



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 81	Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746 editor@hexhamhistorian.org	Summer 2018
----------------------	--	------------------------------

Thoughts from the Chair

Peter Rodger

A moment in our digital history. No doubt you too have been bombarded by emails demanding that you opt-in, consent to receive emails, update your profile etc etc over the last month or so. Just a media storm really, whipped up by the popular press as a diversion to the nonsense about being forced to leave the European Union. Well, it's all over now (GDPR, not the European rignmarole) so we can settle back into our armchairs and await the next big piece of nonsense.

GDPR, however, does make some sense – or at least some of it does. It means that we can all be able to ensure that whatever information about our lives is held securely and responsibly, and that we can easily check to see what is held and that it is correct. It will, no doubt, make a few web site owners sit up and think – the Daily Mail et al have warned us in heavy black headlines of the draconian penalties that will be imposed for misdemeanours: the upper level fines for failure to comply is €20 million but it's been confirmed by the EU that these fines are a last resort – the Information Commissioner's role is to guide, advise and educate, not to take a sledgehammer to miscreants.

So, sleep easy in your beds and be comforted that the Society has discussed and debated the whole GDPR issue late into the night and has taken appropriate steps to ensure compliance.

I've been scribbling these random thoughts for too long and it's time to take a break. I'll be happy to gift my pen to another – just contact the Editor if you'd like to sit in this chair.

Data Protection & HLHS

As you have probably read elsewhere, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force on the 25th May 2018. We believe the Hexham Local History Society (HLHS) is in compliance with the GDPR but is taking steps to check this. This notice confirms the personal information the Society holds about you.

- Name & Title, full postal address, telephone contact number, email address if any; for joint memberships, there is an additional name, title and email address as appropriate;
- type of membership, and payment type (i.e. standing order/ cheque) but your personal bank account details are not recorded;
- date of latest annual subscription;
- whether you have elected to:
 - gift aid your subscriptions, and date of election if so;
 - receive the newsletter electronically;
 - volunteer to distribute *Hexham Historian* in your neighbourhood;
- participation in any outings organised by HLHS. This information is held temporarily for outing booking and admin purposes and destroyed when the outing is over.

For members that have activated their on-line membership account, your password is recorded, but is not visible to anyone.

As a membership-based charity this information means we can verify your entitlement to the membership benefits, allow us to communicate with you about meetings, and deliver your copy of newsletters, *Hexham Historian*, outings information, AGM papers, and membership renewal letters. (To accomplish this we may use third parties which conform to the required data privacy standards.) For those of you who gift aid your subscriptions we are required to include your name, address, amount of annual subscription, and the date it was made in an annual schedule sent to HMRC. Under the terms of GDPR we believe this data is therefore 'adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which it is processed.'

HLHS may occasionally wish to contact you about items not directly associated with your membership but which we think may be of interest to you. If you would prefer us not to contact you on any such topics then please let our membership secretary Yvonne Purdy know and we will note your preference.

Your data is securely stored, and is available only to a small number of relevant committee members who undertake the work described in the paragraphs above, and is never passed on to any third party other than for our own membership communication purposes, as described above. You have the right to ask what information is stored about you, the right to data portability and the right to erasure (although in this last case it would, of course, mean that we would be unable to communicate with you and provide membership benefits!) We are finalising our full data protection and privacy policies, which will be available on the Society's website as soon as possible. If you want to see the data we hold on you please get in touch with Yvonne Purdy who, as our secretary, is the officer responsible for GDPR: secretary@hexhamhistorian.org or 01434 601237.

Dates for your diary

Tuesday 26th June: The Gibsons: poets in love and war, Hexham Library, 7pm-8.30pm. Ira Lightman & Ken Barratt present an evening of poetry & music which will explore the lives of early C20th Hexham poets Wilfrid & Elizabeth Gibson.

Wilfrid and Elizabeth Gibson were successful poets who spent more than their formative years in Hexham in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In our century their work evades anthologies and has largely faded from memory. Yet Wilfred's work, innovative in subject matter and form, influenced Sassoon, Owen and others. Elizabeth was a rare poet of the suffragette and anti-war movements. Tickets: £4 from www.eventbrite.co.uk or from Hexham Library (01670) 620450

Bodies of Evidence: The Durham soldiers exhibition

Those members who attended our February meeting, (and those who didn't make it) may be interested in an exhibition on the Durham Soldiers Project opening soon in Durham.

