Aln & Breamish Local Histor y Society

New Series Vol. 3 No. 2

Winter 2014

RECORDS & RECOLLECTIONS

Contents

This "Snaffles" cartoon of a WW1 Dispatch Rider is printed here by kind permission of James McCoull of Anderson & Garland. To see its relevance you will need to read Hugh Dixon's article on pages 18 to 21

SOCIETY NEWS

Our change from the second to the third Wednesdays of the month to avoid the clash with the local history group at Wooler seems to have worked. We have seen a significant upturn in numbers at meetings, including quite a few visitors.

We do, however, really need some new blood with new ideas on our committee. Could that be YOU? Could you lend a bit of your time and your ideas to our Society? Do please contact our Secretary, Helen Dinsdale (details on back page).

Most members will be aware that George Winstanley sadly died this summer. George, with Bridget, was instrumental in re-starting A&BLHS after a number of years in abeyance. Our great sympathies go to Bridget, who has been kind enough to write a piece for R&R in George's memory.

For this bumper issue it has been heartening to receive so much high quality material from members. My grateful thanks go to Bridget Winstanley, Alan Winlow, Susan Carlisle, Basil Oliver and Hugh Dixon. Could the next issue include a piece from you? Perhaps you also know of a good speaker. Don't keep quiet about it, but let Helen know.

Finally my best wishes for Christmas and I hope to see you at the March meeting.

Richard Poppleton

In Memory of GEORGE WINSTANLEY

By BRIDGET WINSTANLEY

George was born in 1930 in Birtley, Durham, the youngest of seven children. The family moved to Newcastle early in the 1930s where his father worked as a stonemason on Newcastle's Anglican cathedral.

George had spent less than a year at the Royal Grammar School, having passed his 11+ exam, when the family moved again, this time to Bamford in Derbyshire, where his father was in charge of the large workforce engaged in building the Ladybower reservoir, destined to be Sheffield's main water supply. (This was also the reservoir, incidentally, where the wartime "dam busters" learnt their skills.)

George resumed his schooling at New Mills Grammar, and later won a State Scholarship to Selwyn College, Cambridge. His time in Derbyshire taught him more than academic skills, however. He was an acute observer of human behaviour and his boyhood in a remote village brought him into contact with rich material for hilarious and sometimes bawdy stories, as anyone who spent any time with him will know.

At Cambridge his physical geography studies took him on glaciological expeditions to Norway and Switzerland. Having graduated he joined the Colonial Service in 1954 and was sent to the Bechuanaland Protectorate, now Botswana. A friend recently remarked how strange it was for a glaciologist to end up in the Kalahari Desert!

For George's career in Africa, I recommend as a good read his "Under Two Flags in Africa", which is both entertaining and informative *.

Suffice to say here that he served as a District Commissioner in several far-flung districts with responsibilities that included administration, justice,and liaison with the tribal administration amongst many other duties, and more opportunities for acute observation.

1960 saw marriage to Bridget followed by the births of Kate and Jonathan.

Transfer to headquarters in Mafeking and later Gaborone brought him jobs including the organisation of the first parliamentary elections after Botswanan Independence in 1966; Secretary to the Cabinet under the first President, Seretse Khama; Clerk to the House of Assembly and Secretary for Agriculture.

.... how strange it was for a glaciologist to end up in the Kalahari Desert!

By 1972, having seen the new and successful democracy transformed from a poverty-stricken dependency to a diamond-rich state with the discovery of the world's largest diamond deposits at Orapa, it was time to move on.

With Bridget's family living in South Africa and a job offer in Johannesburg the family

moved to that country. But by 1978 the political situation, especially the brutal death of Steven Biko in police hands, brought the family back to England.

After a career working in London for the Brewers' Society and later the Portman Group, he retired to the pleasant north Essex village of Kelvedon where the family had lived for a number of years. Here he was active as chairman of the local Abbeyfield home and as a member of the local history society. But the North East proved to be a powerful magnet and after a holiday in this area he and Bridget decided to move north.

The Old Post Office in Whittingham became their home in 2001 and the then defunct history society his mission! In addition, he saw the Whittingham Anglican community through a difficult interregnum period as church warden.

Poor health in 2010 led to a move to Rothbury, a smaller house and garden and more amenities suitable for his increasing frailty. He died on 22 August 2014 and is deeply missed by Bridget, Kate and Jon and by his grandchildren.

* Copies of George's book are available at £4 per copy with proceeds to be donated to the Aln and Breamish Local History Society.

The Aln & Breamish Local History Society is dead – long live the A&BLHS!

In the *In memoriam* article above Bridget has rather skated over some significant facts. The Aln and Breamish Local History Society ground to a halt in the late 1980s. The final issue of Records & Recollections had been produced in the autumn of 1985. March 1988 saw the death of the Rev William Nicholson, the founder of the Society in 1967 and its Chairman until his death, and soon afterwards the Society was wound up.

In 2003 George and Bridget Winstanley resurrected the Society and also, in December 2003, produced the first issue of the New Series of Records and Recollections which Bridget edited for the next ten years. We still have some time to go before the 'Phoenix' will have lasted as long as its first incarnation, but we are full of hope for the future; a future that would not have been possible without the energy and drive of George and Bridget. We reproduce the first section of George's Chairman's Report from the first issue of the New Series of R&R:

Chairman's Report

In the Spring of 2003 a group of people gathered at the home of Walter and Doreen Carruthers in Whittingham to mourn the passing, many years earlier, of the local history society, and to explore the idea of reviving it, or something similar. The presence of several people who were both enthusiastic about local history and prepared to work for the revival of the society, seemed promising. By June an open meeting (attended by more than thirty people) had been held at which a new constitution (based upon a model supplied by the Northumberland Association of Local History Societies) and a committee had been voted in place. Thus empowered, a programme of speakers and publications was drawn up and the newly constituted Society got down to business.

AN OLD VIEW OF GLANTON

By SUSAN CARLISLE

The postcard pictured was published by J.C.Ruddock of Alnwick and printed in Prussia, which dates it to before 1914. The view is very similar to that of the drawing in David Dippie Dixon's book 'Whittingham Vale', which is dated 1894.

The card is a souvenir of my great-grandfather, Andrew Armstrong, who wrote a message on the back then did not send it.

