

# FRIENDS OF SWALEDALE MUSEUM

Newsletter No.28  
Autumn 2019

**T**his really has been an incredible few months. The flooding brought all this amazing community together, as so often happens when some event like this happens. Thank you Helen for some memorable talks. I often wish you were here in the winter to liven up the next few months. I really enjoyed the auction, and although there were only seven of us there, plus a puppy, it turned out to be enormous fun. I think we all came away with items we had not planned on buying, which is what very often happens in auctions.

Janet Bishop,

Chair of the Friends of Swaledale Museum

## A message from the Curator

As I write this the Museum is buzzing with activity, not with visitors, but with building work. As ever with an old building there is always rescue work to be done. This time we are concentrating on the ceiling and interior end walls, and one of the sash windows. Thanks to the Friends we do not have to delay this work, and can get on with these repairs straight away, which is a huge relief.

It has been a strange year. The Great Flood affected us all, even if we did not have the catastrophic experience of some. We have lived through an historic weather event, just like the one described by Mr Appleyard in 1899 which is now in the

Museum archive. Now we must save references of our experience in word, print, film and picture for the future. We have a file of material on floods and bridges, much gathered by Lucie Hinson. So now perhaps is the right time to draw it all together, appreciating the historical records in the light of our first hand experience of a similar event.

Thanks to new volunteer recruits Marie Wortley and Prue Drew we have been able to take odd days out from Museum duty. So we are especially



Marjorie Szurko with some of amazing sweet treats



The aftermath of the July floods - © scenicview.co.uk

grateful to them. I am delighted that Marie has offered to become Minutes Secretary for the Friends of the Museum, and she has also been doing sterling work helping update our archive filing. Rob Macdonald is giving our website a boost, with a host of new ideas with a view to attracting more people not only to the site, but also to the Museum. Meanwhile Stephen Eastmead our Digital Archivist has taken a very large bag of photographs to scan and add to our Online Image Archive. As always I thank the Friends of the Museum Committee members for their support.

We have had some wonderful talks this season. Shaun Richardson gave our first John Squires Lecture with his usual panache, erudition and expertise, concentrating on a landscape with horses at Tan Hill. Thanks to Will Swales's talk on insights into local place names we were party to his extensive and innovative research. The audience was totally convinced of his interpretation of the word 'Swale' as 'I swallow', not as in bird, but as in drink. What a treat we had when Marjorie Szurko launched her *Sweet Slices of History* in the Museum. Amidst a table laden with delicious morsels of historic food (including miniature madelines and Tudor gingerbread) we learnt about how her edible exhibitions turned into a Fortnum & Mason Book Award shortlisted publication. Richard Lamb revealed the innovative and not so innovative lead smelting activities at Marrick, navigating us through the complex science of smelting.

**Please note that the next Friends of Swaledale Museum AGM will take place in the Museum at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10th June 2020**

Marion Moverley presented a whole new range of news cuttings from the Dales, thanks to her extensive collection of snippets. Heartiest thanks go to those of you who came to the Grand Auction and those of you who left bids. We were a small band, but we had great fun, and raised £254 for the Museum.

For me one of the high points was working with Tracy Little on our 'Dating Local Photographs' talk. Thanks to her enviable eye for detail, her vast local knowledge and amazing network of family history experts she helped reveal the extraordinary stories behind some of our most iconic photographs of the Dale. It was a veritable switchback ride as what we thought was fact turned out to be fiction, and a whole web of connections were revealed. (More of this later in the Newsletter).

One of the many highlights came in our last Friends of the Museum lecture. Linda Bray came to talk to us (all the way from Australia) about her research into her great uncle Thomas Armstrong, and her project to make sure his literary legacy is not forgotten. In the audience were the Armstrongs' housekeeper, their neighbours who as two little girls remembered Thomas and Dulcie with fond affection, and Brian Robinson who looked after their cars. Brian was able to describe the cars in detail, in chronological sequence, and even remembered their colour! It was one of those special Swaledale moments when the audience contributed so much local knowledge with such generosity and humour.

The year has also been marked by great generosity, not least by John Sharp who allowed us to select books from his wife Susan's (née Alderson) genealogical library, as a way of remembering her love of the Dale. We have not only added much wanted volumes to the Museum Library, but were also given permission to sell duplicates - all bear Susan's Library stamp so her memory will live on through her books.

