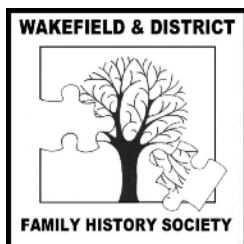


# THE WAKEFIELD



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May Edition

Volume 28 No. 3  
2025

# **WAKEFIELD & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

(Registered Charity 1104393)

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**President: Chris Welch**

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# **THE WAKEFIELD KINSMAN**

**Volume 28 Number 3 May 2025**

ISN1470 0891

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**Cover Image:** Four Red Sweaters with Elsie Walton © Carol Sklinar 2025

**Please visit our website: [www.wdfhs.co.uk](http://www.wdfhs.co.uk)**

While the Society always uses its best endeavours to ensure that the information in its publications is complete, errors may from time to time occur. The Society will not be held responsible for the consequence for such errors but will make corrections in future editions.

Opinions and comments expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Society.

## Chairman's Letter



Time seems to fly by faster than ever. It is amazing to find that the midpoint of the year is fast approaching, and I wonder how many of us have managed to keep our New Year resolutions. Or even remember what they were?

One of the key targets for the committee for this year was to try to engage a larger number of people in the work of the Society and thus assure its future. Whilst with the addition of **Sheelagh Jackson, Claire Pickering and George**

**Scogings** to the committee we have managed to bring in some new blood there are still gaps to fill and as always, our ambition is to have a number of new members who are shadowing and assisting with the main roles so that succession can be assured. Whenever I talk about the challenges we face in finding volunteers I am advised that every organisation faces this problem in the modern world but I do hope that we can live up to the motto of one of my former employers "be different, be better". This was a renowned food business now managed by the third generation of the founding family.

We still have a vacancy for a Secretary for the Society and even more importantly a role for an Editor for the Kinsman who would take on the task on a permanent basis. I took on that role for the last two editions and **Carol Sklinar** has now resumed her position as temporary Editor but there is nothing like continuity to make for an excellent product and to ensure that we return to our normal schedule for publishing it. All of the while, when we are loading more work onto fewer people we are compromising our service to members and not developing our in-house expertise. Similarly in terms of the number of volunteers to help set up and run meetings there are gaps emerging which is affecting the quality of our customer service. So many of the team who have provided help for so long have made their contribution and it is now the time for a new generation to take the lead to build upon the great foundation they established. Our AGM is approaching in July and formal notice of that meeting is provided within this journal and I do hope that you will choose to nominate yourself or encourage others to accept nomination to ensure that we move forward.

We are in the process of setting up a new bank account to let us transition to the modern world of internet banking. I am sure that members will remember that the new membership year commences on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and a renewal form is provided with this journal. We would politely ask that those members who pay by standing order take note of the new bank details provided on the form and make the necessary adjustments with your bank.

## Editor's Ramblings

Hello again; yes, I'm back as Editor, temporarily, at least for this edition of Kinsman. I haven't added a photograph for two reasons: first, I'm here for a short time, and second, as The Princess Royal once said to HM, our late Queen, 'You know what I look like'.

What have I to tell you? You will be pleased to know that **Elsie Walton**, known to me as 'Our Elsie' and my partner in family history crime, is still remembered outside of our society.

A short while ago, I was invited to attend a book launch at the National Holocaust Museum, just outside Nottingham. **Lucy Adlington** was to launch her new book, *Four Red Sweaters*, in the UK. The launch date was very close to the anniversary of when Elsie left us, and it was quite an emotional day for Lucy and me.

After the hour-or-so drive, my first stop was the small but welcoming cafe. After ordering a 'cuppa', I heard, 'It's Carol, isn't it?' That was Lucy; she'd only seen me from the side while I was ordering, so was unsure if it was me. I was introduced to the Curator, as 'Carol, it's her fault I've written the book'. I've taken the blame for many things, but never for giving an author information for a book. Well, there is always a first time!.

It must be two years since Lucy had asked Elsie for help finding someone. Elsie drew blank and telephoned me. Within 30 minutes, I was at Elsie's home, and we were about to start and answer Lucy's questions. The information, including living relatives, took us across two continents and into Western Asia. The information was too vast to include in the book, but it is fascinating.



The book *Four Red Sweaters* is based on a well-worn and loved red jumper displayed at the Imperial War Museum. The jumper was once owned by a young girl who came to England as part of Kinder Transport. The young girl's family remained in Europe, but three sisters managed to get to England. Three other red jumpers are also featured; their story is just as interesting. Lucy tells us what European life was like when the girls were young, what was happening to Jewish families, and how their lives were affected during WWII.

Lucy, as usual, tells her reader the information, sometimes hard to comprehend into an informative, easy-to-read book. Another bestseller.

At the event, Lucy was introduced and an informative slide show introduced the book with images of each jumper's owners and physical items. I was pleased to attend and, in a small way, represent 'Our Elsie'.

## NOTICE OF



The 26th AGM of Wakefield and District Family History Society will be held at 10.30 am on Saturday 5th July 2025 at Outwood Memorial Hall and by Zoom which will enable our distant members to join us.

Nominations from members wishing to serve as an Officer or Member of the Committee should be made in writing on a Nomination Form obtainable from the Chairman, who is acting as Secretary, or by downloading the form from the Members Area of our website, and signed by the proposer, a seconder and the nominee. These should be sent to the Chairman (for address see inside cover) to arrive no later than 14 days before the AGM.

The agenda, and the minutes of the previous AGM are now available to view or download from the Members Area in order to reduce the amount of paper used. The Financial Statement will be added to the website once the accounts have been independently examined. Members still wishing to receive a paper copy of the documents should write to the Chairman enclosing a SAE requesting the documents by post. They should apply as soon as possible and will receive copies as soon as the post allows. For members without internet access a few paper copies will be available at the AGM.

To access the Members Area you need to be registered as a user of the site and to log in using your user name and password.

If you're not already registered, please email a request to Debbie Staynes at: **[membership@wdfhs.co.uk](mailto:membership@wdfhs.co.uk)** to obtain the necessary details. The Constitution is also available within that area of the site.

Members who have previously joined by Zoom will be sent the joining instructions for the AGM. Other members wishing to join by Zoom should email: **[chairman@wdfhs.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wdfhs.co.uk)** to be added to the list.

## Reports from our Meetings

Our speaker at the February meeting was **Gaynor Halliday** with her talk about **Three Worthy Women of Wakefield**.

A singer who sued Pathe, a health worker who tackled Wakefield's infant mortality rate and an anti-suffragist politician.

The singer was **Phyllis Lett** who was heard all over the world. She was one of seven children and the family arrived in Wakefield around 1886 from Lincolnshire, where Phyllis was born in 1883. They settled at 6 South Parade and were an outstanding family but the parents' death at a young age meant they did not live to see their children's success. By 17 Phyllis was pursuing her musical talents and attended the free open school at the Royal College of Music in 1903 and only three years later made her debut at the Royal Albert Hall as a soloist. Her first concert was with **Elgar** conducting when she sang his Sea Pictures in 1909.

In 1910 she became a recording artist for Pathe Freres, recording 19 songs on waxed cylinders; they released 16. At this time she was doing well and living in London. There were various performances in 1914 and 1915; patriotic concerts for the War Relief Fund. Fame and fortune continued in 1922 and she moved to the Hampstead/St John's Wood area. In 1922 she brought a libel action against Pathe. They had transferred her song recordings from wax cylinders to gramophone records but the quality was not good. Elgar said it was dreadful and not reflective of Phyllis' voice and as a result, she was losing income. The case was settled, the three offending records were destroyed and she continued to work with Elgar. She married **Rupert de Burgh Ker MC** when she was 41 and gave a last concert in the Queen's Hall, London in 1925 before she moved to Australia with her Australian husband. They had one daughter and Phyllis passed away in June 1962 aged 79.

The health worker was **Marguerite de Flemying Boileau** 1875 - 1932. In 1900 the infant mortality rate in Wakefield had reached 200 per 1000 babies. The men in charge decided a woman's touch was needed and they appointed Marguerite as a lady inspector.

She was born in London in January 1875; both her parents were Irish and her grandmother had been Matron at Westminster House of Correction. She matriculated with a BA and a qualification in sanitary inspection from the University of London in 1894 through private study and tuition.

Her arrival in Wakefield in 1903 was a turning point for the health of babies and their mothers. Over a two-and-a-half year period she visited mothers in their own homes and found that although poverty contributed to the mortality rate she felt the main reason was crass ignorance combined with devoted affection. Overfeeding was an issue and the diet of some babies was shocking;

most mothers were unprepared for motherhood. She founded Babies Welcome in 1906.

In 1907 the Wakefield Sanitary Aid Society who had appointed her approached the Council to see if they could fund her work. They refused to pay her salary, some thought because of jealousy that she had been so successful, and the work continued through subscription, led by **Anna Louisa Milnes Gaskell** of Lupset Hall. Marguerite left in 1910 and by 1919 they had five health visitors.

She seems to be a bit of an enigma after that. In 1921 she had changed her name to Boileau-Lessy and described herself as single; she was principal at St Ethelred's School. Mysteriously, despite her single status, she had two daughters.

The would-be politician was **Gwendoline Beaumont** 1882-1973. She was the daughter of **F G Howarth** of Sandal Grange. Gaynor showed us her Victorian Lady's Opinion of the Male Sex; she described them as rabbits, rats, nincompoops, jugubes and manlets and was scathing in her descriptions. In 1906 she married **Gerald Beaumont** of Hatfeild House; they set up home in Altofts and started a family. Gerald served in the KOYLI during the First World War and Gwendoline moved into Hatfeild Hall with her in-laws. She was anti-suffrage and believed women did not need the vote to get men to do what they wanted. However, once women got the vote she changed her mind about suffrage and decided to stand for Parliament. Gwennie was a very busy woman, founding associations and serving on committees. After Gerald's death in 1933 she really focused on politics.

She stood for Rothwell in 1935 but her progressive platform did not go down well in the staunch Labour constituency with a strong dislike for women candidates. People weren't coming out to listen to her, instead judging her on her appearance; she wasn't taken seriously. Labour increased their majority.

Gwennie was defeated but not downhearted and continued to be involved in local societies and councils.

Gaynor ended her talk by telling us a little of her book *Struggle and Suffrage* in Wakefield.

Lorraine Simpson, mem 148

Our speaker on 1 March 2025 was **Paul Dawson**, giving us a talk on **Henry Briggs - Outwood Industrialist**.

Paul started his talk by giving us a general background of Outwood, until 1579 the Royal Forest of Wakefield. He told us that Outwood Hall was just behind the memorial hall and Outwood's economic base was cloth making. **Joseph**

**Armytage** built the Hall in 1710; **Richard Lucas** was the next owner who lived in the Hall for many years and it was then let to **Henry Briggs**, Unitarian.

At this point Paul gave us some information on Unitarianism which provided us with a context into the radical left wing nature of the Briggs family. We were then given some history of the Briggs family and their origins in Hull as merchants. Confusingly, all the sons of the same generations were given the same name! We learned about Henry Briggs' ancestors in Hull and Halifax, particularly one John Briggs who was a very wealthy merchant and who married the daughter of **Christopher Rawdon** of Bilborough Hall. Rawdon became the name of the next generation of Briggs sons and so we came to Rawdon Briggs, John's son. He was a cloth merchant and carpet manufacturer, in business with his brother in law **William Curren**. Rawdon was a left wing radical who along with other of his contemporaries, **Dorothy** and **William Wordsworth**, **Jack Milnes** the Democrat etc, wanted revolution in England similar to France. His son **Rawdon Briggs** was banker to **Anne Lister** and was also an MP.

Henry Briggs, born 1798, was the third son of **Rawdon** and **Ann Curren**. Unsurprisingly, he had a radical upbringing and up to his marriage to **Marianne Milnes** in 1824 he had been a partner in his father's firm Curren Briggs and Company but after his marriage he moved to Flockton to help his mother in law run the family colliery business; a long time widow, his mother in law Marianne ran a colliery and railway concession which was very rare for a woman at the time. Henry Briggs of H Briggs and Company retired at the age of 40 and passed his share of the company onto brother in law **William Stansfield** and went on to develop various collieries in partnership with **Charles Morton** of Normanton.

Henry Briggs and his wife worshipped at Westgate Chapel. In his journal he described himself as a liberal who was not deterred from his objectives. He was a conscientious Unitarian. An imposing figure at 6'2", he had an equally imposing wife, equally tall. She was a Sunday School teacher and a local minister; again unusual for the time. They both worked tirelessly for universal suffrage and met the freed slave **Frederick Douglas** when he came to Wakefield. Henry's fellow Unitarians included **Henry Clarkson**, **William Marriott** and **Charles Gaskell** among others. He died in 1868 on a business trip to Dunfermline and stated that he wanted no unnecessary expense or pompous displays at his funeral.

The business was taken over by **Henry Curren Briggs** who married **Catherine Shepherd**, daughter of the governor of Wakefield Prison. He lived and died by his political convictions and continued the traditions of his left wing family. He used his vast wealth to build Unitarian chapels and introduced profit sharing across his business which was pioneering in 1865. He lived at Outwood Hall. He died in 1881 and was succeeded by his son **Arthur Curren**

**Briggs** who was born at Outwood Hall in 1855. He took over the family business in 1881 but did not become the chairman until 1893. He was responsible for building the art nouveau houses in Whitwood and was also Mayor of Leeds in 1903 and Alderman in 1904. The same year, his wife Helen persuaded the directors to give £3000 to help fund Leeds University. The family eventually moved from Outwood Hall to Meanwood and worshipped at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds.

The business was inherited by **Reginald Martin Briggs** and **Donald Henry Briggs**; it was bought for a huge sum of money by the state in 1947 when the mines were nationalised.

Paul finished his talk by telling us that Henry Briggs had a radical political background and believed in the rights of man and fair wages. He also believed that the rights of women were as important as the rights of man. He advocated for free education and the abolition of slavery. He was a man who helped to create the modern world and the family used their wealth to make the world a better place.

Our speaker on 5 April 2025 was **Jackie Depelle** who gave us a presentation on '**Take Three Girls - Their Lives, School and Legacy**' which summarised her research on a particular branch of her family. Jackie had recorded the presentation and then joined us for questions by Zoom at the end.

The Kettlewell family originated in Pateley Bridge but by 1820 had moved to Leeds. Through her research Jackie was able to inform us what Leeds would have been like at that time but Jackie's story followed three spinster sisters - **Ann Elizabeth, Emma and Fanny Alicia Kettlewell**. They were all baptised into Wesleyan Methodism at the Brunswick Chapel in Leeds which was not far from the present day O2 Arena.

Jackie told us that the 1881 White's Directory showed **Mrs Jane** and the Misses M H and A E Kettlewell were running a ladies' boarding and day school at Enmoor Lodge on Chapeltown Road in Leeds. The 1881 census shows Jane, as principal of the school along with her three spinster daughters. The pupils were mainly from the north of England, but they had a French governess. In 1871 Mary Hannah, the eldest daughter, had been a teacher but she had died in 1880 aged 38.

Jackie showed us the various sources she had been able to use for her research, including contacting the author of an article she found in Aspects of Leeds and discovered that the area where the women ran their school was originally known as Button Hill. It was a neighbourhood which contained large villas, some of which survive, like Enmoor Lodge, adjacent to the Northern School of Contemporary Dance.

Enmoor Lodge was bought by **Mrs Jane Kettlewell** in 1876, to run a private boarding school for young ladies and Jackie showed us an advertisement for the school showing the subjects taught.

The 1911 census showed that mother Jane had died and the occupation of her daughters was 'until recently principals of school, just retired.'

Jackie then looked for death information and was delighted to find the Leeds General Cemetery Burial Registers Index 1835-1992 and the wealth of information they contained. We were told about the women's wills; how each passed on to the other sisters until only one remained. They were single ladies and they left legacies to Leeds Women's and Children's Hospital, Leeds Unmarried Women's Benevolent Institute and Women's Auxiliary Wesleyan Missionary Society.

They continued to be benefactors to the community and particularly to women. These women were never wives or widows but sisters and daughters and Jackie felt women were not always researched in depth and wanted to follow the stories of these particularly independent women in her family.

## Membership News

### A Welcome to New Members

Mem. No. 1584 **Angela Croft**

Mem. No. 1585 **Peter Jellis**

Mem. No. 1586 **Julie Ward**

Mem. No. 1587 **Gerald Weldon**

We are sorry to learn of the deaths of members 1461 **David Christopher Lane** and his wife **Kathleen**.

I would like to remind members that June 1<sup>st</sup> is rapidly approaching when renewal of membership is due. There are many members who still haven't renewed for 2024-2025 and some haven't even renewed for 2023-2024.

Also, we request that members inform the Society in advance of June 1<sup>st</sup> if they do not intend to renew their subscription. Failure to do so causes concern and uncertainty.

There are several ways to renew and all options appear on the renewal form which should be sent out with this issue of the Wakefield Kinsman.

Members who have opted to receive an electronic copy of The Wakefield Kinsman still need to renew their membership at the appropriate rate as shown on the renewal form which will be sent electronically with their Kinsman.

## Members' Articles

### Italian Organ Grinders in Wakefield



I was browsing the 1891 census, looking at New Street in Wakefield. This ran parallel to Brook Street from Westmorland Street to what was then a continuation of Saville Street. The 'side by side' maps on the National Library of Scotland show it is now the part of Union Street running past the building recently renamed as WX, with the Elizabethan Grammar School on the east side of the road. I already knew that it was supposed to be a street where many poor people on the bottom rung of society lived.

In 1891 there were four lodging houses on the street, and it was the one at 52/54 New Street that interested me. There were 22 adults and 6 children aged 15 or under living in the house, all but two of them 'lodgers'. They included 8 Italians, all organ grinders. The enumerator recorded that none of them spoke English so it would have depended on him to record the names, and it is unlikely that he spoke Italian. His handwriting also makes it difficult to read. These are the spellings in the Ancestry transcription but I believe several are incorrect.

**Geocaemi Marcantonio**, single, M, age 30, organ grinder, born Italy

**Santo Baccaro**, single, M, age 40, organ grinder, born Italy

**Annanro Servizio**, married, M, age 25, organ grinder, born Italy

**Assa Servizio**, married, F, age 25, organ grinder, born Italy

**Celesta Caris**, single, F, age 30, organ grinder, born Italy

**Marcarita Marsians**, single, F, age 23, organ grinder, born Italy

**Rosa Baccearosa**, single, F, age 14, organ grinder, born Italy

**Oristina Boccearossa**, single, F, age 14, organ grinder, born Italy

My interest was spiked - what was the history of these immigrants? Why and how had they come here? I researched online.

The practice of organ-grinding originated in Italy. From the mid-1800s mass emigration began following the unification of Italy in 1861, with many coming from poor mountainous areas including around Parma and Lucca in the North. By the century's end, more came from southern Italy. Initially settling in London, they spread out to the towns in the north and west. Most were poor, uneducated, economic migrants, becoming travelling musicians, street performers and organ-grinders. It was possible to hire a barrel organ in London

for eighteen pence a day in 1883 (equivalent to about £5) but it could cost £25 to buy (about £1800 now). It was calculated that London organ-grinders could earn between 5 shillings and £1 a day and thus make a reasonable living.

It is unlikely that the group in Wakefield would be earning as much as that, but they would certainly be travelling round the streets, probably with a trained monkey collecting money in a hat, delighting small children with the music they were playing. The adult population may have not been so keen - a correspondent to the newspapers refers to them as '*peripatetic pests*' and that '*no-one could tolerate such an awful infliction as a barrel organ serenade*' (Wakefield Free Press 3 January 1880). The Wakefield Free Press of 11 November 1882 stated that: '*Italian organ grinders are not regarded by the general community as a blessing. They make day hideous, and are tolerated solely for the sake of the children.*' Like many immigrants, there was prejudice against them, which included their lack of cleanliness, and their carrying of knives.

In 1892 the Wakefield and West Riding Herald reported that an Italian organ-grinder **Dominic Scappetici** was charged with wounding a miner with a knife following an argument at the Sportsman's Inn in Netherton. The defendant, who needed an interpreter, counter-claimed that his organ, which he carried on his back, had been broken by the complainant and other men when he refused to play it inside the inn. The wound was small, no knife was found, and the magistrate decided that as the organ had been broken, the defendant had suffered more than the complainant and dismissed the case.

A headline in the Wakefield Free Press on 19th September 1896 reads "*A Dance in New Street*". A group of people were dancing to the music of an Italian organ-grinder, **Dominic Gentle**, when a woman called **Mary Jane Cayton**, a hawker from Bolton, grabbed '*the old man*' and started dancing with him. She took the opportunity to steal a purse containing 30 shillings and some papers from him and escaped to another lodging house where she was apprehended.

In 1897 another Italian organ grinder, **Andrew Prozzi**, living in New Street, who claimed his son turned the handle for him, was fined 16 shillings and 6d for working his son without a labour certificate. He was ordered to send his boy to the Catholic school and pay the fine. No age was given for the boy. Many other articles about organ-grinders appear in the local newspapers, not just in New Street but living in other streets and yards in Wakefield.

I had little success finding what happened to the New Street organ-grinders in later censuses; the only one I found was G. Marcantoni, aged 48, in the 1911 census living in Birmingham with his wife and six children. He had clearly filled in the census form himself, as both the handwriting and spelling were poor. They had had 14 children, 7 of whom had died. He was working as a '*zink*

worker' (sic). The house had 10 rooms, and 8 lodgers were part of the household. Their employment was 'orgen street' (sic).

Nationally, after this period, many of the Italians left their itinerant lifestyle and settled, starting to sell street food and ice cream rather than continue their previous way of life.

I wonder how many of our Family History Society members have Italian ancestry, and have tales to tell!

### Sources:

Article '*The Way Some Folks Live: The London Organ-grinder*' from Cassells Family Magazine, 1883: [Victorianvoices.net/topics/london/street.shtml](http://Victorianvoices.net/topics/london/street.shtml)  
Pages in 'Our Migration Story' about Italian immigration: [www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk](http://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk)

Article in 'The Music Box' Autumn 2020 issue, Volume 29 No 7, online  
British Newspaper Archive online

National Library of Scotland online maps

Shirley Levon, mem 53

## James Arthur White

The Covid lockdowns of 2020 presented people with a lot of extra free time and for myself I used this time diving further into my family tree than just the basics I already had. The main focus of this for some time was my grandfather's paternal side as this was where he had less personal knowledge. This was especially true of his uncle, **James Arthur White**, who he knew nothing about having only met him a few times while visiting relatives in Lupset where several of his aunts and uncles lived, including James Arthur. The first surprise came when looking at the entry for his marriage one time and spotting something I'd missed before. One of the witnesses was **Marian Torr**, who was my grandad's mother, but 3 years before her own marriage to **Frederick George White** at Hemsworth Register Office. Seeing her there showed that James Arthur's wife was actually the sister of Marian's brother-in-law. This was especially confusing to my grandad when I told him over the phone as he was unaware of any of this. Luckily it was around this time that, through Ancestry, I came into contact with a granddaughter of James Arthur's. It was through her I learned of his and his family's life including his children, Mollie and Peter, and his wife Ruby. From there I only became more curious and have spent years finding out more about him and his experiences, especially during the Second World War.

