



# Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



*NUMBER 65–February 2010*

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Friends AGM and Talk by Jim Walker - Berwick Through Time. 7pm start. Venue Parish Centre.

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Local and Family History Day – exhibitions, talks etc. in Guildhall, Berwick, 10 – 4. See article

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010

Friends Private View of Exhibition of Frank Wood paintings in the Museum, 7pm -9pm

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Facades of The Fifties - exhibition of old photos and memorabilia. Guildhall 10 - 4 (Sat); 11 - 4 (Sun)

## **OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES**

### **AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Ayton Bowling Clubhouse.**

**Time:7.30 p.m.**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February  
Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March

Ayton's Churches : Rev Norman Whyte  
AGM followed by a talk on David of  
Ninewells, Chirnside

### **BELFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February

Living with the Hill Forts of the National Park  
: Chris Jones

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March

Slavery in the North East : John Charlton

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April

Stephenson & railways : Alan Fendley

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Admiral Lord Collingwood : Andy Griffin

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

Kirknewton Visit : Brian Rogers

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July

Walk About Tweedmouth : Chris Burgess

### **BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick.**

**Time:7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March

The Battle of Flodden : Paul Thompson

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April

AGM 7pm-7.30pm followed by From Ditch  
to Bastion, defending Berwick : Jim Herbert

### **BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Homes for the Heroes : Jeremy Paterson
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> April	Recent developments in Tyneside
	Archaeology : Steve Speak
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> May	Ice Age Art-including Cresswell Crags : Dr Paul Bahn. <b>This is being held in the Guild Hall</b>
Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> June	Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Borders: Dr Chris Bowles

### **BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose** **Time: 2.30pm**

Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2010	Church Buildings in Galashiels : Tom Hogg
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	Clay Family : Trevor Swan
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	AGM followed by Searching for my Relatives: Nan Oliver

### **COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream.** **Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> March	AGM at 7pm prompt. Followed by A Victorian Souvenir Industry with Coldstream connections : Mrs Jane Bowen
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Cholera and the struggle for clean water in Berwick-upon-Tweed and Northumberland: Mr R Hunter
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> May	Anglo Saxon Palace at Yeavering : Mr R Miket

### **DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Duns Social Club, 41 Newton St, Duns.** **Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> February	The Rough Wooing : Andrew Spratt
Wednesday 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Breach of Promise Cases : Norrie McLeish

### GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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

**Time: 7.30pm**

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March

Old Breweries of North Northumberland :  
Peter Maule

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April

Recent Mesolithic & Neolithic Research  
in North Northumberland : Clive  
Waddington. Followed by AGM

### LOWICK HERITAGE GROUP

**Venue: Lowick Village Hall**

**Time: 7.30pm**

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March

Border Ballads : Derek Butler

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April

A Valley in the North – film show :  
Dorothy Sharpe

### NORHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: Norham Village Hall**

**Time : 7.30 pm**

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March

Viking Age Textiles & Costumes : Paula  
Constantine

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April

Archaeological Survey of the Lower Tweed  
valley and Coastline: Clive Waddington

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May

Serried Ranks and Bluebells : Bob Harrison

### NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March

The Other Geordies : Early Settlement of  
Australia: Alan Fendley

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April

Northwards from Craster-archaeology of the

North Northumberland Coast : Harry  
Beamish, Archaeologist for the National  
Trust, Yorkshire and the North East

**NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH**

**Venue: Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street, Belford      Time: 10.00am**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April

Collingwood's Northumbrians : Tony Barrow  
Tracing your military ancestors from WW1  
and WW2 : John Sadler  
AGM

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May

## **ARCHIVE NEWS**

It doesn't seem that long ago that I last wrote something for the newsletter but plenty has been happening since the last one!

The snow at the beginning of January set things back a bit but since then it has been non stop activity.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we have been given some government Transformation Money to run courses. My last 8 weeks have been spent delivering a number of courses and Workshops which have been very successful and well supported. So far, there have been a number of workshops and courses on reading old documents; starting off in Family History and using the Internet. In addition there have been Family History Surgeries. The funding runs out at the end of March but it has introduced people to the Record Office who have not used it before.

