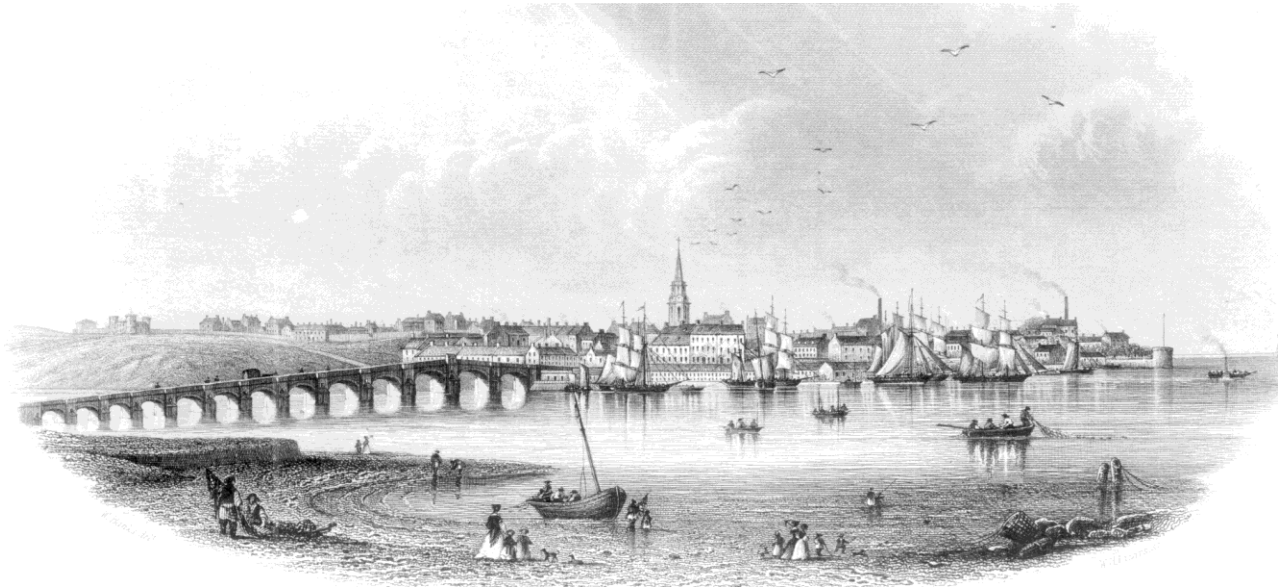


# Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



NUMBER 77—FEBRUARY 2013

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013

Friends AGM and talk by Margaret Fox: Someone to Watch over Me. Kirk and Community. Berwick Parish Centre at 7pm

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Berwick Museum and Art Gallery opens for the new season. Open all Easter weekend. Thereafter, Monday to Friday 10 to 5

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May and  
Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Flodden 1513 Bygone Borderlands Local and Family History weekend in the Guildhall, Berwick. Further details in the next newsletter.

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013

Friends Summer Outing to the  
Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn- see  
article for details.

## **OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES**

### **AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Ayton Community Hall**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013

The Stories behind the Pictures: Chris  
Veitch

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March

A.G.M followed by Papermaking in Ayton:  
John Reid

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April

Visit to Duns Castle

### **BELFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013

St. Cuthbert and Northumbria: John Field

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March

Tribes, Trade and Tyranny: Michael  
Thompson

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April

George Cully and the watermeadows of  
Northumberland: Steve Pullan

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May

Berwick's Food Heritage: Derek Sharman

### **BERWICK CIVIC SOCIETY**

**Venue: Berwick Parish Centre.**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Short talk by Alison Cowe on a co-ordinated  
approach to the appearance of the town.  
Followed by a quirky quiz.

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March

The maintenance and repair of English  
Heritage properties in the North East: Roy  
Stockdale, Technical Manage, English  
Heritage.

