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The attendance of our Wednesday walks and our Saturday outings has been much the same as last year, even though the weather has been appalling on some of the walks. We have also seen one or two new faces along with the regulars which is very encouraging. The feedback is very positive which gives encouragement to the people who organize these outings.

The A.G.M., unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control, was held at Alloa Academy. This was attended by around 20 members. Mrs Roy has agreed to stay on as Chairperson for a further 6 months. Susanne McEwan, however, stepped down from the committee due to other commitments. Margaret Forsyth was voted on, so the status quo has been kept. On the subject of the “committee” we really could be doing with some new members to help out, so if anyone feels inclined to join, please speak to any committee member. It was agreed that the membership fee would be increased to Single Adult £9.00 and Adult (2) £12.00

Scott Paterson from R.S.P.B. gave an excellent talk after the business was concluded. Jack Archibald has written a piece on this in the newsletter. I am sure we all missed having our usual refreshments after the meeting but alas this was not permitted on the premises.

We now have a new book which has been produced over the last few months. The title:- “*The Craigrie and Gartmorn Lades.*” This book was first printed in the 1970’s, the work of Murray Dickie, who has been instrumental in updating the recent edition. It so happens, it is the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of Gartmorn Dam and the lade system. This book is on sale to members and public, cost £4.00. A list of our publications including this one, can be found on our Web site <http://www.cfss.org.uk> .

I take this opportunity to thank all the members who come along on a regular basis and support “The Field Studies” in winter and summer events. I’m looking forward to seeing you all on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011, in the Tommy Downs Room, Alloa Town Hall at 7.30pm.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**  
**Presented on behalf of the Trustees of Clackmannanshire Field**  
**Studies Society on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2011.**  
**41<sup>st</sup> Annual Report**

Once again I have pleasure in presenting this Annual Report detailing the activities of the Society from the previous AGM to the present.

It was passed by Council that the date for the AGM should be moved from late April to early May owing to the bank statements being received at the end of April leaving a very short time to compile the accounts for presentation - now moved to the second Monday in May. During the year the Council met 10 times.

As usual it has been a very busy year - the Summer outings saw an increase in numbers and the heavens were good to us. We started off with the Annual Field Trip, to the south east Borders, again using the Waverly Hotel in Melrose. Twenty members took part in what was a most enjoyable experience. The Winter Talks programme has just been completed with audiences numbering circa 40. Subjects covered were varied including topics such as the Port of Airth, Russian Boxes, The Stirling Heads to mention a few. For the latter part of the programme we have had to vacate our usual premises in the Town Hall owing to maintenance work being carried out. The remainder of our programme has been housed in Alloa Academy, and though its situation is some distance from the town centre, audiences have not suffered too much. Thank to those who have made the effort. Reports on the meetings have been written up in the present Newsletter.

We miss not having the luxury of some refreshment after the meeting. We ought to be back in the Tommy Downs Room for the coming season.

In April this year we had an earlier field trip to Dornoch; again a repeat of a Field Trip in 2003. Thanks to the computer for saving the earlier work

and making the planning so much easier, 19 people attended. The weather was good and there were many interesting sites and fascinating small, local museums to visit. Why is it impossible to establish a museum in Alloa?

For Doors Open Day we were in attendance at the Graveyard and Mausoleum. The attendance within the Mausoleum numbered 47 plus, some visited the graveyard on their own using the booklet "Memento Mori" as a guide. All the copies we had with us were sold out. Doors Open Day is always a worthwhile venture. A re-print of the booklet has been done and is available at a small cost of £1.00. A circular walk round Gartmorn has been arranged for the coming Doors Open Day. See Eddie Stewart.

Found among my collection, the booklet Craigrie and Gartmorn Lades, written 1970 by Murray Dickie, has been edited, copyright established and some funding found for re-printing. The cost per copy will be £4.00. A Council Fund for such projects has been awarded and the manuscript is now at the printers and available soon..

Planning - some anxiety that March Glen may be a new site for travelling people. We joined Coalsnaughton in protesting that the site was not suitable as it was on a hill and encroached on peoples' gardens. The protest was successful.

Once again the case of a Tourist Outlet for the County was discussed. Difficult to find an outlet for the selling of local books. Our main outlet is Alloa Tower who sell "Alloa Tower and the Erskines of Mar" for us.

Eddie & Jack attended the Forum of The Local History Society, a Society that is finding the going tough - the meeting was held to asses fund raising.

A new Bio-Diversity officer has been appointed - Yvonne Boles - we have not met her yet and we should invite her as a speaker. The building that used to house the St. Johns Infant Department and is situated at the top of

Ludgate - its future is uncertain. Luckily some small craft businesses have set up business there.

The Beam Engine building will become a Wildlife Centre for Scotland and two new houses are to be built at the site. The Equestrian Centre has been bought by the RSPB. Have not heard what is happening with regard to the Wind Farm on the bank of the Forth.

The 2010 Coffee Morning was held in the Moncrieff Church Hall and raised a sum of £322.90. The 2011 Coffee Morning will be held in the Ludgate Church Hall. Information will be issued at a later date.

A decision has been made with regard to a contribution towards the cost of petrol when on the summer outings. It was agreed that £5.00 should be paid to the driver.

**E.K. Roy, M.B.E. Chairperson.**

## **OBITUARY**

### **A Personal Appreciation of the late Hilde Axien**

#### **Hilde Axien 1920 - 2011**

It is with sadness that the news has come of the passing of Hilde on 20<sup>th</sup> May this year. She was known to many within the County for being an enthusiastic Rambler, Golfer, Amateur Historian, Artist and member of CFSS for most of her twenty five years in Alloa, having made it her home.

My wife and I were walking along the coastal path towards Port Vasgo in Sutherland and met “the German lady” who was also a fellow member and who became a friend. That day developed into an understanding and exchange many times when back in Alloa over cups of Lapsang Souchong tea. Hilde enjoyed this. Though not to every one`s taste, it complemented her Germanic pastries which one just had to try.

Winter time was spent planning her trips for the next summer although many were made also in the depth of winter. Hilde was always impeccably dressed in the latest of colourful outdoor wear on her search for scenes to capture and stones to paint, which were usually given as little personal Christmas reminders.

Summer conversation was where she had been and where she intended to be. She was an expert driver and members were always glad of a seat in one of her favourite Vauxhall cars. One week end is most memorable being that to the Island of Skye. This was blessed with heat wave conditions and some rather scary single track roads but as usual they were navigated with skill and without fuss by the formidable Hilde.

Remarkably fit with all her outdoor activity, it would be wrong not to draw attention to her interest in the garden which she meticulously tended. She was forever enjoying the views through the seasons against the colour of carefully tended specimen flowers and shrubs.

So the time came when eventually in 2003/4 her decision was to return to Hamburg where her early life had been spent, having retained a home there after the loss of a husband. With the help of her family of two daughters and spouses plus grandchildren she left her beloved Scotland in April 2004. This was a move that in many ways was regretted and her health deteriorated with cardiac problems in the spring of this year and she died aged 91, leaving behind the countryside she so enjoyed.

**Dick Clark**

**OBITUARY**  
**Roy Le-Melling Wood**  
**26<sup>th</sup> March 1933 - 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

Roy was born in Liverpool in 1933. He had an older brother Kenneth who died in 2008. Like many children born in that era he had a difficult childhood although a happy one. The consequences of heavy bombing of Liverpool during the War and the policy of evacuating city children meant he gained little formal education. Although initially being sent to the country Roy returned to Liverpool quickly and spent most of the war period in the city being educated by his mother. He left school at 15, like many others, and at 18 started his National Service in the Army.

His first experience of Scotland was in 1958 when he came to live in Glasgow. He was asked to work in Scotland as a result of his job with Spratts, the pet food company. In 1966 he obtained a job as Production Manager in Samuel Jones, Devon Vale and moved, with his family, to Tillicoultry. Unfortunately the mill closed down in 1972 with workers being made redundant. He was asked to help with the final administration of the closure and so was one of the last to leave the company in 1973.