A look at our visitors' book suggests that we are continuing to provide an important service: the Taylors from Hendra, Cornwall 'Had high expectations - and they were exceeded'; Sheila Dyson from Sheffield thought this 'A great museum, I can feel the people ... Full of character'; while Andrew, Barnaby and Joseph from Lassalle, France stated that it gets 'Better every time we visit'. Jane and Patrick from Surrey commented that the Museum 'Evokes the past - beautiful! Wonderful museum'. The Hayward family of Long Crendon noted, an 'Absolutely fascinating museum - packed with interesting artists and information - Thank you, thoroughly enjoyable', while Mary and Julie from Durham wrote 'Wonderful preservation of past life. Well done for keeping the past alive'. Heidi from Leicester concludes that we are 'A gem of a museum - fantastic snapshots of Swaledale's history'. These comments and your support make it all worthwhile!

*Helen Bainbridge, Curator*

## Fremington's Romano-British Site

The Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group's dig at the Romano-British site near Fremington continued this summer and may prove to be of national significance as many of you will have seen when it was featured in the recent BBC 4 documentary *Digging for Britain*.

Amongst other visitors eighteen children from years 4 and 5 at Reeth School came to learn about the dale's Roman secrets when they visited the site on the last day of the summer term, prior to beginning their own project on the Romans in September. Their visit began with a tour of this year's

excavations with site manager Philip Bastow, during which they had the experience of walking across a newly-exposed Roman-era paved yard and seeing the recently discovered walls of a Romano-British round house. Then they examined some of the exciting finds from this year's dig, and learned some more about life in Swaledale some two thousand years ago.

One of the finds is a lead spindle whorl, so textile artist Christine gave them a demonstration of how this would be used as part of a basic drop-spindle to spin wool. The children then enjoyed interviewing three of the Newcastle University students who have joined in for this summer's excavation. They even had a go at digging their own test pit searching for a paved track.

*Tracy Little*



*Filming in progress*



*Local schoolchildren learning how to dig a test pit*

## Treasures Come in Brown Envelopes ...

On 29<sup>th</sup> June, Ann Stewart-Baker and her sister Christine Ward visited the Museum bearing a gift of a large and rather battered brown envelope. There were treasures inside relating to their mother Cicely Bailey (née Hoye). She had been evacuated in 1940 during the Second World War, from Gateshead to Swaledale at the age of 8, and went to live with Mr and Mrs Waggett at Keld. Cicely helped out with work at Butt House and in the Post Office and shop, staying on until she was 16 before returning home. During her time at Keld she took part in the famous BBC broadcast made by Wilfred Pickles from Swaledale. The brown envelope Ann and Christine brought contained transcripts of the broadcast which featured Cicely, and the letters she received congratulating her on her part in the programme.



Ann Stewart-Baker presenting the big brown envelope to the Museum

The transcript tells us that *By the Winding River Swale* was written by Gerry Raffles and Joan Littlewood, produced by Nan MacDonald and broadcast from the Manchester Studio on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September 1946. Pickles begins the programme at Tan Hill 'with the wind blowing and the bracken stirring' looking down 'on the great sweeps of purple heather and brown fell...the most exhilarating feeling in the world'. He meets Sidney Clarkson at West Stonesdale, and then presses on to Keld where he meets Cicely where she is feeding hens. She tells us that fellow evacuee Joe so loved the dale that he made sure he was fired from his job back in Gateshead and now farms at Crackpot Hall. Just before Muker, Pickles meets Gladys who gives him a cup of tea and some havercake and tells him about the 'Old Roy'. Cicely reappears and tells Pickles about the local wild flowers. She seems to have adopted the Swaledale dialect, and recites the story of a young farmer who had to choose a wife from three pretty daughters living at Keld. His choice is determined by how each daughter treats the cheese on her plate: one eats it without cutting off the rind, which he considers unclean, the second cuts off a thick piece of cheese with the rind and throws it away, which he thinks wasteful, and the third scraped the cheese until it was clean of rind putting the latter in the pig-bin. The farmer thought 'that's t'yan for me'. I wonder if this might have been the origin of May Sinclair's novel *The Three Sisters* set in Reeth and Whaw? Pickles then meets Gunnerside postman Tommy Brown, and he and Mr Calvert the blacksmith discuss the old lead mines, noting an 'iron trough with wheels', with lettering in the bottom OLD GANG. Then Pickles and Mr Calvert's boy, Jimmy, list the local birds.

