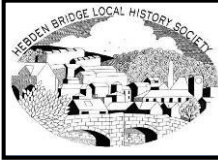


2017 No 1



HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
[www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](http://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk)

Spring 2017



JOHN FAWCETT 1739 - 1817  
Bi-centenary celebrations

**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.

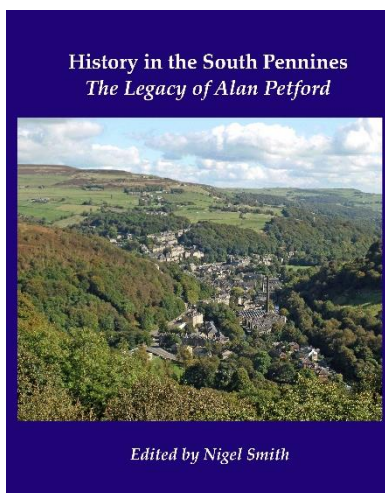
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**Welcome** to the Spring Newsletter. Here you'll find reports of the lectures for 2016-2017, news from the Family History and Prehistory sections, activities and forthcoming events. If you'd like to share your research or pose a query on something historic for the Summer 2017 issue please send it to the Secretary by 1 August 2017.

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Coming at the end of April!

Order this and other society publications via the website, [hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](http://hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk)

## Fawcett 200

Our society is helping Hope Chapel, Wainsgate Chapel and Ebenezer (now Heart Gallery) commemorate the bicentenary of the death of Rev Dr John Fawcett on 25th July 1817 and celebrate his influence on our town. Do you know how Machpelah got its name, how he came to write a famous hymn, how he came to the attention of George III, how he saved the life of a young man, how he brought education to Hebden Bridge? Find out by coming to some of the events. See pages 30 – 32 for his family history.

We are also planning a **Fawcett Day** and want to contact anyone with an interest in the Fawcett surname so we can inform them about this networking event.

If you can help with these events, please contact [secretary@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk)

This is the outline plan – Hope Chapel will be setting up a website <http://fawcett200.org.uk/> and a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/RevJohnFawcett/>

**Friday 7th July and Saturday 8th July 11 am to 4 pm**

As part of the Hebden Bridge Arts Festival Open Gardens, visit the site of Fawcett's canal-side garden (black gate opposite 12-16 Machpelah, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8AU) and find out about this Georgian "celebrity".

## Fawcett 200

**Sunday 23rd July**

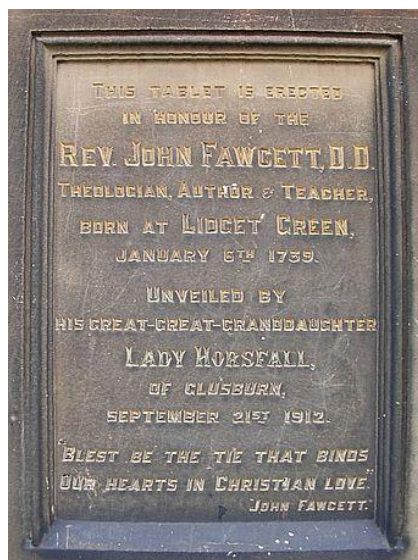
**Special service 10:30 am** celebrating the life and legacy of John Fawcett, led by Rev. Gaynor Hammond at Hope Chapel, New Road, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8EW.

The chapel will be open to visitors after the service.

**Songs of Hope 2:30 – 3:30 pm.** Come and enjoy your favourite hymns in the church garden, including the famous hymn by John Fawcett “Blest be the tie that binds.”

**4th September to 2nd October:** Exhibition by Hebden Bridge Local History Society: Fawcett, his life and legacy, locally and world-wide.

9 am to 5 pm at Hebden Bridge Town Hall, St George's St, Hebden Bridge HX7 7BY



## Fawcett 200

### **9th and 10th September: Heritage open days**

Saturday and Sunday 12 pm – 4 pm at Hope Chapel, New Road, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8EW. Find out more about chapel life in the past with historical displays and talks, children's activities, afternoon teas.

Sunday 2 pm – 4 pm Wainsgate Chapel, Wainsgate Lane, Hebden Bridge HX7 8SU.

**9th to 24th September: South Pennines Walk and Ride Festival** will include Fawcett-themed walks around Hebden Bridge, Wainsgate, Brearley and Peel House.

### **23rd and 24th September: A Fawcett weekend.**

Talks, walks, displays and networking for anyone interested in the story of Rev Fawcett and the surname.

Saturday 23rd at Hope Chapel. Refreshments from 9:30 am to 10 am when talks will start.

12 pm – 4 pm - children's activities, afternoon teas, Fawcett networking with led walk at 2 pm "Hebden Bridge in Fawcett's Day and his legacy in the town.

Sunday 24th 10 am Walk from Hope Chapel to Wainsgate or meet at Wainsgate from 11am and then to the Community Centre where lunch can be purchased, view exhibition "What Wainsgate means to me".

### **Autumn 2017: Fawcett music evening**

An evening of entertainment including songs composed to celebrate Fawcett sung by Old Town Primary School students past and present.

