

HLHS Members Newsletter

January 2024

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



Greenhead Hall, rebuilt around 1820 (WYAS, Kirklees) – see page 2

Welcome to our January newsletter, with best wishes for 2024. The next newsletter will appear towards the end of February. **You'll only receive it if you've paid your 2023/24 subs!**

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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

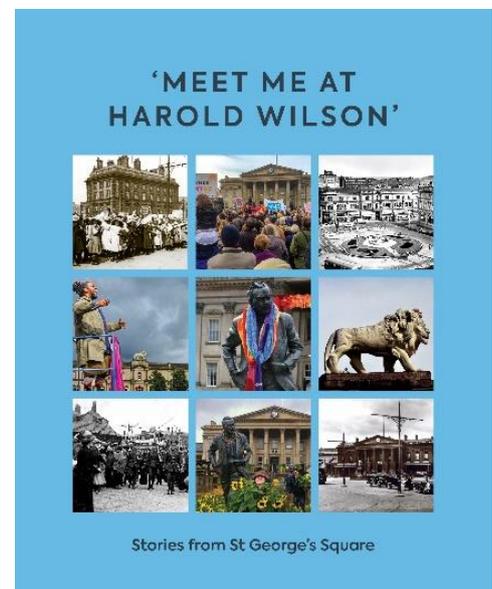
Our next meeting is on **Monday 29 January at 7.30 pm** in the [Oastler Building](#), University of Huddersfield.

In a change to our advertised programme, as they say on TV, David Griffiths will speak on **Greenhead Hall: Huddersfield's Best Address?** in place of his planned joint talk with Lorna Brooks about Birkby Grange.

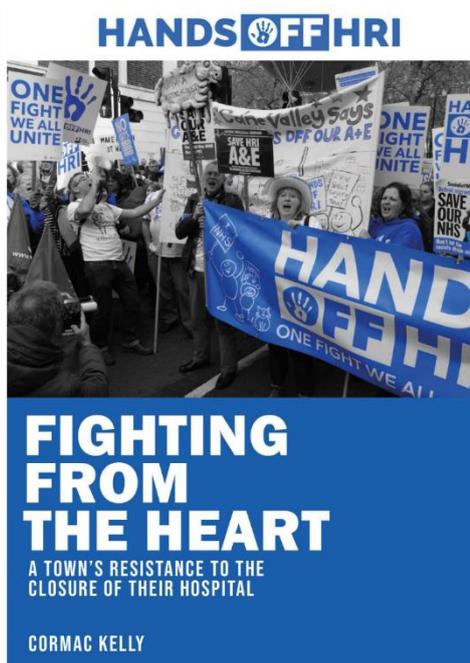
From Tudor times until the early 20th century, where Greenhead College is today, stood one of Huddersfield's grandest houses, rebuilt in Jacobean and again in Georgian times. More than 100 years after its demolition it is largely forgotten, but the imprint of its extensive grounds lives on in Greenhead Park. Over the centuries it was home to some of the town's most prominent citizens, who were at the centre of local affairs and sometimes linked to great events of national and even international history. Its story was touched by the English and American civil wars, the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, revolutionary stirrings in the early 19th century, slavery and the anti-slavery movement.

Our new book – selling like hot cakes!

'Meet me at Harold Wilson': *Stories from St George's Square* has been widely admired and has already sold almost 500 copies since its November launch, benefiting as it does from the publicly-subsidised cover price of £5. If you don't yet have your copy, it will be on sale at our January meeting, in a wide range of bookshops or through our [website](#), with the addition of £2.50 p & p.



More new local history books



Local history is still in the making, right up to the present day. Members may well have taken part in the **Hands Off HRI!** campaign, the story of which is told in a new book, *Fighting from the Heart*. Author Cormac Kelly writes:

‘When the local Health Trust planned to close and demolish Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, along with its vital A & E department, the citizens of Huddersfield rallied under the big blue banner of ‘Hands off HRI’ in a powerful five-year campaign of civic resistance. Mass demonstrations, countless fundraisers, campaign splits – alongside lobbies of Parliament, dissection of the Trust’s closure plans and – finally – an ambitious legal challenge.

