



The Bugle



Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

On 1st October 2008 I was privileged to be elected as Chairman of our Society to help guide it through the next 12 months. Before accepting the nomination I was acutely aware of the task I was taking on because the previous incumbent, Doug Ashmore, having been with the Society from its very beginnings, has done a marvellous job in bringing the Society to the present day and I realised I would have a "big act to follow". However, thankfully Doug is still keen to play a part in the administration of the Society and was elected to the committee, and I know I can rely on him for advice and guidance. This was also important from a continuity point of view as one of the initial priorities for me was to make sure that all the events that the previous administration had committed the Society to be involved with were actually seen through.

These included two events at Gallery Oldham. The first a long term display, starting on 8th November, of Local Monuments. Samples of building materials excavated during the Royton Hall digs have been lent to the organisers, along with the 13 minute summary video that was shown at Olympia in London as part of our Marsh Award bid. Next, on the 15th November, was the RLHS stand at the 'Oldham Family and Local History Day' held at the Gallery. On show here we had our Royton Hall Excavation display panels, our speakers programme, DVDs for sale plus various freebies.

Also organised by the previous administration was the Lancashire Day celebrations on the 27th November with the town crier reading the proclamation from the library steps, a lunch and concert at Trinity Methodists Church and a 'Lancashire Evening' at the Haggate.

Not much time for me to settle in to the job but thankfully I have the strong support of our excellent Society Secretary, Jess Wild who is very much on top of everything and is keeping me 'on my toes'.

One of the proposals put forward at the AGM was for new projects for members to 'get their teeth into' now that the Royton Hall excavation is almost complete apart from some outstanding administrative work and footprinting the site, which can not be done until Spring 2009 at the earliest. Quite fortuitously a new project has reared its head after a new national political initiative was announced at a forum held at the Local Studies Library in Oldham. More details about this project can be found in an special write up about the forum below, but I would urge members to become involved in this as in the past too many historical sites in the Oldham Borough have been lost due to the march of 'progress' and 'improvement'.

Also new to our committee is Beryl Lever who has taken on the role of treasurer. Beryl brings with her the experience of being treasurer at another society and has already computerised our accounts. Beryl takes over after the retirement of Margaret Carter. Margaret has also been a member from the earliest days of the Society and although did not want a committee role is still keen to be involved.

At this point I would once again like to express my thanks and appreciation to the outgoing committee members for their hard work and dedication in developing and looking after our Society. I look forward to continuing the process and I am confident that, although we are a History Society, with your support we can take the Society very much into the future.

May I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and I look forward to seeing you have a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Geoff Oliver, Chairman



Unique Opportunity to save Royton's Heritage

On Tuesday 4th November Geoff Oliver, Frances Stott, Michael Higgins and I attended the inaugural meeting of the council run **Heritage Advisory Forum**. Arnis Buklovskis (Principal planning officer) and Karen Heverin (Conservation officer) made it clear that the proposed Heritage Bill could change the face of planning law with it's introduction of 'Local Lists'. **Any group or individual member of the public can propose a building or site for this list which, if approved, will give protection from some of the worst excesses of modern development.**

Councillor Mike Buckley (the council's Heritage Champion), councillor Jackie Stanton (deputy Council leader) and councillor Uddin (Chair of Regeneration) wholeheartedly endorsed the officer presentations and confirmed the Council's commitment to heritage.

We came away from the meeting, which was attended by other local history society representatives, with the sense that it is now or never if we are to protect Royton's heritage. We need to commit to the project and help to create that list. The work will be officer led with pro-forma, training sessions and an action timetable. If we are genuinely interested then we need to take an active part in recording buildings and sites of historic interest in Royton and making the case for their preservation.

The four of us who attended the meeting are up for it we hope you are too!

Margaret Malcolmson

Memories

Those of you who came to our December 2007 meeting will no doubt have enjoyed the fun evening provided by our guest speaker Raymond Rush. He told us that for ten years he had his own slot on Radio Stoke-on-Trent, talking about country matters, as well making numerous television appearances. He also wrote a monthly newspaper column which, many years later, was turned into book form. Raymond has kindly given me permission to print extracts from his 'Countrywise' books:-

"One of the questions I am often asked by the younger generation is: "What did people find to do on winter evenings before they had television?" We didn't even have electricity on the farm where I grew up so the fireplace was our focal point of attention. Whenever possible folks sat around the fire, the nearer you sat the warmer you got. The big drawback with those fires was the draught, your front was roasting while your back was frozen from the cold wind whistling through the cracks and keyholes of the four doors and three windows of our farmhouse kitchen. Thick curtains covered the doors and cloth 'sausages' lay at the base to try to prevent the wind penetrating. Window cracks were sealed by stuffing them with lengths of folded newspapers but they often worked loose and were blown out by the draught from an outside gale.

Mum would sit near the fire and, by an oil lamp's meagre light, sew a patch on dad's trousers, turn the collar of a shirt, darn the heels on my woollen socks or find a few precious minutes to relax and embroider another flower on her tea cosy, cushion cover or tray cloth. My granny seemed to be permanently preoccupied with making peg rugs on a hessian base - usually a thick sack. Whether large, small, rectangular or round rugs, the outer border was nearly always of dark scraps of cloth made from ancient overcoats that, through years of wear, had become threadbare. They were washed, the buttons cut off and put into the overflowing button tin, then the cloth cut into thin strips about four inches long. The inner and more interesting coloured and patterned area came from dresses, skirts, blouses, stockings and shirts that had worn out or long since gone out of fashion. Peg rugs were very hard wearing and when new had pride of place as hearth rugs, welcomed by our cats and dogs who would otherwise have lain on the cold stone quarry floor tiles.

Meanwhile Dad was digesting the latest livestock prices, news and views in the local paper. He also had farm magazines and seed catalogues to study, planned the food for the stock and the crops for the fields.

One of my tasks was to fold and cut squares from old newspapers and comics. A darning needle threaded with a length of thin twine was passed through one corner of every piece, the string looped and tied, and we had another weeks supply of toilet paper! Nothing was ever wasted in those days - not even our time - before we had the distraction of television."

Raymond Rush

A few tips there that might help us get through this recession!! What do YOU remember of your childhood? Let me know and perhaps you can share your memories with others through the pages of The Bugle..... Jess Wild

Those of you who enjoyed Raymond's talk last December will be pleased to know that he is to speak to us again at our January 2009 meeting about 'Toys and Games'.

Early Oldham

On 11 Sept I attended a very interesting talk on Early Oldham given by Roger Ivens at Oldham Local Studies Library. Mr Ivens gave a general outline of the history of the north of England relating to the Oldham area, particularly the Roman road network between Mamucium (Manchester) and the fort at Castleshaw. He outlined political and tribal development after the Empire and the existence of the Celtic kingdom of Rheged. We have few place names from this era, although Werneth (old and modern Welsh 'gwernydd' - an alder grove) is thought to be one. Most place names such as Royton, Chadderton, Crompton etc. are Anglian from the time invaders from over the Pennines established the old English speaking kingdom of Northumbria (Kingdom north of the Humber).

Mr Ivens developed the 'Yorkshire theme' by listing the earliest owners and tenants of land in modern Oldham and Crompton. The two townships were, in the late 12th century, part of a large manor or estate known as Kaskenmoor. The earliest known landowner was Ailric of Cawthorne, a thegn who held large holdings of land in Yorkshire as well as Kaskenmoor in 1131. His son, Swain (like his father's, a true northern English name) was succeeded by his son Adam Fitz Swain (a decidedly Norman name). The Fitz Swains sublet land in Kaskenmoor and one of the tenants in 1212 was Raynor de Wombwell who rented Oldham and Werneth. Wombwell is located in Yorkshire and Raynor was associated with property near Pontefract. The family holdings were divided through marriage and eventually Kaskenmoor became divided under local landlords and tenants.

He also spoke of the development of first a chapel and then a church at Oldham which was located in lands given to the Knights Hospitaller at Horsedge in the 12th century. Coldhurst and Derker were also Hospitaller lands which became important private estates after the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

Horsedge was once surrounded by 7 holy crosses, the base of one - 'The cross in the towne' - was found during paving work in Manchester Street in the late 1800s.

