

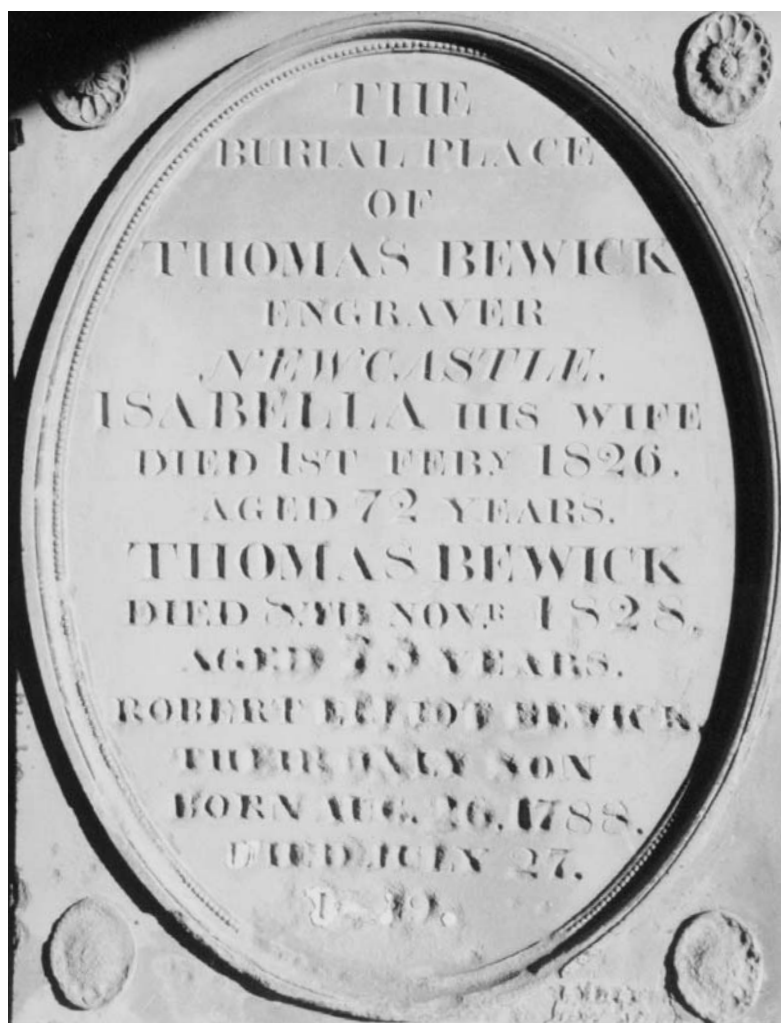


# CHERRYBURN TIMES

*The Newsletter of The Bewick Society*

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## THE BEWICK GRAVES IN Ovingham CHURCHARD



Inscription Stone of Thomas Bewick and his wife Isabella who are buried side by side in the graveyard surrounding the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Ovingham in Northumberland.  
The Stone is inside the Church for protection.

# THE BEWICK GRAVES IN OVINGHAM CHURCHYARD

*by Frank Atkinson*

As most members of our Society will know, Thomas Bewick and his wife Isabella are buried side by side in the graveyard surrounding the Church of St Mary the Virgin, at Ovingham in Northumberland.

Their graves lie at the West end of the church, below the Saxon Tower separated from the tower by a footpath. They are almost unknown to casual visitors, for they bear little in the way of inscription and the two simple rectangular flagstones lie flat on the ground, partly obscured by the surrounding grass.



The current condition of the two simple rectangular flagstones, partly obscured by grass, marking the graves of Thomas and Isabella Bewick at Ovingham.

Last century an iron fencing surrounded the tomb and an informative carved memorial stone panel was fixed to the West wall of the tower adjoining these graves. The stones themselves simply bear the inscribed names THOMAS BEWICK and ISABELLA BEWICK and even these have become partly decayed by time and weather, and are obscured by lichen. The iron fence was removed probably half a century or more ago and the memorial panel was taken into the church porch to protect it from further decay.

