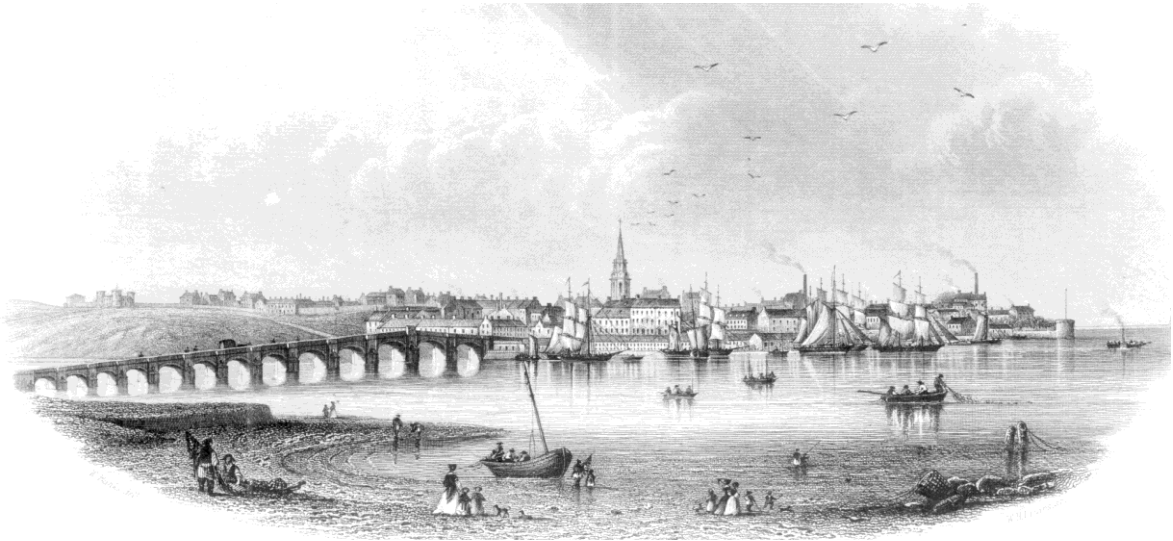


**Friends of Berwick & District  
Museum and Archives  
Newsletter**



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**[Selected articles]**

## **BERWICK FAIR - ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY**

On the last Friday of May the new Mayor of Berwick-upon-Tweed and his Civic Party officially open Berwick's May Fair by "walking the Fair" at noon - an ancient tradition which is part of a traditional event.

Berwick's right to hold this Fair dates back to the medieval period; however, there is very little information about its origins and history. The Fair is first mentioned in a Charter of 1302, granted by Edward I to the burgesses and heirs of the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed. By this charter the town was granted the right to hold an annual Fair lasting from the Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross (3 May) to the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist (24 June) - over 7 weeks! There is no indication that the Fair actually lasted that long and in practice it probably took place in Trinity Week, eight weeks after Easter. This suggests that it probably had ecclesiastical connections and origins. At this time traders would have come from mainland Britain and the continent to sell goods not normally available locally cloth, perfume, spices, pottery, etc - from their stalls set up in Marygate.

Later royal charters, including that of James I of England in 1604, on which the town still bases its weekly market rights today, continued to grant the town the right to hold this annual Fair. After the medieval period the Fair was primarily concerned with the sale of cattle and horses and over the centuries it has enjoyed periods of popularity and decline. To combat its decline during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the date of the Fair was altered on several occasions in order to attract more people. However, until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century it was normally held in Trinity week which obviously changed depending on when Easter fell. For example, in 1808 it started on 17 June, whilst in 1809, it started on 2 June. After the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the date for the Fair was fixed as starting on the last Friday in May.

By 1888, according to John Scott in his History of Berwick-upon-Tweed, the May Fair had almost vanished, however, less than 10 years later it was a thriving and well attended event. Even until 30 years ago the May Fair was very popular, attracting many stallholders and visitors to the town.

