

On Friday 15th February Marjorie and I attended the 'Post Dig Do' at Royton Oddfellows Club, Union Street held for all those involved with the 2007 Royton Hall dig. It was really well attended with Adam Thompson of M.U.A.U. giving a wonderful presentation of the dig. As usual it has left lots of unanswered questions, which makes archaeology what it is, unpredictable and lots of fun. During the evening Frances Stott gave out the news that the Royton Hall excavation project was in line to be included as one of the finalists, in the forthcoming 'Marsh Award for Community Archaeology' held in Olympia in May (see below). What an accolade it would be for Royton Local History Society, all the volunteers and the community of Royton as a whole if we were to be the winners of the First Prize of £1000. I understand that there is some fierce competition, however may be the best dig win!

In mentioning Royton Oddfellows Club I notice in a story from the Oldham Chronicle that the club shut its doors for the last time on Sunday 24th February 2008 after serving customers there for 137 years. According to reports it is up for sale at around £200,000, which is about the sum that 'Whispers' paid for Royton Assembly Hall five or six years ago. Lets hope that they don't hear about this impending sale or we may end up with yet another grey monstrosity on our doorsteps! The real and only Royton Hall has been dug up and backfilled 3 times since the 'new' Royton Hall (the new name given to the old Assembly Hall) was bought, and which now lies unfinished, unused, unloved and a blot on Royton's landscape.

Now on an entirely different tack. You may have gathered that I have, among other things, a deep and admiring admiration for some of the local achievers, particularly those from the early 18th and 19th centuries, and from Royton in the main. In my researching Wolfenden, Butterworth and Kay, all eminent in their studies of the sciences, I have come to realise that all these scholars had one thing in common, they were all self taught. I must also include John Mellor the Botanist and James Taylor as well, who couldn't write properly until he was 27 years of age. I have put together a pen picture of some of these 'heroes' for the Bugle and I start with the great Ben Brierley, the Lancashire dialect writer from Failsworth, just a few miles down the road.

**Doug Ashmore, Chairman**



## Royton Lives Through the Ages

### THE MARSH AWARD FOR COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

Everyone on the 'Royton Lives Through the Ages' committee, past and present, were delighted to hear that our excavation project at Royton Hall has been short-listed as one of the four finalists for the above award. To be one of the finalists is a massive achievement as, according to the Council for British Archaeology, "a good number of very high quality nominations were received." This is a very welcome reward for all the hard work done over the past years and acknowledgement that we have played our part within the community. Each finalist will receive a certificate signed by senior figures from the Council for British Archaeology and the Marsh Christian Trust. The names of the finalists, and the identity of the projects which have been given a Highly Commended award, will be published in the CBA's "British Archaeology" magazine.

We heard about the award 'through the grapevine' via one of our volunteers and our thanks go to Frances Stott and Pearl Malcolmson for putting together a full report about the project for our entry. All the entries were initially judged by members of the Council for British Archaeology who short-listed four. These were forwarded to Brian Marsh OBE, Chairman of the Marsh Christian Trust, for him to decide on the winner which will be announced at the 'Discover Archaeology LIVE' event being held at Olympia in London on Friday 2nd May. In addition to the presentation there will be an opportunity for each of the finalists to talk about their project. We hope to send a representative to the event to talk about the Royton Hall excavations and to (hopefully) pick up the cheque!!

But seriously, if we win or are a runner up, to know that we are one of the top four community archaeology projects in the country in 2006/7 is reward enough and must make everyone connected with the digs feel very proud indeed. However, the biggest thanks possible goes to all of you who volunteered to take part in the 'digs' over the years. As the saying goes "we couldn't have done it without you!" Keep those fingers crossed for 2nd May.

**Michael Higgins, Chairman RLTA Project 2**





## Ben Brierley - from Weaver to Writer



Born into a very poor family of weavers in Failsworth in 1825, Ben Brierley was destined to become one the leading lights of writing in the Lancashire dialect, and achieved local notoriety by his recital of these works to working men's clubs.

An early love of reading, encouraged by his uncle, and inspiration from the works of John Byrom, Shelley and Shakespeare, maintained his devotion to literary matters, such that he took employment as sub-editor of the Oldham Times where he worked until 1862. He was also co-founder of the Failsworth Mechanics Institute, with the aim of improving the lot of working men, which he undoubtedly did.

Nobody could accuse Brierley of being work-shy by any stretch of the imagination. He was an original member of the Manchester Literary Club, he served as a City Councillor from 1875 until 1881, and was on the Free Libraries Committee, where he pushed for working class reform.

He was popular with his readers because his writings told of every day happenings and social comment that they could easily identify with. At the age of thirty he began to contribute articles to local papers, and the republication of some of his sketches of Lancashire characters in 'A Summer Day in Daisy Nook' (1859) attracted lots of attention.