The separation from his family began in 1939, when he re-enlisted in the army on the 8<sup>th</sup> July. Following several army records of his I've seen, he had been a reservist from 1922 in the 4<sup>th</sup> K.O.Y.L.I., as had his father and brothers. In 1939 though he instead joined with the Royal Artillery. Specifically the 214<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Battery of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Medium Regiment, based in Stoke-on-Trent. However, in November he instead volunteered for the newly reformed 170<sup>th</sup>

Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers. This was a company primarily made up of coal miners, just as James Arthur had been, specifically at Park Hill Colliery. He spent about a month and a half in Chatham before going over to France suddenly on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1940. In all there were 18 officers and 504 men in the company who were given just a small handled shovel each as equipment. Following their movements in the war diaries they spent the first month on regimental training before being moved to the Belgian border working in local coal mines that had a shortage of workers. Half were later sent to re-open old First World War tunnels as the basics of their plans were to repeat the actions of the company in that war. This became impossible though due to the fast approach of the



Germans which forced those working on these tunnels further and further south. James Arthur was in this group who by the 17<sup>th</sup> May were in Doullens. They had been ordered to prepare to move and at 15:00 on the 19<sup>th</sup> the order came in. The journey was a slow and perilous one that had to be diverted several times to avoid the approaching Germans and manoeuvre around groups of refugees. In the end the last of them made it to Boulogne by 04:30 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. They played their part in the defence of the city by going beyond the front lines to destroy bridges, losing several men in the process. One group moved north

to Calais but the majority stayed in the city throughout ultimately stuck once the city fell on the 25<sup>th</sup>. James Arthur was captured on the 24<sup>th</sup> and from here was taken to Stalag XX-A, as were many others from the company. He was only here temporarily as he was later moved to a working camp under Stalag VIII-B, specifically at the Paryz Coal Mine in Dąbrowa Górnicza. After 18 months here he was later made a camp leader further to the east until 1944 when he was moved to a new camp Stalag IX-C. The five years he spent as a prisoner had been hard on him both physically and emotionally and left him scarred for the rest of his life.

Upon returning home though he was to find that his wife had left Wakefield with his children for a new man, with whom she'd had a son in 1942. While Ruby had asked for a divorce at this time, he would never agree to one. They seemingly never reconciled and she remained in Coventry, while he moved in with his older brother, **Ernest**, at 16 Gargrave Place. He would live here for the next 20 years until his death in 1965, just a day after his 61<sup>st</sup> birthday, the death certificate giving a cause of death of "Congestive cardiac failure due to purulent bronchitis superimposed by chronic bronchitis with emphysema contracted whilst a prisoner of war between 1940/45". The last years of his life had been tough on him, especially the separation from his family, only meeting his own grandchildren once by chance. I am glad I spent the time I have researching and finding out about him so that he can be remembered and am very grateful

to his granddaughter Kim Tree who told me so much about him and who I was able to share what I found when we met so that his own descendants could know about his life during and after the war.

Image: James Arthur is on the left and his brother Ernest Walter is on the right

George Scogings, mem 1562

## Surnames – important for over 500 years...

...except for where they weren't of course! How many of us have ancestors that originated in some of the remote places of Britain? My most remote forbears came from that area of England that lies to the north of Hadrian's Wall, many miles beyond the late-lamented Sycamore Gap tree. But so far they seem to have been town dwellers and not from the remote valleys away from the small towns. In researching our family trees surnames are the vital piece of information we look for when following ancestral lines. They predate the parish registers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and are a reliable indicator of relationships. But that is in the towns and cities. In remote areas surnames were often unimportant and barely known up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One such area is the South Pennines where in the valleys away from industry where a different method of naming men (not women) was in use.

In 1841 **Henry Clarkson** of Wakefield was part of a team surveying for a new railway that was to be built from Todmorden to Burnley. Todmorden is on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. Indeed the historic boundary between the two counties ran through the middle of the town hall! Henry described what he found on the route of the prospective railway,

*One of the most perplexing and amusing difficulties we had to contend with was ascertaining the surnames of the inhabitants adjoining the proposed line, which was necessary to be done in compliance with the standing order of Parliament. To give an instance of the primitive character of the people, something like this was the colloquy that would take place: - "Pray, who is the occupier of this house?" - addressed to a great rough-looking woman who came to the door. "Why my husband to be sure!" - "And pray what is your husband's name?" "Nay, I cannot tell you that! He goes by t' name of Bills o' Jacks." "But surely," said the interlocutor, "you must know your husband's name?" "Noa I doant." "But I really must have it?" "Why then you mun [must] ask at Toms o' Dicks, a lives a bit higher up t' road!"*

*Actually in some instances this was all the information we could get, and we were obliged to enter Bill o' Jacks and Tom o' Dicks in our record. It, of course, meant that William was the son of John and Thomas was the son of Richard, but the surname seemed a matter of little importance.*

This is how surnames began from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, showing relationships to differentiate between two people with the same Christian name. Bill o' Jacks

would eventually become William Johnson or Jackson and Tom o' Dicks would have been Thomas Richardson or Dickson or Dixon. But in a remote area where everybody knew everybody else there was no need to use surnames to identify each other. They would have had surnames but probably never used them. And if that is the case can we be certain that the correct surname was passed to their children, especially if the woman was widowed. Perhaps the parish priest was the person who carried the knowledge forward.

A few years earlier in 1832, the story of a different Bill o' Jacks horrified



Britain after he was savagely beaten to death along with his son Tom o' Bills. They ran a remote pub called the Moor Cock some twenty miles south of Todmorden on the turnpike road that climbed from Greenfield up to Saddleworth Moor (infamous in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the Moors Murders case) on its way to Holmfirth. A poem from that time summed up the tale. In this case we are left with a surname: **William and Thomas Bradbury.**

*Throughout the land wherever news is read.  
Intelligence of their sad end has spread.  
Those now who talk of far-famed Greenfield hills.  
Will think of Bill o' Jack's and Tom o' Bills*

The Bills O' Jacks pub was demolished in 1937 due to concerns by the water company that it could contaminate the new reservoir recently completed at the bottom of the valley. (Would they be concerned these days?)

So with the coming of the railways and the Industrial Revolution, people moved around more and this style of nomenclature passed into history, several hundred years after most other places had ceased to use it. Censuses and official records (like the railway surveyor's documents) would have made the use of surnames mandatory. But not very quickly! Old habits die hard.

A few miles to the north of the Moor Cock, on a remote moorland road near Meltham, lies another isolated pub. In 1854 it was called the Spotted Cow and was run by **William Dyson**. He was more commonly known as Will o' Nats (son of **Nathaniel Dyson**). By 1871 the pub, an old building, had changed its name to the New Inn! But it was widely known as Wills o' Nats.

And that name persisted through multiple changes of tenant until in the 1970s the name of the pub was officially changed from the New Inn to Wills O' Nats. However, archive photographs indicate the inn had "Wills O' Nats" painted on the gable end of the property since at least 1910. And the pub is still trading as Wills O' Nats with few of its customers probably aware of what it signifies.

My wife was brought up in one of the Saddleworth valleys and she remembers the 'old folk' in the 1950s and 1960s still using this style of identification. By then it was simply a way of identifying a person they were talking about. By the time I moved here in the 1970s those old folk had died and the distinctive accent disappeared over the next twenty years as the area became a



desirable commuter location for Manchester. But back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, moving to a city like London, or more commonly Manchester and Leeds, from a community like this must have been a major cultural shock for all concerned. And did the correct surname get passed down the generations?

### Footnote

Todmorden Town Hall isn't the only building that the border of Lancashire and Yorkshire passes through. The King's Arms, four miles from Oldham town centre is directly on the border. You buy your drinks in Yorkshire and then you can walk a few feet along the room to enjoy them in Lancashire if you wish. It used to be customary for the local Yorkshire inhabitants to beat the bounds of the parish of Saddleworth (walk along the border) and that entailed climbing over the roof of the pub – they do things properly in Yorkshire! And Beating the Bounds is a tradition still kept alive after seven centuries by the parish of All Hallows by the Tower, London which includes beating the water in the middle of the Thames!

### **Sources – Internet (except Clarkson book)**

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*Huddersfield Exposed – Wills o Nats*

*Wikipedia – Beating the bounds*

*Wikipedia – All Hallows-by-the-Tower*

*Memories of Merry Wakefield by Henry Clarkson, 1887*

Peter Holford, mem 1568

## **A series of Mysteries, and a plea for help.**

My father, **James Dogherty**, was born in 1898 in Longton Staffordshire but soon moved to Sutton Coldfield, where he grew up. He was born into a strong C of E family with roots going back to Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. He also came of a long line of Head teachers, all Church of England.

In 1922 he finished his post war teacher training course after demob and started as Assistant Head in a school in north Birmingham between that city and his home in Sutton Coldfield. In 1924 he took over the headship of Sandal Magna Elementary School, now Sandal Castle Community Primary School, living on the premises.

His school log says that in 1926 he resigned to rejoin the Army, in the Irish Guards in Woolwich. As the Head of a Church of England school, it would have been mandatory for him to be C of E. His Attestation, however, records his religion as Roman Catholic.

I, therefore, have one mystery to start with. How did he become an RC whilst still working as a headmaster in a C of E school?

In 1928, he married my mother in St Austen's Roman Catholic church on Wentworth Terrace, then they went back to Woolwich to begin their married life.

My mother, **Annie Bothwell**, was born in Glasgow, Rowchester Street, Camlachie, in 1901 of traditional Irish Roman Catholic emigres from Loughgall in Armagh.

In 1909 the family was living in York Cottages, Leeds Road and her father was a tramway driver. She was a pupil at St Austen's School. By 1911 and still at school she was living in Balne Lane, Wakefield, although by 1921 they had moved to Lincoln Street. She now worked for Sharphouses Wholesale Grocery store on Union Street as an Invoice Clerk.

We now come to the main Mystery in the title which is: how did they ever get to meet, as even in my youth in the 1950s, it was very much against tradition for RCs and C of Es even to mix, let alone engage in a romantic relationship. This was such a strongly held feeling that, when they married, my father's family cut him off, refusing even to attend the wedding. It wasn't until 1953 that any serious attempt was made by my father to establish contact, and even then, it was brief: merely a way of burying the hatchet. My father died in 1955 before any further contact was made.

So, fellow sleuths:

Have you any idea how they might have met and socialised?

How do I find out if there are any records of my father's conversion?

What is known about Sharphouses?

Is there any mention of the Bothwells in the records of the Irish community in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

John Dogherty, mem 1550

# We Will Remember Them

## Alfred Bellis

**Alfred Bellis** was born on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1918, the only child of **George** and **Clara** of Birstall. Following on from his education he worked in the warehouse of *Thomas Burnley and Son*.



During WWII, Alfred served as a Private in the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Yorks and Lancs Regiment. When Alfred was stationed in Barracks in Pontefract he was requested to leave Normanton baths dance hall for dancing in his Army boots. He was also confined to Barracks as he kept going absent without leave to visit his fiancée **Hilda Williams** in Normanton!

When Alfred was sent to France it was very hard for his widowed mother as he was an only child. Alfred wrote regularly to Hilda and when his correspondence dried up for five weeks she knew something was amiss. However although the Army reassured her that he was still serving with his corps, the Red Cross were more helpful and sent her a letter saying that he had been captured but was "in good health".



He served in Dunkirk as part of the Infantry. Alfred was wounded in France after being shot in the leg by a sniper, fortunately the bullet was deflected by a cigarette tin!

Alfred was taken prisoner by the German army and transported to Stalag 8b, in Poland where he served as a slave labourer in Polish coal mines. He and others escaped when Russian forces advanced on the German army in Poland. He was befriended by a Polish family and eventually came home on a troopship via Odessa, Russia. He was underweight, had sores and boils but was otherwise healthy.

