



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 73	Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746 editor@hexhamhistorian.org	Autumn 2015
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Thoughts from a Chair Peter Rodger

The summer has sailed away into history in just the same way as all our pasts. And as it does, we learn that we have to embrace change on a constant basis. Recently, we've seen the finger of doom point at the apparently much-loved bus station; even its landmark clock tower is to go, although the clock itself may make a re-appearance in some obscure part of the new facilities at Loosing Hill.

The Ropery will go soon; if it lasts until the demolition boys arrive. It's been designated as an Area of Outstanding Neglect for many years and some may be glad to see it gone whilst others may have never noticed it was there. Change is that which defines history and all of us are subject to it.

You may have stood by the roadside recently and watched the Tour of Britain cyclists pass by at speed. Blink and you might have missed it. Rather like our lives – everything we do quickly becomes history. We might be left with a photograph, a drawing, a remembered fragrance or just a hazy memory.

But HEY! Cheer up, it's not all doom and gloom and not everything is lost for ever. This Society is engaged in ways of preserving history for the enjoyment of generations to come. The Newsletter you are reading, the digital archiving of images from the library's and other collections, the forthcoming publication of a private collection of mid-19th century photographs, research work amongst the papers of local estates and much, much more are all contributing to the preservation of Hexham's heritage. And every time you take a photograph on your smartphone or share an experience or memory with a young person, or when you simply remember something your granny told you, is ensuring that history is not lost.

50 Years of HLHS

In 2016, we celebrate 50 years since the founding of a local history society for Hexham – there may even be one or two members who were there! In a special celebratory issue of the *Hexham Historian*, we are intending to include memories of HLHS from a collection of members. Already signed up are some of the major contributors to the *Historian*, past and present, but if you have any special memories to share, please contact Mark.

Do you remember 1864?

Ok, it's unlikely! However, for a forthcoming publication, we're trying to establish the location of this photo. The accompanying caption states that it is in Gilesgate in 1864 but, given that the buildings are clearly on level ground, where was it? Early maps show the name Gilesgate also being used for the stretch of road north from the junction with Eilansgate, now better known as Chareway. The shopfront, on the right of the photo, bears the name "T.N....Builder &..." Could this be an early site of the well-known Hexham builders, Newmans? A branch of the now-fragmented Newmans business, of course, still maintains a site on Chareway Lane. If anyone can confirm either of these ideas, or has a better suggestion, please contact either Mark, or Peter on peter@anick.co.uk



Dates for your diary

23rd November, 7.30pm **The Past, Present and Future of Ladycross Nature Reserve**” a talk by Colin Jewitt. Slaley Village Hall.

26th January 2016. **Innovation, Invention, Industrialisation: the Tyne & Wear Heritage Conference.** The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle. The conference is the first step in an ambitious project to engage local communities in the preservation of their local heritage. The keynote speaker will be Adam Hart-Davis. For more information, and to register for the conference, go to www.twhf.co.uk or call 0191 241 4523

The Dukesfield Smelters & Carriers Project – Final Report Greg Finch

A fine stone horse carving and milestone, the creation of Hexham sculptor David Edwick, now stands beside the Dukesfield Arches. It reminds us that, from this quiet leafy corner of Hexhamshire, it is 15 miles to the lead mines in one direction and 18 miles in the other to the Blaydon quays. The huge lead smelting mill which stood here for 170 years, of which the arches are the most striking remains, was at the centre of a network of busy tracks connecting the high Pennines dales with Tyneside. It was vital to the rise of the regional lead industry to national importance from the 1600s.

We knew none of this five years ago, when it was suggested at a parish council meeting that *“the Arches need a bit of attention.”* That ‘bit of attention’ culminated on a sunny June afternoon with an end-of-project celebration for our volunteers, including many HLHS members. Lord Allendale unveiled the milestone in front of the carefully conserved arches. 2015 co-incidentally marks the 350th anniversary of the construction of the mill. This kind of delightful discovery has characterised the whole project, and this year’s issue of Hexham Historian contains two articles that have come out of the project’s research.

