

BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2016

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SPRING PROGRAMME

TUESDAY, APRIL 12TH

A QUAKER DYNASTY: THE PEASES OF DARLINGTON
JOHN WINN

TUESDAY, MAY 10TH

*DR. FOTHERLEY PANNELL:
C18TH NORTH RIDING SURGEON & APOTHECARY*
DR. DAVID SEVERS

TUESDAY, JUNE 14TH

STEAM IN YORKSHIRE: THEN & NOW
DEREK RAYNER



MEETINGS ARE HELD IN BOROUGHBRIDGE LIBRARY JUBILEE SUITE AT 7.30

ALL WELCOME; MEMBERS FREE

NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Peter Fleming

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter. Below are a few announcements reflecting the rude health of BDHS.

Launch of Website

We are now trialling our society website (a big thanks to David Bellwood for all his hard work with this). The address is

www.boroughbridgehistory.co.uk

Do take a look at the site and if you have any comments, ideas or suggestions please let me know and I will share them with the working group managing this initiative.

Society Writing Project

With the Dog Kennel Lane project completed the society is now looking at an ambitious new venture, the writing of a book on the history of Boroughbridge. This is something members have expressed an interest in and we now want you to come forward if you would like to be involved in the writing or if you have any resources you feel would help with the writing (e.g. old photos, family recol-

lections etc).

Mike Tasker has drawn up a list of possible areas to research and he has agreed to lead on this project. If you feel you would like to investigate any aspect of the history of our town or could be involved in any way please contact Mike directly (mike@multitasker.co.uk). We must stress that you do not need to be an experienced writer or professional historian to be involved! This is an inclusive venture and anyone with enthusiasm is welcome.

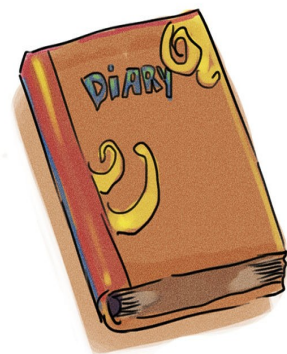
New Treasurer Needed

Christine has announced that she intends to step down as treasurer. During her time in office she has done an excellent job and we are now seeking a member to step forward who could take on this role. The sums of money involved are not great and you do not need accounting experience. Please let me know if you are interested. If you have recently joined BDHS please don't be shy about offering your services. My e-mail address is peter.fleming57@btinternet.com

NOTES FROM THE SOCIETY ARCHIVIST - Linda Dooks

Archive days for your diary

If you wish to help with research or have any queries about the history of Boroughbridge and District please meet in the Jubilee Room Boroughbridge library on the first Friday in the month at 2 pm. The next four sessions will be on 1st April, 6th May, 3rd June, and 1st July. Now we have almost sorted the Archive cupboard the Friday afternoon sessions will concentrate on the research project for the book on Boroughbridge led by Mike Tasker and the photographic archive.



wikiHow

Enquiries

Recently we have had enquiries about the Foster family from Aldborough. The Bickerdike family from Brampton Hall. General Wades encampment at Langthorpe and the Waind family who were farriers in Horsefair.

The Boroughbridge Easter Walking Festival

Our Dog kennel Lane heritage walk for the Boroughbridge Walking Festival on Good Friday was well attended with over fifty walkers enjoying the lovely sunshine.

Easter Photographic Exhibition

Over 100 people visited this joint exhibition with the Boroughbridge Walkers are Welcome Group and The Lower Valley News. On view were photographs from the Lower Valley News Photographic competition and landscape photographs from Walkers are Welcome member Ken Harrison. Mike Tasker displayed Old photographs from the history Society archive together with the Boroughbridge at War pictures used in his book.

The venue was also the start of the Walkers are Welcome Town Tour treasure hunt. This was also another chance to see an edited version of The Dog Kennel Lane research project. It was lovely to see people having memories revived from seeing Boroughbridge as it used to be, and we thank the many people who brought along photographs to add to our collection.

The winners of the Dog Kennel Lane Children's Quiz were Torol Blacker and Kitby Winder.

Many thanks to everyone who helped on the day.

