

# LASSWADE DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2001

### WE ARE NOW 30-YEARS OLD!

It would be very remiss if we did not take the opportunity in this particular issue of our Newsletter to record an important recent anniversary of the Society.

The Society was formed in a period of crisis these long years ago and since then much has happened within our area, not always but mainly for the best. We are as active as we have ever been, with 425 adult members and a still-growing support base throughout the district.

Please join us in a sentimental journey back through the years to our formation.

"LASSWADE IS A DUMP!" This was the rallying cry quoted by the "The Dalkeith Advertiser" as its headline for an article which described our inaugural meeting at the old Jenny Lasswade Hotel (now demolished) on Monday, 5 April 1971. It was attended by over 100 local residents and was an exciting and very positive event. It had been convened to draw attention to the need for drastic action to deal with the industrial dereliction left after the closure of St. Leonard's Paper Mill in the heart of the village, the threat of relatively uncontrolled redevelopment and the filthy condition of the North Esk river. The press coverage referred to "blots on the landscape" - "the broken-down shell of the old paper mill" - "glaring eyesores" - "the general air of dilapidation" and of the "locale becoming more and more cluttered up with rubbish". There was unanimous approval of the need to establish an organisation which could serve as a focus for concerted local action and a formal communication link with the authorities.

For those of you with longer memories, the first Committee of Lasswade District Civic Society

comprised : David Dundas (Viscount Melville) as Honorary President; Charles Duffus as Chairman; Mike Collett as Vice-Chairman; Eric Collyer as Secretary and William Baillie-Strong as Treasurer. The Committee Members were Joan Balfour, Inga Britt (Eebee) Blair [who inspired public pressure for the meeting], Bill Dobson, Elizabeth Fraser, Norrie Hunter, Neville Morgan, Des O'Brien, Peter Scola and John Stewart. Sadly, only Eebee Blair, Bill Dobson and Des O'Brien are still around from that founding group, which has been followed over three decades by a succession of very dedicated and hard-working officials and team-members.

Although there is still a great deal required to improve our environment, we have already painstakingly achieved quite a lot over this period through our own efforts and from constructive dialogue with Midlothian Council and the other authorities. The industrial dereliction has largely been replaced by more sympathetic building construction and the beautiful and historic wooded valley of the North Esk has been more determinedly conserved. The

### LOCAL CLEAN-UP LUNCH and FUN DAY

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 10:30 am**

**Lasswade Area**

A series of local projects in and around Lasswade will be tackled by small groups. These will take around two hours after which everyone is invited to gather in Lasswade park for lunch (supplied) and various games for all ages.

Please see details on accompanying sheet.

### AUTUMN WALK AND PICNIC

**Sunday 23rd September 12 noon**

**Polton Village**

Following the success of last year's walk and picnic, we are planning a repeat.

Exact routes will be decided at the time depending on attendees' fitness and foot & mouth restrictions but will certainly include Bilston Woods, the Railway Viaduct and Hewan Bank with a picnic lunch (bring your own) beside the river at Maiden Castle.

river, which literally stank of the caustic soda from the old paper-mills in which all the water-life had long since coughed out its lungs, now provides a sustainable aquatic ecology that has seen the occasional salmon, and includes herons, dippers, kingfishers, broods of ducks and recently, an otter.

Your Committee meets about ten times a year and always has a busy agenda. Inevitably much of our work is reactive in response to adverse planning applications, path damage, litter and vandalism etc., but we also try to remain pro-

active by developing new ideas to enhance our environment and benefit the local community.

In this context the Society recently initiated the first steps which have led to the formation of The Esk Valley Trust Company Limited. This new organisation is now available to serve as the umbrella on environmental matters for all the local community organisations along both tributaries of the River Esk, from the Pentland and Moorfoot Hills in Midlothian to its estuary at Musselburgh in East Lothian.

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### **The Glenkevoch River Clearance (22 - 24 May 2001)**

For years Nick and Doris Ross, who live at Glenkevoch House midway between Lasswade and Polton, have been trying to get something done about the build-up of debris and sand/stone banks which have three times caused the river to flood into their property at depths of up to two and a half feet.

The Society was recently able to arrange for Midlothian Council to appoint a contractor to carry out this work. The pictures below really tell the story from there and our thanks go to Ricky Moffat, Mark Turner and Billy Donnelly of the Council and particularly to Matt (The Dog) of Willsweep who went out of his way to ensure the best possible result.



Before



During



After



### **SPRINGFIELD MILL**



The developer's appeal against the Council decision to remove this site from the housing list will be heard by the Scottish Executive Reporter as part of the Local Plan Inquiry over three days 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September.

SMAG, together with their witnesses, including the Civic Society will be there and would welcome any members who might like to attend for all or part of the time to help demonstrate local support. The venue is the Scottish Mining Museum at Newtongrange and times will be put

out by email and on the website when they are known.

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### **GRAVEL AT CHURCH ROAD GRAVEYARD**

A small group of members provided the muscle power on the afternoon of 25 July to spread five tonnes of granite chips on the turning verges outside our local graveyard. The material was supplied by Midlothian Council and our offer of this physical contribution shows how team-work can achieve benefits despite budgetary restraints.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our A.G.M. on Tuesday, 8 May 2001 was another opportunity for Members to air their views on a number of local issues which is always of great value to the Committee in its later deliberations. Margaret Workman gave her final Chairman's Report which described the wide range of activities covered during the previous year. Demitting office, she was presented with a gift of china in grateful recognition of her dedicated work over the past decade, first as a Committee Member and Treasurer and then Chairman of the Society; we are pleased that she will still remain on the Committee as an active contributor. A full list of the new Committee is printed overleaf and members are invited to contact their nearest representative on any matters of local interest. At this same Meeting, Clive Gairn who has loyally acted as our Auditor for many years, was also presented with a small token of thanks on behalf of the Society Members.

### IDEAS PLEASE FOR A NEW SOCIETY LOGO

When the Society was first formed, official stationery with our original logo was used solely by the Hon. Secretary (perhaps as the only educated scribe in the village who owned a fountain-pen!). This protocol has lapsed through the years, especially with urgent word-processed letters being composed by delegated specialists.

However we would now like to re-establish our group identity and are seeking possible designs for an updated logo. The ideal choice might embody the initials "LDCS" and/or illustrate our heritage and local environment. It could be coloured, but should provide a simple image that can also be successfully reproduced on a black-and-white photocopier e.g. for newsletters.

#### **All contributions will be most welcome.**

Why not have a go! - with the proverbial "bottle of bubbly" for the creator of the most inspirational design.

Ideas / sketches / doodles with a name and address please to: the LDCS Committee  
c/o 33 Broomieknowe, Lasswade EH18 1LN

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No. 00/00618/FUL "Pinnocchio's" [railing paintwork – retrospective]

approved by Midlothian Council Planning Committee on 23.07.01.

No. 00/00753/FUL "Sunnybrae" [conversion of stable to dwellinghouse]:

now withdrawn by the Applicant.

No. 00/00754/OUT "Sunnybrae" [new house on agricultural land]:

now withdrawn by the Applicant

No. 01/00125/OUT Springfield Mill, Polton [25 new dwellinghouses]:

subject to Scottish Executive Public Inquiry to be held on 4, 5, 6 September at which the Society will be represented.

No. 01/00358/FUL "Sunnybrae" [conversion of stable – revised Application]:

awaiting Midlothian Council Planning Committee decision.

### THE ESK VALLEY TRUST

The Trust was incorporated in April 2001 as a Private Limited Company. It covers the valleys of both tributaries of the Esk River, from the North Esk Reservoir in the Pentlands and from the South Esk at Gladhouse Reservoir in the Moorfoots all the way to the Firth of Forth at Musselburgh.

The Trust's recent publicity launch explained its intention to support and extend the conservation achievements of both the national and district authorities and the various local community groups in the Esk catchment area [including our own Society]. Five Directors have already been appointed, from Penicuik, Roslin, Lasswade and Eskbank in the North Esk valley and others will be drawn from the communities along the South Esk and the Esk.

It is hoped that its presence will help to promote a sustainable network of rural pathways and to conserve the environmental benefits of the valleys for Midlothian's residents and its visitors. There is already considerable public interest in these objectives which are intended to provide long-term safeguards for future generations to enjoy this outstanding natural asset in the years to come.

## Contact Details

Chairman - Bill Dobson (Broomieknowe)  
0131 663 8103  
bill@wsdobson.idps.co.uk

Treasurer - Tom Delaney (Wadingburn/Kevoek)  
0131 663 7334  
tomdelaney@microsolsales.freeserve.co.uk

Secretary - Tim Tuke (Polton Village)  
0131 654 0827  
ttuke@springtec.idps.co.uk

Membership - Anna Dobson (Broomieknowe)  
0131 663 8103  
anna@wsdobson.idps.co.uk

Planning Issues - Joan Acton (Polton Bank)  
0131 660 2065  
joan\_acton@yahoo.co.uk

Maggie Brown (Wadingburn/Kevoek)  
0131 663 7617  
maggib33@hotmail.com

Gillian Fewster (Polton Village)  
0131 663 1007  
gillian@fewster.idps.co.uk

Keith Fuller (Poltonhall)  
0131 663 8289  
keithmfuller50@hotmail.com

Sandra McGlasson (Mavisbank)  
0131 663 9690  
smcglasson@amserve.net

Margaret Workman (Broomieknowe)  
0131 663 9159  
costara@lineone.net

**[www.lasswade.free-online.co.uk](http://www.lasswade.free-online.co.uk)**

*We hope that you will be able to join us at the Clean-up and Autumn Walk events which are publicised on the front page and also on the separate sheet. We are pleased that the river at Lasswade Village is looking reasonably good and only needs a small amount of work, but there are plenty of other areas needing attention on our own doorsteps. Please come and share these activities with your fellow members. The Committee and I look forward to seeing you at your chosen project or at the picnic lunch afterwards.*

*With best wishes for the remainder of the summer.*

*Chairman*

