

NEWS BULLETIN



THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

No.79 June 2025

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ABOUT US

The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne promotes the preservation, study and enjoyment of historical and archaeological heritage in general, and of North East England in particular. We have over 600 members, and always welcome new ones. We have a full programme of public events, lectures, walks and visits, and social activities. We are guardians of worldclass 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, email admin@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk.

NOTE FROM OUR INCOMING PRESIDENT

Dear SANT members, it is an honour to write to you all in my capacity as the new President of the Society. I must start by thanking my predecessor Dave Heslop for all he has done during his tenure. This has included steering the Society through the post-Covid transition, supporting the various Society sub-committees, and welcoming the appointment of a new Society librarian and secretary. Dave was still hard at work in the last few weeks of his tenure, securing funding to support the production next year of special edition of AA to publish the results of the excavations around Newcastle Keep undertaken in the 1990s.

The Society can only function with the support of our many volunteers who give their time to support the Society Executive, Council, and various sub-committees to undertake our work. If any members feel they could support this work and would like to



Don O'Meara: Our New President

become more involved I would encourage you to get in touch to discuss any assistance you might like to give.

The work of the next three years will include looking at new ways we can expand the remit of the Society. As well as continuing with our existing work, one of the aims for my tenure is to launch a podcast, which will allow us a new medium to present and promote the work of the Society to a wider audience.

Whether you are a member based in the North East or further afield we are united in our belief that the study, promotion and celebration of the history and culture of the North East is a worthy pursuit. To this end I hope to work with all our members to continue this important work, and ensure we have a healthy and vibrant organisation into the future.

Don O'Meara

A LIBRARY REMINDER

The Great North Museum: Hancock Library is on the second floor of the Museum. Our opening hours are currently Monday to Thursday, 10am to 2pm (except Bank Holidays). The Library holds three main collections: the SANT collection, the Cowen collection (Newcastle University's School of History, Classics and Archaeology), and the Natural History Society of Northumbria's (NHSN) collection. NHSN's North East Nature Archive is housed within the Library (viewing by appointment only). There's also a small children's collection for our younger visitors, and a museum collection on themes of decolonisation, equality, diversity and inclusion in museums.

We have volunteers who look after SANT's collection, led by Mike Barke, your Honorary Librarian.

They look after the journals, check locations of books, investigate what's inside some of the older volumes, add new books to the collection and much more! The Museum Librarian is always happy to help you find what you are looking for too.

As SANT members, you are able to borrow books from the SANT collection, but you are also most welcome to browse any of the books on the shelves. You can search the SANT collection using the lists available on the website: <https://www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk/index.php?pageId=685>. These are searchable documents and will tell you where items are located (in the public access, controlled access or in our off-site Library Store). You just need your membership card if you want to borrow something from the SANT collection.

The Library is open to everyone to use. Society members, volunteers, independent researchers, academics, students, members of the public and Museum visitors are all welcome to undertake research, browse or just take a moment. You can find out more about using the Library, and check the opening hours, on the Library's website: <https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/collections/library-and-archives>

Rebecca Knight



*Great North Museum: Hancock Library.
Photograph Rebecca Knight*

LEAVING THE MINING INSTITUTE

The *Proceedings of the Society* for 1931 (*PSAN* 4th ser., 5 No. 1, 1–2) record that:

‘The Society began the year 1931 by changing its place of meeting... a more roomy and more convenient place than the library [in the Black Gate] in which to hold the Society's monthly meetings was essential ... future meetings will be held ... in the Lecture Theatre of the Mining Institute in Westgate Road’.

Then, as, now, there was disquiet among some members about moving from venerable surroundings to a more practical space. The proceedings record that Mr Gerald Stoney, DSc, FRS, opposed the motion to move, arguing that ‘there was a good deal of sentiment in the



Lecture Theatre, Mining Institute (Common Room). Photograph: Nick Hodgson.

it is only right to say farewell, and to recall what momentous archaeological discoveries have been unveiled there and what debates conducted within the walls of its lecture theatre. Although we are leaving it, this room has become part of the Society's history. And so we move on to pastures new, as we did in 1931!

Nick Hodgson

matter. They, as antiquaries, appreciated the charm of the old building ... and he hoped they would not leave it for more modern accommodation'. He was obviously a confirmed last-ditcher: 'When they left the Castle for the Black Gate he regretted it and now he was very sorry to think that they proposed to leave the Black Gate'.

Nevertheless, the motion to move was carried 'by an overwhelming majority', and the Mining Institute, latterly 'the Common Room', went on to become the Society's meeting place for 94 years.

