

HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter 57

Summer 2010

Now published:

***Hexham in the
Seventeenth Century***

by Anna Rossiter

The last newsletter indicated that this new book was on its way. We're now very pleased to announce that it has been published in paperback and in hardback, and will soon also be available as a digital download from the Society's website.

Written by Anna for her Master's thesis in 1997, her work has now been reset, and fully indexed, as a 300 page book with the enthusiastic support of Anna's husband Nick. It is an authoritative and accessible study of Hexham, in the early modern period, and breaks new ground with the amount of primary research of the voluminous records of the town and its manorial authorities. It is set firmly in the context of other work on the early modern English town and makes skilful use of parish registers, probate documents, manor court rolls and other original material. It is a meticulous work, supported by maps and many figures, tables and illustrations and represents a great advance in our understanding of Hexham during a very interesting period in its development. In addition the book includes short biographies of many of the leading townspeople of the period and therefore will be of great interest to family historians with Hexham ancestors.

The Committee considers that the book is a fitting commemoration of Anna's great contribution to the Society and to knowledge of the history of Hexham. We are unable, under the terms of our charitable status, to make a donation to charity in her honour, but net proceeds will be shared with Nick in the form of author's royalties, and he has decided to support a cancer charity.

Contents.

Preface (by Liz Sobell); Acknowledgements; Introduction: Town Studies, Sources; The Town in Context: Geographic and Historic Context, Population History; Occupations: Occupational Structure, Problems with the Evidence, Leather Trades,

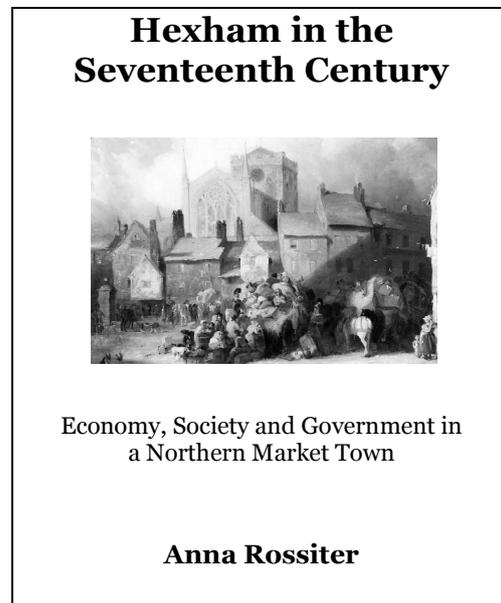
non-leather trades; Economy and Society: Hearth Tax, Housing, Land tenure and the land market, Personal goods, Credit relationships; Town Government: Systems of Local Government, Manor Court – organisation, officers, responsibilities, changes, the Church, the County; the Town's Governors and the community: Lords of the Manor, Court officers, the Community; Appendices – the Four and Twenty, Court Officials in 1665, References, Bibliography, Index.

Price:

All prices include a discount to members of 10% off the retail price:

To obtain a copy please contact Ted Wall, telephone number: 01434600422 or e mail tandtw@hotmail.co.uk

Hardback £ 22.50 + P/P of approx £2 if applicable
 Paperback £ 13.50 + P/P of approx £2 if applicable
 Download £ 9.10 (PDF file. Coming soon).



