



# CHERRYBURN TIMES

*The Journal of The Bewick Society*

## DR. IAIN STUART BAIN (1934-2018)

*by Simon Lawrence*



Iain and Sue Bain visiting Graham and Nina Williams's Weaver's Cot, Biddenden, Kent c.2008. Photo courtesy of the Hesterberg Press

A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Iain Bain (1934-2018) was held at St Mary's Ashwell on Saturday 29th September. The service was led by the Revd Robert Evans and there were readings by Donald Anderson, Robert Dalrymple and the Revd Patrick Forbes. Sarah Bauhan's tribute introduced a recording of ISB playing the Northumbrian smallpipes. Simon Lawrence of the Fleece Press and Bewick scholar Nigel Tattersfield paid tribute to their friend.

We are told in a printed newspaper Obituary\* that it was upon his retirement from hammer throwing – at which he gained the British Universities record – that Iain went into publishing, and secondly that as ‘a man of considerable personal charm and grace, he was genuinely interested in everyone he met’. I think these two strands define Iain's life; every one of us here will have been connected to him through his work and personal interests, so closely intertwined, and have been touched by his *personal charm and grace*.

In his 1996 unscripted Presidential Address to the Private Libraries Association, he said ‘I have been extraordinarily lucky that my working life has been intermixed with my enthusiasms ... sometimes these have been influential in my finding congenial work, and my places of work have often fed my interests. Nobody could have been more fortunate’.

In his childhood Iain had an awareness of his Scottish grandfather's books and their design, which was then bolstered by a bit of school printing. This led him on to a happy path that many here will recognise, learning to make books as a hobby after reading John Ryder's *Printing for Pleasure*, published in 1955. He also suffered that hopeless inherited ailment: he developed into a collector, leading him to buy and bring home a whole suitcase of books the week before he married Sue, which was, he wrote ‘a rather late and sudden warning to my wife-to-be’.

Iain's first job in 1956 as Sales Manager for the letterpress book printers Unwin Brothers (which also meant he could visit provincial antiquarian booksellers while at work) led to the gift of an 1836 Albion Press upon leaving there in 1966. He moved to work as Production Manager at the Bodley

*Continued overleaf...*

Head, working alongside the same John Ryder who inspired him and so many of us, and who had taken note of and encouraged Iain's hobby printing and developing scholarship; (in turn Iain fostered such an attitude among his own staff).

Iain began to print as a hobby at home under his Laverock Press imprint from about 1960 in that fascinating revival of private press printers who were still able to buy metal type and presses without difficulty; Iain's output typically involved books and booklets of up to 32 pages on scholarly subjects which interested him.

At the Bodley Head he became involved in the design of their books and moved on with ease in 1972 to become Head of Publications at the Tate Gallery. Good design skills and a shop floor understanding of production gave him the opportunity to enhance Tate Publications' output of both books and other printed matter. He was there until retirement 22 years later, in 1994.

As Iain mentioned, his working life was pretty much identical to his personal interests. He developed a taste for books and images, printers and publishers – from the early 19th c in particular, and he wrote an important Printing Historical Society essay in 1966 on the great 19th c copper plate printing firm of Thomas Ross, still going, which he had helped to relocate. In the process he saved important archives which had been threatened with loss. This involvement led to the discovery in the Ross stores of over 300 copper plates for William Daniell's *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, made between 1814-25, plates which the Tate Gallery now describes as *the highpoint in the history of aquatint engraving*.

The plates were owned by the the defunct publishers Nattali & Maurice, long absorbed into the Bodley Head. When Iain was at the Tate Gallery he arranged for Tate Publications to co-publish, along with Editions Alecto a final and definitive edition of the 306 surviving Daniell plates (just two were lost), the receipts from sales covering purchase of the plates for the gallery, 'with a little profit to spare' as Iain recorded. He had previously published under his personal John Boydell Press imprint, a group of 11 Gainsborough copper plates, a Stubbs plate *Tygers at Play*, and some Landseer plates, and this experience led to the happy production of the Daniell plates in 1978. Later the Tate repeated the exercise with eleven Constable images. It is greatly to Iain's credit that the Gallery was able to acquire the entire Daniell collection, the Stubbs the Gainsboroughs and the Constables. This was at a time when museums were prepared to accept that the actual printing surfaces – blocks or plates or stones – were in themselves important, apparently more so than is the case nowadays.

Iain was deeply involved in the setting up of the Printing Historical Society, of which he was a founder member and at his death its Life President. He played an important part in the early days of the Private Libraries Association, along with David Chambers, with whom he created much of lasting

worth over a long friendship. Famously the pair took an Albion Press into the British Museum to print 17 William Blake wood engravings, and did the same a few years later at the Tate with some Lucien Pissarro blocks owned by the Ashmolean Museum, delivered by taxi to the Gallery. Iain was a long term member, and past President of the Double Crown Club, and more besides.

Iain published other scholarly books in a collaboration with John Ryder under the revived Nattali & Maurice imprint, and later three books with Graham Williams, as Bain & Williams. After retirement he put his skills to use as a freelance – too often anonymous – book designer, most notably seeing through the press the enormous volumes of *A Highgrove Florilegium* and *A Transylvania Florilegium* for the Prince of Wales' Charitable Foundation and Addison Publications.

As a designer he became especially fond of the early 19th century typefaces, Bulmer in particular, and enjoyed making publications in a landscape format, recognising its typographical opportunity. I was fortunate to print and publish his penultimate book, on *Thomas Bewick's Last Autobiographical Notes*, a collaboration which couldn't have

been nicer, and for which he printed the block of the poorly old horse, *Waiting for Death*, though grimacing a little at the title. He signed his own name under a facsimile of The Master's and I was quite pleased at the typographical device.