The talk ended with illustrations of the old, squat, dilapidated medieval church which was demolished in 1827 to make way for the present parish church. It is a pity that the original architect, Sir Charles Barry was not allowed to proceed with his intention of preserving some of the old walls within the new. The new church was eventually designed by Richard Lane of Manchester at a much cheaper cost.

Cllr Mike Buckley thanked Mr Ivens for his informative talk and said he had started a debate and hoped that it would lead to further inquiries into the area's early history.

Michael Higgins

Famous Roytonians

Continuing his articles on Famous Roytonians, in this edition Doug Ashmore tells us about another Royton mathematician - John Butterworth.

John Butterworth

The noted mathematician, JOHN BUTTERWORTH, also known as Owd Jack o' Ben's, was born at Haggate, Royton on the 16th February 1774 to very humble parents. His father was a handloom weaver and John followed the same occupation. He was sent to work at the tender age of six years, and put to work on a Dutch wheel for the princely sum of 1 shilling and 4 pence per week. He had very little schooling and was in his late teens before he could write tolerably.

A stray copy of a mathematical journal is said to have first turned his attention to maths, although another account says it was an almanac. It doesn't really matter which it was, but it aroused his interest and started his journey into his chosen profession. Having associated himself with other like-minded people in the neighbourhood who were fond of geometry, Butterworth soon began to give evidence of his rapid progress in his favourite subject. He joined a Mathematical Club in Oldham, of which Wolfenden (featured in the next edition of The Bugle) was a member, and he became so proficient at his chosen subject that he was competent to answer most of the geometrical questions asked of him. His first written contribution appeared in the 'Gentleman's Mathematical Companion' in 1801, other contributions were made to the 'Enquirer', 'The Leeds Correspondent', the 'Northumbrian Mirror', the 'Ladies Diary', the 'Gentleman's Diary' and 'Modern Geometry'. One wonders how much he received for these contributions - probably very little or even nothing at all.

So what do we know of his talents? To his credit, his most important job was being entrusted with the calculations of the strains of the Menai Suspension Bridge which is carried by vertical wrought iron rods hanging from chains. A mechanical engineer of the day explained that "the strains produced by the catenary" would be difficult to calculate, but the final strength would be determined by actual experiment". **Telford**, who was responsible for the design of the bridge, was found on his hands and knees praying when the testing time came! However, it proved to be a success and the bridge has stood the test of time. The building work started in 1819 and was completed in 1826. It was 521 metres long and connected Wales to Anglesey.

*Catenary, the dictionary tells us, is a curve formed by a uniform chain hanging freely from two points not in the same vertical line. Or - Catenary Bridge - a suspension bridge hung from such chains.

Not being married, John continued to live with his parents until his mother died in 1837. In his later years he started a small day school in his house, and taught a few factory children at nights. He managed to live for a number of years on his scanty income of around 15 shillings a week. He sometimes made an extra 6d or a shilling by solving mathematical questions for people who then claimed the credit and, being an honest man, he found this regrettable but necessary to survive. A Mr W. Binney said of him "He is a fine stout old man, having an extraordinary massive head covered with snow white hair, and a countenance beaming with intelligence and good nature". He was known to boast that he had never slept a night away from Royton Lane, 55 years having been spent in the same house.

During 1842-3 his health rapidly declined so a subscription fund was set up for him by his friends, and for the last few years of his life he received 5 shillings a week from the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. It was stated at the time "that this, with frugality and care, enabled him to live comfortably".

He died in 1845 at the age of 71 and was interred in St, Paul's Churchyard, Royton. A memorial tablet was placed on his grave as a tribute of respect by his friends of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, in the hope that future scholars would be encouraged to follow his blameless way of life in their chosen field. A memorial tablet was also fixed inside the church, which bore the following inscription:-

"His abilities, upright conduct, meekness of disposition, and unassuming manners, gained for him that esteem so justly due to modest worth."

Doug Ashmore

Sources :- Rev C E Shaw, Varley's Royton Annual, J W Kershaw, Bruce Langridge - Oldham Interest Centre.



The Chairman and committee of Royton Local History Society would like to wish everyone

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS and A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR



Visit the R.L.H.S. websites at www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk or www.rlhs.co.uk

