



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 65	Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746	Spring 2013
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Thoughts from a Chair Peter Rodger

In the week that the Leicester car park remains are confirmed to be those of Richard III my thoughts turn to what we will leave to be discovered in four or five hundred years time and to reflect on how the quantum changes in available, and for many, accessible technologies enables us to be so sure of our facts. Remember that without carbon dating, DNA testing, computer modelling and the many forensic sciences developed in recent years, Richard of York's bones might have been swept aside and forgotten. Instead, a whole new interest in the subject is awakened and there are opportunities for the city to generate an income stream.

At a simpler level, the Society also reaps benefits from advancing technologies. I recall my mother spending weeks researching and writing local history articles and publishing them on an inky Roneo machine. Until the early 1970s that was about the extent of technological advance. Today a staggering amount of research material is almost instantly available through our computers and we have the tools to rapidly publish extraordinarily high quality material and to make it available to almost everyone. During the last few months I've been giving some old three and a quarter inch glass slides a new lease of life by scanning and digitally improving them so that they are of a publishable quality. It's easy to take for granted the overhead digital projector, casting high resolution images during our monthly talks; a few years ago we might have been fortunate to be excited by a 'magic lantern' show. The Society's web site (www.hexhamhistorian.org) is increasingly becoming a vital research resource as the Publications Committee find increasing amounts of interesting material to share with members. Do keep an eye on the web site, particularly the expanding members' library where we will be adding more material of both social and local interest and in the meantime I will leave you to ponder what our descendants may discover.

Message from the Secretary Yvonne Purdy

Thank you to all members who have renewed their membership and a gentle reminder to those of you who intend to but haven't quite got round to it yet! If you've lost the renewal form, a replacement can be downloaded from the website or contact me on (01434) 601237 and I'll happily send you another.

Gift Aid – an update

Many of our members 'gift aid' their Society subscriptions, worth £2.50 to the HLHS in respect of each single subscription, and £3.75 for each double subscription, each year. This adds up to a significant gain in our total income at no extra cost to our members. HM Revenues and Customs have recently clarified the terms of any new gift aid declarations to be made from 1st January 2013. While this does not affect the written declarations made by our members in the past, HMRC are asking charities to bring this clarification to the attention of its members. The important point is that the amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax you pay in each tax year (6 April to 5 April) must be at least equal to the amount of tax that ALL the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs you donate to will reclaim on gift aided donations for that tax year. If you believe this affects you please contact the Treasurer at the following email address: gregpfinch@hotmail.com or by post at Dotland Farm Cottage, Hexham NE46 2JY

New on the Website

1) Gloria Cadman's 1976 MLitt thesis, **The administration of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1843, in the Hexham Poor Law Union, 1834-1930** has now been added to the Members' Library. Readable in both PDF and Word format, as well as providing a fascinating picture of pre-Welfare State Hexham, this contains many listings of both Guardians, officials and paupers and is likely to be of great interest to local family historians. Following our appeal in the last newsletter, Patricia Ward has stepped forward and is working on a names index to the thesis listing the individuals mentioned.

2) The **cumulative index to Hexham Historians 1-22 (1999-2012)** is now available to search or download as a PDF. If anyone wants a paper copy and does not have access to the Internet, this can be provided at a cost of £2.50; please contact Mark Benjamin.

Where Wainwright really stayed!

The site previously suggested for the Abbey Café (Newsletter 63) where Wainwright stayed in 1938 has now been identified as having been the Albany Café (sorry, Peter!) - the Abbey Café was, as it turns out, where we originally suggested, the corner site currently occupied by Ashley Matthew, Jewellers and The Valley restaurant. A postcard from 1938 shows the ground-floor occupied by H H Telfer, Family Butcher, but the first-floor windows are clearly marked as a café. The second-floor windows are all open, possibly bedrooms being aired.

Another mystery solved!

Several members have come forward with suggestions as to the mystery word in Jim Hedley's letter. The consensus is that the indecipherable word is "pass"; the sentence therefore reads "*Hughes was brought before them to be removed by pass from the Township of Hexham to Ireland*". Pass in this instant being related to passport.