Now, for reasons of practicality and cost, meetings for the foreseeable future will be held in Newcastle University, so we have to say goodbye, at least for now, to the Common Room, as the Mining Institute is now known. But after almost a century of meeting in this room

LEAVING THE MINING INSTITUTE: A PERSONAL VIEW



Neville Hall (Mining Institute Building), Westgate Road. Photograph: Mike Barke

Life is strange. A set routine for years suddenly ends. On 27th November last we heard Fraser Hunter's talk on Roman Scotland at the Mining Institute, Irwin Thompson packed up the equipment and he and I and a few others adjointed to the Italian Restaurant for the last time.

It was with some trepidation I realised on 29th January this year I was to give the first talk in our new venue at the University and I had just come from the 'Wake' celebrating Irvin's life after his sudden death. The technology for 'Zoom' had been passed to Richard Pears who set the whole lot up perfectly in new surroundings, except we forgot to silence the 'mike' so our pre-meeting deliberations were broadcast to the world. What indiscretions were revealed I cannot tell but, as yet, no writs have been received.

SANT was founded 212 years ago and for the first 12 years it met in various locations from back rooms of pubs, private houses, the Lit & Phil and the Castle Keep. In 1825 we moved into the new Lit & Phil building which this year celebrates its bi-centenary. We remained there until 1848 when we moved to the renovated keep, before moving on to the Black Gate later in the century. By the late 1920s the expanding library made meetings there

more difficult, and in the 1930s it was decided to move to the Neville Hall built in 1869-72, better known as the Mining Institute and now 'The Common Room'. The tiered lecture room there was described by the authors of the 1992 Edition of Pevsner's Northumberland as '... a 1902 alteration of some splendour by Cackett & Burns Dick.' I personally feel sad that after attending lectures there for nigh on 60 years, through circumstances beyond our control, we have had to leave these cosy and iconic Victorian surroundings.

Denis Peel

THE PILGRIMAGE OF HADRIAN'S WALL, 2029

The next Pilgrimage is now a little over 4 years away and planning has already started. The organising committee held its first meeting in December. Its members represent The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, The Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Durham and Newcastle Universities, English Heritage and there are 3 co-opted members.

There are certain traditions to follow, not least that the order of travel is reversed each Pilgrimage, so in 2029 we start in the west. Possible dates were considered and the same week as in 2019 – the last week in July – was the preference. Tyne Valley Coaches have been contacted and a caterer for lunches approached, while accommodation and the programme are under consideration. One important element of each Pilgrimage is the handbook; for 2029, its production is in the safe hands of Tony Wilmott and Rebecca Jones. The 8 principal guides have been chosen and they have agreed to serve; we are also considering the recruitment of a student supporter for each coach. The committee will continue to meet on a 6-monthly basis through the next 4 years.



John Collingwood Bruce (1805 – 1892) and the 'Unsplit Rock' at Limestone Corner where Hadrian's Wall meets the Whin Sill.

Photograph from the 1930 Book of the Pilgrimage, compiled by R.G. Collingwood.

David J. Breeze

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 2025

Thank you to all members who were involved in facilitating the Postgraduate Research Conference on February 1st, 2025. We had research papers from six PhD candidates at Newcastle University and Northumbria University.

Olivia Colborn kicked off the morning with analysis of the role that the Lit & Phil played in the dissemination of modernist thought during the early 20th century. By exploring the Society's books and lectures, Olivia is demonstrating that the Lit & Phil engaged with modernist art and writing at the time that this movement was first being created.

Kerri Armstrong detailed her examination of 203 women convicted by the Sessions and Assizes Courts of Durham, Newcastle and York in the late 19th century. Kerri is using these records to demonstrate that the history of crime has been dominated by a male-orientated framework. Kerri's work is featured in *Cultured North East: Stories from behind prison walls* form part of Postgraduate Research Conference

Daniel Riddell took us to 19th century Newcastle and the lives of the Quaysiders. Doing business required collegiality, information exchange and deals to win over new connections. While this was relatively easy to do within the loose commercial fraternity that was accessible, competition could inevitably end in violent disagreement and brawls.



(right to left) Abby Hammond, Damian Rudge, Olivia Colborn, Kerri Armstrong, Daniel Riddell, and June Watson

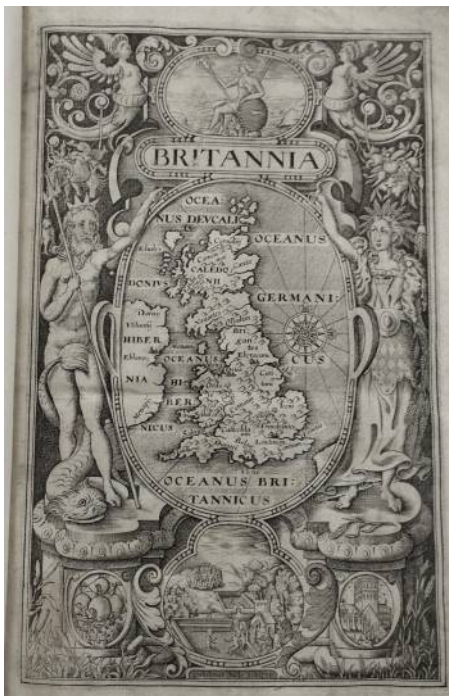
Damian Rudge demonstrated that by correlating the isotopic data from the artefacts at Corbridge Roman Town museum and sections of the original water pipes in the keeping of Northumbria University, with Roman epigraphic and mining records, it has been possible to provide compelling evidence of a chaîne opératoire at Red House.

