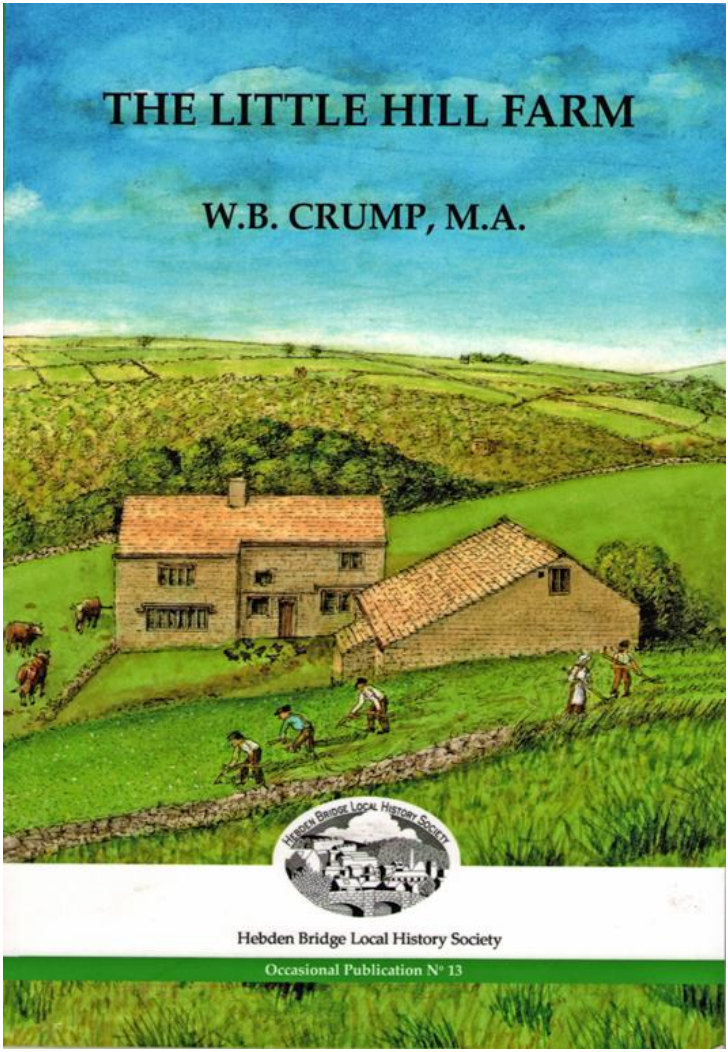
2024 No 1

HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

Spring 2024



Published by the Hebden Bridge Local History Society

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

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Cover: Crump's Little Hill Farm, recently republished by the Society. See page 4

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. Thank you to everyone who has contributed. There are reports of the lectures for 2023-2024, activities and forthcoming events. If you'd like to share your research or pose a query on something historic for the Autumn 2024 issue, please send it to the Secretary by 1 August 2024.

Contents

Society Publications

For brief details of the Society's publications, see pages 4 – 6.
For further details and to order visit
https://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk/pages/publications

News from the trustees

We realise that many of you are curious as to the way forward since Murray Seccombe moved away and we no longer have a Chair. This has not been an easy time for the trustees as we currently have no one on the board who feels able to take on that role. However, having said that, our new constitution does not actually require a permanent chairman and so for the time being we have decided to distribute the customary roles of the chairman between the trustees and to take it in turns to chair trustee meetings. We will keep this under review.

Our society is a thriving organisation covering many diverse aspects of local history. Not only do we have an eclectic range of talks every year, but we have an extensive local archive, our own publications, research help and advice and links with other heritage groups. I am sure you are aware that we have a very active board of trustees with wide ranging skills but there is only so much we can do. We would welcome new members on the board or volunteers to help with some of the tasks. We particularly need help with technology. We already do our best, in fact better than our best, as you will have experienced from our recordings on Vimeo, but would appreciate more help. If you feel you could help us in anyway, an interest in local history is all we ask.

This last season we had some disruption when the Methodist Church was undergoing renovations. These took longer than expected and we had to postpone two of the talks early in 2024 and one was rescheduled in April. Attendance at the talks continues to be good with a similar number of members watching the talks on-line. The archives at Birchcliffe continue to be open twice a week and it would be good to see more visitors

using the facilities there. We have one new publication this year which is a revised edition of The Little Hill Farm by W. B. Crump first published in 1951. The work on the transcription of the Heptonstall Manor Court Rolls from 1570 to 1625 is reaching a conclusion. Recently a new history group from Todmorden U3A have begun to transcribe the probate records from Heptonstall 1700 – 1750, hoping that deciphering the handwriting gets easier as they become more accustomed to it.

Again, our many thanks to all our volunteers, especially those who organise the talks and the recordings, those who are helping to catalogue the archives and those who produce our newsletter. Our special thanks go to Murray Seccombe for all he has done, especially helping us to negotiate the move to becoming a charity, and we wish him all the best in his new life in York.

Selection of summer local history events

Chris Toole will be speaking on 'Paternalism in nineteenth-century Halifax' at Calderdale Industrial Museum at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 22 May 2024. Free for CIMA members, others £4.

'Yorkshire Watermen' presentation to Calderdale Family History Society on Thursday, 27 June at 7.30 pm, the Maurice Jagger Centre, Lister St, Halifax

Andrew Bibby is leading a Co-operative Heritage Walk on Saturday, 6th July (International Co-ops Day), meeting at 11 am at Hebden Bridge Town Hall. All welcome, no charge.

