



NEWSLETTER Number 4 - August, 2011

UPDATE on Downham & Twiston History Group

THE history group continues to flourish with 20 core members and many other locals and visitors over the last few months. We have had a varied programme which is now enhanced by our new projector. A recent highlight was the visit to Manor House, Twiston, by kind invitation of Judith and John Nixon.

The July meeting was cancelled and is re-arranged for Monday 8th August. The topic has also changed with a visit to Clitheroe Library when Sue Holden will be talking to us about the services and information available in the reference library. The reference library is an excellent resource for students as well as for local historians and we wish to do everything we can to support this resource.

Tom and Elizabeth worked on a display for the church centenary celebrations which saw its debut in June at the choral evening with the A Cappella singers. The display will be out again during October when two special services will take place. We plan to hold our history group meeting in church to coincide with the display when we can talk through the different eras of church history.

The history group welcomes newcomers and is happy to embrace new ideas and projects for the group. Subscriptions remain at £1 per meeting.

Recent History Group Events

- Village scrap book [1920s & early 1930s] donated to group – Jan 2011
- Second instalment of Twiston Mill history [last newsletter] – Jan 2011
- Memories evening with invited guests February 2011
- Speaker Kevin Illingworth on 'Vernacular Buildings' - March 2011
- Talk on the 'Life and Times of Colin Wiseman' – May 2011
- Visit to Manor House, Twiston – talk on history of house – June 2011

Next Meeting

Monday 8th August 7.30pm – Clitheroe Library

THE MANOR HOUSE, TWISTON

TWISTON

Twistleton became Twiston. Twistle means a boundary between either two steep valleys or two boundary streams (here, Ings Beck and Pendle Water). It was also on the boundary between Northumbria and Mercia. In the reign of Edward III, John de Twistleton lived at Twiston Mill. The listed buildings of Twiston, apart from The Manor House, are Red Syke, Whitestones, Lowergate Farm, Hill Top Farm and Hill Foot Cottages. Also Clough Head, which is officially in Rimington.



Manor House, Twiston – back of house – formerly front of house

THE EARLY INHABITANTS

The "Starkey" family lived in the house for about four hundred years. A house has been on the site since 1182AD when it belonged to the Twistleton family, then the Greenacres family, followed by the Starkie (as they became) family in 1488.

The present house was built in 1719 and what happened between 1182 and 1719 we can only guess at. The Starkey family, related to the Starkey family of Huntroyde Hall, have repeated the Christian names Thomas and James for many years and intermarried with other locals, e.g. in 1655 Thomas Starkey married Ellen de Fernside. Some of the female members of the Starkey family were named Duella, Parthenia, and Angelina. If we are to believe the parish records Thomas Starkey of The Manor House married at the age of ninety-one and then had three children and died at the age of one hundred and five! Another Thomas Starkey became, as did his son, a senior wrangler at Cambridge University. Outside the present house is a small stone cobbled bridle path leading to the Tithe Barn (which is now privately owned, with the 1782 date stone and initials of JS).

INGS END AND PUDSAY SHILLINGS

I am not sure about the veracity of the story that Pudsay Shillings were minted in The Manor House, nor have I seen any written evidence, but I am fairly sure that James Starkey was involved. The local name of Skeleron was derived from the ancient name Skelhorn. Small scale lead mining took place in the Bronze Age and was continued by the Romans who used the lead for plumbing (for baths and water conduits). It was used also in the construction of churches, cathedrals and castles.

Skelhorn belonged to William Pudsay, squire and owner of Bolton Hall (at Bolton-by-Bowland). During the reign of Elizabeth I, silver was extracted and secretly minted into silver shillings, and illegally used locally; in those days all mined silver belonged to the Crown. It was said that the mines were haunted, and an apparition known as the Grey Man was to be seen. This certainly kept folk away. The mines (it was said) were occupied by small goblin-type characters and boggarts who could only communicate with the mine owners, which was very convenient.

William Pudsay minted his coins, and they were used throughout the area. A cottage in Bolton-by-Bowland is still called Mint Cottage. Fairies, said to live in the woods at Skelhorn, gave William a magic silver bit for his horse, and when the excise officers arrived to arrest him at Bolton Hall, William escaped on his magic horse, jumping over Pudsay's Leap, at Rainsber Scar on the River Ribble, after which he escaped. He later pleaded forgiveness from his Godmother, Queen Elizabeth, who granted him a pardon from execution. However, the mines were confiscated and became Crown property. In 1878 the mines employed fifteen workers. By 1879 this had dwindled to only two.

LATER RESIDENTS

We can only imagine what the first Manor House looked like. On the big cornerstone at the gable end of the house is a mason's mark in the shape of a W, now almost worn away by the weather. The sheltered walled garden was, I presume, used for growing vegetables, although the soil is very stony. Many fragments of china have been found together with pieces of white clay pipes and glass "cough mixture" bottles. Animal bones and teeth have also been discovered.

The house had been occupied by Robert Bulcock in 1841 and in 1861 by his widow Betty. In 1871 her son Thomas Bulcock inherited the farm and is seen in a photograph together with his farm labourer and housemaid. Queen Victoria's Jubilee was a time of much celebration and after more than a few pints at the Black Bull Rimington, Thomas met with a fatal accident on his way home across the fields.



Thomas Bulcock, his farm labourer and his housemaid

The three ugly 1960s garages at the bottom of the drive once were a cottage occupied by Thomas' brother, Joseph, who helped him on the farm. This cottage was known as Manor House Cottage in the 1891 Census. The last record I have of the Starkey family was James Starkey who was Vicar of Blackburn in 1790 and his son the Reverend Thomas Starkey in 1818.

The house fell into disrepair and was sold by the Downham Estate to Sir Alfred Hall-Davis (then Chairman of Massey's Burnley Brewery). He drew up plans for renovation, but before he could complete the work he became MP for Morecambe and Lonsdale, and moved to his new constituency. The house was then sold to George and Sheila Reed, from Nelson, who completed the renovation, adding an extension for a kitchen, bedroom and bathrooms. After their deaths we bought the house and garden from their son Charles Reed, who now lives in Spain.

Twiston is a secluded hamlet well known to older Nelson folk, who used regularly to catch a bus from Nelson, through Roughlee and Barley to Twiston, and on to Downham and Clitheroe. My stepmother and her sisters used to catch this bus and alight at Twiston Mill with a bottle of "dandelion and burdock" for a picnic, and catch the bus home at Mutton Acre Gate next to Lowergate Farm. Nick o' Thumbs was a picnic held in Twiston by the Barrowford Working Men's Club, on the first Sunday in May every year, at which Nettle Pudding was cooked and eaten. Mrs Tarn, who lived at Hill Foot Cottage, was well-known for serving high quality ham and egg teas to ramblers.

(Twenty-two years in The Manor House for us!) Judith Nixon May 2011