He is followed by the ghostly voices of old miners as he makes his way down to Reeth where he recites the Reeth Battle Fair poem. He is met by Cicely and they listen to the sound of the children at Reeth School singing, before he progresses on to Richmond and the end of the programme which concludes with the song *Beautiful Swaledale*.

As one of the letter writers commented to Cicely, 'if Wilfred doesn't look out you'll be doing him out of his job', while Auntie Margaret and Uncle Tom in Gateshead noted that the experience 'will be something to look back on, in the future'. Now we have Cicely's script and her fan letters, thanks to her daughters, all of us can now look back on this little bit of local broadcasting history in more detail.

Helen Bainbridge

**R**ichard Lamb led his third field trip for us in mid-July. This year we were treated to an all day tour of the Surrender and Old Gang mills situated on Barney Beck between Arkengarthdale and Swaledale. We were blessed with good weather and no road closures, unlike previous years. Richard brought the complex sites to life for us with his usual enthusiasm, knowledge and energy. An added bonus was an aerial overview made possible by our youngest attendee, 21 year old Ben Harvey, who brought his camera mounted on a drone. Spectacular! Next year Richard's field trip will be concentrating on sites in Arkengarthdale.



Surveying the site - Kathy Browne



Drone shot - Ben Harvey

We were delighted to meet the great grandchildren of Rev TC Gobat, who feature in our panel on him, and his High Church and Labour Movement connections in Swaledale.

The photograph of them on the panel shows two young girls, who have now grown into young ladies. It was lovely to see the Gobats out in force when they came to our August Friends of the Museum talk.



**W**hen Helen and I started pulling together old photographs from the Museum collection for the September talk we had no idea of the can of worms we were opening or of the amazing string of coincidences which were involved.

This has always been one of our favourite photographs (*right*). There are several copies in circulation as it was obviously made into a post card at some point, but the general understanding from various notes has always been that this was the first car to come into the dale and it was a Sunbeam, the lady in the car is called Peggy Spensley, she was the oldest person in the dale at the time (aged 103 apparently!) and she was the local correspondent for the *Darlington & Stockton Times*.



Quite a lot of information for one small photograph – unfortunately most of it is wrong. As soon as we started trying to find out more about Peggy Spensley it became obvious that there was never a lady of that name who had lived so long and that the Peggy who was the newspaper correspondent would have been much too young to have ever dressed this way. There was another lady living in the dale at the time though who would fit the bill. *Cooke's Almanac for Richmond and Swaledale, 1910* records: "June 6th Mrs Margaret (Peggy) Spensley of Feetham, well known to visitors and residents in Swaledale in which valley she spent her whole life, died at the age of 85". So did Peggy the correspondent take advantage of the arrival of a piece of cutting edge technology in the dale to match it up with her oldest neighbour for an iconic photograph? There was a lady photographer on the doorstep, Miss Clarke of Feetham, who could easily have taken it at short notice.



In the meantime we'd been in touch with Beamish to see if they knew any more about the picture as they were selling postcards of it in their Museum shop. Amazingly they not only knew all about it, apart from Peggy's name but also had another picture of the same car in a different place! Their image no 15337 shows 'An elderly lady in a motor car at Low Row. Car originally registered in Newcastle upon Tyne, January 1904. The car is a Little Star 7hp reg BB 58. The car in 1904 belonged to Mr Alfred John Nathan Smithson of Stockton...' They also have this one (*left*) image no 84372 'A Little Star motor car 7hp (Reg BB 58) outside Smithson's photographers shop, possibly in the Stockton area. The gentleman driving the car is Mr Alfred Smithson's uncle.'

J B Smithson, based in Leyburn, was one of the local photographers who we'd featured in the talk, oblivious to the fact that the car belonged to his own nephew. The family originated from Low Row and still had relatives there,

which probably explains what the vehicle was doing in Swaledale in the first place.

At this point the Upper Dales Family History Group got involved. Thanks to Liz Kirby we found out that the second photo was taken outside Smithson's shop in Shildon. Several other people asked if there was any connection between J B Smithson and a Joseph Smithson who moved to Redmire from Low Row in the 1850s but didn't seem to fit comfortably into any of the known families. Incredibly the answer was sitting in the Museum all the time. In the archive, waiting to be delivered to the County Record Office for safe keeping, was a very fragile hand stitched journal, kept between 1838 and 1844 by Joseph Smithson himself. This had been looked after for many years by a family at Low Row and transcribed by one of our members, Sheila Ickringill. Inside the back page there was a note pasted: 'Return to J B Smithson, Craven House, West Burton.....which I had from my father's cousin, Joseph Smithson, Redmire.' This is pretty much a family historian's dream - actual written proof of a connection – and we were delighted to be able to share the news with his 4 x great grandson.

Without the initial query about the car and its owner it would probably have been some time before the significance of the journal itself was realised – it's faint and hard to read, has page edges missing and has been stitched back together in the wrong order – but it's an absolute goldmine of snippets of information about everyday life in the dale around 1840. As well as family, personal and chapel events Joseph recorded mining bargains, sudden deaths, the building of Holy Trinity Melbecks and comments on the Foresters' Friendly Society all in no particular order. The original document has now been scanned at NYCRO and we're looking forward to reading it more thoroughly during the winter months.

The story of the car continues however. In the last few weeks Alan and Julia Thorogood have discovered yet another photo (*right*) in the Beamish collection. Described as 'Jane Pedley in the driving seat of her early motor car c.1910 in Swaledale'. We haven't worked out yet who Jane Pedley is but we're pretty sure it's not actually her car and it looks awfully like another shot of Alfred Smithson's Little Star.



The story continues.....and if anyone knows where the car is now, we'd love to hear from you!  
*Tracy Little*

**T**hanks to Jane and Ian Law, who sent us a copy of her obituary, we now know quite a bit more about the intrepid motorcyclist Florence Margaret Blenkiron who grew up at Walker House, Marrick. Just to prove that you can't always trust newspapers though *The Daily Telegraph* starts by getting her year of birth wrong but we'll let them off as in 1991 you couldn't just go online to check these things!

*Margaret Kingaby....was the first woman to do the 'ton-up' on two wheels, lapping the Brooklands circuit at 102mph, an achievement that won her the Gold Star of the British Motor Cycle Racing Club in 1934.*

After describing the journey through Africa for which she is best known the piece continues:

*She spent her early career as a secretary at Hadfields, the Sheffield steel manufacturers.*

*Young Margaret had conceived her passion for motorcycles at the age of 16, but she later became as great an enthusiast for four wheels as for two. After her return from Capetown she spent two summers running car tours all over the British Isles and the Continent, finding winter employment as a secretary and chauffeur.*

*During 1939 Miss Blenkiron's adventurous spirit took her all over south east and north Australia. In November she returned for war service which was inevitably passed in motor transport. In October 1940 she left with a unit of 56 field ambulances for North Africa where she ferried those wounded in the desert back to Cairo.*

*She was then posted to the Palestinian Girl Drivers Unit and put in charge of heavy trucks and armoured vehicles, responsibilities that took her all over Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Her services were recognized by a commission in September 1941, after which she concentrated on training; at the end of the war she was mentioned in the dispatches.*

After moving to work in India she married an army officer, Kenneth Kingaby and the couple eventually moved back to farm in England. Sadly she suffered a stroke in later life and was confined to a wheelchair before her death in 1991 but she'd had an amazing life to look back on.

Tracy Little



Sam Richardson from the University of Huddersfield did a 3 day placement with us as part of his English Literature BA. We also awarded him the Second John Huggins Prize, of a copy of *The History of the World in 100 Objects*.

## Remembering Ralph Alderson

It is with great sadness that we said goodbye to Ralph Alderson who died on 26 October this year. One of the early projects of the Friends of Swaledale Museum, masterminded by Jenny Curtis, was the revival of the 1948 local production of *Beauty and the Beast*. We found not only the original script, but also some of the original cast, including Ralph Alderson, who played The Beast. What a wonderful moment it was to meet Ralph, characteristically full of energy, wit, kindness and fun. He linked Swaledale past and present with such a generosity of spirit, and became a true and loyal friend of the Museum. As Pamela, his wife, noted he was proud of his Swaledale roots. He was a fount of knowledge on local matters which he was always willing to share. We were delighted to see them both in the summer, when they participated in Rhoda Fraser's delightful Chapel Tea in the Museum. Even though Ralph was ill his humour and spirit shone through. Though we shall not have the pleasure of his actual company again, he is very much part of the Museum, and will always be part of Swaledale.

Helen Bainbridge



*Ralph in costume as the original Beast!*

## Mystery Object

We're very grateful to Tim Martin & Nicky Ingram who identified the last set of mystery objects (right): "The tools in the latest newsletter are general foundry tools for preparing the sand for casting. They are usually brass/bronze and used for touching in the edge of the sand mould after the pattern has been removed and before the metal is poured in. There are usually around 40 different shapes in a set - but each foundry man would make ones to suit his own work."



This edition's mystery object below isn't quite such a mystery as the curator does actually know what it is this time! The handle is wooden, the metal hook part is extendable and the coin is a 50 pence piece for comparison. Any thoughts?



## Friends' Programme 2020

Dates and speakers for 2020 are being finalized at the moment but will be advertised in the Spring Newsletter and on the website etc as soon as we have details.

Probable topics so far include the Kearton brothers, the impact of the floods on the local historic environment, poverty in the dales in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and another look at old photographs of the dales.

In an attempt not to clash with the Swaledale Festival next year we've planned the AGM for a little later than usual:

**Wednesday 10th June**  
Friends of the Museum AGM

After being cancelled once due to illness and once due to the flooding, we're hoping David Johnson will be able to finally, at the third attempt, tell us about lime kilns next summer:

**Wednesday 1st July**

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

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

For more information contact: 01748 884118, 07969

823232, or email: [helen@swaledalemuseum.org](mailto: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 .**

Earlier this year the Museum received an email from Rod Aanensen, a member of the Marrickville Heritage Society in New South Wales; [www.marrickvilleheritage.org.au](http://www.marrickvilleheritage.org.au)

Marrickville is a suburb of Sydney named by the owner of the land where it was built in 1855; Thomas Chalder, born at Marrick in 1813.

Rod was keen to learn about Marrick in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but also to find out about the fate of a flag, sent by the children of Marrickville to the school at Marrick in 1907. He was delighted to learn that although the flag itself had succumbed to the elements, the embroidered border (*below*) still exists and is still in Marrick, well over a century later.



## Friends of Museum in

### Criminal Connections Shock!

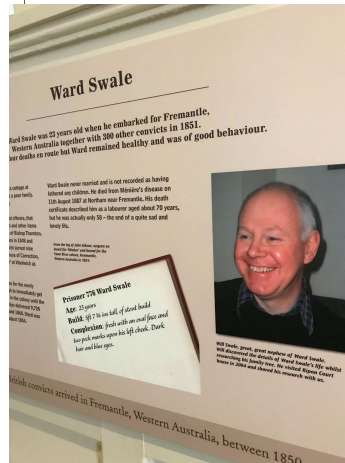
When Will Swales and John Little were introduced as they sat in the same row at one of the Museum talks this summer they had no idea that anything at all connected them.



Until two other members spotted this panel (*below*) at the Prison and Police Museum in Ripon. Will's great great uncle

Ward Swale got on the wrong side of the law and was rewarded with a one way ticket to Australia in 1851. At around the same time two of John's great great great uncles were running a pigeon stealing racket in South Yorkshire until they got caught by a clever bit of policing.

Astonishingly all three ended up on the same Thames hulk awaiting transportation and then sailed together on the *Minden* to Western Australia. Coincidences do happen!



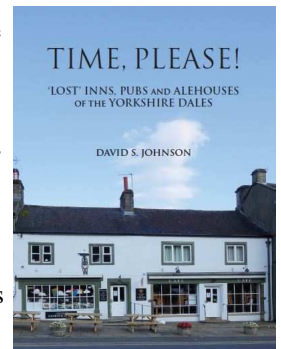
When not researching his criminal connections Will writes about the history of people and places in Swaledale (do have a look at his website: <https://willswales1.wordpress.com/>) and gave us a fascinating talk in September about the origins of some local place names.

*Tracy Little*

A new feature on the Museum website is a place for reviews of locally relevant books. Helen has set the ball rolling by reviewing *Time, Please! 'Lost' Inns, Pubs and Alehouses of the Yorkshire Dales*, by David Johnson.

The book covers 'forgotten' premises such as Jenkin Gate at Oxnop and Lilly Jocks in Arkengarthdale which is shown on an 1836 map, and of course the many pubs of Reeth, tracking their changing names and some of the licence holders.

*Time, Please!* is published by the North Craven Heritage Trust, ISBN 978-1-9160727-6-3, and is on sale at Castle Hill Bookshop in Richmond at £9.99, or directly from the Trust.



If you have any memories or reminiscences of Swaledale & Arkengarthdale, or anything else relevant to local history which would be of interest for the Newsletter, the Committee would love to hear from you. We can't promise to use everything in full, but all contributions, however small, will be very welcome! Please contact Helen on 07969 823232 or email:

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