New Book

The Little Hill Farm by W.B. Crump. Revised edition. Published 2023. Hebden Bridge Local History Society Occasional Publications No.13. Paperback. 112 pages, 37 images.
ISBN: 978-0-9933920-8-5. £11.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

William Crump first spoke about his observations on hill farming in Calderdale in a lantern lecture in Hebden Bridge in 1913 and The Little Hill Farm was published nearly 40 years later. It is the work of an informed scientific observer whose deep, wide-ranging knowledge perceived the totality of the local environment, from its geology, ecology, and history through to its current population and their working practices. His descriptions and observations on the way of life of the early twentieth-century hill farmer are as informative and relevant as ever, and it remains an essential and rewarding source for everyone interested in the upper Calder Valley.

The original edition has long been out of print and difficult to obtain, so this new edition enables it to be widely enjoyed and appreciated by new generations of visitors and residents of the area. Whilst retaining the original wording of the text, some corrections and improvements have been made to enhance its appearance and readability for a modern audience. Full referencing and indexes have also been added. The original illustrations have been rendered in colour by Peter Brears who has also provided an introduction to William Crump and his work.

Publications

Society publications can be ordered via our website
https://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk/pages/publications

History in the South Pennines: the legacy of Alan Petford. Edited by Nigel Smith. Published Spring 2017. Hardback. 442 pages, 143 illustrations. £25 (plus £3.50 shipping)

Pennine Valley: a History of Upper Calderdale. Edited by Bernard Jennings. Originally published 1992. Reprinted with corrections 2011. Paperback. 224 pages. Was £14.99, now only £12 (plus £3.50 shipping)

Pennine Perspectives: Aspects of the History of Midgley. Edited by Ian Bailey, David Cant, Alan Petford and Nigel Smith. Published by Midgley Books, 2007. Hardback. 346 pages. Now only £8.00 (plus £3.50 shipping)

The Diaries of Cornelius Ashworth 1782-1816. Edited by Richard Davies, Alan Petford and Janet Senior. Published 2011. Hardback. 368 pages. Was £19.00, now only £8 (plus £3.50 shipping)

Hebden Bridge Town Centre Trail. 2008. 27 pages. £2 (plus £1 shipping)

Occasional Publications series

These titles are short print runs and some are close to going out of print so act now if you want to collect the complete series!

Midgley and Warley Probate Records. Edited by Mike Crawford and Stella Richardson. Published 2022. Paperback. 220 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 postage)

Enclosing the Moors: Shaping the Calder Valley Landscape through Parliamentary Enclosure by Sheila Graham. Published 2014. Paperback. 123 pages. £11.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Midgley Probate Records: Household and Family in the Upper Calder Valley 1531-1731. Edited by Ian Bailey and Alan Petford. Reprint of 2007 edition by Midgley Books. Published 2012. 116 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

City in the Hills: Dawson City and the Building of the Walshaw Dean Reservoirs. By Corinne McDonald and Ann Kilbey. Published 2012. 52 pages. £11.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Going to War: People of the Calder Valley and the First Weeks of the Great War. By M. Crawford. Published 2013. 145 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Sowerby Probate Records: Household and family in the Upper Calder Valley 1688 – 1700. Edited by David Cant and Alan Petford. Published 2013. 215 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

The Medieval Park of Erringden. By Nigel Smith. Published 2021. 150 pages, 49 images. £11.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Erringden, Langfield and Stansfield Probate Records 1688 – 1700. Edited by Mike Crawford and Stella Richardson. Published 2016. 209 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Heptonstall and Wadsworth Probate Records 1688 – 1700. Edited by Mike Crawford and Stella Richardson. Published 2020. 195 pages. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Hebden Bridge and the Railway in the Nineteenth Century. By David N. Taylor. Published 2019. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

The Clothing Industry of Hebden Bridge: selected texts. Edited by Nigel Smith and Diana Monahan. Published 2018. £9.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Traditional Food in the South Pennines by Peter Brears. Published 2022. Hebden Bridge Local History Society Occasional Publications No.12. Paperback. 262 pages, 58 images. £11.99 (plus £2.80 shipping)

Lecture Reports 2023 - 2024

Sheila Graham

27 September 2023 **Andrew Bibby**

THE EARLY CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING MOVEMENT AND HEBDEN BRIDGE'S PART IN IT

'A brighter, happier, more joyous life': the vision of what co-operative housing could offer to working people at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Andrew Bibby is a writer and journalist well-known for his particular interest in the British co-operative movement, and the special role played by Hebden Bridge in this history. His recent research has focused on housing co-operatives. After the founding of the Rochdale Pioneers at Toad Lane in 1844, a wave of co-operative societies and institutions spread, creating 'a valley of co-operation'. There were soon retail co-ops in Todmorden and Hebden Bridge and by the 1860s most hillside villages had their own co-op. There was also the nationally famous Nutclough Fustian Workers' co-operative. By the end of the century co-operation was a powerful national movement, and had extended into wholesale, banking, insurance and flour making. But despite the provision of homes being one of the original aims, there was as yet no real co-operative housing movement.

Some local street names provide evidence of small-scale investment in housing in this area, with names such as Industrial Street, Co-operative Street, and Co-operative Terrace. By 1903 about £8 million was invested in 37,200 houses, but this was mostly in mortgages, not co-ownership, and the houses were the conventional close-packed terraces deemed suitable for the working classes. There was no grand vision. Elsewhere the

garden city movement proposed building homes, not in serried streets, but on green-field sites, with open spaces and room for leisure. These principles were a good match for co-operation and the aims of a newly formed Labour Association launched in Hebden Bridge. Nutclough was its northern centre and Crossley Greenwood (son of Joseph, founder of Nutclough) became a leading proponent of its ideas. This Co-operative Tenants' Society model was based on shared investment and shared ownership and a central aim was to provide communal spaces – meeting rooms, sports facilities and room for a social life.

Seeing beyond the provision of basic houses to a vision of community living was the work of George Lister Sutcliffe, a Hebden Bridge architect (designer of Birchcliffe Chapel). After a move to London he became the in-house architect for the Co-operative Tenants' Society. The movement was widespread before 1914, with dreams of a brighter more joyful life becoming reality across the country. Hebden Bridge came close to having such a village at Eaves Bottom – 'a site fitted to become an arcadia and to ring with song and happiness', but a fall in trade made this uneconomic. And when the first world war ended, the urgency of housing need dictated a different route of mass municipal housing, and many of the co-operative partnerships were broken up. Ten co-operative estates survive, including two in Manchester at Fairfield and Burnage, still boasting the gardens, playgrounds, meeting halls and bowling greens of the original vision. The houses are owned collectively, as the title of Andrew's latest book on this fascinating history claims '*These houses are ours.*'

11 October 2023

THE MELTING SEASON: INSIDE THE MIND OF OLIVER HEYWOOD — **Sheila Graham**

How do you get inside the mind of someone who has been dead for over 300 years?

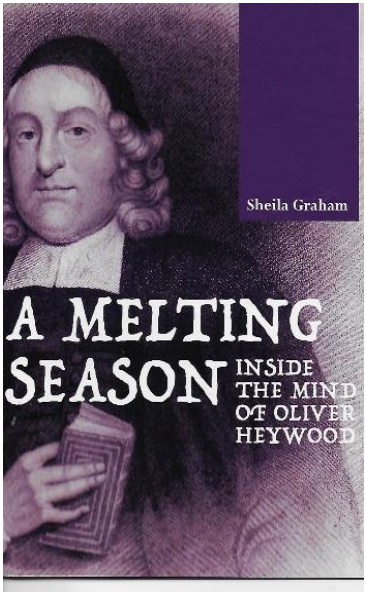
Luckily the Reverend Oliver Heywood was a keen diarist and Sheila Graham told the Society how she used lockdown hours to trawl through the strange things he recorded to find a sense of his thoughts and feelings.

Oliver Heywood was a Puritan; an English Protestant in the seventeenth century, when puritans sought to rid the Church of England of Roman Catholic practices. They had strict moral beliefs and were censorious of licentious behaviour. Heywood, with other dissenters, believed that his right and duty to preach came direct from God, and was confirmed by the excess of emotion he called 'the melting season'.

Heywood was born in Bolton in 1630 to puritan parents and, following education at Cambridge, he was ordained and became the incumbent of the Chapel at Coley in 1650, living nearby in Northowram. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1658, a series of Acts attempted to bring the dissenters back under the control of the established church and Heywood found himself suspended from the ministry. For many years he travelled throughout Yorkshire to preach. Life was sometimes dangerous; he was even imprisoned for a short time. From 1688 when the reliably Protestant William came to the throne, Heywood's life until his death in 1702 was relatively peaceful.

So what do we learn about him from his diaries? Can we get inside his mind? The diaries were transcribed by a local antiquarian, J. Horsfall Turner, in the late nineteenth century and through them we can get a taste of his thoughts and beliefs.

He was apt to pass judgement on notable men of Halifax whom he thought degenerate, not bland obituaries but incisive and opinionated with a marked preference for scurrilous gossip. '*Charles Best, killed himself with intemperance, degenerated into licentiousness' 'Robert Gledhill, a clipper 'tis said'*. He was especially fascinated by sudden death and the horror of facing judgement day unprepared.



Heywood also reported on the behaviour witnessed at events in Halifax, annual celebrations such as Mayday, '*a heathen custom which attracted a number of people of the baser sort, gradually through the day descending into drunkenness and chaos'*. He was a good storyteller and described events fully but always with his puritanical bias. He was looking for evidence that 'all hell had broke loose' and judgement day was close. Another source of wonder were comets, storms and unseasonable weather that also suggested the end of days.

Heywood was still writing his diaries days before his death in 1702. He had sold his horse and even records the price he got for the surplus hay and a week before his death, writes his will. With his accounts up to date and ready for the judgement, he died. Not for him the ill prepared death: everything was accounted for.

Report by Barbara Atack

Sheila's booklet was published in 2022 by Northowram History Society.

25 October 2023

THE TREASURES OF HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY ARCHIVE

Anne Mealia

Up on the hillside steeply rising from Hebden Bridge is Birchcliffe Chapel, housing the remarkable archive of books, papers, deeds and documents cared for by Hebden Bridge Local History Society. Anne Mealia is an assistant archivist and very familiar with the extent of the treasures to be found there. As someone who makes her living as a genealogist and whose research into Todmorden families have fed into historical walks and talks about the area, she is also well-placed to know how essential it is to preserve such records.

The oldest record, a deed written in Latin on vellum, dates from the sixteenth century, and probably matches what most people think an archive might contain. But it is important to remember that an archive is a living organism, and that collecting from this century too is essential if people in the future are to get a glimpse of how life was lived.

The archive collects and holds documents relating to the Calder valley roughly from Todmorden to Sowerby Bridge, and the holdings include deeds, diaries, maps and even artifacts such as old farming tools and samples of lichen. There is also a library of books by local authors both famous and obscure, including some rare survivals. To get a vivid sense of how people entertained themselves over the years, you could consult the many programmes and flyers relating to entertainment. These are still being collected, to keep adding to the mosaic that makes up the cultural life of this part of the valley.

