

I

Cock-fighting in Northumberland and Durham during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

George Jobey

Newcastle may challenge the world for cocking, P. Egan, Book of Sports (1832)

WHETHER OR NOT Newcastle had merited such an accolade in earlier times, cock-fighting was undoubtedly a popular sport throughout the North East during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Often referred to as the “royal sport” or the “royal diversion”,¹ its followers were to be found in all ranks of local society, both before and to some degree after it was finally made illegal in England and Wales in 1849.

Although none of the local gentry of the period can be shown to have attained the outstanding sporting commitment of the 12th Earl of Derby (1752–1834), reputedly the greatest cocker of all time and the owner of at least three thousand fighting cocks, their ranks nonetheless included many so-called “gentlemen of the sod”. Indeed, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century the dedication of the more ardent of these gentlemen cockers was epitomized in the aspirations of Sir William Chaytor of Croft, near Darlington, who, when forced as a debtor to exchange the innocent diversions of his manor in Teesdale for those of the Fleet prison, was concerned on more than one occasion during his first winter of estrangement that the weather would not prevent him from “watching the cocks in the pit”.²

During the following half-century some of the more notable subscribers to cock-fighting mains advertised in the Newcastle newspapers included the Duke of Cleveland, whose birds on occasions found appropriate and worthy opponents amongst those of the Earl of Northumberland, the Bowes of Streatlam Castle, already zealous in their sporting interests, and,

amongst other family groups, the trio of Sir Edward Blackett of Hexham Abbey, his stepson Nicholas Roberts, and his brother Sir John Blackett of Newbass Hall. Prominent names amongst gentlemen subscribers in the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries are no less evident: Sir Henry George Liddell was an active supporter, both before and after his notable Baltic tour of 1786, which brought the two Lapp women and reindeer to Ravensworth; Sir Henry Vane Tempest, despite many other sporting activities, was probably the North East’s most enthusiastic gentleman cocker; whilst Hugh, the second Duke of Northumberland, and our own Society’s first Patron in 1813, also featured as a subscriber, together with Charles Grey Esq., later to become Earl Grey of Howick and Prime Minister. Moreover, in 1767, John Lyon, the 9th Earl of Strathmore, had not only assumed the family name of his father-in-law, George Bowes of Streatlam and Gibside, but had also continued to support the family’s earlier sporting interests, by following pursuits which were once seen to be “always innocent and without the smallest guile, but not those of science or any other splendid quality”.³

Many supporters of the sport were also to be found amongst those local gentlemen who, though they may have been less elevated in title, were not necessarily more modest in lineage: such were William Fenwick of Bywell Hall in Northumberland, long renowned for his hospitality and sporting activities; George Baker of Elemore Hall in Durham, perhaps better known for his interest in the breeding of

sheep and cattle; and George Gregson of Warden Law, near Houghton-le-Spring, a gentleman jockey, fox-hunter, courser and cocker of some distinction. And if it is not to prolong this squirearchal list unduly, some of the early fathers of our own Society in 1813 did not lack the sporting interests of their peers or their Society's Patron. Amongst them were W. T. Greenwell of Greenwell Ford, the father of the antiquary Canon Greenwell, and Robert Surtees of Mainsforth Hall, the Durham historian, whose most zealous application to his studies did not always exclude other interests. Although being listed as a subscriber to a cock-fighting main did not necessarily confirm personal attendance at the event, it so happened that in 1812 Robert Surtees was but one of four members of the large Surtees family who subscribed to the cock-fighting mains at the Durham races, in the company of, amongst others, Sir Henry Vane Tempest, Greenwell, Salvin of Croxdale Hall, Beckwith of Silksworth House, Stafford of Monkwearmouth, and Lyon of Hetton House, the uncle of the 10th Earl of Strathmore (*Appendix*, 45). It has been suggested elsewhere that cockfighting was perhaps losing its appeal amongst the "genteeler circles" of the area in the second half of the eighteenth century;⁴ if indeed this were so, there was undeniably a fairly strong cock-fighting fraternity still present amongst the sporting gentry of the North-East as late as the early years of the nineteenth century. And even after the death of Sir Henry Vane Tempest in 1813, when Collingwood Bruce considered that the sport was "in great measure left in the hands of a different class of society",⁵ it was by no means entirely short of its gentleman supporters.

Whilst the contests advertised as "Gentlemen's Subscription Mains" did not always bear the mark of strict social exclusiveness, events were also advertised which catered specifically for subscribers from the trading classes. Furthermore, amongst the latter there were seemingly yet further social gradations to be recognized, as, for example, between subscribers sought for a "Gentlemen Tradesmen's Main", to be held at the old Turk's Head,

Newcastle (25), in April 1798, and those for an unqualified "Tradesmen's Main", to be contested at the same pit in March 1814. Even if in sporting practice such distinctions could have been somewhat loosely defined, they nevertheless serve to remind us of the social path already trodden by some of the local gentry of the period.

Enthusiasm for cock-fighting amongst the more lowly ranks in the social spectrum was in places almost endemic. On the other hand, possibly more than a fair share of adverse criticism was sometimes levelled against the excessive participation of certain groups of workers, especially by critics who were not concerned to acknowledge the broader social involvement in the sport or the fact that it was by no means an addiction of the whole of any one social group. Thus, it was often the lead miners of Weardale or the relatively well paid northern colliers who came to be singled out, in an unqualified manner, for ignoring both their work and "the clamorous wants of their families" when a cock-fight was in the offing.⁶ Be that as it may, the vast majority of these more humble devotees have remained as individually anonymous as the engrossed yet excited circle of onlookers to be seen in a Bewick woodcut (fig. 1), or the "sooty thrangs" of Coquetdale pitmen who, at about the same time, were said to be fighting their cocks and baiting badgers at Oliver Proudlock's Badger



Fig. 1 A cock-fight by the inn (T. Bewick). Cock-fighting rings were often prepared at very short notice.

Inn in the hamlet of Swindon (32). Only fleetingly do specific characters emerge, and then often only because of some personal idiosyncrasies: such, for example, were the colourful dress and language of Tommy Dunn, the weaver and barber of St John's Chapel, when attending the cockings at Westgate (59); the pugilistic prowess of "Cock Fighting Ned" from Gateshead Fell (48), who could thump his adversaries "all about"; or the total obsession of Johnnie Anderson, the masons' labourer from Cambo (7), who sparred like a cock and talked to himself, "always about cocks, always about cocks".

Nor can it be assumed that the gentler sex were invariably more refined in their sporting interests, even though they might be ladies of "the highest rank and most finished education". Lord Redesdale recalled that in his youth, when cock-fighting was still fashionable, both ladies and gentlemen went fully dressed to the local mains,⁷ the ladies perhaps somewhat inconveniently garlanded in their hoops. Moreover, if in fiction Hugh Walpole's Judith Paris had been taught how to prepare Uncle Gantry's birds for Cumbrian contests, then the North East was not short of its own female practitioners in the flesh, the celebrated Nanny Trumwell of Rothbury (28), who trained Coquetdale cocks in the early nineteenth century, being but one of them.

The young too had been nurtured for many centuries in the same sporting traditions. In September 1716 William Cotesworth wrote from Sedbergh school, to his father at Gateshead Park, that "he might conveniently go to College about Shrove Tide which is ye cocking time".⁸ And although in 1719 the governors of the much less fashionable Hexham Grammar School (18) had abrogated their right to decide the school victor by battles fought between the pupils' cocks on Shrove Tuesday, reasoning that the cost might prevent poorer parents from sending their sons to be educated, not all local institutions were then so altruistic about this possible hindrance to the scholastic welfare of the young. The "cock-penny" and "hand-sel" continued to be paid at some other schools, generally on the first Monday in Janu-

ary, and was often a welcome addition to the schoolmaster's salary. Furthermore, on the often boisterous "barring out" days at local schools, such as at Elsdon (11) or Cambo (7) in Northumberland, the conditions imposed by the pupils for the master's re-entry to the building included the right to attend all local cock-fights and horse-races, in addition to having specified holidays.

The established rural cock-pits were often no more than uncovered earthworks, which, before the prohibition of the sport, were generally located in or near to the villages. Few local examples appear to have survived, however, and in local tradition other forms of small circular earthworks have sometimes been taken to be purpose-built cockpits. The uncovered pit generally consisted of a central fighting platform, eight or more feet in diameter, surrounded by a fairly shallow ditch and an external bank, similar to that which survives at Burnfoot (5) near to Dirlpot (figs 2 & 3) and to those which have been more frequently recorded in Cumbria to the west.⁹ During the contests a low wall of boards could be set on the platform to retain the feathered combatants, whilst spectators were supposedly confined to the area outwith the ditch, so as to leave the interior free for the "setters" or "pitters" of the cocks and any other officials. The pits were sometimes situated on the village green, as was previously the case at Shotton (54) in Durham and as is now just visible at Elsdon (11) in Northumberland. Many were also located immediately adjacent to an inn, often within its yard or garden, as formerly at the Fighting Cocks (now the Turk's Head) and the Blue Bell in Rothbury (28). The desirability of choosing a location where nature itself provided a vantage point for additional spectators is apparent at Burnfoot, where the pit lies immediately below a small river-terrace (fig. 3). A similar viewing point would also have been available above the pit once said to have been located on the slope down to the River Tees at Middleton-one-Row (52), whilst an urban equivalent possibly existed in what was being advertised as "The Stand on the Hill" at Henzell's pit in Newcastle's Flesh-



Fig. 2 Cock-pit at Burnfoot, Dirtpot, near Allenheads, viewed from river terrace.

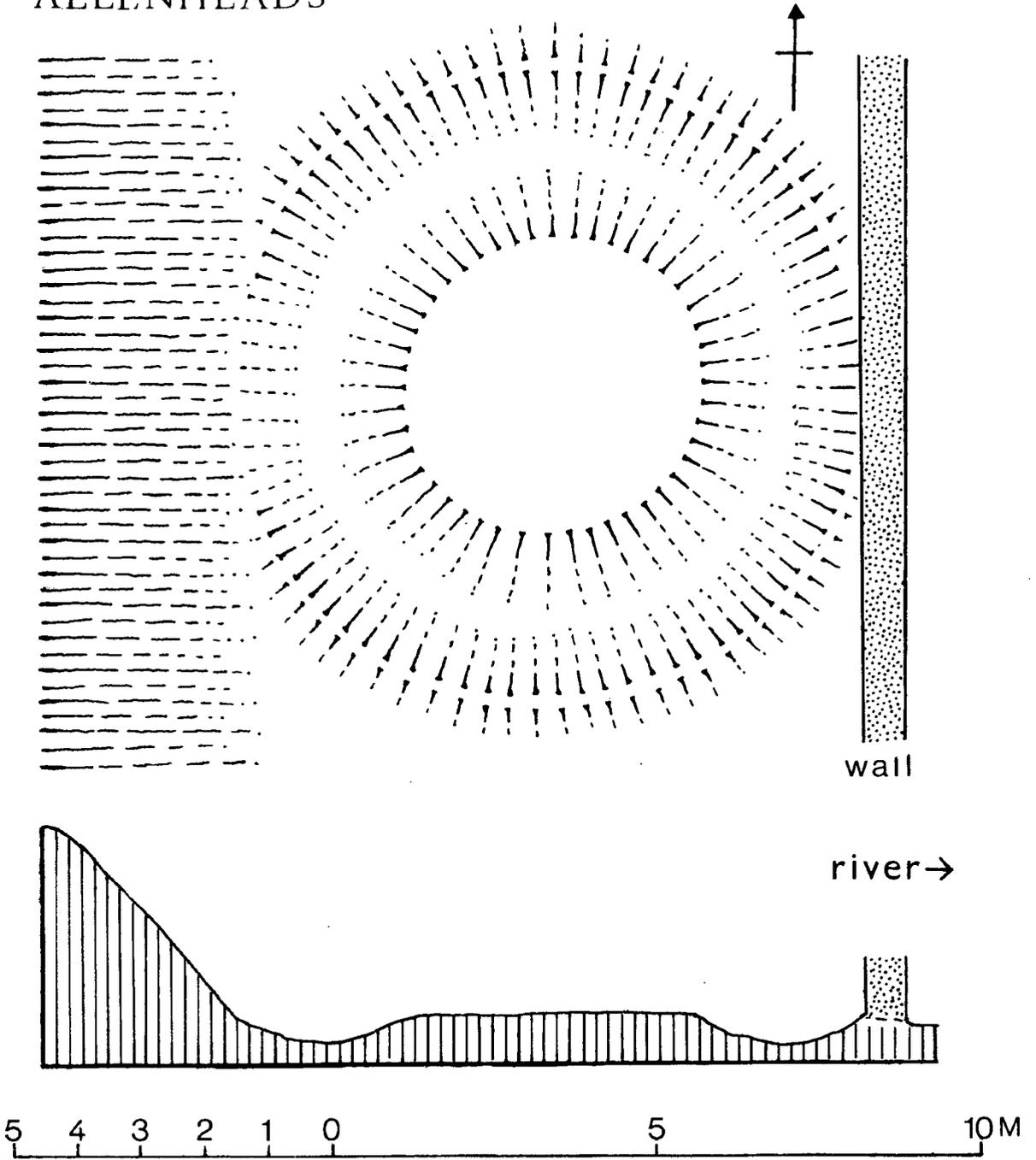
market (25) in the 1770s, although by then this description could equally well have been applied to the upper tiers of seats in a covered pit. On yet other occasions a prominent site like that on the Haa' Hill in Rothbury (28), where one of the village's five pits was situated, could offer the incidental and less obvious advantages of a church door for notices of impending contests, as well as the proximity of consecrated earth, which at some places elsewhere was thought to be efficacious in the feed of the feathered contestants and useful as an antidote against adverse charms.¹⁰ Whilst the sport remained legal, however, a paramount consideration was undoubtedly the presence of a nearby inn, maybe suitably endowed with the sign of the Fighting Cocks. Afterwards, this could sometimes become a less acceptable

association, and at Netherton (24) in Northumberland, for example, the Fighting Cocks later became the Phoenix, most probably in this instance to denote the reformed character of the house rather than to herald any rebuilding from the ashes of a predecessor.

Covered pits were generally though not invariably found in urban contexts, either as purpose-built, free-standing buildings, or as arenas fitted into existing premises. The free-standing buildings could be circular, square, or many-sided, and varied in size and the number of spectators that could be accommodated. An octagonal building erected in 1785 in Lowther Street, Carlisle, was as much as forty feet in

Fig. 3

BURNFOOT ALLENHEADS



diameter with walls fifteen feet high.¹¹ The internal fighting platform was generally raised above a surrounding gangway, corresponding to the ditch of an uncovered earthwork, whilst beyond this lay the seating which was often tiered, as in the “very commodious” pit at the Talbot hotel in Darlington (43) in the early nineteenth century. The fighting ring itself was generally known as “the sod”, in that it could be carpeted with turf, though this was frequently replaced by matting in the covered pits. Natural lighting could be provided by shuttered spaces high in the outer walls of the pit, as found in some surviving Welsh examples.¹² At times, however, and particularly in mid-winter, the provision of adequate illumination was undoubtedly a problem, as is evident from an advertisement for Mordue’s New Pit in Newcastle’s Fleshmarket (25) in 1770, where the contests were to start each day “at 10 o’clock precisely”, because gentlemen had been complaining about their cocks having to fight by candlelight.

Unfortunately, few if any covered pits appear to have survived in the North East. A free-standing, brick-built pit in the Durham village of Coxhoe (41), which later served as a smithy before being demolished in 1895, had been fourteen feet square with a pyramidal roof, and was presumably similar to the square building erected during the eighteenth century in the yard of the Green Dragon Inn at Stockton (56). And in recent excavations behind the site of the former Phoenix Inn in Hexham (18), not sufficient of a possibly many-sided structure was recovered to establish if this was the pit known to have been associated with that hostelry. As to the local property conversions made for such sporting purposes, it may be apposite to recall the pretentious boast of Thomas Claxton, an early nineteenth century lessee of a building in Darlington’s Skinnergate (43), that he would “soon make a paradise of the place”, whereupon, with the speculative creativity of a property developer, he turned it into a cock-pit. No doubt there could be the remains of such sporting beatitudes yet to be found in our area, perhaps some of them having later enjoyed the seclusion afforded by

the cellars of existing buildings. One possible example of the latter is to be found in a cellar in the formerly fashionable seaside resort and garrison village of Tynemouth (33), where, presumably because of restricted headroom, a circular pit in the floor takes the place of the raised fighting platform (fig. 4). In the case of most well established venues, however, even the redolent place-names themselves, such as Fighting Cocks Yard in Newcastle (25), Fighting Cock Lane in Sunderland (58), Cockpit Houses in Winlaton (61), or simply The Cockpit in Dunston (44), have all been erased over time.

Great attention was paid to the breeding of the birds. “By breeding to feather you show care and refinement” observed one writer when referring to well-known strains such as Derby Reds and Cheshire Piles. Many cockers and places in the North East also had their own favourite breeds: there were, for example, “the whites with brass wings” associated with Sir Henry Liddell of Ravensworth and “the whites with yellow backs” possessed by George Bowes of Gibside,¹³ or, in a more humble context, “the whites with port red wings” said to have been popular with the villagers of Ulgham (34) in Northumberland. Similarly, at an early nineteenth century cock-fight which followed upon a morning’s coursing at the village of Prendwick (27), lying on the margin of the Cheviot Hills, the favourite birds were seen to be “Brandling greys” and “Felton reds”. The reputation gained by some places for raising birds could also account for names such as “Fighting-cocks-farm”, recorded in the early nineteenth century in the Durham parish of Dinsdale, as well as for the place-name of Fighting Cocks (47) itself. Therefore keen competition amongst the breeders at local shows was only to be expected. Squire Stafford of Monkwearmouth (58), a notable breeder in the early nineteenth century, was said to have been so proud of having won the Durham best bird award, a full-sized cock cast in gold, that he had it mounted on one of the columns at the entrance to his house, possibly with more vanity than prudence.

The so-called walking of the cocks was a



Fig. 4 Pit in cellar-floor, Tynemouth (1952).

practice performed on much the same basis as fox-hound walking. Optimum conditions for a walk were prescribed in works such as Hoyle's *Treatise on Game Cocks*, where it was also advised that "when a gentleman intends to fight a match, he should first visit all his walks to examine what condition the cocks are in".¹⁴ As late as the early nineteenth century, when many customary boons had long since disappeared, the tenancy for the moorland farm of East Wilkwood, lying beyond Holystone in Northumberland, still included the duty of walking a game-cock, feeding a spaniel dog and spinning four pounds of lint yearly for the then squire of Biddlestone, Walter Selby.¹⁵ In other cases, however, it was a service to be

paid for by the owners of the birds. Thus in 1771 "several persons" were paid a total of £1-10s from the estate of the deceased Anthony Clark of Bishop Auckland for one year's walk of twelve of his thirteen cocks.¹⁶ The distribution of these walks could be fairly widespread, so that the same Anthony Clark's widow had had to pay 10s-6d to John Ditchburn for bringing in the cocks from the walks, whilst in 1774 Robert Ramsay received 16s from the Gibside estate for carrying cocks out to various walks.¹⁷ In like manner, a nineteenth century resident of Kirkwhelpington (7) in Northumberland was still having his game-cocks walked on farms "all over the moors".

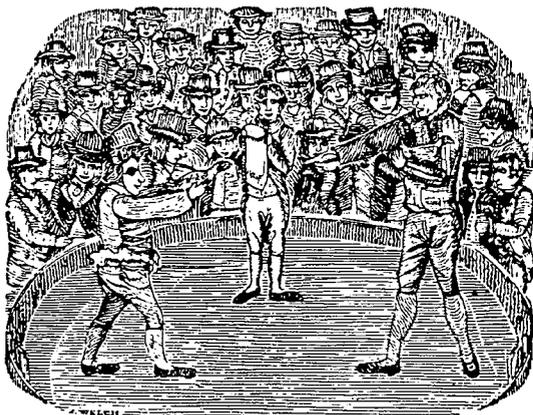


Fig. 5 Shows the two "setters" or "pitters" and either a "master of the match", or a "teller of the law". One of the tasks of the "teller" was to tell ten between each setting—to where one or the other refused to fight.

