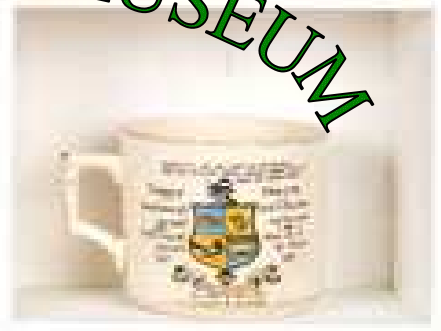


FRIENDS OF SWALEDALE MUSEUM



Newsletter No.27
Spring 2019

A message from the Curator

This year marks the bicentenary of the birth of John Ruskin (1819-1900). Although his prose now reads rather heavily, his ideas are still inspirational. In February I visited the wonderful exhibition on Ruskin at 2 Temple Place in London, and I was struck by how his delight in the 'Alpine' air of the countryside of the north-east may perhaps have influenced others. Remember how Marie Hartley and Ella Pontefract describe the 'Alpine' views of Swaledale, in their first book published in 1934? Ruskin created a museum in Sheffield, the Guild of St George, in 1870 for the industrial workers of the city. At the same time Swaledale was still very much an industrial landscape. Now Ruskin had very clear thoughts on what a museum should be; a place of learning, interaction and social engagement. In this age of government austerity, which has made such an impact on the funding of culture, infrastructure and education, museums have an even greater role to play.

2019 also marks six hundred years since the death of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). It might seem incongruous to connect Ruskin and Leonardo, but both valued the power of seeing, and museums offer the opportunity to exercise and focus that power. Even the everyday tools that we have on display in our small museum benefit from a longer look, an appreciation of the materials of which they are made, the



Spring has returned to the Museum garden....it must be nearly opening time!

perfect shape into which they are fashioned for the function they were meant to follow, and the time taken even on the most humble object to enhance its aesthetic appeal through decoration. Thinking about the work of John Ruskin and Leonardo da Vinci makes me look at the our collection in a new and inspiring way, I hope that it will for you also. We hope that our line-up of events will help us think about familiar Swaledale things in a new way too.

Helen Bainbridge, Curator



TEMPORARY EXHIBITION:

Past and Present: A New Look at Old Swaledale

We are all familiar with those popular picture books that show old images of a particular place, the sepia and black and white lending them a familiar air of age and authenticity. Sometimes these books also include pictures of the same sites as they are today. Our eyes flick back-and-forth between them, inviting a sort of distracting game of find the difference. Well our very-own photographers at Scenic View in Reeth have come up with an innovative idea, employing the technical and aesthetic skills of their profession, combining old and new in a single image. Using the Museum's collection they have chosen a selection of old photographs and merged their modern equivalent into a single view (*left*). Come and see the wonderful results in a select exhibition of these

works in the Museum - the highlight of our Upper Gallery this season. Perhaps you might want to commission your own 'Past and Present' image from them, but first come and see what they can do!

Please note that the Museum has **another** new email address: helen@swaledalemuseum.org

Apologies if you've been trying to contact Helen on museum.swaledale@mail.com which we announced in the last Newsletter - it was blocked without warning by the provider. We hope the new new one will be more durable!

Inspired by last year's celebrations of the centenary of the end of the Great War, one of our members, Alan Gibson, has researched and transcribed an exquisite diary written in 1916 by Marjorie, daughter of Sir Francis Denys-Burton of Draycott Hall, Fremington, while she was working as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse at Woodcote Military Relief Hospital near Reading.

Dedicated to: My mother who always said to me "Why don't you keep a diary?" the book is as much a scrapbook as a journal, a combination of fact, anecdote and private thoughts, along with original letters, illustrated with photographs and line drawings copied from a tongue and cheek publication of the time by Joyce Dennys, *Our Hospital ABC*.

The Voluntary Aid Detachment was a voluntary unit of civilians providing nursing care for military personnel in the United Kingdom and various other countries in the British Empire. Marjorie was just one amongst many thousands serving this way, but not many left such a detailed account of their experiences. Prior to the outbreak of the War, the Government and other bodies such as the Red Cross instigated the VAD across the country, to provide field nursing services should hostilities break out. By the summer of 1914, there were more than 2,500 detachments, being served by almost 75,000 volunteers, two-thirds of them female.

