Since our previous January Newsletter, we have enjoyed an illustrated talk by Winnie Stevenson in February about the Roslin Gunpowder Mills. In March, we held our well-attended Annual Party which seemed to be greatly enjoyed by our members including many ‘new faces’, and we trust that this augurs well for the future of the Society.

The daffodils which the Society has planted throughout our district over the years are now in bloom again. It will be interesting to see how well our new Community Garden and the village park, now so much more easily accessible over our well-used Jubilee Footbridge, starts to ‘green-up’ in the warmer weather.

As finishing touches for the Garden, the Council has agreed to supply a suitable vandal-proof litter bin beside the bus-shelter and to asphalt the unfinished pavement; our Society is arranging for a small railing on the Garden perimeter wall and the installation of park benches. MacTaggart Scott of Loanhead has very kindly agreed to manufacture and donate a stainless steel ‘time capsule’ which will be filled with archival reference documents from local organisations and buried within the Garden area later in the year. We also wish to create a series of more open viewpoints of the river along the edge of the park.

The 34th Annual General Meeting

Our A.G.M is scheduled for Monday, 26th April 2004 and we hope that you will be able to join us at this event, see below and page 4. We are most anxious to recruit a number of new members to strengthen the incoming 2004 - 2005 Committee and would like nominations to be submitted to me by Monday, 12th April 2004.

At the A.G.M. regretfully Joan Acton will be resigning due to heavy personal commitments. Her wisdom and experience, especially in reviewing complex Council Planning Application issues, will be missed and we hope that she will be able to return to the team in later years.

Also, as a founder Committee Member in 1971 and having served in various capacities during two periods for a total of 16 years, I believe that it is now time for me to stand down from the Committee as your Chairman. It has been a great privilege to be involved with Lasswade District Civic Society during this time and to have been able to contribute to the many different aspects of its progress over the years. I particularly wish to thank the present Committee for its support.

We have seen great changes during these three decades - as some for the worse, such as the loss of so much of our original green space, ever increasing traffic and the all-pervasive litter and vandalism - but also considerable successes, with the final clean-up of our old industrial sites, the fresh-flowing river now revitalised with aquatic life, the continuing (if still fragile) survival of our cherished woodland valley and an increasingly wider public awareness and concern for its rural conservation. But there is still much more to be done, and we all need to remain active and constantly vigilant in our future care for the district.

With ongoing best wishes to you all as you enjoy each emerging new season in our lovely valley.

B.D.

ADOPT-A-PATCH!

These two girls did! Lois Forbes (5) of Lasswade and her cousin Ellen Morton (8) went on a litter hunt along the Braeheads Path, Kevock Road and Green Lane and collected every piece of rubbish they saw - what a really good example for us all! Well done, Lois and Ellen.

Although Council staff have periodic clean-ups along our main roads, they are not always able to deal with jetsam and wind-blown litter that is stuck in hedgerows and verges. Remember that the eye-catching piece of plastic, can or bottle that annoys you today could still be there in ten years’ time, unless someone does something about it. Why not carry two plastic bags on your local walks - one to serve as a glove for filling the other.

Your help could make a difference too.

Notice of AGM
Monday 26th April 2004
Lasswade Park Pavilion
7.45 for 8.00 pm
More details page 4
Our new LOGO is here!

After many attempts over the last year or so by Society Members to create a new logo, an idea came to Committee Member, Claire Craig (a.k.a. 'Isa' Newton!) when she was out walking locally and a cupped acorn fell close by. At the next Committee Meeting she presented her ideas. Acorn pictures were produced in a variety of different colours, shapes and textures. Fonts jumped out of the page in black and green, big and little, thin and bold. Claire put forward her reasons for her choice (see below) and now with a great deal of help from her son Hugo, using his computer skills they have produced our new identity. This Newsletter, already established in green and pale yellow complements the logo.

Our grateful thanks to them both and we all hope you will appreciate our new design and its symbolism. BD

Claire writes ........

When considering the choice of a new logo it was decided that a simple and memorable image was required which would convey ideas and associations appropriate to the aims and interests of the Society. The design of an acorn in its protective cup was deemed to fulfil this requirement for the following reasons:

- Its simple design, easy recognition and visual impact
- The protection of the seed acorn by its cup symbolises the role of LDCS in protecting our environment
- The acorn symbolically conveys the notion that ‘tall oaks from little acorns grow’ i.e., out of relatively small efforts major projects can materialise, again reflecting the possible activities of the LDCS
- Sessile oak trees abound in Lasswade and its environs. The acorn logo could be seen to imply a sympathetic ‘partnership’ with Midlothian, since it is indirectly connected with the Council’s existing and much admired oak-leaves logo and could sub-consciously suggest that we are advancing together with the shared aim of improving and protecting our environment.

WE HOPE YOU AGREE!!

WEIR’S THIS? and can you get there?

A good view of the Polton Weir can be seen from the Lasswade to Polton River Path.

This can be accessed from the War Memorial in Polton Village, by keeping to the riverside and following the footpath signs for a short distance. With the volume of water at this time of year, you will not miss the sound of the weir.

Alternatively how about a pleasant walk from Lasswade Village to Polton?

At the road bridge in Lasswade turn into School Green Road by the public phone box. Walk up the steep Church Road to the footpath on the left, just before the high-walled cemetery. Follow this path with fine views of the Lasswade Viaduct, until you reach a small road (Green Lane), walk past Esk Tower on your left and take the footpath again on your left. Follow this route until the next road, cross over diagonally and take the opposite footpath downhill. You will pass Mavishank and its policies on your right. If you are lucky you may see roe deer grazing and one or two buzzards circling overhead. Walk on to the weir and to Polton. At present the only way back is to retrace your steps, or to use the roadway.

Walking Time: 40 minutes
Distance: approximately 1.5 miles

This is one of our three remaining Lasswade weirs, all built to provide power or water for industrial purposes during the last century and even earlier. There is one upstream at Springfield Mill, this one downstream from the metal bridge at Polton Village and the last one is near the Lasswade viaduct. The fourth is no longer in evidence but it fed the lade that carried the water into Middle Mills in Lasswade Park - and there must have been a fifth one for the lade behind Glenkevoek House further up the valley.
ANNUAL PARTY - guests from 23 - 87 years!

Around 100 members, representing all areas of Lasswade, the escarpment of Loanhead and some further afield, and spanning a great mix of ages, came to enjoy the popular Annual Party in St Leonard’s Church Hall on 12th March. The level of sound said it all!

Some of the “background girls” are seen on the left during afternoon set-up preparations in St Leonard’s hall, and below are some of the guests at the party.

Thanks go to the many people who so willingly helped in different ways by labouring, flower arranging, offering good suggestions to producing delicate and tasty finger-bites. The guests then solved contributed by providing a high volume of chat and a lot of good humour.

Looking After Our Members

The Society currently has 470 adult Members. Except for a few members on the postal list, each household receives several visits a year from one of our 18 Local Representatives. They keep us in touch, and additionally, they collect subscriptions, sell Annual Party tickets, deliver Newsletters and occasional extra information. These volunteers are invaluable and very importantly, help to keep our membership together by adding the personal touch. Needless to say, as they wear their shoes out trudging up and down and round about, they are saving the Society a huge amount of money in postage stamps! Our grateful thanks to them, as always.

On 16th February, 36 members gathered in the Lasswade Pavilion to attend the excellent illustrated talk given by Mrs Winnie Stevenson, with support from Mrs Vonne McLeod.

Winnie painted a picture of life in the days of the Powdermill and displayed a mass of slides depicting every angle of the sensitive work that took place in the steep sided, wooded valley. The dangers from sparks or reflected light were immense and the work force was carefully monitored to ensure that they were not wearing spark making accessories or concealing any smoking materials.

At one stage 58 buildings were to be found nestling amongst the trees, all set well apart so that an explosion would cause as little secondary damage as possible.

From its closure in 1954 to today, virtually all traces of the buildings have disappeared and the valley has returned to peace and tranquility once more.

After this most successful talk, the Committee has decided that our autumn walk will visit the Powdermill to imagine for ourselves the bustling community that once thrived a couple of miles upstream from our river in Lasswade.

ROSLIN GUNPOWDER MILLS
STATUS OF RECENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No. 02/00559/FUL:
"Summer House", Polton Road: one house
Midlothian Council decision still awaited

No. 02/00601/FUL:
Former Jenny Lasswade Hotel site: six houses
Midlothian Council decision still awaited.

No. 03/00390/FUL:
Howden & Welton Garage:
Split conversion and 4 new terraced houses on forecourt.
Midlothian Council decision still awaited.

No. 03/00897/OUT: Polton Stables: four houses
Midlothian Council decision still awaited

No. 04/00058/FUL: Former Polton Press:
Creation of 16 industrial units:
We are concerned about problems of increased traffic and the more complex environmental control of any future multiple ownership.

No. 04/00126/FUL: Pittendreich Nursing Home:
Extension of the main House and construction of 25 close-care accommodation units in its grounds:
Whilst recognising the social benefits, we have commented on the conflict with the Local Plan protections, lack of easy pedestrian access to Bonnyrigg, the need to ensure high standards in conversion of the Listed Building, and the need to safeguard the proposed accommodation units from adverse “change of use” in the future.

NEW PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Members can keep themselves informed about incoming proposals by viewing: www.midlothian.gov.uk/services_home.asp
which includes weekly lists of ‘Planning Applications Received’. Fuller details are then routinely available at Fairfield House, Dalketh and the relevant local library.

CONSERVATION AREA GUIDELINES

Our District is covered by three Conservation Areas - Lasswade Village & Kevock, Mavisbank and Broomielaw - this last, created in 1981, being fairly well documented with advice on good practice. The other two have never been linked with any specific guidance, and rely on the generalities of central planning policy as interpreted by the authorities - with uncertainty and confusion for the local residents.

Sarah Barron intends to draft material in consultation with Midlothian Council to support its own remit to prepare a customised document for the Lasswade Village & Kevock Area. This will cover a whole range of practical matters, including an improved definition of its present land area, its existing architectural character and a detailed record of its natural and built heritage features. We will also propose suitable guidelines for the ongoing design, development and treatment of its buildings and streetscape, signage standards, tree preservation, opportunities for further enhancement, priorities for action and other related issues.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

to be held in Lasswade Park Pavilion on Monday, 26 April 2004 7.45 for 8.00pm
Wine will be served

As notified in the January 2004 Newsletter, requests for Committee nominations, (proposed, seconded and with the consent of the nominee) should be given to the Chairman two weeks in advance of the AGM.

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