The feeding and the setting or pitting of the birds were also important functions. Initially both activities were often performed by the same person, but eventually they became separate responsibilities. An experienced setter, by his expert judgement in the manner of introducing a bird to the fray, could materially affect the outcome of the battle (fig. 5). It was the good feeder, however, with his closely guarded methods of training and feeding the birds for some nine or more days before the contest, who was particularly sought after and could sometimes command considerable remuneration. John Ward, who had been a feeder for the cocks of the aforementioned Anthony Clark of Bishop Auckland, also served on different occasions for the Gentlemen of Northumberland, as well as for the Gentlemen of Durham, in mains held during Newcastle races in the 1770s. Likewise, in the Newcastle newspapers between 1786 and 1816, Small, a well-known Newcastle feeder, was acting for, amongst others, the Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Hamilton, Sir Henry George Liddell, the Gentlemen of Northumberland and the Gentlemen of Haddington in Scotland, in venues as widespread as Durham, Newcastle, Hexham, Alnwick and

Edinburgh. During the same period, an equally popular northern feeder, Sunley from York, was often found in opposition to Small. The keen demand for the services of such experts may also be judged from entries in the few local match bills that have survived: in fig. 6, for example, Walton will be seen to have acted for no less than six of the sixteen gentlemen subscribers. It then comes as no surprise to find that the reports on the results of contests would sometimes give as much prominence to the names of the feeders as to those of the owners.

It has been said that an expert feeder could train his birds for mains of different durations and even for combat under different climatic conditions. Works such as Hoyle's give some indication of the preparatory regime of exercising, sweating, scouring, feeding and trimming the birds for the fray, as well as for the after-care of those survivors that carried the scars of battle. Individual and regional practices, even if closely guarded, often differed only in their details; a version from nearby Cumbria included what were seemingly very stiff, pre-match purges of Senna tea and a finger-sized portion of the very best Turkey rhubarb and magnesia, "more than would operate on you and me", before a diet of "everything that was good".¹⁸ Such final preparations were carried out at places arranged with the feeder or at the owner's house. Even where it appears that a well-known feeder may not have been employed, the cost of feeding was still a debit of some consequence to be considered in any financial account, as is evident from the small and less than profitable joint venture of Messrs Wood and Wren in mains at Durham (45), Bishop Auckland (38), Stonebridge House (57) and Heighington (49) during 1785 (Table 1).

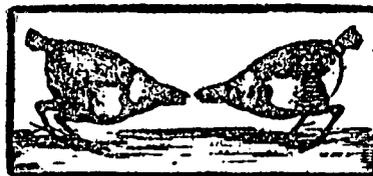
Although birds were often described simply by their feather—a "pile", a "black-red", a "ginger", a "custard"—there was far greater variety and more than a little interest in the individual names bestowed upon them. It was no doubt the dogged political aspirations of the owner that accounted for the name "Wilkes and Liberty", one of the cocks entered by Duncombe Shafto of Whitworth Hall for a

Account between Mefers Wood (Merrington) & Wren
of equal Shares in Cocking—1785—

Subsequent Account—after ye Bill delivered in—

To Entrance of 4 Cocks at Mrs Dun's		12.12.0	
& for two Shares in ye main for malt at Aukland		3. 3.0	
to feeding.....		1. 0.0	
		<u>16.15.0</u>	
Recd at Mrs Dun's for 3 Battles	7.10.0	9. 1.0	deduct
& of John Huet for a lost Battle	0. 5.0		
by Betts won on ye fighting	1. 6.0	<u>7.14.0</u>	Lost
	<u>9. 1.0</u>		
five Bushells of Malt Mr Wood recd—drawn for a Battle—			
Entrance of three at Hoult's Durham April 1785—		12.12.0	
out of ye Days for 100£—		1. 1.0	feeding
Recd at Hoult's for one Battle ye first day in a		13.13.0	
50£ Main	2.10.0	3. 3.0	
& of John Huets a Share of 10.6 & 2.6. to feeding		<u>13.0</u>	10.10.0 —Lost
deduct		3. 3.0	
at Stonebridge House May 1875			
Lost	2. 2.0		John Huet standing equal Shares
& to feeding	<u>0.17.0</u>		
Lost	<u>2.19.0</u>		
Lost at Heighington		0. 9.0	
cock drew 2.10.—staked 3.3		0. 9.0	to feeding
J Huet having a Share		<u>0.18.0</u>	deduct
Won at ye Turn Out Match at Heighington			3. 9.0.
deduct above			<u>0 18 0</u>
Won			<u>£2.11.0</u>
from above			
£7.14—			
10.10—			
<u>2.19—</u>			
21. 3—Lost			
<u>2.11—Won deduct</u>			
18.12—Total Lofs in equal Shares—9.6. }			
9.6. }			
18.12—			Mr Wren advanced
			the whole Stake Money
			on ye Cocks—

Table 1 Relevant part of a financial account of 1785 (Merrington, Co. Durham: NRO ZALA/19b)



THE
GENTLEMEN'S SUBSCRIPTION MAINS,

At Mr Loftus's Pit, Bigg-Market, Newcastle.

On Thursday, February 9th, 1809,—50l.			Friday,—50l.			Saturday,—100l.		
16	MR Hunter, red	3 10 0 Walton	13	MR Maddifon, red	4 0 0 Welsh	10	MR Ridley, red	
2	MR Story, red	3 10 0 Davidfon	10	MR Ridley, red	dun	4 0 0 Davidfon	MR span.	4 4 0 Davidfon
4	Mr Watson, red flag	3 10 0 Walton	8	Mr Wastell, bir.	4 0 0 Petree	6	Mr Dodd, dun	4 4 0 Walton
12	Mr Maddifon, red dun	3 10 0 Welsh	14	Mr Taylor, red	4 0 0 Walton	3	Mr Watson, bir.	4 4 0 Walton
13	Mr Taylor, red	3 10 0 Walton	15	Mr J. Watson, red	4 0 0 Walton	2	Mr Milburn, yel.	4 4 0 Dubmore
1	Mr Milburn, bir. pile	3 10 0 Dubmore	9	Mr Clark, red dun	4 0 0 Scott	9	Mr Hudson, yel.	4 4 0 Walton
7	Mr Heslop, yel. span.	3 10 0 Lockey	11	Mr Hudson, black	4 0 0 Walton	4	Mr Mellish, bir. pile	4 4 0 Davidfon
8	Mr Ridley, red span.	3 10 0 Davidfon	1	Mr Baker, red	4 0 0 Dubmore	13	Mr Maddifon, yel.	4 4 0 Welsh
10	Mr Hudson, red	3 10 0 Walton	6	Mr Dodd, red dun	4 0 0 Walton	14	Mr Taylor, red	4 4 0 Walton
14	Mr Clark, bir. dun flag	3 10 0 Scott	5	Mr Mellish, red dun	3 15 3 Davidfon	16	Mr Hunter, yel.	4 4 0 Walton
6	Mr Dodd, gin dun	3 10 0 Walton	3	Mr Milburn, bir pile	3 15 2 Dubmore	8	Mr Wastell, yel.	4 4 0 Petree
9	Mr Wastell, red span.	3 10 0 Petree	12	Mr Johnson, red	3 15 2 Davidfon	15	Mr J. Watson, red	4 4 0 Walton
15	Mr J. Watson, red	3 10 0 Walton	2	Mr Story, red	3 15 0 Davidfon	11	Mr Clark, bir. dun	4 4 0 Scott
11	Mr Johnson, red	3 10 0 Davidfon	16	Mr Hunter, red dun	3 15 0 Walton	12	Mr Johnson, bir. pile	4 3 0 Davidfon
3	Mr Baker, red	3 10 0 Dubmore	7	Mr Heslop, red	3 14 2 Lockey	5	Mr Baker, bir. dun	4 3 0 Dubmore
5	Mr Mellish, red	3 10 0 Davidfon	4	Mr Watson, red	3 14 0 Walton	1	Mr Story, red	4 3 0 Davidfon
						7	Mr Heslop, red	4 2 0 Lockey

To begin precisely at Eleven o'Clock each Day.

main at the Waterloo Inn in Durham, three years after he had spent lavishly in a vain attempt to capture the southern division of Durham in the 1832 elections and some years before he was eventually elected as a member for the northern division. On the other hand, at Rothbury in 1838 the name "Burke" was almost certainly invoked by macabre rather than political considerations, as presumably was "The Devil (*sic*) among the Taylors" at Newcastle in 1846. The title "XYZ", borne by a cock which was victor in a main at Newcastle races in June 1816, though somewhat enigmatic was nonetheless indicative of the existence of that large clientele devoted equally to the Sod and to the Turf. The bird was almost certainly named after the famous bay colt "XYZ", winner of the Newcastle Gold Cup in four successive years from 1811 to 1814 and of many other northern events. Whilst the horse came to be celebrated in verse for its "pith and speed", the cock gained some degree of immortality as a *rara avis* from its subsequent portrayal in oils (fig. 7).¹⁹ Eventful episodes in national history, strong in the local folk memory, also provided a quota of *noms de guerre*. In the contest recorded by Dixon between the villagers of Alnham and Netherton (24) in Coquetdale, held some fifteen years after the battle of Waterloo, the cocks were given the names of the opposing French and British generals in the French Wars, not without some evident antipathy against the French. In many other instances, however, the sobriquets reflected no more than the hopes, fears and happenings of everyday life, often being far from refined and of the countryside rather than the town: thus, "The King of the Lonnen", "The Weary Barnman", "Twank the Fiddle", "Tommy's Gone for Groceries", "May the Frost never hurt the Potatoes", and "Mary wants him back again".

Fig. 6 Match-bill showing owners, birds and their weights, and feeders. As often the heaviest birds were fought on the last day. Mr. Loftus, of the Turks Head Hotel, was the grandfather of W. K. Loftus, archaeologist and early excavator in Iraq. See AA 5, 1 (1973), 195-217.



Fig. 7 XYZ Fought June 1816 Won £50 at Newcastle

T. Milburn/Feeder

R. Blacklock

(Newcastle Evening Chronicle)

The last of the foregoing examples was not only a homely plea adopted by many different appellants but was also indicative of the great affection which could be felt for the birds, despite a seeming lack of regard for animal welfare in other respects. A similar, deep attachment may also be envisaged in a sorrowful event experienced by the Rev. John Brand in the early nineteenth century. Having been called upon to perform the Service for the Visitation of the Sick on behalf of a local collier, he had been at first quite unable to proceed because of a very clamorous interchange between two bagged cocks, one of them suspended above the sick-bed apparently for the sake of company and comfort to the dying man. In like manner, an underlying expression of fondness for the birds shines through in local verse and song, whether these are extolling the faint-hearted discretion of "The Black Cock of Whickham", the overt

bravery of "The Red Cock of Berwick", or the resurgent power of "our Bonny Grey" with "the silver breast and the silver wing".²⁰

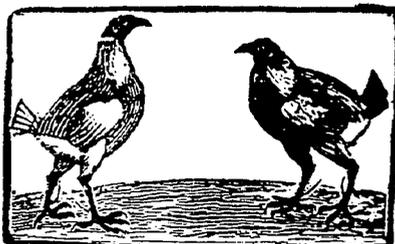
Given the vulnerability of the birds, especially when out on the walks, theft and nobbling because of greed or envy were only to be expected. It was certainly green-eyed jealousy in the seventeenth century which led to the sudden demise of "Spang Counter", the often victorious bird of a youthful Ambrose Barnes of Startforth near Barnard Castle, who at a later date, as the renowned Puritan Alderman of Newcastle, had some reason to doubt the propriety of his early enthusiasm for cocking.²¹ The culprits in this instance were given as "the sparks of Streatlem Castle", presumably none other than members of the Bowes family. From the early eighteenth century, the Newcastle newspapers were advertising rewards of five guineas for information leading to the conviction of those who had stolen gamecocks, "bred by gentlemen with great care and trouble" and "put out to several places to walk". More specifically, in 1766, the same reward was also being offered for the recovery of "a small stroke breasted, black-red, clip'd Cock, marked Out Right and In Left, greenish Legs and dark Nails", which had been stolen from Stob Hill, Morpeth (23). The most severe punishment ever meted out locally for such a theft would seem to have been transportation; this being the fate of a man from Tynemouth (33), who having stolen a local cock was seemingly so foolish as to have entered it in a local contest.

Once the birds were ready for the fray they were normally placed in bags for transport. "Jim bagged Napoleon and off he went, To Netherton cocking—the lad was bent", are two lines of Coquetdale doggerel which give the picture in its simplest, rural setting. But at other times, and in particular those of the big horse-race meetings, the stage coaches and the carriers' carts could be hung around with noisy, bagged contestants. It is worthy of passing note that perhaps the True Briton coach, which occasionally delivered early nineteenth century parts of *Archaeologia Aeliana* to some of the more distant members of our own Society, may

well have carried their feathered competitors with somewhat greater frequency than their antiquarian volumes.

Three classes of birds were normally specified in the contests; stags which were under one year in age, cocks which were older, and blinkards or one-eyed veterans (figs 8 & 9). "Fugies" or "hamies" were in local parlance those birds which still refused to fight after the due procedures had been followed. Although in less well regulated contests there could be impromptu *mêlées* for birds showing such discretion, as reputedly amongst "Crowley's crew" from the iron-works at Winlaton (61), their ultimate fate was often the cooking pot for cock-a-leekie. In the mains at some local schools on Shrove Tuesday the "hamies", as well as any cocks which were killed in combat, became the welcome perquisites of the school-master.

During the eighteenth century most of the advertised mains in the region took place between Christmas and July. It was specifically stated in the notices if silver rather than steel spurs were to be used. The most common form of contest was the Welsh Main, in which birds fought eliminating battles in pairs until there was an eventual winner. Such mains could be for all three classes of birds, with different weights specified for each class with stated weights and the usual allowances at the weigh-in (figs 6 & 8). In addition there was the Battle Royal, often referred to locally as a "crowdie main", in which all contestants were turned into the pit together until there was a victor, or until only two birds remained which could then be set against each other. Occasionally, local mains were also fought in which a Battle Royal was substituted for the later stages in a Welsh Main. Long Mains were those which could be fought over a number of days, with as many as forty-one or more cocks on each side, the result being determined by the number of successful battles gained by a side. Just such a contest fought during Newcastle race week in July 1808, between the Gentlemen of Durham and those of Northumberland, eventually terminated in a drawn match on the Saturday with each side having won as many as twenty-four



TO BE FOUGHT FOR,
At CHATTON, on MONDAY, February 3d, 1823,
TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS,

By Cocks, Stags, or Blinkards 4lb. 12oz. the highest.

THE SAME DAY

Twenty-five Pounds,

By Cocks, Stags, or Blinkards, 4lb. 8oz. the highest. Stags and Blinkards to be allowed 2oz. and 2oz. for feathers.—To weigh on the morning of fighting at 9 o'Clock, scales to be taken down at 12 o'Clock. To fight with fair steel spurs, and draw as usual.

Davison, Printer, Alnwick.

*Fig. 8 This woodcut impression was used at the head of some of Davison's handbills for at least a decade from 1816, though it lacks the more lively portrayals of confrontation achieved in some others. It appears as "no. 342 price 2/6d" in a catalogue of impressions from wood-engravings, many certainly by Thomas Bewick, which was formerly in the possession of Wm. Davison of Alnwick and is now in Newcastle Central Library. Impressions depicting two birds set against each other were also commonly at the head of newspaper advertisements of cock-fights. (For many dating to between 1779 and 1824 v. Thomas Hugo, *The Bewick Collector & Supplement* (London 1866 and 1868).*

battles. In view of the number of different mains that were held at the many pits operating during a Newcastle race week, the commonly held opinion that one thousand cocks could die during the period need have been no very great exaggeration. Despite this, there were and had always been those apologists who saw great

virtue in the variety of challenge that such contests offered to society at large. At the dawn of the eighteenth century it could be asserted by the doyen Edinburgh feeder Macrie, certainly with much greater optimism than history warranted, that "village may be encouraged against village, city against city, king-

TO BE FOUGHT FOR,

At Mr. T THOMPSON'S PIT, Alnwick,

On THURSDAY, May 12th, 1825,

SEVENTY POUNDS,

By Cocks, Stags, and Blinkards.

First Main—TWENTY POUNDS, by ditto, 5 lb the highest.

Second Main—TWENTY POUNDS, by ditto, 4 lb 10 oz the highest.

Third Main—TWENTY POUNDS, by ditto, 4 lb 6 oz the highest.

Fourth Main—TEN POUNDS, by ditto, 4 lb the highest.

Also the same day, A GUN to be Fought for by ditto, 4 lb 6 oz. the highest, four Subscribers, One Guinea each.

Second Cock to draw One Guinea.

Also the same day, A TURN-OUT BATTLE, 5 Guineas a side.

Stags and Blinkards to be allowed 2 oz and 2 oz for Feathers.

Scales to be put up at 10 o'Clock in the forenoon.—Fight and draw as usual.

—
Davison. Printer, Alnwick.

Fig. 9 In the 1820s Thompson's pit was in Narrowgate Street. At this time scales were being set up at various places, e.g. George Brown's, Horse and Hounds, Narrowgate Street (1824), and Thomas Thompson's, Bow Bridge (1825); more often than not these were inns or ale-houses.

dom against kingdom; nay the father against the son; until all the wars in Europe, wherein much Christian blood is spilt, be turned into that innocent pastime of cocking".²² Both this and similar supportive but equally credulous arguments were still being repeated at times in the early decades of the nineteenth century.²³

At local race meetings the cock-fighting mains were generally fought in the morning, before the Ordinary (a meal often at a standard price), to be followed by the horse-racing in

the afternoon and an Assembly in the evening for dancing, carding and the like. Carding after cocking was also common in the villages of the north-eastern dales, where, as at Netherton (24), the competitive instincts and chances to gamble could be even further extended by wrestling, hop-step-and-loup, and foot races.

Contests were normally advertised by hand-bills (figs 8 & 9) and from 1712 in the local press, where pride of place in the earliest issues of the Newcastle Courant must go to mains

held for lovers of "the Noble and Heroic Recreation" at the signs of the Crown, the Bull and Crown and the Blew Bell, all in Newcastle (25), and the Black Bull near to Barnard Castle (37). Eventually, the geographical span of the venues being advertised in the Newcastle newspapers extended as far as to York and Preston in the south, Wigton in the west, and Edinburgh in the north, although some of the more distant places were those where mains were being offered only as additional attractions at horse-race meetings. And in a few instances, as at Framwellgate Moor (46) and Chester-le-Street (40) in Durham or Milfield (21) in Northumberland, cock-fighting appears to have merited such relatively expensive notice perhaps only at the time of the local horse-races. Nevertheless, even a fleeting, newspaper advertisement, like that in 1764 for a main at the village of Barrasford (3) in North Tyndale, a venue which seemingly never achieved such notice again, must serve to remind us of the many events which were held but never advertised in this manner. The press notice of a future contest would appear anything up to twelve weeks before the date set for the weigh-in, giving ample time for the preparation of the birds and further advertisements. Consequently, a single issue of the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle in March 1776 could offer as many as nine different cock-fighting events during April and May at different pits in Newcastle, Darlington (43), Houghton-le-Spring (51), North Shields (26), Alnwick (1) and Alston in Cumbria. Handbills were still being printed locally during the 1840s, but notifications of contests in the local press began to decline during the early nineteenth century, the last advertisement for cock-fighting in association with Newcastle races being in 1821, though this by no means marked the end of mains being held either here or at Durham during the race-meetings.

By collating the dates of advertised events it seems probable that the major pits in Newcastle tried to avoid any overlap in the dates of each others contests, and even at times, maybe, with those at other important venues in the region. Thus, in the first six months of

1776, there were no apparent clashes between the dates of contests held at the six major Newcastle pits, except during the Newcastle races, and only two with another fourteen advertised events as far apart as Darlington to the south, Alnwick to the north, and Penrith to the west. That some such understanding did exist, at least between certain major pits, finds additional support from an insertion in the Durham County Advertiser of 14 January 1815, stating that because of fighting in Durham during the week commencing 13 February the fighting at Mr. Bull's pit in Newcastle (i.e. The Turk's Head) would be postponed until 27 February and the following days. Likewise, surviving handbills printed in Alnwick in the early nineteenth century bear witness to there having been a similar observance in arranging dates for the mains to be held at Alnwick (1) and the nearby villages of Denwick (10), Longhorsley (20), Chatton (8) and Felton (12). On the other hand, many a minor contest would have been arranged with little regard for embryonic calendars of this nature. At the Coquetdale village of Alwinton (2) in the eighteenth century it was the custom, and certainly to the financial benefit of the Parish Clerk, merely to include the dates of future cock-fights amongst the notices read out at the church door after morning service. Once advertised in the press any widespread cancellations of contests seldom seem to have occurred, except perhaps at times of "distemper" amongst the cattle, as in 1749 when most public gatherings, including those for cock-fights and horse-races, were strictly prohibited.

The number of prizes offered in a single main varied according to the kind of contest. Sometimes there was an award to the winner of each battle, in addition to the prize awarded to the winner of the main or the "odd battle", or to the side winning most battles. The latter sum could be anything from ten to twenty times greater than that for the single battle. In the eliminating Welsh Main, however, prizes were normally restricted to the winner and to the second and only sometimes the third most successful bird, rather than to the winners of every battle. It was also not unusual for more

than one main to be held at a pit during the same day, thus increasing the total prize money available (fig. 9).

Such foregoing considerations apart, the value and nature of the main prizes varied considerably, being governed generally by the importance of the venue and the status of the potential subscribers. In terms of cash certainly no local contest appears to have approached the exceptionally large stakes for a main held at Lincoln in 1830, between the birds of Joseph Gilliver, a famous breeder, and those of the Earl of Derby, when with seven birds a side it was 5,000 guineas the main and 1,000 guineas the battle. The largest monetary prizes offered locally were normally in the region of 10 to 20 guineas the battle and 500 guineas the main or odd battle, as in contests between the Duke of Cleveland and the Earl of Northumberland at Durham races ((45) in 1760, or between the Gentlemen of the North Side and the Gentlemen of the South Side of the Tweed during races at Lamberton (4) in 1813. At the other end of the scale, cash rewards for the winner of less prestigious contests could be no more than a few guineas (fig. 9).

Objects of gold and silver featured prominently as prizes, ranging from gold cups worth 150 guineas for mains at some of the important race meetings, through silver punch bowls and gold watches, to silver spoons and silver cockspurs worth no more than a guinea or two. Large quantities of ale or malt were also offered, the latter a seemingly popular reward in times when home brewing was fairly common, though again by way of contrast a short, impromptu Four Main might warrant no more than a bottle of gin. In predominantly rural areas, horses, heifers, pigs, geese or joints of meat and loads of hay were fairly common prizes, as were all types of household furniture down to the humble cracket. Very large items of local property seldom appear to have been at stake, a rare exception being at a sixteen cock Subscription Main in 1766 for the copyhold and appurtenances of the Black Bull Inn, Hexham, valued at £400, with £40 going to the second bird and £20 to each of the two birds which were third. First advertised to take place

at the Phoenix Inn in Hexham (18), this contest was later transferred to what could have been a far more profitable venue at Steel's pit in Newcastle during the local Race Week. In common with what was the custom at a number of schools a silver bell for the victor's hat was awarded at Hexham Grammar School (18) on the Shrove Tuesday cockings before 1719—a visible mark of success and authority, but perhaps spiritually less rewarding than the prayer book given at the not too distant Alston Grammar School in Cumbria.²⁴

At a number of local horse-race meetings in the eighteenth century the prizes awarded at the cock-fighting were often of greater value than those gained by success on the course. This was particularly so before an Act of 1740 which made it illegal to run horse-races for plates of less than £50 in value, thus eliminating a large number of the meetings which had been held in at least forty-seven different places throughout Northumberland and Durham in the preceding sixteen years.²⁵ Nevertheless, even as late as 1793, the daily purse for each of three days racing at Hexham (18) was only £50, whilst at the pit of the Phoenix Inn in the same town the birds of the Gentlemen of Northumberland were in combat with those of the Gentlemen of Cumberland for 10 guineas a battle and 200 guineas the main.

All told, however, the value of the prizes at times must have been relatively small when compared with the total sums that were won or lost in wagers. "Now see the gallants crowd about the pit, And most are stock'd with money more than wit" are lines which describe a failing that was certainly not confined to profligate gentlemen of fashion; there were those on the local pitmens' pay nights who were equally willing to bet "the last remaining doit", particularly if John Barleycorn was present to enhance expectations and to assuage disappointments. To gamblers of all sorts cock-fighting offered great variety in the forms of the possible wagers, as is well illustrated by the detailed calculations of the odds listed in such works as Hoyle's *Games*. Moreover, for many punters cock-fighting events were at times

more accessible and gave more frequent opportunities to speculate than horse-race meetings. The constant shouting and acceptance of the many bets added greatly to the general clamour around the pits, so that the reputation gained by the Newcastle bookmaker Sinclair, whose prodigious memory was said to allow him to retain odds, names and faces without taking notes, could have been well deserved.

Financial considerations dictated that there should be a reasonably close relationship between the value of the prizes offered in a Subscription Main and the product of the number of birds multiplied by the fee required from each subscriber. Thus in a sixteen bird Welsh Main at Morpeth (23) in 1844 for a heifer worth £15 as first prize, together with a total of £10 for further prizes, the entry per bird was 1½ guineas, leaving a credit balance of 4s which could be conveniently attributed to "expenses". Generally speaking, where prizes of 100 guineas or so were advertised the entry fee was from 8 to 10 guineas for each bird in a sixteen bird main, whereas in the contest for the Black Bull Inn, Hexham, valued at £400, the stake was much greater at £25 a bird. By way of contrast, the smaller and final contest on the Haa' Hill in Rothbury (28) called for an entry stake of only 12s-6d a bird. No doubt even this smaller amount could have discouraged some less well-heeled subscribers to the sport, though at the time it does not seem to have deterred the shoemaker from Otterburn village from travelling the fifteen miles to Rothbury with as many as eleven of his cocks on the carrier's cart, all secured in their tartan bags. Whatever the social standing of the subscribers, however, there were always those who defaulted on their payments, leading to cautionary reminders in the press that cocks could be excluded from the contests, or perhaps more effectively, as at Berwick (4) in 1815, that the feeders rather than the owners would be answerable for the stakes.

Where spectators' admission fees were charged they were generally less than 5s, even for major contests. The "Stand on the Hill" at Henzell's pit in Newcastle (25) in 1772 was

advertised at 3s for the duration of the mains, whilst tickets for the mains at the Morpeth races in 1844 were 2s per head. At the 1838 mains on Rothbury Haa' Hill, however, as little as 6d was charged, the same as the price of admission to the gallery for plays at the nearby Blue Bell Inn. In covered pits with more than one tier the prices not unnaturally varied with the distance from the fighting area. Admission tickets were issued at some of the major pits, similar to that depicted below Hogarth's well-known portrayal of "The Cock-pit-Royal". A more elaborate brass admission token of this nature, which bears on one side two cocks set against each other below the legend "Royal Sport", and on the other side the name "John Watling", presumably the owner or lessee of the pit, has long been in the numismatic collections of our own Society (fig. 10). For some promotions an additional source of revenue would also arise from the sale of printed programmes, which in the early nineteenth century were being sold locally for about 6d each.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century a number of local pits were still in public ownership. Alnwick Corporation (1) at that time was making payments for the maintenance of the old Pottergate pit, as well as granting "the Liberty of the Cock-pit" in the rentals of the Town Ridge. Although some pits continued to function under similar arrangements after this time, there was, as we have seen, a profit to be made from the private ownership or lease of an established cock-pit, whether it was attached to an inn or not. Consequently, Mr Thomson who ran pits during the early nineteenth century at least in both Alnwick (fig. 9) and Denwick, if not in more Northumberland villages, was not alone in having found it worthwhile to extend the geographical area of his financial interests. The economic potentials of ownership are further illustrated, even if again only indirectly, by the attention which was drawn to the presence of a cock-pit when the sales or leases of premises were advertised, whether it happened to be a pit refurbished in "a superior manner" at the famed Turk's Head in Newcastle (25) in 1813, or merely a "cellar cock-pit



Fig. 10 Brass admission token (actual size 32 mm × 43 mm); note the formalized sods or matting in the ring.

with glass lights” at the more modest Seven Stars in the village of Monkseaton (22) in 1814. Finally, when a covered pit was not in use for its designated purpose it could always be hired out and, if necessary, adapted for others. In 1832 Billy Purvis, the Newcastle boothman, was happy enough to fit out and decorate his friend Ambrose Maddison’s cock-pit in Hexham (18) “according to Thespian order”, presumably to their mutual financial advantage. Moreover, if the thespians could be rewarded with the proceeds of the occasional “benefit” performances, as indeed was Billy’s painter on this occasion, so too were the profits from cock-fighting sufficient to allow “benefit” mains to be advertised for loyal servants and supporters of the cock-pits.

We are told that in 1781 Martin Sherlock urged a friend to visit England, even if only to witness an election and a cock-fight, there being “a celestial spirit of anarchy and confusion in these two scenes”.²⁶ And despite the protestations of apologists to the contrary, it is undeniable that local cock-fights were often responsible for disorder and misdemeanours, an aspect of the sport which at that time brought forth more adverse criticism than did any concern for animal welfare. That the cock-pit in the small village of Whalton (36) near Morpeth was kept in “a state of frequent disturbance by quarrels and oaths” was not an unusual phenomenon. Even more dire results

could also befall, as in 1771 when Stephen Bolton of Tynemouth was found dead on the beach at Cullercoats (9), after drinking too freely at a cock-fight the previous night. His demise was seen as “a proper warning against intoxication . . . so it shall incite every benevolent man to discourage and the magistrates, if possible to suppress these meetings, which are scenes of Gaming, Debauchery, and Profaneness, and sometimes productive of untimely deaths”.

