

NEWS BULLETIN



THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

No.59 December 2015

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne promotes the preservation, study and enjoyment of historical and archaeological heritage in general, and of the North East of England in particular. We have nearly 800 members, and always welcome new ones. We are the oldest provincial antiquarian society in the country.

We have a full programme of public events, lectures, walks and visits, and social activities. We are also guardians of world-class collections of antiquities and archives, and of a library of over 30,000 books and journals. We sponsor and publish research into North East history and archaeology of all periods.

For more information, look at our website, www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk or contact us at SANT, Great North Museum: Hancock, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT, phone 0191 231 2700, e-mail admin@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk

FROM THE PRESIDENT



I am pleased to report that the Society continues in good health. Membership numbers, the bedrock of an organisation such as ours, continue to be sound: a happy state of affairs not currently enjoyed by all similar bodies. Our committees have reviewed what has been a largely successful programme for the past year, and plans for 2016 are well advanced and promise to be as interesting as ever. Members can look forward to the 2015 volume of *Archaeologia Aeliana* in the New Year, confident that standards of scholarship and interest are as high as ever. In addition to ensuring that bills are paid, the membership is administered and correspondence dealt with, the Executive Committee has been considering the best ways to develop the Society's management of risks.

In the Library, changes to the contract of the Librarian have brought about changes in the way it is staffed on Fridays, which we do not anticipate will affect its smooth running. It has not been possible to continue Saturday opening, due to low take up, but at least the experiment has been tried. Members receive a tremendous service in terms of information about activities and events via the website and News Bulletins, and this has become one of our great strengths.

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The Society could not function without the involvement of its members. Anyone who is interested in tasting the work of committees, helping in the office at busy times, or representing us at history fairs, for example, is welcome to get in touch, via the office or through contact with any committee or Council member. The recently formed and very successful Eighteenth Century Study Group would welcome members, providing an opportunity to become involved in useful research for those for whom committee work does not appeal.

My own serious illness has prevented my enjoying the Society as much as I would have preferred in recent months or contributing to its work. I am very grateful to all those who have stepped in and taken on tasks or diverted business from me. It has been clear for some months that I will not be able to commit to the time and energy needed to be President. I will therefore be stepping down at the end of 2015. At the Anniversary meeting in January I will be commending Richard Pears to members as my successor. I am confident that his skills and energy will take the Society forward.

Derek Cutts, President

Editor's note; members will be very sorry to hear that Derek is having to step down. We wish him all the best for the future.

OUR PROGRAMME FOR 2016

Lectures

Several of our lectures in 2016 highlight anniversaries, from the tercentenary of Capability Brown, to the eightieth anniversaries of the Jarrow March and the Spanish Civil War. As usual, I have tried to arrange lectures which span the whole period of history and pre-history.

A talk about the excavations at Bradford Kaims will take us back thousands of years, whilst that on Ushaw College discusses the development of the library right up to current times. The North East has long been a region which is proud of its heritage, and the Hadrian's Wall Path is a prime example of an initiative to promote one part of our history, whilst also ensuring its future. Community projects have increased in number, scope and success in the last few years and our lecture on the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project demonstrates one such piece of work. Amateur

AN INVITATION

The 2016 Anniversary Meeting will be on Wednesday 27th January, at the Mining Institute in Westgate Road, and the speaker will be Matt Perry, on *Commemorating the Jarrow Crusade: why the Crusade remains relevant today*.

There will be a social evening after the lecture, upstairs in the Mining Institute's Wood Memorial Hall. We would be grateful if members would donate food for the buffet; please contact Freda Thompson on 0191 285 5303 to say what you are bringing. We will also ask for a small donation, around £2, for each glass of wine. New members who have joined in the last year will be especially welcome.

divers have discovered hundreds of coins and artefacts in the river near to Piercebridge Roman Fort, and another paper will explain how this material can be used to study votive activities in the Roman period. We are extremely lucky in the North East to have so many active researchers in aspects of our history, as the talks on the eighteenth-century astronomer Thomas Wright, and on the involvement on North-easterners in the Spanish Civil War, will demonstrate. And with the recent changes at Newcastle's Central Station, it seemed fitting to have a paper on the original building of this beautiful structure by John Dobson, whilst another paper investigates the strong musical heritage of the North East.

I would love to hear any suggestions for speakers or lecture topics; just drop me an e-mail or catch me at the monthly meetings!

