



CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Journal of The Bewick Society

BEWICK PRIZE 2020 - JOHN BRYCE



Winter Garden, 130 x 100mm. Winner of the Bewick Prize 2020.

The Bewick Prize is a prize for a small wood engraving awarded at the annual exhibition of the Society of Wood Engravers.

Late in life Thomas Bewick wrote in his *Memoir*: I cannot help feeling a deep interest, and an ardent desire, that the art may long flourish, and that those who follow it may feel happy in the pursuit.[†] [*A Memoir of Thomas Bewick, Written by Himself*, edited with an Introduction by Iain Bain, Oxford University Press, 1979 p.201]

First awarded in 2012 previous winners include Sue Scullard, Rosamund Fowler, Shirley Smith and Peter Brown.

Born in London in 1934, John studied mechanical engineering at King's College, London. Graduating in 1956, he entered the Royal Aerospace Establishment, Farnborough,

where he carried out exciting research work on projects such as Concorde. His drawings of engines in the test cells and aircraft on the airfield led to paintings exhibited with the Guild of Aviation Artists. On retirement, John[†] decided to pursue an active career as a painter and printmaker. John was elected a member of the Wapping Group of Artists in 2003 and is also a member of the Society of Wood Engravers (SWE). In 2010, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE).

The Society of Wood Engravers Centenary Exhibition (82nd Annual) featuring The Seasons Project opened at the Bankside Gallery on 4th February. Details of its nationwide tour can be found on their website. (<https://www.woodengravers.co.uk>)

ROBERT JOHNSON IN THE FLESH

A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

by Nigel Tattersfield



The Flesh Market looking south, an early morning view. Watercolour by Robert Johnson, 1795(?), reproduced by permission of the Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

As we know from Thomas Bewick's Memoir, Robert Johnson, like Luke Clennell a year or so later, was one of the few apprentices to heed his master's call to take pencil and paper and leave the confines of the busy workshop to delineate the wider world. By doing so he became, as Bewick was at pains to acknowledge, 'super-excellent ... I conceived he could hardly be equalled, in his water coloured drawings of views & landscapes, by any artist'.¹ Accordingly, as his talents matured, he was despatched from the workshop whenever a wealthy customer required a view of his house, whether it was George Anderson's opulent town mansion in nearby Pilgrim Street, Charles Clavering's newly reascent castle at Widdrington near Morpeth, or Lord Delaval's neo-Gothic castle at Ford, just south of the border with Scotland.²

Clearly, Johnson was not drawn to nature as his master had been since boyhood. Apart from delightful, closely-observed vignettes of everyday scenes, narrative snapshots clearly inspired by (and rivalling) his master's 'tale-pieces', Johnson's

interests lay with depicting edifices in their settings, often accompanied by an emphasised perspective.³ He was attracted to ancient monuments in a romantic state of dilapidation such as the castle at Bamburgh, the spectacular feats of civil engineering to be gazed upon both at Tanfield Arch and the newly-erected cast-iron bridge at Sunderland, significant new developments in Newcastle as epitomised by the recently-founded Infirmary, picturesque survivals in the shape of the thirteenth-century monastery of Blackfriars, and of course the towering lantern-topped St Nicholas Church, the first building you would have seen when stepping out of Bewick's workshop.⁴

His large-scale watercolours of these subjects are infused with a delicate palette and a wonderfully limpid light, investing the scene with an early summer's morning optimism. They are peopled by everyday folk going about their daily business, or in the case of Tanfield Arch, lost in admiration for the sight they behold. It is this sunny confidence that so clearly

differentiates Robert Johnson's work from that of his fellow apprentice Luke Clennell, whose turbulent depictions of man and beast at the mercy of the elements – an overloaded lifeboat caught off Tynemouth Heads in a tempest, the panic-stricken horses of a baggage train engulfed in a terrifying thunderstorm – suit his vigorous style but suggest a tortured soul. Nor does Johnson (unlike Bewick) allow a mordant undercurrent to so much as hint at potential disruption; there are no gallows in the distance, no scenes of inebriation or acts of wanton cruelty visited upon patient animals to disrupt his Edenic visions. For Johnson, life proceeds at a decorous pace, neighbours stroll and converse politely on quiet streets and squares, tranquillity reigns. Something of Johnson's delicate constitution pervades his view of the world.

Alas for Johnson, life did not proceed tranquilly or otherwise beyond his twenty-sixth year.⁵ Early in 1796, a year or so after completing his apprenticeship with Thomas Bewick (in which he 'attained to great excellence' as an engraver on copper and in which his master had instructed him closely in techniques of colouring and delicately pencilled outlines)⁶ and following some eighteen months' independence as a drawing master and engraver (an independence so successful that he was able to persuade his father to relinquish his carpentry and retire),⁷ he gained – one might say – a commission to die for. The Scottish antiquary John Pinkerton had in mind a volume treating of portraits of eminent persons of Scotland with a short biography attached to each engraving on copper. Many of the original portraits were oil paintings by George Jamesone (c.1587-1644), Scotland's earliest portraitist of note, held in the collection of John Campbell (1762-1834), the earl of Breadalbane, at his country seat at Taymouth. This was an imposing country house (originally called Balloch Castle) surrounded by landscaped pleasure grounds in the informal style, but nothing like the vast neo-Gothic pile that replaced it in the early nineteenth century and which still stands.

'In the politest manner', the earl had already conveyed his permission for John Pinkerton to have the portraits copied. In turn, Pinkerton applied to the printers and booksellers Morisons of Perth for candidates they thought best suited this prestigious task. Although they had commissioned woodcuts from Bewick for a minor spelling book in 1794, Morisons had little in the way of an ongoing relationship with the workshop. So they in turn applied to the famous Edinburgh copper-engraving firm of James Kirkwood for a recommendation. Kirkwood had a much closer working relationship with the Bewick workshop and suggested Johnson,⁸ even though he had little or no experience of portrait painting. That notwithstanding, the choice could hardly have been bettered, Johnson being not only a sensitive draughtsman but a fine engraver on copper too.

