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**Stories from the Wall:  
The Making and Remaking of  
Localism in Rural Northumberland**

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**PhD in Sociology  
University of Edinburgh  
2011**

## Declaration

In accordance with University regulations, I hereby declare that:

1. This thesis has been composed solely by myself;
2. This thesis is entirely my own work; and
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Heather Blenkinsop

## **Abstract**

This thesis concerns the making and remaking of localism, by which the thesis refers to the experience of group identity expressed through commitment to community, in rural Northumberland. Specifically, the research investigates the process of becoming, or claiming to be, or being seen as, a local person, and of belonging to a community. It examines how the processes of making, verifying and ascribing such identity claims occur and in what situations and contexts. The research contributes to the sociology of local identity and ‘belonging’, using a broad ethnographic methodology focused around public events. Through participant observation and analysing some relevant documents, it examines how ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’ cooperate to organize and attend these events and how they provide a time/space through which solidarity or otherwise is performed and identities are related to the outside world. The thesis argues against binaries such as public and private, insider and outsider, local and incomer, and instead proposes that there are layers of belonging, gradations of relationship and many points of interconnection. Further, division and cooperation are different ways in which groups and individuals choose to connect, and both are forms of attachment and interrelationship existing along a continuum of belonging. A person can commit and connect over time through volunteering and acquiring local knowledge about the place. However, often it is those who are socially on the fringes, the incomers, who are most assiduous in performing what passes for local. History is important for understanding prevailing social conditions, and some current events were analysed in an historical context. Many commentators have drawn boundaries around their area of study. However this thesis argues that the boundaries, geographic and social, move depending upon context, time, situation and the social location of those involved, including the researcher.

The conclusion brings together a set of interconnected findings, and presents the distinctive main arguments about belonging and the local in the thesis. First, birth is not an absolute criterion for belonging and incomers can become ‘local’ in the sense that they can move inwards into their own construction of place. Second, rather than focusing on boundaries alone, the centre of what is bounded is seen as being as



important as the boundaries in assessing what it means to be local. Third, while looking into the historic past is a valuable tool in understanding prevailing social conditions, attention must also be paid to the evolving future and how such perceived changes impact on the social. Fourth, there are varied routes to belonging that allow a person to move from outside towards inside. However, the routes to belonging are complicated and cannot be patterned. Fifth, the boundaries are permeable and expand to the global and contract not only to the local, but to the isolated, following an annual rhythm. The result is research which contributes to the sociology of localism and 'belonging' in relation to community and self in contemporary Britain.

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I liken doing a PhD to wading backwards through treacle with flippers on. Along the way there are obstacles to navigate, anxiety to medicate and a few flaming hoops to jump through before balancing on a beach ball and barking like a seal. Many people have supported me during the process of writing this thesis. Firstly, my supervisors Liz Stanley and Michael Rosie who have on many an occasion, unstuck a treacled flipper and even waded with me, guiding me around thorny theoretical conundrums and rocky reflexive ideals. Special thanks to another flipper unsticker – Hugo Gorringe, for all his help, support and dealings with red tape on my behalf.

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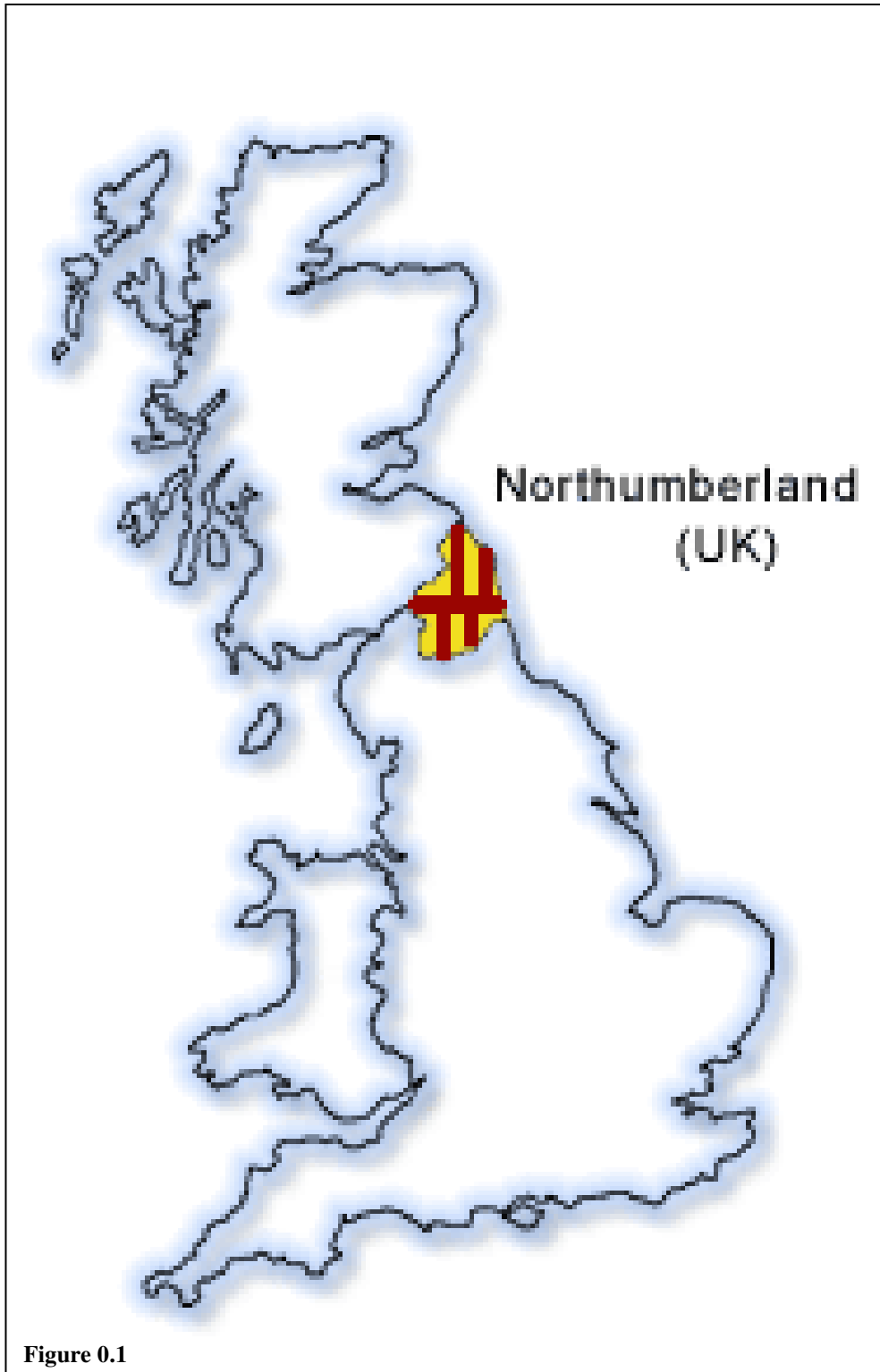
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## Northumberland on the Map



## Haltwhistle on the Map

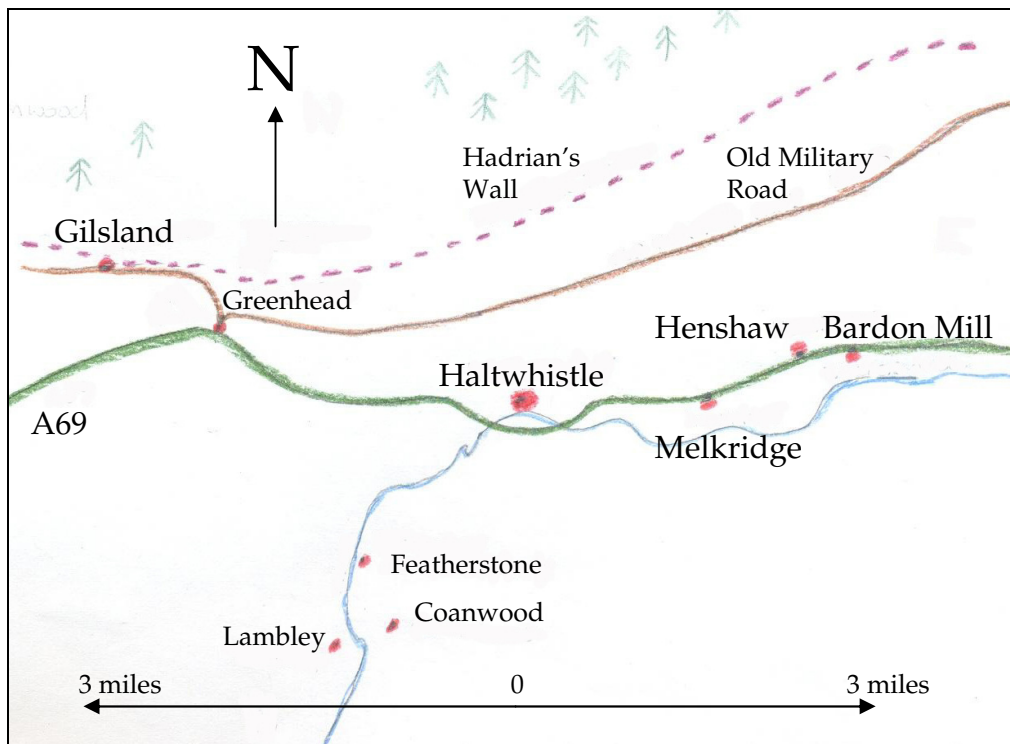


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## Introduction

This research concerns the making and remaking of localism in and around the town of Haltwhistle in the county of Northumberland, with the research contributing to the sociology of local identity and ‘belonging’, using an ethnographic methodology focused around three public events. ‘Localism’ refers to the experience of group identity defined by a sense of commitment to a community and its social practices (Nadel-Klein 1991, p502). Studies of belonging in Britain have typically been viewed in terms of claims to national identity (McCrone at al, 1998, 2002, Kiely at al, 2005, Bechhofer at al, 1999) or to belonging to small, relatively isolated communities (Frankenberg 1957, Cohen 1982, Strathern 1982), or to suburban industrialized areas (e.g. Stacey 1960). Studies on rural towns which are connected to a broader society have not been ignored, but an examination of unrelated kin incomers and the process by which they negotiate local identity status has not been examined extensively (although see Elias and Scotson 1965, Jedrej and Nuttall 1996).

A pilot study and three months of fieldwork were completed in 2008, during which time I participated in three public events, through these building contacts with other participants, organizers and residents. A further six month period of fieldwork was conducted during mid 2009, during which I built upon these established relationships and initial fieldwork by carrying out further ethnographic fieldwork concerning the same three events, in which both ‘locals’ and ‘incomers’ cooperate. In addition, numerous shorter visits were made between and after these lengthy portions of fieldwork.

These events are the bi-annual Walking Festival, the Summer Carnival and the Craft Fair. For each of them, I examine how ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’ cooperate to organize and attend these events, and how they provide a time/space through which solidarity or otherwise is performed and identities are related to the outside world, through ‘community stories’, ‘stories of belonging’ and ‘local stories.’ The research investigates the process of becoming, or claiming to be, a local person, of belonging to a community, including how the processes of making, verifying and ascribing such identity claims occurs and in what situations and contexts. It will contribute to a



sociological understanding of belonging in relation to community and self in contemporary rural Britain.

### ***Why Carnivals and Fairs?***

The approach to research on Haltwhistle by focusing on public events, carnivals and fairs was influenced by my previous research in Anthropology and Folklore Studies. My background is in American Anthropology with a specific focus in Myth and Folklore Studies. I gained a BA in Anthropology at California State University, Los Angeles studying all four sub disciplines within the American tradition: Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, Physical Anthropology and Linguistics. My M.A. focused on Myth and Folklore Studies as a sub discipline of Cultural Anthropology. This differs from other Universities such as UCLA in which Folklore studies exists within the English department.

My early training was heavily influenced by the ideas of Anthropologist Franz Boas (1938), his own interdisciplinary experience, interest in folklore and specifically his ideas around diffusion and the impact of history on the present. In relation to this thesis, early folkloric research explored the roots of several Northumbrian Folktales. That research drew on Propps (1990) Morphology of the Folktale, Stith Thompson's (1955) Motif Index of Folk Literature, as well as many other folkloric indexes. Other early folkloric influences included: Alan Dundes, Elliott Oring, and Joseph Nagy.

Encouraged to draw from different disciplines by my supervisor at CSULA, I supplemented my core anthropology training with classes in history, documentary film-making and psychology among others. I agree with Tonkin (1992) and many other commentators that it is necessary to look beyond our disciplinary boundaries, and following Clifford (2003) I designed my research using a tool kit approach drawing broadly from ideas across the literature. Influenced by Boas and the importance he placed on understanding the history of a culture, I took classes in Medieval European History to better understand folktales originating from this era and location. This broader context proved to be an invaluable tool in data analysis and impressed upon me the importance of history to understanding prevailing social conditions, an idea explored throughout this thesis. Through documentary film, I

gained an appreciation for the visual impact of including images along with the writing and how inferences made from the analysis of such images must be defended to the reader, an idea that would later be refined following Stanley and Wise (2006) in a strategy they have theorised as Fractured Feminist Foundationalism. These ideas will be further discussed in Chapter two.

Ethnographic training was hands-on and fieldwork focused, especially within Myth and Folklore Studies. As groups and individually, we were required to put the methodological training gained in class into practice by doing ethnographic fieldwork in our own city of Los Angeles and within our own families and peer group. Early fieldwork experiences included researching speciality stores, neighbourhoods, and a local festival celebration, the Fiesta De La Candelaria.

Held annually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February on Olvera Street, Los Angeles, the Fiesta De La Candelaria, or Candlemass, is an annual highlight for many Spanish speakers in the city. However, while the celebration has important religious elements, such as the presentation of Christ child Icons, there is a stronger secular component to this event including: singing, dancing, music, storytelling, a raffle and food. I recorded the event on video while my fellow student (a fluent Spanish speaker) interviewed participants. The people we spoke to came from all parts of Mexico; some from areas where the Christ child Icon is presented, some from areas where this is not practiced. Explanations for this phenomenon varied and conflicted which I expected. My prior training in folklore studies impressed upon me the expectation of multiple variants on any story or in this case, a story in motion. However, even those who came from regions of Mexico where the Christ child Icon was not presented, participated here in Los Angeles. Why? Here the secular part of this public event was highlighted in which cultural forms from all over Mexico were celebrated through song, dance, story and cuisine, bringing everyone together. This stressed to me the importance of participating in the Fiesta De La Candelaria for immigrants from Mexico wishing to belong in Los Angeles. Participating in this event provided a way for immigrants to join in and make a commitment to their new community through active involvement in a public festival.

My Masters level work concerned Celtic identities in Los Angeles and how these are created through participation in public secular events and spaces. The

research was turned into a paper entitled Californian Celts: Creating Community Identity in Public Space and presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Celts conference in Cornwall in 2006. In 2005, I attended my very first Scottish Highland Games, held near a southern Californian beach. Within the next few months I attended the L.A. County Irish Fair, the L. A. County Renaissance Fair, The Great American Irish Fair and another Highland Games as well as Irish language classes, folk dancing and music sessions in the Los Angeles area.

Scottish Highland Games were so popular in the United States, that one or more Games could be attended somewhere in the country almost every week of the year. One of Southern California's Irish Fairs averaged around 30,000 participants over a two-day weekend. Similarly, the San Diego Highland Games averaged 20,000 attendees. In Southern California, there was a Celtic themed festival or event at least every month large enough to attract visitors in the tens of thousands.

The research explored who attended these events and why they existed in Southern California. Was this a Celtic sub-culture (Gupta 1992), the result of some massive revitalization (Wallace 1956), a new invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) or a continuation from the so called Celtic homelands across the Atlantic? I found that the interest, preservation and recreation of Celtic identities in Southern California was driven by diverse motivations and therefore could not be explained by any single theory. These events drew a combination of new immigrants holding onto symbols of their homeland in an attempt to maintain their identity, and descendants, who may trace their ancestry back several generations, attempting to revitalize their own culture, and finally 'Celtic enthusiasts' and their cultures, which span the global spectrum. This creation of community took place at public sites such as Celtic themed festivals and cultural centers.

Pat Moran, the organizer of the Celtic Festival explained that "everyone wants to belong to a community – especially in Southern California" and to help with this he recreated a sense of community by having all of the festival's activities happen inside a circle. When people come into a physically bounded space, they become, by virtue of being there, members of a community. They belong by sharing similar values, characteristics and priorities; something about the meaning that space evokes makes them enter and in so doing they cross a metaphorical borderland

(Ewing 1998) and enter that community, thus fulfilling a need to belong. Several participants explained that people behave differently when they change their clothing, whether they are involved in a historical re-enactment, a dancing costume or wearing their Kilt or clan t-shirt, it changes the way that person behaves. This is just one more way that people who are unknown to each other can establish a temporary bond, even if it is just for one day and in this case used for the purpose of “establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, p9). The research concluded that the creation of public space in which Southern Californian’s can gather and celebrate Celtic culture fulfills the need for community and a sense of belonging for participants, which in turn fuels the continuation, revitalization and recreation of Celtic identities in Southern California.

These research experiences highlighted to me the importance of festivals, carnivals and other public events as ways for immigrants to ‘belong’ to a new community through their participation and commitment to these events. As my research on Haltwhistle concerned the process of becoming or claiming to be a local person and of belonging to a community, focusing primarily, although not exclusively, on public secular ceremonies which are accessible to incomers was a good way to do this. Just as Californian immigrants participated in festivals as a means of belonging, focusing on the analysis on the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle was a legitimate way to observe the making and remaking of localism and the meanings of belonging there.

This research differs from the earlier community studies such as Stacey’s (1960) Banbury, Rapport’s (1993) Wanet, or William’s (1957) Gosforth in several ways. The focus of my research is on public secular events such as the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle, although other fabric of life events, such as recreational activities, visiting with informants, dinner parties, goat-sitting, work and so on are also included. This is because the focus of this research revolves around incomers and their process of becoming or claiming to be local and of belonging to a community. As I have already argued, informed by my prior reading and more importantly, my own research, these events are a legitimate means of gaining access to and exploring these processes in action. I view these public events as stories in

action or community stories. Influenced by my prior training in Myth and Folklore Studies, all stories exist in multiple variants (Dundes 1984, Oring 1986) and there is no singular 'truth' out there to be discovered, rather, there are multiple knowers with their own truth and that includes the researcher (Wolf 1992, Plummer 2001, Stanley and Wise 2006). In addition, many commentators have drawn boundaries around their study area, for example Frankenberg's (1957) Village is in a valley and Rapport's (1993) Wanet is in a dale. However, this thesis argues that the boundaries of what is seen to be Haltwhistle, whether geographic or social, move depending upon context, time and the social location of those involved and this is explored in more detail in Chapter Four.

### ***Getting There***

But the beauty and mystery of the ethnographer's quest is to find the unexpected stories, the stories that challenge our theories. Isn't that the reason why we still go to the field – even as we question where the field is located – in the 21st century? We go to find the stories we didn't know we were looking for in the first place (Behar 2003, p17).

It was my first year of post graduate research and I had limited funding for the ethnographic study I had proposed. Going to Northumberland to conduct my fieldwork would not only incur cost, but would also necessitate leaving my part time job in one of Edinburgh's Whisky Bars and thus accruing considerable debt; not something I felt comfortable with. This was a major challenge to my research and one many researchers face; how to fund it?

While chatting to the bar's chef one evening he explained that he was working his way around the world by volunteering to work in various youth hostels in exchange for accommodation. I wondered if this was something I could do to make my fieldwork possible because, as England (1994, p82) comments "A more reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges." Flexibility is key in dealing with fieldwork challenges, and reassured by Behar (2003, p17) in the quote above that being challenged is positive and, while searching for the unexpected is what it is all about, I contacted several hostels near my fieldwork area. I explained that I was a research student and inquired

if there were any volunteering opportunities. One hostel responded and I was offered a voluntary post involving some cleaning and kitchen duties in exchange for free accommodation and food. The hostel Manager explained that I would still need to complete a questionnaire explaining why I wanted to volunteer. I felt really positive about this as it gave me the opportunity to fully disclose my intention to research communities in Haltwhistle and the surrounding areas as part of my PhD thesis before the voluntary post was confirmed.

Before leaving for my first fieldwork period, I quit my job and my accommodation in Edinburgh; I was going to live at my fieldwork site. I packed my rucksack, booked my train ticket and began the 'quest' as Behar describes it, of my field work experience, in search of stories I did not know existed. Knowing that transport was limited, I lugged my bicycle on and off two trains arriving in Haltwhistle for what looked like a short cycle to the hostel. Unfortunately the map I was reading did not indicate just how hilly that short distance was. It was so steep in parts that I had to get off and push, much to the amusement of a dry stone wall builder I passed along the way.

### ***About Haltwhistle***

Why Haltwhistle? During my undergraduate degree I completed my honours dissertation researching the roots of several folktales connected with local castles, specifically The White Lady of Blenkinsopp Castle. And as a Northumbrian, the history of my home country has always interested me. I am a native of Northumberland, but not of Haltwhistle or any of the surrounding villages, hailing from Wallsend, thirty miles away and the eastern terminus of Hadrian's Wall. While I do not have any roots in Haltwhistle specifically, my last name, Blenkinsop, is associated with the area as there is a Blenkinsopp Castle and Blenkinsopp Hall close by. There are also grave covers dating to the thirteenth century bearing the names and coats of arms of Blenkinsopps in the Sanctuary of the Anglican Church, and so 'Blenkinsop(p)' is well known as a 'local' name.

At the time the main period of the research was conducted, the town of Haltwhistle lay within Haltwhistle Ward in the District of Tynedale and the county of

Northumberland. In 2009 Tynedale district was abolished and incorporated into the county of Northumberland and this restructuring will be discussed in Chapter Four. As the most recent accessible census data were related to Haltwhistle Ward, that information was used. Haltwhistle Ward had a population of 3811 and the population was in decline. Tynedale and Haltwhistle had a low proportion of ethnic minorities and over 99% of the population in Tynedale and Haltwhistle were white. 83.5% of people were Christian (the remaining percentage listed either 'no religion' or 'not stated'). Both ward and district were above the UK average for older and retired people (Tynedale Census 2001, Appendix 1).

Haltwhistle has a train station and is on the A69 making it very accessible. From April to October, a limited bus service, the AD122, runs the length of Hadrian's Wall several times a day along the scenic Old Military Road, linking Newcastle in the east and Carlisle in the west with all of the tiny villages and heritage sites in between.

The area is rural, the alternating boggy and rocky land used primarily for grazing animals. The only crop grown is silage for the livestock. However, farming is in decline and the primary industries that once dominated the area: textile manufacture, milling, and mining have completely disappeared and been replaced in some small part by tourism, which, owing to the inclement weather, is seasonal. Tourists come to see one thing; Hadrian's Wall. Attributed to the Roman Emperor Hadrian, the wall is almost two thousand years old and runs from coast to coast for eighty three miles. Haltwhistle is close to one of the most impressive stretches where the wall and other archaeological sites have been preserved and the landscape is especially dramatic. In addition, the area is littered with castles and fortified dwellings, the majority of which were built in the thirteenth century as defensive strongholds, some of which were later expanded and are still maintained and inhabited. Others lie ruined on desolate hilltops. Known as the castles of the 'Middle Marches,' all are surrounded in a rich body of history and folklore.

This area of Northumberland is not new to incomers. Over two thousand years ago, the Romans came and built the Wall. Around a thousand years later, the Vikings came, traded, raided and settled and even today many of the place names and those of geographic features reflect Norse origins. From the Middle Ages up to

the 17th century there was considerable raiding among and between border peoples and many defensive bastle houses and castles built during that time still stand. Following the industrial revolution, industries came and went in this area, each successive wave of enterprise brought with it a new influx of people. Old mine shafts, crumbling lime kilns and tall brick chimneys still dot the now peaceful landscape. During World War II, children were evacuated here as were pregnant women from Newcastle to have their babies, safely away from bombing. The remains of Camp 18, a POW camp that housed over four thousand German Officers is still visible in the grounds of Featherstone Castle. More recently, the population is declining, though Haltwhistle is experiencing an influx of people retiring to the area as well as tourists and visitors in the summer months. How does this ongoing influx of incomers, which is mirrored to a greater or lesser extent in many towns throughout Britain, impact on what it means to be local? In light of this the research had five key questions:

### ***Research Questions***

- In what ways do people see themselves as not/belonging to Haltwhistle?
- What kinds of people are seen or see themselves to make up this town?
- How and in what ways are notions of identity performed around public events?
- How are boundaries/conflicts between incomers/locals negotiated around public events and what is their motivation for participation?
- What is 'Haltwhistle' in a sociological sense?

### ***Organization of the Thesis***

'Chapter One – Are You Local?' is organized into four main sections dealing with overlapping concepts. First, I address identity, self and belonging in arguing that identity-making is a social process that is constructed and performed and is dependent upon identity-claims being made, received, evaluated and accepted. While the strongest marker in claiming local identity is birth, commitment is the strongest claim an incomer can make. Such commitment is expressed through belonging to



social structures within this community, such as the local walking group and festival committees. Second, I explore ideas around invented traditions and the making of memory. Here the focus is on memory and tradition in relation to public events such as the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle. While these events may appear to reinforce what are seen to be shared memories, they are more often invented traditions which have been created and enacted in the present so as to re-create a desired past, thereby transforming and reaffirming collective local identities. Third, I examine studies on community, boundaries and conflict by examining the movements of people into a community and how changing boundaries are renegotiated and conflicts mediated. The festivals provide social landmarks around which group identity is performed and through which local/incomer conflict and boundaries are negotiated. Fourth, I combine these concepts by way of stories and identity making. I consider the festivals to be ‘community stories’ where the story of ‘who we are’ is retold. Using ideas around the retelling of well-known stories and the making of identities, the festivals in Haltwhistle are analogous to well-known and often told stories, where boundaries are crossed by the involvement and cooperation between ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’.

‘Chapter Two – The Two Faced God: Being In and Looking Out’, concerns ethnography as a methodology and discusses the relevant methodological literatures. I have argued that identity and belonging are constructed and performed in storied ways and that the understanding of such stories relies on paying attention to the meanings of the tellers. Thus a qualitative methodology needs be employed, as Elias and Scotson (1965) and Kiely et al (2005) explain, because this is necessary to tease out the complexities of not/belonging and identity claims made by Haltwhistle ‘locals’ and ‘incomers’. In addition, the ambiguity of the terms ‘incomer’ and ‘local’, together with the visual and performative nature of public events, necessitates an ethnographic methodology. An ethnographic approach which encompasses participant observation but also interviewing and the collection of supporting documents is used. The focus is on ethnography as a process and product, the ethnographic claims made and the criteria used to evaluate those claims. Intrinsic to the writing of ethnography is the process of fieldwork and the writing of fieldnotes, which are also elaborated upon here.

‘Chapter Three – The Centre of Britain: A Tale of Two Towns’, explores the centre of town, the Market Place, as a focal point. To the casual visitor, Haltwhistle appears to be a homogenous town when in fact it is divided into separate social spheres existing in the same geographic place. This becomes apparent when I attended the bi-annual Walking Festival. At this event, it seems that all of the local residents are actually recent incomers to the town. Here I argue that Haltwhistle is not one town but two; one of locals and another of incomers. Both groups use the Market Place as a centre, but separate their allegiances; locals frequent locally run pubs and cafes and incomers frequent incomer run establishments. However, at the same time I was assured that it is the festivals that “bring the whole town together.”

‘Chapter Four – Walking the Fringe: Routes to Belonging, Boundaries of Belonging’, explores the routes incomers can take to belonging to the town. The route most open to incomers is the local walking group. By joining with the local walking group and engaging in other activities in the area, I argue that knowledge of local history and nature, and storytelling around these topics, are implicit belonging claims. Further, I explore who the recent incomers are composed of and what brought them to Haltwhistle. While out with the walkers, I heard contested claims and the use of what passes for ancient history and folklore to contest an attributed identity claim. Along the routes to belonging, there are boundaries, and in the final section I discuss my realization that the boundaries of what is seen to be Haltwhistle are not as static as they appear. In some cases, the boundary of Haltwhistle expanded to include the surrounding villages which used to compose the old Haltwhistle parishes. I looked into the past and also economic and social conditions prevailing in the present and evolving future to ascertain the reasons for these boundaries and changes to them.

In ‘Chapter Five – Mindful Fairs, Mindless Flags’, I discuss my attendance at a Carnival, and explore an event which I am told is a ‘local affair.’ Here I found that the boundaries of what is seen to be Haltwhistle contracted, not only to the town itself, but to certain groups of people within the town. Carnivals and fairs are mindfully constructed in Haltwhistle and the surrounding villages to define their boundaries and flag separate identities. I explored the reasons for this and the

boundary mechanisms in place and in so doing, realized that while flag waving can be associated with symbols of unity, often the flag waving and display was mindless.

‘Chapter Six – The Enigma Machine: Public Messages, Private Conversations and Hidden Secrets’, explores the public message broadcast about Haltwhistle to the outside world. Following Cohen (1982), I argue this is a simplified public message masking the complicated and often contradictory private messages between Haltwhistle people. Here I explored such contradictory messages and how people accounted for them. Beyond the private, are the silences and hidden secrets. I learned that the Carnival ended abruptly several decades ago, and although in living memory, Haltwhistlers appeared united in their silence around this event.

‘Chapter Seven – Living in a Bubble: a Community of Belonging Separate from Place’, explores my experience of coming to belong to this community, where I volunteered and spent most of my field work. The core themes of the two main festivals are highlighted and compared to the hostel. Here I argue that the researcher can belong, as an insider, to a community under study. This I realise is an audacious claim; however, I demonstrate how this occurred in the hostel by paying attention to the core themes including: boundaries and bonding mechanisms, uses of cultural tropes, and most importantly, by participating in communal story telling; by telling the tale of ‘who we are’.

The result is research which contributes to the sociology of localism and ‘belonging’ in relation to community and self in contemporary rural Britain. This will be substantiated in successive chapters and drawn together in the conclusion answering the question, ‘what is Haltwhistle in a sociological sense?’

# Chapter 1 – Are You Local?

“Belonging claims are demonstrable forms of commitment and... follow different procedures when claiming, attributing or receiving identities, and recognise that others they interact with do identity differently” (Kiely et al 2005, p153).

## ***Introduction***

Haltwhistle lies on the historic boundary of Hadrian’s Wall and is near the county border between Northumberland and Cumbria, both of which are English border counties with Scotland. It is a rural town, the largest in the old Haltwhistle rural parishes, and surrounded by a collection of much smaller villages and outlying farms and homes. Economically, Haltwhistle has experienced decline, with the major industries of farming, milling, and mining now largely defunct and replaced in some small part by tourism. And yet, despite apparent geographic and political marginality, Haltwhistle proudly proclaims itself ‘the centre of Britain.’ What is ‘Haltwhistle’ in a sociological sense? What kinds of people are seen, or see themselves, to make up this town? In what ways do people see themselves and others as not/belonging to Haltwhistle? Indeed, what ‘is’ Haltwhistle, sociologically speaking? These questions are the foundation for the following discussion and will be referred to again later.

## ***Identity, Self and Belonging***

There is an extensive literature on the overlapping and complicated issues of identity, self and belonging (Anderson 1991, Ewing 1998, Holstein and Gubrium 2000, King 2000, Tilly 2002, Jenkins 1996, McCrone at al 1998, 2002, Bechhofer at al 1999, Kiely et al 2005, Goffman 1971a, Cohen 1982, 1986, Billig 1995, Rapport 2002, Frankenberg 1969, 1982, Savage et al 2005). I am particularly interested in the concept of social identity as articulated by Jenkins (1996), ideas about the presentation of self by Goffman (1971), ideas about identity claims proposed by McCrone at al (1998, 2002), Kiely at al (2005) and Bechhofer at al (1999), and Cohen’s (1982) conceptualization of belonging.

In Social Identity, Jenkins (1996, p5) argues that all human identities are social identities, that self and collective identities are not only constructed but similar, and that identity is a dialectical process, because "social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)." Jenkins proposes that individual and collective or group identities are in effect two ends of a continuum, the individual extreme stressing difference, and the collective extreme stressing similarity (Jenkins 1996, p19). He also comments on public events, where people come together with a specific cause in mind, such as a public rally, as "collective rituals of identification" (Jenkins 1996, p3).

Identity is a process and consequently identities are never fixed, and they can change over time as well as in different contexts and situations. For example, a book can be published posthumously, changing how someone's identity is understood after their death, or a person can emigrate and acquire a different social and national identity. This process of identity construction is continuous and most noticeable at the boundaries across which people flow, transforming their identities (Jenkins 1996, Ewing 1998, Cohen 1982, McCrone et al 1998, 2002, Bechhofer et al 1999, Kiely et al 2005). Identity is a dialectical relationship between the self and collective, concerns public issues and personal troubles, and as the self is socially constructed, it is meaningless in isolation; that is to say, without a society, there is no self. This socially constructed sense of self is the result of an ongoing social process which operates through time, making and remaking notions of identity. Organized public events, such as the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle, in which a group of people choose to participate, could be seen to represent, or rather help construct, an identity for that group, the town and so on, and researching them provides a useful way of grounding these ideas.

Goffman (1971a) argues in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life that when an individual presents a certain image of themselves, they are projecting a particular definition of a situation. This presentation or performance must be convincing enough for an audience to accept and also be based on a definition of the situation that all present can, in a basic sense, agree to. Failure to do so results in embarrassment or humiliation, however, performers and audiences will often cover

for one another if one makes a mistake, for example, by pretending not to hear an inappropriate comment. Using a theatrical analogy, Goffman asserts that people use props such as the clothes they wear or the car they drive to represent their character and to frame scenes that order the performance of self. These performances take place in everyday activities and reciprocally involve performers and audiences, who cooperate to present their desired public face. Such performances necessitate that all involved are cognisant of the desired result or definition of the situation and work together, thereby increasing a sense of solidarity between the players.

Goffman (1971b, p185-6) also suggests that people are bound by the values of the society in which they live and that "...the individual does not go about merely going about his business. He goes about constrained to sustain a viable image of himself in the eyes of others... He engages in little performances to actively portray a relationship to such rules as might be binding on him." And with reference to the public events I am interested in, the framework set out by Goffman is useful in understanding how both incomers and locals appear to cooperate over the festivals and how solidarity is not merely performed, but perhaps created, in the process of performing what is Haltwhistle during these festivals to the outside world and to themselves.

In exploring claims to Scottish national identity, McCrone at al (1997,1998, 2002), Bechhofer at al (1999) and Kiely at al (2005) draw upon the idea that social identity is neither fixed nor given and will change according to context and also how identity claims are made, received and ascribed by people located in particular social circumstances. In this work, an individual's national identity is seen as dependent upon the identity claims made. The same individual may claim a different identity depending upon the circumstances and context of the situation. For example, a person who may not pay much attention to their national identity may choose to do so at a football match, especially, for instance, if that match involves Scotland and/or England. Further, McCrone at al argue that such claims may not be accepted by others and that the individual may anticipate such rejection of their identity claim and adjust that claim to ensure acceptance (McCrone 1997, McCrone et al 1998, 2002, Bechhofer at al 1999, and Kiely at al 2005).

Researching national identity in Scotland, McCrone et al draw primarily upon interview data from two separate studies, the first concerning landed and arts elites in Scotland and the second concerning the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed on the English side of the English-Scottish Border. This work understands national identity as process of construction, and it comments that the idea that “we know who we are in terms of who we are not” (McCrone et al 2002 p 315) involves a considerable oversimplification of the complexities involved in identity construction.

What are the criteria for belonging? Kiely et al (2005) argue that the criterion of ‘birth’, ‘blood’ and ‘belonging’ are better conceptual tools for investigating this than the contrast between civic (residence/commitment) versus ethnic (birth/ancestry) dimensions for unravelling the intricacies of identity. This is because they take into account the complexities and flexibility with which identity claims are made at different times and in different contexts. Claims to Scottish identity, they found, rested primarily on birth, as expressed in interview data from both Scots living in Scotland and English-born Scottish residents. However, a sense of belonging was also associated with lengthy residence and commitment or a feeling of attachment to a place, its customs and people, with belonging claims evaluated by Scots on a case by case basis using “belonging markers such as lengthy residence, commitment and contribution to Scotland as another route to Scottishness” (Kiely et al 2005, p169). However, both Scots and English migrants in Scotland agreed that birth was the strongest marker<sup>1</sup> of national identity and also that it was unlikely that their national identity could ever change, although it was possible for the Scottish-born children of English migrants to be accepted as Scots, particularly if they had a Scottish accent (Kiely et al 2005, p170).

These ideas about belonging and being a ‘real’ Scot, or in my case Haltwhistler, are interestingly reflected upon in Marilyn Strathern’s study of the village of Elmdon, in which she concludes that “being ‘real Elmdon’ depends on birth status. In-coming spouses can never be truly assimilated... the ‘real Elmdon’

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<sup>1</sup> “Identity markers can be defined as those characteristics which are perceived to carry symbolic importance either as a signal to others of a person’s national identity, or which might be mobilised by the individual themselves in support of an identity claim. Identity rules are the probabilistic rules of thumb whereby under certain structural conditions and in certain contexts, markers are interpreted, combined or given precedence one over another”(Bechhofer et al 1999, p527-8).

are those born to certain families” (Strathern 1982a, p89). In discussing the idea of a 'core' of the village, Strathern (1982b) proposes that a few family names correspond with being 'real Elmdon.' Similarly in Haltwhistle, a few core family names designate a person seen as a 'real' Haltwhistler; these are names associated with the Border Reivers and in which their descendents take great pride. However, unlike Elmdon, where the names are associated with the village only, the Border Reiver family names in Haltwhistle are common throughout the Anglo-Scottish border region and so would not separate those of Haltwhistle from nearby villages. Strathern explains that "Elmdoners' consciousness of their own distinctiveness is a product of their relations with the outside world. It is a distinctiveness which places little stress on cultural criteria - local 'customs', ways of speaking, and such - and considerable stress on a sense of belonging" (Strathern 1982b, p248-249).

Strathern argues that attention must be paid to the 'boundary mechanism' in avoiding the over-simplified notion that 'community' equates to 'town.' Belonging, Strathern proposes, is much more complicated than simply being a member of a local group, a certain neighbourhood or workplace. In Elmdon, 'real' Elmdoners' recognise a division between local interest groups, which is quite different from the division as perceived by incomers who see the Elmdon as an "organic village" (Strathern 1982b, p253). Similarly, different segments of Haltwhistle perceive these divisions, and also ostensibly the boundaries to not/belonging, differently, observing: "the insider/outsider contrast is a matter of ideology... one cannot in any simple manner reproduce it as demographic fact" (Strathern 1982b, p256). Labels such as 'local' and 'incomer' are ambiguous and may depend in large part on the specific claims being made because "the boundaries that delimit insider and outsider statuses are neither simple nor fixed" (Crow et al 2001, p30). However, not belonging is also a claim and many incomers may set themselves apart from supposed 'locals', creating their own boundaries and enclaves within the town. And so "residents can be allocated to one or other category on an individual basis only by the contextual interests of the moment" (Strathern 1982b, p269). In this way, some persons may be more fixed and others experience more mobility in relation to belonging, but it is the groups that are fixed, while the individual person is mobile and their perceived position can move between groups in making claims to not/belonging. The question



becomes, not/belonging to what? Is this to Haltwhistle as a residence? To a certain Haltwhistle family or interest group? To a 'core' Haltwhistle family with historical roots in the area? Or perhaps, an individual's claims to belonging change not only over time with length of residence (if not resident since birth) but also in different situations and contexts. These are all possibilities I will explore but with a particular focus on the last.

Despite birth being the predominant marker of identity, belonging is more complex than simply being born in a place; there must be a sense of commitment, as Cohen suggests:

“‘Belonging’ implies very much more than merely having been born in the place. It suggests that one is an integral piece of the marvellously complicated fabric which constitutes the community; that one is a recipient of its proudly distinctive and consciously preserved culture - a repository of its traditions and values, a performer of its hallowed skills, an expert in its idioms and idiosyncracies. The depth of such belonging is revealed in the forms of social organization and association in the community so that when a person is identified as belonging to particular kinship group or neighbourhood he becomes, at the same time, a recognisable member of the community as a whole and of its cultural panoply” (Cohen 1982 p21).

Cohen's work concerns Whalsay, an island where less than one per cent of the population come from outside (Cohen 1982, p24). Similarly, in Fox's study of Tory Islanders, all the island's inhabitants were seemingly related kin (Fox 1982, p51). Haltwhistle is inland, it even boasts being the centre of Britain, ostensibly for tourism purposes, and a large portion of the inhabitants come from outside Haltwhistle to settle and to visit, with tourism the major industry due to Haltwhistle's close proximity to Hadrian's Wall, the Pennine Way and the A69. In direct contrast to Cohen's work, Haltwhistle has a high proportion of incomers and visitors. Consequently kinship ties are not a reliable or sufficiently inclusive way of thinking about belonging, given that many inhabitants are unrelated incomers. What is common between these two very different places of Whalsay and Haltwhistle occurs in connection with Cohen's comment that “local experience mediates national identity” (Cohen 1982, p13), although the national can also be rewritten for other

social formations such as towns, organizations or bounded institutions such as religious ones.

How and in what ways do people belong to a community and what is the mediation involved? Cohen suggests that “belonging to locality is mediated by membership of its more fundamental structures – kinship, friendship, neighbourhood, sect, crew and so forth” (Cohen 1982, p14). It is through membership of such things that the individual becomes part of the community as a whole. The extent to which someone is regarded as local has to do with their involvement and attachment to such local structures, and in the context of Haltwhistle such structures include groups such as the walking group and the organizational committees of the Summer Carnival and the Craft Fair.

Belonging is defined by social structures and experience and every community, Cohen suggests, does this in unique ways. At a local level, people are likely to know, or know of, each other, and this knowledge embodies social relations within the society (Cohen 1982, p10). Such personal knowledge impinges on social structure: “It is an order whose imposition is not dependent upon authoritative office or on the threat of public censure, but which lies in the intricately structured ways in which people belong to their communities and which somehow subordinate individuality to communality” (Cohen 1982, p11). When a person calls themselves, for example, ‘local’, it is not the history of the area that defines this, but their experience of belonging to a particular family, neighbourhood, workplace or other group (Cohen 1982, p13). And regarding this, Cohen proposes that social structures such as family are not generalizable nationally, or even between similar rural communities, but are specific to an individual location and form “boundaries of commonality within which meaning is shared and communicated in idiom and social organization. They define those tiny spans of close social relationships to which people attribute their fundamental social ‘belonging’” (Cohen 1982, p9). Beneath the familiar surface lies a range of meanings; the familiar is form, but there is complexity beneath and “It is precisely in such differences that people perceive, cherish and even accentuate their cultural boundaries” (Cohen 1982, p8-9).

It is, as Barth (1969) points out, at the boundaries of localities that what it means to be local becomes most meaningful. ‘Locals’ become aware of that identity

when they interact with others whom they perceive to be different from themselves because they are not local, and these borders are not geographic but socially constructed (Cohen 1982, p3). As Cohen comments:

"Cultural boundaries are not natural phenomena. They are invoked and ignored by those within them for different purposes. Similarly, boundaries can be drawn at various levels of society, again depending upon purpose. Thus I might choose to identify myself as British, Scots, Sheltander, Whalsayman, or as belonging to some particular kinship-neighbourhood nexus in Whalsay. The significant point is that with each 'ascending' level I increasingly simplify (and thereby misrepresent) the message about myself. At each descending level I represent myself through increasingly informed and complex pictures. It should therefore be recognised that 'belonging to locality', far from being parochial triviality, is very much more of a cultural reality than is association with gross region or nation" (Cohen 1982 p9-10).

The distinctiveness of culture not only becomes apparent at its boundaries, but also when people place a judgement value on it. In many rural communities, the value of what are perceived to be traditional practices may be low, but if such traditions are positively valued then a distinctiveness may be preserved and the behaviour of inhabitants regulated in order to preserve it:

"The sense of belonging, of what it means to belong, is constantly evoked by what ever means come to hand: the use of language, the shared knowledge of genealogy or ecology, joking, the solidarity of sect, the aesthetics of building skills. This persistent 'production' of culture and attribution of value becomes an essential bulwark against the cultural imperialism of the political and economic centres, and thus provides fundamental means by keeping the communities alive and fruitful" (Cohen 1982, p6).

The sense of belonging to a community does not have to be in a geographic sense (although it can), but can also include the experience of a community in which people feel politically or economically disadvantaged. Hence, many such borderland communities remake their local culture – I discuss the idea of invented traditions later - and such communities are often in a state of crisis regarding such things as unemployment, ageing population, out migration, diminishing resources, commuters,

or religious antagonism. Cohen (1982, p7) suggests that communities experiencing crisis “respond by making the elements of their social organization and process ideological statements – condensations – of the whole and, thereby, emphasizing the tightly structured intricacy of local social life.”

However, there is a difference between the public voice of the community which is presented to the outside world, and its complex private messages communicated within itself, and so the researcher “must try to make the public message intelligible in terms of the private conversations – and not the other way around” (Cohen1982, p8). But how is the researcher to gauge what constitutes the public message that Haltwhistle is broadcasting about itself? One way to explore this is to focus on the collective public performances around which the community collaborates – its festivals, fairs and other public events. Such collective messages or statements of public identity to the outside world misrepresent the many complexities of what it means to live in Haltwhistle, and I agree with Cohen (1982, p8) that to look at any single event/process/structure as representative of the entire culture under investigation would be mistaken. However, such public structured expressions of identity and culture do represent something I am interested in about Haltwhistle and are worthy of further investigation.

In his comparative study of public events in Sri Lanka and Australia, Kapferer (1998, pxx) argues that such events are ritualized performances that "are concerned with achieving transformations in the persons of participants." Analysing the Sri Lankan ‘Suniyama’, an anti-sorcery public ritual performance, and the Australian commemoration of Anzac Day, an annual memorial for combined Australian and New Zealand troops, Kapferer suggests that the performance of these events is a process of transition, allowing a person to move from the outside to the inside. In evaluating the Sinhalese Buddhist myth upon which a public performance is based, together with the list of 'historical facts' regarding the national significance of the Anzac troops during World War One, Kapferer proposes that the story, whether of mythic sorcery or of remembered history, represents a series of transformations and that ritualized performance of the story during public festivals and memorials "is a key event in the discovery and reformation of a coherent identity" and such symbolic embodiments of the nationalist imagination do establish

identity (Kapferer 1998, p126-127). This nationalist imagination is the imagination of community as constructed through these festivals, which may over the years take on new form. Linking these ideas back to Haltwhistle, the festivals may appear to be performed in the same way every year – the parade may start at the same time, in the same place, for example, but it is likely that the meaning attributed to that parade, where it starts, at what time, can change, And so although the overall structure can stay the same through time, "ceremonies are always gaining new significance in their developing historical context" (Kapferer 1998, p150).

Kapferer's idea that such public performances are process of transition, allowing some participating outsiders to ritually move inside on some level, at first appeared to be a helpful way of looking at the round of festivals in Haltwhistle. However, regarding the anti-sorcery ritual, Kapferer is implying that an actual spiritual transformation is occurring for the participants involved. My research in Haltwhistle is concerned with secular festivals and carnivals without any overt religious or spiritual overtones. Consequently drawing on Kapferer would be inappropriate in relation to secular events. Instead I found DaMatta's (1991) Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes more useful. Although concerned chiefly with Brazilian carnival, DaMatta covers three types of carnival: military parades, religious processions and carnival marches. It is the latter I am interested in as it relates to the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle. DaMatta writes that these secular carnivals are like military processions in that they both occur in the centre. Certainly the main events I am concerned with in Haltwhistle all occur in the centre of town. However, while the military procession lasts just a few hours, by contrast the carnival goes on for at least three days. Both the Haltwhistle Summer Carnival and the Walking Festivals last for a week.

DaMatta (1991, p84) comments that participating in a carnival "permits the fantastic openness that ends up relinking and reuniting each with all" as social roles that once separated people, such as age, class or in the case of Haltwhistle, local and incomer statuses, are left behind. This kind of secular carnival "creates a festival out of the everyday social world in which there is no emphasis on the harsh rules that govern membership and identity. Because of this everyone can change groups, cross over, and create new relations of unsuspected solidarity" (DaMatta 1991, p89). I find

this idea of a person being able to ‘cross over’ at a carnival as DaMatta suggests, a more useful way of looking at the processes of carnival as a time/space where identities and the local can be made and remade in Haltwhistle.

My research concerns the making and remaking of what it means to be ‘local’ in Haltwhistle; and as the town has a high proportion of incomers as well as insiders (and also visitors in the summer months), a useful indicator of how what constitutes a ‘local person’ is made and remade is to explore social structures in which both insiders and incomers can become involved. In my first fieldwork period, I was repeatedly told that it is the festivals and the summer carnival which bring people together. Both insiders and incomers are involved in the organization of, and participate in, these public events and thus my decision to focus the research on them, although not exclusively, as I shall also explore other ‘fabric of life’ aspects of Haltwhistle and its inhabitants.

So far I have argued that all identity is social, and it involves a process that is not fixed but rather in a perpetual state of becoming. This process of identity making is dependent upon identity claims being made, received, evaluated and accepted or not, and such claims and evaluations involve using social rules and markers. It is precisely such claims and evaluative responses that my research explores in depth around the ‘peak moments’ of the carnival and festivals and also locate these in the broader fabric of social life in the town.

### ***Invented Traditions and the Making of Memory***

There is an extensive and divisive debate around the ideas of memory, memory making and invented traditions (Anderson 1991, Bender and Winer 2001, Halbwachs 1992, Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, King 2000, Maynes et al 2008, Smith 1999, Stanley 2006, Tonkin 1992, Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, Thomson 1990, Antze and Lambek 1996). My own focus is on memory and tradition in relation to public events such as the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle. I am especially interested in Halbwach’s (1992) ideas about collective memory, Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (2002) ideas around invented traditions and Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities as well as Stanley’s (2006) ideas concerning post/memory.

Because I am investigating the identity claims which ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’ make and how these are evaluated by each other, my research has explored groups to which both incomers and insiders belong, where the boundary making and remaking between the two groups is evident and observable in the public space in which the processes of identity claims are negotiated. In investigating what brings these sets of people together in Haltwhistle, I am interested in how, regarding the public events being focused on, people deploy ideas about memory and tradition. For Halbwachs (1992), it is sharing in collective memories that draws people together although such memories need to be established and reinforced. And he proposes this is done through re-enactments which may be historical, (that is, re-enacted through festivals, fairs and other public or memorial events), but also autobiographical, (that is, through personal public events such as weddings, and anniversaries).

Halbwachs asserts that all memories are experienced within social frameworks, but, “while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base as a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (Halbwachs 1992, p25). The act of memory, the experience of memory being recounted, is collective but the actual memory itself is experienced as individual, although expressed in a social framework: “it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection” (Halbwachs 1992, p38). While I find the concept of collective memory interesting, it is also problematic and there are many criticisms of his work (see Kosicki and Jasinska-Kania 2007, Stanley 2006, Becker 2005, Tonkin 1992). Drawing on a Durkheimian perspective, he stresses the collective and overlooks the individual, changing and creative aspects of memory. Specifically Becker (2005), comments that he did not examine trauma, for example the war he had just experienced, examples of which are notable in their absence from his work. Relatedly, along with remembering there is also forgetting and gaps in memory, to which I will return later.

