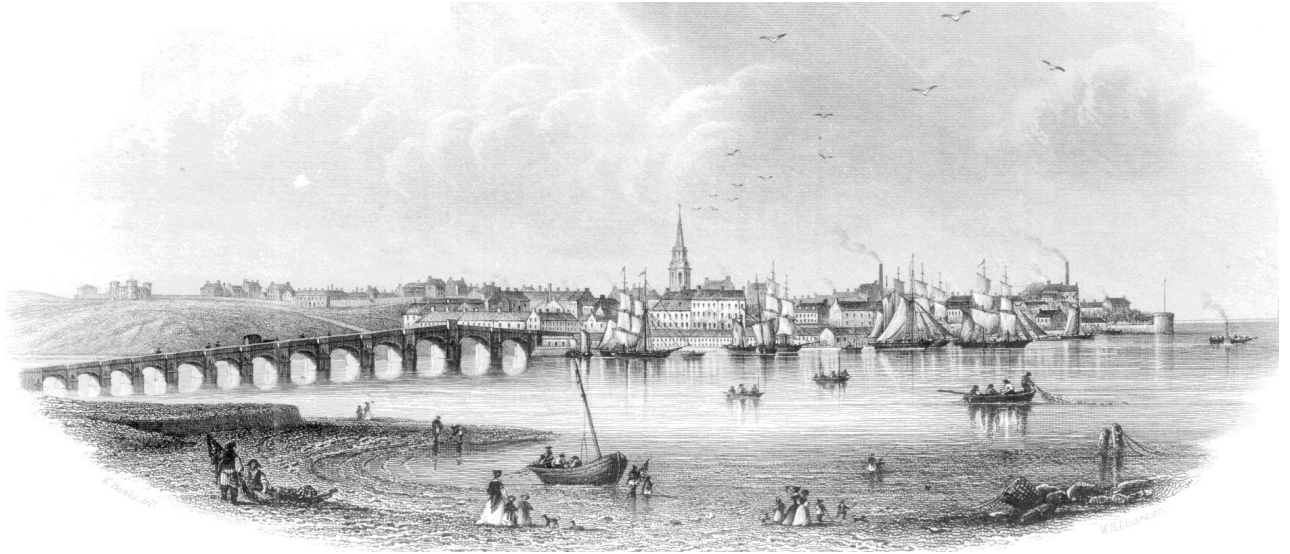


Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



NUMBER 57– February 2008

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 7th March 2008

Friends AGM and talk by Dr Paul Carter of the National Archives entitled “Crime in the North in the late 18th and early 19th centuries”. 7pm in the Guildhall, Berwick

Saturday 7th June and Sunday 8th June
2008

Facades of the Fifties Exhibition in the Guildhall, Berwick. Saturday :10 am – 4pm ; Sunday : 11am – 4pm

OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES

AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Ayton Bowling Clubhouse

Time: 7.30pm

Tuesday 26th February 2008

Ayton of Yesteryear: Irvine Inglis

Tuesday 25th March 2008

Gunsgreen House: Simon Furness

Tuesday 29th April 2008

Visit to Abbotsford

BELFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Meeting Room, Belford Community Centre.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 27th February 2008

The Archives : Linda Bankier

Wednesday 26th March 2008

The Life and Times of Henry Richardson

M.D.,R.N. (From Opium Ward to Convict

Ships) : Jane Bowen

Wednesday 23rd April 2008

Women at War: Alan Fendley

Wednesday 28th May 2008

Old Embleton : George Skipper

BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick.

Time:7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 20th February 2008

The Relative Contributions To The "Golden Age of Northumbria" of Lindisfarne & Wearmouth/Jarrow: Dr Rosemary Cramp

Wednesday 19th March 2008

The Blyth and Tyne Railway: Alan Fendley

Wednesday 16th April 2008

Annual General Meeting 7.00-7.30pm

followed by Members Night (Contributions from Members)

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick upon Tweed.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

No lectures in January

Monday 3rd March 2008

Anthony 4 Cleopatra: Jeremy Paterson

BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose

Time: 2.30pm

Sunday 16th March 2008

Progress and Developments at the
Local, Family & Archives Centre at
Hawick : Rachel Hosker

Sunday 27th April 2008

The Archives at Robert Smail's Printing
Works : David Rudram

COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Thursday 6th March 2008

A.G.M at 7.00pm prompt. Followed by
Polwarth Church: Rosie Letts

Thursday 3rd April 2008

Old Wooler: Mr R Miket and Mr D

Thursday 1st May 2008

Fairnington
Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. Why his
legacy is worth preserving: Mr R Scott

DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Duns Social Club, 41 Newton St, Duns.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 27th February 2008

Duns Scotius: Canon David Henry

Wednesday 26th March 2008

Pestilence in the Perception of History :

Wednesday 30th April 2008

Isabel Gordon
Summer outing

GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: The Cheviot Centre, Padgepool Place, Wooler.

