



Friends of Berwick & District
Museum and Archives
Newsletter



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[Selected articles]

VISIT OF COLDSTREAM GUARDS TO BERWICK

On 25 July 2000, the Coldstream Guards were granted the Freedom of the town of Berwick. Their last important visit to the town was almost 50 years earlier when they came to celebrate the ter-centenary of the Regiment. We are fortunate in having a very professional colour cine film of this event which many of you may have seen on our Film Nights. We don't know who took the film (if anyone does, please let me know) but the following is the newspaper account of the day's proceedings.

BERWICK ADVERTISER, 17 AUGUST 1950

COLDSTREAM GUARDS COME HOME FOR THEIR TER-CENTENARY MARCH

The ter-centenary cycle of the Coldstream Guards was completed at Berwick on Saturday.

Exactly 300 years ago to the day the Regiment was formed. Five companies had marched out from the Berwick Garrison, across the Old Bridge spanning the Tweed to join five companies from Newcastle and become founders of Cromwell's famous Regiment, commanded by General George Monck.

On Saturday, under grey skies, Coldstreamers of the 3rd Battalion and the Regimental Band came back to celebrate the ter-centenary. Their parade from Tweedmouth Modern School, down the Great North Road and across the river to the Town Hall, took them along part of the same route as the Regimental founders. The precise stepping Guardsmen whose scarlet tunics gave a vivid dash of colour came on a peaceful mission though bayonets flashed as they marched. They were headed by the Bandsmen and corps of drums of the 3rd Battalion. From Newcastle, where the main programme of celebrations took place at the week end, they had travelled north for the ter-centenary parade.

Impressive Sight

All along the North Road route from the Tweedmouth Modern School, which had been used as changing quarters, the Guardsmen came through lines of spectators. As they swung into Marygate, where five-deep crowds thronged the pavements, the scene was impressive and historic. Rain which started an hour before had ceased and there was a welcoming flash of sunshine. Facing the marching column was the official partly drawn up on the Town Hall steps, the grey old building gay with evergreens, flowers, flags and bunting.

The robes of the civic chiefs; the dresses of the ladies and again the bright scarlet of the regiment's officers overshadowed in colour the massed red of the soldiers' tunics. It was a pretty spectacle.

Every window and vantage point over-looking the street had its full quota of spectators, who even lined the Scotsgate wall in the distance.

Earlier, the official guests had assembled in the Town Hall, where the Mayor formally received General Sir Charles Lloyd, Colonel of the Regiment, and presented him to the civic party. As the Guardsmen came to a halt before the Town Hall the 60-strong contingent of Old Coldstreamers, commanded by Capt. W. Straker Smith, moved into line across Marygate to form a barrier across the crowds. Those on parade included Capt. the Hon. Michael Joicey, Col. W. Forbes, Mr W. Somervale, the Association chairman, and Mr C. Robinson, secretary.

Only ex-Coldstreamer from the Berwick district was ex Constable James Atkinson of Berwick Police Force.

It was an impressive sight as the General Salute was honoured and then, while the band played an accompaniment, the Mayor, the General, Col. E. R. Hill, and an official party inspected the Guardsmen and the veterans. Back to the steps the Mayor gave an official welcome on behalf of the towns- people.

MAYOR'S PRIDE

In his address Councillor Yelloly said as Mayor of the loyal and ancient borough of Berwick he deemed it a very great honour and privilege to receive Gen. Sir Charles Lloyd as Colonel of the Coldstream Guards, and the officers and Guardsmen as well as the Band and Corps of Drums of the 3rd Battalion, of the most distinguished regiment.

"Especially am I pleased as the occasion is part of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the formation of the regiment, and today you return to the town out of whose garrison five companies of the original regiment were drawn in the year 1650, to be then known as Colonel Monck's Regiment of Foot, and some years later, by the present name of the Coldstream Guards, the Mayor continued.

"It can justifiably be said, therefore - and I am proud to say it - that your most famous regiment has its roots in this historic town, which in the past was the buffer town in the armed conflicts between England and Scotland, and throughout its long history has been closely connected with various regiments of the Army.

