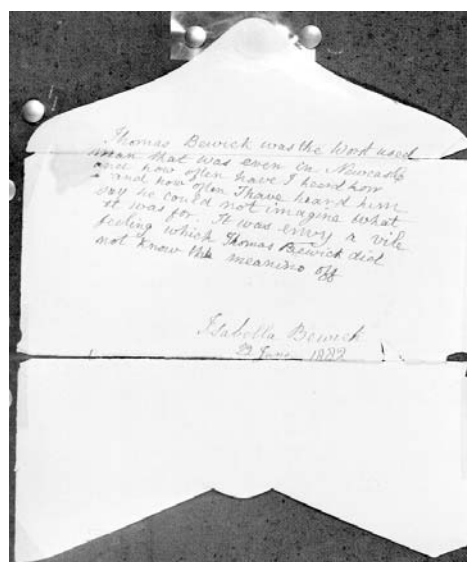




CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Newsletter of The Bewick Society



Outside and inside views of the envelope containing the Memorial reproduced on pages 3-6.

BOOKPLATES BY BEILBY AND BEWICK

by Nigel Tattersfield, reviewed by Dr Frank Atkinson

Published by The British Library, 1999 (ISBN 0 7123 4508 6)

Rarely does one find such a thorough-going dissertation on so detailed a subject as Nigel Tattersfield's book on the bookplates by Beilby and Bewick.

He has identified several hundred book plates and illustrated the larger number of these (over 300) with a wealth of assorted information and mention of more than 1,100 local names with associated social history.

There has been a tendency amongst writers on the work of Bewick to give full credit to his watercolours, his illustrative engravings: quadrupeds and birds, and his wonderful tailpieces, and then to refer belittlingly to his 'commercial work': bank notes, clock faces, silverware, etc.

Of course the artistic reputation of Bewick must perforce largely be judged by the birds, beasts and tailpieces, but the record has now been set straight in reference to his precise and beautiful detailing in such a wide display of armorial and associated work.

By bringing together the whole range of this material from the Beilby and Bewick workshop, we are given a feast of heraldic topics, followed then by the social history behind it all.

The depth of searching to which the records have been subjected is quite amazing and makes this book of great value to two entirely different audiences: those who wish to know of the wide range of Bewick's and Beilby's work and associations with their clients, and those who seek the detail of social history and northern genealogy which is presented here.

One cannot but be amazed at this amount of knowledge set out before us and we owe a great debt to Nigel Tattersfield and his years of painstaking research.

Sadly the reproduction of several of these plates fails to achieve the perfection which might have been expected from such a worthy publisher and it seems that a 'ha'porth of tar' has been saved in the preparation of an otherwise lavish production.

However we can all be grateful not only to the indefatigable researcher and author, but to all those who have helped in this great work, whether as workers in archives, or as editor and publisher of this fine record. It will surely never be replaced.

A MYSTERY SOLVED?

by Alan Angus

The Autumn 1994 issue of *Cherryburn Times* contained an article by me under the heading 'An Intriguing Document', on which I give details of an unsigned and undated manuscript note in the Bewick Collection in Newcastle City Library.

It consists largely of a quotation from Pinkerton's 'Scottish Gallery' relating to the tragic death at Taymouth of Thomas Bewick's former apprentice Robert Johnson, as described in a letter from Messrs Morrison of Perth. Morrison's letter goes on to say '... that Johnson had been bound apprentice to Bewick, by his father an aged Carpenter of Gateshead, near Newcastle¹: – that Mr Bewick, observing his uncommon genius for drawing, employed him to trace the figures on the Wood in his elegant *History of Quadrupeds*²: – that he had been employed about six months on his own Account before he agreed to go to Taymouth³: – and that his labour supported his aged parents.'

The writer of the manuscript has added the following footnotes:

1. There is an error in this statement. Johnson's Father only came to reside at Gateshead during the latter part of the Apprenticeship of his Son, who previously lodged with John Bell landsurveyor at the Westgate: – left on the arrival of his (Johnson's) parents.
2. This remark excited the ire of Bewick, who denied the fact; the writer can however vouch for Johnson's having drawn some of the figures, which were engraved in the *History of Quadrupeds*, he, perfectly recollecting seeing Johnson engaged in such work, and it strikes him (the writer) that he saw Johnson pencilling one or two, on the Wood, but his recollection is not so perfect in this, as in the other, viz. that Johnson drew some of the figures, which were afterwards engraved in the *History of Quadrupeds*.
3. Johnson had an apartment in Mosley Street, a little west of the Shakespeare Tavern, where TB called on him, with messages from his Father, and he, Johnson, took great pleasure in giving TB some instruction in Drawing, and drew him several hasty sketches to copy: – the annexed is the only one TB has preserved, more as a memento of the Artist than a specimen of his work.

