

G & K U3A History Group

'LOCKDOWN MISCELLANY', JUNE 2020.

During the Coronavirus Lockdown the usual meetings and visits of the History Group were suspended. This Miscellany arose out of Zoom and email exchanges when members were sharing thoughts about local features of interest. Additional relevant information about the topics was found online.

Peckfield Colliery Disaster, commemorated in Micklefield churchyard.

Lizzie M. 'I went for a walk where I'd not been before and came across Pit Lane. I got talking to someone about some lovely big old houses along there and was told they were the pit manager's house and some of the workers' houses. I asked where the pit used to be and from there Googled the information and found out about the disaster.'

Pat D. 'Ashley Land is very knowledgeable about the Peckfield disaster. He has maps and history of the men who lost their lives. He was able to show me my Great Grandfather's statement on retrieving his father's body from the mine which was very moving.'

The Peckfield pit disaster was a mining accident at the Peckfield Colliery in Micklefield, which occurred on Thursday 30 April 1896, killing 63 men and boys out of 105 who were in the pit, plus 19 out of 23 pit ponies. The disaster is commemorated at Micklefield Church.

Peckfield Colliery was owned by Messrs. Joseph Cliff and Sons, with Mr. Joseph Cliff being senior partner of the Micklefield Coal and Lime Company. Mr. Charles Houfton had been the manager since the colliery opened, and Mr. William Radford had been employed as the Under Manager for 17 years. Despite seven fatal accidents in nineteen years, Peckfield was considered by miners to be a safe mine. Ventilation was drawn through the seams by a Waddle fan (a large fan used in mines to provide ventilation) at the top of the Upcast shaft, and had removed the eleven instances of small escapes of gas since 1891. Men worked with picks by the light of tallow candles, whilst the undermanager and five deputies carried safety lamps.

The explosion was caused by a slight fall in the roof in Goodall's gate, on the West side of the mine, 943 yards from the Downcast shaft. A small quantity of 'fire-damp' (flammable gas, particularly methane) escaping from the crack in the roof was ignited by a miner's candle at 7:15am, just as the men were starting work. No gas had previously been found in the New North Road or Goodall's Gate in the West Level. Two miners and their ponies were killed at the point of impact, and four more were killed as they began to flee. The explosion travelled south, down New North Road against the air flow, as coal dust dislodged by the explosion carried the dull flame beyond its point of origin, and expanded into a roaring flame when it reached the air in the West Level main intake, and then continued to expand through the mine, killing miners and trapping them, as roofs fell. The explosion tore through the stables, killing and burning the horsekeeper, plus 12 of the 14 pit ponies. The two pit ponies who survived were stood in the middle, partly sheltered by the other ponies.

Augustus Walker Blue Plaque, Garforth. Carol J, Lizzie M .

Pat D. 'I believe my Grandma was in service with Gus Walker's family.'

This blue plaque commemorates Air Chief Marshall Sir Augustus Walker 1912-1986. (27 Lidgett Lane, round the corner next to the back door.) The plaque reads: 'Was born in Garforth and brought up in this house. Serving in the RAF 1934-70, he rose to its highest ranks. An inspirational figure, he led daring bombing raids with 50 Squadron on industrial targets in Germany and commanded a series of bomber stations during World War II.'

Around Moorland Terrace, Garforth.

Carol J. 'Moorland Terrace is the row of houses built by whoever lived in 9a Moorland Terrace, the owners say there was a Gascoigne lived there, but it can't have been Isabella or Elizabeth as they lived at Parlington/Lotherton. So it may have been a relative, I haven't found anything about it yet! The house must be about 1860s as our house (no 1) is 1870. There are quite a few Victorian houses around here, on Lowther Avenue (technically a private road, part adopted) is Springfield Care Home was originally in 'the doctor's house', Lowther House, and Springfield House extended to bridge between the two. At the end is Churchfield House which looks late Victorian. (A friend lives there so I'll ask her if she knows any history of it.) Looking at Ian Atkinson's* maps I realise that what was 3 Lowther Avenue ('Springfield') (which I said was part of the care home, certainly about 20-25 years ago) was knocked down, 10-15 years ago and the original house (named Lowther House on the maps) had a massive extension built onto it, covering the site of Springfield.

(*Note. See <https://www.ianatkinson.net/garforth/>.)

Lidgett Lane apparently had an 'ancient gateway' at roughly the junction with Lowther Road, which figures as Lidgett= lych gate. Old maps show a track going from here down to Wakefield Road and the book, Manorial Garforth, mentions a Kyrkgatte, then Kirkgate, probably joining Church Garforth with West Garforth and down to the Wakefield Road - look at Ian's maps and you'll see this looks likely. From 'Manorial Garforth': 'The ancient, irregular and meandering crossroads lay close to the entrance of the present Lowther Road. Here formerly stood a temporary gate, restricting the movement of beasts, where Kirkgate met Lidgett Lane at the boundary beck.' That beck is now culverted, piped under the end of the gardens of 1 and 3 Moorland Terrace on Lowther Rd side, and open from 1 Lowther Road pretty much all the way to the Church Lane allotments by the ginnel.'