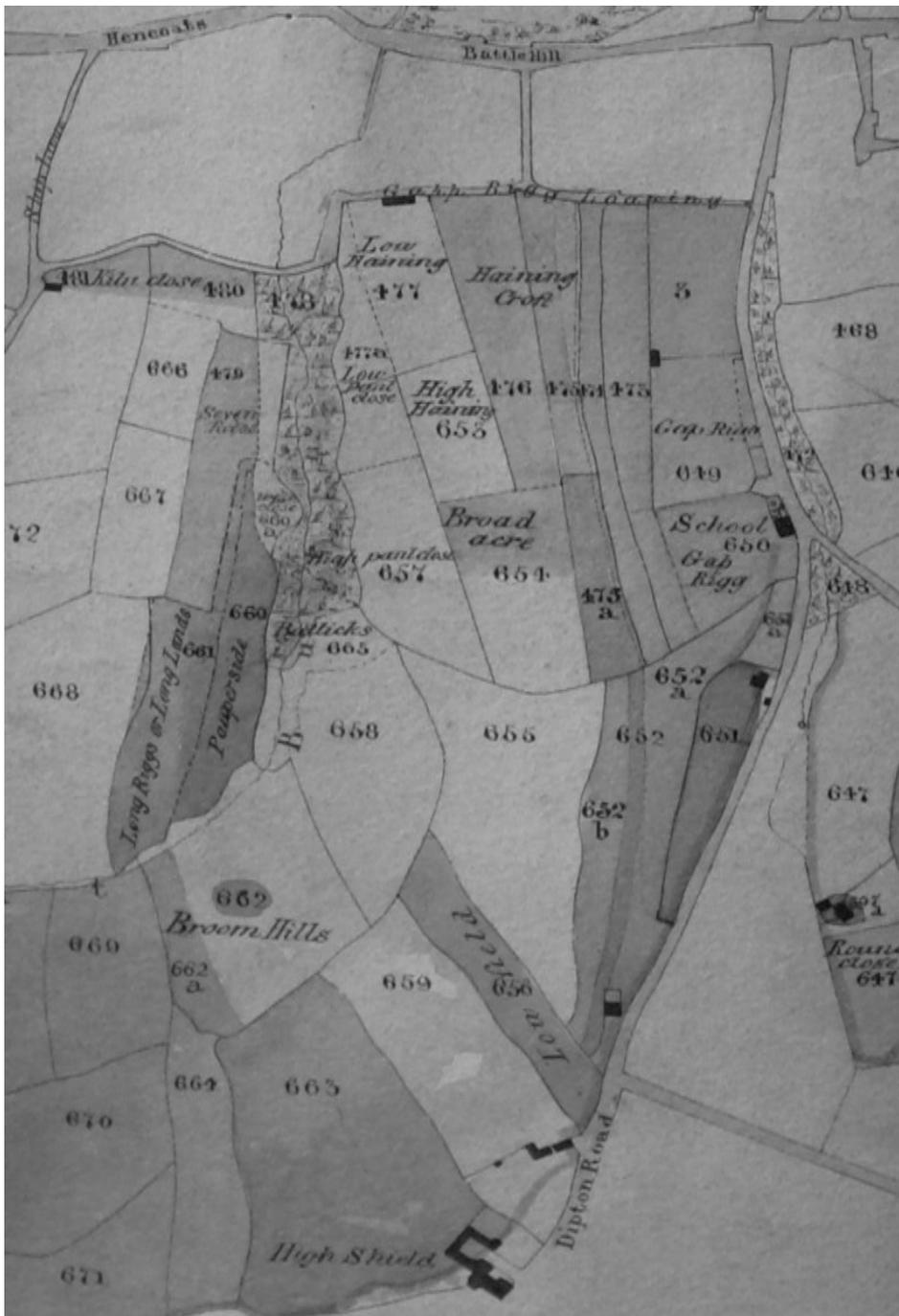
<p>Events:</p> <p>14th September: <i>The First Music Seller in the Land</i>, Dr Vic Gammon</p> <p>12th October: <i>Reflecting on Northumbrian Rock Art</i> Dr Aaron Mazel</p> <p>9th November: <i>Ghost Beliefs in Enlightenment England</i>, Dr Sasha Handley</p> <p><i>All held in Trinity Methodist Hall Beaumont Street Hexham</i></p> <p>Sign up to our e mail service for the newsletter, and other Society messages.</p> <p>Contact Yvonne Purdy (membership secretary) for more information</p>		
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Another old map of Hexham – and a medieval boundary

Greg Finch

This map is roughly contemporary with the Tithe

Map of 1844. It shows the southern part of Hexham now occupied by the Elvaston Road estate.



Battle Hill can be seen along the top edge to the north, and the Dipton Mill road runs nearly down the right hand edge to the east. Gapp Rigg Loaning, now Gaprige Lane, follows the same course today between the Wydon, or Cowgarth, Burn and Eastgate.

To the north of the lane are the narrow burgage plots belonging to the houses on the south side of Battle Hill, not detailed on this map.

