



CHERRYBURN TIMES

The Journal of The Bewick Society

A NEWLY DISCOVERED MANUSCRIPT MEMOIR OF BEWICK BY GEORGE CLAYTON ATKINSON

introduced and presented by David Gardner-Medwin

Bewick enthusiasts will know the name of George Clayton Atkinson, author of the early biography, the 'Sketch of the Life and Works of the late Thomas Bewick' (1831).

In March 2006, a set of six quarto volumes of the figures without letterpress of Bewick's *Quadrupeds, Birds and Vignettes*,¹ was sold at auction in Newcastle. Five of the volumes contain evidence that they had formerly been the property of George Clayton Atkinson; the sixth, the 1824 *Quadrupeds*, is a standard copy in publisher's boards with no annotations or marks of previous ownership. *The British Land [and Water] Birds engraved on wood by Thomas Bewick* (1825) in four volumes and the single volume of *Vignettes* (1827) are uniformly bound in full brown and green morocco and have been interleaved with wove paper (watermarked 'S E & Co 1824') for notes to be made relating to each of the images. Almost all of the birds are named on the interleaves, with comments about a few birds and vignettes, all in Atkinson's handwriting. There are important additional insertions, described below, in the first volume of the *Land Birds* and on the title page an autograph inscription 'A Copy selected by my Daughter for Mr G.C. Atkinson 10 March 1828, Thomas Bewick'. These five volumes were secured for the archives of the Natural History Society of Northumbria.²

In the first volume of *Land Birds*, bound in before the title page on the same paper stock as the interleaves, are 22 pages of manuscript comprising a draft memoir of Bewick. The handwriting is a uniform, neat, but probably amateur 'printed' script (see page 4), bearing no resemblance to Atkinson's, and with several elementary spelling errors. It gives the impression of being written by a painstaking relative or acquaintance rather than a professional scribe. The content, however, makes it certain that Atkinson was the author and that the major part of it, but not the whole, was written before he was, as he explains, 'induced to commence a memoir... for publication' by the Natural History Society of Northumberland Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne and to read it to a meeting of the Society (which he did on 15th June 1830). The resulting 'Sketch of the Life and Works' was published in the Society's *Transactions* in

1831 and is recognised as one of the earliest biographical accounts of Bewick. In it Atkinson acknowledges additional information provided by three close friends of Bewick's, William Garret and John Bell (both booksellers) and Richard Wingate. The manuscript draft (hereafter the 'Draft'), on the other hand, seems to be entirely Atkinson's work, and it differs widely in other ways also from the published version (the 'Sketch'): each contains major passages absent from the other and the 'Draft', where the passages do correspond, is often more detailed and uninhibited in its comments, making it an important source of new biographical material. Indeed towards the end he writes that he was advised to omit some of his anecdotes from the published version. It sounds as if his youthful enthusiasm may have alarmed some of his audience and it is pleasing to have these hitherto unsuspected deletions restored. Atkinson had been shown the manuscript of Bewick's own autobiographical *Memoir* (thirty-four years before its publication in 1862) and appears to have remembered or copied some parts of it and used them in his own account, but he was more circumspect about using this material in the 'Sketch'. The other main differences are these: the 'Sketch' alone includes a historical introduction on wood engraving, a short family history, much bibliographic material on Bewick's works (almost certainly supplied by Bell and Garret), and a few new anecdotes (including the well-known one about Bewick presenting his tooth to Atkinson as a 'relic'); the 'Draft' (largely transcribed below) contains more anecdotes, more comments on some of the best of Bewick's bird engravings (but some, being rather anthropomorphic and banal, are omitted or abbreviated here), and a long commentary on the vignettes in the 1827 volume, much of which casts no new light on them or on Bewick, and is also omitted.

A strange feature of the 'Draft' is the presence of several comments scrawled in pencil in the margins. They can briefly be described as juvenile and sarcastic and they add nothing to our understanding of Bewick or Atkinson. The impression is that a younger brother got hold of the manuscript in a moment of annoyance and by clumsy



implication accused 'Mr GCA' of sentimentality, ignorance, hypocrisy and vanity: 'Nonsense, George', 'Sentimental!', etc. Where Atkinson writes, of fishing, 'set lines are capital fun', the annotator adds 'for a school boy' and where he recounts Bewick's reaction to men shooting swallows the annotator, in his closest approach to serious criticism, reminds Atkinson that he colludes at the shooting of moor game. Some of these marginal notes are partly buried in the binding proving that they were written on the loose sheets. It seems surprising that Atkinson did not erase them before the volume was bound.

Following the memoir are laid-down two 'memorabilia' of Bewick: an impression of his wood engraving of Cherryburn based on John Bewick's drawing, inscribed to Atkinson; and a receipt for three guineas written by Bewick 'To Mr George Atkinson ... for a set of the Figures of the British Birds'. Both are mentioned in the 'Draft', which also describes how Atkinson selected his impressions of the birds. Loosely inserted in the volume is a half-sheet of paper with the following note in Atkinson's hand (partly reproduced below), apparently one of many that he wrote after visits to Bewick, providing material for his memoir:

Sat October 26th 1825—called on M^r Bewicke [sic] & sat some time with him—talked of Eels; urged the feasibility of putting a lot into the pond saying if he lived near it he would soon have 10,000 Eels into it: mentioned to him the fact of its being nearly annually dried up: that, he said might be obviated by digging some deep hole to retain the water instead of letting it run off to Gateshead—. thinks horsehair eels are originally hairs, & says he conceives many inveterate inward complaints arise from swallowing these animals while rolled up like a black pepper; thinks almost all eels must breed in the mouths of the rivers & that they are therefore sea fish—this accounts for the large or rather long strings of small eels w^h pass up the rivers at certain seasons—told him that there was yet another bird for him to do, & that it was at the museum to come over on Monday—viz the reed wren w^h has been sent from M^r [blank] in London [—] he knows the bird well he says & has seen it in Horseley wood [ie Horsley] before it was cut so much as at present—when he visited Edinbro' some years since he saw it placed among the foreign birds in the museum, in wh mistake he rectified them[.]

George Clayton Atkinson (1808-1877) was the eldest son of Matthew Atkinson of Carr Hill, Gateshead.³ Bewick had convalesced from his serious illness at Carr Hill in 1812, high on the fell overlooking Newcastle.⁴ Whether George, aged four, was introduced to natural history by Bewick at that time is not recorded. He was already enthusiastic about birds at the age of 17 when he began visiting Bewick at his home in West Street, Gateshead (en

route from Carr Hill to Newcastle), in the summer of 1825.⁵ The young Atkinson became one of the founding committee members and a curator of ornithology of the Natural History Society in 1829 and remained one of its most active and generous members throughout his life (donating many notable items to the museum including in 1838 a 15 foot ichthyosaur from Whitby). A directorship of the Tyne Iron Company at Lemington provided income and leisure for him to make important contributions to natural history. He left illustrated manuscript accounts of voyages to the Hebrides and St Kilda and to the Faroes and Iceland⁶ and, horrified by the effect of industrial pollution on trees near Gateshead, he organised a major study of notable trees in the north east counties, reported in 1873, one of many papers which he published in the Society's *Transactions*. As President of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club (an adjunct to the Society) in 1872 he presented a word portrait of Bewick, rather like his mentor's vignettes in its inextricable mixture of memory and imagination—on 27th June 1871 about a hundred members of the Field Club ('one fifth of them ladies') had walked from Wylam to Bywell, by way of Ovingham where they lingered for a while in the churchyard by Bewick's tomb:

As they left the spot, I could scarcely help yielding to a sort of reverie that he was with us, and mingling cheerily in our pursuits. A hale, well-built, hearty old man appeared among us, on leaving the church-yard; clad in black, with breeches, and worsted stockings fitting tightly and neatly upon a well formed leg; he wore a rather broad-brimmed black hat, and walked with a stick, though so actively and firmly, that there seemed no necessity for its use. He hailed me courteously, with a cheery—"How do you do, Mr. Atkinson; you have a gay party with you today!" "Yes," I said, "and you see we have ladies among us, sir!" His eye beamed with kindness as he glanced at them, and he paused and turned to me saying, almost solemnly, "Oh, sir, be as kind to them as ever you can." Joining a portion of the party, he said, "I dare say you would like, now you have seen the tomb, to see the birthplace of Bewick? I will accompany you, if you please, so far on your way, and point out Cherryburn." So we turned down the village of Ovingham, ... "Oh," he said, "you do well to get away from the town, and see as much of God's works as you can; I suppose you each of you follow up some particular branch

of Natural History, and endeavour to make it as attractive as possible to your companions. Many a one in my time I have smitted with a love of Ornithology. Well, well, you will find life all too short to exhaust the simplest subject; and you will discover that the more you learn, the less you will find that you really know. ... Why, sir, it would take a man his lifetime to write the history of a spider."

We wandered on, on the charming walk towards Bywell, till we

reached a point in the road, about three-quarters of a mile west of Ovingham, commanding a view of Eltringham and Cherryburn; here he paused, and turning a quid of tobacco (which was lodged inside his lower lip) with his tongue, he stepped nimbly on to the southern bank of the lane, and pointed with his stick over the hedge to the south towards the place of his birth. A dense cloud of smoke from the coke ovens came, rolling down the valley at that moment and concealed the view. A sad exclamation—half groan, half sigh—burst from the old man, and with a melancholy ejaculation of “Poor Tyneside!” our companion disappeared from among us, and we went on our way... .⁷

In the transcript that follows all the original spelling and punctuation are retained. The pages are numbered for ease of reference. Only Atkinson’s comments on some of the images of birds and vignettes are omitted; these gaps are indicated.⁸

The Transcript of Atkinson’s Manuscript

[Page 1] Mr Bewick died in 1828, since which time more than a year having elapsed without any biography being published, I think it well to fill these few pages with a memoir of him, lest in waiting for one more perfect, I allow my own recollections of him to slip from my mind. This would be a pity, as from my frequent intercourse with him for some years, I had an opportunity of being most intimate with him, and consequently of remarking many of those peculiarities, wick springing from a shrewd and intelligent mind, aided by strong natural originality and humour, guided by the most perfect benevolence cannot fail in a certain degree, to interest, either all who knew him, who admire his works, or are curious in the development of genius.