BDHS ANNUAL TRIP 6TH JULY 2016

Our trip this year is to Auckland
Castle (home of the Prince
Bishops) on Wednesday July 6th

As a trial we are hiring the Boroughbridge Communicare Bus which will make the cost of the day considerably cheaper. However the bus can only seat 17 including the driver so if you definitely wish to reserve a place please contact me a.s.a.p. with a £5 deposit (tel. 01423 322862 or e-mail



SPRING PROGRAMME: SUMMARY OF TALKS

January: *The Dog Kennel Lane Project* - David Barley and Linda Dooks

January's talk was provided by David and Linda who helped fellow members to understand the scope of the DKL project and how lottery money had been spent. This was a fascinating summary of particular interest to those who have not yet walked the DKL circuit.

With the aid of on-screen photographs we were shown where General Wade's army camped en-route to Culloden and how light detection and ranging (LiDAR) images suggest an earlier, possibly Iron Age settlement.. We were told about archaeological finds such as Stone Age flints associated with the area. A brief history of Brampton Hall and Mulwith was given. The latter was home to Mary Ward who established religious institutions world wide.

We also learnt about Christ the Consoler Church (visible on the route) built by Lady Vyner of Newby Hall in the 1870s as a memorial to her son who died at the hands of brigands in Greece. This fine church was designed by William Burges.

Throughout the presentation we heard about how those involved had undertaken their research and there was reference to local characters such as Alan Pearson who contributed through being interviewed. Alan had worked on the land in the 1970s and had discovered arrow heads and other remains.

As a foot note I will mention that I was able to participate in a guided walk Linda led as part of the walking festival in March and so was able to see 'in the field' the various features David and Linda had introduced in their talk. Leaflets including a map of the route are available from the Tourist Information office in Boroughbridge.



Christ the Consoler, Skelton on Ure



Augering in Willow Garth wood as part of the DKL project

February: *Fountains Abbey* Michael Bevington

A good evening's entertainment was provided in February by Michael who managed to keep us enthralled for well over an hour with interesting insights into the history of Fountains Abbey.

The Abbey is now the responsibility of the National Trust. That it exists at all is down to the Cistercian order of monks, established at Citeaux (Latin Cistercium) by Robert of Molesme in 1098. The Cistercians had established an abbey at Rievalux but it was not until 1133 that a group of monks who had 'broken away' from the Benedictine order applied to join the Cistercians. They had selected the site we know as Fountains a year earlier when they left St.Mary's Abbey in York. Although the Skell valley offered some obvious advantages one of the monks in the group had not been impressed. He wrote 'A place of horror and vast solitude, uninhabited centuries back, thick set with thorns and fit rather to be the lair of wild beasts than the home of human beings'.

Nevertheless, the site was agreed and the mon-

astery established. To join the order applicants had to be able to read and write in Latin which made membership pretty elitist as all but a tiny minority had any education at this time. Monks had to take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and maintain 'silence at all times'. As stated, the community attracted people from families of standing and soon it had become the largest monastic establishment in Britain with land and farms in 200 places across Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmoreland. The abbey was engaged in farming, wool exports, fish sales, horse breeding and lead and iron mining. Their turnover has been estimated at £80m in today's values.

Not surprisingly Henry VIII realised the opportunities this wealth presented. Following his separation from Rome he passed the Act of Supremacy and became head of the Church in England. In 1536 he passed the Act of Dissolution and set about the removal of monasteries and convents across the land. Fountains closed in 1539. Henry sold the estate to Richard Gresham who then sold it to Stephen Proctor. A hundred years later it was sold to the Aislabie family and remained in their hands until 1966. Together with Studley Royal it is now a World Heritage site.

Fountains Abbey Today



March: *Roman Roads of Yorkshire* - Mike Haken

Mike is chairman of the Roman Roads Research Association. As such he was able to challenge some of our assumptions about Roman roads with reference to the very latest research being undertaken. He began by explaining how new technology is being used. He described how magnetometry was used to detect and plot magnetic anomalies caused by variations in soil types and features buried beneath the ground. He then showed us with some very clear images on screen how Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) can provide archaeologists with the ability to create high-resolution digital elevation models (DEMs) of archaeological sites that can reveal micro-topography that are otherwise hidden by vegetation. However, as LiDAR involves the use of aeroplanes it is very expensive! Archaeological geophysics, a means to of gaining information about what features are below the ground (such as a Roman road) without having to dig large holes or aeroplanes is also helping to develop thinking about Roman roads.



A mobile magnetometer

Mike explained that it is usually assumed that a 'street' placename (street, trat, strid, strait etc) suggests a settlement on the route of a Roman road and that it is popularly held that these roads were always straight . Using the methods mentioned above these assumptions



are now being questioned. It seems not all Roman surveyors and engineers followed the same principles of building and up to 40% of the mapped routes of Roman roads may in fact be inaccurate, especially as many routes were based on assumptions rather than proof. Mike was able to show through the clever use of maps and LiDAR photos on screen possible routes for a Roman road east of Aldborough and why there can be reasonable doubt about the exact crossing point of the Ure.

He also showed very convincing images to suggest we need to challenge our thinking about the exact route taken by Roman roads such as Bainbridge to Bowes and Skipton to Ilkley. All in all this was a very thought provoking and well argued presentation.

Excavation at Marsden 2015

Boroughbridge Agricultural Society - Brian Dooks

An Agricultural Society, which was founded in 1825 and claims to be one of the oldest of its type in Britain welcomed a member of the seventh generation of one of its original members as a guest to its latest meeting.

Boroughbridge Agricultural Society has met regularly, now three times a year since its first dinner was attended by 28 founder members on January 7, 1826. Only during the Second World War, when food was rationed and members were on active service, were meetings suspended. A public notice, published on December 31, 1825, announced the Society was being formed "for the purpose of protecting and watching over agricultural interests and for diffusing general information on agricultural affairs." The founder members included Andrew Lawson, of Boroughbridge Hall, who was unanimously chosen as the first president. He was twice elected as Member of Parliament for Knaresborough and served as a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant.

One of Andrew Lawson's descendants married a Tancred, which led to the creation of the Lawson-Tancred family. Sir Andrew Lawson-Tancred now lives at Aldborough Manor near Boroughbridge. His brother, Rupert, remains a member of Boroughbridge Agricultural Society, so the family can claim continuous membership. Other founder members included Humphrey Fletcher, manager of the Boroughbridge Bank, later absorbed into the York City and County Bank, and Hugh Stott, a medical practitioner, owner of the Crown Inn and bank shareholder. The founder's list for Boroughbridge Agricultural Society described Stott as a "surgeon and banker."

Hugh Stott was the younger son of apothecary surgeon Thomas Stott, of Spofforth, near Wetherby. After his father died in 1795, Hugh, then 16, was apprenticed to his uncle Hugh, who had a medical practice in Boroughbridge. His mother died in 1801 and he was left a legacy which enabled him to complete medical training in London. Hugh returned to Boroughbridge in 1809 to assist his uncle, who was becoming increasingly frail. The following year he married Dorothy Fretwell, whose brother, Richard, had inherited the Crown Inn. Richard was unmarried and when he died in 1811 Hugh and Dorothy took over the Crown and built Mynthurst, opposite the inn, as their home.

They developed the Crown into a leading mail coach inn with stabling for 100 horses but were also involved in charitable ventures, including support for the first free Elementary National School in the area. In his later years Hugh was active in rebuilding St James's Church, which was relocated to Church Lane, and a memorial plaque was erected by public subscription after his death in September, 1851.



Three years ago a member of the seventh generation of the Stott family, also called Hugh Stott, (picture left) who lives in Epsom, Surrey, contacted Linda Dooks, secretary of Boroughbridge and District Historical Society. The retired Royal Artillery Lieutenant Colonel was seeking help with his family history, particularly in identifying ancestors' graves in the cemetery at St Andrew's church, Aldborough. Their meetings and correspondence led to an introduction to Ron Nixon, a retired general practitioner, who is a former president of Boroughbridge Agricultural Society. As a result, Col Stott was invited as a guest, and responded to the Society's toast to their guests at the January dinner, following Baron Jopling of Ainderby Quernhow, a member for 59 years, who delivered his paper for discussion.

Lord Jopling, who was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Margaret Thatcher's Government, was Member of Parliament for Westmorland from 1964 and subsequently Westmorland and Lonsdale until 1997. He was also Chief Whip of the Conservative Party and Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury. Col Stott, who told the Society's current presi-

dent Roger Naish that he was delighted and honoured to be invited as a guest, said his research had shown the Society had been highly regarded for nearly 200 years. He wished the Society and its members long and continued success.

