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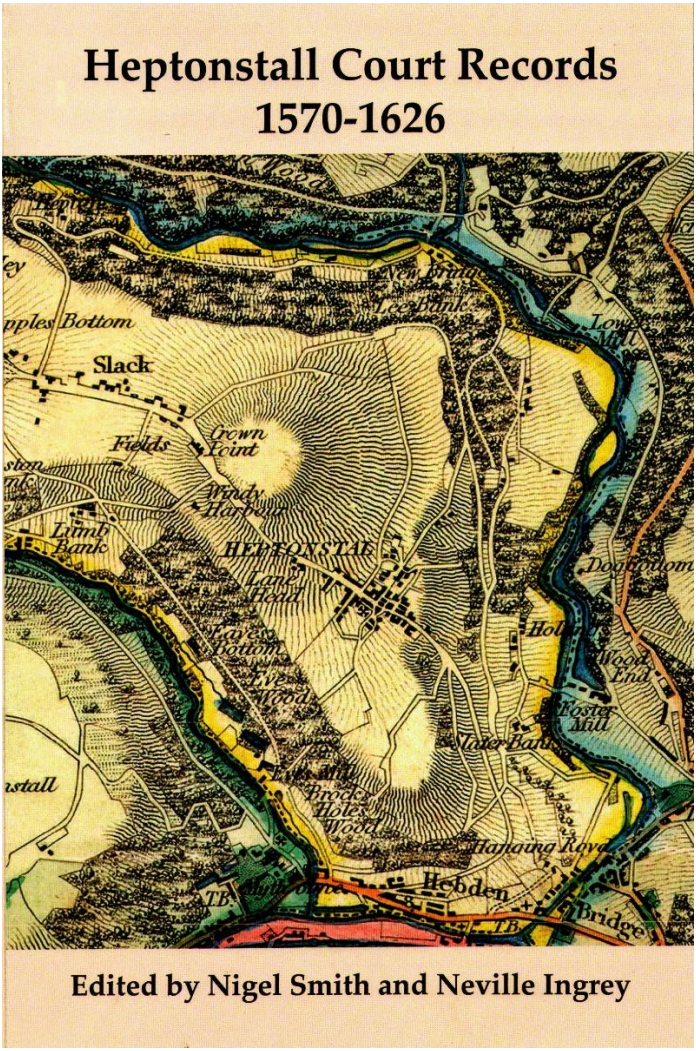
HEBDEN BRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

Spring 2025



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Cover: Latest Society publication. See page 3

News from the trustees

At the end of the lecture season for 2024 to 2025 we would like to thank you all for your involvement with the Society. We appreciate that conditions at the venue were not ideal when the weather was cold and we are discussing this with the Methodist Church representatives and hope to have improvements by the start of the Autumn lecture programme.

We are keen to maintain the meetings as an important contact point for members, despite the increasing dominance of remote 'working' in many areas of life. The opportunity to meet and discuss matters historical over a cuppa is most welcome, and we will be trying out new approaches in the future. Suggestions, anybody? It is also intended to continue with the meeting recordings being made available to all members. Managing this process is quite a time-consuming business and help from members would be appreciated. Please do speak to one of the Trustees if you can help

The archive and family history sessions continue to operate at Birchcliffe. There is already a devoted group who assist in the continuing process of cataloguing and responding to enquiries. The Society continues to receive queries on a variety of subjects; from local artists to zoological research. Thank you to everyone who helps in making this less visible aspect of our Society a success.

Our financial situation is satisfactory and we are very grateful to our Treasurer for her continuing work in balancing the books. This aspect has proved a challenge for many voluntary groups, not just in local history. Our book sales continue to provide a welcome income stream and the production of good quality historical works gives our Society that extra prestige as well as adding to historical knowledge and understanding.

The lecture on Victorian stained glass by Dave Smalley, postponed due to bad weather, will take place as part of the Autumn 2025 programme.

A selection of summer local history events

Do check before you go!

Heptonstall Museum is open Thursday to Sunday 11 am till 4:30 pm. Entrance costs £3 for adults, under 18's are free.

Ticketed talks at Heptonstall Bowling & Social Club

Saturday 21st June 2pm
Female Convicts Down Under: Fact and Fiction

Saturday 19th July 11am
The Life and Work of Edward Crossley 1841 – 1905

More information: *www.heptonstallmuseumfriends.org.uk*

Calderdale Heritage Walks have a varied offering. Most are two hours, £4 per person. Ones in the upper valley include:

Sunday, 8th June Old Town, Above and Beyond

Sunday, 13th July Dobroyd Castle - Pre-booking essential

Sunday, 10th August Heptonstall Shadows

Sunday, 17th August Todmurdern

MONDAY, 25th August Midgley Moor (3 hours)

Sunday, 26th October Todmorden Folk

Full details *www.calderdaleheritagewalks.org.uk*

New Publications

In May, the Society will be publishing the earliest available records of the manorial court for Heptonstall. This is the first time such records for this area have been made available and are the result of five years work translating them from the Latin. Ancillary documents provided to the court in English are also included. This publication will be followed, probably in June, by a volume exploring the material contents of houses in the area at the end of the seventeenth century. Written by Peter Brears, a museums and historic house consultant, this book analyses the inventories of local people that have been transcribed and published by the Hebden Bridge and Halifax probate groups over the last ten years.

