



CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Newsletter of The Bewick Society

FROM THE CHAIR

Hugh Dixon, Chairman of the Bewick Society, reflects on his first months in office.

My first thoughts, in settling somewhat gingerly into the chair of the Bewick Society, are to keep my back straight, and to be very grateful for the legacy I have received. The example and efforts of my predecessors come first. Dr Frank Atkinson, now the Society's President was, of course, not only 'the Man who made Beamish' but also the man who, as a retirement pastime, made Cherryburn and the Bewick Society. With his enormous experience and knowledge, both of Bewick and of northern social history and folkways, he continues to give most welcome advice and support. Professor Kenneth McConkey, my immediate predecessor, saw the Society through a period of constitutional uncertainty, and gave academic authority to a wider vision of Bewick's place in the history of printed illustration.

From Kenneth, too, I was fortunate enough to inherit our excellent second generation Committee. I rely on their experience and expertise. I am very grateful for their help, resourcefulness, and in no small measure, their patience.

So what, the new Chairman may think to himself, is there left to do? It seems to me that there are two groupings among Thomas Bewick enthusiasts: those who recognize his pioneering position and the quality of his work but place it in the much wider historical context; and those whose detailed knowledge of Bewick's work extends to subtle differences between editions, changes to printing blocks, varied inkings, and detailed fascination with collection of Bewick items both past and present.

Both approaches are valid, and can lead to absorbing publications. Neither, however, naturally provides a straightforward introduction to the enthusiastic beginner. Thomas Bewick ought to be more widely known. His name may be familiar, but the breadth of his achievement in documenting both natural and social history deserves much greater recognition. I believe the Society has a role to play not only in encouraging expertise, but also in

providing more general introductions to the understanding and appreciation of Bewick's work. I trust that this will be reflected in our annual programmes.

Not all members will know that my main job with the National Trust, as Historic Buildings Representative for Northumbria Region, includes responsibility for curatorial care of Cherryburn. In this light I hope I may be excused for attaching importance to links between Cherryburn and the Society. Cherryburn gains enormously from advice and volunteer help of members. Society membership still includes free entry to Cherryburn, and current proposals allow for better access to collections. It will be my endeavour to strengthen ties which I believe to be of mutual benefit.

Nevertheless I am proud to have been a member of the Society before the National Trust had any connection with Cherryburn.

I was drawn to the quality of Thomas Bewick's work in its own right. It began with admiration for the craftsman's skill and the artist's vision; but gradually I came to appreciate, too, Bewick's extraordinary ability to observe so much of the world about him and to record with it with sympathy and with humour. I would like others to share that process of discovery.

Your Committee is aware that there is much to do. We wish to stabilise the Society's finances, to cultivate partnerships for activities (as the lecture programme shows), to set up a web site, to undertake more outgoing initiatives, and, most importantly, to establish a regular annual programme to encourage members participation. All this will be in pursuit of the Society's main purpose 'to promote an interest in the life and work of Thomas Bewick and related subjects'.

I regard it as an honour to be your Chairman, and I look forward to hearing your ideas, and to meeting you at events.

Hugh Dixon



Thomas Bewick at the Hatton Gallery

by Andrew Heard

Assistant Curator, Hatton Gallery

The Hatton Gallery recently held an exhibition of the work of Thomas Bewick. Showing works from the Hatton's permanent collection alongside loans from the National Trust, the Pease Collection, the Natural History Society of Northumbria and a private collection, the exhibition ran for six weeks in December and January.

The exhibition concentrated on the tailpiece vignettes Bewick used to enliven his various publications. The mounted drawings from the collection of the Natural History Society amply illustrated the range and variety of the vignettes and also highlighted the inventiveness and industry of Bewick. Many of the comments we received from visitors during the course of the show reflected this. It was the overwhelming number of different stories and narratives contained within the vignettes, as much as Bewick's skill in working on such a small scale, that seemed to capture the imagination of visitors. In all, the exhibition contained over 350 separate images and it was noticeable that people who viewed the show generally stayed for a long time. There was much to look at.

Re-uniting the separate stages of Bewick's artistic process was another important element of the exhibition. The preliminary transfer drawings, the engraved boxwood blocks and the finished prints of eight of Bewick's vignettes were individually framed and hung side by side. These displays provided an insight into Bewick's working practice and showed how he occasionally modified his initial design when working on the block. Individually mounting and framing the blocks gave them greater emphasis and encouraged viewers to look on them not only as functional objects but also as important works of art in their own right.

