



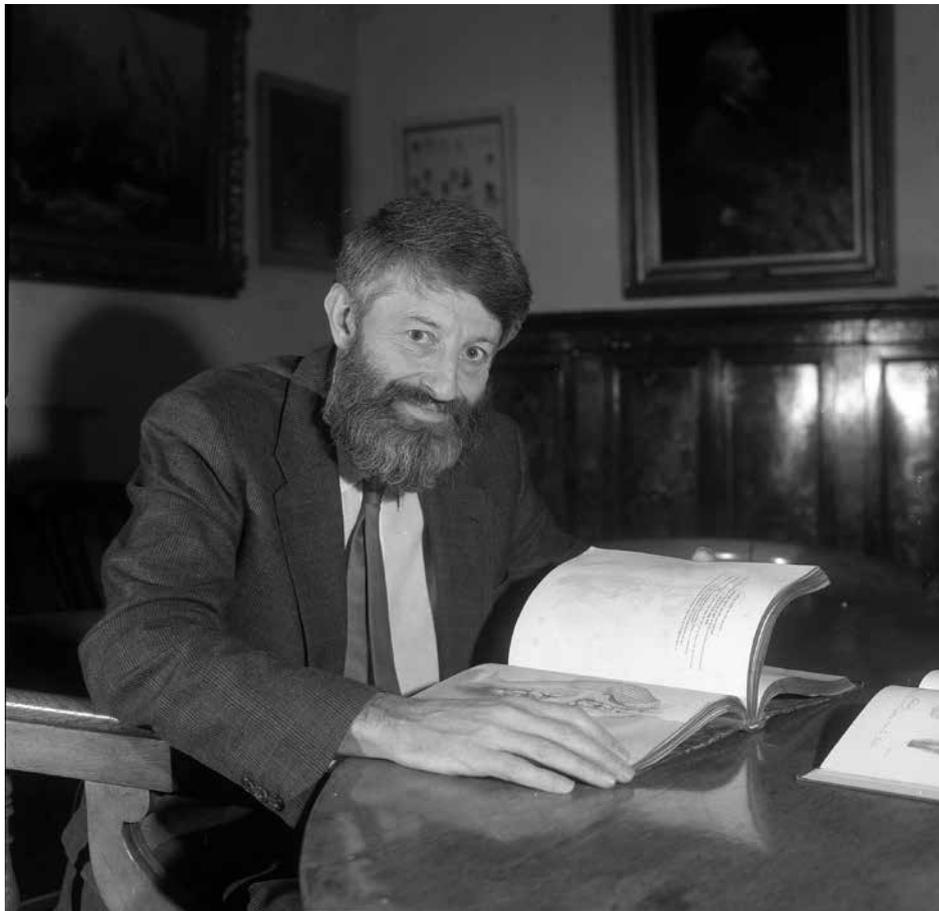
# CHERRYBURN TIMES

*The Journal of The Bewick Society*

## A MAN FOR ALL BEWICK SEASONS

*DAVID GARDNER-MEDWIN, CHERRYBURN AND THE BEWICK SOCIETY*

*Hugh Dixon*



David in the Council Room of the Natural History Society of Northumbria when elected Chairman of the Council in 1997. Photo by David Noble Rollin © NHSN

When David Gardner-Medwin was twenty and still an undergraduate at King's College, Cambridge, his grandmother, knowing his interest in ornithology, gave him as a birthday present a first edition of Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds*. It proved to be a crucial moment for him – and for those who have had the benefit of his scholarship, application, wisdom, dedication and friendship in saving Cherryburn and establishing the Bewick Society over the last quarter century. David had developed a growing interest in nature, and especially in birds, as a young boy in Canada

and Barbados and in the Scottish highlands when at school at Edinburgh Academy. He went to Cambridge to study Natural Sciences and, although he became absorbed with Medicine, natural history remained a passion; his first publication, when still a student, was about bird migration across the Pyrenees. In Thomas Bewick he found a kindred spirit, a keen and sympathetic observer of countryside with an extraordinary ability to record what he saw. And the quality of the volumes fired David's lifelong passion for collecting books for both their content and construction. Yet it was not Bewick who brought

David to Northumberland.

Continuing his medical studies at Bart's in London he settled on neurology and then, determined to train with those most advanced in this field, he applied for a post under Henry Millar and John Walton in Newcastle. Summoned to interview, David decided not to spend the night in town but took to the country and camped beside the Tyne between Ovingham and Bywell, just across the river from Cherryburn where, he said, "I could enjoy the birds". Most happily, he got the job. He had married Alisoun Shire in Cambridge and their daughter Janet was born at Barts. The family moved into their enduring family home at Heddon-on-the-Wall overlooking the Tyne; and there their son, Robert, was born. In 1972 David became the first consultant paediatric neurologist to work outside London and he went on to have a distinguished career doing pioneering work, especially in the treatment of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The mark of his success is shown in the sobering statistic that in his time the average age of death in the North East rose to 30 compared to only 19 elsewhere.

Alongside his professional work, David entered fully into the cultural life of Tyneside and this in turn led to a very full 'second career' after his retirement in 1997. It is significant to his later contributions to the Bewick Society that, formally and informally, he advised libraries in the city and university about acquisitions and collections; and that his long and typically selfless service to the Natural History Society



David with Iain Bain, Cherryburn 2003. Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Bewick's birth. Photo courtesy Bewick Society.

of Northumbria culminated, during the great upheaval of its collections in the remodelling of the Hancock Museum, in six years as Chairman of its Council (1997-2002), and then Vice-President (2002-09).

It was fortunate for the Bewick world that David's last clinical and teaching years coincided with the campaign to

save and restore Cherryburn. David was part of the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Trust which, under the leadership of Frank Atkinson, acquired the house and small farm, and raised the funds to repair buildings and establish the collections. When the property was passed to the National Trust, the Bewick Society was formed to support Cherryburn and, more broadly, to promote understanding of Thomas Bewick and his achievement. David was a member from the start and how fortunate that was. It is difficult to think of any area of the Society's activities to which David did not make significant contributions, and to whatever he did he brought his formidable intellect, penetrating vision, painstaking research and generous willingness to share his time and his knowledge.

An effective committee man, he was adept at gently steering discussion back to the matter in hand. He entered wholeheartedly into planning programmes and taking a full part in events. He was particularly effective in Bewick Birthday Conversations at Cherryburn, drawing on his store of Bewickiana whatever subject arose. His completely natural 'bedside' manner worked very well in consultations when visitors brought treasures for appraisal. No matter how common an object, he listened carefully and would be appreciative and encouraging. When there was a gap in the lecture programme, David would say "I could do something about..." and the lecture that followed would be a well-researched and amusingly delivered study.

As a researcher and author David was enthusiastically industrious, spotting gaps that needed filling or areas of research with potential. The bibliography in this edition of *Cherryburn Times* speaks for itself. In his wide-ranging works, two achievements stand out as fundamental advances in understanding Thomas Bewick and his world. His painstaking research into the origins of Bewick's family (published in *Cherryburn Times* in three slices) has been revelatory. Research on both sides of the Pennines went as far as surviving records and sensible surmise could allow. Where before there had been only indistinct figures in mist, David revealed rounded characters in carefully observed landscapes and, too, portents helpful to understanding the Bewicks at Cherryburn. It seems highly improbable that the fruits of this labour will ever be surpassed.

As an editor David was patient, helpful and precise. In 2003 he shared with Iain Bain the production of the Society's most ambitious publication, *Bewick Studies* in celebration of Thomas Bewick's 250th Anniversary. To this David contributed an essay on a subject very close to his heart, *Thomas Bewick's Library*. This he soon extended into a study of the 'interestingly numerous and varied' books owned by Thomas Bewick and his children. Drawing on many sources, he assembled a scrupulously referenced list of almost 500 books. Though in his view 'certainly incomplete' he published it, modestly titled 'A Provisional Checklist of the Library of Thomas Bewick' on the Society's website. There, he realised, it could be most readily consulted; and almost every year he noted improvements. No initiative, it could be argued, has been so influential in curbing the widely-held Wordsworthian view that Bewick was simply a rustic genius. As Bewick himself said 'my education was not so scanty as many imagine'; and here is evidence.

There were, too, many unobtrusive ways in which David



David walking with members of the Bewick Society, Ovingham, May 2008. Photo courtesy Peter Quinn.

served the Society. A great e-mailer, he was always willing to help with enquiries, citing sources to answer questions, or undertaking pieces of research so that the Society could respond with authority, precision and humour – encouraging members and creating new ones. If occasion demanded, he would minute a meeting, make a detour to check a venue or a reference, entertain a speaker, select, display and explain items to enhance meetings, or appear in a damp churchyard to calm church authorities about proposals for Bewick grave-stones.

It was largely because of David that the Society developed an out-of-doors programme. He was the author of the *Thomas Bewick in Newcastle* walk leaflet. Then he planned and led a series of countryside walks: around Cherryburn and Ovingham; in search of earlier Bewicks around Kirkheaton and Kirkharle; and even further afield, to north Yorkshire, where TB had drawn birds in Marmaduke Tunstall's collection when preparing his *History of British Birds*. As ever his preparation was meticulous. Mindful of members' abilities and comforts, he would test the route, check inclines and obstacles, and plan breaks. His guidance on the walks was a wonderful blend of expertise in local and natural history spiced with humour and swift observation as birds appeared as if on cue.

David was generous with his time and knowledge and in

other remarkable ways. He assisted the acquisitions for Bewick collections and eventually arranged for much of his own collection to go to suitable homes. Not least, he and Alisoun funded the return from America of six original Bewick blocks for the Natural History Society of Northumbria.

His natural courtesy and self-effacement masked a steely determination to identify what was needing to be done, and then to do it well. David had little time for dislikes but among the few was any waste of time; few lives can have been so full or so productive. It now seems odd that David did so much for the Society almost entirely without holding office (though he was heavily committed elsewhere). To overcome a difficulty in the Society's constitution he served as a highly effective Chairman for just one year. Otherwise he was content to be simply on the committee. He was rarely absent but on one of those occasions early in 2014 the committee decided to recommend to the membership his appointment as Vice President. Unknown to the committee David's absence was because he was undertaking treatment for a condition which he had known about for years but had never mentioned. Knowing that it was about to take a fatal turn, he had decided at that same time to tell his friends.

Responding to Peter Quinn's letter, David wrote:

I am very grateful for the honour... I think only Iain Bain has been Vice President before – so I feel the appointment is very special indeed. The news gave me a very bright moment at a time when life has been becoming more difficult – and I am still buzzing with the excitement of it.

David died three weeks later.

In his professional career David, literally, extended lives; in his retirement, in several different fields, he enriched people's lives. David was a wonderful, enjoyable colleague and friend. That the Bewick Society is in good health derives in no small measure from the standards and example that he set and the energy he expended in giving it a sound foundation. That is why we miss the wise counsel, the beard and the smile and why David will be remembered.



David on Stilts, Cherryburn 2007. Photo courtesy Stewart Thirkell.

*Iain Bain*



One of the most familiar of Bewick's vignettes is this view of the Tyne thronged with 'the black fleet' of keel boats, some at full sail down river, driven by a westerly wind and others being rowed or towed upstream against wind and tide. From the title-page of his *Land Birds* of 1797, and more an assembly of acutely observed detail than a precise view, its leaning Tide Mark stone, carrying the Newcastle arms, recalls an event in 1783 when Bewick came to the aid of Thomas Bamburgh, an illiterate stone mason. As the story is told in the following letter now in the Pease Collection, it is typical of other surviving letters of a similar cast in which Bewick reveals his generous and supportive nature. It was addressed to Josiah Robinson, a stalwart of the Newcastle Town Clerk's office.<sup>1</sup>

Forth

22 September 1783

T. Bewick's Comp<sup>s</sup> to Mr Robinson, wou'd be much obliged to him if he wou'd take the Trouble to present the Inclosed Bill to the Common Council, when they meet; if they pay it, be pleased (if you think it proper) to give them a Rec<sup>d</sup> in your own Name & which shall be their discharge. If they shou'd object to the Payment of it on account of the other Stone which was done & set up by some other Person, a little while before the Barges were last up the River &c, be so good as to state to them the Case of this Poor Man, & which is as follows. When the Gentlemen from the Barges were up last Year, on the Green near his house, where the Tide Mark is fixt, they ordered him to get a Stone done & set up against they came there again the next Year, & they wou'd pay him for it - accordingly every thing which they then order'd him to do, has been done (except fixing the Stone up) it was ready at the Time, w<sup>th</sup> the Castles upon it, - the Gentlemen thout it well done, & it seemed every way to meet w<sup>th</sup> their Approbation; but when he wanted to be paid for it, none of them offered to do so, but told him he need not fear the payment of the Money - that the Corporation wou'd soon settle that Matter w<sup>th</sup> him &c. But being disappointed & unacquainted with any proper Method to proceed upon in such a piece of Business, he thout it wou'd be better and easier for him to apply for payment to the person who he thou't (from the active part he took) had been appointed to have the direction & management of the Job, & to see it properly executed &c. The Person alluded to is M<sup>r</sup> Henry Reed of Ryton (late of NCastle) he countermanded the first Order shortly after it was given - & told Bamburgh he wou'd get the Stone done himself; and in about a ¼ of a Year

after this, calld again & gave him orders to proceed with it & get it done at the Time above mentiond, & also called at different Times till within three Days before the other Stone was fixt up & seemed quite satisfied at what had been done, both as to workmanship & the Time it was done in. Since that time, he has twice or thrice waited upon M<sup>r</sup> Reed in hopes of his being paid his demand, or to be directed by him where he might be expected to be paid it & by whom &c but instead of having the Satisfaction to have either the one or the other from him, M<sup>r</sup> Reed (for Reason's best known to himself) has always as yet thou't proper to treat both him & his humble Applications with the greatest Contempt - I hope when the Gentlemen of the Common Council are made acquainted w<sup>th</sup> these Particulars, they will order the Bill to be paid - it may perhaps appear to them that M<sup>r</sup> Reed ought to pay it, but I hope they will consider, that it is too much out of the Power of an Old, infirm, poor Man, with a large Family of Children, supported by his Labour, to oblige him to do it. I shall wait upon M<sup>r</sup> Robinson some day this week, to know whether my humble Endeavour, to serve an honest man has been crowned with success - if it prove so, the pleasure I shall feel upon the occasion will more than sufficiently reward me for what trouble I have been at I am / Sir / your obliged humble Serv<sup>t</sup> &c / Tho<sup>s</sup> Bewick  
The Corporation of Newcastle Cat House, May 1783  
To Thomas Bamburgh Dr  
To a Stone wth the Newcastle Arms for a Tide Mark £2. 12<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>  
Address: Mr Robinson / at the Town Clerk's Office / Newcastle  
Endorsed: Thos Balmbrough / abt a Tidemark Stone / 24th Sep<sup>r</sup> 1783 to / be paid by y<sup>e</sup> Committee

Bamburgh's 'Cat House' no longer stands, but the Cat House Plantation is still marked on the large-scale OS map. This thin strip of woodland lies on the flat lands or haughs of the north bank of the Tyne below Heddon-on-the-Wall. Here, at the shallows of Hedwin Streams was the point that until the end of the 19th century, marked the height of the spring tides, the limit of the City's jurisdiction and thus the positioning of the tide mark.

The visit of 'the Gentlemen of the Barges' refers to the long-held custom described by Eneas Mackenzie in his *Historical Account* of 1827 - as it was by his predecessor Brand in 1789<sup>2</sup>:

'On Ascension-day every year, the mayor and burgesse

of Newcastle survey the boundaries of the river Tyne. This annual festive expedition starts at the Mansion-house Quay, and proceeds to or near the place in the sea called Sparhawk, and returns up the river to the utmost limits of the Corporation at Hedwin Streams. They are accompanied by the brethren of Trinity-house and the River Jury in their barges. When the chief magistrate is popular, the boats are numerous, and the scene beautiful and exhilarating’.



