

## **LOCAL EXPLORERS**

Our June visit took us to the Sir John Barrow cottage museum and the Hoad monument. Starting in the morning 28 members met at the museum at Dragley Beck in Ulverston which our museum guide Iain had opened up early for us. So as people arrived they were able to start to look around the cottage and its contents. At the official meeting time of 10.30am Iain gave us a very interesting talk about Sir John, his life and career whilst also pointing out interesting things about the cottage itself. We were then free to continue to explore the many documents and maps held in the museum, which referred to both Sir John, the monument and Ulverston.

The museum is small, we were a large group and the weather was very hot so at lunchtime those staying on for the afternoon visit to the monument took the opportunity of an ice cream at Bardsea, lunch in the cool café at Booths or in Gillam's in Ulverston, or a picnic.

Reconvening in the afternoon, 20 members made their way up to the monument – some took the direct route up, most took the less challenging way up around the back from St Mary's Mount, and one member took up the offer of a lift up in our lighthouse keeper guide's 4x4! As we arrived we were invited inside to sit in the cool shade whilst our guide gave us further information about both the monument and Sir John's life and career. Everyone then had the opportunity to climb up to the very top to see the superb views, which the majority of our group did. Those remaining on ground level still had outstanding views from around the monument, to Scafell Pike in the north and to Blackpool Tower in the south. Unfortunately a bit too hazy for seeing the Welsh hills.

A really interesting day, despite the challenge of such hot weather, and we certainly all know much more of Sir John Barrow's life and the significance of the monument.

*Irene Allan*

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On 11 July, two groups of Local Explorers were privileged to have the opportunity to visit Cumbria Wildlife Trust's local nature reserve at Foulshaw Moss. Many of those who attended said that they had driven past hundreds of times without knowing about the very special, interesting area hidden from the busy A590.

Keziah Taylor, Assistant Warden, gave us an introduction of the history of the Moss, it's recent development as a nature reserve and plans for the future. A short walk to a raised viewing platform gave us a good overview of the site and we learned of the importance of the Sphagnum moss (for carbon capture) and also about the varied flora and fauna. A short way along a boardwalk is another viewing area specifically to observe the osprey. Volunteer, Matthew, told us of the success of the osprey pair and some interesting facts about their habits and we were able to use the powerful telescopes and the webcam to observe the nest. This year's three chicks were at the stage of testing their wings and "helicoptering" above the nest - they have now all successfully fledged Another success story is the reintroduction of a rare species, the White-faced Darter dragonfly which are thriving on the boggy areas of the Moss.

We all enjoyed the visit immensely and were grateful that the forecast thunderstorms did not occur!

*Jean Waitson*

**AUGUST EXPLORERS : POETRY PATH**  
**AND ‘CATHEDRAL OF THE DALES’ KIRKBY STEPHEN**

After all the wet weather we have had recently we were blessed with a lovely dry and bright day for our visit to Kirkby Stephen.

Meeting in the car park, our group of 18 members set off through the town centre and out to the start of the Poetry Path. The circular path, about 2 miles long, goes west along the southern side of the River Eden before crossing the river on the Millenium Bridge at Stenkrith, then back on the other side of the river. Spaced out along the Path are 12 poems set on rocks and stones, one for each month of the year depicting a hill farmers year with a carved motif for each.

We found January’s poem right at the start of the path, then crossed the Swingy Bridge (fortunately no longer swingy) to continue along the Path, stopping at each poem to decipher the wording and to discover the carved motif, which were sometimes difficult to find due to weathering and the growth of moss and lichens since their installation in 2004. We were so lucky that Glenis had the brilliant idea of bringing paper and wax crayons for rubbings to be taken of these carvings which brought the motif out more clearly showing pictures of events during the hill farming year such as lambing, shearing and the Farmers Market. We collected rubbings from 10 of the 12 carvings – one was in a stream and one we couldn’t find amongst the moss and undergrowth! Andrew was able to point out some interesting historical places along the way, with the family name of Musgrave cropping up quite often!

Having completed the Path we walked back along the river to Frank’s Bridge in the town where half the group sat by the river for a picnic whilst the other half crossed the bridge back into the town centre to find lunch in one of the cafes. Following our lunch we visited the Parish Church, known as the Cathedral of the Dales, in two smaller groups. Andrew had researched well and gave us a very interesting history and guided tour of the church. Again the family name of Musgrave appeared often even as the name of one of the chapels. Even the tusk from the last wild boar, killed on nearby appropriately named Wild Boar Fell, is on display in a cabinet in the church.

I think everyone took the opportunity to look round the shops and cafes in the town square and especially the excellent Tourist Information Centre before travelling home. It had been a lovely full day visit and we had discovered some local ‘hidden’ treasures.

*Irene Allan*