The media showed a lot of interest in the exhibition. Regional television and radio stations and the local press all covered the show, as did some of the national newspapers. The Sunday Telegraph listed it as one of their Critics' Choices and Frank Whitford, describing the exhibition as 'fresh and fascinating' and Bewick's artistic skill as 'miraculous', included it in his Critical List in the Sunday Times. These articles drew wider attention to the exhibition and many people travelled from outside the region in order view the show.

Bringing Bewick's work to a wider audience was, perhaps, the most positive aspect of the exhibition. Those new to Bewick were quick to comment on the disproportionate relationship between his reputation and his artistic skill. One visitor memorably stated that if Bewick had lived in the south he would have been buried in Westminster Abbey. The lady was informed that Bewick was, fittingly, buried at Ovingham. This she knew. The point she was making was obvious enough.

Jean Taylor, the Hatton Gallery's Education Officer, was kept very busy throughout the exhibition with almost six-hundred schoolchildren, from primary level to sixth formers, coming to participate in Bewick's workshops.

The younger children were encouraged to design posters inspired by the vignettes and a good deal of skill was in evidence in the finished results. For some reason the most popular vignettes for the younger visitors were *Roadside Relief* and the *Pigsty Netty*. GCSE and 'A' Level students designed their own vignettes and rendered them in small scale on scraper board, working from dark to light to create an image. Outreach projects form an important element of the Hatton Gallery's programme and on the weekend before Christmas Jean held a Bewick workshop in the Metro Centre, where children made Bewick Calendars. All the work produced by education projects was displayed in the gallery on the last day of the exhibition.

The Thomas Bewick exhibition was well received and very well attended. In the last week alone over fourte hundred people visited the show. Many of the visitors were unfamiliar with his work or were only aware of the illustrations of birds and animals. Giving prominence to the vignettes presented the more human and humorous aspect of Bewick's output, making the work on show more accessible and enjoyable. It was very apt that an exhibition celebrating the work of such an important local artist should be the Hatton Gallery's final show of the last century and also the first of the new millennium.

The Baton from the Hatton

Paul Barlow, Art Historian at the University of Northumbria, on 'Thomas Bewick at the Hatton Gallery'

It is never easy to exhibit the work of Bewick. Print is a sadly unglamorous medium, and Bewick's prints are, as we know, tiny pieces of work, unlikely to fill up the spaces of galleries with their must-see glamour. Partly for this reason, exhibitions of Bewick's work have been few in number. Curators are unlikely to compete for the privilege of staging the next blockbuster Bewick show. So the Hatton has set itself no easy task in attempting to translate the small, localised pleasures of our artist into a public experience of objects on its walls. In the event, the problem of the size of Bewick's work was not really overcome - as it never really could be. But the quantity and the intensity of the little vignettes on display did encourage detailed contemplation, as the gallery had intended. In this respect the choice of this aspect of Bewick's work was fortuitous - these little visual jokes and quirky visual byways encourage a meandering way of looking in the gallery-goer. One finds oneself absorbed by their endless oddities, entering a lost world which is both intimate and unidentifiable. Whether this kind of antiquarian enjoyment is really best fostered by the gallery space is arguable, but the Hatton have certainly made a serious attempt to achieve it.

Less appealing, to my taste, was the attempt to turn the wood blocks themselves into exhibits. This is by no means new in Bewick displays - as we know from the nearby Laing Gallery's own attempts to incorporate Bewick into its historical time-tunnel of Geordie culture, where

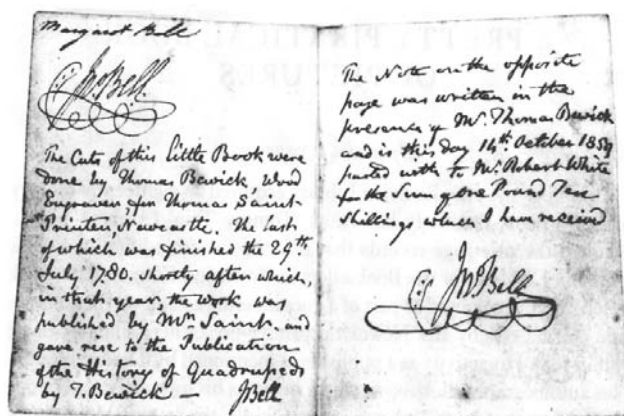
(continued on page seven)