### **Ceremony**

Today the May Fair is opened by the Mayor and his Civic Party walking around the stalls at noon, accompanied by the ringing of the town's bells. In the past, the event was celebrated with more pomp and in the seventeenth century it started as early as 10 o'clock. The Fair would be opened by the Town Clerk reading the proclamation on the Monday of Trinity week, after which the Mayor, the Justices and other Corporation officials walked the Fair. At one time members of the Guild were "commanded under a penalty of 5 groats to walk with the Mayor on the Fair Day, with the Town's Waits [musicians] before them in all Dignity and Decorum" and they had to appear in "their Gownes and other Apparrell" under a "Forfett to the Gylde of 8 shillings without Redemyson".

By the end of the last century the procession was headed by the Borough Police, followed by the Halbert Bearers, the Mayor, Sheriff and members of the Corporation, a tradition which has continued into this century, although even by 1934 the number of officials attending was in decline.

## The Fair in the Past - according to local newspapers

### 1896

A newspaper report of 1896 described the Fair as an opportunity for the inhabitants of town and country of "laying in a stock of hardware for the year" and to "enjoy the lighter liberties of a week of holiday", and Marygate as "alive with itinerant merchants in hardware, with the usual accompaniments of less important dealers". Besides the main Fair in Marygate, there were also other events to attract people - on Saturday there was a Horse Procession and Show, introduced in 1890, a sale of grazing cattle and a Fun Fair on the Parade "where Wilmot's galloping horses, brilliantly lighted by electricity were the principal attraction to old and young" as well as "Tommy Miller's well known acrobatic performances".

The stalls stretched up Marygate and through the Scotsgate to Scott's Place and on them it was possible to purchase anything from "quack medicines to carpets, linoleums, mackintoshes and pot plants". The amusements on the Parade were patronised by hundreds of people who enjoyed "all the fun of the Fair". Many of the old favourites were to be found and a new amusement to Berwick people was "Shooting the Rapids" which was kept busy. The stalls such as Hoop La and coconut shies were losing popularity at this time and being superseded by more novel amusements.

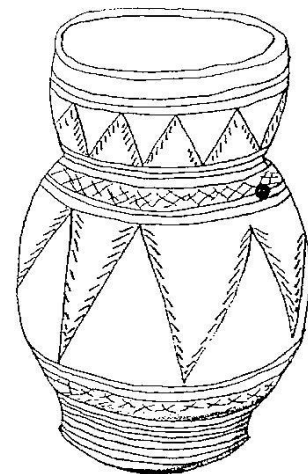
### 1964

Thirty years ago, the Fair had over 40 stalls and was opened by the new Town Clerk, Mr John Healey who read out the ancient Proclamation to open the Fair from the Guild Hall steps. Even at that date, the stalls stretched up Marygate as far as the Walkergate Junction. Many people considered the erection of stalls on that part of the street from Golden Square to Walkergate was very dangerous as this was part of the A1 and a main thoroughfare for traffic travelling north to Edinburgh. One Councillor refused to walk the Fair as a protest. The Fun Fair on the Parade was still taking place.

*Linda Bankier*

## EXHIBIT OF THE MONTH

Urn  
Ceramic  
Beaker Period, Early Bronze Age  
c.2500 BC  
BERMG: 1853



This month's exhibit is the oldest we have featured so far. This urn is a fine and typical example of the sort of distinctive vessels being produced throughout Britain at the end of the Neolithic and beginning of the Bronze Age. This distinctive pottery seems to be associated with the first manufacture of metal, though the transition to 'the Bronze Age' was not sudden and uniform

throughout the country. At one time it used to be thought that these pots were carried by new invading peoples, and up to seven waves of invaders were identified. Though some migration from the continent of Europe seems likely, it is not thought it was as organised as an 'invasion'. But certainly the 'Beaker folk' do seem to have brought with them a form of beer for the first time. They are also associated with the beginning of 'cup and ring' rock carvings in the North. Later in the year this pot is to feature in an exhibition in Durham setting the carvings in their archaeological context together with an examination of the response of artists.

Unfortunately it is not known where this pot was found or how it came to be in the museum.

