

Totley History Group Meeting
Via Zoom
Wednesday, 28 April 2021

Present:

16 People

Notices

On 23 and 27 June we are having a 2 mile walk around Totley about the working history of Totley over the centuries, meet at The Cross Scythes at 2pm, a 2 hour walk, it is the same walk on both dates.

In July we have a visit to the Zion graveyard planned for Sunday 25 July at 2pm.

We are hoping to have an AGM in September and have a speaker booked, Stephen Gay, about the history of the Sheffield to Skegness train line.

Speaker Tonight

Our speaker tonight is Pauline Burnett talking to us about the history of holidays.

In medieval times holidays didn't exist and days away from work would be for holy days, random saints days and seasonal markers of the agricultural year, eg Harvest Festival. Sundays were observed as a religious day. Workers worked for the Lord of the Manor for around 200 days of the year as they had their own land and animals to look after.

Pilgrimages took place but mostly for the wealthy as people couldn't afford to leave their land and animals. Travelling was difficult as roads were non-existent, robbery on the roads was quite common and the distances to travel were vast.

After the reformation the Protestant Church decreed holy days remained, Sundays, Christmas Day, the 12 days of Christmas, Easter day and Ascension day.

Aristocracy went on The Grand Tour, often for 2 years to visit places such as Spain, France, Greece, places with historical significance. Rome was considered an essential destination. They would learn a language and make contacts with people. A portrait would be made to mark the occasion and sent back home. Tourist artefacts were also sent home.

Late 18th century, early 19th century, Napoleon's campaign made it difficult to travel and reduced the number of people going on tour. Other types of holidays began to grow, people visited spa towns like Buxton for the water which was believed to benefit their health also coastal towns for the sea water. People had to travel in their own horse drawn coaches so numbers of people were limited.

The trains made a huge difference in people travelling in the mid 19th century, trains were originally developed for moving of goods but then people realised they could be used for their own travel. Thomas Cook realised the potential of the railways and started to organise leisure trips. He produced guide books, arranged excursion trains and tours eg the for The Great Exhibition, it was the beginning of the pre-paid holiday. He invented a holiday coupon which was a way of reducing money to carry so was safer. People were able to go to the Middle East, America, Russia. In 1869 Egyptian tours were popular and he had tours going to Egypt through Europe or cruise to Cairo, these were for the wealthy people.

For the ordinary folk celebrations were still limited to holy days, random saints days and seasonal markers of agricultural year. The people were working hard all year round and the seasonal days for agricultural didn't apply to all trades. In 1871 the Bank Holiday Act was introduced with 4 bank holidays, Easter

Monday, the first Monday in August, 26th December and Whit Monday.

The railways brought easy access to the coast. Promenades were built on the sea front for people to walk along in their best clothes. People chose holidays on what the resorts had to offer and where the train would take them. Sandy beaches, donkeys, evening entertainment, acts, dancing were all on offer. Post cards became popular from 1880 as a way to communicate as there were no telephones. The bathing on beaches was segregated until around 1890 and bathing machines were used so that ladies weren't be seen in their swimsuit.

Alternative styles of holiday were developed, camp sites for a more affordable holiday. Thomas A Leonard founded the Co-operative Holiday Association for men only. These were recreational and educational holidays, cheap for young people. As costs increased due to added services, Thomas Leonard left and founded the Holiday Fellowship.

1890 to 1910 crop picking began to earn extra money and often accommodation was provided. Examples are picking of the summer fruits, potato picking, hop pickers, the tradition kept going for a long time, it was tough, hard work.

1900 onwards coast towns were building accommodation for all pockets with B and Bs and hotels.

Transport made a difference, charabanc trips were popular and caravans were produced from 1919. Owning a car was expensive.

The rail companies would advertise with posters showing places in the beautiful countryside and these posters are now iconic and collector items.

1920 to 1930s winter holidays were advertised, such as skiing holidays, these were an extra to a summer holiday.

Swimming became popular after it was included in the 1896 Olympics. Pools and lidos were built, eg at Millhouse park, it is recalled that the water was cold!

1938 was the first time workers got holiday pay, before this time there were holiday saving clubs and these continued to save for spending money. The unions had been campaigning for 20 years for holiday pay.