Clubs, societies, pressure groups and chapels have always been part of that environment. The battle to save Hardcastle Crags from flooding was a key event in the last century, and the archive

holds many documents from the organised struggle, including parliamentary bills, posters, petitions and minute books. These would provide real riches for someone to investigate. So would the large collection of items relating to industry. The archive from manufacturers Redman Brothers of Foster Mill includes illustrated catalogues, sample books, billheads and plans, which give a real insight into how this local business operated.

Maps and plans record how the valley developed with turnpikes, canals and railways opening up the valley. And it's easy to lose an hour or two scanning one of the large-scale OS maps held by the Society. The audio-visual collection includes oral histories and examples of dialect and films such as a trip down the Leeds Liverpool canal.

The archive is open to visitors on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 2 pm and 5 pm. On Thursdays you can also get help with family history research. Booking through the website is essential. The website also lets you access the catalogue, which can be searched in various ways to find the items that might interest you. Maybe a visit to the archive will lead to a new talk or a future publication.

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8 November 2023

THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL: FROM QUAYS TO PIER — Anne Kirker

Anne Kirker, local historian and volunteer guide with Calderdale Heritage Walks is used to exploring the history of Calderdale as preserved in the landscape. But in this talk she took the audience on a different kind of trip, through a very different landscape. We enjoyed a visual travelogue of a cruise along the Manchester Ship Canal, one of the most important civil engineering projects of its time, completed 130 years ago.

The cruise took us 36 miles from Salford Quays to Pier Head in Liverpool. The canal was needed to support the trading links of the fast-growing city of Manchester by allowing large ships to gain access. More than 16,000 navigators (navvies) were employed in digging 'the big ditch' and there were many deaths and injuries.

Barton aqueduct carrying the Bridgwater canal over the Manchester Ship Canal © Peter Whatley www.geograph.org.uk

The glittering buildings at the start of the cruise reflect the more recent regeneration of the area, with cutting edge architecture in the Lowry Building and Imperial War Museum. The Ship Canal shares the route with rivers Irwell and Mersey, as well as the Bridgewater canal, and a road network, all demanding access under and over the canal. The transitions between river and canal involve sophisticated systems of locks and sluices, monuments to the industrial age. We were introduced to a medley of bridges, aqueducts and viaducts, ever more ingenious in their response to problems – lift bridges, swing road bridges, high level bridges and even a swing aqueduct (an audience member who had sailed her own canal boat across explained how rubber wedges held the water back when the bridge swung).

The canal had to accommodate the people living and working nearby, so there are passenger ferries at 25p a trip, and a pedestrian swing bridge to safeguard an old right of way. The differences in scale and purpose are seen at Thelwall where the M6 roars endlessly over the double bridge of the viaduct. Nearby was a little rowboat to ferry people to work and a pontoon, carrying farm animals across the water.

Anne pointed out places of historical interest along the way: twelfth-century Norton Priory; Halton Castle, now a luxury hotel; Trafford Park, home once of an elegant deer park, now of the Trafford Centre. There was Davyhulme Harbour, where Manchester's sewage was shipped off to Liverpool, and Partington Basin, an unloading place for Shell and BP, where in the 1970s there was a disastrous spill and fire. At Runcorn Gap were the quarries which provided the distinctive red sandstone of Liverpool Cathedral.

Approaching Liverpool we were again aware of modern bridge building. An incredibly engineered transporter bridge from 1905, which carried cars and people across the structure at 4 miles an hour, was replaced by the Jubilee Bridge in 1968. This itself is now dwarfed by the 2017 New Mersey Gateway, gracefully arcing the river. And at Pierhead the still proud three graces of Liverpool waterfront, the Liver, Cunard and the Port of Liverpool Buildings speak of the regeneration of this part of the city where the Ship Canal with all its echoes of the past reaches its end.

22 November 2023

TENTERS IN THE LANDSCAPE: A REMARKABLE HISTORY — Dr Graham Cooper

In looking at the traditional woollen cloth production of our part of Yorkshire, the role of tentering – drying and stretching cloth on a frame – is often seen as a straightforward step in the whole process. But as Dr Graham Cooper explained nothing could be further from the truth. He has spent many years looking into the history of tenters, discovering a world of challenges, cheating and regulation. Nineteenth-century maps show the prevalence of tenter fields in the landscape of the West Riding and East Lancashire. However, unlike other equipment used for cloth production, very little evidence of tenters has been found, probably because they were mainly made of wood.

Tentering was an essential part of the finishing process, stretching the woven cloth, shrunk and wet from the fulling mills, to a standard width laid down by statute. The cloth was hung on the hooks in the top bar and bottom bars of the tenter frame, and the bottom bar was gradually lowered to stretch the cloth. It was important to avoid overstretching, which made it likely that holes would appear in the thin fabric, and it would also be liable to shrink again.

Throughout the centuries authorities were seeking out potential cheating. Deliberate overstretching of the cloth was seen as a scourge and condemned by preachers as 'the greediness of gain'. There were hundreds of laws, statutes and regulations governing the production of cloth, which was a major part of the trade of England. As well as the clothiers potentially cheating, there was a huge risk of theft, sometimes from the tenter fields, sometimes

from the highway. Punishments for stealing cloth ranged from fines to transportation or even a death sentence.