Both books are hardback volumes, reflecting their importance to the history of the area, and will be limited editions.

Heptonstall Court Records 1570-1626

Edited by Nigel Smith and Neville Ingrey

476 pages, 7 illustrations, 4 maps. £20.

These court records for the township of Heptonstall provide an insight into how daily life was managed by the manorial court, an early form of local community regulation. We learn about transfers of property, the gradual process of encroachment on the moors, issues concerning the maintenance of water courses and hedges, and rights to the resources of the commons. Amongst much else, they provide extensive information on local families and the properties they owned.

These records are a verbatim translation from the Latin of the only extant records of a submanor in the Upper Calder Valley for this period and also include the reports of the jury that were written in English. A detailed introduction, a glossary and comprehensive indexes are included.

Seventeenth-century Calderdale

by Peter Brears

290 pages, 84 colour illustrations. Price to be confirmed

For ten years two groups of local historians meticulously transcribed and published hundreds of wills and lists of contents of Calderdale people's homes between 1680 and 1700. This book draws on this huge mass of information to provide a vivid recreation of life and work in one of Britain's wealthiest and most productive upland communities. Its economy was based on wool textiles that financed the exceptional buildings in the Calder valley hills and the flourishing town of Halifax. In this volume all the area's equipment, food, artefacts, and products are studied and illustrated in great detail, drawing on solely local examples of this period. The result is a unique account of life and work in this part of seventeenth-century England just before it was transformed by the Industrial Revolution.

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)

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

Occasional Publications 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)

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)

Bargain book offers

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 £10 (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 £5.00 (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 £5.00 (plus £3.50 shipping)

Lecture Reports 2024 - 2025

Sheila Graham

25 September 2024 **David Glover**

AUGUST 1842 – THE PEOPLE VERSUS THE ESTABLISHMENT

'Thousands march on Halifax. Cotton mills brought to a standstill. These might have been the headlines in the turbulent summer of 1842, when discontented workers of the Calder Valley determined to make their voices heard.

David Glover is an experienced interpreter of Halifax's past and he unravelled the complexities of what became known as the Great Strike or the Plug Riots. The plugs in question retained the water of the mill boilers, and the marching protesters had the bold idea of removing them so the steam powered machinery of the mills would be brought to a halt.

The political background was important: the workers had no democratic voice. Despite the protests of the Chartists, and millions of signatures demanding fairer representation, Parliament had twice rejected the People's Charter. Growing industrialisation meant greater profits for the owners, but wages and conditions were poor. At the same time the punitive Poor Law Act of 1834 saw the growth of a harsh workhouse system. Radicalism had a strong base in Halifax, with renowned Chartist speakers like Ben Rushton, a handloom weaver from Ovenden, attracting huge crowds to outdoor rallies at Skircoat Moor.

On Monday 15th August a rally was planned at Skircoat Moor. This should have been a working day, but hundreds of people were determined that they would not go to work. It is said that

12,000 men and women walked from Lancashire and Bradford, surging into Halifax, disabling the mills as they marched.

They crossed North Bridge to Haley Hill Mills, where the plug was successfully pulled with the co-operation of Edward Akroyd, the owner's son. Armed special constables were protecting Woodside, his father's mansion, and here several men were shot and injured. But with many mills successfully disabled, the protesting crowd must have felt they had achieved a kind of victory as they prepared for the following day.

Tuesday 16th August was another day without work, but with more confusion and violence. Eighteen people arrested at Skircoat Moor were transported to Wakefield Court by coach and train. The Hussars provided an armed escort, and crowds gathered, largely sympathetic to the prisoners. On the return journey, at Salterhebble, they attacked, injuring some soldiers. At Northgate the reading of the Riot Act failed to disperse the protesters, and Hussars charged into the crowd with bayonets and sabres. More attacks took place on North Bridge and at Haley Hill where the infantry fired on the crowd causing serious injuries and several deaths.

Very little changed immediately as a result of the strike. When the People's Charter was again presented to Parliament in 1848 it was again rejected. But the events of the Great Strike and the mass revolt of workers endured in the history of Halifax. Ben Rushton was celebrated as a hero and more than 6,000 mourners filled the streets of Halifax for his burial in Lister Lane Cemetery in 1853. The values and aspirations of the Chartists continue to be celebrated.

