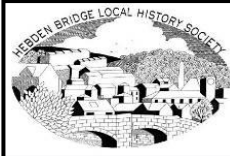


2018 No 1



HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

Spring 2018



Discovery Day

**Food and Farming in the Calder Valley,
Past, Present and Future**

**Saturday 15 September, 2018
Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge
See page 2**

**Published by the Hebden Bridge
Local History Society**

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The society has sections for those with a particular interest in local prehistory, family history and folklore.

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Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. Here you'll find reports of the lectures for 2017-2018, news from the Family History and Folklore sections, queries, activities and forthcoming events. If you'd like to share your research or pose a query on something historic for the Summer 2018 issue, please send it to the Secretary by 1 August 2018.

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Society Publications

Coming soon: Hebden Bridge and the railway in the nineteenth century.

For information on all the Society's publications, see

www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

Discovery Day

Food and Farming in the Calder Valley, Past, Present and Future

Saturday 15th September 2018, 9.30 am to 4.00 pm
Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge

**An introduction to using archive materials with a
view to encouraging future research**



This day will include:

- An introduction to archives held by HBLHS that have reference to land use and farming, including historic publications, maps, wills and deeds.
- A closer look at local probate records, the 1941 Farm Survey and farm buildings.
- A question and answer session with farmers who have a lifetime involvement in farming locally.

Lunch and refreshments included. Price to be announced!

For more information please contact Barbara Attack

ataxjb@btinternet.com

Exhibitions

To mark the end of World War I there will be an exhibition in the autumn at Hebden Bridge Town Hall entitled **November 1918: Armistice and after**. It will show aspects of local life throughout the last year of the war and beyond this remarkable time.

1918 was a worrying year. German advances in spring almost reached Paris; men were still being called up; rationing was adopted on a wide scale; local families, wives and mothers continued to receive news of injury and death of loved ones, while they struggled to keep home life going. November brought the fighting in France to a halt, but while there were changes to the franchise and an election there were also massive problems. And Hebden Bridge – maintaining its individuality - avoided the building of a war memorial. The exhibition will cast light on these and other features.

Spring 2019 will see an exhibition on **Hebden Bridge and its railway station**.

Five people are now working on the exhibitions. I am really pleased by the response to the appeal for help in creating these presentations. If you are interested in the research or the creative side of this, then please contact me to learn a little more about what's involved.

Mike Crawford mecrawford@btinternet.com

Hebden Bridge Co-operative Heritage Walk

UN International Day of Co-operatives 2018

Saturday 7 July 2018

11 am - 12.45 pm

Hebden Bridge in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was known as an important national centre of the co-operative movement. This heritage walk will visit both the Nutclough Mill (home of the worker-run fustian manufacturing co-operative for almost fifty years) and the former central stores of the Hebden Bridge Industrial Co-operative Society (the retail co-operative). Also included will be a short visit to the graves of co-op pioneers Joseph Greenwood and Jesse Gray at Sandy Gate burial ground.

Leader: Andrew Bibby, author of *All our own work* (the story of the Nutclough co-op)

Meet: Tourist Information Centre, 11am.

Cost: No charge, but donations to Overgate Hospice may be made.

Terrain: Pavements, small earth path at Sandy Gate. One climb, from the centre of Hebden Bridge to Sandy Gate, will be taken slowly.

The walk will formally end at the Tourist Information Centre at about 12.45pm but participants will be welcome to have a drink afterwards at the Fox and Goose, Hebden Bridge's co-operative pub.

Folklore Section

The Midgley Pace Egg Play Performed in the Upper Calder Valley on Good Friday

The Midgley version of the Pace Egg Play was performed as usual this Easter throughout the Calder Valley by the same group of young people who, to their immense credit, have kept the play going during the last three years, since Calder High School ceased to take an active part in its production.

It was performed at Midgley in the 18th century and probably even earlier, and continued until World War I. It was revived at Midgley School by H. W. Harwood and F. H. Marsden in the 1930s and continued until World War II. Until 1950, the play was produced by Midgley school, but Calder High School took over the reins on its opening, so it had been kept going by the two schools since 1932.

At the last AGM, we described how the survival of the older of the valley's surviving Pace-Egg troupes, the Midgley version, had come under threat. Costumes, props and actor availability had been in short supply in the interim, when a group of ex-students had been keeping it going themselves.

Following that meeting, our President and Rodney Collinge, who had previously taught the Midgley Pace-Egg Play to Calder High students, contacted the newly-independent group of players and offered support in preparing for the 2018 performances. This included securing rehearsal space, provided by Pennine Heritage at

Birchcliffe Chapel; costumes, with the help of Chris Coe and Fiona Harrison; a minibus from Calderdale Community Transport; and some funding from the Society. Headgear and replacement props will hopefully be in place for Easter 2019. Grateful thanks to everyone who has been involved.

It is intended to set up a support group for the newly-independent players, which will guarantee not just its continuity but its rude health into the future. The troupe will need help in many ways: funding, the making and upkeep of costumes and props, the organisation of rehearsals and transport. If you would be interested in joining this support group, which is not limited to Calderdale residents, please contact Barbara Atack ataxjb@btinternet.com or Rodney Collinge 01422 885141.