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

AGM followed by a talk, A Miscellany of  
Berwick Anecdotes: Michael Cullen

### **BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick.**

**Time:7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Northumbrian Identity through music, song  
& dance: Kim Bibby-Wilson

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March

Medicines from the mud. Recent  
investigations at Soutra Medieval Hospital:  
Dr Brian Moffat

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April

AGM 7pm followed by talk, Strategic  
Decisions at Flodden: Dr Chris Burgess

### **BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Hunter-gathers on the edge; the earliest  
humans in the Western Isles of Scotland  
: The Durham Western Isles Team

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April

AGM followed by Scottish Mesolithic  
Geophysical Survey project: Dr Nyree  
Finlay ( Director)

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May

Traprian Law updated: Dr Frazer Hunter

### **BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose**

**Time: 2.30pm**

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013

How to Research Buccleuch Records:  
Andrew Armstrong

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March

Useful websites for Family History  
Research: Peter Munro

Sunday, 26 May 2013

AGM followed by Someone to Watch  
Over Me : Kirk and Community :  
Margaret Fox

### CHIRNSIDE HISTORY GROUP

**Venue: Community Centre**

**Time: 7.30pm**

Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> February 2013	Sir William Burrell of Hutton Castle: David Heywood
Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> March	Bishop Wars: Oliver Hofer
Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> April	Twizel Castle: Catherine Kent
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> May	Georgian Fashion & Etiquette: Karen & Val

### COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream.**

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> March	Jedburgh Story and AGM: Ken Fotheringham
Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> April	Manderston House: Rhona Lang
Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> May	Walking in the Land of the Reivers: Ian Landles

### DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> February	The Scottish/English Borderline: David Welsh
Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> March	Mary, Queen of Scots-Daughter Debate: Mrs Margaret Lumsdaine

### GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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

**Time: 7.30pm**

Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2013	“Flodden 500 years on”: Dr Chris Burgess. <b>This meeting will be held at the Tankerville Arms, Wooler.</b>
Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	Flodden-Many Questions and Perhaps a Few Answers: Clive Hallam-Baker. <b>At</b>

**the Tankerville Arms, Wooler.**

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April

AGM followed by refreshments and film on Flodden. Open to members and non-members.

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April

11.00am at Heatherslaw Mill, Etal: Talk and Tour by Julia Nolan, Head Miller : Heatherslaw Mill and Milling from the 1300s. Followed at 12.45pm at Etal Village Hall: A Flodden Feast-a three course luncheon recreating 16<sup>th</sup> Century dishes. Price £16 per person. Booking essential.

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April

Chain Bridge Honey Farm. Guided Tour and Talk on the History of Bee Keeping by Willie Robson. Please meet at site by 2.00pm.

**LOWICK HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Lowick Village Hall**

**Time: 7.30pm**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013

The Sitwells of Barmoor: John Ferguson  
Voices from the Past Part 2: William Morton, born Way to Wooler, 1897, resident of Lowick 1941-1975

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April

Lowick Remembers Part 2: School Days. A follow up of the successful session last year – bring along photographs and other documents associated with the village.

**NORHAM HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Norham Village Hall**

**Time : 7.30 pm**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Bondington, from mediaeval village to Berwick Suburb: Brian Chappell & Linda Bankier

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March

“The Forgotten Workers” a film on the

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April

Bondage System of labour in the Borders  
and North Northumberland: Dinah Iredale  
Letters from the Past: Martha Andrews &  
Chris Pawson.

**NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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

**Time: 7.30 p.m.**

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013

The Farne Island: John Walton

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March

Harry Hotspur: Andy Griffin

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April

Metal Detecting: Ian Glendinning

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May

The Life of Lord Armstrong: Andrew Sawyer

**NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

**NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH**

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

**Time: 10.00am**

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Berwick's Victorian Food Heritage: Derek  
Sharman

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March

Evacuees to Northumberland: Oral History  
Accounts: Liz O'Donnell

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April

Members' Forum

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May

AGM

**SPITTAL. ST JOHN'S RAILWAY AND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Venue: Spittal Bowling Club**

**Time: 7.30pm**

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Quarry Railways of North Northumberland  
Coast Part 2: Roger Jermy

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

The Lives of T Dan Smith: John Griffiths

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May

Tanfield Railway past and present: member  
of the Society

## TILL VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**Venue: Crookham Village Hall**

**Time: 7.30pm**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March

Minor Railways of North Northumberland:  
Roger Jermy

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Lanton Quarry: Clive Waddington

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May

The Romans in the Borders: Rob Collins

### **ARCHIVE NEWS**

It isn't actually that long since our last newsletter and so there is not much to report. However, life in the archives is always busy and Carole and I are never short of work to do. Since returning after Christmas, most of my time has been taken up working on the Flodden 1513 Project. Over the next two years, the Berwick Record Office and the Heritage Hub at Hawick will be co-ordinating and running several activities including a Volunteer Transcription Project. Two initial meetings have been held here in Berwick to try and recruit volunteers and these have been extremely successful, with over 30 people attending and the majority wanting to take part. The next step is to train the volunteers in how to read old documents – both English and Scottish – before working on primary source material which is available about the Battle and the Borders up to 1603. In addition to the transcription Project, I am also organising a Local and Family History weekend on 18 and 19 May 2013. This is similar to the Bygone Borderlands events which we have held in the past. It will be a series of displays by local groups as well as talks. The general theme will be the Battle of Flodden and the history of the area since then. I have been contacting local groups and we are meeting up at the beginning of February to discuss the event and how people can be involved. I will be asking the Friends to help with the event and so, if you can offer your services in any way, just get in touch. There will be a lot more information about the weekend in the next newsletter and regular updates throughout the next two years about the Transcription Project – watch this space !

Otherwise, I have still been undertaking work with the Peregrini/Holy Island Project. The Heritage Lottery bid was submitted at the end of January but it will be the summer before we know whether it is successful. Fingers crossed !

Following on from the last newsletter, we have now started work on entering the Photocentre index on the computer, thanks to the help of a couple of volunteers. It is still very early days but we are finding some interesting things – pictures of Berwick Theatre; the Royal Hotel ; Berwick Cricket Club 1951 ; Belford's First May Queen in 1952. There are also a couple of pictures of the Beatles when they stayed in the Kings Arms in 1965. If you can spare an hour on one of our open days to do some inputting, just get in touch. It will be a long task but well worth doing.

## **GREENSES HARBOUR**

You may have seen some reference in the local newspaper recently to the Greenses Harbour and its poor state of repair. The following are extracts from the Berwick Advertiser newspaper report on the opening of the Green Haven Breakwater in the issue dated 8 Oct. 1897 :

### **OPENING OF THE GREEN HAVEN BREAKWATER AT BERWICK**

Yesterday afternoon a memorial tablet in connection with the Green Haven Breakwater was formally unveiled by the Mayor ( Mr G.A. Harrison). There was a considerable attendance of people, and although the weather was of a rather threatening character, the gathering passed off without interruption.

The proceedings commenced shortly after half past two when the Mayor, who presided, called upon the Secretary to read a statement .

MR W ECKFORD proceeded to give an outline of the work. He stated that the fishermen had long felt the want of accommodation for their boats, and several schemes and plans had been mooted for carrying out the work, but most of them involved the expenditure of a great deal of money. There was no means of carrying them through. The fishermen themselves had tried at different times to improve that small cove, but it seemed beyond their powers to make anything practical, and they almost began to despair of having any improvement. The present Mayor, however, in the year of his Shrievalty gave an impetus to the movement which had now every prospect of being carried to a successful issue. As a result of a preliminary meeting held in the Mission Hall, a public meeting was called in October 1894, which was presided over by Lord Warkworth, and then it was resolved to construct the breakwater on that spot. A Committee was then formed and subscriptions were invited. They soon found, however, that several difficulties had to be grappled with.