The land to the south of Gapp Rigg Loaning was originally part of the open town fields of Hexham. Several of the fields shown here, particularly those just to the east of Haining Croft, betray their origins as open field strips.

Hexham's open fields were enclosed in a piecemeal fashion over more than a century, thereby 'fossilising' the shape of many of the original narrow strips. Some of the fields are shaded, indicating land which was once copyhold land belonging to Hexham manor, such as Haining Croft and Broad Acre, and freehold land, such as at Gap Rigg and Pauperside. The original Subscription School is shown just before the fork at the top of Eastgate. This was replaced by the Sele School in the 1850s but the disused building is still there.

Note, the distinctive curve of the field edge which runs away from just south of the school westwards towards the burn, and then another graceful curve southwards from there, which encloses Broom Hills. These boundaries enclose land in the characteristic shape of medieval reclamation from the waste ground, as cultivation encroached up the cold north facing hill away from the town centre. The boundaries shown here must be of a great age, because, the land to their south, higher up the hill, and once just rough waste land, was already 'anciently' enclosed by the time Hexham East Common was enclosed in 1755. In all likelihood, these graceful curves date to no later than the expansion of settlement and cultivation in the thirteenth century. The more northerly one might be older still, since it clearly encloses a fairly small area of land (some 20-30 acres) immediately beyond the town's burgage plots. It would therefore have been one of the first areas of waste to the south of the town to have been cleared, perhaps in the early twelfth century, if not before.

We can guess at a specific purpose from the name Haining Croft, which many will know as the large Victorian house on Gaprig Lane, and shown here on the elongated closes in the centre of this ancient enclosure. The 1379 Black Book, which lists the property of Hexham Priory, shows that the area was known as Haynyng crofte. Haining appears to be derived from the Old Norse word *hegning*, meaning a fenced enclosure for cattle. Scandinavian names are rare in the Hexham area, but not unknown, suggesting a limited amount of settlement by Danes, presumably in the wake of Viking incursions in the early tenth centuries. It raises the intriguing possibility that this parcel of land was carved out from the waste ground over a thousand years ago as a cattle enclosure. This in turn might mean the town continued to develop during an otherwise poorly documented period in its history between the early Saxon bishops and the land grants to the Priory in 1113.

Having been built over by the town's expansion into the Elvaston Road area, one might expect all trace of these boundaries to have disappeared today. However, a careful look at the current map shows where Moonfield cuts through a short surviving section of the boundary, just past Moonfield House, a short distance in from the Dipton Mill Road. The land is lower on the side of the hedge nearer the town. What today is an ordinary low domestic hedge between modern properties almost certainly marks a boundary at least 700 years old, and possibly much older still?

(Map reproduced with permission of the owner)

**Summer reading:
Don't Believe all you
were Taught in History
Lessons**

A curious little book has just been published in Newbrough/Fourstones, which lifts the lid off many famous incidents in Northumbrian History. Written by Bob Murray, *An Alternative History of Northumberland, or What really happened*, is being sold in aid of St Michael's, St Aidan's and St Peter's churches. It is just the thing to read as a break from all those worthy tomes recommended in newspapers as summer reading.

It has answers to all those local history questions that you were afraid to ask. For example, have you ever wondered how Emperor Hadrian got planning permission to build the Roman Wall? Wonder no more: the Bob has hunted down account of the Planning Committee at which it was discussed.

Have you found yourself awake at night considering whether the Wall was the best solution to the Roman's problems? This book has the answer: thorough research has uncovered proposals for six other barriers. Do you secretly fret that that the Viking Raids were only stag parties from Denmark? The book has the answer.

In addition there is scholarly consideration of the effects of the building of the Military Road, and its good and bad effects on the inhabitants of Newbrough and Fourstones, and the answer to the vexed question, who was the Uncommon Reiver? This book has eighteen never-before disclosed insights and explanations of local events, and also, for non-natives, prefaces each 'true' account with a précis of the

accepted version. Information that you didn't know you didn't know and more besides.

The little volume, beautifully set and printed by Chris Wilson of Allerwash, is being 'printed on demand'; to obviate the danger of the author having a vast stock of unsold copies... Even if your summer reading is already set, it could be a great start to your Christmas shopping! It is £5.50, including P & P, and all proceeds go to the churches. Rob Tindall is acting as Bob's agent and will take orders on 01434 674324 or RobMTin@aol.com

The Hexham Timeline
(Occasional Publications series 10)

Question: What can be contained in 163 entries?