Thomas Bewick was born at Cherry Burn near Eltringham, which is a mile and a half above Ovingham on the Tyne, on the 12th day of Aug^t 1753.⁹

A view of his fathers house, in wood by his brother John, who though excellent in his day, was very inferior to my old friend, was given me one day by Bewick, after receiving a negative to his inquiry if I had ever seen it. When these volumes were bound, I had sundry little mementos of their ingenious author, put up with them; and this among the rest, with the subscription in his hand writing (wrong spelt, by the bye) was not forgotten.

His father in a simple untaught way, had a most ardent admiration of nature in all her parts, and being obliged to rise early to look after a small Landsale colliery which he had, used on his return to breakfast, to recount [Page 2] all, that he had seen in his rambles, describing in such glowing and rapturous terms, the economy of nature, & the habits of natures creatures, that a tithe of my old friends enthusiasm, would have rendered him, involuntarily a most fervent naturalist. To these remarks of his father, which led him to an intimate observance of all that had life, including the most trifling peculiarities in manner or domestic habits, are we indebted for these volumes, than which nothing can ever be more faithful, and as yet nothing has been as much so.

Bewicks talents were a wonderful combination, and most fitly adapted for a work of this kind; for he possessed

in himself, from observation, an intimate knowledge of the manner and disposition, general character, and peculiarity of attitude pertaining to each bird; he had the most extraordinary felicity in embodying these attributes with his pencil; and finally he united to these, great ingenuity and talent as a wood engraver.

When I speak of the disposition of a bird, I know I use a rather objectionable term, though one perfectly admissible here: who will say that the Domestic Cock, is not a bold and valarous [sic] personage, sufficiently aware of his own importance; and dignified accordingly: and who will say that his dame is not a good managing, bustling housewife, intent on gossip and household affairs; the summit of whose happiness and self importance is to see herself a respectable member of society, as the mother of a thriving brood of chickens, or to display her garrulous satisfaction to the world, as she wanders forth at morn, fully imbued with all the dignity of having laid an egg [Bain (IB), 1978, 80b]; and the depth of earthly misery is to see her ungrateful step children spite of her earnest solicitations, tempt the broad flood, in utter disregard of maternal anxiety and distress [Cirker (C), 1962, 166:8; IB 85a].

Who...will not readily aknowledge the fact that animals possess many feelings in common with the lords of creation... Observe the water wagtail, how it jerks its tail as it runs along the ground and the water crow... .

The sparrow, so calm and lethargic, is to me like a citizen and man of the world; he seems calm and unmoved, serious and apathetic; just like the men of this day, whose endeavour seems to be, to appear [Page 3] above any demonstration of feeling, and to substitute for dignity and ease, the most impenetrable apathy and unconcern.

The Magpie! is there not activity and restlessness in his very attitude? and the old horse in the back ground—what a tale does it tell of service unrequited and hardships at an end! —This very horse belonged to his father: a neighbour borrowed it under strict injunctons of care, to go to Newburn with: he abused his trust and overwrought the horse, which died soon after, and my kindhearted old friend, used to step aside in going to school, to see the old horse and cry over it! such was his simplicity of character that he has mentioned this circumstance to me, two or three times.

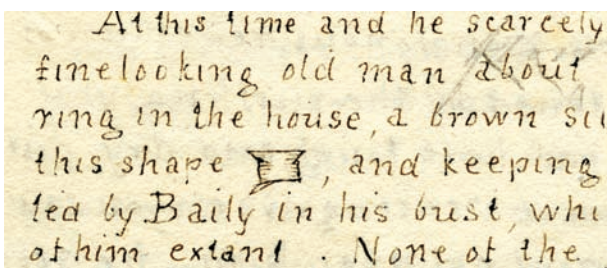
... The lark is one of the most beautiful things in the book; he had seven lying beside him to draw from, and admirably he has succeeded. See it is just going to rise carolling to the sky—till this moment it has cowered down to escape your notice; and now it is startled and looks round it preparatory to its flight. ...The Wheatear so wild and shy, quite prepared on your nearer approach, to take his flight from the stone he sits on, to the next hillock, shewing in his undulating flight, the white over his tail, and accompanying it with his monotonous repetition of chac chac—The cushet! he is rather frightened by the rustling you make among the bushes—oh do not shoot at him, he is tough and dry just now, and you will only flush the Woodcock you were seeking when you saw him. ... [Page 4] The Turkey and Peacock are finely done, and the Guinea Fowl, in the background of which he represents himself getting over the wall. For it was at M^r Hodgsons of

Elswick that he made the drawing, and he was much annoyed in his clandestine entrance by the house dog seen below him. The Partridge and Quail [*sic*] are also very pretty, but are much surpassed by the Corncrake, which with the Woodcock are from living birds, and—the latter at any rate, the best in the book. There is a life in them both which no other painter can give, and as specimens of art they are unrivalled—The Heron is nicely executed, and the attitude capital. The Bittern too is excellent: what ease and firmness of step, and how well, without any great contrast of colour does it stand out from the background. The Tringæ he is rather at fault in; they are birds not much under our observation, and from the circumstance of changing their plumage annually, they are rather puzzling: from this circumstance Bewick is sometimes incorrect in his nomenclature: But they are just as correct and faithful as the rest. ...

To return to old Bewick after this unreasonable digression in criticism of his works; the first time I saw him, was I think in 1824 or 5. My brother Richard, who with me, had always a great curiosity and fondness for nature's works, returning for his summer holidays, from Mr Gibson's of Tirrel near Penrith, brought with him the eggs of a bird which he did not know: on consulting Bewick's Birds, he unhesitatingly recognized it as the Pied Flycatcher, and as Bewick in his description [*sic*] of it, seems somewhat at a loss about the nest and eggs, we determined to call on him, and give him the benefit of Dick's observations. We did so and pleased the old man very much: he questioned Dick repeatedly on the manner and habits of the bird, and expressed himself highly gratified by his remarks, making memoranda from his answers on the margin of a copy of the birds, scrawled almost full of notes for the correction of the next edition.

After our conversation on the Flycatcher, we talked I remember, inter alii, of the large pond before the house at Carr Hill: he inquired if it [*sic*] contained any fish, and on my answer in the negative, he said, "why if I was your father I would soon have ten thousand eels in it[?]. I took the hint and shortly afterwards, put in two or three buckets full, none of which I have since had the pleasure of seeing [*sic*].

At this time and he scarcely changed all the time I knew him, he was a stout, fine looking old man about five feet ten, to six feet high; very well made, wearing in the house, a brown silk cap of his daughters making, somewhat in this shape [below], and keeping his quid of tobacco in his under lip, as represented by Baily in his bust, which by the bye is the only good published likeness of him



extant. None of the prints of him give you at all the character of [Page 5] his face, and of course the paintings from which they were taken are little better.¹⁰

About a year before his death, he had a small full-length picture of himself, taken by Good of Berwick, who had an original and exceedingly clever manner of managing his lights, effected by placing his subject in the conflux of light formed by two windows at right angles to each other, thus giving an effect of light which is very pleasing, and has been copied with tolerable success by Parker of Newcastle and others. This painting, tho' rather a caricature is certainly the best professional likeness extant, next to the bust. But the best of all is a sketch by his friend Mr Jos: Crawhall, now in the possession of Mr Crawhall of Denton Burn, his brother: [Marginal note in ink in GCA's hand added here as follows]

* I find it is copied from a likeness by Nicholson, done

at Chillingham, & now in the possession of Mr Garret.¹¹ nothing but the bust, which is extremely like, and gives you exactly the benevolent and frank expression of his countenance, together with the peculiarity of the veins on the temple, the quid in the underlip, the tuft of hair (natural) in each ear, &c., can at all compare with it.

The impression when we took our leave on this first visit, as he held out his hand and warmly pressed us to come and see him often, was that I had seldom or never seen so goodhumoured, frank and manly a countenance.

In consequence of the warmth and sincerity of his invitation to go and see him often, I used to do so continually: generally twice, and sometimes thrice a week, always meeting with the same kind welcome, and earnest invitation to go more frequently. He was a man of such sterling good sense, and such originality and boldness of expression, and imagination, that an excuse half as good, would have entailed on him a good deal of my society, as it is, I look back to the hours I have spent with him, with feelings of much satisfaction. Whatever injustice I may do his remarks in the following record of them, I must, to the best of my recollection, aided by sundry notices of his conversations, in journals and memorandum books, which I have occasionally kept, endeavour to indite as faithfully as possible, all that can in any way elucidate the character of my excellent friend.

The first notice I possess of him in writing, is dated 1st Jan: 1828 [ie 1826],¹² and runs thus "By Mr Bewick's advice given some time since, I this day commence the following record of my deeds and misdeeds, as well as of all occurrences, in any wise interesting to me and mine". So that to this piece of advice, I am indebted for the power of recalling many pleasing circumstances regarding him, which I should otherwise have forgotten, and, which, trivial as they are, are likely to constitute the sole interest of this memoir.

He always kept a journal, and it was, he said, such a source of melancholy satisfaction, to refer to bright hours spent with friends gone from us, that [Page 6] he had often urged me to adopt one: and short as has been the time of my doing so, and young and careless though I be, I find on looking over it, many names of those who were, but are not. He used likewise to keep an obituary of his friends, and if he embellished it, in a manner, which from a peculiar talent, he once possessed, it must indeed have been a thing of much interest. The talent I allude to, was that of drawing from memory, the most excellent like-

nesses of faces which he had seen. From want of practise [*sic*], he lost it in his youth, and I never saw a specimen of it; but, such was the spirit and facility with which he handled his pencil, that I can readily imagine very faithful likenesses of those he loved, springing up beneath it. This talent was not, however confined to objects of his kindly regard, as one of the tail pieces, or rather the drawing from which it was taken, shews; the anecdote pertaining to this Vignette, where the Devil is represented whipping a man in his own cart up to the Gallows, is this; a man in the constant habit of supplying his family with coals, was found to have cheated him sadly: Bewick drew a striking likeness of him in the situation represented in the vignette, and then going to the door, seized the unsuspecting peculator by the arm, and dragging into his room pointed out the drawing, saying “now then, if thou goes on, as thou has been doing with me, the Devil’ll get thee and take thee to the gallows”—the man sported penitence, and got off, not a little frightened at either the present or prospective grasp of the old gentleman.

