



CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Newsletter of The Bewick Society

Thomas Bewick and John Hancock

by David Gardner-Medwin

Side by side in the Council Room of the Natural History Society of Northumbria at the Hancock Museum are two portraits in oils, of Thomas Bewick and John Hancock, both depicted in late middle age. Bewick was painted in 1816 by James Ramsay, Hancock posthumously in 1892 by F.H. Michael, evidently from a photograph taken by Joseph W. Swan in about 1874.

John Hancock was in fact 20 years old when Bewick died in 1828 and, three years before Hancock died in 1890, Robinson¹ wrote that he was Bewick's last surviving friend. By that time John Hancock was well known as a taxidermist without peer whose bird groups at the 1851 Great Exhibition had caused an immediate sensation and a lasting demand for his work. He was also a competent artist, a superb field ornithologist and the principal founder of the museum which now bears his name.

Hancock's grandfather, Thomas, and father, John, had a saddler's and hardware business at the Newcastle end of the Tyne Bridge. There young John was born and there, for a while, he joined his elder brother in business long after their father died, though by then the family lived in Gateshead. The elder John Hancock had been a keen and able naturalist, and perhaps a friend of Bewick,² but John could scarcely have been inspired by his father alone since he was only four when he died. His mother continued the family's interest in natural history, treasuring her late husband's collections and his books and perhaps exploring with the children from their new rural home 'beyond Windmill Hills'.³ Perhaps too they made an early contact with Thomas Bewick, for when he planned his move to 19 West Street in Gateshead in 1814 the advertisement for the newly built house invited 'For further particulars apply to Mr. Hancock, Bridge End, Newcastle'.⁴ Richard Wingate who taught Hancock the art of taxidermy and was a close neighbour of Thomas Bewick on the Forth, was another possible intermediary.

Little has been recorded about the friendship between Bewick and Hancock except that it existed. Bewick

certainly was hospitable to another keen young artist naturalist, George Clayton Atkinson, born like Hancock in 1808. Atkinson left a detailed 'Sketch' of his mentor in the first volume of the Society's Transactions,⁵ including a vivid description of the old man's vivacity in conversation and his manipulation at moments of excitement of the habitual plug of tobacco behind his lower lip (another teenage visitor, Hannah Gurney, found Bewick less attractive – 'he is a large, fat, dark man pitted with the small pox, very ordinary, & what does not serve to embellish his person, chewed tobacco'⁶). But Atkinson was only one of 'four young ardent naturalists' who used to visit Bewick towards the end of his life⁷ and it is very likely that Hancock was one of the other three. Hancock made some creditable attempts at woodcuts of birds of which the Society has proof copies; he may well have had at least a



John Hancock's engraving of a blue tit (c1845).

few lessons from the master although no evidence of this has been found and the dated cuts are from 1845, long after Bewick's death. John and his brother Albany Hancock were at the centre of a group of naturalists who met informally for some years before they formed the Natural History Society in 1829.⁸ There is no record that Bewick attended meetings of the group, but after his death the Society used an engraving of Bailey's bust of Bewick as the frontispiece to the first volume of their Transactions;

and the first paper was an account by Wingate of the swan that Hancock and he had discovered as a new species and which was named *Cygnus bewickii* in memory of 'our late celebrated naturalist and engraver'.

The final edition of Bewick's *British Birds* to be printed from the original blocks (1847) was edited with care by Hancock and is regarded as having the finest impressions of any edition. The Society is fortunate to own the page proofs with Hancock's amendments to the text and comments on the printing of the blocks. Also on display at the *Enthusiasms* evening was a copy of the 1821 edition of *British Birds* with the adolescent signature 'J Hancock' on the flyleaf of each volume.

[FOOTNOTES ON PAGE EIGHT.]

Thomas Bewick, the Barber Surgeons and the ‘Cot’ at the Forth

– a note to provoke discussion and research on Bewick’s homes in Newcastle.

by *David Gardner-Medwin*

Early in 1781 Thomas Bewick negotiated with the Company of Barber Surgeons, Periwig-makers and Wax and Tallow Chandlers of Newcastle upon Tyne for the lease of their gardener’s house and part of their garden. The entry in the Company’s minute book states:

20 Feby 1781

The Company met to take into consideration proposals made by Mr. Thomas Bewick for taking the Gardeners House & upper Gardens when the Company agreed to let him a lease for any Term not exceeding 21 years and to make the alterations and Additions to the House proposed by Mr Bewick he paying £5 per Annum for the House and upper gardens and also 7 per Cent per Annum for the money to be expended on such Additional Buildings.