A PRETTY PIRATICAL BOOK OF PICTURES

by Brian Alderson

In November 1995 the Bodleian Library acquired an eighteenth century children's book, familiarly known as 'Tommy Trip' (Arch. A g. 29). Although the title page records that it is the twelfth edition of a work printed in London 'for the Booksellers in Town and Country', the book has long been recognised as part of a buccaneering assault on the London trade carried out by the Newcastle printer-bookseller, Thomas Saint (1738 – 1788). His activity as a publisher is mentioned by Thomas Bewick in his autobiographical *Memoir*, where he notes his own early experience in executing woodcuts and names specifically the 'cuts for children's books, chiefly for Thomas Saint'.¹

A testimony to Bewick's involvement in Saint's edition of Tommy Trip's *Pretty Book of Pictures* occurs in the Bodleian's newly acquired copy, which carries a manuscript note by John Bell (1739 – 1864), the Gateshead antiquary/collector/bookseller:



John Bell's notes in Arch A g.29

The Cuts of this Little Book were done by Thomas Bewick, Wood Engraver, for Thomas Saint Printer, Newcastle, the last of which was finished the 29th July, 1780, shortly after which, in that year, the work was published by Mr. Saint and gave rise to the Publication of the History of Quadrupeds by T. Bewick. – J. Bell.

to which was later added:

The Note on the opposite page was written in the presence of Mr. Thomas Bewick and is this day 14th October 1859 parted with to Mr. Robert White for the Sum of One Pound Ten Shillings which I have received. – Jno. Bell.

While there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these entries, the first of them may be counted among the earliest in a series of misleading statements which have served to confuse the historical status of *A Pretty Book of Pictures* in both its London and its Newcastle manifestations. In this instance, Bell – and presumably Bewick too – have got the date of the Newcastle completion wrong. It is possible to picture the two gentlemen discussing the little book that lay before them, with Bewick turning to his ledgers – his Engraving Books

as they were known – to check when he did the work. There he would have spotted under the date 24th July 1780 an entry for '62 Cuts' for 'Tommy Tagg', which he mistook for 'Tommy Trip'. but which is, in fact, the engraving done for Saint's piracy of Newbery's *Collection of Pretty Poems for the Amusement of Children Three Foot High* by 'Tommy Tagg' (Roscoe J346).² Had Bewick turned back a couple of years he would have found the correct entry:

Saint 17 Jan – 3 April [1778] Tommy Trip 30 cuts

Beasts

7 September 27 Cuts Birds.

A suggestion that 1779 was the date for the Newcastle edition of *A Pretty Book of Pictures* comes from the influential catalogue of Bewick's work by Thomas Hugo, *The Bewick Collector* (1866), where he lists at no. 16 a 'twelfth edition . . . Newcastle: Printed by Thomas Saint, 1779. Sq. 24mo. viii. 124pp . . . Good copy, in its original boards.' To this entry he adds a note that *A Pretty Book* was the germ from which the History of Quadrupeds was to spring³ and he goes on to quote John Bell:

From the figures being correctly drawn, and altogether it being a more than extra got up book, it went through fourteen editions of large numbers, each in a few years; but from the usage of its possessors . . . [up to 1795] . . . scarcely a copy of Tommy Trip was extant.

Unfortunately Hugo's and Bell's statement raise more questions than they answer. When Hugo says explicitly that the 'twelfth edition' has Saint's Newcastle imprint, he implies that this was printed alongside the one 'for the booksellers', a most unlikely event, for which, as I indicate below, no precedents exist elsewhere in Saint's publishing practice. (Hugo was probably content to give the place of printing as known by him and to omit information that the London imprint was spurious). As for Bell, he supplies no evidence that the Newcastle book ran to fourteen editions, and may well have been referring to Newbery's true London edition which *did* reach a stated fourteenth printing in 1787 (see below). That edition probably provided Edwin Pearson with a reason to label as a fifteenth edition his version of *A Pretty Book*, published under its own imprint for the bibliophiles' market in 1867 – a year after Hugo's *The Bewick Collector*. Pearson's full title was '*A Pretty Book of Pictures* . . . The Fifteenth Edition. Written by OLIVER GOLDSMITH for John Newbery . . . [and] *Embellished with Charming Engravings on Wood* [Black Letter]. from the ORIGINAL BLOCKS engraved by Thomas Bewick for T. Saint of Newcastle in 1779. With the History, Adventures and Seclusions of the said Blocks for nearly 100 years . . . London: . . . 1867'.

