

Support your local shops

Wightmans

Market Square, Duns.
Telephone: Duns 83726

*For Hardware, Gifts
and Gardening Goods, etc., etc.*

The Berwickshire Civic Society

Newsletter No. 14

Summer 1993



NETHERBYRES in 1875

MAKING THE MOST



**Make a Fleming House
your Home with:**

- * Freedom of design – making your house unique
- * A wide range of standard house designs
- * Complete design service with planning and building warrant/regulation applications
- * The highest Scandinavian standards of insulation
- * External cladding of brick, stone or timber

NOBODY HAS A FLEMING HOME LIKE YOURS

FLEMING
HOMES

T. Fleming Homes Ltd.
Station Road,
Duns, Berwickshire TD11 3BR,
Scotland.
Telephone Duns (0361) 83785.
Telex 72528 HAFLEM G.
Fax 83504.

OF YOUR DREAM

The Chairman's Report

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Chairman:

Major General Sir John Swinton,
Kimmerghame, Duns.

Vice-Chairman:

Lieutenant Colonel S. Furness,
Netherbyres, Eyemouth.

Hon. Secretary:

Mrs A. Totty,
Oaklea, Main Street, Gavinton.

Hon. Treasurer:

Mr Douglas Maxwell,
Ryslaw House, Duns.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Mr H. Aitchison
Mr R.G. Dodd
Mr A. Forsyth
Mr W. Gillie
Mr D. Hugonin
Mr J. Ingoldsby
Mr P. Leggate
Mr A. Lester
Mrs L.F. Machin
Lady McEwen
Mr W. Scott
Capt. R. Sinclair
Mr A. Swan
Major N. Thomson

The 1992 Annual General Meeting was held at Paxton House by kind permission of the Trustees. There was an excellent attendance and we were privileged to have a tour of the house after the meeting and a most interesting talk on it's history from Mr Kenneth Scotland, the Executive Trustee.

Since the A.G.M. your Executive Committee have met quarterly in Duns. At their Spring meeting they stood in silence as a mark of respect for the memory of Mr Neil Lawrence and Mr Don Marquis, committee members for many years who will be greatly missed.

The main subjects which have occupied our attention over the year are as follows:

Hume Castle As reported in last year's Newsletter, Hume Castle is once again open to the public and it's care, on behalf of the Society, is in the hands of Mr Karl Sommer, who lives in the old School opposite the Castle. He is most conscientious in his duties which consist of watching the security of the Castle and keeping the grass and weeds under control. For the latter task we have provided him with a strimmer.

It is astonishing - and very sad - to have to report that the massive Castle door, designed by David Mylne, with it's considerable metal lock, has been vandalised and at the moment of going to press cannot be closed. It will be repaired before the Autumn.

Thanks to the Scottish Borders Enterprise, an excellent car park has been constructed and an interpretation panel placed on a small cairn. With these two elements in place, Borders Region have signed the Castle from the main access roads. We are extremely grateful to both these organisations for this support.

The Castle was advertised as open as part of European Heritage Open Doors Day on 12th September and 42 people came. The Berwickshire News gave this event publicity and this brought most of the visitors. The Scotsman ran an article, with an excellent photograph, but neglected to say when or why the Castle would be open; the Southern Reporter declined to mention the event at all!

Your committee has decided that the Castle should be officially opened at 3pm on Wednesday, 28th July, when it is hoped that a member of the Home family will be present to perform the opening. The opportunity will also be taken to unveil within the Castle an oak seat, presented by the Society in memory of the late David Mylne. All members are invited to this opening and, since a number of people who have helped the Society over the Hume Castle project are also being asked, it is hoped that a good quorum of members will be able to attend.

Keep Berwickshire Tidy The 1992 Trophy was won by St. Abbs and at a presentation ceremony held in St. Abbs School on 20th October this was presented to the winners by Mrs Peter Gordon of Northfield. Certificates, very professionally inscribed by the Reverend Hugh McKay, went to Cocksburnpath, second, and to Cranshaws & Longformacus and Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth, who shared third place.

The 1993 competition was won, for the first time, by Chirnside. Second place was shared by Paxton & Hutton and Cranshaws & Longformacus. Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth came third. A presentation ceremony will be arranged to take place in Chirnside in the Autumn.

Robert Fortune As noted in last year's Newsletter, the 150th anniversary of his first expedition to China by this distinguished Berwickshire born plant hunter falls in 1993.

To mark the event, and with the co-operation of The Royal Gardeners' Benevolent Society and The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, your Society has arranged for the Summer House at Netherbyres to be refurbished and it's garden planted with plants associated with Robert Fortune. An inscribed stone, which members attending the A.G.M. on 26th July will be able to see, is to be unveiled when Netherbyres is opened officially on 16th September.

A short article on Robert Fortune by Mrs Dawn MacLeod Wilson will be found later in this Newsletter. Mrs MacLeod Wilson is the acknowledged authority on Robert Fortune and we are most grateful that she has found the time to write this article specially for the Society.

Berwickshire Local Plan This was discussed in Committee and considered to be in general an excellent document on which the Society had only a few very minor comments to make.

Cockburnspath Cross The original plaque placed on the Cross by the Society after it's last refurbishment in 1978 has succumbed to age, and the Society has agreed to fund it's replacement.

Duns Cross Your Society did not support the removal of the Mercat Cross from Duns Public Park to be resited in the Market Square.

Duns Show Following last year's high-point in the Society's fortunes - with the Hume Castle project complete and the Mouth Bridge saga brought to a satisfactory conclusion - it was decided that an exhibit at the Duns Show could be an anti-climax and that we would give the Show a miss in 1993.

Coldstream Burgh Standard Last year your Society contributed £50 to the cost of provision of new armorial bearings for Coldstream. This year we have contributed a further £10 towards a new Burgh Standard.

Planning Applications A list of Planning Applications received from Borders Region since the last Newsletter is printed at the end of this one. These applications are for Listed Buildings or for buildings in Conservation Areas. This year there have been 38, which compares with 32 in each of the last two years. These applications, and others of a controversial nature, are vetted by Mr Walter Scott of Gordon on the Society's behalf and we are very grateful to him for this time-consuming work.

1993 Annual General Meeting By kind permission of The Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society, the 1993 A.G.M. will be held at Netherbyres, Eyemouth, at 7 pm on Monday 26th July. As is now customary, wine will be provided by the Society and Colonel Simon Furness will speak about the history of Netherbyres House and it's transformation into a retirement home which those attending will then be able to see for themselves.

Twass summer tide: the cushat sang
His am'rous roundelay:
And dew, like clustered diamonds, hang
On flower and leafy spray.
The coverlet of gloaming grey
On everything was seen,
When lads and lassies took their way
To Polwart on the Green.

John Grieve

Robert Fortune

The plant collector Robert Fortune (1812-1880), whose travels in China and Japan brought us many garden plants of lasting value, including Winter Jasmine (Jasminum nudiflorum) and Bleeding Heart (Dicentra spectabilis), was born on the Blackadder estate near Edrom in Berwickshire. The eldest son of hedger Thomas Fortune and Agnes Redpath, Robert was removed to adjoining Kelloe estate soon after his birth.

Early in his life he showed a keen intelligence and a capacity for hard work, assets which helped him to rise with speed in his career as a gardener. From a first post as garden boy at Kelloe he went on to Moredun and thence in 1839 to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. Under the great William McNab he made excellent progress, and was soon sponsored for a post at the Horticultural Society's garden in London. At the early age of thirty Robert became Superintendent of the Hothouse Department at Chiswick.

A little later he acquired a post as the Society's collector in China - newly accessible after the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. The list of plants required by his employers was lengthy and conditions in China unsettled. Fortune's request for firearms was rejected, a cudgel being deemed adequate protection. Young Robert, stoutly claiming that a gun was essential, got his way in the end. This was lucky, for his own life and those of companions were more than once saved by prompt and accurate use of the weapon.

His work in the Far East spanned some twenty years and was carried out initially for the Horticultural Society (not then 'Royal') and later for the East India Company. The last expedition was made on his own account, sponsored by individuals at home. Fortune's later years were spent in seclusion at his London home, where he endured painful disability contracted on his travels.