It is ordered that Mr. Anderson, Mr. Weddell. Mr. Thos Greenwell Junior Mr. Thistlewaite with the present Stewards be a Committee for conducting this Business.¹

Bewick’s proposals came at an interesting time. During the later part of his apprenticeship and again after his return from London in 1777, Bewick had lodged at Ned Hatfield’s. In his Memoir² he explained that these lodgings were above a dancing school run by Neil Stewart and his successor Ivey [or Ivie] Gregg. In 1778³ Gregg’s dancing school was on the north side of St Nicholas Churchyard and, although by 1790 it had moved to the foot of Westgate Street,⁴ St Nicholas Churchyard was probably the site of Bewick’s lodgings in 1781. They would have been conveniently close to the workshop. It was in the 1780s that Mosley Street was opened up as an east-west route through the medieval town,⁵ and demolition of some of the buildings to the north of St Nicholas Churchyard would have been necessary; the planned demolition may have played a part in forcing Bewick to move.

But in addition, Thomas’s relations with his brother John, his first apprentice, who had lodged amicably with him since 1777 became temporarily strained.⁶ Bewick did not record when he left Ned Hatfield’s, but the disagreements with John and the negotiations with the Barber Surgeons together suggest that by 1781 he had decided that the time had come to find another home, and a garden.

How far did the negotiations go? The available Barber Surgeons’ records make no further mention of the proposed lease and it is uncertain whether the plan failed or Bewick lived briefly in the gardener’s house before moving to his cottage on the Forth.

The gardener’s house appears on 18th century maps⁷ as a small detached building on the Manors, about 20 yards south-east of the Surgeons’ Hall and immediately to

the west of the Corner Tower of the town wall. In 1698 Celia Fiennes had written ‘I went to see the Barber Surgeons Hall which was within a pretty garden walled in, full of flowers and greens in potts and in the borders’.⁸ Seventy years after Bewick’s negotiations, in 1850-51, the Barber Surgeons’ Hall itself, by then the home of the Newcastle upon Tyne School of Medicine and Surgery, was demolished to make way for the Newcastle to Berwick railway. The gardener’s house survived and still stands at the top of the Croft Stairs high above the Pandon Dene, recently restored as offices for a firm of accountants. The railway bridge and the City Road separate it from its 17th century neighbour on the west, the Holy Jesus Hospital. The railway company financed the building of a new Surgeons’ Hall, for the Medical College, in Rye Hill but a bitter schism in the School left the majority faction to cope for more than a year with teaching medical students, including anatomical dissection, in desperately confined and perhaps squalid conditions in their only remaining property, the gardener’s house and its shed.⁹

In the event Thomas Bewick’s home from the early 1780s for more than thirty years was his ‘little happy Cot at the Forth’. He was living there by 7 March 1783,¹⁰ and very probably by October 1781.¹¹ Robinson says of it, presumably quoting the recollections of Bewick’s daughters:

It was here he first commenced housekeeping, some years before his marriage, in 1786, having bought part of the furniture belonging to the previous tenant, Dr. Hutton, the eminent mathematician, . . . It was a fine low old-fashioned house, pleasantly situate in what was called Circus Lane, having a garden extending backward almost to the old Town Wall, and embracing a view of the semicircular bastions of West Spital Tower and Gunnerton Tower. . . . It consisted of only five rooms, and the rental was but £8 per annum.¹²

It is difficult to judge how much of this account to trust; Jane (1787-1881) and Isabella Bewick (1790-1883) had left the Forth in their twenties and were in their late sixties to early nineties when Robinson knew them. Charles Hutton (who only much later held an honorary doctorate) had left Newcastle for Woolwich in 1773, at least eight years before Bewick moved to the cot, and he never returned.¹³ Unless the house remained empty there must have been an intervening tenant, though some of Hutton’s furniture may indeed have remained. The West Spital Tower was, by Bewick’s time, an elaborate structure,¹⁴ inhabited by Ralph Beilby and his family. Between it and the Gunner (or Gunnerton) Tower stood the Stank Tower and both of these were indeed semicircular bastions. Robinson also states that the ruined tower, lacking any adjacent wall, which is illustrated in the first edition [1804] of *Waterbirds*, page 109, was ‘one of those old towers as seen from Bewick’s windows’ (**Figure 1**).

This cannot literally be so, for the evidence of contemporary accounts and maps, and of Richardson’s pencil drawing of the walls and Stank Tower,¹⁵ shows clearly that the walls between these towers remained intact until well after 1804; furthermore the direction of the distant castle keep, its position on a motte or steep slope, and the pool in the foreground all show that the



Figure 1. Vignette first published in *Waterbirds* (1804).

view cannot have been from the cot on the Forth and it may not have been in Newcastle or even a real place at all. Nevertheless, the semicircular bastion in the engraving, though slimmer than those of the city walls, was somewhat similar; perhaps Robinson overinterpreted some such comment by Bewick's daughters.