In 1863 he definitely took to journalism and literature as his work and published, in that year, his "Chronicles of Waverlow". A story called "The Layrock of Langley side", published in 1864, was later dramatized and this was followed by many others. He wrote a weekly entitled 'Ben Brierley's Journal' which remained in publication until 1891, and gave public readings of his own writings, visiting America in 1880 and 1884. Did they understand his Lancashire accent when he said "Im Going Whoam" you may well ask?

I have two of his books - one is entitled 'Irkdale' which strangely contains another book by Edwin Waugh called 'Yeth-Bobs an Scaplins'. The other book is called 'The Cottages of Mossburn' which could so easily be Moston with it's hall, now under archaeological excavation. This book is in fine condition and was first published in 1856.

In 1884 he lost all his savings through the failure of a Building Society. A fund was raised for his support for which I am sure he was eternally grateful as there was no dole in those days!

He died in 1896 and two years later a statue was erected to him in Queen's Park, Harpurhey, Manchester. All that remains today is the plinth but Brierley is remembered with a new bronze statue situated at Failsworth Pole, just yards from his birthplace in Oldham Road. A memorial that the people of Failsworth feel justifiably proud of.

**Doug Ashmore**



DID YOU KNOW :-

*Ben Brierley's father James Brierley was born in Middleton. It is said that he was a soldier at one time and fought at Waterloo in 1815. He also marched to Peterloo in 1819, as a member of the Middleton contingent led by Sam Bamford, so he would almost certainly have attended open air meetings and drilled in Tandle Hill as described in the December edition of The Bugle.*

Which leads me very nicely on to this:- Did you spot the deliberate (?) mistake in December's 'Bugle'?

In the article 'Tandle Hill and the Royton Bugle' it spoke thus about Peterloo:- "On the fatal day, AUGUST 19th, 1819, both Royton clubs marched in columns via Oldham, where they joined in with the Oldham, Saddleworth, Lees and Mossley Clubs. The Rochdale and Middleton contingents, 3,000 strong, also led by a bugler, and forming square, line and column in their various 'regiments', made their own way to Manchester."

SORRY, it should have read AUGUST 16th not the 19th.

**Editor**



## Memories



*Marjorie Ashmore, our membership secretary, sent me these lovely memories but can anybody help her out please?*

“A few weeks ago we spent a very pleasant couple of days with Doug's sister and her husband. One of our conversations was about local traditions and how Derbyshire has its own that are very different to our "Lanky" ones. I mentioned black peas and the tradition of having them on bonfire night along with potatoes thrown into the fire and I seem to remember pies of some sort also being around. Quite how we got these I don't know, perhaps our mothers made them? I am confident some of our ladies will be able to put me right on that.

The other interesting item discussed was oven bottom muffins that, when made correctly, are in my opinion second to none. It never fails to amaze me how many different types of bread we have regionally in England. Needless to say they had never heard of oven bottoms! I have memories of my grandmother, who was a very good cook, making them in the old black leaded range - putting them in the bottom of the small oven to cook when the other baking had been done. I can remember the smell of them now. When I was older, and my grandmother no longer with us, I had to go to a small bakers on Rochdale Road (somewhere near Radcliffe Street) to collect my mum's order on my way home from school. I can't remember the name of the little bakers which had once been a cottage in a terraced row of houses. I think that the front room must have been converted into the shop area. Again, I would be very pleased if someone could jog my memory regarding this.”

*I would like YOUR memories to print in this section. Please share them with us all by sending them to me.*

**Jess Wild, Secretary**



## ROYTON HERITAGE TRAILS

Those of you who have enjoyed doing the walks from the 'ROYTON HERITAGE TRAILS' booklet will be pleased to know that a second booklet is due out soon. The first booklet contained two walks, one around Royton town centre and the other around Thorp and Tandle Hill, with interesting historical facts about places along the trails. Due to the great success of the first booklet it is now almost out of stock, so Royton Local History Society is raising money to have more copies printed. Please support our efforts if you possibly can.

The second booklet will contain three walks taking in, amongst other places, Oldham Edge and Heyside with historical facts about sites along the way. This time more copies can be printed thanks to Michael Higgins securing a grant of £2000 from the 'Community Foundation for Greater Manchester' for the publication of this booklet. This grant was awarded to individuals from their 'Community Champions' fund for the purpose of "putting the heart back into communities." So when yours is giving out after climbing up Oldham Edge, and you're up to your knees in mud with the rain lashing against your face, you know who to thank .....  
MICHAEL !

Look out for announcements about the launch of the second booklet within the next few weeks, and lets hope it coincides with a spell of really warm, dry weather!!



## RLHS WEBSITE

I am pleased to tell you that our website has been completely overhauled recently, thanks to a lot of time and effort by Geoff Oliver. It has now been brought up to date so if you haven't visited it for a while please take a look. If you have any comments, ideas or suggestions about what should be put on it please contact Doug Ashmore or Jess Wild. You can log on to the site using either of the following:-

**[www.rlhs.co.uk](http://www.rlhs.co.uk)**

or

**[www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk)**



Royton Local History Society is a member of the 'Friends of Real Lancashire' - No. 544SF