A writer in 1889, describing the 28 founder member, had said: "About these gentlemen I have made careful enquiries, and could, if required, adduce living witnesses to testify to the geniality, affability and high estimation in which they were all held in the respective neighbourhoods where they once resided – truly a set of men that any Society might be justly proud." Col Stott added: "What more can I say?"

A World First for Boroughbridge - Mike Tasker

It must be Boroughbridge's best kept secret. The bridge which originally crossed the canal in Boroughbridge carrying the Great North Road was the first iron road bridge in the world. It is quite remarkable that this little known fact has remained hidden for so long. Amazing what you find out when you dig around in the BDHS archives cupboard.

The bridge across the Severn at Ironbridge in Shropshire is usually credited with this distinction, but the one at Boroughbridge, although certainly of modest construction by comparison, preceded it by some 11 years. Unfortunately the bridge no longer exists, it was demolished and rebuilt as a roundabout in 1946 in conjunction with the rebuilding of the river bridge following its collapse in 1945.

Going back to the mid eighteenth century with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, transport of heavy goods by road was difficult because of the poor state of the roads. The burgeoning development of the river and canal network took off with renewed urgency and enthusiasm. By the mid 1700s the canal building frenzy reached the river Ouse and its tributaries, the Ure and the Swale. The river had been navigable as far as Aldborough and Boroughbridge prior to this. The river is tidal up to Naburn but at that time there was no weir or lock at Naburn, nor at Linton. The river may have been tidal even up to Boroughbridge.



A paper by Pat Jones (*see ref below*) gives detail about the bridge and its attribution to the then engineer John Smith. (No relation to the Tadcaster brewer). Extracts from this paper are quoted below.

"In 1734 and again in 1748 York's Ouse Navigation Trustees sought John Smith's advice regarding the lack of depth in the river's upper tidal reaches, and in 1752 he drew up plans for a lock and weir at Naburn and by 1757 the work was completed. In 1767 Parliament passed three Acts intended to improve the navigability of the Ouse above York, and its tributaries the Swale and the Ure. The third Act authorised the improvement of the Ure from its confluence with the Swale through Boroughbridge to Ox Close, with a canal onward to Ripon. Linton Lock became passable in 1769 and by October 1769 the River Ure was navigable to the tail of Westwick, some 3.5 miles beyond Boroughbridge. Its mediaeval mill weir had been by-passed by Milby Cut over which the Great North Road was carried on what is thought to be England's first iron bridge. At that time the Great North Road was a wide drovers' road along which countless cattle were driven from Scotland and the north to the markets of the south. It has been claimed that as many as 2000 head of cattle had been known to pass through Boroughbridge in a single day. The bridge built over the Milby Cut comprised nine cast iron beams about three feet apart, carrying stone decking, and supported in masonry abutments resembling the walls of a lock chamber".

Smeaton, who built the Eddystone lighthouse, is credited with building the weir at Boroughbridge, but the bridge over the canal was almost certainly built by John Smith junior, who in all likelihood obtained the cast iron beams from the Masborough Ironworks at Rotherham. The beams would have been transported by river to Boroughbridge. Although it was eventually established that the tensile strength of cast iron was not suitable for this type of construction, the bridge survived intact for 177 years and withstood quite exceptional loads during the Second World War.

When the bridge was dismantled in 1946 the iron beams were deposited in a York Museum. One of the original beams used in the construction possibly still exists in the Science Museum at Wroughton in Wiltshire, a museum which has space for storage of heavy/bulky historical artefacts. We are currently trying to establish whether or not it is still there. Although the bridge was basic and functional compared with the picturesque and exotic construction at Ironbridge, its importance as a vital part of the Great North Road cannot be over-emphasised, and would far exceed that of the Shropshire bridge. It is inconceivable that the Milby Cut canal could have been opened without a bridge first being in place to take the busy Great North Road traffic. As such it should be celebrated as the **first iron road bridge in the world**.

Ref: "Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society" No 165, November 1996 by Pat Jones

Many thanks to Brian and Mike for their articles. Other members wanting to submit an article for the newsletter should e-mail it to me (peter.fleming57@btinternet.com). Peter