

*A Kaleidoscope of  
Victorian Life:  
The Berwick-upon-Tweed  
Corn Exchange 1856-1895*

**By  
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# *Introduction*

The Corn Exchange in Berwick played an important role as one of the local centres around which much of the social, political, religious and financial life took place. My aim has been to shed light on this. By studying what kind of activities it was used for we can create a picture of what attracted people from Berwick and its surroundings to come to the Corn Exchange. There were certain annual events, such as balls and AGMs, but all through the year a great variety of events took place.

The reason for building the exchange was, of course, to have a proper place for the weekly corn market, but it was stated very clearly from the very beginning that a building of such proportions could and should be used for much more than that; and it is this “much more than that” I will concentrate on.

My main source has been the *Berwick Advertiser*, supplemented by other local newspapers such as *The Kelso and Berwick Warder* and *The Journal*.

All articles quoted are from the *Berwick Advertiser* unless otherwise stated.

I am aware of the fact that some of the language used in certain quotes would not be acceptable today and wish to emphasise that this is not the wording I would use.

The period covered here is 1856 - 1895, covering the first forty years of its existence.

*Lars Rose*

## *1856 - 1865*

The late 1850s saw a number of buildings being erected in Berwick. St. Mary's Church in Castlegate was consecrated in November 1858, the Scottish church in Wallace Green is from the same period, as is the Masonic Hall on the corner of The Parade and Walkergate. This would seem to indicate a certain optimism that could possibly be a consequence of the Royal Border Bridge being opened in 1850.

The history of the Corn Exchange in Berwick started in 1856, when 38 prominent citizens of Berwick and surroundings published a letter in the *Berwick Advertiser* on 31 May. In the letter, addressed to the Mayor, Robert Ramsay, they asked for the Mayor to call a public meeting as "We the undersigned FARMERS, MERCHANTS, BANKERS, and others, feel very desirous that there should be a Corn Exchange erected in a suitable part of the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed." The Mayor complied and a public meeting was held in the Town Hall on Saturday, 7 June, 1856.

A committee was established and the search for a suitable site begun. The Corn Exchange was established under the Limited Liability Act, passed in 1855, and called Berwick Corn Exchange Company – Limited, making it the first limited company in Berwick.

A number of both public and committee meetings followed this decision - a decision based on the fact that other towns in the Borders already had corn exchanges and might very well take business and activity away from Berwick. After considering several possibilities of a suitable site, the present location in Sandgate was chosen. The site was somewhat larger than what was needed, so it was decided to sell off separately what is now the building between Foul Ford and Silver Street.

On 8 November, 1856, an article appeared on the front page of *The Berwick Advertiser* inviting "architects to furnish designs for a new Corn Exchange with Committee Rooms &c, for the town of Berwick." No less than 142 architects

showed their interest by applying for details about the project, and after the deadline had expired on 1 January, 1857, a meeting was held on 10 January, where, according to an article in the *Berwick Advertiser* “The plans for this proposed erection, fifty-four in all, presented to the committee in competition for their premiums of £40 for the best and £15 for the second were on Tuesday arranged in the assembly room of the King’s Arms Inn.” The task was to reduce the number of applications to four from which the shareholders would then choose the winner. “All plans were executed with great neatness and artistic beauty” according to the Committee, and each plan had a technical signature instead of a name in order to rule out any biased opinion.

In February, 1857, the winner of the competition was unanimously chosen by the shareholders to be Mr. John Johnston of Newcastle, and he was duly awarded the sum of £40 as the winning prize. The entire cost of the erection of the building was not to exceed £2,750.

About five months later, on 27 June, 1857, at 2 pm, Robert Ramsay, Esq, Chairman of the Committee, laid the foundation stone of the Berwick Corn Exchange. The ceremony was low-key as it was decided to defer any public ceremonial until the opening of the building. The erection of the building started right away and within about four months the heaviest part of the work was completed, led by the contractor Mr Reed.

The weather during the winter was well suited for construction work and on 27 March, 1858, it was announced on the front page of *The Berwick Advertiser* that “It is expected that the new Corn Exchange will be ready for occupation early in May next” and that people who were interested in having stalls there should put their names forward promptly.

This announcement seemed to be somewhat over-optimistic as the finishing work dragged out a little, but on 5 June, 1858, an article appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser* announcing that “This fine building is now rapidly approaching completion, and the proceedings of its inauguration, which are to take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> instant, are looked forward to with considerable interest.”

A few weeks later, on 19 June, an advertisement could be seen in the *Berwick Advertiser* announcing the first GRAND CONCERT in the NEW CORN EXCHANGE on 30 June.

The official inauguration of the new Corn Exchange took place on 28 June, 1858, in

the form of a public dinner “of the shareholders and such of the public as choose to join them.” The article goes on to state that “every shareholder has been presented with two tickets for lady visitors to the gallery, and as the shareholders number one hundred and thirty-eight, there is every prospect of about 300 ladies being in the apartment, as under the arrangements it is likely that every ticket will be used.” Dinner tickets could be obtained by men, and men only, at the Hen and Chickens Inn in Sandgate at a price of 8s. Dinner was at 3 o’clock and the Ladies’ Gallery would be open from 4 o’clock.

Finally on 3 July, 1858, the Berwick Corn Exchange was opened for transactions of business, thus fulfilling the need that had been expressed just over two years earlier by a group of prominent citizens of Berwick.

In the *Berwick Advertiser* article in connection with the official opening of the Corn Exchange there was a fairly detailed description of the interior of the exchange: “Immediately above the main entrance is to be a representation of the borough arms, cut out of stone; and overhead at the top of the building is to be a figure of Ceres, with several vases. On either side of the entrance are two elegant apartments to be appropriated, the one for the directors’ meetings, the other for a reading room to the subscribers. They are each 20 feet long, 15.5 feet high. Over these and the entrance is one large apartment measuring 50 feet in length, 15.5 feet in breadth, and 17.5 feet in height. This room on festive occasions can be appropriated for the purpose of a refreshment room, and when not used for such, it will be divided by a wooden partition, and as reported is to be used for the business of the Savings Bank. There are two minor entrances to the body of the hall, namely on the left of the plan and in the rear. The staircase up to the tower leads to the gallery only.

“The interior of the great hall, as it is approached by the main staircase, has a very imposing effect. The gallery adjoins the entrance, and though it affords accommodation for about 300 persons it is neither cumbrous nor to appearance occupying much space. Beyond the gallery the hall is lofty and light. In shape it is nearly oval; it is circular at one end where four windows are inserted. At the opposite end it is square. The roof, which is one extensive span, is of a peculiar construction, having open exposed girders, and nearly one-half of it is formed of ground glass. Plenty of light is therefore supplied. The length of the hall is eighty-five feet; the width is seventy ditto; and the height forty-four ditto. There is an orchestra formed in one of the side walls of the hall. There are also apartments for the residence of the porter, and for the temporary retirement of the company. The stalls or benches for assisting the merchants in transacting their business are

arranged round the walls, and these are of such construction that when they are not required they can be folded down and their obstruction removed. There are thirteen gas-lustres pendant from the roof, each containing eight jets, besides numerous brackets along the front of the gallery.

“The entire work of the erection has been entrusted to Mr. Matthew Reed of Bath Road, Newcastle, and so far as it has progressed its erection has given entire satisfaction to the directors. The frontage of the main building is 38 feet high; it is adorned with numerous windows which give it a light appearance. The spire is sixty feet high, and in its entire state will present a remarkable appearance.” (July 3, 1858)

The first public event took place on the same day—namely Mr. Wilson’s Concert. It was a great success, as about 1,200 people were there, and “the behaviour of this immense throng was beyond all praise. Only one man, and we regret we could not ascertain his name, as we should have published it, being inebriated was for a short time noisy and turbulent” (ibid.), he was, however quickly removed by the police, and the opening of the Corn Exchange was declared to have been completed with great success.

At the second AGM of the Corn Exchange, the first one in its own building, it was revealed that 164 season tickets had been sold and paid for at a price of 7s 6d each, and 22 stalls at £2 each. There were still 57 unsold shares, and the Directors pointed out the importance of these shares being sold soon to consolidate the company. Part of the financial problem was the surplus space of ground just north of the Exchange, (present day Bank of Scotland) and not needed by the Corn Exchange itself. Attempts had been made to sell it, but so far without success. On 4 September, the following announcement appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser* “The directors beg to call attention to the advantages afforded by the new Corn Exchange for sales by auction of every description of property, meetings of agricultural societies, concerts and public meetings of all kinds. There are also rooms attached to the Exchange—which appointments may be made for the transaction of business by trustees, meetings of creditors, committees etc. The directors have also arranged for the exhibition of placard advertisements in the hall and lobby on market days.” This clearly lays out the intended multi-purpose use of the building.

There was a keen interest in new discoveries and inventions. An example of this is when, on 16 October, 1858, Mr. E. Graves, of the Electric Telegraph Company, gave an illustrated lecture on the electric telegraph, what it is and what it does.

“Wires will be led into the room, so as to place it in direct communication with Newcastle and London. Questions asked by the audience will be answered from those places, and the latest news of interest signalled from London . . . .The mystery of the spirit rapping will be illustrated and the means by which the deception is carried out explained. The electric light will be displayed and a small cannon fired by the electric current.” (October 16, 1858)

On 26 November, 1858, the official opening ball of the Corn Exchange took place. The windows of the drapers in town were full of displays of rich and elegant ball gowns and according to the local papers the choice was beyond anything that had ever been seen in Berwick. The ball was attended by 96 ladies and 215 men, and was managed by 16 stewards. The arrival of the guests was in itself an event. The streets of Hide Hill and Sandgate were packed with people eager to witness the arrival of the ball company, and some of the well-known people, among them the Mayor, were greeted with rounds of cheers, but “notwithstanding this state of excitement the conduct of the crowd outside was very becoming and decorous.” (December 4, 1858). The year of 1858 thus finished on a high, with the Corn Exchange well-established as part of life in Berwick.

At the AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Co. Ltd. in July, 1859, it was announced that the directors were winding up the capital account, but there were some problems involved in doing this. Mr Reed, the contractor, had put in a claim for £686, but the architect, Mr. Johnston, after investigating the accounts said that an amount of £159 was due to the contractor. The directors claimed, however, that only claims submitted in writing would be considered. The problem now faced by the directors was if they should proceed to a court of law. The points considered by the directors were that by going to court they admitted that there was a case, and furthermore if the case went against them they might end up having to pay the money plus expenses. Mr. Reed refused to settle for £159 and claimed that he was £686 out of pocket. The directors decide to offer Mr. Reed £159, in spite of him having refused to settle for that amount, they add, however, that they do it “without prejudice if not being accepted.” (July 9, 1859). It was also announced at this meeting that the unoccupied site at the north end of the Exchange had been bought by the Berwick Building Company for £200, and that the plan was to build two shops in the front part of the site and move the subscription library from Bridge Street to the second floor of the building. An interesting point raised at the meeting concerned the conditions of the stall holders. The problem seemed to be that too many stalls had been crammed into the hall, making it difficult for the stallholders to do their job properly. It was also pointed out that the Berwick Corn Exchange compared unfavourably in this respect with other corn exchanges in the area. A

committee was appointed to look into the matter. The cost of the building had been kept within the final estimate of £5000, in spite of unforeseen expenses to fix the glass roof, which had suffered some broken glass due to either shrinking or vibration, and, as we shall see, problems with the roof were to occur several times over the years.

From an entry in the *Berwick Advertiser* on 9 July, 1859, we learn that the architect of the proposed new building next to the Corn Exchange was again Mr. Johnston of Clayton Street West, Newcastle.

Even though television and film were still a thing of the future people then had opportunities to see visual representations of current and historic events. On 27 August, 1859, Sinclair's Grand Historical Panorama of Russia and his new and elaborate Views of India were shown for five nights at the Corn Exchange. One of the things shown from India was "the chief features of the mutiny (events which have arrested, and still continue to absorb so much of the public attention)." (August 27, 1859)

At the AGM held in January, 1860, it was decided that it was still not advisable to pay dividend, but the hope was that this would be possible at the meeting the following year. New and, hopefully, better stalls had been erected, at a cost, no doubt.

Several concerts took place during 1860. The programmes often seemed to be a mixture of classical music, ballads, folk music, comic acts, for example, on 11 February, Mr. G. Wilson gave a grand vocal and instrumental concert assisted by the renowned American humourists Messrs. Palmyre, Williams and Archer. Also to appear are "a party of Ethiopians who have lately appeared at several very fashionable entertainments, where they have been received with great applause." Ethiopians was a name often used in those days for all black people. (February 11, 1859)

Things could go wrong. On 11 August, 1860, there was a review of a lecture given by the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown on "The People's Proverbs". The audience was numerous and respectable, but apparently there had been a problem. "The Reverend lecturer gave an explanation of the cause of the disappointment experienced here last week on his account. It appeared that he had mistaken the week as we supposed he had done. He acknowledged that the fault had been his in having carelessly read the letter he had received from his correspondent. The disappointment which was again experienced on Monday was occupied by the



train running from Liverpool to York not reaching the latter place in time to enable its passengers to secure the express train coming north.” However, all seemed to have been forgiven, and the lecture proved to be highly entertaining and was well received by the audience. A few days later he gave another lecture on “Manliness” and he again managed to delight the numerous audience.

Several concerts took place towards the end of 1860. On 3 November, it was announced that Dr. Mark and his “unrivalled orchestra from the Royal College of Music, Manchester” would give two grand vocal and instrumental concerts in the Corn Exchange, and a similar kind of concert was announced by Mr. Julian Adams in the same place a few weeks later. The final concert of the year was to be given by members of the Scremerston Colliery band, who announced that their first concert of vocal and instrumental music would take place in the Exchange on 11 December.

The new year, 1861, began with the annual Volunteer Ball, arranged by the members of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Artillery and the Rifle Volunteer Corps, on the first day of the new year. The entertainment started off at the end of January, when Heath’s African Minstrels gave a “one night only” performance. The programme illustrates the, at least to us now, strange variety that often made up entertainments given in places like the Corn Exchange. Part I was advertised “As darkies in city life” and apparently consisted of a number of ballads, in the review, however, it said that the concert started with an overture and chorus from “The Bohemian Girl”. Part II was called Ethiopian Varieties, and the concert was to be concluded by a burlesque operatic sketch from Lucia de Lammermoore. Again according to the review the audience thoroughly enjoyed the concert, even though the music was not up to the mark and the choruses were poor. The entertainment was apparently interspersed by conundrums that went down very well with the audience.

The Ethiopian element in entertainment seemed to have been rather dominant in these years as only a few weeks later Mr Morrison Kyle from Glasgow announced the last Scottish tour of the celebrated African Opera Troupe. The entertainment would consist of “Ethiopian novelties, burlesque operas, humorous, musical & terpsichorean selections.” (February 16, 1861)

The Corn Exchange was also used to hold concerts and other kinds of entertainments as a way of raising money for charity. One such example is a concert held on 2 March, given by the Northumberland Artillery Militia and South Carolina Ethiopians under the patronage of the Vicar, the Mayor, and Lieutenant-

colonel Clementson. The proceeds of the concert went to the relatives of the sufferers of the late accident on Spittal Point. The accident referred to was the drowning of four brothers of the Roughead family and their cousin on Christmas Day, 1860 while they had been at sea fishing. The circumstances of the accident were hotly discussed in the local community and the local press, but in the end nobody was blamed for the tragedy.

The definite highlight of 1861 was when the following announcement appeared on the front page of the *Berwick Advertiser* on 9, 16 and 23 November: “FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY—Mr. Charles Dickens will read at the Corn Exchange, Berwick, on Monday evening, November 25th at eight o’clock his Christmas Carol and the Trial from Pickwick. The time occupied by this reading will be two hours and twenty minutes.

Reserved seats, four shillings; Area, two shillings; Back Seats, one shilling. Tickets to be had of Mr. Henderson, bookseller, High Street and Western Lane, Berwick, where a plan of the stalls may be seen.”

We know that Charles Dickens stayed at the King’s Arms Hotel in Hide Hill in 1858 and again in 1861 and that he gave a reading there in 1861, but not in the Corn Exchange as advertised. So what happened?

The advertisement in the *Berwick Advertiser* was repeated on 16 and 23 November, indicating that everything was all right.

Then on 30 November, five days after the reading, a review of the event was published in the *Advertiser*, where the following sentence appears: “The readings took place in the King’s Arms Assembly room and not in the Corn Exchange as had been advertised, the reason for this change being the inconvenient echo for which the Corn Exchange is so noted, and which would have made the evening’s entertainment, if given in the latter place, a comparative blank to many of the audience.”

This seems to be the first time “the inconvenient echo” is mentioned, and nothing appears to have been said about it in connection with concerts and other activities having been held at the building. We even know that in June, 1858, Mr. R. Ross’s instrumental band of musicians had tested the effect of the sound in the hall, “and the result was in every respect highly gratifying.” (June 5, 1861), it goes on “Mr. Ross in being asked his opinion, stated that the room for the purpose of a concert appeared to him faultless.”

So why did Dickens not give his reading in the new Corn Exchange, which was larger, newer and seemed to have served the audiences well on many other occasions?

Thirteen years after Dickens refused to give his readings in the Corn Exchange an article appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 February 1874, prompted by the publication of the third volume of Forster's *Life of Dickens*. The article is called "Dickens' Opinion of the Corn Exchange", and in it is quoted what Dickens wrote one hour before he was to appear at the Corn Exchange: "As odd and out-of-the-way place to be at, it appears to me, as ever was seen, and such a ridiculous room designed for me to read in! An immense Corn Exchange, made of glass and iron, round, dome-topped, lofty, utterly absurd for any such purpose, and full of thundering echoes, with a little lofty crow's-nest of a stone gallery, breast-high deep in the wall into which it was designed to put me. I instantly struck of course, and said I would either read in a room attached to this house (a very snug one, capable of holding 500 people), or not at all. Terrified local agents glowered and fell prostrate, and my men took the primitive accommodation in hand. Ever since, I am alarmed to add, the people (who besought to honour of the visit) have been coming in numbers quite irreconcilable with the appearance of the plea, and what is to be the end I do not know."

We, of course, know, but what we do not know is whether Dickens' refusal to perform at the Corn Exchange was a case of a grumpy old man who did not want to go outside and walk a hundred yards or so down the road from his comfortable hotel because of bad weather, or a genuine concern for his audience, notwithstanding Mr. Ross's praise of the Corn Exchange as being near perfect as regards performing music.

After the reading Mr. Dickens "expressed himself in complimentary terms on the manner of his reception, and the marked appreciation, which he had met with in this town." (November 30, 1861)

More serious things also took place at the Corn Exchange. The Berwick Chamber of Commerce held a meeting there in December: on the agenda were among other things the question of where fishing boats could be anchored, as the law was now the Harbour Master had no power over this, and it was suggested by the Chamber that a clause dealing with this problem should be inserted in the new Harbour Act that was being debated in Parliament, as the present situation made things difficult for the salmon fishing. Another issue that was discussed was how toll was charged, apparently the problem was that during hiring a cart and horse was charged every

time it passed through the toll, but the Chamber intended to apply to Parliament to have this changed.

As the year before, the Grand Volunteer Ball was to be held in the Corn Exchange on the first day of the new year (1862), but before that, at the monthly meeting of the artillery and rifle volunteers held in the Barracks in mid-December, it was announced by Captain Thomas Allan “that the ladies of the borough had very handsomely subscribed sufficient funds with which they intended to purchase colours for the corps, and that their presentation would take place on the evening of Monday the 30th instant, in the Corn Exchange.” (December 21, 1861). Due to the recent death of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort no drill took place at the meeting.

The Volunteer Ball took place as advertised, but apparently, owing to the wet and disagreeable weather, only about 30 couples took part, and it was feared that no surplus would be left to aid the funds of the volunteer corps.

We know that the custom of having a Christmas tree had arrived in Berwick. In an advertisement in the *Berwick Advertiser* at the beginning of January a New Year’s Festival was announced that “The amusement will comprise Christmas trees, on a splendid and gigantic scale.” (January 4, 1862) The entertainment took place on the 23 January and the hall was dominated by three large Christmas trees adorned with fancy articles both for adults and children. “In the evening the trees were illuminated with gas jets encircling them, and the many sparkling and attractive objects presented a very gay aspect.” (January 25, 1862). The festival was held in aid of the parsonage fund for St. Mary’s parish, and the total amount collected amounted to £110 13s 11d.

Mr. Sam Cowell gave his first concert in the Corn Exchange after his return from America. Apparently the concert was not quite up to expectations. Mr. Cowell’s performance went down well, but it “acted as a relief from dull monotony of the remainder of the concert.” (January 18 1862)

At the AGM of the Berwick Building Company held in January it was announced that the building next to the Corn Exchange was finished and the cost was within the estimated outlay, but as the buildings had not yet been fully occupied it was decided not to pay any dividend.

More mundane things took place in the Corn Exchange as well. On 8 February, 1862, the following advertisement appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser*: “Robert

Kennedy, Bell-hanger, gasfitter, whitesmith and plumber, begs leave to state that he will exhibit in the Corn Exchange on Saturday (tomorrow) some specimens of Smith and Wellstood's American stoves and famous boilers."

At the beginning of the year the Volunteers had apparently applied to the Corn Exchange Company to use the Exchange for their weekly drill. The application had been turned down, the reason given being that the corps was unable to pay the hire demanded, so for the time being the drilling would take place at the Barracks as before. The reason for this planned move is not explained, but it was decided "to engage the Corn Exchange for company drill one month previous to commencing out-door exercise in May." (February 8, 1862)

The items that were auctioned off in the Corn Exchange were many and varied. On 22 February, 1862 it was announced in *The Berwick Advertiser* that the general annual meeting of the Berwick and Norham and Islandshire Turnpike would be held at the Corn Exchange on March 18. After the meeting there an auction would be held for the letting of 11 tollgates for the term of a year. The prices for the previous year went from £485 for the Tweedmouth High Gate, with one gate and two check chains, to a mere £78 for the Haggerston Gate, with two side gates. The takers would be authorised to take tolls for stage coaches and other carriages for conveying passengers or goods for hire, every time they pass or re-pass. The auction did not go very well: "The attendance was pretty numerous, but the competition generally languid with a disposition not to exceed the sums previously laid upon the tolls" the *Berwick Advertiser* reported. (February 22, 1862) The total amount realised on the tolls ended up £173 less than the year before.

The entertainment side of the activities taking place in the Corn Exchange was not neglected. At the end of February a grand entertainment under the conductor and accompanist Herr Decker-Schenk and a number of ladies – The Female Swiss Singers—who all appeared in Swiss national costumes. The background of the stage was filled up with a very fine Swiss view of Lake Geneva and the surrounding mountains. However, in spite of everybody performing well, the *Berwick Advertiser* had the following comment: "The large hall, though not quite full, was very respectfully attended, and comprised a goodly sprinkling of the elite of the town and neighbourhood; and had the concert been held on any other than Saturday night, which is a very inconvenient one for the merchants and others of this place, we have no doubt these attractive ladies would have had a bumper house." (March 1, 1862). This makes one wonder why Saturday night was considered a bad night for an entertainment.

Properties were also auctioned off at the Corn Exchange. The auctioneer was Mr. James Purves, but although only very few of the properties put up for auction were sold, they nevertheless, give us an insight into several aspects of life in Berwick. We are often told who owned or occupied the property, we get an idea of price levels, and how prices would vary depending on the location of the property, and the general interest in buying, or lack of it, reflects on the general economy of the area.

The Corn Exchange was also a popular place for holding bazaars in aid of various causes. In July one was held by the United Presbyterian Church in Church Street in aid of repairing and enlarging the church. These events were quite elaborate. On this occasion the hall was decorated with flowers and banners, and behind a cloth screen, which encircled the room, “pleasing music was emitted from a pianoforte, played by an unseen lady.” (July 19, 1862). Eight stalls had been set up selling a variety of articles. One stall was specially mentioned in the newspaper it was the one presided over by Mr. Paterson from Spittal: “The stall comprised a very large collection of fossils collected by Mr. Paterson on both sides of the Tweed, forming a rich and rare memorandum of the earth’s earliest inhabitants.” (ibid.) The bazaar, which lasted two days, collected the amount of £290 from admissions and sale.

Towards the end of the year trouble was brewing. A number of farmers in the neighbourhood had proposed that the corn market should be moved from Saturday to Monday. This would apparently mean that it would coincide with the fortnightly cattle market. The Berwick Corn Exchange Co. realised that there was little they could do to stop this initiative. All they could do was to state that “This contemplated institution, we fear, will operate injuriously upon the dividends of the Corn Exchange Company, who may safely calculate upon a large proportion of Monday’s business being transacted at the fortnightly cattle market.” (November 1, 1862). The breakaway farmers made an application to the Corn Exchange Company for permission to hold the Monday market in the Corn Exchange. The answer to the application is not recorded in the newspapers, but from an entry on 15 November one can draw the conclusion that the application was turned down. It says, “NEW WEEKLY CORN MARKET— The first meeting of those favourable to the holding of the weekly corn market in this town on Mondays took place on Monday last. The company which comprised fully fifty gentlemen assembled in the street outside the Corn Exchange, that building being closed to all parties except such as are willing to pay for its use, which was not done in this instance. We are not aware whether any transactions took place at the market, but as will be seen from our advertising columns, it has been resolved to repeat the experiment on Monday next.”

The following week a group of corn merchants, in all 42, came out in support of keeping the market on Saturdays. The breakaway farmers kept going for three weeks before they threw in the towel and admitted defeat. On the 29 November, an article appeared in the newspaper stating that simply by looking at the number of people who turned up for the Monday market it was obvious that the change was desired by only a small number, “and now that it has been fairly tested to the satisfaction of those wishing it, and found to be inexpedient, it is hoped that the usual harmony will prevail in regard to the Saturday market, and that both buyers and sellers may largely profit by a united adherence to the good old way.” Calm had been restored.

At the end of November, the United Order of Mechanics held a ball in the Corn Exchange in aid of a fund for the distressed operatives in Lancashire. The evening started with a procession through town. According to the *Berwick Advertiser* the procession was “a rather ludicrous display, in the shape of a torch-light procession, which, if it did not evince good taste, at least afforded considerable merriment to the great number of the inhabitant assembled to witness it.” ( November 29, 1862) The muster of the lodge took place at the Woolpack, owned by Mr. Lamb, as usual. This was followed by another march where “a number of boys, to whom it seemed to afford great pleasure to play fantastic tricks with their puny lights, which were occasionally extinguished by their pranks.” (ibid.) However, things calmed down and the procession proceeded with “becoming gravity and pomp to the top of Castlegate” before going on to the Corn Exchange, where 21 couples took part in the dancing, and the result of the evening was proceeds of £5 that was handed over to the relief committee.

More events took place in aid of the Lancaster Relief Fund, which was a nation-wide organization set up to relieve the many workers in the cotton mills in and around Lancashire who had lost their jobs. The Civil War in America had led to dwindling supplies for the cotton mills and to soaring prices due to fierce competition over what little supply of cotton was available. During the winter of 1862/63, a total of 431,395 people received relief—about 20 per cent of the population in the area concerned. This was, of course, a situation that the local system of poor relief could not cope with and hence the setting up of the Lancaster Relief Fund. At the beginning of February an amateur concert was given in the Corn Exchange and it was a huge success. “The attendance at the concert was one of largest and the most fashionable since the Corn Exchange was erected. A great improvement in the transmission of sound was effected by the erection of a neatly draped platform for the performers, surmounted by a graceful canopy, which gave

a pleasing effect to the entertainment.” One wonders if this improvement would have made Charles Dickens change his mind about the Corn Exchange. The concert consisted of a number of songs, duets, trios and choruses, all performed by people from the local community. Robert B. Weatherhead, solicitor, played the violin together with Master Patrick Weatherhead, and William Weatherhead on the violoncello, accompanied by Mrs. and Miss Weatherhead. Dr. Kirkwood played the flute. Miss Henderson and Miss M. Lowrey sang. The conductor was Mr. T. Rees Evans, organist at the parish church, who also sang and was “deservedly encored”. (February 14, 1863) The balance, after expenses had been paid, came to about £27, which was handed over to the relief committee.

In February, it was time for the AGM of the Corn Exchange Company. The company had made a profit but there was a problem. Mr. John Sessies, an architect from Edinburgh, had inspected the building and prepared a report, which stated that the roof was not in a satisfactory condition and needed further strengthening and support. This led the Chairman to remark “that it rested with the meeting to decide whether the balance, available as dividend, should be divided among the shareholders, or be carried to a reserve fund to meet any unforeseen expenses.” He went on “When the company was formed it was not contemplated that any great pecuniary advantage would arise from the undertaking, and circumstances had occurred which had absorbed the capital in a manner which had not been contemplated. They had paid a large sum for the site, and they had been unfortunate in the choice of a plan of the building, one more simple and less costly would have answered the purpose equally as well. All they could do now, however, was to make the best of it.” (February 14, 1863) It very much looked as if they had overstretched themselves. Also the problem of the sound was raised and it was suggested that some portable erection for better sound transmission should be looked into. No decision was taken about the roof.

The big event in March was the Royal Wedding on the 10 March, 1863, when the future King Edward VII married Princess Alexandra. A whole day of rejoicing and demonstrations was planned involving everybody from the Rifle Volunteers to the local school children, who were to be given oranges and buns. Athletic exercises took place in the Magdalen Field, and a banquet at the King’s Arms Hotel was also held. The Rifle Volunteers were to celebrate over a glass of wine at the Barracks, followed by athletic exercises, the other way round might perhaps have been better. Even the inmates of the Workhouse were to have an extra dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, and the heads of families receiving out-door relief were to receive sixpence per head in additional relief. The Corn Exchange was to be illuminated, paid for by subscription, as was the Scotchgate, and at six o’clock a soiree



followed by a ball was to take place at the Corn Exchange.

Later on in March Dr. Mark and His Little Men gave an entertainment in the Corn Exchange. The varied programme of music, both singing and instrumental, was well received by the audience. However, the *Berwick Advertiser* found it appropriate to make the following comment: “We would direct the attention of Dr. Mark, however, to the want of order among his little men while before an audience. In some instances the undisciplined conduct attracted particular attention, and had a tendency to mar the general harmony of the entertainment. However much they may be ‘well up’ in their various parts, and accordingly deserving of public support, they do not gain upon an audience by their general conduct on the platform.” (March 21, 1863)

The Berwick and Norham and Islandshire Turnpikes saw a considerable improvement in the prices obtained for the various turnpikes compared to the previous year. The rise amounted to £309. The total rent was £3,385.

There were quite a number of auctions of properties during the last half of 1863. On 31 October no less than 11 lots were being advertised as being auctioned off at the Corn Exchange by Mr. James D. Purves on 9 November.

In February, 1864, it was time for the AGM. In spite of the predicted expense of having the roof repaired, if it was repaired, the net profit had gone up from £62 14s 9½d in 1863 to £104 9s 11d in 1864, which meant that the Directors recommended the meeting to declare a dividend of 4½ per cent.

Also in February it was announced that the eminent Scottish vocalist Mr. Kennedy would appear at the Corn Exchange for one night only. This one night appearance followed a highly successful London season of more than one hundred nights at the Hanover Square Rooms, the Egyptian Hall, and the Music Hall, Store Street. Apparently the Scottish songs went down very well with the audience. The *Berwick Advertiser* wrote: “Seldom have we listened with greater pleasure to the rendering of Scotland’s national airs than on the occasion referred to. Mr. Kennedy was in good voice, and he sang with such skill and pathetic feeling as to ensure the appreciation and hearty laudits of the large assemblage.” (March 5, 1864)

Art and science was combined in what was called a grand intellectual treat, it was “Professor Groove’s splendid, mechanical and picturesque diorama of the Holy Land and theatre of arts, animated with wonderful moving figures! The only exhibition of this kind in Great Britain. The whole accompanied with appropriate

music.” (April 23, 1864)

The entertainment was well reviewed. Professor Groove had not visited Berwick for over 30 years, but “it affords the professor much pleasure on the present occasion, after so long a period, to renew his acquaintances, and to take up his quarters with his former landlady Mrs. Bolam.” (April 23, 1864) There was apparently no end to the fantastic things Professor Grove could entertain with. There was a French mechanical figure who exhibited wonderful elasticity of action in dancing, leaping and running. There was a spectacle of the Deluge or Noah’s Flood, also representation of Captain Ross’s voyage to the North Pole in search of Sir John Franklin and an allegorical representation of the four seasons. One might however wonder about the success of the show as prices were halved for the last five nights.

In August there was another sale of property, it was “All those desirable freehold premises, situated in Bridge Street, lately occupied by Mr. Joseph Milburn, grocer and fish dealer, deceased.” (August 13, 1864)

In October of the same year another “almost original” Christy’s Minstrels group appeared in Berwick. According to *The Berwick Advertiser* “The performers are designated ‘the celebrated and original New Orleans coloured opera troupe’ and are stated to approach nearer in their performances to the original Christy’s Minstrels, than any company now extant.” (October 22, 1864)

The entertainment was a success in spite of some of the entertainers suffering from bad colds, and “On Wednesday evening the latter part of the entertainment was somewhat marred by the unrestrained mirth of a woman who appeared to be exhilarated from other than natural causes.” (October 29, 1864)

A number of auctions took place towards the end of 1864. In November some houses were advertised for sale in Church Street, and about a month later some dwelling houses and building sites in Spittal, near the mouth of the Tweed. The houses and building sites were situated around Main Street, Spa Well and Cow Road. Finally a number of dwelling houses in Palace Street were to be auctioned off at the end of December.

At the beginning of the new year yet another Christy’s Minstrels appeared in Berwick. The announcement was accompanied by a special notice and caution to the public which said “The immense success which has attended this troupe (since its arrival in England in 1857) having induced various unprincipled persons to

assume the title, and (in many instances) even taking the name of the company. The public are respectfully cautioned against these imposters, and also to note that Messrs. Wilson & Montagne are no longer connected with the company.” (January 6, 1865)

The Volunteers’ Concert and Ball at the beginning of February was attended by about 300 persons. It took place in a hall decorated for the occasion, the volunteers were all in uniform, and consisted of the usual combination of entertainment followed by the dancing.

In February, 1865, the annual meeting of The Berwick Corn Exchange took place, and once again the spectre of the bad condition of the roof appeared, so even though there was a net profit of just over £92, and altogether the sum available as dividend was £106, the Directors recommended to the meeting not to pay out any, but rather save it for any emergencies which might occur. The emergency which might occur was of course the roof. The *Berwick Advertiser* writes on 10 February: “They were all aware that the roof of the building was not in a satisfactory state. Some time ago the Directors in their report brought the matter before the shareholders and also obtained the opinion of an eminent architect as to the best mode of remedying the defect. The Directors had not hitherto seen their way to act upon that report, but they were perfectly aware that at some time or other, and probably at no distant date, they would have to face the necessity which would arise of repairing the roof. The Directors, therefore, thought it would be a much more reasonable method to retain the profit in hand to meet any emergencies rather than divide them and probably afterwards have to go to the shareholders for funds to cover the expenses of the repair.”

Later the same month The Hen and Chickens, situated in Sandgate, was put up for sale. The premises “are to be sold in consequence of the death of the late proprietor.” (February 17, 1865), who was Mr. Edwin Walker. The following week the sale took place in the Corn Exchange. There was quite a bit of interest, but nevertheless, even though the amount of £605 was offered it did not reach the reserve price, and was not sold. Another attempt was made in early March to either sell or let it. Whether this attempt was successful or not is not mentioned.

The Berwick and Norham and Islandshires Turnpikes held their annual meeting in March, and at the same time they let the turnpikes, this time for a period of three years. All the gates were put up in one lot, and Mr. Thomas Bower, Hunslet, Leeds, offered £3,705 and the tolls were let to him for the three years. The price of the letting had increased by £54 from the previous year.

In June 1865 an entertainment of Phrenology and Mesmerism by Mr. F. Montegue was announced. Apparently the so-called entertainment failed to draw in the crowds. On 30 June, 1865, The *Berwick Advertiser* reviewing the evening wrote "The audiences were not very numerous. Mr. Montegue gave a lecture on the sciences which he advocates, and afterwards invited individuals from the audiences, upon whom he illustrated his remarks. On Saturday evening, two only of those who volunteered to go on the platform were found susceptible of mesmeric influences, and with them Mr. Montegue amused the company for a considerable time, and apparently to the satisfaction of all."

In July, there was an emergency meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Co. Ltd. Again the reason for the meeting was the condition of the roof. It was decided to undertake the work of repairing the roof immediately. It was to be secured with iron ties, and re-slatted, and it was also decided to reduce the size of the plate glass one half. The entire cost was estimated to be less than £300 and there was £170 in hand.

In September of the same year, the auctioneer Mr. Allan Purves offered for sale by public auction, "All that large and commodious mansion, standing in its own grounds, with the park, vinery, coach house, stables, and other appurtenances, situated in Palace Street, Berwick-upon-Tweed, formerly the property of William Riddle, Esq., deceased, and at present occupied by Captain Jackson, R.N. The house contains three public rooms, nine bed and dressing rooms besides kitchens, cellars and servants' apartments, the whole being in excellent repair." (September 15, 1865) This must have been the Governor's Palace. The auction, however, was not a success. The biddings reached £1,200, but were bought in at £1,600.

