

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

Spring 2015



ANNOUNCEMENT

Society visit to Toad Lane

Home of the Rochdale Pioneers

Details Page 3

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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 2014-2015, news from the Family History and Prehistory sections, activities and forthcoming events. If you'd like to write a short article on something historic for the Summer 2015 issue please send it to the Secretary by 1 August 2015.

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**Receive your Newsletter by email and help keep costs
(and therefore subs) down**

Email membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk
with your name and membership number

Local History Society Publications

Order via the website, from the Bookcase or at Society lectures.

Pennine Valley: a History of Upper Calderdale.

Edited by Bernard Jennings. 2011. £14.99

Pennine Perspectives: Aspects of the History of Midgley.

Edited by Ian Bailey, David Cant, Alan Petford and Nigel Smith. 2007. £18.00

A Century of Change: 100 years of Hebden Bridge and District. Edited by Diana Monahan. 1999. £15.95

The Diaries of Cornelius Ashworth 1782-1816. Edited by Richard Davies, Alan Petford and Janet Senior. 2011. £19.00

Hebden Bridge Town Centre Trail. 2008. £2.00

Occasional Publications Series

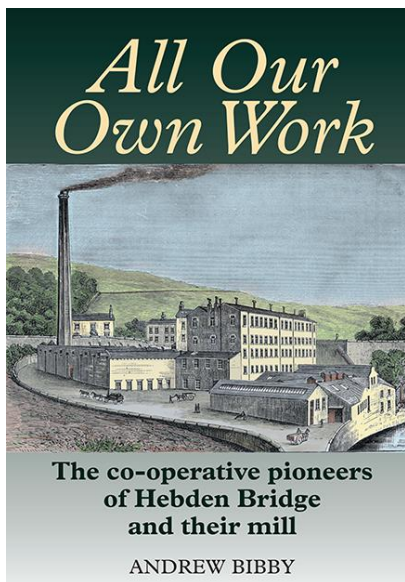
1. **Midgley Probate Records: Household and Family in the Upper Calder Valley 1531-1731.** £9.99

2. **City in the Hills: Dawson City and the Building of the Walshaw Dean Reservoirs.** £11.99

3. **Going to War: People of the Calder Valley and the First Weeks of the Great War.** £9.99

4 **Sowerby Probate Records: Household and family in the Upper Calder Valley 1688 – 1700.** £9.99

5 **Enclosing the Moors: Shaping the Calder Valley Landscape through Parliamentary Enclosure.** £11.99



The Co-operative History Museum at Toad Lane, Rochdale, which has recently been completely renovated, is putting on a small exhibition about the Nutclough Fustian Manufacturing Co-operative Society to tie in with the publication of Andrew Bibby's book.

The Society is planning two group visits on **Wednesday**

2nd and Saturday 19th September at 2.30 pm. The cost is £4 including tea/coffee and the visit would last about an hour and a half. People may also want to make a day of it and visit Touchstones Art Gallery and Museum.

To book contact the Secretary (see inside cover). Give your preferred date, numbers (visitors welcome) and whether you can offer seats in a car or would like a lift. Your place will be confirmed after 16th May if there are at least 20 people interested. Please inform the secretary if you are unable to go so your place can be offered to people on the waiting list and so the society does not have to pay for empty places. Payment can be made to the treasurer or on the day. The invitation has also been extended to the Mytholmroyd Historical Society.

Local History Exhibitions in Hebden Bridge

We have organised two exhibitions so far: Hebden Royd and the early years of the Great War (Autumn 2014), and the Rochdale Canal in the Upper Calder Valley (Feb/March 2015).



Both exhibitions have attracted a great deal of attention. While some people look across the whole display - images and words, others are attracted by individual items. The selections of photographs are always an attraction. The recent selection of images on the canal is now on display at the Fox and Goose Inn. Display items are generally available for presentation at other venues.

Our facility to display work has been made more secure, thanks to a grant under the Calderdale's Ward Forum Grant Scheme. We have a large folding display screen, more picture frames and print materials. I am also grateful to those who have offered their help with the setting up of exhibitions.

Exhibitions this year

3rd August to 6th September: Hebden Bridge and the twin towns of St Pol and Warstein. Members are helping with this presentation promoted by Hebden Royd Town Council. If you feel you are able to add anything - perhaps you were involved with a school exchange or have helped by accommodating a guest - please let us hear from you; pictures and recollections are always welcome.

7th September to 4th October: 'Up to the Moors': will cover the Township of Stansfield - a huge area extending from Mytholm to Blackshawhead and beyond Todmorden to Cliviger. 'Up to the Moors' will show the development of the area from the early medieval period to the nineteenth century. It will also show something of the families of Stansfield and their homes, based around original research by members of the Society. If your family has lived in this area for generations then maybe they will show up on our list of wills and inventories.

Mike Crawford

mecrawford@btinternet.com

Power and Potability

The South Pennines History Group Day School held at the Birchcliffe Centre on Saturday 6 September 2014.

It had to be raining of course. The local history enthusiasts were gathered Upstairs@the Birchcliffe for the seventh annual day school to hear from several expert speakers about how water has contributed to the landscape and society of our Pennine communities, and the weather obligingly provided a storm.

Archaeologist Dave Weldrake explored the social significance of wells, ranging from myths and magical stories, through the seemingly more rational fashion for spas and the strictly utilitarian provision of domestic water. Many of the legends attached to wells seem to go back no further than a fashion for folklore in the nineteenth century, with little documentary or archaeological evidence to link them to earlier times. There was perhaps an element of magic in the belief in the healing powers of water which led to the fashion for plunge baths and spa resorts. Water for utilitarian purposes undoubtedly shaped the landscape, with hilltop settlements clustering around the lines of springs and wells, pumps and troughs still to be seen in the landscape.

