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## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Hello Members.

I hope you have all enjoyed the lovely summer. As always, the Society's chief involvement was The Main Guard where "The True Description of her Majesties Town of Berwick" Exhibition ran for a second year.

There was a very favourable reaction from visitors with many complimentary comments about the Exhibition, The Main Guard and Berwick in general. In the Soldier's Room, as well as the permanent History of a Garrison Town exhibition there was the added attraction of Anne Wadey and Jo Hart working the tapestry which is part of The Tweed 1000 Project. It was a pleasure to have them there and visitors showed great interest in adding stitches to the Tapestry.

The season was heralded by the annual Main Guard Party on 31st May which was attended by seventy members and guests which included The Civic Party.

This year we held an informal drinks party on the 11th October to

thank those who had stewarded during the four month season. We are very grateful indeed to those who gave their time, some on a regular basis.

On 5th July, Catherine Seymour and I attended the Longridge Towers School Founders Day when our annual prize was presented to 3rd form student Molly Ryan for her work with Army Cadets.

Again this year we have given donations to the Tweedmouth Feast Crowning and Carnival Committee and The Spittal Gala.

There is much to be optimistic about Berwick at the moment which includes the proposed new Hospital and new Leisure Centre on separate sites. We really do feel that Berwick is no longer the forgotten town of the county. Northumberland County Council and The Borderlands Growth Deal are intending to fund much more which will be beneficial for the Town including, potentially, a new theatre, arts and conference centre.

We are still waiting to learn the result of the Coastal Communities bids for The Barracks Heritage Hub, the Quayside and the Pontoons which have reached

Government level. However, the Barracks issue has been incorporated into the £300,000 Welcome Visitor Project.

The Berwick Regeneration Commission is very active and a report is included in this Newsletter.

I always have a feeling of trepidation when I hear about plans for The Spittal Point area which must have the greatest potential and one of the most impressive outlooks in the country. Plans are afoot for some of the area - we can only keep an eagle eye on how these proceed.

Michael Gallico does an excellent job as Chairman of the Planning and Development Sub-Committee, despite breaking his leg this summer. Our views are taken on board regularly by the County Planning Committee.

## **EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS**

We have had a number of really interesting, informative talks in the Spring/Summer season of events which are reported later in this Newsletter. We had two given by prestigious lecturers in July when

Dr Adam Menuge gave a master class on Berwick's Commercial Character and Architecture (Described on our website).

Then Dr Peter Jones gave a fascinating description of Ancient Greek Medicine. This meeting, unfortunately, clashed with the Football World Cup semi-final when England was playing! However, after the talk it turned into a thoroughly enjoyable discussion group.

The Heritage Open Days was a highly successful event with many visitors and created a real buzz in the town's atmosphere. There were interesting sites, presentations and walks with a special display in The Town Hall.

The Society oversaw The Main Guard with The New Tower alongside which was opened for the first time and two of the old favourites - The Gunpowder Magazine and The Cumberland Bastion. The small, organising committee for HODS consisted of Linda Bankier, Catherine Kent, Jane Miller, Jim Herbert and myself. The Town Council also gave support.

This year we co-operated and liaised with the three other Autumn Festivals, The Berwick Food

Festival, The Film Festival and The Literary Festival which proved most beneficial and we hope to do the same next year.

The Christmas Party is on Friday, 7th December (details enclosed) and as always I hope to see many of you there. To all our members I wish you a very happy Christmas and festive season.

*Zoreen Hill*

## **NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

It is always a considerable task gathering material for the newsletter in an effort to provide interest and balance. I have been lucky, since taking over two years ago, in having regular input from Michael Cullen, Alan Hughes and more recently from David Spencer-Barclay. However, contributions from other members are most welcome so if you have a topic you would like to write a short article about and likely to be of interest please submit to me preferably by email to:

[john.webster.balerno@btinternet.com](mailto:john.webster.balerno@btinternet.com)

## **PATRICIA (PAT) MILLER**

We were all deeply saddened at the death of Pat Miller on 10th August. Pat was the widow of esteemed architect, Philip Miller, who was Chairman of the Society from 2004 to 2006.

They came to live at Castle Hills in 2000 after Pat, a gifted gardener and designer, had assisted Philip in the restoration of Ampthill Park in Bedfordshire and Cairness House in Aberdeenshire, two large stately homes.

Philip and Pat brought a dynamic into The Civic Society and Berwick with imaginative events, often musical, at Castle Hills and other venues - The Guildhall and The Kings Arms Assembly Rooms.

They both welcomed visitors to Castle Hills, an iconic house in Berwick having been a maternity home where many local residents had been born and given birth.

To many of us Pat's demise seemed sudden - she had looked well and was very cheerful and had recently joined the Executive and P&D Committees.

She will be greatly missed. On 4th September, after the funeral at Houndwood, a reception was held most appropriately in The Main Guard.

*Zoreen Hill*

# CIVIC SOCIETY NEWS

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

May I remind members that annual subscriptions for 2019 will be due on **15 January 2019**: the rate remains the same as for a while, £12 for a joint, and £8 for a single membership which is very good value for all that the Society offers.

Thank you to those who already have a standing order in place: if you do not, there are three ways to pay for 2019:

1. Set up a standing order at your bank or building society to the Civic Society's account: Bank of Scotland, sort code 12-12-57, account number 00156361 You do not need a special form from the Society: this can be done online or over the counter.

2. Set up in online banking a one-off payment to the same account, to be made on 15 January 2019.

**Please**, if you choose either 1. or 2., give your name and initial as a reference so that I can identify your subscription from the bank statement. We do have quite a

number of members who share the same surname.

3. Send a cheque to me at the address below: in fact you can send it now, post-dated to 15 January 2019, whilst it's fresh in your mind!

Whichever method you choose, thank you for your continued support. If you really decide that you no longer wish to support the Society please let me know, so that you do not receive reminders.

*Michael Gallico*

Hon. Treasurer  
72 Ravensdowne,  
Berwick-upon-Tweed,  
Northumberland  
TD15 1DQ

## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SUB- COMMITTEE

This group meets every 6-8 weeks and reviews all new planning applications that affect the designated conservation areas (CAs) and listed buildings.

Normally we do not look at applications outside the CAs although the Society did oppose the retail development at Morrisons on the grounds that any further decline of the retail aspect of the town centre and economic activity would jeopardise the maintenance of historic buildings.

The summer has been fairly quiet for new business and the vast majority cause no comment. More applications for replacement windows have been received, often citing the fact that neighbouring houses already have them, which is not a valid reason when the application affects historic material. In some cases, especially when NCC's Conservation Officer has taken a stand, repair and restoration has been preferred to wholesale replacement.

The former Blackburn & Price site continues to exercise us: whilst the latest application to substitute seven houses for a series of flats is a welcome reduction in density, the Society objected to the monolithic design and height of the row of

houses, and the continued plan to use render and non-traditional materials.

There have been some small successes: a retrospective application (to which the Society objected) for a series of advertisements on the outside of the Pets at Home building was refused and the posters have now gone; and the latest in series of proposals to build housing in the courtyard of St Aidan's House, adjacent to the Ramparts, has been withdrawn.

For new developments, such as that planned for 13 Castle Terrace, the former St Mary's vicarage, there was support because the extension would be clearly different from the existing building; and on Lovaine Terrace two applicants brought forward a well-prepared proposal to restore windows and doors to re-create the original appearance of adjoining houses. Incidentally, some members may not know that Castle Terrace is outside the conservation area, a surprising omission when one thinks about it.

*Michael Gallico*

Chairman, Planning &  
Development Subcommittee

[planning@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

# RECENT TALKS

**David Spencer-Barclay** kindly agreed to take on the demanding role of Reporter at Civic Society meetings following the retiral of Michael Cullen.

Below are his reports from meetings held earlier this year.

## ARCH

On Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 Councillor **Richard Wearmouth**, chair of ARCH, the arms-length development corporation that is attached to Northumberland County Council (NCC), gave a wide ranging talk lasting fifty two minutes to members of the Civic Society on its performance, since there was a change to the Council administration and how ARCH itself has changed

Cllr Wearmouth began his talk with a potted history of how he came from a position in the private sector to becoming chair of ARCH. He moved on to state he and other councillors had discovered issues that needed resolution when the new administration took over, the proposed move to Ashington from Morpeth for county hall was

cancelled and a whole host of other issues were also addressed, like the restoration of free travel for 16-18 year olds in education something that would benefit Berwick based students

Cllr Wearmouth said that in addition to matters addressed above, together with NCC, a programme of activities are now being implemented for example the selling off of properties outwith Northumberland, the provision of affordable housing, the link up with other councils in appointing a mayor for the new north-of-Tyne grouping.

For Berwick-upon-Tweed in particular, ARCH now embraces the Berwick regeneration activities and welcomes the link up of the various groups established in the town and also embraces the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Wearmouth also made reference to the new proposed leisure centre/ hospital building

Cllr Wearmouth fielded several questions from the audience on ARCH and NCC's previous activities in Berwick-upon-Tweed

as questioners had in the past had less than positive experiences when approaching these bodies in the consultation on projects. Cllr Wearmouth sought to reassure the audience on these matters.

Zoreen, Lady Hill Chairman of the Civic Society, gave the vote of thanks.

## SPITTAL POINT

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Mr **Mike Greener**, current secretary of the Spittal Point Development trust, delivered a report on progress on proposals to revitalise the area, he also kindly mentioned the Civic Society's involvement in the project. Mr Greener's report, entitled "Spittal Point- Past, Present and Future?" consisted of a talk aided by a visual presentation to an audience of around fifty.

The visual presentation contained some aerial photographs of how Spittal looked around 1952 and what became apparent was the level of industrial activities present in a fairly concentrated area. The industries were quite diverse in nature, they included salmon fishing employing around 500

workers, some chemical works, phosphate and bone grinding, and fertiliser works both for agricultural use. Mr Greener mentioned that during World War 2, 23 workers were killed when the Luftwaffe mistook the fertiliser works for a munitions factory. The current business activities in the area are for example motor vehicle repairers, some second hand shops, a plant rental company and an ice-cream factory and depot.

Over the last 10 to 15 years there has been at least 7 professional consultations and reports carried out at Spittal Point for the purpose of evaluating how best to improve the look, amenity and employability factors. As would be expected of such discussions on this area, the subject of the remaining Spittal point chimney featured in several questions. In answering these questions, Mr Greener showed several illustrations of how some of the consultants engaged envisaged the use of the chimney; one in particular suggested that the chimney be clad in stainless steel.

County Councillor Georgina Hill, who represents the area, gave the vote of thanks and took the opportunity to provide an update

on the status of most recent activities.

## **BERWICK'S COMMERCIAL CHARACTER**



*Adam during his presentation*

Berwick Civic Society was treated to a fascinating lecture with visual presentation named “ Berwick’s Commercial Character” by Dr **Adam Menuge**, of the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, at Cambridge University. Unusually for the society, the lecture was delivered on the evening of Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at 7:30 pm.

The lecture centred on certain commercial facets of Berwick’s past including for example, how Berwick fitted in with Peter Borsay’s classification of towns in the early eighteenth century. Dr

Menuge developed the concept by comparing Berwick with other towns namely Norwich, Bristol, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Exeter, York, Shrewsbury and Chester. Towns that have similar profiles in terms of population, trade and significance in their own area.

Dr Menuge went on to expand on the classification theme by defining activities within Berwick such as having a market, a military garrison, a seaport together with other facets such as being a parliamentary, postal, trading, fishing and manufacturing town and the values placed on these activities that significantly contributed to Berwick’s financial and commercial profile.

The visual presentation that ran alongside the lecture was comprehensive in its content showing for example a well known engraving of a scene at the top of Hide Hill at the intersection of Marygate and Church Street. The engraving dated back to circa 1799. Views of modern-day Berwick were also shown, Bridge Street, Hide Hill, Church Street featured together with explanations of their design.

Dr Menuge also commented on the use of the then popular window

designs and installations of the type used in the frontage of the Kings Arms hotel on Hide Hill. Internal layouts of buildings were also shown with particular emphasis on preserved staircases.

The lecture lasted one hour and ten minutes. John Webster, Vice-chairman, of the society gave the vote of thanks.

## GREEK MEDICINE

Berwick Civic Society had a second lecture during July 2018. The second lecture was delivered on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm by Dr **Peter Jones** a renowned University classics academic writer and reviewer. The subject matter was on Greek medicine, language and practice.

Dr Jones commenced his lecture by outlining the perceived assumptions the ancient Greeks had made on medical issues and associated remedies. He went on to speak about and expand upon the well established classical view at the time that there were four basic elements that made up the entire world, namely Earth, Air, Fire and Water. There was also the concept that the prevailing

seasons aided medicinal balance in the human body. Reference to Melas Cholos (black bile) featured in this principle.

There was the perception that blood within veins and arteries contained air and that blood simply sloshed about: this view continued into the sixteenth century when relatively modern medics thought that blood travelled up and down in the body, it was not until much later that the theory of circulation was hypothesised and adopted by modern medical practitioners.

Dr Jones went on to describe the derivations of medical terminology relating to organs and diseases originating from both Greek and Latin languages, most definitions of medical conditions can still be expressed in Latin form.

Society member Catherine Seymour was asked to do a set of readings to illustrate the ancient Greek example of how medical conditions were initially defined; each reading was followed by an explanation of the derivation some quite humorous by today's standards. Epilepsy, Diabetes, Gout, Tetanus, Catarrh were just some of the conditions mentioned. Attendees were encouraged to contribute during this part of the

lecture in a question and answer format.

Zoreen, Lady Hill Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

## **BERWICK-RUSSIA THE TRUE STORY**

The joint meeting of the Berwick Civic Society and the Berwick History Society took place on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 7.30pm at the church hall on The Parade Berwick-upon-Tweed. The talk was given by Mr **James Bruce**. Mr Bruce studied Russian at St Andrew's university in Fife.

The subject of the talk was titled 'Berwick-Russia-The Crimean war-The True Story'. Mr Bruce set out to clarify the popular misconception that the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed is still at war with Russia, something that visitors to the town and visitors to Berwick Civic Society's exhibition at the Main Guard in particular, frequently bring up in their questions to the stewards.

The situation originally occurred due to the wording on legal documentation prepared at the outbreak of the Crimean war where

the town Berwick-upon-Tweed was specifically identified as an entity and as a result of oversights in the administrative procedures after the end of the war, Berwick, on paper was still at war with Russia, this situation was identified and rectified.

In parallel with the talk, Mr Bruce provided a photographic slide based visual presentation of newspaper articles following the subject and showed some interesting cartoon images of politicised maps of Europe and Russia showing satirical viewpoints of the time. Mr Bruce has spent time in Russia most recently at the football World Cup; he showed some interesting slides of historical locations in and around the stadium.

Mr Bruce ended with a question and answer session. Mr Bernard Shaw and Zoreen, Lady Hill respectively from the History Society and the Civic Society, gave the votes of thanks

# OTHER ITEMS

## BERWICK'S STEAMSHIPS

Steam power was effecting mighty changes at sea and many companies saw an engine-driven future. Berwick's smacks and clippers soon had to make way for some Leviathans. Never can there have been so many steamships working out of Berwick as there were in 1838.

The Berwick based General Shipping Company bought the Ardincaple, '*a fine fast sailing vessel*' which had survived a fearful storm off Bamburghshire in which three seamen and two ladies had been washed overboard. That same year, 1838, the company also bought the Glenalbyn, '*a powerful and elegant steamship*'. These two vessels had been acquired with the intention of carrying on trade with Newcastle and York.

The mood of thrusting optimism did not last long and soon the chairman's reports mulled gloomily over the difficulties of steam. They

had to operate at or near maximum capacity to pay. The Ardincaple needed new boilers. They were costly to insure and sometimes weren't. Nor did Newcastle's trade depression help. The Glenalbyn was taken off the York run after a year and sold.

Before it disappeared from the scene the Glenalbyn had been involved in an incident with another vessel, The Tourist. This intruder tied up in the Glenalbyn's berth. The Harbour Master shouted to the captain to move. When he refused the Harbour Master returned with an axe and slashed the moorings. The matter ended up in court with a finding for the Harbour Master.

Despite the General Shipping Company's problems the Berwick Shipping Company also thought steam would '*ultimately prevail*' and bought the Manchester and Rapid, putting both vessels on the London run. In 1840 though, the chairman's report was listing '*events of a disastrous nature*'. These included colliding with the forty-ton Trotter in the Thames estuary, running down a sloop off

## EDWARD 1st GOOD FRIDAY 1296

Shields, swamping coal carrying Thames barges and, most seriously, a collision with the barque Tyrian in which four of its crew were killed. The Manchester too had been damaged in a Thames storm.

By 1843 the Berwick Shipping Company too was wondering whether there really was going to be a future in steam. An event helped it decide. In November 1844, the Rapid was tied up at its Berwick mooring when a fierce conflagration at night sank it.

Underlying everything was the consciousness of the ever-advancing railway that would put an end to the London trade. On the completion of the Newcastle-Tweedmouth section of the line Ardincaple was sold for the meagre sum of £255. In May 1848, the Berwick Shipping Company was advertising '*new and fast clipper schooners*' and sent the Manchester to the breaker's yard. The steamship adventure was over.

*Michael Cullen*

The Association of Free Miners still work in Gloucestershire's Forest of Dean, the last link to a Charter granted by Edward 1st March 30th 1296 at Berwick. Edward was so impressed by the speed with which a group of his soldiers undermined the walls of Berwick Castle that he granted them charter to dig for coal freely. Anyone over 21, apprenticed to a free-miner for a year and a day, could call himself a free-miner. What brought Edward and his men to Berwick-upon-Tweed 700 years ago and why did he order them to undermine its walls?

When asked where MAGNA CARTA was signed, one wag replied, "bottom right hand corner?" We know that John Lackland did in fact apply his seal to the bottom right hand corner at Runnymede June 15th 1215. My wife Susan's uncle Geoffrey Sale found a copy of the 'Great Charter' at King's School Bruton when headmaster, its sale securing the future of his school.

The charter included promise to defend the life, liberty and property of all citizens. John died of dysentery at Newark a year after Runnymede, fighting his barons around the Wash, supported by Dauphin Louis of France and French mercenaries. John had Pope Innocent III annul Magna

Carta but it was reissued shortly after his son Henry III succeeded him.

Henry was succeeded by his son Edward I. Edward no doubt chose to ignore the letter of the Great Charter's law as he arrived on the outskirts of Berwick March 30th 1296. He rode on his favourite horse Bayard at the head of an army estimated to comprise 30,000 foot soldiers, 5,000 mounted men at arms and over 100 ships. Berwick, once the foremost of the four original Royal Boroughs of Scotland, was to suffer such a reversal of its former fortunes that it was never to recover. One historian puts it plainly "the town was ruined forever, and the greatest merchant-city of Northern Britain sank from that time into a petty seaport".

One wonders just how much or how little Berwickers knew of Edward's reputation, as they defied and taunted him with the name 'Longshanks' a title by which he would be known for the rest of his days, days that many Berwickers would not live to see.

After witnessing the young Prince Edward stab a man to death at dinner, one subject remarked "I look forward with dread to the day when he will become King." Edward embarked upon a Crusade to The Holy Land in 1270, where he attacked Nazareth, killing everyone he found there. Although his father died in 1272, life was so

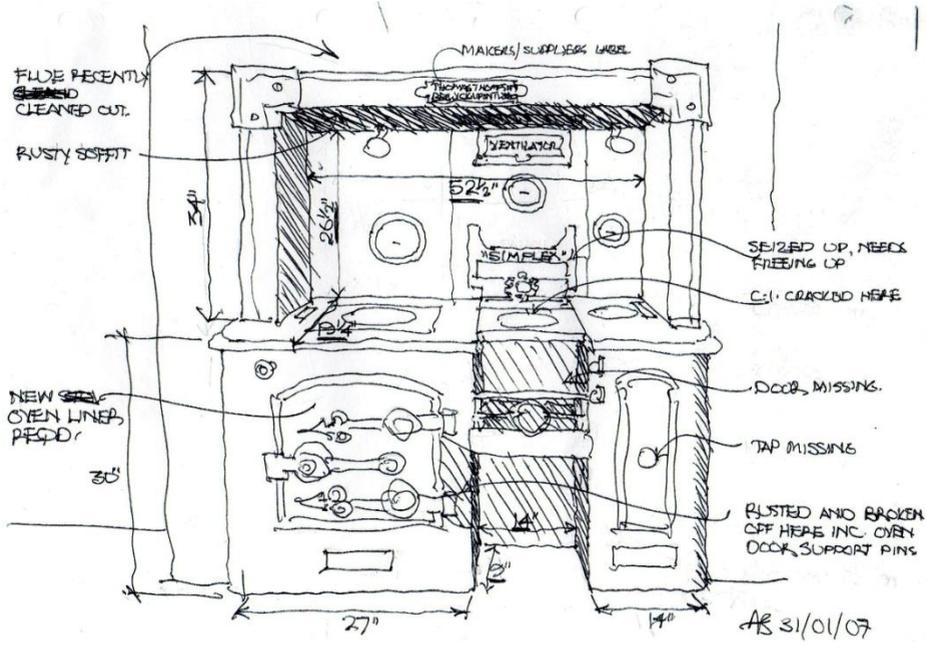
stable at home Edward did not return to be crowned until 1274.

After his Coronation, Edward was determined to be seen to be King and ruler not simply in name but also in deed, so focussed on what he perceived to be the four main threats to his Kingship, the Welsh, the Jews, the Scots and the French.

He waged two systematic campaigns against the Welsh, the first in 1276-77 led to the overthrow of the great Llewellyn ap Gruffyd. Turning then to his second threat, he had all Jews in Britain arrested, hung 267 and banished the remainder.

Returning to the 'Welsh problem' in 1282, further attacks led to the death of the Great Llewellyn and the capture of his brother David, whom Edward had hung, drawn and quartered at London.

*Alan Hughes*



## DAVID'S GRATE CHALLENGE

Berwick Civic Society has in its ethos the desire to preserve as much of the historic fabric in the town, in this context it is correct for not only the external architectural features to be preserved but to also ensure where possible, that historic internal features are preserved. On the basis of the foregoing, I as a retired design engineer who likes to participate in hands-on engineering projects, classic car restoration and guitar construction for example, was delighted to accept a commission to renovate a range type cooker/heater located in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

A range was the forerunner to the AGA style of cooker and has its roots in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century when the technique of casting iron into practical, robust and decorative items was perfected, the historic village of Beamish has several working examples. This model dates from the late 1880's and comprises of an oven, hot plate cooking and water heating facility and was custom built to fit the available space by a local company called Thompson.

Having researched the subject and obtained a sketch, I was able to assess what the range originally looked like, so I produced several drawings of the components that needed construction at the workshop at my home. It must be noted that the grade of cast iron used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is no longer available; therefore I had to use modern materials to complete the project.

The first item I had to repair was the oven door support side panel that had fractured and as such did not allow the oven door to open or close safely. Using a piece of 3mm (1/8"inch) thick steel plate I was able to sandwich this plate behind the existing broken pieces and to drill and countersink (very very carefully) the cast iron support and secure the repair with slotted head countersunk screws to give the correct period look.

The second item requiring attention was the replacement of the severely corroded interior oven panels. Due to the limited access within the oven I had to remove the existing panels, use them as a template and to construct new panels offsite in a way that reflected the accessibility issues and then install them in a fairly difficult way.

The third item is the firebox hearth; this item was disintegrating so I took the decision on safety grounds to dismantle it. I rescued the useable parts and constructed a freestanding custom-made firebox structure to be bolted to the floor.

I have found the project to be a very interesting experience and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge

***David Spencer-Barclay***



**The refurbished range**

## PAXTON HOUSE WATER WHEEL



*The wheel in action*

If you've not been already then a visit to Paxton House is worthwhile to see Scotland's only surviving 18<sup>th</sup> century waterwheel and beam pump in action. The waterwheel came back into use in April this year after considerable restoration.

Here is information gleaned from the Paxton House website that gives a bit of background.

*When John Adam designed Paxton House for Patrick Home in 1756, architect and owner had to make special provision for supplying it with fresh water from the springs in the Dene.*

*This was far sighted of them both at the time as little was known about water borne diseases until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Water quality was generally perceived as either 'fresh' or 'foul'.*

*Paxton was one of the first houses in Scotland to pump water from a local spring up to a storage tank at the top of the house, using cutting edge 18<sup>th</sup> century technology.*

*A huge flood in 1948 buried the remnants of the original mechanism but we were fortunate as a very similar system was discovered at nearby Blackadder. This last surviving water wheel and pump were kindly donated to the Paxton Trust by Blair Harrower, meaning this historically important machinery could be saved and conserved.*

*John Webster*



*Access to the wheel is down steps to the burn*

# BERWICK REGENERATION COMMISSION

The Berwick Regeneration Commission (BRC) was set up with the purpose of providing democratic legitimacy and a clear route for delivery of regeneration projects in the town.

Its membership includes the three Northumberland County Councillors for Berwick, Georgina Hill, Gregah Roughead and Catherine Seymour.



It also contains Richard Wearmouth, the NCC Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development. Richard is also Chairman of NCC's regeneration arm, Arch which is soon to be replaced by a new company called Advance Northumberland.

There are three members from Berwick Town Council and three

elected Northumbria Healthcare, NHS Foundation Trust governors who sit on the Commission for matters relating to healthcare and the new Berwick Hospital.

We also have the support of a range of officers with wide-ranging expertise in regeneration, economic development and bid writing.

Amongst the key aims of the BRC are Town centre improvement (drastically improving the look of Marygate), improving rail connectivity, developing a Berwick-focussed tourism strategy, maximising our position on and by the water, development of a further and higher education offering and promoting projects which have the potential to be truly transformational.

The BRC is delighted with the recent good news that £20m will be invested in a new state of the art leisure centre with a 3G pitch. Also, that Berwick will have a new hospital on a separate site and there are a range of other developments in the pipeline.

The BRC is excited by the opportunities presented by North of Tyne Devolution and, particularly, the Borderlands Growth Deal.

We are bidding for major funding for a new theatre, cinema and conference centre for Berwick, with the intention of creating an iconic new building which, to use the phrase of the leader of NCC, creates the potential for “cultural transformation” in the town, building on the already excellent offering at The Maltings.

The BRC is keen to work with the various groups in the town and all residents as we strive to usher in a new era of delivery for Berwick.

*Georgina Hill*

## SPITTAL TOURISM

In April 1920, Cllr. Edminson was anxious to get Spittal cleaned up before visitors arrived. He noted in particular the dilapidated state of part of the prom and that the Fish Quay *‘had an evil look and a terrible smell*. Smells from fish curing and the factories had been off-putting. The previous June it had been too much for one visitor who went home early for, *‘the smell was in my bedroom and every place I went. It haunted me everywhere’*. Those who came from industrial towns were probably more hardened to these aromas.

Large numbers of visitors did though come, parties numbered in the hundreds being common. The habit of the Border towns taking their trade holidays in rotation ensured a steady inflow during the summer months. In 1928 Spittal was so crowded with visitors as to give *‘the idea of an invasion’*. Sizable school parties turned up regularly, that from Kelso being the most persistent. (This was a long-established custom and an idea to go elsewhere in 1908 had had children chalking ‘Vote for Spittal’ on the pavement when the matter was put to a meeting. Spittal won.)

In 1930 a party of 800 arrived at Tweedmouth Station and marched to Spittal preceded by the Kelso Pipe Band. Its popularity survived the wet weather of which they seemed to get an unfair share.

It was sometimes said that there was not enough to do. An extra dimension was added with the opening of the Palais de Dance though it burned down two years after opening. Fortes replaced it with the popular Venetian pavilion which hosted tea and coffee dances while those with a competitive edge could enter foxtrot or crooning competitions.

On the beach you could hire a deck chair and listen to one of the Colliery bands playing on the prom, try your luck on the putting green, take part in a clock golf competition, or play tennis. For children there were the Daily Mail 'sand-designing' competition, a roundabout, and donkeys.

In 1933 there was an event no-one could ever have expected. There was the crash-landing of three German balloonists on the putting green. They had been blown off course, were arrested as aliens, but later cheered as they were sent on their way from the station.

Spittal had its devotees. When Mr. Robert Laurie of Selkirk died in 1931 he had been coming to Spittal for 65 years. While there were some grumbles such as those over accommodation, but compliments too (a Mr. Solomon complained of the '*unpleasantness of the accommodation*' while Mr. James Dalglish had '*always been most comfortable*') there were those enchanted by their discovery. To an American gent Spittal was '*a marvellous little place - just the kind of spot I've been looking for*'.

**Michael Cullen**

## The Berwick Civic Society

is a Registered Charity (No. 508953)

Website:  
[www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

### Office Bearers 2018-2019

Chairman..... *Zoreen Lady Hill*

Vice-Chairman...*John Webster*

Hon. Treasurer & Membership Secretary.....*Michael Gallico*

Hon. Secretary..... *Vacant post*

Newsletter & Website.....*John Webster*

Please feel free to email any Officer of the Society using:

[contact@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

Membership forms can be downloaded from the website:

[www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk)