

Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



NUMBER 52 - November 2006

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 23rd March 2007

Friends AGM in the Guildhall, Berwick
at 7pm.

OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES

AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Ayton Bowling Clubhouse

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Tues. 28th November 2006

Maritime Berwick: Jim Walker

Tues. 30th January 2007

Along the Border Line: Bryan Webster

BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: The Parish Centre, Berwick

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wed. 15th November 2006

Early days in Belford and Berwick Workhouses :
Jane Bowen

Wed. 20th December 2006

Members Night – update on Bondington Project
and Facades of the Fifties.

Wed. 17th January 2007

Northumbria's Golden Age: Derek Sharman

BELFORD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: Meeting Room, Belford
Community Centre**

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wed. 13th December

Supper party at Goosewells. Courtesy of
Ms.Philippa Craig

Wed. 24th January 2007

"The Freeman and the Dukes": Mr.C.S.Pettit

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick upon
Tweed**

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Mon. 6th November

The Neolithic site at Millfield: Clive Waddington

Mon. 4th December

Festive Archaeology: Roger Miket

BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose

Time: 2.30 p.m.

Sun. 19th November

“History of Cavers Church”: Jean Muir

COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Thurs. 7th December 2006

The Border Reivers: Mr David Welsh

Thurs. 14th December 2006

Christmas Social

Thurs. 18th January 2007

Railway to Kelso-eventually: Mr Ian Curry.
This is a joint meeting with Cornhill W.I. at
Eildon Centre Coldstream.

DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: Dunse Social Club, 41 Newton
Street. Dunse**

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wed. 29th November 2006

“The Adventures of an Archeologist in The
Planning Department: Rory McDonald

Wed. January 31st 2007

“Polworth Kirk Past and Future: Charles
Letts

GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: The Cheviot Centre,
Padgepool
Place Wooler.**

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wed 8th November 2006

Musings of a Country Joiner & Undertaker: Mr
Thomas Tokely.

Wed 13th December 2006

Border Weddings: Mr Vince Kelly

Wed 10th January 2007

Unicorns: Mr R.A. Humphrey.

NORHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Norham Village Hall.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Mon. 13th November 2006

North Northumberland Hillforts:
Mr Alistair Oswald.

NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY : NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH

**Venue: Bell View Resource Centre,
33 West Street, Belford**

Time: 10.00am

Sat 18th November 2006

The Clay Family: Mr T.Swan

Sat. 9th December 2006

Christmas Lunch

Sat. 20th January 2007

Members' Open Forum

NORTH SUNDERLAND AND SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: St. Paul's Church Hall, North

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Sunderland

Wed. 22nd November 2006

“Animals of War”: Betty Walton

Wed. 24th January 2007

Xmas Party

ARCHIVE NEWS

I'm not quite sure where the past couple of months have gone but maybe that's a sign of getting older!

Needless to say the Record Office has been very busy. There is a noticeable increase in the number of people coming to the area to research their Family History – I have had visitors right up until the end of October which wouldn't have happened a couple of years ago.

As well as the public open days, the Record Office has been involved in a number of projects which I mentioned in the last newsletter. On 20 August, the complete **“Facades of the Fifties”** exhibition was mounted in the Guildhall. About 600 people came to visit the exhibition over the day, a mixture of local people and visitors, and it was a great success with something for everyone, even the children – we were encouraging them to draw pictures of shops!. The Group running the exhibition do hope to take the project further forward but we still need to meet to discuss this.

At the beginning of September, we had a very successful **“War with Russia Weekend”** for which the weather was very kind to us. The Record Office was involved in various parts of the weekend. We co-ordinated all the exhibitions which were in the Guildhall and produced one about Berwick in the 1850s and another on the area's connections with the Baltic in the past. With the help of the Friends, we also manned the Guildhall over the weekend – thanks to all those who helped with the bookstall and the teas and coffees and particularly to Jim Walker for mounting an exhibition of some of his photos from “Secret Berwick”. The annual “Open Doors” was taking place over the same weekend and so this year, I decided to do my tours of the Council Offices again. Over the morning, I took round over 100 people and by 1pm I didn't have much of a voice left! The Record Office's main contribution to the weekend was working with the Maltings Youth Theatre on some historical street theatre. This year, sticking to the Russian theme, we told the story of Berwick's only visible connection with the Crimean War – the Russian Gun on the Walls. I researched the story using the local newspapers and the teenagers interpreted it. We all really enjoyed doing it and the teenagers had a great time acting it out. As part of it, we

continued a Bankier tradition – Niamh took part last year(3 weeks old) and so this year it was Siobhan's turn as the naughty girl putting grass down the cannon at the Quayside!.

As a result of my work with the Maltings Youth Theatre, I produced a small exhibition for the "No Limits" event for Young People which the Council held in the Guildhall and other venues in the town at the end of September.

Things will start to get quieter now over the winter but that means there is a chance that I will now catch up with all the day to day work.