The continuing vitality of the Heptonstall Pace-Egg Play is also a vital strand in our area's repertoire of traditional lore and heritage, and the large crowds attracted to the various venues of these two troupes on Good Friday testify to the enduring appeal of traditional community observations and entertainments. It is all part of the grand sweep of local history!

How old is the Pace-Egg Play?

Eddie Cass¹ and other researchers have rightly stated that the earliest documentary reference to the Pace-Egg Play is from the late 18th century; this means that the play was certainly in existence then, but obviously implies that it was already a tradition in existence. The question is, how far back might it go? No definitive proof is possible

without further sources, but Hebden Royd poet Michael Haslam has made an important contribution to the debate by examining the literary construction of the text². His article is online – go to www.northernearth.co.uk, and look under Articles/Folklore/The Literary Style of the Pace-Egg Play. Alternatively, please email the Society's Folklore Section and editor of Northern Earth magazine at john-billingsley@mypostoffice.co.uk for an electronic file of the article.

1. Eddie Cass, *The Lancashire Pace-Egg Play: A social history*, Folklore Soc., 2001; *The Pace-Egg Plays of the Calder Valley*, Folklore Soc., 2004.
2. Michael Haslam, 'The Pace-Egg: Notes for a History of Doggerel', *Northern Earth* 121, 2010, pp.12-16.

Family History Group

Challenges facing the family historian

Members of our Family History Group have many years' experience in determining family trees and ancestral relatives. Our combined efforts often result in clarification of most difficult situations. Recently, for example, we were asked to help a family determine how another family related to their own. The two families have completely different surnames; we knew quite a lot about the family making the request but little about the other family named 'Slater'. Apart from the family name and that they had lived in Heptonstall we weren't given any more information, for example, forenames or dates.

The procedure involved looking at all the Slaters in Heptonstall, tracing their ancestry and looking for any connection with the requesting family. Luckily, there were only a few Slater families there and it was soon decided to concentrate on Thomas Slater, born in 1844. He had married late in life in 1882 at the age of 38 years. His bride was Sarah Ann Sutcliffe, the daughter of a Heptonstall grocer, Richard Sutcliffe. They had a shop on Main Street, Heptonstall, and, according to the 1891 Census, operated as a grocer, draper and butcher. Thomas died in 1909, aged 65 years without leaving any children. To find a connection with our requesting family we had to find out more about Thomas, perhaps to find his parents and any siblings.

Prior to his marriage, Thomas had lived with his grandparents for most of his life. His grandfather John Thomas taught him the butchering trade, which he carried on at Heptonstall Slack until his grandfather died in 1875. After his marriage, Thomas possibly moved into the premises of his in-laws on Main Street, Heptonstall.

Tracing him back through his grandparents, John and Grace Thomas, I found him at Slack Top in the 1851 Census, aged 6 years. It was at this point that our group's combined experience would be needed. The census indicated that Thomas Slater and his grandparents, the Thomas's, were all born in Heptonstall. So all we had was that Thomas' father would have been named 'Slater'. It seemed logical that as Thomas was named Slater and his grandparents were named Thomas, then we needed to find a marriage between a Slater and a Thomas and there

wasn't one. The next obvious thing was to look for Slaters in the 1841 Census and also in the 1861 Census to see if those entries contained clues; again, there were none that fitted. At this point our researchers needed to bring to bear their experience and consider what local records we had available which might supplement those available online.

Looking at the burial records for Slack Chapel revealed just two Slater burials: Mary Slater in 1846 aged 22 years and Henry Slater in 1848, aged 26 years. Their marriage was registered on 25th December 1842 and Henry's bride was Mary Sutcliffe whose father was John Thomas. This needed more research: why was Mary named Sutcliffe when, from the 1841 Census, it was clear she was the eldest child of John and Grace Thomas? We checked the date of the marriage between John Thomas and Grace Sutcliffe and, using the birth date for Mary Sutcliffe, it was clear Mary was born out of wedlock. The 1841 Census showed her as the eldest daughter of John and Grace Thomas and, by that time, she had taken John's surname. So, it was not until she married that she revealed her real birth name for the records.

Finally, it was now possible to confirm, from his birth record, that Thomas Slater's mother's surname was indeed Sutcliffe. To sum up, finding out who our Thomas Slater really was required considerable ingenuity on the part of our researchers, but we now knew all that we needed about him: sadly, he had lost both his parents before he was 5 years old and he had no siblings.

Keith Stansfield

Queries to the Society

As well as local people, our local history archive is often used by people from all over the world, sometimes by a visit to the Birchcliffe Centre, but often a virtual visit through our website and the research service which a few members are prepared to provide. The small charge contributes to the rent and upkeep of the archives. Personally, my reward is the detective work and the gratitude of the recipient which sometimes leads to us gaining further knowledge about our area or local families such as the Greenwoods or the Sutcliffes. For example, we now have an electronic copy of a solicitor's diary from 1831, which we think is probably that of James Pearson Sutcliffe of Southcliffe House.

Here are a few queries dealt with since the last newsletter. Please do let me know if you can add any information.

Family history

The accident-prone **Tolleth family and their brushworks** Places located included 102 Market Street, Bridge Street, Hangingroyd Lane, Brearley Old Hall and Rose Villa; but nothing much on the accidents involving a gas explosion (1907), boiling pitch (1914) and Robert's injury and death (1932).

