

Haltwhistle History Group Newsletter

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

Edition 2, 9th August 2023
Gibbon

Edited by Steve

Hello everyone, here is the second 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 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. Thanks.

In this newsletter:

1. Colin Mills – Edward I
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4. Next and Future Meetings

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.

Colin Mills – Edward I in Haltwhistle AD1306, and related topics

Colin Mills gave the group an excellent talk on Edward I and his visit to the area and has kindly provided his notes for this newsletter which are below. Many thanks for an entertaining and informative well researched talk Colin.

Good morning to one and all. I hope you can hear me. If not, just hold up a hand and I will try to speak up. I'm not a professional historian or teacher used to making presentations; I'm just like many of you - I'm an enthusiastic amateur historian sharing some of the many bits and pieces acquired over a lifetime of curiosity and reading. Hopefully this session will not overlap the last meeting too much.

So: "King Edward I in Haltwhistle and some associated items of local interest." There's a lot to it; but I'll try to keep it short, no longer than 20 minutes to leave time for you to ask questions or to discuss within the group. The problem for me has been what to leave out and focus items that might be most interesting to you. There are dates but you don't need to remember them all. They mainly cover the years 1297 to 1307, just ten years. I will need to look at some notes from time to time, just to keep me in check. So, leaving lots of stuffs out, we go straight in.

We have here an itinerary of King Edward I journey across Durham and Northumberland in the autumn before he dies. You can keep these copies if you wish - we can get more copies from the library if there are not enough. The bits that are printed in bold are the official itinerary from the national archives. The other comments are my suggestions about what we might read into the basic data. So this is now available in Haltwhistle and will save you a journey at least to Durham University Library that was the nearest copy I could find for this.

You will see that on September 7th, 8th 9th in the year 1306 King Edward I signed state papers in Haltwhistle.

He is not recorded to have been previously in any of the places in between Durham and Carlisle. His journey was continuous and consistently from east to west with no detours or doubling back. They seem to have travelled on what was left of the old Roman roads. Again, we can estimate the short distances between the various stopping points.

These tend to confirm other evidence that Edward I was a very sick man and could only travel 3 to 5 miles a day, necessarily by the shortest, comfortable route. Marc Morris (wave his book) in his well-researched biography "Edward I, A Great and Terrible King" found evidence (that unfortunately he doesn't cite) that Edward, after staying 4 nights in Hexham, gave to one of the monks who tended his illness £1 gift as a thank-you. A lot of money in those days. He was clearly suffering; some suggest from a form of dysentery. As a proud man, a military man, who been on three crusades to the Holy Land, he was used to living rough, and riding on his big, charger horse; so it must have been a huge blow to his pride that on some days here he was actually drawn on a litter.

As an aside, Henry Sumerson, (wave booklet) states that before leaving Carlisle for the last time in the Spring of 1307, he had not been seen in public for several days and there were rumours that he was already dead. On hearing this he stubbornly insisted on riding out through the city on his great charger dressed in his full royal regalia. He made it for less than a mile beyond the city walls before he collapsed and had to revert to the more practical mode of travel.

Nevertheless, he still had a lot of work to do. Having been away from London for many months, he still needed to transact national and international business as he went. Normally, on his royal journeys about Britain and in France, a day's journey would have been at least ten miles; and he was accompanied by the royal train of about 200 people with 20 wagons of gear and supplies. This must have had a bearing on where they would stop overnight. We can use our imagination. There must have been a team of scouts regularly going ahead to find suitable spots for overnight stops. The priority was to find secure, preferably stone built structures for him and his immediate entourage. Others in his entourage were probably being billeted up to several miles around and about. But on horse they could reach the king within half an hour if need be.

Strong buildings in stone were few, very expensive to build, especially in the north of England. Practically the only such buildings apart from the royal castles seem to have belonged to the church, anything from a well-built but humble parish church to large priories, abbeys and cathedrals. Later, while the King overwintered at Lanercost his son, the crown prince, was quartered at Weatherall Priory with his own entourage. That's how it worked. Again, Henry Sumerson says that when Edward arrived in a city like Carlisle in the following Spring, there were only 4 stone buildings left standing within the city walls, the Castle, the White Friars, the Blackfriars and what is now the Cathedral.

There are a number of other interesting stories that spin off this topic, so as we have a bit of time I would like to just touch on them briefly, because they also link Haltwhistle and Tynedale with other aspects of local and national history at the time.

First: The itinerary merely gives a location and we have to guess where he stayed. In Haltwhistle, the church was by far the most outstanding and secure building at the time.

It was the same size then as it is today. There are many traces of the original stonework that confirm that it is on the same footprint. (Peter Ryder's survey, 2005/6). We know there was an earlier Anglo-Saxon church in the town. We don't know exactly where it was, or how big it was, but it was still the most important Church in this area, and it was rich. In the reign of King Canute, or Knut as he is now called, (and this was before 1066 and the Norman conquest) King Knut wished to confirm a peace with a Scottish king by the name of Duncan; so in 1021, a marriage was arranged. They often did so in those days. Pity the poor ladies who had little choice. Incidentally, mention of this King Duncan reminds me that he was the one murdered by Macbeth in the Shakespeare play. Bet you never thought there was a Haltwhistle connection with Shakespeare! But to come back to the main story, King Duncan was obliged to marry the sister or near female relative of the Earl Siward, who was the powerful military governor of all of Northumberland and Yorkshire. He guarded the kingdom's northern border and charged with keeping things quiet. With Knut's approval, the bride from Earl Siward's family brought to her royal husband King as an acceptable marriage dowry in such circumstances a portfolio of English property, That comprised the 12 townships of South Tindale and Haltwhistle Church. If you didn't already know them, the 12 townships are now generally accepted as Haltwhistle, Kirkhaugh, Knarsdale, Thirlwall, Walltown, Plenmellor, Melkridge, Ridley, Thorngrafton, Whitfield, Ouston, Elrington and significantly also the Church of Haltwhistle. So even then, that earlier

church in Haltwhistle must have become large and rich enough with substantial revenues from tythes and rents to have been a worthy part of a royal dowry. All of that property now passed officially to the most powerful of the three Scottish Kings that operated in those days.

It was customary that a man always took over and managed his wife's property. Several generations later, one King William the Lion of Scotland wanted to found his own royal abbey at Arbroath, it needed funds; so he endowed it with his gift of 23 well-off churches that he owned, including Haltwhistle. The deed still survives, and I have seen the name Hautwesyl in a digital copy of the list in the surviving chartulary of Arbroath Cathedral. The monks of Arbroath then set about building a new church on a grand scale. It was finished and dedicated to the Holy Cross about 1230. It was strong, sound and structurally intact when Edward I came by about 76 years later.

Now, I said the church was intact. That brings me to introduce you to another snippet of information. Walter of Guisborough was monk at an abbey on the North Yorkshire moors with Scottish connections on the Baliol side. He had access to information on both sides in the Scottish wars. His passion was recording history and through his numerous church contacts he amassed a vast amount of detail. Some called him a latter-day Bede. His account of the late 1290's and early 1300's is so valuable because he and his correspondents were, between them, virtually eyewitnesses. I have a printed copy here. It's still in the original Latin.

He records the Scottish raids on the north of England in 1297/8 in great detail from the sack of Carlisle town, Berwick, Rothbury, Alnwick, Cumberland, Allerdale, Derwent, Cockermouth, Durham, Annandale and Hexham and the burning of Hexham. He even recounts the conversation between William Wallace and the monks who returned next day to try to perform their daily Eucharist in the smouldering ruins. So what's the point? Nowhere in these months of attacks is there any mention of attacks on Haltwhistle town or its church. Probably because it belonged to a royal Scottish Abbey and the Scottish King would have been very displeased with Wallace and his leader, the Earl of Moray, if they had done so. So, another good reason for thinking that Haltwhistle church was almost certainly intact and in outline very much like it is today when Edward I chose to stay there. By the way, staying in a church was not a sacrilege. Only the chancel and the burial ground counted as holy ground. Many non-religious community activities took place in the nave of a church.

One last aside. In Scotland, Haily means holy. Holyrood is the modern spelling of the Haily Rude, the Holy Cross of calvary. Here in the borders we have many words used in common on both sides. We have locally the Haily Mary spring near Staward Peel in Allenbanks, also in the Halley Pike lough. It has nothing to do with Halleys comet or fishing. It is very old and means the lough by a holy hill that probably had a cross on it.

In Edinburgh today, Holyrood Park, that is also site of Holyrood Abbey (now long gone), Holyrood Palace (the Scottish official home of King Charles when he visits), and the building that today houses Scotland's Parliament, all derive their name from a couple of incidents. Queen Margaret (later to be Saint Margaret of Scotland) was given a relic of the Holy Cross of Calvary by the monks of Waltham Abbey when she travelled north to marry a Scottish King Malcolm. So, each of the later Scottish Kings

owned it. King David I decided to build his first new Abbey in the park as a thanksgiving for a miraculous recovery from a hunting accident on Holy cross day in the park. Symbolically, he presented the abbey with the relic of the Holy Cross and they dedicated the abbey with that name. The holy relic became a place of pilgrimage and even drew pilgrims away from St. Cuthbert's shrine in Durham. It also became customary to dedicate new churches in Scotland to the Holy Cross, it having royal approval so to speak.

Edward I was a religious man and sort of acquired relics from the peoples he conquered. Conquerors tend to do that. He held the Black Rood, the holy cross of the former princes of Wales. When he conquered Scotland in 1296, at the same time as he removed the coronation stone of Scone to Westminster Abbey, he took possession of the Haily Rude of Scotland. With his acquisitive nature, he had taken possession or been given a host of other religious objects. After he died in 1307, his household staff at Burgh-upon-Sands had to make an immediate inventory of all his personal possessions that had become the property of his absent son King Edward II. In a wooden box with a cross on the lid they found 72 holy relics that Edward I took with him everywhere on his travels. It included the same, now famous relic of the Holy Cross of Scotland. We can read the full inventory in Latin and English here in Henry Summerson's booklet. The list now makes it virtually certain that when Edward I stayed in Haltwhistle church on 11th -14th September 1306, he had with him inside our church the very relic that gave the church its dedication and name. None has previously made that connection. You are the first to hear it. They say that what goes around comes around. Strange that!

I have no intention of publishing this paper; and as my personal notes I now share them with you being fellow members of the private Haltwhistle History Society. If others wish to pursue this subject, it might give some clues as to where to start; but they are advised to check everything for themselves and acknowledge any copyrights of items that they verify and intend to use in a public context.

Thank you for the notes Colin, invaluable.

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

The Heritage Exhibition opened on Tuesday 18th July in the downstairs of the Haltwhistle Partnership Office with many thanks to the Partnership for the use of the premises. So far it has been very well received. If you have not seen the exhibition it is open Monday to Saturday between 10am and 2pm.

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 supplement the static displays with more images and adverts from around 100 years ago.

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 with myself. Steve Gibbon.

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 or Steve Gibbon steve@stevegibbon.co.uk both on 01434 344383 or pop down to the exhibition and leave your details. Thank you.

Next and Future Meetings

The next meeting is on Wednesday 13th September 1030 for 1100 in the library first floor. All welcome. The topic is Haltwhistle Churches. If you have any memories or information about Churches past and present or photographs, please bring them along.

The October meeting will be a visit to Holy Cross Church hosted by Colin Mills.

It is possible that meetings may change to the first Wednesday of the month from September, but we are awaiting confirmation of this. This has come about due to the double booking at the library by another group who took over the main meeting room. Keep 'your ears to the ground' in the meanwhile please.

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

Ideas for future meetings include:

- A Haltwhistle town centre walk part 1
- A Haltwhistle town centre walk part 2
- A Haltwhistle burn walk part 1
- A Haltwhistle burn walk part 2
- Reivers part 2
- The South Tynedale Railway
- The Railway at Haltwhistle and surrounding area
- A Railway related walk at the Station
- The Roman Wall in the vicinity of Haltwhistle
- Industry in and around Haltwhistle past
- Featherstone Castle
- Featherstone Prisoner of War Camp

- Bardon Mill Pottery tour
- Local dialect words and phrases – their origin and meaning
- 110 years since the start of World War I
- The Temperance Movement in the Tyne Valley
- Quakers in the area

Walks will be scheduled for better weather months and will be kept short in length to accommodate all ages and fitness levels. If anyone knows of any speakers for any of these talks (or others) please let us know. We could potentially pay speakers modest expenses (most do not claim) but no speaking fee.

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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