



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 62

Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746

Spring 2012

A message from the Secretary

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their membership already, and a gentle reminder to those of you that haven't yet! Membership rates remain unchanged and now you can arrange to pay by Standing Order, thereby relieving you of the need to remember each year.

Ask not what your Society can do for you...

We're looking for a member to help our Outings Officer, Charlotte Coxon, with her duties. If you're interested, please contact Charlotte on outings@hexhamhistorian.org or on 01434 607798

New on the Website

Street names: a list of all current street and terrace names, along with approximate locations. Not to be confused with *Vanishing Hexham* (also downloadable from the website), which lists names no longer in use, but quite useful in placing locations in Hexham, particularly for those new to the town.

Indexes for Historian binders

Having purchased our lovely binders, some members have asked whether it would be possible to have separate indexes for the 10 issues contained in each volume. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, and the valued efforts of Hilary Faulkner, our honorary indexer, it is! Indexes for Hexham Historians 1-10 and 11-20 can now be obtained from Ted Wall for the bargain price of £3.00 each. Unfortunately, it has not been feasible to create these in booklet form but the folded index will slot nicely into the binders. The annually-updated cumulative index, currently covering Historians 1-21, is of course still downloadable from the website.

Saturday night at the movies....

Hexham has had its own cinema for more than 100 years. The Forum Cinema, built on the same spot as the Gem Palace, is now community owned and still going strong. To mark this momentous occasion a short film is being made by local company In-house Films. The film is nearing completion and all that is missing is some archive pictures (moving or still) showing what life was like in Hexham in the early to mid-20th Century. Images of a Saturday night out at either The Forum or Queens Hall are particularly welcome. For more information please contact: Sue Chapman at sue.chapman10@btinternet.com or Glenn Perry glenn@inhousefilms.com or phone him on 07801818966.

One of our Flag Captains is missing

Does anyone know the whereabouts of a portrait of Edward Rotheram RN? A portrait of Edward (1753-1830), who captained the Royal Sovereign at the Battle of Trafalgar, is thought to have come to Hexham some years ago from Bildeston, Suffolk, where he is buried. However, neither the Abbey or the Museums service know of its current location.

The Bildeston History Quarterly is intending to publish an article on him and would like to include a copy of the portrait. If you know anything about the portrait, please contact Sue Andrews at 17 Manor Road, Bildeston, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 7BG

**Planning for
Hexham's
Heritage**

Hexham Town Council has set aside £5000 to investigate residents' ideas for a 5 year town plan; to provide a robust framework for community actions and projects. Initial consultation in November suggested residents' strong wish for more coordinated action and planning between different groups and agencies at all levels. A common view expressed was that, while we have many active organisations which make our town a good place to live, their efforts could have more long lasting impact if there was better liaison and broader public involvement.

Special interest working groups will help to find out the issues people are concerned about, plan public consultation and organise small events to model collaborative and creative ways of working. The groups include arts and heritage and, given the historic riches of our town and its long past, we would greatly value Society members' input. If you would like to be more actively involved please contact Judy Lloyd on (01434) 606293.

**The Popular
Politics
Project**

Anyone with an interest in local history can be part of the new Popular Politics Project. The project involves volunteers exploring some fascinating topics including working lives, politics, migration and leisure.

With a wealth of information spread across libraries, public archives, museums and even in private hands about public people and events, the Popular Politics Project's aim is to collate this information and create a database as well as produce publications that will allow easier access for everyone.

Some research will take place in public archives in Durham, Tyneside and also at Northumberland Archives based at the Woodhorn museum in Ashington where staff are delighted with the project. "It won't be all desk work." said regional co-ordinator John Charlton "Part of the job will be to find, record and transcribe personal narratives of living participants involved in political parties, movements and campaigns too. Training in oral history techniques as well as research methods will be given, so even complete beginners can get involved." Sue Wood, head of collections at Woodhorn said, "Many of our regular visitors are looking into family history, we have so many other records and documents, so it's wonderful to see what the Popular Politics Project volunteers are coming up with."

