

## 12<sup>th</sup> Portobello (RHS) Scout Group

### Drummonds Hall (a.k.a. 'Lauder Cottage')

The initiation of Drummond's Hall has to be established, but it appears that the first encounter was around 1962, when the cottage is mentioned in Schola Regia articles. Michael Halcrow recollects visiting the farmer's house on the east side of the A697 with Peter Blythe, and thinks Peter may have known him. The first edition of the Twelfth magazine in 1964 mentions 'maintenance programmes at Lauder Cottage'. 'The last of Lauder Cottage' was definitely in 1974, when a series of mournful photos shows phases of the exit. In the approximate 12 years of our temporary tenure, hundreds of cubs, scouts, rovers, leaders and parents enjoyed the idyllic surroundings of the former sawmill cottage, with its associated safe river, and proximity to the town of Lauder.



A variety of improvements were made through the years, from the creation of a dormitory in the attic space (fire regulations presumably ignored), bridge repair work on the route of what has since 1984 been part of the Southern Upland Way, and the 'great water works', enabling running (actually pumped) water in the house, and a flushing toilet outside. The latter project was a triumph of engineering, presumably masterminded by fluid dynamics expert Gordon McConnachie, but aided by many scouts,

rovers and parents. One recollects the opening of the toilet block, when John Robertson, District Commissioner at the time, on viewing the new loo facilities, and wishing to christen them suitably, asked female parents to step outside for a few minutes while he did so. The installation started with a large bath placed in the field well above the cottage, suitably engineered to collect field drain water. The water was piped downhill towards the house where semi-rotary pumps extracted it as required, one pump in the kitchen, the other in the newly erected brick-built toilet block. The toilet emptied into an expertly constructed septic tank, which had several correctly established soakaways.



Many photos exist showing a succession of members of the scout group apparently enjoying the facilities. Many include parents who very much look as though they wishing it was them who were starting their weekend break! Rover scouts enjoyed the risky two-mile trek to Lauder of an evening to support the finances of a couple of the local hostelries.



Following our departure (a.k.a. eviction), many improvements have been made, and the property has developed from a two room and kitchen 'but-and-ben' to a four ensuite double-bedroomed 'country estate cottage' (according the expensively produced sale brochure).

The selection of photos shown below are taken in all seasons; several show snowy conditions, when the transit of Soutra presumably must have been exciting.

**Drummond's Hall photo gallery**



1966 – Drummonds Hall - the toilet block under construction - Peter Blythe, Gordon McConnachie, Allanach on ladder



1969 March - Seagull Patrol camp at a snowy Lauder



1970 Buchan, McConnachie and Lawrie during idle speculation at the front door



1859 OS 25 inch map of Drummonds Hall, showing the mill lade



1964 April – Drummonds Hall from the SW showing the sawmill lade tunnel



1971 Cubs in the river, making a brave attempt to drown themselves



1970 Cubs and parents' visitation. No lack of motor cars!



1974 – The last of lauder Cottage – a mess of kitchen 'furniture' ready for storage at Northfield Broadway



The 'Country Estate Cottage' in the 2010's sales brochure. Four bedrooms and several public rooms later...