Time: 7.30pm

Wednesday 12th March 2008

The Chillingham White Cattle: Philip

Wednesday 9th April 2008

Deakin
Reminiscences of Wooler: a
conversation introduced by Bill Hal,
followed by AGM

NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: St Paul's Church Hall, North Sunderland

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 28th February 2008

Old Embleton or Magic Lanterns!: George
Skipper

Wednesday 26th March 2008

The Maritime History of Berwick : Jim
Walker

Wednesday 23rd April 2008

The Alnwick Camp, 1914-1918: Cliff Pettit

NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH

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

Time: 10.00am

Saturday 15th March 2008

Recent Projects and Lesser-Known sources
for Family History at Berwick Record Office:
Linda Bankier

Saturday 19th April 2008

History of Schools in Bamburgh and North
Sunderland : Maureen Bramley

Saturday 17th May 2008

Herring Girls and Hiring Fairs: Maureen
Brook

ARCHIVE NEWS

It's hard to believe that nearly two months of this year have almost gone already.

Although it hasn't been long since we last produced a Newsletter, quite a few things have been happening in the Record Office to keep me busy on non public days.

I have continued my work with Berwick and Glendale Middle Schools as part of the MLA NE's (Museum, Libraries and Archives Council NE) Heritage Lottery Fund project. Both schools have continued to use the archives for support. Glendale have started their project on the Second World War and as part of that, the whole year group are going to visit the Archives at the end of the month and spend a day here finding out information from our local archives. Berwick Middle School are about to start their project and I'm going up there next week to introduce the topic. I have really enjoyed being involved in this and I have learnt a lot from it as well because it has given me the chance to look at sources in depth as well, instead of merely directing researchers towards them!

On the school front, I have also been finishing off the work on the Time Capsule for the new building in Walkergate. After acquiring the correct storage materials and having the time capsule properly sealed, the children from Berwick Middle School buried it on a very wet Tuesday afternoon at the end of January. Its location will be noted on a plaque inside the new building and hopefully it will be opened in about 20 or 30 years time and will give the residents of Berwick an insight into life now.

As well as working with children, I have continued my work with local groups. As part of their Heritage Lottery funded project on Education, I have been helping the Old Parish of Bamburgh Group with cataloguing the documents and photographs they have collected as part of the project. The group are doing the cataloguing and I am guiding them. If anyone is interested in joining the group, they meet on a Tuesday afternoon in Seahouses. I can provide contact details.

An important part of the Record Office's work is to preserve all forms of documentation relating to the history of the present Borough. This can be an item

which was created yesterday or many hundreds of years ago. Most of the items are placed here on "deposit", long term loan which means that I look after them in controlled conditions and make them available for research. The following are a selection of the items which have been deposited in the Office over the past couple of months :

Panoramic photograph of Berwick from Halidon Hill, taken in the late 1960s/early 1970s (BRO.1307)

Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council electoral register edited edition, 2007/8
(BRO.1309)

Original 35mm film made by CBS on Alan Beith's campaign in the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency bye election, 1973 (BRO.1311)

Sale catalogue for the fittings of Haggerston Castle, 1920s (BRO. 1312)

Diaries of Dr Henry Richardson, surgeon, 1860 – 1863; 1884 + 1886 (BRO.1313 – transferred from the Northumberland Collections Service)

Negatives of aerial photographs taken in North Northumberland and the Borders, 1970s (BRO.1315)

Catalogue for the sale of the Belford Estate, 1808 (BRO.1317)

Invoices, statements and receipts of Albert Robson, grocer of West Street, Berwick and Union Brae, Tweedmouth, 1935 – 1937 (BRO.1318)

Minute Books and other records of William Elder and Sons, Berwick, 20th century (BRO.1319)

The Archive is being added to all the time and it is essential that the Friends and other people bring prospective collections to my attention. In many cases, people think that the documents or photographs they have would not be of interest, however, in most cases they are as their subject matter or background can reveal so much about the area.

Linda Bankier

**WORKHOUSE PROJECT
AND
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Just a quick update on the Workhouse Project. We are definitely included in the project and have agreed initially to look at the Berwick-upon-Tweed and the Glendale Board of Guardians Unions. The National Archives put in their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in December and hope to hear back by the end of June. Please keep your fingers crossed that they will be successful as this will be a great project for us which will help broaden our knowledge of the workings of the Poor Law in this area after 1834.

Dr Paul Carter, our contact at the National Archives is coming up from London to speak at the Friends AGM on Friday 7th March. The title of his talk is "Crime on the North in the late 18th and early 19th centuries" which is one of his specialist subjects. He is a fascinating speaker, so please do come along and bring a friend. It would be great to have a good turn out. The AGM starts at 7pm in the Guildhall, Berwick and is followed by Dr Carter's talk.

Linda Bankier

FACADES OF THE FIFTIES

At the beginning of June, the Record Office will be mounting an exhibition of old photographs and other information about Berwick in the 1950s. If you have any old photographs of Berwick at the time or events that took place and would be happy to lend them to us to copy, please get in touch with me at the Record Office (01289 301865). Also, if anyone would like to volunteer a couple of hours over the weekend to steward the exhibition, that would be great.

Linda Bankier

LIFE IN THE LAND ARMY

As part of the Glendale Middle School Project on their area during the War, the teacher was keen to find out information about the Land Army in North

Northumberland. On looking through the newspapers, we found the following description of life in the Land Army in the Berwick Journal, dated 14 October 1943. If any of our members have their own reminiscences of life in North Northumberland during the Second World War and would like to write them down, I would be happy to keep them here in the Archives.

LIFE IN THE LAND ARMY

Visit to Hostel at Norham

The life of members of the Women's Land Army was described to a "Berwick Journal" Representative when he visited the W.L.A. Hostel at Norham, last week. The head warden, Miss MacDonald, described the daily work and the recreation of the girls, and several girls told of what they thought of the W.L.A.

