

COLDINGHAM PRIORY

“The Medieval Grave Slabs of the Scottish Borders”: a talk by Peter Ryder F.S.A.

Saturday 1 July 2023



Peter Ryder and the President inspecting the Coldingham grave slabs

In association with the Friends of Coldingham Society, the Club held a successful public event at Coldingham Priory.

With over 80 members, guests and members of the public present on a bright afternoon, the President welcomed those in the church by explaining why it had been decided to visit Coldingham for this event. There were two reasons: in the graveyard there is an important collection of grave slabs which are highlighted in the speaker’s book, which had been published in 2022 by the Club; and the westernmost window on the north wall is dedicated to Dr James Hardy, who was Secretary of the Club for more than 25 years in the late 19th century. For the benefit of those who were not Club members, the President spoke about the Club and its activities and said that applications for new members were being encouraged as it approached its 200th anniversary in 2031.

The President then introduced George Prentice, Chair of the Friends of Coldingham Priory, to give an illustrated talk about the history of the Priory, which was well received by the audience. Further information about the timeline of the Priory can be accessed at <https://www.coldinghamparish.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/COLDINGHAM-PRIORY-TIMELINE-Copy.pdf>

Having thanked Mr Prentice, the President said that the Scottish Borders is a region which is rich in history but that much of it, if not already lost, damaged or destroyed, is at risk through natural

weathering, new land management practice, societal change, and other causes This makes it all the more important for records to be made of what still exists. Peter Ryder has spent many years travelling across northern England and southern Scotland recording medieval grave slabs before they are forgotten or lost. Having lived in Otterburn before moving to Fife, he was able to record many slabs in the Scottish Borders through photographs and drawings and the Club was pleased to be able to publish his book. Peter Macdonald, the Club's Editing Secretary, was thanked for his efforts in designing the book and arranging for it to be printed and published.

Mr Ryder then gave an informative talk about his work in the Borders and beyond for which the President asked those present to show their appreciation. After signing copies of the book, he took interested attendees to the Coldingham slabs situated in the graveyard and explained their various markings. He expressed concern that, since his last visit, there had been further, significant weathering of the stone.

Mr Ryder's book "The Medieval Grave Slabs of the Borders" (ISBN 9780951643457) is available for purchase through the Club's website.