For more information please contact John Charlton, regional co-ordinator on 07761 818384 or by emailing: ppp@nelh.org

**Dukesfield
Lead Smelt
Mill record
transcription
project**

Greg Finch

Many readers might be familiar with two substantial stone and brick arches out in Hexhamshire, by the Devil's Water below Dukesfield Hall. They are the remains of what was once a very busy 18th century mill that smelted lead carried down from the Pennines by pack pony and then on to Tyneside. It closed down in 1835. A project is being planned by the local community to preserve the arches, and reveal more about the past of the mill and surrounding area. A grant application will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in March, the start of what could be a year-long process to get funding. In the meantime we plan to kick off the project with research into the extensive documentary record of the mill's activity, hopefully aided by a grant from the Henry Bell Trust, on which a decision is expected shortly. Should we be successful we will obtain copies of archive material at Woodhorn, Durham and Newcastle, and undertake a transcription project and piece together the history of the mill and those who worked there. There will be some briefing and orientation sessions at Whitley Chapel Parish Hall, but it is hoped that -as with the Society's 18th Century Letters transcription project- much of the work can be undertaken via remote PC access from your own home. If you are interested or simply want to know more, we'd love to hear from you. Please email dukesfield@hexhamhistorian.org

The great clock mystery

Eric Morton

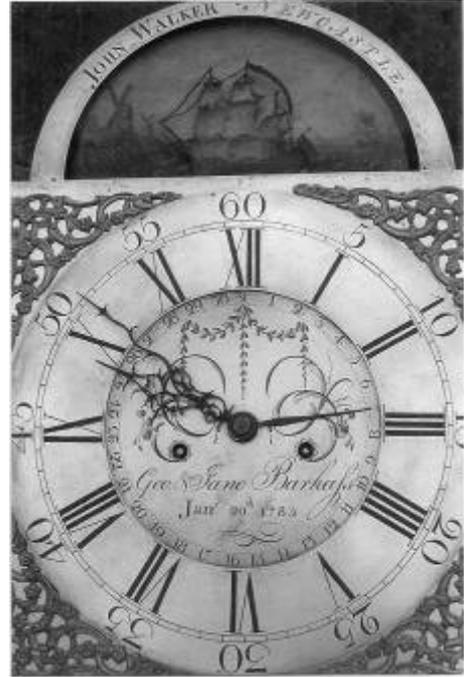
John Walker of Newcastle, the maker of this clock, is very well documented. The engraving is by the Beilby & Bewick workshops in St Nicholas

Square. As was common, the first owners of the clock, George and Jane Barkafs, had their names engraved on the dial centre, along with the date Jan 20th 1785.

These commemorative clocks are generally referred (although often erroneously) to as “marriage clocks”. And, indeed, George and Jane Barkass were married in Hexham on 14th May 1782. So what happened on 20th January 1785 to warrant the engraving?

The surname Barkass is a North Eastern variant of Barkhouse (tannery), which may or may not be of help in establishing a Hexham connection

Eric can be contacted on (01207) 270019 or ericmorton@googlemail.com



A road scheme for Hexham in 1857

Greg Finch

The people and motives behind the bold changes to the townscape of central Hexham in the mid Victorian period were described by David Jennings in his article ‘1841 and a revolution in Hexham’s townscape’, published in *Hexham Historian*, Vol 13, (2003). This culminated in the building of Beaumont Street and the Town Hall and Corn Exchange in the 1860s. A map has recently come to light which appears to depict the survey of the ‘whole locality’ which W.B.Beaumont, as principal landowner, hoped would lead to laying out the ground in such a way as ‘to be useful to the Town and neighbourhood of Hexham’.

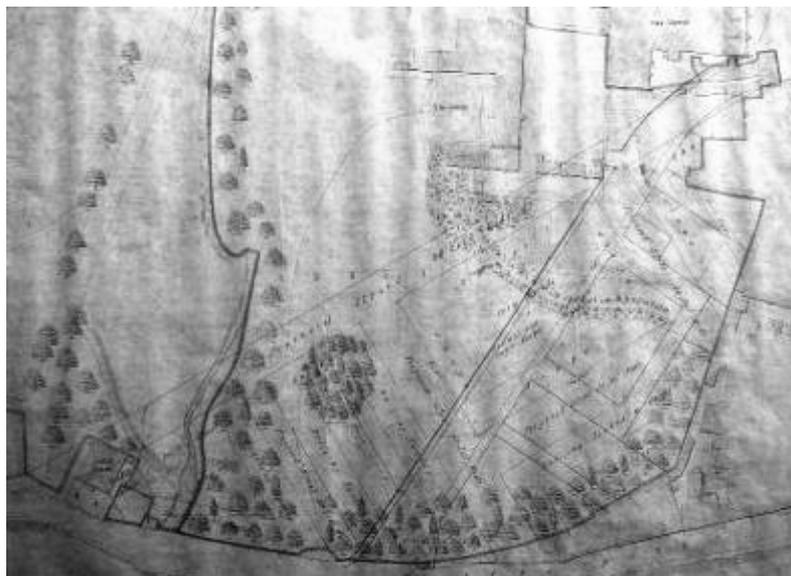


Figure 1 (reproduced by courtesy of a private collection)

The plan shown here (Fig 1) appears to be draft of Beaumont’s initial scheme. It envisaged, as shown in red, a wide straight road from the Market Place right across the Sele to where the United Reformed Church (the ‘Scotch Church’) sits on Hencotes. A series of secondary

roads and buildings laid out in an orderly geometric pattern is shown to the south-east, filling the space between the new main road and the ancient boundary of the Priory grounds. Neat rows of houses, shops and a market area are shown. 'Back lanes' are shown, presumably mindful of the drive to improve public health in the wake of the 1853 cholera outbreak and subsequent formation of the local Board of Health. The 'Scotch church' would be rebuilt on a new alignment. Fig 2 is another extract from the plan, showing another new wide road, heading eastwards from the Market place bulldozing all in its path the old buildings between the Moot Hall and Old Gaol, heading down the hill into Hall Orchard.

It was, of course, a more modest scheme that came to fruition a decade later. The route of the future Beaumont Street is also shown as a later addition in blue on Fig 1. As we look at the view from it across the Sele today, and the preservation of something of the medieval street plan east of the Market Place, many might be thankful for the reflection, delay, cost and legal implications, compromise, (but still the expenditure of a great deal of money) through which the initially grand plans for this small part of the landscape were translated into reality.

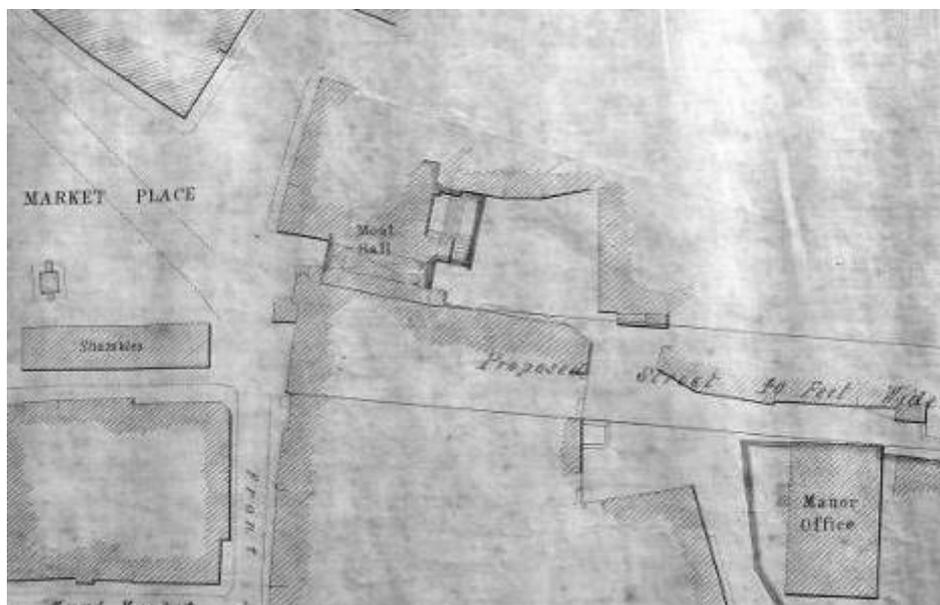
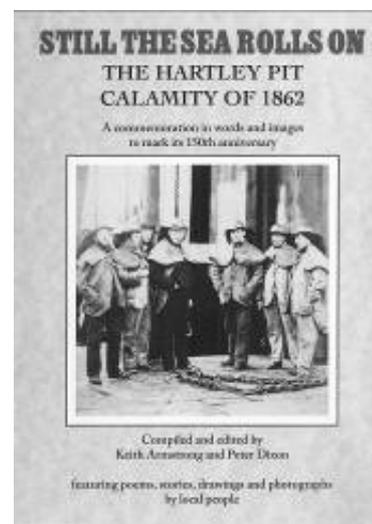


