

BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024

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SUMMER PROGRAMME

TUESDAY, 14TH MAY: ANDREW STODOLNY

“THE BRONTES AT THORPE GREEN”

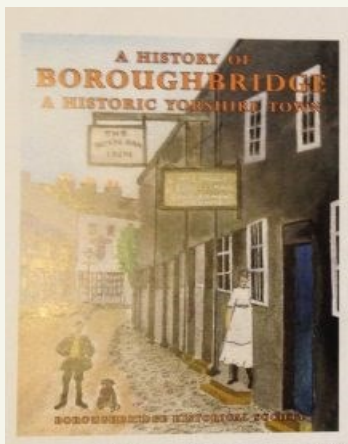
A TALK ABOUT ANNE AND BRANWELL BRONTE AND THEIR TIME AT THORPE GREEN HALL LITTLE OUSEBURN

TUESDAY, 11TH JUNE: NATASHA HOUSEMAN

“AN ALMOST YORKSHIRE FAMILY”

TUESDAY, 9TH JULY: MARK LEARMONTH

“A HISTORY OF WORK SINCE 1937,
AS TOLD THROUGH DISNEY ANIMATION”



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

Welcome to the summer newsletter (and let us hope the weather improves so that we can enjoy the summer).

We have had some excellent speakers this year, but I think everyone who heard the talk given by Andy Wilson, 'Berenblum and the Bari Bombs' about the discovery of chemotherapy and cancer treatment, would agree that this particular lecture was outstanding.

This recent history, in our lifetimes, had me thinking. I'm sure many of you have watched Micheal Portillo's 'Great British Railway Journeys', with his copy of 'Bradshaw's Guide', first broadcast in 2010. His two most recent series, series 14, 2023 and the present series 15, are currently transmitted weekdays on BBC2 at 6.30pm or on Catch-up on BBC iPlayer. In the latest two series, he describes himself as a 'Baby Boomer', someone born since the end of World War 2 and the mid-sixties, I suppose that covers most of BDHS membership, with a few pre-boomers and a few post boomers.

Through his railway travels around various parts of Great Britain, he describes how our history, including our social life, has changed since the war. There are of course the big international changes that have taken place as well as the major national events that have changed our lives: the founding of the NHS, Nationalisation, Education, Penicillin etc.

Think of the everyday ways our lives have changed, shopping for example, going to the corner shop, the Thrift stores, the Co-op to get the 'divi'. Television; if you were lucky enough, a small 10" set, black and white only, that needed a slap every so often, or the TV repair man calling so often he was like a lodger! The telephone, which not many people had, and if you did it was probably with a shared line, when long distance calls had to be made through an operator, until STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialing) arrived in the mid-fifties'. Now we have mobile phones and are able to communicate

with friends and relatives around the world in seconds.

Music (who remembers songs by Doris Day, The Platters, Pat Boone, Jimmy Young, The Everley Brothers, Elvis Presley and of course who can forget The Teddy Bears!) played on record players at 78, 45 or 33 RPM.

There are major economic changes that have happened since the war, loss of large-scale shipbuilding, coal mining, steelworks, large scale motor car and aircraft manufacturing, textiles etc.

Also in our local community, Boroughbridge and surrounding areas. The A1 Great North Road, that used to bisect the town until the bypass was built in the early sixties, the loss of pubs and hotels, a fraction of what they were, the closing of the railway, the Barnaby Horse Fair, Boddy's timber yard, the Roecliffe Brick & Tile Works, the various mills, the gas works on Horsefair, butchers slaughtering the animals on their own premises, amongst other businesses that have come and gone.

In this period the town has grown, the creation of the marina in the 1970's with new housing, schools, health centre and a wide range of shops and cafes and many other local businesses, Reed Bordall, Paynes Dairy, Russel Farm Machinery, Myers builders' merchants, amongst many others.

It's good to remind ourselves of our past recent history and how our lives have been changed in a relatively short period of time. Some would say for the better and some for the worse. I think we should in many ways think for the better, compared to our parents and grandparents lives pre-war, when certain injuries and illnesses, before the advent anti-biotics could lead to a long and prolonged illness, disablement or death.

Peter Audsley (Chairman)

Peter Audsley

**Free Access to the Roman
Aldborough site**

Saturday 27th April 10am–5pm

**Make sure you bring proof of living
in the YO51 postcode area to guar-
antee your free access**

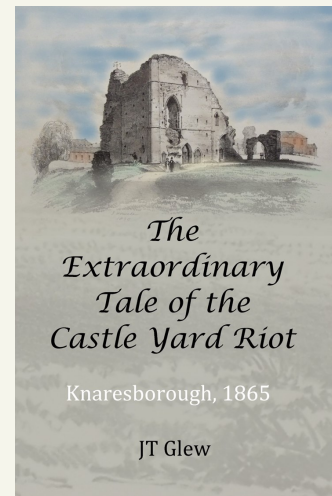


The Extraordinary Tale of the Knaresborough Castle Yard Riots Jackie Glew

In January, Jackie gave an engaging lecture on the Knarsborough riots of 1865. A brief summary of her talk is provided here. If this whets your appetite, the full story can be read in Jackie's book.

