

BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

<http://www.boroughbridgehistory.co.uk>



NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2018

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AUTUMN PROGRAMME

TUESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER

MY CRIMINAL ANCESTORS

BARBARA DIXON

TUESDAY, 9TH OCTOBER

AGM AND MEMBERS' EVENING

TUESDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER

GUY FAWKES AND THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

TONY MORGAN

TUESDAY, 11TH DECEMBER

OUT OF NIDDERDALE AND OVER THE HILL

JENNIFER DEADMAN

MEETINGS ARE HELD IN BOROUGHBRIDGE LIBRARY JUBILEE SUITE AT 7.30

ALL WELCOME: MEMBERS FREE; VISITORS AND GUESTS £3.00



NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

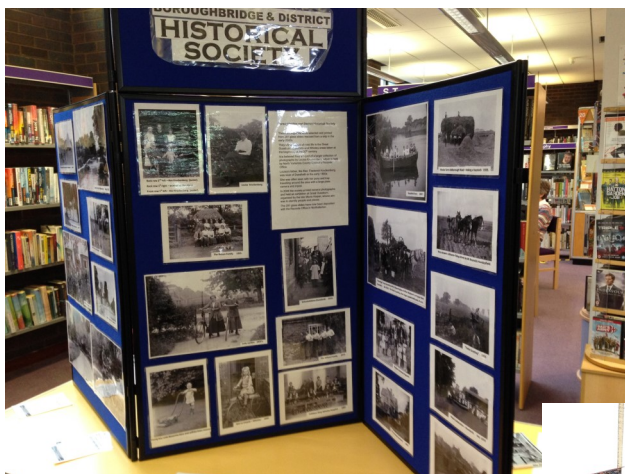
Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter. I hope all readers had a lovely summer. And what a summer it was! With week after week of high temperatures and no rain England began to look like a different country. It seems, though, that as autumn approaches we are returning to normal meteorological conditions.

The society has an excellent programme of guest speakers organised for the autumn season, courtesy of David Barley. October is, of course, our AGM and members' evening. In recent years we have had a number of short talks from members at these events. Please consider saying a few words if you have an interesting story or artefact to share. So that we can plan properly please let me know at the September meeting if you would like a slot.

We are now at a very exciting point with our book on the history of Boroughbridge. As a result of Mike Tasker's passion and drive and the contributions made by large numbers of society members and others the project is nearing completion. More from Mike about this at our next meeting.

The society has been represented at a number of events over the summer thanks to stalwart volunteers. Our society thrives because of the hard work of all committee members and other volunteers who do their bit. Anyone who feels they can help in any way with the work of the society should speak to me or any member of the committee so that we can get you involved.

Peter Fleming (chair)



Our displays at Northallerton Library and Newby Hall



No. 6 (RCAF) Group Bomber Command During World War 2

Ken Cothliff gave the April talk which proved a very informative and fascinating resume of the operations conducted by No. 6 (RCAF) Group Bomber Command during WW 2. The speaker's interest in the Canadian formation was deep- rooted as his father, who was Canadian, flew with the Group as a Flight Engineer. He was shot down and killed in 1944 while returning from a raid on the Essen industrial complex.

The Canadians started arriving in strength in late 1939 and by 1942 were so numerous that in October of that year No.6 Group of Bomber Command was formed manned completely by RCAF officers and men. Group HQ was established in Allerton Castle and 6 "local" airfields including Dishforth, Topcliffe and Dalton hosted a total of 8 bomber squadrons, comprising two squadrons of four-engined Halifax and 6 squadrons of twin-engined Wellingtons.

Early Group activity included "gardening" sorties, whereby Wellingtons were employed on mine-laying in coastal waters from northern Norway as far south as the French Atlantic coast in the Gulf of Gascony. 5000 tons in all were dropped. Notable attacks included the early Berlin raids when 78 of the Group's aircraft were deployed. V1 and V2 sites were destroyed including Peenemunde. Pre D-Day and post D-Day operations saw the Group adopt a tactical role hitting logistical targets and enemy troop concentrations. By 1945 the Group had expanded to 14 squadron strength including four Lancaster squadrons. The other squadrons retained their trusty Halifax bombers. Additionally, a squadron of Mosquito Pathfinders was detached to No.8 Group RAF.