Roy was next employed, as a civil servant, in the Food Drink and Tobacco Industry Training Board. This Board was one of a number of “quangos” which the Thatcher Government wound up at the end of the 1970s, beginning of the 1980s. As a result he set up, with two partners, his own business working as a consultant for the food, drink and tobacco industry until he retired. Whilst he worked all over the country he mainly worked in Scotland, which he enjoyed, making many friendships which lasted long into his retirement.

Roy was a member of the CFSS for many years and went on several trips with them. He had a special interest in the American Civil War and gave a well received talk on the consequences of the war called “Not Gone with the Wind”.

Roy was a friend of the Museum and gave a talk on the building and history of Samuel Jones, Devon Vale. He was also a member of Alloa Writers Club.

Roy leaves a wife, Isobel, and a son, Boyd.

**Eddie J.D. Stewart**

## CFSS WINTER PROGRAMME 2011 / 2012

Meetings are held in Alloa Town Hall (Tommy Downs Room), unless otherwise stated, on Monday evenings -2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of the month- 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Members of linked societies and other non-members are welcome, though non-members would be expected to join for subsequent visits.

### 2011

#### SEPTEMBER

Sat 10<sup>th</sup> **COFFEE MORNING** – Ludgate Church hall, Alloa  
10am – 12 noon

#### OCTOBER

Mon 10<sup>th</sup> **DINO STAMPEDE.** Dr. Neil Clark

Mon 24<sup>th</sup> **THE SPIRIT OF LASSODIE (a mining community in Fife) .**

The Rev. Ivor Gibson

#### NOVEMBER

Sat 5<sup>th</sup> 37th Man and the Landscape Symposium at Stirling University.

**Celebrating Central Scotland's Geodiversity**

Information at <http://www.fnh.stir.ac.uk>

Mon 14<sup>th</sup>

**THE ROAD TO SANTIAGO (ST. JAMES) COMPOSTELA** Ken Grey

Mon 28<sup>nd</sup>

**OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION IN THE NORTH SEA** Iain Archibald

#### DECEMBER

Mon 12<sup>th</sup> **Member's Night**

### 2012

#### JANUARY

Mon 9<sup>th</sup> **ALLOA INCH.** Margaret McGregor

Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> **NAPOLEONIC PRISONERS OF WAR CRAFTS** Cairns Mason

#### FEBRUARY

Mon 13<sup>th</sup> **UP THE FORTH.** Ian Hedrick

Mon 27<sup>th</sup> **MAGICAL MOUNTAINS OF JIANXI PROVINCE, CHINA.**

Prof. Mike Thomas

#### MARCH

Mon 12<sup>th</sup> **CARPOW LOGBOAT**

David Strachan, Heritage Officer, Perth & Kinross Co.

Mon 26<sup>th</sup>

**GLASGOW NECROPOLIS;**

**THE BURIAL PLACE OF THOSE THAT TURNED GLASGOW INTO "THE SECOND CITY OF THE EMPIRE".**

Nigil Willis

#### MAY

Mon 7<sup>th</sup> **AGM** Cheese & wine

*Symposium of the Forth Naturalist and Historian: 2011  
The 37th Annual Man and the Landscape Conference*

Saturday 5th November

FORTH NATURALIST AND HISTORIAN SYMPOSIUM 2011



CELEBRATING CENTRAL SCOTLAND'S GEODIVERSITY

*Celebrating Central Scotland's Geodiversity*

**Putting 'Geo' back into Diversity**

**Geodiversity: the Forth Valley context**

**Walks back in time: exploring Scotland's geodiversity**

**Geology and landscape around Stirling' a walking guide**

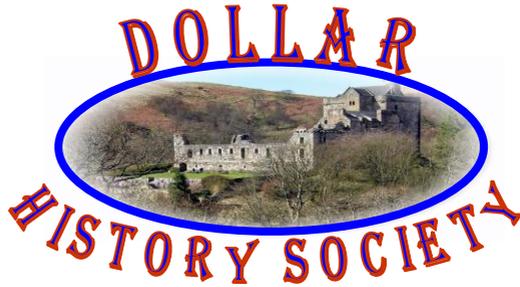
**The Callander Moraine - lessons in geoconservation**

**Geodiversity and the built heritage**

**Gold in Scotland with reference to Scotgold's Grampian Gold Project**

**Final Discussion**

Information at <http://www.fnh.stir.ac.uk>



Programme 2011-2012

**2011**

- 13 September      What did you do in the War, Mum?  
Local ladies will share some of their remarkable recollections.
- 11 October        History and Mythistory of the Children's Crusade in 1212  
Dr. Gary Dickson    Fellow in History, Edinburgh University
- 08 November     Parks and hunting in medieval Scotland  
Professor Richard D. Oram, Stirling University.
- 13 December     Britain leaves Hong Kong 1997: A personal view of Dollar  
.Mr. Roddy Hine

**2012**

- 10 January        What the Vikings did for us.  
Mr. Julian Ward. Former teacher, now a tour guide.
- 14 February      John Brown's Body and the American Civil War  
Dr. Ben Marsh, Stirling University
- 13 March         The Enigma of Captain Bligh  
Professor Gavin Kennedy, Professor Emeritus, Heriot-Watt University
- 10 April          Wade's Highland Highways  
Mr. Alfie Ingram of Dundee.
- 08 May    AGM  
followed by      Living as an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Woman  
Mrs. Fiona J Houston, Researcher and writer.



**Winter Programme 2011/2012 - 60th Year**

**Saturday 17th September**

*By Alex Black*

“A History of Central Scotland Police”

**Saturday 15th October**

*By Cameron Merriweather*

“Glasgow Cathedral”

**Saturday 19th November**

*By Sir Robert Stewart*

“The Japanese Garden at Cowden”

**Saturday 21st January**

*By David Bytheway*

“The Iron Road”

**Saturday 18th February**

(A true story of espionage with a local connection)

*By Dr Janet Morgan - Lady Balfour of Burleigh*

“The Balloonist and the Housewife”

**Saturday 17th March**

**Members Night and AGM**

*All meetings at 7pm in Clackmannan Church Hall*

*JMB- Secy.*

**Tullibody History Group  
Talks schedule 2011 – 2012**

**Held in The Heritage Centre at 7.30pm**

<p><b>29<sup>th</sup> September 11</b></p> <p>Chris Calder Tullibody Old and New</p> <p><b>27<sup>th</sup> October</b></p> <p>Margaret McGregor 'Life on Alloa Inch'</p> <p><b>24<sup>th</sup> November</b></p> <p>Alex. Stocks 'Construction of Clackmannanshire Bridge'</p> <p><b>8/15<sup>th</sup> December</b> Christmas function</p>	<p><b>26<sup>th</sup> January 2012</b></p> <p>Geoff Bailey 'Dooocots and Sundials'</p> <p><b>23<sup>rd</sup> February</b></p> <p>Eleanor Young 'Logie Kirk Project'</p> <p><b>29<sup>th</sup> March</b></p> <p>John Donaldson 'Stirling Heads'</p>	<p><b>26<sup>th</sup> April</b></p> <p>Susan Mills 'The Youngers of Arnsbrae'</p> <p><b>31<sup>st</sup> May</b></p> <p>Annual General Meeting</p> <p><b>June</b></p> <p>Outing Date &amp; venue To be arranged</p> <p>The schedule was drawn up by Janet McGregor</p>
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## **Industrial Visit Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

### **Longannet Power Station**

Seventeen Members of the Society met at the carpark of the Old Medical Centre at 5.50pm for the short journey to Longannet Power Station on the outskirts of Kincardine on Forth.

We reported to the Gatehouse to register and collect our passes. Everyone was surprised at the area that the complex covered, as we had to get into our cars again and travel a good distance to the visitor centre. There we were welcomed by our Guides for the evening. That was after we entered the car park by the exit instead of the entrance!

Anyway, all was forgiven and after a short introductory talk and issue of our safety gear we split into two groups for our guided tour. One group headed for the displays in the Visitor Centre the other into the Plant Room where the actual electricity is generated. We climbed a few flights of stairs and onto the viewing platform where we were a bit overawed at the vastness of the place.

