



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 77	Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746 editor@hexhamhistorian.org	Spring 2017
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Thoughts from the Chair

Peter Rodger

I've spent rather more time in 'the chair' this month than is good for me. Following some relatively minor foot surgery I've been enduring enforced rest for 6 weeks, catching up on my reading list and listening to a lot of radio. You may have heard recently, an interviewee defending the Trump regime; "Do what you always did, and you'll get what you always got". Not an outstandingly intellectual observation, but one which nevertheless has some relevance, not only to the current situation in the USA, but also to one on our very own doorstep.

If we, (and I mean anyone who considers themselves to be a responsible custodian of Hexham's heritage), do nothing about Hexham's Workhouse, (on the Corbridge road), then we will get what we were always destined to get – another tin shed and acres of car parking (think: the station goods yard and Homebase/Pets at Home/Poundstretcher.

On the other hand, some concentrated action now, may well save the Workhouse buildings and create new opportunities in the form of, for example, a mix of old and new buildings incorporating affordable housing, workshops for craftspeople, live/work units, a gallery, meeting spaces, a small community park and perhaps a small amount of retail space.

The Workhouse was built in 1839 and modified and extended between 1880 and 1883. The Master's House (1883) has coloured wall murals painted by Italian prisoners during the Second World War. In the later part of the 20th Century it became part of the original Hexham General Hospital being used for Administration and a Laundry until the new hospital was built, when it was acquired by Helen McArdle Care Homes. Since then it has lain neglected and unused other than as a dumping ground for redundant or damaged care home mattresses, wheelchairs, soap dispensers and hi-lift armchairs. Almost every window has been smashed and recently one of the buildings has sustained significant structural damage to masonry. McArdle's have recently disposed of all their care homes and the future of the Workhouse site is uncertain. It is for sale and it's understood that the asking price is £3.5 million

English Heritage comment that *"the Hexham Union workhouse is an interesting complex of buildings and is of clear local interest. As it is included within the Hexham conservation area, appropriate controls are available to consider its retention and adaptive re-use, which is strongly recommended"*. The Council's Local Plan allocates the site for housing use. English Heritage comment that *"Its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area is highly significant and will hopefully influence its future."*

A small group of residents have alerted Northumberland County Council and, through our local Town and County Councillor Cath Homer, the police and fire services. The NCC Planning Conservation Officer and the Enforcement Officer are aware and both are supportive of efforts to save the site from demolition. Hexham Civic Society have also expressed serious concerns about the future of the Workhouse. An open meeting has been arranged for Saturday 11th March at the Torch Centre and if you share these concerns you will be very welcome to come along and learn more.

There's more information about this on the Civic Society web site www.hexhamcivicsociety.wordpress.com and on the 'Save the Workhouse' web site, www.preserveourworkhouse.wordpress.com

Outings 2017
Jennifer Britton

The three outings planned for this years are to The Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn, on the afternoon of Tuesday 16th May, an evening tour around Hexham Abbey in the company of Peter Ryder on Tuesday 13th June and a day outing to Lanercost Priory and Brampton Church on Saturday 15th July.

Please note that numbers are limited on the visits to Northumberland Archives and to Hexham Abbey House, and because of this the committee has agreed that only postal bookings will be accepted, in order to give the same opportunity for everyone. There will be a waiting list (if necessary) in case of cancellations. If either of them are heavily over-subscribed I'll do my very best to organise extra visits! When booking please would you send a separate cheque for each outing, and also make sure that they are made out to Hexham Local History Society, as our banks will not accept cheques made out to 'HLHA'.

The visit to Hexham Abbey House will be followed by a light buffet supper. If you have already done a tour round the Abbey buildings you will be most welcome just to come along to the supper. It would be good to make this into a pleasant social evening for members.

Digital archives
Mark Benjamin

Strange noises heard over Hexham recently can be ascribed to the wailing and gnashing of teeth emanating from our esteemed Treasurer following the decision by the Committee to spend a substantial amount of money on equipment to allow the Digital Archive Project to move forward. Much of the money spent actually came from a Heritage Lottery grant for this purpose, but you know what treasurers are like!

