

# BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023

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### SPRING PROGRAMME

TUESDAY, 10TH JANUARY

A Walk Round the Aislabie's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Water  
Gardens at Studley Royal - Mike Bevington

TUESDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY

Tokens of Love: A History of Love, Marriage  
and Separation - Andrew Wager

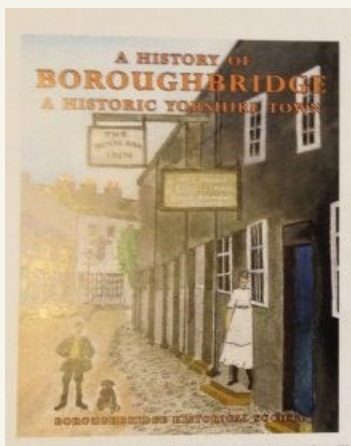
TUESDAY, 14TH MARCH

In Your Own Words: The Dialect and Heritage  
Project at Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes

Kathleen McGrath

TUESDAY, 11TH APRIL

True Life Tales of Tudor York - Janet Senior



### A HISTORY OF BOROUGHBRIDGE

COPIES CAN BE BOUGHT AT MONTHLY BDHS  
MEETINGS AND AT PYBUS NEWSAGENTS

## **N o t e s   f r o m   t h e   C H A I R M A N**

Wishing all the members a very Happy New Year and looking forward to a less tumultuous 2023 than last year.

The BDHS has had a very good year following on from Covid. The meetings have been well attended with more confidence, there has been a gradual monthly increase in members and visitors which are approaching pre-Covid numbers.

The year has been particularly significant as it was the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322. Collaboration with The Battlefield Trust and support from Boroughbridge and local councils and Boroughbridge Primary School, enabled a good result. A relief, as progress came to a halt during much of in 2020 due to Covid, 2021 brought a gradual increase in preparations and planning through Zoom meetings and face-to-face planning meetings.

The event on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March was a well-attended, as the early morning rain gave way to bright and sunny day. The ceremony began at the battle cross in Aldborough, where the Earl of Hereford laid a wreath in memory of an ancestor who died during the battle. Other local dignitaries also laid wreaths. Displays also took place in the town, through the day thanks to The Three Swords display team, Battlefield Trust and Bowyer Bushcraft. There were guided walks of the battlefield sites by Louise Whittaker of the Battlefield Trust. The children of Boroughbridge Primary school designed battle shields, which were displayed in the library Jubilee Room, along with other battle information.

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August the Battlefield trail was finally opened by the Mayor of Boroughbridge, The Three Swords Display team again in attendance and the Battlefield Trust represented by Louise Whittaker and Chris Rock. Chris designed all the artwork of the display boards along with the trail leaflet. Each of the five boards can be seen at the bridge by the entrance to Mill Lane, the entrance to Milby Lock pathway, the others at Milby Lock, Aldborough Road and St.James' Square by the fountain.

The Society were approached earlier in the year by Boroughbridge Council, asking if we could produce a leaflet of Boroughbridge, highlighting historical locations, for the town's visitors. The design lead

was taken by Mike Tasker. The leaflets can be picked up at the town tourist office and various other locations in the area.

In July a trip was arranged to visit Pontefract Castle, which proved to be a big success.

In July we hosted Bedale Historical Society, who had earlier approached us asking if we would give them an historical walking town tour around Boroughbridge, which proved to be very successful. An invitation has been reciprocated by Bedale to visit them in July 2023 (yet to be arranged).

At the AGM in September there was a change in the committee members. Peter Fleming stepped down as chairman after seven loyal and very supportive years in the position; he is staying on as a committee member. Linda Dooks, a founding member of the Society, has stepped down from the committee, due to other commitments. She has been such an outstanding supporter and archivist of the Society over the years. Christine Tasker also stepped down as a committee member due to ill health. Her hard work and support will be also missed.

If anyone would like to get involved with the work of the committee, please don't hesitate to get in touch with any current committee member.

We have an interesting programme of talks lined up for 2023, beginning on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January, when Mike Bevington from the National Trust will give a talk titled 'A Walk Round the Aislabie's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Water Gardens at Studley Royal'.

Peter Audsley





**Dan Metcalfe** gave our October talk. Dan is a farmer's son and the family farm is located near Studley Park, Ripon. Part of the farm is known as Hospital Wood Field. This field was part of a massive barracks which, during World War I, housed over 30,000 soldiers. Dan had always been aware, therefore, of how the past remains in the present.

Dan helped with a project to commemorate the Normandy landings (World War II) which involved creating the shapes of fallen soldiers in the sand. Following this, he began to experiment with creating shapes from drying mud and collaborated with Jean Mundy to create a number of figures that would resonate with people during the 100 year anniversary for the end of World War I. Ultimately, his mud exhibition in Ripon Cathedral attracted over 33,000 visitors and raised £4000 for charity.

