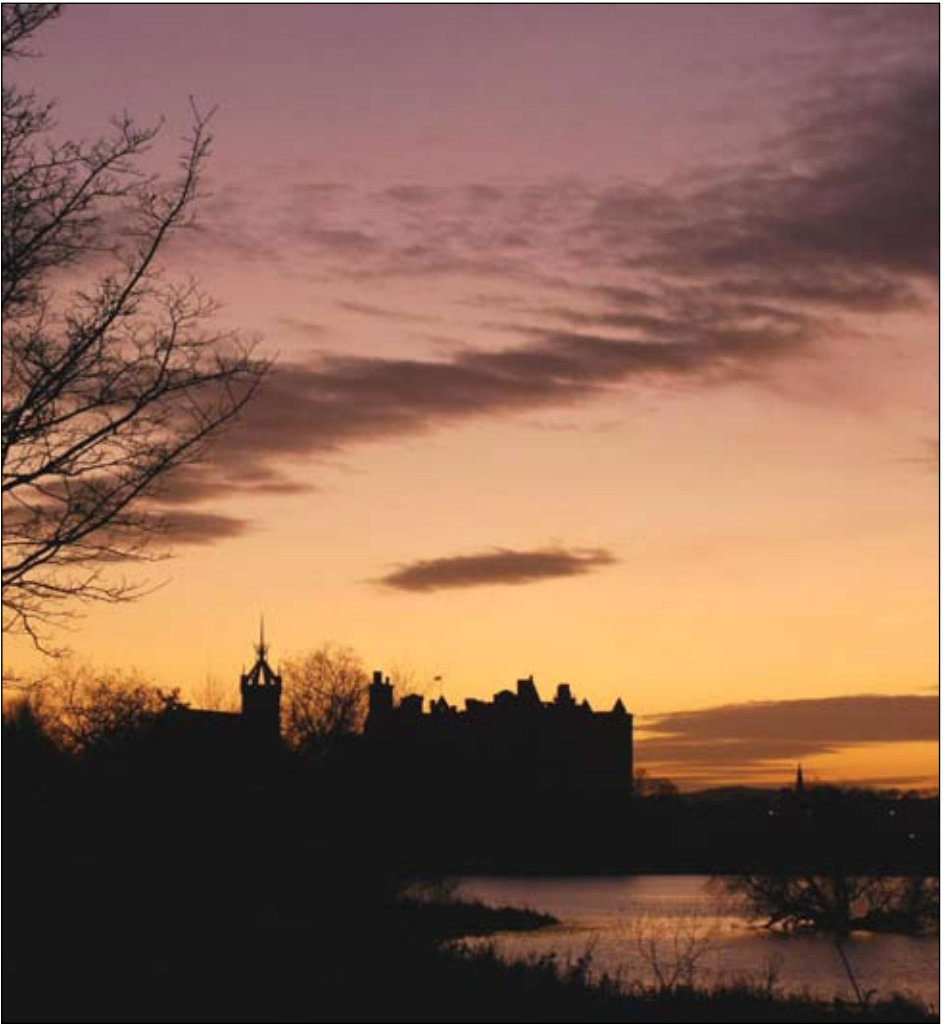


Linlithgow Civic Trust **NEWSLETTER**

No. 2009/4

December 2009



Winter Sunset - from "Linlithgow Loch Every Day of the Year" by Martine Stead
(The full set is available at <http://linlithgowlocheverydayoftheyear.shutterfly.com/>)

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Photographs: We are very much obliged to John Aitken, Kirsty Leonard, Chris Long, Calum Smith and Martine Stead for permission to use their photographs in this edition of the LCT Newsletter.

Chairman's Comments

Chris Long

Is the future pedal power or flower power? Recently, on behalf of the Civic Trust, I attended the unveiling of the new information board at the side of Linlithgow Station. The display, prepared by Spokes, gives lots of information regarding cycle routes, amenities and facilities for cyclists in the town. Do have a look for it the next time you go to the station.