For those who didn't hear Andrew Millard speak: In November 2013 two mass burials were discovered in an area being developed as a new café for Palace Green Library. After over 350 years, a team of archaeologists from Durham University were able to confirm that the burials were some of a group of Scottish Prisoners who died in 1650 following the Battle of Dunbar. Find out how different pieces of a complex jigsaw of evidence were pieced together to establish the identity of the bodies, the science behind the discoveries, and the remarkable story of the survivors, some of whom were transported to New England to a new life at the edge of the known world.

Bodies of Evidence brings together material from collections across the UK and beyond. The exhibition shows how Durham University scientists working with colleagues at Bradford, York and Liverpool John Moores universities used the latest scientific techniques to reveal more

about the soldiers' story – how they lived, why they died, and what became of those who survived.

The exhibition in Palace Green Library runs from 10am on Saturday 9th June to 5pm on Sunday 7th October. Tickets cost £7.50 (£6.50 children/concessions) and allow for three visits to the exhibition. Further information about the display and associated events can be found from pg.custodian@durham.ac.uk or 0191 334 2972

**Why did
Hexham bridge
fall down**
Sue Ward

That was the question behind a lengthy legal case after the collapse of the second Hexham Bridge in 1782, after standing for only 14 months. More than three hundred pages of correspondence and legal documents about the collapse, are now available with their transcriptions on the internet, as a result of the Unlocking the Archives project financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne (SANT).



SANT has received many bequests of documents in its 200+ years' history, all now held at Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn. A group of members had already transcribed papers from the Relief Committee after the great Tyne Flood of 1771, and were keen for a further challenge. The neatly bound volume about Hexham Bridge's collapse together with a fascinating set of wills from Hexhamshire, dating between the 1690s and 1710s, and a

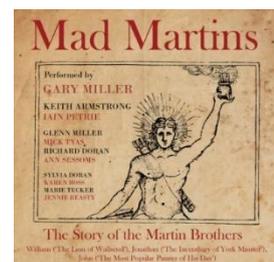
report from the 1771 Flood Relief Fund in Durham, seemed to provide it. They formed the core of an application to the HLF in 2016.

All three volumes were duly photographed at Woodhorn, and the images put on a dedicated part of the Antiquaries website. The HLF financed two palaeography courses, and a mix of new and long-standing volunteers worked away at the transcriptions through 2017. The work is now complete, with glossaries and search functions included – see www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk/uta.

It was, as one volunteer put it, about “rediscovering the power of history to illuminate the nature of life today”. This was the aim also of the series of school workshops about the 1771 flood, the third element in the HLF project. A small exhibition of the work produced has been on show in Eldon Square in Newcastle, and some of it is included in a leaflet available in print and on the Antiquaries' website.

Mad Martins
Keith Armstrong

Mad Martins is an ambitious, and rather special, project. It depicts the lives and times of the three Martin brothers – William, Jonathan and John – who were born in the late 18th century in the South Tyne area of Northumberland. Each of the brothers was a visionary who nevertheless achieved a degree of notoriety (in Jonathan's case also embracing a certain status of madness) during his lifetime. William, “The Lion Of Wallsend”, self-



styled “Philosophical Conqueror of All Nations”, was an engraver and inventor; Jonathan, a religious fanatic, was “the notorious incendiary” of York Minster; and John was both a town planner and an acclaimed painter of epic scenes of cataclysmic Biblical events.

The project tellingly brings together songs, poems, narration, music and art. A useful adjunct in the form of a complementary (fourth) disc presents all the instrumental backing tracks to the various spoken-word pieces on the main triple-CD set, together with the orchestral backing track to the song *In My Hands*. And there are plans for a full-blown 2½-hour theatrical performance of *Mad Martins* in 2018...

