

Linlithgow Civic Trust **NEWSLETTER**

No. 2009/2

Annual Report - April 2009



Photograph of St Michael's Parish Church from the Rose Graden by Calum Smith

Along with a number of townscape improvements, it is hoped to fully restore and improve the Rose Garden when the Burgh Halls refurbishment is completed.

AGM Notice – Saturday 18th April at 7:15pm

Members are hereby notified that the AGM of Linlithgow Civic Trust will be held at 7:15pm on Saturday April 18th 2009 in the Dalyell Suite, County Buildings, Linlithgow. Enter by the side door (opposite the Police Station). Papers and further details are included with this Newsletter

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Chairman’s Report

Chris Long

As illustrated in our last newsletter, you will have noticed that the familiar facade of the Burgh Halls, at the Cross, is undergoing facial treatment! The rugged stone features, so familiar to the inhabitants of Linlithgow, have disappeared behind the application of a ‘face pack’ while the restorative treatment is working away behind. Some well known characters from the past, including Mary Queen of Scots and the ‘Green Man,’ will be watching Marches Day through the windows for a couple of years. Let’s hold our breaths and wait for the transformation!



Opposite the Cross, the future of the County Buildings looks assured. We are pleased to be able to hold our AGM in the Dalyell Suite this year. Uncertainty hangs over the future use of the adjacent historic Sheriff Court building. We will be keeping a close look at developments there once the buildings have been vacated later this year.



It is worth looking behind Oliphant’s at 212 High Street. To the rear, the remains of a rare survivor of the seventeen tanneries that Linlithgow had in the 18th century, has sadly been demolished and replaced by modern dwellings. A most outrageous and significant loss to the town’s heritage.



I wish to record my debt to all the members of the Executive Committee who have achieved such a lot over the last year.

I urge you to have a look at the new, free, Linlithgow Heritage Trail leaflet. This is a joint effort funded by West Lothian Council, supported by Linlithgow Civic Trust, Linlithgow Community Council and Pride & Passion Linlithgow, compiled by Ron Smith, typeset by John Aitken and printed by **jmk**, Linlithgow.

I would also draw your attention to the new edition of Walks around Linlithgow. Generous grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage is acknowledged. The booklet was written by local author John Davidson, compiled by a dedicated team, project managed by Sheila Ashby, typeset by John Aitken and printed by **jmk** Linlithgow. Over six hundred copies have already been sold in just six months! As one of our local booksellers has remarked... "What a publishing phenomenon, almost as good as Harry Potter!"

If you would like to contribute to the work of the Tust, please contact me. We are always looking for people to join our active committee.

Editorial

John Aitken

At the start of 2005 the Trust changed to the current Newsletter format and I took over as its Editor. We hope that you continue to find it informative. I am always pleased to receive comments and suggestions for improvement.

Apart from keeping Members up to date, we are happy to include your views, articles and suitable photographs. This edition includes an article by Alex Adamson on the environmental impact of older buildings and some of Calum Smith's excellent photographs of the town.

The timing of Newsletters will change slightly this year to include a Newsletter in December rather than in January 2010.

The LCT Newsletter is issued three times each year. In between, we try to keep you up to date via the LCT website at www.lct.org.uk and by e-mail. E-mail newsletter@lct.org.uk or phone Editor John Aitken on 01506 848258 if you would like to comment, contribute or suggest improvements.



Recent Events

Mon. 16 March: LCT Lecture - Sybil Cavanagh

Members were treated to a well illustrated talk by Sybil Cavanagh at the annual LCT lecture. Her subject matter was "**West Lothian's mansions – and what's become of them**". Sybil has been Local History Librarian with West Lothian Libraries since 1990 and is based at the Local History Library, West Lothian Library HQ, Hopefield Road in Blackburn. Sybil organised the excellent West Lothian History and Heritage Fair held on 20 September 2008 at Linlithgow Academy.