SAVED AN EMPIRE

"The achievements of the Coldstream Guards throughout the centuries are so many that, on an occasion such as this it is not possible to mention every major campaign in which the regiment has been engaged. Suffice it to say that they have served with

distinction in every part of the world, and won battle honours in various theatres, including Waterloo, Inkerman, Mons, Ypres the Somme, Arras, Dunkirk, Sidi Barrani, Caen, and in other important theatres, the names of which are household words throughout the land. Your regiment was engaged at the first battle of Ypres in the year 1914 when, without doubt, its engagement with the Brigade of Guards saved the British Empire, and from which the Coldstreams emerged with merely 60 men and no officers, the rest having fallen."

The Mayor concluded: "Such are a few of the honours of which your regiment may well be proud, as we are of them, and it is with such pride that, on behalf of the people of this ancient town, I give you a very warm welcome today."

In his reply Gen. Lloyd said that to receive an address such as the Mayor had seen fit to present to them was an event which he might assure them would not be forgotten throughout the annals of the regiment.

He continued: "The Coldstreamers look upon Berwick and Northumberland as the land of our birth. As the Mayor has already explained, it was from the regiment of Col. Fenwick in 1650 - Col. Fenwick then being Governor of Berwick - that five companies were taken and, together with five companies from Newcastle were formed into one regiment which was given by Cromwell to George Monck. That was 300 years ago and it was also 300 years ago that the same Col. Fenwick caused to be built your church of the Holy Trinity, which, I believe, to be the oldest ecclesiastical structure in your borough. In that church therefore, we have a direct and visible link with our birthplace."

The General went on to recall that in December, 1659, George Monck with his regiment started from Coldstream on his famous march to London. It was at Milfield that he received from the citizens of Berwick a deputation in favour of the restoration of Charles II. As they know, that march to London changed the history of England. Since the days of Cromwell, Berwick had been a key place strategically. It had been a source of contention between Scotland and England. It had experienced more fighting and gained more military fame than any other comparable place in the country.

FIRST BATTLE

In 1660 Cromwell himself was here on his way to the Battle of Dunbar, where men of the regiment first came under fire - the first occasion of many. There were few places of greater historical interest and fame than Berwick. Sir Charles concluded by declaring that they were very proud of their connection with the borough and very proud that to this day so many men from Northumberland continued to become Coldstreamers.

The Mayor moved on to the dais to take the salute as the Guardsmen marched past en route to the K.O.S.B. Depot.

THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME

General Sir Charles Lloyd. Knight of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, Military Cross, Colonel of the Coldstream Guards, the Officers, Warrant and Noncommissioned Officers and Guardsmen :

WE THE MAYOR, Aldermen and Burgesses of the County of the Borough and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed extend to you a most cordial and hearty welcome on this memorable return to our ancient and loyal Borough;

WE REJOICE and record our great pride in our association with you on this historic occasion in celebration of the Tercentenary of the formation of your most distinguished Regiment, being conscious of its unequalled Army, and the long continuous and devoted service of the regiment to the Sovereigns of this Realm ever since their happy restoration to the throne, in which you were so largely instrumental, ten years after that day in 1650 when five companies of men were drawn out of the garrison of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and five out of Berwick-upon-Tweed to be known as Colonel Monck's Regiment of Foot: AND WE express our complete confidence that in the centuries to come as in its glorious past the Regiment will display the highest possible efficiency for which it is well and truly known and acknowledged throughout the World.

THE COMMON SEAL of the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the County of the Borough and Town of Berwick-upon-Tweed was hereunto affixed this 12th day of August, 1950, in the presence of

THE GUESTS

Guests at the luncheon and the Town hall Ceremony included Ald. Mrs B. F. C. Adams, Drum Major H. Appleby, Col. R. Atkinson. Major A. K. Barlow, the Borough Surveyor (Mr J Armitage), the Borough Treasurer (Mr W. H. White), Lt.-Col. W AG Burns. Councillor J W Carmichael, Lt.Col. J Chandos-Pole, the Chief Constable (Mr F J Armstrong), Mrs Ralph Cleworth, Supt. J W Coxon, Major R J V Crichton. Ald. Mrs B Edminson, Councillor J J Edminson, Councillor T Evans, Rev. W B Hicks, Col E R Hill, Councillor G M How, The Recorder (Mr Ralph Cleworth). The Mayor (Councillor R Yelloly), the Mayoress (Mrs Yelloly), Major D W McConnell, the Sheriff (Mr I T Smith) the Sheriff's Lady (Mrs Smith). Cmdr. C W Kit Cat and Mrs Kit Cat. The Town Clerk (Mr R B Davison) Major C W Lamberton, Councillor T A Landels.

