



The Bugle



Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

Dear Friends,

This is the last time I shall write in this newsletter as Chairman of Royton Local History Society and it was my intention to write about four hundred words. I have however decided against it and brevity will prevail.

What I want to say is this, I have over the last six years made many friends and of course some enemies, it's unavoidable and understandable. Whenever tough decisions have been made they have been supported by the Committee for the benefit of the Society as a whole.

I am immensely proud of the Society, its standing in the Borough, it's achievements, the Royton Hall Community Dig in particular, and the information that it has made available to the people of Royton and beyond. All this of course could not have been achieved without the help and support of the Committee and all the volunteer helpers who have worked so very hard. In thanking them I feel I must also mention my wife Marjorie who has given me her utmost support, first as Secretary and later as Membership Secretary.

I would also like to point out that I am not the only member of the original committee who has decided to 'hang up their boots'. Margaret Carter, our treasurer and brew lady, who has worked with me from the start is also stepping down from her post. I want to thank her for six years of dedicated service to the Society and hope that she enjoys her 'retirement'.

Before I close I would like to mention that there is an Annual General Meeting being held on 1st October 2008 at 7:00 pm at Downey House for people who make themselves members at the September Meeting. Please attend this very important meeting which is being held to vote in *your* new Committee.

Doug Ashmore, Chairman



Doug Ashmore - Chairman of Royton Local History Society - 2002 to 2008

Now that our Chairman Doug Ashmore has decided to 'hand over the Chairman's baton' to someone else, it seems an appropriate time to tell 'his story'.....

Doug hailed originally from Higher Openshaw, East Manchester and worked at the Chadderton Avro complex until 1970 when he moved about to better himself in his chosen profession of aircraft engineering. He went to work for the MSM Group, Middleton as chief inspector in 1980, where he remained until he retired in 2000. He has lived in Royton for 44 years and his present home, where he has lived for the last 25 years, has lovely views of Tandle Hill and beyond.

After speaking with Fr. David Booth, Vicar of St Paul's Church in Royton and others, it struck Doug that Royton had a rich history which should be discussed and enjoyed. Helped by sound advice from Chadderton Historical Society members Michael Lawson and Mark Johnson, Royton Local History Society was born in 2002 with monthly meetings being held at Downey House.

By pure chance, during a medical appointment, Doug met the grandson of Dr J. T. Godfrey, the last private owner of Royton Hall. Each time Doug had an appointment with radiologist Michael Godfrey, he would give Michael some more information on the Hall. This started a friendship with the Godfrey family and the rest as they say "is history!" Led by Doug, a sub-committee of Royton Local History Society called 'Royton Lives Through the Ages' was set up to organise the excavation of the remains of the Hall. They sought funding from various sources and individuals and appointed the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit to advise and oversee the excavations.

The first dig took place in 2005 and was a great success combining, as it did, volunteers for the many tasks involved, the local authority, schools and local firms. Not only was dedicated leadership needed, but also interviews had to be carried out with the local press, radio and television. The second dig under Doug's leadership took place in 2006 and was equally successful. When however a third and 'final' dig was suggested Doug, understandably, said he wanted to step down as the Chairman of the 'Royton Lives through the Ages' sub-committee and concentrate on the other important work of the Society and it's other members. Marjorie his wife, who had been equally intensively involved with the digs, agreed!

In the early summer of 2008 Doug indicated that, after six years, he wished to step down as Chairman of the now immensely successful Society he had been instrumental in forming. He leaves a healthy and inspired Society but his interest, and that of his wife, will still be as keen as before as they both hope to serve as members of the Committee.

Royton Local History Society and 'Royton Lives Through the Ages' owe a great debt to Doug for his inspiration, drive and sheer hard work.

John Crothers, Vice Chairman

Membership 2007/8

As Doug has explained this is the last time that he will write in 'The Bugle' as Chairman of the Society. It is also the last time that I will print out the annual number of members as I am also standing down as Membership secretary at the AGM.

Once again there has been an increase in the membership over the last year (2007/8) to 64 members - an increase of 7 over 2006/7. The average numbers attending over the year has also increased to 57.4 per meeting. These figures show that we have a steady increase of members, some old and some new, and of course the stalwarts without whom the society would not be so successful, all showing a healthy increase.

Marjorie Ashmore, Membership Secretary



Royton Lives Through the Ages - Project Two

The 'Royton Lives Through the Ages - Project Two' committee has recently completed two projects. The first was our Royton History Resource packs for local schools. This project grew out of our hosting school visits to the Royton Hall digs. We then visited the schools to find out what they would need in a history pack and acted on their suggestions. The packs, containing books, booklets, computer disc and finds from the Royton Hall excavations, were distributed to local schools in June. Frances Stott produced a fine CD containing old maps, extracts from historical documents, census and poor rate material and newspaper articles relating to local history. Also included were Frances' books 'History of Royton Hall' and 'Looking back at Royton', the two town trails booklets and the green booklet outlining the first two archaeological digs. The project involved the whole committee assembling the packs at Royton Library with the help of archaeologist Ruth Garrett from Manchester University. As we had a good surplus of pottery finds from the digs we also included some as 're-assembly kits' for the children to piece back together during their history lessons. Pieces of clay pipes and other artefacts were also included.

The second project was a schools literary contest and was part of the 'Awards for All' funding requirement. Using James Taylor's 1820s poem 'On My Native Village' we approached all Royton schools to ask their budding writers to submit a short poem or story on the subject of 'Royton'. Teachers suggested adding an art dimension so we eventually offered prizes in both media. Disappointingly, only two schools decided to take part (Thorpe and Royton Hall) but the quality of writing was high. The teachers at these two schools certainly made an effort to encourage their pupils. The Oldham Chronicle assisted with the judging and WH Smith gave us a discount on prize gift vouchers. Hannah Jaunbocus won 1st prize of a £20 gift voucher for her poem on 'The Tandle Hill Monument' and Mica Hale won a £20 voucher for her drawing of Royton Hall. Adam Horton and Ryan Miller were poetry runners-up and Lauren Hartley was artistic runner-up, each receiving a £10 gift voucher. The prizes were presented at a special ceremony at Royton Library on 7th August. A display of some of the entries alongside James Taylor's poem 'On My Native Village' was exhibited in the Library from 1 - 16th August. Thus we were able to link literature with Royton's history and give the nineteenth century James Taylor, known in his day as 'The Royton Poet', a new audience while at the same time introducing modern writing from the Royton schools of today.

Michael Higgins, Chairman RLTA Project 2

NEW DVD ----- ROYTON HALL EXCAVATION 2007 ----- ONLY £5

Once again Geoff Oliver has given hours of his time to produce another DVD about last year's dig at Royton Hall. Actually Geoff was worried that people would not be interested in just 'another' dig DVD because of the comprehensive coverage given in the previous two productions. He therefore decided to make this one different from the others by including aspects of the project that were not previously covered and he has kept the digging sequences to a minimum!

This new DVD includes how the memorial stone and blue plaque in Hall St. came into being, followed by a very brief description about the formation of Royton Local History Society and why the excavations came to be carried out in the first place. It also contains a short summary by archaeologist Adam Thompson and selected clips from digs 1 & 2. Following on from this there is the launch of the free 'green book', which describes the first two years excavations in detail, and the unveiling of the interpretation board now situated next to the memorial stone on Hall St.

Moving on to the 2007 dig footage there is the site preparation, children digging, VIP and other visitors, a very interesting sequence about the 'finds', a detailed tour of the site by Adam, site photography and recording, the open weekend and finally, filling in the site. That should have been the end of the story, but in May 2008 the project won the Marsh Award for Community Archaeology so it was a 'must' that this should also be included.

The DVD finishes with Adam Thompson's 'Thank You' piece for all the people involved with the excavations. From his point of view the support he received from the organisers and volunteers was quite outstanding and this is his way of acknowledging this.

All in all it took 9 months to complete DVD 3. It's running time is approximately 80 minutes and at a cost of only £5 it is fantastic value for money. Copies are available from Jess Wild or can be bought at Royton Library.