## *1866 - 1875*

In January, 1866, the Rifle Volunteers were inspected in the Corn Exchange by Adjutant Northcote, who used the occasion to introduce the volunteers to their new commander Captain Douglass, who had taken over from Captain Ramsey when he had been obliged to resign.

The first musical highlight of the year was when the famous Mademoiselle Titiens appeared for the first time ever in the Corn Exchange. Mademoiselle Titiens was described by what was called a contemporary as "a lady who without disparagement to her contemporaries may be said to be at the head of her

profession.” (February 9, 1866) Her first appearance had taken place in her native Hamburg at the age of 15, and her three months long appearance in London in 1858 had firmly established her as star. However, in the announcement of the concert on 9 February, 1866, it says: “In order to bring this grand concert within the reach of all, the prices on this occasion will be reduced to, reserved seats, 5s; gallery, 3s; and back seats, 3s.” The advertisement goes on: “Upon the success of this concert will depend Mr. Evans’ scale of charges for the future. He trusts, therefore, to receive the liberal support of all classes.” Mr. T. Rees Evans was clearly not only an organist but also a businessman.

A major sale of property in Spittal took place on 29 March 1866. The auction was organised by Mr. Allan Purves and included houses, premises and a large piece of vacant ground, all of which had belonged to Mr. George Carr who had died. In all there were five lots, all situated on the east side of the Main Street of Spittal.

At an extraordinary general meeting of the Berwick Shipping Company in the Corn Exchange in March, a dividend of no less than 15 per cent, or 30s per share, was declared. This to our ears today fantastic dividend was apparently made possible by the Company having decided against the introduction of steam communication with London.

On the 29 June, 1866, another auction of properties in Spittal took place in the Corn Exchange. In this case the properties involved were among others “Tweed Cottage” and the adjoining “Tyneside Cottage.”

A Berwick Grammar School bazaar was planned for July 31, 1866, in the Corn Exchange. The money raised at the bazaar was to go towards an extension and improvement of the Berwick Grammar School. The sum of about £1500 had already been raised, but a considerably larger sum was required to carry out the project. There seems to be some confusion about the date of the bazaar, as an article appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser* on July 27 reviewing the bazaar. Not only that, it also turned out that the money collected was not only to go towards improvement and extension of the Grammar School, but to re-locate it. A site had been bought in Palace Street at a cost of £1,550. The sale of the Grammar School buildings in the High Street had brought in £1,000, and to show his dedication to the project the Rev. W. Mirrielees, Headmaster of the school, had offered to sacrifice part of his salary towards paying off the mortgage that they would have to take out within the prescribed time. A committee of local ladies volunteered to arrange the bazaar, and set up stalls around the hall in the Corn Exchange. “The bazaar opened at twelve, after which visitors began to arrive slowly. The

attendance of people from the country was not so large as had been anticipated; probably owing to the very wet weather of the previous day and night, and its unpromising appearance on the morning of the bazaar.” (July 27, 1866) Apart from the usual stalls selling ornamental articles, there was also a flower stall, “the flower stall was soon cleared, and a post office, neatly and attractively fitted up, received a large amount of patronage.” (July 27, 1866) Other activities were going on, “In an upper room of the Corn Exchanger, Messrs. W. and P. Weatherhead exhibited a number of dissolving views every half-hour.” (ibid.) The total amount received for admission during the day was over £15, and the sales and other sources amounted to upward of £140.

At the Berwick Gas Company’s annual meeting of the shareholders in July, 1866, a number of problems were mentioned. The price of coal had gone up by about 15 per cent over the last year, leading to £200 more being spent on buying coal than the year before, and all indications predicted that the same would be the case next year. On top of the rising coal prices they also had to face increases in the pay of the workmen. To increase the misery, they had lost a cargo of coal, and this loss had to be deducted from the profit of the company as they were their own insurers, which must have meant that they were not insured. Apparently they had learned their lesson and decided to insure all cargoes coming in by sea in future. In spite of all the bad news the company was still able to offer a dividend of 10 per cent. At the meeting the previous year it had been, “unanimously agreed that the annual dinner of the company should be given up. It was generally admitted among all limited companies that money spent in feasting was not properly spent.” (July 20, 1866) One dissenting voice among the directors was Mr. G. Young who “thought there should have been a dinner. He did not care for one himself, but it was the only way in which they could recompense the directors for their trouble. He thought it was a great pity that it had been arranged not to have a dinner.” (ibid.)

The Eastern Border Horticultural Society had been re-established in 1865. The Mayor, J.W. Ruddock, was the President, and the second competitive exhibition was held in the Corn Exchange in September 1866. The object of the society was “while affording all classes opportunities of acquiring or gratifying a love of flowers, to promote the successful cultivation of the best kinds of fruit, flowers, and vegetables, and disseminate a knowledge of the improvements successively being made in the practice of horticulture.” (September 7, 1866) The exhibition was declared a vast improvement compared with the exhibition of the previous year. Numerous prizes were awarded to a vast array of flowers, fruit and vegetables. The list of prizes amounts to no less than five full pages in the *Berwick Advertiser*. The awarding of prizes was however not without controversy. It is

reported in the newspaper that “A lot of seedling pansies raised by Messrs. Waite Brothers of the Hope Nurseries, and grown by Mr. Robert Moffat, Berwick Cemetery, were awarded a prize of 5s; and a dozen of these pansies were shown in a stand and gained the silver medal given by the Sheriff. This latter decision of the judges, we understand, was protested against by Mr. George Wilson, Dunse. The dispute will probably be decided at the first meeting of the Committee.” (ibid.) A band from the Northumberland Artillery Militia entertained people during the afternoon with a variety of popular music.

The autumn saw a number of concerts being held in the Corn Exchange, among them another visit by the original Christy Minstrels. Apparently one of the new features in the programme was the so-called Negro “tall-talk” between the numbers, in which “bones” and “tambourine” figured prominently. The versatile comic vocalist also appeared at the Corn Exchange to a large audience, and as usual the event of the season was the annual amateur and volunteers’ ball, which took place on December 18. Just before Christmas, Professor Millar appeared at the Corn Exchange for five nights in a show called “Song, Mirth, and Magic.” He had apparently spent some years in America and appeared together with his wife and a comic singer called Dan Cooke, together with a number of trained birds. Mrs. Millar, however, only appeared at the last two performances due to indisposition. The audiences at the entertainments were somewhat lower than expected, especially as the entertainment included prizes at the value of £75 being given away, the prizes included purses of money, gold and silver watches and silk dresses.

1867 started off on a sombre note. At the beginning of January an amateur concert was held in the Corn Exchange in aid of the sufferers of a colliery explosion. The audience was not as large as one would have expected, probably due to the very cold weather and the fact that it was known that there was no heating apparatus in the Corn Exchange, only a stove, which had been kept burning for two days to try to warm up the hall. The concert was organized by Mr. Rees Evans, and consisted, as was often the case at these kinds of concerts, of a sacred part followed by a secular one. Even though the performers do not seem to have been paid, and the sale of tickets amounted to £35 5s, only £20 was left for the relief of the sufferers of the explosion after expenses had been paid.

The cold weather continued and at the Matthew Brothers Minstrels entertainment at the end of January “the consequent cold state of the hall, the attendances were small.” (January 25, 1867)

At the annual meeting of the shareholders of the Berwick Corn Exchange Co. Ltd. held at the beginning of February the financial difficulties the shareholders were facing were still there. In the report to the shareholders it said “a further sum of £141 3s 10d expended on the alteration of the roof, which your directors trust will have the desired effect of preventing further breakage of glass, and altogether rendering it more substantial and permanent. But for this expense, yet necessary alteration, your directors would have had the pleasure of recommending a dividend during the last two years, and they sincerely trust that next year they will be in a position more favorable to the ordinary shareholders, who are legitimately entitled to a fair percentage for the money advanced in promoting the original objects of the company.” (February 8, 1867) This was at a time when other companies paid dividends of up to 15 per cent.

In the same month the world of art came to Berwick. T. Buchanan announced that a painting by Gourlay Steell Esq., R.S.A., called “A cottage bedside at Osborne”, depicting the Queen reading the scripture to a sick fisherman, would be on view for a few days at the Long Room of the Corn Exchange. To emphasize the importance of the painting the advertisement in the *Berwick Advertiser* includes quotes from other newspapers. In one of them from *The Daily Review* it says among other things “that the perfection of art is to conceal art.”

In March 1867 the idea of establishing a local museum was aired. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, and the decision was taken to start a museum for the town and district. The area to be covered by the museum was to be from Lammermoor in the north to the Cheviot Hills in the west and the Farne Islands on the coast. It was emphasized that all classes, including the working classes, would benefit from getting involved in the museum. Another meeting was held in April where some temporary rules for the museum were drawn up, one of the reasons for this was to establish the conditions for membership of the museum: 2s 6d were to be paid by working men, and 5s by all others, and family tickets at 5s and 10s respectively. The next point was to find a suitable location for the museum. The Sheriff reported that he had been in contact with the Corn Exchange and found out that the room on the left of the entrance of the Corn Exchange, or the large room upstairs could be rented for the purpose of the museum, adding, however, that he did not know the rent. The meeting seems to have been carried away by the apparent enthusiasm for the museum and it was suggested that a separate building housing the museum could be built, but the sum of £400 needed to do this was, of course, not there. Later on in April it was announced that the following office bearers had been appointed: The Mayor J. Purves as President; the Vicar Rev. J.G. Rowe as Vice President; the Sheriff R. Douglass as Treasurer; and Messrs. John Scott and Thos.



Patrick as secretaries. In connection with the membership fees it was announced that a donation of 5 guineas would constitute a life membership. Donations in terms of things to be exhibited in the museum should be brought to the Corn Exchange.

All of Berwick and district seem to have entered the quest for donations of things to the museum with great enthusiasm. Again and again articles occur in the newspapers thanking people for their donations. At the beginning of October the Committee announced that they are now ready to receive specimens and object. The items that appeared were truly amazing: a joint of a whale's tail found in the foundation of a house in Berwick; a spur found on the south side of Halidon Hill; a log of wood with initials cut on the bark when the tree was young (a great curiosity); 2 rare fish in a dried state; a native sponge; 2 needles from Franklin's last vessel; a seal found in digging the foundation of Berwick railway station; a piece of log picked up in the Bay of Biscay showing the destructive power of the ship-worm; a huge number of coins as well as stuffed birds; a rare and interesting fish and a cocoa nut; a petrified piece of moss; a piece of stone from one of the 7 churches of Asia contributed by Mr. Johnson, a seaman from Tweedmouth; a piece of stone from the temple of Minerva; a piece of lava from Vesuvius; and an oil lamp from the foot of Calvary. However, in my mind, none of the donations can compete with a piece of the Alps—sadly no longer to be seen in the museum.

On 13 December a very interesting suggestion appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser*: "Memorials of the past—we have been asked to make the following suggestion to the Committee of the Museum. Our correspondent says –'There are many nooks and corners of the borough which might be photographed and hung around the walls of the rooms, showing the town as it was in bygone days. It is a pity, for instance, that the old erections in Sandgate, where now stands the Corn Exchange, should not have been so represented. A more artistic corner never existed. The view might have included the 'Golden Swan', formerly known as the 'Ravelled (or Foul) Anchor' the 'Fisherman's Arms' and where the library now is the public house known as the 'Bee Hive', or properly the 'Bee Shop.' These have passed away, but in Tweedmouth you still have such bits of painting as the 'Thatched Tavern'- a house built for a public house before the old bridge was erected, and where the masons employed obtained their refreshment daily. These are memorials of the past which might well be preserved by the art of photography".

The entertainment function of the Corn Exchange was not neglected. On 2 May, Tom Thumb and his diminutive wife, Commodore Nutt, and Minnie Warren appeared at the Corn Exchange. They gave two performances consisting of songs,

dances, duets etc. The four “living miniatures” drove from their hotel to the Corn Exchange in a miniature equipage drawn by what was said to be the smallest ponies in the world. In connection with the entertainment there would also be an exhibition of the rich, rare and valuable presents given to them by some of the crowned heads of Europe. As a special treat at the morning entertainment they appeared in their rich and costly costumes that they wore when they appeared in front of Queen Victoria.

Another type of entertainment appeared at the Corn Exchange for two nights in June. The celebrated American artist, vocalist, lecturer, musician, traveller and composer Washington Friend had returned to England after an absence of six years with an entirely new show. According to the newspaper the entertainment consists of “great panorama, (the most beautiful paintings in the world), accurately depicting life and scenes in America, including the Rocky Mountains, the Falls of Niagara, and the river Saguenay, (never before illustrated), with appropriate songs, anecdotes, music and lecture.” (June 7, 1867) This kind of performance may seem to us a strange mixture of entertainment and education, but it also gives us an indication about the desire to hear and learn about foreign countries that most people would never see.

The newspaper review the following week is generally positive in terms of Mr. Friend’s performance, the only criticism is “The Corn Exchange being lighted from the roof, and daylight predominating over gaslight these circumstances in a measure detract from the effect of the panorama, which would have been seen to greater advantage had the hall been more darkened.” (June 14, 1868) So not only was the glass roof a financial problem and burden, it also seems to have limited the effectiveness of certain kinds of performances.

There were other problems brewing. The subscription library, housed in the Corn Exchange, was in trouble. At a meeting of the promoters and subscribers to the library only a few people turned up which prompted Alexander Robertson, who presided at the meeting to say “that, considering the small number who had attended the meeting, the result of it would, he thought, be anything but creditable to the intelligence and spirit of the town.” (August 2, 1867) Membership was dwindling, the expected number for the following year was set at no more than 35, which would not even enable them to cover expenses, not to mention buying new books and periodicals for the library. So the painful conclusion was that the affairs of the library had to be wound up and the library closed down, and this was carried out at a consequent meeting, where the Committee was given the job of doing this.

At the end of the month a Grand Bazaar was announced to take place in the Corn Exchange. It was held in connection with Ancroft Moor Church and the money raised was to be spent on “the laudable object of advancing education.” (August 30, 1867)

On 22 November, it was announced that “The westernmost half comprising 3 rooms of that dwelling house, with a stable and small garden behind the same, in occupation of Messrs. George Forrest, John Nurse, and Richard Whillis, pleasantly situated in the Parade, Berwick, and next to the Parish Church”, was going to be sold by public auction in the Corn Exchange. This must be one of the two houses that were situated where the present Vicarage is, and which were demolished in the 1920s.

Things were looking up for the Berwick Shipping Company. At their annual general meeting in November, 1867, the directors’ report recommended a dividend of no less than 20 per cent – this was a consequence of the supply and demand of salmon. The quantity caught was down considerably but demand was strong, hence high prices.

The great English tenor, Sims Reeves (1821-1900) made his first appearance in Berwick in November, 1867. “The Corn Exchange was selected as being the largest room in town, and the attendance was more numerous than we have seen at any previous entertainment. The reserved seats were all filled, so was the gallery, and very little space in any part of the large hall was left unoccupied.” (November 29, 1867) Expectations were, of course, high, but the planning on part of the organizers seems to have been somewhat wanting. “There seemed to have been some difficulty in fixing upon a programme, as neither the one at first generally circulated, nor that supplied with the tickets, was followed, but a programme with the words of the song, supplied in the room at the charge of a penny each, was adopted. This, we think, was scarcely fair to the purchasers of tickets.” (ibid.) There was a general disappointment with the performance, both with Mr. Sims Reeves himself, and the other singers appearing at the concert. Mr. Reeves seemed to lack sympathy, and his choice of songs was not appreciated, monotonous ballads led to encores, which were not merited. At the end of the concert when a glee sung by the performers was to conclude the evening “Mr. Sims Reeves unaccountably did not make his appearance. He came out of the retiring room with the others, and being seen from the gallery behind the screen, a vigorous attempt was made to get him to mount the platform, but without effect, and his refusal to take part in the glee naturally some gave umbrage to the large party who had in great measure been attracted to the entertainment by the influence of his great name.” (ibid.) So the

disappointment seems to have been shared by those giving the concert as well as those attending it.

A quick visit to the Continent could easily be fixed. In December 1867 Mr. Hamilton paid his first visit to Berwick with his "Hamilton's Excursions to the Continent and back within two hours, visiting France, Prussia, Italy, Switzerland and the Rhine." (December 20, 1867) To increase the sense of travelling Mr. H. Andre was their guide on the trip and prices for the illuminated exhibition were quoted as prices for 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. The following week Hamilton's Diorama received very positive mention in the newspapers, and everybody who had not yet seen it was urged to do so. "Starting from Folkstone to Antwerp, some of the most interesting places on the Continent are visited, and the description of them affords both pleasure and information. The scenes represent both day and night-time, and various aspects of beauty, storm and desolation. An efficient band of music contributed much to the entertainment." (December 27, 1867) As a sign of concern for other less fortunate people than himself Mr. Hamilton visited the Master of the Workhouse and invited all the inmates to visit the diorama, which they were highly pleased with, and thoroughly enjoyed.

At the AGM of the Corn Exchange Company held at the beginning of February, 1868, a positive picture was painted of the financial situation of the company and the directors felt that they could recommend a dividend of 3 per cent. As Mr. P. Clay had died during the past year his son John Clay was elected to replace him. In the Secretary's report he stated "that the rents of the company were improving: every stall in the Corn Exchange was let, and it would be a matter for the consultation of the directors whether or not more stalls might not be erected. It was also stated that several gentlemen attended the Corn Exchange who ought to occupy stalls." (February 7, 1868) This would seem to mean that some people were trying to ply their trade in the Corn Exchange without renting a stall, which would lead to unfair competition as their costs would be lower than the people who paid their rents.

Sometimes activities would be moved outside the actual building of the Corn Exchange. The following auction of agricultural implements and machinery was announced to take place outside. "Several new machines and instruments and implements (being the surplus stock in that department of Messrs. Wilson & Son, Ironmongers), including patent turnip slicer, Bentall's root pulper, Howard's swing plough, 2 double drill ploughs, oil-cake breakers, guano crusher, strawcutter, 3 grubbers, zig-zag harrows, small weighing machine, all well worth the attention of agriculturalists and others." (March 6, 1868)

In March 1868 Professor Millar gave an entertainment in Berwick again for one night only. In the advertisement it said among other things that “the world-renowned illusionist, has the honour to announce that he will give his wonderful, extraordinary, mysterious, terrific, marvellous, exciting, surprising, and curious entertainment, introducing the greatest budget of wonders ever witnessed, among which will be the SPHYNX, or living speaking head without a body! The dead bird restored to life!” (March 13, 1868) On top of that gifts and money would be given away and there was to be a competition to find the best comic singer, the best concertina player and the best dancer. The competition was open to all residents of Berwick, and the prizes were a silver watch worth £3, a splendid concertina, and a purse containing half a guinea. Some of the gifts that were to be given away by two well-known and responsible gentlemen of Berwick, selected by the audience, could be seen at Mr. Rankin’s Bootmaker, in the High Street, the Saturday beforehand. The entertainment was a great success. 1,200 people turned up, a great number of them probably attracted by the numerous presents. Nine people had signed up for the competitions and winners were duly found. Previous to distributing the gifts Professor Millar introduced the speaking head without a body “which was viewed with no little interest and wonder.” (March 20, 1868)

In connection with the AGM of the Berwick and Norham and Islandshire Turnpikes in March, 1868, an auction was again held of the tolls of the several toll gates in the trust. The three-year period of the letting of all the toll gates would expire in May, and the toll gates were offered to be let in one lot for two years at a price of £3,700 per annum. In spite of the good number of people present nobody bid. The problem seemed to be that the present takers were losing money under their lease. Attempts to put the tolls up separately and for one year only did not lead to any offers being made either, and the tolls were not let. After the auction a deal was struck with the present taker, Mr. Thomas Bower, Leeds. The annual rent was reduced to £3,650 from £3,705 on condition that Mr. Bower would forego his claim on the trustees for compensation for loss sustained at Castlegate Toll owing to the stoppage of Whiteadder Bridge (locally known as Canty’s Bridge). It would seem that the stoppage mentioned must have been due to the fact that a new Whiteadder Bridge was opened in 1868, so presumably there would have been a period where the traffic had to find other ways to get into Berwick.

In some cases there seemed to be very little to redeem an entertainment, as this review indicates: “Concert—the ‘Grand comic concert and Ethiopian entertainment’, announced for Monday evening last, took place in the Corn Exchange. We understand the attendance was miserable, and the performance as a

whole was very poor. The only attractive part was the dancing of a young amateur.” (May 15, 1868) It is not clear if the dancing amateur was one of the group of entertainers, or one of the audience who thought (s)he would improve things by joining in.

In October, 1868, Miss Helen Kirk, among others, gave a very successful concert in the Corn Exchange, the attendance was large, and every performer was received with the expected enthusiasm, and several encores were given. Until “Mr. MacLagan sang ‘MacGregors’ Gathring’, and replied to the encore by giving ‘The Life-buoy’. He then sang ‘Captain Jinks’, acknowledging the encore with ‘Bess’ Bitter Beer’, in the singing of which he was interrupted by the appearance of a rat in the room, which put the audience into commotion.” (October 16, 1868)

A general decline in the quality of the entertainments performed in the Corn Exchange seemed to have taken place. This notice appeared in the newspaper in October, 1868: “Christy’s Minstrels—the only real and original Christy’s Minstrels gave an entertainment in the Corn Exchange on Monday night. The attendance was small, and the performances of the company, numbering eight, were barely satisfactory. The audience got impatient during the first part of the programme, which was hurried through. The second part, which was promised to be of a comic nature, was no great improvement, some of the pieces being executed in a manner altogether ludicrous. The proceedings of the evening formed a contrast to what has been recently been heard from distinguished artistes in the same hall.” (October 23, 1868)

The Turnpike Company might have had problems letting the turnpikes, but when it came to appointing a surveyor of the turnpike roads in the trust, interest soared. The trustees held a meeting in the Corn Exchange at the beginning of October, 1868, to appoint the new surveyor from the day of appointment till 12 May, 1870. No fewer than 19 candidates were interested, 11 local ones and 8 strangers. At the meeting it was decided that “Mr. P. D. Brown, Edinburgh, appeared from his testimonials to possess the best qualifications for the post and the meeting adjourned in order to give the opportunity of seeing the gentleman referred to.” (October 9, 1868) Apparently Mr. Brown passed muster and he was duly appointed at the New Gaol, after having confirmed that he was willing to keep a horse and reside within the limits of the trust. The annual salary was £80.

The world-renowned Siamese Twins re-visited Berwick at the beginning of 1869. (They had last visited the town in 1830). They stayed at the King’s Arms Hotel, from where they were driven to the Corn Exchange in a carriage with drawn

blinds, so only those who were willing to pay for admission would be able to see them. Apparently all they did was to circulate and talk to people and answer any questions they might have. The newspaper commented: "These wonderful living curiosities, who have so long excited the wonder and astonishment of the world, are now on their way to Paris to subject themselves to the critical and perhaps fatal operation of surgical separation. This they have long held in contemplation, and now, having reached the rapid decline of life [they were 57 years old], and fully conscious that, by the unchangeable laws of nature, a very brief period is allotted them on earth, have finally decided to submit to the trying ordeal, whatever may be the result." (January 29, 1869) In any case, the operation did not happen, as the twins died, still co-joined, in the US in 1874.

At the AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange in February, 1869, the dividend was set at 3.5 per cent. It was also announced that one of the directors Mr. G. Smith had died during the previous year and Mr. George Black, Ford Forge, was elected as his replacement.

On 22 February, 1869, Professor Millar gave a farewell concert in Berwick prior to his departure for America. It was the usual extravaganza, with competitions, entertainment and the giving away of valuable articles to the audience.

In May the beginning of the new season was announced "Berwick Museum will reopen for the season on Thursday 27th instant. Admission 1d. Several valuable additions have been made." (May 21, 1869)

1869 seems to have been a fairly quiet year for the Corn Exchange. There was a higher number of auctions of items like household furniture and agricultural machinery and implements which could perhaps have been a sign of a slump in the economy. Even the Berwick Shipping Company seemed to be struggling. At their AGM in December 1869 a mere 5 per cent was paid out in dividend, compared to 15 per cent a few years earlier. The reason for this was that the company had used money from the sale of a clipper schooner to buy additional salmon fishings, so that they either owned or leased the whole of the fishings from the mouth of the Tweed to the Whiteadder. However, as it had been one of the worst salmon fishing seasons for many years and prices had stayed low.

In January 1870 Steph. Sanderson, Clerk to the Harbour Commission, announced that an auction would take place, led by Mr. J. D. Purves, of all those large and commodious premises situated on the Quay in Berwick-upon-Tweed, at present used as a blacksmith's shop and shed, and occupied by Messrs. Gladstone & Co.

In February, the AGM of the Corn Exchange Company took place and the dividend was set at 3.5 per cent. It was announced that the death of David Logan of Ferneycastle meant that a new Chairman of the Directors had to be elected, however, there is no evidence in the newspaper article that this actually took place.

In March Japanese entertainment came to Berwick in the shape of the great Fusi Yama Japanese troupe from the court of the most powerful Daimo (or prince) of Japan, Prince Satuma. The programme consisted of things like top spinning, Japanese magic and juggling, fire eating, sword-swallowing and lamp tricks. The entertainment was for one night only and expectations were high. On the night “there was a very large attendance, the door having been besieged by a crowd eagerly pressing to obtain admission about a quarter of an hour before the hour appointed for commencing.” (March 11, 1870) The reserved and front seats were occupied by local ladies and gentlemen. “There were also a great many in the back part of the hall, and shortly before the entertainment began, those behind took advantage of the temporary nature of the partition between them and those who occupied the second seats, by knocking down the barrier, thus creating some confusion in the midst of which many of them secured positions more favourable for sight-seeing.” (ibid.) The whole entertainment went down very well, especially the top spinning—making a top spin on the edge of a sword was watched with great interest, but the fire eating trick was considered to be old hat. The entertainment was interspersed with three Japanese ladies singing and dancing in the Japanese style this “did not accord with English notions, and gave rise to more astonishment and amusement than admiration.” (ibid.)

Shortly after this, Professor Millar, the world-renowned illusionist, was back in Berwick, after his trip to America, with an entirely new entertainment. New it might have been, but it seemed to work along well-known patterns. A lot of presents were to be given away, from gold rings to gold watches and silk dresses and a cottage piano valued at £30. There was also a competitive contest to encourage local talent: “a magnificent gold watch will be given to the best comic singer, and a silver cup to the best sentimental singer; a large silver-plated goblet will be given to the best dancer, a silver-plated teapot will be given to the gentleman bringing the largest number of ladies to the entertainment”. (March 25, 1870)

In spite of this the entertainment was only a moderate success “The hall was well filled. The entertainment was similar to those previously given by Professor Millar in Berwick, and the tricks were greeted with rounds of applause and various other



noises. Madame Millar, who had been announced to sing during the evening, did not make her appearance". (April 1, 1870)

On 27 May, 1870, a public meeting was held in the Corn Exchange. Its aim was to decide on the best course for continuing steam communication by sea between Berwick and London. A committee was appointed and a new meeting was arranged for 1 June. If this meeting took place it was not in the Corn Exchange.

In August the "lately erected and pleasantly situated dwelling home at the foot of Sandgate, Berwick-upon-Tweed, at present in the occupation of Mr. John Beveridge" (August 5, 1870), was auctioned off by Mr. Strother. "The property was put up at £200, and after a spirited competition between two gentlemen, it was sold to Mr. James Gilroy, High Street, for £335." (ibid.)

In September it was announced that an evening concert was to take place under the leadership of Mr. Anderson, who had been in charge of a very successful Choral Union concert the previous spring. There is a hint at the Corn Exchange not quite living up to its alleged suitability as a concert venue. "There will be means taken to overcome the natural disadvantages of the Corn Exchange as a concert hall, and we have no doubt the arrangements in this as every other aspect will be such as to give satisfaction to the audience." (September 23, 1870) The concert, which took place on 29 September, was a great success and "Mr. Anderson's arrangements of the seats and his attempts to improve the acoustic properties of the hall were very satisfactory, and he deserves great credit for a very pleasant evening, which everyone present must have enjoyed." (September 30, 1870)

At the end of October it was announced that on 2 November, 1870 the Provincial Tour of Madame Bodda Pyne (late Miss Louisa Pyne), the English soprano and late manageress of the Royal English Opera, Covent Garden, would give a Grand Operatic and Ballad Concert in the Corn Exchange. The main attraction was, of course, Madame Bodda Pyne herself even though as it was said in the newspaper "her best days have gone". The audience was large and fashionable, and the only complaint at the concert was that those who sat in the reserved seats were "being provided with nothing better to sit upon than bare forms, without any support for the back." (November 4, 1870)

A different kind of entertainment visited Berwick the same month. Drake's Diorama exhibited for six days in the Corn Exchange. What could be seen was "scenes of interest on the overland route to India, and sights witnessed while

travelling in the east. Several nautical views are also shown, and the brilliant transformations of several of the scenes greatly enhance the entertainment. A historical and descriptive lecture is given by Mr. Drake. Miss Rose Percy presided at the piano and sings a selection of music in a very pleasing manner.” (November 18, 1870)

The Queen’s Minstrels, who had changed their name from Royal Original Christy’s after appearing in front of the Queen and court at Balmoral Castle and been honoured by the patronage of the Queen and court, the nobility, gentry, and the clergy of nearly every denomination in the United Kingdom, appeared in the Corn Exchange at the end of November. The Queen’s Minstrels say about their programme “No vulgar absurdities, but high-class sentimental and comic concert, by gentlemanly entertainers, with blackened faces, greeted everywhere with roars of laughter, and salvos of applause. An inexhaustible, varied and attractive repertoire of the most original, the latest and greatest novelties in Negro minstrelsy.” (November 25, 1870)

On a more mundane level it was announced that The Berwick Border and Ornithological Association was to hold their first grand exhibition of cage and song birds in the Corn Exchange on 7 and 8 December.

Also in December the Japanese returned, although it was not the same troupe as had been there before but the Tycoon’s Private great Dragon troupe of Japanese performers. They gave three performances to fairly small audiences. Maybe people had not quite recovered from the Japanese ladies singing at the earlier visit by another Japanese troupe. There was, however, no reason to stay away on this occasion “The principle parts of the entertainment were: - The boy Tommy, who balances on a large tub, supported by seven smaller ones, these again being supported on Hansktchi’s feet; feats of posturing at the top of a long pole on the shoulder of Godai; dexterous performance on a single wire by a Japanese lady; the famous ladder balancing feat, never yet achieved by any other than the Japanese.” (December 2, 1870) The article ends with a severe criticism: “It seems very negligent on the part of those who are responsible for the management of the Corn Exchange, that the gas should have been almost unendurable during the exhibition. Owing, it would appear, to the defective nature of the burners, the gas was blazing up in an unusual manner, and was escaping in large quantities, to the great danger of those present. Surely it would not have been difficult to remedy so simple a defect”. (December 2, 1870) It is not hard to imagine what present day Health and Safety would have thought of this situation.

In December it was announced that a subscription ball was going to be held in the Corn Exchange on 19 December, and no fewer than 27 stewards were mentioned in the newspaper. The occasion was the annual show of fat stock of the Berwick Christmas Club. It was also mentioned that the committee organizing the ball intended to make it an annual event, and it seemed that no effort was going to be spared to make this a special occasion. The newspaper reported “We understand that the hall will be beautifully decorated, the boxes round the side screened off, and the floor made suitable for dancing. Part of the hall will be screened off and fitted up for card playing. The hall will be properly heated, and fires will be lighted in all the rooms. Retiring rooms for ladies will be fitted with every comfort and convenience . . . There can be little doubt of the success of this reunion. The elite of the district are expected to be present.” (December 16, 1870) Another practical measure to be made to ensure success of the evening that “We understand that the committee intend to cover the entire roof of the Corn Exchange, so as to effectually prevent rain escaping into the hall, should the weather be unfavourable. The improvement of the flooring for dancing is also under consideration. It has been decided to lay an entirely new flooring in a way that will greatly improve its elasticity, and render it better fitted to dance upon.” (ibid.) Obviously the big glass roof was still giving problems. About 200 people were expected to attend the ball.

Earlier in the month the annual Volunteers’ Ball took place in the Corn Exchange, and many people enjoyed themselves, watched by a large number in the gallery, and the dancing went on until almost five o’clock the following morning.

The first concert of the season given by the Choral Union took place in the Corn Exchange on 15 December. The concert was well received by the audience in spite of a few hitches pointed out in the review “The second part opened with ‘Hail, smiling morn’ which went a little unsteady, the time being too quick; neither did we approve of Mr. Anderson’s mode of beating in this glee, as he distinctly beat the common time mood instead of the triple, which has rather an awkward appearance in this well-known glee. It is a common trick in the art for singers to surprise their hearers by springing to the dominant in the second last note, which proved much too high for the treble, and in our opinion greatly marred the piece encored.” (December 16, 1870). The audience seemed to have been unaware of these technicalities and had a good time.

The AGM of the Corn Exchange Company took place in February 1871. Although not very well attended, it was decided to pay out a dividend of 3.5 per cent. Things seemed to be running quite smoothly, the only other decision, was to change the letting of the stalls from January to January instead of from July as had hitherto

been the case. This would take effect from January, 1872.

Two concerts took place at the beginning of 1871. One was a grand evening concert given by Madame Vaneri and her company. The programme consisted of mostly Scotch songs and ballads and La Marseillaise, here called a French war hymn. La Marseillaise seemed to be a frequent number on concert programmes. When the Berwick Tonic-Sol-Fa Association gave a concert in March, under the patronage of the Mayor A. Thompson and the Sheriff John Henderson, it appeared again, this time called the great French chant of liberty, together with the new patriotic song of Germany "Watch on the Rhine" by Heinrich Heine.

Towards the end of March it was announced that a public auction would take place in the Corn Exchange on 12 April. What was to be auctioned off was "That excellent front messuage or tenant, situated in Woolmarket, Berwick, now in the occupation of Mr. Taggard, Mr. Scott and others, and also those six back messuages or tenants, immediately behind the above-mentioned premises, occupied by Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Nesbitt, and others, and also, those two messuages or tenant at the top of the yard, belonging to the said premises with the small garden in front, now or late in the occupation of Mr. Stafford and Mr. Richardson, belonging to the late Alexander Christison". (March 24, 1871) At the auction there was a small attendance but the auctioneer, Mr. Thos. Strother, managed to sell the property to Mr. James D. Purves, who acted for another party, at £905, just £5 above the reserve price.

On 28 April, the painting called "The Noble Army of Martyrs" (1867) by Thomas Jones Barker (1815-1882) was exhibited in the Savings' Bank Room at the Corn Exchange. The painting depicts the great champions of the Protestant Reformation. "Mr. Barker has devoted a term of over six years to the verification of the portraiture of his subject, and his materials have been collected from the most reliable sources, not only in our own country, but in France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Bohemia. The figures are grouped in a landscape composition . . . The picture may be at once pronounced the best and most interesting Mr. Barker has ever painted, and for the manner in which the painter has overcome the difficulties in the way of the successful accomplishment of his laborious enterprise, he cannot be too highly complimented." (April 28, 1871) We do not know whether the painting was seen by many people or not.

During the first week of May "Gompertz's newly-invented and wondrous spectroscope has been exhibited in the Corn Exchange." (May 5, 1871) It did not manage to draw in the crowds, even though the people who were there admired

“the manner in which the different spectres appeared and disappeared was certainly very amazing and seemed to afford much delight to those present.” (ibid.)

In June, the freehold estate of Baits Cross and Strand was put up for sale in the Corn Exchange. The remarks made by Mr. S Donkin, who was the auctioneer, are interesting and he said “that it was unnecessary for him to occupy the time of the company with any observations in regard to the situation, the soil, and all the other advantages of the estate. They all knew as well as he did that there was a gradual progression going on in agriculture—there was in fact no limit to its productions—and land consequently has much increased in value. What was a garden, he asked, but an improved system of husbandry. Land would increase in value so long as the general population was employed.” (June 23, 1871) This clearly states that farming is profitable, but it also states that the success of the farmers depends on the buying power of the general population, that is interdependency between the different groups of the population. The bidding was brisk at the auction and reached the sum of £17,500, at which point it was revealed that the reserve price was £18,000. So the estate was not sold at the auction but afterwards by private bargain to Ralph Forster, Esq., of Springhill, for £17,600. The fact that the estate could not reach the reserve price might indicate that Mr. Donkin had exaggerated his sales talk somewhat.

Also in June it was announced that the local lodge of Good Templars wanted to draw attention to their cause, teetotalism, and had decided to hold a soiree in the Corn Exchange. The article in the newspaper contains a quote “Spare the pooh-poohing of the radical anti-teetotaler and conservative tippie”, which was a quote put out by the Good Templars themselves. It says further in the article that “Good Templarism is gradually making way in this country, and in our own town the movement betokens flourishing aspects, as to the stability of this newfangled temperance institution, however, time alone will prove . . . A host of speaking talents is expected to take part in the proceedings, and the brethren, it is anticipated, will appear in their regalia. We wish the Good Templars’ soiree all success.” (June 30, 1871) It is difficult not to get the impression that the newspaper is not quite sure of what to think of the temperance institution and is somehow hedging its bets. A few years later, however, the Good Templars were to enter the Berwick scene in full force.