A feat of this kind to a man of so strong a frame as Bewick in his youth, and even to a later period of his life possessed, must have been matter of little difficulty, and requiring no great excitement of feeling; but there were occasions, when his patience and temper were put a good deal to the stretch. In the commencement of his celebrity, he was obliged to go to London to enter into arrangements with some of the eminent booksellers there, for the sale of his work. On this occasion he met with many things that were offensive to him: to a man of the most primitive simplicity and modesty, of thought, word, and deed, the insincerity and selfishness, so prevalent in large communities, and (alas that it should be so!) more especially in our Babylon, could not fail to be a source of much disgust; on one or two occasions, it roused him to a display of his corporeal powers, rather more interesting than agreeable to the object of them. The particulars of these rencontres, I regret to say, have flitted from my memory: I only remember, that as he detailed them, they were generally accompanied by some quaint and pithy admonition to the discomfited object of his wrath, which, if delivered, with any thing like the humour he infused on telling them to me, must have produced a somewhat equivocal effect. Not, that on these occasions he ever condescended to pugilistic struggles, or vulgar exhibitions of that kind; but on occasions of insult or provocation, when irritated beyond endurance, he used to put forth his strength, and by a calm but nervous demonstration of these faculties [*Page 7*] prove, at once, the inexpediency of further molestation.

He never could bear to see a woman or a horse abused: in the latter part of my acquaintance with him, I remember seeing [*sic*] him very much excited, from having been witness during his walk, to a severe blow given by a brutal fellow, to a woman. “I sprung forward, M^r Atkinson, to knock him down, but I remembered that I was only a feckless old man and might very likely get myself abused. So I told him what I thought of him, and shamed him out of meddling with her”. This, however was only one ramification of his humanity, which was universal. He was always meditating on some plan for the improvement of his fellow creatures, or the better treatment of the animals entrusted to them. At

the time of his death he was engaged in a rather new and beautiful style of wood cutting, the first application of which, he devoted to the amelioration of the condition of the horse, an animal so essentially useful to us, and yet in many cases, so inconsiderately neglected, and abused. It had struck him, that any cheap print of this animal in a state of evident suffering from want of care, and ill usage, possessing sufficient appearance of misery, to force itself on the conviction, and awaken the better feelings, of those to whom he is usually entrusted, would tend more than any thing else to the better treatment of this valuable animal.

His Vignette of the old Horse waiting for death, in his fables, was the model he followed, on a larger scale: he employed for it four blocks joined together and backed with transverse layers of mahogany, to prevent them from warping, forming one large block the size of this page, on which he represented in his happiest style, a magnificently wretched old horse, within view of all the comforts of the farmyard, but without the possibility of attaining them; an old stone wall, quite an original subject, as he remarked, for an engraver, but which he has done beautifully, intervening: he also introduced some brackens¹³ in a hedge side, with excellent effect.

He could not, I remember, please himself with the eye of his old horse, and after filling two or three scraps of paper with old eyes, which would have delighted most other men, he declared he must wait to see an old horse. I promised to keep a look out, and send the first I met with to stand for his likeness in the back lane: and I so far succeeded, that I gave a man who had one in a cart a shilling to take it up to Bewicks for the purpose; which he promised to do, but as he afterwards told me, could not find the place I described. I do not remember how he managed the eye at last, but I think a proof impression or two, were taken, within a week of his death.

Another proof of his humanity, was the fact that he had never, but once by accident with a stone, killed a bird; and it was to him, as it must be to all humane persons, a subject of much regret and displeasure, to witness the unnecessary destruction of any living creature, however insignificant. On one occasion this feeling induced a pretty strong remonstrance to some young men engaged in shooting swallows: it contained nothing very remarkable, but a truism with which he concluded it; “that they were destroying creatures of infinitely more use to mankind, than themselves”. this carried conviction with it, and produced the effect he wished.

As I anticipated, this memoir is becoming, or is likely to become, but a desultory [*Page 8*] sort of composition, for even now, as I do not remember any further traits of his humanity, I shall ramble on to something else, and return again to the foregone subject, whenever any thing new comes over my memory, but with the same neglect of order and regularity.

With regard to the fact, that the cuts were, with very few exceptions done entirely by himself, I have it in my power to pledge myself. I was at Richardson's print room in Blackett St^t one day,¹⁴ when not knowing me to be an intimate friend of Bewick, he began in an illnatured way, to run down his works, not only questioning their genuineness, but absolutely asserting that he only finished a few of

the cuts himself. I was a good deal annoyed, and called in returning from town, to ascertain the degree of truth of this assertion: in answer to my question, if he allowed his pupils, or others, to finish, or assist him with his woodcuts, he said, "no except in the Whimbrel, Tufted Duck, and lesser Tern", and turning to his daughter, added, "are there any more, honey"? she considered an instant and then answered "she thought not—certainly not half a dozen in all"—We both pressed him to do them over again, and make all in the book, his own. he seemed quite aware of the desirability of it, and intended, I dare say, to do it some day. He certainly did not execute them in so finished a style during the last few years of his life, as he did in the days of the Woodcock and Skylark, though even then there was a life and spirit in them, which many artists would envy.

In his younger days, he could finish one of the birds, if not accompanied by much foliage, in a day, and sometimes in a few hours. Subsequently, though still retaining his eyesight unimpaired, he could not sit so closely at it, and was not, therefore, so expeditious.

As to the tail pieces they were merely recreations to him, and as he took up sometimes one, sometimes another to cut at, he seldom thought it worth his while to follow any sketch or drawing. At the same time, he had generally by him a good many blocks with pencil sketches of much humour on them, ready for his engraver, which he used to produce for the amusement of his friends. Many of these remain uncut to this day, one of which was quite in his own style of humour: it represented the corner of a street covered with Bills of all sizes and discriptions [*sic*]; wild beasts, pigfaced ladys, playbills &c. &c. in every variety, and one very prominent placard, apparently engrossing the attention of a parcel of politic looking old men, who with sundry idle boys, standing in deep contemplation of the mysteries thereon represented, seem a good deal amused with it, is a flaming prospectus of an abridgement of the law of England in five hundred volumes.

During the time of my acquaintance with him, his british birds being nearly complete, he had not many birds to do: I think, maybe five or six: let me see, the King Duck, Harlequin Duck, Vulture, Blue breasted Robin, Reed Wren, and Cursorius: occurring in the order I give them¹⁵. The last very rare Bird, belonged to M^r. Gisborne of Durham,¹⁶ who at that time, possessed [*Page 9*] a collection, and employed an intelligent, observant young man, of the name of Proctor, to procure and prepare, for him specimens of ornithology &c. taking him with him, to different parts of the kingdom: when this young man saw the Cursorius in his collection, he begged that Mr. Bewick might be allowed to make a drawing from it, for his book; this was readily acceded [*sic*] to; and, I think, (but am not quite certain) that it was sent to M^r. G.T.F.,¹⁷ to be forwarded to him: be this as it may, M^r F sent it first to M^r. Selby,¹⁸ and on its return, took it to Bewick, making it appear, a great, and personal favor [*sic*], that he was allowed to see it: taking to himself the entire credit of having obtained it for him, and entirely suppressing Proctors name, in the transaction. Bewick got to know this, and was not a little annoyed by it: I was there when Mr. F called with the bird: after a good deal of important inanity, he took his leave, but returned to make old Bewick

observe, that the Bill of the bird was not curved from the base to the tip, as represented by some authors, but only near the tip. To a man of such scrupulous accuracy as my old friend displayed, this was, to say the least of it needless, as Bewicks cool "ay, ay", seemed to imply. I know he used to consider him an essential prig, rather envious of the laurels obtained by others, and not very scrupulous about wearing only those of his own gathering. Bewick used to say, "he sucked Proctors brains for his information[?]. The Reed Wren, motacilla arundinacea, was I believe procured for him, by Mr. F s, instrumentality. The Blue breasted Robin was shot on the town moor, here; it is almost unique as a british bird, and is now in the museum of the Literary and Philosophical Society.

I had long urged to him the advantage which would accrue to naturalists from the publication of the eggs of the british birds, and that if they were supplementarily added to his birds, it would make that work, all that ornithologists could wish: he seemed so perfectly aware of this, that he had quite determined to set his daughter Jane to work with them, and it was for a long time matter of continual conversation between us: he had the greatest confidence in the abilities of his family; particularly [*sic*] Jane and his son, but unfortunately their extreme diffidence is such that the talents which they have are only too likely to bloom unseen.

had she undertaken the publication of the british Oology, I think she would have done it justice, but as I have long given up all hope of this, (for she always, (however zealous the old man was) conceived herself to be incompetent to it, and laughed at the idea of her publishing), and have got a young friend M^r. W. Hewitson, who has abundance of the finest talent, to undertake this interesting publication. previous to this I had determined to employ a painter, (Carmichael)¹⁹ to draw for me on the interleaf, the egg pertaining to each opponent bird. he had only done the Kestrils [*sic*] eggs, and those of the Raven, when I found him to be rather too pictorial, so I was in despair till I got Hewitson to promise to do them.²⁰ Robert Bewicks forte, is minute and proportional copying: I have measured fish of his execution, and found them true, to the most extraordinary degree: He is now engaged in the continuance of the british fishes, commenced by his father, and only advanced [*Page 10*] as far as fourteen or fifteen cuts, for they too were to be in wood: the vignettes to the fishes, when published will be very pretty: they are mostly in character with the subject, as spirited as the others, and all display that intimate acquaintance with nature, which constitutes the chief, tho' to many unaccountable charm of his designs.