In his particularly interesting discussion of the ‘invention’ of place and meaning in the Holy Land, Halbwachs comments, “we ask how recollections are to be located. And we answer: with the help of landmarks” (Halbwachs 1992, p188). These landmarks are in the form of collective traditions, created and recreated in the

present to form social beliefs, and he suggests “We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and they are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated” (Halbwachs 1992, p47).

Regarding my research, such public festivals, which happen at the same time every year, provide annually repeated social landmarks around which a configuration of Haltwhistle cooperates to tell a community story and thereby reinvent what it means to be ‘local’ to Haltwhistle, to the outside world, or rather to incomers from it. However, this idea of ‘reinvention’ or social construction and remaking has to be taken more seriously than Halbwachs does; and so I turn to explore the idea of invented tradition associated with the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger (2002) and also Anderson’s (1991) concept of imagined communities.

In contrast to Halbwachs’ idea that collective memories are reinforced by events remembered by the community over a long period of time, Hobsbawm and Ranger (2002, p1) propose that many such traditions are in fact invented – that is, socially constructed in a mindful way. They also argue that such invented traditions consist of “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” Usually, the aim of such practices and rituals is to establish links with a suitable historic past. However connection with this past is, at best, tenuous in many cases. This is because such traditions are invented for the practical purpose at a particular juncture in time of “establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, p9), and such groups may be real or imagined communities. The authors argue that the benefit of studying invented traditions is that such phenomena indicate problems, developments or transformations within a society that may otherwise go unnoticed. As society changes, traditions must change with them in order to ensure group cohesion and are by no means as unchanging as often professed.

Traditions are thus invented, often but not always by some kind of institutional body in order to respond to this problem. However, in order for the invented tradition to take hold, it must be presented in a form that people can identify with, and so “all invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator of



action and cement of group cohesion” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, p12). In my own research context, for example, Haltwhistle applied for ‘Walkers are Welcome’ national status. This status is awarded to towns that actively benefit walkers by making facilities more accessible for them, for example, pubs will display signs welcoming walkers in boots and hiking gear. The ‘Walkers are Welcome’ status is aimed at ‘the rambling community,’ but who or what is ‘the rambling community’? Anderson (1991) proposes the idea of the ‘imagined community’, which is a concept formed around the idea that a nation or a grouping within it is a socially constructed community that is ultimately ‘imagined’ by the people who see themselves as part of it and it having ‘life’ beyond their own involvement. However, this idea can be applied to much smaller communities, because “all communities larger than primordial villages of face to face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (Anderson 1991, p6). Such 'community' aspects exist because there is the conception of "comradeship" between members, in spite of other inequalities which may also exist (Anderson 1991, p7). The ‘rambling community’ would certainly fit Anderson’s definition of an imagined community.

The ideas proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger around invented traditions and also Anderson’s ideas about imagined communities work very well together as a way to think about the festivals in Haltwhistle. However, regardless of whether the festivals are remembered or invented, there is also a process of forgetting involved. Anderson uses the analogy of a photograph, suggesting one can look at an old photograph of oneself, perhaps as a baby, but not remember it being taken - this memory, if it ever existed, has been forgotten and for that reason it must be narrativised, creating a 'narrative identity’ (Anderson 1991, p205). Stanley proposes that such narratives are constructed in the present and retrospectively used to ‘remember’ things back in time: “Linear sequencing does not operate in a forward mode only. From “the end” we can, we often do, read images and other biographical information backwards through time, to impose a real meaning with hindsight reaching an account of what it all meant” (Stanley 1988, p135).

In later work, Stanley (2006) theorizes the idea of post/memory as a “history after the fact,” a manufactured memory where later meanings are imposed back in time to interpret, now in the present, constructions or versions of what had happened,

or more often what is claimed to have happened, in the past. Along with remembering after the fact, there is also forgetting, which forms part of the post/memory process because “memory, in the sense of a direct recall of events in the past, both is and is not involved in what ‘the facts’ are now understood to be” (Stanley 2006, p4). Events do not exist in isolation, for what happens after the event influences what happened before. Through such representations of the past or myriad pasts, what is understood to be ‘a’ past is rewritten in the present moment or moments (Stanley 2006, p14). The result is that “memory is ‘post-slash-memory’, ‘post/memory’ because almost immediately marked by representational forms and separated by the absolutism of passing time from the originating events” (Stanley 2006, p21). Stanley suggests that post/memory is not only useful as a way of understanding the process of memory-making as an analytic tool, but also needs to include the one who sees and represents what is seen to be ‘the facts’ of the past. In this way, as I look at a photograph of the Walking Festival, or stand by the side of the road watching the Summer Carnival parade pass by, I am infusing what I see in front of me with what I think I already know about these events. These ideas about the researcher’s presence will be further explored in later chapters in relation to ‘authoritative’ accounts and who and what is seen to provide these.

### ***Community, Boundaries and Conflict***

Community, boundaries and conflict are overlapping ideas which in Halthwistle concern the movements of people into a community and how changing boundaries are renegotiated and conflicts mediated (Gluckman 1957, Frankenberg 1957, Elias 1965, Stacey 1960, Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, Strathern 1982, Savage 2008, Skiffington 1991, Kohn 2002, Phillips 1986, Masson 2005, Southerton, 2002, Merton 1972, Bell and Newby 1971, Allan and Phillipson 2008). How are boundaries and conflict mediated between ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’? As I have previously suggested, it is through cooperation over annual public events that ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’ come together. This of course does not guarantee the absence of conflict or more routinely of separations and divisions. Therefore I now turn to explore ideas about conflict and cooperation around public events and incomers

(Gluckman 1958, Frankenberg 1957, Stacey 1960, Elias and Scotson 1965, Jedrej and Nuttall 1996). Gluckman's account of the ceremony of opening a bridge, entitled Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand (Gluckman 1958), explores a social situation in which two conflicting groups, Zulu and white people, came together and cooperated over this public event, and is usefully discussed in connection with problematic meetings of divergent groups in Haltwhistle.

Gluckman is interested in exploring a public event, in this case the bridge opening ceremony, to investigate people's assumptions and social practices concerning the social structure as a whole. In doing so, he looks at the divisions within the society under examination, writing that "socially enforced and accepted separation can be a form of association, indeed cooperation..." (Gluckman 1958, p12). Here Gluckman is referring to the separation of Zulu and white people apparent in the bridge opening ceremony and more widely in what was then called Zululand. But there was cooperation as well as separation, and here Gluckman points out, "...in this inter-relationship, once can trace separation and conflict, and co-operation, in socially defined modes of behaviour" (Gluckman 1958, p13). Conflict, moreover, need not necessarily be overt; it can be subtle, in the form of a passing complaint, joke or other covert gesture, and it can occur at the same time and as part of cooperation.

Gluckman also discusses the ideas which each group of people develops about the other, whether true or not. For example, white farmers had a bad reputation for mistreating their black tenants and even if such a farmer treated their tenants well, this did not affect the general social belief because "good treatment is quickly forgotten, while oppression is remembered" (Gluckman 1958, p20). However, the divisions were more complex still, because, "the main groups of Whites and Zulu are split into subsidiary groups, formalized and unformalized, and membership of these groups changes for the individual according to the interests, values and motives which determine his behaviour in different situations" (Gluckman 1958, p25).

Gluckman's ideas about the overlaying of conflict and cooperation are very interesting regarding my research context, for conflict and cooperation are both involved in how people connect to Haltwhistle around a sense of local identity and for some 'belonging' to this ideal. Cooperation over the annual festivals in this sense

mediates and transmutes, although does not dissolve, the conflict between insiders and incomers. Gluckman notes that the conflict as expressed at the bridge ceremony is not necessarily overt and is often revealed in subtle ways. Equally, the conflict between incomer and insider in Haltwhistle is typically not overt. Many of the incomers tend to come from outside the local area and have no related kin in the town. Many of them have advanced degrees and own their homes and are most often from a higher socio-economic class than many of the insiders. Many come to Haltwhistle to retire and thus have more available free time and disposable income than others. Not only is their incomer status a boundary, but their age, income, education and class form what Ewing (1998) referred to as metaphorical borderlands and Rosaldo (1989) as social borders. Relatedly Ewing, drawing on Anzaldúa (1987), suggests that when two cultural groups meet a borderland is actually present (Ewing 1998, p262). The idea of borderlands within social spaces is useful as a way of thinking about identity and memory making around a bounded culture, Haltwhistle, and the movements and flow of people, ideas and technology into and out of it (Appadurai 1990).

It must be remembered that Gluckman's work took place in the 1930's within a very specific historical context. Methodologically, 'The Bridge' as it is known, was the first instance of the extended case method or situational analysis which became a feature of the Manchester School, founded by Gluckman (Frankenberg 2002, Macmillan 1995). Early critics challenged Gluckman's use of the word 'community' as he used it in relation to society in Zululand. Gluckman responded by rejecting the challenge that he had referred to the Zulu and the white people as harmonious group, rather that they were a group of people in dispute within an established social system. Relatedly, his ideas around conflict and cooperation were controversial and must be understood in the context in which they were written as "The years 1936-8 when Gluckman was doing his fieldwork in Zululand, marked the high-water point of Hertzogs segregationist 'solution of the native problem'" (Macmillan 1995, p51). This historical context along with Gluckman's Marxist leanings certainly impacted on these ideas. The key idea, that conflict can be a form of cooperation, is certainly thought provoking but does not work for me in relation to my research on Haltwhistle. I have reworked this idea to say that both conflict and cooperation are

both possible ways that people can connect to a place. This idea will be elaborated upon and illustrated in subsequent chapters.

Frankenberg's (1957) Village on the Border concerns public events in Welsh border village. He examines the importance of recreational activities in affirming village unity in the context of examining the divisions which exist between social classes, different language speakers, church and chapel, men and women, insiders and outsiders, and how these affect village life. Frankenberg is particularly interested in three public activities: politics, football and the carnival, all of which bring villagers into contact with outsiders, and with incomers used as 'fall-guys' whom villagers can blame when things do go wrong, further contributing to village cohesion. His ethnography also concerns how such activities impact on a sense of belonging in the context of many of the men in the village crossing the Welsh-English border for employment reasons. Also, Frankenberg's village is, or rather was, fairly geographically isolated in a valley. However, Village on the Border was written over fifty years ago, and in a special issue of Sociological Review on belonging in rural Britain, Cohen (2005 p607) writes that its underlying theme was communal conflict in the face of economic decline, discussing how Frankenberg focused on communal events as a context in which to study this conflict, to generate insights regarding social and economic change in Britain more generally.

Conflict can arise over competition for resources such as jobs and housing (Elias 1965, Newby 1980, Gilligan 1987, Jedrej and Nuttall 1996) and may also be attributed to divisions such as social or economic class (Stacey 1960, Bell and Newby 1971). In Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury, Stacey (1960) asserts that the divisions within the town are rooted in social class and economic status, with traditional industry forming a part of its social structure, whereas non-traditional industry does not. In this way, existing residents, who are more likely to be part of traditional industries, and incomers, who are not, are further differentiated. Like Cohen (1982), for Stacey (1960 p16) "society is made up of a network of face to face groups, based on family, neighbours, occupations, associations and status," including membership of voluntary organizations in which the members choose to participate. The walking group and the organization of the Walking Festival, are part of this social fabric in Haltwhistle. The associated activities throw light on emergent social

structure, because membership of such associations shows not only the individual interests of the members, but also “the social comfort of mixing with those with whom he has the most in common” (Stacey 1960, p77). Studying the groups which people choose to join, rather than those where they may have little choice, such as occupation or social class, can help enable the exploration of localism in Haltwhistle.

In The Established and the Outsiders, Elias and Scotson (1965) provide an account of incomers to a suburban community who settled in a new neighbourhood. The study began by investigating why this newer neighbourhood had a reputation for delinquency, formerly valid, but which persisted even though the facts had changed, with echoes here of Gluckman’s (1958) comment about the bad reputation of white farmers. Elias and Scotson (1965, p2) comment "the fact that length of residence can be a factor in the ranking of families and groups is quite well known." However, for Elias and Scotson it is not just length of residency which sets the incomer apart, but also the differences in structure of these new groups of people. By ‘structure’ here Elias and Scotson mean income, occupation and so on (Elias and Scotson 1965, p3), similar to Cohen’s idea of fundamental structures and how membership of these holds the key to integration into a community. Further, ideas about incomers for Elias and Scotson are not individual but part of a "parcel of common beliefs and attitudes maintained by various forms of social pressure and social control", with ideas about one’s own position within the community and also that of others being "formed in connection with a continuous interchange of opinions within the community" which was the result of social pressure (Elias and Scotson 1965, p5-6). Social images are remade and incomers can rarely match the ideal due to their lack of lengthy residence.

History is important here. The neighbourhood Elias and Scotson were researching was settled by incomers twenty years before during the wartime blitz, when over a hundred London families and their factory were moved there. Their study, carried out twenty years later, showed that the division between old and new families was still apparent and they comment that looking at the situation without knowledge of the history of how it evolved would fail to comprehend the reasons for prevailing attitudes towards the ‘delinquent’ neighbourhood. And of course, as Elias and Scotson point out, this process of groups leaving their homes to resettle

somewhere else through reasons of economic and technological development or conflict is not unique and is happening the world over, and that the "small-scale problems of the development of a community and the large-scale problems of the development of a country are inseparable" (Elias and Scotson 1965, px).

At this point, it seems that 'incomer' and 'local' have become and are used as typologies to represent real people. How real are they? Jedrej and Nuttall's (1996) White Settlers explores the impact of counterstream migration in rural Scotland. Throughout, they draw attention to the intricacy of meaning attributed to the terms 'local' and 'incomer' and discuss what kinds of people 'incomers' are and why they choose to settle in rural areas. One question highlighted is, how many incomers are there in a given population and is their impact proportional to their numbers? In a survey of seven highland communities, Lumb (1980, p 53) found there is "little correlation between the proportion of incomers in a population and their apparent impact upon it." However, the perception persists that "incomers rejuvenate the local economy, but the indigenous people are marginalised" (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, p4).

One of the ways in which incomers are rejuvenating the local economy in Haltwhistle is through tourism. However, tourism is a double-edged sword which, on the one hand, seems to bring in revenue to the area, but on the other is seen to erode traditional ways of life, leaving many locals resentful towards the involvement of incomers in tourism (Gilligan 1987). Relatedly, traditions such as highland games may come into existence to provide what the tourist has come to find (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, p84-5). And it is not just traditions that are re-enacted for the benefit of the tourist, for there is also the production of local histories written by local inhabitants for the tourist market; and there are many such examples of this in Haltwhistle, from booklets produced and sold in the town's tourist office to websites set up by local residents promoting their version of local history. While tourists can be demonized for destroying traditions, the very existence of such traditions or what passes for them is often recreated (or invented) with the tourist in mind. Interestingly, the "individuals who actively work to promote and defend the traditional way of life are often, paradoxically, identified as 'incomers'" (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, p93). This is certainly the case in Haltwhistle, with the guides for the bi-annual walking festival

who are identified as 'locals' in the advertising booklet actually being 'incomers' to the town.

The terms 'incomer' and 'local' are not the collective experience of two fixed groups, but are more rhetorical in value (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, p 93). Such ambiguous status has been recognized by Gilligan (1987, p80) in a study of incomers to a Cornish town, referring to people on a 'sliding scale' along the incomer-local continuum. Similarly, Phillips (1986, p144) in his study of the Yorkshire parish of Muker found gradations on the local/non-local scale ranging from "real Yorkshire Dalesfolk" at one extreme, to "people from away" at the other, with "real Muker", "new incomer" and "old incomer" among others in between. In fact, it is in communities with a history of in-migration, like Haltwhistle, that distinctions between who is an incomer or a local become especially socially significant (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996, p 174), making the study of their impact and integration particularly salient there.

### ***Stories, Storytelling and Local Identity Making***

An extensive body of literature exists discussing how stories and their telling impact upon identity making (Norrick 1997, Riessman 2001, Tonkin 1992, Stanley 2006, 2008, Pinder 2007, Maynes et al. 2008, Laslett 1999, Holstein and Gubrium 2000, Wolf 1992, Smith A. 1999, Smith R. 2003, Nadel-Klein 1991, Stone-Mediatore 2003, Tilly 2002). Here I will focus on how and in what ways stories and storytelling impact on local identity making in connection with the Haltwhistle festivals. Using Wolf's (1992) and Norrick's (1997) ideas around the retelling of well-known stories and the making of identities, it seems to me that the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle involves a well-known and often told story, and that boundaries crossed by incomers are involved in the telling of such stories by their participation in such events. Here I draw on Stanley's (2008) approach to 'story' as:

an account of things that have happened (usually, to some people), which has a beginning, middle and end, although not necessarily in this order; which involves some form of emplotment so that the story develops or at least has an end; it is produced for an audience, whether implicitly or explicitly; and it is a motivated or moral



account because it represents a particular point of view or encourages a measure of understanding or empathy from the audience; and it works by being metaphorically and/or analogically connected (tacitly or explicitly) with the lives of its audience (Stanley 2008, p3).

Norrick (1997) suggests that the retelling of well-known stories encourages group bonding, transmits values and confirms membership. Also, such stories offer the opportunity for group narration, which allows those present to re-tell the story to suit the circumstances, context and persons present (see also Tonkin 1992). Nadel-Klein (1991, p513) proposes that "the stories told ... continue to construct and reaffirm identity within the group whose members do the telling." This makes me think of the recasting of 'who is Haltwhistle' in the annual round of festivals there. In this way, using Goffman's (1971a) analogy, the performers can be recast to include incomers who are invited to audition via their membership of the local groups in which they have voluntarily become involved. As Riessman (2001) suggests, storytellers perform their identity, revealing themselves as they wish to be known, positioning themselves in various, flexible roles to organize the scenes and collaborate with the listener to construct the story. In the well-known tales about them, everyone supposedly knows how the festivals are supposed to be performed, while the actual emergent performance of these festivals retells the tale and in turn recasts who is local – at least to the outside world, and possibly in Haltwhistle itself.

Such stories address several key theoretical debates, regarding the connections between the individual and the social, structure and agency, social transformation, invented traditions and manufactured memories, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Stories are constructions around the intersection of people, their societies and the places they live in. There is a connection between teller and listener, the story told, and the reason for its telling, so that "Stories and questions about them are good... for making sociological sense out of life" (Laslett 1999, p393). Consequently the analysis of stories and their telling is informative in understanding how people construct their lives and intersect with social structure, thus my interest in this.

However, it would be an oversight to restrict such stories to verbal accounts. As Pinder (2007, p105) suggests, "We tell our lives in movement too, until the tales

we tell are worn like a glove.” Her research focused on a programme of guided walks aimed at the promotion of well-being for people on the edges of urban areas and she explains that the walkers described themselves to each other using metaphors of movement, such as being able to ‘get up’ or ‘out’ (Pinder 2007, p111). This is especially interesting to me as I am researching festivals in which stories are in physical as well as social motion. Being aware of the rhetorical strategies used by the tellers is crucial to understanding their meanings (Emerson 1995, Laslett 1999, Maynes et al 2008). Certainly "The issue is not whether these stories are true, but what meaning they hold for those who tell them" (Nadel-Klein 1991, p509); however, I am also reminded by Stanley (2006, p25) that “What is seen is impacted by what is known, not just what is looked at” and stories are subjective in nature, not only the interpretation of the tellers themselves, but their audiences, which include the researcher and the reader (Maynes et al 2008, Tonkin 1992, Riessman 2001, Laslett 1999). Participating in these festivals and paying close attention to storytellers will result in research addressing: what kinds of people make up the town of Haltwhistle, how and in what ways they see themselves as not/belonging to the town, and ultimately, what Haltwhistle is in a sociological sense.

Pulling it all together, the framework of my thesis is organized and argued around a number of overlapping and interrelated concepts: claims to not/belong, boundaries and interconnections, the remaking of localism, conflict and cooperation as forms of connection, invented traditions and post/memory, and stories as sites of construction/connection.

I find McCrone et al’s (2002) and Kiely et al’s (2005) idea that not/belonging claims are made, received and not/accepted based on the specific criteria of birth, blood and belonging useful, as they help to take into account the division within Haltwhistle between ‘incomers’ and ‘locals.’ Such criteria are also helpful in analysing conversations in which explicit not/belonging claims are made, as their research relied on interview data which analysed responses to specific questions posed by the interviewers. In addition to exploring claims to not/belong (implicit and explicit), I am also interested in communities of belonging that exist alongside or separate from Haltwhistle as a place and so, while useful in some contexts, this approach is also for my purposes, limited. I propose an ethnographic methodology to

focus on not only verbally explicit claims which are made, but also the implicit claims to belong including non-verbal actions that as Goffman suggests are performed, such as dress, voluntary membership of groups, and stories about the self not/belonging.

Cohen's (1982) idea that identity is most noticeable at its boundaries seems to work well regarding Haltwhistle, which at first I assumed was a bounded place and the annual round of festivals as bounded events, both socially and temporally. However, identity is not only observable at boundaries but also by connectedness beyond them (Strathern 1982). As I stated earlier, Haltwhistle is connected to a broader society and is not as isolated as Frankenberg's Village on the Border or Cohen's Whalsey. Therefore, simply looking at the boundaries where the community is perceived to end, as Cohen suggests, would be insufficient because this does not take into account what happens beyond such boundaries. No community exists in a vacuum and Strathern (1982) stresses the importance of the relationship between the community and others outside it, which is relevant to Haltwhistler's conceptualization of their own distinctiveness. This is important as Haltwhistle is surrounded by much smaller villages for which Haltwhistle is the centre for entertainment, shopping, and services; and consequently I am interested in the social connection of these villages to Haltwhistle and how this interconnectedness impacts upon what Haltwhistle is, in a sociological sense.

Therefore I am of course also interested in the making and remaking of localism; and following Jenkins, I see this making and remaking as identity formation, a dialectical relationship between the individual and the social or the person and the group. I agree with Jenkins that public events can be seen as "collective rituals of identity" (1991, p19), and thus attention to such festivals is a good way to observe the boundedness or interconnectedness experienced between Haltwhistle and the surrounding villages as well as between groups within Haltwhistle. However, such making and remaking implies a temporal element; merely viewing the situation in the present moment without paying attention to the historical background would miss the underlying reasons for prevailing attitudes, as Elias and Scotson (1965) point out. And so not only am I exploring these festival and

public events as they exist today in order to analyse this process in action, but also how they have evolved over time.

I have already defined localism, following Nadel-Klein (1991), as the experience of group identity defined by commitment to community. And following on from Gluckman (1957) and DaMatta (1991), I have focused upon public events, such as the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle, as the best way of observing this experience of commitment to community. This is because these festivals, I have been repeatedly told by Haltwhistle residents, 'bring the whole town together,' and as such are a good way of exploring group identity and their commitment to Haltwhistle as a community. While I agree with DaMatta (1991) that such public events are also zones of transition where the process of making and remaking what it means to be local can occur, they can also be zones of exclusion and conflict.

In exploring these zones of conflict, or more routinely, of separation and division, I find Gluckman's (1957) idea that conflict can be reworked a form of cooperation useful as a way of looking at both the cooperation over festivals in Haltwhistle and the divisions and separations also observable at such events. These divisions and separations are social boundaries, and as I have already suggested drawing on Strathern (1982), in relation to Haltwhistle it is connectedness across such boundaries that implies what Haltwhistle is, in a sociological sense. Combining these ideas (that a sense of localism is dependant upon relationships with others who are not local, with conflict reworked a form of cooperation), I would reframe Gluckman's argument in applying it to Haltwhistle, to say that conflict and cooperation are both ways in which Haltwhistle groups connect to Haltwhistle, and to those outside the observable boundaries of the town.

Linking this idea that conflict and cooperation are both ways in which residents connect to Haltwhistle, together with Strathern's (1982b, p248-249) idea that Haltwhistlers' sense of belonging is a "product of their relations with the outside world," and also with Jenkins' conceptualization of a continuum between the individual and the social, I would stress that connectedness, like identity itself, should be viewed as a continuum. The boundaries of 'us' and 'them' and all in between involves an ebbing and flowing depending upon context, teller, and audience. Such ebb and flow is geographic, temporal and profoundly social and

involves perceived traditions and memories as well as forgetting. I find Hobsbawm and Ranger's (2002) proposition that many traditions are not remembered but are in fact invented (that is, socially constructed in a purposeful way), useful in exploring the making of remaking of localism through festivals and other public events in Haltwhistle. The idea that such invented traditions aim to establish historical links with a desired past is promising, but how exactly is this done? To say that traditions are re/invented deliberately is to imply that the inventors are trying to rewrite history; but while this may be true in many cases, I am not sure that this is a conscious act on the part of Haltwhistle residents. However, the idea of post/memory as a "history after the fact" (Stanley 2006, p4), where current meanings are imposed back in time to interpret, in the present, what it all meant (or is forgotten/suppressed), is for me a more useful analytic tool which also includes the researcher who sees and interprets what is seen.

Such remembering and forgetting and what passes for tradition is passed on through stories about the self and about Haltwhistle and the ways in which people wish themselves and Haltwhistle to be seen and accepted by others. The annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle involves the retelling of often told and well-known stories, and here I am interested in Wolf's (1992) and Norrick's (1997) ideas concerning communal storytelling and identity-making. I am using stories to address the intersection of individual and social, boundaries and interconnectedness, implicit and explicit claims to not/belong, invented traditions and manufactured memories. However, I am uneasy with a focus on stories as purely verbal accounts. While these are instructive and useful, not all stories are verbal nor do they all make explicit claims to not/belong. I agree with Pinder (2007) that stories are also told in physical movement and metaphor, and thus they are a very useful way of exploring festivals as sites of identity making/invention/remembering. However, stories are a construction and, just as memories can be forgotten and traditions invented, so stories can be made up to remember or reinvent the desired past. They can also be forgotten and thus my interested in things beyond the boundary of the story being told, beyond the public image that Haltwhistle presents to the world, to include the gaps and silences, for as Gordon (2008, p20) suggests "the intricate web of connections that characterizes any event or problem is the story."

## ***Conclusion***

In this chapter, I have discussed ideas around the making and remaking of localism and belonging in the town of Haltwhistle. Identity-making is a social process that is constructed and performed and is dependent upon identity-claims being made, received, evaluated and accepted. While the strongest marker in claiming local identity is birth, commitment is the strongest claim which an incomer can make. Such commitment is expressed through belonging to social structures within a community. In my Haltwhistle research, I focus on those social structures which participants choose to belong to, such as the walking group and other groups involved with public events. While such events may appear to reinforce what are seen to be shared memories, they are more often organised around invented traditions which have been created and enacted in the present so as to re-create a desired past, thereby transforming and reaffirming collective local identities. The festivals provide social landmarks around which group identity is performed and through which local/incomer conflict and boundaries are mediated. These public events are ‘community stories,’ where the story of ‘who we are’ is retold and remakes what and who is a ‘local’ person. The ambiguity of the terms ‘incomer’ and ‘local’ and their enactments, together with the visual/performative nature of public events, means that an ethnographic methodology is a particularly useful means of exploring such things. I turn in the next chapter to discuss this in more detail.

## **Chapter 2 - The Two-Faced God: Being In and Looking Out**

“Ethnographies are Janus-faced. In one direction we gaze upon ‘the field’ and in another upon ‘the academy’” (Stanley 2008b, p28)

“A peculiar character of fieldwork ...is that the scientist has to communicate with the objects studied and they with him and that he is part of the situation studied” (Powdermaker 1967, p287)

“there is still not much of a technique attached to ethnography despite the last twenty plus years of trying to develop a standard methodology” (Van Maanen 2010, p251)

### ***The Beginning***

In Roman mythology, Janus is the God of beginnings and endings, gateways and portals. Depicted with two faces, Janus gazes in opposite directions at the same time. As Stanley’s (2008b, p28) quote above indicates, this two-faced approach is necessarily employed by ethnographers. This analogy applies not only, as Stanley (2008b, p28) suggests, to the product, the final ethnography, written about the researched and primarily for the academy, but for me it also applies to the process of fieldwork, in which the researcher is both bodily ‘in’ the field and also an outside researcher. This chapter explores my methodology, and as Van Maanen (2010) states in the quote above, there are no universally-accepted methodological techniques associated with this. Here, I outline what I have done and discuss my methodological choices. Beginning with the design of the research, I explain my aims and the theoretical underpinnings which inform my choice of fieldwork immersion, the specific methods used and the ethical concerns raised. Like many others, I see ethnography as both a process of fieldwork and a final written product. I explore the process of ethnography – conducting fieldwork and writing fieldnotes, discussing what they are and how I have used them. I then move on to explore the product of ethnography - analysis of the data and writing about this. The chapter closes by discussing the resulting ethnographic claims, and the criteria by which they can be evaluated.

## ***Designing the Research: Aims and Theoretical Underpinning***

My research was designed to address several significant gaps in knowledge about belonging and community in contemporary rural Northumberland. In my search for similar studies, I found Rapport's (2002) British Subjects, Cohen's (1982) Belonging, Crow's (1996) The Sociology of Rural Communities and the earlier Community Studies (e.g. Stacey 1960, Bell and Newby 1971) useful reading. Interesting and important work has been done on the Scottish borders (e.g. McCrone et al, Gill 2005) but very little on the English side of that border (although see McCrone et al's work on Berwick upon Tweed). Ethnographically pertinent work has been done concerning the themes of belonging and incomers (e.g. Frankenberg's (1957) Village on the Border, Elias and Scotson's (1965) The Established and the Outsiders, Jedrej and Nuttall's (1996) White Settlers, and Masson's (2009) Kinship and Belonging in the 'Land of Strangers'). However, I found a dearth of contemporary ethnographic literature concerning local identity and belonging and specifically regarding rural Northumberland. My thesis contributes to that gap in the literature.

Methodologically, my research adopts a broad interpretive stance utilizing a qualitative ethnographic framework. Like Clifford (2003, p123), I understand theory and methodology as a tool-kit; not a system that constrains the research, but as tools to use in order to build a view of the society I am researching. I agree with Delamont (2009a) and Atkinson (2009) that there should be an analytic centre to this ethnography and that a strong theoretical framework helps accomplish this. Also like Atkinson (1990) and Denzin (1997), I recognize that storytelling and identity are performed, which lends itself to a more literary, historical and narrative-oriented approach.

The continuum between the theory-driven, positivistic approach attributed to scholars such as Burawoy, and an intuitive, humanistic, story-like approach used by Behar, were explored during an international interdisciplinary conference dubbed 'Ethnografest' (Wacquant 2003, p7). In the opening session, Behar (2003, p23) urged exploration of the personal experiences of the researcher in ethnographic writing,



paying attention to feelings and moments of inner clarity, explaining “I would use not only the observational and participatory methods of classical anthropology but the subtle forms of knowledge found in ineffable moments of intuition and epiphany.” One criticism of Behar’s ‘humanistic, intuitive’ approach is that “ethnographers too often enter the field with only the goals of description and interpretation to guide them, treating theoretical development as a black box or ignoring it altogether” (Snow et al. 2003, p184). Another is Atkinson’s (2009) comments about self-indulgence and ego-centrism at the expense of analysing the social world. In addressing the realist/positivist vs. idealist oppositional debate, Stanley and Wise (1983, 1993, 2006) argue that this binary is overly simplistic and suggest that a stance combining elements of both, instead of choosing sides, would be more useful.

Researching the making and remaking of localism engages with individuals and their conflicting perceptions of reality and truth (Tilly 2006) as well as my own analytical understanding, which may or may not agree with theirs (Wolf 1982). As the quote at the beginning of this chapter from Powdermaker (1967, p287) suggests, the researcher is “part of the situation studied”. How is this to be accounted for in fieldwork and writing? Jackson (2008) suggests that the fieldworker occupies a liminal status, caught betwixt and between while in the field. I disagree with this, for the fieldworker is not ‘the other’ (Murphy 2008); but rather the fieldworker is bodily ‘in’ the field, actively participating in the social.

Consequently, I have found a shift of focus away from an epistemological foundation and abstract theorizing, towards a more ontological foundation centred on who the researcher is and how they are situated, most useful. Here, I find my stance similar to Stanley and Wise in a strategy they have theorized as Feminist Fractured Foundationalism (FFF):

“social life is both founded in a material factual reality and also involves disagreements and disjunctures between people’s views of ‘the facts....there is a materially grounded social world that is real in its consequences (foundationalism), and insists that differently situated groups develop often different views of the realities involved (fractured)” (2006, 1.4).

My focus is on who the researcher is and how they are situated, grounding the researcher as an actual person at work in a real social setting (Stanley and Wise 2006). Positionality for Hastrup (1992) and England (1994) refers to the researcher's age, sex, gender, ethnicity, biography, biases and so on, all of which are lenses through which the researcher interprets their experience. There is also the researcher's social location (Stanley 2008b), which in the context of my research involves the researcher as volunteer, resident, visitor, walker, researcher and so on. Why would the reader be interested in knowing these things? Because "By being told the 'position' of the researcher, we can see the angle and view from which the findings arose" (Salzman, 2002 p808). And this is important in evaluating the researcher's knowledge claims.

My research design is predicated upon the interactional and intersubjective nature of the making and remaking of localism in Haltwhistle. Consequently, I have designed a theoretical and conceptual frame using a tool-kit approach drawing around the ideas discussed in this chapter and Chapter One. Identity and belonging are constructed and performed in storied ways and the understanding of such stories relies on paying attention to the meanings of the tellers. Thus a qualitative methodology needs to be employed, as Elias and Scotson (1965) and Kiely et al (2005) explain, because this is necessary to tease out the complexities of not/belonging and identity claims made by Haltwhistle 'locals' and 'incomers.' Cunliffe (2010, p227) distinguishes ethnography from surveys and interviews, which she calls a "quick dip" into the research site in contrast to the immersion required in ethnography, which "is about understanding human experience – how a particular community lives...It differs from other approaches to research in that it requires immersion and translation."

Emerson (1987) and Van Maanen (1988) advocate immersion in the field with lengthy periods of fieldwork, ideally supported by repeat visits, allowing the researcher to develop a historical dimension to their work. Emerson (1987, p37) expressed concern over the short amount of time which many researchers spend in the field, often as little as a few weeks or a month or two. My field research was consequently split into three phases. Firstly there was a pilot study, followed by a summer at my research site, and then time spent back in my office, writing and

reviewing the data to see what questions emerged. The second period of fieldwork, conducted the following summer, not only infused the research with a temporal element, but also allowed me to go back into the field with new questions. Thirdly, additional shorter visits of a few days here and there to visit with an informant or attend an event were also carried out, facilitated by the close proximity of my research site. So even though I lived in Haltwhistle for a combined period of nine months, my fieldwork was conducted over a period of two years. Most of this time was spent as a volunteer at the hostel; however, in the early stages of fieldwork I also stayed at the home of a Haltwhistle resident.

For me as for many others, ethnography is both a process and a written product, and as Atkinson (1990, p104) notes "...authors of ethnographic texts weave their own and others observations and accounts into the more extended accounts of social action." This interweaving that researchers do in the research process juxtaposes the fractured nature of social reality and tries to knit it together and make sense of it, in order to present an analysis of it in written form. My ethnographic approach encompasses participant observation, but also interviewing and the collection of supporting documents, and my analysis of the data I have engaged with.

## **Methods**

The process of ethnography involves using specific research methods. The methods I have used to collect the data for this ethnography include participant observation, observation, semi-structured conversational interviews, and the collection of documents such as photographs, reports, and leaflets, as well as the usual references to journal articles, books and web-sites.

Like Cavan (1978), the two main sources of participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data about the festivals, around visiting and social events. Cavan's research focused on a rural community in Northern California, in which she found:

"Visits provided an excellent opportunity to collect members' impressions of community life and first hand observations of domestic life. They provided an opportunity to check out previous accounts and provisional interpretations. They also provided opportunities to see

parts of the community that lay outside of my personal acquaintanceship network” (Cavan 1978, p271).

Haltwhistle is also rural, and for me as with Cavan, visiting people and attending festivals and other public events were my main locus of participant observation in and around Haltwhistle. Also like Cavan, I found that such visits introduced me to new potential informants who were outside my existing networks.

In addition, I have also used documents including reports, maps, leaflets, diagrams and photographs. For Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p138), photographs or other documents are not representative or to be taken at face value. However, I agree with Stanley and Wise (2006, p4) that they do provide some evidence around which the reader can judge the interpretations made by the researcher, holding the researcher accountable for the claims made in their writing. By presenting the data for the reader to see, conflicts within the data or between data and interpretation will be apparent and must be defended, a point I will discuss later in this chapter. Where I have analysed a photograph of the Summer Carnival or a document about the Walking Festival, for example, I have included a copy for the reader to see. In the case of a photograph, table or map, these are included in the text while longer documents are appended within appropriate word count constraints.

## **Ethics**

I now want to comment on some hand wringing I have had with regard to the inclusion of documentary evidence and the ethical challenges this poses in relation to anonymity. Both the ESRC and the University of Edinburgh’s Research Ethics Committee require the protection of research subjects by anonymising the names of individuals and organizations. I understand and wholeheartedly agree with honouring a person’s confidentiality, protecting vulnerable people and those who would be negatively impacted by the research findings. Those to whom I assume these requirements are targeted. However, the festivals I am focused upon actively advertise. They are public events, open to all and are widely covered in the local news, something the organizers actively encourage. Also, some of the people concerned actively wanted to be ‘known’ and their real names used. Nonetheless I

have abided by the ESRC and University protocols. All personal names have been changed. The names of individual business have also been anonymized. At the same time, Haltwhistle is a real place and much of my analysis of the festivals relies upon documentary evidence about the festivals in the form of publicly available booklets, photographs, maps and reports produced by such businesses. In order to use these, it is necessary to name Haltwhistle, otherwise the maps and other documentation I have used to explore the interconnectedness of Haltwhistle with surrounding villages would have made little sense. Changing the name of Haltwhistle itself would make it impossible for readers to scrutinize the documents I have used as evidence, and as Stanley and Wise (2006, p2) suggest, making such documents available to the reader is important in providing evidence of the knowledge-claims being made.

Consequently, throughout the research I ensured that my intention to research the festivals was open and well-known, specifically among their organizers, the walkers, hostel workers and anyone I conversed with. In addition, I have taken care to not only anonymize personal and business names, but also to change any descriptive facts that could be used to identify particular people.

However, my ethical responsibility to protect the anonymity of participants must be balanced with my commitment to my readers. To do this, I offer the following accounts to give readers a sense of who these people are and their settings in order to enrich the accounts offered of the key ceremonies and their satellite events. These accounts are drawn mostly from my fieldnotes and some portions of the fieldnotes are quoted directly. In other instances, I have created composite characters in order to reveal ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1973) without identifying the individuals concerned. Following are three accounts concerning individuals who sit on the organizational committees of the major festivals in Haltwhistle.

### **Milking the Goat**

I trekked the five miles to Mrs Jacobs’s house in lovely weather passing a sign for tea and scones at Thurlwall Castle on the way. I met her 2 year old daughter Miriam who was in her second day of potty training and was extremely distressed because the night before she had peed in her new slippers, a present from her grandmother filling one of them to overflowing. They were now drying out;

facedown over an unlit wood burning stove, still quite damp. Mr Jacobs made us coffee and we chatted for a while, after meeting Miriam's imaginary friend. Mrs Jacobs gave me a copy of the 'Haltwhistle Rings' a set of guided walks on sale at the partnership offices. She won them in a tombola and already had a copy. Then she told me about James the owner of the nearby Castle. Mrs Jacobs suggested James may be willing to let me stay if I were willing to catalogue the copious documents he has which the local historical society want and claim are mouldering under his bed! Mrs Jacobs laughingly said he is old and extremely eccentric but a wonderful storyteller, she suggested I contact him and tell him what I am up to. Mrs Jacobs seems to enjoy making fun of her self and her neighbours. Miriam finally used the potty for the first time. We all cheered and applauded.

We went out side to let all six goats out and milk the nanny. "The trick" Mrs Jacobs said as she approached the shed "is to call her name while banging on the door of the goatshed and have her food ready – Florence!" Armed with a bright pink, three legged milking stool, Mrs Jacobs showed me how to milk the goat "pinch-release-pinch-release... roll your fingers", she said, "don't pull like you're milking a cow, she doesn't like that." After a while, I seemed to get the hang of it but not in time; I need to speed up! Milking time equals food eating time and the food was gone long before I had finished milking the goat. Mrs Jacobs went back to the shed and let the remaining goats out. They are friendly animals with eyes just like sheep. She explained that from time to time the goat gets cystitis, "you'll know because the milk will be pink – just throw it away." I had offered to goat sit for the Jacobs's after a conversation with Mrs Jacobs in which she confided that they can not get a weekend away because they do not have anyone to take care of the goats. My chance to do just that came a few weeks later:

I woke up in the guest bed of the Jacobs's house. The weather is unchanged from yesterday; still wild, wet, and windy. I got out of bed, put my waterproofs over my pyjamas, pulled on my wellies and went out to get fresh feed before releasing the goats from the shed where they spent the night. They can hear me out and about and butt their heads against the door. The steep hill down to their paddock is now a quagmire. Their food bowls in their day-shelter are upturned and covered in grasses. I took them back up the bank, rinsed them and filled them with feed, taking it back down the bank. The goats are becoming increasingly restless. Bang! Bang! Against the door of the shed. As

instructed, I knock on the shed door calling “Florence! Florence!” Opening the door an inch with my body weight behind it to prevent a stampede. Two goats to try break free, I grab for Florence’s collar and pull her to the front. The other goats do not resist, they are used to her coming out first to be milked. She runs to her bowl and stands still. I grab the three legged bright pink plastic stool and the pale and begin to milk. Her udders feel full. I do my best (I gave her more food to give me more milking time) but still don’t get as much milk as Mrs Jacobs before she finishes her food and bolts. The milk is pink – a sure sign of cystitis. She runs around while I open then shed door and release the others – they run down to their paddock together. I run back to the house! (Fieldnotes 6 September)

### **The Popping Stone**

I Met with Catherine at 10.30am at the cafe. She is a lovely woman and very knowledgeable about the folklore, history and geography of the area. We chatted for a couple of hours. She told me about Gilsland; that it rests on the Northumberland-Cumberland border which runs through the middle of the town and also three church diocese run through it segregating it even further. She told me I must see the popping stone and invited me back to her home that day for lunch.

Catherine’s house is a 3 story red brick terrace that faces the railway line (although you can not see it at the bottom of their very long and leafy garden). She shares her home with her husband and they have two children who are now at university. We had tea and chatted; she told me about her adventure in Greenland birdwatching while she was a graduate student – she met her husband there, he was a member of the expedition party. They were stranded for four weeks. Their food was dropped by aircraft which was fine, the only problem was, the boxes inside smashed and all the food mixed together, tea, rice, flour... She also described hitching alone in the Yukon.

After lunch we went for a walk in the woods towards the popping stone. On the way, Catherine pointed out the various boundaries, ecclesiastical and county and how these divisions are reproduced by the villagers who define their allegiances not by which side of the village they live on but where they look towards: Carlisle or Haxham/Newcastle. These allegiances are dependant upon; 1. place of work, 2. children’s school. Places where they spend the most time. The local church looks like

a smaller version of the church of the Holy Cross in Haltwhistle but it is only 150 years old. The church of Mary Magdalene which is a short walk out of Gilsland falls under the jurisdiction of Carlisle. We walked a couple of miles through the woods, plodging through muddy puddles, crossing bridges and fields before finally, coming to rest at the popping stone.

Catherine explained that the popping stone was popularized by Sir Walter Scott during his stay in Gilsland as a place where couples went in order to ‘pop the question’ This was followed by sealing the deal under ‘the kissing bush’ (hawthorn) a daughter of which stands about twenty feet away. Catherine has amassed many old postcards most of which she purchased on eBay showing groups of people sitting on the popping stone. She inspected the stone and noticed that a piece had been chipped off recently. She told me that traditionally, women wishing to marry carried a piece of the popping stone around their necks. On the way back we walked by one of the areas with many holy wells. Catherine was amazed to see a cut basin in the well which was little more than a natural spring. She said it was not there before and has either been placed there or someone has excavated it.

### **The Dinner Party**

I was invited to the home of Mr and Mrs Welsh, both involved with the Carnival’s committee, for a dinner party. My visit required taking the bus, the AD122 a few stops to get to the home of my hosts. I was told that the home was hard to find but that Mr Welsh would meet me at the bus stop. Although I had met and spoken with Mrs Welsh on a number of occasions, and she had extended the invitation, this would be my first meeting with Mr Welsh. Mrs Welsh affectionately described him as ‘short, balding, pot bellied and bad tempered’. As the bus pulled into the bus stop, I saw a man fitting the description offered by Mrs Welsh scrutinizing the people getting off the bus. He was wearing a blue long sleeved shirt, open at the collar, and a grey-green herringbone jacket and a creased brow. Mr Welsh greeted me with a firm handshake. “I hear you are doing a PhD”, he said, “what’s your hypothesis?”

We walked up the bank, made a few twists and turns and then down a cobbled alley to reach their stone house. Mrs Welsh greeted me in the kitchen with a



polite smile, she was draining some pasta and the steam partially obscured her face as she spoke. Mrs Welsh was around fifty years old, slim, with short dark hair and was wearing light denim jeans and a pink top. I gave her a bottle of red wine I had brought with me. Two other guests were already there, also involved with the carnival although one of them was not a committee member.

Veronica, a woman in her 20s explained to me that while she is not on the committee per say, she does 'help out' at carnival time, with washing the bunting, baking, and other activities. Meanwhile, Mr Welsh opened a bottle of Merlot and offered us all a glass. Mr Welsh went back into the kitchen, spoke to Mrs Welsh and then brought the bottle of red wine I had brought and peered at the label as he put it down on the dining room table grunting "a mixed grape! Is that all we're worth?" I smiled nervously. Did it matter? The other guest, Pat, an older grey haired woman with a curly perm ignored his comment and asked how my research was going.

Nibbles appeared on the table and Mrs Welsh asked if I liked gin. I had barely finished the glass of red wine when she poured me a very strong gin and tonic. Conversation over dinner turned to sloe berries and Mrs Welsh talked at length about how she uses them, she stopped mid sentence and remarked with tone of disapproval, that I was nursing my drink. What I really wanted was a glass of water or a cup of tea, but more red wine appeared instead. I was feeling quite tipsy by this point but none of the other guests seemed affected. Pat talked about all the jobs she had ever done; two. She worked for the same company since leaving school and then five years before retirement, she was laid off. She took another job for the remaining five years and met her second husband. Mr Welsh turned the conversation to local history, obviously an interest of his and he talked with some authority. Towards the end of the evening, he told us a ghost story:

Abigail Featherstonehaugh fell in love with Dick Ridley but was, by order of her father to marry a Blenkinsopp...Fires were lit on the corners or boundaries of the land bequeathed in dowry – when the fires went out, the land was conveyed – there were no documents. After the ceremony, Dick came down on Blenkinsopp, ambushed the wedding party, Abigail got between them and was cut in twain. At midnight, horses hooves could be heard outside Featherstone Castle, Albeny Featherstonehaugh heard footsteps coming towards the great dining hall, the wind blew open the doors, the fire suddenly blew up and he

saw the entire wedding party – carrying their heads under their arms...  
(Fieldnotes 5 July).

### ***Being In and Being Out: Fieldwork and Fieldnotes***

I now explore the foundation of ethnography; fieldwork and fieldnotes. The processes of fieldwork and the writing of fieldnotes have prompted considerable and divisive debate (Cunliffe 2010, Delamont 2009, Stanley 2008b, Emerson 1995, Hammersely and Atkinson 2007, Rock 2007, Wolf 1992, Atkinson 1990, Lederman 1990, Jackson 1990, Sanjek 1990, Van Maanen 1988, Bryman 1988, Strathern 1986, Powdermaker 1967). I shall address what fieldwork is and the positionality of the researcher. I then move on to explore the writing of fieldnotes, their purpose and importance in relation to the final ethnography, and comment on how I have kept, written and used them in my own research.

The fieldwork experience results from the researcher's active "engagement in learning what we can about how life is lived in another social/cultural setting" (Wolf 1992, 128). My experience is that the intrinsic disjunctures and conflicts in social life are mirrored in fieldwork. Like many others, I have found that textbook definitions of fieldwork methods and how they should be conducted are very different from the reality of fieldwork, which involves a constant juggling between the researcher's involvement and detachment, learning and making mistakes, accidentally finding something significant, chance meetings and conversations and so on (Rock 2007, Wolf 1992, Atkinson 1990, Bryman 1988, Powdermaker 1967). For example, how soon should the researcher write up their fieldnotes after the 'event'? Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) urge the researcher to write their fieldnotes as quickly as possible, and ideally I agree. However, for me, as soon as possible was often hours after the event, because when I was watching a carnival in the pouring rain I could not write in my field journal lest it turn to mush in the downpour. Similarly, on my weekly outings with the walking group, it was impractical to pull out my field journal while plodging through a bog to scribble down an interesting bit of conversation. And while volunteering at the hostel, it was impossible to write in my field journal while simultaneously ladling custard on top of sponge cake or making

beds. So the abstract views about what should happen often contrast sharply with what is actually possible in the field, despite the best efforts of the researcher.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p4) stress that “the researcher must find some role in the field being studied.” Similarly, Emerson (1987, p37) suggests fieldwork would be further enriched by adopting more insider roles, something which can only be achieved with lengthy and immersed fieldwork practice. However, merely being there for a long time is no guarantee of an ‘insider role.’ Here I agree with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p83) that “the value of pure sociability should not be underestimated as a means of building trust.” Spending considerable time and effort in seemingly mundane activities that do not directly address the research, or at least do not appear to at the time, have been invaluable as a means of my building rapport with potential informants. And such rapport is not created once and then forgotten, for as Delamont (2009b, p60) points out, “access is a process not an event, and must always be treated as a precarious accomplishment and not a stable state.”

My commitment to involve myself with local groups, for example, the walking group and my voluntary activities at the youth hostel, have allowed me to continually build upon this process while placing an “emphasis on participation, on fieldwork as socialization into other ways of knowing and doing” (Emerson 1987, p 39), and thus to pay closer attention to participants and the meanings they give to things. However, no matter how much the researcher integrates themselves and becomes a member of the community under study, they will always be different because they are, first and foremost, a researcher and so the researcher is constantly slipping into and out of roles (Anderson 2006, Strathern 1986, Whyte 1973, Powdermaker 1967).

I now turn to explore fieldnotes and differing notions of the role of fieldnotes and how they should be constructed and used. Fieldnotes mean different things to different researchers and there are many ways of recording fieldnotes for different purposes. To some, they are raw data; to others, they represent a process (which some have argued have no role in the final ethnography other than to keep the researcher sane); while to others, they are the first ordering of analysis.

Emerson et al (2007, p353) describe fieldnotes as “writings produced in or in close proximity to ‘the field’... a fieldnote corpus need have little or no overall

coherence or consistence; it typically contains bits and pieces of incidents, beginnings and ends of narratives, accounts of chance meetings and rare occurrences, and details of a wide range of unconnected matters.” This suggests that the fieldnotes themselves, like fieldwork experiences, are filled with the same fractures and disjunctures as the social life they purport to selectively represent.

