

HLHS Members Newsletter

November 2023

huddersfieldhistory.org.uk

email@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



The old Highfield Chapel, stables and manse (Kirklees Image Archive) – see page 8

Welcome to our November newsletter, and best wishes from the Committee for Christmas and the New year. The next newsletter will appear towards the end of January.

HLHS Committee

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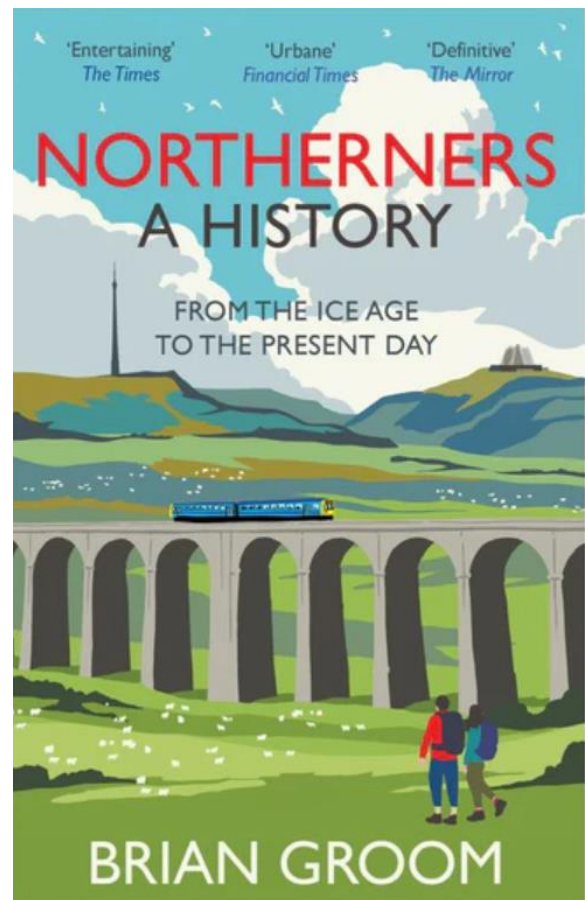
*With the exception of
our own web site,
Huddersfield Local
History Society is
not responsible for the
content of any web sites
linked to
in this newsletter.*

Our next meeting

Our next meeting is on Monday 27 November at 7.30 pm in the [Oastler Building](#), University of Huddersfield.

Brian Groom, author of the bestselling *Northerners: A History, From the Ice Age to the Present Day*, will outline 180 million years of history, showing how the North's people have shaped Britain and the world in unexpected ways. Northern England, fashioned by waves of migration, invasions and battles, has had a profound impact on European culture and the global economy.

Brian Groom is a journalist and author, originally from Stretford, south-west Manchester. Most of his career was spent at the *Financial Times*, where he did many of the top writing and editing jobs, but he also launched and later edited *Scotland on Sunday*, the *Scotsman's Sunday* paper. He retired from the *FT* in 2014 and moved to Greenfield, Saddleworth.



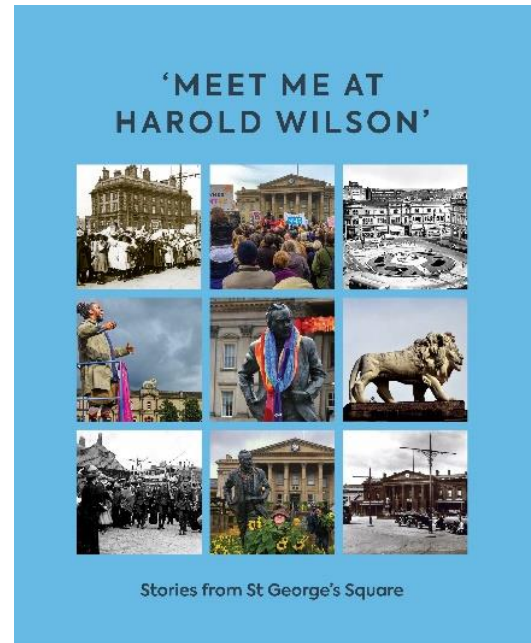
Last call for membership renewals

Just a reminder that this the last newsletter you will receive, unless your membership subscription for 2023/24 is paid up by the end of the year. You can pay by cheque, Standing Order or online: the various methods of payment are set out [on the website](#).

Our new book now launched

Following a successful History Day and launch on 4 November our new book, ***'Meet me at Harold Wilson': Stories from St George's Square***, is now widely available and, at only £5 for 164 pages, selling well as Christmas approaches. It will of course be available at our November meeting, and is on sale now in a wide range of retail outlets:

- Local Studies Library, Victoria Lane
- Handmade in Huddersfield, Imperial Arcade
- Newstrack, Huddersfield Station
- Waterstones, Kingsgate
- Children's Bookshop, Lindley
- Centre Books, Cathedral House
- Colne Valley Museum, Golcar
- Root Cellar, Meltham
- Read, Holmfirth



Or it can be bought through our [website](#), with the addition of £2.50 p & p.