The Society is now the proud possessor of two dedicated scanners; one for slides and another for paper prints & photographs. As well as enabling us to scan more rapidly a substantial collection of images already held, the idea is that – once Summer comes – we will be able to take the scanners out into the town and invite members of the public to come forward with their own images to add to the collection. The ability to scan and return the images, whilst the owner waits, will make the whole operation much simpler.

We've also purchased a new wheeled bag for Terry, our Publications Officer, to transport the bookstall to and from meetings – to replace its crumbling predecessor!

Needed: an auditor
Greg Finch

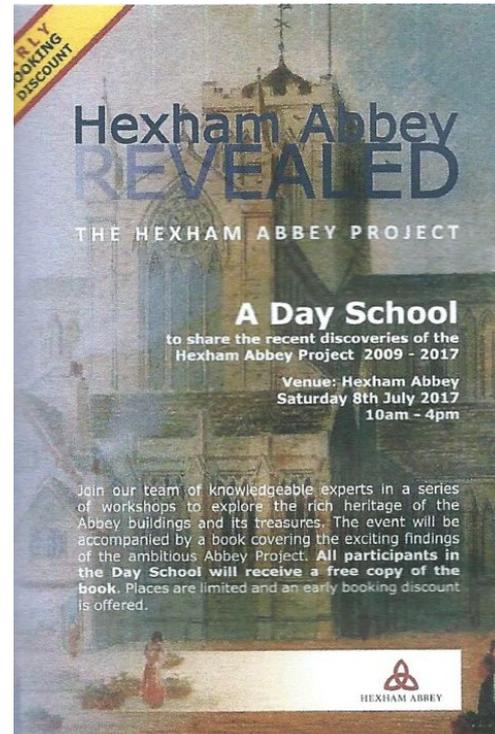
For as long as I have been Society treasurer, and I believe for several years before that, one of our long-standing members, Colin McCabe, has checked over our annual accounts. He has now decided that it is time to step down from this responsibility. I'd like to put on record my thanks to Colin for the quiet, careful, efficient and timely way he has carried out this important job each year. As a Society we have good cause to be grateful to Colin for his help over so many years. We now need to find someone else to take on this task. Can you help? You don't have to be an accountant, and we have no legal responsibility to have our accounts audited, so the job does not mean any formal accountability for the results. We simply feel that, as a Society and as a charity, it is good practice for our accounts to be subject to an independent review each year. The treasurer prepares a binder with the draft financial summary, the supporting accounts, bank statements, receipts for spending, all cross-referenced for ease of checking, and is available to talk through the various papers and answer any questions that arise in the course of the review. It normally takes place in January and does not entail a great deal of work. Colin and/or I would be happy to talk to anyone who would like further information. If so, please contact me in the first instance at gregpfinch@hotmail.com or 01434 607490, or have a word at one of our monthly meetings.

**Hexham Abbey
Revealed: Day
School**

Saturday 8th July 2017; 10am – 3.30pm £25 (until 31st March), £30 there-after. This day school will share the recent discoveries of the project from 2009-2017.

Workshops will include: The restoration and archaeology of the Priory buildings, The lost Eastern chapels, The abbey's collection of early prayer books, Vestments and furnishings & The digital modelling of the Anglo-Saxon abbey and later Medieval priory. Participants will receive a complimentary copy of *Hexham Abbey Revealed: the Hexham Abbey Project*, a co-publication between the Abbey and HLHS.

Booking forms may be obtained from the Day School Booking Office, The Parish Office, Hexham Abbey, Hexham NE46 3NB (01434) 602031



**Have you seen
this house?**

A bit out of our territory but we've been asked if anyone can identify this house, thought to have been somewhere in County Durham. Any suggestions to Donna Smailes at donnasmailes@me.com or to the Editor.