‘Told by a veteran campaigner, this is the inside story of the battle for their hospital by activists of Hand Off HRI and the people of Huddersfield.’

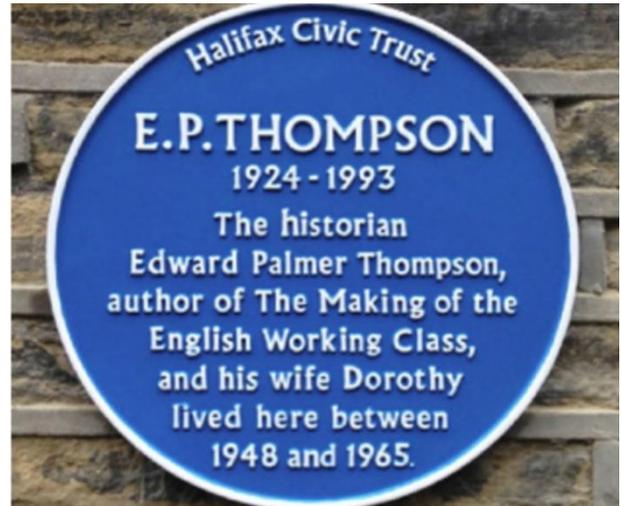
The book can be bought from Handmade in Huddersfield, Imperial Arcade or Newstrack at the railway station, or by post from Cormac Kelly at 5 Lincroft Avenue, Dalton, HD5 8DS (07845 428189). The cover price is £8, plus postage at £2.40 – cheques payable to HandsoffHRI, or ask for bank details.

Meanwhile Hebden Bridge Local History Society has published a revised edition of *The Little Hill Farm* by W.B. Crump. It is the work of an informed scientific observer whose deep, wide-ranging knowledge perceived the totality of the local environment, from its geology, ecology and history through to its current population and their working practices. His descriptions and observations on the way of life of the early twentieth century hill farmer are as informative and relevant as ever.

The original edition has long been out of print and difficult to obtain. Whilst retaining the original wording of the text, some corrections and improvements have been made to enhance its appearance and readability for a modern audience. Full referencing and indexes have also been added. The original illustrations have been rendered in colour by Peter Brears who has also provided an introduction to William Crump and his work. The book costs £11.99 and is available from the [HBLHS website](#) (plus £2.80 for postage) or from the Bookcase in Hebden Bridge.

EP Thompson 100th anniversary event

To celebrate what would have been the 100th birthday of celebrated historian E P Thompson, author of *The Making of the English Working Class* and much more, Calderdale TUC (with support from the Society for the Study of Labour History, Yorkshire CND and the Independent Working Class Education Network) are holding a day-long conference to discuss and reflect on Thompson's intellectual and political legacies, as well as the ongoing relevance of his approaches to history and politics for the world of today.



An all-star cast of speakers – among them two of our past Luddite lecturers - includes Matthew Roberts, Sheila Rowbotham, Julian Harber, Gawain Little, Colin Waugh, Kate Hudson, Katrina Navickas and others. Details of the event are as follows:

- Saturday 3rd February
- 9.55am - 3.30pm (doors open from 9.30).
- Trinity Sixth Form Academy, Halifax HX1 1UN
- Free but booking is required – [please book here](#) if you will definitely attend.

The conference will be followed by a social at the Graystone Unity Pub from 4.15 – 6.0.

Victorian Halifax – a new walk

Edward Thompson and his wife Dorothy lived in Halifax (see plaque above, on his home at Siddal) and undertook much of their research and teaching there. Coincidentally, on the same weekend as the conference, Calderdale Heritage Walks offers a new exploration of the town's Victorian legacy, visiting some of the many fine buildings which celebrate the town's entrepreneurial spirit and civic pride, and discovering some of their stories.