Moreover, his grasp of the engraving techniques necessary for transmitting tone and nuance from a drawing to a copper engraving was unusually comprehensive, enabling him to facilitate the copper engraver's task with sympathetic instructions, a signal advantage in this commission. As Johnson proposed to Pinkerton shortly after his arrival at Taymouth, the portraits 'should be engraved ... as much as possible in the manner of Houbraken's heads; as that sketchy, soft, close-stroked kind of engraving is the most beautiful and

suitable representative of drawings, or old sunk-in indeterminate pictures, which a naked harsh outline ... can but faintly express'.⁹ Johnson's demands were not excessive; for highly finished Indian ink drawings he charged a guinea; for 'slight outlines, tinged with Indian ink' it was half-a-guinea, 10s. 6d.¹⁰ His watercolour tariff was not revealed but would have been in the order of one-and-a-half guineas. There is no doubt that he expected to execute at least some of the portraits in this medium; in mid-August Johnson was still trying to ascertain 'which of the noble personages Mr Pinkerton wishes to have, and which in colours.'¹¹ In the event, at least two, Robert I and Annabella Drummond, were exquisitely rendered in watercolour.

Every effort appears to have been made to ease Johnson's considerable burden. Given that daylight was necessary to copy the paintings and that the echoing halls of Taymouth would have now emerged from a winter hibernation that could chill to the bone, it was envisaged that his employment would begin at the beginning of June. The earl himself would be at home, so the house would be fully staffed. Morisons of Perth were on hand to consign 'the best drawing paper' to the local carrier, just as Johnson specified, 'in a stiff case of pasteboard, to keep it from crumpling'.¹²

Alas, circumstances had conspired to delay Johnson's departure for Taymouth. Having fallen subject to 'a fit of illness',¹³ it was early August before Johnson managed to depart from Newcastle,¹⁴ reaching his lodgings in the village of Kenmore a few days later. Meanwhile the earl had made plans to depart for London, leaving the great house to the care of a skeleton staff, probably in the person of an elderly housekeeper. The mansion housed literally hundreds of paintings and progress was initially hindered by a missing catalogue identifying the works by Jamesone. That being found, Johnson proceeded to locate the required portraits and annotate the catalogue entries. There were also problems of a practical nature; some of the canvasses – there were approximately sixty-four of them in total – had been severely neglected and shorn of their frames. One in particular was 'rescued from oblivion', being 'so tender that I could scarce get it copied', as Johnson anxiously remarked.¹⁵

Although Taymouth has a temperate climate, the summers are not known for their longevity. August came and went, and September found Johnson pursuing his labours 'with a fatal assiduity'.¹⁶ By October, temperatures would have been noticeably dipping and the stone-flagged corridors and halls of the great house, with hardly a soul in residence and populated only by crumbling portraits of the illustrious departed, must have been a particularly cheerless Valhalla. Nevertheless, Johnson industriously soldiered on, 'in a large parlour, *without fire*'.¹⁷ Working six or seven hours at a stretch, struggling against the rapidly diminishing hours of daylight, he had completed fifteen portraits and four remained to be done, including that of Anne Cunningham, marchioness of Hertford.¹⁸ Intent upon catching her likeness, Johnson instead caught a cold. Never blessed with a robust constitution, Johnson was unable to shrug this off as a minor inconvenience. It may also be borne in mind that this was the first extended period of time he had been away from the ministrations of his family (and even from Thomas Bewick, who had always taken a fatherly interest in his health, referring to him not altogether

uncritically as ‘a tender & pampered boy’). Indeed, it was Bewick himself who had noticed some years before that Johnson ‘was of so delicate a constitution, that he could not bear confinement’,¹⁹ and now here he was, precisely in that state.

The cold turned into a fever (a ‘fever of the brain’ in the contemporary accounts) which in turn produced hallucinations and disconnected ramblings. In Kenmore there was nobody to care for him and his behaviour became increasingly erratic. In consequence the local villagers, convinced he was the victim of demonic possession, bound him with ropes and beat him remorselessly to purge his body of the malign influences. For how long this torture continued is uncertain, but a passing physician, a Dr McLagan, travelling through the village by chance, ordered his release and applied blisters.²¹ This was the treatment of choice for fever, hysteria and insanity in the eighteenth century but was primitive by today’s standards; a fine powder made of cantharides, sometimes mixed with pepper, mustard seeds and other powerful stimulants, was mixed into a paste and applied to the body, often to the legs, raising welts or blisters which were then lanced to release the watery ‘ferous humours’ believed to be unbalancing the body. Whether it was this treatment or simply the physician’s sympathetic presence that did the trick but the fever abated. Alas, all too late. Robert Johnson died ‘in peace and composure’ the following day, 29 October 1796, and was buried at Kenmore, ‘Far from his friends, his home, and native Tyne’ as a sonnet to his memory lamented.²¹

Robert Johnson had been an only child and in order to provide a little income for his parents, now elderly and deprived of their sole means of support, fellow apprentice Charlton Nesbit, who had been particularly close to Johnson, engraved on wood Johnson’s well-known watercolour view of St Nicholas Church, taken from the Flesh Market. This large scale woodcut, printed by William Bulmer in London, was widely advertised; all proceeds were for the benefit of Johnson’s parents. (Bulmer, it is believed, printed the engraving as a charitable gesture.)



The Flesh Market looking south, probably mid-morning, watercolour by Robert Johnson, 1795(?), reproduced by permission of the Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

The watercolour from which this woodcut was taken shows the Flesh Market looking south, one summer’s morning in 1795.²² Windows have been thrown open to air the rooms.

The church clock appears to show twenty minutes past ten; in the foreground, elegant figures saunter about the square and a post-chaise bearing a nobleman’s crest upon the passenger door and guided by a postilion mounted on the nearside horse trots easily across the field of view, providing a chance for two young street urchins – out of sight of the postilion – to hitch a ride on the rear axle.²³ In contrast, the middle ground has a two-wheeled cart full of dirt or stable-manure (but not night-soil which demanded a very specific type of cart) emerging from Mosley Street on the left, the carter leading his plodding horse by the reins. A sedan chair departs out of sight to the right and a man relieves himself in a quiet corner formed by the church. Scattered in various stacks are the wooden table tops and trestles that form the butcher’s market stalls every Saturday, so it is conceivably the Friday before the market day, or the Sunday afterwards.