This term, the whole of Berwick St Mary's First School has been undertaking a project on the history of Berwick. I have been working with the Year 4 and the Reception classes. Year 4 has visited the Record Office to find out about Prisons and I took them over to the main building to see the cells where we used to keep the archives! I also went up to the school to work with the Reception class where we

watched a film on the opening of the Royal Tweed Bridge in 1928 and looked at some photographs of it. This is a school that I haven't really worked with before and so it has been great to build up these contacts.

As part of the Food Heritage Project, we have also been working with Holy Trinity First School. Amongst other things, they have been looking at food in the Workhouse and the Prison. We have provided them with various information and documents and they have also visited the Record Office to see original sources and to look around the Council Offices. They all loved the cells and the strongroom !

Over the past two years, The Library and the Record Office have been working together on a Second World War project looking at life here in that period and also in our twin town of Trzcinka in Poland. On Holocaust Memorial Day, we held an evening to thank those who have helped with the project and as a launch for our small exhibition of what we have done. We had a lovely evening and the exhibition can now be seen in the Library. It will also be going to Trzcinka after Easter.

Finally, we have been continuing our work on the Workhouse Project with the National Archives. We have almost finished our allocation of correspondence from 1834 to 1853. One of the volumes is now searchable online and the others should be made available in the next couple of months. To publicise our work and the information which can be found in the documents, 5 of the group gave a talk to Berwick History Society in February. It was a very successful evening.

Lots of other things have happened but that's all I can think of for now. There is too much going on to keep up!

*Linda Bankier*

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

As you can see from the "Dates for your Diary", the Record Office is arranging two events in Berwick in the next couple of months for which I need some volunteers to help.

The first is a Local and **Family History Day** in the Guildhall on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March**. This will be a mixture of things happening. As part of the day, I would like to

run a Local History book stall and am looking for volunteers to help man it and generally steward the event. I'm also looking for speakers and so, if anyone would like to give a short talk, please do get in touch.

The other event is the **Facades of the Fifties** weekend on **15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May** . Again, if anyone would like to help steward that event and man the book stall , I would love to hear from you.

For both events, I'm looking for people to help for 2 hour slots. If you can help, please telephone (01289) 301865 or e-mail [lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk](mailto:lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk)

*Linda Bankier*

## LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY DAY

As part of the Transformation Fund events organised by the Record Office, we are holding a **Local and Family History Day** in the Guildhall on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March from 10 to 4**. There will be local and family history exhibitions; the opportunity to talk to Family History experts ; talks on both subjects; family and local history bookstalls and much more. Please come along and support this event. Admission is free. If anyone would like to help steward the event, please contact me on (01289) 301865 or [lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk](mailto:lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk)

*Linda Bankier*

## FACADES OF THE FIFTIES

Believe it or not, it is nearly two years since we last put on the Facades of the Fifties exhibition. This year we will be exhibiting it again in the Guildhall over the weekend of **15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May**. For those who don't know, it is an exhibition of photographs of Berwick shop fronts taken in May 1959. In 2008, many people generously lent us photos to copy which greatly added to the main exhibition. If anyone has any photos or memorabilia of Berwick for the 1950s which they would be willing to lend us for

copying for the exhibition, we would love to hear from you. We will, of course, return everything to you. If you can help, please contact me at the Record Office, (01289) 301865 or [lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk](mailto:lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk) .

As well as the photos, I hope to show our old films of Berwick in the 1950s. Do come along and have a trip down memory lane !

*Linda Bankier*

## **AGRICULTURAL SHOW AT WOOLER**

Whilst carrying out research for the exhibition I did on the History of Glendale Agricultural Society, I found the following report on the first show organised by the Society.

### **BERWICK ADVERTISER 5 AUGUST 1892**

#### A NEW SOCIETY

A successful agricultural exhibition was opened at Wooler on Wednesday under most auspicious circumstances. It was the first effort of the Glendale Agricultural Society, which has just sprung to life. Many years have passed since the district could boast a show for the promotion of better breeding of cattle, indeed the last affair of the kind dates back to 1849. On that occasion, the classes numbered some fifteen or sixteen, so that it will be understood the undertaking was on a very small scale. It may be that energetic leading spirits were wanting or that Glendale did not contain that competitive fire which now characterises the folk of the North, but the Wooler Show, as it was called, died what may be described as a natural death. It is somewhat surprising that it has never been revived, for a prettier and more appropriate seat for a show could not be imagined. Lying snugly under the shadow of the Cheviots, Cottage Field, whilst fixing a handy centre for the Wooler district, commands a pleasing view of hill and vale, and is sheltered from the biting north east winds. Moreover, it is so admirably fitted for the work that a visitor might almost be led to believe that the horse ring had been sunk below the general level of the ground to enable every spectator present to witness without difficulty the