Butlins opened in the 1930s to provide affordable holidays. YHA was founded and open to any person from any background to have rest, often used for people on cycling or walking holidays.

After WW2 holidays became more popular. The aluminum technology gained from plane production in the war was used for building caravans and also static caravan holiday sites opened for people to rent. The east coast resorts continued to be popular, they had entertainment, food and the beach.

Coaches were used for UK tours and overseas. National Express took over a lot of the companies in the 1970s. In the 1950s people starting going overseas, a plane journey to Spain involved refuelling en route. Jet planes changed the industry and no need to refuel en route, UK tourism suffered. In 1970 Thomas Cook acquired the 18-30 holiday company for young people who had lots of spare money and these were very popular.

In the 1980s tent technology progressed, now framed tents with waterproof nylon and bespoke equipment made for camping. There is now a huge amount of self catering options available.

Cruising was expensive but has become cheaper in recent times. The huge ships have food, entertainment, guided tours arranged and cater for all age groups.

All holiday businesses have been affected by the pandemic in 2020/2021, it is an important industry and hope it will soon return.

Pauline was thanked for an interesting and informative talk.

Dates of Future Meetings

May – No Meeting

23 and 27 June – A walk around Totley about the working history of Totley over the centuries, this is the same walk on 2 different dates, starts at 2pm for 2 hours, meet at The Cross Scythes.

25 July – A Visit to the Zion graveyard at Attercliffe at 2pm

22 September – AGM and Stephen Gay – A history of the Sheffield to Skegness train line.

Minutes of Totley History Group Meeting 22-09-21

Numbers present 13

Apologies Jean Byron Kerry Clarke Dorothy Prosser

Jennifer Burns Carmen Blakely Roger Wilde

Due to the coronavirus pandemic this was the first meeting to be held in the Library since Feb 2020. As well as starting the journey back to normality for the group by having an invited speaker, an interim AGM was held. A full AGM will be held in April 2022.

AGM

Minutes of the 2019 AGM

These were agreed.

Chairman's and Treasurer's Report

The chairman explained that due to Covid restrictions an AGM had not been held in 2020.

Approval for his report covering 2019 and 2020 was given.

As treasurer he also reported we hold £3500 in our account, which has stayed more or less static during lockdown. The accounts to December 2020 were approved.

Election of Committee

Resignations

A number of committee members have either resigned or intend doing so at the April 2022 AGM.

Resignations as from Sept 2021...

Dorothy Prosser vice chairman, but remaining on the committee

Jennifer Burns Refreshment organiser

Jimmy Martin (Jimmy has now moved into The Glen and has given his personal archive to the group)

The remaining committee members were re-elected.

Resignations as from April 2022

Norman Rolfe Chairman, but retaining Treasurer's post

Pauline Burnett Speaker/finder, but remaining on committee

An appeal was made for interested members to join the committee and/or offer specific roles that would be of interest to them. Pauline is happy to pass on accumulated speaker information and give support during the changeover.

Prior to the pandemic our speaker meetings regularly drew audiences of 35-50, and with refreshments to follow always proved a popular and sociable evening.

The AGM was closed and the floor was handed to the speaker

Through Kirton Tunnel to Cleethorpes

Stephen Gay

In his usual fascinating delivery, Stephen's talk was full of both railway history and the peripheral and social changes that affected the use of the line.

Part 1 Sheffield to Retford

The journey now begins at Midland Station (Pond St), opened in 1870, but the line was built circa 1849 as the Manchester Sheffield and Lincoln Railway (MS&LR) and would have passed through the original Midland Station close to the Wicker. Scant evidence remains of original railway buildings, but slides taken by the speaker over a 40 year period captured a Goods Office (demolished in 1980's) and many signal boxes that were no longer needed after Powerbox signalling system was installed in 1970s. Slightly strangely, many of the toilets built to serve the needs of the signalmen still survive to this day!

Rolling stock manufacturers such as Cravens, who built both luxury carriages as well as trains for the London Underground, have all left their mark beside the line. Buildings originally used by manufacturing companies that depended on the close proximity of the railway for both supplies and distribution of their

goods may still stand, but with the passage of time have been repurposed for 21st century use.