THE COLONEL HAD A WORD WITH THE EX-P.C.

Only Berwick man parading with the Old Coldstreamers at the ter-centenary parade of the Coldstream Guards in Marygate on Saturday was Jimmy Atkinson, Unionists' Club steward. A colonel of the regiment later stopped the popular ex-P.C., biggest man amongst the Old Coldstreamers, in Woolmarket to show him the illuminated address presented to the regiment. Mr Atkinson served in the same battalion during World War I. with the colonel, then a lieutenant. **The street** was cleared: policemen

paced their beats: there was an expectant hush... down Marygate rode an unconcerned lone civilian cyclist, His sheer audacity denied the right to challenge as he swept past! **Because the "mike"** was "live," snatches of the Mayor's conversation with Sir Charles Lloyd came over the air to the amusement of spectators near the Town Hall. The fault was rectified when the General adjusted the microphone. **Just as** the Guardsmen swung into Marygate a ginger cat arrived to patrol the section in which the parade was to be drawn up. However, he decided discretion was the better part of valour and retreated into the crowd with a mild admonitory tap from a P. C's foot.

On parade were 11 officers and 210 other ranks. **The ceremony** had a special significance for the 10 P.C's and three sergeants posted in Marygate. They were all ex-Coldstreamers. Practically all the "Bobbies" stationed on the entire route were former members of the Guards brigade.

Traditional Tweed salmon was the main dish at the excellent lunch for the civic and military guests in the King's Arms Hotel. **Other ranks** of the regiment had lunch at the K.O.S.B. Barracks, by arrangements made between the two regiments.

It was the first visit, as a body, of the Coldstream Guards Regiment to Berwick since its formation - a lapse of 300 years. Berwickers will hope that it will not be another 300 years before the next visit.

Provost Norman D. Henderson of Coldstream attended the Newcastle dinner on Friday and presented to Sir Charles an illuminated scroll expressing felicitations on this important date.

LUNCHEON SPEECHES

ELEGANT REGIMENT 'THE ARISTOCRATS OF TOUGHNESS'

The officers and civic guests were entertained to luncheon in the King's Arms Hotel. In proposing the toast of "The Coldstream Guards", the Mayor declared: "I would like to assure the officers and guardsmen of the regiment that we are genuinely proud at having so close a connection with their famous regiment, which forms one of those comprised in what we know as that great disciplined corps the Brigade of Guards.

More so by reason that these celebrations follow so soon upon the honour done to the regiment by His Majesty the King, when recently he presented new colours to the regiment.

Elegance, No Frills

Of the regiment it has been written that with their aristocratic and princely family of the Guards, the Coldstream has always stood as befitted its Cromwellian regiment, for a certain simplicity and directness, and that like the new model from which it derived, and the sturdy north and west from which it recruits, it has elegance but no frills. **Its tradition is classic and Puritan; there is something Roman about its restraint. Its spiritual home is a tight place or stick corner, anything calling for the most fundamental of English virtues, fortitude, hardihood and endurance,**

and that the Coldstreamers are the polished aristocracy of toughness. A commander who has such a corps serving under him knows that, wherever he may place it, it will continue to do its duty with maximum efficiency until it ceases to exist.

The Mayor continued: "After all through which the world passed in the years 1939 to 1945 the peace loving nations hoped that never again would we have to face the horrors of total war, and we pinned the utmost faith and hope in the United Nations organisation in order to preserve the peace of the world. With the stealthy, yet unlimited growth of Communism, however, and the gradual attachment of one nation after another to the dictates of Communist Russia and more recently by the clear indication demonstrated to us all in Korea, it seems unlikely that the peace of the world is to be preserved without the maintenance of the powerful forces of all the united nations. It is necessary, therefore, as one of the honourable members of the United Nations organisation, that this country should maintain adequate forces to take full share of enforcing the freedom of peace loving notions. We thank God, therefore, that we have regiments still in existence of the quality of the Coldstream Guards upon which to build an efficient army, feeling quite sure that if the time comes-and we pray that it will never be necessary- that we have again to be engaged in total war, we will not be felt lacking in any sense to do our part to defeat any enemy whose object is to over run the world.

