



Pocklington and District Local History Group

October 2020—Newsletter No. 1



Hail fellow Pocklington history supporter,

When we had to suspend our history group meetings back on 1st April no one knew how long it would be for and where things would take us. Some six months on and we are not really much the wiser. Clearly restarting monthly meetings is not yet on the horizon, but PDLHG committee and members have not been idle in recent months.

The lockdown obviously sent numerous people to their computers to research their family histories, and we received several enquiries through the website from people home and abroad with Pocklington origins or connections.

They included Americans wanting to confirm their ancestry back to Tudor Pocklington, those from nearer to home wanting help in unravelling what their relatives were doing in Victorian times, and a recent message from France asking for local information about Bernard Sanchis, son of Vicente Sanchis, one of 'La Neuve', the Spanish republicans in the Free French army that left Pocklington in July 1944 and liberated Paris a month later.

And I was even pulled into investigating my own background with a notable outcome. I had a basic knowledge of my family going back a couple of hundred years but I'm not really into family history, however, I received an email in May (sent at 2am) from a distant cousin asking for some help with her research. A few hours online and I was delighted to have discovered that I am directly descended from convicts – in 1821 my 4 x Great Grandfather and 3 x Great Grandfather, father and son John Gilbank, were both transported Down Under for poaching, served their 7 year sentences in Van Diemen's Land then returned home to East Yorkshire both living to a ripe old age.

It was particularly disappointing that the VE -Day 75th commemorations were cancelled as we had arranged to put on an exhibition as part of the 2020 Flying Man Festival in church; but there has been plenty more happening on the local history front that will hopefully be shared or published before too long.

The project to create a museum within Burnby Hall has been delayed but not derailed, and I hope to feedback more at the **history group's Zoom AGM which we have set for 15 October**. We are immensely indebted to Hull museum designer, Mike Cox, who during the lockdown produced free of charge a draft design of what he thought a museum in Burnby Hall could look like.

Committee man, John Brown, has led an initiative to publish a book of local walks that contains many snippets of historical and architectural information and is now available from Forths and other local outlets. History group members, John Nottingham and Mike Silburn, are putting together a detailed publication about all the losses of aircraft from RAF Pocklington during WWII. There is a meeting in a couple of weeks with a TV company that is putting together programmes about lost railway lines, and we are helping a local man put together an app detailing a Halloween history tour around town. We also hope to produce a Pocklington history walk and talk video in the next couple of months.

Andrew Sefton has kept updating the pocklingtonhistory.com website with all sorts of information, and this newsletter contains a summary of what he has posted through the summer. If you have any information or discoveries then please send it to Andrew for the archives.

All the above and more means that we are scheduled to emerge from the pandemic with lots of new stuff, if, that is, you can call anything to do with history as new – as I wrote back in April at the start of the lockdown, Harry S Truman said: *"There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know"*.

Happy historical hunting,

Phil Gilbank

**** Important Announcement ****

Pocklington & District Local History Group will hold their AGM on Thursday 15th October at 7.30pm and will include a short presentation on 'Review of the Year' by Andrew Sefton. The meeting is by Zoom and you must register your attendance by emailing Jo Green or sending an email to:

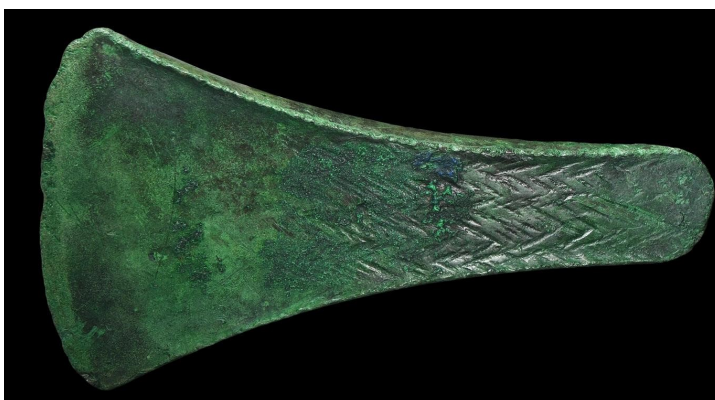
pocklingtonheritage@gmail.com



Mesolithic hand axe in flint found at Throstle Nest Farm Pocklington (Owner: Pocklington & District Local History Group).



