

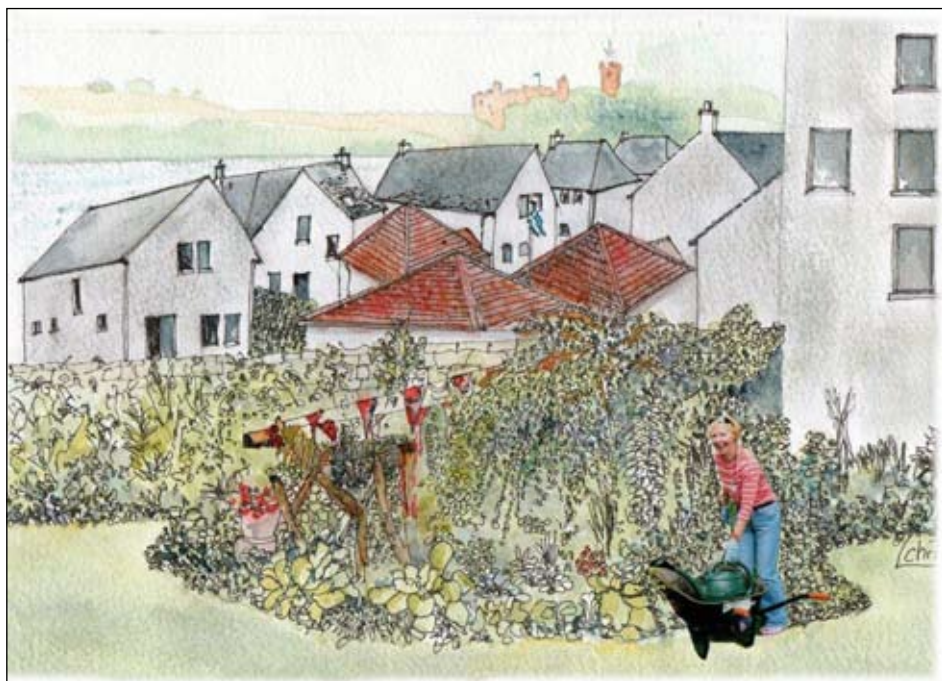


LINLITHGOW CIVIC TRUST

NEWSLETTER

No. 2011/3

November 2011



'View from Eileen's window'

A Watercolour by Chris Long

Linlithgow has many fine private gardens and, with encouragement from Burgh Beautiful, some residents are also working together to enhance the areas around their flats and houses, for everyone's benefit. (continued on Page 2)

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Photographs and Illustrations: We are obliged to Malcolm Fraser, Tony Oxbrow, Kirsty Leonard, Chris Long, Audrey Simpson, Calum Smith, Ron Smith, and Shirley Smith for permission to use the photographs and other illustrations in this issue.

Cover Story

Chris Long. (Continued from front cover)

Burgh Beautiful, a sub-committee of Linlithgow Civic Trust, encourages residents to adopt communal areas for planting and maintenance. Excellent examples of groups of Linlithgow residents working together to improve and maintain local communal areas are around the flats in the town centre at the Water Yett and at West Port.

The planting by Audrey Simpson and Peter Common at the West Port and by Eileen Murray at Water Yett is an inspiration. At the Water Yett, large areas of tarmac parking serving the health centre and Linlithgow Loch have been transformed by Eileen's work in creating a colourful and welcoming atmosphere which gives an excellent impression to visitors as well as locals. Look out for Shergar the racehorse, the Loch Ness Monster, the fairy and hearts displayed on trees to mark Valentine's Day, to mention only a few of Eileen's creations. The watercolour on the front cover illustrates Eileen hard at work in her garden.

The work of Eileen, Audrey, Peter and their helpers was specifically recognised by the judges of Beautiful Scotland in their recent award of Special Endeavour to the town. In fact, the judges described one of Audrey's flower beds as "one of the best mixed borders seen in a long time".

If you know anyone that could take on a similar challenge elsewhere then please let Burgh Beautiful know.