Andrew was born in 1863 at High Bleakhope in the Breamish Valley. He belonged to the Armstrong family described in Chapter 2 of Sarah Wilson's book 'Reflections'. In 1893 Andrew married a Mary Anderson, who came from Milkhope in Coquetdale. She was a virtuoso on the Northumbrian pipes, performing as 'Piper Mary'. Her pipes are said to have been made by the Halls of Hedgeley.

Her pipes are said to have been made by the Halls of Hedgeley

Andrew Armstrong was a farm worker. Initially he worked for his father at Bleakhope then at Haughterslaw near North Charlton. In about 1896 Andrew obtained the tenancy at Bannamoor near Eglingham. But this did not work out, and in 1911 Andrew was working for the farmer, William Brown, at Titlington Mount as his shepherd. Andrew lodged at the farm with another shepherd, James Thompson who, with his wife and six children, lived in one of the three-roomed farm cottages. That Andrew had become a shepherd for hire is indicated by the text of the postcard. It is addressed to 'Mr Dodds, Dunstan Square, Lesbury'. Andrew says 'I will be at your place to start clipping on July 8th'.

Meanwhile Mrs Mary Armstrong was living in Glanton with the children and had taken in a lodger. Her eldest daughter was a pupil teacher at the elementary school; her third daughter had won a scholarship and was boarding at the Duchess School in Alnwick.

But the family was living with a misfortune. The second daughter, Mary, had had a riding accident, which left her paralysed from the waist down and unable to go out to work.

The Armstrongs moved on from Glanton. In 1923 they were at High Hartington near Cambo. In 1935 they were at Crag Head in Allendale. The local landowners, the Blackett-Ord family, are said to have been their benefactors because they were fans of pipe music.

Andrew and Mary Armstrong both died in 1942. They are buried alongside their disabled daughter in Whitfield churchyard.

A SPECIAL BOBBY

Bobby Blain was in conversation with Richard Poppleton.

Bobby Blain is a name that will be known to many who live in the Aln and Breamish area. Although he was born, in 1931, in foreign parts (Morpeth!) he moved with his family to our area at the age of 11. His early schooling had been at Cambo and at Netherwhitton, and when he came north he attended Ingram School which at that stage was an all-age establishment.

He left school at 14 just before the end of the war, and, faced with the need to get a job, was fortunate to be taken on by the farmer at Reaveley where he learned the farming skills of fencing and sheep shearing. Once he had become an adult worker he was paid the agricultural minimum wage of £1-6s-6d a week, but had to surrender 10s of that for his accommodation and food on the farm. For those of us who've almost forgotten the arithmetic of pre-decimal coinage, that left him 16 shillings and 6 pence a week. Of course the opportunities to spend your money in rural North Northumberland in the late 1940s were rather limited, as were the range of things available to buy. The age of the consumer society was still a long way away and rationing was still in force.

As a teenager, although that term hadn't yet been invented, the main sources of entertainment in the small amount of free time were the local dances. From Reaveley one could get fairly easily by bike to the Village Hall at Ingram which was the main venue, but there were also dances at Powburn and at the Archbold Hall in Wooler. Buses ran regularly up and down the A697 and Bobby could use the stop at Powburn or at Brandon White House to reach Wooler. Another thing that hadn't yet reared its ugly head in those days was the dreaded Health and Safety. The last bus south from Wooler was at 10.00pm and Bobby well recalls a day when the 35-seater bus was faced with 70 people all wanting to get home. No-one really turned a hair when all 70 piled in.

The farms immediately after the war were still using some horses, but tractors were on the scene, which made some of the heavier jobs a bit easier. In the snow the

horses were often superior and when the roads were well covered it was necessary to use a horse and sled to get down the valley to Powburn to get supplies. Paraffin was especially important because electricity didn't reach Ingram until 1952 and it took another three years after that to get to Reaveley, so paraffin lamps reigned supreme.

The postman at that time was Walter Thompson from Glanton. He brought the post right up the valley to Linhope on his bike and he was very reliable. Low and High Bleakhope were always a bit too much of a challenge and their post would usually be left at High Linhope. Despite the rural nature of North Northumberland the postal service was excellent. The mail trains on the Alnwick to Cornhill line would pick up and deposit the mailbags, at speed, from the line-side hooks from where they could be transferred to the main line to London and Edinburgh.

After 13 years at Reaveley Bobby moved, in 1958, to work for Mr Houseman at High Linhope. He married Edith in 1960. She

was a farmer's daughter from Ingram Mill and they shared a good married life until Edith died in 2001. The photo shows Bobby and Edith at Buckingham Palace in 1992 when they were invited to a Garden party in recognition of his more than 30 years' service with the Special Constabulary.

They had two sons. The eldest, Robert, did 35 years in the RAF, first as a PTI and then as a parachute trainer, racking up a total of 5104 jumps before he retired. Leslie is a BBC engineer in London.

When the boys reached school age it soon became clear that the business of getting them to school from High Linhope was just too difficult and so the family moved to Hedgeley Cottages in Powburn and Bobby went freelance with his shearing, fencing and gate-making.

He often sheared with George Taylor from Percy's Cross and with George's son, David. Bobby never chased shearing records, but he does know that his best ever day's count, with a partner, was 519 ewes. It makes the back ache just to think about it, although one day when David Taylor complained about his back, his father told him that if he kept his back bent the pain would go away.

Mr Houseman was in the Special Constabulary, but soon after Bobby joined the farm he wanted to hang up his uniform so he recommended Bobby as a replacement. The training seemed largely to take place in the backroom of The Plough in Powburn and sometimes at the Powburn Police Station while later on there would be occasional weekend refresher courses at Police Headquarters in Ponteland.

Bobby's operational career often involved helping regular officers at public events. He particularly remembers the crowd control duties at the opening of the original Tyne Tunnel in 1967. Near Christmas he was often asked to go out on 'turkey patrol' and although he never caught anyone involved with turkey rustling, he is sure that the deterrence of the patrols was effective - the rural bush telegraph worked well.

Rather less savoury were the callouts on weekend nights to places like Seahouses and Amble, armed with their old-style wooden truncheons. Even less pleasant was the 100% turnout of Specials from Powburn and Whittingham when 11-year-old Susan Maxwell disappeared at Cornhill-on-Tweed in 1982. Despite all their search efforts along and in the Tweed they were unsuccessful. Susan's body was found two weeks later in the West Midlands, but it was not until 1996 that Robert Black, a delivery driver, was convicted of Susan's murder as well as the murders of three other children.