## Lecture Reports 2016 - 2017

**28 September 2016**

**THE BRONTË FAMILY**

**Isobel Stirk**

Two hundred years after the birth of Charlotte Brontë the fascination with the family remains as strong as ever. The spark of the genius can be found in the remarkable Patrick Brontë, who rose from humble beginnings in Ireland to master Greek and Latin and gain entrance to St John's College Cambridge where he succeeded in graduating and gaining ordination. Patrick lived until he was 84, but the story of the Brontës is one of premature deaths.

When he arrived at Haworth parsonage in 1820, he had a wife and six children. Within a year his wife Maria was dead and the children left in the care of Patrick, helped by Maria's sister, Elizabeth Branwell, and faithful servant Tabitha Aykroyd. Although he is sometimes portrayed as a distant father, Patrick actually showed real interest and concern for the well-being of his children, especially in their education, teaching them Latin, Greek and French at home and encouraging their creativity.

The early experiences of the Brontë children fed into their fiction. Their time at Cowan Bridge school was terminated by the deaths of the two eldest daughters, and Charlotte recreated the harshness of the regime there in the harrowing depiction of the school in *Jane Eyre*. Her rather unhappy work as a governess also featured in that book, as did her sister Anne's in *Agnes Grey*. Fired by an ambition to start her own school, Charlotte went with

Emily to Brussels to improve her French at a school run by M. Heger. It is clear that she fell in love with her host and teacher, and this transformative experience is the basis of her novel *Villette*, though M. Heger's shadow is probably found in other romantic heroes like Mr Rochester.

Emily was most closely tied to her moorland home; she was deeply homesick when at school and her passion for the landscape is evident in her poetry and especially in *Wuthering Heights*. Branwell famously sank into a life of dissipation, squandering his talent for both art and writing. His death in 1848 was followed within a matter of months by Emily and then Anne, all taken by consumption.

To counter the desolation of these days, Charlotte turned to work: writing the novel *Shirley*, going to London where she was lauded by other writers and had her portrait painted, and travelling to Edinburgh and the Lake District, where she became friends with Elizabeth Gaskell, her future biographer. She attained some personal happiness too when she married the devoted Arthur Nicholls, Patrick Brontë's curate. However the tragic narrative seemed inescapable and Charlotte too died of consumption, at the age of almost 39.

The Brontë legend lives on, and is especially potent to an audience in Hebden Bridge who know the same hills. Like the narrator in *Wuthering Heights* we can wander among the heath and the harebells and wonder 'how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.'



**12 October 2016**

**BURIED ALIVE? PAST FUNERAL CUSTOMS      David Glover  
IN CALDERDALE**

Being buried alive might be a recurrent nightmare, but there is at least one such recorded event in Halifax in 1770, when potential grave robbers were shocked to see the body of a certain Mary Haigh sit upright in the vault where she had recently been interred. Walking home to Shaw Hill in her grave clothes she must have been a terrifying sight, but was welcomed by her grieving husband and was even able to bear him another child in the years of life that followed.

Information about burials and funerals can be gleaned from various sources – parish records, churchwardens' reports, personal diaries, family archives and local and national newspapers. David looked at some of the costs entailed. It was more or less obligatory to be buried in the churchyard or church and in medieval times, those who wanted to ensure quick progress through purgatory paid extra for prayers in the chantry chapels, for candles to be lit and for poor men to accompany the coffin. In later times an elaborate funeral was a statement of wealth with those in the business of despatching the dead providing special mourning rings, clothes, gloves and scarves, as well as the funeral carriages and professional mourners or mutes that gave someone a special send off.

Those who were not buried in consecrated ground included suicides, who were often buried at crossroads. An area near People's Park, once known as Goldsmiths

Grave, is thought to be one such location. Quakers could be buried in their own land, and Brighthouse Quakers Jonathan Walsh and his wife did just that in 1823. These graves seem to have been lost until the vault was uncovered by quarrying in the area and the opportunistic quarry company charged inquisitive locals 2d each to view the site. Victims of Halifax's gibbet seem to have been granted burial in church grounds, and the requirement for consecrated burial seems even to extend to body parts. The records show that the amputated leg of Ambrose Patchett of Luddenden Dean was given a proper burial in 1883, followed by his body a year later.

Graveyards themselves can provide much of historical interest which might stimulate research. A gravestone in Halifax mysteriously records that 'two were buried here by mistake'. Many cemeteries and churchyards have dedicated 'friends' who record the gravestone inscriptions and uncover the stories of those who were buried there. These include the story of Ben Rushton, the famous local Chartist buried in Lister Lane, whose funeral was said to have been attended by 10,000 mourners, and the unusual Hindu burial of a travelling acrobat in Stoney Royd Cemetery in 1868.

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**26 October 2016**

**MEMBERS' RESEARCH REPORTS**

The history of trans-Pennine crossings, from the mid-sixteenth century to the coming of the turnpike roads in the eighteenth century, is being investigated by Murray Seccombe for a PhD. A particular fascination is the way social changes followed the development of roads, and the differences between life on the 'tops' and in the valleys after the low-level routes were developed.