Bronze Age British 'Swinton Variety, Bandon Type' Flanged Flat Axehead found near Barmby Moor (owner: A.Sefton)



Bronze Age British 'Migdale' Type Decorated Flat Axe found at Wetwang (Owner: A.Sefton)



A Viking iron axe-head This type of axe head (Skeggøx : bearded axehead) is the heavier type of single hand axe type. Found close to the village of Fangfoss, along with a large bronze ring (to slip the axe handle into attached to a belt?), and a Spearhead. Also buried with the axe and spear was a bronze finger ring. (Owner: A.Sefton)

The history of the area told by axes

Andrew the axeman

History can sometimes be defined by the progression of a single article through the ages. There are a few items that have an aura about them - and one such is the axe.

Pocklington and district has a particularly distinguished history when it comes to axes, and thanks to Andrew Sefton setting his stall out to fill in some of the gaps we now have an almost continuous series of axes going back some 5,000 years.

Dozens of Neolithic stone and flint axes have been found over the years in the fields around Pocklington, originally used to clear the woodland and bring the land into cultivation around 3000 BC. A prominent stone example, known as 'The Pocklington Axe', is at the Hull & East Riding Museum, while we were recently given an impressive Neolithic flint axehead, found just over the Pocklington parish boundary on the way to Nunburnholme.

Moving to the next era a miniature bronze socketed axe was found in 2014 as part of the Nunburnholme community archaeology project; and cache of four Bronze Age socketed axes were found on Pocklington School's playing fields in the 1970s. They are believed to have been deliberately buried by a local blacksmith about 1000 BC and were given to the Yorkshire Museum but are not on show. Earlier Bronze Age axes or fragments are recorded from Pocklington, Givendale and Fangfoss.

The local history of the axe is a mixture of artefacts and stories, and the Viking era leads the way. There is the famous legend of the giant Viking axeman slaying King Harold's men by the score on the bridge at Stamford Bridge before he was speared by a crafty Saxon in a pig trough boat. And Andrew has greatly added to our local heritage by obtaining an artefact to go alongside the legend – sourcing a small axe from the Viking period found at Fangfoss.

Leaping forward in time, for centuries 'The Yorkshire Bill' became both agricultural implement and weapon of war. For centuries the same billhook that thatchers, peasants and yeomen used on their hedges and coppices were taken with them as their weapon of choice.

The billhook was in use by the Saxon period and went through the ages into the 20th century, still being issued to sappers in World War I. Descriptions of the Battle of Towton, England's bloodiest battle in 1460, tell of the mass slaughter of Lancastrian troops. Perhaps my favourite local reference comes from the state papers of the Tudor period which detail how Thomas Bishop, lord of



A Viking iron Skeggøx found in the 1980's by G Houghton with other Viking artefacts very close to Stamford Bridge, a few miles south close to Dunnington.
(Owner: A.Sefton)

the manor of Pocklington, was "sore afflicted by the byll" – he took part in the Revolt of the Northern Earls which attempted to replace Elizabeth I with Mary Queen of Scots, and was struck over the head by a billhook during his capture. Queen Elizabeth sent her personal surgeon north to Carlisle to keep him alive because she wanted the key information he possessed and he lived another ten years in the Tower or under house arrest – his son, Thomas junior, was also captured with him but was not so lucky as his life was ended by an axe when he was beheaded at York in 1570.

Yorkshire billhooks were made by the hundred by local blacksmiths, and Andrew has brought the local axe collection up to date by salvaging a couple of classic Yorkshire billhooks from his family farm at Bishop Wilton.

If anyone has any more local axe related information we would love to know about it.



Bill hooks from Hall Farm Bishop Wilton. They date from the 19th Century and were a classic ancient design known as the "Yorkshire Billhook"
(Owner: A.Sefton and all above axes will be donated to Pocklington Museum when operational)

Latest Website Updates



[Canon Noel Duckworth](#) (left) was Chaplain of Pocklington School from 1958-61. He was an Olympic rowing cox and Japanese Prisoner of War in World War 2 and who served in 2-Cambs regiment and who also appeared on 'This is Your Life'. He gave a remarkable speech recording his ordeal which was broadcast on the BBC and a transcript survives and was given on the eve of the official Japanese surrender in Singapore on 12th Sept 1945.

[Flight Lieutenant John J Blair](#) DFC (right) was born in 1919 in Jamaica. In 1941, at the age of 22 he volunteered for service in the RAF and was enlisted into Bomber Command. Following training in Canada, he joined 102 Squadron as a Navigator at RAF Pocklington. This is a link to a video made by Mark Johnson the great-nephew of John Jellicoe Blair, one of almost 500 Black Caribbean air crew in the RAF during the Second World War.



"[Clegg's People](#)" was a Yorkshire Television series made in the early 1980's. In this episode Michael Clegg interviews three people working in Yorkshire in different artistic fields about their work. For his third interview, Clegg visits the Arts Centre in Pocklington. The [Pocklington Cinema](#) shows a film has just finished screening and the curtains go up to reveal the collection of penny arcadia, old slot-machines, collected by John Gresham. One of the machines shows an English execution, and

Gresham shows others in action, with a young woman assistant winding one of the machines. Gresham gives an account of their history and how he came to acquire the objects 12 years previously, which held 333 machines. He states that 100 of these are on show, dating between 1886 and 1939, some possibly earlier. The first one he acquired was a space invader machine. Together they look at more of the collection, including a football game from 1896, the first of its kind, and an acrobat, an American execution and a Chinese torture. Some were collected from the father of Alice and Evelyn Dennison from Leeds, including a What the Butler Saw. After the Arcadia closed in 1994, the collection was sold to an American Greg McLemore in 2004 who now exhibits the machines in [Pasadena](#), California, USA. **In the film *Fast Forward to 14m 40s to see Pocklington*.**

Further additions to the district information has been added which includes the [Hearth Tax 1672-73 for Seaton Ross](#) and the Trade Directories for 1892-1909 for [Melbourne](#), [Storwood](#) and [Thornton](#).

[York Archaeological Trust conservation project](#) to protect important Pocklington Iron Age burial objects is now complete.



The York Archaeological Trust (YAT) has been working on the chariot and other grave goods discovered on the Persimmon Homes development. Excavations at the site by MAP Archaeological Practice in Malton Paula Ware, managing director of MAP Ltd, said: "The upright horses were positioned in motion, as though leaping upwards out of the grave. "The skeleton of the 'warrior' man was placed in a crouched position in the bed of the chariot with a remarkably well-preserved bronze shield, and a beautiful decorated enamelled brooch." The corroded and fragile nature of the items meant that field conservation techniques such as the use of plaster bandages and block lifting, as well as very careful handling, were employed to lift the objects safely and transfer them to the conservation laboratory for further work.



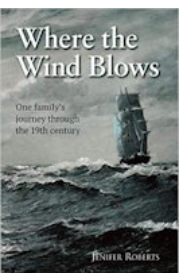
[The forgotten faces of Pocklington](#) - Michael Tayleure photographed many people of Pocklington in his portrait studio in the town in Victorian times. They survive by surfacing many years later from house clearances and auction sites. They have no names, they are forgotten people. No one alive today knows who they are. So, encourage everyone to write a name on the back of a photograph so that future generations will know their identity.

Phil Gilbank is an expert on [Pocklington's Catholic Heritage](#) and has researched the long history Pocklington has had with the Catholic faith. Pocklingtonians have always been a rebellious lot and usually chose the losing side in national events. Examples include 'The Pilgrimage of Grace' and 'The English Civil War. But Phil gets hold of the story in typical scrum down fashion and tackles a complicated story with accomplishment. His talk has been made into a video using his original presentation slides.

Old Family Group Photographs is a new section added to the web site. The [Moor family](#) of Barmby Moor were a significant family in the area and probably the best known descendant being Denis Moor who had the electrical shop in Pocklington. Their farm was Barmby Grange which was later the location of Pocklington Airfield and Pocklington Industrial Estate.



Next is the [Smithson family](#) of St. John's Lodge Pocklington with the oldest certified family photograph taken by Michael Tayleure in 1874. Lastly, the family of [William Johnson](#) of Pocklington with another very early group photograph.