The exact position of the cot is not easy to determine. The evidence that follows suggests that it may have been the more easterly of the two buildings shown lying about 50 yards south-south-west of the Gunner Tower on the map of Newcastle surveyed by Charles Hutton in 1770¹⁶ (Figure 2) and on the modified version engraved by Ralph Beilby in 1788.¹⁷ The Bewick family became very fond of their cottage garden, and gardens extending from these buildings towards the city walls are indeed indicated on these two maps.¹⁸ Ralph Beilby's home in the West Spital Tower, 'close by' according to Weekley,¹⁹ was about 200 yards from the buildings in question (its site is now near the eastern end of the Central Station booking hall).

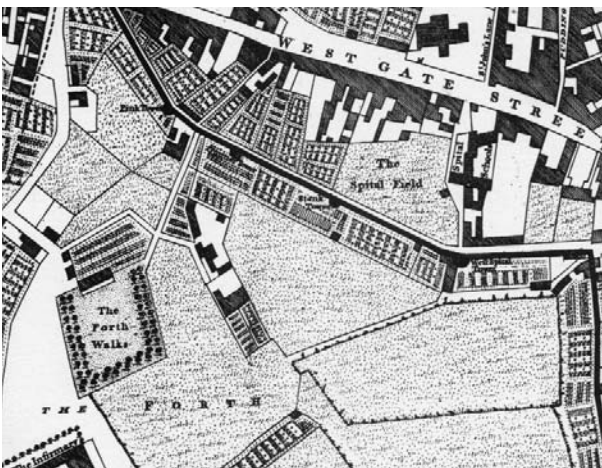


Figure 2. Part of the Plan of Newcastle upon Tyne surveyed by Charles Hutton in 1770. The building postulated as his own (and later Bewick's) rented cottage is shown to the SSW, across two gardens, from the Gunner Tower. (Orientation – north is vertical.)

A tantalising clue to the site of the cottage is the perspective drawing of R.R. Wingate's house by Robert Elliot Bewick (published by Alan Angus in *Cherryburn Times* in 1992).²⁰ This shows the distant gable and rooftop of the Bewick cottage, at the far end of a lonnen, in relation to three other buildings – the gateway and house

of Mr George Waldie (Forth House) on the left and Wingate's house in the foreground on the right, with the Circus behind it, fronting onto the lonnen.²¹ Bewick's daughters remembered Mr Waldie as a kind neighbour;²² his house stood close to the city wall where Forth Lane emerged onto the Forth.²³ The Circus (built in 1789) was immediately north of Forth Walks,²⁴ (Figure 3), and just to the south of the site of the present St Mary's Cathedral. Wingate's house has not been identified but it was 'Elizabethan' and must have existed at the time of Hutton's map and it may have been the more northerly of two houses which were shown there to the north-west of the tavern or pavilion on the northern boundary of the Forth Walks (Figures 2 and 3); indeed a fourth building shown on the right hand side of Robert Bewick's drawing may have been that tavern. No map names 'Circus Lane', mentioned above by Robinson, but the only lane likely to be given this name ran roughly east-west past the north side of the circus. Happily enough this orientation roughly matches the vista along the lonnen shown in Robert Bewick's drawing. Circus Lane must have run a little to the south of the line of the modern Bewick Street.

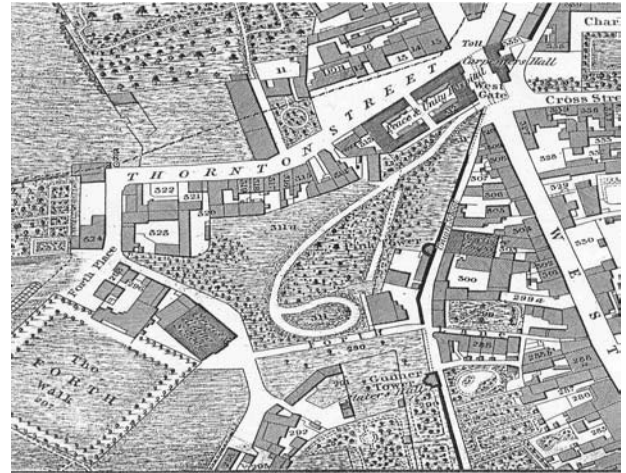


Figure 3. Part of the Plan of Newcastle surveyed by Thomas Oliver in 1830.²⁵ The 'Circus and Riding School' is the darkly shaded building at the northeast corner of The Forth Walk. The printed Reference to the Plan (Newcastle: Oliver, 1831) gives the owners of the numbered properties: 290 (leased) and 311 were John Waldie's, 291 was Thomas Featherston's. The house numbered 298 is the one here postulated as formerly rented by Richard Wingate. (Orientation – north is about 45o east of vertical.) Reproduced with the kind permission of Tyne and Wear Archives Service.

