

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter 34

September 2006

Guest Editor: Pam Hatfield

Our Programme for 2006-2007 (in the Burton Institute, except June 18)

Monday 25 September at 7.30. 'The Changing Face of Winster'

Monday 16 October at 8 pm. Party and AGM

Monday 27 November at 7.30. 'The Anglo-Saxon Fort at Bakewell', by Jan Stetka

Monday 26 February 2007 at 7.30. 'Voices: Women of a White Peak Village', by Gillian Radcliffe

Monday 26 March at 7.30. 'Winster Underground', by Anthony Wood

Monday 23 April at 7.30. 'How Winster got its Rights of Way', by Rob Greateorex

Monday 18 June. Guided Walk. Details later

The Courtship and Marriage of Elizabeth Hawley of Winster, 1657

The following extracts are taken from 'Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover', by C. Kerry, *Derbyshire Archeological Journal* 18 (1896), pp. 29-80. They relate to the marriage between Leonard Wheatcroft, who was a tailor, poet, songwriter, parish clerk, and landlord of the Hand and Shears in Ashover, and Elizabeth Hawley of Winster. The wedding took place in May 1657 during the period of the Commonwealth and was a civil one. Wheatcroft was a Royalist and had served in the army. The violence of the times is exemplified in his description of his courtship of Elizabeth:

Then did I expect an answer from her againe, but none came. Then did I and another mount on horseback and to the towne of Winster we went well armed, with a full resolution to see sweet Betty, which after many repulses we did. But after our departure we had like to have been taken by 7 scouts [watchmen] which on a sodden fell upon us. So we, having but short time, made as short dispatch with them as we could, for at the first tilt I bore down two of them, and my partner flew amongst the rest. They laid upon us very sharply, but we, having the better horse, forced them to flee with losse. So, praise God, we escaped with the loss of little blood.

Despite these setbacks, Wheatcroft continued his courtship and in April 1657 proposed to Elizabeth in a letter, which she accepted, sending with her reply a love-token in the form of a necklet:

Dear Love, I will not omit any opportunity that I can get to commend my dearest love unto you and, as a token of my love, I have sent you a band, desiring you to let it embrace your neck, as willingly as you would embrace me...

The wedding feast was took place in Ashover, and Wheatcroft has left an account describing it in great detail. Elizabeth rode over in advance to bring 'some Pewter and other things which we might use', and 'parting with her upon the wild moors ... I told her I would not come over again till I came for her, to which she seemed very willing...'

Wednesday, being May 20th, before the Dayspring brake forth I awoke and, leaping forth out of my bed, was not long before I had put on my wedding apparil, and, arming myself for the day of uniting love, many came to see me that morning. Then did my chosen ringers ... with flying colours tied to the wrist of their hand, cause merry bells to ring aloud, so that at last many came and went along with me to fetch the Bride.

So, coming to this Towne of Winster, we found them all in readiness, and, though they had before many times assaulted me, yet now was the wayes made open, so that I, with the rest of my friends, safely arrived at her father's house, where we was noe little made welcome. But when they saw I would take their daughter the pearly teares fell from their eyes, yet withal did they rejoyce.

The marriage ceremony took place before Justice Spateman of Brackenfield. After the young men had competed to be the first to take off the 'bride-garters', they raced to be the first home to Ashover, the winners being awarded coloured ribbons.

Despite it being the time of the Commonwealth, when we might have expected limited celebration, they do not seem to have stinted, for the wedding feast lasted eleven days, with eleven dinners for over two hundred guests. All of this is described in great detail in Wheatcroft's account of the event. He ends:

And so, gentle reader, I leave off my two years' suit. If you would wish to know how many times I went a-wooing, you shall find so many slashes upon an Ash Tree at Winster Towne End, and how many miles I travelled for her sake they were 400 and 40 and odd. And so, gentle reader, I rest. August 16, 1657.

Elizabeth Wheatcroft bore a number of children and died in 1668, aged 52.

[Thanks to Peter Trewhitt of Parwich Local History Society for drawing our attention to this account.]

From the Parish Magazine One Hundred Years Ago

The vicar's letter to the parish in October 1905 reflected that 'life is so busy' and that we often feel we have too little time to give to religious exercises. [This was his theme most months.] It included an entreaty to the fathers of families to attend church more frequently to pray for help in fulfilling their responsibilities in guiding their households. The mothers were asked to attend more frequently to pray for compassion and gentleness in developing love and Godliness in their children.

A major event over Christmas 1905 was the children's party held at the Burton Institute. This was open to every child under fourteen and lasted from 3 till 7 pm. In all, two hundred children or more were present. There was a Christmas tree (provided by Mr Heathcote), and Father Christmas, led in by a fairy, gave a gift to every child. In addition cakes, fruit and sweets were given out.

The report by HM Inspector on Elton School used language typical of today's reports: 'satisfactory progress is being made'. However, wording we would not see today reports that 'the infants are kindly and earnestly managed'.

The vicar's letter of March 1906 gave historical information relating to the length of the fast of Lent. Its original observance was for forty hours, in commemoration of the time that elapsed from the noon of Friday when Christ died until His resurrection. Other days were added in early Christian times, so that by the fifth century the usual fast was 36 days (or six weeks deducting Sundays). Ash Wednesday and the other three days were added in the eighth century and a Lent of forty days was established.

The magazines of May to July include comments by the Vicar on the 1906 Education Bill, to which he objected on many grounds. For instance, he argues that the Bill promoted 'undenominationalism', with no reference to any definite doctrine or the sacraments. But his major objection was that it conflicted with the trust deed for the Parochial School, which stated that 'for ever the buildings were to be used for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church... Every teacher employed in the school should be a member of the Church of England.' The new Bill would force the trustees to disobey these clauses and deny the children religious instruction. The trust had legal status, with trustees required to carry out to the letter every possible condition or face severe penalties, and consequently he called upon the trustees to stand firm against the bill.

Latest News

We have been given a donation of £500 by HJ Enthoven and Sons, which, added to the £500 already received from Ladbroke's, will enable us to buy a digital projector for use by us and other groups in the Burton Institute. The History Group is pleased to acknowledge the generosity of those involved in making these grants.

Winsters Features in Ashford Well-Dressing

The History Group was approached earlier this year by the designer of one of the well-dressings at Ashford-in-the-Water, who wanted to use the front cover of the Winsters Book for a panel commemorating one hundred years of ownership of Winsters Market House by the National Trust. The painting used for the book cover was specially commissioned by the History Group from the Sheffield artist Bill Kirby, and of course we were happy to agree.

The result was a beautiful and faithful rendering of the picture in petals – a new medium for the work of Bill Kirby, who felt ‘honoured’ to have his picture interpreted in this way.

A hand-made greetings card has been made from a photograph of the dressed well, and the History Group has a very small supply of these for sale at £2 each.