movements of the animals. However, some months ago a party of influential gentlemen sounded the local agriculturists on the subject of forming a new society, and eventually Councillor Sir Jacob Wilson, Ald. Rea; Ald. Askew Robertson and Councillor Hindmarsh went actively to work. The result of their labours is the Glendale Agricultural Society and its 1892 exhibition. The promoters have every reason to be proud of their success for there were about 400 entries, a very large field of visitors and better weather could not have been hoped for. Here then were three of the most important factors suitable to a degree. There was also cause for great satisfaction in the quality of the exhibits. The principal features of the day were the sheep and the horses. The former proved a strong attraction and they were very favourably compared with the animals at the county show. This particularly applies to the Border Leicesters and the half bred gimmers which were a fine lot. Mr Wm. Pringle, Branton, Glanton, was represented by two winning rams of superior stamp, and in ewes of the same kind Mr M Laidler, West Fenton, Wooler, was the most successful exhibitor. In half bred rams Mr John Davidson was awarded third prize for a splendid animal, though somewhat aged. The judging of the horses was watched with keen interest and many steed of first class character were paced on the grass. Brood mares with foals at foot, geldings and fillies were much admired. The horse leaping did not create a *furor*, but what Mr Rea's mare did she did well and prettily, and in a manner which left her in undisputed possession of the best prize. With regard to cattle, Sir Jacob Wilson's bull, Merry Christon, stood out prominently, and Mr G.P. Hughes, took first prize for a well formed rich red (1891) heifer (Cowslip XXII ). There were not many collies but the pick of the group was undoubtedly Mr T.C. Rand's Princess May. It is interesting to note that amongst the exhibitors was Mr Anthony Barber of North Doddington, a gentleman who was actually represented in the classes at the 1849 Wooler Show. His Grace the Duke of Northumberland is patron of the Society, and the president is The Right Hon. The Earl of Tankerville who was present. The majority of the vice presidents were present.....During the day the band of the Wellesley Training Ship rendered interesting selections, and the boys were listened to by a large crowd of spectators. The pieces were conducted by Bandmaster J.W. A Eskdale, F.S. Sc (Lond.).....

*Linda Bankier*

**MUSEUM NEWS**

The museum at the Barracks had a successful season in 2009, with visitor numbers very slightly up on 2008 – the busiest day was in September on the Sunday of the Food Festival weekend, when there were 309 visitors.

We managed to open up another exhibition gallery on the ground floor in time for the Stephenson exhibition in September, and kept the exhibition up over the winter months, for the benefit of the occasional out of season visitor.

The winter months have been spent in cleaning, polishing and painting, ready for the new season. The main jobs have been to clean and repaint the office on the ground floor of the building, to make it more pleasant and useable space, and work is still in progress – nearly finished - on reorganising the picture store on the top floor of the building.

We are hoping to restore the back staircase to use, and reopen the small exhibition space at the top of the stairs by the end of the new season.

Looking forward to the new season, we aim to open with an exhibition of the works of Frank Wood, whose paintings were much admired by visitors throughout last season. Work is in progress getting the gallery ready for the show. Several of the Friends have lent Wood paintings and drawings to the Museum. We are now almost ready for the satisfying task of hanging the pictures to best effect. We hope to see as many as possible of the Friends on the evening of 31<sup>st</sup> March - the eve of our official opening to the public - when they are cordially invited to come and take a private view of the exhibition.

For the latter part of the season there will be a costume exhibition. The museum has a small but interesting collection of costumes which have not been on exhibition before.

We are planning a small “taster” exhibition at the end of the season centred on a recent donation; a collection of around 100 watercolours and drawings, mainly by Andrew Wallace, has arrived from aboard.

We are in the early stages of discussions re another Berwick bridges exhibition based on exhibitions made by the Institution of Civil Engineers “Web of Iron”, and the Civic Society.

We are helping Andro Semeiko, one of the Gymnasium artists in residence with his exhibition next April. Andro, originally from Georgia, is a graduate of the Royal Academy School. His paintings and installations create a world where everyday objects play extraordinary roles in science fiction setups. He has asked about the possibilities of borrowing items from the museum to juxtapose with some of his paintings. We have agreed in principle to his request.