‘Ascension Day on the Tyne’ by J.W. Carmichael. 16 x 10cm.  
Courtesy Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle (Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums)

At one time part of this procession allowed that as the Mayor stepped ashore at the tide mark, he would kiss the prettiest girl in the assembled crowd – a custom that continued until it was discovered that the then incumbent was favouring members of his own family. From this the local name ‘the kissing stone’ came into use.<sup>3</sup>

One of the fullest and most lively of many accounts of the Ascension Day celebrations appears in Moses Richardson’s *Local Historian’s Table Book*.<sup>4</sup> Written by an eye-witness in 1818, it tells of how ‘On arriving at Hedwin streams, the river jury took formal possession of their boundary stone as the mark of their utmost jurisdiction westward. Mr. Ostle, the harbour master, an individual of considerable proportions, with the help of the bargemen, placed himself on the top of the stone with a glass of wine in his hand, and said “in the name of the king and the corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne, I take formal possession of this stone . . . : it has been theirs from time immemorial and will be theirs for all time to come; and I therefore propose the health of the king and the conservators of the river Tyne, at the high water mark”. This address was warmly cheered, while the pit lads began to fire off some cannon, the band to play, and bottles of wine to empty their exhilarating contents: dancing parties of men and women also began to form as if by instinct. The Cat House, a cottage a little distance from the boundary stone was inhabited by a gentlewoman whose face bore evident marks of acquaintance with the middle of the last century; on this occasion she appeared at the door to greet the party, in a silk frock and diminutive lace cap; every gentleman uncovered in her presence, a token of respect she acknowledged with a very low curtsy. She was plentifully regaled with wine, for which she returned a flood of compliments and then modestly intimated to the bottle holder “that it was customary for the empty bottle to be left at her house, and she thought it a pity to let good old customs to go down”.’ Could this have been, despite the reference to ‘a gentlewoman’, Bamburgh’s



widow?

Those of us regularly in touch, well remember David Gardner-Medwin’s address – ‘tidestone1@gmail.com’. For me his emails always brought enthusiasm, kind enquiry, generous help, ever valuable information, and often tactful reproach as my labours on Bewick’s correspondence became too easily diverted. The ‘tidestone’ element of course reflected the proximity of the tide mark to the family home at the foot of the steep descent from Heddon. One summer evening we took a walk to visit and photograph the stone, still standing austere with its three castles in bas-relief and the now indistinct 1783 date at its head. It’s tempting to imagine that Bewick’s portrayal might perhaps reflect his recollection of the possibly more handsome work of the rejected stonemason.

I was later encouraged to enlist David’s help in attempting to discover more of Bamburgh and his ‘large family’ and the tiresome Henry Reed of Ryton. We had hoped that firm evidence had survived to show that payment had actually been made, beyond the suggestion in the endorsement of the letter; for the moment this remains unconfirmed and Reed is still a shadow. Nevertheless it is the nature of David’s response that was so typical of his helpful thoroughness – in its detailed account of his source research, his hope for further clues, in his quoting of map references and his note on the wagon-way and single-track railway that ran past Bamburgh’s cottage by Heddon Haughs. And of course, the soul of discretion, he had recently come across two outstanding J.W. Carmichael paintings of the Ascension Day flotilla, still in private hands.

David’s contribution and editorial work on *Bewick Studies* was tireless, his extensive and most valuable elaboration of my slight piece on Bewick’s hawthorn leaf engraving put me to shame, and his work on Bewick’s ancestry continues to astonish. How we miss him.

*Quando ullum inveniemus parem?*

#### **Notes and References**

1. ‘... filled an arduous department in the town clerk’s office, upwards of thirty years.’ Memorial, St John’s churchyard, Newcastle, 1792.
2. Mackenzie, II.744; John Brand, I.37.
3. Heddon-on-the-Wall, Local History Society.
4. London and Newcastle, 1846, III.192.

# BEWICK AND THE 'MEDICAL GENTLEMEN'

*Nigel Tattersfield*

Although his family was far from comfortably off, there was much in Thomas Bewick's childhood that contributed to his lifetime of generally good health. His father's smallholding at Cherryburn meant there was always food on the table and the landsale colliery at Mickley ensured plentiful fuel for cooking and heating. The young Bewick was allowed to roam freely and developed into a strapping lad, up to all sorts of mischief, none of which – by a miracle – resulted in severe physical damage. Though 'often scalded & burnt' (so badly on one occasion that he thereafter sported a bald patch on the crown of his head), he was fortunate neither to fall headlong from tall trees whilst bird-nesting nor to drown whilst steering ice floes down the wintry Tyne. He must have had the usual childhood diseases of the day such as chickenpox and measles and we know he made a good recovery from smallpox, notwithstanding it left the usual marks of its passing on his face. Mercifully, it did not affect his eyesight, or we would all have been much the poorer. When he did fall ill as a child, Bewick would have probably been treated with a home-brewed potion from a local herbalist (usually an elderly dame with a deep knowledge of plant-lore), or time would have taken its healing course.



Paradoxically, it appears it was not until he reached the comparatively sheltered environment of Ralph Beilby's Amen Corner workshop that Bewick first had contact with a doctor. The term was broad, encompassing apothecaries, (who, after herbalists, were in general the first and often the last resort for the mass of the population), surgeons (who had completed an apprenticeship or a course approved by the recently-established College of Surgeons), and physicians (who had trained at university and submitted dissertations to achieve a degree). The change from outdoor pursuits to the closed confines of an engraving workshop had had an adverse impact upon young Bewick, who was exhibiting all the signs of an upper respiratory tract infection. Beilby took him to the surgeon-apothecary Nathaniel Bailes, whose rooms were just around the corner in the south-east corner of St Nicholas' Churchyard (and later the site of the Beilby-Bewick workshop.) Bailes also happened to be a tolerably good engraver as well as a plain-spoken character; he wasted no time in administering a severe ticking-off. 'What!', he exclaimed to the crestfallen Ralph Beilby, 'have you no more sense than to set a growing country lad to work, doubled up at a low bench, which would inevitably destroy him?' Bailes immediately

achieved the status of hero in young Bewick's eyes and the two became firm friends, Bailes acting as his medical mentor and family doctor for many years thereafter (until, in fact, he was cut for the stone by his highly-regarded colleague William Ingham and expired in consequence).



The episode in Beilby's workshop serves to show that the practice of occupational medicine was already well established in Newcastle and reminds us that the Industrial Revolution, although still in its infancy, brought a price which the working man had to pay. The countryside (and the hunting field) had its fair share of accidents to be sure, but these were incidental. The collieries too experienced numerous tragedies and of course Newcastle was a busy port thronged with shipping and its attendant hazards. However, the rapid industrialisation of the predominantly urban workplace brought traumatic injuries caused by heavy machinery and by processes which involved fire and were powered by steam. Just as deadly (though less visible) were the chronic diseases caused by the inhaled dusts, noxious gases, toxic vapours, and polluted water resulting from these processes. Although the dangers were clear to the workers, the proprietors of the engineering works, potteries, lead works, glasshouses, and chemical factories were more sanguine, since profit, not workers' safety, was their overriding concern. To salve their consciences (when they had them) they made donations to the town's Infirmary (founded 1751) and Dispensary (1777).

In comparison, engraving was a tranquil occupation, in which a moment of carelessness might result in a painful nick from a burin rather than the loss or fracture of a limb. Nonetheless, it had its stresses and strains, most notably upon the eyes. Hours spent poring over fine detail in poor light or flickering candlelight could take their toll. In consequence, Bewick suffered from eyestrain when still a young man and he consulted the crusty Scottish physician John Clark, who sensibly recommended he plunge his head into a bucket of cold water every morning. Personally, Bewick was a great believer in natural remedies but above all in prevention being better than cure. Plain living was his watchword. Quack medicines

were to be avoided at all costs, and although ‘skillfull medical aid, may sometimes be of use’, he acknowledged, ‘nothing is so sure, as a recurrence to a plain diet & temperance & exercise’. With an unusually robust constitution, he could pronounce from a position of strength; sometimes this led him to absurd extremes in which he boasted of always sleeping with the windows open, ‘where a thorough air, as well as the snow blew through my room – in this I lay down, stripped into the bare buff except being rolled in a blanket, upon a mattress as hard as I could make it’. This smacks more of machismo than temperance but Bewick claimed he never experienced any ailment as a result. Predictably, his nemesis arrived in the shape of a wife, who would have no truck with such nonsense.

Not all his siblings shared his iron constitution. Between the years 1782 and 1795, Bewick’s youngest sister Sarah died at the age of sixteen, cause unknown; his eldest sister Hannah perished of complications following a miscarriage; and brother John died slowly and painfully of tuberculosis, a disease that Thomas Bewick had undoubtedly contracted at some point but from which he, like most of his contemporaries, had made a full recovery. In fact, his health remained exceptionally good (barring the odd episode of gout) and his constitution unimpaired until 1812, when he was approaching sixty years of age. In April of that year however, he was brought up short by ‘a violent perspiration suddenly checked’ which turned into a severe illness which caused him to become ‘helpless & pined to a Skeleton’. Neither he nor anyone else expected him to recover, for this was long before the advent of antibiotics and what afflicted Bewick was almost certainly acute pneumonia and pleurisy, aggravated by an empyema or gathering of pus in the pleural cavity. He was far beyond any medical aid; only rest and the day and night nursing of his wife and daughters could effect (as it did, providentially) a positive outcome. Nonetheless, it took two and a half years before Bewick had strength enough to put in a full day at the workshop. Probably for the first time in his life, he had been brought face to face with his own vulnerability.



As old age gained upon him, Bewick increasingly relied on medical opinion. In February 1824 he wrote that he was ‘seized with a giddiness in my head’ and in November he experienced another similar episode. This resulted in him accepting, as he recorded, ‘the discipline of the Doctors, who bled – leached – put me on a spare diet and have further recommended me to keep quiet at home, during the winter months’. Though far from a conclusive diagnosis, it has been suggested that the symptoms indicate hypertensive

encephalopathy, a consequence of high blood pressure. Two years later he suffered ‘a fit of gout of the stomach’ and ‘lay in a stupor for several hours’. ‘Gout of the stomach’ was a portmanteau term covering a range of problems, but the element of stupor has suggested to some commentators that this was in fact a heart attack. Whatever it was, it did not take him too long to get back on his feet, but there were several further troubling episodes of a similar nature during the rest of the year.



Bewick had commenced his Memoir whilst taking a late autumn holiday in Tynemouth in November 1822; he completed the first thirty-four pages in a month. He did not take up his pen again until 29 May 1823, when he was ‘confined by a fit of the Gout, at home’, and composed a further sixty-six pages in just under a month. Later the same year, again at Tynemouth, he completed another twenty pages. It then proceeded by fits and starts over three years and was virtually completed by 20 January 1827 whilst he was recovering from an infectious cough (which all three of his daughters also caught) and for which he was ‘obliged to call in medical aid’. Clearly his autobiography was being composed against a background of declining artistic powers and fluctuating health. However, by April 1827 when the celebrated American artist and naturalist John James Audubon called, he found ‘a tall stout man ... a perfect old Englishman, full of life, although seventy-four years of age, active and prompt in his labours’. In July the same year he took the waters at Scarborough but these were less than efficacious, reawakening ‘all the dormant evils of the rheumatic Gout’ and leaving him so weak he could barely walk; when he did so it was with the help of a stick, yet by November he had fully recovered.

Although improving, medical science was still fairly primitive and it is not surprising to find medical practitioners offering Bewick conflicting diagnoses. The ‘gout of the stomach’ he experienced in 1826 was classified by surgeon Henry Edmondston as ‘an overflowing of blood to the head’ and ‘something Paralytic’, whereas Dr John Ramsay stated it was gout. By then Edmondston was Bewick’s least favourite medical man. He had treated his son Robert for a number of health issues over the years, but had recently irritated Isabella, Bewick’s wife, in the final stages of her ‘shocking illness’ (which was probably pancreatic cancer) by careless comments about her family, and behaved towards daughter Jane in a haughty, ‘high toned Aristocratic’ fashion. (Edmondston had issues of his own; by 1830 he was paralysed and confined to a mental asylum.) Ramsay, on the other hand, was a firm favourite with all the family, watching at Bewick’s bedside, when, ‘from my too close application to business and over exertions, I needed his advice & medical aid’.

However, both Edmondston (despite his transgressions) and Ramsay received favourable mentions in the Memoir, for

Bewick had a tender regard for medical practitioners. On surveying his friends from the various professions over the years, he admitted that ‘I cannot help giving a preference to medical Gentlemen for besides their learning & attainments in common with the other professions – they appear to me generally to be further removed from prejudices – more enlightened & more liberal in their sentiments than the other labourers in the vinyards of science & literature.’ Three doctors came in for special praise – Thomas Emerson Headlam of the Infirmary, Thomas McWhirter of the Dispensary (originally a physician in the Navy, he had been wounded at Trafalgar), and McWhirter’s erstwhile colleague Thomas Trotter, lately Physician to the Fleet. Trotter possessed a combative, headstrong personality; a kindred spirit for the equally headstrong Bewick.

In bowdlerising her father’s Memoir for the first edition of 1862, Jane Bewick blithely excised all mention of these medical practitioners. The same fate awaited others that her father had noted in an earlier passage when recalling that publication of the *Quadrupeds* had brought him the friendship of physicians Andrew Young, Samuel Burton Pearson, and surgeon Nathan Surgeon. These men, as Bewick remarked, were all ‘eminent in their professions’, but he tempered his praise by deploring their fate, for according to him they ‘all fell victims to the Bottle’. Certainly binge drinking was part and parcel of the social fabric of the day (Bewick himself was regarded as ‘a hardish drinker’) and doubtless these three medical men, whose avowed interest was in the ‘brain frenzy’ caused by alcoholism (now known as delirium tremens), indulged in some serious field research; but their intake does not appear to have reached apoplectic proportions. Essentially their interest was spurred by Enlightenment attitudes which would have contended that alcohol dependency should be understood rather than morally censured. In fact, together with Thomas McWhirter, all three formulated a successful programme of recovery (based upon a diet of opium, wine and nourishing soups); indeed, in 1801 Dr Pearson published the first modern description of the condition and its treatment. (Thomas Trotter incidentally, was not far behind; three years later he published his *Essay on Drunkenness*.)

Other medical men encouraged Bewick’s engraving career in various ways. The surgeon and man-midwife Thomas Stout complimented Bewick upon his engraving a silver box for him, pointing out how ‘colour’ (subtle gradations in tone) could be ‘produced by plain engraving’. ‘From that time’, Bewick remembered, ‘I attempted colour upon the Wood’. Others, such as surgeon William Rayne, seeking to make the forthcoming *General History of Quadrupeds* definitive, invited Bewick home to draw his pet small ribbed-nose baboon. Both Stout and Rayne commissioned bookplates from the Beilby-Bewick workshop (as did twenty-seven other medical men), a reminder that practitioners, be they dentists, apothecaries, surgeons or physicians, also required their names or other marks of ownership on instruments such as syringes, saws and spatulas (and especially ‘fleams’ for bloodletting). A reminder too, that many possessed considerable libraries and were a restless, enquiring and energetic group for whom publishing was an honourable means of self-publicity. So Bewick also found himself engraving frontispieces for pamphlets de-

scribing all manner of medical devices and discoveries, from a new tourniquet invented by William Ingham to an annular saw by Thomas Machell, from a splint devised by James McIntyre to a modest account of the efficacy of the broad-leaved willow bark (the fore-runner of aspirin) for George Wilkin-son, a Sunderland surgeon.

Over the ensuing decades, Bewick’s avowed esteem for the medical profession has been generously returned in kind by many of its members, only a tithe of whom can be recorded here. An enthusiastic ornithologist as well as an outstanding physician, Edward Jenner wrote of Bewick’s ‘inimitable genius’ and how his ‘peculiar humour’ often rescued him from the depression from which he suffered. Although best known for his studies of William Blake, the surgeon Sir Geoffrey Keynes, famous for his pioneering work on blood transfusion, was also enchanted by Bewick. The late Alan Woodruff, Wellcome Professor of Tropical Clinical Medicine at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (and a capable wood engraver in his own right) was another enthusiast. And so, all too soon, to David Gardner-Medwin, outstanding paediatric neurologist and accomplished ornithologist, of legendary energy and penetrating intellect, who was one of the earliest (and most active) members of the Bewick Society and whose flair for tenacious research, fluently presented, has enriched many issues of the Cherryburn Times.