Answer: The entire history of Hexham, from before the Romans to the formation of the Unitary Authority!

Taking on work originally started by Tom Corfe and Rodney Higgins, Mark Benjamin has condensed the huge list of events forming the rich history of our town, to create a handy guide for tourists, history students and anyone interested in knowing how the town has developed. The eight page, concertina fold, leaflet also contains a list of comparator events, showing what was happening at the same time elsewhere in the world, and a short reading list for anyone wanting to learn more about the history of Hexham. It is illustrated by photos from Stan Beckensall.

Editing down the many events that have gone to create the town's history into what would fit into the space available proved quite a challenge but it is hoped that all the principal developments have been retained. In due course the original list, numbering many hundreds of date entries, will appear as a resource on the Society's website where it can be updated as further dates emerge; whether missed historical events or current news, such as the imminent closure of Robbs (as we go to press). *The Timeline* will be launched in time to be available for the summer holiday tourists and will cost £1.90. It will be available for sale in the usual outlets and from the website, or by contacting Ted Wall. Because of the low price, there is no Member's

Discount on this title. It is an essential quick guide for anyone interested in Hexham's history and a great aide memoire to take to the library when conducting research.

**The Border Library
needs YOU!**

Volunteers are needed to help in the Border Library, located in the Old Gaol. The library contains a wide variety of material including the Butler Trust Collection which was put together over many years by Bill Butler, once Director of the Northumbria Tourist Board. The Collection is of books, music scores, photographs and other sources of information about the history, culture and music of the Borders area. It has a particularly wide collection of Northumbrian pipe music and ballads. Recently, as readers of previous issues of the newsletter will know, the David Jennings' archive has been added to the library's holdings and a visit is a must for any Hexham historian

If you have some time to help please contact the honorary Librarian, Fiona Lockhart, by leaving a message on (01434) 600910 or by email, borderlibrary@btconnect.com

**New Opening times
for the Old Gaol**

The new opening times and days for the Old Gaol from 1st April are as follows:-

April - end September, open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 11am - 4.30pm.

Oct, Nov, Feb, Mar open Tuesdays and Saturdays, 11am - 4.30pm

Also open February and October half terms Mondays to Saturdays, Bank Holiday Mondays, Hexham Christmas Market, and between Christmas and New Year.

Website News

www.hexhamhistorian.org

We hope that you are finding the website accessible and useful. To make full use of the facilities please register as a user: this will open up a cornucopia of exciting downloads and free information. The website is being added to all the time.

The following documents have been uploaded into the Members' Library and can be downloaded, free of charge, by any member who has registered on the site.

- **An account of certain charities...in Tindale Ward (1783).** We attempted to upload this a while ago but technical matters defeated us. Apologies to those who tried, unsuccessfully, to download it! We have now split it into three sections, all of which download easily.
- **Hexham cemetery gravestones, 1859-1925.** This index and transcription of monumental inscriptions includes a guide to locating burials in the cemetery, taken from Jennings & Jennings (2004) *Hexham cemetery: a place of charm and historic interest*.
- **Hexham burial registers, 1859-1903.** Transcriptions of the cemetery's records in both date and name order.
- **St Mary's Roman Catholic burial registers, 1833-1929.** Transcription of the church's records in both date and name order.
- **St Mary's Roman Catholic Church gravestones.** Transcriptions of monumental inscriptions in St Mary's graveyard.

We will continue to tell you about any updates in the newsletter, but why not visit the website and have a look for yourself?

Information Wanted

All requests are on the website, but here is a taste of the most recent. Can you help?

Yvonne Purdy is trying to identify a house in St. Mary's Chare, Hexham, in 1770. The will of Elizabeth Armstrong, written on 3 April 1770 states:"All that her Freehold messuage burgage or stone house with the appurtenances in Hexham aforesaid in a Street called St. Mary's Chair bounding on the house then late William Harveys on the East the Kings Street on the West and the house then late John Ramseys on the North and the house then late Matthew Fairlamb on the South". Please contact Yvonne via the website.