

HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter 49

Autumn 2007

The Hopper Mausoleum: a topic for further research

Stan Beckensall

A possible research project for a member of the Hexham Local History Society. Stan Beckensall has taken many digital images of the Hopper Memorial at Grey Mare Hill. Is anyone interested in undertaking some research for an article in a future Hexham Historian? The story so far...

The Hopper Mausoleum

At Grey Mare Hill, near Kilnpit Hill, to the east of the A68 to Consett, there is a remarkably little-known building called the Hopper Mausoleum. It stands on a hill with very good, almost all-round, visibility particularly to the south and south west, in the churchyard of St Andrew's church, which is managed by the Historic Churches Trust. The Church dates from 1769, but was restored following subsidence, in 1892.

The memorial was built by Humfrey Hopper of Black Hedley in 1752 as a memorial to his wife. He was later buried there and details of his descendants were engraved in the building erected in a neo-Classical style, complete with niches, statues, pinnacles, iron railings and more. It was restored c1977 but has now been partly vandalised. It remains an imposing monument, accessed only by a signposted footpath on the south side of a minor road to Whittonstall.

On the south face, there is a slab with a dedication that has been added to over time, but which tails off – either through erosion or from being left unfinished. This notes that the monument was:

Erected by Humfrey Hopper of Black Hedley in memory of his wife Jane Hodgson who died February 29th 1752 aged 77.

The inscription goes on to list members of the Hopper family.

The memorial is built from sandstone and until recently was home to a number of small states, but unfortunately they were recently stolen.

Close by, amid a graveyard that has some early 18th century tombstones, is a simple cruciform church. Inside it has a central arched roof that covers most of the interior, and is full of box pews. Who was Hopper and why did he build such a distinctive monument? Further research is needed. If you are interested please contact Stan stanbeckensall@yahoo.co.uk

HELP HELP HELP!

The Society used to have a slide projector but it has gone AWOL. Can any member help us to track it down? Alternatively, has anyone got a reliable slide projector they are willing to donate to the Society? We are in the embarrassing position of having to ask speakers to bring their own! Kodak has stopped producing their carousel projectors and we cannot hire one. If anyone can help, please contact Fred Donnan on (01434) 604082.

Committee Members

Do you want to contribute fully to the workings of the society? Do you want to bring some new blood to the proceedings? The Committee require a **Secretary, Speakers' organiser** and a general **committee member** as soon as possible. Please contact Fred Donnan on (01434) 604082 if you are interested. Anyone is welcome to put themselves forward: whether you have been a member for many years or even if you joined last week!

Information Wanted

The Website

On the very day we launched the Society's website we received our very first web enquiry! Since then, we have received a number of others, all of which have been added to the *Answers Please* page and, with luck, will have been answered by at least one of you!

Don't forget: Items of interest to our members that arrive too late for inclusion in one Newsletter and that cannot wait until the next are added to the Newsletter page of the website. Definitely a case of "watch this space"!

Any members who may be able to help, or are simply interested in having a look can access the site at www.northumberlandlife.org/hexham-local-history-society/AboutUs.asp

The current queries are listed below for those without access to a computer. Please see if you can help!

White, known to be teaching at the school in 1901

ginneyjane@hotmail.com

1. Jo Burrill would like to know about the history of the **Quatre Bras allotments**. How long have they been established as allotments? What was the land previously and who owned it?

(01434)608456
joburrill@btinternet.com

2. Jane Gunney is looking for photos of **Whitley Chapel School** and its pupils from the early 20th century. She is particularly interested in **Maud Gertrude**

3. Phil Drew is interested in any family history research that has been done on the **Rumney** family who lived in and around New Alston/Haydon Bridge from about 1900 or so. His mother's father was, Edward Featherstone Rumney. He worked in the Settlingstone barytes mine and died in 1930. He would like to know whether any history of the mine has been written and whether there was a union at the mine.

Edward had several brothers who served in WWI. The other side of

the family were Keys. They may have come from the North Shields area and may have included lay preachers in one of the Methodist sects. Some of the Keys line are: Richard Keys killed on railway may have married an Ann Adstock (?) who later ran a boarding house in Haltwhistle and Newcastle. William Henry Keys b 5 March 1894 m Sarah Jane Craick 4 July 1910 died 14 February 1947. Seven children. She born 8 August 1873 died 6 June 1958.