9 October 2024 **Michael Peel**

FIFTY YEARS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN CALDERDALE: An awkward birth, a tough upbringing and a place well worth celebrating

As Michael Peel explained to a meeting of Hebden Bridge Local History Society, you won't find a place called Calderdale on the map, and until the Calderdale Metropolitan Borough was created in 1974, the name had very little currency. It encompassed the settlements of the Calder Valley from Todmorden to Brighouse, including the largest town of Halifax. The Local Government Act of 1972 aimed to reduce the number of councils, streamlining services and responsibilities of district and county councils. As a journalist, Michael has monitored the activities of Calderdale from its beginnings, and drew on reports in the local and national press over the years to remind us of what has changed and how much has remained the same.

In the 70s there was a legacy of housing deemed to be unfit for habitation, and many in the council were keen to employ the wrecking ball and start afresh. One news story highlighted how squatters 'invaded' a row of unoccupied houses marked for demolition in Queen's Terrace, Hebden Bridge in the early 70s. Opinion in the town was split, but in the end the council opted to bring such houses up to date, and with council improvement grants much of the housing stock was retained. Redundant textile mills were also likely to be demolished but saved by conversions into apartments or, in the case of Nutclough Mill, into premises for tech companies like Calrec Audio.

Tourism was a major economic activity in the Upper Calder Valley and the council set to encourage visitors and gave support for the reopening of the Rochdale Canal and local walks such as the Calderdale Way. Hebden Bridge town centre was a sad sight with a quarter of shops standing empty in 1975. There were

ambitious plans to demolish old buildings in St George's Square, with futuristic replacements, but instead the council opted for pedestrianisation using large planters to do the job.

Increased tourism raised the issue of another intractable problem: parking. There were some rather alarming plans such as using Calder Holmes as a coach and car park, and building a multi-storey car park on Garden Street. Ever increasing parking charges helped to limit traffic with the added benefit of providing an income stream to an ever cash-strapped council. But the problem remains.

Over the years the demand for services crashes into the lack of funding from central government. Recent years have seen losses of the services expected fifty years ago – swimming baths, libraries, police stations, courts, fire stations have all closed as part of the drive to save money. But there has been renewal across the borough – new medical centres and hospitals, flood alleviation schemes and the successful re-imagining of the Piece Hall.

Interest in formal local democracy may be weak, but people in Calderdale are still keen to make their opinions known, with campaigns, meetings and marches the chosen vehicles. Local newspapers no longer have the influence of fifty years ago, but perhaps social media can get people more directly involved with issues of democracy?

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23 October 2024 **Peter Thornborrow**

THE DUAL ECONOMY OF TEXTILES AND AGRICULTURE

A case study of Hartley Royd in Stansfield

Peter Thornborrow is well known for his talks about buildings, and drawing on his experience as an architectural historian and surveyor of listed buildings, he introduced members of Hebden Bridge Local History Society to Hartley Royd in Shore. He described a remote moorland location and showed the remains of the drovers' roads, packhorse tracks and causey ways which allowed textile production to flourish alongside agriculture. As well as the tracks, large crosses still remain where they have marked the salt ways since medieval times. Stone drinking troughs are a reminder of the pack horses which were a crucial part of the transport system until the advent of turnpike roads more suitable for wheeled vehicles.

When Peter first encountered Hartley Royd to complete its listing, it was in a semi-derelict state, with windows walled up and mullions missing. The owner at the time was not co-operative and when he found that the listing involved an obligation to repair the building, he decided to sell. The new owners were very keen to restore the house, and Peter took on the job of designing the restoration. This involved examining the building to find evidence of how it had been built and used. Some of the building dated back to the 16th century, and was probably originally timber-framed. The upper floor with a transom window was where the weaving workshop was situated, and below was a vaulted arched cellar.

Alongside the architectural clues, detailed inventories from probate records, listing the contents of each room, provided evidence of how rooms were used. There were two parlours at the front of the house, to the east and west of the entrance and at

the rear the service rooms - a kitchen as well as the housebody which would have been at the heart of the building. A restoration project can also pick up evidence of changes from hearth tax returns. People were taxed on the number of hearths or fireplaces there were in the house, and the records of these show that Hartley Royd went from three to four hearths. The original arched fireplaces were still in place. Other architectural features were influenced by the location; then as now Hartley Royd is frequently subject to wind and rain, and it was to mitigate this that the house has unusual recessed doorways and an inner porch and entrance lobby.

The detailed inventory listing everything from beds and their hangings to the arks for storing oatmeal brought colour and detail to life lived in this remote area. There were oxen with their yokes used for ploughing and a few cows identified by their names. Tools like harrows, mattocks and turf spades for cultivating the land and were also listed. The second arm of the dual economy was textile production, and the shop, shop chamber and wool chamber were the location of equipment for spinning and weaving cloth. Images from Peter's collection illustrated many of these items.