The new season also poses some less pleasant challenges, however. Northumberland County Council is faced with having to save £21,000,000.00 from the budget for the next financial year. This is rather less than the original forecast of £30,000,000.00. The implications for Northumberland Museums' Service are that £60,000.00 worth of savings needs to be made. However, the proposed budget was not adopted at full council on 10<sup>th</sup> February. At the time of writing, further discussions between all political parties are ongoing, and the budget should be fixed before the end of the month.

Berwick Museum is on course to transfer to the Museums Trust by the end of March. If the process can be completed in time there will be a substantial saving on Business rates. Morpeth and Hexham Museums should follow by June this year.

There have been a number of new acquisitions over the winter. As mentioned earlier, we have had a large number of Wallace paintings and drawings donated to the museum by the estate of Mrs Elsie Clark. Mrs Clark and her sister Grace Wallace donated other paintings and family memorabilia to Berwick Museum while they were alive, some of which were exhibited in the "James Wallace and The Quintet" exhibition held in 1995. The majority of the drawings and paintings are by Andrew Wallace, though there are some by James Wallace also.

Mrs Stella Straker-Wilson has given the museum a small brass box embossed with Princess Mary's image. This once contained a 1914 Christmas present (of cigarettes and chocolate, long since eaten) for her father, WW1 medical officer Steve Smith, who later became a chemist in Berwick.

Mr and Mrs Fred Kennington have donated some commemorative royal china ware, some linen items and some lead toy battleships.

Mrs Elizabeth Light and her family are about to donate a very interesting and extensively researched 1840s wedding dress, which belonged to their ancestor Isabella Robertson.

The BBC's Politics Show used the museum as a venue for filming one Sunday in December. The programme featured Sir Alan Beith MP and Christine Stevens SMP in a debate re Scottish independence. I am told that the museum looked well, with Jon Hall's large panoramic painting of the Royal Border Bridge – on loan from Institution of Civil Engineers - acting as an appropriate backdrop to the interview.

*Anne Moore*

## **THE PROBLEMS OF OBTAINING A NEW MASTER: PERSISTENCE PAYS**

In 1844, the then Master of the workhouse, John Purdie became ill, and despite being given a month's leave of absence by the Guardians, he did not recover his health. As an interim measure, in January 1845, the Berwick Relieving Officer, James Blackett Atkinson was given oversight of the workhouse, and the workhouse porter, John Moor acted up, and this situation continued until, in September 1845, Purdie died.

His death created a dilemma for the Board of Guardians. The normal procedure would have been to publish an advertisement for a new couple to act as master and matron of the workhouse. The Guardians, however, were very pleased with the work as matron of Mrs Jane Purdie, the widow, and moreover they considered that the workhouse was currently as well run as at any time since its inception. Hence, at a meeting on the 9th of September 1845, in the presence of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, W. H. Toovey Hawley, the Board discussed a proposal to retain the services of Jane Purdie as matron, formally appoint James Blackett Atkinson as a non resident Master or Superintendent Master, and promote John Moor to be resident Deputy Master. Hawley advised the meeting that the Commission was unlikely to accept the proposal of a non-resident master, and that, moreover, a porter lacked sufficient authority to be made a workhouse master. He understood their reluctance to lose the services of Mrs. Purdie, but that the way to

deal with it was to advertise for only a new workhouse master, although he personally felt that it would be better to appoint a new couple to the joint roles of master and matron. Despite Hawley's warnings, the Guardians wrote to the Commission seeking permission to implement their plan, only to have it turned down, as the Commissioners, too, sought Hawley's advice. At this point, Hawley told them that the proposal to promote Atkinson was the result of favouritism on behalf of the Guardians. In replying, the Commission wrote that they could not accept the proposal both because of the concerns over non-residence and because Atkinson could not be both a relieving officer and Master.

