



THE BERWICKSHIRE NATURALISTS' CLUB

Instituted 22 September 1831

www.bnc1831.co.uk

June 2022 Newsletter

Dear Member

Welcome to our second Newsletter of 2022. We have had three very successful trips so far this year and were daring to hope that we were back to business as usual.

Unfortunately, as we all know, the best laid plans “gang aft agley” and we have had to cancel our proposed activity for July. More information below. However, if you are at a loose end on a clear day sometime in July it would be worth taking a trip to the **Hume Castle Indicator**. On a recent trip it appeared that some members were unaware of this device that was set up to mark the centenary of the Club. Details below

<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1273711> The views are terrific.

Please note that whilst our visits on the 22nd of August include guided tours with restricted numbers all Members are welcome to explore the grounds at Gosford and Dirleton with us.

Log in to our website <https://www.bnc1831.co.uk/> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Berwickshire-Naturalists-Club-100910404910462> for updates on this year’s programme and our other activities.

Best wishes

Chris Neville-Taylor, President

Rediscovering Dunglass 13th / 14th July

This event has been cancelled. With a month to go a combination of disappointingly low advance ticket sales and the imminent need to honour certain financial commitments has made it unwise to continue.

We are determined to ensure that the preparations of our fantastic selection of speakers will not have been in vain and hope that a more compact event in a different format and with better access to public transport can be arranged for next year. A publication of papers is still under discussion.

Regarding the proposed programme of walks, this would have been negatively affected by the devastating effect of Storm Arwen on East Lothian and Berwickshire. Next year, subject to the agreement of the Dunglass Estate, the Berwickshire Naturalists’ Club would be happy to organise some of the walks as a separate event.

Events in August and September

Monday August 22nd

GOSFORD HOUSE AND DIRLETON VILLAGE

MORNING VISIT: GOSFORD HOUSE, LONGNIDDRY, EAST LOTHIAN

The morning visit is to Gosford House, Longniddry, East Lothian (NT449787)([///fries.kiosk.segmented](#))

A private tour has been arranged and will commence at 11-30 am. Meet at 11-15 am on the gravel parking area beside the house.

Attendees are permitted to explore the Pleasure Grounds to the south of the house on foot. The terrain is flat, there are attractive boating and curling ponds and the lawns afford lovely views of the south face of the house. Allow at least 30 minutes before the meeting time to do this. There is no additional charge.

The price of the tour is fixed for a maximum of 15 participants and the cost will be £15 per person, payable on booking (see below). The tour of the house will last approximately 1 ½ hours. In the event that more than 15 members wish to participate, there will be a waiting list.

Gosford House, the seat of the Earls of Wemyss and March, is set in 5000 acres of coast and parkland in East Lothian. The house is a neo-classical mansion which was one of the last commissions of Robert Adam. It was completed a few years after his death in 1800 and is widely accepted to be an outstanding example of his later work.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/online-exhibitions/great-scottish-interiors/gosford-house-east-lothian/>

The Marble Hall, in the south wing, was completed by William Young in 1891. It is three storeys in height with an elegant double staircase which leads to a surrounding picture gallery, which contains a fine collection of paintings, which are often lent to important exhibitions. The internal detail of the Hall combines Italian and Palladian influences.

The extensive Pleasure Grounds date from the late 18th century and include parkland, and boating and curling ponds. The layout is first shown on a plan by Forrest in 1799 and confirmed by Ainslie's survey in 1808. The formal garden to the west of the house was enclosed with a low stone wall and small square temples as part of the 1891 reconstruction.(www.parksandgardens.org/places/gosford-house/)

There are toilets in the house but no catering facilities. As access is via steep marble steps, unfortunately the house tour is NOT suitable for those of restricted mobility. Bags and purses cannot be carried around the house as they may inadvertently knock items or trigger alarms. They should be left in the car or in the cloakroom inside the house.

DIRECTIONS

Follow the A1 to Haddington then take the A6137 towards Aberlady. Turn left onto A198 direction Longniddry. At the Gosford House North Lodge turn left through the arch (the

gate will be open) and follow the red arrow pointing to the right. Parking is in the gravel courtyard. There is no shade for cars.

BOOKING

The first 15 members to book via Eventbrite will be given a place on the private tour. Others will be placed on a waiting list. If there are sufficient numbers, efforts will be made to arrange a second tour.

Please book by 15th August 2022 at https://bnc_gosford.eventbrite.com

LUNCH OPTIONS

Subject to the weather, there are numerous options for picnic lunches: The Gosford House grounds; the Bents at Longniddy (part of the John Muir Way) with open views across the Firth of Forth; Aberlady; Gullane beach; Dirleton village green (adjacent to the castle (see below)) or Yellowcraigs beach with its view of Fidra Island.

