

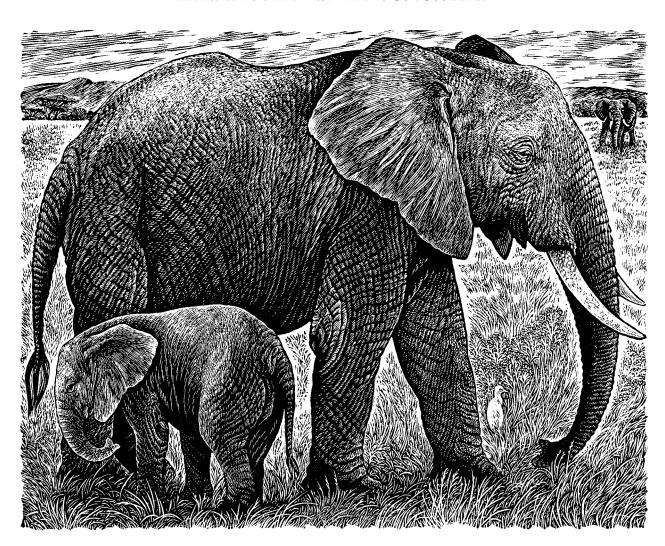
# CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Journal of The Bewick Society

### THE BEWICK PRIZE 2012

Annual Prize awarded at the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wood Engravers

AWARDED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO SUE SCULLARD



Entitled 'Elephant and Calf'. (original 97mm by 121mm), it is a beautiful engraving of great detail and skill and Sue Scullard is a worthy winner.

The Bewick Society aims to promote an interest in the life and work of Thomas Bewick. The Society was created in 1989 in the wake of the success of the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Trust in saving Cherryburn, creating a museum and handing it over to the National Trust. We aim to support all the collections of Bewick's work, to encourage research and writing on the work of Thomas, John and Robert Bewick and the many apprentices who passed through the Bewick

Workshop. We are keen also to maintain an interest in the world of contemporary wood engraving. As such we are very pleased to be able to offer this prize and to be associated with 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] PQ

### THE PITMEN PRINT

### by Julian Whybra

In early 2007 I was reading a book review of Nature's Engraver: A Life of Thomas Bewick by Jenny Uglow. Accompanying the review was a tiny 2" x 3" illustration of a sword-dance team showing four men, longsword dancing, accompanied by a fool and a fiddler. Never having come across a four-man longsword dance before, intrigued, I obtained the book and found the illustration in which the engraved legends, at bottom left and right, can just be made out: "Xmas in the olden time" and "Pitmen", respectively. There was no reference to the dancers' village or tradition, no dated watermark, and no indication of the date of the engraving. In fact, there was no reference to the source – it is simply called Pitmen sword dancing – proof in the list of illustrations where it is included with those that are not by Bewick.

Although the *Pitmen* print was in Bewick's possession it was not engraved by him. It is not of a poorer quality; it is very well-executed and very fine. It is merely a different style to Bewick's. Experts on Bewick's engravings are of the opinion that it does not resemble his work but instead could be the work of an apprentice. Bewick rose to national fame from 1790 and once his renown as an engraver was established, a drawing could have been sent to him for an apprentice to



engrave using that drawing as a template. Sadly no correspondence regarding the *Pitmen* print has so far been found but correspondents did often send in drawings of things they wanted engraved – dogs, coats of arms, etc. – for posters, or for book or poetry illustrations. From 1804-1828 Bewick and his school also engraved to designs from professional artists commissioned by other publishers. The dates of the *Pitmen* print can thus far be narrowed down to 1790 at the very earliest and 1828 at the latest (though the drawing from which it was done may well date from an earlier period "in the olden time").

