

APPLICATION FORM

(To be completed in Block Capitals)

I (full name)

of

.....(full postal address)

hereby apply for Membership of the Berwickshire Civic Society and agree to be bound by the Constitution thereof. I deliver herewith my first Annual Subscription of £5.00

Signed Date

BANKERS ORDER

To the Manager of

(insert above the name and address of your Bank)

Please pay now to the Royal Bank of Scotland, plc, Market Square, Duns, Berwickshire for the credit of the Berwickshire Civic Society (Account No 00 11 16 67), and on the 6th April annually hereafter the sum of FIVE POUNDS (£5.00).

NameA/C No

Address

Signed Date

Please send this application form, with cheque or Bankers Order to:
Mr Douglas Maxwell, Hon Treasurer, Ryslaw House, Duns, Berwickshire
TD11 3HX

The Berwickshire Civic Society

Newsletter No 20

Summer 1999



Cothill Doo'cot Photo: R. Kent

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Kimmerghame, Duns
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Netherbyres, Eyemouth
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Mrs S Swan
Harelaw, Chirnside
01890 818321

Hon Treasurer

Mr D Maxwell
Ryslaw House, Duns
01890 840633

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr R Davidson – Whitsome
Mr R G Dodd - Eccles
Mr R Kent – Duns
Mr D Lamb – Longformacus
Mr P Leggate – Greenlaw
Mrs L F Machin – Coldstream

Lady McEwen - Polwarth
Mr W Scott - Gordon
Capt R Sinclair - Gavinton
Mr A Swan - Coldingham
Mrs A Totty - Gavinton

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since the 1998 Annual General Meeting at Greenlaw your Executive Committee have met quarterly in Duns, and the main subjects which have engaged our attention have been as follows:-

Hume Castle As our major, and indeed only, property, inevitably Hume Castle occupies much of our time. An outburst of vandalism last autumn meant the loss of a padlock on the wellhead and the notices on the wall inside the castle. Both have now been replaced. Complaints were made in the local press but never passed on to the Society, about water running down the road outside the car park. On investigation this proved to be caused by a blocked drain on the road verge, and of no direct responsibility to the Society. Sadly, Mr Karl Sommer, our long serving key keeper, has been suffering from ill-health and has asked to give up his responsibilities as he can no longer get up and down the hill. He has agreed to continue to keep a key, but the routine maintenance and grass cutting has been taken over by Mr Laing, 1 Cheviot View, Hume. Mr Sommer has kept the Castle grounds immaculately, and we will be sorry to lose his services.

We have also had a letter from Dr David Long of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, about the rare mosses and lichens growing on the trees at Hume (see letter reproduced later). Having checked with Historic Scotland that there are no objections, we propose to replant ash trees along the northern fence line, to replace those lost in recent years. Historic Scotland have also confirmed that they are happy to continue the present funding arrangements for Hume Castle.

Polwarth Kirk There is no news of any repair work on this fine Kirk.

Greenlaw Town Hall The good news is that a grant has been promised to the Greenlaw Town Hall Trustees for townscape improvements, but there is no progress on repairs to the building or in finding a long term use for it. All the windows have been boarded up, which looks pretty hideous, but should prevent further vandalism. We can only hope for better news this year.

Marchmont Doocot The Society has given £100 towards the cost of emergency repairs to make the building wind and water tight. The trees close to the building are being felled to avoid further damage in the future.

Mouth Bridge Thanks to pressure applied by the Community Council, Scottish Borders Council have promised to replace the defective mortar in the masonry of the bridge. However nothing has happened on site, and the mortar is still crumbling allowing water ingress to the joints.

Doors Open Day The Society duly took part in Doors Open Day, in conjunction with the Scottish Civic Society and Scottish Borders Council. Five buildings were open to the public including the Masonic Hall, which had never been open before. Guided walks were also held in Eyemouth and at Fort Point. This year Doors Open Day is centred on Hawick, so the Society is not involved.

