

# The Cheviot

Issue number 1 - Spring 2016

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# The Cheviot

Welcome to the first edition of “The Cheviot” - a new journal which aims to celebrate the history, landscape, nature and culture of North Northumberland.

The definition of North Northumberland, in this context, is rather arbitrary, but if pushed, I would say that it covers the parts of the county north of a line that runs roughly between Morpeth and Kielder - in effect, the lands beyond the “Wilds of Wanney”.

This first edition is a “prototype” - to try out the idea and see what people’s reaction will be - and also to use it as a means to seek more contributions, on the basis that it is often better to have something to see and touch rather than just a concept.

The aim, at least to begin with, will be to publish three times each year, with a variety of articles that each celebrate an aspect of North Northumberland. I hope that the content will be varied enough so that everyone will both find things of interest, and also items that may create a new interest. In the words of Stephen Fry, I hope that you will find something that is at least “quite interesting” in each of the articles.

A number of the articles will be “features”, in that they will have a particular theme that will provide continuity through each issue. The following are examples that it is hoped we can continue:

**Artefacts from the Museum;** drawing on the hidden stores within our local museums. In this issue there is a piece about a local photographer from the early 1900s which casts an interesting light on those times.

**Behind the Scenes;** getting access to parts of popular sights that the public don’t often get to see. Inside, we have a trip round the pump room below the Alnwick Garden Grand Cascade.

**Local Artists;** as well as paintings, this will also include other forms, such as poetry. We have two poems in this edition, as well as some paintings.

**Walks;** We’ll try and include one walk which will have a lot of interesting facts.

We would like to include information about any new books that have been published, but we will not be doing traditional reviews - rather we will aim to include an extract from the book that stands alone as an article, but that might

prompt an interest to get the full book. Later you will find an extract from a book of geological walks.

The one thing that all the articles will have in common is that they are “off the beaten track”. They will either be about things that are less well known, or give a different angle on some that might be better known.

The “style” of the journal will be what you see here - simple and straightforward, without any fancy effects. There will be plenty of photographs too.

Ideas for future articles are welcome, and if you are interested in making a contribution, please get in touch. If you want to try your hand at writing, that is fine - or if you have a story to tell but would like help in getting it written down, again that’s fine too.

I would also like to make some limited space available for local businesses to publicise their products. If you want to find out more, get in touch. Some examples for our own books have been included in order to provide an impression of what can be offered.

If you like what you see, and I hope that you do, please consider subscribing to future editions.

Finally, I’d like to thank all those who, with very limited information, have bought into the idea and have both provided material and encouragement for this first edition. In no particular order - Katrina Porteous (and Bloodaxe Books), Avril Meakin, Helen Page, Noel Hodgson, Brian Doyle, Peter Podmore, Ian Clayton, Chris Davies and Mick Grant - thank you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ian Clayton', written in a cursive style.

## Ross Back Sands and the Guile Point Markers

Between the two great castles of Bamburgh and Lindisfarne can be found one of the best stretches of beach in the whole county. It is a good mile walk to the shore from the last parking spot, but this makes for a good stroll, and also means the beach is often very quiet.

Park just before the entrance to Ross - there are clear signs saying that you should go no further. The road takes you past Lindisfarne Oysters and through the farm and its holiday cottages. Continue along the road, past the barrier to the cottages, where the road ends.

The path is clearly marked across the fields. From this point you are passing through an old artillery range from the Second World War, and a number of old concrete buildings from these times can still be seen in the fields and dunes.

There was a narrow gauge railway here that provided moving targets for gunnery practice. This is no longer here, but it was moved in the 1950s and is surprisingly still in use on the Otterburn Ranges!

Approaching the beach, a wonderful view opens out to both the north and south, towards the two great castles of Bamburgh and Lindisfarne (below).



Looking right, to the south, the beach stretches out towards Budle Bay, with Bamburgh Castle in the distance. At low tide, the expanse of sand here is very impressive.

We are turning left, however, towards the Holy Island of Lindisfarne which can be seen on the horizon.

The further you go along the beach, the quieter it will get. After about a mile there is a gap in the dunes - this part of the beach is under water at high tide.

We can continue, however, on to Old Law dunes, from where you can walk to the very end of the beach.



Grey Seals become a common sight in the sea along here. There can sometimes be dozens of them in the water together. Often they seem to be watching you with as much interest as you watch them! And aware of your interest, they do their best to show off their water skills (above).

At the very end, there are two sandstone navigation beacons. Known by two names - Old Law or Guile Point beacons - they provide sailors with the bearing to for the deep channel into Holy Island harbour - once past the tip of the spit of land that the beacons sit on, a boat must then turn northwards to get to the harbour itself.

