

BNC Visit to Inchcolm Island on 8th May 2024



The view from the central point on the island

22 members of the Club under the leadership of the President visited Inchcolm Island on Saturday 8th May 2024. Inchcolm Island, named for St Colomba, is dominated by an important Augustinian Abbey, which was very sensibly built on the island to deter raiders. The Abbey was thereafter frequently raided. However, the set of buildings that remain are the best preserved of early monastic sites in Scotland. The island has a strategic position in the Firth of Forth, and was suitably fortified in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a good wildlife refuge, and the visit in May was timed to allow the breeding sites for sea birds to be observable.

The visit was greatly enhanced by the first fine and warm weather for a while. Gathering at South Queensferry in the shadow of the Forth Rail Bridge, the commercially operated ferry to the party to the island. A briefing on what could be seen and some of the history of places passed was given across the boat intercom, and on arrival on the island, a further briefing was given by the island warden. Thereafter members were free to pursue their own interests. The buildings are well explained by both signage at appropriate locations, and within a dedicated visitor centre.

Members visited the raucous gull nesting sites, and observed a number of common species, as well as a small colony of Puffins. The species seen are not as diverse as those on the Isle of May, but nevertheless were worth the visit.

Philip Rowett, the club Librarian, gave a tour of the 19th and 20th century coastal defences despite issues of difficult terrain and hostile bird life.



The boat trip back to South Queensferry took us below all three of the bridges across the Firth of Forth allowing us to see these significant structures from an unusual perspective, and a further commentary gave us detailed information about the bridges and other buildings of interest that could be seen on the shoreline.



