



CLACKMANNANSHIRE FIELD STUDIES SOCIETY

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The CFSS was formed in October 1970 after attempting to revive the Alloa Society of Natural Science and Technology established in 1863. The CFSS aims are - “ to promote interest in the environment and heritage of the local area” - and it has some 150 members.

In winter there are fortnightly lectures or members nights, from September to April, beginning with a coffee morning and concluding with our AGM. In summer, from May to August, there are four Saturday or Sunday outings, a weekend event, and fortnightly Wednesday Evening Walks.

CFSS has run and participated in various events (eg. on David Allan, and at Alloa Tower), is associated with the Forth Naturalist and Historian (FNH) in publishing, and the annual Man and the Landscape symposia, which are reported on in the CFSS's April *Newsletter*. Our latest edition of *Alloa Tower and the Erskines of Mar* was jointly published with The Friends of Alloa Tower.

Research projects have included - Linn Mill, Mining, and Alloa Riverside; These have been published as booklets - *Linn Mill, Mines and Minerals of the Ochils*, and *Alloa Port Ships and Shipbuilding*. A recent project is *Old Alloa Kirkyard Archaeological Survey 1996 – 2002*, which has further work in progress. Other publications include - *David Allan; The Ochil Hills - landscape, wildlife, heritage walks*; and the twice yearly *CFSS Newsletter* - April 2003 will be no.70, and there are five yearly contents/indexes. Other activities are related to biodiversity studies and plans, environment, heritage, and tourism.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in, or desire to support the aims of the Society in this field of Local Studies.

The Society has a study / council room in Marshall House, Alloa. This has a small collection of books, maps, photographs, etc. which members are encouraged to use for reference or study.

For further information contact CFSS Chairs Mrs E K Roy (01259 – 213954) or D Clark (212395) or FNH Secy. L Corbett (215091).

Clackmannanshire

Field

Studies

Society

Newsletter

70

NB – this CFSS Newsletter 70 includes brief reports on the 28th annual Forth Naturalist & Historian's Man and the Landscape symposium, Nov. 2002 – Scotland's Weather & Climate – living with change

**Vol. 31
Part II
April 2003**

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EDITORIAL

You could consider this edition (70th) a milestone, the Newsletter is now a Septuagenarian – no mean feat, though it does not get pensioned off.

This winter's series of talks has proved very successful with a full house on each occasion. These have been written up in this newsletter – to refresh your memory! Thanks to Dick Clark for making sure we are kept in the public eye by getting a report to the local papers on time. At this session's members' night, tea and coffee was provided, free of charge – a great success that will be repeated again.

Unfortunately the Industrial Visit to Nexfor in Cowie could not take place, but owing to Dick Clark's efforts permission was given to visit Diageo's plants at Abercrombie, Carsebridge and Blackgrange. This is the first time that Diageo have engaged in a conducted tour of their plants and have stated that the party must be restricted to 24. The list for the visit was very quickly filled up and apologies to those who have been disappointed.

By this time you will have received the Summer Programme and I hope the weather is kind to us so that as many members as possible will take part in these events. The Field Trip to Dornoch in May was very quickly booked up. Those regulars who take part know that this is a worthwhile venture – we arrive home tired, but happy!

At last the Society is moving into the 21st century. We have been entered into Clackmannanshire County's Web site, and also the 1996-2000 Old Kirkyard Survey. As a follow-on to the first recording of the stones in the kirkyards, the Society has been successful in obtaining a grant from Local Heritage Initiative Scotland to enable us to conduct further research into archaeological and historical aspects of this important site. LHS is a lottery funded body whose aim is to support local research and community involvement. Six areas in Scotland have been targeted, of which Clackmannanshire is one. Our project is entitled Alloa Old Kirkyard Outreach, and, as well as CFSS members, we are co-operating with other local groups, e.g. Friends of Alloa Tower, Friends of Alloa Museum & Heritage Service, CLICK IT Centre After School Club and Alloa's Social Inclusion Partnership.

We shall be looking for computer literate members, as well as members willing to undertake some research, to give a hand with this project. The area can provide an in-depth study of Alloa's history – shipping, trades, religion and people. Volunteers are needed but more on this will be discussed at the AGM.

Betty Roy

NEWS FLASH

ALLOA ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

The site at Marshall, long recognised as a burial ground from previous finds early in the 1800s, was the subject of great discovery last month.

Susan Mills, Heritage & Museum Service of the County, and of course well known to the Society as an active member, having made a calculated assessment of the site, has actually found a Bronze Age cist and even more important, what is possibly the most intact Iron Age burial ever found in Scotland.

The Bronze burial content included full skeletal remains and a very fine example of a decorated food vessel. Dating is guessed at 2500 - 1500 BC. The Iron Age burial appears to be that of a warrior-class male of great social position having been buried with examples of great wealth (sword, spear, toe rings, beads) all of which may give a date of 200 BC to 200 AD.

All the remains have been taken to Glasgow University and the artefacts to Edinburgh for proper dating. A full report may take some time to be compiled and we, the Society, appreciate the work of Susan and look forward to supporting the return of the artefacts to the new County Museum.

