



Ravenstonedale Parish History Group

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 6th May 2015
2.30 in the History Room

Chairman's Notes

The Ravenstonedale Parish History Group continues to receive steady support from those attending the winter season of talks, visiting our annual exhibition in the summer and giving or loaning items of local and family interest. Also descendants of families once living in the parish who are generous enough to share their hard-won research into their family trees and last but by no means from our committee members who help in a variety of different ways.

The archive grows apace and faster than we can keep up with sometimes but thanks to a visit by one of our committee members to the recent Cumbria Local History Federation convention day we have received offers of help in learning about cataloguing history documentation more efficiently. The monthly talks offer a wide range of topics, from the navvies building the railways in Mallerstang, soldiers from the parish who fought in the 1st world war, to Black settlers in the northwest.

It is very heartening that so many people feel that learning about and recording local (and national) history is a worthwhile activity of lasting value to the community which I believe it to be.

CAM

Thursday Afternoons

This year we have been pleased to welcome visitors from the parish, the rest of the country and overseas, all looking into their local ancestors and their properties. We were able to help with several of their enquiries and were also pleased to receive their copies of family trees and other memorabilia which are now in our archives, so that others can benefit from the research and exchange information. One of the documents which we transcribed as a result of a visitor's enquiry is an account of a local Quaker wedding in the 1700's – it makes very interesting reading!

2014 Autumn Exhibition

As well as numerous photographs and newspaper cuttings on the theme of *Entertainment and Celebrations Past and Present*, we were pleased to put on display a painting of the village kindly loaned by Thomas Balmer which came from the home of the late Juliet Frankland. Susan Huck has donated past trophies from Ravenstonedale Agricultural Show, which were collected together by the late John Jackson, and we displayed some of these. They will all be on permanent display in the History Room at High Chapel, and will feature in next year's exhibition which will be on the theme of *Agriculture*. Needless to say, we will welcome any material on this theme which you may feel able to donate, or lend for the exhibition. We also featured some parish sporting events and venues, but our search for a photograph of The Waitby Cup continues – can you help? We were delighted that exhibition

visitors filled in some missing names on team photographs for us. Also on display was the beautiful engraved and mounted village football shield (donated to us by the late John Jackson) which sadly was only contested twice, as the outbreak of the Second World War meant that the competition lapsed.

During the exhibition of *Entertainment and Celebrations – past and present* – one of our visitors, Geoff Waldram, presented us with a file of his ongoing research concerning the life and work of Edward Jeffry, his great-uncle. Edward Jeffry was a talented and prolific artist who lived and worked in Ravenstonedale, first at The Chantry and later at The Stables. He died in 1978. Geoff has tracked down a lot of his work, including of course the Toby Twirl books which he illustrated while living at The Chantry, often with local scenes incorporated into them. Edward Jeffry also produced over two hundred covers for the monthly *Cumbria* magazine from 1959 onwards, as well as book covers, maps, greetings cards, bird paintings and countless landscapes. We were able to help Geoff with his search to identify several of the local houses and scenes in the paintings which he owns. We also put him in touch with other local people who own paintings, and Geoff would love to see photographs of them – particularly if they have a Stables studio or Chantry studio stamp on the back! We are delighted with Geoff's kind gift. It is available to view at High Chapel – on Thursdays between 2 and 4pm or by arrangement.



Gifts to the Archive

We have received a number of generous gifts to the archive in one form or another as mentioned in other parts of this newsletter. One of the biggest in terms of size is the large photograph which now graces the east wall of the hall.

The photograph of Beckstones barn on the road to Artlegarth was the prize winner in a Cumbria Wildlife Trust Hay Meadows photographic competition a year or so ago and had pride of place in the Hay Meadows exhibition in Tullie House, Carlisle.

Mr & Mrs Pratt of Kilnmore Farm whose barn it is were offered the photograph after the exhibition was over. There was no wall big enough to display it in their house so they eventually asked the History Group if we would like to have it and we were delighted to accept. It took a bit of doing but it is now displayed for all to see and it could not have found a better place. Our thanks go to John and Hazel for thinking of us.

Do come and view this magnificent twelve foot by eight picture in situ

Monthly Talks

At the beginning of this year we learnt about the effects of the building of the railway in the Mallerstang valley in the later part of the 19th century, life was tough for the workers but their reputation for wild behaviour, drunkenness and violence was often unfair and exaggerated as the speaker went on to explain. The descriptions of their antics that persist to this very day through newspaper articles, guide-books etc. are inaccurate and based on gossip and hearsay rather than proper research into source material as Mr Murray went on to demonstrate. A considerable number of the so-called 'Irish' navvies were men from the locality with wives and children and for whom the work however hard, was a godsend. The moral of the tale would seem to be never to believe everything you read!

To commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War Val Fermer opted to research into the circumstances and lives of the servicemen whose names appear on the Church War Memorial. Unusually the number of men killed in WWI in this parish was fewer than in WWII so she decided to research into the lives of those who survived WWI as well as those who did not. However the importance of returning to original sources was reinforced when her research brought to light two men from the parish

who had gone out to fight, one of whom was killed, and neither of whom are mentioned in any list of those who went out to fight in WWI. This may have been because they both lived in Fell End and may well have been absorbed into the records of the neighbouring parish of Sedbergh.

The final speaker for the 2013-2014 season was Margaret Gowling who spoke about the tanners of Temple Sowerby, she described how the tanning industry had developed there and how the village had prospered as a result, which might account for the preponderance of handsome and substantial houses in what is otherwise a relatively small village. The business of tanning is a particularly malodorous one and the juxtaposition of elegant architecture with foul smelling yards seems incongruous to us and would not be tolerated today. However as Margaret Gowling pointed out people constantly lived amongst unpleasant smells of every kind and were used to it.

Over the summer we received the sad news that George Handley had died. He was to have given a talk in September about his forebears, the Dawson family, who lived in the village for several generations.

Mrs Gowling very generously agreed to come and talk to us on 'A woman's

place in 17th century life in the Upper Eden'. Her research centred on the Brough and Kirkby Stephen area. Once again one was made to realise how very hard life was in past centuries for both women and men. Jobs were hard to come by, often seasonal and temporary; families had to travel long distances to seek work with little or no job security.

Women could own nothing but in the labouring classes that was an irrelevance since neither men nor women owned anything or very little. In the more prosperous classes when a woman married, a dowry from her family would come with her as part of the 'package'. Once married the ownership of the dowry passed from father to husband, she never had any control over it whatsoever and for unmarried women it was just as bad if not worse, unless fathers took pity on them and gave them something they too could be left penniless. However Mrs Gowling discovered while researching old wills that those women who were left comfortably off by kind and enlightened husbands or fathers, turned out, quite often, to be bankers to their local community loaning out money to relatives and to other people or businesses. So some women could become quite powerful but for the rest it seems to have been drudgery and not much else.

Our most recent speaker, Mrs Susan Dench was for many years an archivist in Carlisle and arising out of a work project to research into black settlers who came to Cumberland in the 17th, 18th & 19th centuries she continued to research into their history more deeply. There were few black settlers at the time, and how they came to live in Cumbria is often very uncertain - possibly they came from the West Indies either as sailors or house servants with colonial families living in or near Carlisle or the military. In her research she found one who became a gardener at a country house near Carlisle and another, in the latter part of the 19th century, as a policeman (who became quite a well known character) also at Carlisle. Researching into the lives of the black settlers presents difficulties because they would often take on the name of the family they worked for or a name given to them by their employer. Perhaps because they were fairly few and far between these settlers seemed to be accepted into the community with complete equilibrium often marrying local women, raising families, holding down jobs and thus whatever was recorded about them in parish registers etc; was in the most part done so without remark as to their provenance or appearance. Mrs Dench did not know if there were black settlers in this area although it is believed that there may have been some in Sedbergh and there is a gravestone in the Ravenstonedale churchyard which purports to belong to a freed slave. C.A.M.

Archive Gifts (continued)

We are extremely grateful to Mrs Wendy Hunter for giving us a number of fascinating WI scrapbooks and other papers dating back from the 1960s and also the Newbiggin-on-Lune School Log Book from 1873 the date of its opening to 1919. Every page in the latter has been photographed and the book itself will be given to the County Archives in Kendal as it is old and has within it information which should be available to the wider public. Both of these gifts are a goldmine of information and we thank her and the WI for their generosity, it is much appreciated.

Contacts

Former communication and membership details redacted

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Former committee members names and contact details redacted.



E Jeffry - Lytheside Ravenstonedale

Annual General Meeting 2015

Wednesday 6th May in the Community & Heritage Centre at 7.30pm

The proposed programme for next year, which will continue to be held on the 3rd Wednesday in the month starting in September 2014-2015 is

17th September 2014

Margaret Gowling *A woman's place is in the home*

15th October 2014

Susan Dench *Black Settlers in Cumberland*

19th November 2014

Richard Arrowsmith *The History of Kirkby Stephen Silver Band*

10th December 2014

Members & Friends *Christmas Get-together*

21st January 2015

Val Fermer *Ravenstonedale Furnishers—From Fells to Fine Furniture*

19th February 2015

Jean Scott-Smith *The origins of Place Names in Cumbria*

18th March 2015

Andy Lowe *lakeland architecture*