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Note: Unless otherwise stated, all references can be found in Thomas Bewick’s *Memoir*, edited and provided with an extensive introduction by Iain Bain for the Oxford University Press and published in 1975.

1. Robert Robinson, *Thomas Bewick: his Life and Times* (Newcastle, 1887), p.166, noting the brown silk cap invariably worn by TB as an adult. Ex-apprentice Edward Willis termed it a ‘French Travelling Cap’ in his recollections; London Library MS.
2. Robinson, p.194. The workshop later engraved a bookplate for Clark, illustrated with a biography in Tattersfield, *Bookplates by Beilby and Bewick* (1999), pp.94-95.
3. I am grateful to the late Dr Denis Dunbar Gibbs for this diagnosis and to his colleague Dr Owen McCarthy FRCP for confirming the probability of this diagnosis. A more extensive account appears in Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work* (2011), I, p.132. Dr Gibbs also diagnosed Bewick’s wife Isabella’s final illness as probably pancreatic cancer and contributed greatly to the medical aspects of my earlier publication, *John Bewick: Engraver on Wood* (2001). With customary generosity (coupled with his

# Tribute to David Gardner-Medwin

*Janet Gardner-Medwin*

27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014

admiration for Bewick and a high regard for David Gardner-Medwin – who he had known for many years) he had readily agreed to cast an expert eye over the present text. However, this was not to be, for it is with regret that I must record his death on 8 January 2015 at the age of 87.

4. *Bewick to Dovaston: Letters 1824-1828*, ed. Gordon Williams (1968), pp.27, 36.

5. Professor A.W. Woodruff, 'Thomas Bewick – His Life and Health', Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, 69, October 1976, p.778.

6. *Bewick to Dovaston: Letters 1824-1828*, p.79.

7. Thomas Bewick: from the *Letters of 1823-1828* (1968), p.37. Note that this is a supplementary volume to the *Letters 1824-1828* and is edited by Iain Bain and John Ryder.

8. A fine portrait of Thomas McWhirter, artist unknown, was sold by Colchester auctioneers Reeman Dansie, 15-16 February 2011; with thanks to Jenny Croxon of Reeman Dansie for supplying details.

9. Brian Vale and Griffith Edwards, *Physician to the Fleet: the Life and Times of Thomas Trotter 1760-1832* (Woodbridge, 2011), provides a thorough and long-overdue biography.

10. As remarked by John Dovaston; see *Bewick to Dovaston: Letters 1824-1828*, p.136.

11. William Pryse-Phillips, *Companion to Clinical Neurology* (Oxford, 2009), p.271. The condition was the subject of Pearson's elusive *Observations on Brain Fever* (Newcastle, 1801), reprinted with an explanatory text in *The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* (1813), 9, p.329. See also John Armstrong, *Practical Illustrations of Typhus Fever*, 3rd ed. (1819), p.515 and James Conquest Cross, 'An Essay on *Delirium Tremens*', *New York Medical Journal* (New York, 1831), II, p.316. Born about 1765, Pearson inherited an estate near Skelton in Cumbria and left Newcastle about 1805; he died in 1814. Young ('blunt, though candid and of honest address', according to Richardson's *Local Historian's Table-Book of 1843*, III, p.53) was born about 1761 and died 1806. Surgeon died in 1817.

12. 'Of Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body' had been the subject of Trotter's thesis at the Edinburgh medical school in 1788.

13. Tattersfield, II, TB2.124, TB2.156, TB2.119, TB2.160.

14. Letter to Thomas Trotter, 9 February 1825, quoted in *Bewick to Dovaston*, p.39.

15. Geoffrey Keynes, 'The Work of Thomas Bewick', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 June 1953.

16. See note 3 and Stephen G. Wright's obituary of Woodruff in the *Independent*, 24 October 1992.



My father, David, had such a wide range of interests it was difficult to think who might know him and be able to speak today from all perspectives. Indeed, I suspect most people who knew him as a colleague probably considered him an expert in their own field, but had little inkling of the breadth of his interests. That was characteristic of him, never to boast or brag, just to demonstrate excellence in whatever field he was concentrating on at that time whether that was natural history, or the child in front of him. So in writing this I have had the very great pleasure of talking to many people who worked with him across all his fields of interest, thank you all. I hope to show that he was a man who managed to have many parallel careers in which he was equally eminent.

David Gardner-Medwin was born in November 1936. He was the eldest of 4 sons. His father, Robert Gardner-Medwin, was an architect who met his Canadian wife, Margaret Kilgour, on a boat in the Atlantic. They married in Canada, and settled in London where David was born. War loomed and Margaret returned to Canada with her young son. She also took with her twin girls who were evacuees to the safety of her sister's care; and Dad's brother, Andrew, was born in Canada. Life in Canada was blissful, wilderness and canoes, the perfect environment in which to awaken an interest in nature. Dad encountered his wider family, it was perhaps the start of his interest in genealogy leading to his meticulous study of our family history, not just names and dates, but researching who people were and what they did which is what really interested him. The Canadian medical connections became very important to Dad, his uncle, Jack Kilgour, was a doctor, and his maternal grandmother, Geills McCrae, had two medical brothers, John and Tom, both lucky enough to work with Sir William Osler. John McCrae died working as a doctor in France during the First World War. These two great-great uncles of mine were much talked about at home, and their medical books and papers remained in Dad's care. No coincidence that I bear Janet McCrae's name, the mother of Geills, John and Tom.

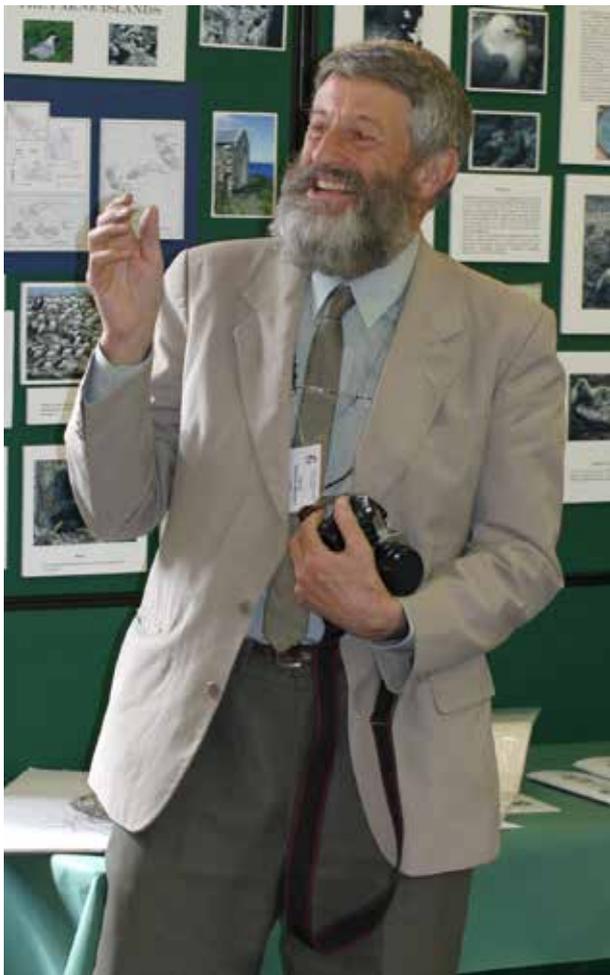
Towards the end of the war David's father, Robert, left the army to work on development and planning in Barbados. Tony and Chris were born there. David and Andrew enjoyed freedom amongst the sugar canes and on the beaches. Everyone came to love mangoes, limes, cricket and, so, Tony tells me, calypso. The school atlas was centred on the West Indies, and David watched his father's role develop working to improve society through architecture and welfare.

Their next home was in Edinburgh. Scotland played an important and much loved role throughout the rest of Dad's life. But first, medicine was to come much too close to home. His brother Chris, just a toddler, developed influenzal meningitis, a serious infection against which children are now large-

ly protected by vaccination. Chris was given Streptomycin, an antibiotic that saved his life, but had the serious side effect of damaging his hearing. For Dad, then just eleven years old, seeing his parents' fears for Chris, and watching his mother's subsequent determination to challenge conventional medical advice she ensured that Chris learned to speak and lipread well, held properly high expectations for his education, and his future life – this laid important foundations for Dad's later approach to children and disability, and that key paediatric skill, his great respect when listening to mothers.

It was Dad's passion for natural history that Scotland nurtured above all. The seminal moment, as Dad reported it, was on the Isle of Arran when a young man, a complete stranger, asked directions. He was going bird-watching and Dad was allowed to go with him for a truly magical day in the company of a skilled ornithologist. He told my children about being engrossed watching a pied wagtail nest under a bridge that day.

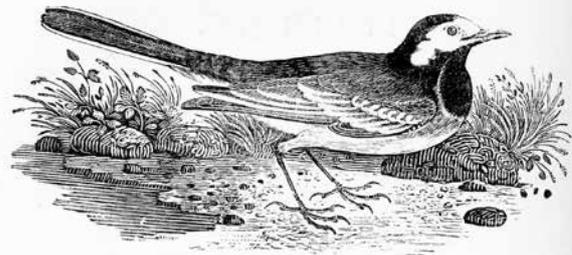
Later family holidays in the Cairngorms led to a particularly deep love of that area for all his family. He went to school at Edinburgh Academy where a biology master fostered his passion with hill walking trips throughout Scotland, and bird watching on the Northumbrian Coast. Dad organised a trip of fellow pupils to Tiree in April 1954, aged 18, writing to the "Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust" for permission to do some research on bird migration. Taking the binoculars that came from his grandfather, which he used for the rest of his



David at Blagdon Hall, Northumberland in May 2004. Celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the Natural History Society of Northumbria. ©NHSN

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BRITISH BIRDS.



THE PIED WAGTAIL.

BLACK AND WHITE WATER WAGTAIL.

(*Motacilla alba*, Linn.—*La Lavandière*, Buff.)

Bewick's *The Pied Wagtail*, *A History of British Birds*, volume 1.

life, his meticulous diary starts with a lovely teenage entry of the people and their role on that trip, where Dad describes himself as "Ornithologist, botanist and photographer". He borrowed his father's cine camera and filmed a raven's nest, and his diary records the early spring flowers and their habitats – he was a naturalist in the round from very early, with a keenness for botany as well as birds. It was no surprise that when he went on to Cambridge, to King's College, it was to read Natural Sciences and that, whilst at Cambridge, his first scientific publication was a study of bird migration across the Pyrenees.

Three key events happened early in his Cambridge days: most importantly, he met Alisoun Shire. Dad, of course, chose Scotland to propose, and our parents married six years after they first met in the beautiful setting of the Chapel of King's College where my mother's father was a fellow.

Secondly, for his 20th birthday his grandmother gave him a first edition of Bewick's *British Birds*. Thus began his life-long interest in a wood engraver whom he particularly admired for his accurate and natural depictions of wildlife. He recognised a fellow bird watcher: Bewick's drawings demonstrate he really knew the birds in their natural habitat, and did not rely on the stuffed specimens often used at that time. Neither he nor his grandmother could have anticipated that Dad would live most of his life a few miles from Bewick's childhood home, developing a deep interest in Bewick; and that those volumes would be the perfect start to Dad's passion for old books.

Thirdly there was medicine. Dad's English grandfather was a GP and anaesthetist who died before Dad was born. Dad knew the photograph of him as a medical student outside the Gibbs Building at Barts. Soon after arriving at Cambridge Dad decided to study medicine rather than natural sciences. He went on to Barts, like his grandfather, and even engineered that I was born in the Gibbs building outside which that photograph had been taken. After house jobs and a pathology post, a choice influenced by his knowledge of Osler's teaching, Dad settled on neurology, where he could use his outstanding clinical and diagnostic skills to the full. He was determined to train under Henry Millar and John Walton, in Newcastle. So sure was he about the post that immediately he

learned of his success at interview he apparently popped his head back around the door, asked for a recommendation for a local solicitor, promptly travelled west from the centre of the city, found a house here in Heddon-on-the-Wall with wonderful views across the Tyne Valley, in complete contrast to central London, and bought it. Luckily Mum approved when he got back to London with the news. Indeed this was a very happy move for my mother, and Robert was born soon after the move, the true Geordie in our family. After his peripatetic childhood, Dad would say he didn't know where he came from but that he belonged in Northumberland. My mother too loves the village and her wealth of friends here.

And so my parents' love of Newcastle and Northumberland started, and their enjoyment of music in the King's Hall and with the Avison Society and most recently at The Sage. By joining the Lit and Phil, Dad rapidly became part of Newcastle cultural circles. From the start he had two parallel careers, medicine and natural history, and in both he shared a passion for old books. He was always home particularly late on a Tuesday evening right through our childhood, for he had started bookbinding, restoring old books with great respect for their provenance. He became known to the local and national antiquarian booksellers. His library started to grow more rapidly, along with the depth of his interests. He enjoyed the work of John Ray and Gilbert White, and helped to set up the Friends of William Turner, the naturalist, in Morpeth. His real expertise centred on his knowledge of the history of the people, those naturalists, early physicians and anatomists. He was an excellent historian and his meticulous and accurately referenced research has come up time and again in discussions. In medicine, of many books I could mention, for me it was particularly the obstetric drawings of William Hunter and his mentor William Smellie that stand out. He bought battered copies of their great obstetric books and restored these with great skill. He became involved in the Natural History Society of Northumbria, based in the Hancock Museum, where he was, in the 80s, Chairman of the Society's Library Committee, working to make the library more accessible, and building it up and then, later, taking on the challenging task of Chair of Council. He became President of the Friends of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Robinson Library. He became very well known in Newcastle.

Dad came as a Medical Research Council research fellow working on early genetic associations of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The need for a specialist clinician in paediatric neurology became apparent. Dad was interested, and focused his attention on developing the skills for that post. Like his father he took a Harkness fellowship, and we all went off to Boston. This was a very important time for us all as a family. We renewed our friendship with old American friends, the Shankland family. Robert and I, aged 4 and 6, developed Bostonian accents, and best of all we got to know our father much better. We travelled all around the States, visited cousins in Canada, all in a Ford Estate Car for long trips, the longest was for three months, always camping and having many adventures, from the everglades to the sequoias of California, Robert's particular favourite a source of many wonderful memories!

Dad was appointed as consultant in paediatric neurology in 1972. He made a huge impact in many ways. Firstly

in the development of a multidisciplinary team, particularly for the care of boys with Duchenne's muscular dystrophy. Survival and quality of life were dependent on meticulous care, at home, in school right through to the intensive care unit. He built a skilled multidisciplinary team whom he admired greatly. The addition of more doctors to the team actually came very late, and I'm afraid Dad slightly boasted that they replaced him with four consultants when he retired. His multidisciplinary team approach and meticulous care led to the improved quality of life and life expectancy which he felt was his greatest achievement. The average age of death from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy in the northeast rose to 30 years, compared to just 19 elsewhere.

Secondly Dad was a natural teacher and mentor, following Osler's principles, always stressing the importance of getting the foundations of diagnosis and clinical care right, and his maxim "give the child space" to emphasise the importance of gait assessment for muscular dystrophy is still used as a key principle in training today. The many kind comments from those people he taught say this better than I can.

"It is thanks to David that I am a paediatric neurologist at all he opened the door for me to join the specialty as well as giving me the best training anyone could dream of. I still feel the strength of his example fantastic with children who all immediately related warmly to him. My memories of him squatting smiling at the end of a corridor with arms outstretched so a young child would run to him which they did with total enthusiasm so knowledgeable, hard working and conscientious, such a lovely mischievous sense of humour, and always very kind, a real teacher in every sense."

"He was of course one of the founder fathers of our speciality."