How have other researchers written their fieldnotes? Lederman (1990) used daily logs, typed files and personal journals, and similarly Sanjek (1990) distinguishes between ‘data’, ‘fieldnote records’, and ‘diaries,’ a distinction that has been critiqued by Emerson (1995, p12), who suggests this implies that perhaps observations can be separated and objective. Why should what is ‘in a diary’ be completely separated from ‘data’, for instance? Emerson et al suggest this is because some researchers feel it is important to distinguish in their records between what they have observed and what they are writing about it, whereas others consider fieldnotes to be a form of writing that includes “what they learn and observe about the activities of others and their own actions, questions and reflections” (2007, p354). As I have already suggested, I consider the fieldworker to be a part of the social situation under study and therefore agree with the latter stance. It is for these reasons that I include any initial responses I have to the events, conversations and observations I am recording in what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p163-4) call ‘analytic notes.’ These are notes about potential future analysis that are written into the fieldnotes as they occur to me while writing. However, for me as for Wolf, the fieldnotes themselves are the beginnings of analysis in their own right, as the person who writes has already edited, in their own mind, by choosing what to write and what to omit, because “The fact that we choose to write down a particular piece of information implicates it in the beginning of analysis. Our fieldnotes are the first ordering of ‘what we know’” (1992, p91).

‘What I know’ is transcribed in my handwritten field journal. In this note book I jot down events, important bits of information, web site addresses, maps, and, when possible, describe the events I am witnessing as I participate in them or shortly thereafter. These handwritten jottings are typed up into my electronic fieldnote document at the end of the day. I also take photographs with a digital camera which I download onto my laptop in file folders labelled by the date and place the

photographs were taken. In addition I also have boxes of materials I have collected while in the field: programs for events, newspaper articles, documents I have acquired containing statistical or policy information, tourist information and so on. My fieldnote electronic document, that already edited composite of my written notebook, photos, and documents, is the very first draft of my written ethnography, that is, this thesis.

### ***Looking Both Ways; Analysis and Writing***

One of the key issues in ethnography is “understanding how an observer/researcher sits down and turns a piece of her lived experience into a bit of written text in the first place” (Emerson 1995, pvii). Once fieldnotes are written, the ethnographer leaves the field and attempts to weave these notes together into an 'ethnographic story' (Emerson 1995 ix) using fieldnotes as a data source to be reordered and analysed in developing an account that makes sense for other audiences. And as Stanley (2008b, p21) suggests, those audiences are most likely academic even though the ethnographic process reflects upon the meanings given to events by the studied community. Again I refer back to Stanley's (2008b, p28) comment at the beginning of this chapter regarding the Janus-faced gaze of ethnography, “In one direction we gaze upon ‘the field’, and on the other upon ‘the academy.’”

Like Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p28), my goal is “the production of knowledge” about social life in Haltwhistle, specifically how localism is made and remade around public events such as the annual round of festivals. Likewise, I agree with Delamont (2009b, p58) that “the main focus of social science should be analysis of social settings and actors to whom the researcher has had access, not the introspections of the researcher.” But how is such a task to be accomplished and knowledge produced? Pink (2007, p22) suggests that ethnography goes beyond data collection, to become “a process of creating and representing knowledge that is based on the ethnographer's own experiences.” While I agree that ethnography is such a process and what is written is certainly the ethnographer's interpretation, my research has been informed by reflexive awareness of my interpretation of social situations in Haltwhistle and analysis of those situations, not a description of my own

experience. Here Jacobson's (1991, p122) caution that "...introducing the experience of the ethnographer into an account does not necessarily shed light on the experiences of others..." has to be heeded. However, while including the researcher's experience in the field does not in itself provide any analysis of the actions of the researched, it does introduce a reflexive dimension to the account. And here I agree with Atkinson's (1990, p180) comment that "The fully mature ethnography requires a reflexive awareness of its own writing, the possibilities and limits of its own language, and a principled exploration of its own modes of representation."

## **Reflexivity**

Being an ethnographer involves "learning how to do fieldwork, learning how to write, figuring out who you are as person/fieldworker/writer, and knowing how, where, and when these all connect. The thread running through all four tasks, I believe is reflexivity..." (Cunliffe 2010, p231). There is a debate, sometimes sharp, around how reflexivity should be employed during the ethnographic process and the ways in which collected data are interpreted and analysed (Atkinson 2009, 2006, Delamont 2009a, 2009b, Atkinson and Delamont 2008, Chang 2008, Atkinson et al 2007, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Pink 2007, Stanley and Wise 2006, Anderson 2006, Charmaz 2006, Vryan 2006, Ellis 2004, Behar 2003, Bochner and Ellis 2002, Riessman 2001, Behar and Gordon 1995, Stanley 1992, Wolf 1992, Strathern 1987). Here I focus on reflexivity in interpreting and analyzing the data collected about social life in Haltwhistle. I am interested in exploring analytical reflexivity (which differs significantly from autoethnography) and the argument that researchers have an obligation to analyse their data and not merely describe it, and that such data can be used to generalize beyond the research context to address broader questions about society (Atkinson 2009, Delamont 2009a, 2009b, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Stanley and Wise 2006, Anderson 2006, Wolf 1992, Tilly 2006, 1984).

Before proceeding I want to identify what is meant by the term autoethnography and how it differs from analytical reflexivity; there is no clear, agreed upon definition, because "The term has a double sense - referring either to the ethnography of one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic

interest. Thus, either a self (auto) ethnography or an autobiographical (auto) ethnography can be signalled by "autoethnography" (Reed-Danahay 1997, p2). Delamont (2009b, p51) compares two crises she experienced during the course of her fieldwork to illustrate the contrast between the usefulness of analytical reflexivity, with what she refers to as the "narcissistic substitution of autoethnography for research." Like Delamont (2009b, p58), the definition of autoethnography I am using is a study setting where the researcher is the main focus of that study. Delamont (2009b, p58) distinguishes this from reflexive ethnography, "where the scholar is studying a setting, a subculture, an activity or some actor other than herself and is acutely sensitive to the interrelationship(s) between herself and the focus of her research." Using this definition of autoethnography as personal introspection that generates little or no analysis of the external social world, would be of little use to me in exploring social life in Haltwhistle. However, reflexive ethnography, where the focus is on people and public events in Haltwhistle, hopefully generates interesting sociological questions worthy of analysis.

In trying to reconcile these ideas, the intersection of knowledge production, and the experience of the author, with the analysis of social life in Haltwhistle and my own reflexive awareness of my writing, I have found FFF (Stanley and Wise 2006, p3) and its commitment to analytic reflexivity helpful: "Analytic reflexivity focuses on the acts of knowing and what goes into this, looking in detail at the analytic processes involved and the evidences supporting these" (Stanley and Wise 2006, p11). Anderson (2006, p382) stresses that "reflexivity involves an awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants." This suggests to me a researcher position of interconnection, which in turn reminds me of Delamont's (2009b) comment regarding the interconnectedness between the researcher and the researched. As Cunliffe (2010, p228) suggests, the ethnographic story involves "weaving observations and insights about culture and practices into the text", but I wish to be careful about which observations and insights are mine about 'the other' and how I came to these conclusions, but also without a priori privileging one knowledge claim above others because in any social situation there are many knowers, of which the researcher is only one.

## Generalizing

Over the past twenty years, there has been a growth in autoethnography and evocative or emotional ethnography focused on the researcher (Chang 2008, Ellis 2004, Behar 2003, Bochner and Ellis 2002, Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Richardson 1994). The underpinnings of such research stress that these ethnographies cannot explain or generalize beyond the immediate focus of investigation, which in this type of ethnography is invariably the self. In response to this, those favouring an analytic agenda (Atkinson 2009, 2006 Delamont 2009a 2009b, Stanley and Wise 2006, Anderson 2006, Wolf 1992) propose to maintain analysis as central to the research and to use “empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves... not only truthfully rendering the social world under consideration but also transcending that world through broader generalization” (Anderson 2006, p387-8). The issue of ‘truthfulness’ in the accounts offered will be explored later in this chapter, but for now I concede Anderson’s point regarding generalization. As I have already discussed, I will be analyzing the data I collect, but here I want to explore how such generalization beyond the empirical data can be done.

In exploring motifs of belonging and attachment, Savage (2008, p153) suggests that “globalization is premised on a new kind of localism, one that focuses on the particulars of place” (Savage 2008, p161). By exploring the place of Haltwhistle through the analysis of the motifs of belonging and attachment as Savage suggests, what localism is may be inferred and consequently broader structures generalized about. Delamont (2009a, p2) suggests the work of Charles Tilly and specifically his idea that “detailed research close up against everyday life should be systematically related to big questions.” One such motif of belonging would be explicit claims about belonging (Kiely et al 2005). However such claims are not only verbal accounts but can also be performed, and I now turn to explore performed motifs of belonging enacted with props and expounded in particular through stories.



## The Analysis of Stories

My research concerns belonging to Haltwhistle, and the making and remaking of localism through the process of becoming or claiming to be a local person. Such identity claims are bound up with and exhibited in stories, told and retold, either individually or as ‘community stories’ performed around festivals and other public events. As Plummer (1995, p174) suggests, “stories gather people around them.” The analysis of such stories is helpful in understanding how people construct their lives and how these lives intersect with social structure.

Representation in ethnography lies in the hands of ethnographers as authors of the text, it is also dependent upon the ways in which the researched choose to represent themselves and their lives. Atkinson (1990) suggests that ethnographic texts are constructed, performed, and that audiences form part of that performance. Similarly, Tonkin (1992, p97) proposes that “oral narratives be seen as social actions, situated in particular times and places and directed by individual tellers to specific audiences” and that this underpins ethnographic writing. Denzin (1997) extends this argument, suggesting that it is not just the performative aspect of the story which is under enquiry, but also the written ethnography, which can and should be viewed as a performance, which is precisely Atkinson’s (1990) point.

An extensive body of literature exists around the analysis of stories (Gordon 2008, Stanley 2008b, Tamboukou 2008, Tilly 2006, 2002, McCormack 2002, Norrick 1997, Pinder 2007, Mishler 1999, Plummer 1995, Riessman 2001, Wolf 1992) Here I am interested in McCormack’s (2002) ideas of Storying Stories, in which stories within conversation are analyzed, and also Tilly’s (2006) ideas around the social process of giving reasons regarding what people say they and others do, and specifically how this is done through the use of stories. In Storying Stories, McCormack (2002) outlines a method of analyzing in-depth conversations, in which she “explores individuals’ understandings of their experience in the context of their everyday lives while simultaneously looking to the wider social/cultural resources on which people draw to help them make sense of their lives” (McCormack 2002, p220). I am interested in how localism is made and remade in Haltwhistle and, like McCormack, much of my data engages with conversations. McCormack’s (2002) underlying assumption is that such understandings are made and remade through

stories, and thus my interest in this approach as “stories always occur as parts of conversation” (Tilly, 2006, p73).

McCormack’s research differs in some ways from mine: she conducted tape recorded conversational interviews, analyzing the content through ‘active listening’ after the fact and then returned her interpretive stories back to the participants for their responses, something I have not done. Here I agree with Wolf (1992), that if any two townspeople were to witness the same event, they would often give different, often very different, interpretations of what they saw. Similarly, I will give a different perspective, and trying to ascertain agreement on my perspective from the people whose activities are subjects of the research may be impossible. Linking back to Anderson’s (2006) comment about the ‘truthfulness’ of accounts, such an approach suggests there is some certain, objective and inherent ‘truth’ out there. Like Stanley and Wise (1993, p142) I disagree with this, as “sometimes we find ourselves constructing events differently from other people,” a comment that applies as much to the researcher’s construction as those of, and between, the researched.

However, McCormack’s (2002) commitment to analyze the stories that occur within conversation as data, and to explore recurrent themes that come up across such stories, is useful as a way of thinking about stories of belonging in Haltwhistle. Many of my days out with the walking group consisted of lengthy conversations which I have analyzed, focusing on the stories which can be separated from the surrounding conversation by identifiable boundaries. As I discussed in Chapter One, such boundaries are the beginning, middle and end, which encircle the emplotment, the things that happen, the point of view of the storyteller, and adaptation to the audience (Stanley 2008b, Tilly 2006, McCormack 2002, Riessman 1993, Tonkin 1992).

In thinking about stories as they occur in conversation and how they can be analyzed, Tilly (2006) in Why? investigates the reasons people give for the things they and others do. Stories, Tilly suggests, are explanatory accounts, including cause-effect descriptions of events and their justifications. For Tilly, the stories people tell about what happened, what they did about it and the claims they make, are adapted from models of social processes they have learned, interpreted and adapted from others and “such models vary dramatically from group to group, situation to situation

and relation to relation” (2006, p10). And so it is entirely possible that one Haltwhistle resident may claim to be ‘not local’, while others might refer to that person as ‘local.’ Such a difference is defensible if the underlying models for the judgements being made are analyzed as varying social facts, because “when human behaviour is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential” (Wolf 1992, p129). As Stanley and Wise (2006) suggest, “social life is both founded in a material factual reality and also involves disagreements and disjunctures between people’s views of ‘the facts’”, and so the appropriate stance is not to a priori privilege one viewpoint above others, but rather to present ‘the facts’ using “sufficiency of evidence for the conclusions drawn, the plausibility of interpretations and conclusions, and the reception by readers” (Stanley and Wise (2006, p5).

Tilly comments that:

Stories matter greatly for social life because of three distinct characteristics. First, they rework and simplify social processes so that the processes become available for the telling; X did Y to Z conveys a memorable image of what happened. Second, they include strong imputations: I got the credit, he gets the blame, they did us dirt. This second feature makes stories enormously valuable for evaluation after the fact, and helps to account for peoples’ changing stories of events in which they behaved less than heroically. Third, stories belong to the relationship at hand, and therefore vary from one relationship to another; a television interviewer gets a different story of a lost football game from the one players tell each other (Tilly 2006, p16-17).

These three characteristics of stories work very well within the conceptual frame I outlined in Chapter One. Like Tilly, my focus is on the social processes involved in the stories told, not on how plausible or accurate such stories are, because when people give reasons they are “negotiating their social lives” (Tilly 2006, p15). The first characteristic of stories outlined by Tilly is the negotiation of social life, stories around which show that the simple is actually complex. For example, the claim to be ‘English’ in Haltwhistle may appear to be a simple claim, but as I will discuss in Chapter Four, such a claim is made highly complex by the claimant and counter claimant.

The second characteristic of stories for Tilly is that they make claims and such claims can confirm, reject, build or deny any relational claim. These two characteristics are very useful when combined with Kiely et al's (2005) conceptual tools of 'birth', 'blood' and 'belonging' for exploring how claims to be 'local' or to belong to Haltwhistle are made and accepted, by whom and under what circumstances. However, as such claims are often made after the fact, and reinvent the past in the desired image of the present, this relates well to Hobsbawm and Ranger's (2002) ideas around invented traditions and Stanley's (2006, p4) concept of post/memory as a "history after the fact." In relation to Haltwhistle, analyzing stories made and remade around the annual round of festivals using the analytic tools of post/memory and invented traditions is a useful way of exploring what Haltwhistle is in a sociological sense.

Tilly's (2006) third characteristic of stories concerns the variability of the story depending upon who is telling, who is listening and the context in which the story is told, and this relates well to the ideas around performance and storytelling outlined earlier in this chapter. While both McCormack (2002) and Tilly (2006) mainly explore verbal accounts, I agree with Pinder (2007, p105) that stories are told in motion too, and in my work this motion is the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle.

Stories, in addition to being told in verbal accounts or performed at a festival or public event, are also told in photographs and documents. Such documents include my fieldnotes, which are extensive sources of data to be analyzed, remembering that the context in which these documents were produced, and their intended audience are both part of their analytic worth. Just as different people will interpret the same situation differently (Stanley and Wise 2006, 1993; Tilly 2006), the use of distinct 'voices' in the writing of ethnography will represent events in a different way (Van Maanen 1988). Relatedly, there are different rhetorical devices and 'voices' employed by ethnographers, and "how social reality is conveyed through writing involves, among other things, authorial voice" (Van Maanen 1988, p10).

Social reality, Van Maanen argues, is in part a creation of the writing process, as a perceived social reality influences the writing, and this includes the researcher's viewpoint and the way they choose to write the text they produce. Moreover, an

author's viewpoint and writing style can often be identified as 'belonging' to a specific style of ethnography and/or sociological theory (Wolf 1992, Atkinson 1990, Van Maanen 1988, 2010). Therefore it is crucial to pay attention to the ways in which ethnographers construct reality through their writing. In Tales of the Field, Van Maanen (1988) defined three distinct genres: 'realist tales', 'confessional tales' and 'impressionist tales'. 'Realist tales' are characterized by the absence of the author in the ethnographic text, and the "documentary style focused on minutiae." They are arranged so as to highlight something the author feels is important which is stressed as being 'typical'. The author's authority in this rhetorical style is reinforced, not only by their absence from the text, but also by the absence of any self reflection, doubt or contradiction, enabling them to claim objectivity (Van Maanen 1988, p47-51). This contrasts sharply with 'confessional tales' which are written in the first person and "question the very basis of ethnographic authority" (Van Maanen 1988, p92). 'Impressionist tales' are highly personalized 'shaggy narratives' like a collage, these tales are told in multiple voices, and in contrast to realist tales they highlight the unusual or bizarre (Van Maanen, 1988).

How have these stylistic genres stood up to the test of time? Tales of the Field was revisited in a conference entitled 'Telling Tales' in 2008 and Van Maanen (2010) concludes that the three categories have in fact held up well over the past twenty years. Where does my ethnography fit within these categories? It would be honest to say, that it accurately fits none but borrows elements from all three. It is theoretically informed, written in the first person, questions what the researcher can know, analyses and interprets a variety of data, including the researcher's own fieldnotes. But what does all this do? It tells a story. And "stories", Van Maanen (1988, p119) suggests, "by their ability to condense, exemplify, and evoke a world, are as valid a device for transmitting cultural understanding as any other researcher-produced concoction."

Returning to voice and rhetorical strategies: if an ethnography were written in the realist tradition with a God's eye view, or written in an extremely dry and tedious style, each is nonetheless a style of authorial voice. And as such it is no more or less valid than any other rhetorical style the ethnographer may choose to employ, for it is the evidence and argumentation that 'matter'. I am reminded of Wolf's (1992, p122)

comment that “The dangers of this realist approach... suggest that we are often not aware of how we use this style to give authority to our creations.” However, in reaction to the mundane, there is a danger here of veering too far into literature and fiction, but I have to wonder, where is the line? I agree with Gordon (2008) that the boundary between fiction and social science is not as secure or as obvious as might be presumed because, as Atkinson (1992, p51) suggests, “The ethnographer is undoubtedly an artisan who crafts narratives and representations.” I have come to realize that in an ethnography, things do not appear in chronological order because the ethnographer is narrating, constructing, the ethnographer’s adventure into the analysis of the field, and “The elements are, indeed, well enough established as to constitute almost a folklore or mythological corpus in its own right” Atkinson (1990, p106). And so, as I weave this story that is my thesis, in my own words, splicing it with chunks of field notes and photographs, reorganizing the exact chronology of events, choosing what to put in and what to leave out, colouring it with my own intellectual crayons, I am in a sense mythologizing by telling an analytical story of my field experience. Once again, a Janus-faced approach is necessary to look in one direction and guard against the authoritative claims inherent in the realist tradition while also steering clear of the fictional mire. I have used some of the devices of fiction, such as metaphor, analogy and creativity, because I agree with Vryan (2006) that ethnography can be creatively written and still analytical.

Accompanying voice and genre, the use of language also impacts on rhetorical style. I have attempted to use clear and accessible language in order to communicate my ideas effectively to the reader. I agree with Mills (1959, p217) in his notes “On Intellectual Craftsmanship” in urging researchers to “present your work in as clear and simple language as your subject and your thought about it permit.” Similarly, Behar (2003) stresses that, “in order for ethnography to survive, we must learn to produce ethnographic work that is more accessible than it has been in the past.” This process of how researchers interpret and represent what they have observed, experienced and analyzed contains knowledge claims and criteria upon which to evaluate such claims, to which I now turn.

## Ethnographic Claims and Criteria

There is a debate around the interrelated areas of knowledge claims and evaluation criteria (Wilson and Chaddha 2009, Pink 2007, Stanley and Wise 2006, 1993, 1983, Behar 2003, Jacobson 1991, Bochner 2000, Richardson 2000, Ellis 2000, Atkinson 1990). As already discussed earlier in this chapter, a commitment to a reflexive and analytical ethnography is for me essential. However, an exploration of whose reality is being expressed and precisely what and whose 'facts' are being represented warrants further exploration. I now move on to examine the criteria upon which my research might be appropriately evaluated.

I have utilized criteria from Bochner, Richardson and Stanley and Wise to assess my research on Haltwhistle and want to consider the knowledge claims that such criteria are predicated upon. An ethnography contains particular knowledge claims and data to support those claims (Jacobson 1991, p7). However, different forms of ethnography utilizing different data, voice and perspective will explicitly or implicitly make different knowledge claims. The task is to establish the criteria upon which the reader can appropriately judge the quality of an account as being good, bad or indifferent of its kind.

What criteria should be used to evaluate my ethnography? Bochner (2000) argues that evaluative criteria are subjective and culturally dependent and that the very need for such criteria is reflective of limitations and a resistance to change. Conversely, Richardson (2000, p254) asserts that "I believe it is our continuing task to create new criteria and new criteria for choosing criteria." Should researchers treat evaluative criteria with suspicion and avoidance or engage in the task of selecting and responding to such criteria? How should such a task be approached? As I have approached ethnography as a process and a product rooted in analytic reflexivity, I am "concerned with the evaluation of the products of social science and with making the evaluative criteria explicit" (Wilson and Chaddha 2009, p549-550). Despite his assertion that evaluative criteria are subjective and limiting, Bochner (2000, p268) offers the list of personal criteria he himself uses: detail, not only fact but feelings, structural complexity, emotional credibility/reflexivity, transformative potential, ethical portrayal and impact. And rooted in a self-reflexive approach, Richardson

suggests five criteria: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expression of a reality.

While I agree that certainly ethical responsibility and reflexivity are essential practices, for me a greater focus on the evaluation of the data, its usefulness, appropriateness and analysis is required. I agree with Richardson (2000, p253) that “The ethnographic life is not separable from the self.” However, my focus is on social life in Haltwhistle and I agree with Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003, p57) that “we must not lose sight of the ethnographic imperative that we are seeking to understand and make sense of complex social worlds of which we are only a part (but a part nevertheless).” Furthermore, being a part of a social situation places the researcher in possession of ‘knowing’ by experience and access to a much wider range of data than can practicably be made available to the reader (Stanley and Wise 2006). Earlier in this chapter I suggested that for me as for many others, ethnography is both a process and a product. Here it is the research process or “act of knowing” which Stanley and Wise (2006, p6) suggest can be explained if the researcher’s interpretations of this wider range of data are documented in the written product, the ethnography.

The claims made should be supported by the data (Wilson and Chaddha 2009, Stanley and Wise 2006, Wacquant 2003). The core question here is: is the data sufficient and appropriate? For example, I claim that the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle bring the townspeople, ‘incomers’ and ‘locals’ together. My data for this claim rests in fieldnotes entries in which I have recorded various occasions where local residents, both self-identified incomers and locals, stress that it is the festivals that bring the whole town together, and thus my interest in them.

Finally, incorporating the useful points discussed earlier in this chapter from Mills and Behar regarding the importance of clear writing free of jargon, I propose clear language as an essential criterion for good ethnography. Bearing these thoughts in mind, the kind of evaluative criteria which can be usefully applied to my research on Haltwhistle are as follows:

1. Ethical - has ethical responsibility been exercised appropriately in relation to the people written about?



2. Reflexive – has how the researcher is situated and who they are ‘being’ been accounted for?
3. Data – has appropriate and sufficient data been selected and, where possible, made available to the reader?
4. Analysis – have the data been analysed in a reflexive and useful way that is clearly related to the claims made?
5. Claims - does the resulting ethnography interpret what Haltwhistle is, in a sociological sense, and substantiate claims to know this?
6. Accessibility - has clear language been used to communicate the research as effectively as possible making it accessible to a broad audience?

## **Conclusion**

Pulling it all together, the methodological tools I use in the ethnography underpinning this thesis consider of a number of interrelated ideas: conflicting perceptions of reality, reason giving in storytelling, the researcher’s positionality, analytic reflexivity, and the use of retrievable data. The broad conceptual frame for it draws on the work of Mills and The Sociological Imagination, in which Mills (1959) stresses the importance of the intersection of biography, history and social structure, using theory as a tool-kit approach to move between perspectives in order to build a picture of the society I am researching. This ‘picture’ of society is a fractured one, filled with “disagreements and disjunctures between people’s views of ‘the facts’” (Stanley and Wise 2006, p2). The idea proposed by Stanley and Wise (2006), that there is a real world out there and that people situated differently will understand that world differently, not only breaks out of the realist versus constructionalist binary but also works well with Tilly’s (2006) ideas around the reasons people give for the stories they tell. Tilly argues that stories make relational claims that can confirm or deny an existing claim. This in turn works well with Kiely at al’s (2005) conceptual tools of ‘birth’, ‘blood’ and ‘belonging’ discussed in Chapter One as a way of exploring belonging claims in Haltwhistle. In addition, Tilly (2006) argues that such claims will change depending upon context, audience, and over time. In relation to claims of belonging made and remade around the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle, this also works well with Hobsbawm and Ranger’s

(2002) ideas around traditions being invented in the present to inculcate an link with an imagined past, and also Stanley's (2006, p4) post/memory as a history after the fact. Relatedly, stories are not only found within conversation but are also performed, making them useful as a source of data to be analyzed in conjunction with festivals as sites of interaction and transformation.

I have found the strategies that compose FFF useful in conjunction with ethnographic methodology, specifically ideas around analytic reflexivity and the use of retrievable data. I agree with Delamont (2009a, 2009b), Atkinson (2009) and Stanley and Wise (2006) that research should have an analytic centre and be concerned with social life, also that such analysis must be reflexive and consider the researcher's positionality in relation to the research. This is important because the researcher is part of the social world they are researching and so their position within that world must be shown to the reader, to enable them to interpret the foundation upon which the researcher's claims to know anything about this part of social life are predicated.

One way this can be done, Stanley and Wise (2006) suggest, is through the use of retrievable data, thus providing evidence to the reader for the interpretations made, leaving the reader to come to their own conclusions. The data I have used are my fieldnotes, photographs, reports, maps, and booklets. This suggestion is helpful in making the researcher accountable for their claims and offers evidence for such claims that can be defended. However, there are also challenges with, and limitations regarding, the use of retrievable data. First, the use of retrievable data demands that the data analysed is included within the text for the reader to see. In many cases, however, the documentation being analysed is simply too lengthy even to be appended. Second, academic work and in particular this thesis is presented as a written document, and the researcher inevitably selects some data for inclusion and analysis and omits others, so that the researcher has a much broader knowledge and access to a greater body of data than can be made available to the reader in any one paper or book. Third, there is the ethical challenge of assuring the anonymity of participants with the use of contemporary documents. Despite these challenges, I agree with Stanley and Wise (2006) that is better to show some evidence to substantiate a claim being made than none at all. But more importantly, by exposing

these challenges, authority is shifted away from the researcher who renounces epistemological privilege by being held accountable for claims made about ‘the other.’

I have suggested that both the process of fieldwork and the writing of fieldnotes are filled with disjuncture and difference, just as is the social life these attempt to represent, albeit selectively. Just as the data selected for analysis in the final ethnography is only an exemplar of a much broader body of data known to the researcher, so the fieldnotes are selected notations among a sea of conflicting experiences and observations by the researcher. A tangled web of bits and piece all going on at once written down in linear, chronological order. This very ordering is an artifice, but necessary in order to make any sense. Even if many different opinions and claims are included, they are still written down by the researcher. I have suggested, following Wolf (1992), that my fieldnotes are the first ordering of analysis, and implicit here is consideration of what is not written down, of what the researcher has chosen to not/deliberately omit.

Finally, the whole thing is knitted together in the act of writing, with disjuncture and difference rewoven into an ethnography story or account. Reordered, analysed and argued, it is itself a form of performance, a story that, as Tilly (2006, p16-17) suggests, conveys some ‘facts’ about what happened to some people. It makes claims about these facts and it is told in such a way as to appeal to a specific audience. It is then a rendering, a composite of the fractured nature of social reality, laid out in a linear fashion. The temporal chronology of events is eventually abandoned, with examples of data selected, broader concepts generalized upon, and it is told by a storyteller, the ethnographer, in an analytic frame.

This chapter has outlined how I ‘do’ the ethnography underpinning my thesis. Next I show how it was put it into practice by using the tool kit developed in this chapter to reflect on my experience of the bi-annual Walking Festival and the apparent centrality of this event to Haltwhistlers.

## Chapter 3: The Centre of Britain: A Tale of Two Towns

Sue explained that the town was split in two; the locals and the incomers... What brings the two groups together is the walking (Fieldnotes).

"... individuals must also be able to coalesce into larger coherent entities in order to interact with other groups in society. How can individuality and collectivity be expressed simultaneously without compromising each other? ...the answer lies in symbolism, in people's prowess in making ordinary and unremarkable aspects of their behaviour eloquent statements of identity." (Cohen 1986, pix).

### ***Introduction***

Haltwhistle proudly proclaims to be the centre of Britain. And the centre of Haltwhistle is the Market Place, not only spacially, but also socially. The original cobbled Market Place still exists surrounded by a 13<sup>th</sup> Century Church and 16-17<sup>th</sup> Century Bastle Houses, fortified farmhouses built to defend residents and their livestock against attack. One is now a hotel, another is a café. Surrounding the Market Place are cafés, pubs, banks, the Post Office, Haltwhistle Association offices, and bus stops. In addition to the signpost and Centre of Britain sign (p10), there are many benches all around the Market Place, blending into outdoor seating for the cafés when weather permits. Throughout my time in Haltwhistle, I experienced the Market Place being used by incomers, locals and visitors of all ages.

This chapter serves as a bridge between the theoretical and methodological ideas and tools already discussed, and the substantive chapters to follow. In the introduction, I claimed that Haltwhistle is a town divided between incomers and locals. In this chapter I start to put into practice the ideas and tools already developed to explore that claim. I first became aware of the incomer/local divide as a visitor to Haltwhistle and participant in the bi-annual Walking Festival. I now turn to analyse data collected about that event. Although I participated in several Walking Festivals over the course of my fieldwork, I will focus here on the first, as reflection on this experience led me to question if the festival really does bring the whole town together as has been suggested.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I explore a day as a visitor to the town for the purpose of attending the Walking Festival. Here I analyse my fieldnotes as a source of data, focusing on positionality with regard to both myself and other people in the group. I also analyse the reasons given for the things people did and said. Participation in this event also led me to consider who is local and what makes a 'local person', as this attribution is not as simple as it may seem. Second, I analyse some documents collected about the Walking Festival, including: photographs, flyers, reports and local news articles, to see what additional information analysis of these data yield. These data are included for the reader. Third, I propose that the Market Place in Haltwhistle's town centre provides a symbolic focus for identities and relationships, from banal everyday activities to the ritual associated with festivals and public events. However, following Strathern (1982b), I also argue that the Market Place is not the centre of an 'organic village,' a perception that is often mistakenly made by outsiders, rather that the same geographic place is differentiated into distinct, but not exclusive, social spaces.

### **A Journey Back Through Time, 11am, Market Place**

My first experience of social life in Haltwhistle occurred in the Market Place, as it is the beginning and ending place for most of the walks comprising the bi-annual Walking Festival. The day of the 2008 Walking Festival was glorious. I packed my rain coat anyway. I wandered into Haltwhistle's Market Place just a little before 11am for the themed walk entitled, 'A Journey Back Through Time.' As I was a little early, I walked over to investigate the signpost (Figure 3.3) and large blue sign (figure 0.3) which champions Haltwhistle as the centre of Britain and includes the following quote:

“Symbols of the centre are among the most persistent elements of myth and belief... appealing to the curious minded or the curious part of everyone's mind...they are monuments to our instinctive, everlasting perception that every being needs to affirm its own identity by finding its own centre.” Mitchell (1994) quoted on the sign, 'The Centre of Britain' in the Market Place, Haltwhistle (Figure 0.3).

I wondered about the purpose of the sign. Was it merely for the tourists? Or did it represent a symbolic centre for the people of Haltwhistle? One by one, the other walkers drifted into the Market Place, including the guide for the walk, who introduced himself as Allan, a local resident. Allan explained that this was the eleventh Walking Festival.

We shambled off through a narrow archway and down a shady back alley paved with cobblestones to a street called Fair Hill which looked down onto the Market Place. Haltwhistle was once an active market town, dealing mostly with livestock, as the names of many of the town's pubs (The Ram, The Bull etc) attest. Emerging into the sunlight, we were directed to look up at a large stone building.

Allan is on a mission to uncover the truth about Haltwhistle's history. He tirelessly pours through old maps and census records trying to piece together the past. He told us that one of the census records that has recently fallen under his scrutinous gaze dates back to the early 1800s and records several people as living at 'the mill, Fair Hill.' Allan has located map with a circle drawn right next to the mill building, indicating that a windmill once turned on the spot, although exactly what the mill was used for is unknown, although he points out, local people are completely unaware of this building ever being a mill (Fieldnotes 5 May).

What intrigues me about this fieldnote entry is that Allan, the walk leader and local resident, comments that 'local people' are completely unaware of the history of the Mill. This suggests to me that he is not a local person because he differentiates himself from them, making 'local people' the 'other'. Furthermore, he claims to have knowledge about the history of the mill that is unknown to these 'local people.' My evolving interpretation is that Allan's knowledge of local history, specifically knowing things that 'local people' do not know, along with his voluntary activities as a walk leader, stress his commitment and attachment to Haltwhistle. Following Bechhofer et al (1999, p527-9), commitment and contribution are identity markers which can be used by an individual to signal an identity claim. However, Allan's claim, in this instance to know more about local history than local people, must be interpreted in context. That is, he was a walk leader and may simply have been fulfilling his role, because as Kiely et al (2005) suggest, identity claims

are highly nuanced, are made in different contexts for different reasons, and depend heavily on the anticipated acceptance or rejection of the claim made.

Were there any 'local people' listening to his comment to affirm or refute his claim? In my fieldnotes, I defined our group as follows:

We the walkers, are about 15 strong... about a third local residents, all British... In addition to Allan were three other members of the local walking group: Jacki, Bob and Jane....I got talking to Bob and Jane, two other local walkers, a married couple who retired to Haltwhistle quite recently... Jacki, a retired woman, had moved here sometime before that (Fieldnotes 5 May).

Reflecting on the above fieldnote entry, I state that of the 15 walkers "about a third were local residents." Allan, Jacki, Bob and Jane comprise almost a third of the group and, while all are local residents, all of them moved to Haltwhistle from elsewhere. Based on this information, it seems unlikely that there was a 'local person' present to refute Allan's claim to know more about local history than the locals. The absence of a local person on this walk suggests the absence of an anticipated challenge to his claim to know more about local history than the locals do.

## **Shouting To Be Heard**

We then crossed a stile, a ladder up and over a four foot high, neatly dressed, dry stone wall. The group was starting to string out ahead of me, marching up the hill with myself bringing up the rear. Eventually, huffing and puffing, I got to the top where I saw a curious sight; several dried out rodents hanging on a barbed wire fence by their tails. Allan was in full storytelling mode about the ice age, the Romans, and man who walked thirty miles a day selling tea... But what about the desiccated rodents?

I finally had to ask; "errr... Are they rats?" No one thought it was worth mentioning previously but as soon as I asked three local residents started telling me the tale of the moles.... Moles are ravaging the landscape and local farmers have outsourced a professional 'mole-catcher' from Cambridge, and it was the

fruits of his labour I was staring at, strung out for public scrutiny (and payment). One of the group said the mole catcher was paid the scandalous fee of £3 a mole! Some agreed this was outrageously high, while others thought his catch was pitiful, and one even suggested that if he really wanted a good catch, then he should have used dynamite... (Fieldnotes 5 May)

Clearly, as walk leader, Allan, the local resident, has a reason for his knowledge claims about the local area. But here, several other local residents also seemed to be very interested and knowledgeable about the local history and environment. There appeared to be a commitment on behalf of all of the local residents present to stress their commitment and attachment to Haltwhistle by competing to tell me the tale of the moles, reminding me of Tonkin's (1992) comment that people will often compete to tell their version of the story.

Walking alongside Hadrian's Wall down the steep Tipalt Burn, I got talking to Bob and Jane, two other local walkers, a married couple who retired to Haltwhistle quite recently. We chatted about the Romans and why they built the wall; Bob thinks for import/export taxation and points at the numerous gates within the wall and small numbers of soldiers garrisoned as evidence that it was not intended to keep anyone in or out. Bob and Jane are from the south of England but show a keen interest and knowledge of local history. We walk through trees in what appears to be an untouched wilderness when, in the middle of nowhere, there is a perfect chimney, several feet in diameter and at least thirty feet high built of red brick. Bob explained that there was once a factory here, he pointed out other pieces of the original building that I didn't even notice, peeping out from undergrowth. He tells me that the chimney was rebuilt and there is a lot of other rebuilding going on: many industrial buildings are being restored and walking trails put in (Fieldnotes 5 May).

Each story-telling is a unique performance, an interpretation of past events which reflects the agenda and identity of the story tellers. Positioning themselves in various fluid roles, story-tellers organize the scenes and collaborate with the audiences to construct the story, drawing upon their understanding of memory (Reissman 2001). These stories should "be seen as social actions, situated in particular times and places and directed by individual tellers to specific audiences" (Tonkin 1992, p97). These stories tell about the present, what is important to this particular group, to these tellers and their audience in this time and this place and this social context. As such



these stories form a constantly reworked version of the past embedded in the ongoing present (Stanley 2006).

So far, my interpretation is that the perception of Haltwhistle as an ‘organic Village’ (Strathern 1982b) is one that only an outsider would make. At first glance the Market Place with its ‘Centre of Britain’ sign projects the public message of a homogenous town. However, following Cohen (1982), this is a simplification of the more complex private messages within the town, which will be explored further in Chapter Six. Reflection on my fieldnotes recorded during my participation in the Walking Festival suggests that several of the local residents, including the walk leader and three others, moved to Haltwhistle from elsewhere. Allen, the walk leader and local resident, distinguishes himself from ‘others’ who he calls ‘locals’ by claiming to know more about local history than they do. Furthermore, although they are not native to the area, all of the local residents seemed to take a keen interest in local history, even competing to be heard (Tonkin 1992) in telling me the tale of the moles. These knowledge claims will be explored further in the next chapter. So far, my interpretation consists of reflection on my fieldnotes alone, concerning my impression of the Market Place and what happened on the day of the walk, with no information regarding what happened before, or after. In the following section, I analyse some documents collected about the Walking Festival, which are provided to the reader.

### ***Documenting the Walking Festival***

A row of meat-hooks hung in a butcher’s shop window on Haltwhistle’s Main Street. This is not unusual, but what was hanging from the meat hooks was; it consisted of flyers advertising local events. One of these mirrors the front cover of Haltwhistle’s eleventh bi-annual Walking Festival booklet (Figure 3.1). Central is an

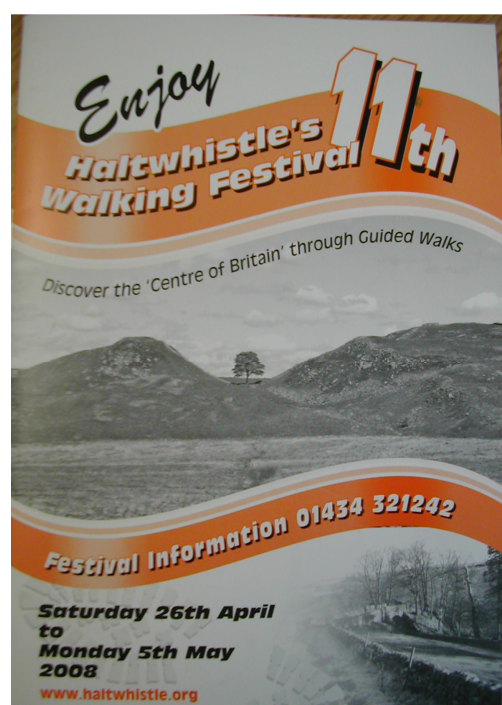


Figure 3.1

image of the Robin Hood tree at Sycamore Gap along one of the most impressive stretches of Hadrian's Wall. Above the image of the tree some text swirls up into the sky inviting the reader to, 'Discover the 'Centre of Britain' through guided walks.' I passed the shop on my way to the Haltwhistle Association Offices, close to the Market Place, to meet with one of their staff, Sue, for a mug of tea and a chat about the Walking Festivals.

In this section I analyse the documents I collected to see what they can tell me about the Walking Festival and how identities are negotiated around this event. How do people know about the Walking Festival? Advertising for the Festival is achieved through a multitude of channels. Locally, flyers are produced by the Haltwhistle Association and placed in shop windows, for example, the butcher's and estate agent's shops in town as well as the Haltwhistle Association offices close to the Main Street. Flyers are also placed on local notice boards in the town, the Post Office, the churches, local library, as well as the village green notice boards of neighbouring villages such as Melkridge and Bardon Mill. Booklets are produced by the Association and distributed to pubs, cafés and guesthouses, as well as the library and churches and tourist information offices and centres.

Over a cup of tea with Sue of the Haltwhistle Association, we chatted about the Festival, who attends, how it is organized, and how people find out about it. Through the course of our afternoon chat I discover that the festival as well as other local events are advertised and later covered in The Squeak, a quarterly newsletter delivered to 1000 homes which is produced by the Haltwhistle Association with funding from the South Tyne Valley Fund. Nationally and internationally, the website [www.haltwhistle.org](http://www.haltwhistle.org) (hosted by the Haltwhistle Association) serves as advertising for the Festival, including a detailed listing of all walks available and a booking form; in short, it is an online version of the booklet. The Hexham Courant, a local newspaper covering the Tynedale area of Northumberland with a readership of 45,000, also covers the festival, publishing a press release prior to the start of the Festival and covering it as a news item following its conclusion.

## Who is involved?

The Haltwhistle Walking Festival was organized by the Haltwhistle Association, “a charitable company that aims to bring about projects and activities for the benefit of local people living in Western Tynedale” (Haltwhistle 2008). The Walking Festival has a festival committee, of which there are five members from the walking group which meet every Monday at the Association offices to decide the schedules for the festivals, design the brochure, select dates and so on. Advertising from Haltwhistle businesses in the leaflet covers the printing costs and a volunteer from the walking group handles press releases. Again, the commitment to the community and to the Walking Festival is evident not just from the walking group who volunteer their time, but also from the local businesses which support it.

Jacki explained that the walking group is not official – walkers join the group at their own risk! The Walking Festival, however, is official, and therefore insured, and it operates under the auspices of the Haltwhistle Association (Fieldnotes 5 May).

In 2006, the Haltwhistle Association produced the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation (Appendix 2), overviewing the background, aims and economic impact of the Festival. The aims identified were firstly to increase the economic development of the area in line with the Action Plan for the town as part of the Market Towns Initiative (now called Action for Market Towns), stressing the outstanding natural beauty of the area, and capitalizing on the Haltwhistle area, being a crossing point of three popular walking trails (the Hadrian’s Wall Path, Pennine Way and South Tyne Trail) and also in close proximity to the A69 and Haltwhistle Train Station. The second aim is to utilize the existing walking group as voluntary group leaders for the walks and to encourage local people to participate in the leading and organization of the Festival so as to increase their skills and experience thereby helping to improve the health and wellbeing of local people. Thirdly, this Evaluation states that the Walking Festival fits in with the Market Towns Initiative Action Plan for Haltwhistle by providing an opportunity to increase tourism to the area, specifically to Haltwhistle as the starting point for most of the walks, with the aim of promoting Haltwhistle as the service centre for the south Tyne area.

Action for Markets Towns “is a not-for-profit company and a registered charity... national membership group that provides small towns, local authorities and others with: information and advice, examples of best practice national representation.” Services offered to members on its web site include: newsletters, case studies, insurance, policy, a members directory and at the top of the list for premium services offered is assistance with finding funding (Action for Market Towns 2008). In line with this, the Evaluation promotes cycling and walking by improving cycling facilities and through the production of a pack of 22 self-guided walks around the Haltwhistle area called the Haltwhistle Rings (on sale at the Association office). The walks also utilize local volunteers as a resource and thereby the Festival is seen as a learning opportunity for local residents as well as a way of enhancing health and wellbeing. In addition, the promotion of the Haltwhistle Association Offices as a resource centre is listed, because the Association offers many services to the community, such as free internet access, help with CV preparation, skills evaluation, organizing volunteer opportunities, providing local information on services and so on (Haltwhistle 2008).

I wondered who guides the walks, and how someone becomes a walk leader?

The Evaluation explains:

Volunteering has been a big part of this project. All walks were led by volunteers. Most of these came from the regular Walking Group “The Friends of the Haltwhistle Rings”. They have surveyed paths, trailed routes, taken up walk leader opportunities, and litter picked to make the place look smarter (Haltwhistle Association 2006, p2).

Furthermore, volunteer leaders and backups received training prior to the walks and the added incentive of a social evening (The Squeak 2008, p9).

### **But Why Was the Festival Started Really?**

During another afternoon tea visit to the Haltwhistle Association offices, I met with Sue again. At the time I was writing about the impact of moles in the area and recounted to her a conversation I had with one of the walkers, who had explained that the mole population had exploded due to an outbreak of foot and mouth disease

in the area. During such an outbreak, access to affected land is seriously restricted to help halt the spread, and so outsourced mole catchers cannot gain access to the land. I wondered what was the impact of foot and mouth on the Festival – was the Festival cancelled at any time because of it?

Talking to Sue at the Association offices, I asked her about foot and mouth and if the outbreak had stopped the festival. Sue told me that the festival grew out of the outbreak of foot and mouth in 2001, the purpose being to regenerate countryside use. The more recent outbreak of foot and mouth happened over the summer months and as the festivals occur in the spring and autumn respectively, the festival was unaffected (Fieldnotes 8 Sept).

I found it interesting that no mention of foot and mouth disease is made in the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation (2006) produced by the Haltwhistle Association, especially considering that one such outbreak is seen by Sue at least to have precipitated the Festival. However, the aims of the Festival, to regenerate and contribute towards the local economy (and the wellbeing of its residents), are consistent in both the Sue’s account and the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation.

The Festival has been building in momentum over recent years with the number of walks increasing from 15 in 2005 to 26 in 2006 attended (Figure 3.2).

	Oct-05	Oct-06
Number of Events	16	29
Number of Walks	15	26
Percentage fill rate of Walks	115%	80%
Number of Walkers*	259	361
Number including Non Walking Events	305	471

\*half of these walkers were local residents and have benefited themselves from the experience in both health and knowledge of the area (Haltwhistle Association 2006, p4).

Figure 3.2

In spring 2007, the ninth Festival, there were 26 walks and all were filled according to an article published in the Hexham Courant (online):

ORGANISERS of Haltwhistle walking festival hailed the event as a success after they filled every place on every walk. The ninth festival, for which 25 volunteers helped to arrange 26 walks, attracted people from Australia, Holland, Northern Ireland and Scotland (P. Edwards Friday, 18 May 2007).

There seems to have been an attempt to adjust the number of walks so they are at full capacity, as the number was reduced in May 2008 to 22 walks (The Squeak 2008, p9) and adjusted up slightly in October 2008 to 24 walks, which I found out by counting the number of walks offered in the twelfth Walking Festival booklet (2008).

What constitutes a local resident is unclear from the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation, as no specific definition is given. However, Figure 3.2 above states that half of the walkers were local residents. Perhaps looking at where people came from might help. An addendum to the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation is a list of 'where people came from', but this is a list of towns and nothing more. The towns are grouped in terms of distance from Haltwhistle, although no actual distances are given. I recognized all of the towns given and can picture in my mind's eye where they are in the country (and the world). However, the list gives no indication of how many people came from each place mentioned, so the list is of little help in this respect. The biggest proportion of place names on the list are from along the Wall itself, and this certainly reflects my own experience as a walker during the Spring 2008 Walking Festival, as almost all of my fellow walkers were from towns ranging east to west along Hadrian's Wall, with the exception of a couple from Yorkshire.

The theme of economic regeneration is referred to prominently in the first line of a news article in the August 2008 issue of The Squeak (2008, p9), "The 11<sup>th</sup> Walking Festival has been unanimously dubbed as the 'best yet'. Walkers came from all parts of the country, with the local businesses doing really well."

Overwhelmingly, the purpose of the walks is economic generation for the town. As traditional industry has reduced and farmers are considered virtually impoverished, so tourism has become the mainstay of the local economy. The statistics in Figure 3

form part of the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation (2006, p3) and show an overall estimated positive economic impact of £7,860.

60 overnight stays @ £60.00 per night*	£3,600
150 day visitors @ £8.00 per day*	£1,200
Direct contributions to local restaurants/café	£450
Money raised for Air Ambulance	£1,250
Taxi Hire	£250
Local Bus Fares	£110
Local Printing Cost	£1,000
	<b>£7,860</b>
* Reference Visitor Survey 2002/Estimate	

Figure 3.3

The cost of the Festival in 2006 was £1500, £600 of which was met by advertising from local business towards printing costs for the brochure and flyers. The remaining printing costs were met by the fees collected from individual walkers. The shortfall was met by the Haltwhistle Association (Haltwhistle Association 2006, p3).

### But What of Imagery?

The photographs chosen for the cover page of the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation, the photograph used on the cover of the Walking Festival booklet and flyers, the images on the web site, and photographs taken by myself as a member of the walking group, can all be analysed as a source of data. As Pink (2007, p17) suggests, “By paying attention to such images in ethnographic research and representation we are developing new ways of understanding individuals, social relationships, material cultures and ethnographic knowledge itself.” How do images of the Walking Festival represent



Figure 3.4

the individuals involved, their social relationships and their material culture? Rose (2007, p2) writes, “These images are never transparent windows onto the world. They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways”. So how do these photographs interpret the Festival, the town, its people?

There are five photographs on the front cover of the Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation, one large and four small. All appear to have been taken during the Walking Festival and depict walkers of all ages, seemingly un-posed and enjoying themselves. They appear at first glance as random snap-shots, but are they? All show a selection of people adequately equipped for a walk in Northumbrian autumnal weather, all are taken on a sunny day (a rarity in these parts, so I am already suspicious), and all show people either from behind or from the side; none of the photographs *appear* to have been posed for. The largest photograph (Figure 3.4) is of a group of walkers, seven are visible from behind, walking in the sunshine along a wide grassy pathway, with a hill covered in golden autumnal foliage rising sharply to the left. In front of the walkers, a view of green patchwork hills beyond, the shadows are long, and sunlight bounces off the walkers’ hair. The people in the photograph are in the act of walking, many of them with walking sticks and backpacks and sensible walking clothes; they are iconic symbols of walkers (Rose 2007, p83). Serious Walkers. While the picture does not appear to have been posed, it has certainly been well selected out of many so as to depict the ideal image of the Walking Festival, to show off the landscape to its finest and depict the walkers, all close together, one walker’s head turned in conversation to another, having a great time.

When I look back at my own photographs included in my fieldnotes, I see that the three I chose to use in my journal have no people in them. They show a near deserted Main Street and Market Place in Haltwhistle (Figure 3.5), a sign post (Figure 3.6), and a row of dead moles on a fence (Figure 3.7). They are devoid of human life. What was I thinking when I took these photographs? And when I selected them to include in my journal? What image was I looking for and what story, if any, was I trying to tell?

The Market Place picture (Figure 3.5) was taken when writing my fieldnotes and my interest in the notion of ‘the centre’. Haltwhistle calls itself ‘the centre of



Britain’, while the Market Place is the centre of town and also the starting point for all the Festival walks.



**Figure 3.5**



**Figure 3.6**



**Figure 3.7**

The signpost (Figure 3.6) in the Market Place depicts exact distances to various edges of the British Isles, ‘proving’ that Haltwhistle is the centre of Britain, and thus my interest in it. The third picture in my fieldnotes is of several dead moles hanging by their tails on a fence (Figure 3.7). I took this photograph because it shocked me – I had never seen such a sight before. It was taken while I was on the guided walk ‘A Journey Back Through Time.’ Having enquired about the moles to my fellow walkers, among other things I was told that the mole catcher must display his catch for scrutiny so as to secure payment at £3 a mole, so I took this photograph to tell that story.

The central image adorning the Walking Festival booklets and flyers is, as noted earlier, a black and white photograph of the Robin Hood tree at Sycamore Gap on Hadrian’s Wall (Figure 3.1). This image is an iconic one (Rose 2007, p83) of Hadrian’s Wall and is used to represent the Wall in advertising literature, postcards, calendars, posters, tourist information as well as photographs, souvenirs and just about anything which a visual image can be stamped upon. Towards its bottom right hand side, smaller and partly faded into a second image, is another black and white photograph of dry-stone wall running alongside a road with a small crop of trees bereft of their leaves. The image it fades into is one of similar size and is a semi-transparent image of a boot-print, an indexical sign (Rose 2007, p83) denoting walking, the activity to be undertaken (Figure 3.1). Why are these photographs in black and white? This is perhaps to infer a sense of history, of timelessness, of things past - although of course the colour could have been removed from the photograph

for economic rather than aesthetic reasons to reduce printing costs. The Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation (2006, p3) notes that the cost of the Festival to the Haltwhistle Association far outstripped the monies collected from walkers and from local advertisers, so it could be a simple matter of economics.

Using the Internet Archive<sup>2</sup> (accessed 24 Sept 2008), I entered the web addresses listed on the front of the Walking Festival booklet into the Wayback Machine, a web page archive. The results, listed by year, indicate every date the web page was updated. From this archive, I can look back and see every change that has been made from the first web page uploaded on 18 October 2000 to the most recent on 9 February 2008 (changes made during the last six months may not be available). What images have been used on the website and have they changed over time? How are images presently being used? Currently, the web site shows few colour photographs depicting the landscape. However the earliest images on the website are of buildings in the area, including the Church of the Holy Cross and a local home. Perhaps the Association became more active in promoting use of the countryside by walkers, and as such the images have been changed to reflect what they believe is their best commodity.

### ***A Tale of Two Towns***

I chatted with Sue about the history and folklore of the area, specifically Gilsland, just two miles west of Greenhead. During the Second World War, over one thousand women from the Newcastle area travelled to Gilsland to have their babies in the safety of the local hospital far from potential bombing. Some of those born in the hospital return to visit each year. They are known as the Gilsland War Babies. Also,

Sue explained that the town was split in two; the locals and the incomers and that the incomers are typically older and of a higher socio-economic status than the locals. What brings the two groups together is the walking. Also, everyone uses the Association; they offer free legal counselling, internet, organize volunteers etc.

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<sup>2</sup> An Internet library and non-profit organization founded in 1996, with the purpose of offering permanent access for researchers, historians, and scholars to historical collections that exist in digital format. The Internet Archive includes texts, audio, moving images, and software as well as archived web pages, <http://www.archive.org/>.

Talking to Sue about the stories being told she agreed that they were all very local. She even told me that many in the town have their own particular version of stories from the perspective of their family/group. Also every story I heard so far was rooted in the landscape, in the environment. These two factors, locality and landscape, equate to a dimension of space or indeed place. Place is central here (Fieldnotes 7 May).

Here I want to analyse Sue's reason for suggesting that the town was split in two by following Tilly (2006). Sue suggested unequivocally that the town was split in two and that the only thing that brought both groups together was the walking and also use of services provided by the Association offices. However, analysis of documents and booklets produced about the Walking Festival in the prior section concerning documentary evidence suggests that the Association is involved in the organization and promotion of the Festival, a factor which most likely influenced Sue's reason giving. Sue offers the variants of stories as evidence for this split in the town between incomers and locals. Sue explains that "many in the town have their own particular version of stories from the perspective of their family/group." I interpret these story variants to represent the interests of the tellers, and as such they represent a subtle form of conflict. That is, the story told by one person or group is in conflict with other versions of the same tale told by other people. It seems here, both conflict – in the form of story variants – and cooperation over the festival, are both ways in which people connect to Haltwhistle as a place. Finally, I have commented on the apparent centrality of place to the stories I had heard and it is to the central place in Haltwhistle – the Market Place that I now turn.

I sat on a park bench in the Market Place, took some photos and talked to John, a local man. We talked for some time during which he told me that about twenty years ago, as an art historian, he spent some time researching the Lindisfarne Gospels. I discovered through the course of our conversation that he was not locally born, but from somewhere near London, although he lives in Haltwhistle now. It was a beautiful sunny day and the Market Place was filled with people. Many of them were sitting in cafes, while others, like myself, were sitting on the benches which surrounded the Place chatting and watching the world go by. The Church bells rang. Some time later, all traffic stopped and the noise of hundreds of conversations became silent as a funeral procession passed through the Place. It was led up the middle of the high street by the vicar garbed in a long white gown

and a man who I assume was the undertaker to his left was in black top hat and tails. Following them at a snail's pace was a long shiny black hearse, a black BMW, and then, all clad entirely in black, were the mourners walking at the rear. Hundreds of people watched the procession in absolute silence. After they had passed, John explained that the reason for the funerary procession up the street is that the church is on one side of the town and the cemetery is on the other (Fieldnotes 6 May).

This was something that a visitor, as I was on this occasion, would not know and would therefore question this ritualistic spectacle. However, to anyone who had resided in Haltwhistle for any length of time, the practical reason for the procession would most likely be known. Also, reflecting upon the above fieldnote entry, it begins by introducing John as a 'local man' but then states he 'was not locally born.' What was going through my mind at this time? This happened very early on in my fieldwork and I was very much a visitor to Haltwhistle and so my perception was that anyone who lived here was 'local'. A point of view consistent with Strathern's (1982b) 'organic village.' However, his revelation of London based roots led me to question that initial assumption. But only so far – I refer to him as 'not locally born', a fact he himself confirmed. It did not negate his current local resident status for him or for me. Why did I perceive him this way? Perhaps because he knew about local practices such as the reason for the funerary procession and the ritual surrounding it. Also, his prior research on the Lindisfarne Gospels suggests a commitment to the North East. Following Kiely et al (2005), commitment and lengthy residence are the strongest markers of belonging an incomer can make. Although the Lindisfarne Gospels are not connected directly to Haltwhistle, they are strongly connected to the cultural and historic heritage of the North East more generally, and his commitment to studying them suggested to me a commitment to the region.

### **Who is local? What makes a local person?**

I wondered what makes a person local. Does a person have to be born in Haltwhistle to be considered local? What of the Gilsland war babies, born in Gilsland but gone within days of their birth back to Newcastle – would they be considered local to Gilsland?

I met Mel, the bartender at The Ram, sitting outside with the owner enjoying a beer and the sun. I ordered a cider and joined them. It was getting late in the afternoon and one by one, many of the (neo?)locals came to join us. I chatted to Mel for a while about the Walking Festivals and the town. Mel has worked at most of the pubs in town, she talked about going to school here. I assumed she must be local but she told me that she was not local herself; she had moved here with her mother at the age of nine from Hexham, about fifteen miles east. Mel was busy talking about the carnival which takes place every summer; they have floats, a carnival queen, duck race, wheelbarrow race, beer tents, bagpipes and Morris dancers. Mel said “it’s the one thing that brings the whole town together.” I thought this was interesting as I have heard exactly the same thing said about the Walking Festival (Fieldnotes 6 May).

Several things stand out to me from the above fieldnote entry. Firstly, Mel, although resident in Haltwhistle from childhood and hailing from Hexham, just a few miles to the east, still identifies herself as ‘not local.’ I wondered if a person would have to be born in Haltwhistle to be considered local, or if the boundary to being local lies somewhere between Haltwhistle and Hexham. This boundary will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. In this conversation, Mel is clearly the ‘other’, for as Cohen (1982, p5) suggests, “The individual becomes aware of his identity when he interacts with a social ‘other.’” And that social other is not merely the people of Haltwhistle for Mel, who defines herself as ‘not local’ but also people like me. I must consider my own social local location here. I am a person not from Haltwhistle who she is meeting for the first time. To her, I may appear as visitor, outsider, another ‘other’. Who I am, and how I am perceived by the speaker, has an important impact on what that speaker will say, and on the identity claims she will make (Kiely et al 2005, Bechhofer et al, 1999). And I must remember that in another context, another audience, her identity claim could be different. Secondly, festivals are a point around which people gather, in which the two separate social worlds of Haltwhistle, the locals and the newcomers, interact. I went there expecting to find stories about us and them, between different Hadrian’s Wall communities, but that is not what I found. A division appears to exist within the town itself; between locals and incomers. Location is central, the stories are local and are all are rooted in the place.

## Same Market Place, Separate Social Space

My initial time was spent in cafés and pubs around the Market Place, and I perceived Haltwhistle as an ‘organic village.’ As Strathern (1982b) points out, this is the perception many outsiders will have, and during my initial visit to attend the Walking Festival and early fieldwork, this was my impression too. However, over the period of my fieldwork, a tale of two towns emerged, of locally-born insiders, and of incomers from elsewhere. I realized that those who were incomers favoured the cafés run by the incomers and those who were locally-born staunchly supported the locally-run café. For example, when I arranged to meet the locally born Carnival Treasurer, she insisted we meet in the local-run café. However, when I arranged to meet Sue, an incomer and avid local historian, she insisted we meet at the café run by incomers. Similarly, there is a pub, The Ram, favoured by incomers and frequented by the walkers, while the Horse and Cart is favoured by locals. This distinction is not exclusive as locals will come into The Ram. However, over time, the clientele was consistently incomer, along with the management. Both pubs and cafés surrounded the Market Place and so were in the same geographic place, but in separated social space.

The importance of the locally-run café was highlighted when the existing owners decided to sell the business. The search was on for a new owner, but it was felt strongly by the incomers that the new owner must be a ‘local’ person. There was much talk within the town about who would take over the running of the café. For Nadel-Klein (1991), such gossip is in itself a ‘localizing practice.’ Perhaps, by their participation, the gossipers were making an implicit claim to localness. This made me consider if gossip, and more generally knowledge about local events, histories and stories, may be a route to belonging? It was with considerable relief that a ‘young local woman’ took over the running of the business. The term ‘young local women’ is significant as this precise definition was given to me by several townspeople. However, reading a short article published in the Hexham Courant (2008) concerning the new ownership of the cafe, I became increasingly confused about what defines a person as ‘local’. The article clearly states that the young woman hailed from Bardon Mill, a village about three miles east of Haltwhistle. How is it, in a town that appears to be divided between incomers and locals, a person from

a neighbouring village can be referred to as 'local' where as some people resident in Haltwhistle are not? This raised serious questions in my mind regarding the definition of a local person and the boundaries to localness.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of the activities discussed in this chapter, I started to feel closer to understanding why everyone appears to be involved with the Walking Festival. As Gluckman analyses the opening ceremony of the Bridge, he examines why people are there, what their motivation is for attending the event, and he explores the coexistence of conflict and cooperation, asserting that "the most significant part of the day's situations – the appearances and inter relationships of certain social groups and personalities and cultural elements – crystallized some of the social structure and institutions of present-day Zululand" (Gluckman 1958, p12). From this I understand that their actual motive for attendance may be less relevant than the apparent reason for attendance. And thus the public expression to me, a new face, a perceived visitor, that the festivals bring everyone together. Not only does this alert me to the fact that there are separate factions and thus this is not an 'organic village', but also that, although both groups are separated, festivals are the socially accepted time and place for both groups to come together. This coming together with those who are not of one's own group, could be interpreted as a central value of Haltwhistle's people.

Goffman (1971, p185), argues that such values form the core of social interaction and if a person's practice departs significantly from the expected values, others will demonstrate disapproval: "The central values do but itch a little, but everyone scratches." Goffman further explains, "...the individual does not go about merely going about his business. He goes about constrained to sustain a viable image of himself in the eyes of others... He engages in little performances to actively portray a relationship to such rules as might be binding on him" (1971, p185-6). With Gluckman (1958) and Goffman's (1971) comments in mind, it would appear that the inter-relationships between those present and the effect of their presence on the social structure as a whole is more profound than the individual's own private motive or thoughts. The inter-relationships between members of a collective are seemingly more important than that of each individual. So what is the collective

motivation behind the apparent cooperation between townspeople regarding the Walking Festival?

My evolving interpretation is that the cooperation among townspeople occurs not merely for the Walking Festival in and of itself, but for the economic revival of the town of which the Festival is seen to play a key part. The economic revival of the town is dependent upon outsiders coming in and spending money. My experience of the Walking Festival itself in May 2008 suggested only that the Festival brought townspeople, both locals and incomers, and visitors together. But that is not the whole story. The motivation to come together is seemingly driven by the desire from participating members of the community to encourage improvement in the local economy, something I would not have become aware of at this stage of my research without the considered use of retrievable data. It was only through reading the Evaluation and news articles written about this event, and seeing the stress placed primarily on the financial return to the town as a result of the festival, that the importance of economic growth through the Festival became apparent.

Chatting to townspeople in the Market Place, over afternoon tea in the Association Office, and in the pub, I learned about the politics of the town. As Sue at the Association office interpreted it, there are two Haltwhistles. One is of locally-born insiders and the other is of newcomers or incomers, with a huge socioeconomic divide between them, so they co-exist although rarely interact. I am told that the festivals are the only things that bring both groups together. Who are the locals? What does it take to be local? Where is the boundary between the locals and incomers? Is this boundary geographic, social or both? I have seen only one Haltwhistle, the outsider's - the side that I as outsider can easily access. I realized that during the course of my fieldwork I had spoken with many people, all local residents, but not one of them a 'local person'. And the very definition of a 'local person' is questionable. The so called 'local woman' who took over the running of the local café was reported by the Hexham Courant (2008) not to reside in Haltwhistle at all, but to hail from the nearby village of Bardon Mill, and yet gossipers in Haltwhistle referred to the new café owner as 'a local woman.'

In this chapter I feel I have raised more questions than answers around what constitutes a local person and precisely what and where the boundaries to localness



are. And so it is to the boundaries of belonging and the transcendence of such boundaries that I turn to explore in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Walking the Fringe: Routes to Belonging, Boundaries of Belonging**

...there are routes – in this case through/within rural nature for transformative belongings and attachments which may transcend processes of exclusion and social division (Neal 2009, p13).

Cultural boundaries are not natural phenomena. They are invoked and ignored by those within them for different purposes. Similarly, boundaries can be drawn at various levels of society, again depending upon purpose... It should therefore be recognised that 'belonging to locality', far from being parochial triviality, is very much more of a cultural reality than is association with gross region or nation (Cohen 1982 p9-10).

### ***Introduction***

As an incomer to the Haltwhistle area, I involved myself in various activities such as volunteering at the youth hostel, joining the local walking group, attending festivals and other public events, and also doing everyday things such as visiting the local beauty salon and spending time at cafés around the Market Place. The focus of this chapter is to explore the routes to belonging which are open to incomers and also the boundaries of belonging and how they are invoked, created and transcended.

One of the easiest routes to belonging for an outsider is to join the local walking group. Analysing accounts from my fieldnotes in relation to my joining the walking group highlighted to me the importance of knowing local stories as a route to belonging for this group. Following Kiely et al (2005), I view such knowledge as a claim to belong based on commitment. However, this claim is implicit and, although it is no substitute for being born in the area, it is a commitment claim nonetheless. Throughout this time, I built relationships with the walkers and we shared our stories; they found out about me and I found out about them, where they came from (if they were not born in Haltwhistle) and how they came to Haltwhistle. However, I realized during the course of my interactions with the walkers over a period of many months, that less than half of them currently live in the town of Haltwhistle. Using

primarily documentary evidence, I turn to explore the boundaries of Haltwhistle using historical as well as contemporary materials. Through this I came to realize that in some contexts it is the old Parish boundary that is observed and not the boundary of the town proper.

However, the past alone does not define why the boundaries of Haltwhistle may be as they are. I realized that factors impacting on the present and expected future also influence the boundaries of what is seen to be Haltwhistle. One such factor was the potential closure of two village Post Offices and the response to this perceived crisis by affected villagers.

Finally, I reflect upon a meeting with the Lincolns, a couple who recently moved to Haltwhistle and do not get involved with the festivals, claiming “we just live here.” However, they live in a significant building, a cottage in the centre of town, and although they claim not to involve themselves, they have artefacts which attach them to Haltwhistle as a place. Following Neal (2009), I argue that their attachment to this building and artefacts such as photographs of public events could in themselves be a route to belonging, although their peripheral status acts as a social boundary.

### ***Archaism of the Fringe: The Walking Group as a Route to Belonging***

In Chapter One, I concluded that one of the strongest claims to local identity that an incomer can make is commitment to social structures within that community (Kiely et al 2005), specifically to groups that the individual chooses to join voluntarily (Stacey 1960). One of the groups that appears to be most accessible and open to new members is the walking group. It is members of this same group who volunteer to organize and lead the bi-annual Walking Festival, a social landmark around which identities are performed and boundaries mediated.

Having attended the Walking Festival as discussed in the previous chapter, I subsequently met with some of the regular walkers and was repeatedly invited to join the walking group. Invitation is not necessary, as these walks are open to the general public and advertised as such. However, the walkers actively recruit new members. This is important as the walkers claim that other events, such as the carnival, are

difficult to infiltrate and this will be discussed later on. Walking with this group gave me ample opportunity to engage in conversations and listen to the stories told by people in this group.

When I first joined the group, the most abundant stories were historic and folkloric, verbal accounts intertwining the accepted history, geography, and local legends such as ghost stories surrounding various castles in the area. I found it interesting that those who are new to the area seem to know more about these stories – or are at least more willing to tell them – than the so called locals. For example, while visiting a tea room attached to one of the local castles, I introduced myself to the tea room owner, also wife of the local farmer, explaining that I was doing research. She asked me if I had heard the tale of the castle ghost. I asked her to tell me more, hoping for her version of the tale, but all she could tell me was that there was a ghost. However, when I asked the walkers about this, I received a fully fleshed out and actively told story. This is an example of a phenomenon that occurred frequently throughout my fieldwork. This made me think about a concept from folklore studies called ‘archaism of the fringe’, which asserts that folklore is best preserved along the fringes; that change occurs rapidly in the centre (e.g. city) and then ripples out, the knowledge settling with those on the fringes, where change occurs more slowly. For example, the Brothers Grimm went out into the villages to collect folk tales because they believed folklore was best preserved with the peasants in the countryside. In the context of the walkers, I could rewrite the geographic for the social and argue that, in Haltwhistle, local lore is best performed by those who are socially on the fringes – the incomers - and that they acquire and disseminate such knowledge as a route to belonging.<sup>3</sup>

### **Telling Stories: The Importance of Local Knowledge**

Here I am interested in how local knowledge is used as a route to belonging. I argue that such knowledge connects incomers with no existing kin to Haltwhistle as a

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<sup>3</sup> However, I do not claim that such local lore is preserved, this is not the case of a ‘survival’ of local lore, that is, a story that has been passed down from generation to generation and thus survived. Here the emphasis is on reciting published stories and also upon story creation. My claim to know that the stories about local lore told by incomers are from books, rests in my prior research onto regional folklore. Listening to their stories, I recognise them from the published versions I have read and when asking the teller where the tale originated – the precise book I had in mind was confirmed.

place. I am interested in knowledge that is important to the walkers and their frame of reference; and how they acquire such knowledge and how they then demonstrate or defend this knowledge to others, which others and in what contexts. I am interested in exploring the importance of local knowledge as an implicit claim to belong. I differentiate this from explicit verbal claims to not/belonging such as those explored by McCrone et al. (1998) and covered in Chapter One. Such local knowledge is more than gossip (which I discuss in Chapter 6). Local knowledge I define as including: knowledge of local history and folklore, of the land and nature, and of who is doing what.

With reference to the latter I discovered that, after I had introduced myself to a few people and explained that I was doing research for my PhD, it seemed everyone knew who I was and why I was there. On several occasions while introducing myself I would be cut off mid sentence with something like, ‘oh yes, you’re that research student from Edinburgh,’ said with what I perceived to be pride in their local knowledge. Even though I was meeting these people for the first time, they knew about me and, as Cohen (1982) and Frankenberg (1957) have commented, a commitment to belong includes knowing others within that community, if only indirectly. It seemed to me that the story of the research student had already been told within this community. By asserting their prior knowledge of me, they also reaffirmed their own belonging to this place.

As we walked along, we passed a church without a steeple. We stopped here and our guide pointed out that the land had belonged to the Greenwich hospital and that following the Napoleonic wars, there was a surplus of ships’ chaplains and because the Greenwich hospital owned the land, they built churches on them to employ the chaplains, all in a similar style – churches without steeples. The guide barely finished his verbal presentation when a discussion ensued among the walkers about how the land came to be owned by the Greenwich hospital in the first place and what really happened during the Napoleonic wars and the real reason the churches had no steeples, everyone contributing and debating what they knew... As we wandered down the road, in the drizzle, the discussion wandered around the Jacobite rebellion, the shifting borders between England and Scotland and exactly whose head was on a spike and for which specific crime. Although none of the discussants were born in the area, showing and sharing their knowledge of the history of the area appears to be of great interest and involves much energy, time and discussion (Fieldnotes 17 June).

Reflecting upon this fieldnote entry, the importance and interest in local history and folklore is apparent. Reading this entry also alerts me to the interaction between the walkers and the official guide for the day in asserting their own knowledge and interpretation of the story, because as Tonkin (1992, p7) suggests, “speakers compete... to have their own version of events accepted.” In guiding the walk, the guide has made an implicit claim to belong through demonstration of his knowledge of local history and folklore. Similarly, the rest of the walkers, in competing to have their stories heard and contribute their knowledge to a very public conversation, also make an implicit claim that they too belong not only to this group, but to this place.

As we walked and chatted, I learned that some of the walkers have formed another voluntary group called the Haltwhistle Friends, to combine their love of walking with landscape stewardship. I wondered if they were responsible for the dry stone wall rebuilding that was taking place just north of Haltwhistle. I remarked that I had often seen a man rebuilding the dry stone wall, with his van close by and his dog closer. They are not involved in this walling but work in cooperation with the National Trust to accomplish tasks such as planting hedges and maintaining ditches, hedgerows and footpaths. We passed several hedges in various states of growth that the Haltwhistle Friends had planted. They took great pride in their contribution to the environment and community and all knew when each hedgerow had been planted and by whom and continued to reminisce over their activities for another mile or so. And in the process they were strengthening their connection to each other, the other walkers, the Haltwhistle Friends and the land around us. Even though they are not from this area, they have expressed a commitment to the natural environment and the community through this work and I interpret their engaging discussion as an implicit claim to belong. As the comment from Neal (2009) at the beginning of this chapter suggests, along with membership of the walking group, attachment and commitment to the natural environment is a route to belonging. In discussing it and pointing out what they have done, not only to other members of the Haltwhistle Friends but to others, such as myself, they are similarly making an implicit claim to belong and strengthening their commitment to these groups.

For some of the walkers, local knowledge is a noticeably individualistic pursuit. The expression of local knowledge here is not to compete with others to have one's version of the story heard, but to tell a story that is unknown to anyone else.

I spent much time in front of the walkers with Allan our leader for the day... He explained that the forest was planted in the 1930's because most of the wood in Britain was being imported from Canada at the time and the wood was needed for mine shaft bracing amongst other things. The stipulation was that the wood harvested could only be sold within Britain and thus supporting the British economy. He explained that villages supporting up to 80 people sprouted all over the place as men were employed (and brought their wives and families) to clear the ground and plant the trees. It was envisaged that the same men would be needed to maintain and harvest the wood but then the chainsaw was invented and such numbers of employees were no longer needed. He said that very few people were aware of the history of these forests in Britain as very little has been published about it although he did mention that a few enthusiasts did get together and publish a few papers on the internet a few years ago... Cresting the hill we were met with a beautiful view over a lake below us; sandwiched between two crags... Buttercups, white and red clover and at least two varieties of local orchids swayed among the long grasses. Allan explained that most local people don't even know about the lake and offered an example of a local lady, born in the area whose family lived around here who had no idea this lake existed even though she would have walked within a mile or so of it to get to her grandparents as a child. Allan offered many such examples of local knowledge he possessed which was unknown to so called 'local' people... Allan said that many of the poor sheep had been left wearing their woolly coats this summer. This was purely economic as it costs 70p to shear a sheep but the fleece only sells for 30p. And worse, because of some European ruling, farmers were not allowed to burn or bury the wool! So, the sheep were left, hot and woolly in the fields. He continued to talk about the European injustice against 'our' sheep (Fieldnotes 15 July).

Reflecting on the above account, Allan, an incomer, seems to take particular pride in knowing things about the local area that no one else does – not even those he refers to as 'locals.' This is evidenced in his knowledge of the forest, knowledge that he states is known by very few. Specifically, he talks about knowing the location of a specific lake, one he claims not even the locals know about. This is most certainly a claim to belong evidenced by his reference to 'our' sheep although Allan does not personally own any. The reference is not about ownership of sheep but a claim to

belong as the keeper of local knowledge. As I discussed in Chapter Three, Allan has done a considerable amount of research about the local area, looking through old census data and old maps. However, how would a so-called local respond to this? Or any other claim an incomer makes to belong? In this instance the answer is unknown. No one else commented on his claim that the locals do not know the location of the lake because he did not say this in front of any 'local' people. As I recorded at the beginning of the fieldnote entry, Allan and I walked ahead of the other walkers - out of earshot, and I doubt he would have made such an audacious claim in front of them.

It is the incomers who are telling their version of the story of Haltwhistle to the outside world, the story they have created and that they tell. Their creation comes from their own historical research – looking through old census data, piecing together 'what really happened' from documentary evidence and then, through their own interpretation, telling their version of events. In this way, they make the story of Haltwhistle their own. Not through collective memory, or reciting long held oral narratives, but ownership and even creation of what passes for history. In this way, incomers not only learn existing histories and engage with the natural environment as a route to belonging, they write that history and then are the tellers of that history to others, not only during the weekly walks, but as the organizers and leaders of the bi-annual Walking Festival. They remake Haltwhistle in their own imagination. And within this remaking lies a claim to belong. Their claim extends beyond commitment to community by joining groups (Stacey, 1960) or lengthy residence (Kiely et al. 2005) or even by what they do such as organizing the Walking Festival, leading the weekly walks or assisting with National Trust. The implicit claim is what they know, and the claim itself is performed by sharing what they know with others.

### **Stories of Belonging: How They Came to Haltwhistle**

The actual lived history of the place in which they lived was less important as the way in which they could define the place as belonging to them through their conscious choice to move and settle in it. We call this orientation to place that of 'elective belonging' (Savage 2008, p152).



As the weeks went by and I participated in more of the local walks as well as other social functions such as visits to the local pub with members of the walking group, I came to realize that most were in fact born elsewhere in the UK and indeed the world and came to Haltwhistle in their retirement. My interest now turns to how those born outside Haltwhistle came to be there and how they explain their understanding and process of being an incomer.

The walk was led by a woman called Mary with a noticeably Irish accent. There was another Mary and two Janes. I talked at length to a woman from South Africa who identified herself as a Scottish-South African. The range of detectable accents I have heard among the walkers was quite vast and includes accents from London and the south east, South Africa, Ireland, Scotland, Yorkshire, the Midlands as well as many more English sounding and regionally non-specific accents, to my ears at least. Speaking to members of the walkers, I found that people have lived in, or come from, New Zealand, Australia, Scandinavia, South Africa and North America as well as all over the British Isles.

One walker remarked that most of the walking group came from outside the Haltwhistle area. During the conversation, two of the other walkers commented that they had moved here to be nearer their daughters, who came to the North East to attend University. The daughters had attended and met partners at Newcastle, Durham and Teesside Universities and then settled in the north, and their parents had moved to Haltwhistle to be close (but not too close) to their children and grandchildren. Another couple joined in this conversation and explained that they had moved to live in Haltwhistle and between their children, who were in Kent and Edinburgh respectively. Again, the children had attended university, met partners and settled in these areas. The Irish woman related the tale of how all of her three children came from Northern Ireland to Newcastle or Teesside universities and stayed. She said after her first two sons came over, her youngest did not consider an alternative, because by that time it had become a family tradition. She had moved to be close to her children. However, the reasons for moving to Haltwhistle are diverse:

He said he came from Aberdeenshire. He had moved south in the 1950s when his older brother inherited the farm. The other walker interjected that in those days, only one son could inherit – the others

had to move away so he had come to this part of the country looking for work. He was a policeman for many years...

Her father was from Bardon Mill. She moved back to Halty from York to look after him...she has taken root in Halty ...

She is from Tyneside but she moved here after attending Newcastle University. She brought her parents to live in the area and has no real connection to Tyneside now (Fieldnotes 30 June).

Neville and his wife are also incomers and have been in Haltwhistle for about ten years. They have a summer home on one of the western Scottish Isles where they spend several months of the year. Neville explained that his family had moved around quite a lot because of his work, finally settling and retiring to Haltwhistle. They said they love it as people are so friendly – a sentiment reinforced by Lina, a retired woman from Scandinavia who settled in the area after moving around the UK herself.

The conversation wandered from how everyone came to be in Haltwhistle to our relationships to friends and family and the different support networks employed by incomers and locals. One walker, an incomer herself, said incomers rely as much if not more on friends and non-related networks whereas locals were horrified at this concept and relied exclusively on a tight-knit family. This seemed to be verified later on in the walk by one of the Janes who was a local – born in Haltwhistle.

Jane told me how all of her children had gone to local colleges which had allowed them to stay living at home and that all lived within a short drive. She told me with obvious pride that she speaks to one daughter daily the other several times per week, her son once a week or so. She seemed to take great pride in her close familial ties and expressed her dismay and confusion over families that were not as close as hers. She then asked me if I went 'home' on my days off, when I said no, she looked shocked and disapproving. I immediately felt uncomfortable at her reaction and explained that I had been living out of the country for several years as a sort of defence...(Fieldnotes 30 June)

I have to question my reaction here. Why did I feel 'defensive?' I think it is because her assumptions about where my home is do not match my own. Reflecting on my conversation with Jane, her disapproval of me not going 'home' regularly and my response to that, I realized that there are different concepts of 'home.' Initially I

assumed, as with Fitzgerald and Robertson (2006), that the idea of home could be easily defined and usually equates to a physical residence. However, this is simply one idea among many (see for example, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, Lawrence, 1995, Rappaport, 1995, Hochschild, 1997), and as a narrow definition in which house and home have been used synonymously it has been quite rightly criticised by Rappaport (1995).

Jane takes pride in her strong connections to her family members, all of whom live close by; their close proximity appears to be another point of pride. Home is more than a dwelling to Jane, it is symbolic of close familial ties, both emotionally and geographically. This is her basis for reference that home equals family and that my home must of course be where my closest relatives live. That would be my parents' who live thirty miles to the east just outside Newcastle. However, I do not consider my parent's home to be mine. My justification, that I have lived in several locations in different parts of the world, is true and more accurately reflects my own feelings about what home is. It is wherever I am living. Home is a place of residence for me and does not reflect the close proximity of relatives. As an independent adult woman, I am no longer 'tied' to my family nor do I rely on them in any way, nor have I for decades. As a single woman with no children, I have no one relying on me. And having moved around over geographically vast regions, living in the Middle East due to work and the United States to attend university, I have had to be adaptable to new circumstances and also be very self-reliant.

Like the incomers, I have tended to build my networks of support around friends, many of whom have been in a similar situation. Relating this back to the walkers, Dawson (2002, p118) suggests, "in an era when many social networks, and particularly those of older people are increasingly fragmented, leisure provides a key context for the development of new social networks." Why then do the locals with strong family ties get involved? Jane told me she just loved walking – so for her it was an easy and interesting hobby. However, Dawson's idea could explain why the majority of the walking group are incomers. Joining the walking group is not merely a hobby; it is a way of building a support network to supplant a family.

The concept of social capital has been defined by many commentators (for example, Hanifan 1916, Bourdieu 1983, Coleman 1988, Putman 1996, Paxton 1999).

For Bourdieu (1983, p 248) “Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network...to membership of a group.” And while I agree with Hanifan (1916, p131) that the resources of the walking group include “goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse” within this group, there is also the added feature of what Putnam (1996, p34) defines as ‘civic engagement’ or “people’s connections with the life of their communities.” The activities of the walking group expand beyond networks of support for the individual members. As evidenced by the group’s contribution to the town by the organisation and running of the bi-annual Walking Festival and the connected group of ‘Friends’ who plant hedgerows and repair pathways, this group interconnects beyond the individual membership to the larger community.

### **Archaic Identities: I’m not English - I’m “a Briton!”**

Just as the word ‘home’ is invested with very different meanings, so is the word ‘English.’ What seems a common sense and obvious meaning to one person can be extremely complex, problematic and even derogatory to another, as the following entry from my fieldnotes suggests:

Something quite interesting happened during the lunch conversation. One of our party was from Scotland and called one of the local residents ‘English.’ The accused Englishman responded that calling him ‘English’ was an insult; he was ‘a Briton’. He then went on to say that we are probably all a bit Viking anyway and that he had no idea where his ancestors came from and then remarked, almost as an after thought, that nor did anyone else. The Englishman in question was one of the Newcastle crowd with a soft but recognisable accent to match and so I would say definitely northern. This was the only conversation of this kind that I ever heard during my nine months of fieldwork. It was interesting that no one else commented on the discussion as they usually do, and that the conversation changed quite quickly (Fieldnotes 15 July).

Several things stand out to me. The meaning of ‘English’ is different depending upon which side of the border one is looking from. What may be a common sense categorization by the Scot – referring to someone as English who resides in and has an accent indicative of England - may have been heard by the accused Englishman as an ethicized slur, as he clearly states it is ‘an insult’ and one he felt the need to refute,

by correcting the Scot and referring to himself as 'a Briton.' Furthermore, the response, or more concisely lack of response, from the rest of the party to this silence indicates that the conversation may have been considered too overtly sensitive to be engaged with.

Billig (1995, p.173) reminds me to "attend to the little words" when dealing with matters of national identity. The Scot referred to the man from Newcastle as 'English' and thus inferred a modern national identity label upon him. He responds to the claim by calling it 'an insult', suggesting the term 'English' carries undesirable or potentially shameful baggage, a response often recorded by English respondents when questioned on their feelings about Englishness by Condor & Abel, (2006) in "Vernacular Constructions of 'National Identity' in Post-Devolution Scotland and England." Although not in such strong terms. I find Condor and Abel's (2006, p73) approach useful because they propose that "answers should not only be sought in formal social scientific theories of identity (national or otherwise), but might also be sought in social actors' own mundane sense-making practices." Their study of the vernacular terms and their meaning for the people using them is consistent with Emerson's (1995, p13) advice to focus on and interpret meanings as they are understood by the participants, an ethos discussed in Chapter Two.

To contest the claim levied against him, the man from Newcastle calls himself 'a Briton' not British (which would infer a sense of national identity) but 'a Briton' suggesting to me a more archaic, inclusive and geographic or potentially cross-country borders ethnic self identification. This identification with an imagined 'other' is consistent with Condor and Abel's (2006, p.59-60) findings "that both personal and social identities are often defined in comparative terms, and that national identity may be commonly defined in relation to an imagined 'other.'" The man questioned further justifies this term by commenting that "we are probably all a bit Viking anyway." The use of 'we' is inclusive and one may suppose includes the Scot as well as everyone else present in this 'we,' and 'we' are connected ancestrally to another group; the Vikings. Viking is such a loaded term which conjures up various associations and meanings to different people. The term Viking can be used historically to refer to several groups of people: settlers, traders and most infamously invaders from different parts of Scandinavia. The idea of Vikings is a very strong

one; in the popular imagination they are big and strong and have fabulous long boats with dragon-headed prows and armoured flanks adorned with colourful round shields. They were also for hundreds of years settlers in the borders, Northumberland and Cumberland. This perhaps helps to pinpoint how this man identifies himself, as this region was influenced and settled by these peoples and in the contemporary situation many trace a vague ancestry, if not of themselves, then of topographic place names, to Old Norse names. For example, the area is littered with 'sikes', a derivative of the Old Norse word for a spring.

The self-identified Briton continued that he had "no idea where his ancestors came from and then remarked, almost as an after thought, that nor did anyone else." By relinquishing any evidence in support of his own claim, he thereby quashes anyone else's claim to know their ancestry, returning to the 'we' formulation for being 'a Briton'. And the silence from the others in the group could perhaps be, as Condor and Abel (2006, p.75) suggest, that they "like many respondents in England, treated national self-identity as an essentially private matter" and not a topic for public conversation. I will explore the impact of such silences further in Chapter Six.

Not everyone in the walking group lives in Haltwhistle. There seem to be many people I have spoken to who live in the surrounding villages and some who came from as far away as Newcastle to join the group. How can they be involved in the sense of belonging to Haltwhistle if they do not live in Haltwhistle? This leads me to think that perhaps Haltwhistle does not end at the boundaries of the town proper. One of my research questions concerns what Haltwhistle 'is' in a sociological sense and another concerns boundaries. It may be helpful to define the boundaries of what is commonly accepted to belong to Haltwhistle or to be a part of it and this is the question I will tackle next.

### ***Where Are the Boundaries?***

My conversations with the walkers suggest that a proportion of them do not reside in Haltwhistle but in the outlying towns and villages, some even coming from as far away as Newcastle, thirty miles to the east. However, I also wondered if this was merely a perception based on the people I had talked to. I wondered if there was some way to get a fix on the numbers of people involved in the walking group and

where they all live. This would help me to understand where the geographic boundaries of what is accepted to be Haltwhistle are, as a place, in the context of the walking group. If the boundaries of the community can be defined, a clearer picture may emerge of to what and where people are claiming to belong, and the extent of the community that people are expressing commitment towards. In what now follows, I will use documentary evidence in the form of contact lists, books, websites and maps and produce my own table and charts to help ascertain the boundaries of Haltwhistle.

After I had been walking with the group for a few months, I was given the walking group contact list, providing the names and contact information for the regular, established members of the group (which for hopefully obvious reasons of privacy I cannot provide). For clarity, I should point out that the number of people on the list is reflective of the core of regular attendees who volunteered their information for the contact list. There are more occasional walkers and even regulars who are not on the list, as well as new people joining. However, I recognized many of those listed as regulars and thought it would be helpful in terms of understanding how belonging to this group makes one belong or not to Haltwhistle to see exactly how many of the group actually live in Haltwhistle.

**Where the Walkers Reside**

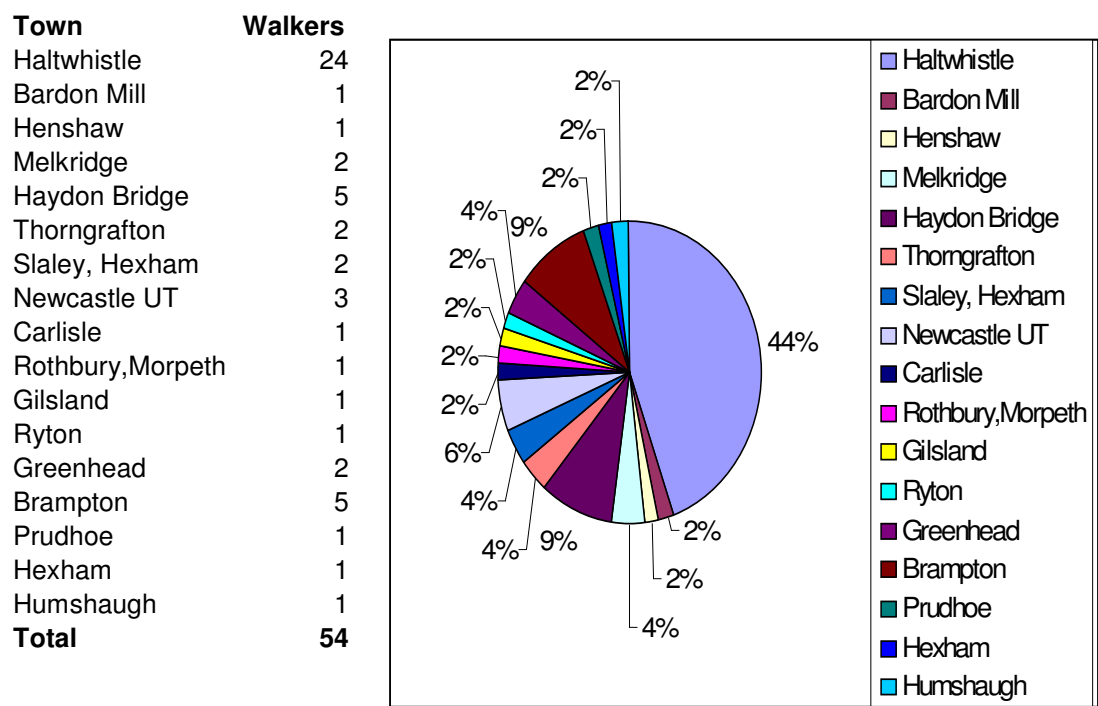


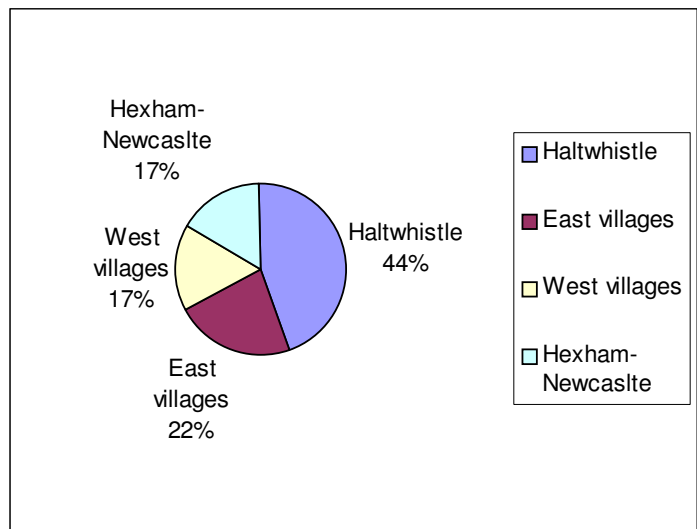
Figure 4.1

I decided to list all of the towns indicated as a residence and see how many people lived in each town. I then made a pie-chart to represent that information visually and turn the number of people into a percentage of the walking group (Figure 4.1).

I concluded that visually, Figure 4.1 was difficult to make sense of because there were too many very small slices to the pie-chart. So for clarity I decided to simplify them by grouping together all of the small villages immediately to the east and, similarly, all of the small villages to the west of Haltwhistle and produce Figure 4.2. Most of the villages in each group are within a mile or two of each other. To my surprise, the data show that less than half of the walkers actually live in the town of Haltwhistle. At first I was surprised and a little dismayed, because I had been researching the walking group as a voluntary group to which people choose to belong (Stacey 1960) as an example of how residents choose to belong to groups in order to express their sense of belonging to Haltwhistle. Does the fact that less than half of them, 24 out of 54 or 44%, live in Haltwhistle prove that assumption invalid? Or is there more going on here? This leads me to question, where are the boundaries to Haltwhistle commonly accepted to be?

**Where the Walkers Reside**

Town	Walkers
Haltwhistle	24
East villages	12
West villages	9
Hexham-Newcaslte	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>



**Figure 4.2**



The local quarterly newsletter The Squeak (2002, p1) is delivered to residents of “Haltwhistle and surrounding areas”, but I wondered exactly which surrounding areas. In answer to this question, the minutes of the Haltwhistle Association’s AGM in 2008 offer some clarification:

“The quarterly Community Newsletter is produced to inform local residents of what is going on in Haltwhistle and the surrounding parishes including contributions from local residents, community groups and organisations. Supported by the South Tyne Valley Fund, it is currently delivered to every household in the community (NE49, NE47 7 and CA8 7 codes)” (Haltwhistle Association Limited 2008, p7).

Several assumptions appear in this extract from the ‘Community’ section of the 2008 Annual General Meeting minutes. In particular, a ‘community’ is imagined to exist (Anderson 1991) and this community includes Haltwhistle and the ‘surrounding parishes’ and also is bounded by specific postal codes. I wondered to myself if this community was specific to the readership of The Squeak and the Haltwhistle Association, or whether perhaps the idea of that community existed beyond the town of Haltwhistle to include the ‘surrounding areas’ and those in specific postal codes (Figure 4.3) was recognized and accepted by others? And if so who, and in what contexts?

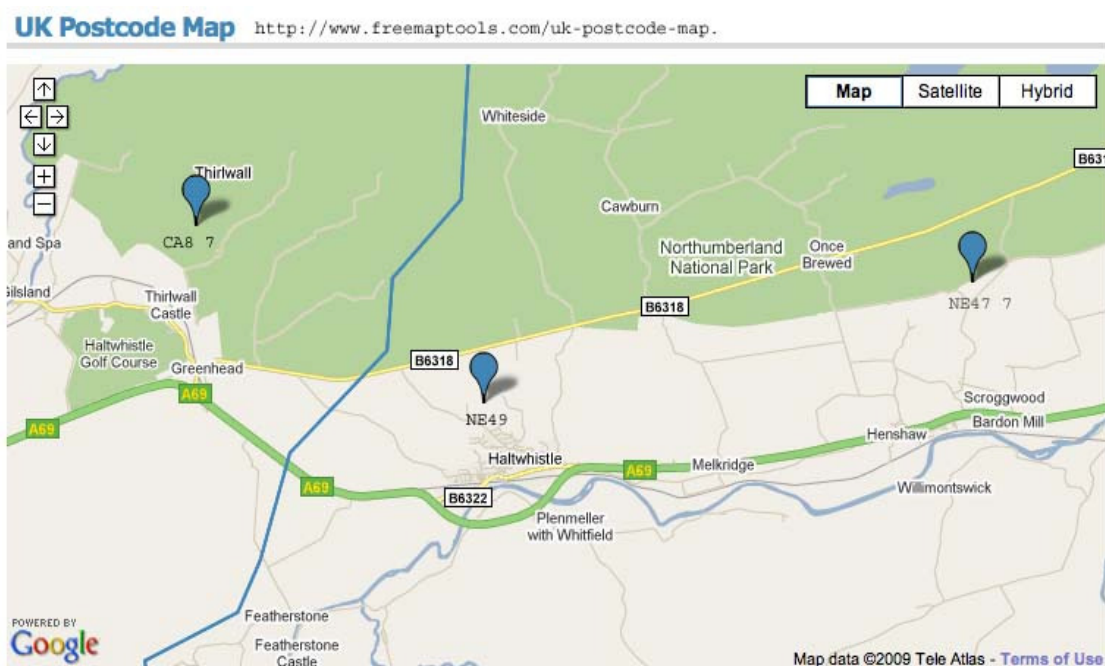


Figure 4.3 – Post code map indicating centres of post codes NE49, NE47 7 and CA8 7

## Historic Boundaries: Haltwhistle as a Place - Town or Parish?

As I am interested in the groups that people choose to belong to, I decided to investigate how groups that people can choose to join within Haltwhistle elect to define the boundaries of Haltwhistle. During the Haltwhistle Association AGM, concern was expressed by several people over the inclusion of what they called ‘the hinterland’ in the proposed Haltwhistle Archive (Appendix 4). A brief look at the signage on the town’s three social clubs reveals “Haltwhistle and District” attached to all three of them. A look at the Haltwhistle History Society’s web site reveals, “The Haltwhistle & District Local History Society.” Similarly, the website of The Haltwhistle Women’s Institute (<http://www.visithaltwhistle.org/wi.html>) clearly defines their affiliation with the nearby villages of Bardon Mill, Featherstone, Greenhead, Halton Lea Gate, Newbrough and Warden<sup>4</sup>. The Haltwhistle Golf Club is actually located in between the nearby villages of Greenhead and Gilsland, three and eight miles to the west respectively, but by name, it associates itself with Haltwhistle ‘and surrounding areas’ (<http://www.haltwhistlegolf.co.uk/index.htm>).

I began to wonder what ‘the district’ or ‘surrounding areas’ were composed of as they do not mirror the boundaries of the District of Tynedale or the Ward of Haltwhistle (see map Appendix 8). Elias and Scotson (1965) stress the importance of historical research in understanding contemporary social conditions. Their account of incomers to an established community revealed that the reason for the bad reputation of one neighbourhood was rooted in the past. Following Elias and Scotson (1965), I decided to look into the past to see if the idea of a ‘Haltwhistle district’ commonly referred to by the above associations has an historical origin.

My understanding is that the modern civil parishes or districts are based largely on the old church parishes and those old church parishes may give me an idea of what the modern ‘district’ is commonly accepted to be. What were those old church parishes in the case of Haltwhistle? Whellan (1855, p878) offers the following definition: “Haltwhistle parish comprises the townships of Bellister, Blenkinsopp, Coanwood (East), Featherstone, Haltwhistle, Hartley Burn, Henshaw, Melkridge, Plainmellor, Ridley, Thirlwall, Thorngrafton, and Wall Town.” However

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<sup>4</sup> For research on the impact of the Women’s Institute in Northumberland, see Neal 2009.

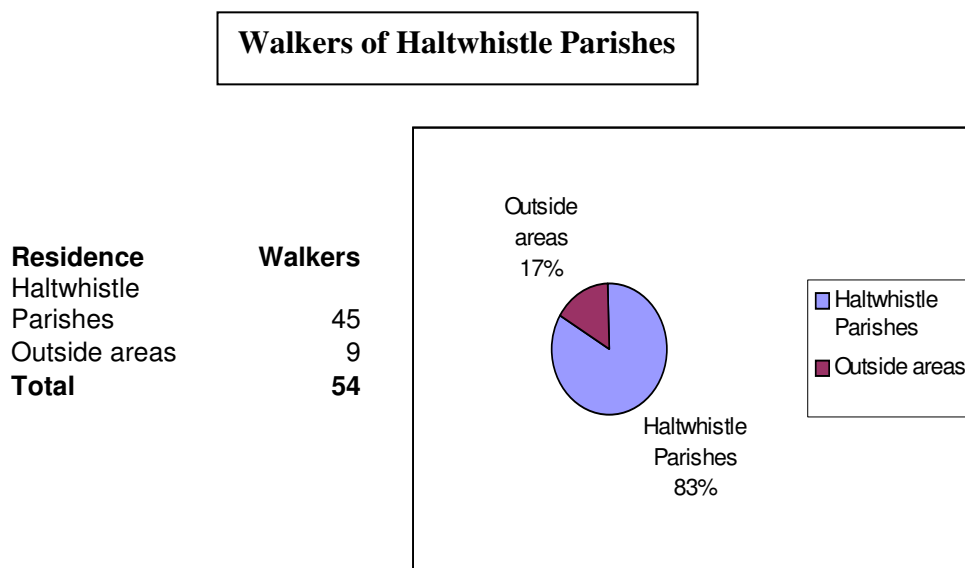
this was in 1855 and so how does this map onto what is considered to be Haltwhistle today?

Presently there exists a pack of 22 circular walks in and around Haltwhistle called The Haltwhistle Rings, produced by the Haltwhistle Association (Appendix 7). On the top of each booklet are printed the words, “22 walks in the historic parishes of Haltwhistle”. Each of the twenty two booklets contains a map of the walk alongside local legends about the area and in the top right hand corner, a walk number and the areas covered. Looking through all twenty two, the only difference I can see between these “historic parishes of Haltwhistle” as indicated on The Haltwhistle Rings pack and Wheelan’s 1855 definition of the parishes of Haltwhistle, is the addition of Knarsdale, Kirkhaughton and Alston, all areas to the south of Haltwhistle town. This interpretation of the parishes of Haltwhistle to include the southern parishes is, not surprisingly, reflected on the web site of the Haltwhistle Association as they also produce The Haltwhistle Rings.

However, a further reading of the History, Topography and Directory of Northumberland (Whellan 1855, p880) reveals a slightly larger grouping of seventeen parishes and townships existing under ‘The Haltwhistle Poor Law Union’ including: Bellister, Blenkinsopp, Coanwood, Featherstone, Haltwhistle, Henshaw, Kirkhaugh, Knaresdale, Lambley, Melkridge, Plainmellor, Ridley, Thirlwall, Thorngrifton, Walltown and Whitfield. The Poor Laws were a system of relief for the poor instituted originally in the fourteenth century as a response to a declining economy caused by inflation and population growth as well as a reduction in traditional forms of charitable giving. Amended in 1834, the Poor Laws prevailed until they were replaced by the welfare state in 1948 (Boyer 2002). Blaug (1964, p 229) writes,

The Old Poor Law was essentially a device for dealing with the problems of structural unemployment and substandard wages in the lagging rural sector of a rapidly growing but still under-developed economy. It constituted, so to speak, "a welfare state in miniature," combining elements of wage-escalation, family allowances, unemployment compensation, and public works, all of which were administered and financed on a local level.

This local level was the parish, and the Haltwhistle Poor Law Union was a collection of parishes united in providing such relief centred on the Union workhouse in Haltwhistle. The same grouping of parishes and townships was mirrored in the Haltwhistle Registration District, which existed from 1837 until 1936 when it was succeeded by Northumberland West Registration District, combining the former districts of Bellingham, Haltwhistle and Hexham (Tynedale district was formed in 1974 under the Local Government Act of 1972 with administrative headquarters in Hexham). Still, this slightly larger grouping of associated parishes much more closely resembles those referred to in The Haltwhistle Rings and by the Haltwhistle Association and is also echoed in the routes taken by the walking group, many of which walk through the picturesque areas south of the river Tyne. Similarly, the inclusion of southern parishes is included in the Women's Institute associations, and the Haltwhistle and District Local History Society's catchment area. It seems that then, as well as now, it is the economic as opposed to ecclesiastical association or connection between parishes or modern districts and townships which prevails.



**Figure 4.4**

Following from these conclusions, I produced Figure 4.4 to represent all those walkers from Haltwhistle parishes from the consensus of data I have drawn from The Haltwhistle Rings, the Haltwhistle Association, the delivery postal codes

for The Squeak, the named associations of the Haltwhistle Women's Institute and History Society and the seventeen named parishes of 'The Haltwhistle Poor Law Union'. Now it would appear, looking at Figure 4.4, that 83% of the walkers reside within the Haltwhistle parishes. When I look back at Figure 4.2, where I had grouped the nearby villages together in terms of east and west, it is a combination of these numbers of walkers from these villages and the town of Haltwhistle which cumulate in the number of walkers from the Haltwhistle parishes. However, the current Haltwhistle District would be a lot clearer if the reader (not to mention the writer) could look at a visual representation of what geographic areas are covered. Figure 4.5 shows the boundaries of the old Poor Law Union, which includes those parishes considered to be the Haltwhistle district today.



**Figure 4.5 Old Registration District and Poor Law Union Boundary 1837-1930**  
[http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/boundary\\_map\\_page.jsp?u\\_id=10055969&c\\_id=10001043](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/boundary_map_page.jsp?u_id=10055969&c_id=10001043)

## **Economic Boundaries: Post Office as Centre**

However, it is not only to the past that I cast my gaze when looking to see why the boundaries of Haltwhistle may be as they are, but also to the ever evolving present and future. Again, a Janus-faced approach that looks to the past and the future is needed to see that boundaries evolving today may not be entirely modelled on the past but could also be a response to evolving economic, political and/or cultural changes. The current downsizing of the surrounding villages and their resources may also force local residents to rely more on Haltwhistle than previously, as the following entries from my fieldnotes suggest:

I was introduced to Gladys in the car park, a tall, slender, white haired retired lady. She told me that she lived in the nearby village of Melkridge. She said it wasn't what it used to be, it used to have a church and a chapel, a pub, a school, and three shops! It was a real village then. She said the pub closed 40 years ago. Melkridge used to be a pit mining village she continued. It's all gone now. No shop, no pub and no school. Just a collection of houses and a village green. (Fieldnotes 17 June).

I joined in a conversation about sustainable villages. We were walking by the edge of a small village to the right of which was a beautiful wild flower meadow containing two enormous and majestic copper beach trees. There are plans to build affordable housing on the edge of the village right on top of the meadow which would mean cutting down the copper beach trees. A petition has been raised to save the trees to no avail. The conversation turned to defining a sustainable village. One of the walkers clarified that a sustainable village must contain a doctor's office, shop and school. Somehow talk then turned to the plight of the honey bee. One walker asked if anyone had seen the documentary about the demise of the honey bee on TV that week. Several walkers began to discuss the reasons for the demise of the honey bee, namely an infectious mite that is killing the honey bees off in droves. "If the honey bees die, we all die" one of them said (Fieldnotes 30 June).

What is the honeybee of the sustainable village, the thing without which the village will die? Is it the school? the doctor's office? the shop? some combination thereof? or another factor entirely? What none of the walkers mentioned was the Post Office. However, none of the participants involved in this conversation live in a village in which their local Post Office is under threat of closure. The residents of Gilsland and

Bardon Mill are (I should note for clarity that the type of Post Office in question in both villages is the sub-Post Office attached to the sole village shop).

In December 2009 I attended a conference entitled 'Re-Thinking Community' in New Zealand and among the varied papers presented was an especially thought-provoking and pertinent paper addressing the importance of the Post Office to village social life. Throughout her paper, "The Shape Shifting Post Office Incident", Goodwin-Hawkins (2009) recounts how the social interactions between residents of a small village in rural north Yorkshire revolved around the Post Office, which, like many village Post Offices including those at Gilsland and Bardon Mill, was a sub Post Office attached to the village shop. The village Post Office provided a focal point for interaction, exchange of news and gossip, a way for people to meet, and for new people to become acquainted. It was a place where all residents of the village, of all ages and life circumstances, came together. A place where paths crossed and people connected. On a more mundane level, the village shop/Post Office provides an economic centre where people can buy groceries and newspapers, claim and access benefits and cash, in addition to sending letters and parcels, which is important to individuals but also facilitates the smooth operation of many small, local business.

Both socially and economically, the village shop/Post Office is surely important to the continuance of a sustainable village. A report, conducted at the bequest of the Commission for Rural Communities by Environmental Services Management (2007, p2), comments "Post Offices combined with village shops play a fundamental role in rural economies and provide a focus for community life." Gilsland and Bardon Mill Post Offices are attached to a village shop. Three quarters of the Post Offices in rural England are attached to a local business, over half of those businesses are the village shop, and according to the report, 80% of these rural Post Offices are unprofitable. As a result of financial losses of approximately £4 million a week in 2006, restructuring of the Post Office network has been proposed resulting in the closure of up to 2,500 Post Offices in rural England. Both Bardon Mill and Gilsland Post Offices were selected for closure, but not without a fight from the villagers.

I first became aware of the threatened Post Office closures when travelling on the bus through Gilsland. I saw what looked like a white sheet hanging from someone's upstairs window bearing the following slogan daubed in red paint:

### **SAVE OUR POST OFFICE**

The residents of Bardon Mill similarly mounted resistance to the proposed closure of their Post Office by launching a campaign website (Gibbon 2008). Bardon Mill residents organized themselves in several ways: by electing a group of local coordinators, by scheduling a succession of public meetings to address how the campaign could proceed, and by promoting this information via the website and an associated online community forum where residents could air their comments and concerns. The website also offered example templates of various letters of protest against the closure that concerned individuals, families and business could complete and send to the Post Office in support of the campaign.

Why do the people of Bardon Mill feel the Post Office is important to their village? Gibbon (2008) states: "We are committed to fighting the proposed closure of our local Post Office in Bardon Mill which will severely impact our local shop, our rural economy and our sustainability." Here Gibbon appears to speak for a unified village. It is as Cohen (1982, p7) suggests, that communities experiencing crisis, such as the loss of such an important social and economic centre as their Post Office, "respond by making the elements of their social organization and process ideological statements – condensations – of the whole and, thereby, emphasizing the tightly structured intricacy of social life." The villagers of Bardon Mill certainly see the village Post Office as fundamental to the sustainability of their village. The Environmental Services Management report (2007, p 59) stresses that the economic viability of village shops attached to a Post Office is dependent upon foot fall into the Post Office as well as the salary of approximately £1500 per month paid to shop owner/sub post masters. But what is the economic benefit to the village of the Post Office? The report states (2007, p22):



every £10 spent with a local food retailer is worth £25 to the local economy, compared to just £14 generated from supermarket chains. So the net benefits to nearby businesses brought about by having a Post Office would be lost if the Post Office closed. Half of the turnover generated from local retailers is returned to the local economy, in comparison to large retailers who return as little as 5% to the local economy.

In short, without the attached Post Office, the village shop is unlikely to survive and the overall economy of the village will be negatively impacted.

A public meeting to discuss the closure of Bardon Mill Post Office was held at the local primary school on 7 July 2008. The threat of the closure was apparently important to many members of the community, as the following post by a village resident on the community forum the day after this suggests:

“I think everyone was surprised by the attendance at tonight's meeting. There were people there I have never seen before in 8 years in the village, it demonstrates the level of feeling about the possible loss of a community facility” (Bardon Mill and Henshaw Community Forum 2008).

This post indicates that people who have not previously met despite living in the same small village for over eight years have come together over the threatened loss of their Post Office. In addition, loss of their Post Office is not only an economic loss and a loss of convenience, but also represents the loss of a “community facility.” By coming together to fight the proposed closure of their Post Office, the villagers of Bardon Mill have defined “boundaries of commonality within which meaning is shared and communicated in... social relationships to which people attribute their fundamental social ‘belonging’” (Cohen 1982, p9). Such public support is demonstrative of the value of the Post Office to the villagers and more importantly, of how a perceived crisis in a community can bring that community together.

The Post Office closures in Bardon Mill and Gilsland are offset in some small part by the installation of a mobile postal service which will visit both villages for a few hours two or three days per week. However, this is no substitute for the loss of what one Bardon Mill resident called a “community facility”. The Environmental Services Management report (2007, p16) further suggests “Post Offices perform an

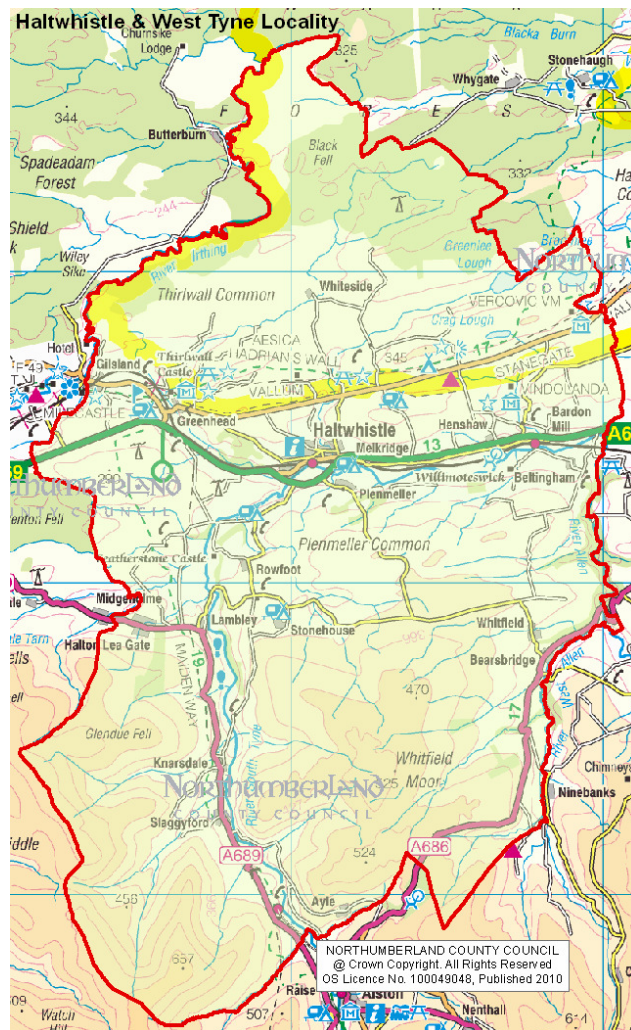
important role in their community, not just by providing essential services but acting as a focal point where people can obtain advice and meet others.” Anyone needing Post Office services outside the very limited service times of the mobile postal service will be forced to travel to their nearest main Post Office which for both Bardon Mill and Gilsland is the main Post Office at Haltwhistle. The closure of the Post Offices in these villages, which lie within the historic Haltwhistle Parishes, reinforces the interconnectedness of Haltwhistle with the outlying villages and thus the boundaries of the Haltwhistle Parishes with the town itself at the centre.

In addition to the restructuring of Post Offices in the area, the districts of Northumberland have also undergone significant changes. At the beginning of my research, the Haltwhistle parishes were situated within the district of Tynedale, the largest district in England and Wales (Appendix 8). On 1 April 2009 as part of “The Northumberland (Structural Change) Order 2008”, the district of Tynedale was abolished and the district councils dissolved. The former districts were restructured into Northumberland County Council, a new unitary authority. Northumberland has been split into three new service areas: North, South and West. These service areas have been subdivided into twenty seven ‘localities’ (Appendix 9) serviced by a Community Forum;

Community Forums are a part of what the County Council is calling “Localism” which is about encouraging everyone who lives or works locally to offer their ideas and solutions to local problems and to work together to address them (Community Forum Protocol, 2009, p2).

Several things stand out for me about these new ‘Localities’ and their Community Forums. First, ‘Localism’ as it is defined by the County Council appears to involve everyone who ‘lives or works locally.’ Residence is not required, that one works in the area is enough to be included in the ‘Locality’. Second, inclusion and boundary crossing are encouraged; anyone with an interest in the wellbeing of the locality has a voice and cooperation between and across localities is encouraged (Northumberland County Council, 2009). Third, the boundaries of the new Haltwhistle and West Tyne Locality are quite different from the Tynedale District or any of the smaller wards into which Tynedale was divided (Appendix 8). What the boundaries of the new Locality do appear to match are those of the old Haltwhistle

Poor Law Union, the area generally acknowledged to be ‘the hinterland’ or district by local residents (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6).



**Figure 4.6 Haltwhistle and West Tyne Locality 2010**

My initial assumption that the social boundaries of Haltwhistle equated to the town boundaries were challenged by my involvement and subsequent conversations with members of the walking group. The possibility of using the contact list as a source of data occurred after I had demonstrated my commitment to the walking group by becoming a regular member of that group, participating in the walking festival, the weekly walks and other social events over a number of months. I learned that only 44% of the walking group actually live in the town of Haltwhistle.

However, further investigation using documentary evidence suggests that what is considered to be Haltwhistle includes the Haltwhistle Parishes, which centred around the town. In addition, following up on my conversations with Gladys and others about village sustainability and an investigation of the slogan on the flying bed sheet in Gilsland proclaiming 'Save Our Post Office' led me to a variety of online sources of information regarding the nationwide closure of rural English Post Offices and the negative impact of such closures upon the villages of Gilsland and Bardon Mill specifically. The loss of their Post Office represents the loss of a social and economic centre for both villages, forcing them to use the Post Office in Haltwhistle. Thus, the boundaries of what Haltwhistle is currently accepted to be continue to include the outlying villages and historic parishes with Haltwhistle town at the centre, both geographically as well as economically. The recent abolition of Tynedale district in 2009 and the creation of the new Haltwhistle and West Tyne Locality, further reinforces the old parish boundaries, those reflected in the Poor Law Union boundary map.

### **Social Boundaries: Allowed In and Fitting In**

It was while sitting on a bench in the Market Place that I met the Lincolns, recent incomers to Haltwhistle and owners of a B&B close to the town centre. Mrs Lincoln is very interested, like many incomers, in researching the local history of the town and is especially intrigued by the older buildings. She was equally intrigued with my research and invited me to her home for afternoon tea to discuss it further. Here I will explore a conversation with the Lincolns concerning their expression of their own not/belonging to the town.

I arrived to find Mrs. Lincoln covered in flour and baking scones in a beautifully restored old kitchen in keeping with the character of a cottage built in 1820. "Just go through the back door and into the garden and I'll be with you in a moment", she said as she put a last tray of scones in the oven. I found Mr Lincoln sitting out in the sunshine in the midst of their beautiful cottage garden. Mrs Lincoln appeared moments later carrying a tray laden with a pot of tea, mugs, a milk jug and a plate of chocolate biscuits (but sadly, no home-made scones). It is Mr Lincoln who runs the B&B, Mrs Lincoln has a job in Carlisle and commutes Monday to Friday. She explained that to her,

Haltwhistle is just a place to live. Of course they both love the area and told me repeatedly how beautiful it was and how much they liked being 'away from it all' but they didn't feel that they belonged to Haltwhistle: "We've only been here three years!" they exclaimed. Apparently a much longer period of residence is required before someone would be accepted as belonging. To illustrate their point they told me there was one lady in town who owned a shop on the main street that she had run for over thirty years and only now does she feel that she is on the 'fringes' of becoming local (Fieldnotes 13 September).

Clearly, the Lincolns as well as the thirty year resident incomer and shop owner, recognise that lengthy residence is associated with being local and accepted by others as belonging (Bond and Rosie 2006, Kiely et al 2005, Elias and Scotson 1965). And this was something which they laughingly lamented, as they were already in their middle years, was unlikely to happen for them. However, while they equated belonging with acceptance by others, they also made it clear that for both of them Haltwhistle was just a place to live, and in the case of Mr Lincoln, a place of business. My interpretation is that they verbally denied an overt sense of belonging to the place beyond work/residence, perhaps because they anticipated a rejection of this claim (Kiely et al 2005). Mrs Lincoln's interest in the buildings of Haltwhistle but not the history of its people seems to mirror their not/claim. I wondered if this might be a way of distancing herself from an implicit claim to belong, in contrast to the walkers who had made such implicit claims in their almost competitive telling of local stories and thus demonstration of local knowledge. Alternatively, she may simply have an interest in architecture:

After chatting for some time, the Lincolns proudly brought out and displayed several large black and white photographs that they said "came with the house." The photographs depicted a parade down the main street in what appeared to be the early/mid twentieth century. Perhaps the carnival? No one knows. However, these photographs were treated with reverence, they were carefully brought out, unwrapped and presented like ritual items for my inspection. I wondered if perhaps the manner in which these photographs were revered implies some kind of symbolic importance to the Lincolns? (Fieldnotes 13 September).

As Cohen (1993, p50) suggests, such rituals can symbolize social boundaries. My interpretation is that these photographs act as symbols of belonging, a physical object in place of the verbal claim, and interestingly, in contradiction to it. However, this makes sense if the Lincolns expected a verbal claim to belong would be rejected and they have already provided their lack of lengthy residence as a reason for this. And let us not forget the house they live in, which is a beautifully restored historic cottage close to the Market Place. Here I agree with Masson (2007, p43) that “There are all sorts of linkages between personhood and locality, and they have much to do with creativity and innovative ways of fitting in.” Although the Lincolns claim that “we just live here”, the way in which they live and the home in which they live are symbolically important to the way in which they fit in.

Although they live in Haltwhistle and Mr Lincoln runs a business there, the Lincolns have more than one centre of belonging. Haltwhistle is one. However, they hail from the Carlisle area thirty miles west and Mrs Lincoln still works there. They are connected to Carlisle through family, friends, work and their past long-term residency. In a way, the Lincolns already have a sense of belonging to Carlisle, so perhaps for them belonging to Haltwhistle was not as important as it might be to someone with no other belonging centre. In many ways their position was similar to mine. Like the Lincolns, I had recently arrived in the area myself. Also like them, I worked and lived there. However, my residence was temporary. I knew that I would be returning to Edinburgh to complete my PhD. I also had another centre and place of belonging.

I have explored my interaction with the Lincolns as an example of those people who live in Haltwhistle and yet claim not to have a strong sense of attachment to Haltwhistle as a place. In their own words, “we just live here.” At the same time, they acknowledge that their lack of lengthy residence is a boundary to belonging. Despite my interpretation of their ritual presentation of old photographs as an implicit belonging claim, they have another centre of belonging in Carlisle, marked by lengthy residence, networks of support and work there.

## ***Conclusion***

Reflecting upon my experience with the walkers and their use of the natural environment as a route to belonging, I am reminded of Bell’s (1993, p4)

ethnographic study of a Hampshire village in which he writes on the “social experience of nature”, arguing that social identities are constructed through nature. However, Cohen (1982) reminds me that belonging is invoked by whatever means are at hand and what is most readily available in a rural setting is nature. I would argue, using a Goffmanesque analogy, that the country is a prop to support the performance of belonging by the players – in this case, the walkers.

Claims to belonging are embedded in the stories people tell, how they represent themselves and how they accept the representations of others. Knowledge of local lore and involvement with local concerns are ways that an incomer can demonstrate their commitment to the community and, by extension, knowledge of the local area, its history, geography and folklore, is an implicit claim to belong. As I have already discussed in an earlier chapter, following Kiely et al (2005), commitment to community is a strong claim to belonging which an incomer can make. One of the ways someone can claim to be local is to acquire local knowledge about the area and its canon of stories.

How does this explain the Lincolns not/belonging claim that ‘we just live here’ and their ritual presentation of photographs in their historically significant cottage? Here I am interested in Neal’s (2009) argument that, following Bell (1993), the non-human natural world and the built environment, (for example: churches, village greens, cottages, historic buildings, Hadrian’s Wall) are invested with meaning. I would add that such attachment and familiarity can also be extended to artefacts such as photographs of these environments, and also to the social institutions which inhabit these environments, such as the Post Office. The subjectivities involved in the attachment and familiarity in this process allows for claiming and counter claiming to occur. In this chapter, I have explored the shaping of the natural and built world by incomers as a claim to belong. However, when looking closely at this natural/built world, the boundaries appeared more fluid.

Most of the walkers are incomers and forming local networks with other incomers was crucial for them as most have no family members living in the immediate area – unlike the ‘locals’ who appear to. Through conversations with them over many months, it became apparent that not all of them actually resided in Haltwhistle. Exploring what the boundaries of Haltwhistle are accepted to be, using

historical evidence in books, maps and cross referenced with my conversations with the contact list of regular walkers, I built up a picture of where everyone resides. It would seem that, in some instances, Haltwhistle includes the surrounding parishes, which the town has been historically connected with, and central to, for hundreds of years.

Furthermore, the recent closures of sub-Post Offices in the nearby towns of Bardon Mill and Gilsland has further reinforced their reliance on Haltwhistle and its centrality to the surrounding villages, both geographically and economically. The crisis of the threatened loss of the Post Office in Bardon Mill and Gilsland brought villagers together to fight for a common cause. Just as festivals are sites of transition, also other public issues (Mills 1957), such as the campaign to save the Post Offices, offer a way for villagers to come together and for identities to be remade through their commitment to the community (Cohen 1982). As Strathern (1982b, p269) comments regarding the villagers of Elmdon, “whether you are Elmdon or not Elmdon does not make a great deal of difference to ordinary everyday interaction if there are other grounds of common interest.” Just as the festivals are a ground of common interest, so are other everyday issues and concerns such as the threatened closure of the village Post Office.

There appears to be a disjuncture here. In the last chapter, I concluded that Haltwhistle was a town divided between incomers and locals. The comment from many of the walkers that the Summer Carnival is difficult to infiltrate as it is run by ‘locals’ seems to support this. However, in this chapter, the boundaries of Haltwhistle seem to increase beyond the town to include the outlying villages, connected to Haltwhistle historically and by evolving economic necessity. This disjuncture requires further investigation. Despite the boundary of Haltwhistle expanding to include the outlying villages in some contexts, I became aware that some of these villages had their own summer fairs and carnivals. I wondered about the significance of Haltwhistle Summer Carnival to the outlying villages, and also, the impact of the Bardon Mill and Gilsland Summer fairs on the boundaries of what Haltwhistle is seen to be. And it is to the so called ‘locals’ and the Summer Carnival that I turn to in the next chapter in order to explore the how these boundaries operate.



## Chapter 5 – Flagging the Carnival: Mindful Fairs, Mindless Flags

“The Carnival brings the whole town together”  
(Carnival Treasurer).

“having annual ceremonial performances and celebrations are important in reinforcing who 'we' are" (McCrone and McPherson 2009, p1).

"The unwaved flag, which is so forgettable, is at least as important as the memorable moments of flag waving" (Billig 1995, p10).

### *Introduction*

“Sorry, the ducks are all sold” she said. I was trying to buy a duck for the annual duck race, part of the week long Haltwhistle Summer Carnival. A thousand yellow plastic ducks are launched from the bridge and ‘raced’ down river. The sign says they cost £1 each, first prize is £100, second is £50 third is 5x£10. I strain to add up in my head, 1000 ducks at £1 each is £1000. The prizes of £100 plus £50 plus £50 equal £200. As they are all sold, I deduce two things; 1. It is very popular and 2. A profit of £800 has been made. But who gets the money and why is it so popular?

This chapter begins by exploring how the Haltwhistle Summer Carnival, a seemingly public event, has both public and private spheres, and how boundary mechanisms, such as local knowledge, birth status, residency and commitment, operate. McCrone and McPhearson (2009, p1) argue that national days, such as St. Andrew’s Day in Scotland or Independence Day in the United States, are memorial devices situated in a particular time and place for the purpose of strengthening national identity. Rewriting the national for the local, the above comment that “having annual ceremonial performances and celebrations are important in reinforcing who 'we' are" (McCrone and McPherson 2009, p1) is usefully applied to the exploration of carnivals, fairs and other public events in and around Haltwhistle. Following McCrone and McPherson, I argue that local festivals and fairs, among other things, are memorial devices, re-enacted at the same time and place annually to strengthen a sense of local identity or ‘who we are’.

Regarding the mindful construction of fairs, Hobsbawm and Ranger (2002, p1) comment that “Traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.” The bi-annual Walking Festival discussed in an earlier chapter, has existed for about ten years, although it seems to have been around for much longer. In fact, Haltwhistle did have a bi-annual fair, as suggested in the following quote from Parson and White (1827) in their History, Directory and Gazetteer of the Counties of Durham and Northumberland:

“two annual fairs, on the 14<sup>th</sup> May and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, both of which are numerously attended and well supplied, the former with cattle (chiefly cows) and the latter with fat cows and lean cattle for wintering. Hirings for servants are held twice a year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May and 11<sup>th</sup> of November” (1827, p420).

So, the bi-annual Walking Festival which takes place in the spring and autumn is linked historically with the bi-annual cattle market and no doubt reinvented at the same time of the year to inculcate such a link. I argue that the Haltwhistle Carnival and various village fairs and events are also mindfully constructed in a similar way.

Relatedly, nearby villages which are a part of the Haltwhistle Parishes, flag their own symbols of identity and unity. Unlike the nation with its established boundaries, local villages use their annual fairs to define their own boundaries and sense of local identity (Frankenberg 1957, Masson 2009).

Finally, I explore flags and flag waving. While flags can be associated with emotional symbols of unity (Firth 1973), and contribute to the mindful construction of village identities, they are often comments Billig (1995, p41) mindless and entirely banal in their flagging of identity. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter from Billig (1995, p10) suggests, these banal flags, hanging limply in a public space, or printed on an umbrella, are as important a topic for study as the patriotically waved flag.

### ***The Carnival: Public and Private***

6 July 2009 was Carnival Day and it rained heavily. The Carnival was supposed to start with a parade down the main street of Haltwhistle at 12 noon, but it was late. Perhaps the organisers were hoping the rain would stop. I was standing on

the main street under the partial cover of a dripping wet tree, waiting with hundreds of other people for the parade to commence (Figure 5.1).

The Summer Carnival is far more than an annual parade and fair, but a week long celebration including various events such as the duck race, a picnic, treasure hunt, wheelbarrow race, and raft race among other things.



The photograph in Figure 5.1 only looks in one direction, toward the start of the parade. The street was lined with hundreds of people in the other direction, towards what is known as ‘the town foot’.

Finally, the motorbikes leading the procession arrived, followed by four minis, two with union jacks painted on their roofs. Next came the floats; first a Viking longboat drawn by a van decorated as Valhalla with a huge papier-mâché skull and ‘Highway to Hell’ blasting out of a portable stereo. Next came the American Times float, preceded by a founding father waving an American Flag and the front of the float made to look like an early wagon train. Then there was a Statue of Liberty, the HOLLYWOOD sign, Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, and finally, covered in tin foil, a NASA rocket, all to the sound of ‘Kids in America’. Then an Egyptian themed float appeared peopled by small children and a procession from the

local nursery school in fancy dress; followed by a Strictly Come Dancing float, and a Naked Chef themed float behind it.

I talked to a woman whose grandson was in the parade – she said Haltwhistle was famous for its bad weather but it had never been THIS bad... After the procession I was told the carnival would continue on ‘the field’ but which one? This is a rural community surrounded by fields! (Fieldnotes, July 6)

Reflecting upon the above fieldnote entry, I was exasperated by the assumption that I would know where ‘the field’ was in a rural community. However, I soon realized that the ‘the field’ (Figures 5.2 & 5.3) was well known to all local residents. Everyone who has lived in Haltwhistle for any length of time knows where ‘the field’ is, even though it is completely unmarked and there are no signs. Re-reading this fieldnote entry, I now feel like laughing at myself because not knowing the location of ‘the field’ clearly identified that I was not a ‘local,’ resident or otherwise, with my lack of this very important piece of local knowledge clearly marking me as an outsider. The same field is used every year for this occasion and it seemed to me that everyone knew where it was. Everyone, that is, except me.

Reflecting further upon ‘the field’ in the exchange above, the term is not used as it would be in common language, but has a specific meaning to members of this community. Stoddart (1974) writes about a similar fieldwork experience in “Pinched: Notes on the Ethnographer’s Location of Argot.” During his covert fieldwork among heroin addicts, Stoddart recounts how his outsider status was exposed through not understanding an argot - or the specialized use - of the word ‘pinched.’ Upon hearing that an addict had been ‘pinched’, Stoddart understood the word ‘pinched’ in its common usage – the addict had been arrested. He then asked why the person had been arrested, not understanding that to this community ‘pinched’ referred not only to the arrest, but also the reason; that is the possession of narcotics. His lack of knowledge about the specialized use of this word within the community under study marked him as an outsider, in much the same way that I was marked as an outsider by my lack of knowledge about ‘the field.’ The word ‘pinched’ incorporated the ordinary usage of the word; that of being arrested, however, it also carried the additional assumption that the arrest was for narcotics possession. Similarly, ‘the

field’ incorporates the commonsense usage of the word, that a field is being referred to, but the additional information attached to its use is the precise location of ‘the field’.

After the parade had passed by, I saw a steady drove of people walking towards the railway tracks and disappearing under the railway bridge. I followed the throng and, emerging from under the railway bridge, I arrived on ‘the field’. There was a Ferris wheel and other rides, a beer tent, a food tent, and a tea tent advertising £1.50 for tea and a choice of three home-baked cakes. Beyond the crowds I could see the floats from the earlier parade at the end of the field (Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

Clearly ‘the field’ was usually occupied. Even the interior of the tea tent was carpeted in cow pats. No one appeared concerned about this. I felt concerned about it but attempted to conceal my concern as I juggled my tea cup and plate of cakes and went to a seat in the busy tea tent. The only area of ‘the field’ that had been cleared was the Cumberland wrestling ring which had been covered in a layer of sawdust. Owing to the downpour, the sawdust had become completely sodden and no one was wrestling. The incessant rain prohibited photography. An announcement came over the PA system; “I hope the sun doesn’t come out and spoil everything...”



Figure 5.2 – ‘the field’ looking east





**Figure 5.3 'the field' looking west**



**Figure 5.4 - The Winning Float! Valhalla; all Vikings complete with horns**



**Figure 5.5 - American Times Float, at the bottom of 'The Field'**

Knowing certain things about the carnival, such as where 'the field' is, could be interpreted using Goffman's (1971) analogy of knowing one's role in play. Knowing the role and playing it well could be interpreted as a definition of a situation or, put another way, a claim to belong. It indicates that possessing this information distinguishes the knower from the casual visitor. One would have to live here or be connected to a resident to know the location of 'the field.' Similarly, not knowing excludes a person. There is no signpost directing people to 'the field' because this knowledge is assumed. This assumption is interesting, as it supposes that everyone present at the Carnival will be a local resident or have some connection to Haltwhistle and I wondered why visitors would not be expected to attend.

Does knowing about this make a person more local? Drawing on DaMatta (1991) in Chapter One, I explored the notion that public events such as carnivals, fairs and parades are sites of transition, and that participation in these events operates as a process which allows a person to move from outside inwards. As I illustrated regarding the walking group in Chapter Four, knowledge of the corpus of local folklore and history facilitates a boundary crossing, allowing a person to become part

of the group by becoming knowledgeable about local stories, both folkloric and historic. The local knowledge here is also a story – it is a story enacted through performance and this performance involves knowing how to tell, communally, the story of the Carnival through active participation (Pinder 2007, Norrick 1997, Nadel-Klein 1991, Goffman 1971). Knowing how this story is told - for example, knowing that after the parade, the fair continues on ‘the field’; and furthermore, knowing where ‘the field’ is and how to get there - continues “to construct and reaffirm identity within the group whose members do the telling” (Nadel-Klein 1991, p513). Members thus communally tell the tale, through participation, relating how and where things happen at the Carnival. I wondered if this ‘insider knowledge’ formed what Strathern (1982b, p253) calls a ‘boundary mechanism’ to keep outsiders out or at least to mark who they are.

### ***Carnival Boundaries***

I learned that very few of the walkers have anything to do with the Carnival which the walkers see as a “local affair”. Several of the walkers felt it was hard to infiltrate the Carnival, saying the Carnival was “hard to get into” and people have to be invited to join the committee. Conversely, the walkers want to know how to get more local/younger people to join them (Fieldnotes 8 July).

It would seem from the above fieldnote entry that the Carnival bounds Haltwhistle in a different way from the Walking Festival and group. The attitude of the walkers suggests that they perceive a boundary is in place (Kiely et al 2001), that the Carnival is a ‘local affair’ to which they are not invited, at least as committee members, thereby affirming their status as incomers. While the Carnival appears to keep incomers out, the walkers, predominantly incomers, actively attempt to recruit, both locals from the Haltwhistle area and visitors from beyond. The apparent boundaries reflect this. As I discussed in Chapter Four, for the walkers the boundaries of Haltwhistle expand beyond the town to include the old Haltwhistle Parishes. However here, the boundaries of Haltwhistle appear to contract, not just to the town itself, but to certain segments and groups within the town of Haltwhistle such as those involved in the Carnival. It seems that for the walkers, Strathern’s (1982b, p249-249) comment that their “consciousness of their own distinctiveness is



a product of their relations with the outside world,” applies. However, for those involved with the Carnival, Cohen’s (1982, p3) comment that “It is at the boundaries of localities that what it means to be local becomes meaningful” applies with such boundaries “socially constructed to distinguish one group from those who are ‘not us.’” The walkers appear motivated by boundary crossing, whereas the Carnival organizers appear to be concerned with preserving their current boundaries.

I wanted to know more about the Carnival, including who organises it, how long has it been going, who gets involved, and whether it really brings the whole town together as I have heard several people say. It was much more difficult to find Carnival organizers than to find and join the walkers. I asked the walkers and they told me, quite unanimously, that the Carnival ‘was hard to get into’, because it was run by the ‘locals’ and seemed quite unavailable to them. Carnival Headquarters is also located in a Haltwhistle shop which never seems to open. I attempted to visit it regularly, avoiding Wednesday afternoons and lunch times, when all the shops in Haltwhistle are closed, but for months was unsuccessful. Many people laughed about the shop that is never open – particularly because it was the Carnival Headquarters (a factor I explore further in Chapter 6). I checked with all of my contacts in the walking group and no one could recommend anyone connected to the Carnival Committee that I could talk to. I asked at the hostel, and no one there knew anything about the Carnival. I looked online to see if the Carnival has its own webpage and it does not.

The stalemate was broken by another shop owner who was described to me by the walkers as being ‘on the fringes of being local.’ She was an occasional walker with the walking group and had lived in Haltwhistle for forty years. She told me that one of her employees, a local woman, might be able to help. It was raining heavily at the time of this conversation and writing down phone numbers was completely out of the question. Fortunately, I knew which shop she ran and she knew which hostel I worked in, so through our mutual connection to the area we managed to find each other. Her employee called the hostel telephone number the next day to contact me and gave me the name and phone number of the Carnival’s Treasurer. She assured me she had spoken with the Treasurer, whom she knew personally, and explained who I was and the nature of my research and that the treasurer was willing to meet

with me. I called the Treasurer only to find out that she was leaving for a two week holiday in the morning and she asked me to call her when she returned. I did and finally, on 5 August 2009, the Treasurer suggested we meet at the locally-run cafe.

I asked the Treasurer if everyone involved with the committee was local and to my surprise she responded “Oh no! The Committee President is not local – he comes from Hexham.” Hexham is a large town seventeen miles directly east of Haltwhistle. I found her use of the term “not local” interesting. She does not call him an incomer, but nor is he local; he fits into a third category of ‘not local’. Unlike Gilligan’s (1987, p80) ‘sliding scale’ or Phillips’ (1986, p144) ‘gradations’ on the local-incomer scale, this category defines what he is not, in this case a local. However the term ‘not local’ is ambiguous with regard to what he is. As the term incomer was not used, he is neither local, nor incomer, but perhaps liminal in his status. I heard this category used before, by a young bar-tender, also born in Hexham, who referred to herself as ‘not local’, despite living in Haltwhistle since childhood. Here again, the term was applied to someone born relatively close by, although outside the old Haltwhistle Parishes, but who had lived in Haltwhistle for over twenty years. The Treasurer confirmed that he had been the president of the Carnival Committee for that time, almost since the Carnival restarted in 1989. Despite hailing from a nearby town and his commitment to the committee of the town’s Carnival for twenty years, the president was still not considered a local. Just as in Strathern’s (1982, p89) study of Elmdon, “being ‘real Elmdon’ depends on birth status,” it seems that to be a real local in Haltwhistle, one must have been born there and that incomers there too “can never be truly assimilated.”

It may seem that the boundary between local and not-local, based on the two examples of the bartender and the Carnival president, is Hexham, seventeen miles to the east. Just as Haltwhistle is the centre of its own set of parishes, as discussed in Chapter Four, the larger Hexham is the centre of the next group of parish communities east along Hadrian’s Wall. Additionally, I was also told that the Hexham summer fair often occurs on the same date as the Haltwhistle Carnival. Haltwhistle Carnival goers explained that there was no conflict, because people from Hexham would never come to the Haltwhistle Carnival and equally Haltwhistle people would never attend the Hexham fair. It seems that Hexham marks a clear

social as well as geographic boundary and a person born in Hexham can never be local to Haltwhistle, irrespective of their commitment to the town via contribution or length of residence (Kiely et al 2001). Hexham is a key ‘other’ on the other side of the boundary.

### ***A Symbol of the Villages***

However, the labels and social boundaries governing acceptance or not into the Carnival committee are not the only boundaries in operation. Unlike the walking group, which draws members from the villages in the old Haltwhistle parishes and defines its boundaries as such, those same villages have their own summer fairs. I was told by several people at the Haltwhistle Carnival that ‘only Haltwhistle people attend – other villages have their own’. Earlier, the nearby villages of Gilsland to the west and Bardon Mill to the east were contrasted with Haltwhistle, and these two villages will be compared again here. Gilsland has its own Agricultural Fair annually in August, and Bardon Mill and its tiny neighbour Henshaw come together to host the Bardon Mill and Henshaw Village Fete on or around Mid Summer’s Day. Interestingly, as the Bardon Mill and Henshaw Fete is in June, the Haltwhistle Carnival in July and the Gilsland Agricultural Fair in August, there is no conflict in dates which might prevent neighbouring villagers from attending each other’s events, although Haltwhistle residents claim that they do not.

The three fairs are also distinctive. I have already indicated that the parade of floats is the highlight of the Haltwhistle Carnival. The Gilsland Agricultural Fair is very different and dominated by exhibitions of cattle and sheep as well as working dog contests. The Bardon Mill and Henshaw Fete consists of a fair with stalls and a May Pole on the Bardon Mill Village Green. The differences between the three fairs to me points towards the distinctiveness perceived by the villagers. These distinctive village fairs have become “a symbol of the village’s existence as a community in opposition to other communities and the world at large” (Frankenberg 1957, p154). Each village is distinguished from its neighbours around a very different presentation of itself (Goffman 1971a), a presentation of community self.

This reminds me of Gluckman's (1958, p12) comment that "socially enforced and accepted separation can be a form of association, indeed cooperation." Perhaps the residents of Bardon Mill and Gilsland use their village fairs as a way of affirming village unity, just as the residents of Frankenberg's (1957) Village on the Border used their recreational activities, including a carnival. Combining these useful ideas from Gluckman and Frankenberg, perhaps the very distinctiveness of each fair inculcates a sense of separation from nearby villages while at the same time creating a sense of unity between cooperating members within those villages. Here it would seem that just as some of the residents of Gilsland and Bardon Mill resisted the closure of their Post Office as a way of demonstrating attachment to their village, their resistance, by distinctiveness and thus separation from the nearest village and its fair, also demonstrates an attachment and commitment to their own village. As Nadel-Klein (1991, p510) suggests, "At the most basic level, localism's pervasiveness can be seen as a form of resistance." Resistance to what is perceived to be beyond the boundary of 'us' could be said to strengthen attachment and commitment to 'us'. As I argued in Chapter One, both conflict and cooperation are ways in which people form attachments, and here it seems that resistance can be a form of attachment. By cooperating to host their own fairs, the people of each village resist incorporation onto the boundaries of Haltwhistle and flag their own village identity. However, those boundaries are not fixed and move depending upon the situation, context and who is involved; each village fair does not represent the attitudes of every individual resident, rather, it says something about the attitudes of those involved. And the village itself is composed of groups which make up the whole, those groups to which individual members belong (Stacey 1960, Cohen 1982).

### ***Commitment and Change***

"'Belonging' implies very much more than merely having been born in a place" (Cohen 1982, p21), it also requires commitment. An enormous amount of work and money goes into the preparation of the floats for the Summer Carnival (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

Haltwhistle businesses do get involved in helping with the Carnival, for example, a Haltwhistle business owner brings his cherry picker to help put the bunting up every year. About two weeks before the Carnival, a newsletter including a program is delivered by hand to all homes in Haltwhistle and everyone helps to wash the bunting when it comes down. The work is all done by the committee members (Fieldnotes 5 August).

In addition, Haltwhistle businesses advertise in the Haltwhistle Carnival Programme (Appendix 3). The first two pages of this programme guide detail which Haltwhistle business have made donations, how much money was made last year, and the Carnival cash prizes for the current year. Haltwhistle businesses provide support in the form of manpower, resources or space - for example, use of 'the field' was a donation and the various social clubs donated the use of their function rooms during the week-long festivities.

The Carnival does make money, some from the duck race and on the day through tea and cake sales (all made by volunteers) and while some is used for prize money, most goes back to local town charities, it is very important, the Treasurer said, to give back to the town (Fieldnotes 5 August).

The total donations given by the Carnival Committee in 2007 totalled £15,725 (Haltwhistle Carnival 2008, p3 Appendix 3). The Treasurer explained that most of the Carnival committee meetings take place during the winter months when local people can approach them with ideas for floats and also charities approach them with application for funds from the monies raised.

Now I understand where all money goes which is raised by the Duck Race – into local charities that have been selected during the prior winter. This would also explain why the duck race was so popular; in buying a duck, a donation to a local charity has been made. It is another way in which Haltwhistle residents can demonstrate their commitment to the town. In addition, profits from cake sales on the day (as well as other events) also go towards local charities. This seems to me to represent a strong commitment to the local community on behalf of Carnival participants and organizers.

The Walking Festival, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three, aims to bring outside revenue into the town by drawing in visitors who stay in local B&Bs and frequent the pubs, cafés and restaurants. The Carnival, by contrast, redistributes the town's existing wealth. The Walking Festival seeks to bring in outside revenue which, as Jedrej and Nuttall (1996) suggest, associates incomers with the rejuvenation of the town. However, in both cases, raising money and involvement in these public events demonstrates a commitment to the well-being and betterment of the town, operating through the organizing group's relationship to the town. The result is that local people raise local money, and incomers raise money from other incomers.

My conversation with the Treasurer as well as with other residents who had lived in Haltwhistle for some time indicated that the Carnival had undergone changes. "No tradition is constructed or invented and discontinuous with history," suggests Kapferer (1998, p211), things merely take on new form. But some things have changed since the Carnival was restarted.

There have been changes in the last twenty years, especially recently. Originally, there was an 'It's A Knock Out' competition with teams from local pubs and factories taking part as well as a raft race and wheelbarrow race. All have stopped from a combination of increasing concerns about health and safety and diminishing interest from contestants. In addition, The Treasurer remarked that these events were held at weekends when most people were off but many now work more at weekends and are not as available. The duck race is ever popular and this year, a very successful scarecrow contest was implemented. Judging the scarecrow contest was very difficult so for next year, the plan is to let towns people vote for their favourite scarecrow and thus make the decision more democratic and the voice of the town not one judge (Fieldnotes 5 August).

The reasons for the demise of the 'It's A Knock Out' contest, wheelbarrow and raft races, are increased concern over health and safety issues and lack of interest and availability due to changing work schedules. During my two summers in Haltwhistle, the raft race was cancelled because excessive rainfall had swollen the river to dangerous levels. However, in order to ensure the continuance of the Carnival and to replace the now unworkable wheelbarrow and raft races, a new activity had to be found. This was the scarecrow contest.

Anyone can enter a scarecrow into the contest and, wandering around town during Carnival time, the popularity of this activity is visible. However, what strikes me most about the scarecrow contest is its inclusivity. Although the wheelbarrow and raft races were open to anyone, those anyones had to be adults and physically able to partake in these activities. Not so with a scarecrow contest. People of all ability levels and ages can take part. There are scarecrows outside pubs and shops, individual homes and even the churches entered their own scarecrows into the contest.

This spirit of inclusivity has also extended to judging the scarecrow contest. Reflecting again on the above fieldnote entry, during the first year a specific judge was appointed but as the treasurer stated “Judging the scarecrow contest was very difficult” (Fieldnotes 5August), which I suspect was for political reasons. For example, selecting a specific winner could be interpreted as excluding others and contributing to open conflict between factions. Now, there are judging forms available in various shops in the town and anyone can cast a vote by completing a form. By making the decision process more democratic and allowing everyone on the town to judge the scarecrow contest, incomers can have an impact and a voice in the Summer Carnival. In this one instance at least, the whole town can come together, as the comment at the beginning of this chapter from the Treasurer suggests. The Carnival and specifically the scarecrow contest can be seen as “a symbol of village unity and cohesion against the outside world” (Frankenberg 1957, p100). However, this sentiment may appear to be in contrast to the divisions and separations visible throughout other aspects of the Carnival.

Insider knowledge, such as knowing where ‘the field’ is and how to get there, can distinguish a local resident from a casual visitor. Further, unlike the Walking Festival and walking group which extend the boundaries of Haltwhistle to include the villages in the old Haltwhistle parishes, the Carnival restricts those boundaries. The boundary is enforced from the outside because nearby villages that are part of the Haltwhistle parishes have their own summer fairs which are distinct in character from the Haltwhistle Carnival and reinforce the different identities of the outlying villages. The Haltwhistle Carnival further restricts that boundary not only to the town itself but to certain groups within the town, the locals and not-locals, thereby

excluding incomers and reinforcing the unity of their group (although this is mitigated slightly by the recent introduction of the scarecrow contest). However, birth status alone does not automatically include one in the Carnival, there must also be commitment. This can include sitting on the committee, helping with Carnival organization or even just attending, especially in spite of the bad weather.

In thinking about the Carnival in Haltwhistle, the response of townspeople to the weather seems significant. Looking at Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, the sheer number of people who attended in spite of such dreadful weather stands out. I was reminded by a woman standing next to me at the Carnival parade that Haltwhistle is famous for its bad weather, and it is so expected that even the announcers on ‘the field’ joke about it, as with the announcement “I hope the sun doesn’t come out and spoil everything” noted earlier. In spite of the rain or even because of it, each person attending is presenting a certain image of themselves as supporters of the town. By attending despite the weather, they are showing their level of support for and commitment to these events; their presentation of community self.

While people show their commitment to the various carnivals by coming out in support of them in spite of the weather, I felt there was more going on than just commitment. Billig (1995, p117) comments that flagging the weather “helps to reproduce the homeland as a place in which ‘we’ are at home, ‘here’ at the habitual centre of ‘our’ daily universe.” Billig illustrates this by discussing the way in which British weather is flagged in the newspapers, defining a sense of ‘our’ weather. However, Haltwhistle people used the weather to define their own locality, the distinction that the weather is worse ‘here’ is made. The weather is flagged, not only in relation to the commitment expressed by Haltwhistle people, but also as Billig (1995) comments, to flag where ‘home’ is, and ‘who we are’.

### ***Flagging Local Identity***

The relentless rain on Carnival day resulted in a multitude of umbrellas. Reviewing some of the photographs I had taken, several of the umbrellas had flags on them: either white with the red cross of St George (English flag, see Figure 5.3) or a blue background with three lions and ‘England’ above (Figure 5.1). I also saw the latter mirrored in many T-shirts and other clothing worn by Carnival attendees. Billig



(1995, p 6) comments that identities are continually flagged or reminded and that “these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed.” Billig illustrates this point referring to flags hoisted above institutional buildings; they are there but barely noticed. My concern here is not with nationalism but with local constructions of belonging and community. However, Billig’s (1995) comment regarding the banality and everyday nature of flag waving is just as pertinent to the local as the national because “local experience mediates national identity” (Cohen 1982, p13). I was surprised by the display of English flags, and in Chapter Four I recounted an incident where a man from Newcastle felt that being referred to as English was an insult, even though this was in a Scottish/English context. But in the same town in which that incident occurred, people made apparent and public claims to English identity.