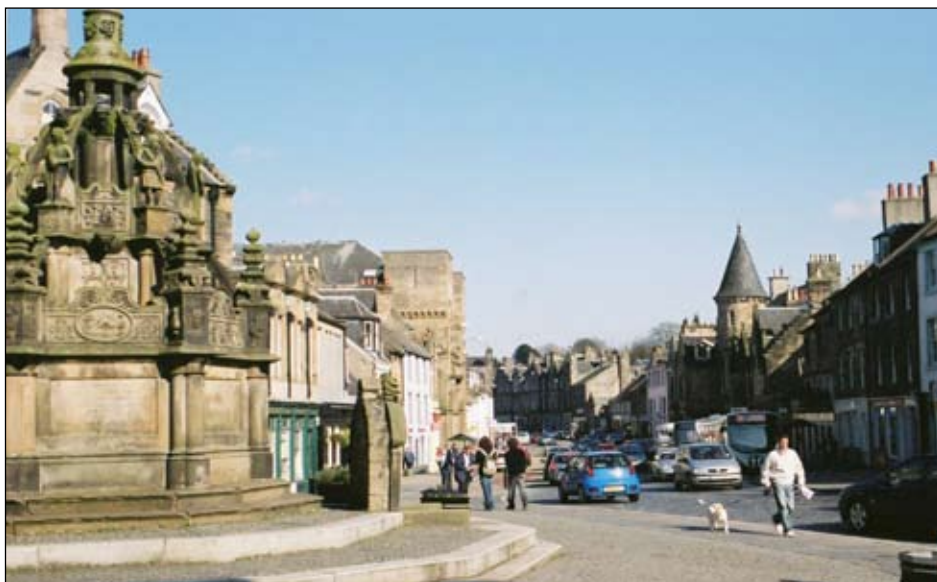
Chairman's Comments & Editorial

John Aitken, Chairman and LCT Newsletter Editor

Congratulations to Ron Smith, the many Burgh Beautiful volunteers and West Lothian Council for sweeping the board at the Beautiful Scotland awards. The Silver Rose Bowl for best overall entry, Best Medium-sized Town, a Gold Award and an award for Special Endeavour in relation to the admirable community gardening activities undertaken by Eileen Murray and helpers at Water Yett, and by Audrey Simpson and Peter Common at the West Port flats. What a fantastic achievement! I wish Linlithgow well in Britain in Bloom 2012 when we will represent Scotland in the 'Towns' category.

There have been a number of recent changes in the Committee. Mike Vickers, who organised an interesting and varied visits programme this summer, has stepped down as Programme Co-ordinator and has now taken over as Treasurer from Sheila Ashby, who is no longer on the committee. Chris Long has volunteered to organise the summer visits programme for 2012. Alex Adamson, Planning Spokesman, does not want to continue in this role so we are looking for a volunteer. The job involves reviewing planning applications in Linlithgow and commenting on those which are likely to have a significant impact. If you feel that you could fill this role, please let us know.

Suitable articles for publication on the LCT Newsletter are always welcome. If you would like to comment, contribute or suggest improvements, e-mail newsletter@lct.org.uk or phone John Aitken on 01506 848258.



Reports on Recent Events

Mike Vickers

Thu. 18 August - Visit to Midhope Castle & Abercorn Church

A party of 18 of us enjoyed an evening visit to Midhope Castle followed by a visit to Abercorn Church.

As Midhope is included in one of the Civic Trust's walks, a number of us had visited the castle before. This time we had Alex Adamson as our expert guide. Alex had dug into the Scottish Civic Trust's and RCAHMS' archives to come up with a history of the castle from 1438 to the present day. In its early history, it changed hands a number of times between the Livingstons and the Hopes. Latterly it was used as estate workers dwellings. By 1962 the Castle was described as derelict with the main roof collapsed. A painted ceiling was removed and has been preserved in Edinburgh but a series of wall paintings has been lost. 1986 a grant was provided to make the building water tight and the castle is now re-roofed, although some of the windows are no longer glazed. Alex's notes on the Castle are available on the LCT website.



As we walked back to our cars, Alex pointed out what he considered the largest dovecot he had ever seen - capable of housing 2,000 pigeons.

