

# The Reiver

The newsletter of the North East & Borders Region of the Battlefields Trust

## Introduction

I can't believe it has been a year since the last newsletter! The summer of 2012 has been a quiet time in terms of regional events due to the weather, the Olympics and the other commitments of some of our active members within the region. Next year looks like making up for this. I am always keen to hear from members who are able to take a role in arranging or leading events. We do need more of you to play an active part if we are to be able to offer a greater number of regional activities.

*Geoffrey Carter*

## Activities

### LookwideUK

On 5<sup>th</sup> March Geoffrey Carter led a group of young people from Newcastle on a walk over the battlefield at Homildon Hill. On the following day the group visited Bamburgh to discover something of life in a castle. LookwideUK is a Northumberland Scouts development initiative and aims to help disaffected and disengaged young people make the most of their lives. The two days formed a part of a larger "Geordie At War" project. Some of the participants have written their own account of the visits which appears at the end of this newsletter. Anyone interested in finding more information on LookwideUK can visit their web site at : <http://www.lookwide.org.uk/>.

## Heugh Battery



**The Heugh Battery at Hartlepool. The only British gun battery to have fired its guns in anger during the First World War.**

On June 10<sup>th</sup> Martin Gershman led a visit to the Heugh Battery in Hartlepool. Did you know that the first casualty of enemy action on British soil during the Great War was Private Theophilus Jones aged 29 who was killed on the 16th December 1914 at Heugh Battery when a German naval taskforce bombarded the town? We were given a guided tour of the site which is now a museum full of fascinating information and artefacts. For full details take a look at their web site at : <http://heughbattery.com/>

### Homildon Hill

After bit of a lull the project is picking up pace again. Clive Hallam-Baker has taken on day-to-day management of the project and it is planned to have a new leaflet ready for next year's tourist season. Recently, the actor and longbow expert Dr Robert Hardy spoke on behalf of the Trust the Tower of London giving his interpretation of the battle. Geoffrey Carter gave the introduction. The owner of the battlefield, Jim Short, was present as a

guest of the Trust. Earlier in the year Jim and Clive Hallam-Baker took Robert Hardy to visit the site.



**Jim Short discusses the ground at Homildon Hill with Robert Hardy.**

### **Scottish Borders**

Justin Sikora has continued to lead our work on Scottish Borders side of the Flodden 500 project in association with the Scottish Borders Council. The project is linked the work on the English side of the border in the run-up to the 500th anniversary of the battle next year. A combined bid for funding has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund. For more information on Flodden see the web site run by Trust member Clive Hallam-Baker at <http://www.flodden.net/>

### **Annual General Meeting**

The regional AGM will be a little late this year. In fact, it will be next year! We hope to be able to arrange this for January 2013. Full details will be circulated shortly. However, please note that we will need a new Regional Secretary. Justin Sikora is returning to the US next summer following completion of his PhD and has decided to stand down now rather than midway through the year. If you are interested in taking on this role, please contact Geoffrey Carter.

### **The Battlefields Trust AGM and Conference 2013**

The Trust's 2013 AGM and Annual Conference will be held in Durham and will focus on the north east. The event will be hosted at Durham University over the weekend of April 5<sup>th</sup> to April 8<sup>th</sup> 2013. Professor Michael Prestwich, the distinguished historian, will be the guest speaker at the dinner on Saturday April 6<sup>th</sup>. Full details can be found on the Trust's web site at :

<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/>

We will need some helpers over that weekend and this is something we will discuss at our regional AGM.

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### **Contact Details**

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### **Geordie At War**

The following pages were written by some of the young people who took part in the two day trip to Homildon Hill and Bamburgh Castle. It is presented unedited. I think you will agree that it is a great piece of work.

## Geordie at War

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March the Lookwide Team picked us up from school and we travelled to Wooler. There are thirteen of us in the group from All Saints Church of England College in the west of Newcastle. This was the start of our two-day residential field trip to visit the battlefield at Homildon Hill. The battle was fought in September 1402 between a Scots army commanded by Archibald, Earl of Douglas and an English army led by the Earl of Northumberland and including his son Sir Henry Percy (Harry Hotspur).

We left school on a bright but cold morning and drove for an hour to get to Wooler, once there we went to the youth hostel, parked the bus and set off on this historical walk.



We met Geoff on at the bottom of the hill and whilst we had our lunch Geoff told us some facts about the battle and how the Scots were attacked just before they reached the Scottish border. The Scots Army of 10,000 men had earlier

invaded Northumberland and had reached as far as Newcastle which they plundered. The Earl of Northumberland led the English army from Berwick to block the escape route of the Scots as they made their way towards Coldstream heavily laden with booty.

We made our way up the hill and after a few hundred metres we stopped and Geoff explained the layout of the ground, the route taken by the Scots army and the dispositions of the English army. Currently it is thought the Scots took up a semi-circular formation around the lower slopes of the hill with the bulk of the English facing them at the bottom. Further along the walk we stopped again and Geoff pointed out the feature known as Monday Cleugh. Again current thinking is that part of the English army took up position on the other side of Monday Cleugh on Harehope Hill and archers fired into the Scottish ranks causing many deaths and injuries. Looking at the ground it seems impossible that the arrows could have travelled so far. Geoff's view was that the archers advanced nearer the Scottish lines to fire their arrows and surprisingly the Scots remained in position and allowed this to happen. Geoff pointed out to us that, because there has been no archaeology carried out on the battlefield and written evidence is sketchy it is difficult to establish with certainty the exact course of the battle on the ground.



One thing was certain – the Scots army suffered a terrible defeat with many men killed and injured by the devastating arrow storm from the English archers. We have seen a replica English war bow and know how difficult it is to pull, we have also seen a computer generated simulation of an arrow storm and it must have been very frightening for the Scots. Geoff explained how archers were trained from an early age to fire their arrows at

maximum range and rapidly to create this effect which devastated the Scots. One question remains unanswered – why did the Scots army remain in position and not react to the arrow storm?

When we got on the top of Homildon Hill we had a fantastic view of the snow covered Cheviot Hills and we could see right into the border of Scotland.

On reaching the summit Geoff explained the outcome of the battle. A number of Scottish noblemen were killed and a number were captured for ransom, which was the thing to do in those times. Scottish casualties were reported as very heavy with few escaping over the border.



We set off down the hill back to the Youth Hostel for a welcome cup of tea and a rest. We had an enjoyable day and learned a lot about this little known battle which took place in our region. Thanks to Geoff who brought the battle to life for us and made history interesting.

Tammy Armstrong, Carol Watts, Rebecca Millburn, Bethany Decarteret, Shanie Wills, David Cowie, William Condren, Marty Winch, Kane Selkirk, Lee Quilt, Richard Williams, Lauren Spence and Rebecca Walker.