If you have purchased the first two DVDs and are hesitant about buying DVD 3 please bear in mind that ALL the proceeds have gone towards funding the excavations, the interpretation board and producing the 'green' book and resource packs for local schools. At the time of writing we are hoping to fund a 'Footprint' of the Hall, marked out by paths and information boards, so that visitors can clearly see the size and layout of this once magnificent building.

Geoff wishes to thank everyone who has humoured him and appeared or helped in the making of all three DVDs. and Adam Thompson for his valuable time and inspired presentation of the facts. But most of all he wishes to thank Frances Stott for the photographs, information, ideas and her encouragement, support and patience during the making of these DVDs.

Jess Wild, Secretary

Famous Roytonians

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Literary and Philosophical Societies abounded in the district. Also about this time there were the Hampden Clubs, Mechanics Institutes and Mutual Improvement societies, all established for the improvement of the education of the people. These institutions were supported by the working classes, and by voluntary subscriptions, and were conducted by operatives and employers alike, who instructed each other in various branches of education, music and the sciences.

Small groups of men met together in the pursuit of knowledge. Mathematics, mechanics, botany, geology, entomology and other sciences coming within their range of study. "The aim of geology," says an authority "is to describe accurately, the long succession of changes in the dust in this 'cooling cinder the earth', and to assist them in an orderly way to understand their causes." In this way it calls up nearly all the other branches of science for help - astrology, physics, chemistry, mineralogy, botany and zoology. So we see how these men were led from branch to branch in their studies. Though of humble birth and of limited means many of these men obtained a distinguished place in The Temple of Science and others became noted botanists like John Mellor who was featured in the last edition of The Bugle.

The Mathematicians

In Oldham and it's surrounding areas there was quite an 'outbreak' of the study of mathematics. Simple minded men, whose elementary education had been picked up at odd intervals, did not hesitate to attempt the study of this the most difficult branch of knowledge. These men were mostly weavers, who followed their occupation and their calculations concurrently. The loom would be stopped whilst the problem and the solution were written in chalk, possibly on the loom house floor. Sunday was the day when they met for mutual study and chief amongst these were John Kay of Royton, John Butterworth of Royton and James Wolfenden of Hollinwood. They not only acquired proficiency in maths but earned distinction as propounders of problems and providers of solutions and they were frequent contributors to scientific journals and magazines.

John Kay

John Kay was born in Elly Clough, Royton in 1781 of humble parents. As a boy he had little education, but during his limited leisure hours from his job as a hand-loom weaver he was determined to increase his store of knowledge. When eighteen years of age, he became friendly with John Butterworth (who you will read about in the next edition of The Bugle) and so became acquainted with mathematical studies. Under Butterworth's guidance he lost no time in disposing of the rudimentaries of mathematics, and concentrated on the more difficult aspects of the science. In this field he obtained distinction and won prizes for his solutions of mathematical problems.

His first mathematical correspondence appeared in 1808 in the 'Gentleman's Diary' and in 1810 he gained second prize in an award given annually by the proprietor of that periodical. Up to 1816 he continued to enrich it's pages with many curious and elegant geometrical and mechanical questions and solutions. He was also a contributor to 'The Enquirer' and the 'Leeds Correspondent' but, like Butterworth, his favourite publication was the 'Gentleman's Mathematical Companion'. When, on the appearance of the prize question in the 'Companion' he provided the answer, he was awarded with the first prize. Considering he had the likes of Gompertz, Simpson, Butterworth and Epsilon as his opponents, it gives some idea as to the depth of his knowledge.

Apart from his mathematical prowess he achieved many other things. At the age of twenty he was elected constable of Royton, which office he filled to the satisfaction of the authorities for several years. He subsequently became a manufacturer of cotton cloth, and at the time of his death he had been an overseer of the poor of Royton for several years.

All this was packed in to a fairly short life as he died on December 31st 1824 in his 43rd year. His remains were interred in the churchyard of St. Paul's Church, Royton and the place where he was laid to rest was marked by a plain stone bearing the inscription:-

In mathematics soared his noble mind,
Peace probed his soul, he felt for all mankind.
He loved true virtue, but disliked vain pride,
Truth was his aim and reason was his guide.

Douglas Ashmore

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



Royton Local History websites : www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk

or

www.rlhs.co.uk



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