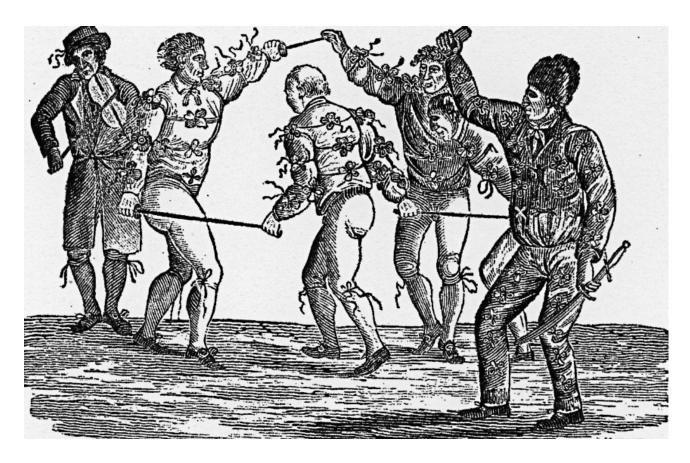
So far the print has not been found reproduced in any contemporary work so I searched recent literature to see if the print had been reproduced and researched in modern times. Two articles (dated 1894 and 2002) reproduce and comment upon it. The earlier article merely stated that the print is copied from an early nineteenth-century woodcut. The author of the most recent article reproduced the print from the earlier one, and, besides being mystified by its origin, unfortunately mistook the dancing being portrayed for a

rapper sword dance. A close examination of the *Pitmen* print shows that the four dancers and fool are ribbon-bedecked, definitely holding longswords, and performing the 'Single-under' dance figure. Assuming that the print showed a side performing an extant longsword dance, I then began to look for the dance that might match this description. An examination of the 34 extant longsword dance-cum-folk plays revealed (possibly) two other traditions with four dancers, one (Sowerby) with similar costumes, and eight containing the same 'Single-under' figure. From the similarity of the costume I first thought that the print might be an early representation of Sowerby at a time when it had four men; the existing information relating to Sowerby was taken down in 1913 with the dance having lapsed thirty years previously. At that time there is mention only of six dancers.

It was at this point that my researches took an upward turn. My inquiries had prompted the discovery of a second print. One of the country's two leading Bewick experts, Iain Bain, has in his possession three copies of the Bewick Memoir, individually created by Bewick's daughter, Jane, with her manuscript notes and with inserted proof copies of many of Bewick's wood engravings. One of these contained a second Pitmen print but this time without Jane's annotations, but still with no dated watermark. Iain Bain thinks it too is a reproduction from the workshop rather than in Bewick's own hand. It is a very clear and large 3" by 41/2" image with much more detail visible than the first print. Not only can the dancers' dress be clearly seen but so too can the Fool's. The Fool appears to be holding a collecting box and he has stitched on to the front of his upper garment the figure of a man and below it the figure of a running dog. It was this dog, coupled with the fact that the print shows four men dancing, that reminded me of an account dated 1815 of a four-man longsword dance by Robert Topliff which had been the subject of a paper by E.C. Cawte in 2002. Cawte's paper collated evidence of a play with sword dance as reported by several writers during the nineteenth century.

The first of these writers was Topliff, a musician with an interest in the traditional songs of his native Co. Durham. He described a sword dance with play, twelve four-line stanzas of text, and the song *Kitty, Bo-Bo*, from Co. Durham. There were nine characters: a Singer, four sword dancers (Squire's Son, Sailor Bold, Tailor Fine, Keelman Grand), a Doctor, a Fiddler, and a Fool and Bessy (who are not named in the cast, but appear in the notes). Accompanying the text are notes indicating that the dance was traditionally taken on tour locally by pitmen at Christmas.

The second account of the same dance was recorded by Sir Cuthbert Sharp. Whilst working in Sunderland in 1834 he published a book of local lore relating to Co. Durham among which is a description of a sword dance with play including almost all of Topliff's stanzas and song – in fact, virtually the complete play. It included Topliff's nine characters though the Singer is called a Captain named True Blue,



and the Fool is named Jolly Dog. Accompanying the text are notes indicating that the dance was traditionally taken on tour in the Sunderland and Durham area by pitmen at Christmas, and that True Blue 'generally wears a kind of faded uniform, with a large cocked hat and feather, for pre-eminent distinction; and the buffoon, or 'Bessy', who acts as treasurer, and collects the cash in a tobacco-box, wears a hairy cap, with a fox's brush dependent."