There are over 50 girls in the Hostel most of whom volunteered for the work, which they all thoroughly enjoy and several of them expressed the hope that they could stay until the end of the war, at the same Hostel if possible.

Breakfast in the Dining Room

During the summer months the girls have to get out of bed at the early hour of 5.30 in the morning and start work. At 7.30 they get their breakfast in the Hostel Dining Hall. After breakfast they leave for the farms where they are working and carry a small snack with them to eat at lunchtime. They return again to the Hostel at five o'clock, when they get a hot dinner. Most of the girls also go out again in the evenings to help the farmers at their busy times, and do not return until supper time, after which they retire to their billets for a well earned rest after a hard day's work.

In their billets they sleep in bunks which are very comfortable and there are also stoves in each billet which provide plenty of heat.

Plenty of Recreation

There is plenty of recreation for the girls, especially in the winter evenings when they do not have to do night work. The dining hall in the Hostel is used for all kinds of recreation. There is also a wireless set, from which the girls hear dance music and

they are often fond of dancing. A piano is also well patronised by the girls some of whom are masters of the key board. A beautiful voice also entertains the girls to songs, the owner of which is Miss Martha Black.

Have Own Dramatic Club

The Hostel Dramatic Club was successful in winning the Northern Women's Land Army Silver Cup for a drama competition held this year in Newcastle. "Number 10" was the name of the play staged by the girls and there was a large number of entries from all over Northumberland. The Silver Challenge Cup has the Land Army Hostel name inscribed on it, and the girls will make another attempt to retain it at next years' competition.

Raising money in aid of charitable objects is another of their pastimes and recently they raised the sum of £50 as the result of a sale of work, whist drive and dance. The sale of work was held in the Hostel on a Saturday when the sum of £18 was raised. The stalls at the sale were managed by the girls themselves and they were beautifully decorated with fancy goods – most of which had been made by the girls themselves. Gifts of rabbits, jam, etc were also sold. In the evening a whist drive and dance was held which made the total amount raised up to £50. This sum was sent to Mrs Churchill's Y.M.C.A. Fund to provide canteens for women workers in this country and abroad.

Poultry Club

A poultry club has also been started at the Hostel, and they have 34 hens. The money for the club was raised from whist drives and dances.

Miss MacDonald, who is in charge of the Hostel has been there for two years. She volunteered for the work. Before joining the Land Army, she travelled a lot abroad. Mrs Blakett Ord, Pallinsburn is the assistant head warden. Mrs Straughan, who is

the cook belongs to Norham and volunteered for the work when the Hostel was opened two years ago. Her husband is employed at a garage at Cornhill, and their daughter is at home looking after the house. Their son is a prisoner of war in Japanese hands.

Worked in Garden for 8 Years

Miss Agnes Gerrish, who is a member of the "1st Battalion" of the Land Army girls at Norham has been there for two years since the opening of the Hostel. On two

occasions when new hostels have been opened at Haggerston and Fenton, she has been lent out for a week or two to get them started. When interviewed by the "Journal" Representative she said she liked working on the land best. Miss Gerrish comes from Stakeford, Choppington and before joining the Land Army was employed by a market gardener for eight years.

Another of the girls, Miss Wright from Newton-by-the-Sea, volunteered for the Land Army a year and a half ago. She says she likes the work. She was working in a garden before joining the W.L.A.

Miss Armstrong, another girl was a typist in an office in Newcastle before joining. She now drives a tractor. Another girl, formerly a bakeress in Newcastle, now drives a van at the Hostel.

The land girls of this hostel are considered very good workers and there are never any complaints from any of them, even after a hard day's work.

Linda Bankier

MUSEUM NEWS

ASPECTS OF THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF BERWICK

The Man in the Moon: The notorious Mr M'Gall

As Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council prepares to enter the final year of its existence and elections are soon to be held for the new unitary council it is

interesting to recall that in the 19th century Berwick-upon-Tweed was a by-word for political corruption and double-dealing. In Parliament you could always get a laugh by comparing whatever you were attacking to the 'honesty' or 'probity' of Berwick. This situation was not helped of course by the lack of a secret ballot. One of the odder conversations recorded by Walter White in his account of his tour of the North in about 1858 was an exchange with one of the salmon fishers on the Tweed.. "Wully," the "old un", as the others called him, was keen to convince "the genelman

up in Lunnon” of the need for a secret ballot. White was all against it citing political corruption in New York as an example of how “sneaks and knaves will still be sneaks and knaves with vote by ballot”, and made a fine speech about how voters should stand up, resist bribes, intimidation and vote for the right man. Before Wully could answer the fish were spotted and the call came to man the nets, but White could see he was not convinced. Just how common ‘sneaks and knaves’ were in Berwick politics was ably demonstrated in the events following the general election of April 1959.