Keith Stansfield's area of expertise is in family history, and he was inspired by television biopics of Gracie Fields to investigate the Stansfield family tree. In the 1930s Gracie Fields (Stansfield) was the highest paid movie actress in the world, but her origins were in the rooms over a chip shop in Rochdale. Piecing together evidence from censuses, parish records, graveyard records and passenger ships, Keith has uncovered some interesting facts about the Stansfield family. Most notably he finds we can now claim that she is indeed 'Our Gracie', as her great-great grandfather, William Stansfield, lived in Bridge Lanes! Keith's talk provided a brief tutorial into the methods, frustrations and pleasures of family history.

Most of us see the woodlands as a place of relaxation, but Hywel Lewis is looking at their past industrial use. The woods were an essential part of the industrial life of our area. In his short talk Hywel focused on Knott Wood, behind the Staff of Life pub in Todmorden. His PhD study uses maps, legal documents and newspapers, but also laser produced aerial images of the landscape. Best of all,

perhaps, is the pleasure to be found by walking through the area and discovering archaeological evidence, or the wonderful contorted shapes of ancient oaks that had been coppiced over the years. From just this one location came the wood for clogs, pit props, bobbins and joinery, oak bark used in tanning and the charcoal that was essential in the wool-combing process.

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**9 November 2016**

**TRADITIONAL FARMHOUSES AND  
BUILDINGS IN THE LANCASHIRE  
AND YORKSHIRE PENNINES**

**Kevin Illingworth**

Although timber-framed houses present a beautiful and decorative face to the world, even more wonderful is the internal construction with the cruck frames that can be seen in the large open halls. Such timber-framed halls are more commonly found in Lancashire and Cheshire, but in West Yorkshire, where it became fashionable to encase houses in stone, internal examination often reveals the earlier timber construction.

It is in the detail that the character of vernacular buildings really emerges. Kevin focused on porches, which were often added to an existing house at a later date. Double height stone porches mirrored the jettied construction of the old timber framed ones, with the upper storey jutting out above the ceiling of the lower. These porches showed off the fashions of the time with decorations such as columns, battlemented tops, finials, elaborately carved ogee doorways, drip mouldings and even dovecote

openings. There could be other features too, possible reflecting the superstitions of the age, with small carved balls under the apex of the roof or on the inside of the porch doorway, acting as protective marks. Even more fun are the gargoyle water spouts, with flat, cat-like faces – the practical combining with the decorative. It is clearly particularly rewarding to look up when visiting a historic house.

An interest in vernacular buildings seems to turn you into something of a detective, noting where roof levels have been changed, floors inserted and several centuries of building can be uncovered. Kevin suggested that joining a group such as the Friends of Historic Houses Association or local Vernacular Buildings study groups can often get you access to buildings not normally open to the public. Alternatively, you can turn detective and search the photographic library of listed building on the website Images of England.



Alder House, Bolton-by-Bowland

**23 November 2016**

**WOMEN, DOWN TOOLS!**

**Andrew Bibby**

**The women machinists' strike in  
Hebden Bridge, Autumn 1916**

Exactly a hundred years ago, in November 1916, at the height of World War One, the women garment makers of Hebden Bridge were fighting for an increase to their pay and, supported by their Union, went out on strike.

The manufacture of cloth, especially the khaki for army uniforms that was produced in Hebden Bridge, was an essential part of the war effort, and though there had been some wage increases in the form of war bonuses, rocketing inflation was causing considerable hardship. There was little sense that men and women should receive equal pay, and in fact the women machinists were on a piecework rate, while the men were paid hourly. An attempt was made by the manufacturers to settle the dispute by raising the hourly rate but insisting that the demand for an increased piecework rate be dropped. However, the United Garment Workers Union was dominated by women, and it proved impossible to ignore their demands. The men may have felt this was not their struggle, but Union leaders like Annie Loughlin and local secretary Sam Craven insisted on solidarity. With 2000 striking women in the town, there could hardly have been a family that was untouched.

Spirits were probably high when Annie Loughlin addressed the massed strikers at the Royal Electric Theatre, but this was not simply a dispute between

manufacturers and workers – as the strike bedded in questions were asked in Parliament, and by the end of November the Board of Trade insisted on arbitration. Despite women making up the vast majority of the local strikers, the final deal seems not to have improved their lot to any great degree. Gains in basic pay were offset by cuts in the temporary war bonuses and Sam Craven pronounced it a ‘very moderate’ gain.

As in all historical research, it is the availability of archived material that helps to fill in the picture of the past. Andrew explained that the information that he has pieced together came from local newspapers, but more importantly from the archive of material relating to the Nutclough Co-op held by the Co-operative archives. However, the Nutclough was not the only or main employer involved in the dispute, and it would be very exciting if archives from other manufacturers eventually emerged. Voices from the past are often hard to hear, and strong characters like Sam Craven can drift into sharp focus and then disappear. However it is remarkable that despite this being predominantly a strike by women, no female voice is heard – even Annie Loughlin, who rose to pre-eminence in the Union movement later, is not recorded as being involved in the dispute or arbitration process. It is part of the frustration and excitement of historical research that some gaps can’t be filled.

