
The Bugle

Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

Chairman's Message

Welcome to the 2015/16 season of RLHS. I hope you have enjoyed the summer break whether you travelled to distant parts or just stayed here in Royton. As usual the work of the Society doesn't stop just because we don't have any meetings and Jess, our secretary, has been busy booking speakers for our enlightenment and entertainment. Likewise Pat, our treasurer, has been sorting out our accounts prior to annual checks by our auditor and a full financial report will be ready for your examination at our AGM in a few week's time.

One of the biggest jobs we've been doing throughout the summer is the refurbishment of the Royton Hall site. The council mows the grass but it is our responsibility to keep the paths well defined. You may remember that I announced that we would be doing this work and asked for volunteers to help. The response was disappointing but thankfully some members did come forward and carried out the work. I am very grateful to those who did. The area is now looking pretty much like it did when the footprinting was done initially about three years ago. The Royton Hall dig and permanent outline of the walls and viewing area are our high profile advertisement and probably our greatest achievement. We need to be more vigilant and schedule this work once a year and it will not be so hard if we keep on top of it.

Our council has asked us if we would help them take part in the heritage open weeks in September this year. Unfortunately I had to limit what we could offer because of the lack of support when they wanted us to help with town hall and clock tower tours on St George's Day. The only help we could offer was to do Royton Heritage walks on two Saturdays during that period.

I'm delighted to say that the Town Hall Clock has now been repaired. I was privileged to be present when the work was done. The new part was fitted and the system reset and of course the time accurately set. Once again we have a super accurate timepiece for all to be proud of and enjoy.

Geoff Oliver, Chairman

Peterloo 200th Anniversary Planning Meeting

The next bicentenary planning meeting will be held at The Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, Salford from 6-8pm on Thursday 1 October. Representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund will be there to advise on grant applications. Suggestions for activities from groups or individuals will be welcome. Anyone can attend, as an individual or as part of an organisation. Schools, societies, artistic groups or individuals writing plays re-enactments poems etc. are welcome. If you wish to attend please book a free place at clair@manchesterhistories.co.uk. Otherwise telephone 0161 306 1982.

Michael Higgins

Hedge Gate or High Gate?

I have been researching the life of John Butterworth, the Royton cottage handloom weaver and

celebrated Mathematician. I am doing this in partnership with Dr Robert Poole who is working on a history of James Butterworth, the first historian of Oldham. The two men were reputedly related and I am looking into any family connections. James's father was born in Royley, Royton in 1724, and later went to live on the Oldham-Ashton border. John Butterworth's father and grandfather were born in a place spelt Hag Yate in Royton, which is obviously our modern Haggate. John himself was born here in 1774, only three years after his would- be relative, the historian James, if indeed the two are related. In my studies I have perused the Parish Registers as far back as 1700, and of course in the process, continually find the spelling Hag Yate cropping up. I am still trying to find a connection between the various Butterworth families, but Hag Yate continues to intrigue me.

The first Ordnance Survey map, surveyed here in 1843, shows the lanes of Royton in the area we now call Haggate. Old documents give us the various names from the 17th century up to the OS map. From Royton Hall farmyard (The Fold) the lane leading to and through Haggate was called in various places, Fold, Top of Fold, Bottom of Fold etc, leading into Haggate Lane. This seems to end at the present Dog and Partridge Pub, then becoming Royton Lane at Haggate. As it rises above the brow at Royley leading down to Streetbridge it becomes Street Lane down to the Chadderton border at Street bridge itself. Today the whole stretch is called Middleton Road, simply because it eventually gets to that town. Yet even then it is known in sections by various local names. But what is a Hag Yate, the place where John Butterworth the mathematician, his father John the cottage weaver, and his grandfather Benjamin Buterworth the carpenter lived all their lives?

Haggate roughly begins at the Dog and Partridge and ends at Royley. But what is Royley? I often find references to Royley Fields, Royley Clough, and of course Royley House, now demolished, but whose old stone barn was still standing until the 1980s. Recently a new house has been built on the ruins. A 14th century deed seems to delineate the border between Royley and Royton and clearly they share the 'Roy' part of the township name. The dividing line then was Royley clough and a ditch or stream called Royton wall or well leading southerly by the 'Oxgangs, or common field, of Royton' to Ellyclough. On this border stands the farm known today as Netherhey, or 'Lower Hedge' as we might say in contemporary English. It is possibly this that has given us Hag Yate, or 'Hedge Gate', an enclosed area of a once common field. Above Netherhey farm stands Highlands. Does the 'high' part of the name mean 'hedge land too or is it the higher hedge? And has time confused the spelling of High and Hey, especially since in dialect the word for head or top is 'Yed' or 'Yet'? Indeed Whatever the origin, the area, and particularly the road has preserved the name, for even in John Butterworth's day the lane here was also called simply Haggate. Perhaps even, like the famous Gates of York, or Deansgate in Manchester, the name copies the Danish word 'gata', meaning a road. Which brings us back to the question of whether it was a Highroad or Hedge Road.

In older times the spelling of Haggate has taken various forms, Hartshead, Hartingstreet Lane, Hagginstead Lane/Gate and even Highgate. And I have heard older folk pronounce it 'Haggat'. In John Butterworth's day Haggate was just a collection of cottages along the lane and his own house was a row of three dwellings on the site now occupied by the old Methodist chapel opposite the end of Hindle Drive. It was a thriving hamlet then, full of cottage handloom weavers like his father, or carpenters like his grandfather. And John Butterworth's fame as a solver of mathematical puzzles published in the periodicals of the day, and also as a much sought after correspondent by worthy mathematicians and patrons, once gave Haggate limited notoriety, if only as the home of the gifted self-taught humble man able to calculate the stress configurations of the proposed Menai Bridge.

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