

HLHS Members Newsletter

October 2023

huddersfieldhistory.org.uk

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We would like to hear from you! Please send any news, details of events and books, requests for information and comments that you think may be of interest to other Huddersfield Local History Society members to publications@huddersfieldhistory.org.uk



Ramsden Street Chapel (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) – see page 5

Welcome to our October newsletter - the next will appear in late November.

A word of thanks here to co-editor Dave Pattern, whose name has appeared here with mine for some time. Readers will miss the historical illustrations and archival material he has contributed from the vast resources of his [Huddersfield Exposed](#) website. I'll do what I can, but I won't be able to match his contribution!

David Griffiths

Our next meeting and AGM

HLHS Committee

Chair:

Cyril Pearce

Vice-Chair:

Janette Martin

Secretary:

Richard Hobson

Treasurer:

Steve Challenger

Membership

Secretary:

Val Davies

Programme

Secretary:

Beverley Norris

Publications

Secretary:

David Griffiths

Publicity:

Chris Verguson

Journal Editor:

Robert Piggott

Discover

Huddersfield rep:

Maureen Mitchell

2 vacancies

*With the exception of
our own web site,
Huddersfield Local
History Society is
not responsible for the
content of any web sites
linked to
in this newsletter.*

Our next meeting is on Monday 30 October at 7.30 pm. The main feature is the Kirklees Local TV film **Windrush The Years After: A Community Legacy on Film**, introduced by KLTV chief executive officer Dr Milton Brown. The meeting takes place as usual in the Oastler Building, University of Huddersfield. The prize-winning film delves into the experiences of Windrush pioneers who settled in Huddersfield, navigating Britain's discriminatory policies of the 1950s-1990s. Discover how second and third-generation African Caribbean British descendants confronted challenges in education, employment, and housing while navigating race and embracing their cultural identity through sound systems, reggae music, Rastafarianism, and supplementary schools.

Milton Brown, who has been involved with community activism since 1970, comes from a family of Windrush pioneers who dedicated themselves to empowering the Huddersfield African Caribbean descent community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. He specialises in African studies, leadership, institutional practices, and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Our **Annual General Meeting** will take place beforehand, with the following agenda:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM
3. Chair's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Subscriptions (no change is proposed)
6. Election of Officers and Committee
7. Appointment of Accounts Examiner

If you would like a copy of the minutes or accounts beforehand, please email Richard Hobson, secretary@huddersfieldhistory.org.uk

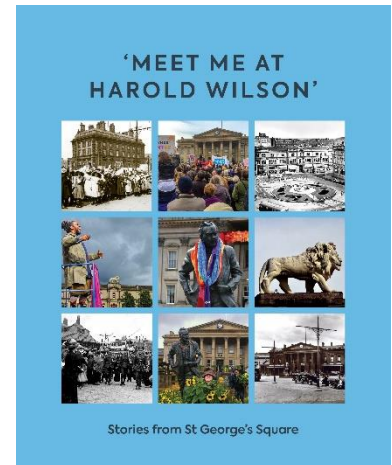
There are two vacancies on the Committee to fill, so do please consider whether you could contribute to our busy but enjoyable management of the Society. Our Chair, Cyril Pearce, will be happy to discuss this before the meeting - chairman@huddersfieldhistory.org.uk

Thanks from David Taylor

Members who attended the September meeting will know that the speaker, Professor David Taylor, was taken ill towards the end of his excellent talk. He has asked us to convey his heart-felt thanks to everybody who helped him that evening and to those who have enquired (directly and indirectly) about his health. Although he was briefly admitted to hospital and some investigations continue, he is back in business and hopes to attend the October meeting.

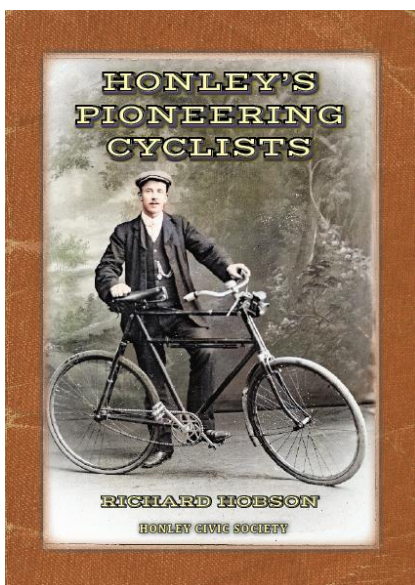
History Day and book launch – 4 November – Brian Jackson House

You can still book for our annual History Day, on the theme **A Square for the Town**, with talks on the origins and the buildings of St George's Square and on Victorian railway excursions. Full details have been sent to members and are now [on the website](#) too. The Day is free to paid-up members (you can also [renew your subs](#) on the website); lunch is £11.50, provided by our usual excellent caterers, but must be booked by the AGM on 30 October at the latest.