Hexham's Circulating Libraries

Sue Chapman is researching for a TV programme and would like to speak to anyone who remembers the commercial circulating libraries in the town. We know that Boots ran one from its premises on Fore Street and are fairly sure that T & G Allan's, late of Battle Hill, did so too. Anyone with any information on either, or any other commercial circulating library, should contact Sue at sue.chapman10@btinternet.com or by phone on (01434) 601743.

The Timeline Help requested

Hexham's timeline, available on the website, is an invaluable record of the development of and events within the town. We would like to link entries on the timeline to relevant articles published in the Hexham Historian for those interested in learning about the entries in greater detail – all we need is for someone to match them up! Although access to the Internet would be useful, it is not essential for this task so, if you think you would like to help us with this, please get in touch with either Mark Benjamin or Peter Rodger on peter@anick.co.uk Don't worry if you don't have a complete set of Hexham Historians – our Publications Officer, Ted Wall, will be delighted to sell you any missing issues! Or, alternatively, we can loan you a set to enable you to undertake the task.

The School Photo

Following our appeal at a recent meeting, Mollie Telford has identified the photo (a portion of which is pictured below) of the girls and staff of Queen Elizabeth Girls Grammar School as dating from June 1939. The staff members, pictured from left to right, are: Kathleen Veitch (Classics); Lily Barnett (Science); Maud Moore (Geography); Miss Ellis (Headmistress); Florence Idden (History); Margaret Clark (Mathematics) Phillis Duckers (Domestic Science & Art); Miss Wood (French); Kate Dickinson (English). Standing immediately behind Miss Ellis is Peggy Usher, whom Mollie thinks was Head Girl and who left at the end of the 1939 academic year.



Advertising Opportunities

Do you run a small business or club? We know many of our members do. If you would like to reach over 400 potential customers or recruits, both local and countrywide, why not place a small ad in the next issue of **The Hexham Historian**?

We've increased our prices slightly this year and Full page ads will cost £70, half page ads £40, and quarter page ads at £25. However, Members of the Society can claim a £5 discount!

Hexham Historian 23 will be hitting the streets in August 2013. Contact Mark Benjamin at enquiry@hexhamhistorian.org or on 01434 607746 by the end of July. Camera-ready copy is preferred (either JPEG or PDF) but Mark will happily typeset a plain text advert if you don't have anything ready prepared.

Events for the Diary

The newly-formed Collingwood Society, celebrating the life of Admiral Lord Collingwood, has announced its programme of events, some of which are listed here. Further details of the events and the Society can be found by contacting the Secretary, Tony Barrow at tnybarrow@aol.co.uk

Thursday 7th March: 10.30-15.00 A day of commemorative events throughout Morpeth town centre, organised by the Greater Morpeth Development Trust and sponsored by Morpeth Town Council, in which the Society is participating. The highlight will be the official unveiling of a bronze bust to the Admiral at the Town Hall. A series of talks will be delivered by Society speakers in the Town Hall and nearby Collingwood House will be open to visitors

Thursday 7th March: 19.30 Royal Grammar School, Newcastle. The 2nd prestigious Collingwood lecture, this year entitled 'Collingwood – a very private hero' and delivered by Max Adams. Free admission for Society members, school staff and pupils. £2 for others.

Wednesday 24th April: 19.30. HMS Calliope, Gateshead Quays. 'Collingwood the Gunner' – a talk by Andy Griffin, kindly hosted by the Tyneside RNR. Collingwood achieved fame as a gunner and set the record for the muzzle-loaded broadside which stands to this day – come and hear how it was achieved. Free admission for Society members and RNR personnel, £2 for others.

Wednesday 19th June: 19.00 Collingwood Memorial, Tynemouth. 'The Collingwood Memorial – a guided on-site talk' by John Grundy. Not the story of Collingwood, but rather that of the greatest monument to him. Refreshments in the TVLB Watch-house afterwards. Open to all, no formal charge, but a suitable donation to the TVLB to cover their costs requested.