Mad Martins is available as CDs, or as a download, from <https://mادمartins.bandcamp.com>

History uncovered

The recent felling of the trees on Haugh Lane, below the old swimming pool, has exposed a considerable amount of old stonework, evidence of earlier buildings on the site; some obviously attached to what is now the Community Centre and at least one free-standing. Whether any were ever part of town walls (see John Chapman’s article in HH19) remains very doubtful!



OS Map 1864



A mystery deepens – literally!

Our recent publication *Two gentleman photographers* featured a sketch of a Magdlein von Flensburg – about whom we could discover nothing. Whilst idly watching a recent edition of *Flog* it, my attention was caught by the name Catharina von Flensburg. This was the name, or to give it its full title *Die Frau Metta Catharina von Flensburg*, of the brigantine wrecked off Plymouth Sound in 1786. When the shipwreck was discovered and excavated between 1973 and 2006, it was found that its cargo of reindeer hides had been preserved in the mud and was still perfectly useable. Indeed, a Hexham-based leatherworker was using one of the hides in recent years.

However, I have still been unable to discover anything about the von Flensburg family. The portrait in *Two gentleman* bears the date 1864, so it is possible that Magdlein was a descendant of Metta Catharina – but it looks as though we’ll never know! Flensburg is a port in Schleswig-Holstein; Metta Catharina would have been a Danish citizen but, interestingly, 1864 was the date of the war between Denmark and Prussia, after which Flensburg, and Magdlein, became German. So, perhaps Magdlein was a refugee and a victim of the notorious Schleswig-Holstein Question of which Lord Palmerston famously said, only three men had ever understood it and one was dead, one was in an asylum, and he himself had forgotten it!

Notes & Queries

An increasing number of queries are coming to the Society via Facebook. These will be indicated by (FB) at the end of the query. If any member has an answer to any such query, please respond via the Editor.

- a) Nick Bell writes: I was born at Fenham, grew up in Whitley Bay where I was trainee Photo Journalaist on the 'Whitley Bay Guardian', and lived in Darras Hall during the World War-2 when not at Hexham Camp. In 1956 I emigrated with my parents, younger brother Terry and sister Tess to Australia. I would love to hear from anyone who knows somebody who was evacuated to **Hexham Camp** during WW2. (FB)
- b) Michael Molyneux-Johnson writes: I'm looking for some information and old pictures of **Temperley Place**. In particular number 5 which used to be part of number 4, which was the coach house....As I live in number 5, I'm very keen to see what it would have looked like. (FB)
- c) Joe Martin writes: Can anyone identify this object found just above Catton. Could it have been something to do with the lead industry? (FB)

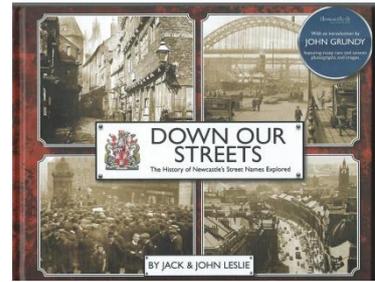


- d) Gillian Watson wonders whether anyone can date this postcard of the **County Hotel**? (FB)



Book ReviewHelen
Rutherford

Leslie, John & Jack. **Down our streets: the history of Newcastle's street names explored** (Tyne Bridge, 2018) 09780993195686 £8.99



Did you know that it is possible that Pudding Chare, just off the Big Market in Newcastle, may be so called because vendors of black puddings set up stall there? Or that Sandhill, adjacent to the Guildhall on the Quayside was first recorded in 1310 when it was literally a hill of sand next to the Tyne? This little hardback book, an updated and expanded version of an earlier edition published in paperback in 2003, is packed with photographs and provides an interesting guide to the people and events behind the naming of the streets of Newcastle. The explanations are concise and it is not really a "reading book" but its strength lies in the photographs that illustrate Newcastle from the middle of the nineteenth century.

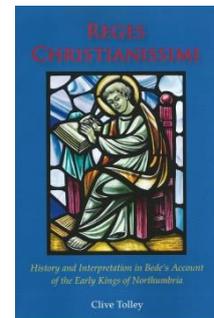
The Leslie's book, with a foreword by John Grundy, includes many photographs published for the first time and the joy of the book is scrutinising them to spot exactly their point from which they have been taken and to see what has changed. The street lay-out of Newcastle, and many of the buildings still exist today but even in the photographs of familiar scenes the unfamiliar offers a tantalising glimpse of the past. For example, the picture on page 11 of the Guildhall and Bessie Surtees house has a police box in the foreground (not the Tardis type) and the photograph of the post office building on St Nicholas Street includes a rather fine ice cream cart just in view.