What started with the precarious state of the arches broadened into a much wider ranging conservation and heritage project. We took the time to talk to a lot of people in 2010 and 2011. The combination of Hexhamshire and Slaley Parish Councils with the Friends of the North Pennines charity gave us very strong foundations for the work to come. What we planned might have been centred on the Dukesfield arches but it wasn’t just about them. We wanted to make sense of Dukesfield within the region as a whole, and in doing so find ways to involve people from right along those long-lost routes between the fells and Tyneside. So our plan was also wide-ranging in terms of events and activities. It was an ambitious idea but as we looked around for grants, it was an idea the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) liked.

On a chilly night early in 2012 at the Travellers’ Rest pub near Slaley we held the first meeting of our ‘Dukesfield Steering Group’ – Anne Porter, Liz Sobell and I from the Shire, Pat Wilson and Ian Hancock from Slaley, Ian Forbes and Pete Jackson on behalf of the Friends of the North Pennines. Gill Whatmough and David Fruin joined later in the project. By the end of 2012 we had tested out many of our ideas on a small scale thanks to an initial grant from the HLF. This included an intriguing archaeological dig, part of the North Pennines AONB’s hugely successful ‘Altogether Archaeology’ programme. That October inflicted both midges and snow on us as we dug, but an impressive number of enthusiastic volunteers came along each day, giving us courage to complete our bold plan for the main project. We submitted a doorstep-thick pile of application documents to the HLF shortly before that Christmas, the production of which still gives me occasional nightmarish flashbacks.

Looking back now, we have actually achieved far more than we dared to dream. Twice as many volunteers helped with the project than we had forecast, and contributed an astonishing 1,600 days of their time. Architect Tristan Spicer and stonemason Gary Simpson and his team ended up conserving chimneys, mill race and a wheelpit as well as the arches, thanks to the archaeological discoveries made under Richard Carlton’s direction. Our documentary research has made available around 6,000 letters and other items to support research into north-eastern history for years to come. Talks were given from Newcastle to Nenthead. Our project manager, Yvonne Conchie, and her team oversaw that wide range of activities and the production of several walks leaflets, educational materials, a touring exhibition and information panels and milestones at Killhope, Sinderhope, Dukesfield and Blaydon. The late, great Geoff Brooker brewed ‘Oresome Ale’, which once again linked up pubs along the lead road and captured imaginations with souvenir beer mats. David Nixon’s play has delighted audiences far and wide, and the ‘Heritage Cook-off’ in Slaley last year brought other new audiences into an awareness of the important role the lead industry used to play. We are delighted that these efforts have been rewarded by winning the ‘Love Northumberland Awards Coast and Countryside

Project of the Year' award for 2015, and to have received national recognition by being shortlisted for Historic England's Heritage Angels award for industrial buildings.

What matters most is that people have come from along the length of the lead road –and beyond- to meet, contribute, learn and have fun. We are very grateful to everyone that has helped. Together we have learned much about this important lost industry. The future of a much-loved Shire landmark is now secure, and will carry on inspiring people to ponder who has been here before, what they achieved and on the inevitability of change in even apparently 'timeless' quiet places.

The full story is available on the project website at www.dukesfield.org.uk. HLHS has been one of the bodies providing financial support to the project. This continues in the form of a grant to the 'Reading the Past' documentary transcription group, which is still adding material to the free online research archive 'Dukesfield Documents'.

Trinity House outing
Chris Britton

Trinity House, Newcastle, situated in Broad Chare just off The Quayside, is not open to the casual tourist, so 22 members went on an organised tour. After gathering in the entrance hall, which is presided over by the 'Summoner' and adorned with strange stuffed and tarred sea creatures, we set off on our guided tour led by volunteer guide David Watts.



Trinity House was set up in the 16th Century to assist in pilotage and other safety measures on the Tyne, gradually extending its reach along most of the coast from Northumberland down into Yorkshire. It also had charitable and educational aims for mariners and their families. It still has charitable aims, but its original purposes have all since been ceded to other national bodies.

The Banqueting Room has a beautiful painted plaster ceiling, with a ship at its centre surrounded by a compass rose. The walls, floor to ceiling, are panelled in mahogany and hung with a number of large paintings of old sea battles. Old crown glass in the windows gives a wavy view of the courtyard, and is etched in places with names of previous decorators – a form of advertising graffiti!