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**14 December 2016**

**A LOCAL VIEW OF CAROLS  
AND CHRISTMAS**

**Diana Monahan**

Carols can be traced back to medieval times when they were frequently accompanied by joyful circle dances. However, songs celebrating the turning of the year go back to earliest times and some of these reflect the pagan traditions associated with the festival, such as bringing holly and ivy into the house.

Wassailing was another tradition reflected in old carols and was the custom of going from house to house singing songs to bring good luck, in exchange for food drink, or money. This led to the later custom of carol singing from door to door round a neighbourhood or village. A piece of archive film footage featured the carol singers from Blackshaw Head chapel who walked an estimated ten miles on some occasions, visiting numerous farms and houses with their carols. The evenings ended back at the chapel with liver and onions for the singers who were no doubt cold, tired and hungry!

Mumming was a Calder Valley Christmas tradition, which was still alive in the 1970s. Small groups of people with blacked faces and sometimes in costume would go from door to door, sweeping and tidying the hearth of each house they entered. No words were said but a humming (mumming) noise was made as they went about their business, again bringing good luck in return for some money.



Another singing tradition, which is still carried on locally, is the performance of the Messiah. Performances of the oratorio in Halifax can be traced back to the early years of the nineteenth century. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century numerous chapels of varying sizes were performing the Messiah with great enthusiasm and some continue to the tradition this day.

Carols in the Square in Hebden Bridge on Christmas Eve is always popular. Its origins are thought to date back to the 1940s when people would gather in the Square after the dance in the Co-op ballroom ended. The pubs, which were still open, did a roaring trade as no alcohol was served at the dances! If anyone can tell us more about the origins of this tradition we would be glad to hear from them.

The evening concluded with a look at the Cragg Vale Carols. Thanks to the internet, Diana discovered that the local Cragg Carol originated in America in the late nineteenth century. But how did they become adopted as the village carols? Diana speculated that they were probably introduced to the valley by Henry Jones who was appointed organist and choirmaster to St John's in 1899 and remained in post for the next 47 years. The carols appeared in some very popular publications at the time and he may well have brought a copy to his new post. Whilst the carols fell out of fashion elsewhere, they continued to be sung by the Cragg Choir not just in church but around the houses in Cragg Vale.

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**11<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

**DID I SEE MARILYN?**

**Alan Stuttard**

It was 1952 when conscription was the lot of all 18 old boys, and Allan Stuttard was eager to leave his Hebden Bridge factory work and see something of the world.

He entertained with his 18-month stint as a private in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. And did he see the world? Not straight away. He spent the first 10 weeks square bashing and learning to be a number rather than a name in the barracks in Halifax, just 8 miles from home.

It was hard work, but safe. That feeling didn't last long. The young soldiers were shipped out to Korea where the American and British armies were greatly outnumbered by local forces. The Korean War is often known as the Forgotten War and there were many casualties. After an interim time guarding borders in Hong Kong, Korea was his ultimate destination. Luckily for Allan, because he was under 19, he was kept away from the front line – but life was still tough and dangerous.

He told us that he made three big mistakes. The first was to volunteer...he hoped to be trained to manage stores but ended up on the bomb and mine demolition team. The second was offering to stay behind to rebuild the camp; it so happened to be winter and winters in Korea are exceptionally cold. The third was not to stand in the back row when no volunteers are forthcoming – as those at the back are chosen for the tasks in hand!

So did he see Marilyn? Yes he did. He eventually managed to procure his preferred job in stores which made a bargain possible with some members of the American forces, who in return smuggled a group of them into the back of a concert troupe event. Bob Hope – and as he later discovered, a very glamorous Marilyn Monroe – were performing. But from where he was in the audience of thousands, he could hardly distinguish who was on stage, or hear what was going on!

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**25 January 2017**

**MYTHOLMROYD**

**Rodney Collinge**

### **The Development of a Pennine Village**

Rodney Collinge was both a pupil and a teacher at Calder High School, and now as he looks out on those familiar hills, he likes to imagine the people who have walked those tracks in the past. In a comprehensive talk he described how developments from the Ice Age to the end of the nineteenth century have left their marks on the area.

The glacial melt gouged out the steep-sided valleys, and early people from the stone age, bronze age and iron age forged their living on the hill tops, leaving evidence in the form of flints, stone tools and signs of burial sites, hill forts and stone circles. The Romans too have marched across these hills – the road from Ilkley to Manchester passed through Luddenden and Wainstalls. In the 1950s a hoard of Roman coins was found close to where the river was forded, possibly suggesting a settlement there, and archaeologists are still hoping for evidence of a Roman fort in the Sowerby area.

Place name evidence points to later invaders and settlers with *-royd* and *-ley* being common word endings from Anglo-Saxon while *-by* *-gate* and *-rake* have Viking origins. The name Mytholmroyd comes from its place at the meeting of two rivers.

In the time of the Domesday book there were about thirty households, farmsteads scattered on the hillsides, and this pattern of development persisted for many years, with much of the area being kept for hunting by the lord of the manor as protected 'forest' and 'park'.

