

Field Trip Report 27<sup>th</sup> October Duns Castle visit prior to the AGM which was held in the Volunteer Hall in Duns.

Thirty club members attended this visit where we were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Alick Hay whose home is Duns Castle.

It was a beautiful autumnal day, the trees on the avenue up to the castle still holding their yellow and orange leaves and the day mild and windless. Mr. Hay met us on the gravel at the front of the castle which has been the home of the Hay family since the end of the 1600s.

We were told about the exterior of the building and the phases of it's development from it's original keep style. The last substantial alteration work to the design of the building was done between 1816 and 1822 by Colonel Hay the architect being James Gillespie Graham. The castle has interesting gargoyles decorating the exterior and some are believed to depict Duns 'worthies' of the period. We entered the castle by the main door and made our way up the shallow treads of the staircase to the dining room where we had refreshments provided by our hosts.

We were shown the major public rooms on this first floor and admired the woodwork on the window frames and panelling and a magnificent mirror with a heavily carved frame. Through his comprehensive talk about the family portraits Mr. Hay gave us a detailed history of his family and their connections with some of the major family lines in Scotland. There were several amusing tales of picture provenance and the attempted fraudulent sale in America of a painting which the Hays own and hangs at the castle. When the auction house was told of their 'error' the painting was hastily removed from the sale catalogue. In recent years the castle has been used as a venue for weddings and is the focal point for many local events. Famously it was the location for the filming of the 1997 film Mrs. Brown.