



CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Journal of The Bewick Society



A bundle of photographs of Cherryburn circa 1984.

INTO THE ARCHIVE

by Peter Quinn

The Bewick Society is in the process of organising a deposit of materials with the Tyne and Wear Archive. The cache of documents, photographs and ephemera will cover the running of the Society from its formation in 1989 to 2010. The 2003 anniversary year was our busiest period with the publication of *Bewick Studies*, the production of a video and many events to celebrate Bewick's 250th anniversary. The documents are supplemented by a bound volume of copies of the *Cherryburn Times* created for us by Tim Gradon, bookbinder.

In addition to the Society material are several folders of correspondence from the archive of the late Dr Iain Stuart Bain (1934-2018). These have two points of focus. The first relates to the landmark exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery held in 1978. As curator Iain Bain re-imagined the legacy of Thomas Bewick sweeping away the Victorian fascination with Bewick as a natural artist: "It is seldom recognised that the work by which he is now known was the extraordinary by-

product of a hard and busy life as a general trade engraver on metal." The pains taken by the then Publications Manager at the Tate Gallery are documented in the letters in these files: trips to Newcastle, frustrations over exhibition design details; attempts to organise a wider tour of the show.

The other subject dealt with by the documents is the part played by Iain Bain in the acquisition of Cherryburn by the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Trust; the establishment of the collection and its eventual hand-over as a prize-winning small museum to the National Trust. It is sobering to handle the transatlantic correspondence; the reports of how Cherryburn might be organised; the artist impressions of the layout. The vision and energy of Iain Bain, Frank Atkinson, their colleagues and supporters deserves to be remembered and celebrated. Thankfully future researchers will now be able to do just that.

THOMAS BEWICK AND THE WOMEN WHO LOVED HIM

by Kristin Bluemel

Thirty-four years after Thomas Bewick's death, his daughter Jane finally published his *Memoir*.¹ It was 1862 and Queen Victoria was settling into the twenty-fifth year of her reign by the time Miss Bewick rewarded Bewick's devoted and expectant readers with a print edition of his recollections about his rural Northumberland upbringing, Newcastle apprenticeship, and rise to national celebrity as a writer and illustrator of beautiful volumes of natural history.

The *Memoir* begins like a letter from beyond the grave with the words, "My dear Jane," and it appeals to "my dear Jane" throughout to reveal the deep love Bewick felt for his daughter. These words, "My dear Jane," also imply the deep love his daughter felt for him. Such love is the reason why Jane, fiercely protective of her father's reputation and careless of the desires of sportsmen, scholars, and book collectors, trimmed and tucked Bewick's *Memoir* to suit her Victorian reserve and feminine scruples.² Bewick's *Memoir* did not appear in unexpurgated form for more than one hundred years, when in 1975 Iain Bain published the authoritative "classic" edition that we enjoy today.

In between these two dates, the 1862 date of the *Memoir*'s first abridged publication and the 1975 date of its first complete publication, another memoir by another English wood engraver was published and received with delight by critics and common readers. In 1952 the celebrated artist and wood engraver Gwen Raverat (1885-1957) published *Period Piece*, a memoir of her Cambridge childhood as the granddaughter of Charles Darwin and daughter of the astronomer Sir George Darwin and the American Philadelphia belle, Maud Du Puy.³ Although a member of one of Victorian England's most privileged families, with access to

extraordinary cultural resources, Raverat shared with Bewick the distinction of being born a most unlikely artist, separated in her case by sex and gender rather than class from histories of British art and literature.

Raverat began writing and illustrating *Period Piece* after she had suffered a stroke and could no longer endure the rigors of engraving the hard end grain of the boxwood blocks that functioned as the material basis of her white line wood engravings and book illustrations. From the perspective of old age and physical debility, Raverat looks back with compassion and humour on her awkward childhood self, her early efforts at drawing, and what she describes as the "bad" sketches that filled her notebooks. She reflects, "I am sure that no one would have picked me out from the [drawing] class as a promising artist; . . . there was nothing to notice about me, except my keenness" (64).

The keenness that Raverat recalls as the only sign of her artistic promise is another form of the passion she records when describing her life-changing discovery of Thomas Bewick's wood engravings. This story is told in a chapter of her memoir titled "Aunt Etty" in honour of her father's elder sister Henrietta. We learn from the first sentences of the chapter that Aunt Etty was "most emphatically" a Lady, a person who did not do things for herself. Born when Bewick's daughter Jane was 56 years old, and only one generation older than Raverat, this adored and doting female relative could say at age eighty-six that "she had never made a pot of tea in her life; and that she had never in all her days been out in the dark alone, not even in a cab" (119). This is a vivid, almost surreal reminder of the gendered and classed privileges that imposed nearly immovable constraints upon the bodies and imaginations of upper middle class Victorian girls like Gwen Darwin. Raverat's description of Aunt Etty's queenly captivity at 31 Kensington Square, London, emphasizes the virtual impossibility for girls of her generation to imagine themselves as great artists. Lying on Aunt Etty's sofa amid Morris wallpapers and peacock blue serge curtains, the young Gwen finds herself enraptured, enchanted, by Bewick's tiny vignettes or tailpieces, wishing "passionately" that she could have been "Mrs Bewick":

Surely, I thought, if I cooked his roast beef beautifully and mended his clothes and minded the children – surely he would, just sometimes, let me draw and engrave a little tailpiece for him. I wouldn't want to be known, I wouldn't sign it. Only just to be allowed to invent a little picture sometimes. O happy, happy Mrs. Bewick! thought I, as I kicked my heels on the blue sofa. (129)

The most important word in this tender, funny passage is "allowed." It signals Raverat's only half tongue in cheek acknowledgement that someone else would determine even the fortunate and humble Mrs. Bewick's access to block and scoper. As the wife of a working man, Mrs Bewick was no Lady and certainly had more freedom than Aunt Etty to move in the dark or fix herself tea, yet her daylight hours would inevitably be dominated by women's work. This vision of housework and dependence is the height of artistic ambition for the young Gwen. To imagine herself as Mrs. Rembrandt



Fig. 1: Jane Bewick (1787-1881), represented as an august, aged lady Victorian reader. From Nigel Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work*, Vol. 1, p. 176. Illustrative credit to Iain Bain, p. 371.