In years past, the harbour at Holy Island was very busy, with coal and lime being shipped in and out in large quantities, and the entry to the harbour was very difficult. It was reported in the Caledonian Mercury of 24 August 1799:

*In consequence of the recent instances of misfortune which have happened at Holy Island, whereby many lives, as well as much property, have been lost, for want of proper beacons to direct ships into that harbour when the weather is so bad that pilots cannot get off, - the Master and Bretheren of this House [Trinity] by an application to Lord Tankerville, have obtained leave to erect Beacons on the south side of the said harbour, for the better direction of ships going in; which beacons are now completed and proper persons appointed to attend the same and the trade may be accommodated with directions for going into the said harbour, by applying at the Custom-house here, and at Sunderland, paying a small contribution, annually for the support of such Beacons.*



These original beacons were made from timber. In 1829, they were replaced by the stone ones we see today (left), which were designed by the famous North East architect, John Dobson. It was reported in Newcastle Courant of 12 December 1829:

*NOTICE TO MARINERS:*

*The Corporation of the Trinity House of this Town [Newcastle] has built Two Beacons Upon the Old Law, as LEADING MARKS into HOLY ISLAND HARBOUR, and the old Wooden Beacons are taken down.*

Originally unlit, the beacons were presumably only used during daylight. Today, the eastern most beacon has a navigation light fitted on a small platform part way up. This, together with another light on Heugh Hill on Holy Island, provide the navigation for safe entry into the harbour at all hours.



On the way back, the views are reversed, with Bamburgh on the horizon. The only sign of people will probably be your own footprints in the sand.



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Media 086/15

## Behind the Scenes at the Grand Cascade

Many people have marvelled at the elegance of the Grand Cascade at the The Alnwick Garden, which evokes the spirit of a past time. But how does it all work?



Underneath the ponds and weirs that make up this fantastic water feature, there is a whole subterranean world of pumps, pipes, valves and tanks - all kept operating day in, day out, to entertain the thousands of visitors to the Gardens.



Entering through a small door at the end of the Poison Garden, you emerge into a very different world, where the noise of the electric motors which power all the pumps means that visitors must wear ear protection!

The pumps (left) are big - together they are moving 7,260 gallons of water every minute!



There are over 100 water jets within the cascade, each with its own automatic valve, controlled by the computerised system that creates the display. Standing in the underground plant room you can hear the hiss of compressed air as these valves are opened and closed (right).



Each of the main pumps has a variable speed motor which allows the control system (left) to vary the pressure of each different set of fountains. For example, if the wind is strong, increasing the water pressure can maintain the appearance of the jets.

It is important that all of the water which circulates through the fountains is kept clean - there can be a lot of debris, such as leaves and twigs, that get into the system, which would lead to

blockages. So large filters are used to clean the water each time it passes round. These are the large green tanks (right).



There is also a method of chlorination that prevents the build up of bacteria - the small black and white tanks (right).

The pump room reflects the shape of the cascade

above. Most of this underground space is actually made up of reservoirs. In all, the cascade alone contains over 30,000 gallons of water!

As well as operating the cascade, the plant room also has pumps which feed the fire protection within the Treehouse in the event of a fire there, taking water from the reservoirs.



All of this fire system is painted red. As well as the normal electric pump, there is a second pump powered by a small diesel engine so that the fire system can still operate even in the event of a power failure (left).

This underground area was once hidden from view, with only the garden's engineers allowed access. Recently, however, visitors can take advantage of tours that have now been arranged. Costing £10 (£5 for children), the tour takes about an hour and takes in the cascade above ground as well as the engineering space below.

I'd like to thank Will Douglas for making my tour of the pump room possible, and Steve Grice for showing me around - a great guide, who you might meet if you do the tour yourself.

## Duddo Stone Circle

The stone circle at Duddo is a dramatic sight the first time you see it, and subsequent visits do not diminish this feeling. Standing on the crest of a hill, it makes a fine prospect against the horizon as you walk along towards it.



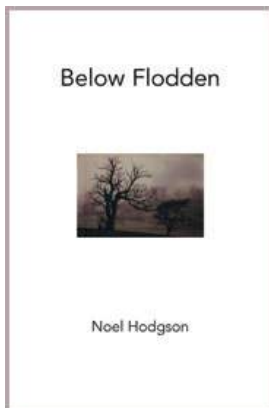
Erected about 4,200 years old, its original purpose remains a mystery, but it is clear that much effort went into its construction. It must have been a place of importance to its builders.

Originally with seven standing stones, two were removed, probably sometime during the 19<sup>th</sup> century - the sockets which originally supported them have been found beneath the surface.

