

RAVENSTONEDALE PARISH HISTORY GROUP



Our website header: A view over Ravenstonedale Parish from Bents Hill on Crosby Garrett Fell

Newsletter Autumn 2022

Just a reminder - if you receive the monthly Parish newsletter *The Link*, details of our meetings and reviews of our talks are published in that, and please remember that if you have access to the internet you can keep up to date with History Group news and events by checking our website <https://www.ravenstonedalehistory.org.uk> on a regular basis. Steve Fermer also regularly reviews the evening talks in *The Link* and the *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, and for the *Cumbria Local History Federation* Bulletin. The latest Bulletin featured his report of Les Neal's talk on the Quakers, as well as an article by Jackie Wedd on her local research for her talks on the Parish Millennium Map and Embroideries. The Bulletin cover features a photograph of the former Ravenstonedale Signal Box from the Parish archives.

If you wish to contact the History Group in writing, please leave a comment on one of the forms on our website. Your email address will NOT be shown online – it is only visible to you and to our website admin, who will endeavour to contact you within a week or so. If you wish to telephone a member of the History Group committee, please call either 015396 23308 (Caroline) or 07798 688057 (Val).

Extraordinary General Meeting 4th April 2022

Of course, we are not alone among local History Societies and Groups of all kinds to have suffered disruption to our plans and normal procedures during the Covid pandemic. We feel fortunate to still be in existence when for example the nearby Orton and Tebay History Society had to close due to lack of volunteers to run it. However the RPHG Committee felt it necessary to call an Extraordinary General Meeting in April to discuss the future of the Group with particular emphasis on the storage facilities for the Parish archives.

The minutes of this meeting will be circulated to members by email with this newsletter.

Archives Training Course

This course, delayed by the pandemic, was provided by Cumbria Local History Federation in partnership with Cumbria Archive Service and Kevin Bolton, an archives consultant. Chris Asquith and Jackie Wedd attended the course in Carlisle. Kevin Bolton also visited RPHG on 22nd July with a member of the CLHF committee to meet more volunteers and offer further support and advice. He has summarised his findings in a report and a copy of this report will also be circulated to members with this newsletter.

Platinum Jubilee Exhibition: 3rd – 5th June 2022



Photographs and reminiscences about previous Parish celebrations from the 1887 Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria onwards featured in our exhibition in the upper room at RCHC over the three days of the Platinum Jubilee (part of it is shown here). We also opened the archive room to visitors. We'd like to thank all the visitors who gave us donations totalling £120 towards the upkeep of the archive, which has already been spent on more archive-standard storage boxes (see Kevin Bolton's report).



Previous Jubilee celebrations in the Parish have involved planting trees, fancy dress, sports and partying!

No change there then! – our Platinum Jubilee digital photographic archive is already in progress.

Our thanks to the photographers for sending us these images of celebrations in Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin-on-Lune – we can always take more via email to Val who will be emailing you this newsletter.



Two of the folders and a set of photographs in our exhibition featured the story and famous (or infamous) exploits of the Ravenstonedale Yacht Club, including the Red Sparrows Display Team (also shown recently on the *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald* archive photo page).



The Yacht Club HQ was The King's Head. During the exhibition, a Ravenstonedale resident told us that she thought she might have the Yacht Club banner in her attic which used to fly on the King's Head during regattas. She remembered rescuing it from a skip when the pub was being refurbished some years ago.

Sure enough she found it, and it has now become one of our recent acquisitions for the archive – sadly, we don't have space to unfurl it permanently but we will be purchasing some archive-standard packaging especially for textiles, and will be able to display it from time to time in future exhibitions.



More Recent Acquisitions

Two RPHG members, Jenny and Roger Johnson, who have recently moved away from Ravenstonedale, kindly gave us a framed aerial photograph of Coldbeck Farmhouse as it was when they moved in.



Coldbeck Farmhouse, early 2000s



Roger and Jenny also gave us a folder detailing the history of the tree-planting scheme from 2005 to 2011 which they organised to screen Coldbeck and the surrounding area from the new A685. This includes everything from details of the trees that were purchased and planted to the protracted correspondence with Cumbria Highways to get permission to undertake the scheme.

We have also been given papers, drawings, photographs and fabric samples from the creation of the four Millennium Embroideries made by local embroiderers. This collection is being sorted and catalogued and will be put into archive folder boxes for ease of viewing.

Anne Taylor, Chair of Upper Eden History Society, kindly undertook some research for us into the former Pendragon Gallery (1972-1981) in Kirkby Stephen and its owner Jean Marshall.