Frances McIntosh

Country Meetings

For 2016, we will be going in May to Temple Newsam House near Leeds, with its substantial holdings of fine and decorative art, and to the medieval moated manor of Markenfield Hall in September.

This year, our proposed visit to Guisborough in May had to be cancelled due to a low take-up, but the September trip was a great success. We went to the mid-Victorian country house of Brodsworth Hall in South Yorkshire. Built for the wealthy Thellusson family in the Italianate style by architect Philip Wilkinson it was the height of modernity at the time, and it remained a family home until 1988.



Moated Markenfield, picture Sue Ward

We had a guided tour around the newly restored formal and informal gardens with a very knowledgeable guide, so by the time we entered the house we knew all about the history of both the gardens and the hall, and of the family's colourful past. Most of the objects on display inside are from the original furnishings bought from Lapworths in London in 1863.

Brodsworth's interiors show how the Victorian house was created, lived in, and adapted by later generations of the family and their servants. A rich archive of photographs has been collected to add personal details and insights to the story. The National Trust's policy of preserving, rather than restoring, the interiors demonstrates how a once opulent Victorian house grew 'comfortably' old.

Denise Heslop

Time Walks

The first walk of a new year's programme is traditionally an urban one, a chance to blow away the Christmas cobwebs without overtaxing those feet. This year's will be a maritime walk in North Shields on 29th December. We will be able to take lunch afterwards in the Old Low Lights which is opening specially for us. Details to be confirmed; see our website for information.



Alnmouth Bay in June, picture courtesy Rosie Serdiville

Our postponed visit to Stewart Park in Middlesbrough will take place on 14th May. We will explore the Victorian house, estate buildings, park with arboretum and Captain Cook Museum. Meet 10.30 at the Visitors Centre (by the plant nursery). There is a café in the museum for lunch, or you can eat sandwiches by the lake whilst watching the wild fowl. The walk will be led by Francine Marshall, Park Education and Events Officer.

We are trying out a new idea in July, following up and expanding on the lecture in May by Greg Finch. *Lost Industrial Hexhamshire* is a chance to explore the smelting and lead carrying associated with Dukesfield arches as well as the community archaeology project which has done so much to preserve its history. We will be meeting at Whitley Chapel at 11 o'clock. Bring sandwiches for a walk of 5-6 miles – but be warned there are no toilet facilities available en route!

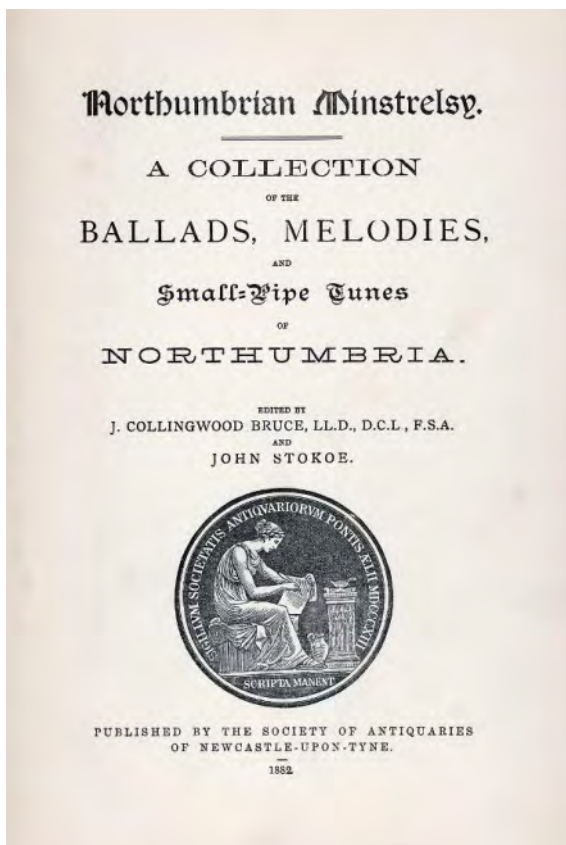
These walks should all be as much fun as those in the past year. Anthea Lang led us out on a nippy December morning at the end of 2014 to explore Gateshead's railway heritage. It was strange to contemplate how close it came to becoming a major destination, a prospect finished off by the construction of the new rail line carried by the High Level Bridge. In May Elspeth Gould shared her extensive knowledge of the history of Seaton Delaval with a large group. She even arranged for good weather. Adrian Osler led a midsummer antiquarian amble around Alnmouth Bay in June. We explored the maritime landscape from the Mesolithic through to 2013, using geology, history and archaeology as our tools.

