



Aberlady in Bloom was formally constituted as a not-for-profit community group in February 2020, although volunteers have been active as a village gardening group for over three years. Our aims are to help improve the natural environment of the village; keep our picturesque village looking pretty and well maintained; help combat the destructive impacts of climate change; promote the educational and health benefits of gardening and freshly grown produce; and to encourage participation.

Our origins lie in a Climate Friendly Aberlady household survey undertaken in 2018 to help assess which climate mitigation measures command support in the village. The redevelopment of the village Memorial Garden and the creation of a fruit and vegetable community garden in the Kirk Stables grounds were popular. We're very grateful for the support we've received from the outset by way of grants and other contributions, from landowners and volunteers, who now number 23 with an active core group of around 10. Our job is made very much easier by the excellent relationship we have with East Lothian Council's Amenity Services.



*Young Beavers painting vegetable boxes in the Kirk Stables Garden*

## About Aberlady

Aberlady is a popular coastal village on the A198 road and on the John Muir Way, named after the great naturalist John Muir, born just a few miles away in nearby Dunbar. The village population is rising as a result of new housing development and currently stands at around 2,000. However, the intrinsic charm of the High Street conservation area remains intact. Aided by the natural and sheltered anchorage of Aberlady Bay the village has seen continuous occupation since early times. A series of Scheduled Ancient Monuments testify to our heritage. Aberlady was a wealthy monastic settlement of Lindisfarne from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when it was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Pefferham. The village continued as a market town and trading port throughout medieval times and played a strategic role in the Siege of Haddington of 1547/48. Our maritime heritage is hardly visible those days but is remembered in the naming of Port House, Harbour House and Anchor House and is reflected too in the ship in full sail depicted above the entrance to Sunset View, reputedly once the 'Old Ship Inn', off the Sea Green. In Edwardian and Victorian times, the village was a popular holiday destination for families seeking to exchange the bustling, overcrowded life of the city for the fresh seaside and country air. This was enabled greatly by the advent of rail travel to the village. The last train from Aberlady departed in the 1960s. Aberlady Caravan Park now occupies the station site.



*A Welcome to our Village*

During the Second World War the village hosted army and prisoner of war camps in Gosford grounds and strategic defensive positions were once again established around the bay. During peaceful times the surrounding fertile soils enabled an agricultural industry to flourish on outlying farms and the numerous small holdings, many of which continue to this day. Malt from the Maltings, now converted to residential flats in Sea Wynd, was regularly transported to the Red Lion Brewery at Winchester, owned by Mr Punton who lived in the Lodge in West Main Street. The Gardens development at the east end of the village takes its name from Sherratt's market garden and orchard. Another market garden once flourished at Sunnybrae in West Main Street, while the tulip fields which ran south from our Back Road down to Borough Gates are still recalled. In 1952 Britain's first Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was established at Aberlady Bay. Today, the LNR is an important and internationally recognised refuge for migrating birds and for local wildlife.

Aberlady has many clubs, associations and societies. Aberlady Conservation & History Society ('Aberlady Heritage') was established in 2001. Aberlady Bowling Club and Aberlady Golf Club are much older. The well maintained grounds of Aberlady Bowling Club sit on the western entry to the village. Established in 1888, the bowling club remains a focal point in the life of the community. It regularly produces champions too.



*The lawns of Aberlady Bowling Club have produced champions*

Members won the British Pairs title in 1988, the Scottish Triples trophy in 2000 and the Scottish Senior Fours titles in 2004 and 2005. Aberlady player, Gordon White, is the current Scottish singles champion. The ladies section too has been very successful, with triumphs in the Haddington Trophy, Champion of Champions and the East of Scotland competition. All of this takes a well maintained green and playing surface.

Formerly, a drill hall for the local rifle volunteers, the Village Hall is maintained and held in trust from the Earl of Wemyss by the Community Association. The hall has hosted countless events over the years since 1872, including those of the now defunct Aberlady Dramatic Society. Its first performance was that of 'The Skipper's Daughters' based on the popular novel of the village's smuggling days. The Village Hall hosts a Seed Bank to encourage community interest in gardening. Nearby Luffness Mains Farm donated a large amount of sunflower seeds and we hope to see a fine spectacle of sunflowers across the village shortly.

Aberlady Conservation and History Society has done much to research and promote the village's past. Heritage interpretation boards are provided around the village and two books and a number of tourist information leaflets have been published by the Society. The GPS-based PocketSights smartphone app includes an illustrated walking guide to the village and other walk material has been provided as part of the North Berwick Area Walking Festival due to launch in August.



