
The Bugle

Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

Chairman's Message

After a meeting with Councillor Roberts where she told me there was some money available for a historical project in Royton, I requested suggestions from members. You responded very nicely and I was able to get back to Cllr Roberts with a list of about 10 suggestions. Some projects were quite large and probably very costly. Others were smaller and obviously much cheaper. To cut the story short, after a couple of meetings and phone calls it would appear that the Blue Plaque mounted on the commemorative stone at the Royton Hall site will be refurbished and a signpost to Hall site will be erected in the shopping precinct and directing people to the site.

Now that the changes to our town centre are going ahead it will be necessary to edit our Royton Walks booklets. These were written by Frances Stott and Michael Higgins some years ago and have proved so popular that a second print run had to be done to cope with the demand. Once again numbers are running low and now is an ideal time to rewrite the necessary parts to reflect the changes in Royton's development. The demolition of the Baths and the new supermarket to be built are major changes that will have to be included along with smaller ones like the re-siting of the Mounting Steps from the shopping precinct back to Downey House. Frances and Michael are now involved with making the changes to the booklets. The present booklets can be downloaded in PDF format from our website www.rlhs.co.uk

Once again we celebrated Lancashire Day this year on Friday 27th of November. The Lancashire Flag was installed on the flagpole outside the Town Hall and at 11am in the Library Michael Higgins read a short address which included a Lancashire poem that he read in dialect. After this we trooped outside where the Town Crier rang his bell and read the Lancashire Proclamation. I would like to thank Michael, our local councillors, Town Hall and Library staff and Chadderton Historical Society for the loan of their Town Crier.

Finally I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you again in 2016. Please remember that our first meeting is on March 14 when Dr Robert Poole will tell us about James Butterworth, Oldham's first historian who lived in Royton for a period of his life.

Geoff Oliver, Chairman

Christmas in Royton, 1865

The ending of the American Civil War during the year also ended the resulting Cotton Famine and the part time stoppage of most of Royton's mills. But it would take several months for trade to resume and for Royton to get back to any sort of pre-war life. The new railway Station and warehouses at Highbarn would do a lot to speed up transport of spun and woven cotton back through Oldham and outward to finishing processes and the world. Consequently seasonal events seem rather low-key as reported in the newspapers of the day.

The election of 1865 helped to stimulate minds as the great trade depression eased and mixed feelings of political affinity flared up in July in Cooper Square where the candidates, John Morgan Cobbett and Sergeant Spinks, addressed a crowd of 2,000 persons, both men trying to prove that one of them was not a Conservative. But two other events stand out in this year as a prelude to Christmas entertainment: the appearance of two great Lancashire dialect poets and storytellers, names still prominent today. One was Ben Brierley, of Failsworth and Hollinwood, who made his first public visit to Royton in April. At a crowded St Paul's National School in Chapel Croft he read from several of his stories and poems, including Cure for Love, Bradey's Visit to Thistledown Hall, and the Hazel Clough Boggart. Thomas Seville, of Elm House, was in the chair, supported by Rev. Richard Hill, the long serving

vicar, and his curate, Rev Henderson. The School's singing class also entertained as well, in the hope of raising money for a new harmonium. This must have whet many appetites for on November 27, as a warm-up for the upcoming Christmas parties, Ben's great rival and then more famous author, Edwin Waugh of Rochdale gave his own readings to a packed school of 750 Lancashire dialect lovers. He too was assisted by the Royton Choristers and thanked by Thomas Seville.

The official Christmas party in St Paul's National School took place on 23 December when Whitworth Riley was presented with a family bible for his 24 years as a teacher. Sixty teachers and colleagues were present. Royton Village School also held a tea party for 250. The Tonic Sol Fa La association sang glees and 'sacred' music. Not to be outdone the Congregational School filled their hall with 300 guests. Other churches and schools to hold tea parties were the General Baptists, at their church and hall in Park Road (Rochdale Road), The Luzley Brook Wesleyans held their party hosted by Samuel Schofield of Heyside House. To set the tone for this very downbeat year, the Temperance Society, along with the Rechabites, held their annual 'do' at the Temperance Seminary in Park Road (lately Casa Belmondo) where they soberly toasted the season with 'the cup that cheers but not inebriates'. The Methodist Chapel in Fir Lane did not hold their party for 150 until 6 January.

The mills were back in the business of holding parties too. Henry Lowe presided over singing and dancing to a band of music at the Union Mill, Union Street, where 200 hands were fed and entertained. Oranges and biscuits were distributed to the employees, who responded by a vote of thanks to the proprietors, Mr and Mrs Milne and George Seville. Shiloh Mill, shared by Messrs Rothwell and Scragg, and Thomas and John Holden, held their 'feast' at the Greyhound Inn. Royton Lane Mill went that little bit further when Mrs John Holden distributed money to the hands: Spinners and Jobbers received 2 shillings sixpence, Cardroom hands and winders 1 shilling, and weavers sixpence. At the California Mill (part of Springhill Mill) shared by Messrs Taylor and Cooper, the workers had to be happy with a ticket to the Rechabite tea party at the Temperance Seminary.

Not all social or works parties made the papers of course. But one pub unfortunately did. Sally Lund, the wife of the landlord of the Shoulder of Mutton in High Street was convicted of assaulting her mother-in-law with a knife handle in the pub in early December and given a fine of 40 shillings or 40 days hard labour. She had appeared at Royton Magistrates' Court in an intoxicated state. A crowd of sympathisers followed her as she was escorted to Royton Railway station to begin her jail sentence in Salford. It was reported that her aggrieved husband, eventually got over her assault on his elderly mother and consented to pay Sally's fine. Whatever the ending of this squabble John Lund was able to host the annual dinner of the Order of Foresters. James Davies presided over an evening of songs and recitations and Mr Thomas Ashworth 'played several pieces on the accordion'.

St Paul's School tea party on New Year's Day was a fitting end to the festivities when Reverend Hill wished them all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year by also giving the children a present from the Christmas Tree, a new innovation in Royton. He also had some good news on the missionary front. The church authorities had rented a house for Divine Worship in, of all places, Heyside. Eventually they hoped to build a church there, His curate, Rev Henderson, then outlined the hard task ahead as he described the 'primitive' character of Heyside. Looking at the daunting task he said that they were 'in the same state the Apostles of Old were in'. However hard the task St Paul's missionaries faced we do know in hindsight that the vision of building St Mark's did come to fruition. But that is for the future, beyond 1866.

Sources: Oldham Chronicle 1 April, 2, 9, 30 December 1865, 6 January 1866; Oldham Standard 11 July, 30 December 1865, 13 January 1866

Michael Higgins

Royton Local History Society on the Internet at www.rlhs.co.uk
A member of The British Association for Local History
A member of the Friends of Real Lancashire