



## Reports of our Summer 2017 outings by David Perry

### **Brechin Castle**

On Saturday 24 June nine members of the Section and one guest enjoyed a visit to Brechin Castle, the home of the Earl and Countess of Dalhousie.



The present castle, completed in 1711, is the work of architect Alexander Edward for James Maule, 4th Earl of Panmure, who did not enjoy it for long as he was forfeited for participating in the '15. The castle incorporates earlier work from a medieval castle, notably in a basement cellar converted into the family dining room, with thick walls and a vaulted ceiling. There has been a castle on the site since the 13th century, when John Balliol surrendered his

crown and kingdom to Edward I of England there in 1296. In 1303 the castle was besieged by Edward when Sir Thomas Maule, the garrison commander, was killed. The Maules were descended from the earlier lords of Brechin, who were forfeited in 1320 and again in 1437, but did not acquire the castle until 1634 when the 1st Earl of Panmure bought it from the Earl of Mar.

The attachment of the Maules to the Stuart and Jacobite cause is evident on the main staircase where the main wall contains portraits of James VI, Charles I, Charles II and James VII as well as Queens Henrietta Maria and Catherine of Braganza, wives of Charles I and II respectively. Despite the forfeiture for Jacobitism, the 4th Earl's nephew was able to buy back the castle in 1764. He was a Hanoverian general and had been created Earl of Panmure anew (as an Irish peerage). The new earl was succeeded by his nephew, the Earl of Dalhousie.

Later Earls of Dalhousie served the Empire as Governors-General of Canada, India and Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the castle contains mementoes of their service. There is a memorable 'swagger' portrait by Sargent of the 14th Earl of Dalhousie, who created the Drawing Room. The carved woodwork and plaster ceiling of this room are based on the Drawing Room of the Palace of Bromley by Bow, London, a Jacobean mansion now demolished, although the Drawing Room is preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The wood work at Brechin was carved by local craftsmen and includes the coats of arms above the fireplaces of the two families at the castle – Ramsay and Maule. The ceiling contains representations of three of the Nine Worthies – Joshua, Hector and Alexander.

The landscaped grounds of the castle contain many varieties of trees, including firs, a monkey puzzle, copper beeches, cedars of Lebanon and Wellingtonias, some from their girth of great age. Some distance from the castle is the flower garden with its formal avenue which contains a 17th-century sundial, originally from Panmure House, and two stone terrestrial globes as well as a more recent sundial surrounded by yew trees.



*The walled garden with the 17th-century sundial, originally from Panmure House*

## Whitefriars

On Wednesday 28 June, shortly before it finally closed, some 25 members and guests of the Section enjoyed an evening visit to the Whitefriars excavation where Derek Hall, the excavator, explained the site.

Excavation was now concentrated on the SW corner of the cloister, which showed evidence of alterations, possibly as a result of the bishop of Dunkeld's rebuilding of the church in the early 16th century. This would have been the kitchen area of the monastery. The southernmost building of the W range of the cloister had been shortened in length and the abandoned part of the building turned into an outside waste dump for kitchen waste (a dump of oyster shells and animal bones). The westernmost room of the S range of the cloister was divided into two rooms by a wooden partition. Stone drains in this area included one with remains of a wooden lining.



*The SW corner of the cloister at Whitefriars*

The water supply to the monastery came from Wellshill and ran under the W end of the church to the cloister. Most of the S range will remain unexcavated since it is outwith the area of any proposed new building.

Over 300 skeletons or parts have been recovered in total from the excavations in 2008 and since 2014. A post-excavation design now needs to be agreed with PKHT and the developer.

## Wemyss Caves

On Sunday 30 July eleven members and guests enjoyed a visit to the Wemyss Caves in Fife.

We were met by Dr Sue Hamstead of the Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society, who spoke on the caves to the Section last November. The caves were carved by the sea into the Carboniferous sandstone cliffs after the end of the last Ice Age some 8,000 years ago. There are several caves, not all of which have carvings in them and not all of which are accessible. The first cave is Court Cave,



a double cave, one part of which was used as a passageway by fisherwomen travelling to sell their fish; this has a carving identified as Thor and a goat, as well as possible cup and ring marks. The other part has carvings of Pictish double discs symbols and broken V-rods, a salmon, a goose and possible Ogham lines. Doo Cave is aptly named for its nesting boxes for pigeons carved into the back of the cave. The three Well Caves

(Fern Cave, Well Cave and Unnamed Cave) were not accessed as the first and last have entrances blocked by silting and entry to Well Cave is barred by a gate. Jonathan's Cave has the most carvings as well as much graffiti, Victorian as well as modern. Carvings in it include fish, birds (swans), animals (a Pictish horse and a dog or wolf), Pictish double discs, tridents and a ship.

Above the Well Caves, and connected to Well Cave by a passageway, are the remains of Macduff's Castle, traditionally associated with the Thane of Fife in the 11th century but probably no earlier than the 14th century. The castle was the seat of the Wemyss family until they built Wemyss Castle. The castle was abandoned in the 17th century and partially demolished last century.

## **The Engine Shed**

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August six members and one guest visited HES's new building conservation centre based in Stirling. After a four-year restoration and development programme it opened in June 2017, and it now serves as a central hub for building and conservation professionals and the general public, with the aim of encouraging a greater understanding of traditional building materials and skills. The Engine Shed building, used as a goods transfer shed, was built sometime between 1896 and 1913. The exact details of its construction were subject to an information blackout, and are still unknown, as it was part of an important military complex.



In the afternoon a few members visited the Wallace Monument, enjoying a pleasant walk up the sculpture trail from the car park in the glorious weather.

## **Kinfauns Church**

The ruined church is early 15<sup>th</sup> century, dedicated to St Ninian, believed to have replaced a 12<sup>th</sup> century chapel, with the Charteris Aisle added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In September I was invited on behalf of PSNS to attend the celebration to mark the completion of the Tay Landscape Partnership project to conserve and consolidate the building.

Our Section had undertaken a survey of the gravestones in the churchyard in the early 1990's and Graham Watson had spent a great deal of time and energy lobbying the powers that be to do something about the building and especially the Charteris Aisle before it was beyond help. He had been very happy to hear about the progress being made and had been going to visit it when he came back from holiday.

At Sophie Nicol's talk in January David Bowler mentioned the Hebrew headstone in the older part of the churchyard so I've included a photograph taken in 1999.

*"I KNOW/KNEW MY REDEEMER LIVES"*

*The Dow family, dated 1849*



I hope to send out information about this year's summer outings programme soon.

As ever, if you have any queries about any PSNS matters please don't hesitate to contact me and I will try to provide the answers.

Regards,  
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