In 1865 Dr John Simpson was the owner of Castle Lodge, which he used as his country retreat. He began to improve the area around the castle by planting trees and building a summer house. This outraged the people of Knaresborough who had, for as long as could be remembered, used the area for recreation and to access the river bank, using a path that ran across the land Simpson fenced off (land technically owned by the Duchy).

William Johnson, a tailor, led the opposition to Simpson. The town constable ordered a meeting about the issues of concern to the townsfolk. Tempers flared and George Renton proposed taking back the fenced-off land. In the confusion that followed, Simpson's summer house was vandalised. A trial for 'riot' took place at Leeds Assizes. A man called Thomas Benson was bribed to give evidence of rioting and as a result the



The Castle Yard

judge ordered eleven men to three months hard labour. The men were a cross-section of society and included a broker, a musician, a labourer, a shoe maker and a joiner. Given Simpson's social standing, it is not surprising the law found against the locals, even though Simpson had annexed public land on to his own and bribed observers to lie about what happened. Here is an anonymous poem from the C18 that sums up how things worked.

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steal the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose

The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine
The law locks up the man or woman
Who steal the goose from off the common
And geese will still a common lack
Till they go and steal it back



Justice Shee conducted the hearing

However, the story doesn't end with the convictions. A year later the man who had been bribed to give false evidence was found guilty of perjury. Tragically, three of those sent to prison died while there. Those who survived were treated as heroes on their release.



A Surviving Tankard

“Boisterous cheering was accompanied by hand shaking and other tokens of a joyful reunion, flags and banners hanging from windows, suspended from rooftops, stretching across streets. Nearly every shop in the town was closed and thousands of people in holiday attire thronged every thoroughfare and high above all were now heard the strains of the military band and now the merry peals from the musical bells of the ancient parish church.”

Tankards were presented to the men as a token of thanks from the people of Knaresborough. There was a carnival atmosphere as the men arrived back in Knaresborough but those who had perished in gaol were also solemnly remembered.

Amelia and the Industrial Age—Marion Moverley

Marion spoke to society members in February, when she shared her fascinating research into Amelia Birchall, including the sources she used to track Amelia's path through life.

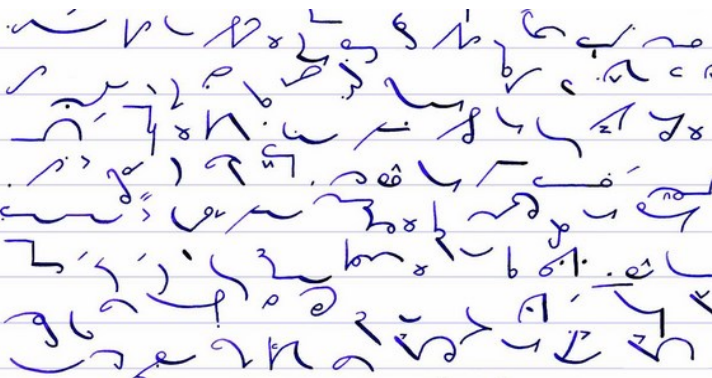
Amelia was born into a Leeds Quaker family in 1829. Her life story reflects the industrial innovations of the C19th. Alfred and Mary Birchall had seven children; sadly Mary died a few weeks after giving birth to Amelia. Alfred was a merchant who soon became involved in the Leeds textile industry. His manufacturing base was Stonebridge Mill, Farnley. For a while, the family was sufficiently well placed to send their children away to boarding schools; Amelia to Ackworth Quaker School. However, Alfred's textile manufacturing did not go as planned and so he gained employment as a Share Broker. He did not prosper in this field either and was declared bankrupt in 1853.

By this time Amelia was employed as a governess at Croft Hall Boarding School in the North Riding. Such schools catered to the new industrial middle classes. In July 1858 Amelia was married in Darlington to William Fossick of Norton.

He, too, was a Quaker, as many of the 'better' families of Darlington were. Fossick worked for West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company. He died in a tragic accident in 1867, when his body was discovered on the railway track near Billingham. It is hinted at in reports from the time that he may have been under the influence of alcohol at the time of his death.



Croft Hall



Pitman Shorthand

By 1871 Amelia had moved to Ramsgate with her son, William. However, she moved back north to remarry. Her new partner was Joseph Pitman of Meltham Mills, a cashier for the Brooks family. A cousin of Amelia had introduced them. Amelia now had a famous brother in law, Isaac Pitman, inventor of shorthand.

