



Friends of Berwick & District Museum and Archives Newsletter



NUMBER 82–JUNE 2014

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 15th August 2014

Friends Private View of Cameron Robertson's photographs and other work relating to the Cowe Buildings. 7pm at the Watchtower Gallery in Tweedmouth. (see article)

OTHER SOCIETIES' LECTURES

AYTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Ayton Community Hall

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Lectures resume in September

BELFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Meeting Room, Belford Community Centre.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 25th June 2014

Visit to Wooler Police Station and
Courthouse

Sunday 20th July 2014

Cruise on the Tyne

Lectures resume in the Autumn

BERWICK CIVIC SOCIETY

Venue: Berwick Parish Centre.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 18th June 2014

Can Politicians Ever Be Trusted: Sir Philip
Mawer, a former Senior Civil Servant in the
Home and Cabinet Offices and
Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

Wednesday 9th July

Almoners-Medieval or Modern: Sandra
Gann.

Lectures resume in the Autumn

BERWICK HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick.

Time:7.30 p.m.

Lectures Resume in October

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Venue: Parish Centre, Berwick

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Lectures resume in the Autumn

BORDERS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Corn Exchange, Melrose

Time: 2.30pm

Lectures resume in the Autumn

BOWSDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Bowsden Village Hall

Time: 7.30pm

Lectures Resume in October

CHIRNSIDE HISTORY GROUP

Venue: Community Centre

Time: 7.30pm

Lectures resume in the Autumn

COLDSTREAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Eildon Centre, Coldstream.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Lectures resume in October

DUNSE HISTORY SOCIETY

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

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Lectures resume in September

GLENDALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Cheviot Centre, Padgepool Place, Wooler.

Time: 7.30pm

Lectures resume in September

LOWICK HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Lowick Village Hall

Time: 7.30pm

Lectures resume in September

NORHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: Norham Village Hall

Time : 7.30 pm

Monday 9th June 2014

To be confirmed

Thursday 22nd June

Visit to Kirkharle, birthplace of Capability

Monday 14 th July	Brown. Meet in the Vistor Centre Car Park at 1.30pm To be confirmed
Monday 11 th August	Mauchline Ware and its Flodden connection: Jane Bowen

NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Venue: St Paul's Church Hall, North Sunderland

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Lectures resume in October

NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
ALNWICK BRANCH

Venue: Bailiffgate Museum, Alnwick

Time: 7.15pm

Tuesday 1 st July 2014	Tracing your History through Freemasonry: Steve Newman
Tuesday 2 nd September	Researching your family's involvement in WW1: David Thompson

NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BRANCH

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

Time: 10.00am

Lectures resume in September

TILL VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Venue: Crookham Village Hall

Time: 7.30pm

Lectures resume in the Autumn

BAMBURGH RESEARCH PROJECT

Venue: Bell View Centre, 33 West Street, Belford

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Tuesday 10 th June 2014	Bradford Kaims Prehistoric Landscape Project: Paul Gething
Tuesday 17 th June	Flodden 500, Archaeological Investigations of the Battle of Flodden: Chris Burgess
Tuesday 24 th June	The Burnt Mound Misconception (Part1): Excavation Strategy: Tom Gardner
Tuesday 1 st July	The Burnt Mound Misconception (Part2): Excavation Strategy: Tom Gardner
Tuesday 8 th July	The Art and Material Culture of Northumbria: Stephanie Chapman
Tuesday 15 th July	The Anglo-Saxon Earls of Northumbria: Graeme Young

Lectures are free but donations are welcome

LINDISFARNE LECTURES

Venue: St Mary's Church, Holy Island

Thursday 12 th June 2014	Expanding the Archaeology of Holy Island: Dr David Petts, University of Durham starts at 7.30pm
Monday 21 st July	The Lindisfarne Gospels: Professor Richard Gameson, University of Durham starts at 4pm

PRIVATE VIEW INVITATION

Cameron Robertson who has just finished a photography degree at Carlisle University has undertaken voluntary work in the Record Office over the past 2 years, helping us with the Photocentre collection. As his final degree Project, he decided to investigate the Cowe Buildings in Bridge Street, taking pictures with a traditional roll film camera of the interiors of the empty buildings and also finding out about the Cockle making process. During August, Cameron's work will be displayed in the Watchtower Gallery in Tweedmouth. His exhibition will include his own images as well as some from the Photocentre collection and also some artefacts relating to the buildings. On 15th August, starting at 7pm, Cameron will give a short talk about his work and then the Friends will have an opportunity to view the exhibition and ask him questions. Please do try and come along. We will send out an e-mail reminder nearer the time.