There were a number of once important junctions, eg. Nunnery Junction near Tinsley where many lines criss-crossed. Small branch lines to serve steel works, coal pits and power stations were shown. Many of these branch lines are now disused, ripped up and overgrown, but others are still plain to see, even if now out of use. Tonnes of coal in snaking trains were delivered daily to power stations via such branch lines, seemingly the most important freight for many years, but now all gone.

Fresh fish came from Grimsby through to the Midlands and even had its own loop line built at South Waleswood to hasten its journey, the smell letting everyone know it had passed through!

Stephen's vast archive of photographs showed very clearly how the use of the line and rolling stock has changed through the decades. Sections that once boasted two lines each way are now reduced to just one, although with the current increase in freight traffic this may change back again. We saw slides of wooden carriages left to decay in sidings, then finally torched to prevent rough sleepers taking advantage of them. Photographs of trains that looked little more than buses on the line, through to the heavy diesels and the cumbersome weedkiller train that made its annual trip along the line.

The railway often runs in close proximity to Chesterfield Canal, the transport means it superseded. Its steepest gradient is near Don Valley (1 in 10) with cuttings and tunnels being created in order to traverse small contours in the land. An accident during the building of the Beighton viaduct resulted in fatalities, when the arches toppled like dominoes. An embankment built to carry the railway at Kiveton Bridge was washed away in the 2007 floods, but this time fatalities were avoided when a vigilant engine driver felt a wobble as he passed over the stretch. He quickly reported it and by the time the engineers reached the spot the lines were hanging in space many feet above the wrecked embankment.

Land once used as part of the railway infrastructure has been repurposed ...industrial sites such as those alongside the Parkway, rural areas now being used for recreation eg a section of the trans-Pennine trail from Southport to Hull, opening in 2001.

Stations have ceased to be staffed since tickets are now bought either from an automatic machine, online or on the train, the deserted buildings sometimes being subject to abuse and vandalism.

Station hotels have either been demolished or survived as a B&B, a convenience store...more repurposing.

By the time we arrived in Retford we had learnt much about the uses and the changes that have taken place during its 170 year history.

Part 2 Retford to Cleethorpes Wed. October 27th 7.30pm

Totley History Group Meeting Wednesday, 27 October 2021

Present:

15 People

Notices

The History Group will be placing a wreath on Remembrance Sunday, 14 November, at the Totley War Memorial on Baslow Road.

Sue is now the guardian of the deeds to Totley Bents Farm, these date from 1621, it is the oldest building in Totley. Les has transcribed the deeds and they are now on our website, they are fascinating reading.

Speaker Tonight

Our speaker tonight is Stephen Gay, his talk tonight is part 2 of his railway journey from Sheffield to Cleethorpes, from Retford to Cleethorpes.

We start at West Burton and go by the Chesterfield Canal for the last time up to Clarborough tunnel, quite a steep hill, this area is a wildlife conservation area. Lincoln Cathedral can be seen and North Leatherton windmill and also the power stations at West Burton which were once the largest until the construction of Drax power stations.

Then we go down to the River Trent at Sturton, this station closed in 1968. We reach Gainsborough Central station which used to have around 100 staff, with shops and a roof covering. There are many foot crossings over the railway line around here.

Many of the stations were not near the communities they served so when regular bus services began the stations sadly closed, many of the station buildings have been demolished or are

privately owned. This includes the many crossing keeper cottages along the line.

From Gainsborough we arrive at Blyton and onwards to Kirton Lindsey station and then Kirton Tunnel. John Fowler of Forth Bridge fame engineered the tunnel, it has a lovely frontage, John Fowler was born in Sheffield.

We are now at the most scenic part over the river near Brigg, the River Ancholme. Brigg station, once again used to have a large staff and roof, shops, refreshments, and waiting rooms.

Robey Junction has a tall signal box so the staff could see all the trains approaching. It is now closed, although it is still a busy junction today. From this junction we go to Barnetby station and Brocklesby station which opened in 1848.

Stephen then took us down the Barton line to Barton on Humber starting at Ulceby station then Thornton Abbey which has a lovely picturesque gatehouse and is now English Heritage. Then Goxhill station and Marsh crossing and New Holland station where the Yarborough hotel is located, now owned by Wetherspoons, a large prestigious looking building. Boats dock at the New Holland pier. After this is Barrow Haven and then we reach Barton on Humber which opened 1849 and reached Cleethorpes 18 years later.