For many years there were only four upright, giving it the name “Duddo Four Stones” which can still be seen on the OS map. A fifth stone, which had fallen over at some point in time, was raised back into position sometime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, giving us the five stones we see today.

The stones that remain are impressive, with the tallest standing over two metres high. They have been sculpted by the wind and rain over four millennia to create the shapes we see today.

The monument is accessible by a permissive footpath. Follow the signs from the centre of Duddo village and park as directed, making sure not to obstruct the roads or gateways. It is nearly a mile each way, so allow at least an hour for the visit.



The poem *Duddo*, on the following page, is from local poet Noel Hodgson's book, *Below Flodden*. This was the first of Noel's publications, and has been followed by two further poetry books - *Dancing Over Cheviot* and *A Grand Land*. He has also written a novel, *Heron's Flight*, which is based on the story of the Battle of Flodden.

More information, including contact details for ordering books, can be found on Noel's website [www.noelhodgson.co.uk](http://www.noelhodgson.co.uk).

## Duddo

Behind the wood  
Mist gathers like  
A ghostly flock.  
In wheel ruts  
Pools of rainwater  
Tremble in a chill breeze.  
Clouds spilling  
Across the western sky  
Cloak Cheviot's top.  
Hanging on fence wire  
A chorus line of dead crows  
Sway together in  
A grim finale.

Upon a small mound  
In a nearby field  
A circle of five  
Standing stones  
Like old wizened teeth  
Flute the wind;  
An anthem to  
Forgotten Gods.

*Approaching the small stone circle you are immediately absorbed by its simple splendour. Moving around the stones, you are drawn to touch them. Under a dark, wild, winter sky their shapes have an unearthly, awesome aspect; something I have tried to evoke in the poem.*

*Noel Hodgson*

## A Hike to Windy Gyle

This walk starts and ends at the National Park car park at Wedders Leap (NT866103), about 5½ miles up the Coquet Valley from Alwinton. It is over 11½ miles long, and needs good footwear and some map reading skills.

Leave the car park and cross the road [1] towards the bridge over the river Coquet. The building next to the car park is Askew Hall, now used as a store for the farm. It was original built in 1935 as a dance hall and it apparently has one of the best sprung wooden dance floors in the county.



It is thought that the name Coquet refers to the Red River, which may be a reference to the red rocks in the river bed or perhaps to the reddish tinge given to the water by the peat washed down from the hillsides and suspended in the water.

When you cross the bridge contemplating the reason behind the name of the river, it is as well to also remember how the car park got the name of Wedders Leap.

So the legend goes, a sheep rustler had taken a wedder (a castrated tup) from the slopes of Shillhope Law and was getting away with his ill-gotten gains when the owner spotted him and gave chase. The thief had the tup tied around his shoulders as he tried to make off down the hill. He tried to jump across the river still carrying the wedder but with his boots scrambling on the far bank the weight of his booty around his neck dragged him backwards into the river.

At this point the river has cut a gorge and is estimated to be 14 feet deep. Needless to say, crime does not pay - the poor thief drowned, dragged under the water by the sodden wedder.



Take the path uphill, turn left through the gate and follow the path alongside the wall. Below the wall is an area of upland hay meadow that is carefully managed by the farmer to maintain the ecologically important area. The meadow is not cut until late in the season to allow the flowers such as Wood Cranesbill,



Yellow Rattle and the Melancholy Thistle to fully bloom and seed.

Follow the path past the old schoolroom and a wooden building [2] known as the deer hut. The schoolroom used to be the school for the valley before it closed. Both buildings are now used as camping barns. The schoolroom and the dance hall hark back to a time in the not too distant past when the valley had a much larger population than it does today.



Continue along the path into the valley of the Hepden burn. It is here that a sign purloined from a street in the London borough of Hackney has found a home. When the borough were approached about their missing sign they had the grace to admit that it had found a fantastic location [3] and there were no plans to ask for it back.



The path now starts to climb for the first time up the flank of Kyloe Shins to a stile [4] over the fence at the top (NT873120). Here the path splits and you can take either route. The path to the right takes you down to the Usway burn at the 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse

of Fairhaugh. The farmhouse has been extensively modernised and can now be rented as a holiday home. However, it should be noted that there is no electricity supply, with the fridge and lighting being run on bottled gas. The path does not cross the burn but turns uphill through the forest until it meets the other path that has followed a higher line from the stile.

Follow the path as it comes out of the trees at a fence with gate and a stile [5]. The walk continues across the side of the Middle in front of you. To your right the path coming down the flank of Yearnspath is Clennel Street, one of three ancient drove roads that you will encounter on today's walk.