He used to say that no one could pass a well, or stream of water, without turning to look at it! and on consideration, answering for myself alone, I dont think I could: there is always something so essentially interesting in water, that when associated with the usual pleasing accompaniments of a rustic well, it certainly forms a most delightful subject for contemplation. Exclusive of the many charms of a poetical nature which it holds out, it has many charms to the merely rational observer. The myriads of creatures dwelling within its bosom, and those which are daily and hourly repairing to it, are matters well worthy of remark: see the water spiders in groups of four or five

skimming on the surface, with such curious irregularity. Bewick used to say "a' many and many an hour have I sat and watched them, wondering and wondering how they had power to dance about so lightly on the top, and then dive beneath the surface when they please"—Then the beautiful Dragon Fly as he shoots past you on a sultry day, seizing and tearing in his rapid flight some gay butterfly, and in his turn, snapped up by a pike, which lay listlessly basking in the sun, and seemed, like man, to destroy more from the wanton-ness of power, than from actual necessity—is he not, think you, subject of interest to any one, who will give him a moments observation? and the shoal of minnows in the deep water near the root of the tree—how frivolous and viewless seems their occupation—but throw in a worm to them and their ceaseless, and eager persecution of it will convince you, that their apparently objectless motions, were in reality those which nature suggested as most successful in the discovery of their prey. now they pull the poor worm, and evince as much selfishness in their struggles for the final appropriation of it, as we should in matters as worthy of our cupidity: two or three of the most powerful have got him to themselves and tug him away into the deep water, to have him all to themselves—but what disturbed the quietness of the water, and frightened all the minnows into shallow water again?—it was a large trout—did you not see his yellow side, as he seized one of the group of minnows surrounding the worm, there is a good lesson for you—go home and consider it! or stay—catch that nice cheerful grasshopper on the dry bank behind you—use him as though you loved him, tho' as our humane friend Izaak Walton says—I see you have a length of gut and an old worn out tail fly on it, sticking in your hat band—there take it off—why it is not a foot long—never mind, tie this bit of string to it—ay that will do—now a hazle rod—oh yes quite long enough—there get gently up behind the old tree, and with as little motion as may be, drop the grasshopper, you so tenderly impaled, on the corner of the hole where the wind ruffles the water so—now lift it gently and let it fall again—ay dont despair, try again—once more—ay, by my word, you have him now, so go home and conclude the train of moral sentiment you so promptly commenced at the capture of the minnow.

Look at the sand martins gliding from their nests in the bank beneath [Page 11] your feet chasing each other so rapidly over the surface of the water—are not they interesting? is not the gorgeous Kingfisher, which darts past you with such velocity as almost to elude the sight, or hangs quivering in the air beside yon willow, looking like a gem suspended for your fascination—is not he interesting? or the tall graceful Heron standing so still under the Alder, with his calm eye apparently fixed on vacancy, till with rapid extension of neck, he captures the unsuspecting fish he had been watching—is he not, also interesting? is not all which has life interesting to an exquisite degree? and more than this—is it not matter of import to us, if in its consideration, we are led to the contemplation of the maker and inventor of that which causeth us such wonder and speculation? and can we behold the curious workings of instinct, and the admirable provisions of nature, without doing so?

My worthy friend used to say, that all consideration and study of nature, must be pleasing and instructive in the highest degree: his most gratifying reflections, were those connected with the examination of her operations, which the further they are carried, the more convincing they become, of the continual care and ceaseless providence of our creator. I have heard people say Bewick was an atheist! far from it—I never knew a more simple devout christian. Death was at all times most familiar to him, and was continually introduced into his conversation, but without the slightest levity: his father, and some others of his family, had died at the age of seventy, and he looked forward to that period of his life, as one likely to be fatal to him likewise: when he passed it, he said he had got a new lease, and might go on for some time, though as he was only a tenant at will, it was a matter of every uncertainty: he was not afraid to die, though he did not wish for its approach, and when he did die, he should just wish John Laws, Richard Wingate, and me, to be present—in fact he used to talk of death frequently in a painfully familiar way, but with such simplicity, that you never could imagine it affectation.

John Laws and Richard Wingate were familiars of his: the former who was an engraver, and old pupil of Bewicks, carrying on his craft chiefly in silver, farmed some land at Heddon Laws in Northumberland; and in the intervals of his twofold trade, dedicated a good deal of attention to natural history, chiefly the two branches, Ornithology, and Entomology; and though not very scientifically acquainted with either, possessed a very tolerable knowledge of all which had come under his own observation. To him Bewick is indebted for the addition of the mountain Linnet to his birds, and I know no man who has paid more attention, or met with so much success in investigating the habits of the Cuckoo. his industry in these pursuits displays itself in a good collection of the eggs of the british birds, which he has made.²¹ He is in fact a man who would have done more credit to a situation of life which could have afforded him a better vantage ground to start from[.]

Richard Routledge Wingate, is an extraordinary man: his father was, I believe a dog breaker and bird stuffer, desultory, uncertain occupations, which often [Page 12] unfit a man for more regular pursuits; they had, I have heard, this effect upon him, and afforded his son only an indifferent chance of becoming the exceedingly respectable member of society, which he now is. He is a roman catholic, and a strict one, and follows the occupation of a brushmaker, though there needed not this or any other drudgery, as he is a man of considerable property in London, Cumberland and elsewhere[.] I am not aware what his eduction has been, but can bear testimony, to an extremely tenacious memory not ill stored with general and natural history, &c. his knowledge of the latter, ornithology particularly is extensive and correct; it has enabled him to discover and publish to the world a new and undescribed species of swan, which is added to the british Fauna, under the name of Bewickii. And when M^r. Fox was engaged with his synopsis of the Newcastle Museum, Wingate, on two or three occasions set him right in the nomenclature, where he was in danger of making sad mistakes. He derived from his father, the art of stuffing animals, which with his good taste, knowledge of anatomy and familiarity with Bewicks Birds,

of which, by the bye, he possesses a curious and valuable copy, coloured with the greatest accuracy from the identical specimens which Bewick engraved from, render him, unquestionably the best stuffer whose works I have seen: this was also the opinion of Bewick and Audubon, both pretty competent judges.

These I think were the men most in esteem with Bewick: they both had the same ardent zeal in their pursuit of nature, and were men of the same simplicity and integrity of character as himself: his intimacy, therefore with them is not to be wondered at; That he should tolerate the friendship of a youth like me, is rather more unaccountable, though it might easily be attributed to that benevolence of disposition which led him to the unceasing consideration of the welfare of all around him: this might induce him to foster, in me that disposition to admire the wonders of nature, the prosecution of which, had been to him such a constant source of gratification.

In the conversations I have had with him on the rare birds which had come under his observation, he has told me repeatedly of two birds which have never in the slightest degree, been considered as pertaining to the British Fauna: one of them, I think he caught himself in a bog near Bywell, he had no hesitation, in pronouncing to be one of the Jacana's;²² the other, was the Cardinal Grosbeak, two of which he remembers being shot on the trees in the churchyard at Ovingham. as coming from a man of Bewicks accuracy, these are curious facts. The Corncrake, we know, is difficult to see, except when lured by a Crake call: till he had recourse to this expedient, he had only once seen it in a state of nature; it was under the windows at Cherry Burn, early on a summer morning, and the way in which he described its gestures and behaviour, was exceedingly characteristic [*sic*] and amusing, but quite impossible to convey any idea of on paper. On these occasions, when he got interested in his narrative, he would throw aside the words in common use, and in original and highly expressive language, bring to the imagination in an extra [*Page 13*] ordinary manner the subject of his detail.

His friend M^r. Dovason,²³ who is now presenting the world with a memoir of him, in Loudons Naturalists Magazine, has attempted to introduce Bewicks style of phraseology; but, between the difficulty he seems to feel in transcribing the dialect, which he invariably allows to degenerate into low Scotch; (in the original, a genuine and not offensive Northumbrian, used with the greatest spirit and effect, and enhanced by the peculiarity of cadence, which he, in common with all Northumbrians, infuse into their tones) and the exaggerated [*sic*] quaintness of language he represents him as making use of, he has entirely failed in his attempt to present a semblance of his friend to those who had ever seen and conversed with him. His representations too of the character of my old friend are very incorrect; much as I admired and respected him, I can not agree with M^r. Dovason in representing him liberal to a fault; on the contrary I should say he was rather thrifty: M^r. D relates an instance or two of generosity in him, amounting almost to profusion, which are not at all accordant with his disposition. I however, have no reason to say so from any instance of it to myself; on the contrary, in the only pecuniary transaction I had with him, he behaved in a very

handsome manner: it was in the purchase of this edition, for which I should have paid three guineas, but he would only receive the booksellers price, two and a half. By the bye I once bought a common edition for Dick to take to Liverpool, but as I find no memorandum of anything particular attending the purchase, I am not aware that I paid less than others. I called in March 1830 to buy an edition in quarto of the tail pieces, and his family would only let me pay booksellers price, so that on the whole it may appear unjust and illnatured in me pronouncing him illiberal, though he was undoubtedly considered so by those who knew him well, particularly with regard to rival engravers. I shall however, say no more on this subject, nor would I have mentioned it at all, but for the more perfect illustration of his character.

While I am on the subject of the different editions, I may remark that four copies of the Quadrupeds were printed on vellum: one of these is now in the hands of the Miss Bewicks;²⁴ and one, of a person (a vaguish term, involving no sex) of the name of Hodgson originally concerned with him in the publication of it; the other two are in the possession of some two persons, whom I don't remember. Of the birds, about ten years since, thirty copies were taken on quarto paper, with particular care, which are now very valuable: in 1825 one hundred more were published in the same style; but of course, from the number of birds which he had in the meantime engraved, in a much more perfect state numerically; and from the great improvement in printing, as much so in fineness of impression: of these they kept six or seven of the best, for their own friends; and when in March 1828, I called to select this copy, four choice ones were laid on the table for my inspection and choice; the leaves were loose, and with Miss Jane Bewicks and in dubious cases, her fathers assistance, I compared each seperate [*sic*] [*Page 14*] impression and laid those aside, for my purchase, which we thought best. as these impressions, taken without the support of the types, were very ruinous to the blocks, breaking them in many cases, as in one of the Crows, the Nightingale &c. Mr. Bewick had determined that no more should be struck; I may, therefore, pretty safely pronounce, this to be the most valuable edition of his Birds, in the world. The selection took us from ten in the morning till three or four, and having Bewicks evidence on the title page, for its excellency, this may as safely be considered the best copy. A few copies of the Vignettes ([blank]) were printed in 1827 on Quarto paper, and some on octavo; in 1830 I made myself master of one of the former, which though examined and approved by my friend Miss Jane, does not bear a written testimony like the present volume. The humour displayed in many of them, is rich in the extreme; and were it not that in some cases, they betray a degree of coarseness, too frequently introduced by artists of that day, they would be invaluable as table books. Though not so elaborate as the productions of Hogarth, I am inclined to think they will be acknowledged [*sic*] to contain an equal degree of originality and talent, with even that celebrated man's; his admiration for Hogarth's works was very great, and on one occasion on my asking him what he thought of Cruickshank compared with him, he made the judicious remark, 'that Hogarth made vice odious, while Cruickshank only rendered it ludicrous'.

Bewicks were not so much in caricature as either of them; nature was his model in every case, and eminently successful he has been in representing her, in all her parts; though in the delineation of the affections and feelings of animals he is unequalled. The bulk, however of the tailpieces represent the highly respectable human species in divers whimsical, but natural situations, and many of them have their origin in real facts. While I am in the midst of this subject, I may as well take a review of them, and detail, where I know and remember, the incidents in which they took their rise, or anything relating to them, which can have an interest for me or others in after life.