Since the church is Saxon in origin, though thirteenth century in large part, Listed as Grade I, with a graveyard in reasonably well kept condition and including various interesting tombstones, it has become an accepted place for schools to visit, for it satisfies many of the criteria needed for the 'History Curriculum'. So more and more visits are being made, yet little help is offered to such parties, especially when it comes to identifying whose graves these are. And indeed, who *was* Thomas Bewick?

As your President, I felt that these graves needed some physical improvement and a little 'interpretation', to use a modern word.

So, with the approval of your Committee, I discussed the problem with a local designer and landscape architect, June Drage. She very kindly drew up a possible scheme of improvement which calls for the stones to be



The Saxon Tower of the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Ovingham below which the graves of Thomas Bewick and his wife Isabella lie.



The Church and its Saxon Tower at Ovingham showing the iron fencing which surrounded the grave, from an original watercolour painting by Joseph Skelton in 1889.

raised a little and properly levelled, for one has sunk and cracked across. Clearly one would not think of re-engraving the inscriptions, but the lichen can be carefully cleaned away and two simple informative brass plates affixed on an adjoining block of stone lying at the feet of the main stones. A surround of small whinstone blocks – a regional hard dark-coloured basaltic rock – will protect the edges of the stone slabs from the passing lawnmower, whilst delineating their shape, without themselves being intrusive.

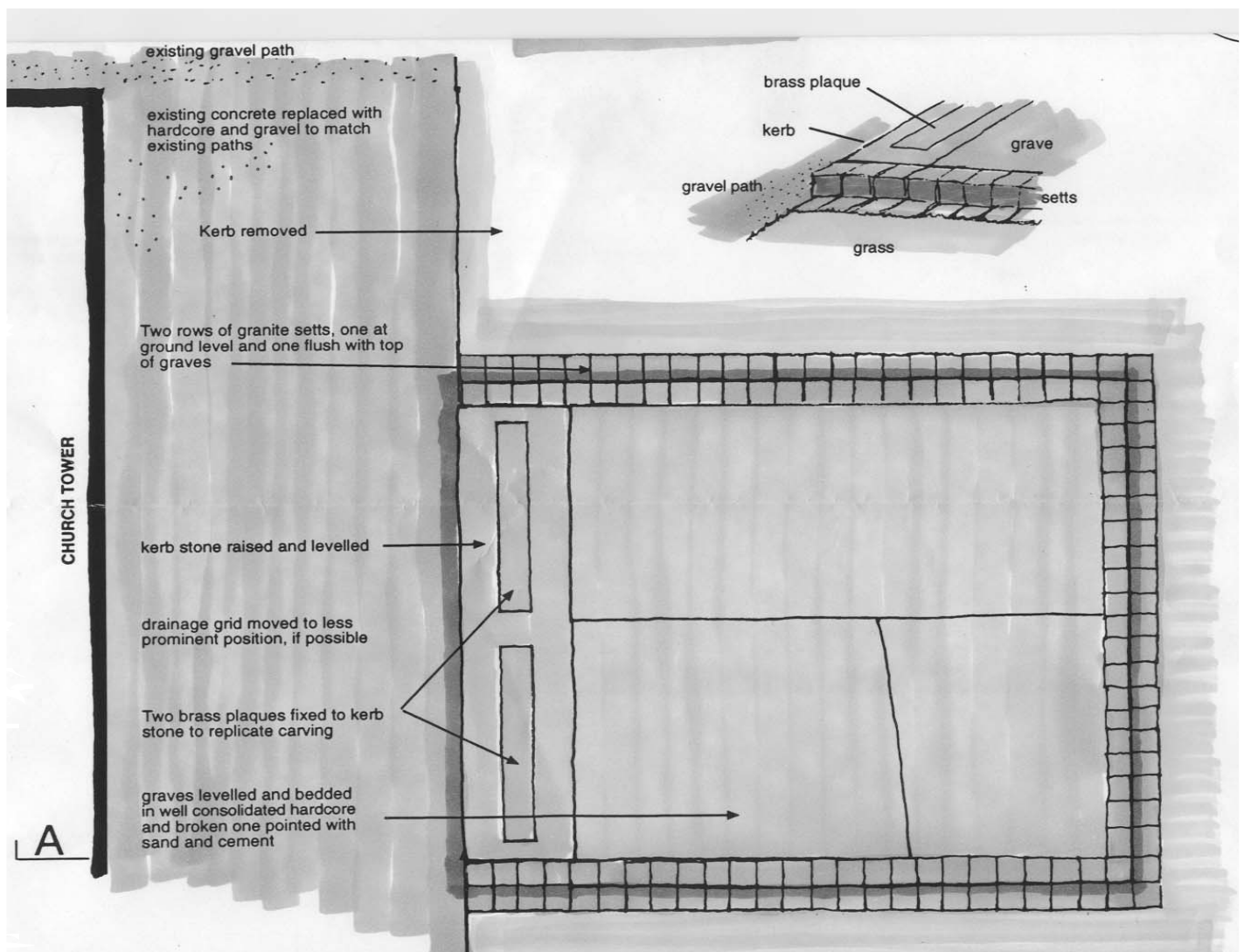
The Parochial Church Council is now obtaining a Faculty from the Diocesan Council (a Faculty is a kind of ecclesiastical 'Planning Consent'!), to permit this work to proceed, and we hope all will be completed before many more months have elapsed.