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13 November 2024 **AGM**

Who knew that so much information could be gathered from wills and probate records or that maps and records to excite a group of neighbours would be found in the Hebden Bridge Local History Society's archive? Instead of the usual lecture, members of the Society were invited to report on their recent research.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL **Barbara Hall**

Barbara Hall has been involved for many years with a group looking at late 17th century wills, inventories and probate documents from the ancient parish of Halifax. Barbara explained the meticulous process of transcription and research of documents from the Borthwick Institute in York. Groups in Hebden Bridge and Halifax have now successfully published this work, with indexes, glossaries and analysis.

Barbara's group has now moved on to the first decade of the 18th century in the township of Halifax itself, and already there is plenty to interest family and local historians. Family relationships can be untangled, and the inventories of rooms and contents provide a snapshot of how people lived and the details of their occupations and wealth and debt. Perhaps another book is on the way.

NEIGHBOURS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD **Sheila Graham**

Sheila Graham reported how a group of neighbours at Edge Hey Green in Colden banded together to find out more about their properties. They wanted to understand when the houses were built and by whom; who lived there; what their lives would have been like; how they would have been employed.

The architecture – different window styles and obvious additions - provided some clues that this was not built as a unified row. Some of the three storey backs had one roomed under-dwellings which have been integrated with the front house – explaining the gaps in modern house numbers. Deeds and auction adverts provided more details about the cottages.

The group made use of historic maps, including one from 1833 held in Calderdale and Hebden Bridge LHS archives, with field names as well as all the buildings. It links with information in the township valuation book which gives names of owners and

tenants of cottages and farms as well as their annual rental values.

The first census of 1841 shows that 75% of the occupants were hand-loom weavers and Uttleys, Greenwoods and Sutcliffes occupied over half the houses. In a later census the occupants were almost all born in Heptonstall with the furthest coming from Sowerby. The census in 1861 showed signs of social change with the end of handloom weaving and more working in the mills. Older former handloom weavers were now often defined as 'paupers'. A number of elderly women paupers lived in one cottage, with a 9-year-old girl the only worker – this was actually one of several small workhouses in the area. In the Society archive the records of the Poor Law guardians reveal the scale of the poverty during the 'cotton famine' of 1862-3, with almost every household on the row receiving some kind of help, including a Christmas dinner.

Both talks provoked a lot of interest from those with their own memories and information to share. Hebden Bridge Local History Society would love to hear about other local research by members.

Report by Catherine Chatham

27 November 2024 **Margareta Holmstedt**

TODMORDEN TOWN HALL – 150 YEARS OLD

Todmorden Town Hall, one of the most impressive buildings in the Calder Valley, is about to celebrate its 150th birthday, as Margareta Holmstedt told Hebden Bridge Local History Society. She has lived in Todmorden since 1970, serving as a town councillor for many years, and as a volunteer guide and member of the Town Hall Friends is both knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

Todmorden had no real identity before the Industrial Revolution. Its position on the county boundary of Lancashire and Yorkshire meant it looked more towards Manchester and the cotton industry, growing rapidly in the 1800s. There was very little local government. Local decisions were taken by church vestry committees; boards of health and magistrate courts met in local pubs. A growing sense of civic pride led to a desire for a more dignified and prestigious place.

In 1860 a committee was formed to build a town hall, a site chosen and foundations laid. But the timing was wrong, as the American Civil War cotton boycott meant they ran out of money. It was the pre-eminent and wealthy Fielden family, (Radical MP John Fielden and his nephews) who ten years later bought the site and engaged the architect John Gibson, who had designed such different Fielden-linked buildings as Dobroyd Castle and the Unitarian church.

On the first floor was to be a grand ballroom, and the ground floor was to be the new home of the Magistrates' Court. It was completed by 1875, costing the Fieldens £54,000. The magistrates now had a dignified place to conduct their business, with rooms for the police, a dock for the accused and seats for the public to see justice done. But the pride of the place must have been the glittering ballroom, reached by a sweeping staircase, wide enough for the ladies' voluminous skirts. There was a sprung floor for the dancing, but also a stage and balcony for musical performances. The decoration was superb, with the best stucco and numerous sculptures and relief medallions. Todmorden could also show off its cutting-edge technology, with ultra-modern 'gasoliers' – gas chandeliers, which elegantly provided ventilation through hidden vents, allowing stale air to rise and be expelled through the roof.