The Boardroom, hung with more paintings of a maritime nature, is dominated by a huge painting from the School of Rubens depicting the allegorical representation of the four main continents, and also by a huge 'prisoner of war' ship model carved from beef and mutton bones. The Master's Room was more intimate with a run of large glass fronted bookcases along one wall full of maritime journals and books by famous explorers. However, one of these proved to be a hidden door leading into the chapel, the oldest part of the building. Refitted over the centuries, the pews, whilst looking good, proved rather uncomfortable!

Hesleyside outing
Caroline Freeman

On a glorious June evening we met to be shown around Hesleyside Hall in the North Tyne valley. The surrounding parkland, an early commission for local talent Capability Brown, looked idyllic, although the site was



originally chosen for its boggy nature, to deter rival Border reiving clans. The family of our very welcoming hosts and guides, William and Anna Charlton, have inhabited Hesleyside continuously since 1343, when it was just a defensive pele tower built on land granted by King David of Scotland in 1135. We were told entertaining but blood-thirsty tales of Charltons feuding with rival reiving clans, and shown the actual spur used in William Bell Scott's painting 'The Spur in the Dish'. The magnificent house we now see was added to the pele tower in three stages – hence the 3 front doors! – in the 17th and 18th centuries, being completed in 1800 with a classic Georgian front by architect William Newton, who also designed the Theatre Royal in Newcastle.

Inside the house, our tour of several beautifully decorated and furnished rooms was enlivened by the stories of the characters depicted in the family portraits. The fact that, unusually, the estate has often

been handed-down through the female line has helped keep Charltons in continuous occupation. So has some strategic inter-marrying with other wealthy Northumbrian families such as Swinburnes and Fenwicks, and the occasional rich American! We ended our tour in the intimate private chapel, converted from a bedroom in 1838 when the family built St Oswald's Church in Bellingham for the rest of the local community. In earlier times the Charltons' Catholicism necessitated a priest-hole in the house, and they were involved in planning Jacobite uprisings, including connections with the Radcliffes of Dilston. However one ancestor converted to Protestantism – for a year! – in order to become High Sheriff of the county. This pragmatic streak is now evident in the way the family is diversifying – offering luxury B&B in the main house, glamping in shepherds' huts in the park, hosting weddings and guided tours – in order to meet the huge costs of maintaining an historic house. Many thanks to our hosts, and to Jennifer Britton for organising a most interesting and enjoyable tour.

Auckland Castle & Weardale outing
Margery Wylie

It was a lovely morning for our trouble-free pleasant trip to Auckland Castle where we arrived at 10:25 a.m., according to the huge impressive clock on the outer gate. Walking past a beautiful walnut tree surrounded by a circle of white roses we entered the Castle for our guided tour. We first saw the large hall before going into the very impressive Chapel which was in earlier times the dining hall (a very long way from the kitchens). From there we went upstairs to the throne room containing a magnificent wooden throne before seeing the gallery specially built nearly 300 years ago to display the famous Spanish pictures of the 12 sons of Jacob. A small room leading off contained a comprehensive collection of photographs and silver relating to Bishop Auckland's football team's glorious past. The Castle was inhabited by the Prince Bishops and then the Bishops of Durham for 900 years, but was sold to Mr Jonathan Ruffer some 5 years ago. He intended to buy the Spanish pictures but on seeing where they are displayed, decided to buy the Castle as well, and now has imaginative plans for its future as part of the community of Bishop Auckland and further afield, including other fine buildings in the town and Binchester Roman Fort. At present, the cafe is in the library, but there were picnic tables and chairs in the grounds and miles of beautiful walks through what had been a grand deer park for the Prince Bishops and friends. The oldest walled garden in the North of England, now waste ground, is being restored by apprentice bricklayers, gardeners and so on and is viewed from the raised driveway into the Castle.



After lunch it was an easy ride up the Wear Valley to the Wear Valley Museum at Ireshopeburn where we had a short interesting talk in the High House Chapel about John Wesley and the early Methodists who became very numerous after Wesley's several visits to the area. The visit included a walk round the two small rooms comprising the Museum, packed with household items and clothes dating from approximately 100 years ago, and some of which were quite familiar to us!

Help please!

