

Our December meeting of the Royton Local History Society at Downey House had a different, but very enjoyable, format. Instead of having a guest speaker we were all the guest speakers and proved willing, after a glass or two of wine, to share our Christmas memories with the membership. None so more than myself as I recounted the story of when I was evacuated to Poynton in 1941 to escape Hitler's bombs in Manchester. I was in the dining room of the house of the Wood family, when suddenly I heard the sound of a bomb screaming down. I immediately flung myself underneath the table to howls of laughter from the Wood's. Then one of them went into the kitchen and turned the gas off from under the whistling kettle. I very sheepishly climbed from under the table to gales of laughter!!

Royton Hall Dig

A group of our members, chaired by Michael Higgins, are currently looking at the possibilities of having a further excavation at the Hall. This new project will be known as 'Royton Lives Through the Ages Project 2'. I feel sure that everyone wishes them well with this project and hopes it has the same success as the two previous digs. (see below)

Forthcoming Event

Our April meeting will be deferred to the third Monday of the month - 16th April. This is because the second Monday (our usual meeting day) falls on Easter Monday. Phil Ellis has kindly agreed to give a talk on "Getting to Know your Ancestors", a subject that I am sure will interest many of you. Phil tells me that he has been interested in the subject for about 20 years now. He has also agreed to run a genealogy group within the society for the benefit of interested parties. The committee would like to thank Phil for this gesture and wish it every success as we feel this fills a much needed niche.

Community Involvement

Our society is presently meeting with neighbouring local history societies and council officers, to devise a scheme to oversee the conservation and preservation of the borough's historical buildings. A number of council owned buildings in Royton come under our brief. Six being considered of high priority. Frances Stott, Pearl Malcolmson and Janet Green have documented each of these, detailing their features, histories and physical condition. The buildings are:- Royton Library, Royton Town Hall, Royton Baths, Byron Street School, High Barn School and the Cemetery Chapel.

We, as a local history society, should be looking at documenting other important historical buildings which are not council owned any volunteers?

Doug Ashmore, Chairman



Royton Lives Through the Ages - Project 2

A committee, made up of sixteen members of the Royton Local History Society, are trying to raise enough money to carry out another dig at the site of old Royton Hall, to explore the areas which have not been excavated to date. The amount needed has to cover the cost of archaeologists fees, hire of toilets, equipment and insurance. The committee intend to apply for various grants and are in the process of sending out letters asking for sponsorship. All the profits from the sale of the DVDs about the previous digs are going towards the project, as are the proceeds from the raffles held at our monthly meetings. This committee would like to thank all the members of Royton Local History Society for their continuing support.

Michael Higgins, Chairman R.L.T.A.2



Memories

The first memory is from Mrs Edith Walker (nee Shaw) and friends:

In 1935 I remember that there was great excitement and celebrations for the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. I attended St Pauls School at the time and all the junior school children in Royton were given a commemorative china beaker by Royton Urban District Council. I still have mine and I'm sure there are a lot of others still lurking in the back of cupboards all over Royton and further afield!

As well as receiving the china beaker, on the day all the school children in Royton were taken to Tandle Hills. Full of excitement we made our way to the park, some went by tram to Tandle Hill Road and others walked. Once in the park we gathered together and sang the song "Fairest Isle" which, by that time, we hated as we had been practising it for weeks beforehand at school just for this occasion. As well as singing we all did country dancing in the park.

A friend also remembers been given a commemorative 'medal' which was attached to a red, white and blue ribbon. The 'medal' had the heads of the King and Queen on it. I can't remember getting one but I'm going to have a good look at the back of the drawers - just in case I did!!



Janet Peers recalls another story from her 'bellringing' days:

When I was a teenager there were ways of making money as a bellringer by ringing the curfew bell.

During the 1400's a traveller was caught in the marshes of the area known today as Page Moss. Hearing the bells of St. Michael's Church, Huyton, he managed to get to safety. In gratitude, he arranged payment for a Curfew Bell to be rung at 8pm each evening during the Winter months. If my memory serves me right, this was roughly from October to March.

We all took a night each and had to collect the Church key from the Vicarage, which was along a very dark path between huge mature trees. Then, with the huge old key, had to go the Church, unlock the door and make our way through to the belfry. The curfew itself consisted of ringing the date on the treble bell (i.e. If it was the 6th day of the month, we had to toll the treble bell, to make the clapper hit the bell 6 times), and then transferring to the third bell and ringing that bell for about ten minutes. When you had finished bellringing it was a case of reversing the process with the key, until you could finally reach the road and street lighting again!

We had to wait until the end of March before we got paid, and the amount was 7/6p. Which, by my reckoning, works out at about threepence ha'penny per ring! I recently spoke to the present Belfry Master, and he still rings the curfew as often as he can.

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Our last memory in this edition is from Nora Goodlad:

I was born in the front room of Highlands Farm on the 3rd May 1921 and I believe Mrs Blomley, who was the local midwife delivered me. As well as being a midwife she used to 'lay' people out when they died - in those days people were kept in their home until the funeral took place.

I had a brother called Leonard, who was older than me, and we enjoyed living on the farm. We used to go to the shippon every morning with our mugs and my dad used to put the milk right from the cow into our mugs - it was lovely and warm! One year, at Whitsuntide, we went round knocking on doors to show off our new clothes - this was the usual thing to do in those days. When we got home our Mum wanted to know where we had got the pennies from, so we were 'in hot water' for that! The thing was that most of the houses we went to were customers of my Dad's milk round. My Dad told them that we would NOT be doing it again!

We went to St. Pauls day school and also Sunday school. We also used to go to the Institute at St. Pauls when they held Whist Drives and Dances. I remember they used to dance the 'Lancers' which is not done these days. We would have a pie and a cake at the interval and then slide around on the floor.

Sometimes, on Sunday night, we would go to Granny and Grandad Miller's house, they lived at Cow Gates Farm. My Dad used to say "Our Nora will be asleep when we get there!" He had to carry me home as there were no cars in those days.

When I was about seven we left Highlands and moved to Low Crompton Farm. It was quite a walk to school in the morning over the golf links, then back again for our dinner, then back to school for the afternoon, but it didn't do us any harm.

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