

Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



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[Selected articles]

SNIPPETS ABOUT FORD PARISH

The following are some snippets about Ford Parish in the past.

PECULIAR CUSTOMS

The Peculiar Customs document is dated late 18th century. I'm sure the people of Ford are glad that the custom on All Saints Eve doesn't happen any more!

Peculiar Customs that prevail among the Common People at Ford on the several undermentioned Days

1. On Shrove Tuesday the Schoolboys are allow'd to fight each a Cock upon paying the School-Master a penny. The Boy's Cock who wins the most Battles gives the Boy the title of Victor; the Boy, whose Cock is second, is call'd the Victor's Man. On Palm Saturday the victor has the Honor of running from the Church about a Mile & back again attended by his man; the rest of the Boys run thrice about the Church with long palm Rods in their Hands & then set off in pursuit of the Victor; & if they overtake him before he reaches the Church again, 'tis well if he escapes a severe flogging, tho' his man or second endeavours to ward off the Blows as much as possible.

On Shrove Tuesday likewise in the Evening a Collection is made to purchase a Foot-ball when the married Men play a match against the unmarried; the married Men play towards the Church & the unmarried from it. Before they begin, they oblige all that are married the preceding year to jump or wade through a wide, deep, watery Hole which they call the Gaudy Loup. Whoever refuses is not allow'd that year to play at Foot-ball amongst his Companions.

3. On Easter Tuesday they assemble in the street, join'd by many from neighbouring villages, where they form a Ring & having all danc'd till they are satisfy'd, Two female Combatants are singled out to dance with each other as long as they can : a Pidgeon decorated with various kinds of Ribbands is held up by the Feet all the time they are dancing; which Ribbands are the prize divided between the Combatants. This they call the Dow Dancing. The Evening they spend in Merriment & Feasting.

4. On Midsummer Eve they us'd to have a great Collection of Horses Bones, with which they made a Bonfire on an Eminence above the Village - a Custom now almost forgot.

5. On All Saints Eve, commonly call'd Nutcracker Night, the Young Fellows generally meet in a Body, & after robbing all the Cabbage Yards they can, they have a Gothic Custom of throwing the Cabbages down People's Chimneys which is often attended with dangerous consequences. This custom prevails in many parts in Scotland & in the neighbouring Villages.

VISIT OF MARQUIS AND MARCHIONESS OF WATERFORD

Berwick Advertiser, 24 September 1842

The Marquis and Marchioness of Waterford arrived at their seat at Ford Castle, on a short visit, on the evening of Saturday last. This joyous event, which had been for some time expected, and for which due preparations had been made, was signalled by an immense fire on the top of the hill immediately to the east of Ford, as well as by others on some of the neighbouring heights. In the early part of the week, the noble Lord and the Marchioness together with David Smart and J.C.Blackden, Esqrs, his Lord's agents, with that courtesy and kindness for which they are remarkable, visited most of the residents and inspected the houses, etc. , in Ford Village and other places on the estate - their visits yesterday (Thursday) including amongst other places that of Ford Forge, where the extensive spade manufactory of Messers Thomas Black and Son, and the carding and dyeing establishment of the Messers Towns, occupied a great deal of their attention. After a minute inspection of some of the various processes in each, the Noble Marquis intimated to Mr Black his desire to witness the process of manufacturing a spade, an article for which he understood Ford Forge had long been celebrated - which desire was immediately acceded to, a spade of first rate workmanship having been begun and finished in the presence of the party, who departed highly gratified, - the Marquis taking the newly made spade along with him in his carriage, after giving a gratuity of half a sovereign to some of the workmen by whom it was manufactured; and generously presenting a couple of sovereigns more amongst the establishment in general, in order to enable them to drink the health of his Lordship and that of his amiable consort, the Marchioness, as well as otherwise enjoy themselves a little on such an auspicious occasion.

1 October 1842

The Marquis of Waterford, after a visit of twelve days to Ford Castle, left this morning at half past six o'clock for Newcastle. They were escorted beyond the bounds of their property by the tenants on horseback. During their stay they visited every place worthy of being seen in the neighbourhood. In our last we mentioned the visit of the Marquis to the spade manufactory at Ford Forge, in the operations of which he seemed to take great interest. On Saturday, he and the Marchioness descended the coal-pit at Ford Hill. It is very unusual for females to descend these pits, as the natural timidity of the sex generally deters them, but the Marchioness seems made of firmer stuff and, a conveyance having been prepared , she and the Marquis, with a workman to guide the descent, were let down to the depth of forty fathoms into the bowels of the earth. After inspecting the arrangements below, they were brought up again, much gratified by their visit. The inhabitants of Ford are quite delighted with their landlord and his lady, and as they are understood to be similarly well pleased with their visit, it is expected that it will be repeated at no far distant day.