With perseverance on the part of the Committee, these were eventually overcome and in the spring of the present year estimates were obtained for the execution of the work, and after the many delays they had now to congratulate themselves on very different circumstances. He stated that the sum subscribed for carrying out the work was close upon £970 which included a grant of £320 from the Scottish Fishery Board and £100 from the fishermen themselves. He had the utmost pleasure in calling upon the Mayor, as Chairman of the Committee which had had the control of this matter, to perform the ceremony of unveiling the tablet

The MAYOR said it was to him a very pleasing duty that he had now to discharge in the unveiling of that tablet. He had worked at this improvement now for four years, and it was a considerable time to work, and to have in one's mind the one object which he so wished to see carried through. He then unveiled the tablet which read as follows :

*“Erected 1897 by contributions from fishermen and the public, assisted by a grant from H M Fishery Board for Scotland ....J Watt Sandeman and J M Moncrieff M Inst. C E ., engineers; D MacDonald & Son, contractors. Year of the Diamond Jubilee....*

The MAYOR, in addressing the company, said it was to him a very great pleasure to have the opportunity of addressing them on that occasion. That had been, as he had told them before, a scheme which he had had in his mind's eye for a very long time, and to see almost the completion of it, with the exception of the little breach at the end, which would be filled in in a day or two, was to him very gratifying indeed.. ....And that he was of the opinion it would be of the very greatest assistance to the fishermen in carrying out their work (Applause). He did hope that the fishermen of the Greenses would be fishermen, and that they would use that harbour for what it was really intended, namely, to carry on the white fishing in that immediate neighbourhood...

The company, then led by the boys' choir of the Berwick Parish Church, under Mr G Bromby, organist, and accompanied on the cornet by Bandmaster Caldwell RA, sang the National Anthem. The choir also sang the hymn, “Eternal Father, strong to save.”..

MR JAS BORTHWICK proposed a vote of thanks to the subscribers, and said his brother fishermen and himself were deeply indebted to the subscribers for so nobly coming forward and helping them to establish the breakwater. They were much obliged to them for the liberal support they had given the scheme, and especially to Mrs Dr Heagerty who had worked very hard on their behalf (Applause)

Mr STEVEN returned thanks and said that as the Mayor had mentioned they were much indebted to the Fishery Board for coming forward and helping them at the last moment. He could assure them as the Mayor had said after all their efforts had very nearly been exhausted, they looked as if they were going to be left in the ditch if the money was not forthcoming to enable the Committee to go forward with the work. At that time he wrote to Lord Warkworth and asked him if it would not be possible to get the assistance of the Fishery Board, His lordship wrote to him asking if he would send up all the information on the subject, and he would see the Secretary of State for Scotland and see if nothing could be done. He did so, and the result of that was that a meeting of the Fishery Board was called in Edinburgh, and , through the instrumentality of Lord Warkworth, and from the information supplied to the Board by Mr Doull, the fishery officer, Mr Angus Sutherland was sent down, and after getting all the information from the Mayor and the Committee, the Board made a grant, as had been stated of £350. That put the committee in the position of taking in estimates, and they saw the result now – that the breakwater was almost completed. He was sure all the subscribers would join in wishing that the harbour would be the means of protecting those who had to go down into the deep to earn their livelihood (Applause).....

Capt NORMAN R.N proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor.  
The MAYOR replied, and the proceedings terminated.

*Linda Bankier*

## **MUSEUM NEWS**

It is not long now until the new season begins, and though it is only the beginning of February there is still much to do to get ready.

The exhibition at the Granary was a great success, and we saw around 4,000 visitors over its course. We extended the show to cover the Christmas holidays, which turned out to be well worth it. Many local people came for one last look, and visitors to the town over the holiday period were also able to take advantage of the extended hours. We are now planning to bid for some grant funding, in order to

continue the exhibitions at the Granary for a further two seasons, and to carry out some research, conservation and education work on the collection.

