



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 59

Spring 2011

Editor sought

Still waiting for volunteers – one will do! If you fancy a go, I'll be more than happy to walk you through compiling the next issue, due out in the summer. Hope to hear from someone soon on thebenjamins@talktalk.net !

Message from the Secretary

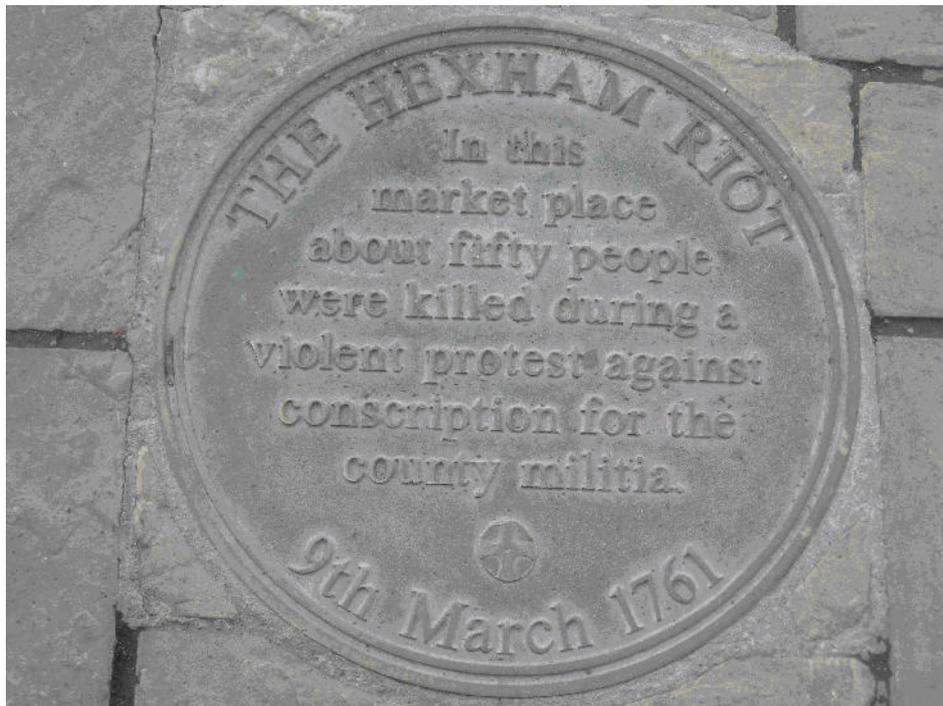
Yvonne Purdy

I'd like to thank all members who have paid or renewed their subscriptions promptly – and to gently remind those of you who have yet to get around to it! Subscription rates remain unchanged and, as I'm sure you'll agree, are excellent value for money.

The Hexham Riot

Liz Sobell &
Jim Hedley

Next month sees the 250th anniversary of the Hexham Militia Riot, when troops opened fire on crowds protesting against balloting for militia conscription on Monday 9th March 1761. Those who have read Tom Corfe's excellent account of the riot (2004) will know just what shock and distress must have been caused in Hexham and the surrounding area when news of the 52 dead and hundreds injured swept through the district.



All the more surprising, then, is this letter written about a missed breakfast meeting just two days later, when in the Market Place the blood of the dead and injured had barely washed away. It was written by Robert Lowes, aged 54, an attorney in Hexham and member of the well-connected family of Lowes of Ridley Hall near Haltwhistle. His house, later the Post Office and now known as Hadrian House, was just off the Market Place. His intended meeting had, from internal evidence, probably been with Mr Nicholas Walton, Receiver of Greenwich Hospital's Northern Estates, and another.

"Gentlemen

I received your favour of the 20th Inst. and duly observe the contents.

Mr Christopher Bell has been with me several times about the affair of Jos. Atkinson he no doubt has acquainted you with the distress he made on the goods of small value found upon the premises...