Dick Clark



Bronze age burial
(Dick Clark, CFSS)



Iron age burial
(Dick Clark, CFSS)

Clackmannanshire Field Studies Society Summer programme 2003

Meet at Alloa Health Centre car park –Wednesday 7 pm, Saturday 9.30 am
(except where otherwise stated **)

Wednesdays

- May 7 Doune Ponds – with Lindsay Corbett & Carolyn Watt
21 Victorian Alloa – with Betty Roy & Fraser Macintosh
June 11 Devon Wetlands – with Susan Mills & Betty Roy
25 Plean Country Park – with Eddie Stewart
July 9 ** Falkland House, mausoleum, estate, walk in grounds – with Dick Clark
6.30 pm Alloa Health Centre car park
23 Kinneil House – with Susan Mills & Historic Scotland rep. Nick Bridgeland
Aug 6 Alloa to Clackmannan + s. side of Black Devon – with Betty Roy
20 Old Sauchie & Environs – with Betty Roy & Susan Mills

Saturdays

- May 24 Crammond + Lauriston Castle – with Elizabeth Crane & Bob Snaddon
June 21 Balvaird Castle & Abernethy + Lindores – with Eddie Stewart
July 19 Chatelherault + Cadzow – with Elizabeth Crane & Lizanne Lumsden
Aug 16 Palacerigg & Castlecary – Cumbernauld – with Bob Monk
Sept 13 Coffee Morning, Spiers Centre, Alloa 10-12

Weekend Field Trip: May 16 – 19 Dornoch

**Most outings require shared transport, stout footwear and suitable clothing .
On Saturdays bring packed lunches.
Visitors are welcome for most events!**

Inquiries: EK Roy 01259-213954 or D Clark 01259-212395

THE FORTH NATURALIST AND HISTORIAN

FNH is a charitable informal organisation of the University of Stirling
to promote knowledge of the environment and heritage.

The 28th annual Man and the Landscape symposium last November had a 150 attendance and was heard referred to as a `happy` event. It's continuing success owes much to the help given by a core of CFSS members. Some reports on the presentations are given here (pp. 8) - while some in full paper form may be in the next FNH annual journal.

The 29th 2003 symposium programme is still `in planning` - maybe / possibly influenced by features of this year eg this International Year of Fresh Waters; this 30th year of the Woodland Trust;and ??..

The 2003 FNH journal will be volume 26 – again contents are still in progress, but likely to include – reports on weather and birds; some papers of the above last symposium; naturalist papers on Lampreys, and on Fleas of Clackmannan shire; and an arts one on `Gainsborough`s Beautiful Mrs Graham` (who was Mary Cathcart of Schaw Park) which is a major exhibition of the National Gallery of Scotland , April to June this year; and on Gartmore;.....

The 2002 journal is being distributed and promoted, and the contents (given below), you`ll note feature a `proceedings` of that `Thistle and the Rose -700th anniversary of the Treaty of Perpetual Peace 1502`, University conference and Historic Scotland`s exhibition, that a number of CFSS members attended last year; papers on naturalist and arts / heritage features of the new National Park; and book notes on Shipping of the Forth, Stirling Castle, Dunmore Pottery; and Biodiversity plans of Stirling , Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. An Index / Contents to the journal volumes 16 to 24 (1993 – 2001) is now available (£1, the journal £6, plus p&p if applicable)

FNH contacts with Stirling`s Voluntary Services (CVS) have resulted in a suite of new furnishings (from Forth Enterprise) thanks to sterling work by Dick Clark; and, after an earlier faulty set, a computer (via the University and Marilyn Scott); software from Microsoft and a printer from Cathy Conoboy. All in, giving us much to do – in prospect – a new look CFSS !!

Lindsay Corbett

Naturalist Papers

- 3 The Weather of 2002 - S J Harrison
9 Book Reviews:- *Rain* -Cuthburt; *Keith Brockie* and *Fabulous Ferns* –in the Scots Magazine;
11 The Forth Area Bird Report - C J Henty
36 Book Reviews:- *Millennium Forest Trust*; *Bryophytes* -Crawford; *Fauna Britannica*;
37 J A Harvie – Brown (1844 – 1916): Ornithologist: People of the Forth (14) - K J H Mackay
41 The Present Status of Scotland`s Rarest Butterflies: in memory of John Berry naturalist extraordinary and lepidopterist for all seasons - David Spooner
53 Freshwater Fish of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park - Peter Maitland
65 The Bill Brackenbridge Memorial Project - Brian Thomson
67 Editorial Notes:- FNH journal indexes, and back issues; Bob McCutcheon; Forthcoming and Author Addresses
68 Book Reviews:- *Biosphere reserves* – UNESCO MAB; *Fishes in Estuaries* – Elliott & Hemingway; *Keith Brockie* and *Fabulous Ferns* – in the Scots Magazine