Linda Bankier

IRREGULAR MARRIAGE AT LAMBERTON TOLL

Jane Bowen has recently been going through the Berwick Board of Guardians Minute and Letter books. Whilst doing so, she found the following letter, dated 1863 and sent to the Head Constable of Berwickshire about a Lamberton Toll marriage. As there are so few registers available for these marriages, this is a great find and for one family may be the only extant proof that the marriage took place :

6th October 1863

Sir,

I am directed by the Guardians of this Union to submit for the consideration of yourself and the legal authorities of the County of Berwick the facts connected with the Celebration of an illegal marriage which lately came under their Notice.

James Sommerville and Mary Beveridge both being resident in the Village of Spittal in England and neither of them having ever resided in Scotland went on 1st January last with William Thompson who resides in this town to Lamberton Toll, and there a so called Marriage was solemnized by the latter in the presence of Matthew Beveridge, the woman's father and a man named William Hardy.

The parties who are ignorant people believe this to be good marriage but as you are doubtless aware it is quite invalid.

Thompson is an old hand at this trade and the Guardians are desirous that he should be punished if your law will reach him – for the purpose the Guardians desire me to submit the matter to you, and I now enclose for your information the Lines which Thompson gave the Parties.

I am Sir, Your obedient Servant, E. Willoby, Clerk to the Guardians

If anyone else has found entries relating to Irregular marriages in unusual places, do let me know. We do keep a note of oddment marriages we find in the hope that they will help someone one day.

Linda Bankier

BRITISH SCHOOL, PALACE GREEN, BERWICK

Before the summer, the Record Office and the Berwick History Society were approached by some relations of Katy Cuthbert who was headmistress at the school in the 1950s. The family have some material but with the help of both organisations, would like to produce a booklet on the school. Following a letter in the local newspaper, I have been contacted by some people who went there and who are willing to help. However, we want to involve as many people as possible. So, if you know anything about the school – did you go there or have you any old photographs of the school or its pupils which you would allow us to copy – please do get in touch. The school was opened in 1859 and didn't close until 1975 after which it became the hostel for the children of Holy Island attending schools in Berwick. I can be contacted by telephone on 01289 301865 or by e-mail : lb@berwick-upon-tweed.gov.uk

AUTUMN LECTURE

The Autumn Lecture this year was given by Chris Green, Museum Curator, in the Gymnasium. Members and friends were treated to an excellent evening which was held amid the Faed exhibition and the stage set for the wonderful production of Amadeus.

Chris outlined the setting up of the Berwick Borough museum and Art Gallery, from the inspiration of Dr. Johnston who “invented” the descriptive side of Natural History. The Museum Collection started life in Dr. Johnston’s rooms, moved to the Corn Exchange and thence to the Museum and Reading Room in Marygate. Burrell donated his collection of 400 items in 1940 and then the Borough Museum and Art Gallery settled into the Clock Block at the Barracks in 1985.

The Universal Museum and the Eco Museum were next on the agenda. The Universal Museum is falling out of favour and from Chris’ description of the Eco-Museum too much good will on the part of present day folk and their descendants is needed, to ensure the conservation of all artefacts for future generations.

I hope the next bit of lecture is to be printed in this newsletter. My jottings do not pay tribute to the inspired talk Chris gave about Burrell’s collection and how it fits into our current agenda. He elaborated on Burrell’s taking great care to purchase items which showed development of style over several centuries. Chris certainly opened our eyes to the treasures within the Museum.

After this erudite but fascinating lecture we were treated to a film made for the “War with Russia” weekend. The Da Vinci Code had nothing on this convoluted tale which involved the Holy Grail and Anastasia and Castle Hills and William Chichester of Ravensdowne!!

Refreshments and mingling followed a rousing vote of thanks from Vice-Chairman Gus Fairburn.

Barbara M Herdman

THE MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE:

A revised version of the Curator's Autumn Lecture to the Friends

As most Friends will now know Berwick Museum is going through an interesting time at the moment, with its whole future up for discussion.

That the fundamental existence of the museum should be questioned is completely consistent with the whole history of museums and that of Berwick in particular. The museum has changed its essential character three times in the last 140 years. Established in 1867 from the collections of Dr. George Johnston the first Berwick Museum was a natural history database. Then in the late 1940s it changed into primarily an art gallery, thanks to the donations of Sir William Burrell. It was a time when it was thought art and high culture should be made available to the masses. Then again in the 1980s the museum changed again, with an enormous effort put into collecting industrial and domestic objects that represented the social history of the Borough in the last two centuries.

In my own time as curator, I too have followed current trends in museums. First we had a rash of temporary exhibitions, then education became a core activity, so from 1997 onwards we have developed education to a point where we are now recognised regionally as doing innovative work, as witnessed by a Museums Council special grant in 2005 to enable schools from outside the Borough to come and experience our Tudor Days. These are based on the concept of Living History. This has been around in the world of re-enactors for forty years yet it is only within the last decade that museums have considered it 'respectable' enough to wish to join in. The Union of the Crowns 400, Eve of Trafalgar and the War with Russia are all part of this new emphasis on living history events for the public.