From the moment of her arrival at Woodcote, the 23 year old Marjorie was face to face with a whole new world, both socially: "I was met at the station by a motor load of Tommies (my first introduction to them, my last hospital was for officers), this was rather alarming..." and professionally: "...it is all very well but it is jolly hard to be turned loose in a strange house at night, not even knowing the way up stairs. Someone came down at 6.30 to show us the work, we have to get breakfast by 7.45, then there are the trays for the ones that don't get up." It's worth noting that in 1911 she had been living in a 34 room manor house in rural Ireland with her family who were employing nine live-in servants as well as a governess.



Marjorie Denys-Burton.



Woodcote Military Relief Hospital

Accommodation was another bug bear: "It appears that we sleep over in a house belonging to those people called Beeton...but we share a room which is a terrible disadvantage and I am wondering how I am going to stand Miss Davenport for 24 hours out of 24..." although she also reflected: "However, I am supposed to be working for my country so I must not grumble ... and anyhow I ought to be thankful I am not in the trenches, but I hate the feeling that I can never be alone."

What follows is a very down to earth account of daily life in the nursing home with all its monotony, tragedies, successes and sheer hard work – from constantly aching feet to dressing horrifying wounds to battling with fires that refused to light (no boiling water = no tea = equals major crisis!), interspersed with snippets of conversation and personal reflections on the progress of the War and little incidents which show a very human side to people who are otherwise just faces in faded photographs.

One man is in such a bad state that: "They put an advertisement for him in the paper saying: 'Lonely soldier desires correspondents' and this morning he had 350 answers. But he does not seem to take any notice. All sorts of conditions of people answered, clergymen, housemaids, spinsters, enclosed photographs, and one was so funny we answered it pretending to be the soldier." This backfired however: "The correspondence with the advertisement lady is getting so compromising, we have been obliged to write to say he was dead as she threatened to come and see him which would have been disastrous!"



The wagonette & passengers ready for their day out on the river

Before long Marjorie has overcome her earlier qualms – the cook at the house where she lodges "...brings us hot cocoa before we go to sleep at one o'clock and tells us all the household difficulties" and she begins to sympathize with the servants who have lit fires for her in the past. She plays the piano for the men in the evenings and drives them out for a day on the river: "It seems so curious to think, if you had been told two years ago you would have spent a happy afternoon on the river with the groom, the gardener, a couple of miners and a footman, you would have said 'utterly impossible' and yet I have done it and enjoyed it."

Thanks to Alan we now have a full transcript for the Museum and you can see the original at the Imperial War Museum in London – it's well worth a look as a glimpse into an often overlooked aspect of what it was like to be a young woman thrust into a very alien environment at a time of great upheaval. In Marjorie's own words: "When I was young I used to think the present day was so dull, that nothing exciting ever happened, and that it would be so nice to have lived in the Middle Ages! But it was all a joke to what we have now, air raids, people returning with the mud of the battlefield on them, and we take it all as a matter of course, nothing seems to excite one now, lucky thing I suppose, or we should all have been dead long ago. I wonder when the war will end, it is too awful. Personally I can see no end to it."

Tracy Little

Remembering Les Tyson - died 28th January 2019



Les with the late Arthur Raistrick

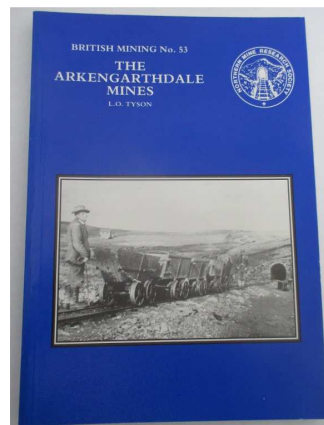
I remember the day Les Tyson first came to the Museum, just after we had taken the project on. He was a great friend of Mike Gill, who had nobly agreed to write our panels on lead mining. Les came to meet him here and I remember thinking how lucky we were to have the two greatest living historians of the local mines with us. Les always had a merry twinkle in his eye, and was a superb raconteur, especially over a large mug of tea. I remember him telling me that, for a while during the swinging sixties, he lived on the roof of the Drury Lane Theatre in London. I was never entirely sure whether to believe him, but he always kept me enthralled.