Linda Bankier

ARCHIVE NEWS

It's newsletter time again and it has been a busy couple of months with various projects on the go as well as our normal day to day work.

The First World War is an important historical event which is being highlighted a lot at the moment and the Record Office is beavering away on various things relating to this. In the last newsletter, I mentioned that we had been working with Ann Coburn on a project with Tweedmouth Middle School. At the beginning of March, 30 pupils from Year 7 visited the Record Office to find out from local sources about life in Berwick from 1914 to 1918 and also about some individuals who were involved in the War. The children learnt a lot and it was interesting to see them putting together the pieces of the jigsaw – tracking down families in the 1911 census and then what happened to some individuals within them as the war progressed. Using the information they have gathered, the children have then worked with Ann Coburn, a Creative Writer to write their own letters to someone at the Front. Their work will be used in a presentation at the Maltings on 24th June.

As well as the First World War, I am continuing my work with Flodden. My volunteers have been transcribing some Berwick sources, including the Rules of the Garrison and extracts from the Bailiffs Court. The latter includes some wonderful snippets on life in Berwick in the 16th century – who had Scottish people in their houses and people not clearing away their rubbish ! Everything wasn't rosy then either ! The next few weeks are very busy working with the Education team but I'll tell you all about that in the next newsletter !

Next year, Berwick hopes to celebrate 900 years of its history with a series of events and historical weekends. The Record Office is heavily involved in this and through our work with various local groups and individuals, we hope to raise our profile. As part of Berwick 900, we hope to have a Berwick Families Project and have been talking to the Heritage Lottery Fund about a bid for this. The Project would involve exploring the archives for information about families connected with Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal through the centuries. Peter Munro from Border Family History Society has been working with us on the initial phase and has set up a blog on things he has discovered. Go to <http://berwick900.blogspot.co.uk/> to see what is in the blog. If you can help us identify any of the descendants of the Mackay family who are mentioned, do let me know. I'll give further updates on the project in the next newsletter and also a list of event weekends in 2015.

In the past couple of months, the Northumberland Archives as a whole has been working closing with the Manorial Documents Register which is run by the National Archives to start a project on creating a database of manorial records relating to Northumberland. Many counties now have an online database which can be accessed through the National Archives website but Northumberland is not represented on this at present. Over the next two years, Sue Wood, Head of Collections at Woodhorn, Andrea Cameron, a Project Archivist and I will be busy identifying manorial records within our collections and also finding out what is held elsewhere so that we can create a comprehensive list for our county. The present list which is on index cards is very out of date. This is a challenging project which will involve a lot of research but is well worth doing.

Finally, over the last couple of months, I have given a number of talks to various groups. In April, I spoke to Bamburgh WI about researching your family history and in May, I did a talk on old photographs of Berwick to some elderly residents at Berwick Care home. In addition, through the Flodden Project, some of the Transcription volunteers and I have talked about our work and findings so far to Berwick History Society and Tillvas.

This is only a selection of the work going on in the Record Office at present. There is never a dull moment here !

Linda Bankier

VOLUNTEERS WANTED- FIRST WORLD WAR PROJECT

The Northumberland Archives Service operating from Woodhorn and Berwick has been awarded a grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund for a 15 month project to help us find out and make more accessible the information that is held in the archives relating to the First World War. Often the material is hidden away and not obvious in the catalogues or is only available through the paper catalogues in our respective Searchrooms. We want to involve volunteers in this work, helping us to look at some of our collections in more depth. The project will start in the autumn but if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, just send me an e-mail and I will add you to my contact list and let you know when we will be holding a meeting to launch the project. I can be contacted on lbankier@woodhorn.org.uk . If anyone wants further information on the project, just get in touch.

Linda Bankier

FIRST WORLD WAR AND BERWICK

As August approaches and the centenary of the start of the First World War, I thought you might be interested in reading some snippets from the Berwick Advertiser about the Home Front. Life had to go on for those at home but it was not always easy.