...I am sorry the safeguard of the sudden march of the Militia hurried you out of this place on the 11th Inst. by which I lost the promised satisfaction of seeing you that day in the morning to talk over two or three matters and to eat a hearty breakfast with you as usual. I knew nothing of the matter till I was as far as the Market place to be with you and then I was obliged to wheel about to save my breakfast at home having told my wife I would not Breakfast at home she seemed at first desirous of taking me at my word by this Mr Walton will see how poor Husbands that have no Visible proofs of doing Family duty are like to suffer and he will upon this occasion think himself well off with the Number two so early.

The particulars I wanted to talk with you about were first the affair you mention about Mr Walton's Tithes claim...

...Another matter was one of course to pay you Rawgreen rent and if a Second Mob had taken it from me I intended to make them give me a receipt in full on the Hospital's Account...

...I shall hope to see you at Durham Election although it vexes me I am so situated as not to be able to get there before the third of April I am (with much Esteem)

Gentlemen

Your most Faithful Humble

Servant

Robert Lowes

Hexham 25th March 1761"

Northumberland Collections, reference NRO 3444/32.

Also apparently missed by the histories of the Riot was an event which took place shortly after, which is recorded in the Quarterly Sessions of the Assizes dated 16th April 1761,

"John Graham of Lord Granby's regiment of troop with David Berry says that he and his comrade George Farmery were walking in the streets at Hexham last Tuesday when words arose between them and William Alnwick of Corbridge and the said Alnwick damned the King and all his soldiers and that he could burn them all to ashes."

National Archives: Quarterly Sessions of the Assizes, North Eastern circuit depositions, ASSI 45/26/5 No 1-112, 1761 depositions

Hexham's Old Gaol will open specially on Wednesday 9th March to mark the 250th anniversary of the Riot. A small exhibition about the Riot is to be mounted in the museum's Charlton Room and will run until Saturday, 7th May.

Basques in Hexham – connections

Following the publication of HH20, Philip Clark has mentioned that J R Lawther, quoted in the article on the Basque refugee children, came from a staunch left-wing family. One of 15 children, he was born in Choppington to a mining family. One brother, Clifford, fought and died in the Spanish Civil War, whilst another brother, William (*right*), was elected MP for Barnard Castle from 1939-31, later becoming President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and, subsequently, the first President of the National Union of Mineworkers. William was knighted in 1949, living in Whitley Bay until his death in 1976.



Hexham Historian: 1

The **new cumulative index**, covering issues 1-20, is now available to download from the website. For those members who still prefer paper, HH21 will include an index to issues 16-20 to supplement the earlier printed index; a limited number of which are still available from the Publications Officer. Still available, too, are copies of the A4 version of the index to issues 1-15! Anyone who would like the larger version should contact Mark Benjamin on (01434) 607746

**Hexham
Historian: 2**

SPECIAL OFFER ON HEXHAM HISTORIAN BACK NUMBERS

As a special offer, to members only, any ten back issues of the Hexham Historian can be purchased at 2/3rds of the total cover price. This could mean a saving of between £13 and £20, depending on which ten you pick. The printed index to volumes 1 to 15 is included in the offer. A summary of the contents of each Hexham Historian can be found at the end of this newsletter, on our website www.hexhamhistorian.org or by talking to Ted Wall at the monthly meeting.

If you'd like to take advantage of this offer, contact Ted on (01434) 600422 or write to 6 Park Avenue, Hexham, NE46 3EN. Sets can be collected at the next monthly meeting or, if you live in Hexham, it can be delivered free. Outside Hexham, we will post it for an additional £5.90 to cover p&p. Pay upon collection at the monthly meeting or send a cheque made payable to 'Hexham Local History Society' to Ted at the above address.

**Hexham
Historian: 3**

We know that many members keep back runs of the Historian and, as the number of issues grows, these runs are becoming increasingly unmanageable. We're currently investigating the possibility of acquiring binders to hold 10-12 copies. In deep red/maroon covering with gilt lettering on the spine, it seems likely that these will cost around £5 each but we shall inform members of the final details in a future newsletter.