Jenifer Roberts has written a new book called "Where the Wind Blows" which includes information of the [Rudston family of Hayton](#). Jenifer describes the book as "An enthralling family saga told through a remarkable collection of letters written by members of a family divided through emigration and tragedy. It is a fascinating story of one family's journey through the 19th century begins in the wheat fields of Lincolnshire, moves through Australia, Ireland and the Atlantic Ocean, and ends in a crumbling sandstone monument on the north Yorkshire coast." The book is available on [Amazon](#).

The Oaks, was run on Saturday 4th July 2020 at Epsom and took place on the same day as The Derby for the first time. Phil Gilbank writes of the ancient associations of thoroughbred horse racing in the Pocklington area and some of the local characters involved.



[Beatlemania in the 1960's](#) inspired many pop bands to start up a pop or rock band. All that was needed was drum set, a bass guitar, an electric guitar and a singer with a mop of hair!.

The Pocklington area had a few bands in the 60's and 70's and we explore the music and the people of the time.

Bands remembered included 'The Targets' (Pocklington), 'The Strangers' (Barmby Moor), 'The Corvettes' (Seaton Ross), 'The Zeroes' (Pocklington), 'Jason and the Argonauts' (Barmby Moor), 'Sons of Witch' (Pocklington), folk band Prussian Blue (Bishop Wilton) and the Bluegrass band The Crocker Brothers (Millington).

Next is an intriguing story of Spanish Republicans, who as part of the Free French, congregated in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1944 and stayed in Pocklington prior to the D-Day landings. [Rafael Gomez Nieto](#) - the last survivor of 'La Neuve', the company of Spanish republican soldiers that lived and trained in Pocklington before going on to be the first troops to liberate Paris in August 1944, has recently died aged 99. Another victim of the deadly CoronaVirus. People in Pocklington knew him as Ralph Gomez.



A [talk was given by the Pocklington and District Local History Group Chairman Phil Gilbank](#) in Thixendale in October 2019 and has been made into a video.

We explore the mystery of the Warter Priory relic '[The hand of Saint James](#)'. This relic possessed powerful healing properties, and performed miracle cures throughout the twelfth century. Warter Priory ran St. Giles' hospital in Beverley and no doubt attempted to heal many pilgrims on their way to visit the tomb of St John in Beverley Minster. But Reading Abbey also possessed a hand of St. James, so the mystery deepens. (Left: the hand of St. James in St. Peters R.C. Church, Marlow).



Due to popular request, WARTER has been added to PocklingtonHistory.com.

We have traditionally tried to stick to the old [Harthill Wapentake \(Wilton Beacon Division\)](#) as our area of coverage for the Pocklington



and District Local History Group. However, it is clear that we have had to add further parishes as these places still have an affinity to the town and the town in turn views them as local villages. Warter is also such an interesting local place with the history of the Priory ancient and modern, and it contains, very close to Pocklington, [The Yorkshire Wolds Heritage Centre](#) in Warter Church. The first items to be added include the [Bulmers directory for 1892](#), a [Gallery of Photographs](#), [Saint James Church](#), the [1844 Tithe Apportionment](#), the [History of Warter](#) with the web page designed to be used as an educational resource.

The following report was from the [Pocklington Post newspaper for 6th August 2020](#). York Archaeological Trust conservation project to protect important Pocklington Iron Age burial objects now complete. The delicate conservation process of the rare Iron Age chariot burial objects found in Pocklington is now complete.

The [York Archaeological Trust \(YAT\)](#) has been working on the chariot and other grave goods discovered on the Persimmon Homes development. Excavations at the site by MAP Archaeological Practice in Malton had already unearthed dozens of graves, but once the importance of the barrow and its contents were realised. The Pocklington site contained the remains of a high-status individual, together with several different grave goods including an impressive shield.

The History of Barmby Moor which was produced by Jean Dawes, Guy Wilson and Ray Wilkinson is to be reprinted. Copies will be available from Moira Wilkinson for £10 with any profit going to Barmby Moor School. If anyone would like a copy please contact Jo Green for Moira's telephone number.



Magi Felber preparing one of the wheels for transportation to YAT's Conservation Lab.