Rev. Arnold Bingham who served at Brearley Chapel 1923-43 to whom his nephew, David, was evacuated in World War II.

A couple from the USA, were delighted when we unearthed a bill from their ancestor, **William Iredale**, for glazing the second Birchcliffe Chapel.

The **Robertshaws** of Heptonstall – the enquirer would also welcome being put in touch with local Robertshaws.

Places

Highroyd Farm including Ambry Well.

Barker's Terrace.

Puzzle Hall, not the one in Sowerby Bridge – there is one at Charlestown. Coincidentally this led to us receiving a digitised copy of a recording of Wainsgate Choir in 1950.

A challenging query

Local folk-wrestling traditions and contests in the Hebden Bridge area. Some references eventually found including a photograph in the publication, *Pennine Perspectives: Aspects of the History of Midgley*.

Other research being done by members which involves our area

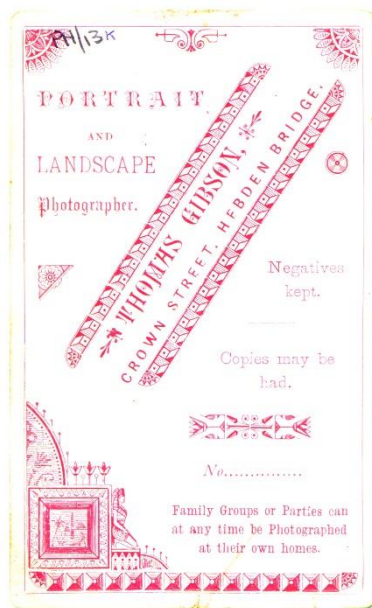
Solomon's Temple at **Underbank**.

WW1 soldier, **James Edward Cooper**, originally from Earlsheaton, but living in Melbourne Street with his wife Florence when he worked for the 'Pru' and then went missing in the war. He has not been found on any memorials and there are various reasons which could account for this.

Photographer and whitesmith, **Thomas Gibson**. His father turned out to be one of our eminent artisan naturalists and his children were founder members of the Hebden Bridge Literary and Scientific Society and its various sections.

A big thank you to all the members who have assisted with local history queries, particularly John Billingsley who helps with the folklore questions, Keith Stansfield with descendant and Stansfield queries, and Pennine Horizons Digital Archive who assist with requests for images. More volunteers would be welcome, just let me know your area of expertise or topics you would be happy to follow up; e.g. Charlestown area, textiles, particular surnames.

Diana Monahan



Lecture Reports 2017 - 2018

27 September 2017

**MEMORIES FROM HEBDEN BRIDGE
PHARMACIES**

Linda Powell

The apothecary's bottles, jars and scales on display at the season's first meeting seemed redolent of an ancient craft. In fact they were an essential part of the working life of long-time Society member Linda Powell, who began her career in the Co-op Pharmacy in Hebden Bridge in the 1960s. Her engaging memories brought home the extent of changes in medical practice and social norms since then.

The Co-op Pharmacy, in Albert Street was an essential part of community life for the busy industrial town, and run at that time by a Mr Tom Barker, always formally dressed and partial to a spot of rum with his morning coffee. In the shop, fitted out with fine oak cupboards and counters, Linda learned her craft, which involved making up the ointments, liniments, medicines and suppositories prescribed by the doctors. Ingredients were weighed out precisely, ground up to powder with a mortar and pestle, and shaken up with water in half gallon bottles, before being poured into the correct size prescription bottle.

Local chemists also had their own bottles of tinctures for coughs and colds, which in winter could swell their profits. Among the abbreviated Latin instructions scrawled on the doctors' prescriptions might be found ADT – 'any damn thing' – which was a signal to provide some convincing potion for a troublesome hypochondriac.

Other medicines regularly sold over the counter, included Beechams powders and pills, and Fennings Fever Cure along with traditional recipes such as camphorated oil for bad chests and gentian violet for impetigo. Constipation was another area of profitability for pharmacists, with sackfuls of senna pods held in stock to be sold in small bags. More alarmingly, farmers would also arrive with an order for strychnine, to rid their fields of moles.

Over the years these in-house remedies disappeared, with the arrival of new drugs made on an industrial scale and dispensed in their packaging, although senna pods survived for a long time. The pharmacy remained an essential resource providing pregnancy and blood pressure tests, advice and reassurance along with the prescriptions. The familiar and friendly faces of Linda and her colleagues keep the pharmacy at the heart of the community. This fascinating talk gave us an insight into their changing roles.

11 October 2017

TODMORDEN OLD PUB TRAIL

Barbara Rudman

Barbara Rudman's passion for the history of twentieth century pubs led her to explore the stories of the pubs in Todmorden and how they reflect social change. Since she published her book *Todmorden Old Pub Trail*, more and more pubs have closed, a trend driven, she believes, by the availability of alcohol in supermarkets and the dominance of mobile phones in providing social contact.

For centuries drinking ale was the healthy option compared with unclean water, and most farmers would be brewing for the family and neighbourhood. The first commercial ale houses were often farms on the tops, such as the Sportsman's at Kebcote, where thirsty travellers on the packhorse ways sought rest and refreshment. Where the routes dropped down into the valleys there would also be pubs to serve their needs, such as the White Lion in Todmorden or Hole in the Wall in Hebden Bridge. Developments in transport continued to encourage new pubs, with new places springing up beside canals, turnpikes and railways in their turn.

