



Lasswade District Civic Society

# Newsletter

AUTUMN 2021



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## Chairman's Report

It was with feelings of delight and relief that we were at long last able to arrange an event for Members, with our Jubilee Tea Party on Sunday 5 September. We were so keen to have a Members' meeting after eighteen months of restrictions, but took the decision that it should be outdoors, rather than have so many people congregating in an indoor setting. We appreciated that some members would, understandably, still be uncomfortable with large gatherings in enclosed spaces, so we opted to hold the Tea Party in the Community Garden. We were blessed with beautiful weather and, thanks to the sterling horticultural efforts over many months by two of our members, the Community Garden looked amazing. The Party was well attended and was a huge success, with members having the first opportunity in many months to catch up on all their news and exchange local gossip. Cheryl Ashworth also took a group on a very informative guided historical tour of the village, something that we might well look to repeat in the future.

The Tea Party marked the 50th Anniversary of the Society and was an opportunity to thank all those, many sadly no longer with us, whose unstinting work has enabled the Society to flourish for half a century. Lasswade has seen many changes in that time and your Society has adapted to suit the evolving demands of the community. We no longer have to campaign to clean up the River, but we do have to work to persuade people living in or passing through our lovely village to dispose of their litter responsibly or, better still, to take it home with them. We are hoping, when COVID restrictions are sufficiently eased, to revive plans for an

anti-litter project with local primary schools. It is so often the children who educate the parents nowadays on environmental issues.

You will find in this Newsletter details of the long-postponed Annual General Meeting and I hope as many Members as possible will attend. Our activities have been seriously curtailed during the pandemic and the AGM will be an opportunity for Members to meet and to share a glass of wine when the formalities are over. Your Committee look forward very much to seeing you at the AGM.

*George Clark, Chairman*

## Notice of the Lasswade District Civic Society Annual General Meeting

On **Tuesday 26th October 2021 at 7.30pm**

In **St Leonard's Church Hall, Dobbie's Road**

*All LDCS members are welcome to attend*

Nominations for the Committee  
(proposed, seconded and with the consent of the nominee)  
should be received by the Secretary Rosemary Mackay  
(dequinceyrose@aol.com) by 12th October 2021.

*There will be a short illustrated Talk on the History of Lasswade*

**Wine and soft drinks will be served**

## Secretary's Report

We would like to thank everyone who joined us on Sunday 5th September to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Society. This also gave us an opportunity to thank our recently retired Reps for all of the work they have done on behalf of the Society, more photos inside.

Covid has limited our ability to reach out to new members, please take the opportunity to invite friends and neighbours who are new to the area, to join the Society. Contact your Rep or myself at [dequinceyrose@aol.com](mailto:dequinceyrose@aol.com), for a welcome pack.

It was a lovely afternoon in the refreshed Community Garden. Wendy and Jill have been tenacious in their removal of invasive groundcover and have tackled the overgrowth with commendable vigour. If you haven't had a chance to visit the garden lately, I would recommend that you take a look and admire the crisp edging which sets off the grass areas beautifully.

The Community Garden and bridge over the river are very tangible reminders of what the Society has achieved during the past 50 years. Not to mention the newly repaired bus stop and

the Penfold pillar box. The Society was founded with the aim of 'improving and maintaining the natural and urban environment of Lasswade,' something that remains our primary focus to this day.

As we move forward, I believe that the Society is more relevant than ever. As we seek to find new and innovative responses to the challenges of balancing the rural and built environment in the face of increased house building with all the resulting pressure on the roads through the village.

We are privileged to live in a beautiful part of the world with all the benefits of a capital city on our doorstep and are mindful that we are custodians of Lasswade for the generations to come. The Society gives us a powerful voice through which to channel our concerns as individuals and as a community. As always we look forward to hearing from you!

*Best wishes*

*Rosemary Mackay, Secretary*

## Notes From A Local Ornithologist

I had to smile when reading the last Newsletter's 'Nature Observations' about the raptor on the roof with a snake in its talons. First, there aren't that many adders around Lasswade, especially in winter, when they hibernate. Second, I learned I'd unknowingly played a role in the drama. On a cold January day, out walking near the Wadingburn Road junction, I spotted a Peregrine falcon in the middle of the road. It was plucking away at a bird in its grasp, oblivious to the 31 bus bearing down on it.

Luckily, I managed to divert it (the falcon, not the bus) and watched it flap off towards Lasswade village, still clutching its bulky prey. It was wearing jesses (leather straps) on its legs, but I didn't make out the radio antenna on its back; its signal eventually enabled the falconer to track down his lost tiercel as it sat polishing off its lunch. So a happy ending, if not for the Snipe. For that is what the prey actually was, and not a snake at all. The Snipe is a long-beaked wading bird that overwinters on the boggy landfill site where the falconer has permission to hunt with his occasionally errant Peregrines.

Less lucky than the Peregrine was one of the Buzzard pair that for several years now have made their home in the Haverall Wood at Wadingburn. Following relentless persecution. Buzzards were long extinct around here, but have now returned in such strength that they are the raptor most often spotted in Lasswade. They are frequently mistaken for eagles, but not everyone welcomes their presence. On Easter Sunday 2020, having daily watched a pair circling over my home not far from Lasswade Village. I heard five shots ring out. We saw no more Buzzards there for the rest of the year. In early May this year, near the nest where the Haverall Wood pair raised young in 2020, I discovered the pathetic remains of a Buzzard scattered on the ground. Not very far away was a smashed hen's egg, which I suspect had been laced with poison. If so, multiple crimes had been committed, and the police were informed. Needless to say, if you find a dead raptor, don't touch it, don't let your child or dog go near, and report it to the police on 101. Nearly three weeks later, I again approached the nest site to find a sole Buzzard wheeling over the heap of feathers and crying in alarm. Do birds feel lasting grief?

As we know from the Buzzard's return, wildlife will flourish given half a chance, but the impact of climate change plus a booming

human population is making things ever harder for nature. Even so, there are things we can do in mitigation. Many of us feed birds in our gardens, and this is of inestimable value now so much farmland has become a sterile environment not just for birds but for the bees and butterflies which love our gardens too. Domestic cats get a bad press when it comes to killing garden birds - it is estimated they may kill up to 27 million annually - but the RSPB suggests there is no clear scientific evidence linking this carnage to declining bird numbers.

Dogs, on the other hand, present a real and mounting problem as their numbers rocket and doting owners unleash their animals in the woods, across the fields, and along the shoreline, unwittingly spreading havoc among breeding and wintering birds alike. Unlike our pets, once the larks, warblers and waders are disturbed, they have nowhere else to feed or another home to return to. Until very recently, the mysterious Woodcock, nocturnal snipe-like birds that flit over the treetops at dusk, squeaking and grunting as they go, bred in the woods all along the North Esk. Today there are none. The human and canine pressure is now too great.

Thankfully, though, there is good news too. Thirty years ago, the Nuthatch was virtually unknown in Scotland. Now, rising temperatures have tempted them gradually northwards, and today these stocky, noisy, feisty wee birds, scooting up and down tree trunks with equal aplomb, can be found alongside the finches and Robins at garden feeders for much of the year. They will even breed in the boxes put up for Blue Tits if they can't find natural holes in trees. Luckily, our neighbours' garden has precisely the right kind of trees. So not only do we enjoy seeing them at our feeders, we've had the privilege of watching these immigrants from the south bring up their young and establish themselves as native Scottish birds.



*Andrew Barker*

## Some Observations from our Garden

Here we are another eight months on from when I last wrote for the LDCS Magazine and what an amazing Summer we have had so far. The long spell of rain we had earlier in the Spring is long forgotten and the regular warm weather has brought on such growth in every area of our garden; and I am sure in yours too no matter how large or small!



In the centre of our "2011" garden bed our Eucryphia stands resplendent, bedecked with hundreds of beautiful white blossoms like a bride in her glorious attire! You may ask why the "2011"? This was a large bed which was overgrown with weeds of every kind. In 2011 we finally decided something had to be done. Several years on (about 5!) we finally got round to clearing and planting. With me working in one direction from the centre and my occasional gardener working in the other direction we finally got it cleared and planted up.

There were several substantial plants which we left in place which included the eucryphia, of which there are three, a couple of purple hazels and a redwood which we cut regularly and is prolific in growth. One of the shrubs we planted was this luscious Vanilla Fraise hydrangea

After a very slow start our gunnera plant has grown and grown. Its largest leaves now measure 2.5m in diameter and its thick prickly stems are but 15cm in diameter. I stabbed my garden fork into the ground beside the clump to give you an idea.

The herbaceous border took off and I have never seen such enormous geraniums. The agapanthus are blooming, the honeysuckle was a show and the clematis stunning. Of course I



cannot forget the buddleia blooms which attract the most beautiful butterflies.

As the year draws on I notice how laden the sorbus trees are with berries of every colour. These will help feed the birds over the winter.

The leaves are beginning to turn on one or two of our trees and the leaves are starting to flutter down as the nights close in.



### The Community Garden

Late last Autumn we planted some daffodil bulbs and were well rewarded in the Spring with the wonderful yellow heads joining the bright yellow of the forsythia by early April.

In the Spring we decided that the garden needed a thorough and drastic overhaul. We set to with loppers and saws and secateurs and raised the majority of the shrubs and trees almost to the ground in two of the three sections. There were huge heaps of vegetation at the end of this procedure which the Council removed for us. The cornus has come back with vigour, the rosa rugosa has flowered its heart out and produced huge hips which are colouring up nicely. On the other side, the large shrubs have



responded well to severe pruning. In particular the physocarpus which was pruned severely has put on such growth that it looks like a giant sprawling octopus and has filled the whole corner. We planted some clematis Montana along the back fence which will give its rewards in the Spring and have kept weeding and spraying where necessary to clear most of the rest of the area. Little by little we have planted up the front of the border with non-invasive plants propagated from our own gardens and slowly but surely the plants are becoming well established. There are some gaps still to fill but we are waiting for cooler and damper weather so we do not need to carry water up from the river! \*

There is still work to do but thank you to all who have helped over the last year.

A very kind local contact, George, has made a wonderful job of the bus stop shelter. He replaced, repaired and painted the front and sides which were in a sorry state of rot and decay and it looks so much better!



## Thank you to retiring Reps

At the Jubilee Tea Party we took the opportunity to present a token of the member's appreciation, to a number of Reps who have recently stood down, following years of service to the Society. Between them they have logged up almost 200 years of membership of LDCS, many of these as Reps. Quite an achievement, I am sure you will agree! That role has been central to the success of the Society, as it has provided a vital continuity of contact between the Society and its members. They have delivered countless Newsletters, collected hundreds of pounds in subscription, and answered many queries, passed on concerns and all with good humour and a sense of service to their community. We are very grateful to all of our Reps.

Rosemary and Sandra were unable to join us on the day but Anne, Joy and Jan were presented with a mounted photo of Mavisbank taken by John Blair, an accomplished photographer and member of the Society.



## High Street shops

Those of us who lament the recent demise of High Street shops in our towns and cities will be interested to know that in the first half of the 20th century Lasswade was a thriving shopping centre. Reports indicate that there were over 25 shops in the village; indeed, one of the ladies we interviewed for the local



history project described how she and her family did all their shopping in Lasswade. As well as the shops that may be expected in a small community such as a post office, butcher, bakers, newsagent, chemist, sweet shop (there were actually 3, including one run by a lady called Euphemia Stebbings), Lasswade also

had some upmarket and specialist shops. For example, Mr James Henderson owned the 'outfitter, clothier and general draper' which, according to one of our interviewees was "very posh",

while Mr Johnny Black's grocery store and Italian Warehouse, at the foot of the post office steps, was an upmarket delicatessen store selling pickled walnuts, olives, maraschino cherries and stem ginger all beautifully displayed in glass jars. Here, coffee was ground and cheese cut from whole cheeses while customers waited. Apparently the aroma from the shop was amazing!

The Post Office and General store was at the top of the steps on Eldin Place. For a time it was run by Mr Billy Stewart, who was provost of Lasswade for a while.

At the corner of Elm Row and Eldin Place was the garage run by Mr David Burns and family.



## Subscription News 2021/2022

PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO READ!!

1. Firstly, as a Society we have to conform with GDPR and with the improvements in the database we felt this was a good time to get all your details correct. Secondly, Sheena and Rosemary have been working really hard on this and slowly but surely coming into accuracy!! During this process you may have been contacted on more than one occasion regarding your details and also your subscriptions and method of payment. The Banks are confusing us on the payment front! For this reason your payments may have been queried. The problem is that a one-off payment shows up on the statement as an FPI (Forward Payment Inward) but unfortunately some Standing Orders (including my own) appear under the same heading rather than SO. We are therefore left not knowing whether your FPI payment is a one-off or a Standing Order and we can only ascertain and note this if we ask you one more time - or wait until next year and see if your payment comes through on the same date! Apologies to all who have been caught up in this but we appreciate your patience.
2. Thank you to all members who have set up a Standing Order for their Annual Subscription. Please do check your SO details and make any alterations if necessary.
3. A Standing Order would be our preferred way to receive your subscription payment. If you do online banking, you can do this yourself. Alternatively, you can ask your bank to do this for you. PLEASE check the date on your Standing Order and, if necessary, please alter it to a January payment. Our details are:

Name of Account: Lasswade & District Civic Society  
Sort Code: 80-17-42 (Bank of Scotland)  
AccountNo: 00427753  
Amount: £3.00 Single £5.00 Joint

Date to Pay: 31 January latest  
Frequency: Annually  
Reference: YOUR Surname AND Initials

4. If you wish to pay by cheque or cash, you can still do this. Please email Rosemary at [dequinceyrose@aol.com](mailto:dequinceyrose@aol.com) for up to date instructions.
5. Cheques should be made out to: Lasswade & District Civic Society.

Thank you