[There follow six ms pages of description of vignettes. Here only selected passages are transcribed; references are to *Cirker & Bain*.]

The first one, where the blind man is seen fishing, and the dog has by his barking exasperated the cattle in the field over the brook, till they gallop in all directions with exalted tails, is new: it has never been printed elsewhere [IBtp]. ... The devil seems a favorite subject with him, as he makes him the leading character in many of the pieces; in the next one he introduces [*sic*] him holding forth with much apparent zeal to a party of methodists [IB130b]; whether it be good taste to ridicule any modification of religion, I leave to others. ... what a beautiful thing he has made of the two cows drinking, and how intelligibly he shews you the two crows and magpies buffeting the hawk [C13:12; IB121a]: there are but few men, whose birds in motion you can recognise, but Bewicks can not be mistaken, ... [Page 15] The drowned dog by the water side, and the magpies and crows preparing to feast on him [IB114b], is an object only too common on the banks of the Tyne[.]

The sportsman with his two, evidently good dogs, is a delightful thing; and is so probable, and natural, that it must be interesting to all who can handle a gun, or delight in the behaviour of a couple of fine bred dogs [C144:5, IB118a].

Many people have asked me what he could mean, in the next page, by the gigantic thorn leaf and pigmy pillionized horse? I don't know, unless it be a whimsical method of demonstrating the effect of distance, by eclipsing a horse with a leaf [IB122a]. ... The suicide, self suspended over a brook [C163:6, IB119a], is—like the rest,—exceedingly good: can any thing equal the helpless pendulousness of the figure, or the whining impatient anxiety of the dog? ... his old favorite is introduced inspecting an execution, with much satisfaction through a glass [IB123b].²⁵ ... the shore scene, with two masts rising from the sea in the distance, and the hat lying on the sand, tell a plain and intelligible tale of shipwreck [IB127b]. ... the man who one can imagine carries some illgotten property on his back, taking a short cut, or may be a long round, to avoid passing near the gallows, fancying goblins and devils in every bush [C117:3, IB120b]. see he now hesitates! ... a ewe and her lamb are represented starving on the moors in the snow storm, tells its own story: that Bewick attended to the minutest circumstances, is apparent even in the lambs tail, which is wrigling [*sic*] with almost the same energetic delight as if it drew a more plentiful supply [*sic*] of nutriment than is likely to arise from an old besom [C112:3]. ... how pitiable is the condition of the poor dog [IB145b], a remnant of cord about whose neck, leads one to the supposition that he has been doomed to that most hopeless

of all death's, drowning with a stone to his neck; but who, owing to the cord breaking, has swam [*sic*] to a small island, and is howling with despair, exposed to the pelting of the storm! ... [Page 16] one of the methods of capturing wolves so intelligibly depicted, that it tells you more at a glance, than you would understand from a page of description [C147:7, IB136a]. The attitude of the man in the cut below is worthy of remark. In the scene of leaping a brook with a pole [IB142a], is shewn the power he possessed at giving an effect of distance to his pieces, not obtainable in the method now in vogue, of printing them extremely black, as in Northcotes Fables &c.; ... We have in the following one, the consequence of a refused application for alms: the beggars, evidently gypsies, having left the good housewives garden gate open, to the admittance or sundry pigs and poultry which will at her leisure meet the delighted [*sic*] gaze of the old lady [C165:1, IB94a]. ... He used to say he never could please himself [Page 17] with a horse or water in a state of motion: he must have been scrupulous indeed, if unsatisfied with the pretty subject which follows: a solitary rock at sea, with the waves, not dashing, but dancing against, and so naturally has he drawn it, that no one can fail to be pleased with it [C110:1, IB69a]. ... I have often thought the next one, of the old man crossing a rivulet by means of a bough, one of his superior designs: it is a sweet piece of nature, and the cautious attitude of the man creeping along the old mossgrown branch, is very nicely expressed [C111:4, IB74a]. ... a loyal old farmer incapacitated within sight of his own house: rolling and kicking in the most hopeless manner: his hat and wig rolled off and two carrion crows only waiting a cessation of activities, to come and inspect him more closely; the date on the stone, the old Kings birthday fully explaining the occasion of his misfortune [C158:2, IB81a]. The representation of the returned sailor, is in some of the editions of the birds (the land birds published in 1816), put at the end of the volume, as an emblematical Vignette to accompany the word Finis: the water in it is very well done.[IB66a] ... we come to one of the most beautiful in the book: a flyfishing scene [IB68a]: never was flyline more lightly and expertly maintained on the water, than the one of this oldfashioned looking fisherman seems to be, and the sweet combination of rock and wood, with the element of his affections, explain to the uninitiated one of the great charms of the fishermans vocation, the delightful scenery with which it never fails to bring you in contact[.]

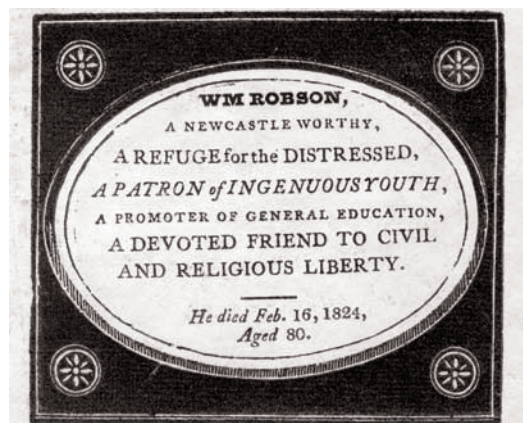
Set lines are capital fun when the water is high; Bewick represents them in two or three places [C138:7, C139:3 & 9]: the old fellow below seems [Page 18] to have got a good fish or an eel. The next view is a local one on the Tyne, and is a beautiful [*sic*] composition, sadly at variance with my old friends declaration that he could not please himself with water, or else he must have been unreasonably severe on his own performances. what fault could the most critical, find in the water introduced in the next page, as it washes the old fishermans feet while he puts on a new fly, or repairs some part of his tackle which has suffered in a trial of skill with a large fish [C139:1, IB76a]; I cant help thinking that the piscator is the likeness of some wellknown character, as the old fellow similarly engaged, two pages ago, is the very prototype of him. ... how is it possible to

mistake his birds even when thus introduced in a Vignette. I remember on looking at the lobsters claw holding a paint brush [IB75b], I remarked to him on the strangeness of the idea of a lobster turned painter; he looked for a moment and laughing at his own whim, said; "Ay, theres many a worse". ... he must indeed have been difficult to please if the motion of the hunter which occurs in the next cut did not meet his approval. ... From my childhood I have laughed at the unfortunate plunderer of nests [IB54a]: oh how natural that his hair should stand on end, & that he should throw up his legs in no longer dependence of the faithless bough, which nevertheless, he clings to with the characteristic inconsistency [Page 19] of mankind. Bewicks illustration of the Snirp²⁶ for snipes and woodcocks is far more intelligible than a page of letter press on the subject [C147:11, IB54b]. ... he introduces Henry Hewitson Esq^r. of Seaton Burn: Bewick went to that place to see him when he was just recovering from the accident from whence his present lameness originated: it was I think a fall from a gig and the doctors, to strengthen his ankle which was broken, recommended sousing in cold water: Bewick found him undergoing it and was so amused that he said he would draw him, wry faces and all [C171:1, IB33b].²⁷... The boys playing at soldiers, in the church yard, in all the thoughtlessness of boyhood; before pride and education have seperated [*sic*] the wealthy rectors whitestockinged son from his ragged companions, reminds one of that period of life in our own existence [C123:1, IB34a]. How vexed the old woman is at the geese, who have been laving in the well [C166:2, IB38a]. and how cleverly he has utturred [*sic*] his idea of flying to the moon with Herons [IB 42b]. Imagine the unfortunate predicament of the sportsman who having shot a widgeon, is depending on the branch of an alder for support as he endeavours to reach it, and "nimium ne crede" away it goes, and he must follow [C143:5, IB35a].²⁸ I am really inclined to pronounce fellowship in suffering, to be the most unsophisticated bond of attachment between man and man. only see the fervor of cordiality with which these old soldiers salute each other [C160:5, IB43a], and if it does not shame the light fingered urbanity in use among men of ton, may my hand never be grasped in sincerity, or my eye meet the affectionate regard of womans eye, as illustrated in the next cut. ... The two old men carrying water, are from nature [C170:8, IB14a]; they were bleachers at Ovingham, the one on the [blank] being "auld Tommy Dobson of the bleach green["]", and the other [blank].²⁹ ... [Page 20] and the incipient huntsman, with his rocking horse and wooden hounds, and the walls of his play room adorned with racing calenders [*sic*] and cocking lists, gives one a pretty correct prospect of the momentous occupations of some of our country gentry [C125:7, IB3a]. His farmyard is quite char-acteristic of the bustle and comfort of an english yeomans mode of life [C165:7 IB5a]. ... an old fellow trying to disentangle a set line, which an ingenious eel has probably twisted in an old root at the bottom, in retaliation for the inconvenience arising from a hook in his jaw.

Thus I have taken a review of some of the vignettes, for the volume published of them, does not contain nearly all that he did: I do not think any from the fables in it, and I know he cut some which went to America.³⁰ I need only

add, that any one taking the trouble, will be most abundantly repaid for their examination.

As a memento of departed friends, he prepared a square block, with an oval cavity for types, and at the decease of an intimate, or esteemed friend, composed a short eulogy on him, and got his printers to strike him off a few impressions: thro' the kindness of Mr. John Bell, landsurveyor, I am enabled to introduce one of them as a specimen:



As I before remarked, he not unfrequently amused himself by drawing likenesses from memory, some of which he cut on wood for the illustration of his memoirs.

[Page 21] His kindly nature could not but be alive to the fascinations of female society: on one occasion I mentioned the interest expressed by my sisters, in his works; he insisted on my bringing them to see him, and we went to tea one night, accordingly; he was kind and simple as usual. On another occasion he upbraided me for my unfrequent visits; I told him we had had some ladies staying with us, and my attention had been devoted to them, of late; he was mollified immediately, and said "a, be as kind to them as ever you can", and added something which I do not now remember, in commendation of the sex.