Saturday 27th April: 16:40 Queen's Hall, Hexham. Talk by Anthony Everitt, author of 'Hadrian and the triumph of Rome'. A Hexham Book Festival event. For details of tickets contact the Queen's Hall box office or see www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk

Monday 9th September: Battle of Flodden Conference to be held by the North East of England Historical Institute (NEEHI). There will be a series of lectures on the background to James IV's invasion of England, the English response, the battle itself and the consequences for England, Scotland and the Borders. Further information can be found at: www.northumbria.ac.uk/floddenconference

“Awful Murder at Hexham”

Yvonne Purdy & Mark Benjamin

On the 31st of May, 1830, George Barnes married Ann Chicken in Hexham. George was a labourer and occasional pig butcher, living in Broadgates and, reportedly, “of a very morose temper and of dissolute habits”. The marriage was to have dreadful consequences.

The Northern Liberator of Saturday 16th November 1839 reported, “A murder, unparalleled in the annals of this town, was committed on Tuesday last, the 12th instant, by a person of the name of George Barnes, upon the body of Joseph Chicken his (Barnes's) wife's brother, about five o'clock in the afternoon. The facts of the case are as follows:- The father of the murdered youth died a few years ago in the room where the murder of his son was committed, leaving, by his will, his household furniture to Joseph Chicken and his brother, both minors at the time. Barnes and his wife, (the latter the sister of the two youths,) took possession of the house and furniture at the death of the elder J. Chicken, and acted in the capacity of guardians for the two youths.” The murder made the national press and, in the report that appeared in the Morning Post of 19th November 1939, it reported that, “Joseph Chicken [was] a tailor, about 21 years of age, a young man, we understand, of irreproachable character, and who had employed his leisure time lately as a Sunday-school teacher.... It appears that some years ago [Barnes] married the daughter of Joseph Chicken, the father of the deceased, and Mr Chicken, Barnes, and his wife, all lived together. When the old man died he left some small accounts unsettled; and these Barnes, very creditably to himself, discharged, in return for which he considered himself entitled to the furniture which belonged to Mr Chicken.” The Northern Liberator's account continues, “One of [the sons] subsequently removed to Manchester, where it is supposed he now is; the other, now murdered, was serving his time as an apprentice at Matfen, to Mr Soulsby, a tailor there, and was universally esteemed, not only by his master and mistress, but by all who knew him. He had contracted to marry a young woman belonging to this town, and the day on which the fatal occurrence took place, the parties had agreed and named the day of their marriage. Whether Barnes might suspect that on this event taking place, the young man might demand that part of the furniture belonging to him, or from what other cause the occurrence might have taken place, is unknown; but in the course of the afternoon of

