

HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter 55

Winter 2009

The Website

Judging from the number of hits, including some from enquirers in Norway, the Ivory Coast and Birmingham, our new website www.hexhamhistorian.org is proving very popular and useful.

New material uploaded into the Members Only section of the website includes **The Rossiter Database**. Named after Anna Rossiter, this database already holds more than 7,000 records of Hexham's historic population, and it is the intention of the Society to extend the range of material collated by Anna to create an increasingly comprehensive database covering the town's past. If you would like access to the member's only section please apply via the website.

Other new additions are the **Jury lists from 1823** and a complete listing of **Pubs and hotels**, including many that are long gone and old names of establishments still existing. We hope to build this section into a substantial resource for all society members. If any member has similar listings or documents that you feel would be of use to other members, please contact Mark Benjamin on 01434 607746 or email thebenjamins@talktalk.net

And don't forget, if you have a query concerning any aspect of Hexham's history, you can now post it onto our **Notes & Queries** section. Who knows, that person in the Ivory Coast may just know the answer!

Book sale (s)

Rodney Higgins

Lilian Higgins has asked the Society to dispose of Rodney's considerable collection of books, mostly relating to the history of Northumberland. These have now been catalogued and are offered for sale to members at discounted prices until the end of the year. Sales will be on a first come, first served basis – so get your order in fast! The catalogue may be consulted in the Members area of the Society's website www.hexhamhistorian.org (a limited number of printed copies are available for members without access to the Internet).

Mark Benjamin is handling sales so please contact him on 01434 607746 or email thebenjamins@talktalk.net either to order books or for a printed catalogue.

It has been agreed that the books will be put on general sale at the start of the new year, at full market price through Mark's online bookselling operation, Bennor Books. So don't miss your chance to snap up this fine collection of local history titles at bargain prices!

Proceeds of the sale will go towards subsidising the Society's publications programme: an activity of which Rodney was a keen supporter.

Bennor Books

Mark is also handling the disposal of surplus higher-value local history titles from the County Council's library collections. Many are from the reference or multiple copy collections and are in reasonably good condition; some are titles that rarely come onto the market. Mark sells primarily through www.abebooks.co.uk but, as a special offer to Society members, is happy to sell direct to locally based members – thereby avoiding postage and other charges.

If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact Mark on 01434 607746 for a printed catalogue.

**Letters from 18th
Century Hexham - a
new publication
project for the
Society.**

Life in Hexham in the early 18th century is brought to life quite vividly in a great collection of some 160+ letters written by the Reverend George Ritschel and his successor the Reverend Thomas Andrews to their superiors in York. The letters are now preserved at the Borthwick Institute for Archives in York, but Society members Liz Sobell and Greg Finch were permitted to photograph them last year, and they formed the basis for Greg's talk to the Society's September meeting. We now wish to transcribe the letters fully with a view to producing a fully edited publication in due course. The vast majority of the handwriting is quite legible, especially once a reader has 'got their eye in' with some of the contemporary lettering, and in any case we would aim to provide some 'crib sheets' if needed.

Are you interested in helping? For practical purposes having a computer which can display digital photographs, an email account, and being familiar with Open Office or

MS Word, will be essential (or, failing that, a friend who'd be prepared to print the photos and type up your transcriptions!) But being computer based means that Society members who do not live in the Hexham area can be just as much a part of it as those who do. If you would be interested in being part of a team to take forward what will be a fascinating project, please send an email to gregpfinch@hotmail.com

**Association of
Northumberland
Local History
Societies AGM**

The Association held its AGM at Stannington Village Hall on October 10th. The business Meeting in the afternoon was preceded in the morning by John Charlton who gave an interesting talk on 'John Graham Clarke, a Newcastle merchant in the time of slavery'.

There was a good attendance from the County's Societies, Groups and individual members. Reports were given on activities, news and events. Ted Wall gave an account of HLHS activities, publications and membership (we are the largest Northumberland Society), and Greg Finch's recent national award for his Dotland article in HH18.

Date for your Diaries - The next ANLHS AGM will be in October 2010.

**Information
Wanted**

Ray Veitch has contacted the Society from Adelaide to ask if anyone has any information about **Barhaugh Mill** near Kirkhaugh. He knows it was still in existence in 1839. His 3x great grandfather Thomas Veitch worked at Barhaugh Mill in the 1830s. By 1841 the family were at East Beggarbog and by 1851 at Crindledykes near Vindolanda Roman Fort. His daughter Elizabeth was born at Barhaugh Mill in January 1839 and baptised at Kirkhaugh. Tragically Elizabeth was drowned in a river Tyne ferry rollover near Heddon in 1877.

If you have information then you can email Ray at rmv@internode.on.net

Oliver Currie is researching **roperies** for his dissertation at Northumbria University.

If anyone has any information regarding Hexham's example, he would love to hear from you on 07801951453 or email him at james.currie@unn.ac.uk

Jim Hedley has been collecting local books for many years, but has been unable to find a copy of **Robert Rawlinson's 1853 Report to the General Board of Health** on

a preliminary enquiry into the sewerage, drainage and supply of water and the unsanitary condition of the inhabitants of the Town and Township of Hexham in the County of Northumberland. Published by HMSO (1853). The usual book finding websites have yielded nothing. Does anybody know of a copy in private hands? Jim can be contacted on 01434 605450.

Does anyone know who was the **stationmaster** at Hexham around 1889? Was **William Bates Foundry** near the station?

If you know the answer to either of these questions please email ictree@btclick.com

The Thirteenth Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall

Margaret Snape

The thirteenth Pilgrimage took place on 8th-14th August 2009. Over 200 people, from Britain and abroad, professionals and amateurs, visited many locations along the Wall with the aim of learning about the discoveries of the previous decade as well as refreshing memories of the well-known sites.

Expert guides were on hand at each site, and there were evening lectures on the latest discoveries. Formal receptions and informal events were occasions for enjoyable socialising.

The Pilgrimage is an event with a long history. The first took place in 1849 when the antiquarian John Collingwood Bruce led a group of about twenty enthusiasts on a tour of the Wall, stopping to lecture on places of interest. The second pilgrimage held in 1886 was also led by Bruce, then 81, and organised jointly by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle and the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Four more pilgrimages took place at irregular intervals, interrupted by the First and Second World Wars. Then the seventh pilgrimage was organised in 1949 on the centenary of the first, and it was decided to hold a pilgrimage every ten years. Traditionally the direction of travel alternates, a pilgrimage beginning at the east being followed ten years later by a pilgrimage starting at the western end of the Wall. But new traditions evolve all the time. The twelfth pilgrimage in 1999 marked the 150th anniversary of the first pilgrimage, so a wreath was laid at the memorial to Bruce in Newcastle Cathedral, a ceremony repeated in 2009.

One of the most exciting discoveries of the last decade has been the discovery in Staffordshire of an enamelled bronze vessel – a Roman souvenir of the Wall - which appears to show that the Romans themselves called the monument Hadrian's Wall – Vallum Aelium (Aelius being Hadrian's family name).

There have been major new discoveries on the Wall itself, the most important being the discovery of lines of obstacles between the Wall and the ditch – pits intended to contain entanglements of branches, found during excavations in urban Tyneside. Much new information has also been gained by surveys of earthworks – ditches and causeways – and geophysical surveys of civilian settlements outside the forts. Research on the nature of the stone wall has enabled conclusions to be drawn about the building programme.

The Pilgrimage was followed by another important event for Roman archaeologists – the International Roman Frontier Studies Congress (or Limes Congress – 'limes' being the Latin for 'frontier'). This event takes place about every four years, each time in a different country with a Roman frontier. This year three hundred Roman scholars met for their Congress in Newcastle, immediately after the Wall Pilgrimage – the first time since 1949 that the two events had been held in the same place – a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Books have been published to mark each event:

The Pilgrimage Handbook: *Hadrian's Wall 1999-2009*, by Nick Hodgson, describes research and discovery on the Wall in the last decade. Available from Ian Caruana, 10 Peter Street, Carlisle CA3 8QP, price £10 including postage and packing.

Produced for the Limes Congress: *The Roman Army in Northern England* by Paul Bidwell and Nick Hodgson, Hardback, 195 pages, is the first ever gazetteer of all Roman military sites in northern England south of Hadrian's Wall. Price £14 (including delivery), by cheque to The Secretary, Arbeia Society, Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum, Baring Street, South Shields, NE33 2BB

**17th and 18th
Century treasures in
the Newcastle City
Library.**

In September Dr. Dorothy Hamilton gave an interesting talk on 17th century Newcastle, the growth of which influenced the development of contemporary Tynedale. She

displayed some highlights of Mackey and Thomlinson collections given to the City Library over a century ago and now on display in the recently rebuilt library building. This included Civil War tracts and mid 17th century works on Newcastle and its surrounding district. Other collections of material given to the library which will be of interest to our members include the James Alder Archive, a local painter, illustrator and sculptor who died in 2007, and the Bewick Collection amassed by John William Pease in the 19th century, and containing early editions of Berwick's works, woodblocks, letters and drawings. As well as the online cataloguing underway, many of the works in the Newcastle Collection have been digitised to give much wider access. Visit <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/newcastlecollection> for more information.

From the BALH presentation in June: Greg receiving his prize for his article on Dotland with Prof David Hey!



The British Association of Local history Societies also picked up on the editorial piece about family and local history from the last HLHS newsletter, and they included a summary of it under their 'Societies' section. Only one formal response has been received to the article, from Ms M Raymer of Corbridge who agreed with the contention that family history is relevant to the study of history in general and local history in particular. She pointed out how important it is to see how local lives fit into national events, using the example of her own merchant seaman ancestors. She

points out that history has everything that novels and popular entertainment has, "death, desertion, betrayal, murder...the lot" all happening to real people and therefore much better than something made up!

The Literary and Philosophical Society

Imagine finding a retreat in the centre of Newcastle, somewhere you can sit with a cup of tea or real coffee, take in beautiful and historical surroundings, meet friends or be completely undisturbed. The Lit and Phil offers all of this, and happens to be one of the largest independent libraries in the country.

The Lit and Phil can be found in Westgate Road, just one minute's walk from Central Station. Unlike most of the beautiful and architecturally superior buildings in Newcastle, the Lit and Phil remains today what it was purpose built to be nearly 200 years ago.

The Literary and Philosophical Society was founded in 1793, a place for the people of Newcastle to meet, talk and learn. It was soon established as a place where leading thinkers of the day could meet and exchange ideas; early presidents of the society included Robert Stephenson, Lord Armstrong and Sir Joseph Swan.

The magnificent reading rooms remain largely unchanged today and the Lit and Phil now houses historical collections covering every field of interest. Specialising in history, biography, literature, science, travel, local history and poetry, our 150,000 volumes are coupled with an extensive set of periodicals, providing an exceptional resource for both general reader and academic researcher. In addition, the Lit and Phil is a modern lending library, with current fiction and non-fiction also available for loan. We add at least 1,000 new books every year and because we're building a collection, we are likely to have the complete works of many authors, and not just their latest novel.

The outstanding music collection is one of the best outside London. The recorded music includes over 7,500 CDs and 10,000 LPs for loan covering the classical, jazz and folk music repertoires, and the printed music includes the complete works of the major composers, a wide selection of other works, music related books and periodicals.

Our literary links continue to grow; local writers and poets enjoy the peaceful and inspirational surroundings and renowned authors perform readings and book launches at the Lit and Phil. We also have a full programme of poetry, music and lectures throughout the year.

The appeal of the Lit and Phil is broad, it's a library, a building of historical importance, a venue for a rich programme of events, an amazing resource, an escape, and a meeting place. Overall, the Lit and Phil is a public building that welcomes new faces; please feel free to come and have a look around. Should you want to become a regular visitor and borrow books, we would invite you to become a member for a yearly subscription charge.

In 2008, the Lit and Phil:

- Added over 1,300 books to the collection
- Lent over 10,000 CDs to members
- Held over 100 lunchtime/evening events including talks, readings, poetry and concerts
-

Membership could make the ideal Christmas gift and a December offer makes it even better value. Membership ranges from £90 for a family to £20 for a student.

For further information, call 0191 232 0192, email library@litandphil.org.uk or visit the website www.litandphil.org.uk

**Northumberland &
Durham Family
History Society:
Tynedale Branch**

Tynedale branch of the NDFHS meet in Hexham Community Centre at 7pm once each month on Thursdays. If you are not yet a member why not go to one of their talks? Visitors are welcome and a £1 Donation includes coffee/tea & biscuits after the main part of meeting. Although there is, of course, an emphasis on family history, many talks are of general interest and recent speakers have discussed, amongst other things, Ragged and Industrial schools, and Hospitals and Healthcare provision in Tynedale from an historical perspective.

...Stop press...stop press...stop press...

Liz Sobell is giving a talk in Whitley Chapel Village Hall (in aid of hall funds) entitled '*Work, Life and Strife in Hexhamshire*' on Friday November 27th. Tickets cost £10 and include light refreshments and wine. Contact Malcolm Caisley on 01434 673267 for tickets.