

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter No. 15 January 2000

PROGRAMME FOR SPRING 2000

Monday 24 January, 7.30 in the Burton Institute

David Frederickson: The Brittlebank Murder Mystery

Monday 28 February, 7.30 in the Burton Institute

David Hey: Derbyshire Surnames

Professor Hey has published many books on local history, including *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads: Trade and Communications in North Derbyshire and South Yorkshire (1980)*. He is also author of *The Oxford Guide to Family History* and is Director of the Sheffield Names Project. Despite all this erudition his talk is guaranteed to be lively and entertaining – they always are.

Monday 27 March, 7.30 in the Burton Institute

Rob Shiers: Deeds and Documents in Winster

A chance to discover what can be learned about the past from legal documents, sale catalogues, and the like. Rod is a practising solicitor, and therefore has first-hand knowledge of the ins-and-outs of conveyancing. Some people have already kindly brought along the deeds of their houses for us to look at. If you have deeds or documents we could use on the night, please let Rod see them in advance so that he can explain their contents (tel. 650523 or 650090).

Oral History Project

A grant from the Millennium 'Awards for All' fund has enabled us to press on with the publication of our recordings of memories of Winster. The cassettes have been transcribed and are in the process of being edited. There will be photographs as well. We are aiming for completion of the project in summer 2000, but, of course, further recordings will continue to be made.

From the Parish Magazines January to March 1900

The lamplighters were asked to keep the lamps lit till 12.30 on New Year's Eve.

Three baptisms and six burials are recorded between January and March. In consequence of the number of deaths in the village it was decided to postpone the Annual Parochial Tea and Concert until after Easter. A serialised historical account of 'Ancient Mining Customs' began in the January issue, unsigned but

probably by H C Heathcote, the local historian, who was then Chair of the Parish Council.

In January a lecture was reported, organised by the Band of Hope, on 'A Tour in Lower Egypt'. It was 'Beautifully illustrated by first-rate lantern slides', which are fully listed, from 'The Albert Dock, London' to 'The Pyramids'. 'Then followed a series of living pictures, produced by the cinematograph, including the Royal Jubilee procession in London, a railway train, a man with the nightmare, the divers of Milan, the two drunkards, snowballing, and the children's pillow fight.'

The Wesleyan Reform Chapel held a service of sacred song entitled 'Won for Christ'. On New Year's Day they held their Annual Tea in the Public Hall, with entertainment by three local choirs and two soloists, followed by several 'stirring addresses'. There was also 'A Christmas Tree, Sale of Work, and Public Tea at the Primitive Methodist Chapel ... interspersed with singing by the choir, Mrs. Allen and Mr. A. Marshall.' Proceeds amounted to £5.

The Parish Council met in the Schoolroom. Its duties over this period included listening to a paper on 'Roadside Waste Land and Village Greens' and administering the 'Grizzle Dole' (a local charity fund?). Extensive collections were taken for the Transvaal War Fund and for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association (organised by Mrs Childers Thompson of Winster Manor). The grand total in February was £18 16 1 ₂. Every individual contribution is published, including 'Boxes at the Inns'

Bull's Head	1s 8d
Miners' Standard	1 8
Angel Inn	1 9
Crown Inn	9
Bowling Green	1 10
Shoulder of Mutton	4 7

The March issue of the Parish Magazine contains a copy of a letter, dated 4 January, from Private John Sweeney, a native of Winster, on service with the South African Field Force, to his sister, Mrs John Corless. After wishing her a Happy New Year he goes on: 'We are quite enjoying ourselves. You would not think we are in a war... We are singing in camp and playing all sorts of games and passing the time on as we can. We are at a place called Chievely. It is only fifteen miles from Ladysmith, and we can hear the boers bombarding it every minute of the day and we can't get there to help them. We have got four good naval guns here and when any of the boers come out of their trenches we fire at them, and when one of the lyddite shells bursts you can see boers and horses flying in the air. It is very awful stuff is the lyddite. I am all right here. I am with the Red Cross Society carrying the wounded off the field when there is any battles, and they are not supposed to fire on the red cross but the boers sometimes do.' He finishes: 'We are all in the best of spirits. Give my best respects to all my friends in Winster.'

THE BRITTLEBANK MURDER MYSTERY: A COMMUNITY PLAY PROJECT

A Reminder

In 1821 Andrew Brittlebank (the son of the family who owned most of Winster) shot William Cuddie, a local physician in a duel in the grounds of one of the large houses on West Bank. He had challenged Cuddie to a duel because of the attention Cuddie was paying to his sister. Cuddie died of his wounds the following day and Brittlebank and his two seconds (one a brother) were charged with murder. Andrew Brittlebank never stood trial because he absconded and never returned. In his absence the other two defendants were acquitted at Derby Assizes later that year. Cuddie had been popular in Winster because he often did not charge the poor for his services and a lavish memorial was erected by public subscription in the church. It was later mysteriously destroyed and it is said that old father Brittlebank took a hammer to it in the middle of the night. It was replaced inside the church but it is not there today probably because alterations required its removal – alterations over which the Brittlebanks would have had control. After old Brittlebank died his widow's personal spending habits became so extreme that land had to be sold to pay her debts. But with agriculture in depression negative equity meant that the huge estate disappeared rapidly and by the end of the century was gone.

The Project

We will begin by holding a series of workshops this spring, which will be offered to local amateur theatre groups, youth groups and other interested individuals to introduce the idea of devised community to work with professional artists including a writer, artistic director. We hope this will lead to some performance for Winster Wakes Week in July 2000. We will then aim to raise enough money to produce the Brittlebank Murder Mystery on the streets of Winster in summer 2001. We have funding from Awards For All for this.

The Point of it

The project provides a number of desirable opportunities for local communities and organisations:

- It is an attempt to give local amateur drama and music groups the chance to improve the quality and excellence of their skills by working with professional artists and to participate in a large-scale professionally-produced arts project based on a piece of new writing.
- The participatory form of the community drama will also provide opportunities for schools, local folk dancers (like Winster Morris Men) and community arts groups of all kinds.
- Even more broadly, there can be very wide participation in the event by local people as audience and in fringe events. We could provide opportunities for researching period costume and other aspects of

Derbyshire life in the 19th century. It would be a celebration of our local identity in the Peak District.

- It would be an inter-generational event involving young and old in different aspects of the same project. It could therefore be a learning experience for all.
- It would be open and accessible, increasing people's involvement in their community's history.
- The play would be done as a promenade production using Winster as its set. The village is a wonderful setting and it might be possible to use the very houses where the events took place. It would be a considerable attraction to the large summer tourist audience in the Peak District.

The People

- Chris Hawes is a current writer of 'The Archers' and lives in Youlgreave. He will write the play.
- Maggie Ford, a local professional director and filmmaker who also lives in Youlgreave, will direct the play and run the acting workshop programme.
- We hope to employ someone of the calibre of John Tams [who also lives in Derbyshire] to write the score and work with local choirs and music groups of which there are a number in local schools and the community.

The Pounds

We think we need a further £25,000. We have applied for funding to 'Year of the Artist'. We will also be trying to establish partnerships with local businesses. On the income side we envisage that people would pay a small fee for workshops. The play will be promoted locally and to the summer tourist audience who will be charged a ticket price in line with other similar theatre events.

Winster Local History Group

We realised from the outset that the History Group would play an important part in all this, especially in researching the murder and its context. In order to get things started the History Group meeting on the 24 January will be on The Brittlebank Murder Mystery. Please come along. It promises to be the start of something interesting.

David Frederickson