Anyone who needs more details of the forthcoming walks, or who needs (or can offer) transport should contact Rosie Serdiville on 0774 979 8023 or email at rosie.serdiville@gmail.com

Northumbrian Minstrelsy Concert

Our second Northumbrian Minstrelsy Concert will be on Saturday 26th June, in Hall Two at the Sage Gateshead. Like the previous concert in 2013, our Bicentenary Year, it will feature the work and influence of our society's Ancient Melodies Committee, which published the seminal 1882 book of Northumbrian songs, ballads and pipe tunes.

Performers will include Andy May (small pipes), the Border Directors (songs, tunes and Border pipes), and singers Carolyn Robson and Johnny Handle. We will also have



The front cover of Northumbrian Minstrelsy, the 1882 book of songs to be commemorated in our concert

singer/composer Jez Lowe, whose early songwriting career was influenced by the lyrics collected by one of SANT's founding members, John Bell.

The ticket price will be fixed nearer the date, and tickets will be available from the Sage Box Office. (Note; the concert is not included in the 2016 programme card, so please make sure you put it in your diary).

Kim Bibby-Wilson

CAST ASIDE...(OR HOW OUR SOCIETY LOST ITS HEAD)

After Dr James Raine had made his spectacular discoveries of St Cuthbert's relics when he excavated the saint's tomb in 1827, he turned his attention to Bede's grave in Durham's Galilee Chapel. However, his excavation in 1831 yielded no equivalent treasures. Instead he found a partial skeleton, the bones reverently laid out in their proper anatomical position as they had been left by the workmen who destroyed the elaborate tomb at the Reformation.



The cast of Bede's skull, picture courtesy Bede's World/Duckworth Laboratory, Cambridge

Raine was struck by the shape of the skull which he described as being 'remarkably flat'. When writing about all this some twenty years ago, I spotted a note written by him among the Durham Cathedral manuscripts where he itemised the bill he had paid for a 'mould & three casts' of this peculiar feature. At that time I tried, without success, to discover what had happened to those casts.

Recently and to my great delight, one of them turned up, discovered by Leicester's Professor Joanna Story in the Duckworth Laboratory collection in Cambridge. A copy is now on display in Bede's World at Jarrow and you can find the full story of its discovery – and discussion of the authenticity of the relic – in the current number of the *Antiquaries Journal*. This is available in our Library, or can be read and downloaded free on-line until 31 December (<http://bit.ly/1Tlz15O>).

But this positive discovery hides a more negative and somewhat shameful story. Our Society was given one of the casts after Dr Raine's death. It is recorded in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, series 2, volume 4, 1860, p. 33 – but we seem to have lost it! There is no record of it after its initial donation; it doesn't, for example, appear in William Bulmer's 1950s catalogue of archaeological items which were to be transferred from the Black Gate Museum to the University site. Some years ago our Keeper, Lindsay Allason-Jones, reported that a crumbling cast had been found in a cupboard at the Black Gate – but this turned out to be that of a prehistoric horse! Perhaps it was 'borrowed' and never returned – or just disintegrated in a damp corner.

Whatever the explanation for our loss, somewhere out there, of course, is cast no 3....

Richard N. Bailey

TRANSCRIBING THE 1771 FLOOD PAPERS



One of the pages of the 1771 Tyne Flood Papers volume, digitised and on our website.

We now have an Eighteenth-Century Group, jointly with the Explore Lifelong learning programme, to transcribe the volume of *Flood Papers* in our archives at Woodhorn, and put the transcriptions on our website alongside the digital images. This was in response to last February's lecture by Dr Helen Berry of Newcastle University about the 1771 Tyne Flood, in which she drew on these papers and whetted our appetite.

Over the last few months, a keen group of volunteers has nearly completed the task, tackling crabby handwriting and strange abbreviations. It is now more than two-thirds complete, and you can see the table of contents at www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk/Flood/contents.php. Click on one of the entries and it will bring up the digitised page. Then click on 'transcription' on the sidebar and it will bring that up. There is also a search engine so that you can bring up all the entries relating to a particular place or person. The database was designed and is being supported by our webmasters Cornwell Internet, who needed to spend a considerable amount of time putting it together to our specifications – many thanks to them.

