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# The Bugle

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## Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

### Chairman's Message

We have now arrived at the end of the 2014/15 and will take our summer break until resuming again in September. Our secretary Jess Wild is putting together our new talks programme and I'd like to thank her for the time and effort she puts into doing this each year. I would also like to thank her for producing the Bugle for the past eight years. Michael Higgins has taken this job on board so if you have any interesting stories please pass them on to him. I'm sure he'll be glad to receive them. And a big thank you for taking this on.

I'd like to remind you about two requests I made in the March edition of the Bugle. The first is the preservation of the stonework above the entrance of the swimming baths. In the past we have made representation to the councillors in order to try to preserve the carved stonework and somehow display/incorporate it in the new building. Councillor Bashforth is fully supportive of our request and would like to hear suggestions of how this should be done. If you have any thoughts on this matter please let me know and I will log all and present them to Cllr. Bashforth at a meeting to be arranged sometime soon. If you would like to be present at the meeting and put forward your suggestion personally I can arrange that too.

Secondly, the Youth and Children's services have now moved out of our Town Hall which has freed up a large room on the top floor of the building. Cllr. Bashforth is proposing. To use this space for a Royton Museum. Once again he is asking our help in planning this and although there are already some exhibits in storage he would like donations of artefacts, either on loan or as gifts, to the town that can be put on display. We would also be involved with creating information boards to describe the displayed items. If you would like to be involved in any aspect of this project please let me know. Money has also been made available for a complete refurbishment of the building and suggestions for what facilities should be provided are now being sought.

I can assure you that suggestions put forward to councillors are taken seriously. An example of this is society member Elisabeth Johnson, who requested that the commemorative granite stone near the Oozewood Road entrance to Tandle Hill Park be cleaned and the inscription made clear and easy to read. The stone was erected in 1919 when the Park was gifted to Royton by Norris Bradbury as a hope for peace after the First World War. Elizabeth suggested that as it was a memorial stone it should be refurbished as part of the Oldham borough's WWI commemorations.

As a result of her request not only was the stone cleaned and the lettering repainted it was repositioned to a more prominent location a couple of yards away and rotated so that the inscription faces the paths and not the trees. The stone now glistens and sparkles in the sunlight and can be easily seen when approached from within the Park or from the Oozewood Road entrance.

Geoff Oliver, Chairman

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## Waterloo and Royton?

The Battle of Waterloo, fought on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1815, ended the reign of Napoleon and 23 years of European war. Roytonians won't be making a fuss at the bicentenary in June and references to local men in the battle are elusive. But we do know two Middleton men were definitely at Waterloo, and one from Oldham gained notoriety by surviving the battle but dying at Peterloo. Peterloo itself was a sarcastic reference to Wellington's great victory and the use of troops to disperse the St Peter's Field reform meeting in Manchester four years later. Many of those reformers had been drilled to march in step by army veterans on Tandle Hill beforehand.

Tandle Hill is now in Royton but was then part of Middleton and was a game park belonging to Lord Suffield. Lord of the Manor. Demobilised soldiers, out of work because of the decline of the cottage handloom industry, blamed the war, lack of parliamentary representation, and the post war Corn Laws for their distress. Local veterans also found that while they were fighting Napoleon ( the so-called 'Tyrant' who had conquered all of Europe, and who had made his brothers European kings and nobles) a long-standing peace party in Royton had been supporting French Revolutionary ideals. Napoleon himself revived revolutionary fervour after he escaped from exile in early 1815 to re-arm France. He promoted egalitarian symbols of the Revolution such as Liberty caps and slogans to gain support for renewed war.

One returned Waterloo veteran was Middleton reformer James Brierley, the father of Failsworth dialect writer Ben. We know he had served in Captain Whinyates's rocket troop of the Royal Horse Artillery during the campaign and was therefore in action during the retreat to Waterloo when the unit at first destroyed a following French horse artillery gun and crew with a direct hit, but then sent its next rockets careering wildly amongst allied cavalry as well as the enemy. Wellington ordered Whinyates to pack up his rockets and stick to his cannon instead. Undeterred, Whinyates fired over 50 rockets at a column of enemy infantry and utterly disorganised them before British Heavy cavalry charged and dispersed them in the battle itself. Was James Brierley wearing his Waterloo Medal at Peterloo four years later? Another Middleton man is known to have served in the British heavy cavalry at Waterloo. Was he at Peterloo ?

The ranks of the reformers were full of such veterans. In preparing for the great demonstration planned for St Peter's Field in Manchester a sergeant of the 95<sup>th</sup> Rifles, helped to train over a thousand men on Tandle Hill to march by column and tactical wings, including rifle drill. The 95<sup>th</sup> were an elite regiment and had defended a sandpit and hill in front of Wellington's line at Waterloo. The men thought it a bit of fun; the authorities certainly didn't and smelt insurrection and treason. (Royton man Tom Bluett was an ex army bugler who called the men to drill on Tandle Hill and his bugle gives this bulletin its name). Predictably the Middleton contingent sent a battalion strength unit to Peterloo complete with military band, battalion flags and a cap of Liberty on a pole. Other towns had 'awkward squads' who marched like comical half- trained recruits. Royton also had a Female contingent dressed in their Sunday Best with their own banner. Some 60,000 reformers eventually marched in. But were they real soldiers or mere protesters?

Unfortunately one hero of Waterloo was not at Manchester that day. Respected General Sir John Byng, whose brigade of footguards had successfully defended the Chateau d' Hougoumont throughout the battle, had been asked to command the real troops defending Manchester. He sent a subordinate instead and the committee of Magistrates mismanaged reading the riot act. The Local half trained Manchester Yeomanry bungled an arrest attempt and provoked a fight around the banners. The 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars, some wearing their Waterloo Medals, were sent in to save them and helped to disperse the crowd. The hussars had covered Byng's right flank at Waterloo and had charged both enemy cavalry, and infantry, whilst enduring a cannonade which took off the leg of their colonel, Leighton Dalrymple. One-legged Dalrymple led the regiment at Peterloo too. The result was some 15 reformers dead and 700 wounded. Byng soon regretted his absence, he was commandant of the northern military district and well known for his skill in crowd control.

At Waterloo there were 50,000 total casualties and it took four days to collect all the wounded scattered on the field. It took far longer to burn or bury the dead. It was with this in mind that Royton Poet James Taylor wrote about local men killed in 'the bloody war' and fantasised that they were buried in Royton Churchyard. Whatever happened at Peterloo (and it will have a more brash local bicentenary commemoration in 2019) perhaps we can pause a minute to think of the shadow that Waterloo cast over it.

Michael Higgins

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### Peterloo 200th Anniversary Commemoration Committee

The next meeting to plan events for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peterloo in 2019 will be held at Manchester Metropolitan University on Wednesday 10 June at 6:pm. All are welcome so if anyone wishes to go would they contact Claire Turner [claire@manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk](mailto:claire@manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk)

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A member of The British Association for Local History  
A member of the Friends of Real Lancashire