The name of the owner of the cottage is not recorded in Bewick's Memoir or by his biographers, but Robinson wrote that it was the death of the owner that resulted in the sale of the cottage before the Bewicks moved to Gateshead.²⁶ The Land Tax records for the Forth ('Without the Walls') for 1767-1814²⁷ make no mention of Hutton or Bewick as tenants but they may have been among the 'others' repeatedly mentioned as the tenants of a landowner called Matthew Laidler (died 1790)²⁸ and later of Sarah Laidler, his widow (died 1808). Robinson²⁹ mysteriously mentions a Mrs Laidler's land at Barras Bridge, apparently out of context but in connection with the sale of Bewick's garden, so the garden and the cot on the Forth may well also have been her property. Certainly the Laidlers knew Bewick well for Matthew made him one

of three trustees of his real property by his will (including Barras Mills) and Sarah chose him as one of three executors of hers.³⁰ Unfortunately the wills do not specify their property on the Forth; but it appears that from 1808-12 Bewick was one of his own landlords and that he had some control over the Laidler property from 1790-1814.

Bewick is said to have tried to buy the cottage on the Forth when it was put up for sale,³¹ but to have been outbid by Mr Featherston, a successful grocer.³² By 1830 Thomas Featherston was the owner of the land to the south of Forth Lane and east of Circus Lane (outside the walls, and excluding the strip closest to the wall) as well as the large triangular field further to the south (**Figure 3**).³³

The idea that Bewick attempted to buy the cottage may have been another of Robinson's misapprehensions. He seems to have thought that the Bewicks moved to Gateshead in 1814, while all other authorities give the date as 1812.³⁴ Certainly the advertisement for the new house (which Robinson quotes in part but does not date)³⁵ appeared in the Newcastle Advertiser on 29 Feb and 7 March 1812. It seems improbable that Bewick would have would have considered returning to the Forth two years after moving to Gateshead and it may be that, with his special knowledge as executor, he told his daughters some of the details of the sale which in later years they or Robinson misinterpreted.

The Gateshead house was a recently built freehold property in Back Lane, later called 19 West Street, quite close to Windmill Hills where Bewick had convalesced from an illness in the spring of 1812. The fact that John Hancock senior lived near Windmill Hills and was the contact named in the advertisement may or may not be coincidental. Bewick still used the address Back Lane when he signed his will on 27 September 1827, leaving the house to Robert,³⁶ but on Oliver's 1830 map it is called West Street. The house was visible across the Tyne Valley from the cottage on the Forth,³⁷ so no doubt the family could watch the progressive development and industrial pollution of the Forth from their new home with mixed feelings.

Bewick seems not to have left a drawing or engraving of his cot; his daughters would surely have mentioned it to Robinson if he had. The panoramic view of Newcastle sketched in July 1783 by J. Bailey³⁸ shows some of the buildings on the Forth which are marked on the contemporary maps, though not in perfect perspective. A possible candidate for Bewick's cottage can be seen there, near a recognizable Forth House and not far from a tower of the City Wall, but much of the Forth is obscured by plumes of smoke, perhaps a proper symbol of the later obliteration of the area under the Central Station and its surroundings. As this article goes to press, a memorial to Cardinal Hume is being built at the southeast corner of St Mary's Cathedral's property. When we stand at the bottom of the new steps, below the statue, we are very close to the site of the cottage. Either there or on 'Bewick House' (1844) across the street, which lies at the northern end of his garden, would be a suitable place for a plaque to commemorate Thomas Bewick's 'happy cot'. Someone must have known that when Bewick House was built.

Notes and References

1. TYNE & WEAR ARCHIVES (T&WA) GU/BS/2/3. Of the subcommittee members, Anderson was a surgeon, Weddell a peruke maker, and Greenwell and Thistlewaite tallow chandlers (Whitehead's Directories for 1778 and 1790).

2. *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by himself*, edited by IAIN BAIN (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) page 46.

3. *Whitehead's Newcastle and Gateshead Directory*, 1778.

4. *Ibid* 1790.

5. GRUNDY J. et al. *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*, (London: Penguin, 1992).

6. *Memoir* (op. cit.) and TATTERSFIELD, N. *John Bewick: engraver on wood 1760-1795* (London: British Library, 2001).