The opening ceremonies in April 1875 were lavish – with a procession lasting 4 hours and a banquet of nine courses for 400 people. Todmorden finally had a building to be proud of, in a classical style, and topped with a beautifully sculpted pediment celebrating the dual heritage of Lancashire and Yorkshire skills. However it was its position, literally built on top of the river marking the boundary that left Todmorden as a proud possessor of a town hall but no town. It was not possible to incorporate a borough that was in two counties. The boundary was redrawn in 1888, so that Todmorden was in Yorkshire. It was not until 1896 that Todmorden was granted its charter as a town, but some families still haven't forgiven the betrayal.

11 December 2024 **Diana Monahan**

A TALE OF TWO CARNIVALS
Films from the Yorkshire Film Archive

At the turn of the year Diana Monahan treated Hebden Bridge Local History Society to a taste of celebrations one hundred years ago. In the summers of 1924 and 1925 carnivals held in Hebden Bridge were filmed, and local people were able to view the events and look out for themselves and their friends on screen at Hebden Bridge Picture House. The films had been commissioned by the owners of the Picture House. However, after 1928 and the advent of talkies, there was no projector able to show the films and they were on the point of being destroyed. In the 1950s Hebden Bridge film enthusiast Milton Sunderland interrupted his friend in the process of setting fire to the celluloid films that had been stored at his house, and rescued the ones labelled Hebden Bridge Carnival.

The films were eventually restored by the Yorkshire Film Archive, first to VHS and then in a digital form, with funding

coming from Friends of Hebden Bridge Picture House, Hebden Bridge Local History Society and Hebden Royd Town Council. They are available on the Yorkshire Film Archive website.

The films are evidence of the popularity of the carnivals, which were planned as money-raising events for the local brass band and other charities. Streets were crowded with people as the parade wound through town to the fields of Calder Holme, where various competitions and races took place. The streets were decked with bunting and union flags, and people were clearly dressed in their best, with barely a head without a hat. A mock King and Queen (two brothers in rich regalia) presided over the event, which also featured Britannia and a lion making a jolly patriotic statement.

Diana and her colleague Molly Sunderland had clearly spent hours watching the films and honing their spotting and identifying skills, so Diana was able to focus on local dignitaries as well as anonymous smiling people queueing to wave at the camera. She could also point out landmark buildings, shops and advertising slogans. Most of the tableaux were carried on cars and lorries, (again usually identified by Diana) and many featured bands and people in elaborate fancy dress. Local organisations and businesses were represented, with choirs, rugby teams, chapels and shops all competing to be the best float.

On the field at Calder Holmes the racing and judging took place, with local newspapers recording every winner. Entertainment ranged from choirs and fancy dress to a demonstration of weightlifting by a travelling strongman. Local bands performed, and there was also the fun of comic bands with instruments such as a tin bath drum. Despite the silent film, you could almost hear the noise of the exuberant scenes. It seemed that everyone would know someone, a neighbour or a workmate, who was taking part. And everyone was taking part in the film, and could relive

the day when the film was shown a week later at the Picture House and the Co-op Hall. You can imagine the laughter and cries of delighted recognition.

Thanks to the rescue of the films and the work of the Yorkshire Film Archive, we can still enjoy that carnival atmosphere.

22 January 2025 **Kevin Illingworth**

THEN AND NOW: PHOTOGRAPHS OF VERNACULAR BUILDINGS TAKEN BY RALPH CROSS AND KEVIN ILLINGWORTH

Kevin Illingworth is a leading member of the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group, and over many years he has photographed and drawn buildings with architecture typical of Yorkshire and Lancashire – not grand stately homes in the classical style, but more modest houses where working and living co-existed.

The starting point of Kevin's lecture to Hebden Bridge Local History Society was the photographic archive of an earlier enthusiast for vernacular buildings. Ralph Cross lived from 1893 to 1978, latterly in Burnley, and spent fifty years photographing buildings mainly in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Many of his slides have been collected and digitised by Pennine Horizons Digital Archive. We were able to see Ralph Cross's original images alongside ones taken by Kevin a few decades later.

Most of the houses dated back to the seventeenth century, with some from the sixteenth century, and shared typical architectural features. Stone mullioned windows, for example. A local variation are round-headed windows or decorative ogees (a double s-shape). Decorative details could make a study in themselves, with the ends (or stops) of the hood mouldings that diverted water from the windows often carved elaborately.

Practical features like water spouts were also decorated, often with grotesque or humorous faces. Pineapple finials on the roof were also popular – as found at Greenwood Lee, Heptonstall, which also has scroll shapes carved into the plinth of the porch.