This is a great present for anyone with a love of Newcastle. The only flaw is the lack of dates on many of the pictures: although trying to date them, from the modes of transport, pedestrians clothing and shop signs is part of the enjoyment that can be gleaned from poring over the pages. I recommend a magnifying glass to wring all the details from the high quality prints!

Book Review

Max Adams

Tolley, Clive. **Reges Christianissimi: history & interpretation in Bede's account of the Early Kings of Northumbria** (Gracewing, 2018) 9780851449301 £12.99



The Venerable Bede (672-735) is the outstanding source for our knowledge of early Anglo-Saxon kingship, especially in those lands north of the River Humber, which he christened Northumbria. Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 734) is a providential history intended to show how, in parallel with the Old Testament, God's chosen people (the Jews/the Anglo-Saxons) came, by virtue of accepting God's faith, to forge kingdoms of righteous warrior might.

Bede is particularly interested in the fates of three kings: Æthelrith, Edwin and Oswald. With knowing irony Bede deploys the first of these, a pagan overlord of North Britain between about 593 and 617, to act as God's divine instrument, destroying the armies of the Christian Britons of North Wales at a great battle near Chester in about 616. The Britons, as Bede understood it, were guilty of failing to spread the word of God among their Germanic neighbours and, worse, of rejecting the overtures of Augustine's famous papal mission after 597.

Æthelrith's brother-in-law, and slayer, Edwin (617-633), after a long period of exile followed by political consolidation, was instructed in the Christian faith by Paulinus, a Roman missionary. In a famous debate he agreed to bring the Northumbrian people into the church.

His death – at the hands of a Christian British king, Cadwallon – returned Northumbria to a state of apostatising anarchy from which it, and the church, were rescued by the timely arrival of the hero of the piece, King Oswald (634-642), at Heavenfield.

Many gallons of ink have been spilled in the cause of teasing out Bede's complex and exceedingly subtle narratives – some of them self-contradictory, all of them fascinating – and Clive Tolley has contributed six analytical essays of his own in an equally subtle and contradictory new book, *Reges Christianissimi*.

Taking the Battle of Chester, Edwin's conversion and Oswald's triumph at Heavenfield (the latter of particular interest to members of the HHS) as three cornerstones of Bede's narrative, Tolley draws out what he calls typological, figurative and analogical threads to show how Bede interpreted English history by taking types – Jerusalem, Saul, the Exodus, for example – and matching them with anti-types and metatypes in his historical characters and events, to reveal the divine hand. These sub-chapters are offset by detailed geographical and military analyses of campaigns, battles and conversion episodes which are likely to appeal more to the general reader even if Tolley's theories at times test credulity.

Tolley knows his stuff, especial in the matter of biblical exegesis, although some of his language requires considerable reader stamina, and possibly a dictionary at hand:

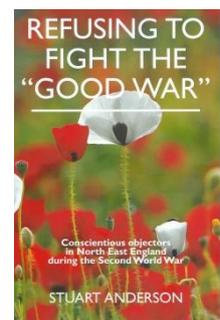
Rome, viewed as a spiritual city ... forms a type to the antitype (or anatype) of the new Jerusalem of the fulfilled kingdom of heaven; the perspective is anagogical, looking forward to this fulfilment of the eschaton.

There are intriguing insights: Tolley argues that British accounts of the Battle of Chester, which underlie Bede's version, consciously draw on legends surrounding the Alleluia Victory of St Germanus against heretics in the 5th century. In the section on Oswald, Tolley argues that both the cross he raised at Heavenfield before his battle with Cadwallon, and the stakes on which his dismembered body parts were displayed after his death at Maserfield (Oswestry; Oswald's tree) are reflections of both crucifixion narratives and of the pagan Germanic *treow*, the tree of life and the world tree Yggdrasil. The argument is slightly compromised, because although Tolley convinces this reviewer that Bede understood the metaphor, there is no surviving Old English account that uses the word *treow* to, as it were, sink the putt. Despite its difficulties, and some over-stretched conjecture, *Reges Christianissimi* offers fans of Bede a fresh angle with which to view this most fascinating period of Northern history.