The project to transcribe the 1784 Poll Book – also digitised on the website – is also up and running. We are thinking about further items to transcribe, now we have our teeth into the work. There is a wealth of other material in our archives, not least some of the other documents bequeathed to us by John Adamson, who bequeathed us this book when he died in 1855. How it came into his

possession we have no idea, since it's essentially the office file of the solicitors Herons, in Hexham, who administered the flood relief fund. They were paid a guinea (£1.10) per committee meeting – at a time when labourers re-sowing the fields damaged by the flood were being paid a shilling (5p) a day.

Sue Ward

DUKESFIELD DOCUMENTS

Volunteers with the HLF-funded Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers' Project have transcribed thousands of letters and other documents to create a free, fully searchable, online collection of material. It brings together for the first time digital versions of manuscripts held in local archives alongside much more obscure material in distant collections and recently discovered documents in private hands. Correspondence long separated between different physical archival locations can now be re-united via the website's search facility.

The core of the collection is the letter books kept by the Blackett family's Chief Stewards from the 1750s, a treasure trove of information on Dukesfield, the lead business, land management, Newcastle and much else besides. We have also discovered two 1670s letter books kept by Michael Blackett, a Newcastle merchant in his own right, in Cambridge University Library. These reveal much about commercial life on the Tyne during the Restoration period. Exchequer Court witness depositions from 1690 obtained from the National Archives shed light on carrier traffic to and from Blaydon. From the 1730s there is much from Sir Walter Blackett's chief agent, Joseph Richmond, on Newcastle politics and on negotiating the renewal of mining rights in Weardale with the Bishop of Durham. One volunteer has also tabulated nearly 80 years' worth of lead mining, smelting and refining statistics from the family's surviving account books.

'Dukesfield Documents' so far comprises around 6,000 letters and other documents, adding up to well over 1.2 million words of fully searchable text. Clear references to the original source documents are always provided, along with background information on the principal correspondents, brief

descriptions on the archival collections from which the contents are drawn, a glossary, guides to further reading and support, and editing conventions. We hope that the collection will stimulate and support future research into every aspect of social, economic, political and family history of the North East of England and beyond between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

The website address is
www.dukesfield.org.uk/documents

Greg Finch

LIFE IN THE CASTLE

Editor's note; now that the 5-year Heritage Lottery Fund grant for Newcastle Castle has finished, it is being run by a self-standing charitable trust. The Society is represented on this by Richard Pears and Sue Ward, with Lindsay Allason-Jones continuing to play a major role. But as the door closed on a piece of our history, a chance encounter at a party brought forward this contribution, from the (then very young) curators of our Museum in the Black Gate in the 1970s.



Edward Scott Dobson's pastel drawing of the Black Gate in 1969, from our picture collection

Life in the Black Gate, 1969 to 1975

I first became Custodian of the Black Gate at the age of 18, newly married, and thrilled to have such an interesting job and the threepenny bit-shaped flat that came with it. Running up and down 81 stairs quickly made us very fit, but visitors arrived gasping for oxygen.

My early memories are of the smell of the brewery, the noise of starlings roosting, and the squealing of train wheels crossing between the Keep and the gatehouse. The whole building shook when a heavy load went by. There was often the terrifying sight of window cleaners stepping from one high ledge to another at Milburn House on the Side.

Bell-ringing practice at St. Nicholas cathedral was charming, except when my husband Stefan, a lute-maker, was trying to tune an instrument. Our predecessor, Johnny Handle, had found the noise so irksome that when the bell-ringers left one evening they were assailed by blasts of a trumpet aimed at them from the living room window.

To my young eyes, the members of the Society seemed incredibly old – some of them were in their forties, but most were decades older and I marvelled at how they made it up to the library – they must have been as old as I am now! Some of the committee were formidable: Barbara Harbottle could be a force to be reckoned with, but John Gillam, the president, told me a story of dropping an important piece of pottery behind a radiator in a Corbridge pub, never to be seen again. I also remember mention of a promising student called Lindsay Allason-Jones – I wonder what happened to her?

Restoration work to the Keep and Black Gate started while we were there, and the foreman mason, Billy Midwood, would terrify us with doom-laden warnings that the middle floor walls were bulging 6 inches out of line, usually while trains were thundering past. The masons were still working when we left in 1975.