Keep Berwickshire Tidy The 1998 competition was won by Edrom, Allanton and Whitsome, with Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth second, and Burnmouth third. A very successful and enjoyable presentation ceremony was held in Allanton Village Hall in October. We are very grateful for all the hard work put in by Ray Davidson and his team of inspectors.

STOP PRESS The results of the 1999 competition are first Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth, with St Abbs and Edrom, Allanton and Whitsome joint second. Third was Hutton and Paxton. Other subjects which have been brought to the attention of your Committee are:-

The Lord Home Memorial
28 Newtown St, Duns
Conservation Areas in Berwickshire
Dead elm trees
Duns Town Trail
Planning Appeal at St Leonards, Lauder

Annual General Meeting The Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 26th July, at Gunsgreen House, Eyemouth at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm. Wine will be served before the meeting, which will be addressed by Allan Swan who will give an update on plans for Gunsgreen House. Gunsgreen House is approached along "The Avenue" opposite the gates of Netherbyres.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In the period 6 January to 9 December 1998, our Architectural Adviser, Mr David Lamb, dealt with 79 planning applications and a further 8 in January 1999. Due to other commitments Mr Lamb has had to remit his work for the Society. We are very grateful for all he has done in the last 2 years. In his place we are extremely fortunate to have persuaded Mr Robin Kent to act as our adviser. As a distinguished architect specialising in historic buildings, he is an ideal replacement. He reports:-

Since I formally took over as architectural adviser on 8 March the Society has been consulted about 20 planning applications and I have formally commented on 6 of these on behalf of the Society. Several were for replacement PVCu windows, which I felt were detrimental to the appearance of the buildings. Members of the Society could remind their friends and neighbours that the installation of replacement windows to listed buildings, and to buildings in most of our conservation areas, requires consent, something often 'forgotten' by the salesmen: At present there almost seems to be an orchestrated campaign to replace long lasting, sustainable and often historic, timber windows to buildings in our conservation areas with clumsy plastic replacements of doubtful durability, and some very serious questions need to be asked about the service life, repairability and so-called ease of maintenance of these, before choosing them.

The quality of many of the planning applications we are asked to comment on is extremely low, both from the point of view of design appropriate for conservation areas and the information submitted, which is often incomplete and completely inaccurate.

I am frankly amazed that the Council registers some applications.

Conservation Area Review

I also passed on the Society's comments on the Council's review of conservation areas in Berwickshire, including our request for the extension of proposed 'core areas' in Duns and Eyemouth. Although we are happy with the idea that conservation area controls should be exercised with discretion, eg. by allowing extensions and window replacements in certain cases on the rear of properties, we are concerned that the Council's proposal for 'core areas', could result in the loss of historic street frontages in the non-'core areas' and reduce the quality of our conservation areas still

further.

Town Trail

On behalf of the Society I provided lengthy comments on and additional material for, the proposed Duns Town Trail. The Society strongly supports such initiatives, which raise public awareness of the value of the built heritage and I would like to encourage any members who wish to make suggestions for possible town trails or 'Millennium Walks' (like that proposed for Chirnside), or who have material that could be suitable for other town trails, to contact me or the Council's conservation officer direct (Mark Douglas at Newtown St Boswells).

Forestry Strategy

I offered some comments on behalf of the Society on the Council's draft structure plan for forestry, urging the Council to encourage the maintenance and restoration of the important designed landscape features of our great houses and the replanting of the broadleaf trees that used to line many of our rural roads, to enhance the environment for people and wildlife.

Other matters

The Society has written to the Council about the introduction without permission of plastic gas meter boxes on historic street frontages in conservation areas and the removal of historic street surfacing materials, particularly cobbled forecourts, just two factors we feel are contributing to a gradual erosion of quality.