7. In BOURNE, H. *The History of Newcastle upon Tyne: or, the ancient and present state of that town* (Newcastle: John White, 1736) and Charles Hutton *A plan of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead, taken by an accurate survey, finished in the year 1770* (Newcastle: C. Hutton, 1772).

8. MORRIS, C. *The journeys of Celia Fiennes* (London: The Cresset Press, 1947).

9. EMBLETON, D. *The history of the Medical School, afterwards the Durham College of Medicine at Newcastle upon Tyne, for forty years, from 1832 to 1872* (Newcastle: A. Reid, 1890).

10. *Memoir* (op. cit.) page 100.

11. BAIN (*Memoir*) p xlii, prior source unknown.

12. ROBINSON R. *Thomas Bewick: His Life and Times* (Newcastle: R. Robinson, 1887) pages 171-173.

13. BRUCE, J. *A memoir of Charles Hutton LLD FRS* (Newcastle: T & J Hodgson, 1823).

14. See the early 19th century drawing by T.M. RICHARDSON (coll. Newcastle City Library) and also Hutton's map (Figure 2).

15. *Ibid*.

16. HUTTON op. cit. It does seem likely that Hutton would have shown his own house on the map and that the accuracy of the survey in its vicinity can be relied upon.

17. In BRAND, J. *The history and antiquities of the Town and County of the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London: B. White, 1789).

18. There is a difficulty here. The more easterly building is the smaller and more related to the garden while the more westerly seems too large and lies more on the Forth Lane than on Circus Lane. But the eastern house could be seen from beyond the circus to the west (see the following paragraph) only if the other, lying between them, were a much lower building or in dead ground; the downslope of the terrain may make the latter explanation feasible.

19. WEEKLEY, M. *Thomas Bewick* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p 143.

20. ALAN ANGUS 'Richard Rutledge Wingate' *Cherryburn Times* 2 part 2: 5 & 7 (1992).

21. Below the drawing, in handwriting that is not R.E. Bewick's but may well have been one of his sisters', is the following note: *Behind the Elizabethan house (in which Mr. R.R. Wingate dwelt), - is the Circus - behind that again is the corner of T. Bewick's House top - at the Forth - on the left is the gate leading into Mr. Waldie's Grounds this house behind is now the top of Bewick Street [remainder of the page and some further writing cut off].*

The ambiguous statement about 'this house behind' would be appropriate for Waldie's house. Also on the drawing the artist has written 'Distance of the picture 36 feet or 12 yards. Height of Eye about 4 feet' and has drawn a scale and a measured angle defining the perspective. These notes imply that some care was taken to draw the buildings in the correct relation to each other.

22. ROBINSON, 1887 (op. cit.) p 192.

23. *Plan of building ground . . . and projected improvements in Newcastle upon Tyne July 8th 1834 drawn by Thomas Oliver architect* (Northumberland Record Office (NRO) ZAN MSM/20). Forth House remains on the site, its appearance changed by the addition of arched windows on the ground floor in about 1869 (T&WA: plans T186/3572).

24. *Ibid* and Oliver (1830) - *op. cit.* in Figure 3. The Circus is briefly described in Mackenzie's *A descriptive and historical account . . . of Newcastle . . .* (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827).

25. Plan of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Borough of Gateshead surveyed by Thomas Oliver in 1830, engraved by W.H. Lizars in Edinburgh and published by Oliver in Newcastle in 1831 (T&WA D/NCP/2/10).

26. Robinson, 1887 (*op. cit.*) p191'27. T& WA: St John's Chapelry G/Tax2/5/26-50.

27. T& WA: St John's Chapelry G/Tax2/5/26-50.

28. Matthew Laidler was burgess of the Company of Bakers and Brewers (admitted 17 April 1749). He was also admitted to the freedom of the Company of Upholsterers, Tinplateworkers and Stationers on 4 November 1773, being one of 'The Committee of Burgesses admitted . . . as a Mark of our Appreciation for their conduct in the late Contest with the Magistrates relative to the Town Moor' (T&WA GU/Up/2). Eleven months later Thomas Bewick completed his apprenticeship. According to the catalogue of the records of the Upholsterer's Guild at the T&WA, Bewick was admitted to this guild. This might have provided a connection with Laidler which could have led to his renting his cottage. However no evidence of Bewick's or Beilby's membership of the guild or freedom of the city has been found in the records of the guild (GU/Up/2 and /3) or of the Freemen of Newcastle (GU/NCF/1, /2, /6 or /7). It is strange that Bewick never mentioned a guild. His daughters much later regarded him as having been shamefully treated by Newcastle without specifying the problem (and as a consequence most of their collection of Bewick's work was bequeathed to London rather than Newcastle). Is it possible that through some irregularity he served his whole apprenticeship but was denied admission to freedom and that this was the bone of contention? 29. *Ibid* page 192. The Land Tax records indicate that Sarah Laidler had died by 1809 and that her heirs remained the landlords until 1813.