Unpopular Child

It is not easy in these days for regiments of the Army to prosper, claimed the General in his reply, because they have so many commitments. In peace time-if this can be called peace time- the Army tends to become the unpopular child of the family, but if we can get the support of the civic authorities and of our countrymen, then I can assure you those important tasks will be made very much easier. As a regiment they were very proud of their 300 years; they were very proud of their Northumberland origin; they were very proud of their motto, "Second to none." That did not mean they thought they were better at all times than anyone else. It did mean, however, that they were second to none in their efforts to make themselves efficient and fit in the service of their country.

The General described the reception at the Town Hall as striking and moving and said he wished to thank the Council and the citizens of the town for having received the regiment so hospitably. This occasion will be recorded and remembered for years to come, he concluded.

Linda Bankier

The Lord Delaval

I was interested to read Dennis Nicholson's article about the above vessel in the last issue of the newsletter and I can add some more detail as this was the ship upon which Peter and Georgiana Hogarth together with their two and a half year old

daughter, Agnes, travelled to Melbourne (see Hogarth letters in Newsletter Nos. 23 and 24)

The *Lord Delaval* was built in Berwick by Messrs. Gowan and sailed on Monday, 13th September 1852 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and the weather was set fair. A large number of local people thronged the town walls and the pier to see the departure of this fine vessel. The ship was due to be detained in London for about 4 weeks and the 50 passengers booked from the Berwick area had their baggage put on board at Berwick and travelled down to London at a later date by rail.

The Hogarths went to London by sea from Granton Pier and had presumably been visiting relatives in Edinburgh. On arrival in London they had to go into lodgings because the *Lord Delaval*, which was at Gravesend, suffered continual delays to its sailing date of some extra 12 to 14 days. Apparently too much baggage had been taken on at Berwick and a large number of pieces had to be unloaded. Peter and Georgiana had their cabin altered so that their boxes could go underneath their beds. There was very wet weather at this time and Georgiana complained in one letter that all their "bed clothes are very damp, the mattresses are as wet as if they had been crated in water.....we are going to take them on shore at Gravesend to get them properly dried." Because of the extra delay the Ship's Agent, Mr. Sinclair, gave them 15/- each and Georgiana was very upset as she found out that other passengers had been given 25/- each.

The ship eventually sailed on the 5th November and collected the doctor at Deal. Georgiana commented on the fact that he was a young unmarried man new from College. No doubt she was concerned as she was some 7 months pregnant at this time! There are four letters written on board ship detailing day to day events and each one covering several days and only finished when a northbound vessel was sighted and the mail was passed over for conveyance to England. There seems to have been no distinction between Cabin and Intermediate Class passengers and they all had free range of the ship. Music, dancing and also concerts were held on board and all entertainment finished at 10 pm with the musicians rendering "God Save the Queen". On Christmas day they were given an extra allowance of flour, raisins and currants however, there was no music or entertainment, a small child died and two women were taken ill with fits – as Peter wrote "it was a very melancholy Christmas".

Two items of interest mentioned – firstly, one of the stewards on board was named Stevenson and prior to joining the ship he had worked for a butcher in Berwick. Secondly, on the 9th January one male steerage passenger died and after his burial at sea there was held an auction of all his personal possessions and the money raised, together with £10 found on him, was held by the captain for his next of kin.

When they were some 4 weeks from Melbourne they caught up with the "Sir W. Molesworth" of Glasgow that had taken 101 days so far. On board was a daughter of Mr. Gowan who was married to a Mr. Johnston (believed to be a missionary) and knowing that it was a Berwick ship, she sent a letter across to be read by anyone who knew her so that her friends in Melbourne could be told that they were well as there had been a lot of sickness on board with 13 children and 2 adults dying.

Georgiana had her child (a boy) on the *Lord Delaval* and the Captain very kindly offered to let her stay on board until she was perfectly strong again. Unfortunately their daughter Agnes died of dysentery some time after the baby was born but before their arrival at Melbourne. The letter giving exact details of this loss has not survived.

Finally, the small boat bringing their baggage ashore from the ship was run down in the Bay and sunk and remained under water for 2 or 3 days. They lost almost half of the food that they had brought out such as oatmeal, cheeses, sugar etc. Eventually the baggage was raised and Peter managed to stack their cases on the wharf and while he went a short distance to hire a dray, one of the largest packages containing most of the clothes they had worn on board was stolen. Peter commented that he hoped there would be better luck in store for them in Australia.