New accolade for Huddersfield Station

Still on the theme of St George's Square, Huddersfield Railway Station has been hailed as one of the best in the world. *Time Out* magazine has drawn up a list of the 15 most iconic railway stations globally and Huddersfield Railway Station is the only UK one on it – more details [here](#).

Annual Harold Wilson Lecture 2023 'Harold Wilson: The Winner'

Our new book is not about Harold Wilson but Labour front-bencher Nick Thomas-Symonds MP has recently published a new biography of the Huddersfield-born Prime Minister, *Harold Wilson: The Winner*. On **Thursday 23 November at 6.0 pm** he will give the University's annual Harold Wilson lecture, on Mr Wilson's life and its lessons. The lecture is free to attend but please [register your attendance here](#).

Flowers and Ferns around Huddersfield

Jill Lucas has updated a book first published in 1985 by Kirklees Council, *Flowers and Ferns around Huddersfield*.

The book begins with a short description of the differing habitats to be found in the area, how the recording was carried out and the background history of plant recording from 1850 onwards. The bulk of the book consists of a systemic list of over 1000 species, giving their common and scientific names, their status, i.e. native or introduced, the number of one-kilometre squares or monads in which each species has been recorded and other information where appropriate.

Meticulous recording of this kind was central to the work of Seth Lister Mosley, whose biography, *Nature's Missionary* by Alan Brooke, was published by the Society in 2022.

With 119 pages, including 14 with illustrations, *Flowers and Ferns around Huddersfield* is available from the author at 8, Camborne Drive, Fixby, Huddersfield HD2 2NF (phone 01484 545875), who can arrange collection or delivery locally, or send by post if £2-50 p & p is added. It is also available from the Oxfam bookshop in Holmfirth.

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. Overleaf is the third and final part...

Dave Pattern

HUDDERSFIELD SEVENTY YEARS AGO - NO. III.

I remember when we had considerable domestic manufactures carried on in the neighbourhood. Some would have looms in their own chambers, others spinning jennies having about forty spindles each. Others would spin a single thread on a one spindle. Let Haigh, an old woman, used to go to the mill, and bring home a bag of refuse wool, such as was scraped from the carding engine. Right good long wool it was, though it had some dirt in it. Some of this wool she would place upon her tumming stock, which implement I will try to describe. A card was nailed upon a board which stood about a foot above a trestle to which it was nailed fast. On this trestle the operative sat astride when at work. The other part was a loose board, also with a card nailed upon it, and with two handles on the other side with which to work it. As I have said, some wool was placed upon the fixed card, and the loose card was scraped over it till the fibre of the wool was combed all one way, then the loose card was reversed, and the wool stripped off the lower card in a soft flossy mass about the shape and size of a small mackerel.

After a sufficient quantity of these cardings had been got together, Letty would bring out her spinning wheel and commence spinning. She first wrapped the carded wool round the fingers of her left hand. Then she would apply the wool to the spindle, draw out a thread about three yards long, and then run back and wind it on to the spindle. By repeated passes of this kind she would form a good sized cop on the spindle, and when she had spun a number of cops she would reel them into hanks. These she took to the fud market to sell. The fud market was held in a little chamber over the old Plough Inn, just opposite the Green Dragon. It was attended by buyers from Dewsbury and Batley, who used this hand-spun material for listing and carpet weaving. Query — Where would the old woman get her wool to make fud of now-a-days? We had no shoddy mongers or mungo workers at that day.

The worsted manufacturing must have been in a very primitive state at the beginning of the present century. The worsted, like the fud, was drawn out in a single thread on the old spinning wheel. Of this I could, if necessary, advance convincing proof. My aunt Betty was a widow woman who lived in a small cottage, and made her living by spinning worsted on a single spindle. A man came from Bradford every Saturday and brought with him a large quantity of carded or combed wool in small detached portions about five or six inches long and very light and soft. I think they were called pluckings. He would bring these pluckings and distribute them amongst those who spun for him in Huddersfield, and would at the same time take away their spun worsted in the shape of hanks. On a winter's evening I and other children of the neighbourhood would go into old Betty's cottage to see her spin and hear her tell strange stories and "boggard" tales. And as she spoke, with her light wheel humming a dreamy accompaniment, she worked up these pluckings in much the same manner as I have said old Let Haigh worked up her fud. The difference was that whilst Let's was for the Huddersfield fud market, my aunt's was for the Bradford market, to be woven into stuffs. Now, these wheels, with their drowsy hum and rattling spindles, are things of the past.

