

RAVENSTONEDALE PARISH HISTORY GROUP



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

Newsletter Autumn 2023

Just a reminder - if you receive the monthly Parish newsletter *The Link*, details of our meetings 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. We also send details of our forthcoming talks to the Cumbria Local History Federation for their Bulletins.

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, Secretary) or 07798 688057 (Val, Treasurer and Membership).

RPHG AGM May 2023

Our Chair Sue Prince stood down at the AGM this year. The Committee would like to thank her for all she has done over the past six years, and we hope that she and her husband Dave will continue to attend meetings and volunteer for projects as and when they can do so. Fortunately we had a volunteer, Chris Asquith, willing to take over as Chair so we were able to elect him formally. Jackie Wedd remains as Vice-Chair and website admin. We also welcomed Judith Todd as a new committee member - and have welcomed two new volunteers who come along on Thursday afternoons to High Chapel when we are open to the public (you don't have to make a regular commitment). We always need help with cataloguing the archives – we are extremely grateful, as ever, to long-standing volunteer Sally Cannon for all her help with this. It is going to be a busy time over the next few months!

As reported at the AGM, Chris Asquith and Jackie Wedd attended the two-day training course on Archives Preservation run by Cumbria Local History Federation and Cumbria Archives last year, and they also recently attended a half-day introductory course run by Cumbria Local History Federation about a forthcoming new online Local Archive Catalogue System to be provided later this year by CLHF for member groups.

We would like to use the new system to catalogue our ever-growing digital collection of photographs to begin with. The system will allow us to upload a photograph with information about it to a simple searchable online database which will be standalone for each History Group. **Populating the RPHG database could be done at home by volunteers...(!)** Apart from the searchable “headline” e.g. a name which would be visible online to all users, the detailed further information from our catalogues will be exclusively available to RPHG members, not the general public.

Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership

We have continued working with WDLP during this year and have taken every opportunity to do so, as this National Heritage Lottery funded project has a limited four year lifespan and will finish soon.

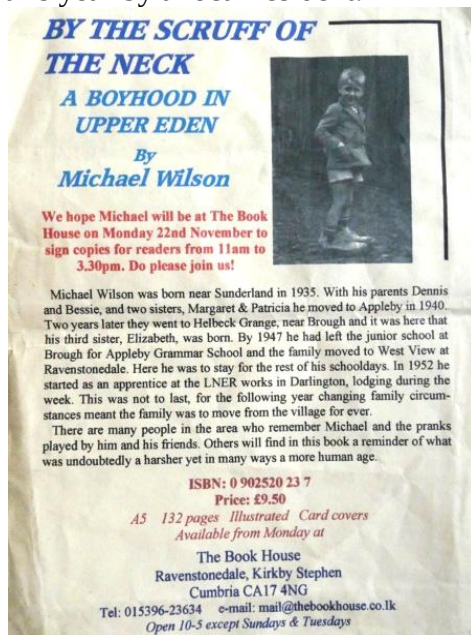
We made a successful application for a National Lottery funded grant of £2000 to WDLP through their “Loving Your Landscape” Local Heritage Project. We submitted a spreadsheet detailing how we would spend the money on buying more archive-standard storage boxes and folders as well as monitoring and improving the conditions in the Parish Archives Room for long-term storage, using the knowledge we gained from the Cumbria Archives and CLHF training. We will shortly be submitting our final Project report which includes an account of the volunteer time we have spent on the Project – 100 hours so far since January! Under the terms of the grant we needed to contribute 6 days of volunteer time, costed at £150 per day, to make up the £900 equivalent.

We have also provided information from the Parish Archives to WDLP for forthcoming new Information Boards for Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin-on-Lune villages, and for the new interpretation board for the Gilbertine ruins in St Oswald’s Churchyard. Jackie has been working on the text for an updated booklet funded by WDLP about the Gilbertines for St Oswald’s, and is very grateful for the help she has received from RPHG members and others. In due course the booklet will be available in the Church.

Recent Gifts to the Parish Archive

Sir Martin Holdgate has kindly given us a copy of his 2020 book *Hartley: A Westmorland History*. This is an invaluable account of the early history of Westmorland as well as a comprehensive detailed look at the evolution of Hartley itself, and includes many references to Ravenstonedale.

We also received a donation of books of local interest from Orton and Tebay Local History Society when they closed, and local books from a Ravenstonedale resident which are being catalogued at the moment and will be on our shelves soon. These include a signed copy of Michael Wilson’s memoir about growing up in Ravenstonedale in the 1950s – **By the Scruff of the Neck** – as well as the invitation to the launch of the book in 2004 at the publishers, The Book House, in Ravenstonedale (then at Fallowfield). We will keep the signed copy of the book in the archives but continue to lend out the other copy we have – also donated to us earlier this year by a local resident.



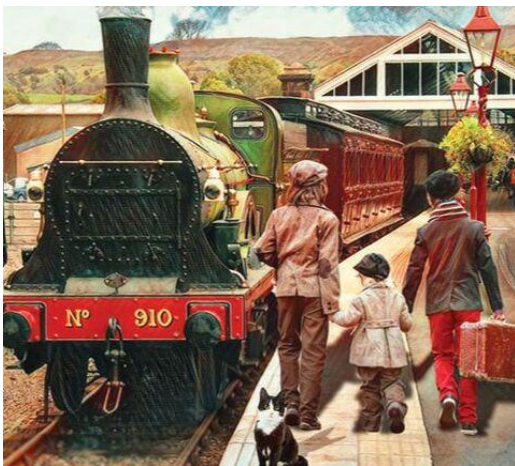
Invitation to the launch of Michael Wilson’s book and one of the photographs from the RPHG Archives of Michael and members of his family at the event in November 2004, where he signed copies.

YDNPA Ravenstonedale Test-Pitting Project 2022

The project ran during summer of last year, and was 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. Our first evening talk of next season on 20th September will be by Douglas Mitcham on the project and its legacy.



News of current and future projects – more volunteers required please!



We supported the **Stainmore Railway Company at Kirkby Stephen East** in their successful National 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.

This will involve research into the roles of women working on the railway – not just in wartime - by Nateby & Wharton WI and Upper Eden History Society as well as RPHG.

Part of the KSE project - **West Side Story** – will focus on the forgotten history of the Stockton and

Darlington Railway in Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness, particularly of the role of women working on the railways.

RPHG will also focus on the social changes which the railway line brought to the Parish – starting with its construction, which has been documented before in Kirkby Stephen for example, but not in any great detail here in Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin-on-Lune.

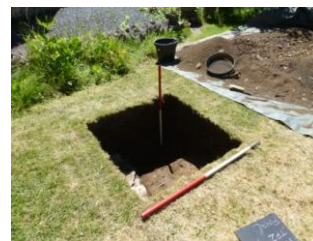
Judith has started investigating the changes in the Parish during the years the railway was constructed, particularly how the sudden need for increased accommodation for the labourers affected the villages, and she has also begun to discover how women were involved – not always “officially” it seems...

As part of RPHG’s contribution to this we aim to start an Oral History project in the Parish in 2024 - something we have long wanted to do. We have had preliminary training but will arrange more. Thanks to WDLP, we are first in line to borrow the necessary equipment for the project in due course from the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes. Please let any of the Committee know if you would like to be involved.

Next Season's Evening Talks Programme 2023-2024

20th September 2023 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre:

Digging the Past – what did we discover? The results and legacy of a WDLP community archaeology project in Ravenstonedale village - by Dr Douglas Mitcham, YDNPA



25th October 2023 at 7.30pm in Newbiggin-on-Lune Public Hall:

Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin - Then and Now - by Caroline Morris.



Ravenstonedale Midtown 1890 and 1930



Newbiggin before and after St Aidan's was built

22nd November 2023 at 7.30pm in St Oswald's Church, Ravenstonedale:

More than a Memorial – the surprising story of the Blanche Hewetson window in St Oswald's - by Jackie Wedd.



13th December 2023 at 7.30pm venue tba **Christmas get-together for members and friends.**

17th January 2024 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre :

A Voyage through Time - history notes from a cruise along the length of the River Thames - by Steve Fermer

15th February 2024 at 7.30pm in Ravenstonedale Community and Heritage Centre:

Only Connect – 17th century Lady Anne Clifford and our monarchy today - by Anne Taylor

15th March 2024 at 7.30pm in Newbiggin-on-Lune Public Hall:

West Side Story – the project by KSE to celebrate the story of the local Stainmore Railway, the western extension of the SCLR, on the occasion of its 200th anniversary in 2025 - by Mike Thompson, the KSE Project Manager.



[A busy year in the Archives Room!](#)



Caroline and Sally sorting out part of our collection of original local photos and filling the new archive-standard pockets and albums we have been able to purchase with the WDLP grant.



Some of the shelves of new files which have replaced the old ones – they were falling apart after over 10 years on the shelves. These are not archive standard files as they do not contain original material which would deteriorate over time, but this was an extremely necessary task as we reorganised the storage – a huge thank you to Judith for organising this – and to Caroline for writing the labels.

Sally and Caroline are also working their way through these files checking the spreadsheet catalogue for each one (from *Agriculture* to the *Yacht Club of Ravenstonedale*) so that we can put the catalogue onto one spreadsheet as advised by the Cumbria Archive Service – this makes the collection more easily searchable and removes the need for cross-referencing individual names, places etc.



This is part of the collection of books of mainly local interest which have been donated to the Parish Archives over the years – the books which need special protection (leather-bound, unique local research into the Fothergills etc) are in the archive-standard boxes. These include a Wharton Bible and several *Toby Twirl* annuals illustrated by local artist Edward Jeffrey, as well as an almost complete run of the monthly *Cumbria* magazine for which he provided the cover illustrations for over 20 years. There are WI records, the “Hearse Record Book” from St Oswald’s, and Minute Books of the Tennis Club, Bowls Club etc which all help us with family history enquiries.

This year these include requests for help from Fothergill and Knewstubb descendants and an enquiry from a visitor about the whereabouts of his great-grandfather George’s grave. We were able to confirm from records in the Archives that George lived at Artlegarth and was buried in St Oswald’s Churchyard, but the grave is unmarked so we cannot locate its precise position. George’s son John is also buried there, but again his grave cannot be precisely located as there is no headstone.

Huge thanks are due to Richard Todd who has kindly continued the RPHG tradition of bespoke shelf construction by members. He has not only strengthened the large plan chest where we keep large items flat and store the large non-standard sized archive boxes for scrapbooks and textiles, but has also made us a new desk and shelves. We are also very grateful to Bev and Pete Brummitt for their gift of a filing cabinet where we can store our new boxes, folders and inserts until we need them.