It was during our time there that the museum ceased to be a 'museum that should be in a museum', and instead came to house the world's largest collection of bagpipes. Out went the black display cases, 60 watt bulbs, handwritten labels, and gaps where an object had been 'removed by the curator' (not to mention dropped behind a radiator).

When our daughter Becky was born, we realised that life in the city centre was not

suitable for a baby, so we left for the country, but we look back on our time there with happy memories.

Liz Sobell

A NEW MILECASTLE FOR HADRIAN'S WALL



Building the Milecastle, picture courtesy Lindsay Allason-Jones

A new milecastle arose on Hadrian's Wall at the end of September. Designed to last for only 28 days, it was built not of stone but of books. Obsolete encyclopaedias became the cornerstones and redundant law journals the archways. This was *Simulacrum*, an art installation conceived by Dawn Felicia Knox and the Hadrian Arts Trust. The aim was to reflect elements of the Roman Wall in a new way and bring forward questions of impermanence and preservation at a place where the original wall was long quarried out.

The *Simulacrum* mirrored the defensive structures that were once found along the wall. As the creator (and our former Artist in Residence) Dawn Felicia Knox explained, 'I am drawing from the precision and geometry of Roman structures in contrast to the natural environment. The sculpture will begin to decay almost immediately – rain will permeate the books, the sun will crack the book covers and plants will begin to take root. This mirrors the act of ruination of the stones itself, at an accelerated pace.' She was there for much of its existence, filming the process of decay. At the end of October a final event included a performance by the Noize Choir, an experimental choir creating sonic compositions using the extreme edges of the voice.

DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

If you have received a copy of this *News Bulletin* by e-mail, (as well as or instead of by post, depending on your preferences) then the answer is, yes, we do have a valid current e-mail address for you. However, for almost half the membership we either don't have an address, or the one we have is invalid or out-of-date, so that e-mails bounce back.

So if you think we haven't got your correct address, please send an e-mail to addresses@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk. This also give you the chance to subscribe to our regular e-circular, detailing not just our programme but other events of interest in the region. And don't forget that we also have Facebook and Twitter accounts. Follow the links on the sidebar of our website's home page to sign up.

Sue Ward

The idea of building a milecastle of books was conceived some time ago by Hadrian Arts Trust, to celebrate the introduction of literacy to Britain by the Romans. It is because the Romans brought literacy here that we know so much about Hadrian's Wall and those who lived there. The project was supported by the Northumberland National Park and Arts Council England.

Lindsay Allason-Jones

LIBRARY REPORT

A flood in our basement library store at the Discovery museum in early October could have brought disaster to our books stored there, but this was averted thanks to the quick responses of librarian Ian Bower and Discovery Museum's Phil Robinson and Mat Parsons. We owe a great debt of gratitude to them all. The leak was in the mass of concealed pipes above the lowered ceiling – a horror I had never dreamed about. The water fell from above our section and ran down the gaps in the top shelves, and also down the front wetting several books, but only soaking two. Luckily, Ian discovered the flood in its infancy one morning, and prompt action by Phil and Mat in draping

the shelves with plastic sheeting and rigging up a funnel arrangement to catch the water and pipe it away prevented more significant damage. Our post mortem concluded it was likely to be a rare event and there was little that could be done to predict the next leak. I am rearranging our books in such a way as to avoid contact with water if there has to be a next.

Ian has also been busy publicising the joint library. He has hosted visitors on Heritage Open Day in September, and groups from several Local History Societies, as well as publishing information on leaflets, blogs, Twitter and Facebook. Meanwhile we have two new volunteers, Michael Barke and Anne Craven, working with Eric Waites checking the shelves, and recording extra items found in books, including book plates and signatures.

While our mandate is to acquire books relating to the north of England and the Scottish borders we do have some surprising interlopers, including a signed copy of the autobiography of the famous actress Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life*. It was a gift to a Mr Story Gofton and the book which also contains a letter from her and a number of interesting inserts. How and why do we have it? One of our previous library volunteers, Martin Collins, did some research in 2011, and found out that Mr Story Gofton was Newcastle-born and bred and had a long stage career.