He so deeply admired The Master as he called him but of course appreciated and encouraged a number of modern artists and engravers, in particular Rigby Graham, Joan Hassall, John O'Connor, David Gentleman,

John Lawrence, Leo Wyatt, Reynolds Stone and Richard Shirley Smith, and by the latter three artists had five engraved bookplates. The Stone bookplate bears the touching tribute 'Homage to TB', and Richard Shirley Smith's larger, 1980 bookplate alludes to Iain's deep pride in his Scottish ancestry, including the sailing boat 'Bonnie Lass' belonging to his grandfather working out of Wick in the 1890s. His grandmother came from Skye, which is over the water from Eilean Donan castle, also featured. In the present generation his family – Sue, Kirsty and Nina were an essential and central part of his life, and a happy family enabled Iain to be the man that we all knew.

Iain was a scholar and a book man through and through, a role model to myself and others; and many of us will recall his library which he preferred to call the book room, where piles of books sat on piles of books, where projecting quartos created perching space for new acquisitions and pictures, much of it apparently inaccessible to the unknowing and timid visitor.

Latterly the Albion was marooned, all but inaccessible and as we once stood at the entrance to the book room, a little muffled crash from some distant corner was recognised by Iain: 'Ah, there goes another pile', he chuckled.

Rather than list Iain's life and work I hope you will have

An honest man here lies at rest,  
The friend of man, the friend of truth,  
The friend of age, and guide of youth:  
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,  
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:  
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

#### 'Epitaph on a friend'

*Robert Burns*

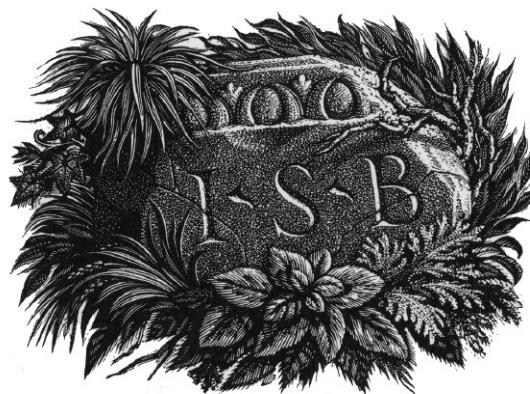


gained a flavour of the man himself. Every one here will have known different aspects of him; we also discussed fountain pens, springer spaniels, Brompton cycles, Mull, cycle touring in Scotland, Wheatstone concertinas, and all the time woodblocks and copper plates – and he was always ready to give advice on the Apple computer into his 80s. Emails typically arrived between midnight and one a.m., ‘toiling at the Bewick coal face’ as he sometimes said. He had known my grandfather well, which was an added flavour to our own friendship.

I mentioned Iain’s John Boydell Press imprint. Boydell was an 18th century publisher noted for his reproduction of engravings; Timperley tells us that when John Boydell died in 1804 ‘he was justly called the father of the arts in Great Britain’, and that ‘Boydell has shown, to those who desire to pursue his steps, that industry, patience, and perseverance, united to talents, and joined with conduct, are, humanly speaking, certain to surmount all difficulties or impediments’. These words could happily be applied to Iain.

Life is enriched by the people we meet, and all of us here have been enriched by Iain’s friendship, and his life’s example. Here in his own words,

*Give curiosity full rein, & let’s do something with what we find... Never be disappointed in the search. And always be ‘surprised by joy’.*



\*See Daily Telegraph 25th May 2018 (<http://bit.ly/2t55qOS>) and Jack Davidson in Glasgow Herald, 11th May. (<http://bit.ly/2MppEvA>).

## A TRIBUTE TO IAIN BAIN

*by Nigel Tattersfield*

While wondering quite how to start this tribute, my eye was drawn to a quotation by the Pre-Raphaelite artist and critic Frederick George Stephens. In 1880, he remarked confidently:

‘So much has been written about the life and art of Thomas Bewick, that it is almost impossible to add to the large body of criticism and biographical data which has been thus created and compiled’.

Bewick’s *Memoir* had been published, Thomas Hugo had compiled his two-volume *Bewick Collector*, and all was well with the world, all Bewick research done and dusted.

It may surprise some of you to learn that this was Iain’s view too, and I quote ‘The world had been told the story of Bewick a thousand times already. Everybody’s done all the work, why bother anymore?’

And, had it not been for a series of timely coincidences, there it would have remained. But in 1967 Iain bought an overstuffed scrapbook which had belonged to John Dovaston, a late eighteenth century dilettante lawyer with a fondness for folk music, ornithology and Bewick. Iain actually bought the album for the pipe tunes which Dovaston had carefully recorded, but whilst leafing through the album discovered deep within its pages a couple of Bewick letters and an original watercolour or two.

At almost the same time, an American, Gordon Williams, approached the publishing house of Nattali and Maurice, where Iain was working with John Ryder as editor and production manager, with a series of transcripts of letters between Dovaston and Bewick which he thought warranted publication. The die was cast. Following publication of that

book (1968) and fascinated by what the letters revealed, Iain began compiling a checklist of Bewick’s correspondence.

Now a checklist is all very well, but the searcher after truth (and Iain was no exception) needed a faithful transcript too. Nothing daunted, but blind to the immensity of the task ahead, Iain set out to transcribe every single letter to or from Bewick that he could trace. Not only those in public collections, in his own collection and in those of friends, but also all the letters that turned up in booksellers’ catalogues and at auction. This was an activity which would have mightily stretched an academic research team. Iain did not have the luxury of such support and the work took up the rest of his life, an endless hum in the background, or as he would have said, a constant pebble in his shoe.

I think what drove Iain was his sense that a void existed at the heart of Bewick scholarship. To be sure, enthusiasm, admiration and acclaim were far from wanting and the popularity of Bewick’s engravings had not waned over the years.

But the clamour of voices claiming to speak on Bewick’s behalf had prevented Bewick from speaking for himself. The correspondence was one way to connect with his authentic voice. Another were the workshop archives deposited in the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. And the third was the original holograph of Bewick’s own memoir which, having been remorselessly bowdlerised by daughter Jane for the first edition, had been quietly gathering dust in the British Library for over a century.

In 1975, Iain’s publication of Bewick’s *Memoir*, now complete and unabridged and with an extensive panoply of



Iain Bain at the Bewick Film Premier, Chicago, June 12th 1979.  
Photo courtesy of the Hesterberg Press

scholarly notes, was a watershed moment. As Bewick had restored the art of wood engraving, so Iain restored Bewick to us, not as an isolated genius communing with nature, but as an artist-craftsman running a busy workshop, a tradesman in the heart of a sooty city on the threshold of the Industrial Revolution. Here was Bewick, warts and all, a satisfyingly complex personality, combative but thin-skinned, talented but truculent, warm-hearted but occasionally hot-headed.

Reviewing Iain's edition for *The Times*, Brian Alderson remarked, 'At a time when the brave days of the Enlightenment are well and truly over, the honesty and beauty of this new edition of the *Memoir* gives a welcome opportunity for a return – however temporary – to what its author commended as 'chearfulness'.

'Chearfulness' was also a quality that Iain himself embodied and did much to engender in others. It buoyed him up through thick and thin and the trials and tribulations of his new job as publisher at the Tate Gallery. Undeterred by the manifold responsibilities Iain now shouldered, there followed much burning of the midnight oil as he turned his attention to Bewick's vignettes, and then devoted himself to the watercolours and drawings of Bewick and his workshop apprentices. Despite the efforts of F. G. Stephens in 1880 and David Croal Thomson half a century later, these had remained woefully underestimated and overlooked.

Iain cheerfully rectified the matter, locating nearly 1500 examples in collections both here and in America, but progress on the proposed book was slower than anticipated. Having raised public awareness of Bewick to new heights, Iain had become a victim of his own success and the calls on his spare time became more pressing than ever. The year 1978 marked the 150th anniversary of Bewick's death and Newcastle was keen to commemorate the occasion with a full

programme of exhibitions and lectures in which Iain played the leading part. There was yet another book to write; entitled *Thomas Bewick: an illustrated record of his life and work*, it reflected all this activity.

On its eventual publication in 1981, the long-awaited *Watercolours and Drawings* was deservedly hailed as a masterpiece of Bewick scholarship and a tour de force of contemporary trade publishing. However, there was no time for Iain to rest on his considerable cushion of laurels. No sooner had the reviews appeared than it was announced that the Cherryburn Estate, Bewick's birthplace, was about to be sold. A trust was speedily formed to raise funds to purchase and to restore the then-dilapidated site for posterity and Iain immediately co-opted as a trustee. He worked tirelessly for the Trust, writing articles, sounding out his museum and gallery connections, and using his considerable powers of persuasion upon potential patrons. The world was beating a path to Iain's door, literally in the case of a BBC North East film crew, which took over the book room at New Cottage to film *The Bewick Man* for a TV documentary. Iain was the understated, unassuming star of the show.

It was at about this time that I first met Iain, not, I should hasten to add, as a potential patron of Cherryburn, merely by chance at Christie's, where two woodblocks attributed to Bewick were on view prior to auction. Iain proved to be kindness personified, encouraging at every turn my own tentative steps towards Bewick scholarship, a generous master to a relatively unlettered apprentice.

In 1994 Iain retired from the Tate Gallery but his nose was still firmly pressed to the grindstone of Bewick's correspondence. By this time he had traced – and largely transcribed – over two thousand letters to and from the great engraver. Indeed, Iain's own correspondence was beginning to rival that of Bewick's, and I am sure there are many here today who still treasure his elegantly scribed letters with their headings by Reynolds Stone or Richard Shirley Smith. (The latter adorns the order of service you have before you today.) Very occasionally a delightful variant would arrive. One such heading, probably in reply to an importunate letter from me, announced 'Bain and Co. Purveyors of Privileged Information to the Bewick Industry. Terms Moderate: No Commission Too Small: Delays Certain.'

I used to tease Iain that his letters, his exquisitely designed Xmas cards and his own private publications with their distinctive mix of Gresham Display for the headings and Bulmer for the text, would one day, like Bewickiana, be sought after as Bain-iana.





The digital revolution saw the rise of email and the demise of such letters. Iain embraced this revolution with consummate ease and it gave wings to his latter career as a book designer. From my point of view, he was a joy to work with. My own contributions to the literature on Bewick benefitted immeasurably from his selfless involvement, as designer or consultant (and often as unofficial editor), in every single one of the titles. As recently as last year, he was a tower of strength in the production of *The Bewick Sketchbook of 1792 to 1799*, hailed by Antony Griffiths in *Print Quarterly* as ‘a beautifully produced and luxurious facsimile ... even the blank verso pages are reproduced in full colour’.

Over the years and along the way, Iain taught me nearly everything I know. That detail is everything; that a cup of tea is as nothing without an accompanying Kit- Kat or chocolate digestive; and that a timely prayer to Saint Anthony of Padua will enable the retrieval of lost things. But not – I am afraid – computer files, over which sanctity appears to hold no sway.

For the moment, and somewhat ironically for a man devoted to the book beautiful, computer files are where Iain’s transcripts of Bewick’s letters remain. The fervent hope is that they will eventually be published in book form. This I know

was his ambition and it would be hard to imagine a more fitting memorial to all that he achieved in the field of Bewick studies.

In spite of my best efforts to remedy the matter, Iain remained steadfastly reticent about his vital role in my own books. Those with eyes to see will recognise his input immediately. But for most people the modest, almost anonymous colophon to the verso of the title-page, I B (in caps) followed by t y p (in lower case) will be the only sign he passed this way. And now - alas - we have to add three more capital letters: R. I. P.




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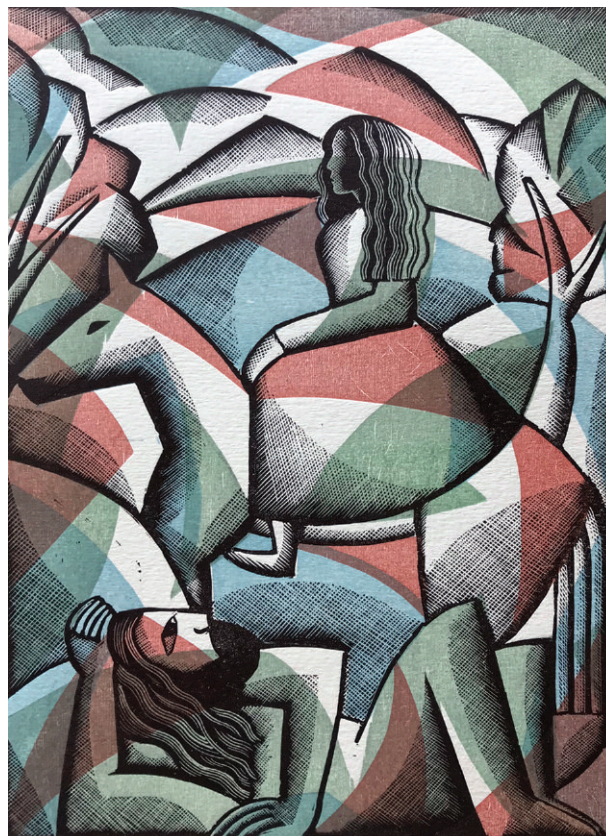
## ‘THOMAS THE RHYMER’

### THE BALLAD OF THOMAS OF ERCELDOUNE

*by Poppy Holden, illustrated by Chris Daunt*

The book of a talk first given for Jesmond Library in Newcastle, in December 2017, about the 13th century seer and adventurer, Thomas the Rhymer (Thomas of Erceuldoune) and his adventures with the beautiful and generous Queen of Elfland.

This souvenir book is the second in the series published by Belle Grove Press, illustrated by Chris Daunt, President of the Society of Wood Engravers. Published August 2018. You can find it here <http://bit.ly/2DiPf72>





# THE COALPORT ANIMAL SERVICE - A POSTSCRIPT

by Barry Newland

Since writing the article (The Coalport Animal Service Barry Newland, *Cherryburn Times Volume 6, Number 9 pp.1-4*) for this Journal and published in September 2016, I have been keeping a weather-eye open for further pieces from the service. Unbeknown to me until recently, the auctioneers Christies had sold in their Ceramic Sale, 08/12/2005, Lot 56 'Coalport Dark Blue Ground Oval Sauce Tureen and Cover and a Plate, circa 1800-10'. Their description referred to the Animal Service and named the animals-but there was no mention of Thomas Bewick.

The animals on the tureen are *The Lesser Dormouse* (393), *The Fox Hound*, (348) and on the cover *The Turnspit* (365) and *The Comforter* (364); all again being named to the underside of the pieces. These animals appeared in the 1st Edition of the *History of Quadrupeds* but the page numbers given by me in parenthesis refer to the 4th Edition which of course dates the service. The combination of animals selected strikes me as odd, three dogs and the diminutive Lesser Dormouse! That said, it is good to learn of more Bewick animals depicted in colour.

*The Domestic Cat* (231) on their plate is interesting in that it is another version, the other having been illustrated in my article. The latter example is in poor condition and slightly misshapen too, so my theory is that it was rejected by 'quality control' and another produced. Bewick's cat is unmistakable on both plates, however the backgrounds are markedly different.

There is of course another tureen extant together with a centre dish, serving dishes of various shapes and plates as well, but it is still not known whether ice pails were included in the service. I live in hope that if they were, at least one will come to light.

Apropos Christies neglect in crediting Thomas Bewick. I am reminded that Iain Bain in a letter to me in 2015 said, in respect of their collection, 'Perhaps Shrewsbury Museum could be persuaded to catalogue their collection more accurately? - 'the animal figures after wood engravings by Thomas Bewick for his *General History of Quadrupeds....*' or some such.' Toward that end I donated a 4th Edition to the Museum earlier this year; I hope that it does the trick and gives credit to where credit is due.



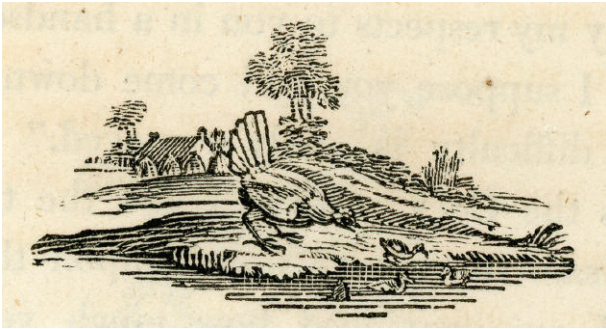
Photo © Christies Images-Bridgeman Images



# THOMAS BEWICK: BELIEFS AND VIGNETTES

*A lecture by Peter Osborne delivered at Newcastle City Library,  
Thursday 7th September 2017.*

A companion lecture was delivered on 1st October 2018 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication of the *Fables of Aesop*. This lecture will be published in the next *Cherryburn Times*.



**1. Hen and Ducklings (enlarged),**  
vignette first used in *Select Fables* 1784.

Amongst Bewick's vignettes for the early Gay's *Fables* there is a tiny image, known as *The Hen and the Ducklings*. The Hen looks on with evident alarm as the ducklings that she has just hatched swim off into a stream. We note the great skill of the apprentice Thomas Bewick in depicting the concern of the hen.

We turn now to a book written in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century but frequently re-published and very influential in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In *The Wisdom of God* <sup>(1)</sup> John Ray wrote the following:

We see ducklings, tho' hatched and led by a hen, if she brings them to water, they presently leave her, and in they go, tho' they never saw any such thing before; and tho' the hen clucks and calls, and doth what she can to keep them out.

John Ray is a key figure in the revival and spread of Natural Theology: the belief that the ecological perfection of the natural world demonstrated the wisdom of a divine creator. Ray particularly highlighted the ducklings' act as a proof of instinct by quoting the same story from Pliny. He made the story a summative illustration that "every part in animals is fitted for its use". It is an illustration of key importance in Natural Theology, quoted also by William Derham, whose *Physico-Theology* was almost as important as Ray to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus Bewick's little vignette seems to take on a special significance. But would the lad have come across such books and such beliefs? We know that his master Ralph Beilby was thoroughly committed to Natural Theology, not least because he expressed his belief firmly in the 'Advertisement' of the *Quadrupeds*.

Our attention has been directed in a particular manner to the various instinctive powers of animals—that hidden principle, which actuates and impels every living creature to procure its subsistence, provide for its safety, and propagate its kind. To discover more and more of this unerring guide, directing the brute creation to their highest good, by the simplest and most certain methods, is a pursuit worthy of the most refined understanding, and leads us to contemplate the wisdom and goodness of the adorable Author of Nature, who "openeth his hand, and all things are filled with good."

**2. Detail from the Advertisement**  
of *A General History of Quadrupeds*.  
The figures engraved on wood by Thomas Bewick, 1790.

It seems most likely that Ralph Bielby's library, which was used by the young Bewick <sup>(2)</sup>, would have included books by Ray and Derham

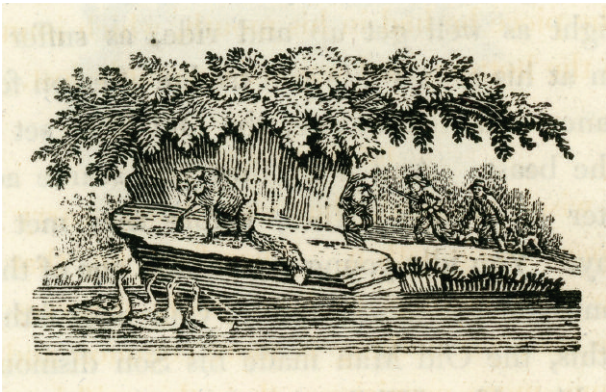
Before he left home for Newcastle, Thomas was taught by, and heard sermons by, the Reverend Gregson, whom he much admired. Gregson would probably have preached Natural Theology. Both Ray and Derham were Anglican priests and we know that the popular William Shenstone, who critically influenced Bewick's early vignettes, <sup>(3)</sup> recommended Natural Theology as a subject for sermons.

The books that Bewick illustrated as an apprentice expressed Natural Theology belief. Gay's own introductory fable of *The Shepherd and the Philosopher* is in such a vein, as are a number of Dodsley's, the other fabulist writing in *Select Fables*. Time and time again when we look at books that Bewick knew and admired we find the same underlying and sometimes fulsomely expressed belief. Thomson, his favourite poet, has been said, in his "Seasons" to have been a major force in the popularising of Natural Theology <sup>(4)</sup>.

We can therefore be confident that Bewick adopted the beliefs with which he was surrounded and that his *Hen and Ducklings* was a testimony to it. Tiny though it is, the vignette is extraordinary. Not only does an apprentice lad replace the traditional flourish of the decorative vignette with a picture, but he does so with a little animal storia. *Storia*, sometimes called *History Painting*, was seen as the highest genre of art so the vignette was given significance beyond its tiny scale. Bewick had made the vignette pictorial; he was also making it meaningful.

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We should be grateful that Diana Donald has, in her *The Art of Thomas Bewick* brought out for the first time the importance of Natural Theology to his natural history illustrations. Now we shall see that it has an even more overt significance to many vignettes. But why has this not been previously explored in the Bewick literature? The answer is probably that the early critical literature went little further than expressing wonder at his fine depictive qualities and his brilliance as a wood engraver and that later literature has been too embarrassed to emphasise his Natural Theology, even if they recognised it. Ecological cohesion was attributed to a completely different cause by Darwin, and Bewick lovers may therefore have wished to ignore Bewick's views. This has been compounded critically because writers have taken insufficient notice of what Bewick actually said in his prefaces and introductions where Natural Theology is thoroughly expressed. The same is true of *The Memoir* where a complicated Natural Theology statement introduces the little appreciated opinion part of the book in chapter 17.



**3. Fox, Geese and Hunters,**  
vignette in *Select Fables* 1820, p.20.

Once perceived, the influence of Natural Theology on Bewick's vignettes appears wide. In the two early books of fables, *Gay's* and *Select*, although there remains a preponderance of flourishes there is variety of pictorial vignettes. Among these Derham seems to have sparked at least two others. His major contrast between the reason of man and the instinct of animals is creatively illustrated by the Fox, Geese and Hunters. The fox by a stream is so instinctively obsessed by his prey that he fails to notice the planned stealth of those hunting him. It is the first among several vignettes that explore this contrast.



**4. Keep On This Side,**  
vignette *History of British Birds, Land Birds*, 1797, p.XXVI.

In one of the clearest, *Keep On This Side*, a blind man and his illiterate helper miss the sign which their reason and literacy should have respected but their little dog knows the way by instinct.



**5. Traveller with a Fire,**  
*Select Fables* 1820, p.270.

The early *Traveller with a Fire* represents not only the benefit of fire but more so the goodness of wind which has multiple references in Derham.

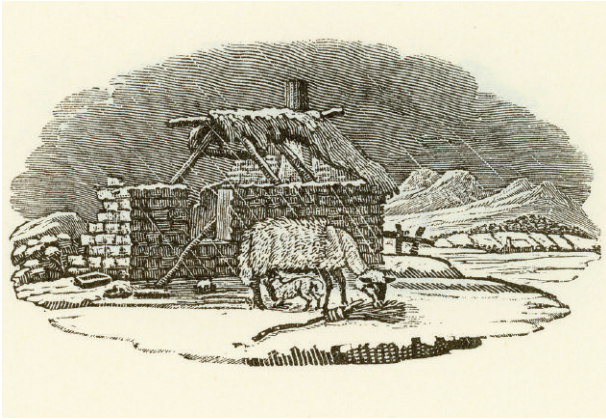
It is only when we come to the *Quadrupeds*, however, when Bewick, together with Beilby, has greater control of the publication, that we begin to find a more planned approach. There, notably, the key vignette, because it appears on the title page, is *Omne Bonum*.



**6. Omne Bonum,**  
from the title page of *A General History of Quadrupeds*.  
The figures engraved on wood by Thomas Bewick, 1790.

This represents the Natural Theology dictum that God's goodness is shown in the natural provision of pure water. In several passages Derham praises its world-wide distribution and the clarifying effect of its passage through strata to issue in springs. Not only does Bewick show this in the drinking hart but he blazons forth the double message by inscription: 'All good things come from above' and 'The wonderful works of God'. Here he establishes what is to become almost a guiding principal that his most important mottos are shown, as it were, as having the dignity and duration of being carved into rock.





**7. Vignette to the Shetland Sheep**  
from *A General History of Quadrupeds*.  
The figures engraved on wood by Thomas Bewick, 1791, p.59.

There is a mish-mash of vignettes in the *Quadrupeds*: flourishes, re-use, repetition, a few showing habitat and many showing human foibles. The closest illustration of Natural Theology is the vignette following *The Shetland Sheep* on page 69. This would fit perfectly as an illustration of Derham's passage,<sup>(6)</sup> on feeding in the winter and the dependence of young mammals.



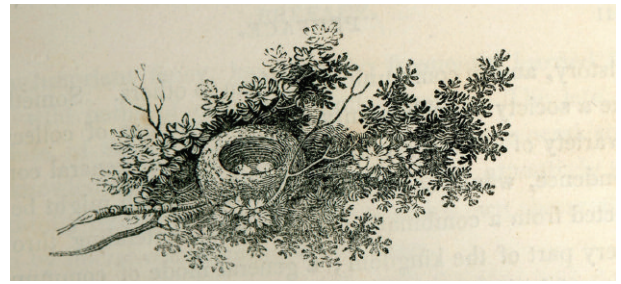
**8. The Tide-stone**  
from the title page of *A History of British Birds, volume one containing the history and description of Land Birds*, 1797.

*The Land Birds* goes even further in making a thorough Natural Theology statement in the prolegomena. The title page vignette represents a Newcastle tide stone but its real theme is wind. It ruffles the foliage and the bird faces it resolutely. Its benefits, as stated by Derham<sup>(7)</sup>, are clearly shown. One 'great usefulness to the world is how they maintain the salubrity of the atmosphere', as here by blowing off industrial fumes from the chimney. Other 'great conveniences of the winds' are to 'various engines and various businesses' especially to the sail. Bewick emphasises this last by contrasting the ease of sailing downriver with the labour of rowing back up into the wind.

The book is prefaced by a delightfully neat little bird's nest. This illustrates the couplet on nests in Thomson's *Seasons*, as quoted on p.XIX of the Introduction. Ray also writes of nests (pp.120-121) 'so elegant and artificial that it is hard for man to imitate them.'

The tail-piece to the Preface is a version of Gay's Shepherd and Philosopher with its emphasis on the wisdom of those close to nature. Both this and the head-piece to the Introduction echo its first words:

*'In no part of creation are the wisdom, the goodness and the bounty of Providence displayed in a more lively manner than in ... the feathered tribe.'*



**9. Birds' Nest vignette,**  
head-piece illustration to the Preface of  
*A History of British Birds, volume one containing the history and description of Land Birds*, 1797, p.III.

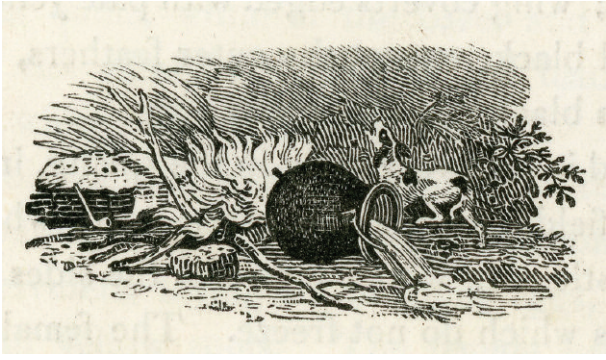


**10. The Farmyard**  
head-piece, Introduction to *A History of British Birds, volume one containing the history and description of Land Birds*, 1797, p.VII.

The bountifulness itself is reflected in *The Farmyard* with its profusion of birds. The *Introduction* closes with a paean to the instinct among birds, which is reflected in the instinct of the little dog in the tailpiece, Keep this Side. A traveller appropriately leads into the Contents which are rounded off by *Grata Sum* where the traveller takes his grateful brimful of god-given spring water. The whole sequence works closely with the Natural Theology inspired prolegomena.

A few of the Land Bird descriptions come close to Ray and Derham in a way that is supported by Bewick's tail-piece. An interesting example is the *Domestic Cock*. In 1797 Bewick takes as his subject the protective urge of the cock, whose hens, says the text, 'he leads, defends and cherishes.' In the vignette the hens peck contentedly behind their fierce defender. He makes his 'significant gestures' as Derham has described. Bewick interprets that in detail not only in pose but also in the plumage raised and flattened in threatening anger. After Bewick takes over the whole production of *British Birds*, including text, he retains most of the original but his tail-piece relates now to the hen rather than to the cock. She 'guards against the dangers that threaten them.'





**11. Dog with a scalded foot,**  
*A History of British Birds, volume one containing the  
 history and description of Land Birds, 1797 p.140.*

A large proportion of the original *Land Birds* vignettes relate in some way to Ray or Derham. There are 85 vignettes, though 10 are either flourishes or tiny depictions of a rock or such-like. Of the remaining 75 nearly half (35) can be related to Natural Theology. To take some examples: there are two of dogs in distress, one having just scalded its foot. Ray (p.55) describes how a dog uses its brain to get on a table and goes on to the fact that they show 'pleasure or pain' for example by the 'doleful significations they make when beaten or tormented.' Men pity them 'apprehending them to have such a sense of pain and misery as themselves have.' Bewick presents us with a number of vignettes which, one way or another, show dogs suffering or disturbed.



**12. The Bird-watching shepherd,**  
*A History of British Birds, volume one containing the  
 history and description of Land Birds, 1814-16, p.362.*

The little vignette of a shepherd watching a migrating flock combines three Natural Theology thoughts: the instinct of migration, the pleasure of watching nature, and the value of natural events to tell time, season, and much else. We note that bird migration was perhaps the most contentious concern of contemporary bird study.

In the *Water Birds*, written and managed by Bewick by himself, and published seven years later than the *Land Birds* we find increased emphasis on Natural Theology. The Introduction begins with the ecological observation of how

flycatchers and others are 'eminently useful to man by clearing the atmosphere of myriads of insects.' It ends with a précis of Derham's assertion of the value of nature study as adoration of the 'infinite wisdom' of the creator. We find a quite different approach to the prolegomena illustrations. There is a new emphasis on the inter-relatedness of things, and of people in particular. This reflects the value that Natural Theology attributed to study of nature as a moral guide. Derham, for example, speaks of two sorts of value. The first is the quasi-religious value of proving and therefore 'adoring' (Bewick's word) the Creator. The second is in seeing the relationship between things, what we call ecology. This has a moral implication where things depend on each other. It also has the same implication for mankind. Study of nature develops wisdom. Derham includes concepts like stewardship, sympathy, and even love.



**13. The Old Comrades,**  
*head-piece illustration to the Introduction  
 to the History of British Water Birds, 1804, p.V.*

Reacting to this aspect of Natural Theology Bewick starts his Introduction with the renewed friendship of two Old Comrades, the meeting up again of men who have been together in battles. The doves of peace make their comment in the rear. He ends the Introduction with that powerful symbol of Mutual Support of the blind and the lame. It follows Bewick's hymn to nature which

breaks through the trammels of pride, and removes the film of ignorance, it soars with clearer views towards perfection, and adores that Infinite Wisdom which appointed and governs the unerring course of all things.

Then, quoting the Newcastle-born poet Akenside:

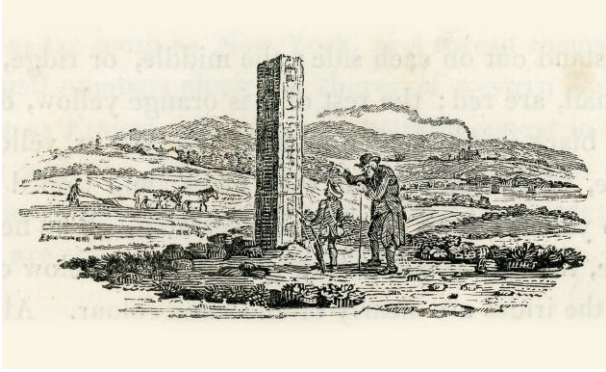
.... Thus the men,  
 Whom Nature's works can charm, with God himself  
 Hold converse; grow familiar day by day  
 With his conceptions; act upon his plan,  
 And form to his the relish of their souls.



**14. Sun worshipper,**  
*vignette A History of British Birds, volume two containing  
 the history and description of Water Birds, 1804, p.110.*

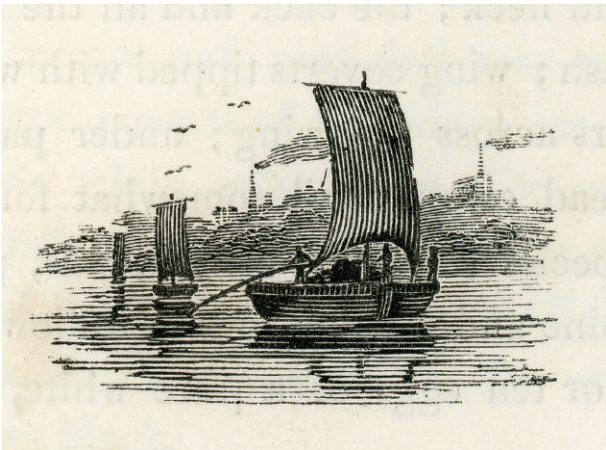


Two little vignettes, on pages 83 and 110, show a man paying homage to the sun. This reflects Derham's paean (pp 26-27) to its "noble, glorious and comfortable benefit". We begin to see, in the *Water Birds*, vignettes that show affection for the wisdom tradition, which is to become a major theme in Bewick's *Aesop*. On page 112 we see an ancient shepherd quietly reading under a venerable stone monument, and on page 220 a similar figure instructs a boy on the meaning of a pillar.



**15. Old man and boy,**  
vignette *A History of British Birds, volume two containing the history and description of Water Birds*, 1804, p.220.