*Heritage Information*

### **Our Year**

By 2019 we had permission from Aberlady Parish Church to establish a community fruit and vegetable garden in the former Kirk Stables grounds. A dozen potato boxes, soil to fill them and material to line the boxes were very kindly donated to our community fruit and vegetable garden in the Kirk Stables by the super team at Luffness Mains Farm. The boxes were then cut down to size and filled by local volunteers. Restored gardening tools were donated by HM Prison Edinburgh under a community scheme in which they participate with the Conservation Foundation. The tools received included 2 garden forks, 2 spades, 3 rakes and 3 grass rakes, a hoe and some secateurs. Other tools and equipment, including an 80 metre hose, which has proved very useful, were donated from within the community. Our tool selection stock means volunteers don't need their own to be involved. We attended the Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood annual seminar in the Albert Halls, Stirling in October 2019 where we made useful contact with other local groups and were delighted to receive our 'Level 3 – Advancing' It's Your Neighbourhood Award.

From spring 2019 we planted our growing boxes to produce a variety of our fresh, seasonal and organic vegetable produce from seed purchased by volunteers. Together with homemade preserves made from raspberry canes in the garden, our produce was displayed and made available for donations at the busy community homemade lunches held monthly by volunteers in the Village Hall. This arrangement - and volunteer maintenance of the garden – was impacted by Covid of course but we have always had a number of households keen to have fresh vegetables from the garden delivered to their door. During lockdown the garden was a welcome oasis for the one or two gardeners not isolating. Deliveries and gardening were always conducted according to Scottish Government guidelines. The donations received provide welcome assistance towards costs. As it's not yet clear when the community lunches might resume, if at all, we are considering our options, including a Summer Fair in the garden grounds.



We typically grow and harvest the following produce from March onwards:

Early Potatoes

Beetroot

Cabbage

Chard

Carrots

Onions, white and red, and Spring Onions

Courgettes

Small Turnips

Rhubarb

Leeks

Shallots

Lettuce



*Our Kirk Stables Garden*



*Shallots*



*Beetroot*



*Courgettes*

As we have limited space in the Kirk Stables Garden, there is always a challenge in growing to meet demand for fresh produce. We try to achieve two harvests each season from the boxes. As lettuce and other salad greens can be harvested quickly after sowing they are planted in the same boxes as other vegetables with longer growth times, beetroot for example. We look forward to our first crop of Garlic shortly and to harvesting Asparagus next year. We grow our produce organically and make full use of the compost cages in the garden grounds to increase the organic material in the soil.



We've donated produce to both Inns in the village, both of which take pride in the freshness of the produce they use in their kitchens. We hold our weekly group meetings at Duck's Inn, which happily provides complimentary coffee and biscuits. To help increase our growing space for produce, the owners of the Old Aberlady Inn gave us permission in June 2021 to make use of the unused vegetable plot behind the well-maintained Beer Garden to the rear. The Inn will promote the produce we donate to the kitchen as community grown, organic, fresh and seasonal. A donation of 17 seed potato varieties, some heritage, gave us a great choice. This garden has now been fully planted and includes winter and spring greens as well as a range of potatoes. Some of the new seed varieties will replace the early potatoes to be harvested at the Kirk Stables over the next few days. The Inn garden looks a little tired at the moment but with some paint and natural living colour we'll soon brighten it up.



*Our second vegetable growing spot to the rear of the Old Aberlady Inn*

Between June and December 2020 we were in discussion with East Lothian Council's Amenity Services about developing adding additional flower beds in the village Memorial Garden. The garden contains a War Memorial raised by public subscription following the South African war. The names of others who later fell in the First and Second World Wars were added subsequently. This memorial stood in the road junction opposite the church gates until it was relocated to the Memorial Garden in the 1920s. The garden also contains a memorial to Anne, late Countess of Wemyss in the shape of a 15<sup>th</sup> century Venetian Well with scrolled ironwork above, from which hangs a floral display. This memorial was moved from the Pleasance grounds almost opposite the Memorial Garden at the same time as the War Memorial was relocated. Between those two memorials stands a cross erected by the community in 2010. This interprets how the original 8<sup>th</sup> century Northumbrian cross that stood close by may have looked when it was first erected at the monastic settlement they knew then as Pefferham. The 2010 version was carved using the same basic tools and techniques as used originally. The curators at the

Nation Museum of Scotland took a close interest. The natural world is represented by zoomorphic carvings of animals and birds, and vines, and the cross is thought to convey ideas of peace and conciliation during the turbulent times of its creation. The eyes are made from blue and brown glass to match the colours available at the time and with metallic inlays to help reflect natural light, and make the carvings more lifelike. The original cross would have been painted in bright, vivid colours.