Figure 2 (reproduced by courtesy of a private collection)

Book review
Mark
Benjamin

Armstrong, Keith & Dixon, Peter **Still the sea rolls on: the Hartley Pit calamity of 1862** (Northern Voices, 2012) 64pp
ISBN 9781871536201 £7.99

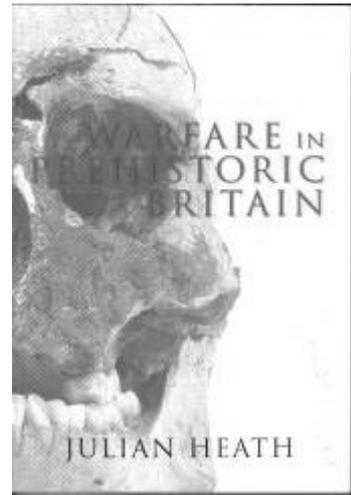
A commemoration in words and images to mark the 150th anniversary of the disaster that claimed the lives of 204 men and boys; the first large scale mining disaster of the Victorian era and one that caused a media storm comparable with that over the trapped Chilean miners of more recent times. Many of the illustrations are taken from contemporary press coverage and complement well the text which is a mixture of contemporary quotes and poems with more modern writing, including specially written poems by Keith Armstrong. A fascinating and well produced piece of social history.



Book review
Ted Wall

Heath, Julian. **Warfare in prehistoric Britain** (Amberley Publishing, 2011) ISBN 9781848683693 £18.99

This interesting book covers the period between 10,000BC and AD43. Julian Heath's thesis is that there has always been armed conflict (a better term than warfare since it covers the range from raids to tribal battles). Most of us know that the people of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age were warlike but we might have assumed that the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic times were peaceable, perhaps even idyllic. Not so. Competition for land and favoured resources, raids to steal from neighbours, vengeance seeking, family and tribal feuds and so on have always been around. Also, in the absence of a central authority, each community could do as it pleased, including bullying its neighbours.



Mr Heath sets out the archaeological record in great detail, setting out the evidence from excavations, tracing the evolution of weapons, artefacts and fortifications. Although his subject is Britain he draws upon other regions when it is relevant. He is careful to describe the alternative interpretations of the archaeology as well as the one he favours. For example: he sets out the popular modern explanation of hillforts as prestige focus points for assembly or religion rather than primarily for defence; he then points out just how massive the defences are, and how elaborately the entrances are designed for defence, and the thousands of stockpiled slingstones that have been found. There is a lot of information here. For example did you know that the Neolithic bow was six feet long and made of yew? Just like the English Longbow that was so effective in the Middle Ages.

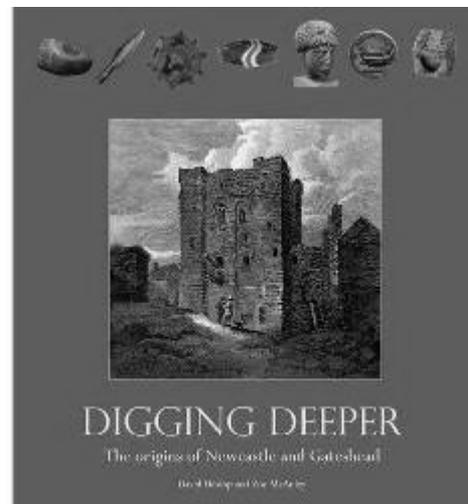
The book has 161 pages; it is very well illustrated, with a good bibliography and index.

Book review
Greg Finch

David Heslop, David & McAuley, Zoe **Digging Deeper: the origins of Newcastle and Gateshead**

(Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2011) 84pp, ISBN 978 1 857951 34 9 £8.50

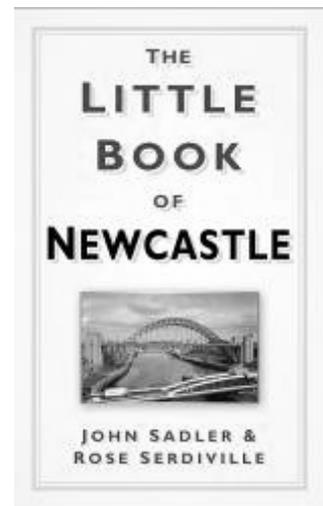
Given the age and importance of the city of Newcastle, the presence within it of so many historians, archaeologists and their institutional homes, and waves of 20th century development, it is not surprising that over the years a great deal has been written up in detailed reports on excavations on both banks of the Tyne. But for the majority of us without the specialist knowledge, and indeed the stamina, to plough through the journals it has hitherto been hard to see the wood for the trees. This small volume therefore provides a welcome summary of the early development of Tyneside, from pre-history to the 12th century, with the Norman establishment of the new castle overlooking the Tyne. Archaeologists David Heslop and Zoe McAuley have written an overview of this broad sweep of time which focuses on what we know of the sequence of human occupation and use of the land and river, and they have backed this up with accounts of specific excavations and by introducing key archaeological techniques. This is refreshingly different to the approach taken in many specialist reports which document in necessarily minute detail exactly what was found at ever deeper layers within their trenches and then eventually speculate on what it might all mean. Here, the meaning is at the centre, and, while noting the uncertainty which remains over many dark and unknown centuries, a clear picture emerges



of the development of the city area, the impact of the Romans, the route of Hadrian's Wall, the Anglo-Saxon period and then the massive stone fist slammed onto the hillside by the Normans. It is brought out all the more vividly by the superb colour aerial-view reconstructions by Judith Dobie and Geoff Laws of how Newcastle and Gateshead might have looked during Roman, Saxon and Norman times, and is complemented by many maps, photos and historic illustrations. There is one quibble. For a book which so skilfully introduces what we know of Tyneside's past from a great deal of archaeological work it is surprising there are no references to the specific detailed reports that it draws upon. Those responsible for providing the scholarly foundations are named and acknowledged in a list, but any readers inspired to dig deeper, following the title of the book, are not given the direct means to do so. Nevertheless this is a very useful book, an impressive and digestible example of where "less is more". It conveys the excitement of discovery and the potential to learn so much more about the origins of the city. As John Grundy says in his introduction "It makes you wonder what might be revealed tomorrow."

Book review
JB Jonas

Sadler, John & Serdiville, Rose **The little book of Newcastle** (History Press, 2011) 189pp
ISBN 9780752460444 £9.99



Although I was born in a Newcastle nursing home, I have always looked upon myself as a native Northumbrian as the North East was not then split into Northumberland and Tyne & Wear. As such, I have the fierce pride in my origins that all of us in the extremities of our country share, be we Cornishmen, Devonians or Northumbrians. Whilst not reflecting that fierce pride, not being natives themselves, the authors of this "Little Book" have given us a fascinating account of the history of Newcastle and the individuals who have shaped that history.

I hope they can be encouraged to do a similar book for Northumberland so that our "greats", headed of course by Wor Jackie, can be afforded the legacy they deserve. As the authors say, this book is one to be dipped into and savoured. I hope they will feel that I have savoured enough to write a fair review by the time the editor's deadline was up, and I look forward to browsing through all of it over the next few weeks.

**A local
"worthy"?**

Mark Benjamin

In researching for an enquiry received through our website, I had occasion to read a *Hexham Courant* article from February 1877, the first in a series entitled *Our local statesmen*. This featured Matthew Smith, the first chairman of the newly established Local Board of Health. It makes fascinating, and hilarious, reading being a "hatchet job" of which *Private Eye* would be proud! The following excerpts give some idea of the flavour...

"(Matthew Smith) had such high an opinion of the value to the town of open drains, foul water, high death-rate and very low money rates that he threw himself heart and soul into the ranks...who believed only facts which kept down the pence in the pound... Not that his writings were very powerful, nor his speeches convincing, but his thoroughness in the simple principles his friends rejoiced in, his steadfastness and consistency to the great idea of 'dirt'...proved the excellence of Mr Smith's electioneering tactics, and also revealed the fact...that intelligence has but small chance against greed, and benevolence has little regard in local politics....A few yards of flagging, as many gas lamps as made Hexham darkness visible, road that were barely passable, and a patch of sewers trying to run perversely against the natural laws...were the sum total of the deeds done by this comfortable and easy-going Board for ten years under its distinguished chairman....As a

speaker, Mr Smith,...would invariably have emptied 'the house' if as in the case of a greater council, there had been a comfortable retiring room. His harsh, grating voice, his confused style, and his 'damnable iteration', made his orations more than even a moderately refined taste and nerves not too sensitive could possible bear."

The writer of the profile signed off with the dismissal of Smith *"into that retirement where it is to be hoped his past labours will give him that sense of satisfaction of which his fellow citizens, though they do not reciprocate it, have no wish to disturb"*.

Shortly after the appearance of this article, Matthew Smith was summoned before the Sanitary Board for *"having a nuisance on his property"* and was told to close a house unfit for habitation and remove two middens. Having been convicted, he appealed against the £10 fine, promising to execute the required works to the Board's satisfaction. His appeal was refused!

Forthcoming events

Included with this newsletter are the booking forms for this year's Society outings.

Saturday 12th May : Capheaton Hall and Gardens

Saturday 9th June : Theatre Royal & Tyneside Cinema

Saturday 7th July : Kelso Abbey & Floors Castle

As we hope you'll agree, Charlotte has arranged an interesting variety of visits. Seats are allocated on a first come, first served basis **so book yours now to avoid disappointment!** We'd also like to remind members reading this via email that the booking forms are downloadable from the website (also available for other members who manage to mislay the original forms!)

These photos, taken by member Christine Hanley, show some of last year's visits to Eyemouth, Dunsgreen and Catcleugh Reservoir.



**Other
Events****Joseph Skipsey – a Commemoration**

Saturday 17th March, 7– 9pm. The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, Neville Hall, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SE Tel: 0191 232 2201

An event celebrating the 180th anniversary of the birth of Skipsey, the Tyneside Pitman Poet. The event includes Keith Armstrong, Gary Miller (Whisky Priests) and pipe player Chris Ormston, with readings from Skipsey's poetry and an account of his life.

**Notes &
Queries**

Many of these queries are posted on our website, occasionally anonymously. If you can help with any that do not give contact details or you are not on email, please get in touch with Mark Benjamin on (01434) 607746

1. Gloria Devereaux is asking about her grandfather, Ridley Daglish "we used to have a photo of him stood next to a Rolls Royce, he was in full uniform, and we're pretty sure it was at the Hydro. My brother had the photo, but has misplaced it, he is a car buff and says that the RR was one of the first ever manufactured and that would have been about 1907-1910, and he is pretty sure it was a RR Silver Ghost. He has emailed RR a couple of times and given them the information we have, but to date has not received a reply." If anyone can tell Gloria anything about the photo or her grandfather, she'd love to hear from you at petedevereux@googlemail.com
2. I am seeking information about the Reay family. In particular the siblings of Eleanor Reay, formerly of Haltwhistle and of 8 Alexandra Terrace, Hexham at the time of his death during WW1 (1917 Arras, France). George Reay's parents were Thomas and Jane and his siblings were John, Thomas, Isaac, Jane Annie, Hugh, Eleanor and Catherine. My maternal grandmother, Eleanor, named her first child George (born 1920) in memory of her late brother. ...Thomas' male line came from Haltwhistle.
3. Does anyone know anything about ... John Jewitt Lambert, married to Jessie Robinson and William Robson married to Mary Reay, they all lived on Tyne Green or Ridley Terrace and both were large families, John Jewitt Lambert was a Slater, William Robson a Saddler
4. Does anyone know anything about the serious mining accident that occurred at Acomb Colliery in July 1945?
5. Any information about Stanley Alexander Lyall who played for Hexham Hearts FC c1945, aged about 17, before going on to play for Sunderland.
6. Does anyone know the year that Bell & Riddle, chemists in the Market Place, ceased trading? Actual date would be even better, but the year will do!

And, finally

Amberley Publishing is looking for someone to produce a book on Hexham for their *Through Time* series. This would be a 96 page, then-and-now picture book, containing old photographs, each paired with a new photograph in full colour, to show how the same scene, or a related one, has changed over time. Each pair of photographs has a short descriptive caption. Anyone interested in this proposed project should contact Mark Benjamin at enquiry@hexhamhistorian.org or (01434) 607746