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‘West Lothian’ – 50 Interesting ‘Facts’

1 **Armadale,** originally known as Barbauchlaw, indicating an area for boar hunting, was renamed when the lands were bought by Sir William Honeyman in 1790, who took the name from the town on his estates in Sutherland.

2 The **Fraternity of Dyers** in Linlithgow is regarded as the **oldest** of its kind in Scotland and second only to the Fraternity of London Dyers for the whole of the United Kingdom.

3 The famous **Broxburn icicle** formed on the Almond Aqueduct in 1895 during the severe winter frosts. It reached a height of 22.8m (75ft) forming from the aqueduct sluice. The height of the aqueduct above water level is 23.16m (76ft).

4 If you are born and bred in the Royal Burgh of **Linlithgow** you are known as a '' Black Bitch ". A Black Bitch dog appears on the town's coat of arms.

5 The **House of the Binns**, near Linlithgow**,** stands as a living monument to one of Scotland’s oldest families, the Dalyells, who have lived here since 1612.

6 Stephen Gallacher from **Bathgate** is one of Europe's top 100 golfers. Stephen is the nephew of former Ryder Cup captain Bernard Gallacher. Stephen is known to practice at Kingsfield Driving Range.

7 **Mary Queen of Scots,** the most famous of the Stewart monarchs, was born in Linlithgow Palace in 1542.

8 Every year in the summer it is possible to enjoy open air Scottish Dancing in the courtyard of **Linlithgow** Palace. www.scotchhop.co.uk

9 Built in the 15th century by one of Scotland’s most powerful families, the Crichtons, the roles of **Blackness** Castle were those of garrison fortress and state prison. The present castle was designed as the bow of a large ship heading into the Firth of Forth to scare off any would be attackers!

10 **Armadale's** unusual public house, The Goth (1911), was designed on the Swedish Gothenburg System which sought to reduce alcohol consumption by providing ample coffee and food.

11 The legendary regiment of **Royal Scots Greys**, was formed in West Lothian by General Tam Dalyell in 1681. The regiment was named after the general had replaced his troops conspicuous red coats for grey uniforms, he is thus credited as the first commander of the Royal army to recognise the importance of camoflauge.

12 **Torphichen** was confirmed as a place of sanctuary when the **Knights of St John** established their headquarters there in the 12th century having been gifted the land by David I.

13 **Hopetoun House** is one of the most splendid examples of Georgian architecture in Britain being the work of Scottish architects Sir William Bruce and William Adam. Both Bruce and Adam were architects to the Royal house of their day.

14 **Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic Garden** was started from a garden collection that had been cultivated by Sir Patrick Murray at Livingston peel. When Murray died abroad, his friends arranged for the garden to be transplanted to create the original botanic garden as a fitting memorial to his plant hunting and horticultural endeavours.

15 James 'Paraffin' Young set up the **world's first oil refinery** in Bathgate in 1850.

16 West Lothian won the top category of **Council of the Year** at the 2005 Local Government Chronicle Awards. West Lothian Council is the only council in Scotland that has ever won - or been nominated – for the accolade since the awards were established.

17 **St Michael is the Patron Saint** of Linlithgow**.** The town's motto "St Michael is kind to strangers" promises a warm welcome for visitors.

18 Sir James Young Simpson, **pioneer of** the use of chloroform in childbirth, was born in **Bathgate** in 1811.

19 As a Royal burgh, **Linlithgow**, enjoyed charter rights to a lucrative monopoly of trade along the Forth from the River Almond to the River Avon with its own port at Blackness.

20 **Avon Aqueduct,** approximately one mile to the west of Linlithgow, is Scotland's largest canal aqueduct. An impressive 24m (80ft) high and 247m (810ft) long, it boasts 12 arches, each with a 50ft span.

21 **The Riding of Linlithgow** Marches is held every year on the First Tuesday after the Second Thursday in June (13th June 2006) - the tradition dates from the 14th century when the trades guilds checked the burgh boundaries including a visit to the town's port Blackness.

22 Henry Bell, who designed the Comet, **the world's first practical sea going steamship**, was born at Torphichen Mill.

23 In 1986, a special aisle was created in St Michael's Kirk, **Linlithgow,** to mark the occasion of the **Queen's 60th birthday**. The queen was to worship here when she visited the town in 1989 as part of 600th anniversary celebrations of the granting of the burgh's charter.

24 **Bathgate's Gala day on the first Saturday in June**, re-enacts Robert the Bruce bestowing the lands of Bathgate Castle on his daughter Majorie as a dowry in celebration of her marriage to Walter the High Steward. Their marriage gave birth to the Stewart dynasty.

25 Blackness Castle was location for scenes from **Franco Zefferelli's version of Hamlet**, which starred Mel Gibson.

26 Cairnpapple Hill, at about 310m or just over 1000ft in height, affords **one of the best viewpoints in central Scotland**, extending from Arran in the west to Bass Rock in the east.