In my original article I gave what seemed to me to be convincing reasons for thinking that the writer of the manuscript note was Charlton Nesbit, another of Bewick's apprentices. I could hardly believe that Bewick had ever gone to Johnson for instruction in drawing, but could think of no satisfactory explanation for Nesbit's statement.

Following publication of the article I received a letter from Nigel Tattersfield in which he wrote: 'I find it hard to believe that Johnson – fine draughtsman though he was – gave TB instructions in drawing. Also why should TB have frequently called on him with messages from his father? Could the "TB" actually be "JB" or John Bell?' After I had sent Nigel a Xerox copy of the manuscript he agreed that the initials were indeed 'TB', but suggested that 'TB' could be Thomas Bell (1785–1860), son of John Bell the land

surveyor. He went on to say: 'I have a vague impression the Bells resided in Gateshead, and if so it is not inconceivable that the seven or eight year old Thomas Bell would call upon Johnson with messages from his (Johnson's) father. In addition I cannot imagine Robert Johnson giving Thomas Bewick "hasty sketches" to copy, though for a young boy such as Thomas Bell that would make all the sense in the world.'

So the matter rested for four years, but in June 1999 Nigel raised the subject again. He wrote and told me that he had visited Gateshead Public Library and looked at Thomas Bell's grangerised copy of Atkinson's 'Sketch of the Life and Works of Thomas Bewick' (shelfmark L920BEW). On page seventy-five Thomas Bell notes that Robert Johnson lodged with the Bell family and gives an account of Johnson drawing some of the figures afterwards engraved in the *History of Quadrupeds*. Nigel's letter continues: 'What is interesting throughout the volume is that Thomas Bell habitually refers to himself in the third person as TB. It also appears to me that the handwriting throughout the grangerised "sketch" is close to the Newcastle Library manuscript note. . . . My proposition is that the TB of the drawing lessons was Thomas Bell and it was he, not Charlton Nesbit, who penned the Newcastle Library manuscript account, the details perhaps deriving from his father John Bell.'

A visit to Gateshead Library and an inspection of the grangerised copy of Atkinson's 'sketch' convinced me that Nigel's theory was correct, and that Thomas Bell's distinctive handwriting was the same as that in the Newcastle Library document. The major mystery was thus explained: it was the young Thomas Bell, not Thomas Bewick, who received the 'instruction in Drawing'. There are however one or two points that are still not clear: according to the note in Newcastle Library the Bell family was living 'at the Westgate', that is in Newcastle, at the relevant time. So were the messages delivered by Thomas Bell to Robert Johnson from his own or from Johnson's father? Then there is Bell's repeated assertion that 'Johnson drew some of the figures which were afterwards engraved in the *History of Quadrupeds*'; as he would have been barely five years old when the *Quadrupeds* was published, it is remarkable that he so perfectly recollected seeing Johnson engaged in such work.

Nigel has provided a possible explanation for this: he suggests that 'what Thomas Bell (and his father) saw was Johnson drawing up the animal figures for Dr James Anderson's periodical "*The Bee*". These were executed in the Beilby/Bewick workshop in 1791–92, and were very, very close to the cuts for the *Quadrupeds*. In 1792 Thomas Bell would have been some seven years of age (much more likely for a clear recollection) and explaining his father's assertions more adequately, especially the statement by Thomas Bell that his "late parent . . . believed he had been so employed." Thomas Bell mused in the Gateshead "sketch": "My only conclusion is, that Johnson . . . drew facsimile cuts to some of those inserted in the *Quadrupeds* . . ."

Memorial to the Misses Bewick
from the admirers of Bewick and
his Works, residing in Newcastle on
Tyne and Neighbourhood.

To the Misses Bewick

We the residents of the
town of Newcastle and Neighbourhood
who have undersigned this Memorial
earnestly desirous of doing honour to the
memory of the late Thomas Bewick in
his native district, beg to be allowed
to address you on the subject of the
disposal of his works.

