

XII

The Elusive Mr. Birch

R. J. Malden

IN THE graveyard, near the east of the chancel of St. Andrew's Church, Corbridge-on-Tyne, there is the broken stump of a gravestone which bears the initials E.B. 1767. In front of it is a metal plaque with the words, "Eliezer Birch, Churchwarden and Benefactor of the Parish 1720-1767". In life, and in death, Birch was a mysterious figure. He arrived in Corbridge, apparently from nowhere, and died at the comparatively early age of 47. He has intrigued many people, especially my late mother, Mrs. Margaret Malden, who laid flowers on the grave on the two hundredth anniversary of his death.¹

There is some received wisdom in the village about Eliezer Birch—that he presented the clock to the Church, that he built the pant in Prince's Street, and that he built and lived in Cross House. Each of the Histories of Corbridge mentions him, but usually without reference to documentary evidence:

Mackenzie, in 1825: "... about the year 1760, Eleazer Birch, Esq, ordered a piece of ground near the ancient Corchester to be drained, when several tanners' or skinners' pits were found. They were all built with brick."²

Robert Foster writes more than a hundred and ten years after Birch's death: "Where he came from, or his antecedents, were never satisfactorily known. There was an opinion, held by a few, that he was a refugee from Ireland; others held different views of his whereabouts; one thing was certain respecting him,—he was a gentleman, both in purse and character. . . . A small stone resting against the churchyard wall, on the west side of the pele tower, records his death."³

Dixon in 1912 writes: ". . . and is sometimes called French and at others an Irish refugee, but his antecedents are not satisfactorily known."⁴

The *Northumberland County History* is more factual about his properties in Corbridge.⁵

Walter Iley, because he lived in Cross House, undertook considerable research, into Birch's life and comments that, as far as is known, there is no written source for Foster's remarks and put forward a question, "Was the government still sufficiently afraid of Jacobitism to have a spy—an agent—in Corbridge in 1760 and to keep him until 1767?"⁶

The element of chance enters into any research, and so it has been with this article. My mother often told me what little she knew about Eliezer Birch, and, as a young boy, I was a frequent visitor to Cross House. However, it was chance, twenty years after leaving Corbridge, that led me to a major piece of evidence which has helped, substantially, to fill some of the blanks in Birch's life. This was a reference⁷ to one Eliezer Birch, apparently acting as a government spy in Derby during the 1745 Rising, and, in turn, to a remarkable document, written by Birch, which recorded his capture and escape from the Scottish invading army in Derby. At least two copies of this document exist, one in the Duke of Devonshire's papers at Chatsworth in Birch's own hand⁸ and another published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1817.⁹ The text transcribed has already appeared in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, but not accompanied by any discussion.¹⁰

Many questions about Birch remain to be answered, but the story unfolds of a wealthy young man, who acted on impulse as a spy, had a dramatic escape, then forced to take early retirement due to ill health, and who came to love his adopted home of Corbridge. In piecing together this story I have received unstinting assistance from Miss J. M. Ayton, Manchester City Council; Mrs. A. M. Burton, North-

umberland County Council; The Clerk, The Drapers' Company; Mrs. J. L. Drury, University of Durham; Miss C. M. Hall, The British Library; E. Higgs, Public Record Office; J. E. Lloyd, Researcher; M. A. Pearman, Chatsworth Estates; Mrs. L. Shaw, University of Nottingham; Dr. C. Shrimpton, The North-umberland Estates; Dr. D. M. Smith, The Borthwick Institute of Historical Research; Miss C. Wightman, Public Record Office; Miss J. M. Wraight, Guildhall Library, and especially from my wife Eilean.

The Birch family came from near Manchester and had connections with Birch Chapel. One member, John Birch, served as a colonel in Cromwell's army. John's nephew Sergeant Birch, was a Member of Parliament and was one of the thirteen commissioners, with an annual salary of £1,000 free of tax, appointed to supervise the disposal of the estates forfeited following the 1715 rising. The Derwentwater Estates were sold by fraudulent auction at a price estimated as £20,000 below their minimum value to Birch and a Newcastle industrialist. He was expelled from the House of Commons in 1732 as a result of this corruption and died in 1735.¹¹ Since the mid sixteenth century the Birch family held property at Chorlton Roe, Lancashire.¹²

The Reverend Eliezer Birch became Minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, in 1712. A staunch Hanoverian, he died in 1717, leaving his property in Chorlton Roe and his books and surgical instruments to his eldest son John, and the sum of four hundred pounds to his other son Robert.¹³ Robert Birch is variously described as a fustian man, a woollen draper or a linen draper, and amassed a considerable fortune.¹⁴ When he died in 1762, he left bequests, with one notable exception, which totalled £27,500 in cash (a present day equivalent of £1,100,000) as well as property. He had already distributed in his lifetime £9,900 (£396,000).¹⁵ The notable exception was:

"And whereas I have already given to my eldest son Eliezer Birch the sum of six thousand two hundred pounds and upwards and he hath since

behaved himself towards me in such an undutiful manner as hath rendered himself undeserving of any more or greater part or share of my estate real or personal I therefore give unto him One Shilling and no more."¹⁶

Robert Birch married Alice Lees on 10 July 1717, shortly after the death of Eliezer senior, and it is likely that their son Eliezer was born around 1718 and named in memory of his grandfather. As yet, no trace has been found of his baptism.¹⁷ Eliezer seems to have been well educated, though where is presently unknown. The records of Manchester Grammar School make no mention of him or of his school fellow Orrell.¹⁸ Eliezer no doubt joined his father's business at an early age and was probably sent to London to expand the firm. By 1745 he had set up as a linen draper, at Bucklersbury in London.

In 1745 the unthinkable happened. A Scottish army invaded England, taking a western route towards London. They arrived in Manchester or, more particularly, Salford, on 29th November.¹⁹

Either as a result of possibly being implicated with the Jacobites, or for fear of his business, Robert wrote to his son in London asking him to return with all haste to Manchester. This Eliezer did and, on 2nd December, started out from London.²⁰ The events which followed are best given in Eliezer's own words as found in his report to the Duke of Devonshire.²¹ On realizing that the rebel forces were approaching Derby he decided that:

"... I would Stay in Town and take as particular an Account of the Rebels as I was able and would if Desired Send such Acc^t to the Duke of Devonshire at Nottingham..."

To help in this enterprise he asked Mrs. Howe, the postmaster's wife, for a handful of peas

"... by the Help of wich I thought I could execute my design with more Certainty and less confusion than any other Method I could then think of..."

Having placed himself in a room overlooking

the Ashbourne road Birch, together with an old school friend by the name of Orrell, carefully counted the number of the rebels as they entered Derby. In all some 2300 foot, 450 horse, 75 baggage and about 40 lead horses passed this vantage point and this information Birch took to Uttoxeter, hoping to find the Duke of Cumberland, but was redirected to Stafford where he arrived at 2 am. Giving his information to the Duke's Secretary, he decided to return to Derby for further information, thinking that the rebels would have left by the time he arrived. On arrival in Derby at 7 pm he was recognized by a Manchester volunteer in the rebel army and was arrested on the Nun's Green.²² He was taken to Lord Exeter's House, in Full Street near the Market Place and confined in the guard house.²³ This was, in fact, the headquarters of the Prince and Birch was brought into a room containing some 30 senior officers where he was questioned by Sir John Hay of Restelrig, the Prince's Secretary, before being imprisoned in an upper room. This gathering of superior officers was, in fact, the council meeting at which the decision was taken to retreat from Derby. Birch

"... Continued under a Strong Guard till abt 7 o'Clock ye next Morning [Friday 6th December] at which Time there Appeared an extraordinary Bustle and Hurry amongst my Guard ..."

Realizing that his guards had disappeared, he forced the shutters of his window and jumped down to the gravel path below, a drop of some twenty feet. From there he made his escape into the adjoining garden, stripped off his clothes and swam for about three miles downstream to Alvaston. Here he found shelter in a house, but was soon aware of the pursuit and, as they knocked on the front door

"... I made my Escape out of a Back Door And with all my might Ran towards the River but Apprehended myself closely pursued and being incapable of Undergoing much more Fatigue I got behind a Hedge and Lay upon ye Ground ..."

The cold was so intense that he forced himself

to crawl to a second house, but again the pursuit was soon on his track and

"... made my Escape by Leaping out of a parlour window soon after my persuers came into ye Kitchen and, with the greatest Difficulty and Danger got to Elverson ..."

Here he obtained a horse and made his way to Nottingham where he arrived at 4 pm.

Presumably Lord George Murray would make every effort that news of the retreat was kept secret for as long as possible, hence the sustained pursuit of Birch. The pursuers had been told that it was a member of the Prince's forces that had deserted. By 11 am most of the army had left Derby, the Prince having left at 9 am, the retreat having started at 7 am.²⁴ When he made his report, Birch was certain that there was a spy on the Duke of Newcastle's staff and made every effort to pass on his intelligence without causing any suspicion. That there might be a spy in the Duke of Newcastle's staff was borne out by the correspondence between a Mr. Seagrave and Mr. Heathcote following the escape, and later published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*²⁵ by an anonymous contributor.

Between December 1745 and 1754 there is, at present, a blank in Birch's career. It is likely that he continued his linen draper's business in London until ill health, probably aggravated by his escape, made him leave the capital. The anonymous contributor suggests that he was made a Receiver of Land taxes for Northumberland as a reward for his efforts.²⁶ It may have been this cessation of business that caused the rift, not only with his father, but also with some of his sisters. He may have heard of Northumberland through the disgrace of Sergeant Birch and the Derwentwater Estates. Whatever the reason, he sought a more healthy climate and, in 1754, is to be found at Humshaugh.²⁷ Both Humshaugh and Corbridge are noted for being healthy places and, by late 1754, he had settled, finally, in Corbridge.

Birch started to buy property in Northumberland in 1754. It is clear that a consider-

able amount of land in and around Corbridge was being purchased, though it is not always possible to define the areas exactly. References to the boundaries of other properties show that he held the following lands: Aydon Lane, Broomhills, Eastfield, Westfield—the Belfe and Burns Close, Northfield (at Deanside), Easter Isles, Longtrees and Croft Head, Castleway Head, Catchbell Hills, March Close, Newbridge, Colchester, land at the Eals on the south side of the River Tyne, and at Shildon west Lough near Aydon.²⁸

The Land Tax returns show Mr Birch of Prince Street, Corbridge, paying £4 12s 3d, in 1763²⁹ and £4 8s 3d with a further 10s for Kilns in 1766. Presumably these were lime kilns, part of “the brisk and profitable trade” which supplied lime throughout the county.³⁰ These were either adjacent to the Limestone Quarries by Deadridge Lane or, more likely, nearer to Aydon. Identical sums are also paid by Lionel Winship of Aydon, Thomas Green, John Bates of Aydon White House and James Gibson. Only four other individuals paid more tax, and only Birch is given the title of Mr.³¹ The potential extent of his property is reflected in the 1779 enclosure award for Corbridge where lands are identified to his residual legatee, Charles Potts, and amount to 43 acres and 3 perches of the Townfields, 31 acres 2 roods 36 perches of the Stinted pastures and 64 acres 1 rood 39 perches of Corbridge Common, in all a total of 139 acres 1 rood 38 perches.³² Only James Gibson and Bartholomew Winship were allocated larger areas. The largest single area is marked on the Thorns estate between the Beaufront Road and the River Tyne on the west bank of the Corburn opposite the Duke’s Mill. This could well be the ground mentioned in Mackenzie that Birch drained and found remains of brick lined tanners’ pits—more likely to be remains associated with the Roman Bath House or fortlet to the west of Corstopitum, though the Colchester lands tend to be identified with the present site of Corstopitum.³³ The second largest tract of land was just below the Keeper’s Cottage on Milkwell Lane stretching east towards the Corburn below Aydon Castle, together with a smaller

area on both sides of the stream immediately below the ford. A further area was to the south of the old Newcastle Road before Howden Dene, now the site of The Hayes, with two more stretches on Corbridge Eals to the south of the river.³⁴ His property within the village included a messuage, shop and chandlers, workhouse and dwelling house in Middle Street, apparently the present building occupied by Chaffey’s Bakery.³⁵

The most distinctive feature in Corbridge to remind us of Eliezer Birch is Cross House. Built at an angle at the junction of St. Helen’s Street and Princes Street, facing south-east down Gormire with a view over open fields. The house dominated the improved road coming up from the bridge to the Military Road (B6318) above Aydon. The Military Road was completed in 1751 and the new road from Hexham (A69) a year later.³⁶ Birch built his house around 1756 and it has a number of unusual features. It is, in fact, two houses, each with its own front door. It is intriguing to think who Eliezer Birch intended to live in the other half of the building. For a description of Cross House see Appendix.³⁷

One of the pieces of received wisdom, repeated by most historians of Corbridge, is that Birch paid for the construction of the pant in Princes Street. No documentary evidence for this claim has been found. The public supply of water in the village was of great importance. There were at least seven points where water was available. There were pumps in Main Street, the Market Place and by the Wheat Sheaf Inn, and springs, running into troughs beside Monksholme in Spoutwell Lane, at the foot of Priory Gardens, Princes Street at the foot of School Lane and St. Andrews well at the foot of Well Bank on the old Carlisle Road to the west of the Church.³⁸

The spring of water in Princes Street, at the bottom of the hill, must have been a considerable nuisance for travellers and it would have been logical to remedy this when the road was improved. The pant consists of twin stone troughs fed by water from the mouths of two cast iron lion’s masks. The surround for the twin troughs is large and well built, and is



Fig. 1. *Cross House, Corbridge.*

certainly the most elaborate of the pants in the village. Since the famous Roman sculpture, the Corbridge Lion was not discovered until 1907,³⁹ the only other local connection with lions is with the Percy family, Dukes of Northumberland. The Duke was, and is, a major landholder in the village and perhaps it is more likely that he paid for the pant rather than anyone else. However, this will probably remain one of the several mysteries surrounding Eliezer Birch.

By 1766, Birch was chosen as one of the churchwardens for Corbridge and took over

the task of writing the Minutes of vestry meetings.⁴⁰ During 1756 the churchwardens and overseers of the poor for the village agreed to hire a house for the lodging, keeping and employing of the poor of Corbridge.⁴¹ On 9 February 1767, it was agreed that a new Poor House should be built near the old hall or Cawsey House adjacent to the Wheat Sheaf Inn, in St. Helens Street. Cuthbert Snowball's estimate of £109 17s 5d for building the Poorhouse was the lowest, and was accepted by the Vestry Meeting.⁴² On 20th April, Birch was re-elected as a Churchwarden, and promised to



Fig. 2. *The pant in Princes Street, Corbridge.*

pay the difference between thatching and slating the roof of the Poorhouse, which came to £32. He died on 11 July 1767 before the work had been completed and his executors settled the sum on 30th July.⁴³

The Vestry also agreed to purchase a Clock for the Church Tower and launched a public subscription. Birch collected £2 8s 6d in contributions. He donated £20, before his death,

but he had always intended to ensure that the clock was installed.

“... I give and bequeath unto the Minister and Church Wardens of Corbridge the sum of thirty pounds to be laid out by them for a clock to be placed in the steeple of their church.”⁴⁴

In fact only a further £13 14s 7d was needed to meet the outstanding bills for the poorhouse

roof and the installation of the clock. The clock was installed by Mr. Walker and the cost of gilding the two faces by Mr. Collier came to £7 7s. This sum was also settled on 30 July 1767.⁴⁵

One of the most elusive documents relating to Eliezer Birch has been his Will, and the origins of this problem can be traced back to his "undutiful behaviour" towards his father which had caused a serious rift some years earlier. Perhaps it was a result of Eliezer leaving the family business in London and moving to Northumberland. Whatever the cause of the argument, it extended not only to his father but also to his sisters. His sister Mary, who predeceased him in 1763 makes no mention in her will of her eldest brother⁴⁶ and, likewise, Eliezer makes no mention of his three surviving sisters in his will. There was so much ill feeling that the youngest member of the family, Sarah,⁴⁷ claimed to be sole next-of-kin and heir to Eliezer, claiming that he had died intestate. The matter had to go before the prerogative court of Canterbury to be settled on 26 May 1768 when the rightful executor, Charles Potts of Ollerton, was granted letters of administration.⁴⁸

The Will was made on 12 July 1764 and witnessed by the Curate of Corbridge, John Martindale, together with Robert Forster and Thomas Lumley, who had been a Churchwarden in 1752. Bequests were made of £50 to John Noble, Husbandman, an old friend who became churchwarden in 1773; £20 to the Poor of Corbridge and £10 to any servant in his employ at the time of Birch's death. His first bequest was of £300 to his Aunt, Margaret Evans, in trust for her three daughters Mary, Susannah & Margaret. A sum of £3,000 was left to his cousin John Lees in trust for Robert Birch, son of Eliezer's late brother Jonathan, when he became 21. If he had died before reaching 21, then the money was to go to Eliezer's surviving brother Joseph. Two bequests of £25 a year for life were made to Mary Scott and Mary Johnson.⁴⁹ Possibly Birch was Godfather to them. Little is known of Mary Scott. The Corbridge Parish Registers record the baptism of Mary, daughter of John Scott of

Thornbrough on 9 March 1755; the marriage of Mary Scott on 29 September 1770 to Lionel Winship, who was buried 29 March 1779; and the burial of Mary daughter of John Scott of Aydon White House on 22 March 1779.⁵⁰ The annuity was to be charged against 2 acres 3 roods and 34 perches of land in Colchester (sic) sold by Charles Potts to William Bertram in 1778.⁵¹

A little more is known about Mary Johnson. In his will, Birch states that Mary Johnson, "Lives with John Nicholson of Hexham or his sister in or near Derwent in that county of Northumberland," which implies that her parents were dead. The attorney, Charles Potts, of Ollerton in Cheshire, was Birch's residual legatee. Although why remains a complete mystery. Perhaps Birch's break with his family had been almost complete; perhaps Potts was a very old friend. Potts died in 1773 and in his will, dated 5 June 1772, he leaves a lump sum of £500 to, "Mary Johnson who now lives with me," on her reaching 21 to buy out the £25 per annum left by Birch and that if she refused or married without consent of his executors, then the sum was to be forfeit.⁵² It is clear that, in 1772, Mary is under 21 and so cannot have been born before 1751. In historical research there will always be some speculation. During 1751, there were Mary Johnsons baptized at Simonburn, Bamburgh, Bothwell with Hexham and Stamfordham. At Simonburn on 27 May 1751, William Johnson and Ann Oxley, both of the parish, were married and on 26 July that year Mary, daughter of William Johnson of Hexham was baptized there. On 1 March 1753, William Johnson in Hexham and Ann Wilson from Warden were married at Simonburn by licence.⁵³ It may be coincidence or wishful thinking, but Eliezer Birch knew a Captain William Johnson in Derby in 1745; Birch moved from London to Humshaugh for his health—on whose advice? Simonburn was the parish Church for Humshaugh. There a William Johnson had a daughter baptized in 1751. If the mother died shortly afterwards and the father was away on military duty, what more natural for Birch to become the little girl's protector? Possibly this is too much man-

ipulation of historical snippets. Many tantalizing gaps remain to be filled in the history of Eliezer Birch. The elusive Mr. Birch has yielded up many of his secrets but many still remain.