Jean's name cropped up when Jackie was researching the story of the creation of the Millennium Map for her talk in 2022. David and Caroline first met the late Tom Oldham, an artist who became their good friend and collaborator on the Map. Jean had known Tom and his wife Wendy when they lived in Peterborough before they moved to Newbiggin-on-Lune in 1974. Jean sold paintings, art materials, books, gifts, wool and knitting machines. We are very grateful to Anne for giving us a folder of her research, including this anecdote (recalled by Jean's son Bob) about Tom Oldham when he was working in the Gallery during the 1970s: *A lady walked in and asked if they sold pencils. Tom showed her what they had and she bought practically the entire stock. Tom asked "Why do you need so many pencils?" She replied "I am buying them for my husband." Tom asked "Does he eat them?" She replied "No, he is Wainwright." Tom had no idea who she was talking about even though we had a large number of AW's books in the shop!*

Edward Jeffrey and The Chantry



Two of Edward Jeffrey's illustrations inspired by Ravenstonedale village for a *Toby Twirl* book, featuring his own logo for The Black Swan and another view of Townhead Cottage, this time with a back view of the postman! Many of you will know that the artists Edward Jeffrey and Richard Clark rented The Chantry with their families for many years from the late 1940s into the 1960s. Their landlady was Sarah (Sadie) Wilson, who lived in the former converted stables there known as Chantry Lodge.

Tracey Edgerley Meloni and The Chantry

We were very sad to learn recently that Tracey, Sarah Wilson's granddaughter, died on 7th June in Harrisburg, USA, where she had lived for several years in retirement.

Tracey was born at The Chantry in 1945 and lived there as a young child looked after by her grandmother when her parents were abroad as her father was in the Forces. Tracey always remembered her early life here and particularly the kindness shown to her by Edward Jeffrey.. She returned to the village in the early 1970s and visited Edward Jeffrey who by then had moved to The Stables.

He gave her this watercolour painting of Artlegarth Beck Bridge and The Chantry for her 25th birthday (*photo taken by Dave Wedd when he and Jackie visited Tracey in Harrisburg in 2019*)



Many years later Val contacted Tracey about her memories of The Chantry as part of her village history research, and we contacted her again when we set up the Friends of the Bridge with the aim of conserving it.



When asked if she had any memories of the bridge, Tracey replied

What good timing! I'm taking a class online - and am very pleased to hear from you. Yes, indeed I do remember it. It is featured not only in my memories, but also is in the foreground of the watercolor Mr. Jeffrey did of The Chantry as my 25th birthday gift. I just wrote a memoir piece about watching Guy Fawkes day events looking over that bridge when I was six. I would be most happy to join your effort.

Tracey generously gave RPHG Edward Jeffrey's portrait of Sarah Wilson which now hangs in the archive room. Latterly the pandemic kept her isolated at home, but she kept in touch with us: *I am writing, taking workshops and "mentoring" nurses* she wrote earlier this year. We will miss her.

[Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership](#)

We have continued working with WDLP during this year and are taking every opportunity to do so, as this National Heritage Lottery funded project has a limited four year lifespan. RPHG members have helped with the surveying of Small-Scale Heritage Features in the Parish, and took part in the following events too.

[Westmorland Dales Landscape Forum, 23rd April 2022, at RCHC](#)

RPHG were asked if one of their members could give a short talk about Ravenstonedale Parish to open the morning's heritage talks, so Jackie put together a brief presentation entitled **Ravenstonedale from an Offcomer's Angle**. After an excellent buffet lunch provided by Kev Hillyer, three walks were laid on for the delegates including a local geological walk with Sylvia Woodhead and a village history walk led by RPHG.



John Dunning opening the WDLP Landscape Forum at Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre

A short report of the day can be found at the following link:

<https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/news/westmorland-dales-landscape-forum-well-attended>

[Artlegarth Beck Bridge](#)

This YDNPA interpretation panel for Artlegarth Beck Bridge now installed by the bridge is one of the results of RPHG's local research for Karen Griffiths, Interpretation Officer for YDNPA, as part of her **A Way Through** project in conjunction by WDLP.



[YDNPA Ravenstonedale Test-Pitting Project 2022](#)

This was run over the summer, led by Doug Mitcham, YDNPA Cultural Heritage Officer, and guided by professional contractors Eden Archaeology, led by Martin Railton. A team of volunteers, some from Ravenstonedale, some not, dug pits (and filled them in again), sieved a lot of earth to extract the finds, filled in onsite report sheets and also helped to wash the finds. This test-pitting method is designed for the general public –people with no archaeological experience, although many of the volunteers had been on previous digs. We will have to wait for all the results and news about the finds as they have now been sent away for analysis by the appropriate specialists, but there is a short report on news so far at the following link: <https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/news/test-pitting-in-ravenstonedale>



[Bowberhead Open Days July 2022](#)

We put together a small display about the Frankland family and traditional haymaking for the Haymeadow Open Days last year, and were pleased to see it on show again this year in the larger temporary exhibition space at Bowberhead in the former dairy, along with larger photographs from the Frankland family album reproduced by WDLP with permission.



Fragrant Orchid at Bowberhead July 2022

The haymeadow restoration is coming along nicely!

Some ongoing research by members

We are very pleased to be able at long last to carry out an **Oral History Project** in the Parish. While oral history has been informally collected in the past by members, this will be an opportunity to do so using the latest equipment and with training provided. Again we have to thank Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership for offering us this chance. **The introductory meeting will be run by Hannah Kingsbury, WDLP Cultural Heritage Officer, on 15th September at 10am in the Upper Room at RCHC**, and we would like to invite as many people as possible who might be interested in volunteering for this project to come along and see what is involved. We know that some who are interested are not able to come to this meeting – but as with the test-pitting recently, some training can be arranged later on too.

We are also supporting the **Stainmore Railway Company at Kirkby Stephen East** in their next Heritage Lottery bid for funding towards their celebrations of the 200th Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 2025 – the S&D ran “our” Stainmore railway line which lasted for 100 years in the Parish. One focus will be working with UEHS to research the role of women connected with the railway. We already know of one lady from Ravenstonedale who worked as a locomotive cleaner, as well as one who owned a share (or shares) in the railway. The opening and closing of the railway here in the Parish brought about much social change which will be another aspect of our research.

And as usual many of our members are pursuing their own research – Val has been looking into the history of Midtown properties in Ravenstonedale village back to 1776 – ownership and occupants including the Rudd and the Relph (or Relf) families. Les Neal is starting to look at the early history of the area, from the Angles, Vikings and Normans up to the dissolution of the monasteries, at which point the Whartons became Lords of the Manor of Ravenstonedale. Jackie is researching the story of the memorial window in St Oswald's Church to Mary Blanche Hewetson (who is actually buried in the High Chapel graveyard). The “portrait” window, a depiction of St Cecilia, patron saint of musicians, bears the signature of Daniel Cottier. Cottier and his family were close London friends and neighbours of John and Adelaide Hewetson and their daughters Blanche and Edith.

(Blanche's father John Hewetson, originally from Street, is perhaps best known for having the former Ravenstonedale mansion that he named Hwith built on land he owned there).

Caroline has been pursuing her own research project to “capture the past before it disappears” which has resulted in her exhibition of paintings at the Ruskin Museum in Coniston – much delayed by the pandemic but finally here! Many of our members were able to attend the Private View in June, and if you couldn't go then and haven't been able to go since – then as you can see it will be at the Museum until 4th September, every day of the week from 10am to 4.30pm, so you still have a chance to see it. Highly recommended!



Next Season's Talks Programme 2022-2023

21st September 2022 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre:
Lakeland Dialect and its Origins by Jean Scott-Smith.

19th October 2022 at 7.30pm in Newbiggin-on-Lune Public Hall:
Walking Through History – Hadrian's Wall (Bowness to the Solway) by Maurice Steele.

16th November 2022 at 7.30pm in Newbiggin-on-Lune Public Hall:
A railway excursion through the British Newspaper Archive, with entertaining diversions en route by Diana Fothergill.

14th December 2022 at 7.30pm in RCHC: **Christmas get-together for members and friends.**

18th January 2023 at 7.30pm in Newbiggin-on-Lune Public Hall:
The Fell Pony Heritage Trust by Libby Robinson.

15th February 2023 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre:
Further research about the early history of the Ravenstonedale area by Les Neal.

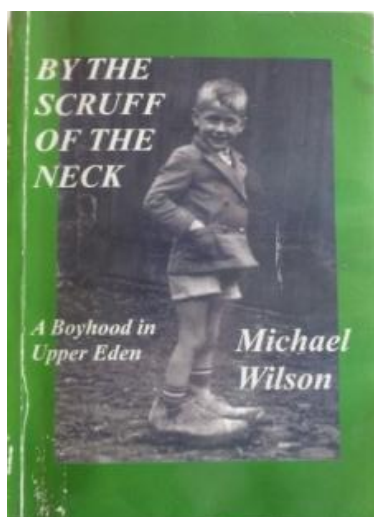
15th March 2023 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre:
Ravenstonedale Test-Pitting Project Summer 2022 by Doug Mitcham.

As ever we will be dealing with family history enquiries via the website, emails and from casual visitors to the archives on Thursday afternoons – as usual this year we have had a couple of enquiries from descendants of local Fothergill families and also from a Hewetson (although it turned out his line was not from Ravenstonedale.) Descendants of the Robinson family who lived in Newbiggin-on-Lune (two of whom are buried in St Oswald's Churchyard) have also been in touch recently.

We are very pleased to have been able to co-opt two new committee members (still room for more!) and we must thank our new volunteers who have come forward to help us as we reorganise the archive to implement the recommendations in Kevin Bolton's report – and of course as ever we thank our long-standing volunteer Sally Cannon for all her help.

Finally -

A new bench has just appeared on the green at the southern end of Ravenstonedale village near the pig house and opposite West View, dedicated by his family to the memory of Michael Wilson who lived at West View as a (mischievous) young boy in the early 1950s. His book *By the Scruff of the Neck* about growing up in Upper Eden is a great read! He recounts his efforts to blow up Chantry Bridge (Artlegarth Beck Bridge) and good deeds such as mowing the lawn for Sadie Wilson at Chantry Lodge – but only until she provided lemonade – after which Michael and his friends would abandon the mowing! There are stories of his father's life as a signaller for the Stainmore Railway. Michael's family have donated his railway photos to KSE.



Michael's widow, son and family, 20-08-22