Alternatively, the Walled Garden café at Archerfield (NT502838 <http://glassware.hotels.eternity>) is recommended as it is then possible to see the west exterior of Archerfield House, a magnificent mansion house dating from the 17th century and with alterations by Robert Adam. Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange a visit to Archerfield as the house is inextricably linked with the Village and Castle of Dirleton.

Otherwise, refreshments can be purchased in Aberlady, Gullane and Dirleton en route to the afternoon rendezvous.

AFTERNOON VISIT: DIRLETON VILLAGE TOUR WITH OPTIONAL VISIT TO DIRLETON CASTLE GARDENS

The afternoon visit is a guided tour of the village of Dirleton, East Lothian which is kindly being given by Bill Nimmo, a long-standing member of the Dirleton Village Association. Numbers are restricted to 15. There is no charge for this tour but, for those who wish to see the unusual and most attractive gardens within the castle grounds, there is an admission charge (Historic Scotland members enter free, Adults 16-64 £3-50 and Concessions £2-50).

Meet at 2-15 pm outside the entrance to Dirleton Castle, which is adjacent to the public car park and public toilets.



The Castle Bowling Green



The Castle Garden

Dirleton is one of the prettiest of East Lothian's conservation villages, set along the south side of the Forth on the coastal road between Gullane and North Berwick. It is characterised by a large village green surrounded by a maze of pantiled houses, historic Dirleton Castle and Dirleton Kirk, two inns and, nearby, the popular and spectacular Yellowcraig Beach with its views of Fidra.

The prehistory of Dirleton is represented by iron age settlements and burials and by a record of a fort on Craigs Hill to the west. It is likely that a settlement had become established by the seventh century.

In the mid-twelfth century King David I of Scotland gave the lands of Dirleton to the Anglo Norman de Vaux family who initially settled at Eldbotle, a mile northwest of the current village, and built a church at Gullane. Around 1240 they built Dirleton Castle, one of the early stone castles in Scotland. It was damaged during the Wars of Independence in the late thirteenth century but rebuilt by the Haliburton family and extended by the Ruthvens who also added the dovecote and gardens.

The church at Gullane ceased to meet the needs of its parish in 1612 and was abandoned in favour of a new church at Dirleton. The manse was moved eighteen years later to the west side of Dirleton Green and is now known as the Old Manse. The church was funded by local landowners.

The economy of Dirleton has historically been based on agriculture, initially a peasant system but replaced by a few farms heavily dependent on manual labour. Since the mid twentieth century mechanisation has radically reduced the need for employees. The village has mainly become a dormitory for people working elsewhere.

The village still maintains the characteristics of an estate village with many buildings of architectural interest, the centrally positioned castle and the extensive village greens. The Archerfield House east lodge lies to the west of the greens. The kirk is, arguably, the earliest post-Reformation church in Scotland. Much of the present lay out of the village reflects the work carried out by Lady Mary Nisbet Ferguson who inherited the estate from her father. She had previously been the first wife of Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of

Elgin during his term as Ambassador Extraordinaire to the Ottoman Empire and was one of the most influential and wealthiest heiresses of the late 18th and early 19th century. It was to Archerfield that Lord and Lady Elgin returned while awaiting the arrival in England of the Parthenon marbles.

Regrettably, like other sites managed by Historic Scotland, the castle itself is not open to the public due to safety concerns. It will be possible to view parts of the castle from outside the wall during the village tour. The castle itself is one of Scotland's oldest surviving strongholds, with towers dating from the 13th century. For four hundred years it was a fortified residence to three successive families: De Vaux; Haliburton and Ruthven. Following abandonment, Cromwell's siege in 1650 rendered the castle unfit for military use. Dirleton estate was then purchased by the Nisbet family in the 1660s and, while they never restored the castle to a residence preferring to live in the newly constructed Archerfield House, they did turn the ruins into an important feature in their new designed landscape. Descendants of the Nisbets owned the Castle until it was gifted to the National Trust for Scotland in 1980.

The gardens which can be visited, despite the castle itself being closed, date from the late 1800s. The formal Victorian west garden was reconstructed to its original design in 1993, while the north garden, sheltered by the external wall of the castle, is a beautiful example of an Arts and Crafts garden. Its herbaceous border is, by repute, the world's longest. The garden has a rare ginkgo, or maidenhair, tree and a bowling green which was laid out sometime in the 17th Century and remains on its original site, having previously been a knot garden. King James VI is said to have played bowls there, although this cannot be confirmed. If this is the case, it makes the bowling green one of the oldest, if not the oldest, green still in use in Scotland.

