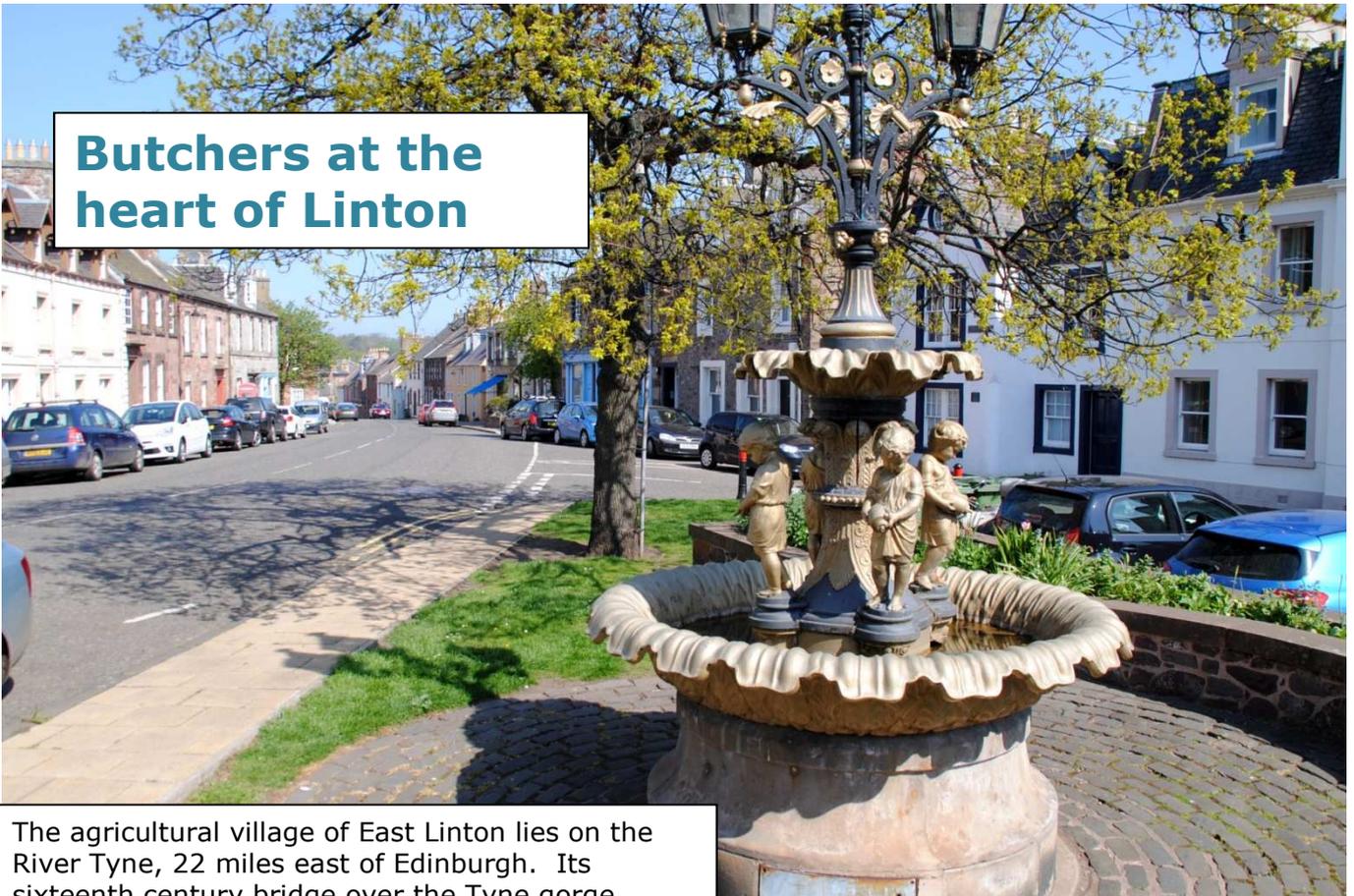


## Butchers at the heart of Linton



The agricultural village of East Linton lies on the River Tyne, 22 miles east of Edinburgh. Its sixteenth century bridge over the Tyne gorge secured East Linton's place as a staging post on the Great North Road.