Abby Hammond took us through her research into the ledger stones in Newcastle Cathedral. She focused on the life of Dame Jane Clavering (1668/9–1734/5), detailing how Clavering delicately balanced the roles of ideal wife, mother, and widow with the complexities of leading a successful business.

June Watson wrapped up proceedings with a trip to Madeira, which provided a safe refuge for Northumberland aristocrats recovering from consumption. Jane detailed the work of female travellers who undertook research projects on the natural history of the island and by doing so influenced scientific knowledge at the periphery of empire.

Dave Heslop awarded two prizes on behalf of SANT – the President's Prize went to Abby, and the Special Commendation to Kerri.

CAMDEN'S *BRITANNIA* IN THE SANT LIBRARY



Frontispiece to 1610 Edition of Camden's *Britannia* (SANT BF 141a). An early engraving by William Hole (d.1624).

I've spent the last few months exploring various editions of William Camden's *Britannia* in the SANT collection at the Great North Museum: Hancock Library. First published in Latin in 1586, the *Britannia* was Camden's attempt to capture the history and landscape of Britain and proved hugely popular. English translations appeared from 1610, and Camden researched and improved the book until his death in 1623. The *Britannia* grew, with later editions featuring additional content, illustrations and improved maps.

The first English translation of 1610 is the earliest *Britannia* in SANT's collection. A substantial, leather-bound folio, a small bookplate reveals the archaeologist R G Collingwood as a former owner. An 1896 catalogue shows a 1637 edition has been in SANT's care for over 125 years. This book has suffered the loss of some original maps, which have been sliced from the binding so forcefully that adjacent pages have sustained damage. This likely happened before the volume came to SANT, and in some cases the missing maps have been replaced by impressive hand-coloured versions, inserted loose. Research suggests this is a rare variant, with only six others identified on JISC's Library Hub.

There are other mysteries to be solved. What is the source of the loose, coloured maps? does the library stamp in the 1637 edition mean it travelled from Stourbridge to Newcastle at some point before 1896? Who is 'Ella', author of a letter inserted in the 1610 edition? Does an identical error in setting of the type in both the 1787 and 1806 Northumberland sections mean they are, in fact, the same imprint?

I'm planning to spend more time with these beautiful volumes, exploring evidence in the SANT archive and reviewing other library's holdings to better understand the history and significance of SANT's *Britannias*, and I hope to have more to share before too long.

Alex G Healey, AGH Archives

JULIA BOYD: THE FIRST FEMALE 'ORDINARY' SOCIETY MEMBER

The recent discovery of a letter from Juliana (Julia) Boyd to John Collingwood Bruce in 1886 (she was a pilgrim on his 'Wall' expedition) reminds us of an amazing woman who in 1877, became our first 'ordinary' female member.

Born in 1846, in Urpeth, County Durham, she devoted much of her life to her father and younger brothers' interests when her mother died from TB. Julia was 15. She became

extremely knowledgeable on many subjects, amassing a hugely sought after and diverse Antiquarian collection including Roman coins, rare books, paintings and Bewick woodcuts. Her talk on 'armorial bearing china' at the opening of the Black Gate in 1885 was reported to be 'concise and instructive'.

Julia was Dame President of the Primrose League's St Cuthbert's Habitation, a conservative organisation. As a member of this society, the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, the Durham Archaeological Society and the Harleian Society she contributed to publications of the day. She was also a campaigner for female suffrage and lobbied parliament.

Perhaps her most notable achievement was the publication of her book *Bewick's Gleanings* (a copy is in the SANT Library), whose subscribers included Dr Bruce.

In 1890, following her father's death, Julia decided to travel. With her companion Helena Pape, she visited Australia, New Zealand and some South Sea Islands, collecting many ethnological items along the way (her collection is held by the Natural History Society of Northumberland). But, having experienced poor health for some time she was diagnosed with a tumour, returning to Auckland for surgery. Sadly, she succumbed to peritonitis on the 10th of January 1892 and is buried at Purewa Cemetery. Her Society's obituary can be found in the 1892 *Proceedings*. Following her death, the sale of 'The Julia Boyd Collection' took 12 days, and was reported in *The Durham County Advertiser*.