But suppression of the sport was some way off. Whilst there had been a number of enactments to prohibit cock-fighting in earlier centuries, the last during the Protectorate, none were with any long-term effect. Some local prosecutions against cock-fighters had also been made after the Restoration, but these were generally qualified, as in the case of Mathew Ridley at Hexham in 1669, who was accused of the ecclesiastical offence of fighting cocks “at the time of Divine Service”.²⁷ In similar vein, although disapproval or even prohibition of the sport featured in regulations governing some of our local institutions, concern was not about its barbarity but rather about the misbehaviour, vain time-wasting, and the cost that might arise from participation. Thus the rules of 1697 governing the apprentices of the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers certainly forbade them to keep horses, dogs for hunting and fighting cocks without

permission, but only until they had served seven years of their ten years apprenticeship, after which the master's permission was required.²⁸ Nor did the eighteenth century codified regulations of the large Crowley iron works at Winlaton, however remarkable in concept, have animal welfare in mind when the Clerk for the Poor was enjoined not to "upon any account of races, cock-fighting, rope dancers or stage players dismiss his scholars or any of them or absent himself, but shall constantly attend his school as aforesaid".²⁹ And whereas at times the more thoroughly plebeian and cruel practice of cock-throwing on Shrove Tuesday was vigorously attacked in letters to local publications of the eighteenth century,³⁰ such opposition seldom if ever appears to have embraced a simultaneous condemnation of cock-fighting.

By the early nineteenth century, however, opposition against the actual barbarity of such sports as cock-fighting was gaining ground and was being accompanied by more success. In the first place, an increase in the number of new schools, including Sunday schools, as well as the improved education available in others, were all having a beneficial effect on the general moral climate. The 1814 Visitation return for the parish of Bishopton (39) in Durham could express the fervent hope that "the Rising Generation should now be more regular in their public worship of Almighty God", as cock-fighting in the parish had been discontinued and the erection of a new schoolroom had enabled the managers to insist upon the regular attendance of both master and pupils. Likewise, but in secular vein, the Children's Employment Commission of 1842 attributed the gradual disappearance of bull-baiting, dog-fighting and cock-fighting in nearby Bishop Auckland (38), over the previous fifteen or twenty years, to the improved education of the young. And whether it was fortuitous or not, the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute at Wolsingham (62) in Weardale, in what had been the Fighting Cocks Inn, is at least an apposite reminder of the salutary educative processes which were also at work amongst some of the more mature members of society.

The religious revival too was exerting its moral pressures. In the 1830s, during Primitive Methodist meetings at South Side, near to Butterknowle in Durham, converts included "cock-fighters of terrible experience, turned from their brutalities",³¹ whilst crowded meetings in the villages around Newcastle were leading not only to cards being banned but also, in seemingly unreasoning bouts of fervour, to fighting-cocks being decapitated in the progress towards Salvation.³² Although locally there were those of other religious persuasions who also remonstrated against blood sports,³³ it is probably no less than a fitting mark of the importance of the Methodists' conscience in such matters that their first regular preaching place in South Shields (55) was established in a building formerly used as a cock-pit, the stairs down to it from Thrift Street being aptly renamed Society Stairs.

Yet other contemporary observers, perhaps not without some personal bias, were also keen to attribute such behavioural improvements to an increase in political awareness, engendered by movements such as Chartism: "Twelve months ago (i.e. 1838) colliers met at the cock-pit, or delighted in a dog-fight; now they read the *Liberator* and *Star*; the cock-pit is lost sight of in the intensity of political feeling and determination".³⁴

Finally, for some of those many miscreants whose sporting habits had not been reformed by education, religion, or an interest in politics, there could be the deterrent imposed by the lengthening arm of the law. In 1846 cock-fighting and gambling were thought to be nearly gone from the parish of Long Benton, near Newcastle, the presence of four police from the county having had "good effect in promoting better habits".³⁵

Meanwhile, for many of the local gentry, who often dispensed the law, fox-hunting had become a far more popular sport during the hundred years which had elapsed since George Bowes had first introduced packs of fox-hunting hounds into Durham county.³⁶ Not surprisingly, it also remained a socially and politically more acceptable sport.

In the early decades of the nineteenth cen-

ture the local press was increasingly a vehicle for letters and articles denouncing the evils of cock-fighting.³⁷ Some critics were more constructive than others in that they offered alternative amusements, at least “for the poor or lower orders of society”. Amongst such approved options were the cultivation of small gardens, the appreciation of music, or the diversion of play-acting—the last coming from a local gentleman who at least admitted, albeit rather guardedly, that as to cock-fighting he “had been a little that way himself”. Indeed, this growing censure was not always without some double standards. William Davison, in his *Descriptive and Historical View of Alnwick*, published in 1822, was at a loss “to state to what perversity of feeling or worse than brutal taste the continuation of this barbarous sport is to be ascribed”: yet, such evident abhorrence did not appear to deter him, as a printer and publisher of some stature, from printing the handbills for the cock-fighting mains at Alnwick and the neighbouring villages over many years (figs 8 & 9). However, far more powerful and effective local voices than Davison’s were also being raised in condemnation, most notable amongst them being that of the Quaker Joseph Pease, who was already vigorously supporting animal rights during the 1820s before he became a member of parliament for South Durham in the 1832 election. In the event, it seems almost paradoxical that the 1825 line of the Stockton to Darlington Railway, in which Pease was so heavily involved, should have been directed through Fighting Cocks (47) itself.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had been founded in 1824, and cock-fighting was made a misdemeanour in certain circumstances by an Act of 1835, later to be replaced in 1849 by the more stringent Cruelty to Animals Act which made the sport illegal. The Society itself began to present cases against cock-fighting by the late 1830s, but, as has been perceived elsewhere,³⁸ most of these were clearly against persons of little social consequence. And despite Thomas Oliver’s praise for the part already played by our local gentry and magistrates in prohibiting the sport

by the 1830s,³⁹ there were some in authority, like Duncombe Shafto of Whitworth Hall, whose attitudes were possibly less than strict or fully law-abiding even after 1849.⁴⁰ In this context it may be sufficient to mention two nineteenth century transgressors, whose names both Collingwood Bruce and later Chancellor Ferguson felt unable to give,⁴¹ possibly because of a sense of decorum. The first, said to have been a well-known Newcastle alderman and magistrate with a cloistered pit at the back of his house, was certainly none other than Sir John Fife, the noted surgeon and Mayor of Newcastle in 1838 and 1842, who once opined that “common sense and proper feeling ought not to be wanting for a position on the bench”.⁴² The second gentleman, who had sometimes been entertained at this same pit when in the area, was undoubtedly Baron Parke of the Court of the Exchequer, later Lord Wensleydale, whose daughter Lady Cecilia was the wife of Sir Matthew White Ridley of Blagdon and was attended by Sir John Fife during her own and family illnesses in the 1840s.⁴³

As to the eventual fate of well-established local pits, some were closed quite quickly after 1835, the Haa’ Hill, Rothbury (28), for example, probably as early as 1838, following upon public disorders and heavy fines by the magistrates. Others, however, still functioned even after 1849. Morpeth (23) perhaps continuing until the 1850s despite frequent proceedings against the owners, whilst the Gallowgate pit in Newcastle (25), once said to have been the last active public pit in England, was not finally abandoned until after a police raid in 1874. Elsewhere, Robert Smith Surtees’s vision in 1859 of notes of soft music from the village band having replaced “cock-fighting, dog-fighting and bacchanalian songs”⁴⁴ was to some degree an idyllic over-simplification. Clandestine events certainly continued, despite more effective policing. With “crows” or look-outs posted there could be relative safety in a secluded valley at Burnfoot (5), in concealing woods near Byers Green (38) and possibly Wallington (7), or in the upland isolation of the putative sites on Soney Rigg (31) above North

Tynedale and at Hare Sheds (17) and Guide Post (15) in the Cheviot Hills. Nor were urban cellars or secluded town gardens the only places to offer domestic sporting privacy. Chancellor Ferguson related how a Carlisle gentleman in 1877 kept his cocks in a sodded attic,⁴⁵ a practice which might well account for some old household names such as the "Cock Attic" or the "Cock Loft", as still survives at East Shaftoe Hall in Northumberland. Indeed, large sporting attics were not unknown in the later nineteenth century. When William Anderson, the owner of Willington Slipway on the Tyne built Rosehill House near Wallsend in the 1860s, he furnished the attic with a rat-pit,⁴⁶ to accommodate a sport which had gained in popularity after cock-fighting was banned.

The clandestine survival of this once "royal diversion" of cock-fighting, down to the present day, is not our concern. But current legal prosecutions hereabouts will come as no surprise to some older members of our own Society. Even in the distant innocence of their youth, they will not have been entirely unaware of the true destiny of some of those proud birds ostensibly bred only for show,⁴⁷ or altogether ignorant of the contents of those mysterious sacks being carried to out-of-the-way places, where the chance to gamble was not limited to pitch-and-toss.

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REFERENCES AND NOTES

Where possible the sources relating to places mentioned in the text are given in the Appendix, as

indicated by the numerals in brackets. Newspaper references are merely selective and have been abbreviated as below, followed by the date of the particular edition.

BA=Berwick Advertiser;
 DA=Durham Advertiser (1814-37);
 GO=Gateshead Observer (1837-50);
 NA=Newcastle Advertiser (1788-1814);
 NC=Newcastle Courant (1711-1909);
 NG=Newcastle Gazette (1710-51);
 NJ=Newcastle Journal (1739-88);
 NWC=Newcastle (Weekly) Chronicle (1764-1953);
 NMC=Newcastle Monthly Chronicle;
 TM=Tyne Mercury (1806-46).

¹ Because of its earlier popularity amongst royalty, v. Pegge, Rev. S., *A Memoir on Cock-fighting, Archaeologia* III (1786), 132-50.

² Hughes, E., *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1952), 382.

³ Foot, J., *The Lives of Andrew Robinson Bowes and the Countess of Strathmore* (1810), 13.

⁴ Hughes, E., op. cit.

⁵ Bruce, J. C., *Handbook of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1863), 101.

⁶ Brand, J., *Observations on Popular Antiquities including Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgares* (1810), 419; Mackenzie, E., *View of the County of Northumberland* (1825), I. pt.1, 209.

⁷ Bruce, J. C., quoting a letter of 1864 in *Lectures on Old Newcastle*, 62.

⁸ Hughes, E., op. cit., 357.

⁹ e.g. Cowper, H. S., *CW* XIII (1893-4); Sykes, W. S., *CW* 2 XXIV (1924), 242; *RCHM Westmorland*, various entries.

¹⁰ Peate, I. C., *Denbighshire Cockpit and Cock-fighting in Wales* (Nat. Mus. Wales, 1970). Hole, C., *Witchcraft in England* (1945), 135.

¹¹ Ferguson, Chancellor, R. S., *CW* IX (1885-7), 375.

¹² Peate, I. C., op. cit. which includes illustrations and reconstruction.

¹³ Bourn, W., *Whickham Parish* (1893), 32.

¹⁴ *Hoyle's Games with an Essay on Game Cocks etc.* (rev. ed. 1820), 428-59.

¹⁵ Dixon, D. D., *Upper Coquetdale* (1903), 33. The tenants of the Earl of Derby were similarly obliged to walk cocks.

¹⁶ *Consistory Court of Durham 1771: Bryan Garry v. Jane Clark*, Dept. Pal. & Dip., Univ. Durham.

¹⁷ Bourn, W., op. cit., quoting from estate papers. But his attribution of certain payments for digging pits to the digging of cock-pits is almost certainly

wrong; they were probably for sinking test pits for coal.

¹⁸ Ferguson, R. S., op. cit., 318.

¹⁹ Reproduced in *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 19/7/1957, p. 6.

²⁰ Respectively e.g. Stokoe, *Northumbrian Pipe and Ballad Tunes*, 20; Sheldon, F., *History of Berwick* (1849), 336; Fish, L. M., *The Folklore of the Coal Mines of NE England* (Norwood ed., 1975).

²¹ Longstaffe, W. D. H. (ed.), *Memoir of the Life of Ambrose Barnes, Surtees Soc.*, 50 (1869), 33. 'Spang' = to leap with force (Brockett, *North Country Words* (1865), II, 149).

²² Macrie, W., *An Essay on the Royal Art and Recreation of Cocking* (1705).

²³ e.g. Gallus Gallinaceus, A modest commendation of cock-fighting, *Blackwoods Magazine* XXII no. CXXXII (Nov. 1927), 587-93.

²⁴ Sopwith, T., *Mining Districts of Alston Moor, Weardale and Teesdale* (1833), 27.

²⁵ Hinde, J. Hodgson, *Public Amusements in Newcastle*, AA2 IV (1860), 233.

²⁶ Letter quoted in Dicks, J., *The Works of Hogarth* (London), 133.

²⁷ *Durham Diocesan Records 1669*, II/3, 175, Dept. Pal. & Dip., Univ. Durham. Sunday had been a popular day for cocking in earlier times (Brand, J., *Popular Antiquities* (1849 ed.), II, 57).

²⁸ Newcastle Merchant Adventurers I, *Surtees Soc.* 93 (1894), 25.

²⁹ Law Book of the Crowley Iron Works, *Surtees Soc.* 167 (1952), 154-5.

³⁰ e.g. An earnest and affectionate address to the Common People of England concerning their Usual Recreations on Shrove Tuesday, *Newcastle General Magazine* 5 (1752), 37. Cock-throwing seems to have continued in Newcastle until at least 1753 and was said to have been discontinued in Stockton in 1748 (*Richardson's Table Book* II, 19, 48), though there were clearly later instances elsewhere v. e.g. NC 15/3/1783.

³¹ Patterson, W. M., *Northern Primitive Methodism* (1909), 90.

³² Colls, R., *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield* (1987), 118.

³³ e.g. Stockdale, R., *A Remonstrance against inhumanity to animals etc.* (Alnwick, 1802). He states specifically "I do not like Methodists"!

³⁴ Colls, R., op. cit., 279 quoting the *Northern Liberator* for July 1839.

³⁵ Ibid., 118, quoting an underviewer for Killingworth and Burradon collieries in 1846.

³⁶ In 1738 he had bought hounds and terriers from

Sir Wm Middleton of Belsay Castle, Northumberland, and in 1745 a celebrated pack of fox-hounds from Dorset v. Arnold, R., *The Unhappy Countess* (1989), 15-16.

³⁷ *Northumberland and Newcastle Monthly Magazine* vol. I (1818), 261-2, 300; *ibid.*, II (1819), 60.

³⁸ Malcolmson, R. W., *Popular Recreations in English Society* (1973), 135.

³⁹ Oliver, T., *A New Picture of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1831), 77.

⁴⁰ Eden, Sir T., *Durham* (1954), II, 445-6; unless the story of the re-enacting of the cock-fight in the courtroom at the behest of Shaftoe, the magistrate, is apocryphal.

⁴¹ Bruce, J. C., op. cit.; Ferguson, R. S., op. cit.

⁴² *Newcastle Town Council Reports*, Sept. 5th, 1860. Sir John, who was also a huntsman, died in 1871. He had lived in Ellison Place, Queen Square, Hood Street (1855), and later Northumberland Street. The University has recently commemorated his involvement in medical education by naming some new student accommodation Fife House.

⁴³ Ridley, Viscountess (ed.), *Cecilia: Life and Letters of Cecilia Ridley* (1958), 16-17, 111, 190. Clearly Sir John Fife was also corresponding with her father.

⁴⁴ Watson, F., *Robert Smith Surtees* (1933), 183, quoting from *Plain or Ringlets?*

⁴⁵ Ferguson, R. F., op. cit.

⁴⁶ Richardson, R. W., *History of the Parish of Wallsend* (1923), 294. A sport which was sometimes defended, notably by the less impoverished, as the last sport left to the poor man after cock-fighting was banned.

⁴⁷ Reputably one of the last large breeders of cocks for show in this area lived at Cawburn Shield on Hadrian's Wall in 1970; he had had 50 birds but was forced to abandon breeding because of high costs. (*Newcastle Journal* 21/1/1970, p. 13.)

APPENDIX

A selection of places where cock-fighting is attested or is said to have taken place in Northumberland and Durham.

NORTHUMBERLAND

1. *Alnwick*. NWC 22/2/1766, NA 26/12/1789; handbills NRO ZMD167/1, 4, 5; Tate, G., *History of Alnwick* (1866), I, 434.

2. *Alwinton*. Dixon, D. D., *Upper Coquetdale* (1903), 234.
3. *Barrasford*. NWC 24/3/1764.
4. *Berwick & Lamberton Races*. NA 24/6/1813, BA 11/3/1815; Fuller, J., *History of Berwick* (1799), 448; Fairfax-Blakeborough, J., *Northern Turf History II*, 149.
5. *Burnfoot* (fig. 2). The pit lies at NY 850546 by an early hollowed track and the River East Allen, here merely a burn. This was lead mining country and the building across the fields to the NW, now a private residence, was formerly a public house. Burnfoot was also once the site of an annual cattle and sheep fair (Dickenson, G., *Allendale and Whitfield* (3rd ed. 1903), 63–4). An octogenarian, whose father had farmed the land nearby, showed the present writer where by tradition the “crows” or look-outs had been posted.
6. *Catton*. The “cock-ring” mentioned on Catton Lea (Dickenson, G., *ibid.*) could no longer be found.
7. *Cambo, Wallington, Kirkwhelpington*. Bosanquet, R. (ed.), *In the Troublesome Times* (1929), 20, 71–2. The pit in the Wallington W Wood has not been found and the only remains known in Cockplay Plantation are those of a Romano-British type, stone-built settlement. Cockplay, as also in Cockplay Farm, nr. Simonburn, is probably not indicative of cock-fighting, *pace* Ridley, N., *Portrait of Northumberland* (1965), 30.
8. *Chatton*. Handbills, NRO ZMD167/1 (1067c).
9. *Cullercoats*. NJ 16/2/1771.
10. *Denwick*. Handbills NRO ZMD167/4 (78c), 167/5 (35). Apparently the pit was a favourite off-duty resort of members of the volunteer corps when at their fortnight's training near Alnwick in the early nineteenth century (Donkin, S., *Reminiscences of Northumbrian and Border Character* (1886), 117).
11. *Elsdon*. There are vestigial remains of the pit on the green, c. 10·6 m (34'9") overall with a shallow ditch c. 1·8 m (5'11") across from the platform edge to the crest of the outer mound. An oak tree and bench seat occupy the platform. Whether or not this was T. Humble's, as advertised in NWC 14/12/1765, is problematical. For barring out day *v.* poem of 1826 in Bosanquet, *op. cit.*, 20. The isolated concentric circles site on the moors near Birky Burn, 3½ mile to the SE of Elsdon, would not rest happily as a cock-pit (plan, *Antiquity XIX* (1945), 81).
12. *Felton*. Handbill, NRO ZMD167/1 (799c); NCH VII, 265.
13. *Ford*. NMC 2/1889. The original pit was removed by the Castle Quarry, but the later pit on Ford Hill Farm has not been found.
14. *Great Tosson*. Dixon, D. D., *op. cit.*, 323. The Royal George is now a private residence.
15. *Guide Post*. Philipson, J., AA5 VIII (1980), 167. A slight circular depression at NT 875136, is a traditional site, according to hill farmers.
16. *Haltwhistle*. NWC 12/4/1766. 7/6/1766.
17. *Hare Sheds*. Philipson, J., *op. cit.* A round pit, originally edged with large stones and 2·5–3 m overall, has been dug into an earlier cross-dyke or field boundary on Clennell Street at NT 907089. A most probable explanation.
18. *Hexham*. NWC 22/3/1766, NWC 22/5/1781, NA 27/4/1790; NCH III pt 1, 216,297; Robb, W., *Hexham Fifty Years Ago* (1882), 15; Robson, J. P., *Bard of Tyne & Minstrel of Wear, Life & Adventures of Billy Purvis* (1849), 164. Information on excavation from D. Edwards (report forthcoming).
19. *Holy Island*. PSAN2 VII (1895), 82. The traditional site of the cock-pit for at least three generations has been on the Heugh, just to the E of the Beacon, where there is a circular feature c. 10 m overall cut by a later trench c. 1·5 m wide. There is some confusion re the position of Dr. Hope Taylor's “early monastic cell” excavated in 1962 (*Prehistoric Soc. Tour Guide 1964*, 31, and now *Northern Archaeology* 8 (1987), 19).
20. *Long Horsley*. Handbill, NRO ZMD167/1 (103c).
21. *Milfield*. NC 15/3/1720, NA 2/1/1790. Is it possible that the prehistoric cursus was re-used for the race meetings?
22. *Monkseaton*. NWC 26/2/1814; Tomlinson, W. W., *Historical Notes on Cullercoats, Whitley and Monkseaton* (1893), 19, 58. The inn and what was possibly a cellar cockpit has been replaced by more recent buildings.
23. *Morpeth*. NJ 28/2/1742, NC 15/8/1747, NWC 4/1/1766; Stob Hill NC7/6/1766. For 1844 expenses *v.* Fairfax Blakeborough, *op. cit.* II. The races were said to have attracted Fenwicks, Shaftoes, Sir Charles Monck, Lord Durham, Lord Grey and Lord Byron (Woodman, W., *Berwick. Nat. Club XIV* (1892–3), 132).
24. *Netherton*. Dixon, D. D., *op. cit.*, 257, 259, and *Vale of Whittingham* (1895), 34–7. The Phoenix which became the schoolmaster's house is now a country cottage. Dixon gives the cock-pit as being “on the S side of the burn opposite the village”, where there is a ridge now covered in rank, obscuring overgrowth. The circular earthwork at NT 985076, beyond the W end of the village but still S of the burn, bears a close resemblance in plan to a cock-pit yet would seem to be precluded because of

