

Soup, Tea and a Chat



On the 8th of January 2003, the Silloth Methodist Chapel held the first of four planned "Pop Ins" for a bowl of soup and a bread roll plus a cup of tea, all for only £1.

The idea of these events, being to provide an opportunity for the people of Silloth to meet friends, and enjoy some mid-day refreshment together.

It was thought that this would, in some way, fill the gap between coffee mornings held during the summer time and the Lent Lunches.

Mrs Jean Wilson, would like to thank the chapel members who helped with this first event, and those Sillothians who supported the occasion, which was a great success. More of these "Pop Ins" will be held on:-

Wed. 22nd January

Wed. 12th February

Wed. 26th February.

Proceeds from these events will go to supplement the chapel funds, thus ensuring that we can continue to operate, and to provide Christening, Wedding and Funeral Services for the population of Silloth. In these days of high costs, we are being put to considerable expense to maintain the property and to conform to the latest Government Regulations regarding Disabled Access.

Our small congregation would be very pleased to welcome any younger people who feel that they would like to join us, thus helping the chapel to continue in the future years.

Solway Super Stars

Story by: Norman & Florence Hammond

Around the Solway Firth shoreline and indeed within the Firth itself, are forests of small lowly plants that have shared their fortunes throughout many centuries. These are lichens, part fungi part alga. The coastal area of west Cumbria has changed considerably since the Rev Andrews studied the lichen flora there in 1880, for both the habitats and the lichens themselves have long since vanished, the only main natural habitat being St. Bees Head where even here many species are struggling. The south Solway shore has few natural habitats but this is offset by the many artificial structures, e.g. buildings, dock complexes, promenades which all provide home to these fascinating plants. At about the same time the Rev George McConachie was studying the lichen flora of the Rerrick cliffs in the Stewartry, which are there in all their glory to see today.

The Solway Firth European Marine Site provides few suitable habitats, but the coastal fringe with all its hedges, trees and buildings supports a flourishing assembly of *corticolous* species as a testimony to good air quality, this evidence moving well inland with the prevailing wind to ensure fine maritime species at Kirkandrews on Eden and up to Canonbie. The Solway Firth *crustose* lichens shine supreme on the fine coastal cliffs of the Stewartry and Wigtonshire enhancing the overall scene for visitors and local people alike. The dark black zone seen along the base of the cliffs isn't oil washed ashore, as is often thought, it's a wide, flourishing band, mainly of the specialist maritime lichen 'Verrucaria spp', generally a dark black, but also intermingled are lightish green species all fused together. Just below this band you will find very small black dots, no larger than a pinhead 'Pyrenocollema spp' on the millions of barnacles in what is known as the 'eu littoral zone' for instance below the Silloth promenade.

Extensive areas of orange lichens excel on the south facing cliffs, but especially at the Mull of Galloway, where sheets of 'Caloplaca spp' provide a wonderful spectacle in the late afternoon sun, and good subject matter for the many photographers who visit the headland throughout the year.

Lichen specialities abound, from the tough 'Cladonias' that have survived throughout the industrial period in west Cumbria, also the maritime species on the Allonby Buoy in mid Solway, to the lichen that has seen the battles, shipwrecks, Mary Queen of Scots crossing, for we believe it started its life around the year 1120.

With your 10x lens move close in to examine the lovely 'Jam tarts' on the widespread yellow *Xanthoria parietina* on the Skinburness sea wall and trunks of the roadside trees in Criffel Street, especially outside the T.I.C (see Pauline or Susan), or the 'Bakewell tarts' of *Ochrolechia parella* on red sandstone by the docks. Look very carefully to find surfaces that have been 'grazed' by the predatory 'Tartigrade' 'Milnesium tardigradum' a minuscule giant in this Silloth micro-world. Tartigrades are diminutive animals, rarely exceeding half a millimetre in length and immediately identifiable by their four pairs of stumpy legs usually terminated by claws.

Our Silent Sentinels have been monitoring the air and sea water quality from the dawn of time in a manner unknown to modern technology, and these lovely lichens will continue to do so, at no financial cost, into the future.

(If you would like a lichen tour of Silloth please mention it the Tourist Information Centre girls).

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