Denis Peel

Editor's note; Ellen Terry's book is in our rare books store, catalogue number GG 023. Martin's blog about Story-Gofton is on <http://blog.twmuseums.org.uk/the-great-north-museum-hancock-library-discovering-mr-e-story-gofton/>.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

May 2015

Professor Brian Roberts, of the University of Durham, spoke on *Where have all the Soldiers gone?* He suggested that the Hadrian's Wall zone offered a laboratory for exploring the transitions between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon world. Computer mapping tools meant he could select between more than 60 layers of historical and geographical information at will, and overlay them one on another.

This work included the study of place names. It was generally assumed by specialists that the earliest names in an area were topographic, with habitative names coming later. His maps showed that a 'green line', snaking through Northumberland, divided the area into different zones. The first, closest to the Tyne, was mixed topographic and -tun, habitative names. The second zone, further away, was almost wholly topographic, and the third was again a mixture. Thus cultural regions could be related to physical regions. Agricultural colonisation and arrangements for the supply of food were complex processes. When a group took over an area, often there was initial speedy settlement of the best land, followed by a slower infilling of poorer land.

The Coquet Valley, embracing 'Cocwudu', an area remembered as having been woodland after it had ceased to be wooded, was crucial. There might have been an Iron Age boundary there, with the Coquet Valley and Cocwudu a liminal zone between two tribal units. There appeared to have been large numbers of people north of the Wall. A long dry period for much of the time of Roman occupation would have been favourable to agriculture. After that, rising sea levels on the coast of Germania sent raiders and settlers overseas, with Britain a land of opportunity. With the withdrawal of the Roman command structure, the troops on Hadrian's Wall – many of them of Germanic origin in any case – might well have stayed and drawn in others. Archaeology was able to detect only durable structures, not the shanty towns that could have grown up around forts.

Brian can be contacted on b.k.roberts@durham.ac.uk.

June 2015

Rebecca Jones of Historic Scotland spoke about *On the march: Roman Camps in Scotland*, in a lecture sponsored by the Roman Society. Although not as well-known as forts and frontier fortifications, she said, Roman camps still had plenty to tell us about the Roman occupation of Britain.

Most of the camps in northern Britain are considered to be 'marching camps' – temporary enclosures housing troops away from their bases on campaign and policing activities. Eighteenth-century antiquaries identified a number of these, and the pioneers of aerial survey in the twentieth century had found others. A great many camps were only known through cropmarks. But there were also

some remarkable survivals, with clearly visible banks and ditches, giving the lie to a first-century historical reference which suggested that they were sited on departure. Rebecca went through their distribution and form, especially their entrance-way protection, defensive possibilities, attached camps or annexes and internal features. She added that the large-scale excavations at Kintore in Aberdeenshire recorded numerous ovens and pits, and these features were now beginning to be recognised at other sites.

There were challenges, she said, in dating structures which were only occupied for a few days or weeks, against the existing chronological outline for Roman Scotland known from histories and the archaeological record. However, the list included some very large ones, almost the largest in Europe, which might well relate to Septimus Severus' campaign in Scotland.

Rebecca can be contacted on becjones@sky.com

July 2015



Engraving of the Great Fire of Tyneside from the Illustrated London News, 14 Oct 1854, picture courtesy Wikipedia

Mark Thorburn of Lonely Tower, an independent film production company in Newcastle, spoke about his recent film, *The Great Fire of Tyneside 1854*. He explained that in the past, making a historical documentary of this sort would have been highly expensive. Recent technology had brought the cost down and the Heritage Lottery Fund was willing to help film-making about local history issues of this sort. The film was in essence a showcase for his long-term project of making commercial and documentary films.

The Great Fire was well documented, with two public inquiries taking place, one for Newcastle and one for Gateshead. The

interesting point about it was the size of the explosion, which was powerful enough to destroy housing across the river, with two or three smaller explosions clearly heard before the main one. At the public inquiries, many were keen to show that gunpowder had been stored there, but chemical analysis showed that it was definitely not involved.

The fire had started on 6 October 1854, in a worsted warehouse close to the High Level Bridge. It then spread to the mixed warehouse next door, where three thousand tons of sulphur and a considerable stock of several different nitrates were stored. Thousands of people lined the river banks and the bridges to watch. In the film and subsequent discussion, Mark suggested that it was the sulphur which was the culprit for the explosions. Sulphur powder melts at a low temperature, and then vaporises at a higher one, and it can explode if mixed with oxygen or hydrogen – as it could have been if the nitrates were reacting with it. The sulphur's melting would have been spectacular, with rivers of blue flame coming out of the windows.

