

XII

Del. et sculp.: The Society's collection of engraved copper plates

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IT IS JUSTIFIABLE to feel a sense of wonder at the wide range of interests evidenced in the activities of the Society in the nineteenth century. One that has been little noticed was the acquisition of engraved copper plates. The Society formed a collection of over two hundred of these plates, mostly of those used to illustrate books related to the concerns of our members. These plates are in the Black Gate. When I examined them in the late sixties and early seventies they were much neglected and, to the best of my knowledge, unlisted. I cleaned them up, took amateurish impressions from many of them on a copper-plate press,¹ and made a draft list. This proved to be such a complex confusion of detail that my resolution faltered and failed before the list could be reduced into a form capable of being typed and finding its way past an editor into print. Rather than to allow the product of this labour wholly to pass into oblivion, my present intention is to deposit my note-book including the list in the Library of the Society. Meanwhile the present article will essay some description of the riches of the collection.²

Should any thought be entertained that this zeal of our forbears lacked discrimination, let it be said at once that the plates collected include work of historic and artistic merit, including work of Samuel Buck, T. H. Hair, and T. M. Richardson. Many of the draughtsmen and the engravers or etchers are undistinguished, but some even of these glean lustre from their printer William Davison or significance from the local interest of the subject. Some of the publications in which their images appeared are now the coveted objects of collectors. There are a few of the plates which do not fall into any group. Of these one of the most

interesting is the plan of Newcastle engraved for Bourne's *History*. Also of special interest is Hodgetts' engraving of a view of St. Nicholas' Church, Newcastle, by T. M. Richardson. Otherwise the plates will be discussed below grouped under the titles in which they were published. Although most of the Davison plates did not appear initially in a bound volume, as his *Miniature Views* they do form a uniform series.

When it is noted below or in the list that some of the plates which must have been in the original set are missing, it does not necessarily follow that they have been pilfered; for one reason or another they may not have been acquired in the first place, or they could have been placed with a tradesman for printing and not returned. Below "plate" is used for the engraved metal in our collection and "Plate" for the impression from it in the publication. None of the plates, of course, is in mint condition and some are marred by scratches, but many are still capable of giving an acceptable impression, though I would deprecate any suggestion that an edition be printed from any of them.

The publishing history of engravings such as these is rarely simple. Artists and engravers, like other men had to pacify the landlord or pay cash for bread and ale, so partial issues often appeared before definite publication. Thus it is unlikely that all of the bibliographical accounts given below are complete.

Samuel Buck, *Views*

Samuel Buck (1696–1779) is famous for his *Views of castles, seats, and remains of antiquities throughout Britain*. He was his own engraver as well as draughtsman but for a

period was joined by his brother Nathaniel. Their views of Durham and Northumberland were published in 1728, but the larger views of cities were published later, concluding with that of Berwick-on-Tweed in 1745. The whole collection was re-published in collective form as "*Buck's Antiquities or Venerable Remains of above 400 Castles & C., in England and Wales, with near 100 Views of Cities*", London, 3 vols, folio, 1774.

The twenty-four views of ruins in Durham and Northumberland (1728) were their standard views with an image approximately 365 mm wide by 190 mm deep. Our Society evidently acquired the complete set of these plates together with the three larger prospects of Newcastle, Durham and Berwick and a reprint of 25 of Buck's views was published by us in 1889. The reprint includes twenty-four views and as a frontispiece the South East Prospect of Newcastle upon Tyne. The prospects of Durham and of Berwick are in our collection but were not included in the reprint. Of the original twenty-four folio plates those of Alnwick Castle, Bamburgh Castle, Belsay Castle, Prudhoe Castle, Auckland Castle, and Holy Island Monastery were missing when I listed the plates.

From references in *Proceedings* in 1883 to the cost of 150 copies at £45, later to payment of Lambert & Co. of £4 9s 6d for the index for Buck's views and again to Lambert in 1884 of £16 12s 6d for 25 copies of "Buck's Views", covers etc., it seems possible there was an issue by the Society earlier than 1889, or they may have been issued in parts before the 1889 publication.