We have heard with
much regret that it is your intention
to allow your father's works to pass out
of this town and neighbourhood and
we beg leave to state that in our opinion
it would be considered a great loss to the
district if the works of so great an artist
were to be removed from Newcastle and
were allowed to find a resting place in
any other locality than that which he
passed the greater portion of his life and
on which he has conferred so great
celebrity.

We feel that these
works ought not to leave this district
and would suggest that no more fitting
place of deposit could be found than in
the New Building of the Natural History

Society where many of the specimens of Birds from which Mr. Bewick's drawings were made are still preserved. The people of Newcastle would feel great interest and pride in possessing and taking care of these precious memorials of the great Illustrator of Nature who has so essentially identified Newcastle with his own fame and labours. And in order to give full effect to this suggestion we would propose that a room of the New Building be styled the Bewick Memorial Room in which his works could be permanently placed for reference.

We believe in concluding this Memorial that we are only advocating what would have been your father's earnest wish, that the Memorials of him and of his works should remain in the town where they were produced and for which he always shewed a great and affectionate regard.

We sincerely hope that you will pardon the liberty we are taking in thus addressing you, but we present this Memorial from a sense of duty we owe to the memory of your father and to the town in which he lived and laboured so many years of his valuable life.

Jonathan Angus - Mayor -

John Jorsey

Chas. M. Palmer

Thos. Court

J. J. Cowen

Milton Philpott

Henry Jorgensen

Ralph Carr Ellison

John Hancock

Walter H. James

Dr. Smith

Thomas

Robert

W. L. Armstrong
 Ralph Brown.
 Rev. J. Middleton.
 George A. Fenwick
 Mad. Woods
 James Wood
 John T. Atkinson.
 Norman Johnson.
 Ely. Linnaman Mawson.
 Richard Gail
 Delwey
 Thos. Gibson
 Messrs. Alexander
 Henry West.
 Frederick Hay
 W. Wardle
 J. Reid
 Addison Pott
 R. G. Green
 John Diddell
 Herbert Williams.
 J. Richardson
 Charles Green
 Rev. Watson
 J. McLeod
 Charles Murray Mawson
 John Johnson
 Edward Mathie
 W. Hathington
 W. M. Richardson
 W. M. Richardson
 J. H. Maclean
 Robert Brown
 J. M. Merson.
 W. Cook.

Margt. Armstrong
 Ulrich Alex. Peterson
 J. Fredoritt
 John Stutton
 Philip J. Mather
 Joseph Dawson
 Edward G. Clark
 John Gray
 Rev. M. M. M.
 D. P. Morrison
 B. P. Mawson
 J. P. Gardner
 E. H. Gove
 R. Dumble
 G. G. Gath
 G. Barrill
 J. Jackson
 William Peterson
 Thomas L. L.
 J. H. Scott
 J. H. Mawson
 Joseph Mawson
 Matthew Bowser
 James Selatin
 Matthew Proctor
 Henry Mawson
 J. P. Mawson
 W. M. Mawson
 R. W. Hodgson
 C. W. Rose
 James Crosby Anderson
 W. L. Anderson
 Edward Mawson

J. Quincy Ingraham
 Thomas Sewell
 Henry Nelson
 Rochester Water
 James Spring
 Alex. S. Stevenson
 Joseph Wilson Swan
 John Cameron Susan
 John Theodore Mosz
 John Bell Simpson
 W. S. Daptes
 Thomas Prober
 Wm. Bewick
 Frederick W. Hall
 Russell Bewick
 Young Dickinson
 Wm. Hall Esq.
 R. W. Tuters
 A. R. Dees
 Wm. J. Dawson
 Starfield
 A. J. Nichols
 Thomas Eddy
 H. M. Dodson
 H. W. Benson
 Geo. A. Hunter
 L. A. D. Shupley
 Chas. D. Howard
 Noble
 Adson Caros
 Louisa Fife
 William Smith
 W. Temple
 Samuel Dixon

Charles Henry
 Collingwood
 W. Wilson
 Sam. K. Wood
 Co. Councilor
 M. Gray
 W. A. Furness
 John H. Gale
 M. H. Bowden
 John H. Angus
 Rich. H. Holmes
 M. H. Hartman
 John W. Robinson
 Alderman
 Samuel Sam. Nichols
 Missions of the
 M. H. Stephens
 Geo. W. Gibson
 Wm. D. Stephens
 John Gutter
 Henry Scholesfield
 Wm. William Newton
 William Dimming
 M. H. Bowden
 James C. Lippin
 The Wm. J. P. Alderman
 Thomas Richardson
 Sheriff
 Dixie Brown
 Wm. H. Noble
 M. J. Hancock

The Memorial to the Misses Bewick, fourth page (signatures).

A NEW BEWICK MANUSCRIPT

Memorial to the Misses Bewick

by June Holmes

The Natural History Society of Northumbria was delighted to receive a most interesting and important document late last year presented by one of our long-standing members.

The four-page manuscript in the form of a 'Memorial' was sent to Jane and Isabella Bewick, the daughters of Thomas Bewick, petitioning them to deposit their father's works in the new museum of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne (now The Natural History Society of Northumbria). These sentiments are further endorsed by one hundred and forty four signatures of some of Newcastle's most distinguished worthies, giving a fascinating insight into the efforts of the local community to keep Bewick's works in Newcastle.

Thomas Bewick's daughters were of the opinion that their father's work was not appreciated in his hometown and had negotiated donating a substantial number of drawings etc., to the British Museum as early as 1875 (Bain, 1981). Obviously this fact was well known to local Bewick enthusiasts including John Hancock, a great friend of the Bewick family, and the 'Memorial' was an attempt to prevent the loss of the important drawings, prints and portraits. The building of the new museum (named The Hancock Museum in 1891) had commenced in 1880 and was seen as an ideal repository for a Bewick collection.

The text of the 'Memorial' is transcribed as follows:

Memorial to the Misses Bewick from the admirers of Bewick and his Works, residing in Newcastle on Tyne and Neighbourhood

To the Misses Bewick

We the residents of the town of Newcastle and Neighbourhood who have undersigned this Memorial earnestly desirous of doing honour to the memory of the late Thomas Bewick in his native district, beg to be allowed to address you on the subject of the disposal of his works.

We have heard with much regret that it is your intention to allow your father's works to pass out of this town and neighbourhood and we beg leave to state that in our opinion it would be considered a great loss to the district if the works of so great an artist were to be removed from Newcastle and were allowed to find a resting place in any other locality than that in which he passed the greater portion of his life and on which he has conferred so great celebrity.

We feel that these works ought not to leave this district and would suggest that no more fitting place of deposit could be found than in the New Building of the Natural History Society where many of the specimens of Birds from which Mr. Bewick's drawings were made are still preserved. The people of Newcastle would feel great interest and pride in possessing and taking care of these precious memorials of the great

Illustrator of Nature who has so essentially identified Newcastle with his own fame and labours. And in order to give full effect to this suggestion we would propose that a room of the New Building be styled the Bewick Memorial Room in which his works could be permanently placed for reference.

We believe in concluding this Memorial that we are only advocating what would have been your father's earnest wish, that the Memorials of him and of his works should remain in the town where they were produced and for which he always shewed a great and affectionate regard.

We sincerely hope that you will pardon the liberty we are taking in thus addressing you, but we present this Memorial from a sense of duty we owe to the memory of your father and to the town in which he lived and laboured so many years of his valuable life.

The 'Memorial,' which is undated, has to have been written before Jane Bewick died on the 7th April 1881 at the age of ninety-four and before the British Museum received its collection. The first signatory 'Jonathan Angus – Mayor,' was in office from November 1880 to November 1882, thus narrowing the date of the 'Memorial' to between November 1880 and April 1881.

Unfortunately the petition was not effective and although there is very little documentary evidence existing as to the transactions between the Bewick sisters and the British Museum, a substantial collection of Bewick's work was sent to London shortly after Jane died. Isabella was obviously still not convinced of the sincerity of her fellow townspeople and wrote to that effect on the envelope in which the 'Memorial' had been hand delivered.

'Thomas Bewick was the worst used man that was ever in Newcastle and how often have I heard how – and how often I have heard him say he could not imagine what it was for. It was envy a vile feeling which Thomas Bewick did not know the meaning off (sic). Isabella Bewick 22 June 1882.'