Life-size metal figures, cut from the moulds which made the mud shapes, were installed in various places around Ripon, where they remain, reminding us of the sacrifices made by that special generation. The figures include a tommy and a horse (based on Dan's great grandfather who had been a Royal Lancer), a woman helping a wounded soldier (based on Nellie Spindler) and a returning soldier, hoping for a better future.

Dan's talk was really fascinating. Not only were we reminded of the ultimate sacrifice so many made, we learnt a great deal about the painstaking process of experimentation leading up to the very successful exhibition. Some soil from Belgium was combined with soil from Hospital Wood Field to create the final work displayed in the cathedral. It was a living installation in that over a six week period as the mud dried the shapes and textures of the figures appeared. Visitors could view the figures from above, using a gantry erected on scaffolding. The painting below shows one source of inspiration for the installation.



Gassed By John Singer Sargent





The figures appear as the mud dries





33,000 VISITORS  
5000 VISITORS ON NOV  
10TH  
500 SEGMENTS SENT  
AROUND THE COUNTRY





## The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

### Andrew Thornton

Andrew's talk provided us with a very interesting and sobering account of the work of the commission, which looks after cemeteries for services personnel in the UK and abroad (and associated records) who died through war. Over one and a half million dead are commemorated from World War I and II in 23,000 locations. A fourteen year-old is the youngest known soldier remembered and a sixty eight year-old the oldest. Each year, new casualties are located on what was the Western Front in World War I. While the largest cemeteries are in Europe there are also cemeteries in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and Britain.



Graves on the Isle of Islay

Sir Fabian Ware worked for the Red Cross on the Western Front. He created a Graves Registration Unit which, by Royal Charter, became responsible for Imperial War Graves in 1917. When the war ended exhumation parties continued trying to locate the fallen until 1921. Many of the dead were classed as 'unknown soldiers'. It is easy to understand why, given the destruction that took place on the battle fields. There were, for example, 10,000 casualties at Etaples alone.

The cemeteries created to remember and honour the dead were designed according to a number of principles: headstones were uniform, headstones were permanent, the dead were named on headstones or on a memorial stone, no bodies were repatriated, headstones had a rounded top (not a cross) to represent all faiths fallen. Epitaphs were allowed, though some were contentious; 'He Died for Capitalism' was one such. In graveyards with over forty graves a cross of sacrifice was built and a stone of remembrance in very large cemeteries. The famous Menin Gate contains 53,000 names.

In the UK there are 306,000 commemorations. Here, individual private headstones were allowed.

For more information about the work of the commission and the cemeteries they maintain please go to [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)



The Menin Gate



Topcliffe R.A.F. Aerodrome was the airfield used as the headquarters of the Canadian training base of No 6 (R.C.A.F.) Bomber Group. Topcliffe Cemetery contains the graves of several Second World War airmen.



## A SHORT HISTORY OF EASINGWOLD RAILWAY

### Frank Johnston-Banks

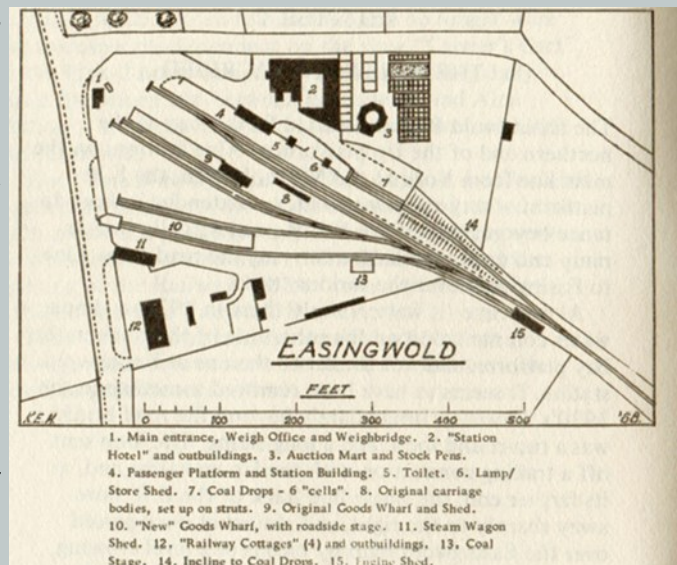
Frank spoke to the society in December. Peter Audsley summarised his talk for us in the notes that follow.