The Day will end with the launch of our new book, **'Meet me at Harold Wilson': Stories from St George's Square**, at 3.30 (refreshments from 3.0). This is a free-standing event open to all. Reasonably-priced car parking is available in the Brunswick St car park at the top of New North Parade.

New books from our members



Like many people, HLHS Secretary Richard Hobson found he had time on his hands during lockdown at the beginning of the pandemic. Matters were made worse by having to spend the days on a much-extended break in Australia. To occupy himself, Richard began to research the activities of Huddersfield cycling clubs around the end of the 19th century.

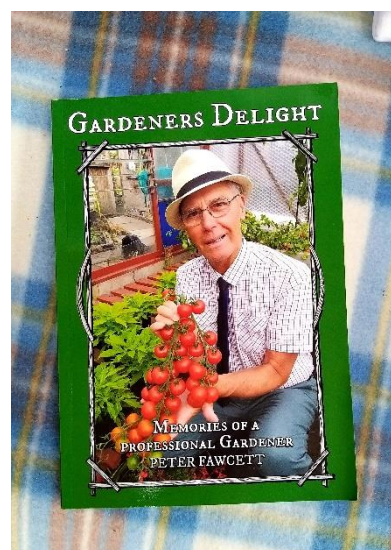
Honley Victoria Cycling Club sparked his interest when he found that several men from the Holme Valley, and in particular Honley, engaged in record breaking attempts and road racing as sport after long hours at work. Richard has now written the story of the men and

women who participated in these astonishing feats and turned it into the latest local history book published by Honley Civic Society.

Titled *Honley's Pioneering Cyclists*, the 40-page book relates a bid to beat the record to cycle to London, and the innovations that saw the transition from penny-farthing to cycles much more like those we might recognise today. Several of the bikes were built locally.

Priced at £5.00, the book is on sale at Holme Valley News and Zebra in Honley and at READ bookshop in Holmfirth, as well as Honley Christmas Street Market in Church Street on 2nd December.

Meanwhile our member Peter Fawcett has published *Gardener's Delight: Memoirs of a Professional Gardener*. Peter began his 45-year career working on the Kirklees estate of Sir John and Lady Armytage. In the 1970's he moved into working for the Council Parks Department, in the belief that the parks had the right to the same care and diligence given to private gardens. In his book he has mapped out a Gardener's year and related untold stories from his time at Kirklees Hall. The book also includes stories from BBA Scandinavia Mills in Cleckheaton in the 1960s and 70s, with a full description of the workings of the factory.



The book is available from Peter Fawcett, 34, St. Peg Lane, Cleckheaton, BD19 3SD, peterfawcett0@gmail.com (£10 + £2 p & p) or from Spenborough Stationers, 16 Albion Street, Cleckheaton BD19 3JD, 01274 873026, alecsuchi@hotmail.com

'Creating Kirklees' project

Several years ago, along with other local societies, HLHS gave strong support to a West Yorkshire Archive Service bid for National Archives funding to catalogue their vast trove of local authority records going back to the 19th century origins of modern local government. The project has struggled through Covid, the discovery of mould where many of the records were held, and the temporary closure of the Service for relocation, but triumphed over adversity to achieve a great deal. The records of 32 smaller former authorities have been fully catalogued, and there has been extensive catalogue enhancement and improvement work for a further 12, including the largest Kirklees predecessors. The full lists can be explored by visiting the [WYAS catalogue](#) - then go to Advanced Search and insert KMT* into the 'title record' field.

Huddersfield ~~70~~ 200 Years Ago

In May 1878, the *Huddersfield Examiner* published a series of three articles by “Native” (later revealed to be lead pipe manufacturer John Hanson of Folly Hall) titled ‘Huddersfield Seventy Years Ago’, which described the town in the first decades of the 1800s. Portions will likely be familiar to many of you, but seemingly the entire full text of the articles is not available online. So here is the second part...

Dave Pattern

HUDDERSFIELD SEVENTY YEARS AGO - NO. II.

The first innovation on the green fields was the Riding School. It was erected for the Yeomanry Cavalry to drill and practise in. Afterwards it became a theatre and concert room; then, for a number of years a waggon warehouse, and lastly an iron warehouse. Whilst it was a concert room I heard Catalani sing there. I used to ride in the hay-cart in the blythe haymaking time to the field where Albion Street now is. The next erection was made by Mr. John Taylor in what is now called South Parade. Mr. Taylor was connected with the local militia, so the house came to be sometimes called “Local Hall.” The next after that was quite at the opposite end of the fields, nearly at the bottom of High Street. It was built by a Scotchman named Oliver, a wool merchant. The remainder of the boundary of High Street was a field wall that ran up to the top house in the same street, where Love’s pawn shop now is. Where High Street Chapel now stands there stood a smaller chapel, which was opened in 1814. Before that a large laithe or barn stood there. In this barn I and the rest of the lads about thought it a grand thing to be allowed to tread down the fragrant hay in the old loft, time-blackened and cobweb-hung.

