

President's Report October 2022

This year the Club has held six meetings and visited ten places of interest.

The first meeting of the year was held on April 28th and 20 members visited Howick Gardens in Northumberland. The garden includes one of the largest collections of wild origin plants in the UK. Despite the ravages of Storm Arwen, the Estate, which is also well known for its spring bulbs and woodland garden, was a pleasure to visit. The recently restored Visitor Centre in the Hall now has two restored rooms with full public access as well as displays about the Garden and Arboretum. It would be well the effort to plan regular visits to the Garden to observe the changing seasons.

On May 19th about 20 members gathered at Cocklawburn for a preliminary talk by Elizabeth Devon and Sandra Gann before heading for the coast. The objective of the visit was to explore the Geology and Industrial Archaeology of the area. Elizabeth led us on slow, "Nat's pace", walk which took us through an effectively "post-industrial" landscape to look at the geology which includes a limestone pavement and clearly displayed geological layers which were very well explained. It was one of those classic days out on part of the fascinating shoreline of our region. Thanks also to Nigel Summerling for his input regarding the area's industrial past.

The third meeting of the year took place on June 9th and started with a visit to Stobo Kirk. Julian Birchall showed members around the 12th Century Kirk which is allegedly on the site of a 6th Century religious building founded by St Kentigern.

Later that morning Agnete Samdahl, the new owner, guided us around the Japanese Water Garden originally built by Hylton Philipson of Stobo Castle. The gardens cascade down the dene from a lake and contain a wonderful variety of plants. Many dating from its creation.

The majority of members then decamped to the Botanic Gardens at Dawyck for lunch.

In the afternoon Julian and Rosalind Birchall invited members to their walled garden at the Old Manse at Drumelzier. A beautiful site stretching down to a tributary of the Tweed.

A planned event at Dunglass was unfortunately postponed. Members have been informed of the reasons for this in the June newsletter.

The fourth meeting, on Monday August 22nd, involved a trip to East Lothian. In the morning 16 Members enjoyed a private visit to Gosford House near Longniddry. The seat of the Earls of Wemyss and March, Gosford is set in 5000 acres of coast and parkland and was one of the last commissions of Robert Adam. The neo-classical mansion is considered to be one of his finest works. The house also contains a remarkable number of artworks. In the afternoon Bill Nimmo of the Dirleton Village Association took us for a perambulation ending up in the splendid church.

Some Members also took the opportunity to visit the unusual and most attractive gardens at Dirleton Castle.

The fifth meeting on September 8th took Members back to the Borders. James Pringle , Laird of Torwoodlee, welcomed Members to the Estate. John Dent led us up to the Broch, one of only three in the south of Scotland and built on the site of an Iron Age hill fort. John explained the history of the site and its significance. Members also enjoyed the splendid views of the surrounding hill and of Wedale, the valley of the Gala Water. Having descended from the Broch the party were guided round the exterior of the Palladian Villa by James Pringle whose family home it had been from 1783. We then moved to the ruined Torwoodlee Tower, built in 1601 and the previous seat of the Pringles. In the afternoon Members met at Old Gala House from where John Gray of the Old Gala Club took us on a perambulation in the old town. Having visited a number of significant sites Members returned to the museum in torrential rain.

The sixth meeting on Thursday 27th will be a morning visit to Duns Castle and, in the afternoon, the AGM and Presidential Lecture.

Many thanks to the members of the Field Activity Group for putting together such a varied programme.

Chris Neville Taylor. President