Our guide gave us an excellent description of what lay before us; the turbines and the mass of ancillary equipment that goes into the generation of electricity in a coal-fired power station. We were also told about the basic working of the system that was used. The Guide explained how coal came into the power station, how different types of coal were blended together and crushed to a fine powder before being pumped into the boilers to generate the steam which turns the turbines. To make this more cost efficient the steam is superheated and used again. The water that makes the steam comes from the town supply but before that is used it goes through a system of demineralisation at the plant in the factory grounds. Water used for cooling purposes is pumped direct from the River Forth.

Some of the waste or ash from the boilers is cooled and pumped down river to around Preston Island, near Valleyfield, where it is used for land reclamation. Scottish Power sponsors a full time Countryside Ranger to manage the Lagoons created by the land reclamation in the interests of

biodiversity. It is now a haven for wildlife. A high proportion of the ash is sold by Scotash; a joint marketing venture with Blue Circle. It is used for use in construction and products such as grout and cement. There are ash storage facilities on site for this purpose.

I experienced the use of this ash (PFA) in the building industry when it was used on a site I worked on in Kirkcaldy, many years ago. It was used as hardcore replacement under the concrete floor, I found it very effective. The Guide told us a big area of the Longanet site was built on PFA supplied from Kincardine Power Station when it was in operation. A lot of technical information was given when we were in the viewing gallery that evening and I am afraid I did not grasp it all, there was so much of it.

From there it was on to the Operations Room where the electricity is distributed via the National Grid to all parts of the country. A fascinating place with fuse boards and a mass of dials controlling the flow of electricity. The electricity generated is upgraded to 24,000 volts by passing through transformers to the transmission lines to substations on the grid where it is reduced to the voltage supply for that area. It is really amazing how they can carry amounts of electricity to suit the needs of the nation. There are four sections to the operating room which divides the total source of power, three are of a modern digital system which only needs the click of a mouse to operate, the other is the old fashioned fuse system installed nearly forty years ago. One of the operators was very good at explaining the system and made it very interesting, answering a series of questions we put to him. Even after his explanations it was still a bit hard to take it all in.

We said goodbye to the staff and it was back to the visitors centre, passing the other group on the way. At the visitor centre there were various exhibits with regards to the Power Station and its development over the years. One new development which is in its infancy is Carbon Capture which, if it works, should extend the life of coal as a fuel for a good number of years into the future. Basically what happens is the carbon emissions are caught in the chimney and it is hoped that they can be piped to redundant oil wells where it can be stored safely; a simple explanation

for a very hi-tech subject. While in the visitor centre we were shown a video on the subject and what they have done so far, still a long way to go.

The two groups met up again at the Visitor Centre, and made our way back to the gatehouse to sign out. A very pleasant evening and we have to thank Eddie Stewart for organising this venture.

Technical details:

- Longannet Power Station second largest coal fired Power Station in the United Kingdom , third largest in Europe.
- Installed capacity of 4 x 600 mega watt units.
- Operating at full load, can produce enough electricity to meet the needs of 2 million people.
- Longannet Chimney is 183 metres high, a local landmark.
- Electricity generated at Longannet is sold on the wholesale markets in England and Wales, since 2001 to Northern Ireland.
- Site occupies 89 hectares
- Has been supplying electricity and meeting Scotland's needs since 1972.
- It has various ecological processes in operation to reduce carbon emissions.

**Jack Archibald**

**Future Scapes; a talk by Scott Paterson R.S.P.B .**

**on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

Due to circumstances beyond our control we were unable to follow the usual procedure. After the AGM, however, we were treated to an excellent talk by Scott, a continuation of the talk he gave on Members Night the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

Future Scapes :- Space for nature, Land for Life, an interpretation of R.S.P.B. policy for getting the Biodiversity kick started after it had dropped down a gear.

The main subject of the talk was the Forth Estuary from Bo'ness to the tidal reaches beyond Alloa. He did, however, mention Flow Country in Sutherland and Caithness which has had a great success in the rejuvenating of the Peat Bog, which is the largest in the World. This came after a disaster of planting non-native conifers in that area for a number of years.

It was then back to the Forth Estuary and the inhabitants of the salt-marshes. This started with a slide of a Shelduck, which is Britain's largest duck and quite prolific in the estuary. Other ducks mainly of the diving variety, have seemed to drop off recently, probably due to change in the feeding patterns for ducks like the Goldeneye and Scaup. Also the water of the Forth is a lot cleaner than it used to be, probably causing a reduction in the amount of feeding for the shovel beak type of duck.

Another bird that has seen a reduction in numbers is the Corncrake, normally very active in the salt marshes of the river estuaries. It is hoped with the work carried out by R.S.P.B. in trying to regenerate areas of salt marsh, the Corncrake will return. Early signs are very promising.

We were shown another two slides of birds, the Bar-tailed Godwit, and the Twite. I have seen them only in books not expecting to hear of them being on the Forth Estuary. There is quite a difference in size of the two birds, the Twite being Sparrow size and the Bar-tailed Godwit about the size of a Curlew. Both birds are winter visitors, the Twite breeding in Northern Scotland and Scandinavia, and the Godwit the high Arctic. The estuary is also a site for birds in transit on their way south.

The Salt-marsh is the powerhouse of the breeding of insects, molluscs and various types of invertebrates, which are the staple diet of the majority of ducks and waders and it is vital that there is no further loss of this invaluable landscape.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, retaining walls or dykes were built along the tidal reaches of the upper Forth, for the reclamation of land for

agricultural purposes. The result was a loss of the tidal flood plain and the salt-marshes. Due to the changes in climate conditions and the prospect of global warming, a change of tack in the thinking was required. The R.S.P.B. started to open gaps in the dykes at various points, (mainly on south bank). This allowed the water to come in at high tide, and drain away at low tide creating a flood plain and this in turn became a salt-marsh. This gives nature a kick start into bringing the land back as it used to be.

Scott said everything that was done had to be thought out carefully and there was a limit to what you could do as we still needed some of the industrial areas, such as Longannet Power Station and the industry and Port of Grangemouth. He went over various points of the area where changes could be made, and where changes had been made which had turned out for the better. For example,, when the Clackmannanshire Bridge was constructed, .5 hectares of salt-marsh was lost on one side of the river but gained 6 hectares, which is being developed into a salt-marsh on the other side.

We were shown various slides of the estuary in particular the Bothkenner Estate, which is a haven for wild life; also an area between Grangemouth and Bo'ness, which was a product of industrial development in the past, that somehow went wrong. It will require a great deal of thought to put it right.

A polished talk by Scott that I am sure everyone appreciated.

**Jack Archibald.**

### **Dornoch Weekend April 15 – 18 2011**

It started with a visit to Dunrobin Castle. A delightful young piper was playing in the sunshine outside.

We discovered from one of the stewards on duty in the entrance hall of the castle that Dunrobin station stands on the nearby railway line which runs from Inverness to Thurso. This needed investigation.

Up the long drive we walked, past the stables and the lodge house and across the A9. Sure enough, only a few yards ahead of us was the single track line with a private level crossing for a farm road. Better still, almost alongside, stood a small, pretty black and white painted timber building – the station itself – a station in miniature.

It no longer functions as a waiting room, but is the home of a collection of railway memorabilia, including a British Rail pocket timetable for trains to Stirling via Alloa and Cambus.

Taking a look at the very modern Scotrail timetable on the platform, we discovered that Dunrobin is a Request Stop! Yes, somehow you have to let the driver of the oncoming train know that you want to get on. Not only that - there are several sets of yellow plastic steps on the platform, one of which you can take to the platform edge to help you to climb in.

Three trains travelling northwards each day and two going south can be stopped at will.

We had earlier learned from the steward that a steam-hauled train would be passing through next morning on its way to Cornwall.