“seemed too tremendous even to imagine” (129). More tremendous altogether is the fantasy of being a boy, any boy, and thus able to grow into a man and painter. This desire, what Gwen Darwin wanted “more than anything in the world,” was so deeply, essentially, despairingly impossible that she writes, “I did not dare to think about it at all” (129). Instead, she projects her impassioned response to Bewick’s art and her similarly impassioned identification with Bewick’s masculine space in art history onto an imaginary Mrs. Bewick. Readers, delighted by the doodle of the restless, desiring Gwen on the blue sofa, may discount the second Mrs. Bewick conjured by Raverat’s words. This feminine figure, surrounded by her tasty beef, scoured pans, thread, needle and children, pays with housewifely labour for her privilege to “only just. . . be allowed” to draw and engrave a little picture—a little picture which even *Period Piece* cannot represent. These are the visual-verbal conundrums of a modern woman’s “classic,” one that documents comic desire and domestic tragedy: the ordinary, everyday tragedy of artistic women’s reduction to happy, happy anonymity.⁴ Raverat reminds us that this status awaited most women artists working in Bewick’s day and virtually any day prior to that on which she and her female contemporaries decided to pick up the engraver’s tools and give themselves permission to “invent a little picture sometimes.”

This brief article can only hint at the implications for art and book history of women’s differently constructed and experienced relations to key terms and materials in Bewick’s life and legacy.⁵ These terms and materials include Bewick’s wood engravings of rural lives and landscapes in his famous books of natural history and the places, people, and things that Bewick and scholars of Bewick refer to when describing his relations to Newcastle and its surrounding countryside. More generally, these terms and materials include the history of feelings readers have experienced in response to Bewick’s engravings of rural English places, the English tradition of white line engraving that Bewick founded, and the legacy of women who through their words and images left us a record of their love of Bewick and his impact on their art.

This article tells no tales of intrigue or secret romance, unveils no letters between Bewick and a heretofore unsuspected Muse of Cherryburn. No; the upstanding family man we know from Bewick correspondence, biographies and scholarly studies is the character who endures. Instead of a new Bewick, the Bewick we know and love leads us here to new ways of interpreting and valuing women’s roles in the stories we tell about him. These stories might touch on the historical Mrs. Bewick and her daughters, as well as the imaginary or metaphorical Mrs. Bewicks who populate our fantasies about the home life of every male genius. Above all, these stories focus on the real women who, generations after Bewick lived and died, learned from his work and developed his white line tradition of autonomous wood engraving and book illustration through undertaking such engraving and book illustration themselves. Gwen Raverat’s fanciful conjuring in *Period Piece* of a Mrs. Bewick, minding her husband’s roast beef and children in order to be “allowed to invent a little picture,” inspires the question, “What women loved Bewick and through this love were able to imagine themselves not by his side, but in his place?” Or, to more clearly expose the feminist stakes of such inquiry, “What does

it take to overturn centuries of social, cultural, and imaginative conditioning so that a girl like Gwen Raverat can fantasize about being Thomas Bewick rather than marrying him?”⁶

My research suggests that only a woman born around the turn of the twentieth century, with access to arts education, the ability to put that education to use in the literary marketplace, and the freedom to travel wherever her art and interest demanded, could assume the heroic persona of “the female Bewick.”⁷ No longer confined to the traditional role of artful woman as helpmate, muse, or model for masculine artistic regard, modern day female Bewicks of the so-called 1930s wood engraving revival helped transform British books, literature, and culture as they extended into new periods and contexts Bewick’s tradition of white line wood engraving. Women like Agnes Miller Parker, Clare Leighton, and Joan Hassall, like Gwen Raverat, suffered terrible losses of friends, family, and security during a period defined by the Great Depression and two world wars.⁸ However, as middle-class women they thrived, confronting personal necessity while pursuing professional opportunities that few British women of any class had ever before encountered.⁹ I assume that their stories are more powerful, more meaningful, once joined together with the stories of other women who loved Bewick. That we know in advance the women in Bewick’s day could only express their love for him through domestic care, housekeeping and bookkeeping rather than drawing, painting, or wood engraving, goes directly to the heart of this argument. There was never any question nor do we have any record of daughters Jane, Isabella, or Elizabeth Bewick, for example, receiving art instruction from their father, even though he trained dozens of apprentices and brought up his son Robert to take his place at the head of his Newcastle workshop. It would take another two generations before women could aspire to what was materially sensible but ideologically impossible for Bewick’s daughters - pursuit of careers as professional wood engravers. It is the challenge of this article and the book-length study of which it is a part to reveal why twentieth-century woman wood engravers decided to master the materials and techniques used by Bewick and his male followers, how this mastery promoted their professional stature and personal independence in modern Britain, and why their success matters for those of us who love Bewick. After all, these women formed no collaborative workshop or feminist community, they did not study with the same teachers or develop the same style, and were not all working self-consciously in Bewick’s tradition. Rather, in adopting and adapting Bewick’s techniques and rural subjects, they took up his role as the people’s wood engravers, heroically shaping their modern women’s lives according to their separate visions of beauty and unique interpretations of its ideal forms.

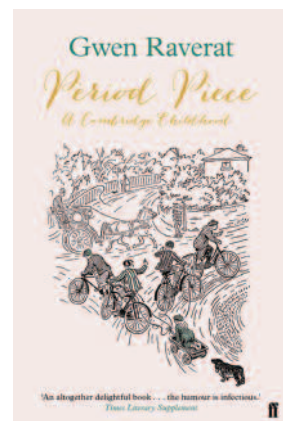


Fig. 2: Cover of *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood*, 2018 edition This new edition celebrates the 65th anniversary of the publication of *Period Piece*, which has never been out of print.

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Bewick, *A Memoir*, Ed. and Intro. Iain Bain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
 - 2 In addition to Part I of Nigel Tattersfield's biographical essay, "Wood Engraving Reborn: The Lives and Times of Ralph Beilby, Thomas Bewick and Robert Bewick" in *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work*, Vol. 1 (London: The British Library, 2011), 15-192, and Jenny Uglow's more popular *Nature's Engraver: A Life of Thomas Bewick* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), see *Bewick to Dovaston: Letters 1824-1828*, Ed. Gordon Williams, Intro. Montague Weekley (London: Nattali & Maurice, 1968) for evidence and interpretations of the feelings of love and devotion that existed between Thomas and Jane Bewick.
 - 3 Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* (London: Faber & Faber 1952).
 - 4 Patricia Jaffé in *Women Engravers* (London: Virago, 1988), says "It is impossible to leave the subject of women engravers without a thought for all those hundreds of women in both nineteenth and twentieth centuries who have learned the craft and remained unknown" (124). Surely there is the echo in both Raverat's and Jaffé's words of Virginia Woolf's invocation in *A Room of One's Own* [1929] (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981) of the lost female "Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them" (49).
 - 5 My work in progress, "Enchanted Wood: Women Artists, Rural Britain, and the Twentieth-Century Wood Engraving Revival," forthcoming with the University of Minnesota Press, is a more ambitious investigation of the questions introduced here, considering in addition to Gwen Raverat, the life and art of wood engravers Agnes Miller Parker (1895-1980), Clare Leighton (1898-1989), and Joan Hassall (1906-1988).
 - 6 Eve comes first in a long line of women capable of inspiring others to production of great art but not themselves creating anything other than chaos and babies. Griselda Pollock, looking back in "Preface to the Bloomsbury Revelations Edition" in 2020 on the conditions that inspired her and Rozsika Parker's path breaking *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1981; London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), xx-xxvi, writes that the book took its title from a 1972 exhibition which for the first time proved that European art of the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries did include many beautiful paintings by women. At that time she and Parker decided that they needed to demonstrate how their discipline of art history "was *structurally* sexist. It did not just ignore or neglect women. It actively made art history women-free, and did so most effectively only in the twentieth century" (xxi). Is it any wonder that the first picture in Parker and Pollock's classic feminist study represents Eve in Adam's place in *And God created Woman in Her own Image*, "an advertisement for Eiseman Clothing via Michelangelo and Ann Grifalconi (1970)" (2)? Literary studies have not been quite so dramatically devoid of examples of women's creativity as art history, with 1970s feminist impacts on the canons and construction of the field felt more immediately and widely. In terms of revolutionary significance, a partner literary study for Parker and Pollack's might be Virginia Woolf's 1929 *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, 2005).
- Wood engravers of Woolf's generation, both male and female, have always been protective of their reputations as artists as opposed to craftsmen. See for example Joanna Selborne's authoritative *British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration 1904-1940: A Break with Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1998; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll P, 2001), 9-10, or Simon Brett *Wood Engraving: How To Do It* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1994; London: Herbert Press, 2018), 11. Among the general histories of illustration and wood engraving that are of special relevance to study of modern white line wood engraving are Thomas Balston's *English Wood Engraving, 1900-1950* (London: Art and Technics, 1950) and Thomas Balston's *Wood-Engraving in Modern English Books* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), Richard Benson's *The Printed Picture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008), Douglas Percy Bliss's *A History of Wood-Engraving* (London: J. M. Dent, 1928), James Hamilton's *Wood Engraving & the Woodcut in Britain, 1890-1990* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1994), Edward Hodnett's *Five Centuries of English Book Illustration* (Aldershot: Scolar P, 1988), Jaffé's *Women Engravers* (London: Virago, 1988), and Brigid Peppin and Lucy Micklethwait's *Dictionary of British Book Illustrators: The Twentieth Century* (London: John Murray, 1983).
- 7 British women had been successful illustrators of children's books before women wood engravers as a group earned recognition for innovative contributions to 1930s children's book publishing. Kate Greenaway and Beatrix Potter are the most famous Victorian women artist illustrators, while Mable Lucie Attwell and Honor Appleton dominated the interwar scene. See Joyce Irene and Tesa Rose Chester, *A History of Children's Book Illustration* (London: John Murray and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1998), esp. chaps. "Moonlight and Shadow: 1880-1900," 127-50, "Edwardian Extravagance: 1900-1918," 151-76, and "The Seeds of Recovery: Illustration between the Wars," 177-96.
 - 8 Roland Leighton, Clare Leighton's handsome, talented older brother, was killed in action in 1915. He was eulogized by a distraught Marie Connor Leighton in *Boy of My Heart* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1916) and more famously by his fiancée, Vera Brittain, in her pacifist memoir *Testament of Youth* [1933] (London: Penguin Classics, 2005). One day after Rupert Brooke died, Gwen Raverat's first cousin Erasmus Darwin was killed in action in the Second Battle of Ypres. William McCance, Agnes Miller Parker's husband, was imprisoned during World War I as a conscientious objector.
 - 9 Jaffé attributes the scarcity of women engravers in England prior to 1900 to "economics, the apprenticeship system and the status of women" (8). When by 1856 publishers Ward and Lock published *Elegant Arts for Ladies*, appropriate feminine arts such as Feather Flowers and Painting on Velvet were illustrated with wood engravings, but wood engraving itself was not on the list. The Arts and Crafts movement brought many women to wood engraving as amateurs, but those who worked as professionals like Georgiana Burne-Jones and Janey Morris were little more than "unpaid adjuncts" (Jaffé 12).