DIRECTIONS

If travelling from Gosford House, allow approximately 15 minutes to reach Dirleton via A198 direction North Berwick. At the first sign for Dirleton turn left into Edinburgh/Main/Rd B1345 and proceed into the village. With Castle Inn on your left and the village greens ahead, turn right to the public car park (and public toilets).

If travelling from the A1, Dirleton can best be reached by either turning off at Thistly Cross, Belhaven roundabout and then following the road past Tantallon Castle and the Bass Rock through North Berwick or turning off at Haddington, crossing the Garleton Hills with open views north to Fife and following the signs for Dirleton.

The guided tour of the village will be suitable for disabled visitors, for the most part being on footpaths and tracks. It is hoped that we will gain access to the interior of the kirk. For those wanting to access the castle gardens (either before or after the tour), the paths are suitable for disabled visitors.

Public Toilets are available at the Castle car park.

Numbers are limited to 15. A waiting list will be maintained if the visit is over subscribed. There is no charge for the guided tour but charges (as above) apply for those who wish to visit the castle gardens.

Please book no later than 15th August 2022 through

https://bnc_dirleton.eventbrite.com

Thursday 8th September

TORWOODLEE ESTATE (TD1 1UD) and GALASHIELS OLD TOWN (TD1 3JS)

Meet at 11.00am at Torwoodlee Mains (NT464 378; postcode above)

James Pringle, Laird of Torwoodlee welcomes the Club to enjoy this walk around his estate, which has been in the Pringle (originally Hoppringle) family since 1501 and will include the ruined, but recently consolidated Torwoodlee Tower of 1601 and the exterior of the fine Palladian villa which has been the family's home since 1783. The charming policies straddle part of the Catrail, an earthwork which in antiquity separated the fertile Tweed lowlands from the barren hills around. This is overlooked by a 250m high spur on which are the remains of an Iron Age hillfort and one of only three known broch towers from the south of Scotland. Fort and broch have been explored in the past, not least in 1950 by Prof. Stuart Piggott (recently portrayed in the 2021 film *The Dig*) and still attract the attention of archaeologists. Our climb to the fort will be rewarded by extensive views of the surrounding hills and Wedale, the valley of the Gala Water in which nestles the town of Galashiels. The walk should take about 1½ hours.

At 2.30pm reconvene at Old Gala House in Scott Crescent, Galashiels (NT492 358; postcode above).

Modern Galashiels grew from a small Burgh of Barony that was established in 1599 by James Pringle of Old Gala House, which itself dates from 1583 and is where our perambulation will begin. Our walk around the Old Town will be guided by John Gray of the Old Gala Club, take about 1 hour and encompass an history of the town from its modest origins to its dramatic expansion into a centre of textile production in the Industrial Revolution. Old Gala house is open to the public free of charge and Members are encouraged visit before or after the guided walk.

Directions

Take the A72 Peebles road from Galashiels and after passing S M Motors and Nice Twice Emporium on your left, take the next right onto a farm road which winds back up the hillside to Torwoodlee Mains, where there is a large open space for parking and where the walk will commence. Sturdy footwear is essential and there are no toilet facilities accessible on this part of the visit.

The walk around Galashiels starts from Old Gala House, which is located on Scott Crescent and is not more than 10 minutes' walk from Tesco *via* Paton Street and St John Street (turn left at the top).

Whether stopping for coffee on the way to Torwoodlee or returning to Galashiels afterwards, there is parking in the town centre for two hours free of charge at Tesco (just off the A7) as well as a café and toilets in the store. Other cafés within easy walking distance are located on Market Street, Bank Street and Channel Street.

There is no limit to number of participants on this trip but please logon to https://bnc_torwoodlee.eventbrite.com to help us manage the event.

All Our Yesterdays

A search for the first reference to Gosford in the History came up with this paragraph from Dr Johnson's first anniversary address on September 19th 1832

Birds. At our meeting in July, it was mentioned that a male bird of the rose-coloured ouzel (*Pastor roseus*) had been shot at West Ord, in the vicinity of Berwick, on the 13th of that month, by the Rev. Mr Campbell. No previous instance of the occurrence of this beautiful bird in North Durham is known ; and very few instances of its occurrence in the north of England are on record 1 . It is a summer visitant, coming to us at uncertain intervals ; compelled, perhaps, to make these parts by the force of some contrary storms : and, in this respect, it resembles another bird, the Egyptian goose (*Anas cegyptiaca*), a small flock of which is recorded to have visited the Tweed, at Carham, in the beginning of February last 2 . This flock, as is conjectured by Mr Selby, may probably have made its escape from Gosford, the seat of the Earl of Wemyss, upon the Firth of Forth, where numbers of these birds are kept in the artificial pieces of water.