Maureen Flisher

1876.	
Jan. 31	Taylor, Edward James, Bishopwearmouth.
Mar. 1	Johnson, Rev. Anthony, [curate of] Bywell St. Peter.
„ 1	Oswald, Septimus, Newcastle.
April 5	Carr, Rev. Henry B., Rector of Whickham.
May 3	Hooppell, Rev. R. E. Incumbent of Byers Green.
June 7	Rogers, Rev. Percy, Rector of Simonburn.
July 5	Young, Oliver.
Aug. 2	Pattinson, Hugh Lee, Scots-house, Boldon.
Sept. 6	Wood, Rev. Thomas W., Upton-on-Severn.
Dec. 6	Fenwick, John George, Gosforth.
„ 6	Watson, Henry, Newcastle.

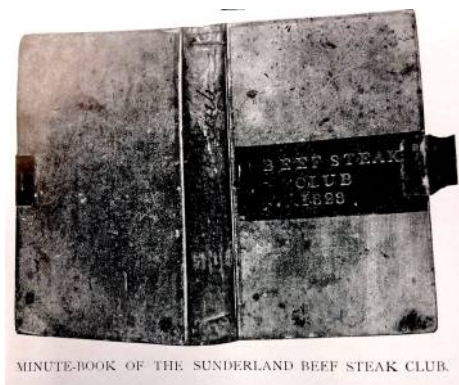
1877.	
June []	Boyd, Miss Julia, Moorhouse.
„ []	Mackay, Matthew, Newcastle.
July 4	Holmes, Sheriton, Newcastle.
Aug. 1	Carr, William Cochran, Fenham-hall.
Sept. 6	Barnes, J. W., Durham.
Nov. 7	Fothergill, Joseph, Whickham.
„ 7	Glendinning, William, Newcastle.
„ 7	Greenwell, Rev. William, Durham, re-instated.

Chronological List of Ordinary Members listing Julia Boyd, 1877. Archaeologia Aeliana, Third Series, Vol X, 1913, p.57.

THE SUNDERLAND BEEFSTEAK CLUB

The Society's Library has a substantial collection of journals. Most journal articles are, of course, written by and for academic specialists and their broader appeal is likely to be limited. But many journals in the Society's collection actually have a much wider interest and their contents can be extremely entertaining and informative, especially if they refer to local personalities and events.

One example, concerns the 1909 edition of the 'Sunderland Antiquary' and an account of the *History of the Sunderland Beef-Steak Club* by G.W. Bain, established in 1828. Voluntary associations of all types were a conspicuous feature of nineteenth century towns and cities, including social and dining clubs such as this. The club was formed by John Kay, then landlord of the *Golden Lion* in Sunderland's High Street, famous for being the location of the assault on the Marquis of Londonderry by a mob. The club was select, consisting of 13 'town' members and 3 'country' members but 'strangers' could be introduced to the club as guests. Most unusually an 'intruder' from Newcastle was a guest in June 1828, his name was Mr Richard Grainger! The club's headquarters later appears to have moved to Fawcett Street but then subsequently meetings seem to have been in private residences. The President for many years was Sir Cuthbert Sharp. Members had to 'be at Table at 5 o'clock precisely' and were normally served 'Soup or broth, fish, beef steaks or beef steak pie', although on one occasion there was consternation when venison was served! Wines were to consist of 'port and sherry, the allowance in the proportion of two bottles for three persons'. No doubt conversation grew more animated as the evening progressed.



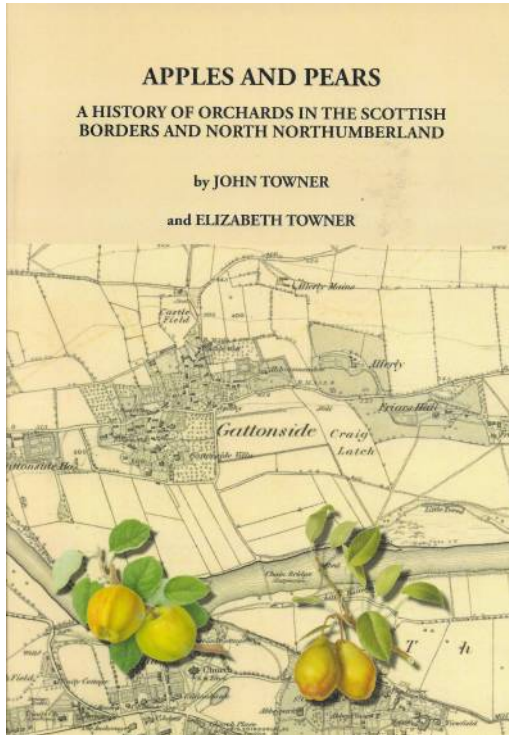
MINUTE-BOOK OF THE SUNDERLAND BEEF STEAK CLUB.

Minute-Book of the Sunderland Beef Steak Club, 1828. Image: G.W.

Although the main function of our journal collection is to report on the latest academic research, time spent browsing through early editions can not only give a brief glimpse into social and cultural life in the past but also be entertaining.