Comparatively little notice has been taken until now of the watercolour that apparently precedes this scene by a few hours.²⁴ The palette employed by Johnson is noticeably cooler, the sun lies lower to the east, shadows cast by the buildings and the dismantled market stalls are more pronounced, and windows are tightly shut (for the sun is as yet not high enough to warm the rooms within but the maids have been busily at work lighting fires, as we can see from the smoke lifting lazily from the chimneys). The clock appears to show six o’clock and Johnson’s viewpoint is a little towards the left, allowing a view, almost abutting the church, of what appears to be the Black Horse Inn (which stood in the Groat Market, so this may have been artistic licence). Perhaps most tellingly, a carter makes his way towards Mosley Street (the same carter we see plodding back, fully laden, a few hours later in the subsequent version). As ever, a number of elegantly attired inhabitants are enjoying a stroll and polite conversation.



Detail of enlarged figure from TWCMS: H12780, being Robert Johnson with an artist’s portfolio under his arm.

And there, hiding in plain sight and looking directly at the observer, is Robert Johnson himself, a handsome young fellow, fashionably dressed too, with a cane in his right hand, a low-crowned, broad-brimmed beaver hat nicely framing his luxuriant curls, and his portfolio tucked under his left arm.

REFERENCES

1. *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick, written by himself*, edited by Iain Bain (1975), p.198.
2. The Weekly Engraving Book, 16-21 July 1792 records a 'Perspective View of Mr. Geo. Andersons house in Pilgim. St.' being drawn by Johnson at a charge of 5 guineas. The same source, 25 August 1792 shows Charles Clavering being charged 5 guineas for a view of Widdrington Castle by Johnson. Cash Books, 24 October 1793, show Johnson being allowed expenses of 15 shillings for his expedition to Ford; Ledger, 5 November 1793, records a charge to Lord Delaval of 10 guineas for a view of Ford Castle plus a further charge, 29 May 1794, again of ten guineas, for a view of the Cottage at Ford Castle.
3. As remarked by Iain Bain, *The Watercolours and Drawings of Thomas Bewick and his Workshop Apprentices* (1981), I, p.70.
4. For images of Bamburgh and St Nicholas Church see Bain, *Watercolours*, I, pp.78, 76. Tanfield Arch, the Infirmary, and the monastery at Blackfriars are all in the Laing Art Gallery, references TWCMS: H12781, H12779 and H3462 respectively. The engraving of the Sunderland Bridge by Abraham Hunter (but actually by his journeyman Robert Nicholson), after a drawing by Johnson, is in a private collection. The latter print was acclaimed by a commentator in the influential *Monthly Magazine* for August 1796 as 'a beautiful perspective view'.
5. Robert Johnson's date of birth is generally stated to be 1770, but Alan Angus traced his baptism in Ovingham to 9 September 1771, strongly suggesting that he was born in the summer of that year, not 1770; Alan Angus, *Thomas Bewick's Apprentices* (1993), Allenholme Press, Wylam for the History of the Book Trade in the North, publication PH 62, p.6.
6. *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick*, edited by Iain Bain (1975), pp.196-98.
7. Messrs Morison & Son to John Pinkerton, 18 November 1796; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.425.
8. Messrs Morison & Son to John Pinkerton, 18 November 1796; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.424.
9. Robert Johnson to John Pinkerton, 17 September 1796; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.421. Jacobus Houbraken (1698-1780) of Amsterdam was the leading portrait engraver of his day, renowned for his highly-detailed and almost feathery copper engraving technique, a fine exemplar for Johnson to emulate.
10. John Pinkerton to Malcolm Laing, 12 August 1799; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), II, p.83. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery has four of Johnson's original drawings for Pinkerton. That of Margaret of Denmark is a pen and ink sketch with minimal wash (acc. no. RSA 1193) for which Johnson would have charged half a guinea; those of Lady Juliana Campbell, Duncan Campbell, and Mariotta Stewart (acc. nos. PG 2073, 2074, 2075 respectively) are highly finished pen, ink and wash drawings for which Johnson would have charged a guinea apiece.
11. Robert Johnson to Morisons, 13 August 1796; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.135. The letter has been dated '1786' by the typesetters in error.
12. Robert Johnson to Morisons, 13 August 1796; *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.135. The letter has been dated '1786' by the typesetters in error.
13. John Pinkerton, *The Scottish Gallery; or, Portraits of Eminent Persons of Scotland* (1799) introduction.
14. Letter from Robert Johnson, North Queensferry, 4 August 1796, to Abraham Hunter, Newcastle, quoted in Bain, *Watercolours* I, p.68.
15. *The Scottish Gallery*, introduction, quoting a letter from Johnson to Pinkerton, 11 October 1796.
16. *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.420.
17. Messrs Morison & Son to John Pinkerton, 18 November 1796. *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq.* (1830), I. p.423.
18. John Pinkerton noted in *The Scottish Gallery* that 'Johnson, the ingenious limner, died before he had finished the drapery'.
19. *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick*, edited by Iain Bain (1975), pp.196-97.
20. Dr McLagan can be cautiously identified as Thomas John MacLagan (c.1772-c.1848) of Logierait (some 15 miles from Kenmore). Coincidentally his son, also Thomas John MacLagan (1838-1903), became a physician in Dundee with a particular interest in fevers, gaining particular attention for his treatment of rheumatic fever using salicin, an anti-inflammatory forerunner of aspirin; Derek Doyle, 'Thomas John MacLagan (1838-1903)', *Journal Royal Society of Medicine*, 2012 Mar; 105 (3): 131-136.
21. *Monthly Magazine*, volume V, April 1798, p.288. The unknown author calls upon the earl of Breadalbane to rear a 'humble shrine' in memory of Johnson close to the 'limpid Tay'.
22. Laing Art Gallery, TWCMS: G5251. An impression of Nesbit's wood engraving, based upon this watercolour, is present in the same collection, TWCMS: M3373.
23. This image is reminiscent of the vignette by Bewick of himself aping the gentleman and riding in his own carriage, which first appeared in the *Quadrupeds* (1790), p.295. Bain, *Watercolours*, I, p.76, suggests that the lively figures of the urchins was Bewick's work, but this seems unlikely, especially given that Bewick, having helped Johnson in the past with his figures, openly admitted that 'at length he neaded none of my help, in this way'; quoted by Bain, *Watercolours*, I, p.65.
24. Laing Art Gallery, TWCMS: H12780.