the 12th, a quarrel arose, and a regular fight commenced between Barnes and the deceased. Almost an hour after the termination of the fight, Chicken proceeded to the house of Barnes, as is supposed, for the purpose of making matters up. On Chicken entering the house, Barnes, who had previously thrown himself upon the bed, started up and ordered the young man to quit his house. Chicken replied – “I should think not.” A scuffle now commenced between the parties, during which Barnes seized the poker and struck the ill-fated youth a terrible blow on the face, at nearly the same instant, as appears from the evidence, he laid hold of a gully, or knife, which was sticking in a sheath and plunged it into the belly of poor Chicken, who immediately cried out “I am killed.” This he did three times, and at last he cried out “send for a doctor,” and almost immediately expired. Barnes was seen by a young man to put his hand up to the case after the deed was done, as is supposed, for the purpose of replacing the knife. Dr. Jarbridge attended and used means to restore animation to the body. As he did not know of the stab he had received, finding all ineffectual, he unbuttoned his trousers, when such a sight was exhibited as none here ever saw; the knife had entered below the navel, and the bowels of the unfortunate youth were protruding in a most awful manner. Search was immediately made, the knife was found in the sheath, bloody,; the trousers, shirt, &c., examined and the knife found to fit the gashes made in them. The scene now baffled my powers of description. I was present. The cries of the female part of the family, on both sides, were heart-rending; here one was fainting, there another was frantic; all was confusion and grief and disorder. But there was one unruffled and unmoved amidst all, that was Barnes. I paid particular attention to him; he displayed no emotion, neither exhibited any signs of contrition; his countenance never changed, which surprised me greatly. But I was more than ever surprised when he filled and lighted his pipe, and leaving the corner where he had previously been seated, sat down upon the table with his victim in view and smoked it, seemingly with the utmost composure. Having done so awhile, he left his seat, and having forced his way through the crowd in the room, he helped himself to a pot of small beer out of a cask, which he seemed to enjoy with the most perfect sang froid. He was then taken into custody and conveyed to the House of Correction; here a storm of terrible execrations assailed him, but he regarded not that storm, he conversed with the officer who was conveying him to prison, and acknowledged he had done the fatal deed; but while acknowledging this, neither remorse, regret, or contrition, appeared evident, but he merely said, “it was a bad job.” This day an inquest was held upon the body of the deceased, before S. Reed, Esq., and a respectable jury, and after hearing the evidence, a verdict was returned against Barnes of Wilful Murder, and the Coroner issued his warrant for removing the prisoner to Morpeth for trial at the next Assizes.” The Morning Post account adds that “Mrs Barnes was not in the house at the time, but when she became acquainted with the unfortunate transaction she became delirious, and now remains in a pitiable condition.”

The case came to trial the following February and, from the lengthy article in the Spring Assizes of 26th Feb 1840, “Mr Archbold addressed the jury for the defence, and contended that it was not proved that the death of Joseph Chicken was caused by the means stated in the indictment, and that at all events the offence was committed under circumstances of provocation in the course of the struggle to eject the intruder from his house, which would reduce it from murder to manslaughter. His Lordship summed up, and the jury, after being some time in consultation, brought in a verdict of guilty of manslaughter. Sentence was deferred.” Unfortunately, we have been unable to ascertain Barnes’ eventual fate. The 1841 census lists Ann Barnes as living in Old Church, earning a living as a glover and, possibly as a childminder as a Joseph Armstrong, a “nurse child” aged 6, appears under her name.

(This story was found by Yvonne whilst browsing through old newspaper files in search of something else. If you come across any stories that you think might be of interest to members, please contact Mark)

Book Review

Sheila
Armstrong

Mason, Peter Ford. **The pit sinkers of Northumberland and Durham** (History Press, 2012) ISBN 978 0 7524 8094 7. £11.69

The author encouraged himself to write this book because of the history of his ancestors who, he says *"have been involved in mining in County Durham for three generations"*. He also points out his identification of very early pit sinking and even quotes from the Book of Job about pit sinking.

Therefore, this book is concerned with the history of mainly men who worked in coal and ironstone mines mostly in Northumberland and Durham. Many miners moved from Cumberland and South West England to this part of the United Kingdom. They gradually became so skilled that they were wanted in other parts of the world including even South America. Sometimes miners had to move their families many miles away from their local area and this was very stressful. They worked such long hours and became very fatigued. There was a lot of "stife" gas and owners and viewers had a great lack of interest in the health of their workers even though their skills were so valuable.

Mr Mason describes the very damp and bad accommodation for miners and their families - no indoor sanitation, no electricity even when it was available. For many years toilets were in the street .

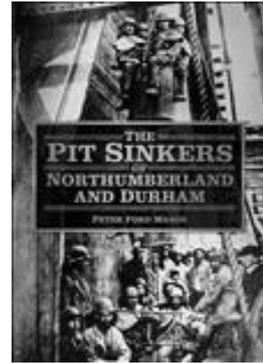
He also describes the terrible colliery disasters that have happened worldwide and many miners very young and old were killed. Many disasters are already known about in other historical and engineering works.