The following connections are apparent between the *Pitmen* print and Topliff and Sharp's descriptions: a **four-man longsword dance**, performed at **Christmas**, by **Pitmen**, with a **Fiddler** and **Fool** (named **Jolly Dog** with a **Jolly Dog sewn** on to his costume who appears to be carrying bones or perhaps something very similar to a Georgian/Regency **tobaccobox**), all decorated with **ribbons** and **touring the Tyne and Wear (Durham and Sunderland) towns**.

The third account dated 1854 by William Clepham basically copies Cuthbert Sharp but adds that there were performances of the dance in 1854 (his notes imply personal observation on his part).

The fourth account of the dance was recorded by Robert Bell who published a book on 'peasant' poetry in 1857. In it, he reprinted and 'corrected' Sharp's account, although the 'correction' may simply represent Bell's opinion. There are alterations to various verses and minor insertions but despite copying Sharp's text, there is enough that is new to convince the reader that Bell witnessed a performance himself.

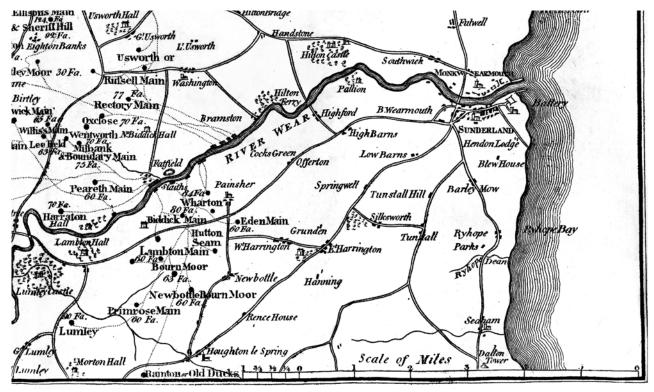
The fifth and sixth accounts, both by Joseph Crawhall and dated 1880 and 1883 respectively, copy Cuthbert Sharp. They add information about where the actors stood – this knowledge may have come to him second-hand or from personal observation as a youth. There are also five later accounts describing the dance that appear to be simply copies

of Topliff's, Sharp's and Bell's accounts.

If the Topliff (1815) and Sharp (1834) texts are compared (the Clepham, Bell and Crawhall texts are virtually the same as Sharp's), then it is obvious that the same performance is being witnessed.

Cawte made the natural assumption that there are six dancers but a close examination of the text shows that (in Sharp's fuller text) each of the four dancers is given two stanzas by way of introduction before the others are introduced: "to join us in this play". The extras (True Blue, Jolly Dog, Bessy even) may have joined in the dance as the occasion demanded, but Topliff's text makes it clear that there were four dancers, as is corroborated by the Bewick Workshop *Pitmen* print.

As to the origin of the dance there are clues in the text of the play. The first stanza of Topliff's last song names Cox Green and Painshaw (modern Penshaw) in a familiar way. Cox Green is a hamlet located on the right bank of the River Wear. Penshaw Hill is half a mile to the south and the village of Penshaw is a further half mile southwards. Sunderland lies about 4½ miles to the east and was home to Cuthbert Sharp who states, as does Topliff, that the dancers were pitmen who visited the larger towns in the area, specifically naming Sunderland and Durham. Durham lies  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the southwest. In addition, there was in Penshaw Staiths in the early 1800s a public house called 'The Keel', a fact that would surely not have been lost to an audience upon the introduction of the 'Keelman' character. Penshaw Staiths lies a mile to the west of Penshaw. A 'staith' is a wharfside construction for loading coal. In the early 1800s Penshaw Staiths on the south bank of the River Wear served thirteen pits south of the river (five of them within a mile radius of Penshaw) according to Akenhead's 1807 collieries map. See next page for excerpt



Part of Akenhead's plan of the Rivers Tyne and Wear with the collieries and the principal roads and villages included in Hodgson's The Picture of Newcastle, 1812.

of map Penshaw (spelt Painsher), Cocks Green, and Staiths are all shown centre left. Pits are shown by large black dots.

Penshaw villagers seemed to have been widely employed in the surrounding pits. For example, in an explosion in the Mill Pit, West Herrington on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1812, twenty-four men were killed, all of whom came from Penshaw and are buried in its All Saints' Churchyard. It therefore seems highly likely that in Penshaw we have the pitmen's village origin.

It was at this point that Iain Bain contacted me to say that he had found in Bewick's *Weekly Engraving Book* for the week ending 16<sup>th</sup> July 1814 the entry:

'Bell Wood Cut Sword Dancers [£] 1.2.6'

It is almost certain that 'Bell' is John Bell (1783-1864), Bookseller, Antiquarian, and ardent Pamphleteer of Newcastle upon Tyne who had a strong interest in local folklore. Coincidentally, John Bell was a friend of Joseph Crawhall, the father of the Joseph Crawhall who wrote the fifth and sixth accounts of the Pitmen's sword dance. It may well be that the father provided the drawing for the workshop to follow and that it remained with him for the son to inherit and make use of later.

Given that the woodcut was made in 1814, its engraver can be narrowed down to one of four apprentices or engravers then working for Bewick: Edward Willis, William Harvey, William Bewick and William Temple.

The finding of a pictorial representation of a four-man longsword dance and the similarities of three or four eye-witness accounts (one of them contemporary with the print) describing four-man longsword performances in the same place as the print leads to a possible conclusion that they are describing one and the same event, viz., the singular occurrence of the existence of a longsword side from the north of Co. Durham, and, in all probability from the village of Penshaw.

It remained to discover something of the dance itself. Using nearby surviving village longsword traditions, a compari-

son of dance figures was made to produce a heterogeneous hybrid of the original. This composite Penshaw dance was first performed by a longsword side from the Mayflower Morris Men of Billericay and an echo of the *Pitmen* print was recreated at 'The General's Arms' public house in Little Baddow, Essex, on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

#### Author's Acknowledgements

I must thank Iain Bain for his advice and permission to reproduce his copy of the Pitmen print; Virginia Ennor of The British Museum for her assistance in obtaining permission to reproduce the Museum's copy of the print; and Jenny Uglow for her encouragement and introductions.

[This article is extracted from *The Lost Dance* - a full history of the prints, the tentative reconstruction of the dance, and the musical notation is available in booklet form at a cost of £5 plus p&p from the author. (obtainable by e-mailing enquiries@giftltd.co.uk).]



Vignette from Joseph Crawhall's Olde frende's wyth newe Faces. Adorn'd with sutable SCVLPTVRES. chapter IV 'The Sword Dancers'. (1883)

## A DRAWING BY JOHN ANDERSON, PUPIL OF THOMAS BEWICK

by Virginia van der Lande



Title page vignette from the Quadrupeds title page (first edition).

Two volumes by Dr James Anderson, LL.D. (1739-1808), Observations on the means of exciting a spirit of National Industry: chiefly intended to promote the Agriculture, Commerce, manufactures, and Fisheries, of Scotland (Dublin, 1799), were recently offered for sale by an antiquarian bookseller. Loosely inserted in one of the volumes was a small pen drawing in sepia ink. It is a very competent copy of the title page vignette of Bewick's Quadrupeds (first published in 1790) except that the rock face is inscribed 'I Anderson Dec. 24 1792'. 'I' and 'J' were at that time interchangeable.

It is on contemporary, unwatermarked paper measuring 80 by 110 mm and has two sets of three pinpricks on the left hand side, and a smudge from an inky finger (or thumb) on the upper left hand side. The artist was clearly right-handed and the paper would have been steadied while he worked, using pins holding it on a firm surface and the other hand. There is no imprint of a tracing ever having been made and the drawing itself, the same size as the original vignette, differs in minor details. The detail is so fine (each leaf separately drawn in the style later shown in his engravings) that a magnifying glass and strong illumination would have been needed. Both resources would have been available in the Beilby-Bewick workshop at Newcastle where Dr Anderson's son John (1775-1807) had just started his apprenticeship. Using a rock face to inscribe names, dates, dedications, etc., was a



John Anderson's trade card.



The sepia ink drawing copied from Quadrupeds title page.

device much used by engravers at that time.

Two impressions of a trade card impression with John's name are known (Pease Collection, Newcastle; British Museum), which were engraved when he later worked in London.

The drawing can probably be attributed to John Anderson although he was then 17 years old and had only completed 3 months of his apprenticeship. Although wood engravings exist which can be attributed to him unequivocally, no other original artwork by his hand are known. He sometimes engraved the work of others, such as that of George Samuel for *Grove Hill* (1799), but the illustrations for other publications such as the early 1800 editions of *Farmer's Boy* were entirely his own.



The Seton of Mounie bookplate.

Both volumes of Observations on the means of exciting a spirit of National Industry have Seton of Mounie bookplates. John's mother was Margaret Seton (1749-1788), daughter of George Seton of Mounie who inherited Mounie in Aberdeenshire in 1782. Her eldest son, Alexander, adopted the surname Seton when he later inherited the property.

It had a collection of family papers (now at Aberdeen University) as well as a library of books about the Setons and volumes by recent members of the family. Mounie was sold in 1970 and its books dispersed. The British Library holds a diary by Henry Anderson (1789-1810) about his campaigns in India, and the State Library of New South Wales (Sydney) has a volume with the Mounie bookplate once owned by another brother, Robert Anderson (1781-1840), with illustrations of the flora and fauna of Norfolk Island. The Mounie bookplate is more recent, however, and bears the arms of Dr Anderson's great-grandson, Rev. Lt.-Col. Alexander David Seton (1854-1936) and his wife, Emily Turner, who during 1909 inscribed one volume of the *Observations* with a brief note about his family.

In 1792 George Seton's aged widow, Anne Leslie, was still living. By then her son-in-law Dr Anderson had left Monkshill in Aberdeenshire (John's birthplace), and had settled in Edinburgh, where he was very occupied with his periodical, *The Bee*, for which the Newcastle workshop (including John) later provided many illustrations. See Nigel Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick The Complete Illustrative Work*, three vols. (2011, London: British Library), vol.2, pp. 108-111 [TB 2.43. *The Bee*, 1791].

Is it reasonable to postulate that the sketch was given to John's grandmother (or another relative) as a Christmas present? And that later it was safely tucked into what was to date his father's most important publication? Many years later, the two volumes (plus others yet to come on the market) survived several sales until they were discovered during a house clearance in East Anglia. Both are now in the proud ownership of the writer, who wishes to express her gratitude to Nigel Tattersfield for drawing her attention to this item in Blackwell's catalogue. The author would appreciate any additional information about John Anderson as she is preparing a biography with a list of his work.

### Fall of a Giant.



The bus shelter on the A695 in Mickley Square at the stop nearest Cherryburn has been graced with a large version of Thomas Bewick's Chillingham bull - not an enlarged version of the whole print with all its foliage, but simply a painting of the animal against a background of sky with other panels of colour bearing no relation to the original woodland context of the wood engraving. We do not know who painted this image or what the occasion for it was; nor do we know who ordered its demolition or what the occasion for that was. However, down it has come, whether this was achieved through the lucubrations of a committee, or a bureaucrat's imperious decision, or even the trumpets of Jericho, we think possibly nobody knows.

## A Recent Gift to the Natural History Society of Northumbria.

The Bewick Society has no premises and holds no property. So when we are offered a gift or have an opportunity to buy an important item of Bewick interest, our committee decides which of the several public collections in the North East of England would be the most suitable to house and care for it. Recently, for example, we purchased a Bewick watercolour for the collection at Cherryburn. The Natural History Society's collection in the Hancock Museum library was the fortunate recipient of a recent donation, a sumptuously bound elephant folio album of Bewick workshop and related wood engravings. There is a fine collection of comparable Bewick albums in the Pease Collection, but the Natural History Society had not owned one.



