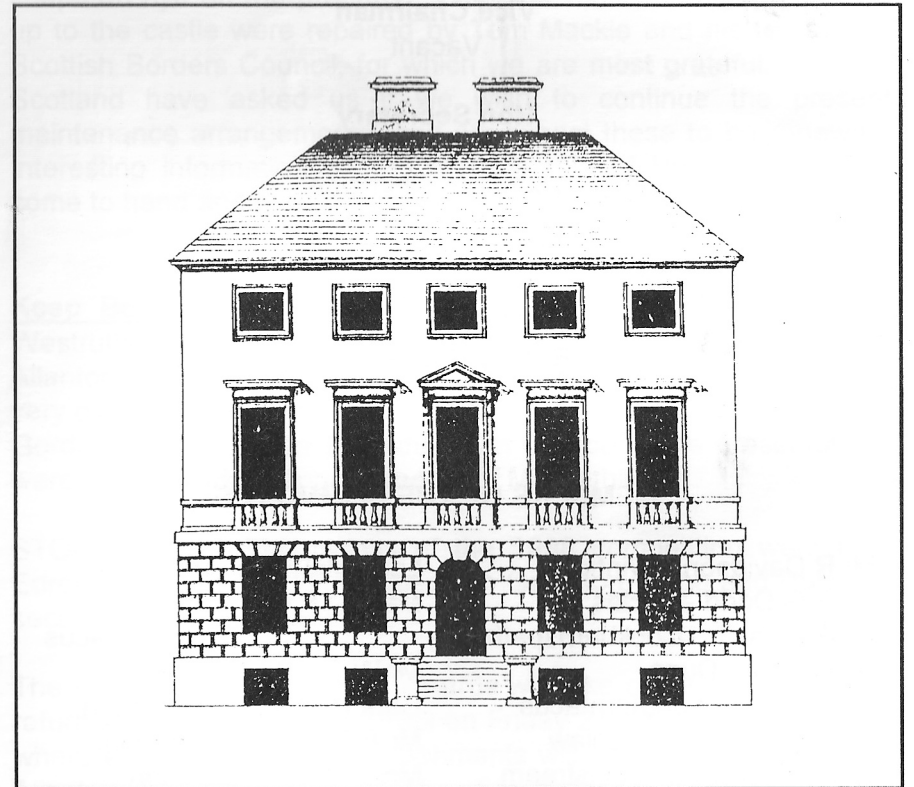


The Berwickshire Civic Society

Newsletter No 19

Summer 1998



James Adam, Façade of Gunsreen House c. 1753

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr R Davidson - Winfield	Lady McEwen - Polwarth
Mr R G Dodd - Eccles	Major J F MacKinnon -
Mr A Forsyth - Cockburnspath	Longformacus
Mr R Kent - Duns	Mr W Scott - Gordon
Mr D Lamb - Longformacus	Capt R Sinclair - Gavinton
Mr P Leggate - Greenlaw	Mr A Swan - Coldingham
Mrs L F Machin - Coldstream	Mrs A Totty - Gavinton

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since the 1997 Annual General Meeting at Polwarth your Executive Committee have met quarterly in Duns, and the main subjects which have engaged our attention have been as follows:-

Hume Castle The Society continues to run the property without major problems. Mr Karl Sommers, our key keeper, carries out routine maintenance and grass cutting with great efficiency and keeps an eye on the property. Over the winter, the steps leading up to the castle were repaired by Tom Mackie and his team from Scottish Borders Council, for which we are most grateful. Historic Scotland have asked us if we wish to continue the present maintenance arrangements, and we expect these to be renewed. Interesting information on the wartime role of Hume Castle has come to hand and is reported later in this newsletter.

Keep Berwickshire Tidy The 1997 competition was won by Westruther and Gordon, with Coldingham second and Edrom, Allanton and Whitsome joint third with Reston and Auchencrow. A very pleasant presentation of the trophy and certificates was held in Gordon Village Hall on Thursday 30th October. The presentations were made by Mrs Senga Tweedie of Middlethird.

STOP PRESS. The results of the 1998 competition were first, Edrom, Allanton and Whitsome, with Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth second and Burnmouth third.

The presentation of the KBT Awards will take place in the recently refurbished Allanton Village Hall on Friday 23rd October at 7.30pm where entertainment and refreshments will be provided by Edrom, Allanton & Whitsome Council. For further information please contact KBT Secretary Ray Davidson (01890 870259)

The Committee would like to thank everyone who made such an effort to tidy up for the competition. Berwickshire was looking tidier than for some years, with very few blackspots. A special commendation to the gentleman picking up the trail of litter left by the schoolchildren between Duns and Berwickshire High School at lunchtime on the day of the inspection.

Polwarth Thorn Thanks to the efforts of Tom Mackie, and his team from Scottish Borders Council, the Polwarth Thorn which had become very overgrown, and submerged with undergrowth, has been cleared. The railings surrounding it have been painted and the masonry wall repointed. It, or rather they, have been judiciously trimmed to removed dead wood, and a prop to support the oldest of the two thorn trees has been put in place. Direction signs have been erected off the main road, and an explanatory plaque attached to the railings. Hopefully the thorn will now be able to survive for some years yet. We are awaiting recent proof of its alleged ancient properties. Any lady prepared to supply such proof should contact the Chairman.

Polwarth Kirk There is no news of any repairs to the kirk, although the trees surrounding it, which were recently felled, have been replanted. The sad death of Mr Tom Fleming will no doubt delay progress. We are keeping a close watch on the situation.

Greenlaw Town Hall The Trustees are still seeking to find a new, long term use for the building and funds for it's repairs. Meanwhile it continues to look very sad, although improved by the window boxes and boards covering the vandalised windows. Taken in conjunction with the Castle Hotel across the road, they are the most important group of buildings, clearly at risk, in Berwickshire. It is to be hoped that progress can be made in the coming year to conserve them.

Marchmont Doocot The Doocot at Cothill Farm stands at the end of the grand avenue in front of Marchmont House, and forms the focus at the end of it. It is a category B building and has fallen into some disrepair. The Society has been in touch with the owner, Mr Oliver Burge, who has commissioned a report from one of our committee members, Mr Robin Kent. We are most grateful to Mr Burge for his interest in this important building. The next stage is to obtain agreement from Historic Scotland and to find the necessary funds to carry out repairs. Mr Burge has also expressed an intention to replant the beech trees either side of the grand avenue, to fill the gaps in it. It is good to know that the Marchmont Estate is in such good hands.

Gunsgreen House The Society has been consulted about the future of Gunsgreen House at Eyemouth. Owned by Scottish Borders Council and no longer required for its most recent use as a golf club house, it is necessary to devise a long term positive use for this important building. Listed as category A, Gunsgreen House appears to have been designed about 1753 for an Eyemouth Merchant, John Nisbet, and is the work of the Adam brothers in Edinburgh, most probably James and John. It later came into the ownership of the Homes of Wedderburn. It is unusual as it is a fine example of a Merchants House, as might have been found in Edinburgh's New Town, which has been sited on its own in open countryside. The building has been well maintained over the years, and many of its original internal features remain intact. The problem is to find a viable and suitable use for it in the long term. The Society will take a close interest in developments, and is committed to do everything it can to help.

Doors Open Day Last year the Society took part for the first time in "Doors Open Day" which is sponsored by the Scottish Civic Trust, and forms part of European Heritage Days; an initiative of the Council of Europe. We opened Hume Castle and Greenlaw Kirk Tower. This was the old County Jail, formed by several small rooms connected by a narrow winding staircase. Luckily the day passed without incident or accident, although the sight of several

small boys leaning over the low parapet at the top of the tower gave your Chairman a few anxious moments as he arrived at the end of the day.

This year we will again take part; this time in conjunction with Scottish Borders Council, who will be producing a pamphlet. "Doors Open Day" is on Saturday 19th September, and will focus on buildings in the Eyemouth area, including Gunsgreen House, Eyemouth Masonic Lodge (never open to the public before) a traditional smoke house, Coldingham Priory and a number of others. Details can be obtained from Eyemouth TIC nearer the time.

THE LOST HOUSES OF BERWICKSHIRE

The Society was pleased to help sponsor the exhibition of "The Lost Houses Of Berwickshire" in Eyemouth museum earlier this year. This was a photographic record of the great houses of Berwickshire demolished or materially changed, based on the photographs taken in 1875 by Archibald Swinton of Kimmerghame of the Principal "Gentlemen's Residences" of Berwickshire. Of the 59 houses photographed in 1875 over a third have disappeared or been substantially altered. The exhibition was opened by our President, the great grandson of the photographer. The exhibition has now moved to Thirlestane Castle. It is hoped it will be shown in Duns and Coldstream next year.

Jim Ingoldsby MBE

The Society was greatly saddened by the death of Jim Ingoldsby earlier this year. He was a sterling member of the Committee and will be remembered for his dedicated work in support of the Keep Berwickshire Tidy Campaign. A full tribute to him, written by our President, appeared in the local press. Perhaps our best memorial to him will be to keep Berwickshire tidy (and beautiful).

The following other subjects have received attention:-

Greenlawdean Forestry
Heritage 900, Coldingham
The Mouth Bridge
Lamberton Kirk
The Lord Home Memorial

Annual General Meeting

This will take place in the New Palace Centre, Greenlaw at 7.00pm for 7.30 on Monday 20th July. Wine will be served before the meeting, which will be followed by a short recital on the splendid HILSDON theatre organ. This is the only one of its type in the World and the biggest in Britain.

The Palace Centre is situated just off Greenlaw High Street, a few doors down from the Post Office.