QUEENS VICTORIA'S JUBILEE - 1887

FORD

Here the grounds and gardens at the Castle were opened after two o'clock to all the people connected with the different farms on the estate. The school children assembled at Ford School and after receiving Jubilee commemorative medals - the gift of Lady Waterford, proceeded to the site of "Jubilee Cottage" which is to be built by Lady Waterford in

commemoration of the 50th year of the reign of her Majesty. The foundation stone of this building was laid by Mr Thomas to whom there was presented a silver trowel in commemoration of his 50 years service on the estate. At three o'clock refreshments were served out to the children. A band supplied by Mr J.H. Amers, Newcastle, played music in the grounds, while there was dancing to the enlivening strains of Mr Lock's violin. Cricket, quoits, and other games were enjoyed on the recreation ground, while bowls were trundled in the Castle Court, in which, and in the rose garden refreshments also were served. At nine o'clock a bonfire was lit on the White Hill and thus the rejoicing of a memorable day were brought to a close.

PALLINSBURN

On Tuesday, a fete in honour of the Queen's Jubilee was given by Mr and Hon. Mrs Askew of Pallinsburn to all the people and workmen on the estate. The children belonging to Branxton, Crookham and Howtle schools were also invited and altogether there must have been 400 people present. The grounds were then thrown open at 2pm and the people at once proceeded to enjoy themselves, each according to his liking. Suitable games were provided for the children and the successful competitors in the various races were awarded prizes by Miss Mary and Miss Isa Askew. A cricket match was got up by those who took an interest in that game, whilst dancing to the music of Spittal Band, which had been engaged for the occasion, was kept up throughout the afternoon and evening. A substantial tea was served out to the company about 5 pm after which Jubilee commemorative medals were presented by Mr Askew to all present. A cordial vote of thanks was proposed to them. At ten o'clock, there was a beautiful display of fireworks, admirably managed by Mr Stevens, Berwick during the progress of which the large bonfire built on Mardon Hill blazed merrily up. After Jubilee songs had been sung by the children led by Mr Bayliff, Branxton and the National Anthem by all present, hearty cheers were given for Her Majesty as also for Mr Askew, Hon Mrs Askew and family refreshments were again served out and the large company separated, after having apparently spent a day of thorough enjoyment.

HOUSING CONDITIONS

Glendale Rural District, 1897

Report on the condition of Cottages at Ford Hill:

At Ford Hill there are ten Cottages, two of these have each two rooms, the remaining eight have one room. Each of them has a lean to which some use as a bedroom for which purpose it is not fit. In every case the lean to admits the rain freely. The Cottages are not spouted and the Walls are damp. There are two doors in each Cottage, one opposite the other, this makes them very cold and all the occupiers complain of this. In one of the single room cottages, there are including children, six occupants. In the rest the number is smaller. The chief points calling for notice are the limited accommodation, the damp walls and the cold drafts in windy weather from the two doors which in many cases are in bad repair. The Cottages might be made good ones by throwing two into one. There are good privies recently built but one of them is in use. The pails are too large for easy handling and complaints are made about them being altogether and too near the Cottages.

Linda Bankier

TURNER IN BERWICK BOROUGH

J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) made four tours in North East England and South East Scotland during which he produced, as was his habit when travelling, large numbers of drawings and watercolours in sketchbooks which he later used as a reference library of scenes from which he would later develop finished watercolours, oil paintings and engravings.

Drawing and paintings made during his time in what is now Berwick Borough illustrate the overall development of his art from the sketch of the Berwick townscape of 1797 (Fig 1) - an early, carefully detailed topographical drawing, showing the influence of his training under the architectural watercolourist Thomas Malton, to the late impressionistic oil painting, "Norham Castle, Sunrise" of c.1845 - a supreme example of Constable's description of Turner's work as "airy visions painted with tinted steam".

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Records of Turner's visits to Berwick are made in the "North of England" (1797), "Berwick" (1831) and "Abbotsford" (1831) sketchbooks, the latter two in connection with his illustrations to publications of Scott's poem and prose works.

Berwick was the most northerly point of Turner's 1797 tour and he made two sketches then - one the pencil sketch mentioned above (Fig 1) of the townscape to the east of the Old Bridge, from a point near the Tweedmouth end, which shows the Bridge Gate at the north end still in place. From the evidence of old maps this Gate seems to have been still in existence in 1822 but removed by 1849.

The other sketch (Fig 2) taken from about the same viewpoint, is a watercolour, with washes of black, blue and yellow, showing the north bank of the river westwards from the old harbour, the battery leading to Coxon's Tower, the estuary and the sea. An overlying yellowish colour is due to exposure of the picture in Victorian times. The diffused source of light within the picture, and the light and shadow falling on the town walls and buildings suggest the time to be evening. It appears to be low tide and shows the deep water channel and the faint outline of Spittal point. A few sailing boats are moored wither in the harbour or beside Carr's Rock or standing off in the bay.

Turner revisited Berwick in 1831 and from sketches made then he produced the finished watercolour of 1832, *Berwick-upon-Tweed* (Fig 3), now in a private collection in the USA. It was intended for engraving as a frontispiece to vol.XII "Dramatic Pieces" of Scott's Poetical Works, 1834 and as an illustration to "Halidon Hill", Scott's drama of that title.

The original sketch was made "out of the Scotsgate in a field on the left hand side of the Dunse road" and included "the old Castle, the Bridge and the sea". It also shows the defensive medieval "White Wall" running down from the Castle to the 16th century Water Tower encompassing a gun emplacement on the river bank. In the distance to the left is the octagonal Bell Tower, medieval in origin.

Berwick - upon - Tweed

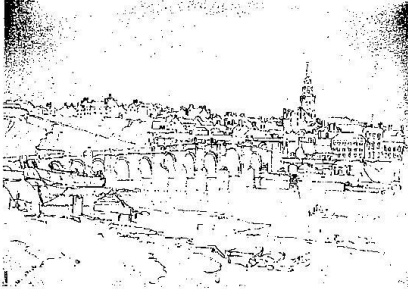


Fig 1. Old bridge and town from the south, 1797.

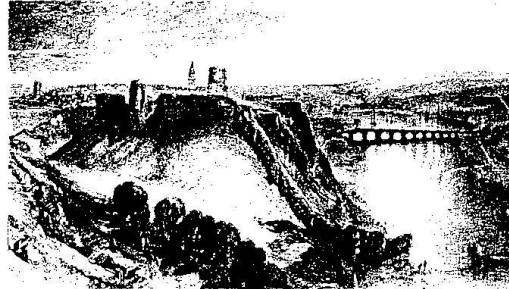


Fig 3. The Castle, the Old Bridge and the sea. Frontispiece for vol. 12 of Scott's Poetical Works, 1832.

