

# HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



<b>Newsletter 70</b>	<b>Editor: Mark Benjamin</b> <b>(01434) 607746</b> <b>editor@hexhamhistorian.org</b>	<b>Autumn</b> <b>2014</b>
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**Thoughts  
from a Chair**  
Peter Rodger

*"The Society continues to grow."* That's a statement I'd very much like to make, particularly as I know that our Membership Secretary, Yvonne Purdy, has an all-time ambition to burst through the 300 mark. In fairness, membership is very close to this magic figure and all it needs is a gentle push to make Yvonne very happy. As we approach the end of the Society's year, I'd like to ask you all to think about those people amongst your friends and family who might be interested in joining us in January.

We have recently acquired new committee members (to be ratified at the AGM) and there are some exciting plans for the next year and beyond. We plan to host the Association of Northumberland Local History Societies' Round the County Day, the concept of which is to introduce members from other societies in Northumberland, to the historical heritage of our town. Traditionally, this has taken various forms, including a number of lectures and visits or guided walks taking place throughout the day. Undoubtedly, this event will take much preparation and will offer many very exciting opportunities for your involvement. I believe that it will offer us, as a body, the chance to explore aspects of Hexham's history that we don't usually address.

Our monthly talks have, as ever, been excellent and as the season draws to a close with the November meeting it's good to reflect on the widening range of topics and speakers since last January. I know that from time to time there have been difficulties with the sound system at Trinity and that there have been some difficulties in hearing the speakers as a result. We have had long and protracted discussions over the summer about how to improve the quality and, as a result, have purchased a new, high quality microphone system which we are assured will provide a marked improvement.

**Dr John  
Chapman**  
**(1926-2014)**  
Colin Dallison

A long-time member of the Society, John was very interested in many aspects of life. He was awarded a degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge; then a PhD in Physics; he was intrigued by lightning strikes. John & Pam moved to Hexham in 1980, settling at High Shield. His *History of High Shield* is a very detailed work with many excellent illustrations. The author of *The house dater's toolkit*, he was very knowledgeable about buildings and loved exploring attics and cellars. John found pleasure walking around Hexham (he was convinced the Romans had been here) and enjoyed explaining its buildings; he captured this love in his 2003 booklet *A walk back in time: a guide to Hexham*. In that booklet he said, *"I had now crossed to the far side of the earth six times in my life, and Hexham was the best place that I had found!"*

John enjoyed travelling. He gave talks to both the Society and to the Beacon Club (of which he was President one year). He loved touring in Wales and Scotland and had been a keen hill walker, climbing many of the Munros. He and Pam would keep Burns Night, sometimes inviting a Northumbrian piper.

A keen gardener; John was generous in giving away cuttings and was particularly proud of the vine in his conservatory. He and his wife ran a stall at the Abbey's Christmas Fair for several years, providing many plants and pieces of holly. He was also kept busy tending his beehives.

John worshipped regularly at the Abbey and served as a steward and guide, making a recording of his tour around the Abbey for tourists. A special interest for him was Prior Leschman's chantry

chapel, particularly the stone carvings on the north side. John's knowledge and enthusiasm about the Abbey will be very much missed.

**Research  
Guides 2: Local  
records on the  
web – From  
A2A to  
Discovery**  
Ian Hancock

Many readers will be familiar with the National Archives' invaluable "Access to Archives" website (A2A), which lists the archive holdings of nearly all the public repositories in England. The website has not been updated for several years and The National Archives have announced that the service will be shut down this autumn.

All the data from A2A has been transferred to the National Archives Discovery website (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>), where it is now fully functional, so I thought it would be useful to review how this great resource works in its new setting. I focused on finding out about a particular place, but of course it is equally useful for tracing sources for the history of people and events.

The great value of what I will continue to call A2A is that it can reveal unknown or unexpected archive sources - for example a large collection of Clavering papers in Hertfordshire Archives, and Fenwick of Bywell papers at West Yorkshire Archives.