Later that day Betty, Eric and I were visiting Carn Liath Broch close to the coast. The car park was alongside the railway line. Suddenly there was an unexpected, loud thundering noise. Imagine our surprise and delight when two splendid steam locomotives rushed by us on their way to collect their coaches for the next day's long journey south. Serendipity?

**Brenda Jenkinson**

### **Field Trip, 15<sup>th</sup> April -18<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

Failte to the Highland Folk Museum the literature said. We are committed to improving the understanding of Gaelic culture through interaction with staff. Right I thought. This is my chance to test my Gaelic knowledge (or not as the case me be). However, I obviously chose the wrong member of

staff as the gentleman I engaged in conversation only smiled and said "the same to you".

The places we visited were many and varied but to someone who has an especial interest in James IV, the visit to St. Duthac Collegiate Church and Museum in Tain was particularly enjoyable (as was the coffee and cake in the small tea-room in the town afterwards).

Footwear (and feet) need to be sturdy if taking part in a Field Studies weekend. Violet discovered one of her insoles quite worn through after she had successfully climbed up the hill to view Skelbo castle at close quarters and to drink in the marvellous vista of Loch Fleet. She declared the effort worthwhile however.

Mary, Violet and I had a short walk round Domoch on the Monday morning before the guided tour of the Cathedral, and in doing so we discovered the Witch's stone dated 1722, that comemorates the last execution in Scotland for alleged witchcraft. We also viewed 'Littletown' the row of small houses where the tenants cleared from the estates in 1819 were settled. Just two of the interesting heritage sites around Domoch that give a glimpse into the town's past.

On the way home with our heads full of information we made another discovery. The House of Bruar tea-room provides delicious gluten-free cakes. The enjoyment of that treat was the icing on the cake of what had been another successful weekend trip.

**Susanne McEwan.**

### **“2011” WEEKEND**

It's the middle of April and this year the cars are heading North  
On route for our weekend and coastal hotel in Dornoch  
Ballinluig is our coffee stop with a variety of scones  
Then 19 members return to 7 cars so we can travel on  
To drive through lovely countryside on a perfect sunny day

At Newtonmore in time for lunch and with a longer stay  
This Highland Folk Museum had many memories we could share  
Especially the school room's treasures were happily compared  
By afternoon Kingussie we viewed ruins high above the town  
Where in 1746 by Jacobites, Ruthven Barracks were burned down  
By 4 o'clock across the Kessock Bridge, Fridays last visit of the day  
To the Dolphin & Seal Centre for information the Warden did convey  
(He supplied binoculars—but no sightings in the water)  
Next day to the "Clan Ross" town of Tain historic past to trace  
The museum's video showed James IV visited this medieval pilgrimage  
place  
After lunch to Portmahomack and leisurely walk along the shore  
Then Tarbatness Discovery Centre, a fine bronze of a Pictish Woman  
near the door

*The land around the church had at some time in the past been designated as a glebe to provide ministerial finance. Then before the Centre was created in the original building an archaeological survey above and below ground revealed that before 11<sup>th</sup> and up to 16<sup>th</sup> century a village (which must have been a centre for stone masons) had occupied this same site.*

Many excellent stone carvings from the area on display  
Late afternoon and hotel bound complete another sunny day  
13<sup>th</sup> Century Skelbo Castle viewed on Sunday then a short stop at Loch  
Fleet  
A famous nature reserve, then on to Golspie where we arranged to meet  
To enjoy a pleasant coffee stop and stroll along the shore  
Arrived Dunrobin Castle, 12 noon, a welcoming Piper at the door  
This led to camera's clicking and requests to please say "CHEESE"  
Lunch—after a leisurely tour of the Castle—anyone for soup and  
sandwiches?  
The terrace overlooks the garden, panoramic view on such a fine day  
Then a chance to see the castle from the garden, perhaps a photograph?  
And then are on our way  
An exhibition at Orcadian Stone, many items from around the world in  
the collection

Highland rocks, minerals and fossils—from the shop an available selection

Two visits left on the itinerary for Monday as we assemble behind the Cathedral in the Square

Sir Robert Gordon Sutherland's 17<sup>th</sup> century historian recorded this was where was held St Barr Fair

No guided tour of the Cathedral, but a lady arranging flowers gave us a small interesting talk

*A board just inside the entrance mentioned the "PLAIDEN ELL" the standard 38 inch cloth measurement used at Fairs and Markets. This was also the site of the market with it's Mercat Cross and when shepherds and crofters attended they would leave their dogs in a lane across the road known as Dog Street.*

Had a lunch break before the History Links Museum, from the square just a ten minute pleasant walk

The weather has been perfect, seen the North East at its' best

Hope next year will be the same, wherever the compass needle rests

**Nancy Henderson**

### **Linn Mill to Clackmannan**

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May, the Society members had their first walk of the Summer 2011 programme. This was changed from the original programme. Nevertheless, six members braved threat of showery weather that evening, and walked from Deerpark School, Sauchie, towards the dam. Turning, first right, down the old bridal path, (the old road to Clackmannan known in Sauchie as "over the range"). We believe this was the path used by the people of Sauchie to go to Church in Clackmannan as Sauchie was without a church until circa 1840. We came to a crossroad after travelling 300 metres, left an alternative route to the Dam, right to Jellyholm Farm, straight on Helensfield. The 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Mars Lade at this point ran on an east to west axis, carrying the water from the dam, to de-water his coal pits at Holten and Water Mill etc. Also at this point looking left one could see

the water filters built in 2004 and closed in 2006 ending a supply of water to the town of Alloa, which began in 1820. We then crossed over the Brothie Burn, the Old Rifle Range came into view on our left. We then passed Hillend Farm again on our left to arrive at Helensfield where we turned left and walked along the old road to meet the B910.

It was left again, and we carried on to Lynn Mill, our first stop to see the the Lynn Mill falls on the Black Devon. This area was researched, and booklets were produced by members of the CFSS back in the 1970's. We were fortunate, we had Betty Roy in our company, who was one of the members of that time, and was able to give us a resume` of the work that was carried out at that time. We left Lynn Mill and joined a right of way just before Grassmainston Farm which leads to Gartmorn Dam. Along this path on the left in the 1960's was the site of opencast workings, now fully restored back to green fields. Here we heard the cry of the lonely peewit overhead, giving a beautiful aerobatic display. This familiar farmyard bird has suffered significant decline recently and is now a Red List species. Joining the south path of the dam the evening light was fading, due to the rain clouds, which takes us past the water filter for Clackmannan, then over the Head of the Dam, past the Visitors Centre and down the road leading back to where the cars were parked. We were lucky with the weather the rain started when we were 300 metres from the cars.

This was a most enjoyable evening with good company. We extend our thanks to Betty for leading the group and to Jack for checking out the route prior to the walk. Thanks to all the members who took part.

**By Eddie Stiubhart, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011.**

## **Gartmorn and Cowpark Woods (circular)**

**A walk on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

After a day of heavy showers, ten members met at Marshill Carpark and travelled to the parking area at the beginning of Gartmorn Dam where we were met by another two members, making a grand total of twelve.

Getting ourselves organized, we were soon on our way along the wagon way, on the north side of the Dam. It was a bit wet underfoot and also at that time the rain was coming down in buckets, but not enough to dishearten us. First of our views was of the Island which used to be the home of a rookery; alas I have not seen any for the last couple of years or so. Next point of interest was a peninsula, a piece of land opposite the Island which in recent years has been converted into a bird sanctuary for a variety of ducks and waders that frequent the area.

On the opposite side of the track (wagon way) at this point is quite a large pond, again a haven for waterfowl and ducks. Over the years past it has been a large breeding ground for frogs and various amphibians and invertebrates. Again I have not seen any amphibians this year. This is maybe due to the large amount of herons that have been in this area, nine at one count. Just past the pond but on the dam side you can see a structure built by a Rangers' Community Project to encourage Sand Martins to form a colony. No luck as yet I am afraid. A few paces further on, is a Bird Hide, the subject of wanton vandalism from time to time. From here you can see a panoramic view of the south side of the Dam.

