

[These letters are contained within a 'scrapbook' of letters, printed handbills, newspaper extracts and other items relating to the proposed route of the turnpike road through Hexham. It was originally owned by Thomas Bell, bookseller, surveyor and collector of Newcastle and is now owned by Dr Jim Hedley of Hexham. Another very similar scrapbook, also now in private hands, contains the originals of some of the copied letters, and was originally owned by the Revd Anthony Hedley, of Gateshead in 1823.]

**7 Jul 1823    Michael Bell to Thomas Wentworth Beaumont**

[Note: undated but the version sent to Diana Beaumont was replied to by her on 21st July 1823. Letters to newspapers protesting against the route were dated around 2nd-5th July.]

We the undersigned Freeholders of the Town of Hexham in Conson of our own feelings and those of the town at large have taken the liberty of petitioning you with every feeling of respect begging your kind remonstrance with the Trustees of the Hexham Turnpike in deviating from the line of Road pointed out by their Act of Parliament and projecting on across Seal bisecting the public walks at two points.

We and our Ancestors having enjoyed these walks unimpeded by any obstruction form time immemorial do declare that should the line projected by the Trustees be adopted it will almost universally be objectionable to the Inhabitants.

We should not have presumed to address you had we not been informed that some one or more of the Trustees had declared themselves determined at all events to carry it through the Seal and that whatever objection the Town may feel to this line it must be settled between them and yourself. We cannot therefore for a moment suppose after your kind expressions for our Interest and welfare on a former occasion that if you intend to qualify as a commissioner on this road and attend the meeting on the 9th August when the line will be finally determined you will not only advise and recommend the Trustees not to pass so unpopular a measure but in no way give it you support.

The objection to a public Road passing through pleasure grounds, public and private walks is a feeling not only peculiar to the Rich but it is the feeling of nature why then are not we and the poorer classes of this Town to experience it and exert all our Interest and the power we may possess to prevent it.

When we consider the distance saved by the Seal line but poor fifty seven yards at an expense of £150 we cannot suppose the public Traveller would reflect against the Trustees nor yet their own conscience disturb them for not taking the shortest line when the same scruple did not exist extending the line of Road above sixty yards with an addtl expense of £100 by deviating from the Act of Parliament line about two miles distant from this town at the suggestion of one or two of the Trustees.

Is it too much to ask the public and those commissioners to travel the wearisome distance of fifty seven yards and not interfere with our walks and change the character of the Seal so much admired and visited by strangers who appreciate our unobstructed privileges as highly as we ourselves value them.

Though an unfortunate and ever to be lamented event has prevented you from residing amongst us still we do not doubt that upon all occasions you are alive to our Interest and wishes with confidence in the Relief and with every respect we subscribe ourselves

Your devoted Constituents

Michael Bell Wm Bell snr Philip Jefferson James Charlton  
Ambrose Maddison  
George Cox Joseph Parkin Gaiven Maddison Robt Rowell Thos Weathill  
Joseph Robinson John Gibson sadler Robert Dickinson Richd Bulman  
John Grant  
Thomas Cole Thomas Dobson Christ. Bell John Bell George Shedholm  
Bambrough John Stobart John Batey John Midford Wm Hindmarsh  
John Parkin Francis Scott Thomas Lunn Wm Charlton John  
Farbridge Robert Bell Ralf Little Wm Errington Willm Wilson Michl  
Elliot Robt Robson Perc.l Bambrough Jno Middleton Wm Smith Jos Charlton  
Mattw Coulson Wm Mole Mattw Lee George Lee Edw.  
Nicholson George Pears Joshua Bright Henry Ridley Peter Keir John  
Davison John Watson Wm Armstrong James Tweddle James  
Graham Thos Yarrow John Dodd Richd Robson John Forster  
Joseph Elliott James Miles John Hall Willm Carbin Robt Lorraine  
James Anderson

**7 Jul 1823 Michael Bell to Diana Beaumont**

[Note: undated but Diana's reply was dated 21st July 1823. Letters to newspapers protesting against the route were dated around 2nd-5th July.]

We the undersigned Freeholders of the Town of Hexham in Conson of our own feelings and those of the town at large have taken the liberty of petitioning you with every feeling of respect begging your kind remonstrance with the Trustees of the Hexham Turnpike in deviating from the line of Road pointed out by their Act of Parliament and projecting on across Seal bisecting the public walks at two points.

We and our Ancestors having enjoyed these walks unimpeded by any obstruction form time immemorial do declare that should the line projected by the Trustees be adopted it will almost universally be objectionable to the Inhabitants.

We should not have presumed to address you had we not been informed that some one or more of the Trustees had declared themselves determined at all events to carry it

through the Seal and that whatever objection the Town may feel to this line it must be settled between them and yourself. Now we trust you will consider it too much in us to suggest that as your consent is requisite in conjunction with Mr. Wentworth Beaumont you will be induced from this to give the matter your most serious Consideration and when called upon should you appreciate our unobstructed priveleges as highly as we ourselves value them give your decided negative to so unpopular a measure.

The objection to a public Road passing through pleasure grounds, public and private walks is a feeling not only peculiar to the Rich but it is the feeling of nature why then are not we and the poorer classes of this Town to experience it and exert all our Interest and the power we may possess to prevent it.

When we consider the distance saved by the Seal line but poor fifty seven yards at an expense of £150 we cannot suppose the public Traveller would reflect against the Trustees nor yet their own conscience disturb them for not taking the shortest line when the same scruple did not exist In allowing the commissioners and Governors of Greenwich Hospital Receivers extending the line of Road above sixty yards with an addtl expense of £100 by deviating from the Act of Parliament line about two miles distant from this town at the suggestion of one or two of the Trustees.

Is it too much to ask the public and those commissioners to travel the wearisome distance of fifty seven yards and not interfere with our walks and change the character of the Seal so much admired and visited by strangers who appreciate our unobstructed privileges as highly as we ourselves value them.

Though an unfortunate and ever to be lamented event has prevented you from residing amongst us still we do not doubt that upon all occasions you are alive to our Interest and wishes with confidence in the Relief and with every respect we subscribe ourselves

Your devoted Constituents

Michael Bell [and 62 others, whose names are given in the similar letter of the same assumed date to Thos Wentworth Beaumont]

### **21 Jul 1823 Diana Beaumont to Michael Bell**

[Note: handwritten copy of Diana Beaumont's letter to Michael Bell as the first signature on the petition with an assumed date of 7th July]

(Copy)

Portman Square July 21st 1823

Sir,

Mr Beaumont and I find that Mr W Beaumont has already given his consent to the carrying of the road through the Ciel [sic], if it is thought advisable by the Commissioners & as we are unwilling to interfere with his wishes on the subject we

regret that in this instance we cannot comply with your request and that of the Petitioners you was so obliging to forward to us; I confess for my own part I should be very sorry to see the line of road pass through the Ciel – a walk I have so often admired and enjoyed.

I am sir your H ble Ser.t  
Diana Beaumont

London July 21 1823  
Mr Michael Bell/ Glover/ Hexham  
Limerick

**27 Sep 1823 Matthew Wilson to Anthony Hedley**

[Note: The original copy of this handwritten eye-witness account is sent to the Revd Anthony Hedley of Gateshead, in whose scrapbook copy the original was pasted is anonymous. However the identical handwritten copy in the similar scrapbook owned by Thomas Bell of Newcastle entitles it 'Mr Wilson's account of the proceedings relative to the Seal September 26th and 27th 1823'. He was the self-styled poet of Hexham, Matthew Wilson, prominent among those celebrating the outcome of the dispute.

Rev Mr Lee is probably the Rev Charles Lee Lecturer of Hexham succeeding Clarke in 1824? (c.1790-1862), curate St John Lee from 1814, lecturer Hexham from 1824, son of Richard Lee of Leeds, and nephew of William Lee, Diana's brother-in-law]

On the 26th of Sept 1823 Mrs Beaumont arrived at Hexham on her way to Alanheads, and that Evening in a conversation she had with Mr C. Heads and others she signified that she had been of Opinion that the Commissioners of the Intended new line of Road could carry the line through the Cloisters and the Seal with or without her consent. Mr. Heads said they could not. She asked emphatically 'can they do so Without my Consent'. The answer was 'Madam, they cannot.' She then inquired in the event of the Road crossing the Seal 'how or where they would fill up the space in the Common after building the Bridge. One said 'they will cut down the Seal to the Level and if necessary take the Gravel from the Seal Bank to fill up the Road to the Bridge. She asked (seemingly astonished) 'but can they do without my consent.' The answer was 'Certainly not.' She then asked how would they do with the Walks in that Case. One said 'they will lay out the Wlaks below.' She asked (Astonished) 'but can they do so without my consent.' On being told they could not she said emphatically 'Then they shall not do so.'

Next morning soon Six O'clock she was in the Seal and after having examined the different lines of the Road in the Company of the Surveyor. On their return they met Mr. Jno Bell near that part of the Road where the Commissioners intended to carry their line. She expressed to him a Wish that a Few of the Townspeople would meet her

that Morning about 8 O'clock. Accordingly at the time named a Number (some think about Fifty) assembled and about a quarter past eight Mrs Beaumont, accompanied by the Revd Mr. Lee [her chaplain] was seen walking towards the Multitude. We all moved down the Road to meet her and when we came Near unto her she made a sudden Stop, and kneeled to us (she seemed rather affected.) We all took off our hats. She recognised Mr. Scott and stepping forward said 'Mr Scott, how are you?' at the same time giving him her hand. Mr Scott said in reply 'Very well thanks you ma'am. How's Mr Beaumont'. She replied 'he is nearly as he has been for some time past'. Then turning to us she said 'Gentlemen pray do put on your hats.' Which we all immediately did. She then said – 'Gentlemen I have examined the Different lines of the Intended new Road, and I am fully of Opinion that the Temperley line [ie. as originally proposed in the Turnpike Act of 1820] is decidedly the best. I think it would be a great pity if the Inhabitants of Hexham were deprived of their Walks and no person will induce me to Consent to it. I doubt not but that they got the Consent of my Son ... but tho I Give him the Rents and proceeds of my property here yet I am still Lady of the Manor (pointing to that part of the Seal the Commissioners meant to Cross) and (emphatically) No power upon Earth will induce me to Consent that the Inhabitants of Hexham will be deprived of the Comforts and priviledges they have long enjoyed in the Seal. Gentlemen (the tears were in her eyes) I thank you for your kindness and wish you all Good Morning.' She then accompanied by Mr. Lee Walked up to the Place where her Carriage waited for her and tho' some in the Crowd said 'Three Cheers' the request was not complied with out of tenderness to her feelings.

**29 Sep 1823 Mary Kell to Thomas Bell**

[Note: Mary Kell was the aunt of Thomas Bell, Newcastle bookseller, surveyor and collector, into whose 1823 road dispute scrapbook the letter is pasted.]

Hexham Monday morning

Dear Nephew,

I hope you and Thomas got well home and found all well. There has been a sad upro at Hexham since Friday night about the road through the Seal. It is not to go that way now – the Lady Beaumont has been here and such a day on Setterday ringin of Bells and aile given away in the market place and a large fire in the market place after dark the nois never seased till two a clock on Sunday. Your uncle has sent you some speches – give John one of them first time you see him – your uncle joins me in Love to you all I remain your affectionate

Aunt Mary Kell

[addressed on reverse:] Mr Thomas Bell/ Bookseller Union Street/ Newcastle

**1 Oct 1823    John Bell to Diana Beaumont**

To Mrs Beaumont Lady of the Regality or Manor of Hexham

We the Inhabitants of Hexham in public meeting assembled take this opportunity of returning you our sincere thanks for the very kind and handsome manner in which you received a Deputation of our Townsmen on Saturday last. Your declaration 'No power upon Earth shall induced Col Beaumont or myself to do any thing to deprive the Inhabitants of Hexham of the Comforts and privileges they have so long enjoyed in the Seal' will be long an gratefully remembered, And we sincerely wish you and yours health and happiness

Signed on behalf of the meeting by  
Jno Bell Bailiff

**4 Oct 1823    Diana Beaumont to John Bell**

Gentlemen,

I beg you will accept my best thanks for this public demonstration of your favour, of which I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance; I trust no one can suspect that I am blinded by prejudice or influenced by private Interest when I declare my decided dissent to the measure of the line of Road passing through the Seal. I have already given my reasons for it. Col Beaumont & I will never join any Party to deprive the respectable Inhabitants of Hexham of the antient Privileges they have been indulged with, & which I sincerely hope they will long enjoy. Allow me Gentlemen to wish you a good morning, for I am proceeding in great haste to join my family at Bretton Hall.  
Hexham October 4. 1823