



# Lasswade District Civic Society

## Spring Newsletter

### **Introduction:**

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2010. Here we summarise our recent activities and future events with the reminder that fuller details, including minutes, calendar, letters on planning, paths, subscriptions and comment can be seen on the Society web site. [www.lasswadecivic.com](http://www.lasswadecivic.com) We thank you for your support at recent events and welcome any ideas for future activities. Please encourage new residents/folks to the area to join the Lasswade Civic Society.

**David Sugden (Chair)**

### **Footpaths**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2009, Scotways involved representatives of LDCS and Esk Valley Trust and organised a walk along Melville High Drive, informing the land owner beforehand. We are able to demonstrate that until recently the path was an open track without gates and indeed the local community participated in a walk

along it in October 1995 to mark Midlothian District Council's confirmation that it is a Right of Way. Scotways will discuss the footpath (labelled LM 178) and let us know their thinking. In the meantime the threatening notices have been removed by the landowner.

### **Report of the Autumn outing**

A glorious autumn outing was promised for October 10th 2009, the geological highlights of Edinburgh, led by David Sugden. A small group gathered in Lasswade park and set off for Agassiz Rock at Blackford Quarry. David showed us grooves in the rock that showed the path a glacier had taken. In 1840 Louis Agassiz, a Swiss geologist, first noticed that this rock was polished and grooved by the passage of an ancient glacier across its

surface. His observation helped to lay the foundation for our understanding of how glaciers have shaped the landscape during the ice ages of the last two million years. We found other scratches and David explained that the positioning of these scratches over turned theories of The Flood. It was exciting to put fingers in scratches made 20,000 years ago!

We left the midges and went to Salisbury Crag where David led us to another hidden gem of geology. "It was here in the late eighteenth century, that James Hutton, the father of modern geology, found evidence that Salisbury Crag was once molten rock. The evidence drawn from this locality was instrumental in Hutton's Theory of the Earth (1788)." There is a small plaque to help you find this rock and look at the way the layers show molten rock has pushed through sedimentary rocks. Small boys found perfect rocks to climb up while we listened to David's explanation. We hope that David will run a similar outing to Siccar Point which is the another part of local geology linked to Hutton's discoveries. Our thanks to David to talk shop to us at the weekend! David can recommend publications if you want to go on your own tour !!

### **Autumn talk**

It's precisely because we value the high "amenity value" of Lasswade and its surroundings that we're members of the Civic Society. But how many of us really have our eyes open to the environment in which we live?

One who certainly does is Dr Neil Grubb, a hospital consultant to trade with a professional's talent when it comes to capturing on film and in photographs the natural wonders of the North Esk Valley. In his talk to society members in November he guided a spell-bound audience through the spectacular birdlife of Midlothian, concentrating on a patch which he has made his own – Roslin Glen. Here he rubs shoulders with families of woodpeckers and swallows, charts the fortunes of the peregrine falcons which find a safe haven on the cliffs hollowed out by the river and captures the intimate life of the nuthatches which in the last few years have become such a specialty of this area. Unknown in Scotland until the last twenty or so years, these woodland birds are now firmly established in our area and if you are lucky they may even come and visit your garden feeders. Look out for the grey-blue back, stubby tail and orange breast of a bird just a wee bit larger than the tits which usually make short work of your peanuts.

Neil is a consummate presenter of his work, and we were privileged that he gave us such easy access to a world on our doorstep which is there for us all to enjoy.

### **Planning Information**

The Planning Front has been relatively quiet over the past few months and all recent applications have been housing related.

Planning Application No. 09/000304/FUL, the erection of a Flatted Development at Dequincey Road, Poltonhall, which we stated in the Autumn Newsletter was within the village envelope and therefore the Society had decided not to object, turned out to be within the Green Belt and in the end we did write and object along with many others. Fortunately the application was refused in November as being contrary to Green Belt policy.

Two similar planning applications which, indicate a trend to capitalise on large gardens within conservation areas, were responded to by the Civic Society at the end of last year.

Planning Application No 09/00461/DPP to erect two new houses in the front garden ground of 1 Braeside Road, Loanhead, and which affected the Mavisbank Conservation Area was refused in December as being out of character with the general development of the area.