Joseph and Amelia retired to Worthing. Amelia died in 1907 in Brighton. Her life encompassed the mighty textile industry that was central to the Industrial Revolution. Her grandfather, father, uncles and cousins were all involved in manufacturing textiles, which were exported across the world. Her first husband was involved in railway engine manufacture, forging iron and making railways. Railway building drove the Industrial Revolution. Amelia's second husband came from the new clerical class which rose on the back of manufacturing. Amelia had a middle class life with sufficient funds to retire in some comfort. Throughout her life she was able to employ a servant, a further reflection of the class system in the C19th.

Berenblum and the Bari Bombs—Andy Wilson

As our chairman mentioned in his comments at the start of this newsletter, Andy Wilson gave us a very interesting and stimulating talk in March. His theme was the development of chemo treatments for cancer, with a particular focus on the role of Isaac Berenblum.

During World War I mustard gas was used and killed or injured many thousands of soldiers (it was first used at Ypres in July, 1917, resulting in two thousand deaths or casualties). Edward and Helen Krumbhaar worked at the Front 1917-1919, conducting autopsies on the dead. They noticed that mustard gas victims had depleted white blood cells. This discovery would be important in the development of cancer treatments.



Soldiers Blinded by Mustard Gas in WWI

Isaac Berenblum was a medical student at Leeds University, after the war. His family were Jewish and had fled Russia following a number of pogroms and settled in England. A new cancer charity (now *Yorkshire Cancer Research*) was set up in 1925 and funded a research department at Leeds, led by Professor Richard Passey. Berenblum was one of their first recruits. He conducted experiments on mice with a mixture including 0.1% mustard gas and found that the solution was killing cancer cells. In effect, he had discovered a chemotherapy. In 1931 in the USA Frank Adair and Halsey Bagge tried the treatment on humans with extensive cancer and found it could reduce or even eradicate the cancer.

Developments advanced further during World War II. In December, 1943 the port of Bari in Italy was attacked by the Germans. The SS John Harvey was blown up. It contained a secret cargo of mustard gas bombs. The gas spread around the harbour with devastating results. The survivors were taken to Bari hospital. Doctors had no idea what the symptoms meant but Colenal S Alexander from the USA knew immediately that mustard gas was to blame, even though the allied leaders were unwilling to admit this publically. Alexander's report noted the depleted white blood cells. Gilman and Goodman, working on cancer treatments in the USA, picked up on this. They had started treating lymphoma patients with mustard gas before the Bari event. They found mustard gas and oxygen could remove even large cancer tumors. Over a five month period in 1942, sixty patients had responded positively to treatment.

Today, there are over a hundred types of chemo treatment for cancer. (Of course, therapy is not without side-effects, as a person's immune system is impaired through treatment.) The battle against cancer has come a long way in the last hundred years and Berenblum's contribution should not be underestimated. His career following Leeds included becoming Head of Oxford University Cancer Research Centre. In 1974 he was awarded the Israel Prize for Biology.

History of Spinning and Textiles—Sarah Wroot

In April, Sarah told us the story of the twisted thread from the hands of palaeolithic people to the steam driven mills of the of the Industrial Revolution. She brought with her various artefacts related to spinning and demonstrated hand spinning and the use of a spinning wheel. Sarah's enthusiasm for her subject made for a very entertaining evening.

Spinning has a long history. Although wooden textile tools decay, many historical sources remain to prove the importance of textiles in human development, for example pottery from 700 BCE found in Hungary depicts hand spinners at work. It is, however, the Near East where most remains of early textiles exist. The Tarkhan Dress from Egypt was confirmed by carbon dating to have been made in the fourth millennium BCE.

During the Bronze Age people moved from spinning plant fibres to using wool. Archaeologists have shown that after 2000 BCE many more sheep were kept into their adulthood; this must have been for their wool. Administrative records from Crete show that 100,000 sheep were kept around Knossos. It is estimated 1000 women were employed in textiles there. In Peterborough, archaeologists have found quantities of spindles, whorls and loom weights dating from the Bronze Age, suggesting production there was for more than just domestic use.



Women depicted using simple spindles in medieval times

the 1300s but by the 1500s broad cloth exports were more important than raw wool exports. This pre-Industrial Revolution industry, centred largely on home production, was soon replaced by production in mills and factories through the invention of machinery for spinning and weaving at speed and scale. While we often see this revolution negatively, Sarah suggested that for the skilled women employed in spinning, factory life may actually have been quite liberating.

Spinning, weaving and dyeing techniques travelled along trade routes. We know from finds that artefacts from the Mediterranean ended up in Scandinavia and Britain; so do did ideas and techniques relating to textiles. For example, driven spindles derived from Persia were adopted in thirteenth century Europe.

In the Middle Ages in England the woollen trade made many areas prosperous, especially in East Anglia. Wool was exported in great quantities in



A rather idealised idea of spinning under the Domestic System

Bernard Porter—Recollections

Here are some memories and recollections of Bernard Porter, whose family owned and ran the 'The Three Horseshoes' pub in Boroughbridge. The memories were passed on to a Mike Jones during a meeting in 2010. Bernard retired from the 'Three Horse Shoes' in 2004. He sadly died on 30 November, 2023. The pub stayed in business until August 2023, run by others, when it was sold and renamed 'The Tap on the Tutt'.

Memories and collected information by Mr Bernard Porter.....Feb 2010.
mjrrjones

My family go back five generations in the Three Horse Shoes. It was the foresight of George S Porter to move from West Hartlepool to the hostelry in Boroughbridge on the A1 with his daughter Elisabeth Margaret Lillie (known as Lillie) and grandson Horace on the 17th of September 1902 at an ingoing of £67-11s and rent £20 per year. Mrs Severs (Lillie) held the licence from Sept 1933 to 1936, Horace took it over from 1936 to 1956, Gladys (Horace's wife) held the licence from 1956 to 1963. My father Raymond held it from 1963 to 2000.

From 1902 to the early sixties the building was owned by Hepworths Brewery of Ripon and was then bought by Vaux of Sunderland. My father, mother, uncle and aunt helped my grandfather and grandmother manage the hotel from just after the last war and continued to do so after the deaths of my grandparents in 1973. My uncle and aunt retired from the hotel. As Elaine (my wife) and I had worked in the hotel from our teens; we decided to take over their partnership. In 1986 my father and I bought the Three Horse Shoes. Our sons having established their own careers and not wanting to come into the family business we decided to retire in February 2004. In World War 11 the army took over the back half of the hotel for about four years, and billeted Canadian soldiers there.

Records show previous landlords of The Three Horse Shoes in the 19th century were 1822 Samuel Morrel, 1828 John Morrel, 1834 Thomas Marston, 1837 Thomas Houseman, 1848 Anne Whincup, 1861 Mary Gray, 1877 Richard Clark, 1897 Charles Bentley, 1900 John Prince.

The Hotel was extended in 1932 to how it is today. This extension incorporated the original building next door, which had been owned by the owner of the Old Mill in Mill Lane. At the right hand side of the Hotel on Mill Lane there was a garage where now stands the brick built "Flats". The symbol of the Hotel was three very distinct horseshoes displayed with the open end of the shoes downwards. This is a display of "Luck Lost" as opposed to the other way around meaning "Luck Gained" The significance of this is explained by the fact that near to the Hotel once stood the "Gallows" where the guilty were taken to be hanged.

On the left of the Hotel once stood a café which in 1932 became what is now Barclays Bank. Across the road the building next to the Crown Hotel car park entrance was "The Temperance Hotel" upstairs whilst down stairs there was a double frontage "Café" and "Sweet Shop". A very agreeable man operated both enterprises by the name of Mr Bert Paul. The Three Horse Shoes Hotel stands in Bridge Street, further along going south and it becomes Horsefair. On the same side as the Hotel just into Horsefair stood a blacksmiths shop, always kept busy shoeing the numerous horses both of the area and horses passing through the town. When the smithy closed an iron plate was set into the pavement to cover a recess which had been used by the blacksmith to hold the hub and spokes of cart wheels, the replacement fabricated iron rim being heated and placed on the circumference to cool and form a tight replacement rim. Next time you are in Horsefair try to locate the steel plate.

Throughout my time in Boroughbridge I always had a fascination for seeking out information of what happened when. The following are some of my findings. I have also over this time acquired a substantial collection of photos depicting times of yester years of the Town.

Interesting facts. Gas came to Boroughbridge in 1860, the company was nationalised in 1946. Electricity came in 1932, and went into public ownership in 1936. The Mill that functioned in Mill Lane had electrical generators installed motivated by waterpower from the river Ure. The power generated was used in the Mill, and also supplied electricity for public consumption. After many years of operation the Mill caught fire thought to have started from an electrical fault. Once alight the fire became a roaring blaze and much damage was done to the building.

The church that once graced St James Square, became unsuitable due to it's building structure. Subsequently it was demolished, and rebuilt in Church Lane at its present location in 1852 at a costing of £2,420. To mark where the old church stood, a cobble circle enclosing a cross of cobbles marks the spot even today. Look out for this circle when you visit St James Square. The Methodist chapel in Horsefair was built in 1865. Back in 1850 the police set up in Boroughbridge, then they were known as "Parish Armlets" on account of wearing an armband supporting a metal plate signifying who they were. Years later in 1905 the Police set up in New Row

and still operate from there. The elaborate architectural fountain in St James Square built in 1875 has an inscription explaining its heritage.

The brickyard up at Roecliffe was established in 1890. Bricks made here had blue markings, which identified them as local bricks. When you noticed the blue marking you knew you would have difficulty drilling holes into them, as they were extremely hard. As you walk around Boroughbridge look at old buildings to see if you can identify this type of brick. Opposite the Three Horse Shoes Hotel stood the Blinking Owl (now a care home), overlooking the river. The Owl was a licensed restaurant in 1985. Here was where the Riverside Wharf operated in 1853. Goods were shipped in and out from the wharf. Lead came from Nidderdale, wine from York, linen from Knaresborough to name but a few of the goods. To this day if you are fortunate to visit the building and go down to the cellars you will see the arched entrance where boats would moor to load and unload their cargo. The Town Bridge was constructed in 1115, and rebuilt with a more robust structure in 1562; its present structure was achieved in 1944/45. The weir straddling the river Ure together with its salmon ladder adjacent to the present picnic area was started in 1767 and completed in 1769.

Hostelries were in abundance in and around Boroughbridge. Passing trade and travel in those days provided ready customers. It is believed there were about 40 of such places providing food/drink and accommodation to those that stayed or travelled through the Town. Up at Kirby Hill stands the Bluebell, which is 200 years old. Down in its cellars there were 2 cells designated to hold villains. They were kept there for short periods for onward shipment south to York and other places, or north to Newcastle. There was the White Horse that became the White Swan. In Milby we have the Grantham Arms named after Lord Grantham of Newby Hall, and the 4 Alls now a private house. The 4 Alls so named: -

King---I rule for All **Priest**----I pray for All **Soldier**----I fight for All **Everyman**----I pay for All.

In Langthorpe there was Waricks Brewery, The Free Masons that became Oddfellows then renamed Steam Mill, which later became the Anchor. Other pubs were The Railway Tavern, the Old Red Lion, and The Fox & Hounds. In Boroughbridge there were several hostelries to name a few there was The Crown, The Three Horse Shoes, The Three Grey Hounds, The Royal Oak, The Green Tree, The Blinking Owl (previously mentioned being a licensed restaurant). Many of these establishments have long gone or have changed names.

In times past there were a number of working Mills. On Mill Lane adjacent to the river stood a corn mill (previously mentioned) in St Helena the mill was water powered from the river Tut, this mill was used to drive machinery in Foundry Yard one of its function was to "Mash Up" old clothing to make "Scrim". Another mill stood where Charltons Garage is today.

The Railway came to the town in 1848 as a branch line from Pilmoor. The line was extended in 1875 onwards to Knaresborough. Eventually the advent of access by railway spelt the death knell to the Canal trade. In Langthorpe there was a sweet factory. In 1890 The York City & County Bank became known as The Midlands Bank. Directly opposite across the road there was another Bank known as Fletcher Bank, now long gone (1870) now a solicitor's office known as Fitzgerald-Hart. The Post Office started in Chatsworth House in 1854, it then moved in 1890 to where it is today. Coaching reached it's height in 1789 at that time horses being used to haul coaches over 20 – 30 miles before resting or being changed. There was a candle factory in the High St near where Pybus stands today; tallow to make the candles was supplied from the town butchers.

There were several "Friendly Societies" in the Town to name a few there was the Oddfellows who met at the Black Swan which used to be by what is now the "Spar", there was the Forresters who met at the Queens Head by Hall Square, the Druids met at the Windmill, the Free Gardeners, and the Rechabites, these societies in the main provided a social function helping those in need particularly in sickness, and death.

John Holt—War Time Recollections

The material that follows is reproduced with the kind permission of Ripon Grammar School.

John H Holt 1930 – 2016

John was born in April 1930 in Skelton-on-Ure, the son of the Headmaster of the village school, then attended Ripon Grammar School though 1941-48.

After RGS, he did 2 years national service at RAF Ballykelly and then joined Lloyds Bank. He worked at several branches finally becoming a branch manager in Farnborough. His interests lay in gardening, caravanning and in old cars, having restored a 1929 Morris Cowley saloon over 7 years, following which he attended rallies each year with the Bullnose Morris club.

John published three books: life growing up in the 1930's and 40's in Skelton, his father's experience in the First World War and his major book about the history of Skelton on Ure, which provided profits to fund the restoration of the Skelton 1st World War Memorial.



Recollections

I suppose my first insight into Ripon Grammar School was when I sat for what I think was called the County Minor Scholarship exam. I know that my father who was the headmaster of the village school at Skelton-on-Ure was keen to get as many of his pupils as possible into the RGS; at which I think he was quite successful. I distinctly remember the essay that we were asked to write which said "Suppose you could change places with somebody, who would it be and why" or words to that effect. Anyway I was successful and the next stage was an interview with Mr Strachan in his study at the RGS. To a young boy of 11 he seemed to me quite a forbidding and stern man. However I survived the interview and started school there in September 1941. We travelled to Ripon on the United bus from Skelton that left there at 8.30am. It came from Boroughbridge and on the way through Langthorpe it picked up quite a lot of other boys going to the school. There were quite a number of us from Skelton and indeed included quite a lot of girls going to the High School; but that is another story as we got a little older!! The cost of the bus fare in those days was I think 4d return but school children had a bus pass that I have a feeling was provided free but by whom I'm not sure.

The bus stopped in the market square from where we had to walk to school and as you can imagine there was very little time to arrive in time for assembly in The Big School. It meant a very brisk walk and even then we could be late. If it was raining then we got very wet; but there was an alternative. If you stayed on the bus it used to go up Palace Road and through the Royal Engineers army camp and stopped outside the school about the same time as those who had walked. Because of the shortage of petrol the buses quite often used to run on gas which was supplied to the engine from a container towed behind the bus. Also to accommodate more passengers the bus seating was changed so that the seats were set parallel to the length of the bus. This way, although there was less seating accommodation there was more room in the centre that allowed people to stand; and so more people could be carried. At times the buses were very packed indeed!!

As petrol was rationed and only available to those who owned transport and used it for vital war work there were very few cars on the roads. Those that could not obtain a ration of petrol laid their cars up for the duration of the war and that is how my father's Morris 8 came to be standing on bricks in the garage with the wheels removed. They were kept in our spare bedroom and it was my job monthly to make sure that they were pumped up with a hand pump to the correct pressure in order to preserve them. Those vehicles that were allowed on the roads had to have their lights shielded by a circular metal frame with long slits in the centre and a cover above each slit that slanted the light downwards. This fitted into the vehicle light glass cover and only allowed the minimum of light to show so that it was not that apparent from above to any enemy planes. Also to try and ensure that they could be seen on the ground by passing traffic those vehicles with running boards had the edges painted white.

By September 1941 the Second World War was in its second year and we had already been issued with gas masks in case the Germans dropped gas bombs. In Skelton there were two detector boards that contained a green chemical and if there was gas about I think they changed colour depending on whether it was mustard gas or chlorine.



We carried our gas masks to school in their cardboard boxes slung around our necks until the fear of gas became more remote; when they were left at home. Nevertheless in the winter when we arrived home at dusk that was the time when searchlights would be scanning the sky looking for enemy aircraft. The nearest we had to a fear of bombing was when a German bomber said to have lost his way dropped a single bomb on Dishforth aerodrome. We had not long been home and we were quickly ushered under our stairs that was deemed to be the safest place in the house. I think the nearest city to be bombed was York and although it is about 18 miles away from Skelton we could hear the noise in the distance. When there was an air raid expected the air raid wardens in Skelton would parade along the street

blowing whistles. When it was deemed the danger had passed they would parade the street again ringing hand-bells to sound the "All Clear". In Ripon and larger towns there would be sirens that would sound with a warbling sound for a raid and a constant sound for an "All Clear". On a still night in Skelton we could hear the Ripon sirens. Travelling to school by bus daily meant that we crossed the river Ure at Bridge Hewick and over a period of some weeks we saw something being constructed on the upriver side of the bridge. There was a concrete area made in the field on the left hand side of the river and a concrete ramp down into the river and another ramp out of the river on the other side. There was then a short concrete road to the main Ripon road on the Ripon side of the bridge and a concrete standing area on the other side of the road (the racecourse side). That concrete stand is still there, as are the ramps down into the river. One morning as we passed over the bridge we saw that Sherman tanks had arrived and later some Churchills and Crusaders. We then saw them going down the ramps into the river and driving up and down the river practicing for the Normandy landing; although we didn't know the reason at that time. One morning as we crossed the bridge we could see that a Sherman upriver had fallen into a deep hole and the turret gun was pointing up into the air at a very steep angle. We hoped that the tank crew had got out of the tank in time before it filled with water.

The bus to Ripon came from Boroughbridge to Skelton and also often involved passing numerous army lorries and bren gun carriers along the road and particularly along the Avenue down to the Newby Hall park gates. These in fact extended along the Mulwith Road and also into Newby park many times completely filling the park with vehicles and tents. We were told that the army was on manoeuvres although many years later it transpired that this was probably part of what was known as The Coates Mission. This mission was to provide for a number of houses, of which Newby Hall was one, to provide safety for the Royal Family should it become unsafe for them to stay in London because of the bombing. It became fairly common knowledge in the village that the Royal Family may well come to Newby but not that the army was there to familiarise themselves with the area for this reason. Newby Hall was surrounded by barbed wire and concrete pill boxes (machine gun posts). In the very large fields along the river Ure which backs on to Newby Hall rows of wooden railway sleepers were erected vertically in long lines at frequent intervals to prevent aircraft from landing there.

Being near to Dishforth aerodrome meant that there was the constant drone of bomber aircraft and through the war years York aircraft were succeeded by Whitleys, Wellingtons, Halifaxes and Lancasters. Inevitably they returned from air raids having been shot up quite badly at times and there were numerous crashes around the area. One of these could be seen quite clearly from our bus in the morning where it had crashed into Moses Hill Plantation near to Givendale Grange on the way to Ripon. It was a Halifax crewed by Canadians and in fact crashed on take-off from Dishforth Sadly all were killed. Here perhaps I should mention what became known as the 1000 bomber raids on Germany that took place later during the war when bombers based in the UK leashed thousands of tons of bombs on German factories and railway marshalling yards in The Rhur etc.. At dusk we used to sit on the wall of our garden in Skelton and watch Lancasters and other bombers appear in a line of about 8 on the distant skyline. Almost before they had disappeared to the East overhead another line would appear; and so they came wave after wave. They certainly caused havoc on the places that were attacked and there has been a lot of controversy about the bombing of Dresden in particular where I have visited and seen the cathedral in the course of reconstruction. My personal feeling is that it brought the war to an earlier end than otherwise might have been the case and Bomber Command has only recently been recognised for its part in the war in which over 55,000 aircrew lost their lives; most of them young men in their 20s.

On one occasion there was a huge blazing fire that I could see from my bedroom window and it was obviously in the village. Everyone thought that an aircraft had crashed and indeed several fire engines came from Dishforth aerodrome thinking the same. As it was not an aeroplane they returned to Dishforth. It turned out it was an absolutely huge stack of

wheat in a farm stackyard that was on fire and several other civilian fire engines turned up. They emptied a nearby static water tank that had been built specifically for putting out fires created by enemy incendiary bombs and then emptied a local pond. That not being enough they had to take their hoses all the way down to the river Ure about a mile away! The fire was eventually extinguished but not before it had destroyed the whole stack together with the threshing machine standing at the side to begin threshing the next day. The cause of the fire was at first thought to have been due to a 5th columnist in the locality starting it deliberately but in the end it was thought it was a carelessly thrown away cigarette end that had blown against the dry stack and fanned into flames by the wind that night. What a careless loss of food for the vital war effort.

School finished at 4pm and as the bus left from the market square at 4.30pm that meant another brisk walk, and sometimes a run, to catch the bus. If we missed it there was another that left a little later but that one went along the B6265

and along what we called the top road to Boroughbridge via Kirby Hill. We would get off it just past the Marton le Moor lane end and tramp along a footpath, cutting across the fields to Skelton. It was quite a long and sometimes muddy walk much to the chagrin of our parents. I don't know what students use now but we carried our books etc in a satchel again slung across our shoulders and this could be quite heavy at times when trying to get to school on time. Latterly in the 6th Form I used a small attaché case. Food during the war, (and indeed for some years after the war) was rationed of course and in the early days my parents made sandwiches for our lunch and we sat in The Big School to eat them. Later on a hot lunch was provided and it was taken in a hut near to the carpentry hut that was behind where the present reception area is sited. Later still we were provided with lunch that was taken with the boarders and we had to



queue along the corridor before making our way into the dining room. In those days corporal punishment was the order of the day and whilst queuing there I was pushed by another boy and fell right in front of Miss Bayley the maths mistress who claimed I was fighting and as a result got the cane from Mr Freeth, the French master! You didn't argue in those days.

Speaking of rationing, food rationing was very strict although in some cases there were some "under the counter" purchases as they were called. In the countryside we didn't suffer as much as those in the towns as we could keep hens and most families at least in our village kept a pig in their back yard. This was encouraged by the government as a means of supplying people with fresh meat. Pig Clubs came into existence to obtain bulk feed for the pigs. Also when a pig was slaughtered it was impossible to preserve the offal for future use so it was cut up; made into parcels and distributed around the village to others who kept pigs. When their pig was slaughtered the compliment was returned. Many families had 2 hams and 2 sides of bacon hanging in their larders with much of the other smaller joints preserved in brine.

Sweets were rationed too but we used to make our own by mixing a tin of condensed milk with powdered milk and rolling the mixture into small balls. They were very sweet but good. Also often if we had time just before our bus left for home we would dash into a greengrocer's shop and buy dried bananas. These were horrible looking brown things but they did taste of banana. The other thing that was available from the pharmacist was glucose tablets that also took the place of sweets. The third of a pint of milk that we enjoyed at junior school was still available at RGS and as prefects we used to be in charge of handing out the bottles from the step at the base of the clock tower at the morning break. Any full bottles that were left were quickly consumed by the prefects in charge and at that time it was full cream milk so we all thought it tasted extremely good. Prime Minister Winston Churchill made some very inspirational speeches but at the outbreak of war and during the first year or so food was becoming more scarce as ships bringing food to us from abroad were being sunk by U-boats. (German submarines) Even bread became rationed and we were exhorted to try and produce our own food. Dig for Victory was the slogan and people worked very hard on their gardens and allotments. Ration books held coupons that had to be surrendered for a set amount of food and as the supply of clothing material became more difficult to obtain the books also held coupons the surrender of which had to be made to buy clothing. In Ripon Jacksons the clothing shop in Westgate was a designated shop for the supply of the RGS uniform and the supply was of course limited by the availability of clothing coupons. My mother used to knit my jerseys and pullovers that had the RGS colours along the bottom hem.

As the war progressed it was evident that raw material was becoming in short supply for the production of tanks and other weaponry including aircraft. We were exhorted to collect as much as we could of any iron, steel and aluminium. As a local boy scout in the Skelton troop we were sent round to knock on the doors of everyone in the village to collect these metals. Everyone was extremely patriotic to the extent that they were donating aluminium teapots and other domestic items to be broken up for the war effort. It was also vital that the government acquired funds for war expenditure and my father and someone else in the village vied with each other on a friendly basis to see who could sell the most National Savings stamps and National Savings Certificates. The same exhortation applied to the collection of paper and the Scout

room where we met regularly had a heap of paper for collection to help with the war effort. Turning to sport I was never much good at cricket much to the disappointment of my father. However I did enjoy rugby and after playing for the Colts I graduated to the First XV as a regular player. We enjoyed many good games winning a lot and losing some; I hope with good grace. Leeds Grammar School was always a hard match whilst Ashville at Harrogate was considered an easy win! One school we did enjoy going to was Ampleforth College as after the match we were entertained to a good meal. We were taken to the away matches in a coach and it was traditional on the return that we used to sing popular songs of the day. The last one as we arrived back in Ripon however was always the same; called "I'll be your sweetheart, if you will be mine" That always went down very well. How memories come flooding back!!



Boroughbridge and District Historical Society Committee

Minutes for Tuesday 16th January 2024

In Attendance: Peter Audsley, Jackie Akers, David Barley, David Bellwood, Peter Fleming, Mike Tasker, John Winn. **The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.**

Treasurer's Report: £1300.47 is held at the bank and £258.09 cash in hand. One book has been sold and there are 43 members.

Secretary/Archivist's Report

***Will Swales-The Crown History Project** It's coming along albeit slowly with much help and guidance from Mike Tasker. He has put me (Will Swales) in touch with Alan and Brenda Hopwood who had a shop near the Crown and some of their photos may prove useful. I was contacted by Councillor Phillips who alerted me to more photos including one of the old stables. It would be helpful to find the original of this. I would be pleased to hear from anybody who has knowledge of the ownership of the hotel in the 1960s and 70s. It may well be 2025 before the project appears in print, in the meantime please pass on my thanks to anybody from the society who has helped.

***Kathleen Pullan-Watkins:** Kathleen who has been in touch with the society several times will be visiting the town in June from her home in Philadelphia PA. She would like to meet members of the society then if possible and as she has a strong connection to St Mary's Church, Roecliffe she would like to be put in touch with them. Also ancestors of Kathleen's may have lived at 'Rose Cottage' The Square Boroughbridge and she would like to visit the cottage if it can be identified.

***Fran Mahon** is an archaeology student at York University who would like to investigate the edifice marking the source of the River Ouse. Links have been sent to Fran.

***Liz Leatherbarrow (Town Clerk)** has been in touch re cleaning of the battle boards. (see separate item)

***Data protection** where we receive enquiries names only should be recorded.

***Room Bookings:** we need to remind members of dates for the archive meetings at the preceding Tuesday meetings.

The secretary raised the issue of attendance at June/July meetings when on occasions the Jubilee Room has been very hot with consequent effect on numbers attending. After discussion it was agreed that we would not seek an alternative venue.

***Website:** testing of the new software has shown it to be OK. A training session open to all members will be arranged.

***Battle Boards:** Agreed that we should take over responsibility for cleaning the boards. PA will do the north and south side of the square. DBa Milby Lock, JW St James' Square, JA Aldborough Road and DBe the board at The Devil's Arrows car park.

AOB

Tea Rota: February DBe, March PA, April JW, May, DBa, June PF, July JA

Agreed that we would provide a display in the library entrance in May. **Next meeting 16th April 7:00, venue to be arranged.**

Fontaine Hospital, Linton

Many of you will have visited Linton, a village in the Yorkshire Dales, famous for the lovely three bridges over the beck. Close to the clapper bridge there is a building that is rather grand for the Dales, a combination of Palladian and Georgian styles of architecture. This is the Fontaine Hospital, named after its founder, Richard Fontaine.

Fontaine was born in 1639 and left Linton to try his luck in London. He died a millionaire, at the age of 81. As a timber merchant he was one of the few citizens who did well out of the Great Plague and the Great Fire, wood being in great demand for coffins during the plague and for house building after the fire that destroyed much of London.

He left money in his will to build almshouses and a chapel. He was clear he wanted the hospital (really a refuge) to house local poor people. To secure its future, he left funds to buy agricultural land, the profits from the use of the land would then fund the hospital into the future. The buildings were designed by John Vanbrugh, who was the architect of Castle Howard. The almshouses are still lived in by local people. The tiny chapel is usually open during daylight hours.

Peter Fleming



The Fontaine Hospital today (above) and as it looked c.1900 (left)