Apart from the difficulties with passenger's baggage both in London and on arrival at Melbourne, it would appear from the evidence we have that the *Lord Delaval* was a well-run ship and the journey was a successful one with four babies being born, very little illness and only a few deaths.

Sources: Berwick Advertiser dated 18th September 1852 for details of sailing.
The Hogarth Letters – on microfilm and also transcribed

Eric Herbert

A Journey through Berwick's Literary Heritage

4: Monastic Masterpieces?

Chronicles

The Middle Ages was certainly a busy time for Berwick. Caught between the warring kingdoms the town was repeatedly sacked, rebuilt, resacked and re-built, the castle particularly being a victim. That we can follow the fortunes of the city through these alarming centuries is due in large part to the efforts of medieval chroniclers based in monasteries around the country. All later historians have relied on these primary sources, supplemented these days by evidence from charters, legal and financial records and other non-narrative sources. To try to trace back all of what we know of Medieval Berwick to the original monastic chronicles would be a huge and fairly unrewarding task, and would also not really be relevant to the 'literary heritage' of the Borough. Most of the chronicles that are the best sources for what was happening here were written miles away, at monasteries with little or no connection to Berwick, like Lanercost Priory or St. Albans Abbey. The only chronicle to be produced anywhere near Berwick was that written at Melrose, probably started soon after the Abbey was founded in 1136. The Melrose Chronicle is, as its name suggests, a list of dates with significant events often described in considerable detail which is of enormous use to modern historians, but only as far as its limitations allow. The Chronicle includes many events going back centuries before the Abbey was founded, all of which are copied out of Bede and for later periods from the

chronicle of Symeon of Durham. Only for the events from 1150s to 1266 do the anonymous chroniclers speak with real authority, recounting things they have had directly reported to them by eyewitnesses, or other good report. Again and again in medieval histories the writers are at pains to stress that they are either only copying earlier and greater authorities or have good reports of what they are writing about. William of Malmesbury underlines this preoccupation:-

"I vouch nothing for the truth of events long past save the accuracy of the chronology, the veracity of the [copied] narrative must rest with its authors. But whatever I have recorded of later times I have either seen myself or heard from credible authorities."

The importance of eyewitness evidence had been stressed for historians as early as the 7th.Century by Isidore of Seville:- "we grasp what we see better than what we gather from hearsay. Things seen are not represented falsely." Given the confusion that eye-witnesses in court get into over what they saw, we may question Isidore's assertion, but it is as well for modern historians that by and large medieval chroniclers did stick to recording their own times, rather than embark upon speculative explorations of earlier times that they were ill equipped to undertake. The wealth of contemporary detail in the Chronicles points to their contemporary purpose. For us they are histories, for their writers they were diaries of events that had an immediate relevance for the monastic community. The Melrose Chronicle is not only concerned with Scottish events, there are references to Popes, emperors, a narrative of the crusades and the doings of the king of France. Even more relevant to the Abbey was the local detail, the appointments, retirements and deaths of bishops and abbots, the careers of monks that had left the Abbey, events in the lives of benefactors, and of course, a mass of detail on lawsuits, land disputes and anything considered relevant to the Abbey and its property. The chronicle was a log book, legal record, appointments-diary, newspaper, and gossip column all combined, rather like the chaos of facts and gossip we might find on the internet today. And, like the tabloids or the internet today, the desire to include a good story often lowered the writers' critical threshold. Perhaps the most notorious example is Geoffrey of Monmouth (c1100-1154) whose *History of the Kings of Britain* (c1147) traced them back to the Trojans, has the stones of Stonehenge flying by magical means from Wales and who effectively proved for the medieval reader the existence of Arthur, Merlin and company.

The Vampire of Berwick

Not everyone was taken in by this historical novel, William of Newburgh (c.1135-1200) makes fun of Geoffrey's notions before narrating his own tall stories, most notable that of the so-called *Vampire of Berwick*. This was not so much a blood-sucker in the Dracula tradition as a decaying zombie-like corpse that roamed the town pursued by a pack of demonic dogs. It was said to be the damned soul of a man who had lived a life of great wickedness. Eventually ten brave lads traced the body to its grave, cut it into pieces and burnt the remains. William goes on to recount similar tales of wandering undead in Alnwick and Melrose who spread plague and when traced to their graves were full of fresh blood. These tales are notable as the first accounts in British folklore of vampire-like characters. Newburgh Priory in Yorkshire incidentally, is now a quiet country house. Oliver Cromwell is buried in the attic, and, in the fine gardens, grows lots of wild garlic. Very spooky.

