

The 2017 AGM of the SVBWG was held at John Sinclair House, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Head Office, Edinburgh on 5th October and was followed by the Group's Annual Conference, with the theme *Investigation and Conservation*. Our first speaker was Ben Tindall (Benjamin Tindall Architects) who, with 'Hermits and Termites – restoration of an 18th-century house', gave an enthralling account of finding, saving and restoring this town house to become his own home in the early 1980s. Its name may have been taken from 'Hermitis' – referring to St Leonard's chapel and hospital – with 'Terraris' referring to farmland. Built in 1734 for excise solicitor, William Clifton, it later became the home of the Scott family of artists – father Robert, and sons David and William Bell Scott – and in striking contrast was called 'Coalyard House' when used by the stationmaster of the 'Innocent Railway'. When the railway closed in the late 1960s, the council took on the building and neglected it, with a view to demolition for a road scheme – which fortunately never happened. Staying within Edinburgh, with another uplifting talk, Geoffrey Stell (Historic Buildings Consultant) then spoke on 'Teaching building analysis to students of conservation – some Royal Mile case-studies' based upon his work helping to deliver MSc Architectural Conservation at Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh. The final presentation was from Eve Boyle (Community Liaison Manager, HES) who spoke on 'Tomintoul and Glenlivet – towards a biography of a Highland landscape'. She enthusiastically described a community project that has been recording the rural heritage and investigating the archaeology around Tomintoul. Lying within the Glenlivet Estate, Tomintoul is a fine example of an 18th century planned village and the highest village in the Highlands. After lunch, delegates were divided into groups in order to take turns at two activities; one group was escorted on a visit to HES archives by Veronica Fraser, where displays in the Print Room included works by Alexander Archer and James Drummond, as well as historic photograph albums, while the other was hosted by Ben Tindall on a guided tour of 'Hermits and Termites', which is just a few minutes' walk from John Sinclair House. At the latter, visitors were impressed by the fine, panelled interior and remarkable mahogany staircase, and one of them succinctly described the experience as 'inspiring'.