

# Haltwhistle History Group Newsletter

---

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

---

**Edition 6, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024**

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.

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. We meet at 1030.

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. Thank you.

In this newsletter:

1. Digital News
2. Summary of meeting held at Haltwhistle Memorial Hospital - 10th January 2024
3. Library

Happy New Year to one and all.

## Digital News

I have been busy over Christmas and New Year – well for a few hours anyway. Have you heard of Wikipedia? Perhaps you even use it regularly or occasionally. It is an online encyclopaedia more extensive than the old Encyclopaedia Britannica. Wikipedia is a free online encyclopaedia, created and edited by volunteers around the

world and hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation. You can find it here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Well, the software that drives Wikipedia is freely available and well supported. It drives not just Wikipedia itself but lots of specialist 'Wikis' round the world. I am using it at The Heritage Centre Bellingham to record our Heritage and History and the stories people have and can pass on digitally before they are lost. I have now done the same for Haltwhistle and created our very own publicly accessible Wiki for Haltwhistle Heritage and History. You can find it here: <https://haltwhistle.org/history/> supported by the Haltwhistle Partnership website.

There is not much on it at the moment but that will quickly change. To get started I have used my notes from these newsletters since the group started. However, we can expand this with help:

1. Do you have any heritage recollections or history notes about Haltwhistle in the past? This could be about occupations, people, places, or simple anecdotes. Send them to me in an email or Word document and I can put them on the Wiki. You do not have to format anything, just keep it simple. Photos would help as well.
2. If you do not do email or Word, then either find someone who does to help you or at any meeting pass me some legible handwritten notes.
3. Do you have a topic you want to find out more about? I can create a holding page and ask the public for contributions to help fill it out?
4. If you have a little bit of IT capability, I can easily train you to be a contributor or editor of the WIKI, it is not too hard. Just get in touch.
5. If you have information from past exhibitions, I can load that up to the WIKI as well.
6. If you are working on a new topic of interest you can load up information to the WIKI as it develops, you don't have to wait until the work is complete. This way you can start sharing immediately and others might then be interested in helping or contributing.

It is simple and quick. One of the advantages of recording this information digitally is that it need never be lost and is easily accessible for ANYONE. So, CAN YOU HELP please?

## SUMMARY OF MEETING HELD AT HALTWHISTLE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - 10TH JANUARY 2024

**(Notes thanks to Jan Millward)**

**Present:** Lorna Silverstein – Chair (LS), Margaret Foster (MF), Ivy ?, Annette Corble (AC), Jan Millward – Minutes (JM), Ian Millward (IM), Julia Whyte (JW), Barrie Thompson (BT), Colin Mills (CM)

**Apologies:** Steve Gibbon

LS began by giving a brief introduction on how the History Group came about. She was concerned that the memories of the older generation were in danger of being lost if steps weren't taken to collect them. At the first meeting in the summer of 2023, there were six people present. However, at future meetings, attendance peaked at around 40. It became clear that the informal approach which was envisaged at the start could not continue and the organisation of the Group should be more structured.

As the subject of history consisted of so many elements and the interests of the members were wide, AC felt that the first thing to be determined was a Mission Statement for the Group. This would give a clearer focus on what should or shouldn't be covered. After much discussion, the following was agreed:

**“The aim of the Haltwhistle History Group is to collect, preserve, protect and share the history of Haltwhistle and its civil parishes.”**

The vision is to have an overarching Group with subdivisions under heading such as Industry, Buildings, Language, etc. but could also be broken down to focus on individual parishes. All projects should meet the criteria laid down in the Mission Statement.

It was agreed that we make use of the expertise and interests within the group. For example, LS's interests are in pre-Roman history; AC could use her connection with Haltwhistle Herald to promote our activities and requests for those with memories of a particular topic to come forward. JM is to compile a list.

It was noted that the older generation were primarily the ones we wanted to come forward but many of these may not be computer savvy. To this end, JW suggested that we place a post box in the library, subject to permission, for them to contact us.

JW advised the Group of her role at the Chamber of Trade and the formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan. She had been tasked with finding out which buildings within the town were of significant importance to the local community. MF spoke of the importance of the Mechanics Institute and her memories of the soup kitchen there. This is exactly what JW is looking for – not only the buildings, but the memories associated with them. JW pointed out that the buildings would not be given listing status, merely protected within the Plan.

There was discussion around the subject of collecting the oral history. JW reported that Amanda Drago of Greencroft Arts had funding available for sessions relating to this. JW had expressed interest on the Group's behalf. JM also has connections to a professional historian who would be prepared to offer suggestions and advice.

It was agreed that when it comes to oral history, we take the following steps:

- Make use of the expertise on offer to find out the best way to collect and collate it.
- Place an article in the Haltwhistle Herald informing the community of our aims.
- Put on events to bring people together in an informal atmosphere.
- Collect the oral history.

It was agreed that planning for the Group's sessions should be independent, not take place on Wednesdays and that the topics covered should be entertaining to engage people's interests, thereby encouraging them to return on a regular basis. After discussion, it was agreed that the people present at this meeting, and anyone else who wished to be involved, would meet on the second Thursday of the month (i.e., the day after the Group talk) between 10:00 and 12:00 in the Griffin Room at the Manor House. The 'Committee' would be as detailed in the December Newsletter:

- **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](mailto:noel.mills20@gmail.com)

It was further agreed that all speaking should be through the Chair (i.e. LS) so that everyone has the chance to speak without interruption. This should also prevent an individual monopolising a meeting.

The fact that the Group's talks are only available to those who were not working was discussed. It was suggested that we could offer an evening summer programme to accommodate the wider community and attract tourists. CM pointed out that we could duplicate some of the daytime talks to reduce the workload. There was also the possibility of visiting schools to engage the younger generation.

The programme up to April was agreed:

- 14<sup>th</sup> February** Richard Graham of South Tynedale Railway – Alston and Carlisle to Newcastle lines (confirmed)
- 13<sup>th</sup> March** Colin Mills – Featherstone POW Camp
- 10<sup>th</sup> April** Kilfrost (subject to reply from CEO) alternatively, Wendy Bond – quarries

The programme is to be advertised in the Haltwhistle Herald.

It was agreed that we remain at Haltwhistle Hospital for the time being as it was pleasant, had ample parking and was free.

As a courtesy to the speakers, we are to be firmer with the audience taking their seats so that talks begin on time. Each speaker has the floor for 45 to 60 minutes with a questions and answers session afterwards. Speakers should not be interrupted whilst delivering their talk.

IM is to create a poster. LS to inform him of details to include.

It was felt that the Group is not yet ready for its own website. JW suggested that we have a page on the Chamber of Trade website. Steve Gibbon to be asked to organise this.

The meeting closed at 12:00.

**Date of next (committee) meeting:** Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024. 10:00 in the Griffin Room, Manor House.

## 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](mailto: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 <sup>th</sup> Walking Festival	Haltwhistle Walking
Festival	
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.

To avoid spam, please seek the permission of your email friends before forwarding this newsletter. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please email me at [steve@stevegibbon.co.uk](mailto:steve@stevegibbon.co.uk) and I will remove your details from the subscriber list. Please do NOT paste this newsletter, or any part thereof, on Facebook, Twitter or any other social network, blog or website or in any village newsletter or other publication. If you believe an item could be of interest to your local community by being included, for example, on a community Facebook page, please contact me. I will happily provide a suitable copy, thereby indicating my permission to use the item in a wider setting. Thank you.