



# Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



*NUMBER 62 – June 2009*

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 11 - 5pm

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 11 - 4pm

Stephenson 150 Exhibition in the  
Guildhall, Berwick-upon-Tweed – see  
inside for details

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> - Monday, 31st August  
11 - 4pm

Stephenson 150 Exhibition, Etal Village  
Hall – see inside for details

**BERWICK MUSEUM & ART**  
**GALLERY EXHIBITIONS 2009**

**OPENING TIMES**

**1<sup>st</sup> April – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2009**  
**including Bank Holidays**

**Wednesdays – Sundays, 10am – 5pm**

17<sup>th</sup> June – 31<sup>st</sup> August

**Beside the Seaside:** An interactive exhibition celebrating the seaside and coast for holidays and artistic inspiration.

9<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September

**Icon of the Steam Age:** A detailed look at depictions of the Royal Border Bridge since 1850, staged as one of the local events marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Robert Stephenson.

**OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES**

**AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Ayton Bowling Clubhouse**

**Time: 7.30pm**

**Lectures resume in the Autumn**

**BELFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June

Evening Walk to Fowberry and Weetwood:  
Tom Braidford

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July

Evening Visit to Ancroft Church, Graveyard  
and Tower: Rev.V.Dickinson

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

AGM for 2009-2010

**BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick.**

**Time:7.30 p.m.**

**See Stephenson 150 lectures**

**BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

**No Lectures in July and August**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September**

**Title to be Confirmed- Steve Speak**

**BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose**

**Time: 2.30pm**

**Lectures Resume in The Autumn**

**COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream.**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July**

**A Walk around Alnwick: 7.30pm**

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

**A Visit to Polwarth: 7.30pm**

**DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

**Lectures Resume in The Autumn**

**GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30pm**

**Lectures Resume in The Autumn**

## NORHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: Norham Village Hall**

**Time : 7.30 pm**

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July

Local Visit, Mrs Rosie Letts and Dr Binnie:  
Polworth and Fogo

**No lectures in August**

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September

Gunsgreen Visit: £3.50 each.

## NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: St Paul's Church Hall, North Sunderland**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

**Lectures Resume in The Autumn**

## NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

### NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH

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

**Time: 10.00am**

**No lectures in July/August**

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September

CJ Leyland of Haggerston: Chris Shaw

## STEPHENSON 150 LECTURES

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June

**William Elder Building, Berwick, 7.30pm**  
Robert Stephenson, The Eminent Engineer:  
Dr. Michael Bailey (Manchester University)

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July

**Parish Centre, Parade, Berwick, 7.30pm**  
The Minor Railways of Berwick District:  
Roger Jermy

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August

**William Elder Building, Berwick, 7.30pm**  
The Newcastle and Berwick Railway, 1839-  
1850: John Addyman

## **ARCHIVE NEWS**

The Record Office has been very busy in the last couple of months working on various projects as well as our normal day to day tasks of running a public service two days a week and answering all the enquiries we receive.

The following is a taster of what we have been involved in.

In the run up to Local Government Reorganisation in Northumberland, I spent a lot of time going round all the District Councils trying to identify archive material which should be placed in the Northumberland Collections Service at Woodhorn or here at Berwick. It was a very tiring, often very dirty and interesting experience which was very worthwhile and has led to the deposit of a lot of material, including some little gems. It is amazing what you can discover in unusual places if you are prepared to hunt!

In the last newsletter, I mentioned the Lady Jerningham Project which we were undertaking with local schools. At the beginning of March, I went out to 9 First Schools in the area and talked to children from Years 3 and 4 about Lady Jerningham and her life in preparation for a drama day that they attended at Longridge Towers School. The archive sessions went really well and helped the children get a lot more out of their day at Longridge Towers. I went out to see one of the Drama Days and the children were having a great time re-enacting incidents in her life and dressing up in Victorian costumes. Since then, we have continued to do some further work on Lady Jerningham and the statue which was erected by her husband in her memory. Lars Rose has discovered that Sir Hubert's original plan was to erect a fountain outside St Mary's Church in Castlegate and not the statue we are so familiar with now.

Having finished Lady Jerningham, there have been other projects to concentrate on as well. The Record Office is heavily involved in the Stephenson 150 Festival in Berwick and is working on a number of events which have an archive element. As part of the project, we are very keen to record the memories of people who worked

on the railway in this area in the past. Very few people are now aware of the importance of Tweedmouth Railway Station and the various rural lines that operated in this area. In mid April, we got together a group of about 20 former railway employees and they talked about their experiences and their careers. It was a privilege to listen to them and hear what life was like and the camaraderie they enjoyed. We are hoping to get them together again and to also record their memories which will be preserved in the Record Office. In addition to people's memories, we are also trying to collect pictures of the railways in the area. It's amazing what pictures people have lent us of trains and the local stations – Carole has been very busy scanning them all and some of them will be displayed at the Guildhall exhibition at the end of June (27/28<sup>th</sup> – see separate article). As part of the project, I feel it is important to include something for young people and so in conjunction with the Institution of Civil Engineers, we are organising a Bridges to Schools event at Longridge Towers for about 300 children from the English and Scottish sides of the Border over a couple of days. The children get to build and walk over an actual bridge as part of the experience!

In earlier newsletters, I have mentioned the Second World War project that we have been working on with Tweedmouth Middle School and the Library here in Berwick. This term we have been continuing to help the school find out more about this area's involvement in the War and as part of that, they went on a one day tour to Kirknewton, Milfield, Wooler and the defences near Holy Island. At each place, we had local experts who talked to the children about the airfield at Milfield, the crashes in the Cheviots, the Land Girls at Wooler and the defences which are still visible on the Causeway at Holy Island. The children learnt a lot on their day away and we have made some useful contacts for the future.

