

RECORDS & RECOLLECTIONS

Contents

A Life in Farming - Bob and Opie Telford. <i>By Richard Poppleton</i>	2
A letter to the Editor	7
Bailiffgate Photographic Competition	7
Whittingham Parish Church - The Legacy of Rev R W Goodenough <i>By Bridget Winstanley</i>	9
Holystone Priory <i>by Richard Poppleton</i>	13
Early Carved	
Decoration at St. Bartholomew's <i>By Hugh Dixon</i>	17

SOCIETY NEWS

When you get this new R&R we shall be at the end of another season of talks. We have had some excellent presentations on a wide range of topics and attendance at the meetings has continued to be encouraging.

We did, unfortunately, lose one speaker. David Dickinson from Tod le Mor had a disastrous fire at his book binding workshop which destroyed much of his equipment and he understandably had to withdraw. But the good news is that he has agreed to be back on our programme in May 2016. In his place we found Ian Gledinning from Holystone who fascinated us with his metal detecting tales and some of his finds.

We hope, when you look at the details of our 2015/16 talks which you can find on the programme cards and on the final page of this journal, you will see things that really make you want to come to Whittingham to hear the speakers. Good attendances at meetings are the lifeblood of a thriving Society and those of us on the Committee, not to mention the speakers, are very much encouraged when we see good audiences.

At the risk of becoming a well-worn record, I do want to stress how much we still need new volunteers for our committee and more members willing to send in articles or interesting photographs for Records and Recollections.

Richard Poppleton

The photograph shows the frontage of Callaly Castle in about 1900.

In March 2016 our President, Dr Tony Henfrey, is to give us a talk about aspects of Callaly Castle and some of the efforts made by the current residents to restore some of its past glories.



A LIFE IN FARMING

By RICHARD POPPLETON – in conversation with Bob Telford

One afternoon in January this year I was invited to have tea with Bob and Opie Telford at their home at Mile End near Whittingham. I had asked if I could talk to them to hear their memories and reminiscences of their lives in our area of North Northumberland.

Bob was born on a farm - High Moralee in the North Tyne Valley - in 1920. High Moralee was a livestock farm and in 1935 when Bob left school farming was in the doldrums during the recession of the 1930s. He soon learnt his trade, working with cattle, sheep and horses. Although the farm used heavy horses, mostly Clydesdales, the terms of their tenancy and that of many other tenanted farms in the area, came with the stipulation that there was to be "no land ploughed", so the horses didn't have that particular onerous annual task to perform.

Then, in 1939, with the return of war, government rules changed. Every farm, including hill farms, was obliged to put a minimum percentage of ground under the plough to ensure there was a major increase in home-grown food crops. This induced Bob's father, Roland, to buy his first Fordson tractor. We, in the 21st Century, are used to new tractors costing at least many tens of thousands of pounds, so it is almost laughable to know that in 1939 a new Fordson cost £180. It had metal-rimmed wheels, perhaps because the rubber for pneumatic or even solid tyres was needed elsewhere during the war.

With the emphasis on maximum food production the farming scene began to pick up during the early 1940s and Roland Telford was inspired to seek out a better tenancy, which he found at Fawdon in the hills above

Branton. In 1943 moving his family to Fawdon was one thing. Moving his stock was a different problem. Even in wartime there were wagons to transport sheep, but the 75 cattle and seven horses had to walk.

Over the course of two days, with the men on horseback, they drove the beasts across the Tyne at Wark, through Birtley and up the line of the A68 past Otterburn to Elsdon. There was then the long climb up over Bils Moor to their overnight stop at Grasslees where the animals were able to rest in grazing fields. In the morning, after crossing the Coquet at Hepple, they proceeded north via Sharperton and Netherton to Alnham, Prendwick and finally Fawdon.



What made this epic 45 mile trek more remarkable was that it had attracted the attentions of a film crew who made a record of the whole journey. At one

point when it was necessary to cross a rather wide and slippery burn the cameraman moaned to Bob and asked if he realised that the camera he was carrying cost £40,000. Bob managed to avoid asking why, in that case, he had thought it a good idea to bring it to film a cattle drove over some very rough country. The film record still exists and the family have copies.

At the end of this article there are a few photographic stills from the film. The quality is not brilliant, but it is good to see some record of the 'Telford Drove'.

In those days when a new tenant or owner took up residence on a farm, other local farming families would make the effort to visit

to welcome them. Or perhaps it was partly a wish to cast a judgemental eye over the newcomers. Bob recalls that Jackson Green from The Mountain farm near Whittingham rode over to Fawdon to pay his respects, at the age of 80. Far more important, as it turned out, were some visitors from Reaveley – a certain Mrs Sophie Robson and her eldest daughter Opie.

William Robson was the third generation of his family to farm Reaveley. Opie had done well at school and had gained a place at Durham University to read Geography and Geology. Having graduated she got a position in the Government Offices in Edinburgh, working on maps. She remembers that the staff were required to work a 5½ day week and if you missed a Saturday morning session you were penalised a full day of your holidays. I suspect that in later years the NALGO union might have had something to say about that.



Tommy, William & Sophie Robson, Bob & Opie, Kit, Mamie & Roland Telford

Opie's mother had told her and her two sisters never to marry a farmer or a clergyman. So of course Opie married Bob; Isobel married John Crawley who had spent the war in the Merchant Navy before being ordained; and Katherine (Kit) married Bill Thomas who many local people will remember from his ministries at Alwinton and Whittingham. Bob and Opie married in 1948 at Ingram and eventually had three children, Roly, Bill and Sophia. The family photograph at the end of this article taken in 2014 shows the extent to which the family has grown with grandchildren and great grandchildren a delightful legacy for Bob and Opie.

The extent to which the Fawdon farming enterprise prospered started to become evident by 1949 when Bob's brother, Tommy, was able to buy Pasture Hill Farm at Seahouses. Between them their interests grew, some by purchase and some by tenancy, so that they had holdings as far apart as Trows and Rowhope, MoD farms in Upper

Coquetdale, and Swinhoe Farm near the coast at Beadnell. The names roll off the tongue: Alnhammoor, Whittingham Lane, Branton Eastside, Linhope, Hartside, High and Low Bleakhope, The Clinch, Hadwin's Close on Alnwick Moor.

Of course farming is only partly about the farms themselves, but is equally about the people who live and work on them. Bob

recalls characters, particularly among the shepherds. Most of the farm workers kept a pig or two at their cottages and on one occasion Bob took Jack Wilson, shepherd at The Clinch, to Hexham to buy two pigs. On the way back they rather overstayed their time in the pub and Jack, knowing that he'd be in trouble from his wife, hit on an interesting distraction strategy. Back at his cottage he let the pigs out of the back of the Land Rover and 'accidentally' let them into the house. Bob didn't say whether Jack's wife was sufficiently distracted or whether he got a walloping anyway.

On one occasion Maurice Reed, the auctioneer, was doing a valuation on Alnwick Moor. Bob Jackson, the shepherd, was counting the sheep and when they'd done they retired to the farm kitchen with a bottle of whisky. Bob Jackson became quite loud and opinionated, so Maurice said: "Bob, you've

had your say, now shut up!". Then Bob, in high dudgeon, stood up and threw his hat into the fire.

One day the shepherd at Langleeford Hope, the farm right at the top of the Harthope Valley, had brought a pig home and put it in the shed which had a half-door. That night Willy Brown, the farmer, as a joke, let the pig out but closed the door again. In the morning the shepherd assumed the animal must have jumped out so when he'd caught it he returned it to the shed but added an extra plank to the top of the door. But Willy let it out again and this went on for two or three days and nights until the shepherd was heard telling a friend that he'd "bought a real louping pig".



Bob & Opie at Fawdon in 1979

You often had to expend some effort in pursuit of entertainment. Ted Cowans at the Clinch would often walk over the moors, from High Bleakhope to Alwinton for a dance, stay the night and walk back the following morning. This same shepherd, as a young man, was driving some sheep towards Bellingham Mart when, most unexpectedly, a car came round a bend and hit and killed a couple of the leading ewes, damaging the car. Ted was summonsed for not being in proper control of his flock and the magistrate asked why he had not had a man walking ahead of the sheep. Ted replied that: "there's only one person I've heard of who walked ahead of his flock and that was Jesus Christ. I'm not him!" The case was dismissed.

As we know, one sad feature of the Cheviots is the number of air crashes that have occurred. Bob remembers having been told a story about an occasion, shortly before they came to Fawdon, when a plane crashed on Hedgehope Hill. The Polish pilot survived and managed to stagger down to Hartside. There he found Mr Oliver, father of Basil and Ronnie, who, hearing a foreign accent, assumed the pilot was German and marched him at gunpoint all the way down the valley to the police station at Powburn. Unfortunately it turns out the story isn't true! Basil Oliver has confirmed that a Wellington crashed in June 1943 and the rear gunner, the only survivor, made it to Hartside where Mr and Mrs Oliver discovered he was Polish, gave him a cup of tea and then got him to Linhope where there was a phone so the police could be contacted.

As a tenant farmer Bob was able to show that it is possible to influence the most powerful landlord. Edwin Nelson had been the shepherd for Bob at The Trows. A few years later when Bob took the tenancies at Alnhamoor and Low Bleakhope he approached Bill Hugonin at Northumberland Estates to ask if they would allow Bob to take the Bleakhope tenancy jointly with Edwin. The Agent said, discouragingly, that the Estate had never let a tenancy on that basis, but he would ask the Duke. Eventually the answer was yes and the Nelsons farm at Low Bleakhope to this day.

Finally I asked Bob and Opie about leisure pursuits to which, of course, Bob said that farmers are far too busy for leisure time. But equally predictably he admitted that he had had plenty of time to go hunting. As a boy he had hunted on a pony with the North Tyne and when they moved to Fawdon he joined the West Percy. He became its Chairman, a post he held for 18 years, and although he hasn't ridden a horse since he was 70 he still follows the hunt in his 4x4. In fact one day about four years ago when I was walking in the hills above the Usway Burn in Upper Coquetdale the hunt passed me and then, around the side of a hill, on a most improbable grass track, came Bob with a car full of ladies!

Records & Recollections

Opie has, over the years, been heavily involved with the Ingram Women's Institute and with the Ingram Show back in the days when it was the Ingram Sports. I've also heard from other sources that she has been a staunch supporter of Branton School and an advocate for its survival.

Bob and Opie have lived at Mile End for 30 years since he semi-retired and the main farming has been taken over by their children and their spouses. A personal history of farming in North Northumberland for 71 years is an amazing achievement and it was only a few years ago that Bob bought himself a new tractor, so clearly he's not done yet.

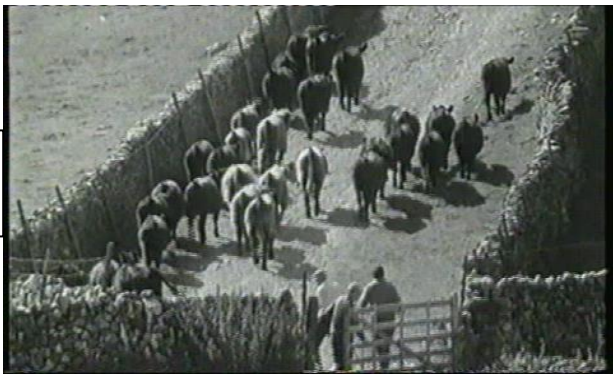


The following page shows still images from the Telford Drove film referred to earlier in the article.



Bob Telford

On the road



Fawdon at last!



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

January 25, 2015

Dear Richard,

I wish to express my deep appreciation for the article written in Records and Recollections – New Series Vol 3 No 2 - titled **Joseph Arthur Hay, Basil Oliver & Cheviot Air Disasters**.

This article came about through the efforts of yourself, Bridget Winstanley, Basil Oliver, Chris Davies and a number of uncredited persons of your History Society. I consider it an honor to have my uncle considered worthy of mention.

Again thank you for your kindness. I am sure that your Society will continue to be the successful repository of Local memory past, present and future.

Sincerely,

Andrew M. Hay
USA



OPEN DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION
Shots from the Heart

“Northumberland Events 2014-2015”

We invite you to take part in our photographic competition. 30 photographs will be chosen by our judging panel to represent our “Shots from the Heart” to be exhibited in Bailiffgate Museum & Gallery in November 17th 2015 to February 7th 2016.

Category 1-Under 18
Category 2-Adults

**Photographs must be taken between
October 2014 and November 2015.**

We are not necessarily looking for traditional postcard style images rather subjects that capture the essence of the event and the people who organise, work and participate in them.

The events photographed should take place within the area of Northumberland from the coastal towns of Amble to Seahouses, or inland from Rothbury to Wooler and the Northumberland National Park east of the A696.

Events small and large, indoors and outdoors, from Christmas lights to summer shows, fetes, bring and buys; any event which people organise for others to enjoy.

Subjects could include:

- Interior and exterior shots daytime or night time including people
- Portraits or group shots of people who work or attend

Records & Recollections

Please submit images at the highest resolution you have available and accompany each photograph with a caption and short paragraph that could take the form of a comment, interesting fact, or memory from the subject or yourself. Also the event, where it took place and the date.

The closing date for entries is **Sunday 1st November** and all photographs must be submitted through our website by jpeg image.

A winner from each category will receive a framed mounted print of their photograph. 1st, 2nd, 3rd prizes will also be awarded after a public vote entitled, "My Favourite Photograph" by visitors to the exhibition. Winners will be announced on 28th February 2016. A cup will be presented to the overall winner.

Entry forms are available from the museum website bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk/photocomp
Advice is available from Bailiffgate Museum by email ask@bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk

Terms & Conditions

1. Entry to the competition is free and open to all amateur and professional photographers.
2. Entries online only through the Bailiffgate website bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk/photocomp
3. You will be allocated an entry number and can submit up to 5 images.
4. Please submit in jpeg format and at as high resolution as possible.
Categories for entry are: a) Adult b) Under 18
5. All photographs to be submitted under an individual's name with details of the place photographed, the date of the photograph, who or what the subject is and any text such as a story or comment.
6. It is the entrant's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary permissions are obtained from any person featured in the photograph. If you need advice about this please contact the museum.
7. By submitting an image you confirm that you are the copyright holder and creator of the image and that you will be responsible for any claims by a third party.
8. The panel of judges will include a professional photographer, a trustee, and two volunteers from Bailiffgate Museum. Their decision is final.

Please note: copyright will remain with the photographer whilst all entries will be archived in the museum collection. By entering the competition the entrant/photographer agrees to Bailiffgate Museum using the images for possible exhibitions, publications or promotional material.

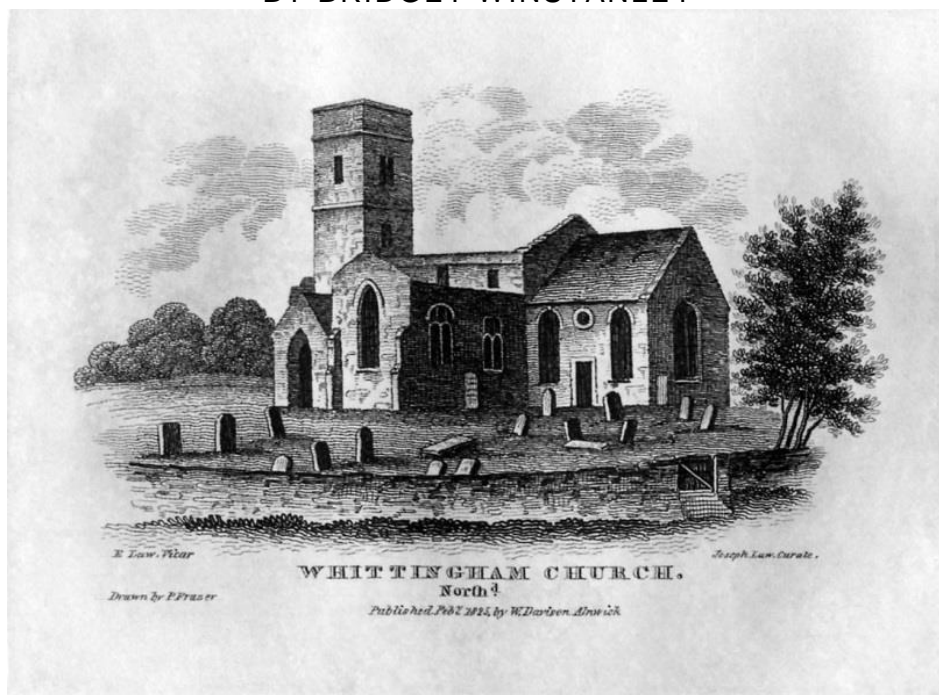
Bailiffgate Museum will assume that the photographer will allow the sale of the exhibited photograph to offset the exhibition costs unless contacted by email ask@bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk by 01/11/15.

The information on these two pages is being published by our Society because it was felt that some of our members might like to take part in the competition. There is still plenty of time between now and the competition closing date.

Jane Mann from the Museum Trustees will be giving a talk to our Society on 18th November.

WHITTINGHAM'S PARISH CHURCH AND ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES: THE LEGACY OF THE REV. R.W. GOODENOUGH

BY BRIDGET WINSTANLEY



St Bartholomew's Church, Whittingham in 1825

The Church of Saint Bartholomew

The Church of Saint Bartholomew is a complex of building and rebuilding, with Saxon, twelfth and thirteenth century remains. Apart from the rebuilding of the chancel in 1725 and its extension and gothicisation of 1871, and the addition of the vestry in 1906, the rebuilding which has most altered the whole church is that carried out in 1840 by John Green for the Rev. R.W. Goodenough, vicar of Whittingham from 1836 to 1880.

The upper parts of the old, plain Saxon tower of the eighth century seen in the engraving taken from D.D. Dixon's Whittingham Vale, were demolished with gunpowder by the workmen employed by Mr Goodenough. Only a warning by the same, presumably reluctant workmen, that the newly built north arcade was being endangered by this drastic procedure prevented the full plan to level it to the ground. So we must be thankful that at

least the lower level of the Saxon tower remains.

The transepts and aisles have twelfth and thirteenth century remains only in the lower courses, the rest dating from the rebuilding of 1840. In the North Transept we have a highly embellished monument to the Rev. Goodenough's son Reginald, killed at Sebastapol in the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856. He was just 18, a lieutenant of the 97th Regiment of Foot and had been leading his soldiers to the assault of a battery when mortally wounded.





Finally, with regard to the interior of the church, the east window is dedicated to the memory of Mr Goodenough. It is a fine addition to the church, portraying the Good Shepherd and representations of the four Evangelists. A brass inscription reads, "To the glory of God and in Memory of R.W. Goodenough, Vicar of this Parish, 1836-1880. By his parishioners and friends".

Financing the Church Rebuilding

The rebuilding of the church cost £1259. This sum of money was raised from parishioners including, and presumably largely, the principal landowner in the parish, the Earl of Ravensworth. In a begging letter to the Duke of Northumberland dated March 2 1841, Mr Goodenough pleads with the Duke to contribute a final £75 as he finds that he is short of that sum. He himself, he says, has already contributed £100 and is unable to find any more.

'I can assure you that no outlay beyond what was necessary in the repairs of the fabric has been indulged in: and I must also say, that with regard to the numbers of our congregation and of Communicants, the most satisfactory results have followed all the

trouble, labor and expence, (and on my part all the anxiety inseparable from such a work).'

We know that this plea was turned down by the Duke, but if and where the £75 was found is not recorded.

Architectural Style of the Rebuilt Church

It is hard to discern any particular architectural style in the rebuilt church. This early period of Victorian architecture is, according to Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*,

'... a "Battle of Styles" i.e. between Classic and Gothic ... growing evermore eclectically confused.'

Eclectically confused is probably a good description of the architecture of this rebuilding. Sadly, some fine Norman and earlier features were demolished, though it is impossible to know whether these had become unsafe or just unfashionable. Nevertheless, I find myself, despite all the regrets about the loss of ancient features, deeply moved by the peace and beauty of the interior of this church. Somehow, out of the eclectic confusion, a calm and lovely space has been achieved.

Churchyard Walls

Moving out of the church, through the churchyard with its many ancient memorial stones, 14 of which are listed though crumbling, we come to the wall of the churchyard and its two fine gateways. At the west end there is a gateway of 1860 with square corniced piers and pyramidal caps,



work of George Ferguson, mason. Next to it is a stone stile of more ancient date. At the east end is another listed gate and stile and further away, in the corner, is an ancient stone Latin cross (*see photograph on the previous page*), which, according to D.D. Dixon, though not the listing notes, was found in the north wall of the churchyard at the time of the 'restoration' of the church in 1840. So perhaps we must thank the Mr Goodenough for the discovery of this wonderful object.

The Vicarage



Mr Goodenough was responsible too for the listed house known as the Old Vicarage, now privately owned. It is a large and pleasant building set in a garden to match. The listing notes describe it as being in the Tudor style. Two questions arose in my mind about the building of this imposing house in the mid-nineteenth century. Where did the vicars of Whittingham live before this house was built? Who paid for it?

The Vicarage Tower

It is a little known fact that Whittingham once had two pele towers, and the vicars lived in one of them. The parson's tower stood to the west of the church and was demolished by Mr Goodenough when he built the vicarage. This tower appears to have been built after the one still standing on the opposite side of the River Aln, for there is no record of it until 1541 when a survey of border towers was made which says,

"At Whyttyngame bene two towers, whereof the one ys the mansion of the vycaredge and thother of the Inheritance of Rb't Collyngewood, esquire, & both in measurable good repac'ons." (D.D. Dixon).

Financing the Vicarage

In 1776 the Clergy Residences Repair Act enabled the clergy to raise money for the repair or rebuilding of their parsonage houses by mortgaging the income from their benefices. Queen Anne's Bounty (a fund established in 1704 to augment the incomes of the clergy of the Church of England) was empowered to make loans at low rates of interest. This facilitated the building of many substantial and elegant Georgian parsonages and even more early Victorian ones. I have no evidence that this is how Rev. Goodenough financed his new vicarage, but it seems likely. (See www.buildinghistory.org).

Memorial to Mrs Goodenough

We come now to the final object in the works associated with the Rev. R.W. Goodenough: the fountain erected to the memory of Mrs Elizabeth Ann Goodenough which stands across the road from the west gate to the churchyard. The listing notes describe this memorial as follows: *"Fountain. 1874. Sandstone ashlar, marble and ceramic tiles. Gothic style. Square base with pointed-arched panels on each side. On east side an attached octagonal stone basin and above it, a lion's head containing the water spout. On the north side a copper plate inscribed with the many virtues of Elizabeth Ann, wife of the Rev. Goodenough. Square central stage has elaborate cusped opening under gablets with short marble colonettes at the corners. In the openings ceramic tiles incised with ladies' heads and doves. Stone octagonal steeple top with foliage and ball finial."*

This amazing Victorian Gothic structure is now more or less reduced to a sandstone skeleton. The ceramic tiles have gone and though Mrs Goodenough's virtues may still be admired on reading the brass plaque, the fountain is a sad monument to neglect and decay.



Robert W. Goodenough: what do we know about him?

We have seen something of the legacy of this energetic vicar, but do we know anything about his life or personality? It is fortunate that David Dippie Dixon appears to have known him personally and has left some descriptive passages about him in his invaluable *Whittingham Vale*. Another source is our own *Records and Recollections*, vol. 2 no. 9, Spring 1980, in which Mr P. Blakiston wrote some notes about his predecessor.

The Jolly Vicar

Much to my surprise, I find that the Rev. Goodenough was rather a jolly fellow who knew every man, woman and child in his congregation by name and occupation. Churchgoing was practiced by very many people in those times so this knowledge must have extended to a large number of people. According to D.D. Dixon, it was his custom to be at the church long before service time, greeting the parishioners and asking after their welfare as they entered the church.

Goodenough was a Yorkshireman by birth and he found the local accent very amusing. Apparently when two or three children came to the church door he would hold it from the inside until they shouted through the keyhole "Wise uz in". This expression and its counterpart, "Wise uz oot" caused him to fall about with laughter.

More insight into his character was provided by his personal copy of the hymn book which annotated in pencil with his views on the hymns. These were uncompromising. 'Rot', 'Worse and worse', 'Horrible', 'Popular, but vulgar tune', 'This tune is like a wheelbarrow', 'Super-horrible' were some of his comments.

More seriously, we learn from his obituary in the *Newcastle Daily Journal* of October 23rd 1880 that he was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford. It tells us too, that the restoration of the church was carried out under his personal supervision, that he was an able scholar and an eloquent preacher, while his rich fund of humour and quick repartee made him a welcome guest of the county families.

It is clear that he took his religious duties very seriously. According to the Rev. P. Blakiston, in his article on Whittingham vicars, Goodenough presented vast numbers of youthful candidates to be confirmed by the Bishop of Durham at Alnwick. In 1841 there were 58, in 1843, 41, in 1845, 57 and in 1849, 68. The candidates were conveyed to and from Alnwick in farm waggons.

References

Dixon, David Dippie, *Whittingham Vale*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Robert Redpath, 1895.

Fletcher, Sir Banister, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. 17th ed. London; Athlone Press, 1961.

Records and Recollections, Vol. 1 no. 7 (Letter to the Duke of Northumberland).

Records and Recollections, vol. 2 no. 9, Spring 1980 (Blakiston article).

HOLYSTONE PRIORY

By RICHARD POPPLETON

In the issue of Records and Recollections in the winter of 2013 (New Series Vol 2 No. 10) we published an article about Holystone Church. Readers will forgive another piece about Holystone in the light of some very recent research. It must be stressed that this article has been written by an interested observer and not by the group carrying out the excavation work, although a draft version was sent to key members of the group and changes were made to some of the content in the light of their comments.

On 18th March when David Dickinson's major fire at his home at Tod le Mor prevented him from giving his presentation to the Society, Ian Glendinning bravely stepped in at short notice. Ian lives at Holystone and part of his talk concerned the topical subject of the 'lost' Holystone Priory.

It has long been known from pre-Reformation documents that there had been a priory, but no one in recent times has seen any direct evidence of the building. However, many stones and grave slabs have turned up around the village in the past and Dippie Dixon said such stones were visible in certain walls in his day. The Holystone History and Archaeology Group (HHAG), chaired by Ian, had obtained permission to carry out a dig alongside the south wall of Holystone Church. The group also managed to get some grant money from the National Park's Sustainable Development Fund, plus a contribution from the Coquetdale Community Archaeology Group to cover their costs.

..... allowed only a single week's access and prohibited the use of mechanical diggers.

There were, however, some important constraints. The landowner's permission allowed only a single week's access and prohibited the use of mechanical diggers. This was entirely understandable given that the land between their home and the church is an adjunct to their garden. Then, because the grant moneys were to come from year-end funds from the National Park, HHAG were required to present their expenditure accounts before the end of March. So, under the project management of Jan Frazer and directed by Richard Carlton of The Archaeological Practice, a small army of volunteers appeared on Monday 16th March armed with spades, trowels and cameras.

At this point, aided by information from the Parish of Upper Coquetdale website, it is appropriate to say something of what is known about the Priory:

Augustinian priories were first established in England and Scotland in the early 12th century. A petition exists, in very poor condition, in which the nuns of Holystone wrote to an unnamed English king in which they refer to "seven marks a year granted to them by Alexander formerly king". If we assume this was Alexander I of Scotland then it dates the Priory's foundation to between 1107 and 1124, making it one of the very earliest in the country.

For some time the priory was influential and powerful. The nuns held land in Harbottle, Alwinton, Harden and Caistron, but also in places as far afield as Newcastle, Wallington, Newminster, Redesdale and Roxburgh. These lands were the source of their tithe income, which must have been considerable.

Contd.

By the end of the 13th century England and Scotland were at war and it was not many years before the constant raids in this lawless border region resulted in regular burning and plundering of the priory and additionally prevented the nuns from collecting any of the tithes due to them. They were reduced to poverty and in an attempt to help they were granted the chapel of Harbottle in 1312 by the Bishop of Durham.

Despite their plight the priory continued for more than another 200 years, although the nuns made regular petitions to be relieved of their tax obligations on the grounds that their tithe income could not be collected. By 1432 the last Prioress, Alice Botecomb was installed, but the numbers in the nunnery were dwindling and eventually only six or seven remained. The priory was finally dissolved in 1539 in the first wave of closure of religious houses by Henry VIII.

The graveyard of the church lies entirely to the north of the building, and this arrangement is only found when a monastery or priory occupies the land to the south of the church. At one time on this south side the foundations of cottages could be seen, arranged in a way which is characteristic of an Augustinian priory. Because of this the land to the south side is designated a site of historical importance.

The original Norman church was demolished in 1848 and rebuilt, but the architect from Durham, George Pickering, was fortunately sensitive to the Norman layout and he designed and built the new structure on the same plan as the original. The church is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin which is entirely appropriate as St Mary was the patroness of the original priory, although it seems this formal dedication was made post-reformation

The dig began at the south west corner of the church and almost immediately uncovered a stone door post extending about a metre below current ground level. It had evidence of hinge attachment points. At the base of this post two different floor levels were uncovered, both well below the floor of the present church.

A second trench, further along the south wall of the church and at right angles to it, revealed some high quality masonry which is part of a wall, possibly interior,



2. The interior of the cundy



1. Stone door post and floor levels

of this building which must have stood alongside the Norman church.

There were two other excellent features of this second trench - a very well-constructed cundy or drain and a large cross slab grave cover. The cundy runs parallel to the church wall and about 1.5 metres away from it. It clearly relates to the building that was now being uncovered, although whether it was to bring a fresh water supply to what we have to assume was the priory building, or to carry

sewage away is not clear. David Jones, a member of the dig team, took a very clear internal photograph of the cundy.

The cross slab grave cover was at the foot of a very old bricked-up doorway in the south wall of the church, but at the lower level consistent with the Norman church. The grave cover seems to have been removed from its original position and placed here to be used as a door step into the church. Cross slab grave covers are so called because they are carved with a cross along the upper surface. They are not uncommon in the north of England and at



Holystone there is a prominent one built in to the south wall of the church, quite high up, and another, well-preserved specimen standing inside the entrance of the present church. They are hard to date or to relate to the occupant of the grave on which they previously lay because there is usually no inscription other than the cross motif. They are often found removed from their original positions and re-used for other purposes, as has happened here. And when a grave cover has been used as a door step even the carved cross is often largely obliterated by the passage of countless feet.

3. *The cross slab grave cover*

destruction was simply a physical dismantling of the upper parts of the building

Also found at various points in the trenches were stone roofing tiles, some still showing the nail holes by which they had been attached to the roof beams. The fact that these were within the stonework of the building suggests that at the time of the priory's destruction the roof was allowed to fall in, possibly as the priory was burned to the ground, although the archaeologists did not find any good evidence of the charcoal remains that would have been present if the destruction was accompanied by fire. So maybe the

destruction was simply a physical dismantling of the upper parts of the building

By lunchtime on the Thursday of the dig week a third trench had been created near the south east corner of the church and further areas of well-constructed masonry were being uncovered. At the same time the 5-day dig constraint meant that already the first trench was being back-filled because everything had to be returned to its original state by the end of the Friday. In practice the absence of any machinery to tamp down the returned soil made the task more difficult, but David Jones has confirmed that with continuous human tamping, the group did succeed in getting the restored turf level with the surrounding ground.

So we need to ask what was achieved by this dig. A major building was shown to be present alongside and probably at right angles to the modern church. The archaeologist in charge, Richard Carlton, concludes that the substantial walls that were found are from the right period and are either part of a much larger church or could be part of its cloisteral extensions. Its floor levels were consistent with the floor levels of the Norman church. Bricked-up doorways into the Norman church show that the two buildings were in regular joint use.

The quality of the stonework uncovered shows that this was a major and important building and it was almost certainly the Holystone Priory first built 900 years ago and eventually pulled down and abandoned at the time of the Dissolution in 1539. It was a pity that very few small finds,

... this was a major and important building and was almost certainly the Holystone Priory

such as pieces of ceramics, were made which suggests that the dig was not in the area of the nuns' living quarters, but on the site of a non-residential building.

Whether future efforts will be made to seek further permission to excavate more sections of the priory must remain to be seen, but the group hopes to be able to dig under the remains of some Victorian cottages that were on the same site and might have been built over earlier structures. What they'd really like is to find a good midden heap that would yield lots of evidence of the lives of those long past occupants.



4. Detail from the second trench showing soundly constructed wall and floor



5. Solid walls from the third trench at right angles to the church south wall

*Photographs 1,4 and 5 are by Richard Poppleton.
Photographs 2 and 3 are © David Jones.*

EARLY CARVED DECORATION AT St. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, WHITTINGHAM

By HUGH DIXON

The character of every church derives from varied or changing ways of worship, whims of clergy and congregation and chances of fate. Each has its own stock of features, furniture, fittings, gifts and memorials; and together these represent assembled investment, achievement and memory of a community.

St Bartholomew's Parish Church at Whittingham is exceptional only in the chronological range of its assets. While experts debate the precise dating of early Northumbrian churches, most agree that the earliest parts of St Bartholomew's are characteristic of churches built before the Norman Conquest. It is unfortunate that general accounts of the church tend to dwell on the very radical rebuilding of the church in 1840 [Note 1] leaving limited space for earlier features. While there are indeed more academic and specialist accounts [Note 2] these are less well known. It is not the purpose here to discuss the building history of the church but to notice a feature which, it is suggested, has been too little noticed and acknowledged. And attention was drawn to it in an unexpected place.

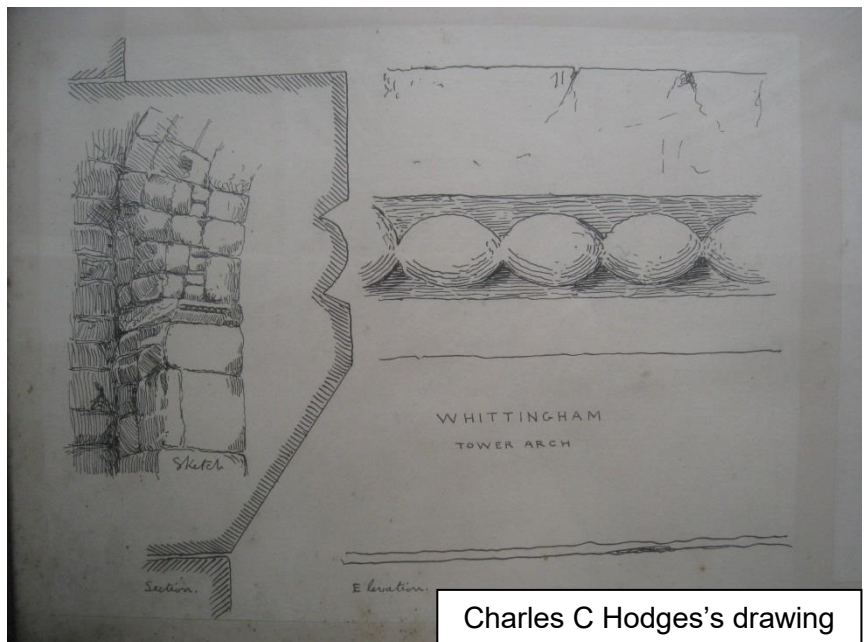
he claustral buildings at Hexham Abbey, removed from the ownership of the church at the Dissolution



The Archway at St Bartholomew's

(1537), have been retrieved, restored and re-opened to visitors (2015). Part of the project has been to update the inventory of possessions. Among these is a pen-and-ink drawing [Note 3] measuring 340 x 260mm, and identified simply as 'Whittingham Tower Arch' with an elevation, section and sketch of the upper part of the north side of the archway at St Bartholomew's.

The drawing is not a highly-finished or greatly accomplished work of art but it does what was intended, to give a clear image of a simple but very early piece of carved decoration. It is not signed or



Charles C Hodges's drawing

dated but its authorship is not in doubt. It is framed with three other drawings of Anglo Saxon features from other churches, all in the same style, all dated around 1900 and all signed by Charles C. Hodges.

Charles Clement Hodges started his antiquarian work in Nottinghamshire and then made a study of sepulchral slabs in County Durham. He moved north to Hexham to provide antiquarian surveys of the Abbey (printed in majestic style in 1888) but rapidly established himself as resident antiquarian-architect and principal ally to the ambitious Rector, the Rev. W. Sydney Savage. Hodges bolstered his understanding of Anglo Saxon architecture and decorative carving by spending his own time visiting and drawing buildings across the north-east. His work and discoveries at Hexham were recorded in a series of publications. But his studies of other buildings have been little noticed. The reason they have survived at all seems to be because many were included in an exhibition of Hodges's work sometime after the Great War and have remained, mostly still framed, in darker corners of Hexham Abbey ever since [Note 4]. So it was that his drawing of Whittingham church tower arch came to be in Hexham.

It may seem curious that Hodges chose to draw such details when photography had already become sophisticated and was used increasingly for recording. Indeed his collaborator at Hexham, John Gibson, was a chemist, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians and a photographer whose pictures [Note 5] are vital records of the progress of works at Hexham and of other places. Yet Hodges knew from experience that photographs are not the complete answer to understanding of structure and design. This is why he chose to record carved stones with drawings. In the case of Whittingham that decision was important [Note 6].

The decoration on the impost stones – the stones from which the arch springs – is



Photograph of the upper north side of the arch

over 12 feet above ground level and difficult to see [Note 7]. Pevsner (1992) mentioning 'unmoulded imposts' was not alone in missing the decoration. As Hodges's drawing shows, the lower corners of the imposts are chamfered out from the jambs, or sides, of the arch, and the decoration is carved into the vertical surface above. The corners of both imposts are bashed so decoration is lost; but the imposts project only on the inner faces of the arch and not on the east or west faces, so the decoration was never carried around the corners (which would have made it more visible) and could hardly be more simple.

Taylor and Taylor (1965) did see the decoration and illustrated it. They call it 'a line of ovate ornament' and it does resemble a row of tangent eggs or lemons set in a groove. So why any fuss? Only that it seems interesting that such decoration does not appear elsewhere in the north east. Indeed decoration on imposts of Anglo Saxon churches is rare [Note 8] and the only two examples, although more elaborate, which resemble Whittingham are at Colm Rogers and Daglingworth, both in Gloucestershire.

It would be easy (and perhaps it has been) to dismiss the 'ovate ornament' as simple and local but for another factor. As many have pointed out, the style of building, with 'long and short work' (with quoin stones set alternately flat and upright) at the

angles of the tower and the original nave at Whittingham is typical of Anglo Saxon building. What is less clear is why this technique was not used on the lowest parts of the tower. Moreover, as Peter Ryder has shown [note 9], long and short work is not a Northumbrian but a southern feature sometimes called the Mercian type. The nearest cousins, and outliers themselves so far north, are in Yorkshire at Bolton-on-Deerne and Laughton-on-the-Morthen and Barton-on-Humber.

So it can be seen, even from its fragmentary state, that the early church at Whittingham had unusual features for the area. That two of these features seem distinctively southern in character may be a coincidence but it is thought-provoking and turns imagination to what southern connections there might have been that long ago. Charles Hodges would probably have been pleased to know that his little sketch would one day prompt thinking about the church; and, surely, he would agree that St. Bartholomew's is worth another look.

Notes:

1. Such as Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Buildings of England Northumberland*, 1957; Mee, Arthur, *The King's England: Northumberland (1952) 1964*, 264-5, where the author refers to the tower's '1,000-year-old masonry having been blown up with gunpowder by the architect aided and abetted by the rector of the day.'
2. Notably Taylor, H M and Taylor J, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Cambridge, 1965, II 657-660; Pevsner, Nikolaus, Ryder, Peter *et al*, *The Buildings of England Northumberland* 2nd Ed. 1992; and Bailey, Richard N, Cambridge Eric and Briggs, H Denis, *Dowsing and Church Archaeology*, Intercept 1988, 103-107

3. Hexham Abbey Inventory: HEXAB3034.3
4. Cataloguing of all the drawings at Hexham Abbey is progressing
5. The Gibson photographic collection, rescued by Robin Gard, is now preserved in the Northumbrian Archives
6. Not least in drawing attention to the carving and thus to the writing of this article
7. For some years the base of the tower served as a vestry so the archway may have been obscured. See D. D. Dixon, *Whittingham Vale*, 1897 p201-2
8. Professor Bailey tells me that the Taylors (Vol 3 p1052) identify only a dozen examples in England pers.comm. 05.11.2014
9. Peter Ryder in Pevsner, *Northumberland* 2nd Ed 1992 pp 49 & 628

Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to the Rector and Parochial Church Council of Hexham for permission to reproduce the drawing of Whittingham Church archway by Charles Hodges.

I am indebted for his generous help to a fellow member of the Hexham Abbey Conservation Advisory Group, Professor Richard Bailey, a real expert on Anglo Saxon Northumbria, for casting light into my darkness and for steering me towards many authorities cited here; and also to Peter Ryder, the foremost authority of the archaeology of mediaeval Northumbria and a most patient tutor.

Hugh Dixon

Programme for the 2015/16 season

16th Sep Jack Arrowsmith – *Grace Darling*
21st Oct Chris Davies – *WW2 Air Crashes in the Cheviot Hills*

18th Nov Jane Mann – *Bailiffgate Museum*

16th Mar Dr Tony Henfrey – *Callaly Castle*

20th Apr Clive Hallam-Baker – *Battle of Flodden*

18th May Short AGM, followed by:
David Dickinson – *Bookbinding*

15th Jun Andy Walker – *A Guide's Tour of Alnwick Castle*

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

Office Holders and Committee 2015

Tony Henfrey (President)
Bridget Winstanley (Vice President)
Jim Dinsdale (Chairman and Membership Secretary)

Helen Dinsdale (Hon. Secretary)
Richard Poppleton (Hon. Treasurer)

Doreen Carruthers

Contact details:

*The Secretary, A&BLHS, Sunnyside Cottage,
The Lane, Whittingham, Alnwick NE66 4RJ
Tel: 01665 574319*

jim.dinsdale@btinternet.com

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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:

*The Treasurer, A&BLHS, Greystone Cottage,
Titlington Mount, Alnwick NE66 2EA*

The option is available to pay by Standing Order with your bank and if you would like to pay by this method, please contact the Treasurer at the address above or by phone 01665 578346 or email

rich.titlington@btinternet.com