We felt strongly that the Memorial Garden should benefit from more natural colour and variety to attract year-round interest by villagers and visitors: the John Muir Way walking route passes the garden gate. We were also keen to attract more wildlife into the garden. After discussion on the options an arrangement of four new beds circling the existing central bed was agreed. It was also agreed that Aberlady in Bloom would assume responsibility for all the beds in the redesigned garden following their development. The local authority would remain responsible for grass and hedge cutting. A layout plan and the original plant selection are provided in the annex to this portfolio. The plots of the new beds were de-turfed by East Lothian Council on 5 December 2020. In keeping with Covid guidelines at the time, volunteers then set about digging them over. Following one of our posts to our Facebook page, the amazingly generous John and Fiona Playfair of Garden Solutions at nearby Ballencrieff donated 50 bags (50L) of mushroom compost to fork in after digging - with the promise of a further 40 bags (50L) of processed farmyard manure to help bed the new plants in! We had spotted a sizeable quantity of natural stone in the kirkyard grounds and volunteers laid these out as edging for the new beds to complement the natural stone edging of the existing central bed. The beds were then allowed to over-winter.





*The garden prior to redevelopment*



*The new beds are de-turfed*



*The arrival of huge amounts of compost*



*Welcome hands and forks*



*Keen Volunteers*



In late February 2020, around 270 herbaceous perennials and shrubs from Macplants, Pencaitland and 18 rose plants donated by Cruden Homes (East) and villagers were planted by 15 volunteers.



*April 2021*



*June 2021*



*June 2021*



*June 2021*

We have a partnership arrangement with Margiotta's store in the High Street under which, in return for the positioning of two large wooden display boxes (that we own and built from recycled timber) in the shop forecourt, the shop meets the costs of the bedding plants we select for planting. The shop sells a large amount of bedding and other plants and this arrangement helps promote them. It's a win-win partnership. On 25 May, a supply of plants arrived and, while they did not fully accord with what we had ordered on this occasion, they make an eye-catching display all the same. We have

number of other display boxes in the village too, and plant and maintain the half-barrel planters in the forecourt of Duck's Inn.



*Margiotta's*



*Duck's Inn*



*Old Aberlady Inn*

On 23 June, we hung 12 floral display baskets from six lampposts on the north side of the High Street; three at each side of Margiotta's shop in the centre of the village. To water and feed the baskets we purchased a small, 50L bowser. We are grateful to Margiotta's for allowing us to store the bowser to the rear of the shop, where a water tap and hose are available for our use. The shop also supports us by ensuring that the bowser battery is kept fully charged. At our weekly catch-ups each Saturday morning we agree watering and maintenance rotas for the Memorial Garden, the Kirk Stables garden, the hanging baskets and the display boxes. To this agenda we now need to add the additional growing area we have secured to the rear of the Old Aberlady Inn.





*Hanging baskets and attractive gardens adorn the High Street*

## **Environment**

We are very fortunate in Aberlady to have access to a beautiful coast, parkland and countryside which sustain an extensive range of wildlife. The formal landscaped gardens of Gosford House are also available subject to a permit which may be purchased from the adjacent Gosford Bothy Farm Shop.

Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve was the first site to be designated a Local Nature Reserve, in 1952. It comprises a complete set of habitats from low water right through to

salt marsh and sand dune, largely unchanged by the influence of people. A wide array of wildflowers reflecting the accompanying coastal habitats can be found at Aberlady, including many locally rare species. In turn these support a wide variety of insect and invertebrate life. The birds associated with Aberlady are diverse. In autumn the site can play host to over 30,000 pink-footed geese, which come here from Iceland to roost and feed locally before moving on later in the winter. During spring and summer other migrant species from Europe and North Africa come to rear their young. Wheatears, whitethroat and blackcaps all nest on site with a few species of wading bird, including redshank and lapwing.