His knowledge of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale mining was vast, and based on thoughtful scrutiny of surviving documents. He was often to be found poring over manuscripts and maps in North Yorkshire County Record Office. He shared this knowledge generously and we benefited greatly from his thoughts and ideas. He is best known in print via his contributions to the publications of the Northern Mine Research Society. His first work for them was *A History of the Manor and Lead Mines of Marrick*, British Mining No.38, unravelling their

complexities from ancient times to their closure in 1939. Next came *The Grinton Mines*, British Mining No.51 the first detailed history of mining and smelting in Grinton, Ellerton and Fremington, co-authored with Ian Spensley and Richard White. He then went on to write the *History of the Manor and Lead Mines of Arkengarthdale, Yorkshire*, British Mining No 53.

Most recently he was working on coal mining at Tan Hill and as is typical was delighted to share his findings. Shaun Richardson will acknowledge Les's help in his lecture on the subject to the Friends which will be given on 5th June. As Shaun reported after his funeral 'he wanted no memorial, no plaque, no headstone, just for people to remember him...his past remained enigmatic to the last, as he wished'. He will always be remembered by us. Thanks to his son Paul, his current research notes have been retrieved so that his work will live on.

Helen Bainbridge



For something a bit different why not come to the Museum on Wednesday 28th August for a grand



Map, Print and Picture Auction.

A medley of local and not so local work will be for sale, with an enthusiastic auctioneer, your very own curator!



Mystery Object

Amazingly someone identified the previous mystery object (left). Sorry there's no prize Rob Nicholson but we were genuinely amazed that you knew it was a case for carrying leeches!

The picture on the right was one of several forwarded to us after being posted on Facebook by a lady who asked if anyone could identify the tools she'd found while clearing her parents' house. She said: "Our family has distant (Alderson) connections to Swaledale...had farming, wheelwright, coal & corn merchant connections. They also had a milk round & general store." Any suggestions? We'll try to pass them on.



Books from the Library of Susan Sharp

We would like to acknowledge the kindness of Mr John Sharp in contacting us in March this year. His late wife, Susan Sharp (nee Alderson), was for several years the Records Officer of the Alderson Family History Society (AFHS) and also served the Society in many other roles, carrying out and managing several research projects. In this capacity we were delighted to meet her in the Museum on several occasions. She was a very knowledgeable and expert family historian, and in support of this activity, built up a considerable library of books relating to the Alderson family, and to the topography and social history of Swaledale and surrounding areas. After her death in 2018 her husband John catalogued the bulk of her library and very kindly offered us our choice for the Museum Library, and of others to sell to raise funds for the Museum. He not only offered us the books but drove to Swaledale to deliver them in person. We are deeply grateful to John for his generosity in enabling us to add to our collection of local works, and in so doing considerably enhancing our research activities.

Further Exploration of Fremington's Romano-British Site

Work has continued over the winter months on considering the implications of last year's discoveries on the Romano-British site at The Hagg, Fremington, when the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group investigated the ground to the north of the roundhouse, yard area and terraced track way.

Interest is focusing on the complex construction of the site and the lay out which has obviously been carefully thought through, using the natural ridge to the west, nestling below a rocky outcrop on the north and a glacial mound to the east. Although the site is on a steep slope, this has been engineered into terraced platforms and flagged yards, with possible evidence of later redevelopment in the form of better laid flags and some aesthetic features.



An aerial view of the site showing the paving

There is definitely a strong military link, both with the type of door sills and the quantity and quality of artefacts found, including up to eight large quern stones of a type only used by the army – a blank one hints that they might actually have been manufactured on the site. In addition, the work involved in constructing the buildings and yards found so far would be far more than a subsistence farmer would be likely to undertake alone and looks more like the co-ordinated effort of men who knew exactly what they were doing.