Just as we were about to dismantle the Burrell exhibition, we were promised a visit by BBC Scotland. The corporation are planning a programme to be broadcast later this year, celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Glasgow Burrell Gallery, and were keen to include Berwick in the film. Whether filming will indeed go ahead is unclear, as a final decision is to be made on the subject. However, the producer and researcher for the programme had an interesting day, and as well as having a look at our collection, they also were able to speak to the few people left in Hutton who could remember Sir William. Look out for the programme, which will be broadcast in the summer.

To tie in well with the 2013 visit to the north east of the Lindisfarne Gospels, our opening exhibition of the new season will feature the art and calligraphy of Tom Fleming. Tom is Scottish by birth, but has lived in Northumberland for many years. In 1953 he came to Northumberland as Surveyor at Lynemouth Colliery which was the largest undersea coal mine in Europe at that time. In 1960 he attended evening classes at Newcastle University and obtained his Certificate of Fine Art specialising in Calligraphy. Working as a mining engineer for many years, Tom has been chairman of the Northumbrian Scribes since its formation in 1989. Having now passed his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he is due for a retrospective exhibition.

The calligraphy subject is also found in the Flodden 500 Anniversary events. Courtesy of training by Linda, Anne and Jim are hoping to become, if not expert, at least competent in reading 15<sup>th</sup> century secretary hand. The prospect of being able to help translate original medieval documents, and so add to our knowledge of the battle, will certainly prove challenging but very worthwhile! Meanwhile, at the museum we are hoping to put on a small exhibition on the Flodden theme later on in the season, to coincide with the Anniversary.

We will be open for the new season from Easter Thursday at 10am. We hope to see you soon.

*Anne Moore - Museums Officer, North Northumberland.*

## A WEBSITE FOR THE FRIENDS

Opinion has been gathering for some time that the Friends should have their own website as a means of raising the profile of themselves and their activities as well as those of the Museum and Record Office. Last summer the Committee set up a sub-committee to explore the options and to make recommendations about how the proposal should go forward.

The sub-committee started work in August 2012 and outlined a set of objectives for the website. We also looked at as many websites of comparable 'Friends' as we could find and identified a handful which offered particularly useful features and examples of structure. An early consensus emerged on the need for prominent and eye-catching pictures to draw the visitor in, illustrating not only the resources within Berwick itself but also the wider historical heritage of North Northumberland in general. The opportunity to give timely publicity via the website to events and activities relating to the Museum and the Record Office should be another central feature, as well as a simple online method of joining and paying a subscription to the Friends, which will - we may hope - extend the membership to a wider circle of supporters. It is also envisaged that there will be scope to give access to some of the work of volunteer Friends which has produced useful handlists, surveys, indexes, etc. As for the Newsletters themselves, older issues form a valuable archive of information which could be made available for downloading from the website, while the recent ones would remain an exclusive benefit for members as at present.

With these considerations in mind, a working draft of the content has been outlined with the headings:

- About the Friends (including accounts of activities, the role of volunteers, and subscription arrangements)
- About the Museum
- About the Record Office
- Local History (to include work done on the individual towns and villages of the District)
- News & Events
- Links (to all the websites of useful organizations relating to the work of Museum and Record Office)

In order to design and create a robust and good-looking website, we need the assistance of a professional web designer. The sub-committee was keenly aware of the mutual benefits of using local skills for this task, and so proposals were invited from two Berwick-based companies with extensive experience in web design. Following discussions with both companies, a recommendation on our preferred partner has been made and agreed with the Friends' Committee.

The next stage is to assemble the major part of the content for the website - a substantial task in which we hope for contributions from many hands - and with this material we can move forward with the web designer to create our internet presence. When...? Not overnight, of course. But perhaps the next Newsletter will have a clearer view about that.

*John Spiers*

## **FRIENDS' CONSTITUTION**

You will find in the papers sent out with this newsletter, a copy of a proposed revised constitution for the Friends. The situation is that the Charity Commissioners advised us of the need to review the existing constitution, and on doing so, we discovered several problems:

- the Constitution still included clauses predating the actual formation of the Friends;
- it did not take account of the local government changes which resulted in responsibility for the Museum and Archives being transferred to the Woodhorn Charitable Trust; and
- over the years some of the committee posts specified in the constitution had become redundant.

Twenty years on from the original Constitution, it also seemed appropriate to take account of the extent to which electronic communication is now regularly used in daily life.

The Constitution being sent to you now, which is intended to address these issues, is subject to the agreement of the Charity Commissioners. Assuming they indicate their approval, there will be an opportunity to discuss it, prior to its being voted on at

the AGM on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March this year. Should you have specific concerns you would wish to raise prior to then, please contact me, as Secretary on 01668219653, [boward@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:boward@hotmail.co.uk).

*Jane Bowen*

## **FRIENDS' MEMBERSHIP**

A number of members paying by standing order are still paying subscriptions at the old rate.

The fees are £7.00 for Single Membership and £10.00 for Family Membership  
If this applies to you please send the difference to me, via the Archives by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. Anyone who has not done so will have their fees returned and be deleted from the membership list.

*Keith Wills, Treasurer*

## **FRIENDS' OUTING TO WOODHORN**

We plan to have a visit to the Archives at Woodhorn on 25<sup>th</sup> June this year. The provisional arrangements are to arrive at Woodhorn for 4.00pm, when we will be met with tea and biscuits. At 4.30 pm, Sue Wood, the Head of Collections, will give us a guided 'Behind the Scenes' Tour of Woodhorn's facilities, showing how the documents are stored, conserved and copied, as well as allowing us the chance to see the modern facilities of the Search Rooms – something we aspire to get for Berwick, eventually!

Following our visit, we suggest that we adjourn to the Brewers Fayre in the Queen Elizabeth County Park, half a mile away for a sociable supper before returning north. The Tour is being offered free to Friends, and refreshments at the pub should be paid for individually. At this early stage of planning, it would be helpful to have an idea of those who would like to go, how many would require transport to be provided, and who would be willing to offer transport.

If you are interested, please phone (01289 301865) or e-mail Linda (lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk) with a note of how many of you wish to go, and whether you require or can offer transport. We will finalise arrangements in the light of the uptake.

*Jane Bowen*  
*Secretary*

## **A ROPE MAKER'S FAMILY AND THEIR CONNECTIONS WITH RUSSIA**

Whilst searching for some other information, we came across the following obituary in the Berwick Advertiser of 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1918, which has been slightly edited.

The Late Miss Davidson, Berwick

### **A LIFE LONG CONNECTION WITH RUSSIA**

The death of Miss Davidson, of 5 Castlegate, at a fairly advanced age, removes a notable lady whose connection with Russia has lasted nearly sixty years from a community almost ignorant of her rare personality. In 1859 she visited a married sister in St. Petersburg, and then entered the service of Prince Obolensky, Minister of Agriculture, as governess, and remained connected with the same family for three generations.

Her last visit to Russia was made immediately before the war and she found her return cut off, and it was with difficulty she reached this country, enduring privation particularly trying to a septuagenarian lady. From the first she was brought into contact with the highest society of Russia for in Prince Obolensky's house was a private chapel much sought after in the celebration of fashionable marriages, usually attended by the Grand Dukes and Duchesses and notabilities, and very often by His Imperial Majesty the Emperor Alexander II. In another part of the same great house was the abode of Countess Protassoff, widow of the famous General of Cavalry, who was Procurator of the Holy Synod, which led to many gibes that the religion of Russia was directed on military principles. Countess Protassoff was herself a very powerful personage holding the office corresponding in this country to that of Mistress of the Robes, and Miss Davidson became a favourite with her, and met in her salon – statesmen, warriors, men of art and literature and famous musicians from whom she gained a wide collection of anecdotes.

Her pupil the Prince Nicholas Obolensky, who accompanied the murdered ex-Emperor on his famous tour round the world, when he represented Russia at the coronation of King Edward VII, visited Berwick and the visit was duly recorded in these columns. In connection with this visit Prince Obolensky told an amusing story. The ladies of the Court were rallying him at breakfast at Sandringham on his visit north, and expressed interest in Miss Davidson of Berwick-on-Tweed. The Dowager ex-Empress (sister of Queen Alexandra) overheard the remark, and she observed "I know Miss Davidson of Berwick-on-Tweed." Then silence followed.

Miss Davidson was particularly retiring and hated publicity. She would not have permitted the repetition of these stories during her lifetime.

Our initial thought that it should be possible to find out more about Miss Davidson's life in Russia has unfortunately been unsuccessful, although, co-incidentally, a letter from a Russian Governess, which appeared in the Alnwick Gazette on 17 March 1877, throws some light on governesses' experiences there.

*...with a good knowledge of English, and two other languages and music, a governess may always find something in this country. English is greatly liked.... The position of a governess in Russia is superior to that in England. Here the governess is quite treated as an educated person and a member of the family. All the meals are taken together, company present or not. The governess is also often taken to a concert &c. Although the climate is so cold the houses are warm; the food is excellent; the tea is far better than in England...*

The writer of this account was paid 500 roubles a year, with an additional 100 roubles for a holiday.

Miss Davidson, Ann Isabella, was the second daughter of Robert Davidson, and his wife Isabella. According to the 1851 census, the family lived in Castlegate, and Robert was a Master Ropemaker, employing 4 men. Altogether, Robert and Isabella had seven children. The sister whom Ann went out to St. Petersburg to visit was Eleanor, apparently the oldest child. In October 1851, she had married Simon Charles Romanis, a medical/veterinary student from Russia, studying at Edinburgh University. When, the following year, Simon Charles' father, also Simon, took ill and died, the young couple had to return to Russia to take over the family business, the unlikely combination of iron founder and veterinary surgeon. How these two businesses fared is not recorded, but Simon Charles' medical training stood him in good stead during a cholera outbreak, when his treatment saved the lives of all his patients. Eleanor died in St. Petersburg in 1864. Before then, presumably, her younger brother, James, also visited St. Petersburg, for he married Simon Charles'



sister, Lucy, but they returned to England and the family business, James assisting his mother after the death of his father in 1862. James himself died in 1876, and it was his younger brother John, a grocer, who finally also took over the rope manufactory which, in 1881, was now employing 6 men and 5 boys.

Interestingly it has also emerged that Charles Simon's maternal grandfather, Charles Manners was a steward and gardener to the Duke of Northumberland, sent out to Russia at the request of Catherine the Great in 1792. He laid out the royal gardens at Schlusselfurg, Torida, Tsarskoe Selo and Peterhof. His great grandson records that he finally fell from royal favour when he chose to present some fruit which the Tsar had earmarked for his mistress, to the Empress instead! His skills as a gardener, however, enabled him to continue working for the nobility in Russia until his death in 1824.

*The source of the photographs and the broader Romanis connections is a book, The Calls of Norfolk and Suffolk, by Charles S. Romanes, privately published by T & A Constable in 1920, now available as an e-book through [www.archive.org/](http://www.archive.org/)*



**Isabella DAVIDSON**



**Simon Charles ROMANIS**



**Lucy DAVIDSON nee ROMANIS**

*Jane Bowen and Janet Ward*

## **BAMBURGH “GHOSTS”- TALES FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY- HOW TO DELIVER BAD NEWS WITH COMPASSION....**

For the last two years, I have had the privilege of working as a volunteer at the Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn , on the Lord Crewe papers. These are a fabulous collection reflecting life in the 18C in Bamburgh, and in the Castle; I would like to share some of the stories I have found with you.

Rev Henry Elliott was the Curate at Bamburgh Church, lodging at Fowberry (prior to the Glebe being built) writing to Dr John Sharp on Feb 24 1783. Picture, if you will, a Bamburgh cottage scene-the Curate probably in his black robes, an elderly lady wrapped in her shawl, fire smoldering fitfully in the hearth....

“Immediately, as soon as I received your favour respecting poor Major Dodd’s death, I waited on old Mrs Dodds, and dwelling for about half an hour on the uncertainties of this life, on the losses and disappointments that we must expect to meet with, and asking her if she had heard anything of the Major lately, and being answered in the negative, was obliged to tell her that she must have patience, because it would be a little longer than she expected before she could see him, yet though it could not be a very long time at her time of life; for her son was no more; at which she cryed what my Jacky and wept aloud for a few minutes, but soon calmed, tho every now and again would break out again, but before I left her, which was about an hour after, began to reconcile and the last time I saw her was to a wonder; and at present she is at the windmill-hill

Mrs Sandwicks idiot boy grows big and in a short time will be hard to manage, perhaps it may be in your power to procure her something for him from the Governors of the Society who distribute their charity for that purpose

And poor Robert Air will certainly go down this season if ye Gentleman of the Trust do not support him a little;Tho he has corn at the Castle at reduced price..,yet corn this year from its bad quality goes but a little way towards the maintenance of family, and especially with him who has such a large one

I am dear Doctor, your most obedient servant...”

With thanks to Woodhorn Archive-ref NRO452/C/3/2/13/14

*Carol Griffiths*

## SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER

**Berwick Advertiser, 7th October 1870**

### SCREMERSTON- PIT ACCIDENT

On Wednesday morning, an accident occurred at Berwick Hill Colliery, whereby one of the miners, named Andrew Tait, residing at Richardson Stead, had one of his legs broken above the ankle. It was caused by the sudden slip out of the wall of a large block of stone. Dr Jamieson was promptly in attendance and had the leg set.

**Berwick Advertiser, 14th October 1870**

### FORD AND LOWICK TURNPIKE TOLLS

A meeting of the trustees of the Ford and Lowick Turnpike roads was held at the Delaval Arms, Ford, on Tuesday, for the purpose of letting the tolls to be collected at the various toll-bars and checking gates in the district, for one year from 11th November. There was a good attendance, and the competition was brisk, but there was a decrease of £70 on the sum realised last year. The following was the result of the auction:- Ford Bridge and Barelees, with the Check Gates at Co., Leeds, for £573, the old rent being £641; Langham Bridge, to Andrew Oliver, the old tenant, for £96, the old rent being £110; Redscar Bridge, to Andrew Darling, the old tenant, for £67, the old rent being £60; and Lowick, to John Varty, Newcastle, for £99, the old rent being £85. the total sum realised was £826 as compared with £896 last year.

**Berwick Advertiser, 21st October 1870**

### EDINBURGH INFIRMARY, THE PRINCE OF WALES LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the New Royal Infirmary, in Edinburgh, took place on Thursday, last week and passed off with great success, the day being observed as a general holiday. There was a tremendous influx of visitors from places within easy reach of the city, and of freemasons alone there

were present upwards of four thousand. At half past twelve the Prince of Wales, in his Masonic uniform, and accompanied by Lord Dalhousie, the Grand Master Mason of Scotland, and Lord Rosslyn, the Deputy Grand master, joined the rear of the procession at Masons' Hall, in George Street, the Grand Lodge office bearers and members proceeded to the Grand Lodge, and after the carriage of His Royal Highness, which was drawn by four horses with outriders, came an escort of Hussars, followed by the carriage, with four horses, containing the Princess of Wales, the Countess of Rosslyn, and Lady Walden. The streets between the Freemasons' Hall and the site of the New Infirmary were lined by the troops of the garrison and the volunteers of the city..... the article continues in great detail

*Carole Pringle*