

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter No 13

May 1999

Next Meeting

Monday 21 June at 6.30 and 8.00 (two groups). A Visit to Winster Church Graveyard, led by Helen Bastin. Last year this event was rained off on two occasions, so it must be third time lucky. Helen has added to her database of inscriptions from the gravestones all sorts of information and anecdotes about the individuals who are buried there. In order to keep the numbers manageable we have decided to split the visit into two. Please phone Helen (650213) to say which group you would prefer to be in. Twenty in each group. First come, first served.

News in Brief

The History group recently provided information which was used in a feature on the Burton Institute on BBC Television's 'Countryfile'.

Richard Foley has kindly donated a set of freestanding display boards to the History group. These will be useful for future displays, like the one we mounted for 'Winster and the great War' last November. In the meantime anyone is welcome to borrow them.

James Thomas (whose aunt Annie Thomas wrote the Great War poem 'Our Brave Winster Boys') recently visited Winster and brought with him photographs, which he loaned for copying. He also generously donated a large chisel, forged by his great-uncle George when he was blacksmith at Mill Close Mine.

Jean Skyrme has been offered the loan of some interesting items for the proposed exhibition of Winster memorabilia in the Autumn. Anyone willing to help please phone 650778.

Photographs

People continue to be very helpful in making available photographs for us to copy for our archive. Until recently we had the photos copied (negative and large print) very cheaply at the University of Sheffield, but unfortunately the photographer has retired and the service is no longer available. We have also had photographs laser-copied, and are grateful for the help Paul Fearn has been

able to give. But there is an urgent need to locate a cheap photographic service to replace the one we have lost.

We are exploring several possibilities, so in the meantime there is a delay in returning photos which have been lent. However, they are all safe and will be dealt with and returned very soon.

Oral History Project

The hard work of the Oral History Group is beginning to bear fruit, and we are pushing on with our plan to publish a book of Winster memories some time in the year 2000.

We have made many hours of recordings of village residents, past and present. These are contained in 43 audio-cassettes, which we have transcribed word-for-word. Although this has been a group effort, the bulk of the interviewing has been done by Freda Forster, and the bulk of the transcription by Barbara Berry.

We have begun to edit computer files of the transcriptions, for example by cutting any repeated material, and we plan to consolidate further by editing out some of the questions. Then we will arrange the material by subject to produce, we hope, a distillation of interesting material covering almost the whole century. This will be our contribution to Winster's celebration of the new millennium.

Report of Meeting in February: 'Not the Only Knives in Derbyshire: Winster and Brittlebanks', by Dr Lynn Willies

Lynn Willies, who is known to many through his extensive work of lead mining in Derbyshire, has been researching the social and economic history of Winster since the 1960's. A big audience of over sixty reflected the great interest in what he would have to say about this important local family, especially about the famous shooting incident in which they were involved in the garden of Bank House, West Bank, in 1821.

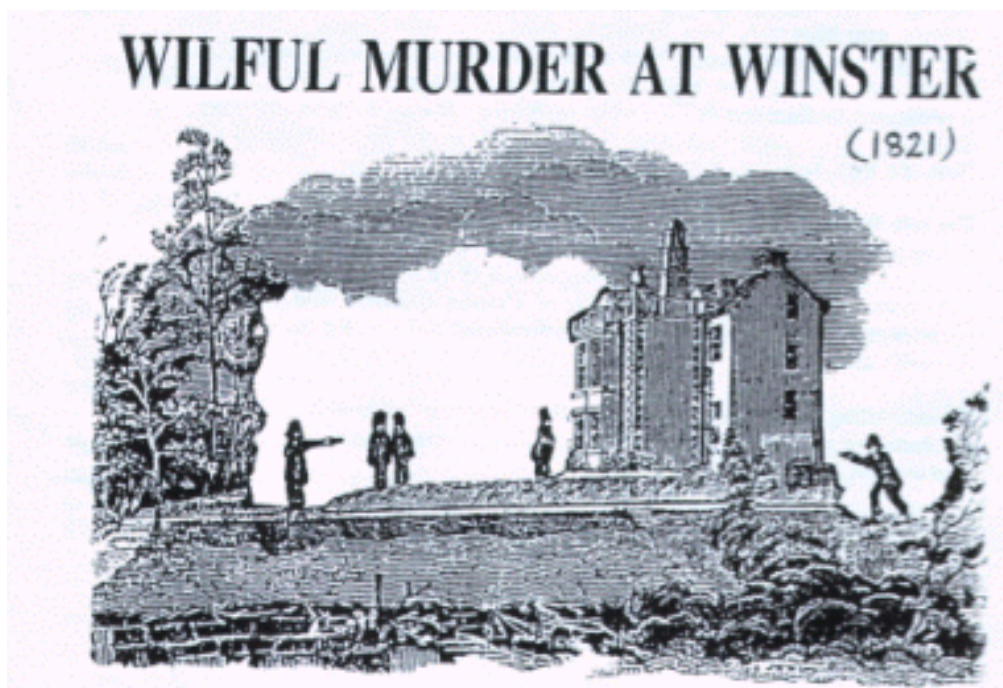
The Brittlebanks were of modest means when they came to Winster. Several members of the family later trained in the law, and they were able to build up their wealth and influence by gradually buying property and land in the parish, including Oddo House, which they had rebuilt in lavish style.