At the crossroads on the other side of the Middle (NT875137) do not follow Clennel Street but turn to your right and follow the

road up towards the Scout hut and Uswayford farm. At the ford before the farm the path turns left and crosses the river by a wooden footbridge. On the other side of the river continue to follow the river upstream taking care with your footing as the slope of Hen Hill is steep.



Cross the tributary (NT886150) and follow the path up hill and through the wood until it joins the Salters Road - the second drovers road on today's route. Turn left and follow the path through the forest, it can get very damp here. The path then joins a forestry road which leads you back to the river and the waterfall of Davidson's Linn (NT884156).

From the waterfall [6] follow the road up through the forest. When it joins a forest road turn left and keep on the road for 100 yards or so before taking a path through the forest to your right. This leads out of the trees and joins Clennel Street as it



makes it way to the border ridge at Hexpethgate (NT871160). Here you will join the Pennine Way which is following the border at this point [7].

To your right is the whale-backed shape of Cheviot, in front of you is a panoramic view of Scotland (if you can see past the ridiculous road sign that spoils this view) but our path leads off to the left along the paved Pennine Way. The paving stones, some of which came

from the floors of demolished Lancashire mills, lead to the highest point of the walk – Windy Gyle (NT855152).

The summit of the mountain at 619 metres the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the range is marked by a trig point placed on top of a Bronze Age mound. The view in to Scotland is worth a few minutes before continuing downhill along the Pennine Way.



After about two miles [8], the path you are on is crossed by The Street (NT834149) the last of the drovers roads on our route today and our way back. If you are lucky enough at





this point you may see some of the wild goats that roam this area. So turning left follow The Street until you reach the road by the White Bridge at Trows (NT859114). From here it is a short walk back up the road to the car park back at Wedders Leap.

*Brian Doyle*

Brian has been walking the Cheviot Hills for more years than he cares to remember, both with friends and alone. There are not many parts he has not placed his boots! He is co-author of a recently published book, *Our Northern Hills*, that tells some of the story of the hills; the geology, history, hills, rivers and valleys. See the back page for more information.

## Sir Charles Parsons

In the peaceful churchyard at Kirkwhelpington can be found the graves of Sir Charles Algernon Parsons and his wife, Katharine. Not a Northumbrian by birth, Parsons can nevertheless be rightly considered a part of the rich Engineering heritage of Northumberland.

The industrial revolution was founded to a great extent on the harnessing of steam power. It was James Watt who realised how much energy was being wasted by the early steam engines as they repeatedly heated and then cooled their massive pistons and cylinders. His invention of the separate condenser led to massive increases in efficiencies which enabled steam engines to become practical power units for factories and locomotives.

The other great advance in the use of steam was the Parsons multi-stage turbine. This made the supply of cheap electricity a reality.

His genius was to realise "that moderate surface velocities and speeds of rotation were essential if the turbine motor was to receive general acceptance as a prime mover. I therefore decided to split up the fall in pressure of the steam into small fractional expansions over a large number of turbines in series, so that the velocity of the steam nowhere should be great...I was also anxious to avoid the well-known cutting action on metal of steam at high velocity."



Parsons first turbine was demonstrated in 1884 - it is said that his design for his turbine blade was actually sketched on the back of an envelope! He opened his own works in 1889, in Newcastle, producing steam turbine electricity generators. These quickly became adopted as the standard for electricity generation.

Parsons turned his attention to ship propulsion. It was in 1897 that he famously 'unofficially' demonstrated the speed of his turbine-powered ship, Turbinia (left), at the Fleet Review, in front of the Queen and her Admirals. Within two years, the Royal Navy had a number of destroyers fitted with Parsons' steam turbines and very soon it became the standard propulsion unit for both Navy ships and liners.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Charles Parsons and his wife bought the Ray Estate at Kirkwhelpington where they would live for the rest of their lives. He was knighted in 1911 in recognition of the importance of his engineering contributions.



Sir Charles died in 1931, while on a cruise in the West Indies. His wife died two years later. They were buried together in Kirkwhelpington churchyard.

There are two memorials within the church; to Sir Charles and to his son, Algernon George, who died in action during WW1.

## Lindisfarne and the Causeway

Lindisfarne is one of those special places in Northumberland and, unsurprisingly, it is on most visitor's "must do" list.

The causeway, however, while being part of the romance of the place, is often neglected, with visitors going straight to the main attractions. The following pages are an attempt to redress this, with Peter Podmore's paintings and Katrina Porteous's poem both giving a different perspective on the causeway itself.

### Holy Island Causeway

Much of Peter Podmore's inspiration comes from the Cheviot Hills that he looks out on from his house by Kirknewton. He aims to capture the rhythm of the landscape, the transience of the light and the weather. Recently his interest has included the spectacular long vistas of the Lindisfarne Causeway and this has led to some abstract works exploring the problem of how to allude to the dimension of time using a series of individual abstract images that connect laterally with each other and form a progression. He is trying to find the connection between music as a series of sequential incidences and how that can function in painting. When a student he studied the Chinese painters who used scrolls which were designed to be unravelled slowly revealing an image that was designed to take the viewer on a journey through hills and valleys.

If you are interested in Peter's work, he can be contacted at:

[www.peterpodmore.co.uk](http://www.peterpodmore.co.uk) (which is being redesigned)  
[info@peterpodmore.co.uk](mailto:info@peterpodmore.co.uk)  
5 Westnewton, Kirknewton, Wooler NE71 6XJ  
01668 216550







## The Refuge Box

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The following excerpt is taken from Katrina Porteous' long radio-poem, 'The Refuge Box', made for BBC Radio 3's 'Between the Ears' with producer Julian May. The poem is based on the idea of sanctuary, that of humans and wildlife, and is set around Holy Island. Half way between the island and the shore is the 'refuge box', a small hut raised above the causeway for anyone caught by the incoming tide.



'Slakes' is a Northumbrian word meaning 'mud-flats'. Strictly speaking, The Slakes are the mud-flats beyond Beal Sands and 'the Swad' (another Northumbrian word, meaning 'weed'). The poem opens with a wide view of the Sands, Slakes and whole tidal area.

The poem includes the sound of seals, birds, wind and water. The accompanying photographs were taken by Katrina during the making of the poem.

The full text is published in Katrina's poetry collection, 'Two Countries' (Bloodaxe Books 2014), which is also available as an e-book with audio.

## The Slakes

*Excerpt from: The Refuge Box*

At the edge of the Low, the wind blows cold.

A world that is water and not water  
Stretches away, reticulate;

Shaken within it, redshank, godwit,  
Their scraps and patches of safety shrinking,

Spreading. Miles of sand-flats. Glittering  
Streams and ribbons of water, weaving

Earth and sky; between them, the golden  
Island, afloat on equivocation,

Or safely grounded there, the tide  
Either coming or going around it, the road

Snaking towards it, narrow, human.

*(Fade up seals, low Hooooo)*

You reach the Danger sign, and stop.  
You want it, that Island, stretched out like a ship

Ashore on its saltings, adrift in a sea  
So blue and endless, you'd think the sky

Had swallowed it up, or else had fallen  
Smack down into its own reflection.



Out from the causeway, over the sand,  
Guideposts narrow towards the Island,

The mirror-image of their own  
Vanishing – an invitation.

The Slakes answer the sky's question:

Blue?

Blue.

Now, will you

Step out into an unknown element?

*Katrina Porteous*



## A Lindisfarne Geology Walk



This is a walk back in time - to see some fascinating geological features that were formed many millions of years ago.

The walk has been taken from a new book, *Northumberland Coast Rocks*, which contains 12 walks. It has been published by the Howick Heritage Group. It costs £6 and is available from Tourist Information Centres, Grieve's bookshop in Berwick and various small shops in the coastal villages.

You can access St Cuthbert's Island only when the tide is low. It's close to the village, the Lindisfarne Centre, the church and the Priory.

From the car park, make your way through the village towards the church. As you go, take a look at the buildings and see if you can identify the stone from which they are made. Looking at the local stone can often give you hints and information about the local geology. You should be able to distinguish between the sandstone and the (often shiny) dark brown Whin Sill dolerite.



Walk past the church and down the little lane to the beach. As you go, you can see the big chunk of The Heugh in front of you. To your right is the little island and it can be reached without getting your feet wet!



As you step up on to the rocks of the island, notice the patches of rock which prove straight away that this was not formed by layers of sedimentation but by molten magma slowly oozing, cooling and solidifying. If you look around, you'll find lots of patches like this underfoot.

Can you work out which way the magma was flowing before it finally solidified?

You'll also see lots of little holes called *vesicles* - these are made by bubbles of gas trapped in the magma and rising up to the top. These bubbles can become elongated as the magma flows slowly sideways under pressure from below. Often you find them filled with quartz or calcite that has crystallised later from warm circulating groundwater. They're then called *amygdales*.



Vesicles and amygdales are found only on the original top surfaces of sills and dykes. Look over to the Coastguard Station on top of the Heugh; it's much higher than where you're standing. How can St Cuthbert's Island be the top surface then? The answer is because it's a *hybrid* - the main part of the magma on Lindisfarne pushed upwards, forming a dyke, but it also spread sideways in places too, forming a small sill.





As you return, go and look at the base of The Heugh to your right. The rock you're walking on is a limestone pavement, pale grey in colour. Notice how it changes to a beige colour as you approach the dyke.

As the white-hot magma pushed its way up through the surrounding rocks, it cooked them and changed their structure. This process is called "*contact metamorphism*". Rocks are very poor conductors of heat, so the wide expanse of metamorphosed limestone shows that this magma must have been very, very hot indeed to have changed so much of the surrounding rock.

You can imagine what it must have been like when the intense pressure on the magma forced it quickly upwards, splitting the rocks apart.

The sudden contact between the fiery magma and the cold limestone caused the edge of the magma to solidify instantly, forming what is known as a *chilled margin*.

Because it cooled so quickly, the crystals at the margin are tiny because they had no time to grow before they froze, so the surface is quite glassy and smooth. Feel it and see for yourself. The crystals deeper inside the dyke are much bigger because they crystallised much more slowly, being insulated from the cold limestone for a lot longer.



You can find lots of fossils on the grey pavement of the Acre Limestone if you search diligently. Not only will you find fragments of shellfish - crinoids and brachiopods - but also what are known as *trace fossils*. They are the feeding trails of sea creatures living on the sea bed. The pictures below show you what they look like.



Now you can climb to the top of The Heugh, from where you get a terrific view of the whole area. On the farther side of the Heugh (known as Steel End) you can also find examples of vesicles, amygdales and flow patterns in the frozen magma.

### Safety on the causeway

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The causeway across to Lindisfarne is one of those special journeys. Twice a day, access to the island is prevented by the sea as the rising tide flows over the 'slakes'.



*Image from Seahouses RNLi*

There are plenty of notices giving the safe crossing times and warning about the dangers of trying to use the causeway outside these times. Sadly, every year, many people ignore these warnings and become stranded.

The crossing times are very real; the water comes in very quickly.

Don't get caught out!



## Almost Forgotten

Today, we are used to seeing the aircraft of the RAF flying over the county. In fact, military aircraft have been in the skies of Northumberland for over 100 years. The first aeroplanes arrived in 1915, to carry out coastal patrols and to counter the threat of the Zeppelin air raids.

Sadly, all this activity has not been without tragedy. Over the years, many aircraft have crashed, with the air crew often being killed. Very few people know about these crashes today. Some will have seen the tragic remains of the American bomber on the western slopes of The Cheviot, which remain as a memorial to the two young Americans who lost their lives on a wild December night in 1944, but in the main, most of the crashes have been forgotten.

Chris Davies, of Rothbury, has taken on the task of tracking down all the air crashes in Northumberland and piecing together the story of what happened, using eye witness accounts as well as official records and contemporary newspaper articles. Wherever possible, if there has been a fatality, he erects a memorial to those who died.

A typical story of one of those Almost Forgotten aircrews happened to the west of Alnwick in 1942. In these middle years of the Second World War, Britain was struggling to find a way to deal with the night bombers of the Luftwaffe. A dramatic, but ultimately fruitless, solution was the Douglas Havoc "Turbinlite" aircraft (below).

Fitted with both radar and a powerful searchlight, it was intended that they could detect, and then illuminate, enemy bombers, allowing accompanying fighter aircraft to engage with the enemy.



Such a unit was deployed at RAF Acklington, the Fighter Command airfield responsible for defending the skies of Northumberland. It was on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1942 that Havoc AW392 was on a routine training flight when one of its two engines cut out, causing the aircraft to lose height from 12,000 to 2,000 feet. The pilot increased the power on the remaining engine, but unfortunately this caused the Havoc to go into a spin from which it didn't recover in time. The aircraft crashed into the edge of the cutting of the Alnwick to Cornhill railway line, near Mossyford Farm on Alnwick Moor. Both crew members were killed. The cause of the crash was put down to 'error of judgement on the part of the pilot'.



Some unknown person at some time had placed a small plaque at the site of the crash, but this had become buried, and it was only when Chris Davies investigated the site that it was recovered and placed back in its rightful position (left).

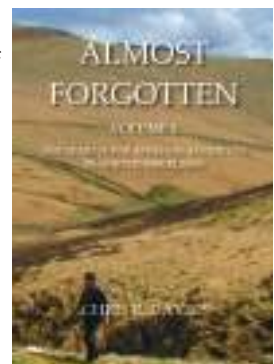
The 'Turbinlite' was not a success, and was soon replaced by improved radar that could be carried within the night fighter aircraft themselves.

An interesting side story of this was, that to try to keep this new radar secret, British propaganda claimed that the success of the night fighters was due to the pilots eating carrots, which gave them the night vision of cats. It probably didn't fool the Germans, but it did lead to more people eating carrots!

Chris Davies has identified the sites of over 200 air crashes in Northumberland. In 2012 he published an account of some of the stories from his investigations, and in February 2016, he published a second volume which contains the stories behind 31 crashes in the county as well as updates on ones that were in volume 1.

The book is available from [www.wildsofwanney.co.uk](http://www.wildsofwanney.co.uk)

It is priced at £12.99 which includes p&p in the UK.



## Swansfield Peace Column

Northumberland has no shortage of grand mansions, but Swansfield Park Road in Alnwick is a reminder of one of the county's lost houses. Leading up from Waggonway Road towards the golf course, it would have once led to the grounds of Swansfield House. Built in 1823 by John Dobson, this was the home of Henry Collingwood Selby. The house was demolished in 1975, to be replaced by the current Swansfield House.

Today, Alnwick golf course occupies much of what was Swansfield Park, within which can be seen the Peace Column.

Erected by Henry Selby, it celebrates the first victory over Napoleon Bonaparte, in 1814. The column is supposedly designed in accordance with 'Vetruvius' plan', referring to the Roman architect who proposed certain proportions as being aesthetically ideal.

The four faces of the column's base each carry an inscription, which are to varying degrees deteriorating, but it is hoped that some renovation will be carried out in the near future.



For the record, the inscriptions are:

*England has saved herself by her firmness, and Europe by her example. - Pitt*

*This Pillar was erected by HENRY COLLINGWOOD SELBY, a Magistrate of this County, to commemorate the persevering and victorious efforts of the British Empire by sea and land during an arduous struggle of XX years, and the signal successes of the Powers united with this Country at the close of that eventful period; the expulsion of the French from Russia after the burning of Moscow in MDCCCXII, the defeats of their armies in Germany in the memorable campaign of MDCCCXIII, the invasion of France, the surrender of Paris, the downfall of Napoleon Buonaparte, the re-establishment of the Bourbon monarchs, and the restoration of Peace to Europe in MDCCCXIV.*

*Vice-Admiral HORATIO VISCOUNT NELSON of the Nile defeated the French and Danish Fleets at Aboukir and Copenhagen, and fell in the decisive victory of Trafalgar achieved over the combined Navies of France and Spain in MDCCCXV.*

*Field Marshal THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON having vanquished the Armies of France in Portugal and in Spain, at the Battles of Vimeira and Talavera, Salamanca and Vittoria, drove them beyond the Pyrennees, and advancing to the banks of the Garonne again overthrew them under the walls of Toulouse in MDCCCXIV.*

*The Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT directed the councils and energies of his country during the first years of a just and necessary war, and died in MDCCCVI, having established that wise and vigorous system of policy, which succeeding statesmen, emulous of his example, steadily pursued till they secured Independence for the Nations of the Continent and a Peace of unparalleled glory for this empire.*

The victory was short lived, of course, with Napoleon escaping his island prison after only nine months, before being finally defeated in 1815 by the combined armies of Britain and Prussia at Waterloo.

The golf club do allow visitors to walk up to see the column, but it is very important to get permission from the club house before walking on to the course.





The column sits within the rampart of an Iron Age hillfort, which has given the hill the name of Camphill. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarians believed that such enclosures were of Danish origin, but we now know they were built much earlier.

Nearby, on Battlements, the road that leads from Clayport Bank to Rugley, can be seen an 'eye catcher' which could have been visible from the grounds around the original house.



## John Hall Sanderson, Amateur Photographer

Today we live in a world where almost everyone is a photographer. Mobile phones, tablets and digital cameras provide the means to take photographs anywhere and at any time. An estimated two billion photographs are uploaded and shared to social media sites every single day! But turn back the clock 100 years or so and most photographs were taken by professional photographers. The cost of cameras, film and processing put photography beyond the pockets of most of the population. While it is true that the advent of the cheap Kodak Box Brownie in 1900 did make taking "snaps" more accessible, the quality of images was not high and good quality cameras and lenses were still expensive.

One Alnwick man who could afford good quality equipment was John Hall Sanderson. Born in Alnwick in 1886, he was the son of Joseph Sanderson who, with his brother Henry, owned the Alnwick and County Stores on Bondgate Within.



At some point the family bought the Corn Exchange building and by the end of the Edwardian era it was operating as a cinema and music-hall.

At the Bailiffgate Museum we have in our Collection several dozen photographic glass slides which were recovered from the Corn Exchange when it closed in 1994. These were later purchased at auction in 2008 for £270 on behalf of the Alnwick Lions Club, who then donated them to the museum. Along with the photographic images are a number of slides which have been painted black, and then text describing the image has been scratched into the paint. It is these latter slides that indicate that the photographs were projected onto the cinema screen. Some indicate that J H Sanderson was the photographer (though we cannot be certain that they were all taken by him).