### **So how does it work in Discovery?**

1. If you know of a relevant archive collection you will now find the access to all UK public archives on the front page of the Discovery website - scroll to the bottom of the page to "FIND AN ARCHIVE". This provides an internet link to the local archive website, from which you can find their on-line catalogue.

2. If you are searching for information on a place you can simply type the name of the place into the SEARCH box at the top of the main Discovery page and browse the results. The search result gives a title for the document, sometimes a brief description, the archive repository in which it is found and the reference.

Clicking the blue coloured header of the document then displays the context of the record in the collection, with more information about the document. There is a way of delving deeper that isn't obvious - if you now click the blue coloured title of the collection, you are presented on the right hand side with a list of all the documents in that series.

To give an idea of the scope of the general search - Searching for "Hexham" brings up 9600 separate records from at least 15 different repositories. Searching for "Slaley, Northumberland" finds 178 records from 4 repositories. In both cases, of course, most of the records are from Northumberland Archives.

Faced with 9600 records you can sort the list by date or title under "RELEVANCE", and you can narrow your choice down to a single archive. You can also do a refined search from "ADVANCED SEARCH". e.g. Searching for "Hexham" and "Enclosure" produces 17 records from 4 different repositories.

The search for "Hexham Enclosure" highlights one of the big advantages of A2A for on-line research. It produces a reference to the Duke of Portland Deeds and Estate Papers at Nottinghamshire Archives. However, you will not find the reference in the Nottinghamshire Record Office's own online catalogue, which is only "work in progress". Record offices vary enormously in the completeness of their on-line catalogues and at the moment many rely heavily on A2A for listing their holdings on-line - there can be far more detailed information in A2A. It is always worth checking the local on-line catalogue, however, and Discovery makes this easy for you, by providing a link first to an information page about the local archive repository and then to that archive's website.

**Epistolae:  
Medieval  
women on the  
web**

Epistolae <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu> is an online collection of letters to and from women dating from the 4th to the 13th century AD. These letters from the Middle Ages, written in Latin, are presented with English translations and are organized by the women participating. Biographical sketches of the women and descriptions of the subject matter or the historic context of the letter is included where available.

Epistolae is meant to be a cooperative project. It designed to allow for future additions and translations of letters, as well as corrections to the texts or to the information offered. Some scholars and presses have already contributed letters and translations, and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged in the text. Users are invited to participate by sending material or inquiries to [jmf2@columbia.edu](mailto:jmf2@columbia.edu). Contributions, fully acknowledged, will be put online after review for accuracy and style by a small board of scholars.

**Wills on the  
web  
Yvonne Purdy**

The North East Inheritance Database is an index of Durham and Northumberland probate and related records pre-1858 held by Durham University Library. Familysearch.org now host all the original images (for free!!!!).

- (a) Go to the NEI website <http://familyrecords.dur.ac.uk/nei/data/intro.php>
- (b) Click on Simple Name Search and enter your name of interest, and list names
- (c) Select any specific name by clicking in box on left, or go top of page and click 'all'
- (d) Go to bottom of page and click 'view records'
- (e) From the details of probate records found, note down the DPR..... long number
- (f) Exit database
- (g) Go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- (h) Click on 'Search'
- (i) Click on 'Browse all published Collections'
- (j) Scroll down to 'England, Durham, Diocese of Durham Original wills, 1650-1857'
- (k) Click on 'Browse through 148,960 images'
- (l) Wait patiently, and pour a glass of something refreshing to sooth your stress while it loads.
- (m) Scroll down to your matching reference from North East Inheritance Database.
- (n) Ignore the 'script has stopped running screen', (I get it every time) and just click on the X in the top corner.
- (o) Your document should load.
- (p) Enjoy!

Tedious but absolutely worthwhile.

**Visit to  
Hexham  
Abbey  
Wendy & Chris  
Gilding**

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 33 members of HLHS had a most interesting visit to Hexham Abbey. The evening began with a presentation by Tom Kelsey which illustrated some of the many things in the Abbey which most of us walk past without noticing, or which are hidden from view, such as masons' marks, roof bosses and detailed carvings. He also showed pictures of artefacts which are known to have been in the Abbey, but which have disappeared or which are now in museums both in the UK and abroad.