Just before the time to which my recollections extend, perhaps about the year 1800, our head constable was a respectable tradesman of the town. His name was Samuel Mosley. He had a large dog, which rejoiced in the name of Towser. After a while on the "Love my dog, love me" principle the dog's master was commonly called Towser also. He had no lock-up in which to put prisoners, so one was built at that part of the town called Low Green, near where Hadfield's pawn shop now stands. When this prison was finished it was called Towser Castle, and when a prisoner was placed in durance vile, he was euphemistically said to have "gone to Towser." When the streets were named, Castle Gate received its name from Towser Castle, which stood there. In my young days men used to be flogged through the streets of Huddersfield for petty larceny. They were tied behind a cart or van that came from Wakefield. The punishment commenced at the Cloth Hall. The victims were flogged on their backs with the cat until they reached the Dog Inn, in the Old Street. I believe a man of the name of Tim Knowles was the last to be punished in that way. His offence was stealing ducks.

I have a few more reminiscences of Huddersfield and its people in my young days, which may be worth recording. At one time during my remembrance we had but three Irishmen in the town. One was James Rourke, a cropper or cloth-finisher, another was James Conelly, a horse dealer, and the third was Martin Webb, a cloth-finisher and merchant. At one time, too, it might be about 1806, we had but one auctioneer in the town, Samuel Lancaster, father of the late celebrated auctioneer, John Lancaster. My father was accustomed to send me, when a boy, on the Saturday, for the Leeds Mercury. It was published only once a week, and the price was sixpence, and, at one time, I think, it was sevenpence. The size was not equal to that of the supplement of the Huddersfield Examiner. We had to fetch them from the bookseller's in the town, as there were no colporteurs then. The paper had a red duty stamp at one corner, but that is now happily done away with. Things are rather different now, when we can have a daily paper brought to our door for the small sum of a halfpenny. On one occasion my father took me and my brother to a hatter's to give each a new hat. The hatter advised him to have a stamp pasted in each, "for," said he, "Jack Allan is very busy knocking folk's hats off, and all who are without a stamp in their hats are fined." It was the law that everyone must have a shilling stamp pasted in his hat or be subjected to a fine. The stamp was a piece of black cotton nearly the size of the crown of the hat, with the royal arms stamped upon it in white. It was said that the informer received one half of the fine.

I can just remember the soldiers pomading, powdering and tying each other's back hair. They wore their hair long, tied with a riband, and hanging down their backs with a tuft of hair at the end, and plenty of powder on the back of the head. This method of dressing hair was not peculiar to the army. People generally wore queues. At that day they were fashionable. My father used to wear one. The last man in Huddersfield to retain the old fashion was, I believe, Mr. Frank Downing, the grocer. When a middle class man was fully dressed in those days he wore his queue down his back, a blue coat with gilded buttons, buckskin leather breeches and top boots, a frilled shirt with the frill sticking out about three inches, and a gold brooch stuck in it. They looked very

smart and jockey-like. We had no policemen, but in their stead a few old men employed as watchmen. They were commonly called "Old Charleys." Their dress was a long top coat with several capes, and a large slouched hat. The guardians of the night would go forth after ten o'clock swinging a large horn-lantern nearly as large as a butter firkin, and bawling out the time every half-hour of the night something after this fashion "Half-past eleven o'clock, and a weetish neet!" They were also provided with a large wooden rattle to call up their fellow-guardians to their aid when they were in want of assistance. It was ridiculous to think that these superannuated old fellows would prevent burglaries by night. They warned the thieves of their approach by carrying their light and shouting the hour, even more effectually than a modern policeman does with his bull's eye and heavy tread. I always considered their way of proceeding tantamount to saying "Get out of the way, I am coming." Such were the guardians of the night at that day. They remind us of Milton's words in his "Il Penseroso" :—

“——The bellman's drowsy charm
To bless our doors from nightly harm.”

Herrick, in his poem of "The Bellman," thus gives the bellman's blessing:—

“From noise of scare-fires rest ye free,
From murder, Benedicite!
From all mischances that may fright
Your pleasing slumbers in the night,
Mercy secure ye all, and keep
The goblin from ye while ye sleep!”

