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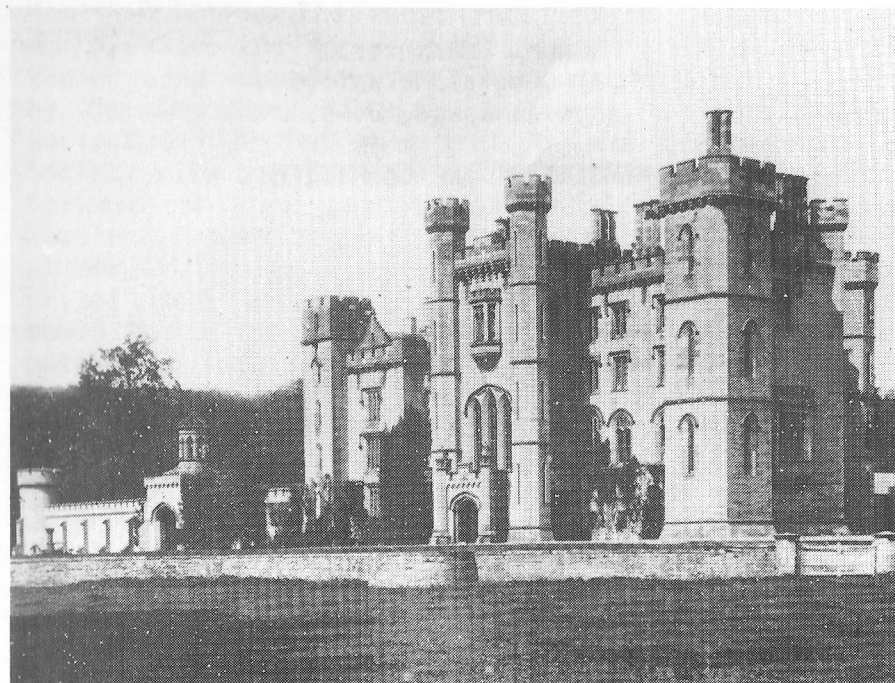
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The Berwickshire Civic Society

Newsletter No. 11

Summer 1990



DUNS CASTLE
photograph taken in 1875

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The 1989 Annual General Meeting was held at Wedderburn Castle by kind permission of Mr George Whitla, the tenant and occupier of this ancient Home property. At the conclusion of a very well attended meeting, and following a most interesting talk on the history of the house by Miss Georgina Home-Robertson, members were able to inspect the recently refurbished public rooms.

Since the A.G.M., your Executive Committee have met in Duns three times and the main subjects which have occupied our discussions are given below in no particular order.

Mouth Bridge: The news, received in February - 28 months after the second Public Inquiry - that Borders Region were accepting the grant arrangements proposed by the Secretary of State and were to repair this ancient bridge for road traffic, was greeted by the Society with considerable satisfaction and we now look forward to work beginning. Unfortunately, as this Newsletter goes to print, vandalism has been detected at Mouth Bridge where a key coping stone has been prized loose and pitched into the river. That this would be unlikely to happen where the bridge in use must be obvious and it is to be hoped that it will not now be too long before the direct link between Whitsome and Duns - closed since 1984 - is restored.

Hume Castle: Last year I reported on the difficulties we were having over this major project to restore Home Castle to a state which would permit its reopening to the Public. These difficulties are further described, with their eventual satisfactory outcome, in a separate article by David Mylne, who has borne the heat and burden of this venture.

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Keep Berwickshire Tidy: The 1989 winner of this Trophy was Swinton and Ladykirk Community Council area and, in a packed village hall at Swinton in October, the Trophy was handed over on behalf of the Society by Lady Swinton. Certificates, beautifully inscribed by the Reverend Hugh McKay, were also presented to Ayton, the runners-up, to Chirnside and to Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham, equal third; and because of the remarkable closeness of the marks this year, to Abbey St. Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston who came fourth.

At the conclusion of the ceremony Mr Douglas Hugonin presented his fascinating audio visual slide show "Yesterday that's past" which was very much appreciated.

The 1990 Trophy, judged as usual under the careful direction of Jim Ingoldsby during the second week in April, has been won by Coldstream, with Ayton second, Chirnside third and Eyemouth fourth. A presentation ceremony will be arranged to take place in Coldstream in the Autumn.

Cove Harbour: Your Society has been much concerned over the recent proposals for the development at Cove and, although a detailed Planning Application has yet to be seen, we have made our views on what is rumoured for the future of this jewel in the crown of Berwickshire's coast clear to Borders Region. These are that, although as a Society we would support sympathetic and small scale development at Cove, what appears to be being proposed is neither of these things and, if implemented, would very much tend to destroy the character of the harbour and go a long way towards damaging the considerable charm and beauty of the place which rests principally on its peace and tranquillity.

Dead Elms: The Society continues to press landowners to cut those dead trees - invariably elms - which so disfigure the Berwickshire landscape, not least on the outskirts of our towns and villages. Members are asked to add their voices to our requests - and they can only be requests - that these eyesores may be removed.

Duns 500: As a contribution to the celebrations of Duns 500, Mr Douglas Hugonin, on behalf of the Society, staged an audio-visual slide show about Duns and its history, entitled "A simple, peevish place". Sadly, this excellent and profoundly interesting show drew an audience far smaller than it deserved.

Duns Show 1990: The Society intends to mount a small exhibit as in previous years at the Berwickshire Agricultural Show on Saturday the 4th of August. By kind arrangement with the N.F.U. this will be sited in their marquee. Last years attempt to interest the Public with a competition to identify photographs of old houses was not a success and will not be repeated. Any ideas for a replacement would be gratefully received.

Planning Applications: A list of Planning Applications received from Borders Region during the last year is printed at the end of this Newsletter. In addition, the Society has been concerned with, and has made representations to Region about, applications to build houses at Bridgend, Duns (which we supported, but which was turned down), and at Gavinton (which we did not support).

The Society is particularly grateful to David Mylne on whom, despite recent ill health, almost all of the vetting of these applications falls.

Other Societies: Your Society has continued to maintain close links with the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (A.P.R.S.) and with The Scottish Civic Trust, and has recently encouraged entries from Berwickshire for the annual awards organised by these two bodies. Your Society has recently joined the Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service. Our President attended the inaugural meeting of the Ettrick and Lauderdale Civic Society and offered wise advice on its formation.

1990 A.G.M.: By kind permission of Alexander Hay of Duns Castle, and to mark Duns 500, the 1990 A.G.M. will be held at Duns Castle at 6.00 p.m. on Monday the 16th of July. At the conclusion of the meeting members will be permitted to view the Castle and, following last year's popular innovation, wine will be provided by the Society.

John Swinton
Chairman

DUNS CASTLE

This article by Alexander Hay of Duns Castle is re-printed from the Duns 500 Official Programme by kind permission of the author and the Editor.

The lands of Dunse were given to Randolph, Earl of Murray by King Robert the Bruce and he built the original Dunse Castle in 1320. It was built as an L-shaped Pele Tower, which is now incorporated in the East Wing of the Castle; the entrance being in the inside of the L, what is now called the "Tackety" door. The walls of this part of the house are up to eight feet thick, as can still be seen in the main dining room.

The Castle was one of a number of such fortified houses spread throughout the Border Country, being involved in the Border Wars which took place over the ensuing centuries. Along with the original town of Dunse it would have been damaged during the fighting, but was always rebuilt.

In 1696, the lands of Dunse and Crumstane were sold by public roup by the creditors of Sir James Cockburn of Cockburn and Ryslaw and were bought by William Hay of Drummelzier. William Hay was the second son of John, first Earl of Tweeddale; he had been given the lands of Drummelzier in Peeblesshire by his father in 1679. Since those times, the Castle has been enlarged on a number of occasions.

In approximately 1720, William Hay built on the West Wing, which extended the Castle to include what is now the small drawing room, beyond the main front door. This did not include the grand entrance which was added later.

In 1971, Robert Hay, grandson of William, built the North semi-circular tower, comprising the kitchens, the large drawing room and the bow-windowed bedroom, which have a magnificent view over the lake. He also built the stables and offices in the form of a square with an imposing clock tower. On both occasions, he used the architect James Baxter, whose simplicity of design for the stableyard is very effective.

Over the period 1818-22, the Castle was transformed into its present structure by William Hay, son of Robert. This was done in the style of early Gothic Revival and involved the extension of the Castle to the West, the addition of the grand entrance hall, all the towers and the castellations, and the building of the screen wall and crown arch to the west. William used as architect James Gillespie, afterwards known as Gillespie Graham who went on to have a celebrated career and whose works include Taymouth Castle, Armadale Castle on Skye, and the New Town of Edinburgh. The builder was William Waddell, who lived at Gavinton and the stone was taken from a quarry at Putton Mill on the outskirts of Duns. There is in the Castle, a drawing, signed by William Waddell, of the projected final design, but which differs from the actual finished product in a number of details.

The interior of the Castle was completely redesigned at the same time; the quality of the craftsmanship is exquisite, and most of this survives to this day.

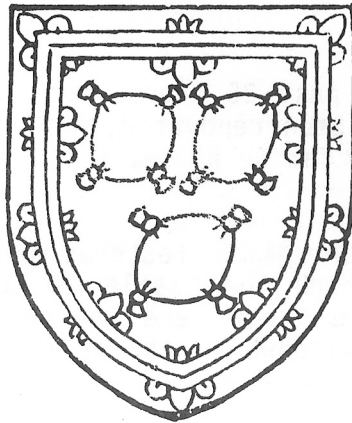
Over the past 25 years, most of the interior of the Castle has been renovated, and it is now a warm(!) and comfortable family house.

One of the main features outside is the Lime Avenue, down which the Castle is approached from the town. The lime trees were planted in 1726, many of which were blown down in the dreadful gale of October 1881; the trees were raised by means of machinery and replanted, in most cases, with success. Of the 49 trees in the avenue, approximately 35 are from the original planting.

Another feature of the Estate is the Lake, or Hen Poo, which forms the focal point of the Duns Castle Nature Reserve, managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Members of the public are welcome to walk round the lake and follow the paths which are signposted within the Reserve.

For those who are interested in reading more about the Castle and the Hay Family, there is, I understand, a copy of "Family of Hay of Duns Castle" by Francis S. Hay in the public library in Duns.

The Hay Family have long been proud of their association with the Burgh of Duns; Aline and I and the children hope this may continue for generations to come.



The Arms of Randolph, Earl of Moray: A silver shield with three red cushions within a "royal tressure" also red. The "tressure" is similar to that round the lion rampant in the Scottish Royal Arms, and remind us that Randolph was King Robert's nephew. The cushions are sometimes drawn in diamond shape. One of them appears in the shield of Duns Town Council ("inherited" by the Community Council). Earlsmeadow is named after Randolph.

Alexander Hay,
Duns Castle,

LEGERWOOD KIRK

Situated in an isolated rural area near the Lammermuir hills between Earlston and Lauder, Legerwood Kirk is one of the oldest religious houses in the Scottish Borders, and still holds regular services. Dr J.L. Trainer has explored the history of this ancient building for APRS and the Society is most grateful to Dr Trainer and to APRS for permission to reprint this article for the APRS Spring/Summer 1990 Newsletter.

The first record of its existence was in 1127 in a charter granted to the Church in favour of the Priory of Coldingham. Since then, it has been extensively repaired on a number of occasions, but many of its Normaneseque features are still recognisable.

It possesses one of the finest examples of a Norman arch within a small parish church in Scotland. The history of this arch is fascinating. Originally it divided the nave from the chancel but for centuries remained hidden as it had been covered over by the Kerrs of Morriston who had converted the chancel into a family burial vault. In 1898 W. Van Vleck of Legerwood, the British Charge d'Affaires to the court of Brazil, donated the money required to take down the wall and restore the arch to its original design.

Adjacent to the arch on the cap of a pillar is an eroded small protrusion. This was where in medieval times a grinning face of a demon or imp was placed to remind the preacher that the devil was ever present to answer his claims. Examples of these, more clearly depicted, can be seen on Iona and at Melrose.