A century of allotments

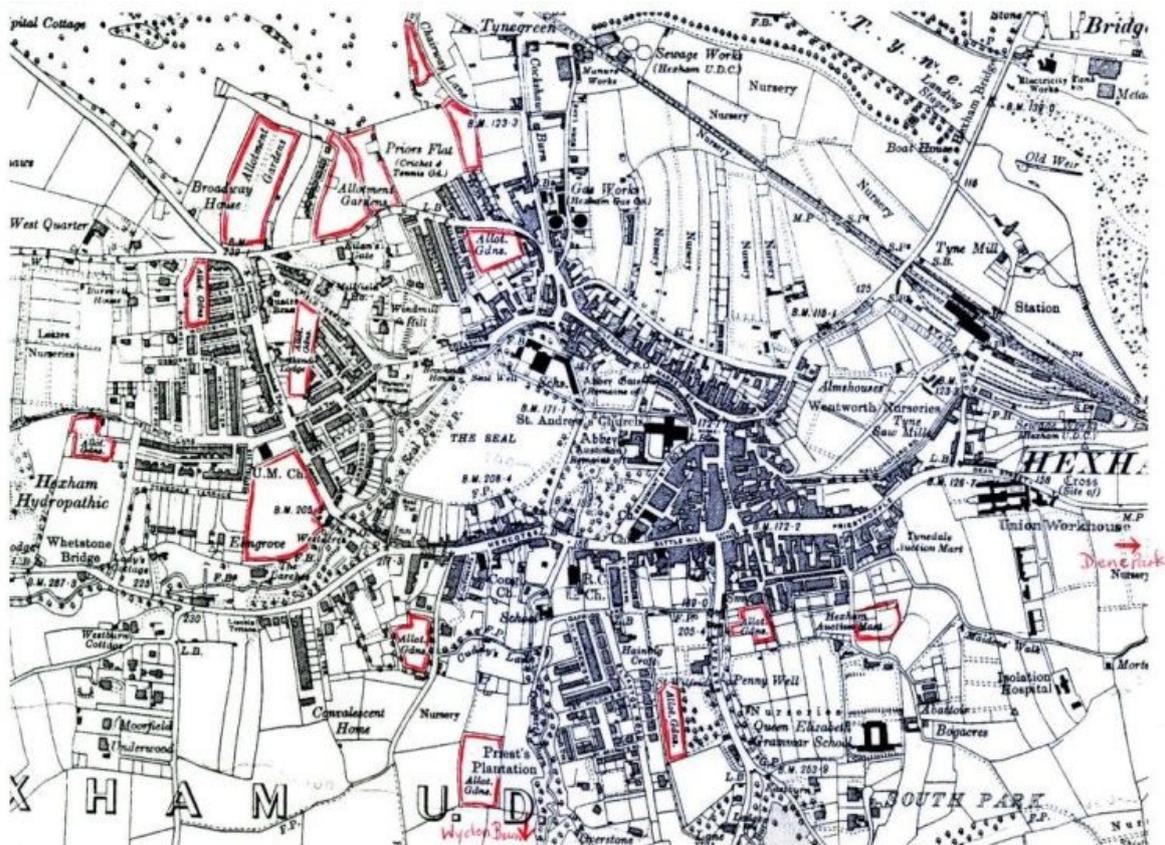
Susanne Ellingham

1917 was the starting date for many of the allotments that used to be scattered around Hexham. Now, a century later, only 4 remain: Quatre Bras, Dene Park and Wydon Burn are run by the Town Council. The allotments to the east of Park Avenue now belong to the houses on the west side. The rest of the Allotment Gardens were built on, mostly before 1939.

Although the Allotments Act of 1887 enabled local authorities to set up allotments there was no great impetus until food shortages began to bite during WW1. A small allotment had been set up by the Council in 1911 but the majority date to 1917-1918. A few others were suggested or set up later, some only lasting a couple of years before the land was sold on eg 3 acres somewhere on Haugh Lane bought 1932, sold 1934.

The map below shows the allotments that I can identify using the 1922 OS map plus David Jennings' list in "Local Government in a Market Town". His index to the HUDC minutes and Hexham Courant (available in the Old Gaol) also helped. I think there may have been others eg I know that the War Memorial Hospital at St Wilfrid's house rented out allotments on the land south of the hospital (I remember seeing the old rent book a dozen years ago before it went to Woodhorn). Can anyone tell me if the plots extended across to Eastgate from the gardens shown on the map south-east of St Wilfrids?