The railway came to Linton in 1846 and to avoid confusion with Linton in Peeblesshire the prefix East and West emerged. Today the East Coast Main Line is carried through the village at high level, bridging both the River Tyne and main village street. East Linton originally had its own station, but this closed in 1960.

For somewhere so close to Edinburgh, East Linton has managed very successfully to retain its essentially rural charm. Attractive domestic buildings surround pubs, shops and other local services.

You can take a seat in the square and watch the water in the fountain sparkle in the sun and splash over the four cherubs. The cast iron fountain with a three arm lampstand is dated 1882. An extremely important example of its kind that attracts its own visitors. It was presented to the Burgh by John Drysdale who left East Linton to become a highly respected 19th century merchant in Buenos Aires.

Others come take a stroll down Mill Wynd to The Linn, the waterfall that gives Linton its name but now it is the butchers that attracts the most regular visitors. A steady procession of vehicles draw up, very pleased that there is always somewhere to park.





Linton Butchers only came into being on 1st July 2013 when John and Elaine McKirdy took up the reins. John was working in the East Linton butchers shop when he was when offered the lease of the business. He is very grateful to John Anderson who gave him first option on the opportunity.

Elaine has experience as a chef and the initial plan was that she would continue to work at the Westgate Gallery Restaurant in North Berwick where she was the manageress. Things took off at Linton Butchers and Elaine was able to give up her job in September that year.



Changes were gradual, things like new cabinets, flooring, walls, new scales, equipment and refrigeration. It seems totally appropriate that quality audio kit booms out Carpenters hits in the background while John McKirdy makes the whole place tick. The butchers shop is clean, smart and a credit to the village. Customers' understandable concerns that quality and products would remain the same after the change of ownership were unwarranted.

John religiously matures his beef which is predominantly from Traprain Farm and purchased at St Boswells market. Lambs and pigs are supplied by Scotbeef and chickens from Gosford Poultry at Aberlady.





Success in the very first product competition they entered, winning South East Scotland Beef Sausage championship and subsequently Reserve Scottish Champion in 2014, was a major boost to the business. Elaine described the effect on the business:-

"There was a fantastic reaction from customers. They were coming from everywhere. We could hardly sell a beef sausage before, now we are inundated for them."

The speciality sausage trade had always been good but it took off, now with a comprehensive selected of different tastes, customers pick mixes of different sausages to barbecue or grill like kids in a sweetie shop.

Little wonder really since the range includes Boerwars, Venison & Juniper Berries, Pork & Leek, Cumberland, Pork & Chilli, Hog Roast, Pork & Mustard, Gloucester Old Spot, the list goes on. Burgers are just as interesting with the usual suspects augmented with offerings such as Pork & Apple, Venison and Stroganoff.

"Winning the 2016 Scottish Beef Sausage title was even better" revealed Elaine. Customers were really interested in what we were in the news for again. 'What have you won this time?' we were being asked. It is a close community and the local people do support the local shops."



Pictured: David, Helen, Dougie, Elaine, Graham



Another huge factor that attracts customers is the ability to tell them where everything comes from. The meat could hardly be lower in food miles, fruit and veg is a big attraction and the potatoes come from East Fortune and Preston Mains.

The shop has a separate bakehouse one hundred yards down the street. Using pastry and pie shells from the Bells Food Group, it is here that the steak pies are made and a vast array of hand held pastries including Bridies, Sausage Rolls, Steak & Haggis, Chicken & Ham pies and Mince Rounds.

Back in the front shop the song line is "There is wonder in 'most everything I see" and that has to be true for what Linton Butchers customers have on offer. There are several award certificates providing assurance over the excellence of the vast range of products. Add to that the colourful displays and the attractive shop which is then complimented by cheery welcoming staff.

The staff consist of five full time, two part time, a Saturday boy plus John and Elaine. The busiest time has changed from mornings to between 2.00pm and 5.00pm. John's ever present attitude that 'nothing is problem' spills out like an infection and if customers don't see what they would like it will be cut to whatever they want.

At Linton Butchers you really can be on top of the world. As the lyrics conclude:-  
"Not a cloud in the sky, got the sun in my eyes  
And I won't be surprised if it's a dream."

