

**WINSTER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP  
NEWSLETTER  
No. 3 December 1996**

**VISIT TO MATLOCK RECORD OFFICE – MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER**

Dr Margaret O’Sullivan welcomed us and began by explaining the role of the Public Record Office. The office in Matlock is the County Record Office, and it holds all the statutory and ecclesiastical records for Derbyshire. Archive records may be manuscript or printed material and are distinguished by two features:

- they are the original record
- they have been produced by an organisation, family or business in the normal course of its activities.

The material is therefore unique and demonstrates how an organisation has changed over time.

The Record Office is licensed to hold statutory records and is inspected annually to ensure that it is meeting the national standards for storing the material. These standards relate to the security and safety of the records. Security standards are very high to ensure that this irreplaceable material is not lost or stolen. In addition the records must be preserved in conditions which meet standard requirements concerning levels of humidity and temperature control.

Following an inspection, the licensing authority issues a licence specifying which records can be held. The Record Office also has legal powers to accept privately owned records which are entrusted to their care. Priority is given to those records for which there is a high level of risk of loss or damage. The Office takes a proactive approach in its collecting policy, identifying possible sources as part of its survey programme and advising the owners of archive material of the facilities it provides.

Records held at the Matlock office date back to the middle ages. Margaret showed us an indenture relating to the sale of land about 1249. Although it is undated, experts have been able to work out the date on the evidence of the handwriting and the seals. The seals were particularly interesting, the larger ones indicating the level of status in the community, with different shapes for men and women. Women clearly owned property in medieval times and in this respect had a similar status to that of men.

Margaret then talked about the preservation and conservation of records. The staff repair material damaged by fire, floods and damp, but the biggest threat is from over-handling and carelessness. Consequently great care is taken over the treatment of records when they are being consulted. Large volumes are placed on special

cushions similar to bean bags, to prevent their spines from breaking, and other material is covered with transparent sheets.

After the introductory talk we were taken into the Public Search Room and it was explained what members of the public have to do to gain access to the records. The office is open Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. and there is no charge for consulting the documents. The system for identifying relevant documents and then arranging to look at them is explained in leaflets available at the Record Office. Some documents have been reproduced on microfilm. An archivist is always on duty to assist and answer queries.

A number of documents relating to Winster were on display, including original plans of the village school, parish records, maps, reports of extreme weather conditions, and an account of one villager who lost his fingers in a bell-ringing accident and was unable to work.

Overall this was a very informative meeting and it will have given people confidence to visit the Record Office in their own time in connection with their researches into the history of Winster.

Christine Renouf

## **NEXT MEETING OF THE GROUP – MONDAY 16 DECEMBER**

### **7.30 Market House**

The main business will be to sort out groups for working on individual projects and to get some financial matters sorted out. From the questionnaires (not all have been completed) it appears that the main interests are:

#### Winster 100 years ago

It was agreed at the October meeting that this would be the focus of research into the history of individual homes and buildings. This also allows us to take in local businesses, people, etc., and there will be plenty of opportunity to work both forward and back from 1900. John Geddes has now purchased a clean copy of the second edition O.S. map, and copies will be made available. Most people have expressed interest in being involved in this project.

#### Oral History

Many people have also asked to be included in the scheme to record memories of the village. These oral sources are a precious resource, and we must stop talking about it and get ourselves organised.

The other main interests are Lead Mining and Paths and Trackways. Possibly other subjects may emerge when all the questionnaires are in.

### **MEETING ON 20 JANUARY**

I hope to arrange a guest speaker on Oral History or Lead Mines. Details later.

### **FINANCES**

The fee for the Record Office visit is £1.50. John has also paid out a considerable sum for the O.S. map. I think the time has come to ask for a subscription. This is something we must discuss.

### **DERBYSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES NETWORK**

I have a lot of information, including details of useful publications and of workshops and meetings that may be of interest. I will bring this on December 16.

Geoff Lester