So over its 140 years the museum has continually adapted to changing requirements from society, from natural history data-base to art collection, to social history to living history. But throughout these changes there has always been a collection and a building in which to put it in. Some things are emphasised while others are stored to be brought out when the fashion changes again.

Now however the closure of the museum is debated, and what is particularly fascinating is that what has emerged through various public meetings, letters and other statements is that the debate is not simply about money, but about what sort of museum service should be carried forward. On the one hand there are those that support a traditional museum while another school of thought sees closure of the existing museum as an opportunity to

redistribute the resources into an entirely new heritage service not based on a traditional museum structure.

Berwick, like most other town museums was founded on the concept of the universal museum. This idea comes from the 18th century enlightenment and the greatest example is the British Museum, where the evidence for all human and natural things is brought together to inform rational debate, on international, national and the local levels. But by the 1970s the idea that every town should have its own mini-British Museum with a bit of everything was being widely questioned. Let museums be small and local came the cry. So we saw the rise of Heritage Centres, with lots of narrative history in the form of graphic panels with a few objects. The universal museum idea also was attacked in the 1980s by theorists who considered that there was no longer a universal truth (this was an offshoot of deconstructivism in literary theory) and that the 'priesthood' of museum curators should no longer be believed, and we saw the rise of different narratives, beginning in ethnic galleries. For example Gallery 33 in Birmingham Museum pioneered multiple labelling for the same objects – there was the 'indigenous inhabitants' story', the 'colonists story', the 'curator's story' and the visitors were invited to contribute their own comments.

From ethnic collections the idea of multiple narratives has moved onto local stuff and in recent years we have seen the rise of community curators, as in Rotherham Museum and at Slough, where local people make their own displays, with the help of established museum staff. This is seen as directly corresponding to the needs of the local communities. Recently some very large museum makeovers have been directly informed by this approach. Norfolk Museum service did a public consultation on what sort of themes and displays the museum ought to cover, and the grandest of all is the newly opened Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow. A decade of focus groups and public consultation resulted in 200 stories that the public wanted told in the museum. These have been edited down to just over 100 and each is told in a separate case in 22 themed areas. Done to the highest standards (it cost £1000 a square metre) this is the ultimate in community informed display and has attracted 1.4 million visitors in the four months since it opened. A parallel development to the multiple narrative idea is the concept of an eco-Museum. This began in France as a response to the economic collapse of the steel factories at Le Creusot. As part of the regeneration of the area was a radical new museum concept was devised, the eco-musee. At Le Creusot it was a museum of the whole area, not just a series of local museums, with the whole community enrolled into the effort. As Hugues de Varine, the founder of the museum has written:-

"Any movable or unmovable object within the community's perimeter is physiologically part of the museum. This introduces the idea of a kind of cultural property right, which has nothing to do with legal ownership...So every building, every person, every cow, every plant and every tree within the museum's boundaries was to be considered as belonging to the collections, objects of potential interest and significance."

The idea is intended not primarily for visitors but to give the depressed community a sense of worth encouraging communities to take a pride in the own surroundings, exploring local heritage and expressing this in various ways whether it be through trail leaflets, booklets, interpretation panels or other means to fix the story of the landscape. At Le Creusot it certainly worked to give the depressed community a sense of identity and there are some excellent local examples such as the ongoing Coquetdale Community Archaeology project and within the Borough with the Flodden battlefield trail and its associated activities.

Nor is this idea a purely rural notion, in Manchester the concept of involving disaffected communities through archaeology has been successfully pursued. Excavations in socially deprived areas had the effect of reducing crime and disorder levels by 20% in those areas, as local youths took a real interest for the first time in their own backyards. At its best then the eco-museum concept can give a real sense of worth to a community and produce real research into the lost history of those communities. But in its purest form it does away with the idea of the traditional museum altogether, as we see from a report on museums in Morayshire.

“Rather than serving as a storehouse or a temple, both of which isolate objects from ordinary people and require professional assistance for access and understanding, an eco-museum recognises the importance of culture in the development of self identity and its role in helping the community to adjust to rapid change...Collections are viewed from broad perspectives and organised around a community’s interrelationship with its culture & physical environment. In addition to objects, collections can consist of for example, AV-materials, paper documentation, physical sites, traditional ceremonies, oral history. Inventories are taken of holdings in the community, but people are not asked to turn over valued items for storage in a repository. As a result training community members to care for items at home is a critical function of eco-museum staff work”.

This means in effect the ‘collection’ only exists in virtual terms (and indeed could be recorded on the web) but it does not really exist in a way that it can be successfully passed on beyond the lifetime of the original owners. At its simplest a traditional museum interrupts the natural progress of objects through time from making, to use, to disuse, to throwing away. Unless there is some institution there to collect and preserve there will, in 50 or 100 years, be no collection. Perhaps this does not matter as it is perfectly possible that the traditional museum has indeed outlived its usefulness, and the new forms of preservation implied by the eco-museum concept will take its place.

In Berwick’s context the question then arises as to what happens to the existing collection if it is indeed decided to re-focus resources around travelling community heritage workers rather than a traditional display. At issue is not the local social history as seen currently in *Window on Berwick* this fits well into a community agenda and could be comparatively easily be re-located to a heritage centre somewhere other than the Barracks. The real

issue concerns the 400 or so items of the Burrell collection comprising paintings by mainly Dutch and French artists, medieval carvings, Islamic metalwork and lots of Chinese porcelain. At first sight it is difficult to see how this is of any use to a purely local agenda. It can be argued that Burrell's original intention, to show fine art to a small town, is now out of date - simply putting out fine art and expecting people to be wowed by it, just because the curator says it is marvellous is no longer enough. To justify the Burrell collection in local terms we should envisage how it could be used in a revamped museum. For some items this is comparatively easy. Take for example the medieval works - chalices and other metalwork, carvings of saints, a single piece of tapestry. All these from unknown churches in Europe and bought by Burrell on the open market. Now Berwick's first golden age was the Middle Ages when the town was called a second Alexandria because of its wealth & prestige. A town that might indeed invest in chalices, carvings of saints and tapestries. So it is perfectly possible to convert the Dragon Gallery, which already contains these items, into a Medieval Berwick gallery combining items from Bondington with Burrell's items standing for all the lost wealth.

Moving onto the portraits in the collection, these range from the 16th to 18th century. Clearly in a town girt by Tudor ramparts there is a place for the two 16th century portraits very typical of the style of the period. These two indeed play a regular part in our Tudor education days. Similar the style and costume of the other Burrell portraits is completely in keeping with works that might have been seen in Berwick in those periods and would easily fit into any reconstruction of those periods.

Then there are the main pictures, mostly French and Dutch works of the 19th century. These pictures are linked and do tell a tell of artistic influences and subtle connections. The pictures by Angel and the 18th century French school find their influences in pictures we have by Ribot and Bonvin. Similarly the Monticelli was inspired by Watteau and Michel was inspired by 17th century Dutch landscapes. These, and the French open-air painters such as Boudin, also inspired the painters of the Hague School whose works are well represented. The Hague school was an attempt by Dutch painters in 1870s to show peasant life and the wet and windy Dutch landscape. They were much collected by Scots, as noted in *Apollo* 1960:-

"Dutch XIXth century paintings appealed to the hearts, as well as the pockets, of the Scots because sobriety met with a response in a serious temper, and a dominant grey and green tonality looked at home in a country in which, on its Eastern seaboard at least, nature herself seems to paint by the tone values....the sentimental Scot will never outwardly reveal his deepest feelings; the heart that he refuses to wear upon his sleeve speaks through the pictures upon his walls, vicariously giving vent to emotions he would dare to express in public".

So the Hague is very relevant to Scotland and Sir William Burrell. But more than that, Israels, the founder of school, travelled to Scotland. George Reid went the other way,

studying with the Hague school artists. His picture of Norham Castle is in the collection, a local picture in the greys of the Hague style. And there is more. Glance at the peasant child from Artz's *Waiting for the Boats* and we are reminded of the Cullercoats school of NE painters and also of Berwick's own James Wallace, for example Wallace's *Figures on the Old Bridge at Berwick*, which has a very similar mother & child with a group of 'peasant women' behind. This is not surprising as Wallace travelled to Holland and visited the studio of one of the leading artists of the group Anton Mauve (two of whose pictures are in Burrell collection). Wallace's paintings show great influence of the Hague school in terms of subject and technique. So to truly understand our local painter James Wallace we need the Hague School pictures.

Then what about the Chinese porcelain? In our exhibition *Burrell the Collector* in the Gymnasium we arranged the porcelain in a display as it might have looked in the 18th century, when this porcelain was first imported into Britain. It was then the height of fashion. And Berwick's second golden age was this very same 18th century. Did anywhere in Berwick look like the porcelain display we arranged? It is at least possible. In Dr Fuller's *History of Berwick* moreover there is praise for Chinese agriculture, which shows some locals were effected by the cult of Chiniserie. But the usefulness of the Chinese and Islamic collections goes beyond the 18th century.

One of the real problems that all museums have today is representing contemporary culture. In Berwick the Gymnasium Gallery is a leading exponent of the cutting edge of contemporary art, and we have in the past also put on exhibitions of living artists, we are after all an art gallery as well as a museum, but what about contemporary popular culture? This is now no longer local but global and based on movies, on pop music, on fashion, on the cult of celebrity. Museums need to represent these things in their collections and, to show their origins and connections. This we did this year with our *Tales from the East* exhibition. In 26 sections we showed how dependent modern Western popular culture is on the East. Darth Vader and Yoda from *Star Wars* were placed alongside samurai armour and Chinese plates showing sages. Modern leaflets for *Aladdin* pantomimes rested alongside Islamic metalwork and plastic dragons contrasted with dragons on Burrell pots. One family from Frome were enthusiastic:-

"East exhibition really hits the spot! Excellent use of contemporary mediums to explain history & its immediate relevance in our modern lives. Best exhibition I've seen since 'Modernism' at the V&A!"

Even Hugues de Varine, the creator of Le Creusot, has come to recognise the importance of a wider perspective. He concluded a lecture at Utrecht in 1993 with the words:--

"The community museum...begins with people, not with objects. Its philosophy and its practice are based on the relationship between local people and their heritage. That heritage is regarded as being local, national and global. The purely parochial local museum contains the seeds of failure.

Unless the familiar and the known are constantly linked to the strange and the foreign, the community museum is destined to die of anaemia. It will suffer a similar fate if it abandons its duty to be people-centre and becomes object-centred”.

Finding the balance between objects and the community should indeed be the subject of this current debate.

Chris Green

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

After the heart-stopping news that the closure of Berwick Borough Museum and Art Gallery was imminent- and our petition for which 1400 names so far, which helped change “closure” to “consultation for the future of the Museum”, we have not been idle.

We have held frequent F.B.D.M.A. Committee Meetings to ensure we know what is afoot and how we can best promote and help the Museum. Brian Chappell and I attended a meeting set up by Bernard Shaw which included Community groups such as the Development Trust, Bondington Group, the Preservation trust etc. There were 18 of us and we selected 6 of that number to set up what has become known as “*The Action Group*”, to look to raising funds and awareness that we can help Berwick Borough Council save the Museum. The vision is not only to save the collections but to improve all aspects of our rich and varied heritage throughout the Borough.

One of the groups with charitable status might act as an umbrella body until such time as the Action Group can become a charitable trust in its own right. There is a lot of work to do and as far as we can we will keep you up to date with developments.

What was most heartening was the large number of people who were prepared to sign the petition. There were also many, many letters from all over the Borough, and indeed, over the country expressing support. We were touched by the considerable thought that had gone into most of the letters which brimmed with good ideas and hope.

We are hoping to have a recruitment drive for membership because we feel we need more people visibly interested in the work of the Museum and Archives. Both Linda and Chris believe passionately in their own work but also in anything which reflects the wonderful heritage to which all of us in the Borough fall heir.

Perhaps in twenty years time we may have our Museum and Archives in an ultra modern environment which will enable exhibitions to be mounted throughout the Borough and reflecting all ages of our history. We can but hope.

*Barbara M Herman
Chairman F.B.D.M.A*

WAR WITH RUSSIA

An interesting side-line, certainly for me, was a visit to the old fishing drifter “Reaper”, moored at Berwick Quay.

Having gone down below, my eye was immediately caught by a “ST.KILDA MAIL BOAT, PLEASE OPEN”, amongst a collection of this and that. I asked a crew member how they had come by it. Oh, I don’t know, he said, it’s “just been there” for years and no other crew knew either. So I explained my interest, having done 2 N.T.S. Work Parties on St.Kilda in 1988 and 1989. And the history is this:-

In the early days, the St.Kildans’ equivalent of dialling 999, was to build a wooden container-no bottles then- put in a message and cast it off, knowing that the prevailing currents would take it to the mainland, 60 odd miles East. In 1930 you may know that in spite of better communication the island was evacuated, being unviable as a community.

So – when N.T.S Work Parties got underway, the tradition was established to build a similar box, any design, with a plastic bag or bottle inside containing about 12 postcards, self addressed and a message, and cast it off when leaving St.Kilda. Some have even reached Norway, but most to the Western and Northern Isles, or never recovered.

Back to the “Reaper” now. The crew were most interested and tried to prise it open, but too firmly screwed. But one end had been removed exposing the screw top of a plastic bottle, which they declared empty. So I had a look in and could see that there were indeed postcards in, which had conformed to the curve of the bottle. As the Reaper was due to leave, no more was done.

However I later had a phone call from a crew member a Mr McKay, also secretary of the Anstruther Museum where the Reaper was based. He had extracted the cards (from work Party June 2002), kindly sent them to the people concerned, with my name and address and explaining how I had brought their attention and interest in the box. He told me that it

had been passed to them by the St.Andrews Coast Guard, who had received it in 2003 or 4 from a fishing boat from Orkney. Mr McKay was doing further research, as they were all so interested.

Muriel Fraser

WHAT WE DID IN THE WAR (with Russia)

Berwick's best known story is that it is supposedly still at war with Russia. This followed, so it is said, from Berwick having to be mentioned separately in all laws and the Crimean War having been declared on behalf of England, Scotland and Berwick but the peace of 1856 missed off Berwick. We could not let the 150th anniversary go by without some celebrations, so the Museum got a grant from the local Museums Hub to pay for a weekend of events, coinciding with the Civic Society's Heritage Doors Open Days. As with previous living-history weekends Derek Sharman was brought in as project co-ordinator and did a fantastic job of dealing with all the practical things so that the weekend ran amazingly smoothly and one of the re-enactors commented that it was one of the best organised events he had ever been involved in.

The unique challenge of course with this weekend, unlike all previous living-history events, was how do you give substance to a story that has no basis in fact and is actually just a piece of game-show trivia? We decided that Berwick in 1856 would be the theme and Derek devised a scenario for a 'battle for Berwick' which did not depart too far from historical reality. The day-long storyline supposed Russian prisoners arriving in Berwick would seize weapons and have a fight with the garrison. Around this battle we grouped other events. Linda Bankier researched a very comprehensive exhibition on the genuine links between Berwick and Russia, I did a rather smaller one on the very slim history of the myth itself and Linda and Wendy Payne revised a drama about the arrival of the Russian cannon now on the ramparts, this was performed by the Maltings Youth Theatre. The military were supplied by the 19th Regt of Foot (the Green Howards) the only Crimean period re-enactment group with 'Russians' found by the Confederate side of the American Civil War Society (they had the grey uniforms). A contingent of Royal Marines who appeared in last year's Eve of Trafalgar weekend was also involved. In last year's weekend the newly created Museum Theatre Group performed two 'Gothic' stories down in the old Wine Cellars in Silver Street, that worked well but we felt cut off from everything

else. This time round therefore we were based on the Gymnasium and performed *Sheldon's Scenes of Berwick History* a 40 minute show adapted by me from Frederick Sheldon notoriously inaccurate *History of Berwick* (1849).

The weather over the weekend was perfect, the military scenes, arrival of sailing ship *Reaper* and the dramatic presentations looked fantastic. On the Saturday evening over 100 people attended the Parish Church for a dazzling concert by Koshka a trio of musicians from Glasgow's only Russian café. Sunday saw a repeat of the main events with the addition of a poem commissioned by the Museum from Keith Armstrong. The battle for Berwick was even better on the Sunday and overall around 4000 extra people are estimated to be in the town for the event. Three days later a Council sub-committee recommended closing down the Museum.

Chris Green

ELEANOR WEATHERLY'S DIARY FOR 1804 RE-VISITED

You may remember the above article, which appeared in the Newsletter of March 2005.

I am delighted to say that since then, the original Diary has been found, and surprisingly, not where it was believed to be. One of our readers, Shirley Shaw who, curious about some of the spinning terms mentioned, placed extracts in the Journal of the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, asking if anyone could give her an explanation.

One of her respondents was Mrs Elspeth Orrom of Cumbria, who was unable to help with the spinning query, but was most anxious to know where Shirley had found the diary extracts. She went on to explain that she actually owned the original volume and was currently transcribing it, which also included the year 1805. (Surely a 'eureka' moment for any researcher) This Diary has been in the possession of Elspeth's family, the Olivers, for over 100 years.

Eleanor's son, Matthew James Turnbull married as his second wife, Sophia Oliver of Lochside house near Yetholm. When Matthew died childless in 1894, he left his books to the Oliver family. Elspeth, as the great- great niece of Sophia, duly inherited the Diary from her mother Anne Oliver, who had typed out the 1804 transcript. A portrait of 'Dr Turnbull' still hangs in Lochside house, and whilst the family knew of his connection with their ancestor, they were unaware that he was the son of the diarist, Eleanor Weatherly. The story has now been brought to a happy conclusion.

Eleanor suggested at the end of 1804 that she would '*try what another year would do*' – we now know that she did try another year. Thanks to Elspeth, the transcription of the complete Diary is now in Berwick upon Tweed Record Office. Below is a short extract, describing how they received the news of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar.....

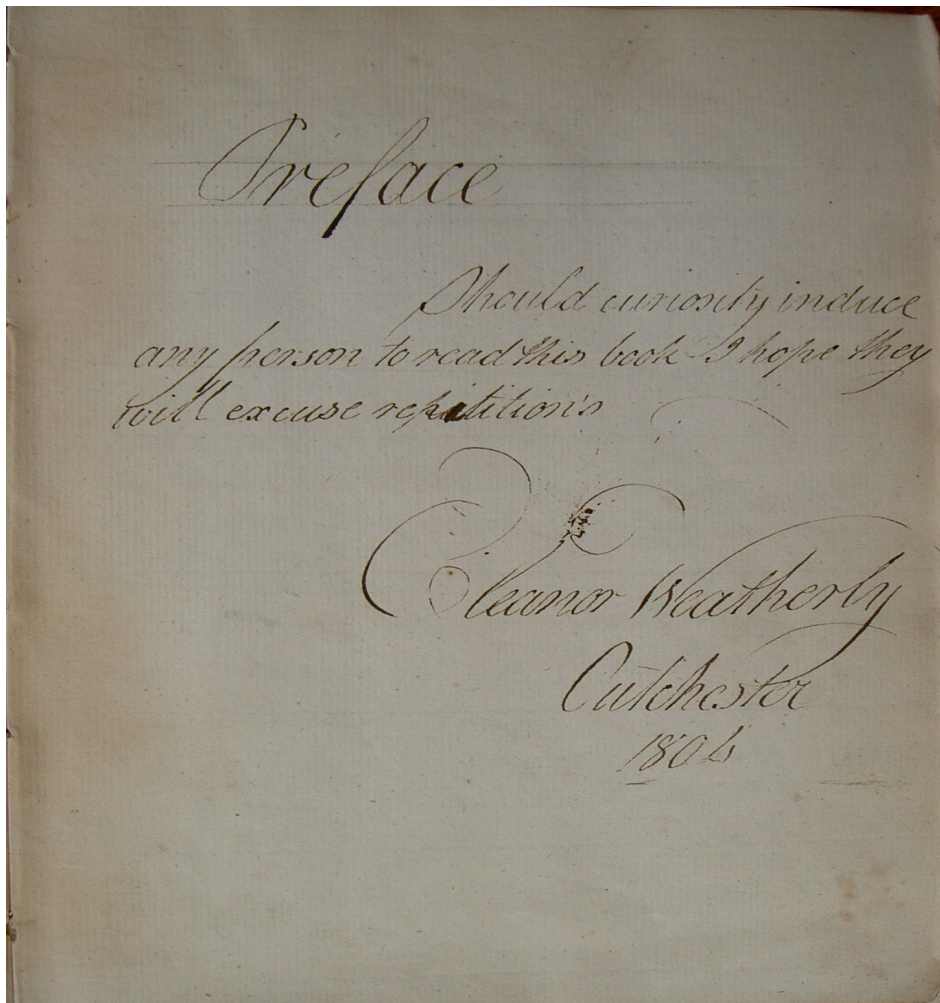
Friday 8th November 1805

BerwickI dressed for dinner, went upon the Bridge to see a Ship Launched and was joined by all the beaux of our acquaintance – got back to dinner at 4 o'clock – Miss Dag, Mr Air, Mr John Logan, Mr George Brown, Mr James Vardy, James, Susan and I dined at Mr Bell's. Miss Watson came over after dinner – we were dancing after tea in high spirits when we thought of going to the play, set all off at 8 o'clock to the theatre and got comfortably seated between George Brown and Tom Smith. The play was bespoke by Capt'n Bennett which was 'Diamond but Diamond'.

It was just over when we heard a great noise in the street and shortly after a flag of Victory was brought into the theatre with the joyful news that nineteen sail of the line was taken, but a damp was soon thrown over the general joy when we heard that the Brave Admiral Nelson had fallen in the Action. Nothing was heard for some minutes for the shouts of the people – Sir Carnaby Haggerston began to harangue the Nobility but the wine had been too potent at dinner for anyone to be edified by his bright speeches.

Captain Bennett got the newspaper in and read it pro bonna publico - when he came to the place which announced the death of Lord Nelson, he spoke with such feeling that it brought the starting tear into every eye present. Tom Smith and I were speaking in praise of Captain Bennett saying how prettily he read &c &c, when we were told he was just at our back and overheard every word. Rule Britannia was sung by the players and joined in Chorus by everyone that had a voice either to roar or sing. .John Vardy, Tom Smith and Colonel Brown came down with us to Mr Bell's to supper, we sat up till morning as the Gents would not let us go away, for all the news was canvassed over and over again – the memory of Lord Nelson was drunk after supper. This day has been one of the busiest I have had this some time.....

Joan Wright



THE BIRTH OF THE BERWICK CORN EXCHANGE

The history of the Corn Exchange in Berwick started in 1856 when 38 prominent citizens of Berwick and surroundings published a letter in the Berwick Advertiser on May 31. In the letter, addressed to the Mayor Robert Ramsay, they asked for the Mayor to call a public meeting as 'We the undersigned FARMERS, MERCHANTS, BANKERS, and others, feel very desirous that there should be a Corn Exchange erected in a suitable part of the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.' The Mayor complied and a public meeting was held in the Town Hall on Saturday 7 June 1856.

A committee was established and the search for a suitable site begun. The Corn Exchange was established under the Limited Liability Act, passed in 1855, and called Berwick Corn Exchange Company – Limited; making it the first limited company in Berwick.

A number of both public and committee meetings followed the decision, a decision based on the fact that other towns in the Borders already had corn exchanges and might very well take business and activity away from Berwick. After considering several possibilities of a suitable site, the present location in Sandgate was chosen. The site was somewhat larger than what was needed, so it was decided to sell off separately what is now the building between Foul Ford and Silver Street.

On November 8, 1856 an article appeared on the front page of the Berwick Advertiser inviting 'architects to furnish designs for a new Corn Exchange with Committee Rooms &c, for the town of Berwick.' No less than 142 architects showed their interest by applying for details about the project, and after the deadline had expired on 1 January 1857, a meeting was held on the 10 January where, according to an article in the Berwick Advertiser 'The plans for this proposed erection, fifty-four in all, presented to the committee in competition for their premiums of £ 40 for the best and £ 15 for the second were on Tuesday arranged in the assembly room of the King's Arms Inn.' The task was to reduce the number of applications to four from which the shareholders would then choose the winner. 'All plans were executed with great neatness and artistic beauty' according to the Committee, and each plan had a technical signature instead of a name in order to rule out any biased opinion on the part of the Committee.

In February 1857 the winner of the competition was unanimously chosen by the shareholders to be Mr John Johnston of Newcastle, and he was duly awarded the sum of £ 40 as the winning prize. The entire cost of the erection of the building was not to exceed £ 2,750.

About five months later, on 27 June 1857 at 2 pm Robert Ramsay, Esq, Chairman of the Committee laid the foundation stone of the Berwick Corn Exchange. The ceremony was low-key as it was decided to defer any public ceremonial until the opening of the building. The erection of the building started right away and within about four months the heaviest part of the work was completed, led by the contractor Mr Reed.

The weather during the winter was well suited for construction work and on March 27, 1858, it was announced on the front page of the Berwick Advertiser that 'It is expected that the new Corn Exchange will be ready for occupation early in May next' and that people who were interested in having stalls there should put their names forward promptly.

This announcement seemed to be somewhat over-optimistic as the final finishing dragged out a little, but on 5 June, 1858, an article appeared in the Berwick Advertiser announcing that 'This fine building is now rapidly approaching completion, and the proceedings of its inauguration, which are to take place on the 28th instant, are looked forward to with considerable interest.'

A few weeks later, on June 19, an advertisement could be seen in the Berwick Advertiser announcing the first GRAND CONCERT in the NEW CORN EXCHANGE on June 30.

The official inauguration of the new Corn Exchange took place on 28 June 1858 in the form of a public dinner 'of the shareholders and such of the public as choose to join them'. The article goes on 'every shareholder has been presented with two tickets for lady visitors to the gallery, and as the shareholders number one hundred and thirty-eight, there is every prospect of about 300 ladies being in the apartment, as under the arrangements it is likely that every ticket will be used.' Dinner tickets could be obtained by men, and men only, at the Hen and Chickens Inn in Sandgate at a price of 8s. Dinner was at 3 o'clock and the Ladies' Gallery would be open from 4 o'clock.

Finally on 3 July, 1858 the Berwick Corn Exchange was opened for transactions of business, thus fulfilling the need that had been expressed just over two years earlier by a group of prominent citizens of Berwick. The successful birth of a building that was to play an important role in Berwick's business and social life as a venue for entertainment, balls, religious meetings as well as auctions, for more than a hundred years had taken place.

Lars Rose

SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER

Saturday February 2nd 1861

PUDDINGS AT HALF-PRICE

The Valuable and Economical Properties of Harper Twelvvetrees'

BAKING AND PASTRY POWDERS

Exceeds all belief! The great saving of flour astonishes all who have used it!! If a small portion is used, when making Puddings, Norfolk Dumplings, or Pancakes, the size will be increased NEARLY ONE HALF!! Try a Penny Packet for some Puddings, and notice the surprising results!!

PURE WHOLESOME & DIGESTIBLE BREAD

May also be made WITHOUT YEAST; and Tea Cakes, Buns and Plum Puddings without Eggs or Butter!! Two pounds of flour are saved in every stone, and a Penny Packet is equal to nine eggs!! Don't be put off with inferior imitations.

Saturday June 1st 1861

HERRING HOUSES AT SPITTAL

To be LET, with Immediate Possession.

All those PREMISES, lately occupied by Mr John Alexander, consisting of Smoking Houses, Cooper's Shop, Yard, Dwelling House, etc, fronting the River. Apply to GEO.HENDERSON & SON.

Sandgate, Berwick, 7th March, 1861

Saturday November 9th 1861

HIRING MARKET

This market was held on Saturday and was pretty well attended, although had the weather been more favourable a larger attendance would doubtless have met for the purposes of the market. There was a good demand for servants, and all who were willing to accept the terms offered readily met the engagements. The wages of men for the half-year ranged from £7 to £8; boys, from £4 10s to £5; and women, from £4 to £4 10s. Some of the women servants held out for £5. In the afternoon a market for the sale of cattle and horses was held on Hide Hill, when about the usual number of animals were shown, without, however, leading to much business. The weather being cold and stormy, the people from the country left the town early to return to their homes.

Carole Pringle

These two pages are empty! We would like to seek sponsorship to fund the postage of the newsletter which is about £120 p.a. (£30 per quarter) Perhaps you know of a group or society who would like to advertise for a small portion of the annual cost (no set fee)

Please contact Barbara Herdman 01289 307524