*Chris Green, Museum Curator*

## **A VICAR ON THE RUN**

Dr Richard Hildyard held office for twenty months between April 1538 and December 1539. He was born at Winestead in the East Riding of Yorkshire where his ancestors had been lords of the manor since the reign of Henry VI. As a younger son, he entered the Church and was appointed chaplain to Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham. Tunstall was careful not to antagonise Henry VIII and his all-powerful Principal Secretary, Thomas Cromwell, but Hildyard was related to certain prominent families who took great exception to the succession of measures designed to achieve the King's complete supremacy over the Church. The outcome was the abortive Rebellion of 1536, known as the 'Pilgrimage of Grace', which was finally, and brutally, suppressed in 1537. Although Hildyard was actively involved in the rebellion he was not arrested but kept under surveillance by Cromwell's agents after he was appointed by Tunstall to the rich living of Norton. Maybe he was warned of impending arrest, or worse, for on 14 November 1539 he set off from Tunstall's London residence. After calling upon his family at Winestead and preaching at Stockton and Norton, where he sold the glebe corn, he went on to Durham, where he sold a horse to the chancellor. On 11 December 1539, his servant George Bishop was interrogated by Sir William Eure, Captain of Berwick, and by Bryan Layton, Captain of Norham. Bishop said that he had ridden with Hildyard to Gateshead and Morpeth where Hildyard hired a guide for the journey to Alnwick. He preached there and expressed an intention to visit Norham and Berwick before returning south via Holy Island.

It would appear that he had a carefully-laid plan to escape into Scotland for Hildyard hired a guide from Alnwick to Belford where the Clerk of the Parish agreed to escort Hildyard and Bishop to Ford and thence via Cornhill to a crossing of the Tweed near Coldstream. Bishop informed Eure and Layton two days later that he had parted company with Hildyard on the river-side at Coldstream on 9 December when the fugitive vicar had sought sanctuary at the priory of Coldstream and immediate access to the Archbishop of St. Andrews. The significance of Hildyard's role in the Pilgrimage of Grace and his personal ambition for advancement in a kingdom not ruled over by Henry VIII are revealed by the contents of State Papers, including the Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, for the reign of King Henry VIII.

Within eleven days of Hildyard's escape Sir William Eure was reporting that a pursuivant-at-arms had been sent to the King of Scotland with royal letters seeking the immediate return of Dr Richard Hildyard. Several attempts were made to secure his extradition and, at the end of January 1540, the King of Scotland was asked to release Hildyard in exchange for a notorious Border Reiver. This was turned down by James V who replied that he "would deliver no kirkman". Henry VIII became personally involved and gave detailed instructions to a minister on the manner

in which his royal nephew should be tackled. Again this approach proved fruitless and, when James V died in December 1542, Hildyard was still safe in Scotland.

Rentals for the Archbishopric of St Andrews provide evidence of Hildyard's sojourn at St Andrews under the personal protection of Cardinal David Beaton. At first, he was lodged with Alexander Makke, a citizen of St Andrews, and then he was installed for at least two years at St Salvator's College. For two months in the summer of 1542 he was hiding at the Cardinal's castle of Monimail, near Cupar, before hostilities broke out with England. In January 1542 Henry's ministers were still engaged in attempts to extradite certain fugitives who had been involved in the Rebellion of 1536. "Leche of Louth, the first beginner of the insurrection and a continual deviser of evil towards the king and his realm. Woodmancy of Beverley and Wilson, captains of the said insurrection. The friar of Knaresborough, a special setter forward of the same and Dr Hilliarde, a notable counsellor and conspirator of the same". William Leche, and his associate John Priestman, were handed over to the Council of the North in 1543 following the murder of King Henry's herald. Priestman confessed to the Council that after a meeting between Leche and Cardinal Beaton they had intended to lie in wait for the English herald "within the bound road of Berwick" but "as their horse began to fail, they were constrained to do it sooner". The murder took place near Dunbar and the two culprits were initially examined at Edinburgh on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January by Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll and "Great Justice of Scotland".

Shortly afterwards Hildyard left Scotland and Henry's spies proceeded to monitor his movements throughout Europe. The investigation had already assumed an international dimension for various English agents, in direct correspondence with Henry VIII, were reporting on the association between Cardinal Beaton, Richard Hildyard and Reginald Pole who, as a grandson of George Duke of Clarence, was cousin to the King and a cardinal since December 1536.