A further objection was lodged to Planning Application No 09/00515/PPP the subdivision of an existing plot and development of a new house at 43 Polton Road, Lasswade. This development would adversely affect the Broomieknowe Conservation Area and result in a loss of trees to the locality. The application is still pending but we hope will have a similar outcome to the previous application.

A much larger planning proposal has recently been lodged with Midlothian Council, Application No. 09/00636/PAC to **develop the Kevock Vale Park Caravan Site in Lasswade**. The proposal is to remove the existing static homes and replace them with 66 new houses. There will be a drop in exhibition to display the proposals at the Caravan Site on Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup> from 12 noon until 7 pm. Further information will be available in the Public Library in Bonnyrigg and at the Midlothian Council Offices in Viewforth Dalkeith. Specific information is also available through the online planning system at Midlothian Council and from the Planning Officer dealing with this application Mr. Kingsley Drinkwater on 271 3315. Remember if you have a Planning Application reference number all applications should be available to view on the Midlothian Council Planning Website.

### **New Steps**

As reported on the LDCS Web Site and in the Autumn Newsletter, the project to construct a flight of steps and handrail is now complete, giving us a wonderful new link path adjacent to the war memorial and further improving our local park and Community Garden.

At the top of the steps the old timber bench has been replaced by a new cast iron bench, so everyone can sit and enjoy the view across the Community Garden. The bench is dedicated to Bill and Anna Dobson who were so highly regarded by the Civic Society and within the wider community. We hope once the snow clears you will have time to use the new steps and admire the view. The Society would like to extend its thanks to John Blair and the Environmental Works Team, to Gary Cormack and Gary Edmonds of Land Services and to our local Councillor Derek Milligan for undertaking this project on our behalf.

### **Lasswade weir project**

At the suggestion of one of our members we are looking at the possibility of delivering a small scale community energy project for the benefit of the local community. The idea is to harness the energy of the North Esk as it flows over the weirs at Polton and Lasswade. We have spoken to Community Energy Scotland and have taken them on a site visit. They have expressed an interest in supporting the project with funding for both an initial feasibility study and for capital works should the project proceed. We have also contacted Councillor Milligan who is also supportive.

The next step is for us to write a proposal to CES with a view to obtaining a grant for the initial studies. The first thing to be checked will be the riparian ownerships, in order to establish who own the weirs and the river banks/accesses. Co-operation on landowners is a pre-requisite to getting this off the ground. Testing also needs to be done in order to establish whether the flow of water is suitable for a small scale hydro-electric scheme.

We will also be looking at other projects which CES have supported to see how best to structure the community trust or other body set up to administer the project. We do not see this as a Civic Society function as it will have much wider community benefit. However, we do think it something that the Society could and should take a lead in organising.

We will keep you posted as things develop.

### **New Lasswade High school Community Campus**

The council have decided to seek additional consultation as to how the proposed new Lasswade High School should look. We would urge that as many people as possible take time to fill in the questionnaire. These questionnaires can be found at Bonnyrigg Library or down loaded online by following the link below –

<http://www.midlothian.gov.uk//Article.aspx?TopicId=6&ArticleId=24805>

### **Subscriptions**

Just a gentle reminder that subscriptions are due in the middle of March.

£4 per family

£2.50 per individual

Subscriptions can be paid to your rep, at the cheese and wine or by pay pal.

### **How to pay on line**

Invoices have been sent to all members who have provided e-mail addresses. If you wish to pay on line you do not need a PayPal account. You can either pay via PayPal using your credit/debit card or directly via your PayPal account if preferred. There is a note on the invoice saying to ignore it if you wish to pay at the door as usual.

### **Annual Cheese and wine**

**Lasswade District Civic Society  
Invites you to the  
Annual Cheese and Wine Party  
At St Leornards Church Hall, Dobbies Rd  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
7.30 p.m.**

**This year because of new licensing laws this function is free and it may well be the last time we run this event. We would therefore be particularly delighted to see you there. It would be helpful if you could let your local rep know if you will attend or e-mail via the website contact page. [www.lasswadecivic.com](http://www.lasswadecivic.com)**

**Please note AGM 26th April Lasswade Pavilion 7.45pm**