greater overall dimensions and especially the depth of the ditch. Either location would satisfy the route of the post cock-fight foot-race described by Dixon.

25. *Newcastle*. Frequent editions from NC of 1712 onwards; NWC 1/12/1770, NJ 16/5/1772 & 31/5/1766, NA 27/3/1790, NWC 7/4/1798, NC 19/3/1814 & 15/5/1816. There were as many as eight different pits advertising in the 18th century and there were probably others not doing so.

26. *North Shields*. NWC 22/2/1766, at £20 prize money each day this was the smallest amount offered amongst the eight pits advertising in this edition.

27. *Prendwick*. Donkin, S., *Reminiscences of Northumbrian and Border Character* (1886), 17. "Felton reds" were presumably named after the village (12, above) and "Brandling greys" were probably associated with the Brandling family, of which Charles Brandling was certainly a cocker in the later 18th century. The stakes and spades "from Jemie Blacklock's, Callaly High Houses" were no doubt also useful in preparing a cock-fighting ring.

28. *Rothbury*. NC 23/5/1747; Dixon, D. D., op. cit. & AA2 XIII (1889), 310-16 include passing references to other places in Coquetdale.

29. *Shilvington*. *Berwick. Nat. Club XVI* (1896-8), 138. All traces of this supposed cock-pit in this reduced medieval village, last recorded by the O.S. at NZ 15718093, have now been ploughed out.

30. *Snitter*. Dixon, D. D., op. cit., 453. The Half Moon has been a private house since 1929. No pit survives but a cock-spur was found in an adjoining garden (local info.).

31. *Soney (Soncy) Rigg nr. Plashetts*. In the area of Pithouse Crags at an altitude of c. 300 m and now for long under afforestation was a feature described as circular, c. 5 yds in diameter, surrounded by a ditch and seats cut out of earth, and resembling earthworks known as Arthur's Round Tables (e.g. Mackenzie, E., *History of Northumberland* (1825), 257). This is an attribution sometimes given elsewhere to cock-pits as well as to prehistoric henge monuments.

32. *Swindon*. Dixon, D. D., op. cit., 292, 304. The Badger Inn is now a private residence but is marked by a wall plaque. It was popular with the miners who worked on Hepple moors. For cock-fighting between Coquetdale and Redesdale men on nearby Harehaugh's "bloody plain" v. Roxby, R., *The Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel* (1832), 28 note d.

33. *Tynemouth*. The pit sunk into the cellar floor is beneath what was for many years Boots the Chemist and is now the Victoria Wine shop in Front Street; diam. 3.5 m (11'6"), depth 1.2 m (3'8"), with

access by five narrow steps on the S perimeter (fig. 4), v. also *Shields Weekly News* 7/8/1970. Tradition has another pit at the Salutation Inn in Front Street, but nothing now survives.

34. *Ulgham*. Reportedly two cockings a year in former times but no pit survives (Brown, J., *Ulgham* (pr. pub.), 131).

35. *West Whelpington*. The circular stone-built feature near the centre of the green of the DMV, once thought to be a cock-pit (Hodgson, J., *History of Northumberland II*, 1, 197) is now seen rather as a pound (Jarrett, M. G., et al., AA5 XVI (1988), 173, 188).

36. *Whalton*. Elliott, Rev. J., *Berwick. Nat. Club VI* (1869-72), 242. There are no remains on the reduced village green.

DURHAM

37. *Barnard Castle*. NC 1/3/1712, 20/4/1723. The Black Bull Inn was not in Barnard Castle but 5 km to the E on the present A67 road at NZ 104166. It is now a store for a piggery with the cellar filled in and no remains of a pit. The Zetland point-to-point used to be held in the fields opposite.

38. *Bishop Auckland*. NC 15/4/1721, 28/12/1765; VCH *Durham II* (1907), 53, 56.

39. *Bishopton*. *Queries addressed to all Parochial Clergy in Ordinary Visitation 1814*. Dept. Pal. & Dip. Univ. Durham.

40. *Chester-le-Street*. NWC 19/4/1766; note also Fighting Cocks Inn, Great Lumley.

41. *Coxhoe*. PSAN VII (1895), 144; AA2 XIII (1889), 310-16.

42. *Daddry Shield*. White, P. A., *Portrait of Durham* (1971), 55. No remains.

43. *Darlington*. NC 1/12/1727, *Yorks Courant* 8/3/1738, NWC 8/3/1766. At least three pits were operating in the 18th century and at least two in the early 19th century. Longstaffe, H. D., *History and Antiquities of Darlington* (1854); 297; Eden, Sir T., *Durham II* (1954), 445.

44. *Dunston*. Parker's pit was operating on Dunston Bank in 1712 (Bruce, J. C., op. cit., 101); the area at the N end of Ravensworth Rd. was known as The Cockpit (Bourn, W., *Annals of Whickham Parish* (1893), 130.

45. *Durham*. NJ 7/6/1760, NWC 15/6/1765, DA 14/1/1812, TM 21/4/1812; handbill, DRO London-derry Papers D/LO/F1013. At least two pits were

advertising in the 18th century, and the Waterloo Inn pit was still operating in the 1830s.

46. *Framwellgate Moor*. NC 11/5/1728.

47. *Fighting Cocks*. Surtees, R., *History of Durham* III (1823), 239 note r gives Elisha Cocks as proprietor of Fighting-cocks-farm in 1823. Part of the manor of Middleton came into the hands of the Cocks of Plymouth in the later 18th century, but it seems unlikely that the farm and village names derive from the family name.

48. *Gateshead (Low Fell etc.)*. NWC 6/5/1775, GO 27/1/1838; Manders, F., *A History of Gateshead* (1973), 240–41. Another celebrated cocker from Gateshead Fell was 'Lang' Wilson (Wilson, T., *The Pitman's Pay and other Poems*, ms copy NRO M18/18, p. 15).

49. *Heighington*. NC 12/8/1727, 13/3/1745, NWC 22/3/1766; accounts for 1785, NRO ZALA/19b.

50. *Hope House*, nr *Middleton Teesdale*. A local tradition of doubtful origin has Hope House (earlier Hope Farm) as an ale-house at one time, but even so the supposed cock-pit on the edge of a scarp at NY 98602783 seems more likely to have been a stack-stand.

51. *Houghton-le-Spring & Kepier*. NJ 16/3/1765, NWC 1/3/1766, 11/3/1780. Kepier Grammar School, "The Eton of the North", was attended by Robert Surtees and other sons of the northern gentry who later subscribed to local mains.

52. *Middleton-one-Row*. Compared to the Rothbury Haa' Hill pit in AA2 XIII (1889), but the village green has been reduced by the present main

road and some scooped platforms on the slope down to the Tees are of uncertain purpose.

53. *Newhouse*. Race, s., *The Two Worlds of Joseph Race* (1988), 31.

54. *Shotton*. Phillips, M., *PSAN3* III (1907–8), 20. No remains are now visible on the reduced village green.

55. *South Shields*. NC 10/3/1798; Hodgson, G. B., *The Borough of South Shields* (1903), 271.

56. *Stockton*. NC 1/7/1727, 10/3/1798; Heavisides, H., *The Annals of Stockton-on-Tees* (1865), 131–2; Fowler, T., *History of Stockton* (1972), 121–2.

57. *Stonebridge House*. NNWC 11/3/1780; accounts for 1785 NRO ZALA/19b.

58. *Sunderland, Bishop Wearmouth, Monkwearmouth*. TM 5/1/1813, DA 4/2/1815; Mitchell, W. C., *History of Sunderland* (1919), 112–13, but the sites W of Barnes Park, on the Wreath Hills and at Low Row are no longer visible.

59. *Westgate*. *Auckland Chronicle* 22/8/1907; Graham, J. J., *Weardale Past and Present* (1939), 81. The "Pingle" (a small enclosure) which once contained the pinfold and the cock-pit, opposite to what used to be the Miners' Arms, lies behind the old candlehouse which still stands.

60. *Whickham*. Bourn, W., *Whickham Parish* (1893), 69–70.

61. *Winlaton & Winlaton Mill*. Bourn, W., *History of Ryton* (1896), 124; Gateshead MBC, *History of Blaydon* (1975), 124.

62. *Wolsingham*. NWC 29/3/1766; Milburn, T. A., *Life and Times in Weardale* (1988), 59.