Water as a source of power in the Calder Valley was the theme of Justine Wyatt's talk, from the earliest corn and fulling mills of the 14th century to the provision of power

for the textile industry and today's alternative technologies. The complex engineering involved in exploiting this great natural resource is a reminder of how important water was to the industrial development of the South Pennines, and the landscape still carries the evidence of this spectacular growth.

Victor Khadem looked at the significance of water in medieval times. He referred to place-name and other evidence that suggested water was associated with the supernatural, but also showed how the sophisticated exploitation of water was not an invention of the industrial revolution, with streams channelled and diverted to serve some Saddleworth settlements back in the twelfth century.

The larger more centralised populations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century required water on a grander scale. Norman Redhead of the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service looked at the impact of the network of reservoirs built in the hills surrounding Oldham. High rainfall and deep cloughs made the construction of reservoirs in this area very attractive. The resulting dramatic changes to the landscape included the disappearance and depopulation of the upland hamlets, diverted roads and the magnificent engineering excellence of the structures built by gangs of imported 'navvy' labour.

The life of the navvies was explored more closely by Ann Kilbey, who told the story of 'Dawson City' at Heptonstall where the navvies who built Walshaw Dean Reservoirs were housed. These men led a nomadic existence, but Dawson City provided them with homes for their families, a school and even a small hospital. Eventually, the men moved on, leaving the landscape changed forever. The evocative photographs of men and machines bring to life an extraordinary era in the ambitious exploitation of this ordinary natural resource.

Sheila Graham



The cover photo of the last newsletter was a view of a local reservoir, but no-one identified it – so here it is again – with a clue – it's near the site of what sounds like a fortification. But that's not the 'official' name..... Answers to the Hon Sec.

Lecture Reports 2014 - 2015

24 September 2014

VALLEY OF A HUNDRED CHAPELS

Amy Binns

How non-conformists shaped our world

Searching online maps was the starting point for Amy Binns' fascination with chapels, as she told a packed meeting of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society. And when she discovered there really were a hundred chapels scattered in every small community in the Upper Calder Valley a hundred years ago, she was hooked. Evidence of the lost chapels can still to be found – perhaps in an elaborate gate post, railings or a yard of gravestones.

Why were there so many in this valley? One explanation lies in the geography and the vast size of the parish of Halifax. The upper valley was far from the mother church and served by chapels of ease in Heptonstall and Cross Stone. In a 1720 count only 9% of the population in this area attended church on Easter Day. This was a gap that began to be filled by non-conformist travelling preachers addressing meetings in private houses. Gradually communities started building their own chapels, modestly at first but eventually gaining confidence and producing grand edifices.

The architecture of the buildings made clear the difference between Church and Chapel. For the established church the focus was on ritual, for the non-conformists the

important thing was the preacher and the word of the Bible. Typically chapels were built symmetrically, with two long windows lighting the pulpit. Heptonstall famously used an octagon, with balconies and seating that again focused on the preacher and his stirring message.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a massive increase in chapel building, with communities and local mill-owners becoming more competitive and establishing huge buildings like the 'Methodist Cathedral' in Todmorden (the current Central Methodist Hall was originally just the Sunday School) and the classically inspired Hope Baptist chapel in Hebden Bridge. When there was no financial benefactor, communities would undertake much of the work themselves and raised money at stone laying ceremonies such as the one at Foster Lane .

The success of the chapels lay in their integration in the community, with tea parties, picnics and entertainments. The Sunday Schools provided education for large numbers of children and adults, with literacy classes but also skills such as reciting and speech making that gave people a way into political life.

Perhaps some of the chapel builders over-reached themselves and the decline was inevitable. Universal state education took over some of the role of the Sunday Schools, other forms of entertainment displaced the glee clubs and teas of the chapel and the large buildings became too costly to maintain. The end was often the

discovery of dry rot, when the depleted chapels were not able to meet such major expenditure.

Much remains of the chapels, both in the memories of local people and in the wonderful photographs and collections of flyers and programmes of events that people have saved. Amy's book 'Valley of a Hundred Chapels' sheds a fascinating light on the hey-day of chapel life, and the website www.chapelvalley.org.uk is full of even more detail. Even better, search out the chapel remains in the hill top hamlets where they once prospered.

8 October 2014

THE LISTED BUILDINGS

Peter Thornborrow

OF THE HEBDEN BRIDGE AREA

Heptonstall, Wadsworth and Blackshaw

Peter Thornborrow commenced his lecture by sketching out the process in the early 1980's that led the then Secretary of State Michael Heseltine to rapidly expand the number of historic buildings inspectors under the aegis of what is now commonly known as English Heritage.

This in turn resulted in the ex-music teacher, but with considerable interests in old buildings, being given the remit to look at amongst other areas, Stansfield, Heptonstall and Wadsworth. In the three months he was given for the survey he submitted successful applications

for listing for over 700 buildings and structures. A considerable increase over the pre-existing 30 or so.

Apart from the many buildings in the upper valley he also successfully submitted for listing familiar features like Reaps Cross (then collapsed but now re-erected as a millennium initiative) and Strines Bridge above the New Delight public house. He also successfully had listed individual components of the then derelict Rochdale Canal. During the time that he was a music teacher in Littleborough he had seen the policy in Lancashire of destroying the iconic Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways glass platform canopies as part of a 'simplification' of the stations. As a result, when he became the inspector he had Hebden Bridge station included in the listed structures, giving the town a 'gateway' for visitors many envy.

His lecture was illustrated with 35mm slides taken at the time interspersed with which were some of the late Ralph Cross's ethereal black and white images of interiors then derelict but now fortunately restored. The lecture was liberally punctuated with many, many anecdotes both of a personal and family nature as well as relating to buildings and their occupants.

Perhaps one of the most telling was the demise of the Great Barn at Greenwood Lee. Pronounced safe by the English Heritage structural engineer, it fell down less than a fortnight later. Or the mill which stood on the site of the



Greenwood Lee Barn (Kenneth Crabtree collection PHDA)

Co-op supermarket: due to be listed in ten days, it was demolished over a weekend.

Emerging somewhat later than usual for a history society lecture it was impossible not to reflect on the economic benefits the listing of the railway station and the canal has contributed to the tourist and allied employment in the area. It was also rather enjoyable to see images of very youthful David Cant and Kevin Illingworth, two of Peter's evening class students in the 1980s. They both, of course, have gone on to make very substantial academic contributions to the study of vernacular architecture both in West Yorkshire and beyond.

22 October 2014

**VIEWS FROM TWO COMMUNITIES
ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN 1914**

**Mike Crawford
Wolfgang Hombach
and Nick Wilding**

Commemorations of the war that began a hundred years ago often deal in generalities, but, rooted in the detail of local communities, become a moving tribute to ordinariness in extraordinary times. Local historian Mike Crawford and Wolfgang Hombach, formerly director of the Erich Kastner Schule in Maintal, have mined the documents of their local areas – Calder Valley and Hanau in Germany - to gain insights into the reality of the experience of war. Local film-maker Nick Wilding has gathered together some remarkable oral histories and images which added an extra dimension to the presentation given to the Hebden Bridge Local History Society.

The declaration of war against Germany on 4th August 1914 war seemed to come out of the blue for people of the Calder Valley. One day they were preparing to board the special trains heading for the seaside; a few days later local reservists were marching away, and at the White Lion in Hebden Bridge horses were being selected for service.

In less than three weeks local men were among the thousands who died as part of the expeditionary force at Mons. The love and concern expressed in a letter from a

German mother to her injured son must have been repeated in letters from Yorkshire mothers.

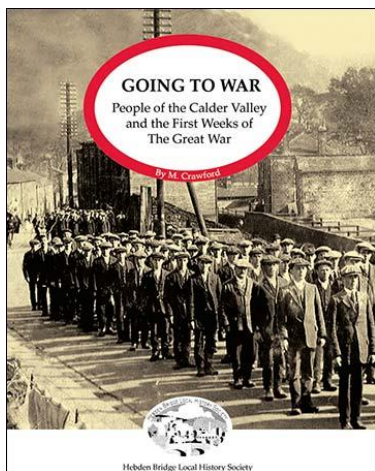
Reports in local newspapers in both communities give some insight into the mood: on August 4th the Halifax Courier published a full page plea for opposition to the 'wicked and stupid' war, but this was soon followed by reports made by local men writing to their families. The Hanauer Anzeiger, local paper of Hanau was subject to censorship and its pages portrayed 'the enemy' according to national stereotypes – the brutal Russians, the untrustworthy French, and the English pressed into military service, 'making the world bleed for moneybags'

Oral history and newspaper reports paint a picture of an enthusiasm for enlistment, fired by a sense of solidarity with those men from the community who were being battered in France. Local relief funds were started, and knitting and sewing on a grand scale. When Belgian refugees arrived in the Valley their voices were heard at recruitment meetings, and many young men were encouraged to join up.

In Hanau too there was initial enthusiasm, but soon there was real hardship being felt by civilians: a letter from a new mother, destitute after her husband was conscripted, begs for help to pay the midwife. There were limited social benefits, and sky high prices, panic buying and fear of bank closures. By 1916 the baking and selling of cakes became a criminal offence. 700,000 German civilians died

of malnutrition in the First World War, far exceeding the 500,000 killed by bombs in the second.

The enduring impression lies in the ordinary voices and the photographs of young men in uniform collected in Nick Wilding's films. Martha Lord's memory of her brother, joining up at seventeen and killed on the Somme: "dreadful things are wars, you know". Bill Beesley's logic: "they could have killed all of us... you've got to kill the other side or they'll kill you." Michael Gibbon recalling his father's story of responding to the call of a young German in a shell hole, calming him and telling him to lie low, then having to be restrained in his anger at seeing him killed by another English soldier. This talk was indeed a tribute to ordinariness.



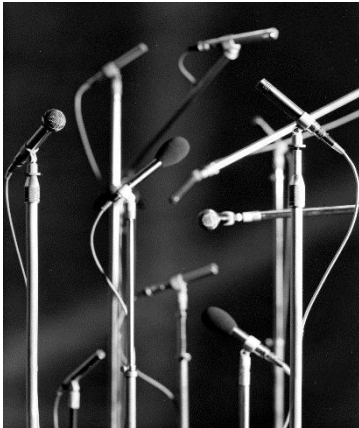
Available from the Society and local book shops.

12 November 2014

**THE EARLY HISTORY OF
CALREC AUDIO LIMITED**

Stephen Jagger

In 2014, Calrec Audio celebrated 50 years in audio, and 25 years in Hebden Bridge's historic Nutclough Mill. Following the Hebden Bridge Literary & Scientific



Society's AGM (of which the Local History Society is a section along with the Astronomy Society), Stephen Jagger presented "The Early History of Calrec Audio Limited." Stephen was the managing director from 1989 to 2009, but joined the company straight from college in 1972. He covered

the story of the company, when it was at Hangingroyd Lane. It is hoped to invite Stephen back for the tale of Calrec's next 25 years in Nutclough Mill.

19 November 2014

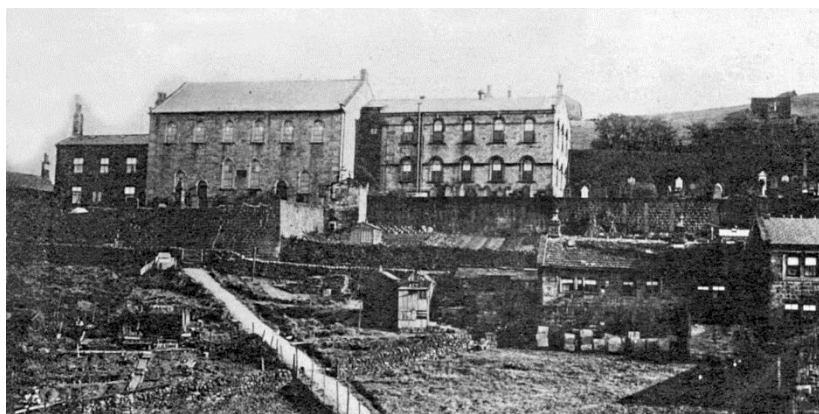
SOME LOCAL ANNIVERSARIES Diana Monahan

BUT “DON’T MENTION THE WAR” Frank Woolrych

Following the 65th AGM, members of Hebden Bridge Local History Society were treated to a sample of some of the treasures to be found in the Society’s archive. Frank Woolrych told the story of how the Birchcliffe Baptist Chapel, celebrating its 250th anniversary, eventually became home for the History Society Archive and the Pennine Horizons Digital Archive. Some of the nineteenth century photographs now held at Birchcliffe showed the rapid development of the hillside where the first chapel was built. By 1898 when the present Birchcliffe Chapel was completed, the views across the valley were often obscured by smoking chimneys. This magnificent building was threatened with demolition after it closed in 1973, but was saved by Pennine Heritage and provided a home for the Alice Longstaff photograph collection, which was gifted to the organisation by Frank. Meanwhile, the Hebden Bridge Local History Society’s growing and valuable archive had been searching for a permanent home, and found a safe resting place at Birchcliffe, in the refurbished board room. Both the archives have gone from strength to strength.

Diana Monahan gave an indication of the fascinating facts that a search through the archives can uncover, by running

through seven hundred years of anniversaries, with illustrations mostly from the Society's own collection. These included the arrival in 1764 at Wainsgate Chapel of the Reverend John Fawcett, who penetrated the 'unintelligible dialect' and continued to promote the education of young men of the area rather than advance his career elsewhere. In the same year there was the bankruptcy of John Parker of Shackleton, whose adventures with the Cragg Vale Coiners are also recorded. Photographs track the development of the townscape, but it is often the ephemera, like the postcard from the Village Blacksmith with a cartoon sketch of an unwilling horse, that put us in touch with lives long gone.



Old Birchcliffe Chapel Alice Longstaff collection PHDA

Frank and his team have digitised many of these historically important and fascinating photographs and they can be explored on the website: www.pennineheritage.org.uk/digital-archive

26 November 2014

WILLS, INVENTORIES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE PARISH OF HALIFAX AT THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY **Alan Petford**

Faced with a pile of seventeenth century legal documents written in an impenetrable script and full of unrecognisable words like swingle trees and hookseams, we might be tempted to think that rewards of deciphering them wouldn't justify the effort involved. But as Alan Petford showed in his talk to the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, a study of wills and inventories can illuminate brilliantly the daily lives of men and women in this area over three hundred years ago. A group of volunteers have been transcribing probate documents from the ancient parish of Halifax covering the years from 1688 to 1700 opening up a study of these times to other historians. Inventories were particularly important, as an accurate account of all the deceased's property was needed in order to assess the total value of the estate.

There is a long established understanding that in the Parish of Halifax there was a dual economy of farming and textiles, and the inventories make it clear that almost every profession had some involvement in agriculture. Alongside the cattle that are listed, the agricultural equipment adds detail to our picture of the farming methods of the time. The listing of 'three oxen' and 'ox harrow and plow' shows that oxen were still being used

to work the land. Sleds were as frequently listed as carts, being more suitable for work on the hillsides.

The importance of textile production is also confirmed through the equipment listed in the inventories, with everything from the raw wool, through the spinning wheels, looms, tenters, shears, presses and pieces of cloth valued by the appraisers. It is clear that the most profitable part of textile production was the finishing process, which added value to the cloth after the initial weaving. After weaving cloth would be fulled and felted, and dried on tenters which stretched the cloth back to size. To get a smoother finish, the nap on the cloth would be raised with teasels and then carefully cropped with shears. All the equipment needed for this is found in the inventories: 'tenters in the croft'; 'shears, shear board, handle brake and raising peark'. The 'screw press, piece paper and planks' were required for a finishing process where the cloth was put into hot and cold presses; a final touch was to use the contents of a 'tub oyle and butter in it mixt' to add the extra smoothness which would bring a premium in the market. The high value given to this equipment in the inventories points to the profit that such processes could command.

In the course of Alan's talk it became obvious that information about agriculture and textiles was only the beginning of the insights available from these inventories. The way the houses were used becomes clearer, with no designated bedrooms but beds found in every room

except the kitchen. We can learn much about the cooking methods from the pots pans trivets and fire irons, as well as the ubiquity of the oatcake with its required bakstones (for cooking) and bread fleaks (where the finished oatcakes hung to store). The variety of furniture and valuables listed points to a comfortable life for the occupants of the larger houses; a life which a study of these fascinating inventories opens to our modern gaze.

There are two books of probate document transcriptions (for Midgley and Sowerby) with explanations and glossaries already available from the Society, and more should be following.

10 December 2014

HAPPY BIRTHDAY STOODLEY PIKE

Nick Wilding

It's two hundred years since the building of the original Stoodley Pike Tower, and Nick Wilding, local film-maker and historical researcher, was determined that the anniversary should be celebrated in style. In the last Hebden Bridge Local History Society meeting of 2014, Nick shared his wonderful filmed collection of reminiscences about the Pike, as well as the record of its fantastic birthday party.

The 1814 tower is almost unique in having been built to celebrate a Peace Treaty rather than a military victory. The Napoleonic wars had dragged on for over twenty years by the time the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1814, and the local population of the Upper Calder Valley was delighted to celebrate a new age of peace. When it fell down on the eve of the Crimean War in 1854, the power of an omen once again attached itself to the place. It was rebuilt in 1856 when peace returned.



Stories of doom and disaster seem to have been long associated with the place - there are folk tales of flames flaring from the stones, hints that this was the devil's seat, and even in modern times stories of electrical storms when aggressive squirrels attacked walkers!

But the Pike was also a much loved playground, and some of the reminiscences Nick has caught on film tell of the

antics of the local boys, riding bikes on the parapet, jumping off onto the soft peat, suffering from ricocheting shot-gun pellets and foraging for explosives left behind after Home Guard training.

Stoodley Pike's connection with political justice, from the Chartists to twentieth century peace movements was reflected in the birthday celebration. Visitors from the French twin towns were welcomed to the party. And a 'right good do' it was: Stoodley Pike is pretty inaccessible, and the logistical problems of getting everything and everyone there formidable – but everyone played their part and there was a brass band, a flight of peace pigeons released from the towers, and a large crowd to say Happy Birthday Stoodley Pike.

14 January 2015

**WAKEFIELD COURT ROLLS
FOR FAMILY HISTORY**

Sylvia Thomas

As president of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society and former West Yorkshire County Archivist, **Sylvia Thomas** is clearly proud that the Society is custodian of seven centuries of evidence which can be researched by local and family historians. In a talk to the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, Sylvia outlined the kinds of details about

family relationships and everyday life that can be gleaned from the court rolls. Covering seven centuries, the parchment (later paper) rolls recorded the administration of the manor of Wakefield which took place at the manorial courts. Though the earlier rolls were written in Latin, many have been translated and can be consulted in reference libraries.



Court Roll of the Manor of Wakefield

Names are at the heart of family history research and the rolls are full of them. As property was transferred through a process known as 'surrender' the rolls record those who

held the property in the past, as well as those to whom it is being transferred or who may inherit in the future. All this contributes to the family tree. Historians can also find the names of occupiers of property, as well as the occupations of all those named. Sylvia cautioned that it isn't always easy to identify an individual ancestor: particular surnames are often very common within a local area, and there was a propensity to use similar Christian names across the generations and in different branches which can cause confusion.

When land was left in wills, this too was recorded in the court rolls, often offering clues about relationships between family members who may have different surnames. Illegitimate children might also be included in the inheritance, giving new leads for the researcher to follow. Will-makers often sought to control the behaviour of their families from beyond the grave, for example by making inheritance conditional on a son not marrying a named woman – and these details too add to the fascination of researching family history.

The manor also administered justice at twice yearly 'leet' courts, and these records contribute rich detail to our knowledge of the past. Failing to abide by the laws and customary practices of the manor could lead to a summons to appear before the court. Offences could be punished with fines, or even with death. Those causing affray and fighting were among those punished, as were

sheep worriers, scolds, eavesdroppers, and nightwalkers and those who tainted flour, used an unofficial baker or had excessively smoky fires.

This rich archive of court rolls from 1274 to 1925 holds secrets and stories which wait for the family historian detective to uncover.

28 January 2015

PATTERNS IN THE LANDSCAPE

Nigel Smith

The evolution of settlement and enclosure in the Upper Calder Valley

With the scattered hillside settlements and fields stretching to the moors covered in snow, the patterns in the landscape couldn't have been more evident. Librarian/archivist of Hebden Bridge History Society **Nigel Smith** has studied these patterns and the way settlement and enclosure developed in the valley for some years and was recently awarded a PhD for his work. He told the society how his investigation into the way people had settled and enclosed the land drew on documentary and place-name evidence, but was also strongly rooted in the geography of the area.

Of particular importance were the gently sloping terraces of land lying between the 200 – 300 metre contours which

had better soil and plentiful springs of water. Place names pointed to a reason for some of the settlements on these hillsides – the local place name ending ‘tonstall’ probably indicates a site which provided summer pasture for cattle. Place-names with ‘hey’ and ‘shey’ (which later became ‘shaw’) indicated rough grazing or woodland pasture, and often seem to have been shared with different farmers having rights to graze a set number of cows there.

Another characteristic of our local landscape is the large number of dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets. These are typical of a pastoral type of farming. When land was divided between members of the family, we often see two farms close together with shared names such as Upper and Lower or Near and Far. Land-holdings grew as farmers gained permission from the lord of the manor to make new clearances or encroachments which would provide profitable rents.

Nigel cautioned that the shapes of fields is not a good pointer to the age of a settlement – historians have sometimes seen an inverted ‘s’ shape as evidence of a medieval common field system, but some such strips were also created in the nineteenth century. Oval fields were often made from early clearances as the most economical type, but these were still common in nineteenth century enclosures.

Nigel’s talk made very effective use of maps which showed vividly how the settlement of our valley

developed and pulled together the topographical, place-name and documentary evidence. As well as publishing his findings in an academic book, Nigel has made much of his documentary evidence available on-line. The fully searchable South Pennine History Group website www.southpenninehistorygroup.org.uk provides a fabulously rich resource for anyone interested in the history of this area.



Horsehold from Edge End Moor

11 February 2015

GROWING UP IN SOWERBY

Jean Illingworth

Jean Illingworth's love for and fascination with her home town of Sowerby was at the heart of her talk to the Hebden Bridge History Society. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but its history probably dates back much further, with local stories maintaining that Roman troops marched down the main street. It was part of the forest of Sowerby providing hunting grounds for aristocrats, and was a centre of the civil war, with locally encamped Roundheads involved in skirmishes with the Royalists in Halifax.



Sowerby Towngate from St Peter's tower

Much has changed, not least within Jean's own lifetime. She spoke of the significant buildings that were lost, including alms houses, pubs, post office, farms and

chapels that were demolished when new corporation housing was built. But some fine buildings remain, including St Peter's Church, with a magnificent interior including Giuseppe Cortese plasterwork, fine Corinthian columns and beautiful stained glass.

Sowerby's rich social life used to revolve round the many churches, chapels and Sunday schools and there were many local characters whose names endure. One was the Whig MP known as John 'Almighty' Whiteley, from his habit of preaching in the upstairs room of the Star Inn (Rushcart). His portrait used to hang in the pub, looking down with his stern gaze. Thought mysteriously lost, it turned up on an Antiques Roadshow in Sussex.

Jean spoke with passion about her 'free' childhood in the countryside around Sowerby, and has recorded her stories in a book 'Growing up in Sowerby' which stimulated such a response that she put together the new stories in a second book 'Sowerby Tales.' She also advised her enthusiastic audience to look out for the annual heritage open days which offer an opportunity to look round St Peter's Church. There are also guided walks in the area, when Jean can point out the features that make Sowerby such a fascinating place.

25 February 2015

**A LONG TIME AGO,
BUT NOT THAT FA R AWAY**

David Shepherd

The title gave a sense of the perspective needed to look back into pre-history – a period of time covering 7000 years before history was recorded. As David Shepherd cautioned in his talk to Hebden Bridge Local History Society, we need to hold on to an awareness that these valleys and hills were occupied by people who would share recognisable emotions and ways of organising their society.

The hill tops are still revealing the secrets of their prehistoric occupation and archaeology sheds more light on the lives of these distant societies. Stones survive where bone and leather disappear, and the dozens of standing stones identified by David and his group provide fascinating evidence of design in their careful placing. Many of these stones have their long axis pointing to the rising place of the mid-winter sun, suggesting that they may have ritual purposes. There are ring cairns too, with puzzling features that may mark entrances, and a henge on the hills above Midgley where the ditch on the inside of the circle rules out a defensive purpose. Other questions are raised by huge propped stones, deliberately poised and balanced on other stones by human effort.

Some stone features are more clearly understood as graves or memorials – collapsed cairns and ‘kists’ where the stones which formed the sides of the chest are still clear, though no human remains can be found in this acid ground. The aesthetic sense of these early people is becoming more evident, with special chosen stones containing fossils or other distinguishing features placed carefully on the inside of the kists, often on the west facing side. Rock art has been known for a while, though not fully understood. Recently David and his group have found some mysterious grooves in stones which have not yet been identified either as deliberate marks or geological features.

The work goes on, and ‘hot from the trowel’ David shared the fascinating archaeology underway in the area. Here is yet more evidence of how the upright stones were carefully slotted into the ground. Stones now hardly noticeable to the untrained eye would have stood as proud as those stones which we are impelled to raise to memorialise our dead.

Not so far away then, either in distance or emotion.

11 March 2015

GRUELLING EXPERIENCES

Peter Higginbotham

We probably all have an image of workhouse life and how the inmates subsisted on weak gruel, but Peter Higginbotham's exhaustive researches reveal a far more complex and fascinating story, as he told Hebden Bridge Local History Society.

From the age of Elizabeth I each parish was responsible for providing help for those inhabitants who found themselves destitute. A poor-rate was collected to fund the relief, and the able-bodied were expected to work in exchange for help. For some parishes this forced work was best undertaken in a house, where those unable to work could also be sheltered. These workhouses grew in number through the 18th century and reminders can still be found locally – at Workhouse Farm and Workhouse Green in Colden for example.

The more formidable workhouses of popular imagination were built as a result of the 1834 Poor Law Act, which established Poor Law Unions covering a much wider area than the old parishes. 'Out-relief' was abolished and the workhouses were to act as a deterrent to anyone claiming relief. Although this was popular among the ratepayers of the south, in the northern manufacturing areas it was seen as an unnecessary expense. Todmorden in particular stood out against the proposal for forty years until

eventually building a workhouse at Mankinholes – Stansfield View.

The workhouses were strictly regulated: no-one was forced to enter, but whole families had to be admitted together. Once inside the inmates were classified and strictly segregated – males and females never mixed, and children beyond infancy were housed separately and perhaps saw a parent on Sundays. As the name suggests, the regime involved work – mainly domestic for the women and physical labour for the men, such as breaking stones for road-making. The elderly and infirm were not required to work. All the inmates wore a uniform, and meals were also regulated – mainly gruel, bread and cheese with meat or bacon twice a week.



Stansfield View Union Workhouse Todmorden Antiquarian Society collection PHDA.

Research has shown that many of the residents were single parents and their children as well as elderly men beyond useful work and the so-called 'imbeciles' and 'idiots' who could not fend for themselves. Bit by bit the workhouse hospitals, at first staffed by mostly illiterate inmates who got drunk on the various medicines, became a more reliable source of treatment for the sick. By 1930 the workhouses were rebranded as Public Assistance Institutes and control passed to local councils, and eventually their role was taken over by the NHS and welfare state.

The old workhouses were perhaps not essentially cruel, but the shame and stigma of being sent to the workhouse never disappeared. There is a wealth of stories still to be discovered, with records in national and local archives as well as on Peter's own website www.workhouses.org.uk and in his splendid collection of books.

Peter Higginbotham is a writer and researcher best known for his extensive study of the workhouse and related institutions. He is the author of a number of books including *The Workhouse Encyclopaedia*, *The Workhouse Cookbook*, *Voices from the Workhouse* and *A Grim Almanac of the Workhouse*, and the creator of the website www.workhouses.org.uk. He has also contributed to many radio and TV programmes including *Who Do You Think You Are? Heir Hunters*; *Coming Home* and *Secrets from the Workhouse*.

25 March 2015

**THE DAM THAT ISN'T AND THE
GREAT FLOATING PLUG OF THE COLDEN**

Dave Smalley

Dave Smalley's investigation of Noah Dale dam starts with a story and an oddity in the landscape, as he explained to the Hebden Bridge Local History Society. The story is of a catastrophic collapse of the neglected dam at the head of Colden Water in the 1930s which carried the core of the dam downstream. The oddity in the landscape is the mound of earth which stands close to the breached dam wall and has been identified as the 'plug'. But big mounds of earth don't just float.



Standing in the boggy ground at this remote spot, Dave was determined to find a more convincing explanation.

The dam itself was built between 1805 and 1810 so that water supply could be guaranteed to the spinning mills of the Colden Valley. Dave has established that the original dam was well built but it was shallow and could not hold enough water to supply all the mills. The owners took an enormous loan of £7000 in 1810 but in 1826 needed to invest in making the dam bigger. This raised the wall using rather shoddy engineering and was probably the cause of the dam's ultimate failure.

Examination of the landscape shows that the original dam had made use of existing landscape features, but had diverted the course of the Colden. The odd knoll is not a 'floating plug' but just part of a larger mound that was cut through by the navvies to keep the Colden flowing well.

A century later there were concerns about dam safety and new regulations demanded that the dam be kept in good repair. Those responsible were loath to spend more money on this, paying a waterman just £5 a year to inspect and maintain the structure. A report found a gap in the wall of the dam that had been raised, a fault that would cost £2000 to put right. The failed dam was left to decay further.

Stories have always suggested that the dam burst because of a serious rain storm – but the rainfall statistics don't support this theory. It seems that after a steadily wet year in 1938, the reservoir was beginning to hold water again, and the owners decided to dismantle it, probably by

collapsing a tunnel. All the archaeology seems to support this.

Dave's talk was a masterclass in showing how archaeology, geology, engineering, detective work in archives, analysis of photographs and simply tramping through bleak boggy moorland combine to add to our knowledge of the past and bring history to life. The result was a fascinating story about the construction of the Noah dale dam and its ultimate demise.

Mytholmroyd Heritage Day

Saturday 16 May 2015

10.00 Registration at Church of the Good Shepherd.

10.30 **From pre-history until the end of the 19th century.**

Talk by Rodney Collinge.

11.30 **Two Short Historical Walks.** Cragg Road with Pam Jordan, or Eastwards along Burnley Road with Iain Cameron. The walks are repeated in the afternoon.

1 pm Drinks, sandwiches and home-made cakes for sale.

2 pm **Industry and the 20th century.** Presentation by Ann Kilbey and Frank Woolrych.

3 pm **Repeat of the two morning walks.**

Cost for the day is £6.00 or £2.00 per event. Visitors will have time to peruse the many displays around the church. Topics include cricket, football, the gala, the Methodist Church, Calder High School, the railway and industry.

Alan Petford – a tribute



The untimely death of local historian Alan Petford, which was announced recently, is a devastating loss for the many local history groups and organisations he has worked alongside. He has been a long-time friend of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, which indeed made him a life member in recognition of his contribution.

Alan will be remembered as a fabulously gifted and inspirational teacher, whose breadth and depth of knowledge was stunning. He communicated with a lightness of touch and grasp of quirky detail that made an audience feel included in the uncovering of the history he was retelling. A vast archive of photographic slides helped to illustrate the topic he was speaking on; for example details from medieval paintings or stained glass to show how a particular agricultural tool might have been used.

Even better was to go on a history walk with Alan, to hear him conjure history from the construction of significant buildings, or explore how the details of the interior shed light on a wider story. In a seemingly featureless field he would point out the landscape evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation or of ancient water courses, visible, as he would say, to 'the eye of faith'.

Getting people to actually 'do history' was as important to Alan as communicating his own knowledge. He has sown the seeds and nurtured the growth of many groups of amateur historians who are doing significant work to the highest academic standards he insisted on. Some of the work of these groups has been published, expanding considerably the sum of what is known about the life of South Pennine communities. Much more is ongoing, with transcriptions of old wills and inventories from the parish of Halifax soon to be made available for historians to explore. Around Halifax, and indeed throughout the area, are people who have been fired by Alan's own endless curiosity and given the skills, strategies and confidence to become local historians.

His legacy lies in these groups, and in the hundreds of other minds touched by his enthusiasm and expertise. Many will find it impossible to change the habit of thinking, when encountering an unusual building or a curious bit of evidence emerging from an ancient document, 'Oh I must tell Alan about that!'

Sheila Graham

Prehistory Section

We have continued to attend the open seminars at the University of Bradford covering a diverse range of archaeological subjects including Scottish flint sources, Bronze Age ceramics and Yorkshire henges. Elsewhere we heard Bob Pegg (remember Mr Fox from the early 1970s?) discussing his work on prehistoric musical instruments.

We were represented at the Pennine Prospects Annual Conference, and continue to maintain a presence at the SOURCE meetings. Dave Shepherd provided archaeological advice on sites identified for tree-planting to alleviate flooding in Calderdale. Moors For The Future initiated a consultation about their experimental molinia mowing and the possible archaeological impact.

Two talks were given, to Halifax Scientific Society and the prehistory section of Huddersfield Archaeological Society.

Brian Howcroft has had a very successful year in the field, and has published many of the results in Prehistoric Yorkshire – an annual publication of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

Examples of finds over the last year:

Prehistoric lithics were found on an exposed level of shore line below the stone cladding when Middle Walshaw Dean Reservoir was drained for repair work. Finds date to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods.

Dave Shepherd

Family History Group

Council Chairman Project

We have begun work on the project to find out more about all the Chairmen of the Hebden Bridge urban councils from 1895 to 1974. Many of their photographs are in the Council Offices. There are 54 in all and we hope to write a short biography for each. The first task was to find out as much as possible using the internet sites and for many we already have birth and death details. We have now begun the second stage of looking for reports in back numbers of local papers. Obituaries are particularly useful as they often give details of council service.

With this in mind a small group of us spent an afternoon in Halifax library looking for suitable articles in past numbers of the Hebden Bridge Times. Some of the articles we found have proved very useful. However, there are some names that we did not find and we will need to find other sources for our research. The list below has names from the earlier councils where we drew a blank. If you have any knowledge of these past Chairmen or know of relations still living in the area, would you please get in touch?

Arthur Sutcliffe Chairman 1914; Born 1871.
Eldon House, Hebden Bridge, Co-op Secretary.

Richard Arthur Parker Chairman 1935; Born 1874, Died 1939.
19, Osbourne Place, Hebden Bridge.

John Blackburn Chairman 1928.

If you would like to become involved in this project your help would be more than welcome. Not only do we hope to organise

another afternoon at the library soon but we will also need help in writing up the.

Below are the dates of the Family History meetings until the end of next season. There are some dates where we may have difficulty finding members to run the sessions so if you are planning to visit us, please e-mail or ring beforehand so we can ensure someone is on hand.

Barbara Atack ataxjb@btinternet.com

Family History Meeting Times 2015

| | Saturday | Thursday |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------|
| April | 4 th | 16 th |
| May | 2 nd | 21 st |
| June | 6 th | 18 th |
| July | 4 th | 16 th |
| August | 1 st | 20 th |
| September | 5 th | 17 th |
| October | 3 rd | 15 th |
| November | 7 th | 19 th |
| December | 5 th | |

at the Birchcliffe Centre,
Birchcliffe Road, Hebden Bridge HX7 8DG

Archive Opening Times 2015

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. In December there will be no Saturday opening.

| 2015 | Wednesday 2 - 5 pm | Saturday 10 am - 1 pm |
|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| April | 8 th | 25 th |
| May | 13 th | 23 rd |
| June | 10 th | 27 th |
| July | 8 th | 25 th |
| August | 12 th | 22 nd |
| September | 9 th | 26 th |
| October | 7 th | 24 th |
| November | 11 th | 28 th |
| December | 9 th | |

Quick Guide to Local History Events

| April | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Sat 25 th | <p>Walking with History eTrail www.pennineheritage.org.uk/Trails/Guided-Walks-2015 Meet Blackshawhead Chapel at 12.35.</p> |
| Sat 25 th | <p>Votes for Women walk - part of the www.calderdaleheritagewalks.org.uk/current programme. Meet 2.15 at the station.</p> |
| Sunday 26 th | <p>Radical History eTrails launch. Two walks. Todmorden 10 am; Hebden Bridge 1.30 pm www.pennineheritage.org.uk/Trails/Guided-Walks-2015</p> |
| May | |
| Sat 2 nd | <p>History of the Rochdale Canal in Hebden Bridge. Easy accessible stroll. Meet Hebble End 10 am; finish Fallingroyd Bridge around noon. Walk or bus back.</p> |
| Sat 2 nd | <p>Hebden Bridge – A 700 year story (and how it was nearly lost). Film by Nick Wilding at The Picture House 4.30 for 5 pm.</p> |
| Sat 16 th | <p>Mytholmroyd Heritage Day. See page 39.</p> |
| Sun 23 | <p>Dying Matters Day at Hebden Bridge Town Hall will include a local history display and talks on wills and living in the C17.</p> |
| June | |
| Sat 6 th | <p>Sam Hill Story: Fortunes, Feuds and Scandals. Meet St Bartholomew's, Ripponden 11 am. www.pennineheritage.org.uk/Trails/Guided-Walks-2015</p> |