THOMAS BEWICK'S *THE WILD BULL*. THE FIRST BRITISH CATTLE PORTRAIT ENGRAVED ON WOOD.

by Graham Carlisle

The first proof was pulled in the summer of 1789 and to this day, Bewick's print of the *Wild Bull*, free of all evidence of the infamous 'split' has generated speculation – financial and theorizing – not only within 'Bewick circles' but also the wider art and print collecting world. With the occasional appearance of a genuine lifetime impression on the open market – and the route to this will be shown later – a catalogue description may well have the eye catching footnote: Boalch 1. This refers to: *Prints and Paintings of British Farm Livestock 1780 – 1910, A Record of the Rothamsted Collection* by D. H. Boalch. Harpenden 1958. The catalogue is arranged in order of breed,

starting with cattle which constitute about three quarters of the 1,000 plus prints in the collection. Thomas Bewick's *The Wild Bull* is first in the list; fifth in the chronology of cattle prints. Shown is the Rothamsted *Wild Bull*; a 3rd state example with its reversed border evident and the horizontal defect clearly visible. Unidentified as such by Boalch, but as the title above suggests, this is the first British cattle portrait engraved on wood.¹ It should be noted that from personal choice, (and for reasons which will become evident), the commissioning customer retained only 2nd state impressions, and like 1st state impressions these do not show the horizontal separation.²



© Lawes Agricultural Trust / Rothamsted Research

On copper or wood; a close call

Soon after publication, Marmaduke Tunstall of Wycliffe (1743-1790) purchased from the Newcastle-upon-Tyne workshop of Beilby & Bewick three copies of: *The Whitley Large Ox* 1789.³ A design printed from a copper plate engraved by Thomas Bewick in a large print run of 400 copies: an early and ambitious commercial venture in animal portraiture by the workshop, for a previously untested market. The same year Bewick's drawing of a Bull, taken from Lord Tankerville's herd of wild white cattle at Chillingham was engraved by him, but specifically for Tunstall; not on copper as first envisaged but wood.

Significantly, Lord Tankerville's land steward, Bewick's multi-talented friend John Bailey – a correspondent and occasional employee of Tunstall – is credited with the first British dated portrait print of livestock: *The Blackwell Ox* after the artist George Cuitt.⁴ Worked on copper, as was his speciality, using aquatint and line engraving, the plate of 1780 establishes Bailey and the north-east as the origin of printed cattle portraiture; predating with more restraint the vogue for images of outrageously fattened livestock in the following years.⁵ Bailey engraved two more copper plates prior to Thomas Bewick's *Wild Bull* on wood: *The Howick Mottled Ox*⁶ engraved 1787, published 1788 and *The Howick Red Ox*⁷ engraved and published 1788.⁸

The two prints are held in the Department of Prints and Drawings collection at The British Museum. Formerly in the British Library and originating from the collection of Sir Joseph Banks who, for 41 years, held the position of President of The Royal Society; they were probably hand coloured by Bailey for presentation. Marmaduke Tunstall in 1771 when elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society, was described by his proposer Daines Barrington⁹ as: “a gentleman of most general erudition and more particularly versed in every branch of natural history”. Despite this accolade Tunstall failed in the end to provide a proposed “small memoir” about the Chillingham cattle for Sir Joseph Banks and the Royal Society. A planned accompaniment – and genesis – for Bewick’s engraving of *The Wild Bull*.

Bewick sets off for Chillingham and stays with John Bailey.

“[...] on Easter Sunday 1789, I set off on foot to Chillingham accompanied by my acquaintance William Preston, the Printer, on this business[...] - We took up our abode with my old kind friend John Bailey & spent a cheerfull Evening with him after our fatigues, and next day he accompanied us to the park for the purpose of seeing the Wild Cattle[...] and I thus got my sketch or memorandum, from which I made my drawing on the wood -” (Bewick’s Memoir, Iain Bain ed. 1975).¹⁰

During that convivial evening, Bewick might have learnt more about Bailey’s two large Ox prints made for Sir Henry Grey of Howick, Northumberland; of which, *The Howick Red Ox* had recently been completed. Bailey trained as an engraver years before becoming land steward to Lord Tankerville, and those abilities proved useful when he reproduced the *Blackwell Ox* in 1780 with stock breeder Christopher Hill, Blackwell, County Durham, named on the plate. It seems Marmaduke Tunstall – who owned a print of the *Blackwell Ox* – had known Bailey for some time. He was contacted regarding Lord Tankerville’s wild cattle many months before Bewick’s visit to Chillingham:¹¹

Chillingham Castle 3rd June, [17]87
Sir, [Marmaduke Tunstall]

Herewith I send two Drawings, a Bull and a Cow, of the wild Cattle in Chillingham Park; as you desired they are only rough Tinted-Indian-Ink drawings, but the Animals I hope, are very Accurate, being immediately known, by every Person who saw them, that had ever seen the wild Cattle before, the figure behind the Cow is the general appearance of the Oxen.[...]

*I am Sir with great respect your obliged
and very humble Servt*

John Bailey

P.S. you wish to know if I am at liberty to Survey:- when you have anything of that kind to do, I shall be glad to serve you. - and have a pleasure in reflecting that my labours will be for a liberal patron of the Arts, who possesses a true and refined Taste.