The Reserve is managed by our Countryside Ranger Service, principally the warden John Harrison who, prior to Covid, would provide annual illustrated talks to the village on the latest developments in the Bay. John has established a volunteer group to help with his work in maintaining the extensive habitat, with estate maintenance, plant monitoring, fencing and litter picking. One particular project has been the removal by volunteers of invasive plant species. In June 2019 a large group of over 20 volunteers removed 22 bags of Two-spined Acaena which unless dealt with would threaten the diverse, native flora. [www.elcv.org.uk/groups/aberlady-group/](http://www.elcv.org.uk/groups/aberlady-group/)



*Reserve Warden John Harrison with environmental volunteers tackling invasive plant species*

Volunteer groups also picked and cleared away litter and rubbish brought in by big tides prior to the start of the bird breeding seasons. The effort is paying off. However, a demoralising amount of large single-use plastic still arrives with each new tide. A 20 hectare plot has been grazed by sheep for 13 years and the positive impact on the flower-rich grassland. It has been a good year for dragonflies. The area around the Marl Loch has seen counts of over 100. Most common are the Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly and Four-spotted Chaser. An impressive male Emperor Dragonfly has also been spotted above the loch. Orchids too have flourished.





*Local environmental volunteers removed 102 bags of litter and assorted wheels, tyres, road maintenance signs from the coastal woodland at Greencraigs at the east of Gosford Bay*

Outside the confines of the reserve too volunteers have been active in clearing extensive litter and rubbish from our country roads, footpaths and coastline. Since December 2020 over 220 large bags of waste material have been uplifted from around the village. This is a sterling effort by over 40 local volunteers inspired by the efforts of Lawrence and Ann Connelly. During April and May 102 bags of litter and assorted wheels, tyres, road maintenance signs and other debris were removed from the coastal woodland at Greencraigs at the east of Gosford Bay and taken to the recycling centre at Macmerry.

### **Waterston House - A Wildlife Haven**

Overlooking Aberlady Bay Nature Reserve from the south-west is the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Scotland's Bird Club. When the gardens surrounding Waterston House were laid out in 2005 the aim was to create an attractive setting for the club's HQ, managed in an environmentally friendly way that attracted a variety of wildlife. At the front, the main path leads to patio area with a small rock and water feature. On either side are beds with a mixture of shrubs and perennials to provide cover for birds and also colour and nectar from early spring to autumn. Great spotted woodpeckers have been seen taking nectar from the red-hot poker. Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird and Chaffinch forage on the ground while Tits pick insects off the shrubs. There are also cotoneasters, rowans and a crab-apple which provide berries throughout the winter; waxwings have occasionally been seen eating the rose-hips. The Buddleja attracts several varieties of butterflies in late summer.



As the site is south and west facing it tends to be dry and sunny. Some plants do better than others: Hardy Geraniums, Penstemons, Lavender, Hebes and Salvias thrive. There are two meadows, one on either side of the main path. They have evolved over the years with wild and some garden flowers blooming from spring through to autumn. A few Snowdrops raise their heads in January/February and then there is quite a show of Primroses and Cowslips. In May/June a deeper yellow predominates with lots of Buttercups as well as Yellow Rattle which is gradually reducing the coarser grasses as it's semi-parasitic. June/July is when the meadow flowers are at their best and most colourful with swathes of Lady's Bedstraw, Knapweed, Ox-eye Daisy and Scabious. Although the meadows become untidy and less colourful in August/September they are left so flower seeds can mature and drop before mowing at the end of September. In the late autumn some patches are scarified and sown with a mixture of annual wildflowers such as Poppies and Cornflowers. Moles, field mice and shrews can also be found and when cutting back in autumn care is taken to avoid frogs and toads.

To the west of the gardens the informal hedge has matured to be a wind break from the predominant westerlies. It has several native species including Dog Rose, Hawthorn, Holly, Guelder Rose and Hazel, with some non-native Cotoneaster. To the east side of the building a path, accessible by wheelchairs, goes past a rock bank to the boardwalk, along the very large pond which stretches the length of Waterston House. A waterfall powered by an electric pump is at one end. Native marginal plants such as greater Spearwort, Water Mint and Bog Bean have colonised the shallow edges while at the far side of the pond is a stand of Reed Mace or Bulrush. The Water Lilies are of garden origin but we have now to introduce the larger, native, White Waterlily thanks to the cooperation of the adjacent Gosford estate. In spring look for the yellow flowers of Marsh Marigold and Wild Iris. There is a dense growth of the non-native but long-established Canadian Pondweed under the surface. This is a useful oxygenator and provides a habitat for many invertebrates including several dragon and damselflies. Frogs and toads breed in the pond in spring.





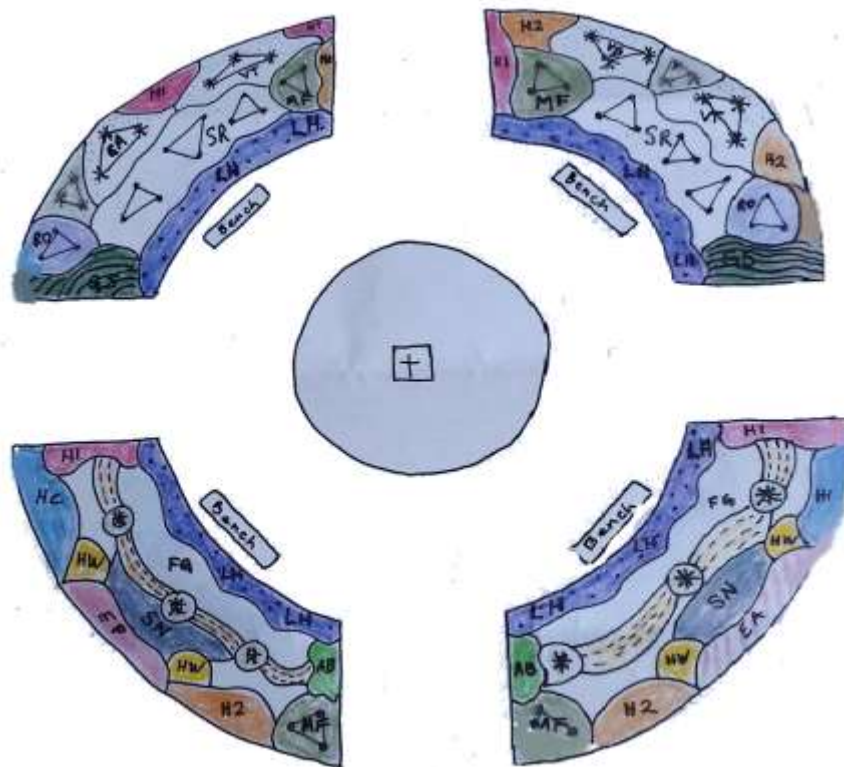
Occasionally Mallards visit and Martins and Swallows swoop low to drink and take insects. Some nest under the eaves. The roofs of Waterston House drain into the pond, maintaining the water level. The grounds of Waterston House form part of the John Muir Pollinator Way, supported by Buglife. Trapping organised by Aberlady warden John Harrison has recorded an impressive 244 species of moths. The gardens are maintained by a team of volunteers who can be found at work here on Wednesday mornings.

Aberlady in Bloom, July 2021  
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## Annex

### Aberlady Memorial Garden Redevelopment

Below is the Layout Plan of the four new beds which together circle around the central bed. Lavendula Hidcote forms the inner edges of the new beds to complement the Nepeta around the outer edges of the central bed. In the northeast and northwest beds, scented roses are the dominant theme while Heuchera and Geraniums add new colours and textures. The centres of the south-east and south-west beds are dominated by tall grasses while Erigeron and Salvia add colour and variety to the outer perimeter. The tall grasses invite you in. Fragrant roses and the sights and sounds of busy bees reward you. We've had to deviate from the plan somewhat because of plant availability and some Heuchera losses during but we are very happy with the new beds. They are less than 6 months old and what a difference they make to the garden overall, which is now much more inviting to villagers and visitors. A perfect memorial.



Layout Plan

## Planting Plan

Colour code/symbol on plan	Species/variety	Number required
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### Herbaceous/small shrubs

LH	Lavandula 'Hidcote'	80
RO	Rosmarinus officinalis	6
H1	Heuchera 'Fire Chief'	10
H2	Heuchera 'Palace Purple'	10
HC	Hebe 'Caledonia'	10
MF	Miscanthus 'Flamingo'	12
HG	Hebe 'Great Orme'	12
HW	Helianthemum 'Wisley Primrose'	12
AB	Agapanthus 'Blue & White'	10
EP	Erigeron 'Pink Jewel'	12
EA	Erigeron 'Azure Fairy'	12
SN	Salvia Nemerosa 'East Friesland'	10
FG	Festuca Glauca	30
-----	Mixed tall grasses?	20
GS	Geranium Sanguineum 'Striatum Pink' & G. Pratense	15

### Larger shrubs

* *	Viburnum Tinus 'Eve Price'	6
*		
* *	Viburnum Burkwoodii	3
*		
* *	Cornus alba 'Sibirica'	3
*		
. .	Scented species roses	12
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