Reviewing the photographs taken at the Carnival, I noticed other flags, for example, the American flag flying above the American Times float (Figure 5.5). How do I differentiate between the meaning of the England flags on the umbrellas and T-shirts and this American Flag and supporting memorabilia? At first, I thought perhaps there was no difference; both flags were on display on the same day at the same event. However, the ‘American Times’ float was part of a carnival and as I have already discussed, carnival is a type of ritual, a social landmark around which “collective rituals of identification” (Jenkins 1996, p3) are performed.

The American Times float, the Viking Long Boat, the Strictly Come Dancing float and the Ancient Egypt float, are all there to entertain, to draw people together, to commune. They draw upon shared cultural tropes that all present can agree upon. Thus, someone new to this festival, such as myself, can look at the Viking Long Boat and know what the horns represent, even though I believe that those depicted never actually called themselves Viking nor is there any evidence that they had horned helmets. Around such understandings, a transition is made and I am sharing an understanding of these symbols with the other participants. Similarly, the American Times float relies heavily on well-known stories and shared cultural tropes such as stories of wagon trains, cultural icons such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe and knowledge of a NASA rocket. A shared understanding of historical context is relied

upon, even though that historical context may refer more to popular culture than what is recognized as historical fact.



For Firth (1976, p328), flags are often ‘social symbols’ and as such “may serve as a symbol for the unity of a large body of people.” Another flag close to Haltwhistle is the Northumbrian flag on the Melkridge village green one mile east of Haltwhistle (Figure 5.6). Billig (1995, p8) comments that "in the established nations, there is a continual 'flagging', or 'reminding, of nationhood." Re-writing the national for the local, could the county flag on the village green be a reminding of a more local or regional identity by some people in Melkridge? But who elected to put it there? It might take only one concerned person to organize a flag pole and raise a flag but it takes a group or a community to organize, run and attend an annual fair. These questions require further exploration, and a broader look at flags as symbols of identity and/or unity in this area would be helpful.

A trip into Hexham to visit the Abbey led me to consider flags and symbolism generally. Are they really an indication that this is what the people want or representative of how people see themselves and their identity?

Walking around the abbey I noticed something I have seen before; flags and a window with a certain non-religious theme...I saw this once before in Durham Cathedral, - a whole section of the church filled with Masonic symbols and an enormous stained glass window filled with Masonic symbolism, well at Hexham it's the British legion. Flags adorn one side of the isle and a stained glass window with the union jack separated and the flag of Northumberland in the centre (Fieldnotes 21 August).

Flying high above the Abbey is the English flag of St George. The interior window (Figure 5.7), paid for by the British Legion, suggests a more composite identity, with its intertwining of flags and emblems with the Northumbrian flag at the centre. The inscription under the stained glass windows declares that the window was paid for by the British Legion, so that the images and symbols to be seen, even in a church, are there because some person or organization paid for them and chose to install those particular images. Firth's (1973, p328) comment that flags are often "a symbol for the unity of a large body of people" seems pertinent here. In this window, the emblems of various branches of the armed forces are intertwined with the Union Jack and the Northumbrian flag. However, it is the Northumbrian flag which is central. This reminds me of Cohen's (1982, p9-10) comment regarding ascending and descending levels of identity:

I might choose to identify myself as British, Scots, Sheltander, Whalsayman, or as belonging to some particular kinship-neighbourhood nexus in Whalsay. The significant point is that with each 'ascending' level I increasingly simplify (and thereby misrepresent) the message about myself. At each descending level I represent myself through increasingly informed and complex pictures. It should therefore be recognised that 'belonging to locality', far from being parochial triviality, is very much more of a cultural reality than is association with gross region or nation."

The "complex pictures" in this window, in descending order of identity could be: British, British Legion, British Legion Northumbrian. However, in ascending order, following Cohen's example above, the message is simplified and thus misrepresented and could refer to all members of the British Legion,

not just Northumbrians, or even all British people, depending on how one interprets the intertwined images.

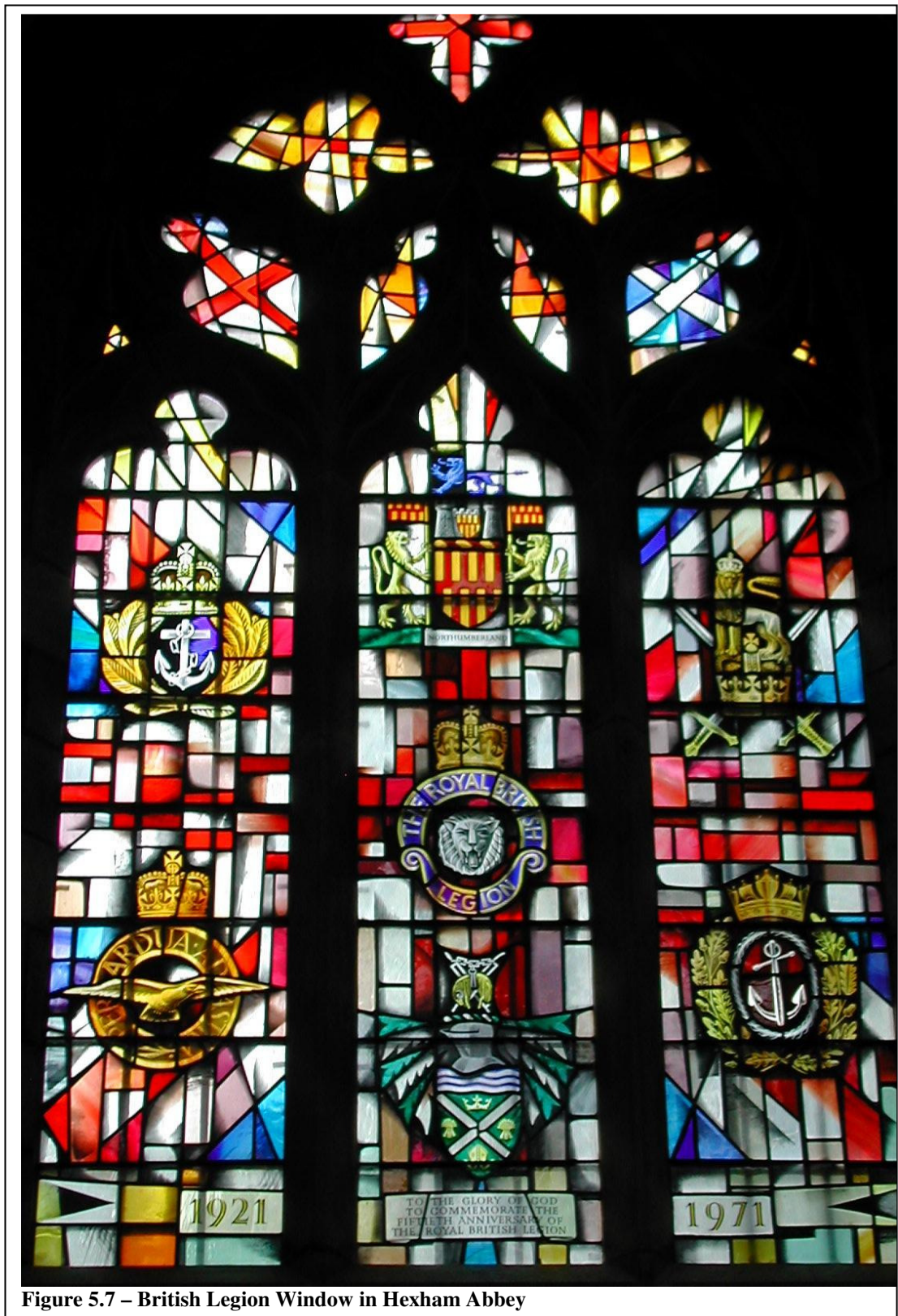


Figure 5.7 – British Legion Window in Hexham Abbey



But are the English flag above Hexham Abbey and the Northumbrian flag on the Melkridge village green purely public displays? Mills (1959) cautions that public issues are related to private troubles. In addition to the public display of the Northumbrian flag on the village green at Melkridge, I was interested in the more private messages between villagers, regarding the village notice board. In a sense, notice boards are public in nature, but in relation to the flag, the notice board is low key and requires the viewer to stop and read it. It requires deliberate action. Which is why on my first visit to Melkridge I noticed the flag and was aware of the notice board but not its contents.



Figure 5.8 – Melkridge Village Green notice board

On a second trip to Melkridge, I read the messages on the notice board (Figure 5.8) and saw a notice referring to funds raised by the Village Green Committee of £538.05, the proceeds from the village BBQ “despite the lousy weather.” The committee that elected to erect the Northumbrian flag on the village green perhaps using funds raised by the Village Green Committee from a prior BBQ or other fund-raising activity. Just as the people of Haltwhistle support the Carnival and by extension the charities it supports by buying ducks in the duck race, so the people of Melkridge support their Village Green Committee and by extension are

responsible for the Northumbrian flag that flies upon it. Melkridge does not have its own village fair but it does have a village BBQ and, as I have already suggested, these events help to establish unity within the village and also reinforce a social boundary around the village. Perhaps, for the people of Melkridge, the Northumbrian flag on their village green, paid for by proceeds of the village BBQ, operates as a symbol of village unity.

### ***Mindless Flags***

There is a campsite just outside Haltwhistle, the far boundary of which is marked by a flag. In my first year of research, it was a Union Jack. As the summer wore on and the wind and weather took its toll, the flag became more and more tattered, a mere few inches of red, white and blue remained clinging to the flagpole at the end of the summer season. The following year the flag had been replaced with a red and yellow Northumbrian flag. I wondered why the change? Was this a move towards a more regional identity? Or was there a more prosaic reason? Perhaps the Northumbrian flag was more available to purchase, a gift, or maybe the campsite owner just wanted a change. Firth (1973, p328) comments that “the symbolism of flags lies primarily in their display.” The display of this flag was not hoisted with ceremony or with any kind of ritual or observance; the trappings of what Billig (1995) refers to as ‘hot nationalism’ were absent. That observable deterioration of this flag was allowed suggests a more banal use. This flag was attached to a makeshift flag pole, approximately six feet high on a fence line. It fluttered, unceremoniously, if the wind caught it. Firth (1973, p333) differentiates flags used as signals, that is to convey information, from flags meant to “express ideas or emotions”, commenting:

A simple instance of a flag signal is when at a country cottage a flag is put on a pole in the hedge at the roadway to attract the attention of travelling milkman or newspaperman. The message is – milk or newspapers wanted; it is imprecise, has minimal content and almost no emotional loading. Moreover, the flag is non-specific. Shape colour and design are immaterial...

Similarly, in this case, this flag is a signal, a boundary marker indicating the edge of the campsite. As such, following Firth (1973), whether the flag is a Union Jack, Northumbrian, or any other design (excepting red which often indicates danger) is irrelevant. The change from a Union Jack in one summer to Northumbrian flag the next in this instance does not suggest a move towards any identity – regional or otherwise. It is a boundary marker, nothing more.

What about two flags of St. George hanging in a shop window in the middle of Haltwhistle (Figure 5.9)? In contrast to the campsite owner who displayed first a Union Jack and then, when it required replacement, hoisted a Northumbrian flag, this shop owner displays two English flags. This reminds me of the people wearing England football shirts and carrying umbrellas with English flags on them. Could it be that some people in Haltwhistle have a heightened sense of English identity?



Figure 5.9 - Shop window in Haltwhistle

Kiely et al (2000, p1.3) conducted a study on the English border town of Berwick-Upon-Tweed investigating the problematics of identity claims made and ascribed by inhabitants, commenting that:

“Ostensibly one would expect that people from Berwick-upon-Tweed would claim an English national identity. After all, they live in a town jurisdictionally in England and in the county of Northumberland. Moreover, one might think that because inhabitants of the town live only 3 miles south of the border with Scotland, they would be likely to feel a heightened sense of their English national identity.”

The authors expect this because “In interviews with a number Scots living in nearby Eyemouth, a Scottish town located six miles north of the border many did indeed claim that living close to the border gave them a heightened sense of national identity” (Kiely et al 2000, p Notes 4). While this thesis is not concerned with national identity, some comment here is required as it relates to the expression of local identities along Hadrian’s Wall and specifically the question of English identity in Haltwhistle. Although further from the border, like Berwick, Haltwhistle is a town in England and in the county of Northumberland. Is a heightened sense of English identity responsible for the display of England flags in the shop window and also imprinted on umbrellas and shirts?

I asked some of the townspeople about the English flags in the shop window. They laughingly said that the flags were put up during the 1998 world cup and the shop owner just didn’t bother to take them down. I thought, the way some people leave unlit Christmas lights strung to the outsides of their houses all year round (Fieldnotes 17 August).

Here it seems as Billig (1995, p123) suggests “the flag-waving of sport itself becomes another flag to be waved.” Thinking again about the England flags on umbrellas, Figure 5.1 is a photograph of a blue umbrella with three lions. This is the badge of the English Football Association and represents the England football team. The same badge was mirrored on many shirts worn on Carnival day. What they are displaying is support of a sporting team and Billig (1995, p124) comments that “often the team is the nation” and that national identity “comes to the fore at international sporting occasions” (Billig 1995, p64).

There is no doubt that on certain occasions people may feel a heightened awareness of their national identity; sporting confrontations between Scotland and England being one of the most



common. However, in their everyday interactions, people's national identity is often seen to be of little immediate relevance (Kiely et al 2001, p34).

Gill (2005, p88) discusses how national identities are negotiated around rugby in a Scottish border town, commenting that the symbols associated with sports teams, such as the badge of the football club referred to above, are shared and known by everyone. Relating these helpful comments from Billig (1995), Gill (2005) and Kiely et al (2001) to the display of flags in Haltwhistle, they appear to be primarily about football. And supporting football is the alleged reason for the English flags in the shop window, displayed for the World Cup and then, I am told, forgotten. They are not fervently waved but fall more into the category of the everyday, or what Billig (1995) calls 'banal'. In many respects these sports related flags also rely on shared cultural tropes, such as those discussed earlier in this chapter, as a means to inculcate unity. They are symbols behind which fellow supporters rally. They rally an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) of football supporters, united in support for their team.

The football shirt, just like the church windows or the village green flag, are also a result of consumerism in addition to ideology as "our identity has become synonymous with patterns of consumption" (Miller 1986, p165 in Billig 1995). The window at Hexham Abbey was paid for by the British Legion, the flag in Melkridge was paid for by the Village Green Committee, the flags in the shop window were paid for and installed by the shop owner; and so in effect, identity is bought, like an umbrella or a football shirt.

However, while these symbols of identity were purchased, the purpose of the flags is to inculcate unity. In Melkridge, the flag is a public symbol of village unity, in place of a carnival. The British Legion window at Hexham Abbey is also a symbol of unity, intertwining flags and emblems in the design. The display of various flags during the Haltwhistle Carnival could also be interpreted as a symbol of unity, that is, drawing on shared cultural tropes such as those displayed on the American Tales float. As part of a Carnival, which DaMatta (1991) suggests is a site of transition, sharing in such cultural tropes allows transformation in the participants and so binds people together in their common understanding. And common understanding and

support for a football team is the reason behind the flags in the shop window and the various sport related shirts and umbrellas.

### ***Conclusion: Bringing the Whole Town Together?***

‘It brings the whole town together’ is a sentiment I have heard expressed, almost word for word, many times in relation to both the Walking Festival and the Summer Carnival, but I wonder how true this statement really is. Certainly, it is the image of Haltwhistle that residents, both locals and incomers want to project publicly (although privately, the walkers were open about their perceived exclusion from Carnival activities). It is the public message Haltwhistle people are united in projecting to the outside world. But is it reflective of what is actually happening in the town? The answer is yes and no. It is a partial truth. It brings the whole town together, those townspeople who are connected with a specific festival. Referring back to Stacy’s (1960) Banbury Studies, it brings together those groups that people choose to join and I would add, those townspeople who are allowed in.

However, both the Summer Carnival and the Walking Festival are similar in that the local residents donate their time to organize both events. Just as members of the local walking group volunteer to lead the walks, towns-people (many of whom are not on the committee) assist with the Carnival; someone brings a cherry picker to hang bunting, the bunting is taken down and divided between several local people and washed in their washing machines, and several local women are involved in cake baking. However, none of these local people are the ‘incomers’ who make up most of the walking group. So it would be more accurate to say that the Summer Carnival brings a certain segment of the town together; the locals and ‘not-locals’ however it also appears to exclude the ‘incomers’ from participating in the organization of the event, in all but peripheral ways such as attending the event and participating in the judging of the scarecrow contest.

This division was commented on in Chapter Three where, as one local resident described it, there are two Haltwhistles; one of locally born insiders and one of incomers from else where. While the Walking Festival and its precursor, the walking group are easy to join for incomers, as I discussed in Chapter Four, the

Summer Carnival is more difficult for incomers to infiltrate. In this way a boundary mechanism is in place; the local people seek to maintain boundaries whereas the incomers promote boundary crossing.

These divisions and boundary mechanisms are also reflected in the ways in which money is raised during both the Walking Festival and Summer Carnival. In Chapter Three I discussed the reasons for Walking Festival attendance; the public reason offered by many people was the 'it brings the whole town together' (a comment I have also heard applied to the Summer Carnival). However, further investigation suggested that economic regeneration of the town following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease provided the impetus to start the Walking Festival and promoting tourism fuels its continuance. The Summer Carnival, on the other hand, draws only on the local community, specifically Haltwhistle residents, from which to raise funds. In this way, local people raise money from the local community, while incomers raise money from other incomers to the town.

The boundaries within Haltwhistle are not the only ones in operation. As I discussed in Chapter Four, in some circumstances the boundaries of what Haltwhistle is accepted to be expand to include the surrounding villages in the old Haltwhistle parishes. However, I was told that those villagers from outside the town do not attend the Haltwhistle Carnival because they have their own fairs and events. The fairs of the surrounding villages distinguish them from Haltwhistle by performing a different presentation of community self and flagging their own distinctive identities.

I argued in Chapter One that festivals are times at which identities are mediated and boundary crossing occurs. My experience of the Summer Carnival included such a boundary crossing through coming to understand the use of the argot, 'the field'. My ignorance of the location of the field clearly marked me as an outsider at the first Carnival I attended. However, through my attendance at this event, I learned this important piece of local knowledge. Now I know what 'the field' means and importantly, where it is. Through attending the Carnival and learning about 'the field', I crossed a boundary in my understanding of local knowledge.

My understanding of 'the field' and my own realization that lack of this piece of local knowledge marked me as an outsider became apparent when reviewing my own fieldnotes. As I discussed in Chapter Two, my fieldnotes are the very first

ordering of analysis and, in addition to recording events and observations, I also included my reactions to these events. This was certainly the case in understanding ‘the field’ as it was used in Haltwhistle:

After the procession I was told the carnival would continue on ‘the field’ but which one? This is a rural community surrounded by fields! (Fieldnotes 6 July)

Without including my own responses in my fieldnotes, this important piece of information may have gone unnoticed when reviewing them for inclusion into the thesis months later.

Public and private are not black and white categories. Just as Jenkins (1996) proposes that individual and collective identities are similar in that they form part of a continuum, it seems that in Haltwhistle and the surrounding area, public and private are two extremes of a continuum of relationship. Where a person stands or relates to others along this continuum equates to that person’s level of belonging. In this way, the Haltwhistle Carnival parade is public, ‘the field’ slightly more private and the Haltwhistle Carnival Committee almost exclusively private. Flags are banal and public, but the message boards, although public, are more private on the public-private continuum because action is required on the part of the onlooker to read their contents.

This chapter has explored what is flagged – either mindfully in the case of the various carnivals and village fairs and their presentation of community self, or mindlessly, such as the flags that Billig calls ‘banal’. However, remembering is part of a dialectic process, because along with remembering there is also forgetting (Billig 1995, Stanley 2006, McCrone and McPherson 2009, Smith 1999). Identities are built not only by commemorating carnivals and other public events that remind us who we are, but also on forgetting. In the next chapter, I will explore the public message that Haltwhistle people choose to perform and also the more private conversations, or more routinely, the silences guarding what is forgotten and what is secret.

## **Chapter 6 – The Enigma Machine: Public Messages, Private Conversations and Hidden Secrets**

...distinguish between the locality's voice to the outside world, and its much more complicated messages to its own members... When the community presents itself to the outside world (as when any level of society engages with another) it simplifies its message and its character down to the barest of essentials. The message, therefore, is frequently experienced by the members of the community as a misrepresentation, for they find the composition of their collectivity inexpressibly complex (Cohen 1982, p8).

...gossip and even scandal, have important positive virtues. Clearly they maintain the unity of morals and values of social groups. Beyond this, they enable these groups to control the competing cliques and aspiring individuals of which all groups are composed (Gluckman 1963, p308).

### ***Introduction***

The Church was full to bursting with exhibits and attendees to the Craft Fair. It was a beautiful sunny day and a band was playing outside, the music drifting into the church. The aisle was packed with stalls which were spread out among the pews. There were stalls selling hand-made cloth bags, glittering glass jewellery, oil paintings, ornaments, patchwork quilts and pillows, knitted and crochet items. Around the edges and against the wall there were exhibits from local artists, photographs of local scenes, books filled with poetry, journals documenting local flora, examples of traditional crafts and a strange object encased in glass. I peered into the protective glass case at what looked like an antiquated typewriter in a beautifully hand-made wooden box. Row upon row of rounded metal keys; some raised, some flat, disks, levers, and what appeared to be electrical parts partially obscuring the mechanics behind them. "It's an Enigma Machine!" said a very enthusiastic man standing next to it. "Used for encrypting and decoding secret messages during World War II. Fascinating isn't it?" he said as he turned to admire the machine himself. "Fascinating" I agreed – but I wondered, why was it there?

In the last chapter I explored the Haltwhistle Summer Carnival and some examples of public messages around the communal presentation of self performed around the various public events. As the Cohen (1982) quotation at the beginning of this chapter suggests, this public message is often very simplistic and a misrepresentation of the complexity and often contradictory private conversations within a community. Just as the purpose of the enigma machine is to encrypt and decrypt secret messages, so the purpose of this chapter is to “distinguish between the locality’s voice to the outside world, and its much more complicated messages to its own members” (Cohen 1982, p8). As I concluded in the previous chapter, public and private are not binaries, but points along a continuum of relationship. Where a person stands or relates to others along this continuum maps onto that person’s level of belonging. In this chapter I will explore the public messages about Haltwhistle projected to the outside world and “intelligible in terms of the private conversations” (Cohen 1982, p8). The Enigma Machine uses ciphers to decrypt hidden messages; conversely, I will analyse gossip, documents and my fieldnotes as well as my reflections upon them to interpret what appears to be encrypted or silenced.

### ***The Public Message: We Are All Together and We Are Good People***

What are the public messages of Haltwhistle, or what Cohen (1982, p8) calls the “locality’s voice to the outside world”? One of them is ‘we are all together’. Thus in the last chapter I reflected on repeatedly being told by townspeople that it is the festivals that bring the whole town together. This projects the image of an ‘organic village’ as a public message, simplified and meant for the outside world. As Strathern (1982b) comments, the ‘organic village’ is actually a perception outsiders would have, those who were unable to see the nuanced divisions between local interest groups that make up the complexity of Haltwhistle’s social life.

The public message is that the town is united and stands together and that, in the context of the festivals, everyone helps and in so doing they are ‘good people.’ However, neither of these public events brings the whole town together, only those segments of the town that are involved in and committed to that specific event. And,

I would add in relation to the Carnival committee, those who are ‘allowed’ in. This is an apparent contradiction of the simplified public message of the ‘organic village’. However, such contradictions can be accounted for in what Tilly (2006) calls the ‘reason giving’ employed by the storyteller, which I now explore by reflecting on some accounts.

Stories of presumed deviant behaviour being corrected can be used to reinforce the public message that Haltwhistle people not only pull together (by adhering to the same values) but are all good people. Reflecting again upon my conversation with the Treasurer of the Carnival Committee, it appears that even seemingly negative events can be deployed to demonstrate that Haltwhistle people are all good people. In the following fieldnote entry, I recorded the account of ‘the stolen scarecrow returned’. The Treasurer related how her scarecrow, outside her home and entered into the Carnival’s scarecrow competition, had been stolen and later returned:

“The Scarecrow was stolen on a Sunday night – and returned the following Thursday looking quite bedraggled! I think someone stole it on the way back from the pub and then took several days to get the nerve to put it back” (Carnival Treasurer, fieldnotes 5 August).

Reflecting upon this short fieldwork note, several themes emerge. Firstly, she explained that the scarecrow was not only stolen but returned, and I was not left for more than a second or two to be told that the thief was drunk rather than really a thief and had returned the stolen property. This reflects an underlying “unity of morals and values” (Gluckman 1963, p308) expressed by Haltwhistle people. She continued to explain why the theft occurred in the first place, that someone took it on the way back from the pub. This is what Tilly (2006) calls her ‘reason giving’ for the story. The strong implication is that it was taken under the influence of alcohol and therefore excusable. She further asserts that the thief took from Sunday night to the following Thursday to “get the nerve to put it back,” indicating that the thief is bound by the same moral rules as the rest of the community, and their breach was so risky that several days of serious contemplation were required to muster the courage to return the scarecrow, which I assume means returning it without being seen. As they

were not seen, the identity of this person or persons is unknown and thus the message that 'we are all good people' remains intact.

But what about when bad things happen and are not 'corrected'? Even here an incident can be used to quarantine those persons who become 'the other' and 'not us'. Such stories can be told to explain to outsiders things like vandalism, which the outsider can clearly see and must be explained away in order to continue the public message that 'we are all together' and 'good people'. The importance of the public message that 'we are all good people' comes to the fore in such situations.

I have just been to the beauty salon for a facial. The beautician doing the treatment is from Haltwhistle born and bred. I asked her if she had lived here all her life and she said she had, as had her parents. She commented that it was shocking that someone had smashed in a couple of windows in the main street – the hardware shop and the one next door. I asked her if she knew who was responsible, she said she had heard names but it was all gossip and she didn't know for sure. But it was terrible – what would visitors to the town who didn't know Haltwhistle think?? That was her main concern. Interesting. As a local not concerned with the tourist trade as far as her occupation goes, she is most concerned about what visitors would think of the place (Fieldnotes 19 May):

I had noticed the broken windows but said nothing, while the beautician brought up the topic and felt the need to comment on it. What was interesting to me is that she was concerned what visitors to the town will think, implying perhaps that people within the town will know that Haltwhistle people are good, but visitors may need to be told. It was my first visit to the salon and my first meeting with the beautician. I had explained to her that I lived and worked at the youth hostel. However, as someone new to the area and unfamiliar with the public message, perhaps she felt the need to inform me, because for her I was a visitor and this may have influenced her comment.

In The Established and the Outsiders, Elias and Scotson (1965) describe a similar situation occurring in a village with a long-established local community and a more recent incomer community. Where members of a group flouted the rules of acceptable behaviour for the group, a sense of shame and embarrassment was felt by all members, because "blemishes observable in some members of the group were



emotionally transferred to all members of the group” (Elias and Scotson 1965, p102). In this way, the beautician was ashamed of the vandalism as it reflects badly on her community group.

Even though the beautician claims to know who did the vandalism, she declined to reveal the names. Not revealing the identity of the vandals leaves open the possibility that it may have been an outside person or group, similarly to the scarecrow incident where the thieves were also unseen. However as Elias and Scotson (1965, p93) argue, “That one gossiped about it with others was proof of one’s own blamelessness. It reinforced the community of righteousness.” The result is a community of good people to which the beautician belongs by virtue of her giving this account.

### ***Churches Together***

Scandal and gossip are not the only means by which public messages are conveyed to the outside world. As I discussed in Chapter One drawing on Cohen (1982, p 13), “local experience mediates national identity”, while the national can be rewritten for other social formations as well. The message that ‘we are all together’ is also represented through the apparent harmony and unification of the town’s churches. Religious difference is often the focus for divisions within a community. In Village on the Border, Frankenberg (1957) explores divisions between church and chapel. In Haltwhistle, the public message proclaims the reverse; the churches are together (Figure 6.1). Figure 6.1 shows a small leaflet giving information on the religious services available in the town. The leaflet states that the audience is ‘visitors’ making this an explicit public message for outsiders.

I wondered how this unity of religious institutions developed. History is important here. As Elias and Scotson (1965) proposed, without looking into the history of the town in their research, the underlying reasons for the existing divisions would not have been apparent. What is the history of ‘Churches Together’ in Haltwhistle?

This leaflet is published by Churches Together in Haltwhistle, which is the Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed Churches of the town working in partnership and sharing our resources.

For those visitors who would like to worship with us we hope this leaflet is helpful. You are also assured of a warm welcome in whichever denomination you choose to worship.

We hope all visitors to our town have an enjoyable stay and will find something of interest so that you will want to return again.



WELCOME  
to  
HALTWHISTLE

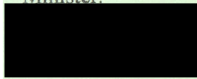
This leaflet is for the benefit of visitors to our town, to inform when and where Christian worship can be found each week.

From time to time there are extra services or events - please see church noticeboards for details.

HALTWHISTLE  
METHODIST  
CHURCH

Westgate

Minister:



Sunday Worship  
10.30am  
Morning Worship  
10.30am  
Sunday School  
(except school holidays)  
6.00pm  
Evening Worship

ST WILFRID'S  
ROMAN CATHOLIC  
CHURCH

Two Churches  
Westgate

Priest:



Sunday Worship  
11.00am  
Mass

UNITED REFORMED  
CHURCH

Two Churches  
Westgate



Sunday Worship  
2.30pm  
(until 31st May 2009)

HOLY CROSS  
ANGLICAN  
CHURCH

The Market Place

Vicar:



Sunday Worship  
8.00am  
Holy Communion

9.30am  
Sung Eucharist

Thursday Worship  
10.00am  
Holy Communion

Figure 6.1

A formal Association was established in 2003 between the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and the United Reformed

Church, building on ten years of active cooperation (The Squeak 2003, Issue 6, p2). As I discussed in Chapter One, traditions are invented, often, but not always, by some kind of institutional body to respond to a problem (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, Cohen 1982). One possible problem is identified in The Squeak (2003, Issue 6 p2) as opposition to “the minority who are only committed to self-interest.” Although the specifics are not elaborated upon, the article clarifies that such self interest involves division between the churches, contrasting the public message that the churches stand together with the concluding statement affirming, “The Way Forward is together” (The Squeak, Issues 6, p2).

However, the unified relationship between the churches in Haltwhistle has a longer history than the formation of this formal Association in 2003. While scanning through old editions of the Hexham Courant newspaper on reels of microfiche in Hexham library I discovered, by accident, the following short item printed in 1938:

General Exodus – 300 Scholars and adults left Haltwhistle by train for their annual outing (to Whitley Bay) they represented Westgate Methodist, Castle Hill Methodist, Parish Church, Presbyterian Church, The Elim Hall, Assembly Mission and Salvation Army (Hexham Courant, 16 July 1938, p8)

I think that 300 may be a misprint for 30, as I have been advised such misprints are common in the Courant. However, this short news item indicates that a partial association between many of the religious groups in Haltwhistle was in existence long before the formal Association of 2003. It also indicates that the tradition of an annual outing, operating as a social landmark in bringing together representatives of these groups, was already ongoing in 1938.

What prompted a formal Association being established (or perhaps re-established) in 2003? One possible factor was told to me as a piece of gossip on one of the weekly walks. A local woman from the nearby village of Henshaw, a self identified Methodist, explained there was a problem with the Vicar of the Anglican Church and the issue was Holy Communion. Methodists and Catholics can make communion in each other’s churches, but the Anglican Vicar will only allow those confirmed in the Anglican Church to accept communion there, thus excluding Methodists and Catholics. Following Tilly (2006), the accuracy of a story is less

important that the reason given for its telling, and I wondered why Methodists and Catholics might find themselves in the Anglican Church. The Henshaw woman explained that the ministers “all preach in each other’s churches” and everyone accepts this intermingling except the Vicar. Perhaps the Anglican Vicar and his supporters are the minority that The Squeak article is referring to. And perhaps, as the gossip is a Methodist, her gossip brings me closer to a more private conversation about the Churches Together, a division not so dissimilar from Frankenberg’s (1957) findings in Village on the Border.

And perhaps the vilifying of the vicar is in itself a tradition. As far back as 1311, the Vicar was an unpopular figure in Haltwhistle, with the then Vicar, Robert de Pykwell, captured and held for ransom by border raiders (Moore 1915, p104). The people of Haltwhistle responded that the raiders could keep the Vicar and refused to pay. This story is a popular one and is recounted in at least two of the Haltwhistle Rings and has been retold in various newspaper articles over the years, keeping the tradition of vilifying the Vicar very much alive or, as Plumber (2001) writes, ‘freezing’ the story by writing it down and transforming it into a ‘true memory’.

The property of this church suffered severely at the hands of the Scots, and Robert de Pykwell, the vicar, was carried into captivity. In 1311 he had a licence to let the vicarage to farm for one year to pay for his redemption. As late as 1314, when the moiety granted to Edward I by the clergy was collected, nothing could be obtained from the vicarage of Haltwhistle because everything had been destroyed and carried away by the Scots, who still remained in the neighbourhood, so that no one dared go near the place (Moore 1915, p104).

...witnessed the violence of the Border wars and Reiver raids, with the vicar reportedly being carried off by Scots raiders in 1311 and his house put up for rent to pay a ransom (Coulter, D. 2009 The Cumberland News online).

Having been carried off prisoner by the Scots, Robert de Pykwell received licence in 1311 to let his vicarage to pay his ransom. In 1313 there is a release of a sequestration, as the abbot had fully satisfied the king (Society of Antiquaries, 1822 p15).

After the vicar of Haltwhistle, Robert de Pykwell, was kidnapped by the Scots, the people of Haltwhistle said that they could keep him (Ellis, M 2004 p54).

The above quote from Martin Ellis was referenced in the Journal and The Sunday Sun newspapers, Dec 7, 2004

...the bishop had to pay a ransom to secure the release of the vicar, Robert de Pykewell, after he had been captured by an attacking Scottish party in 1311, burning the town and the church in the process (Coulter 2008 The Hexham Courant online).

**Did you know:** The Holy Cross Parish Church dates from the early 13th century and has several historic connections and many interesting architectural features, but a favourite anecdote relates to its incumbent vicar of border warfare days. It is said that the vicar of the parish Robert de Pykewell in 1311 was taken hostage by cross-border raiders and a ransom demanded. The good people of Haltwhistle responded by stating the demands would not be met, and that they could therefore keep the vicar! (The Haltwhistle Rings Walk 06 p2, The Haltwhistle Rings Walk 01 p1).

### ***Receiving Loud and Clear. Or Not.***

Reflecting upon these three accounts; the stolen scarecrow, vandalism and 'Churches Together', my perceived social location has impacted on what I was told and so what I can know. This involves not only how the townspeople in question reacted to me and what they chose to tell and conceal, but also how I positioned myself in relation to them. The first account of the stolen scarecrow was related to me by the Treasurer of the Carnival Committee during a conversational interview. As I discussed in the last chapter, this interview was difficult to organize and occurred by going through several intermediaries. This involved the walkers (predominantly incomers), the shop owner 'on the fringes of being local', one of her 'local' employees, and finally the 'local' Treasurer herself. Unlike most of my research, which was conversational in nature, this was a semi-structured interview: I was interviewer, the Treasurer was interviewee. Also, in relation to the Treasurer I was a stranger, an outsider, present in order to research and interview.

Regarding the first two examples, unlike the walkers who, like myself, are incomers to the town, the Treasurer and the beautician are locals. In addition, I had no prior relationship with either of them as I did with the walkers. Even though I explained that I live and work at the Youth Hostel, I also explained that I was in Haltwhistle as a researcher. From their position as a local, I was very much an

incomer and a temporary one at that. I represented 'the outside world' and what I was told is the simplified public message (Cohen 1982). In both cases, their gossip about 'bad things' did not reveal the names of the perpetrators, which they implied they knew. My interpretation is that such talk would be reserved for more private conversations between members of the local groups that they were part of. What their gossip did reveal, however, is that they themselves were blameless for the activities concerned, and the goodness of local people was re-established (Elias and Scotson 1965). In the stolen scarecrow incident, the missing scarecrow was returned. In the vandalism incident, those implied as responsible were cast as 'other', thus preserving the 'community of righteousness' of the gossipers (Gluckman 1963) and by extension this conveyed the public message that 'we are good people.'

However, in the third account, regarding the Churches Together, the identity of the perceived malcontents was revealed, by a local from the nearby village of Henshaw but also a walker. My relation to her was also as a walker, and I had come to know this woman over two years of regular contact through the walking group of which we were both members. Unlike the beautician and the Carnival Treasurer, I had built up a relationship with this woman over a period of time and we were both members of the same recreational group by choice (Stacey 1960). My interpretation is that as member of the same group I was privy to the private conversations between members of the walking group and thus any relevant gossip.

So far I have explored some aspects of public messages broadcast for the outside world in Haltwhistle. I have argued, drawing on Cohen (1982), that this is a very simple message, that 'we are all together' and that 'we are good people.' Gossiping about things that go wrong assists this public message by drawing the gossipers together as a community (we are all together), reinforcing moral values and deflecting blame away from 'us' (we are good people). My relationship to the tellers impacted on what they shared or left unspoken, and so what I can know from such exchanges, apart from in the last instance where the Vicar was branded the 'problem', only the public message was conveyed to me. However, as Cohen (1982, p8) suggests, the researcher "must try to make the public messages intelligible in terms of the private conversations - and not the other way around." One event where

both public messages and private conversations were audible by me was around the failure of the Craft Fair, which I now turn to explore.

### ***Private Conversations: It Failed Because of Him!***

While public messages are directed to the outside world from within Haltwhistle groups, there are private conversations which differ from the ‘organic village’ image proclaimed by the public message. These private conversations acknowledge divisions between various groups within the town, and I gained access to some of them because walking group members actively voiced their feelings of exclusion from the organization of the Craft Fair and the Carnival.

This chapter began with a comment about my visit to the Craft Fair during my first year of fieldwork. The purpose of the Craft Fair is “to promote all levels of local talent” and exhibiting the work of local artisans is central (Coulter 2008). As it appeared to be so popular and well-attended, I selected it from the various public events in Haltwhistle for further exploration to see how incomers and locals cooperate (or not) and perform their identities to the outside world.

The Craft Fair was well advertised in the local newspaper and The Squeak, and is also much talked about in Haltwhistle in the months leading up to it. On the day of the Fair I arranged to meet several of the walkers in the Market Place and go with them to the Anglican Church where the Fair was held. We separated once there, and in my case wandering about brought me to the glass case protecting the Enigma Machine, as commented earlier. The glass case contained a small type-written card explaining that this was a model replica of an Enigma Machine made by a local man. Appearances can be deceptive, for what initially appeared to be anomalous curio turned out to be an example of local craftsmanship, precisely what the Craft Fair is all about. This acts as a metaphor for the fact that private conversations are the terms upon which the public messages must be interpreted, because the public may not make sense until the private is known, as Cohen (1982) suggests.

### ***Failure of the Craft Fair***

Craft Fair 2009 ???

Mr X, after several years of hard and unstinting labour on the Craft Fair has decided he can no longer continue. This event has grown in stature over previous years and provides an excellent showcase for

local artists and craft workers. The Haltwhistle Association would like the event to continue. Mr. A and Mr. B would like to hear from anyone willing to put time into developing the Fair for this year and beyond. (The Squeak, May 2009, p3)

On reading the above short article in the May 2009 issue of The Squeak, (2009) my heart sank because the Craft Fair was one of the events I had decided to explore in connection with this thesis. I chose it because it seemed popular and well attended by both locals and incomers and would provide a good opportunity to observe how localism is made and re-made through the performance and possible transition of identities at this public event. After the resounding success of the Craft Fair during the first year of my fieldwork, how could I make sense of its failure during the second? Here I explore the ways that locals and incomers provided reasons for the failure of the Craft Fair.

During my fieldwork I attended as many public (and private) events as possible. There are several other smaller fairs and public events in Haltwhistle and one of them is the Annual Plant Fair. It was at the Plant Fair that I recognised one of the walkers and she told me about the Craft Fair:

“Did you know that the Craft Fair would probably not happen this year?” She said. Actually I did – I read it in The Squeak. She said she had a list of email addresses for people who are usually involved, but no one was doing anything, she thought it wouldn’t happen this year (Fieldnotes 16 May).

In Chapter Four I explored the importance of local knowledge, arguing that knowing local history, folklore and specifically what is happening in the town is involved in an incomer moving towards being a member of local groups. It seems from the above fieldnote entry, that I am very proud of my own local knowledge. In an earlier chapter I discussed the boundaries of Haltwhistle and how, in some contexts, the boundaries of Haltwhistle extend to include the old Haltwhistle parishes and what is known as the Haltwhistle district. The newsletter The Squeak is delivered to all homes in the district and also the Youth Hostel where I was volunteering receives a copy. As recipient, I perhaps identified as a local resident. The Craft Fair was also discussed in the walking group itself.



We stopped by a bench for our morning coffee break. The rain was persistent. Several walkers started to discuss the Craft Fair, which is not happening this year. They were bitter because a meeting, to discuss the continuance of the festival was only attended by four people. They were upset because they are all on the mailing list but none of them were invited to the meeting (Fieldnotes 17 June).

I thought this was very strange in light of my 16 May fieldnote entry and what I surmised from this chance conversation. I wondered how it could be that none of them had been invited to the meeting, as they claimed. Like Tilly (2006), I was more interested in the reason given for their lack of involvement than whether or not emails were actually sent and who may or may not have been on the mailing list. When people give such reasons, this is not solely out of a search for truth or sense making, but because they are “negotiating their social lives” Tilly (2006, p15).

The walkers perceived they had been excluded from participating in the organization of the Craft Fair, including the walker who claimed she had seen the email list. The walkers demonstrated solidarity in complaining and sharing in the communal sense of having been excluded from any decision-making regarding the Craft Fair, to reinforce their “community of righteousness” (Elias and Scotson 1965, p93). As Tilly (2006, p10) suggests, the giving of reasons connects people in a group and provides “statements about relations between the people giving and receiving those reasons.” The given reason for their perceived exclusion brought them together, and the division between those who were thought to be invited to the meeting and those who were excluded, reinforced their solidarity and sense of belonging to the walking group.

However, such things “belong to the relationship at hand, and therefore vary from one relationship to another” (Tilly 2006, p17). And so the explanation I was told by the walkers about why they were not involved in saving the Craft Fair was different from that of locals, influenced of course by my relationship to them because “differently situated groups develop often different views of the realities involved.” (Stanley and Wise 2006, p26).

The Treasurer explained that she was not involved with any of the other festivals in the town and when I asked her about the Craft Fair

she didn't know anything about it but said that if she had known they needed volunteers she would have gotten involved, as would others (Fieldnotes 5 August).

Unlike the walkers who complained of their exclusion, the Treasurer of the Carnival Committee claimed she knew nothing of the impending failure of the Craft Fair, despite coverage in The Squeak, delivered to every home in the area and focal point of much local talk. Her reason for non-involvement – that she had no knowledge of it - is similar to the walkers' comment that they were denied knowledge of it. Both groups claimed they were unable to help because either they did not know or else were denied access. Both claimed they wanted to help, reinforcing the public message that 'everyone helps'. The locals and incomers give different reasons (Tilly 2006) for the same result, the failure to rescue the craft fair. But why?

I asked Sue at the Association office about the Craft Fair. Sue said that the Craft Fair is being taken over by a new organizer. I asked what happened to the original fair – apparently there was a committee, but the president wouldn't delegate and then claimed it was all too much when he got no help. He is also the very 'recent' president of another event Committee in town. Also, the fair will no longer be held in the Church because the Vicar is afraid it would not be as good as the prior years and this would reflect badly on the church. However, the new organizer is planning to change the festival around and introduce a pub crawl which will have local bands playing at all the pubs on route (Fieldnotes 8 Sept).

Interestingly, Sue feels no obligation to give a reason for her own involvement or lack thereof, even though she is employed by an organization responsible for the promotion of public events. The reason for the Craft Fair failure she gives is that the president failed to delegate to the committee and then, feeling overwhelmed, resigned. In addition she says he was also president of another committee. As Masson (2007, p35) suggests, "a new arrival who sits back, watches community life, learns how it happens, and then joins in seems more likely to be incorporated. The 'pushy' incomer who runs every committee and is seen to be 'taking over' often remains peripheral, sometimes shunned." This makes such a person the perfect 'fall guy' when things go wrong, and the same sequence of events

was described by Frankenberg (1957) in analysing the failure of public events in Village on the Border.

However, there is more than one scapegoat implicated here, with (in another conversation) the already discredited Vicar linked with potential barriers to the continuance of the Craft Fair. Gluckman's (1963, p308) comment that such talk is used "to control the competing cliques and aspiring individuals" is a helpful way of looking at these explanations. Here it implicates two fall-guys in connection with the failure of the Craft Fair, the president of the Craft Fair and the Vicar. The Vicar, from a piece of prior gossip, is said to be a barrier to the Churches Together movement, and the related public message that, by extension, Haltwhistle stands together.

As I noted earlier, the public message conveyed about Haltwhistle is, as Cohen (1982) suggests, an oversimplification of the complexity of social relations within the town. Cohen (1982) cautions that the simplified public message must be understood in terms of the more complex private conversations that occur. What do the private conversations say? In the case of the failure of the Craft Fair, this is that both locals and walkers would have helped had they been asked. The reason given for non-involvement hinges on separation, division and exclusion – quite the reverse of the public message 'we are all together'. And such separations and divisions increase the sense of individual people belonging to their own respective groups. But how is the public message to be understood when there are no available private conversations or gossip, nothing it seems but silence?

### ***Decrypting Silence***

In the last chapter, I was repeatedly told that the Carnival was restarted in 1989, but I wondered, 'restarted following what?' There appeared to be a reason the Carnival stopped that no-one could 'remember'. Sometimes in order to find out what is, one must look at its opposite – what is not. In order to explore the communal presentation in Haltwhistle, what is concealed or unspoken has to be explored. In this section I explore the growing silence I encountered as I attempted to find out about the original Carnival. How can I understand a piece of knowledge expressed by

silence? Eventually I concluded that the reasons for the failure of the old Carnival were very different from the impression that Haltwhistle people wish to give about the town, and so rather than account for it, silence prevailed. And this silence, as Gordon (2008) suggests, is a story in itself.

No one could tell me anything about the old Carnival before it was restarted in 1989. Although there is a lot of information about the Carnival since its restart, no one, including the event organizers, could tell me anything about the demise of the old Carnival, although some older residents remembered participating in the Carnival as children. Following are several fieldnote entries concerning conversations with people I felt sure would know why the old Carnival ended:

Penny told me the carnival had been ongoing since she was a girl and she remembered tap dancing on stage. Penny is in her late 60s. She also said the carnival did stop for a while but she couldn't remember why (Fieldnotes 3 June).

Treasurer : She said that the Carnival was restarted in 1989 because of the town twinning with St. Meen le Grand in France, although she was unable to say why. Do they have a carnival? She also knew that a carnival had existed before but didn't know what happened or much about it but suggested people I could talk to. One of the people she suggested I talk to is the shop owner at Carnival Head Quarters who she said would remember the old carnival. The other is the President of the Carnival Committee, I was assured that he would know (Fieldnotes 5 August).

After a whole summer of trying to get the shop owner at the Carnival HQ she was actually there!! I talked to her and she remembers the carnival as a girl – she said it was the hospital carnival originally. She didn't know why the carnival stopped (Fieldnotes 8 September).

I called the Carnival President on the phone and asked if he would be willing to talk. He asked how I got his number and I explained that the Carnival Treasurer had passed it on saying he might be able to help me with information about the history of the carnival. He enthusiastically began to talk about what would be happening next year and how much better it would be than the prior years. I asked about the old hospital carnival and why the carnival had stopped. He said he really didn't know anything about that and could only talk about the carnival since it restarted in 1989 (Fieldnotes 5 August).

Town Twinning representative: “It is great that you have been informed of the Carnival's history, coming out of the Bretons visits to celebrate with us and process through the streets of Halty! Although I haven't been involved for more than 4 years now, there are several people around Haltwhistle who have been involved from the start.... Do you mind me asking, are you a local resident?”(Email 9 September )

The first fieldnote entry concerns a local woman and one of the very few local members of the walking group who had participated in the Carnival as a child; the second is the Treasurer of the current Carnival Committee; the third is the shop owner at Carnival Head Quarters and also a child participant; the fourth is the President of the present Carnival Committee; the fifth is a representative of the Town Twinning Committee and connected with the restart of the Carnival in 1989. I had felt sure, because these people are all intimately connected with the Carnival, that they would know the reason for the break, evidenced by the Carnival restarting in 1989. Perhaps they did know, but all I encountered were diversions, dead ends, disclaimers and ultimately silence.

As the Carnival appears integral to social life in the town I felt sure it would be discussed at the Haltwhistle Association's AGM in September 2009. I also hoped the failed Craft Fair would be discussed because publicly at least, the intention was to save and revive it. As minutes from the previous year's AGM are only circulated a year later, I decided to take minutes of the meeting myself (Appendix 4). Many other social activities within and beyond the town were discussed in detail. But although the Walking Festival, regeneration of the library, the gardening club, local history projects and restoration of the vandalised shop front were all discussed, there was no mention of either the Carnival or the Craft Fair.

### ***Code Sending and Reason Giving***

In his discussion of reason giving, Tilly (2006) differentiates stories from conventions. For Tilly (2006, p15), stories are explanatory narratives offering cause-effect relationships to explain events, whereas conventions provide simple reasons, for example, 'I forgot'. In the first four fieldnote entries above, a conventional reason was offered for not being able to tell me why the old Carnival ended, with the teller

saying they cannot remember or do not know and no further information is offered by them. The Treasurer, after telling me she did not know why the Carnival ended, suggested someone else who would – who turned out not to.

I began to wonder if these really were simple conventional reasons, because there appeared to be a code of practice at work. Typically, Tilly (2006) suggests, codes are used in situations such as legal proceedings, medical procedures, and administrative policy decisions by specialists, and not by ordinary people. However, it seems that in the above five accounts there is a shared code of amnesia or avoidance: “In contrast to stories, codes need not bear much explanatory weight so long as they conform to the available rules” (Tilly 2006, p17). The rule here seems to be that no one talks about the demise of the old Carnival. The simple explanation of forgetting or not knowing and pointing me in another direction could be interpreted as following a policy, which is what Tilly suggests codes are all about. In the above accounts, after forgetting or not knowing, several people suggested someone else I could talk to or, in the final account from the Town Twinning Representative, stated that “It is great that you have been informed of the Carnival's history, coming out of the Bretons visits to celebrate with us and process through the streets of Halty!” (Email, 9 September 2009), implying there is no history before that.

As no one could (or would) tell me why the Carnival had stopped prior to 1989, I decided to do some detective work of my own. The Hexham Courant, regularly prints articles about festivals, fairs and other public events in Haltwhistle. Old copies of the Courant are kept on microfiche at the Hexham public library. Having hit a dead-end and agreeing with Elias and Scotson (1965) that the history of an event is important in understanding current social relationships, I took the train to Hexham and went to the library to find out more.

I had no idea when the Carnival had ended or even when it had originally begun – was this an ancient fair that had existed for hundreds of years? A librarian told me that the Courant was on microfiche and was not indexed and so the only way to find out would be to start reading every newspaper, cover to cover. The Courant is a weekly newspaper, but there were still potentially hundreds of editions to scan. I began by looking at 1989, the year the Carnival restarted, and found several articles in line with the story I was told by townspeople, that the Carnival had restarted to

celebrate the town twinning with one in France. I had hoped to find something about the old Carnival, but focus was on the restart. For hours, I scanned through years without success. Eventually I found a short article entitled ‘Carnival to Aid Hospital’ (23 July 1938, p2, Appendix 5).

This was the fifth annual Carnival in aid of the War Memorial Hospital. Scanning through the microfiche, the Carnival stopped for several years during World War II and resumed in 1949 with the proceeds aimed at funding a new swimming pool (following the birth of the National Health Service in 1948, it was no longer necessary to raise funds for the hospital). It seems, reading through the Courant in the early post-war years, that swimming pools were very much in vogue, with many towns in the area raising money to build their own.

The tone of Carnival news stories took on a distinctly financial tone, introducing a ‘carnival barometer’ to chart the money raised. By 1950 (Appendix 6), the focus of the story was “a successful financial return” (Hexham Courant, 21 July 1950, p8). The goal was to raise £1000 to build the swimming pool, and the ‘carnival barometer’ in the following week’s issue (Hexham Courant 28 July 1950, p5) recorded that £840 was raised, - an increase of over £140 on the previous year’s figure. In the years following this there were articles announcing the Carnival and then a follow-up article afterwards reporting its events and importantly, how much money was raised. On Friday 9 July 1954 the Courant reported that the Carnival to be held the following week would be the biggest and most ambitious to date.

The next Haltwhistle Carnival to be reported in the Hexham Courant was in 1989. What happened to the 1954 Carnival, promised to be the biggest and most ambitious ever? I thought perhaps I had missed the news report of it, searched the microfiche again and found nothing.

In attempting to find out about the demise of the old Haltwhistle Carnival, I had talked to many people and researched newspaper archives over half a century as well as checking online resources, and found nothing to explain what happened to the Carnival in 1954. As Stanley (2006) suggests, along with remembering there is also forgetting and both forgetting and remembering are involved in the post/memory process. What is it about the old Carnival that the townspeople wanted to forget? This ‘forgetting’ enables a rewrite of the history of the Carnival in terms of the

desired present, that the townspeople are good people and that they stand together. This forgetting seemed to have originated as deliberate silence. Smith's (1999, p16) comment that "the past is as much a zone of conflict as the present" is pertinent in this respect, as history is being renegotiated and rewritten to convey a desired story about the past, a story written very much in the present.

Tilly (2006) suggests the reasons for such stories, conventions and codes, is to connect people. But in the context I am discussing, silence may operate as a disconnection with people not wanting to be associated with the old Haltwhistle Carnival. Here at least, everyone really was together and united in their disclaimed knowledge around the failure of this event in 1954. And that there was an actual silence here was conveyed to me two days before my fieldwork for 2009 ended, at a point when I had reconciled myself to the fact that I would never find out what happened to the Carnival. However, I was then visited by a man I had not knowingly met before. He suggested at various points in our conversation that the locals (he was an incomer) were what he called 'insular' and it was only the incomers who started anything, although he conceded that once things were 'off the ground' then locals would get involved. Even the 'local' Carnival was (re)started by incomers. Consequently my visitor felt disconnected from locals and their community and was therefore entitled to gossip about them. But why was he so keen to gossip to me? He had heard I was researching this topic as part of my PhD thesis, that I was a researcher, only temporarily resident and not really connected, like him.

My visitor told me that the 1954 Carnival did take place and record amounts of money were raised towards the swimming pool. The money was displayed in two large glass jars as contributions to the much advertised 'carnival barometer' and also testament to the public message that the people of Haltwhistle were good people, shown by giving so much of their money to a worthy communal cause. However, the morning after the Carnival, the glass jars were found smashed by the river and the money stolen.

At first I thought that the shame surrounding the theft was the reason that the whole affair was silenced. This theft was so much in conflict with the public messages that Haltwhistle people are good people, that it had to be silenced, and further, that the people of Haltwhistle were united in their silence. I wondered if this



silence was one way in which the whole town really did come together. However, this is only the account of one person, a person who, as an incomer, was not present at the 1954 Carnival. Here again, I am not concerned with the truth of his account; he may be truthfully recounting a story he has heard, but that does not mean the theft actually occurred, nor does it validate the assumption that communal silence was instituted out of a sense of shame. There could be other, rather more prosaic reasons why the Carnival ended in 1954, such as lack of interest from organisers, or perhaps enough money was raised and another Carnival was not needed. Perhaps, the reason for the demise of the old Carnival really was forgotten as many of the people I talked to claimed. But why?

Unlike the stories about the capture and ransom of the unpopular vicar of Haltwhistle in 1311, something which has been ‘frozen’ and constantly retold in news articles and other local literature over the years, the story of the 1954 Carnival has not been kept alive. Searching through old copies of the Hexham Courant, The Squeak, books and online sources, I could find no mention of the Carnival after 1954 until its revival in 1989. Perhaps this lack of constant reminding is the reason it has slipped from memory. Maybe a shameful event did occur, perhaps the money was stolen, and perhaps the original reason for the silence was a communal sense of shame surrounding the event. But maybe not.: However, after that initial silence, and through lack of reminding, the reasons – what ever they were - may have simply been ‘forgotten’. As Plummer (2001, p242) comments, “what matters to people keeps getting told in their stories”, if the story of the ending of the old Carnival is not being told, it could be that it simply does not matter to the people in Haltwhistle that I spoke to.

### ***Conclusion: Reasons to Remember, Reasons to Forget***

In this chapter I have attempted to understand the public messages conveyed to me about Haltwhistle in terms of the private conversations and silences. What stuck me most was that my perceived social location had effects regarding what Haltwhistle townspeople chose to share with me and what they chose to conceal. The public message is that townspeople are good people and that they all stand

together. Although this communal presentation of self is performed around the festivals, which I was continually told bring the whole town together, this public message is also conveyed in the reason-giving behind things that go wrong. The display of the Enigma Machine at the Craft Fair appeared to be an anomaly, but there was a very good reason for it being there – to showcase local craftsmanship. Similarly, the account of the return of the stolen scarecrow indicates that, although something bad may appear to have happened, a theft, it was excusable and the scarecrow was returned. This account was related to me by the Carnival Treasurer – a local person I was meeting for the first time. To her, I was an outsider and what I got was the public message which reinforced the goodness and togetherness of the townspeople.

As I concluded in Chapter Five, public and private are two extremes along a continuum. The account of the stolen scarecrow as well as the explanation for vandalism also related to me by a local person, convey the public message about the town. While the account regarding the ‘Churches Together’ was related to me by a local woman, she was also a fellow member of the walking group and so I was privy to more of the private conversations occurring. The accounts of exclusion related by the walkers were similarly at a more private point along the public-private continuum, because like them I was an incomer but still a temporary resident. And finally, silence surrounding the reasons for the demise of the old Carnival were broken by another incomer, one who, while resident, was not really connected to the town, like me.

While I was unable to see how identities were made and remade at the annual Craft Fair beyond the first year, its failure and the response to it by both locals and incomers was illuminating. Chapter Three discussed the division between locals and incomers and these divisions are reflected again around the failure of the Craft Fair and the inability of both groups to save it. The incomers claimed they were excluded from important meetings and the locals claimed they would have helped, but they knew nothing about it. Just as both groups raise money - the incomers through the Walking Festival and the locals through the Summer Carnival - they do it for different reasons and for/from different people. Similarly, in response to the pending

failure of the Craft Fair, both groups were unable to help but cited different reasons for the same inability to get involved.

Tilly (2006, p10) comments that the giving of reasons connects people, and the failure of the Craft Fair offered a unique opportunity to observe the reason-giving on behalf of the locals and incomers for their inability to save it. The incomers communally claimed exclusion and thus bonded within their own group and the locals claimed lack of knowledge, thus holding themselves blameless. Blame ultimately fell on the fall-guy, the incomer organizer of the fair and, to a lesser extent, the already vilified Vicar. And this allowed both incomers and locals to further increase their sense of belonging to their own respective groups. Chapter Four discussed how local residents in Bardon Mill and Gilsland resisted the closure of their Post Office and in so doing increased their own level of belonging, and Chapter Five commented that the villages around Haltwhistle hosted their own fairs to resist inclusion into Haltwhistle. In this chapter, groups of people blame the fall-guy and the Vicar for perceived injustices and in so doing defined “boundaries of commonality within which meaning is shared” (Cohen 1982, p9).

In Chapter One, the importance of history was discussed and following Elias and Scotson (1965) I stressed that understanding the foundation of many present day social conditions involved looking into the past. This was essential in understanding why the vicar was vilified. In my initial conversation with the Methodist women and member of the walking group, the Vicar was held up as a barrier to the ‘churches together’ movement in Haltwhistle. At first I thought this was because the Vicar was Anglican and the teller Methodist, however, a look at history, both recent and distant suggests a longer standing stigma attached to the Vicar in Haltwhistle. Most recently, the Vicar was blamed in relation to the failure of the craft fair, however I think that he was most likely a fall-guy. Reading an article in The Squeak about a minority of people who oppose the Churches Together movement, conjecture from the gossip about the Vicar and his alleged refusal to allow non-Anglicans to receive Holy Communion in the Anglican church, that the Vicar is again implied. However, the unpopularity of the Vicar stretches as far back as the Middle Ages. The popular story of the capture and ransom of the Vicar of Haltwhistle in 1311 – and the subsequent refusal of the people to pay the ransom – is kept very much alive today,

in the Haltwhistle Rings and numerous local news articles. Vilifying the vicar has become a tradition, one with long and much celebrated historic roots.

However, not all historic events are remembered, some are forgotten or silenced. This was the case with the reason the old Carnival stopped in 1954. Despite talking to many people who I believed would know what happened to the Carnival, none of them were able or willing to tell me. Reason giving varied among the people I asked. Some said they did not know, others said they could not remember or referred me to a third person. One person informed me that the Carnival had started in 1989 and thus negated anything that might have happened before. Finally, one person, an incomer to the town, contacted me to tell me his version of events, that the money raised during Carnival week in 1954 had been stolen. Although it is possible that a shameful event did end the Carnival in 1954 and may have been the reason for silence at the time, I argue that it is the lack of retelling since then that most likely has resulted in the reason genuinely being forgotten, as most people said. Much the same way that identity requires constant flagging, as discussed in Chapter Five, so stories require constant telling to stay alive.

Stories about the Vicar of 1311 are constantly flagged in books, news paper articles, The Squeak and other print and online sources. Although my interest in the Vicar was sparked by bits of local gossip, it was evidence of tales about Vicars in that role spanning eight hundred years that allowed me to understand why the Vicar is an easy fall-guy in Haltwhistle today. Use of documentary evidence in the form of newspapers, The Squeak, flyers and analysis of my own fieldnotes as a source of data has been invaluable in ordering my analysis. Lack of such data surrounding the demise of the old Carnival suggests to me that the reason this story has been forgotten by many people is precisely because it has not been flagged between the event in 1954 and the present day.

As I have pointed out, how other people perceived me impacted on what they were willing to share or conceal. However, in none of these groups was I 'local'. Even as a member of the walking group, it was known that I was a temporary resident in the area. However, there is one place where I was regarded as an insider, a group which resisted engaging with activities or events in or around Haltwhistle. That group is the Youth Hostel where I worked as a volunteer over most of my

fieldwork. I will now explore how community was created and belonging inculcated in the youth hostel and how and why resident hostel workers did not engage with the Haltwhistle community, town or parish, as a means to belong.

## **Chapter 7 - Living in a Bubble: A Community of Belonging Separate from Place**

“we live in a bubble here; we are so far from reality, it’s like the real world doesn’t exist!” (Hostel worker).

"Matters of identity seem everywhere and yet nowhere because most people do not have to think about or negotiate them very much. For most, identity is, in Michael Billig’s (1995) term, banal in the sense that it is taken for granted, everyday, affirmed by the iconography of daily life. Those on the margins, however, whether in national or ethnic terms, offer the social scientist much better opportunities for understanding that identities are, in essence, negotiation codes used as people attempt to steer paths through processes of acceptance and affirmation"(McCrone 2002, p317).

### ***Introduction***

Throughout this thesis, I have explored the ways in which localism is made and remade through participation in the annual round of festivals and other public events in and around Haltwhistle. This chapter serves to highlight the core themes of the two main festivals by comparing them to a community within the old Haltwhistle parishes which exhibits a strong sense of belonging that is separate from Haltwhistle as a place, the youth hostel where I volunteered for most of my fieldwork. As the quote above suggests, “Those on the margins... offer the social scientist much better opportunities for understanding that identities are, in essence, negotiation codes used as people attempt to steer paths through processes of acceptance and affirmation"(McCrone 2002, p317). An outline of life at the hostel is offered in order to frame the fieldwork. The economic impact of the hostel is explored and how this compares to that of the Carnival and Walking Festival. Drawing on key points in the methodology, this chapter illustrates the importance of the positionality of the researcher and also how analysis of the research can be generalized beyond the immediate context. Throughout, the stories and rhetorics of the hostel workers are contrasted with those of other informants from the Haltwhistle parishes. I conclude by reflecting on what I have learned from this experience and on the processes involved in coming to belong to the hostel community. I reflect on the various layers

of belonging and how a person can add belonging layers through adherence to the processes described. Throughout, I use the experiences gained in the hostel to illuminate aspects of social life in Haltwhistle, drawing on examples from the preceding chapters.

In this chapter, I argue that community and a sense of belonging can be created by adherence to social boundary and bonding mechanisms, specifically communal storytelling, in which the researcher can participate. I compare and contrast the core themes that emerged in the prior chapters primarily in relation to the two main festivals with life as part of the hostel community; boundary making and bonding through the use of shared cultural tropes, uses of argot, the natural and built environment, shifting boundaries and centres, culminating in the analysis of communal story telling and its impact on belonging for the tellers. However, to begin, I offer a brief outline of the hostel, its setting and economic impact in order to frame the research for the reader.

### ***The Hostel Setting: Framing the Fieldwork***

8pm marked the end of the dinner shift and indicated it was time for the staff to eat. We were huddled, elbows in, sitting on plastic stools around a very small wooden table. One of the first things I learned, after everyone's name, was the image of the hostel held by the staff. One of them explained, "we live in a bubble here; we are so far from reality, it's like the real world doesn't exist!" I thought she must be referring to the rural and isolated nature of the area. But I came to realize, over the following months, that there was something else going on here. As they talked, I heard a mixture of accents. They talked about living in the hostel, about the weekly pub quiz to which I was immediately invited, which to me stressed the importance of recreational activities in belonging to this group (Frankenberg 1957). However, mostly talk revolved around the duties that have to be performed; I thought that I was being primed for what I would be expected to do on my first day.

Bothy Sike is on the map, although it is not a town, nor a village but a youth hostel inside the boundary of a National Park and the old Haltwhistle parishes in what is known as 'Hadrian's Wall County.' There is a pub just down the main road

which runs from east to the west across this narrow strip of northern England. During my time at the hostel, the exact number of staff varied only slightly. There were five full time and three part time staff as well as three other volunteers during my fieldwork. Although most of us were new to the hostel in my first summer of research, there was one substitution where a member of staff was replaced in the second year. All of the other volunteers came consecutively for no more than two or three months. The part time staff all lived within a few miles of the hostel. All of the permanent staff and volunteers were from other parts of the British Isles and the world.

There is a garden in front of the hostel which is maintained by the hostel staff, including a lawn that can be used by guests. The tiny hostel reception area doubles as a small shop and a bar. There is a large lounge for the guests and a self-catering kitchen. The hostel also provides meals on request. The original building dates back to the 1930s and was refurbished during the 1980s. It has not received any upgrades since that time. Its shabby appearance and lack of modern conveniences are all reasons The Manager maintains for charging off-peak pricing all year round.

Bothy Sike is three very hilly miles from Haltwhistle. The area surrounding the hostel is rural, the alternating boggy and rocky land used primarily for grazing animals. Tourism is seasonal, owing to the inclement weather. Tourists come to see one thing; Hadrian's Wall. Bothy Sike is close to one of the most impressive stretches, where the wall and other archaeological sites have been preserved and the landscape is especially dramatic. In addition, the area is littered with castles and fortified dwellings, some of which are still maintained and inhabited, others lie ruined on desolate hilltops. All are surrounded in a rich and bloodthirsty body of history and folklore.

### ***Economic Impact of the Hostel on Haltwhistle:***

The youth hostel gains revenue from paying guests primarily for accommodation and cooked meals. Modest revenue is generated from the hostel shop which as already mentioned, sells basic items and has a limited bar. However, the economic impact of the hostel goes beyond a profit (or not) for the hostel itself and beyond Haltwhistle. A laundry service collects bedding daily for washing, beer is



ordered for the hostel bar from a brewery in nearby Allendale, food is ordered almost daily; some from a national institutional caterer but other items from the local butcher in Haltwhistle. The hostel also buys organic produce from a local horticultural college.

Many of the hostel guests are walkers or cyclists although a few do arrive by car. Although they can self-cater or buy meals at the hostel, many choose to eat at the pub next door or cycle/walk/bus into Haltwhistle and visit the town's various pubs and cafes as well as the supermarket and other high street shops bringing revenue directly into Haltwhistle. For those attending the Walking Festival this is especially so as most of the walks begin and end in Haltwhistle town centre and the walks always concluded with a trip to a pub or café.

During my time at the hostel I worked on the reception desk and as part of the check in procedure, guests were requested to complete a card indicating where they came from. Although many were from the north of England, visitors came from as far away as South Africa, South America and Australia. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the Carnival generates income from Haltwhistle local residents while the Walking Festival brings revenue into the town from visitors from the outside. Similarly with the hostel, revenue is generated from visitors to the hostel and to Haltwhistle from elsewhere in the UK and around the globe.

### ***Shifting Boundaries and Centres***

When I first conceived of doing research among Hadrian's Wall communities, I immediately thought of towns and villages; places where people lived as their permanent residence, which is why initially I had not considered the hostel as one of those communities in its own right. Strathern (1982b, p253) very helpfully reminds me to avoid the over simplified notion that 'community' equates to 'town.' How and in what ways do people belong to the hostel as a community? Cohen suggests that "belonging to locality is mediated by membership of its more fundamental structures – kinship, friendship, neighbourhood, sect, crew and so forth" (Cohen 1982, p14). It is through membership of such things that the individual becomes part of the community as a whole. Despite birth being a predominant marker of identity, belonging is more complex than simply being born in a place;

there must be a sense of commitment. The extent to which someone is regarded as belonging has to do with their involvement and attachment to these local groups. In Haltwhistle, such groups are the walking group or the Carnival Committee. However, belonging, Strathern proposes, is much more complicated than simply being a member of a local group, a certain neighbourhood or workplace. Belonging is defined by social structures and experience and every community, Cohen suggests, does this in unique ways. What unique ways are used by members of the hostel to inculcate a sense of community?

I wondered why none of my colleagues had any commitment to local activities such as attending the Carnival or even joining the walking group. This was especially perplexing to me as I knew some of them enjoyed walking and were often looking for people to walk with. My question was answered quite succinctly by one of them, “I’m not putting down roots so I don’t get involved in any groups or anything – if I was staying I probably would.” By “groups or anything” she is referring to groups outside the hostel. The hostel itself is a group with a very strong sense of belonging partly because the members of the hostel, with the exception of myself, do not get involved in outside activities.

This is not the first time I have encountered this sentiment. In Chapter Four I chatted with the Lincolns who said “we just live here” about their belonging to Haltwhistle. The Lincolns are incomers to Haltwhistle and although they live in the town and one of them runs a business there, they have networks of support in Carlisle, thirty miles to the west. Just as the hostel staff are not putting down roots because they have a centre of belonging elsewhere, so do the Lincolns. However, the Lincolns had photographs of an earlier parade through the town, and they live in a significant building. In Chapter Four I argued following Neal (2009) that the non-human world and built environment were invested with meaning and that attachment to these environments as well as the social institutions which dwell within them were a means of belonging. Here it is attachment to the hostel itself as an institution and the small community of resident workers that define a sense of belonging for the staff.

The boundaries of Haltwhistle can extend to include the old Haltwhistle parishes for the walkers as I argued in Chapter Four, and can contract to include only

certain groups within Haltwhistle town proper for the Carnival organizers, as I argued in Chapter Five. Similarly, the boundaries of the hostel community could extend to include the pub next door, and not just the building, but the workers and regular customers. At other times, those boundaries contracted to the Hostel workers themselves. What is 'inside' and what is 'outside' of the hostel as a place of belonging is not as clear cut as anticipated when I first arrived. A Janus-faced approach which looks not only at the boundary but also at the centre around which the boundary circles can reveal more than a simple look at boundaries alone. The weekly pub quiz reflects this centre/boundary shifting.

The pub quiz is every Tuesday night in the pub, less than a quarter of a mile down the road. After having dinner together we get changed and leave the hostel, scramble through the undergrowth, climb over a four feet high stone wall against which someone has piled logs to make the clambering easier. Then, we walk down the road while trying not to be knocked down. There is no path, no hard shoulder, just the unlit, narrow road with the bog on one side, a stone wall on the other, and a 70 mph speed limit. It is a perilous journey fraught with danger which only highlights the sheer joy of it all. We arrive en-mass and after only a few visits, my drink is on the bar as I walk through the front door. I realise that any attempt to drink something other than vodka and diet coke is futile. And such a request could even be offensive to the bar staff who take pride in knowing the drinks of their 'regulars'. All of the staff at the pub live within a few miles. As we are in there quite often, we get to know them well. Off duty pub employees also come to the pub quiz and make their own team in competition to ours, but if the numbers are low in either side, we join forces. There are typically four regular teams: Bothy Sike, the Bothy Pub, the local farmers and the diggers. The diggers are a group of archaeologist excavating nearby Roman remains. Only the lead archaeologists are regulars as the actual diggers change every few weeks. Many are archaeology students. We never join with them. The Pub staff and farmers never join with them, although, both the pub and hostel staff will join with the local farmers if necessary. In addition, there are other groups of tourists who make up their own teams, who we all (hostel, pub, farmers and diggers) ignore.

My interpretation is that the pub quiz does not merely bond the hostel staff together as a group. It also creates a sense of community with other people who live locally with pub staff and the farmers, which infers the hostel staff are accorded a more local status, based on residency and commitment, even though few of the hostel staff were born in the area or live there year round. In some instances, such as recreation time, the centre of this community is the pub and the boundaries extend to include the pub staff, the hostel staff, the farmers and other nearby residents who are all 'regulars'. However, the community is elastic. The boundary is visible when visitors come into the pub. On other occasions, such as work, the centre is the hostel itself and the boundaries of the community contract to the physical boundaries of the hostel and the social boundaries of the staff within.

However, there is more to belonging than going to the pub quiz and deciding which team to join if numbers are short, despite the understood importance to all team members. In some respects, this reflects the separation of incomers and locals I observed in Haltwhistle's Market Place. Chapter Three explored my changing perception of Haltwhistle from that of the 'organic village' to a town divided. I realized over the duration of my time in the area that local people in Haltwhistle preferred the locally run pubs and cafes, whereas incomers preferred the incomer run equivalents. However, this division was not exclusive as incomers would go into the locally run and frequented cafes and pubs and visa-versa. Perhaps what is happening with the pub quiz groups at the Bothy is similar to the divisions occurring in Haltwhistle; that groups will join together when necessary. And necessity also precipitated the communal support of the 'save our Post Office' campaign in Bardon Mill and Gilsland. As Chapter Four discussed, many villagers who had never met each other despite living in the same small village for years were brought together by their collective need to protect a communal resource. However, at other times people prefer to stay with their own group, those with whom they have the most in common, those with whom they share a sense of belonging.

The elastic boundaries formed closely around the hostel, which can expand to include the pub next door, are similar to the boundaries of Haltwhistle. Chapter Four discussed how the boundaries of the town expand to include the old parish boundaries in some instances and contract not only to the town itself, but to certain

groups within the town as explored around the Haltwhistle Carnival in Chapter Five. At the hostel, the boundaries are expanded when the hostel workers leave the hostel and go to the pub. Boundaries are expanded by both groups to include each other, much the same way as the walkers expand the boundaries of Haltwhistle to include all of their fellow walkers in the surrounding villages, and the social clubs, institutes and societies of Haltwhistle all include 'and district' or something similar in their signage. Boundaries are also contracted to focus a sense of unity and identity. For the hostel workers, that happened when the centre of our focus was the hostel, when we were bodily there and it was just 'us'. This reminds me of the ways in which the villages had their own fairs and festivals, differentiating themselves from Haltwhistle, contracting their own boundaries around themselves and resisting inclusion into the larger expanded Haltwhistle parishes, or recently established Haltwhistle 'Locality'. This expansion and contraction of boundaries in some instances also impacts on who is local in a specific context, or more precisely, who is accorded local status.

### ***Shifting Social Location***

My methodological focus is on who the researcher is and how they are situated, grounding the researcher as an actual person at work in a real social setting (Stanley and Wise 2006). I agree with Murphy (2008) that the fieldworker is not 'the other' nor are they, as Jackson (2008) suggests, a liminal presence caught betwixt and between, but rather the fieldworker is bodily 'in' the field, actively participating in the social. As such, the fieldworker can belong to the community under study. Which begs the question, in what capacity? Here I am interested in Stanley's (2008) concept of social location, including the fieldworker's role, for example, my location as researcher, visitor, hostel volunteer, or member of a walking group.

My own social location as an insider was highlighted by my invitation to a private New Year's Eve party for family and friends hosted by the owner of the Bothy. The Youth Hostel is officially closed for the winter season with only one member of staff in residence as caretaker. Still, I was invited to stay at the 'closed' Youth Hostel as a friend of the staff. I attended the party with two other members of

the full time staff. It was a witches and wizards fancy dress party which evolved into an all-mythical creatures party. In a sea of pointy hats, there were also devil horns, a genie's turban and several pairs of fairy wings. I went dressed as an elf. As midnight approached we, family and friends, went outside in silence. We formed a circle in the darkness. Joining hands we wished in the New Year, January, named after the Roman God Janus, the two-faced God of beginnings and endings.

I wondered if the accorded local status inferred for the hostel staff and the interrelationships between the hostel staff, pub staff and farmers was merely a result of the close physical proximity of the two buildings. Through immersion in the field over a lengthy period of time (Emerson 1987), visiting as a way of building relationships (Cavan 1978) and as Powdermaker suggests (1967, p287), being a "part of the situation studied" through my fieldwork, I was accorded not only a type of local status, but also, in the context of the New Year's party the status of 'family and friends'. Relating back to Chapter Three, the issue of 'who is local' was raised in connection with the so called 'local' woman who took over the running of the local café in Haltwhistle. I learned that despite being referred to as local by townspeople, she hailed from one of the outlying villages in the old Haltwhistle parishes. This confused me because there were many people who lived in Haltwhistle who were not considered local. Reflecting on my own locally accorded status at the hostel and wider hostel-pub community, this was granted by physical residence, commitment through regular attendance at events and actively making friends. The new café owner was also from a nearby village, and according to a newspaper report, had already been involved in community activities before taking over the café, making her prior commitment to the community public knowledge.

The importance of history in understanding prevailing social conditions has been stressed throughout this thesis. Again, following Elias and Scotson (1965), looking back in time could lead to a clearer picture of why current social relationships exist as they do. In Chapter Six, the role of the Vicar throughout Haltwhistle's History was explored. Recently the focus of local gossip, implied in a local news story and historically, the role of the Vicar was very unpopular with the townspeople. The Vicar in 1311 was kidnapped and the local people refused to pay the ransom for his return. It seems likely that this unpopular role occupied by the

Vicar made him a perfect fall-guy for the failure of the annual craft fair. What could history tell me about the relationship between the Bothy pub and the hostel next door? I learned that many years ago, the pub's owner used to run the hostel and although he no longer had any legal connection to it, this relationship between the two workplace communities prevailed, according local status to those hostel workers who were regulars at the pub. However, this accorded local status was dependant upon me being a part of the hostel community, and such recreational activities such a pub visits and parties form just one small part of the means by which a person becomes a member of a community. I now turn to explore this process in more detail.

### ***Boundaries and Bonding***

This process of moving social location from outside researcher to hostel volunteer required understanding that “one's place depends on ‘playing the game’”(Masson 2007, p33). Moving social location from outsider toward inside happened around peak moments such the annual round of festivals in Haltwhistle. Despite the division between incomers and locals discussed in Chapter Three, the Walking Festival and Carnival did provide a space in which boundary crossing could occur. By participating in the Walking Festival or even joining the walking group, new residents could meet more established incomers (and some locals) and learn about the environment, history and geography of the local area as well as make friends, as I did through joining this group. Similarly, through attendance at the Haltwhistle Carnival parade, or buying a duck for the duck race, a commitment to the community is made and a boundary is crossed transforming the incomer's status from outside towards in.

“After we have worked for the Hostel we can't be released to the community... We would need support workers, a whole new department of credentialed professionals would be needed to rehabilitate us...That's why I have all the meetings here – I can't leave the perimeter of the national park” said The Manager (Fieldnotes 31 August).

The Manager and the other staff continued to talk about how ‘institutionalized’ we all were and his comments, even though in jest, were really beginning to ring true for me. Humour was widely used as a way of inculcating a sense of belonging and communally telling the story of our ‘living in a bubble cut off from the outside world’. Humour was also used to draw very specific social and geographic boundaries around the hostel. The hostel sits on the very edge of a national park: leaving the national park equates to leaving the boundaries of the hostel. Of going back out there, into ‘the real world’ a place that, according to the staff, was filled with untold dangers and too many people.

Jokes mediated conflict. We all ‘got along’ but inevitably conflict arose. When this happened, humour was the mechanism used to reaffirm social boundaries and ensure bonding. For example, the occasional lost temper was quickly swept aside and forgotten; someone would crack a joke and the atmosphere would relax:

It is imperative for everyone to get along. Far more important than how well they do the job – many inadequacies can be forgiven if the person is a good fit for the little hostel tribe... I asked Joy, what would happen if any of us did something which threatened group cohesion? She looked shocked, and said she didn’t know, but she didn’t think it would be allowed to happen, the rest of the group would stop the person from going too far and if they did, and everyone does something stupid from time to time, they would just be made fun of, as a deterrent from doing it again (Fieldnotes 3 September).

Humour was continually used as the primary way to diffuse tension. As Cohen suggests (1982, p6), belonging is inculcated in a community using the most available mechanism. Chapter Four discussed the use of the natural and built environment and knowledge about them as the means through which belonging was inculcated. Here at the hostel, the most available mechanism was humour. Joking was also used as a mechanism to control behaviour and I agree with Masson (2007, p38) that such joking indicates “not separation but sameness” and thus bonded the staff members together. Inappropriate behaviour would be ‘made fun of’ and the perpetrator ridiculed as a punishment for committing the offence and also as a deterrent from doing it again. This avoidance of direct confrontation in order to maintain the status quo reminds me of the subtle handling of conflict in the form of



gossip in Haltwhistle. However here, the conflict takes the form of humorous ridicule as a way to enforce social boundaries to bind the group together. This was imperative because the staff represent a small group of people, living and working together in the middle of nowhere. The stress of a lingering feud would have fractured the tiny hostel community. Conversely, maintaining the social boundaries through the use of humour proved to be an effective bonding mechanism.

After our shift finished one day, Fran and I went outside with our coffee to sit on the stone wall bounding the perimeter of the hostel. This became a tradition – something we looked forward to after a morning of cleaning. Often we would go out in the rain and take an umbrella and just sit on the wall and chat about nothing, about everything. After only a few weeks, other staff members joined us so that we were all sitting outside on the wall. It seems that this tradition of sitting on the wall and drinking coffee together was invented for the purpose of “establishing or symbolizing social cohesion”(Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002, p9). We talked about our families, things we wanted for our futures, problems we might be experiencing, we shared our hopes, our fears and our dreams, sitting on the wall looking out over fields of sheep and watching the dry stone wall builder at work, inching slowly away from Haltwhistle towards us, repairing a wall.

One sunny afternoon, we were looking out onto the beauty of the landscape, commenting as we always did just how beautiful it was and how lucky we all were to be living here. Fran said, “you know, living in the hostel really is like living in a bubble – we are not part of the real work world at all!” This was a phrase I had heard repeated numerous times, but the stress here was a statement not a joke. Often when someone returned from a trip away, they would laughingly say they were ‘back in the safety of the bubble.’ The real world was something we glimpsed occasionally in yesterday’s newspaper rescued from a bin while cleaning one of the rooms. Apart from that, nothing from the real world intruded here. It is, as Barth (1969) points out, at the boundaries of localities that what it means to belong becomes most meaningful. I interpret ‘we live in a bubble here’ as a kind of humorous communally told story, the purpose of which formed a ‘boundary mechanism’ (Strathern 1982b, p253), delimiting where ‘we’ ended and ‘out there’ began.

‘The bubble’ was used by hostel workers similarly to the way in which ‘the field’ was used by Haltwhistle residents. Chapter Five explored the use of ‘the field’ as an ‘argot’ or specialized language, following Stoddart (1974). Not only did ‘the field’ represent an actual field in the commonly used sense, but it also included the location of the field used for the Carnival fair and entertainment following the Carnival parade. Not knowing where ‘the field’ was clearly marked a person as an outsider. Similarly, the use of ‘the bubble’ represented more than a metaphor for the isolated location of the hostel, it represented a shared way of life, and a sense of belonging to a small closely knit community. Knowing what ‘the bubble’ meant was part of the communal storytelling that hostel workers shared in.

### ***Telling the Story of Who We Are***

Stories are important. People use stories to support their current or desired identity (Tilly 2006). How are stories impacting on identity among Hadrian's Wall communities? Which stories are alive? My prior reading in folklore studies informed me that if they are alive it is because they have meaning to the community in which they are told (Dundes 1984, Oring 1986), and further, that they construct and reaffirm the desired group identity (Nadel-Klein 1991, Norrick 1997). My many days out with the walking group and visits with residents in nearby villages over the summer months impressed upon me the importance of familiarity with the corpus of local stories, these include: old ghost stories attached to local castles, and stories about the Romans and Hadrian's Wall. Everyone has their own slightly different version of events, and as one local resident told me, “many in the town have their own particular version of stories from the perspective of their family”. Those who want to belong need to know this corpus of stories in order to share in that sense of community. This knowledge stresses commitment, an implicit claim to belong (Kiely et al 2005, Cohen 1982). However, knowing the corpus of local lore and gossip is not enough to make a person belong, as suggested by my interpretation of the reason giving offered by the Haltwhistle incomer for breaking the code of silence in the last chapter. Stories must somehow incorporate the belonging of the teller.

What is ‘the bubble’ to hostel workers? It is the story of our ‘institutional life’ told communally with humour, reflecting a much deeper commitment to belong here.

It is an affirmation of belonging and a definition of the boundaries of the community we profess to belong to. Our so called 'institutional life' is constantly reinforced by rules and rituals, our bonding and social control mechanisms and our conceptualization of living 'in the bubble' cut off from the outside world. I could not help wondering if this was some aberrant example of Goffman's (1961, p11) 'total institution' which he defines as, 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.' We all came by choice and were not committed as the inmates of Goffman's Asylum were. And although we are rural and the hostel itself appears isolated, we can leave at will. However, we have co-constructed the humorous concept of ourselves as if we were such an institution, and as if we did live inside a bubble cut off from the outside world. We have created a sense of 'we are all in it together', whatever 'it' is. And perhaps it is what 'it' means to the members of the hostel that is most important rather than classifications of markers.

The stories people at the hostel tell are different from those of the residents of Haltwhistle. As I argued in Chapter Four, locals residents tell stories connecting them to this area and its history, and in so doing legitimize their belonging claims. Similarly, the hostel staff have their own shared folklore and it includes our self-conceptualization as 'an institution in a bubble, far from the outside world'. Part of that folklore is fictionalized, and in that sense is made up. But that does not make it any less true, or any less valuable. In writing about the importance of folklore, Delamont (1989) researched urban legends circulated by middle school pupils about the terrors of high school, such as a ghostly nun in the toilet. Delamont argues that researchers have placed too much emphasis on rationalized accounts and paid little attention to folkloric and other personal narratives which can reveal underlying issues and concerns. The concern at the hostel is with a sense of cohesion and belonging, demonstrated by the following story which equates the hostel to a Monastic Community:

The Manager joined us for breakfast this morning. He asked Kat and I how we would cope once we were released back into the real world after being members of our neo-monastic community here... We all

started to chip in and build, communally, the picture of our monastic community – The Manager as Mother Superior, (he commented he even has a bald head like a monk) we have all taken the habit (our hostel t-shirts) we wear the skull cap and apron to further identify ourselves, the black and white checks representing the purity of our community and the darkness to which we must return. We are all officially celibate, we all inhabit small cells with single beds, rudely furnished with a desk, chair and small wardrobe as well as a sink because cleanliness is next to Godliness. We rise early each morning and perform basic tasks, we feast like kings, we have much ale (from the pub next door) and even stock our own locally produced beer. Everyone is sniggering and sorting through bacon, eggs and cornflakes... We provide food and accommodation for weary travellers... Yes, we have everything except the bee hives and the vegetable garden... We are all roaring with laughter by this time (Fieldnotes 11 September).

Male and female terms are intermixed without anyone losing the thread, The Manager, after calling himself Mother Superior, even points to his bald head and pot belly (the caricature of a monk, not a nun) to support his position – every one breaks out in fits of giggles; despite the obvious contradiction, we are all on the same page and everyone understands what he means.

It was next day before I realized that something else had happened during yesterday's fictional creation of the Monastic Order of St. Bothy Sike; all present shared a background in Catholicism or the Church of England. We drew upon our shared cultural tropes to create the story. Chapter Five discussed the use of shared cultural tropes at the Haltwhistle Carnival. During the parade, the floats displayed the themes of the Vikings, American Times, and Ancient Egypt among others, all themes that onlookers could understand and agree upon. This shared understanding facilitates a transition, allowing participants to 'cross-over' (DaMatta 1991) socially on some level. Telling the story of the Monastic Order of St. Bothy Sike did several things: it reaffirmed our sense of community, it reaffirmed the hierarchy, with The Manager as Mother Superior, and finally, it created a fictionalized story of who we are as we cannot rely on history to do it for us. We have no communal history, but we do have a communal image, albeit a crude stereotype, of monastic life.

What is also interesting to me, is what is missing; religion. God is mentioned in passing as next to cleanliness– we wake up and clean. However, as Douglas (1984, p2) suggests, “rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience.” The analogy

here has nothing to do with spirituality but of rituals, of the tasks performed, the way of life and the symbolism used to translate those ideas and make them map onto our own way of life at the hostel.

Reflecting further on my field journal entry about the Monastic Order of St. Bothy Sike, I am struck with its completeness of description. It does not merely state 'facts', it is visual, it describes a picture of what our life is like at the hostel. In this communally told story, we describe ourselves and the way we look, what we wear, and why this relates to our purpose, weaving each individual into "the marvellously complicated fabric which constitutes the community" (Cohen 1982, p21) . The black and white checks on our aprons and hats are equated with darkness and light, in jest yes, but there is a sense of higher purpose eluded too here, that what we do is important and has value. This is important, as we are all here for seemingly different reasons; some are paid workers, others like myself are volunteers, I was there to research, another volunteer was there to improve her English. This consciousness of our own distinctiveness "places little stress on cultural criteria – 'local customs', ways of speaking, and such - and considerable stress on a sense of belonging" (Strathern 1982b, p248-9). Telling this story drew, not on local knowledge, history or custom, but on our shared background knowledge of monastic structure. This commonality of existing knowledge, gained in different cultures and countries, was used in the present moment to recreate who we are as a hostel community.

What it also defines is our sense of commitment, in the way we dedicate ourselves to the service of 'weary travellers', our commitment to living in our small and crudely furnished rooms, miles from anywhere. Commitment is the strongest claim to belonging that an incomer (and we all were) can make (Kiely et al 2005, Cohen 1982). This story defines and describes, humorously, our communal experience of belonging. We had co-created a fictionalized account of 'who we are' and defined our purpose, demonstrating a commitment to our community through communal storytelling as a boundary making and bonding mechanism.

## Conclusion

The beginning of this chapter queried how localism was made and remade in and around Haltwhistle. Reflecting on this chapter, it seems to hinge upon commitment, close proximity, historical connection and accorded status. Commitment to the hostel required our communal storytelling where all members contributed and co-created the fictional story of 'who we are'. Participation in such activities marked a transition where a new member of the community could, as DaMatta (1991) suggests 'cross over' a boundary from outsider inwards. Commitment was also made to the pub next door, the Bothy, although it was contingent upon already being a committed member of the hostel and the close proximity of the pub to the hostel. Commitment to the expanded pub community required regular visits, especially on quiz night, and making friends with the staff and regulars. This commitment relied not only on the close proximity of the two buildings but also upon a historical connection between the management of both. As discussed earlier, the manager of the Bothy Pub used to run the Hostel and although he is no longer connected legally, the social link remains between the two. This combination of commitment, close proximity and historical connection resulted in many hostel workers being accorded local status, as I was, and invited to a New Year's party for 'family and friends'.

Localism at the hostel was possible precisely because the hostel (and Bothy pub) were separate as a place from Haltwhistle. Although the hostel was only three miles from the centre of Haltwhistle and as close as several of the surrounding villages, many of the staff, especially those who were from elsewhere, declared that 'we are not putting down roots' and thus made a decision not to participate in Haltwhistle activities. Similarly, the Lincolns in Chapter Four said 'we just live here' to describe their belonging to Haltwhistle. In both cases, the Lincolns and the hostel staff had other centres of belonging. For the Lincolns their centre of belonging was Carlisle, where Mrs Lincoln worked and their family and friends lived, and for the hostel workers it was where ever they came from. However, despite their rejection of belonging to Haltwhistle as a place, both the Lincolns and the hostel workers did use the natural or built environment to connect themselves to the area and make an implicit claim to belong. The Lincolns lived in a significant building and had old

photographs which were treated with pride depicting historical scenes from Haltwhistle. The hostel staff identified strongly with the hostel and the pub next door and participated in bonding through rules, rituals and communal story telling which defined their identity as separate from Haltwhistle. This reminds me of the villages surrounding Haltwhistle that were part of the old parishes and included in what Haltwhistle was seen to be in some instances, but separate from this in others. The individual fairs and the unique presentation of communal self demonstrated at these events by participating villagers was discussed in Chapter Five. At the hostel, the unique collective hostel identity performed was localism to the hostel through commitment and close proximity (we lived in). Localism to the expanded hostel community including the pub next door concerned not only commitment and close proximity, but also the historical connection between the two establishments and accorded local status.

I agree with Cohen (1982, p6) that belonging is inculcated using the most available mechanisms. Mechanisms used in the hostel include: humour, the natural environment, the use of argot and communal storytelling. In the hostel, humour was used as a way of deflecting tension and controlling disputes. In Haltwhistle, gossip was used in much the same way. Another available mechanism used by the hostel workers and Haltwhistle residents to inculcate a sense of belonging was the natural and built environment. Many of our afternoons were spent sitting on a stone wall bounding the perimeter of the hostel with cups of coffee looking out over wild flower meadows filled with bleating sheep, agreeing how lucky we were to be living in such a beautiful location. Similarly the walkers used nature, their knowledge of the landscape and history and their commitment to it through the festivals and other voluntary projects to inculcate a sense of belonging within their group. The hostel workers used the argot of 'the bubble' to describe not only their isolated location, but also their sense of separateness and commitment to their small community. Carnival goers in Haltwhistle used 'the field' in a similar fashion, to describe not only a field, but knowing where it was. Understanding both of these argots represents a boundary crossing where a person can move from outside towards in. Shared cultural tropes are another way in which people can commune and boundaries can be ritually crossed. Such tropes were evident at the Haltwhistle Carnival in the themes chosen

for the floats, themes that all present could understand and agree upon. At the hostel, a shared understanding of what passes for Christianity and monastic life allowed the hostel workers to co-create the story of the Monastic Order Bothy Sike, the story of 'who we are.'

I felt sad to be leaving the hostel. I had spent two summers there, two summers of living and working with the same small group of people, two summers of getting to know them and letting them know me. We ate every meal together, shared free time, shared our life stories. They made a leaving card for me, which is several pages long and more of a leaving booklet. Within its pages are cut-outs of my favourite snacks, photos of my favourite places, photos of us drinking coffee on the wall, of all of us at the pub quiz, and doodles on every page that represent little in-jokes that only 'we' would understand. It represents evidence that they know things about me, things that anyone outside the hostel would not know. The images connect 'us' together and to the hostel. 'Goodbye and Good luck' is printed on the front. It bears testimony to my experience of belonging.

Following two summers of living and working at the Bothy Sike hostel, I was no longer just a research student. To the townspeople, I had become 'Heather from Bothy Sike.' Working at the hostel added an identity layer of 'local resident and worker' on top of the pre-existing 'research student', and therefore outsider. When introducing myself or, especially during my second summer of fieldwork, being introduced by someone I knew, the first question I was asked is, 'are you local?' To which I responded that I lived and volunteered at the Bothy Sike hostel. It was only after my connection to locality was established that I told them why I was there. But this information became secondary, my local connection was the information solicited and given first.

Layers of identity exist like rings of belonging. In no tidy or concentric order; they have fuzzy, shifting boundaries which, as Kiely et al (2005) suggest, move depending upon situation and context. This forms what Masson (2007, p34) calls 'eclipsing identities'. For example, my own experience began as 'visitor' and 'researcher'. After a while and after making some commitment to joining local interest groups, it became 'incomer'. Finally after becoming an 'institutionalized' resident of the hostel and choosing to co-collaborate in telling the story of who we



are, I was 'local resident and worker' to the townspeople and simply 'one of us' to my fellow Bothy Sikers. Through the various bonding mechanisms and communally telling the story of 'who we are', we moulded ourselves into a community, an institutional life in a bubble far from other forms of reality.

## Conclusion: End of a Season

At the beginning of this thesis I posed the question: ‘what is Haltwhistle in a sociological sense?’ I now return to that question to explore what I have found and what I have argued about belonging and the local in a sociological sense, in relation to Haltwhistle. My main arguments are: first, that Haltwhistle is a place with shifting boundaries, not only between the town and surrounding parishes but also regarding its changing connection to the outside world. Second, this space is inhabited and utilised in various sometimes overlapping and sometimes separate ways by incomers, locals, non locals and visitors. Third, people can claim to be part of Haltwhistle town and/or parish in different ways and their social location can move along a continuum of belonging, not necessarily just in one direction but back and forth depending on specific circumstances. Fourth, all of the above are impacted on by time, not only the past but the evolving future. I now turn to unpack these arguments and expound upon them.

Throughout the thesis I have argued against binaries such as public and private, insider and outsider, local and incomer, divides and instead proposed that there are layers of belonging, gradations of relationship and interconnection. Haltwhistle as a place, on the surface at least, appears divided into overlapping local and incomer spheres. What seemed to be an ‘organic village’ is certainly a town containing divisions and separations, the most notable being that between locals and incomers, with each favouring their own pubs and cafés. To the outsider, however, this is not apparent; it is only when one has spent time in and around the place and come to know people, that this separation or divide becomes noticeable. But there is no binary here, no strict once and for all boundary between the two. For instance, locals do go into incomer run establishments and vice versa. The boundaries between these spaces are not fixed but permeable. Relatedly, public and private are not exclusive. The Carnival parade is a public event, knowledge of the location of ‘the field’ slightly more private, and the Carnival committee more private still, on the public private scale. Adapting Jenkins’s (1996) argument that individual and group identities exist along a continuum, what springs to mind is that this is a continuum of belonging and the local, although the term continuum is a massive oversimplification

of the complexities involved. Instead of trying to label the thing and pin it down, developing a way of conceptualizing it would be more helpful. A Janus-faced approach which looks at the 'organic village' with one eye and the divisions and separations between and within groups with the other, is the approach I have found the most useful.

In reframing Gluckman's (1958, p12 ) comment that "separation can be a form of association, indeed co-operation," I have argued that conflict (or more routinely division and separation) and cooperation were ways in which residents connected to Haltwhistle or to the surrounding villages in which they resided. Cooperation was seen regarding the festivals in which I was told everyone comes together and also in response to the crisis of the proposed closures of the Post Offices. The public messages expressed around the time of the Carnival and Walking Festival were that 'they bring the whole town together.' But as I have suggested, this is only partially accurate – they bring some people in the town together for a specific part of the year. Conflict was seen in the gossip and 'othering' of vandals and the Vicar. However, as I argued following Nadel-Klein (1991), gossip is in itself a 'localising practice.' Conflict, in the routine form of division and separation, was present in relation not only to groups in Haltwhistle town, such as the division between pubs and cafes frequented by locals and incomers, but also between the town and the parishes, with each outlying village having their own distinct fair. Division and cooperation were ways in which groups and individuals chose to connect, and were both forms of attachment and interrelationship existing along a spectrum of belonging.

I have argued against static boundaries in favour of moveable boundaries which wax and wane depending upon context. The boundaries of what Haltwhistle is seen to be are not as clear as they may seem. Many social commentators have been able to draw very clean, unproblematic boundaries around their area of study (e.g. Frankenberg 1957, Elias and Scotson 1965, Strathern 1982b, Stacy 1960). However in Haltwhistle the boundaries are far from clear or static. The defining boundary of what Haltwhistle is seen to be moves depending upon context, rhythm, situation and the social location of those involved. The boundary expands to include the old

Haltwhistle parishes (and modern 'Locality') in some instances, and contracts to certain interest groups within Haltwhistle town in others.

Expanding the boundary, there is the concept of a much broader 'Haltwhistle district' or 'hinterland'. This is visible not only on the signage of the town's clubs and associations, but concern over inclusion of 'the hinterland' in current programs voiced by Haltwhistle residents at the Association AGM. As I argued in Chapter Four, the boundaries for this district follow those of the Haltwhistle parishes and specifically those parishes included in the Old Registration District and Poor Law Union - the very same boundary mirrored in the newly established Haltwhistle 'Locality' created in 2010. Contracting the boundary, Haltwhistle is reduced to the town itself or more routinely to certain groups within the town, such as the Carnival Committee. However, the boundary around what constitutes a 'local person' remains unclear. Chapter Three discussed the take-over of a café by a so called 'local woman.' This 'local woman' actually hailed from a neighbouring village but within the Haltwhistle parishes, suggesting the boundary of what it means to be 'local' is elastic and may admit some people on a case by case basis.