It is possible to regard the showing of the pictures to the captive cinema audience as self-indulgence on Sanderson's part ("you must see my holiday photos"), but far more likely he realised there was a genuine interest in seeing images of local events and places. There was, of course, no television, and newspapers carried far fewer photographs than is the case today. Perhaps he saw himself as a form of local news photographer. None of the slides date from after the Great War and this is probably because the cinema newsreels of Pathé News would have filled the intermissions so there was no longer a need for this kind of local news photography.

The earliest dateable image is this one of the Alnwick Shrovetide Football match in February 1906 (below).



There are a number of other sporting photographs in the collection, including the opening of the new golf course at Rothbury in 1908 (below).



As an old boy of the Dukes School he would have had a personal interest in the school's centenary celebrations in 1911, and here we have a photograph of some of the old boys walking up Percy Street on the way to the celebration (right).

But for me, the most powerful images are those taken at the funeral of the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison in Morpeth in 1913 (page 38). Although she was born and bred in London, her father and mother were from Morpeth and Longhorsley respectively. After her death, following the incident at the 1913 Derby, she was laid to rest in Morpeth.

Apart from his interest in photography, he was also a keen motorcyclist, which we know from a report in the local paper that reported his involvement in an accident on Denwick Lane in May 1913. He felt that the crash was due to the poor street lighting and claimed £5 compensation from Alnwick Urban District Council. The Council, however, were not forthcoming.



In his personal life he married Laura Black, from Sunderland, at Newcastle Cathedral in the summer of 1914, and they had three children: Dorothy, William and Muriel. Towards the latter part of the Great War he served as a sub-lieutenant in the Navy. After the war he spent the rest of his life in Alwick running the family business and died in 1971, aged 84.

Footnotes:

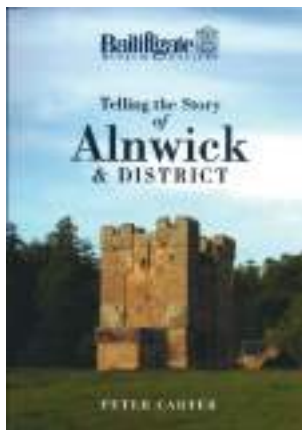
1. The images have undergone a certain amount of digital restoration.
2. While the glass slides are the property of Baillifgate Museum, we do not have the copyright. Because he died in 1971, copyright in the images lies with any of his surviving relatives until 2042.





3. If any readers have any further information about him then we would love to hear from you at [ask@baillifgatemuseum.co.uk](mailto:ask@baillifgatemuseum.co.uk)

*Mick Grant; Collections volunteer, Baillifgate Museum*



More interesting facts from the Baillifgate Museum can be found in a new book *Telling the Story of Alnwick and District*, by Peter Carter.

It is both a history of the town and its environs and a guide book to the museum's permanent collection.

Priced at £5.99, it is available from the museum.

## Cateran Hole



Cateran Hole, on Quarryhouse Moor - previously also known as Catherine's Cave and Cateran Cove - is a place of mystery. It sits in a small depression in the middle of the moor, with a series of carved stone steps leading down to a cave within the Fell Sandstone of the hill.

Legend has it that it is one end of a tunnel that leads to the Hen Hole on the western flank of the The Cheviot.

There is a story that an intrepid group of adventurers, whilst exploring Cateran Hole, got as far as a point below the Hurl Stone, a pre-historic standing stone which is about 3 miles away, at which point they heard fairy music and fled.

The cave in fact is about 45m long, formed by the slippage of the rock along fault lines. Nearby can be found Cateran Rift, which is a gully formed by the widening of such a fault. The 'hole' seems to be a similar to this feature, but with a roof being allowed to remain.

The steps, and the shelf that can be found at the entrance, have clearly been man-made, but 'why' remains a mystery. There is perhaps a clue in the name 'cateran', which has been applied to marauders and cattle thieves, and so could refer to the reivers or smugglers.

That the hole would make a good hiding place cannot be doubted. It is still difficult to find. And could it just possibly be that the legend of the fairies served some purpose in keeping inquisitive people away?

So how do you go about finding Cateran Hole?



For those with a GPS, the '10 figure' grid reference is NU 10228 23674. Alternatively, you can find the hole on OS Explorer Map 332, and use the two images below, taken from the entrance, to help by using the relative positions of masts, wind turbines and woodland.



It goes without saying that you should take great care when going down the steps, and do not go any further than the entrance chamber.