30. Durham University Library diocesan probate records for 1790 and 1808. Matthew Laidler's will was signed on 13 August 1790 and proved on 4 September, Sarah's was signed on 4 June 1808 and proved on 25 July.

31. Robinson (*op. cit.* p 191).

32. Robinson, 1887 (*op. cit.*). A John Featherston, grocer, who had been supplied with a bookplate by Beilby and Bewick in 1787, died in 1814 (Tattersfield, N. *Bookplates by Beilby & Bewick* [London: The British Library, 1999]). Tattersfield suggested that it was John who outbid Bewick. In 1814 Thomas Featherston was recorded as the owner of the property on the Forth (T&WA G/Tax2/50). Which of them was the original purchaser has not been established. John's will (Durham University Library diocesan probate records 1814) was signed on 14 July 1814 and proved on 30 September. It indicates that both his brother and business partner (an executor) and his only son and heir (a minor) were named Thomas.

33. Thomas Oliver (1830) *op. cit.* See also NRO: ZAN MSM/20. A field, presumably the same one, mentioned in the Land Tax records, was transferred from the ownership of Henry W. Reay to that of Thomas Featherston in 1814. Oliver's Reference (1831) *op. cit.* shows that Featherston also owned a great deal of other property in the city. Oddly enough Jacob Ralph Featherston, probably a nephew of John, became a neighbour of Bewick's, living at 16 West Street (Tattersfield, 1999 *op. cit.* p 119).

34. On p 115 Robinson gives 1814 as the year of the removal to Gateshead, which accords with the change of ownership of the property on the Forth in the Land Tax records; yet Weekley, 1953, and Williams, 1968 (*opera cit.*) give 1812 and Bain (*Memoir* page xlv) gives 'early September 1812'.

35. Robinson (*op. cit.*) p 193n. The original advertisement lists the following features of the house, in addition to the attractive views quoted by Robinson: parlour, drawing room, four lodging rooms, servant's room, large garret, cellar with a pump of excellent spring water, large yard with detached buildings, and a garden well stocked with fruit trees etc.

36. Durham University Library diocesan probate records, 1828.

37. Robinson, 1887 (*op. cit.* p 193n).

38. Drawn and engraved two years later by James Fitter for publication in volume 2 of Brand's *History* (*op. cit.*).

'The Many Faces of Bewick'

by June Holmes

Advance notice of an exhibition of the numerous portraits of Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), the celebrated North East Artist, wood engraver and naturalist.

As part of the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Bewick the Natural History Society of Northumbria will be displaying part of its substantial Bewick Collection in the white room at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle, from the 26th July to the 5th October 2003. It is hoped to bring together portraits, engravings and other images. This particular exhibition theme has never been presented before and will be of great interest to the admirers of Bewick and hopefully the public in general.

The subject of the exhibition will be Thomas Bewick portraits, of which the Society holds one of the most important collections, with oils and watercolours by James Ramsay, William Nicholson, Plymer, Kirkley, and T. S. Good. There is a substantial assemblage of portrait engravings by T. Ranson, Leopold Flameng, Henry Hoppner Meyer, etc., a few of them annotated by Bewick's daughters with comments on the accurateness of the images.

To complement this display it is hoped to obtain, on loan, the other important works deposited in establishments in the North East and London, not least, the other portrait of Thomas Bewick by James Ramsay held in the National Portrait Gallery.

The Laing Art Gallery, the Central Library Pease Collection and the National Trust will be approached for either the loan of their portraits or good facsimile copies.

Within the context of portraits, a corner of the exhibition will be devoted to the rest of the Bewick family portraits held in the Natural History Society collection: Robert Elliot Bewick by John Bell, John Bewick by George Gray and the photographs of Bewick's daughters Jane and Isabella.

A selection from the collection of watercolour and pencil drawings by Bewick will also be displayed to add further interest. The exhibition notes will refer to Bewick's life history with anecdotes and some information on the other artists where available.

It may be appropriate, if the space is available, to show some of the drawings and images associated with Bewick's three homes and his workshop.

It is envisaged that part or all of the display will be available for exhibition elsewhere in the North East at the end of the two months.