During discussions at the unveiling of the information board, Linlithgow Civic Trust was challenged to celebrate what appears to be a world 'first'! It is possible that Linlithgow is the site of the earliest photograph of a railway station that is still in use today. Photographs of Linlithgow railway station taken by the early pioneers Hill and Adamson date back to the 1840's - the beginning of photography. The station remains largely intact. The Trust is going to investigate the legitimacy of the proposal and, if substantiated, will consider the placing of a plaque in an appropriate location on the station. Let me know if you have any knowledge regarding this 'first'.

While at the station take a look at the plants and flowers growing in the numerous barrels maintained throughout the year by Liz Burrows on behalf of Burgh Beautiful. I wish to thank all the workers who contribute throughout the town into making Linlithgow a more beautiful burgh!

Editorial

John Aitken

On behalf of the Trust I was invited to tour the work in progress at the Burgh Halls. Most of the planned work has already been done plus some unplanned remedial work. The building should re-open as planned around April 2010 and become available for public use 4 weeks later, once staff have been trained.

I feel that the contractors and architects have done a good job and that the long overdue refurbishment will give this important building a new lease of life. The new entrance is off Kirkgate and the front doors will serve as fire exits that can be used for access on special occasions, such as the Marches. The ground floor houses reception, Council Information Services, a small sales area, a new cafe with an outside patio leading to the rose garden, public toilets and the kitchens. The former court rooms form a three bay art gallery, the south hall will have french windows opening onto an elevated terrace, a new bar and a small servery space for food handling, supplied from the kitchens below, and the refurbished north hall will have a completely new floor and separate storage space for tables and chairs. The lower floor will include an audio-visual room, classroom and staff facilities. All floors are accessible via stairs and a new lift.

E-mail newsletter@lct.org.uk or phone John Aitken on 01506 848258 if you would like to comment, contribute or suggest improvements.



Linlithgow Palace in Winter - Martine Stead

Recent Events

Mon. 12 Oct. - Talk: Railways Around Linlithgow

Dr John McGregor, lecturer with the Open University, addressed a full Canal Tearoom on local railway history. John researches 19th century railway politics, is a trustee of the Glenfinnan Railway Museum and published 'The West Highland Railway: Plans, Politics and People' in 2005. This talk was part of "Celebrate Linlithgow" 2009.

Sat. 26 Oct. – Tour of Dumfries House, Cumnock, Ayrshire

The visit to Dumfries House was a day to remember, with perfect autumn weather to augment an outstanding example of 18th century architecture and furniture. The journey by mini bus was easy and comfortable and, while costing a little more, saved the carbon emissions of four or five separate car journeys.

We were lucky to have an erudite and amusing guide who explained that the 5th Earl of Dumfries inherited the title in 1742 and, returning home after a distinguished military career, was determined to find himself a wife and to sire an heir. To add to his ageing attractions, he commissioned a new and extremely elegant residence on the family estate, designed by the Adams brothers and built between 1754 and 1759. Together with an outstanding and unique collection of furniture commissioned specially for the house from Thomas Chippendale this provides a fascinating snapshot of the best of design of the middle of the 18th Century. There is also the largest collection of artefacts designed by the 18th Century Edinburgh furniture makers in existence.