Back on Tweedside, aside from Melrose Abbey, the other site of literary creation was Dryburgh Abbey founded in 1140. Its most notable Abbot (1184-88) was Adam of Dryburgh, a celebrated preacher in his own day and author of a number of works on theology and instruction for brothers entering the Premonstratensian order. Eventually the bustle of Dryburgh got to be too much for him and he retired to a Carthusian house at Witham, where he died in 1212. Most celebrated of all the local monastic writers was John Duns Scotus (1265-1308). Probably born in Duns, he went to Grey Friars in Newcastle and then onto study and teach at Oxford, Cambridge, Paris and finally Cologne where he died and is buried. His theology was a reaction against the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and many considered him to be superior to Aquinas in his doctrine of the individual will. He was a pioneer of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and earned the nickname 'Doctor Subtlety' for the ingeniousness of his arguments. His followers in 16th. Century were dubbed 'Dunses' by their opponents from which we get the word 'dunce'. Duns Scotus' stand on individual freedom has also gained him admirers among philosophers and poets into 20th. Century. A memorial is to be seen in Duns.

Monks behaving badly

South of the Tweed though, the literary history is far less impressive. On Holy Island in the century following Reginald of Durham's death a complex of monastic buildings were added to the Norman Church. At first conventional these were entirely remodelled into a very unmonastic look by 1341-42. There was a fortified boundary wall, the church tower had arrow loops and the surviving inventories list a range of armour and weapons - by 1465 the monks are even spending 8 shillings on brass handguns and gunpowder. This warlike array may have been because the Priory was used as a staging post for Royal armies going north to campaign against the Scots. The same inventories, the earliest in 1326, and other documents, give us a running commentary on day-to-day life of the monastic community. We can see from year to year how much they spent on food, wine, clothes and everything else; how much they borrowed, and, it has to be said, how uncreative they were. In 1340 the Prior of Durham writes in pained tones that the monks must stop their "notorious neglect of religious observance", he tells them they must hold regular services and must not leave out the midnight service. This letter was scarcely delivered, when he writes again telling the young monks not to make fun of their aged Prior. The inventories show that they did not lack service books. In 1348, for about 10 monks, they had in the church, in addition to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 5 antiphones, 4 graduals, 3 psalters, 2 ordinals, 2 processional, and one volume each of epistles, legend, martyrology, sequences and homilies - quite enough to get a service started. Across the courtyard in the Chapter House, "In the Common Chest", was the light reading, Lives of the Saints, an epitome of theology, a poetical treatise on the mass (with diverse epistles), St. Mark's Gospel, sermons by St. Bernard and a Bible, "in which the book of Maccabees is wanting". Twenty years later a couple more volumes have been added, one the verses of Hildebert of Tours and "many pamphlets on diverse subjects". *The Sentences* by Peter Lombard (d.1164), a standard theological crib, in question and answer style, had been borrowed from Coldingham. By 1416 there were a few more service books but the only other new volumes are the letters of St. Jerome and *Imago Mundi*, their sole scientific work. They still had Lombard's *Sentences*, 50 years after borrowing it, but Coldingham now had their only Bible. Thereafter until the dissolution there would rarely be a Bible

at the Priory. Nor were they writing or copying any books, the accounts (e.g.1450/1) show they spent less on parchment (3s 4d) than they did on weapons (12s). Also each new generation of monks had the occasional rebel, who could not take monasticism seriously, such as the two in 1465 told off for frequenting taverns and "suspected places", playing dice, swearing and uttering "prohibited jests".

Over on Farne, the situation was far more studious. There were at most 2 monks there in 1394, when an inventory reveals there were no less than 25 books and 13 tracts. These included the Life of St.Bartholomew, and a book of "Mediations", this might have been the *Meditaciones cuisdam monachi apud Farneland quondam solitarii* now in Durham Cathedral Library. It is the work of one of the hermits of Farne in the same 14th.Century mystic genre as the rather better known *Cloud of Unknowing*.

