

Winster Local History Group
Newsletter No. 19 March 2001

Notes on 'Winster's Neighbours: Bonsall', meeting on 26 February 2001

Continuing the series of talks on Winster's neighbours, Peter Greaves from Bonsall spoke about the history of his home village. Its geology differs from that of Winster in that limestone is interspersed with impermeable igneous (volcanic) rock. As a result, water is retained in some places, and there are numerous springs. The first settlers must have come because of the presence of this water. Early Bronze Age weapons (1200BC) were found in 1644 near Ball Eye Mine. Remains from the same period were also found on Blakelow Hill in 1786. In the Romano-British period, there was a settlement at Bonsall Leys. The Danes arrived about 875, accompanied by Norwegians coming from Ireland. A beautiful Celtic brooch from this period was found on Bonsall Moor in 1863, and was described in *The Reliquary* by Llewellyn Jewitt, the well-known antiquarian from Winster.

At the time of the Domesday Book (1086) Bonsall was known as Bunteshale (meaning Bunt's piece of land) and this name evolved through at least 25 variations to its present form. It was a royal manor, but possibly consisting of no more than a single farmstead of 4 or 5 dwellings. Later it split into two manors: Bonsall Superior, now Upper Town, and Nether Bonsall, now the main village. The first church was built about 1230, and rebuilt with improvements in 1340. An interesting feature is the Bonsall Imp, a stone carving on one of the interior pillars. In 1552, three bells were hung; this was fairly unusual, and was a sign of growing prosperity. By 1609 three more had been added, but in 1899 an estimate of £231 to rehang them was deemed unaffordable; even today, they cannot be rung properly, and have to be hit with hammers.

In 1561 the Barmaster recorded 60 or 70 households, hence a population of perhaps 350, engaged mostly in lead-mining. The work was done by 'free miners', in small workings. It involved little capital investment, as opposed to the much larger workings in Winster. The largest mine was Ball Eye, whose production peaked between 1500 and 1600. Around 1630 a cash-strapped King Charles I sold the manor, which was eventually bought by the copyholders (tenants), another sign of the growing wealth of the community. In the 1600s were built the listed buildings which still stand: the Manor House, the Dower House, and the Kings Head. The Market Cross was built in 1671, probably on an earlier (15th C) base. At this time the Hearth Tax returns (1670) showed 99 households, a population of 500-600. By 1903 it had grown to 1500-2000, the records showing that when water mains were installed, 274 out of 303 houses benefited. As regards more recent history, from 1880 to 1934 Bonsall had its own Urban District Council, which was then merged with Matlock UDC. In 1974 Derbyshire Dales DC was set up, with Bonsall Parish Council following in 1979.

Peter concluded by telling us about 'The Old Man of Bonsall', a medieval stone carving depicting a miner going to work. This is thought to have been one of 12 similar carvings, representing the months of the year. Many years ago, it was 'rescued' from where it lay in the Bonsall churchyard, and now resides in the church at Wirksworth.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All talks, (except that in June) will take place in the Burton Institute, starting at 7.30 pm.

19 March 2001. Workshop on old Winster Sale Catalogues

Ever wondered what was in the Boudoir of the Old Oddo? Or what price Winster Hall was sold for in 1926? Or who was buying up village land around 1900? Do you know what an 'Act of Parliament' clock is? Or an 'indulgence chair'? In 1890 what price did a full-sized walnut billiard table fetch? Or a set of 'Scotch bagpipes'? Members of the History Group will display and talk about some of the catalogues in our collection. There will be plenty of opportunity for comments, ideas and suggestions from everyone, and if you have any sale catalogues of your own relating to Winster, please bring them along.

23 April 2001. 'T'Owd Man: The History of a Derbyshire Lead Miner' by Brian Woodall.

Brian will bring a selection of minerals and tools (and clothes?), and tell the story of the pleasures and pains in the life of a lead miner. Come along and see him bring the past to life. The presentation will be suitable for all ages (admission free for children).

18 June 2001 Winster's Mines

Dr Jim Rieuwerts (Peak District Mines Historical Society) will lead a guided walk to view some of the surface features of Winster's mines. Assemble at the Ore House, 7.30 pm.

PROGRAMME FOR 2001/2002

Please let us know if there are any particular topics which would interest you -- suggestions are always welcome. Keep these dates free:

2001: 25 September (AGM)
 15 October
 19 November

2002 25 February
 18 March

22 April
17 June

CURRENT AND NEW ACTIVITIES

Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers: A Talking Book version.

Following last year's very successful launch of the book, based on Winster residents' memories of the village, a taped version has now been produced. The tape lasts about one and a half hours, and features highlights from the printed book. Professionally produced by Talking Newspaper Enterprises using a variety of actors, the tape is tone indexed and is in a Braille cover box.

There are three ways to obtain a copy:

1. A limited number are on sale at £5.99
2. A copy is available for free loan to any visually impaired resident, or
3. The Local Studies Library, at County Hall Matlock, is issuing several

Contacts: Freda Forster (650110) or Simon Reynolds (650695)

The Buildings Group

The group has now held its first meeting, and a number of small-scale projects are under way. We are talking to older residents about how the buildings looked when they were young, who lived in them, and who owned them. Earlier still, copies of deeds (where available) will take the picture further back into the past, as will research based on electoral rolls, censuses and other historical material. If you would like to see what we are up to and get involved with the research, please contact David Jones (650178)

The Brittlebank Murder Community Play.

The bid for funding to support the writing and production of the play was not successful, but there was encouragement to resubmit, with appropriate modifications. This shows that the project is basically a good idea, and there is a good chance that support will eventually be forthcoming. However, it will not be possible to put on the play this year. Summer of 2002 is the new target.

From the Parish Magazine One Hundred Years Ago

[The Winster and Elton Monthly Magazine appeared after the demise of the Winster Monthly Magazine three years previously, when it had to be discontinued because of financial difficulties.]

1 January 1901. In his opening letter, the vicar, W H Nixon, greeted the new century with an appropriate reference to Deuteronomy 34, which describes the death of Moses and the passing of authority to Joshua. 'And now, (he wrote) as to the future, unknown, and yet so full of possibilities. Never has there been such a century as that which is about to die, but it leaves to that which is about to live such a legacy of possibility and responsibility as may well make thoughtful hearts tremble'.

The Parish Council discussed the Lighting Act and the dangerous condition of some of the lamp posts, as well as unspecified operations in the Grissel Field (near Islington and Lickpenny Lanes) by the tenant. There was a row over the Supplementary Valuation of Winster properties, with Mr Stone resigning from all the offices he held in the parish in the light of criticism from other members, which he took as a personal slur.

1 February 1901. In a solemn letter the vicar noted that with the death of the late Queen (on 22 January) 'the Victorian era is closed to us for ever, that it closed in fact with the century. The very name of our Queen has become so interwoven with our national life, and thought, and language even, that the sense of loss is strange and difficult to understand'.

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council passed a vote of sympathy on the death of the Queen, agreed how the day of the burial was to be observed in Winster, and pledged a vote of allegiance to the King. On the Saturday of the funeral business premises were asked to close from 11.00 till 2.00 and a service was held at noon.

1 March 1901. In his letter the vicar returned to his normal religious themes, announcing his intention to preach on Sundays during Lent a series of sermons on 'Sin, its Causes, its Consequences, and its Cure', and on Wednesday evenings upon some of the 'Miracles of our Lord'. He ended: 'And if you are not a communicant, ask yourself, WHY NOT?'

Your affectionate friend and Vicar, W H Nixon.'

Since the previous meeting of the Parish Council the Chairman, W H Heathcote, had telegraphed their congratulations and allegiance to King Edward at Osborne. The following reply was received from Sir Francis Knollys, Windsor: 'To Chairman Winster Parish Council, Winster. I am commanded by the King to thank you and all members of the Winster Parish Council for kind telegram – Knollys.'