Berwick Advertiser, 14 August 1914

THE TOWN GUARD

A very full muster of the newly formed Town Guard was held on Sunday afternoon when the Mayor presided and gave a hearty welcome and congratulation to the members. Col Pennyman, representing the resident military, also spoke of the great aid such a corps could and would be and that its formation was sure to inspire the inhabitants with confidence. Major A Tower Robertson was unanimously appointed to Command the Guard, and in accepting the responsibility spoke of the intense seriousness of the undertaking, but they could also have every hope and confidence in thus pledging themselves to their King and country and town from the fact that our cause was absolutely a righteous one. Mr R.H. Dodds was made Adjutant and his well known energy makes him the very man for such a post of organisation and secretarial work. Dr Maclagan offered his services as honorary surgeon and others were voted into the position of officers and many details were settled. Each night, guards are posted to look after the Border and Five Arch Bridges and pathways etc and other duties are being carried out. The Mayor and Sheriff have been most energetic in regard to the formation of this Guard.

Berwick Advertiser, 25 June 1915

BERWICK SECOND CONTINGENT OF WOUNDED SOLDIERS. ARRIVAL ON FRIDAY NIGHT

A special hospital train arrived in Berwick Station on Friday night about 9 o'clock containing 90 wounded men – this being 16 more than arrived with the first contingent in November. Colonel C.L. Fraser, Berwick, was informed early on Friday morning that the wounded would arrive at night and forthwith arrangements were made for their reception and the three hospitals were quickly got ready viz : - Bell Tower, Parochial Hall and Berwick Infirmary. Dr C.L. Fraser was responsible for all the arrangements and he had the capable assistance of Mr W J Dixon. The transport officer was Colonel Peterkin, 2nd 10th Royal Scots, while accompanying him were many of the officers of the Royal Scots in charge of the stretcher bearers, while Mr R C Clements assisted by the Boy Scouts, saw that the wounded went to the hospital to which they had been allocated. As on the last occasion at the station the members of St John's Ambulance Association rendered invaluable assistance in carrying the wounded from the train, they being under the supervision of Mr Bate, the secretary of the local branch of St John's. There was an abundance of cars to

convey the wounded to the hospitals and a large crowd assembled to witness the arrival. The wounded are more serious cases than on the last occasion, there being 41 stretcher cases against none on the last occasion. The hospital train left Southampton at ten o'clock on Friday morning and was therefore eleven hours on the road. An R A M C Private who is an attendant on the train informed an "Advertiser" representative that there were a number of "gassed" amongst the contingent, but they had all kept wonderfully cheerful during their long journey.

Berwick Advertiser, 4 Aug. 1916

ATTENTION TO SHADING OF LIGHTS

A very perceptible curtailment is now manifest in the length of the daylight compared to what it was a month ago, and each week that passes will make this more manifest. In such circumstances householders will be returning to the aid of artificial illuminant before retiring to rest, and it is most important that all precautionary means be taken to safeguard the exit of the tiniest ray of light to guide the demonical enemies of the air in their nocturnal visits to our little island in the sea. As the Chief Constable remarked at the Petty Sessions last week the public are very careless in adopting such steps. Blinds and windows should be carefully examined in good time, and all defects in screening or shading the light attended to at once. It will be too late some evening when the police knock is heard at the door. Forewarned is forearmed, and the Chief Constable has bluntly told the general community that any such prosecutions will be severely dealt with. Venetian blinds are particularly liable to prove insufficient in confining the rays of the light, and in many instances, they would be much better removed during the winter period, or at any rate for the duration of the war.

Linda Bankier

MUSEUM NEWS

We have had a busy start to the season , with improved visitor numbers. We opened for two weekends over the school Easter vacation, and were rewarded with lots of extra visits. We plan to be open on weekends in the summer vacation, too.

Our 2014 exhibition is of Berwick townscapes, showing some of the more modern views of the town which haven't been out on display for a little while together with a few old favourites by Frank Watson Wood and James Wallace. Later in the season, we have been offered the NE Wildlife photography competition once again, which we will take up as it proved very popular, especially with our younger visitors last season.

The new Berwick Museum Family Trail is currently at the printers and will be available in good time for the school summer vacation. The artist Daniel Weatheritt has provided some charming illustrations based on the museum collections to accompany Jenny Dockett's text. The trails, which come in a set of four - one for each Woodhorn Trust museum, will be free, though we will have a suggested donation of 50p to enable a reprint if necessary.

Friends will be pleased to hear that work has just been completed in smartening up the "Education Room", so we can actually use it for family learning activities, education sessions and meetings throughout the season. It is no exaggeration to say that the room has been completely transformed, and looking very smart indeed by the addition of a new dark blue carpet and blinds funded by a generous donation from the Friends.

We will be testing out this new space thoroughly on 24th June, when we will be hosting a visit from a visiting tour group of travel for the Arts, a WWI /HLF briefing session and Flodden 500 Teachers' update session. Please do come and have a look at the room next time you visit.

Our joint HLF application (with the Maltings) for an exhibition and an education programme on the Burrell collection has been resubmitted and is being considered, and we should find out the results by the end of June. If we are successful, we will repeat the exhibition at the Granary gallery during winter 2014, but will have funding

for an education officer, and will be carrying out some oral history interviews as part of the programme.

Liz and Jenny – two of our front of house staff - are researching our WWI plaque, which came to us from Berwick Grammar School in 1991. We aim to find out as much as we can about the people named on the plaque, with a view to putting on a display later in the year.

Jenny's other project is giving the ship's bell from HMS Berwick a thorough clean, with a view to making a small display later on in the season. Jenny is gathering stories from people who served on the ship, and who could remember it visiting the town. She is also doing her best to identify sailors in some of the photographs we have of the ship's crew; one of them in particular, who appears in several pictures, always with a smile!

Berwick Museum has now got a Facebook page. We hope to keep it up to date with interesting pictures and facts, notice of events etc. Please do check it out, and tell us what you would like to see on there... and like us!

Anne Moore - Museums Officer, North Northumberland.

THE BERWICK VS BELFORD BLAME-GAME

On the evening of 25 October 1855 Joseph Manderston turned up at Detchant Moor Colliery near Belford. He was looking for work but was unsuccessful in finding any. He was, however, allowed to spend the night in one of the sheds belonging to the colliery. At some point he spotted a tin containing what he assumed to be coffee, but to be sure he brought it over to the fire – it was not coffee, but gunpowder. It exploded and badly burnt both his hands as well as his face and neck. He dressed his wounds with Florence oil, and stayed on at the colliery until the following Monday, 29 October. The men at the colliery had told him to go to the Workhouse in Belford, which was bound to take him in considering his condition and the cold and wet weather. He went to the house of the Relieving Officer, George Scott, but he

was not in. His wife, however, told him to go to the Workhouse and tell them that she had sent him and they would put him up for one night in the vagrants' cell. He was given no written order. Mr Manderston told the doorkeeper at the Workhouse that he had come to seek medical assistance for his burns. He was put into a room and the door was locked. The room had no bed, there were only two old coverlets on some sloping boards, and there was a very small fire burning. Between five and six o'clock the doorkeeper entered the room together with another man, who Mr Manderston afterwards found out to have been the Relieving Officer, George Scott. Mr Scott behaved in a very aggressive way and said that if he had been at home when he came to his house he would have turned him away. He tried to make him leave the Workhouse but Mr Manderston pleaded with him and asked to be allowed to stay for a few days and have his burns treated by a doctor. Mr Manderston got the impression that Mr Scott was either mad or drunk. Mr Scott questioned him about how much money he had on him, and when he was told that he had four pence, Mr Scott said that in that case he would have been able to pay for his own lodging and added that he did not care if Mr Manderston lived or died. A doctor was sent for and his wounds were treated, but only his left hand, and he was given some food. By this time the small fire had gone out and as he was still wet from walking in the rain, he had to walk up and down the room in an attempt to keep warm. The next morning the room was unlocked and he was given some breakfast. Shortly after this a woman turned up and told him that he had to leave the Workhouse, which he did without having a chance to have his wounds seen to or even wash. He left the Workhouse and after spending one night in lodgings in Lowick and another night in an engine house in Scremerston, he arrived in Berwick where he was admitted to the Workhouse where he had been since. He said that he was 78 years of age and a native of Scotland.

This account, given by Joseph Manderston after he had been admitted to the Workhouse in Berwick, appeared in the Guardians' Minute Book for December 3, 1855.

In the minutes from November 5, 1855, Alexander Kirkwood, Medical Officer at the Berwick Workhouse claimed in a letter to the Guardians that by the time Joseph Manderston turned up in Berwick his condition was so bad, due to the bad weather and his burns, that his life was in danger.