The Record Office is also involved in a number of other projects which are either ongoing or coming to fruition in the next couple of months but I'll keep that for the next newsletter. Watch this space!

*Linda Bankier*

## **LADY JERNINGHAM MEMORIAL**

The following article appeared in the Berwick Advertiser on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1908 about the unveiling of the Lady Jerningham Memorial :

## LADY JERNINGHAM MEMORIAL UNVEILED

### A Formal Ceremony

Yesterday the statue on Bankhill erected to commemorate the death of Lady Jerningham, was handed over to the Berwick Corporation by Sir Hubert Jerningham. It will be remembered that when the Town Council accepted the offer of Sir Hubert a site in Castlegate was proposed and arranged for, but certain considerations caused the site to be abandoned. Another site was got at the top of Bankhill, and this was finally decided upon. The construction of the monument was entrusted to the late Mr Ingram, sculptor, London, a brother of the reigning Bishop of London, Dr Ingram. While his task was still in an unfinished state Mr Ingram died, and Mr Pennichini, completed the work. He came to Berwick with the monument and saw it safely erected. The monument takes the form of a white marble statue of the late Lady Jerningham, life size, with a dog at each side. It is mounted on a solid granite base. The Authority have enclosed the whole piece of ground in which the monument is erected, and have provided a five feet footpath on three sides. The foundations were put in by Messers Gray and Son, Berwick, to the order of Mr Wilson, sculptor, Tweedmouth who erected the base. The railings were the work of Messers Thompson Brothers, High Street, Berwick, at the expense of the Authority, who also intend having the ground levelled and tidied. Altogether the statue is a splendid specimen of the sculptor's art, and improved Bankhill immensely. One thing the Authority might do which would perhaps be an improvement. In the enclosed ground there are a number of trees, rather weakly trees, and if they were all taken away with the exception of the one nearest the statue, it would be an improvement.

The following inscriptions were on the statue :

*Yet in these ears till hearing dies,  
One set slow peal will seem to toll:  
The passing of the sweetest soul  
That ever looked with human eyes.*

Tennyson's "In Memoriam"

ANNIE LADY JERNINGHAM,  
of Longridge Towers, Berwick-on-Tweed.

Obit 9<sup>th</sup> October 1902

Presented to the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed by Sir Hubert Jerningham, K.C.M.G., late and last member of Parliament for the borough.

This memorial was offered and accepted by the Town Council of Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1903. G.F. Steven, Esq., mayor; J. Weatherston, Esq., sheriff; and erected 1908. Frank Edminson, Esq., Mayor; James Leslie, Esq., Sheriff

## THE UNVEILING

At half past ten in the morning the ceremony took place in presence of a large attendance of the public. Inside the railings were the majority of the present Town Council and number of past representatives. The company included Sir Hubert Jerningham, KCMG, Mr Pennichini, London, the sculptor; the Mayor (Mr F. Edminson), the Sheriff (Mr J. Leslie), Aldermen Burn, Turnbull, Marshall and Weatherston, Councillors Forsyth, Maclagan, Davidson, Greenwood, Richardson, Plenderleith, Nesbitt, Laing and Steven; Mr A.J. Dodds, Mr T. Thompson, Mr H.R. Smail; Mr T.C. Smith, the borough treasurer; Mr R. Dickinson, the borough surveyor; Mr W. Weatherhead, clerk to the Authority; Dr Heagerty, etc.

Sir Hubert said – We are informally met; there have been no formal or official invitation because time passes so quickly. What was intended three years ago cannot very well be performed six years afterwards. What I wish to say is this, that the unveiling of the statue must have some meaning, and the original meaning was to give to the town of Berwick a memento of a lady who in the recollection of many of you, always took the deepest interest in the town and its prosperity and its embellishment, not only that, but I personally owe onto her that I was made acquainted with this historical portion of England, and that thanks to you, I was able to be your representative in Parliament, the last representative of the Borough of Berwick-on-Tweed. That was a debt of gratitude further administered which I did not quite know how to repay, when, unfortunately, our Borough was disfranchised. I consequently thought that after the touching manner in which you had followed the remains of an excellent woman to the grave it would please you to have at the same time a tribute of my gratitude. The two feelings are therefore blended into one, and today we unveil our statue. It will remind you of much, and if one other wish is fulfilled in the unveiling : viz., of being an ornament to this town which she loved so much; I shall be gratified if it meets with your approval. I am sorry it should have been so long in being erected, but the Mayor and the municipality are aware that it was not the fault of the sculptor, who has had it ready for two years. We have had some little difficulties to contend with, but we persevered – we are persevering people in the North. Under these circumstances I need not say more. I ask that the



statue be unveiled, and present it to the Mayor and Municipality of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The Mayor, in reply, said that in deference to Sir Hubert's expressed wish that there should be very short speeches, he refrained from making any remarks further than to thank Sir Hubert on behalf of the town for the lively statue. He assured him that it would be well cared for, and his Worship had much pleasure in handing to him a written reply.

The Mayor's reply was in the following terms :

Sir Hubert:

Kindly permit me to say that apart from the beauty of this memorial from an artistic point of view – and the sculptor has realised in the marble statue a vision of real loveliness – there are other beauties connected with it which deserve our notice. To my mind the most conspicuous of which was the beauty of character of the late Lady Jerningham whose memory this memorial will ever tend to keep green. Generous and kindly she ever was. Her philanthropy reached the humblest. Many had reason to bless her name. For all her goodness we rejoice to know that she is now enjoying her Master's reward.

Then we have the site which the memorial occupies. This I consider, too, is beautiful. Beautiful in its lofty eminence. Dominating the silvery Tweed, with an expanse of the most delightful landscape stretching away beyond wherein can be distinguished the stately Towers which sheltered the deceased lady, and which she knew as home.

Again we have the beauty of sentiment which prompted you, Sir Hubert, the distinguished husband of the deceased lady, to give such a memorial to the citizens of Berwick-upon-Tweed. This generosity of yours justly calls forth the approbation of the citizens, and on their behalf, I take the opportunity of heartily thanking you for your beautiful gift, and at the same time expressing the hope that you may long be spared , and have health in abundance.

*Frank Edminson, Mayor*

**STEPHENSON 150 PROJECT**

Many of you will be aware of the Stephenson 150 project which is taking place in Berwick between May and October 2009 to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Robert Stephenson who designed the Royal Border Bridge. If you want to see the full list of events taking place, you can view this on [www.berwickmuseum/stephenson150.html](http://www.berwickmuseum/stephenson150.html) . The events include talks, Film Nights at the Maltings, exhibitions, Railway walks, children's drama workshop and art exhibitions.

Members of the Friends may be interested in the two Exhibition weekends that the Record Office is involved in organising :

### **JUNE 27<sup>TH</sup> AND JUNE 28<sup>TH</sup> – RAILWAYS AND ROYAL BORDER BRIDGE EXHIBITIONS**

This is a railway themed weekend looking at railways in the North Northumberland and Borders area and the Royal Border Bridge. There will be displays from local groups, talks and railway films as well as some short dramas on both days. Hopefully, there will be something for everyone of all ages, both young and old. Please come along and support us!

### **AUGUST 29<sup>TH</sup> – AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> – RAILWAY EXHIBITION AT ETAL VILLAGE HALL**

1<sup>st</sup> July marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Heatherslaw Light Railway and to commemorate this, we are organising a railway weekend at Etal Village Hall over the August Bank Holiday weekend. There will be displays relating to railways in the area as well as an exhibition on the Light Railway and activities for children.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

If you are free over the weekends of 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June and 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> July, would you like to help steward the exhibitions at the Guildhall and at Etal. I'm looking for volunteers to help for a couple of hours invigilating or manning the bookstall. If you are interested, please do get in touch on (01289) 301865. If anyone could spare a couple of hours, that would be great.

*Linda Bankier*

## **WORKHOUSE PROJECT**

Everyone in our Workhouse group has now been given their first allocation of documents relating to the Berwick Union and is working away at home cataloguing the correspondence. We had a meeting in May to discuss progress and to also find out what types of matters were discussed with the Poor Law Commissioners. There seems to be a wide range and variety of cases which often are discussed over a period of time. John Spiers and Wendy Urwin came across a case which spanned both their allocations which John has written up below. This illustrates what you can find in the records and how important this cataloguing work is :

### **“NOT SUCH ANOTHER PLACE IN ENGLAND”**

In March 1843, the Poor Law Commissioners at Somerset House received a letter of complaint from a pauper inmate of the Berwick-upon-Tweed workhouse. It was signed Anthony Percy, and it accused the Master of the workhouse, John Purdie, of a serious assault:

*“I have been most cruelly used here by the Master and almost crushed to death by him throwing me down and l[y]ing on me with his knees on my breast so that I can hardly draw my breath. I am an old man sixty nine years of age an[d] not able to bear such usage.”*

Percy extended his grievance with some colourful characterisation of the workhouse:

*“There is not such another place as this in England – it is a complete Brothel – every sort of vice is encouraged here by the Master and Doctor.”* [National Archives MH 12/8978/Folio 26]

The Commissioners responded by requesting an investigation by the Board of Guardians in Berwick, and in due course they received the Master’s side of the story. He said that Percy had been refusing to go and break stones, as was required of him, and when he had resorted to foul language and violent behaviour, the Master and the porter had used force to restrain him. The Board accepted his explanation. But the most striking evidence emerged from an interview which the Board’s chairman Alexander Robertson conducted with Anthony Percy, in which Percy absolutely denied having made any complaint about the incident – or having written any letter to the Commission.

The Chairman’s suspicions then fell upon another inmate of the workhouse, Jonathan Middleton, thought to be “troublesome”, to whom Percy had spoken about his confrontation with the Master. When Middleton was interviewed however, he too denied knowing anything about the matter. The Guardians in Berwick requested that the original letter should be sent to them so that they could examine the handwriting, but it never arrived, and there the matter was allowed to rest. [MH 12/8978/Folios 56-58]

In June of that year however, there was renewed interest in the letter in the context of a different scandal that was disclosed. The workhouse was supposed to enforce a strict “segregation of classes”, especially male from female, but the design of the Berwick buildings made this difficult to maintain, and it was discovered that two of the inmates (“both of weak intellect”) had succeeded more than once in having sex on the premises. The Master’s lack of vigilance incurred the “severe displeasure” of the Commissioners, and urgent measures were taken to provide more doors, fewer keys, and better lighting. The Guardians did not miss the opportunity to divert a little

of the blame onto the Commission itself with the argument that if they had received the Percy letter as requested, they might have been able to trace its author and hence to unravel its charges of moral impropriety at an earlier stage. The Commissioners grudgingly agreed to send on the letter, but it appears that they never did, and again the matter lapsed. [MH 12/8978/Folios 95-96]

But only temporarily. In October 1843 another letter of complaint about the Master of the Berwick workhouse reached the Commission, this time from the same Jonathan Middleton upon whom suspicion had previously fallen. He made three charges against the Master:

*“I am sore afflicted with the palsy and he sends me to work out of doors this weather which makes me a good deal worse...”; “he set a Madman on to attack me and if it had not been for the rest of the men I would have been murdered and for no reason but because I belong to the Church of England he being a dissenter...”; “he even refuses to let me go out to the Church on a Sunday and brings in dissenting Ministers to preach here every Sunday but never a Minister of the English Church so that I have no opportunity of [hearing] divine worship”. [MH 12/8978/Folio 167]*

Once again Chairman Robertson and the Board of Guardians interviewed the parties, in the course of which most of Middleton’s allegations disintegrated: his work was revealed to be spinning hay ropes and was done under a wooden shed, with the approval of the Medical Officer; the incited attack on him was denied; and his Sunday confinement had been ordered to prevent him from stealing and removing workhouse property, something for which he had recently served a prison sentence. The Board was left in no doubt of his “depraved and vicious” character. It is however a curious coincidence, which the Board may well have noted, that the “Madman” attacker in Middleton’s story turned out to be one of those inmates who had been apprehended in sexual misbehaviour earlier in the year (and who had since died): were there further undisclosed motives underlying the latest accusations and linking them with previous criticisms of the regime?

To resolve any remaining doubts concerning a pattern of complaints about treatment in the workhouse, the Board obliged Middleton to provide a sample of his handwriting which was sent to the Commissioners in London, in order that they might compare it with the Percy letter still in their possession. The Commissioners’ clerks dutifully filed the handwriting sample with the Board’s letter; there is no indication that anyone took the trouble to make the comparison that they requested. [MH 12/8978/Folios 186-187]

More than a century and a half later, the National Archives' project to make available the contents of the Poor Law Commission's correspondence enables all of the evidence at last to be reviewed together. And whatever the genuine iniquities of workhouse life which provided the context for the story, it becomes clear from certain identical phrasing in both the Percy and Middleton letters, and in particular from the characteristics of the handwriting in them and in the submitted sample, that they were indeed written by the same author – and that Jonathan Middleton was not averse to practising forgery as well as misrepresentation in pursuit of his grudges against the Master of the workhouse.

We can also see the private comments on the case which were written by the energetic Assistant Poor Law Commissioner William Toovey Hawley for his colleagues' benefit (and which would have been especially gratifying to Chairman Robertson had he too been able to read them): Hawley was already persuaded of Middleton's unreliability, and went on to declare his belief that "There is no Board more anxious to have their workhouse in good order than that at Berwick". [MH 12/8978/Folio 167 verso]

*John Spiers*

## **ASPECTS OF BERWICK'S CULTURAL HISTORY**

### **BERWICK MUSEUM 1990-2009: A Personal Retrospect**

When I first started as Curator at Berwick Museum on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1990, curators as a species were already in decline. The all-powerful curators of the immediate post-war generation were on the way out, being replaced increasingly by museum managers. Three weeks after I started Dr Estvée Cole came up from the Victoria & Albert Museum to open our new Dragon Gallery. This was alarming for me, here was a powerful Museum Director who had just sacked nine curators in a major corporate restructuring. What if she hated the fairly bizarre new gallery (officially called *Breaking Barriers and Bending the Rules*) with its roaring dragon, mirrors and confusion of exhibits from different places and times? Fortunately if she hated it she was too polite to say and the day passed off with great acclaim. The Dragon Gallery and indeed the look of the whole museum were the creations of my predecessor

Richard Doughty (Curator 1985-90), a pipe-smoking, bow-tied flamboyant individual whose philosophy, as stated at the Museums Conference a couple of years later, was that curators should “play with their collections”. This ruffled some feathers especially among the emerging pc brigade whose motto (summed up at the same Conference session) was that “museums should be a place of healing”. Back in 1990 I tended to be more on the side of the therapists than the playground providers. I was far more obsessed in those days with scholarship and the minutiae of getting the cataloguing sorted out than with creating a “tawdry fairground” as one visitor commented. I even went so far as to agree with this opinion in a piece I wrote for the Museums Association Journal at the time of the MA Conference in Newcastle in 1991. This did not go down at all well with Michael McDonald, who as the Planning Officer was in charge of the Museum and Tourism. He was furious that I should publicly run down the work of my predecessor, something that he had passionately believed in and clearly battled to get through committees. I was shocked at his extreme reaction, but it was clue to his complete fascination with the Museum, which essentially was his hobby. Hardly a week would pass without him dropping round after a hard day of growling in the Planning Office, to unwind with long chats about art and culture with me and our stalwart Technician John Pinkerton. He had little time for “social history trash” which put him at odds with everything I was learning at Museum school during that time, but he loved a spirited argument as long as it was well informed. For Mike the Museum was essentially about Art and he was in his element during the NE Year of the Visual Arts in 1996 continually encouraging, hectoring, being inspired and inspiring, even as I and John put together a summer exhibition about transport to balance the flood of art shows. By then the Gymnasium Art Gallery had come into existence, it had been Mike’s idea to convert the space, initially to accommodate an exhibition by the Northumbrian abstract painter James Hugonin, Northern Arts then devised the Visual Arts Fellowships. Though later these came to dominate, at first they were only part of the programme which was organised by the Museum and included such successes as Jim Walker’s *Remembering Walls*. The Friends played a major role in staffing the Gym in those days; though some of the more extreme ‘installation art’ was a challenge for some. This was also true of the *Ramparts Project* in 1996 a gathering of conceptual works from around the world curated with steely single-minded determination by Pippa Coles, with whom I had terrible rows which fortunately we always seem to patch up. It was a dynamic and heady time over which Mike McDonald presided like a ring-master.

Then, in 1997/8 the era of cuts began. Mike retired and died very soon after, which deeply upset me. The Council was re-organised and a new Amenities Manager was

appointed who scarcely ever visited the Museum and seemed to regard the Museum budget as a source of funding for other projects, hence the 'redundancy' of the Museum Assistant Liz Doley was followed by the appointment of a Sports Development Officer. I was of course outraged at the time and the manner in which the decision was taken and its ramifications still rankle after all these years, but if there was a positive side to Liz's departure it was that it forced me to take an interest in local history. Hitherto Liz had been the local history expert on the staff, I had buried myself in the Burrell collection (reading up on Chinese porcelain and the Hague school of 19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painters) and equally diverse cross-cultural research, which enabled us to stage 'general' exhibitions on BIG subjects – Light, Sound, Food, Transport, Money, Time and the Four Elements. But from 1998 onward progressive cuts meant that we had to become increasingly local in our interests, and from 2001 to 2004 the Museum's main exhibition was a local subject staged in the Main Guard and paid for by the Civic Society. My increasing knowledge of local history coincided with my increasing interest in the use of drama to illuminate and interpret history. I've been fascinated in historical subjects in dramatic form ever since I staged my first play at Sussex University in 1981. That was a three hour symbolic drama based on Gustav Holst's *Planets Suite* which had human sacrifice in the opening scene and the destruction of the world in a nuclear holocaust and Holst's ascent into heaven at the end. It was greeted with general bemusement. I've tightened things up a little over the years: *The Price of Fish* at last September's Food Festival lasted 10 minutes and was much more appreciated. In the museum world in general 'Heritage Performance' has become increasingly important both in terms of outreach events and for educational use, and I have been very lucky to be able to pursue this aspect both in terms of the number and quality of grants that have come our way in recent years and my very able collaborators, technician/designer Jim Herbert and education worker Chrissi Cairn. But of course if you devote a lot of time to one aspect others do tend to get neglected, as the Consultants report on the Museum in 2007 made clear. In their opinion I had not devoted enough time to the static displays and behind-the-scenes endeavours such as collections management etc. This was ironic as the Consultants were called in the wake of attempts to close the Museum because, in some Councillors' minds, it was not doing *enough* outreach activities. I am still of the opinion that had I (once the budgets started getting cut from 1998/99) buried myself in the stores and brought collections management to a peak of perfection the Museum would have been closed at the beginning of 2008 as was publicly announced early in 2007. As it was our public profile through education, outreach and tourist impact was sufficiently high that the campaign organized by the Friends and other supporters had credibility and the Museum was saved.



Museums are perhaps one of the few Local Authority organisations where personalities and their individual styles do count and make a big difference. I think myself to have been enormously privileged to spend my working life since 1983 in and around Museums, and since 1990 to be able to have a direct influence on the way visitors and residents have perceived history. Now my successor Anne Moore (Museums Officer North) will bring her own style to Berwick while also dealing with Morpeth Bagpipe Museum. It is a challenge, as will be coping with a new County bureaucracy, so she will need the help and support of the Friends, which I am sure will be as readily given as it was in my era.

Bye for now.

*Chris Green (Last curator of Berwick Museum)*

## **A WORD OF THANKS**

I would like to express my grateful thanks to all the Friends who contributed so generously to my leaving present and in general to the Friends for their help and support over the years. Friends might like to know that they raised enough for me to be able to buy a brand new laptop computer upon which this note and the accompanying article are written. Thanks again.

*Chris Green (Curator, 1990-2009)*

## **ALBERT LEWIS**

In the last Nesag newsletter Patricia Hix drew attention to a man by the name of Albert Lewis, admitted to Belford Workhouse in 1889, described as “a coloured man” in Jane Bowen’s book “A Poor Little House”. She wondered about his origins and whether he might be a former slave. When I had read this same book I had also noted Albert Lewis : a man from overseas would have been an unusual occurrence at that time in a small rural village such as Belford in North Northumberland. I

happen to live just a few yards from the site of the Belford Workhouse which was demolished in 2003. Whilst working on the Remembering Slavery Project I had already learnt of a petition for the Abolition of the Slave Trade signed by over 400 signatories from Belford and forwarded to Parliament in 1792. This petition was unusual because of the high number of women signatories when women were normally not included on petitions. Could Albert Lewis be another link between Belford and the subject of slavery?

Jane Bowen kindly supplied further information on Albert Lewis. He had been admitted to Belford Workhouse after suffering an epileptic fit but quickly discharged himself in order to attend the Hiring Fair at Berwick. Hiring Fairs were held annually in market towns in this region for the purpose of recruiting farm workers and they were usually accompanied by much socialising and merry-making. It would have been a good opportunity for both spending and making money. The Medical Officer who examined Lewis and ordered hospital supervision within the Workhouse went on to make a formal complaint against the Master of the Workhouse for discharging him without authorisation. The Master, Mr Treble, however, had been informed by a tramp that Lewis was well known locally as a quack who regularly sold medicines at fairs and had recently been turned out of Wooler Workhouse.