Historical Papers

- 69 The Thistle and the Rose,1502-13: a conference to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Treaty of Perpetual Peace,1502 - Michael Penman. *Includes* - The Political Context of the Perpetual Peace, by Norman Macdougall, and synopses of papers - Stewart and Tudor Literature -P Bawcutt, Music -A Ashbree, and Architecture -R Fawcett; Book of hours - I Barnes; Renaissance Queenship -J Laynesmith; and the Stirling Castle exhibition.
88 Book reviews:- *Stirling Castle*, *Great Hall restoration* – Fawcett; Stone Age Alpha – Peterson; *Cunningham Graham* – Fraser; *Dunmore Pottery* - Cruickshank
89 Writers and Artists of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park: Scenery of a Dream - Louis Stott
98 Book reviews:- *Alva* – Dovey; Bannockburn 1314 – Armstrong; *In the footsteps of Wallace* – Young & Stead; *Francis Frish's Picturesque Harbours* – Solby
99 The Stirling Unionist Club, 1901-1919 - David Perry
108 Book Reviews:- *Millennium Canals* – Hutton; *Shipping of the Forth* – Hendrie; *Old Alloa* – Hutton; Scotland Magazine
109 The Reverend Duncan MacFarlan (1708-1791) - John Mitchell
112 The Forth Naturalist and Historian

Recent books of interest:

The Working Countryside in the Forth Valley. Forth Valley Countryside Initiative. Ed. K Mackay. 2002. 93pp. In CFSS...

This is an information support pack for teachers – well and clearly presented in five chapters –the farming scene; European perspective; farming today; farming in the Forth Valley; woodland, conservation and wildlife; and appendices –references; a working countryside ‘box’; and a directory of resource providers. Maps and some features are from FNH’s *Central Scotland – land, wildlife, people* put in all FV schools in 1995, and later as a CDrom *HSE – Heart of Scotland’s Environment*.

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland. Council for Scottish Archaeology. 2002. Ed. Robin Turner (NTS). 180pp. In CFSS

Brief reports by local authority areas – none for Clackmannanshire – Stirling’s includes –Dunblane Cathedral, Clachie Burn, East Coldoch, Jail Wynd, Station Square, Stirling ...

Gargunnoch, parish, village, guest house. Ian McCallum, author and publisher. 136 pp. Trelawney Cottage, the Square, FK8 3BH.

Includes – 1832 voters, War I veterans, ministers, farmers, feuers, 1881 census, has col. Illus. and plans.

Scottish Pottery Historical Review no. 22, 2002. Scottish Pottery Society. Ed. Robert Rankine, Alloa. 72pp. In CFSS...

Includes papers on –30 years of the Society, New light on Alloa Pottery by Susan Mills - a Bailey Australian export teapot and a dish found at Bauchop’s House, on Dunmore Pottery, and Peter Gardner centenary, .. & book reviews

White Phantom of the Loch. M Gordon. EOS. 2001. 200pp. £4.99

Stories of the victims of accidents of Loch Lomond (copies from G Barkaway, 2a St. Michael Dr., Helensburgh G84 7SE 01436 671790)

Around Doune and Deanston. Karen Ross. Tempus. 2002. 128pp. £11.99.

Well annotated photos – a great supplement to the FNH’s *Doune Historical Notes* now taken over by Kilmaddock Trust

Journals and Newsletters regularly received in CFSS room include –Shell’s Environment news; Calatria of Falkirk History Society; the Green journals of Stirling and Falkirk; MSEEf, Green Scene, Environment Education, Agenda 21 - ..., National Library, Scottish Local History, Focus – AHSMS, SFAS, CSA, SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) publications; Forestry Commission....

REPORTS ON THE 2002 SYMPOSIUM

CLIMATE CHANGES AND THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF SCOTLAND

Paper by Noranne Ellis SNH, given in her absence by Kate Sankey.

The first important point made was that in Scotland we benefit from the effect of the Gulf Stream which causes our climate to be somewhat warmer than other areas which lie at the same latitude as we do.

The Ice Age came to an end when the ice retreated about 10,000 years ago. When that occurred, grasses and similar plants began to grow, followed by some trees. At about 5,000-4,000 years BC the climate became cooler and wetter, and peat was established. Then trees like Scots Pine and then Birch, then Hazel started to colonize in the more northerly parts. Charts were shown to indicate predictions for the years up to 2080. At that time we had temperatures up to 3 degrees higher than now, but this will depend upon the effects from greenhouse gas emissions and the like.

Changes already being seen are showing an increase in insects and the birds that feed on them. Mussels are now more prolific and flowering plants such as the Scottish Primrose are in danger of dying out due the fact that they grow far north in the country and their preferred temperature is tending to move away from the landmass. Also, we will lose an area for Alpine flowers growing, with the rise in temperature.

There is now a project, called the Monorcid project, which looks at the changes in nature due to climate change. It appears that some species are surviving better than others with climate changes. The Twinflower of the woodland is diminishing, and a chart was shown indicating degree of change against time.