The 'history' of Bewick's blocks is given by Pearson in his introduction, and there is little reason to doubt that it corresponds fairly closely to what happened. After Saint's death the blocks travelled to Hall & Elliott in Newcastle,

thence to Wilson & Spence in York, thence back to Emerson Charnley in Newcastle, and finally to Bohn and eventually to Pearson himself in London. But his discussion and use of them in the 'fifteenth edition' deserves rather stronger condemnation than Sydney Roscoe's unaccustomedly temperate 'very unreliable', since the defects of his account have been responsible for misleading many subsequent commentators both on Bewick's work and on Newbery's original. He perpetuates some of the unsubstantiated evidence from Atkinson and Hugo; his reference to Goldsmith on his title page is given on the strength of a puff in *The Vicar of Wakefield* about 'the philanthropic bookseller in St Paul's Churchyard . . .³⁴'; and although he seems to have been lent the present Bodleian copy by Robert White as a guide for his reprint, he nonetheless manages to incorporate into some of the blocks from Charnley's 1820 edition of *Select Fables*. (That was later to mislead Croal Thomson in his 1882 *Life and Work of Bewick* into singling out some 'fine cuts' which were never part of the 1778 enterprise at all). What now follows is an attempt to untangle the certain from the uncertain in all this mixture of fact, speculation and hearsay, and to place Thomas Saint's *Pretty Book* more securely in its own history.

According to Sydney Roscoe (see note 2) the first edition of *A Pretty Book of Pictures* was printed for John Newbery in London and Benjamin Collins in Salisbury in 1752, and the book is a good example of the pragmatic editorial methods employed by these early dealers in books for children. Goldsmith may have caused Mr. Primrose to portray the philanthropic Newbery as dashing about 'compiling materials', but, in fact, the *Pretty Book* is almost entirely plundered from a work first published in 1730, *A Description of Three Hundred Animals* . . . in the British Library copy to Thomas Boreman, who was also one of its publishers, and who was later to become the publisher – and probably author – of those miniature children's books which he called 'The Gigantick Histories', twenty examples of which were displayed in the Bodleian's 1995–6 exhibition of 'Early Children's Books'.



The bison from Topsell's *History of Four-footed Beasts* (Douce T subt. 15)

The *Three Hundred Animals* is confessedly 'for the Entertainment of Children' and it sets out to provide them with an illustrated introduction to a variety of

'Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Serpents, and Insects' (with 'a particular account of the whale-fishery' for good measure). It does this by interleaving a series of prose descriptions with engraved leaves which carry (usually) three illustrations of the creatures currently being dealt with. The images are not taken directly from nature but from a gamut of previous publications, most prominently Edward Topsell's *History of Four-footed Beasts* (initial edition, 1607), but including also some from Barlow's Aesop (1666) along with Dürer's rhinoceros.



The bison from Boreman's *A Description of Three Hundred Animals* (Opie F. 40).



The bison from Newbery's *A Pretty Book of Pictures* (Johnson 8.84).

What Newbery and Collins seem to have done is to work their way through *Three Hundred Animals*, selecting one or two creatures from each plate to make up their sequence of page-openings on Beasts, which consist of an illustration, probably a relief-cut in soft-metal, married to a letterpress description. (Thus the leopard, tiger, rhinoceros, bear, wolf . . . that feature on pages 4 – 13 of *A Pretty Book* appear as nos. 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 of the *Three Hundred Animals*). An analysis shows that nineteen of the Beast illustrations taken from that book are closely copied, while the remaining six are probably also derivative. The texts are more loosely edited, with an eye on juvenile readers, and they are all preceded by quatrains which vary from the descriptive:



The bison from Saint's *A Pretty Book of Pictures* (Arch A g.29).

The fierce fell Tiger will, they say,
seize any Man that's in his way;
And o'er his Back his Victim throw.
As you your Satchel may do now.

to the satiric – with a Newbery timbre. For 'Fox' the text reads:

So artful, so serious he looks, and so sly
At the Goose when he casteth his Eye on't,
That he seems like a Gamester intent on his Die,
Or a Lawyer surveying his Client.