It was the Tory’s day with the two Liberal MPs defeated by Captain Charles Gordon (1817-63) and Ralph Earle (1835-79). Gordon, a captain in the Madras Light Infantry was well connected being a cousin of Lord Aberdeen, the Prime Minister who had resigned in 1855. Earle was a particularly interesting character who as an attaché at the British Embassy in Paris spied for Disraeli supplying him with information damaging to the Government. Earle had no particular connection with Berwick, but he and Gordon did secure some extra local support by sponsoring a petition signed by a 1000 townsfolk urging the government to re-occupy the now deserted barracks. The loss of revenue from the troops was seen as a key element in the town’s comparative poverty. After Earle and Gordon’s victory the ever familiar questions were immediately asked about bribery and corruption. In June Gordon was asked outright in the Commons if certain accusations in the Liberal paper *The Berwick Warder* were accurate. He was about to answer when the Speaker prevented him. The next month, to divert scandal, Earle resigned his seat and a by-election was called. An informal arrangement was cooked up so that the defeated Liberal Majoribanks would be returned unopposed, but unexpectedly Tory, Richard Hodgson who had failed to get elected in 1853 repudiated this and pushed ahead with a campaign. He was very keen to get elected having recently taken over as Chairman of the North British Railway and had quickly established a reputation for getting things done. *The Times* called him “one of the daring, dashing ambitious class, a man who appears to look on shareholders as mere tools and puppets of an imperial will”. But there was also a down-side, *The Spectator*

commented he was “resolute, remorseless and one-idea-d, a man utterly unscrupulous when needful.” Becoming an MP would give him respectability. There was a nail-biting close to the contest. The poll opened at 8 am and closed at 4 pm with electors appearing throughout the day to declare their vote in public, being cheered or booed by the crowd gathered at the Town Hall. For a while Hodgson was slightly ahead, then Majoribanks’ votes crept past, then more voters for Hodgson and so on, neck and neck throughout the day. By 3.45 the Tories

were ahead by four votes, John Jarvie in his book *A Grey Walled Town* (1907) vividly describes the climax:-

“The faces of the Liberals betrayed their anxiety, and their eyes watched gloomily the hands of the clock as they steadily crept towards the fatal hour...twelve minutes now and the day is lost and won. But see, there is a stir on the outskirts of the crowd, and all eyes are turned up the street. Through the Scotsgate a vehicle comes careering along, whip and voice urging on the sweating horse. A cheer goes up, and eager hands assist the occupants to mount the hustings. Three votes for Majoribanks the figures are 304 and 303, and there are now but two minutes to go! The Sheriff has enjoined silence, that the striking of the clock may be heard; no need, for all are at highest tension, and the hush as of death. Second by second the hand creeps like a figure of fate, and all eye’s are upon it”. But again there is commotion; the cry goes forth that a mistake has been discovered: the Liberals have not been credited with two votes they ought to have had, and as four o’clock booms out and the polling books are shut with a snap Mr Majoribanks steps out smiling, the elected candidate by a majority of one in surely one of the most remarkable elections that the history of politics can show”.

More remarkable indeed than Jarvie says, for in February 1860 Hodgson launched a petition alleging that some of the voters were disqualified from voting through non-residence or ‘legal incapacity’. Such petitions were a fact of life in elections at the time but on this occasion Hodgson’s action opened up the whole rotten worm-tin that was Berwick politics and it did his party no good. As so often before a Select Committee of the House of Commons was convened to look into the Berwick election. It questioned witnesses and minutely examined all the suspect voters to determine their eligibility. Some votes were upheld and some struck down but in the end the election of Majoribanks was confirmed. What questioning of the witnesses revealed however, was such widespread bribing that it was suggested during a Parliamentary debate that only a Royal Commission could properly investigate the matter. Lord Cecil tried to inject some caution into the debate, saying there had

been ten similar Commissions on various towns and nothing was ever done, why waste more public money on Berwick? But the moral campaigners won the day and in August 1860 a Royal Commission duly opened it’s hearings in Berwick. It had been hoped, as Berwick was a small place, that the investigations would be brief, in the event it took seven months for the Commission to produce a report of 547 pages. From the start it was clear there was one man particularly in the spotlight, William M’Gall. A long-time resident of Berwick M’Gall was described as

a 'legal writer', that is not quite a solicitor. His name had come up time and again at the Select Committee hearings and in Parliament in May 1860 he was described as 'the Man in the Moon', showing a gleam of silver in the night as briber-in-chief. That much was clear, but what was not certain, as voters from both sides admitted to receiving bribes, was who did M'Gall work for and where did the money come from. Of course M'Gall himself had already denied it all on oath before the Select Committee, and as a consequence in July he was tried for perjury at the Old Bailey. The prosecution assembled three particular unsavoury witnesses, supposedly Berwick voters, who claimed to have been bribed by M'Gall. But, after a six-hour deliberation, the jury found him not guilty. To the Royal Commission the secret 'arrangement' that had been made to get Majoribanks elected unopposed immediately made the candidate a suspect in at least one part of the conspiracy, but the dubious witnesses at the trial had supposedly received most of their handouts from M'Gall in dark alleys near Mr Gibson's pub, well known as Hodgson's campaign headquarters. But then they might have been bribed to lie about who had bribed them. And it was also possible that some had been bribed to vote and others to stay away from the poll. What added to the confusion was that all the candidates were also well known givers to charity and charitable handouts to deserving people, voters included, could be misconstrued. The Commission was hampered in its investigations by a certain amount of stone-walling on the part of witnesses, these people were dubbed by *The Times* 'the Berwick know-nothings', but despite their evasions and probable lies, a pattern did begin to emerge. There had been some bribery by the Majoribanks' camp, but Majoribanks himself, the Commission eventually concluded, did not know of, or condone, the actions of his supporters. The more systematic bribery campaign had been on the part of the Tories, directly ordered, it was sensationally alleged, by Benjamin Disraeli himself, at the time Chancellor of the Exchequer. Earle was indeed a Disraeli spy when a civil servant, but it was said that in the lobby of the Commons Disraeli had asked one Alex Brodie to go north and organise a bribery campaign to win Berwick for the Tories. Questioning of Disraeli had to wait till the Commission got back to London so in August it was the Berwick Tories that were under the spotlight.