27 **The West Lothian question** was posed by Tam Dalyell, MP for the Scottish constituency of West Lothian, during a debate over Scottish devolution in the 1970s. It foretold of an anomaly, now in existence, over Scottish Westminster MPs' inability to vote on devolved matters affecting their constituents and their ability to vote on English domestic issues whilst English MPs were not able to vote on similar Scottish matters.

28 **Livingston FC** is celebrating its 10th anniversary during season 2005-06. The club – formerly Meadowbank Thistle – moved to West Lothian in 1995. During it's first few seasons 'Livi' rose through the Scottish divisions, reaching the Scottish Premier League in 2001 and securing an astonishing third place during its first year "at the top".

29 Cairnpapple has been a special place for over 5000 years. The remains of a complex of **prehistoric sites** established in 5 phases include burial pits, cairns and henges can be seen there.

30 West Lothian's lowland status is confirmed by having the **lowest highest point in Scotland** at 1000ft or 310m in the Bathgate hills.

31 West Lothian's booming economy is set to continue to outstrip the rest of Scotland. Current predictions reveal that West Lothian is likely to be the joint **fastest growing area in Scotland** over the next four years. Economic Growth is forecast to be 8.3%.

32 West Lothian has **the youngest population in Scotland** with an average age of 36 years and has the highest percentage of under 18-year-olds in mainland Scotland. The average age in Scotland is 39.

33 Before the Battle of Falkirk in July 1298, **William Wallace** is said to have held his last Parliament at Torphichen**.** After the battle, the victor, Edward I, **Hammer of Scots,** sought medical assistance there for an injury to his ribs after he was trampled by his restless battlehorse.

34 In 1606, at Hilderstan**,** in the Bathgate Hills, **silver was discovered.** Extravagant spender James VI, claimed the rights to this mine, extracted over 200 tons of silver in the first year of his ownership and exhausted the mine's reserves within 10 years.

35 **The Canal Museum** at Manse Road Basin, Linlithgow is the only Museum on the Canal network in Scotland. Situated on the Union Canal, the museum recently gained grant aid for a major restoration project.

36 With just over a quarter of the West Lothian population, Livingston, is **the largest town** in the area by a factor of 3 on its nearest rival, Bathgate.

37 Many West Lothian town's have strong heritage in the mining of **coal, clay, iron and shale** and excellent local museums tell the story of this heritage.

38 Lord James Stewart, Earl of Moray was victim to Scotland's **first recorded assassination by a firearm** when he was surprised in Linlithgow High St. Today a window in St Giles Kirk Edinburgh depicts the event.

39 Fauldhouse comes from Fealh Hus, old English, and means **"house on unploughed land".**

40 On the **last Saturday in May** Bathgate plays host to the **first Highland Games in the calendar**. It is one of the biggest Highland Games, with many pipe bands and contestants coming from around the world.

41 The Five Sisters Bing of **West Lothian** may be set to become an historic monument to the industry they provide testament to. Climbers are showing increasing interest in scaling shale bings in a sport now dubbed **Bing-Bagging**.

42 **The award winning 2002 film Young Adam**, starring Ewan MacGregor and Tilda Swinton, had scenes shot in Linlithgow on the Union canal.

43 Calder House, home to the Sandliands family and Lords of Torphichen, was visited by the Polish composer **Frederick Chopin**, during his visit to Scotland in 1848.

44 It is believed that **Robert Burns** was made a freeman of Linlithgow on 16th November 1787.

45 Four West Lothian schools, Greenrigg, Torphichen, Woodmuir and Westfield, took up the challenge of working with the author and Scots language specialist and teacher Matthew Fitt, and traditional singers and songwriters Alistair Hulett and Gill Bowman in a Scottish Arts Council funded project **'Telling Tongues'.**

46 The newly restored King's fountain at Linlithgow Palace, which dates from 1538, is Britain's **oldest surviving fountain.** One of the earliest piped water supplies in Scotland, it is claimed that the fountain **flowed with wine** during royal feasts staged by the Stewarts.

47 Part of the beauty of West Lothian is the **proximity of countryside** to all of its towns. This is serviced with excellent amenity from country park and outdoor activity centre perspectives.

48 The original **medieval crown tower** of St Michael's Kirk, removed in 1820, was one of only 4 churches in Scotland with this feature. The others are King's College, Old Aberdeen, St Giles, Edinburgh and St Mary's in Haddington.

49 West Lothian **family history** society was set up in 2000 to assist in tracing West Lothian connections and has a nice collection of archive photographs of the areas towns. www.wlfhs.org.uk

50 **Blackness milk**, imbibed on the Linlithgow marches, is a blend of milk and whisky.