Mike Barke

APPLES & PEARS: A HISTORY OF ORCHARDS IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS AND NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND, BY JOHN AND ELIZABETH TOWNER



Orchards have been an interesting feature of the landscape in the Borders and north Northumberland since monastic times and this book traces their rise in the region from the early twelfth century to their decline by the early 1900s. Although never on the scale of the commercial orchards of the Clyde valley or the Carse of Gowrie, or of Kent, Hereford or Worcester in the south, orchards had an important part to play in the life of the religious houses, castles and tower houses, country estates and towns in this part of Britain. Apple varieties such as 'White Melrose', or pears such as 'Jeddart' from Jedburgh, are reminders of the significance of fruit trees in the area. The book also describes the region's nurserymen and gardeners, including James Grieve and the famous pomologist, Dr Robert Hogg.

The book summarises the main features of the rise and fall of these orchards using a wide range of original materials such as estate records, order books of fruit tree suppliers, local court records, government reports, Ordnance Survey maps and contemporary newspapers. A wealth of material also comes from the large Fruit Congresses held in London and

Edinburgh in the 1880s.

Front Cover of Apples and Pears by John and Elizabeth Towner (2024)

As well as the historical picture, the book considers the environmental significance of orchards. They are sites of significant biodiversity and their loss over the past hundred years or so has had a cost over and above the aesthetic pleasure that orchards bring to the landscape.

Some signs of hope are discussed at the end of the book, with the spread of community orchards in the region. One of the aims of this study is to provide some historical justification and stimulus for planting orchards once again.

Published by: **Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, 2024.** (More information available on the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club website: bnc1831.co.uk/publications)

John & Liz Towner

MONTHLY MEETINGS BY SUE WARD

November 2024 Meeting



Traprain Law from the North. Photograph by Kim Traynor.

Fraser Hunter, of the National Museum of Scotland, spoke about *Silver stories: the Traprain Law treasure and the roles of silver around the late Roman frontiers*. The site, he pointed out, was a large hogback hill easily visible from the main railway line to Edinburgh. It had been inhabited at least as far back as Neolithic times, and in the Roman period it was a local power-base.

The treasure had been found in 1919, during a lengthy excavation led by Alexander Curle, Director of both the National Museum and the Royal Museum of Scotland. It was the biggest hoard of hacksilver found anywhere, at

22 kilos. Curle had published the details within four years, but more recently the National Museum had hosted an international team looking at it again, using modern techniques and knowledge about other hoards all over Europe.

Isotope analysis of the lead that was also present on some objects suggested that they could have been made in the north-western provinces of the Roman Empire. The late Roman elite, especially the women, were accustomed to show off their wealth by the use of silver objects. Mosaics and wall-paintings showed that styles and fashions were similar across the Empire. However, the objects in the hoard were in pieces, not whole items, and they had mostly been cut down carefully, to create individual pieces of specific weights. Some had been cut down further, less carefully, at a later date. They were bullion, used instead of bulk shipments of coinage that were no longer possible. Such 'hacksilver' hoards were found throughout Europe, on both sides of the Imperial border, and could be dated to the 4th or 5th centuries. The treasure might have been sent as a subsidy for a client king, or a payment for troops supplied.

Fraser added that the silver was given to an Edinburgh goldsmith to clean and restore. They had used techniques that would never be contemplated today, including beating a flattened flask back into shape. They had then used the designs to create their own highly successful range of silverware, paying a royalty to the Museum.

Fraser Hunter can be contacted on f.hunter@nms.ac.uk, and a recording of his talk is on our YouTube channel.



Denis working in the SANT Library in the Blackgate. Photograph by Tom Yellowley.

January Meeting

The speaker was Denis Peel, who was our Hon Librarian from 1981 until his retirement in 2023, talking on *The SANT Library: Past, Present and Future*.

He explained that the Newcastle Antiquaries had spun off from the longer-standing Literary and Philosophical Society in 1813 and almost immediately began accumulating books. The first Treasurer, John Bell, moved to the post of Librarian after a few years, and held the post for several decades. At first, books were transported to the meeting place each week so that they could be used for reference and loaned out. However, after 1825 the new Lit and Phil building included rooms for a number of societies, and the books were moved to glass-fronted cases and were numbered so each had its own location.

In 1846 the Society acquired the Castle Keep and in the 1880s the Black Gate, and the library was moved there in 1909. The first catalogue was published in the mid-19th century. In the 1920s a new cataloguing system was made necessary by the library's enrolment in the important Regional Library Lending Scheme.

Denis himself, having been brought up in Yorkshire, had come to the North-East in 1964, and was almost immediately hooked by archaeology whilst experiencing one of the Society's digs. In the 1970s there were two big bequests of books. Having volunteered to help with these, in due course Denis found himself Librarian. Meanwhile the archives – including printed books with written material in them – had been transferred to Northumberland Record Office when it was set up in the 1960s on a site near Newcastle Race Course, and then moved to Woodhorn as Northumberland Archives in 2000. Most recently, the whole library had been transferred to the Great North Museum: Hancock, where it was looked after by the part-time museum librarian, our Hon Librarian, and several volunteers. Denis had calculated, he said, that 40% of our stock was on open access and 40% on closed access, 10% in store in the Discovery Museum, 4% at Woodhorn and the remainder 'missing'. As for the future, he wondered whether printed books would exist at all in a few decades, or if everything would be digitised.

Denis can be contacted on gdpeel@btinternet.com. For the library's opening hours and other arrangements, see our website.

February Meeting

Geologist and author Ian Jackson spoke on *The influence of geology on the Romans and their northern frontier – does a geoscience perspective reinforce or challenge received wisdoms?* His thesis was that awareness of geology could enhance archaeologists' interpretations. It was apparent that each discipline did not fully understand the other – there was a communication gap. The two groups of specialists shared techniques: observing, surveying, and measuring in the field and the laboratory, but on very different scales. Crucially both were interpretative sciences, based on the often limited facts available. Archaeology's challenge was to weld



Bedrock (and building stone) disappears beneath thick Quaternary (glacial) deposits just east of Birdoswald). Photograph: Ian Jackson.

science and the humanities in which process many more narratives were created. Archaeologists also failed to fully appreciate that the science information they used, whether geological maps or isotope analysis, were not facts; they were best interpretations of the available data.

Ian argued that the subsurface geology had had a profound effect on the decisions the Romans took about the route of Hadrian's Wall, its building materials and the many natural resources they used. Investing more effort in understanding rocks could help validate the archaeological evidence, and enrich the human narratives.

He painted a picture of the geological evolution of the landscape and its likely state when the Romans arrived and the likely importance of indigenous peoples' knowledge. Roman defences made use of the Whin Sill escarpment which gave them a strategic advantage. The

Vallum threaded its way between the hard Sill and soft bogs or lakes, long since drained but whose geological imprint remained. In the west the builders switched from stone to turf because the geology changed: bedrock was buried many metres down and stone was no longer easily accessible. Ian gave many examples of the natural resources the Romans exploited, from metals and fuels to gemstones and pigments. There were so many unanswered questions – and the opportunity for cross-disciplinary research. You can see more in the recording available on our YouTube channel. His recent book, *The Rocks at the Edge of the Empire*, gives many more examples of the influence of geology and is available from www.northern-heritage.co.uk, price £12.

March Meeting



Excavation Site at Carlisle Cricket Ground Site. Photograph: Frank Giecco.

In March, Frank Giecco of Wardell Armstrong spoke about Uncovering Roman Carlisle. He explained that the whole process had started when Carlisle Cricket Club's ground had been flooded after the River Eden burst its banks. In 2017 they decided to rebuild their pavilion on higher ground. Of the four archaeological evaluation trenches, just one happened to hit masonry, and this was the top of a hypocaust stack, almost the only element of the complex of ruined buildings that was less than 1.5 metres below the current ground level – had it been any deeper, the evaluation would have missed it.

Major excavation had only begun in 2021, with a community archaeology project, and had continued over each summer since then. They had found a Hadrianic

phase of building, a Severan phase followed by an early fourth century rebuild, and then organised medieval quarrying, probably to provide building stone for city walls and Carlisle Castle.

There was fairly limited evidence of a Hadrianic bath house, which had then been obliterated by a Severan building on a much larger scale. This, however, had been remodelled fairly soon after it was built, perhaps a sign that it was a white elephant. There were some very well constructed drains where, oddly, the upstream part had not been properly cleaned out when the downstream part was rebuilt. This meant, however, that there was a wealth of small finds including 76 intaglio, 400 hairpins, 350 glass beads and 823 coins, some with little or no wear, suggesting they had been brought to the site in order to be distributed. Among larger finds were two large stone heads, 80cm tall, which were quite crudely carved, and seemed to be intended to be placed at a height, looking down. There were also many lightweight vaulting tubes, which would have been used in a construction technique originating in North Africa – something that could again link the construction of the building with the period when Emperor Septimius Severus was resident in York.

Frank concluded by saying that they were planning another community archaeology project for the summer of 2025, and had launched a crowdfunder to finance it. Frank can be contacted on fgiecco@wardell-armstrong.com, and the crowdfunder is on www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/uncovering-roman-carlisle-summer-dig-2025. The recording of his talk is on our YouTube

channel, at <https://youtu.be/C3i3yVK-Wp8>.

April Meeting

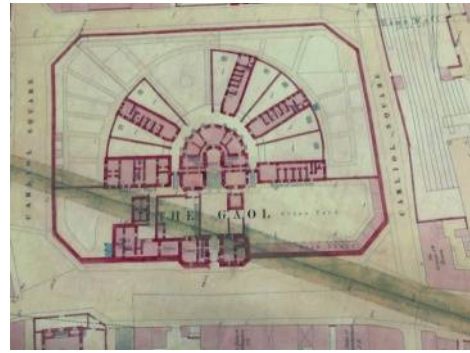
Patrick Low and Shane McCorristine talked about *The Ghosts of Newcastle Gaol: Bringing a Victorian Prison Back to Life*, at our April meeting. Shane began by explaining that before the Gaol was built, Newcastle's prison had been in Newgate. This was generally recognised as being unsuitable and dangerous, and reforming zeal led to a project for its replacement.

However, the site chosen in 1822 for the new gaol, to the east of Pilgrim Street, was on a slope and the soil was difficult to work. John Dobson won the architectural competition, but there had to be modifications as building went on, because costs overran. Today, the site of the Gaol has been largely forgotten, with the whole townscape of central Newcastle undergoing yet another cycle of rapid change.

Patrick then took over to talk about capital punishment and the Gaol. There had been 16 executions for murder over its 97-year history before final closure in 1925. All but one of those executed were men. The first person to be executed was a woman, however. Jane Jameson's hanging in 1829 and the next one, in 1844, were public spectacles on the Town Moor. In 1850, Newcastle followed the pattern adopted in other towns and the gallows were set up outside the gaol walls. Even so, the hangmen travelling to and from the gaol could find themselves the subjects of unwelcome attention.

The bodies were buried inside the gaol, without a burial service. In 1925 when the buildings were scheduled for demolition, those that could be found were exhumed, but three bodies were missing and have never been traced. Those recovered were re-interred in All Saints Cemetery, in Jesmond, and recently a plaque has gone up bearing their names.

For more detail, and to contact them, look at the website that Patrick, Shane and their fellow-researchers Helen Rutherford and Clare Sandford-Couch have set up, www.newcastlegaol.co.uk. There is a forthcoming book in July, *Newcastle Prison: A History 1828–1925*, from Tyne Bridge Publishing, and there is to be an exhibition in Level 6 of Newcastle City Library (May 27–August 16), to commemorate the centenary of the gaol's demolition.



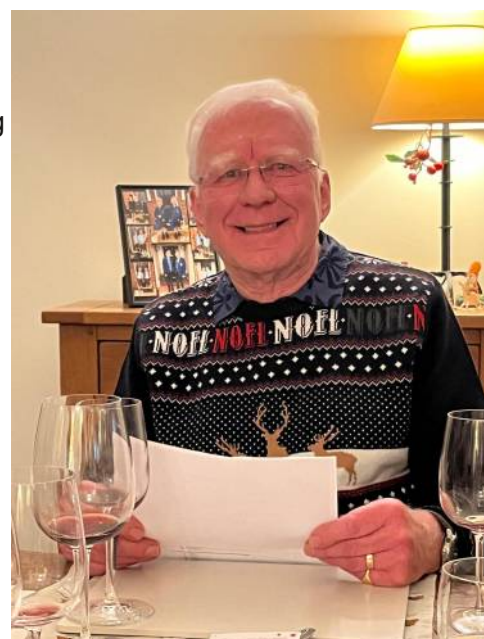
Newcastle Gaol, Carloli Square. SANT Map Collection (O.S. 1:500; 00046). Northumberland Sheet, XCVII.7.10, 1861.

IRWIN THOMPSON, 1944–2025

SANT members, especially regular attendees at our monthly meetings, were shocked to learn of the sudden death of Irwin Thompson in January. Irwin was an ever-present figure at these talks, quietly and efficiently setting up the IT system and ensuring the connection of remote 'Zoom' participants. It is easy to underestimate the technical skill and sheer amount of work involved in these tasks, but Irwin fulfilled this vital role with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of competence.

Irwin was born and schooled (Heaton Grammar School) in Newcastle before undertaking a London University B.Sc degree in Mathematics and Physics, graduating in 1967. A variety of employments followed until he became first, a lecturer at Northumberland College (1975–1988), then a senior administrator, managing the College's Information Systems. This led into the role of consultant to Capita Education Software Solutions from 2001 to 2006, then IT Support and Development Officer with Durham Constabulary, 2007–2014. As he neared retirement, Irwin also established himself as a private consultant in IT and Computer Services.

But Irwin also used his professional expertise to help



*Irwin Thompson, 1944–2025
(Photograph reproduced with permission of Hilda Thompson)*

numerous local societies and associations with IT issues. In addition to his support for SANT he was also deeply involved with the Mining Institute for many years and, in fact, had become Honorary Secretary of that Institution in 2024. Typical of Irwin's unstinting support was his role in the Northumberland Name Books Project (2016–2019) initiated by Professor Diana Whalley who commented that he '...shared his IT expertise with extraordinary generosity.'

Irwin was proud of his technical expertise and his ability to keep step with the many new developments in the world of IT over his career. But he was also enthusiastically committed to Newcastle and North-East history, working as a city-guide from 2019. He brought his trademark precision, thoroughness and wry sense of humour to this role, as with all his others.

Mike Barke

GRACE MCCOMBIE, 1932–2025



Grace McCombie, 1932–2025

Many in the North East of England were deeply saddened to learn of the death on 4 February of Grace McCombie, at the fine age of 93. As friends will have long known, Grace endured a debilitating illness in recent years, and the news of her passing, though anticipated, ends the life of one greatly respected and admired, but mostly loved.

Grace was born in South Shields and spent her school years in the region before leaving for university. She later married Frank McCombie and they had a family of three boys.

In her later professional career, she was a Field Monument Warden working for the Department of the Environment undertaking regular visits to scheduled ancient monuments to assess their condition. Later, when the Department rolled out the national listed building resurvey in the early 1980s, working through Napper Associates (architects), she joined Peter Ryder, John Grundy and Bill Taggart to survey the North-East region. Peter and John covered Northumberland, Grace and Bill, County Durham, all working under the guiding hand of the redoubtable Dolly Potter.

Grace was also a vital member of the Tyne and Wear Joint Conservation Team, a specialist group led by Brian Jobling, providing listed building and conservation area advice across the metropolitan county. She worked there with (amongst others) David Lovie, Ian Ayris, Peter Derham and her longstanding friend, the noted archaeologist, Barbara Harbottle.

A lifetime's knowledge of the buildings of the North-East later bore fruit in two landmark publications. Firstly, in 1992, her joint authorship, with John Grundy, Peter Ryder and Humphrey Welfare of the second edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England Northumberland* volume. Much of its urban Tyneside text drew on Grace's expertise and this blossomed in her sole authorship of the more expansive text of the *Newcastle and Gateshead: Pevsner City Guide* in 2009, both volumes published by Yale University Press.

Before, during and after her work for Yale, Grace had written and been published extensively in local and national journals. Amongst them were major reports (with others) on such key Newcastle buildings as Bessie Surtees House, Sandhill, Alderman Fenwick's House, Pilgrim Street and Trinity House, Broad Chare.

Her authoritative writing was matched by her public speaking and her strong association over many decades with both established and newly formed architectural, archaeological and historical societies in the region. She was President of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne (2005–7), Vice-President of the Northern Architectural History Society (2003–25), and an early and formative committee member of the North East Vernacular Architecture Group (c.1986–2015). She was also a long-standing member of the Newcastle Diocesan Advisory Committee on Churches.

Grace's life, thus condensed, was evidently long, richly rewarding and successful. That will suffice, that will endure, but she was also so much more. She was a great encourager. Twice in my professional life, when I have paused over making the next move, uncertain in taking a new direction, Grace was there to embolden me, always there with wise words of support.

In architectural debate her voice might deepen and sharpen but sharing a joke Grace lit up,

her whole face creased in laughter. As Christopher Downs has said she had a 'warm and mischief sense of humour.' Invariably good company: you always felt better after meeting her. It was just another of Grace's qualities that lives on in the memory beyond her passing, but it was one of her best.

Martin Roberts

EDITOR'S NOTES

Parts of this News Bulletin have a decidedly valedictory tone, most obviously because it contains obituaries of two of our members who have recently passed away. Martin Roberts pays tribute to one of our most distinguished members and former President, Grace McCombie whose contribution to our understanding and interpretation of the region's historical built environment was nothing short of phenomenal. Sadly, we also mourn the loss of Irwin Thompson whose skills have been invaluable in the efficient presentation of our lectures within and beyond the lecture room and in enabling access to the Library Catalogues via the website.

A very different type of farewell relates to our change of venue for the Society's Monthly Meetings. Leaving the grand surroundings of the Mining Institute will have been a considerable wrench for many people and a source of regret. But this has been done for unavoidable practical reasons, and we are grateful to our new hosts at Newcastle University. Although this is not a 'farewell' in any real sense, we should also record that David Heslop has now finished his term of office as President and thank him for carrying out this role so efficiently and, in a way that is largely unseen, with an eye to the future well-being of the Society. We welcome Don O'Meara as our new President.

Looking forward into the future does not necessarily mean everything must be 'new'. The future can also provide opportunities for re-engagement, for a return to activities that have possibly been laid to one side or forgotten – not least under the exigencies of a global pandemic! Rebecca Knight reminds us in this Newsletter about the rewards that can result from time spent in our Library and the simple pleasures of just browsing books, periodicals and maps. As well as a programme of fascinating lectures, your Society offers you such opportunities. We look forward to seeing you soon! Please remember that contributions to the Bulletin are welcome – 300 words plus an illustration. The deadline for the next Bulletin is 3rd November and my e-mail is mikebarke46@hotmail.co.uk.

Mike Barke