Although essentially providing rest and refreshment, pubs have been at the heart of many developments in the community. Inquests and public auctions were commonly held in pubs right through till the nineteenth century when local government took over many of these functions. Pubs were the venues for banks, libraries, societies, Sunday schools and lock up cells.

Barbara has uncovered some of the social history of local pubs and their centrality to the community. The Golden Lion was a coaching inn, where the publican was also receiver of mail, providing stabling and fresh horses and carriages to keep the mail on the road. Here also a lending library was established, and newspapers would be shared among an increasingly educated population. The Royal George was a trading post till the 1840s, with goods and groceries for sale every Thursday. Todmorden market was established at a meeting in the White Hart, and here some significant local trials were held in an upstairs room. The

Shoulder of Mutton (Jack's House) was home to a lending library, and at the Hare and Hounds the Agricultural Society was founded.

A look over the history of local pubs shows that there have always been changes driven by innovations in the way we organise society, so perhaps the modern decline in pubs is not so surprising. Perhaps everything has its season, and now people meet and socialise in new ways.

25 October 2017

HOW THE HIPPIES SHAPED HEBDEN BRIDGE

Chris Ratcliffe and Jenny Slaughter

Both speakers conjured up that era at the end of the 1960s that was full of ambition about living in a way that was more creative, satisfying and equitable. For some people this meant involvement in revolutionary politics and experiments with living communally, for others it was setting up adventurous creative enterprises and dropping out of the conventional rat-race.

Hebden Bridge itself was in decline at this time, its identity as a textile town fading, and its terraces of working people's houses under threat of being demolished. On the hill tops at the same time many small farms had proved unviable and had been abandoned. For Chris, fully involved in the political causes of the time while squatting in London, Hebden Bridge provided an opportunity to establish new ways of 'living the revolution' and following those principles. For Jenny, the chance to live a more satisfying creative life was found in one of the many

ruinous farms. It is clear that a 'hippy' life was not a dreamy option but involved hard work in making properties habitable and becoming self-sufficient. At the heart of the ventures was a desire to live and work co-operatively and sustainably.

There was music and mysticism but also entrepreneurship. Jenny's work included making and selling hippy dresses and establishing the café-cum-shop-cum social hub 'On the 8th Day' in Manchester. The vegetarian principles of many of those involved in the 'counter culture' led to the establishment of co-ops to source and sell wholefoods – Aurora Foods was established as a workers' co-op in Hebden Bridge, and also became a centre for musicians, poets and artists to gather. Such places attracted more kindred spirits to make their home in the town, and to shape its future.

One of the major legacies of this influx has been the creativity for which Hebden Bridge and the surrounding area has become famous. Small, independent producers of craft products grew up, and music was ubiquitous, with barns, pubs and the Carlton ballroom hosting hugely popular events before the days of the Trades Club.

Although these 'offcumdens' may have appeared alien to the long-time residents of Hebden Bridge, a brief look at their history shows a remarkable fit with a town noted for both its non-conformity and its co-operative movement.

Jenny and Chris were both involved in gathering material for the very successful History Society exhibition held at the Town Hall, which led to many requests to produce a

book recording these times. This is their intention, and they would love to find more photographs from that era, recording some of the exciting happenings and hippies of Hebden Bridge.

8 November 2017

THE WITHINS FARMS

Steven Wood

That so many came to Hebden Bridge Local History Society's meeting to hear Haworth historian Steven Wood talk about the Withins Farms is a testimony to the continuing fascination with the place so closely identified with Wuthering Heights.

As Steven pointed out, that link was established when the publishers of Wuthering Heights were wanting to produce an illustrated version of the book. The sketch of the site that was included in the 1873 edition shows that it was the setting, not the building called Top Withins, that provided Emily Bronte with her inspiration.

The three farms at Withins – Top, Middle and Lower Withins – occupy an island of cultivated land surrounded by heather moorland. There were farm buildings here from at least 1567, when 16 acres and buildings were purchased. The split into three farms seems to have happened in 1591, when William Bentley, wishing to divide his property equally between his three sons, set out in his will the exact conditions and rights by which they could farm and occupy the property.

It would have been a hard living for a farmer at such a high altitude, but the combination of textile production and agriculture made it a profitable one. An inventory from 1696 for Lower Withins listing cows and sheep alongside looms and spinning wheels, illustrates this perfectly. The fields surrounding the farms would be meadows and pasture land, with cows being the most important livestock. There is still physical evidence of dairies in the barns, both in the form of a lintel inscribed with the word DAIRY, and of a dairy sink largely intact in one of the stone walls. Later inventories for Middle and Top Withins mark the change from wool to the more lucrative worsted weaving, while nineteenth-century censuses record the decline of the home-based textile industry as work moved into factories. Twenty people were living on the three Withins farms in 1851; fifty years later, the buildings were abandoned.

What is left of Top Withins probably owes its survival to the romantic connection which meant that no-one wanted to be responsible for its total ruin and some consolidation work was carried out from time to time. Its literary fame also ensured that it was frequently photographed, allowing historians to see the position of peat stores, dairy and barn. The site also had an appeal for artists, with L. S. Lowry, Joseph Pighills, Thomas McKenzie and Sylvia Plath among those who tried to capture its mood.