Nothing daunted, the Guardians marshalled their arguments at the Board Meeting on 23 September. They again stressed how advantageous they felt the arrangement would be to the Union; denied any favouritism and reminded the Commission that, prior to the formation of the Berwick-upon -Tweed Union, Atkinson had been both an Assistant Overseer for Berwick and Superintendent of the Poor House, with no ill effects. Indeed Hawley's predecessor, Sir John Walsham had publicly said that the Poor House was the best managed he had seen, and later had considered reappointing Atkinson to a role as Superintendent when there was a weak workhouse master. Moreover, during the period of Mr. Purdie's illness, when the scheme the Guardians were now proposing was in fact the way the workhouse had been run, even Mr. Hawley could find no fault on an unannounced inspection!

When the Commission received the Board's letter on 29th September, both Hawley and Walsham were again consulted. Hawley dug his heels in on the principle that allowing a non-resident master would create a dangerous precedent. Sir John admitted that the old Poor House had been the best managed he had ever seen, confirmed that he had considered appointing Atkinson as a Superintendent at a later stage and offered his personal view that, given his knowledge of Atkinson, he believed the Guardians' scheme would work. Then, rather lamely recognising the importance of solidarity within the Commission, he added that, if Atkinson was not willing to be resident, he could not be appointed. It was this last point that the Commission conveyed to the Guardians in their letter on October 8.

It was not until November 20th that the Guardians once more renewed their argument. In an effort to meet at least some of the Commission's objections, they proposed that the Porter, John Moor, be made workhouse Master, and that Atkinson be appointed Superintendent. Anticipating the Commission's view that the

promotion of the Porter was inappropriate, they added that Moor was a well educated, industrious and honest man, who, until weakness had forced him to give up his trade, had been a Master Cooper. Also that the books he had maintained during Purdie's illness had passed the scrutiny of the District Auditor. Their job description for the role of Superintendent, however, was rather less convincing:

*'..duties would be principally those which are found to require the absence of the Master from the Workhouse- such as obtaining from the Contractors the necessary supplies of provisions &c and in seeing that they are of the qualities contracted for - in attending to the clothing Department, and generally in superintending the entire Establishment, and in assisting the Guardians , or their Committees with suggestions for improvement in the discipline or Management of the Workhouse.'*

When the letter was received in London, Hawley's immediate comment was to the effect that if Moor was as good as the Guardians said, then there was no need for a Superintendent. The reply sent to the Guardians on December 6, stated that the Commission would accept either Atkinson or Moor as **resident** Master, but there was no need for a Superintendent.

Clearly the Guardians had put contingency plans in place, for on this occasion the reply was taken directly to the Vice Chairman of the Board, Alexander Christison, rather than waiting for the next Board meeting. Christison authorised an immediate reply making it clear that under no circumstances was Atkinson willing to be resident, but also describing in detail the considerable time already spent daily by Atkinson at the workhouse, and noting that, if appointed, Atkinson would give up his post as Collector of Rates, thus releasing even more time for the Workhouse. The Guardians wished to stick with their proposal. The letter also contained a scarcely veiled threat.

*'.....it will be a source of deep regret if the Commissioners still adhere to their determination not to sanction the appointment of the officers as proposed.'*

Once again Hawley was consulted. He continued to hold to his cherished principle that non-residence was wrong, but admitted both that Atkinson's character was such that the proposal could work, and, perhaps more tellingly, that if the Commission again turned down the Guardians' plan, at the next meeting the Board would consider a motion for a mass resignation. The question for the Commission was

*'whether harmony is to be purchased by concession, or the principle maintained at the hazard of collision.'*

Sir John Walsham also contributed his opinion that agreeing to the wishes of the Guardians would be infinitely preferable to risking confrontation with them, especially as their views were practically right!

Before a formal reply could be sent, the Guardians wrote again on December 17, proposing that Atkinson would undertake all the master's duties, short of sleeping at the workhouse. By now, Hawley had recognised the need to meet the Guardians' wishes, but still could not swallow the idea of a master absent particularly at night, when problems with vagrants seeking admission to the workhouse could be anticipated. Ironically, he found himself recommending the acceptance of the Guardians' original proposal. It was in these terms that the Commission wrote on December 24, sanctioning for a trial period the appointment of Atkinson as non-resident Master, and Moor as Resident Assistant Master.

It had been a prolonged struggle, but in the end, it was the Guardians who had won.