Then on to Abercorn Church in the fading light. We noticed the contrast between the wonderfully maintained Church and the sorry state of the Castle. The minister had discouraged us from using the electric light in the Church so we used torches to pick out the salient features of the inside of the Church, which is surprisingly spacious with the side aisle wider and higher than the nave. A particular delight was the Hopetoun loft at the east end overlooking the pulpit, richly decorated with the family crest.

Like the Castle, the Church has been much altered during its lifetime most recently at the end of the 19th century when the building was extended and the roof raised. It is understood that a doorway in the south wall may date back to the 11th century.

A key feature is the well kept churchyard with tomb stones dating back to the 1600s and earlier – many with the familiar skull, cross bones and hour glasses rather than inscriptions. There is also a small museum with a fine collection of ancient stones.

A key feature is the well kept churchyard with tomb stones dating back to the 1600s and earlier – many with the familiar skull, cross bones and hour glasses rather than inscriptions. There is also a small museum with a fine collection of ancient stones.

As we walked back to our cars we could appreciate the quiet well kept and secluded village of Abercorn.

Thu. 8 Sept. - Talk by Malcolm Fraser on Linlithgow Burgh Halls

We enjoyed an interesting talk on the refurbishment of Linlithgow Burgh Halls and on the general theme of making good use of older buildings through adaption and refurbishment as a viable and much preferable alternative to clearing the site and erecting entirely new buildings.



Sat 10 and Sun 11 September - Doors Open Days

A large number of West Lothian buildings were opened for public access, including many of Linlithgow's churches. This was the first time that Linlithgow Civic Trust had organised Doors Open Days in West Lothian and there was a fairly steep learning curve, ably surmounted by Alex Adamson and a small sub-committee. Results were mixed - some buildings received fewer visitors than we would have expected - but generally it went well and the Trust will probably organise it again in 2012.

Sat 8 October - Visit to Grange

On the cover of the Trust's best-selling publication 'Linlithgow Old and New' peers a tower, half hidden in the trees below Airngarth Hill, to the north of the town. It is visible from many parts of Linlithgow and can be seen from the M9. The tower is called 'Grange', not 'the Grange', and has been the family home of the Cadell family for generations.

Twenty members of the Trust were grateful for the opportunity to visit Grange on Saturday 8th October 2011. We were welcomed and shown round by Johnny Cadell, Karen and their family. The house is the offices of the landscape and architectural practice, AREA Urban Design & Architecture, run by Johnny and Karen, as well as being their private home.



Designed by the Edinburgh architects J N Scott and A Lorne Campbell, the house was built high up on the hill between 1904 and 1909. It is a magnificent and confidently designed house with touches of art nouveau detail. The tour included a selection of public rooms, among which were the oak-panelled entrance hall; an elegant and bright, white panelled drawing room which provided a touch of art nouveau detail and a dining room with a range of family portraits, lit by windows which allowed open views to the east and the south. It is remarkable that so little has changed from the time it was first occupied, despite totally different social conditions. Who can afford six gardeners these days? Interestingly the house was built with an emphasis on local produce from the home farm; fruit from the walled garden was well as having space for tennis or golf for the large family of Henry Moubray Cadell who commissioned the house.

William Cadell (1708-77) was one of Scotland's first industrialists founding the Carron Iron Works in 1759 jointly with Dr John Roebuck and Samuel Garbett. The lease and subsequent purchase of Grange Estate took place in 1778, principally for its ironstone. Nineteenth-century members of this distinguished family include the geologist Henry Cadell, author of several books about the geology of West Lothian.

Programme

Chris Long, LCT Programme Co-ordinator

Tue 21 Feb 2012 @ 7:30 - LCT Lecture - Adam Room, Cross House

Prof. John R Hume will present the 2012 Linlithgow Civic Trust Lecture on the subject of 'Industrial Archaeology in West Lothian'.

Mon 12 March 2012 @ 7:30pm - Annual Annet Lecture - Academy

Janet McBain, formerly of Scottish Screen Archive, will present Linlithgow Heritage Trust's 2012 Annet Lecture in Linlithgow Academy Theatre at 7.30pm. Admission £2.50, including glass of wine.

Sat 31 March 2012 @ 7:15pm - LCT AGM - Masonic Hall.

This will take the usual format with the Annual General Meeting followed by a buffet and refreshments. Full details will be included in the next Newsletter.

Mike Vickers has stepped down as programme co-ordinator after this year's successful series of summer visits. We are all obliged to Mike for his hard work in this role. Chris Long will arrange the 2012 programme and details of planned visits will be published in the next Newsletter and on the website.

If you have any ideas for the Programme, please let Chris Long know tel: 01506 843461, e-mail programme@lct.org.uk.

Planning

Alex Adamson, LCT Planning Spokesman

Planning application levels remain low in Linlithgow. Over the last quarter LCT has had two successes. The application for a 77m high wind turbine near Bridgend, which we had opposed, was rejected by the Planning Committee. Along with other local groups, we objected to an application for six residential moorings on the Union Canal, near Manse Road Basin, by British Waterways. Having seen the strength of local feeling, British Waterways have withdrawn their application and are now consulting local interest groups about how best to develop facilities along the canal.

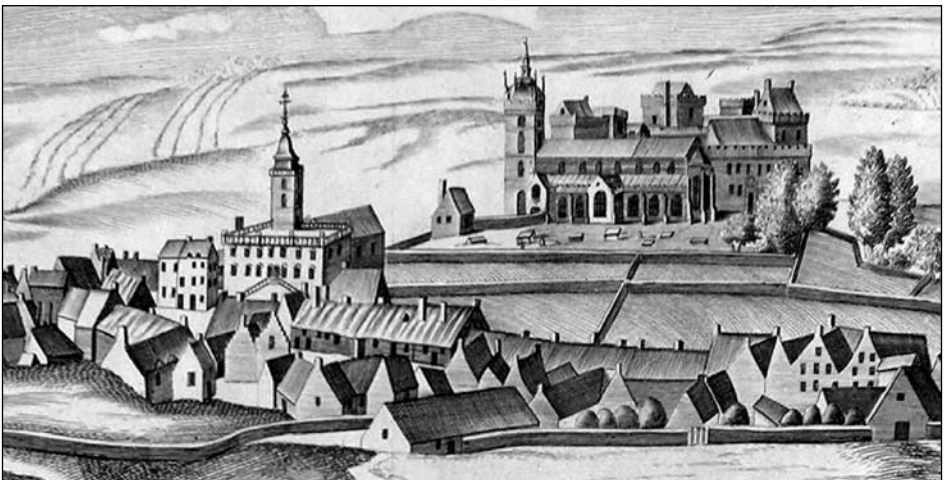
The Committee continues to keep abreast of the Wallace Land proposal for significant development at the M9 junction and will be meeting with their representatives at the end of November.

Linlithgow Burgh Halls

Malcolm Fraser, Malcolm Fraser Architects

The Burgh Halls are of the greatest historic and social significance to Linlithgow, providing the community with its central gathering place over hundreds of years. Of course behind them lies Linlithgow Palace, of great historic significance itself. But the Palace and its Peel concern themselves with Scotland in general, while the Burgh Halls were built to serve and focus the town.

The site must have done so since time-immemorial; but the present set of buildings date from 1668, being constructed to replace the old Tolbooth, which Cromwell's troops destroyed.



Section from a John Slezer print "The Prospect and Town of Linlithgow" 1693

There are buildings, however, that it is confusing to “date”: for a site like this is a conglomerate of structures, where fires, repairs, additions, remodelling etc. have changed and adapted it, to suit the needs and aspirations of the community, over its long life.

I love buildings that do this – not that I don’t sometimes regret what was lost, for the Slezer print of 1693 (reproduced on page 7, drawn soon after the wooden spire was added to the tower) shows how wonderfully-austere the original, flat-roofed box was, before the front was rebuilt and the pitched-roof added. (Put your thumb over the spire and you see the severity of architect John Smith’s original composition).

But by the end of last century the “conglomerate” was in a poor state. The two main Halls were still important resources for the town, but they were restricted by inadequate fire escapes, with restricted numbers. The Halls also had a lovely, adjacent, sheltered, south-facing garden, but it was round the back, inaccessible from the buildings. Halls and garden were all hidden from each other, down mazy stairs and corridors and through wee doors and diversions, and the service parts of the buildings, built in the 1960s, were long past their prime.

The work we proposed repaired the whole building, strengthening floors, replacing dangerous stonework and providing fire escapes, lifts, adequate toilets, disabled access etc. But it also opened the building up at its heart, with an airy, light-filled stair that allows all elements of the buildings to overlook and connect-to each other and a reception and café at its heart that flows out into the garden.



The café and the sunny garden room were to be a happy meeting place, for both locals and visitors. But the easy access to the garden was to add a significant new dimension to what can happen in the Halls. Aside from the ground floor café’s opening to the garden the rear Provost Lawrie (formerly County) Hall has huge new French Windows where once was blank wall, which open onto a large terrace over the café’s garden room and which has, in turn, stairs leading out to the garden. The terrace would be, we hoped, ideal for everything from Tai-chi classes to wedding speeches.



The Café Garden Room, with the outdoor area leading to the Rose Garden



The Provost Lawrie Hall (formerly the North, or County Hall) showing the three new French Windows that open onto a terrace over the Garden Room



A view of the completed works from the Rose Garden

The project has not run smoothly – as everyone in Linlithgow knows. Looking back in my files I see that we were appointed nearly 11 years ago, in September 2000. It took time for West Lothian Council to work through the options and bring together the various sources of funding that would compliment their own considerable financial commitment to the project. And Linlithgow knows that, once on site, and with the project proceeding well and an on-time completion in sight, the Contractor – the historic and highly-skilled and competent Hunter & Clark – went under, in the general construction-sector meltdown.

The experience was very painful and the logistics and contractual-legalities of the new Contractor, Maxi Construction, taking-on another's halted work, were extraordinarily byzantine. Over all this time, and through all these difficulties, I must pay tribute to the Council, who have recognised the significance of the project and not faltered in their drive to achieve it.

Visiting the Burgh Halls, now, it all seems so worthwhile. The building just thrums with life and light and activity and pleasure, from people of all ages. We feel privileged to have been entrusted with the work, proud at what we have achieved and very happy at how the good folk of Linlithgow are taking the Burgh Halls to their hearts, once again.

Burgh Beautiful

Ron Smith, Burgh Beautiful Chairman



The past few months have perhaps been some of the most momentous in the history of the Burgh Beautiful campaign – not only did Linlithgow win the premier award – the Rosebowl – in the Beautiful Scotland awards, but our new base at Clarendon has taken shape with immediate benefits to the operation of our group.

Beautiful Scotland Judging and Awards – The town was assessed on Wednesday, 10 August by judges, Colin Ainsworth, Gregor McGillivray and Sandy Scott. The judges were shown as many of the towns floral displays, parks, landscape, gardening and other relevant features as possible, emphasising wider community involvement and environmental responsibility. The judges must have liked what they saw because, when the results were announced on 12 September, we were delighted to have won:

- a gold medal (an improvement on last year's silver gilt)
- the award for being the Best Medium-sized town in Scotland
- an award for Special Endeavour; and, best of all
- the coveted silver Rosebowl, Beautiful Scotland's premier award for being the overall winner.



The Rosebowl - Awarded for the best overall entry in Beautiful Scotland 2011

Unfortunately, we weren't able to receive the accolades in person at the awards ceremony in Rothesay owing to travel disruption caused by the high winds. The cancellation of the ferries from the mainland stopped Burgh Beautiful representatives Hazel Duguid and Shirley Smith from attending, but the Rosebowl, a cup and four certificates were finally officially presented to us at a ceremony in Stirling on 1 November.