As well as having far more books on Farne, the Priory was anxious to keep them, in 1449 paying no less than 53s 4d "to diverse Scots for getting and bringing back" seven books, clearly stolen in a raid on the rocky isle. It is sad to realise the heirs of St.Cuthbert were neglecting services, ignoring books and making no effort to write anything new. But is understandable. In the great days of the 7th and 8th.Centuries Lindisfarne was *the* creative centre for the region, it was under Royal patronage, it had a bishop, saint-in-residence and all the best artistic personnel would naturally wish to be part of that endeavour. 700 years later, Holy Island was one of many out-stations of the great See of Durham, it was from there that monks came after their training, and it was to there that the more talented returned. Farne was a tiny exception to this. The focus of the St.Cuthbert's cult was more on Farne, where he lived in greatest sanctity, rather than Holy Island where he had once been buried. So it was to Farne that the most dedicated and studious resorted.

The Friars of Berwick

Tales of neglect of duty and generally ribald carryings on are typical of monastic houses in the later Middle Ages and it is one of the reasons that St.Francis launched his reform movement founding the Franciscans in 1209. Pledged to the strictest poverty, chastity and obedience the Grey Friars were a nomadic preaching order, travelling from place to place depending on the charity of ordinary people and not the patronage of the rich. It was a noble ambition and within seven years St.Dominic had followed Francis' example with his Dominicans, or Black Friars. The Carmelites or White Friars were recognised in 1245 and established their first house in England at Hulne Priory in Alnwick Park, of which extensive ruins remain. Finally the Pope approved the Augustinian Hermits in 1256. These reformed orders were initially very popular with the public. There was a refreshing 'back-to-basics' air about them. They were mostly based in towns, such as the surviving Black Friars site in Newcastle, and practiced care-in-the-community rather than shutting themselves off in remote monasteries. They were also very popular with Scottish kings and all four were soon established in Berwick mostly with Royal patronage, Franciscans in 1231, Dominicans in 1241, Carmelites in 1270 and Augustinians by 1299. But like most reforming movements the friars were victims of their own success, religious enthusiasts rapidly set up dozens of rival groups all intent on showing they could out-do the others by the depth of the devotion, their ceaseless fasting and powerful preaching. The Friars of Penance, or Friars of the Sack, were one such group who were grudgingly allowed to set up in Berwick in 1267. By 1274 the Pope had had

enough and promptly banned any further orders of friars and stopped recruitment into all but the 'official' orders. Starved of new recruits the Sack Friars had abandoned Berwick by 1285. But it was not just religious enthusiasts that were the problem. Being able to move freely from place to place, exempt from most ecclesiastical jurisdiction and generally popular with the public, it was not long before donning a friar's habit was seen as the quickest way for a free lunch and a generally easy lifestyle by every clever layabout and conman in the country. Telling the fake friars from the genuine article became an irritating social nuisance. For poets, ballad-singers and performers this was a gift, mocking friars had great entertainment value. By 1475 the gluttonous Friar Tuck' had appeared in plays about Robin Hood and by 1500 'Friars' were regular drinking companions of the 'Lord of Misrule' in Christmas revels. If friars were seen as gluttons and lechers, on the other hand their independent mindedness could also be suspected of being in league with the Devil. The scientific experiments of the Franciscan Roger Bacon (1214-92) were in his lifetime seen, at best as unconventional, at worst the product of dark helpers. Another Franciscan experimenter Thomas Bungay (fl.1290) was similarly suspected, their joint reputations as magicians enshrined in Robert Greene's *The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay* (1594). It is in these contexts of humour and suspicion that the anonymous comic poem *The Freiris of Berwik* should be seen. It dates from about 1480 when Berwick was still in Scots hands, and tells the story of two roving friars who beg lodgings from Alison, a housewife, while her husband, Simon, is away. They spy on her assignation with another lecherous friar, and when Simon returns unexpectedly they turn this to their own advantage, pretending to use magic to conjure up a feast (which had been hurriedly hidden by Alison). Finally they pretend the lecherous friar (hidden in a trunk upon Simon's arrival) is a demon and Simon hits him with a cudgel as he makes his escape. The Scots poem is 566 lines long and the main source for the text is in a collection of poems copied out by George Bannatyne (1545-1605) while he was sheltering from the Edinburgh plague in 1568. It used to be attributed to William Dunbar, but this is not now accepted. A prologue gives a fine description of Berwick at the end of the Middle Ages:-

"As it befell, and happinnit in to deid,
 Upoun a rever the quhilk is callit Tweid
 At Tweidis mowth, thair standis a nobill toun,
 Quhair mony lordis hes bene of grit renoune,
 And mony worthy ladeis, fair of face;
 And mony ane fresche, lusty galland was
 In to this toun - the quhilk is callit Berwik.
 Upoun the sey thair standis nane it lyk,
 For it is wallit weill abowt with stane
 And dowbill stankis castin mony ane;
 And syne the castell is so strang and wicht,
 With strait towris and turattis he on hicht;
 The wallis wrocht craftely withall;
 The portcules most subtelly to fall
 Quhen that thame list to draw thame upoun hict,
 That it nicht be of na maner of micht
 To win that hous be craft or subteltie
 Quhairfoir, it is maist gu allutirly
 In my tyme, quhair evir I haif bene -

Moist fair, most gudly, most plesand to be sene;
The toun, the wall, the castell and the land,
The he wallis upoun the upper hand,
The grit croce kirk; and eik the Masone Dew
The Jacobene freiris; of the quhyt hew
The Carmeleitis; and the Minouris eik -
The four ordouris wer nocht for to seik
Thay wer all in this toun dwelling."

The story then moves along rapidly in a bright and breezy style, with a number of double-entendres and broad farcical elements. Probably the poem was recited by storyteller, who adapted it to mock any one of the four orders as required. Alternatively it may be the poetical working up of a farcical sketch that was performed by travelling players. Similar stories of lone friars conjuring up meat are known from France and Germany but the *Freiris of Berwik* is the first to include two friars. The same story, with the same characters, turns up as an interlude in Robert Davenport's *New Tricke to Cheat the Divell* (1639) and again in German as *Der Exorcist* (1679). The publisher of this noting it is adaption of a stage work. In 1950s the poem formed the basis for a one act play, and as part of *From Cheviot to the Coast*, a musical celebration of Berwick which was staged at the Maltings in May 2000, I adapted the opening of the story as a comic interlude. I hope some day it will be possible to stage a dramatic version of the complete story, truly one of the highpoints of the local literary heritage.

Further Reading

Bulloch, J. *Adam of Dryburgh* (1958)

Cartwright, R.A & D.B. *The Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands* (1976)

Jack, R.D.S. & Rozendaal, P.A.T. (ed) *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature 1375-1707* (1997) [pp.152-65: *The Freiris of Berwik* (c.1480)]

Raine, J. *North Durham* (1852)

Simpson, J. & Roud, S. *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (2000)

Stevenson, J.(trsl) *The History of William of Newburgh* (1856, rpt.1996)

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Chris Green

SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER

March 1824

H.M. revenue Cruiser "SUCCESS", Lt. W.A. Thomson R.N., has arrived in Leith Roads from her station in the West Highlands. To shorten her passage Capt. Thomson resolved on pushing through the Caledonian Canal, to accomplish which, the wind must be either easterly or westerly; being the latter, the SUCCESS was shackled to set sail. The novel sight of one of H.M. ships under a crowd of canvass,

decorated on both sides from the top masthead to the deck with all her variegated colours and flags enlivened by the martial pibrochs and Highland airs played by the piper, did not fail to bring in crowds the astounded natives, who viewed with wonder an armed ship, moving with majestic pride, some 100 feet below them, through the bosom of the mountains, from the west to the German Ocean. On clearing the canal, the SUCCESS fired a salute, in consequence of being the first of H.M. ships which has come through this wonderful passage. The SUCCESS draws 13 feet of water.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BERWICK ADVERTISER AUGUST 12TH 1824

SIR – The Tyne Mercury of the 3rd of August, has some observations on the impropriety "of full grown men as well as boys, bathing in the Tyne, in the middle of the day" near a public walk. The people of Berwick upon Tweed act completely the reverse of this, for whilst the females bathe in a place completely secluded, to the disgrace of our town, be it said, they are annoyed by persons who stand or lie upon the top of the bank, for the express purpose of beholding nudity. When I see 2 or 3 BRACE of dandies assisting their optic nerves by means of telescopes, with the above intent, I can pass them unmoved, as things not properly belonging to creation, for strictly speaking, it cannot be said that the Deity ever made a dandy; but feelings of disgust arise when I observe those who ought to know better, stretching their necks with the utmost avidity and thus invading what no man ought to do, the precincts of female modesty. T.M.

Muriel Fraser