The original numbering of the plates in 1728 presumably ran from 1 to 24. These numbers have been tapped-up in the plates and re-engraved with numbers dispersed between 2 and 224. This was presumably done when Samuel produced his collected edition in 1774. The new numbering includes the three Prospects of Newcastle, Durham and Berwick.

The two large plates engraved in 1745 (Durham and Berwick) have the name C. Johnson stamped on the reverse; presumably he was the supplier of the metal. On the plate

of Brinkburn Priory there is evidence of some deletions. Scratched on the reverse of the plate of Dunstanburgh is *Printed by Lord Salisbury 1889 Born Nov. 23 1825, Edinburgh*. When I examined it the plate of Brancepeth Castle was wrapped in paper addressed to Mr. Charnley, Bookseller, Bigg Market, Newcastle upon Tyne. The Charnley dynasty traded from their Bigg Market shop from 1806 to 1860. The association of this wrapping paper with the Buck plates may be accidental, but it does suggest the possibility that one of the Charnleys was the agent in their acquisition by the Society.

Davison's *Miniature Views*

The next important group and numerically the largest, though it includes the smallest plates, are those engraved for W. Davison. W. Davison (1781-1858) was an Alnwick printer of distinction who commissioned a number of engravings both in copper and in wood.³ Among his many activities he published many miniature views as intaglio prints. These, says Professor Isaac, were the picture post-cards of the period being printed on superfine wove cards at 4d each. Some were also used for embellished note-paper. Thirteen of those in our collection are of gentlemen's seats. Of those originally published Acton House, Fal-loden, Felton Park, Fowberry Hall from the North, Haydon Bridge School, Shaftoe Hall and Wallington House are missing from our collection.

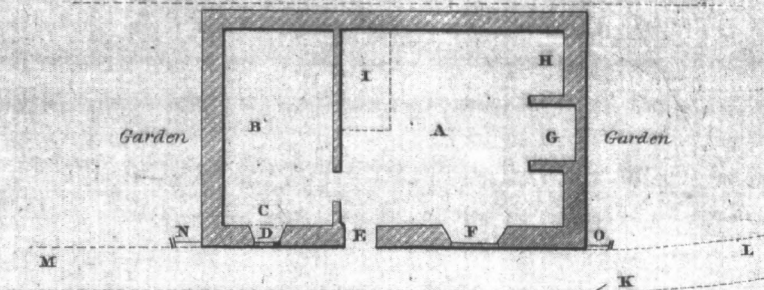
Some seventy-seven in our collection are of churches in Newcastle, Northumberland and Durham. Missing are churches at Bellingham, Bywell, Chollerton, Haydon, Haltwhistle, Rothbury, Morpeth, Whalton, Simonburn, Wallsend and Gosforth Chapel. In addition in our collection are the plates of two views of Lindisfarne Priory which were re-published by T & G Allan of Newcastle in 1888. Many of the miniature views have appeared in publications since, beginning with MacKenzie in 1825. The miniature views virtually all date from the 1820s. The drawings were by various hands ranging from Ralph Beilby⁴ to "from a drawing by a young lady". Almost all are engraved by



East View of the Cottage in Homer's Lane, near Warden, Northumberland, where the atrocious Murder was committed Tuesday night 3rd Jan^y 1826, On the body of Joseph Hedley, (commonly called "Joe the Quilter") a man who had attained to a greater proficiency in quilting than any ever known in the north of England.

Published by W. Davison, Alnwick.

Drawn by R. Dendin, Warden, Jan^y 20, 1826.



REFERENCE

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| A. The dwelling room. | G. The Fire place. |
| B. An apartment where he kept his Hens & sticks. | H. Where his Coals lay and a great quantity of blood found on the walls & furniture here. |
| C. Where his body was found with a garden Hoe across his Breast and a stick upon his Legs. | I. The Bed. |
| D. A window nearly built up except a hole for the Hens to pass in & out. | K. Where the Clogs were found which he wore. |
| E. The Door with a hole at the bottom for the same purpose. | L. Road to Chollerford & Bellingham. |
| F. The Window. | M. Road to Warden & Hexham. |
| | N. South Garden Door, O. North D ^o D ^o . |

Cottage where "Joe the Quilter" was murdered: a pamphlet published by Wm. Davison, Alnwick.