Steven's painstaking research into the histories of the three farms shows how a jigsaw of documents such as wills, inventories, censuses and reports can fit together with a study of maps and close inspections of the landscape and

archaeology to create a vivid picture of life over time in these remote farmsteads. This detective work - linking documents, walking the landscape and inspecting the buildings is at the heart of the excitement of uncovering local history. This combination of inventory and field-work evidence has enabled Steven's collaborator, Peter Brears, to recreate the living and working spaces in these three Withins farms in intricate drawings showing the contents in place. These can be found in the book by Steven and Peter: *The Real Wuthering Heights; The story of the Withins Farms* published in 2016.

22 November 2017

**TWENTY THOUSAND DESCEND
ON HARDCASTLE CRAGS**

David Taylor

David Taylor, using many images from the Pennine Horizons Digital Archive, conducted a virtual walk following the route taken by visitors who arrived in Hebden Bridge by rail and then walked to and around Hardcastle Crag. The numbers who travelled to enjoy the beauty spot grew rapidly as the opportunities for leisure travel offered by the new railways were grasped by people from nearby mill towns. Over a three-day Whitsun holiday weekend in 1897 20,000 people enjoyed a day out in the Crag.

Originally the leisure potential of railways was not understood and little provision was made for passengers. At first, third class travel was 'waggon class', where people stood up in uncovered waggons and sometimes

shared the space with livestock. Nothing could put people off however, and by the end of the century Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways were issuing postcards promoting Hebden Bridge and Hardcastle Crag as destinations for popular excursions. There were even postcards written in French, encouraging Belgian visitors to get to Hebden Bridge via the Zeebrugge-Hull line – also owned by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

The photographic virtual tour was a fascinating glimpse into the past, with images from times up to the 1950s showing a very different Hebden Bridge. Some showed crowds in their Sunday best making their way to the Crag – some in horse-drawn charabancs but most by foot. Along the way cottages and farms took advantage of the tourist influx by putting on teas. By the 1920s some offered camping and overnight accommodation, tennis courts and swing boats. Gibson Mill itself gained a new life as an Entertainment Emporium, with dancing and skating on its upper floor, teas in the cottages, and boating on the mill pond.

The old photographs captured the excitement of a day out in the country, made accessible by the growth of the railways, so that ordinary working people could wobble on the stepping stones, enjoy ice cream and perhaps loiter with their friends in ‘the Lovers’ walk’.

13 December 2017

**FROM CRIME SCENE TO HOLIDAY CAMP Freda Kelsall
STORIES OF HAWDON HALL**

The first thing that Freda Kelsall had to contend with when she purchased the property near Hardcastle Craggs, was the tangle of names that attached to the place: Howden or Howdon – Hole, Hoyle or Hall? But as well as its varied names, the house came with many stories that have fascinated Freda ever since, most famously the Hawdon Hall murder.

The property was mentioned in documents from 1631 and was probably two cottages and a barn. Features in the landscape show some of the ways in which the occupants worked, with signs of enclosures used for pasture, and charcoal burning in the woods. As with many Calder Valley farms, textile production came to dominate, first at home and then at nearby Gibson and New Bridge Mills.

The story of the notorious murder unfolded in 1817. The two cottages were occupied by Samuel Sutcliffe (Sammy o’Catties) a clothier, who lived with his nephew William Sutcliffe, and by William Greenwood, a weaver. A frequent visitor was Michael Pickles, (Old Mike), a beekeeper who was known for his strong religious views, but also for his large strong hands, big feet and a habit of milking other people’s cows. The final character in the sad story was a younger man, John, known as Joan o’ Bog Eggs, who complained to Pickles about his need for money.

It seems that Old Mike came up with the plan to rob Samuel Sutcliffe while his nephew was away - the fact that Sammy used a pound note as a bookmark in his Bible apparently confirming that he had more money than he needed. The robbery went wrong when Sammy woke and called out. In silencing him, Old Mike killed him. They left with money and goods, including a pair of shoes and a Mytholm bank note, which as it had not been signed had been pinned into an account book. A large footprint left at the scene pointed towards Old Mike, and the younger man incriminated himself by trying to pass the bank note marked with pin-holes and by taking the old shoes to be mended. Eventually both men were arrested, found guilty and executed in York.

The place became notorious, but it didn't stop those who lived there from getting on with their lives, and a complete turnaround in the mood of the place came about a century later, when a young William Holt, looking for new challenges after his war service, had the idea of opening a holiday camp and tea gardens. By this time Hardcastle Crag was attracting hundreds of visitors, and for a short time the house was filled with camp beds which Billy had bought at bargain prices after the peace made them redundant. Photos show tennis being played on what must have been the only flat surface, and the mill dam provided opportunities for bathing.

It was clear from her talk that Freda loved Hawden Hall, which has now enjoyed thirty-five years of creativity and conviviality during her time there.

10 January 2018

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN

THE UPPER CALDER VALLEY:

Julia Maybury

Recognition, Resilience and Reward in World War I

Hebden Bridge Local History Society member Julia Maybury was inspired by the activities planned to commemorate the centenary of the First World War to explore the roles of women and girls at the time, searching Hebden Bridge and Halifax newspapers, listening to some fascinating oral history recordings and using the evidence of old photographs to discover stories that have often been disregarded. She wanted to discover the answer to a simple question - what happened to the sisters, wives and mothers of the men who went off to war?

Society had clear ideas about the distinct roles of women and men: men were expected to protect and provide, while women were seen as nurturing and focusing on homemaking. The men who responded to the call to war were fulfilling the duty to protect, and women were at first called upon to support men in this, as seen in a poster of the time 'Women of Britain Say Go'. Gradually it became clear that a second army of women needed to be mobilised to sustain their communities and families by taking on more work outside the home, as well as in extending their nurturing roles in demanding fields such as nursing.

Although at first there was some resistance to this, there was also a growing recognition that women were well able to contribute in areas beyond traditional caring and homemaking.

Julia focused on the resilience that women and girls showed in responding to the call for women to do their bit. Local girls from the age of 12 or 13 were already working in textile factories and sewing shops which locally began producing khaki for soldiers and duffle coats for sailors. Existing volunteer sewing circles could also be extended to meet these needs. More significantly however, women were called upon to work in munitions and engineering factories – the former especially involving considerable dangers to health. One photograph showed staff at the Ormerod Engineering Factory which included women and girls, and in other local factories up to half the workforce was female.

Field Marshall Haig recognised that working-class women were making a huge contribution and called upon middle class women to join them in the battle against Germany. Many turned to nursing and voluntary work. Women were at the forefront in staffing new convalescent hospitals such as those in Todmorden, Cragg Vale and Mytholmroyd, both as volunteers and as qualified nurses, but were also at the heart of managing and fund-raising, taking on responsibilities traditionally belonging to men.

Local women were also among those who volunteered to serve as nurses abroad, close to the front in France, but also in Malta, Egypt, Mesopotamia and India. For several local women their efforts were acknowledged when they were awarded Red Cross Medals and mentioned in dispatches. Some letters home reveal the dangers and the horrors that the women shared, speaking poignantly of

the many injured and gassed, and also of compassion for wounded German soldiers.

While it was explicitly understood that this was just ‘for the duration’ – when war was over it was expected that everything would revert to normal – there were repercussions and rewards for women and for society which grew from the necessities of war. Some people worried about the future when women had stepped so far from their traditional gender roles. One church minister wrote of his worries about the morality of working class young women who had licence to behave as they liked, citing the ‘ribald laughter’ on the buses as evidence. But women had gained considerable expertise and a more prominent civic role, for example in trades unions and political parties, which continued in the post-war world.

There is a sad lack of recognition of the part women played in the war effort in the official memorials that were later commissioned, although a few war memorials in Lancashire do depict women in various roles. One tangible reward for women was the granting of limited suffrage when the war ended. It was entirely fitting that Julia shared her detailed and painstaking research at the beginning of this year which sees the centenary both of the end of the war and of the granting of votes for women.

24 January 2018

**THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH OF
HALIFAX 1539 TO 1670**

David Cant

One of the strengths of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society over recent years has been the individual and group research projects undertaken. Ten years ago an ambitious course, 'Agriculture and History in the Pennine Landscape', offered participants the chance to 'do local history yourself'. Up to half the people of England died during the Black Death of 1348; it took two centuries before the population returned to the same number. Single events such as this can have dramatic results, so the group set out to use parish records to investigate what had happened in the parish of Halifax (roughly equivalent to modern day Calderdale.)

Ian Bailey led the group doing this research, but ill-health prevented him from giving this talk, so David Cant stood in for him.

Parish records of baptisms, marriages and burials that were required by law from 1538 onwards provide the bulk of the data that the group collected. The audience could judge the challenge of the project from images of the pages the group had to decipher – crammed into three columns per page with explanations in Latin and occasional personal notes added by the clerk. Estimating population numbers from this raw data involved grappling with some complex and well tested mathematical formulas, but the resulting figures are reasonably reliable. Transposed into graph form they showed some remarkable peaks and

troughs of rises and falls, compared with a much more steadily rising national picture.

So the group set out to discover what events locally or nationally could have had such impact. Natural events, such as floods and droughts would clearly have an impact, as would epidemics such as plague and sweating sickness. Changes in technology and industry could also impel changes in population in different areas, and national events such as war would also be reflected in population changes. Further research allowed the group to speculate on correlations between events and sudden fluctuations in the graph. Calling out for investigation were the years of mortality crisis – a sudden doubling in the number of burials recorded in the registers.

The causes of death were not always given, though plague and sweating fever are recorded, with plague victims 'buried near their own dwellings'. A spike in burials in 1587, nearly six times more than normal, suggests something catastrophic. Adults were affected much more than children, suggesting that a disease like typhus was the cause. Typhus is also known as famine fever, and this year also saw a failed harvest because of two years of very wet weather. The majority of the population would have lived very precarious lives and it seems likely that a combination of starvation and typhus led to the sudden increase in deaths.

The early years of the Civil War are also reflected in a sudden increase in burials in Halifax. Some of those who died are recorded in the parish register as soldiers,

including many from places outside the parish, such as Scotland. The garrisoned soldiers were probably also responsible for bringing plague to the town of Halifax. The largest mortality crisis occurs in 1645 and overwhelmingly these are from the town of Halifax, where overcrowding and insanitary conditions allowed the plague to flourish.

The detailed research work carried out by this group made for an impressive and fascinating talk – despite the darkness of the subject. The excitement of local history research is always that sense of reaching back into real lives through some dry and dusty documents. A fuller account is included in *History in the South Pennines: the Legacy of Alan Petford*, which is available from the Local History Society - www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

14 February 2018

**DAMN YOUR EYES! PROTECTION
AGAINST THE EVIL EYE IN HUMAN
SOCIETY AND LOCAL ARCHITECTURE**

John Billingsley

The magnificent ‘Halifax houses’ – the farm and clothiers’ houses built or rebuilt of stone in the seventeenth-century Calder Valley – often have decorative architectural details resembling the ‘evil eye’, commonly believed to ward off bad luck. But such symbols may be a sign of the growing wealth disparity of the age rather than the exercise of witchcraft.

There is certainly a strong resemblance between marks found across the Mediterranean and those decorations carved in stone above thresholds, such as a diamond surrounding a circle, representing the evil eye. Other decorative details found include arrows, crosses, spirals and pentagrams, all of which are thought to have protective qualities. From the myth of Medusa to modern day phrases such as 'withering looks' and 'looking daggers' there is a consciousness of the power of the gaze to do harm.

John believes that these conspicuous symbols were there to deflect that envious gaze. The rich men in their extravagant houses were aware of the gap between rich and poor, and conscious too that if they had more, others had less. They wanted their houses full of seventeenth-century extravagance, but also knew that boasting and glorying in their wealth was dangerous – envious looks could spell disaster.

So why did these symbols appear at this particular time and place in the architecture of the well-to-do? John links it with the change from a medieval to a Renaissance world view, with a sense of communality giving way to the individualism which grew into modern capitalism. The houses themselves now had more private spaces such as parlours, away from the large hall that had been a semi-communal space. Prosperity was interpreted as a sign of God's favour, but the needs of the poor were to be met by the poor law taxes rather than personal charity. At the same time there persisted a sense of fairness, a sense that a more equal society was a more balanced society. Perhaps

the wealthy felt the resentment of those who were poor and consequently a sense of unease that led them to protect themselves by symbols that acted as distractions.

We look at those carved decorations now as charming additions to the fine stone buildings, but perhaps, as John Billingsley argues, they represent the experience of profound social changes set in stone.

28 February 2018

SEVEN CENTURIES OF RECORDED

Nick Wilding

FLOODS IN THE CALDER VALLEY

Thirty people struggled through snow and blizzards to attend a talk about floods by Nick Wilding, local filmmaker. After two years of research and illustrating his material with photos, newspaper articles and film, Nick set about comparing recent twenty-first century floods with others in the past. He showed the way storms in the Calder Valley have affected not only our valley but others in Yorkshire, Lancashire and beyond. He then shared with everyone his own exploration up some of the Calder Valley's tributaries responsible for past inundations.

Nick accepted that global warming might have exacerbated frequency in recent years, but outlined other contributory factors and diagnosed the Calder Valley's 114 floods within seven hundred years and its vulnerability to flooding as being symptomatic of human interference. He assessed the impact upon roads, railways, culverts, quarries, drains, reservoirs and the canal. Boxing

Day 2015 is now confirmed by meteorologists as the climax of several hundred years of inundation, but Nick revealed that it could have been worse. He praised the current community flood prevention work and also some of the flood prevention schemes proposed in the past and abandoned at the start of the Second World War, but expressed concern about the choice of current engineering schemes.

He concluded by saying none of this work will be effective, unless governments of all colours consider the long-term future and change their attitude to regular maintenance. They consider the cost is too great, but they need to look at the destructive cost of the floods themselves, currently approaching £5 billion and rising. 'The Environment Agency' Nick said, 'will spend their £60 million on capital high profile projects and then return to their base in Bristol and I fear that future generations will look back on the money spent in this period of history as a terrible wasted opportunity'.

14 March 2018

THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF YORKSHIRE' Dr Paul Dalton

Our perception of the Norman conquest of England often begins and ends with the Battle of Hastings in 1066, as represented in the famous Bayeux tapestry, soon to make a rare journey to Britain. Dr Paul Dalton, principal lecturer in Medieval History at Canterbury Christ Church University, described the conquest, and the resistance to

Norman rule in Yorkshire in the years that followed that initial significant battle.

The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy's army was justified as the rightful overthrow of Harold Godwinson as a perjurer, who had broken the most sacred of oaths of loyalty made to William when he claimed the throne of England for himself. However, establishing Norman rule in England was a much more difficult process than winning the battle which saw the death of Harold. William's army had to make their way into a resistant London so that he could be crowned in Westminster Abbey as the legitimate Christian King. Opposition there crumbled and William was crowned on Christmas Day 1066.

The process of conquest took far longer. Initially the strength of arms proved at the battles of Hastings and the entry into London allowed William to establish his position as king largely through a mix of force and contract – submission and the taking of hostages followed by promises and marriage deals. However, in Yorkshire, at that time part of the entirely distinct and distant earldom of Northumbria, opposition began to grow. William was seen not to have kept his promises, and the imposition of heavy taxes was resented. York itself was described by a contemporary chronicler as being peopled by 'wild men... seething with discontent'.

