

# HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

[www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](http://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk)

FOUNDED 1949



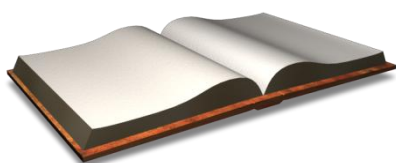
Hebden Bridge Local  
History Society receives  
Accreditation from WYAS

SEE INSIDE FOR WYAS PRESS RELEASE

HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
THE BIRCHCLIFFE CENTRE  
BIRCHCLIFFE ROAD  
HEBDEN BRIDGE HX7 8DG

Secretary: Diana Monahan - 01422 845982 - secretary@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

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Archive Opening Times 2012

	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
	<b>2 - 5 pm</b>	<b>10 am - 1 pm</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>28th</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>9th</b>	<b>26th</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>13th</b>	<b>23rd</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>28th</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>8th</b>	<b>28th</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>12th</b>	<b>22nd</b>

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Cover photo: *Diana Monahan (on left) and Society volunteers receive their Accreditation certificate from Rachel Tapp, Archives Project and Engagement Officer for the West Yorkshire Archive Service*

# LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY RECEIVES ACCREDITATION FROM WYAS

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*Abridged WYAS press release*



We are delighted to announce that the Hebden Bridge Local History Society have become the fourth group to complete the West Yorkshire Archive Service Community Archive Accreditation Scheme.

Altogether there are 23 dedicated groups across the five districts of West Yorkshire which are members of the scheme, including Morley Community Archives, Methley Archives and Hebden Bridge's Pennine Horizons Digital Archive. These groups aim to involve local people in their own history and heritage and are making a real difference to their communities. Previous events supported by the scheme include a heritage open day in Hebden Bridge, nostalgic fashion show in Morley and weekly coffee mornings to explore the vast community collections held in Methley.

On 15th March 2012, Hebden Bridge Local History Society was formally accredited by the West Yorkshire Archive Service. Created in 1949 as part of the Hebden Bridge Literary and Scientific Society, the Local History Society is an excellent example of a vibrant community heritage group. It serves the local area with a library and archive at the Birchcliffe Centre and a year-round programme of fascinating talks and events.

Hebden Bridge Local History Society said "The Society has spent over sixty years looking after an archive; we are therefore delighted to receive this Accreditation Award, which demonstrates that we are managing our Archive effectively and to best practice, for the benefit of the community."

To find out more about the NowThen project and to see the full press release, go to <http://nowthen.org/network>

# CHARLESTOWN JOINS HEBDEN BRIDGE

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## CHARLESTOWN HISTORY GROUP

The Charlestown History Group has disbanded; their website is now owned and hosted by the *Hebden Bridge Local History Society* (HBLHS).

Founded in March 1998, the group has done a tremendous job over the years, and are to be congratulated on the legacy they hand to future generations.

The HBLHS are delighted that they can play a small part in ensuring this archive is secure for the future.

### Press Release:

Since 2004, the British Library has been selectively archiving websites with research value that are representative of British social history and cultural heritage. Under the scheme the *Hebden Bridge Local History Society* (HBLHS) website has been selected by them for regular archiving. President Frank Woolrych commented, "This demonstrates the importance that the British Library attaches to our community and photographic archive."

The HBLHS is also now hosting the *Charlestown History Group* website, substantially increasing the amount of information relating to Mytholm, Charlestown and Eastwood. Richard Peters from the Charlestown group said, "We are delighted that all the information collected over the last 12 years will now be permanently available for future generations." He went on, "We would urge anyone with information, documents or photos of the area, however recent, to get in touch through the HBLHS website."

To view the newly amalgamated websites go to [www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](http://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk) and follow the link to Charlestown.

## THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

STEVE CHAPPLES

SEPTEMBER 21ST 2011

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Steve Chapples opened our season with an eclectic approach to the much-vexed issue of the Battle of Brunanburgh. This key battle between the Anglo-Saxon forces of England's King Athelstan and a confederation of Norse and Scots armies took place in 937 CE, and is hailed as a kind of 'birth moment' for England as a nation. The outcome, according to contemporary reports, was heavy slaughter amidst which Athelstan's forces emerged as victors; the Ulster Chronicle lamented "A huge war, lamentable and horrible, was cruelly waged between the Saxons and Norsemen. Many thousands of Norsemen beyond number died although King Anlaf escaped with a few men". Details of the battle are, however, scanty, and the thorniest issue of them all is the location of the battle. Given in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Brunanburh, many researchers have opted for Bromborough on the Wirral. However, Burnley, sited on the River Brun, has obviously always been a tempting contender, despite the fact that the Brun could not take large vessels.

Nonetheless, Steve lives on the edge of Burnley and is very familiar with the landscape and place names around his home, and feels that they provide a much better case for a Burnley location for the battle than previously advanced. In a slightly experimental mode of presentation that perhaps was less persuasive than his article on the subject, he introduced the audience to correspondences between what is known and what can be deduced today.

For any researcher, the lack of hard facts about this battle will provide a sore challenge in 'fleshing out' the bones of those slain men, but Steve has made a case worth considering for locating this epic conflict on the Lancashire borders of the Calder valley.

*John Billingsley*

# PACKHORSE DAYS AND PACKHORSE WAYS

JANET NIEPOKOJCZYCKA

*OCTOBER 12TH 2011*

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Not so very long ago the jangling of packhorse bells would have been a common sound on the tracks and trails which wind across our hillsides. Janet Niepokojczycka is a packhorse enthusiast, and she brought the scene to life for members of the Society. Her initial fascination for the subject led her to try it out for herself, with long distance walks in the Lake District with her pack-pony William Wordsworth, leading eventually to a mammoth 1000 mile trek along packhorse routes to London in 1991. Her enthusiasm endured and led her to find out more about the packhorse days and packhorse ways.

Janet showed how pack horses have featured in lives and landscapes throughout time. They are shown on a frieze in Iraq, dating from 640 BC and found as part of the scenery in Roman mosaics and medieval illustrations. They are often depicted in detail, carrying a wide range of goods on pack saddles that are recognisably like that made for Janet on her own journeys. Records show how important packhorses were to the wool trade, with monks of Fountains Abbey relying on the animals.

Packhorses were also invaluable in carrying copper and lead from inaccessible mines and over difficult terrain in the Lake District and North Yorkshire. Amazingly, salmon was also a cargo for the pack horse ponies – the fresh fish were carried to London, travelling day and night at high speed, with a change of horses creating a kind of pony express to get the valuable trade. Some owners, such as Batemans in the Lake District, ran strings of horses up and down the country, the Eddie Stobart long distance lorry drivers of their day.

As Janet pointed out, the evidence of the packhorse trails is still evident in the landscape with hollow-ways and stone causeys showing the passage of these packhorse trains through hills and dales. There is evidence too in the packhorse bridges (not least in Hebden Bridge) with their low walls allowing the bulky loads to pass unhindered. Finding the

way across moorland tracks could have been a problem, and there are many stone markers and milestones which were erected to make the way more clear. There are also the packhorse inns, service stations of their time, where both horses and drivers could take a welcome rest.

The audience were left with a much richer picture of the packhorses and trails that played such an important part in the character of Hebden Bridge.

*Sheila Graham*

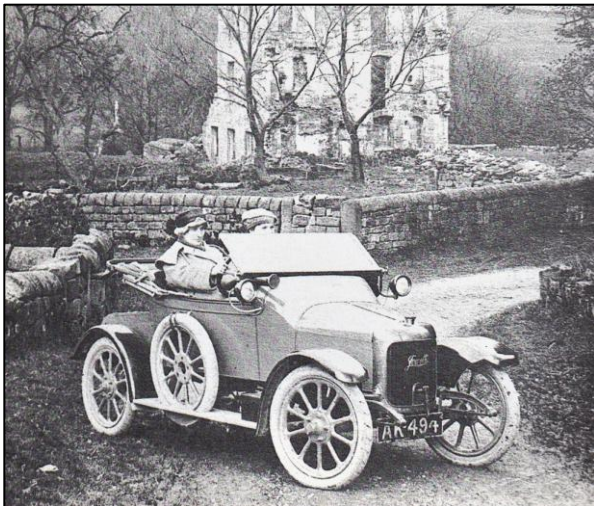
## JOWETT CARS: A BRIEF HISTORY

JOHN ATACK

NOVEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> 2011

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### WHEN BRADFORD'S OWN BEAT THE PORSCHE!



The glory days of Bradford's Jowett cars were recreated for members of the Society by enthusiast John Atack. He described how from the early days of the twentieth century Jowett developed its innovative 'flat twin' engines to be one of the leaders of motor car design in England. By 1919 the family firm had opened a brand new factory at Idle and launched their designs into the age of elegance that

characterised this decade. Jowetts were used by the metropolitan police and also took up the challenge of competitive driving. Two Jowetts, called 'Wait' and 'See' completed a gruelling rally drive from Lagos to Mombassa and Jowett's sports cars raced at Brooklands. The high point of competition came when in the 1952 Le Mans race, the Jowett gloriously won by beating the Porsche!

During the Second World War the factory had concentrated on the war effort, making a major contribution to the Avro Lancaster and producing crucial parts for the tracked vehicles used in the Normandy landings. The fifties saw the blossoming of the business with new models such as the Jowett Javelin, Jowett Bradford and Jowett Jupiter and exports around the world.

The Jowett Owners Club is the oldest of its type in the world, and currently has over 600 members. John's own love affair with Jowetts was demonstrated with a series of photographs of Jowetts he has nurtured

and coaxed over many years. The audience was left in no doubt that the proud Jowett name is still very much alive for enthusiasts like John Atack.

Sheila Graham

## PUBS AND BREWERIES OF THE UPPER CALDER VALLEY - PETER ROBINSON

NOVEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup> 2011

The local pub has been at the centre of local communities for centuries, as the research of local historian Peter Robinson reveals. His fascinating talk to the Society encompassed the history of brewing in the area, as well as the social importance of the inns and ale houses that once thrived in the settlements

of the upper valley. An amazing 20% of all premises licensed to sell beer or ale in 1577 were in Yorkshire, a number partly explained by the scattered population with each settlement having its alehouse. Brewing formed part of the economy of the valley, where farming, weaving and brewing could be undertaken by different members of the family on the same premises.

The Calder Valley still has a sprinkling of the original inns, either at the centre of small villages, or on the main transport links: by canals, bridges and alongside packhorse and turnpike roads.

The inns were more than places for relaxing social gatherings, Peter Robinson explained. The Sportsman at Kebcote on the long causeway to Burnley hosted an annual cattle fair until the early 20th century. Inns were often used as a depot for parcel deliveries, and as the place where wages could be paid. Coroner's courts and Parliamentary hustings were also held in inns. More notoriously, local inns were at the centre of some famous scandals and crimes, such as those in Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge associated with the Coiners. Some of these friendly local inns hide some very dark secrets.

Sheila Graham

ADVERTISEMENT. (Circa 1879)

**A House where you may SEE A LARK!**

**THE HOLE-IN-THE-WALL INN,  
HEBDEN-BRIDGE.**

Mr. JAMES HEAP would remind visitors to the village, that at the above Inn may be seen a domesticated Lark, wonderfully tame, lives in an unwired cage, but retires to an ordinary wired-cage at nights. The sight is an extraordinary one, and perhaps unparalleled elsewhere.

*The Hole-in-the-Wall Inn is over the Old Bridge, where  
may be had*

Old Jamaica Rum, for which the house is noted; the best Scotch and Irish Whiskies, and Foreign Spirits, Wines, &c.