Rev Hans Hamilton was called and summarised his close involvement with the Tory campaign. Hamilton was no stranger to political controversy. In Durham he had taken an active part in electioneering so much so that the *Durham Chronicle* called him "that most offensive compound of opposites, a political parson". He had been a supporter of Captain Gordon for years, but denied he had ever given money out on his behalf, though he confirmed the Captain was a great giver to charity, which made him popular. Hamilton recalled that after Gordon's defeat in the 1857

election he was cheered back to his house and celebratory bonfires were lit outside. One got out of control and Hamilton had to organise the girls from the charity school to get it put out. Gordon's own evidence before the Commission began by him claiming he had stood in the election on "strictly purity principles". He had of course, as recently as 1857, paid for the building of St Mary's Church in Castlegate, but had hesitated to do that lest it was seen as a political bribe, but the Rev Hamilton had told him "never mind..do what is right, and don't mind what people say". Gordon admitted giving M'Gall £700 to distribute as 'charity' saying "I think my benevolence outweighed my political feeling", and "Mr M'Gall seemed to enter into my charitable motives, and to think I had taken the right way to stop bribery". He had not asked M'Gall for an account of how the money was spent and had not known M'Gall had a previous Scottish conviction for fraud. Many of Gordon's answers drew cynical laughter from the capacity audience in the Town Hall, as his air of wounded innocence, even political naiveté, seemed scarcely believable. As each new witness made new allegations M'Gall was called and recalled again and again to answer individual points. Clearly the pressure got to him, the newspapers started calling him 'the notorious Mr M'Gall', and one day when he was recalled he did not appear. He had apparently left town on business. Not to be outsmarted the Commission summoned his wife instead. But Mrs M'Gall turned out to be a Catholic and there was then a lot of fluster, delay and tears, before they found her a Catholic Bible to swear on. It was hardly worth the effort, she gave a few evasive replies and said she would not answer anymore as she didn't know "anything about electioneering". This brought the house down with the audience. M'Gall did reappear a few days later but refused to swear unless he received immunity from prosecution. After a recess the Commission offered him limited immunity, but was not good enough. He was promptly arrested and taken to Berwick gaol. Called again on 1st September a week in gaol had not changed his mind and he again refused to swear. The Commission decided he would be called again when they reconvened at the end of October in London, but he was released in the meantime. Two months later the star witness was Disraeli who thought the whole idea that he would stoop so low as beneath contempt. But anyone who had travelled from

Berwick to London hoping to view a confrontation between the sparkling and celebrated Disraeli and the grubby Mr M'Gall was disappointed. When M'Gall was called a solicitor appeared carrying a letter with a Dover postmark. It was a rambling repetitive epistle, from a man at his wit's end, desperate to avoid "another winter in prison" which "will do for me". He had fled the country. The reading of the letter "caused some amusement" in the audience. In the end the Commission concluded that both sides had bribed voters. Twelve had been bribed by the

Liberals, without Majoribanks' knowledge, while fifteen had been bribed by four people for Tories and Captain Gordon had known all about it. Disraeli of course was completely innocent of anything. As Lord Cecil had predicted no action was taken as a result of the Commission, Captain Gordon continued to represent Berwick till his early death at forty-five in 1863. As for Mr M'Gall, at the Berwick election in 1864, there were again accusations of bribery, once again a Select Committee investigated and a lad came forward to tell them that he was convinced he had seen, in a dark alley, the notorious Mr M'Gall bribing a voter, the voter had even waved his hat in the air to celebrate. The secret ballot was introduced finally in 1872.

Source: The above is based on *The Times'* account of the Royal Commission investigation and the final report itself.

Chris Green (museum@berwick-upon-tweed.gov.uk)

NEWS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

URGENT HELP NEEDED

Jean Watts (01289 302389) is co-ordinating volunteers to be at the Reception Desk in the Museum. This service will begin on 21st March 2008 when the Museum re-opens after its winter refurbishment.

People are needed on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 1pm to 5pm. Jean hopes people will volunteer for 2 hour stints and remember, the more volunteers, the less spare time you need to give.

Prior to this service starting, Jim Herbert will organise short courses for volunteers to familiarise themselves with the layout of the Museum.

BERWICK MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

I have enclosed a synopsis of the draft report from Consultants, Barker Langham Ltd about the future of the Museum. There is a glossy report but the synopsis gives you an idea of the bones of the project. Linda holds a copy of the draft if you wish to read it. Comments can be made but please would you ensure that you make representation as a member of FBDMA.

Thank You

Barbara Herdman

WHAT'S IN A NAME? OR THE MYSTERY OF MR MACASKIE'S HOUSES

When we began our second project on the history and archaeology of Bondington we decided to take another look at the development of Castle Terrace in Victorian times and the ancient remains that were discovered there. It was slowly becoming clear that everything seemed to revolve around the names of houses in Castle Terrace. It had all seemed simple at the beginning when we started our explorations. We knew that John Scott in his "The History of the Town & Guild of Berwick-upon-Tweed" (1888) had observed:

"It will be remembered that a few years ago, when Cheviot House in Castle Terrace was built, that the foundations of a church were laid bare, and the remains of a churchyard (several graves in which I

saw opened). The foundations of the church showed a building 90 feet in length, with a square tower at the western end, 25 feet square."

So that was simple. This discovery had been made at Cheviot House, 48 Castle Terrace and Scott seemed to suggest that the ecclesiastical remains were now under the house. It was a little later that we discovered that Scott's rather

dismissive phrase, “a few years ago” used in relation to the building of Cheviot House referred to work that had actually taken place twenty years before.

But the real problems started when Jim Walker drew to our attention a copy of a pamphlet by Edward Herdman, “Berwick: Its Monasteries & Churches” (1887) in which the author referred to the Cistercian Nunnery founded by King David 1st of Scotland and noted:

“This, the first, and certainly the most important, convent in the town stood in the Nunslees Meadows, near Halidon Hill, and was dedicated to St Leonard. Its foundations can still be clearly defined in the Cow Close, at the back of “Allerley House.”

This was when we began to feel anxious about house names. Our earlier research had shown that “Allerley” was the house now known as “The Hollies”, no. 46 Castle Terrace” and next door to No 48. Herdman’s pamphlet was published in 1887, the year before Scott’s book. And surely, we thought, it is significant that he suggests that the remains are in the garden, not under the house with his phrase, “at the back of Allerley House”? At the least the evidence seemed to suggest that we should be prepared for ancient remains in at least two gardens along Castle Terrace.

The situation grew even more confusing when Lars Rose, in his mammoth trawl through the back issues of the Berwick Advertiser, came across the following piece dated 10th April 1868:

“During the course of last week while Mr James Lawrie, gardener, was trenching the garden of Mr Macaskie, Halidon, he came upon 8 human skeletons in different parts of the ground...There was also discovered close to the north-west boundary wall of the garden a solid piece of masonry, 21 feet square, which is supposed to be a portion of a tower.

Running transversely from this supposed tower was found a wall of dressed stones, four feet thick, passing out into Mr Huntley’s field”.

We saw and read the phrase “Mr Macaskie, Halidon.” It seemed to suggest that Mr Macaskie lived at a house named “Halidon” and that this might indicate ancient remains in a third garden. We did some searching into the Victorian records of the Farm Committee of the Council and were given access to some private documents

and matters became even more uncertain. It is true that there was, and is, a house in Castle Terrace named “Halidon” but in April 1868 it was the property of Alderman Thomas Bogue and it was difficult to see how Mr Macaskie could have been connected with it as his place of residence.

Mr. Thomas Bogue was one of a select group who decided to build large, elegant houses on the pleasant outskirts of the town. In 1856 he had been granted a lease of one acre on No 1 Inner Cow Close by the Farm Committee of the Council and had built “Halidon House” during the two years of his mayoralty (1858/59).

Mr. George Macaskie was the proprietor and editor of the ‘Berwick Warder’ and an entrepreneur. He had a residence and worked in Sandgate. He also decided to build in Bondington and had gained a lease from the Farm Committee in 1866 for an acre of land on No 2 Inner Cow Close to build a house and set about building it with the help of a private mortgage arranged in 1867. He built the house now known as “Cheviot House” in 1868 but he called it “Allerley.” The name caused us major confusion: how could there be two houses next door to one another, both called “Allerley?” But it was just as confusing for his fellow Victorians who variously listed the name in contemporary documents as ‘Allaby’ ‘Allally’ ‘Alara’ or ‘Allerley.’ We wondered how we would ever find an explanation to that riddle.

But it was on the other problem - the reference in the Berwick Advertiser to ‘Mr. Macaskie, Halidon’ – that we decided to concentrate first. We struggled with possible explanations: was “Halidon” the name of Mr Macaskie’s residence in Sandgate; or was it a general reference to the fact that Mr Macaskie’s house was situated on the lower slopes of the famous Halidon Hill battle site? One further explanation, which I admit I favoured, was that the journalist who was covering the story, simply misheard or miscopied what he had heard and noted the familiar name “Halidon” where his informant had said the unfamiliar name of the new house. As we have already seen, the name of Mr Macaskie’s house was certainly one that

caused confusion in the area and the strangeness of the name may have caused confusion in the reporter’s mind and caused him to get the house’s name wrong.

The Bondington team decided that it was time for some practical fieldwork and so we set out to get permission to examine the gardens of “Halidon House.” “Halidon House” at no. 32 Castle Terrace is a substantial house which was divided into two separate units after the Second World War and the owners of both houses agreed to

allow Alan Williams, the Project's archaeologist, and me to visit and explore their gardens on one Saturday morning to look for archaeological remains. We trudged over some flower beds and muddied some lawns but found no clues and Alan was doubtful that these gardens could be the site of the described remains.

We felt we had not yet completely proved our point about "Halidon" being the wrong house but further investigative work by members of the Project team revealed that in the same week that the Berwick Advertiser carried its story of archaeological remains uncovered, one of its rivals, the Berwick Journal carried its own account of the event and followed it up with a further piece the following week. The Berwick Journal makes no reference to Mr Macaskie as the owner of the house but in both issues refers to the recentness of its construction, to "*the villa newly erected in Inner Cow Close*" (10th April) and "*...the discovery of some interesting relics in the garden ground attached to a recently erected villa, about a mile from Berwick*" (17th April). Mr. Bogue's "Halidon House" was approximately ten years old at the time and hardly fits the description, "newly/recently erected," whereas Mr. Macaskie's house fits perfectly. So we were back to two houses with possible ancient remains.

Further detailed work carried out by Linda in the Edinburgh Archives provided information from yet another of the Berwick newspapers of the time. Mr. Macaskie's own newspaper, the Berwick Warder (Newspaper Archives, National Library of Scotland) gave the discoveries an even fuller treatment in its issue of 10th April 1868, although without revealing that the discovery was made in the garden of Mr. Macaskie, the editor and proprietor of the newspaper:

Singular Discovery of an Ancient Burial Ground.

"Within the past few weeks a discovery of much interest to the antiquarian was made in the garden ground of the new villa, recently erected in the Inner Cow Close, about one mile from the town. The contractor, Mr. Lawrie, engaged in levelling the ground, finding it necessary, owing to the

insufficiency of soil at the top, to trench the ground deeply, came upon a stone coffin. As the work proceeded further discoveries were made.

The article was considerably longer but this is the final piece of evidence with Mr. Macaskie's own newspaper here confirming that the recent extensive remains had been discovered in the garden of his own house, No. 48 Castle Terrace. It could not

have been at no. 32 because it was not “recently erected” and, as it turned out, it could not have been no. 46 because, as we shall see, it had not yet been erected

In 1877 Mr. Macaskie sold No. 48 to a recently retired naval man, Captain Francis Norman (1833-1918). At the same time he and his son applied for a second lease for land in Inner Cow Close from the Farm Committee of the Council and, it seems likely, used the money from the recent sale of No.48 to build No 46 Castle Terrace. The Minutes of the Farm Committee note that Mr. Macaskie and his son had applied for land on the west of Mr. Macaskie’s house (that is, between the present Nos. 48 and 50 Castle Terrace) but found the site was not as large as they required and decided to take up the plot to the east on which No. 46 now stands.

It also seems likely that around the time of the purchase, Captain Norman decided to re-name his newly acquired house “Cheviot House” and that Mr. Macaskie decided to revert to “Allerley” for the house which he was involved in building between 1877-1880 and which is now No. 46 Castle Terrace. This would explain how the 1881 Census lists George Macaskie as resident at ‘Alara’ and Patrick Dalton, general servant, domestic, pensioner, as resident at ‘Cheviot.’ Thanks to some brilliant detective work by Linda, we know that Francis M Norman, Commander, Royal Navy, aged 47, was away from Berwick at the time. He was a visitor at Norton House, Bredon, Worcestershire. We know it because the 1881 Census tells us.

The 1881 Census also makes it clear what were the names of the two houses and that whereas Scott in 1888 had noticed that the correct name of no. 48 was now “Cheviot House,” Herdman in 1887 had not noted the change and wrongly listed its name as “Allerley.”

So we are back to one house, with the evidence pointing to all the ancient remains that excited the Victorians being in the garden of Cheviot House. The present owner says that when we set out on the third phase of the Bondington Project we can do geo-physics in his garden provided we do not disturb his asparagus bed.

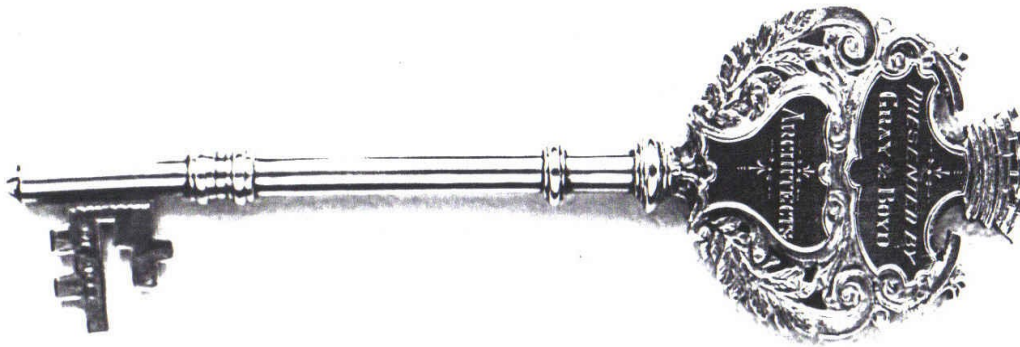
Then we might find those elusive foundations of the church, a wall 90 feet in length, with a square tower at the western end, 25 feet square. That really would put Bondington on the Map but we might have to ask the owner to re-site his asparagus bed.

Brian Chappell

SPITTAL SCHOOL CENTENARY

“ On the fine afternoon of April 29th, 1908, a large crowd of Spittalers witnessed a rare formal occasion. Standing outside the recently built Spittal School they looked up the road at the Mayor, Mr Edminson, and his party processing along from The Roxburgh Hotel where they had been dining.

Reaching the main gate, the Mayor was presented with a silver key by Mr Boyd, the architect, then all went inside for a series of speeches. These concluded, the children sang songs and gave exhibitions of Indian Club and Dumb Bell drill.”



Spittal First School celebrates 100 years on April 29th, 2008, and they are planning a number of events and activities to commemorate this.

The school has seen tremendous changes over the years for both the teachers and pupils. It is hoped that the exhibition planned for mid June will elaborate on these factually and pictorially. With the help of the Friends, the school hopes to create a celebration to be proud of. If you have any documents or photographs, the school or the Record Office will be happy to copy them and return the originals. (Are you a former pupil, member of staff or governor of Spittal School?)

Written memories would also be very valuable. (First day at school, last day at school, special lessons or visits, playground activities, sporting events, special visitors or memorable occasions.) All information and photographs collected for this display will be deposited in the Archives so your memories will not be forgotten! (If you are able to help in any way with information or photographs, please contact Robert Curry, Headmaster (01289 307413) or Linda at the Record Office (01289

**EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARIES
OF
HENRY RICHARDSON, M.D., R.N.**

Some excerpts from the diaries of Henry Richardson, M.D., R.N., the sometime proprietor of the Berwick Advertiser. These diaries, which cover the last two years of his life, have recently come to light at Woodhorn but have now been transferred to the Berwick Record Office.

Tuesday 11th March, 1884

Th.32 fine clear calm sunny day Cheviots white from top to bottom less bright p.m. & light easterly wind. Went to office early and did my work suppressed a stupid letter about Trawling and an [abrasive] reply to Gregson - also modified an article in Local Gossip condemning a decision of County Magistrates. Wife & I went to Cheswick by 1.20 train....

Monday 17th March, 1884

Th.45 wind S.S.E. very light fine sunny day quite warm – a most enjoyable day. Wife and I with Capt. & Mrs Forbes & Miss Duncan went by 1.20 train to Scremerston. Saw the frog that had been found in a block of limestone and afterwards dined with Mr Johnson. Capt. F left early to lecture at Lowick and Mrs F & Miss D to walk home. We came home by train. Very pleasant day.

Wednesday 14th January, 1885

Th.34 still blowing fresh f. North heavy showers of hail before noon, afterwards fine. I went to see decorations in Corn Exchange for Bachelors Ball. Long pole in centre extending to roof with circle of evergreens and glass globes – stripes of coloured cloth from top of pole draped to resemble a tent – said to be the best design yet exhibited...

Friday 1st May, 1885

Th.46 rain and thick mist from early morning till evening wretched weather for Riding the Bounds. Eight horsemen however turned out a few close carriages. Robin (son aged 9) was all ready to go but was not allowed a g^t. Disappointment....

Wednesday 13th May, 1885

Th.43 wind northerly rain in early morning fine sunny day but rather cold winds. At HC (Harbour Commissioners) meeting sanctioned sale of plant in ship building yard to Mr Fenwick (Berwick) for £140 cost about ten times that. Have had two men clearing drain yesterday & today – unable to trace it – have cut up lawn very much. Got Mr Cluden to send Urban Sanitary men and he has superintended them.

Thursday 4th June, 1885

Th.57 morning dull fresh W^y. Wind afternoon sunny and very warm wind subsided. Attended Petty Sessions today, Mr Lowrey in the chair, strange that a man totally blind sh^d be in such a position, but Justice is said to be blind.....

Jane Bowen & Jan Ward

SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER

Berwick Advertiser, April 25th, 1863

CURIOSITIES OF THE REGISTER-

The returns relating to marriages have just been completed for 1861. In that year 35 girls were married at 15 years of age, one to a man above 45, and another to a man

above 50. Five widows married a second time at 19, and 23 widows married again after 70. 26 women were married after they had seen threescores and ten, one of them to a man under 30. A lad of 16 married a woman of twenty, and two men above 80 married women of 20 and 21. Ten men married at 16, 55 at 17, 478 at 18, 157 at above 70. 35 girls married at 15, 202 at 16, 1,206 at 17, and two women at above 80, making the marrying time of women extend over 65 years. These

statements are much below the real fact, for the precise ages of persons marrying were stated in less than two thirds of the marriages of the year. The returns relating to persons married in 1861 distinguish six of the men as divorced men, and five of the women as divorced women. In one instance, in St Pancreas, a marriage is returned as being of a divorced man to a divorced woman.

Berwick Advertiser, June 13th 1863

THE BARRACKS-

The attention of the Town Council having been called some time ago to the external appearance of the barracks, it was agreed to memorialise the War Office to make some improvement on their dingy aspect. This was accordingly done, and the results has been that the front of the barracks facing the High Street has undergone a new rough casting, to the great improvement, not only of the time old mansion itself, but to the whole of the neighbourhood.

Berwick Advertiser, June 13th 1863

CHIRNSIDE-REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCES-

A FEW DAYS AGO THE GRAVE DIGGER OF Chirnside, in preparing the "narrow house" for the body of an aged villager, came, at the depth of several feet, upon a coffin, the lid of which being broken the body of a female was discovered in a wholly undecomposed state-every part appearing as full and fresh as when deposited there thirty-six or thirty-seven years since; and what is still more remarkable, the body on being moved emitted a considerable quantity of pure blood, but the cadaverous odour was so intense that the bellman was almost overpowered with it, and was glad to get the remains lowered to a deeper resting place. Whether there could be anything particularly preservative in the soul or in the quality of the body, which had

kept it so long entire from the influence of decay, it would be a difficult question to solve.

Berwick Advertiser, June 13th 1863

MATRIMONY is- hot cakes, warm beds, comfortable slippers, smoking coffee, round arms, red lips, kind words, shirts exulting in buttons, redeemed stockings, bootjacks, happiness, &c. SINGLE BLESSEDNESS is - sheet-iron quilts, blue noses, frosty rooms, ice in coffee sweetened with icicles, gutta percha biscuits, flabby steaks, dull razors, dirty towels, rheumatism, corns, coughs, cold dinners, cholics, rhubarb, and any amount of misery.

Carole Pringle