William's method of subduing his kingdom was to build quick and effective motte and bailey castles, topped with wooden palisades, to take control of the surrounding

country. In York the remains of two such castles can still be seen, though the stone-built Clifford Tower is of later date. However, despite this, Yorkshire and Northumbria were not subdued and, with the support of the Scottish king and at other times of the Danes, remained at the heart of the struggle against William's rule.

Eventually William responded with extreme force in what has become known as the harrying of the north, laying waste to the countryside and causing the deaths of perhaps 100,000 as it was recorded that the land 'north of the Humber was stripped of all means of sustenance'. As a symbol of his success, William made a point of wearing his crown in York at Christmas 1069.

Domesday Book records some of the effects of the harrying of the north, with the value of land in this part of Yorkshire massively reduced and with large areas described as waste, or without value. The change in society was profound, for while the daily lives of the peasantry probably remained largely unchanged, the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy was crushed and became largely invisible. Norman French lords were rewarded with lands, and the government and religion of England, while retaining some of the same structures and institutions, was entirely in the hands of the Norman aristocracy. In later years there was a revival of Yorkshire monasticism with the foundation of French orders and the building of abbeys bringing to England beautiful Romanesque architecture, still evident in a place like Selby Abbey.

28 March 2018

The Alan Petford Annual Memorial Lecture

**TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES AND COMMONS Dr Nigel Smith
DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH PENNINES**

The moorland hills around Hebden Bridge might seem far removed from disputes and confrontation. However, this study examined how disputes over township boundaries reached a peak three hundred years ago, and some rumbled on until the mid-nineteenth century.

Often these disputes were about the use of resources. The land described as common was owned by the lord of the manor, with individual freeholders given rights of access and use. These included the rights to graze animals; to get peat, clay, sand and stone; and to gather berries, rushes, heather and bracken, which were so useful to upland farmers. Disputes arose when these rights were abused by overuse or encroachment.

On the often featureless moorlands, boundaries can be hard to discern. They might use a natural feature such as a ridge or stream, or be man-made, for example banks, ditches or lines of stones. But stones can fall over, or be dug up and moved, while ditches become silted up and watercourses change direction. Sometimes there was an attempt to settle a dispute by calling on the memory of residents, but this was far from perfect. Sometimes these disagreements took years to settle. A boundary between Wadsworth and Midgley, contested in the 1590s, was marked with stone or cairns. But part was still shown as 'disputed ground' on Myers map of 1835.

Disputes in Langfield township, on the south bank of the Calder, including the high ground of Mankinholes Moor. One dispute in 1605 was heard before the Court of the Duchy Chamber of Lancaster. They appointed surveyor William Yewart to examine witnesses and make a map to clarify the situation. The witnesses spoke of the 'moondike' or 'mondike' described in earlier documents as the 'mandike' – a ditch used to mark a boundary. Traces of this feature have been located, and some of the stones which were used to mark this ancient boundary in about 1699.

Ordnance Survey maps tend to be treated as definitive, but surveyors relied on the local knowledge of 'meresmen' to identify the line of a boundary and produce a sketch map, which would be open for comment. A boundary between Langfield and Rochdale was subject to arbitration in a dispute during the 1840s. The Boundary Remark Book kept by the surveyors in the 1890s recorded changes showing the addition of a line of stones where the boundary was thought to be. But by the time of the second edition map in 1908, these were marked simply as stones, rather than boundary stones, and a portion of Lancashire seems to have been absorbed into Yorkshire.

There are more details in *History in the South Pennines: the legacy of Alan Petford*, which was edited by Nigel. It is a testament to the continuing and wide-ranging influence of the person who did so much to encourage the study of local history in our area.

Family History Meeting Times 2018

	Saturday	Thursday
April	7	19
May	5	17
June	2	21
June	30	--
July	--	19
August	4	16
August	25	--
September	--	20

Archive Opening Times 2018

The Archive at Birchcliffe will be open on the afternoon of the second Wednesday of the month; and on the morning of the fourth Saturday of the month.

2018	Wednesday 2 - 5 pm	Saturday 10 am - 1 pm
April	11	28
May	9	26
June	13	23
July	11	28
August	8	25
September	12	22

Hebden Bridge Local History Society
The Birchcliffe Centre,
Birchcliffe Road, Hebden Bridge HX7 8DG

Local History Events (ours and others)

Events in Hebden Bridge unless stated

April	Event	Where
16	Launch of Halifax Probate Book	Halifax Library 7 pm contact to book a place halifaxprobate@gmail.com
18	Seven Centuries of Floods (again!)	Methodist Church, Market St 7.30 pm
29	Heritage Walk – Overlooking the Valleys	Meet John Billingsley Old Town School 2.15 pm
May		
1	Prehistory talk to Halifax Antiquarians	Carlton St Church, Halifax 7.30 pm
25	Big Sing revival	Piece Hall, Halifax
28	Heritage Walk with David Cant	Luddenden Car Park New Rd 2.15 pm
June		
5	Mytholmroyd Industrial Co-op - talk to Hx Ants	Carlton St Church, Halifax 7.30 pm
10	Heritage Walk in Hebden Bridge: Women's Suffrage	Pre-book from 1 May via Halifax Visitor Centre
July		
7	Walk to celebrate International Day of Co-operation	Meet Andrew Bibby at the Marina 11 am