Easingwold was a busy market town in a mainly agricultural district on the main road from York to Thirsk and Northallerton, it was a thriving small town in the pre-railway days. The first attempt for the railway was in 1836 when Easingwold attorney, Robert Gill, attempted to get the Great North of England Railway Acts for the line to include a line passing through Easingwold. When the line from York to Northallerton was proposed in 1838, there was the expectation that it would pass through Easingwold, for a railway to serve the area, but the plan fell through. This was the first of various schemes to fail during the period 1836-1864. The line which became part of the East Coast railway, took an almost straight course between York and Northallerton. It by-passed Easingwold by about 2.5 miles, and until the railway came, a horse drawn carrier's cart made the journey to Alne Railway Station three times a day. The Great North of England Railway was opened from York to Darlington on 4 January 1841 for freight traffic, and on 31 March 1841 for passengers.

The final Easingwold scheme was proposed in 1880, to include a branch line from Alne on the NER's East Coast Main Line. This brought a consortium of leading local farmers, merchants, landowners, and residents together over the coming years, resulting in the Easingwold Railway Act of 1887 and the incorporation of the Easingwold Railway Company on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1887.

After funding was secured, construction was contracted out to the ominously named construction company, Death & Co, the company had underestimated the cost of the project, and went bankrupt during construction, a second contractor was found, and the line was completed and opened on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1891 at a cost of £17,000, some £5000 over budget. It was the shortest stretch of privately owned standard gauge railway in the country at just 2.5 miles long. Easingwold station had a single platform with a small timber building; there was also an extensive goods yard comprising four sidings, passing loop, goods sheds, weighbridge, weigh office, coal drops, cattle dock and engine shed.

The opening appears to have been a large event for the residents of Easingwold, with free rides for children on the opening day.



Easingwold No. 1 Engine



The line took ownership of at least three locomotives, manufactured by Hudswell Clarke, the first was purchased on the 24 June 1891. Trains commonly consisted of a locomotive and one coach, with a journey time of eight minutes.

Prior to WW1 the company had a staff of twelve, made up of one station master, one clerk, four porters, two drivers, one fireman, one guard and two permanent way men.

Early passenger services consisted of nine daily trains each weekday in both directions. In 1921 this was reduced to eight daily trains, and then six in 1927. World War 2 led to further reductions and by October 1946 there were only two return trips a day. Passenger service finally ended on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1948.

Unlike most light railways, the Easingwold Railway was profitable for most of its life. Freight traffic was mainly agricultural and was always more important than passenger revenue. Although it made a loss in its first year, it was turning a profit by 1893. By 1920, the Easingwold line was paying a regular dividend of around 3-4%, before road competition began to affect railway traffic. A 1% dividend was paid in 1931, the last dividend until WW2.

Unfortunately, the end of the war and the resulting drastic reduction in traffic quickly led to losses. In 1947, the Easingwold line lost £1,078. Profitability was not helped by having to hire locomotives, due to having to scrap No.2 locomotive as a new firebox and boiler were needed, at an estimated cost of £1,400.

Cost reductions and a levelling off of traffic decline during the 1950's was enough to keep the railway running, but not turn a profit. By 1956, the total deficit reached £12,245, with annual losses of between £1,500 and £2,000. Talk of early closure began in September 1957, and the last train left Easingwold on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> December 1957. The train carried several wagons of sugar beet, and a 4-wheel van with Directors, General Manager, and various passengers.

The Easingwold Railway was only 2.5 miles long and with two stations. The line started at a bay on the northern end of the Up platform at Alne Station. A water tower was located on the bay platform. Easingwold Station survived until 1967 when it was destroyed by fire only leaving the station hotel standing. The station hotel was built around 1903, and still stands alongside the old station site, it was converted into a private dwelling in 2003.

In its time the line was affectionally known as "T'Awd Coffeepot".



Then and Now: the former Station Hotel, now a private house



## Society Notes

### Projects Group

After the completion of the 700th Battle commemorations and the installation of the Battle Trail boards we are now looking for continued help with the archives, as we have been donated a new filing cabinet which several members of the group have been busy setting up. This will be especially useful as we have been given photographs and research documents on Boroughbridge collated by one of our past Chairmen, Marjorie Ashworth, who sadly died in the Autumn after a short illness.

The records of the Dog Kennel Lane Project have finally been collated, including the finds for the field walking. These are now in the Archive. There is now a full report of the project in the Boroughbridge Reference Library.

During the past few months we have also been involved with the revision of the Boroughbridge *Walkers are Welcome* information board for the Town Tour which stands outside the Tourist Office. Mike Tasker has also looked at doing a small reprint of the Boroughbridge book as it is still selling well, copies of which are available from Pybus Newsagents Boroughbridge.

*Our next project meeting is on Friday 5th January at 2 pm in the Jubilee Room above the Library. Any member of BDHS is welcome to attend.*

### Information Board St James' Square

The installation of the last information board on St James Square has brought to an end the celebrations for the 700th Anniversary of the Battle of Boroughbridge.

The Boroughbridge Historical Society, supported by Boroughbridge and local parish councils, the Battlefield Trust and Boroughbridge Primary School held a series of events in commemoration of this battle in which the northern earls rose up against the King in 1322.

In March a solemn ceremony was held at the battle cross in Aldborough, where The Earl of Hereford laid a wreath in memory of his ancestor who died in the battle. Later in the day a display of armoury was given by The Three Swords display team, there were guided walks of the Battlefield, an exhibition about the battle with armoury shields designed by the children of Boroughbridge Primary School and a display by both the Battlefield Trust and Bowyer Bushcraft.

Later in the year the Battlefield trail was opened by the Boroughbridge Mayor with The Three Swords again in attendance and The Battlefield Trust represented by Louise Whittaker and Yorkshire Chairman Chris Rock who designed and completed the art work on the information displayed along the trail.

For further information visit [www.boroughbridgehistory.co.uk](http://www.boroughbridgehistory.co.uk)  
Or to download a leaflet [boroughbridgewalks.org.uk](http://boroughbridgewalks.org.uk)

Happy New Year, Linda Dooks



Newly Installed Information Board, St. James' Square



**Boroughbridge & District Historical Society**

**Minutes of AGM**

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 7.30 pm**

Agenda

Apologies

Margaret Audsley, Sue Marsden, Barry Green

Minutes and Matters Arising from 2021 AGM

Two errors were spotted: change of date from 2109 to 2019; Change of name from David Bellfield to David Bellwood

Members approved the minutes.

Chairman's Report

PF reported on the speakers the society engaged during 2019-2020. There was a trip to Pontefract and a visit to Boroughbridge from the Bedale Historical Society. The key events of the year were: the commemoration events for the Battle of Boroughbridge and the erection of related information boards; the production of a Boroughbridge trail leaflet, now available in the Tourist Information office. LD was thanked for all her work on the battle commemorations and MT for his creation of the town tour leaflet.

Treasurer's Report

JA reported on current finances. Summary (attached as App 1).

Secretary/Archivist's Report

LD presented her report (attached as App2).

Election of Committee and Officers

PF is stepping down as chair and LD is leaving the committee. PF thanked Linda for all she has done for the society. The revised committee is Peter Audsley (Chair), Jackie Akers (Treasurer), David Bellwood (Website and Enquiries), Peter Fleming (Newsletters), John Winn (Minutes Secretary), David Barley (Speakers Secretary), Mike Tasker (Projects).

Members approved the new committee.

Constitution

A revised constitution was presented (attached as App3).

Members approved the document.

Membership fees

The membership fee for 2020-2021 is £20 if paid by transfer and £21 if paid by cheque or cash.

Members approved the fee.

Any Other Business

Date of 2023 AGM

The 2023 AGM will be Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> September.

## Heptonstall Octagonal Methodist Chapel

**Peter Fleming**

I agreed to write a short article for every newsletter on a local building or landmark. I use the word local to mean Yorkshire (and even slightly further afield) rather than only our immediate environs. I first came across the Octagonal Chapel as a teenager on a Sunday school trip. Here is a little of the history of this Grade II listed building, located at Northgate, Heptonstall, near Hebden Bridge.



The first octagonal chapel was built in Norwich in 1757, followed by Rotherham in 1761, Whitby in 1762 and Heptonstall in 1764. Many others followed. The symmetrical octagon was planned on land called Dockey's Croft, given to the Trustees by Thomas Colbeck, of Keighley. The design and construction was overseen by John Wesley, who frequently preached in Heptonstall and the surrounding areas of what is now Calderdale. It is one of the oldest Methodist churches that have been in continuous use for worship up to today. Unlike the Victorian buildings of the later excesses of Methodist zeal and pride, Heptonstall was built to a human size by a practical and unpretentious people. As a result the building has a simple grace and humility.

Methodism in Heptonstall began with the firebrand Scot William Darney. He founded many societies on both sides of the Pennines as he travelled, preaching as he went. The Heptonstall "Darney Society" was visited by Charles and John Wesley in 1747. In those early days, Heptonstall had a preacher every sixth Sunday, with the travelling preachers receiving no stipend or allowance, eating where they could. John Wesley continued to visit Heptonstall and there were always immense crowds to hear him.

The society was so successful it was decided to build a chapel. The octagon shape was then fashionable for Methodist preaching houses, as it avoided conflict with the established church. The building was finished in 1764. It was intended to hold 200 people, but by 1802 there were 337 members and over 1000 scholars. The solution was to knock down the far end of the chapel, lengthen the walls and rebuild it, preserving its octagonal shape. As numbers increased even further, a larger chapel was constructed in Hebden Bridge which meant the octagonal building we see today was preserved.