The scene is given further meaning by the background contrast between the chimney belching smoke and the man peacefully ploughing. Bewick laments in the *Memoir* (p.174) the effects of 'the filth of manufacturies.' The theme may come from Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. Derham's praise for the benefits of wind is repeated more succinctly in the vignette on page 190.



**16. Three Keel Boats on the Tyne,**  
vignette *A History of British Birds, volume two containing the history and description of Water Birds*, 1804, p.190.

We have sudden revelations of the intensity of Natural Theology belief that drove Bewick. Having told how the Water Crake anchor her nest to a reed, "like a boat", he adds a footnote which is almost pure Derham.

Adorable is that divine wisdom, and infinite that providential care, which instructs these birds thus to secure the continuance of their species, and to provide for the safety of their future offspring.

The use of analogy in likening seacures floating nest with a boat, indicate the more subtle and creative way in which he is using vignettes to reflect on the ecology of Natural Theology. The Long-Legged Plover, or Long-Shanks, is accompanied by an image of a man crossing a river on stilts. The Little Stints who forage on the sea-shore are reflected in the huntsmen who also seek their food there. The Water Rail being "rich and delicious eating" is tailed by the dog stealing food from a kitchen dish.

The *Water Birds* generally uses vignettes more than the *Land Birds* to indicate the habitat, characteristics and behaviour of species. The Kingfisher with his long beak is reflected in the poachers with their trident. The Dipper or 'Water Ouzel' is unusually depicted a second time in the vignette where he dips on a rock. Birds are frequently juxtaposed to scenes of shoreline or river as appropriate. Comments on the feeding habits of the Oyster Catcher are juxtaposed with an image of women collecting shellfish.



**17. Women collecting shellfish,**  
vignette *A History of British Birds, volume two containing the history and description of Water Birds*, 1804, p.6.

From the beginning Bewick made vignettes that reflected his Natural Theology beliefs. Some, like *Omne Bonum* are direct statements of them. Others, to greater or lesser extent, parallel or were sparked by the texts of Natural Theology writers like Ray and Derham, both of whom he mentions in his introductions. The increasing illustration of Natural Theology theory in the vignettes of the *Water Birds* is continued, and treated much more thoroughly and creatively in the *Aesop*.

#### Notes:

1. RAY John, *The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of Creation*, 1691
2. BEWICK, Thomas, ed. Bain, Iain, *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick*, OUP 1979, p.47
3. Donald, D., 2013. *The Art of Thomas Bewick*, Reaktion Books.
4. See *Cherryburn Times*, Vol 6, No. 4, pp.9 ff.
5. CORNELL, Philip, *Newtonian Physico-Theology in Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, Vol. 72, 2009, pp.1-28
6. DERHAM, W., "Physico-Theology", pp.210 ff.
7. Derham, op cit., Chapter 2.

# ‘NIGHTINGALE’

by Peter Brown

Winner of the Bewick Prize, 2018 at the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wood Engravers.  
About the Artist, from his website *Little Brown Birds*:

‘The two constant loves of my life have been wildlife and art. I have loved being outdoors since I was a child growing up on the Belfast Lough, where the activity of the seabirds – the screeching of the Arctic terns, the cry of oystercatchers, the scurrying of the small waders along the shore – was an unending source of fascination. These birds became the subject matter for my drawings from an early age.

After attending art college and a spell of working in advertising, I completed a postgrad in illustration at St Martin’s in London. I then worked for many years as an illustrator, during which time I took numerous courses in printmaking. In 1992, I was asked by the The Times newspaper to illustrate a weekly column (*The Feather Report*) about birdlife in Britain, which I am delighted still to be doing. Initially, I illustrated the birds in scraperboard, but eventually I produced them as wood engravings. Currently, I am working mainly in wood engraving and Japanese woodblock and I also teach classes and workshops in both media.

In terms of inspiration, I am not a twitcher. I do not carry around a list of species to tick off, nor do I get particularly excited about a rare bird. For me the joy is to observe a bird, often quite an ordinary species, going about its daily business. A family of titmice being fed by their parents, the pecking order of a flock of house sparrows squabbling over food, the tiny adjustment of a kestrel’s wing as it holds its position in a strong breeze, the foolhardy bravado of a red grouse as he stakes his claim to the path you’re on: these are the things that make me think I’ve really seen something that day and that I want to portray. Sometimes there is a special connection, as when the gannet eyes you up while gliding above the deck of a cross channel ferry or a friendly robin hops around hoping for a worm as you turn the garden soil. These are the moments that motivate me the most.

I also love the surroundings in which birds are found: farmland being worked, a village churchyard, the distant sea between hills, a gathering thunder cloud in midsummer, a lopsided boat at low tide. These help to add a story element to a picture, and this is the part of picture making that often gives me the most pleasure.

Light for me holds the key to drama in a landscape. I especially like the low angle of the sun at either end of a day and throughout autumn and spring, as it emphasises the form of the land.

Of course, outside is where all of this happens. There is always something to find remarkable and something to take away at the end of a day of walking in the countryside. The scenes encountered lodge in my memory and re-emerge in pictures and prints.’

(<http://www.littlebrownbirds.co.uk/>)



Peter’s prize-winning engraving continues on tour with the exhibition. Dates at the beginning of 2019 are as follows:

Bankside Gallery, London

5–24 February 2019

Private View: Saturday 9 February,

Zillah Bell Gallery, Thirsk

9–30 March 2019

Private View: Friday 8 March,

Further details on the website of the Society of Wood Engravers (<https://www.woodengravers.co.uk/>)

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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. The committee of the Bewick Society is actively seeking a new editor. If you feel you would like to help out or if you would like to contribute to future issues in any way, please get in touch. We can be contacted via the Bewick Society email and address: June Holmes, Membership Secretary, The Bewick Society, c/o Great North Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT [bewick.society@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:bewick.society@newcastle.ac.uk)

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