Chantry Chapel of St Mary the Virgin, Wakefield Lesley M.

Wakefield had four chantry chapels (chapels endowed for the saying of masses and prayers), three of which dated from the 13th century. They were built outside the medieval town on the roads leading to Leeds, Dewsbury, York and Doncaster. The Chantry of St John the Baptist was on Northgate, the road to Leeds, where Wakefield Grammar School stands today. The Chapel of St Mary Magdalene was on Westgate where it crossed the Ings Beck on the road to Dewsbury. St Swithun's Chantry Chapel, on the York road, was near Clarke Hall.

In the 14th century the Chantry Chapel of St Mary the Virgin was built on the medieval bridge across the River Calder on the road to Doncaster and the south and only a stone's throw from the Hepworth Gallery. Wakefield's medieval nine-arched bridge is 320 feet (98 m) long, was built in stone between 1342 and 1356. It replaced an earlier wooden structure on the site of an ancient ford.^[8] The chapel on the bridge was licensed in 1356.

The Battle of Wakefield was fought about a mile south of the bridge in 1460 and the Earl of Rutland was killed near the bridge while attempting to escape.

The chapel was used for worship until the Reformation and Abolition of Chantries Acts when all Wakefield's four chantry chapels were closed. The bridge chapel survived because it is a structural element of the bridge. After closure it was used as a warehouse, library, office and cheese shop and survived bridge widening in 1758 and 1797.

The chapel was transferred to the Church of England in 1842 and the Yorkshire Architectural Society, influenced by the Oxford Movement, persuaded to undertake its restoration. The society, keen to restore medieval ecclesiastical remains, adopted designs by George Gilbert Scott. Restoration costing approximately £2,500 (equivalent to £240,000 in 2019), was carried out, resulting in the complete reconstruction of the chapel above pavement level. The new west front differed slightly from its medieval predecessor. Scott is perceived as having made two errors, the first was being persuaded to completely replace the old west front. The second was having the new façade carved from Caen stone, which crumbled in the polluted urban atmosphere and was completely replaced in 1939 in gritstone by ecclesiastical architect Sir Charles Nicholson. The original richly carved medieval façade was moved to Kettlethorpe Hall, where it became the frontage to a folly boathouse.

The chapel opened for Anglican worship in 1848 and was used as the parish church of the newly formed ecclesiastical district of St Mary until a church was built in 1854. The bridge chapel became a chapel-of-ease and services were held irregularly. St Mary's merged with St Andrew's, Eastmoor in the 1960s and the impoverished parish struggled with the chapel's upkeep. In the 1980s it seemed likely the chapel would be declared redundant by the Church of England. In January 2000 a parish boundary change brought the chantry into the care of Wakefield Cathedral.

Kippax Castle, Kippax

Colin R. 'Through my family I have a connection with the Church of St Mary's in Kippax and so I have attended services and events there. Because of this I am familiar with the earthworks adjacent to the church which mark the site of Kippax Castle. This is a good illustration of how, following the conquest, the Normans systematically imposed their authority on England village by village.'

Kippax was an important manorial centre prior to the Norman Conquest. It comprised, not only Kippax itself, but also the townships of Ledston and Barwick in Elmet, as well as parcels of land in other townships in the locality. Kippax may have been the site of an Anglo-Saxon Minster or mother church which would be responsible for the spreading of Christianity through the region via a network of 'daughter houses'.

After the Conquest William gave Kippax to Ilbert de Lacy as part of a vast manorial holding called the honour of Pontefract. The importance of Kippax in pre-Conquest times led the de Lacys to establish the castle at Kippax to act as the administrative centre for that part of the honour. It continued to perform this function until the late 12th century when the role was transferred to Barwick in Elmet.

The most visible survival of the castle today is a circular earthwork known locally as “Cheney Basin”. This is all that remains of the shell keep established on the site. There are antiquarian reports of stonework being visible under the embankments but a recent geophysical survey failed to identify any such remains. It therefore seems likely that the keep was originally a wooden structure and was never rebuilt in stone.

ADDENDUM TO THE 'LOCKDOWN MISCELLANY', JUNE 2020.

An additional contribution to the Miscellany from Chris L.

Manor Farm Experimental Agricultural College, Garforth.

Background

The farm is situated about a mile north of Garforth railway station along the Barwick Road and can be identified as the Manor House on the OS map.