Bob Snaddon

SNIPPETS

Following Bob. Snaddon`s report, other papers gave much to think about. Alastair Dawson`s talk reconstructing the last 1000 of Scotland`s climate history made the audience realise that outside factors, as well as man`s intervention, have a bearing on climatic change. Icelandic volcanic eruptions, in the late 18th century, had an impact on Faroe Island fishing. The subsequent increase in temperature contributed to a drought in Scotland and famine. To-day, drilling of the ice in Greenland for research into Viking expansion may have been the cause of recent North Atlantic gales and severe flooding in Britain.

In recent years we have all noticed the earlier budding of trees, flowering of plants, earlier and later mowing, as well as a longer period when trees are in leaf.

Nowadays, we have to be aware of the impact climate change is having on our lives – imagine the scenario – year long mowing of the lawn?

REPORTS FROM WINTER TALKS

SCOTLAND`S HISTORIC SHIPWRECKS

Dr. Noel Fojut, Historic Scotland. 28.10.2002

Most are aware of the archaeological investigations into landward remains, however, it is only since 1991 that Historic Scotland was given powers to protect the many wrecks round our shores. It was interesting to learn that Scotland led the way by, in 1991, introducing protective legislation with regard to what lay beneath the sea. The boundary round our shores was extended to a distance of 12 miles, rivers and lochs included. Interestingly, the area of water protected is comparable with the land area.

In recent times, there has been increased activity with regard to important wrecks, and, as is the practice with the built heritage, wrecks have been given the same protection. Seven wrecks, dating from the 17th to the early 20th centuries have been designated as worthy of protection by HS. The speaker instanced the wreck of the `Swan` at Duart, Mull, that has been researched and stabilised, diving discouraged and information boards in place dealing with the story of the vessel.

There are thousands of wrecks round our shores, 1500 recorded for Shetland alone. The elements play a part, though in periods of history relations with England were strained, a factor that forced vessels to take the long and dangerous route round the north. Many merchant ships floundered on our rocky coastline. Salvage is usually undertaken almost immediately – a slide showed the recovery, from a Dutch vessel, of a number German pottery jars in mint condition. In more recent times 76 ships of the German Navy were deliberately scuttled by the German Commander at Scapa Flow – most of these have been salvaged and only seven now remain.

Much archaeological information can be gained from studying the wrecks. Each ship put to sea is a self-contained survival kit with all that is needed to sustain life on board. Wrecks also provide a valuable resource in researching the development of technology. Present day techniques of sonar and echo-sounding speed up the research programme, more and more is being recorded and a Database being compiled.

This was an interesting talk by an accomplished speaker.

Betty Roy

HISTORIC 13th CENTURY CATHEDRAL BUILDING

Dr. Richard Fawcett, HS, - 11.11.03.

The speaker for the evening, Dr. Richard Fawcett, Principal Inspector of Historic Scotland, is the definitive authority on Ecclesiastical Buildings in Scotland, having “a personal passion” for the subject. In the course of his illustrated talk his enthusiasm was contagiously transmitted to the members and interspersed with anecdotal humour. To condense 200 years into such a short time is no easy task.

Dr. Fawcett gave a resume of the influence of David I on the resurgence of building at that time. Briefly, David was a pious king and reigned during a period of peace. As a young man he travelled throughout Europe, a factor that influenced his thought. Spiritual movement in almost all religions is never static and the Monastic Orders which included Cistercians, Augustinians, Benedictines, Tironensians and various factors in theological thinking, moved architecture towards Cathedral, or `Cathro` which is recognised as `seat of the Bishop`.

Bishoprics and parishes developed in the reign of David I still follow the boundaries then set down. The audience were then taken on a fascinating journey round the cathedrals of Scotland – Brechin, Dunkeld, Elgin, Dornoch, Fortrose, St. Andrews, Glasgow, Birnie and St. Magnus in Orkney, though the latter came under the Norwegian diocese. Masons were brought from Durham to work on Fortrose and Dornoch under the supervision of the Moravian family who gave us the Moray name.

The Moravian family really moved into the grand style with the `triple tower` plan for Elgin Cathedral (1224). Quoting Dr. Fawcett, “moving big time”, or keeping up with the neighbours by “we have three towers”.

Interestingly, he mentioned `The Cathedral of the Isles` at Snizort in Skye that Dr. Fawcett also found, as did our Society in May 2000, the site to be of special interest.

St. Andrews did become recognised as the largest ever built and became the principal Bishopric in Scotland, for centuries playing a major part in Scottish politics throughout the Stewart era.

How can it be possible to report on such an evening? To end Dr Fawcett expressed his own personal opinion that the greatest of all has to be that of Glasgow as an `extraordinary` example of advanced architectural design and Master Masons work. Rather than try to expound on this complex building, let us take Dr. Fawcett’s suggestion and go and see this wonderful Cathedral, built over the tomb of St. Kentigern/St. Mungo.

“It is a matter worthy of one’s enquiry, how such a nation as Scotland should have been in a capacity to erect such superb edifices as that kingdom abounds with. There

is no country in Europe that can brag of either or greater piles of buildings, or a more regular architecture in its ancient churches and religious fabricks”. Quoted from John Slezer, 1693, Nostrum Scotia.