The middle ages saw the development of the textile trade, with most of the production carried out in the home. There is some landscape evidence of this textile production, with a 'stretchergate' in Midgley where the yarn would be stretched and strengthened, and 'tenterfields' in Luddenden where the woven pieces would be stretched on tenters. The move to producing the finer worsted cloths saw the growth of a prosperous class of yeomen/clothiers whose fine sixteenth- and seventeenth-century stone houses are such a feature of our landscape. Increasing innovation and mechanisation led to the building of ever bigger mills, and the movement of the population to the valley bottoms. Both the remaining mills and the rows of workers' cottages remind us of that age.

The story of Mytholmroyd, like many Calder valley towns and villages, then became a story of increasing civic organisation, with elected officers charged with keeping the peace, ensuring the poor were cared for and transport links kept in good repair. The story of the Cragg Vale

coiners might be reminiscent of the wild west, but bit by bit chapels and churches, roads, canals and railways contributed to the development of an ordered town with a strong sense of community. That sense of community is only strengthened by an awareness of the past and the people who have lived here before us.

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**8 February 2017**

**The Alan Petford Annual Memorial Lecture**

**PEOPLE, PUZZLES AND EARNING A LIVING    Mike Crawford**

The work of local historian and educator Alan Petford is still much missed, but his legacy is very much alive in the flowering of seeds planted by him, such as the project to transcribe and make available the wills and other probate documents from the parish of Halifax at the end of the seventeenth century. Mike Crawford has been involved in this project from the start and his talk revealed what a rich resource this is proving to be.

One thing that became clear was the fascination of working with these old documents, especially when handling the original parchment or paper. Part of that fascination is the range of puzzles that face the transcriber. After learning to read the elaborate seventeenth-century hand and attune to the non-standard spellings there are the obscure terms for items in the kitchens, chambers and workshops. Each volume of the wills (5 so far published) contains a glossary specific to that area, revealing extra detail about furnishing and the working practices.

The wills themselves, while often formulaic in expression, give glimpses of the deeply felt religious beliefs of a time when England was well used to dissent and discord. There are so many feelings that we can recognise, especially the desire to make provision for widows and children and to avoid disagreement among family members as the estate was divided. Occasionally there are hidden stories, such as the man who after settling an income on his wife, left the bulk of his estate to his female servant.

The comprehensive inventories are an especially rich resource, giving an insight into how people lived as well as how they made a living. Most of the townships were dependent on the dual economy of agriculture and textiles. The agriculture was mainly pastoral with small herds of cows, occasional flocks of sheep and a few pigs being recorded in the inventories. Arable farming – mostly growing oats – was widespread but not economically dominant. However there seemed to be a link between wealth and an investment in textile production. Looms and spinning wheels were not expensive and these inventories document the beginning of an industrial society, with some more wealthy clothmakers employing out-workers. One such man left bequests to each of his spinners or makers of cloth.

In the social structure of our part of the Calder Valley there seems to have been no dominant lord or gentry, but many independent yeomen of middling wealth. They lived in some comfort, with furnishings such as beds and cushions, tables and longsettles being universal, and some evidence of a more cultured life with books and pictures,

silverware, clocks, looking glasses and even virginals making an appearance.

At a time before banking was widely available, the inventories provide ample evidence of a system of lending and borrowing, often involving large amounts and the signing of bonds. The documents point to women (both widows and spinsters) being especially active in money lending. It has been suggested that this availability of local credit enabled the clothiers to invest and expand their businesses. The absence of either a dominant lord or master/employer is borne out in these men with strong self-esteem who valued independence and enterprise: a fertile ground for the industrialisation of the next century.



*An oak settle*

**22 February 2017**

**GREAT UNCLE PERCY:**

**Glenda Shaw**

**INVENTOR OF 'CATS' EYES'**

**The story of a Yorkshire icon**

Glenda Shaw shared the story of Percy Shaw, inventor of the reflecting road studs called 'Cats' Eyes', and showed how he became a 'Yorkshire icon'. She spoke with obvious fondness and admiration for her great uncle and his achievements, joking that he was responsible for 'her 15 minutes of fame'.

The Shaw family moved into the grandly named Boothtown Mansion soon after Percy, the eleventh child, was born. He lived there for the rest of his life, developing his highly successful Reflecting Road Studs Company on the site. Glenda painted a vivid picture of a highly inventive buccaneering spirit on the look-out with his younger brother (Glenda's grandfather) for money making schemes.

It was a search for a practical solution to a problem that famously led Percy to invent the Cats' Eyes. Making his way home on foggy nights from his favourite Queensbury pub, Percy had relied on the glint of headlight on tram tracks to guide the way. With the demise of trams, these guidelines had disappeared, but having picked out the gleam of a cat's eyes, the idea for his invention struck. By the early 1930s it was perfected and ready to go into production. The space where he wanted to build his workshop was occupied by his favourite tree, so it was incorporated into the building.



The ingenuity of Cats' Eyes was the simplicity of the idea – glass given a reflective surface; a flexible rubber stud; and the casting that held the stud in the road. The rain was an ally, as water which drained into the rubber would act as a wiper to keep the glass clean every time it was squashed by passing traffic. Patents were granted in 1934 and 1935. By the time of the black-out in World War II 40,000 Cats' Eyes a week were being produced on the site, with both brothers innovating and adapting the technology to develop the invention.

Percy Shaw's fame grew, enhanced no doubt by his outgoing and slightly eccentric personality. He enjoyed his success, buying a top of the range Rolls Royce Phantom and filling its boot with crates of local beer when he went to collect his OBE, refusing to pay London prices!

He was celebrated during his life-time, being an extraordinary interviewee for Alan Whicker and featuring in magazines and on local TV. He died in 1976, and has continued to be celebrated with appearances in lists of the greatest inventors, designers and Yorkshiremen into the twenty-first century. His life and achievements have been marked by blue plaques and commemorative stamps as well as a song. He might well have appreciated most the public's choice of 'Percy Shaw' as the name of a pub, since it was his love of a pint that led to his invention – one that has contributed significantly to road safety for over 75 years.

**8 March 2017**

**THE STENCH OF VICTORIAN INDECISION    Tony Boughton**  
**Be thankful you can flush. A tale of the Great Stink!**

In the summer of 1858, the city of London came to a standstill due to the stench emanating from the River Thames. The river was literally choking on raw sewage.

*“Near the bridges the feculence rolled up in clouds so dense that they were visible at the surface...the whole river was for the time a real sewer.”* (Michael Faraday 1855 in a letter to the Times.)

Tony Boughton gave an insight into the problems caused by the rapid growth of urban areas in the nineteenth century, London in particular, and how the Victorians dealt with the problem of cleaning up the rivers, though not always in an organised manner.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century only 20% of the population in England lived in towns and cities. Towards the end of the century this had risen to 80%. This caused overcrowding and dreadful living conditions for the poor, but put a great demand on water supplies and the disposal of waste of all kinds. Within London up to the middle of the century the lack of a centralised authority meant that there were many different designs of sewerage systems and not all worked in conjunction with neighbouring schemes but most allowed waste material to flow directly into rivers.

Between 1830 and 1866 there were several outbreaks of cholera, which, through various studies, led to the rightful conclusion that the illness was transmitted through the

water supply, but this theory was not accepted until the latter part of the century. Most dwellings had rudimentary ash or dry soil toilets but the more affluent people were beginning to install 'water closets' in their houses which only added to the waste that reached Britain's rivers.

In 1858, during that very hot summer, the stench from the river became unbearable. Even the Houses of Parliament considered moving their business up river and finally decided to act. A bill was created, amazingly quickly. This included not only the implementation of a sewerage system that would divert the out flow down river, designed by the civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette, but also the construction of embankments along the sides of the river.

It was a massive project that involved 82 miles of intercepting brick lined sewers with outfalls at Crossness on the south side of the river and Barking on the north side. Here there were massive pumping stations with steam engines to aid the discharge of the sewage into the river.

Here in local areas the introduction of sewerage schemes took a little longer. Local councils had a responsibility for constructing sewerage systems but perhaps because of the local terrain, many houses were still using outside dry soil or ash toilets well into the twentieth century.

**22 March 2017**

**THE ARTISAN NATURALISTS**

**Rob Trueblood**

The Artisan Naturalists were self-taught working men who became experts in their chosen field of botany. The extent of their achievements is marked in the dedications inscribed on their tomb-stones and in memorials in churchyards from Prestwich to Todmorden that were erected to them by grateful and admiring local people. These were men of humble origin who clearly made their mark and were held in high esteem for their achievements.

John Horsefield was a handloom weaver from Whitefield who taught himself about botanical classification while sitting at his loom and memorising the complex Latin names and taxonomies of plants. Richard Buxton, a shoemaker, began by teaching himself to read from a spelling book before progressing to read the most complex technical books and become an expert in mosses. Buxton's skill had practical applications – his employer sold herbal drinks and precise identification was crucial. Both these men, and others like them, operated at a high scientific level, drawing on the 'taxonomies' devised by Linnaeus.

The Calder Valley too had its artisan naturalists who formed part of the network of keen and independent botanists. Samuel Gibson was a whitesmith (tin-worker) from Hebden Bridge who made a detailed account of the botany within a mile of Heptonstall and was especially knowledgeable about grasses and mosses. James Bolton of Warley used his artistic skills to draw and make

copperplate etchings of fungi, while Todmorden's John Nowell is himself memorialised in St Mary's churchyard.

These men from Lancashire and Yorkshire would meet, sometimes on 'botanizing' field trips, and correspond. But what was even more significant was their passion to teach as well as to learn. They helped set up local botany societies, often meeting in local pubs, and charging a small subscription that enabled them to purchase the specialist books and equipment they needed. They also contributed to science by publishing books with meticulous descriptions of local flora and making extensive collections of plants. They are characterised by a precision in observing and recording what they encountered in the fields close to home.

The artisan naturalists are an inspiring example of that spirit of self-reliance and thirst for knowledge which we associate with the Enlightenment. They did not accept the limitations of their economic situation or even lack of education – they valued learning and were generous in their teaching and sharing of knowledge. Fittingly, a descendant of Samuel Gibson was one of the founders of Hebden Bridge Literary & Scientific Society and the Local History Society.

## Folklore Section

Work continues on raising the profile of protective household charms and symbols at both local and national level. This is a topic of key interest to anyone interested in the history of secular and ecclesiastical, formal and vernacular buildings, and in how people in the past viewed issues of security in both practical and magical terms. Folklore Section co-ordinator John Billingsley was one of the organisers of the Hidden Charms conference in Norwich in April 2016, the first academic-level conference on the topic since the 1970s, and plans are under way for a second event in 2018. Videos of presentations at the Norwich conference can be found here:

<http://www.apotropaios.co.uk/conference-2016.html>.

John's interest in this area of folklore was roused by the simply-carved stone heads on local seventeenth-century yeoman houses. They often appear alongside other symbols and objects displayed or concealed in the building, and his current local research investigates such remnants of a widespread belief in the evil eye and other threats to the security of the home. **Members are invited to contact him (see inside cover) about such objects and customs, as well as other aspects of local folklore.**

## **Prehistory Section**

Members of the prehistory section have worked with Calderdale Museum Service to set up the **Widdop from 6000 BC** Exhibition in Heptonstall Museum. Descriptive panels and artifacts in the display cabinet inform visitors regarding the occupation of the Widdop area from 6000 BC to the nineteenth century. The exhibition complements other items on display in the Museum that depicts Calderdale life. Jeff Wilkinson co-ordinated the setting up of the display on behalf of the Calderdale Museum Service. The exhibition opened on 4th March and continues on weekends and Bank Holidays until 29th October.

Museum opening times are from 11:0 am to 4:00 pm. All the display panels were created and provided by the Hebden Bridge Local History Society.

## **Family History Group**

When we started the Family History section 10 years ago our role tended to be that of introducing people to the research processes needed to discover the history of their own family. Technology has advanced so much during this time that many of the records we need to refer to can now be found online.

We still have some members and many visitors who come to research their own family but increasingly we have been developing a new role for the group. It is that of answering queries from people living in other parts of the

country, even other parts of the world. These are people whose families originated in the Calder Valley and are seeking information about their family or about the area they came from. We are using these enquiries to gather information about families who originated in Calderdale and intend to form a database from them for future reference.

### **The Family of John Fawcett. 1739-1817**

Our latest research has been about the family of John Fawcett (1739-1817). John was born in Bradford but spent most of his life as a Baptist Minister here in Hebden Bridge. It is the bicentenary of his death this year and Hope and Wainsgate Chapels along with our society are staging various events to commemorate this.

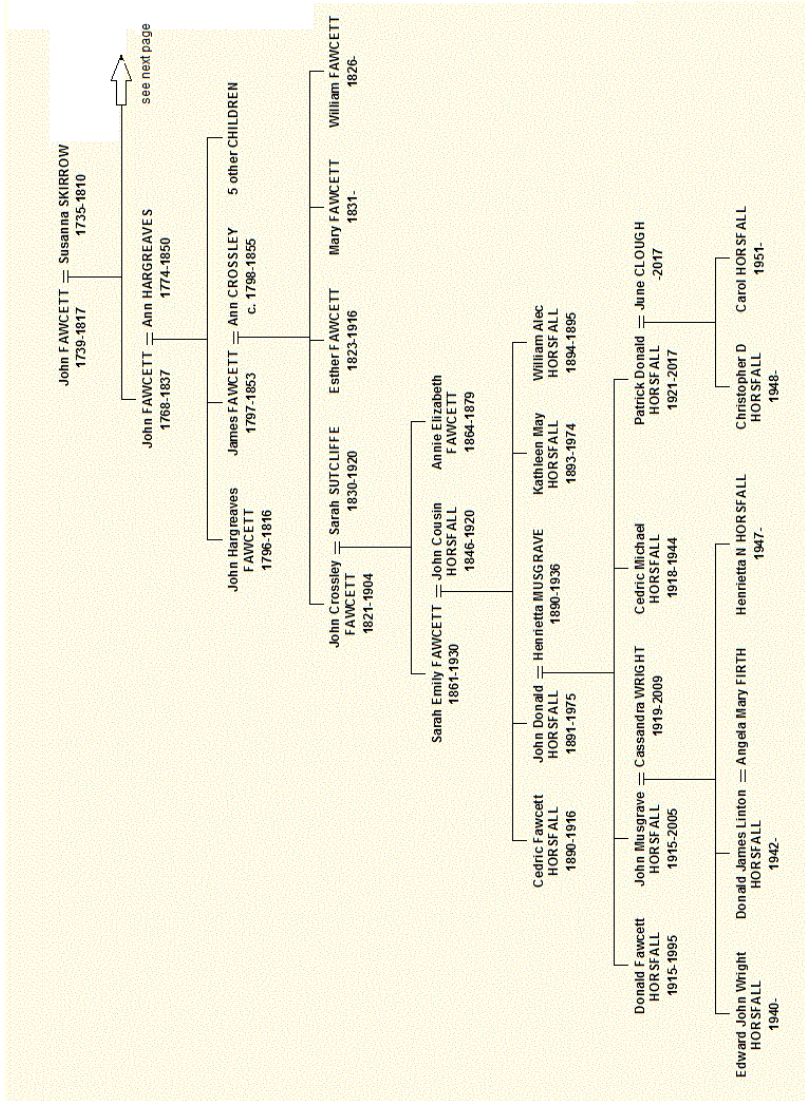
Our role in this has been slightly different from our usual research. Rather than looking for ancestors of John Fawcett we have been looking for descendants so we can invite a few to join in the celebrations.

So far we have been able to trace two branches of the family where there may be descendants. We began by using marriage and census records and the family tree for those two branches is shown on the next page.

We had discovered on Wikipedia a link to the Horsfall side of the family from the plaque in Bradford erected by his 2x great granddaughter, Lady Horsfall, born Sarah Fawcett at Brearley. Her husband, John Cousin Horsfall, born in Hebden Bridge, inherited a spinning business in Glusburn from his first wife, Elizabeth Hartley. John C. Horsfall was awarded a peerage in 1909 and this made our



research much simpler. Through 'The Peerage' records we can follow the family until the present day to the present baronet, Sir Edward J.W. Horsfall and his children and grandchildren. We hope to make contact with the family.

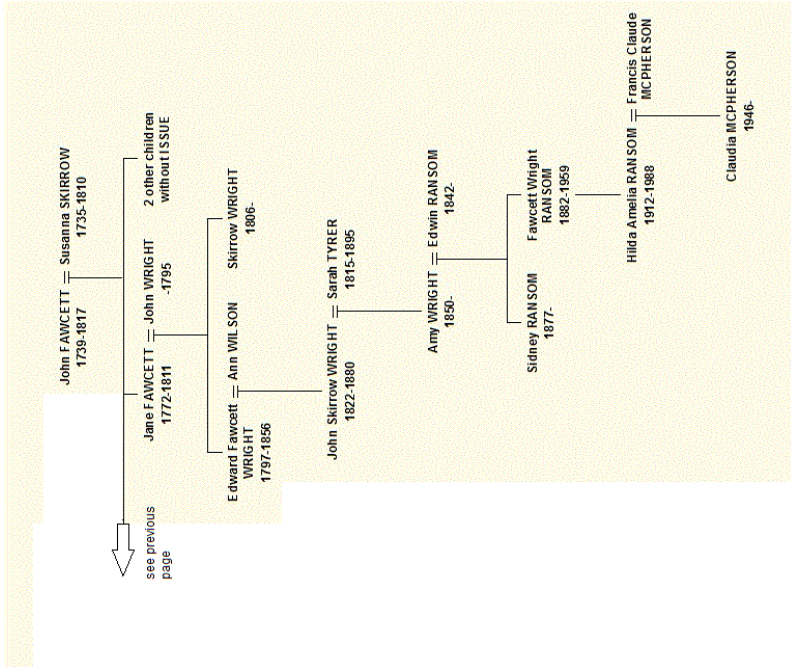


*The descendants of John Fawcett*

Some descendants from the other branch of the family are now in Canada. We have managed to contact this family through Claudia Guichon and they are delighted to know about the connection.

Jane, the daughter of Rev John Fawcett, married John Wright at Halifax in 1795; John was a wine merchant from London. One of their children, Edward Fawcett Wright, born in Hebden Bridge, eventually married and had a son, John Skirrow Wright who became a button manufacturer in Birmingham. J.S. Wright married Sarah Tyrer in 1842 and one of their daughters, Amy, married Edwin Ransom in 1871. Edwin was a miller from Hertfordshire.

The Ransoms settled in Kempston, Bedfordshire where they raised a large family; several of their sons emigrated to Canada and North America towards the end of the nineteenth century. Fawcett Wright Ransom arrived in Canada in 1882 joining his brother Sidney. F.W. Ransom married Mabel Arde and the family eventually moved to Winnipeg. F.W. Ransom was always interested in improving education and took an active part in achieving that. He also was very active in establishing co-operatives in farming. F.W. Ransom died in 1959. His daughter, Hilda, became a dietician and married Claude McPherson of Winnipeg in 1940. One of their daughters, Claudia born in 1946, became the youngest person to swim the English Channel in 1963. Claudia married Peter Guichon of Kamloops, British Columbia. Peter is related to Judith Guichon, the twenty-ninth Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.



*The descendants of Jane Fawcett*

See pages 2 – 4 for details of the events planned to celebrate John Fawcett’s bi-centenary.

*Keith Stansfield, Anne Mealia, Barbara Atack*

## Family History Meeting Times 2017

	Saturday	Thursday
April	2 <sup>nd</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>
May	6 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>
June	3 <sup>rd</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
July	1 <sup>st</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>
August	5 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>
September	2 <sup>nd</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>

## Archive Opening Times 2017

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.

2016	Wednesday 2 - 5 pm	Saturday 10 am - 1 pm
April	12 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>
May	10 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>
June	7 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>
July	12 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>
August	9 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>
September	13 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>

Hebden Bridge Local History Society  
The Birchcliffe Centre,  
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