



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 63

**Editor: Mark Benjamin
(01434) 607746**

Summer 2012

HLHS Committee nominations

While the Society's AGM is still several months away, this is the last newsletter to members which will appear sufficiently beforehand for us to invite committee nominations, as required under article 4.3 of our constitution. The Society cannot function without an active committee and, as several members are standing down this year, we do need others to step into their place. Please consider whether you'd like to join the committee - we're quite a friendly bunch really and there's free coffee & biscuits on offer at all meetings!

Members may nominate themselves. Those nominated by others must have indicated their willingness to serve. If you are interested please let the Secretary know by phone (01434 601237) or by email at the following address: membership@hexhamhistorian.org

The Secretary writes....

I'd like to say thank you to the members for a record number renewing their membership so promptly, and welcome to all our many new members. It's good to see such a good turn out of members at meetings, and the number of visitors enjoying our talks. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find details of the latest additions to the

Members' Library on the website, and don't forget that if you have a query or question about anything to do with the history of Hexham, feel free to ring or write to me or post them on Notes and Queries.

A Photographic Archive for Hexham?

A project that the Committee has been contemplating for a while is the creation of a virtual photographic archive of life in Hexham over the 20th century. The idea is that members of the public would be encouraged to bring along their photos; we would then digitise them, returning the originals to the owners and adding the digitised copy to the archive. A new Lottery-funded opportunity for funding the acquisition of the necessary equipment has just been launched, so all we need now is for a Society member to take the lead in what could be a very exciting project! Plenty of support would be provided by members of the Committee so, if you're interested in leading the team or just in getting involved, please contact Peter Rodger at peter@anick.co.uk



Town Fair parade c1991

Promote your business

This year's Hexham Historian is in preparation and will be published in August. Once again we are offering members the opportunity to advertise their business, be it B&B, consultancy or craftwork, at the special members' rate of £20 for a quarter page. Contact Mark Benjamin on 01434 607746 or enquiry@hexhamhistorian.org for details by 30th June.

New on the Website

Children's Employment Commission (1842) Report by JOHN ROBY LEIFCHILD, Esq., on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries, Lead Mines, and Iron Works of Northumberland and the North of Durham; and on the Condition, Treatment, and Education of such Children and Young Persons.

The Hexham Bibliography A listing of all known books and scholarly articles relating to the history of Hexham, Hexhamshire and the Middle March; an updating of the listing that originally appeared in the Society's 2002 publication *Finding Out*

Hexham Sources A guide for the beginner into sources available in Hexham itself; in the public library based in the Queen's Hall, and the Border Library, based in the Old Gaol.

National Family History Fair Newcastle

The Society will have a stall at the National Family History Fair, to be held at Newcastle's Central Premier Inn on Saturday 8th September. As well as a plethora of stalls, there are talks on the National Archives, and researching Scottish and Irish ancestors. The fair runs from 10am to 4pm and entrance is £3. Further information from www.nationalfamilyhistoryfair.com. Any offers of help on the day

gratefully received!

BALH Local History Day

The British Association for Local History is holding its annual conference in Manchester on Saturday 16th June. Dr Paul Carter will talk on Records of the Victorian poor: Poor Law Union correspondence, and Professor Karen Hunt of Keele University will talk on inter-war women's politics. Tickets cost £25 and can be

obtained from www.balh.co.uk/events.php

Local History Month in Newcastle

Newcastle Libraries are hosting a series of events to mark Local History Month. Only some of the highlights are given here; all in the City Library unless stated otherwise. To book tickets or for further information, email information@newcastle.gov.uk or phone 0191 277 4100

Newcastle's Victorian villains: fact into fiction (Barry Redfern)

17th May: 2.30-3.30 £3

Men of the North (Keith Armstrong)

6.30-7.30 Free

Life, leisure and community in the lower Ouseburn, c1840-1940 (Mike Greatbach)

18th and 25th May: 2.00-4.00 £5

The great walls of Newcastle (Ken Smith)