Letter from Mr. Treble to Local Government Board

*March 18th 1889*

*Dear Sir*

*Re Albert Lewis, a Vagrant*

*As I know you will be very busy on Thursday I will give you a little more information about the above man. When I wrote to you on the 14th instant I knew he was an imposter. - A tramp told me."That he had been at that there game afore, and was turned out of Wooler Workhouse the day before he was admitted here, also that he was a Quack and attended local Fairs selling medicine." I wanted however to verify this statement, which the accompanying letter will do. The man who was drunk when admitted here told me a tissue of falsehoods - he said he never was in a workhouse before, also that he had been a Gentleman's butler. He played his part well during his apparent insanity, ordered his Servants, spake of the Matron as My Lady Lowther, and took a great dislike to myself, so much so, that he would not have me in his presence, he was very polite to the Doctor, who thought he was a great man, and cautioned us not to offend his "Caste". Now the facts seem to be that the man is well known in this district as a drunken imposter, he was a Slush (?) in the Chillingham Stables about 14 years ago. When he left Wooler on the 25th February, he said he called at Fowberry where Mrs. Leather gave him ten shillings, he came to Belford , and was drunk in Curven's Lodging House the same*

*afternoon, where a man named Patrick Green, who is now in this Workhouse states that he saw nine shillings in his possession - Lewis then appears to have given annoyance to several people in the Town, including Laing's, the Inn, and Gibson's, the latter told him to go away as he looked too much like the Devil for him. He slept at Curven's on Monday night, took a turn round the Town on Tuesday morning, took occasional fits, and would have hurt himself only someone was always near to save him, he managed until dinner time, when he was brought in here, and took his last fit at 10 OC the same night. Doctor Burman need not have the slightest apprehension about the man, as Inspector Spratt passed him on the Berwick Road, the same morning as he left this workhouse, he was there alive and apparently in good health. I may mention that altho' the man left on the 1st of March, Doctor Burman did not speak to me about him until the 6th and not then until I asked him to make his remarks on his own side of the Medical Book - If Doctor Burman only had a tithe of the trouble with the Tramps, that we have, I am sure he would facilitate their removal from this workhouse, instead of trying to retard it.*

His self discharge from Wooler Workhouse was subsequently verified by the Master at Wooler:

*Glendale Union Workhouse*

*Wooler, Northumberland*

*March 16th 1889*

*Dear Sir,*

*With regard to your enquiry about Albert Lewis, I have to state that a coloured man giving that name was admitted into this Workhouse on 14th Feby 1889, as he had been taking fits in the streets of Wooler. He was under treatment in our Hospital until his recovery, when he was discharged (at his own notice) on Feby 25th.*

*Yours truly*

*T A Robson*

*Master*

I was curious to find out more about Albert Lewis. I attempted to do so by searching the census.

A search of the 1881 census did not provide any possibilities. The census for subsequent years brought up the following entries:

### **1891 census Poplar (London) Workhouse**

Albert Lewis Pauper widower 52 chemist born East Indies, British Subject

## 1901 census Kidderminster Workhouse

Albert Lewis married 61 baker worker Worcester

Going back to the **1871 census** I found an Albert *Smith* of the right age. I was not too surprised to find him in **Manchester Workhouse**.

Smith Albert unmarried 31 labourer (general) East Indies – Calcutta

Could he have given a false surname?

Of course this is not inconclusive proof that the same man is referred to in each case. Information provided for the census by Heads of Institutions is often inaccurate. However, for the most part the name and age agree and it is not inconceivable that a man used to mixing potions might turn his hand to both chemistry and baking! And if he could travel from Belford to Poplar within 2 years perhaps he could make the journey from Poplar to Kidderminster – and no doubt to several other places en route- within 10 years!

I have not found him on the 1911 census nor have I found a death registration. The term “East Indies” usually refers to India and all of SE Asia. The Doctor had made reference to “caste”. So the likelihood is that Lewis was of Asian origin. There is no evidence that he originated from the Caribbean or from the USA. It seems unlikely that he was a former slave and there are no further clues as to how he came to be in England at that time.

Like Patricia Hix, I am now helping on the National Archives Workhouses Project where volunteers are transcribing correspondence between the Poor Law Commission and individual Workhouses. I plan to place a request in the Project's next newsletter for further information on Albert Lewis, just in case he has put in an appearance at any other Workhouses!

*Valerie Glass*  
*April 2009*

## **BERWICK AND DISTRICT BACHELOR'S BALL**

**Berwick Advertiser Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1885 - p2.**

**BERWICK AND DISTRICT BACHELORS' BALL** - *flowery report including .....*

The liberality of the bachelors on this occasion was similar to that on previous occasions, and their annual ball on Wednesday night was therefore as great a success as any that preceded it. As usual the Corn Exchange was obtained for their evening's pleasure, and at the hands of Mr John Crow, painter and decorator, High Street, it was transformed, if not into

"A rare pavilion such as man

Saw never since mankind began"

At least into a beautiful apartment where the company could

"Knit hands and beat the ground

In a light fantastic round."

Pretty as the decorations have been in previous years on this occasion they were much more handsome and of quite a different character. The idea was to represent a marquee of variegated colours, and this was very efficiently carried out. The pilasters of the Corn Exchange were draped with lengths of red, white and blue calico carried up a considerable distance, whence they were conveyed to the central part of the hall and fastened to the top of a pole which had been fixed in the centre of a new floor laid down for the occasion by Mr George Richardson, joiner, Tweedmouth. Round this pole was a wreath of evergreens, a supply of which was obtained from Haggerston Castle Grounds and Paxton House policies. Half way up it was a corona or circlet adorned with foliage, and to which were affixed lamps lit with gas, the pipes for which were conveyed into the premises by Messrs John Wilson and Son; plumbers, Bridge Street. A few feet from the floor the pole was surrounded with shields bearing various devices surmounted by flags. The portions of the pilasters of the Corn Exchange that were draped with calico were also adorned with shields and flags. The windows at the east part of the hall were draped with lace curtains and surmounted by flags of all nations. The recess at the north part of the hall was hid from view by calico of a terracotta colour to represent the appearance of the walls of the Corn Exchange, and this was relieved by lace hangings. On the balcony were placed busts of Shakespeare and Milton. In front of this was affixed a shield representing the monogram or ensign of the Berwick

Bachelors' Ball, viz., three bees. This was surmounted by three banners. At each side of the recess were the Northumberland armorial bearings and the Berwick Corporation's coat of arms; while over it were placed the Royal emblazonry and some small flags. The merchants' stalls were converted into an extemporised shrubbery (the plants for which and for the decoration of the supper table were obtained from Messrs Waite, Hope Nurseries, who had charge of the evergreen decorations) and this was screened off with electric blue calico topped with a gilt border which was flowered with tiger lilies. Above this was a garland of leaves from which sprang lamps lit with gas. In front of the electric blue calico were strips of lace narrowed and fastened in the middle with tassels. The space underneath the gallery was separated from the area for dancing with similar materials, and the rails above were relieved with terracotta calico. Projecting from these were three banners bearing designs of lions and eagles. In front of the rails also were garlands of evergreens. The gallery itself like the merchants stalls was converted into a mimic shrubbery for the time being by a number of plants placed on it. Four doorways gave entrance and exit to the area for dancing and these were adorned in a highly artistic manner, the pillars and entablature being of a creamy colour on which were painted pretty floral designs. The doorways were also adorned with evergreens and lace curtains. The space underneath the gallery was, as usual, reserved for card playing and those other amusements pursued by such member of the company as were too aged or tired to "sport and trip along" amongst others in their circumgyrations. We should state that the music was supplied by Mr J. H. Amers of Newcastle, and that the orchestra consisted of eight performers. The spot selected for their accommodation was underneath the recess at the north part of the hall it being adorned with two large busts of Sir Walter Scott and Byron. Here was the pianoforte. The committee..... *Named* ..... also looked well after the creature comforts of the gusts of the evening as upstairs in the long room was laid out a *recherché* supper which included all the delicacies of the season displayed in tempting array. At the doorway of the Corn Exchange was constructed an illuminated porch where the company were sheltered from cold draughts on alighting from their carriages. The masters of ceremonies were Messrs R. Weatherhead, A. L. Miller and W. A. Logan under whose management the programme was performed with a hitch. The ball began at 9 o'clock and was kept up with great spirit till about four o'clock in the morning. ....*followed by the programme of dances and lists of names and addresses of the bachelors who gave the ball, those who received invitations, and of those ladies who kindly acted as matrons.*

*Jane Bowen/Jan Ward*

## **PETITION TO THE GUILD**

To the worshipful the Mayor Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borren of Berwick on Tweed in Guild assembled.

We the undersigned, being Burgesses, having for many years been employed under the Corporation in sweeping and cleaning the streets, an humble occupation, yet perhaps the only one in which our age and infirmities permitted us to earn a subsistence, and in a time of unprecedented distress, thrown out of employ. As a small furtherance to the chance of future employment we begged of the Committee to allow us to retain our Shovels etc but they not finding themselves sufficiently empowered to do so referred us to the Guild, and this forms the request of our present petition. A favour so small we humbly hope the Guild will not deny four of its own Members and old servants and your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray.

Saml Crisp  
Alexr Cosser  
Peter Beatiment  
Geoe Johnson

Berwick on Tweed  
Decr 13<sup>th</sup> 1816

(On verso) Townhall 13<sup>th</sup> Decr 1816  
Ordered that the shovels and grapes? be delivered to them.

*Irene Budworth*

**BERWICK ADVERTISER NOTICES**

# OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS

## Births

20 Feb. 1808

"Lately, **Mary Bedworth**, (with her child about two years of age) reduced to the greatest poverty, and very far advanced in a state of pregnancy, applied to the Churchwarden of Spitalfields, to go into the workhouse; he immediately gave her an order, and the next morning she was safely delivered of three fine girls, who are now all living, and with the Mother are likely to do well. Her husband, who is in the first regiment of Tower Hamlets Militia, lately volunteered into the line, and is now at Madeira.

30 July 1808

"In Sutherland, the wife of **Wm. Munro**, gardener at Rosehall, a fine boy and a girl. The father of the twins is 90 years of age, in perfect possession of his faculties, and is as able to work as ever. He has lived at Rosehall for the last 60 years, and planted all the firs on that estate, which cover upwards of 300 acres and are now fine timber. He married his second wife about three years since; by his first he had a large family - and he has a brother now living in Tairi ten years older than himself.

10 April 1813

In the 30th ult. the wife of a young man in the city of York, was safely delivered of three boys, who, with their mother are likely to do well. The same young woman was delivered of twins about nineteen months ago.

## Marriages



19 November 1808

"At Dromore, **Mr Wm. Rae**, of Edenraty, aged 73, to **Miss Lucinda Lee**, of Drumskee, aged 24. The circumstances attending this marriage are something singular, as he has lived to this period without ever thinking of entering into such a situation, though possessed of a vast property, but supposing his friends might have disputes in consequence thereof, he thought proper to marry this young woman, she being his housekeeper.

6 January 1810

Marriage Extraordinary. - There was a marriage solemnized on the 27th ult. in the parish church of Crosthwaite, near Keswick, at which were present; - 2 brothers, 2 sisters, and 2 cousins - 3 husbands and 3 wives - 4 fathers and 4 mothers - 4 sons and 4 daughters - 2 uncles and 2 aunts - 2 nephews and 2 nieces - and yet the party consisted of no more than six persons.

27 January 1810

At Gisburn, in Craven, **Mr T. Bank**, to **Miss Martha Hague**, both of that parish. In this marriage there was an extraordinary want of singularity: for the bridegroom is a twin, and his twin brother attended, the bride is a twin, and her twin sister attended; the clergyman, who officiated, is a twin; and the parish clerk a twin; his twin sister (who lives in that parish) and who has been married about 12 years, has had twins twice, all living.

### **Death Notices**

15 May 1813

"The following just character of the late **George Culley**, Esq. is taken from a contemporary Journal. - "This eminent person retained until his last illness that even gaiety of temper, and simplicity of manners which characterized his early life. The vigour of his intellect and his body was unimpaired (sic), and age brought not decrepitude. He survived his elder brother, Matthew, a few years; to their joint intelligence and exertion, Northumberland in particular; and society at large, are indebted for a general spring in rural industry, with its numerous advantages, which

both ameliorate the character and increase the sustenance of man. From every county of the sister island, and from every civilized part of Europe, and the New World, pupils and strangers crowded to view the scenes of their active and successful labours, - by whose means the diffusion became general, and successive improvement has rewarded their curiosity. While his relations and intimates mourn the intelligent friend and gentle companion, the public will feel the privation of an active member, agriculture loses its most distinguished benefactor and advocate, the earliest and latest pupil of Bakewell."

11 October 1823

"In the bay of St. John's, Antigua, on the 17th February, a black woman, named **Statira**, who, by information from herself, must have attained the advanced age of 130. She was a slave, and was hired as a day-labourer, during the building of the gaol, and was present at the laying of the corner stone, which ceremony took place 116 years ago. She also stated that she was a young woman grown when President Sharpe assumed the administration of the island, which was in 1706; so that allowing her to be then 14, it brings her age to that of 130.

14 August 1819

"On the 31st of May last, at the Hope Estate, Jamaica, aged upwards of 140 years, **R. H. Elletson**, a negro. His own account (which is strongly corroborated by living and written testimony) is, that he was born at Merryman's Hill, an old sugar estate in St. Andrews, and was a father at the time of the great earthquake in 1692, which destroyed Port Royal; that he was at home when that event took place, and perfectly remembers the violence of the shock."

*Gill Lee*

**SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER**

## **Berwick Advertiser January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865**

### WORKHOUSE TREAT

Mr R Dodds, with his accustomed liberality, entertained the inmates of the Workhouse on Monday night to a plentiful supply of tea and spice loaf. The poor people assembled at six o'clock, and were immediately served with the refreshing beverages three times stronger than is ordinarily partaken of in the Workhouse. So abundant was the supply of bread that many of the recipients were unable then to dispose of it and they were obliged to take it with them to their rooms for an after consideration. After tea, John Moor, one of the inmates, returned thanks on behalf of the guests to Mr Dodds for the kind and liberal manner in which he entertains them at the beginning of every year, and he hoped the Mr Dodds and his family might long be spared to receive the good wishes of the recipients of their liberality. The Rev. W. K. Armstrong, in the absence of Mr Dodds, acknowledged the vote, and assured the poor people that nothing gave Mr Dodds greater pleasure than to perform acts of charity. Mr Dodds was prevented being present by his fulfilling another engagement. Several of the inmates sang songs, after which they were allowed to engage in dancing, enlivened by the music of a violin played by one of themselves. The number of inmates on Monday night was 99, each of whom was presented with an orange. Beside the Rev. W.K. Armstrong, Mr Morton and a number of ladies were present during the proceedings, which were enjoyed by all.

## **Berwick Advertiser January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1865**

### AMATEUR THEATRICALS AT ALNWICK CASTLE

Another of those delightful entertainments that have so pleasantly and instructively diversified the domestic life of Alnwick Castle, both during the present and previous winter, came off on Friday evening last, in the beautiful theatre, fitted up in the Guest Hall of the Castle, before their Graces the Duke (who wore the ribbon and star of the Order of the Garter) and Duchess, and a distinguished party who accompanied them. A large company from the town had also been invited, and the whole amounted to upwards of 200. "Children in Arms" as the programme, written by Mr John Brown, brilliant with hit and point, intimated, "were not admitted, as the manager had a lively sensibility of the piercing quality of their weapons."

## **Berwick Advertiser February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1865**

### IMPROVEMENTS IN TWEEDMOUTH CHURCH

We understand that Mrs Elliot of Orde House, has made the munificent offer of £1000 to the Incumbent and Churchwardens of Tweedmouth, and proposes with that sum to build a chancel, and to place therein a stained glass memorial window of the Grieve family. Any surplus that may be left, after fulfilling this double object, Mrs Elliot places at the disposal of the Incumbent and Churchwardens to wards any other improvements in the church that may be deemed necessary. We are glad also to add that plans have been prepared for restoring the nave of the church, re-roofing the church, re-seating the nave, heating, etc, placing a new vestry at the side of the church, and converting the present transept into an aisle. The whole cost is estimated at £1500. Mrs Elliot's surplus of, say £300, will leave the sum of £750 to be collected to carry out this most desirable object.

## **Berwick Advertiser February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1865**

### FATAL ACCIDENT AT SCREMERSTON COLLIERY

On Monday afternoon, while the pumps at Scremerston Colliery were undergoing repairs, one of the firemen, named John Smith, was seated in a drift in the back pit for the purpose of signalling as occasion might require. While thus situated he had opened a door which leads into the main shaft, and it is supposed that as he looked into the shaft the cage descended and most unfortunately caught him on the head and carried away his face, causing instantaneous death. It appears that the deceased was in no way called upon to look into the shaft, and no blame attaches to any other person for the melancholy event. The unfortunate man was 53 years of age, and has left a widow. An inquest was held on the body on Tuesday, before Mr J J Hardy, coroner but the Government Inspector of Mines to be present. From his long connection with the pit and his intimate knowledge of its working, as well as the general esteem in which he was held as a trustworthy servant, the deceased was elected for the post which he occupied at the time of the accident, as a particular careful man.

*Carole Pringle*