A section of a military style quern stone

The original idea that the site would turn out to be a cluster of house platforms now seems unlikely as only one house has been identified so far and the current thinking is that the complex is more likely to be a central supply base, perhaps a gathering point for livestock, to service a number of different local forts.

Although apparently remote, the Hagg is actually in a very strategic central position relative to four known Roman forts, at Bainbridge, Catterick, Greta Bridge and Bowes, as well as to the local lead mines. Recent Lidar images of the Bainbridge fort have shown definite signs of a previously unknown road leaving the north gate and continuing in that direction. Finds such as coins and pottery from the Hagg show that it was in use throughout the active life of the forts with occupation coming to an end at the same time as the Roman occupation of Britain.

The dig is beginning to attract national attention. Project Manager Philip Bastow was recently invited to give a presentation on the findings to the Royal Archaeological Institute and a group of archaeology students from Newcastle University expected to be on site this summer to assist with the next phase of the excavations. As in previous years, volunteers are always welcome to help – the dig will take place between 10th and 24th July, including weekends. If you'd like to help, please contact Rod Flint, email:

Rod@swaag.org

Tracy Little

On Wednesday 5th June we are delighted to welcome back Shaun Richardson to present a paper on some of his most recent research: 'Landscape with Horses: Coal Mining at Tan Hill and Kings Pit Collieries'. Shaun is a familiar figure in the dales. While working on the chert quarries we suggested that he meet John Squires, who promptly took him a tour of the site near his home on Fremington Edge. For this reason we asked Shaun to give the first John Squires Memorial Lecture in honour of one of the oldest and truest friends of the Museum who died last year.

Shaun explains that these collieries have a history of working covering over 700 years. Using a combination of previously unpublished documentary research undertaken by the late Les Tyson, and new detailed measured earthwork survey carried out by Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd, the illustrated talk will provide an outline history of the collieries and also focus specifically on the survival of structures associated with the raising of coal to the surface by horses. What remains of these structures will be compared and contrasted to those elsewhere in the dales. Shaun has also taken on the curator's challenge of connecting this lecture with the work of Leonardo da Vinci!



Tan Hill Colliery in 1931



This glass bottle stopper turned up in a garden at Grinton. Stamped with the words 'Aire and Calder Bottle Co, Castleford & London' it's virtually identical to one in a museum

in Victoria, Australia. Comments on their website indicate similar bottles turning up in Canada and the USA as well as Devon and Berkshire. Does anyone know what it might have held? The company were producing bottles between 1836 and 1913 so there's a fairly wide window.

And for those with a sweet tooth...

On Saturday 29th June at 3pm you can join Rhoda Fraser for 'Yorkshire Tea and Tales'. Join Rhoda to hear stories about chapel teas, traditional recipes and how times have changed, while enjoying a fine Dales tea. Numbers strictly limited so do book early - £8 includes talk and tea with biscuits, cake, and Wensleydale cheese.

On Wednesday 10th July at 3pm Marjory Szurko, the author of *Sweet Slices of History* (shortlisted for the Fortnum & Mason Food and Drink Book Award 2019) will launch her book which includes recipes from Mrs Spiers amongst other well known local names from the past. Taste the samples and find out how the recipes ended up in the archive at Oriel College Oxford. Do bring along your own local recipes (and samples!) Free event although Museum entry charge applies to non-members.

The mystery of Ruby Ferguson, author amongst other things of the ‘Jill’ pony books, deepens. Several people (thank you in particular Marion Moverley and Sara O’Donovan) have been beavering away at the story that she was ‘raised in Reeth’. It would be tempting to write this off as ‘don’t believe everything you read on Wikipedia and blame it on Ruby’s known fondness for making up fictitious biographical details for dust jackets if it wasn’t for the 90 year old guidebook to Swaledale which mentions ‘Miss Ashby’ in the same breath as May Sinclair and Beatrice Harraden.

