
The Berwickshire Civic Society

Newsletter No. 21

Summer 2000



Lamberton Toll in 1933

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

Mrs L Mitchell - Gavinton
Lady McEwen - Polwarth
Mr W Scott - Gordon
Mr A Swan - Coldingham
Mrs A Totty - Gavinton

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since the 1999 Annual General Meeting at Gunsgreen House, Eyemouth your Executive Committee have met quarterly in Duns, and the main subjects which have engaged our attention have been as follows:-

Hume Castle Hume Castle rightly takes up much of the Society's time. I am delighted to report that Mr Karl Sommer seems to have had a new lease of life, and continues not only as our key keeper, but also has again become responsible for the maintenance, particularly the grass cutting, in the Castle. We have also formed a group of local volunteers into the "Friends of Hume Castle", thus strengthening our ties with the local community, particularly Greenlaw and Hume Community Council. We have planted ash trees and one oak along the boundary of the Castle field, to replace those felled in recent years, and to try to preserve the colony of unusual mosses and lichens, as reported in the last Newsletter. We have renewed the formal agreement with Historic Scotland for funding the routine maintenance and care of the Castle.

Polwarth Sadly we have nothing to report about any possible work on the Kirk. The Polwarth Thorn continues to flourish and the area inside the railings was sprayed in the summer to keep down the nettles and undergrowth. Recently a planning application was put forward for a development of 59 houses in the area of the former Polwarth village. This seemed to be far too many, and they were of an unsuitable suburban design. The Society, through its most able architectural adviser, put in a detailed objection to this proposal. We are all for suitable redevelopment of the village, provided the overall layout and design of the houses is sympathetic to the site and not a bit of Berkshire parachuted into Berwickshire.

Marchmont Doocot The owner is to be congratulated on making Cothill Doocot wind and watertight, and for felling the trees which were threatening to fall on it. We look forward to its full restoration in due course.

Greenlaw Town Hall We are assured that progress is being made over Greenlaw Town Hall, but it remains boarded up and a very sorry sight. Hopefully I can give better news at the AGM.

Gunsgreen House Members who saw round Gunsgreen House, Eyemouth at last year's AGM will be interested to know that funding is in place for phase I of the project – the conversion of the basement and lower ground floor into an exhibition area, and facilities for yachtsmen. Once work on this is complete an application for the major slice of funding for the two main floors will be made.

Keep Berwickshire Tidy Judging this year took place during the week 1st-7th May. The results of the competition are:-

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 st | Coldstream & District |
| 2 nd | Swinton & Ladykirk |
| 3 rd | Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth |

Overall the judges were impressed with the standard of tidiness in the towns and villages, but found the state of the main roads to be far more litter strewn than in previous years – particularly those roads emanating out from Berwick.. It is clear that much of the rubbish thrown down at the roadside originates from MacDonalds. What they are doing to try to educate their customers to take their litter home is not known, but it is clearly not succeeding. The AI in particular is in a disgraceful state, with all the lay-bys covered with litter and the evidence of fly-dumping. The local authority do their best to clear up this mess. Members are urged to report anyone they see dumping litter to the Police.

Annual General Meeting The Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 24th July at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm. The speaker will be Mark Douglas of Scottish Borders Council's Planning Department. The meeting will take place in the Cottage Tea Room at the Hirsell Crafts Centre.

Subscription It has been suggested that subscriptions should be payable at the AGM. As the date of the AGM is variable, and the change would require a formal amendment to the constitution, it is not proposed to change the present date of payment (6 April) but anyone who has not yet paid this years subscription is urged to do so on receipt of this Newsletter, to the Treasurer, using the form on the back of the Newsletter.

REPORT BY ROBIN KENT, ARCHITECTURAL ADVISER

In the period 1st June 1999 to 7th April 2000 the Society was consulted by the Council on 61 Planning and listed building applications. The majority of these did not require any comments, and some even received our encouragement. Assisted by members of the committee, our Architectural Advisor lodged reasoned objections to 20 applications.

Replacement Windows 8 objections were lodged against applications for unsuitable PVCu replacement windows, which we feel are a major factor in erosion of the quality of Berwickshire's historic buildings and conservation areas. PVCu window replacements are invariably detrimental to the character and appearance of older buildings because of their inability to fully replicate the appearance of traditional timber windows. There are also some very real doubts about the durability of PVCu windows and claims that they are 'maintenance free' are exaggerated. By contrast with PVCu, timber is a sustainable material and defective timber windows can be repaired and upgraded to meet modern performance standards if required. Many historic timber windows have proven service lives well in excess of 150 years and contain historic crown or plate glass with ripples, music lines or fire- sparkle which can add enormously to the character of old buildings. Please spread the good news that you do not need to replace them !

Signs 3 objections were lodged against unsuitable shop signs, where, again, plastic is making inroads. Sadly, many of our streetscapes are already suffering from garish, oversized, standard supermarket signs, some even blocking our whole shop windows. The Society recognises the need for advertising signs but is keen to encourage hand painted signs which respect the scale and design of street frontages, preserve surviving fascias and ornamental brackets, and introduce an element of unique local artistry, variety and interest into the street scene.

Major applications We have objected at length to 3 major applications, briefly summarised as follows: We felt that the proposed Scottish National Motorsport Museum was too large for the back garden of 42-44 Newtown Street, Duns, and we suggested alternative sites that would allow for a museum of truly national stature. We objected to an application for the demolition of the listed Whitehall House, Chirnside and the construction of an industrial facility on the rural estate, rather than on nearby disused industrial land. Finally, we objected to an application for a large speculative development of 59 houses on the Green at Polwarth. As a result of our,

and other objections, Whitehall House has been saved at least for the present. We are still awaiting the outcome of the other applications.