It was a great disappointment that part of the collection left Newcastle after such an eloquent letter supported by a long list of distinguished petitioners. The Mayor, Jonathan Angus, the Town Clerk, Hill Motum, the Sheriff Thomas Richardson, a plethora of Aldermen and councillors, of which could be counted Joseph Cowen MP, had all put their names to this proposal. The Natural History Society was strongly represented with the signatures of John Hancock, Colonel John Joicey, Lord William George and Lady Armstrong, Ralph Carr Ellison, Thomas Burt (the MP for Morpeth), and Joseph Wilson Swan (inventor of the incandescent filament electric lamp) to name but a few.

Although the Memorial was unsuccessful in retaining the complete works of Bewick in Newcastle. a substantial

part of the collection eventually did remain in the City with the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne. When Isabella Bewick died on the 8th June 1883, at the age of ninety-three, her executors Joseph Crawhall and John Wheldon Barnes were entrusted with the undertaking to dispose of her father's works to a suitable institution; that privilege fell to the Natural History Society.

As a finale to the story, a letter, received in 1883 by John Hancock from G. F. Westmacott, was ordered to be read and noted in the minutes of a Natural History Society committee meeting dated 6th March 1889. The minutes detail the events leading up to the arrival of the Isabella Bewick Bequest to the Natural History Society suggesting that even on her death bed Isabella would not make the decision herself to leave the bequest in Newcastle. She had apparently originally willed the remainder of the collection to her cousin Robert Ward (c.1821-1883) but on his demise shortly before her own death she left this difficult decision in the hands of her executors. The minutes read as follows:

'The following letter was read by the Secretaries at the request of Mr Josh. Crawhall & was ordered to be placed on the minutes

Newcastle upon Tyne

7th November 1883

Dear Sir

're Isabella Bewick decd.'

At Mr J. W. Barnes request I write to explain to you that under the previous wills of the deceased Mr Robert Ward was the residuary legatee. All the drawings prints etc. besides those previously given to the British Museum were left to that institution and the portraits etc. to different individuals, but in consequence of the death of the residuary legatee Mr R. Ward, a new will was necessary & in making that will Mr Joseph Crawhall, Mr Barnes & myself were consulted by the deceased at her house at which interview Mr Barnes suffered & persuaded the deceased to leave the portraits, prints and drawings to the Executors "in the belief & confidence that they will present or dispose of the same to such institution or institutions which in their uncontrolled discretion they think will best perpetuate & keep alive the memory of my late father Thomas Bewick and his ability" and but for this persuasion neither of the Executors would have had the power to have presented to the Newcastle upon Tyne Museum anything whatever.

Yours faithfully

G. Fred Westmacott

John Hancock

4 St. Mary's Terrace'

It would appear, from this letter, that even the great friendship she had with John Hancock and his sister Mary Jane, could not overcome Isabella Bewick's mistrust of her Newcastle contemporaries and she could not fully commit herself to agreeing to leave her father's works in his own hometown. It was therefore fortuitous for the City that the executors, as explained in a letter to John Hancock in 1884, 'regarded the claims of Newcastle upon Tyne as paramount and have therefore selected the

articles enumerated in the schedule annexed, and now beg to offer them as a gift to the Newcastle upon Tyne Natural History Society'; where the collection resides to this day.

References:

BAIN, I. (1981) *The Watercolours and Drawings of Thomas Bewick and his Workshop Apprentices*. 2 Vols. Gordon Fraser. London.

The Man Who Made Beamish

by *Frank Atkinson*

Northern Books (ISBN 0953 5730 01)

We must draw the attention of our readers to this fine book by our President. From the point of view of the *Cherryburn Times* the book only mentions in passing the saving of Cherryburn and its opening as Thomas Bewick's Birthplace Museum.

Dr Atkinson is widely known for the conception and construction of the Open Air Museum at Beamish, County Durham, in the North East of England. In this book he sets down something of his gargantuan and protracted struggle to produce this pioneering regional museum.

Bewick Society Activities 2000

20 January Hatton Reception at 'Thomas Bewick' Exhibition.

1 March *Cherryburn Times* copy date – have you a contribution?

22 June Annual General Meeting.

Guest speaker: Prudence Bliss.

July Visit to Ovingham Church and Cherryburn.

1 October *Cherryburn Times* copy date – any contributions?

October 'Enthusiasms': an evening of short talks by members.

7 November Winter Lecture: by Iain Bain, Thomas Bewick's Letters. Literary and Philosophical Society.

Cherryburn Times is published twice a year. Contributions are invited particularly from members of the Bewick Society.

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