Mark can be contacted on contact@lonelytower.co.uk, and the film can be viewed on www.lonelytower.co.uk/great-fire.html. We also have a copy in our library.

August 2015

Professor Richard Gameson, of the University of Durham, spoke on *The Earliest Northumbrian Books*. He explained that a major constraint when curating the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition in Durham in 2013, was that exhibits had to look spectacular, but many of the earliest books survived only as single pages or fragments. However, eighty books from seventh- and eighth-century Northumbria survived in some form; a good total compared to the thirty for the whole of England from the ninth century, or the four from eighth-century Kent. There were others, such as the Echternach Gospels, where the attribution to Northumbria was probable but not certain. Gospel-books predominated but several other works, including Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, were represented in multiple copies.

One reason for this survival was that books tended to move around. Only thirty of the Northumbrian fragments remained in Britain, while the rest went overseas at an early date. Only a few monasteries would have high-quality scriptoria, of which Wearmouth-Jarrow



Richard Gameson studying a manuscript book

and Lindisfarne were the obvious examples. York also had a library and (intermittently) a scriptorium, but almost all direct evidence of this had disappeared. Some of the books might have been removed by Alcuin with Charlemagne's assistance, and material from it might still turn up, or be re-attributed.

Wearmouth-Jarrow was the best-attested writing centre in early Anglo-Saxon England, and showed how quickly a library and scriptorium could be established if the founder put his mind to it. Bede's writings showed that he had access to at least 200 titles. (By comparison, at the end of the fourteenth century, the common library of Cambridge University held only 330 books.) It was wrong, however, to think of a centre as existing autonomously. It needed to be part of a network, with access not just to a team of scribes, but the parchment and the pigments.

Richard can be contacted on richard.gameson@durham.ac.uk.

September 2015

In a joint lecture with the Institute of Physics, David Heslop and Iwan Peverett, talked about *The Past in Pixels*. David began by asserting that archaeologists were earlier than most people in becoming interested in virtual reality; they had to be, since the reality was so fragmentary. The transformation of 2D site



The Castle Keep on a mobile phone and in the real world, picture courtesy Iwan Peverett

plans to 3D shapes forced the archaeologists to work out details of how a structure worked.

Currently he was recreating medieval Newcastle, using resources including engravings, photos, plans, maps, CAD and GIS. One of their early initiatives had been the creation of accurate building geometry from historic photos of houses in the Close. The finished project might well include an 'accuracy scale' with buildings that still existed today at the top, and those where the form was largely conjectural at the bottom, so that viewers could bring into play as much or as little as they wanted.

Iwan explained that he had begun as an architect, and was the first student on his course to do his work on a computer. Newcastle and the North East were good at taking developments in other industries, such as oil and gas or gaming, and using them in the construction industry and then on to heritage work. Digital technology could be immersive, interesting and engaging. It could allow fast and accurate documentation through laser scanning, even in awkward spaces. This could make planning a buildings strategy and maintenance easier. For example, they had been able to do an accurate survey of the Black Gate to assist with the design of the lift. It could also promote 'virtual heritage tourism'. Students on the on-line Hadrian's Wall course had been able to wander through a reconstructed Arbeia.

'Augmented reality' could provide increased information about the real world. Northumbria University students had piloted an app by which one could stand in front of the Castle Keep and see how it would have looked without John Dobson's additions. There were, Iwan stressed, strict guidelines in a series of 'charters' about setting out where each bit of information had come from, explaining what

were the sources and what was conjectural.

David and Iwan can be contacted via david.heslop@newcastle.gov.uk

October 2015



Sir George Elliot, caricature from Vanity Fair, picture courtesy Wikipedia Commons

Bill Lancaster spoke about the nineteenth-century industrialist Sir George Elliot, ‘Bonny Geordie’, a major figure in his time but now unjustly neglected, born in Gateshead in 1814. His father was a coalminer and George followed him down Whitefield pit in Penshaw in 1823 as a trapper boy. He displayed a natural talent for the technical aspects of mining and in 1831 his father persuaded his employer, the Londonderry Company, to help him acquire training in mining practice despite having had a role as a leader in a violent strike earlier in the year. He was apprenticed to Thomas Sopwith, one of Britain’s most distinguished engineers, and quickly gained a reputation as a talented viewer.