The industrial revolution in England in the 18th and 19th centuries affected many parts of the country and Leeds participated fully. This was initially in the textile industry, mainly wool and flax production, processing and marketing. These were quickly followed by engineering, iron foundries, mining expansion etc.

The rapid increase in industrial employment opportunities led to a corresponding population increase. The population of Leeds in 1800 is quoted as 30,000, this more than tripled to 101,000 by 1850 and to over 160,000 at the 1881 census. Increased food production was central to feeding the increased population.

The agricultural revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries paved the way for the industrial revolution with the increase in both population numbers and health. In the nineteenth century agricultural production was improved by enclosing the land, to give greater management opportunities and possibly tenancy security. Other innovations included land tillage, manuring and fertilization of land, plant and animal breeding, crop rotation, mechanisation etc.

Not least among the food improvement innovations introduced was the recognition of the importance of agricultural education and training. This had to improve beyond its existing “sitting-with-Nellie”, i.e. often poor quality on the job training which had sufficed for centuries, to more formal institutional training.

Agricultural training in Leeds

The first agricultural training institute in England was the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester (Gloucestershire) which started training students in 1845. It catered largely for the sons of the gentry and did not have formal links to a full university.

The Yorkshire College of Science was formed in Leeds in 1871 mainly to support the wool and textile trade and to meet the technological demands of the fast-changing city. This undertook teaching and scientific research with no bar to students'

religious or class affiliation. In 1884 this joined with the Leeds School of Medicine and other institutions to form the Yorkshire College which in turn became Leeds University in 1904. Women were admitted to Leeds College but not initially to the University.

In 1891 a department of agriculture was inaugurated as one of the technical sections of Yorkshire College. As well academic training in agriculture from the city-based college, a farm was required to provide the practical training and demonstrations in agriculture. There was also a developing awareness of the need for field based agricultural research.

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Manor Farm, on the Parlington Estate near Garforth, was eventually identified to provide these functions. In 1898, the East and West Riding County Councils took out a 30-year lease on this farm on behalf of the College. Colonel Frederick R T Trench -Gascoigne had inherited the estate in 1893 and the family's interest in and desire to support public services including agriculture is well known. It is reasonable to assume that they took a personal interest in facilitating the tenancy

The farm is situated about a mile north of Garforth railway station along the Barwick Road and can be identified as the Manor House on the OS map.

Work was started immediately to adapt and add to the existing farm buildings. The farm consisted of 312 acres divided as two thirds arable land, and the rest grassland. Some of the land adjoining the educational building, erected in 1901, was set out in plots. These plots were similar to those used for evening classes, in the area, and teachers briefed in their use. The scheme was funded by the three Yorkshire Ridings

The educational building itself was designed by a firm of Leeds architects and built by a Barwick in Elmet contractor. It was officially opened by The Earl Spencer, Chancellor of the Leeds Victoria University, on the 28th June 1901. The federal Victoria University (combining higher education in Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool) eventually combined with the Yorkshire College to form Leeds University.

A Leeds University booklet published in 1908 describes the Manor Farm buildings as simple in design and carried out in pressed brick with a few stone dressings. There were two separate blocks comprising the farmhouse together with barns and outhouses plus another block which housed the education department. The education department comprised lecture rooms, laboratories, a seed room, bacteriological room, and separate sitting rooms for men and women students.

Students were taught practical agricultural skills and given experience in a proper working farm environment. Agricultural training was offered at purely vocational non certificated levels such as dairy technology up to part of the BSc degree.

Research trial programmes listed in 1926 included potato variety trials, further experiments with human food crops such as cereals and potatoes and animal food crops like mangelwurzel. Fertilizer trials included basic slag and limestone soil dressings and manure treatment of grass leys.

A fuller list of training and research programmes is given on line as extensively

archived at Leeds University.

The lease expired in 1928 and was not renewed as the area was considered unsuitable due to the acid atmosphere. The work was transferred to other sites including Askham Bryan Agricultural College near York and the three farms on the Headley Hall estate near Bramham Park.

The farm and land were returned to the Parlington Estate and sold at auction, together with six other farms, on October 2nd 1964.

https://www.parlington.co.uk/outlying_houses_h13.html.

The buildings were demolished in 1970.

Information regarding the purchase and operation of the farm is taken from various publications by the Barwick in Elmet Historical society plus photographs and further information from the Leeds photographic collection. The websites are as follows:

Barwick in Elmet Historical Society

<http://www.barwickinelmethistoricalsociety.com/5032.html>.

and the Leeds photographic collection

http://www.leodis.net/display.aspx?id=201021_170194

http://www.leodis.net/display.aspx?id=2004318_54226321

In summary these references describe the purchase of Manor Farm and its subsequent operation and show some photographs of the land and buildings.