Book Review

Caroline
Westgate

Anderson, Stuart. **Refusing to fight the “good” fight: conscientious objectors in North East England during the Second World War** (Tyne Bridge, 2018) 9780993195679 £9.99



Sixty thousand men and women refused either to fight or, sometimes, even to undertake alternative service during WW2, which challenges the stubbornly enduring myth that everyone in Britain pulled together to defeat Hitler. This book is a comprehensively researched and well-written account of conscientious objectors (COs) in North East England during that conflict.

The principle had been established during the Great War that those applying to be exempted from conscription on conscientious grounds would have their cases adjudicated by a Tribunal. From their start in 1916, the panels were run by the War Office and were dominated by military representatives. As a result, nearly a third of applicants were sentenced to terms in jail. But in WW2 a more pragmatic view prevailed. Tribunals were organised by the Ministry of Labour and headed by a judge; Parliament having accepted the principle that – in a war being fought against Fascism – it was important to protect the right

to freedom of thought and belief. Also, it was admitted that the harsh treatment meted out to COs in WW1 had signally failed to change minds.

The North East had one of the lowest percentages in Britain of people registering as COs. Applicants from the working classes were thin on the ground, possibly because an army wage offered some degree of financial security to those who had experienced widespread unemployment in the Depression. Both men and women appeared before the Tribunals but the middle-classes predominated: skilled workers, managers, teachers, civil servants and creative people. Two-thirds cited a religious objection to killing, half of whom were Quakers or Jehovah's Witnesses.

Some, such as Communists and members of the Independent Labour Party, were motivated by their political beliefs. They objected to taking part in a conflict which they viewed as a capitalist's war. Fenner Brockway wrote that it was *'morally wrong to kill fellow workers in the interests of the possessing classes.'* A publication by the Non-Conscription League stated that *'Life is to be conscripted at a shilling a day while no action is taken to conscript wealth. Cannon fodder cheaply obtained will be cheaply spent.'*

Tribunal records were destroyed at the end of the war but Anderson draws on contemporary press reports and archived personal recollections for his account. The chair of the Newcastle Tribunal was Judge Thomas Richardson who achieved notoriety among COs for his outbursts of animosity towards them. Nevertheless, when decisions were made, this *'gruesomely patriotic old Tory'* (as the CO and poet James Kirkup described Richardson) must have been restrained by his colleagues on the panel because the statistics show that the Newcastle Tribunal recorded exemptions at above the national average rate. Nevertheless, Anderson's detailed analysis reveals inconsistencies in the Newcastle Tribunal's decisions. The majority of Quaker applicants were granted exemptions, possibly because many were willing to join the Friends Ambulance Unit which had acquired such a good reputation in WW1. By contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses had a hard time trying to convince the panel of the sincerity of their beliefs.

COs' problems didn't end after they had been granted conditional exemption. Local Authorities and businesses often refused to employ them, and unions declined to protect them. When they were directed to find work on the land, farmers resisted employing them because they lacked the necessary skills. Local newspapers published letters attacking them and referring to them in disparaging language. 'Absolutists' came in for particular opprobrium, refusing even to register as COs because they objected in principle to the element of compulsion in the system. They would agree, for example, to fire-watch but only if they were considered to be volunteers. They would not be directed into any work which could be construed as part of the war effort. Though being a CO was not a criminal offence, they were imprisoned.

Two chapters which covered ground new to me are on women COs and on soldiers who became convinced pacifists during their service. Class status impacted on the fates of both groups: a maid was more likely to be imprisoned for her pacifism than was the lady of the house. Similarly, an officer who could no longer in conscience carry a gun was generally allowed quietly to resign his commission, whereas Other Ranks faced extremely harsh treatment in a military detention centre.

What did the COs achieve? Conscientious objection was eventually recognised by the United Nations as a human right, an extension of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion which the UN Charter enshrines. The COs from the North East can justifiably claim to have played their part in that transition.