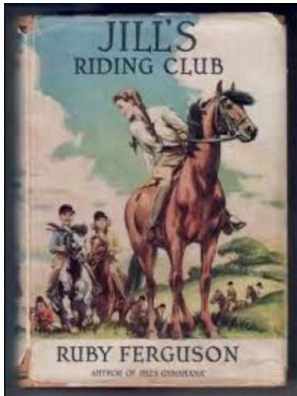
Ruby was born in 1899 in Hebden Bridge where her father, Rev David Ashby, a Methodist minister, was stationed at the time. The family moved around the country over the next few years, living at various times in Skipton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Woolwich and Bradford, where she attended the Girls’ Grammar School before going to St Hilda’s College, Oxford to read English from 1919-22. By this time Rev Ashby had moved to Manchester and after graduation Ruby joined her parents there, working as a secretary, and as a publisher’s reader and book reviewer.



In 1926 she published the first of several books under the name of R C Ashby. As an attempt at anonymity this fell at the first hurdle when a local paper reported that: “Miss Ruby C Ashby, daughter of the Rev David Ashby, a Wesleyan Minister who was stationed at Hebden Bridge from 1896 – 1899, and is now at Plymouth Grove Church, Manchester, has written a novel entitled *The Moorland Man, a Romance of a Northern Farm* which will be published early autumn by Hodder & Stoughton...”

In 1934 Ruby married Samuel Ferguson, a widower with two sons and although she continued to write books for adults, now almost entirely out of print, she didn’t achieve her greatest success until she began to write the *Jill* books for her step-grandchildren in 1949.

So where does the Reeth connection fit in? Tracing Rev Ashby’s career there’s no suggestion that he was ever minister in Swaledale. Even if he came on a temporary basis it’s hard to see how Ruby could have been ‘raised’ here. And if the family didn’t live here, what is her connection with Reeth? We’ll keep digging, but if anyone has any suggestions....



Last year a visitor to the Museum made us aware of Swaledale’s connection to a pioneering woman motorcyclist, Florence Blenkiron, who hit the headlines in 1935 when she rode from London to Cape Town with a companion Theresa Wallach with a motor bike and side car.

Florence was born in Harmby in 1903 but grew up at Walker House in Marrick. An intensely private person, little is known of her early life but at some stage she developed not only a passion for riding motor cycles but also the technical and practical skills to keep both the machine and herself on the road.



Edith Foley in Reeth during the 1927 or 1928 International Six Day Motorcycle Trial

Both women were accomplished competitive racers, well known enough to raise corporate sponsorship for their journey which was reported in the press as they sent back dispatches en route.

In December 1934 Florence and Theresa were waved off from London by a large crowd including Lady Astor who declared, “I am an unrepentant feminist and convinced that whatever a man can do, a woman can do too”. For the next eight months they contended with the unpredictable climate, the geographical conditions, the French Foreign Legion’s attempts to prevent their journey, and visits by wild animals – as well as rebuilding a failed engine and fixing their trailer. Not only was this done without all the modern navigational aids we now take for granted but, for some reason, without even the help of a compass!

Even more astonishingly, after Theresa was taken ill and returned to the UK by boat, Florence made the return journey alone apart from a section where she wisely allowed the bike to be towed across the Sahara behind the desert bus. Once home she delivered one lecture on her adventures and then rarely spoke of them again although Theresa did eventually publish a record of the trip in *The Rugged Road*.

Coincidentally Stephen Eastmead also pointed out that one of the photographs in the Museum collection showed a woman motorcyclist with The Buck in the background. Someone had suggested that this might be Marjorie Cottle, the first woman to finish the Scott Trial course but Stephen’s research was finally able to identify her as Edith Foley another pioneering woman rider from the 1920s. With all this happening on her doorstep perhaps it’s not so surprising after all that a young girl from Marrick grew up to take on a challenge that most people at the time thought couldn’t be tackled even by a man!



The send-off by Lady Astor

Friends' Programme 2019

All talks to be held in the Museum at 7.30pm
Please note that other events may be added during the course of the season

Wednesday 29th May at 6.30pm

Friends of the Museum AGM

Wednesday 5th June

First John Squires Memorial Lecture

Shaun Richardson - *Landscape with Horses: Coal Mining at Tan Hill and Kings Pit Collieries.*

Saturday 15th June 2pm - 4pm

Lichen drop-in with Sue & Les Knight

Wednesday 19th June

Richard Lamb - *Not once but twice: The introduction of innovative lead smelting technology into Yorkshire. But where? Marrick of course.*