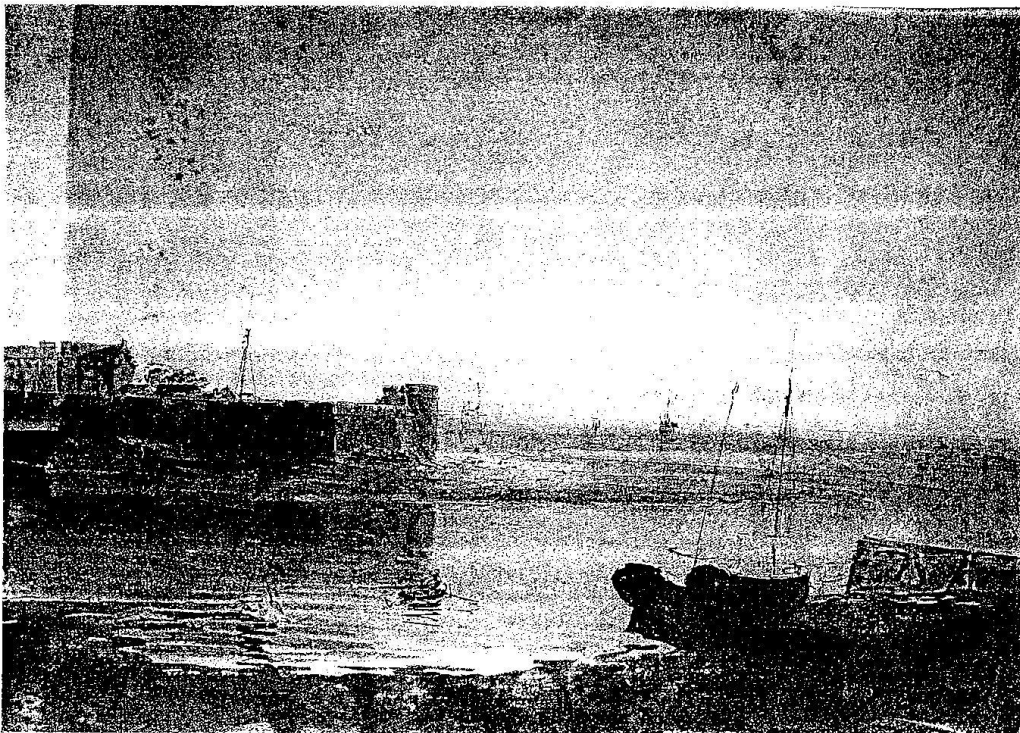


Fig 2. The old harbour, Coxon's Tower, the estuary of the Tweed, and the sea, 1797.

BAMBURGH

Turner produced a finished watercolour of Bamburgh Castle which was exhibited in 1837 but is at present untraced. This originated from a pencil sketch of 1797 showing the Castle from the beach to the north, and includes a two-masted sailing ship brought ashore after having got into difficulties on this notoriously dangerous coast, and being salvaged.

Three "colour beginnings" or "colour structure" were derived from this sketch and used to develop the finishing watercolour. "Colour beginnings" are the result of Turner's technique of watercolour painting which involved experimenting with compositions by laying in the main masses of his design in boldly opposed blocks of colour, without detail. The presence of colour beginnings is evident in works after 1810.

HOLY ISLAND

A finished watercolour "*Holy Island, Northumberland*" of the Bamburgh Ferry landing on St Cuthbert's Isle on a stormy day was exhibited in 1829 and is now in the Tate Gallery.

It was based on a sketch made in 1797. "Colour beginning" areas of storm clouds, sea and light falling on Priory and cliffs can be clearly discerned. St Mary's Church is shown at the extreme left, the Priory ruins towards the centre, and the Castle at extreme right. Considerably more of the Priory Walls collapsed in the twenty years after Turner's visit in 1797.

Another five sketches were made in the "North of England" sketchbook of 1797, one of which, "*Holy Island Cathedral*" a watercolour of the nave arcades from the south, was the basis of a mezzo-tint published in 1808 in "*Liber Studiorum*". These arcades have now largely collapsed.

FARNE ISLANDS

"*Storm off the Farne Islands*" of about 1825 is untraced and there is doubt as to whether it is an oil or watercolour. An old photograph exists.

NORHAM

Norham Castle was Turner's inspiration for several works over the years. "*Norham Castle on Tweed, Summer's Morn*", painted in the same year for Edward Lascelles of Harewood is now in the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford. Both watercolours are views taken from upstream of the Castle. A pencil sketch and colour beginning studies exist in sketchbooks. There is no human activity evident in these studies.

"*Norham Castle on Tweed*" a watercolour of c.1800 is now in the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.

A watercolour appears in the sketchbook "*Rivers and Ports etc*" of 1823 "*Norham Castle on the River Tweed*" which was published in "*River Scenery*" 1824. This scene is bustling with human activity on both river banks and economic and social differences are emphasised - an important theme in Turner's work at this time.

A watercolour and an engraving are evidence of Turner's work illustrating the publications of Sir Walter Scott. The watercolour, now in a private collection, of c.1833 was a commission from Walter Fawkes to illustrate lines from poems by Scott, Byron and Moore. Turner chose to illustrate the quotation "*Day sat on Norham's castled steep*" from "*Marmion*".

The engraving is derived from an untraced watercolour "*Norham Castle. Moonrise*" of c.1833. It was engraved for the frontispiece to Vol.VII "*Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland*" of Scott's *Prose Works*, 1834-1836.

"*Norham Castle. Sunrise*" of c.1845 is an oil painting on canvas in the Tate Gallery. It is an impressionistic work of watercolour-like appearance. Turner, however, although sometimes referred to as one of first impressionists, rarely worked from nature in his finished works.

Nora Thompson