Moving onwards 500 metres or so we turn left off the wagon way. This is just before the Sheriffyards Colliery abandoned in the early 1920s it being no longer profitable. Heading up through the woods, incidentally, the start of Gartmorn Wood we clambered up a steep incline helped by a few steps cut into the slope. Believe it or not, the banking was what remained of the spoil heap of Gartmorn Mine. This was a private enterprise of the late 1940's early 1950's.

Reaching the end of the path and turning left, we traversed a steady incline which ran parallel to the wagon way we had just left. Reaching the summit of Gartmorn Hill, on the right through the trees were the Ochil Hills. On the left we looked down on the Dam and Gartmorn Hill Farm. The main occupation of the farm is the breeding of turkeys, geese, chickens and guinea fowl, also with a few beef cattle in the field. Moving on, you reach a farm track that takes you to Fishcross & Coalsnaughton Road.

On turning right we travelled a short distance then turned left through a gate, until a few yards further on we veered to the right.

From there on we encountered various problems. This was caused by the recent storms. A number of trees had been blown over and of course they were across the path. I took the decision to take a shorter route than I had intended, but they were even across that path. With great difficulty, we were able to deviate from the path, but the ground was very wet. It was like walking through the Primeval Forrest. Apart from the problems, we were able to glimpse herons in the trees; whether it was a nest or not, I can't really be sure, but there was definitely more than one.

Eventually we were able to get to the path that goes through Cowpark Wood, to reach the summit of another hill which I have always known as Mount William, and had another great view, this time of the Forth Valley.

We then trundled down the hill to reach the road to the Dam and it was only a short distance to the car park. Circle completed.

It is a pity we encountered some difficulty over the evening commencing with the rain and followed by the fallen trees; however, we accomplished the majority of our objectives.

## **Jack Archibald**

P. S.

The people who took part would have noticed that the Forestry Commission have been busy thinning out the woods. Is the title of the walk still viable?

**Plean Country Park** (no report this year)

## **Larbert House & surrounding area**

**Wednesday 27 July 2011**

On a lovely summer evening 16 people in cars, parked at Forth Valley Royal Hospital, Larbert. We were met by Gordon Harper, Forestry Ranger working with the NHS. He gave us a guided tour of the hospital grounds.

We first went to see where the forestry was cleared as much of the Rhododendrons, had taken over much of the land. Nothing grows under this weed (*R. ponticum*) and will take a long time to clear it completely. They are planting native broad leaf trees in their place.

We then looked at the curling pond which is very grown over. The workmen are hoping to clear the pond and make it into an interesting feature for the park land.

The next stop was Larbert House. I have put an article in from Ian Scot. The house is a ruin at the moment. The NHS would like to have this made into a hotel as it would be a lovely setting and may help visitors to the hospital. It would be a wonderful use of the ruined building.

We wandered along the path and come to the tunnel under the path, but could not see this very well. We found an article in Google which I have added. The workmen had just found this tunnel, which was very exciting.

We meandered along the path to the stables. This was not in such a bad state of decay. The good or the bad news is that Bats are roosting here. You are not supposed to disturb bats, so this would make developing the building a bit difficult. The NHS is hoping to make the stables into flats. Next to the Stables is the Walled garden which it is hoped will be made into 4 large, expensive houses.

We then walked back to the hospital and looked at the ice house. It has been bricked up but not very sympathetically. Some of the ornamentation has been taken off. With a bit of luck it will be lying in the vegetation and may be restored to its rightful place.



**Isobel Wood**

### **Tunnel found in Forth Valley hospital grounds**

The brick-lined tunnel links a derelict mansion and ornamental loch which forms part of the

estate of the new Forth Valley Royal Hospital.

Ranger Gordon Harper made the discovery while clearing rhododendron bushes on the loch's shore. It is thought the tunnel would have allowed wealthy guests staying at Larbert House 200 years ago, to avoid staff on the walk to the loch.

The hospital, opened in August 2010, is clearing the 70-acre estate to turn it into a "woodland oasis". A Forestry Commission Scotland ranger was appointed earlier this year to look after the grounds.

The tunnel was at first thought to be part of a boathouse, which is marked on a first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area.



Geoff Bailey, keeper of archaeology at Falkirk Council, said the "fantastic" tunnel - dating from about 1800 - was likely to have been built to preserve the privacy of the gentry."

Mr Harper said: "I have really enjoyed investigating the history of this site.

"I thought we would uncover hidden features when we cleared the rhododendron but didn't expect to find something so exciting as a tunnel."

Larbert House, a Category B listed building, was the residence of the Stirling-Chalmers family for many years.

It was designed by David Hamilton and built for Sir Gilbert Stirling in 1822. The house lay derelict for several years and was badly damaged by a fire in 2006.

*This was taken from the internet.*

### **LARBERT HOUSE**

The building was a bit of a mixture of bits and pieces added by different architects at different times.

The original house dating from 1800, was designed and built for the Riddell family of Ardnamurchan. It is the east-facing part with the two bowed windows. In 1822 the main changes were done for Sir Gilbert Stirling by the architect David Hamilton who designed Falkirk Steeple (1814) and Larbert Old Church (1820) and Airth Castle (1809). He created a new front entrance on the south with the fancy new doorway (called a *porte cochere*) which had two pairs of fluted columns. You can see both the original house and the additions in the drawing.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the house was extended again for the new occupant Sir John Graham and a tower added above the south doorway.

You can see this addition in the photograph which is not however, of very good quality.

As well as these main changes there were many other alterations and additions over the years with new doors and windows added and walls raised.

The building was occupied as part of the RSNH until a few years ago and was badly damaged by fire in December 2006. Since then it has been further vandalised. You can see the state of it a year or so ago in this second picture.

It is a B listed building which makes it difficult to demolish though that depends on its condition of course.

PS Kate Fawcett, the Communications Manager at the new hospital told me today that they had discovered a tunnel near the house which might be the kind that the servants were made to use when moving about the house with dishes etc so that the family did not have to see the workers anymore than necessary!! Those were the days for some folk anyway.

There is an Ice house in the grounds. The pond is named the Curling Pond



Larbert house as it was not so long ago



Larbert House as it is today



Drawing of Larbert House

*Ian Scott, Falkirk History Society*

## **Gartmorn Dam via Gartmorn Lade, Cast, Carsebridge, Cats Close, to Waterwheel, returning via Brothie Burn Wood to Gartmorn Dam.**

### **A walk by the C.F.S.S. on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2011**

What a long winded title, but it proved to be a very interesting walk, made even more interesting by the weather. Commencing at Marshall Car Park five members travelled to just short of the dam to park our cars, on waste ground opposite Deepark School. This had to be done, because the gate is locked at 9.30pm and there was no guarantee that the walk would have been completed. We were indebted to Isobel Wood for ferrying us to the Visitors Centre at the Dam, to commence our walk.

Anyway, five hearty souls plodded away along the Dam head and down the steps to the Twin Pumping Stations (Circa 1890) and then Visitors' Centre, (now closed), to the start of the Lade. Two points to mention were that the Lade was piped in early 1950's if my memory serves me correctly. The other point is, the Brothie Burn starts on its journey to the Forth at the same place about 20 metres further south.

The next point of interest was the overflow from the Dam. When it is in full flow, it can be quite spectacular, especially in the winter. I was quite surprised at the amount of water that was flowing when we passed. Not surprising, of course at the amount of rain we have had recently and what was falling that evening. Trudging on, we passed the Filter Beds and the ancillary buildings, now, I am afraid, a thing of the past. After upgrading in the 1960's and 1990's, I am afraid 'progress' has taken its toll.

Pushing on, we came to a path that goes from Sauchie to Helensfield, always known to the locals as "over the range". This was due to the fact that around 1914 a firing range was built for the Territorial Army. This was disbanded around 1945. During the Second World War it was mainly used by the Home Guard and others; Polish Troops etc.

Looking over the hedge on to the other side of the path, we were able to see the depression in the ground that showed the route of the Lade.