The details of master sinker families are still similar to people who are still alive, and people who live in the colliery areas of Northumberland particularly where I live. The author identifies some varied pursuits of miners and sinkers too. Examples he gives of these are hard drinking which was decreased by the rise of Methodism particularly in colliery villages; nice clothing and dressing up when not at work; colliery brass bands; dog and cock fighting; Blaydon running races 1862 to 1916; Northumberland Plate; Association football; prize fighting; local and national politics; celebrations of new pit sinking. Apart from Mr Mason's lists of mostly cultural interests, organizations like local orchestras, choirs and operatic societies sometimes associated with Co-operative Societies flourished and while they are less popular than they were there are still male and female voice choirs and brass bands in previously mining areas.

There are many interesting Appendixes about words that have been traced to different parts of the country. Examples of these are "hoy", "boring nagers", "freestone" and "corves". Perhaps "sappers" in India were originally miners. There is a street in Haswell, Douny Durham called "Sinkers Row".

This is an interesting book but perhaps too detailed. It could be better if it was divided into two parts - Northumberland and Durham and other parts of the United Kingdom and abroad. Also the print is small, but the photographs and drawings are very interesting and show how exhausted the sinkers and other miners became regularly.

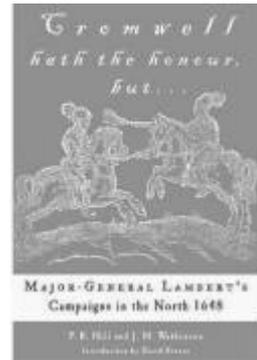
I can remember what mining rows of houses were like in many East Northumberland villages up to recent years. Many people did not get their houses updated well into the 1970s. This work was frequently carried out when mining families were still living there. This is from my experience rather than that of Peter Ford Mason. I am sure that book would be of great interest to many readers especially those who are older who had experience of mining villages. It could be too advanced for younger people but the art work and photography would be useful for them.



Book Review

Liz Sobell

Hill, P R & Watkinson, J M. **Cromwell hath the honour, but...: Major-General Lambert's campaigns in the North, 1648** (Pen & Sword, 2012) ISBN 9781848326545 £25.00



John Lambert was commander of forces in the north of England during the second Civil War (1648-1649). He was responsible for the sieges of Pontefract and Scarborough, and proved to be a popular general. He negotiated an end to unrest among his troops and played an important part in the Battle of Preston. However, his achievements in the lesser known north of the country were overshadowed by Cromwell's hold over attributions of glory, and he wasn't even mentioned in Cromwell's account of that three day battle.

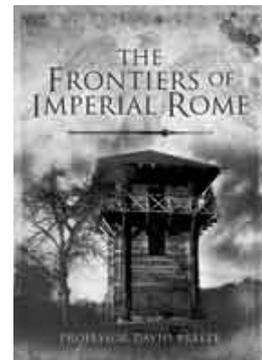
As a work of reference, this book is very valuable: Chapters 2 and 3 give a useful background to the state of affairs before the outbreak of war. There is a timeline and a glossary of terms, a series of maps, and short biographies of some of those mentioned in the text. The bibliography is extensive, and there is separate appendix discussing sources of information.

This book is minutely researched and well-written, but covers a very limited period of time. The general reader (and especially one such as myself, looking for indications of how the Civil War affected my own locality) might therefore find it very heavy going as something to read from cover to cover. Detailed day by day accounts of troop movements and supply problems can get very wearing to all but the most devoted Civil War buffs, but since this is the main theme of the book, it is unfair to criticise it for lacking what the authors have not intended to write about. I am the wrong reader, but I am sure I will find it a useful aid for future research.

Book Review

Peter Lewis

Breeze, David J **The frontiers of Imperial Rome** (Pen & Sword, 2012) ISBN 978 84884 427 8 £20.00

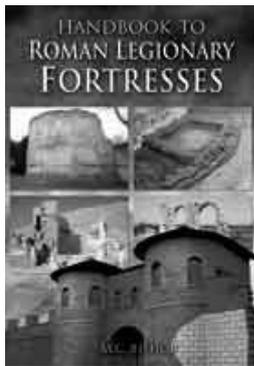


When I was young there was clear received wisdom about Roman frontiers in general and Hadrian's Wall in particular. The wall was built to keep out the Scots and the Romans built straight roads to stop the Ancient Brits hiding round the corners. There may still be a scintilla of truth in both these assertions but historians and archaeologists now offer more complicated interpretations.