The Beasts are followed by forty-four Birds, many of which are described and illustrated two to a page-opening. Here the incidence of variation is more substantial, with at least half-a-dozen images entirely unrelated to the equivalents in *Three Hundred Animals* and with many descriptions difficult to ascribe with certainty to a source. (Often the brevity or the obviousness of the information given scarcely requires a source-text.)

From Roscoe's listing, the Newbery/Collins run of editions of *A Pretty Book* can be seen as continuing from 1752 to 1787, when the fourteenth edition, noted above, was published by a partnership of Thomas Carnan (Newbery's successor in St Paul's Churchyard), Stanley Crowder (who is often found with the Newbery firms in congers for adult books), and B. C. Collins of Salisbury (the original publisher's son – Benjamin père having died two years earlier). A precise dating of the sequence of editions is not possible, since – as John Bell put it – 'the usage of its possessors' has resulted in large-scale extinction. One copy is located of a fifth edition (before 1765); two of a ninth (1767); one of a tenth⁵ (1769); two of a thirteenth (1778); and one of a fourteenth (1787). It could well be that when Saint called his 'London: for the Booksellers' printing a 'twelfth' edition he was working from a near-contemporaneous copy of the Newbery eleventh, which may have come out *c.* 1772, and he was thus plausibly fitting his piracy into a known numbered sequence.

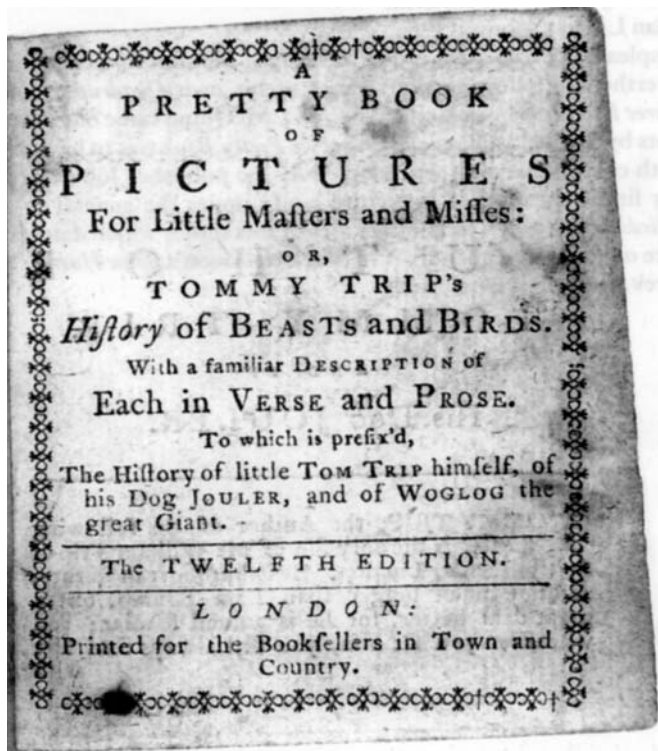
No evidence here or elsewhere supports the claim that Saint published copies with a Newcastle imprint as Hugo's entry in *The Bewick Collector* suggests. The book is extremely rare (I have located only one other copy, in the Schiller Collection at Cherryburn) and no copy is known with Saint's name on it. One may hazard a view that, for books primarily edited by Saint on his own behalf, like the *Select Fables* of 1776 and 1784, or done for local booksellers, like the *New Lottery Book* for Charnley (1772), he used a genuine imprint, but he would remove this for pirated work. Thus the 'Tommy Tagg', noted above as recorded in the Engraving Books in 1780 probably corresponds to a copy 'London . . . for the booksellers' which Roscoe described as 'probably a piracy' (J346.9A).

Whatever the ethics of Saint's activity here, he did at least make a creditable attempt at a worthy piece of alternative editing for *A Pretty Book*, unlike such firms as Mozley of Gainsborough whose 'Lilliputian Manufactory' turned out dismally debased piracies under such spurious London imprints as 'Osborne & Griffin'. An effort has been made, by varying the size of type, to confine each subject to its own double-page spread. (In the Newbery original they sometimes over-ran). Some metal-cut arabesques have been introduced to fill up blank spaces, and some modest editorial changes have been made. The mythical Lamia, which Newbery/Collins retained from Topsell, is deleted, and the Baboon, which looked like a small horse, corrected.

Bewick's handling of his job of re-interpretation shows a remarkable assurance for an engraver not long out of his time and seeking to establish himself as a partner in a busy firm. In many instances he does, as his nineteenth-century admirers claim, produce 'faithful representations' drawn from nature, and his famed use of white-line engraving, which allows him to bring out surface textures, contrasts sharply with the crude outlines and shading of the Newbery cuts. He also converts the generalised trees and landscapes of his model into far more precisely imagined scenes with rural, jungle, or even arctic backgrounds giving further truth to his portrayal of the creatures themselves.

We do not know if he recognised the dependence of the pictures in Newbery's 'Tommy Trip' on those in Boreman's *Three Hundred Animals*, but if he did that may have increased his animus against the latter book which was part of his 'first reading, when a boy at school' and which he deemed 'a wretched composition', perhaps because of the crudity and inaccuracy of its descriptions and illustrations.

Even if the prompt was only a commercial one – Thomas Saint calling upon his local genius-engraver to copy some London pictures – the piratical venture must have proved a valuable preparatory exercise for the great works of the future. Seven years after 'Tommy Trip' was completed, Bewick cut the Dromedary, the first block for what was to become the *General History of Quadrupeds* of 1790, and this book was followed in 1797 and 1804 by the two volumes of *Birds*. They were weighty descendants from the *Pretty Book of Pictures* and – ironically – they in their turn were destined to yield much treasure to the pirates of the future.



Title-page of Saint's *A Pretty Book Of Pictures* (Arch. A g.29).

A PRETTY BOOK OF PICTURES: 'Twelfth Edition'
[Newcastle: 1778]

Collation: 24° (90 x 77mm). Laid paper (horizontal chain-lines).

[A]¹ (A4 damaged by hole); B–F¹² (E3 signed E2) G²
(=A5–6)

Pp.[4], v–viii. 1–124. Wood engraved frontis. and 52 wood engravings of animals and birds, and six others, by Thomas Bewick (recorded in the Beilby/Bewick Engraving Books as given above: p.342).

Victorian half calf, back lettered in gilt between rolled decorations; dark brown paper boards with royal arms impressed front and back.

Provenance: John Bell; Robert White; Margaret Bell (inscriptions).

Bodleian shelfmark: Arch A g.29.

¹ Quoted from *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick Written by Himself*, ed. with an introduction by Iain Bain (London, 1975), p.41. The passage appears to refer to Bewick's 'prentice years, but Iain Bain notes that 'the work for Saint did not develop until the end of Bewick's apprenticeship'. His involvement with Saint's children's books occurred even later than that after his abortive visit to London from October 1776 to July 1777, when – he records in the *Memoir* (Bain, p.71) he did work for 'Mr Carnan & Mr Newbury [i.e. Francis Newbery, John's son] of St Paul's church yard'.

² Transcripts from the Engraving Books have been made by Mr Iain Bain, who has kindly allowed me to consult his notes. The reference to Roscoe here, and later in the essay, is to *S. Roscoe, John Newbery and*

his Successors 1740 – 1814; a bibliography (Wormley, Herts., 1973).

³ His information was taken from George Chandler Atkinson, 'Sketch of the Life and Works of the late Thomas Bewick', *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne*, 1831, pp.132ff.

⁴ *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. xviii.

⁵ Bodleian Library Johnson g. 84.

⁶ His displeasure is recorded in the *Memoir*, at the start of Chapter 12 (Bain, op.cit. p. 105). Nevertheless, following the success of his own *Quadrupeds and Birds*, a new edition of *Three Hundred Animals* edited by A. D. McQuinn came out in 1812 with Bewick look-alike cuts by Samuel Williams. Newbery's *Pretty Book* was to have a life of its own in the nineteenth century, when it was adapted by the publisher John Harris (successor to the Newbery firms) for a series of picture books under the general title of *Tom Trip's Museum of Birds and Beasts*. The complexities of this series, which dates from c.1820 to at least 1833, are outlined in Appendix A of Marjorie Moon's *John Harris's Books for Youth 1801 – 1843*, rev. ed. (Folkestone, 1992).

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Appeal

Bewick Memorials at Ovingham

A small but important part of the current repair programme at Ovingham Church is the repair of the Bewick family burial place and memorials, including those of Thomas and his wife Isabella. Readers will no doubt remember the illustrated feature in *Cherryburn Times* Vol. 3 No. 6, where details of the proposals were shown. The Bewick Society Committee has decided to make a contribution of £500 from its modest savings. It is hoped that members may wish to help with the cost. At less than £5 per member it would be possible to double the contribution, and for the Society to be responsible for the lion's share of this element of the repairs. If you would like to contribute, please send a cheque, payable to 'The Bewick Society', to June Holmes, Hon. Membership Secretary, The Bewick Society, c/o The Natural History Society, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne. Please note also in the Programme of Events a conducted tour of the site.



THE BEWICK BURIAL PLACE AT OVINGHAM.

Cherryburn Notes

This is the tenth season since the Thomas Bewick Birthplace Trust passed Cherryburn into the care of the National Trust, and, too, the tenth year in residence for the Administrator, Stewart Thirkell, and his wife and Assistant, Yvonne. In that time they have built and led an effective and dedicated band of volunteers, many of them Members of the Bewick Society, whose gifts of time have made it possible to sustain high standards of presentation despite acute financial stringencies.

In some ways the winter closure is the property's busiest time, and this year has been as hectic as ever. As well as routine care of animals, conservation work and planning for the coming season, there have been more far-reaching developments to consider. Preventing 'slips and trips' is always important. One of the more remote garden paths has been completely remade with cinder and gravel. Its flagstones were in fact roof stones, too thin for flagging and consequently fragmenting. Located below a hedge they had also become very slippery. They now await an opportunity to go back on a roof! One quadruped that would not be missed is the local fox who keeps taking the farmyard hens; better defences are being devised.

The opportunity has also been taken to look further ahead. The permanent exhibiton has done excellent service but is now a dozen years old and will soon need renovation. It is hoped that a new layout will allow slightly larger meetings in the 'new house' than is possible at present, and also a study area. With the need to improve the visitors' comforts, thought is being given also to improved, if necessarily rather limited, catering. 'Visitors ought to be able to sit down and have a good cup of tea' said Stewart at a recent management meeting, and no-one disagreed. Trust staff look forward to discussing developments when the Bewick Society visits on Sunday, 23rd July. By then, too, members will be able to see the small exhibition on John Laws, pupil of Thomas Bewick and master engraver; this has been devised by Alan Angus, formerly Hon. Treasurer of the Bewick Society.

London Group Autumn Meeting 1999

Nigel Tattersfield kindly presented an illustrated lecture on Bookplates by Bewick and Beilby to a small but enthusiastic audience at the Working Men's College in Camden on 18th September 1999. This was essentially the same communication he gave to the Society in Newcastle on 4th June 1998, and in which he drew upon his outstanding book on the subject. (For review see the last issue of the Cherryburn Times, volume 3, no. 8).

Unfortunately events have conspired to make this the swansong of the London Group. The Working Mens' College has announced a tripling of the hiring fee for the venue. A more cogent reason for abandoning the meetings is that attendances have been altogether too meagre. Inviting a speaker to address an audience of half-a-dozen, or even less, cannot be justified.

Despite recent poor attendances, the Group is extremely appreciative of those distinguished speakers who have kindly given of their time over the years to describe their enthusiasms and impart specialist knowledge.

by Robert Jones

A Book on John Bewick

The British Library is going ahead with the publication of Nigel Tattersfield's major book on John Bewick. It is expected to appear next winter. The Committee has agreed to contribute £500 towards the cost of colour printing the only known portrait of John Bewick (which belongs to the Natural History Society, currently on show at Cherryburn). In return it is expected that members of the Bewick Society may be offered the book at a concessionary rate. More in the next *Cherryburn Times*.

(Paul Barlow continued from page two)

scratching noises and engraving instruments accompany the prints. At the Hatton things were somewhat more discreet. The blocks were mounted and displayed like avant-garde sculpture, along with studies for the designs. This did indeed allow the visitor to see how a particular image developed, and there is an undoubted fascination in these strange dark wooden cubes, looking like mysterious relics from some fetish-cult. But the effect was to transform Bewick almost into a modernist artist, someone like Susan Hiller, who is so keen to display boxed objects in sequences, juxtaposed with quotations from Freud's Case Histories.

But then maybe I'm just being a bit too wild in my analogies here. Nevertheless, I think a greater concentration on the ways in which these designs entered into the wide world beyond the studio and the gallery would have been desirable. There is, of course, that vital feel for the physical realities of life in all these prints: the constant activities and day to day circumstances of human experiences lived through little glimpsed moments. Some of that vitality was stressed, but some stifled by the display. However, that's simply an indication that the full thick flavour of Bewick could never be caught by a single exhibition, however imaginative and welcome as this.

This exhibition raises a number of interesting questions for the Bewick enthusiast, keen to promote interest in the work of this unique but difficult-to-place artist. Bewick deserves exhibitions. He needs to get out more. But how is this to be done? His works, as we have noted, don't lend themselves to the public arena, nor is he easily fitted into any of the larger scale 'movements' which allow exhibitions to combine the work of diverse artists. He falls between stools: neither 'romantic' nor 'Victorian'. It must be said, though, that a re-examination of the 'picturesque' as a distinctive tradition in the visual arts is long overdue. Perhaps the new Tate Britain will take up the baton from the Hatton, and give Bewick his rightful place within a larger scale exhibition on that most quirky and wilfully eccentric of all artistic movements, in which Bewick's work should stand at the centre.

Programme of Events



Douglas Percy Bliss, illustration for *Border Ballads*, 1925.

Thursday, 22 June 2000

6.30pm: Annual General Meeting

Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne (drinks from 6.15pm).

After the AGM Prudence Bliss, formerly Lecturer in the History of Art and Newcastle University, will speak about her father, Douglas Percy Bliss (1900-1984) sometime Director of the Glasgow School of Art, and London art critic of *The Scotsman*, a painter and wood engraver whose works carried the Bewick tradition into the age of Expressionism.

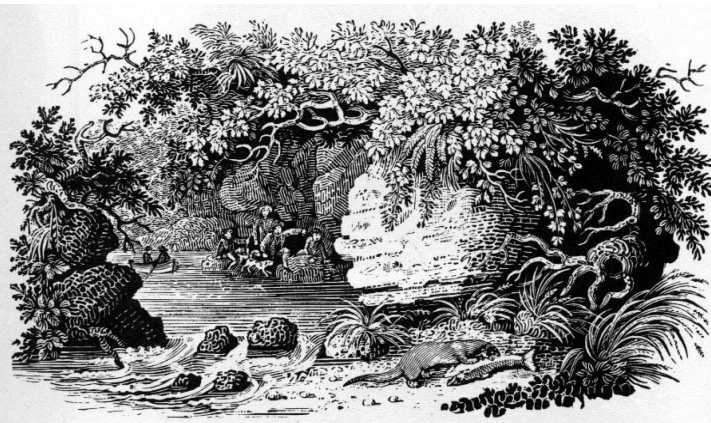
Sunday, 23 July 2000

3pm: Visit to Ovingham and Cherryburn

Meet at Ovingham Parish Church for conducted tour by the Society's President, Dr Frank Atkinson, who will look particularly at the current programme of repair works which includes the Bewick family burials places and memorials (to the cost of which the Society is contributing). Afterwards there will be a cup of tea at Cherryburn and an opportunity to see Alan Angus's exhibition about Bewick's pupil John Laws, and to hear about National Trust's development plans.

Hosts: Stewart and Yvonne Thirkell.

Don't miss two lectures which the Society is sharing this winter :



Wednesday, 25th October 2000

6pm: The Society of Antiquaries at the Miners Institute

Dr Frank Atkinson on 'Thomas Bewick in Newcastle'.

The President of the Bewick Society looks at the reputation of Thomas Bewick in the place where he worked, then and now.

Tuesday, 7th November 2000

6pm: The Literary and Philosophical Society

I am
Dr Iain
Bain
your obliged member
Thomas Bewick

Iain Bain on 'Thomas Bewick's Letters'.

The foremost authority on Thomas Bewick's career and writings unveils results of his most recent research project for the first time.

Bewick who?

Quiz enthusiasts may have noticed that Thomas Bewick has been given national notice twice in recent months. Those listening to BBC Radio 4's Round Britain Quiz on 31st October last year may have been amazed or dismayed to hear a team (unidentified for shame) struggling to make any connection between a swan and the author of 'A General History of Quadrupeds'.

More satisfactory was the answer to a similar question on BBC 2's University Challenge on 17th January, though the team did come from the University of Durham, so some viewers at least expected them to get it right.



The next number of *Cherryburn Times*, to be published in December, will include the Society's Programme for 2001. Members suggestions for events, visits and lectures are most welcome. Already planned for January is 'Bewick Enthusiasms', an evening of short lecturettes (about ten minutes each) from members on their enthusiasms for aspects of Bewick's work, research in progress, collection items.

Please dare to make an offer to the Chairman (01434 602655) or any Committee Member if you have a pet subject you would like to air.

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

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