The Special Endeavour Award relates specifically to the excellent community gardening activities undertaken by Eileen Murray and helpers at Water Yett, and

by Audrey Simpson and Peter Common at the West Port flats. The judges praised "the best mixed borders seen in a long time", the attraction of wildlife and the element of public art. We presented copies of this award to Eileen, Audrey and Peter with a congratulatory covering letter.

The judges also nominated West Lothian Council for the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Trophy (albeit, the trophy was eventually won by Aberdeen City Council), stating that parks maintenance was carried out to a very high standard in Linlithgow. "There was not a weed to be seen, all the edges around beds and grass areas were immaculate and the bedding schemes done in consultation with Burgh Beautiful were well grown, covering the ground and pleasing to the eye."



The Beautiful Scotland judging in progress at the Cross



LinlithGROW's decorative vegetable bed at the Vennel

The main highlights from the judges' mark sheets are:

- 94 marks out of 100 for horticultural achievement, including 20 out of 20 (can't get better than that!) for both residential/community gardening and the quality of the town's green spaces. Liaison between Burgh Beautiful and the Council on themed bedding was praised, and the community gardens as above were described as 'outstanding'. Special mention was made of the herb borders in front of the Health Centre (Hazel Duguid) and the vegetable bed at the Vennel (Kirsty Leonard/LinlithGROW). Recommended Areas for Improvement: "Not a lot! Keep up the work and keep pushing the boundaries!"
- 42 marks out of 50 for environmental responsibility, with 9 out of 10 for three of the five sub-categories. The heritage trail markers and public art were given special mention as areas of achievement, but our lowest mark of 7 out of 10 for recycling was (again!) identified as an area for improvement.

- 43 marks out of 50 for community participation, with again 9 out of 10 for three of the five sub-categories. Here, the local sponsorship of the hanging baskets was seen as impressive, and the Eco Garden of Linlithgow Bridge Primary School “was a good stop and was enhanced by the enthusiastic schoolchildren who acted as great tour guides”. Linkages with Community Service Order teams and more youth involvement were recommended.
- Overall, 179 marks out of 200, compared to 155 last year, and 133 the year before.

Britain in Bloom 2012 – Further to our success, we have accepted a nomination to compete in the Britain in Bloom UK finals as Scotland’s representative in the ‘town’ category. The likely publicity will put us in the UK national spotlight, hopefully attracting more visitors and tourists. I’m sure that we will rise to the challenge over the coming year!

Establishment of our new Clarendon Base – We are pleased to report that the Burgh Beautiful Base in the grounds of Clarendon House is proceeding apace. In the two months since planning permission was granted, the area in and around the previously disused and neglected outbuildings has been transformed into an embryonic working base. On Saturday 22 October, the first scheduled planting event took place; this event, attended by some 13 members, cleaned out and replanted the town’s hanging baskets for winter display. Further scheduled events will take place throughout the winter months and into the future.

At a physical resource level, the site now boasts a polytunnel, a new shed, an installed water supply and a composting area in addition to the four, now functional, original ‘rooms’ in the outbuildings. Installation of paved access within the site is next in line, along with preliminary work to assess and reduce the water ingress through roof, windows and rear wall. Full restoration of these



The polytunnel and shed at Burgh Beautiful's new Clarendon Base



Clarendon Base clear-out in September

outbuildings is outside the remit of our current Community Chest and Voluntary Sector Development Fund grants from West Lothian Council, but it is hoped that the functional aspects which we have achieved can be followed by structural and decorative improvements, thus ensuring that yet another historic Linlithgow building and its setting is returned to its original purpose.



Hanging Baskets at the Vennel

Sponsorship of Hanging Baskets and Floral Displays – We are inviting renewals of basket/planter sponsorships and have reached about the half-way mark in comparison with last year – these are positively welcomed from businesses, organisations and individuals and anyone interested should contact me (see back page for contact details) for details of available positions/prices and a simple form. Why not club together with others to show that you appreciate our efforts? We are extremely grateful to our sponsors and we are looking at the best ways of publicising their essential contribution.

Other Projects – We are pursuing the following projects for the coming year:

- Bringing more colour to The Cross through the installation of more planters and hanging baskets, in response to a feeling that the town's main focal point should have more attention devoted to it;
- Extending community involvement by involving the scouts in providing and planting new floral barrels at the Linlithgow Bridge cross roads;
- Working with the Council to upgrade the design of the flowerbeds near the 'Keep Linlithgow Tidy' sign;
- Encouraging new member Dianne Lamont to create a new garden at St Ninian's Way;
- Possibly creating an Olympic-themed display on the grass slope at Baronshill Avenue;
- Possibly organising further bulb and tree planting events; and
- Organising a photographic competition.

The selection of bedding plants for next summer has been considered by a sub-group and orders will be made soon. We have welcomed several new members over the past few months and we are grateful that most have kindly taken on some sort of planting responsibility.

Forthcoming Events – Opportunities for Burgh Beautiful and Civic Trust members to get involved in the next two months are:

- **Saturday, 19 November** – Making of holly balls at Clarendon, 9.30am to 4pm – just turn up when you want!
- **Saturday, 26 November** – Fund raising at the Advent Fair, from 9.30am – 3.30pm with stalls selling raffle tickets and taking orders for our generously-sized holly balls (£25 each) and wreaths (£20 each) in aid of next year's floral displays. Orders for holly balls and wreaths will be available for collection at Clarendon on Sunday, 4 December between 2pm and 4pm (alternatively there will be a £5 delivery charge). We would still like a few more volunteers to serve at the stalls - if you're interested, please contact Chris Long.
- **Saturday 3 December** - Burgh Beautiful holly ball and wreath making event, 9.30am onwards to around 4.00pm at Clarendon. Everyone is invited to help with making up the holly balls and wreaths which will have been ordered at the Advent Fair – again, just turn up!

I often get into trouble for singling out people for special praise, because it is so easy to miss out the contributions of others who may be equally deserving, but I must give a heartfelt thanks to absolutely everyone who has helped us to achieve such a great result over the past year. However, I don't think there will be any objection to me expressing our great appreciation to Tony Oxbrow who, over the past few months, has masterminded and carried out the fantastic transformation of our Clarendon site into a very acceptable base for our campaign.

Finally, as always, Burgh Beautiful seeks new volunteers, particularly over the next year to meet the challenges of entering Britain in Bloom. You can do as little or as much as you want, either on your own or as part of a group. If you are at all interested in helping, please contact me or any other Burgh Beautiful member (see back page for contact details).



Audrey Simpson's beautiful community garden at the West Port flats



High Street Planters

Publications & Other Items for Sale

Available for purchase in the town or through Chris Long (Tel: 01506 843461)

Linlithgow - Architecture & History of a Scottish Royal Burgh * . . . £12.00

Linlithgow Old & New £15.00

(£10 when supplied directly by LCT to Members)

Walks Around Linlithgow **With waterproof map!** £6.00

Street Names of Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge * **Reduced!** £2.50

A particularly attractive tea towel £4.00

Linlithgow Town Plan **Reduced!** £2.00

Poster (drawings of the town's antiquities & historical features) £1.95

* A free copy of Street Names of Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge is supplied with Linlithgow - Architecture & History of a Scottish Royal Burgh when it is supplied directly by Linlithgow Civic Trust.

Membership

Please encourage people who support our aims to join Linlithgow Civic Trust. There is an application form on the website www.lct.org.uk or contact John Aitken: e-mail membership@lct.org.uk phone 01506 848258.

Executive Committee

Chairman John Aitken chair@lct.org.uk . 01506 848258
also **Membership, Newsletter and Website**

Vice Chair Currently Vacant

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

Treasurer Mike Vickers treasurer@lct.org.uk . 01506 671307

Burgh Beautiful Ron Smith burgh-beautiful@lct.org.uk . 01506 670758

Planning Alex Adamson planning@lct.org.uk . 01506 845918
also **Doors Open Co-ordinator**

Publications Chris Long publications@lct.org.uk . 01506 843461
also **Burgh Beautiful Secretary and Programme Co-ordinator**

Committee: Peter Fairweather, John McGregor and Ken Ralston

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