Fig. 3: Raverat's rendering of herself as "Mrs. Bewick" lounging on Aunt Ety's blue sofa at 31 Kensington Square, London. From *Period Piece*, Faber and Faber, 1952, 128. 4 x 2 ⁹/₁₆ inches.



Fig. 1 A Bewick's Swan and a Mute Swan side-by-side, photo Steven Rutherford.

THOMAS BEWICK THE NATURALIST

by Steven Rutherford

Thomas Bewick was an important naturalist, and yet, I find very few of today's naturalists or birdwatchers remember his contribution to the development of their subjects. Bewick in his day was recognised by two very prominent naturalists, William Yarrell 1784 – 1856 and John James Audubon 1785 – 1851. Yarrell was an English zoologist and naturalist and author of several books on nature including his bird book that shares the same title as Bewick's book, *A History of British Birds* (1843), while Audubon, an American artist and ornithologist who set out to make a complete record of all the birds of America in his major work, *The Birds of America* (1827-1839). Yarrell discovered and described the Tundra swan giving it the name Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (1830) separating it from the larger Whooper swan two years after Bewick's death (fig. 1). Audubon, after his visit to the UK when he met Bewick, returned to his work in America and named a new species of wren Bewick's wren *Thryomanes bewickii* 1827 to celebrate his friendship with Bewick and in recognition of his work. In this article I hope to show some of the skills and understanding that Bewick produced in his books.

MORE THAN JUST BASIC IDENTIFICATION SKILLS – THE SPARROWHAWK

Bewick was a birdwatcher from being a small boy and developed an eye for detail that we can see in his sketch of the Sparrowhawk. As a lifelong birdwatcher, I look at the sketch of the Sparrowhawk and recognise the bird instantly. However,

it would be simple to give that statement without backing up why I recognise it; let me look at it with a critical eye and explain my reason for coming to this conclusion by looking at the detail as well as the understanding that Bewick brought into this watercolour study (Fig 2a).



Fig 2a. The Sparrow Hawk, Pen and Watercolour. Coll. Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig 2b A Sparrowhawk, photo Steven Rutherford.

This is a bird of prey as seen by the hooked bill. The bill is also in the correct proportion to the head, and, not only has a sharp hook but it also shows a notch on the side of the bill that is used in the butchery of their prey that is typical of hawks and falcons. The large eye and flattish shape to the head can be compared with the male sparrowhawk in the photograph (Fig.2b). The length of the wings suggests that this is a member of the hawk family by being short in the wing tips and only reaching about a third of the way along the length of the tail as showing on Bewick's bird, this is because of the way that hawks generally hunt. Sparrowhawks are woodland edge birds, flying close to cover and using surprise as a tactic and long wings could be a hindrance. Falcons are longer winged to help develop speed, allowing them to swoop upon prey with great velocity. These hunting styles are aided by the adaptations of the legs and feet of the two family groups, the falcons hit the prey at speed and so need powerful short and stout legs and toes, whereas the hawks snatch the prey in slower flight so have evolved long legs and toes to aid this. Another feature to show the accuracy and care taken with this sketch is the feathering on the wings. The scapulars look scaly and the tertials are elliptical and set next to the secondaries, the primaries reach to about a third of the length of the tail. I would also say that Bewick's Sparrowhawk is an immature female, my reasons for this are –

Looking at the light stripe that runs above the eye (supercilium), this is pronounced and clearly visible, in the male it shows faintly confirming that this bird is female. The tail shows three distinct dark bars – male Sparrowhawks have these tail markings but are fine and difficult to see whereas the females tail shows the barring well. Mature birds have white spotting on the back of the head, back and wings; if this was a mature bird, I am sure that Bewick would have included these marks.

MORE THAN JUST THE BIRD – THE MAGPIE (fig.3)

This is another outstandingly detailed piece of work by Bewick who understood the bird by studying it at close quarters. I am always particularly impressed with the way that Bewick suggests the iridescence within the colours on the wingtips and tail on this woodcut. It is the story telling in the background, however, that I would like to highlight his Magpie. It is to be considered that through the late 18th and early 19th centuries education would not have been the universal and well-run state that we enjoy now, and so literacy would have been a privilege then rather than a right. Bewick negated this problem, I believe, by opening up his books to more people through his ability to tell a story through a picture.

By looking beyond the Magpie we see a setting of a farm house with fields and hedges with an occasional standard tree. There is a single lone tree just behind the bird and we see that it is standing beside water. Magpies are opportunist feeders



Fig. 3 Detail, The Magpie, *History of British Birds* Volume One.

taking insects and fruit, when available as well as hunting small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, they will also take chicks and eggs. The habitat shown here will hold all of this potential food. However, there is another story within this picture, a tragedy. Just under the tail of the Magpie we can see that a fence has broken and a horse has fallen to its death – Bewick is showing us that the Magpie is also a carrion feeder.



Fig. 4 The Black- Cap, *History of British Birds* Volume One.

TIMINGS AND FINDING – THE BLACKCAP (fig. 4)

Blackcaps are members of the warbler family and are traditionally migratory birds visiting us each late spring to breed before moving on in the late summer. Bewick's carving is a good illustration of his ability to tell a story within this very accurate portrayal of the male Blackcap. First, we will again start by focusing on the bird and note the stance, the bird has dropped its wings slightly to expose the rump; the bill is open suggesting the bird is singing and a few feathers on the back of the head (the crest) are raised. This last point is usually used when the bird is displaying pleasure, excitement or stress. The Blackcap is a bird that spends quite a bit of time in the canopy of trees singing and feeding and so can be hard to see as it flits from leaf to leaf, however, the song is strong and loud attracting, not just a mate, but the attention of the birdwatcher.