The opportunity for healthy activity could be found in an announcement in August. “Dancing and Callisthenics. Mr. Grahamsley Atkinson and daughter have the honour to announce the opening of their classes for the above accomplishments in Berwick, Ayton and Dunse on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. The usual course of lessons

will be given.” (August 11, 1871) The classes would take place at the Corn Exchange.

In October 1871 Tom Thumb, his wife, Commodore Nutt and Miss Minnie Warren again appeared at the Corn Exchange. It was their farewell tour before returning to America. They had just finished a successful tour through Japan, China, the Straits, Siam, Ceylon, Australia, India, Egypt and the Continent, and they were now finishing by visiting almost every city and town in Great Britain. They were only going to spend one day in Berwick, giving two performances. Their programme seemed not to have changed very much since their previous visit to Berwick in 1865: “On this their positively farewell visit, they will have the honour of appearing in their interesting and elegant Lilliputian performances, as given by special command before her most gracious Majesty, and the Royal families, nobility and gentry of Europe, and also at St. James’s Hall during their late memorial eight months’ engagement there in 1865 consisting of songs, duets, comic acts, burlesques, and laughable eccentricities.” (September 15, 1871) Prices had been reduced for this occasion to afford all an opportunity to see the performance, or maybe there was a certain anxiety on the part of the organisers that it would be difficult to pull in the crowds.

In October, Mr. and Miss Grahamsley Atkinson and their dancing academy returned to Berwick to complete the lessons for the season. The course would terminate with an evening-dress lesson in the Corn Exchange.

People would have a chance to show what they had learnt at the Dancing Academy on several occasions at the end of the year. The annual subscription ball in connection with the Berwick Christmas Club took place on 15 December in the Corn Exchange, and no fewer than 35 stewards would be in attendance. Three days before this the annual Volunteer Ball took place.

However, there were problems brewing in the Christmas Club. A special meeting was called at the end of November and held in the Committee Room of the Corn Exchange. The reason for calling the meeting seemed to be the proposed change of the third rule of the club which said: “No stock will be admitted on the ground from any place where infectious disease of any kind has occurred within one month of the date of the show.” There had apparently been a meeting the previous week where the same subject had been discussed and led to disagreement and bad feelings among the members. The chairman expressed that “he hoped, however, that they might be able to adopt some measure which would meet the views of both parties, and that in the discussion now to take place they would meet the subject in

a temperate manner.” (December 1, 1871) A lengthy and involved discussion followed, such as had the special meeting been called correctly, what could be discussed at a special meeting, had enough notice been given? Mr. Laing seemed to be the mediating force in this dispute when he said that “he had been talking to several persons about the matter, and their opinion seemed to be that both parties should give way a little. If they carried on the discussion it would only lead to ill-feelings, and do harm to the club, which he was sure none of them wished to do. He hoped that both Mr. Thompson and Mr. Rutherford would withdraw their motions, and then he would move that no stock be exhibited unless they could show a clean bill of health a fortnight previous to the show.” (ibid.) This led to a discussion of the rules laid down by the Privy Council, which appeared somewhat vague and unclear and which made Mr. Donkin express the view that “The Privy Council do not know their own rules themselves.” (ibid.) The Mayor now said “we may take the local authorities’ interpretation of the regulations, and act upon them. The Mayor subsequently moved that the regulations to be enforced at the ensuing show be the same as those issued by the Privy Council and local authority.” (ibid.) This led to an amendment being proposed and seconded, when Alderman Thompson “called the attention of the chairman to the fact that the meeting could not transact any other business than that for which it had been called, viz., the confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting.” (ibid.) Chaos now set in. All propositions made at the meeting fell to the ground, and the meeting was asked to confirm or reject the minutes of the last meeting. Voting now took place and “For the motion that rule three of the club be rescinded, and that the Privy Council regulations for the counties of Berwick, Northumberland, and Roxburgh, be adopted instead.” (ibid.) 19 voted for and 10 against. Mr. Rutherford, however, was not going to give in. He declared that he was going to lodge an official protest with the Secretary, saying that the rules for holding meetings had been broken. The Chairman, forever hopeful, “said that now after the exhaustive discussion and the division which had taken place he hoped all those little ill feelings which had been engendered would close with the proceedings of the day, and that every member would do his utmost to render the show a success.” (ibid.)

The Berwick and Border Ornithological Association held their second annual exhibition of British and foreign cage and song birds in the Corn Exchange in December, 1871. The *Berwick Advertiser* brought a very long and detailed report of the exhibition and the various prizes won in the 23 classes represented: “The exhibition on both days was well patronized by the public, and in addition to the chirruping of the “songsters of the grove”, an instrumental band discoursed at intervals some appropriate music.” (December 8, 1871)

Also in December, it was announced that the Good Templars were to hold a soiree in the Corn Exchange “This new order of social reformers are waxing strong in number in this quarter and with the view of still increasing their ranks, a public soiree is announced to be held in the Corn Exchange on the evening of Thursday first, under the auspices of the Border Union Lodge. Judging from the rapid sale of tickets the soiree promises to be a great success. Two of the more prominent leaders of the Good Templar movement Mr. Jabez Walker, Glasgow, and Baillie Lewis, Edinburgh, are to address the meeting”. (December 15, 1871) It seems unclear whether this soiree is the one that was announced in June, or if it was the second one that year.

In March, 1872, Berwick, together with the rest of the country, “gave thanks to the Almighty God, in whose hands is the destiny of life and death, for the restoration to health of the Heir Apparent to the throne”. (March 1, 1872) The previous Tuesday had been made a public holiday and thanksgiving services were held in the local churches and the Corn Exchange, all well attended. It appears slightly odd that a service should also be held in the Corn Exchange as Berwick had churches representing most denominations.

In March, Mr. Vance gave a concert to a full house in the Corn Exchange. His appearance led to the following comment: “He has perhaps established too well his reputation as a bright particular star of the first magnitude to require any additional lustre to his name at our hands; but our opinion of his performances, notwithstanding, is in substance, that he is an exceedingly clever personator of almost any human oddity—‘sex immaterial’, as our left-handed friend sitting on our right with a wink remarks—and looks as really in legal black-cloth and horsehair the barrister, as he does in corduroy the country clod, or in gaudy out-fittings the modern belle, ‘Dolly Varden’ . . . His very latest, ‘Dolly Varden’, is nor his best; far from it; and while it is a good take-off on the soi-disant aristocrat it borders somewhat on vulgarity, and this Vance should guard against.” (March 22, 1872)

Both the Choral Union and the Berwick Tonic-Sol-Fa Association gave successful concerts in the spring. Less successful was the entertainment given in the Corn Exchange in May by Mr. George Cecil Murray and Miss Louisa Gordon Goorlay. It was well attended in spite of bad weather “but we failed to see or hear anything of its advertised character—‘romantic, original, and realistic.’ - Miss Gordon Goorlay is undeniable a very good actress and a fair singer, and her partner Mr. Cecil Murray is a second-rate comedian; but the entertainment in which they appeared entitled ‘Woo’d and Won’ is a very wishy-washy affair, and is suited chiefly for the amusement of family parties and school children.” (May 17, 1872)



The highlight of the concert season was no doubt the return visit of the English Opera Company in July. Three performances had been planned, but due to the success of the company the stay was prolonged by three extra performances. The only glitch was when on the first evening “the opera announced to be played, ‘La Somnambula’, would in consequence of a delay on the railways, require to perform without the usual scenic accompaniment.” (August 2, 1872)

In September a special religious service was held in the Corn Exchange for the Cockenzie fishermen engaged in the herring fishing from the port of Berwick. Would the number of fishermen fishing out of the port of Berwick be able to fill the Corn Exchange, or was the reason perhaps that the particular religious need of the fishermen from Cockenzie could not be satisfied in any of the existing places of worship?

The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange went off without many problems at the beginning of February 1873: a dividend of 4 per cent was decided upon. A meeting of the shareholders of the Berwick and London Steamship Company held in the Corn Exchange on 6 February, 1873, had much more wide -ranging consequences: it was in fact the end of it as “it was unanimously agreed, after a statement had been made by the Chairman to wind up the company in terms of articles of association. We understand that deep regret was expressed by the Chairman, and endorsed by the members of Committee, that they were obliged—owing principally to the fact that a large portion of the capital of the company had not been taken up by persons interested in the trade, and also to the unfortunate circumstances that the iron trade, upon which the steamer greatly depended for upward freight, was at present in a depressed state, and coals had increased largely in price of late—to adopt such an extreme measure. The Chairman also stated that the company intended to run the vessel in the trade up to the end of March, and that they purposed taking the necessary steps in the meantime to dispose of her by public sale. On the motion of Mr. S. Sanderson the directors were appointed liquidators for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the company and distributing the property. It is very unfortunate that the Directors have been compelled, on account of this discouraging state of matters, to wind up the affairs of the company. The loss to the port of a vessel of the class as the *Gala* is greatly to be regretted, and we sincerely trust, for the sake of liquidation that the high character which the *Gala* has undoubtedly established for herself on the coast will enable the Directors to realize a large sum at the sale for the benefit of the shareholders. Few of her class has done better in the trade; she is one of the finest screw steamers ever launched, and we reiterate our expression of regret that it has

been deemed necessary on the part of the company to part with her.” (February 7, 1873) What is not mentioned is the railways which would probably have been part of the problem one would think.

In the spring of 1873 one concert after the other was announced to take place in the Corn Exchange. In March there was a grand concert in aid of the new infirmary. A few weeks before that another grand concert consisting of a mostly operatic programme, and supported by several artistes from Her Majesty’s Opera had only been able to draw a meagre audience. The annual Choral Union Concert was announced for 8 April, and the Berwick Tonic-Sol-Fa the week after. The National Opera Company paid a return visit to Berwick in March but in spite of the fact that “The company has greatly improved in every aspect since its last visit.” (March 21, 1873), it only attracted a very small audience. This led to the following comment from *The Berwick Advertiser*: “The patronage bestowed is not commensurate with the performances; but the fact that local entertainments have of late been pretty thick, and that others are announced to come off shortly, may account in some measure for the somewhat small audiences.” (ibid.) Berwick seemed to have been hit by some kind of concert fatigue.

In spite of all this The Choral Union Concert was a great success. The Corn Exchange was crowded from floor to ceiling “to hear this excellent musical association, in a programme of music of the richest and most elevating nature—compositions designed to ‘touch the finest strings that trend the heart’, and to ‘exalt and humanize the mind’” (April 11, 1873) Everybody performing at the concert was showered with praise except Mr. George Rea. “We have had frequently occasion to speak in laudatory terms of Mr. Rea’s singing, and we simply reiterate our formerly expressed opinion that he is a basso of high class. He sang his charming air with fine effect, but—and it would be well for Mr. Rea to attend to this advice—he ignores the words set to the music. In his air hardly a word was distinctly uttered.” (ibid.)

The Tonic-Sol-Fa Association held their seventh annual concert on the evening of Easter Tuesday. The review of the concert was in generally positive, especially considering the fact that about a third of the people performing were new, which led the critic to write: “Before proceeding to comment upon the singing, we may mention that owing to the peculiar constitution of Mr. Smith’s class its membership is constantly fluctuating, and this has been more so the case during the last season than for some time.” (April 18, 1873) Exactly what “the peculiar constitution” was is not quite obvious but must refer to the unusual approach to singing promoted by the tonic-sol-fa method. In the same review the writer refers to “A gentleman well

qualified to judge of musical performances, kindly furnishes us with the following mild critique on the concert.” The well qualified gentleman was by and large positive, except for little jibes such as “The applause was hearty, if not always judicious . . . many of the choruses were sung greatly out of tune, the altos having a tendency to sing flat, the other voices were dragged down with them, so that times there was a decided difference between the voices and the pianoforte.” (ibid.) The main critic of the evening was however not directed against the performers, but against the Corn Exchange itself “One word for the Corn Exchange. A very offensive effluvium from bone dust or some other chemical preparation was strongly felt during the whole night, and when the hall was heated there was what the Yankees term a ‘loud smell,’ such as all Rimmel’s perfumery could hardly have quenched. Inspector of Nuisances take note.” (ibid.)

A definite red-letter day, if not for all of Berwick, then at least for the local lodges of Good Templars, was on the 1 July, 1873, when the laying of the foundation stone of a new hall in Coxon’s Lane took place. The day started with a procession through town. Between 300 and 400 Good Templars were present. David Milne Home, Esq., Paxton House, had agreed to lay the foundation stone and was presented with a trowel and a mallet by Brother Patrick of the Border Union Lodge. Afterwards a soiree was held in the Corn Exchange. The main speaker of the evening was David Milne Home, who started out by saying as he was not actually a member of a temperance society he felt that he was maybe not the right person to address the audience on that subject. Instead he spoke at length about the parliamentary election, and said that he “was exceedingly surprised and mortified to find that so small an amount of interest had been taken in that contest by the various temperance organisations in the county.” (July 4, 1873) The reason Mr. Milne Home brought up the election was “Because it was the duty of all abstainers and the friends of temperance to choose a man who would further their views in Parliament. It was utterly useless—simply wasting a great deal of valuable time and a vast amount of good paper petitioning Parliament to pass a Permissive Bill or a Prohibitory Liquor Bill if the members returned did not pledge themselves to support such a bill or at least to countenance any measure of the kind.” (ibid.) He then went on to talk about a related subject, that of pauperism, which he said demanded the immediate attention of the Legislature as “They knew that pauperism and intemperance were intimately connected; one acted on the other, and very often intemperance led to destitution and pauperism; and our poor laws gave a legal right of maintenance in case of destitution, no matter how the destitution had been brought about, were imperfect, as they tended to create improvidence and wasteful expenditure of money.” (ibid.) He called the Poor Law Act a disgrace to the statute book of a Christian country, and received applause for

it.

The next speaker was Rev. J Stephens who at great length dealt with the evil of drinking and what should be done to fight it. He then went on to talk about the working classes “We heard a great deal of the improvement of the working classes. This was the age of the improvement of the working classes. Every thoughtful man had sympathy with the sons of toil, and every genial, generous hearted man must rejoice that the working classes have received shorter hours of labour and bigger wages. But there was something else than shorter hours and big wages required; he said plainly and avowedly that the increased wages and the reduction in hours of labour were useless, yes worse than useless, without moral principle. Did he speak at random? Was it a figure of rhetoric? Did the statistics of the country not prove that this age, the golden age of the working classes, the age of material increase, stood prominent for drunkenness? The big wages were consumed during the extra leisure hours in the public house, and the advantages thus granted to the sons of toil partook more of the character of a curse than a blessing.” (ibid.) The Rev. Dr. Cairns was the next speaker. His approach to the problem of drunkenness was somewhat different from the previous speaker. He said “Many hard words were used by the speakers on teetotal platforms against the publicans; he would not utter any harsh sentiments; there were many things to excuse and extenuate publicans in their present position, and until such enlightenment in this important question of temperance was given as would move the people of this country to make a change in their present drinking customs . . . What was to become of our working classes, who with all their material property were descending in the moral scale, receding further and further from the pastoral blessing and from holy things?” (ibid.) One thing that is present in all the speeches is the “concern” of the working classes and that they might not be able to handle the slightly improved circumstances themselves without “guidance” from those in authority. The evening ended with several rounds of votes of thanks including one to the ladies “who had presided at the different tables”. (ibid.)

A few weeks later the Corn Exchange was turned into a grand eastern bazaar arranged by the Scotch Church in Hide Hill. “The object of the bazaar was praiseworthy and deserved even larger patronage than was bestowed on it. The Scotch Church in Hide Hill has a peculiar if not an important history by the Disruption of 1843, the memorable protracted litigation arising out of that great ecclesiastical struggle with the object of retaining the church property in the hands of the congregation worshipping in it, having, although successful in point of legal decision, saddled the church with a very large debt.” (July 18, 1873) This had also meant that the church was badly in need of repair and refurbishment. “The

Exchange was literally filled with needlework, haberdashery, ironmongery &c &c. To enhance the beauty of the stalls the Exchange was tastefully decorated. At the further end of the room a platform, comfortably furnished, was erected for the special benefit of the choir, and those gentlemen who were to take part in the opening ceremony. The stalls, eight in number, were ranged round the hall, and neatly set off." (ibid.) In spite of bad weather on the first day of the bazaar trade picked up on the other ones and a profit of around £150 was declared.

To finance the building of the Good Templar Hall a bazaar was held on 26 and 27 August. A committee of no fewer than 22 ladies was established, and Mrs. Milne Home of Paxton House was made patron. A few weeks before that the annual missionary sale was held in the Long Room of the Corn Exchange. For sale was "fancy and useful articles made in the course of the year by a number of ladies who met regularly at the Vicarage for the behoof of the missions belonging to the Church of England." (August 15, 1873) In spite of a large selection of goods at moderate prices the sale was not a success. The weather was pleasant, which meant that many people were either away on holiday or were at one of the many "kettles" taking place on the same day. Another contributing fact to the poor financial outcome of the sale was that in order to give prizes to the Sunday School children who had exhibited plants and shell at the sale an entrance fee was charged, which again meant reduced income.

At the Good Templar Bazaar, Mr. Milne Home had once again been asked to deliver an address even though it was his wife who had been made patron of the bazaar. The women did not seem to have much of a voice unless they happened to be singers or performers. Mr. Milne Home, however, did mention his wife, "he assured the Good Templars that Mrs. Milne Home very much appreciated the honour they had conferred upon her in asking her to become patron of their bazaar. It was not in her power to do much for the object in which the Good Templars of Berwick were so much interested, but she had come there to show that she was willing to support them, and to aid the cause by contributing articles for sale." (August 29, 1873) This picture of women as mothers, wives and "bazaar-articles-producing" creatures reveals much about that society. Mr. Milne Home also addressed the juveniles present. "He referred to a case which had lately come before a Justice of the Peace Court in Berwickshire in which a boy, fourteen years old, had stolen half-a-sovereign from an old relative, bought a bottle of whisky, and with some companions had drunk the whisky. The boy was brought up for theft and fined, but he thought the boys' parents ought to have been fined for having imbibed in their children a taste for strong drink." (ibid.) Trade was brisk, and there was also a raffle, and among the prizes were "two original pictures by Mrs. J. J.

Paxton. ... a choice case of butterflies, a case of white mice, a weighing machine, white rabbits, and a statuette of 'Jamie Strength'." (ibid.) In total the bazaar raised about £237.

In spite of postponement due to illness of Mr. Howard's concert, it turned out to be a great success when it took place in the Corn Exchange at the end of September. Together with Mr. Howard himself Miss Forster was the star of the evening: "A striking feature in the performances was the highly successful manner in which the lady amateur, Miss Forster, acquitted herself. Her style of singing seems to have been much improved under the tuition of Mrs. Howard, by whom she was accompanied on the piano; and the applause with which she was greeted was loud and long continued. Her songs were given with great expression and her powerful voice was well adapted for the Corn Exchange." (October 3, 1873) Less fortunate was Madame Laubach whose "singing was rather disappointing, and her efforts apparently were not much appreciated, although she sang with great care." (ibid.)

In October 1873 the U.P. Church in Church Street was reopened for the first time after improvements had been made to the interior. Following a number of services held to celebrate the occasion, a soiree was held in the Corn Exchange. No fewer than 800 people sat down to a tea free of charge supplied by the ladies of the congregation. Several ministers of the town occupied seats on the platform and Rev. James Stephens presided. In his speech he spoke at length about the balance between adorning the church without letting it detract from the real reason. "He knew that Christian life might flourish in the very rudest building, for stalwart and heroic martyrs had served God amidst the catacombs of Rome, and our forefathers, the leaders of the great spiritual Reformation in Scotland, worshipped in what have been called contemptuously, 'rude barn-like buildings', yet from the same buildings went forth stalwart Christians." (October 17, 1873) Apparently there had been some talk in town about the justification of the project, and Rev. Stephens reminded the young men of the congregation, who had carried out the work, not to brag about it, as that could lead to people thinking that they regarded the adornment of the church more important than the worship of God that took place there.

The next speaker Rev. W. S. Chedburn said that now that the young men of the congregation had finished their job "He hoped they would devote their attention to the rude, uncultivated specimens of humanity in Chapel Street and Walkergate Lane, so as to make them true servants of the Lord God Almighty, and enable them to go forth in their turn to seek and rescue others." (ibid.)

Some interesting remarks were made by Rev. John Young, who had left Berwick in 1859 to move to Edinburgh and had not been back since. "In 1859 the town of Berwick was not in very good odour, owing to the sitting of a Royal Commission for the purpose of inquiring into the proceedings at a Parliamentary election which had recently taken place; and the only thing which Berwick seemed famous for were bribery and Dr. Cairns." (ibid.) He then went on to comment "upon the improvements which had been made on the Bankhill, Walls, and other places, and referred to the establishment of the Literary and Scientific Institute, Museum, Science classes, Freemasons' Hall, Good Templars' Hall, entertainments in the Corn Exchange, fortnightly entertainments, and the new Infirmary as indicative of readiness and determination on the part of the people to work with their hands and use their money so as to prevent their town from remaining behind the age." (ibid.) In spite of all this he had a word of warning to the people of Berwick. "Reading as he did with utmost regularity the *Berwick Advertiser*, he could not help notice that sometimes two columns of that paper were taken up with reports of the proceedings at the police-court, and in addition there were accounts of lamentable calamities which occasioned coroner's inquests, and the evidence given at these was disgraceful and damaging to the town. Drunkenness might not be as bad here as at other places, but there was no reason why they should not improve the morals of the inhabitants." (ibid.)

However, everything was not gloom and doom. Also in October it was decided to start art classes in connection with the Science and Art Department, which had secured a room in the Corn Exchange that the Museum had used before. The classes were to be taught by James Wallace. To promote this initiative, the committee had decided to hold an art exhibition and conversazione on the 12 November. The committee "respectfully request the loan of pictures, works of art, or objects of scientific interest from ladies and gentlemen in the town and neighbourhood." (October 24, 1873). There was to be an admission fee to the exhibition which was to go towards fitting up the room as an art class.

At the end of October, the annual Roman Catholic soiree was held in the Corn Exchange. The atmosphere here was very different from that of the Church Street Church one held shortly before. "An address by the Very Rev. Canon Browne was almost inaudible, as a continual buzz of conversation was kept during the delivery, and a great many people went out." (October 31, 1873) The various songs delivered at the soiree seem to have been much more appreciated than the talks. "The second part of the programme was curtailed, otherwise the entertainment would have lasted till that hour 'o' nicht's black arch the keystone'. As it was, the proceedings terminated about eleven o'clock, and the company then wended their

way homewards, while the band struck up an air which had the effect of disturbing the slumbers of such inhabitants as had retired to rest.” (ibid.)

More fun was predicted with the announcement of “Two hours genuine fun with Arthur Lloyd” in November. However, the success was somewhat limited, in the review it said, “if there was ‘genuine’ fun for ‘two hours’ the audience did not seem to appreciate it, as the applause which greeted the principal vocalists’ efforts to amuse was never great, and the laughter was seldom hearty. His characteristic delineations did not excite much admiration, and Mr. Edwin Keene’s voice was not heard to advantage. Mrs. Lloyd’s vocal powers are none of the best, but her acting compensated somewhat for that defect.” (November 14, 1873).

The Equitable Benefit Building Society held its half-yearly general meeting at the beginning of December. The entire meeting was one long praise of the society which apparently had gone from strength to strength. The only statement of possible improvements was that “If more of the working classes would join such societies and seek to establish themselves in a certain position, no doubt good results would follow.” (December 5, 1873)

Mr. R. P. Todd held his annual assembly in the Corn Exchange at the beginning of December. His classes in dancing and deportment had been such a success that his classes had moved from one of the smaller rooms in the Corn Exchange to the big hall in order to accommodate the many students. The programme for the evening “was a very select one, and was principally composed of fashionable dances. Interspersed here and there was a favourite Contra, and all was executed with a grace and precision that added another to the many laurels Mr. Todd had gained in the past as an efficient and painstaking tutor.” (December 5, 1873)

As so often before, one of the last events of the year was the Volunteers’ Ball. This year about 500 people attended. Every effort had been made to make this a special event. An additional floor had been laid down to make the dancing less fatiguing than it would have been on the original floor, and “the ornamentation of the room was as elaborate, profuse, and elegant as the last time, the dinginess of the hall having completely disappeared under the transforming process of Mr. J. Crow, painter, High Street, who had charge of the general decorations, and Messrs. Beloe & Lamint, seedsmen and gardeners, who arranged the evergreens and supplied the flowers and plants.” (December 12, 1873) “The ball did not commence until about 9 o’clock, the first dance being led by Capt. T. Allan and Miss Eleanor Purves. From that time up till the hour at which the entertainment terminated the hall was a scene of great brilliance and animation, the polished blades of the bayonets shining



out amid the varied hues of the articles used in the adornment of the room, while the gay dresses of the ladies formed a pleasant contrast to the uniforms of the Volunteers and the sombre looking garments of the civilians.” (ibid.) The refreshments were supplied by Mr. Tinn of the Hen and Chickens Hotel – a fitting end to the year.

1874 started on a more sombre tone. The evangelists Moody and Sanky from Chicago paid a visit to Berwick in January inaugurating a number of prayer meetings both in the Corn Exchange and the local churches. They held two services in the Corn Exchange, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. On both occasions people poured into town from as far away as twenty miles and so big was the interest that several people were unable to be admitted. Messrs. Moody and Sanky were joined on the platform by all the dissenting ministers in the town and the meetings were a combination of singing of hymns, prayers and preaching. After the evening meeting many people went to Wallace Green Church where a special service was conducted. The week continued with more meetings in the Corn Exchange and Wallace Green Church and Church Street Church with more meetings taking place the following weeks in the Corn Exchange frequented mostly by members of different dissenting congregations.

At the end of a four-week period a crowded meeting was held in the Corn Exchange. It was presided over by Rev. Dr. J. C. Brown of Berwick, and Dr. Cairns made a statement as to the work which had been going on for the last four weeks: “Favoured by those circumstances, the visit of Messrs. Moody and Sanky on 13th of January last was blessed to produce an awakening unexampled in the history of this town, and which has so far extended to the surrounding district. The great gatherings in the Corn Exchange on the afternoon and evening of that day, and the prayer meeting which followed in Wallace Green Church, can never be forgotten by those who were present; and it is believed that many souls date their first impression from that occasion. It was not as in great cities, where such movement propagate themselves by degree. The whole town - a sixth or seventh part of whose population were gathered together—was struck at once; and all that has followed has been more or less the continuation of that first mighty impulse.” (February 13, 1874) To keep up the momentum Dr. Cairns suggested that smaller meetings be held in selected areas of the town lasting a week, and presumably targeted at areas where such an effort would be seen to be needed.

In between these occasions of religious fervour that was prevailing in the town, the St. David’s Lodge of Freemasons held a ball on 30 January on the occasion of the dedication of the New Masonic Hall.

The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company was held in February, a dividend of 5 per cent was declared, but otherwise there were no points for discussion.

Mr. T. Rees Evans' third musical evening took place in February. The programme was varied and well received by the not very large audience. The income from the concert was to go towards paying for a public drinking fountain, however, not everything went smoothly at the concert: "The conduct of some of the audience was most disgraceful, and a few who ought to know better, seemed determined to show how foolish they could be by making the most hideous noises as possible. The injury done to the stalls in the Corn Exchange by these stupid fellows will, if the kicking and knocking is not stopped, be considerable, and the Company would find it to their advantage to have a policeman in the building when it is used for entertainments, so as to prevent willful damage to their property, and arrest an offender and punish him. We say nothing of the annoyance caused to those people who go to concerts to enjoy the performances—that is never thought of by these selfish and irrational beings." (February 20, 1874)

A new phenomenon from the world of entertaining could be seen and heard in Berwick in February when The Royal (Poland Street) Temperance Hand-bell Ringers gave two successful concerts in the Corn Exchange, and they also paid a visit to the Town Hall "where they gave a specimen of their skill by chiming the bells in the spire, and playing some airs." (February 20, 1874) It was, however, not only the ringing of hand-bells: "At the Corn Exchange, in addition to the campanological treat, melodies and choruses were sung, in some of which the audience joined, and the conductor prefaced each performance with humorous and appropriate remarks, in the course of which he said that the peal of eight bells in the spire of the Town Hall, four of them were cracked, and they were utterly spoiled by being mended, instead of being recast. He explained this, showing that they were unable to vibrate properly, and expressed the hope that the inhabitants would take steps to have the peal made perfect." (ibid.) It is not known if the inhabitants followed the conductor's advice.

At the end of February, a curious advertisement appeared in the newspaper: "Damaged wheat for sale. To be sold by auction, on behalf of whom it may concern, at the Corn Exchange, Berwick, on Saturday 7th March, at one o'clock precisely, in lots to suit purchasers, about 80 quarters of damaged wheat ex. 'successor' from Stolpemunde, now lying in Messrs. Crossman & Paulin's Granaries, Berwick, where it can be seen. James D. Purvis, auctioneer, Berwick,

26th Feb. 1874" (February 27, 1874) One wonders what the damaged wheat could be used for.

St Patrick's Day was celebrated by the Irish portion of the population with a soiree and a concert in the Corn Exchange. The entertainment was well patronized although the number did not reach a hundred, as it had done in previous years. The Rev. J. Farrell, who addressed the audience, and complimented it for its good behavior, thought that this could be due to the fact that he had been unable to obtain the assistance of any of his clerical brethren as they were engaged in similar ways as he was tonight. After the address a number of songs were sung to everybody's satisfaction and supported by Miss Park who presided at the pianoforte.

At the end of March, the people of Berwick were ready "to enjoy the 'touches of sweet harmony' warbles by the multitude of angels and their masculine attendants." (March 27, 1874) It was time for another Choral Union Concert. The singers numbered about 90 and performed under the leadership of Mr. W. Anderson, who successfully guided them through the evening's programme. He was helped by Mr. B. Barker who "also discharged his accustomed duties as accompanist in an eminently efficient manner, his aid being almost indispensable. We hope the harmonium at which he presided is not, as some of its tones are extremely harsh and disagreeable." (ibid.) The programme consisted primarily of religious songs, with one rather strange exception when the second part of the concert started with the singing of the Russian National Anthem, sung as solo and chorus.

On the evening of Good Friday a meeting was held in the Corn Exchange. The aim was to support the Permissive Prohibitory Liquor Bill, which was at the time being debated in Parliament. The Rev. Dr. Brown started the meeting. He mostly talked about the situation in Russia, where the not unfamiliar argument of controlling the sale of alcohol by increasing the price, limiting the number of places where it could be bought and increase the fee for obtaining a licence to sell it. He was followed by Rev. R. Crozier who moved the adoption of the following resolution "That inasmuch as all parties in the state and all sections of the community agree that the sale of intoxicating liquors cannot be treated as an ordinary trade but that licences should be issued only in accordance with the supposed requirement of each particular community, this meeting is of opinion that whatever be the origin and nature of the licensing authority, the inhabitants of each parish or district have the power to determine directly and specifically the primary question whether licenses are required for their convenience." (April 10, 1874) The resolution was passed

together with others which all ran along the same lines namely that alcohol was a great curse on society and that people should have a say in the availability of alcohol in their district.

The Hon. General Neal Dow, an American, went even further in his condemnation of alcohol saying that he had visited Berwick three times and had seen all parts of the town and nearly all the people. He talked about relics of the old ignorant barbarous times when people were burnt for their opinions, when torture was common and when people were put to death for supposed sorcery and witchery, and he then went on to say “If they were to judge of a thing by the amount of mischief and misery which resulted from it then he might say that the licensing of public houses was a greater sin than all those he had mentioned.” (ibid.) He also claimed that people should be stopped from doing things that were inconsistent with the general common good, and as public houses were clearly, in his mind, inconsistent with the common good, they should not be allowed. He also compared this view to the punishment of criminals for committing acts inconsistent with the common good. At the end of the meeting it was decided to send copies of the resolutions passed to the Members of Parliament for Berwick, The Prime Minister, The Home Secretary. The Chairman Dr. Cairns, “said he had much pleasure in doing so, although he did not think it would be of much use in sending them to any of the persons mentioned. Berwick stood in an anomalous position in regard to the Permissive Bill, as its Parliamentary representatives had always voted against the measure, and yet many of their constituents were in favour of it. Of the present members one was opposed to the Bill, and the other was neutral.” (ibid.)

At the beginning of June, Mr. T. Maclagan gave an entertainment in the Corn Exchange for one night only, called “Figaro, the Barber”, but in spite of Mr. Maclagan’s popularity in Berwick, where he had performed several times before, the entertainment was not a success as he performed to “an audience whose smallness would scarcely pay the performer for his trouble . . . and we can only attribute the limited patronage given to him on the occasion under notice to the unfavourable time of year for indoor entertainment.” (June 5, 1874)

After an apparently quiet summer things picked up again as autumn approached. In September Signor Bosco, “This clever foreign *prestidigitateur* gave an entertainment in the Corn Exchange on Tuesday evening.” (September 11, 1874) The audience was large and they enjoyed the many conjuring tricks. The same month Matthew Brothers’ Christy Minstrels gave a one night performance. They were said to have performed every single night except Christmas Days and Feast Days since 1864 under the same proprietor.

At the end of the month a week-long exhibition of panoramic views of Ireland took place in the Corn Exchange. According to the review: "The paintings are well executed, and are also faithful representations of the many beautiful and interesting scenes which are to be met in the Emerald Isle. By means of a change of light, different effects are produced, and some of the transformations thus made, as well as a few of the pictures from real life, excite the mirth of the company on account of the ludicrous sights and situations which are depicted . . . Dancing and ventriloquism complete an excellent and varied entertainment." (September 25, 1874)

Yet another "original" group of minstrels appeared at the Corn Exchange at the beginning of December. "This great company of coloured natives of the Southern States of America have made arrangements to give their gems of minstrelsy, and will appear in a monster programme of humour, elegant and sparkling varieties. An entertainment unparalleled in the history of the World's amusement." (November 27, 1874) However, in spite of the promotion "the people here did not seem to think these of the first water, for the patronage they bestowed was not very liberal." (December 11, 1874) Maybe the people of Berwick were saving their money for the Blondinette Melodists, "The celebrated company of young ladies with golden locks . . . (eleven in number), from the Crystal Palace, St. George's Hall, &c, &c." (ibid.) whose entertainment was "The essence of comedy, farce and burlesque." (ibid.) Unfortunately there is no mention in the papers of how the entertainment was received.

The Equitable Benefit Building Society held their half -yearly general meeting in December under the presidency of Mr. J. D. Purves. Mr. Shrimpton mentioned that an act of Parliament had given building societies more power, which meant that a group of people could now join together and buy land on behalf of the building society and afterwards sell it to single members for building sites at a profit. It does not say whether this idea was taken up. But apart from the annual Volunteers' Ball held on 15, December, this concluded the activities in the Corn Exchange in 1874.

In February 1875, Mr. T. Strother announced that he had been favoured with instructions from Messrs. Morris & Co of London to sell by auction at the Corn Exchange "a choice collection of oleographs, and superb coloured photographs, all elegant and appropriately framed in gilt frames." (February 12, 1875)

The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company was also held in February.

Everything seemed to be going well and a dividend of 5 per cent was decided on.

In March a somewhat different kind of entertainment was given in the Corn Exchange by Messrs. Strange and Wilson. It was “their new literary, scientific, and musical entertainment, with all the astonishing effect of the Aetherscope, spectroscope, phantoscope, and other optical contrivances, by means of which angels are seen floating in space, and gliding imperceptibly through walls, human beings vanish or appear at will, demons roll in mid-air, fairies dance on walls and ceilings, spectres creep up walls and gyrate in space, ladies dance amidst flames of real fire, and one being dissolved into another.” (March 12, 1875) The entertainment was called an opera and the first part was based on a poem by Goethe called “Faust and Margrethe”. “The life of Faust and the principal events of his life are summed up in the soliloquy with which the entertainment begins, but portions of Goethe’s work are considered by some exceptional, have been excluded from the libretto. Notwithstanding these excisions the unity of the piece is preserved and the various situations are portrayed with much effectiveness.” (ibid.) One may wonder what parts of Goethe’s poem was considered exceptional, but the main focus of the entertainment was probably the use of the various “scopes” anyway, which is also reflected in the second part of the entertainment which was an illusion “by which people entering a box disappear and reappear in an apparently marvelous manner; and the laughable spectral sketch entitled ‘The Haunted House’, which affords much amusement on account of the ludicrous scenes and actions in it.” (ibid.)

The season for the Tonic-Sol-Fa Association ended with the annual concert in March. *The Berwick Advertiser* starts out its review with a lengthy piece about the importance of music, and bemoans the fact that “The musical associations in the town are not so strong as they were a few years ago, and it is a pity the membership should fall off, for we cannot conceive any other recreation than music, better calculated to elevate and refine the feelings, to say nothing of its educational influence . . . and anyone who is not moved with concord of sweet sounds is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night and his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted.” (April 2, 1875) This lament is followed by a detailed description of the programme of the concert and much praise for the performers.