We now go back from the Barton line to Haborough and then Stallingborough which is the longest named rail station in England. Great Coates is the next station over the River Freshney and to Marsh Junction and to Grimsby Docks. Here there were paddle steamers, however, the opening of the Humber Bridge in 1981 spelt the end of their operational life. Grimsby town station still has its overhead roof and the Grimsby dock tower is a grade 1 listed building. Following this is New Clee Station which has the cold stores for the fish.

We then arrive at our final destination Cleethorpes, the station buildings date from 1863.

We thanked Stephen for a very interesting and fascinating talk.

Dates of Future Meetings

24 November – Rod Amos – The Bodysnatchers of Yorkshire

15 December – Totley's Past in Photographs accompanied by
mince pies and a chance to chat

26 January - Some Ancient Suburbs of Sheffield - David
Templeman

Totley History Group Meeting Wednesday, 24 November 2021

Present:

31 People

Notices

We are currently working with restricted numbers for attendance for our meetings. Our first 2 meetings in the library since lockdown were sparsely attended, however, it was good to see this evening that there was a good turnout.

The History Group has been very successful, however, we are now in a difficult situation as we need more people to join our management committee and our current Chairman and Speaker Finder would like to step down. Norman will still be Treasurer. These 2 roles are not time consuming, anyone who is interested please contact Kerry. The management committee will be meeting in January to review our current situation and the way forward. The reality is that we may not be able to function after our April AGM meeting if we cannot find more people to help us.

Our next meeting is on 15 December where we will be looking at Totley's past in photographs with refreshments including mince pies.

Speaker Tonight

Our speaker tonight is Rod Amos talking to us about "Digging up the dead, bodysnatching.

The 19th century ushered in a new-found medical interest in detailed anatomy thanks to an increase in the importance of surgery. In order for the surgeons and medical students to study anatomy, human bodies were needed and thus ushered in the practice of grave robbing. Before 1832, the Murder Act

1752 stipulated that only the corpses of executed murderers could be used for dissection. By the early 19th century, the rise of medical science – coinciding with a reduction in the number of executions – had caused demand to outstrip supply.

The earliest form of bodies being dissected can be traced to Henry VIII with 4 bodies were used from hanged felons as a deterrent to people. In Charles I reign 2 bodies were used. In 1815 there was a statutory requirement for people to have training for surgery. In 1828 the first anatomist was prosecuted which deterred surgeons from bodysnatching, professional bodysnatchers then began. In 1826 and 1827 there were many anatomy and medical schools, around 1,000 bodies were dissected during this time. Bodysnatching was rife in this country with an export market to Ireland and France.

In 1832 the Anatomy act became law as surgeons wanted change as they were being forced to pay for bodies, it gave free licence to doctors, teachers of anatomy and bona fide medical students to dissect donated bodies. It was enacted in response to public revulsion at the illegal trade in corpses. There was anger about bodysnatching and doctors weren't trusted because of their role in the deception.

In 1824 Sheffield was the first medical school to open in Yorkshire followed by Leeds, Hull and York. In 1835 a crowd attacked the Sheffield anatomy school and they broke in, found the bodies and destroyed them.

Bodysnatchers were prosecuted with a fine or imprisonment. They broke open the coffin and took the body not the shroud, by not taking the shroud the penalty was less if they were caught. They received 2-4 guineas per corpse. They cleaned up around the grave so there was no evidence of a disturbance and they could then return for more bodies.

Various methods were used to try to stop the bodies being taken:-

Keep the body at home until they decayed so of no use.

Keep the body in a “dead house”.

Mort-safe, eg railings around the grave or over the grave.

A large stone on the grave.

Watch towers were built in graveyards to keep watch over the area.

An iron coffin, very heavy to move.

The Sheffield University still dissect bodies, some other schools use demonstrators for training.

Rod was thanked for a very fascinating talk.

Dates of Future Meetings

15 December – Topley's Past in Photographs accompanied by mince pies and a chance to chat

26 January - Some Ancient Suburbs of Sheffield - David Templeman

23 February - The History of Book-Toys, pop-up and novelty books in pre-television era – Ian Alcock

23 March - Sheffield's Heritage (South Yorkshire Archeology Service – Sarah Cattell