If you have any knowledge of other allotments, or stories about the allotments, please contact Susanne Ellingham at susanneellingham@hotmail.com or drop a note in at the Old Gaol (open 11-4 Tues and Sat in February and March, Tues to Sat thereafter, or under the door if shut) or post to 6 Windmill Hill, Hexham, NE46 3EE



**Snippets from
the past: The
Sandhoe Rifle
Club**

Another in our series of stories gleaned from historic newspapers by Yvonne Purdy. This time, from *The Newcastle Daily Journal*: Friday, October 17, 1862; pg. 3; Issue 2160.

In the Journal, of the 9th June last, we gave a brief sketch of the history, and an outline of the rules, of a club which had then been recently formed by Rowland Errington, Esq., of Sandhoe, for the purpose of enabling its members to become efficient marksmen. To enable the club to carry out its object, a range was formed on the property of Mr. Errington, at West Oakwood (Birky Burn), which, being now almost completed, we are enabled to give our readers an idea of its situation and character. A turnpike road from Hexham, joining another from Acomb and Sandhoe, a little below the rifle ground, and about a mile-and-a-half from each place, passes close to it, and renders it of convenient access. In the field which forms the starting point of the range, Mr. Errington has erected a neat and substantial block-stone building, for the use of the club, comprising dwelling rooms, armoury, sitting rooms for ladies, committee rooms, large rooms for general members, with other conveniences attached. Upon the terminating point of the range, are placed two targets, entirely distinct, though contiguous. A wooden bridge has been erected, to enable the members the better to arrive at the 350 yards range. A path the whole length of the range forms an admirable promenade, which is rendered still more agreeable by the ground, for a considerable distance on each side, being neatly sloped, dressed off, and sown with grass, the whole distance of the first target (600 yards). This barrier is formed by an artificial mound of earth, but a few yards beyond that, and rising to a considerable height, is a natural background. Deviating a little to the south, is the line of the second target, which, owing to the workmen having been almost entirely engaged in the completion of the one intended for more general use, is not so far advanced. It is, however, rapidly progressing, and in the course of a short time will be finished. Four hundred yards further east from the first, the other target is erected, immediately in front of a very substantial barrier, artificially constructed, and backed by a thick wood, which rises to a considerable altitude. This range is exactly one thousand yards, but could, if needed, be extended considerably towards the west, and being situated in the level formed by the bed of the rivulet from when its name is derived, it is snugly sheltered by rising grounds on all sides. Previous to its being used for this purpose, it was little else than a waste, covered with a thick bed of furze, whins, and other rubbish, and a favourite resort of all kinds of fearae natura. It is intended to be neatly laid out with shrubberies, &c., while rustic seats will be placed in different parts for the convenience of visitors. The whole is being done at the sole expense of Mr. Errington, and, when finally completed, will form not only a delightful and picturesque resort, but be one of the finest, if not the finest, rifle range in the north of England.

As one of the rules of the club provides a patroness's, president's, vice-president's, and steward's prize shall be shot for by members, at a yearly match, and be awarded to the party making the highest score at each match, the first annual meeting accordingly took place yesterday, when the following prizes were offered for competition, viz.:-



Baton awarded at a Victorian shooting competition held at Anick

1st, A Silver Cup, value 10 guineas, presented by Miss Stanley Errington, the patroness of the club.

2nd, A Whitworth Rifle, value 10 guineas, presented by Rowland Errington, Esq., the president.

3rd, A Purse of Gold, presented by the Vice-Presidents.

4th, The Sum of £3 10s., presented by the Stewards.

As was to have been expected, the members availed themselves of the opportunity presented of gaining both honour and profit, and as many as 63 competitors (out of 90 of which the club is composed) entered their names upon the lists. The regulations of the club for shooting were strictly enforced.