Fig. 6 Elm Leaves, photo Steven Rutherford.

Bewick shows us how, where and when to find Blackcaps in his woodengraving through the telling of a story. If we look at the branch that the bird is on, it has not, I think, been placed there as a prop and we should look at what can be deduced. The buds on the twigs (fig. 5) are small and dark and there are small rounded, rose-like buds of the flowers, and some of the leaves are open, this is telling us that this is early spring. The leaf shape is asymmetric and the edges are double toothed (one large point then several smaller points before the next large point (fig. 6)) and the marks on the upper side suggest texture. All of these features are from the English elm, and the English elm was, until the advent of Dutch elms disease in the late 1960's, the most commonly found tree of the British hedgerows. And so to find a Blackcap it is best to look early spring in high hedgerows indisposed with some mature trees and the males are usually best detected by their song.



Fig. 5 Buds on branch of Elm tree, early Spring, photo Steven Rutherford.

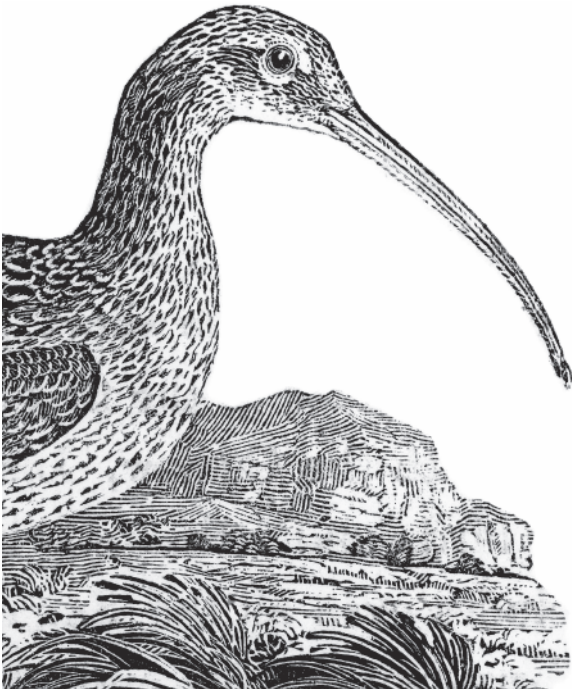


Fig. 7 Detail, The Curlew, *History of British Birds*, Volume Two

BIRD HABITATS –
THE CURLEW (fig. 7)
AND THE LAPWING (fig.8)

I was fortunate to have my childhood growing up on the north bank of the River Tyne in the village of Lemington and not far from Cherryburn, so I spent much of my time there walking and birding in areas that would have been the play areas and birdwatching sites that the child Thomas Bewick would have frequented. A favourite walk was to follow the remains of Hadrian's Wall and, as I look at some of Bewick's illustrations in *A History of British Birds*, I can recognise some of the places that he also went to along this impressive structure when taking sketches for his work. This can be shown by looking at the Curlew and the Lapwing.



Fig. 8 Detail, The Lapwing, *History of British Birds*, Volume Two

Hadrian's Wall runs from east to west across these northern counties of England. Part of the route of the Wall follows the natural fault line of the Great Whyn Sill, and at Crag Lough the Wall was built on the top of the northern edge of the fault where a small, but sheer face is formed giving even greater defensive protection. To the south of this divide here is pasture, while to the north it is wet heath, and it is the wet heath that is ideal habitat for Curlews and Lapwings and was somewhere that I loved going to during the breeding season as a child. Looking at the backgrounds in both the Curlew and Lapwing illustrations we find the Great Whyn Sill at Crag Lough.



THE YELLOW BUNTING.

YELLOW HAMMER, OR YELLOW YOWLEY.

(*Emberiza Citrinella*, Linn.—*Le Bruant*, Buff.)

Fig. 9 The Yellow Bunting or Yellowhammer, *History of British Birds*, Volume One.

STRANGE HABITATS EXPLAINED –
THE YELLOWHAMMER (fig.9)
AND THE NUTHATCH (fig.10)

The Yellowhammer is a bird of farms, scrubland and hedgerows and the Nuthatch is a woodland bird yet Bewick chose to portray them beside a river. This anomaly is explained perhaps by the location of Cherryburn. The cottage and farm sit on a valley looking down onto the River Tyne, the young Thomas Bewick had to cross the river each time that he went to school or church at Ovingham. He was also a very keen fisherman and would have spent many hours there with his rod catching fish, not only for fun, but also to supplement the family diet. I think that the sketch of the Yellowhammer may have been made a couple of miles to the east of this wood, opposite Newburn. The land today is flat here before climbing gently up towards Ryton and Prudhoe and is a typical scrubby area and a place where I often see Yellowhammers on the tops of the Hawthorns and willows. Even though Bewick's Yellowhammer is showing on a twig over the river, the background looks very similar to the scrub area opposite Newburn today.

CONCLUSION

Bewick's *History of British Birds* were illustrated by an active field naturalist who brought accuracy to the identifications and with the information on the bird's habitats and ecology. Bewick's skills at story telling also opened these books to others that might struggle with more academic books. Bewick's self-published works of natural history represent the beginnings of the now flourishing area of publishing: the field guide for the general reader or novice naturalist.



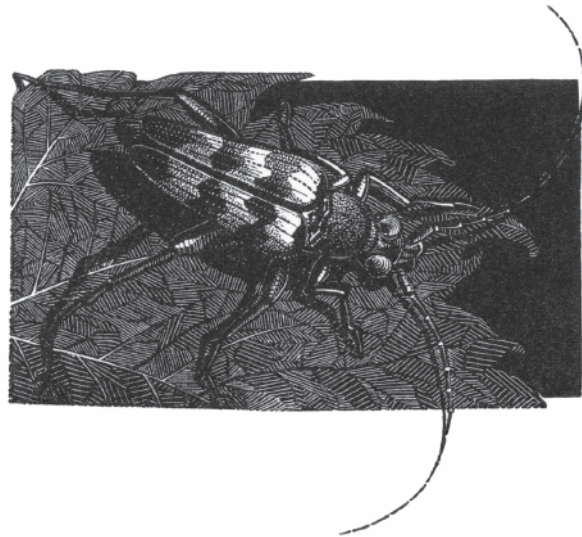
Fig. 10 The Nuthatch, *History of British Birds*, Volume One.

THE BEWICK PRIZE 2022

The Society of Wood Engravers 84th Annual Exhibition
continues at Sea Pictures Gallery starting on 9th June.
The show features over 120 original prints, all for sale.

The Society of Wood Engravers was founded in 1920 by artists including Eric Gill, Gwen Raverat, Robert Gibbings, Philip Haggren and Lucien Pissarro. A break during the war years and then again in the 1970s meant that their annual exhibition ceased for a time; since their revival in 1984, they have built a reputation for excellence, attracting exhibitors and collectors from around the world. The Society exists to promote wood engraving, but also embraces all forms of relief printing, which makes this show a fascinating and affordable collection of images inspired by a wide range of subjects.

This year's winner of the Bewick Prize for a small woodengraving is Anne Desmet RA RE. We are delighted that Anne will talk to the Society via Zoom on September 29th at 7.30 pm. Anne will talk about her own work and those historic works she included in the 2020 exhibition 'Scene through Wood, A Century of Modern Wood Engraving' at the Ashmoleum Museum in Oxford. Book your Zoom ticket on Eventbrite.



Anne Desmet RA RE Beetle, 2022,
Winner of the Bewick Prize

This exhibition runs **9th June – 9th July**.
Sea Pictures Gallery, Well House, Well Lane, Clare, Suffolk CO10 8NH.

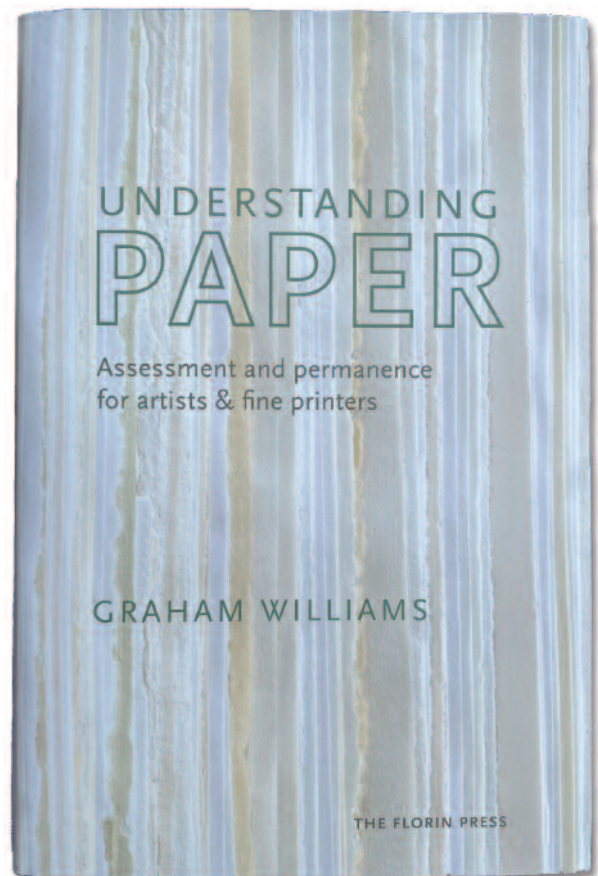
UNDERSTANDING PAPER BY GRAHAM WILLIAMS

Review by Chris Daunt.

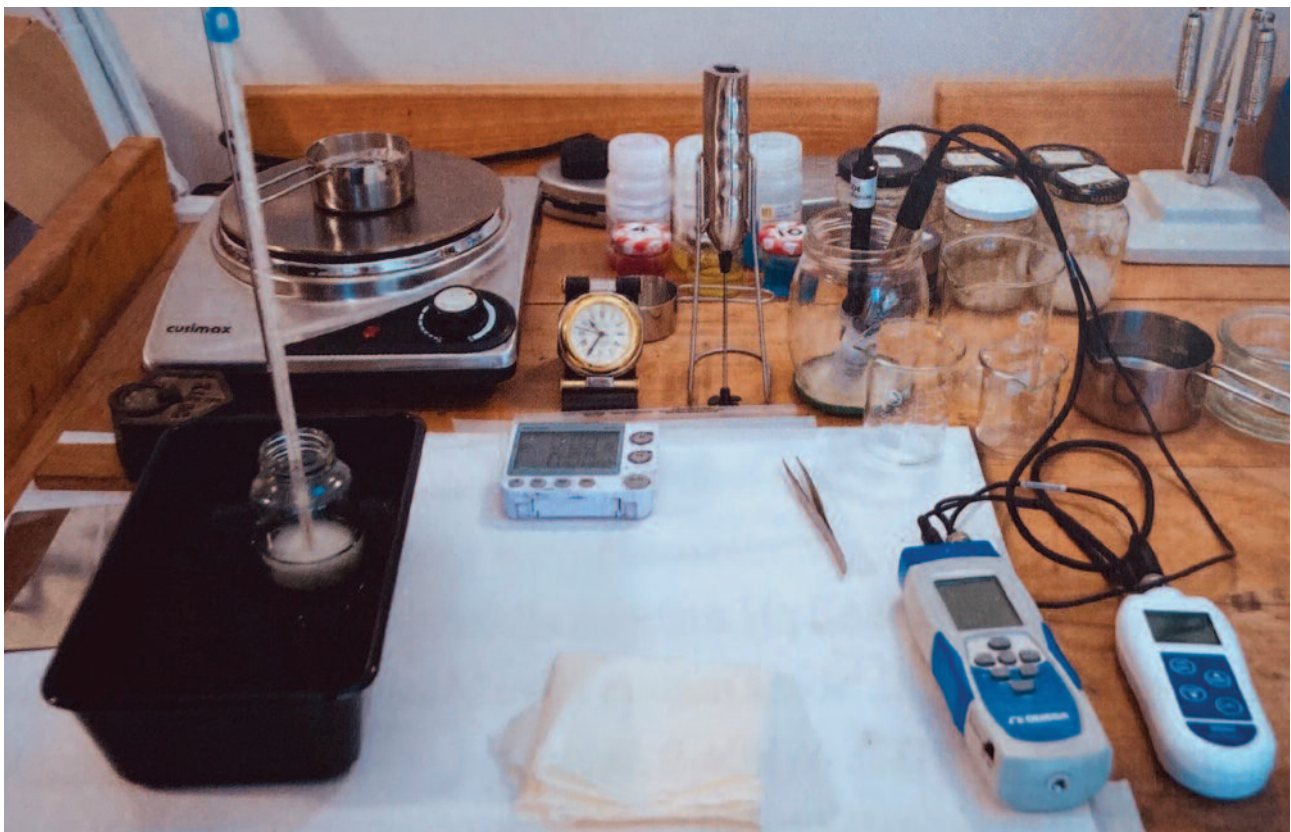
It has been said that one of the joys of the private press is that it allows you to write a book on any subject under the sun. Graham's book on paper is highly specialised and will probably be of interest to only a select readership yet is also a very practical reference and handbook. The author's intention is to assist the artist or printer with in depth knowledge based on 'aesthetic evaluations' and 'scientifically based standards'. Regarding the latter, detailed and thorough tests on numerous papers are described in meticulous detail. Whilst Graham presents these extensive tests with great step by step clarity, I suspect that most of us will be very happy to rely on his findings rather than attempt to carry out the tests ourselves.

I found the chapter assessing various hand made and mould made papers to be of particular interest and I have already referred to it in choosing paper for a forthcoming print commission. The final chapter deals with letterpress ink and is, as Graham states, a subject dealt with more fully in his recent volume on Thomas Bewick. Here, he deals only with how to modify an ink to enhance its performance on conditioned paper. This confirms what I have found, namely that none of the commercially available letterpress inks are stiff enough to do justice to finely engraved blocks.

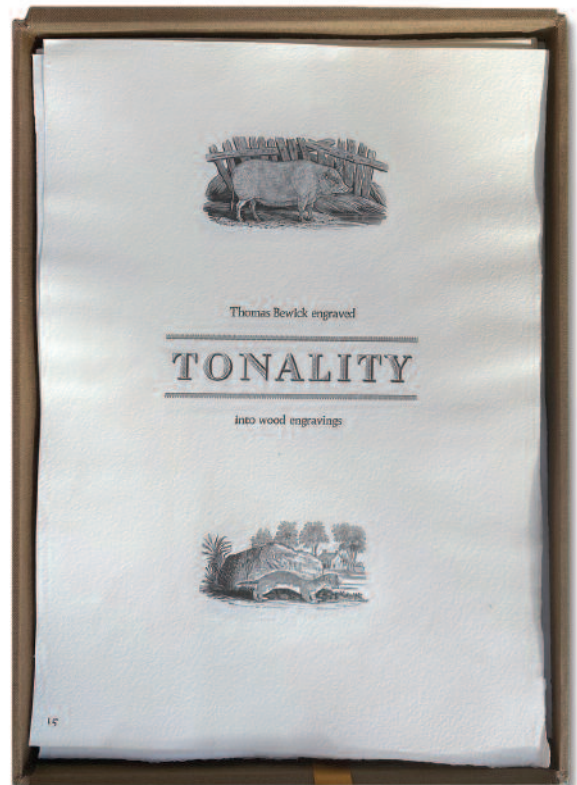
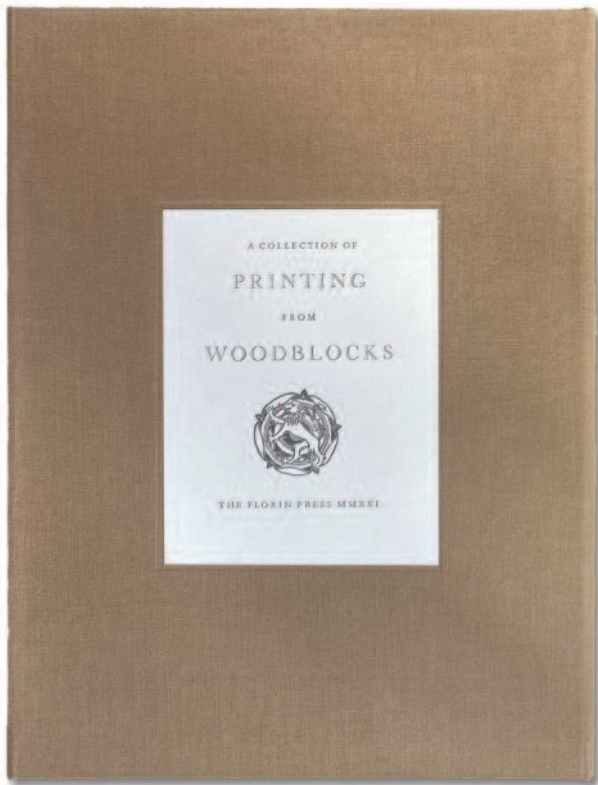
The glossary about paper is a very helpful addition and clarifies pretty much any term relating to paper.



Graham Williams, *Understanding Paper. Assessment and permanence for artists & fine printers*, The Florin Press 2021



Workbench when testing Ph. A sample is heating at the back and another cooling at the front. *Understanding Paper*, page 45.



A COLLECTION OF PRINTING FROM WOODBLOCKS. THE FLORIN PRESS

Review by Chris Daunt.

This boxed set of loose sheets from Graham Williams is a treasure, an antidote to the lamentable and relentless shift from the printed page to the screen. Even before that shift, this would have been a sign of contradiction to an industry that tossed aside the beauty of letterpress printing in favour of mass volume printing.

A Collection of Printing from Woodblocks is a celebration of the beauty of the well printed block on high quality papers, and this is more than enough to justify its creation. It returns one to the pleasure of browsing the large format, printed page. For me it rekindled memories of monastic days when I had access to huge, ancient tomes of the church fathers, handmade letterpress pages, bound in weighty covers. There was a thrill in opening these books and contemplating the Latin text, even if I understood very little of it. The custom of *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading) was likened to a cow chewing the cud, where the object was not to gain information, but rather to savour a sentence at a time. Sometimes a monk could spend an hour chewing over no more than a few sentences. Lifting out one page at a time of Graham's printed sheets is just such an experience.

The contents of the perfectly crafted box comprise a paperbound introduction to the set of loose sheets. In it Graham situates this production as the middle volume of his three publications, the first being *Thomas Bewick Engraver & the performance of woodblocks*, and *Understanding Paper*. In this introduction you have a key to what follows, information on the woodblocks, paper and inks. Here he allows himself a

journey of delight in using different papers and inks to print the same engraved blocks, with a small set of text that has the feel of a printing aphorism. The engravings (and text) take on subtle but distinct complexions when printed on papers of varying texture and tone. I'm handling one sheet now, *The Chinese Sow* and *The Weasel*, engravings from the *Quadrupeds*, printed on handmade Richard de Bas paper in a warm white. The slight embossing into the paper reminds me of the gulf between a letterpress sheet and a commercially printed page.

Over the years people have said to me that I could surely find a computer programme that would enable me to make 'engravings' in a fraction of the time. I always struggled to find a polite answer, but my reply next time will be to pull out a sheet from this box. The text between the engravings reads 'Thomas Bewick engraved Tonalities into wood engravings'. This is a meditation on a theme and is absorbing as I take in these extraordinary engravings, printed with a skill that Bewick would have most certainly approved. I don't think anyone would disagree if I stated that few, if any, of Bewick's printers ever did the job as well as Graham Williams.

Amongst the sheets you will find some with two of Graham's own engravings, showing that the author is also an accomplished wood engraver. Finally, the set is complete with two blank vintage sheets and an instruction to lift up to the light where you find two large watermarks. Laurence Sterne would approve.



Cherryburn, May 2022

CHERRYBURN IN 2022

by Kay Owen

Cherryburn has reopened and is welcoming visitors once again. Feedback from last year was overwhelmingly positive with visitors to the property commenting on the more personal, engaging experience offered.

The birthplace, museum and gardens are all open and tickets need to be booked by 3pm the day before your visit. Members can book for free, while non-members will need to pay when booking. Open every Thursday and Friday from 2 June to 28 October 2022 from 10:00 - 17:00.

There has been lots of activity behind the scenes with a major garden renovation recently completed. The space has been transformed with new paths which are more accessible and the creation of beds, as well as an area for allotments. The garden has a more natural look and has a wilder feel, with easy to source plants to inspire you to create your own planting schemes at home.

Some of the newly created beds have been left to self-seed while others have been planted with native wildflowers including foxgloves and ox eye daisies. There are several whites and softer tones, attracting bees and butterflies and characteristic of the natural landscape as Bewick would have experienced it. As well as our gardeners and volunteers, the rangers and countryside team are now based at Cherryburn too – a welcome addition to the team.

Inside the house, sales of Bewick prints are still extremely popular, and Bewick's work continues to inspire visitors and

artists alike – including Turner Prize nominee George Shaw. George's new exhibition, *Home is Unspent - George Shaw and Thomas Berwick – Cherryburn*, curated by Jonathan Watkins, will be on display in the birthplace and museum from 14 July until 28 October.

In other exciting news, Cherryburn will feature in a BBC television programme focusing on the collection of 100 woodblocks carved by Bewick's students/apprentices. Filming on site will include the cataloguing of the blocks and the identification, labelling, and cataloguing of the blocks for our collections database. The transmission date of programme is to be confirmed.

We're excited to share all that is new at Cherryburn and look forward to welcoming you

Cherryburn Times is normally published twice a year. Thanks to our authors. Kristin Bluemel has been Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Newcastle University (Spring 2022) and is Professor of English, Wayne D. McMurray Endowed Chair in the Humanities, Monmouth University; Steven Rutherford is Honorary Chairman of the British Naturalists' Society; Chris Daunt is a blockmaker, wood engraver and teacher of wood engraving and Kay Owen is Visitor Operations & Experience Manager at the National Trust. We welcome contributions for future issues. We can be contacted via the Bewick Society website. Our email address is bewick.society@newcastle.ac.uk

Editorial team: Peter Quinn, June Holmes & Hugh Dixon.

Proof reading: Charles Fleming.

Design & print: Kimmerston Design.

KD 78/4448