

## **Northern Review - Issue 10, April 1996**

Newbiggin musician Derek Hobbs, whose most recent success was the community oratorio 'Fell 'em Doon' at the Newcastle Proms last autumn, has turned to the engravings of Thomas Bewick for his latest creation.

His beautifully produced book features 24 tunes, each paired with a printed engraving. The tunes are varied in manner and pitched so as to suit a variety of instruments, including Northumbrian Pipes, fiddle and penny whistle.

It is sometimes difficult to feel the connection between the tune and the picture, but some are very clear. *Toy boats on the Tyne*, for example, is a haunting slow air capturing perfectly the lazy feel of a summer afternoon as the lads in Bewick's picture try out their boats on the river, as the young artist did himself as a boy.

*Hens around the Yard* has an amusing way of imitating the pecking action of poultry and the jerking of the head, but Bewick's print is of a farmyard with an amazing variety of birds, as it should be since it was made for his *History of British Birds*.

*The Cuckoo's Tune* features that bird's characteristic falling third and the tune of *The Wheelwright* circles around in a satisfying way...

...Another slow air, *High Tide* does include some delicious major seventh chords against its haunting Aeolian mode melody. *Walking the Hog* is an amusing evocation of Bewick's man being dragged along by the string tied to his pig's back leg.

There is another lovely slow air to illustrate the peaceful scene at Bewick's birthplace, Cherryburn, Eltringham, alas no longer so peaceful as it was even 25 years ago when I lived thereabouts.

Derek Hobbs has produced a charming and varied collection which should draw a big audience in this region and further afield.

**KEVIN STEPHENS**