**New online
resources**

Two very useful online databases have been launched recently. Both are available to the general researcher and are free to use.

1) Cause Papers in the Archbishopric of York

www.hrionline.ac.uk/causepapers/index.jsp

A searchable catalogue of more than 14,000 cause papers relating to cases heard between 1300 and 1858 in the Church Courts of the diocese of York. The original records are held in the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York, and are the most extensive records of their type in the United Kingdom. They offer an extremely valuable resource for family and local historians and scholars interested in social, ecclesiastical, economic and legal history.

2) North East Inheritance Database

<http://familyrecords.dur.ac.uk/nei/data/intro.php>

Created and maintained by Durham University Library, this is a fully searchable index to the university's holdings of pre-1858 Original Wills & Inventories, Registered Copies of Wills, and Probate Bonds. Full catalogue details are given for these fascinating documents although it is still necessary to visit Durham to inspect the documents themselves.

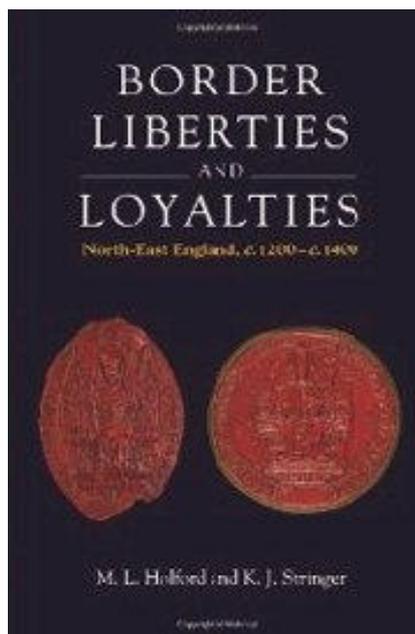
**Book review
Greg Finch**

M L Holford and K J Stringer **Border Liberties and Loyalties: North-East England, c1200-c1400**, (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) xxiv + 456pp, ISBN 978 0 7486 3278 7, £80 hardback

Aspirations to alter the balance between centralised and local power in England drew attention in the high medieval period, as they do today. The kingdom is usually regarded as one of medieval Europe's most centralised, yet much of the North-East was dominated by liberties - largely self-governing legal jurisdictions - that greatly restricted the English crown's direct authority in the region. Such liberties existed throughout the country as a whole, and a few of them, the 'regalities', exercised great independence, extending to local tax raising and spending, "where the king's writ did not run". In the North East there were three such areas: Durham, Tynedale, where the lord was the Scottish king for much of this period, and Hexhamshire, that elongated triangle of land running from the Durham border up to Hallington beyond the Roman Wall, under the lordship of the Archbishops of York. This book's intensive examination of the realities of power, royal ambitions and local resistance, and the effects on lordship and the structure of society within each of these liberties is therefore of great local interest. It is the product of probably the most

comprehensive primary research into the medieval political history of the area since the volumes of the Northumberland County History a century or more ago.

The origins of the liberties were vague enough to allow the Crown increasingly to assert that they simply exercised a delegated authority which could be as easily withdrawn, but the liberties claimed ancient independence from royal control, to which the crown should defer. Dr Holford finds evidence of great local self-confidence: a royal writ was trampled into the ground in Durham in 1295, and in Hexhamshire the Archbishops repeatedly and successfully resisted attempts by the crown to levy taxes locally, even in the face of increased military spending during the turbulent 14th century when the region was at the front line of war with Scotland. Evidence is given to support the view that Hexhamshire's relative independence also owed much to the locally accepted legitimacy of the Archbishops' rule. The surviving record seems to show that the machinery of justice and administration operated well enough for most of the period to prevent the county courts being seen as more attractive. If so, it prompts the speculation that many of the derogatory comments periodically expressed about the lawlessness of Hexhamshire were motivated more by an external desire to undermine local independence than by actual events. An attempt is made to explore whether a sense of local identity and community can be identified, influenced in part by the research agenda of the North East of England History Institute. While in Durham it seems that St Cuthbert was used as an active symbol of local identity, Dr Holford finds that in Hexhamshire, despite the obvious potential of Hexham Priory and its links to the Hexham saints, there is little evidence of the promotion of any such unifying cult during this period. He questions the degree of local sentiment for the Priory, noting the lack of land grants to it from within the regality compared to donations from further afield, although this might also be explained by what he acknowledges elsewhere to be the limited number of land holdings of sufficient scale to permit such generosity.