Dick Clark

PRESERVATION OF CARVED STONES

Dr. Susan Buckham. 25/10/02

Dr. Susan Buckham in her talk made the audience appreciate the enormity of the task confronting the Carved Stones Adviser Project. This project is funded by the Council for Archaeology Scotland and Historic Scotland with the remit to collect information and compile a list of all known sites, as well as others that may not be recorded. She stressed the importance of local knowledge as well as the valuable input from volunteers. Those undertaking research will be aided by National Heritage bodies, cemetery managers and archaeologists.

The situation is critical, gravestones are deteriorating at an alarming rate and many factors contribute to the erosion of the stones. Dr. Buckham has produced a recording methodology that will highlight the condition of, and the main threats to the memorials. Pollution, vandalism and extreme weather all play their part in accelerating the rate of decay. Plants and animals can cause problems for memorials, for example, lichens, algae, moss and ivy, in different ways, do damage the surface of the stones, but, even so, the removal of biological growths is not always desirable.

Most of what Dr. Buckham dealt with is already known by members of this Society. This was a well researched and informative talk by an able speaker, and it was interesting to have knowledge of what the Adviser Project entails.

Betty Roy

THE FIRST HUNDRED MUNROISTS

David Hewitt, Friends of the Ochils. 13/1/03

A joint meeting was held on January 13th between CFSS and Friends of the Ochils when an illustrated talk was given by their Chairman, Dave Hewitt, that highlighted those early climbers in the hundred and ten years of Munro Bagging. There are now over 3000 Munroists on the list which requires to be revised and updated every year by the Committee of the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

Mr. Hewitt showed slides of these early climbers, such as Ronnie Burn, R.C. Priest and Colin Dyeson, all looking relaxed and as if they were having a thoroughly good day out. Special mention was made of Philip Tranter (son of Nigel) and his energy.

It brought back memories to me of Tom Weir and his hugely popular television shows and articles, and Dundee's own Sid. Scroggie, blinded and maimed in WW2 – they all seem to be of a special breed of men!

During the question time Dave explained the different grades of mountain such as Munros 3000ft+, Corbetts 2500-3000ft and Donalds (smaller still), besides answering many other questions on mountaineering. It was a most enjoyable evening and the hall was abuzz as other members reminisced about their own climbing skills. And, Yes, I have climbed Three Munros – at least!!

Elizabeth Crane

THE GREAT MICHAEL, JAMES IV'S – great schip, c.1507-15??

This paper has been presented by Dr Michael Penman of Stirling University.

This illustrated talk outlined the building and fitting-out of the great carrack, *Michael*, during the kingship of James IV (1488-1513) and her short career in Scottish service from 1511 until James' death at the battle of Flodden in 1513 after which this ship was sold into French service. New docks were created for the creation and maintenance of this and other vessels by James, at New Haven, near Leith, and Pool of Airth, opposite Kincardine-on-Forth. The royal Treasurers' Accounts for the period reveal in considerable detail the materials used to construct this vessel as well as her armament and crewing. These accounts bear out many of the assertions of the late 16th century chronicler, Sir Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie; that the vessel cost £30,000 was over 200 feet in length, bore 27 large guns and 300 smaller guns, required 300 mariners for her four masts, 120 gunners, and could carry over 1,000 troops when needed.

However, closer examination of King James's motives for building this great ship raise some interesting questions which it may still be possible to answer using the - at times - scant Scottish, English and French sources for the period. For example, did James' pursuit of renaissance court display involve him in direct competition with Henry VII of England? Were the *Michael* and her new docks modeled on Henry's new works at Portsmouth in 1494 for the building of such vessels as the Regent? The setting of the Forth valley and estuary with its many royal buildings must have been an impressive canvas against which to build and display such a vessel. The *Michael* certainly had a strong impression on visiting French and English ambassadors in 1512-3, both of whom tried to acquire the ship's services. The building of the ship was, though, a great national enterprise involving materials and workers from throughout the kingdom as well as continental Europe and this laborious process can only have increased James' stature and authority over his subjects.

James clearly had an interest in the new technologies of the day (artillery as well as shipping). But is it possible that - in an age of rapidly developing ship-building design - the Scots (and their French shipwrights) created a vessel which was too large and too heavily laden with men and guns to sail well? After all, the *Michael* ran aground twice and had to have her main mast changed at least once. Did the ship reflect James' genuine interest in the great explorers by sea of this period? It may be possible to find evidence for his meeting people at court who could tell him of the great exploration and warship achievements of the day; it may also be possible to identify books about travel and the importance of sea-power which James may have read.