The half yearly general meeting of the Equitable Benefit Building Society took place in June. The main item discussed at the meeting was whether they should adopt the Building Societies Act. The Chairman, Mr. J. D. Purves, said, upon being asked, that this was not compulsory but that it would give them some very

important power, as this would mean that the society could now borrow money and obtain loans, something which the individual members had had to do as private persons before. “The security now offered by the act was the society itself, which was as good if not better than the other, and would enable the trustees to do in a straightforward and perfectly legal manner what was performed in a round-about, and perhaps illegal way before.” (June 25, 1875)

In July, Mr. A. L. Miller offered for sale by public auction in the Corn Exchange “all those freehold self-contained premises in High Street, at present in the occupation of Mr. John Fish, shoemaker, at a rental of £44, and containing shop, back shop workshop, leather cellar, nine excellent dwelling rooms, kitchen and attic, yard and all the necessary conveniences.” (July 23, 1875) After a rapid increase in the bidding the property was sold to Mr. Sanderson, who was acting on behalf of Mrs. Purves, Eden House, Spittal.

Another auction, also organized by Mr. A. L. Miller, took place in the Corn Exchange in August. This time it was a sale of superior household furniture, office furniture etc. all things belonging to a gentleman giving up housekeeping. Anything from sofas in haircloth, piano, mirrors, clocks, celarette, to night commodes, washstands and towel-rails as well as a hand sewing machine in first rate order, and also office desks and a stove could be bought.

As a follow-up to the evangelical work that had been carried out in the town the previous year many people had felt that there should be another united communion. This was held in the Corn Exchange in August when 800 members of various churches in the town and many from further afield assembled for a communion service. The meeting was presided over by Rev. R. Scott, assisted by the local ministers.

In September, W. H. Edward’s Great Panorama offered two hours in the far west accompanied by original and appropriate songs, anecdotes, music and lecture.

The same month a large company assembled in the Corn Exchange to hear a musical and dramatic entertainment given by Scottish artists. Among the artists was Mr. R. Pillans who “gave several humorous songs written in the vernacular language, and accompanied them with suitable and amusing gestures. His jocularities and odd costumes frequently excited the risibilities of the auditors who were not niggardly in their manifestation of approbation.” (September 17, 1875) The other artists were a combination of sweet warbling contralto, robust tenors, grace notes that did not improve the singing, and unmusical quartettes, all led by

Madame Laubach “in a very satisfactory manner as accompanist.” (ibid.)

In October, it was announced that the Jubilee Singers would appear again in Berwick after two years absence and they were met with as much enthusiasm as before. “On their first night in Glasgow the great Kibble Crystal Palace was crowded in every part, and hundreds went away without attempting to penetrate the mass of people about the doors.” (October 29, 1875) The concert in Berwick was the only one in the area, otherwise one would have to go to either Galashiels or Newcastle. Seven of the singers appearing at the concert were born slaves, one has been sold at the age of fifteen months for seventy pounds. As on their previous visit, the purpose of the concert was to raise funds on behalf of Fisk University, Nashville, U.S.A, where black people were being educated. The concert was a huge success, “The renown of the singers and the desire to help the good cause they are engaged in, drew together the largest audience that have ever assembled in the Corn Exchange.” (November 5, 1875)

The appearance of black people in Berwick in 1875 must have been an unusual event, and there are some quite interesting comment made “they range in colour from the ebonite full-blooded African to the pale-faced Octoroon . . . The vocalists express themselves in good English, and the gentlemen are fluent speakers.” (ibid.) The concert is described in the newspaper in a very, and somewhat unusual, emotional manner: “The words of the songs they render are exceedingly simple and somewhat strange, but they all contain some central religious truth; and as the words and music have been the ecstatic utterance of some deeply-impressed worshipper at camp meetings near the slave plantations, they have that vitality about them when uttered by earnest lip that goes direct from heart to heart. Their effect upon an audience is marked and deep.” (ibid.) The singers express the moral and religious power of music “The compositions are entirely free from intricacy; their charm lies in the absence of all those difficulties and deformities which are so often introduced by art, and considered as beauties and improvements.” (ibid.) This seems to be a rebuke to the stiffness of Victorian society and the reviewer sees the lack of artifice as a whiff of fresh air.

The Drapers’ annual soiree and ball, which took place in the Corn Exchange at the beginning of December was opened by Mr. J. Atkin, who the previous year had talked about the importance of mental education, but this year he turned to physical education, using himself as an example of the benefit of healthy out-door exercise. One might suspect that after a long day working in a shop physical exercise might not be the first thing that would come to a shop-assistant’s mind, but Mr. Atkin was against the people who saw dancing as a bad thing and advocated it, no doubt, as



part of his keep fit promotion. He was also for early closing of shops as being beneficial to both shopkeepers and the public assuming that the hours not spent working in the shop or going shopping would be spent on either mental or physical exercises.

In December, a large quantity of furniture was auctioned off by Mr. A. L. Miller in the Corn Exchange. It was very much the usual things being sold, apart from seven large school wall maps, new and mounted.

The Volunteer Ball took place in the Corn Exchange on 24 December. In terms of the decoration of the hall it seemed to be a case of quality having won over quantity: "The hall was nicely decorated for the occasion, and although the ornamentation was not so elaborate as in former years, yet it was neater and more tasteful than formerly." (December 24, 1875) But in spite of this improved appearance of the hall "nevertheless their dingy hue somewhat detracted from the general effect of the garniture." (ibid.)

## *1876 - 1885*

The important event in the world of entertainment in February, 1876, was the arrival of the Royal Hand Bell Ringers. They had appeared in front of the Queen at Windsor Castle by special demand, and people were urged to apply for tickets as early as possible to avoid crowding on the day. Whether the hype around the concert was justified we do not know as it was not reviewed.

In March, yet another visit by minstrels took place, this time they were called The Queen's Minstrels. The programme consisted of a mixture of music and acting and dancing and concluded "with a comic act entitled 'Who Died First?' which was much relished by the audience." (March 17, 1876)

Spring brought around the usual concerts given by the Choral Union and the Tonic-Sol-Fa Association. The Choral Union performed Handel's Messiah, the first time this had ever been tried in Berwick, and due to the extra challenge reinforcement had been called in from in the shape of Adam Hamilton, conductor of the Edinburgh Choral Union. This had again led to a doubling of the ticket prices which however had not dampened the demand for tickets.

The Choral Union concert does not seem to have been reviewed in the newspapers, but the Tonic-Sol-Fa Association one was. The biggest problem for the Association

appeared to be that there was no steady core of members, none of the original members were left, and this apparently led to a somewhat shaky performance at the concert.

On 29 April, there was an auction in front of the Corn Exchange. The auctioneer was James J. Oswald, and to be auctioned off was “The valuable stud of draught horses, carts and harness at present in use at the construction of the Berwick Dock.” (April 28, 1876)

June and July saw several auctions. To be auctioned off were the usual household furniture with the odd example of stuffed birds and fishing rods and boat compasses. Also to be sold on 15 July, 1876, was “an excellent one-horse open phaeton and set of silver mounted harness.” (July 7, 1876)

The Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light Company held their annual meeting of shareholders in the Long Room of the Corn Exchange in July. Dividend was recommended at 10 per cent, and on top of that it was decided to reduce the price charged for gas due to “a more hopeful state of the coal market.” ( July 21, 1876) The Chairman “hoped that by good management in future the same dividend could be paid. However, there could be no certainty as to that, for they could not say what the price of coal might be hereafter. The Company here had always tried to produce good gas and although they might fail occasionally yet if people viewed it in the right way they would find that Berwick gas was inferior to none, for it equaled on an average the illumination power of from 28 to 30 candles. That was a very large illuminating power, and getting gas of such good quality, the public could not expect it to be very cheap. If inferior coal was used the Company could supply cheap gas, but the Directors were resolved to keep up the quality of the gas by purchasing the best coal.” (ibid.)

In July the Spittal Presbyterian Church bazaar took place in the Corn Exchange. A big decision had been taken by the congregation to build a new church to replace the old one, which was described as being no better than a barn. “The entire edifice has an antiquated appearance and seems now to be quite out of keeping with the new structure around it, while the accommodation it affords is not always enough for the large addition that are made to the regular attenders by the visitors who frequent Spittal in the summer time.” (July 28, 1876) The estimated price of the new church was £2,500, £1,100 had already been obtained through donations, and the selling of the manse was thought to bring in about £300, still not enough, so the ladies of the congregation had decided to hold a bazaar. The Rev. W. Porteus, pastor of the congregation, gave a speech in which he gave some historical

background to the church. “The present building is old and uncomfortable having been used for public worship for more than 130 years. Its origin is interesting. In the year 1745-46 (the year of the Rebellion) the South Gate of Berwick (the one on the bridge) was kept so long shut on Sabbath mornings, for fear of the Pretender, that the Presbyterian residents in Spittal, Tweedmouth, and neighbourhood, could not reach Berwick in time for public worship: and divine service was commenced in Spittal at that time.” (ibid.) The bazaar was then opened by the Rev. Dr. Cairns from Edinburgh.

Two dwelling houses in Tweed Street, containing 4 and 6 rooms respectively and occupied by Messrs. K. Mark and William Redpath, were sold by auction at the end of August to John Marshall of Tweedmouth, a farmer, for £620.

A new kind of entertainment could be seen in Berwick during the last week of August, namely the exhibition of Mr. Bullock’s Royal Marionettes: “The entertainment is a puppet show and the figures are made to move about, gesticulate, and dance with such remarkable precision by means of some mechanical contrivance that one is almost induced to think that the performances are those of living beings. The marionettes also seem to converse and sing as if they were human, but the talk and music come from persons behind the scene. The figures seem to be made of some durable substance for in order that startling and amusing effects may be produced they are subjected to violent concussions and tossing, without injury.” (September 1, 1876)

More properties were sold by public auction in the Corn Exchange in September. Mr. Lambert, Tweedmouth, was the auctioneer, and the two lots for sale were 2 dwelling houses and shops, bake-house and other premises situated in Bridge Street, in the occupation of Mr. Friar, watchmaker, and Mr. Thompson, baker, and a small dwelling house and garden situated behind the two dwelling houses, occupied by Mr. Bruce. Both lots were sold to Mr. Thompson for £680 and £60 respectively.

Miscellaneous effects that were the property of a gentleman leaving town were sold by public auction in the Corn Exchange on November 1, 1876. Apart from the usual furniture, 200 books mostly about agriculture, travel, and theology were also to be sold. The name of the gentleman is not given.

The Jubilee Singers returned in November and performed in front of a packed Corn Exchange. The money earned by the singers had so far paid for the purchase of the site of the Fisk University and the cost of erecting the Jubilee Hall in Nashville,

Tennessee. The present tour aimed at raising enough money to set up an endowment fund for the university, and as before, the concert was received with enthusiasm, except for a few songs that were less captivating. At the end of the concert Mr. Rutling, one of the singers, “made a few remarks and returned thanks to the Mayor for presiding as well as to Mr. William Anderson and the local committee who had made all the arrangements for the concert free of charge. He also expressed his gratitude to the public of Berwick and the neighbourhood for the liberal manner in which they had supported the Jubilee Singers on the occasion of their two visits here.” (November 10, 1876)

1877 started very quietly at the Corn Exchange. The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange was held in February. Two concerts were announced in March: the annual Choral Union concert and an operatic concert under the leadership of Mr. T. Rees Evans.

The Choral Union concert took place in the Corn Exchange on 17 April. On the programme was Mendelsohn Bartholdy’s *Elijah*, sung by a chorus of 120 people and soloists. Mr. Benjamin Barker had taken over from Mr. William Anderson as leader. Unfortunately most of the actual review of the concert in the newspaper is impossible to read, but it seems that the concert was a success.

The concert led by Mr. T. Rees Evans took place on 12 April. The performers were blind students educated at the Wilberforce School, York, and was held under the patronage of, among others, the Marchioness of Watford Castle; Captain Milne Home, Paxton House; and Lady Marjoribanks, Ladykirk. The concert was favourably reviewed: “From the affliction under which the performers labour one might imagine that they would not appear to such advantage as vocalists who enjoy their sight, but after hearing the sweet strains of the company one was agreeably disappointed not only at the perfect harmony but also at the accurate time keeping.” (April 13, 1877)

In June the following warning appeared in the newspaper: “Caution—The following notice was posted in the Exchange last Saturday—‘Any butter or other articles brought to this market and found to be unfit for use, or of light weight, will be seized and forfeited’.” (June 8, 1877) Apparently profitable “shortcuts” by producers was nothing new.

In order to make the people of Berwick more conscious of what they ate, a number of cooking lessons took place in August and September and were given by Miss

Kelman, who held a first-class diploma from the National Training School of Cookery, South Kensington, London. In September the newspaper reports that “The lessons on cookery seem to be causing quite a fuore among the ladies. After Miss Kelman’s first lecture the butchers’ shops in the town were besieged for suet to make ‘clarified fat’ which is recommended as being so useful in cookery, while one enterprising tradesman has a number of pudding shapes displayed in his window for sale, in order to make capital of the passing whim of housewives. One butcher, too, had, the other day, a long array of bladders of fat exposed to view, while certain articles of diet are in much more demand than formerly, and the booksellers’ stock of notebooks must also be about exhausted, judging from the number in use at the Corn Exchange every day.” (September 14, 1877) However, according to certain medical sources, “The present studies of the ladies may bear fruit in due season, in the shape of various dainties, but it be true as one medical gentleman has said, that disease lurks behind fine dishes, then the doctors should have their turn.” (ibid.) The lessons were a great success and according to the newspaper these lessons were sorely needed: “There is, however, it is stated, great ignorance among housewives of this country as to how to prepare the materials which nature has supplied for our nourishment, but the time has now come for this to be remedied, and doubtless in future the ladies will be entitled to include a knowledge of the culinary art among their accomplishments.” (ibid.) The newspaper concluded that all good things must come to an end in spite of an ever increasing interest in the lectures, “the Corn Exchange has been filled every night with large and appreciative audiences, which altogether composed mostly of the female sex also included some of the masculine species.” (ibid.)

Another skillful performance was given by Miss Annie de Montford on a number of evenings in October. In the announcement in the newspaper she was described as a psychological star, who by mesmerizing people could bring them under her control and make them follow her orders, and when performed in front of an audience delighted the people present.

In November this announcement appeared in the newspapers: “The longest painting ever exhibited in Great Britain with startling dioramic and mechanical effect, Corn Exchange, Berwick, for five days only.” (November 16, 1877) How long the longest painting was we do not know, but the whole entertainment was called “Grand Excursion from London to India and back in two hours” and was apparently a mixture of vocal and instrumental music and historical and descriptive lectures. “The representation of the various places and events of interest on the route are well done and pleasing to the eye, while the effect is greatly heightened in some cases by transformations which almost give one an impression of reality.”

(November 23, 1877) Not quite film yet, but moving in that direction.

In the real world an auction was announced to be held for the salmon fishing in the river Tweed for the term of five years from 14 February 1878—the beginning of the Tweed net season. Two lots were to be auctioned off: Bailiff's Bat and Gard and Crow's Bat, all situated on the south side of the river within half a mile of the sea and which had lately been occupied by the late George Young.

At the beginning of December a soiree and social entertainment was given in the Corn Exchange arranged by the congregation from the Roman Catholic Chapel. About 1,000 turned up for the occasion and were told by the Rev. J. Farrel that this would be the last soiree he would preside over in Berwick as he had to leave due to bad health. He expressed his gratitude to the people of Berwick for the kindness shown towards him.

The AGM of the Corn Exchange Company took place at the beginning of February 1878. There was nothing special to announce at the meeting, and dividend was set at 5 percent. Those who were up for election were re-elected.

A new feature of religious work appeared in February, namely special missionary services for the children attending all the Sunday schools in the Borough. These special services were to be conducted by Mr. Josiah Spiers, who apparently had had success in this field in other parts of the country. The newspaper wrote that "if the movement had been adopted sooner perhaps there would not have been so much reason to deplore the fact that in this town as well as almost every other, many more keep away from church than those who go to it, and now that the experiment of pleasing children with religious services for the purpose of attracting them to these is to be tried, let us hope that the seeds of future good will be sown." (February 22, 1878) Whether the initiative was a success or not we do not know, we only know that Mr. Josiah Spiers delivered a special service for children in the Corn Exchange on April 18, 1878.

Even though Miss Annie de Montford had already visited Berwick in October the previous year, she returned in March for a repeat performance. In the advertisement in the newspaper she was pronounced the most powerful mesmerist in the world, and those who might doubt this were referred to opinions expressed in the English and American press and reported in the *Daily Mesmerist*.

The annual Choral Union Concert took place in March. On the programme was Hayden's *The Creation*, and it was the third oratorio by Hayden performed by

them. “Of the ability of the Choral Union to undertake this oratorio it is almost needless to speak; the fact that the members had already performed the Messiah and Elijah was sufficient to qualify and justify them in attempting the Creation, and the manner in which they acquitted themselves on Tuesday night was deserving of all praise.” (March 8, 1878)

Miss Annie de Montford was not the only person who performed acts that could not be explained logically. In March, the conjurer Boz paid his first visit to Berwick after a successful seven week stay in Edinburgh. He was described as “the sensational conjurer Boz, in his marvelous and bewildering entertainment of NECROMANTIC GEMS, concluding with BOZ’S EXTRAORDINARY FEASTS in the DARK SÉANCE, exactly as given by those great spiritualists the Davenport Brothers, including the whole of the wonderful manifestations—the floating instruments and the incomprehensible coat feat, together with series of original and sensational effects which apparently upset the laws of nature, and have cause so many thousands of persons to believe in spiritualism, and must be seen to be believed.” (March 15, 1878)

In April, an article appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser* deploring the lack of good public halls for hire in Berwick. The only hall available for public hire was the Corn Exchange and its suitability, according to the article, can be said to be questionable. “At the very outset we venture to say the only merit our Corn Exchange is possessed of is its capacity. It will accommodate, no not accommodate, it will hold a great number of people, and this is its only solitary advantage in its favour. Its cold cheerless walls, sweeping draught, and leaky roof render it by no means easy to fill with an audience, and equally uneasy for an audience to sit in.” (April 26, 1878) The article then goes on to talk about the lack of comfort supplied by the seating arrangement “The seated portion of the hall, however, is no much more comfortable than the unseated. Indeed, we question if it be not preferable to stand rather than pay extra money for the punishment of sitting upon a rude, hard, coarse board, unfurnished with any support for our back. In this respect the gallery has an advantage, each seat having a back, although nothing but the bare boards to sit upon.” (ibid.) The bad conditions do not stop at the facilities for the audience. The accommodation for the artists are described as dirty, dingy and unfurnished. All in all it compares very badly with similar Corn Exchanges in the area, such as Galashiels, Hawick and Jedburgh, and to top it all “the hire of the room alone being most exorbitant and much above what is charged for comfortably and elegantly furnished halls in other towns.” (ibid.)

In July, a bazaar in connection with St Mary’s Church was announced to be held in

the Corn Exchange on 6 and 7 August, with the object of raising funds to pay for the removal of the organ to a chamber to be built adjoining the chancel, and for a few other improvements.

An even more ambitious project was put forward by the Parish of Duddo. On 3 and 4 September, a bazaar was to be held with the aim of raising £1,500 required for the building of a new church, under the patronage of no fewer than 47 patrons, all listed in the newspaper.

The St Mary's Bazaar was opened by the Archdeacon Hamilton of Lindisfarne, who talked at length about the success of the new parish that was established when St Mary's was built in 1858, and the fact that the church needed to be extended was a sure sign of the success. He then went on to praise "The humble-minded and personally pious founder of St Mary's Church, Captain Gordon, who would today rejoice that the objects of his munificence had been realized. The kind-hearted and generous Misses Askews and their equally benevolent brother would indeed have joined in the work today with heart and purse, and thus helped to complete the good which their liberality initiated; and I cannot forbear referring to Mr. Dunlop, who with persevering zeal continued from the opening of the Church until his death to transact the secular business, and to contribute to the sustentation of the services of St Mary's as its first ever faithful churchwarden." (August 9, 1878) The usual items were for sale at the stalls, and visitors could have their fortune told by a gipsy or be weighed for a penny, but "In addition to all these and the attractions of the stalls there were one or two ingenious inventions got up for the amusement and profit. One of these was a Loan Art Exhibition by Mr. R. Fleming, which was extremely clever and mirth provoking, although it did cause some disappointment to a few, who from the show bill anticipated an interesting collection of pictures and other specimens of art. The objects exhibited comprised a lot of curious articles; for instance. 'Pleasant memories of Childhood'(by Tophi) were represented by some sweetmeats. 'The meeting of Blucher and Wellington' (by Shumacher) was portrayed by two boots; the portrait of the Queen by a postage stamp; the Belle of the Town (by Statham) by the town crier's bell ... and the 'Red Sea' by a capital C painted red.' (ibid.) During the two days of the bazaar, proceeds amounted to about £330 and to that should be added £120 already obtained through subscription.

The Matthews' Minstrels gave a concert in the Corn Exchange at the end of August. A large and appreciative audience enjoyed the concert which showed few innovations from what had been seen on previous occasions, apart from "Mr. Charles Smith showed his marvelous power of balance on an ordinary pair of



skates, which were held up for inspection of the audience, in a Canadian skate dance, and also sang a comical song in a most amusing manner.” (August 30, 1878) What sort of skates they were and whether this could have been the first appearance of roller-skates in Berwick is unclear.

A chance to invest in fine art occurred in September when it was announced that “The Metropolitan and Continental Fine Art Society will exhibit a collection of valuable oil paintings in the Long Room, Corn Exchange, on Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, September 7th, 9th and 10th 1878.” (September 6, 1878) Mr. A. L. Miller was entrusted with the cataloguing and selling of the paintings. “This collection of highly finished modern oil paintings, comprising landscapes, cattle, figures, river, mountain, and lake scenery, views in Norway, Bavaria, Hungary, Upper and Lower Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Rome, Normandy, the Tyrol, on the Rhine, Holland, Germany etc., are all in very superior gilt frames.” (ibid.) How many of these paintings ended up the walls of people in Berwick we do not know, and it would have been interesting to have been told some of the names of the artists.

The bazaar for the purpose of raising funds towards the building of a new Episcopal Church for the Parish of Duddo was opened in the Corn Exchange by the Right Honourable Earl Percy who talked about the dedication of the local people to this project, and the fact that a third of the money needed had already been collected was a proof of this. He finished with these words “I have only one word more to say. It is sometimes remarked that the holding of bazaars for this purpose is a matter of doubtful propriety. Well, all I can say about that is that every nation has its idiosyncrasy, and the idiosyncrasy of the English nation is that they cannot go through any serious undertaking whether it be a European congress or the erection of a church without a dinner or a bazaar. I therefore call upon you to be true to the tradition of Englishness, and to be as extravagant in your outlay on the present occasion as the strength of your purses permit.” (September 6, 1878) The division of labour shines through very clearly in this opening, as well as in most of the other ones that took place in the Corn Exchange. When Colonel W. MacDonald MacDonald of Rossie and St Martins said “I think it is a scene one will not forget soon—those dear ladies round us, and all the work which I see has accumulated under their hands.” (ibid.) He also talks of bazaars being “happy combinations to bring out the skill of the fair sex; and we know they are ever ready with their warm hearts, and their ready fingers to aid every good and noble work.” (ibid.)

For those who still had money left after the church bazaar there was the chance to

take up the offer of dancing classes for beginners advertised by Mr. R. R. Todd on the 13 September in *The Berwick Advertiser*.

There was also a chance to set up as a cabinet maker. Mr. Dods, who was apparently retiring from business was selling all the new household furniture at an auction organized by Mr. R. Lambert in the Corn Exchange. The fact that it says new household furniture indicates that it must have been things from his workshop that had not been sold and not his own private belongings. Also auctioneered on the same day, at his workshop in Bridge Street, all “the stock-in-trade, including benches, turning lathe, deals, and other goods suitable for cabinet makers and others” (September 27, 1878)

Mr. T. Rees Evans gave a concert at the end of October in the Corn Exchange. Apparently the concert was not a financial success and Mr. Rees Evans ended up with a personal loss due to the meagre attendance. The newspaper implies that the reason for the lack of support, not only in this case, but on other occasions as well, was “that the music was of too classical a character to be appreciated by the public generally.” (October 25, 1878) Even though the newspaper points out that this was not the case on this occasion, people seemingly did not want to run the risk of being exposed to Mr. Rees Evan’s high-brow music.

In November the local lodge of Odd Fellows gave a ball for about 100 couples who “engaged in ‘the poetry of motion’ in the area of the hall.” (November 22, 1878)

A more down-to-earth message could be found in the newspaper where the following notice appeared: “Flour for cakes and pastry. The subscriber directs attention to his stock of Hungarian, French, and self-raising flour, which will be found most suitable for cakes and pastry. William Anderson, Corn Exchange Building, Berwick.” (December 6, 1878)

The year ended with yet another announcement of a visit to Berwick from the Matthews Minstrels, promising a great monster programme.

The annual meeting of the Corn Exchange Company, Ltd. took place in early February, 1879. Things seemed to be running smoothly and a dividend of 5 per cent was agreed upon. There was one thing that concerned the directors, however: in spite of the general success of the Corn Exchange, it was felt that this could be improved further by changing the opening time from 12 noon to 11:30 a.m., the reason being: “All the trains from the north, west and south, came in at a time which would enable sellers of grain to reach the Corn Exchange with great

convenience at that time, and he [Mr. Clay] wanted to believe that the corn merchants would make it equally convenient to be at their stalls at that hour. If this alteration was made, the market would be closed, the selling of grain, and the payment for it accomplished a little after one o'clock; and this would enable people who came from directions time to get other business arrangements conducted, so that they might have the opportunity of going home by the early trains." (February 7, 1879) This sounds like an early attempt to avoid business going to other towns—a problem which to this day has not been successfully resolved.

At the beginning of February the Drapers' Ball was held in the Corn Exchange, in celebration of the early closing movement. About 17 couples took part and danced "to the strains of Mr. Hogg's Quadrille Band. Refreshments were produced by Mr. A. Purves, Cannon Tavern." (February 7, 1879)

Also in February a campanological entertainment was announced to take place in the Corn Exchange. There would be two performances, a special afternoon performance for children and an evening performance. The group was called The Royal Hand Bell Ringers and according to the newspaper "they are so well-known that they scarcely call for any commendation from us, but we hope the audiences on both occasions will be such as the fame of the company entitles us to expect and such as they have had on two previous occasions while visiting the town." (February 7, 1879) As a special treat, "By the kind permission by the Mayor the hand bell ringers will play a selection of tunes upon the bells in the Town Hall at a quarter to seven o'clock this evening." (ibid.) The concert went very well: "The manner in which the five executants made use of the silvery toned instruments to produce a harmonious jingle, and to interpret various pieces of music gave evidence of much skill and taste." (February 14, 1879) In addition to the "harmonious jingle", the entertainment also contained a number of glees and humorous sketches. The conductor was Mr. D. S. Miller, who alluded to the peal of bells in the spire of the Town Hall by saying that "of the eight bells one was cracked, but the peal was a very fine one, and there were few in the country to match it." (ibid.)

The actors Walter Bentley and Miss M. Bell gave a dramatic recital in the Corn Exchange on 17 February. Walter Bentley, whose original name was William Begg, was born in Scotland in 1849 and had spent some time in New Zealand and Australia, but returned to London in 1874 where he changed his name and started touring the country performing dramatic pieces mainly by Shakespeare. He eventually returned to Australia where he died in 1927 by committing suicide after a long period of ill-health, but before that he had been involved in establishing

Walter Bentley's College of Elocution and Dramatic Art which later became Sydney Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. The programme consisted mostly of Shakespeare and Walter Scott, but unfortunately the recital does not appear to have been reviewed in the newspapers.

March brought along the annual concert of the Berwick Choral Union. On the programme was Handel's oratorio "The Messiah", and even though this was the second time the Choral Union had performed this piece of music it says in the review that "to most of the members the music was entirely new, as they had only recently joined the society, so that the labour of mastering the difficulties which the oratorio presents, was by no means lessened by the repetition of the work." (March 7, 1879) To ensure a professional performance the Choral Union had called upon the help of an orchestra and a number of professional singers. This, of course, meant that the Choral Union "in order to afford a treat to the public of Berwick, have to undergo considerable pecuniary sacrifices; in fact it is doubtful if the audience on Friday night, large as it was, was sufficiently numerous to make the entertainment remunerative to the promoters." (ibid.)

Mr. Gompertz's Spectral Opera Company returned to Berwick in March, where they gave four performances in the Corn Exchange. The entertainment seemed to be a combination of "new technology" and more traditional entertainment. It says in the announcement that the effect of the entertainment performed by 14 people "will be enhanced by the introduction of the spectroscope, magnesium, oxy-hydrogen, and other lights, by which optic delusions will be produced." (March 21, 1879) The troupe performed three pieces: Schiller's "Storm of Thoughts"; Goethe's "Faust" and Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol".

The Choral Union gave a second concert at the end of April, which was unusual. The background to this concert was to raise money to meet the expenses incurred by the employment of an orchestra and professional singers at their first concert. The audience was large and appreciative and everything went to everybody's satisfaction. Only in one number were the critics able to find fault and this was the "Soldiers Chorus" from Faust "which was rendered by the men alone; some of the high notes were rough, and the Berwick burr was occasionally very perceptible. These crudities, however, were perhaps unavoidable." (May 2, 1879)

Also in May General Tom Thumb and Commodore Nutt, which the newspaper had for some unknown reason spelt Knott, appeared again in the Corn Exchange, this time together with Professor Millar and his daughter. They had all appeared before at the Corn Exchange in Berwick, but not together. Tom Thumb, was born in

America in 1838 and died in 1883. He had travelled all over the world together with Commodore Nutt or Knott, who was American and lived from 1848-1881 and had only recently returned from America. Professor Millar's role seems to have been reduced to tying the various items of the programme together. Commodore Knott's talent was without doubt "as might be gathered from that he played clown last winter through the entire run of the Crystal Palace pantomime, and there is a jollity about his face that, like a signboard, announces the proprietor to be a retailer of fun." (May 23, 1879)

In June trouble hit the Corn Exchange again when "the Inspector of Weight and Measurers tasted the fresh butter offered for sale in the Exchange, and seized 4½ lbs. which was deficient in weight. This is the smallest quantity that has ever been forfeited." June 20, 1879)

The Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light Company held their annual meeting in the Corn Exchange in July and the dividend available this year was somewhat lower than the previous year. This was partly due to the reduction in the price of gas decided at the meeting the previous year and the fact that the directors had decided not to draw upon the reserve fund. The Chairman, Alderman Purves, further explained that the fact that new gas had to be laid down due to repairs that had taken place in the streets, which all added to the slightly worsened financial situation. Dr. Robert Carr Fluker fully endorsed what the Chairman had said and added that "Although only a slight shareholder in the Gas Company yet he had always taken considerable interest in its work in consequence of his official position as a medical officer of health for the borough. He thought the leakage of gas must have been a great loss to the Company, for at some places to which his attention had been called, the smell was just like that proceeding from a gas meter, so that although there had been a slight decrease in the dividend in consequence of the extra expense, yet he thought the Company would be amply recouped by the great saving it would effect in gas in consequence of the improvements. He thought the inhabitants of the town were much obliged to the Directors for what they had done, for whereas that would provide them with better light it would do something towards keeping the inhabitants in a better state of health particularly in the lower parts of the town where pure air was necessary to maintain life in its integrity." (July 18, 1879)

The Eastern Border Horticultural Society held their annual flower show in the Corn Exchange in September. The exhibition was apparently going from strength to strength and was now one of the principal shows in the Borders. The general opinion of the state of the hall in the Corn Exchange was hinted at when it was

said that “The objects sent for view or competition were arranged on tables round the sides and in the centre of the large hall, the ordinary dingy appearance of which was pleasantly relieved by the brilliance and variety of their hues.” (September 5, 1879) As the weather had been bad during the summer and there had been little sun, some products had suffered and the fruit was both small in quantity and rather poor in quality. The only articles in this department which were equal to those of former years were the grapes, which, however, are not affected like apples, pears, and berries, by atmospherical influences. This only makes sense if we assume that the grapes were grown in greenhouses. The five judges, who distributed the awards to the general satisfaction of the people there, were Mr. W. Mackay, gardener, Dunse Castle; Mr. W. Macadam, gardener, Haggerston Castle; Mr. W. Waite, gardener, Cheswick House; Mr. G. Statters, gardener, Longridge Towers; and Mr. P. Common, Chirnside Nursery. At the conclusion of their labour the committee and officials dined at the Hen & Chickens Hotel. To enhance the atmosphere at the exhibition, Mr. J. Hogg’s Quadrille Band, was placed in the gallery to entertain the visitors.

Something which had not happened for many years occurred in November— the Mayor announced that he was going to give a ball, and it took place on 6 November. Great efforts had been put into decorating the hall. “The gallery and the recess on the north side of the hall, were embellished with plants, shrubs, and statuary so as to resemble conservatories.” (November 7, 1879) There were also “a large ebony cabinet inlaid with gold, several handsome gilt and beveled mirrors, bracket-vases, images, and busts of heathen gods and goddesses, and many eminent men of ancient and modern times, which had been kindly lent for the occasion by Mr. W. Wilson, sculptor, Tweedmouth.” (ibid.) “To meet the want of the large company which had assembled at the invitation of the Mayor, the whole resources of the Corn Exchange were called into requisition. There was no extra porch outside the door, but a guard of honour was stationed there, consisting of two sergeants and twenty gunners of the Artillery Volunteers, of which the Chief Magistrate is the Captain Commandant.” (ibid.) The arrangement of the decoration of the building had been done by Mr. W. Purves, of Messrs. Purves & Sons, Hide Hill, assisted by Messrs. Waite Brothers of Hope Nurseries, and as had often been the case, the shrubs and exotic plants had been sent by Captain D. Milne Home, Paxton House. Food was served upstairs by Mrs. Scott of the Red Lion Hotel, game was given by Sir D. C. Marjoribanks from Guisachan, his estate in Invernesshire, and a salmon, weighing 20 lbs. caught the previous day in the Tweed at Horncliffe by Mr H. Christison was generously presented to the Mayor for supper. The list of the people who accepted the Mayor’s invitation is published in the newspaper and is an extensive list of a “Who’s Who” in the Borders in 1879,

and no doubt the ball must have been the highlight in the social calendar that year.

A few days before the above event, the Oddfellows' Ball had taken place in the Corn Exchange. The hall was decorated with, among other things, the silk banner of the Loyal Border Lodge bearing the insignia of the Independent United Order of Oddfellows on one side and on the other a representation of the Good Samaritan with the inscription "Go thou and do likewise". About 250 people attended the ball and "dancing began at nine o'clock, and this pleasant exercise was continued with unabated vigour until an early hour next morning." November 7, 1879) Mr. Hogg supplied the music assisted by Col. Macdonald's Pipers and the Spittal Brass Band. George Wood, of the Coach and Horses Tavern, High Street was in charge of refreshments.

1880 was a leap year, which was reflected in the article in the *Berwick Advertiser* of the Bachelors' Ball, which took place in the Corn Exchange at the beginning of February. "Though this year is a leap year, and therefore the ladies are entitled to take the initiative in regard to matters affecting both sexes, those gentlemen of Berwick and district who are representatives of single blessedness, show no desire to yield their place to the dames, for they have again come forward and provided an enjoyable entertainment which, let us hope, is but the prelude to their acquisition of matrimonial honours." (February 6, 1880) It is quite amazing to think of all the effort that again and again went into decorating the Corn Exchange, certainly the business of selling calico must have been booming in Berwick in those days, or maybe a certain amount of re-cycling was going on already then. In terms of decoration this ball was no exception. In the review in the newspaper: "Bachelors' quarters are not generally considered attractive, but the building which the single gentlemen who provided the entertainment, selected for the reception of the guests, was quite an exception, as it appeared almost like an abode of fairies, more especially when the galaxy of beauty assembled and shone in it." (ibid.) As seems to have become a usual improvement for the dancers, a special floor had to be laid down. In this case it was done by George Richardson, Tweedmouth. The plants were arranged by Messrs. Waite of Hope Nurseries, who were also in charge of decorating the supper table in the long room upstairs, where "the bachelors came out strong in the culinary department, as the repast was most *recherche*' and tempting." (ibid.) Again both the list of the gentlemen who issued the invitation and those who received them are published in the newspaper and gives a clear indication of who were deemed important in Berwick area.

In February, Berwick Corn Exchange Company held its annual meeting. The previous year had not been a particularly eventful one: things seemed to be going

well, a dividend of 5 per cent was declared and the only decision facing the directors was to elect a new director in place of John Clay, Berwick, who had died. His place was taken by Mr. R. G. Bolam.

In March, it was announced that a bazaar arranged by Berwick-upon-Tweed Museum, Literary and Scientific Institute and School of Art would take place in the Corn Exchange sometime in September. The aim was to raise funds for new buildings in the High Street. Unfortunately, there seems to be no further mention of this bazaar, so we do not know if it took place at all or how successful it might have been.