24th May: 2.00-3.00 Free

The black pencil women (Ros Weston)

24th May: 2.00-3.00 (Newburn Library); 6.30-7.30 (Central library)

From Hot Pants to Adam Ant! (Hilary Fawcett)

28th May: 6.15-7.45 £3

Births, Deaths & Marriages Index – GRO (Staff from the GRO)

29th May: 9.30-12.00; 1.30-4.00 Free but booking essential

Fashioning the past (Gillian Stapleton)

31st May: 6.00-7.30 £3

Tudor fashion show (Julia Soares-McCormick)

2nd June: 6.30-7.45 £3

Lane Dykes – a conjecture

John Chapman

Many months ago, a question was asked as to whether anyone knew the origin of the name "Lane Dykes" which is the name of an old house, c1700, at the entrance to the Moonfield estate at the lower part of Dipton Mill Road. I made a tentative guess at the time, and have since pondered the matter as we drive up or down the road to High Shield.

In Northumberland, "dyke" can mean a raised mound defining the boundary of a landscape feature, whereas elsewhere in the country it often refers to a water-filled ditch. Over 20 years ago we were asked to inspect a raised feature in the garden at the rear of the Moonfield house nearest to Dipton Mill Road. Inspired by Raymond Selkirk, I hoped to find traces of a Roman road, but all that was found was a gravel surface on a raised dyke. The recent inquiry to HLHS was from the owner of Greenbanks which was originally called Lane Dykes Cottage. This probably dates to the early 19th century, and is just east of the aforementioned Moonfield house. At the rear of this cottage the ground slopes steeply up several feet, levelling out to a horizontal surface at the top - a typical dyke.

As one is driven down Eastgate, it is possible to observe this smooth surface continuing smoothly down the hill - through Gibson Fields estate and the site of the old War Memorial hospital, down to the vicinity of the Tap and Spile on Battle Hill, where the smooth gradient suddenly terminates with a drop of several feet down to the rear of the Battle Hill shops. The route up the hill likewise smoothly gains height through the grounds of Lane Dykes and onwards over the allotments until Elvaston is nearly reached. This small gradient is achieved by a wall along the side of the pavement which maintains the ground level at this steady gradient. The whole of the route from Elvaston down to St. Wilfrids road, can be followed on foot by walking along a narrow path, with a wall on one side. This has been called "The Pilgrims Way" from the surmise that it was part of a putative pilgrimage route from Blanchland to Hexham Abbey. The notable feature is the very uniform gradient of this path which runs beside the allotments, along the boundary of Lane Dykes grounds and onwards past Moonfield to end in Saint Wilfrid's road.

My conjecture is that the whole of this route was graded using one or sometimes two dykes to allow carts to carry stone down to Hexham from ancient quarries shown on the early ordnance map to have been along the Yarridge road, in the Loughbrow Estate. Current maps show a very straight footpath heading from the quarry site (which was landscaped smoothly by infill in the last century). It leads due north down the sides of the fields to a field gate just across the Dipton road from High Shield entrance. This route was too steep for carts to carry stone but could have been used to lower rock on sledges down to the High Shield level. The use of sledges was a common quarrying technique. Following the Roman hypothesis, I had, at an earlier date, probed the surface of this field path, opposite High Shield, and found that a hard surface approximately ten feet wide, and six inches below the surface, extended up the hill.

In 1895 there was much correspondence between a Mr Maughan and the authorities, asking for a supply of water to the newly opened Loughbrow quarry to feed a steam engine. The use of this engine was not specified, but it may well have wound a continuous rope drive for lowering laden sledges of rock while raising back the empties. This is pure conjecture but it was a standard quarrying technique and somehow many hundreds of tons of rock must have been conveyed down to Hexham. The upper part of the hill seems very steep for horse traffic. Letters show that Mr Maughan was using the stone in 1895 to build the terraces along St Wilfrid's road, and the similarity of the stone and its tooling shows that the early Elvaston estate was made from this quarry. The Maughan correspondence refers to William Bell's quarry, suggesting that these Loughbrow quarries were opened as early as the seventeenth century when William was developing High Shield. (see The history of High Shield in Hexham Library's Brough Local Studies collection).

A second route for carrying stone from the quarry rests on evidence which is no longer visible. In the hunt for possible Roman routes, Selkirk noted that the Dipton Mill road extends very directly from the Dipton Burn with typical Roman directness until it reaches the Yarridge road. Here it deviates three degrees to the east and goes about one hundred yards down the hill to Mount Pleasant cottage. If we follow this line of descent it follows the side of a stream (slake) until it crosses Intake Way at the point where the old entry gate leads to High Shield land. This route appears to be heading directly to Hexham centre. Probing in the ground along the slake revealed another hard surface about ten feet wide and six inches down, like the remains of a Roman track.

I arranged for Raymond Selkirk to bring his team of diggers to test the Roman hypothesis. All amongst us who had the "gift for dowsing" were able to detect an obvious route heading directly from our field gate to Hexham Market place. A distinguished professor who was a very skilled dowser confirmed our results. Complete frustration followed when digging down two feet to glacial clay revealed no trace of a Roman track. I have recently realised that this could have been a quarry route which extended horizontally westwards to Mount Pleasant and then proceeded directly along our "Roman" route to a field gate at the top of the Elvaston estate, to supply hundreds of tons of stone.

The hard track detected between Mount Pleasant and High Shield field would have persisted, as this field was outside the boundary of the mediaeval West Field of Hexham which lay along the line taken now by Intake Way since the 1753 Enclosures. It had always been used for grazing (on the moor). The High Shield field shows ridge and furrow indicating use for crops. Any track surface would have been removed when the route went out of use for quarry work.

My thesis is that the descent from the old Loughbrow quarry was by a steep slide route to High Shield and then by carts down to Lane Dykes along a series of carefully graded surfaces. After Lane Dykes the terrain required the construction of a dyke (or dykes) from Moonfield down to Hexham where the final vertical drop at the rear of the Battle Hill shops enabled rock to be lowered on to carts for carriage up to Elvaston or around Hexham. It may even date to the time when Hexham's defences were built. To confirm my hypothesis a certain amount of walking is required. This I cannot do and I must leave it to others in our society.

Book Reviews
Marion Prins

Aston, Mick **Monasteries in the landscape**
(Amberley Press, 2011)

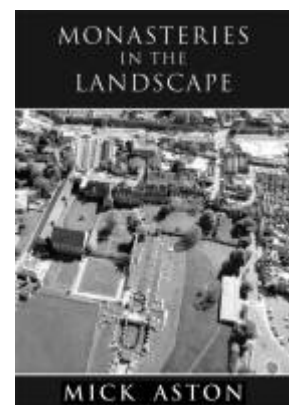
160pp, ISBN 9781848686861 £18.99

Coppack, Glyn **Abbeys and priories**
(Amberley Press, 2011) 192pp,

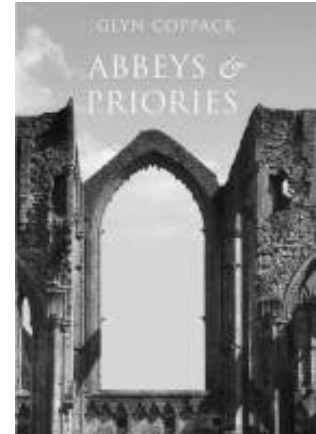
ISBN 9781848684195 £18.99

Does everyone remember their first visit to an abbey or monastery ruin? I certainly do. As a wartime schoolgirl at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, in Yorkshire, we walked along the wildflowered terraces to Reivaulx Abbey every Ascension Day. It was the beginning of Summer and much the best terms to be at boarding school in the 1940s!

These two books manage to flesh out so many of the aspects of the life that was lived in these special places, the great monasteries and abbeys, before the Dissolution in King Henry VIII's reign. They also chronicle the history of monastic life in the country, and its development from the earliest Celtic traditions of single cells in sea-girt places, such as Whithorn, Lindisfarne and Jarrow, to the rich endowments and lush pastures of the later years.



Mick Aston's book, *Monasteries in the landscape*, is immensely detailed, both of individual buildings and in the history of their development. It is also very well illustrated and you can look up anywhere in the country, from Alnwick to Whithorn for example. He also has a detailed bibliography.

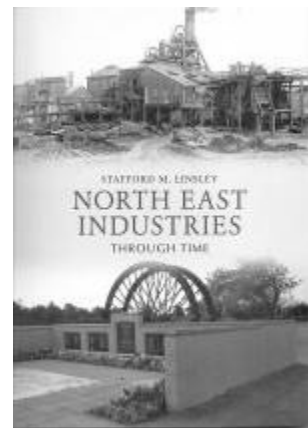


Glyn Coppack's *Abbeys and Pories* is more selective, less comprehensive. He tends to dwell on the archaeology of isolated buildings as they were and as they are now. But he also looks forward to new techniques, such as detailed aerial photography, which are empowering knowledge and discoveries at the present time and for the future understanding of this great heritage.

See you at Rievaulx, or Fountains, or Lindisfarne!

Book Review
Peter Lewis

Linsley, Stafford M **North East industries through time**, (Amberley Press, 2011) 96pp, ISBN 9781848686830 £14.99



Amberley is something of a publishing phenomenon. In less than three years it has produced more than 800 local and niche history titles. Of these just less than half are in a series with the generic title Through Time. Most of these are pictorial reminiscences of towns, cities and locations mostly suggested by their authors*. The format is consistent- well produced glossy, 96 paged paperbacks with approximately 180 illustrations and brief captions.

The latest in the series North East Industries Through Time is a brief sampling from the extensive collection of photographs by Stafford Linsley who, during his more than thirty years as Lecturer in Industrial Archaeology at the University of Newcastle, has probably done more to record, preserve and generate concern for industrial monuments than anyone else. He was born into a County Durham mining family and served an engineering apprenticeship. Noting that industrial decline is often accompanied by a growing interest in industrial heritage, he has collected images that show the past and present states of the sites. Most of the examples come from Durham or Tyneside. The sole Tynedale example shows images of Langley Railway Station in 1905 and 2010.

The subject of the book is heavily constrained by the publisher's rigid format. The topic is just too big to be covered in 96 pages. Usefully each location has been identified by their OS grid square reference, but frustratingly, there is neither a map of locations nor an index. It is, therefore, more a book for browsers than a source for scholars. And at £14.99 that is a high cost.

* I understand that Amberley have declared an interest in producing a Hexham through Time in this format. This would seem to be far more suited to the format and should be welcomed.

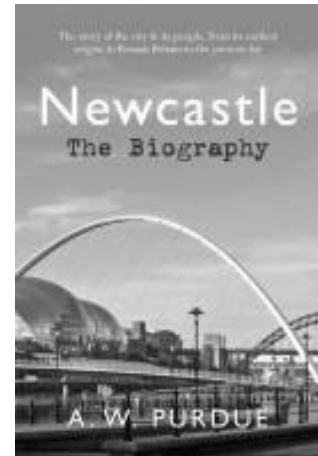
Book Review
Greg Finch

Purdue, A W. **Newcastle, The Biography**, (Amberley, 2011) 352pp, ISBN 978 1 84868 498 0, £16.99

This fine new study by the Visiting Professor in Modern History at Northumbria University (and HLHS member) of the physical, economic, political, social and cultural development of Newcastle over the centuries is based upon a formidable breadth of published material, including much specialised recent research. So much reading could have resulted in an unwieldy collection of facts, but in Dr

Purdue's hands it provides a solid foundation to a well articulated account and serves to highlight a number of themes that run throughout the history of 'the town', not least that its role as a 'party city' is hardly new!

Stress is laid on Newcastle's long standing role as a maritime, commercial and administrative centre at the heart of an industrial region, rather than as a mining and industrial city in its own right. In many respects the century or so after 1850 during which the city itself relied much more strongly on heavy industry is seen as an historic aberration, from which it has – with some pain- been adjusting to its more traditional role in recent decades. The author offers some thoughtful insights on how this recent period of industrial decline coincided with raising the tower of "Geordie identity" for the nation to see, and that its central turret of regional pride has defensive buttresses. This consideration of Newcastle's recent identity in a national context reprises another of the themes of the book, the long standing recognition by the city's leaders of their town's outward-looking role and importance.



Being placed in a broad national and maritime context gives additional clarity to Newcastle's development, in particular its vital trading and political relationship with London. The generations of the merchants who typically held Newcastle's levers of power from the medieval period onwards seem by and large to have been astute in their recognition of how they could help themselves by helping their national masters, whether through providing a bulwark on the dangerous border or feeding the capital's seemingly insatiable appetite for coal. These were merchants, natural traders, who knew the value of trying to look from their counterparts' perspective in order to craft the right deals, politically as much as commercially. Newcastle looked outwards to the sea and measured itself against London. Its rapid growth through the early modern period was surely also the defining force in the development of its own internal hinterland, certainly including Tynedale. Even though this is not within the scope of this work it is well worth reading by those with an interest in the history of the Hexham area because of the strengthening ties of trade and exchange wrought by the growing economic powerhouse down the valley. It is also a pleasure to read, with many well crafted turns of phrase, a fine set of historic and contemporary illustrations, and for the strong sense of affection that runs throughout the work, clearly a labour of love.

Hexham In 1938

In 1938, the now famous rambler, Alfred Wainwright, visited Hexham in the course of his long circular walk from Settle to Hadrian's Wall and back again. This excerpt is taken from his account of that walk, *A Pennine journey* (M Joseph, 1986). Our best guess for the location of the Abbey Café mentioned is the building now occupied by the Valley Restaurant – unless anyone knows better...?

"Then Hexham came suddenly into view as I topped the last rise and saw the road plunge steeply down the other side. And Hexham looked that rarest of oddities. A lovely town. It was below me, set in a wide valley at the foot of well-wooded slopes. The smoke of a thousand chimneys drifted listlessly above the house, merging in faint blue haze, out of which stood up boldly the pride of Hexham, its Abbey.... I saw hundreds of new houses, and many more in course of erection amongst the trees on the hillside overlooking the valley. This verdant stretch of Tynedale has become, I fancy, a rural retreat for the businessmen of Newcastle. They have chosen well.

I descended the hill. A speed limit sign appeared at the roadside, and this, to me, was the boundary. Past here, I was in a town again, and the country was behind me. Street lamps

now. A school, a garage, a row of shops. And people who looked at me with a curious interest....

I wandered about aimlessly for an hour or more. The older part of the town is interesting; there are archways, ancient buildings, fragments of ruined walls, in unexpected places....I came back to the main thoroughfare and went into a café for a meal. The girl who attended me spoke, not unnaturally, Northumbrian, which was another language altogether to me....Here among the folk of Hexham I found a language quite strange. The nearest approach to their tongue is Scottish. The end a sentence with a high note where mine would be low; they make you feel that they haven't quite finished what they intended to say, and have broken off sharply in the middle. They use words I have never heard before. All the time I was in Northumberland I never heard anyone say 'Yes'. They say 'Ah-ah' quickly, intoning it as I would say 'Maybe'; first 'Ah' low, second high and querulous.... The girl in the café answered 'Ah-ah' to all my requests; I asked for nothing that was not within reason. She suggested several times, until I understood properly, that I should try the Abbey Café for accommodation, and told me where it was.