Alfred bore no malice towards the German people, though individual German soldiers would spoil the Red Cross parcels before throwing the contents at the prisoners. Alfred was always grateful for the fact that he had returned home when so many did not.

When Alfred returned to England he was welcomed back into his fiancé's large family. When Hilda's brothers offered to get him a job at the pit, he quickly

declined their offer having just spent some five years in bad conditions working in Poland's coal mines. He worked 'on the bins' for Normanton Council before going to work as a high power linesman for the Yorkshire Electricity Board.

Alfred and Hilda married in May 1945 and had one child, Christine, in 1947.

He had a great sense of humour, loved company and played piano and accordian to entertain both at home and in pubs and clubs around Normanton in a band called 'Rytham Wreckers'.

Wendy Jewitt. Library Development Area Supervisor

## Eliza Ann Dickinson née Beardshall



**Eliza Ann Beardshall** was born on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1851 in Backhouse Row, Kirkstall, Leeds, to George, a forge hammer man, and **Amelia née Bailey**. She was their fifth child.

She grew up in various villages around Leeds – Kirkstall, Headingley and Hunslet – and sometime between the 1861 and 1871 censuses, she went to Temple Newsam where she lodged with the Westerman family. The Westermans were a mining family, so it is possible that Eliza met her husband, James, through them.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1873, Eliza Ann married **James Dickinson** at The New Church in the New Parish of St Jude, Pottery Field, Hunslet in the County of York (as written on her wedding certificate). James was a coalminer, from a mining family, and during their marriage they had 4 children – Charles, James (my great-grandfather), Amelia (Millie) and Ernest who died in infancy.

In the summer of 1893, the price of coal fell, so the mine owners wanted to cut miners' wages by 25%. Miners were paid around 12 to 14 shillings a week, depending on the price of coal, so that was a big drop and as a result, they went on strike.

In July 1893, Eliza Ann wrote a letter to her local paper, the Rothwell Free Press entitled "A Plea to the Miners' Wives – by One of Them." In it she urged the women to support their menfolk who were "not looked upon as men, nor yet as animals, but as something between the two." She asked "Have not the

coalfields been the gold fields of old England? What would the wealth of England be without the coalfields?" She called for the women to stand hand in hand with their husbands, working along with them, "they in the Union, we in the Co-operative stores...United we stand, divided we fall."

In October that year she wrote a letter to the Leeds Evening Express, followed by another written by 'A Working Man's Wife' where she urged workers to support the miners.

She was asked to speak at Women's Co-operative Guilds meetings around the north of England. A newspaper report from Pendleton in November 1893 mentions "the visit of Mrs Dickinson, of Leeds, who worked with much earnestness and self-sacrifice on behalf of the more unfortunate women and children of her class during the late disastrous coal dispute." She was given clothing parcels and money, from the Women's Co-operative Guild, to buy back clothing that miners' wives had pawned.

Eliza was asked to address a meeting at St James' Hall, London and there is a report and picture in the Illustrated London News of her from November 1893. Another report of this meeting from her local paper, the Rothwell Free Press in May 1894 describes her as "this little woman, who is proud of being a miner's wife..." and as being "destined to be one of the orators of the women's movement...can hold audiences of thousands enthralled..."

In a letter from an **Annie Cobden Sanderson** in London, she is asked to speak at their meeting on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November, and then "speak on Hampstead Heath on Sunday afternoon (weather permitting)."

She wrote the following letter home to her husband, James on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1893.

C/o Miss Edwards  
7 Albion Square  
Dalston  
London  
N.E  
Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> 1893

*My Dear Husband*

*It is with great pleasure I write you to give you more particulars. I got into London at 25-3 then I had A (sic) good ride in the underground Railway. When we got out of that we went (sic) on the over head Railway right above the House tops so I had A ride on the under middle and above. I am very comfortable were (sic) I am staying and my throat is A great deal better but I am staying in the House all day, owing to my throat to be more prepared for the Meeting to night. St James Hall holds 7000 people. There is a miners wife from Castleford or Normanton I do not know which, the vicar (?) of Normanton also is going to speak. . I was very tired of riding. My Head was bad. I am going out*

Kinsman

*to tea to Miss Webb to day Wednesday Afternoon. I could stay in London once A week if it was not for having to go to Lancashire. I have already got an invitation to speak at A conference of the Womans Guild in London on Thursday but I cannot you see with having our own conference to attend. Tell Mrs Saville she should see me now, as I am writing this letter in A Grand Room of course A gas stove in it A cup of splendid leaf tea at my elbow. Books and papers in plenty, so even by the above you will know how I am enjoying My self. If any letter come ask Mrs Smith to address (sic) them to me at the above address. I hope Jim and Charley is all right and your self. Remember me to all.*

*From your loving wife*

*E A Dickinson*

A report of the meeting at St James Hall appeared in the Illustrated London News on 18 November 1893, and featured a picture of Eliza Ann speaking.

As a result of Eliza's work, in October 1894, the editor of the Rothwell Free Press wrote and asked her to stand for election as a Guardian of the Poor Law at Hunslet.

*Free Press Office  
Rothwell*

*Oct 19/94*

*Mrs Dickinson*

*My Dear Madam*

*As the approaching Guardian Election is now near at hand, I take the opportunity of suggesting that the time has come when we should realise a change in the administration of the Poor Law.*

*I observe in the Daily papers that two Ladys (sic) have signified their intention of submitting themselves to the Electors of Leeds, as Candidates for the position of themselves on the Leeds Board of Guardians. As to Stourton, I am fully cognizant of the fact, that, Mr Harry Nichols, has been asked, and accepted on behalf of the Stourton Ratepayers Association the position of Candidate, for a seat on the Hunslet Board of Guardians.*

*As we have up to the present been represented by money bags, I think the time has come, when the people should have more direct representation. And on these grounds I venture to ask you, if you will, on behalf of the people allow yourself to be brought out, as a Candidate. Of course such a procedure will be a new departure in representation on our Board of Guardians, but still I am persuaded, it will be a departure in the right direction, as women are I am confident very much in touch on Poor Law matters. The unions as you are aware, composes both sex's (sic), and so far as women paupers are concerned, require on their behalf, women's sympathy as well as men's.*

*So far as you are concerned, I doubt not but that you will do what is right, and see that justice be meted out impartially. I trust you will allow yourself to become the Candidate. If so perhaps it will be an induction to others to follow your example.*

*Awaiting your reply*

*I am yours Truly*

*Joseph Stein*

*PS If you desire an interview with me I will endeavour to meet you at any times convenient*

**JS**



She was duly elected, one of the first women in the country and certainly in the Hunslet Union, to hold such a position and was a guardian until at least 1915.

She was invited to many local events, such as the opening of the new Workhouse and Infirmary at Rothwell Haigh, October 1903; the opening of the City Hospitals, Seacroft in September 1904; the opening of Leeds Grammar School for Girls in September 1906, by HRH the **Princess Louise**; and a reception at Temple Newsam hosted by **The Honorable Edward Woode** and the **Viscount and Viscountess of Halifax**.

Eliza Ann died, aged 79, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1930 at her home in Coggill Street, Stourton, Leeds from senile degeneration. After all she had achieved in her amazing life, her occupation was simply recorded as "widow of James Dickinson, coal hewer."

What a wonderful lady and what an amazing life she must have had. She really was a woman ahead of her time.

Caroline Barker, mem 1557

## Eliza Heald – Legacy of a Victorian School Mistress

**Eliza Heald** had a completely unremarkable life. She was born in the village of Thornes, grew up in the village of Thornes and subsequently died in the village of Thornes. She was part of a small affluent upper middle class family and she worked as a schoolmistress in Thornes. So why is she of interest? Nothing about her stands out until we get to the end of her life and the remarkable will that she wrote, detailing the obsessions, the morals and values of a Christian, Victorian lady. The will also reveals the extent of her knowledge and lack of knowledge of her remaining relatives elsewhere.

Eliza was born in 1818 and stayed at home in Thornes with her mother, Sarah and aunt, Anne. She was educated in the school that Sarah and Anne ran and when she was old enough she became a teacher in the same school. Her only other close relative was her brother George who was two years her senior (see Wikipedia and Kinsman). Her father, Thomas, a wealthy merchant, died in 1829 when she was just eleven. Presumably she left Thornes to attend his burial in Wakefield. In fact we also know that she travelled from Wakefield and visited London in 1858 to prove the will of her brother at the Principal Registry. Her mother Sarah died in 1854 and her spinster aunt, **Ann Murrey**, died in 1862. In that year Eliza was 43, unmarried and without any close relations.

This lithograph shows the village of Thornes in 1843.



The following year she married **John Ashton**; she was 44 and he was 48. On the marriage register her profession was “Mistress of **Mrs Gaskell’s School**” and he was a gardener. At first glance that seems to be a complete mismatch in social standing. But John Ashton was the

gardener for **Daniel Gaskell** of Lupset Hall, Thornes. As such he was no mere soil turner and was a man of knowledge and expertise. Whatever her motives for marriage were, it wasn’t a spontaneous act brought on by isolation. It might have been for companionship, security or respectability but it was certainly not for passion! The first part of her will is a very long legal screed – some forty lines – protecting her wealth in its entirety until her executors dealt with it after her demise. John Ashton wasn’t getting a penny of it!

In the event it wasn't an issue because he died in 1879. She was the last of her immediate family in Wakefield; she was truly alone in her old age. She died in 1882.

Her will proves the link between the family in Wakefield and the one in Hull. She may never have met three of the children of her step-brother Charles but she knew of them.

*To the eldest, **Edward [Redmore] Heald** of Wigan in the County of Lancaster, ships carpenter £100.*

This is double the sum given to his siblings. That suggests that she knew him and knew of his whereabouts: the location, Wigan, is affirmed rather than the 'supposed' locations of the other three (see below). The most likely explanation is that Edward went to Wakefield to find his father's family. He would never have met them before as he was only an infant when his father abandoned them in Hull. Edward was only five years younger than his Auntie Eliza. He was a well travelled man and, from what we know of him, an adventurer and risk taker. His story will be told in a future article.

*The sum of £50 apiece to **Thomas Heald**, supposed to be of Keadby, plumber, **Charles Heald**, supposed to be of Beverley in the County of York, wood turner and **Mary Gower** (sister of the said Thomas Heald and Charles Heald).*

It shows that she isn't certain where her nephews and niece might be but she distributes a few goodies in their direction. Presumably Edward gave that information to Eliza and would have acted as an intermediary. Eliza also set a time limit of twelve months for them to claim their bequest after it has been advertised in '*some public newspaper circulating in Keadby and Beverley and in some general newspapers of general circulation in England.*' At least two of Edward's siblings, Mary and Thomas, received their inheritance!

There are also bequests for her Murray relations in London. She knows precisely where they are!

*The sum of £100 to my cousin **John Hodgson Murray** of Camden Town, London, Coroners Beadle.*

*The sum of £100 apiece to **Ann Murray, Avice Murray and Eliza Murray** the daughters of the said John Hodgson Murray. It's interesting that the surname is spelt in the more conventional manner in London – probably the result of verbal instructions being written up by a junior clerk.*

In keeping with the principle of making sure her husband doesn't get any of her money she inserts the following line into her will: *I declare that any gift or interest taken by any female under this my Will shall be for her own and separate use free from the debts or control of any husband.* Very much a modern feminist value!

Then we get to some interesting bequests which reveal her true Christian values!