In his youth, he was not remarkable for very fastidious attention to his outward appearance: au contraire, that the circumstance of frail elbows, or protrusive heels, were not, to him causes of insurmountable dissatisfaction, is well known to those with whom he associated at that time.

they will likewise remember the love of society which so often induced him to tarry at their places of rendezvous [*sic*] till the unseemly hours of two or three in the morning: not, be it understood from any disposition to intemperance, for he was a sober and abstemious man, but from his cheerful and social character: his wife, ultimately, got him broken of these habits, and in cases of occasional transgression, used to rate him pretty severely; to her remonstrances he often opposed a degree of characteristic drollery and whimsicality, which rendered their colloquies highly amusing: for instance, she commenced one morning a pretty lively tirade upon the impropriety of such rakish conduct, reminding him how unbecoming it was in a married man, and the father of a family &c., and concluded by some slight cut at his untidy, slovenly habits before marriage: all this he endured for some time with much philosophy, till seeing no immediate prospect of a cessation, he began with an enormously long and curiously intoned ejaculation, something like the following "A—h what a

wind there's in our house this morning! why before knew you, I was a nice, canny, tidy lad—but now I gang about with my coat out at elbows, and taties in my stocking heels! a—h!” this, uttered in a tone of undisturbed good humour and so comic that his good lady was compelled to desist.

A strong inclination to belief, if it did not amount to belief, existed in his mind, that the animal usually known by the name of the horsehair-eel, actually originated in hairs falling from cattle into the water. I have been much amused, though I confess not a little astonished at his endeavours to persuade me of it; one thing regarding them which he likewise urged, seems more rational; that from being swallowed while rolled up like a pepper corn, originate many internal diseases of great virulence [*sic*]: this seems not at all improbable, and, certainly many diminutive aquatic animals seem beautifully adapted for inconveniencing a stomach of ordinary delicacy.

When I had arrived at the fifteenth line in the last page,³¹ I was induced to commence a memoir of my old friend, for publication in [*Page 22*] the transactions of the Natural History Society: I read it at the monthly meeting held June 1830 and was gratified by considerable display of approval: I have been advised, however, subsequently to erase some of the anecdotes contained in the manuscript, but of course shall feel no hesitation in introducing them here; the domestic scene in the middle of the last page is one, it being thought that its publication might displease the family. another was the following: he had been engaged in his youth, in a lawsuit with a gentleman of the law, in which he imagined himself to have been ill used: some friend meeting him one day said to him; “well what do you think of M^r. so and so? [”] “think of him sir,” said Bewick, repeating his words with great emphasis and solemnity, turning the quid with vehemence in his nether lip, as was his wont, “why I think, that he's a legal villain!”—when I read my paper at one of our meetings, as above mentioned, John Adamson, under-sheriff for the town was in the chair, and I could not divest myself of the notion that he was the man—I accidentally discovered afterwards, however, that it was no less a person than M^r. [blank] who had fallen into such ill favor with him.

A favorite haunt of his, was Maving the brushmakers manufactory in Pilgrim Street: here in the workshop of his friend Wingate, who was in Mavings employ, he spent many of his leisure hours. Maving who is a political, weather observing kind of man, used to denominate the little shop, the chamber of science and in his innocence of natural history used to make a joke of Bewick and his proselytes. He brought someone down one day to see his celebrated townsman, with whom he was on terms of considerable intimacy, and in spite of his ridicule, not a little proud of; and introduced him in the following homely language: “here's auld Tommy—if ye bring him an auld geuse (goose) wing, or an auld crows leg, he'll tell ye what genus it's of”. Bewick turned on him, a look of considerable dignity, and turning his quid calmly in his lip, said in his slow impressive way, “you know nothing about those things M^r. Maving”.

On one occasion the M^r. Adamson mentioned above, employed Bewick to cut some thing for a publication he was busy with, in which in addition to the principal subject,

some letters in explanation were to be cut: among these was the letter **X**, which unfortunately he cut thus, **X** instead of in the proper manner with the thick stroke from left to right: M^r. A was more annoyed at it, than the subject seemed to require, and expressed himself so to our artist; the old gentleman bore the repetition [*sic*] of it for some time, till finding no symptom of relaxation, he quietly observed, “Well M^r. Adamson its an X still”. (meaning in spite of the error in its formation).

Discussion

High-spirited and rambling though it is, this memoir nevertheless reveals a number of interesting and previously unknown facts about Bewick. Just as importantly, it provides a first-hand picture of Bewick's influence on a young naturalist—a trait mentioned by many of his biographers but nowhere else described so directly.

The experiences of John Dovaston, in his forties when he met Bewick, come closest to Atkinson's.³² Both men were gentry, enthusiastic naturalists and devoted to Bewick, but Dovaston's friendship was based on a more mature knowledge of natural history and was conducted during occasional visits from Shropshire to Gateshead and by correspondence, whereas Atkinson between the ages of seventeen and twenty used to see Bewick up to several times a week.

In Atkinson's brief account of Bewick's accent and dialect (in the ‘Draft’ page 13), he criticises Dovaston's interpretation of Bewick's speech, saying that he ‘entirely failed in his attempt to present a semblance of his friend to those who had ever seen and conversed with him’. He also says that Dovaston overemphasised Bewick's generosity, with some rather unconvincing experiences to the contrary of his own; these passages are not in the published version. It comes as a disappointment to find that young Atkinson had been reading Dovaston's virtually simultaneous account, because it diminishes our trust in the spontaneity of his own. Dovaston's ‘Some account of the life, genius, and personal habits of the late Thomas Bewick ...’ appeared in four parts in Loudon's *The Magazine of Natural History* in September and November 1829 and January and March 1830 (see Williams, 1968, note 16). Atkinson says he started writing his memoir more than a year after Bewick's death, so sometime after 8 November 1829, and must have finished all but the last three pages well before his lecture in June 1830. So it is fully consistent that as he began the memoir he was unaware of any other published biography and towards the end he should write that Dovaston ‘is now presenting the world with a memoir of him, in Loudons Naturalists Magazine’. The disappointment is lessened by the fact that there is virtually no overlap in the two men's accounts, with the exception that the ‘Sketch’ (but not the ‘Draft’) recounts a story about the Duke of Northumberland's visit to Bewick that appears in Dovaston's ‘Account’.

In view of his familiarity with Dovaston's account, it is strange that Atkinson or his amanuensis consistently misspells the writer's name as ‘Dovason’—possibly an echo of Bewick's own pronunciation, with a Northumberland glottal stop.

Atkinson's first visit to Bewick, with his brother Richard, when they conversed about the Pied Flycatcher, is described in the 'Sketch', but their subsequent discussion about eels has not been recorded before, and we are fortunate to have Atkinson's original notes of October 1825 as well as the version in the 'Draft' itself (pages 4 and 21). Somewhat inconsistently, Bewick could recommend introducing eels into a freshwater pond high on Gateshead Fell, apparently expecting them to multiply there, and in the same conversation deduce from his observations of the movements of elvers that 'almost all eels must breed in the mouths of the rivers & that they are therefore sea fish'. The true breeding place of eels could not be known at that time and his deduction was shrewd and partially correct. His other theory—'thinks horsehair eels are originally hairs, & says he conceives many inveterate inward complaints arise from swallowing these animals while rolled up like a black pepper' is fascinating. To us it comes as no surprise that drinking water into which hairs from cattle could have dropped might be followed by 'virulent inward complaints'. We may pass over the idea that the shed hairs became living animals—Atkinson declared himself 'amused' and 'astonished' by such a strange idea and it was not until the work of Pasteur much later in the century that widespread comparable ideas of spontaneous generation were disproven. But in the 1820s to attribute disease to the presence of 'diminutive aquatic animals', swallowed when they were in a spore-like 'pepper corn' form was highly speculative and far from any current medical doctrine, though Atkinson found it 'rational'. It is tempting but inadmissible to suggest that Bewick here envisaged a microbial theory of infectious disease a quarter of a century before it was seriously considered by the medical world; inadmissible because, unlike bacteria, the organisms he described could be seen (they were probably hairworms, nematomorpha). Nevertheless, it is tantalising to have no information on the experiences, observations, conversations, or reading that led Bewick to this 'strong inclination to belief'.

New biographical information and new word-portraits of Bewick are in scattered through the manuscript in anecdotes and descriptive sketches. An example is the story (page 12) of Bewick's youthful experiences of Corncrakes, especially the one he watched from the window at Cherryburn early one summer morning. Atkinson's descriptions of Bewick's appearance, character, and warmth of personality, are confirmed in other accounts but have an informality and enthusiasm that make them especially valuable—'when he got interested in his narrative, he would throw aside the words in common use, and in original and highly expressive language, bring to the imagination in an extra ordinary manner the subject of his detail'. Many writers mentioned Bewick's habit of wearing a cap in his workshop, but no currently known portrait shows this. Atkinson provides a sketch and description of the 'brown silk cap of his daughters making' (page 5).

Several anecdotes appear in both versions of the memoir, but more vividly in the 'Draft'. The coal man who had cheated Bewick for example, is warned off by being shown his likeness in a sketch being led to the gallows by the devil in both versions but in the 'Draft' is actually

manhandled by Bewick (page 6). The account of the engraving of the old horse 'Waiting for Death' appears in both versions, including Bewick's dissatisfaction with his preliminary drawings of the old horse's eye, but the story of Atkinson's attempt to find a suitable old horse for Bewick to use as a model is told only in the 'Draft'. The statement that 'any cheap print of this animal in a state of evident suffering ... would tend more than any thing else to [its] better treatment' suggests that his famous unfinished engraving may have been intended to be sold cheaply to aid such a campaign (page 7). This idea seems not to have been known before and, if correct, it is ironic that after Bewick's death the print became one of his most expensive and collectable.

Other stories were not published at all, particularly the ones that Atkinson added at the end of his 'Draft' because 'I have been advised, however, subsequently to erase some of the anecdotes contained in the manuscript, but of course shall feel no hesitation in introducing them here'. The amusing account (page 21) of Bewick's 'frail elbows, or protrusive heels' his 'unseemly hours', his wife Isabella's 'pretty lively tirade upon the impropriety of such rakish conduct' and Bewick's good natured and comic response is new—nothing quite like it has been published before. The story, though innocent enough, might certainly have displeased the family who closed ranks after Bewick's death to protect their father's reputation to an extent that may appear excessive from our viewpoint. Jane Bewick's bowdlerisation of her father's *Memoir* in the 1862 edition is a well known instance. Few accounts of the slightest impropriety on Bewick's part survive and and this cheerful picture of his private life is a valuable exception.

