

Haltwhistle History Group Newsletter

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

Edition 5, 16th December 2023

Edited by Steve Gibbon

Hello everyone, here is the fifth newsletter of the History Group with a reminder that 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.
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 also apologise that there was no newsletter after the November meeting. Due to an operation, recuperation and then generally being very busy I simple did not get around to it.

Please note that the group meetings have moved to the first Wednesday of the month due to a clash of meetings in the large room of the library. We now meet in the Community room of the Hospital which at the moment is provided for free, is on the ground floor and accessible. It is an excellent venue with a small kitchen for tea and coffee preparation.

I can be contacted via email at 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. Thank you.

In this newsletter:

1. Apologies
2. Structure for 2024
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4. Library

Happy Christmas and New Year to one and all and we will see you all in January.

Apologies first

There is no doubt that the December meeting dissolved into chaos and lacked structure. Many had a part to play in that, including myself and we are sorry for the

lack of focus and preparedness. We do not intend this to happen again. To that end there were some consultations and phone calls and a few people gathered to make some decisions on our behalf so that the group can move forward constructively under Lorna's chairmanship whilst retaining some of the informality and involvement of everyone. I will outline what we are recommending below.

Structure for 2024

We sought to address some issues that have arisen:

1. A chaotic last meeting that went off track and the need to add structure to the meetings.
2. Lack of clarity for the programme for next year.
3. The need to have a small committee to drive things forward.
4. The need to curtail too many topics on the programme and agenda and for research.
5. Clarity and structure for everyone attending meetings.
6. The need to balance those born and bred in Haltwhistle (with a lot of local knowledge), those incomers (this is most of us, including myself) who want to find out more about Haltwhistle and those interested in undertaking historical research.

It is not an ideal democratic approach but to get the group started and functional a small self- selected committee has been formed. Once the group is functioning next year there can be elections to the committee if that is what people wish. We felt in the first full year it was necessary to provide structure and organisation to drive things forward and hence this approach. The suggested committee is therefore:

Chair	Lorna Silverstein (lornasilverstein03@gmail.com)
Vice-chair	Maureen Hardcastle
'Treasurer'	Jan Millward (janmillward@btinternet.com) (Jan will hold donations of funds for tea/coffee and any expenses such as room hire)
Publicity	Colin Mills (noel.mills20@gmail.com), Wendy Bond, other(s). (This team needs someone familiar with Facebook.)
Digital	Steve Gibbon (steve@stevegibbon.co.uk), Zoe?
Library	Jan Millward (janmillward@btinternet.com)
Programme/speakers	Led by Colin Mills for this coming year. (noel.mills20@gmail.com)

If you want to help with any of these roles, please contact the relevant person or Lorna.

Donations (totally optional, any amount you feel you can afford including nothing) will be collected at the end of a meeting via Jan. There will be no bank account initially and the 'treasurer' role will be informal. Donations will be used to support our activities including tea/coffee/biscuits/milk, any room hire expenses we may incur (although the community room is free to use currently), any speaker expenses (these will always be offered to external guest speakers, but many do not take them), and any reasonable

purchases for the library that might be suggested. 50p each would go a long way to supporting the group for example.

Meetings will be structured and managed:

1. Lorna (or in her absence, Maureen) will chair all meetings.
2. If people wish to speak or raise a point they will do so through the chair.
3. The chair will be empowered to curtail interruptions, waffle and off topic discussions and we will all support the Chair in doing so.
4. The meetings will start at 1030. The Chair will introduce any speaker and we will give the speaker 40-60 minutes including discussion and Q&A.
5. Once the speaker is finished with the main topic for the day the Chair can manage any informal updates, other discussions or questions. We will then finish with social interaction and tea/coffee.
6. Any 'committee' business will not form part of the meeting, but the Chair will keep the group updated on any developments or recommendations.
7. Any 'committee' or sub-group meetings to organise the group, the programme, or research/exhibitions, will happen out of the meeting and take place elsewhere.

Initially, to keep things simple and move the group forward:

1. We will have no bank account or constitution (so are unable to apply for any grant funding in this first year).
2. Elections to a committee will not happen until the end of the 2024 year once the group is functioning in a structured manner.

