

DURHAM VCH NEWSLETTER

Number 18

January 2014

Chairman's Report

Everybody will be delighted to know that volume 5, the History of Sunderland, is now in preparation for publication. The typescript was delivered in January 2013. It has been to an external reader and through in-house editing and is now virtually ready to go to press. Gill, Christine, Maureen and John pulled out all the stops to get the text completed. It was not easy for them, working part-time and in the face of all sorts of obstacles. The whole team, but especially Gill who ended up doing a lot more than anticipated, is owed our grateful thanks. The following is the summary of the report by the external reader:

In keeping with the high status, purpose and tradition of the VCH, the authors are to be congratulated on the content and organisation of this volume. The depth and quality of detail provided, and the way in which they have managed to draw individual contributions into a logical and well-ordered narrative is a particular strength. They have left no stone unturned in the quest to provide readers with a durable, comprehensive and thoroughly modern account of the History of Sunderland.

I, for one, can't wait.

It is hoped that proofs will be ready by the time you read this, in January 2014, and that publication, if all goes to plan, will be in the summer. Financial support is available from the Marc Fitch Fund for a special lecture to be held in the region in association with publication. I'm delighted to be able to say that Chris Mullin has accepted our invitation to talk about Sunderland and its history. The date and venue will be announced and publicised with other details of the launch after we have a definite date for publication.

With the imminent publication of volume V the time has come to take stock. We cannot expect ever again to have the resources to hire a full-time editor, let alone editor and assistant. The future almost certainly lies with volunteers, working towards the production of future volumes. There is now only one county that has the resources to employ a full-time editor: many are sustained like us by Trusts who are able to call upon a retired full-time editor in an honorary capacity or employ a part-time editor especially to coordinate the work of volunteers. We will be looking to employ a part-time editor. Your generous

subscriptions and donations bring in over £4,000 a year. We have a reasonable balance in the bank, over £20,000, but will need to find new funding to sustain a part-time editor over several years.

The future of the 'Big Red Book' is uncertain after 2018. We cannot be sure, therefore, that there will be a volume 6 of the Durham History in its historic format. Electronic publishing is likely to be the long-term solution. In the mean time, two or three counties have been pioneering a new series called 'VCH Shorts', which are parish histories, published conventionally with a short run, but also available to be published on demand. A major objective of part-time editor will be to develop the work of our volunteer groups in Gainford, Middleton in Teesdale and Washington to produce such histories. In the case of Gainford and Middleton it may be possible to produce a series of 'VCH Shorts' that could then form the basis of a volume VI, in print or electronically. These histories may well be based on and extend the existing but never published early-twentieth century galley proofs and draft (in the case of Gainford).

There have been a few arrivals and departures in 2013. Sir Paul Nicholson has retired as Lord Lieutenant, but has kindly agreed to continue as a patron in a personal capacity. He has been very supportive over the years both in promoting the history of Sunderland and in helping with fund raising. Mrs Snowdon, his successor as Lord Lieutenant, has accepted our invitation to continue the tradition of representing the monarch as a patron. We have carelessly lost another bishop, as everyone will know. I will ask the Rt Rev Paul Butler to carry on the tradition of episcopal patronage when he arrives in his diocese. Sadly, I must report that several long-term supporters and friends have died. Kit Bartram, who was with us from the beginning, and was a regular and unmissable attendee at the annual meetings died in the autumn. Constance Fraser, an eminent historian of medieval Durham and the north east, and early supporter of the revived Trust, died earlier in the year. So to did Gordon Batho, a stalwart of the local branch of the Historical Association and the Durham County Local History Society; Barrie Dobson, author of the definitive history of the priory in the later middle ages; and most recently Richard Britnell, whose contribution to the history of medieval Durham was equally significant.

May I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year. I look forward to welcoming many of you at the launch of the Sunderland volume.

A J Pollard

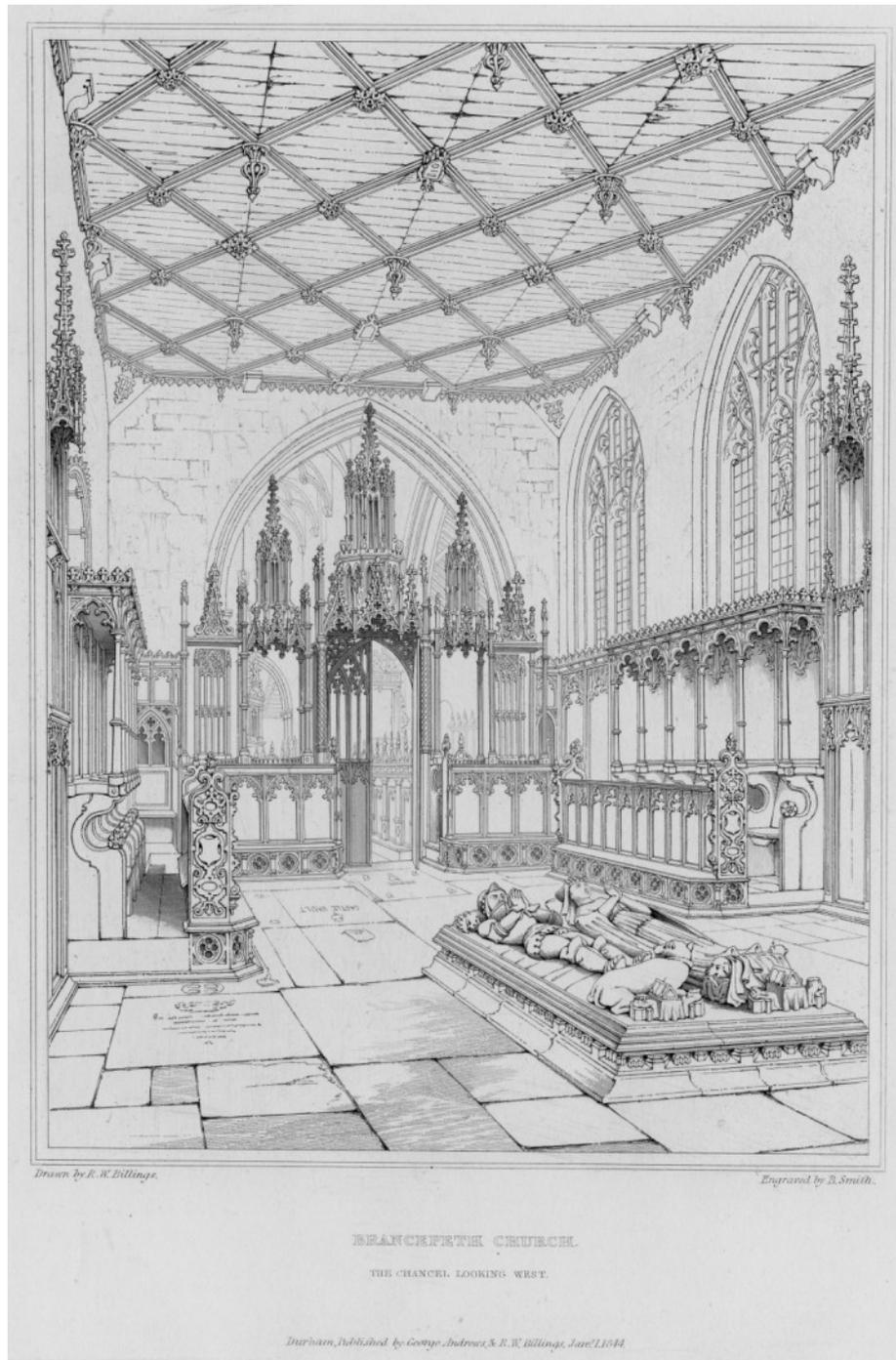
Annual Supporters' Meeting: Brancepeth St Brandon's Church Saturday 8th June 2013



30 supporters of the Durham Victoria County History Trust held their meeting in the church on a sunny 8th June day this year and heard an encouraging report from the Chairman Professor Tony Pollard about the projected publication in 2014 of the Trust's Sunderland volume (vol.5 of the series) and the plans for involvement in work on the south of County Durham and Teesdale.



The poignant final words of the comprehensive report on Brancepeth Church by J T Fowler and W H D Longstaffe in the first volume, 1863, of the Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland focus, quite rightly on “zeal for the beauty of holiness” and the need for care in any changes in a fabric so varied, historic and numinous.



On Wednesday 16th September 1998 a disastrous fire at Brancepeth Church gutted the building, destroying the mediaeval and 17th century woodwork, the organ, the stained glass, the bells frame and radically affected the fabric’s structure and stonework.

At our June Meeting Dr Peter Ryder, Architectural Historian, of Riding Mill talked to us about the restoration of Brancepeth Church over the last 15 years and about the transformation of the shell of 1998 into a serene, light and welcoming centre for parish worship and community activity. Around £2m from insurance and £400k was enhanced by a 1999 appeal for £750K. Every aspect of the church and village life was carefully considered in what needed to be done with architectural guidance and design by Chris Downs of Heaton and by Ulrika Knox of Knox-McConnell of Saltaire. During the effectual rebuilding of the church many 12th and 13th century cross slabs were found in the damaged fabric of the clerestory and elsewhere and these were extracted. Originally probably located in the churchyard they had been re-used in strengthening the walls at a later date and are now displayed partly on the north and south walls of the nave and partly in a reserved area in Brancepeth Castle.



Peter Ryder eloquently helped our meeting to understand the social as well as the historical significance of the emblems on these remarkable survivals and, after lunch Mrs Margaret Dobson very kindly showed the group the magnificent castle and the location of the other stones. Professor Maureen Meikle 's photographs illustrate the happiness of the day.

We are very grateful to Sue Morgan and Jean Hodgson, Administrators of Brancepeth St Brandon, for all their help in organizing the day, to William Brewis and Jake of the Boldon Farmhouse Pantry for a delicious buffet lunch, to Margaret Dobson for so generously indulging the myriad interests of the group in the architecture and history of the Castle, and to Peter Ryder for his splendid scholarship so lightly worn.

Roger Norris



The effigy from the tomb of Robert Nevill—known as the “Peacock of the North” is now set beside a screen of steel and glass created by Brian Russell at Little Newsham Forge, Winston.

There is a copy of Peter Ryder’s archaeological report, based on his survey of the church building after the fire, available on the church’s website <http://www.stbrandon.co.uk/archaeo.html>



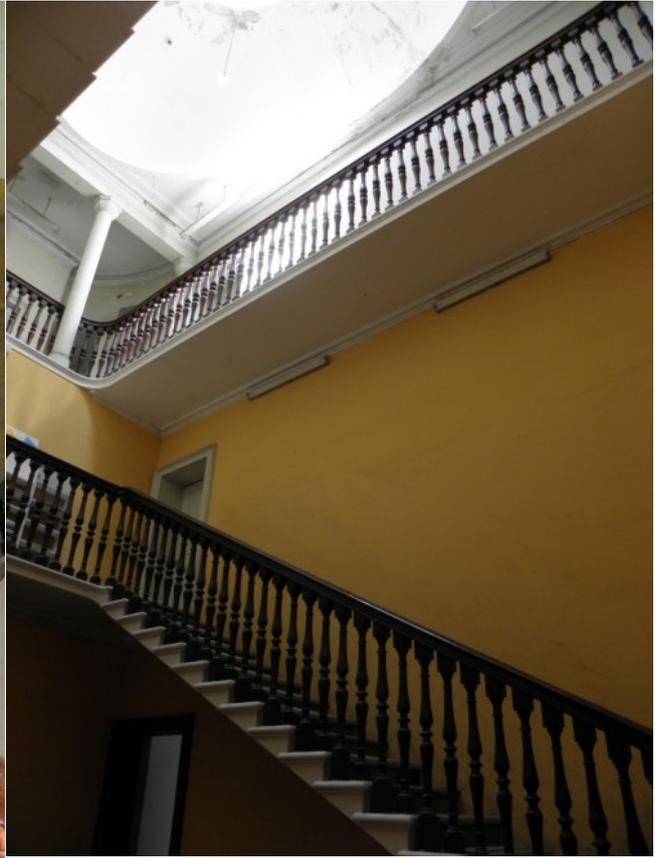
Brancepeth Castle 1 February 1782 (above) and 8 June 2013





Brancepeth Castle interiors





And then far down the stairs ... to the chambers of the medieval castle at the base of the tower.





Recent books :

Michael **Johnson** & Graham **Potts** : *The architecture of Sunderland 1700-1914*. Stroud, The History Press 2013 192pp. MJ and GP have produced a fine, detailed, magisterial account of the architectural history of Sunderland 18th-early 20th centuries. This is a comprehensive synthesis of scholarly and accessible study full of sparkling detail, the earliest accounts being in the 1st chapter and subsequent chapters taking individual types and natures of buildings – Public, Ecclesiastical, Commercial, Transport, Domestic, showing the architectural development of Sunderland to have been of the most varied and distinguished kind. The work is accompanied by good new photography, a glossary, and helpful references. So much in this new work has not been brought together before. It provides a proper recognition of the high quality architectural professionalism from which the City has benefited.

Douglas **Pocock** : *The story of Durham*. Stroud, The History Press 2013 192pp. DP's work for the City of Durham Trust from the early '70s until the present day has been a model for any Civic Society, a careful mixture of considered praise and measured judgment, and in his latest book he brings together, usually with generous optimism, an account of the long and colourful history of the City, its buildings, landscape and the people who have nudged its progress.

Martin **Roberts** : *The buildings and landscapes of Durham University*. Durham 2013 160pp. Martin Roberts, well-respected for his work with Durham City and as Historic Buildings Inspector for English Heritage as well as for his English Heritage *Book of Durham* (1994), takes us through the districts of Durham City together with the Stockton-upon-Tees Campus and the buildings of Ushaw College, with new narrative and illustrations. MR is embarking on a 3rd edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's *County Durham* (1st edition 1953, 2nd edition 1984).

Kenneth **Warren** : *Jarrow: Victorian industrialization and afterwards*. Ledbury, Leazes Press 2013 xi, 237pp. KW, historian and analyst of North East industry, especially shipbuilding and armaments, here focuses on the South Shields born Sir Charles Mark Palmer (1822-1907), his *Shipbuilding and Iron Company Ltd*, and the history and fate of the industries especially at Jarrow until the late 20th century. KW has also recently published *The builders of Elswick : partners, managers & working men 1847-1927* (Ledbury, Leazes Press 2013) ix, 239pp. Covering eighty years of the Scotswood Road Armstrong Whitworth armaments works under the cultured suzerainty of Armstrong, Mitchell, Rendel, Noble and Falkner, this is a personal and social history as well as one of economics and business.

Roger Norris

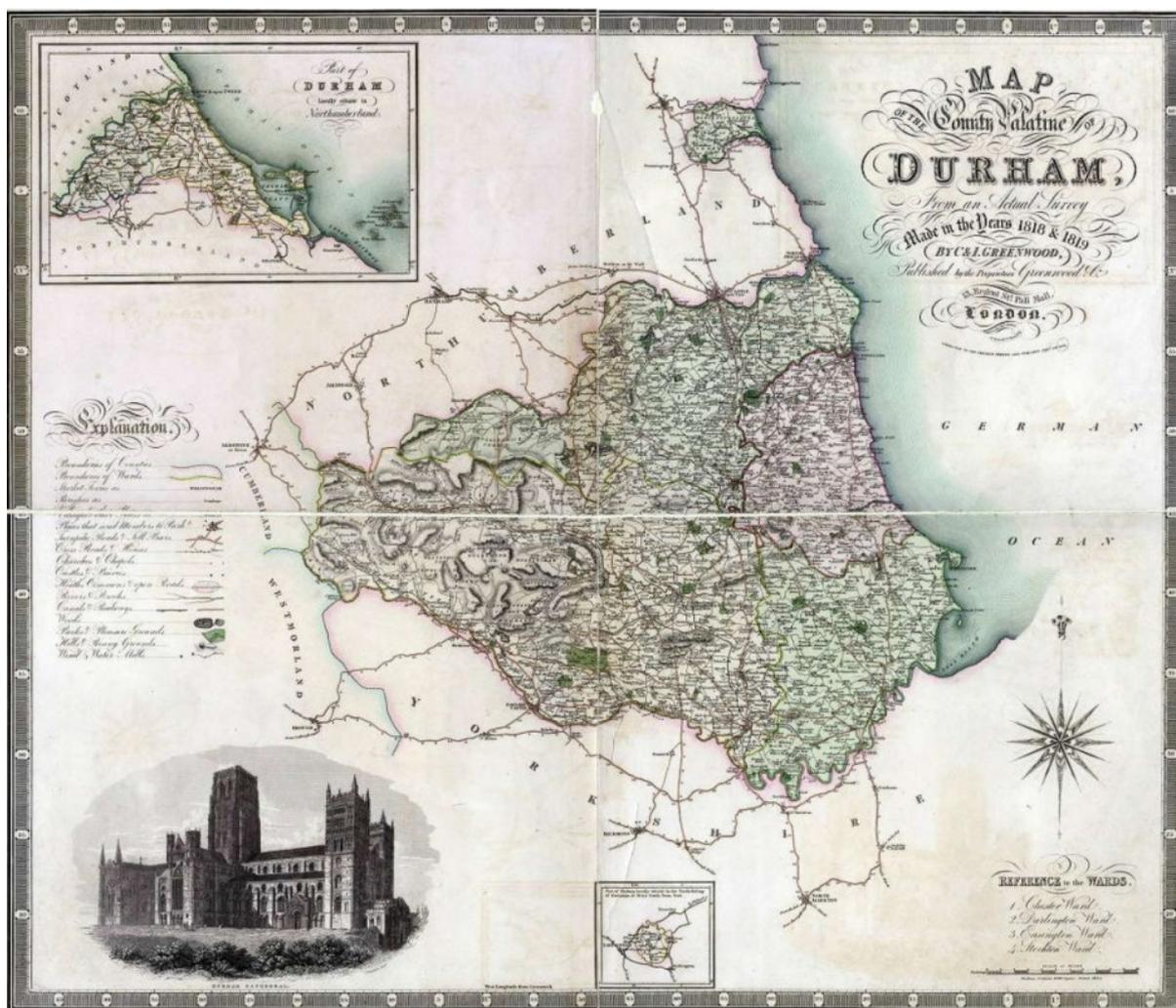
County Durham has a new flag <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-25039676>: apparently, it had been the only county in the north not to have one. The identity of County Durham does not seem to be clearly defined on the wider stage, as even the coal mining tradition that had been associated with it for a couple of centuries seems likely only to diminish. Certainly the generic resident of County Durham does not evoke an instant stereotypical recognition such as that enjoyed by our southern neighbour, the Yorkshireman. The large chunks removed in the 1970s by the creation of Tyne and Wear caused further change to our county, although they do seem to have reinforced the identities of Tyneside and Wearside, and fostered the emergence of the river-spanning entity Newcastle-Gateshead.

Before the Geordie, Mackem or Smoggie, even before the first football was kicked hereabouts, there was another term for the people of this region, the *haliwerfolc*. It has such a pleasing ring to it: the combination of the initial impression of utter foreignness, modified by the gratifying recognition of the simpler parts of the compound terms within that Old English words can evoke. It is so resonant that it is surprising that it has not been seized upon by some marketing consultancy, although perhaps we should be relieved to be spared, thus far, the Haliwerfolc's Shopping Centre.

Originating in the Anglo-Saxon period, the word means the people of the holy man, and of course refers to the fundamental influence of St Cuthbert across the region. It is clear that whatever the geographic range it originally covered, during the palatinate period of post-conquest Durham the term specifically referred to the people of County Durham, those living in an area either defined as between the Tees and the Tyne, or Yorkshire and Northumberland. Perhaps if County Durham had not been so closely identified with the

see of Durham we could have been now living in Haliwerfolk (as with Norfolk and Suffolk, it is not an unprecedented form for a county name).

Durham had fluid boundaries long before 1974 (although for the purposes of the VCH our territory is clearly defined), with several detached sections as shown below on the map published by John Greenwood in 1831. This, unusually for a County Durham map, included all the detached outliers, Norhamshire and Islandshire in the inset box at the top, Bedlingtonshire to the north and the tiny exclave of Craikshire inset at the bottom. All of these small outposts of the county were finally brought under other administrations by the Counties (Detached Parts) Act of 1844, which removed almost all of these anomalies from England and Wales. Durham was the county who lost the largest territory in this process.



Richard Higgins
Newsletter editor

Please send any correspondence to me at r.i.higgins@durham.ac.uk or by post:

Durham VCH Trust
Place Green Library
Palace Green
Durham
DH1 3RN