George Dunn's Elephant Folio Album

The book had been compiled (or acquired?) by George Dunn, a collector living at Woolley Hall near Maidenhead, in the late nineteenth century. He had used as its basis the pages from a copy of J.G. Bell's Descriptive and Critical Catalogue of Works illustrated by Thomas and John Bewick of 1851, which he had window-mounted on larger paper. Interleaved with these are pages with about 750 Bewick workshop images laid down in serried ranks in the style of so many grand nineteenth century Bewick collections, but in this case arranged to illustrate Bell's descriptions. Some are proof impressions, some cut from books. Sadly a few choice images had been cut from the album by an earlier owner. At the end of the volume are some pages of rather miscellaneous prints, unrelated to Bell's Catalogue, some of which are unusual and intriguing. There is, for instance, an uncommon print of the monastic buildings at Jarrow, a curious route plan printed within an arch elaborately embellished with Masonic devices, (possibly a circular related to a funeral procession), and the little copperplate with the motto 'Libertas auro pretiosior' printed as a bookplate for Richard Swarley, apparently signed on the mount by Ralph Beilby.

We are grateful to Mr Paul Smith for this fine gift and for rescuing the album which he found offered for sale on the internet in a severely dishevelled state and on which he used his bookbinding skills to restore to its former magnificence.

## Audubon's Wood Engraving?

John James Audubon (1785-1851) visited Thomas Bewick in April 1827 during the American's all-important tour around the British Isles. The account of their meeting in Audubon's *Ornithological Biography* (1835; volume III, pages 300-304) provides a unique insight into the welcome available at the wood-engraver's Gateshead home. Audubon was able to glimpse the old man at work and his account is often repeated:

Presently he proposed shewing me the work he was at, and went on with his tools. It was a small vignette, cut on a block of boxwood not more than two by three inches in surface, and represented a dog frightened at night by what he fancied to be living objects, but which were actually roots and branches of trees, rocks and other objects bearing the semblance of men. This curious piece of art, like all his works, was exquisite. ... The old gentleman and I stuck to each other, he talking of my drawings, I of his wood cuts. Now and then he would take off his cap, and draw up his gray worsted stockings to his nether clothes; but whenever our conversation became animated, the replaced cap was left sticking as if by magic to the hind part of his head, the neglected hose resumed their downward journey, his fine eyes sparkled, and he delivered his sentiments with a freedom and vivacity which afforded me great pleasure ...

Famously Audubon's account of his time in the North East ends with him admiring the ease with which Bewick was able to work.

I revisited him on the 16th April, and found the whole family so kind and attentive that I felt quite at home. The good gentleman, after breakfast, soon he took himself to his labours, and began to shew me, as he laughingly said, how easy it was to cut wood; but I soon saw that cutting wood in his style and manner was no joke, although to him it seemed indeed easy. His delicate and beautiful tools were all made by himself; and I may with truth say that his shop was the only artist's shop that I ever found perfectly clean and tidy ...

It has always been assumed that Audubon's work was not suited to wood-engraving. An American collector, Mr Jeffrey Grey of Oklahoma City, however is of the opinion that on at least one occasion Audubon may have attempted to publish a bird image using wood-engraving. He has supplied us with the image reproduced here. The original appears to be about 8 by 5 inches. Is this larger-than-octavo-sized illustration of a Crimson fronted Purple Finch, annotated 'Engr by M. Schmitz', an experiment, a false-start, a secret homage to Bewick? Jeffrey Grey reports that he has had difficulty in persuading colleagues in the United States that the central part of the image is a woodcut rather than a lithograph. But he provides us with some information which is not controversial. Audubon's famous volumes of the Birds of America were hand coloured elephant folios produced using copperengraving. Audubon planned an octavo edition for a wider market. Correspondence cited by Grey shows that in the early days (September 1833) of planning the cheaper octavo edition Audubon was open to using whichever method was best and cheapest. By the end of the 1830s lithography was in widespread use and was regarded as the method of choice for economical printing. It has been long assumed that the use of lithographs in the preparation of the octavo edition from 1838 was as a result of the uncontroversial acceptance of lithography's pre-eminence. Jeffrey Grey believes that the illustration he has in his possession is a unique example of Audubon's experimental use of wood engraving by M. Schmitz of the firm of Thomas Sinclair, a Scotsman settled in Philadelphia.