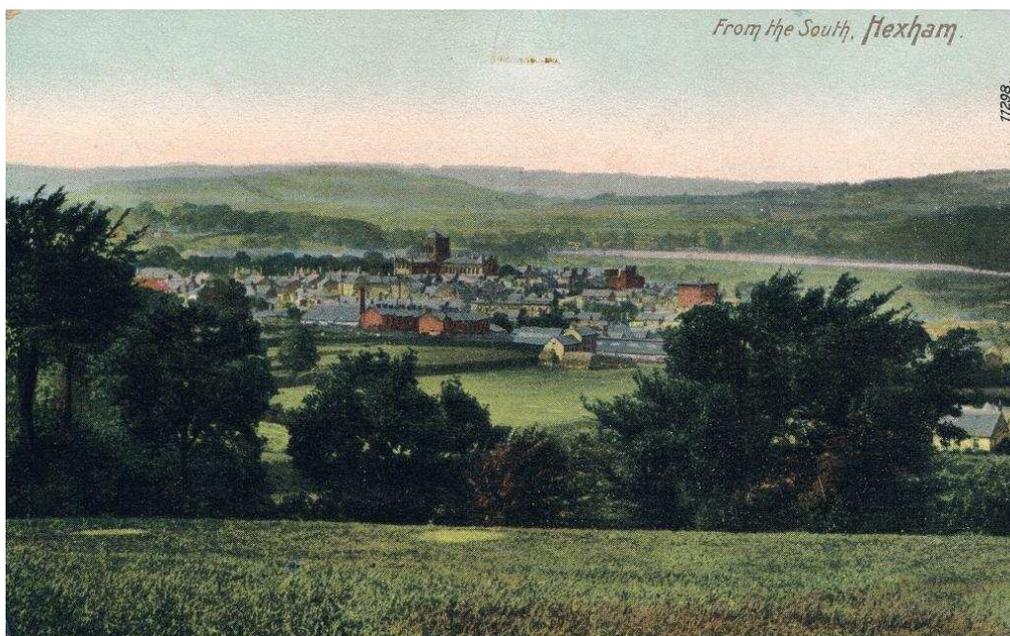
1. The **Voices & Choices Project** (see last newsletter) is looking for volunteer stewards for its exhibition which will be in the Abbey from 7th-20th November. Anyone willing to fill a 2-hour slot or two should contact Caroline Westgate on (01434) 604747 or caroline@quatrebras.co.uk
2. Pat Benson (nee Chamberlain) asks: *"I was born and brought up in Hexham and I am very interested in finding out about the house where I lived originally. The house was called **The White House, Alemouth road** and in the 40's was let out in rooms. Could you please let me know where I could find out this information and plans of this house. I remember quite a bit about the house and the people who rented rooms but it is specific information about the placement of rooms that I am keen to discover. We lived there as a family until 1949 when we were given a council house at Peth Head."* Contact Pat at nextmove@talk21.com or through the Editor
3. Via website: In researching **WW1 Prisoner-of-War camps in Northumberland**, I have found that only two are officially listed for the 1914-18 period, namely: 1. *Riding Mill, Slayley P.O.*

(presumably Post Office), and 2. *1st Northern General Hospital, Newcastle*. I understand that the internees were sent out to work on local farms and the like, also possibly delivering post.

I would be most grateful for any information relating to either of these establishments, especially any lists of internees that might still exist or whereabouts of same. All responses will be avidly received and acknowledged. Kind regards, Charles (If anyone has any information for Charles, please respond via the editor)

Found in Exeter!

Whilst browsing in a bookshop in his home town of Exeter, Society member Greg Finch came across this hand-tinted postcard of Hexham. Captioned "From the South" (in more than one sense!), it seems likely to have been taken from Fellside.



Produced by a German company, it bears a ½d stamp, which dates it from before WW1 as the postage rate went up in 1918 and, as Greg says, it seems unlikely that we'd be importing postcards from Saxony during the conflict! Can anyone date it more accurately?

Scandal at Chillingham Ian Hancock

A few months ago your editor acquired a handsome leather-bound book published in 1710 with the snappy title *Several Reports Presented to the House of Commons by the Commissioners for Taking and Stating the Debts due and growing due to Scotland by way of Equivalent*.* As a review of the economic implications of the union between England and Scotland the book has a good

deal of relevance to contemporary politics. However, this particular copy incidentally brought to light a forgotten Northumberland story. (The book is currently for sale. If you are interested in acquiring it, please contact Mark at bennorbooks@gmail.com or on the phone number above)

The owner of the book between 1750 and 1780, Lancelot Burton of Side House, Knarsdale, seems not to have had much enthusiasm for constitutional history; he had used blank spaces on the pages for making apparently random notes on topics that caught his interest. One of these was *An excellent letter, written by Archbishop, then Dean Tillotson, to Lady Henrietta Berkely, after her seduction by Lord Grey, in the year 1682*. The Lord Grey in question was Ford Grey, 3rd Baron Grey of Wark, 1st Earl of Tankerville, whose family seat was Chillingham Castle. Lady Henrietta was the younger daughter of the 9th Baron Berkeley and sister of Ford Grey's wife Mary Berkeley. In 1682, Grey was prosecuted for the seduction of his sister-in-law Henrietta, though in the course of the trial it became clear that Henrietta had been an enthusiastic and far from innocent partner in an extended secret affair with Grey. When the affair was discovered, Henrietta fled to her lover in London and her father offered a reward of £200 for information on her whereabouts. The trial was a cause celebre, the proceedings published in full in *The Trial of Ford Lord Grey* in 1716 and in *A collection of the most remarkable and interesting trials*, R.Snagg, 1775 (both available to read in Google Books). Macauley

described the extraordinary events that followed: 'When the court rose Lord Berkeley called on all his friends to help him to seize his daughter. The partisans of Grey rallied round her. Swords were drawn on both sides; a skirmish took place in Westminster Hall; and it was with difficulty that the Judges and tipstaves parted the combatants'. There was further uproar when out of the blue Henrietta produced a hitherto unheard of husband and marriage certificate, putting her out of legal reach of her father.

For reasons that are not clear, the lawsuit was not proceeded with any further. However, less than a year later Grey was convicted and imprisoned for treason. He had friends in high places and was released within a few months, when he fled to the Netherlands taking his mistress, Lady Henrietta Berkeley, and the man alleged to be her husband with him. They returned to England in 1695 when Grey became Lord Tankerville, but Grey died in 1701. Henrietta died in obscurity in Kent in 1706; the probate documents describe her as unmarried.

The letter reads as follows:

Though I have found by experience that good counsel is for the most part cast away upon those who have plunged themselves so deep into a bad course, as, to my grief and amazement I understand your Ladyship has done; yet the compassion I have for you, whom I look upon as one of the greatest objects of pity in this world, will not suffer me to leave any means untried that may conduce to your recovery out of that wicked and wretched condition in which you are; and therefore I beg of you, for God's sake and your own, to give me leave plainly to represent to you the heinousness of your fault, with the certain and dismal consequences of your continuance in it. and it is of that heinous nature as to be, for aught I know, without example in this or any other christian nation, and hath in it all possible aggravations of guilt towards God, of dishonour to yourself, of a most outrageous injury and affront to your sister, of reproach and stain to your family, of most cruel ingratitude to as kind parents as any child ever had, of which I am a witness, as I have been since, of the deep wound and affliction you have given them, to that degree, as would grieve the heart of a stranger, and ought surely to make a much deeper impression on you, their child, who have been the cause of it.

Consider it, as you will answer it at the judgement of the great day; and now you have done what you can to ruin your reputation, think of saving your soul, and do not, to please yourself or any body else for a little while, venture to be miserable for ever, as you will most certainly be, if you go on in this course.

Nay, I doubt not but you will be very miserable in this world; not only from the severe reflections of your own mind, but from the distress you will reduce to, when after a while you will in all probability be despised & hated; and forsaken by him for whose sake you have made yourself odious to all the world.

Before this happens, think of reconciling yourself to God, and to your best friends under him, your parents, of whose kindness and tenderness you have had that experience that you have little reason to fear their cruelty and rigour.

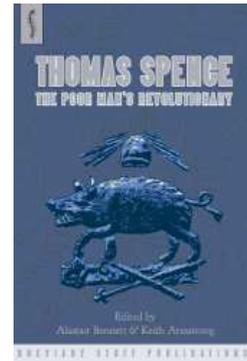
Despise not this advice, which is now tendered to you out of great charity and good will; and I pray God it may be effectual to bring you to repentance, and a better mind.