This is on **Sunday 4 February at 1.30 pm**, meeting at the entrance to Halifax Town Hall, HX1 1UJ. Just turn up and pay guide Anne Kirker the fee of £4.

Frank Peel, Harold Wilson and the Luddites

by Alan Brooke

*One of Edward Thompson's great achievements as a historian was, as he wrote in *The Making of the English Working Class*, 'to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver from the enormous condescension of posterity'. Here our member Alan Brooke writes about an interesting recent find.*

Recently a copy of Frank Peel's *Rising of the Luddites* appeared for sale on the internet – with an asking price of £300 ! The volume is described as 'well-read, with several dog eared pages and scattered thumbprints within'. Since there are numerous copies of the reprinted book and even originals available for a fraction of this price you would expect this to be something special – and indeed it was. Perhaps some of the grubby thumbprints had belonged to no-one less than former Prime Minister Harold Wilson from whose library, dispersed in 2016 on the death of his wife Mary, it had emerged. The book had originally belonged to his grandfather J Wilson, whose signature, along with that of Harold's father J H Wilson, was written inside the cover. Can we imagine young Harold pouring over the book and being inspired by tales of Luddite resistance and the injustices of the millowners ?

If he did read it, it certainly did not make a permanent favourable impression on the future prime minister. In his (intended to be) epoch-making speech at the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough in 1963 he announced that 'there was to be no room for Luddites' in the Labour Party, which was now to be driven by the very un-Luddite concept of the 'white heat of technology'. Echoing C P Snow's condemnation of the Luddites in his Rede Lecture of 1959, Wilson claimed the future for the technocrats and scientists, as he later said, replacing 'the cloth cap [with] the white laboratory coat as the symbol of British labour'. His manifesto both recognised the fundamental technological changes taking place and set the Labour Party firmly on the track of technocracy - and a clash with the declining 'cloth cap' element of the Labour Party that led the historian Eric Hobsbaum to pronounce 'The Forward March of [industrial working class] Labour Halted.'

Harold Wilson's policies contributed to the increasing technocratic attitude to economic forces that saw, in less a quarter of a century from his speech, the destruction of the Yorkshire textile, coal mining and steelmaking industries. Mills and pit head gear were demolished along with the communities those industries sustained. Ironically, it could be argued, Wilson contributed to the destruction of more heavy industry than a few dedicated men with hammers could ever have done. The impact of what has emerged in its place is outside the scope of this article. But what would Frank Peel have thought of today's society? As a vindication, or a repudiation, of the Luddites' aspiration to preserve their communities and put people before machines ?

News from members past and present

We have recently heard from **Frank Grombir**, a former Committee member and editor of our *Journal*, now resident with his growing family in Zlin in his native Czechia (the Czech Republic). While living in Huddersfield, Frank worked at the Local Studies Library and undertook undergraduate and graduate studies in History. He has now been awarded a doctorate by the University of Hull for his thesis, 'Second-Generation Voices of the Polish and Ukrainian Diaspora in Northern Britain, 1948-1998'.

As the abstract of the thesis relates, 'The transpennine milltowns were demographically transformed by migrants from the New Commonwealth. Yet these post-industrial towns and cities, especially Huddersfield, Bradford, Rochdale, and Hull, also became a home to thousands of white migrants who saw themselves in time as either British or European, or somewhere in between.' Rooted in oral histories and regional archives, the thesis recovers the experiences of the forgotten second-generation Ukrainian and Polish diasporas in comparative perspective. It can be found online [here](#).

Frank worked with another HLHS committee member, Bill Roberts, to create the [Migrations page](#) of our website and its immense bibliography of Huddersfield's migrant communities, which Bill continue to maintain and expand. If you've not done so before, do take a look.

We're also informed by our member **Peter Fawcett** that he is due to appear in an episode of the BBC Antiques Road Show this year, speaking about Huddersfield's hand-bell heritage. He will be speaking to the Society on this subject in our 2024/25 programme.