Tenters were recorded in paintings such as J.M.W. Turner's view of Beeston Hill near Leeds and John Holland's view of Brearley, and some early photographs. Near Marsden and Dobcross there are the remaining stone frames of tenters, but the only standing tenter frames with their wooden beams are a remarkable survival at Otterburn Mill in Northumberland. These suffered damage in recent floods, but look likely to be saved with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery fund.

Tenter terraces form Beverley End, Colden valley from www.tenters.org

Attempts to counteract the problems of wet weather have also left some remains. In Dublin a tenter house was built which would provide 'a perpetual summer' allowing the clothiers to continue to earn a living. There are also some castle-like 'wet houses' such as one at Helmshore used for the same purpose.

A satisfying link of maps, Google Earth and footwork can reveal evidence of where the tenters stood, and Graham has photographic evidence of such tenter banks or terraces preserved in the landscape. Inevitably though, most have been built over. Graham found evidence of nearly 400 tenter sites in his survey of the cloth districts, 72 per cent of which are now covered over.

Place names can also give clues to the site of a forgotten tenter field, and Graham is still looking for evidence and further information.

13 December 2023

TOWN TWINNING IN HEBDEN ROYD — Jane Jackson

After the end of the Second World War a strong feeling of 'never again' led to the beginning of a remarkable grassroots movement to foster friendship and understanding. Communities in towns across France and Germany formally declared themselves twin towns and took turns to welcome visitors to their homes and to explore the culture and environment of their twins. Jane Jackson, Secretary of the Hebden Bridge Twinning Society, explained how in 1965 Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise and Warstein were twinned, and how later in 1979 Hebden Royd twinned with St Pol and then with Warstein in 1995.

The idea of twinning is quite simple: in turn, people in one town host visitors in their own homes, and there are organised trips and more spontaneous entertainments. Twin towns often have something in common in their geography or character, but there is a structural difference between Hebden Royd and its French and German twins. The organisation of the events in Britain is the function of local volunteers, whereas in St Pol and Warstein the elected local mayor takes charge, and has both political power and a financial budget. However, over the years the Mayors and Council of Hebden Royd have been supportive and enthusiastic. Twinning visits involve some ceremonial speech-making, gift exchanges and signing of charters, but the photos show a lot of laughter, fun and food as well.

Memorable events include performances by the Hebden Bridge Junior Band and an ambitious children's football tournament in Warstein, when the Hebden Bridge team triumphed and brought home the Cup. Music is often at the heart of the celebrations, though Jane warned that an implacable fascination with the Beatles meant that bands from Hebden Bridge might have to

adjust their set list to satisfy their audiences. Parades and fancy dress often feature in Warstein, and national stereotypes can be successfully met by donning cricket whites and waving bats. In Hebden Bridge the cinema is a much-loved venue, and no visit is complete without a gathering by the old bridge.

Walking in the countryside leads naturally to a shared interest in the environment, especially forest and nature conservation. On one occasion at a meeting in Mytholmroyd exploring Slow the Flow's flood alleviation work, the flood warnings sounded and the hall evacuated. Visitors got a first-hand demonstration of what was involved in cleaning up after heavy rain.

During the Covid lockdowns the internet came into its own, with casual chats, discussions and on-line quizzes keeping the links alive. The themes of war and peace that inspired the movement still have relevance, and schools have worked together capturing the memories of those who recall the early post-war years. There are certainly opportunities to encourage younger people to work across borders on issues that concern them, and to listen to ideas from other cultures. Sports and culture are areas where experiences and enjoyment can be shared. The twinning groups are determined to keep their work relevant and to sow the seeds of many more lasting friendships with families in the twin towns.

More details including the events programme

https://www.hebdenbridgetwinning.org.uk/

14 February 2024

COMMUNITY LED EDUCATION IN INDUSTRIAL WEST YORKSHIRE, 1820 – 1900 **Hebe Gilbert**

A gathering of adults keen to listen and learn: when Hebe Gilbert, a history teacher in Leeds, spoke there was more than an echo of the nineteenth-century community movements which opened educational opportunities to working class people.

Private 'dame schools' could provide basic literacy, and Sunday schools made a considerable impact. For adults, Mechanics Institutes provided a wider technical education, but these tended to be dominated by the philanthropic middle classes.

There were many obstacles facing working class people who desired an education, working long hours for poor pay: 'dull and hopeless looking, as disconsolate as their prospects' and yet they chose to give up the time to learn.

Hebe's interest was in the Mutual Improvement Societies, which were organised co-operatively and focused on members helping each other to gain the confidence and pride to learn and to communicate their ideas effectively. From the 1870s until the 1920s, Mutual Improvement Societies were crucial to the education of the working classes, with a large membership, low fees and an ethos of inclusivity and respect.

From tentative beginnings members were given the confidence to communicate and great value was placed on speaking on subjects extempore, with increasing eloquence. For women it was different. Although some women were involved in political movements such as Chartism, there was less of a drive for education, with a fear that women would neglect their roles as home-makers and mothers. For women, time spent reading was characterised as time wasted, and hinted at moral failure.

One local improvement society was at Hope Baptist Church.

Any idea of the date?

(Pennine Horizons Digital Archive MCH00128)

Seeing men like themselves writing, speaking and being listened to with admiration acted as a further motivation to seek education. Many of the discussions and debates which were the heart of the educational method were focused on political ideas, and fed demands for a voice and a vote. The fear of working-class emancipation reached its height in 1819 with the attack on the crowd in Manchester, in what we remember as the Peterloo massacre. The 1832 Reform Act expanded the franchise, satisfying the demands of the middling classes who owned or rented houses., but excluding the majority of working-class people. Chartism gave a voice to those excluded from the vote, but was increasingly feared by the state, with protests linked to direct action and strikes. The speaking skills so valued by the Mutual Improvement Societies brought working men to the fore in Radical politics, where oratory gave status to those who could effectively argue for their rights.

One of the main themes of the Improvement Society was a focus on moral as well as intellectual potential: 'the exaltation of talent above virtue was the curse of the age' leading to power without principle. At the heart of the movement were egalitarian principles and the primacy of independence of thought. Education was a common inheritance and a source of nobility.

28 February 2024

JOWETT – THE YORKSHIRE CAR **Barbara Atack**

A notice in the Telegraph & Argus in May 1922 invited Jowett owners to join a day trip to Boroughbridge, followed by tea – and so the Jowett Car Club was founded. As Barbara Atack, an officer of the oldest 'one-make' car club in the world, told us, love for the Yorkshire car is as strong as ever.

Barbara's involvement with Jowett cars came in her 'courting' days, as she gradually shared in her husband's love for the car. As they acquired different models – one found in a barn – working on the engines grew from a hobby to a way of life.

Jowett Cars Limited was the brainchild of brothers Benjamin and William Jowett, who had the engineering skills and imagination to see how they could build a successful car manufacturing business in their Bradford works. The ingenious 'flat twin' engine gave them the edge over their competitors in the early 1900s, and by using lighter aluminium for the bodies and making parts themselves, they produced a light car which was good on the hills. The Jowett Light Car, a two-seater steered with a tiller was very popular (One of these, the oldest Jowett on the road, lives in Oxenhope.)

The First World War paused any further development of the cars, but the firm went from strength to strength with production of components for the war effort. By the end of the war they had a larger workforce and a bigger factory, at Idle, Bradford. Throughout the 1920s more models were produced including commercial vehicles, and a fleet for the London police.

Jowett Cars were imaginative promoters of the brand, with racing successes, such as crossing Africa in 60 days and publicity stunts like driving through a new sewage pipe at Esholt. They had a knack for marketing slogans such as 'little engine with the

big pull' boasting 'the pull of an elephant; the appetite of a canary and the docility of a lamb'.

Despite the depression, the '30s were a time of innovation and expansion, with new sleeker models alongside the commercial workhorses. Again, wartime saw them gain orders for military supplies. The focus post-war was on exports, and the robust and reliable Bradfords were very successful. But despite this and some sparkling success of the sports model, Javelin, in the Monte Carlo and Le Mans rallies, the days of the Yorkshire car were numbered. Their bodymaker was taken over by Ford, who were probably not too keen on being part of a rival's production, and so Jowett's last car left the factory in 1954. Loyal to their customers, they kept open a spares and repairs garage to keep Jowetts on the road.

The Jowett Car Club has continued that tradition with a members' spares shop and also regularly welcomes ex-employees to fondly inspect the collection of Jowett cars in the Bradford Industrial Museum. As for Barbara, her last Jowett has moved to new owners, enthusiastic young Jowett Car Club members who will drive it with pride.

13 March 2024

THE FARM THAT MOVED — David Cant
Hollin Hey in Cragg

Hollin Hey, just off Cragg road near Mytholmroyd, was one of the oldest of the houses that dot the hills around Hebden Bridge, but by the end of the nineteenth century it had moved the length of a field to its current position. David Cant, local historian and vernacular buildings specialist, followed a trail of evidence in documents and stones to tell the later history of the house.

The old house, as recorded in both a drawing and a photograph shortly before it was demolished, was a fine stone building with some of the typical architectural details of its period, such as rounded mullion windows, finials on the roof and a door-head dated 1572. So what happened? David traced the history of the farm and buildings from when it was an auction lot in 1894. Originally on sale as two separate farms (Great and Little Hollin Hey) the lots were combined, and the estate was purchased by a Mr Edward Helliwell from Broadbottom in Mytholmroyd, for £1,745. Soon after purchasing the property he applied to erect new buildings and demolish the old ones.

Census documents show that from at least the 1840s, the two farms had been home to several households, and most occupants had not been farmers. So perhaps when Mr Helliwell planned to make Hollin Hey more productive he decided to start with a new built farm house and barn. A rare survival is a nineteenth-century plan of part of the old building, an architect's apprentice-piece completed just before it was demolished, full of interesting detail such as the original timbers visible inside, and a decorative diamond-set chimney top. The plans also reveal that the house had been split into two or more dwellings.

Plans drawn up by Halifax architects Walsh and Wrigley show the new house and barn were designed to provide both more modern living quarters and to improve the profitability of the farm. The plan for the barn incorporates 'mistals' (standing places) for far more cattle than would have been kept previously. The population growth in Halifax meant that milk production was now very profitable. The house attached to the barn also offered a more genteel style of living than the shared dwellings of the old farm. There was a living room and parlour for the family, plus a kitchen and scullery, and a second living room probably for a housekeeper and servants. There were two sets of stairs, one to the completely separate servant quarters, the other to the family bedrooms and the great innovation of a bathroom and w.c.

The building as it now stands reveals that they were keen to maintain the links with the past as well as look to the future. The arched window mullions were replicated and stone and timbers from the demolished buildings re-used. The sixteenth-century stonework, the gable coping stones, and the roof finials were retained. The new owner clearly wanted to give a nod to the past in his new house – the original door head with its 1572 date is incorporated, with an added inscription 'Rebuilt 1896 EH ' declaring Helliwell's pride in the farm that moved.

27 March 2024

YORKSHIRE MODERATES DURING A REVOLUTION

Mike Crawford

Barack Obama's '*A Promised Land'* led Mike Crawford to reflect on the parallels between the frenzied and polarised politics of twenty-first century USA and the political hysteria of late seventeenth-century England. Two local men, George Savile and John Tillotson were moderates who struggled to navigate extremism, and to maintain their principles, positions of power, and loyalty to their friends.

George Savile was part of the aristocracy of England, born at Thornhill, near Dewsbury, in 1633 and losing his father, a staunch royalist, in the Civil War. After the Restoration of the monarchy, Savile was rewarded by Charles II and made Viscount Halifax, rising to prominence in government.

John Tillotson was a contemporary but came from different stock, born in 1630 at Haugh End, Sowerby, the son of a respectable clothier. He was educated at Colne Grammar School, and developed Presbyterian ideals, conflicting with the established Anglican faith. Tillotson's style was non-confrontational. He did not opt for the passionate tirade, but preached with reason. He became one of the leading preachers in London, as Dean, and eventually, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Both men were pursuing their careers in a time of political frenzy, with both Protestant dissenters and Roman Catholics subject to harsh penal laws. But fear of a Catholic succession in the person of Charles' brother, James, whipped up more suspicion.

This was brought to a head in the lurid 'Popish Plot' uncovered by Titus Oates. Savile walked a careful line, insisting that it should be treated as if true. Even after the 'plotters' were executed, Parliament felt that something more must be done and continued to whip up hatred and fear demanding a vote to exclude James from the succession. Following a line of moderation, Savile argued that James could be Regent, with limited powers. When his reasoned argument won the vote, swords were drawn in Parliament, and Savile's life threatened.

The violent hunting out of sedition continued. Both Tillotson and Savile were loyal friends of Lord Russell when he was tried for treason, Tillotson praying with him on the scaffold. Both fell out of favour with the King, but continued to argue for reasonableness rather than dogma. Savile was unconvinced that James could do what was needed, but his objection was on the grounds of parliamentary law, not religion. Although he offered support to those wishing to remove the King, Savile did not join them in inviting William to claim the throne. But once James had fled the country, Savile gave his support to William and took charge of the government. Tillotson also played a role, using his influence with Princess Anne to secure her agreement to the succession of William and her sister Mary.

It would be easy to join the contemporary voices who saw the survival of Savile and Tillotson as evidence of their duplicity, but they kept their heads while right at the centre of a storm, with reason and moderation.

Report by Barbara Atack

10 April 2024

THE HISTORY OF HEBDEN BRIDGE LITTLE THEATRE 1924 - 2024 — Vaughan Leslie

'The Show Must Go On!' is a call that goes to the heart of live theatre – and in the case of Hebden Bridge Little Theatre, it has 'gone on' with hardly a pause for one hundred years. To help celebrate its centenary, Vaughan Leslie has been working to digitise the memorabilia, from programmes and reviews to set designs and cast photographs. The result is a comprehensive Centenary Album, a digital archive and an exhibition at the Town Hall throughout May. Members of Hebden Bridge Local History Society had the chance to hear the story from Vaughan, a long-time member of the Little Theatre, with many acting and directing performances under his belt.

The theatre started modestly in 1924, when members of the Literary and Scientific Society decided to move from reading to performance, for just two nights at the Co-operative Hall. This became an annual event with healthy audiences.

It was a rather nomadic society, and its longevity lies in the enthusiastic members rather than a building. They experimented with productions in the new Picture House, before moving in 1931 into the band pavilion in Calder Holmes park, carrying 200 chairs from the nearby Grammar School for performances. But there was a tremendous appetite for theatre in the town with total attendances for a season rising from 3,000 to 9,000 between 1931 and 1935. At this time the suitably dramatic logo was designed, by Jimmy Henderson, one of the founders. It depicts Art rising from Industry, and still retains its impact.

But this didn't mean security; in 1935, the council decided to use the space for a recreation ground, and the Little Theatre was evicted. They eventually found a home on the ground floor of

the Trades Club, which was converted into a 300-seat theatre. For the first time they were able to have scenery, and set-design grew more ambitious.

In 1939, it must have seemed as if it was all about to be snatched away again, but the Government encouraged theatres to stay open, to boost morale. Attendances during the war averaged 9000 per year, with some poignant notices about the necessity for gas masks, and absolving the company from responsibility for damage from enemy action.

The Ground Floor remained their home until 1977, but high costs meant that the Little Theatre was on the move again, eventually raising the money to build a new theatre opened in 1983, in old garage premises on Holme Street. The intimacy of this tiny theatre brought the audience very close to the action; the first row took cover before a bayonet charge in a production of *Oh What a Lovely War!*

The final stage in the story of the Little Theatre came when the tiny Garage Theatre was subject to an arson attack, and the members again took upon themselves the daunting task of building a new theatre. The result of heroic efforts is the Little Theatre more or less at it now stands – a permanent home and tribute to the spirit of all those who loved the theatre over the century. Vaughan paid special tribute to the late Ray Riches, who epitomised that spirit.

Family History Group

The archives at Birchcliffe open on most Thursday afternoons for family history visitors but only a few people have been to see us in the past two years. We would welcome more. Please note that bookings are required to check that we are going to be there; as volunteers we sometimes are elsewhere.

We often have on-line enquiries from people far and near whose ancestors were from our part of the world. These can give us a useful insight into local families in the past and also how far flung around the world they can become. Recently we had a visit from Roger and Elspeth Ashworth who currently live in Edinburgh and wanted some knowledge of Rawtenstall and Blackshawhead as records showed that their family was living there in the 1700s.