Although there is no evidence to suggest Bailey actively sought the ‘*Wild Bull*’ commission, he was nonetheless well positioned when accepting the job to survey the manors of Wycliffe and Hutton in 1789. He seems to have been the primary source of information about the white cattle, though Tunstall unsurprisingly – in view of the position he held – received the credit in the addenda to the first edition of the *Quadrupeds* 1790. In a post script to his subsequent letter to Tunstall dated 3rd Oct. 1787, describing in detail the habits of the Chillingham herd, Bailey writes:¹²

“You seem to insist on knowing what you are indebted to me for the drawing – I did intend them as offerings of respect, - but as you probably will not accept them, - I shall observe that each drawing cost me 2 days, from which I think they will deserve a Guinea each.”¹³

Proving over many years to be a useful intermediary for Bewick concerning natural history: George Allan, lawyer, antiquary and owner of the Grange private press, of Blackwell Grange, Darlington received a letter dated May 12, 1788.¹⁴ Written in the third person, it sheds further light on Tunstall’s as yet unfulfilled ambitions for the wild cattle prints.

“Mr. Tunstall’s best compliments wait on Mr. Allan; he returns him many thanks both for sending the Drawings [Bailey’s] of the Cattle to Mr. Bewick, as also for favouring him with the inspection of the Prints for Mr. Consett’s Tour; [from the B&B workshop] he thinks them extremely well executed. [...] he did not know the plates were to be engraved at Newcastle. He joins with Mr. Allan in thinking the Cattle will be better done on copper, and in one plate. Mr. Tunstall had two other Drawings of them, done after by Bailey, which he lately sent to a Gentleman for inspection, but expects them back soon. As he thinks them rather superior to the former, he will send them to Mr. Bewick, and perhaps he might like them better; thinks they cannot be engraved in a better manner than the Birds for Mr. Consett’s book; [...]

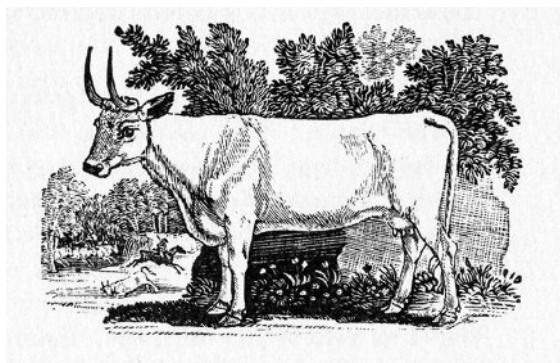
“Mr. Tunstall is much obliged to Mr. Allan for the inspection of Mr. Bewick’s Animals; but he had sent him by Mr. Bewick, [...]”*

In a footnote to this information there is a transcribed letter from Bewick to George Allan from six days earlier. Still no final decision forthcoming on the engraving medium for the wild cattle prints; Bailey’s influence is still apparent and the three way communication continues, TB writes quoting Tunstall:

**“Sir, Newcastle, May 6, 1788*

I cannot set about the Chillingham Cattle as soon as you and Mr. Tunstall seem to wish, being engaged at present very busily employed upon a sett of Copper Plates for Sir H. G. Liddell’s Lapland Tour, by Captain Consett. Have herewith sent you specimens from three of the Plates, and shall send you the others when finished. Have also sent a wood-print of the Chilwild Cow. Mr. Tunstall, in a Letter to us, says, that the Drawings by Mr. Bailey are better done than this Print. I cannot help differing in opinion with him; for I think the Drawings, particularly the bull, very faulty, and out of joint. Be so obliging as to tell me honestly what you think. As Mr. Tunstall only wants a few impressions of the Wild Cattle, I would strongly recommend their being engraved on copper, in Aqua Tinta; which secret, as well as others, we have discovered since I began the new employment of engraving in that way. Our ‘History of Animals’ will be put to press as soon as the paper for it arrives; we only wait for that. [...] Please to accept one of these books of Animals; and, with my most respectful compliments to Mr. Hutchinson, beg his acceptance of the other. They are not well printed, they were done by poor Angus a short time before his death, he printed 20 of each Catalogue and meant to go through the whole, but could not get the job done, he indeed could hardly stand at press when he did these. [...] I am, Sir your much obliged and humble servant, Thomas Bewick.”

As well as the copy of ‘Mr. Bewick’s Animals’ sent by Allan; Tunstall no doubt would have the Quadrupeds prospectus to hand, printed a few weeks before, dated 2 April 1788 and depicting the (Chillingham) Wild Cow. (below)



Detail of ‘Proposals for Publishing by Subscription, A General History of Quadrupeds,’ 1788

Called a ‘catalogue’ [of the Quadruped engravings], it is interesting to have confirmed that 20 (although uncompleted) examples were printed by Angus; probably the previous year, 1787.¹⁵ One of the two sets sent to George Allan was almost certainly the: ‘*Mr Bewick’s Animals*’ sent on to Tunstall and mentioned in the letter of May 12.

Bewick did not think much of Bailey’s drawings, but the wood engraving of the Chillingham Wild Cow, shown in the prospectus for *A General History of Quadrupeds* is also a doubtful advertisement for the large print Tunstall had in mind. Bewick offers aquatint instead: the ‘secret’ process which he perhaps used for the first time in the sky of his first published animal portrait in 1789: the *Whitley Large Ox*.¹⁶

Competition for Tunstall’s commission

Tunstall, with George Allan as an occasional intermediary, is simultaneously corresponding with Bailey and the partnership on matters concerning Lord Tankerville’s wild cattle herd. Although in possession of Bailey’s drawings and with the knowledge that he is a capable engraver on copper, Bailey appears not to be under consideration; Tunstall is persevering with Beilby & Bewick.¹⁷

Messrs. Beilby and Bewick

GENTLEMEN,

I approve of your idea of putting the Chillingham bull and cow into one plate, and that a copper one. I should like to have about sixty impressions taken off and sent to me with the plate, when finished, together with your account, which I will immediately discharge the amount of....

Mar. Tunstall.