4. David Marshall from Wantage in Oxfordshire is trying to locate a café called **Hadrian's Rest**, known to be in the Hexham/Haltwhistle area in 1975. (It's not the former Heddon guesthouse of the same name)

If anyone can recall the café and its location, David would love to hear from you at david-marshall@tiscali.co.uk

5. Louise Thorp would like to know about the **Turner** family. Her grandfather, William Turner, was a butcher in Hexham in the 1930s and members of the family may have served as organists in the Abbey and sung in local choirs. If anyone knows anything, Mrs Thorp can be contacted at 8, The Street, Oaksey, Malmesbury, Wilts. SN16 9TG

6. James Brown is looking for any information about an outbreak of **diphtheria** in 1878 in **Colwell** - with particular reference to a family named **Tierney**. Responses please to two.browns@virgin.net

7. Dr Trevor Williamson is writing a book on the history of Hawthorn, a rural village in Eastern County

Durham. For many years the village and surrounding farms were owned by successive generations of the **Pemberton** family, who were best known for sinking Wearmouth Colliery in Sunderland. The Pembertons held several estates in the North East, for example Barnes in Sunderland, Belmont (now Ramside) at Durham and Hawthorn Tower at Hawthorn.

At the moment he is researching the development and subsequent decline of the Hawthorn Tower estate and has identified the following connection with Hexham:

The Pemberton family sold Hawthorn Tower to a South Shields businessman called David Fulton Robson. He in turn sold the property and eventually moved to Carlisle, early 1960's. A news cutting dated 15th September 1982 reports the funeral of Mr. Robson who was 77 and who died suddenly at his home in Carlisle. He left 2 sons and a daughter. His sons were named David C and Piers C Robson.

The cutting states that the funeral took place in Hexham where his Hugh Bellingham Robson lived. Hugh's address was 'Overdene', St. George's Road, Hexham.

Dr Williamson would like to make contact with descendants of this family. The Pemberton family acquired Hawthorn Tower in the 1850's and engaged the services of a Thomas Askew as gamekeeper. Mr Askew was born in Whitefield, Northumberland and died in Hawthorn in the early 1900's. One of his great grand children, Jack Askew, was chauffeur to the Pemberton family. Jack retired to

Haltwhistle where he died in the 1990's. He is interested to hear from anyone in the History Society with an interest in this family or who knows where Jack's son can be contacted.

hawthornhistory@aol.com or by post to 12 Garbutt Lane, Swainby, Northallerton DL6 3EN

8. **Stan Beckensall** has started to research an article on the **Witherite** mine at **Settlingstones** and is appealing for anyone with memories of the mine to get in touch.

9. **Jim Sinkinson**, an ex resident of Hexham, is writing a novel with the Hexham and district area as the backdrop. He would like some information about how & why the demographics of the villages and towns in the area

(including Hexham) between the First and Second World Wars changed and the principal reasons for the changes: what they changed from and to. For example, population growth / shrinkage, industrial and commercial growth and shrinkage, gender roles after the First World War / effect of motorised transport etc He would be very grateful for any help and can be contacted at: james.sinkinson@talk21.com

Coria Project

Tyne
and
Wear

Museums' project on the Roman bridge at Corbridge, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is reaching its final stages. During excavation of remains of the ramp, which once carried the road onto the bridge, over 300 huge stones of the collapsed retaining wall were rescued and lifted onto the riverbank. The wall has now

been reconstructed in a position safe from erosion by the river. The display will be completed in the autumn. The excavation report is due to be published this winter and will include the results of the new survey of the Roman stones in Hexham Abbey crypt.



STOP PRESS: Hexham Hospital needs your help!

Have you any memorabilia, photos, memories or stories about Hexham Hospital? You may have been a patient, a volunteer or you may have worked there. The hospital is planning an exhibition to celebrate the old hospital and the opening of the new and would like your help. Please contact Sonja Bailes sonja_bailes@yahoo.co.uk or 01434 684858

***Hexham: a History and Guide*
by Stan Beckensall
A Review**

Sonja Bailes

In this latest book on Hexham Stan Beckensall takes us for a relaxed but perceptive guided tour round the town in his own, inimitable, style. We start in the market place and walk round all the streets of note, taking in well-known landmarks from the Abbey, Moot

Hall and Gaol to the tannery area, railway and Egger factory. The narrative covers much of the local history of the town but it appears in its modern setting and there are reflections on current trade, industry, arts and culture.

The writing is easy but do not be fooled into thinking that this is a superficial account. Stan has included a welter of well-researched detail and he gives credit to the many other academics who have informed the content of the book, thus providing references for further study should the reader so wish.

As the writing is so accessible the book is appropriate for a range of readers; occasional visitors to the town as well as to the residents. It can be read as both reference and for entertainment. Some of the extracts are fascinating and recount such things as the almost unbelievably farcical opening of the 61 miles of railway from Newcastle to Carlisle on 18th June 1836.

The publication, however, has been considerably enhanced by the accompanying photographs, the majority of which have been taken by Stan himself, and they well illustrate the text.

This is not dry text either and the author does not always spare us his own thoughts and opinions. But it is none the worse for that. After all, if you feel strongly enough then no doubt Stan would welcome debate should you meet him accidentally during your own Hexham tour of the town.

'Hexham: a history and guide' by Stan Beckensall

Published by Tempus Publishing Ltd in 2007

ISBN: 978 07524 4361 4

From David Jennings:

(This was a letter sent to Tynedale Council; to date, David has received no reply!) We will publish any reply from the council when received...

In the last HLHS *Newsletter*, Mark Benjamin urges a degree of caution with respect to publications about Hexham not emanating from the Society.

There is a case close to home where dubious history about the Hexham is before the public. It is the recently erected display board for Beaumont Street, which gives a mistaken and muddled view of Hexham in the 19th century. Thus:

1. Beaumont Street was built in 1866 and not, as stated, 1864, nor was it laid out in that year, having been laid out, at the latest, by 1857.
2. What might be called the 'heading' on the left of the board reads "Hexham grew quickly in the 19th century. The town centre was overcrowded and unhealthy until the elegant new Beaumont Street was built."

- Hexham did not grow quickly in the 19th century. The population only just doubled between the start and end of the century – this was totally different to the rest of the UK.
 - The town could be said to be unhealthy until well after the 1914-1918 war. It was in desperate condition for much of the 19th century, with the death rate much higher than the average for the UK (often 20% higher). Much of the centre was still overcrowded until slum clearance in the 1930s.
 - Beaumont Street was built as a commercial venture by W. B. Beaumont, not to improve the health of the town. I doubt if it had a slightest effect on it.
3. Encircling the heading is the following: “New streets, running water, proper sewers, better houses.”
- Until 1890, besides Beaumont Street, only about two other streets were built. They were not covered in tar macadam and could be a muddy quagmire in the winter.
 - Although the water supply was improved in 1866, it soon became inadequate to meet demand, as well as being of inadequate purity. The town had to wait until 1889, for an effective supply of water (from Ladle Wells).
 - As late as the end of the 1870s, the sewage system was completely inadequate, with human excrement often deposited in ‘middens’ close to housing. The sewage system slowly improved thereafter but it was only after 1900 that sewage was not allowed to run into the Tyne untreated.
 - Between 1841 and 1891 only six new houses were built each year. It was only after the water supply from Ladle Wells came on stream did the rate of house building increase – between 1891 and 1921 the rate increased to 31. It was during this period that new street building commenced on any scale.

In view of the above, I have to say that the board for Beaumont Street is marred by some rather sloppy history – which is a pity, in view of the excellence of other features of the display. I am at a loss about the chosen emphasis on public health. It would have been much better to say ‘The building of Beaumont Street and its associated buildings was one of many significant steps in the development of Hexham as a commercial centre in the 19th century’. That statement could have been encircled by ‘gas lighting, railway, two newspapers, banks, livestock markets, purpose-built shops.’