During the French war with England, at the beginning of the present century, it was strongly suspected that Napoleon the First was equipping a fleet for the invasion of England. We had no telegraph or railroad, so a system of beacon fires was adopted. It was so arranged that, in order to spread the alarm simultaneously throughout the country, the highest hill tops in England and Scotland should be provided with a fire beacon. There was one on the top of Castle Hill. It was a large pan of tar, with hemp and old tarred ropes in it, which would make a great blaze when set on fire. These beacons were within such distances of each other that they might be seen from one to the other. I doubt whether this would have been the case on a foggy day or night, but however this maybe, these were the means adopted to apprise the nation that a foreign army was about to land upon our coasts. It so happened that one night, about ten o'clock, a roguish wag set fire to our beacon, and we could see the blaze very plainly in Huddersfield. I shall never forget the alarm and consternation which the blazing pyre caused that night. All rushed out of their houses to see the flare of the burning beacon. Men stood in groups with woeful faces discussing what was best to be done. Women ran about from house to house screaming "The French are coming, the French are coming! We shall be murdered, Oh! What shall we do?" Our local militia was then called out. They made but a very poor muster. Some were suddenly taken ill; others as suddenly fell lame. Still there were many staunch men and true amongst

them who were soon in marching order, and off they tramped to the sound of drum, fife and bugle, with the wives and sweethearts of some of the men following the company. It was not until they got to Marsden that it was discovered that the beacon firing was a false alarm.

The recollection of the beacon brings to my mind the following curious story, which has some bearing on the threatened invasion from France. Old Squire Beaumont, of Whitley Hall, of cock-fighting notoriety, had a large rookery in the stately trees which formed and still form the avenue to the Hall. About the time of which I write, he took it into his head to have all the rooks shot off, and the nests destroyed, so as utterly to break up the noisy colony, "For," said he, "I cannot hear when the French are coming for the noise of these d——d rooks."

At the time when the Church was comparatively inert, before she was roused to vigorous action by the rapid progress of dissent, I and a companion used to attend the old Parish Church on a Sunday afternoon. We frequently counted the congregation, and seldom found those present to exceed fifty, yet this was the only church to be found in Huddersfield at that day.

When the completion of the fiftieth year of George the Third's reign came about, there was a grand jubilee of national rejoicing. In Huddersfield we got up an illumination, to assist in which many people stuck lighted candles in their windows with lumps of clay.

It will be in the recollection of many Huddersfield people that we had a central row of old buildings at the top part of Westgate, which was commonly called "top o' t' town." They have all now vanished. John Liddle, the shoemaker, lived in one of them. He had been a recruiting sergeant in Huddersfield, and when he got his discharge he came to settle down amongst us. A little lower down stood the old Red Lion, kept by Mrs. Batley. Lower down still lived Drocharty, the clogger, and at the bottom house lived David Hirst, shoemaker. This house stood nearly opposite the Plough Inn, and faced towards Westgate. It was by most people called Solomon's Temple, from the following circumstance, which I have heard my mother relate:— A celebrated quack, who went by the name of Doctor Solomon, once lived in the house. He sold a nostrum which he called "Solomon's balm of Gilead," and through the selling of it he amassed a large fortune. He afterwards left the town, and in order that he might be had in lasting remembrance, people named the house he had lived in "Solomon's Temple." New North Road was not in existence. The approach to Highfield Chapel was by a narrow lane through the fields, whilst the Old Lane led from the chapel to Marsh. My uncle had a pew in the old Highfield Chapel, or, as it was-then often called, "Billy Moorhouse Chapel." I have sat in my uncle's pew when I was a boy, listening to the venerable old pastor, the Reverend William Moorhouse, with his white curly wig, preaching from his pulpit. After him came the Rev. Doctor Boothroyd.

Dr. Sizer, the little veterinary surgeon, will be fresh in the recollection of many Huddersfield people. I once heard him relate the following, for the accuracy of which I will not vouch, though I see no reason for questioning it. He said that when he was a boy there was no cart road to Lockwood by way of Chapel Hill. The cart road to

Lockwood was by King's Mill Lane and Spa Wood top, or up Crosland Moor and down Swan Lane. The river was spanned by a wooden foot-bridge beyond which there was a footpath all the way to Lockwood. When he and other boys were bathing in the river, the most daring amongst them used to jump from the bridge into a deep pool underneath, to swim or scramble to safer quarters as best they could.

For the present I have done. I hope my reminiscences have given as much pleasure to others to read as they have given to me to write. If it were advisable to tag on a moral, where the moral stands out so plainly, I should say that the history of Huddersfield during the last seventy years shews the impossibility of standing still. A quiet village has become the prosperous centre of a large manufacturing district, with large public works, splendid educational advantages, and a number of large and beautiful churches and chapels well attended and influentially supported. The same sound is ringing through this seventy years as has rung through all the ages, and that sound is "Progress, progress, progress."

NATIVE.

Many of our readers having read with great interest what Huddersfield was seventy years ago, are now desirous to know who the author is who styles himself "Native." We have now authority to say that it is Mr. John Hanson, late of the Lead Works, Folly Hall. It is not unlikely that Mr. Hanson will, at a future date, furnish us with some further reminiscences, in which he was more personally concerned.