



Chairman's Report

Who would have believed it if you had told them a year ago that we would be subject to COVID-19 restrictions for more than twelve months? It has been such a difficult time for everyone, and we can only hope that the current trends continue downwards, that the vaccination programme is successful and that, before too long, we will be able to feel that we are able to control the spread of a virus that has taken so many lives and caused so much pain.

Your Committee has been unable to meet in person during lockdown, but we have had monthly Zoom meetings and have been doing what we can on your behalf. You will see in this Newsletter a piece on the draft appraisal and management plan for Mavisbank, as a decision on Lottery funding to further develop the plan is awaited. Whilst not everyone is in favour of the proposals, it is good to be in the position at last of having something to consider.

The seemingly never-ending saga of the temporary traffic lights outside The Laird & Dog are currently causing long tailbacks through the village. Goodness knows how bad it would have been if traffic had been at its normal volume these past months. We have been in contact with Midlothian Council to express the frustration that these delays are causing to all of us who live here.

On the question of transport, we would very much like to hear your views on the impact of the new traffic lights at the junction with the road to Bonnyrigg, particularly if you have to enter and exit Westmill Road. Midlothian Council are looking for feedback as part of their consultation on whether to install a "yellow box" at the Westmill Road junction. Please let us have your thoughts.

As this is the first Newsletter of the year, I would like to take the opportunity of thanking Ian Barr for once again providing the Christmas tree for the village and also the Council for its contribution in brightening up the Community Garden with the reindeer statues and the Christmas lights.

Finally, I should draw your attention to the excellent work carried out by two of our members (socially distanced of course) over the last few weeks to tidy up the Community Garden. I'm sure you will agree from the photograph in this Newsletter that it is looking splendid, as the growing season gets under way. The stoicism of our volunteers in then waiting in the queues to dump the garden refuse at the Recycling Centre in Newtongrange was very commendable! I only wish that everyone passing through Lasswade would show the same consideration for others when disposing of their rubbish.

George Clark, Chairman

Fly-Tipping

The Society would like to thank staff and volunteers from Penicuik Estate Partnership for removing many items which had been fly-tipped in Haeveral Wood, Wadingburn. This included two mattresses, several tyres, plywood, an old drum and a pram. This task was made all the more challenging because the heavy rain and flooding in late November meant that the mattresses were heavy and saturated and the pram full of sand and silt. We were very grateful to Penicuik Estate Partnership for coordinating the personnel, vehicles and booking slots at the refuse site to enable this to happen. Haeveral Wood is now a far more pleasant spot for walkers and cyclists to enjoy. If any Members have any (legal!) suggestions for how we could reduce fly-tipping in the Lasswade area, please let us know.

Cheryl Ashworth



Congratulations to John Blair the winner of our 2020 Photo Competition!

Secretary's Report

I do hope this finds you well. The bulbs that Sheena and Wendy planted in the Community Garden are beginning to emerge just as we are taking our first tentative steps out of lockdown. To quote a member "if you had to design somewhere to spend lockdown, I'm sure it would look very much like Lasswade." It is true we live in an exceptional part of the world, glorious countryside on our doorsteps that is rich in historical significance and biodiversity. The entries for our 2020 Photographic Competition are a testament to the abundance of our surroundings.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those Members who have continued to collect litter throughout this year long lockdown. The closure of fast food outlets resulted in a marked reduction in roadside debris but with the resumption of business, there has been a miraculous re-appearance of food packaging. It seems that old habits do indeed 'die hard'! Walkers have very much appreciated the hard work that has gone into keeping many of our paths free from litter. People have remarked how much their pleasure in a walk around Lasswade is increased when they are not distracted by thoughtlessly discarded waste.

As a Society we will continue to liaise with fast food outlets to encourage them to educate their customers and seek alternatives to disposable packaging for their products. If you wish to become involved, please contact me at

dequinceyrose@aol.com to join our next Litter sub-group meeting or get in touch to share your ideas on how we might tackle the problem.

We have dates for socially distanced litter picks and garden clean-ups in our diary section. I do hope you can join us. We have decided to offer a mid-week as well as a weekend slots as this worked well last season.

I would like to thank everyone who has responded to my request to pay their subscriptions on-line. Thanks too, to those who have posted or handed in cheques and cash. It has simply not been possible for Reps to physically collect subs and we are grateful to you for your support. If there is anyone who has not yet had the opportunity to pay on-line and would wish to do so, the details can be found on the back of this Newsletter. Please contact me if you wish to pay by cash or cheque and I will make arrangements for collection.

Finally we are sorry that we have not had an opportunity to host an Afternoon Tea to show our appreciation for all of the work done by our Reps on your behalf. We will make that up to you and the Committee would like to thank you on behalf of all of our Members for the great work you do!

Best wishes
Rosemary Mackay, Secretary

Mavisbank House Vox Pop

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have now submitted a second-round bid for funding to The Heritage Lottery Fund. It is expected that approximately half of the organisations bidding for funding will be successful. Any awards made will cover 90% of the costs of developing and costing a plan for the re-development of the Mavisbank site. Successful bidders will be given up to two years to complete this work. It is understood that (HES) will be asking for £7 million from the Lottery Fund as a contribution towards the estimated £15-20 million they expect to spend on the project.

The Society was invited along with four other local organisations to contribute to a 3min Vox-pop that was recorded on site. We wanted to share some of your thoughts that we had drawn from the recent Mavisbank Survey we conducted. We wanted to emphasise that Members were glad that the grounds were to remain accessible to the public, that they did not want the peace and tranquillity to be sacrificed to over development and that the Society were keen to contribute to the planning of the project. We shall see whether these points survived the final edit when we receive our review copy. We are grateful to Prof Cheryl Ashworth for so ably reflecting your views to camera.

Photographic Competition 2020

We were delighted that Jan Jerome, distinguished local Photographer and past Chair of the Society agreed to judge the Competition.

The winning entry taken by John Blair is on the front cover. John is a long-time Member of the Society and an experienced amateur photographer. Jan was impressed by the clarity of the image, the composition and the subject matter. Jan noted that is often difficult for Photographers to achieve the clarity of focus

found in John's entry. We have suggested that Jan might give a Zoom Masterclass open to Society Members. So that we might benefit from her knowledge.

John will receive £100 for his first prize entry. Debbie Kong will receive £20 for her excellent photo of a Moth and Martin Vevers £20 for his sunset.

We hope to run the Competition again and look forward to your entries.



We would like to thank everyone who entered the Competition. Your photos will be added to the archive of images held on the website, depicting life in Lasswade. As well as local traffic, the site is visited by people from all over the world who have connections with the area.

Your photos also provide a record of the biodiversity and changing nature of our local landscape which forms part of the historical record of the village.

Christmas Tree and Lights in Lasswade

Once again we would like to express our thanks to Ian Barr, THE 129TH President of the SRU, for the supply and delivery of our village Christmas Tree. This was a very generous gift to the village and very much appreciated by us all.

The Bonnyrigg Christmas Lights Committee arranged a lovely display of Christmas lights, including the Reindeer in the Community Garden. A number of people commented upon how much they had enjoyed the decoration of the village, especially as we were in lockdown. We would like to thank the Community for their tireless efforts to raise funds for the decoration of Bonnyrigg and Lasswade. We would like to thank all of our Members and local businesses, who supported our fund-raising activities in 2019.



Some Nature Observations

I wonder if you have been watching and listening to the sights and sounds around you over these bleak winter months? It is time to look forward! The shortest day is a month or more behind us. The evening light is extending and the sun has been rising a little earlier each morning. Sunrise and sunset have both given us some dazzling spectacles. Do we dare to think of Spring even in the face of challenging weather? I have been aware of more birdsong recently and heard the dawn chorus this morning for the first time this year. It is an amazing, joyful sound for us on a mid January morning but, for the birds, it is full of purpose and ambition! They are beginning to stake out their territory and make their presence known to potential mates some weeks down the road.

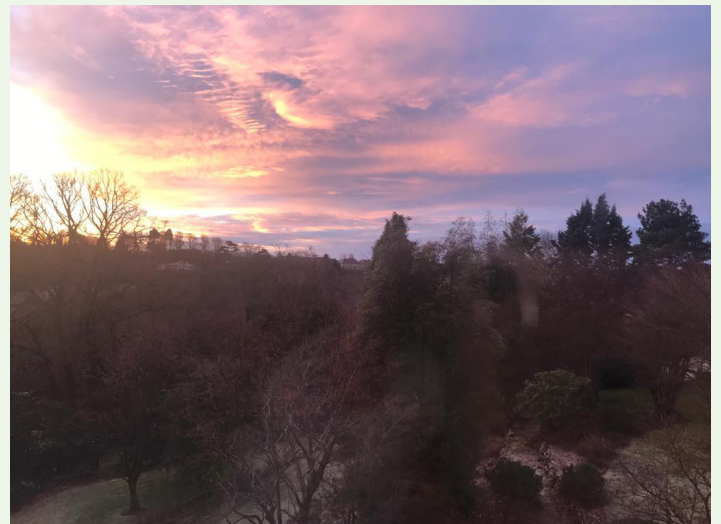
I looked out of my window the other morning and spotted a couple of jackdaws on a chimney stack. They were obviously sharing some kind of breakfast taking it in turn to peck at whatever it was they had found to eat and all the while 'talking' to each other. The local corvids have been fairly chatty of late high up in the naked lime trees. It would be interesting to know what they were saying.

The other afternoon we were surprised to see an unknown gentleman darting about our garden with a strange flashing gadget in his hands. Out we went to investigate what was going on and as he continued watching the flashing red light with its attendant beeping, he explained that he was looking for his falcon! Apparently the raptor had caught a snake for lunch off the landfill

sight and had flown off, prize in claws. The search went on under shrubs and small trees thinking that the bird would be on the ground devouring the delicious dinner. Suddenly the gadget did its job and there, atop the chimney pot, was the falcon, the telltale antenna protruding from a feather and a morsel of snake in its beak.

Winterwatch this evening informed me that mistletoe is a parasite. I probably knew that. The mistle thrush, one of which was seen in the area just today, loves the incredibly sticky white berries of the mistletoe. When its bill gets so sticky it cannot cope any longer, it wipes it from side to side on the branch and thereby deposits the seeds onto the bark. Soon the seeds germinate and the young plants nourish themselves off the tree and thereby happily multiply. Nature is amazing.

I have one more little story and this one is about the snowdrop. I've noticed that they are pushing their sword-like leaves up through the cold dark earth and, in our garden, beside them bloom the bright shiny yellow faces of the aconites. The snowdrop was exported to Kenya many years ago and given a name, the meaning of which is "strong but humble". From the small white bulb the Kenyans saw how this little plant pushed up through the soil, first its leaves and then the white and green flower head. However, after all this hard work, when the flower finally opened it then hung its pretty little head in humility! What a lovely description.



Dates for your Diary

What a good feeling it is to put dates in our diaries once again!

Sunday 18th April 2021

Garden Clean-up and Litter Pick from 2.30-4pm.

Meeting at the Community Garden, when you can decide if you would prefer to litter pick or prepare the Garden for Spring.

Wednesday 21st April 2021

Garden Clean-up and Litter Pick 5-7pm

Meet at the Community Garden, please bring tools and gloves for gardening and gloves for litter picking. We will supply the bags, pickers and hand sanitiser.

I do hope you can join us! Much appreciated!!!

Mavisbank Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Midlothian Council have set out their draft of this document on their website:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/4063/draft_mavisbank_cacamp_december_2020

This is a substantial update on the previous document which dates from 2006. It is presented in a different form and is rather more readable document consisting of fewer sections, and with clearer setting out of the challenges, and the objectives of the management plan. It also reflects the changes in planning law that have been enacted.



The historical origins and significance are set out in a more narrative fashion in the first section of the document. This includes Mavisbank estate and

Polton House estate which both lie within the conservation area and also references the industrial heritage of the valley and its particular significance in the development of the paper-making industry.

The main challenges are rightly identified, in the draft, as being both Mavisbank House and the policies. The house itself is in poor condition as a result of the 1973 fire which took out the roof and the unclear ownership, leading to persistent neglect. Members will be aware of the current bid to gain funds from the Heritage National Lottery Fund on which depends the future direction of development.

There are also significant challenges in managing the policies, these having deteriorated significantly from the original planned landscape set out by Sir John Clerk. There is a need for sensitive restoration work to prevent loss of current amenity - this balance is acknowledged in the management plan

Vehicular access is also recognised as a barrier to increase public use. No specific solutions are identified in the management plan but Wadingburn Road is put forward as the most likely new access

point, should the ambitions of HES and the Landmark Trust come to fruition.

Overall this new plan is to be welcomed and especially the explicit statement that there is "the potential for small incremental changes to buildings and the public realm to have a cumulative negative impact on the area" - a concern that the Civic Society has often expressed in relation to Conservation Areas in Lasswade.

Repair of the Bus Shelter

Many of you had commented upon how dishevelled the fascia of the bus shelter beside the Community Garden was looking. Great to see that it has now been repaired. It looks very spruce and is no longer the 'grot spot' of the Garden!

!!!! Newsflash !!!!!

Some remedial painting is underway but it will soon be returned to its former glory (*couple of months ago*) as below.



Subscriptions 2020/2021

Thank you to all members who have set up a Standing Order for their Annual Subscription. Due to Covid-19, this would be our preferred way to receive your payment. If you do on-line banking, you can do this yourself or, alternatively, you can ask your Bank to do this for you. Our details are:

Name of Account: Lasswade & District Civic Society
Sort Code: 80-17-42 (Bank of Scotland)
Account No: 00427753
Amount: £3.00 Single £5.00 Joint

Date to Pay: 31 January
Frequency: Annually
Reference: YOUR SURNAME AND INITIAL(S)

Please do check your SO details and make any alterations if necessary.

If you wish to continue paying by cash, or cheque, you can still do this. We are unsure whether your Rep will be able to collect this unless restrictions are lifted. If you are in this position, please email Rosemary at dequinceyrose@aol.com for up to date instructions.

Cheques should be made out to: Lasswade & District Civic Society.

Thank you