Carrying on up the path, after taking a right turn and then a left at the Cross Roads, we headed to Jellyholm Farm. In my day it was always known as Fisher's Farm, after the name of the farmer. There I was able to point out where the Lade had been and how it went under one of the farm buildings and carried on for about 100 metres underground, most likely to have been piped in at one stage. We noticed the farmhouse had been built in 1888 and on the lintel of the door it stated it had been built by Walter Henry 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Mar & Kellie. This was a long time after the Lade had been excavated. I pointed out the line of the Lade as I remembered it. Once again, it has been filled in. The Lade carried on from this point to Keilersbae Mill, one time Spinning Mill of Paton and Baldwins, I can only remember it as a ruin. Of course the Lade did not stop there, as it carried on to Holton Mine, providing water for the pump. Another point of local terminology: The Lade from Jellyholm to Keilersbrae was called The Cast.

Anyway, it was a case of pushing once more as the rain did not seem to get any lighter. Left turn at the farm it was then right at Jellyholm Farm cottages and on to Carsebridge one time distillery—a big user of the Dam water. It is now almost completely dismantled and the last working remnants closed recently. That was the cooperage, now at Cambus, to be seen on our next walk.

A look to our right, just past the cooperage is Carsebridge House, one time home of Col. Harvey, also heading for oblivion. About 100 metres on, we came to the Cats Close, a local landmark of the area. After traversing this we found the Sauchie Burn on our right, but there was not much showing now as the majority has been culverted over the years. Further to our right, is the site of Keilersbrae Mill, with only a little of the boundary wall remaining.

As we followed the burn, on our left at the top of the banking, are the Waterwheel Cottages, still occupied after many years. On leaving the path it was a case of a left and a left again, which brought us to the Sauchie and Alloa main road. After 300 metres, it was a left turn for a view of the remains of the Waterwheel, built for the drainage of the Coal Mines in the area. This is seen in all its glory, on the cover of the C.F.S.S. new publication, Craigrie and Gartmorn Lades.

From there it was about turn then left through the new industrial estate to Carsebridge road. Re-tracing our steps and passing the cooperage, it was then a right turn heading for the Brothie Burn, with the rain still tumbling down.

Traversing the path in the Brothie Burn Woods, was a bit of a nightmare, with the light fading and the amount of water on the ground. We wondered sometimes, if we were walking in the burn or on the footpath. After a successful escapade we reached the “Over the Range” path again, reneged on the final section of the Brothie Burn path and made our way back to the cars at Deerpark School. All five were in agreement that it was a very fulfilling evening. A pity about the weather, but you can’t have everything!

## **Jack Archibald**

### **Cambus, Black Grange plus Cambus Ponds, (circular)**

**Wednesday, 24 August 2011** saw the last of the evening walks of the Summer Programme, with 10 members participating. After a wet morning and afternoon the rain finally stopped and it looked all set for a dry evening.

Meeting as usual at the Marshell Car Park we proceeded to the Dumyat Business Park and parked at a Layby there. This was not the intended parking place but we had been denied parking facilities at Black Grange.

However from there we were able to get access to the old Tullibody/Stirling road which was part of our route. The first part of the walk was the old Alloa to Alva railway line which has now been converted into a cycle way and foot path. It has just been completed during the last few months and they have done an excellent job, a joint effort between Clackmannanshire Council and Sustrans, a charity which caters for walkers and cycle paths.

The first part of the walk was dry under foot and we were able to have good views of the surrounding area, passing a ruined dove cot built of solid

brick, the nesting boxes being constructed in a similar fashion, a bit different from the present day construction methods. From there we passed under the Alloa to Stirling railway line which was really quite low. An exceptionally tall person would have to stoop to get through, though it did warn cyclists to dismount. We then travelled along the banks of the Devon for a bit. On the left was the new Cooperage of Diageo, transferred from Carsebridge which we had seen on our previous walk.

We then crossed the metal and timber bridge, quite an iconic feature of that area. We followed the pathway along the side of the Devon to the confluence of the Devon and Forth. The rain had come back again by then and with the rain earlier in the day, with no tarmac to walk on, it was really a bit muddy under foot.

It was then a case of following the Forth before we branched off to the right, with the Cambus Ponds on either side of the path. I am afraid we did not see much wildlife as we trekked through grass. By this time the path had virtually disappeared. However we hit tarmac again and the rain stopped as we passed the Black Grange Bonded Warehouse, and then turned right and headed towards the old Tullibody and Stirling road. This time we walked over the railway line courtesy of a level crossing.

Again we took a right turn at the end of the road, passing the abandoned petrol station, which has caused some controversy in the past. It was over the old Tullibody Bridge with its three arches. Many a time we have all passed over it in the bus or car. We then finished at our starting off point having completed the circle. I prefer it that way when you don't back track on any part of the journey. Apart from some showers, everyone seemed to enjoy the evening.

**Jack Archibald**

## **Blackness Castle and the Union Canal (Linlithgow)**

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

On our first Saturday outing nine members of the Society met at the Marshall Car Park for the journey to Blackness Castle, keeping one an eye on the sky. It was not brilliant sunshine when we left but at least it was dry.

On arrival, first heart flutter. The office was closed, but a note said: “will be back soon”. All was soon ok when the custodian turned up. She was having trouble with pigeons and she had been cleaning up the mess. One problem solved. The next one was being patient waiting for the Ranger to arrive. Of course we were early; however, that flap was soon over when he arrived at the prearranged time of 10.30am.

After the customary introduction we were given a short talk of the history of the castle by the custodian to put us in the picture: Blackness Castle the ship that never sailed. If you looked at it from various, angles, it certainly lives up to its name.

A resumé of the life and times of the Castle:-

It was first mentioned in 1449 and came into Royal hands in 1453 when the surrounding lands were annexed by James II. It served as a Royal Prison in the following century when the most prestigious of the King’s enemies were housed there. Between 1537 and 1543, James V sanctioned major reconstruction, making it the strongest fortress in the area, much of this still standing today. Quite intricate methods of defence were incorporated in the reconstruction, including passages within the thickness of the walls which, having gun loop holes, could defend the outside as well as the inside. The south facing walls are an uncanny 5.5 metres thick. Apart from all of this, Oliver Cromwell laid siege to the Castle in 1650 and badly damaged these fortifications, siege artillery having advanced quite a pace. Also he was able to attack from both sea and land. It was repaired and altered in 1660. The Castle reverted back to its old role as a prison housing French prisoners of pre and Napoleonic Wars. In 1870 its role was again changed when it became the Army’s central ammunition depot for Scotland. Two blocks were built as barracks for the staff; the west block for officers and the other for O.R’s. You can see the difference of the construction in the two buildings. A pier was also built for the loading and unloading of ordnance. It ceased to function as an arms depot in 1912 but returned to its former use in 1914 with the onset of the Great War, the army finally leaving for good in 1918.

The Castle was designated an ancient monument and between 1926 and 1935, major changes were made to work that had been carried out in 1870, bringing it more in line with a medieval fortress.

We now went on a tour round the grounds and seashore with our Historic Scotland Ranger, Ian Lewis. First stop was the site of the chapel now claimed to be the redoubt of Cromwell's Cannons when he led the siege in 1650. A short distance further on were the remains of a medieval doo-cot. That took a bit of working out! We then headed for the shore and were treated to a lovely display of wild orchids. We could not have timed it better, as most of them were in full bloom. The bird life on the seashore was a bit sparse. The wind factor may have had something to do with it; however, some Ringed Plovers were hopping about between the rocks. We were informed that at one time this area had been a productive oyster bed and there were countless broken shells lying about, alas no more. Ian pointed out various plants that inhabit the shore; really quite interesting. We made our way back to the Castle and one thing we could not miss was the giant crane at Rosyth, just across the estuary, all the way from China. Also we had perfect views of the Two Bridges.