After the presentation, the group split into 2 led by Tom and Chris Britton for a tour of parts of the Abbey not usually seen by the public. The Saxon apse below the chancel was revealed and Tom led his group up the night stairs to see the treasury containing the monks' medieval safe. Chris took his group to the Prior Leschman chantry chapel beside the high altar and pointed out the interesting features to be seen there. Following the tour, most of the group joined other members of HLHS for a very enjoyable and sociable meal at Vercelli's.

This was a very interesting and enjoyable evening and many thanks go to Tom for his informative talk and also to Tom and Chris for their tours. Thanks also go to Jennifer Britton for organising everything and to the Abbey verger Derek Iles for facilitating the event.

**Monteviot House & Melrose visit**  
Christine Hanley

By 9am one bright Saturday morning a cheerful group of members and friends were enjoying the coach journey northwards on the A68 through glorious Northumbrian countryside and over Carter Bar to the Scottish Borders and our first destination - Melrose.

The Coach park was very close to the magnificent Melrose Abbey so most of us chose to explore these substantial ruins before wandering into the town. There is much to see in the graceful architecture of this 14th-century Cistercian abbey church including the burial site of Robert the Bruce's heart, weird & wonderful gargoyles and the famous bagpipe-playing Melrose pig. Some of us even managed the circular stone staircase up onto the roof for a close look at the Bell tower and views across the surrounding countryside.

At 2pm we travelled a short distance to Monteviot House, family seat of Lord Lothian – better known as Michael Ancram MP. The house and gardens look down to the River Teviot and although the family acquired the lands in the sixteenth century the present house started off as an early-eighteenth century lodge built by the 1st Marquis. Additions and modernisations over the years have created the family home it is today. The enthusiastic guides who showed us round in 2 groups were very knowledgeable on the genealogy of the family and the artefacts which brought it all to life for us.

The homeward journey was broken for a tea & shopping break at the Woollen Mills outlet in Jedburgh - and we arrived back home by 6pm.

Grateful thanks to Jennifer for her excellent planning.



Photos by Christine Hanley & Jennifer Britton

*From a report in the Newcastle Courant, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 1833, found in the British Newspaper Archive.*

**Hart v Lyon (Special Jury) 1833**  
Yvonne Purdy

This was an action brought to try a right of way through a passage leading from the Market-place of Hexham to Church-lane, through the property of the defendant. The evidence was of great length, and various models, plans, &c., were laid on the table. On behalf of the plaintiff it was argued that the right of way through the passage had

never been disputed before Mr Lyon got possession of the property a few years ago, and that the plaintiff had a door in the passage, by which he could go and put in the shutters of a back window, which he could not otherwise do, without going round two other houses, a distance of about 50 yards. In reply, it was proved by the former proprietor of Mr Lyon's property, that the key of the middle door of the passage had for many years been kept in her kitchen; that she locked it whenever she pleased; and admitted through it only such persons as she thought proper. The right of the plaintiff to go to the market place through one end of the passage, northwards, was not disputed: but it was proved that former tenants of the house now tenanted by the plaintiff (from Mr Kirsopp) had been refused permission to go through the entry to Church-lane southwards.

On summing up, his Lordship said, the jury would have to consider with respect to the case made out by the plaintiff, whether the persons who had gone through this passage did so by right and not by sufferance, in which case their verdict must be for the plaintiff; but if they thought the people had gone through by sufferance only, that did not invalidate the original power of the defendant to close the passage when he thought proper. The jury retired for a few minutes, and then returned a verdict for the defendants.

**Book Review**  
A W (Bill)  
Purdue

Nicolaou, Maria **Divorced, beheaded, sold: ending an English marriage, 1500-1847.** (Pen & Sword, 2014) 191pp £12.99  
ISBN 9781781593400



The Liddells of Ravensworth Castle were delighted when their daughter, Lady Anne Liddell, made an advantageous marriage with led to her becoming Duchess of Grafton, but less so when she separated from the Duke and eloped with the Earl of Upper Ossory by whom she was pregnant. The subsequent scandal of the divorce case in 1768 was all the greater as Grafton was prime minister at the time. By contrast, there was no great sensation when a Cumbrian farmer called Thompson led his wife by a halter to market in Carlisle in 1832 and sold her to the highest bidder in a form of divorce recognised by many of the population.

These two cases, representative of the means of divorce open to those who sought to bring an end to unsuccessful marriages in England during much of the modern period, are among those described by Maria Nicolaou. She rather stretches her subject by including beheading for only Henry VIII ever had the power and the will to exercise this rather drastic option and, other than annulment, which meant that due to bigamy or lack of consummation the marriage had never been such, the main means of ending a marriage were a Parliamentary divorce, informal or legal separation, and wife-selling, for form of popular divorce sanctified, not by law, but by custom.

Ending a marriage was complicated by the fact that, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were so many ways of starting one. There was the official form of marriage by the rites of the established church by an ordained clergyman, but the temporary abolition of church marriage during the Interregnum had meant that for twenty years such marriages had been unavailable. A variety of other ways to get married, which were popular and semi-official, were, however, available. Clandestine marriages, which usually involved some sort of service performed by a man who at some time had been ordained, were often held in churches, such as peculiars or those in and around London's Fleet prison, which had fallen outside of the jurisdiction of the Church. There was also the option of a 'contract marriage', in which tokens were exchanged and there was an undertaking such as "*I take you as my husband/wife*". Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 formally ended clandestine marriages but failed to put an end to contract marriages which continued to be ubiquitous.

Parliamentary divorces were expensive and involved a complex process. The husband had first to secure a religious separation in a church court on the grounds of adultery, then sue his wife's partner for financial compensation for having, in that wonderful phrase, "criminal conversation" with her. Finally, the House of Lords had to see proof of the adultery. This process provided

splendid salacious reading for the public which devoured the evidence, much of which can be summed up as “what the butler saw” as it was usually provided by servants only too happy to tell tales for financial reward.

A complication was the claims of church and civil courts to have jurisdiction over these matters and the proceedings of the church courts working on the basis of anachronistic canon law led to curious outcomes as with the divorce of the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort. The Duchess counter-sued for an annulment on the grounds that the Duke was impotent and the marriage had never been consummated. Beaufort eventually responded by volunteering to undergo the medieval canon law test of virility. Retiring behind a screen, he rose to the occasion and then proved his virility to the courts!

Parliamentary divorces, due to the expense, were only open to the well-to-do while wife sales were an option for poorer sections of society. As Nicolaou comments, wife sales provide the strongest possible example of the “gulf between the values of the pre-Victorian age and now”. They had become rare when Thomas Hardy famously described one in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* but, in their day, seem to have been accepted by both men and women as a customary and acceptable means of ending a marriage.

The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 ended the control of Parliament and Church Courts over divorce and made divorce simpler and easier to obtain. Those who have read Lawrence Stone’s volumes on the history of divorce will find little new in Nicolaou’s account, but her well-written book provides an excellent, compact and accessible introduction to a fascinating subject.

### Book Review

John  
Henderson

Pengelly, C A. **HMS Bellerophon** (Pen & Sword, 2014) 304pp ISBN 9781783462407 £19.99

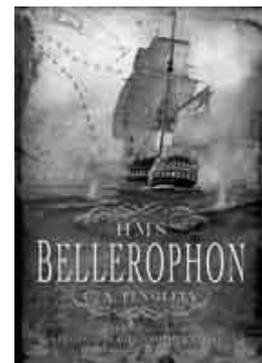
The biography of a ship is often more interesting than the biography of an Admiral. If, like the *Bellerophon*, she has a long record of service and a distinguished list of her story serves as the history of a war.

This, more or less, is what Mr Pengelly gives us in his very detailed account of the ‘Billy Ruff’n’, as her men used to call her when they could not get their tongues around her proper name.

The bicentenary of HMS *Victory* was commemorated in 1965. It is an odd coincidence that Sir Thomas Slade, her designer, also designed the *Bellerophon*, in the same year, though she was not built for some time to come. Like the *Victory*, the *Bellerophon* made her reputation in the twenty years of war against the French Revolution and Napoleon. Like her, her most distinguished service was as a unit of Nelson’s fleet at Trafalgar. Like her, she was painted ‘Nelson fashion’, that is to say, black with yellow strakes, her gun ports being painted black to give her a chequer board appearance. One of Collingwood (our local hero and much under rated in this book)’s division, she lost most of her masts at Trafalgar and her captain was killed on board.

*Bellerophon* record proves what an excellent investment she was. Her service ranges from the Mediterranean and the Baltic to the West Indies and the North American station. Her battle honours include the Glorious First of June, Trafalgar, and the surrender of Napoleon of Rochefort in 1815 and she had an honourable record of service in fleets commanded by such men as Howe, St Vincent, Cornwallis, Saumarez, and of course Nelson.

The details provided by her logs and by the journals kept by officers serving on board give us a detailed account of her life at sea and the conditions under which men served in her. The author is fortunate in being able to draw on two Journals, in particular that of Matthew Flinders, later the circumnavigator of Australia, who served in her as a lieutenant, and that of Pryce Cumby, who gives a vivid idea of the conditions under which the battle of Trafalgar was fought.

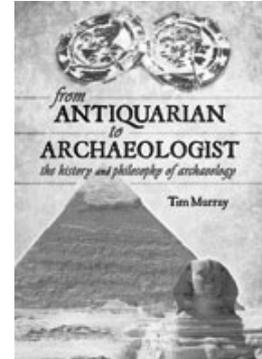


This fascinating book not only describes the contribution of this fine ship but the pivotal role of the Royal Navy during a period of great drama and national danger.

The Bellerophon may not have been saved like HMS Victory but her legacy lives on thanks to the Author's research and writing. It is only fitting that her figurehead should be preserved in the Victory Museum at Portsmouth and that she should now have found a devoted biographer.

**Book Review**  
Greg Finch

Murray, Tim. **From Antiquarian to Archaeologist** (Pen and Sword, 2014) 261pp, ISBN 9781783463527, £25 hardback



This is a collection of Australian Professor Murray's previously published papers on the history of archaeology, presented in chronological order of publication as if in homage to the careful stratigraphy of an excavation trench. It is possible that anyone already interested in the minutiae – and jargon – of archaeologists studying the development of their own trade in far flung corners of the world will already have come across the contents of this volume in the various specialised journals in which they once appeared. The book is unlikely to appeal to anyone else.

**Northern Voices**

Northern Voices is an online publishing venture aims to offer a platform for the views and experiences of those people living in the North East of England who are normally denied a voice and contributes to the culture of the region through a projects, publishing and events programme which celebrates its diverse communities.

Recent projects have involved a commemoration of the Hartley Pit Disaster of 1862, a touring show in Northumbrian churches, performing poetry on the beaches, working in the community of Spittal, profiling Whitley Bay's Spanish City and the Marsden Rock in South Shields, celebrating the Newcastle writer Jack Common and the Durham links of poet Christopher Smart, performing and recording with folk, pop, classical and jazz musicians and exhibiting with visual artists and photographers. Important projects have recently been carried out with North Tyneside Council, the Tyneside Irish Cultural Society, the North East Labour History Society, the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, North Tyneside Town Centres Management, Durham School and the University of Durham's Department of English Studies.

Northern Voices Community Projects attempts to be original and innovative in its programme and to seriously engage with local people and issues. Largely promoted by the poet, Keith Armstrong, topics cover the whole of the north-east but Hexham-specific topics include Wilfrid Gibson, Hexham races and the Riot. Further information about Northern Voices can be found at [www.northernvoicescommunityprojects.co.uk/](http://www.northernvoicescommunityprojects.co.uk/)

**U3A on the Wall**

Tynedale U3A has a group whose objective is to research, visit and walk Hadrian's Wall and reflect what we have found on our website. Although much of the project has been undertaken, new members are still welcome and can register through the website or by contacting Tynedale U3A's Secretary, Harry Shipley on (01434) 602360 [www.u3ahadrianswall.co.uk/wordpress](http://www.u3ahadrianswall.co.uk/wordpress)

**Fear of the French in 1759**  
Greg Finch

In 1759 Britain was in the grip of the Seven Years War with France. Fighting may have taken place abroad, far from the north-east, but letters recently transcribed by Gordon Carlton, as part of the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers project's 'Reading the Past' team, show that the French forces were seen as very real threat. The letters were written from Newcastle by Joseph Richmond, chief agent to Sir Walter Blackett. The first is to Sir Walter in London.

**10 June 1759** *Honoured Sir .... On fryday an Express came to Gen[era]l Whatmore for the regiment here to march forward on tuesday and wednesday first, so that this part of the coast will*

*be left quite unguarded wch surely requires the care of the government in no small degree. It's said Mr Duncomb's battalion of the Yorkshire militia are to be sent here if they can be prevailed onto march which would be a poor defence of our shipping coalmines and other property, which might all be destroyed by a descent of 5 or 6,000 men or less. You will have 40000 pieces of lead or more at Blaydon in a very little time which I am under no small anxiety about...*

It's clear from this letter from Richmond to William Robson, the steward at Wallington that Richmond and Blckett still saw imminent danger four months later.

**20th Oct 1759** *Sir I have sent you out to day by the cart 8 box of Plate by Sir Walters order which I doubt not your care of securing from the French if ever they should pay you a visit at Wallington, which I think you need not be under any apprehension of. Sir Walter wants all the small keys belonging to the house in London to be sent up immediately.*

With hindsight, of course, we know the fear to have been misplaced, but glimpses of popular concern such as these are a reminder that things looked different at the time. These excerpts are from of a long series of letters copied into the office ledgers, and now held at Woodhorn (NRO 672/E/1E/1). Many more such stories will be available to stimulate further research when the transcripts of thousands of these letters are made available via the project's website next year. More details to follow!

**Answers  
please**

1) Dave Pritchards asks: "I was vastly intrigued today to see in a display in the Moothall reference to the **allerkeepers** whose job was to look after the trees (principally alders) on Tyne Green, Hexham, and at the "quicksand ford".

I have found a reference to this dating from the 1660s in the 1896 *History of Northumberland* which suggests that cutting of the trees was licensed and that violators were fined.

I'm curious as to why these particular trees had this special protection, and whether the arrangement was specific to this area (I can't find reference to it, by this name at least, anywhere else). I'd be interested in any information you might be able to provide. Are you aware of any more details?" Please contact Dave at [dep@dendros.org.uk](mailto:dep@dendros.org.uk) or through Mark

2) Chollerton Parish History Society have been involved in an Archaeological dig based on a Bleachfield site in Barrasford for the past 2 years and in the resulting research we have found evidence of a thriving linen trade in the 18th century based at Cocklaw Fulling Mill with an expansion into a bleachfield at Barrasford.

We have evidence of Flax dressers etc at Morpeth in the 18th century and collection of linen from Hexham, Morpeth, Newcastle and even the Wear Valley.

We were wondering if you could help us with regard to any **linen trade in Hexham** in the 18th century. The trade at Cocklaw changes to wool manufacturing with the Saint family in the 19th century but we would be most interested to know if there was a tradition of organised linen weaving in Hexham prior to the mechanisation of the linen trade at the end of the 18th century.

**From Hexham  
to Carmel**

Members may remember an enquiry in last Summer's newsletter concerning a former teacher at the Camp School (Dukeswood). Chaim Simons has now completed his research and his work *Carmel College in the Kopul era: a history of Carmel College, Vol 1, 1948-62* has now been published. If anyone would like to see it, a PDF version is available from Mark.

**From Hexham  
to New  
Zealand**

We had a nice note from New Zealand: Anthea McKergow, a grand-daughter of the last named Henry on the family tree featured in the article on Hercules Burleigh in HH22, wrote, "*I was delighted to learn about Hercules Burleigh as my father was also a Hercules and had similar traits!*" I'm not sure I'd want to admit that my father shared anything with the original Hercules but, then, New Zealand is a long way away!