

WINSTER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP
NEWSLETTER
No. 2 October 1996

MEETING ON 21 OCTOBER 1996 on The History of Individual Homes

At our first meeting, on 16 September, it emerged that a subject of interest to a large number of people is the history of the buildings in Winster, and in particular of people's own homes. This subject also has the virtue of drawing together some other interests connected with the physical environment of the village, such as maps, oral history, village personalities, trades and industries, paths and roads, services, and so on. So we decided to make it the focus of our October meeting, and to invite members of the group to talk briefly about any work they had already begun.

Four people volunteered to speak. As it turned out their presentations complemented each other marvellously – one was mostly on the records in general, one was based on the deeds of a house, one dealt largely with the architecture, and one described changes that have occurred within living memory. Here is a brief summary, by the speakers, of two of the talks:

Researching the History of My House: Alison Gray, Sunnybank, Wensley Road

I have made a start on researching the history of my house but I haven't got very far yet. So what follows is a guide to getting started, rather than a summary of historical findings.

We are lucky to have the Derbyshire Record Office on our doorstep in Matlock. There is a tremendous amount of material there, and I have found the staff very helpful and knowledgeable. They have a complete set of Ordnance Survey maps on microfilm, first and second editions (1800 and 1900), which you can have printed out. The scale is 25 inches to the mile, so it shows individual buildings.

Documents in the archives are not filed in geographical areas, so if you want to find out about Winster you have to look up Winster in the card index system. There is quite a block of cards each containing several reference numbers of documents that mention Winster. These take some wading through, especially as you can only ask to see about four documents an hour. Sometimes you get just one piece of paper which has nothing to do with what you are looking for. Sometimes you get an enormous book which is made up of hundreds of sales catalogues bound together. These make interesting reading – they are the estate agents' particulars for the sale of property and land, and they often have little maps showing exactly which bit of land is being auctioned, and who owns the adjoining property.

Another source of information is the Local Studies Library at County Offices. They have the census returns from 1841 to 1891 on microfilm (so you can print a copy). These have their frustrations as well: people's names and occupations are listed, but not the houses, and sometimes they start at one end of the road and next time they

start at the other end. However, you do get familiar with the names eventually, and it seems much easier to find out about people than places.

Back to the County Record Office again with the names of people you want to find out about. They have the Parish Registers for Winster dating back to the mid 1800s, so you can find out when people were baptised, married and buried. The Family History Society has published a booklet listing all inscriptions on all the gravestones in the churchyard (with an alphabetical index of names, which saves a lot of searching). The Record Office also has copies of people's wills – again on microfilm – which might just mention your house.

The Local Studies Library has a good collection of Derbyshire directories, which go back well into the last century, listing all the tradesmen and 'private residents' (i.e. people who were wealthy enough not to have to work for a living). Again, they don't mention where people lived, nor the names of farmworkers or leadminers.

It all takes a lot of patience and time, and you find yourself getting wildly excited about very minor discoveries. This is not a complete list of all the places to look. It's just what I've found so far, and I would be grateful to hear of any other sources of information that people have found useful.

Addresses: Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock. Tel. 58000 ext. 57611. Open Mon-Fri 9.30 a.m. – 4.45 p.m. Local Studies Library, County Offices, Matlock. Tel. 580000 ext 6579. Open Mon-Fri 9.a.m. – 5 p.m. and occasionally Saturday mornings.

The History of our House: Rod and Jan Shiers, The Headlands, East Bank

When we moved to the Headlands in 1986 we were lucky enough to receive a bundle of old deeds. Usually when a house is sold if the Seller retains other land it is a principle of property law that he/she retains the title deeds (to prove ownership of the remaining land) and the buyer only gets a copy or list of deeds. Our earliest deed is dated 1813 and refers back to just before the end of the eighteenth century.

We set out to try to discover two items affecting the house. Firstly the identity of the persons whose initials (R.E. and M.E.) with the date 1659 appear on a stone in the cellar. We were informed that the current house probably was built in about 1790 on the site of a previous dwelling. We were also interested to try to bridge the gap in history between the stone and the earliest deed.

We started with the parish records now kept in the Local History Department of the County Records Office in Matlock. We discovered an entry in the record of burials for 1660 for Edward the baby son of Richard and Mary Ensor. As not many English surnames begin with the letter E. we thought this seemed a likely possibility. We next considered the records of the Hearth Tax imposed in 1670. This taxed households on the number of hearths existing. We looked for the entry for the Bowling Green and near to this was a record of Richard Ensor (3 hearths). This seemed to support (although not yet prove) our first guess. We soon got side

tracked into examining the census returns for 1841 and 1881. This was easier as we had the deeds to follow. The house was occupied by a large family of 10, and sure enough 40 years later the youngest child, Thomas Brittlebank, had become the master of the household. Once word got around that we were researching the history of the Brittlebanks we were contacted by other people interested in them. We swapped some information and were rewarded by a sepia photograph of Benjamin Brittlebank, one of the previous occupants, taken nearly 100 years ago.

It is worth enquiring from the solicitor through whom you bought your house whether there are any deeds which you can have copied or which might be surplus to requirements of the building society. You may have to pay a production fee to the building society, but it could prove a fruitful source of information.

Perhaps we might get our finds into some sort of order now that we've looked at the material again. If our experience can help you, please get in touch and we'll be pleased to help.

Organising further work on Winster's buildings

In the last part of our meeting we discussed how to take our interest further. We decided that it would be best to focus on a specific time in Winster's recent past, but not so recent for there to be a danger that we would become overwhelmed with too much material. We chose a period ten years either side of 1880, the date of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map and one which coincided closely with one of the national censuses. John Geddes is hopeful of being able to acquire (at a price) a good, clean copy of the map, and this we hope to use as the basis of organising ourselves.

Organising further working groups

It seems that most of the members of our group wish to be in some way involved in the buildings project. But there is also interest in forming other groups to deal with relatively unrelated topics, such as lead mining and field names. Lack of time prevented us from organising any such groups at our last meeting. Also, I have not yet received all the completed questionnaires detailing what people are interested in. It was agreed that I would phone round and gather such information, then compile lists of names and topics of interest and publish them in a future Newsletter so that people can get in touch and get their activities on whatever footing they think best. Several people said at the meeting that they think it is important to get recording some of the oral (remembered) history of the village as soon as possible.

MEETINGS OF THE GROUP IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

Our next meeting will take place at the County Record Office in Matlock on Monday 25 November from 6.30 till 8.30, when the County Archivist will show us some of the most relevant documents and maps. The optimum maximum number is 25, and so far 22 places have been booked. Several people have kindly volunteered to take their cars, and lifts will be arranged by phone. Please arrive on time and bring £1.50 towards the group fee.

Our meeting on Monday 16 December will be a practical one at which we will organise our group projects.

DERBYSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES NETWORK

We are now members of the Network and have received the current Network News and the Diary of Events up to March 1997. These will be brought to the November meeting or can be borrowed in advance. The Diary gives details of nearly 150 talks to local societies, many of which are relevant to our own projects. In addition the following are taking place at the Record Office, Matlock:

Interpreting Dates, Money and Numerals	14 November, 10 a.m.
Lesser Known Sources for Family History	10 December, 2 p.m.
Lesser Known Sources for Local History	28 January, 2 p.m.
Sources for the County's History	20 February, 2 p.m.
Using Manuscript Maps and Plans	20 March, 10 a.m. or 2 p.m.

FUNDING

Our request for funding from the Winster Carnival proceeds was successful, but the grant cannot be awarded till July 1997. Meanwhile an application is being made to the Heathcote Charity mentioned by Gwen McManus and advertised in the November Parish News

NEW MEMBERS

Twenty-six people attended our meeting on 21 October, including the following new names:

Campbell, Hilary	Rock View Cottage, West Bank	650853
Duncan, Graham	Gable End, Main Street	650757
Kewin, Joe	Rose Cottage, East Bank	650676
McManus, Gwen	The Old House, Main Street	650320
McManus, John	The Old House, Main Street	650320
Wilson, Carolyn	Gable End, Main Street	650757
Wynne, David	Clough Vista, West Bank	650096
Wynne, Martine	Clough Vista, West Bank	650096

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