250th Anniversary of Bewick in 2003

A group of interested public bodies and societies has been convened with Ian Watson, Senior Curator with Tyne and Wear Museums, in the Chair, to discuss and coordinate events and arrangements for next year's anniversary. The Bewick Society is represented; any member with proposals should contact Hugh Dixon (Chairman), June Holmes (Membership Secretary), or David Gardner-Medwin (Committee).

TWO BEWICK DRAWINGS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF NORTHUMBRIA



The Puffin

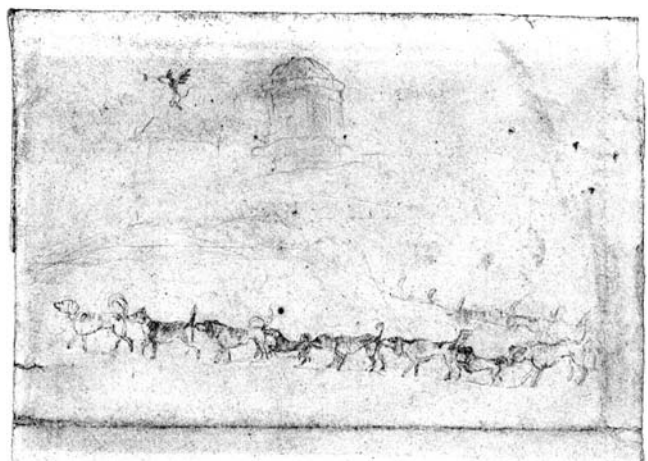
MULLET, COULTERNEB, SEA-PARROT, POPE, OR WILLOCK
Pencil study by Bewick of a Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), 84 x 97 mm., for his engraving shown above in *History of British Birds* Vol. II, 1804, p.168. (1821 edition, p.157.) NEWHM:1997.H67.225

The Puffin is drawn standing on a rock near a small colony of puffins, with the sea and an island in the background. Its feet face to the right, while its head faces to the left. Hundreds of sea birds can be seen flying around the island, a scene reminiscent of the Farne Islands, Northumberland. To the right of the bird are some rather indistinct, perfunctory figures which are much more clearly delineated in the engraving, where they can easily be seen as a group of eight puffins looking for food on the shore. In print they have also been transposed to the left of the puffin, as also has the rocky archway seen above the birds on the shore. Mrs Cheney, née Miss Harriot Carr, of Dunston Bank, presented the specimen used for this figure to Bewick.

Procession of sniffing dogs (NHSN)

Pencil transfer drawing by Bewick for an unidentified engraving. 63 x 84 mm.
NEWHM:1997.H67.538

This humorous, unfortunately incomplete, drawing depicts a long column of all kinds of different breeds of dog, nose to tail, sniffing each other. The lead dog walks forward purposefully, his head and tail held high, those following behind with lowered heads, each apparently only aware of the odour of his predecessor. The long procession winds its way around a rocky outcrop, the dogs appearing from behind it, giving the impression of more to come. The background is indistinct with a faint, domed temple on a high horizon, and a bird in flight nearby.



There is an odd contradiction between the classical architectural form and the naturalistic content of the sniffing dogs, as though the idea of the drawing was to contrast animal nature with the refinements of human culture. It may have been intended for a children's story or fable, with some kind of 'follow my leader' moral. There is, of course, plenty of evidence that Bewick had a robust and earthy sense of humour as well as some considerable appreciation of human cultivation. So it may equally have been an idea for a 'talepiece' vignette which was never completed, either from compunction, oversight, loss of interest, or awareness that public taste was moving against that kind of humour. A further point which might be made is that while dogs do naturally sniff each other's hinder parts, much to our unending amusement, they do not do it in long strings as in the drawing. In that sense, Bewick may have come to feel that the drawing was too far away from his trademark observation of nature to be bothered to complete it – or to want it to be published as his work. Of course, if any reader can point to a printed version of the drawing, we will gladly revise these speculations.

Notes and interpretations by June Holmes and D. W. S. Gray.

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) Membership Secretary
 - (e) Treasurer
 - (f) Editor of the Newsletter
 - (g) Representative of The National Trust
 - (h) a maximum of six Ordinary Members
- (ii) The election procedure shall be:

Ordinary Members – members shall serve for three years and may be re-elected for a second term of three years, and shall then 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, except in the case of the Editor, who may be re-elected without interval.
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.

This Constitution incorporates Amendments made and agreed at the Annual General Meetings of 4th June, 1998, 24th June, 1999, and 21st June, 2001.