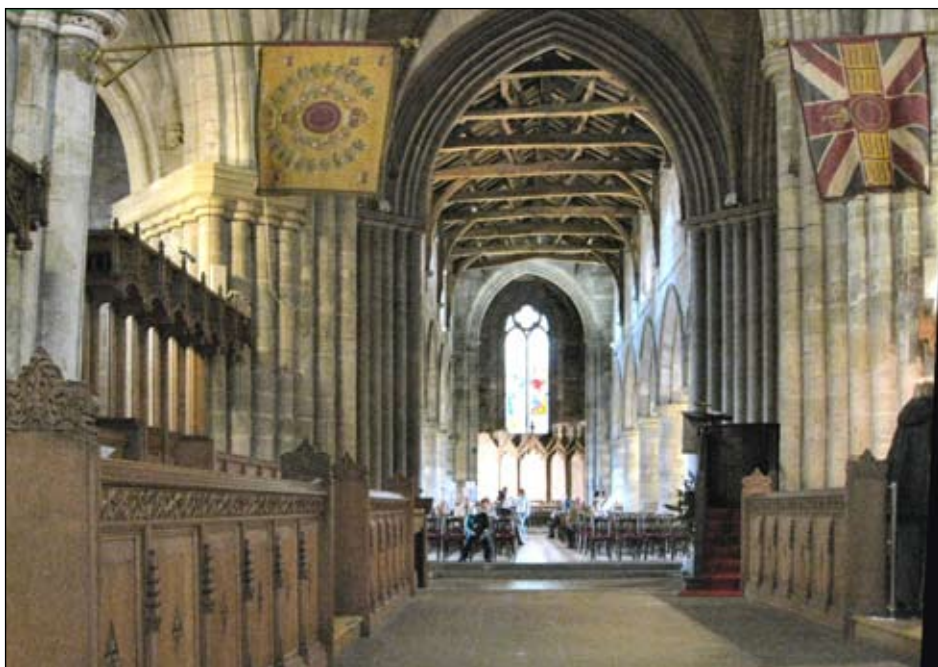
Sadly, although the house and its accoutrements gained him a wife, the 5th earl died in 1768 with no son and heir. Six hundred items of beautiful furnishings remain in a remarkable state of preservation in their original settings. This is due to the fact that the house became largely redundant on the acquisition by marriage in 1814 of the title and lands of the Bute estate and for nearly 200 years the house has been kept with a full staff, but only used as an occasional summer residence. For me, this makes the house very special and sets it aside from other historic houses where alterations and the march of fashion have added layers of change to the original vision.

The house and its unique collection of furniture and fittings were dramatically rescued at the last minute by a trust put together by H.R.H. Prince Charles in 2007. The house is open to the public, by arrangement, for the second year.

For those who missed this outing, I can heartily recommend a visit – booking via the website to make sure of a tour slot. The catering arrangements are a bit eccentric, but one thoughtful touch is the provision of portable seats, gratefully adopted by those of us who find standing a bit tiring these days.

Sat. 29 Aug. - Conducted tour of Holy Rude Church, Stirling

Nineteen LCT Members enjoyed an interesting guided tour of the historic Holy Rude Church, Stirling accompanied by the Rev. Ian Paterson and local guides.



Begun in the early 15th century and still with its original oak roof beams, this is one of Scotland's finest medieval parish churches. It houses Scotland's largest romantic organ, which was played for us by the organist, and it has a number of excellent stained glass windows.

After seeing round the church we visited the graveyard, which has recently been restored at a cost of over £1m.

Programme

Kirsty Leonard

To make preliminary bookings for visits please contact: Kirsty Leonard, Tel: 01506 848427, email: leonardkirsty@hotmail.com.

We will operate a car share system wherever possible, so please indicate if you might be interested.

Thu. 18 Feb.: Annet Lecture - 7:30pm Linlithgow Primary School

George McKenzie, Keeper of Records of Scotland. This is an annual lecture, organised by Linlithgow Heritage Trust.

Wed. 3 March: "Cast in Iron" - 10.15am Callendar House, Falkirk

Talk by Geoff Bailey on the history of the Carron Iron Foundry and the variety of artefacts made there, from canon balls to domestic objects. A collection of articles will be on view.

8 places booked for "Brunch" and talk. £4.25 including coffee and scones. To book, contact Kirsty Leonard, as above.

Tue. 16 March: Talk - 7:30pm Low Port Centre Lounge

Ron Smith will give a talk entitled "Gorbals through the Ages - Lessons for Regeneration." Tea and Coffee. Free (Donations welcome).

April (date to be announced) - Civic Centre Visit, Livingston

A visit will be arranged to the new Civic Centre. Full details will be posted on the LCT website and included in next Newsletter.

Sat. 17 April: LCT AGM - 7:15pm Dalyell Suite - County Buildings

As in past years, the AGM business will be followed by a buffet. Full details will be included in next Newsletter and on the LCT website.

Thu. 13 May: Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh - 7 to 9pm

Guided Tour of College buildings and Museum. Up to 20 people. "Visitors should be aware that they will be visiting an anatomy and pathology museum and be prepared for the nature of the exhibits". But don't be put off – it is well worth a visit. Further details on www.museum.rcsed.ac.uk.

£5 per person plus a share of £60 for security staff overtime. Booking essential with Kirsty Leonard, details above.

Sat. 26 June: Grangemouth Museum Workshop Visit (pm)

Guided afternoon tour of Falkirk Council Museums Workshops. An eclectic collection of industrial, agricultural and domestic artefacts throwing a fascinating light on the lives of local people in the past. Only open by arrangement. No fee, but numbers near the time please to Kirsty Leonard as above.

Sun. 29 Aug.: Visit to Gosford House, Longniddry (pm)

Home of the Earls of Wemyss and March, designed by Robert Adam. Afternoon tour of the house and remarkable art collection. The gardens are also open.

Optional morning guided walk at Aberlady Nature Reserve followed by lunch in Aberlady. Full details in next Newsletter and on the LCT website.

Sun. 12 Sept.: Visit to Ochiltree Castle (pm)

By kind permission of LCT members Dr and Mrs Hunter. Afternoon visit. Details in next Newsletter and on the LCT website

Please contact Kirsty Leonard (Tel: 01506 848247) if you have ideas for visits, talks or events that might be of interest to Trust members.



The West Port in August - Calum Smith

Linlithgow's Dooocots

Sybil Cavanagh - Local History Librarian, West Lothian Libraries

Dooocots were once a means of providing fresh meat in winter time, and are some of the many farm buildings that have become redundant because of changes in farming methods.

The earliest doocots were beehive shaped, with access for the pigeons through the apex of the roof. By the 18th century, the commonest shape was the lectern doocot, rectangular with a single-pitched roof. Certain features appear on all types of doocots: they are almost invariably south-facing so that the pigeons could preen in the sun. Inside, the walls are lined with pigeonholes made of stone or brick. On the outer walls are one or more string courses – protruding ledges which prevent rodents crawling up into the doocots.

By the 19th century, pigeons were being kept as decoration rather than as food, so 'freestanding' doocots were no longer built; instead, a few pigeonholes were often incorporated into farm steadings, usually above the entrance pend as at Bridgend Farm, east of Linlithgow.

Learmonth Gardens

The oldest surviving doocot in West Lothian is the beehive doocot in Learmonth Gardens, Linlithgow, opposite the Canal Basin. Probably built in the 16th century, it stood in the long rig or burgage plot behind the townhouse of Ross of Halkhead in the High Street, and can be seen in John Slezer's print of the burgh of Linlithgow, c. 1680. The pigeons entered by five south-facing flietholes, and there may also have been entry at the top of the roof. The present roof is flat with a modern ashlar lantern. Human entry to the doocot was by a low door in the north side - just 2 feet 5 inches high. The entry is now built up, but when the RCAHMS inspector visited in the 1920s, there was still a potence in place – a ladder revolving on a central spindle, whereby the pigeons or eggs could be gathered from some 400 nest boxes.



The walls are built of sandstone rubble and are some 2 feet 8 inches thick. The external circumference is 65 feet and the diameter of the internal chamber is 10 feet 8 inches.

The doocot was given to the burgh in 1916, and the garden was created in memory of Alexander Learmonth, Provost of Linlithgow from 1802 to 1807. Both doocot and garden remain in local authority care, and the doocot is A-listed.

Linlithgow – Hamilton’s Land

The A-listed buildings known as Hamilton’s Land comprise 42-48 High Street, Linlithgow. They were built in the early 17th century as the town house of the Hamiltons of Pardovan and Humbie. In the crowstepped gable of 44-48 High Street was the doocot, set into the roof space and entered by flightholes cut into a recess. The flightholes were preserved when the buildings were restored in 1958 under the National Trust for Scotland’s Little Houses Scheme, and they constitute the only surviving fuie (a doocot in the gable end of a domestic residence) in West Lothian.

Conservation

The difficulty today is to find a new use for these redundant small buildings. A few of the very largest ones, e.g. Newliston, have been converted into houses. Several of West Lothian’s doocots are used for storage, seven are in decay; only Linhouse is still used for its original purpose. Some fifteen ‘freestanding’ doocots survive in West Lothian; at least six more have been lost. Eight doocots incorporated into farm buildings survive, but many more of this type must exist, and the writer would be glad to hear of them.

Planning and Related Matters

Ron Smith

The previously reported Morrison’s supermarket proposal for the Boghall East site at Blackness Road has not yet reached the stage of a planning application, nor have any pre-application consultations commenced. The prospective objections previously discussed will be sent to the Council if or when a planning application is submitted.

The Future of Linlithgow – Visions and Action Plans

As a result of other time pressures, particularly those relating to the re-establishment of Burgh Beautiful, our preparations to update the Trust’s Vision for Linlithgow document have been somewhat delayed. However, we hope to have a draft for consultation with members and other interested third parties sometime in February or March next year, prior to which the special sub-group of the Trust’s Executive Committee will resume its deliberations. There is still time for members to send in any comments which might help us to

revise the draft - the previous version of the Vision can be found on the Trust's website at (www.lct.org.uk/docs_pix_2006/vision.pdf) and any comments can be emailed to planning@lct.org.uk.

All going well, we should be able to complete our revision in good time to make positive comment on the Major Issues Report connected with the new strategic plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland (which will replace the current 'Structure Plan' for the Lothians). Members will recall that our Vision's lack of conformity with the current Structure Plan was the main reason why it could not properly taken into account by West Lothian Council in the preparation of their Local Plan.

Planning Applications

Progress with recent significant planning applications which have received comment from Linlithgow Civic Trust can be reported as follows:

- **Erection of 90-Bed Care Home at Bonyde Road, Linlithgow** – In the last newsletter, I stated that we did not oppose this proposal as we had been pushing for it as a preferable alternative to a previous scheme on a much less suitable site at Bonnytoun Farm Road. However, Council officials, working from first principles as if the other application had never existed, recommended refusal of the application. This recommendation was rejected by the majority of councillors at the meeting of the Development Management Committee on 18 November and a final decision was referred to the full council due to meet on 8 December.
- **Listed building consent for the installation of external grilles at St Michael's Parish Church** – Although it is a great pity that such proposals have to be considered, it having been good to see the windows unprotected for so long, this proposal related to only the one window (the Burne-Jones stained glass window in the south aisle). As the grilles would be inserted into each tracery aperture rather than across the whole window, thus considerably reducing the impact on this extremely important listed building, the proposal was considered acceptable.
- **Listed building consent to form a two-bedroom flat on upper floor at 212-214 High Street** – This proposal was not felt to be detrimental to the appearance and character of the listed building, probably representing a reversion back to the original residential use. If the proposal had related to the ground floor, the loss of retail space would have been more of an issue.
- **Conservation area consent for demolition of house at Creag an Tuirc, Station Road** – No objection was made to the demolition of this prominently-situated flat-roofed house. We stated that it was "entirely out of character with the conservation area and has little architectural value except as an example of the sort of incongruous developments that

planning authorities sometimes allowed in historic environments in the 1960s”.

- **Erection of replacement house at Creag an Tuirc, Station Road** – The redevelopment of this site gives great potential to repair the damage previously caused to the conservation area and we stated that we were keen to see this potential realised through the erection of a sympathetically-designed building. Although the proposed house may have had architectural merit in a suitable situation, and some attempt had been made to utilise traditional materials, its design was considered unsuitable for the site’s prominent location in the conservation area by virtue of its mix of mono-pitched and flat roofs, its 1960s-style chimneystack, the aluminium facing proposed for its window frames, the amount of timber cladding, and the undue prominence of solar panels. An objection was submitted.
- **Listed building consent for the installation of webcam at 89-91 High Street** - The proposed webcam (along with another proposed at the Canal Basin) was considered to be a desirable installation to give world-wide publicity for Linlithgow and help attract visitors, while causing little visual harm to its host building.

Other Matters

Heritage Trail – Following the production of the Heritage Trail leaflet, the plaques/markers to be fixed to most of the features of interest have been designed by artist Tim Chalk, and the Council is approaching affected property owners for permission to erect them (and to remove the old markers). The new plaques will feature a representation of St Michael slaying the dragon.

Conservation Area Appraisal – Further to our input, Stuart Eydmann of the Council has now produced a report on the first part of the Linlithgow Palace and High Street Conservation Area, namely ‘Character Zone 1’. This covers the land immediately to the east of Linlithgow

Loch, including the surroundings of Bonnytoun House and land to the south of Blackness Road, and the conclusion is that this area has a high degree of environmental sensitivity such that it is not capable of accommodating new development or change other than managed landscape works. We have generally agreed with this approach, subject to the existence of our previously-



The plaque, designed by Tim Chalk, that will mark locations on Linlithgow Heritage Trail

expressed comments supporting the care home proposal at Bonsyde Road as a preferable alternative site to that was previously proposed (see above).

Public Realm – Good progress on this continues – there are new finger posts, notice boards, seats, bollards, bins and tree guards, the road signage in the town centre has all been rationalised and renewed, and all the new ‘heritage’ lampposts have brackets for hanging baskets (see Burgh Beautiful report for more on the hanging baskets). Trust members and Burgh Beautiful volunteers played a large part in the recent community effort to make and erect the very attractive Christmas holly balls now supplementing the winter-planted hanging baskets. This initiative was co-ordinated by Linlithgow Aspires and financed by the Linlithgow & Bo’ness Rotary Club.



Christmas Holly Balls on the High Street

There is more positive news on the upgrading of the High Street pavements and other town centre initiatives – West Lothian Council has been successful in securing a Scottish Government grant for town centre improvements, including £857,000 for Linlithgow. This sum will immediately be spent on a range of projects including the improvement of some of the High Street paving, more new street furniture, upgrading the Rose Garden, the Heritage Trail interpretation boards, a service bridge to the Peel, and the West Port public art proposal. With regard to the latter, we have been invited to a meeting about the sketch ideas by artist Tim Chalk which were recently exhibited in the public library. The sketch proposals envisage a kind of sundial feature with seating and we will make constructive comment as required.

End Note – There is still nothing more from West Lothian Council on the repercussions of the proposal to extend Linlithgow Academy or on the much-needed pedestrian access to the north-east corner of the car park at the Stockbridge Retail Park. Progress on the replacement of the unauthorised plastic-framed windows on the Council-owned category ‘B’ listed buildings at the corner of High Street and Preston Road also seems to be slow.

Burgh Beautiful

Ron Smith



Burgh Beautiful is up and running in preparation for the 2010 planting season, continuing as an integral part of Linlithgow Civic Trust, as decided by a large majority of members and volunteers who came to the well-attended special meeting on 29 October 2009.

The Advent Fair raffle on 28 November was particularly successful with £925.91 collected to help finance forthcoming floral and planting projects. Particular thanks are due to Liz Burrows for all her hard work in organising the raffle, to the many public-spirited individuals and businesses who donated prizes, to Myra Smith for providing the home-baking at the Burgh Beautiful stall, to Provost Tom Kerr for presiding at the draw, to all who helped at both stalls, and to everyone who bought tickets. Liz managed to amass well over 50 prizes which is indeed an exceptional achievement!

The campaign's steering group (a sub-committee of Linlithgow Civic Trust) has been strengthened in numbers and has elected Ron Smith as chairman, John Carswell as vice-chairman and Chris Long as secretary. Other members include Sheila Ashby, Liz Burrows, Hazel Duguid, Chantal Hamill, Tom Kerr, Eileen



Murray and Tony Oxbrow. However, an open invitation remains for others to join the group, its subsidiary planting group or to participate in planting projects – Burgh Beautiful is particularly interested in attracting people who can improve liaison with community, ecological and business groups.

With regard to next summer's floral displays, general themes for plant types and colours have been agreed with West Lothian Council. It is hoped that the co-ordinated approach, with clear differences from previous years, will be apparent to residents, to visitors, and to the judges for next year's Beautiful Scotland competition (in which we have agreed to participate). A register of all significant planted areas in the town, identifying maintenance responsibility, has been drawn up, and Burgh Beautiful's 2010 plant requirements have been ordered via the Council in order to achieve economies of scale.



New member of Burgh Beautiful Sub-Committee, Eileen Murray, with her seasonal 'Rudolf' landscape display at the Water Yett

It has been agreed to donate £1,000 of Burgh Beautiful money towards the full cost of providing all 50 of next summer's 'community-funded' floral hanging baskets (which received funding from the Linlithgow & Bo'ness Rotary Club last summer and this winter). Also, the campaign is looking towards larger-scale community landscaping or planting scheme for each of the coming years – perhaps a long, snake-like flowerbed on the western grass verge of Preston Road, just south of the canal, in 2010, and a large scale rockery on the north side of Mains Road near the leisure centre roundabout in 2011. Both schemes would require fuller discussion with the Council, but they would have a big impact and hopefully attract considerable community interest and involvement.

Fun Dog Show - Sat. 8 May

Burgh Beautiful, in conjunction with Historic Scotland, will again be running the fund-raising Fun Dog Show at the Peel on Saturday May 8th 2010. We would really welcome any input on ideas and planning from LCT members, especially those with an interest in dogs. Please contact burgh-beautiful@lct.org.uk or ring Kirsty Leonard (01506 848427).

Help Wanted!

Burgh Beautiful is looking for volunteers and new ideas to improve the town. If you want to lend a hand, why not contact Ron Smith or anyone else involved?

Membership

John Aitken

Thanks to all who renewed their LCT subscriptions in good time. The few that are still outstanding will have received a reminder with this Newsletter.

Please encourage people with an interest in Linlithgow to join Linlithgow Civic Trust 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 or you wish to stop your membership, please e-mail membership@lct.org.uk or phone 01506 848258.

Publications & Other Items for Sale

Chris Long

Ron Smith and Alex Adamson are working on the updating and enlargement of the Trust's Architectural and Historical Guide to Linlithgow. Ron has completed a draft of the section itemising all the main historical buildings and places of interest, and this is out to consultation with interested parties with a closing date for comments of 18 January 2009. If you would be interested in participating in this consultation exercise, please email Ron Smith (address on the back page) and he will send you the draft. It is hoped to upgrade the format to one similar to 'Linlithgow Old & New' and additional photographic material is being sought, with a further visit to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland being arranged. The aim is to have the book printed by next autumn, and pre-funding via subscription and sponsorship may be sought – watch this space!

The Trust offers an excellent range of booklets and souvenirs, including:

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

These are available for purchase through commercial outlets in the town or through the publications secretary (Tel: 01506 843461)

Executive Committee

Chairman Chris Long. chair@lct.org.uk . 01506 843461
also Publications

Vice Chair Currently Vacant

Secretary Dian Gorrie secretary@lct.org.uk . 01506 842860

Treasurer Sheila Ashby treasurer@lct.org.uk . 01506 840565

Planning Ron Smith planning@lct.org.uk . 01506 670758
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also Newsletter & Website

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- Alex Adamson
- Peter Fairweather
- John McGregor
- Ken Ralston



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