WAR MEMORIALS

Following Alan Grint’s sterling work with the St John Lee and Hexham war memorials, Marion Lewis is planning on listing all casualties from the two World Wars mentioned in The Hexham Courant – and is looking for assistance! If you’d like to help, please contact Marion on 01661 832270, by email at marion_ea@hotmail.com or by post at Woodbine House, Ovingham, Prudhoe NE42 6AA

NEWMP Education Pack Launched at National Family History Fair

THE Project's first Educational Pack - to support work in Primary Schools at Key Stage 1, is now available to order from the Website.

For those of you with an involvement in the Education field, we would be very grateful if you would make Primary School staff aware of the availability of this new resource.



Reprints of Hexham Historians

The most popular Hexham Historians have recently been reprinted. They are:

1. Excavations, How Hexham got its name; St Mary's Chare, etc
3. Abbey excavations; Bridging the Tyne; Wilfred Gibson, etc
4. Cockshaw history- leather industry; buildings, public health.
5. After the Vikings; Medieval topography; Acomb; 1890's Growth; Regional Government HQ
7. Before Wilfrid -Romans and Anglo-Saxons
9. Hexham Schools history
10. A House in Hexhamshire; Priestpople and Battle Hill; Hexham analysed 1851 and 1891; Hexham Cinemas.

New Publication – Canon Sidney Savage, Cleric and Man of Action

The Society has published a new book by David Jennings about the colourful life of Canon Sidney Savage. His part in the rebuilding of the Abbey a hundred years ago was just one episode in an energetic and sometimes controversial life. This included being one of the pioneer skiers in Switzerland, work in France and

Serbia during the 1914-18 war, and ministering in London during the Blitz.

The cover price is £4.50 but it is available to members at the special price of £3.

Publications are on sale at the Society's monthly meetings or by contacting Ted Wall at 01434 600422.

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		If anyone has any ideas for future		
		issues or contributions for the		
		newsletter please contact Helen		
		Rutherford		
		h.j.rutherford@fsmail.net or		
		601990. All contributions are		
		welcome.		
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Members may be interested to know that the HLHS was founded on the 1st January 1966 and met at the Beaumont Hotel. Dorothy Stokoe the librarian was in the chair and the aim of the Society was to 'foster an interest in local history and to encourage research with a view to recording the information gleaned'

By 1977, when the subscription was £1 the membership was about 40. Some members were helping in a dialect survey and others were compiling an index to *The Courant*. Does anyone know what happened to these?

News

Diary Dates

Saturday 1st December 2006

On 1st December there is going to be the second Northumberland and Borders History Fair at the Wentworth Leisure Centre organised by Colin Cargill Events. The fair will run from 10am to 4pm and there will be a variety of stands and displays. The Society is hosting a stand to encourage new members, publicise our programme of events and sell publications. Last year the fair was very successful and well attended. Keen volunteers are needed to staff the Society's stall. If you would like to help please come and encourage more people to join! If you would like to be on the rota, if only for an hour, please contact Please contact Fred Donnan on (01434) 604082 if you can help. Come along and lend your support to this event.

Northumberland and Durham Family History Society talks

All held in the Community Centre Gilesgate at 7pm

8 November 2007: North east photographs & a trip up the Northumberland coast in old photographs (George Nairn)

10 January 2008: The Munionettes (Patrick Brennan)

14 February 2008 Early Victorians from the North East (Mike Furlonger)

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography is 3 years old in October and, to celebrate, the publishers are running a series of regional competitions which highlight the coverage of men and women who've shaped local history across the United Kingdom. Log on to www.oxforddnb.com at any county library to test your knowledge of famous people from the north east featured in the ODNB. Or you can log on using your library membership number from the comfort of your own home if you have your own access to the Internet. You have until Friday 9th November to win a copy of the new edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

Outings: Advance publicity Charlotte Coxon

As usual the Society is preparing a splendid programme of outings for 2008. Please put the following

dates in your diaries, further details will follow shortly:

Sunday 18th May 2008 - half day (pm): Nenthead Mines

Wednesday 18th June 2008 - evening: Royal Air Force base at Spadeadam

Saturday 12th July 2008 - full day: Coniston and Brantwood (the John Ruskin house)

