

# Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust

## Newsletter

Spring—April 2025



SCO 044045

### Editorial

Our thanks to members who came to the Annual General Meeting (25th March). We had an interesting resume of our achievements of the last year from John Robson, the Interim Chairman, who has now resigned—so a new Chairperson has to be elected. Rhonda also gave an illustrated talk about her work with volunteers and other organisations over the last 12 months and Will Smith, Treasurer, gave a summary of our expenses and grants.

Many thanks to Muriel and Hazel who provided tea/coffee and home made cakes.

*Editor—Freda Seddon*

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Please note that your membership, although free, does show your support for the Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust. Members also receive the quarterly newsletter. If you live in Lochmaben, Templand, the Royal Four Towns or the surrounding district, you are eligible for membership. Just contact any Trustee, or Rhonda at Lochfield Cottage, if you or someone you know wishes to become a member.

**Control and click on this link to join CLLCT and access the website** [CLLCT - Contact Us](#)

### Dog Owner Etiquette

We appreciate the fact that Castle Loch is a popular place for walking the dog but please be aware that dogs can cause problems with other walkers.

The following guides should help to prevent friction between dogs and other users, including wildlife.

Please keep your dog under control at all times—Castle Loch is a Nature Reserve.

Please keep your dog on the lead in the Sanctuary Area, the Kindergarten area and around wildlife.

Please lift your dog's waste and dispose of it in the bins at the rear of the car parks or take it home.

Please keep your dog on the lead during the allocated nesting season—the end of March to the end of August.

If you see children or another dog please make sure that your dog is on a lead and under control.



### LATE NEWS :

Friday 2nd May, 7.30pm  
at Lochfield Cottage

### Illustrated Bat Talk

Come along and learn all about these fascinating night-flying mammals

Contacts for Castle Loch Community Trust -  
Facebook CLLCT  
Email— [castlelochcommunity@outlook.com](mailto:castlelochcommunity@outlook.com)

## Habitat Officer's Report

Volunteers have already accumulated three hundred hours this year mostly due to the additional hours removing fallen trees from storm Eowyn. Volunteer activities have included tending to the planted tree saplings to encourage them onto the next stage as well as addressing the pathways in Kirkhurst woodlands affected by the increasing water levels. Further to this the volunteers have also been working on the potholes along the road to the castle. This is an ongoing project with more potholes to tackle.

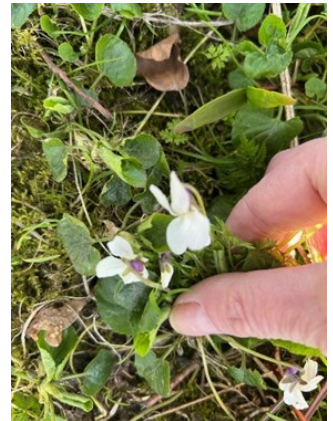
Castle Loch has recruited four new volunteers recently to add to our solid volunteer register and we welcome all people from different backgrounds to come along and enjoy the outdoors with us.

With some of the wintering birds already leaving the site, we are seeing the start of an early spring with nest building birds and early frog spawn. The song of the chiffchaff can already be heard at Castle Loch, although some stay throughout winter, most migrate from Africa with the female being the primary nest builder (Wildlifetrusts.org).



The mute swans can already be seen displaying to one another, sharing their ritual dance to secure their long-term bond and hopefully lead to a successful brood. Last year we saw four cygnets on the Loch. Generally, there has been only two breeding pairs with a resident population of 50 – 80 on the Loch throughout the year.

The break in winter weather has brought about the eruption of sweet violets across from the Castle. As a low-growing perennial, this scented flower is an important nectar source for the early butterflies, not to be confused with the unscented common dog violet. Legend says that violets steal your sense of smell after one sniff, however this may be due to the violets containing beta-ionone which can temporarily shut off smell receptors (woodlandtrust.org.uk).



### Tony Stewart

Castle Loch Community Trust lost a much valued member when Tony Stewart died earlier this year. He spent his early working life employed on a farm near Middlebie before starting work for ICI in Dumfries. Both these jobs furnished him with practical skills and abilities which he put to such good use during the years he was involved as a volunteer, and latterly also as a Board member, at Castle Loch.