James also clearly had genuine motives of piety for building such a ship, perhaps as a vital tool to fulfil his professed interest in a crusade as well as for exploiting the diplomatic tensions of the day between France and England. A number of key royal sites had dedications to St *Michael*, the archangel and Christian warrior - Stirling royal chapel, Rothesay castle chapel, a chapel at South Queensferry, Linlithgow parish church, the shipwrights of Leith; the Treasurer's Accounts show that James was devoted to marking St Michael's feast days. However, is it possible that James delayed in actually calling his vessel the *Michael* openly - referring to it instead as the 'great schip' - because to do so would have been to commit too far to the French side against England by choosing a name clearly associated with the French Order of St Michel? A gold coin designed for James IV bearing the image of St Michael may point to the Scottish king only publicly celebrating the name *Michael* after he had signed his alliance with Louis XII of France in May 1513: James' death in battle in September that year prevented him from ever minting the coin which could not thus have been produced to commemorate the laying of the ship's keel in 1507 or her launch in 1511.

Finally, it is possible to find out what happened to the *Michael* after she was sold to the French? Did she rot away in Brest harbour, as tradition maintains, or did she fight on perhaps surviving to serve in the French fleet which attacked Portsmouth in 1545, the occasion of the singeing of Henry VIII's ship the *Mary Rose* in a fleet led by the English flagship, the *Henry Grace à Dieu*, a vessel perhaps built to rival the *Michael*?

THE WONDERS OF FLORENCE
Alistair Maxwell-Irving, 10/2/03

Alistair Maxwell-Irving, one of the society's own members, spoke on the subject of 'The Wonders of Florence' – a city well-known to him since he has made 12 visits there over the years.

Alistair was able to take his audience through the background of many of the important families who have lived in Florence or had buildings erected there. Slides were shown (all taken by Alistair Maxwell-Irving himself) to illustrate the talk. They gave fascinating views of such buildings as:- San Miniato Al Monte, Palace of the Bishops of Florence, built in 1018, San Marco, a Dominican convent rebuilt by Michelozzo in 1437, S. Croce, the Franciscan tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli and Ghiberte, founded in 1228, rebuilt in 1294 and a host of others. Sculptures for which Florence is renowned – such as 'David' and 'Bearded Slave' by Michaelangelo and 'Rape of the Sabines' by Giambologna were included in the presentation.

Alistair had maps and books on view as well as a statuette copy of 'Mercury' by Giambologna (16th century). It was interesting to learn that the origin of the name of one of our once used coins, the florin, lay in the city of Florence.

Bob Snaddon

THE ECOLOGY OF THE FORTH
Dr. Donald McLusky – 24/2/03

Dr. McLusky gave an overview of the Forth estuary in past times as well as the condition of the river today. Seven thousand years ago the valley was a sea loch. The land has risen since and the sea has retreated with most changes occurring around Alloa. Until 20 years ago the land was rising faster than the sea level, but over the last 10 years the reverse has happened so the estuary will start to fill up again. Sea level is not a fixed entity, it is always changing but not only due to global warming.

Approximately one half of the intertidal areas have been removed by man (local refuse tips are on former mudflats) for agriculture, docks or industry. Attitudes are changing and it is impossible to get permission to infill intertidal areas now. In future sea walls will be allowed to break through as maintenance is expensive. Although the sea walls at Alloa are strong, if these are breached housing could be affected. The Stirling to Alloa railroad runs along the sea dyke, continuous maintenance will be necessary when the railroad is restored.

The Forth meanders below Stirling. Before the sewage works were improved sewage would move back and forth on the tide. Now that sewage works are updated and breweries at Alloa and distilleries at Cambus have closed there is less waste.

Recovery is slow and ongoing but approximately £200,000,000 has been spent by various industries and Councils – a fact that is not universally known. The salt marshes of the Forth Estuary are SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designates and are recognised as world important sites for conservation. Birds come in from Iceland, Greenland and Scandinavia to over winter. Skinflats is one of the best places for Shelduck in the UK.

There is still a residual problem at Grangemouth with chemical production still discharging contaminants. Dredging at the docks also has an ecological impact. Mercury levels have been decreasing since 1982. However, the number of species per mud sample has increased steadily since 1975, mainly due to BP changing their processing methods and better water treatment, resulting in the discharge of fewer contaminants.

In summary, a lot has been done to clean up the estuary over the last 30 years. There will be problems with sea level rising and we are becoming more aware of subtle pollution, e.g. agricultural runoff and pesticides.

Marilyn Scott

DEVELOPMENT of ALLOA POTTERY 1783-1907
Susan Mills (Museum Heritage Officer) and Robert Rankine 10/3/03

The meeting was opened by a welcome from Mrs. Roy who introduced Robert Rankine and Susan Mills as the speakers for the evening on Alloa Pottery. Mr Rankine gave an excellent resume of the history of pottery manufactured in Alloa from the 1700 to 1900s which was of local, and eventually under the Bailey family, of worldwide reputation.

He, of course, spoke with great authority, being well known for his interest in all things local, particularly pottery, and being the editor of the Scottish Pottery Historical Review published by the Scottish Pottery Society.

Susan Mills then gave an excellent talk on the importance of the Alloa Pottery collection held by the Museum Service in Speirs Centre. Well worth calling in to view many of the products, the colours of which are vibrant.

In their heyday the items were not terribly expensive, but they have now become very collectible. If anyone has any Alloa pottery in their possession Susan would be pleased to give an opinion.

Betty Roy gave a vote of thanks on behalf of a very large number of members and visitors.

