



The Tweeddale Society

History

The History of Peebles published in 1990 states that the Peeblesshire Society was founded in the 1880's. So far as is known no records now exist of this early phase of the Society's history, but it must have fallen into abeyance about the start of the last century.

What however is clearly recorded is that in February 1913 a public meeting under the chairmanship of Provost Ballantyne was held in Peebles to consider proposals to form a County Association for the purpose of stimulating interest throughout the County in the study of history and natural science. At this meeting it was agreed that the Innerleithen Alpine Club should amalgamate with the new club, if formed.

A draft constitution for the new club was drawn up by a provisional committee appointed for the purpose, and approved at another public meeting in Peebles on 12th March 1913. The first President was Provost Ballantyne and the Secretary cum Treasurer was J Walter Buchan, Town Clerk and brother of the famous novelists John and Anna Buchan. Walter Buchan continued to be Secretary/Treasurer from 1913 to 1941 when the Society was suspended. A somewhat cumbersome title The Tweeddale Club for the Study of History and Natural Science was speedily changed to The Tweeddale Society and has remained so ever since. The inaugural winter lecture on 2 May 1913 was given by Professor Bryce of Glasgow University and The Loanings, Peebles, on the subject An Outline of Scottish Archaeology. The pattern of winter lectures and summer outings was much as at present.

The Society flourished for 28 years and was suspended in 1941 during the Second World War.

It was not until 1967 that a public meeting was held in the Peebles Town Hall to consider the revival of the Society. The meeting was sponsored by the Extra Mural Studies Department of the University of Edinburgh, and Mr Basil Skinner of the Department had already enlisted some local support and had offered to supply a suitable lecture programme. Ian Lawson and Angus Drummond played a leading part in getting the Society on its feet again, and one of their most happy inspirations was to invite Mr J Halkett Hendrie of Broughton to lead the venture. Under his dynamic leadership, and ably supported by Ian Lawson as Secretary and Jim Buchanan as Treasurer, the new Society grew rapidly and various members, including Ted Smith, the then principal teacher of history at the Peebles High School, were invited to join the Council. Ted remained an Honorary Vice-President of the Society until his death early in 2009.

The first winter meeting on 12 September 1967 heard Dr James Bulloch of Stobo lecture on The Roman Legacy in South East Scotland. Earlier, on 19 August, a party of 44 members visited Mellerstain House under the leadership of Miss Cruft, Keeper of the Archives of the National Monuments Records.