So to the Abbey Café I went, and found it a high building which yet looks tiny, for it is built right alongside the Abbey. I asked the young woman if I could stay there that night; she said 'Ah-ah' and led me upstairs to a cold bedroom on the second floor overlooking the market place....

I stayed there half an hour, writing postcards, and then went out and along to the post office....I sat in the bowling green by the Abbey for a few minutes, and then walked through the delightful little park to the cinema....After the performance, I wandered the streets....I had entertained a slight hope that some young lady might invite me for a stroll, but none approached me, and after shivering at a likely corner for some minutes, pleading silently to be importuned by any one of the many who passed, I gave it up and bought a newspaper and made my way back to the Abbey Café.

The café was in darkness. It was a lock-up shop, and business for the day was finished. I went in and groped my way up the staircase. The building was silent, deserted. There was a pale light in my room from the lamps in the market place....There was no supper for me this night. Someone must have called later to lock up the shop, but I heard no sounds."

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) Barbara Hall writes: I am researching family history, and my family (Davidson/Davison) from Hexham appear to have lived in **Davison building** in the 1861 census. The address given was Bellman Close. Does anyone know anything about this building?
barbara.hall@sa.gov.au

2) Gordon Hamilton is researching the origins of an English longsword manuscript know as the **Ledall Manuscript** (Additional Manuscript 39564 in the British Library). The manuscript is dated between 1535 and 1550 and is only one of three Longsword training manuals in the Middle Ages.

"In my research I have managed to narrow the location of the author to 3 areas with the most likely candidate being in Dotland. A John Ledall is listed as 'able with horse and harness' in the 1538 Northumberland muster rolls. I was wondering if you had any information of any **unarmoured longsword fighting tradition**, training areas in the 16th century or any information on John Ledall so I have more solid evidence to tie him to the Hexham area.

Also if you have come across any manuscripts from the 15th/16th century that mention the terms any of the following terms, rake, void, proffer, rabatt, double round forwards, double round backwards. These are the terms mentioned in the manuscript and can be occasionally confused with a dance depending on how it is written.” gmanusm@hotmail.com

3) George Nichol writes: “A many times great grandfather of mine was John Whitfield, born in Haydon Bridge in 1655 and died in Hexham in 1703. John was a ‘Free stonemason’ and information from the National Archives would indicate that he and another Stonemason named George Jordan were responsible for repairing, and partially rebuilding Chollerford Bridge in the 1680s. Another entry encountered in the National Archives reads: ‘May 1687 - Mr. George Jordan and Mr. John Whitfeild, masons, in full for building the new stone bridge over against the **Roe Parke** wall, IQI.’ My query is - where is ‘the new stone bridge over against the Roe Parke wall’ and is it still identifiable?” gandjnichol@talktalk.net

Northumberland Collections

Digitisation - Restoration - Preservation - Research

~ extensive digital conversion services including:

- all photographic formats - including glass
- maps and plans - rolled or flat
- bound material
- audio - including 78rpm vinyl and reel to reel
- VHS & Betamax to DVD

~ photographic and audio restoration

~ 35mm microfilm copying

~ preservation materials available to purchase

~ professional research service - family and local history

~ presentations / exhibitions / design and binding services

For further details on these and the other services available please visit www.experiencewoodhorn.com and follow the archives pages or visit us at Woodhorn, Wednesday - Sunday at QEII Country Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9YF. Tel: 01670 528080
email: collections@woodhorn.org.uk.

When contacting please use promotional code COL3

And, finally...

**Special
Membership
Offer**

Local bookseller, Bennor Books, has acquired a complete set of our annual journal, the Hexham Historian, Vols 1-21 (1999-2011) including the separate index to volumes 1-15. Listed to the public at £25, these are offered to HLHS members for only £20 (not including postage if required). Contact Mark at bennorbooks@gmail.com, quoting

HHOffer, or call him on 07879263848. A one-off opportunity for new members to build their library of Hexham history – and the journals will look even better in the nice maroon binders available from our Publications Officer for only £16 (p+p)!

