

HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter 51

Summer 2008

A Victorian story: the Dunwoodie family of Hexham and their Hat Factory.

Joan Smith

Joan Smith has been investigating the history of her family, and the results of her work will be published in The Historian. The following article results from her researches.

There has been a great deal of research about Hexham tanneries and glove making, but little has been written about the hat industry in Hexham. Records show that at one time there were 16 Master Hatters in Hexham, who employed 36 journeymen and 28 apprentices.

Evidence of trades and occupations is often found in the names of public houses and the hat trade was no exception. The Hatters Arms was situated in Hexham Market Place, from 1822 to 1848. It later became the Hag Ends Inn, (first noted in 1860) which traded until 1913.

There is evidently lots of research to be done on Hexham hat making but some information is already known about one family engaged in the business; the Dunwoodies

The Dunwoodie Hat Factory faced onto Bull Bank, adjacent to the Moot Hall on the north side. It was established (exact date unknown) by William Dunwoodie who died in 1863 aged 94. The business was continued by his son, also called William, who was a Master Hatter, having completed his apprenticeship with David Wilson, Hatter, on the 24th April 1818. William, the son, was born in 1803 and died on 21st February 1892 aged 89. Further information about the family has been gleaned from the census records. In the first detailed census in 1841 William is noted as being 35 and married to Dorothy Bell, from Humshaugh. They had married on the 14th March 1822 in Hexham and they went on to have eight children. In the 1851 census, William is shown as employing one man. In 1861, when William the elder was living with his son, this had doubled to two. Dorothy died on 22nd May 1868 aged 68 years.

In 1878 the Dunwoodies had a shop in Fore Street, opposite the Meal Market, which he boasted was the cheapest house in Hexham. The hat business was clearly profitable because in the mid 1880s William built Dunwoodie Terrace in Cockshaw and he was living there at the time of the 1891 census.

The Dunwoodie children obviously had ambitions beyond Hexham because one daughter, Mary, married a Mr H Marrett in London on the 9th July 1865 and William their son, 1824-1910, moved with the four children of his first marriage to London after the death of his wife in 1848. He returned to Hexham and married Ann Spedding in 1857 and went to live in Sele View House in

Cockshaw. A second daughter, Isabella, married Thomas Hopper in Hexham Abbey on the 5th May 1884.

The factory was demolished in 1930 when the road was cut through at the side of the Moot Hall to enable better traffic flow through to the Hallbank area.

Welcome to the Summer 2008 Newsletter. I hope the weather will be better than last year, so that the summer outings take place in warm sunshine. Surely it can't be worse? If you haven't booked your place please contact Charlotte as soon as possible!

This newsletter is always looking for interesting articles and items so if you have found something out, want to know the answer to a query or simply want to share some information about Hexham and the surrounding area please contact the editor h.j.rutherford@fsmail.net (01434 601990) all contributions gratefully received.

There has been a very poor response to the request in the last newsletter for e-mail addresses in order to send this letter electronically. Please sign up for this service if you can: it saves trees and money!



If you would like to receive future newsletter by e-mail, please send a message to h.j.rutherford@fsmail.net and you will be added to the electronic list.

Wanted: WEBSITE DESIGNER

Now that the Society has moved into the 21st Century, we should like to be even more innovative

You will be aware that the Society has a well used website which, whilst better than nothing, is very limited and we want to develop it to enable access to PDFs and so forth.

Do you have the required knowledge and time and are you willing to help set up a proper website for the society? If so please contact Mark Benjamin, who will be very pleased to hear from you!
markbenjamin@hencotes.fslife.co.uk

Hexham Historian Index

As an aid to both serious and casual researchers of Hexham's history, a full index to issues 1-15 (1991-2005) of the Hexham Historian has now been completed. Sadly, it is not possible to put the index on our current website, but a limited number of copies will be available in printed form, at a price to be decided. Any members wishing to have their own copy please contact Mark Benjamin at 9 Hencotes, Hexham NE462EQ, email markbenjamin@hencotes.fslife.co.uk so that he

can gauge the number of copies required.

Thanks to the efforts of professional indexer, Hilary Faulkner, who has offered to index each issue for free as it is published. The Society plans to issue future indexes at 5 yearly intervals; the next one, covering issues 16-20, should appear in 2010/1. If we do develop the website, it will be possible to access the cumulative index as it grows each year

Book Review

The Life and Times of Thomas Dixon 1805-1871, Stafford M. Linsley

Greg Finch

Wagtail Press, 2006

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Hexhamshire was as much an industrial as a farming area. The power of the local fast flowing streams was harnessed to meet the needs of corn milling and the cloth industry. Some lead ore was mined higher up the Shire but much more was brought in over the moors from Weardale and Allenheads by trains of pack ponies to be smelted at Dukesfield and Black Hall. This was dirty, dangerous and precarious work. There are few traces of the lead industry left today beyond remnants of dams, watercourses, masonry and several place names. Most of the surviving records are the accounts and documents of mine owners. Very little has come down to us from those who actually worked at the mines and ore hearths. The diaries kept by Thomas Dixon, who worked at the Dukesfield Smelt Mill in the 1830s, are therefore a precious rarity. They turned up in Hexham decades ago and Stafford Linsley, a retired lecturer and industrial historian, has undertaken meticulous research into them over many years, culminating in this recent work. His skilled interpretation of the diary entries (printed here in full) brings them to life and a vivid picture emerges of Thomas Dixon as a remarkable man of much energy and many talents.