James Kerr of Glasgow on metal stamped by Pontifex. Rather an odd-man-out in the collection is a plate of "East View of the Cottage near Warden where Joe the Quilter was murdered in 1826",⁵ which presumably was published by Davison as a pamphlet for sale by itinerant pedlars.

Historical Account of Newcastle upon Tyne, MacKenzie and Dent, 1827

Twelve of the plates used to illustrate this work are in our collection. Plates of Eldon Square, The New Prison, and the Infirmary are not included. One showing the church and various

chapels in Gateshead is used also in the publisher's *History of Durham*. Two are from drawings of Dobson, the drawing of the remainder is attributed to J. Knox who engraved all of them.

An Historical View of the County Palatine of Durham, MacKenzie and Ross, 1834

Seven of the plates in volume I of this work are in our collection, though one is duplicated being used in the *History of Newcastle* as noted above. Views of Sunderland from the North Pier and of Seaham are missing. Engraving was by Collard, Knox and Archer.

Eleven plates from volume II are in the collection. The engravers are Collard and Archer. There is evidence of much tapping-up on the reverse of the plate of the map of Durham, as if at some stage a number of revisions had been made.

Views of the Collieries in Northumberland and Durham by Thomas H. Hair, James Madden & Co. 1844

This work was first issued by Hair himself in parts with only twelve plates entitled *Sketches of the Coal Mines in Northumberland and Durham* with an engraved title page dated 1839. Thirty additional plates together with a text describing the coal trade by M. Ross were added to make the edition published by James Madden and T. H. Hair in 1844.⁶ The drawings are all by T. H. Hair who was a well-known landscape painter, and the plates were mostly etched by Hair himself. They form an invaluable record of the coal mines in this area in the period, and good copies of the 1844 volume are much sought. The publishing history of these plates did not end there, as later in the century they were used by W. Fordyce as illustrations for his *History of Coal, Coke, Coalfields etc.* (London 1860). This was unfortunate as Fordyce had some of the plates altered to bring them more up to date, the impressions are not so good as those made under Hair's super-

vision when the plates were unworn, and, whether it was Fordyce's doing or not, many of the remaining plates in our possession have suffered from mis-handling.

In our collection are twenty-seven of these plates, in a number of them the original title and credit line have been deleted by burnishing and a modified title engraved. Most have "Published by W. Fordyce, Newcastle" engraved in place of the former attribution. There are a number of evidences of tapping-up of the metal to permit of repairs and alterations. A most regrettable case is the plate illustrating the bottom of the shaft at Walbottle colliery. As Hair engraved the scene it picturesquely and usefully records the early carriage of coal in corves. Fordyce had the corf and rope erased and a cage substituted, and the corves on carriages he had made into tubs.

Memorials of Old Newcastle upon Tyne by T. M. Richardson senior

Of the forty-two etchings in this well-known volume we have in our collection the plates of thirty-three. With a few exceptions they are all drawn by T. M. Richardson and mostly etched by himself or an associate. One is engraved by Lambert and another etched as late as 1848 by John Storey junior. On some, but not all, of the plates a number has been scratched. These range from 9 to 40, but do not correspond to the numbers as published. There is evidence of a few repairs and alterations; the plates in this set generally are in good condition.

Archaeologia Aeliana

Seventeen of the plates in the collection were engraved for the first three volumes of *Archaeologia Aeliana*. Those in the first volume may have been engraved any time between 1813 and 1822. The paper of plates IV and V is watermarked 181[-] and 1816, so two at least were engraved before that year. Plate IX was drawn by Beilby and engraved by Nicholson. Most of the plates are on metal by

Pontifex but the engraver is unacknowledged. Pontifex supplied Kerr of Glasgow, but as evidence of the engraver this is inconclusive.

In volume II (1832) we have five out of the twelve plates. Except for plates IX and X, the artists and engravers of these are not acknowledged but the engraver of II and IV was probably Lambert, as the metal was supplied by Large. Plates IX and X were engraved by Lambert. The remaining Plates were lithographed.