Foremost among these experts is David Breeze. The former Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments In Scotland and successful bidder for World Heritage Site status for the Antonine Wall, he is an Honorary Professor at the Universities Of Newcastle, Durham and Edinburgh. He comes trailing clouds of scholarship as you would expect from a man who acknowledges that he was tutored by Eric Birley, John Mann and Brian Dobson. In this, his latest enquiry is to debate the precise purpose of the Roman frontiers.

He begins with a survey of the frontiers themselves whether rivers, deserts, mountains, the sea, marshes etc. plus constructed linear barriers, walls, ditches and palisades. He then discusses the questions of purpose. It seems unlikely, he thinks, that they were for repelling attacks by large armies. Rome preferred to fight in the open. It would suggest that frontiers were there to monitor and limit the movement of individuals whether brigands or no. They recorded and taxed the movement of goods. And more impressively they had a symbolic role as a statement of Imperial power, although the evidence of the extensive carvings on the Antonine Wall suggest otherwise. They don't face north to frighten the enemy but rather look south confirming for the Romans themselves the status of their crusade. – an early example of hurray for heroes perhaps? The author also notes that keeping Britain quiet required larger armies than elsewhere in the Empire. Building projects kept the squaddies busy, a suggestion that might resonate with those of us who did national service and spent hours whitewashing heaps of coal!

This book is very comprehensive, accessible to both scholars and a more general readership.
I highly recommend it.

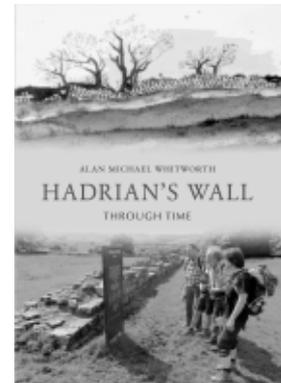


Bishop, M C **Handbook to Roman legionary fortresses** (Pen & Sword, 2012) ISBN 978 84884138 1 £19.99

Mike Bishop's book is an entirely different kettle of fish – or perhaps a different amphora of garum. He's a specialist in military archaeology and admits that he wrote this particular book because he needed a gazetteer of Roman legionary fortresses. He provides detailed drawings and descriptions, dates, units, garrisons, etc of some 85 sites. Those in Britain include Chester, York, Colchester etc. but the sites in the North-East do not fit his very precise definitions, judgments that other scholars might challenge. The book has a short 40 pages of text followed by a gazetteer of his chosen fortresses and a great many appendices including 50 pages of bibliography. You would need to be a specialist in military minutiae to understand this work, let alone use it. Perhaps as a sign of the future of publishing the book is complemented by a website providing information and aerial views of the fortress sites identified.

Book Review
Mark Benjamin

Whitworth, A M **Hadrian's Wall through time**
(Amberley, 2012) ISBN 9781445608945
£14.99



Compiled by the co-author of Saving the Wall (reviewed in Newsletter 64), this is the latest in Amberley Press' series contrasting modern photographs with earlier images of the same scene. In this instance the historical material is a collection of pen and ink sketches made by James Coates between 1877 and 1895. The 165 drawings were donated to Ackworth School, where Coates had taught, in 1948 to commemorate the centenary of his birth. They have remained unpublished until now, forming, as Whitworth says, "one of the most important pictorial archives of the Wall known to exist." As such, this book stands out from others in Amberley's "Through time" series as a significant addition to Wall studies.

And Finally...

We've been contacted by Prue Bishop who has a book dating from the 1880s that belonged to her grandfather who, in 1881, was the son of a Police Constable living at the County Court Buildings. A schoolbook, the book contains the bookplate illustrated below. To the best of our knowledge, Hexham's Grammar School was never called The Royal Grammar School and our best guess that this was a ruse on the part of the then Head Master to increase the perceived status of his school – unless any member knows differently.....?