Despite the book's title, it is far more than a biography. It ranges widely and in authoritative but readable detail over the farming, lead smelting, religious and social history of the people of the Shire and Slaley during the industrial revolution, and also covers the early railway history of Tynedale.

Thomas went on to work on the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway soon after it opened, and rose to become stationmaster at Hexham. The author's

research is complemented by a marvellous collection of prints, old photographs, maps and plans drawn together by Hilary Kristensen, (also the publisher). Many have not been previously published, and therefore, add to the strong local collection published in her *Hexhamshire Memories* in 1999.

In piecing together a story from a wide range of sources it is inevitable that the occasional speculation is open to debate. For example it's arguable that Quatre Bras refers to the place just west of Hexham rather than Wester Byers, not far from Dukesfield.

Had it been possible to include an index the depth of content in the book, particularly the many references and footnotes on local people, would have been further enriched, but this is a churlish minor quibble. The author is to be congratulated, as is the publisher. Surely there are few -if any- rural parts of the country better served by high quality recent publications on their own local history. This latest addition to the collection is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the lead industry and life in Hexhamshire over a very interesting period of recent history.

.....**Diary Date**

Bastles: an introduction to the Bastle houses of Northumberland. A talk by Julia Grint on the latest title from Ergo Press. Wednesday 18th June: 2.30pm. Prudhoe Library, Front Street, Prudhoe NE42 5AA (01661) 832540

<p>Information wanted</p>

Priory Drive, Oakwood

Ron and Frances Middlestorb of Priory Drive, Oakwood, are looking for any information, or pointers to sources of information about their house. They are seeking to write a history of their house. They already know a little about the house, which is just a hundred years old, and would like to know more about the immediate area. Most People seem to know the location best as Cancer Bridge.

A starting point would seem to be Saint Camillus and the religious community there. The house and that of the immediate neighbours, Friars Court, were attached in some way to the community. Both these houses have had minor changes to their names at various times since they were built. The two large semi-detached houses at the Hexham end of Priory Drive also seem to have been part of the set-up. The main part seems to have been Saint Camillus House itself and the buildings now used by Minerva at the far end of the drive.

St Camillus was built by Canon Savage of Hexham Abbey in the late nineteenth century and their current guess, and it is purely a guess, is that the house, originally a single storey building, was the gatehouse or lodge,

standing as it does at the bottom of the drive. Perhaps Camillus House was Canon Savage's and what is now Minerva was a private chapel. The buildings now used by Northumbria Daybreak could have been outhouses or stables.

Ordnance Survey maps for the end of the nineteenth century show very little in the way of buildings here and a current guess is that all of the houses were built between 1870 and 1900. The OS also shows that when the houses were built they were served directly by a small road from Hexham bridge end. This road was severed when the dual carriageway of the A69 was constructed.

Any pointers or information that anyone can give will be much appreciated. Please contact the Middlestorbs at Priory Drive Oakwood or by e-mail at Middlestorb@waitrose.com



Priory Lodge Oakwood

“The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it... it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth, without making some other Englishman despise him” G.B.Shaw

What has this got to do with Hexham? That is what we hope to find out!

Gavin Weightman is looking for **Information about Eliza Armstrong and the Hodges family.**

Read on...

The real Eliza provided the inspiration for George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*; there are several coincidences between her family life and Shaw's heroine.

The Background

In July 1885 the London evening newspaper the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a shocking sequence of articles exposing the scale and nature of prostitution in the capital. Written by W.T.Stead, the editor, the pieces were titled *The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon*. In the first of these articles Stead, styling himself Chairman of "The Secret Commission", claimed to have witnessed the purchase of a 13 year old virgin called Lily from her drunken mother for £5 and described her ordeal up to the point where she was about to be deflowered. He gave a few particulars of the girl's background to illustrate her innocence. It is a key element in Stead's exposure because he had been urged to shock Parliament out of its lethargy and to pass the Criminal Law Amendment Bill which would raise the age of sexual consent from 13 to 16.