*The sum of £200 to the British Temperance League established at Bolton le Moors in the County of Lancaster.* [Bolton le Moors is simply the town of Bolton in Lancashire]

*The sum of £200 to the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.*

*The sum of £50 to the Wakefield Town Mission and the sum of £50 to the Clayton Hospital, Wakefield.*

*And upon trust to pay the residue...to the British and Foreign Bible Society.*

In the modern world these look like small sums of money. In total she left nearly £3,000. But the present day value of £3,000 is over £2,000,000. To a person living in the slums of Hull, as Eliza's niece was, £50 was a life-changing sum of money – about £40,000 nowadays. This was a time when a newly built house in London might cost 50p/week to rent and a manual labourer would earn £50 in a year.

These are not sums a schoolmistress would have been able to save and represent the accumulation of her family's wealth that passed to her. It seems that she lived well because she inherited about £4,000 from her brother George 24 years previously – a present day sum of about £4.5million! In a short life, dying at 42 of TB, he had obviously been well rewarded as one of Britain's greatest railway engineers and had also inherited from their father, Thomas.

*The parish church of St James, Thornes where it is absolutely certain Eliza would have worshipped!*

Her two executors each received £50. **George Kent** was a schoolmaster who taught in the same school as Eliza. The other executor was **Robert Walter Bailey** 'of the City of York, Railway Agent' and clearly a friend and colleague of her brother George. He's described in the will as 'of the City of York' but he was in fact a native of Wakefield, his family resident on Northgate in 1815 when he was baptised. In 1850 he married **Elizabeth Twiggs** the daughter of a manufacturer in Thornes.

So the Heald fortune was dissipated and my great-great grandmother, **Mary Gower (née Heald)**, got half as much as the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews! But it was undoubtedly a windfall that enabled Mary and her husband Richard to go up in the world. Richard went from being an employee in the coal trade to being a coal merchant in Hull. But the world of the Wakefield Healds was a world away from the family in Hull!



Would Eliza have left Mary that money if she had known what Richard Gower was like? He was very far removed from her Christian values! (Another story to be told.)

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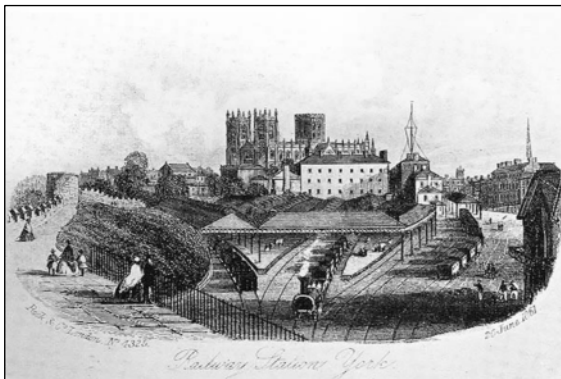
## George Heald, Robert Walter Bailey, Richard Chicken and the Dickens Brothers

**George Heald**, Wakefield's railway engineer, active during the 1840s, had a close friend called **Robert Walter Bailey**. The extent of their trust and friendship is demonstrated by Bailey being named as one of the two executors in the will of **Eliza Heald**, George's sister.

It is possible that George and Robert knew each other from Wakefield as they were both natives of the city. Bailey's family was resident on Northgate in 1815 when he was baptised. In 1850 he married Elizabeth Twiggs the daughter of a manufacturer in Thornes which was the place where the Heald family lived. As we have seen in a previous article, George was born and baptised in Thornes in 1818. But they certainly knew each other through their work on the railways. In the early part of his career as an engineer George was based in Yorkshire and Robert is described in Eliza's will as 'of the City of York, Railway Agent'.

Robert Bailey was the Goods Manager of the North Eastern Railway (NER) and was based in York. This image shows the original station in York which was built inside the city walls. The eight bay block is probably the office block where Bailey worked. Within the offices Bailey had an employee named **Richard Chicken**. Chicken's duties were concerned with preparing, for onward

transmission to the Railway Clearing House (RCH), returns of serial numbers of goods vehicles entering and leaving YNMR territory. From this information the RCH, which was founded by the various railway companies in 1842, calculated the transit charges to be made to the owners of goods wagons for using each company's track. On the formation of the NER the Numbers Takers Office came under the control of a **Mr Cowburn** and he saw a way of relieving himself of a thorn in his flesh (Chicken)



as well as saving the company some expense. Chicken and his colleague Smith were replaced by two juveniles who could accomplish the same duties for only a few shillings a week. To add insult to injury Richard Chicken was discharged, without any reason being given, but alternative railway employment was found for Smith.

Why was Richard Chicken an employee that they were so keen to be rid of? Why was he a 'thorn in the flesh'? It seems he was very annoying with his eccentric ways.

Richard Chicken had a large family, so large that he christened the later boys with Latin numbers; Jesse Quartissimo, Quintus Gilbert and Sextus Bethill. This is far from unique (**Jacob Rees-Mogg** named his sixth child **Sixtus Dominic Boniface**) but it is eccentric. He pursued a campaign of letter writing in the hope of regaining employment in the railway offices. The letters were addressed to any person he thought could be persuaded including the General Manager, the Traffic Manager and the Directors. It was all to no avail and Quintus became the main bread-winner for the family.

Chicken's eccentric behaviour was known widely around York. George Heald had another colleague, **Alfred Lamert Dickens** (1822 – 1860) (right), who was also a railway engineer. Dickens, like Heald, worked out of York but his professional life as a railway engineer is remembered for being the assistant engineer for the Malton and Driffield Junction Railway which began construction in 1847. During his work there his brother, Charles, rented a cottage in Malton in order to spend time with his brother. It is evident that Alfred told Charles all about Richard Chicken. It is universally accepted that Mr Chicken was used by

Charles as the template for **Wilkins Micawber** in **David Copperfield** which was published in 1850.

Richard Chicken's orotundity of speech, his circumlocutions, his use of letters in his attempts to relieve his poverty, and his variety of professions and qualifications would all have commended him to Charles Dickens, who selected the relevant characteristics to form the eccentric and immortal gentleman who makes occasional and welcome appearances throughout *David Copperfield*. Even his Christian name, Wilkins, has a York origin. During the early years of the 19th century it was a common slang name given to persons who were hard up or gave the appearance of poverty. It has its origin in **Major Wilkins**, an 18th century centenarian who was imprisoned in York Castle for 50 years for debt. His name became a byword in the City and was applied to anyone in similar straits.



**Alfred Dickens** got the job as a railway engineer with the help of brother Charles. Charles Dickens wrote to his friend **Angela Burdett-Coutts** asking her to help Alfred to find a position as an engineer, "knowing the kind interest you take in any application or design of mine." It was Alfred's only job as a railway engineer. After the Public Health Act was passed in 1848, Alfred Dickens became one of the group of civil engineers required by the Board to hold enquiries and produce reports investigating the petitions from individual local authorities seeking town improvements and loans to fund them. He died of pleurisy in Manchester in 1860. He was just 38 years old. Charles took care of his widow and five children.

### Footnote

I am indebted to **Sandra Midgley's** website (see below) where the resources about Richard Chicken have been collected in one place. A few sentences of this article have been shamelessly copied from the articles on her website!

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The Real Micawber with a batch of his Remarkable Letters by T. P. Cooper, published 1915, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Lamert\\_Dickens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Lamert_Dickens)

A view of the old station with the offices behind and the hotel at the back of the picture.



Some of the original railway office survive as shown in this photo. The station is long gone, replaced by the current station which lies outside the walls on a much bigger site. This building is owned by the City of York Council and is used as their customer centre.

Peter Holford, mem 1568

## Coram Online Archive

I was going to let you all know about a new website I'd found while researching last month, but **Claire Pickering**, Wakefield Libraries, beat me to it.

Clair had been informed of the website by Poppy, a member of the Voices Through Time: The Story of Care Programme to children

Coram's online Foundling Hospital Archive, is a free digital archive which includes records of Yorkshire's local history!

In October, the children's charity Coram launched its online Foundling Hospital Archive, made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. 100,000 pages of the physical archive have been digitised, transcribed, and made available online for free! These meticulous records document the running of London's first home for children whose parents could not look after them, spanning 1739-1899.

This vast resource includes records relating to four of the branch Hospitals located across England. We thought you might be particularly interested in the Ackworth branch hospital in West Yorkshire, which ran from 1757 to 1773 and later became the Ackworth School. You can find the register books, which detail the key information about each child sent to the Ackworth branch, here:

<https://archives.coram.org.uk/records/CFH/A/10/006/001>

<https://archives.coram.org.uk/records/CFH/Q/01/064>

Other records are an exciting resource for local history:

Apprenticeship Registers – All Foundling Hospital where children were sent out to be apprenticed in the local area. Children at Ackworth were apprenticed to

employers across Yorkshire. These registers give details of their apprenticeships, including employers' trade and address.

**Nursery Books** – Soon after admission to the Foundling Hospital, children were sent to live with a 'nurse' in the countryside, including across Yorkshire. These registers detail these nurses and their locations.

**Inspection Books** - Inspectors were responsible for selecting and supervising the nurses in their assigned district (e.g., Ackworth). The Inspection Books, organised by district, give details of the children and nurses under the supervision of these inspectors.

The transcripts in the digital archive are also fully searchable, so it couldn't be easier to find the records relevant to your local history or interest.

There is a great deal for family historians who have traced their family back to the 1700s and early 1800's. I found a Jane Wilkinson while doing a general search. Jane, was in the Billet Books – On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1743 at 8 o'clock, she was handed in/ found in Hatton Garden. She was about five weeks old. The description of her clothing tells she had a cap, Holland Edge, with Biggin and Forehead-cloth; old nightgown, damask with flowers; blanket; a damask waistcoat; and shirt. She had no marks on her body and she was given to Elizabeth Gurney of Chalfont. Not a lot to go on but for someone this snippet of information could answer a lot of questions.

## More New Websites or Updates

Wakefield became home to some Belgian refugees during WWII. But did you know that people from the Channel Islands came to the UK. FindMyPast has recently added a large number of Channel Islands records including: Passenger Lists; Guernsey Identity Registration Forms 1940-1945; Guernsey Evacuee Wish to Return Forms.

One example of an evacuee wishing to return is the form for **Jane Elizabeth Le Carpentier** (I have Le Carpentier's in my tree, connected to the Grace family). Jane was born in 1912 and lived at Hillside, Mont Morin St Sampsons, Guernsey. She came to England, with two children. Her husband is not mentioned as on some forms. In England, she lived at 218 Rishton Lane, Bolton, before moving to 182 Chorley New ~Road. In both the Channel Isles and Bolton, she was a housewife. How was she able to support herself and family with no income? Did she have family here or was money somehow passed to her?

Another form relating to Jane, answers a couple of questions. Jane's maiden name was Renouf and at the time of her registration she was a widow. She was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1912 in Guernsey. She had black hair and brown

eyes. Her children were born in 1934 and 1937. So, Jane and her two children came back to the island in November 1945.

Another Registration Form, this time for an **Alexander Le Carpentier** (as indexed) but on the form his name is **Alexandre Prevel**. He was born in 1911 and was employed as a greenhouse hand. He was married. Had brown hair and grey eyes. A description of Alexandre tells that he had a scar on his forehead, fingers missing from his left hand and had a limp with his right leg. His photograph covers any information relating to military service.

## John Moore

**John Moore** died on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1887 in Wakefield Asylum, and is supposedly resting within the boundary of St Peter's church, Stanley. A sad end for one of Wakefield's men that should never be forgotten.

Why should John Moore not be forgotten? This newspaper article from the Wakefield and West Riding Herald of 16<sup>th</sup> April 1887 may help.

"Sad death of a Balaclava Hero." - John Moore of the 4th Light Dragoons died at Wakefield on Thursday (the 14th.) at the age of 68. When comparatively a young man he entered the Army and eventually passed through the engagements of the Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman and Sebastopol without receiving a scratch. He was One of the Noble Six Hundred, but even from this terrible ordeal, this vale of death, he escaped scatheless. He possessed four medals and four bars, one of which was for Long Service and Good Conduct. He was also awarded the Ghuznee medal which was presented to all those who took part in the bombardment of the Ghuznee Fort in India. Deceased was in the Army for 24 years and 196 days and, according to his discharge papers, there was not a single black mark entered against his name. He received his discharge on the 1st of April 1861 and since then has been in the service of the **Revd. W. B. Beaumont**, of Collerton Rectory, Leicestershire. Whilst in that gentleman's service he was, unfortunately, thrown out of a trap which was overturned by some bullocks, the consequence being that he received severe injuries, which afterwards affected his brain, and in January last he was removed to Wakefield Asylum, where he expired as above stated. He leaves a widow and one daughter. His interment will take place at the church of St. Peter's, at Stanley, his daughter, who is married, residing in that parish...

Another article: Extract from the "Wakefield Express" for the 23rd of April 1887;-. John Moore, who died last week in the Wakefield Asylum, at the age of 68 years, had faced death many a time and oft, during the Crimean War and came out unscathed from the "Charge of the Light Brigade" who had gone into the "Valley of Death" in obedience to "somebody's blunder". Under the Indian sun too, his prowess was put to the test, and his good sword was ever trusty against the foe. After a military career of over twenty four years, during which

time his character was blameless, he left the service of his Queen and Country and entered that of the rector of a Leicestershire parish. Injuries received however in consequence of a trap accident so affected his brain that in January last he had to be removed to the asylum. He leaves a widow and a married daughter who resides at Stanley. On Monday the remains of the gallant soldier were laid reverently to rest in the Stanley Churchyard awaiting a last "Reveille.",

I had been looking for any link to John in any online sources. I couldn't find anything that would 100% confirm I had the correct John. That was until I re-read the newspaper articles and re-visited the Fold3 website and could confirm that the Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Service Records, 1760-1925, I had found was for our man. I now knew his place of birth. His age at enlistment, and confirmed his army service.

John had been born in the parish of Sandhurst, near Cranbrook, Kent. He attested aged 19 years at Maidstone on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1836 and served as private 855. Following his service he left the East Indies after four years, having also served with the army in Turkey and Crimea for one year and eleven months. His service came to an end as he was deemed unfit. John was suffering rheumatic pain, the result of his long military service. This record confirms he was to work for the Rev. Beaumont, but the place differs, Smithcote (sic) Rectory could the good reverend have changed parish or even retired?

By now John was 43 years 6 months of age. He was quite tall for the time at 5' 11". He had a fresh complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He had a scar on his left hand and was a labourer by trade. Could he have received the scar prior to his military career?

*Major General's Office*  
*Members.*  
 THE BOARD having examined and compared the Regimental Records, the Soldier's Book, and such other Documents as appeared to them to be necessary, report that  
*Private John Moore* by Trade a *Labourer*  
 was BORN in the Parish of *Sandhurst* in the County of *Kent* and was ATTESTED  
 for the *1st* Regiment of *Dragoons* at *Maidstone*  
 in the County of *Kent* on the *10 Oct 1836* at the Age  
 of *19* years that after making every Deduction required by Her Majesty's  
 Regulations, the SERVICE up to this day, which he is entitled to reckon, amounts to *24*  
 years, *187* days, as shown by the detailed Statement on the 2nd page; during which  
 period, he served Abroad *4 1/2* years, viz—  
 at *East Indies* *4* years;  
 in *Turkey & Crimea* *1 1/2* years;  
 and further, that his DISCHARGE is proposed in consequence of *his being unfit*  
 [In cases of Disability, the Regimental Medical Officer will  
 for Her Majesty's Service]

Looking for John in 1871 census was a task. Do you know how many John Moore's born within a two year period either side of 1819 there are? I can tell you a lot. Adding the Leicestershire criteria to lessen the number of results came up with our John, who was immediately recognised by his place of birth. John by now aged 53 was living at Church Town, Collorton with his wife Harriett, John was employed as a coachman, which fits in with how he met his demise,

and his wife was a launderess. Turning the census page, is Lydia their 14 year old daughter. Next door is **William B (Bereford) Beaumont**, Rector of the village and his wife, along with four members of staff – lady's maid, housemaid, kitchen maid and cook. William B Beaumont comes down from a long line of landed gentry and Knights who are buried in the churchyard.

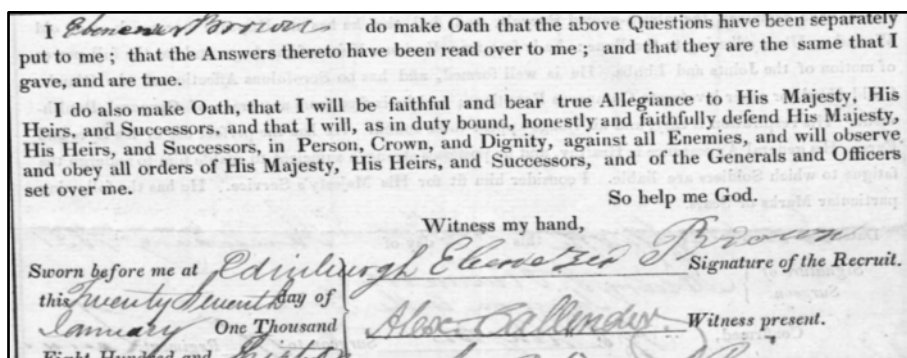
John was admitted to the asylum in January 1886, his stay there being relatively short. More information about his time there can be found at the West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield – C85-608 patient number 9734 and C85/983 page 389. His burial record can be found at C85/699 and in the burial register for Stanley Church, Wakefield, WDP191/1/18.

John is not the only survivor who lived in Wakefield. There are another two that I know of, one of them being Ebenezer Brown who was an attendant at the asylum for 15 years.

There is a Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Service Record 1760-1925 record for an **Ebenzer Brown** who enlisted aged 18. He had been born in Lanarkshire. He rose to the rank of Farrier Major, retired due to being unfit for further service in 1855 and, like John, had a good clean record of service. This information was confirmed by an entry in The Free Press Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1890. 'Death of an old Soldier – Another respected old resident of Wakefield has passed away. We allude to Mr Ebenezer Brown, of Elm Street, who died on Thursday, aged 78 years. The deceased, who served in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers for 24 years was in the Crimean campaign during the years, 1854-6, and was present during the famous 'Charge of the Light Brigade', but did not take any actual part in it, being engaged as a farrier-major in attending to the sick horses,&c. His term of service expiring whilst in the Crimea, he was sent home before the fall of Sebastopol, and received the usual pension. He received, in addition to the Crimean medal and clasp, the Turkish decoration. After quitting the army, deceased became an attendant at the West Riding Asylum at Wakefield, where he was greatly respected'

Again using a newspaper as a source of information, The Wakefield Free Press for 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1871, tells that Ebenezer, due to failing health was given an annuity by way of superannuation of £15 by the Committee of Visitors.

Going back to the Ancestry sister site, Fold 3, Ebenezer was born in Biggar and was by trade a baker. He enlisted in the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Lancers at Edinburgh in January 1831 when he was given £2 12shillings bounty. Ebenezer was 5' 8" tall, had a fresh complexion, brown hair and grey eyes. Along with the medals mention in the above newspapers, he also received a Good Conduct Medal and had a clean service record. However, he did desert in 1833 for 10 days, was imprisoned for 28 days on his return. Ebenezer could write, well at least sign his name.



We know he was unfit for further service, but why? Reading further into the Royal Hospital records 'unfit for active duty from \*\*\*\*\*, palpitations of the heart and chronic rheumatic pain'. It goes on to say that he was affected by the cold and fatigue from his time in the Crimean region. I would imagine that with being a farrier his working position would not been good to his back. By the end of his service (he was discharged at Chatham) his complexion was described as 'shallow'.

The third Crimean soldier is one of 'my boys' and I may tell you about him later!

Others from Wakefield area who served in the Crimea were not so lucky. The York Herald, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1880. 'Intermediate Sessions – **Mary Fitzharris** was sentenced on Monday, at the West Riding Intermediate Sessions, to six months' imprisonment for defrauding the Commissioners for the administration of the Patriotic Fund. The prisoner's husband having been killed in the Crimea in 1855, she became entitled to 65s per week, which she drew until the end of last year, when it was discovered she was married again and was only entitled to 2s 3d'. And a rabbit hole is waiting!

The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle of 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1880, explains a little more. The Patriotic Fund was 'a fund for providing pensions for the widows and children of privates and non-commissioned officers who were killed in the Crimea. The prisoner was married to a private in the 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment named **Michael Laydon**, and he was killed in the Crimea, leaving her a widow in 1855. The fact being so she became entitled to a pension of 5s per week so long as she was a widow. In the usual declaration given to the staff officer prisoner always stated that she was a widow. The declaration was made before the **Rev G M Webb**, vicar of Heckmondwike. The prisoner was re-married to one **Nicholas Fitzharris** in 1860, and notwithstanding that she had during all these years made up the declarations, and described herself as the widow of Michael

Laydon, entitled her to 5s per week instead of 2s 6d per week which a widow who re-married was entitled to.' The article continues for over half a column of the newspaper and Mary seems to have a good deal of newspaper space telling her story.

Well, what you accidentally find while looking for someone. It appears that Mary, was not the only one to have a record. **Nicholas Fitzharris** was sentenced to seven days or pay 15/6 for being drunk – looks like he did the time. The Nominal Register for Wakefield Prison tells that he was also known as **Thomas William Parry** – I wonder why the two names?

**Roger Fenton** was a renowned photographer, being known for his Crimean War collection. His photographs were some of the earliest attempts to use photography as a way of documenting conflicts. Although he spent only four months in the area, he produced over 360 images under extreme conditions. He travelled around the area in his 'photographic van', a carriage pulled by one horse. The van was his home, his developing studio and his store-room. The Royal Collection Trust has a wonderful image of Fenton and his 'van' plus a number of his photographs

## From the Papers

### The Free Press Saturday 11 June 1887

**Newmillerdam** – **Sir Lionel M S Pilkington**, Bart., of Chevet Park has given a plot of 600 yards of land on his estate at Newmillerdam, as a site of a Wesleyan chapel for that village. The proposed chapel is to be built at the corner of the wood which adjoins the fine sheet of water known as Newmillerdam. The new chapel will take the place of a small building which was opened nearly 65 years ago.

**Normanton** – Donations of £5 from **Messrs Lock and Warrington**, of Newland Colliery, and two guineas from Tetley and Son, Leeds, to further the object of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations in Normanton, have been received.

**Accident to a Railway Employee** - On Sunday morning **Christopher Woodward**, aged 39, in the employ of the North Eastern Railway Company at Normanton was a wagon inspector, and who resides at Copmanthorpe, near York, was injured at Normanton Station. It seems that about half past four he was in the act of creeping under some wagons when the train was in motion. Being baffled by the connecting chain rods he got his foot under one of the wagons, which crushed the toes of his right foot. He was immediately conveyed to the Leeds Infirmary, and is progressing very favourably, although it was found necessary to amputate a portion of the foot.

**The Funeral of William Locke, Esq.** - The funeral of Willilam Locke, Esq, of Newland Hall, took place at Scarboro' on Tuesday afternoon. Mr Locke was 65

years of age, and had been ailing for several years, and after two years' somewhat severe illness passed away yesterday morning at his residence. On Monday afternoon the chief mourners consisting of **Mrs Locke, Father Locke, Mr and Mrs Warrington and Master Warrington**, of Cragwood, **Dr Gordon**, and **Father Herskins**, travelled with the corpse to Scarborough.' The train arrived at 7.30 pm, and the remains were immediately conveyed to the Catholic church, where they were received by **Canon Dolan**, who conducted a short service. On Tuesday a very solemn funeral mass was said by the **Rev D Gordon**, assisted by Canon Dolan, Father Herskins and several other priests after which the deceased was buried. It was Mr Locke's particular desire to be interred at Scarborough, where his first wife lays and in which the church has taken a great pecuniary interest.

**A Youthful Pilferer – Richard Hinds**, a youth of 14 from Stanley, was brought up on remand charged with stealing 11 1/2 stones of coal, value 3d, the property of Victoria Coal and Coke Company. **Richard Davies**, underground viewer, proved the case, and stated that on the 26<sup>th</sup> ult he caught defendant coming out of the coal yard with a bass of coal, and that this was not the first time. Defendant said some other boys enticed him and told him that it was all right, and if he had known he was doing wrong he would not have done it. Ultimately the bench ordered him to pay costs, 10s 6d, and if not paid within a fortnight he would have in addition 1s fine.

**Drunks – John Hambleton**, sinker, Normanton, was proved by **Police-sergeant Hartley** to have been drunk on Sunday night at Normanton, and fined 2s 6d, with 11s 6d costs.

**Harry Taylor**, sinker, Normanton, was charged with drunkenness at that place on Monday morning, and, on the evidence of **Police-constable McDonald**, ordered to pay 15s, or in default 7 days imprisonment.

**Walter Welsh and John Manning**, two miners from Loscoe, were each convicted of drunkenness at Normanton on May 29. **Police-constable Foster** and **Police-sergeant Hartley** respectively proved the cases and defendants were each fined 2s 6d, with 11s costs.

### **Leeds Mercury Friday June 2 1933**

**Haldane-Richardson** – The wedding took place at Fulford Church, York, yesterday, of **Miss Dorothy Richardson**, eldest daughter of the late **Mr Robert Richardson** and **Mrs Richardson**, of Fulford and **Donald Henry Haldane**, son of **Mr and Mrs H C Haldane**, of Clarke Hall, Wakefield. The ceremony was performed by the **Rev S W Key**, Vicar, assisted by the **Rev H R Baugh**, of Stanley, Wakefield, and the **Rev S E Arnold**, of Lincoln. **Mr E T Allibone**, Leeds, was the best man. There were five bridesmaids – **Misses Ida Richardson, Molly Lane, Mollie Charlesworth, Joan Kilby, and Joyce Cooper**. The bride's gown was of white matelasse, with lace yoke and sleeves. Her veil was of Brussels lace, held with a wreath of orange blossom and pearl.

**The Manchester Courier October 7 1911 - Obituary** – Veteran West Riding Magistrate. Mr T H Holdsworth, JP, of Sandal Hall, near Wakefield, died yesterday at the age of 80 years. He was formerly connected with the Bell Isle Dye works, near Wakefield, one of the largest concerns of its kind in the country. It was taken over by Bradford Dyers' Association, the business being transferred to Bradford. Mr Holdsworth was the fourth oldest Justice of the Peace of the West Riding, having qualified as a magistrate in 1854.

**Wakefield Herald July 22 1911 - Mothers Visit Wakefield** – On Monday last about 100 mothers from Morley (part of the Dewsbury Deanery), paid a visit to Wakefield. After service in the Cathedral, when the address was given by Canon Welch, they proceeded to Lupset Park, where they were entertained by Mrs Milnes-Gaskell.

**Attempting to Drown His Son at Outwood – Albert Bussingham** (37), miner, of Outwood, was indicted for attempting to drown **Thomas William Bussingham**, his five-year-old son, on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

Mr Harold Newell, who prosecuted, said that on the day named the prisoner was seen by two girls walking along Nook Lane, Outwood, with his little boy. Shortly afterwards they saw the man cross a field, and walk towards a pond. When he reached the pond he took hold of the boy under the arms and threw him into the water. The average depth of the water was between two and three feet, but in the centre it was much deeper. One of the girls ran across the field, and pulled the child from the water. In the meantime the prisoner had slipped into the water, but he was able to get out at the opposite side of the pond. On rescuing the child the girl said to prisoner, 'You are not fit to be in charge of a child'. The girl followed him home, and informed his wife, saying 'If you don't tell the police, I shall'. The police were subsequently informed, and the prisoner, when arrested and charged, said, 'I slipped into the pond and pulled him in with me'.

**Lucy Archer** and **Rhoda Heptonstall** gave evidence in support of the counsel's statement.

The prisoner, who gave evidence, stated that in the morning he went to Wakefield, and when at Lofthouse Gates (as in newspaper) he met the boy coming from the Chapel. He had had a lot to drink. The boy took his hand, and as some alterations had been made to the pond, he went to see them. He slipped into the pond, dragging his son with him. When in the water he lifted the child to Miss Archer; otherwise she would not have been able to reach him. In cross-examination, prisoner said he had a family of five children, the child in question being the only boy.

**Mr Walton**, on behalf of the prisoner, contended there was no intention on the part of the prisoner to kill the child. He was under the influence of drink, and going to the edge of the pond, he slipped in, and the affair was an accident.

The Judge said that after careful consideration the jury found the prisoner guilty of attempting to murder his child, but they recommended him to mercy. He took

that to mean that they understood the prisoner was under the influence of drink and did not know what he was doing. He desired to give every effort to the recommendation, but the attempt to murder a child by throwing it into a pond was a serious offence, and he could not pass a lighter sentence than twelve months, imprisonment with hard labour.

**Death Through a Clothes-line Breaking** – An inquest was held at the Union Infirmary on Tuesday evening on the body of **William Whittington**, aged 74, who died in that institution on Monday. **Elizabeth Ann Whittington**, daughter-in-law of the deceased, said formerly he was employed as a master's check weigh man at the Sharlston Colliery, and had enjoyed fairly good health. For the past year or so he had lived with her, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May he fell while he was hanging a clothes line out in the yard. The clothes-line broke, and he fell heavily on the brick floor. He screamed with pain, and was removed into the house and put to bed. **Dr Masters** was sent for and he said that the big nerve in the hip was hurt, but he would be all right in a day or two. Dr Clarke saw him on the Friday, and instructed them to get him to Clayton Hospital, where he stayed for just over five weeks. Subsequently his mind became unhinged, and it was decided that he should be removed to the Wakefield Union Infirmary, where he died. She thought that it was the strength he had in pulling the rope which caused it to break.

The Coroner: We are very sorry for you Mrs Whittington.

**Miss Lightowler**, Matron of the Infirmary, said that when deceased was admitted on June 12<sup>th</sup> he was restless, and gradually became worse. He was very excited, and times tore the bed clothing up.

**Dr J M Hermon** said that he had seen deceased a good number of times. His mental condition was rather bad, and the thigh was fractured. He was constantly moving about, and had to be in bed. He was quite sound, but the nervous system had worn out. The cause of death was really old age accelerated by shock caused by fracture of the thigh.

A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was returned.

## Dad's Letters

*Post Mark 10<sup>th</sup> July*

219433    2/LT. T. Staynes  
Pioneer Corps.  
A. P. O.  
West African Forces.

My dear Vi,

Six weeks have now passed since I became immersed in this sink of iniquity, commonly called the "butt end of Africa" (actually the troops don't say "butt end, but call it some kind of hole. But I wouldn't know anything about that, being as you might say "an innocent youth where mother never told him anything.") How much better I could have spent time in England. But they say they have found

me a job. I'm going to join old Harding out in the bush. Strange reports reach us about Harding – that he has painted himself blue and green. They say he has impetigo, but personally I think he's just stark staring mad. I always felt **Harding** would paint himself bright blue; in fact, I feel like doing the same thing to myself.

I have bought myself a new suit – tunic & socks for 35/- and look like a tailor's dummy. The native tailor practically built the thing round me, dozens of female underlings flickering about with needles and thread. An extraordinary piece of work. Then I tried to buy some studs for my boots. They only asked 1d for each of them; so, my boots remain unstudded. I'm perfectly fit & well at the moment; no fungi, no itch, no rashes and only visiting the lavatory once a day. In fact, I played basketball in the gym on Sunday afternoon – which developed into a free for all – and afterwards you couldn't tell whether I'd been boiled or just fallen into a stream. The navy say some mail is imminent, but I fear it will have to follow me up country. I've written to Poplar Avenue. And that is all the news.

Normally, of course, after giving all the news one would bring a letter to a quiet conclusion. But I fear I have spoilt you; and that you will be content with nothing less than ten pages. How I am to write ten whole pages I know not. Little Ali doesn't help – he's raising clouds of dust and crooning "Some ones knocking at your soul, let him in, poor sinner." He's not yet sure whether to wear his shirt inside his shorts or outside. Most of them wear them outside but Sammy, the **Beau Brummel** of the reptiles has taken to tucking his in, in European fashion. Ali at the moment is in at the front and out at the back. I wish it were the other way ----- . He's now singing something about "Pull down the devil's kingdom, pull it down, pull it down" Apparently there are somethings which follow you even to Africa. I'm writing this letter lying flat on my bunk and half asleep. Hence the irregularities – I haven't really got full control of my pen. Should one write to one's wife when half asleep? At best I cannot be pummelled and pinched into wakeful distractions. Nor, whilst I write at all, can I fall fast asleep and so encourage nocturnal insomnia. George has just interrupted me with the query "How are you feeling, you old b----?" I replied concisely and effectively using an adverb and past participle not used in polite society, but which in conjunction with my supine, almost moribund, posture described my present state better than anything else. George got drunk on Saturday and I put him to bed; he's looked like death ever since and got a bad throat. We still play solo, but not so regularly and we have to hunt for a fourth. But I still get my afternoon swim and the odd game of chess.

There's a blighter just outside keeps firing a gun which is not a little disconcerting; it also rattles the hut which is aggravating. I think I'll go away and have lunch in the hope that he'll have got tired or run out of whizz-bangs when I come back.

Saturday (July 4<sup>th</sup>)

I am now in the bush. Actually, I am attached to a depot about twenty-five miles inland. It's a mixed depot and there are six of us. **Boase**, a second lieutenant who is afraid of his own shadow is technically my C.O and Harding's; Parker, who came out with us is here laying a cable and **MacShane & Jock** (nationality unspecified) are running another department. My real job is to start up a quartermaster's store and complete the equipment of the British & African troop here – not very many actually but quite enough. In addition, I supervise the cleanliness of the quarters generally, arrange a training programme for the police, censor all letters and look after the canteen accounts. Quite a nice little job – and since at night we have only hurricane lamps I don't have much opportunity of reading and writing. Working for me are **Private** (Mosquito - King) **Arnold** and two native labourers who spend all their time searching for puddles, tins and any other things which hold water long enough for mosquitoes to breed in and they spray or otherwise neutralise them. I should say Arnold did work for me; he went to bed this afternoon with malaria. The native soldiers are either police (nearly all locals) and clerks nearly all Nigerians. The police are a rum lot and come from three different localities with different lingoes. Fortunately, the native sergeant Williams can cope with all three and a sizeable amount of English. The Nigerian clerks all speak mission school English; their letters are a god-send to a harassed censor. "Your letter put me true that you are swimming in ocean of the good health --- Salute for me all the girls; send you gross of thanks". Then there was another blighter who wrote to his "dear heart" and quoted hymns at her. He was "incognisant of her healthiness". Yet another wrote to his brother about a marriageable sister, discussing prospective candidates. Two he dismissed as worthless; but a certain Jacob was "well to keep our sister in enough and knows what shames is", Another suitor apparently was suitable in character but the brother was told to inquire into his financial position. Another writer urged his brother-in-law to look well after his sister "for she is now your wife who will soon by D.V. deliver for you".

The police are a comic looking lot of ruffians. There's **Joe Bundu** who belongs to a very powerful society and puts the wind up all the others. We had him on a charge the other day for failing to carry out an order and using abusive language to a sergeant. Sgt Williams acted as interpreter and we had a fine old time. The first charge was simple, but the second charge was a most complicated affair; the language complained about was of course Mendi, and had to be translated. It then ran "If you vomit that again. I swear an oath". Eventually we discovered that "vomit" means 'emphasize' or 'repeat emphatically'. So that if the sergeant emphatically repeated something or other, Joe Bundu was going to swear an oath. We had a lot more inquiring to do, and eventually we learnt that 'swear an oath' meant that Joe Bundu would threaten to assault the sergeant, as a member of a society (i.e. Joe Bundu would swear by his society.) And when a native swears by his society, he always does it.

And the more famous the society, the stronger the oath. And Joe Bundu society was very famous. The sergeant promptly decided that discretion was the better part of valour and ceased to 'vomit', and trundled Joe Bondu before the white 'Captain' – all officers are 'captains' in the lingua franca. Joe Bundu's defence was a counter-charge against the sergeant, that the sergeant had failed to report the captain on offence by the corporal of the guard; and when Joe Bundu tried to see the captain the sergeant "vomited" him. Then we had to go into the affair of the corporal. Joe Bundu said that he went into a store shed on his tour of duty and found the corporal (also on duty) lying on some sacks with a 'mammy' from the village. The corporal said he went into the shed to shelter from the rain and found the mammy also sheltering. She was sitting on the sack and he was standing up and telling her it was forbidden to women to enter the shed. All this, of course, through the medium of the interpreter. However, we straightened it all out eventually and smoothed **Joe Bundu** down and then read him a lecture just to preserve the sergeant's dignity.

These lads have queer names; but their 'christian' names are a mixed lot; half of them are barbarous native names, but the other half are divided more or less equally into "Joe" and "Tommy" with one or two Alfreds and Patricks. We also have a couple of "Alphas". The mess cook is "Amami" and the waiter is called "Tommy Kissi". Harding's boy is "Tommy Korwa". My boy at the moment is called "Alpha". He is the third – the first two only lasted until I got them to the doctor who rejected them as suffering from unmentionable diseases. Alpha will have to go unexamined until Monday. However, he had a clean bill of health three weeks ago. When passed by the doctor they become "enrolled camp followers" The Romans had a word for them which for the life in me I can't think of; always coupled with "impedimenta et inmenta"- the baggage and baggage-animals. I don't know whether it's coaster's memory or my prolonged separation from Caesar.

Just outside our quarters is the railway – the little back-garden affair I told you about. There's a terrific grade with a vicious curve where the trains frequently get stuck. They then go down the bottom again and bring up a few trucks at a time. The workmen's train is a sight worth seeing. A small proportion manage to squeeze into the coaches; the rest crowd on the steps, buffers, couplings and when necessary, on the roof. When not used by trains, the track is swarming with natives, being the smoothest and most level path between two villages.

So, you see, we have some excitement. The mess is quite pleasant, the food and the company agreeable and entertaining. I miss my bathe and the solo though. The sleeping quarters are a hut divided into seven cubicles about 12 feet square and 12 feet high; plain cream painted walls with five-foot square window at the back and a door and window of the same size at the front opening on to a verandah. The roof is thatch, the ceiling paste-board the walls wood and the floor concrete. No glass in the windows, of course, just wooden

shutters. I have my camp bed and chair, nine pegs and an improvised chest-of-drawers built of kerosene boxes. I hope to acquire several more boxes etc in the near future. The railway line is about twenty yards away; then a drop of about 100 feet to marsh land which stretches away flat as a pancake to the skyline. One short range of hills is visible on the horizon to the north; east & west is just flat. It's rather like looking from the Cotswolds across the Severn Valley to the Black Mountains of Wales. The distant hills look a faint blue.

I'm already acquiring the local Creole tongue. For instance, "Were you issued with a hat" is 'You no get bolé?' If the bloke is Mendi he will reply 'No get' or possible 'Mi fibé' - which Sgt. Williams no longer bothers to translate for us. A housewife is 'needlebag' or 'amiji'. Shorts we have to call 'knickers' because the native cannot distinguish between 'Shorts' and 'Skirts'.

And now I'll have to knock off and get changed before the mosquito starts its evening prowling – and of course for dinner. I'm well on my way to ten pages and there is some mail in – only mine will have to be sent up from the transit camp so I don't know when it will arrive. Still one day doesn't make much difference here, except I'm rather interested to hear if you have received any of my letters or cables yet.

Debbie Staynes, mem 1059

## Snippets

**West Parade Wesley Guild** – The annual picnic of the West Parade Wesley Guild took place on Saturday when a party of about 50 had a most enjoyable time at Monk Fryston Hall, the residence of the **Rev B Hemsworth**, MA, JP. They left Kirkgate Station by the 1.37 train, arriving at Monk Fryston about three o'clock, when they went to view the valuable private collection of birds and animals of the owner afterwards inspecting the beautiful and well kept gardens and greenhouses. In fact a restriction was placed upon their ramblings, tea being served in the pavilion. The weather was delightfully fine and home was again reached about ten o'clock

**Assisting a Constable** – At the meeting of the West Riding Standing Joint Committee, held at the County Hall on Wednesday, **Charles Roberts**, miner, Newton, was, on the recommendation of the Chief Constable (**Major Atcherley**), granted an award of £3 for assisting **PC Walton** in the arrest of prisoners in a fowl-stealing and police assault case in Park Lane last Sunday Morning



## Do you know where The Editor has been?

A once-loved building. This tiled entrance is the entrance to one of the departments. You could buy anything from cheese, flour, and sugar to a three-piece suit. You could do your banking and collect your Divi. Has that given you a clue?

There were gatherings and entertainment, and the council used to count the votes in the large hall following local and national elections.

## Distant Search for WDFHS Members:

We now have offers of help from members who are willing to undertake specific research in the following areas: Bristol area, Keighley, TNA, The Society of Genealogists, Metropolitan Archives, Glasgow, Central Scotland Members wishing to use this service or who are willing to help, please email [joyjoseph105@gmail.com](mailto:joyjoseph105@gmail.com) or contact her at Joy Joseph, 105 Bartholomew Square, Bristol, BS7 0QB.

**What would you like our speakers to tell you about?** The Committee is asking what subjects you would like to have speakers for. The Society is yours, and the Committee would like you to become more involved in choosing speakers at our Saturday morning meetings. Please pass on your suggestions to either a committee member or email: [editor@wdfhs.co.uk](mailto:editor@wdfhs.co.uk). Please let us know if you would like to recommend someone, know of a speaker or volunteer yourself – or indeed if there is a subject that you would like to be covered in one of our meetings.

## Principal Wakefield Information Centres

**West Yorkshire History Centre**, 127 Kirkgate, Wakefield, WF1 1JG.

The Archive has a unique collection of original documents but you must book an appointment to consult them. Be warned at the moment that the earliest available appointment is usually several weeks after you make contact. You can examine their website online to discover documents relevant to your research and they will normally ask you to confirm the documents you want to examine shortly before your visit.

## Opening hours:

Mondays 10:00am – 4:00pm  
Tuesdays 10:00am – 4:00pm  
Thursdays 10:00am – 4:00pm

On Fridays the Exhibition space is open  
(but not the search room to view originals)  
10:00am – 4:00pm  
Please email [wakefield@wyjs.org.uk](mailto:wakefield@wyjs.org.uk)  
or call 0113 535 3040 to book

## Wakefield Library

Local Archives and Family History

Monday, Wednesday and Thursday	9am – 7pm
Tuesday, Friday	9am – 5pm
Saturday	9am - 4pm

**Wakefield Museum**, Wakefield One, Burton Street, Wakefield, WF1 2EB.  
Tel: 01924 302104.

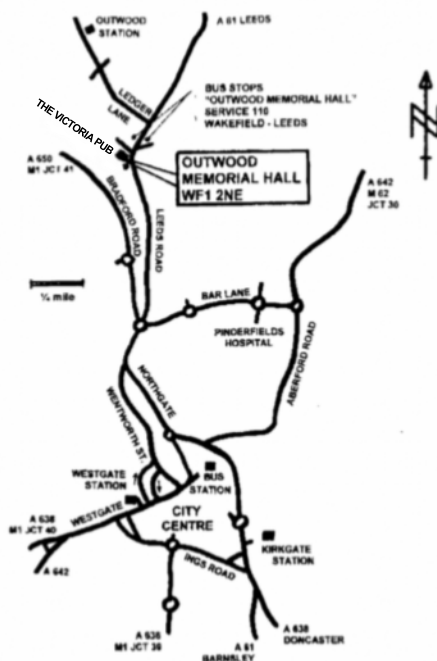
The opening hours are the same as the library except for Monday when the museum closes at 5pm.

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## MONTHLY MEETINGS

All are welcome at our monthly meetings held on the first Saturday of each month (except January) at Outwood Memorial Hall. These feature a guest speaker and doors open at 9.30am with the talk starting at 10.30am. We encourage people (visitors are welcome at no charge) to come to the live meeting to socialise with fellow members and to benefit from the expertise of Society volunteers and other benefits. At every meeting in the hall there are bookstalls, a library, help desk and information on computers. Tea and coffee are available. There is also a special display of artifacts and records, and each month has a different theme.

However, for those who cannot come to the hall it is possible to join the meeting over the internet using the Zoom platform. Please request access by emailing [chairman@wdfhs.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wdfhs.co.uk) and you will receive a message with the necessary link. The Zoom broadcast begins at 10am.



**See rear cover for listings of forthcoming events**

# KEY VOLUNTEERS

## **Membership Secretary:**

Debbie Staynes  
1 The Bungalows, Halifax Road, Dewsbury, WF13 4DJ  
membership@wdfhs.co.uk

## **Publication Sales & Journal Distribution:**

Chris Welch  
101 Thornes Road, Wakefield, WF2 8QD  
cdgwelch@aol.com

## **Bookstall Manager:**

Eileen Marshall

## **Exchange Journals & Library Assistant:**

June Jamieson

## **Help Desk:**

Stella Robinson, Carol Sklinar, Dave Bradley,  
Tony Banks & Debbie Staynes

## **Meeting Reporter:**

Lorraine Simpson

## **Minutes Recorder & Assistant Librarian:**

Jacqueline Ryder

## **Publications Stall:**

Ros Bartle

## **Publications Stall Assistant:**

Deborah Scriven

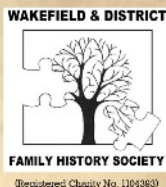
## **Refreshments Organiser:**

Sue Vasis

## **Refreshments Assistant:**

Mary Buttigieg

# Wakefield & District Family History Society



## Programme to December 2025

**SATURDAY MEETINGS**

**at Outwood Memorial Hall**

**Doors open 9.30am - Talks begin 10.30am**

**June 7<sup>th</sup> WENT THE DAY WELL (An Alternative View of D Day)**  
Dr Phil Judkins

**July 5<sup>th</sup> AGM followed by A MINER AND PRISONER OF WAR**  
George Scogings

**Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> MY IRISH FAMILY**  
Sheron Boyle

**Sep 6<sup>th</sup> ASYLUMS AND MY GRANDFATHERS ASYLUM STORY**  
Jude Rhodes

**Oct 4<sup>th</sup> JOSEPH COX: "A VALUED PUBLIC SERVANT"**  
Deborah Scriven

**Nov 1<sup>st</sup> COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION ARCHIVE**  
Elizabeth Smith

**Dec 6<sup>th</sup> To Be Confirmed**

For further information about this  
event, please scan the QR code



**wdfhs.co.uk**