A CENTURY OF FIRES IN CLACKMANNANSHIRE.

DOLLAR MUSEUM – 1988

In the 1980's Tony Martin started a History Society in Dollar which was well attended, and in due course, it was arranged that volunteers gave of their time and energy to winkle out items of interest, i.e., names of houses and their origins, the railway, street names, fields etc. Such was their enthusiasm that in a short time they had accrued quite a lot of interesting facts, so – what to do with them? – show them to the people of Dollar and get them interested in the place wherein they dwell.

After initial consultation between Kirk Session, Civic Trust and the History Society, a Trust was formed, and after two years of hard work the Museum was opened in the old school house in a room lent by the Kirk Session. Later they were offered new premises in the Castle Campbell hall and agreed to buy part of the building for £1, - all the costs of cleaning out, fitting and running to be met by themselves – no mean task!

The new museum opened to the public in July 1993. Colonel R. Stewart doing the honours. In 1994 it was runner up in the Scottish Museum of the Year Awards and a cheque for £400 presented by Princess Alexandra. In 1997 full registration was awarded by the Museums and Galleries Commission. Not bad going for such a small town! It has grown steadily since and a lot of fund raising activities by volunteers and helpers, has been so encouraging.

Exhibitions including, photos of the Devon Valley Railway, noting all the stations between Alloa & Kinross, - History of Dollar from 2500 BC and of course the Academy. A “Granny `o` Kitchen, Greens the Hairdressers of Dunfermline, Tools, Mines, Books, Red Cross, Jays, Robert Burns and Churches. Exhibitions are highlighted at intervals, including one for Mrs Lavinia Malcolm, first woman Provost in the whole of Scotland, 1913-1919.

Heritage Lottery money enabled the premises to be doubled, and items have been borrowed from the National Museum of Scotland. All in all a very creditable success story. Anyone can become a “Friend” for £10 annually, or of course donate. Entry is free to the public.

Lizbeth Monk

By all accounts, it was a memorable blaze. As the flames leapt higher into the dark sky, few doubted that the fine mansion would be totally destroyed. For there was little water to be got from the Brothy Burn, a mere trickle after a sultry summer, and Alloa House could not be saved, that dreadful night in August, 1800.

A week later, the “Courier” of London had over a column about the disaster, describing the mansion as “the seat of Mr. Erskine of Mar” (the title had been lost after the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion). The reportage was clear and painted a picture of the family who escaped with difficulty “in their nightgowns” as it was between 11 and 12 o'clock at night before the blaze was noticed. Due to the alarm bell being rung and the town drummer beating out in noisy warning that something dreadful has happened, many townspeople quickly ran to the Tower and House of Alloa. This was a time when French invasion was feared from `Boney`s` troops. But, no invasion had happened; instead, it was later found that a serving maid had carelessly set a curtain alight while searching for some lost article. The flames were quick to spread and the east wing was soon ablaze. There was no organised fire fighters then, but a group of local men, called Volunteers, under the leadership of Captain Vertue, arrived to “keep off the crowd and protect the furniture”, as the report stated. No engine could be had, until some hours later, and Gartmorn Dam had been shut to collect water for the numerous mills along the Brothy`s length.

The Family of Mar were deeply grateful for the people`s hard work. Many of the locals laboured for seven hours to remove any furniture, paintings, tools, and other artefacts. Despite the danger, no one was injured or killed. By 2am the roof had fallen in, and apart from the north east wing, the whole of Alloa House had been burned to the ground. The old Tower still remained, but only because the engine belonging to Schawpark mansion had arrived, just as the fire seized on the barricade of turfs which had been built up between the Tower and the house. Books, papers, most furniture and paintings were saved.

The saddest loss was an original painting of Mary, Queen of Scots, on copper, and a jug and ewer, the gift of Queen Elizabeth of England to a former Earl.

From the early 1800s, there were many dangers from fire in Clackmannanshire. The thatched roofs of the crowded cottages offered an opportunity for fires – coal, wood, candle flame, to take hold. As the century continues, there was a greater risk from textile factories, sawmills, factories and farms. Oil waste, straw bales, sparks from engines, were all involved – animals on the farms, driven frantic by the danger, added to the chaos.

An official Fire Brigade was set up in the 1850s under the jurisdiction of the Burgh Commissioners.

INDUSTRIAL VISIT - 24/3/03

In 1860 there was a disastrous fire in the heart of Alloa – Paton`s Manufactory. The column heading in the Journal said “Destruction of Kilncraigs Woollen Manufactory by Fire” (Dec 1860). The fire broke out in a drying house on the south side of the mill. The factory bell was rung and the church bell as well, and the alarm was spread “by Tuck of Drum”. Messengers were sent to Tillicoultry and Stirling for fire engines – where were Alloa`s? The large crowd helped by throwing water on the flames. The principal engine, as it always happens most unfortunately, said the sarcastic unknown reporter, was out of repair, and “the other one, as we all know, is an extremely paltry affair, which is of little use for anything”. It arrived very soon, but another problem arose – the fire plug could not be discovered, so water still had to be carried in pails. The oil soaked wood caught fire like tinder, and soon the whole of the vast building was ablaze. The warehouse had been saved. Six sets of carding and two sets of spinning machines were lost that cost from £10,000 to £15,000 (only partly covered by insurance). The old mill with carding engines and `jennies` was unaffected, and a new building would be ready within three months. Meanwhile Patons took a year`s lease of a nearby mill thus ensuring continuity of employment.

The world famous pottery of Messrs Bailey in Kirkgate was mentioned the following year, when a workshop roof caught fire, due to the overheating of a kiln. The 1870s and 1880s had several large fires. One was at the three-storey Upper Strude Mill, Alva. Despite the fire engines, the building was a wreck as the roof and side walls had fallen in. The efforts of the fire fighters prevented the flames reaching the mill of Messrs Archibald & Sons nearby. The fire had begun in the lowest flat when some waste material caught fire. The premises belonged to the trustees of the late Mr John Melvin, an Alloa architect, and were occupied by James Porteous & Company.

A spectacular fire happened in January 1886 at Springfield Mill situated on the south side o Whins Road. The newspaper reporter said it was the most destructive for several years with damage estimated at £2000, no small sum at that time. A large quantity of oil stored on the premises added to the blaze. The Thomson brothers had at least 400 workers and several were on the scene plus many townspeople, as the whole flat was enveloped in flames. The burgh Fire Brigade and fire engine soon attended with the large crowd of willing helpers who always seem to have mustered at these times. In days of few events, a large group of observers gathered at Park Place, Clackmannan Road and Whins Road itself to view. The teasing house was completely destroyed, strong iron bars were twisted like wire. The damage was only partly covered by insurance.

The century of fires – mills, farms, mansions, had produced many `spectaculars` but luckily few had lost their lives. And, at least, a regulated fire service had come into being.

The Industrial Visit to Diageo`s enterprises in Clackmannanshire was voted an unqualified success – “the best ever” remarked many. Long may Diageo see the advantage in keeping their plants in the county.

During the briefing session, a question was asked, “What does Diageo stand for?” Martin Rawlings, Brand Support Manager, and leader for the day, explained it was from Greek – dia = around and geo = earth. However, they like to think it means – “We make the world smile the world over”. The Clackmannanshire operation include – Abercrombie (copper engineering works) Carsebridge Cooperage and Blackgrange/Cambus (warehousing), as well as Menstrie. The Consortium arose from amalgamation of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan – other operations are based in Bonnybridge, Blythswood and Bonhill. The warehousing facility at Blackgrange/Cambus is the largest in Europe.

The tour started at Abercrombies, founded 200 years ago in Broad Street then moved to their present premises in 1944. It is in the engineering workshops that tradition copper stills are made and repaired. These malt whisky stills are in the main constructed by hand and built in sections so that they can be repaired without the expense of building a complete new still. The flavour of malt whisky is enhanced through interaction with copper. Sheet copper is imported from South Africa, all scrap is recycled. It was a joy to behold the bronze sheen of new copper. Not so attractive are the `Coffey` stills for distilling grain whisky. Malt whisky is produced in batches, a specialist product, whereas grain whisky is a continuous distilling operation.

An interesting item in for repair was a 1930s copper funnel from the paddle steamer `Waverley`. Vats for syrup that goes into Tunnocks wafers are also constructed here.

Our next port of call was to Carsebridge Cooperage where again the workforce were engaged in a craft – very much a `hands on` job, as was the work of the coppersmith. It is wonderful to know that these ancient crafts have not fallen foul of the `push button`.

Oak staves for the barrels are imported from America. There are 34 staves in each cask, and, when put in place the barrel gets a steam bath to make the wood pliable and easier to work. The inside undergoes a heat process, it is charred, this adds to the flavour of the finished product. Many other processes are necessary before the barrel is complete, trimming the ends, securing the iron hoops, checking the staves and end pieces fit securely – reed is used to seal any tiny gaps. In a way it was like a conveyor belt without the hum of machinery. Each man knew his job and took pride in what he was doing. Time was taken to explain the traditional tools of the trade,

still in use today. Strange words were added to our vocabulary – Plucker used to even the tops of the staves, Crumby another shaving tool and a Study anvil

An excellent lunch was partaken in the attractive boardroom before we departed to visit the warehousing complex at Blackgrange. This is a very extensive site containing traditional stacking as well of the modern system of pallet stacking whereby more barrels can be stored. When the barrels are filled it requires to remain at Blackgrange for a minimum three years before the liquid is ready. This is where the word `disgorging` enters our vocabulary – the whisky is disgorged into large tanks and then siphoned into waiting tanker lorries – quite an awesome sight. The storage areas at Blackgrange and Cambus are incredible – my thought was – who drinks all that whisky!!

This was a most interesting visit, the programme stated a 3pm finish, but it was after 5pm before I got home. No effort was spared to make our visit enjoyable and thanks must go to the employees who made the day a tremendous success.

Betty Roy



Copper still (Martin Rawlings, Diageo)