

Haltwhistle History Group Newsletter

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

Edition 3, 26th September 2023

Edited by Steve Gibbon

Hello everyone, here is the third 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. For the last meeting I am indebted to Jan Millward who took notes at the meeting of 6th September in my absence.
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 this newsletter is a little late.

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

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:

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2. A Town Walk – through the past, shops, Reivers, streams and Pigs
3. Library
4. Heritage Exhibition
5. Next and Future Meetings

At the moment the group meets once a month on the first 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.

Lorna welcomed everyone and began by relaying the following messages:

- Sue from Moss Peteral Farm is organising a trip to Thornton Records Office on Monday 11th September and there are two free places available. Lorna will pass on Sue's contact details to anyone interested.

- Northumberland County Council is running a Wellness Clinic event and the History Group has been approached to put on an information stall. Lorna will organise and run the stall.
- Lorna gave thanks to all those helping to run the History Group.
- The October meeting is to be held at Holy Cross Church. We are to meet at 10:45 in the social area by the font at the rear of the church. There will be a short introduction followed by a guided tour of the church.
- There was a list of proposed subjects to be covered by the Group and those present were asked to indicate which they would prefer.
- Maureen advised that David at the Centre of Britain may be persuaded to take small groups on a tour of the building to investigate the tunnel and other interesting features.

Churches and Chapels in Haltwhistle

At the meeting on Wednesday 6th September Churches and Chapels past and present were informally discussed with people's recollections and stories about them. Many thanks to Jan Millward for the notes of this meeting.

The Quaker Meeting House, Coanwood

The Meeting House was built in 1760 and is historically important as it has not been modified since it was built. It is a Grade II* listed building and is currently owned and cared for by the Historic Chapels Trust. However, the Trust is soon to relinquish this responsibility so there are steps being taken to preserve the future of this delightful building. The Meeting House is open every day between 10:00 and 16:00 and the group was urged to visit if they hadn't already done so as accessibility may be more limited in the future.

The Quakers differ from other religious groups as they have no minister, services, baptisms, etc. They also refused to pay tithes and were often put in prison for debt. They feel strongly that they should improve the lives of those less fortunate. An example of this is that the rear of the building was used as a lending library which supported local literacy and education.

Quakers were not permitted to be buried in Church of England graveyards as they had not been baptised. If they were buried in Quaker ground, they did not have memorial stones. Interestingly, there are memorial stones, and these belong to members of the Wigham family. The Meeting House was built on a plot of land donated by Cuthbert Wigham.

The existence of the Meeting House implies that there was a Quaker presence of some strength and wealth in the local community at that time. John Hodgson (1779 – 1845) a notable author of the time wrote in 1840:

“Haltwhistle. There is in it a manufactury (sic) of coarse bays (sic) belonging to two worthy Quakers; their fulling mill finished and approved of by trial, 17th September 1762; pleasure and cheerfulness appearing in every face on the occasion; giving a prospect of better bread to the industrious poor.”

Further research by Alison Higgs confirmed that two gentlemen, Messrs. Coates and Reay were owners of mills on the Haltwhistle Burn and were also members of the Coanwood Quakers.

The Salvation Army

The citadel was situated close to the Grey Bull and what is now the Wapping Garden.

Maureen told everyone that her mother was a member as she was musical but was unsure which instrument she played. Pat is going to bring in photos of her parents who were officers in the organisation.

Tin Mission

This was a Baptist Chapel, an offshoot of the Primitive Chapel. There were claims that the organ and singers could not harmonise at the Primitive Chapel!

The Tin Mission was situated off West End, in what is now the Wildflower Meadow of Riverside Park. When working on the area, the volunteers found what they believe to be the red brick foundations of the building. It was demolished after being hit by a lorry. (A photograph of this is on the *Old Haltwhistle Website*). Apparently, a gas pipe was also hit in the accident and local folk had to be evacuated whilst it was sorted out. *(Editor: I understand that the lorry swerved to avoid a youngster who had himself stepped in the road to avoid something.)*

Maureen told us it was the best church in Haltwhistle as it was so joyful. Others who remember attending agreed with her. It was suggested that Jenny Weeks could provide more information.

Elam Hall

This was a small Baptist Chapel situated in Park Road and later became an undertaker's office. Steve Palmer's father was the minister there so it is possible that Steve could provide further information. The floor of the chapel could be rolled back to expose a lead tank used for baptisms.

Methodist Chapels

The Methodist way of worship was an offshoot of the Church of England and it was known that worshippers from Haltwhistle originally met in people's houses at Townfoot. Christine said that she had been told that in Mill Lane, the first house on the left was once a Methodist Chapel.

Methodist Church

When the numbers of the congregations began to decline, the Wesleyans amalgamated with the Methodists. The building in Westgate dates from 1882. The Castle Hill Methodist Chapel amalgamated with the Westgate congregation in 1972.

The area beneath the church could accommodate 200 children. There used to be a Youth Club there. Maureen informed us that *Onward, Christian Soldiers* was a very popular tune to dance the *One Step* to!

St Cuthbert's

This was a Presbyterian chapel, positioned just off Fair Hill. It was up for sale in 1991 and in order to view it, the keys had to be collected from Eddie Webster.

The Primitive Chapel

This is now a private home, situated at the top of Castle Hill. It was bought by Jet Kendrew.

St Wilfrid's

This is a Roman Catholic church situated in Main Street and is the successor to a church built in the east end of Haltwhistle in 1865 and dedicated to Holy Cross. It became known as St Wilfrid's in 1920.

As the congregation grew, the church transferred to the west end of the town and moved into the United Reform building in 1991. The church was shared by both denominations. When the United Reform congregation numbers declined, the building was purchased for the sole use of Roman Catholic worshippers in 2010.

General information

As the town expanded, the churches and chapels gave the opportunities for the miners, mill workers, etc to worship.

Many of the religions supported the idea of temperance. The mine owners, in particular, were in favour of this as they wanted a sober workforce and sponsored many of the chapels. 'Pop' became very popular and a 'pop' factory was established in the area beside Hextol Cottages. *(Editor: It was once known as "pop" because it was sold in bottles with a marble in the neck. When you pushed the marble down, it would pop and release the carbonation, making the drink fizzy and refreshing. Today, most lemonade is still carbonated, but you can also find still varieties that are equally delicious.)*

There is a display of aspects of the history of Haltwhistle and its 10 surrounding parishes in the waiting room at Haltwhistle Station.

There was much more to discuss but we sadly ran out of time. Lorna asked anyone with memories of the churches and chapels to write them down and to bring in any photos they may have. These could then be stored in the History Group's 'library'.

Lorna also pointed out that the town's archives were currently stored in three different places so there was a real need to come up with something more appropriate.

A Town Walk – through the past, shops, Reivers, streams and Pigs

On Thursday 31st August a town walk organised by the library was led by Maureen and Lorna along Westgate from the library and main street as far as the Wappings. Everyone, new to the town or born there, would have learned something from these two lovely ladies and we had great fun on the walk as well to make this a great experience, finishing with coffee at the Centre of Britain Hotel.

Living in the area for only 30 years meant I learned a lot. I provide some brief notes below but the topic deserves a much more extensive record with a lot more pictures so I will look to do this in the winter with possibly a dedicated website.

So the first thing I learned was the derivation of the name Wappings – Saxon for a wet place. In fact, the Wappings at Haltwhistle is the site of a stream, now culverted under the road and house on the South side.

We started at the library, once the Mechanics Institute for the improvement of the education of miner's (and others) children. Here the original façade still exists with the new modern library behind it.

The next building on the same side of the road is the Methodist Church (see more about this in the main text above) where I was surprised to learn that the basement could hold up to 200 children. The basement is no longer used.

In Scarth's Yard there is a Nissan Hut – the last from the PoW Camp at Featherstone. At the entrance to the yard there is a loading bay on the right which was once the loading bay for Oliver and Snowdens Agricultural Merchants.

The shop currently available to rent which was previously Kasteale café used to be Normans Butchers. It was closed on Mondays as that was killing day in the days before animals had to be taken to an abattoir.

The antique shop used to be a Greengrocers and then a Post Office. Tynerede Accountants used to be the gent's hairdressers. The current opticians on the corner was Boots the Chemist ran by Mr. Watson.

Next to the opticians is Aesica Road (named after the route the roman fort at Aesica?). This was formerly Physic Lane (so called because of the chemists) and before that Quaker Lane (*Editor: Is there a link to a quaker meeting house in the road?*).

Crossing Aesica Road brought us to a unique gate post made of clay leftovers from the pottery up the burn in years gone by. There is an even more unique pottery structure in the garden nearby, but we could not see that on the day.

Further along is the current Post Office which in the past had been Timothy Whites the Chemist then Bells (*Was everyone ill? We seem to have been blessed with Chemists!*)

Standing opposite what is now Karbon homes we learned that these premises used to be a coffee shop and butchers then hairdressers. Look up in any town to see the windows and building facades – this helps date the premises. Haltwhistle had two major expansions in Georgian and Victorian times and the windows help date the buildings. There was a window tax at one time and to reduce the tax burden people often bricked up windows. You can still see evidence of this today.

Armstrong's on the South side of the road was previously Bells Bicycle Hire and boarding rooms. Armstrong's on the South side was the gentleman's store whilst Armstrong's on the North side (now the café and Partnership Office) was the ladies store with Bridal Wear on the top floor. The name Armstrong is a corruption of the Viking name for strong arm. As an aside the Vikings would not live in Carlisle which they thought to be an evil place, so they lived in villages nearby ('out by') which took Viking name endings such as Upperyby

The Cumberland Building Society used to be Miligans.

Look up again at the roof of the buildings. Prior to the railways coming which enabled the transport of slate for roofs most roof construction was of stone. Look at the roof of the old Jethros and the Haltwhistle Tandoori for evidence of stone roofs.

In the marketplace in 1590 a local girl was hung for marrying a Scotsman.

We passed the previous premises of Foster and Robisons (haberdashery) and Walter Willsons (supermarket chain, now the new Jethros).

Looking opposite at the lane to the Black Bull we see a cobbled lane with larger sets running as tracks in the lane. These were of the harder wearing Whin Sill stone which gave better grip to the cartwheels. The Whin Sill had been too hard for the Romans to use so this is a relatively 'modern' use of the stone.

In front of what used to be the Blacksmiths there is a stone 'wheel' set in the ground. This used to function as the form to make the iron rims for cartwheels. Peek in the building which used to be the Blacksmiths and you can still see the tools hanging from the forge.



The town clock above Billy Bells was erected by the Carnival committee 1954 nearly 70 years ago.

The current Laundrette used to be a wallpaper and paint business (the owner also owned the Gem cinema when it closed) and before that another optician.

There is a tunnel between the Centre of Britain Hotel and the Manor House then the Church as these all used to be fortified Bastles or buildings and this provided a means of escape. The entrance to the tunnel is viewable in the Centre of Britain hotel. The Manor House used to provide stabling for stagecoaches through the arch to what was Heads and Tails. Heads and Tails used to be Murrays the 'pop' factory.

There was a Drapery at what is now the Old Drapery Self Catering accommodation.

The fish and chip shop used to be a Fruit and Veg shop.

This area has the highest concentration of Bastles and Towers anywhere in the country. These include the Centre of Britain (look to the roof to see the corner of the Tower, see inside to see the staircase within the two-metre-thick walls and look at the East end of the roof to see the cannons embedded on the side of the roof wall), The Lucky Palace and the Manor House.

The Centre of Britain used to be the Red Lion.

At the corner of St. James Lane (used to be known as Squashy Eels Lane) there was a pie shop at one time.

We moved on to the Wappings. Wappings beck used to be open and forded where the road now is and just a few years further North you can see where it was channelled into the edge of the road.

Here on the first day of Spring there was a 'Hiring's Fair'. A straw in your mouth meant you were already spoken for. People used to travel up from London to hire maids etc. No. 2 on the south side opposite the Comrades used to be a General Dealer and Sweet Shop. The Treatment Room was a paper shop.

MW Bells garage was Potts Garage with the house to the west being the parts shop.

The magnificent building now housing Georgie Girl Hairdressers was the Town Hall and Police Station with cells. The Blue Bell pub was opposite now a private house. 'Taliare' was Taylors House.

The end cottage to the East of the Town Hall was a butcher. Crescent Cottage was a slaughterhouse and the grassy bank near to Hillside Cottage was where the pigs were held awaiting slaughter.

Here ended the walk (another part to be arranged for a future date) and we finally learned that Northumberland has the largest number of prehistoric forts in England.

Thanks to Lorna and Maureen for a very interesting and informative guided walk.

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. The list of available publications is provided below.

Title

Author

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
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	Frank Graham
(2 copies)	
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	T H Rowland
of Northumberland	
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

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.

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

1. 100 years since the formation 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.

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. Thank you.

Next and Future Meetings

The next meeting is on Wednesday 4th October 1045 when we will meet at the Church of the Holy Cross and Colin Mills will kindly give us a guided tour.

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:

- Reminiscences of your childhoods
- The local words and dialect
- 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.

Other News

Manorial Workshops. the Hexham workshop 2 is on Tuesday 10th October, not the 19th.

From Dave King: The following is the link I promised to send you for some resources that might be useful for someone looking into Haltwhistle families in the past

<http://www.davekinggenealogy.co.uk/LocalHistory/Haltwhistle/index.html>

There is also a search on the home page, which would work best if it includes 'Haltwhistle' in the search, for example 'Haltwhistle AND Ridley' with the AND in

upper case <http://www.davekinggenealogy.co.uk/index.html> Hope this is useful to someone.

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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