The amount of local medieval autonomy revealed by this work underlines how much centralisation was eventually achieved by the Tudors and Stuarts, presumably in the face of jealously protected ancient rights and privileges, and perhaps helps explain Henry VIII's 'exchange' of Hexhamshire for property elsewhere with a new Archbishop of York in 1545. This is an important and absorbing work which adds much to our understanding of medieval Hexhamshire, Tynedale and the wider North east. While the expense and specialised focus of this thorough academic study might limit its attraction to a wide audience, one can only hope that our local reference libraries might be persuaded to splash out.

**Reviewers
required**

Book reviews are a much appreciated feature of the newsletter and we have contacted several publishers, inviting them to submit their new titles for review in this newsletter; now all we need is some people to write the reviews. Books received and currently awaiting review include:

<i>Holder, G</i>	<i>The Jacobites and the supernatural</i>
<i>De la Beyoyere, G</i>	<i>Hadrian's Wall: history and guide</i>
<i>Beckensall, S</i>	<i>Northumberland viewpoints</i>

If you'd like to join our reviewing panel, please get in touch with Mark Benjamin at 9 Hencotes, Hexham NE46 2EQ; thebenjamins@talktalk.net or (01434) 6007746 and let him know what sort of books interest you. Reviews should be about 500 words, but this is variable and open to negotiation – and you get to keep the book!

**Letters from
18th Cent
Hexham project
starts**

A group of volunteer members gathered on January 14th in Acomb Village Hall to commence the project to transcribe the collection of letters from priests and church officials in Hexham to their superiors in York. Most of the transcription team, who came forward in response to requests for volunteers in recent editions of the newsletter, were able to attend. Greg Finch gave an introduction to the project, the documentary material, its coverage of moral misbehaviour by the townsfolk, church administration, and perennial shortage of funds, and the chief personalities we will learn about, including the irascible Reverend

George Ritschel, Perpetual Curate and Lecturer of Hexham between 1683-1717, and his successor, Revd Thomas Andrewes. Liz Sobell gave advice and support on handwriting styles. The project makes innovative use of shared web pages, set up by Peter Rodger, with a central repository of the source material, help guides and a working library for finished transcripts. This means team members have great flexibility to work where, when and how they wish, independently or together, and yet still collaborate effectively on a work which should reveal much about life in early Eighteenth Century Hexham.



**Interim
financial
statement**

Greg Finch

As you probably know, it was agreed last year to move the Society's AGM from March to November. Since this means that the formal accounts for 2010 won't be presented until much later in the year members might appreciate a summary update now. We remain in a healthy financial position. Spending rose from about £6,400 in 2009 to £6,900 in 2010, but income rose from nearly £6,500 in 2009 to around £8,400 last year, giving us a surplus of about £1,500.

This is partly because subscription fees rose last year while membership numbers remained stable at around 250 (making us by far the largest local history society in Northumberland), but the effect of this increase can be expected to dwindle over the next few years, during which time costs are expected to rise, but we hope to keep fees unchanged. A greater impact was made through the sale of Anna Rossiter's book, *Hexham in the Seventeenth Century*, where we reaped the combined benefit of - on the one hand - an internet-based printer able to provide very small print runs at low cost, and sales that exceeded our expectations. Anna's widower, Nick, also very generously donated back to the Society his share of the net proceeds of the book. We also had a record number of visitors at our monthly meetings. All of this puts us in a strong position to proceed with our plans to publish *The Lands of Hexham Priory* this year, and hopefully the letters from Hexham's 18th Century priests at a later date. A full financial report will accompany the AGM papers later this year.

**Night at the
Museum
Weekend**

As part of this nationwide promotion, the Old Gaol is staying open till 5pm on Saturday, 14th May with Andy Bates running leatherwork activities from 3pm - 5pm (There will be a small charge for joining in the leatherworking). If you were one of the few people who missed it in January, Andy will be repeating the interesting talk he gave to us last month, at 7.30pm in the Moothall's Lockhart Room. (£2 entry charge, £1 for HLHS members). Tickets will be available in advance from the museum. A display in the Old Gaol on Hexham Tans will then run to the end of November.

**John Martin
at the Laing**

As part of the Great British Art Debate, the Laing Art Gallery will be mounting the first major exhibition of the paintings by 19th century artist John Martin for more than 30 years. His spectacular, apocalyptic works will be displayed,

capturing the drama and impact which they had when they were originally displayed. The exhibition runs from 5th March – 5th June and features talks on 30th March and 13th April. Further information on the talks can be obtained from the Laing Gallery.

A whole programme of events and activities will also be taking place in and around Haydon Bridge over the next year to celebrate the life and art of the locally-born artist, to coincide with the Laing exhibition. The first event will be a talk by Max Adams, to be held at 7.30pm on 11th March in Haydon Bridge Community Centre, together with Northumbrian songs sung by Ellen Murphy. Tickets can be purchased from the village library or ordered online from the village website at www.haydon-bridge.co.uk, as can further information about the John Martin Festival programme.

**Friends of
Historic
Dilston**

Forthcoming talks that may be of interest to Society members. Admission to these talks at Dilston costs £3 and must be pre-booked, by phoning (01661) 844157 or email maryroseridley@hotmail.com

Saturday 26 March, 2.00pm *From Tyne to Tiber: Northern Catholic families on the Grand Tour*

A Talk by Anne French (Anne French is a freelance art historian and curator living and working in Northumberland. A specialist in British 18th-century art, she has recently written a major book about the Grand Tours made by men and women from Northumberland and Durham in the 18th and early 19th centuries, *Art Treasures in the North: Northern Families on the Grand Tour*. Her talk will focus on the important contribution to the Grand Tour made by Catholic families from Northumberland such as the Swinburnes, the Riddells, the Haggerstones, and of course the Radcliffes themselves, after they had received a Catholic education abroad.)

Saturday 7 May, 2.00pm *The siege of Newcastle 1644*

A Talk by John Sadler. (The Siege of Newcastle, which took place during the Civil War, is the subject of military historian John Sadler's latest book, to be published in 2011 by the History Press. Tyne and Wear Museums are mounting an exhibition on the subject in the spring to coincide with the publication of the book.)

Saturday 16 July, 2.00pm *Jacobitism in prints*

A Talk by Richard Sharp (Richard Sharp is author of *The engraved record of the Jacobite movement*, published in 1996. His lavishly illustrated talk follows the subject of his book, which charts the large number of engravings that were produced c1688-1773 to include numerous images of the exiled Royal Stuarts and individuals associated with the Jacobite cause. Richard will discuss how patterns of publishing activity coincide with political and military crisis, indicating the importance of prints as propaganda.)

**Rights of
Way – Help
required**

As the county council attempts to sell off various properties in Hexham, residents may not know that a useful shortcut is also set to disappear. The steps leading from the old swimming pool's carpark, down to Haugh Lane, are not currently a registered Right of Way and may well go once the plot is sold. If it can be shown that these have been in regular use for at least 20 years, an application can be made to register the path. If you or anyone you know regularly uses, or has used, these steps over a prolonged period, Mark Benjamin would like to hear from you as soon as possible at thebenjamins@talktalk.net or (01434) 607746

**Notes &
Queries**

1) James Taylor writes: I am currently researching the life of **Andrew de Moray**, in whose name a letter of protection and a safe conduct were jointly issued with William Wallace on 7th November 1297. I do not believe that Moray was present at Hexham (I believe that he died at or soon after the battle of Stirling Bridge and that Wallace continued to issue documents bearing Moray's name as a means by which he could strengthen his authority) and I am keen to establish if anything in either

of these documents confirm my hypothesis (e.g. how many seals were attached to the letters? Were there provisions for the attachment of more than one seal?).

I believe that neither of these documents survive, other than as copies reproduced in Walter of Guisborough's chronicle. And I just wondered if any members of the society could confirm if this is correct. I would appreciate anything that anyone can share with me on this subject.

James can be contacted on jayqtee@aol.com; those members without email can contact Mark Benjamin on (01434) 607746

2) We have received a request for help in locating the graves of **James and Mary Foster**, of Hindley Hall, Broomley. James Foster was a Lead Manufacturer and died 30 March 1879, at Hindley Hall. He left a substantial will which was proved by his son in law, Charles Frank Forster (married to Emma Foster in Cannes, France on 15 Feb. 1877-YP), and Alexander Gow, Lead Manufacturers.

If anyone can help in locating the graves, or indeed any details on the life of James Foster, and/or his son Alfred James Foster (who became a J.P.), please contact Yvonne Purdy on (01434) 601237

3) Does anyone remember anything about the last years of the **Golden Lion pub in Pudding Row**. It was demolished in 1988 to make way for Pudding Mews but an enquirer, the descendant of an early licensee, would like to know when it closed. Please contact Mark Benjamin on (01434) 607746 if you have information about the pub's latter years.

4) Muriel Sobo has a few questions relating to the **riverbank between Hexham and Warden**:

- I found the stone indicating the height of the 1771 flood lying in a heap with other stones next to a no parking sign by the first dwelling along the bridle way from Warden. Will it be rescued and restored before it disappears altogether?
- There is a substantial stone marker where the footpath leaves the tarmac bridleway to go under the road bridge. On it are very clear initials J C S and underneath B followed by a date which is partly eroded but ends in --97. Can you give me any info on this?
- Along the road from Warden to Walwick Grange there is a small vertical stone fitted into a base near the roadside. Is this the one marked on the OS map as stone cross and is anything known about it?

Please contact Muriel at yomi.sobo@talktalk.net or call Yvonne Purdy on (01434) 601237

5) We're hoping to include an article on **WW2 evacuees in Northumberland** in a future Historian. If any member has suitable photos to accompany such an article, Mark Benjamin would love to hear from you on (01434) 607746. Any photos supplied would be scanned and returned.

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Contents of the Hexham Historian: Issues 1 – 20

HH 1 (1991) War memorials; A museum for Hexham?; Hexham excavations, 1990; Dr Joseph Parker; St Mary's Chare; The Gentleman's Magazine, 1755; How Hexham got its name. £3.00

HH 2 (1992) Two wells; Sundials around Hexham; The dating of High Shield; The Ranters in Hexhamshire; A day in the life of the Borough Court. £2.00

HH 3 (1993) Excavations at Hexham Abbey, Jan/Feb 1993; The Inspeximus of 1298; Bridging the Tyne at Hexham in the eighteenth century; Sir Percy Loraine of Kirkharle; Wilfrid Wilson Gibson: profile of a Hexham poet. £3.00

HH 4 (1994) Special edition covering all aspects of the history of the Cockshaw area of Hexham - particular coverage of the leather trade. £5.00

HH 5 (1995) The place-name Hexham; Hexham after the Vikings; The medieval topography of Hexham; Mapping Medieval Acomb; The two William Hewsons; The growth of Hexham in the 1890s; Regional government headquarters. £3.00

HH 6 (1996) Medieval Bingfield; The government of Hexham in the 17th Century; A school board for Hexham. £2.50

HH 7 (1997) Before Wilfrid: Britons, Romans and Anglo-Saxons in Tynedale. Conference papers: The Romans in Tynedale; Roman roads and bridges in Tynedale; The aftermath of Rome; An Anglo-Saxon watermill at Corbridge; Bernicia before Wilfrid; The Battle of Heavenfield; Hexham before Wilfrid? £6.00

HH 8 (1998) The archaeology of Warden Hill; The queen and the robber: a Hexham story; Joseph Cathrall of the Hexham Courant, 1839-1881; Two (1872 & 1935) contemporary accounts of poor housing. £4.50

HH 9 (1999) From Grammar School to High School: Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School from the foundation to the mid-nineteenth century; A new school for a new century; Hexham Grammar School, 1910-1976; After 400 years - the present achievement; The school song. £6.00

HH 10 (2000) A decade of archaeology in Hexham; A house in Hexhamshire: recent investigations of The Tenement, Steel; Hexham cinemas; Life in a Hexham street: Priestpopple, Cattle Market, Battle Hill; Economic & social indicators for Hexham: an analysis of the 1851 & 1861 censuses. £6.00

HH 11 (2001) The end of Hexham Priory; Holmes, sweet Holmes; The origins of Hexham Hydro; Memoirs of Hexham Hydro; Restoration of Hexham Abbey: Savage versus Lockhart. £5.00

HH 12 (2002) The Wars of the Roses in Northumberland, 1461-64; Hexham Mechanics' Literary and Scientific Institution; The Rev John G Bowran and the building of Hexham Primitive Methodist Church; The 1853 cholera outbreak in Hexham; Death in Hexham in the late 16th and 17th centuries: what we can learn from the records; Death in the Tyne valley. £5.00

HH 13 (2003) The Hospital of St Giles at Hexham; Eilaf's vision: Scots, saints and Hexham historians; Border warfare and Hexhamshire in the Later Middle Ages; 1841 and a revolution in Hexham's townscape. £6.00

HH 14 (2004) Order, disorder and criminal activity in Medieval Northumberland; Two militia lists (1762 & 1803) for Hexham; The Society of Shoemakers; Hexham Hydro - a chronological history; Soldiers who died in the Great War. £6.00

HH 15 (2005) The Roman bridge at Corbridge: "the work of giants"; The Hagulstadian church: some notes on early Hexham; A load of old cobblers: Hexham shoemakers in the 17th and 18th centuries; The Great Flood of 1771 in Hexham; Two Hexham iron works; Only fools and horses: Gallipoli 1915. £6.00

HH 16 (2006) Wayside crosses; Clock and watchmakers of Hexham; How many rioters were there?; The history of a house; Suffragettes in Hexham; Pattinsons of Hexham - and beyond. £6.00

HH 17 (2007) Obituaries of Tom Corfe, Anna Rossiter, L C Coombes & Brian Jenkins; Sport, war & business: the three sons of James T Robb; Silly Burn Mine; The history of a house 2: The Larches; Two contested 19th century elections; The Ordnance Survey: a history. £6.00

HH 18 (2008) Obituary of Rodney Higgins; Robbs: the building of a business; Hexham Hydro's Winter Gardens; Shopkeepers to Hexham: the Welches of Hexham; Dotland deserted; The tale of Uchtred; The birth of Egger. £6.00

HH 19 (2009) The diary of Elizabeth Gill; A century of two Hexham churches; A note on the early photographic career of J P Gibson; Witherite mining in Tynedale; A short history of Hexham railway station; Was Hexham fortified?: The "watchtower" and town walls. £6.00

H 20 (2010) From Bilbao to Hexham; "This barbarous and irreligious contry"; The history of a house 3: Maiden Cross; Towards a history of Protestant dissent in Hexham; Hexham and the Royal Forestry Society £6.00

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**And,
finally...**

Society member, Stan Beckensall will be appearing on French television in the summer talking, unsurprisingly, on Northumberland's rock art. And there're another two Beckensall books on the way! *Northumberland hills & valleys* and *Northumberland's ancient churches* will appear later this year.