"He had great humanity and was patient, compassionate and gracious with his patients and their parents."

That makes it sound as if he was uninterested in medical progress and research; nothing could be further from the truth. He was always modest about his own contribution, and excited by improved knowledge because of what this could ultimately mean for the patients. Dad expressed slight frustration when he retired that he missed seeing the beginning of major benefits from medical therapeutics for these children. His retirement party was hosted by the boys and their families at Pendower Special School and featured a wheelchair hockey game where the medical team was roundly beaten by the boys. He continued to the end to hear of his boys, always sending his best wishes to the patients who remembered him very fondly.

He was immensely proud of the people who carried on



Vignette to the Pied Wagtail, *A History of British Birds*, volume 1. First location LB1797:192. David's description in the Vignette inventory: "Four eggs lie in a nest built on the ground under a bush, in full view"



David leading a *Thomas Bewick in Newcastle Walk*, Newcastle 2003. Photograph courtesy Hugh Dixon.

after him and of the breadth and depth of the burgeoning research, particularly the work of those people he knew and taught early in their careers, scientists and doctors alike.

Retirement allowed him to indulge his other passions. He thrived in his second career as a gentleman scientist and philanthropist over the last 17 years, from which he had a great deal of joy. How do I summarise this second career? People have spoken of his beautiful talks and the high quality of his research and writing for the Natural History Society over many years. In his time as their Chair of Council he took his role, representing the views of the Society on the preservation of natural environments, extremely seriously and worked tirelessly to achieve his goals. Influencing the 1997 Otterburn Public Enquiry towards a positive environmental outcome was one of his finest hours.

He was sought out to give his expert opinion about rare books, he identified important books that should be acquired, and helped to build up a number of different libraries and archives in the region.

And what of Thomas Bewick? Dad was part of the Bewick Birthplace Trust in the successful campaign for the preservation of Cherryburn and promoting the work of Bewick. From this “The Bewick Society” was born in 1989, and in 2003 Dad was heavily involved in the 250th anniversary celebrations of Bewick’s birth skilfully and knowledgeably editing a collection of essays, adding one of his own, as well as involvement in many of the events for the occasion. Most recently he completed a detailed study of Bewick’s ancestors, much praised for the quality and detail of his research, and he has written many articles for the Society. That summary really doesn’t do justice to his knowledge and love of the artist over the years, or the deep friendships with other like-minded colleagues which grew from it. He was thrilled to play a part

in returning some original Bewick woodblocks to Northumberland very recently, including engravings of the little bittern and tawny owl.

The one concern Dad expressed as he retired was that he would miss the children. Never patronised, always listened to and valued, he enjoyed their company immensely. June Holmes, a much valued friend and colleague at the Natural History Society, told me a lovely anecdote. David was “Chuffed as nuts” when whilst walking through the Hancock museum a wee boy said to him “Which one of the Hancock brothers are you?” His own grandchildren have been an immense source of joy and pride to him, and you may imagine how thrilled he was to know that his eldest granddaughter wishes to be a librarian.

Dad has said where he wishes to be, back in Scotland, in the Cairngorms which he first knew as a boy. We will take him there walking up through the Caledonian forest with its red squirrels, pine martins and capercallie, up to the open hills with short eared owls and ptarmigan, to the tops with the golden eagle and peregrine falcon. It will be the perfect place for him to be, and for us to remember him.



# Bewick's Art Treasures Return to Newcastle

*June Holmes,*



The Blocks delivered and unwrapped, 2014 © NHSN.

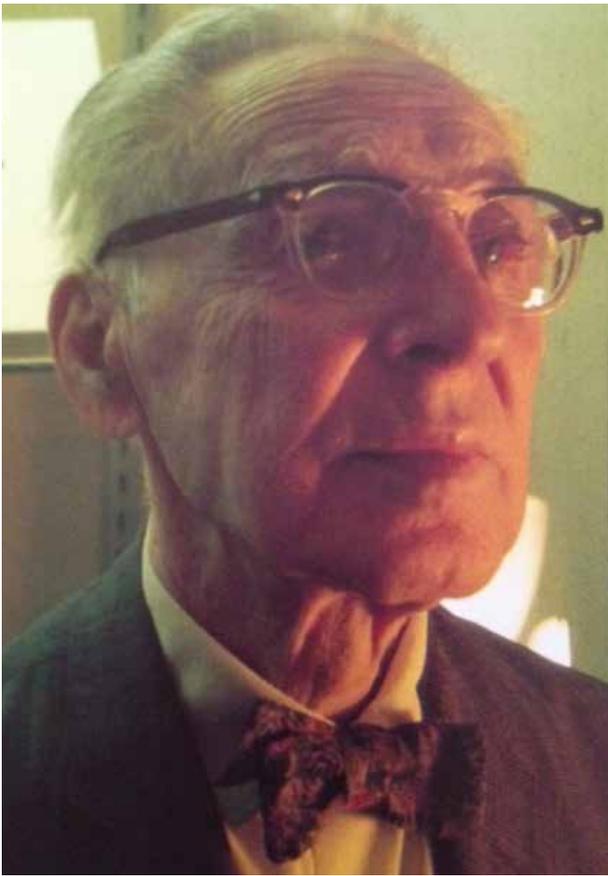
When a small collection of seven original woodblocks by Thomas Bewick, the Newcastle artist, naturalist and master wood engraver, was tentatively offered to the Bewick Society in August 2013 by a seller from across the pond, the search was on to find a good home for them. The vendors were keen for them to be retained in a North East institution, if possible, and after much discussion the Natural History Society of Northumbria expressed an interest in purchasing them. The Society already had an internationally-renowned collection of Bewick material, but did not have any examples of Bewick's unique masterpieces - the woodblocks. With the aid of a very generous donation from Bewick aficionado and philanthropist Dr David Gardner-Medwin and a small grant from the Bewick Society a deal was brokered to bring the blocks back to their northern roots.

The seven blocks had originally formed part of the treasured collections of the Bewick family. When Isabella Bewick, the last member of Bewick's immediate family, died in 1883 an assemblage of 1,350 woodblocks<sup>1</sup> was sent to auction in London by her executors. Neatly arranged in trays slotted into four wooden chests, this collection of blocks consisted

of Bewick's life work – the entire illustrations to all of his major works namely *British Birds*, *Quadrupeds*, *Fables of Aesop* and the *Memoir*. Fortunately, they were purchased by Robert Ward and Son, Printers (relatives of the Bewick family) for £2,350 and brought back to Newcastle. Ward subsequently collaborated with the publisher Bernard Quaritch to produce the five volume *Memorial Edition* of Bewick's works between 1885-7.

Sadly, by the 1940s Bewick's legacy of work had fallen out of favour. The woodblocks had descended down the Ward family line to Dame Irene Mary Bewick Ward (1895-1980), Baroness Ward of North Tyneside, the M.P. for Tynemouth. Having no interest in the collection she sent them back to London for auction at Sotheby's in 1942.

For the paltry sum of £300, Ben Abramson, an American bookseller in Chicago, made the winning bid on Lot 403 and the blocks left England in a ship bound for New York. Dodging German U-boats as they started on their slow journey to America, Abramson was extremely relieved when they finally arrived in Chicago. He had hoped to find a home for the whole collection in an American museum or institution



Paul Standard (1896-1992) photographed in 1987, aged 91.  
Photograph courtesy of Paul Kellar.

but, due to a decided lack of enthusiasm at the time, he failed and Bewick's legacy was, sadly, split up and sold to buyers all across the United States.

The noted American calligrapher and Bewick enthusiast, Paul Standard (1896-1992) was one of the first to buy woodblocks. He bought seven in total although he was of the opinion that they should have been retained by the British Museum. In a letter to Fred Anthoensen in 1943, he accused the institution of "its neglect of a National duty" and that the benefit of owning a block was "far outweighed by the loss to British archives." After his death, his heirs, based in New York, inherited the woodblocks. Wishing to endorse their uncle's condemnation of the imprudent dispersal of Bewick's heritage they offered them back to the North East before putting them up for auction again in the US. The Bewick Society, with the assistance of local antiquarian bookseller Anthony Smithson was able to bring them safely back to England in November 2013.

The blocks, which are all fine examples of Bewick's work, include the exquisite headpiece for the engraving of the Little Bittern from *British Birds: Water Birds*, which first appeared in the 1826 edition. There are six vignettes or 'tale-pieces' as Bewick called them - a Tawny Owl, looks out sleepily from his leafy bower; a boy waves his hat at an angry goose; a clever Crow drops stones into a pitcher to gain a sip of water; and a man and his pointer dogs look for sport, all to be found in *British Birds*. The earliest woodblock, a fox greedily watching some ducks, first appeared in *Quadrupeds* (1790) and a splendid Peacock sitting on a fence is illustrated in *The Fables of Aesop*.

Our colleague David Gardner-Medwin sadly passed away in June 2014, but not before he had time to enjoy seeing the blocks, arrange for them to be professionally cleaned and have pulls taken for our archives. The Tawny Owl and the Little Bittern were his particular favourites; both reproduced on the order of service at his funeral. David's wife also had bookplates printed, featuring the Little Bittern, to insert in the many volumes he donated to local institutions from his vast collection of antiquarian books.

There are other collections of woodblocks in the North East, housed in Newcastle City Library, the Laing Art Gallery, and at Cherryburn, but it is very rare that the opportunity to repatriate any of the scattered American blocks occurs. Thanks to David, they are a wonderful addition to the Natural History Society's archive, which now illustrates the full range of Bewick's work from drawings, to wood blocks, to the finished engravings and publications.



The Little Bittern from *A History of British Birds*, volume 2.

The blocks have already been much admired; they have made a number of appearances in the NHSN's Open Days, exhibitions and archive tours. Appointments can be made to view them via the NHSN Archivist, June Holmes, who is always delighted to highlight the life and work of the incomparable Thomas Bewick.

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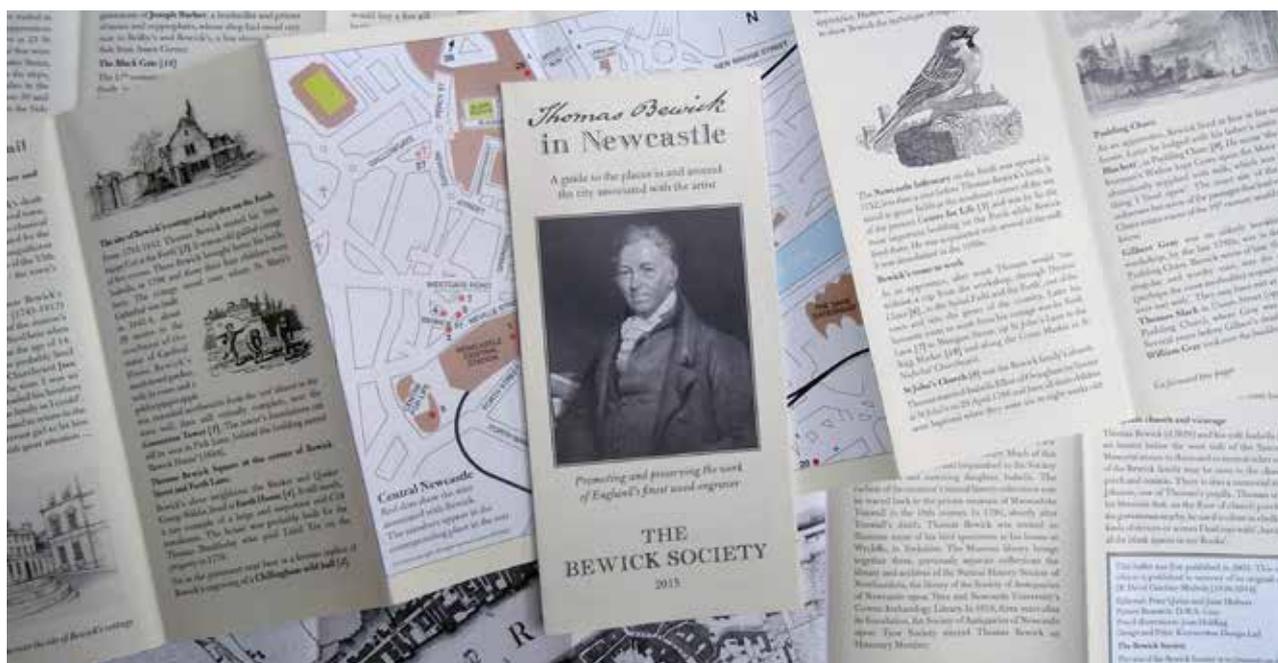
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## TRIBUTES

### *A selection of the many notes and tributes received by the Bewick Society*



Listening to a reading from Bewick's Memoir, near Cherryburn, September 2011. Photograph courtesy June Holmes.

David Gardner-Medwin was an inspiration and a support to so many people, myself included – and this is just a short personal note of gratitude. One of the happiest memories of my early work on Thomas Bewick is of staying with David and Alisoun at Heddon-on-the-Wall, crossing the river, and – following David's typically careful instructions – walking through the woods up to Cherryburn, as Bewick would have done. Another is of standing in Cherryburn yard, watching the birds swoop over the house and out buildings to the woods below, listening to their songs and calls and asking David what they were – he could identify every single one – a robin, chaffinch, angry blackbird, chattering magpie - like a friend who had known them since childhood, and he did it with such humour and charm that I have never forgotten it. It seemed like a magic trick, but it was born of a lifetime of careful study and enjoyment.

I came to respect his deep knowledge of natural history, particularly of birds, and learned a great deal from him about the early Newcastle naturalists. It was fascinating to read his article on John Laws, a keen amateur ornithologist as well as a Bewick apprentice, in the Spring 2014 issue of the *Cherryburn Times*. David was a tireless and determined researcher, tracing Bewick's forebears in Northumberland and Cumberland, bringing to life the villages, commons and coal-pits, cottages and churches and mansions, and the people themselves. His three invaluable articles on Bewick's ancestry are full of nuggets of D. G-M wit, and his delicate corrections of Bewick's own memory treat the old man with the kindness David showed to everyone he encountered: 'TB's many stories of his father are affectionate and informative,' he writes, 'but he seems to have been mistaken in thinking that John had been born by chance at Kirkheaton'. This gentle, meticulous tone also marked David's polite but firm corrections to

drafts, texts, manuscripts and proposals – in everything he did he helped those who worked with him achieve the very best. He remains an inspiration to us all.

JENNY UGLOW

I'm very sorry to hear the news about David. It doesn't seem possible that I won't see him in the Library again.

IAN BOWER, LIBRARIAN, GREAT NORTH MUSEUM: HANCOCK

The Bewick Society has lost a fine scholar, and a true gentleman. JOHN CAFFREY

Although I did not know David well, I recognised his absolute integrity, and was struck both by the extent of his knowledge and by his generosity with it. His various studies of Bewick were foundational for other students like me, providing a constant source of reference. They were both meticulous and well-judged, revealing the intellectual discipline of a professional lifetime. At the same time, he was extremely modest. He could not have been more helpful to me, in reading my work and (for example) making available his full transcript of George Atkinson's rediscovered manuscript. I am sure he will be very much missed, both for himself and for his great contribution to Bewick studies. DIANA DONALD

David has been such an important figure in the relationship between the University and the NHS and the development of the new museum. And of course such a regular supporter of our concerts over decades. He will be much missed at our meetings. ERIC CROSS, DEAN OF CULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

It is impossible to fill the space left by someone like that. HILARY PAYNTER.

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*Cherryburn Times* is normally published twice a year. We have an ambition to publish more frequently when time and material allows.

While this issue was in the final stages of preparation we learned the sad news that the long-time editor of the *Cherryburn Times* D.W.S.Gray had passed away. David's death was a great shock to friends and family as it was so unexpected. As our Consulting Editor he had helped recently with the preparation of the *Thomas Bewick in Newcastle* Leaflet. We shall miss his humour, kindness, generosity and expertise. The next issue of the *Cherryburn Times* will feature an appreciation of David Westerley Stephenson Gray in celebration of a true original. As ever contributions are invited from members of the Bewick Society.

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