Saturday 29th June 3pm

Rhoda Fraser *Yorkshire Tea & Tales*

Includes afternoon tea - see details on page 4

Wednesday 10th July 3pm

Book Launch - see page 4

Saturday 13th July

Field Trip with Richard Lamb, all-day outing to Surrender and Old Gang lead smelting mills

Wednesday 31st July

David Johnson - *Lime kilns in Swaledale & Arkengarthdale: the where, the when and the what for?*

Wednesday 14th August

Marion Moverley & Helen Bainbridge - *Read All About It No.2: More Historical Newscuttings from the Dales*

Wednesday 28th August

Grand Map, Print and Picture Auction

Wednesday 11th September (changed from 4th)

Will Swales - *Insights into the study of place-names in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale*

Wednesday 18th September

Helen Bainbridge & Tracy Little - *How to Date Local Photographs. Some Tactics, Techniques & Tips*

COST: £4 for Friends and £5 for Visitors.

For more information contact: 01748 884118, 07969

823232, or email: helen@swaledalemuseum.org

Please watch the local press & posters for occasional alterations to time/date &, if coming from a distance,

please check with the Museum before setting off.

Advance booking recommended .

In September Helen and Tracy are going to attempt an overview of how to date local photographs, looking at distinctive features such as alterations to buildings, datable events, people etc. Do

you have any photographs we could use for this? Perhaps something showing a gap where there's now a building or vice versa? Or any photographs you'd like to be dated? If so, please do get in touch with the Museum. We can scan the pictures to help protect the originals.

An Evacuee's Memories of Swaledale

In September 1939 I was 5½ years old and had a sister aged 9. Our family lived in Sunderland and ran a small business from a shop front very close to the docks. Our parents presumably decided that we should be moved to a safer place so before the end of 1939 my mother, sister and I were evacuated privately to Bankheads in Swaledale together with an aunt and her two young daughters and two Spanish/Basque refugees from the Spanish civil war - an adult lady and her niece who was about my age. Bankheads is a single house on the south side of the Swale about halfway between Low Row and Gunnerside.

My sister and I attended Gunnerside school walking to and fro each day. I have no record of how long this arrangement lasted but by the end of 1940 my family and the Spanish contingent were in Low Row in a house on the north side of the road at the west end of the village, now named Melbecks House. Sister and I went to Low Row school and my sister took the first part of the 11 plus exam locally. My aunt and cousins were now accommodated at Strands Farm, between Low Row and Gunnerside.

We were back in Sunderland sometime in 1941, presumably because my father was by then in the army and mother was needed to help run the business. On my 8th birthday in 1942, an air raid on the docks led to our home being severely damaged. The house still stood but all of the front doors and windows were blown in and the shop was a shambles. We were sheltered in the rear of the house and were unharmed.

My mother took immediate steps to get us kids to safety, I think by asking a favour of a lady we had stayed with on a pre-war holiday. This was Mrs Milner who we first encountered in Gunnerside but who then lived in Satron.

I resumed at Gunnerside school, my sister, now a grammar school student, travelled to Richmond each day - a mile walk to catch the Percivals' bus and an hour's ride to Richmond.

The accommodation in Satron was a temporary arrangement and my sister and I were eventually accommodated in Gunnerside though in separate houses; sister to a house on the left of the road going west just as the village green opens up on the right - now named West View. I went to Mrs Winter, not a dales person I learned later but, I believe, from Harrogate. Mrs Winter ran a sweet shop from a small house at the main road end of a narrow lane down to where the school used to be, now named Victoria House.

I don't know precisely how long we were there but I do remember an excited girl running through the village announcing jubilantly that the Italians had surrendered, which was September 1943. Some time after my mother came to collect me from the school and we were back in Sunderland in the first half of 1944.

As you see, all of these comings and goings were private and the associations I had with other boys my age were either locals or two or three other private evacuees (they had family adults with them). In fact the only non-private evacuees I was aware of were a brother and sister, family name Pinder, also from Sunderland.

For my part I remember Mrs Milner and Mrs Winter with great affection, they were kindness itself, and the whole experience was just a big adventure.

Tom Maughan