Wycliffe, Nov. 6, 1788

Tunstall appears not to have seen Bewick’s drawing of the Bull, relying instead on the *Quadrupeds* “wood-print” of the wild cow. Yet despite this and the aquatint recommendation; Bailey’s drawings and Tunstall’s genteel predilection for the artistic merits of copper plate engraving, a landmark in engraving history was firmly set in place. The Wild Bull would be cut by Thomas Bewick in relief on wood, not intaglio into metal. The turning point is apparent a few months later with Tunstall’s favourable comments about two of the Quadruped’s impressions:¹⁸

GENTLEMEN,

Am much obliged to you for the impressions you sent me, which are very well executed; the lion has a fine effect in his shaggy pride; the bear is very curious, I never saw the figure of it before... In agreement that the Bull, and as he thought the cow would now be engraved on wood, he continues: ... The cuts for me beg may be done in the manner you think will have the best effect...

Remain,

Your obliged and humble servant,

MAR. TUNSTALL.

Wycliffe, Feb. 11, 1789

Later, when presenting the antiquary Francis Douce with an early state Wild Bull, Bewick could write with obvious satisfaction:¹⁹

“- this is the largest Cut I ever did and I am convinced from doing it, that better things might be performed on Wood than is generally imagined – if I was not obliged to work for the kitchen I would soon make the attempt at trying what I could do in that way as I know that I can cut the [wood] with much more freedom & much clearer than than any of the old cuts that I ever yet saw.”

“I used my little influence to encourage our Northern artist...”
[Marmaduke Tunstall 20th June 1790]²⁰

Having made the necessary change in his surname from Constable to Tunstall, the young Marmaduke succeeded to estates of Wycliffe, Hutton, Long Villers and Scargill in 1760 at the age of 17. The estates totalling 2,579 acres with 20 land-holding tenants and several tenants of cottages bringing an income in 1790 of £2,300. Bought over time – with the aid of mortgaged property, rental income and the benefit of a good marriage – Tunstall is mostly known in the north east today for his natural history collections; parts of which were acquired by George Allan, and it is suggested, a small number are traceable to Sir Joseph Banks and Cook’s Voyages in the *Endevour*.

“The most unusual component of the Museum, in the context of his time, was the collection of birds; “few Gentlemen are in possession of a Museum containing so large a Collection, especially of the feathered race”. Estimated at a cost of between £3,000 and £5,000 when catalogued in 1827, the collection contained almost 600 specimens in 379 cases.”

“Mr G[eorge] A[llan] has been with me to spend a day at Mr. Tunstall’s. I wish you had been with us. Such a collection of books, manuscripts, paintings, prints, coins, gems &c., is not every day to be seen. I have good authority for saying they cost him above 20,000l.”²¹

Surprisingly, the six 1st state prints of Thomas Bewick’s *Chillingham Bull* on parchment were not destined to join this vast collection. Famously describing them as: “rather relaxed and a little ruffled in the coming”, Tunstall seems blissfully unaware or uninterested in the unique quality of these prints, so returns them. As might be expected, the workshop archives show the Tunstall commission only, without mention of four, or perhaps more, privately printed impressions taken for those present at the first day of printing:

Day Book (DB) 25 July 1789, Printing 6 upon parch[ment].

Do. 50 upon royall paper. [25 with, and 25 without border]

DB 18 Dec 1789, 8 Prints of the wild bull on fine Vellum.

DB 25 June 1790, 12 Prints of the wild Bull on paper.²²

J. Todds Catalogue for 1792.

A Catalogue of the Entire Libraries of Marmaduke Tunstall, of Wycliffe Esq. [...] The Whole will begin to be sold extremely Cheap, at the Prices marked in the Catalogue, on Tuesday, June 12th, 1792, for Ready Money only, [...]

[Item] 1: "A Capital, Rare and Curious Collection of Portraits, British and Foreign, selected and adapted to *history* and inserted in their proper Places; including above TWO THOUSAND PORTRAITS of Royal and Noble Personages, &c &c by the most Eminent Artists – This Rare Assemblage has been the Labour and Industry of that Eminent Collector, the late MARMADUKE TUNSTALL, ESQUIRE, [... &c &c]. THREE HUNDRED POUNDS.

[Item] 835 ALBIN's NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRDS, Original Edition, 2vol. with Manuscript Notes, very finely coloured by himself and daughter, neatly bound and gilt, 6l 6s. [£6 6s] 1731.

[Two other sets including the authors original drawings]

[Item] 890[*] BUFFON, HISTOIRE NATURELLE DES OISEAUX, 4 tom, *avec fig. Enluminees, demi rel* 10l 10s [£10 10s] Paris 1770

[Item] 896 Brisson, Ornithologie, 6 tom avec belles figures d'Oiseaux, papier grande, tres bien relie, 9l 9s [£9 9s] Paris 1760 [Sent to Thomas Bewick in place of 890, and entered in the workshop accounts June 28 1792 at the listed price]

[Item] 1139 EDWARDS, NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRDS, and other rare and undescribed Animals, Quadrupeds, Fishes &c [...] coloured after Life, [...] 15l 15s [£15 15s] 1758

[Item] 1387 LATHAM'S GENERAL SYNOPSIS OF BIRDS, 7 vol. Finely painted after Nature, *neatly half bound, Russia backs and corners*, 9l 9s [£9 9s] 1781

[Item] 1646 PENNANT'S WORKS, viz His Tours, 6 vol – British Zoology, 4 vol – Arctic Zoology, 2 vol – History of Quadrupeds, 2 vol – Genera of Birds and Systematic Indexes of Birds – Some Account of London, and Cordiner's Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, 17 vol. *with cuts, new and uniformly bound and gilt*, 20l [£20] 1776 &c [George Allan, writing to Thomas Bewick from the Grange, Darlington 2nd Dec. 1791: [...] "On looking over Mr. Tunstall's books, there are a number of beautiful drawings of birds, [...] Mr. Tunstall has stuck into Pennant a print of the Whitley Ox, which I never saw before [...]"²⁶

[Item] 2254 Bewick's History of Quadrupeds, with Figures Engraved on Wood, boards, 7s 1790

[Item] 2255 Another, *large paper, with cuts, boards*, 10s 6d [At less than retail price, probably Tunstall's own used copies]²⁷

[Item] 2256 Another, *second edition, with cuts, new, boards*, 9s 1791

[Item] 2257 Another, *large paper, with cuts, new, boards*, 12s 1791

It seems likely that a large proportion of the *Chillingham Bull* 2nd state prints Tunstall chose to keep – the 1st state vellum impressions were returned to the workshop – were included in Todd's purchase of the entire library. An exception is recorded in a letter from Tunstall to George Allan: "*Wycliffe, Aug. 21, 1789. Mr. Tunstall's best compliments wait on Mr. Allan; begs his acceptance of an impression on vellum, and four on paper, two with and two without the border, of the Chillingham Bull, from a wood block by Mr. Bewick.*"²⁸

J. Todd's Catalogue for 1794

A Catalogue of a Most Valuable and Curious Collection of Prints, Drawings, Books of Prints, &c. Amongst Which Are The Entire Collection of Marmaduke Tunstall of Wycliffe, Esq. Lately Deceased [...] J. Todd, [...] In Stonegate, York. [nd].