The Berwick Equitable Benefit Building Society held its half-yearly meeting in the Corn Exchange in June. There seem to have been some practical problems, as “Mr. Shrimpton drew attention to the fact that the interest on the members’ deposits was not entered into their books.” (June 25, 1880) Mr. Husband, the secretary, explained how the system worked and why, but it led to the decision that the directors should consider the matter.

A rather inconspicuous entry can be found in the newspaper in July: a ball took place in the Corn Exchange, it was attended by about 30 couples and “a fight occurred during the proceedings.” (July 30, 1880)

The art scene in Berwick seemed to be flourishing. In December the Berwick School of Art held its annual meeting in the Corn Exchange to hear how the school had progressed during the year and to view the works of the students on display, which “consisted of mechanical and freehand drawings, watercolour and oil paintings. All these showed that the scholars were most painstaking and diligent: while many indicated that the students had attained a high degree of excellence, as their productions were really valuable specimens of art.” (December 3, 1880) 71 students were enrolled in the various classes. The teacher was James Wallace, the father of the better known painter also called James. A great number of prizes were handed out in categories ranging from freehand drawing to perspective, geometry and anatomy, and a number of works had been sent to the annual examination at the art school in South Kensington in London, who had also loaned nine paintings to the school as subjects of study during the session.

The Berwick and District Bachelors’ Ball was the first major social event in the Corn Exchange in 1881. The article in the newspaper states “That numerous army of single gentlemen of this town and neighbourhood who have not yet sacrificed themselves at the altar of Hymen, but who appear from their actions once a year to



be wavering between *toujours ou jamais* in the case of matrimony have again held their annual carnival, as on Wednesday night the ball which they give to spinsters and married friends, took place with its accustomed *éclat* and success in the Corn Exchange, which for the occasion was transformed into an elegant palatial hall replete with luxury and comfort.” (January 21, 1881) The actual decoration of the hall followed the pattern from the previous years, with an added pat on the back for the people who had arranged the ball was given: “it was the theme of admiration of all the guest who were unanimously in their opinion that the bachelors of Berwick and district had shown much refinement and taste in fitting up their place of entertainment, which was all the more remarkable when they did not call in the aid of the ladies.” (ibid.) The aid of the ladies was, however, not dismissed completely as, “The bachelors of course, however independent they may be, must inevitably have recourse to the ladies to take a share of responsibility in an entertainment of this kind, and the following kindly came to their rescue to act a matrons.” (ibid.)

The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company (Limited) took place at the beginning of February. The dividend was set at 5 per cent, and apart from a discussion started by Mr. Hogg, Hope Park, Coldstream, whose grasp of the financial affairs seemed somewhat wanting regarding the existence and function of a reserve fund, there were no points for discussion. The report was adopted, the retiring directors were re-elected as was the auditor, Mr. Roxburgh, after which the meeting ended.

In April a ball under the auspices of the Border Union Lodge of the Independent United Order of Mechanics was held. In spite of the nicely decorated hall and Mr. Hogg’s band being improved by the addition of a harp, “The company was not so numerous as former occasions which, no doubt, was owing to the scarcity of money at present and several counter attractions.” (April 22, 1881)

Not much took place in the Corn Exchange during the summer months, which possibly could be another reference to the scarcity of money referred to above. The exception was the Berwick Parish Church Bazaar in the middle of August, which was held to cover the cost of repairs done to the organ of the Parish Church. The cost of this came to about £700 “towards which there has been raised by subscription generously given by ladies and gentlemen in the town and neighbourhood, a little over £300, still leaving a balance of £400 to be collected. This sum for which the Churchwardens and Sidesmen have rendered themselves personally responsible, is, in terms of the agreement entered into between them and the Contractors, not payable until October next. There are in addition to the

restoration of the organ certain improvements in the church, such as painting the interior and repairing the roof, which are imperatively required. The cost of these cannot be estimated at less than £300.” (September 9, 1881) It is an amazing thought that the officials of the church would be held personally responsible for what would then have been a very substantial sum of money. However, they seemed unfazed by this and promptly started organizing a bazaar. A committee was set up. And a group of patronesses was established, led by the Duchess of Northumberland. Articles to be sold at the bazaar were collected, presenting an estimated value of about £1,200. To give a taste of what was going to be sold can be mentioned: pictorial screens, one made by Miss Milne Home, Graden; more handiwork such as a view of Alnwick Castle by Lady Ridley; a pretty fern case and aquarium given by Mr. George Lamb, Woolmarket; a variety of game given by many of the gentlemen of the district; a handsome ottoman furnished in black inlaid with gold, donated by the Misses Martin, The Lions. The cost of decorating the hall had been kept down by re-using many of the decorations from the Bachelors’ Ball earlier in the year. As was always the case on occasions like this the actual opening of the bazaar was a lengthy affair with many speeches.

The speakers usually started out by saying that they were not going to say very much as everybody was eager to start buying from the stalls, upon which they more often than not started a long speech which might have contained some relevant information but more often than not veered off on a tangent and never got back to the subject. The first speaker was Colonel Milne Home. He spent most of his time talking about his friend and parliamentary colleague, Sir Dudley Coutts Majoribanks, who had been invited to open the bazaar but could not leave his estate Guisachan in Invernesshire and had therefore sent a letter to Milne Home. Milne Home went on to praise Sir Dudley, and expressed regret that as he was about to be elevated to the House of Lords he would lose a colleague. Milne Home also revealed a secret in Sir Dudley’s letter, namely the name that Sir Dudley would take when he became a peer, but of course he could not say what it is but only that it would be reminiscent of his old constituency. He then went on to talk about the idea of bazaars and their success saying that “he would not be surprised if the Chancellor of the Exchequer some day, in order to make up a deficit, or instead of adding 1 d to the income tax, would start a national bazaar or fancy fair throughout the country.” (ibid.) This idea seems to be moving towards the idea of some kind of national lottery. For the record, we now know that Sir Dudley became the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron of Tweedmouth.

The next speaker was the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne, the Ven. George Hans Hamilton, who had been the Vicar of Berwick for 12 years before he was

appointed to his present position. He also talked about Sir Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, and mentioned the gift of the west window of the Parish Church from Sir Dudley. As he was under no obligation not to reveal the name Sir Dudley was going to take when he was made a peer, he said that he was going to be called Lord Tweedmouth. After praising Mr. T. Rees Evans, the organist of the Parish Church, for his contribution to music in Berwick, followed by a few words from the Mayor the bazaar was finally opened. Altogether more than £900 was raised and the Churchwardens and Sidesmen could breathe a sigh of relief.

Colonel Milne Home appeared again a few months later as one of the patrons of the Volunteers' Ball together with Mr. H.K.H. Jerningham. About 500 people attended, which followed the lines of previous years in terms of decoration and activities and was, as usual, the first event of the festive season and also marked the end of the year.

1882 started much as it had done in previous years. The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company was held in February. A dividend of 5 per cent was decided on, and the directors that were eligible for re-election were re-elected, and after a short meeting a vote of thanks to the Chairman terminated the meeting.

The next event of entertainment was the annual Choral Union Concert in April. It would appear that the music scene in Berwick was not doing all that well: "The study of music does not seem to be in so much favour as it was some years ago; at least St. Cecilia cannot draw so many devotees to her shrine as but a short time since, she could." (April 7, 1882) The Society had started 13 years before and after a steady increase of members it was now back to its original number of members. About 60 vocalists performed in front of an audience, which in spite of a fairly well-filled hall could have been considerably larger. However, the concert was well received and Mr. B. Barker, who officiated, and Miss J. Cuthbertson, who accompanied, were given praise for their efforts.

The same month Mr. T. Rees Evans arranged a concert in the Corn Exchange in aid of the Town Improvement Fund. "It had been the original intention of the promoter of the concert to give it on behalf of a fund for the lighting of the Town Hall Clock, but learning that the Town Improvement Committee required money to repair the New Road, which is one of the most enjoyable walks in Berwick, Mr. Evans agreed to devote the proceeds to that object." (April 28, 1882) Again the audience was fairly small which "is to be regretted, because the absence of many of the public shows that an appreciation of music is lacking on their part, while it also hinders desirable local improvements from being effected." (ibid.) At the end of the

concert the Mayor thanked Mr. Rees Evans and the performers and Mr. Evans acknowledged the compliment by saying that this concert was the 21st anniversary of his first concert in Berwick and “He intended to devote the remainder of his life to the giving of concerts for the benefit of deserving objects and the next would by request, be for the Berwick Infirmary and Dispensary. It would be next autumn or the beginning of winter and he hoped to have then on the platform at least 300 singers.” (ibid.)

The highlight of the summer entertainment was no doubt the Lilliputian Aztecs, who appeared in the Side Room of the Corn Exchange in June. They were called Maximo and Bartolo, and had apparently been exhibited all over the world. “They are male and female and were discovered in Central America in 1849. They have bird shaped heads, resembling that of the eagle, and bear no resemblance to anything hitherto included in the human species . . . The peculiarity about their hair is that, instead of being hard and stiff, as might naturally enough be supposed, is exceedingly soft and pliant . . . They seem to trust most confidently in the lady by whom they are accompanied, and who by the kindly way in which she speaks to them reveals to the best advantage their feeble intelligence.” (June 16, 1882) It would be interesting to know to what degree the people who came to watch these two people actually believed that what they were looking at was real. We now know that these two unfortunate individuals, probably from El Salvador, suffered from microcephaly. It is unknown if they really were siblings but they were removed from their environment by enterprising hucksters who made up their story and exhibited them in so-called freak shows.

The Berwick and Tweedmouth Gaslight Company held their annual meeting in the Corn Exchange in July. The Company was doing very well and was able to pay a dividend of no less than 10 per cent. This seemed to differ from the general situation of the country and “The chairman moved the adoption of the report. He could only say that considering the state of business of all kinds in the country they had great reason to congratulate themselves. The Gas Company had done exceedingly well during the past year, especially when it was remembered what had been done to the streets. They had also enclosed the ground at Spittal and were still able to offer a dividend of 10 per cent . . . They might also congratulate themselves on being able to reduce the price of gas 3d per thousand feet, notwithstanding the difficulty they had had to contend with.” (July 21, 1882)

The people who had benefited from the high dividend paid out by the Gas Company might have invested some of that money in the shares of the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company (limited) and the Border Counties Agricultural

Association which were offered for sale at the Corn Exchange in August. Investing in the Salmon fisheries was apparently a somewhat risky affair. Mr. Paulin, the secretary of the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company gave out some statistics before the bidding started, and it appeared that over the last 10 years dividends had fluctuated from nil in 1880, 1878 and 1875 to 25 per cent in 1872, but Mr. Paulin expressed a certain amount of optimism as to the future of the salmon fishing in the Tweed, as might be expected. 85 for £10 each were offered. Mr. Paulin's optimism must have worked as they were sold to Mr. Black, Cheswick, for £11 15s each, and he also bought the shares in the Border Counties Agricultural Association (limited).

At the end of September Matthew's Minstrels paid yet another visit to Berwick, and as usual were well received by the audience, who liked the programme consisting of songs as well as dancing, and "The various songs were interspersed with the usual puns and exchanges of wit, and the drollery of these frequently excited the risible faculties of the audience." (September 29, 1882)

The annual Volunteers' Ball took place in the Corn Exchange at the beginning of December. In spite of its extensive coverage in the newspaper it is difficult to find any deviation in terms of arrangements and decoration and it "was notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, as successful as any former entertainment under the same auspices." (December 8, 1882)

At the end of January, 1883, the painter Cormack Brown exhibited a number of his watercolour paintings as well as oil pictures and sketches in the Long Room of the Corn Exchange. About 40 pictures were on display, many of them depicting local scenery, such as fishing villages, Ayton Castle and Norham Castle, but the main attraction was a copy of "The Descent from the Cross" by Rubens owned by Mr. Douglass Murray, Long Yester. Several of the pictures were on loan from, among others, A. Mitchess Innes, Esq., Ayton Castle and H. M. H. Jerningham, Esq., Longridge Towers. Whether this exhibition increased the general interest in paintings is hard to know, but J. Owalds held a sale of oil paintings in the very same room in the Corn Exchange at the end of February and the beginning of March.

Money could also be invested in shares in the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Limited and in the Berwick Corn Exchange Company Limited. At a sale of shares at the beginning of March the Salmon Fisheries shares were sold at a slightly higher price than the previous year to Mr. T. G. Turner, and the Corn Exchange shares were sold just slightly above par to Mr. James R. Black, Cheswick.

The AGM of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company took place at the end of February, and as the year before a dividend of 5 per cent was declared. Improvements to attract more business had been carried out “A heating apparatus at the cost of £176 10s has been placed in the building during the past year, which your directors trust will be found of great benefit to be a means of inducing more entertainments to be held in the Hall.” (March 2, 1883)

Starting 26 February, Poole’s Panorama visited Berwick for a week and drew large crowds of admiring audiences. In spite of being called an exhibition it seems more like an entertainment as tickets were sold to seats, which must mean that people were sitting down and watching. “The pictures shown embrace the principal scenery and grand sights in the world, exhibiting various customs, manners, sports, and pastimes in a great number of countries. There are also representations of the chief events in the Russian, Turkish, Zulu, Afghan, Boer and Egyptian wars . . . all of which are given in a remarkable realistic manner by moving figures and with startling effects. Many of the pictures are also shown under different aspects, such as by day and night, also moonlight.” (March 2, 1883) In addition to this there was also music and singing and “Mr. Orville Pitcher as an exponent of Ethiopian eccentricity creates much laughter by his stump speech and other, extravagances, while Mr. G.A. Poole, who acts as a guide, occasionally sings a funny song, which is greatly appreciated.” (ibid.) The fact that there was a special reduction for school children indicates that it was seen as instruction as well as entertainment.

In June it was announced that “Mr. Jas. J. Oswald has received instructions from Messrs. Samuel Peace & Son, Nottingham, to sell by auction as above on Tuesday 12th June, a valuable consignment of lace goods, direct from the loom.” (June 8, 1883) If this auction was meant for the general public, one would think that it would be seen as unfair competition by the local tradespeople.

Also in June about 600 hundred people gathered in the Corn Exchange for a public soiree. The occasion was the ordination of Rev. J. Rorke to the pastoral charge of Church Street Church. Rev. John Smith, Wallace Green Church, expressed his pleasure in welcoming the new minister. This was followed by no fewer than 10 other ministers expressing “addresses suitable to the occasion” (June 22, 1883) “In the course of the proceedings, Mr. W. Young, junior, presented Mr. Rorke, in the name of the ladies of the Church, with a handsome pulpit robe.” (ibid.) Apparently it was not deemed appropriate for the ladies to present the gift themselves.

An unsuccessful auction took place in the Corn Exchange in June. Mr. James J. Oswald offered for sale “those premises situated in Chapel Street, in the

occupation of Mr. John Baxter and others, consisting of front messuage, let out in tenements, with a horse stable and cow byre (to accommodate two horses and four cows), and several outhouses and large yard behind.” (June 22, 1833) The bidding only went up to £270, and as the reserved price was £380, it was bought in.

Another auction was held a few months later in September. We do not know whether this one was more successful, but we do know that three lots were auctioned off. One was “All that old-established and fully licensed house known as CANNON TAVERN, situated in Church Street, in Berwick-upon-Tweed, let to the Border Brewery Coy, as yearly tenants.” (September 21, 1883) The second lot was “All that messuage or dwelling house and shop with the yard and premises behind, situate and being Nos. 23 & 25 in West Street, Berwick, as the same are in the respective occupation of Mr. Cowen and Mr. Landreth.” (ibid.) The third lot was “All that messuage and dwelling house facing Bank Hill, with entrance from Golden Square, as the same is in the occupation of Miss Fleming.” (ibid.)

In December, the organist of Berwick Parish Church, Mr. Rees Evans, held a meeting in the Long Room of the Corn Exchange. The aim was to plan the concert on behalf of Berwick Infirmary, and also the possibility of holding Saturday evening concerts.

The beginning of 1884 was largely devoted to financial affairs. At the end of January, James J. Oswald offered for sale “The splendid collection of paintings, bronzes, china, art cabinets &c at present on exhibition and sale in the Corn Exchange.” (January 25, 1884) About a week later on 5, 6 and 7 February Mr. Oswald again offered for sale by public auction “a large and varied stock of china, porcelain, glass, earthenware &c, being part of the stock of a large manufacturing firm in the Potteries, who are winding up their estate.” (January 25, 1884)

On 16 February, Mr. J. D. Purves offered for sale by public auction 88 shares of the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Limited, and the same month saw the AGM of the Corn Exchange Company. Due to the large amount of repairs and improvements that had been carried out during the year, the amount available for dividend was not as large as had perhaps been expected, and a dividend of 3½ per cent was declared. The biggest expense had been on acquiring 200 chairs, and the rooms upstairs had been painted and wallpapered. The chairman, Mr. D. Logan declared that the extra expenses had been necessary as “We have competition, and we want to keep the rooms as comfortable as possible. That necessitates extra outlay.” (February 1, 1884) In February yet another auction took place in the Long Room at the Corn Exchange. Again Mr. James J. Oswald was in charge and had

received instructions from Messrs. Wilson Bros., St Mary's Works, Sheffield, to sell by auction a choice collection ranging from electro-plated cutlery to soup tureens, coffee trays and butter coolers, and bread baskets. The auction was mainly aimed at people from the hotel and restaurant trade.

A meeting of the Equitable Benefit Building Society was held in the Corn Exchange in February to discuss an alteration in the rules of the society. It was agreed to, whereas other changes in the running of the society were referred to a committee. On the whole it seemed as if there was a feeling among the members that a thorough revision of the society was needed.

Other problems were of concern when Mr. Rees Evans held the second of a series of concerts in the Corn Exchange "which was well filled by a numerous audience, amongst whom, however, were several disorderly boys and young men, who at interval created a great deal of unnecessary noise and sometimes forgot good manner." (February 15, 1884) One of the performers, Mr. A. Smith from Tweedmouth, was drowned out by the offensive reception given to his singing that "The disorderly conduct of some of the audience had by this time become so intolerable and impudent that Mr. Evans felt himself called upon to state that he could not think of inviting people to come there and sing if they were to be subjected to such insulting and dastardly treatment." (February 15, 1884) The bad behavior stopped and the rest of the concert finished in a satisfactory manner.

When the sales of the shares in the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company took place on 16 February, Mr. Purves offered a few remarks before the actual bidding began, saying that "at former occasions like this they had usually been favoured with the presence of Mr. M. G. Crossman and Mr. G. L. Paulin, the Chairman and Secretary of the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company. These gentlemen were, however, absent that day, and he was sure he spoke the sentiments of all present when he said that they much deplored the loss that these gentlemen had sustained, and the circumstances in which they were obliged to be absent. They all very much sympathized with these gentlemen as well as with their families and relatives." (February 22, 1884) The auction ended with Councillor Robert Boston, Spittal buying all 88 shares.

At the end of February the third and last of the so-called popular concerts was given in the Corn Exchange. As Mr. Rees Evans was away giving a lecture in Coldstream, the concert was conducted by his son, Mr. Becket Evans. Yet again the concert was disturbed leading to the following comment in the newspaper: "We regret to say that a few efforts were made to disturb the concert, but these



fortunately failed. Some persons at one time allowed a pigeon to escape and fly in the room; while at another they set fire to a cracker, which flew about and discharged itself in a corner of the hall. The pigeon, after fluttering against the wall in a state of fright, sank down in the gallery, where it was quietly pocketed by a lady. We are glad to say that the temper of the audience generally, was decidedly against these dastardly and indecent attempts on the part of ill-bred persons to interrupt their enjoyment, and the cries of ‘Put him out’, which greeted the author of these silly freaks, ought to convince them that if they persist in what is likely to become an intolerable nuisance, they will receive as little consideration at the hands of the public as they seem to have for others.” (February 29, 1884) One wonders if the “pocketed pigeon” ended up on the lady’s dinner table. Maybe the organizers of the concert should have sought the help of Captain Darling, who around the same time started a course of lectures for the First Battalion of Tweed Artillery Volunteers on “Military Tactics”.

The last entertainment of the season given at Berwick by native talents was to be the Infirmary Concert, which took place in May.

Again the *Berwick Advertiser* bemoaned the fact that association such as the Choral Union and the Tonic-Sol-Fa had great difficulties in attracting sufficient numbers, and they give as an example that at the recently held Infirmary Concert only about 70 people offered their services in the concert even though all local amateurs had been invited, and none of the church choirs had been willing to take part in the concert, something they had done the previous year for a similar occasion.

Not much happened at the Corn Exchange until the autumn when the return of The Jubilee Singers was announced for 6 October. The concert was attended by a large audience and the eleven singers, who had all been slaves and were now students at Fisk University, sang a selection of songs very much like what they had done on earlier visits to Berwick—a combination of spirituals and what they called slave songs that would have been sung by the slaves on the plantations. During the concert a volume containing the lives of the Jubilee Singers and their music and songs was sold. The review in the newspaper comments about the song “John Brown’s body lies mouldering in the grave”, whose delivery “was very different from the vulgar interpretation we occasionally hear in the streets.” (October 10, 1884)

Two meetings took place in the Corn Exchange regarding the Franchise Bill ((also called the Third Reform Bill) in October 1884. Its aim was to further extend the

suffrage in Britain and extend the same voting qualifications as existed in towns to the countryside. The bill was introduced by the Liberals under Prime Minister Gladstone, and although the Conservatives were for the bill in principle, the House of Lords had expressed certain reservations and sent it back to the House of Commons. Also being debated in Parliament was the Redistribution Act, which, if passed, would mean that Berwick would lose one of its members of Parliament and be reduced to just one.

The first meeting was arranged by the Berwick-upon-Tweed Liberal Association, and began with a demonstration marching down Castlegate and ending at the Corn Exchange, where the meeting was scheduled to start at 5 o'clock, with the Mayor, James Allan, as chairman. A great number of speakers addressed the meeting, among them Mr Jerningham, M.P., Longridge Towers and Sir Edward Grey, who both expressed their support for the Bill, and Mr. William Easton, Donaldson's Lodge, who pointed out the absurdity of the present law where the right to vote depended on where you lived. The Conservative argument was that agricultural workers were not fit to have the vote, an argument that was picked up by Mr. John Brown, Ancroft, who said that he had been confronted with that argument himself and he went on to say, with background in the Reform Bill of 1867, that "If they look at the Parliament of 1867, they would find that a large majority of Liberal members were sent from the boroughs, and a large majority of Tory members were sent from counties. Mr. Disraeli therefore thought he could indulge in a little cheap generosity." (October 24, 1884) He extended the right to vote for people living in boroughs, but made sure that the line was set well above the agricultural labourers in the counties. So Mr. Brown's argument was that the changes were made necessary by what the Conservatives had neglected to do, and he pointed out that when, "A general election took place in 1874[the first after the secret ballot had been introduced], and with 200,000 less [sic] votes than the Liberals, the Tories had 50 more members in Parliament." (ibid.)

An interruption took place during the meeting. A Mr. Joseph John Hill, honorary secretary to the Sunderland Fishermen's Society, who was sitting on the platform as an invited guest, got up at some point and read a resolution, which was drowned out by protests and hissing from the audience. He then tried to give his resolution to a reporter when the Mayor interfered and insisted on it being given to him and he read the resolution which said "That this meeting, while approving of the Franchise Reform Bill is of opinion that without the passing of a satisfactory Redistribution Bill it ought not to come into operation." (ibid.) As there was no seconder to the resolution it was promptly turned down and Mr Hill left the hall in the middle of a scuffle provoked by somebody carrying a banner. After quiet had been restored, Mr. Clark, of Belford, who was there by proxy, said that he had

forgotten his spectacles and had no speech to deliver, but proposed a resolution saying “that this meeting desires to express its strong disapproval of the action taken by the Conservative Party in the House of Lords in regard to the Franchise Bill, and protest against the unconstitutional attempt to force a dissolution of the Common House of Parliament, which is solely within the province of the Crown.” (ibid.) The resolution was carried unanimously and it was decided to send it to Mr. Gladstone.

The second meeting took place on 22 October. It was chaired by Mr. Watson Askew, of Pallisburn and the speakers were Earl Percy, M.P.; Sir Matthew White Ridley, M.P.; and Colonel Milne Home, M.P. They were joined on the platform by a great number of gentlemen representing the Borough, the military and business. The hall was decorated in the national colours and all the speakers defended the action of the Conservative Party. Earl Percy concluded his speech with the statement that “he claimed for the Conservative Party that they were acting in the interests of every man and every class in the country.” (ibid.) The other speakers aimed their criticism of the Government more widely and included the subjects of the situation of the military and the situation in Ireland in their speeches.

The Representation of the People Act 1884 (The Third Reform Act) was passed in December 1884, and was in force until the Representation of the People Act of 1918. The Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 was passed in June 1885.

In November, the annual meeting of the members of the East of Berwickshire Agricultural Association took place in the Corn Exchange with Mr. J. Melrose in the chair. The attendance was small, possibly due to the postponement of the announced lecture by Dr. Stevenson Macadam, Edinburgh, on Manitoba. The secretary, Mr. Doughty, read the minutes of the last meeting, which led to a heated discussion about a proposed suggestion of a change in the annual subscription. The whole thing seemed to boil down to whether the basis for the subscription was the income of the land or the acreage. Major Charles Frederick Campbell Renton of Mordington thought it should be acreage but the Chairman differed, which led to the whole thing being dropped with no decision taken. Another discussion followed about the application of manures to turnip crops, as well as experiments conducted by Mr. Caverhill in regard to Swedish turnips versus yellow turnips. A lecture was delivered by Mr. Bird, Fishwick, on foot-and mouth disease and measures for its prevention, until they came round to the problem of the subscription yet again. A motion from the newly elected chairman, Major Trenton, seconded by Mr. John Allan, of Peelwalls, was carried, until Mr. Young objected and again brought up the problem of acreage versus income. However, what

problems that were left were apparently ironed out, and the meeting came to a close.

Later in the month the activities in the Corn Exchange were of a very different character when it was announced that “Harvey’s wonderful midgets, Princess Lottie, Prince Midge, Miss Jennie Morgan, and General Tot, the four smallest and most perfectly formed little people the world has ever produced,” (November 14, 1884) There seems to have been some uncertainty as to the interest of the public for this event, as another item appeared in the same issue of the newspaper drawing “the attention of our readers to the concert in the Corn Exchange, which is to be given on Monday night by these miniature curiosities. From reports of their performances elsewhere, we have no doubt the entertainment will be most enjoyable.” (ibid.)

The character of the activities taking place in the Corn Exchange shifted again when Miss Evelyn Grey and Mr. A. Gordon gave an entertainment of spiritualism and thought reading. What seems surprising is the seriousness with which it was dealt. “The following committee of local gentlemen, with Councillor Young in the chair, were on the platform, and took part in the performance: Dr. Macay; Mr. Peters, solicitor; Mr. E. Willoby; Mr. H. W. Willits, schoolmaster; Mr. A. Lawson, hatter; and Mr. Gibson of the Grammar School.” (November 28, 1884) A number of activities were carried out of which a few are worth mentioning, one being called blood writing where: “Four gentlemen in the audience wrote one number each on a paper, which the chairman added up. He then set fire to the paper and gave it to Mr. Gordon, who sprinkled its ashes on the arm of Miss Grey and dusted them off, when the total of the four numbers was found printed on the arm.” (ibid.) The last experiment of the evening was meant to show how thought reading might be applied to the detection of crime. “The chairman, Miss Grey being absent, hid a lamp, supposed to be dynamite with a six-minute fuse, beside one of the pillars nearest the gallery, from which point he was supposed to wish to blow up the building. Miss Grey was allowed six minutes to find out the lamp, but she reached it at the end of three minutes.” (ibid.) We do not really know whether the audience thought of this as pure entertainment or whether they actually believed in the supernatural powers that were supposed to be present. But judging from the importance of the members of the panel on the platform one might assume that the latter was the case.

In early December it was announced that new stage accessories had been obtained for the Corn Exchange. “Mr. H. Crow, painter, Berwick, was the artist engaged to depict the scenes, and he has displayed much ability and taste in his work. The

drop scene is a view of Berwick from Tweedmouth. In the foreground is the river upon whose surface float some vessels. In the distance are the Ramparts, the bridge and the buildings of Berwick. The perspective is good and the tints are natural and effective.” (December 5, 1884) As an extra inducement to visit the Corn Exchange it adds “We may also mention that the Corn Exchange is now provided with swing doors for the convenience of egress and that curtains are placed across the doors to prevent draughts of cold air.” (ibid.)

The Volunteers’ Ball took place in early December and it appears to have been executed along the usual lines. “The ball began at nine o’clock, when there were about 500 people in the hall. It was led off by the Mayor with Miss Herriott, and the Sheriff with Miss Ada Carr. When the company were engaged in ‘tripping the light fantastic toe’ in ‘Many a winding bout’, the scene was one of great animation and seemed to afford much pleasure to all concerned in it. For those indisposed to pursue callisthenic exercises other amusements were provided. Dancing was continued with unabated vigour until an advanced hour next morning.” (December 12, 1884)

Also in December a new phenomenon appeared on the artistic scene in Berwick. Mr. W. R. Fairbairn, Bandmaster of the 3rd Brigade Northern Division Royal Artillery, had started classes and formed an orchestra called Berwick Orchestral Society. At their first concert in the Corn Exchange in December, they played to a large and appreciative audience. The programme was varied and even contained “a composition by the conductor Mr. Fairbairn, dedicated to the members of the Berwick Orchestra Society. It was entitled ‘Dilettante’. It was performed by the whole strength of the band . . . The composition contained several pretty and effective passages. Its delivery gave much pleasure.” (December 12, 1884) The concert was such a success that “The entertainment was brought to a close with the National Anthem, but not till about eleven o’clock, by reason of the voracious appetite of the audience for encores.” (ibid.) This led the newspaper to state that “Mr. Fairbairn provided an excellent conductor, but we trust that in future he and all other leaders of musical societies will sternly set their faces against the demands of auditories for repetitions, as these are becoming an intolerable nuisance. People seem to have no conscience in their calls upon performers, and they seldom seem to study what fatigue must be undergone by them in the execution of their tasks.” (ibid.) And one might also suspect that the newspaper reporter was eager to knock off for the day.

1885 started much in the usual way with announcements of annual meetings of various associations such as the Berwick Corn Exchange Company as well as a

concert to be given by the Berwick Choral Union, which was centered around Handel in commemoration of the bicentenary of his birth.

The main political event, however, of the beginning of 1885 was probably the meeting announced on 13 March. Mr. E. Waddington, a conservative trade unionist was to give a talk called “Radical agitators arrested, examined and exposed” the following day. On the day Mr. Waddington appeared on the platform of the Corn Exchange together with Messrs. R. G. Bolam, A. R. Lowrey, M’Creath, W. Weatherhead and H. A. Peters, with Mr. M’Creath presiding.

Mr. Waddington’s talk consisted of a very long list of attacks on the Liberal Party in general and Mr. Gladstone in particular. All this was apparently prompted by the fact that “the radical candidate for North Northumberland at the last election was acting as a paid agent, because he had the sum of £500 paid to him by the Radical Reform Club.” (March 20, 1885)

Mr. Waddington spread his attacks far and wide from the question of the emancipation of the slaves, and the fact that Mr. Gladstone’s family received a sum of £68,000 in compensation after slavery was abolished, religious equality, taxation on tea and sugar hitting the poor, the treatment of the Boers in South Africa. He said “The Liberal Party was not held together by the profession of any great principle. There were men who would maintain the monarchy one day and the republic another.” (ibid.) whereas the Conservative Party “dares to make its stand on great principles, It maintains the monarchy, and the national recognition of Christianity. The Conservative Party believes that the Empire can only be maintained by the spirit which built it up.” (ibid.) The only person who availed himself of the chance to ask questions after the talk was Mr. T. Richardson, and the exchange between him and Mr. Waddington only continued the accusations and a row of unanswered questions. At the end of the evening Mr. H. G. M’Creath proposed a somewhat unusual vote of thanks “a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Waddington for his able and unanswerable lecture.” (ibid.)

A Grand Amateur Evening Concert was held in April under the patronage of among others H.R.H the Duke of Cambridge, K.G. (Commander-in-chief) in aid of the “Egyptian War Fund, which is for the benefit of the widows and orphans of our soldiers who have been killed in our recent battles in the land of the Pharaohs.” (April 17, 1875) The programme was a mix of orchestral music and singing. Perhaps to emphasize the military background of the purpose of the concert “The interval between the first and second parts of the programme was filled up by bayonet exercises by a squad of the King’s Own Borderers, who performed their

share of the entertainment with mathematical precision to the sound of cornet and drum, The bayonet exercise was received with much acclamation and had to be repeated.” (ibid.) A healthy profit of about £70 was made as most of the expenses in connection with the concert were done gratis.

At the end of May, a soiree was held in the Corn Exchange under the auspices of the Roman Catholic congregation. Rev. W. M. Smythe presided over a large audience who enjoyed the ample supply of tea and cake and later a varied programme of music and songs. Mr. H. E. H. Jerningham, M.P. used the interval to propose a vote of thanks to the performers “for the satisfactory manner in which they had performed their self-imposed tasks.” (May 29, 1885) The second part of the programme was devoted to what would today be considered unacceptable, a “negro entertainment”, but as we have seen before Minstrels were very popular during this period referring to “A number of the King’s Own Borderers being dressed up as Christy Minstrels. In this character they appeared to much advantage and showed considerable powers of vocalization, joking and mimicry.” (ibid.)

At the annual meeting of Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas light Company in July, the financially healthy company declared a dividend of ten percent, which would be paid out immediately after the meeting, probably a guaranteed incentive to secure a good turn-out. On top of the dividend they were able to announce a reduction in the price of gas to the consumers, in spite of the fact that the price of tar- a by-product of gas production - had been very much reduced. At the same meeting the death of Dr. Alexander Fluker was announced and that he had “filled the office of a director of the company for five years and all the time displayed a warm interest in its success.” (July 17, 1885)

On July 24 a Grand Japanese Village Fair and Feast of Lantern was announced to take place in the Corn Exchange on 5, 6 and 7 August, and to be opened by Lady Crossman assisted by Colonel Sir William Crossman. Its aim was to raise money for improvements connected with the Berwick Church Street Church. The congregation needed £1,200 in order to “to improve the access to their place of worship by building a hall, dwelling house, and a front shop, for which the property on the one side of the yard has been acquired. The hall, however, is being erected at the cost of Mrs. Young, Bankhead, in memory of her deceased husband, the late Alderman G. Young, and the expense of this, therefore, falls to be deducted from the total estimated outlay.” (August 7, 1885)

To draw in the crowds, cheap return tickets would be issued at all stations on the North British and North Eastern Railways on production of a bazaar ticket, which

could be bought at several stations. The tickets were advertised as “A tour through Japan for 1s! No other summer trip necessary!” (July 24, 1885) The idea of a Japanese theme was inspired by a similar Japanese Village in London some years before which unfortunately was destroyed by fire. Messrs. Carnegie & Co, Newcastle, were engaged to carry out the construction. The task was to give “an accurate idea of a Japanese village on one of its fete days, with its houses, shops, stalls, and tea gardens in all their gayest holiday attractions, with numberless lamps, lanterns, and emblems of the country.” (August 7, 1885) The platform from where the opening address was delivered was a tea garden called the Chin-Chin-Chew-Chew T Drin-kin gardens.

As it turned out, Sir William Crossman and Lady Crossman were unable to be present so Sir Edward Grey opened the bazaar and pointed out “that the present church was sufficient for the congregation in itself, but they approached it through certain buildings which made the entrance very uncomfortable. He could not but admire the love and devotion to their church which had prompted them to undertake the expense of remedying this, rather than allow the prosperity and the appearance of the church to suffer.” (August 7, 1885) After elaborating about various aspects of religious and moral life in England he finally declared the bazaar open. This, however, did not mean the start of the opening of the stalls, as Colonel Milne Home, M.P. had also been called upon to speak. His speech was short, but “concluded by expressing his delight at having this opportunity of expressing to them his goodwill for the last time as their Presbyterian member for Berwick.” (ibid.) He retired from politics in 1885 when the Borough of Berwick ceased to have its own representative in Parliament. But still the stalls were not to start their business as Rev. J. Smith who had come down from Edinburgh and had to get back on the two o’clock train, wanted to join the speakers. “For a considerable period of vacancy he was all that this congregation had for a minister.” (ibid.) He expressed the hope that the success of the bazaar would exceed the high expectation of the congregation. His wishes, however, were not to be fulfilled. “The weather, unfortunately, was most unpropitious—mist and rain during the whole of Wednesday, and not much better yesterday. This, no doubt, prevented a great many from visiting the bazaar, especially those living in the country, and hence the amount of money taken was much less than it would otherwise have been.” (ibid.) We do not know what the total proceed was, only that the one for the first day amounted to £300, so the goal of raising £950 was probably not reached.

The middle of October saw a repeat visit by Mrs. Scott Siddons. She gave a dramatic recital “in one of those entertainments with which her name is now so familiar.” (October 16, 1885) But even though the audience was given an



intellectual treat “The audience was not so large as it might have been, and the acoustic properties of the hall in these circumstances were not such as enabled the reader to appear to such advantage as we have seen in a building of less dimensions.” (ibid.)

On October 9, 1885, it was announced that “The genuine organized Fisk Jubilee Singers in their soul stirring songs”, would appear for one night only at the Corn Exchange on 29 October. They had visited Berwick several times before and this visit which was the last one before going on a tour of Europe and Australia. The programme was little changed from previous visits and “The happy and hearty manners in which they sang the weary and plaintive melodies of plantation life did not fail to inspire the audience with some of the warm enthusiasm which they themselves evinced.” (October 30, 1885) But the biggest hit of the entertainment was their rendering of chorus entitled “Jingle Bells, or the Sleigh Ride”, an early Christmas present brought on by the fact that Miss Lawrence was indisposed and unable to appear.

On 29 October, the Berwick Orchestral Society gave their second annual concert in the Corn Exchange. “There was a numerous and appreciative audience which testified their satisfaction and pleasure by repeated applause.” (October 30, 1885) but this fact led to the Committee asking the audience not to ask for encores, as that had led to the concert not finishing until eleven o’clock the previous year. This was to some extent ignored by the audience which again led the reporter to state that “owing to the late hour at which the entertainment ended, we are unable to give such a detailed critique of it as we should have liked.” (ibid.)

The annual general meeting of the east of Berwickshire Agricultural Association took place in the Upper Room on 7 November with Major Campbell, Renton, presiding. The yearly report dealt with items such as valuation of manure, which apparently gave rise to some concern as “The Directors would draw the attention of members to the instructions for valuing manures printed on the back of the tables and would like to see more generally taken advantage of. Only one sample of manure has been sent in for analysis during the season, and it was satisfactory.” (November 13, 1885) Problems were also recorded of a very small number of premiums for the destruction of wood pigeons’ eggs had been handed in. However, the fifth annual show, held in Duns on 7 August, had been a great success, and the Association had ended with a balance in their favour of £46 4s 9d. This was the first time the show had been held there and the question raised was now where to hold the show the next year, a decision to be made by a general meeting at a later date. William James Hay, Esq., of Duns Castle, was nominated as President for the

ensuing year, even though he was not present due to a bad cold. Because of the part the Secretary Mr. Adam Logan had played in the success of the show in Duns he was awarded 50 guineas from the funds of the Association, which seems extremely generous as the total sum to the credit of the Association was only £123 19s 3d.

There seemed no end as to what would appear at auctions. An announcement, which appeared on November 20, said: "Corn Exchange Buildings, Berwick. This afternoon at 2 Mr. Ralph Dixon will sell by auction as above a quantity of groceries, about 200 pairs of boots and shoes; and an assortment of miscellaneous articles." (20 November, 1885) The next day 126 shares in the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Co (Limited) and three shares in the Berwick Corn Exchange Co (limited) were auctioned off.

The winter was naturally a less busy time for the farmers but they could always attend various exhibitions of what might come in handy for them the following season. The opportunity to do that could be found in the Corn Exchange in December, where W. M. Thompson & Co., Seed and Manure Merchant, and Implement dealers offered a variety of items for sale from Anglo-American ploughs, turnip cutters, cake crushers, ladders made to order and a rich assortment of feeding cakes – linseed, cotton, decorticated cotton – and Baxter's celebrated Northallerton ales. It is not clear from the advertisement, which appeared on 4 December, 1885, if it was to be a permanent appearance at the weekly market or if it was a travelling exhibition that only appeared occasionally.

The year ended with the Volunteers' Ball and it followed the usual format: the only exception was possibly the fact that as the list of dances proved "insufficient to exhaust the ardour of the younger and gayer portion of the assembly, other four dances were added, and the company separated at an early hour next morning, thoroughly tired, but exceedingly pleased with the entertainment." (December 11, 1885)

## *1886 - 1895*

Something new and exciting was announced at the end of January 1886: The Snazelle Musical and Dramatic Illustrated Recitals. "The entertainment is of a novel character, consisting as it does of songs and recitals, illustrated by means of a series of dissolving views and stage pictures, illuminated by the oxy-hydrogen lime light." (January 29, 1886) But then comes the remarks that "Monologues

entertainments have of recent years been comparatively unpopular, owing no doubt to the fact that they have been, almost without exception, of a nature not sufficiently high class to enlist the sympathies and engross the attention of the more educated portion of the community.” (ibid.) Mr. Snazzle, however, managed to put together a programme “which will appeal with irresistible force to all those whose natural sympathies and educational acquirements enable them to enjoy an intelligent appreciation of the musician, poet, painter and dramatist.” (ibid.) However, the more educated portion of the community in Berwick and its surroundings did not avail themselves of Mr. Snazzle’s “highly popular and refined entertainments in the Corn Exchange.” (ibid.) as there was a very small attendance at the concert. The newspaper was still hopeful and convinced that if Mr. Snazzle “should ever again favour Berwick with a visit, he shall have a bumper house to welcome him, and to admire his beautiful view and exquisite songs.” (ibid.)

Apparently the local people of Berwick were more attracted to the kind of entertainment provided by the Kennedy family, who gave their well-known “Twa Hours at Hame” in the Corn Exchange in the middle of February to a numerous and attentive audience. It was basically a number of Scottish songs and stories all well-known to the public, who could sit back in their seats and enjoy themselves.

A first took place at Easter, when the Choral Societies of Alnwick, Berwick and Morpeth joined together in the Corn Exchange and performed Haydn’s oratorio “The Creation”. It had been performed before in 1878, by the Berwick Choral Society alone. This time the number of singers was doubled to 240, and great efforts had been exerted in engaging the soloists, who were Miss Mackenzie (principal soprano, St Giles’ Cathedral, Edinburgh; Mr. Thomas Richardson, Berwick Choral Union; and Mr. J. Nutton, principal basso, Durham Cathedral). The grand united concert at Berwick was a great success especially “considering that the only opportunity all of them had of rehearsing together was an hour or two in the afternoon before the performance in public at night.” (March 12, 1886)

Excursion trains were run from Newcastle, Morpeth and Alnwick, and about 600 people availed themselves of the cheap fares offered, and with this number of people, plus the local people making their own way to the concert as well as a full orchestra and a choir of 240 people it must really have been a packed house.

In late June, a chance for investments arose when Mr. A. L. Miller announced the auctioning of shares which had belonged to the late G. Crossman , Esq. They included shares in Berwick Salmon Fisheries; Berwick Trawling Company; the Border Counties’ Agricultural Association; as well as shares in the Berwick Corn

Exchange Company.

People who did not wish to spend their money on shares had the opportunity to acquire items for their homes when the belongings of, among others, Mr. Alexander Penny, who was going abroad, were auctioned off in the Corn Exchange on 14 July 1886. Among the more unusual items to be auctioned off was a “superior 32 inch bicycle, and another do . . . Also in the evening at six o’clock a consignment of 100 pairs of excellent boots and shoes.” (July 9, 1886) It does not say whether these items also belonged to Mr. Penny.

On 20 August preliminary announcement was given of an exhibition of poultry, pigeons and cage birds, arranged by the Berwick-upon-Tweed Ornithological Society to take place in November, and at a meeting of the members of the Society a week later it was announced by Mr. John Elder, Tweedmouth and Mr. Kerr, Ravensdowne, secretaries, that there would be no less than 22 classes for poultry, 20 for pigeons and 22 for songbirds at the forthcoming show.

On 27 August Mr. Ralph Dixon announced an auction of Dutch flower bulbs with a guarantee of “large healthy roots of vigorous growth.” (August 27, 1886)

On 3 September a Grand Bazaar in aid of the Bethnal Green Free Hospital under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck and a large number of ladies from the district. The Bethnal Green Free Hospital in London offered free medical treatment to poor people, both as in-patients and out-patients, and was situated in an old factory. The initiative to have the bazaar was taken by the Countess of Tankerville and its aim was to raise money to construct a purpose-built hospital. There were two reasons for this as “The hospital has not been without drawbacks—being situated in a noisy locality, and the nerves of both the nurses and patients being tried by the uproar from without. Moreover the place is in a dilapidated state, and as the lease is about to expire, it is not worth the expense of repairing.” (October, 1886) The bazaar, which took place over two days, was opened by the Duchess of Teck, and the hall had been decorated by Mr. John Crow, High Street, as so many times before, and “his well-known artistic taste succeeded in transforming the interior of the building into a sort of fairy place.” (ibid.) The arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Teck was described in great detail. They, and their daughter Princess Mary, arrived on a special train from Belford together with the Earl and Countess of Tankerville. They were met by a guard of honour and proceeded through a triumphal arch erected by Messrs. Waite of Hope Nurseries. They were met by cheers from the people assembled at the station and they proceeded in three carriages through town while the bells in the spire of the Town

Hall rang merry peals. At the Corn Exchange they were met by yet another guard of honour, and the band, under the leadership of Bandmaster Fairbairn played the National Anthem, and the Sheriff, Mr. J. K. Weatherhead, in the absence of the Mayor, escorted the Duchess “to the further end of the hall, a passage having been preserved in the middle of the spectators.” (ibid.) After a short prayer the Duchess of Teck declared the bazaar open and after the National Anthem had been played the stalls were open for business. “The attractions of the bazaar were greatly enhanced by the excellent music rendered by the members of the Berwick Orchestral Society, under the able leadership of Mr. W. R. Fairbairn.”(ibid.) as well as a number of soloists.

The second day of the bazaar, where the Duchess of Teck was also present having again travelled by special train from Belford, was opened without an official ceremony, but the royals were nevertheless met with great enthusiasm by the crowd which had assembled outside the Corn Exchange.

Some used the opportunity of the event: “In the course of the afternoon an old gentleman named Bruce Swan living in Edinburgh, who claims to be a lineal descendent of Bruce of Scotland, was presented by the Earl of Tankerville to the Duchess. Bruce Swan said he had come especially to see her Royal Highness and was greatly delighted at having the honour of a presentation.” (ibid.)

The total proceeds of the two days’ sale were £508 7s 5d. and the best- selling stall being the royal one as “The point of attraction was undoubtedly the Princess’s stall, and it was completely surrounded, some buying, but the many staring in the manner peculiar to English people at the sight of Royalty.” (ibid.)

A third successful concert by the now well-established Berwick Orchestral Society, took place on November 18, 1886, in front of a numerous and appreciative audience.

On November 26 an advertisement appeared in the newspaper announcing the visit of Dr. Richard Lonsdale and his patent “magnetaire” for the prevention, relief and cure of disease. Free consultations would be available, either personally or by letter, in the Long Room at the Corn exchange until 4 December. The consultation might have been free but at the end of the advertisement it stated “Cheques to be crossed ‘Bank of England’. Post orders payable to Richard Lonsdale, Box ‘X’” (November 26, 1886) so money transactions were apparently expected.

The Volunteers' Ball took place on 7 December in the Corn Exchange. The hall was decorated but "Owing to a deficiency in funds from last year's entertainment, the embellishment of the hall was not on so extensive a scale as it has been in some past years, but notwithstanding this fact the interior of the building presented a very neat appearance when it was ready for the reception of the company." (December 10, 1886)

A lack of funds was also reflected in the report at the annual meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company in early March, when the Chairman, Mr. D. Logan, commented "that the cash received from occasional rents for entertainments &c, had been considerably less than in the previous year. This deficiency was attributed to the dullness of trade." (March 4, 1887) At the meeting, the death of Mr. M. G. Crossman was announced with much regret. He had been member of the Board since 1864. Mr. G. Riddle was elected to replace him. We also learn that "The house at Bridge End, formerly owned and occupied by the late Mr. G. Crossman, has been sold by private bargain to Messrs. J. Wilson & Son, plumbers, Bridge Street for £1,400." (February 25, 1887)

Many of the activities taking place in the Corn Exchange in spring of 1887 consisted of a number of furniture sales.

The eighteenth annual concert of the Choral Union took place at the end of April. Two works were performed—Mendelsohn's "Hymn of Praise" and Handel's "Acis and Galatea". The work by Mendelsohn was chosen as "The event which called it forth was the fourth centennial celebration at Leipzig in Germany of the inventing of printing—the art which pushed backward into the dim past the old darkness of ignorance and welcomed the approach of the new light of knowledge." (April 29, 1887) The chorus was under the leadership of Mr. Benjamin Barker and "Too much praise cannot be given to Mr. Barker and the Choral Union for offering to the public such an excellent entertainment. But for them the chief work of the great masters of music would have been sealed books to the inhabitants of Berwick." (ibid.)

The annual meeting of Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light Company took place in July. It was presided over by the Chairman, Mr. C. Hopper, and attendance was fair. A dividend of ten per cent was declared, the same as the previous years, and apart from some adjustments as to the rental paid for gas meters, one rent, things were progressing in the usual healthy way for the company.

Bazaars seemed to be the answer most frequently resorted to when the need to

raise money arose. This was also the case when the members of the Tweedmouth Presbyterian Church decided to get rid of a long standing debt of £300 on the Manse building and if possible make the place of worship more comfortable., but in spite of “Having secured the services of an earnest and energetic minister in the person of Rev. Robert Scobie, it has resolved to make this effort to free itself from the encumbrance.” (August 12, 1887) As Japanese and old English fairs had become somewhat commonplace they decided to go for something else “and accordingly the Corn Exchange was converted into an imitation of the land of the Pharaohs.” (ibid.) “The decorations were carried out by Mr. John Muir, of Messrs. Carnegie and Company of Newcastle, who recently received the royal warrant of decorative upholsterers to HRH the Prince of Wales for work done at the Royal Pavilion of the Royal Agricultural Society of England at Newcastle”. (ibid.) Apart from the usual stalls with useful and fancy articles for sale there were prizes to be won ranging from a sewing machine worth £7 10s, to two sacks of potatoes, a model ship and a live pig worth £3. (ibid.)

Before the official opening by Sir Edward Grey, Rev. R. Scobie gave a short account of his experience as minister at the English Presbyterian Church of Tweedmouth during the last nine months and his wish not only to be able to pay off the debt of the Manse, which had been a burden on the congregation which consisted wholly people from the working classes, but also to improve the church which was not really what it ought to be, and was not in keeping with the requirements of the present day.

Sir Grey then opened the bazaar after a rather long and somehow “standardized” speech. He ended by saying that “He had been recently at the House of Commons, and the principle acted upon there seemed to be that there should be very much talk but very little business. It occurred to him that the principle of bazaars was exactly the opposite, and that there should be as little talk and as much business as possible he would conclude by declaring the bazaar open, and by wishing it every success.” (ibid.) It would be a fair comment to say that he did not quite practise what he preached.

It does not say if the aim of liquidating the debt was reached, but from one small comment in the newspaper saying “Unfortunately, the patronage the undertaking received has not very well seconded the efforts of the congregation.” (ibid.) we might assume that this was not the case.

September and October were dominated by auctions, including Mr. Ralph Dixon offering a consignment of fine hyacinths and tulip and more direct from Holland,

interspersed with sale of excellent household furniture, and followed by the announcement of the last chance of the season to buy a consignment of an exceptionally fine quality of flower bulbs, and “Also about 400 flour sacks (10stone and 20 stone) once filled, specially suited for potatoes &c.” (October 21, 1887)

After yet another auction of excellent household furniture at the beginning of November, the focus was shifted to birds. In connection with the Berwick Ornithological Show to be held on 23 November, Mr. Ralph Dixon offered for sale by auction poultry, pigeons and cage birds. This was the second annual exhibition held by this society, and it was apparently a great success. 730 birds were entered, and the judges were duly impressed with the quality, and they even expressed surprise that “such excellent ornithological specimens should be brought together to compete for small prizes.” (November 25, 1887) The number of visitors to the exhibition was also welcomed by the Committee “especially when the discouraging circumstances attending the promotion this year are concerned, namely, the disagreement of some of the members of the old Committee as to pecuniary matters.” (ibid.) The prizes that were won varied from a turnip slicer, given by Mr. W. Elder, for the best pen of poultry, to a felt hat for the best pigeon in show.

In January 1888 there was a meeting presided over by Mr. D. Tait, Scremerston. It appeared that a new bill regarding the payment of tithes had been introduced in 1887 but was never made into law. If it had become law the difference was, according to the Chairman, minimal as “The only change it proposed was to make the landlord responsible for the tithe and not the tenant, so that the tithe owner could not distrain upon the latter. That, no doubt was a most important change, but it hardly amended the law, because the landlord really was the responsible party, and always had been. Now that the measure had been withdrawn for amendment, he thought the views of the people interested should be elicited, and that some steps should be taken to bring their opinions before Parliament ere legislation proceeded.” (January 20, 1888) It turned out that what people were opposing to was that the tithe should be struck upon the average of 7 years’ prices. “People felt that very much now, in consequence of the rapid recline in the value of agricultural produce. It would be much more advantageous if the tithes were valued according to the basis of one or two year’s prices. He believed when the tithes were commuted, very little allowance was made for tail corn. The averages were fixed according to the prices farmers received for good grain. They had a great deal of tail corn, and in unfavourable seasons very much bad corn, but the averages were taken upon the sale and re-sale of good corn, so that really they were too high.



Farmers, therefore, had great grievances in that direction.” (ibid.) So it was a case of our taxes are too high and unfair. It was decided to submit two petitions—one to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and one to the House of Commons with the basic argument “That fall in the tithes bear no fair proportion to the fall in agricultural produce. The fall in almost all kinds of farm produce, during the last six years, is above 40 per cent; whilst the tithes have only come down about 12 per cent. It must also be observed that whilst the rents of many farms have been reduced 30 to 40 per cent, the tithes, which are supposed to represent a tenth part of the crops, have by no means participated in the fall.” (ibid.) Both petitions were unanimously adopted, and it was agreed to send the one addressed to Parliament to Sir Edward Grey, MP for Berwick Division. A standing committee was set up to observe and if necessary call further meetings.

The annual general meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Ltd. Took place in March presided over by Mr. David Logan, Brow of the Hill, who congratulated the directors of the company on the continued success and stability of the company even though “The expenditure under the head of repairs and furnishings has been unusually heavy owing to the new gas meter being procured in place of the old one, which was worn out, and several alterations and additions by order of the Magistrates. These include the large side door in Foul Ford being fitted with spring hinges and made to swing either way, a large and powerful fire hydrant and hosepipe; both of which are in case of fire breaking out during an entertainment.” (March 9, 1888) So health and safety, in the form of the Magistrates, was creeping up on them. But in spite of this a dividend of five per cent was declared, and the meeting was terminated after a vote of thanks to Mr. Logan.

In March, the weather got in the way of the Choral Union and Berwick Orchestral Society. The planned performance of Handel’s “The Messiah” had to be postponed for a fortnight due to a great snowstorm hitting the area “and although the postponement increased the expenses connected with the production of the work, which have been considerable, it undoubtedly had the effect of making the entertainment the success it was, because had the concert been held on the original day, the attendance, beyond doubt, would have been very small indeed, and the Choral Union might have suffered a heavy loss, which would have been a poor return for all the trouble and anxiety which conductor and singers must have undergone in the work of preparation. Nevertheless, large as the audience was, we regret that it showed a decline compared with the numbers present on previous occasions.” (March 30, 1888)

A somewhat unusual auction took place in the Corn Exchange on 10, 11 and 12

April of “a large and most valuable stock of high class and art pottery, from an eminent manufacturing firm in Staffordshire owing to the depression in the pottery trade. Auctioned off were “Dinner services for 12 and upward, of the latest design. Tea and breakfast services of finest china, painted in landscape, flowers, rustic, cobalt blue, mazarine ditto, and salmon colours, finished in gold.” (April 6, 1888) There seems to be a more than usual number of auctions of household furniture during the spring and early summer of 1888. We also know that much of the world was in the midst of a long and deep depression, and agriculture in Britain was particularly hard hit, so this may have been the reason for this.

The annual meeting of the shareholders of the Berwick and Tweedmouth Gaslight Company took place in July, with Mr. Christopher Hopper as Chairman. In the annual report from the Directors it was stated that “your Directors have much pleasure in recommending the meeting to declare a dividend of 10 per cent upon the capital of the Company, which the Secretary is prepared to pay immediately after the business of the meeting is transacted.” (July 20, 1888) They further declared that due to favourable contracts they were able to reduce the price of coal and “The contracts for the construction of the apparatus for the improved system of purification of the gas manufactured by the company are now completed and your Directors are glad to inform you that everything connected therewith is in good working order, and found to act most efficiently in cleansing the gas, and freeing it from ammonia and other purities.” (ibid.) The position of the Company was apparently much improved as the Chairman mentioned that “The works had never been in a perfect state until the last quarter.” (ibid.)

In August a grand bazaar in aid of the Berwick Institute was held. It was the second bazaar in eight years. The first was held in the Queen’s Rooms in 1880 in connection with the amalgamation of the three elements of what was now called the Institute, namely the Museum, the School of Art and the Literary and Scientific Institute, and its move to the building at 34 High Street. The first bazaar had produced about £1,000, and £425 had been secured through subscriptions, but “The money raised in 1880 did not, however, admit of the carrying out of the plans so far as providing necessary heating apparatus, keeper’s house, and other desirable furnishings were concerned, and it fell short of the actual cost of the buildings completed, so as to leave a debt of some £1,300, which is still a burden upon the Institute.” (August 24, 1888) So the Committee decided to hold yet another bazaar which took place on August 22 and 23, 1888.

At the beginning of the proceedings “Mr. James Gray, Secretary of the Institute, read a letter from the Sheriff of Berwick, expressing regret, that, owing to

circumstances in which they were placed, neither Mrs. Young nor himself would be able to take an active part in the bazaar. He, however, enclosed a cheque for £10 10s to the fund.” (ibid.) These circumstances are later in the article referred to as “their painful circumstances, and terrible domestic trouble.” (ibid.) What had actually happened was that their son Robert had sadly died in an accident. He was a private with the K.O.S.B and was late returning to the barracks with a friend so they had to climb over the wall which caused him to fall down and he died.

The bazaar was opened by Colonel Milne Home, Paxton, President of the Institute, who started by regretting the absence of the Mayor, but added that “it was for the very excellent reason that he had been called upon to represent this ancient borough on the auspicious occasion of her Majesty the Queen’s visit to Glasgow.” (ibid.) After giving a background and explanation of the purpose of the bazaar held in 1880, he went on “they had during the last eight years been saddled with a capital debt of £1,300 in round figures. They had been able from their income to pay every year interest on the money they were obliged to borrow, but they had little or nothing left to carry out other details of improvement or development which they wished to effect. They were obliged to neglect two or three important items in their programme; one of them being the erection of a keeper’s house on the premises; another, a heating apparatus for the museum.” (ibid.) He then went on to deliberate on the reason for the lack of income. “They would allow him to tell them that so far as the support of the public to the Museum and the School of Art was concerned, there was no failing off whatever. He would like to be allowed to say a few words upon the third department of their institute, namely the Literary and Scientific Institution. That was started some years ago for the purpose that its name denoted in order to spread the love of literature and science among the artisan classes of Berwick.” (ibid) The problem seemed to have been that the subscription fee was too high for many to be able to afford, which in turn meant a low take-up, but if the subscription fees were lowered they might not be sufficient to make the institution viable.

After Alderman Alder had proposed a vote of thanks to Colonel Milne Home for opening the bazaar and he had duly acknowledged it, the bazaar was opened, and at the end of the first day £250 had been realised. In the evening a well- attended concert arranged by Mr. W. Redpath was held.

The following day the Bazaar was opened by the Mayor, who expressed his regret that he had not been able to open the bazaar the first day, but also pointed out that this bazaar was different from many other ones in that it “it was held on behalf of an institute which belonged to no sect or party, but was held in trust for the benefit

of the public at large.” (ibid.) He then declared the bazaar open. Captain Norman proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Mayor and said that “Their thanks to the Mayor always were due, but more especially in this case, when he told them that after worthily representing the old borough at Glasgow, and after a very long and heavy course of dining and speech making, he did not get away until a quarter past nine o’clock that morning. Had he considered his personal comfort he would perhaps have been in bed resting from fatigue. But sooner than allow that bazaar to be opened without his countenance and support, the Mayor travelled, he supposed, without sleeping at all.” (ibid.) The burden of holding public offices is undoubtedly very heavy, as this case clearly illustrates. Altogether about £400 were realised over the two days. This, however, only reduced the debt to something like £900.

In September “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” was performed in the Corn Exchange. It was a dramatized version of the book and “To the ordinary play-goer, ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ presented something entirely new. The excellent singing of the troupe, which included several real negroes, gave the piece the charm of an opera, while the varied situations in which heroes of the story find themselves must have abundantly satisfied the devotees of even the tragic drama.” (September 28, 1888) As the performance also included dancing this could very well have been the first example of a musical being performed in Berwick.

As part of the autumn programme of entertainment in the Corn Exchange was a performance by De Chevreul & Latano, mesmerists, prestidigitators and card manipulators, supported by a first class variety company. No fewer than six evening performances were planned but “Unfortunately the audiences have not been so large as might have been expected from the nature of the entertainment. In this enlightened age it is difficult to find belief in the occult sciences, but while all idea of a power above that of the human mind has been divested from this class of entertainment, one does not the less admire the skill and dexterity required in the performance of feats such as those undertaken.” (October 5, 1888)

In October the following announcement could be read in the newspaper: “Death of an old pensioner. On Friday there died at the Corn Exchange, of which he was the keeper, George Payne, aged 69. Deceased was formerly a soldier, he having been in the Royal Artillery, in which he attained the rank, we believe, of battery-sergeant major. Deceased had seen some active service as he was not only in America but also in the Crimea. There Captain Norman, R.N., J.P., of Cheviot House, also served, and Payne being the only fellow campaigner in Berwick whom he knew, the Major-elect attended his funeral wearing the Crimean medal. The deceased was the son of the oldest freeman of Berwick.” (October 19, 1888)

A whole list of auctions was announced at the end of November, all arranged by Mr. Ralph Dixon. The first one was a consignment of hyacinths, tulips, crocus and many other plants. This was followed by a household auction on 5 December comprising anything from mahogany dining tables to curtains, window poles and kitchen utensils. On 7 December the whole of the remaining stock-in-trade of Messrs. Cairns & Son, hosiers, comprising superior fancy goods, and the icing on the cake was to take place on 14 and 15 December where “a valuable and extensive stock of choice Russian furs manufactured into seasonable and fashionable garments.” (November 30, 1888)

The third annual exhibition of poultry, pigeons and cage birds held in the Corn Exchange turned out to be an even bigger success than the previous year, with close upon 1,000 entries, although it meant that “In consequence of the numerous entries and the general excellence of the birds in the various sections, the work of the judges was prolonged till the afternoon.” (November 30, 1888)

At the beginning of December the annual Volunteers’ Ball took place, “When our citizen soldiers assembled to enjoy their annual terpsichorean entertainment.” (December 14, 1888), and “the inspiring music supplied by Mr. J. F. Courier’s band, put life and mettle in the heels of the large company that assembled to engage in ‘revelry by night’.” (ibid.)

An auction was announced for 7 February, 1889, which, besides the usual furniture and utensils, comprised “Case of stuffed birds; china punch bowl; two sewing machines in perfect order; dinner ware; rook rifle; very superior bassinette perambulator, equal to new.” (February 1, 1889) The auction must have been of limited success as another one was announced for 21 February, where the residue from the first auction would be auctioned off.

A big demonstration took place in February, whose aim was “to formally inaugurate the newly formed Tweed Fishery Law Amendment Association, and to denounce the Salmon Fisheries Bill for Scotland.” (February 15, 1889) Fishermen from the area around Berwick had been invited and “These arrived at Berwick by the evening train, and were met at the railway station by the Berwick and Spittal fishermen, as well as their wives, sweethearts and daughters.” (ibid.) The procession, which was headed by the a band, proceeded by way of Castlegate, High Street and Hide Hill to the Corn Exchange, and presented a picturesque and imposing appearance.” (ibid.) Everybody from the Member of Parliament for Berwick, Sir Edward Grey, to local councillors and fishermen, were present at the

meeting, which filled the Corn Exchange to capacity. The Mayor introduced the proceedings and briefly outlined the purpose of the meeting which was to join “in the chorus of disapproval against the Salmon Fisheries Bill recently introduced into the House of Lords, . . . and to assist the Marquis of Lothian to promote a better one for re-introduction next season.” (ibid.) He then handed it over to Councillor Gilroy to move the first resolution which read as follows “That the right of the public to fish for salmon in the sea being recognised by the common law of England, this meeting is of opinion that the existing Tweed Fisheries Acts by which fishermen at the mouth of the Tweed have been deprived of this right, are unjust and unconstitutional and that it is essentially in the interest of justice, and for the preservation of public order, that the law be amended and the public rights restored.” (ibid.)

The problem they were facing had its origin in the Act of 1771 as “Previous to 1771 the public had perfect right to fish for salmon and all other kinds of fish in the sea, but the envious feeling of the fishery proprietors could not endure the rights of others sharing with them in catching salmon. They had the right of fishing along the sea coast and in the river, but that was not enough; they must deprive the poor man of his rights; so they, with their wealth and greater political power, banded themselves together, and got an Act passed, which benefitted pecuniarily none but themselves, and so acted to the hurt and injury of the poor man, and to the hurt and injury of the general public. You can see by this Act it set aside the people’s recognised right, and gave it to men who have had, as proprietors, the whole and sole run over a large number of their fellow creatures, and who have had the law so made and enforced that it has been carried out in the most rigorous and tyrannic manner. By this Act of 1771, a new era commenced, giving the power of fishing in the sea for salmon and in the river over to a body of men, whose qualification for the office of Tweed Commissioner must be that they are proprietors or nominees of proprietors of fishing waters. Not a body, mark you, elected by an outside authority among the people, but by themselves. The Act, as it exists, allowing none to fish within five miles of the shore seaward, seven miles to the south, and four miles to the north, virtually gives the fishery proprietors a monopoly of all the salmon and trout in the sea.” (ibid.) This situation has not led to the peace, comfort, and well-being of the people they live among. “We know in stormy weather, when our boat cannot venture into the sea, the fishermen have been put to great straits to live, and when there has been a lull in the storm, many of them, in as state of semi-destitution, have set a net near the shore, and caught a salmon to keep the wolf from the door, and to appease their children’s hunger. They have been pounced upon, batoned to the ground, imprisoned and fined for taking that which belonged to their fathers, and should by the law of the land be theirs.” (ibid.) He then goes

on to talk about the despotic power of the Tweed Commissioners. “bringing with it much danger to life, and ill-feeling between men who would dwell together in peace if better laws existed.” (ibid.) Altogether this speech can only be seen as a severe indictment of the ruling classes and a defence of the lower classes right to a decent life.

Then the politician took over in the person of Sir Edward Grey M.P. He started by saying that his conclusion after looking into the question of salmon fishing in the Tweed is that it is complicated, and that no matter what he might have to say about would not satisfy everybody but he realises that “the duty of your representative is to learn what your interests are as fully as possible, and then his duty in the House of Commons will be to try to get a fair share of those interests secured to you by Act of Parliament.” (ibid.) But when the debate takes place in Parliament the problem is that “Out of all the 670 members of it, I don’t suppose there are more than 70 who are really personally interested in the salmon fishing question. Just consider what that means.” (ibid). He then goes on to deliberate on what to do, he is convinced that the bill will not be passed, but the problem is not to have the bill withdrawn but to come up with a better replacement. He sums up “The Act of Parliament to be passed ought to be of such character as to allow fishing, subject to licenses, in all unchartered waters to make the law as to close times, and to make the enforcement of that law thoroughly popular.” (ibid.). After Sir Grey’s speech and one by Rev. W. A. Walton, which repeated the sentiments expressed already, the resolution was adopted unanimously.

Now a second resolution was brought forward which said “That this meeting emphatically condemns the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Bill now before Parliament as a reactionary measure serving only to perpetuate the injustice and intensify the evils of which the public have so long complained; this meeting, therefore, urgently presses upon the Government to withdraw the bill now before Parliament, and to introduce a measure acknowledging the public right to fish for salmon in the sea and in all waters belonging to the Crown, curtailing the present annual close time for salmon, legalising free rod fishing for trout in all natural waters, and giving the administration of the Acts into the hands of a board representative of all the interests concerned.” (ibid.) Much of the same arguments as regarding the first resolution were brought forward by people addressing the meeting, and resulting in it being unanimously adopted after which Alderman Adam Darling moved yet another resolution “That a petition embodying the foregoing resolutions be prepared, and sent to the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Lord Advocate, Lord Tweedmouth, and the members of Parliament for Border constituencies.” (ibid.) After several people had expressed the opinion that the bill

as well as the law they had been working under was unjust and should be changed, the meeting finally came to a close.

The annual general meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company Limited took place in March. The annual report was adopted and a dividend of 5 per cent was decided. The only criticism was expressed by Alderman Alder who “thought it would be in the interest of the company if more attention were given to the cleanliness of the hall, which he considered, was in a most disreputable state. The walls required re-decorating, and were a few pounds spent in this direction it would be to the advantage of the company, and to the satisfaction of the frequenter of the place. The Chairman agreed with Mr Alder and it was resolved to see to it.” (March 8, 1889). The Secretary said the roof was the most expensive part of the building, as it cost the company from £10 to £15 every year.” (ibid.)

Berwick Ornithological Society called a special meeting of the members of this society in the Long Room of the Corn Exchange in April. In the chair was the Mayor Captain Norman, R.N., J. P. No fewer than four resolutions were put forward. No 1 said “that the Society should have two days’ show, and that it be held on Wednesday and Thursday, 27th and 28th of November.” (ibid.) This seemed to be for purely practical reasons with respect to transporting the birds at night, which apparently was much better for them, and was agreed to. The second resolution was “That the show of poultry be held under the rules of the pigeon club at London if permitted by them.” This led to a discussion the sticking point seemed to be that under the pigeon club rules none but those specially employed were allowed to remain in the show room during judging. A vote, 12 in favour and 9 against, decided to follow the pigeon club rules if they would accept. The third resolution said “That all birds exhibited be the bona fide property of the exhibitor, otherwise the birds would be sold, and the money given to the funds of the Society.” (ibid.) This seems a rather mysterious rule, and how would it be enforced? The outcome of the discussion that followed led to the decision that the birds be the bona fide property of a person for one month previous to the show. The last resolution said “That there be no entry fee charged for special prizes which were open to all.” This resolution was carried by a large majority. After some routine business had been dealt with the meeting terminated.

On 4 May a rather unusual auction of safes took place. They were made by S. Withers & Co. and described as “patent fire and burglar resisting safes . . . and a perpetual insurance against both.” (April 26, 1889) 13 safes were auctioned off from 20 inches to 4 feet high. The company had existed for over 35 years and had sold £50,000 worth of safes during the last eight years to a number of banks, and



were makers to Her Majesty's Post Offices in England and India. This makes one wonder why they were sold by auction and whether these took place round the country or whether Berwick was especially targeted, and if so, what the reason could be.

The Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association gave their annual concert at the end of April to a numerous and appreciative audience and were closely followed by the Berwick Choral Union who gave their twentieth annual concert in the Corn Exchange in early May, at which they performed Handel's oratorio "Samson". The audience was not as numerous as might have been expected which might have been due to the fact that the concert took place later in the year than usual. At the end of the very detailed review in the newspaper it says "We understand the Committee contemplate giving an opera next season – probably 'The Bohemian Girl' – instead of an oratorio. This, we believe, will be a most acceptable change." (May 10, 1889)

The annual meeting of the shareholders of Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light Company took place in July with Mr. C. Hopper, chairman, presiding. A dividend of 10 per cent, free of income tax, was declared, and at the same time a reduction of the price of gas was announced. The Chairman's report was adopted and apart from the announcement that, "Your Directors regret to inform you that during the past year the Company has been deprived of the services of an able and efficient Director, by the death of Adam Paxton, a gentleman who always took the warmest interest in everything appertaining to the welfare of the Company." (July 19, 1889)

A band from The Farningham Homes paid a second visit to Berwick in August. The Farningham Homes were situated in Kent, and took in boys who were homeless, destitute or in danger of getting involved in crime. It was based on the so-called cottage home principle, which meant that the boys lived in separate cottages with a "father" and "mother" and they received education and were taught various skills. The concert was basically a fund raising event as the homes had a heavy mortgage to service and needed about £15,000 a year for their expenses and were looking for subscribers. The two concerts were very successful and a total amount of £24 2s 10d was raised.

The ever popular money raising event – the bazaar – was again resorted to by the 1<sup>st</sup> Berwick-on-Tweed Artillery Volunteers, who needed money to finance the erection of a drill hall, "in consequence of their ejection from the Barracks, through no fault of their own, but simply because the accommodation there is too small for them and the King's Own Scottish Borderers." (August 23, 1889) The

amount needed was £1,800 and they had already received £426 in the shape of subscriptions from, among others, the Duke of Northumberland, Major Allan, Earl Percy and Messrs. Mann, Crossman & Paulin. The bazaars took place over two days, “and was a decided success, though it still leaves the Volunteers far short of the £1,800 which they require for the erection of their premises. However, their expectations did not lead them to indulge in any false hope, and it is pleasing to learn that they are satisfied with what they have got.” (ibid.)

The opening was presided over by Major Caverhill who quoted from a pamphlet called “A view of the Establishment of the Corps of Independent Berwick Volunteers.” The Corps was formed at the beginning of 1797, and the purpose was specified in the following declaration “We subscribers do hereby declare our unfeigned attachment to his Majesty King George, the Third, and to both Houses of Parliament—considering the present very critical posture of public affairs, and having reason to fear from what has lately occurred in the sister kingdom—invasion from an enemy professing principles highly inimical to the King and Constitution of this country; we feel it a duty as loyal subjects, to come forward in the present emergency, with an offer of our services, to aid and assist the civil power, by forming ourselves into a Volunteer corps, at our own private expense, and upon such regulations as shall afterwards be agreed upon by the subscribers; in order to repel the foreign enemy, and to check or suppress riot and insurrection within the town and liberties of Berwick-upon-Tweed.” (ibid.)

The actual formation of the Corps had taken place on 9 February 1797 at a general meeting at the King’s Arms. One might wonder what possible threats could be expected from the sister kingdom in 1889. The present Volunteer Corps was formed in August 1860 at a meeting of the inhabitants held in the Town Hall and they were now in need of a new home, or as the Major expressed it, they were a crab without a shell and continued that “It is true that they have found a temporary shell in the billiard room of a public house, but this is altogether too small, and not advantageous on several grounds, one of which is that it leads or may lead to transactions for the goods of the house, which cannot be considered as beneficial to the corps.” (ibid.) After thanking the ladies he asked Lady Sybil Knox to open the bazaar, followed by a vote of thanks to her from Mayor Caverhill, who seemed more interested in praising her husband Colonel Knox, after which Lady Knox returned the thanks and the bazaar finally opened.

In addition to the stalls selling a great variety of goods there was a ‘livestock sale’ in one of the side rooms. “This was conducted by masters Caverhill, M’Creath, Weddell and Russell. This apartment for the nonce resembled a miniature

menagerie, as pigeons, fishes, kittens, and other creatures were to be seen ranged round about.” (ibid.) The attendance in the afternoon was low due to bad weather, but at night the Corn Exchange was crowded. One of the amusements in the livestock sale room was “a boy with face blackened, and placed in a dog kennel, created much amusement by acting the part of ‘Jacko’ a monkey.” (ibid.) But there were also well attended concerts upstairs, and “three men belonging to the King’s Own Scottish Borderers lent their aid by singing and step dancing.” (ibid.) The sum realised the first day amounted to £257 8s 3d. Colonel Hamilton opened the second day of the bazaar, which did better than the day before, so that the final proceeds were almost £500. A dance was held at the end of the bazaar

An extensive and important sale of valuable Russian furs was held in the Corn Exchange over three days in October, and in November “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” returned to Berwick for three nights.

A fourth building society was added to the ones already existing in Berwick, namely the Berwick-on-Tweed Starr-Bowkett Building Society. At a meeting in the Corn Exchange in November a number of officials were elected and the number of members was limited to 499. This society had been in existence in London for about 28 years, but the idea of enabling the less well-off sections of society to become home owners had started years before when Dr. Bowkett had noticed that people, particularly in the East End of London, were “living in very filthy dwellings, scarcely worthy of the name of houses or shelter.” (November 29, 1889) Dr. Bowkett knew of the existence of building societies in London but when he looked into the conditions under which these societies were operating he realised that they were unaffordable for many people. He started his own and some years later was joined by Mr Starr and formed the present society. Questions were raised by Mr. J. B. King, who doubted the feasibility of the scheme and said that he had read that many of the members had ended up being hopelessly insolvent. The representative from the Society said that it was not true and added that the fact that these accusations had been aired in Whittaker’s Almanac, which was only published once a year, they had not been able to prove that the accusations were wrong.

In December a ratepayer meeting took place in the Corn Exchange. Three points were up for discussion: 1) the Proposal by the Board of Guardians to construct a new Workhouse. 2) the proposal by the Urban Sanitary Authority to purchase the Gaol from the Corporation. 3) the proposal to provide drainage and a new water supply for Tweedmouth and Spittal. Councillor Gilroy presided. The Guardians had been under pressure from the Local Government Board for some time to build

a new workhouse, “but latterly the pressure had been such as to make the Guardians divide upon the question as to whether or not there should be a new workhouse. The division resulted in a majority of one in favour of such a project, but the mover and seconder of the motion . . . were both gentlemen who were not in any shape guilty of extravagance.” (December 13, 1889) The two gentlemen in question were Alderman Darling and Alderman Christison. A point put forward in favour of not building now was that “the transitional state of matters. We had now a County Council, and such changes might be made by Parliament as to cause the regulation and management of the Workhouse to be very different from what it was now. It was quite possible that they might make such regulations that a far larger Workhouse than the new building proposed would be needed.” (ibid.) A lengthy debate followed, most of the arguments were centred around the supposition that there was actually enough space in the Workhouse and any change that might be needed could be done for a fraction of what a new workhouse would cost. However, one hitch was that the Local Government Board were very reluctant to sanction any changes to the existing workhouse, and had on occasions put their foot down and blocked outlay for changes to the Workhouse. Nevertheless no fewer than three resolutions were unanimously adopted, all of them opposing the building of a new workhouse.

Next up was the proposed purchase of the new Gaol. Mr. Yellowly, Berwick, moved “that the meeting of ratepayers of the borough protests against and objects to the Urban Sanitary Authority borrowing money to be applied for the purpose of the new gaol, because the Authority has already sufficient accommodation for its requirements, and if in future more be necessary, a very small outlay would amply satisfy any further wants.” (ibid.) Again the problem came down to money. The present accommodation of the Urban Sanitary Authority was at the Shambles in Tweed Street, and they had already spent £200 on improving the stables there. The Authority held their accommodation at a rent of £5 a year, whereas the anticipated sum that would be needed to make the new gaol fit for purpose would be around £3,500. There was one dissenting voice: Mr. Cameron, a veterinary surgeon, who said that “he was not there to criticise the resolution as to whether the new gaol was a proper place or not; what he objected to was that part of the resolution which said that the present accommodation of the Urban Sanitary Authority was sufficient. He certainly said it was not suitable. Moreover, there was a considerable amount of valuable property stored in the Shambles, and it stood there deteriorating . He thought therefore the resolution should be amended.” (ibid.) Mr. Robert Dudgeon, Castlegate, wrapped up his objection to both the purchase of the new gaol and a new workhouse by saying that the ratepayers were the poorest class of people in Berwick, especially in Castlegate and went on: “And to talk about a

new workhouse! The paupers in it had their sitting room, their bedroom, their dining room, and W.C.'s out of number. Had the Corporation farmers any such accommodation? He said no. The Corporation cared for itself, but what did it care for the ratepayers." (ibid.) At this point Mr Dudgeon was interrupted by the Chairman and resumed his seat, and the resolution was adopted unanimously. Regarding the proposed water supply and drainage of Tweedmouth and Spittal no decision was taken as it was believed that the Mayor would call a meeting regarding this soon.

Apparently at some point the annual Volunteers' Ball was about to become a thing of the past due to a dispute between the Artillery and the Rifle corps. The Artillery corps had backed out and arranged dances of their own, so the Rifle Corps held a very successful Volunteers' Ball in December on their own in a hall very much decorated along the lines which had become the norm.

1889 ended with the announcement of a grand treat for the new year, starting 30 December and running for six nights. It was "W. J. Colling Hall's Celebrated Panorama, New York to California, Niagara and the Far West. The most beautiful painted picture in the world, nearly one mile in length, illustrating American, Indian, Emigrant and Negro life, and the magnificent scenery and industries of the New World." (December 27, 1889). And it goes on "Sound advice to intending emigrants. How to get there and what to do. A grand witty and original lecture." (ibid.)

The beginning of 1890 saw a number of auctions of household furniture in the Corn Exchange as well as a very short notice in the newspaper announcing that, "Mr. Clark, evangelist, serving under the Apostle, will lecture on Sunday at 3." (January 17, 1890)

The Court Minstrels gave two performances in early February. They were dressed in costumes of the period of George II, and the entertainment consisted of a mixture of songs, dance and the new and original act "Kentucky Force", representing a number of policemen courting while on their beats, was also very entertaining." and "on both occasions the Corn Exchange was filled by a highly delighted and appreciative audience." (February 7, 1890)

In February, a second meeting was held in the Corn Exchange regarding the affairs of Mr. Thomas Hogg, fruiterer, formerly of High Street, Berwick. Mr. Stevenson, Edinburgh presiding "Mr. R. Dixon, the trustee of the estate, said that the meeting had been called by a requisition of some of the creditors who were dissatisfied with

the debtor's manner of accounting for his deficiency, and who were determined, unless insolvency was more satisfactorily explained, to petition against the debtor in the Bankruptcy Court to obtain further enlightenment as to the way the money had gone." (February 21, 1890) It was apparently a very complicated case—changed dates in accounts, statements saying the debtor was owed money, admission that he knew nothing about the trade he was engaged in— and when asked how he had been able to start another shop in Woolmarket he said that somebody had lent him money. It also appears that the new shop was in his wife's name. When questioned about the money he had said Miss Pringle, of Morton House owed him and that he could not remember what he had said. Mr. Hogg had tried to raise money by buying goods on credit and selling them to people paying cash at below cost price and presumably not paying the suppliers. The whole proceeding ended when Mr. Dods in frustration expressed the opinion that there was no point in continuing as Mr. Hogg's reaction to most of the questions were that he could not remember or he did not know. It was decided to take proceedings against Mr. Hogg for obtaining money under false pretences and he was informed accordingly. (Ibid.)

The Berwick Ornithological Society had run into financial problems. The problem seemed to be that they had been too generous with their prizes at their last exhibition so they had decided to arrange a concert in the Corn Exchange. "to make good the deficiency, and by means of this and other schemes the committee hope to clear off the debt so that the next exhibition may be held clear of any incubus." (February 28, 1890) Whether the aim was reached we do not know.

In late February a meeting was held concerning Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute Children. The Mayor presided and Rev. W. J. Mayers gave an account of the work of these homes as well as a short background to how they had been established. It all started 23 years ago "while Dr. Barnardo was a medical student in one of the London hospitals, he used to give some of his leisure hours to teaching what was called ragged school. One cold night, after school had been dismissed, one of the boys lingered over the fire, and on being questioned he told the teacher that he had neither mother nor father, and that he with a number of others 'slept out'. To this he readily answered yes. On reaching the place where they slept, Dr. Barnardo found 13 boys all asleep in the open air, and the boy who had taken him there was taken home, and from that night Dr. Barnardo's life's work was commenced." (February 28, 1890) Since then over 14,000 children had been rescued, and at the moment there were 3,300 children in various homes. Each child in the homes costs £16 a year. Quite a number of babies were living in the homes and Rev. W. J. Mayers said that "He trusted that many of those little ones would not only turn out to be good citizens, but good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ." (ibid.) A various points

during the meeting boys from the homes would play music on hand-bells, bagpipes, violin and dulcimer.

As mentioned earlier the Berwick Choral Union had planned to move away from doing an oratorio at their annual concert, and true to their words, they had decided to perform the opera “The Bohemian Girl” by Balfe for their 21<sup>st</sup> annual concert in March, 1890. This move from grave to gay and from sacred to secular music was prompted by the fact that “For some year past it has been found, we are sorry to say, that the oratorio was not so attractive to the public as it once was, for the attendance at the annual concerts of the Choral Union was not so large as it had been at first.” (March 14, 1890) The change was apparently well received by the audience and the performance by the 100 vocalists, whose number had been greatly increased, was a promising indication of the popularity of the change.

The annual general meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company took place in March and the Chairman, Mr. D. Logan, presided over a rather moderate attendance. The usual procedure was gone through and a dividend of five per cent was declared. The death of one of the Directors, Mr. James Bird, was announced. Regarding the general condition, the Directors had arranged to have the hall re-decorated, and the report was adopted. Alderman Alder then commented on the outside appearance of the building which was in dire need of pointing, and Mr. Short drew attention to the fact that there was a hole in the floor near his stall, but the main concern was the condition of the roof. Alderman Darling reported that it was the Directors intention to raise the rent of the stall holders from £3 to £5 to build a small reserve fund to put a new roof on the building. The discussion that followed revealed that nobody had any idea what the price of a new roof would be, and as it was agreed that there was not a qualified architect in town who could make an assessment and that one would have to be brought in which would add about £10 to the cost. It is not quite clear whether the Directors decided to go ahead or if they just kicked the can further down the road.

Opera seemed to have become the popular type of entertainment in Berwick. In April it was announced that the celebrated Walsham Grand Opera Company would appear for three nights. The first night they performed the opera “Maritana” and “There was an appreciative audience, and they enjoyed a treat such as is seldom heard outside of large centres of population.” (April 18, 1890) The second performance was “The Bohemian Girl” which gave the audience the opportunity to compare with that of the Choral Union. The third performance, which took place on a Sunday, was given to a service of sacred songs.

The Tonic Sol-Fa Association under the leadership of Mr. Thomas Richardson gave their annual concert in April as well. The main part of the concert was the cantata “The Wreck of the Hesperus”, which was performed by a choir consisting of 80 members to an appreciative and large audience.

There seemed no end to concerts in Berwick – in May, five concerts were announced, a “Special engagement, at a great expense, of Miss Maria Clifford (late of Carl Rosa’s Opera Company, St. James’ Hall Concerts, &c) with her celebrated Spanish Choir and Ladies’ Orchestra, which has been enthusiastically declared to be the grandest and most unique entertainment ever organised.” (May 9, 1890) However, the success seemed to have been moderate, “The entertainment, which was of high class nature, was poorly attended each evening. Dr .Seaton, who accompanied the choir, gave a conjuring entertainment nightly, which greatly enhanced the programme.” (Ibid.)

The Berwick Ornithological Society was going through rough times. The annual general meeting was held at the end of May, presided over by Mr. John Smeaton. The general situation was that expenses were going up and not enough money was coming in. Payments for advertising in the catalogue at last year’s exhibition had not been paid, and the concert that was arranged earlier in the year to clear off the deficiency had turned out badly. Generally there was a feeling that not enough was being done to attract new members—the difference between being a member and a non-member was minimal. However, the balance sheet was adopted with instruction to try harder to get in the arrears in future. Captain Norman was re-elected as Chairman as was Alderman Adam Darling as Vice-chairman and it was agreed to limit the number of the committee to 14. Before the election of a secretary, Mr. Bowstead suggested that the secretary should be paid as “A man who was paid would look better after the interests of the Society than a man who was not paid.” (ibid.) A heated discussion followed, and harsh words regarding who was to blame for the unsuccessful exhibition last year were exchanged. It was finally decided to combine the offices of secretary and treasurer, and Mr. Francis Mason was appointed to them. The new Committee was elected and a date was set for the fifth annual exhibition. The general meeting was followed by a committee meeting where judges were appointed for the next exhibition. As a consequence of the problems described above it was decided to hold monthly meetings for the members and thus avoid issues coming to a head.

The annual general meeting of the Berwick and Tweedmouth Gaslight Company took place in July. A dividend of 10 per cent free of income tax was declared, and the only announcement was that they would not be able to reduce the price of gas



this year, as had almost become the norm previous years. The Chairman's report was adopted.

In October "Muldoon's Picnic" was performed for three nights. This entertainment was performed by Mr. E. Lewis West's famous No 1 Company and described as "A genuine and harmless tonic . . . One visit will do you more good than half a dozen doctors." (October 3, 1890)

More comedy followed the same month when Messrs. Norman and Buckstone's company performed the farcical comedy "The Arabian Nights" by Sydney Goundy for three nights. But maybe the Berwick audiences had enjoyed enough comedy as the review stated "we regret that the audiences were not at all commensurate with the merits of the actors, for with the exception of Monday night, when a fair number of people were present, the attendance was small." (October 24, 1890)

On 10 December No. 75 Upper Ravensdowne was to be auctioned off in the Corn Exchange. The property, whose present occupant was Miss E. Davidson, contained "5 apartments, kitchen, back kitchen and 2 light closets. The house is commodious and in good repair, advantageously situated for residential purposes, being in one of the best quarters of the town, close to the Parish Church, Wallace Green Church and the Barracks, and within 5 minutes' walk of the sea." (November 28, 1890) Unfortunately there is no record of whether it was sold and at what price.

A somewhat strange entry appeared in the newspaper announcing St Mary's church soiree and entertainment. The Vicar of St Mary's Rev. James King had decided that it should be "of an uncommon order, and as a recommendation he added at the top of the placards—St Mary's treat, so people say, is pure and bright as flowers in May." (November 28, 1890) The doors opened at 6 o'clock, and "tea as served at Her Majesty's table was brewed at 6:30 p.m." (ibid.) At the soiree previous year people had complained that the tea was cold, but it was intimated in the programme that would not be the case this year, and they were also informed that anyone aggrieved with the quality would have a crown or at least half-a crown on leaving the hall. As tea would only be provided for a thousand people the number of cups allowed was 15 cups for adults and 10 for children under 10. After the tea had been drunk, and probably a number of visits to the toilet for those who had had their full allowance, the Vicar occupied the chair for the musical entertainment of the evening. He had apparently appended the letters A.B.C.D to his name which some took to mean able-bodied church defender. It is hard to imagine how the Vicar's rather unusual sense of humour was received by the people of Berwick. The entertainment consisted of a varied programme of music, song and dance and

was generally well received by the full hall.

A victim of hard times appeared at a meeting in the Corn Exchange in December. Messrs. Lee and Wight, boat-builders had executed a deed of assignment to Mr. A. L. Miller in whom the whole property was now vested and the total deficiency was £586 8s 11d. The problem had started when they had built a steam line fishing boat for Mr. T. F. Robertson Carr in 1886 at a loss. This was followed by a further number of boats also built at a loss combined with a general lack of activity caused by bad times. The main creditors Messrs. Allan Brothers had tried to help, but things had now come to a point where the only solution was to wind up the firm and this was done.

The problems in the Berwick Ornithological Society seem to have died down and they held their fifth exhibition in the Corn Exchange in December, which proved to be a great success.

Also in December, the United Temperance held a demonstration in the Corn Exchange and Berwick Presbytery. The argument was that there were too many public houses in Berwick – 93 in all, one for every 150 people – and they were made too attractive by not only offering alcohol but also a wide range of entertainments. An innovative idea was put forward by the temperance people in the newspaper suggesting that the customers in the pub “Should arrange to have the photographer at hand when they have finished the carouse in order that they might present them with a memento of it, and also in order that they might in their sober moments see themselves as others see them. Perhaps, if people who drink had any conception of the idiotic appearance their faces wear when they are the worse of liquor, they would hesitate before they bowed down to the shrine of King Alcohol. Local temperance reformers who intend to keep strict watch on the trade of the public houses in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal in future would do well to get a few of those detective cameras which have been in use in Ireland recently, for the purpose of taking photographs of scenes in the street.” (December 12, 1890) Is this the beginning of what today would be CCTV cameras? But they go on: “These would afford no end of entertainment when they were exhibited by means of magic lanterns at their public gatherings, to which they should invite, amongst others, those of our public men and officials whose frequent recourse to hotels and public houses is a notorious scandal.” (ibid.)

However, the meeting seemed to have ended on a somewhat positive note when they stated “It must be a matter for thankfulness to temperance reformers, however, to know that the number of public houses in Berwick has decreased during the past

half century. Old people can remember when many more existed. ‘The Old Highlander’, which stood in the neighbourhood of Wallace Green Church, and where the first staff borne by the oldest freeman is said to have been lost, has been demolished. In High Street, at least, four have disappeared – ‘The Black Bull,’ which still gives its name to a yard of evil notoriety; one near the top of Western Lane; a third a little below Crawford’s Alley; and another up the wide entry near the Town Hall. In Woolmarket one or two have ceased to exist; in Hide Hill the ‘Wheat Sheaf’ formerly stood where Mr Young has now a cabinetmaker’s shop; and quite recently another was extinguished in Sandgate to make way for the British Linen Company’s Bank.” (ibid.) So the battle was still on but victory had not eluded the temperance movement yet.

The tradition of the Volunteers’ Ball in December was upheld this year as well and took place according to a by now well-known pattern, as the disagreement seemed to have been solved, and, “During the whole evening the enthusiasm was well sustained, and the dancing was carried on with great vigour till an early hour on Wednesday morning.” (December 19, 1890)

Less than a year after the first performance of the opera “Maritana”, it was performed again in the Corn Exchange at the end of January by the Berwick Choral Union and again emphasised the growing popularity of opera. “From the applause which greeted the performance from first to last, it was apparent that the concert was much appreciated.” (January 23, 1891)

February saw a couple of sales of household furniture, mostly from private homes, but one of them also included the following: “the property of a firm in town, sundry effects laid aside at stock taking, viz.: - Umbrella stand, three bedroom sets, ten dozen cups and saucers, ash pans, fenders, baskets, churn, two pair brass scales, one pair counter do., two spring balances, a superior perambulator, three set trays, 21 yards cocoa-nut matting, three oil stoves, four timepieces, two E.-P. cruets, jelly dishes, patent mangle, a quantity of cutlery and sundries.” (February 26, 1891)

In March, the popular minister of Regent Square, Presbyterian Church, London, Mr. McNeill, appeared at several meetings in Berwick, both in Church Street Church and in the Corn Exchange, where he spoke in front of a numerous audience and most of the ministers of the town. His main message was that “If God was immediate in His judgement there would be plenty of believers, but because heaven and hell were not apparent people were indifferent. But the blood curling and awful thing about God was the slowness with which He worked. We should not be deceived by the silence and slowness of God. Many people were believers

in God in secret. It was all very well to have secret convictions, but He wanted our solid arm, our 'wecht', our influence, our momentum and pith. . . . We should have not only conviction, but the courage of our conviction." (March 27, 1891) He went on, "What was wrong with the Gospel? It was addressed to the ragtag and bobtail. Some people did not like that. They would have a Gospel for fine people, for superior people." (ibid.) One can but wonder if the approach to religion put forward by Mr. McNiell would actually convince and attract more to become believers.

Two days later Mr McNeill appeared again in the Corn Exchange where he launched a strong attack on publicans and their trade saying that "if there was any publican present he would have to come out of his shop if he wished to be saved. He would have to adopt Sunday closing and he would not open on the Monday. Grace could not save a man in the fire but it could save a man from the fire. If any liquor seller or publican was to be saved – he loved his soul while he hated his business – he would have to be pulled out of his premises, and he would thank God when the pull came. There was no chance to make the modern publican's trade respectable or Christian. You could not sell Christian liquor. It would do a saint in heaven harm. Religion did not pass into the beer." (ibid.) This talk was delivered in front of a packed hall where many people had to stand. What we do not know, however, was the reaction of the people there, were they there because they were genuinely concerned about the role of religion in society or was it more out of curiosity.

Somewhat happier tones were heard at the Berwick Choral Union's annual concert in early April when they performed Haydn's oratorio "The Creation". This was the third time that this oratorio had been performed in Berwick under Mr. Benjamin Barker's baton "and we have no hesitation whatever in saying it cast all its predecessors far into the shade, for style and vigour and attention to light and shade." (April 3, 1891) Unfortunately the financial success of the concert fell far short of the artistic one as they performed in front of a half full hall.

The annual concert of Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association took place only a few weeks later, and they seemed to have been more successful in attracting a large and well satisfied audience. The choir consisting of about 100 people under the leadership of Mr. Thomas Richardson performed the sacred cantata "The New Jerusalem" by T. Mee Pattison. "The music was sung with accuracy and taste, but in the joyful and triumphant passages we should have liked to find more enthusiasm and a greater volume of sound." (April 17, 1891) The second part was of a lighter character and went down very well with the audience.

At an auction in June, ten £10 shares could be obtained in the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company, Limited together with a number of leasehold properties viz. tenement dwelling house 78 Castlegate, now in the occupation of Messrs. Cowe, Somerville, Sloss and others, at an annual rent of £15. Also dwelling house No. 20 High Greens, with stable, byre and yard, and now in the occupation of Mr. Archibold Patterson, at an annual rent of £13. These premises were held from the Corporation of Berwick for a term of 99 years from 25 March 1834. The shares offered for sale were bought by Mr. J. Davidson junior, High Street, for £10 15s each, and the two properties were sold to Mr. T. Marshall, West Ord, for £105.

In late May, a promenade concert in aid of raising money to provide a cover for the bandstand on the walls was held. The major part was taken up by the 1<sup>st</sup> Berwick-on-Tweed Artillery Volunteers. "They had a well selected programme, but the arrangement of it by those in charge of the concert was certainly very poor indeed, and did not give the bandmen a chance of performing as they might have done. However, they worked hard, and although no doing as full justice to the music as they could have done, yet they are deserving of the highest credit for what might be termed an uphill fight." (May 29, 1891) We are not told if enough money was raised to fulfil the aim of the concert.

A preliminary announcement could be found in the newspaper on June 19, saying, "To be sold by public auction within the Corn Exchange, Berwick, early in July next. All that block of freehold property, being within no. 46, situated on the east side of Marygate, Berwick, and comprising two shops with dwelling houses above, and also dwelling houses behind in Crawford's Alley. Also that fully licensed public house situated in Church Street, Berwick, known as the King's Head with dwelling houses behind the same." (June 19, 1891)

The previously announced sale of dwelling houses at No 78 Castlegate and No 20 High Greens, both held from the Corporation of Berwick for a term of 99 years from 25 March 1834, took place in the middle of June. The bidding started at £90 and rose to £105 when the lot was sold to Mr. T. Marshall, West Ord.

There suddenly seemed to be a glut of properties for sale in Berwick, apart from the ones already mentioned, Mr. A. L. Miller would sell by auction on 28 July, "All that block of freehold property, being No 37 and 39, Chapel Street, Berwick, including the fully licensed long established public house known as the Masons' Arms, containing bar, snug, kitchen, sitting-room, 2 bedrooms, ample cellarage, and other conveniences, together with the front shop and dwelling house in the

occupation of Mr. Hugh Robertson, and tenements in the occupation of Walter Wilson and others, with large yard containing two stables.” (July 17, 1891)

The sale of property continued into August when Mr. A. L. Miller put up for auction, “All that dwelling house situated on the south side of, and being No 11 Golden Square, Berwick, together with the yard (which has a separate entrance from Bankhill) and offices belonging thereto, as now in the occupation of Miss Gilchrist, at the very inadequate yearly rent of £9 10s.” (July 24, 1891) About a week later the following freehold properties were to be sold by auction: “All that eligible freehold dwelling houses, Nos 37, 39 and 41, High Greens,. . . The premises which are of modern construction, substantially built, well finished and in thoroughly good repair, will be exposed in the first instance in one lot, and, if unsold, will be offered in two lots.” (August 7, 1891)

The three properties belonged to Messrs. G. Craik & Sons. After the conditions of the sale were read Mr. H. A. Peters, solicitor, said that he attended the sale on behalf of Mr. Michael Anderson, who lived at No 43, and stated that the owner of the properties was subject to the payment of 2s per annum for an encroachment on his property, and also to the removal of snow from Mr. Anderson’s roof. However, the properties failed to elicit any bids, but Nos 39 and 41 were sold privately to Mr. Alexander Craik, Hawick, for £400.

A number of sales of furniture took place during the autumn. One consisted of furniture from a mansion house in the district, unfortunately we do not know which one. Also included in the sale was “the remaining portion of the stock of Misses Paterson & Gradon, High Street, Berwick, who are declining business, consisting of baby linen, wools, toys and sundries.” (November 27, 1891)

The last event to take place in the Corn Exchange in 1891, apart from the annual Volunteers’ Ball, were two plays, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and “Out of Bondage”, performed by Mr. R. B. Lean’s Company. The first mentioned play had already been performed in Berwick, but the second one was new.

At the end of January, 1892, a concert was given in the Corn Exchange by a number of children from Dr. Stephenson’s Home for Boys and Girls. The mission of the institution was to rescue children who were in danger of falling into criminal ways because extreme poverty or the death of their parents. “The home received children of any age or any sect from England, Scotland and Ireland without election. It is conducted on the family system, is a religious and industrial institution, is a training school for Christian workers, and is dependent on

voluntary contributions.” (January 29, 1892) About 850 children were in residence and about 600 in this country and abroad under careful supervision. The institution had branches in many part of the country, and even a special one for convalescents and infants as well as an emigration branch in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

The annual general meeting of Berwick Corn Exchange Company was held in February with Mr. D. Logan presiding. There was a poor attendance. Comments were made that the property of the Company had been very much improved during the year, and a dividend of 4.5 per cent was declared. There was no mention of the roof, though, but only that £18 13s 11d had been added to the reserve fund which had been increased to £200 7s 3d.

On 9 March, Mr. A. L. Miller held an auction in the Corn Exchange. Its main content was the household furniture of Mr. A. W. Megson, who was going abroad and the estate of Mr. James Lillico, No 5 Bridge Street, who had gone into liquidation.

In March it was announced that the celebrated comedy company Wallace Erskine and Charles Macdonas would appear in the Corn Exchange for two nights only to perform the new and original farcical comedy “Jane”, the hit of the London season. “For these nights the hall will be converted into a charming miniature theatre, and the elite of the neighbourhood will have the opportunity of witnessing the great success, produced exactly and in every detail as it was at the Comedy Theatre, London, where it ran to enormous business for 250 nights, and was witnessed by royalty and all the leaders of fashionable London society.” (March 11, 1892) The only comment in the newspaper, apart from a very detailed account of the plot, was that, “as the acting was excellent, the entertainment each evening was much enjoyed.” (ibid.)

A major sale of properties took place at the end of March when Mr. A. L. Miller, auctioneers, acting on order by the Court of Chancery, offered for sale a number of freehold and leasehold properties belonging to the estate of the late Robert Rankin. There were six lots: “Lot 1 consisting of a freehold dwelling house with yard and outbuildings and portion of garden ground attached, situate at No 8, The Parade, the same recently occupied by Robert Rankin deceased, was first submitted. Bidding started at £250, offered by Mr. G. S. Henderson, Church Street, and rose to £400 when it was sold to that gentleman . . . Lot 2, a freehold messuage, Nos 29, 31 and 33 High Street . . . was bought in as the bidding only reached £1450. Lot 3, a freehold messuage, Nos 11 and 13, Hide Hill . . . £500 was bid by Mr. D. Fortune, Chirnside. The lot advanced £200 and was knocked down at £700. Lot 4,

No. 30 Golden Square . . . was sold to Mr. James Ewart, High Street for £80. Lot, number 5, a leasehold front messuage in Wallace Green, with back messuage behind . . . Mr. Edward Dawson started the bidding at £160, and it was sold to Mr. James Ewart for £225. Lot 6, was a freehold messuage, Nos. 23 and 25, Church Street . . . presently in the occupation of Mr. W. Skelly. (March 25, 1892) No offers were received for this property.

The celebrated American artiste Miss Adelaide Detchon gave two lyrical and vocal recitals in the Corn Exchange at the end of March and performed in front of “very appreciative but by no means numerous audiences as the merits of the entertainments should have attracted.” (April 1, 1892) This does not quite live up to the description that had been published in the Hawick Advertiser in connection with a performance north of the Border, which stated, “Miss Detchon is well-known by reputation, but it is safe to say that however great might be the expectations of the company they were fairly eclipsed by the reality. Miss Detchon’s brilliancy of style, her charming naivete, her bewitching manner, and her almost child-like beauty and simplicity, fairly brought the house down. One can understand now how it is that the students fall in love with Miss Detchon so completely as they have done in Edinburgh and St Andrews. The wonder is that any normally constituted human organism could resist the peculiarly ‘fetching’ influence that she exerts.” (March 25, 1892)

In April Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association gave their fifth annual concert which took place in the newly repainted and redecorated hall. The main part consisted of “The Song of the Bell” with words by Schiller and music composed by Mr. T. M. Pattison. The audience was numerous and the choir consisting of about 150 people and “It was admitted on all hands that the members of the Association showed much improvement in their singing, which was characterised by that certainty of intonation which is a distinguishing feature of the students of the tonic sol-fa system.” (April 1892) A few hints of what could be improved on were however mentioned in the review: “The contralto solos were sung by Miss Weatherburn, who marred her efforts by nervousness, which caused her to get out of tune with the orchestra.” (ibid.) and about Mr. W. Wood, “who had abundant scope for the display of his strong bass voice in the numerous solos that fell to his share. He would do well in future to impart some briskness to his style.” (ibid.) and finally, “We hope we shall not be considered guilty of captious criticism, in also pointing out that some of the vocalists were betrayed into a few provincialisms in their pronunciation.” (ibid.)

On the 14 June a public meeting for the inauguration of Women’s Liberal



Association in the Border Counties took place in the Corn Exchange and it was to be addressed by the Countess of Aberdeen, Lady Grey, Mrs. Mark Napier and Lady Fanny Marjoribank. It said in the announcement that “It is expected there will be a large attendance as arrangements are being made with the railway companies to grant facilities in the way of reduced fares.” (June 3, 1892) Unfortunately there is no account in the newspaper of how the meeting went, but it seems clear that it was an attempt to strengthen the influence of women, even though they did not yet have the right to vote, especially in the light of the forthcoming general election in 1892.

The available properties for sale did not seem to abate. On 26 July an auction was held in the Corn Exchange. Three lots were up for auction, the first being was Nos. 65 and 67, High Street, consisting of a front shop and commodious dwelling house and offices attached, in the occupation of Mr. John M Gunn, tea-dealer and grocer. The second was “The extensive premises situated in the Sandstell Road, Spittal, consisting of large and convenient yards, curing houses, salt store,&c, together with the commodious dwelling house belonging thereto, all as now occupied by Mr. George Peel, in connection with his business of fish curer. This property possesses unusual advantages of position in relation to import and export, as well as home trade, and is associated with one of the most successful undertakings of the kind in the north of England.” (July 8, 1892) The third lot was a piece of land adjacent to the second lot and covered about 2,770 square yards.

More properties were sold by auction on 10 August by Mr. A. L. Miller. It was “all those freehold premises, being No. 66, Church Street, Berwick, consisting of front shop and dwelling house of 4 apartments, as now in the occupation of Miss Galley and Mrs. Brown respectively; dwelling house of 5 apartments, in the occupation of the representatives of Mrs. Richardson, deceased; dwelling house of 6 apartments, in the occupation of Mr. P. Richardson, and a dwelling house of 2 apartments in the occupation of Mr. John Trotter, together with the yard, garden, and conveniences behind the same.” (August 5, 1892) Also for sale was “All that freehold property, being Nos. 7 and 9, Mill Strand, Tweedmouth, consisting of substantially build dwelling house, as now in the occupation of Messrs. Adam Purves, George Temple, and Thomas Heckle, with yard, washhouse, and offices behind the same.” (ibid.)

A grand Catholic soiree and concert, which took place at the beginning of August in aid of St Cuthbert’s Roman Catholic schools, was set to be a success with a varied programme consisting of performances by both local and specially engaged artists from outside the area. One incident, however, marred the evening: “The only regrettable incident that occurred was when Mr. W. C. Marsden was reciting

‘Eugene Aram’. When about half way through he was interrupted by the occupants of the back benches in such a way that he immediately bowed and left the platform.” (August 5, 1892) The thank you expressed by Rev. W. Smythe at the end of the evening probably did not include of the back benches.

The main event in August was no doubt the Spittal Bazaar, its aim was to raise funds for the improvement of Spittal as a seaside resort and no efforts were spared to make it a success. It was to be over two days and the bazaar would be opened by Earl Percy on the first day and by Watson Askew-Robinson, Esq., of Ladykirk on the second, and Mr J. H. Amers’s band from Newcastle would provide the music. The stalls had been designed by Mr. John Cockburn, Castlegate, and Mr. John Crow had been given the task of carrying out the decoration of the stalls. Special trains, at reduced fares, would run from various towns. Gifts were to be drawn for, ranging from sewing-machines, to Bengal tiger skins and skins of African wild buck and a safety bicycle. And to top it all an “Ode to Spittal” had been written specially by Mr. Aaron Watson, editor of the Shields Gazette, and set to music by Mr. Thomas Richardson, organist of St Peter’s Church, Edinburgh, and was sung at the opening of the bazaar.

The idea of making Spittal more attractive was not new, it had often been talked about but little action had followed “until last year when a letter was written by ex-Ballie Laidlaw of Hawick, pointing out that music, seats on the beach, and a public promenade should be provided if the number of visitors to Spittal were no to become smaller by degrees and beautifully less” (August 19, 1892) This wake-up call led the Berwick Urban Sanitary Authority to appointing a committee of ratepayers of the village for the purpose of adding to the attractions of Spittal. The general feeling was, however, that the initiative taken by the Sanitary Authority was moving too slowly, and as a consequence the idea of holding a bazaar was born.

As the rateable value of Spittal was small it was realised that not enough money could be raised for the project that way, as the total amount of money needed was £2,000. £1,000 was to be borrowed against the rateable value of the village, some subscription money had already come in and the rest would be made up by the bazaar. This amount would pay for “an esplanade extending from the Gas Works to Hood’s Head at the south of Spittal. The face will be of cement and the esplanade will be wide enough to have a carriage drive and a footpath. Means are also to be taken to do entirely away with the present open outlet running out to the beach, and a complete system of underground drainage is to be introduced into the village for the purpose of carrying away all street surface water and house slop. The piping is

of the present ditch on the Billendean Road, along many visitors to Spittal come when they enter the village, and the improvement of the road are to be kept in view. Should there be sufficient funds, the esplanade is to be furnished with suitable seats, and the rough ground immediately adjoining is to be levelled up and suitably laid out, so that the whole place may be beautiful as much as possible. (ibid.)

The bazaar was a great success and raised £1,211 5s ½d , this amount together with subscriptions received and money promised but not yet paid amounted to a grand total of £1,656 15s ½d. Afterwards the Committee met in the Town Hall, chaired by the Mayor, to discuss the disposal of the money, and soon problems arose: “it appears there is some difference of opinion amongst the people of Spittal regarding the construction of the esplanade, and also some misunderstanding as to its cost. It has been supposed that the expense would be £1,500 altogether, but this sum alone will be required for a concrete wall from Hood’s Head to the Gas Works, other £1,000 being needed for levelling the road and the ground behind.” (August 26, 1892) This would mean that the esplanade alone would take all the money and nothing would be left for improving the drainage and the Billendean Road. It was therefore decided to wait until the Local Government Board had held an enquiry into the proposed borrowing of £1,000 from the Public Works Loan Commissioners, as the proposed plan would lead to a deficit of £800-900.

The Farningham Boys paid another visit to Berwick in September and gave a successful musical performance which resulted in £20 10s being collected.

The Eastern Border Horticultural Society held their annual competitive exhibition at the end of August in the Corn Exchange. The season had apparently not been very good for the growers of flowers and vegetables, and the day previous to the exhibition had brought heavy rain which had put the potted plants and cut flowers in danger of being damaged and the weather did not let up on the day of the exhibition. “The weather unfortunately turned out most unpropitious, as rain fell during the whole time the show was open, while a thunderstorm also prevailed in the afternoon. The attendance consequently was very much affected as it was very small in the afternoon, only 29s being taken for admission at the door.” (September 2, 1892) The judges, however, seemed to have done well as “At the conclusion of their labours, they together with the committee, dined together in the King’s Arms Hotel, where an excellent repast was purveyed.”(ibid.)

Two auctions were held in October. The first took place on the 12, where about 800 volumes of books of general literature belonging to the late Dr. Philip W.

Maclagan, 52 Ravensdowne. This was followed a week later by an auction of his household furniture.

In December an expansion of Berwick was planned when “The owner of the Castle Hill Estates, in deference to representations made to him on the subject, has taken the necessary steps to enable him to make the field in Castle Terrace, adjoining the grounds of St Mary’s Vicarage available to the erection of houses of good class.” (December 2, 1892) The auction was arranged by Messrs. John Embleton & Son. A plan of the lots for sale had been made, as well as of the condition of sale and the regulations for the houses to be built.

Trouble was brewing in the salmon fishing community. At the annual meeting of Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Limited the Directors’ report stated that “they cannot report a satisfactory result from the working of the Fisheries during the past season.” (December 2, 1892) This was due partly to the great deficiency in trout, and the low prices, but most of all, according to the Directors it was due to “the great increase in the illegal capture of salmon during the annual close time at the mouth of the river and on the sea coast adjoining. . . . This poaching, which is carried on almost openly, is continually giving rise to acts of great disorder and violence with which the authorities seem unable to cope.” (ibid.) The Company felt justified in their dissatisfaction with the present fishery laws as it was obviously ignored by many. The Company had tried to do something about the problem as “On the 15<sup>th</sup> instant, a deputation from the Police Committee of the Tweed Commissioners had an interview with the Home Secretary with a view of asking for the presence of a gunboat during the close season to protect the bailiffs in the execution of their duty, and in this interview your Deputy Chairman and Secretary were invited to be present, and accordingly attended.” (ibid.) The interview was unsuccessful in terms of the presence of a gunboat, but they were promised that the problem would be submitted for the consideration of the Government. The Directors’ report was adopted, and in spite of the present problems it was decided to pay a dividend of 5½ per cent.

On 10 January, 1893, No. 1 North Terrace was up for auction: “There was a fair attendance. The site on which the house is built is held on lease from the Corporation of Berwick for 150 years, of which 15 years have expired.” (January 13, 1893). However, in spite of the attendance, the bidding only reached £570, and the property was bought in at the reserve price of £650.

The lots belonging to the Castle Hill Estate were, as mentioned before, being sold and on 20 January it was announced in the newspaper that lots 1 and 2 had been

purchased by Miss Agnes Allan, Castle Terrace at the upset or reserve price of £400.

The furniture belonging to Mrs. Anderson, No 1 North Terrace, who was moving abroad, was sold by auction on 22 February in the Corn Exchange, and the auctioneer Mr. A. L. Miller pointed out that “The auctioneer can confidently direct attention to this sale, as the furniture is very superior and in first condition.” (February 17, 1893)

Another unsuccessful sale of property was when “The business premises in Middle Street, Spittal, consisting of baker’s shop, dwelling house of seven apartments, bake-house, three-stalled stable, and hay loft in the garden behind, the same as lately in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Atkinson, baker and provision dealer” (February 10, 1893) was advertised but was not put up owing to the absence of buyers.

The annual meeting of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company Limited was held in February. In Mr. D. Logan’s report he talked about the stability of the company and the receipts from rents were the largest since 1885. “The hall and two side rooms have been painted, and the walls repaired and re-coloured; a large ornamental gas lamp has been placed over the main entrance, and the roof and the premises generally have been kept in good repair.” (February 17, 1893) In spite of the large expenditure the Directors recommended a dividend of five per cent. The report was adopted.

The flow of properties for sale in Berwick went on. In the middle of March three lots of freehold properties were auctioned “under the will of the late Joseph Fleming senior. Lot I, consisting of a shop and dwelling house, of four apartments, with W.C. and cellar, being No. 7, Eastern Lane, presently occupied by Mr. C. McMillan , and yielding an annual rental of £8, was put up.” (March 17, 1893) Bidding was brisk and reached the reserve price of £80, and was ultimately knocked down at £100 to Mr. Peter McLaughlin, Eastern Lane, who also bought the second lot, which was a stone built shop and tenement property at No. 23, Walkergate Lane, at £148. The third lot was the adjoining property, No. 25 Walkergate Lane. “Bidding was commenced at £100 by Mrs. Brodie, and advanced £55, before it was ultimately knocked down to her.” (ibid.)

Also in March the property in North Road called “Helensville” was advertised for sale by auction in the Corn Exchange. It was held on lease from the Corporation of Berwick for a period of 150 years from 25 March 1887. We do not know whether

the property was actually sold.

Often when household furniture is auctioned off we do not know the names of the owners, but at the end of March the Rev. W. W. F. Keeling, the Vicar of Holy Island, put up for sale what appears to be his entire household furniture, which seems to have been the norm when people moved house.

In April politics came to Berwick in the form of a Grand Irish Entertainment under the patronage of among others Lady Jerningham, Longridge Towers. It was called an entertainment but was actually a political meeting in support of Irish Home Rule as it said in the announcement that “In the interval between the first and second parts of the programme, Mr. Jordan, M.P. for South Meath, will deliver an address on HOME RULE.” (March 31, 1893)

At the entertainment, which was given under the auspices of the local branch of the Irish National League of Great Britain, Mr. Jordan said that “He did not come there to appeal for English sympathy; he detested the feeling that they were asking for charity and mercy. He did not want that from them; he simply wanted justice.” (April 14, 1893) He added that he came from the north of Ireland and was an Ulster Protestant. He continued “When they asked for Home Rule what did it mean? It was simply the management of their own affairs; the management of Irish affairs solely by Irishmen in an Irish legislature on Irish soil where the affairs were.” (ibid.) “The principle of self-government was a sort of birthright. He contrasted the government of Ireland with that of other British dependencies which he said had all been granted measures of self-government, and asked why Ireland should not be granted similar powers . . . He believed Mr. Gladstone’s Bill now before the country was an honest endeavour to solve the difficult problem. . . . Dealing with the objection that Ireland was too near to England to have control of her own affairs, that it was too small, and that it would be a hiding place for the enemies of England, Mr. Jordan referred to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands where he said they had self-government, and yet they were much smaller than Ireland.” (ibid.) He also downplayed the religious differences in Ireland “As a Protestant he (Mr. Jordan) would oppose Home Rule if he thought it would injure him. He did not want to be humiliated, and as an Ulsterman, he would not like to see the North brought down from the high position it held. He had no doubt they would pass Home Rule in spite of the protest that had been uttered, and when it was passed these Protestant people would be as safe in Ireland as they were at the present day.” (ibid.) In his vote of thanks Mr. Thomas Darling said that the speech “was a fair, temperate and moderate one without personal recrimination, which he was sorry to say they were accustomed to in Berwick, not so much from their (the

Liberal) side as from their opponents.” (ibid.)

Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association gave their annual entertainment in April. The chorus, consisting of about 150 people assisted by an orchestra, performed a varied repertoire of songs in front of a large audience, and were supported by members of the Choral Union and the defunct Orchestral Society. The second part began with the part song, “Bonnie Girvan Shore”, composed by Mr. Tomlyn, organist of Wallace Green Church, and the newspaper comments that “There was a natural curiosity to hear the production of a local musician, and the audience were well pleased to listen to such mellifluous and ear-haunting strains as those with which the part song abounds. The chorus and orchestra did the part song full justice, and it was much appreciated.” (April 14, 1893) as was Mr. Thomas Elder who “sang ‘The Anchor’s Weighed’ in such a captivating manner that he received an enthusiastic encore . . . Mr. Elder might improve his pronunciation; it is quite distinct, but decidedly provincial.” (ibid.)

The same month saw the performance of Mendelsohn’s oratorio “St Paul” at the annual concert of the Berwick Choral Union and it was seen as a momentous task “which might have daunted a more youthful and less experienced musical association than the Choral Union, but under their enthusiastic and most painstaking leader, Mr. William Green, who is a worthy successor of the late Mr. Benjamin Barker, the members applied themselves with great diligence and skill to the study of the oratorio, and how they accomplished their task was proved on Tuesday night to a large audience which listened with great pleasure to their exposition of the difficult but effective music.” (April 28, 1893)

In May and June a number of sales of household furniture in which the owners were named took place. One was furniture belonging to the late Mr John Scott, formerly Rector, and Mr. J. Tait, East Ord Farm, who was leaving the district, and this was followed by the sale of a quantity of superior household furniture belonging to the late Miss Pratt, Berwick. The next month we read that “Mr. A. L. Miller is favoured with instructions from the Executors of the late Miss Grace E Dickson, to sell within the Corn exchange, Berwick, on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August, a large quantity of household furniture removed from No. 19, Ravensdowne for convenience of sale.” (July 21, 1893)

The annual general meeting of Berwick Equitable Benefit Building Society was held at the beginning of July with Mr. Mason, Chairman presiding over what sounded like an uneventful meeting.

Two freehold properties were up for sale by auction in the Corn Exchange. The first lot was the front messuage or tenement of No. 76 Church Street, in occupation of several tenants at a rental of £19 10s. The property was knocked down to Mr. John Ormiston, Church Street, after a very spirited competition, at £520, thus exceeding the reserve price which was £400. "Lot 2 consisted of a freehold messuage or tenement, situate and being No. 25, Low Greens, with yard and appurtenances behind, presently let to John Grey on a repairing lease expiring 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb., 1896, at an annual rental of £7. Biding was started by Mr. G. Dugson at £80, and rose rapidly until £150 was reached, at which sum it was knocked down to Mr. H. T. Heron, shipbroker, Berwick." (July 14, 1893).

The annual meeting of Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Company was held on 17 July, where Mr. Christopher Hopper, Chairman of Directors, presided over a good attendance. Things were looking good, a dividend of 10 per cent free of income tax was declared as well as a reduction in the price of gas. In his report the Chairman said "The shareholders would have observed that some companies were commencing to make gas from oil, and the Directors were carefully watching the results. The matter was in its infancy at present, but he had no hesitation in saying that if it turned out after little experience to be a success, it would no doubt be their duty to use it, if by so doing they could improve the gas, and benefit the consumers and shareholders alike." (July 21, 1893) The only sad thing to report was "that during the year they had been deprived through death of the valuable services of their dear friend and colleague – the late Councillor Robert Gray." (ibid.) The Chairman's report was unanimously adopted as was the 10 per cent dividend, after which the proceedings terminated.

Another attempt at raising money through resorting to the never failing means of holding a bazaar was contemplated in July. The managers of Bankhill Presbyterian Church, Berwick, needed money. Their decision to build a new manse for their minister on North Road at a cost of about £1,000 had left them short of about £400 after the old manse had been sold for £485 and a special collection in the church had only raised £130. A list of influential patronesses was obtained and "For the occasion the interior of the Corn Exchange had been arranged to represent a Moorish market place by Messrs. Wilkinson & Co, Liverpool . . . which led the visitors to suppose that they had been transported across Europe to the north of Africa." (July 28, 1893) The first day the bazaar was opened by Mr. Watson Askew-Robertson of Ladykirk, whose address was fairly standard. The bazaar was well patronised during the day and the day's proceeding was £260. The second day the bazaar was opened by the Mayor of Berwick, County Councillor James Gilroy, J. P., who actually managed to keep his word when he said "it is not my intention



to inflict upon you a long speech this day.” (July 28, 1893) It was expected that about £400 would have been raised at the bazaar, but due to the fact that not all of that amount would go towards clearing the debt, certain expenses had to be taken into consideration such as rent of the Corn Exchange, meant that the debt would not be cleared in its entirety.

On 2 August a Grand Evening Concert and Assault at Arms was held in the Corn Exchange in aid of the HMS Victoria Disaster Fund. The HMS Victoria had collided with another ship from the Navy near Lebanon in June with 358 crew members drowned and 357 rescued, and this had led to a country-wide campaign to help the families hit by this disaster. The programme of the evening consisted of various musical performances and “The great assault at arms will include:- Cutlass drill, bayonet exercises, attack and defence practice and fencing, by fleetmen of H.M.S. ‘Audacious’ and non-commissioned officers and men of the King’s Own Scottish Borderers.” (July 28, 1893)

Two auctions of household furniture took place in August. The executor of the late Miss Grace E Dickinson “had favoured Mr. A. L. Miller with instructions . . . to sell within the Corn Exchange, Berwick . . . a large quantity of household furniture removed from No. 19 Ravensdowne for convenience of sale.” (July 28, 1893) Also to be auctioned the same day was the property of Rev. Mr. Christie, Free Church Manse, Mordington, who was going abroad. A week later household furniture removed from No. 55 Ravensdowne and belonging to Mrs. Evans, who was leaving town, was to be sold by auction.

In September “All that eligible copyhold property, situated on the west side of, and being No. 50 Middle Street, Spittal, consisting of a front room with dwelling house over and yard, garden, and other conveniences in rear, as at present in the occupation of Mr. J. M. Burr. The premises which are commodious and in excellent repair are most conveniently situated for the trade of a baker, with which they have been associated for the last 38 years.” (August 18, 1893) On the day where the property “was to have been sold by auction at the Corn Exchange, but as no bidder turned up the conditions were not read and the property was not offered.” (September 8, 1893) Two other properties for sale the following day did not fare much better “Mr. R. Douglas, Town Clerk, having read the condition of sale, the dwelling house, No. 23 Quay Walls, Berwick, formerly in the occupation of the late Mrs. Paulin, was first offered, but no bid was made for it” (ibid.) and the other property for sale, No 10 Sandgate, occupied by the Misses Miller only attracted a single bid from B. J. Weatherhead, solicitor, on behalf of a client, and it was bought in at the reserve price of £500. This begs the question of whether the property

market in Berwick was slumping or whether there were other reasons for the lack of interest.

There seemed little sign of improvement in the housing market. Two more lots were offered for sale in September: "The first lot was the freehold messuage or tenement No. 9 Foul Ford, consisting of 6 apartments, lumber attic, wash house, and conveniences, as lately in the occupation of Mrs. Mary Chrystal, and others at the estimated annual rental of £15, together with stable, hayloft, and coach house, in the occupation of Mr. A. T. Gunn, at the annual rental of £5." (September 29, 1893) The bidding went up to £165 and the property was bought in at the reserve price of £200. Lot 2 did better. It was the freehold messuage Nos. 16 and 18 Chapel Street. Bidding began at £50 and went up to £67 at which price it was knocked down to Mr. Thomas Weatherston for Mr. Thomas Cooney, the present occupier.

In October Sir Edward Grey, M.P., Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, got an enthusiastic reception when he appeared at the Corn Exchange to give an update on the general political situation and the Tweed Acts. He started with a lengthy account in defence of the Irish Home Rule Bill, which had been defeated in Parliament the previous month: it was passed in the House of Commons but voted down in the House of Lords. He also mentioned an on-going strike in the colliery district of the Midlands. The Government led by Mr. Gladstone was accused of not doing anything to stop it, but this was rebutted by Sir Grey who said that since the opposition did not seem to have a solution to the problem they had no right to accuse the Government of not taking action. He also mentioned a few other bills that would be put in front of Parliament such as the Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Council Bill. He finally mentioned the Tweed Acts and said that "Though he could not in any way pledge the present Government, it seemed to him that it ought not to be a very difficult thing that when the Scotch salmon fishings are dealt with there should be a clause in that Bill which should repeal the Tweed Acts altogether." (October 27, 1893) In that way the Tweed would come under the general law of Scotland, as he felt that it was more a Scottish river than an English one "and then that they should have local Boards, perhaps under the Scotch Fishery Board, and that those boards should have great latitude in setting the amount of close time and those other regulations connected with it which are most suitable to the individual circumstances of each river." (ibid.) this proposal was greeted with applause by the audience.

A number of questions mostly referring to the Irish Home Rule Bill had been submitted by a Mr. J. Hills. A resolution proposed by Mr. H. Morrill thanking Sir

Edward Grey for his services to the constituency in Parliament, congratulating him upon his appointment to office, and condemning the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass the Home Rule Bill, seconded by Mr. T. Darling, was unanimously carried, and the proceedings terminated.

At the beginning of November a special meeting of the members of the Equitable Benefit Building Society was held. The reason for the meeting was that their Secretary Mr. Ralph Dixon, had filed a petition in bankruptcy on 16 August, and the case had been dealt with in the Bankruptcy Court in Newcastle in September. It appeared that Mr Dixon, who was an auctioneer but also ran an entertainment business as well as being a house agent, had run into financial difficulties when his entertainment business failed to make a profit as far back as 1892, and when he was faced with a request to pay some of his debt in cash he decided to solve the problem by falsifying the books of the Building Society. Mr. Dixon appeared in front of the Petty Court in October, where the charge said that he did unlawfully, wilfully and with intent defraud and falsify the books of the Building Society, and consequently he was sent to the Quarter Session in October where he was sentenced to 18 months in prison with hard labour. At the meeting of the Building Society in November a report from Mr. Eyton, chartered accountant, Newcastle stated “that he found the defalcations of Mr Ralph Dixon, the late Secretary, amounted to £1,716 15s. With contingencies, however, the total loss the society would have to meet was £2,133 0s 8d, and to pay off this a charge of £2 10s per share would be necessary” (November 10, 1893) It would be done in such a way that the money would be charged to the shares as they ran out. “It was stated that a claim had been made by the Society upon Dixon’s estate, but it was also intimated that this would probably be disputed by the other creditors.” (ibid.) This seems a bit strange as the Society’s claim represented about four-fifth of the creditors.

Another special meeting took place in November of the shareholders of the Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light Company. Mr. C. Hopper, Chairman, presided over a large attendance of shareholders. The aim was to pass an extraordinary resolution which said “That the Berwick and Tweedmouth Gas Light be registered under the Companies’ Acts 1862 to 1890, as a company limited by shares, and that its name be changed to the Berwick and Tweedmouth Gaslight Company Limited.” (November 17, 1893) These changes were passed at an extraordinary meeting a few days later.

In December, the Volunteer Ball was back in the Corn Exchange as “Last year a change was made with the object of reducing the cost by holding the ball in the Artillery Drill Hall, instead of the Corn Exchange. The shifting of the scene of

festivity, however, was not popular, and this year the event again came off in the Corn Exchange.” (December 15, 1893) The evening apparently went off to everybody’s satisfaction.

The new year, 1894, started with a so-called tableau vivant in aid of the funds of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. A similar entertainment had been given the year before in aid of Berwick Parish Church Mission Room. The dress rehearsal took place in the afternoon and the inmates of the Berwick Workhouse were invited. The kind of scenes depicted varied: there were hunting scenes and the first scene of the first act of Shakespeare’s King Lear, which was accompanied by Miss Bromby playing a violin solo. Some of the scenes seem slightly obscure: one was called “Playing at Tableau” and represented two children at play and entitled “Mamma asking Pa for a cheque.” Some represented well-known song, and there were also breaks for commercials. “First came ‘Pickwick,’ representing a firm of well-known penmakers. . . . A well-known blend of tea, to which attention was drawn by a couple of ladies sitting at a table enjoying their afternoon cup, succeeded. This was followed by Bird’s custard without eggs, and the last of the series represented the well-known advertisement of Sunlight Soap.” (January 12, 1894) The scenes were accompanied by an orchestra, and a few days later Miss W. Willoby, on behalf of the organising committee, handed over to Mr. G. B. Sinclair, local secretary of the Royal Lifeboat Institution, the sum of eight guineas.

The annual meeting of the shareholders of the Berwick Corn Exchange Company Limited took place in February. Mr. D. Logan, Chairman of Directors, presiding. Mr. A. L. Miller, secretary, read the report, which referred to the continued success and stability of the Company. A dividend of 5 per cent was recommended, which made it possible to increase the reserve fund, which again was further boosted by an increase in the stall rent, which had been accepted by all as the number of stall holders had not decreased. The background for building up the reserve fund was that it “will enable your Directors to regard with equanimity and expenditure which may be necessary for the renewal of the roof and floor.” (February 1894)

A number of freehold properties were to be sold by public auction on 27 March. They were “All those messuages situated at the south side of, and being Nos. 48, 50, 52, 54 in Main Street, Tweedmouth, consisting of dwelling houses with yard and conveniences and presently occupied by P. C. Tough and others.” (March 9, 1894)

The number of entertainments, apart from local ones, seemed to be few and far between in the early 1890s, but in March it was announced that “Messrs. Clyde,

Creighton & Mason have much pleasure in announcing that they have secured, by arrangement with Fred Gould, the entire fit up rights for Scotland of the most successful comedy drama of modern times, viz.: - **THE BLACK FLAG OR EXCAPED FROM PORTLAND BY HENRY PETTITT.**" (March 16, 1894) The fit up rights meant that travelling companies were allowed to put up temporary stages in the places where they were to perform. It is also interesting to note that these rights in Scotland pertained to Berwick as well.

Two lots of freehold properties were to be sold by public auction in April- namely Nos. 22, 24, 26, Tweed Street, known as Victoria Cottage and Lavington Cottage, now in the occupation of Mr. M. I. Cockerill, Mr. W. Bright and Mr. W. Anderson, and "All that freehold messuage or tenement, being No. 42, Low Greens, with garden ground in front, as now in the occupation of Richard Percy, Alexander Crombie, James Burgon and others." (March 30, 1894) You can still see where the garden grounds in front of the houses were, only they are now used as parking spaces.

At the auction the properties in Tweed Street were sold to Mr. Robert Lindsay, West Street for £455. The bidding for the Low Greens property started at £200, and was bought in at the reserve price of £350.

The seventh concert of Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association was held at the beginning of April in the Corn Exchange, "which was filled by a numerous and appreciative audience, who frequently showed their approval of the efforts of the various performers." (April 6, 1894) The first part of the concert consisted of "The Crusader", a cantata written by Thomas Facer and with the libretto by David Gow and was "largely of a military and religious character throughout." (ibid.) The second part was of a miscellaneous character such as chorus songs, glees and part songs.

A public meeting of the Berwick Unionist Association was announced to be held in the Corn Exchange on 25 April "when addresses upon the present political situation will be delivered by T. W. Russel, Esq., M.P., Watson Askew-Robertson, Esq., Lord Warkworth, C. B. Balfour, Esq., The gallery will be reserved for ladies." (April 13, 1894)

More freehold properties were for sale on 25 April. The first lot was "All that front shop and dwelling house, with the workshops, backbuilding and yard situated in Woolmarket . . . in the occupation of Mr. G. M. Lamb, plumber, together with the stables and premises behind, now in the occupation of Dr. Fraser." (April 13, 1894)

The second lot was in West Street “All the front shop and dwelling house, with the bakery and premises behind. . . as the same are now in the occupation of Mr. E. S. Simpson , baker.” (ibid.)

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual concert of Berwick Choral Union took place in April. The work selected for performance was Sir W. Sterndale Benett’s popular pastoral “The May Queen”. In the review it said “There was a correctness of intonation and attention to the nuances which indicated intelligence on the part of the vocalists, and much care in the training by the indefatigable conductor, Mr. W. Green, who spares no trouble to make successful any musical enterprise with which he is associated . . . And the numerous audience spent an enjoyable evening.” (April 20, 1894)

The executors of the late Thomas Johnson, Esq., Scremerston Sea House, had instructed Mr. A. L. Miller to sell by auction on 3 May the collection of valuable oil paintings, water colours, framed and unframed engravings, as well as a collection of books including “Bewick’s British Birds”, “Sheldon’s History of Berwick”, “Dr Johnston’s Flora of Berwick.”

A usual sale of household furniture, in this case belonging to Mr. T. Gregor, Cheswick Cottage, and two ladies leaving town, took place at the beginning of May, but it was followed a few days later by a more unusual one when a sale was announced of items belonging to the late Thomas Murray, blacksmith, Haggerston. The sale comprised “3 anvils, 2 pairs of bellows, drilling machine for power, swages, mandrells, screw-keys, hammers, tongs, stocks, taps and dies, and all the usual tools necessary for a blacksmith.” (May 11, 1894) But that was not all, from another property was offered for sale “15 herring nets suitable for fruit trees, 8 new sheep nets, and 43 fathom galvanized iron chain etc.” (ibid.)

Two lots were offered for sale on 5 June. The first one was “the property on North Road known as Castle View, as presently in the occupation of Mr. Wm. Wilson, shoemaker, which is held on a lease from the Corporation for 150 years, from Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> 1874.” (June 8, 1894) The only bid was from Mr. W. C. Miller for £800 and the property was withdrawn. The second lot was “The front shop and dwelling house at the corner of High Street and Walkergate Lane, occupied by Mr. Joseph Devey and J. R. Dickinson.” (ibid.) In this case no offers were made for them at all.

In July Mr. A. L. Miller offered for sale by auction outside the Corn Exchange “a quantity of nets, lines &c. Comprising: Bridport twine, herring net twine; cotton jute, and creel twine; 500 haddock hooks, 1500 greatline hooks, small lines, cotton

snood line; log line, coir tow line; coir rope, wire rope, galvanized thimbles, spectacles for sail, net guarding, sprat nets, Manilla cord, life belts, 13 sacks, 10 cork fenders; boat wire fore-tie, 50 ft., 4 blocks, herring boat anchor, etc., all in good order. Also, second-hand swings etc. (July 20, 1894) One wonders whether this all came from one fisherman, or if it was accumulation of gear brought in over a period of time.

August and September saw a number of announcements of shares for sale in companies such as Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company, Limited, Berwick Corn Exchange Company, Limited, Border Counties Agricultural Association, Limited and Eyemouth Railway Company.

In October, the property of the late Miss Margaret Smith, Palace Green, was auctioned, and was described as “a very superior assortment of household furniture, oil paintings, fine old engravings, valuable books, antique chairs &c.” (October 5, 1894) This was followed by another auction a week later of the household furniture of the late Mr. W. M. Willie, and this auction also included the tool chest of the late James Douglas, cabinetmaker.

“Uncle Tom’s Cabin” returned to Berwick for two nights at the end of October. The man behind this production was Mr. W. T. Rushbury, and the production was “Supported by a specially selected company of first class artists, including male and female Jubilee singers, real freed slaves etc. New scenery, dresses, music, lime light effects, etc., everything being done to render this one of the most enjoyable entertainments ever offered to the public.” (October 19, 1894) It was said to be the largest production ever produced on the British stage, and among the actors were no less than 20 freed slaves. And “Mr. Rushbury has also provided, at an enormous expense, special scenery, also a beautiful new act drop representing the ‘East Bay of Donoon’.” (ibid.)

Several lots of properties were sold in October. The first was a freehold property in Tweed Street in the occupation of Mr. Gibson, Mr. Harens and others, but the precise location is not stated. The bidding started at £500 and proceeded to £580 offered by Mr. Renton, draper, after which the property was withdrawn. “The second lot consisted of the premises forming the east side of the Sally Port, and extending from Bridge Street to Quay Walls, with frontage to both.” (ibid) No bid was offered and consequently “They were divided and offered as follows: - The fully licensed and long established public house known as ‘The Old Hen and Chickens’, situated in the tenure of the Border Brewery Company; front shop and dwelling house with licensed slaughterhouse and conveyances behind, in the

occupation of Mr. Geo. Dodds, butcher; offices fronting Bridge Street, with dwelling house and appurtenances, in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Leishman, together with the yard behind common to the said premises; and four-room self-contained dwelling house, entering from Sally Port, in the occupation of Mr. Denham as tenant.” (October 19, 1894) Only one offer of £600 was made and the property was withdrawn. This might have been partly caused by the fact that as “The Old Hen and Chickens” was in the tenure of the Border Brewery Company there were a number of conditions attached to the sale. The last lot was “two dwelling houses, situated on the Quay Walls, now in the occupation of Mr. Jas. Laishman, and R. Douglas, Esq., together with the cellars and stores below, and yard behind the same, now in the occupation of Mr. Evans and Messrs. Ralph Holmes and Son.” (ibid.) No offer was made and the property was withdrawn.

October finished with a grand entertainment when Madame Fanny Moody’s concert party gave an entertainment in the Corn Exchange. “A fairly numerous audience assembled, but it was by no means commensurate with the merits of the performers, who deserved more patronage from the public in Berwick, though it would have been impossible for them to have a more enthusiastic audience in the old Border town. (November 2, 1894)

A lecture entitled “A trip to South Africa, its mines and missions.” was given by Mr. D. S. Salmond of Polloshields, Glasgow at the beginning of November, in aid of Berwick Infirmary and Berwick Ladies’ Nursing Association. The Mayor, Ald. J. Weatherston, presided. Mr. Salmond described his voyage to South Africa, the missionary labours there, and life in the gold and diamond mined in the Transvaal. “The lecture was illustrated by 150 magic lantern views of places en route to the Cape, and of scenes and objects of interest in South Africa connected with the gold and diamond industries, as well as various mission stations.” (November 9, 1894) But Mr. Salmon not only talked, he interspersed his lecture with songs which went down very well with the audience.

Another lecture of a very different character was delivered a few days later by Mr. Jerome K. Jerome of “Three Men in a Boat” fame, called “Humour – new and old” and was “treated in masterly fashion . . . and cordially applauded.” (November 16, 1894)

As often as before the year ended with the announcement of the Volunteers’ Ball, which would take place on 11 December.

The annual general meeting of the shareholders of the Berwick Corn Exchange



Company was held in February, 1895. The Directors' report said that "they have the pleasure of congratulating the shareholders on the continued success and stability of the Company. The revenue of the Company from all sources has been well maintained during the year." (February 15, 1895) However, the spectre of the roof had not gone away. An architect had made a thorough examination and recommended that the whole damaged glass roof should be replaced and the slates repaired as well as the woodwork. This would involve an extraordinary expenditure of £111 15s 3d. But in spite of this a dividend of 5 per cent was recommended even though that meant that they had to take a small sum from the reserve fund, which might be a dangerous step to take.

Mr. Newton Jones, Sunday school Union evangelist, held a number of mission services for young people in the Corn Exchange and later on moved to Wallace Green Hall.

The Berwick Tonic Sol-Fa Association "gave their eighth annual concert in the Berwick Corn Exchange in presence of a very large audience, which without being enthusiastic was at times most appreciative." (April 5, 1895) This lack of enthusiasm might be down to the choice of programme as "The first part of the concert was devoted to an exposition of the sacred cantata 'Saul of Taurus' by T. Mee Pattison. This piece does not make great demands upon vocal abilities and technical knowledge but it abound in bright and tuneful choruses, interspersed with melodious and effective solos." (ibid.) And "The choruses were sung with great animation and taste, though it must be confessed, there was a certain amount of monotony about them – a fault which it is needless to say, is not to be attributed to the performers, but to the character of the work." (ibid.)

On 30 April a desirable freehold property at Spittal was to be sold by auction: "all that messuage, situated on the east side of the Main Street, known as 'VictoriaCottage', consisting of a comfortable dwelling house, with garden in front, and yard and conveniences in rear, as presently in the occupation of Mrs. Guthrie at the very low annual rent of £15." (April 19, 1895)

On the same day a sale of the excellent household furniture belonging to the late Mrs. Stevenson, Kyloe Cottage, and of the late Miss Rowland, was held. And there was also the chance of a desirable investment in "a freehold ground rent of £12 10s per annum, incurred upon those substantially built premises, the Cock and Lion public house, in Bridge Street." (April 26, 1895)

A case of down-sizing led to the auction of valuable furnishings of W. Wilson,

Esq., 38 Hide Hill in May. It seems quite reasonable that heavy pieces of furniture such as an oak bureau, a sideboard, 6 antique mahogany “Lyre pattern Back” chairs would not fit in to a smaller residence, but for sale were also such items as butter knives, sugar tongs, antique punch ladle and vases, as well as jars cups and saucers. The sale also included 60 pictures of oil paintings and water colours as well as “Autograph letters of Sir Walter Scott and autograph of Thomas Bewick.” (May 17, 1895) A separate auction of Mr. Wilson’s library, consisting of about 3,000 volumes in almost every department of literature, was held later in the year on 28 and 29 August.

Yet more announcements of sale of property appeared in the newspaper on August 9: “To investors, joiners and others. Residential and Buisness premises in Berwick and Spittal for sale” (August 9, 1895) the first lot was “All that newly built copyhold semi-detached villa situated at the south end of promenade, Spittal, facing the sea.” (ibid.) and the second lot was “All those substantially built leasehold premises, being Nos. 49, 51, 53 Castlegate, Berwick, consisting of front shop and dwelling house, in the occupation of Mr. Redpath, draper, with dwelling house above and joiner’s shop yard behind in the occupation of Mr. J. McCall . . . The property, which is in a main thoroughfare, is well situated for residential and business purposes, being within three minutes; walk of the railway station, and is held on lease for a period of 40 years from 12 May 1880, at the annual rent of £30.” (ibid.)

No 21 High Greens, containing 4 apartments, W.C. and coalhouse, “as now in the occupation of Miss Gunn, at the annual rent of £13, together with the yard and premises behind the same, as formerly occupied by Mr. Wille, and now in the occupation of Mr. Kraft at the annual rent of £15.” (September 20, 1895) The property belonged to Mr. Wille, who had died.

A major auction took place at the end of October of “All those extensive freehold premises situated in Bridge Street, Berwick, consisting of a substantially built maltings of 4 floors, including 60 quarter steep and kiln, 2 malting floors of 481 and 460 square yards respectively. Barley store, as now in the occupation of Messrs. J. P. Simpson & Co, maltser, on a lease of 5 years, from 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1893, at the annual rent of £250.” (October 18, 1895) Also for sale were “Two shops and dwelling houses Nos 48 and 52 Bridge Street, Berwick, with workshop, stores, yard and offices behind, the same as no win the occupation of Mr. John Mosgrove and Messrs. Martin & Scott, on a yearly tenancies at the gross annual rent of £70. Granary of five flats, as now in the occupation of Messrs. Martin & Scott at the appointed annual rental of £210.” (ibid.) Unfortunately we do not know what the

background for such an extensive sale could have been.

Entertainment somehow seems to have disappeared from events taking place. An exception was a short notice saying “Cinderella” – Miss Nellie de Me’Ran and company have been given performances in the Corn Exchange this week of the spectacular comic opera ‘Cinderella’. The entertainment each evening was much enjoyed by appreciative audiences.” (October 25, 1895)

The annual Volunteers’ Ball was held on 10 December. It was the thirty sixth and took place very much along the usual lines “The ball was a great success, and was greatly enjoyed by all who took part in it.” (December 13, 1895)

The Berwick Choral Union gave their third Christmas concert on 17 December in aid of the Berwick Infirmary. It says in the review that “We regret that the audience was not so large as it might have been, for although the gallery was well filled, the body of the hall was far from being fully occupied.” (December 20, 1895) The reason for this might have been the same as caused that “The chorus hardly represented the full strength of the Choral Union, as a number of the members were unavoidably absent owing to colds and other causes. Owing to these reasons some of the soloists also did not turn up, and a few of the orchestra did not appear.” (ibid.)

This has been an attempt to illustrate the role the Corn Exchange played in the lives of the people who lived in Berwick and its surroundings during the first forty years of its existence. The Corn Exchange, as we know, went on to play an important role for many more years as a place where people would gather for a great variety of activities.