*Jane Ward*

## **EXTRACTS FROM THE NEWCASTLE COURANT**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1844**

### COACH ACCIDENT

On Monday evening week, an accident happened with the Royal Sovereign, Berwick and Kelso coach, which had nearly cost the life of the driver. The coach was returning from Spittal about ten o'clock, having left the bulk of her passengers there;

and when about the high toll gate, the reins broke while the driver was holding tightly by them. This sudden freedom from his hold unfortunately unseated him, and the horses finding themselves under no restraint, set off furiously down Tweedmouth, passing over one of the driver's legs, and otherwise very seriously bruising him. The horses galloped on until they were checked by the Tweedmouth low gate, which they luckily reached without further accident. There was only one lady passenger inside, and she was unconscious of her perilous situation. The driver is still very ill from the bruises he received.

**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1844**

### SMUGGLING

On Saturday week the Union coach on her arrival at the Red Lion Inn, Berwick, from the north, was seized by Mr William Hurst, excise officer, who had apparently been waiting her arrival. On a search being made amongst the luggage there were found, in her front and hind boots, three gallons of whiskey and a dozen bottles of ginger wine, which were unaccompanied by any transfer permit. The former was in a grey-beard enclosed in a hamper, which was again covered by a coarse wrapper, and was addressed simply "Belford;" the ginger wine was in bottles arranged in a wine-merchant's basket, and was addressed to a gentleman also at Belford. The horses, which had been detached from the coach before it was seized, were with the coach and all its contents, placed under arrest. After being detained for half-an-hour, in the course of which satisfactory bond was lodged, the coach was allowed to proceed. Subsequently, however, an express was sent after her, and the guard, George Nailor, taken into custody and brought back to Berwick. An additional bond was given on his account, and he was again at liberty. The circumstances occurring on a market day caused considerable commotion in front of the inn. It is but fair to presume that the proprietors, and those in their employment, were ignorant of the contraband goods they had in charge. The persons therefore who thus jeopardised the property of others for the paltry gain which would have been made by evading the excise laws cannot be too severely censured. The bond, which was given on Saturday, has since been renewed, and the consequences are yet unascertained.

*Jan Ward*



## **MORE ABOUT VIRTUE**

In the last newsletter I told the story of Virtue Moffatt, killed by lightning at Budle near Belford in 1868. Since then I have now located the incident in The Berwick Advertiser.

**14th August, 1868 - p3 – BELFORD**

### **DEATH BY LIGHTNING**

On Thursday morning thunder was heard in the distance at Belford, a great deal of lightning was seen, and a slight shower fell. The heat in the morning and forenoon was oppressive even under a heavily clouded sky, and at noon the thermometer in the shade was 74 degrees. In the afternoon about two o'clock, a terrific thunderstorm broke over the town and neighbourhood, rain fell in torrents, and the roads in the locality were flooded. Mrs Virtue Moffatt, Belford, had gone with Mr George Gibson's children in a conveyance to Budle Bay, which is about three miles from Belford, for the purpose of bathing the children. The storm was raging in dreadful fury when the party reached the sea. Mrs Martha Davis, and the nurse Mary Ann Goodwill, tried to persuade Mrs Moffatt to return and not bathe in such an appalling storm, but their entreaties were of no avail. Mrs Moffatt had bathed one child and the nurse had taken it away to bring another, when Mrs Moffatt was struck by the electric fluid and fell down in the water. A person named Gray, who is living in a house adjoining Mrs Jane Henderson's, Blacksmith's Arms, had come from his work and was changing his clothes, (the window of his house faces the sea), when missing Mrs Moffatt, who had fallen down in the water, he hastened to the scene of the melancholy disaster, but the unfortunate lady was just expiring, and in a few minutes life was quite extinct. The body was removed to Mrs Jane Henderson's, which is about a hundred yards from the fatal spot. The electric fluid had struck deceased on the left temple and her left shoulder and side were much discoloured from the effects of the fire. An inquest was held on Saturday by J. J. Hardy, Esq., coroner, the verdict as above. The body was quite supple. The deceased was a widow, 60 years of age, and leaves two sons to mourn her loss. She was interred at Belford on Sunday.

The account is more detailed and vivid than that of the Newcastle Courant. One can imagine the impact it had upon the local community.

I also discovered the identity of George Gibson. From the 1871 census I learnt that he was a shopkeeper selling groceries, clothing and ironmongery in Belford, living off the Market Square with his wife, 5 children under 8 years, servant and the same nursery maid who was present at the tragic incident, Mary Ann Goodwill. In the 1881 census there is another child and Mary Ann is absent. I found her in Gateshead, married to Armstrong Forster, a blacksmith, with 4 children of their own. I have not managed to find out anything more about Martha Davis

I wonder if Mary Ann ever related to her children the sad story of the day she went to Budle Bay with Virtue Moffatt?