Porches featured prominently – sometimes two floors high, with a protruding or jettied upper storey. Date stones are often found here, usually including the initials of the husband and wife who had it built. The fronts of the houses were often built to impress. Roof finials add grandeur, as do the magnificent twelve chimney stacks lining the roof at Rampside Hall in Barrow in Furness. Some buildings claim to be bigger than they are, with windows in gables suggesting a non-existent attic storey. Some have large spans of windows, such as the sixteen lights at Upper Healey Hall in Thornton, or the wavy lintels and decorative sexfoil window at Winewall Farmhouse in Trawden. The porch here acknowledged a more fashionable classical style, with small columns giving a sense of importance. At Field Head in Blackshaw the building has been re-fronted in the late 17th century in a 'polite' Georgian classical style.

One very positive thing that emerged from the comparison is that some of the buildings look more loved and sensitively restored than was the case in the 1950s and 60s. Perhaps the vernacular style is more valued and the expertise is there to underpin restoration. One striking example would be Stanley House in Mellor which was ruinous when photographed by Cross in 1970. By 2003 it had been splendidly re-built and inside the impressive 17th century building is a hotel, restaurant and spa.

Enthusiasts like Kevin, who have accumulated such a detailed knowledge of these buildings and have recorded and shared that detail, make it more likely that this heritage will be protected.

12 February 2025 **David Cant**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE TOWNSHIPS?
The part they played in our local history

As Calderdale celebrates its 50th anniversary, David Cant spoke to Hebden Bridge Local History Society about how the government of the area was organised in the past. The townships were very long-lasting administrative areas, pre-dating the Norman conquest and still in operation in the 19th century. We might think our ancestors lived in simpler times, but their lives were governed by a hierarchy of different institutions such as the manor, the county, the wapentake and the parish. But the everyday exercise of rules to promote order filtered down to the townships.

The ancient parish of Halifax was very large, and was subdivided into about 23 townships. There was a degree of democracy and accountability, as the principal landowners of a township would meet regularly and selected the constable, the churchwarden, the overseer of the poor and the surveyor of highways.

The work of the township was financed by local rates collected at so much in the pound of the assessed annual value of the property. A percentage went out of the township to the church, and the constable's rate went towards the administration of justice. Within the township the highway rate funded the roads, but the poor rate was by far the largest demand on the township's finances. Each township was responsible for providing for any poor person who could prove that they had settled status there.

Having survived for so long, why did the townships lose their significance? One reason is that when towns like Hebden Bridge and Todmorden expanded in the nineteenth century the old

geographical boundaries of rivers, valleys and hills were no longer relevant. The evolution from township to council was also accelerated by the crisis of poverty. In 1834 the national attempt to deal with this through new Poor Law created larger unions, encompassing several townships, to administer relief to the poor. The provision of 'outdoor' relief was prohibited, and all who claimed relief were to be admitted into a workhouse built for the purpose. The new unions were run by an elected board of guardians, and eventually these were joined by boards of health and school boards as the provision of wider services to the population were needed. Responsibility for enforcing the law also moved away from the township constable to the county level, with national standards. By the end of the 19th century a new system of borough, urban and rural district councils swept away the townships completely.

But there is still physical evidence. In Midgley there is a township pinfold where straying sheep and cattle could be held, and township lock-ups to deal with miscreants are still visible in Luddenden. There are the finger posts and milestones that marked the major routes, and bridges maintained by the townships. For historians one of the bonuses of a bureaucratic system is that it generates paperwork: accounts, reports, public notices and court records. Where township records have survived they can provide detailed insights into people's lives.

26 February 2025 **Murray Seccombe**

THE EXPERIENCE OF CIVIL CONFLICT: SOWERBY 1638 -1660

Who would have thought that a book of accounts could open up the day-to-day reality of life during the civil war? But as Murray Seccombe told Hebden Bridge Local History Society, the rare survival of the accounts of the constable of Sowerby during this

period proved an unrivalled source of information. Those years of crisis in the middle of the 17th century were deeply felt. There were arguments, fights and exorbitant taxes alongside challenging new religious ideas.

The position of constable was one of the most important roles in the governance of a township; he had the responsibility to raise a local militia to contribute to security, and as the conflict developed, to support the Military. He also had to collect the taxes to pay for such support. The brief entries detailing expenditure are the bones on which the bigger picture can be built. There is undoubtedly a frisson of excitement when you read "Item paid: James Dobson for quartering Cromwell Horses 2 days and 2 nights."

England had no standing army at this time, but during the reign of Charles I there was an attempt to better equip the conscripts. The Sowerby militia consisted of 8 pikemen and 8 musketeers, who would be required to gather for an annual muster, and paid for two days. This increased to 40 muster days as the threats became a reality, and the accounts record that there was an unwillingness to muster and train. There was also an ongoing objection to the expenses incurred: soldiers passing through or billeted in Halifax had to be quartered and the costs borne by the township. In one case four troopers were billeted for 69 days at a cost of £27. Unsurprisingly, the townspeople objected to the tax burden and the disruption, and on one occasion the constable was arrested and held for not making payments.

Money was also spent on gatherings of soldiers and townspeople as the army became more radicalised. When Royalists took over Pontefract Castle, increased taxes were needed to support the siege and pay the wages of the soldiers and provide provisions for Cromwell's horses. After the execution of the king and the end of the siege, the accounts suggest that the constable spent 1s

6d on some kind of celebration by the townsmen and the soldiers before they marched away.

Taxation remained high during the years that followed and may have contributed to a weakening of support for the Parliamentary regime. Sowerby seemed not to have seen many direct casualties as a result of the war, though there were more deaths from plague epidemics, doubtless more easily spread with movements of armies. For a manufacturing town like Sowerby the slump in trade would have a longer lasting effect. The area remained strongly non-conformist and puritan even after the restoration of the monarchy. Prominent Sowerby men joined the chapel founded by the preacher Oliver Heywood in Northowram. Another legacy of this period was the growth in the strength of township governance especially in the raising and spending of taxes.

12 March 2025 Derek Kettlewell

THE RISE AND FALL OF FOOTBALL IN THE UPPER CALDER VALLEY

How did the sport of 'Socker' arrive in the Upper Calder Valley and why does the area have no notable teams today? Derek Kettlewell, an enthusiastic researcher into local grassroots sports, spoke to Hebden Bridge Local History Society about the challenges faced and highlights enjoyed by teams such as Hebden Bridge, Portsmouth Rovers and Luddendenfoot.

Sport is something of a Cinderella in the world of local history research and few teams have retained an archive. Using on-line data throws up challenges too – it's not so simple as typing in the name of a football club. In the early days 'football' meant 'rugby' and 'socker' (not soccer) was the new kid on the block.

Derek explained how the sport is organised into a pyramid of different leagues, with 'the rest' occupying levels from the 11th downward. In theory it seems that movement up and down the pyramid is possible, but in reality clubs from these levels rarely climb up. The current highest placed local team is Ryburn, in the 11th tier.

From the middle of the 19th century football gradually became more organized, but it was still a mostly middle-class sport, with public schools providing most of the (amateur) players. Only after 1885 was it possible to have professional players, opening the sport to working class men and in 1888 the Football League was formed.

Many social changes contributed to the growth in the popularity of football. Population movement to work in the towns provided players and spectators, and the Factory Act that set up the norm of a five-and-a-half-day week freed up Saturday afternoons for sport. (In Sheffield the half day was on Wednesday – still marked in the name of the modern team.) Benevolent factory owners set up football teams, an act of enlightened self-interest to promote the loyalty and fitness of the workforce. Churches and chapels also saw football as a way of keeping youth on a clear moral path, setting up their own teams and competitions. Football teams were everywhere. Melbourne Street in Hebden Bridge had a football team and when Portsmouth Rovers were set up in 1887 there were already three teams in the little village near Todmorden.

Compared to the nearby towns of east Lancashire football grew slowly in the Calder Valley. One reason was geography: in this area of deep narrow valleys flat ground was at a premium. Suitable areas tended to have been occupied earlier by sports like cricket and rugby. Portsmouth Rovers were a successful club but lacked the money to step up to a higher level. One reporter

sarcastically described how the ground was a 'fine receptacle' for the rain with excellent mud baths. The dressing room was kept warm, he said, 'at a constant four-cow pressure.'

The little teams of the Calder Valley did nurture some famous players, notably via Stoke City, whose scout lived in Hebden Bridge. One of Stoke's all time greats was Billy Spencer from Hebden Bridge. He was one of those local football heroes who were immortalised on collectible football cards. Another heroine was Issy Pollard from Old Town, initially unable to find a local team to play for but capped three times for England in the 1990s.

Derek had no optimism about the future of local football but left a strong impression of how community and belonging finds expression in sport.

26 March 2025 **Alan Fowler**

THE OPENING OF HEBDEN BRIDGE TRADES CLUB AND THE FIRST LABOUR GOVERNMENT

The Hebden Bridge Trades Club, a much-loved institution which celebrates its centenary this year, stands also as a memorial of a time of political change, as for the first time Britain elected a Labour government. Alan Fowler, a longstanding member of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, and with encyclopaedic knowledge of local labour and trades union history, delivered the third in a trilogy of lectures introducing some of the remarkable local men who were steering the labour movement.

The building of the Trades Club was planned at a time when trades unionism and the Labour party were growing. A move from rented accommodation to a purpose-built centre for meetings and social events was seen as crucial in establishing Labour as a contender for power. Most of the funding for the

venture came from three trades unions which epitomised the industry of the upper Calder Valley: cotton weavers, woolworkers, and garment makers. Land was purchased from the Co-op and when the foundation stones were laid in May 1924, Tom Shaw, the Minister of Labour in the first Labour government, gave a rousing speech to the crowd which gathered in the shelter of the brass band room.

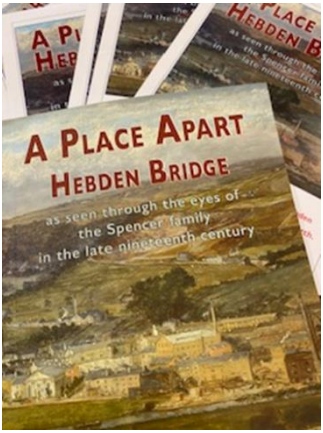
The idea of working men forming a government aroused some snobbish incredulity: George V after meeting with his first Labour prime minister asked 'what would grandma have thought of this?' (grandma of course was Queen Victoria).

Tom Shaw was one of those working men with intelligence and commitment to self-improvement. As a union official he had to reach a good level of mathematics to keep stock of the complicated piece-work rates. And working at his looms in Colne, he taught himself French and German with a level of proficiency such that when he joined a delegation to the Soviet Union in 1920, he was able to speak directly to the Russians who spoke at least one of his languages. In his speech in Hebden Bridge, Shaw described solid and dependable local men such as Philip Snowden from Keighley, who had Yorkshire seriousness on his side as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

These years in the early 1920s were difficult times. There were a million unemployed and the scheme for unemployment benefit was being overwhelmed, even with an extension of the benefits paid in a form of 'dole'. There was a fear of social consequences if people were forced into workhouses. The unstable minority Labour government failed. By the time the Trades Club officially opened on February 14th 1925, Labour was in opposition.

A PLACE APART: HEBDEN BRIDGE
As seen through the eyes of the Spencer family in the late nineteenth century

The story of a book



The book was published in March 2024. I've had since then time to reflect on how an idea became reality, and how the story of a family became a history of a town. Also on the process of research and writing which led to publication. Books take on their own momentum. You don't end where you imagined when you started out.

I'd always known that my mother's side of the family came from Hebden Bridge. She died when I was very young. We rarely visited. Cheshire and Manchester were our territory. The time came when I wanted to know how Hebden Bridge fitted into our story.

I shared information with my Spencer second cousins. Immediately it became clear that there was a tale to tell, about both family and town. My great grandfather was born in 1855, my grandfather, Thomas, in 1878. The business of Joseph Spencer, tailor and outfitter, grew with the town. And then – quite suddenly they left the town. Why, I wondered?

What was it like to start and build a business back then? What was the town like, not least as a place to live? That's what intrigued me. I produced a first draft, contacted Barbara Atack at the HBLHS and she forwarded it to Diana Monahan. And the story really begins here.

Diana already knew about my great grandfather. He'd featured in an exhibition she'd researched about the town. She'd seen his as a story of rags to riches and maybe rags again. Joseph had set up on his own in the mid-1870s. The family abruptly left the town in 1901. The business closed in 1907. While I plotted the curve, always upwards, then abruptly down, Diana helped with ideas and leads, and references to documents and newspaper stories. She'd also co-edited, with Nigel Smith, 'The Clothing Industry of Hebden Bridge', an invaluable collection of documents about the cotton industry.

Another indispensable aid to my research was the Pennine Horizons Digital Archive. Photographs and paintings gave a visual dimension to the story.

I followed up leads and burrowed deeper. I spent long hours going through the online British Newspaper Archive. The local papers back then were a remarkable resource. One we sorely miss today. Hebden Bridge became a town I'd like to have lived in. There was a sense of urgency, of horizons expanding, and new ones opening, not least for millworkers organising for self-improvement.

Market Street was built in the 1880s. Joseph bought a plot and built retail premises which are occupied by Element today. At the same time, river pollution and sanitation were big issues. I drew on a report into a typhoid epidemic to illustrate just how big an issue it was for the town.

Education looms large in the story. So too Manchester. It was the focus of the cotton trade. And for Joseph it was his source for materials and finished goods. What was it like for a young man from a small town to encounter Manchester in its extraordinary heyday?

The business by 1900 was prospering. And yet the family left suddenly. Another strand to the story was non-conformity. There lies the probable explanation. Wesleyan Methodism gave the family its moral compass. Joseph's daughter became pregnant by a local lad who lived just a few doors away from their smart new family home on Birchcliffe Road. It seems she refused to marry him. To avoid the ignominy of an illegitimate birth the family left town.

One final puzzle lay ahead for me as I wrote the book. How best to publish? Self-publishing proved the best option. I could work with editor and designer directly and not through a third party. It's a route that guarantees that it is always your book – there's no publisher with their own ideas who you can blame!

Christopher Collier, March 2025

Available locally at The Book Case on Market Street for £12.95

Archive and Family History Research

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 Tuesday mornings between 10 am and 1 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 Tuesday 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