

BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2013

SUMMER PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 9th April

History of the Rievaulx Valley - Tony Powell

Saturday, 11th May

Display at the Allotment Society's

Plot to Plate event in Boroughbridge Library foyer, 10 am to 4pm.

Tuesday, 14th May.

The History of College House, Masham—Jennifer Deadman

Tuesday, 11th June

Barrows, Badgers and Bunkers: Archaeology on the MoD Estate, Catterick Garrison

Philip Abramson

Thursday, 13th June

Display at Ripon Library's Local History Fair, 10am to 3.30pm.

July

Annual Outing - date to be arranged.

Sunday, July 21st

Display at the 100th Aldborough and Boroughbridge Show, 10am to 4 pm

August - no meeting.

Meetings held in the Jubilee Suite, Boroughbridge library at 7.30pm

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As most of you will be aware I have been planning to stand down as Chairman of the Society at the next AGM. However in the last few months, for personal reasons, I have not been able to take a full part in committee work and have decided it is advisable for me to stand down early. John Whitehouse has very kindly agreed to act as Chairman until the AGM.

Marjorie Ashworth.

Our first meeting of 2013 was very well attended, with many visitors as well as members, wanting to hear the reminiscences of George White, a late resident of Boroughbridge. John Richmond showed us a video recording of a conversation he had had with George in the early 1990s. George had spent most of his life in Boroughbridge. Before WW1 his mother ran the Black Horse public house on the High Street, currently the site of the bike shop. For much of his life he ran a coal delivery business from the town. George described the way life had changed over the years. We heard about the annual Barnaby Fair, where the travellers assembled to trade their horses and which ended towards the end of last century. One fact which seemed quite remarkable to many of us was that for most townsfolk their water was drawn from the pump in St James's Square right until the 1930s. The video ended with carols sung by the pupils of Boroughbridge Primary School.

In February David Hunt gave a presentation on the village of Scriven, a settlement listed in the Domesday Book. The site was given by the Normans to a follower named Scriven, and it remained under the control of the Scriven family until it passed to Henry 111 in the 13th century. The Slingsby family later took control. Scriven Hall has now been demolished and the stables have been modified to serve as the current Hall. Towards the end of its existence the Hall was occupied by various people including the Jacob Smiths and by members of the Forces during WW11. Part of the grounds remain as a park. Some interesting archaeological work has shown that settlement in this area extends back into prehistoric times, at least as far back as the Bronze Age. After outlining the history of Scriven David drew our attention to a number of older properties and pointed out the sites the Work-houses. We had a very interesting evening.

Marjorie Ashworth.



The Green, Scriven

NOTES FROM THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The March meeting saw Pat Osbourne eloquently presenting a viewpoint of the Bronte family which may be unfamiliar to the more casual adherent of Bronte family history. Apparently the Bronte Society would offer no support in the preparation of this talk which portrayed a less than idyllic picture of their family life.

Patrick Bronte adopted his surname when arriving in Cambridge University at age 25 from his humble Irish background which with his original surname of Brunty he was determined to blot out from a new life which on graduation would include writing, composing poetry and taking holy orders. He became Perpetual Curate at Haworth in 1820, an office he held until his death in 1861, having out-lived the family that he brought with him from Bradford.

His lack of personal security in those troubled times was evident from his practice of keeping a loaded pistol at his bedside which he discharged from the bedroom window into the churchyard each morning. (Remember it was the custom for gentlemen as late as in Edwardian times to carry a revolver for personal protection when walking in city streets.) Two of his five daughters died in childhood after contracting TB while at boarding-school. Two more, Emily and Anne, died of TB before passing the

age of 31 years, accompanied by rumours that actually they were poisoned by the assistant curate, Arthur Bell-Nichols, who was later sent back to Ireland by Patrick who distrusted the man and refused to let him court Charlotte, his last remaining daughter.

Charlotte, before all this, had taken a teaching position in Brussels where she fell in love with her married employer who sacked her. Even after returning home she kept up a stream of letter-writing to him couched in immoderate terminology which had to be forcefully rejected by the recipient and his wife. She eventually reciprocated the advances of the aforementioned Arthur

who, after Patrick reluctantly consented, married Charlotte in 1854. However, nine months later she died in the early stages of pregnancy. Once again the rumours started regarding Arthur's predilection for poisoning the family. There was no evidence of course as Haworth was one of the least healthy places in the country with a prodigious mortality rate. Arthur was allegedly conducting an affair with Martha Brown, the daughter of the church sexton, who lived in the parsonage as a servant. He never married her but maintained a close relationship with her even after marrying again upon his return to Ireland on the death of Patrick in 1861.

A significant development after her death was that Arthur inherited Charlotte's estate and the other sisters' estates also. On Patrick's death Arthur inherited that estate even though they were not exactly bosom pals and closer relatives to Patrick lived in Yorkshire with more deserving title to a bequest. Rumours of fraud or coercion were circulated.

The only son, Branwell, failed to realise his potential as portrait painter and became a decadent, indolent alcoholic. He was sacked from a number of jobs for dishonesty and incompetence. The last job at Thorpe Green Ouse-

burn resulted in him having a serious affair with the mistress of the house and allegations involving illegal relations with the son, his pupil. For the rest of his life the Father made regular blackmail payments to Branwell who died aged 31 years leaving debts to many local hostelryes.

Contrary to what the speaker said the Haworth church attended by the Bronte family was demolished and rebuilt in 1879, some 18 years after Patrick died.

John Whitehouse



T h e B r o n t e S i s t e r s

B y
P A T R I C K B R A N W E L L

Chairman's Retirement

As Marjorie stated in her message on page 2 she has regrettably had to retire, after 13 years as Chairman of this Historical Society, on health grounds. Since the year 2000 she has represented the BDHS in a conscientious and dignified manner and we shall miss her contribution greatly. After all, she has been the longest serving Chairman in the Society's existence. We will all wish Marjorie a speedy and full recovery. She has already expressed her intention to continue as a committee member in due course.

John Whitehouse

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY, LINDA DOOKS

Dear Members,

Firstly, as you know I was due to step down as your secretary in October, but as Marjorie, our chairman, has resigned, I feel that I should stay on as secretary until October, 2014.

John Whitehouse has agreed to act as chairman until the AGM in October, 2013.

Newby Hall Exhibition

Over the winter we have been helping Newby Hall with research for its exhibition on the Heritage Lottery-funded Country Houses at War Project. The exhibition, which features the estate's connections with the First and Second World Wars, will be on display throughout 2013 and 2014 at Newby Hall.

If you worked on the estate or know someone who did or you have any other memories of that time please let me know. Newby Hall would particularly like photographs or reminiscences of the tank crossing over the River Ure alongside Copt Hewick Bridge. The exhibition's organisers are also interested in any photographs of Zeppelins flying over the area. They already have a piece of a bomb from an airship, which was dropped on the estate.

Boroughbridge Methodist Church Exhibition

We have also contributed some posters and newspaper cuttings to an exhibition on the history of Boroughbridge Methodist Church which will be held in the summer. The material included programmes from the Society's archive of concerts held in the early 20th century.

Does anyone remember the Sunshine Club or the BBC Theatre organist Sandy MacPherson coming to play on the chapel's newly refurbished organ? If so please contact me with your memories.

Yorkshire Farming Museum Land Army Exhibition.

Lastly, I have been helping the Yorkshire Farming Museum at Murton, near York, with some research into Winifred Jacob Smith MBE, who was the organiser of the Women's Land Army in Yorkshire during the Second World War.

Winifred, whose father farmed at Humberton, near Boroughbridge, before moving to Scriven, near Knaresborough, is buried in Kirby Hill churchyard.

I recently attend a talk on Women in Agriculture at the museum, which featured a speaker who was in the Land Army in the East Riding.

The museum, which has one of the largest archives on the Women's Land Army in Britain, is holding an exhibition on the WLA over the summer, which will be well worth a visit.

Boroughbridge at War

The Historical Society's own exhibition "Boroughbridge at War", which we assembled a few years ago, will be taken to three local events this summer. Our exhibition, which will be seen at the 100th Aldborough and Boroughbridge Show on July 21st, will have a particular emphasis on agriculture.

We are aiming to use the exhibition to gather more information on the First and Second World Wars, so we would like memorabilia, photographs and stories about Boroughbridge's connections with the Land Army, The School Camps held at Minskip, Harvest Camps and Dig for Victory.

I know there was a Land Army hostel at Ripon and Dishforth, and girls were also billeted at Arkendale Hall and The Moat House, Great Ouseburn. Children from schools in South Yorkshire came to Minskip to help with the harvest, but were there any Dig for Victory plots started in the area? Any other information on the wartime in Boroughbridge

would be useful.



The first date the Society is attending is The Plot to Plate event to be held by the Boroughbridge Allotment Society on the 11th May.

We will be in the Library Foyer as last year from 10am to 4pm.

We will then be attending the Ripon Local History Fair at Ripon Library on Thursday, 13th June from 10am to 3.30pm

If you can help with the stewarding on any of these three days please let me know.

I would like to thank Christine and Margaret Tasker who have volunteered to organise the annual outing in July.

Diary Dates

The Archive project meetings will start again on Thursday, 25th April. The meetings are from 2pm until 3.30pm in the Jubilee Suite, Boroughbridge Library.

The next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 23rd April in the Jubilee Suite at 7.30pm.

Watch out for the walks organised by Walkers are Welcome to be held in the Boroughbridge area during the Easter holidays.

Many thanks for your support,

Linda Dooks, Secretary,

Tel 01423 322988.

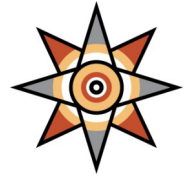
Langthorpe Archaeology Group.

In December the Historical Society sent in the pre-application form for the Langthorpe Project to the Heritage Lottery Fund. We received a five-page document giving advice on what we needed to consider in making the full application. Some of the items highlighted had been addressed already. As the closing date for applications under this scheme was early in January and people had family commitments over Christmas, the committee decided to wait and apply under the Heritage Lottery Fund's new scheme which came on stream in February.

Costs had risen considerably for the project and we have now hoping to revised them back down. On March 13th the group met to discuss the new Heritage Lottery Fund Scheme and to find out if members were still interested in going ahead with the project. It was decided to make an application and cut our costs so we may apply under the Sharing Heritage scheme which is for projects up to £10,000. and is more community based.

Although the application form is longer it is much more understandable in terms of the requirements such as working with other partners and various outcomes.

Friends of Roman Aldborough



Pompeii Live from the British Museum on Tuesday 18th June



Pompeii Live from the British Museum

Pompeii Live is the first live cinema screening of a major museum exhibition.

Tuesday 18 June, doors 6.45, starts 7.00

We will be bringing an exclusive private view of the British Museum's **Life and death in Pompeii and Herculaneum** the Picturehouse cinema in York.

See the wonders of the exhibition from the comfort of your cinema seat, introduced live by British Museum director Neil MacGregor. The exhibition's curator Paul Roberts and other experts will then bring extraordinary objects to life in this unique event.

Plus, you'll see specially made films of Pompeii and Herculaneum today, and go behind the scenes of the show to explore the stories of these famous Roman cities.

Full price £15, Concessions £13

Tickets go on Sale on April 4

Cricket Heritage: A Winter's Tale

In the last edition of the newsletter I described my involvement with the Cricket Heritage Project and its blog. This winter I have been pursuing my own cricket history project which has absorbed many hours of my time, brought me into contact with some interesting and helpful people and made me a familiar figure in the local studies rooms at York and Darlington libraries.

Back in October my aim was to look into the history of three cricket leagues which existed in North Yorkshire after the last war but mainly through loss of member clubs, had become defunct. These were the Swaledale, Wensleydale and Vale of Mowbray leagues. I realise now that I underestimated the size of the task and indeed I have made things worse for myself by not sticking to my brief, particularly in the case of the Wensleydale League where my research has taken me back well before the league began with just four clubs in 1947. Three of these founders, Middleham, Leyburn and Newton le Willows competed in every one of the league's fifty one seasons. The fourth, Bellerby declared before close of play.

What has become clear is that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries even the smallest of villages often had cricket teams, even if they played in fields barely one step up from pasture. In this area until quite recently villages like Copt Hewick, Kirby Hill and Aldborough could turn out eleven men on Saturday, and yet two years ago Dishforth went to the wall and last season Boroughbridge had difficulty meeting its commitments in the Niddedale League.

Much of the earliest information I have found has come from back copies of The Ripon and Richmond Chronicle some of which are available on micro film at York Library and I have made much use of the archive of The Darlington and Stockton Times for twentieth century records. In addition I have been able to contact a number of people who played in one or more of the three leagues and in some cases have kept memorabilia like score books, fixture cards and photographs to which I have been allowed access. Alas in many cases once thriving clubs have disappeared leaving almost no trace. Their records have been destroyed and the grounds reverted to pasture.

As I write this the new season is just a few weeks away and the project will soon be laid to one side but when autumn returns I will return to what has become something of a consuming passion with renewed vigour. There remains much to be done and should I ever feel the job can be filed under 'finished' then other leagues await: the Hessay, the Wath, the Felixkirk and District to name but three.

John Winn



Finally.....

Any member of the society who would like to contribute to the newsletter by writing a short piece, please send your ideas to Peter Fleming (peter.fleming57@btinternet.com) for consideration by the committee.

If you can spare just a couple of hours a month to assist the committee in their work please contact the secretary, Linda Dooks on 01423 322988. **YOUR HISTORY SOCIETY NEEDS YOU.**