# THE FIRST WEEKS OF THE WAR - A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON 1914 - MIKE CRAWFORD

DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> 2011

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What were the experiences of local people in the first weeks of the Great War? History teacher, Mike Crawford, presented a local view to the Society including some of the headlines that were appearing in the Halifax Evening Courier and Halifax Guardian.

At the end of July 1914, people were thinking about their holidays, but by 5th August, reservists, had received their mobilisation papers and were on their way to Wellesley Barracks, and volunteers were saying goodbye to their families. The Hebden Bridge Times for 6th August reported on the collection of horses and that good market prices were to be paid for them.



The soldiers' experiences in France with the 2nd Battalion of the Dukes and the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were related. After the cramped trip on SS Gloucester and the march to Mons, the men were billeted in the coal-mining town of Boussu. The evening of the 23rd August found The Dukes lined up firing at the German army across the nearby canal.

In the two days of fighting before they retreated, John Willie Greenwood was killed along with other local men, Thomas Greenwood and Harry Guest. Further slaughter was to occur at Le Cateau.

Back home, Crossley Mill was promising £5, and a job to return to, for any men who would enlist; Messrs Thomas & Sons of Hangingroyd were offering £10. Mytholmroyd War Distress Committee rejected moves to combine with Hebden Bridge, and in Todmorden Miss Whitaker had begun knitting the first of 500 pairs of socks. The looms were operating full-time by December as the mills tried to fulfil the army contracts.

Of the men who went to France, a third were dead by Christmas. At La Ferté-sous-Jouarre there is now a memorial to the 4000 soldiers who were killed by mid September 1914 and who have no known grave.

*Diana Monahan*

# SCANDAL AND HUMOUR FROM HALIFAX PARISH RECORDS - DAVID GLOVER

JANUARY 12<sup>TH</sup> 2012

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The scandalous, shocking and sometimes downright bizarre activities of our ancestors are often preserved in the driest of official documents, and it is from these that David Glover, journalist and local historian, has gleaned some of his best stories. The audience of Hebden Bridge Local History Society members and visitors were entertained and enlightened by these glimpses of extraordinary lives. The hill to Heptonstall that proved too much for the horse of the vicar of Halifax, for example, so that he was obliged to abandon his pastoral visit and make his slow progress back home.



Many of the activities we now occupy ourselves with led in years gone by to prosecutions. Playing football on a Sunday, having a pack of cards in the house, playing shove halfpenny or even having too many wedding guests could all invite the wrath of the authorities, as David Glover's reading from manorial rolls revealed. A familiar theme was drunkenness, with comments about the deceased's habits recorded alongside details of their death in the parish registers. Other stories recorded the exploits of intoxicated firemen, a drunken grave-digger who lay down in a freshly dug grave and a group of young men who bet regularly on who would be the first 'under the table'.

There were sadder stories too, of punishments endured in the workhouses for perceived misdemeanours, the forced marriages of children, and the heartless treatment of the vulnerable. The lasting impression of David Glover's talk was of the eclectic richness of the resources that are available in local archives; and a firm sense that it is better to be reading about those times than living them.

*Sheila Graham*

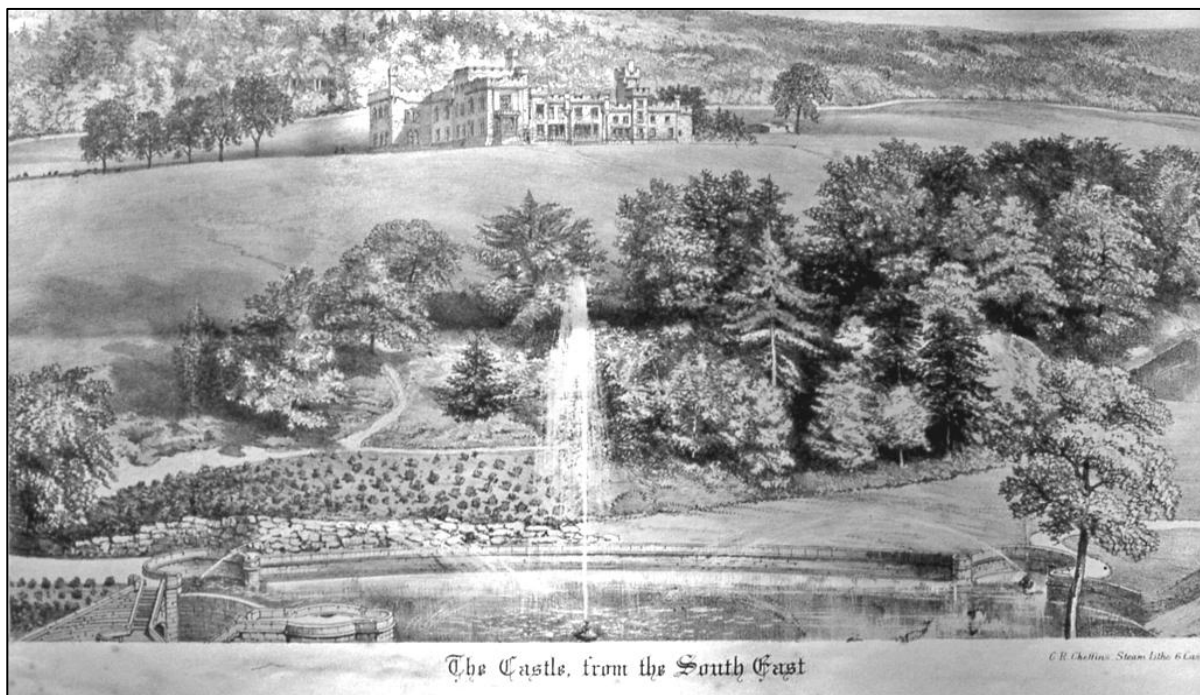
# THE STORY OF CASTLE CARR DAVID CANT AND CLIVE LLOYD

JANUARY 25<sup>TH</sup> 2012

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## CASTLE CARR: RAINBOWS ON DEMAND!

The enduring fascination of the remains of Castle Carr, romantic ruins in the isolated Luddenden Valley, attracted a record crowd, as local historians David Cant and Clive Lloyd recounted some of its story. In its heyday it was one of the grandest houses in West Yorkshire and even found its way into fiction as a brooding 'palace on the moor'. The story of Castle Carr, as David and Clive revealed, was closely tied to the fortunes of textile manufacturers and the need for water of the growing town of Halifax.



Castle Carr itself was the dream of Joseph Priestley Edwards of Halifax, who wanted a castle on the moors to rival the great shooting lodges of Scotland. David and Clive believe that the architect was Thomas Risley of Manchester, who had also worked on the equally ornate Manor Heath. Work began in 1859 with hundreds of workers carting stone and producing the finely ornamented masonry. It was the grandest of buildings, complete with tower, spacious courtyard, banqueting hall and smoking room and every medieval style decoration the architect could devise.

The crowning attraction came about because of a basic need – for water. Halifax Corporation needed reservoirs, and Joseph Priestley Edwards very much wanted a water garden. Perhaps with the help of the Halifax Town clerk (who happened to be Edwards' brother in law) £12000 of public money went towards the building of the water gardens, as a compensation for the three reservoirs built on the Castle Carr Estate. The result was a wonder of the age, with spectacular fountains, cascading waterfalls and beautifully landscaped gardens.

After the death of Edwards in a horrific rail accident, the estate passed through the hands of other industrialists trying to live the dream of ancient landed gentry, until eventually it was purchased by John Murgatroyd of the Oats Royd worsted spinning empire. Castle Carr was never a full time home, but throughout the time of the Murgatroyd ownership was a magnet for pleasure, with annual public openings. It hosted grand balls and even visits from the local workhouse inmates on a rare day out. Celebrations for the coronation of Edward VII saw thousands at Castle Carr, enjoying tea in the grounds and entertained by the playing of the fountains.

Its decline began during the period of the Second World War, when it was used to store TNT, and left in a poor state and finally in 1961 it was decided that the house would be demolished and the building materials sold. What remains of Castle Carr is still rarely seen, as the estate maintains its privacy. The stone fountain guarded by four stone dogs which graced the courtyard is now in central Leeds. David and Clive left the audience wishing for a further glimpse of these fascinating remains of a castle on the moors. Sometimes, when the gates of Castle Carr are opened, the ruins can again exert their romantic charm, while the fountains again create the 'rainbows on demand' that were the wonder of an earlier age.

*Sheila Graham*

## CALDER VALLEY VOLUNTEERS: THE FIGHT AGAINST FRANCO - SIMON MANFIELD

*FEBRUARY 8TH 2012*

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A moving personal experience led local artist Simon Manfield to begin the search for the Calder Valley people who in the 1930s went to Spain to fight against Franco's army. As he explained to members and friends of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, he had joined a group in Spain who were excavating the site of a mass grave from the time of the Civil War, and helped uncover the story of the murders of hospital

workers in a village in the north of Spain. As a documentary illustrator, Simon made detailed drawings to record what was uncovered, and was inspired to search out the stories of those who had gone from Britain to help resist the tide of fascism.

The search proved more difficult than he had imagined. There were names of volunteers from other parts of Yorkshire, and from nearby Lancashire towns, often men active in trades unions, but only two names from the Calder Valley, neither of whom fitted the description of 'local volunteers'. One was Todmorden man William Holt, a man of many parts, who offered his services as a war correspondent to the Daily Dispatch. He reported on many of the battles and was a brave and adventurous man, but was not in Spain to fight for a cause. He didn't fit Simon's idea of a Calder Valley volunteer fired by political or humanitarian beliefs. Ralph Fox, whose name is remembered on a plaque in the Piece Hall, certainly was such a man. He was from Halifax, and having studied languages at Oxford was a well respected writer and politician. He was a passionate believer in socialism and an early member of the Communist party of Great Britain. He joined the International Brigades which was fighting for the legitimate government against Franco's nationalists, and was inspired by the first genuinely international army 'to fight for peace and freedom.' He died in action near Cordoba. Despite his Halifax origins and undoubted altruistic motives, Simon felt that he could not be classed as a Calder Valley volunteer, since he had left the valley to study and finally to work in London and it was from there that he left to fight and die in Spain.



Simon did find supporters for the cause of the anti-fascists in Spain, but not in the names of volunteers who went to fight. It seems that there were strong pacifist beliefs in the area, which Simon believes may have deterred people from joining an army, especially when memories of the First World War were still so strong. Equally, there may have been local people who went to fight in Spain before the International Brigades were set up, and their names may simply have been lost. However, there were

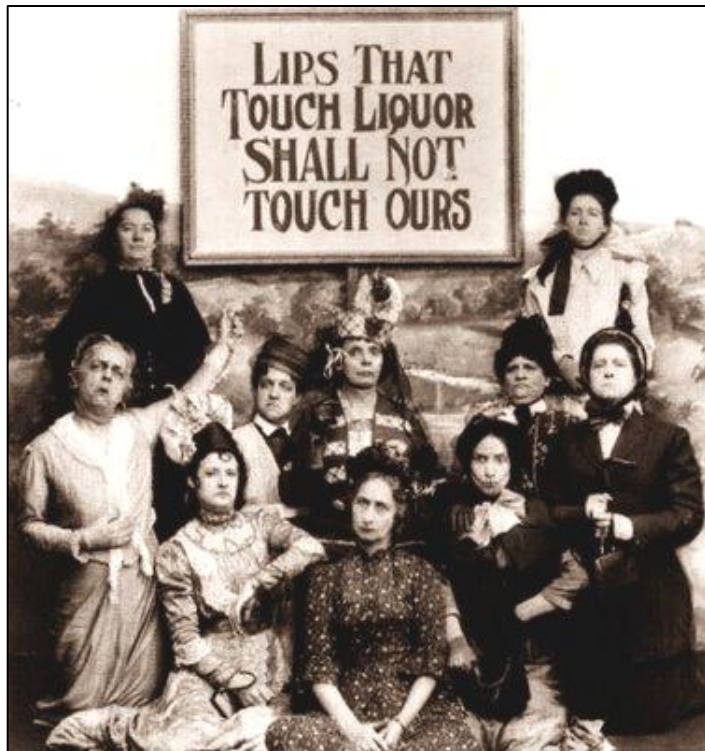
strong feelings about fascism and the attack on trades unionists. A fund for the assistance of workers in Spain was set up at a meeting of Hebden Bridge Labour Party and money sent to the Spanish Workers' Relief Fund. In the end, Simon believes that the people of the Calder Valley did offer generous solidarity and support to those who resisted the rise of fascism, whether or not they were able to take up arms. *Sheila Graham*

## THE TEMPERANCE IN THE UPPER CALDER VALLEY CORINNE McDONALD

FEBRUARY 22<sup>ND</sup> 2012

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The Temperance cause, developing in the 1830s, should not to be dismissed as a bunch of killjoys who wanted to stop people enjoying themselves. They believed in the potential of temperance work to save and improve people's lives. Corinne McDonald, syllabus secretary for the Halifax Antiquarian Society, presented a well-researched and well-received talk describing Temperance activities in the Upper Calder Valley for the Society.



1842 was the earliest local reference. Hebden Bridge and Heptonstall Temperance Society focussed on adults providing alternative entertainment, but attention soon turned to the younger generation. The Band of Hope's origin was in Leeds 1847. Young people made the pledge, "I promise to abstain from all intoxicating drinks and beverages and from tobacco." The first record found in our valley was to the Cross Lane Methodist Band of Hope in 1859. By 1865 there were so many that the Hebden Bridge Band of Hope Union was formed and in 1869 Todmorden had its union too.

Other groups took up the Temperance cause and there was some rivalry. In the 1880s, the Hebden Bridge & Todmorden branch of the Blue Ribbon Army caused a stir in Todmorden. Their singing and other

activities were not always welcome in Todmorden. They also turned down an offer of a joint meeting at Hebden Hall from the Hebden Bridge Women's Temperance because it would be "contaminated by the women element." Friendly Societies also supported Temperance and the Lodges had Juvenile Temples called Myrtle Grove, Hope of Hebden, Calder Vale, Never Despair and Rose of the Valley. Meetings often took the form of a brief talk followed by entertainment such as music, lantern slides, and games. There was a proliferation of choirs, brass bands including a Kazoo band and Concertina band. Demonstrations known today as galas, processions or parades were held.

A periodical was published and our archive has one local example of "The Monthly Visitor". Pamphlets and posters were also published. In 1861 Ebenezer Chapel in Hebden Bridge displayed the Tableau Vivants showing the decline in a family caused by The Bottle.

Groups were involved in politics. In 1894 attention was turned to the proposal of the Hebden Bridge Local Board to demolish the Hole in the Wall Inn and rebuild it as part of their plans for a council building. Eight candidates were fielded for local elections, reduced to 7 when it was discovered that one person did not reflect their views. Only James Moss was elected and in 1899 the new Hole in The Wall was built.

The earliest record of a Temperance Hall in our valley is 1861 - the Oddfellows Hall in Todmorden. In 1880 John Fielden built "The New Coffee Tavern" for his second wife. It closed in 1913 and was bought by the Conservative Club. Hebden Bridge had a Terminus Café and Temperance Hotel. The Hebden Bridge Cocoa & Coffee House established in 1880 lasted 8 years before running into financial difficulty. It would be fascinating to know more about a 1921 reference to a Reading Room and Temperance Bar at Jack Bridge.

With the advent of war activities were put on hold. During the war, opening hours were restricted and afterwards, temperance activities were very much reduced as other distractions took over. Hebden Bridge Band of Hope Union ceased in 1952.

Hope UK still exists in this country but on a small scale. Today it is hard to imagine how much the lives of local people were dominated by Temperance movements.

*Diana Monahan*

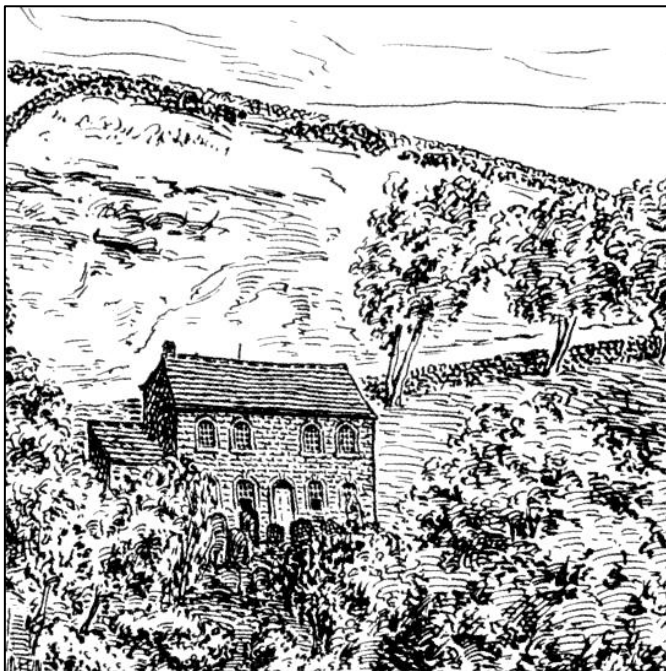
# WWW WEST WADSWORTH

## DAVID NORTCLIFFE

MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> 2012

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www. West Wadsworth was the intriguingly contemporary title of a talk given by David Nortcliffe, well-known local historian, to enthusiastic members of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society. He was charting the dramatic changes that this landscape had seen over the last two hundred years, and had found that the triple w kept returning. First in place names: Widdop, Walshaw and Warcock Hill; then in aspects of the life of the area: wool, water and walking and in the questions what why and when that historians always ask; and not least in the world wide web itself, that has transformed historical research and the working lives of people in this landscape.



David explained that the area had been occupied since before the early Bronze Age and had become home to the typical dual economy of the uplands – farming and textiles. Evidence of this flourishing life is to be found in the remains of farms and hamlets at Alcomden and Greave Clough. The farms have gone, but the ruined walls of the enclosures remain, and stones lying in the fields show that these were substantial

and skillfully constructed buildings. The farming itself may not have been very lucrative, but the spinning and weaving that went alongside allowed the families to prosper. And these seemingly remote areas were connected by a network of packhorse routes, enabling trade to flourish.

The years from 1790 to 1820 were a boom time for local weavers, with growing mechanisation of spinning keeping the weavers supplied, but it was only a matter of time before weaving too was moved from the home to the mills, signalling the beginning of the end for the farms of West Wadsworth.



The next important resource offered by the area was water, to meet the needs of expanding towns. Life on the uplands of West Wadsworth was transformed in the 1870s by the coming of the reservoir building navvies. A 'navvyopolis' of workers moved in to create the reservoirs at Widdop and Walshaw and the complex siphon and conduit system which carried the water to Halifax. The reservoirs took some of the better land, and offered little in terms of employment for locals, adding to the decline of the area. David described the end of the century as the lowest ebb for West Wadsworth as most old farm houses were abandoned. One entrepreneur attempted to exploit the isolation with a licenced beerhouse called the Travellers Rest, established near Widdop. This became a notorious gambling den until it was raided by police dressed as gentlemen on a day out.

A further reservoir was planned in the early twentieth century which would have flooded the valleys at Blake Dean, providing billions of gallons of water, but this plan was defeated and the area of West Wadsworth began to move towards its current use: recreation. A turning point was the acquisition of Hardcastle Crag, and later of Gibson Mill, by the National Trust. Then came the Pennine Way and the refurbishment of some of the old paths across the moors. Local authorities promoted this kind of tourism and offered support to walkers and riders with various schemes. The 2000 'right to roam' acts made accessible a huge swathe of the Pennines, with West Wadsworth lying in the centre and perfectly positioned to attract visitors

Those who live within reach of West Wadsworth know it is a special area and it has the status of special protection area and site of special scientific interest, but such designations, David noted, bring responsibilities but no money. Bracken needs to be controlled, the parking needs of visitors need to be met, and another w – windmills – cause controversy. But West Wadsworth has continued to adapt and the future for this wild landscape looks more hopeful than those who abandoned their farms in the nineteenth century could have envisaged.

*Sheila Graham*

# RUSHES AND ALE

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF RUSHBEARING WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO RUSHBEARING IN CALDERDALE

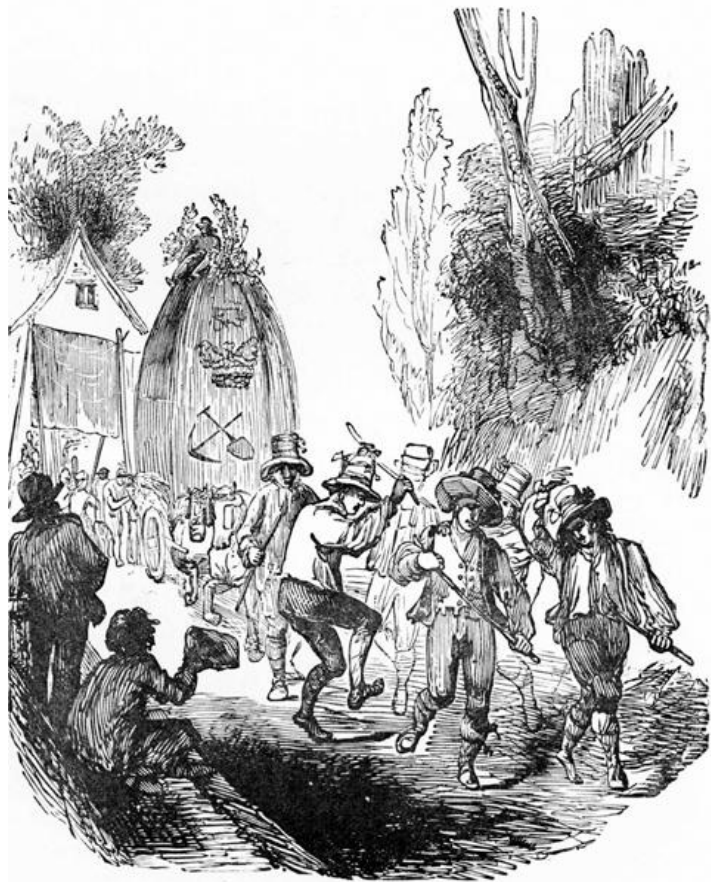
### GARRY STRINGFELLOW

MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup> 2012

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A centuries old tradition with strong northern roots, the celebration of rushbearing had almost disappeared locally when Garry Stringfellow and other enthusiasts revived it to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Since then the event has become fixed in the Sowerby Bridge calendar, and as Garry told a meeting of the Society, in this Diamond Jubilee year, they would love to see the Queen join them to enjoy the fun.

Rushbearing originally had a practical purpose – to bring clean rushes into the church to act as a warm floor covering, but it was always associated with ceremony. An earlier Queen Elizabeth had tried to ban the celebration, fearing that it was associated with 'popery' and with potentially riotous misrule. However records show that the ritual persisted, with women commonly carrying in armfuls of rushes to decorate the church, throughout the seventeenth century. The traditional



rushcart seems to have arrived later, in the eighteenth century, and seems to be a particularly northern custom. The cart would be piled high with rushes forming a typical bee-hive shape, and often decorated with garlands of flowers and with items of silver such as watches. These heavy carts would be hauled by teams of men, often decked out in fancy dress or uniforms.

Within Calderdale, as elsewhere, the custom of constructing a rushcart was associated with raucous fun, fairs, dancing and plenty of ale. The disapproving words of local minister Oliver Heywood give a glimpse into

what went on. At Haworth, he notes: '*multitudes of people meet, feast, drink, play, and commit many outrages in revellings, in rantings, without any fear or restraint*'

Eventually the actual carrying of rushes on the rushcart disappeared, leaving only the revellings, where communities came together to try their hands on the sideshows and buy gingerbread and fruit from the penny stalls. Rushbearing fairs were recorded throughout Calderdale, in Luddenden, Midgley, Brighouse, Ripponden and Illingworth. In 1906 a group of Sowerby Bridge men decided to revive the old tradition, building a rushcart and attracting thousands of people to watch the procession and to enjoy the Morris dancing and the refreshments at local inns. This was a one-off event to celebrate 60 years of local government in Sowerby Bridge, but seventy one years later, the revival of rushbearing was met with equal enthusiasm, and this time was the start of something more enduring.

For Garry, that simple idea for a celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee has turned into a lifelong interest, and he has unearthed some fascinating stories about the ancient tradition of rushbearing throughout Yorkshire and Lancashire. Many of these are recorded in his book, *Rushes and Ale*.  
Sheila Graham

**FAMILY HISTORY GROUP**

**BARBARA ATACK**

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We continue to meet twice a month at the Birchcliffe Centre, and welcome regular members of the group and over the year, 11 new members and some visitors.

We now have 'Find my past' available as well as 'Ancestry'. Most researchers use the computers and these sites, a few people come to consult the Heptonstall Parish Registers which we have both in book form and on CD. Local maps and photographs are also popular and we now have the Pennine Heritage Audio recordings (see page 20) available as well. We thank Frank for all the time and effort he has put into upgrading the computers, so giving us better access for these sessions.

### **Monumental Inscriptions**

Heptonstall churchyard is proving to be a mammoth task. We have now transcribed many of the areas but are discovering areas we thought had been transcribed but the records are missing. We hope to have traced some of them to Oliver Jenkins who was instrumental in the previous

project and who moved away from the area some years back. He has some documents still which hopefully include some of the missing transcriptions which he has offered to give to the society. In the meantime, all the new transcriptions have now been entered on a data base and we are in the process of checking for accuracy and mapping the graveyard. There are still many of the older graves around the edges of the churchyard to transcribe and the mapping will need some thought to make it accessible to all. More volunteers are always welcome.

Barbara Atack

### Family History Times 2012

These are the dates when the Archives will be open for the Family History group in the next few months, please note, there are some changes, see below.

**All openings are from 2 pm to 5 pm.**

#### **Saturday**

April 7<sup>th</sup>

May 5<sup>th</sup>

May 26<sup>th</sup>

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August 4th

September 8th

October 6th

November 3rd

December 1st

#### **Thursday**

April 19th

May 17th

June 14th

July 19th

August 16th

September 20th

*To be arranged*

November 15th

December 13th

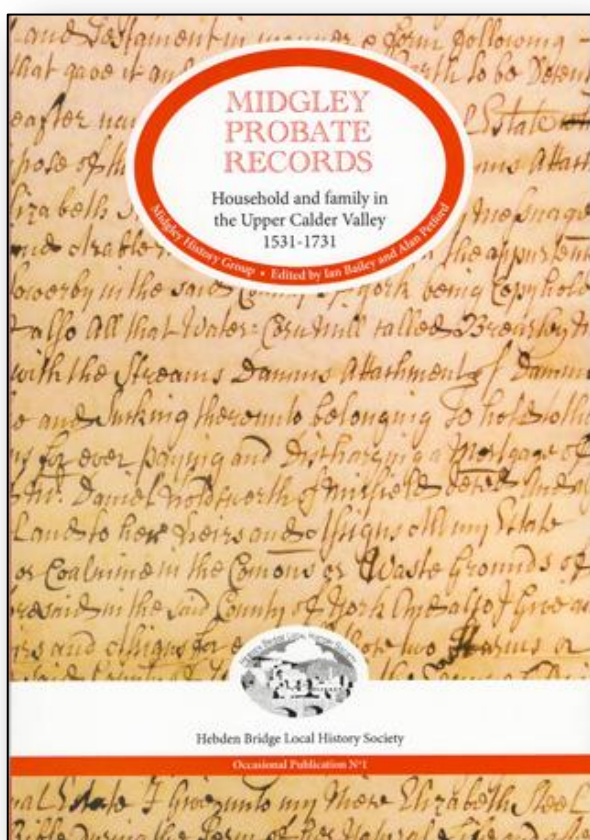


**Family History** has recently been presented with over 300 oral history recordings from the early 1980s, digitised from tape by *Pennine Horizons Digital Archive* volunteer Mr David Martin. This is a tremendous resource so our thanks to him for all his efforts and our thanks to Pennine Horizons for the playback equipment. This is an ongoing project with another 200 recordings, from the Pennine Heritage archive, yet to be digitised. For further details, please contact Barbara Atack.

## NEW SERIES OF LOCAL HISTORY PUBLICATIONS

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The Society is very pleased to announce the publication of the first in a series of Occasional Publications. Occasional Publication No.1 is a reprint of the transcriptions of probate records done by the Midgley History Group that has now been out of print for several years. The intention of the series is to publish new historical work by local authors as well as out of print titles and several of these are currently being prepared. For cost reasons the numbers of each volume that will be printed are small.



This collection of transcriptions of wills and inventories provides a rare and valuable insight into the lives of past inhabitants of the township of Midgley in the parish of Halifax. In addition to information about individual local families and their relationships, the documents provide detailed examples of the architecture and contents of houses, the type of farming that was engaged in, the extent of the dual economy and the home textile industry. Analysis also sheds light on inheritance practices and the nature of religious belief.

These documents were transcribed by members of the Midgley History Group from original records held at the Borthwick Institute at York. Beginning with the earliest, a will from 1531, it includes two groups of documents: twenty wills up to 1587 and twenty-five documents from between 1691 and 1731 that includes both wills and inventories.

Those who wish to ensure that they obtain every volume in the series are advised to reserve copies by informing **Nigel Smith on 01422 842847**.

## South Pennine History Group Study Day Report

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The South Pennine History Group, bringing together enthusiastic local historians from Hebden Bridge, Saddleworth and Marsden, held a highly successful study day at Mytholmroyd on Saturday 24th September 2011.

More than eighty visitors had only to look from the windows of the Methodist Church Hall to see the typical landscape of the Pennine hills with its patterns of dry stone walls. It was the formation of this landscape and its links to the enclosure movement that was the focus of the study day, hosted by the Hebden Bridge Local History Society.

Where the enclosure of moors and commons took place by act of Parliament it was often a cause of dispute, but left an unmistakable mark with new stone walls checkering the previously open moorland hills. Professor David Hey, who has written many books about the history and landscape of Yorkshire, provided an overview of the processes involved and the results of such enclosures in the Pennines.

To those who unfamiliar with the Pennines, such as 19th century journalist A B Reach, the moors could be seen as 'high naked and sterile', but Alan Petford, local historian and lecturer, revealed the richness of the resources offered by the moors, from millstones to heather besoms, and from peat for fuel to pasturage for sheep and cattle. The open moorlands were also used for sport – horse racing and cock fighting as well as grouse shooting. High they may have been, these moorlands were neither naked nor sterile.

Local historians studying local parliamentary enclosures added more detail to the broad picture. Sheila Graham described how the parliamentary act was a last resort after years of dispute as landowners independently took in land from the common, eventually angering those who felt they were not getting their fair share. Minute books kept by the landowners of Stansfield, and the enclosure commissioners in Ovenden provide a real insight into the processes involved in enclosure. Richard Comber focused on the small enclosure of Shipley, which still shows the

hand of the encloser in the roads that made it such an attractive place for development in the nineteenth century. Another fascinating notebook kept by farmer William Longbottom of Sutton in Craven, was explored by Paul Longbottom, revealing the day to day work of transforming the rough land awarded by the enclosure into worthwhile farmland. Finally expert in vernacular architecture David Cant explored the kinds of buildings that appeared on the enclosure lands – ranging from laith house barns to the spectacular ambition of Castle Carr.

*Sheila Graham*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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### **September 8<sup>th</sup> Wainsgate Chapel**

As part of Heritage Open Days, Wainsgate Chapel in Old Town will be opening on Saturday 8th September. The day will end with a talk at 3:30 pm given by Steve Pilcher of *Historic Chapels Trust*, about the work of the Trust "Wainsgate Chapel - the present and the future". A new guidebook of the chapel, with images from *Pennine Horizons Digital Archive*, will be available to purchase, and the author, Charles Thomson, will also talk about the guide and the history of the chapel.

### **September 29th Town Hall Waterside Room**

At time of writing, plans were moving ahead for a special day of talks in Hebden Bridge to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Pendle Witch trials.

Today, from our secular modern viewpoint, many are inclined to treat witchcraft and magic as delusions or nonsense. This means that those involved in the trials can be portrayed as innocent victims. But were they? An environment of belief in magic and witchcraft, coupled with the energetic growth of a militant interpretation of Christianity and more individualistic social outlooks, was common across northern England at the time, and similar furores erupted in the upper Calder valley at Todmorden in the 1630s and Heptonstall in the 1640s; the conditions that led to the Pendle trials were not unique to East Lancashire. The 17th century became a time of intense religious foment and civil strife, focussing attention on what we might today call 'counter-cultural beliefs'.

Our event will take place in the new Town Hall on Saturday, September 29th, and is a collaboration between the Society and Northern Earth magazine. We are very pleased to have as our main speaker Joyce Froome, author of one of the finest books on the Pendle witches context, *Wicked Enchantments: a history of the Pendle witches and their magic* (Palatine Books, 2010); and we are currently contacting supplementary speakers.

If any LHS member would like to present a paper, they are invited to contact our Programme Secretary, John Billingsley, at [johnbillingsley@jubilee10.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:johnbillingsley@jubilee10.freereserve.co.uk) or via Hebden Bridge Library.

**Times and tickets charges will be announced later.**

The Society is very pleased not only to host this commemorative event, but also to mark the opening of Hebden Bridge's new civic facility and support its role in the community.

## **October 14<sup>th</sup> Town Hall Waterside Room**

To mark the 200th anniversary of the Luddite uprising in West Yorkshire, we have invited The Hammer and Shears Company to perform "Among those Dark Satanic Mills" - The Life and Times of the Luddites in the West Riding told in words, pictures, songs and music. Tickets will go on sale in September. For more info see [www.darksatanicmills.com](http://www.darksatanicmills.com)

Please email [info@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](mailto:info@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk) if you would like to be notified when tickets become available for these events

### **Receive your Newsletter via email**

Every year we use a large amount of paper and ink printing the newsletter so a big thank you those of you who have Internet access and chose to receive it via email. If you have an email address and would like to save the Society some money, as well as help the environment, then why not receive future newsletters and other updates electronically **and in colour**.

Simply email [membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](mailto:membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk) with your name and membership number and leave the rest to us. Newsletters will also be posted on our Website.

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