Footnotes to the article on page one

1. ROBINSON, R. *Thomas Bewick: his life and times* (Newcastle: Robinson, 1887).
2. See TATTERSFIELD, N. *Bookplates by Beilby and Bewick* (London: The British Library, 1999) p78 where the friendship of the conchologist, Captain Thomas Brown, with John Hancock senior is mentioned in the same breath as the latter's with Bewick.
3. This and most of the information about Hancock is from EMBLETON, D. 'Memoir of the life of John Hancock' Nat. Hist. Trans. Northumb. Durham, Newc. u. Tyne 11: 1-21 (1894) but more information about their parents is in Embleton's account of John's brother 'Memoir of the life of Albany Hancock, F.L.S., etc.' *ibid.* 5:118-141 (1877).
4. ROBINSON, 1887 (op. cit.) p. 193.
5. ATKINSON, G. C. 'Sketch of the life and works of the late Thomas Bewick' Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham, and Newcastle upon Tyne 1:132-159 (1831).
6. TATTERSFIELD, 1999 (op. cit.) p132.
7. Letter from TB to John Dovaston 13 June 1828 in Williams G. (editor) *Bewick to Dovaston 1824-1828* (London: Nattali and Maurice, 1968).
8. EMBLETON, 1894 (op. cit.).

Thomas Bewick and the 'Tomorrow's History' Project

by June Holmes

The Natural History Society of Northumbria holds one of the finest collections of Thomas Bewick original drawings and watercolours, the only other comparable collection being that held in the British Museum.

There are seven hundred and thirty-eight watercolour and pencil drawings and engravings of British and foreign birds, quadrupeds, vignettes etc. by Thomas Bewick, John Bewick, Robert Bewick and the apprentices. They are mostly transfer drawings used for engravings, some studies and proofs of engravings, including a copy of the Chillingham Bull on vellum, grouped on one hundred and thirty two mounts.

The greater part of this collection was received through a bequest made by Bewick's daughter Isabella, implemented by her executors in 1884. John Hancock presented a smaller number of drawings, mainly quadrupeds, at the same time and the two collections were amalgamated. Hancock was a great friend of the Bewick family and had received the gifts of drawings from Bewick's daughters Jane and Isabella.

Instructed through Isabella Bewick's bequest to 'keep alive the memory of my late Father, Thomas Bewick and his ability' the Society fulfilled her wishes by publicly displaying the collection, much to the detriment of the pencil and watercolour drawings themselves. A large proportion of the drawings have suffered the ill effects of light and atmospheric pollution over the many years of their being on permanent display.

The conservation and curation of such an important collection is a responsibility the Society has not taken lightly. With freedom of access to the collection conflicting

with the problems of conserving the drawings for the future, they were withdrawn from public exhibition in the 1960's for conservation purposes. The collection can now only be accessed by private consultation with the archivist in the Museum Library or by viewing the rare public exhibition of Thomas Bewick's work.

However, this has restricted the availability of the collection to the public and the Society was delighted to receive the offer of a grant from the Heritage Lottery funded 'Tomorrow's History' project, with the proviso that the drawings were photographed and digitised on computer allowing free access to the images. (The objective of the 'Tomorrow's History' project is to produce a major, web-based local heritage resource for North East England working with libraries, museums, archives and local community groups. The information gathered will be accessible over the World Wide Web.)

The Society's project, started in July 2001, is nearing completion the seven hundred and thirty-eight watercolour and pencil drawings and engravings have all been photographed and scanned; a comprehensive accompanying text has been prepared. A web page was also designed for the 'Tomorrow's History' website, which goes on line in March 2002, giving details of the Natural History Society of Northumbria and its Bewick Collection as well as some examples of the drawings. A short biography of Thomas Bewick is also included

Computer disks containing all the images will be available for consultation at the Natural History Society and, in the future, at local libraries in the North East. The first copy of the collection will be presented to the Central Library, Newcastle to be retained in the Pease Collection for use in the Local Studies room. Eventually, it is anticipated that copies will be made available further afield with the British Library, the British Museum and possibly research establishments abroad.

This is an important step forward for Bewick research in the future. The public and admirers of Bewick's work will have easy access to the collection and possibly in a few years do their research in the comfort of their own home. It is hoped that this will act as a stimulus to other bodies holding collections of Bewick material to follow in the footsteps of the Natural History Society and make their holdings easily available to the public in due course.

June Holmes is the Honorary Archivist for the Natural History Society of Northumbria.

Forthcoming Events

June 20 Annual General Meeting at the Hancock Museum
6.00pm. Business starts at 6.30pm, followed by talk
Speaker: Jack Dawson: *The Etching Revival*

July 7 Bewick Walk through Newcastle: Meet at 2.00pm
at Newcastle Central Station outside restaurant

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