For this catalogue, no superlative seems adequate. Passing over the 'Scripture Subjects by Various Artists': Titian, Raphael and Rubens to name just three. Configurations such as: 'FORTY EIGHT ANCIENT PRINTS [...] BY OLD MASTERS [...] *handsomely bound in red morocco, folio Eight by Albert Durer, curious and scarce*' is typically enticing. However, among the hundreds of separate prints listed:

[Item] 1284 The Blackwell Ox, belonging to Christopher Hill, Esq. *weight 162 Stone 10lb* – Cuit – Bailey – 2[s] 6[d].

[Item] 1285 The Howick mottled Ox, belonging to Sir Henry Grey, Bart. *coloured, weight 178 Stone 5lb* – Bailey – 4[s] 0[d].

[Item] 1286 The Howick red Ox, belonging to Sir Henry Grey, Bart. *coloured, weight 178 Stone 4lb* – Bailey – 4[s] 0[d].

[Item] 2220 The Wild Bull of the ancient Caledonian Breed, in the Park at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland, 1789 – J[T] Bewick 0 1 0 [1 shilling]

[Item] 2221 ANOTHER, *with the border* – Bewick – 0 1 6 [1 shilling and sixpence]

[Item] 2222 ANOTHER, *with the border*, on Parchment – Bewick 0 2 0 [2 shillings]

J. Todd's Print Catalogue, 1799. A Catalogue of a Curious and Valuable Collection of Prints, Books of Prints, &c. [...] by the Most Esteemed Ancient and Modern Masters. [...] John Todd, at His Book and Print Warehouse in Stonegate, York.

[Item] 1044 *The Wild Bull*. of the ancient Caledonian Breed, at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland, 1789, cu[t] in Wood by T Bewick, *scarce* 0 3 6 [3 shillings and sixpence]

*1044 Another, with the Border, *fine and scarce* – 0 5 0 [five shillings]

[Item] 1045 Another, a Proof, with the Border, and most beautiful Impression on Parchment, rare – 0 10 6 [ten shillings and sixpence].

1817. A General Catalogue of an Extensive Collection of Books, [...] Now on Sale by John & George Todd, [...] York. [...].

[Item] 655 Bewick's Wood-Cut of the Wild Bull in Chillingham Park, *with ornamented border, size 9½ inches by 7, 7s 6d* 1789

[Item] 656 Another Impression, *without the border*, 5s 1789

The above is considered the *chef-d'œuvre* of T. Bewick, and is the largest cut he ever engraved. Unfortunately, after a few impressions were struck off, the block split, and became unfit for use.

[Item] 657 Bailey's Two ORIGINAL DRAWINGS of the Wild Bull, and Wild Cows, of the ancient Caledonian Breed, belonging to the Earl of Tankerville, at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland in 1787, COLOURED FROM THE LIFE, *size 8 inches by 6, 15s*



