

# Haltwhistle History Group Newsletter

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All your history group news, reports, upcoming events and information FREE in your inbox after every meeting.

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**Edition 1, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Edited by Steve Gibbon

Hello everyone, I thought I would start a simple newsletter for the history group so if you cannot make a meeting you can catch up as it were. I can also let you know about sources of additional information and relevant related events if I have any.

I will very much be dependent on 2 sources to make this work:

1. My notes taken at a meeting and any other information people can supply particularly from those people who may have contributed to a discussion or presentation. As I did not have the idea for the newsletter until after the last meeting my notes this time round are a little thin.
2. You, the reader. If you have anything you would like to see in this newsletter, please provide me with information.

I can't do all of this on my own so all contributions welcome please.

I can be contacted via email at [steve@stevegibbon.co.uk](mailto:steve@stevegibbon.co.uk) or by phone on 01434 344383.

Also feel free to mail this on to anyone else who might be interested or print a copy for them. If you did not receive this directly from myself then I do not have your email address. If you want to ensure you are on the circulation, please contact me by email and ask to be put on it. Equally if you do not want to be on the circulation let me know and I will remove you from it. Thanks.

In this newsletter:

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## Introduction

We are grateful to Lorna Silverstein, Margaret Forster and others (sorry I don't have all of your names) for setting up this group. What started in month 1 with 6 people has grown to 25+ and is a great mix of historians, those interested and want to learn more, the indigenous and the incomers. What everyone has in common is a thirst to find out more about the history and heritage of Haltwhistle and its surrounding parishes.

At the moment the group meets once a month on the second Wednesday of the month at Haltwhistle library on the second floor. Meetings gather at 1030 for 1100 and will finish between 1200 and 1230. Refreshments are available from 1030.

## Castles

Led by Lorna we had a very interesting discussion and a home-made map on the floor about local Castles including:

- Bellister
- Thirlwall
- Blenkinsopp
- Langley
- Ridley Hall
- Haltwhistle
- Featherstone
- Unthank
- Willemoteswick

I would provide more information if I had thought to take more notes, but we learned there are many uses of the word castle for various buildings ranging from hunting lodges, fortified buildings and mansion houses, through to castles authorised by the Crown. Not all of the buildings we covered are actual 'Castles' authorised by the Crown.

We talked about tunnels (some secret, some simply mine tunnels, others escape tunnels), headless horsemen (a story I subsequently discovered has its variants all around the country), Ghosts and more.

Little is known about Haltwhistle Castle because other than some possible fortified bank remnants little remains although we do have Castle Hill and Drive.

In the discussion on Featherstone Castle we digressed into Headless Horsemen and the Prisoner of War Camp – all of which was fascinating.

You can find out more on wiki and elsewhere about almost all of the other sites:

- Bellister [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellister\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellister_Castle)
- Thirlwall [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirlwall\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirlwall_Castle)
- Blenkinsopp [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blenkinsopp\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blenkinsopp_Castle)
- Langley [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langley\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langley_Castle)
- Ridley Hall [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridley\\_Hall,\\_Northumberland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridley_Hall,_Northumberland)
- Featherstone [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Featherstone\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Featherstone_Castle)
- Featherstone PoW Camp <https://haltwhistle.org/wotbott/index.html>
- Unthank [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unthank\\_Hall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unthank_Hall) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unthank,\\_Haltwhistle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unthank,_Haltwhistle)
- Willemoteswick No significant entry found

A full list of Castles in Northumberland can be found here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_castles\\_in\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_castles_in_England) - scroll down the page until you reach the County of Northumberland.

There is a brief introduction to the history of Haltwhistle here: <https://northumberlandparishes.uk/haltwhistle/history> and here: <https://www.visithaltwhistle.com/turbulent-past>

Many thanks to those that contributed to an excellent session – I certainly learned something today.

## Library

A small reference library of books, maps and pamphlets has already been built up. For now, it will be available at each meeting or via Jan Millward. A sign in/out book will be used to record who has what so books can be kept track of. At some point I will include a list of available publications with a future newsletter.

## Heritage Exhibition

With the support of the Haltwhistle Partnership, who have provided free premises, and the support of The Heritage Centre Bellingham, Stan Owen and Steve Gibbon are establishing a temporary heritage exhibition in the downstairs room of the Haltwhistle partnership office. It should be open from Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 10am to 2pm initially with volunteer induction on the Monday 17<sup>th</sup> at 10am. All welcome.

In this first exhibition there is a range of topics covering Haltwhistle as it used to be:

1. 100 years of the LNER and leisure travel and holidays by train.
2. The Photographs of Gibson of Hexham for this area.
3. 85 years since Alfred Wainwright (of Pennine Way and Lake District Fell walks fame) visited Haltwhistle.
4. Some photographs of nearby villages by W P Collier of Bellingham.

Three digital screens will supplement the static displays with more images and adverts from around 100 years ago including one for the Gem Cinema in Haltwhistle.

I look forward to seeing you all visit. This is a taster to see if there is appetite in the area for a permanent Heritage Centre so if you are interested in being involved in this future idea please get in touch.

We also need 2 volunteers a day to man the exhibition and greet visitors. If you feel you can contribute in addition to those already signing up you would be very welcome. Contact Julie Gibbon [juliegibbon@icloud.com](mailto:juliegibbon@icloud.com) or Steve Gibbon [steve@stevegibbon.co.uk](mailto:steve@stevegibbon.co.uk) or pop down to the exhibition and leave your details. Thank you.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 1030 for 1100 in the library first floor when Colin Mills will be talking to us about the well documented visit of Edward I to the area. All welcome.

If you have ideas for future meetings please let us know. At a future meeting we will discuss the sub-groups some of you expressed interest in forming or working with.

## Deadline for contributions

The deadline for submitting contributions is the weekend after any monthly meeting for circulation the week after the event. You may also provide an image with your news contribution for inclusion in the newsletter and email it to me. Please make sure the image is your own or you have copyright right to it.

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