RCAF aircrew comprised approximately a third of the total Bomber Command aircrew strength. No.6 Group's last missions were flown on 25th April 1945. A total of 40,800 missions had been flown during which 126,000 tons of ordnance was dropped. 800 aircraft were lost and more than 4000 crew members died. Additionally Avro Canada built and supplied 500 Lancasters to the RAF. The RCAF contribution was self-funded and the debt we owe them is generally overlooked.

John Whitehouse

Air crew and Ground crew of a RCAF Lancaster Bomber

Zeppelin Attacks on York During World War I

Our May speaker was Dick Hunter who gave us a very interesting talk on Zeppelin activity over York during World War I.

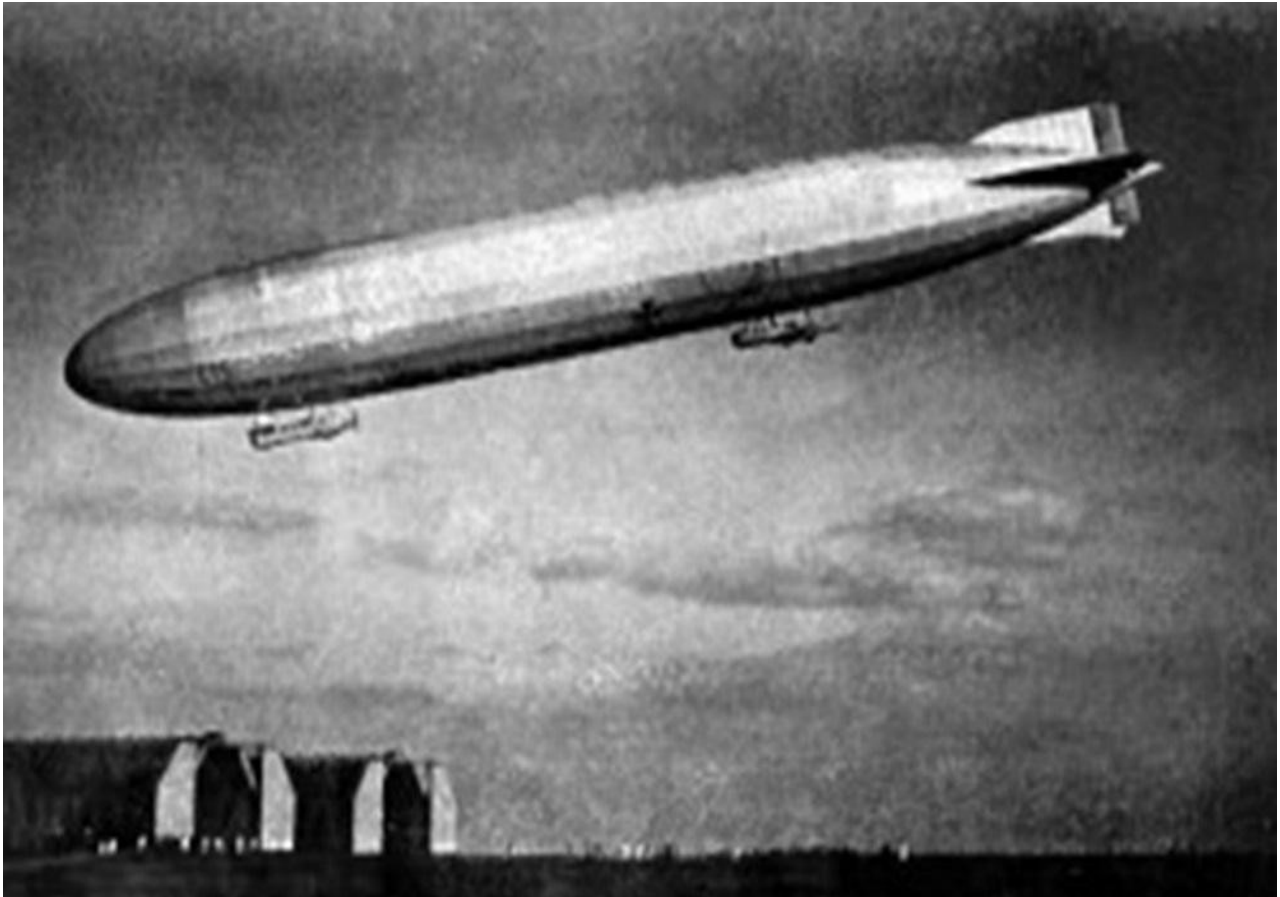
In 1915 there had been Zeppelin raids on Great Yarmouth, Hull and London. In 1916 raids reached further inland to the Midlands and York on May 2nd, September 25th and November 27th and 28th. The most serious of the Zeppelin raids was the one that took place on May 2, 1916. The distinctive cigar-shaped shadow of a German airship was spotted over the city at about 10.30pm. For the next ten minutes it dropped 18 bombs, destroying houses, killing nine people and injuring 40 more. Fear of future raids increased and a number of people were subsequently prosecuted for showing lights at night.