Far Rawtonstall Farm

The family had its roots at Rawtonstall which is the area just at the top of Mytholm Steeps for those of you who know the area. There are four farms and other buildings there, many dating back to the fifteenth century. I took them to meet Richard and Mary Baldwin at Far Rawtonstall where, over a cup of tea and some of Mary's super baking, Richard put them in touch with

Alex Ashworth from Wimbledon who had been a visitor there many times and had managed to discover much about the history of the Ashworth family. This was done by phone and despite Alex being disturbed in the middle of his Sainsburys shop, the conversation went on for half an hour. Needless to say, Roger was extremely pleased to have contact with other branches of the family, especially one who had already delved into the family origins. Far Rawtonstall also has the distinction of not having been overdeveloped in modern times so still retains many original features. It also tends to be a favourite drop in for many locals; always a welcome, especially when Mary has been baking.

Roger and Elspeth Ashworth with Richard and Mary Baldwin

We now have many records available for family history research, particularly the census returns and parish registers for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records. These give us basic information about where our ancestors live but cannot take into account the vagaries of the topography and settlements of specific areas. This is most evident here in the upper Calder valley. When visitors come to the area, they are often surprised by how the much the landscape affected lives in the past, how

the settlements were established, especially the fact that there were not many villages but rather a system of dispersed settlements that were spread across the five local townships of Wadsworth, Heptonstall, Stansfield, Erringden and Langfield. This is something that all local historians in the area have to understand for their research and to this end we have plans to explore this theme in the coming year, hopefully resulting in an exhibition highlighting the history of the Parish of Halifax and specifically the local townships.

If you have anything that you think might be of interest, including records of any local societies or groups, please contact the archivist at archivist@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk.

Barbara Atack

Folklore Section

After Easter, it's a good time to reflect on our local Pace Egg plays. I was unable to make it to the Heptonstall troupe, but received good reports as ever. I did catch up with the Midgley (ex-Calder High) players, who have seen a few changes in personnel this year. Half the team are women, now, which is a major step for this commonly all-male folk play. The script, like any tradition always subject to change in response to developments in wider society, seems to have excised the word 'black' with regard to characters, which has been problematic for some watching the plays. No doubt these changes will bring complaints against 'woke culture' from some people, but I enjoy watching folk tradition adapt rather than get stuck in counter-productive ruts. I once danced in an all-male longsword dance team that was struggling to find new members. Maybe if the old guard had been ready to offer women a chance the team would still be dancing out today.

As I write, May Day is steadily approaching. May customs are not so vital as they once were - I don't know of any functioning maypole in the borough and tradesfolk don't 'trim up' their horses with ribbons and rosettes like they once did. Oliver Heywood remembered what sounds like a Jack-in-the-Green custom in Halifax in 1680, which he, predictably, loathed - "hell is broke loose". Perhaps though if it's stopped raining and warmed up a little by then, you may rise by dawn and wash your face in the dew for your complexion. Or take a cup and some liquorice to the Spa Well in Cragg Vale on the first Sunday in May, Spaw Sunday, and drink some spring water to detox after winter.

Spring is good for folklore generally, and speaker events at The Folklore Centre in Todmorden (opposite the Health Centre, open Weds-Sat 10-3), with whom our Folklore Section is closely connected, regularly sell out. They are always held weekly at 4pm on Saturdays, and the schedule for later in 2024 is looking splendid for fans of folklore in local history and wider topic areas. There's Alison Cooper on Lancashire dialect and wise women, Ceri Houlbrook on witch bottles, and Andy Roberts on British 'flying saucer' cults on the 1960s. In August, I'm talking there on legends and folklore around Todmorden, which sold out when I did it for the Todmorden Book Festival last autumn. There's usually an exhibition or two going on as well - the current 'Museum of Monotropism' display (until May 18) is unmissable, even for those not directly interested in folklore. See the programme at www.folkloremythmagic.com, or pick up a leaflet at the Centre. Pre-booking is advised.

Mention of sold-out events brings to mind my own recent talks in Halifax and Cragg Vale, at both of which attracted higher than usual audiences, so it seems folklore topics are having a moment - as they should for this vital part of local history.

Some Society members may recall my Zoom talk on local corpseways back in those dark pandemic days. I now have a small book available on the subject detailing some local 'coffin paths', which is available at £5 from local bookshops, www.northernearth.co.uk, or myself.

Calderdale Heritage walks also offer walks with folklore content, especially their Outlaws & Nuns walk at Kirklees Priory and Robin Hood's Grave near Brighouse on July 6 & 7. Pick up a leaflet at libraries or the Town Hall.

John Billingsley

Pre-history Section

At the moment the Section produces a detailed update on activities on an occasional basis. Please contact David Shepherd for details by emailing: avid.shepher@gmail.com.

Archive and Family History

Opening Times 2024

Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge

The archive will normally be open every Wednesday and Thursday afternoon from 2-5 pm for general research visits. However, this is subject to volunteer availability. Numbers at each session are limited. Non-HBLHS members £3.

Pre-booking is required

email: archivist@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

When you book, please indicate which documents you would like to see, or give brief details of your enquiry. Our catalogue can be searched on our website.

Family History Group

Meetings are usually held on the Thursday afternoons between 2 pm and 5 pm at the Birchcliffe centre. Non-HBLHS members £3. Numbers at each session are limited and pre-booking is essential to ensure that there is a volunteer available to help with your enquiry. If you are not able to visit on a Thursday we may be able to arrange for you to visit on another day.

Pre-booking is required

email:info@evergreenancestry.com

Unable to visit?

We also run an enquiry service via a form on the website

www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk