

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter 31

March 2005

Next Meetings

Monday 21 March at 7.30 in the Burton Institute

‘Derbyshire Children – at Home, at School, Growing up’, by E. George Power.

The talk deals with many aspects of the history of childhood and family life. Home life draws mainly on the evidence of letters and diaries, those most frequently quoted being the Fitzherberts of Tissington, the D’Ewes Cokes, the Longdons of Longstone (farmers), and the Strutts of Belper. An insight into life at school is gleaned from letters home from boarding school and, for the less well-off, from various school log books. The transition to work, courtship and marriage is also dealt with. In all, the ground covered reflects the subject matter of George’s three successful volumes published by Scarthin Books.

April 25 2005 The Winster Section of the Portway

June 20 2005 Guided Walk along the Portway

Indexing our Photo Archive

With the departure of Jo Ichimura to live in Japan, there is room for another member (or more) on the group that works on the organisation and indexing of our seven hundred photographs. We meet irregularly, approximately once a month, to put the information into a database. Technical knowledge is not a requirement. If you’re interested in learning about Winster through old photographs, why not join in? Tel. 733718.

History Group Officers

It is a sign of a healthy club or society that all members are prepared to shoulder some of the responsibility for running it. We now have a membership of over seventy - the highest ever - yet the same Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer have been in place for a long time - the Treasurer since our foundation in 1996.

The Chair has indicated that he does not wish to stand for re-election. Could *you* do this job? You don’t necessarily have to do anything other than chair the meetings, and you would have the support of an excellent Committee.

Please feel free to discuss any interest with Geoff Lester (650090), although nothing needs to be decided until our AGM on 17 October. This is just advance warning that, unless someone comes forward, the History Group may have to close, or at least take a rest.

Winster Oddfellows (contributed by Michael Greatorex, continued from No.30)

Membership of the Friendly Societies probably followed established family allegiance, and there was rivalry over issues such as membership. An interesting aspect of inter-lodge rivalry can be detected from the record of a special meeting of the Oddfellows at the Bowling Green on 1 June 1880, where it was resolved by a large majority to remove the Triumphant Hope Lodge from the House of William Staley, Bowling Green Inn, to the house of John Taylor, the Angel Inn. Application was made by the lodge on 4 September to the Officers and delegates of the Wirksworth District Committee for permission to 'remove' the lodge in accordance with the above resolution, on the grounds that

the younger part of our members say that they will go and enter into the Foresters sooner than be forced to come here.

It is not clear whether the 'removal' was effected or not, but the lodge certainly held meetings at the Bowling Green during the 1950s.

My father's work for the Oddfellows was not always appreciated by my mother. He spent hours on end 'doing his Oddfellows books'. Large ledgers would be spread out in the front room while he made entries and did calculations. These would often litter the front room for days.

It intrigued me as a child that the Oddfellows were known as 'brothers'. My father addressed letters to them as 'Brother ...' and signed them 'Yours fraternally'. This language was obviously adopted to bind the members together in their common interest.

Some would call at our home to pay subscriptions and to receive payment of cash benefit. The lodge Meetings in the Bowling Green should have enabled members to pay their subscriptions, receive benefit and transact other business there, but they were poorly attended at this time. Brothers calling at our house often did so unannounced and at all times of the day. Whatever my father was doing he would always deal with them, again to the consternation of my mother. I am convinced that my father would pay subscriptions for members he had not seen recently so that their subscriptions were kept up to date. He would then have the task of recovering the subscriptions from those in arrears.

During the 1950s membership was in severe decline. My father kept informal minutes of meetings. Often these just note the date and venue (Bowling Green) and the numbers attending, often 'two or three'. Occasionally there was a note of 'poor attendance', and once 'worse than ever'. It must have been a thankless task for him to keep going as Secretary. But times were changing.

After my father's death my mother still had the Oddfellows records, which for some reason he had not sent to Matlock when the Winster Lodge was transferred to it in 1977. These occupied at least four battered suitcases. Much of the material was modern, but there were also gems such as the Register of Members from 1838, mentioned above.

I spent many enjoyable hours reading, sorting and transcribing, and copies of my material have been sent to the Record Office and Local Studies Library, Matlock, the Derbyshire

Family History Society, Dawn Scotting (<http://winster-ancestry.com/>), and Winsters Local History Group. The original records are now with the Chesterfield Branch of Oddfellows, and the intention is that they will eventually be deposited in the Record Office.

