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Bilton Historical Society Newsletter

Edition No. 2 - March
1997

Chairman's Report *By Bill Williams*

Welcome to our second newsletter. I am sure our members must have wondered at our apparent lack of activity which was not due to inertia! We did however experience problems during our first year and one of these was the loss of our project co-ordinator, the second was the loss of access to the computer on which our records were stored and finally the non return of some documents. Although that is now in the past, it will explain why we will be seeking information you had already given.

We recently held a committee meeting on the Society's future and I am pleased to report we now have a forward plan, even if it means starting almost from scratch. We have decided to re-arrange declared projects, because there was no cohesion, members were left to their own devices and not involved. That was very wrong, we thus decided to limit projects and appoint individual leaders, with members joining the project with which they are happiest, spending as much or as little time as they wish.

You may have ideas for other projects, pre-history for example, but this time we need a higher profile and I sincerely hope our renewed enthusiasm will not only tempt you to stay with us and take an active part, but encourage others to join.



Annual General Meeting

2 April 1997

Bilton Community Centre
7.30pm

Guest Speaker:

JOHN SYMINGTON

***"Characters from the
Forest of
Knaresborough".***

John's talk will last about 45 minutes and will then be followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting. Non-members welcome, cost £1.00. Do not miss our AGM, Bring a guest, Subscriptions may be paid on the door.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

As a person, who from an early age has had an interest in ghosts, zombies and vampires, probably a graveyard would seem to be the natural place to track me down, but these days you would find me there not searching out the macabre, but gathering Monumental Inscriptions.

People may ask, "What are Monumental Inscriptions?" "Why gather them?" "What use are they?" "Who would use them?" "Could I benefit from them?" and "Could I benefit from a visit to a graveyard?" and the answers I would give are as follows:-

Monumental inscriptions are basically the details which are recorded on a tombstone, but I would extend this to also include details recorded on plaques and tablets on church walls, also inscriptions on vases and communion vessels, inscriptions in books, hymn books and Bibles and anything else within the church which may have an inscription of some sort upon it. I have found inscriptions on doors of safes, handrails and even on a tree.

Monumental Inscriptions are gathered by people who are trying to preserve that which has been written down. In churchyards the elements-and vandals are gradually destroying valuable information on tombstones and likewise in churches, books wear out and are gradually replaced. In some cases we have church members who can be described as modern iconoclasts, who remove and destroy plaques and tablets. Bar Methodist Church, here in Bilton, is a good example where these modern iconoclasts have been busy, for in this church, all plaques and tablets were taken down when the church was in need of decoration, but they were never remounted and one large marble tablet was actually broken up and used for ballast when a new car park was being made. The 1914-1918 War Memorial, bearing the words "LEST WE FORGET" is tucked away in a small cupboard under the stairs.

Most people can find some benefit from having a look at these inscriptions, even if it is just for a laugh, for frequently badly worded inscriptions can invoke a smile. I have come across some inscriptions which go into great detail about the pain and suffering someone has borne before death and then end something like "who died on 5th. June 1896, Thanks be to God." or "who died of the 2nd. November 1904, Peace perfect peace."

Graveyards are interesting places, not just to the family or local historian, but to everyone. Those interested in nature can benefit by noting the plants that abound, the grasses, the mosses and lichens, the trees, the wild flowers and in graveyards such as that of All Saints at Staveley, rare wild flowers are being specially cultivated in order to preserve them. Often wild animals can be observed - I have noted rabbits, squirrels, a fox and countless different insects and birds. At St. Jude's Church at Hartwith, I sat on a chest tomb to eat my packed lunch and then suddenly realized that this chest tomb actually contained a wasp's nest; needless to say I quickly found somewhere else to sit. Those interested in architecture would be interested in the churches and the many formations of the tombstones and those with an interest in geology would be in their element trying to identify the many types of stone used for headstones. I could go on, but space will not permit.

Perhaps a glimpse at some of the inscriptions I have come across will give some insight as to what can be found.

Epitaphs which show how people accepted death :- From the OLIVER tombstone in the Great Lumley Churchyard, County Durham, after the death of three children -" And the parents gave in tears and pain / The flowers they most did love / They know they should find them all again / In the fields of life above."

From St. John's churchyard, Bilton a huge angel on a massive pedestal - to a child, MAY, almost ten years of age :- " The gardener asked, 'Who / plucked this flower?' / The servant said, - 'The Master.' / And the gardener held his peace."

Historical Information from the tombstone of JAMES & ANN AIS-BITT, in the churchyard at Washington, County Durham -... Also THOMAS their son /died Feb. 3rd. 1859 from the effect of an/ explosion in Springwell Colliery on the 20th Jan. / aged 31 years.

Sometimes, in a way, one-upmanship after death occurs, as at St. Mary the Virgin's Church at Ramsgill :- Sacred / in the memory of NICHOLAS BELL of Rams- / gill who departed this life Dec. 13th. 1842/ aged 70 years. / HE WAS THE FIRST INTERD IN THIS CHURCHYARD /.....

A piece of unintentional humour -From the grave of MARY ANN and WILLIAM THURWELL in Steeton cemetery ... Also ELIZABETH / their daughter, / wife of JOSEPH DAVY, / who died Aug. 15th. 1925 / in her 78th. year / " Thou doest all things well."

From the graveyard of Ripon Cathedral, a crafty use of words -Here lies poor /but honest BRYAN TUNSTALL / he was / a most expert angler / until / Death, envious of his Merit / threw out his line, / hook'd him, and / landed him here /the 21st. day of April/ 1790. So here we have the humorous, the historical, the enigmatic, to mention just a few types of Monumental Inscriptions; also we have yet another source of both Family and Local History and it needs preserving. Would you like to "get out there" and help to gather and preserve more inscriptions? If so ask.

William Grainge

William Grainge wrote a book Harrogate and the Forest of Knaresborough in 1871. This fascinating historic insight into pass times in the district was republished in 1988.

The Forest of Knaresborough

The first forest laws were made by Canute around 1016. In each forest people called verders were appointed to be in charge. So important were these folk that it was an offence to offer force to them, punishable by loss of freedom if a freeman and if a villein his right hand was to be struck off. Any second offence was punishable by death. It was also death to kill a **deer** in the royal forest; sometimes the offender had his eyes put out.

Even chasing a deer until it panted was punishable by a ten shilling fine. An enormous sum in those days! Apparently it is unsure however that the forest was formed by this date.

In 1086 at the time of the Domesday survey it was not a royal forest. Nevertheless a great portion of it consisted of a "wild heath and shaggy wood." Sadly there is little evidence now of heath land within the ancient boundaries of The Forest of Knaresborough. Killinghall Moor soon to be destroyed is the last remaining vestige of heath land in our district. The probability is that the forest was not formed until the reign of Henry in the early twelfth century.

Did You Know !!!

- * The oldest person buried in St. John's Churchyard reached the age of 101? She was Mrs. MARY JOHNSON and was buried there on 6th. November 1880. The vicar, BASIL K. WOODD, to confirm her age consulted the baptism register of the Parish Church at Goldsborough and made a copy of the baptismal entry in the back of the St. John's Burial Register. The entry reads: "1779 -Nov. 25th. bap. MARY daur of JNO GALBY - Flaxby."
- * Harrogate Hospital Radio was started by two young men from Bilton way back in the late 1960's? Before that time there was no patients' request programme, but BRIAN ELI, a former dentist from Skipton Road, did play "Hospital Vespers" to the patients.
- * A lady from Bilton died at Bournemouth on the 6th. February 1944 and was buried there? However, her body was exhumed by Faculty of the Bishop of Winchester and re-interred at St. John's Church, Bilton on the 15th. November 1945.

Help Wanted

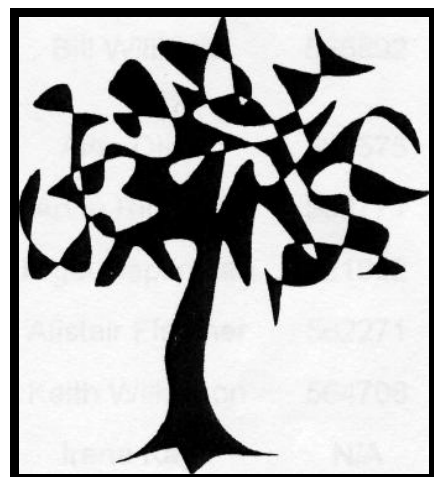
JOHN WILLBY would like to know if anyone has any information about the sluice gates that can be seen at Knox Mill

ALAN OLIVER is seeking information about a small, bronze, hand punched, plaque which he has. It has countersunk screw holes in the top right and bottom left hand corners. The plaque, measuring three inches by one and three-quarter inches has the following inscription on it:-

**B. SUGDEN.
PIN UP GIRL
OF 1944/5.**

Why was the plaque made?
Who was B. SUGDEN?

NIGEL HEPTINSTALL would be grateful if any one could tell him where Barber's Coppice was/is! He is also interested in any information about unusual wildlife sightings in our area



The Future

The Millennium

We hope to produce a booklet describing Bilton in the year 2000.

The Museum

Our long term plans are to find a place to house all our historical data.

The Virtual Museum

We hope to create a virtual museum on the Internet. We already are displaying some Natural History material in this way.

The Time Capsule

At the millennium we intend to bury a time capsule containing present day artifacts for *our ancestor to discover in years to come.*

The Past

Some of you may well be aware of the market garden which occupied the land between Sewerage Works Lane and Hall Lane, which was owned by the Johnson family. Did you know that long before the second world war of 1939 there was another market garden in the area. A Mr. Carter owned one that was situated on land that stretched from the top left hand side of Batchelor Gardens down to where Knox Road is now. It covered most of the land down to where the Knox Arms pub is now and was then called Knox House Farm. In those pre-war days Bilton Cricket Club used to play their matches on a field which was owned by Hill Top Farm. This was situated in the area which is now Knox Avenue and Redhills, part of the Knox estate. Before

moving to their existing site on Bilton Lane they also played for a while on a site close to St. Johns Church.

The Cottages on the right hand side of Bachelor Gardens as you go down, no's 14-34 were in those days called Olive Mount. The facilities were very basic, two cottages shared one outside toilet. Properties 36-56 were built to much improved standards. They had their own back yard and outside loo! This block was called Viaduct View. Many of the ladies in these houses used to take in washing from the big houses on Duchy Road and Kent Road. The laundry was delivered by a Mr Cundall with his horse and cart.

Information supplied by Mrs Dale who has lived in the area since she was a child.

Do you have any memories of Batchelor Gardens, have you any old photographs or do you know why the first cottages were called "Olive Mount"? We would be pleased to hear from anyone who can help.

Regular Meetings

In Future we intend to hold bi-monthly meetings of the Society with guest speakers



Project Leaders

Project	Leader
Bachelor Gardens (incl Bilton Endowed School)	Brian & Sandra Selvidge
Bilton 2000 (Bilton at the millennium)	Bill Williams
Churches	Alan Oliver
Footpaths/Roads	Anne Richards
Natural History	Nigel Heptinstall
Photographic Records	Alistair Fletcher
Railways/Communications	Keith Wilkinson
Library & Archives	Irene Kaye