George surveyed the Forest of Dean coalfield with Sopwith and the Darlington to York railway with Sopwith and Stephenson. He returned to Penshaw in 1837 as under-

manager and then manager of Monkwearmouth colliery, the deepest in Britain. In 1851 Lord Londonderry appointed him Chief Mining Engineer. He was a founder member of the Mining Institute when it was established in 1852, serving on its council from the start, and was its president in 1868–9.

By the 1860s he had mining interests in Nova Scotia, Staffordshire, and North Wales and was able to buy Penshaw mine, where he had begun his working life, in 1864. With help from William Armstrong, he also became the largest shareholder and chief executive of the Powell Duffryn group in South Wales. Powell Duffryn owned large deposits of anthracite coal, for which there was a growing market since it was used to power steamships, and he rapidly expanded their South Wales operations and became one of the largest producers of coal in Britain. Elliot bought other mines in South Wales, and these brought with them iron and steel companies such as Crawshaw Bailey. He also bought wireworks and rubber companies, which under his guidance created the trans-Atlantic cable.

Politically, George was an old fashioned paternalist Tory, known as ‘Bonny Geordie’ by the local miners who elected him as MP for North Durham in 1868. After boundary changes, he moved on to become the member for Monmouth Boroughs in 1886. He was well versed in foreign affairs, persuading Disraeli’s government to invest in the Suez Canal, and was a senior member of the delegation sent to Cairo to re-negotiate Egyptian debt.

In 1874 he was awarded a knighthood from Disraeli for his services in relation to Egypt. He was friendly with the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, and accumulated a collection of Egyptian historical objects which he brought back to England and distributed between his different properties. These included two stones which the Khedive had allowed him to remove from the pyramid of Cheops, which he installed (with inscriptions) in the churches at West Rainton and Penshaw.

Elliot died at the age of 79, and is buried at Houghton Hillside Cemetery.

Bill Lancaster can be contacted at williamlancaster@btinternet.com

DEATH: JIM STEPHENSON

Jim Stephenson, who died on 29 July 2015, was born in July 1932 to a mining family at Heworth

and attended the Royal Grammar School in Newcastle before reading Jurisprudence at Exeter College, Oxford. After learning Russian during his National Service, he served his pupillage in London before moving back north to chambers in Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. Whilst practising at the bar on the North East Circuit he acted as counsel for the great Union solicitors, the Iron Trades. He did almost all the shipyard union work at Swan Hunters and much of the legal work from the pits of County Durham and Northumberland; he was to become famous as the judge in the 'vibration white finger' test cases, in which his castigation of British Coal was upheld in the Court of Appeal, as were his recommendations for compensation. He served on the bench for 15 years.

His interests away from the courts were wide and it was no surprise when he and his wife, Jill, moved to Wetheral on his retirement. He loved fell walking and was proud to say he

had 'done all the Wainwrights'. He was passionate about Sunderland Football Club; the choice of Wetheral as a retirement home was partly based on the ease with which he could get to the match on a Saturday. This led to him becoming honorary Station Master at Wetheral station, which allowed him to travel to the match for free; again, this was not unexpected as he was distantly related to the Stephensons of railway fame and he loved travelling by train. In Wetheral he was referred to as 'The Thin Controller'.

He joined the Newcastle Antiquaries in October 1964, and was a Holding Trustee for many years and a great supporter of the Society's activities. He also served for a number of years as Trustee of the Senhouse Roman Museum Trust.

Our condolences go out to his wife Jill and his three sons.

Lindsay Allason-Jones

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I would be very glad to have readers' comments or suggestions for the content of the Bulletin. I am also happy to receive contributions from members, but pressure of space means that articles frequently have to be drastically cut, deferred, or dropped altogether. My address is 5 Goldspink Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1NQ, phone 0191 232 2968, or e-mail me at sue.ward@phonecoop.coop.

Deadline for the next edition is 6th May 2016. The mailing date will be 8th June. All inserts must be delivered to the Membership Administrator by 1st June. If you want an insert included, contact the Membership Administrator in good time for details of the requirements. The Spring Mailing will be on 9th March, and inserts must be with the office by 2nd March. Inserts should be A5 size, or folded to A5 if larger. An electronic copy of any insert must also be provided (as a Word or pdf document) so that it can be included on the website.