If you wish to learn more about the history of Friendly Societies the following should be of interest:

www.oddfellows.co.uk

www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences.fsrg/index.html

www.forester.ws/history.htm

From the Parish Magazine One Hundred Years Ago (resuming from No. 28)

June/July 1904: The Parish Council considered the Public Tip and the general condition of waste lands on the West Bank, where people had been depositing rubbish in undesignated places.

August 1904: Report of H.M. Inspector of Winsters National School: 'Mixed School. The teachers work zealously. Book-work is neat and careful, but independent composition should be practiced more. Efforts are made to interest the children by special lessons in Drawing and in collecting grasses and flowers. The playground needs attention, spouting and gutters are needed for the offices. The cloakroom should be cleaned and colour washed, ventilation needs watching.'

Infant Class: The class is taught spiritedly and carefully and the order is good. But the room is much overcrowded and the children cannot have a sufficiently active school life. The class room should be enlarged. The room is not satisfactorily ventilated.'

The Parish Council considered the following items: second delivery of letters; railway facilities; weekend tickets; walling Public Tip; street lighting – public meeting to be called as to adoption of Watching & Lighting Act; Eyre's Charity.

September 1904: 'The Church has been completely cleaned, the ceiling and walls covered with distemper, and the roof beams varnished. Will any lady defray the cost of new curtains for the East wall, and of a good brass rod for the vestry curtain?'

As the work in the Church was not completed in time for its opening on the 28th of August, the experiment was tried of holding the Services in the Churchyard, under the shade of our oldest yew. The experiment was so far successful that in coming summers it may be possible to be often repeated. We feel sure that those who attended the Services could not fail to be impressed by the solemnity of the surroundings and their appropriateness for Divine worship. As Cathedral Services are held over the tombs of the honoured dead, so our Churchyard became for once consecrated to the same holy use.'

At a Parish Meeting it was resolved that the Watching and Lighting Act be not adopted.

October 1904: Day and Sunday schools were closed for the past month on account of the prevalence of Scarlet Fever. ‘Owing to a Reporter’s error in the local press an impression has gained ground that the epidemic commenced at the Vicarage. This is not the case ...’

Parish Council: An agreement was entered into between the Council and Mr George Bark in connection with his work of quarrying and breaking stone on the West Bank.

November 1904: The Vicar expressed concern at the congested condition of the Churchyard. ‘As a matter of fact there is sufficient quantity of land in the new ground to last for burials at least during this generation, but most of this has been enclosed by stones in a most extraordinary and wasteful way... My duty seems therefore perfectly plain, though no doubt in carrying it out some opposition may be aroused. It is to ask those who have fenced in larger space than may have been required for interment to remove so much of such fence as shall be seen to enclose unusual ground...’

December 1904: In a long letter the Vicar sought to end controversy concerning the Eyre Charity. [This relates to a long-standing claim that he was withholding funds due to Winster School.] The County Council had recently written to every parish within their area for a list of their Charities in order that they might be kept on file. ‘This is not the time [he says] to do other than place such Charities upon our lists, and it seems to me ungenerous in the extreme for anyone to make this simple request of the Council an opportunity for raking up past unfruitful discussions, and particularly when it would appear that those who are doing so are probably the least able to understand legal terms, or enter into semi legal arguments... The Eyre Bequest became in the first instance a part of this enrolment and has remained so ever since, and yet there are some persons foolish enough to think that such an old arrangement can be disturbed.’

He goes on to explain that [in 1717] Thomas Eyre left a rent of £20 per annum to the Vicar of Winster and his successors for teaching and instructing twenty poor children whose parents were not able to send them to school, until they could read a chapter in the Bible. Therefore, he argues, no one other than the Vicar is able administer this bequest. Also, the passing of the Education Acts now means that ‘teaching and instructing’ can only be given by a properly accredited Elementary School Teacher. ‘And, moreover, there are no longer *any poor children* in England to-day, so poor that their “parents are unable to send them to School” for Education is free – it costs nothing.’ Lastly, the bequest speaks of pupils’ need to be able to read a chapter of the Bible, and he believes that Vicars of Winster are the proper persons to achieve this, and that such instruction ‘can be given whenever and wherever the Instructor pleases.’

After a closing complaint at ‘those who are disloyal to the Church’ he concludes: ‘Still I wish that all our homes be bright this Christmastide. The message of peace and goodwill ever comes to us fresh and cheering, bidding all hearts be gay and all natures be thankful for Emmanuel’s gift. May God bless and keep you. Your affectionate friend and Vicar, W.H. Nixon.’