In the fields from the Wool Pack Inn to the houses at the top of Chapel Hill, the first to build was a grocer and baker named Andy Beatson. The building he erected is now a furniture shop. I will now move to Ramsden Street. On the south side from the Wool Pack down to Clegg Lane, now Commercial Street, there was not a house, neither was there one in Clegg Lane. On the north side all the way from the top corner where the watchmaker’s shop now is to the Ship Inn near the Shorehead, there was not a single house. I have often gathered mushrooms in the field where Ramsden Street Chapel now stands. I mention these things to show what rapid progress Huddersfield has made in a single life time.

We had waterworks in Huddersfield but they were of a very primitive kind, as you will see. The source of our water supply was the river at Folly Hall or Engine Bridge. In a cottage near to Mr. Eastwood’s dyeworks was erected a forcing engine or pump. This was driven by a waterwheel and sent the turbid water up to Huddersfield. The main pipes that conveyed the water were large tree trunks, with a three and a half inch hole bored through them lengthways. They were tapered down at one end, and

the bore at the other end widened a little to admit the tapering end, thus making what is called a faucet joint. These wooden pipes ran under the Canal, up the hill to the top of Outcote Bank, then along what was called the Upper Road to the higher part of the town, and finally discharged their water into a small reservoir which stood near Mr. Midgley's warehouse. From this reservoir the town received its scanty supply.

You may judge of the size of the mains from the following incident. It so happened that the supply to one part of the town was stopped, so that the inhabitants of that part were left "high and dry." Much digging and searching was done to discover the obstruction, until at last the cause of the mischief was revealed. Imagine the astonishment of all when it was found that a large trout had stuck fast in one of the pipes.

Connected with these waterworks was an old woman named Betty Earnshaw. She was rather a masculine looking woman, with a peculiarity about one of her eyes. She carried a large turn-key on her shoulder to turn on the water in the various parts of the town. The servant girls who had to rise early on washing mornings well knew how to get an early supply of water for their work. Betty also professed to tell fortunes for the silly lasses, so that what with water-turning and fortune-telling, old Betty managed to turn many an honest penny, and contrived to be never at a loss for a drop of "something good."

Whilst a lad I had to go to Lockwood for milk, as we had no milk hawkers in those days. As I passed Folly Hall I used to be attracted by the screeching and groaning of the old pumping engine. It sounded as if it had not had a drop of oil for twelve months or more. I would peep in through the broken window and watch the crazy thing at work. It would make a desperate effort, stand for a few seconds and then groaningly move off again. Thus painfully and laboriously was the scanty supply of water pumped up from the polluted river. A little further on, at Folly Hall, my eye caught sight of the blaze of a furnace. I crossed the road and looked into a cottage through the place where a pane of glass had been. There I saw an old woman hard at work breaking up the pigs of iron with a heavy sledge hammer. After she had thus broken it, she put the pieces upon her head, carried them up some steps, and threw them into the furnace. Those who have been engaged in this hard hot work of furnace-tending, and those who have seen the swarthy grimy toilers toiling and perspiring at their work may imagine whether or not that old woman fairly earned her bread. Another time I went behind the cottage, and there saw a horse trotting round in a gin which worked a large pair of blacksmith's bellows, used to melt down the iron in the furnace. They had no other method at that day, as it was before the invention of the fan or rotary bellows. I have every reason to believe that this was the first iron foundry in Huddersfield or neighbourhood. I never knew or heard tell of one before this one. It was established by two partners, Messrs. Holmes and Prince. They carried on business for some time and might have done very well. Prince, the experienced partner, left the firm; Holmes, who had previously been coachman to Colonel Smithson, knew nothing of the

business. By careless and intemperate habits he allowed the business to fall away, and he himself finally became a bailiff.

The next iron foundry was that started by Jonathan Brook, at the bottom of Outcote Bank, and after that came the foundry of Mills at Aspley. The site on which the little foundry at Folly Hall stood has seen several changes. The foundry was succeeded by a brewery; the brewery by soapworks; these by leadworks; after that by iron-works again; and in 1833 the late George Smith established a spirit store and dram shop on the ground where one of the little cottages once stood.

From this primitive foundry right on to the river side was an open field. This was the scene of the first famous Folly Hall fight, where General Croft gave those notable words of command "Front rank, kneel down, rear rank, fire!" which struck terror into the hearts of our brave yeomanry cavalry. This "Folly Hall fight," as it was called, took place at a time of great public agitation. In many places the people were drilling and arming to fight for their rights and liberty. Croft was a brave old soldier who had fought in many a battle. He was drilling a squad of "rebels" in the field by the river. The yeomanry had been apprised of this and came down valiantly to disperse the "rebels." When they reached the bridge they made a stand to reconnoitre. Just at that moment the old veteran in the course of his drill instructions, bawled out at the top of his voice the terrible words "Front rank, kneel down, rear rank, fire!" A few pistols went off, whereupon our valiant Bobadils took alarm, turned their horses sharp round and galloped up Chapel Hill as if they were riding a steeplechase. They ventured not to check their flight until they ran to cover in the back yard of the Rose and Crown. Some sadly malicious people even said they wounded a horse in the nose with a pistol-shot, to shew what dangers they had braved, and the terrible jeopardy in which their valuable lives had been placed. In all probability the malicious people who said so were not far wide of the mark. Thus ended the Folly Hall fight, where the vanquished fled without being attacked or even threatened, and the victors were wholly unaware of the brilliant repulse they had affected.

I will now move over to the other side of the road. The large buildings three storeys high, comprising four tenements, was built, I have been told, by a person named Duke Nebden. This place stood alone in the fields, and the people of Huddersfield considered it sheer stupidity to build so large a place in such an out of the way situation. They therefore called it Folly Hall, and from that the surrounding district took its name.

I will now move a little farther on to Rashcliffe, or, as it is named in old documents, Rushcliffe. What was called Rashcliffe Wood was a very dense thick wood, of which the two parts were called North and South Sides. On the North side, just opposite Benjamin Kaye's butcher's shop, there stood out a large projecting rock, on which grew a stunted oak tree. From that point the wood ran on as far as Mr. Fisher's plantation, with not a house in all the intervening space. The South Side commenced

at the turn to Rashcliffe Hill and ran on as far as the church. Nor were there here any houses. On the top was a grass field with a footpath running up one side. Now the character of the scenery is greatly changed. The woods have vanished like a forgotten dream, the fields are cut up and spoiled, and a rookery of houses has taken up the place which they have vacated. The first to build in the fore-wood was Mr. Abraham Kilner, heald and slay maker. I think the house he erected is the third from the corner.

I have now devoted sufficient time and space to my sketch of this district. I will therefore retrace my steps to Huddersfield. In my former paper, while speaking of Market Street, I forgot to mention that in this street for several years, the magisterial business of the town was done. Messrs. Joe Haigh, of Springwood House, and Ben Haigh Allen were then on the bench. In the second house from the corner lived Matthew Bradley, the magistrates' clerk, and in the front chamber of his house was held our High Court of Justice. Before that we had no Court of Judicature at all in Huddersfield. Our wrongs and grievances were all reserved till Saturday forenoon, and taken to Milnsbridge, and laid before Sir Joseph Ratcliffe, who made a quick despatch of them. Otherwise they were taken to Armitage Bridge, and laid before old Justice Armitage, who held his court in the back parlour of the Black Bull Inn. I was once before him as a witness. In Market Street, from the Queen Hotel to the cork-cutter's shop, was an open field in which Captain Littlewood used to drill the volunteers. At that day they shouldered the old flint lock Brown Bess, with which an expert marksman could hit the target once out of three at 100 yards range.

I can well recollect the time when our streets were all in darkness. People went about at night with hand glass lanterns, and our shops were lighted up with candles or muddy oil lamps. It was then so decreed by our authorities that our main streets should be lighted up. For this purpose lamp-posts were put down at wide intervals. These were furnished with glasses something like an inverted beehive. In them were placed oil lamps which gave a dim uncertain light, and served only to make darkness visible. By eleven or twelve o'clock they were usually nearly all "winked up." Gas was not known at that day as an illuminator. The first gas used in Huddersfield was made by Wm. Waite, a plumber and glazier. His shop was next door to the Globe Inn. His gas apparatus was in the back workshop, and from there he lighted up his front shop window. This new light in the district created great wonder. The shop front was surrounded nightly by a crowd of gaping spectators, who marvelled greatly how anyone could set lire to the end of a cold lead pipe. The first inn in Huddersfield in which gas was burnt was the White Lion, in Cross Church Street. Mr. Waite made a large leathern bag something like a round bellows, and took it to the inn filled with gas, placed it under the table in which a hole was bored to admit a pipe that stood about six inches above the table. There the gas was ignited and consumed, to the great astonishment of the jovial, though perhaps not specially intelligent, frequenters of the house.