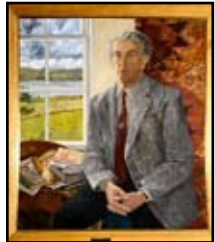
Thu. 19 Feb.: Annet Lecture

The Annet Lecture 2009 was given by Dr Jenny Wormold, Fellow (Scottish History) at the University of Edinburgh on '**The Palace, James V and Mary, Queen of Scots; the Impressive Father and the Lamentable Daughter.**'

Programme

Sat. 18 April: LCT AGM - 7:15pm Dalyell Suite, County Buildings

The Trust's AGM will be held in the Dalyell Suite of the County Buildings, Linlithgow. As usual, the formal business will be followed by a buffet supper, with wine, at a cost of £10 per head. We hope that our honorary President, Tam Dalyell, will be able to give us a few words of introduction and a short history of his family's association with the Dalyell Suite. Please note that access will be via the side entrance (opposite the Police Station). Contact: Dian Gorrie, 01506 842860 secretary@lct.org.uk.



Sat. 25 April: Burgh Beautiful litter pick

Join in and help Burgh Beautiful to make the town more attractive! Look out for details of times and locations in the Gazette.

Sat. 9 May: Fun Dog Show on the Peel – 1:00pm till 4:30pm

Historic Scotland and Burgh Beautiful host their annual afternoon of fun and games involving dogs. Displays, participatory games, face painting and show competitions like sit and stay, wagiest tail and dog-and-owner look alike. Entry is free, with small charge to enter competitions.

Thu. 21 May: Visit to Wemyss Castle Garden - 10.30am

A guided tour by Lady Wemyss. £4.50 a head (the castle is not open) For more details, see www.wemysscastlegardens.com. Picnic lunch (bring your own). Followed by an optional private group afternoon visit to The Murrel, Aberdour, £4 to Scottish Gardens Scheme beneficiaries (see www.gardensofscotland.org). Numbers please to Kirsty Leonard, 01506 848427.

Sun. 14 June: Conducted Tour of Newbattle Abbey - 2:00pm

Located a mile south of Dalkeith, Newbattle Abbey College is a 16th century house which occupies the site of a 12th century abbey. See www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/ Founded by King David I on behalf of the Cistercian order, the abbey and its monks were at the centre of a thriving commercial enterprise. The house was modified and rebuilt successively by John Mylne, William Burn and David Bryce. The drawing room is considered to be one of Scotland's greatest rooms, decorated by Thomas Bonnar in about 1870. Also notable is the Chapel created in a vaulted undercroft that may date from the original abbey buildings. The gardens to the rear of the house include a pair of large octagonal 17th century sundials. Today, the house remains in use as an adult education centre, a training and conference venue. Price £5.00, including coffee.

Sat. 29 August: Conducted tour of Holy Rude Church – 2:30pm

A guided tour of the historic Holy Rude Church, Stirling by Rev Ian Paterson. More details to follow. Contact Chris Long, 01506 843461.

Sat. 26 Sept.: Tour of Dumfries House, Cumnock - 12 noon

One-hour guided tour of Dumfries House in Ayrshire, which offers a famous furniture collection, architecture, art collection and history. See www.dumfries-house.org.uk. Cost is £10, 25% discount for Historic Scotland members (with membership cards), free for Art Fund members. They can provide lunch afterwards for £6 a head (so long as it is booked 28 days before) or we can picnic in the grounds. The environmentally friendly way to go would be to book a mini bus - probably £10 each. Limited to 18 people, so please book early to enable lunch and minibus booking. Contact Kirsty Leonard, 01506 848427.

Please contact Chris Long (Tel: 01506 843461) if you have useful contacts or ideas for visits that might be of interest to Trust members.

Planning and Associated Matters

Ron Smith

As in past years, the Executive Committee has spent much time debating controversial planning issues affecting Linlithgow. Do please consider joining the Executive Committee if you would like to be more closely involved in such discussions.

The Future of Linlithgow – Visions and Action Plans

Over the past year, we have seen the Reporters' negative verdict on the Civic Trust's objection to the Finalised West Lothian Local Plan - the contents of the Trust's Vision for Linlithgow document were rejected primarily because they

conflicted with the Edinburgh & Lothians Structure Plan (see final bullet point below). Although disappointing, this led to a Council commitment for a town 'Action Plan', which was originally due to be published in consultative draft by the end of 2008. Unfortunately, this has not materialised, partly due to a degree of confusion within the Council about that plan's relationship with a revised and updated 'Vision' for the town, financed by the Council, but managed by the Linlithgow Business Association and which was the subject of an exploratory 'Stakeholder Event' at Sun Microsystems on 8 September 2008.

The position has now been clarified and progress with the various plans can be summarised as follows:

- The West Lothian Local Plan was adopted as the statutory Development Plan on 13 January 2009, superseding the provisions of the earlier Linlithgow Area Local Plan.
- The Council's 'Action Plan' for Linlithgow, sometimes referred to as the 'Townscape Plan', will be commissioned from consultants in March 2009.
- The revised 20-year 'Vision' for the town, under the heading 'Linlithgow Aspires' is, at the time of writing, at the stage of community groups and individuals signing up to become involved. It is intended that an Executive Group, composed of representatives of local groups, business interests and individuals, will be set up to oversee the project. In this context, the Trust would hope to make a major contribution and will examine how its own 'Vision' document can be promoted as a basis for future work.
- At a more strategic level, the current Edinburgh & Lothians Structure Plan will be replaced by a new strategic plan for Edinburgh & South East Scotland. The first stage of public consultation on this will relate to a Major Issues Report, expected in the first quarter of 2010. It will be important to ensure that the new strategic plan makes more appropriate provision for the aspirations of the town, and representations will be made to that effect.

Planning Applications

During the past year, Ron Smith has continued to comment on planning applications referred to the Trust by West Lothian Council. This work continues to be done in association with the West Lothian History and Amenity Society.

The number of consultations/comments has fallen again, after a temporary rise last year. During the 12 months to the end of February 2009, the Trust commented on 19 planning applications received by West Lothian Council, compared to 32 the previous year and 15, 32, 57, 54, 56, 44, 48 and 46 in the years before that.

Prospective development activity which has been the subject of consultation is as varied as always. Significant and contentious applications have, as in

previous years, already been brought to the attention of members through the newsletters. In summary, the most important over the past year were:-

- **Erection of 90-Bed, later 69-Bed, Care Home at Bonnytoun Farm Road**
We have continued to report on the progress of this proposal over the past year. Although originally given planning permission in principle, it has not been possible to arrive at a suitable design solution for the site - firstly, a poorly designed modern scheme, then a poorly designed 'period' building, and then a better-designed, scaled-down proposal, but still entirely in the wrong place. Following the Development Control Committee's refusal of the latest scheme, it is understood that, in accordance with the Civic Trust's wishes, a less prominent site to the east, adjacent to Bonyde Road (opposite Sun Microsystems) is now being seriously considered by the applicant. We look forward to seeing the plans for this.
- **Listed Building Application for Restoration and Refurbishment of Burgh Halls** We gave general support to these proposals, now being implemented.
- **Installation of Automated Public Convenience and of Roadside Air Quality Enclosure at Guyancourt Vennel** Objections submitted to both as considered seriously detrimental to the conservation area (the toilet also likely to endanger the continued existence of the existing excellent staffed facility) – both applications were subsequently withdrawn.
- **Erection of Office Building at Avon Place/Strawberry Bank** We were consulted three times on the proposal for an office development on this narrow site next to the railway. Although the use was always accepted in principle, there were some difficulties with parking/access arrangements, and the proposed building was twice redesigned to make it more compatible with the surrounding conservation area.
- **Erection of 12m High Telecommunications Monopole near Star and Garter Hotel, High Street** This prominently-situated mast, far taller than the adjacent hotel, was entirely out-of-keeping with the surrounding conservation area and was the subject of an objection from the Trust. We also objected to proposals for 14.2 metre masts at Preston Road and Mains Road; the first was refused and the latter approved.
- **Erection of 57 Flats on Former Wood Yard at Falkirk Road** We objected to this development of three and four storey flats on grounds of over-development and very poor design - subsequently refused.
- **Redevelopment of Site of Victoria Hall, 88-92 High Street** Proposals were welcomed subject to a number of detailed design concerns, similar to those expressed by the Council's other consultees.

Other Matters

Heritage Trail

Good progress has been made on the new Linlithgow Heritage Trail, financed via the Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge Town Management Group, chaired by Provost Tom Kerr. A colourful leaflet has been produced by Trust members Ron Smith and John Aitken, with photographs by Calum Smith. A copy is enclosed. It is intended that the format of the new trail will be reflected in the proposed revision of the Civic Trust's existing Architectural & Historical Guide.

Working with the Linlithgow Heritage Trust, the Community Council and Pride & Passion Linlithgow, the next year will see the installation of specially-designed trail plaques/markers, mostly on buildings, and the erection of interpretation boards at four prominent focal points.

Conservation Area Appraisal

Having contributed to the initial character assessment, we await the Council's production of a draft. The finished Appraisal will assist in decisions on planning applications and help attract funding.

Public Realm

Further to our concerns about temporary and permanent tarring of pavements in the High Street, prominently publicised in the Linlithgow Gazette, things have moved on considerably. A phased programme of improvements to the 'public realm' and street furniture is being co-ordinated and encouraged through the activities of the Town Management Group, with a good measure of Civic Trust involvement.

Already, new finger posts, notice boards, seats, bollards, bins and tree guards are making a welcome appearance.

Hanging-basket brackets will soon adorn most of the new 'heritage' lampposts at Low Port roundabout, Blackness Road and St Ninian's Road; others will have banners.

Signage throughout the central area has been reviewed and will shortly be replaced, and works to repair and upgrade the town wells and Ross Doocot are in hand.

Perhaps more significantly, the Town Management Group has taken on board the need to upgrade the specification of the High Street pavements and the Civic Trust is working with the Community Council, the Heritage Trust and Pride & Passion Linlithgow to come up with proposals for the consideration of the Council.

Supermarket Proposal at Boghall East

Despite the promoter's public exhibition of these proposals in the middle of last

year, no planning application has yet been submitted. The Linlithgow Against Springfield Development campaign continues to actively mobilise local opposition, and, if an application is eventually submitted, the Civic Trust will object on the grounds stated in the last Newsletter.

Effects of Proposed Extension to Linlithgow Academy

Despite correspondence from West Lothian Council, there is still a degree of uncertainty as to the reasoning for, and likely results of, the proposed increase in the school roll to 1,320. This has important repercussions for Linlithgow as all development control decisions for more housing in the town were effectively being regulated by the restricted capacity of the Academy.

Other Matters

Finally, we are still actively pressing for resolution of the following matters originally raised with the Council quite some time ago:

- 1) The overdue replacement of the unauthorised plastic-framed windows on the Council-owned category 'B' listed buildings at the corner of High Street and Preston Road, promised by West Lothian Council after due involvement from Historic Scotland.
- 2) Deficiencies in the layout and design of the Stockbridge Retail Park with particular reference to the need for a pedestrian access to Falkirk Road at the north-east corner.

Energy Efficiency in Traditional Homes

Alex Adamson

Traditional, stone built, structures perform differently from those built in modern materials. 'Differently' does not necessarily mean worse. They have the ability to absorb heat when it is hot and release it when it is cold, meaning a more even temperature. Porous walls allow natural moisture management and traditional construction allows better ventilation. As Linlithgow Civic Trust members we value our heritage, but time and again we hear unsettling criticism of traditional buildings, accusing them wasting energy. Particularly in the present climate, when worries about global warming and the credit crunch are forcing many people to cut back their expenditure, it is helpful to know what the facts are.

Over the last two years Historic Scotland has commissioned a great deal of research into the thermal efficiency of traditional homes. Surprisingly, this was the first time that science had been brought to bear on this subject. Approximations had been used which have now been shown to overestimate heat loss of stone buildings by up to 60%. In fact, they are, generally speaking, at least as energy efficient as most homes built in the 1960s and 1970s. This is not just the 'heritage lobby' speaking. A report by the Energy Saving Trust concluded that, 'There is no reason why historic homes should not be reasonably

efficient, comfortable and healthy. For a modest investment, energy efficiency features may quickly save money.'

Of course our old stone buildings are not perfect and studies have also been undertaken to identify where improvements can best be made. Most heat is lost through the roof or the windows. In the case of the former, insulation can make a tremendous difference. In a traditional building it is generally best to use a natural material as they are better at dispersing moisture and preventing condensation. There are a number of options available to the home owner wishing to reduce heat loss through their windows. If you are fortunate enough to still have the shutters in your house then by the simple act of shutting them at night you can cut heat loss by over half. If the shutters are insulated the reduction can be nearly 70%. Secondary glazing has been shown to be as effective as insulated shutters. Heavy curtains can be used in combination with all of the above to cut heat loss further.

There will always be some people who argue that it would be more efficient to demolish traditional buildings and rebuild them using more energy efficient designs and materials. However, studies have shown that this is rarely as effective as taking the sort of energy saving measures outlined above. In Edinburgh City Council's Standards for Sustainable Building they report that, 'the embodied energy in the construction of a tenement is the equivalent of 1,000 years of the energy requirement of its power and heating.' Happily, then, far from being at loggerheads with each other the green lobby and the heritage lobby are in agreement - to help save the planet and save our heritage we should look after and improve the efficiency of traditional buildings. Once again recycling is better than the 'throw away society'.

A summary of Historic Scotland's recent findings, and links to other sites, can be found at: <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/conservation/conservation-conferences-and-seminars/energyefficiencyseminar.htm>

Alex Adamson is a member of the Linlithgow Civic Trust Executive Committee. If you want to comment or raise a similar issue, please write to the Editor.

Burgh Beautiful

Joyce Paterson



Burgh Beautiful (BB) has undergone a few changes over the last year. It has lost three members. We have survived this and are adjusting to accommodate the work done by Kirsty and Jan. We still need a secretary, so if you have the time and inclination...

We have continued our planting programme, despite not entering Scotland in Bloom in 2008. We are entering the competition in 2009 and are hoping to do

well as we will have a significant amount of new street furniture, including hanging baskets and planters on the street.

BB has involved schoolchildren in the last year in the planting of crocus bulbs at the West Port, Scottish bluebells at Fiddler's Croft, sunflower and poster competitions in connection with the Dog Show and Family Fun Day.

The Fun Dog Show on 9th May is run in conjunction with Historic Scotland and is one of our main means of fundraising. Liz goes all out to procure prizes for the tombola she runs on that day and at the Advent Fayre too where we have a raffle. Plant sales are another means of raising money for our projects. Thanks are also due to WLC for their cash injection in 2008.

Tony and Leslie have been involved with schools regarding bio-diversity. BB is trying to be more bio-diverse by using more permanent planting and using indigenous plants where possible.

The Station is kept looking clean by staff who work there but the barrels and beds are down mainly to Liz. Our aim is still to promote civic pride through the beautification of our surrounds and would welcome new members so we can spread the vast amount of work carried out by a few very committed people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped us along the way and I applaud the BB workforce for their endeavours.

Membership

John Aitken

The Trust currently has 255 Members, representing 175 households. The seven Members whose 2008-09 subscriptions are overdue will cease to be Members of the Trust after the AGM, unless their subscriptions are paid by then.

We want to recruit new members, so please encourage your friends and neighbours to join if they support our aims. There is a form on the website www.lct.org.uk or contact me.

If your contact details have changed, please e-mail membership@lct.org.uk or phone 01506 848258.



Publications & Other Items for Sale

Chris Long

Trust publications are available from local retail outlets. In case of difficulty, they can be purchased direct from the Linlithgow Civic Trust – to request an order form, e-mail publications@lct.org.uk.

Linlithgow Old & New	£15.00
(£10 when supplied directly by LCT to Members)	
Walks Around Linlithgow	£6.00
Street Names of Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge	£4.50
Architectural and Historical Guide to Linlithgow.	£3.00
A particularly attractive tea towel	£4.00
Linlithgow Town Plan	£2.35
Poster (drawings of the town's antiquities & historical features)	£1.95

Executive Committee

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Publications, Programme & Burgh Beautiful

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