APPENDIX: Cross House, Corbridge

The building is some 5.5 metres deep with an extension to the rear, possibly added, but present by 1777. The frontage has three bays, each with six windows in three storeys. The central bay projects slightly, the lines of the responds being indicated now by fall pipes, with a pediment. The second floor windows are small and square, those on the ground and first floor are slightly taller than wide. All the windows have slightly projecting sills; on the first and second floors a flat unmoulded string course continues their line. A deeply moulded cornice runs along the crown of the wall, dividing to surround the pediment and is supported on corbel-like dentils. There is a straight, horizontal, deeply moulded cornice above each of the four windows of the lower two floors of the central bay. The main windows have all clearly been reglazed about the middle of the nineteenth century.

The area behind the house contains two courtyards and two gardens. They are separated by a wall broken only by a gateway to allow access to the rear of the eastern part of the House. It is likely that the continuous row of buildings in Princes Street to the east of the House pre-date it. This would mean that the stables and access to the rear would have to have been to the west. The west end of the building is quite plain, with an attic window inserted later. The front garden is enclosed by a wall that bows outwards to a central entrance gate. Each of the two dwellings has its own front door, each of a distinctively different design. The western door has a delicately moulded simple surround crowned by a pediment divided from the surround by two further mouldings. The eastern front door is most striking, with a triple keystone and quasi baroque interrupted pilasters. Internally the house is split into two equal dwellings, each with three main rooms, five bedrooms, staircase and a set of outhouses. The rear extensions, each contain kitchen and offices and a back door. Beside the fireplace in the centre ground floor room of the western dwelling is a deep arched alcove which may have been, originally, an internal link between the two houses.

NOTES

¹ *The Bridge*, Corbridge Parish Magazine, July 1967, pp. 12–15.

² E. Mackenzie, *An Historical, Topographical, and Descriptive View of the County of Northumberland*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1835, Vol. 1, p. 331.

³ R. Forster, *History of Corbridge and its antiquities*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1881, p. 111.

⁴ S. F. Dixon, *History of the Saxon Royal Town of Corbridge on Tyne*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1912, p. 72.

⁵ *A History of Northumberland*, Vol. X—Corbridge, Newcastle, 1914, p. 164.

⁶ W. R. Iley, *Corbridge, Border Village*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1976, pp. 199–200.

⁷ F. J. McLynn, *The Jacobite Army in England 1745*, Edinburgh, 1983, p. 123.

⁸ Chatsworth MSS 334.0.

⁹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1817, pp. 404–408.

¹⁰ G. R. Potter, "A Government Spy in Derbyshire during the 'Forty-Five'", *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 89, 1970.

¹¹ *Notes & Queries*, 3rd Series, Vol. 1, pp. 27 & 78.

¹² "Taxation of Salford Hundred 1524–1802", *Chetham Society*, Vol. 83, pp. 38–9.

¹³ Lancashire Record Office WCW Will dated 16 April 1717, probate granted 18 May 1717.

¹⁴ "Chester Marriage Bonds", *Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, Vol. 97, p. 229: "18 Nov 1714 Robert Birch of Manchester, Fustian Man, bondsman."

¹⁵ Public Record Office PROB 11/873. Will dated 29 March 1760 with codicil 16 January 1761, probate granted 13 March 1762. Monumental Inscription—died 3 January 1762, buried at Cross Street—"Calendar of Monumental Inscriptions", *Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, Vol. 76, p. 148.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: Robert (insane) receives £1,200 in trust; Martha £3,500, £2,500 already given; Hannah £5,000 at 21; Mary £5,000 at 21; Jonathan the Chorlton Roe property and residual legatee; Joseph £800, £1,200 already given—undutiful behaviour—codicil adds further £3,000; Elizabeth £5,000 at 21 and Sarah £5,000 at 21. Grandsons—children of Martha and Marsden Kenyon—Robert Kenyon receives property, Edward Kenyon 10 shares in Mersey & Irewell Navigation.

¹⁷ "Chester Marriage Bonds", *Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, Vol. 101, p. 158: "Robert Birch of Manchester, Co. Lancs, Linen Draper and Alice Lees of the same spinster. Bondsmen Timothy

Bancroft of Manchester, calandarer and John Doe. Witness Jennett Clayton & Roger Bolton. At Manchester or Newton".

¹⁸ "Admission Register of Manchester School, Volume 1, 1730–1775", *Chetham Society*, Vol. LXIX, 1866.

¹⁹ J. Ray, *A History of the Rebellion*, London, 1758, p. 133.

²⁰ "Account of The Progress and Transaction of Prince Charles in England & Scotland", *Lockhart Papers*, Vol. 2, 1817, pp. 439–475.

²¹ Chatsworth MSS op. cit.

²² "A plain, general, and authentic account of the Conduct and Proceedings of the Rebels, during their stay at Derby, From Wednesday the 4th, till Friday Morning the 6th Dec., 1745, Derby: Printed by J. Drewry, in the Market Place", *New Spalding Club—Jacobite Papers 1690–1750*, 1895, p. 292.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1817, p. 408.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

²⁷ Northumberland Records Office NRO 3369/79—W. Iley MSS notes f54.

²⁸ NRO 93/MIS/C22 MSS abstracts of J. H. Straker's deeds; Bell 348 MSS Alnwick Castle.

²⁹ NRO ZAN M17/151 Land Tax Schedule for Tynedale.

³⁰ Forster, op. cit., p. 76.

³¹ NRO QRP 16 A Schedule of the Land Tax for Corbridge Parish for the Year 1766.

³² *A History of Northumberland*, Vol. X, Corbridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1914, pp. 143–4 and the 13.9.1799 map surveyed by John Fryer published in Dixon.

³³ Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 331.

³⁴ NRO 93/M15/CSS MSS Abstracts of J. H. Straker's deeds.

³⁵ NRO 605/4 Nicholson & Gray Papers.

³⁶ 24 Geo II cap. 25 1751 & 25 Geo II cap. 48 1752.

³⁷ I am grateful to the late Mr. John Gillam for this description.

³⁸ This road, originally known as Carelgate, remained in use as the main road until the construction of a turnpike road on the south side of the river in 1752.

³⁹ *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd series, IV, p. 33.

⁴⁰ NRO EP57/26 St. Andrew's, Corbridge, Vestry Minutes f. 98.

⁴¹ *County History*, Vol. X op. cit., p. 217.

⁴² Vestry Minutes, op. cit., f. 106.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, f. 114.

⁴⁴ Public Record Office PROB 11/939 Will dated 12 July 1764, proved 6 May 1768.

⁴⁵ NRO EP 57/26 Churchwardens Minutes f. 115 & f. 114.

⁴⁶ Lancashire Record Office WCW Will dated 11 June 1763, proved 10 september 1763.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Sarah had married Nockold Thompson who was a bit of a spendthrift, as sister Mary left her £800 so tied up that he could not get at it.

⁴⁸ Eliezer Birch's Will, op. cit.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *The Registers of Corbridge*, The Durham & Northumberland Parish Register Society, Vol. XXIV, 1911, pp. 53, 172, 265, 267.

⁵¹ Bell 348, op. cit.

⁵² Cheshire County Record Office WS 1773. Will dated 5 June 1772, proved 14 May 1773.

⁵³ NRO M663 Simonburn Registers 1723–88.