*I have but one thing more to beg of you, that you would be pleased by a line or two to let me understand that you have read and considered this letter from, Madam, Your Ladyship's most faithful and humble servant,
Jo' Tillotson*

Burton seems to have had an interest in the moral welfare of fallen women - copied on the same page is the petition of a widow from Knarsdale, identified as IH, to the Hexham Quarter Sessions, for a maintenance order against the father of her illegitimate 3 year old child.

Book Review
Helen
Rutherford

Bonnett, Alastair & Armstrong, Keith – eds. **Thomas Spence, the Poor Man's Revolutionary** (Breviary Stuff Pubs, 2015) £15.00 ISBN 978 0 9570005 9 9



On the Quayside in Newcastle, at the entrance to an undistinguished group of 1980s houses, there is a plaque on the wall dedicated to Thomas Spence, the Newcastle born radical, utopian writer and land reformer. Spence, as this new collection explains, whilst little known today, was “synonymous with ultra-radical opinion”. He is described as “an angry man, a revolutionary and an insurrectionist...anchored by humanitarian concerns and a wide-ranging omnivorous interest in the betterment of his fellows” and this book, published two hundred years after his death, aims to explain his legacy and put him in his rightful place in the history of radicalism.

The volume includes a selection of essays covering aspects of Spence's politics and also a number of his writings, including a newly discovered version of his lecture to the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle in 1775 entitled *Property in Land Every One's Right*. As a result of “hawking” copies of this speech around Newcastle, Spence was thrown out of the Lit and Phil. Whilst it was acceptable to discuss controversial views within the walls of the Lit and Phil, disseminating such views in the streets was a different matter.

Spence was born in 1750 in Newcastle upon Tyne but, in approximately 1788, he moved south to London and set up a bookshop in Chancery Lane. The first record of his presence in the capital is his arrest in 1792 for selling copies of Paine's *Rights of Man*.

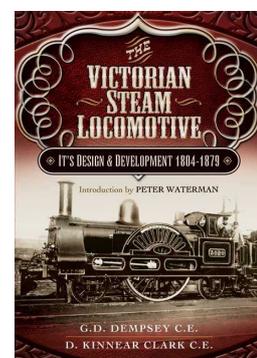
The essays are a comprehensive and fascinating exploration of Spence's philosophy including his vision for a utopian society: “Crusonia” (named after Robinson Crusoe) or “Spensonia”. As may be expected there is a thorough examination of Spence's views, including his links to Paine, and his ideas about rights to property. In addition there are two chapters, by Robert Rix and Joan Beal, looking at spelling reform and the use of the English Language. As Rix explains, in addition to planning to redistribute the ownership of land, Spence wanted to “redistribute the power of language”. He published a dictionary, which was sold from his school on the Quayside, in an attempt to introduce a phonetic spelling system to facilitate writing by getting rid of misleading spelling. Spence believed that proper language use led to greater social mobility.

Spence's writings form a key part of the book and enable the reader to consider the source material alongside the commentaries. The book opens with an essay arising from an incident in Hexham Gathering Nuts and the second half of the book reproduces a number of items, including poems and songs. There is also an interesting set of photographs of propaganda tokens minted by Spence in the late eighteenth century.

This book is a very engaging read and is well worth the cover price to learn more about this now, overlooked local radical and would-be revolutionary. As the plaque in Broad Chare states “Dare to be Free”.

Book Review
David Crockett

Dempsey, G D & Clark, D K. **The Victorian steam engine: its design and development, 1804-1879** (Pen & Sword, 2015) ISBN 9781473823235 £19.99



When I collected the book I said that it felt right and looked right. Having read it, it is right. Although it has been abridged by D K Clark for this 2015 edition, the original C19th prose and the many illustrations, mainly drawings, add to the interest. The book is divided into 2 parts, 4 sections and 26 chapters. Part I is a history to 1879 of locomotives and descriptions of some and their parts. Part II, Section I is a more detailed description of the various components and illustrations of representative locomotives from ‘Puffing Billy’ of 1813 to ‘Pevensey’, a modern locomotive when the book was written. Both ‘Puffing Billy’ and a sister to ‘Pevensey’ – ‘Gladstone’ are in the National Railway Museum in York. The only comment is that the caption for ‘Rocket’ describes it as 2-2-0 tender locomotive but it is 0-2-2 wheel arrangement.