Only one plate from volume III is represented in our collection; the remainder were lithographed, except for a Plate of coins which was printed from a plate lent by the Society of Antiquaries of London. The plate we have was engraved by Collard.

Conclusion

Originating over a century and a half, these plates demonstrate a range of techniques—some now but little used. They range from the pure copper-plate engraving of Samuel Buck in the 18th century to the greater freedom of etching in the 19th century, loosening in style and widening in technical scope as the century wore on. As Joseph Crawhall (the father) and later C. Lovat Fraser breathed new life into the old chap-book (pre-Bewick) style of wood-engraving, or wood-cuts, so it may be hoped some inspired artist may still find expression in the classic precision of the clean line cut by the graver in copper. Meanwhile the Society performs a service in keeping intact this collection of plates for the enlightenment of a posterity whose memory of these skills may increasingly be dim.⁷

APPENDIX I

Engravers and/or Etchers include J. Archer (1808–64), G. Armstrong, Armstrong & Walker, J. Brown, S. & N. Buck, W. Collard, S. T. Davies, T. H. Hair, T. Hodgetts, James Kerr (Glasgow), M. & M. W. Lambert, C. Moss, T. E. Nicholson, T. A. Prior, W. W. Pybus, Edward Richardson, G. Richardson, T. M.

Richardson (1784–1847), Wm. Sharp (London), John Storey junr., John Thompson, and [—] Walker.

APPENDIX II

Suppliers of metal include: (all addresses in London)

Wm. Eastwood, 4, Harp Alley, Shoe Lane.

G. Harris, 31, Shoe Lane.

Hughes, 8, Peterborough Court, Fleet Street.

Hughes, Shoe Lane.

C. Johnson.

Large, New Street, Shoe Lane.

Wm. Pontifex & Co., 46, Shoe Lane.

William & Russell Pontifex, 46/47/48, Shoe Lane.

William Pontifex & Son, 46, Shoe Lane.

William Pontifex, Son & Co., 46, Shoe Lane.

William Pontifex, Sons & Wood, 46/47/48/49, Shoe Lane.

SHA[—] Little Moorfield.

William Stiles, 23, Lisle Street, Leicester Square.

W. Stiles, Son-in-law and successor to R. Pontifex.

B. Winkles, Northampton Street, Islington.

NOTES

¹ By courtesy of Mr. J. Slade, head of the Graphic Design Department of Newcastle Polytechnic, and under the invaluable guidance of Mr. Peter Bottomley, the proofing was partly done on Lambert's original press presented to the Polytechnic by the Hindson Print Group. I am grateful to them for their forbearance and their assistance.

² I was prompted to deposit this note-book by the constructive interest shown by our member A. E. Gilmour.

³ For Davison see Isaac, P. C. G., *William Davison of Alnwick*, Oxford 1968. I am indebted to Professor Isaac for a copy of his list of Davison's *Miniature Views*.

⁴ Beilby, Ralph 1743–1817, a considerable artist and engraver, first the master, then from 1777 the partner, of Thomas Bewick.

⁵ See Richardson, *Table Book*, hist. vol. iii, p. 320, where, citing Hodgson, this lamentable

event is attributed to 3 January 1825.

⁶Metcalf Ross was a printer at 48 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, 1835–52.

⁷In the draft list in my note-book the plates are grouped under the publication in which they appeared or of the publisher. As they often appeared in successive publications it is in many cases necessary to give two references to location which is either done by giving a Plate No. (in Roman numerals) and/or the number (folio) of the facing page, separated if two publications by an oblique stroke, the earlier being given first. Often too there

are two titles, the earlier (which may have been deleted on the plate) being given in square brackets. A date (year) is given, though the source and the precision of this varies; occasionally there is a date on the plate, more often only the date of publication is known. The size of the image is given in millimetres and is preceded by the overall size of the plate (i.e. the metal). Information is given about publication, the name of the supplier of the metal where this is stamped on the reverse, about alterations to the engraving, and occasionally of scratched graffiti on the reverse.