Rather less savoury were the callouts on weekend nights to places like Seahouses and Amble, armed with their old-style wooden truncheons.

The Specials were also called out to the Meadow Well Riots in the east end of Newcastle in 1991. They were fortunate in that they remained on standby and did not have to confront the violence directly – the police and the fire crews had to cope with youths pelting them with bricks.

Bobby must have been an effective Special because after ten years he was promoted to Special Sergeant, then soon after to Special Sub-Divisional Officer and in 1972, when it was decided to split the Northumberland force into two Divisions, he was asked to take charge of the North Division with the rank of Divisional Commandant. That was the role he filled for twenty years until his retirement in 1992.

There are many other aspects of Bobby Blain's life that could have been included in this article, such as his work as a part time National Park Warden and as a Church Warden. He's been involved in many aspects of the running of local shows, particularly the Ingram Valley Sports where he would enthusiastically work with the children, as well as taking part himself in the hill race, despite sprint events being more his *forte*. But it is probably his work as a Special that has been his greatest claim to fame.

The Special Constabulary

The Special Constabulary is the part-time volunteer section of statutory police forces in the UK. Its officers are known as Special Constables (irrespective of their rank), or informally as Specials.

Special constables are not the same as police community support officers (PCSOs), who are paid employees of police forces. Special constables usually work for a minimum of 16 to 25 hours a month, although many do considerably more. **For example in 1992, the year that Bobby Blain retired from the force, there were 42 Specials in the Berwick sub-division who did 13,169 hours of work, which averages out at just over 26 hours per month per constable**. Specials receive some expenses and allowances from the police service, but their work is otherwise voluntary and unpaid.

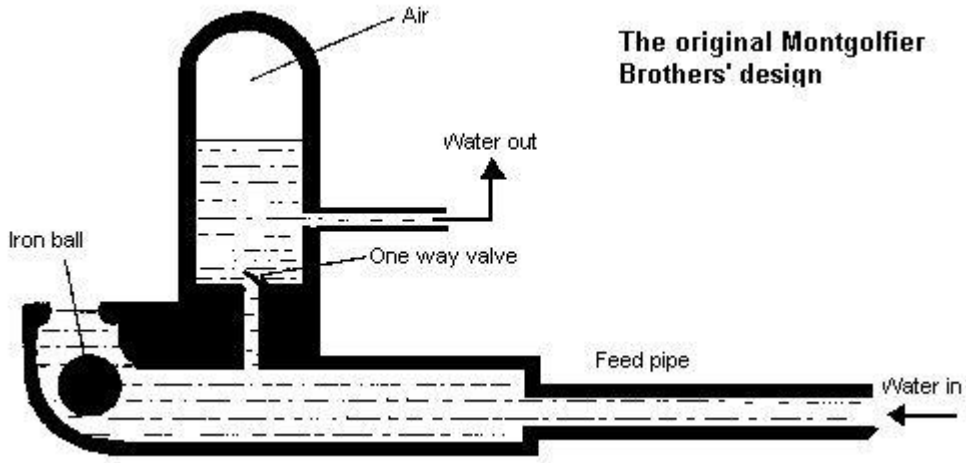
Special Constables are 'warranted' – they have identical powers (including the powers of arrest) to their regular police colleagues and they work alongside regular police officers. Most special constabularies in England and Wales have their own organisational structure and grading system. In Northumberland the grades are Special Constable, Special Sergeant, Special Sub-Divisional Officer and Special Divisional Commandant.

BLAKE'S HYDRAM

By ALAN WINLOW

I have recently been doing some research for Chris and Jill Blythe at the brickworks at Thrunton. The site has a large Blake's Hydram that was delivered to Whittingham Station in January 1937 and subsequently installed at a site on the Coe Burn. Its purpose was to raise water from the burn to mix with the clay to make the bricks.

The original design for these units was thought out by Montgolfier, better known for his invention of the hot air balloon. The diagram shows how his design worked.



The original Montgolfier Brothers' design

Water came down the delivery pipe and thrust the heavy iron ball up into the opening. The water recoiled rather as a rubber ball would when rebounding off a wall and some of the water went into the pressure chamber. When the pressure eased, the iron ball fell back and the valve below the pressure chamber closed. Water came rushing down the delivery pipe again forcing the iron ball back into the opening. This cycle kept repeating. The unit at the Coe burn is of a more advanced design and it used to run for months on end without any attention save for the odd clearing debris from the stream water intake. These units are very expensive; buying one of a similar size today would cost several tens of thousands of pounds but they do run without any other power than the energy from the falling water and they are built to last!

As a young lad I used to look after the unit, number 18059, for my father who was the works engineer. I was absolutely amazed when I contacted the firm that supplied number 18059 to find that they still had a complete record of the shipment. How many other firms keep records going back to 1937?

Today the Blythe's need a water supply for their new Long Crag Fishery venture and hence they have an interest in investigating whether the Blake's Hydram can be restored. Certainly at the moment it is in dire need of some TLC.

JOSEPH ARTHUR HAY, BASIL OLIVER & CHEVIOT AIR DISASTERS

In October Basil Oliver from Whittingham, a long-term member of our Society, received this unexpected letter.

Dear Mr. Oliver, (Basil)

For a number of years I have been trying to research the fate of my uncle who was part of the European War effort in the UK. Last week that search led to you. I am writing in regard to your brave and youthful rescue of his air crew on Short Stirling EE 972 on 25 September 1944 on the Cheviot. I am grateful to be able to reach back seventy years to someone who was there.

My uncle, Joseph Arthur Hay, was born in 1911 in Chatham, Northumberland City, New Brunswick, Canada. After the War broke out in 1939, he joined the RAF (RCAF). He held the rank of Warrant Officer 2nd Class and was a wireless operator/air gunner. His duties, as I understand it, were in transport support, flying mostly in Short Stirlings with the 190 Squadron.

In your teens you may have helped my uncle and his fellow aviator down the Cheviot. Your accounting notes a Canadian and New Zealander. Records indicate that the New Zealander unfortunately died. There were only two Canadians on the training mission that day on EE 972. If it was not my uncle who came down the mountain originally with you, then you must have aided him on your return that night to rescue the remaining crew members.

Although my uncle survived this disaster which you witnessed and aided, he died while returning home in a Wellington which crashed on takeoff from Melsbroeck, Belgium on May 11, 1945. He is buried in The Netherlands.

Thank you for bringing some closure to a small chapter in my family's history.

Sincerely,

Andrew M. Hay (Andy)

The internet has revealed some details of the fate of the crashed aircraft and its crew:

RAF Short Stirling EE972 coded C-OG from 1665 Heavy Conversion Unit (1665 HCU) was on a training mission when it flew into low cloud and crashed close to the summit of The Cheviot. After the crash, two crew members made their way over the rough and hilly terrain to Langleeford Farm. There they got help from **a local shepherd** who accompanied the aircrew back up the hill to aid the other crew members.

Sadly, however, two had already died. Another injured crew member was carried downhill on a wooden sheep gate. Unfortunately, however, he died of his injuries a few days later.

Those who died were:

- Flt Sgt Paulus Senor **Coronel** (29), (Nav) RAAF
- Flt Sgt David Colville **McLackland** (Air Bomber) RAFVR
- W/O Peter Anthony **Allen** (22), (Air Gnr) RAFVR (*Died later of his injuries)*

Those who survived with injuries were:

- F/O John Henry **Verrall**, Instructor/Pilot-in-Command, RNZAF
- F/O E F **Insley** (Pupil Pilot), RCAF

- Sgt D C **Bisgrove** (Flt Eng)
- Sgt T K **Hatfield** (Flt Eng)
- W/O Joseph Arthur **Hay** (Air Gnr) RCAF
- Sgt A **Williams** (Air Gnr)

The Pilot recorded in his notes:

"My crash. Starboard wing ripped off and fuselage broke in two. 3 killed: navigator, bomb aimer, rear gunner."

Recalling this incident in later years, the Pilot stated that if they had been six feet higher or six feet lower he would never have known about it. Higher and they would have missed the hill, lower and they would all have been killed. They scalped the top of the hill in thick cloud and that explains the location of the fatalities. Those riding higher in the fuselage survived.

F/O Verrall was later promoted to Sqn Ldr and was awarded the DFC. He was flying again as an instructor just 20 days later on 15 October 1944; and, on 18 October, he was flying again with Flt Sgt Bisgrove--one of the other survivors of the crash.

The local shepherd referred to was Basil Oliver who was only 15 at the time and strictly speaking was a horseman at Langleeford rather than a shepherd, although his duties clearly involved plenty of work with sheep. Since then he has built up a very detailed knowledge of the aircraft that crashed in the Cheviot Hills over the years of the Second World War.

On the afternoon of 25th September 1944 Basil was travelling between Langleeford to Langleeford Hope farms when he came upon the two pilots of the Sterling who had managed to make their way downhill from Cheviot summit. A rescue party of five men and boys from the two farms, plus the two pilots, walked up the four or five miles to the scene of the crash. Two of the crew had died instantly, while two more were seriously injured. One of these two died a few days later from his injuries.

The rescue party led the survivors down the hill, carrying the two badly injured men on makeshift stretchers. When they reached Langleeford Hope it was well after midnight and there they found RAF, fire service and police personnel.

In the morning Basil went back up to the crash with the RAF and police to recover the bodies of the two dead crew. At the age of 15, Basil had not previously seen a dead body and sadly the state of the bomb aimer was very gruesome. This is clearly a memory Basil has carried with him all his life.

Extraordinarily, less than two weeks later, Basil was in the hills looking his ewes, when he saw the wreckage of another plane at the spot called Goldsclough Burn Head. When he got to the site the first body he found was the rear gunner who seemed to have managed to get out of his gun turret and then collapsed and died. His body was in quite a peaceful state. Further searching in the wreckage revealed the other five crew, many of whose corpses were badly mangled.

Basil then ran down to Langleeford to let others know what he'd found and then he cycled to Middleton Hall where he was able to phone the police. So in the space of eleven days Basil had had to deal with the sight of eight dead airmen. As he says, these days all sorts of counselling services would be offered to help him and the others deal with the after effects of their experiences,

but there was neither the provision nor the expectation of such things then. People were just left to get on with it. There was a tendency for them not even to discuss what they'd seen with each other, so there was really no-one with whom to share the pain and the shock

This plane was a Lancaster bomber (No. KB745) with a predominantly Canadian crew from the RCAF. It was returning from a bombing raid on the German U-Boat pens at Bergen in Norway. It was 75 miles off course when it crashed and it is suggested that at least one of its engines had been damaged by enemy ground fire during the raid, which might explain its inability to maintain its proper course.

In the space of eleven days 15-year-old Basil had had to deal with the sight of eight dead airmen.

The plane involved in the first crash was a bomber made by the Shorts company. The Short Stirling (named after the city of Stirling in Scotland) was the first of the RAF's 4-engine bombers of WWII.It entered service in 1941. However, it remained in front line operations only until 1943, when it was relegated to less onerous duties. At this point, the Stirling was replaced by bombers such as the Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster.

The Air Ministry requirements for the Stirling were for an aircraft capable of carrying a 14,000lb bomb load over a range of 2,000 miles (or a greater range with a lesser bomb load). The Stirling was to be equipped with three gun turrets (nose, dorsal, and tail). Furthermore, it had to be capable of acting as a troop transport aircraft, with accommodation for 24 fully equipped service personnel. Again, it needed to be able to take off from a short runway or undeveloped airstrip.

The Mk III version of the Short Stirling (the type featured on this page) was equipped with four 1,635 hp Bristol Hercules XV or XVI air cooled radial engines, and was designed to carry a crew of seven.

A Short Sterling Bomber

An Avro Lancaster Bomber

[Some of the detail in this article has been paraphrased from Basil's own accounts of the events as described in the book ***ALMOST FORGOTTEN – The Search for Aviation Accidents in Northumberland*** *by Chris R Davies.]*

BOLTON CHAPEL

By RICHARD POPPLETON

[This information is largely adapted from an Archaeological Watching Brief prepared by The Archaeological Practice Ltd in 2013, with the kind permission of Canon Jim Robertson.]

A view of Bolton Chapel looking at the south and east faces.

In the summer of 2013 it was necessary for groundworks to be carried out at Bolton Chapel, including the excavation of trenches, to enable new services to be installed for the chapel. The historical interest of the site meant that the attendance of an archaeologist was required to maintain a "watching brief" and to identify and determine the character of any remains uncovered during the digging and to make an appropriate record of such finds.

Bolton Chapel is a Grade II listed chapel-of-ease in Bolton Village and is part of the Parish of Edlingham. The building dates to at least the 12th century and it sits upon a raised mound and enclosure of probable pre-historic origin. It is of considerable historic interest.

Pre-history

The whole area surrounding the chapel is well represented by historical archaeological remains. These include hut circles of either Romano-British or pre-historic origin and various examples of Neolithic rock art, mainly in the cup-and-ring style typical of Northumberland.

The position and topography of the chapel site is consistent with various kinds of past settlement and intensive land use. The mound and enclosure on which the chapel sits most likely belong to the Bronze Age (2,600 – 700 BC). In 1855 a typical Bronze Age burial cist was accidentally discovered by grave diggers in the churchyard, containing a burial urn that was unfortunately destroyed. It seems likely that this could have been just one of many Bronze Age graves destroyed by at least 800 years of later Christian burials.

The Romano-British period

Little is known of the Roman period in the Bolton area. However an emerging pattern of Romano-British enclosed settlements and farmsteads are slowly being identified in the surrounding landscape on Jenny's Lantern Hill and further north west on the Titlington Mount moorland at Hunterheugh Crags. The field immediately to the north of the chapel, known locally as the Guards field, has produced Roman artefacts including the base of a small bronze dish.

Early Medieval period

Despite the lack of physical remains from this period there is little doubt that a settlement at Bolton existed at this time. The Anglo-Saxon word '*tun'* , meaning homestead, was combined with '*bol'*, meaning a high swell of land – almost certainly the mound on which the chapel stands. This settlement therefore became known as the village of '*boltun'* or Bolton.

Given this Anglo-Saxon place name it is likely that a small timber church or chapel was built to serve this community, possibly by the 10th century when the parish of Edlingham was established.

Medieval period

The earliest part of the present chapel dates to the mid-12th century which can be seen in the chancel arch and possibly in the lower chancel walls. The earliest references to the chapel are in 1291 when the '*capella de Boulton'* was annexed to the vicarage at Edlingham. This village chapel was quite separate from the chapel to the Hospital of Bolton which stood a few hundred metres to the north. The masters and brethren of the Bolton Leper Hospital held the lordship of the manor of Bolton between 1225 and the dissolution of the monasteries in the mid 16th century.

The chapel will probably have suffered considerably, both in terms of its congregation and its structure, during the Border wars between the early 14th and the later 16th centuries. However it was certainly standing and in use when Sir Thomas Howard used the site as a muster point for his troops before the Battle of Flodden in 1513. Surrey and his senior commanders are believed to have prayed here before marching on to Wooler Haugh Head and eventually to the battle site near the village of Branxton.

Current Excavations

Illus. 46: View looking south across completed excavation of Tower foundations adjacent to the southwest corner of the Nave.

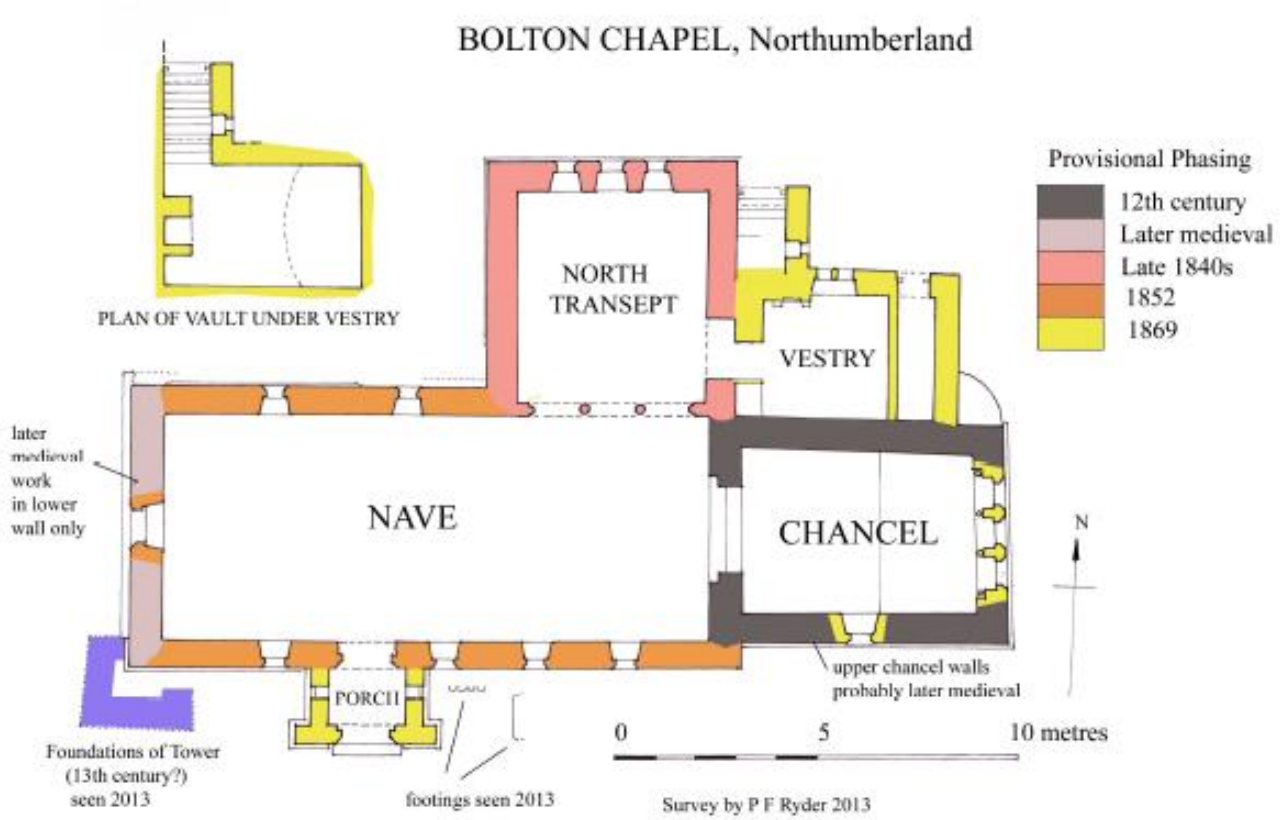
Illus. 22: View looking southeast at structural remains at intersection of the north transept and north nave wall.

Illus. 26: Detailed view of cross-slab grave cover, re-used in foundations of former structure at intersection of north transept and north nave wall.

The main findings from the current groundworks are that significant medieval remains survive in the area between the south wall of the nave and the west wall of the church porch. These remains are interpreted as those of a 13th century tower, perhaps a later addition to the Norman church. Later the plinth of this small tower seems to have been destroyed down to ground level before the west wall of the nave was rebuilt at some time in the late medieval period.

The remains of a 19th century boiler room on the north side of the nave are of only minor importance, although these remains did uncover a re-used carved stone (shown left) which was probably a small grave slab from the medieval period.

The excavations have increased the historical and structural complexity of the chapel and has enhanced the status of the site which was already known as an 'early', probably pre-Christian, religious site.



COLLECTION OF ARTS AND ANTIQUITIES FORMERLY AT CALLALY CASTLE

By BRIDGET WINSTANLEY

A very heavy, beautifully leather-bound and gold tooled volume of 209 pages plus about 100 unnumbered pages of appendixes has come my way. The title page tell us that it is a

CATALOGUE
OF THE
WORKS OF ANTIQUITY AND ART
COLLECTED BY THE LATE
WILLIAM HENRY FORMAN, ESQ.,
Pippbrook House, Dorking, Surrey,
AND REMOVED IN 1890
TO CALLALY CASTLE, NORTHUMBERLAND
BY
MAJOR A. H. BROWNE

BY
W. CHAFFERS, F.S.A.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.
1892

There are two main categories in the contents pages. Under ANTIQUITIES there are listed, among many subheadings, Archaic Greek Vases, Roman Pottery, Mexican Antiquities, Egyptian Antiquities, Early British Weapons, Antique Armour, Gold Personal Ornaments, Saxon Fibulae.

Under MEDIEVAL AND MODERN we have Carvings in Ivory and Wood, Early English Pottery, Arms and Armour, China, Drawings, Engravings etc. by Hogarth, Paintings, etc. – and much more.

Scope of this Article

The aim of this article is to tell the story of how this amazing collection came to be at Callaly Castle, and as far as possible, to tell what happened to it. In the course of that narrative, a little about the Forman and Browne families will be told.

The Browne Family

The Browne family have appeared several times in the annals of the Aln and Breamish Local History Society. Major A.S.C. (Simon) Browne told his own story in 1976 and his recorded talk was published in R&R volume 2, numbers 1, 2 and 3. The present author also did a two part article on the family in R&R New Series volume 1 numbers 4 and 5. A short recap is needed to make sense of this brief examination of part of the history of the beautiful local house we know as Callaly Castle.

There were 5 consecutive members of the Browne family owning land in Northumberland between 1790 and 1987. They were all called Alexander and, curiously, all but the first (who was a clergyman) held the rank of Major! They were a wealthy landowning and sporting family but it was only when the second Alexander, the son of the reverend Alexander, was stationed briefly in Wales with his regiment and met a certain Miss Helena Gwynifred Forman that the seeds were sown for the family to become spectacularly rich and in due course to inherit the collection of arts and antiquities alluded to at the beginning of this article. It was the third Alexander, son of Alexander II and Miss Forman (who by then was Mrs Browne) who bought Callaly Castle in 1877 from the last direct descendant of the ancient Clavering family.

The Forman Family

Information about the Forman family comes from www.gracesguide.co.uk and oxforddnb.com. There are also some quotes from Major Simon Browne's talk of 1976.

The first Richard Forman was a clerk at the Board of Ordnance at the Tower of London during the American War of Independence. It must have become very clear to him during that conflict that anyone in the iron business was likely to make money. His sons and grandsons also became employees at the Board of Ordnance and through their work became financially involved in the casting of cannon. In 1784 Forman advanced more than £10,000 for the funding the Pennydarren Ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil and became a partner in this enterprise. His fourth son William (1767-1829) continued his interests in ordnance and the ironworks. William's marriage in 1789 to Mary Seaton, daughter of a Doncaster landowner, brought in more capital which he used to expand his iron-making interests.

This marriage produced three sons, Thomas Seaton, Richard, and William Henry Forman. The brothers presided over a huge expansion of the iron trade, especially with the coming of the railways. In 1830 40% of all the iron manufactured in Britain came from south Wales. There is no mention of Helena Gwynifred in any of the sources available, but it seems likely that she was a younger sister of the brothers, all of whom, we know, died childless.


[24] one of a pair

Thomas Seaton Forman's wealth allowed him to buy Pippbrook house and to indulge his passion for collecting art and antiquities. When he died in 1850 his wealth passed to his unmarried brother William Henry. William Henry was equally passionate about collecting and he expanded the arts and antiquities at Pippbrook House. He also rebuilt St George's Church, Doncaster, after it had been destroyed by fire, employing the architect George Gilbert Scott.

Major A.S.C. (Simon) Browne, in his 1976 narrative says,

'When my great grandfather married Miss Forman, there was a great number of people between him and the family fortune, but they all happened to die off within six months. My great grandfather, the one who had the hounds, was not left the money, but his son, called Alexander too, was, and he came back to Northumberland and wanted to buy property there'.

This is an interesting paragraph because it explains how the Brownes came to buy Callaly Castle and it also hints at what all the Brownes were really interested in – horses, hounds and foxes – with arts and antiquities lagging somewhat behind.

Major Simon Browne has some further remarks about the Forman connection, which although not directly related to the collection which is the subject of this article, add to our knowledge of this somewhat overlooked family. Referring (probably) to William Forman (1767-1829) he says:

'He engaged Richard Trevithick, a Cornishman, to invent a steam engine to pull the stone from the quarries up about a mile – gradient 1 in 20 – and that was the first steam engine that ever went. It was copied by George Stephenson who made the Rocket but this was more than 16 years before the Rocket'.

The Great Sale of 1986

In 1976 Major Simon Browne dismissed the collection in the following words, referring here to Thomas Seaton Forman and William Henry Seaton:

'[They] went on the Grand Tour –that is to say, went all over Italy and those sort of places and collected a very fine collection of antiques of which we have a few left at Callaly. It was a good thing my father sold them when he came into the Estate. They are nearly all in the British Museum.'

Well, there must have been quite a few left because in 1986, with the Castle and its contents now in the hands of Trustees, though Major Simon Browne was still alive, 1,300 objects of art and antiquities were sold by auction. It is a reasonable guess that most of them were the leftovers from the Forman collection since the Brownes themselves collected mainly hunting trophies.

According to *The Journal* (Newcastle) of September 27, 1986,

'Dealers and collectors flocked to Northumberland for what was acknowledged to be one of the top sales in the county and international attention sent the prices rocketing… An estimated three or four thousand people attended the Christies three day auction on the lawn of the 15th century mansion north of Rothbury, including a private collector, guarding his anonymity, who flew in each day in his own helicopter and a Japanese dealer from Tokyo … and several Americans. But it was the men from Bond Street who had more than monopoly money to spend … They pushed the receipts from an expected £750,000 to more than £1,130,000. Months of planning went into the sale with experts evaluating and cataloguing each of the 1,000 lots.'

The Journal tells us that a pair of Regency mahogany hall chairs (*one pictured previous page*) fetched £59,400, several scagliona tables (*table top pictured left)* each between £26,400 and £49,500, and a pair of Berlin oviform two-handled vases (*pictured right*) £29,150. Works of art did particularly well, with two paintings by the Victorian artist Frank Hyde selling for £28,000. There is a description of these paintings:

'… showing an Eton boy leering at the artist's nude model in his studio, the other showing the same boy chatting up the model while a lady resembling Queen Victoria looks on in disapproval.'

Callaly Castle Today

As many readers will know, after Major Browne's death in 1987 Callaly Castle was sold and converted into a number of apartments. These still retain the beauty of the 17th and early 18th century remake of the castle, including some stunningly beautiful interiors. But there is no trace to be seen of the arts and antiquities of the Forman collection.

WILL DIXON'S WAY TO WAR

By HUGH DIXON

Visitors to Whittingham Church during the current tide of centenary commemoration of the Great War may notice under the tower an unusual tribute to the sons (it was only sons in those days) of the district. This is not the War Memorial (which is the village hall) nor the dated cross by the south door. It is a framed record with photographs of those who enlisted in that awful conflict in 1914 and 1915. It seems to be newsprint and may have been produced by an Alnwick newspaper. There are individual pictures of 28 servicemen and a group picture of 14 more and for each there is a story to be told. On the right, wearing the goggles of a despatch rider, is Corporal Wm Dixon.

This was Will Dixon, son of the proprietor of the village shop who appears, aged eight in a photograph of 'Dixons' with family and staff taken in 1896. (*R&R* Vol.3 No.1). Much had happened in Will's life between the two photographs. He was born in Whittingham on 17th November 1888, the older of two sons of William Dixon, and his wife Dorothy Ann (née Layton), the daughter of Lord Ravensworth's gamekeeper.

Will seems to have progressed well at the village school. It might have been expected that, after basic education, he would follow his father into the general dealer's business established by his grandfather in 1836, but, eventually, it was his younger brother, Henry, who took on this role.

Instead his parents recognised in Will something which they thought might respond to wider educational horizons. Mild prosperity and a level of ambition which, to say the least, was unusual for a village general dealer (even one whose grandfather was a schoolmaster) resulted in Will, at thirteen, being packed off to south County Durham to the North East County School. This had been established in 1886 to provide a liberal education but, because of endowments, it had fees a fraction of those charged by public schools. Unlike many public schools this establishment was tolerant in accepting non-Anglicans. The curriculum, not overwhelmingly classical, concentrated on scientific and technical subjects and there was a strong emphasis on sports – which were regarded as character-building.

All this would have suited Will, though what it must have been like for a Whittingham boy to be transported from the familiarities of rural Northumberland to a strange new environment can only be imagined. He seems to have flourished and taken advantage of the opportunities. He made sufficient use of the swimming pool to be awarded a medal by the Life Saving Society in June 1904 and on the playing fields he developed a sound physique and what became a life-long enthusiasm for rugby and the establishment of the Gosforth Nomads.


1905 when William left school

More significantly for his military service and later career he developed an aptitude for mathematics and science with particular interests in physics and electricity. It does not seem to have been a surprise, or disappointment, to anybody that when in 1905 he left the school (which was renamed

Barnard Castle School in 1924) he opted not to return to Whittingham but to join C A Parsons in Newcastle as an engineering apprentice and to pursue part-time studies at Armstrong and Rutherford Colleges (both later absorbed into Durham and then Newcastle Universities).

The photograph on the previous page (now a bit marked) which he sent as a post card birthday greeting to his father in February 1905 shows a confident and relaxed young man in a smart suit with collar and tie and watch chain on his waistcoat, and with his hands in his pockets (as he so often is in photographs). Perhaps this was a new suit (made at Dixon's?) for starting his apprenticeship.

'*In his apprenticeship days*,' wrote a contemporary, '*his colleagues found him a likeable and staunch friend. His delightfully impulsive outbursts against any form of injustice and oppression often led him into trouble, both then and in later life, but he never flinched, and to this appealing trait in his character was added a subtle and great sense of humour, always courageously shown in adversity.'*

Unlike his schooldays when visits home would have been rare, he was able to get to Whittingham from Newcastle often. Initially he would ride a bicycle the whole distance (or so he told his grandchildren but he had a great reputation as a 'tease-acious' Grandpa) but later he may have used a motorbike and it is difficult to believe that he did not take advantage of the then good railway network which would have brought him close to home.

Completing his apprenticeship in 1911, and determined to pursue his interest in electricity generation, he became an assistant engineer with a consulting engineers firm established in 1899 by two young engineers, Charles Merz and William Mclellan, '*with a minute staff, housed in a makeshift building in Wallsend'*. He was to remain with "M and M" for the rest of his life – apart from one significant interval: just as he was developing experience in engineering projects, especially, electrical transmission, war broke out.


1911 at Merz & Mclellan

Like so many of his generation he enlisted without delay believing it would be an exciting experience, an opportunity to teach the bullying 'Hun' a lesson, and that it would all be over very soon. His medical check, dated 7th September 1914, gave his height as 5ft 7¾ ins; his chest 36 ins; and his vision and physical development as good. He was considered fit for service.

He was recruited into the Territorial Force Northumbrian Division: Royal Engineers, part of a corps then rapidly developing from its traditional roles in mining and sapping into all kinds of mechanical and electrical communications expertise to advance the art of war. Will's profession as an electrical engineer was less important than his lack of military experience. It seems that Barnard Castle lacked a cadet or officers' training corps. So the Whittingham lad went off to war in France in the ranks as a Sapper. Two months later he was promoted Lance Corporal.

Then on Boxing Day, having been assessed by a board of officers, he was pronounced proficient as a motor cyclist and that was combined with an advance in pay from 6d to one shilling per day. With this bounty he was able to get leave early in 1915 to marry Florence Isabella Wright (he called her Florrie), a photographer's assistant, who lived

near his pre-war lodgings in Heaton. The first of their four children, another William, was born just before Christmas.

Like many of his contemporaries he spoke little of the war – almost nothing to his children – but his experience was probably shared by thousands: long periods of boredom, awful living conditions, unexplained marches, and moments of terror. Little is known of exactly where he was or what he did.

When it came to speaking with his grandchildren, there was always the feeling that part was a tease. When his grandson, Richard, asked him if he was shot at by the Germans, he replied "only when I was on my motorbike." This may have been close to the truth; he certainly served as a "D R", a dispatch rider, with the hazardous task of keeping communications effective when telephone wires were destroyed or distances too far for runners. Both sides knew that poor communications could result in chaos and vulnerability; so disrupting any form of communication was a priority – and motorbikes had to be operated at ground level.

Details are scant and muddled but Will had his share of dangerous rides. On one occasion he was commended for getting dispatches delivered in very dangerous circumstances. According to one account, he was given leave to celebrate because he was being recommended for an award. According to another, the officer who granted leave was killed or lost, and Will and a companion were arrested for desertion. The whole truth may be more mundane. The recorded sequence of events which followed does not answer all the questions.

On 15th January 1915, barely three weeks after being declared proficient, Will was promoted to Corporal. The photograph of him in Whittingham church, with corporal's stripes and DR's goggles, probably dates from this time. On 7th July Will was charged with 'Conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline' and ten days later reduced to Sapper by FGCM (Field General Court Martial). There must have been doubts, however, because a month later he is promoted (acting) Corporal and full Corporal soon after. What is also clear is that he received a Mention in Dispatches, an official report from his superior officer to the High Command, awarded for 'gallantry or meritorious action in the face of the enemy'. So, when victory came, he was entitled to wear a bronze oak-leaf clasp on his Victory Medal ribbon.

It all mattered little to Will because stronger winds were blowing. As the regimental history says: *'many qualified engineers enlisted in the ranks of various branches of the service and had, subsequently, to be called out to take up commissions in technical units, where their qualifications could be put to more use. Among those officers who were commissioned into the Tyne Electrical Engineers in this manner... from Northumbrian Divisional RE, was W. Dixon.'*

So early in July 1916 Will was transferred back to Northumberland to a commission as a Lieutenant in the Tyne Electrical Engineers. He did not return to France but spent the rest

of the war in coastal defence, and in particular in designing and operating searchlight defences for the Tyne. This work could be dangerous with the enemy attacking the lights whenever possible; but it can hardly have been as dispiriting as the Western Front. Yet wherever he was, as one contemporary said, 'few did as much to foster and maintain morale and a cheerful atmosphere.'

After the war Will returned to a distinguished engineering career ending as Merz and McLellan senior partner in Newcastle. He liked to joke that although he had escaped being shot for desertion, he still got hung – in the form of a portrait by William Dring RA commissioned by "M and M" for their offices.

Although business kept Will on Tyneside, he often visited the Cheviots and Whittingham,

and for many years had a 'weekend cottage' at Powburn. His brother, Henry, also served in the war (but was too young to be included with the 1914-15 enlistment photos now in the church) and then came back to take over Dixons from his father. Retiring in 1953, he was the last Dixon at Dixons. Will died on the last day of 1959 and Henry, who had remained in Whittingham, died in 1966. They, with their wives, share their parents' burial place in St Bartholomew's churchyard.

Acknowledgement
This piece could not have been compiled without help from many friends and relatives. In particular I am grateful to my brother William who forgets little and saved much; our late brother Miles who died in February this year having done the trenching on military records; our cousin, Richard, the last engineering Dixon to work for Merz and McLellan; and to our Auntie Dot, Mrs Dorothy Robinson, Will's daughter, now 94 years young, a Newcastle languages graduate and former Wren officer, who would have written it herself but is far too busy. All remember Grandpa's solid presence, his soft north country accent and his twinkling sense of fun.

The photograph shows William's three medals. Left to right they are:

- 1914 – 1915 Star
- 1914 – 1918 Medal
- Victory Medal with Oak Leaf clasp for being Mentioned in Dispatches

Programme of talks for Spring 2015

18 Mar ’15 David Dickinson – *Bookbinding*

15 Apr ’15 Sue Rogers – *Undiscovered Historic Routes in Northumberland*

20 May ’15 Kim Bibby-Wilson – *The Northumbrian Language and its Dialects*

17 June ’15 AGM + Alistair Sinton – *Tyne to Tees*

We do hope to see many of our members and guests at our talks

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Contact details:

The Secretary, A&BLHS, Sunnyside Cottage, The Lane, Whittingham, Alnwick NE66 4RJ
Tel: 01665 574319
jim.dinsdale@btinternet.com

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How can you help to ensure that A&BLHS remains a vibrant and interesting organisation that people enjoy being involved with?

- Renew your membership each year
- Encourage friends and neighbours to join
- **Come to meetings whenever you can!**
- Let our Secretary know about potential speakers
- Think about writing short (or long!) items for Records and Recollections
- Look out old documents or records or photographs and be willing to lend them to be scanned and saved for use in Records and Recollections

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Aln and Breamish Local History Society provides members with a programme of historical lectures and publications. A minimum of six lectures a year are arranged, three in the spring and three in the autumn. In addition there is a speaker or an exhibition at the Annual General Meeting in June.

All talks take place in the Whittingham Memorial Hall at 7.30pm (unless otherwise indicated in our programme details) and are followed by coffee, tea and biscuits. If there is sufficient demand it would be possible to hold meetings in other locations in the Aln and Breamish valleys.

Occasionally walks may be arranged in the spring and summer months to look at local places of historical interest.

RECORDS & RECOLLECTIONS

Records & Recollections is published in June and December and is free to A&BLHS members.
We need your memoirs of life in your village and in earlier times, old photographs (to be copied and returned) and anything else which recalls life in past times.

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Subscriptions to the A&BLHS are £10 for a single member and £15 for two people at the same address.

Subs are due on 1st September each year.

You can pay at meetings of the Society by cash or cheque or by sending your cheque, made to Aln & Breamish Local History Society to:
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