Quality of applications We are always glad to have the opportunity to provide the Council with our comments but continue to be consulted about applications which have been registered despite being patently incomplete, inaccurate or lacking important information, more often than not reflecting proposals that are ill thought out or damaging. Our Architectural Adviser has recently been able to contribute to the Scottish Executive consultation on the Report of the Conservation Control Working Group, suggesting that more comprehensive guidelines should be given on the content of applications. However, at present this remains a matter for the local authority and it can only be hoped that the Council will begin to refuse to register applications that are incomplete.

Street Improvements The Society has been pleased to note the improvements of street paving and lighting in Blackbull Street, Duns and the colourful new street signs proposed on Coldingham, but we remain concerned about the very poor quality of the street lights in many of our conservation areas, where motorway style lamp standards are completely out of scale and also unnecessary, given the availability today of traditional style lamps with high lighting outputs. We have welcomed (and contributed to) the new Town Trails but remain very concerned about the quality and location of the plastic notices in Duns and Eyemouth. We have still not received any response to our query regarding the Council's policy on the introduction of plastic gas meter and electricity meter boxes on historic street frontages and it is becoming apparent that despite the recent appointment by the Council of an enforcement officer, the will to take action to prevent such erosion of quality may still be somewhat lacking.

All this goes to show that the Society has a very real contribution to make in improving the local environment and we would encourage all members to remain vigilant and feel free to contact the Chairman or our Architectural Advisor (Mr Robin Kent, 29 Newtown Street, Duns, Berwickshire, TD11 3AS. Tel: 01361 884401, email: rk@robinkent.com) with any comments or concerns.

LAMBERTON TOLL

It is almost exactly 25 years since the decision was taken to demolish Lamberton Toll on the A1. This was one of the most unfortunate decisions taken by the former Berwickshire County Council. Although it allowed the "improvements" to take place to the A1 carriageway it deprived us of an historic landmark, and an important potential tourist attraction. In its heyday Lamberton Toll was a rival to Gretna Green as a site for marriage ceremonies and between 1844 and 1848 there was an average of 368 a year – just over one a day. On November 4th 1833 there were nine marriages in one day. The last marriage at Lamberton took place in the early 1900s. Much time and effort, so far to no avail, have gone into trying to reproduce a tourist attraction on the Border at Lamberton. How much better, and more profitable, it would have been if we had retained and developed the Original Gretna Green of Berwickshire.

KAROO HOUSE, RESTON

The article in last year's Newsletter on Karoo House, Reston, was kindly contributed by Major General Sir John Swinton. It is regretted that due attribution was not made at the time.

THE LORDS LIEUTENANT OF BERWICKSHIRE

The office of Lord Lieutenant dates from 1557 and was most effectively used by Elizabeth I. After the Union of Crowns in 1603, a general Commission was granted to Alexander, 1st Earl of Home as Lord Lieutenant of the Scottish Marches.

Lieutenancies were revived by Royal Warrant of George III in 1794, the chief role of the Lord Lieutenant being to command the militia, in any national emergency. In this he was assisted by a number of Deputy Lieutenants who were chosen for their military experience and expertise. It was from this necessity that the tradition of Deputy Lieutenants having a service background arose. In the present day they are chosen from those, both male and female, who have given service to the community.

The list of Lords Lieutenant of Berwickshire is as follows:

1794	The 10 th Earl of Home
1841	The 9 th Earl of Lauderdale
1860	David Robertson of Ladykirk
1873	The 7 th Duke of Roxburghe
1879	Lord Dunglass, later The 12 th Earl of Home
1890	The 13 th Earl of Lauderdale
1901	George Baillie Hamilton, Lord Binning
1917	Charles Barrington Balfour of Newton Don
1922	Colonel Charles Hope of Cowden Knowes
1930	The 13 th Earl of Home
1952	The 12 th Earl of Haddington
1969	Lieut Col Sir William Swan
1989	Major General Sir John Swinton

COCKBURN MILL by Betty Prentice

In the year 1232 Piers de Cockburn settled on the lands we know as Cockburn and Cockburn Law. The land remained in the possession of the Cockburn family until the nineteenth century. A castle was built which latterly fell into disuse and eventually ruin. The present farmhouse and buildings were built, in part, with stone from the castle.

Cockburn Mill is situated in the valley below, on the banks of the River Whiteadder where there is a natural ford. At one time a road crossed here, continuing up and over the hills. Traces of this road can still be seen, and possibly it formed part of a route between England and Scotland. The town of Duns is only 3 miles away, and early in the year 1400 there is mention of a route from Dunspärke to Colbanspeche (Cockburnspath). Curiously, in this present age (1980), the route chosen as being the shortest to carry pylons supplying electricity from Torness, near Cockburnspath, to England goes over the hills passing on Cockburn land close by Cockburn Mill and Duns. In 1940, although the old road had been non-existent for many years, it was still known as "The Old Drove Road" and there was still a strong wooden bridge covering the mill lade, to carry traffic.

It is possible that a water driven corn mill existed on the site before the thirteenth century – the grinding of grain was an essential part of life. If not it would be built by the Cockburn family. A Deed of Transfer dated 1496 states "Lands of Cockburn and mill thereon". The original may have been replaced with the substantial building existing today.

It was an important mill having 3 sets of grinding stones and 2 large wooden water wheels, supplying, chiefly, oatmeal to the countryside around. The water in the mill lade raced past the Miller's House, the walls of which were built to a thickness of thirty inches.

The Mill remained in use and working until 1946 when it was sold to the present owners.

Although the date of origin is not known it must be centuries old. When taken over part of the building was closed off, being unusable through age.

When this part was opened for repair it was found to contain a large wooden cylinder for cleaning grain, constructed before nails came into use; small wooden plugs held it together. The cylinder remains. Also found was