REFERENCES

1. For our purpose, a portrait print is a design intended as a single print and not part of a book.
2. The 3rd state prints are an important transitional stage in the printing history; the quality suggests they would not have numbered among those sent to Tunstall. Close examination of several 2nd state impressions indicate that the 8mm wide right hand block loosened, probably due to the motion of the heavy inking balls which progressively worsened the vertical hairline break. Action was taken to rectify this: The border was removed, and thin strip forced back against the two larger blocks and perhaps at this stage pinned; fracturing the glue seal along the join of the two large blocks. The decorative border was then replaced upside down. 3rd state impressions show, horizontally, a straight line of heavy black ink and white hairline break, finishing before the vertical hairline. A high resolution image taken by Rothamsted, and for research purposes only, is available from me: beilby.bewick@gmail.com
3. Tattersfield, Nigel. *Thomas Bewick, The Complete Illustrative Work*. Vol. 2, p.811, TB 7. 1. 1.
4. Boalch 17.
5. Thomas Bewick, *The Sketchbook of 1792-1799*. Edited with an Introduction & Commentary by Nigel Tattersfield (Jarndyce 2017), for 'The Fashion for Fat Cattle'.
6. Boalch 18
7. Boalch 19
8. John Bailey (1750 – 1819) engraved a bookplate for George Allan (1736 – 1800) before moving to Chillingham. Tattersfield, Nigel. *Bookplates by Beilby & Bewick* (1999), p. 49. George Allan, friend and correspondent of Tunstall, owned a vellum impression of the Wild Bull.
9. Daines Barrington (1727/28 – 1800). Antiquary, naturalist and vice president of the Royal Society corresponded with Gilbert White. White's sixty six letters to Barrington, together with those to Thomas Pennant comprised White's *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* published the same year as the *Chillingham Bull* in 1789.
10. William Preston's name was omitted from the 1862 Memoir, and 'old' and 'kind' were reversed. Many of us will be grateful to the Bewick Society's late President, Dr. Iain Bain, for his transcription of Thomas Bewick's Memoir 1862. Published in 1975, it corrects, by use of the original manuscript: "*The text established by Bewick's daughter Jane with the unwelcome help of her printer, Robert Ward, [which] was a smoothed-out, repunctuated, and abridged version of the original manuscript.*"
11. L. Jessop and M. J. Boyd *Some Sources for Thomas Bewick's Work on the Chillingham 'Wild' Cattle* Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, October 1996, p. 23.
12. Ibid., p. 25
13. Offered for sale by John Todd in 1817.
14. John Nichols. *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 8, 1814, p. 756.
15. *The Complete Illustrative Work*, Vol. 2, p. 29, for information on Thomas Angus and pre. 1790 printings of the Quadrupeds blocks; some of which were sent to Sir Joseph Banks.
16. Aquatint, which TB 'strongly recommended' to his potential customer, is an etching process used on a metal plate; usually copper. Using an acid dip to 'bite' around resin grains which have been softened by heat; the effect simulates a wash drawing when printed. From its invention and further development in France, to its introduction and first exhibition by Peter Berez Burdett at the Society of Artists in 1772; the process was repeatedly hyped within the trade as a 'secret'.
17. G. T. Fox, *Memoirs of Marmaduke Tunstall, Esq., and George Allan, Esq.*, Newcastle 1827, p. 23.
18. Ibid., p. 24.
19. Wordsworth Trust Collection, 2013.57.4.38, (ex Iain Bain).
20. [ms : Ford], Marmaduke Tunstall to Sir Joseph Banks 20 June 1790, courtesy of Nigel Tattersfield.
21. Boyd, M. J. and Jessop, L. *A 'truly amiable gentleman': new light on the life and work of Marmaduke Tunstall (1743-1790) of Wycliffe, North Yorkshire*. Archives of Natural History (1998). [Letter from Rev. Daniel Watson to Harrison, in Longstaffe 1854].
22. Tattersfield *Illustrative Work* TB 7. 1. 1.
23. British Library and York Museum for the early catalogues. 1817 extract courtesy Les Jessop.
24. William Lewin (1747-1795) began issuing the first edition of 60 copies in 1789, he is said to have been working on the book for the previous 20 years. Each book has 323 watercolours drawings, (not hand coloured prints); of the 19,380 individual paintings for the 60 copies, all were done by Lewin.
25. Gardner-Medwin, David. *A Provisional Checklist of the Library of Thomas Bewick* [2003], Item 120, Buffon. Letter T. Bewick to an unnamed bookseller.
26. G. T. Fox op. cit., p.38.
27. *Quadrupeds*, published 26th April 1790. Tunstall died 11th October 1790.
28. Nichols op cit., p. 757.
29. Ms : Ford op. Cit.
30. In view of the long standing business relationship between Bewick and Todd, (Bewick supplied books to Todd, and Todd sent catalogues to Bewick); it is interesting to speculate on Bewick's reaction to the catalogue of 1817, (and those from previous years). From a 21st century perspective there seems to be, in light of the disclosure of the 'split' in the woodblock, a business case for buying back Tunstall's prints! Thos. Bewick & Son advertised prints for sale, from the repaired block around this time; minus the ornate border and showing the 'hairline' [split], at five shillings.

In the end...

Today, if found at all, surviving *Wild Bull* prints from the original commission of around sixty copies are often in less than good condition. Worn, torn, stained, trimmed close to the image and perhaps pasted onto album leaves. The exception perhaps, those passed on by Tunstall himself. Marmaduke Tunstall's intention was to give a good representation of the Chillingham wild cattle to those of his acquaintance – of similar interests, rank and social standing – that would appreciate his efforts in furthering that particular branch of natural history. He was though, only partially successful. Following the gift of impressions to George Allan 21st August 1789, (also the likely date of the first gift to Sir Joseph Banks); Tunstall, shortly before his death, again wrote to the President of the Royal Society: '20 June 1790, *Worthy Dear Sir, [...] partly held back by the demon of Sloth, which has mostly too great dominion of me, [...] the print of the wild ox, [Bull] which you was so polite as to approve of, I meant to accompany my memoir; would you choose any more impressions either on vellum or paper, they are sincerely at your service, [...]*'.²⁹ The answer is unknown, but after the death of Tunstall it is certain that a majority of *Chillingham Wild Bull* prints ended up with other than their intended audience. On the hands of the Todd family for decades; it is likely that the prints, with and without border, experienced a slow and steady decline in interest and inexorable drift downmarket.



John Todd's shop, shown in its early 21st century incarnation as the *Museum of Psychic Experience*, has now become an upmarket 'retail experience'. The bookshop's bible sign still hangs above the doorway.

Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to Mr. Les Jessop and the Natural History Society of Northumbria for access to the bound up reproduction of Tunstall's surviving mss. Additional details on Tunstall's life can be found in: Boyd, M. J. & Jessop, L. A '*truly amiable gentleman*': *new light on the life and work of Marmaduke Tunstall* [...] Archives of Natural History (1998). Tunstall's natural history collections, with reference to Tunstall, Allan and Bewick is comprehensively covered in: Jessop, L. *Bird Specimens Figured by Thomas Bewick Surviving in the Hancock Museum*, [...] Trans. NHSN 59: 65-82 (1999). Jessop, L. *George Allan's Grey-Headed Duck*: [...] Trans. NHSN 59: 83-92 (1999).



The rare 2nd state without border; the only recorded example: Yale Centre for British Art, the gift of Bernard Quaritch Ltd; B1980.2

Although they sent catalogues to London booksellers, John and George Todd, at Francis Hilyard's old bookshop at the Sign of the Bible, were also reliant on passing trade and casual users of their circulating library. Polite society and lesser gentry, clergy and the enlightened lower orders; who, in the dynamic first quarter of the 19th century might cross this threshold and spend five shillings on an old woodcut of a *Wild Bull*?³⁰



Todd's Warehouse, [believed to be an extension of the bookshop] Stonegate, York by Henry Cave 1779. Oil on millboard. YORAG: 379. York Museums and Gallery Trust.

Cherryburn Times is normally published twice a year. We have an ambition to publish more frequently when time and material allows. The committee of the Bewick Society is actively seeking a new editor. If you feel you would like to help out or if you would like to contribute to future issues in any way, please get in touch. We can be contacted via the Bewick Society email and address: June Holmes, Membership Secretary, The Bewick Society, c/o Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT bewick.society@newcastle.ac.uk
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