We are also concerned about the very poor quality of the street lighting in many of our conservation areas. The street lamps specified by the Highways Department often seem more suited to motorways than historic town centre areas and are frequently out of scale and unsympathetic in appearance, despite the fact that modern lights of traditional design are available and can even have higher lighting outputs!

Members' views on this and the other issues raised above would be very welcome. Please contact me, Robin Kent, at: 29 Newtown Street, DUNS, Berwickshire TD11 3AS.

TREES AT HUME CASTLE - Letter from David Long, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, 6th April 1999

I would like to propose that the Berwickshire Civic Society undertake some tree planting at Hume Castle. Last week I visited Hume Castle with two colleagues (Dr Brian Coppins, lichenologist, and Sidney Clarke, photographer) to take photographs of the rare lichens and mosses which grow at Hume Castle on the rocks, and also on one of the few remaining mature ash trees near the Castle. This is for an illustrated book on mosses and lichens of Scotland which we are writing.

My own interest (as a Berwickshire botanist) goes back many years and I have visited the Castle many times. The rare mosses (eg. *Tortula princeps*) and lichens (eg. *Ramalina polymorpha*) on the rocks on the north and south sides of the Castle are reasonably secure from threat, but those growing on the old trees are in great danger. Twenty years ago there were several old elms and I think other ash trees along the roadside which had interesting mosses and lichens growing on the bark, but these are now gone and there remains only one mature ash along the roadside perimeter. This is a splendid specimen which supports a very fine collection of lichens (25 species including the rare *Rinodina pityrea*) and several interesting mosses (in particular *Tortula virescens*) which are very rare in the Borders. The tree benefits from the low-intensity grazing and lack of fertiliser drift which many old roadside trees in the Borders suffer from. If the last ash tree is felled or blown down, a major part of the biodiversity of the site will be lost.

We would therefore see the planting of some young ash trees along the edge of the north side of the field as highly desirable from a botanical standpoint. We would also like to plead that the old ash tree be retained as long as possible. As I am sure you are aware these new trees would contribute to the traditional landscape character of the Merse and enhance the environs of the Castle.

Personally I would be happy to assist in the purchase or growing of such trees and help to plant them. That might be a project we could involve local schoolchildren in and also get some publicity for Hume Castle and the Civic Society. The only real expense might be suitable tree-guards to exclude stock.

I would be very grateful if the Civic Society would consider this request.

KAROO HOUSE, RESTON

Reston is essentially a one-long-street village and this long street contains several considerable houses with names such as: Reston House, Pinewood and Eyebank; but one of the largest – which no longer advertises its name, probably because it was until recently a shop – on enquiry proves to be Karoo House. Now that's a funny name for Berwickshire! Surely there must be a story behind it? There is:

On 26th November 1859 James Logan, employed by the North British Railway Company at Reston Junction had a son, James Douglas Logan, of whom the Headmaster of Reston School was to write in June 1871: 'this boy is an excellent penman and a good arithmetician, besides being extremely smart and clever. He should obtain a good situation'.

Unfortunately, James Douglas Logan was not too interested in 'a good situation' for, aged 11, he ran away to sea and for three years was a cabin boy on a coastal sailing ship. Tiring of this, he returned to Reston where he became a railway clerk, but in 1877, aged 18, he foresook this steady job, which his father had held before him, and sailed for Australia in the vessel 'Rockhampton'. It has been said that his precipitate departure had something to do with an impending charge of poaching, but there is no clear evidence of this.

Rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the 'Rockhampton' was damaged in a storm and put in to Simonstown for repairs. This prompted our hero to try his luck in South Africa and to give Australia a miss. With £5 in his pocket he is reputed to have walked 30 miles to Cape Town, where he wasted no time in obtaining employment at the new railway station, rising in due course to become Station Master.

So successful was he in this appointment that he was soon advanced to District Superintendent of a section of railway line covering part of the Great Karoo, North of Cape Town. This was a very isolated area of semi-desert and the railway authorities stipulated that the incumbent must be married within three months of being appointed. Characteristically, Jimmy