In order that the contest might be concluded on the same day, it was arranged that the shooting should be in parties, under the superintendence of the stewards, and that the first party (consisting of the members of the band of the club) should commence at eight o'clock a.m. Precisely at the appointed time the proceedings

were begun, and on its conclusion, about four o'clock pm., the result was as follows:-

1st Prize – Won by Mr. Matthew Leadbitter, of Fern Hill, a tenant of Mr. Errington, who scored 8 at 200 yards, 8 at 300, and 9 at 400, making a total of 25 points and hits.

2nd Prize – A tie at 22 points and hits, between Richard Gibson, Esq., and Mr J. Thompson, but Mr. Gibson having waived his claim, it was consequently given to Mr. Thompson. His score was 7 at 200 yards, 6 at 300, and 9 at 400, making a total of 22 points and hits.

3rd Prize – A tie at 21 points between Henry Dodd, Esq., and Mr. Ridley Ritson; Mr Dodd waived his claim in favour of Mr. Ritson, whose score was 8 at 200 yards, 7 at 300, and 6 at 400, making a total of 21 points and hits.

4th Prize – Resulted in a tie between seven members, at 20 points; on its being shot off six of the parties made centres, and Mr. Wm. Ridley won by a bull's eye.

The morning was dull and bitter cold, and continued so during the remainder of the day; and the wind, which had always been strong, often increased into a hurricane, which sometimes impeded the operations, and in every case prevented a correct aim being taken. Refreshments were provided for the competitors, at the expense of the president, in a commodious tent erected on the ground. The band of the corps, under the leadership of Mr. T. S. Watson, of Newcastle, having finished their shooting early, played many popular airs during the day in a very admirable manner. Among those present, either as competitors or visitors, were – Rowland Errington, Esq., and the three Misses Errington; the Honourable Miss McDonald; Lady Blackett, and the two Misses Blackett, Matfen; Miss Ponsonby; Col. and Mrs. Baring; A. Montgomery, Esq.; Miss Cuthbert, Beaufront; George Fenwick, Esq., Bywell; L. J. H. Allgood, Esq., and Mrs. Allgood, Nunwick; Henry Silvertopp, Esq., and Mrs Silvertopp, Minsteracres – visitors at Sandhoe House; Henry Dodd, Esq., the Riding; Rev. Frederick Gipps, Corbridge; Rev. Mr. Rigg, and Rev. Mr. Coates, St. John Lee; Richd. Gibson, Esq.; Isaac Baty, Esq.; John Stokoe, Esq., and Mrs Stokoe; Jasper Gibson, Esq., and two nephews; Captain Nicholson; and Lieut. Head – all of Hexham; William Kirsopp, Esq., the Leazes; Charles Head, Esq., and Mrs. Head, Hackworth; Rev. Joseph Hudson, Hexham, &c., &c.

The silver cup was presented by Miss Errington to the successful competitor at the close of the proceedings, who, on receiving it, returned thanks in a short speech. The other prizes were distributed by Mr. Errington, who delivered a short but graceful address to the members present. Besides the prizes enumerated, the rules provide that a challenge prize shall be competed for by those members only who should obtain 15 points and hits at the contest for the above prizes, and to be shot subject to the same regulations. After the conclusion of the previous contests, this prize was being contested; but as the day was waning, it was agreed to be concluded on Saturday next.

Hexham Book Fair, 19th March 2017

A shameless plug for the Hexham Book Fair – organised by your's truly. A chance to off-load all those books that you have been planning to dispose of – or, indeed, buy some more. Only £25 for a stall, including a table and space around for additional display. Sunday 19th March @ Wentworth Leisure Centre. Open to to public 10am-4pm, £1 entry fee.

All profits from the fair go to funding events in the town organised by the Hexham Community Partnership, such as Spook Night and the Christmas Market.