The story of Henry Hewitson's ankle (page 19), broken in a fall from a gig, throws fresh light on his lameness (there is an account in Tattersfield (1999) of this younger friend of Bewick's attending a fancy dress Assembly in Newcastle in the guise of an old man with gout) but more importantly identifies him as the subject of the previously unexplained vignette in which water is being pumped by a servant girl over his ankle, on his doctor's orders (below). This and the



stories near the end making mild fun of Wingate's employer, Mr William Maving, and of under-sheriff John Adamson, had evidently been told to Atkinson, presumably by Bewick himself, and it is disappointing that even in his private memoir he thinks it necessary to leave some other names blank. None of these anecdotes was published.

In the manuscript Atkinson names names that he suppressed in the published version. Thus we learn that his well-known discussion with Bewick about the contrib-

ution apprentices had made to the engravings in the *History of British Birds* was precipitated by the disparaging remarks made that day by M.A. Richardson at his print shop in Blakett Street (page 8). The story of the Cursorius (Cream-coloured Courser), belonging to 'Mr Gisborne' and brought to Bewick for engraving (pages 8-9), remained unpublished, for the obvious reason that it showed the distinguished vice-president of the Natural History Society, George Townsend Fox of Westoe, in a poor light. George Proctor, the implied hero of this tale, later went with Atkinson on his voyage to Iceland and the Faroes in 1833, returned to Iceland to collect 150 rare birds (for John Hancock to mount for the Society's museum and the parlours of the wealthy), and eventually became the curator of the museum at Durham. Bewick's engraving of the Cursorius (along with the other birds listed as new by Atkinson, at the end of page 8) appeared in the posthumous 1847 edition of the *Birds*, with acknowledgement to Gisbourne alone. Nor was the 'instrumentality' of Fox acknowledged for the Reed Warbler that Bewick illustrated; it had been presented to the museum by the London naturalist William Yarrell, whose name had slipped Atkinson's mind when he made his notes of the conversation on 26th October 1825.

People often ask how long it took Bewick to complete an engraving. Atkinson gives both in the 'Draft' (page 8) and the 'Sketch' a direct answer 'In his younger days, he could finish one of the birds, if not accompanied by much foliage, in a day, and sometimes in a few hours. Subsequently, though still retaining his eyesight unimpaired, he could not sit so closely at it, and was not, therefore, so expeditious.'

On page 5 Atkinson tells that Bewick 'always kept a journal, and it was, he said, such a source of melancholy satisfaction, to refer to bright hours spent with friends gone from us'. No trace of this is known to exist, nor any other reference to it. There are fragmentary brief daily records of special periods, such as his journey to Wycliffe in 1791 and his walking tour in Yorkshire and Cumberland in 1780.³³ These do not seem to be parts of a continuous diary. If such a journal really existed it seems probable that the family destroyed it after his death, rather surprisingly as they generally treasured mementos of their father.

The 'obituary' he kept of his friends and acquaintances (page 5), also seems to have disappeared. Atkinson speculated that this might have been embellished with drawings from memory, 'the most excellent likenesses of faces which he had seen'. Evidence of at least one such portrait survives, Bewick's engraving of his sketch of the poet John Cunningham.³⁴ Examples survive on a less finished level, in the lightning sketches of his son Robert in the margins of his workshop cash-books (in 1798-1804).³⁵ Being aware of his ability to draw likenesses from memory adds interest to some of the sketches of Bewick's youth, like those of characters seen on his 1776 journey in Scotland.³⁶ More importantly it casts light on the part visual memory may have played in the creation of the landscape and buildings in his vignettes and in his engravings of Northumbrian wildlife, not to mention the animals themselves. Atkinson writes, presumably on the artist's own word, that Bewick lost this skill from want of practice; but his

continuing illustrations of so much else that he had seen must throw doubt on this, and indeed Dovaston described Bewick drawing instant likenesses on his thumbnail in Buxton towards the end of his life (Williams, 1988; p.137).

Bewick made marginal notes in copies of his *British Birds* in preparation for the next edition; his annotated copies of the 1809 and 1826 editions are in Newcastle. The equivalent copy of the 1821 edition, which ought to be the one referred to by Atkinson (page 4) when he and his brother brought Bewick new observations on the Pied Flycatcher, appears to be missing. Another Bewick-annotated copy of the 1821 edition, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum (shelfmark RC.n.2&3), appears to be different and contains only the comments of Thomas and Jane Bewick on vignettes.³⁷ Bewick's response to receiving new information is nowhere described in such immediate detail as is given here. Disappointingly, no new facts about the Pied Flycatcher were published in the 1826 or 1832 editions.

The story of Bewick ostensibly seeing the Jacana and the Cardinal Grosbeaks in the Tyne valley (page 12) cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Neither species has ever been recorded in Europe, let alone Britain. As Atkinson says, 'coming from a man of Bewick's accuracy, these are curious facts'. The Jacana (an Oriental, African or South American lily trotter) is virtually impossible as a wild vagrant to Britain, and most unlikely as an escape. Probably the bird was a crane or Water Rail, possibly a juvenile, seen only rarely because of their extremely reclusive habits, and therefore perhaps unfamiliar to the young Bewick. Again, the Cardinal (a bright red North American grosbeak), especially two together, would be highly unlikely as vagrants or escapes. Birds of another red species, such as Pine Grosbeaks (vagrant from Scandinavia) or a couple of male Crossbills as might explain the puzzle. A third questionable species is mentioned in the note of the conversation of 26 October 1825, where Bewick states that he had seen the 'reed wren' in Horsley Wood (an ancient woodland between Ovingham and Wylam) 'before it was cut so much as at present'. The specimen he received in 1825, as he illustrated it for the 1832 and 1847 editions, was the Reed Warbler (a name wrongly attached to the Sedge Warbler image in 1826 & 1832). It was described in a most uncertain manner in 1832 as 'The Night Warbler', a name that has not survived, and only in 1847 by its modern name. The Reed Warbler is not a woodland bird, so the species he remembered from Horsley is very doubtful.³⁸ One can only conclude that the identification of unfamiliar birds in the late 18th century, without a specimen to examine in a well-stocked library, was unreliable; and that the recollection in one's seventies of observations made more than forty years before cannot be conclusive. It is disconcerting to find in Atkinson's memo of 26 October 1825 that Bewick on his visit to Edinburgh—it was in August 1823—was prepared to 'rectify' on such insecure evidence the records of the museum created by his host Professor Robert Jameson and by then eight months in the care of the meticulous ornithologist, William MacGillivray;³⁹ and it perhaps needs to be said that by today's standards, gifted and inspiring though he was as a naturalist, Bewick was evidently sometimes overconfident in his identifications.

Atkinson's remarks (pages 2-4) about the bird engravings and the behaviour of the birds seem to tell us more about his own than Bewick's opinion and observations, although it is possible that during the prolonged process of choosing his set of the engravings (pages 13-14) there had been comments from Jane and her father for the young purchaser to remember; his remarks do have a rather conversational quality. Atkinson confirms the story later told by Robinson (1887, p.177) that Bewick climbed the wall at Elswick Hall, the home of John Hodgson, in order to draw the Pintado or Guinea Fowl; probably both men heard it from Jane Bewick. We learn that Bewick had seven skylark specimens beside him when he made his superbly lively image; and it is refreshing to read that 'The Tringæ [shorebirds] he is rather at fault in; they are birds not much under our observation, and from the circumstance of changing their plumage annually, they are rather puzzling: from this circumstance Bewick is sometimes incorrect in his nomenclature: But they are just as correct and faithful [ie as images] as the rest.' It would have been welcome to be told whether Bewick himself recognised the faults or Atkinson had reached this conclusion from another source.

Likewise little needs to be said about Atkinson's comments on the vignettes (pages 14-20) which tend to speak for themselves and again in any case reveal more about him than about Bewick: he particularly states that he purchased the impressions in 1830, after Bewick's death. They were 'examined and approved' by Jane Bewick but we have no evidence that he discussed their content with her. Every comment that adds a hint of new information or unusual interpretation is quoted in the transcription but these are in the minority. Some of Atkinson's ideas may be questioned (is the fisherman with the barking dog really blind? Are the devil's congregation really Methodists? Can we really identify the 'wealthy rector's whitestockinged son' in the vignette of the graveyard cavalry?) The man creeping along the mossy bough to cross a river is said by Atkinson to be one of Bewick's 'superior designs' but Bain (1979, pp.74 and 25) attributes this vignette to Luke Clennell. Some other points of interest are mentioned in the footnotes. The account of the many blocks marked with designs for vignettes that he kept to engrave later is much the same in both versions but with a much livelier description in the 'Draft' (page 8) of the bills posted at a street corner in the design showing a poster of the 500 volumes of the abridgement of the law of England.

The 'Draft' has an interesting account (pages 13-14) of how Atkinson selected the impressions for his volumes of *British Land Birds* and *British Water Birds*, 'with Miss Jane Bewicks and in dubious cases, her fathers assistance' in a marathon five or six hour session; thus acquiring, he claimed, 'the best copy' of 'the most valuable edition of his Birds, in the world'. His selection of impressions, now in the collection of the Natural History Society, is certainly excellent, though perhaps not significantly superior to other fine sets in Newcastle collections.

The passage about the proposed illustration of birds' eggs in the *History of British Birds* is perhaps historically the most important in the manuscript (page 9). In his published version Atkinson does mention that he and others had made this proposal and indeed had persuaded Bewick to

agree to the idea, 'doing it in aquatint for the better reception of colours' ('Sketch' page 157);⁴⁰ and that her father had hoped that Jane Bewick would paint the illustrations. The draft account goes much further, in addition to recounting in more detail the discussions involved. The crucial new points are that Atkinson himself took the initiative when Jane declined the task and invited first John Wilson Carmichael and afterwards William Chapman Hewitson to paint the eggs. Carmichael was then in his twenties and it says much for young Atkinson's artistic awareness that he chose this rising young artist, who later became one of the best known of all the painters to have worked in the North East. The 'Draft' records that Carmichael painted the eggs of the Kestrel and the Raven. In fact his delicate watercolours of two Kestrel eggs and



one each of the Raven and the Green Woodpecker are to be found in the volume itself, painted on the interleaves opposite Bewick's engravings of the birds (see above). Why Atkinson found them 'rather too pictorial' is not easy to see. In the event, Hewitson undertook the task and the result was his pioneering work *British Oology* (issued in parts from 1 April 1831 to 1 June 1838), one of several very important books produced by members of the Natural History Society in its early years. Atkinson's suggestion was not mentioned in the book, which makes no mention either of any connection with Bewick, so the account he gives in the 'Draft' provides a completely new insight into its origin. The omission is surprising as Atkinson and Hewitson remained close friends and colleagues in the Society for many years, and travelled together to Shetland in 1832. Hewitson's lithographic illustrations of eggs of the kestrel and raven are reproduced here for comparison with Carmichael's watercolours (see next page).

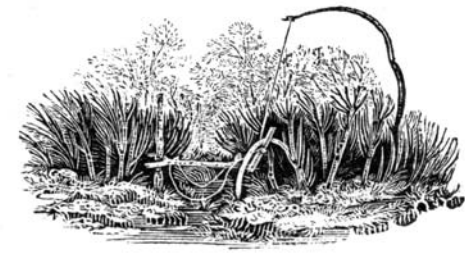
Next in his memoir (page 10) Atkinson embarks on a conversation with Bewick on the charms of water and its inhabitants, turning in flow of consciousness style to predation in nature and thence to a lesson in angling and admiration for riverside birds and the works of the Creator. He drifts in and out of quotation and possibly in and out of reminiscence and imagination. But this passage seems at least be an indication of the flavour of Bewick's con-

versation. It is followed by comments on his religious beliefs and his preoccupation with death, subjects discussed in similar terms in the published 'Sketch' and indeed by Bewick in his *Memoir*. But again a highly novel personal touch is found in the 'Draft'—'and when he did die, he should just wish John Laws, Richard Wingate, and me, to be present'. This seems at odds with Bewick's well documented wide circle of friendships which he described



himself in his *Memoir*. Perhaps it was said in a passing mood and should not be taken too literally. But the choice of the three names must be significant. Laws and Wingate have long been known to be friends of Bewick's but that he should single them out in this way is a revelation; they have no such exceptional prominence in any other known source. The comments on the two men that follow seem to be Atkinson's rather than Bewick's, but his picture of Wingate adds colour to what has previously been known of this interesting man, his Catholic faith, his job as a brush-maker at Mavers shop in Pilgrim Street, and, astonishingly, his 'considerable property in London, Cumberland and elsewhere'; and Audubon's admiration for his taxidermy is particularly interesting. Once again Atkinson takes a swipe at G.T. Fox, criticising his ignorance of nomenclature, perhaps an indication that we should be cautious about trusting the natural history comments in Fox's pioneering and historically valuable *Synopsis* (1827).⁴¹

Bewick left us few comments about other artists and those were largely confined to his own apprentices or other artist-naturalists,⁴² so to find (page 14) that 'his admiration for Hogarth's works was very great' and that he said 'Hogarth made vice odious, while Cruickshank only rendered it ludicrous' gives a welcome glimpse of his opinions. Atkinson goes on to contrast Bewick's vignettes with the caricatures of Hogarth and Cruickshank, implying that the latter were less true to nature, a conclusion that might be disputed at least in relation to Hogarth if we admit urban mankind to be an aspect of nature.



The Snirp: see p. 10 above and note 26.

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Notes

1. *The Figures of Bewick's Quadrupeds* (1824), the 1825 editions of *British Land Birds engraved on wood* by Thomas Bewick, and the corresponding *Water Birds*, and *Vignettes by Thomas Bewick* (1827) all without letterpress (Roscoe 12, 43, 44 and 47).
2. Catalogue number NEWHM: 2006. 3.1–3.5.
3. Biographies are in Welford (1894), Seaver (1990) and Quine (2001), the last by a great grandson, G.D. Atkinson.
4. The illness was probably pneumonia followed by an empyema which eventually drained spontaneously (Jane Bewick ms., National Trust, Cherryburn).
5. The 'Draft' states that the first visit was in 1824 or 1825. The 'Sketch' specifies 1825.
6. Published only much later: Seaton (1989) and Quine (2001).
7. *Natural History Transactions of Northumberland and Durham*. IV: 514-516 (1872).
8. The full transcript is available as a word document on request.
9. In the published version Atkinson stated that Bewick believed his birthday was on the 10th or 11th, though he celebrated it on the 12th.
10. For a detailed review of the portraiture of Bewick, see Holmes (2007).
11. Both the first statement and the correction are puzzling. The original by Nicholson (Holmes, 2007, 11) was painted at Chillingham in 1814 and was said by Atkinson (1831) to be in the possession of Mr Charnley, the bookseller and publisher. It was for Charnley (William Garret's employer) that Nicholson had painted it. Perhaps Atkinson at first mistook Garret for Charnley as the owner. Later this same original was owned by Thomas Emerson Crawhall who presented it to the Natural History Society in 1889. In 1831 Atkinson did not mention the copy made by Joseph Crawhall; where it fits in is unclear.
12. An error—1826 is more likely. But loosely inserted in the volume is just such a note (see page 2) dated "Sat October 26th 1825".
13. Deleted and "ferns" substituted in pencil.
14. No doubt Moses Aaron Richardson, brother of the artist, T.M. Richardson, senior. M.A.R. was a printer, bookseller and antiquarian with premises at 5 Blakett Street.
15. Current English names: King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Egyptian Vulture, Bluethroat, Reed Warbler, and Cream-coloured Courser.
16. The Revd Thomas Gisbourne, prebendary of Durham (Parson & White, 1827; *History of British Birds*, 1832).
17. George Townshend Fox (1768-1848), purchaser of the Allan Museum for the Lit & Phil, and author of the *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum* (1827). Presumably this anecdote was not included in GCA's lecture to the Society.
18. P.J. Selby of Twizell, who was at the time engaged in producing his *Illustrations of British Ornithology*. Selby, like Atkinson, was a founder member of the committee of the Natural History Society and may well have attended GCA's lecture on Bewick in June 1830.
19. No doubt John Wilson Carmichael (1799-1868) who would have been in his mid-20s, and near the beginning of his distinguished professional career.
20. William Chapman Hewitson (1806-1878) was another founder member of the committee of the Society; his *British Oology* was issued in parts in 1831-1838. It made an important contribution to the subject, and added lustre to the Society. This account of its origin is revealing.
21. Part of this collection, with manuscript notes by Laws, is in the Hancock Museum.
22. Note the early 19th century misunderstanding of the apostrophe, evident throughout the document.
23. J.F.M. Dovaston of Westfelton, Shropshire.
24. Corrected in pencil to: the Misses Bewick.
25. In the excellent impression in GCA's volume of *Vignettes* it seems clear that the devil is smoking a clay pipe (indeed with much satisfaction), not using a spyglass.
26. Clearly written. The word does not appear in the OED or in the dictionaries of Northumberland dialect by Brockett, Heslop or Griffiths. In J. Wright's *English dialect dictionary*, Volume V (n.d., c1898), snirp, snerp and snerple 'to shrink' are given the subsidiary substantive meaning of 'a snare or loop'; the word is recorded

from Cumberland southwards to Worcestershire but nowhere in eastern Britain. Both Atkinson and Bewick had Cumbrian forebears and Atkinson went to school in St Bees. In Atkinson's ms note opposite this image in the Vignette volume, he uses the word 'springe' for this device.

27. See Tattersfield (1999) for an account of Bewick's friend Henry Hewitson. The vignette first appears in the 1804 edition of *Water Birds* at page 348.
28. A puzzling comment; the duck is clearly a Mallard, not a Wigeon and the tree an Oak, not an Alder.
29. An almost illegible pencilled insertion in the blank space seems to be 'Young & silly GCA'.
30. Twelve vignette blocks, made in 1812-13 for Charles Fothergill, but not paid for until 1822, were eventually sent to America, but in 1821 Bewick had lost patience and used three of them in his Supplements to *The History of British Land Birds* (title page) and *Water Birds* (title page and page 21) (Workshop ledgers at Tyne & Wear Archives and Fothergill correspondence kindly supplied by Iain Bain).
- 31 At the end of the long passage on the individual vignettes.
32. The memoir by J.F.M. Dovaston (1829-30) from *The Magazine of Natural History* was reprinted in Williams (1968) pp. 129-142.
- 33 The Wycliffe journal is in Tyne & Wear Archive 1269/54, the other in the Newcastle City Library Bewick Collection (Item 446).
34. Described, with an image of an engraving derived from it, by Robinson (1887) pp.39-40.
35. Tyne & Wear Archive 1269/5. Illustrated in Holmes, 2007, 35.
36. Several of these are in the collection of the Natural History Society of Northumbria.
37. Information kindly provided by Peter Osborne and Nigel Tattersfield; I have not inspected the V & A copy myself. The 1809 copy is in a private collection and the 1826 copy is in the archives of the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NEWHM: 1997.H43).
38. In *The History of British Birds* (1832) Bewick states that he had only once seen the 'Night Warbler' but also that he had rarely glimpsed the Garden Warbler, a woodland bird with which the Reed Warbler might, with the naked eye, be mistaken.
39. Chalmers (2003).
40. The introduction of aquatints would have required a fundamental change to the *History of British Birds*; the etched copperplates would have had to be printed in a separate process adding considerably to the book's price. The comment confirms the workshop's willingness to explore new techniques.
41. Atkinson took a major interest in the museum, and donated to it extensively from the age of 17: the two earliest specimens are listed in the *Synopsis*. He seems to have had no reason to begrudge Fox's recognition of these contributions, unless he simply resented the long account given of Fox's own donations compared with those of others.
42. A rare exception is his reference to 'the inimitable pencil of Mr Cruikshanks' in his *Memoir* (1975 edition, page 199-200).

Editor's Note.

This Special Edition of *Cherryburn Times* is the first to appear as 'the **Journal** of the Bewick Society' rather than its 'Newsletter'. As necessary for its important content on this occasion we have doubled our size to 16 pages.

We have been unable to trace the copyright owner of the portrait of Atkinson (from Seaton, 1989), on page one of this issue. If you can help in this, please contact the editor.

Cherryburn Times is normally published twice a year. Contributions are invited particularly (but not only) from members of the Bewick Society.

Editor: David W. S. Gray, to whom contributions may be sent, either by post to 11, Harley Terrace, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1UL, United Kingdom or by e-mail to dws.gray@blueyonder.co.uk

Digital photography and picture management: Ian McKie

Typesetting and Graphic Design: John L. Wolfe

Produced by D. W. S. Gray.

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