It worked. The new law was passed in August 1885 and has remained unaltered to this day. However, Stead had not hidden the identity of "Lily" quite well enough. A girl called Eliza Armstrong had been enticed away from her impoverished home in Lisson Grove, London in June on the pretext that she was wanted as a servant by a woman who had visited the street in which Eliza lived with her parents and brothers and sisters. Nothing had been heard from her since, except for a letter suggesting she was living somewhere outside London. The mother went to the magistrate (accustomed to fining her for being drunk and disorderly) and asked for help to find her daughter. A journalist from the rival newspaper took up the story and the search began. Stead refused to be drawn, pretending for a while he knew nothing about what had happened to "Lily". In fact he had arranged for her to be cared for by the Salvation Army. For reasons that were never explained she was sent to Paris, and when the trail led there, moved to the South of France. Eventually the Salvation Army was forced to return her to her parents.

Stead and others were convicted of abduction and physical assault on the girl: she was twice physically examined to prove her virginity, once by an old French abortionist and once by an eminent London physician hired by Stead. Eliza Armstrong proved to be a resilient girl giving evidence at Bow Street and the Old Bailey. The prosecuting counsel was sent money for a fund for her well-being and she was placed in a home where young girls were trained for domestic service. Newspaper cutting suggest she was there for four years, from late 1885 to 1889. The last cutting I have says that she was found a position on a private home.

Searching the 1891 census I found an Eliza Armstrong, aged 19, in the household of Charles C.Hodges at 2 Sele House, Hexham. She is described

as London born and working as a servant and nurse. The search engines for the Census records are very patchy: Charles Hodges does not show up if you search for him in 1891. I can find no record of him in the 1901 Census nor of anyone matching Eliza. A check on 2 Sele House shows that Hodges was no longer living there.

My quest is to discover what happened to Eliza Armstrong after her fame in the notorious 1885 case. It was a story reported extensively not only in the national newspapers in Britain but worldwide. If the Eliza in Charles Hodges' home was her I would imagine some people must have known. I don't know of any connection between Stead, who was originally from Darlington, and Hodges. I wonder if Hodges knew people in the Salvation Army?

I know this is a long shot, but any leads of any kind, even if they prove beyond doubt that the Eliza Armstrong in Hexham in 1891 was *not* the girl I am looking for, would be gratefully received.

Can anyone help Gavin? Please contact him direct at 15 Kelross Road, London N5 2QS. Telephone: 0207 359 0746 or mobile 07891291448. and send details to the editor, Helen Rutherford so that we can follow up this fascinating story.

Feedback

Replies have been received to a number of the queries raised in the last newsletter. Thank you to everyone who has taken the trouble to respond and assist.

The marble in the fireplace at the station has been identified as Frosterley Marble, which is in fact not marble at all but fossil rich limestone. It has traditionally been used in churches and grand houses, and perhaps most famously in the Chapel

of the Nine Altars in Durham Cathedral.

The request for information about the Temperley family led to the information that the family helped in providing the water supply to Hexham, and they are commemorated on the pillar in the Market Place.

The query about a possible wagon way parallel to the Dipton Mill road resulted in the suggestion that it was possibly the line of a Roman communication line, if indeed Hexham had been a base in Roman times.

Committee News

Michael Saxon has been elected as the new Secretary of the Society and **Greg Finch** has been elected as Treasurer. They have been getting to grips with the Byzantine workings of the Society and are already doing a marvellous job.

In order to introduce members to the new Committee members we thought it would be useful to have a short introduction to each of them. (Michael Saxon's biography will appear next issue.)

So who is the new treasurer?

Greg and his wife Julie have lived just outside Hexham, in the 'Shire, for a dozen years, where their two young daughters have been brought up. Originally from South Devon, it was work for a large business and IT consultancy company which brought him to the North East, via London and Manchester. Having had his interest in the subject stimulated by his A Level history teacher at Exmouth School he studied economic and social history at Bristol University and then went on to complete a D.Phil in the subject at Oxford, where he undertook his research into the English Industrial Revolution under Professor Peter Mathias. Work then took him off into a completely different direction in IT systems development, project management and then business financial planning. However, going into freelance work a year or so ago freed up more of his time to undertake historical research again, along with a bit of acting, walking, gardening, archaeological volunteering and drystone walling. And since much of his freelance work involves "doing hard sums in spreadsheets" he is quite well qualified to be our Treasurer!

HEFC Historical Studies at Queen Elizabeth High School Community Education centre.

As part of the new programme of courses starting in September, there is the opportunity to study for an HEFC (Higher Education Foundation Course) in Historical Studies. It is designed to be part of an Access to Higher Education diploma, for those who want to eventually go to University but it can be studied for fun and interest alone. The Course runs over thirty weeks and is divided into two modules. The syllabus is designed to introduce students to historical method, and the sources of history as well as providing a forum for discussion. No previous knowledge or study is required.

In the first part the origins of the Second World War and the welfare state will be studied and in the second, there is an opportunity to study local history. The course promises to be very interesting and full details will be available in the Community Education brochure, published in the summer. Look out for it!

Summer outings.

Places still left for the trip to Coniston and Brantwood on Saturday July 12th. Please contact Charlotte Coxon 01434 607798 charlottecoxon@fsmail.net for more details

The trip to RAF Spadeadam is fully booked.