I will continue to keep you informed via this newsletter (I do not have an extensive list of names so please let me know if you are seeing this second hand and I can add you to the mailing list). I am happy to add recollections and anecdotes to the newsletter if you have any.

I have also offered to build a simple website and will host a Wiki (as in Wikipedia) where any research, information, recollections, and anecdotes and be held permanently and anyone can contribute.

Other topics will be managed separately to simplify and declutter the main meeting:

1. Anyone interested in a Haltwhistle Heritage Centre and Archive should get in touch with myself. We will maintain relationships with the History Group but will function separately to drive this initiative forward.
2. A vast range of topics for research have been suggested. This is unmanageable and over ambitious. We must also recognise that most attendees may not be interested in research but just want to share or learn more about Haltwhistle's past. By all means if a sub-group of people wish to research a particular subject or create an exhibition, they are welcome to do so and will be supported. Their finding can be presented to the group as a future programme topic and an exhibition could be put on. These sub-group discussions will not otherwise form part of the main meeting and will be created purely on demand and interest.

A small publicity group will work to keep people informed and work to attract members and visitors to the meetings. A small paper-based programme will be printed once the programme is confirmed (based on the typical format for printed WI programmes). However, in this day and age most people use Facebook as a source for information and the group will utilise that as a tool. If you can help with this, please contact Colin Mills or Lorna Silverstein.

We hope you will welcome and support this approach and as you will see from the draft programme later in this newsletter there is an opportunity to feedback on this in January.

2024 Meetings

A draft programme has been put together from the very many ideas suggested. Speakers have not all been confirmed yet and we are working to do so as quickly as possible.

Meetings will take place in the Hospital Community Room at 1030 on the first Wednesday of every month unless indicated. Some better weather meetings may include guided walks in the fresh air. We may put on additional talks for visitors in the middle of the year – perhaps in evenings – but will tackle this later.

January 9th (the SECOND WEDNESDAY) **Social meeting**, discussion and feedback about all of the items discussed above.

February 7th **The Alston Line** (Confirmed speaker)

December 11th **A Trip down Memory Lane** – a facilitated discussion by Steve Gibbon (Confirmed). If you have any burning topics for discussion, please let me know. **To be followed by a Christmas Lunch social event.**

Other programme events to be confirmed asap:

The POW Camp at Featherstone
The Story of Kilfrost
The Haltwhistle Burn
Railways (excluding the Alston Line but may include Lord Carlisle's Line)
A second guided town walk
A locally based Roman History talk
Schools and Sunday Schools history in Haltwhistle
Pubs, Clubs and hotels of Haltwhistle

We will not meet in August during the Summer Holiday season.

Library

A reminder from Jan that some people may have borrowed books from the library and may not have signed for them or returned them. If you have a book from the library, could you please just let Jan know that you have it and will be hanging on to it or returning it. Thank you. Jan can be contacted at janmillward@btinternet.com

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. The list of available publications is provided below.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
Altwesel at the First Millenium 1000 AD (2 copies)	Tony Storey
Archaeology in Northumberland National Park	Paul Frodsham
Bishop Ridley and the Reiving Ridleys	The Black Bull
The Church at Hautwysel	Tony Storey
Enjoy Haltwhistle's 8 th Walking Festival	Haltwhistle Walking
Featherstone Castle, Northumberland	John Cornforth
Haltwhistle and South Tynedale (Geology)	Tony Storey
Haltwhistle and South Tynedale (3 copies)	Tony Storey
Haltwhistle and the Great War (2 copies)	Northern Cultural
Projects	
A Haltwhistle Christmas	Tony Storey
Haltwhistle, Haydon Bridge & South Tynedale (2 copies)	Frank Graham
History of Gilsland	Maria Ann Baxter
In Nancy's Memory	Matthew Parker
Legends of Haltwhistle and South Tynedale	Richard and Susan Sim
Letter From Haltwhistle	Brian Lee
Medieval Castle, Towers, Peles and Bastles of Northumberland	T H Rowland
Northumberland Folk Tales	Rosalind Kerven
My History of Featherstone Castle	John Clark
Towers and Bastles	P F Ryder
War on the Banks of the Tyne	Haltwhistle Partnership

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 permission for it.

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