Part II, Section II is more descriptions along with locomotive diagrams (basic outline drawings) of a range of ‘English types of Locomotives’. These go into great detail including information on various

boiler and firebox styles and the evolution of the express locomotive. There is a long description of the Stirling 8' Singles of the Great Northern Railway including what appears to be direct quotations from the designer, Patrick Stirling. He compared the locomotive with one large driving wheel with one with four coupled driving wheels – the boiler and cylinders being identical though the four coupled one has smaller diameter, 6'6", driving wheels. The single was faster on trains of the day but towards the end of the century the newer, heavier coaches made coupled locomotives with more of the locomotives' weight available for adhesion the order of the day.

Fig 44 is a diagram of a Fairlie locomotive with a single boiler and 45 a double Fairlie of the type still working on the Festiniog Railway in North Wales. On this locomotive there are two boilers joined by one firebox on a rigid frame with the wheels and cylinders on separate pivoted bogies.

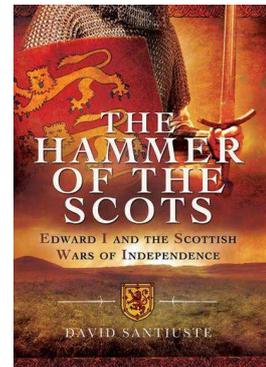
Section III is a comprehensive account, with technical drawings, dimensions, weights, steam pressure and various calculations of a type of locomotive constructed by Messrs Beyer Peacock & Co of Manchester for the South-Eastern Railway of Portugal. The layout is still that of Robert Stephenson's 'Patentee' design of 1838 though bigger and more powerful. This section could be used to build a replica – any offers?

A very good read for anyone interested in the history and development of steam locomotives up to 1879 and as Pete Waterman writes in his forward – "This book plots the development of the Steam Locomotive and is a book I recommend to all who love them or wish to work on their preservation. A fascinating read"

Book Review
Mark
Runnacles
Goodridge

Santiuste, David. **The Hammer of the Scots: Edward I and the Scottish Wars of Independence** (Pen & Sword, 2015) ISBN 1781590125 £25.00

David Santiuste delivers an interesting look at the first phase of the Scottish wars of independence. He is focusing on the period where Edward I waged war against Scotland until his death so while there is many a mention of the various Robert Bruce's it stops short of Bannockburn, something I'm sure Edward II wished sometimes too. Santiuste is showing the signs of an author getting into his stride with this his second book which flows well and is no task to finish. His stated aim is for this text to breach the gap between the entry level broad narrative histories and an in depth academic thesis.



To be clear this is not a biography of Edward I, if this is what you are after the author himself recommends Marc Morris' 'A Great and Terrible King' (and so do I). Santiuste winds down what feels like the well trodden chronological path stopping here and there to go into greater detail. Do not let his quotes from Mel Gibson's 'Braveheart' in the opening put you off. It gives a whistle stop tour through Edward I's earlier career until he seriously began to become involved with Scotland with the appointment of John Balliol as king. Santiuste also gives a glimpse into military life, giving some context to the nuts and bolts of running an army that he goes onto develop later and explaining the logistical difficulties and solutions a more general text might pass by. Our own local part is not missed out, the burning of the school and Wallace's troops visit to Hexham Abbey is recorded as are the big set piece battles of Stirling Bridge and Falkirk as would be expected. What is of real interest in this book is when Santiuste looks at Edward himself, he tries to sift through bias sources or lack of them in some cases to get a clearer idea about the man himself and how he thought about the Scottish problem. This seems to be where there is some new insight, if not new sources and is frustratingly just touched upon here and there. This book would have benefitted from a bit more elaboration here and there to Mark it out as a more unique piece of work. Not everyone will approve of the reference throughout to all the Scottish forces under their many leaders as "the patriots", but that is a minor quibble in a quite decent book.

Does this book succeed in being the stepping stone the author hoped? Yes, kind of. At times it can feel a little lightweight and as if it is dwelling on well known facts and stories but on the whole it does offer that extra level than the broad biography cannot delve into. This is a well written text that is easy to read and makes an interesting contribution to a section of history where there was deemed a gap.

This book is also available as an electronic download.