If you would like to take a stall at the fair, please contact Mark at bennorbooks@gmail.com or call on 07879263848

Notes & Queries

1) Can anyone give any information about **2/2 Forestry Company, Royal Australian Engineers** who came to Hexham in September 1940 and established No 44 Sawmill at Stotsfield. They worked the sawmill until October 1941 when they moved to Thornhill. Graham MacKenzie-Smith of Perth would love to hear from you at grimwade4@inet.net.au or via the editor

2) Stephen Burrows would like to know the origin of the name **Hellpool Lane**. Formerly known as Hell Pool Loanen, this is the old name for the road running down past West End Methodist Church, which now goes under various names, including this one. Stephen can be contacted at stephenburrows7@aol.co.uk or via the editor

**Calling all
ceramicists!**

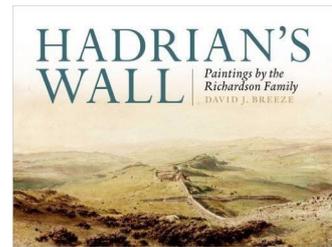
This plate was found whilst a new drain was being dug for The Anchor at Haydon Bridge.



Can anyone shed any light on its origins, or why the squirrels are looking particularly demonic? Yvonne would love to know! Suggestions, please, to Secretary@hexhamhistorian.org or call (01434) 601237

Book Review
Greg Finch

Breeze, David J. **Hadrian's Wall: paintings by the Richardson family** (John Donald, 2016) xiv + 178pp, 67 plates, 20 additional illustrations, 1 map, ISBN 978 1 910900055, £25 hardcover



The curiosity and interest shown by the scholarly John Collingwood Bruce, and wealthy town clerk of Newcastle, John Clayton, brought study of Hadrian's Wall to new prominence from the 1830s. The first edition of Bruce's guide to The Roman Wall was published in 1851, accompanied by a few illustrations engraved from watercolours painted by Henry Burdon Richardson. However these represent just a part of Richardson's work when he accompanied Bruce on his tour in 1848, and few others have seen the light of day until the publication of this fine new work. They are brought together and described here by David Breeze, former Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, Hadrian's Wall expert, and editor in 2006 of what is now the 14th edition of Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall.

With his brothers Charles and Thomas, Henry Richardson painted landscapes of Hadrian's Wall extensively between 1838 and the 1880s, from Wallsend to the Solway Firth. They are beautifully reproduced in colour in this landscape format book, prefaced by introductory biographies of Clayton, Bruce and the Richardsons, members of that renowned Newcastle family of artists, chapters on the paintings' provenance, and context on Hadrian's Wall then and now. This fine book will appeal to historians as well those who love art and the Wall country, for the images capture the Wall in its landscape setting at a time before later tidying up, and indeed before much of Clayton's 'restoration work' on lengths of the Roman fabric. Some of the views are of course utterly unrecognisable today: the Tyne at Wallsend, the windswept empty heaths towards Byker and on the Westgate Road marked by windmills on the skyline, and sylvan views at Benwell and Denton Hall. By contrast, to the west, several of the views can be instantly located today, but with fascinating details marking later changes. In particular the farmhouse at Shield-on-the-Wall, removed in 1867, and a near derelict cottage at Caw Gap hark back to an earlier era of hard-scrabble farming on vast thin pastures, where remnants of the Wall acted as solid field boundaries and even part of the fabric of the poor steadings themselves. Here they are captured in the last years of their existence before being swept away, the better for Victorians to venerate romantic ruins from a far earlier era.

Publications
Terry Eccles

As a member of HLHS you will have received, as part of your membership, the **Hexham Historian**, now at No 26, but you may also have missed one or two, or even more. We even have some very smart binders, in which to keep them! Why not check and make up a full set, either by ordering online or direct from me at the Bookshop stall every lecture evening?

Our Occasional Publications Series, also available, includes such titles as **Hexham Lives**, **Hexham 1854-1939**, **The Heart of all England: Hexham in original documents** and **Hexham in the Seventeenth Century**, as well as more recent titles such as **A pack of idle sparks**, **The Black Book of Hexham** and **Dirty old town**

To help you remember which publications you want to purchase, make a note below and send it to Publications Officer, 19 Tynedale Terrace, Hexham NE46 3JE, email sales@hexhamhistorian.org - or visit the Bookshop stall the next time you are at a lecture.

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