We were shown various aspects of the Castle including the intricate defence structures that had been installed over the centuries. To reach the entrance of the Great Hall we had to climb over the original rock, which was quite scary as one could have slipped easily, but there were plenty of helping hands to help out. Again the views from the windows were fantastic. We then had a walk along the pier and by the time we were due to return the wind had changed to gale force. It was a case of having a head count when we returned to the Castle. Ian left due to another appointment and we thanked him for his services. Some of us had another look round the Castle and the rest headed for the shop for hot chocolates and a browse around for some keepsakes. It was decided to move on to the Canal Basin as it was a bit exposed to have a picnic lunch at Blackness. This was a pity as the grounds were in pristine condition.

A fifteen minute trip in the cars, took us to the Canal Basin, where we found some seats at the side of the water and had our picnic lunch, enjoying calmer conditions. I am afraid we had a bit of a wait for the 2.30

pm departure of the St Magdalene; however, some of the party went for a walk on the tow path and others had a look round the small but very interesting museum. The weather was holding up quite well and it was soon time to embark on the next part of our day. On boarding we found we were the only party travelling. Nothing to beat a forty seat boat with only nine persons on board! The two crew members were very amiable and we had a delightful and entertaining journey along the canal and over the Avon Aqueduct, a credit to the nineteenth century engineers. Tea and coffee and biscuits were served as we gently cruised along.

We stopped at the Aqueduct and got off to have a look round, what a marvellous view we had.

Re-embarking we sailed on for a short distance and turned round at a winding pool to head back to Linlithgow, observing an original dry dock of days gone by when the Canal was in its heyday.

Arriving back at the Basin, everyone concluded that it had been a lovely experience enjoying the scenery and wildlife on the Canal. The crew were thanked in the usual manner. It was then back to the cars and a pleasant journey home via the A9 M9 M876 and Clackmannanshire Bridge.

A few facts about the Canal:-

31.5 miles long from Lochrin Basin Fountainbridge, Edinburgh to Falkirk where it meets the Forth and Clyde Canal. Built between 1818 and 1822, design and engineering work by Hugh Baird. It is called a contour canal meaning it follows the contours of the land, rather than the Lock system, built for the transportation of coal between Glasgow and Edinburgh. A bit of trivia, two infamous construction workers were Burke and Hare.

**Jack Archibald**

**Antonine Wall with James Coleman of Croy History Group**  
**Saturday 23rd July 2011**  
**Leader: Eddie Stewart**

A group of us met on a beautiful sunny day, at the Old Health Centre Car Park in Alloa. We then travelled to The Miners' Welfare and Community Centre in Croy.

On arrival we were greeted by volunteers with a cup of tea, coffee and biscuits.

We were then split into two parties. We went upstairs to see a wonderful display of old artefacts. There was lots of mining memorabilia and household items from the past. There were lots of mining lamps of all sizes, all sorts of things carved out of coal and household goods such as wash boards, irons, Royal Souvenirs and savings banks. These were all set out in glass cases and on tables and walls. There had been a famous boxer called Bill Clinton and of course, Will Starr the famous accordionist came from Croy.

There was an office which had been lovingly put together and we could look at all the things which were not on display. The genealogy department was also in here.

We went on a tour of the building where there was a lovely bar and function room. We also saw the process of painting murals on the wall. The paintings were scenes of Croy and the surrounding area. I would love to go back see them when they are finished. The artist and guide was Seamus Coleman.

We next had lunch in the Miner`s Welfare where again tea and coffee were provided.

I had to leave at this point as I was not able to go on the walk.

The group were taken by James Coleman (84 year old) volunteer down by the Forth and Clyde Canal which overlooks Lenzie.

**Isobel Wood**

## *A brief introduction to Croy Historical Society*

*Croy Historical Society was formed on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2000 by a group of villagers and former villagers with the aim of collecting and preserving all available material of local historical interest to Croy village and district.*

*The Society has the use of the Heritage Room in Croy Miners' Welfare & Community Centre. Also they have many display showcases full of memorabilia from a wide selection of aspects of the heritage of Croy.*

*The Society has a close association into Irish genealogy research and is available to provide illustrated example of family history. Online facilities for family history research are available. The society does not undertake individual research but some individual experienced members may take it on a private & personal basis.*

*Eddie Stiubhart (Croy History Society)*

**This article is from the Croy History Society**

### **Romans & Ancients**

#### **The Romans & The Antonine Wall.**

The Wall was constructed around 142 AD, is 61 km (38miles) long and covered the narrowest part of Lowland Scotland between Carriden on the Forth and Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde. Its main defensive feature was a turf and earthen rampart 3.5 meters high built on a stone foundation with a wooden palisade on top and a ditch in front. This ditch was about 12 meters wide and 4.2 meters deep. Prior to building, the area was well surveyed in order that the best use of natural features and contours was made so that this lessened the actual work required. This can be seen particularly well at Croy Hill where the North facing side was a natural

barrier where less work was required.

Unlike England, Scotland was never considered part of the Roman Empire although the Romans did advance into Scotland several times during their 300-odd years in Britain.

Their first foray north was made in 79 or 80 AD by Cnaeus Julius Agricola from Carlisle, reaching as far as Perthshire. Later expeditions in 82 and 83 established forts as far north as Aberdeenshire and the following year Agricola's forces defeated the native Caledonii at Mons Graupius. However, most of his forts were abandoned shortly after and by 118, the effective limit of Roman rule was marked by Hadrian's Wall (named after the emperor Hadrian), a defensive barrier running across the north of England between the Tyne and the Solway.

During the 140s, the Romans tried to move their border northwards and built a new defensive barrier, the Antonine Wall, between the Forth and the Clyde. For the next forty or fifty years, the Romans regularly occupied and abandoned this position in favour of the security of Hadrian's Wall.

Between 208 and 211, the Emperor Septimus Severus conducted a major campaign against the Caledonii and other tribes from major camps based around the Tay and Angus. When Severus died in 211, the Romans retreated to Hadrian's Wall again. The final incursions came a century after Severus, but this time, the Picts (a confederation of tribes based north of the Forth) fought back and by 367 had overrun Hadrian's Wall which the Legions finally abandoned in 400.

When Did the Romans Invade Scotland?

Historically it was believed that Gnaeus Julius Agricola, following his appointment as governor of Britain in late 77AD, invaded Scotland after a campaign in Wales. The primary source for this story is the Roman writer Tacitus. But as Tacitus was the son-in-law of Agricola, some historians believe that he played up the role of his father-in-law. Older sources claim that Agricola was the first Roman to advance beyond present-day Perth and build the Gask Ridge fortifications, a series of wooden forts and

watchtowers, around 80AD.

However, Manchester University archeologists now conclude that the forts were built as early as 70 AD, during the rule of Petilius Cerealis. If this is the case, they are not only Britain's oldest frontier outposts but pre-date similar fortifications in Germany. The watch towers crossed 20 miles of Perth and Stirlingshire and were rebuilt, sometimes more than once. Agricola was probably responsible for some of the reconstruction. Archaeologists have also shown that there is evidence of farming around this time, suggesting that there was a period of relative peace. It is thought that the forts may have been constructed to protect the Romans' new-found allies from invasion by the Caledonii, further north. The Caledonii were decisively defeated by Agricola at the Battle of Mons Graupius (site unknown but possibly near Inverurie in Aberdeenshire) in 83AD, where up to 10,000 Scots are believed to have died in one of the bloodiest battles ever fought on the British mainland.

### The Purpose of the Sites .

In the early Empire forts were bases that offered security for their garrisons and their equipment. In wartime the enemy was fought in the field. At other times the garrison would have patrolled well beyond the frontier to support allied tribes and gather intelligence. Until the end of the Flavian period the army in Britain spent the summer almost continually campaigning in enemy territory as the province was expanded into what is now the Scottish Highlands. Units built marching camps to provide shelter at night for their tents and, once an area was conquered, a network of turf and timber forts roughly a day's march apart. In the pre-Flavian period, before the legions had established their permanent fortresses, they built large forts either to provide parts of army groups (legion and auxiliaries) with a long-term home or as a summer campaign base (*aestiva*) or winter quarters (*hiberna*). These forts, known as vexillation fortresses, are found mainly in the Midlands and southern Britain.

### First and Second Century Forts.

Newly conquered areas were controlled by timber and turf forts approximately a day's march apart. In Britain this phase lasted until the mid 80s AD. Advances in the mid 2nd century and the early third century proved to be temporary or were short punitive campaigns. However at most forts the evidence is of only one unit, but it is evident that often the whole unit was not based there. During the Antonine occupation of what is now lowland Scotland great use was made of small forts (fortlets) that lacked a headquarters building or the space to hold an entire unit. It is assumed that regiments would have had a headquarters fort whilst manning a group of surrounding fortlets.

### Legio VI Victrix.

A Cohort of the 6th Legion manned the Fort at Croy under the command of the Roman Tribune Fabius Liberalis.

It is also interesting to note that at Bar Hill there was a detachment of Syrian Archers, Cohort Hamiorum Sagittariorum. This unit of Hamian archers was raised in Syria. In Hadrian's time it was the garrison of Coarvoran. It left to become the garrison at Bar Hill during the second period of occupation of the Antonine Wall, returning to Carvoran in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (ca. 163-166).

The 6th Legion had a long and exciting pedigree. It served with Julius Caesar in Egypt and fought at the battle of Actium (against Anthony and Cleopatra). Later it served in Spain and after this in Germany. Its association with Britain began when it was drafted in by the Emperor Hadrian in about 120 AD to assist in building his famous wall. Originally stationed at Newcastle, its main HQ was York. The building of the wall was a joint venture alongside Legio XX Valeria Victrix and Legio II Augusta. Twenty years later their joint building skills were again employed in building the Antonine Wall in central Scotland. From this time onwards Legio VI Victrix were directly involved in British war campaigns and in internecine warfare within the Roman Empire. This included rebuilding Hadrian's Wall in the early third century and re-establishing control after the 'Great Barbarian War' of 367 AD. The withdrawal of Roman forces from Britain in 410 AD left a shadowy VI Victrix at York, but its illustrious career had come to an end.

In the Roman army, the commanding officer of a legion was called the Legate. He was assisted by a deputy called the Camp Prefect, and a staff of six senior administrative officers called Tribunes. The original function of the Tribunes was to spread the call to arms and to ensure that the citizens rallied to the Eagles in time to march and fight. Later, the Tribunate became more of a political tenure, a training ground for young noblemen waiting to go into the consular or civil services. Whenever a Tribune chose to distinguish himself militarily rather than serve his time administratively and get out, his success was almost preordained.

**Almond Valley Heritage Centre and Tarbrax, Cobbinshaw Reservoir  
etc.  
Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2011**

The last Saturday outing was a bit of a headache in the planning, as it covered quite an area and Livingston being one of the original new towns. Off we went, with 12 members and four guests in tow. Heading initially, for Clackmannanshire Bridge, to the M876 and M9, we headed towards Livingston, turned off the A705 to Almond Valley.

This was our first stopping point mainly to see the Shale Oil Museum which gave us an insight into the whole dimension of the Shale Oil Industry from its beginnings to its heyday and its ultimate demise in the 1960's. Shale Oil, the rock that produces the oil, was mined in the West Lothian and Midlothian areas. Remnants of the spoil heaps (shale bings) can be seen throughout the area.

The method of extracting the oil from the rock was devised by James Young, a chemist born in Glasgow, by heating the rocks in retorts; thereafter it was transported to refineries where it was converted to various products, such as raffin, naphtha and oil for making candles. It eventually in later years was made into petrol by adding several additives. Paraffin Young was also called Scotland's first Oil Man. The industry was closed in the 1960s`as being uneconomical, as oil flowed out of the ground in liquid form, in many countries of the world.

We had an enjoyable time at the Heritage Centre, with various other attractions including a farm, corn mill and various amusements. We even had a short train journey, and had lunch in a picnic barn. The whole operation was very much family orientated, with children very much to the fore.

It was now time for our next port of call, the village of Tarbrax founded in 1868 around the pit and shale processing plant. From a barren moor with no houses by the time the works closed in 1926, there were close on 300 houses all built by the mine company who owned the plant. This also included a school and two churches and not forgetting the Co-op, which was reckoned to be one of the best in the country. The Mine had quite a chequered history and was owned by several different companies who tried to make it profitable. When it did close, the works and two thirds of the houses were demolished. The remainder were sold for a pittance.

The journey there was quite interesting travelling along country roads and we did have a marvellous view of the Five Sisters, the best known of the Shale Bings at Addiewell. When Eddie and I were on the recce to Tarbrax, we met a couple of the locals. The first asked us if we were lost. Imagine asking a question like that to the intrepid travellers of the Field Studies. Anyway after a bit chit chat he introduced us to the second local and it so happened that he had co-produced a book on the area and was willing to give us a talk when we came back on our visit.

We arrived that Saturday afternoon and picked up John Kenneway at his house. I don't think anyone in the company expected to end up at the top of the local Shale Bing led by an eighty-four year old, but there we were climbing over and under barbed wire fences with lots of laughter right to the top where we were rewarded with lovely views of the surrounding area. John gave us a running commentary. On the way down, he took us to where the retorts had been. Not much left now, but it gave us an idea of the layout.

It was then to the bowling club for a cup of tea/coffee and biscuits, provided by Mrs Kenneway. For a small village it seemed amazing that it could boast a bowling green although it had only two rinks. The pavilion,

was a stretched out port-a-cabin, but very comfortable. It had kitchen and toilet facilities, all these donated from a legacy by a local lady.

It was then time to say good-bye to John and his wife and on to Cobbinshaw Reservoir our last stop. It was only about three miles up the road. Points of interest on this visit: The Reservoir was designed and built by James Jardine as a feeder reservoir for the Union Canal, which he also helped to build 1824.

We arrived at the reservoir, which is divided into two parts by a causeway taking a road to South Cobbinshaw Farm. We were unfortunate when we were there that a down pour obliterated the view of the loch. It was now a case of beating a retreat back to the cars for the journey home, this time via Addiewell, Blackburn, Bathgate, Torphichen, Polmont , M9, M876, and the Clackmannanshire Bridge, we arrived, home apart for one small deviation, my mistake, but nevertheless a very fulfilling day.

**Jack Archibald.**

**Open Doors  
Gartmorn Lade Walk  
11<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

We had an extra to our Summer Programme which served a dual purpose.



**Forestmill Weir**

We were celebrating the legal agreement signed by 6<sup>TH</sup> Earl of Mar and Colonel William Dalrymple on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1711. A volume of water was to be taken from the Black Devon via a weir and lade to the yet to be constructed Gartmorn Dam. The other purpose was to promote the publication of our new book entitled ` Craigrie

and Gartmorn Lades`, expertly composed by a founder member of the C.F.S.S. Murray Dickie. This came originally from a small booklet produced by the Society in the 1970's. Excuse the pun, but a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, or should I say, lade.

With the lade being out of commission for a few years, now everything was a bit overgrown to say the least. Eddie Stewart did a great job organizing the clearing of the paths from the main road to the horseshoe weir, also the cutting of the trees and bushes at the weir; a real superhuman effort. Really, when he gets the bit between his teeth, there is no stopping him. He also made arrangements with the Council to clear the path, lade side, from the main road to Gartmorn Dam. We have to thank the Council for this effort.

The day of the walk started fair weather wise, after the forecast had been doom and gloom. Nine guests and nine members helped in various aspects of the walk, led by Murray Dickie. His descriptive talk was one of the best I have heard, with a serious side, giving so many facts and figures, with a bit of added humour, encouraging those taking part to participate in the dialogue. Brilliant!

We trundled on at a leisurely pace, dodging some muddy patches, due to the recent heavy rain. Muddy boots were the only discomfort we had. When we were approaching the Dam head the rain came but did not affect the mood of the walk, and we were soon in the shelter of the visitor centre, where arrangements had been made for soft drinks to be available. We finished off with a group photograph taken by Jacqueline Stewart, photographer for the day.

Everyone was full of praise for the experience and we have to thank Murray for his excellent talk and knowledge of the area which is boundless. Thanks to everyone who took part.

**Jack Archibald**