The photograph of the print, sent by Jeffrey Grey.

The authors have not seen the original and cannot say yea or nay to Mr. Grey. Close examination of the photo does not seem to show signs of burin or graver in the treatment of the plumage. The image is of great interest in any case, and we are grateful to him for the opportunity to publish it.



An enlargement of the central figure.

The bird is in virtually the same pose as in the lithograph by J.T. Brown subsequently published in the octavo edition as Plate 197, but it is perched in quite different foliage. Neither image appears in the elephant folio edition. We are happy to pass on any useful information or observations to our friend in Oklahoma.

Email the Society at bewick.society@ncl.ac.uk.



Obituary Viscount Ridley, KG

The Bewick Society is sad to record the death of Matthew White Ridley, 4th Viscount Ridley, on 22nd March 2012. Lord Ridley was born in 1925 and inherited his father's title and the family estate at Blagdon in 1964. His life demonstrated his own conviction that privilege and wealth carry a responsibility for service. After Eton, and still a teenager, he served with the Coldstream Guards in Normandy, Belgium and Germany. Awaiting the age when he could join up, he spent a few months studying agriculture at King's College (later to become Newcastle University, which he served as Chancellor fifty years later) and after the war he completed his studies at Balliol College, Oxford. Then, serving as aidede-camp to the Governor of Kenya, he found time to study flamingos and to stay for four months on an uninhabited island in the Seychelles which resulted in a paper, co-written by Lord Richard Percy, on the plight of the sooty tern then under severe pressure from French confectionary demands. The ability to combine service with his other passion, natural history and conservation, set a pattern for his life. In his beloved Northumberland, amongst many responsibilities, he served for many years as Chairman of the old County Council and as Lord Lieutenant. He was President of the Natural History Society of Northumbria from 1996 to 2004. His distinguished public career culminated in appointment as Lord Steward of the Household and Knight of the Garter.

His knowledge of natural history was deep and wide-

ranging; and he set it to practical use. As President of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust he promoted Red Alert to support red squirrel conservation. In the House of Lords, where he became known for his straight speaking and humour, he showed his knowledge of salmon in thirty-two speeches during the passage of the Salmon Bill. Hardly less important was the example he himself set at his family estate at Blagdon. In developing a partnership between planting and buildings he would have drawn the approval of his maternal grandfather, Sir Edwin Lutyens. But it was to the natural history of the estate that he gave his greatest attention, especially in developing the tree collection; and he took particular pleasure in sharing his enthusiasm. Visitors were frequently welcomed and courtyard buildings modified for their comfort. Through his friendliness, complete lack of pomposity, and happy knack of gauging visitors' interests and level of expertise, he became celebrated as a guide.

With his deep interest in ornithology and angling, and his love of Northumberland, it is hardly surprising that Lord Ridley had great respect for Thomas Bewick and his work. His ancestor, Sir Matthew White Ridley, was a subscriber to the first edition of History of British Birds in 1797 and his copy still remains in Lord Ridley's library. He was a swift and staunch supporter of the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Trust in its efforts to secure a future for Cherryburn; and the campaign was much assisted by his willingness to elicit support from others as well. And, when the place was safe (and then passed to the National Trust) he became a founder member of the Bewick Society. Not least of Lord Ridley's talents was his skill with watercolours and in drawing birds. He will be much missed but, like Thomas Bewick, he leaves the glow of a life well spent and, for the benefit of future generations, some sound conservation initiatives and many beautiful pictures. HD

The use of information included in obituaries in *The Journal* and *The Daily Telegraph* is gratefully acknowledged.



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