While many commentators have focused on the boundaries almost exclusively, this thesis argues that what is being bounded – the centre – remains important. While Haltwhistle has historically been the economic centre for the parishes, and continues to be following the dissolution of Tynedale and closure of the village Post Offices, those same villages maintain their own separate identity. During the Haltwhistle Carnival parade I was told that people from the villages within the Haltwhistle parishes did not attend because those villages had their own fairs. Not only do they have their own fairs and social events, but they are distinctive and separate the villages from Haltwhistle. These fairs and events tell the story of 'who we are' for the villagers, and resistance to inclusion into Haltwhistle forms part of that story. Furthermore, the village fairs become a central feature for the villagers and the village becomes centre – not Haltwhistle. A focus on what is perceived as centre also explains why the workers at the Youth Hostel did not involve themselves in Haltwhistle activities. That is, they had another centre in the Hostel itself. Similarly, the Lincolns had a centre in another place which allowed them to position themselves in their terms quite satisfactorily by saying 'we just live here.' In order to

understand the constitution and movement of the boundaries, it is important to look at what is being bounded – the centre.

I have argued throughout that commitment and local knowledge are two possible routes to belonging. One of the ways in which a person can commit and connect over time is through acquiring local knowledge about the place. My first attendance at the Haltwhistle Carnival was marked by confusion for me regarding the continuance of the Carnival after the parade on ‘the field.’ It became clear, as I discussed in Chapter Five, that all residents, incomers and locals knew where ‘the field’ was and how to get there. Not knowing this critical piece of information clearly marked me as an outsider. However, participation in the Carnival offered a space in which a transition was made and knowledge of ‘the field’ acquired. Similarly, while watching a funeral procession along the main street, the reason for the procession was explained to me by a man who was a long time local resident, but an incomer. This intimate knowledge about the place was acquired through experience, through being in Haltwhistle. But there are other ways in which local knowledge around place was used to move from outsider inwards. I argued in Chapter Four that incomers, specifically members of the walking group, used their knowledge of local geography, folklore and history as a route to belonging. It is those who are socially on the fringes, the incomers, who are perpetuating and performing what passes for local, not only through the walking group, but through the bi-annual Walking Festival which is staffed by volunteers from this group. Similarly, regarding the Youth Hostel, both learning the hostel way of doing things and co-creating the story of ‘who we are’ were routes to belonging for new members. Both volunteerism and acquisition of local knowledge are evidence of commitment to community and as such are two possible routes to belonging.

Knowledge of the boundaries and routes through them is dependant upon the knower’s social location and of course this changes over time. My perspective and impressions changed along with my own social location within the community. In Chapter Six the account of vandalism discussed there was conveyed to me by a local woman, in which the vandals were cast as ‘the other’ and the goodness of the community preserved. In analysing this account I proposed that my social location – perceived by the local woman as an outsider and a visitor – impacted on her reason-

giving for relating this account and also the form of the story she told me. What I got was the public version, the standard view that Haltwhistle people are good people, the message conveyed to the outside world. However, later on I heard an account about the perceived wrongdoing of the Vicar. This story was related to me by a local woman, but who was also a fellow member of the walking group during my second summer of residence in Haltwhistle. At times I got closer to the private conversations that occurred between members of the community. To this woman, I was a resident of the area and a worker at the nearby Youth Hostel. In addition we were both members of the same walking group. Although I was an incomer and my residence was of a short and temporary duration, I became in some sense a member of the community through residence and commitment. As my social location changed, so did so did the stories I was told. Finally, at the Youth Hostel, not only was I one of the team, participating in telling the story of 'who we are,' but I was also invited to a New Year's Eve party 'for family and friends.' In this last example my social location had shifted again towards local albeit a 'local' on the boundaries (or even over them) to what Haltwhistle 'is'. Here I was a fully participating member of the Youth Hostel community, an insider, and I was privy to the private conversations that happen between members because I was a member.

History is important. Without looking back and exploring the archived newspapers on microfiche at the Hexham library, I would never have known that the Carnival suddenly stopped in 1954 after a flourishing history of annual occurrences up to that point. Nor would I have understood the financial reason behind it. Similarly, without using contemporary documents, the financial impetus behind the start of the Walking Festival and the continued economic importance of this event to the town would not have been clear. The analysis of historic public documents of different kinds was also used by incomers as a way of acquiring local knowledge, a practice that I have already argued shows commitment to the community and was a route to belonging. However, along with the past, I argue that the evolving future must also be considered. The threatened closure of the Post Offices in Bardon Mill and Gilsland and the response to that threat - a future event - by villagers impacted upon belonging and the local. It was crisis that brought people, incomers and locals alike, together to resist the loss of their 'community facility.' As well as the historic

past, the evolving future as perceived by residents impacted on belonging and the local for the affected communities.

Pulling it all together, in arguing against perceiving the boundaries between incomer and local in overly binary terms, I have argued for a continuum of belonging, a flow of interconnection and interrelationship. In arguing against thinking in terms of static boundaries, I have emphasized that my fieldwork data instead provide ample evidence for moveable, permeable boundaries that wax and wane depending on person, time and context. I have also argued against looking exclusively at the boundaries and instead looking at the centre of what is bounded as well, recognising its continuing importance and indeed its centrality. And while looking back in time to understand the historic foundation of prevailing social conditions is needed, I have argued that looking to the perceived future is also important. This continuum of belonging between binaries, back and forth between permeable boundary and centre, to the historic past and impending future, all impact on potential routes to belonging. Travelling and traversing these routes depends upon the knower's social location and this can and does shift over time. But what is at the centre of all this? This involves a continuum of time, looking at the past as well as the future. It also involves a continuum of place, focusing on the bounded edges as well as the centre. In addition it is a continuum of the social along which move people move, rather than binaries. To sum up, what I am arguing is that a Janus-faced approach which looks at past and the future, the boundary and the centre, the 'organic village' and the individual factions, lies at the centre of this social, spacial and temporal connectedness.

Standing back from these things, the distinctive main arguments this thesis has made involve a set of interconnected findings which add up to a distinctive rethinking of belonging and the local, in relation to the specific fieldwork site of Haltwhistle, but also I would propose more widely. Firstly, incomers can assimilate into their own Haltwhistle, contra Strathern's (1982a, p89) rather absolute conclusion that "real members of a village" are those born there and that incomers cannot 'assimilate.' This also begs the questions, assimilated into what? And from whose perspective? And why is 'assimilate' the criterion of belonging? As I have argued, what Haltwhistle is, where the boundaries are, who is included and excluded and

under what circumstances, changes depending on context. This fitting in or not depends on a person's situation, who they are and how they are situated, because different people have different reasons for belonging and construct what that means differently - and also of course as a consequence they are responded to differently by different groupings of other people, both 'locals' and others. For some of the locals who were born in Haltwhistle, birth status may be an overarching criterion for claiming local status. But this is not always so, as evidenced by the so-called 'local' women who hailed from a neighbouring village and took over the local café. In this instance a villager from outside was considered 'local' to Haltwhistle in a particular context. Those incomers who chose to, easily fitted into the walking group and became involved in the Walking Festival and committed to Haltwhistle through other acts of volunteerism; and as a result, they are both 'local' for some, but remain 'outsiders within' for others. Through the organization of the Festival and through learning and teaching the history of the place to others, they constructed and performed not only their own belonging, but their own version of what Haltwhistle 'is' in a sociological sense. For the Lincolns, Haltwhistle was just a place to live. However they lived in a significant building in the centre of town and ran a business there. Their claim to 'just live' in Haltwhistle is another way to fit in, and of course for visitors and other outsiders they seemed definitely to be local. The Youth Hostel workers demonstrated a strong sense of belonging as evidenced by not getting involved in any Haltwhistle activities and thus increased their own cohesion and belonging to the Hostel community. This community was wholly constructed using shared cultural tropes to create 'the story of who we are.' Birth is not an absolute criterion for belonging or being local. Incomers can fit into their own construction of Haltwhistle - and 'not Haltwhistle' - in their own way.

Second, while I agree with Cohen (1982, p3) that in some instances, "It is at the boundaries of localities that what it means to be local becomes meaningful," the idea that Haltwhistlers' sense of belonging is a "product of their relations with the outside world" (Strathern 1982b, p248-249) also holds true. These two seemingly contradictory ideas can be amalgamated and made sense of, if the focus is shifted away from looking at the boundary alone, towards looking at the boundary in relation to the centre. The Haltwhistle Carnival is a centre/focus that pointed up



differences between people. This seems especially so regarding the Carnival committee, which many incomers commented was 'difficult to infiltrate.' This 'centre' of Haltwhistle flagged up a particular perception around which belonging and the local was constructed. Haltwhistle town was also considered in some respects to be the centre of a set of parishes known as the 'Haltwhistle parishes' as well as the association with the outlying 'hinterland' or 'district.' There Haltwhistle town was the centre around which the parish boundaries were drawn. However, in the context of the village fairs of Bardon Mill and Gilsland, which lie within the Haltwhistle parishes, the centre was not Haltwhistle. It was the village and the village fair here, and this flags up a distinction between the villages and Haltwhistle by refocusing the centre away from Haltwhistle and positioning it in the village. At the Youth Hostel, the notion of centre was clearly illustrated in the choice of workers to create a community which was centred not on Haltwhistle, but on the Hostel itself. The centre of what is bounded is as important as the boundaries in assessing what it means to be local.

Third, I agree with Elias and Scotson (1965) that history is important to understanding prevailing social conditions. However, this thesis demonstrates that people looked not only to the past in constructing their belonging, but also to the evolving future. The past is up for grabs and is recreated and retold in the present moment. The reasons offered for the ending of the old Carnival, allegedly forgotten or unknown by some and yet accounted for more scandalously by an informant to me, illustrate this point. However, the impending future crisis also impacted upon prevailing social events and circumstances. The threatened closure of the Post Offices in Bardon Mill and Gilsland and the coming together of many villagers in the face of such a perceived crisis was one way in which the expected future precipitated a change in the present social organization of those villages, and many villagers formed groups to resist the closures. Instead of looking only to the past to better understand social conditions in the present, this thesis also suggests looking to the future as well.

Fourth, I have argued that there are routes to belonging that allow a person to move from outside towards inside. However, as I have also shown, the routes to belonging are complicated and can not be seen as patterned in any simple or binary

way. Savage's (2008) 'elective belonging' or the choice to move and reside in a particular place is certainly involved, and most of the incomers I spoke with had made a conscious choice to move to and live in or around Haltwhistle. Belonging can be elective – to a point, but it all depends on what a person wants to belong to. As I have already argued, there are many Haltwhistles and many ways of belonging to ones own perception of that place. Could the incomers elect to belong to the Carnival committee? Not according to those who said that the carnival was 'difficult to infiltrate.' In this instance, a social barrier was clearly perceived by those who felt excluded. Along with 'elective belonging' there is also the additional criterion of being allowed in. Not all belonging is elective or indeed desired or sought. The Lincolns for instance chose to move to Haltwhistle and live in a significant building in the centre of town but claimed "we just live here." The action of moving and living in the place appears to be an elective belonging but the claim to "just live here" appears to refute belonging as something they aspire to. But it is more complicated than that because the Lincolns also had old photographs, treated and displayed with reverence, which anchors them to 'a' Haltwhistle. This again suggests there is not one absolute conception of place that a person can elect to belong or not belong to.

Fifth, Haltwhistle does not have static boundaries. Unlike Cohen's (1982) Whalsay, an island bounded by water, or Frankenberg's (1957) village, isolated in a valley, Haltwhistle is very well connected to the outside world. Haltwhistle town forms the centre of a group of parishes and the recently formed 'Locality.' The geographic boundary of the town expands in some instances to include the Haltwhistle parishes, such as the catchment area of the town's social clubs and the residences of the walking group members. It contracts in others, such as the Haltwhistle Carnival. And it can contract down even to some groups within Haltwhistle town, such as the Carnival committee. However, expansion and contraction of the boundaries go beyond the surrounding villages, which form the Haltwhistle parishes or Locality. Not only does the boundary between Haltwhistle town and Locality ebb and flow, but more broadly the connection between Haltwhistle town/locality and the outside world has an annual rhythm of its encompassing and shrinking. It expands during the spring through autumn with the

annual round of festivals, especially the Walking Festival in the spring and autumn which attracts many visitors from outside. In addition, the AD122 bus, which runs from Newcastle to Carlisle connecting all of the towns and villages along the Wall, runs from April to October – the tourist season and the time of year when most visitors come from all over the world to walk Hadrian's Wall and visit other historic attractions. Even the Youth Hostel mirrors this expansion and is open from March to November. However, during the winter months, there is a contraction when the Youth Hostel closes and all of the residential staff move out except for a solitary caretaker. The AD122 bus stops running and with it the flow of visitors. Haltwhistle becomes more isolated. The fairs and festivals are over, transportation is reduced, and many parts of the parish are snowed in for weeks on end during the winter. It could be said that Haltwhistle is global during the summer and retracts to the local and even the isolated during the winter, a rhythm of expansion and contraction that repeats seasonally.

A Janus-faced approach is required to explore, conceptualize and understand belonging and the local in a sociological sense. Crucially, it involves exploring the continuum between the centre and the boundary, the past and the future, the shifting social location of those involved, and the rhythm of their connection. I want to conclude by answering the question, 'what is Haltwhistle in a sociological sense?' It is a connected place in which people can move into and/or inhabit their own perception of Haltwhistle. There are complex routes in and through to this which depend not only on such perceptions, but also on people's social location, election and choice, and admittance by various groups of others. It has shifting, permeable boundaries which expand beyond the parish as far as the global, and contract beyond the centre of town to the isolated. It follows an annual rhythm from the beginning to the end of a season. In all of this, 'what Haltwhistle is' is both highly distinctive and also acts as a template of how belonging and the local are configured more widely.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Census Data Haltwhistle 2001

OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS



### Statistics about Haltwhistle

Haltwhistle Ward is within Tynedale LAD or UA

This summary gives information on the people living and working within the area, their health and employment status.

It also gives information on housing and crime.

### People Statistics

#### Resident Population and Age

The resident population of Haltwhistle, as measured in the 2001 Census, was 3,811 of which 49 per cent were male and 51 per cent were female. The resident population of Tynedale was 58,808, of which 49 per cent were male and 51 per cent were female.

Resident population (percentage)

	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
Under 16	18.7	19.0	20.2
16 to 19	5.0	4.6	4.9
20 to 29	9.6	8.2	12.6
30 to 59	41.3	44.4	41.5
60 to 74	15.2	15.2	13.3
75 and over	10.2	8.6	7.6
Average age	41.5	41.3	38.6

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

#### Marital Status

Resident population aged 16 and over (percentage)

	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
--	-------------	----------	-------------------

Single (never married)	25.0	23.5	30.1
Married or re-married	52.8	57.9	50.9
Separated	1.8	2.0	2.4
Divorced	8.8	7.4	8.2
Widowed	11.6	9.2	8.4

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

## Ethnic Group

	Resident population (percentage)		
	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England
White	99.7	99.3	90.9
of which White Irish	0.1	0.3	1.3
Mixed	0.2	0.3	1.3
Asian or Asian British	0.0	0.1	4.6
Indian	0.0	0.0	2.1
Pakistani	0.0	0.0	1.4
Bangladeshi	0.0	0.0	0.6
Other Asian	0.0	0.0	0.5
Black or Black British	0.1	0.1	2.1
Caribbean	0.0	0.0	1.1
African	0.1	0.0	1.0
Other Black	0.0	0.0	0.2
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	0.1	0.2	0.9

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

## Religion

	Resident population (percentage)		
	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
Christian	83.5	80.8	71.8
Buddhist	0.0	0.2	0.3
Hindu	0.0	0.0	1.1
Jewish	0.0	0.1	0.5
Muslim	0.1	0.1	3.0
Sikh	0.0	0.0	0.6
Other religions	0.2	0.2	0.3
No religion	9.9	12.2	14.8
Religion not stated	6.3	6.3	7.7

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

## Health and provision of care

The 2001 Census asked people to describe their health, over the preceding 12 months as 'good', 'fairly good' or 'not good'.

Resident population (percentage)



	<b>Haltwhistle</b>	<b>Tynedale</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
Good	62.2	69.0	68.6
Fairly good	27.3	22.7	22.2
Not good	10.5	8.3	9.2

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

It also asked questions about any limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited peoples daily activities or the work they could do.

Resident population (percentage)

	<b>Haltwhistle</b>	<b>Tynedale</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
With a limiting long-term illness	20.0	18.2	18.2

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

For the first time, the 2001 Census asked a question about any voluntary care provided to look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems relating to old age.

Resident population (percentage)

	<b>Haltwhistle</b>	<b>Tynedale</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
Provided unpaid care	10.7	10.4	10.0

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

There are two main benefits associated with health that are paid to people needing help with personal care. They are the 'Disability Living Allowance' and the 'Attendance Allowance'.

The Disability Living Allowance is a benefit paid to people under 65, who are disabled, and need help with personal care, and/or getting around. In August 2000, 1,655 people in Tynedale received this benefit.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, 2000

The Attendance Allowance is paid to people over the age of 65, who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need supervision or a great deal of help with personal care. In May 2000, 1,135 people in Tynedale received this benefit.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, 2000

## **Economic Activity**

Resident population aged 16 to 74 (percentage)

	<b>Haltwhistle</b>	<b>Tynedale</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
Employed	60.7	63.0	60.6
Unemployed	4.1	2.8	3.4
Economically active full-time students	1.4	1.9	2.6
Retired	17.4	16.2	13.6
Economically inactive students	3.2	3.6	4.7
Looking after home/family	5.2	5.6	6.5
Permanently sick or disabled	5.4	4.8	5.5
Other economically inactive	2.6	2.0	3.1

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

Within Haltwhistle, 20 per cent of those unemployed were aged 50 and over, 11 per cent had never worked and 32 per cent were long term unemployed.

In August 2000, there were 560 Jobseeker Allowance claimants in Tynedale of which 25 per cent had child dependants. The Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) is payable to people under pensionable age who are available for, and actively seeking, work of at least 40 hours a week. Figures produced here are those only for people claiming income-based JSA.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, 2000

In August 2000, there were 2,295 Income Support claimants in Tynedale, of which 3 per cent were aged under 20. Income support was introduced on April 11th 1988 and can be paid to a person who is aged 16 and over, is not working 16 hours or more a week, and has less money coming in than the law says they need to live on.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, 2000

## Students and Qualifications

Students and schoolchildren aged 16 to 74

	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
Total number of full-time students and schoolchildren aged 16 to 74	124	2,296	2,648,992
Percentage of total resident population	3.3	3.9	5.1
Total number aged 16 to 17	70	1,286	1,014,284
Total number aged 18 to 74	54	1,010	1,634,708

Note : Students and schoolchildren were counted at their term-time address. Source: 2001 Census, ONS

Resident population aged 16 to 74 (percentage)

	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
Had no qualifications	38.8	26.0	29.1
Qualified to degree level or higher	9.4	25.3	19.8

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

[top](#)

## Housing and Households

In Haltwhistle there were 1,659 households in 2001. 99 per cent of the resident population lived in households. The remainder of the population lived in communal establishments. The number of households in Tynedale was 24,585.

Number of households (percentage)

	Haltwhistle	Tynedale	England and Wales
One person households	31.9	27.2	30.0
Pensioners living alone	19.2	15.4	14.4
Other All Pensioner households	10.1	11.0	9.4
Contained dependent children	27.7	29.2	29.5
Lone parent households with dependent children	6.2	5.0	6.5
Owner occupied	65.9	69.7	68.9
Rented from Council	12.7	8.2	13.2
Rented from Housing Association or Registered Social Landlord	10.0	7.4	6.0

Private rented or lived rent free	11.5	14.6	11.9
Without central heating	9.3	5.6	8.5
Without sole use of bath, shower or toilet	0.4	0.2	0.5
Have no car or van	32.8	19.2	26.8
Have 2 or more cars or vans	20.2	36.2	29.4
Average household size (number)	2.3	2.4	2.4
Average number of rooms per household	5.2	5.8	5.3

Source: 2001 Census, ONS

£'s and number of households (percentage)

	Tynedale		England & Wales	
	Average price	Percentage of households living in this type of property	Average price	Percentage of households living in this type of property
Detached	156,607	33.5	178,806	22.8
Semi-detached	84,108	31.3	101,733	31.6
Terraced	74,348	26.5	89,499	26.0
Flat	69,674	8.4	120,185	19.2
All property types	107,877		119,436	

Sources: 2001 Census, ONS  
The Land Registry, 2001

[top](#)

## Area Statistics

### Levels Of Crime in Tynedale

Notifiable offences recorded by the police. April 2000 to March 2001.

	Violence against the person	Sexual offences	Robbery	Burglary from a dwelling	Theft of a motor vehicle	Theft from a motor vehicle
Total number of offences recorded, Tynedale	313	13	4	134	101	201
Rate per 1,000 population, Tynedale	5.3	0.2	0.1	2.3	1.7	3.4
Rate per 1,000 population, England and Wales	11.4	0.7	1.8	7.6	6.4	11.9

Source: Home Office, 2001

### About this summary

1. This summary brings together data from a number of sources, all of which are available elsewhere within the Neighbourhood Statistics website. More detailed information on these topics and others, is available within the site and can be viewed through a number of ways.

- by subject;
- by a list of areas;
- by using the interactive map.

2. In some cases the data shown in this summary may have been rounded and figures shown may differ slightly from those published elsewhere. Due to rounding of percentages, the addition of categories may not sum to exactly 100 per cent in all cases. It should also be noted that in some cases, different tables may show different counts for the same population, due to disclosure protection measures used to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information about identifiable individuals. Figures quoted should therefore be used for guidance only.

3. These summary statistics are based on administrative ward boundaries legally in force at the end of 2002, which includes ward boundaries that became operative in a number of Local Authorities in May 2003, and some others that will become operative in May 2004.

4. The symbol ".." is used to indicate that the value is not available.

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## **Haltwhistle Partnership**

# **Haltwhistle Walking Festival Evaluation**



**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2006**



## **Haltwhistle Walking Festival**

### **Background**

Haltwhistle has an Action Plan under the Market Towns Initiative which is the basis for the work of the Partnership – see addendum attached.

The Partnership sees both the health and well being of the residents of the Town and their enjoyment of the area as important factors for the continuing health and prosperity of the Haltwhistle community and its hinterland, as such it is necessary to develop and encourage our people to enjoy our position as an access point to the outstanding surrounding landscape.

An important strand of this work is Haltwhistle's Walking Festival, situated as we are at the crossing point of the Hadrian's Wall Trail, the new South Tyne Trail and the Pennine Way and we have easy access off the A69 and the railway to encourage visitors to share in our good fortune.

### **Aims**

There has been a lot of activity to determine how as a region we can get a better economic impact from our outstanding countryside and we feel that we have a very important part to play in:

- encouraging our own people to explore the countryside around us
- encouraging visitors to explore further away from the recognised existing trails
- strengthening our links with other local and national agencies, for example this time Tynedale Council, Northumberland National Park, National Trust, North Pennines Heritage Trust, North Pennines AONB Association, Volunteering Tynedale, Local Network Fund for Children and Young People – administered by the Community Foundation, Haltwhistle Town Council, The Great North Air Ambulance, The Guide Association, Local Schools, Northumberland NHS Care Trust, Churches, Sustrans
- strengthening friendships and contacts between people within the Town
- attracting day trippers
- attracting longer stay visitors
- encouraging visitors to return in the future and explore
- encouraging visitors to recommend Haltwhistle to friends and acquaintances
- spending more in local businesses
- be seen to be promoting the Town

- involving more people as time goes on
- providing a good day out and having fun

We now have a range of literature about the town and surrounding area, including the 22 Haltwhistle Rings Walks Pack which we have recently updated and reprinted.

Activities include:

- organising walks and other events to promote Haltwhistle and the surrounding areas
- providing free training for local people to improve their skills and participation
- providing events and walks to appeal to all age groups and interest groups within the Town
- increasing knowledge of the area and 'healthy living' for local residents
- promoting the 22 walk leaflets

## **Why a Walking Festival?**

We now have a continuing and increasingly successful series of Walking Festivals, where we see a growing number of people returning to the area for successive festivals.

The May and October Walking Festivals are now established events in the Town's calendar alongside the Craftwrite Plant Festival in June, the Town Carnival in July, 'Sights and Sounds' (formerly 'Haltwhistle Pride') in September, the Craft Fair in November and the Christmas Festivities in December.

This is recognised and appreciated by the people of the Town and this is evident from advertising support from local businesses which totalled £600 and made a contribution to the printing costs of the programme. The balance of these costs was met by charges for walks

## **Main Activities**

We can use this, our 8<sup>th</sup> and most successful to date as an example of the benefits that are brought to the Town.

This Walking Festival included walks for all abilities from assisted walks for the differently abled, adventure sessions for the very young, pleasant rambles through our delightful scenery and for the fitter, a trek over the Fells and to the Source of the South Tyne over 3 days. For special interest groups we had a walk along the John Martin Trail, help from a Newcastle University expert on local fungi in Allenbanks, a walk along the restored Alston Branch Railway line and nature walks in the Burn and along the South Tyne Trail near Park Village. We had a talk from the North Pennines Heritage Trust on the restoration of the Alston Arches and a Ceilidh Family Dance Night. See programme attached for full details.



Volunteering has been a big part of this project. All walks were led by volunteers. Most of these came from the regular Wednesday Walking Group “The Friends of the Haltwhistle Rings”. They have surveyed paths, trialled routes, taken up walk leader opportunities, and litter picked to make the place look smarter.

In appreciation for the volunteers efforts, the Town Council, the Partnership and Volunteering Tynedale are contributing towards a Christmas party for those involved. It is proposed that this event will raise some money for local charities through a raffle.

Last but not least there has been a significant training element for local people. Accommodation providers, local residents and interested individuals have undertaken training to be able to lead walks.

This has resulted in local businesses having an additional string to their bow, many who have not engaged with learning for 30 years have benefited. In addition it is strengthening the infrastructure, increasing our pool of residents proud of our Town and confident to promote it and share with others in the future, for this and for other projects.

## Has it Helped the Local Economy?

This is a conservative estimate based on a careful analysis of booking and feedback forms.

60 overnight stays @ £60.00 per night*	£3,600
150 day visitors @ £8.00 per day*	£1,200
Direct contributions to local restaurants/café	£450
Money raised for Air Ambulance	£1,250
Taxi Hire	£250
Local Bus Fares	£110
Local Printing Cost	£1,000
	<b>£7,860</b>

\* Reference Visitor Survey 2002/Estimate

We see an overall immediate benefit of at least £7,860

In support of this a number of accommodation providers reported bookings directly related to the Festival (Hall Meadows, The Grey Bull, Ashcroft Guest House and Shield Hill self catering holiday lets).

In addition to these direct financial inputs into the local economy, we must consider and can only guess at the ongoing benefits of repeat visits, recommendations and increasing popularity of the area as a holiday destination in the future.

Worthwhile as the Festival undoubtedly is it should be said that Partnership costs in terms of time, expenses and materials amount to a sum in excess of £1,500 that are not recovered from charges nor from advertising in the programme.

## Outcome

To put this 8<sup>th</sup> Festival in context, we can compare it to the 6<sup>th</sup> Festival last October.

	Oct-05	Oct-06
Number of Events	16	29
Number of Walks	15	26
Percentage fill rate of Walks	115%	80%
Number of Walkers*	259	361
Number including Non Walking Events	305	471

\*half of these walkers were local residents and have benefited themselves from the experience in both health and knowledge of the area

In addition, over 50 people were involved in the actual running of the Festival, all of whom have benefited from the point of view of their own health and fitness and have an increased pride in contributing to the welfare of our community.

We will be having a debriefing meeting for Walk Leaders shortly and will be considering lessons learnt, a summary of likely topics is listed below:

- Early planning by Walk Leaders
- Early publication of plans/programme on website
- Promotional Material to be finalised sooner
- To consider more evening walks in the Spring
- Longer Walks for more seasoned walkers
- Avoid offering similar alternatives on the same day
- Look at how we can coordinate walks with other events
- Transport to beginning of walks
- Cleansing of our database and improved use of email
- Continued use of the Walking Magazine database
- Continued use of the Hexham Courant who treat it as a news item
- To also advertise in other papers such as the Cumberland News and The Journal
- More contact with Northern England Walking Groups
- Walks to tie in with transport times
- Debriefing teas at the end of every walk

## Future

We feel that the Haltwhistle Walking Festivals fulfil the simple idea of “a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.” It promotes the prudent use of a natural resource, including our own residents,

encourages sustainable transport and tourism and will help to establish stable levels of economic growth and employment in a community that has experienced serious changes in both aspects.

## Addendum

Haltwhistle in 2003 underwent a number of consultative exercises resulting in our Market Towns Initiative Action Plan for the town. The Walking Festivals address the following objectives from our Action Plan.

### Environmental Objectives

- Encouraging the development of walks and cycling in the town and surrounding areas
- Improve recreational facilities in town and the surrounding areas

### Economy and Tourism Objectives

- Develop Haltwhistle as a service centre for the South Tyne Area
- Develop and promote tourism/visitor initiatives
- Promote outdoor pursuits

### Social and Community Objectives

- Develop facilities and opportunities for young people
- Promote learning opportunities for everyone
- Develop Westbourne House as a resource and information centre
- Promote and encourage community and cultural events

### Transport Objectives

- Improve cycling facilities

This project sits alongside a number of other initiatives that the Haltwhistle Partnership is working on. Through raising awareness of walking as an activity and improving access and information about walks we will continue to involve the community and contribute to its strengths.

## Where People Came From

Home Town	Staying Locally	No. of Nights
Carlisle		
Winlaton		
Slaggyford		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Berkshire	Manor House	4
Longtown		
Lincoln	2 Castle Tce	3
London	Moss Peteral	
Haltwhistle		
U.S.A.	Ashcroft	3
U.S.A.	Ashcroft	3
Kelso		7
Chester-le-Street		
Morpeth		
Stanley, Co. Durham		
Consett		
Morpeth	Eden House	
Whitley Bay		
Lanchester, Co. Durham		
Lanchester, Co. Durham		
Cramlington		
Haltwhistle		
Carlilse		
Somerset	Ald White Craig	7
Somerset	Ald White Craig	7
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Bardon Mill		
Bardon Mill		
Bardon Mill		

Haltwhistle		
London	Catton with Mum	
London	Catton	
Melkridge		
Netherlands	Shepherd Tce own H.Let	
Morpeth		
Evesham	Manor House	4
Evesham	Manor House	4
Newcastle		
Haltwhistle		
Low Row		
Low Row		
Stirling	Centre of Britain	1
Stirling	Centre of Britain	1
Chester-le-Street		
Downpatrick N.I.	Centre of Britain	4 (possibly 8)
Seaham, Co. Durham		
Morpeth		
Morpeth		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Bardon Mill		
Bardon Mill		
Bardon Mill		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Darlington	With family	2
Selby	Once Brewed Y.H.A.	
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Newcastle		
Cramlington		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Ridling Mill		
Riding Mill		
Melkridge		

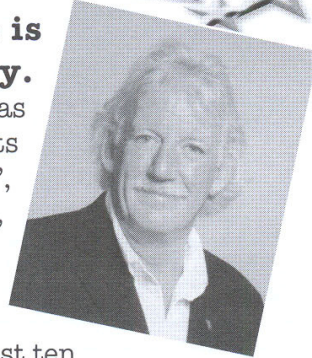
Bardon Mill		
Bardon Mill		
Prudhoe		
Newcastle		
Newcastle		
Bardon Mill		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		
Haltwhistle		

## Appendix 3 – Carnival Program 2008

# HALTWHISTLE CARNIVAL

**This years Judge is  
Brendan Healy.**

Brendan lives in the Tyne Valley and has starred in a number of TV & Film hits such as 'Stormy Monday', 'Purely Belter', 'The Black Velvet Gown', 'Spender', 'Badger' and 'Max & Paddy's Road to Nowhere'. He has also written signature tunes for TV and produced pantomimes at the Journal Tyne Theatre for the past ten years and tours theatres with his one man show. He has been to Haltwhistle Carnival in the past as a spectator and enjoys the Cumberland Wrestling. Instead of accepting a fee, Brendan has donated this towards the Roman Wall Show Wrestling Competition.



## LAST YEAR'S DONATIONS

Pre-School Group Greenhead - £100

Tigger Club - £150

Haltwhistle Utd Under 9's - £150

Over 60's Club - £150

Haltwhistle Burial Committee - £150

Reformed Church Youth Club - £150

**TOTAL DONATIONS GIVEN BY THE CARNIVAL COMMITTEE**

**£15,725**



## BREW & BROWSE

A Gift & Card for Every Occasion

Browse through our Ornaments, Flowers, Jewellery  
and Home Effects while enjoying a coffee.

WESTGATE - HALTWHISTLE



# CARNIVAL DAY

2008



Sunday  
6th July

**12.00 NOON  
START OF PROCESSION**

**VINTAGE ENGINES, CARS,  
MOTORCYCLES AND STALLS**

**PRUDHOE COMMUNITY BAND**

**CUMBERLAND WRESTLING**

**CLIMBING WALL**

**ARCHERY**

**POLLY & JOLLY'S COMEDY CAR**

**FANCY DRESS COMPETITIONS**

**HOT & COLD REFRESHMENTS**

**FAMILY FUNFAIR RIDES**

**EVENING DISCO'S**

Haltwhistle Comrades Club  
& Haltwhistle Working Men's Club

**£2.00 - PAY AT THE DOOR**

**OVER 18'S ONLY**



**PLEASE NOTE:**

**Only traffic taking part in the carnival  
procession may use the old bridge**

## ***Appendix 4 – Minutes of the 2009 AGM***

### **Fieldnotes September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 – Haltwhistle Association AGM**

Held in the back room of the Comrades Club starting at 7.30pm. I took my friend A from the hostel. She is a German Volunteer here to improve her English. As part of her assignment here, she must complete what she calls ‘an intercultural project’ about life in the area. She was very excited about going to the AGM with me for this reason. The meeting is open to the public and had been advertised in the front window of the Association office. There were about forty people in attendance – a huge improvement on last years six members of the general public. In addition to the committee members and the general public, there was a reporter from the Haxham Courant, a representative from the libraries,

We arrived and were asked to sign in and given an Agenda for the meeting ahead and also financial statements dates March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009. Things didn’t seem to be starting anytime soon, so I dashed to the bar for some drinks. The meeting started late with the chair taking the floor and welcoming everyone, point 1 on the agenda. He then skipped points 2 through 8 and went promptly into point 9, “Chairman’s report and Presentation”. Immediately several people tapped on their glasses with pens and when this didn’t get his attention, he was interrupted and brought back to point 2. minutes of the last meeting. They were agreed and seconded. Again he skipped back to his report and again he was interrupted and brought back to the intermediate points on the agenda by several people present. He then made it quite clear his omissions were deliberate! He conceded and offered apologies for absence. He then asked for point 4; Audited annual accounts, to be approved. One person (who I know to be a retired accountant) objected that they had only been handed the accounts on the way in the door and had not had a chance to review them. This was swept aside, and accounts were approved. Much to the chagrin of many present. Finally, with much cajoling, the agenda was adhered too; the auditors were appointed, new serving members of the committee (including a new chair) being nominated and seconded (a process I am told by the lady sitting next to us, that must be completed two weeks in advance).The chair relaxed as he returned to his own report.

Library: The chair reported on the condition of the Library, the original building has been demolished and is currently being rebuilt. The library was temporarily housed in the old water tower at the train station but has since moved into the ‘Clive Brown’ building, owned by the Association on the main street.

Town Archive: The chair introduced setting up a town and hinterland archive using heritage lottery money, allowing local people to access info in cooperation with the records office.

Youth Centre: proposed as youth not well served – this is currently in the process on negotiation.

Elderly Lunches: held once a month provide a valuable sounding board for the views of the elderly.

Community foundation and South Tyne fund thanked for funding activities especially The Squeak.

Funds will be applied for to restore the shop front of the Clive Brown building to early twentieth or nineteenth century original. Again, the choice of chop front must be economically maximized. The history society has postcards and memories of the old shop front which will be used to aid in the reconstruction. A comment from the floor suggested the current 1960's shop front was valid and should not be changed. The chair asked the questioner's wife if she felt embarrassed to be with him. She said yes. The upstairs has been considered for conversion into low cost housing for local people or a Hostel aimed at cyclists and walkers, however, either venture must be maximized economically and at this point the Hostel idea has the most support.

#### 10. Questions from the floor

Q. Regarding the 'hinterland' referred to for the town archive - would this include the surrounding villages. The chair assured that the Haltwhistle archive refers to the haltwhistle district not the town and will be linked with parish records and the records office.

#### 11. Haltwhistle Library Update.

Currently Clive Browns is being used as a temporary home for the library while the library building is being rebuilt. The library reports being busier than they ever were and attribute this to having a shop front (window). Anyone interested in the progress of the library construction can get a copy of a newsletter produced by the contractors – available at the Association office. The library is expected to reopen in the newly built premises in early 2011. The representative from the library was asked about the possibility of community involvement, the answer was that community members could become involved in managing the library and offering input into the kinds of services offered. Another person from the floor shouted out "like having it open lots of days?" The library is currently closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Conversation turned to the possibility of a youth group in a room of the library or a provision for students to do homework there which would necessitate the library being open in the evenings. The Library representative said all suggestions would be properly considered (but no guarantees offered).

#### 12. Community Garden Update

Started in 2003 as people asked the Association about courses and something that proved popular was a gardening course. There was some derelict land behind the Association office and this was used. Because the gardening is all organic – the cost of running it is very small. A patio was laid in year one, using rubble found on the site. Green manure was used to fertilize the land. This group also maintains the twinning garden as well as the tubs on the main street and at the train station. They have a stall at the annual plant festival. 6-8 volunteers in the group – they do it to 'contribute to the town'. They would like more youth involvement. Only issue is

young girls caught stealing apples. Ideas were welcomed for the Sainsbury's bed where some trees were chopped down. They also perform 'guerilla planting'!

### 13. Walking festival Update

Started with the iconic image of the Robin Hood Tree – where is Kevin Costner? Chortles the chair – everyone laughs. Started in 2003 and there have been two festivals every year since. Usually lasting 10 days. Organized by volunteers with help from the Association. Walk leaders are all volunteers. During the festival there are 2-3 walks each day for all grades, types and lengths. The themed walks are proving to be very popular and they are looking for more specialists. Someone asked if they need a beer specialist. The response was that there would be a real ale walk but no specific specialist was required! Why do they do it? The people who run it are passionate about walking. Also, it boosts the local economy ( B&B, shops, pubs, etc.) Spring 2009 517 bookings (not individual walks) 575 walks walked (including walk leaders). 148 bed nights. Finance for the festival comes from: Association, sponsors, advertising, walk fees and volunteer time. Spring 2010 is already planned.

A conversation started among people on the floor about the history of the area and how/why this is so important, JC claims that St. Patric was born in the area (all from reading Alistair Moffatt's The Borders (2002) I recognise his recitation word for word...)

The AGM ended with a video of the Haltwhistle Burn.

When it was all over, the two old ladies next to us shot up and encouraged us to hurry over to the buffet 'before it all goes' they came back with plates loaded and urged us to 'get in quick or there will be nothing left!'.  
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-----END OF FIELDNOTE ENTRY REGARDING AGM-----

## Appendix 5 – Carnival news 1938

Carnival (treasure hunt).

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### CARNIVAL TO AID HOSPITAL

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#### Haltwhistle's Interesting Four Day Programme

Plans are well advanced for the fifth annual carnival which is to be held next week from Wednesday to Saturday at Haltwhistle in aid of the War Memorial Hospital.

Miss Margaret Walton, the Carnival Rose Queen, will be crowned by Miss Nancy Dickinson, last year's "Queen."

The "King" will be Mr Eric Bushby, the "Queen" Mr John Tait," and the Jester Mr Robt. Robbie.

During the carnival the front of the hospital and grounds will be floodlit by the kindness of the North Eastern Electric Supply Company, Newcastle; 500 feet of electric coloured strip lighting will be provided by Carlisle Corporation, and the street lamps will be lit by Haltwhistle Gas Light Company.

The judges of the procession on Saturday will be: Captain and Mrs R. B. Webster, O.B.E., Unthank Hall; Captain and Mrs C. M. Laing, Glendale; Mrs R. E. Smith, Blenkinsopp Hall; Mr and Mrs F. A. Leake, Dr. and Mrs J. M. Glasse, Mr and Mrs Douglas Smith, Dr. and Mrs Burn, Mr Jos. Black, Mr G. F. Renwick, Mr and Mrs T. L. Hetherington, and Mr and Mrs W. A. Hastewell.

The carnival has as its officials:— President, Mr P. J. Liddell; chairman, Mr W. H. Brooks; hon. secretary, Mr W. R. Wilson; hon. assistant secretary, Mr T. Birkett; hon. treasurer, Mr T. L. Hetherington.

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Hexham Courant July 23, 1938: Page 2



# Haltwhistle Carnival a big success

## WILL BRING SWIM POOL FUND TO £1,000

### A week of real merrymaking

HALTWHISTLE'S SECOND POST-WAR CARNIVAL HAS GONE WITH A RARE SWING THIS WEEK, AND EVERYTHING POINTS TO A SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL RETURN.

Up to yesterday (Thursday) the gross receipts had amounted to £551 17s 3d, and, with the £500 net profit made with last year's carnival, there will, when all accounts are settled, be a sum in the neighbourhood of £1,000 available towards the cost of building a swimming pool in the town and providing other amenities.

The spirit of carnival was captured in the first half hour of the week when hundreds of Haltwhistle people refused to allow the rain to damp their enthusiasm and crowded the hospital grounds to see the Carnival Beauty Queen of 1950, Miss Doreen Tweedie, crowned by the retiring queen, Miss Margaret Dixon.

In her coronation address the Beauty Queen echoed an appeal by the chairman of the carnival committee, Mr Tom Bell, who introduced her, to the general public to support the event by giving generously and taking a full part in all the events organised for their enjoyment.

The chairman, Mr Bell had urged the public to realise that by supporting the Carnival they were contributing to a fund which would bring not only pleasure to their own but to future generations.

He expressed confidence in the committee's ability to reach their four figure target, the first £1,000 towards the erection of a swimming pool in the town.

The Beauty Queen, attended by Miss Jennifer Lawson, Miss Elaine Turner, Miss Joyce Turnbull, Miss Marina Laing, Miss Carol Nixon, Miss Jillian Davey and Master Brian Hall and accompanied by the Carnival's "Royal family," of Carnival King (Mr. Nichol Phillips) Carnival Queen (Mr Sammy Storey) and Jester (Mr Bob Robbie) later led the finest parade in the history of South Tyne Carnivals on a tour of the lantern-hung streets, lined with hundreds of townspeople.

There were over 150 fancy costumes paraded together with decorated carts and burles.

The entire parade was almost dislocated by an accident to Lady Godiva (Mr. Phillips). In the main street of the town he fell from his restive horse and was almost trampled under its hooves. He received a badly crushed foot but took his place again astride the horse and remained in the parade to the Belister Castle Sports field before receiving medical attention.

#### COMMUNITY SINGING

In the evening came dancing for the young people of Haltwhistle in the Church Hall, and until midnight the town was kept awake by community singing in the hospital grounds to music provided by the Haltwhistle Old Silver Prize Band.

As preliminaries to the carnival on Friday night, a dance to the music of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers' Band in the Church Hall attracted over 200 couples, and a whist drive organised by Mrs Moscrop, for which there were 18 tables, brought prizes for Mrs Teasdale (highest score), Mrs Dean, Mrs Keen, Mrs Wanless and Mrs Bell. They were presented by Mrs Moscrop.

Local tradesmen who entered into the carnival mood by decorating their windows had their rewards on Monday, when public votes were counted. Honours went to the Messrs Armstrong for a fine seaside scene, with T. Thompson and Son second, and

the Haltwhistle and Greenhead Co-operative, who entered six of the 14 windows in the competition, claimed third place.

#### CHILDREN'S NIGHT

Monday was children's night at the Church Hall.

Probably the most appreciative audience ever to be accommodated in the hall, almost 400 of the town's youngest children, thoroughly enjoyed a concert compered by Mr J. White and arranged by the ladies committee to which Mr James Kipling (piano-acordion), Mr Jack Rogers (comper), Marjory Judge and Mavis Wilkinson (ballet and tap dancing), Mr D. Bates, Brampton (ventriquist), Jean Teasdale, Mr Geo. Hepple (monologues), Mr John Hepple, Miss Paula Bates and children from the County Primary and Church of England infants schools contributed.

Which the stage was cleared the children took their places and kept the programme

Considerable interest shown in the Hound Tra Monday, in which 14 pup were shipped. The winner home in 184 minutes, and the salls were: 1. Cromwell Monaveen, 3; Homer, 4; 1. Major, 5; Numble, 6; Mo Lad II.

#### VARIETY CORPS

Members of a 400 strong force that crowded the C Hall on Tuesday took to the to keep a variety progr

Taking part were Mr Judge, Maureen Venables, G Hobson (banjo), Nichol PH Bob Robbie, Sam Tea George Cowan (comper), Teasdale, Miss Alce W (piano), Billy Ridley, Tom (comper), and Billy West.

Tuesday brought the rest the Doll Show for which were over 80 entries. A poll placed the winners —

Soft toy: Jill Davey (14) Terence Armstrong, 3, Robinson.

Small doll: 1. Maureen (158); 2. Marianne Bell; 3, Allison.

Large doll: 1. Marjory (247); 2. Patricia Jackson Heather Craig.

On Wednesday, 30 local ca motor cycle owners took p a treasure hunt which took on a 30 miles route round whistle district. Mr A. E. We of Unthank Hall was the w with Mr George Dent second.

First holder of the White Challenge Cup for old waltzing are Mr J. Liddle (Ingstone Farm, Slaggyford) Miss Edith Watson (Ston Slaggyford). They won it Carnival Old Tyne dance on nesday night and received the donor, Mr S. Halbert.

Judges were Mr and M Hepple, of Hexham.

There was a real displ carnival spirit at the schoo on Wednesday when Mr Bkatie refereed a comic fi match.



THE King and Queen of Carnival, the Beauty Queen, and some of their retinue pose for the camera during the festivities of Haltwhistle's Carnival Week.

### THE CARNIVAL BAROMETER

THIS is how the Carnival "barometer" has risen. On Saturday, Carnival day, collections totalled £206 16s 1d compared with £163 16s 6d last year. The "sports" produced £55 7s 6d at the gate compared with £58 8s 6d last year.

By Monday night the gross receipts were £350. They rose to £473 on Wednesday and by this morning (Thursday) were £551 17s 3d.

Considerable expenses have, however, to be met out of this sum but the Carnival Committee is confident of reaching its £500 target for this year's event.

**MICKLEY  
LEEK  
SLASHER**

**VANDALISM  
IN A  
GARDEN**

SEVEN show leeks of a prize-winning strain belonging to Mr J. Stecko, of Cherryourn Cottages, Mickley, were slashed

of Haltwhistle's Carnival Week.

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Teachers Association special prize  
Haltwhistle office of the Ministry of  
National Insurance

(Captain H. Best), 84 points; 2. J. H. Yellow (M. Blackburn), 81; 3. J. Green (E. Whitfield), 64; 4. Blue



## Appendix 7 – Haltwhistle Rings


# The Haltwhistle Rings


22 Walks in the Historic Parishes of Haltwhistle, Northumberland

**Walk 01**  
Haltwhistle Parish

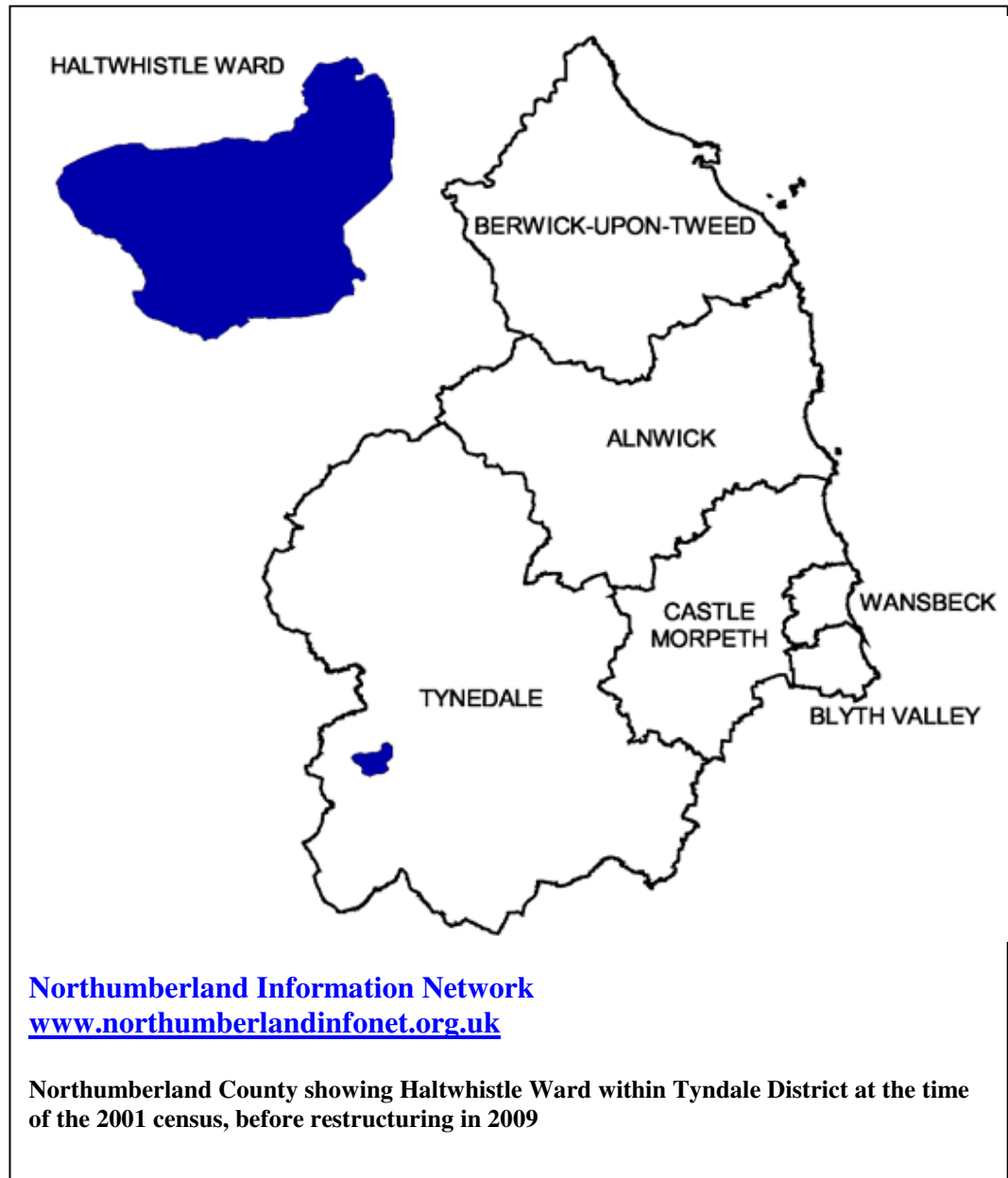
4 miles  
6.4 km

Easy

  
HADRIAN'S WALL  
COUNTRY



## ***Appendix 8 – Haltwhistle Ward/Tyndale District Map***





# Appendix 9 – Haltwhistle and West Tyne Locality Map