The case was first presented to the Berwick Guardians in a letter, presumably written by the Master of the Berwick Workhouse, Alexander Laidlaw, in which he outlined the case and accused the Belford Union of having neglected their duties

towards Joseph Manderston, and thereby shifted their duties and expenses on to another union, in this case the Berwick Union. Mr Laidlaw also claimed that this was not the first time the Belford Union had been negligent, but he added that so far no case had been as inhuman as this one.

The Berwick Guardians must somehow have communicated their disapproval of the behaviour of the Belford Guardians as a number of statements were made by people who had been in contact with Mr Manderston in Belford. They strongly disputed the accusation made by the Berwick Guardians and said that if any cases had been mishandled by them they wanted to see the evidence. In the case of Joseph Manderston they said that there were no grounds for a complaint against the treatment he received in the Workhouse. This is based on statements from George Scott, Relieving Officer, who said that he had seen Mr Manderston at the Workhouse and had contacted the Master and recommended that Mr Manderston should be seen to by a doctor. The Porter of the Workhouse said that he had admitted Mr Manderston to the Vagrants' Ward, but had heard no complaints from him regarding his injuries. Thomas Forster, Master of the Workhouse, said that Mr Scott had contacted him in the evening of 29 October and told him about the case, and that a doctor had been sent for and Mr Manderston's wounds had been treated with oatmeal gruel and a poultice had been applied. Mr Manderston had also been given supper and breakfast, but when Mr Forster came to see him in the morning he had already left. The Medical Officer, Thomas Davidson, confirmed that he had treated Joseph Manderston's right hand with oatmeal gruel and a poultice, and had ordered the same treatment to be done in the morning. He also stated that only his right hand was badly burnt, his left hand was only slightly injured and his face was blackened by the explosion of the gunpowder but no damage had been done. Joseph Manderston had left before the Medical Officer came to the Workhouse in the morning. The Workhouse Nurse, Sarah Hogg, confirmed that Mr Manderston had arrived at the Workhouse in the evening of 29 October, and said that she had given him some water to wash his hands in and had prepared the oatmeal gruel and poultice. Mr Manderston had expressed his gratitude to her. The next morning she served him breakfast about 8 o'clock and afterwards went to prepare the oatmeal, but when she returned to his room he had left.

The Berwick Guardians now decided to set up a special committee to deal with the case, and they were authorised to take statements from Joseph Manderston and other people at the Berwick Workhouse who might have dealt with Mr Manderston, and to communicate the result of these statements to the Belford Guardians. They conducted the interview with Mr Manderston which has been quoted above, and

also an interview with the Berwick Workhouse Nurse, Mary Harle, who said that she had been sent to the Receiving Ward where she found Mr Manderston in a very bad state. Both his hands were very badly burnt, and wrapped in some dirty cloths and were emitting an offensive smell. When she removed the cloths she found that the skin was hanging from his hands in pieces. She had to cut off his left sleeve to be able to treat the burn. His face and neck were covered in scabs. The doctor was sent for and he applied some temporary dressings until a prescription from the druggist arrived. The next morning the loose skin was cut off with a pair of scissors, and Mr Manderston was taken to the hospital in a feverous state. He was confined to his bed there for about a fortnight.

The statements of Mary Harle and Joseph Manderston were sent to the Belford Guardians, who, not surprisingly, rejected the accusations. However, as an attempt to solve the problem they suggested that the Berwick Guardians should attend the next meeting of the Belford Guardians and that Mr Manderston should also be present. This was firmly rejected by the Berwick Guardians. Instead they decided to send the entire correspondence regarding the case to the Poor Law Board for their assessment, and that until they have heard from them Mr Manderston should stay in the Berwick Workhouse.

At the end of January 1856 the Berwick Guardians received a letter from the Poor Law Board in which they stated that they saw no reason for keeping Mr Manderston in the Union Workhouse. They also mention that they had received a report from Mr Edward Hurst, Poor Law Inspector, regarding the alleged improper treatment of Mr Manderston. However, they failed to mention what was in Mr Hurst's report apart from the fact that the Belford Guardians had suggested a meeting, and they wanted to know if this meeting had taken place. What is quoted here is a summary of what appeared in the Guardians' Minute book; the letter itself has apparently been lost. In the volume containing correspondence between the Berwick Guardians and the Poor Law Board, kept at the Berwick Record Office, a couple of pages around the date where one might have expected the letter to be, have been torn out – the reason for this is anybody's guess.