The most important event in the family's fortunes was the duel in which William Brittlebank shot and killed William Cuddie, the popular village

doctor. Charged with murder, William Brittlebank jumped bail and escaped abroad, leaving his two brothers and a friend, who had been his associates, to face trial. At an Assize Court in Derby they were acquitted, an event which led to a great deal of resentment in the village and the publication of some satirical pamphlets. A provocatively-worded monument to Cuddie was erected in Winster Church by public subscription, and Dr Willies put forward the theory that this rankled so much with the Brittlebanks that it resulted in their determination to have the church pulled down and rebuilt. When this was done in 1842, the monument disappeared and was replaced by a modestly inscribed stone in the churchyard.

Brittlebank fortunes began to decline following a fall in the value of land and the extravagance of later members of the family. The family left Oddo in 1891, and the house stood empty for a time, until it was demolished and replaced by the present building.

There is interest in Winster in adapting the colourful story of the Brittlebanks as part of a community drama production.



**Report of Meeting in April: 'The Anglo-Saxons in the Winster Area',
By Geoff Lester.**

The name 'Winster' is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Winsterne', which is possibly *Wines + pyrne* ('Wine's thorn-bush'). The popular etymology 'Wine's Tor' (rocky peak), which would fit very well with the local topography, is extremely unlikely to be correct because 'tor' is not

found as a place-name element in Derbyshire before the thirteenth century. Other Anglo-Saxon names in the area include Portway (market road, track or way leading to a town or market'), and Wensley ('a glade sacred to the pagan god Woden').

It is a mystery why there are so many burials of rich, pagan Anglo-Saxons in the infertile limestone uplands of the Peak when relatively few burial sites have been discovered in the more fertile and accessible lands close to the River Trent and its tributaries. Perhaps it was their practice of burying the dead in barrows, or mounds, which made their burial places easier to spot and more accessible to the attentions of the nineteenth-century barrow-diggers.

One prolific barrow-digger was Thomas Bateman (1821–61), who was a resident and local benefactor of Middleton-by-Youlgreave. He built Lomberdale House, between Middleton and Youlgreave, to house his famous collection of prehistoric and medieval antiquities. Much of Bateman's collection is now in Sheffield City Museum, including the famous boar-crested Anglo-Saxon helmet found at Benty Grange, near Monyash. Also on display there are a gold filigree pendant cross and a gold and garnet brooch, both of the seventh century, which were found in a barrow called White Low 'upon the commons of Winster'. However, two burials investigated by Bateman in the garden of Winster Manor in 1856, although thought by him to have been possibly Anglo-Saxon, are now considered to be from the Iron Age (pre-Roman).

The talk featured slides of these antiquities, and also of the later, Christian Anglo-Saxon items found in the Winster area, such as the carved stone crosses at Bakewell and the intricate stone grave-cover at Wirksworth. Finally some details were given of the interesting double life of Thomas Bateman, and of the clash between the respectable public image he presented and his (for the time) unusual domestic arrangements.

An interesting booklet which gives details of Bateman's life and of a 'Bateman Archaeological Trail' round Middleton is *The Barrow Knight* by Barry M Marsden (K.M.Publications, 1988).