

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter 30

November 2004

Next Meeting

February 21 2005. 'There's More to Walls...', by Trevor Wragg, drystonewaller

AGM 18 October 2004

Thirty-five people attended. The officers for this year are the same as before: Chair Geoff Lester (650090), Secretary Judy Hinsliff (650119), Treasurer Geraldine Hopkinson (650347). We intend to have a change next year, so please think whether you could take one of the posts. A regular changeover is a sign of a healthy group.

Membership

At the moment this stands at about 54, with some regular members still to renew their subscriptions. Please join at one of our meetings, or contact the Treasurer.

Oral History Group

Our Oral History Group makes recordings of people's memories about Winster and was responsible for producing the book *Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers* (now out of print). For the past two years the group has not been active, but now there is interest in reviving it and exploring some interesting new directions. If you would like to know more, please contact Elaine Millard, Tel. 07976 791690.

Winster Oddfellows (contributed by Michael Greatorex)

The Oddfellows Friendly Society is a mutual aid organisation designed to help protect its members against hardship. Historically Oddfellows were men only, but modern Oddfellows include women. I am an Oddfellow, as was my late father and some of my Winster ancestors. Now there is no lodge in Winster, the nearest being in Chesterfield.

Working men have for many years sought to safeguard their interests by banding together. In medieval times the Craft Guilds performed this function, as do the Trades Unions today. The Friendly Societies had their heyday in the 19th century, and in 1875 a Friendly Societies Act made provision for auditing and registration.

By the late 1870s about 27,000 were registered, but today there are only about 200, concentrating on social activities and providing limited, basic care for members

In 1810 there was a National Oddfellows Society, but some Manchester members did not like the autocratic way in which it was run and broke away to form 'The Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity, Friendly Society'. By 1911 this had become the largest Friendly Society in the world. Winster's lodge, established in 1838, had the grand name: 'The Loyal Triumphant Hope Lodge No 1543, Wirksworth District, of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity.'

An 1838 Register of Members survives and is now kept with some other records at the Record Office, Matlock. These are an important source for Winster family historians. The Register gives the names of the persons proposed for membership, their ages and trades, etc. The Register covers the period from the establishment of the lodge up to 1914, some 76 years, during which time 280 men applied for membership.

The earliest name recorded is that of Ralph Staley on 28 July 1838. Two months later Joseph Greatorex (b. 1808) was proposed for membership. He was possibly my first cousin 4 times removed, and is described as a Mason living in Winster.

During the period covered by the Register the dominant trade is that of Miner, and only a small number came from the professional classes. Mr Hampton, a Surgeon, joined in 1839, and Mr B[enjamin] Brittlebank, was made an Honorary Member in 1840. Joseph Thomas, aged 18, a pupil teacher and resident at Sabine Hay [near Mill Close Mine] joined in 1897; Albert Marshall, aged 18 and a printer, joined in 1910. He was responsible for some of the Edwardian postcards of Winster and surrounding villages. Josiah Burton, aged 16, a Grocer's Assistant, joined in 1913. Not everyone was a Winster resident. For example there was Herbert Walker (joined 1911), a Brush Manufacturer aged 17, resident in Manchester. What was he doing in Winster?

A junior lodge, known as 'The Bowling Green Juvenile Friendly Society No 13064 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity', was established in July 1872. Accounts survive for the three years ending 4 December 1875.

Other Friendly Societies with lodges in Winster were the Buffaloes and the Foresters. There was also at one time a 'Girls' Friendly Society', which seems to have been, at least in name, an imitation of the officially constituted, all-male groups. Evidence for this is found in the History Group's own publication *Winster A Peak District Village Remembers*, where Dolly Brassington recalls

Mrs Fletcher, the doctor's wife, did a lot for the village... When the war was on - it must have been the 1914-18 war - we were in the Girls' Friendly

Society, and we used to go up into her kitchen and she would have all kinds of things on the table, like apples, plums and different things. And we had to bottle it and do, and she sent it down to Darley Hospital. That was called The Willing Helpers' League. (p.128)

In 1977 the business of the Oddfellows Lodge was transferred to The Offspring of Hope Lodge No. 209 based in Matlock, which itself was transferred in 1987 to the Loyal Devonshire Lodge No. 396 based in Bakewell, which in turn was transferred in 1990 to the Derbyshire Peak Lodge No. 10049 in Chesterfield. This is the lodge which now includes Winstar and all the surrounding villages which formerly had lodges of their own.

As a child growing up in Winstar in the 1950s, I was fascinated by the Oddfellows. My Father, Arnold (1906-89), joined when he was 18 and was Secretary continuously from 1949 to 1977. My Grandfather, Josiah Greatorex (1874-57), who lived at Wesson Cottage, had also been a member. I became an Oddfellow at 16, and my three brothers also joined.

The Friendly Societies played an important role in the social and economic life of the village. Bert Boam remembers the years before World War II:

There used to be the Friendly Societies, but you used to just pay half copper or two, and it wasn't much, like. You used to get very little out, only a matter of a few shillings. There was one called the Oddfellows and other called Foresters, and they used to keep the flag and that at the Bowling Green, in the club room. They had parades. I forget what time of the year, but there'd be one and, a while after, there'd be other one, just parade up the street with a band in front of them. And it *were* a big occasion! And some of them used to have a scarf round them – a Foresters one. (*Winstar: A Peak District Village Remembers*, p.54)

I have a treasured photograph of the banner about to be put on parade at the bottom of Leacroft Road. It was taken on Wakes Sunday 1955, when I was 10. The banner was carried by Tommy Gregory and my father, with the support of my late brother, Kenneth, and me. Armistice Sunday was another time when the Oddfellows paraded behind the banner, wearing their sashes with pride.

I also have two Edwardian postcards which show The Foresters' banner. This has no lodge name emblazoned on it but the legend 'I Was Sick And Ye Visited Me' and depicts a man in a sick-bed with a woman standing alongside with a baby in arms talking to another man.

The photograph on one of these cards was taken outside the Bowling Green Inn, where the sign indicates that Martha Stevenson (born 1811?) was landlady. There is a large, well-dressed group of men wearing sashes, a man in charge of a drum and a

smaller group with musical instruments dressed in identical uniforms. It might have been Wensley Brass Band.

The second postcard photograph shows a procession about half-way down Main Street proceeding towards the Dower House. There are seven men in front of the banner, none of whom are wearing sashes. One has a top hat. The banner is carried by two men (with sashes), followed by nine men and four children (all without). There is a small number of onlookers. This was probably a funeral procession – most likely of a Foresters' member.

[To be concluded in the next Newsletter.]

Old Postcards of Winster

Michael Greatorex is researching Marshall & Son, Printers, of Winster, and would be glad to hear from anyone who has or knows about postcards published by them. Please phone 07976 214379 or 01827 896252.

Website

Urgently needed: volunteers to help put together a History Group website. Please phone Geoff Lester, 01629 650090 or email geoff.lester@virgin.net