Here ends the case of Joseph Manderston. All traces of him disappear. We do not know what later happened to him - we only know that he did not die in the Workhouse. Dr Kirkwood is quoted in *The Berwick Advertiser* as saying that Joseph Manderston had started out in London with £2 on him, and that he was from a respectable family in East Lothian and an intelligent man. As to who was right about the treatment of Mr Manderston there is no way of finding out. Of course we do not

know under what circumstances the statements were made, but it is hard to believe that Mr Manderston's version of what happened to him could be true, but on the other hand why would he make such serious allegations against the Belford Workhouse if they were not.

The whole dispute between Belford and Berwick makes one wonder if the reason that apparently no action was taken against any of the parties involved was that it was a fairly common occurrence between neighbouring unions and that shifting the responsibility to someone else was not unusual.

Lars Rose

AT THE PICTURES IN WORLD WAR ONE

Berwick's first purpose-built cinema, the Playhouse in Sandgate, opened for business on 22 May 1914. Before that, film seasons had been organised on a rather sporadic basis mostly at the Corn Exchange or the Queen's Rooms. Now films would be shown all year round on six nights a week (with the occasional variation of vaudeville shows) in a theatre which could accommodate over 1000 people - an astonishing figure to anyone who surveys the dimensions of the empty site today. The launch of the Playhouse sought to emphasise the respectability and high quality of its presentations - décor in the style of Wedgwood, lady attendants in Quaker uniforms, a front-of house commissionaire, and a house orchestra - to allay concerns that picture-shows were unwholesomely associated with fairgrounds and the music-hall. The opening programme was headed by "The House of Temperley", a quality British production adapted from a novel by Conan Doyle.

Within three months, the nation was at war with Germany, and cinema managers were quick to see the opportunities which it gave them to establish a new and patriotic relationship with the public. Just three days after the declaration of war, the *Berwick Advertiser* reported on the Playhouse: "The up-to-date and businesslike methods of the manager, Mr Taylor, are shown by the fact that on the screen every night he publishes the latest war news. Great enthusiasm has prevailed at every performance during the week. The orchestra rendered nightly 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the King', and the audience joined in the singing, while cheers were given

when a photograph of the King appeared on the screen." (*Berwick Advertiser*, 7 August 1914, p.2)

Three weeks later, a further report reveals in more detail what drew people to the cinema: "Pictures dealing with the war were shown in abundance on Monday night.... Pictures of the different class of vessels in the British Navy proved of much interest. Photos of the most prominent personages in the war were also shown. The performances on Wednesday night were in aid of the local war relief fund, and at both 'houses' the place was filled to overflowing.... At each performance the latest war telegrams are shown, but it is the intention of Mr T[a]ylor, the Manager, to exhibit shortly actual films of the War." (*Berwick Advertiser*, 28 August 1914)

Compared with the dry text and limited photography that appeared in newspapers and official pamphlets, images on the cinema screen must have brought a startling immediacy to news of the war, even if early film footage was largely limited to the home front because cameramen were initially banned from filming at the front line. When in mid-December 1914 the German navy bombarded Scarborough, Whitby, and Hartlepool, causing many deaths and casualties, the Playhouse was able to screen a news film, "The East Coast Raid", within a fortnight of the event.

The programming of fiction films also shifted swiftly in favour of military subjects in the closing months of 1914, and words such as "honour", "battle" and "supremacy" appeared regularly among the advertised titles. And by the end of the year and early 1915, one of the most popular subjects featured was stories about German spies.

As the war advanced, and the real news of casualties affected more and more people personally, the number of films at the Playhouse which made explicit reference to the war diminished, and a greater emphasis upon comedies appeared in its advertisements. One of the great cultural phenomena of the war years was the rise to worldwide fame of Charlie Chaplin, and his name first appeared in Berwick programmes in April 1915 in his Keystone comedies "The Property Man" and "The Masquerader". Thereafter his films became a regular feature of programmes - at least when the cinema could get hold of them amid intense national competition for copies. Mabel Normand, Fatty Arbuckle, and the now largely forgotten British character Pimple, were other regular comic favourites.

The war itself however continued to draw an audience when some exceptional representation of it was on offer. One of the most notable productions was "The

"Battle of the Somme", a 75 minute official documentary which, even though its content was carefully managed to avoid the demoralisation of its audiences, showed unprecedented scenes of the battlefield and trenches, troop encampments and the medical stations, including images of dead and wounded soldiers. It was filmed in late June and early July 1916, and first shown in London on 10 August. Over the next two months, with the endorsement of the prime minister, Lloyd George, it was shown around the country (while the battle itself still continued) and it is reckoned that 20 million people in Britain saw it. It came to The Playhouse for a week at the start of October, and demand was such that it was brought back again in December. [The film has been restored and issued on DVD; also currently on YouTube.] In March 1917, Berwick also saw the follow-up documentary, "The Battle of the Ancre", which showed for the first time the use of tanks, and which enjoyed comparable success around the country. Evidently presentations such as these were capable of reaching all classes of British society, and by the end of the war, film was recognised as being one of the chief means of conveying information and shaping opinion.

Another contribution of the cinema to the war effort was involuntary: in May 1916 the government introduced an Entertainment Tax which applied to cinemas and theatres. Until then, ticket prices at the Playhouse had remained the same since its opening, ranging from 2 pence for the "Pit" to 1 shilling for a seat in the Balcony (and half price for children). The new tax raised the price of admission to the Pit to 2½d and for the Balcony to 1s 2d - thereby placing the heaviest penalty proportionately on the cheapest seats. The Playhouse labelled it a "War Tax" but it continued in force well beyond the end of the war, and it contributed to an overall decline in cinema attendance for several years.

At least the Playhouse was not one of the 700 British cinemas which had closed by 1918, even though it may have struggled to find new films to fill its programmes and its press advertisements had become noticeably smaller and more tentative. By the last year of the war, the British and European film industries were in disarray, and American companies had asserted their dominance over film distribution. The Playhouse's programmes reflected this with over three-quarters of its features coming from the United States, and war-weary audiences now responded to the escapist adventures of the new stars of the Western, William S. Hart and Tom Mix, the mischievous charm of Mary Pickford, and the enduring inventiveness of Chaplin.

Sources:

Berwick Advertiser.

Michael Hammond. *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914-1918*. University of Exeter Press, 2006.

Rachael Low. *History of the British Film: vol.3, 1914-1918*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1973.

John Spiers

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE.....

Whilst transcribing some correspondence from Thomas Adams to Abraham Dixon of Belford, written in July 1780 we came across the following extract in a letter :

“As I recollect the John Knox the Scottish Reformer used frequently to say “a Papa et Diabolo libera nos Domine I have not preached or prayed for the last 30 years but I have always had a Thwack at the pope and his whore of Babylon” - In his time Enthusiasm passed for Inspiration and Zeal for true Religion..... Some what like John Knox I never think or speak or write about the Banks or any thing relative to them but I must say some thing by way of discouraging (sic) them, for I am clearly convinced in my own mind that these Banks particularly at this time are more destructive to the Country than the generality of people are aware of, I am far from rash when I assert that they have in the greatest Degree contributed to the present Scarcity of Money, but the Voice of an Individual who never spats in print is lost. the Evil continues, is increasing, but ought to be diminished.”

Jane Bowen & Janet Ward

BAMBURGH "GHOSTS"

Tales from the Eighteenth Century- A break-in at Bamburgh Church....

For the last two years, I have had the privilege of working as a volunteer at the Northumberland Archives 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 in an undated letter during 1777

"Today I went to read prayers, but when I came to Bambrough, was told that the Church had been broke into last night, and both the surplices, and three bottles of wine taken out of the Vestry, which accordingly I found true, the villains (for there must have been more than one) has come in at the southern most window at the west end, had unlocked the Vestry door, had forced open the Library desk, had rifled the box in which the collection money used formerly to be kept, but had found nothing in it, but only a bottle screw of Richard Byroms as luckily the money is with me; had taken the surplices and the wine, and had locked the Vestry door behind them, and not finding it easy to get out again at the window, had opened the great door and gone off. I shall apply to Mrs Wood for a loan of the surplice, until the others are got at Bambrough. Mr Grey says he will keep the Church plate no longer, as he cannot answer for all his servants when he and Mrs Grey are abroad. I know no other way of securing it, unless you will allow it to be taken to the Castle

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

With thanks to Woodhorn Archive-Ref NRO 452/C/3/2/6/10

Carol Griffiths

FRIENDS' WEBSITE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

It is now nearly ten months since the launch of the Friends new website. In this short period it has grown substantially, proving to be a great success with worldwide hits (source Google Analytics). For those who haven't recently visited the website it is well worth a look – www.berwickfriends.org.uk

Recently the website has been used by students in Scotland on an academic course.

We have recently added a further two new pages, both appearing in the 'Other histories' section from the main drop down menu.

In a new section devoted to 'WW1 stories' you will find the tragic story on Alexander Calder from Walkergate Lane, Berwick-upon-Tweed, killed at the Battle of Jutland in 1917. - <http://www.berwickfriends.org.uk/history/world-war-i-stories/>

The other new page appears under the expanding 'Historical accounts' section under the heading - 1894. A June day on Holy Island, by Mrs Arthur H. Berger - <http://www.berwickfriends.org.uk/history/>

Kevin Graham,

FBDMA Website researcher/adviser

SNIPPETS FROM THE BERWICK ADVERTISER

Berwick Advertiser, 19th January 1871

THE PROPOSED DOCKS

The monthly meeting of the Harbour Commissioners was held on Wednesday. Alderman Gilchrist occupied the chair, and there was a large attendance of members. With the view of obtaining sufficient funds to carry out the proposed docks it was agreed that the tonnage and shore dues should be increased. A resolution

was passed to the effect that the docks should be proceeded with, and that they should be erected on the Tweedmouth side of the river, immediately below the bridge. The meeting agreed no retain Messrs Stevenson, civil engineers, Edinburgh, as the engineers in connection with the docks, and to consult with them on the subject. The directors of the North-Eastern Railway Company have promised, in the event of the docks being made, to recommend the shareholders of the company to make a siding from their railway down to the dock, with a coal depot, where vessels may load cargoes of coal.- The wooden jetty at the Ballast Quay, which is in a very dilapidated condition, was ordered to be removed.

Berwick Advertiser, 20th January 1871

SKATING CLUB

A meeting was held in the Union Hotel, Tweedmouth, on Friday night, for the purpose of taking into consideration a proposal to establish a Skating and Curling Club in Berwick. There was good attendance, and, on the motion of Mr R Weddell, Mr Wm Weatherhead was called to the chair. In the course of the discussion on the subject which ensued, it appeared to be the feeling of the gentlemen present that skating ought to be kept apart from curling, the latter sport being chiefly engaged in by those somewhat advanced years; and, on the motion of Mr Robert Weatherhead, seconded by Mr H R Smail, it was unanimously resolved that a Skating Club should be formed in Berwick, and that the Committee with full powers to make enquiry about a suitable pond and report at a future meeting as to this and other arrangements, consists:- Messrs W Weatherhead, W Willoby, W Caverhill and R Weddell; Mr Ed Willoby, jun., to Secretary and Treasurer. The pond at Yarrow was mentioned as the most suitable that could be got by the club, but the objections urged against it were the great distance it was from the town, and the fact that it would cost between £20 and £30 to put it into proper repair. The next best place suggested was the lower tank, to the right hand side of the Cowport Gate, which Mr Lowrey had expressed himself willing to give, and the long tank on the side of which could, if thought desirable, be used for curling. Some conversation was carried on as to the parties who should be patrons of the Club, and the amount of the subscriptions, but these questions were referred to the Committee. At the close of business, a vote of thanks was passed to the Chairman, of the motion of Mr R Weddell.

Berwick Advertiser, 3rd February 1871

THE MURDER IN NEWCASTLE

Considerable excitement was caused in the town this week, when it became known that the woman Barbara Sample, who committed the horrible murder of an old woman in Newcastle, a full narrative of which will be found in other columns belonged to Berwick. Mrs Sample is a daughter of Captain Stevenson, who lives at present with Mr Ferguson, the Harbour Master, who is his nephew. After she was married to Mark Sample, a sailor, also belonging Berwick, she lived with her husband about four years ago in the Meeting-house yard Church Street. Mrs Sample then gave herself up to intemperate habits, and sold everything in the house, and her husband in consequence left her. After she was left by him, she lived with her father, Captain Stevenson, but at his house she also disposed of every article she could lay her hands on. It appears that Mrs Sample after this went to Newcastle, where she ultimately got the situation which she held when she committed the murder. On Tuesday night, Superintendent Ronaldson received a telegram from the Newcastle police asking him to search for the prisoner, but as is well known she never left Newcastle.

Carole Pringle