*Valerie Glass*

## **SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER**

**Berwick Advertiser, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1865**

### GLANTON GAMES AND WRESTLING

On Friday these gymnastic feats were held in the usual place, as in former years, a beautiful award in front of the Red Lion Inn. The attendance exceeded any previous gathering, and included many of the county families in the neighbourhood. Over £40 was awarded in prizes; £20 thereof for wrestling. The day was observed as a holiday throughout the neighbourhood. By the kind permission of Captain Grey, the band of the Northumberland Light Infantry, under the able leadership of Mr Millar played many popular airs at intervals. The following are awards :- Quoit main, 8 yards, 11 points to the game, 34 competitors – 1<sup>st</sup> prize, John Patterson, mason, Glanton, £1; 2<sup>nd</sup>, J. Liddell, Shilbottle, 10s; 3<sup>rd</sup>, R. Dougal, Shilbottle, 5s Quoit main, 18 yards, 11 points to the game- 1<sup>st</sup> prize, Robert Wright, Bolton, £1 ; 2<sup>nd</sup>, A. Peary, Glanton, 10s; 3<sup>rd</sup> John Mason, Shilbottle, 5s. Putting the 18lbs. Ball, 11 competitors- 1<sup>st</sup> prize, Wm. Jameison, Penrith, distance 30 feet. 7s 6d; 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mark Campbell, Glanton, distance 29 feet, 2s 6d. Flat Race, 150 yards, 5 competitors – 1<sup>st</sup> prize, D. Anderson, Alnwick, 7s 6d; 2<sup>nd</sup>, P. Thompson, Alnwick, 2s 6d.

## **Berwick Advertiser, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1865**

### ILLEGAL FISHING BY FRENCHMEN – IMPORTANT DECISION

On Tuesday, last week, Lieut. Prosser, commanding H.M. gunboat, "Ruby," charged the master of a French fishing lugger, with fishing for herrings within the limit of three miles off the Fern Islands. The offence was not disputed, but it was understood by the defendant that the convention between Great Britain and France relating the fishing did not mean the limit to be three miles off the Fern islands, but three miles from the mainland, and that, therefore, he had not infringed the regulation. Hitherto no objection had been made to Frenchmen fishing within three miles off the Fern Islands, where large numbers of them annually fished. In order to communicate with the authorities of the Board of Fisheries, and to learn the instructions upon which Lieut. Prosser had acted, the magistrates adjourned the case until Saturday last, when among other correspondence, the opinion of Advocate -General T.D. Harding, given in 1853, that the limit extended to three miles off the Fern Islands, was read, upon which the magistrates ordered the defendant to be fined in the mitigated penalty of £2, including costs.

## **Berwick Advertiser, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1865**

### HONOUR TO A TOWNSMAN

At a meeting of the Liverpool Local Marine Board on Thursday, last week, a patent gold chronometer, from the Presidents of the United States, was presented to Capt. Rice Paxton, of the ship Sultana, for rescuing the crew of the American ship Alarm, which was lost on the Preperie reef, in the Bay of Bengal, on the 3d of November, 1863. The Alarm was bound from Akyab to Singapore, when she struck on the reef she was running very fast. Had the Sultana not hove in sight at the time she did, the probability is that all the crew of the Alarm would have perished. (Captain Paxton is well known in Berwick, of which he is a freeman).

*Carole Pringle*

**BERWICK RECORD OFFICE  
30<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**

The Berwick Record Office first opened its doors to the public in July 1980 and this year will be its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Record Office has developed and grown considerably during that time and so it seems fitting to mark the occasion. It would be great if the Friends could help the Record Office organise and run a couple of events to do this. Therefore, I would like to set up a small group of those who would be willing to help or have some ideas of what we could do. One suggestion is that we create an exhibition to illustrate the variety of work undertaken by the Record Office and the various projects it has supported over the years.

At the moment, it is very important that the Record Office continues to raise its profile and makes people aware of its existence.

If you would like to help in any way, please contact me and I'll try and arrange a meeting in April, once I don't have to think about the Transformation Fund!

*Linda Bankier*