It is well known that Pole firmly believed in a restoration of papal authority in England through a league of Catholic princes against Henry VIII but he had cause to doubt the altruism of Beaton's motives after the death of James V in 1542. Cardinal Pole was embarrassed by Hildyard's open and ambitious plans for his own elevation to the Archbishopric of York and felt obliged to write a reassuring letter to Pope Paul III in 1545. Throughout the remainder of Henry's life his agents continued to report on Hildyard's movements and the contents of intercepted correspondence. In April 1545 Cardinal Beaton had arranged an interview for Hildyard with Francis I, King of France, and he continued to sponsor Hildyard's activities on the continent until his own murder at St Andrews on 28 May 1546.

After that date the state papers are silent on the subject of Richard Hildyard and, although Reginald Pole was to return home as Archbishop of Canterbury, there is no evidence to suggest that Richard Hildyard was able to return in triumph with him. After Beaton's death it must be assumed that Hildyard died abroad through natural causes or at the hands of a hired assassin. In any event, the parish of Norham still had John Rudd as its replacement vicar at the time of Queen Mary's accession and the Archbishopric of York remained in the hands of Robert Holgate. This exercise began with a single-line entry in a list of vicars provided in Surtees' History of the County of Durham and ended with the revelation of a fascinating series of events which touched on the international situation during the reign of Henry VIII.

Local Historical research can be so rewarding.

*John Marlow*

## MARITIME BERWICK

This article was prompted by my purchase, from an antiquarian bookseller, of the Captain's Log Book of "The Rapid", one of the first Berwick owned paddle steamers which sailed between Berwick and London during the years 1841 to 1845. The Rapid was one of two paddle steamers owned by the Berwick Shipping Co., later to become the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company. The Old Shipping Co., existent in 1766, was owned by local men, known as 'coopers' and dealing in salmon. The Company had a small fleet of sailing vessels together with fishing rights on the Tweed. These ships conveyed salmon and other fish to the London market.

By the 1830's steamships came into use along some parts of the British coastline - all paddle-steamers, since the propeller was not yet practical. The Berwick Shipping Co., needing faster transportation, bought its first paddle-steamer "The Manchester" in 1838. This was a wooden hulled, carvel built vessel of 400 h.p., and built at Greenock in 1832. Once the "Manchester" was put into service the Company decided to convert their 'smacks' into 'schooners' which were much less expensive and better for general purposes, though slower. Therefore, for cargoes requiring a fast passage, the steamship was the answer. A second paddle-steamer, the "Rapid" built in Glasgow in 1835, was bought for £12,300. The "Rapid" of 233 tons burthen and schooner rigged, was able to carry more than the "Manchester", although these early steamers had limited goods carrying capacity because of the large coal carrying requirement and the greater length required by the propulsion machinery.

A large part of the in-service expense was in the purchase of coal. Each vessel consumed about 100 tons per voyage, necessitating very heavy and sustained work by the 4 firemen working in shifts of 2 hours off and 2 hours on in 4 hour watches.

A big drain on the Company's operating finances was caused by frequent repairs to hulls and machinery due to adverse weather conditions including ice and storm damage. Crankheads, crank pins, cylinders and defective boilers caused many problems and in some cases necessitated vessels being taken out of service for considerable periods. A number of the problems seemed to have been caused by overstrain on hulls and transmissions through the carrying of very heavy loads such as iron castings, probably from Robertson's Iron Foundry in Tweedmouth, a company very much involved with these steamers both in the transportation of their goods and repairs to the ships machinery.

As with the Berwick Smacks, the paddle steamers carried passengers in addition to cargo. The "Rapid" could carry up to 50 in conditions - providing the weather was reasonable - less tiring than road travel and much cheaper, with greater luggage space. First class was 2 guineas including provisions. There was also Second Class with provisions, and 'On Deck' (or steerage) without provisions.

Coal for the steamers was a heavy expense and, whilst coals were purchased from Bessington for a time, it was found that the coal from the Berwick Townhill Colliery was "just as good and cheaper". Scremerston coal on the other hand was complained of by the Engineer as "not being good", and it was resolved to purchase from the Townhill Colliery - (belonging to the town and leased out).

The phrase "Coals to Newcastle" gives a clue as to how important the coal trade from the Tyne to London was. If for any reason the collier brigs were not continuously discharging coal at London, the capital suffered a coal famine within a week or two.

In winter the steamers were laid up, usually at the Carr Rock, and the sailing ships were used in their place. The busiest time was of course the summer when salmon were being caught in the greatest numbers and transported to the London market.

When a steamer passage was of more than 3 days' duration, the steward who looked after the on-board catering was allowed 10/-, double the usual amount, for the victualling. It may have been an early form of franchise for, in 1846, a complaint is noted from a steward "that he doesn't get any benefit from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cabin Class on the Cheap Pleasure Trips, as most of them provided their own food.

Cheap Pleasure Trips were a regular feature and presumably lucrative for the Company. On one occasion however, they came unstuck when they cancelled a Pleasure Trip to allow Sir John Pringle and a party of 8 to travel to London. Unfortunately the eccentric shaft of the "Manchester" broke when the vessel was off the Coquet and the party disembarked at Shields to continue their journey by rail from Newcastle. The passengers on one Cheap Pleasure Trip from London to Berwick had no complaints however, - indeed they were enjoying their stay in Berwick so much that they petitioned the Company to delay their return to that of the next passage South on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1846. This was refused.

*Jim Walker*

## **CLOOTY MATS AND SHEEP SHEARING**

Life with no Gas, no Electricity, and the nearest telephone 5 miles away. This was rural life in the Cheviot hills in the 1930s.

A new book by Bunty Cowe provides an insight into the everyday challenges of life for the women and children in the remote College Valley near Wooler, Northumberland, as well as some humorous stories of the people who lived there.

The author went to live in the College Valley as a toddler in 1929, when her mother was appointed as Head Teacher at the tiny Southernknowe School.

'Life was quite different then, but what you never had, you never missed, and it was happy', said Bunty. 'Not only did Mum teach the full range from 5 to 14, but she provided the rudimentary school meals service, and every Friday she had to scrub out the school and the toilets and clean the windows', she added. As well as the daily routines of work and play, clothing, transport, leisure activities and the school routine are covered. It charts all the residents of the time and many of the visitors, like 'Stocking Willie', who brought clothing and materials up in panniers on his bike, and like the botanists and geologists who came from Newcastle University. Older readers will recall haymaking, butter making, 'pigs' potatoes', and chaff beds. For others it is a social history.

This 68 page book, entitled "Clooty Mats & Sheep Shearing", contains 21 photographs from the author's collection including some unique snapshots of the people and their work. This book is available from outlets in the area, price £4.25, or direct from the publisher, Mr F L Kennington, Northumbria House, 35 Corbar Road, Stockport, SK2 6EP, at £4.65 incl. postage.

## ICE

On the smacks and steamers travelling from Berwick to the London market, ice for packing the salmon was a very important commodity, and the winter of 1846 must have been mild for, by the end of February there had been no frost and so no supplies of ice had been laid in. It was resolved therefore to send the Berwick smack "King William" to Norway for ice, the smack "Stately" to follow on, after completing the voyage from London to Berwick. 1200 tons of ice was required, and the Captain of the "king William" was empowered to charter vessels at Christiansand to make up the required tonnage of ice.

Some annoyance was expressed at the tardiness of the Company ships in setting sail for Norway, but no sooner had they sailed - consternation - on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1846 "a severe frost having set in this morning," a directors' meeting was hastily arranged to consider their dilemma. It was resolved that they would order that "ice would be led what can be got if 1½" thick on pools, or 2" thick at Yarrow and take chance of disposing any surplus in London". The pools may have referred to the Stanks, where water always flowed from the Tappee Loch and was regulated by sluices. The Yarrow would presumably refer to the shallows at Yarrow Slakes. The carriage of ice into the ice houses would be a tremendous undertaking, and there were 6 ice-houses to fill in Berwick. Horses and carts would be rumbling continuously through the streets loaded with ice either from the ships in the harbour or from the pools by the river. The provision of ice to salmon dealers other than the Salmon Fisheries Co., was strictly controlled and penalties were imposed if it was found that salmon for which the Company had supplied the ice, had subsequently been shipped by a rival's boat. One Robert Weatherburn seems to have been a transgressor in this matter, despite being a member of the company, for he was not allowed to buy ice or salmon, having sent salmon to Newcastle by the "Eclipse" steamer. Despite apologising and having his status restored, he was in trouble again for "not returning 18 country salmon to be charged with ice". He pleaded that his son was responsible and he, not being a member, was not bound by the regulations. The Directors considered there had been collusion and Robert was blacklisted again.

*Jim Walker*