Your President is currently engaged in drafting a guide to the church and its history and its graveyard which will – it is hoped – be especially useful and informative for teachers and school parties alike.

The drawing shown below gives the details as currently proposed.



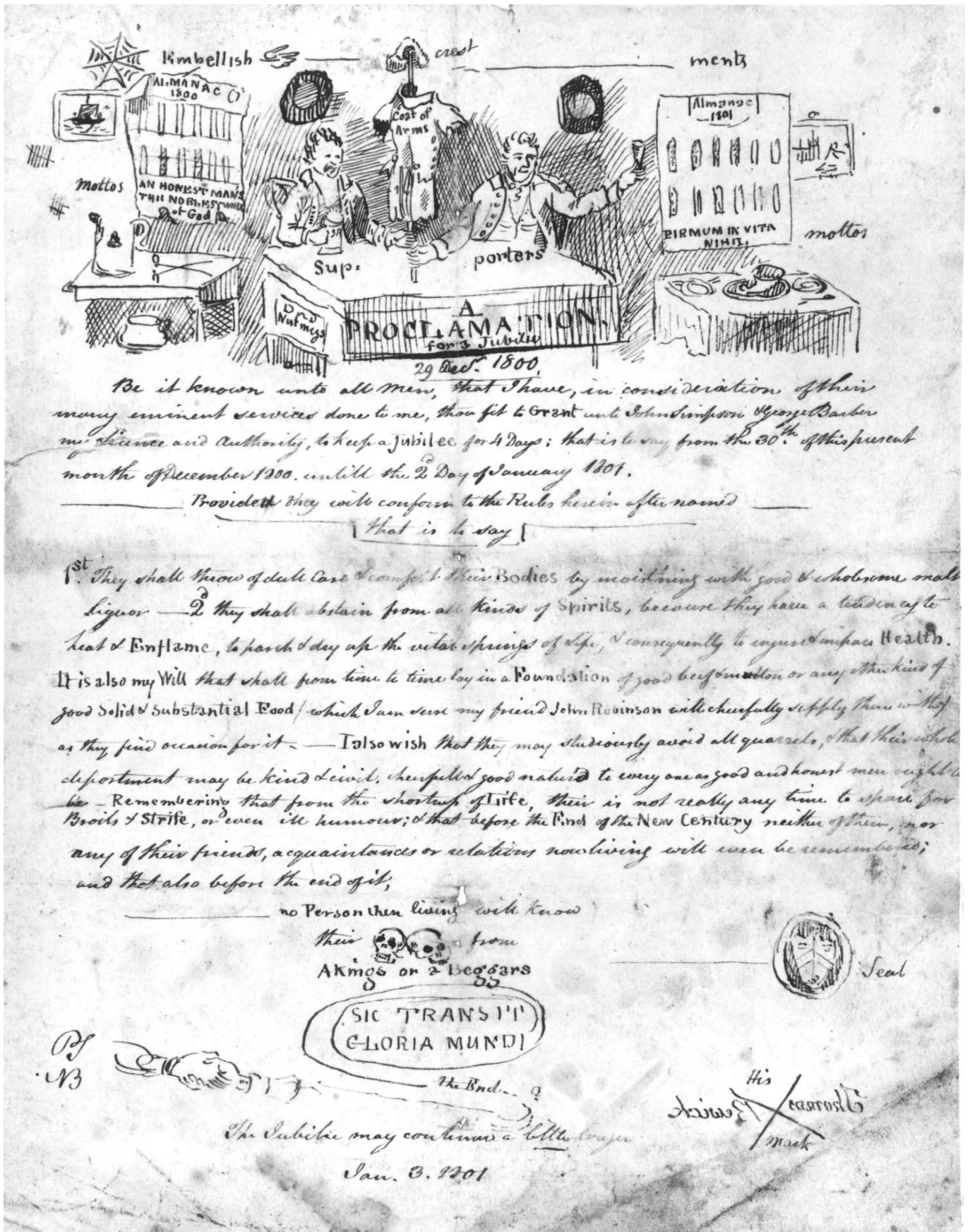
The gravestones of Thomas and Isabella Bewick as they are located at the base of the Saxon Tower at the west side of the Church.



Drawing of the proposed scheme of improvement to the Bewick graves by June Drage of Stocksfield.



# THOMAS BEWICK'S NINETEENTH CENTURY JUBILEE, 1800-1



Be it known unto all men, that I have, in consideration of their many eminent services done to me, thou fit to Grant unto John Robinson & George Barber my Licence and Authority, to keep a Jubilee for 4 Days; that is to say from the 30<sup>th</sup> of this present month of December 1800. untill the 2<sup>d</sup> Day of January 1801.

Provided they will conform to the Rules herein after named  
[that is to say]

1<sup>st</sup> They shall throw of dull Care & comfort their Bodies by moistning with good & wholesome small Liqueur — 2<sup>d</sup> They shall abstain from all kinds of Spirits, because they have a tendency to heat & Enflame, to parch & dry up the vital Springs of life, & consequently to injure & impair Health. It is also my Will that shall from time to time lay in a Provision of good beef mutton or any other kind of good Solid & Substantial Food / which I can send my friend John Robinson will cheerfully supply them with if as they find occasion for it — I also wish that they may studiously avoid all quarrels, & that their whole deportment may be kind & civil, chearful & good natured to every one as good and honest men ought to be — Remembering that from the shortness of Life, there is not really any time to spare for Broils & Strife, or even ill humour; & that before the Ring of the New Century neither of them, nor any of their friends, acquaintances or relations now living will even be remembered; and that also before the end of it,

no Person then living will know  
their  from  
A Kings or a Beggars

SIC TRANSIT  
GLORIA MUNDI



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NB



The End

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The Jubilee may continue a little longer  
Jan. 3. 1801

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ALMANAC  
1800

ALMANAC  
1801

coat of  
Arms

Mottos AN HONEST MAN'S  
THE NOBLEST WORK  
of God

PIRMUM IN VITA  
NIHIL Mottos

Sup.

porters

and  
nutmegs

# A PROCLAMATION for a Jubilee 29 Dec. 1800

*Be it known unto all men, that I have, in consideration of their many eminent services done to me, thou fit to grant unto John Simpson & George Barber my Licence and Authority, to keep a Jubilee for 4 days; that is to say from the 30<sup>th</sup>.of this present month of December 1800 untill (sic) the 2<sup>d</sup> (2nd) day of January 1801.*

*Provided that they will conform to the rules herin after named . . . that is to say . . .*

*1<sup>st</sup>. They shall throw of (sic) dull care & comfort their Bodies by nourishing with good & wholesome malt liquor – 2<sup>d</sup>. they shall abstain from all kinds of Spirits, because they have a tendency to heat & Enflame, to parch & dry up the vital springs of life, & consequently to injure & impare Health. It is also my Will that shall from time to time lay in a Foundation of good beef & mutton or any other kind of good Solid & Substantial Food which I am sure my friend John Robinson will cheerfully supply them with as they find occasion for it. I also wish that they may studiously avoid all quarrels, & that their whole deportment may be kind & civil, cheerful and good natured to every one as good and honest men ought to be. Remembering that from the shortness of Life, their (sic) is not really any time to spare for Broils & Strife, or even ill humour; & that before the End of the New Century neither of them, or any of their friends, acquaintances or relations will even be remembered; and that also before the end of it,*

*. . . no Person then living will know their [. . . skulls . . .] from*

*A Kings or a Beggars*

[Seal]

*SIC TRANSIT*

*GLORIA MUNDI*

*The End*

[Handshake]

*PS NB The Jubilee may continue a little longer  
Jan. 3, 1801*

*His  
Bewick Thomas  
mark*

[signature reversed]

The Proclamation printed on pages four and five of this issue of the *Cherryburn Times* was presented to the Natural History Society of Northumberland and Durham in 1889 by the Misses Bruce of Whitley. It has been brought to our attention by June Holmes, Researcher at the Natural History Society and committee member of the Bewick Society. With it was a letter addressed to their father by Jane and Isabella Bewick in 1863. This is also printed below; it gives some of the background, especially on George Barber, enabling us to approach an understanding of the document. The items were conserved and mounted on archival boards at the Tate Gallery under the guidance of Iain Bain in 1983.

August 20th. 1863  
West Street  
Gateshead

Sir

*In reference to the accompanying sketch by our late Father Thomas Bewick, we feel great pleasure in complying with your request, – to give you an explanation of the characters represented therein.*

*George Barber was employed for many years by our late Father, as a journeyman Copper plate printer and was instructed in that business, when he entered the office. He belonged to a family above the middle class and was by no means an uneducated man. He was plausible and insinuating though when in his cups, very abusive, – His master was unwearied in acts of kindness – and in forbearance towards him, and used every means to reclaim him from his intemperate habits. A relation (a brother or a cousin) died in India and left him an immense fortune for which there arose numerous claimants – George amongst the rest. The prospect of this shower of wealth lasted over many years and might perhaps tend to unsettle him.*

*Of John Simpson we know nothing but that he was employed as a printer on the early editions of T. Bewick's works. He must have been the companion of George Barber. John Robinson was a very respectable man; he kept the Spread Inn, long since pulled down, to make room for Collingwood Street.*

*We remain Sir*

*Your most ob.t Serv.t*

Mr Bruce

Jane Bewick, Isabella Bewick

For some further information on George Barber we find him mentioned in Robert Robinson's *Thomas Bewick His Life and Times* of 1887 on page 115 as 'Bewick's copper-plate printer . . . a near relative of Joseph Barber the bookseller.' This brief mention is part of an explanation of an autograph letter by Bewick dated 13 October 1801 and reproduced in facsimile by Robinson between pages 114-115. That letter simply refers to George incidentally in terms which show him to have been a trusted familiar of the workshop. Rather more details are given of Joseph Barber elsewhere in Robinson, but they do not help us with this Proclamation.

The Jubilee which is the subject of the Proclamation is the celebration of an exceptional New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, namely the one passing from one century to another. It is interesting for us to note that Bewick's (and presumably all his contemporaries) thought that the transition from one century to another took place at the end of 1800 to the beginning of 1801. This was indeed the

normal method of counting centuries. Since we ourselves are on the threshold of an even bigger transition, the millennium, it is notable that most people now seem to think that the new millennium begins on 1 January, 2000. This may have something to do with the serious concern about the notorious millennium bug which threatens doom on that date to those unwary dependents on computers. However that may be, it is clear that Bewick's nineteenth century began on 1st January, 1801, not 1800.

The Motto shown on the Almanac at top right is difficult to decipher in more ways than one. We believe it reads 'Pirmum in vita nihil', though if this is correct, we do not know what was intended. Perhaps it is some kind of dog-Latin, with the word 'pirmum' perhaps an invention of a Latin-looking word based on 'permanent'; this would suggest that it means 'Nothing lasts in life'. That would at least seem to fit in both with the jocular tone of the whole thing and a certain hint of impending doom appropriate to a sense of *fin de siècle* and expressed in the skulls.

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## The Thomas Bewick Metro Train

On Monday 30th November, the Tyne and Wear Metro named one of its trains 'Thomas Bewick'. The Chairman of the Passenger Transport Authority, Councillor Danny Marshall, Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, performed the short naming ceremony at the Airport Metro Station in front of an audience which included invited members of the Bewick Society. The President of the Society, Dr. Frank Atkinson, CBE, was present, with Professor Kenneth McConkey, Chairman of the Society, and Mr and Mrs Thirkle, Administrators of Cherryburn. Bob Browell, former Secretary to the Society, was also present dressed in an informal eighteenth-century working costume rather different from the Lord Mayor's eighteenth-century formal robes and tricorne hat. An appropriate thematic touch was added to the occasion by Mr. Browell's display of wood-engraving equipment, including some engravings made by himself, with some samples of the boxwood which was the basic medium of the Bewick technique.

Although this kind of formality might be seen as a rather nominal acknowledgement of Bewick's fame in the rest of the world, members of the Bewick Society will be very pleased to note that a way has been found to give some kind of recognition to Bewick in our region. Some members have been known to express astonishment from time to time that the City and the region do not make more of one of their most illustrious sons. It remains to be seen whether anything will come of recent plans to create a Bewick centre in Newcastle. We have been reporting slow progress in the last three issues of *Cherryburn Times*, but at the time of writing this, it seems that the project may be waiting at one of the platforms of the Metro line while other trains are moving on the track ahead.



The train now standing at Platform 1 . . . Monday 30 November, 1998

## THOMAS BEWICK



Bob Browell makes a last minute adjustment to the plaque, watched by the Mayor and Lady Mayoress and other spectators.



Mr Bob Browell, Wood Engraver and former Secretary to the Bewick Society, with the display shown at the Airport.



(right to left) The Lord Mayor, Councillor Danny Marshall, Dr Frank Atkinson, President of the Bewick Society, the Lady Mayoress, and Mr Bob Browell.

# CONSTITUTION OF THE BEWICK SOCIETY

## **Name:**

The name of the Association shall be THE BEWICK SOCIETY. It is hereinafter referred to as 'The Society'.

## **Aim and Powers:**

The aim of The Society shall be to promote an interest in the life and work of Thomas Bewick and related subjects.

In the furtherance of its aim, The Society shall have power to:

1. Engage in, support and coordinate research, publishing, education, advertising and other work for the furtherance of the above stated aim;
2. Engage in any other lawful activities to promote the said aim;
3. Appoint delegates and representatives to any other bodies with whom The Society may be connected;
4. Foster cordial relationships with any other body with an interest in The Society's stated aim;
5. Promote contemporary printmaking;
6. Maintain an interest in the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Museum, Cherryburn.