In the raid of May 2, Upper Price Street suffered a direct hit killing George and Sarah Avison of 13 Upper Price Street. So as not to affect morale the raid wasn't reported in the newspapers until a report in the Yorkshire Herald on May 4 which, even then, merely referred to the raid being 'somewhere in Yorkshire'.



Number 11 and Number 13 Upper Price Street after the Raid

Letters and diaries kept at the time reveal some details about the event and what happened afterwards. Street lights were shut off and the gas supply turned down to ensure dimmed lights in people's homes. In Hull search lights and guns were installed to try and spot and shoot down enemy airships. School logbooks record children missing school as a result of the raids. The headteacher wrote in Scarcroft Elementary School Logbook, 'People are much alarmed; attendance has been disturbed'. Entries for the November raid more accurately records attendance down by a quarter. After the first raid a citizens' committee was set up to assist those suffering as a result of the bombing. Appeals were launched for furniture, funeral expenses, allowances for dependent relatives of victims and so on. One interesting detail is that some of the money raised was used to buy artificial limbs for survivors.



A Zeppelin of the type that bombed York in 1916



In one first hand account of the first raid on York Norah Chapman, sister of Emily, wrote: "My poor darling sister was killed in the air raid, my dear darling mother has had her left arm shot off and I am very badly wounded at the top of my right arm, and three wounds in my back... The house is completely wrecked."

Nationally, 560 people died as a result of airship raids. Given the crudity of this method of warfare (bombs dropped by hand from baskets below the airship) this seems quite a high figure but, compared with the slaughter on the Western Front, is a mere fraction of total losses.

Zeppelin Damage in Bishop Hill

Writers and Writing in World War I

In June our guest speaker was Isobel Stirk who gave a moving talk about writers in World War I. She helped us to get a real sense of the horrors of the war; what a contrast to the beautiful and peaceful summer's evening we were experiencing a century later in Boroughbridge, 2018.

Using first-hand accounts, we heard what people were thinking before, during and after the war. Isobel read extracts from writers such as Edward Thomas, Siegfried Sassoon, Vera Britten, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Virginia Woolf and Rudyard Kipling. Unsurprisingly, the public mood before the war was one of patriotism and heroism. As the war progressed writers captured the horror of it all (though what they had to say wasn't published until some years later) and after the war came thoughts of futility and regret reflecting the end of innocence and unquestioning acceptance of war.

One person who was heard during the war was Siegfried Sassoon. His declaration of war against the war appeared in the *Bradford Pioneer* in July 1917. He threw his military cross into the sea in disgust at the continuation of fighting. His friend Robert Graves was able to persuade the authorities that Sassoon had shell-shock. This saved him from being court-martialled.

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insecurities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practiced on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize.

Rudyard Kipling is usually seen as someone whose jingoism helped promote the war, his propaganda supporting the prolongation of its madness. However, he was broken with grief following the war, his son having died at Loos in 2015. He wrote the famous line, "If any question why we died, Tell them, because our fathers lied".

One of the most famous and vivid war poems that captures the horrors of the Western Front is Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.*

*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*

*In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

*If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

The Latin phrase is from the Roman poet Horace: "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country".

It is appropriate to reflect on how attitudes to war have changed in the century since 'the war to end all wars'. Isobel's talk certainly helped us to do so.



The Horrors of the Western Front

English Hymn Tunes and Their Origins

In July committee member and church organist David Bellwood entertained us with a talk on the origins of some well known hymn tunes. David used recordings of a number of tunes and even had us all singing along at points during the talk.

A hymn tune is a melody to which text is fitted. A hymn is a type of song, specifically written for the purpose of adoration or prayer. In the Christian church hymn singing became important after the Reformation, and especially so during the 1700s and 1800s. In 1861 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' was published for the first time. In 1906 'The English Hymnal' was published as an alternative source of hymns. Many hymns we are familiar with are named after places, streets or churches connected with the composer, e.g. Duke Street (St. Helen's), Abbot's Leigh (Gloucestershire), Regent's Square church.

'To Be a Pilgrim' (also commonly known as 'He who would Valiant be') was discussed. This is the only hymn John Bunyan is credited with writing. It first appeared in Part 2 of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written in 1684. The hymn recalls the words of Hebrews 11:13: "...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

The words were modified extensively by Percy Dearmer for the 1906 *The English Hymnal*.^[1] At the same time it was given new tune by British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, who used a melody taken from the traditional song 'Our Captain Cried All Hands' which he collected in the hamlet of Monk's Gate in West Sussex. The melody is referred to in hymn books as 'Monks Gate' but that is the name of the place where it was collected.

Thank you David for an entertaining talk.



BDHS Trip to BEVERLEY and BURTON AGNES June 25th 2018

BEVERLEY MINSTER

A bright sunny morning and all present when the coach arrived, so we were soon on our way to the first stop - Beverley. The coach driver dropped us within walking distance of The Minster which the majority wished to visit.

The Minster, originating from the 1190's with 2 further additions during the 14th and early 15th centuries, is dedicated to St John of Beverley, a Bishop of York in the 8th century, who founded a monastery on this site. His tomb and remains in the Retro-Choir attracted many pilgrims.

The Quire contains 68 early 16th century stalls. Each misericord or mercy seat has a unique carving underneath. The canopies here contain 20th century carvings.

The beautifully carved Percy Canopy (opposite), decorating an area towards the High Altar, dates from 1340 and is thought to commemorate the death of Lady Eleanor Percy 1328. The Percy's at that time were the most powerful nobles in the North.

The intricacy and the delicacy of both the wood and stone carvings is breath taking.

There are also 3 Chapels of the East Yorkshire Regiment, dedicated mainly to those soldiers who lost their lives in the two World Wars and Malaya.

At the time of our visit there was an exhibition of beautifully worked tapestries depicting the life and deeds of St John. They are the work of a local College Embroiderers Guild.

There is much more to see than mentioned here and the general feeling was of an hour and a half well spent. We were picked up again at 12 15 pm and those who wished to lunch at Burton Agnes were there in good time.



BURTON AGNES HALL and GARDENS

Members set off in all directions here, there being so much to see and time limited. The original Norman Manor House mimics the outside of the main Elizabethan House after being clad with bricks in the 17th century when the Hall was finished. However on entering it is immediately obvious that this is Norman, built for Roger de Stuteville in 1173 and typical of this era. The original Norman Church stands behind.

Burton Agnes Hall, in the top twenty of Simon Jenkins "England's Thousand Best Houses", was built in 1598 for Sir Henry Griffith, a 23rd generation ancestor of the present resident family the Cunliffe-Listers. The Hall & Gardens now belong to the Burton Agnes Hall Preservation Trust, being passed to this charity in 1977.

So much to see in this spectacular place. Particularly impressive was the whole wall of Elizabethan wood carving in the main hall and a most unusual staircase. Tapestries, furniture, art, something for everyone to delight in. The top floor itself contains a collection of Impressionist and contemporary artists.

Many of our group found time to explore the Elizabethan walled garden and the areas beyond which contain topiary, a classical pond with modern water sculpture and extended historic woodland.

A visit to this beautiful place is a must. If anyone would like to borrow the leaflets please get in touch- Tel 322862. We would like to thank all who supported us on this trip and thanks to Mike for supplying the photographs. We are always open to suggestions for future trips.

Margaret and Christine



Burton Agnes Hall

Society Members and
Guests enjoying the
grounds