Tony was a quietly spoken, unassuming man with a ready smile and a twinkle in his eye. His problem-solving skills and practical approach to mechanical issues soon earned him the reputation as the man to consult when things became complicated.

He rarely, if ever, failed to come up with a solution to the problems encountered during volunteering sessions. Tony had seen most of them before and if he hadn't, he didn't take long to come up with a solution by adopting an approach which invariably worked.

It was a pleasure to work with Tony and his contributions at volunteering sessions and Board meetings are sadly missed.

*John Reid*



## Storm Eowyn Tree Damage

On January 24th Storm Eowyn struck Castle Loch with the full force that had been anticipated. It was deemed too dangerous to venture out until the strong winds had moderated but then a team of volunteers completed a circuit of the loch to assess the damage. It soon became obvious that we were facing a major incident.

A good and willing team of volunteers was assembled for 9.30am the next day, including two volunteers who were experienced in the use of chain saws and have their own saws. Starting at Lochfield cottage the team worked its way around the loch path, clearing smaller trees and branches.

However, a very large beech tree had come down and was blocking the access road to the castle. Work continued into the afternoon, cutting and clearing the profusion of branches and dragging them off the road to allow pedestrian access. Over the next few days the larger branches and trunks were cut up and vehicular access was restored to the access road.



The main problem was a large and complex tree that had come down onto the boardwalk behind Castlemains Cottages, lifting it slightly and was also caught up by neighbouring trees. The stump had returned almost to its original position but had moved slightly and was sitting too high, making a bump which would have been difficult for wheelchairs and prams to negotiate. A stump grinder was hired for the day to deal with it and on the following Saturday the damaged path was rebuilt and levelled by volunteers.



The path was opened to walkers by midweek and to all users by the Saturday following the storm—much due to the band of volunteers who deserve a pat on the back for all their efforts. Our thanks also to Douglas Fountain who organised and co-ordinated the teams of volunteers.

*Many thanks also to Dougie for this report and for the accompanying photographs.*

## Bluebells



**Native bluebells** *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* have:

- narrow leaves, about 1-1.5cm wide
  - deep violet-blue (sometimes white), narrow, tubular-bell flowers, with tips that curl back
  - flowers on one side of the stem
  - distinctly drooping stems
  - a sweet scent
- cream-coloured pollen inside



**Spanish bluebells** *Hyacinthoides hispanica* have:

- broad leaves, about 3cm wide
  - pale blue (often white or pink), conical-bell flowers, with spreading and open tips
  - flowers all around the stem
  - upright stems
  - no scent
- blue- or pale green-coloured pollen inside

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyacinthoides\\_non-scripta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyacinthoides_non-scripta)

The species name *non-scripta* means "unlettered" or "unmarked" and distinguished this bluebell from another hyacinth. Another hyacinth plant has marked petals - from Greek mythology there was a plant created from the blood of the dying Spartan prince Hyacinthus, a lover of the sun god Apollo. As Apollo cried in grief, his tears marked the new flower's petals with the letters "AIAI" ("alas").

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/nature/trees-plants/a-guide-to-bluebells-in-the-uk>

### Bluebell facts

- Almost half the world's bluebells are found in the UK – they're relatively rare elsewhere.
- It's against the law to intentionally pick, uproot or destroy bluebells.
- Bluebell colonies take a long time to establish – around five to seven years from seed to flower.
- Bluebells can take years to recover after footfall damage. If a bluebell's leaves are crushed, they die back from lack of food because they can no longer photosynthesise.

If you plant bluebells in your garden, use the English bluebell. The Spanish species is a more vigorous plant and could outcompete the UK's native flower.

**Many thanks to John Robson, who found this information on the cited websites .**

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Look for bluebells at Castle Loch in May, although the weather may affect their flowering time and it may be earlier! Many of our bluebells are hybrids—crosses between the native and Spanish Bluebell.

CLLCT has been funded by:-

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GRANGE

Russel Roof tiles



Hugh Fraser Foundation

And — many thanks to all anonymous donors