## **Membership:**

There shall be three classes of membership;

- (a) Individual
- (b) Joint
- (c) Student.

## **Committee – Power and Membership:**

1. The Committee shall have the general management and direction of the funds and affairs of The Society.
2. (i) The Committee shall consist of the following Officers and other Members:
  - (a) President
  - (b) Chair
  - (c) Secretary
  - (d) Treasurer
  - (e) Editor of the Newsletter
  - (f) Representative of The National Trust
  - (g) a maximum of six Ordinary Members
- (ii) The election procedure shall be:

Ordinary Members – members shall be elected for three years, and shall be eligible for re-election after one year.

Officers – officers shall be elected for a maximum of five years, and shall be eligible for re-election after one year.
3. Every member of the Committee must be a member of The Society.
4. The Committee shall have power to co-opt up to two additional voting persons.
5. All members of the Committee shall have one vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.

## **Subscriptions:**

1. The rate of the annual subscription for the different classes of membership of The Society shall be such sums as may be set by vote at the Annual General Meeting.
2. Annual subscriptions shall become due on the first day of April each year. Members whose subscriptions are twelve months in arrears shall be automatically excluded from membership.

## **Finance:**

1. All funds and assets in the possession of The Society shall be held, paid for and applied as the Committee may direct in the furtherance of the objects of the Society. Pending such direction all funds shall be held in a separate bank account (or accounts) in the name of The Society with such bankers as the Committee may from time to time direct.

2. All cheques drawn on such bankers shall be signed by any two of the Chair, Secretary or Treasurer. All documents requiring endorsement shall be sufficiently endorsed if signed by any one of them.
3. The Committee shall have power to invest such funds as are not required to be immediately available for meeting The Society's liabilities. Such investments may be on deposit with a bank or building society or as decided by the Committee.
4. Two auditors, who need not be members of The Society, shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting.

## **Meetings:**

### **1. Annual General Meeting:**

- (a) The AGM of The Society, of which not less than thirty day's notice shall be given to all members, by the Secretary, shall be held during the month of June each year.
- (b) The business of the AGM shall be:
  - (i) to receive reports from the Chair and Offices;
  - (ii) to receive and approve the annual accounts and to appoint the auditors;
  - (iii) to elect the Officers and Ordinary Members of the Committee;
  - (iv) to consider any matter or proposal submitted in writing by any member of The Society not less than fourteen days in advance of the AGM

### **2. Other General Meetings:**

The Committee may, at any time, and shall within twenty-eight days of receiving a request in writing from any ten members, convene a Special General Meeting. Not less than fourteen days' notice shall be given by the Secretary to each member, specifying the business to be transacted.

### **3. Committee Meetings:**

Committee Meetings shall be held not less frequently than once in every quarter.

### **4. Quorum:**

A quorum shall consist:

- (i) at a Committee Meeting, four members of the Committee;
- (ii) at a General Meeting, twelve members of The Society. In the absence of the Chair, those attending shall elect a Chair for the meeting from among their number.

### **5. Notice of Meetings:**

Notice to Members shall be deemed sufficiently served if sent ordinary pre-paid post, or any other verifiable means of written and printed communication, or otherwise delivered to the address of the member registered in the records of The Society.

## **Winding Up:**

On the winding up of The Society, the Committee shall pay the surplus of funds of The Society to such other institution or institutions as the Committee shall determine.

## **Amendments:**

No alteration may be made to this Constitution except by, and with the authority of a resolution of the members in a General Meeting. Any proposal for an amendment must be made in writing to the Secretary in sufficient time to allow details of the proposal to be circulated to the members with notice of the meeting, and must be so circulated.

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*Cherryburn Times* is published twice a year. Contributions are invited particularly from members of the Bewick Society.

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Produced by David W. S. Gray and John L. Wolfe, printed at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle.