

## SCOTTISH ACTUARIES CLUB

### Report

on

2006 Outing

29<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006

Ten of the Club's members and their wives converged on Gleddoch House Hotel on 29<sup>th</sup> September, fifty percent of the members were exiled FFAs, whilst forty percent, not all drawn from the same fifty percent, were born outwith Scotland. George Train had booked to join the party but due to illness had cancelled in mid-September; subsequently he was admitted to hospital, where he had died peacefully earlier in the week.

Gleddoch House, the former home of Sir William Lithgow the shipbuilder, has had a traumatic time in recent years. The golf course was developed about twenty years ago, and the privately owned hotel extended by the addition of a bedroom wing and leisure centre. About three years ago the original building was overcome by a major fire and the main part of the hotel was closed for two years; it was carefully restored except that the grand staircase that used to dominate the entrance hall was replaced by two modern staircases largely hidden from view.

It was still privately owned when the Club made its booking in January 2006, but early in February it was taken over by Swallow Hotels as part of its expansion plans. By early September Swallow Hotels had gone "off the rails" into administration. Gleddoch House was taken over a few days later by Oxford Inns, who also acquired the Swallow Hotel at Carnoustie. The response to enquiries of Gleddoch House Hotel a week before our planned arrival received the response that it was "business as usual". That proved to be untrue as the hotel was short staffed; fortunately those still working there proved to be very good but they had to put in long hours.

We occupied two tables in the Restaurant on Friday evening and the atmosphere was so good that we did not break up until almost midnight. However all but one couple were ready to depart from the hotel at 8.15 a.m. for the Wemyss Bay ferry to Rothesay.

The other couple, Tom and Margaret Ross had decided to play golf despite the heavy hill mist, which didn't clear until well after 10 a.m. However except for an excursion into a burn on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole, they thoroughly enjoyed their round.

Whilst waiting on Wemyss pier to depart on MV [Juno], one of members from the "West" regaled us with stories of the days when on Glasgow Fair days hundreds of people flocked to Wemyss Bay for a trip on one of the several services that operated at that time.

On landing in Rothesay we drove the few miles to Mount Stuart, Brendan having organised a private tour of the historic home of the Marquis of Bute. We were privileged to have as our guide Jean, a very enthusiastic Head Guide at Mount Stuart. She had joined the staff in 1996 when the house was first opened to the public. She now rarely takes parties round but spends time researching the history of the house and family. As we were on a pre booked tour, we were shown several parts of the house not generally seen by the general public, including the original private chapel and the first indoor heated swimming pool in the World which is still in use.

After lunch in the Visitor Centre the Head Gardener took most of us on a tour of the gardens. Like Jean, the Head Gardener was also very knowledgeable, although in his case about the history of the plant collection at Mount Stuart. Two couples had opted out of the garden tour, wishing instead to tour Bute and return Langbank by a different route; a description of their experiences warrants the attached report from one of the Refuseniks.

We returned to Rothesay in time for the 5.25 ferry back to Wemyss.

In the evening we were joined for Dinner by a member based in the West, Harry Taylor and his wife Susan. We had the sole use of the Campsie Suite for the evening, with a "Board Table" layout and the seating plan being designed to stimulate conversation – the evening proved most convivial, with the Members moving seats between the main and dessert courses, so that everyone had four conversation partners during the meal. The party again broke up around midnight.