

Oldham and District Branch of the Manchester and
Lancashire Family History Society

Newsletter December 2017

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Branch News

Last Meeting

The last meeting on Saturday 11th November was a talk and presentation given by Peter Hardy about The National Memorial Arboretum.

Peter and his wife Jane have been volunteers at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire for just over 9 years. The Memorial has 10,000 trees and 330 memorials across 150 acres and is a nationally recognised centre of remembrance.

Jane began the talk by reading a beautiful poem written by a nine year old girl called Jane Johnson entitled *Fifty Years Late*. Peter then went on to explain that the Memorial Arboretum was conceived to remember service people who had died in active service since the end of the Second World War. Every year, in Spring, a sculptor will come and carve the names of people who have died since the previous year on the Armed Forces Memorial. This will be followed by a dedication ceremony when relatives of the dead are invited to dedicate the new names.

Commander David Childs, in conjunction with Leonard Cheshire, first had the idea of having a place where living trees could be dedicated to the fallen. 150 acres of land in Staffordshire on a flood plain site, which had previously been quarried for sand and gravel, were gifted by Lafarge. The Millenium Commission granted about forty per cent of the money and the rest of the money was raised by a national appeal. Tree planting began in the 1990s. Since then there have been 330 memorial and 10,000 trees dedicated to individuals and organisations. It was officially opened in May 2001.

There are many facilities for the visitor including a land train, buggy tours, mobility scooters and guided walks. Entrance is free although there is a charge for the car park and there is also for the exhibition and audio guide. All donations are used to keep the site going.

Peter then showed us photographs and explained the symbolism of some of the many memorials. For example the RAF memorial is flanked by silver birch trees the barks of which look like the fusilage of an aeroplanes and the nearby three pronged hedge reminds us of a propellor.

In the Chapel three simple crosses are the main focus with the central cross being the sword of sacrifice which can be seen on all Commonwealth war graves. Douglas Firs hold up the building and a sculpture entitled *The Story Teller* shows Jesus on the stairs telling stories to modern families with the

inscription *The Key To The Future Is The Past* reminding us of a very important message.

The Armed Forces Memorial designed by Liam O'Connor and built of Portland stone stands on a mound above the flood plain. The names of the 16,000 service personnel are carved into the Memorial's stone walls, with space for an additional 15,000 names to be added. The structure has classical features and the mound reminds us of an ancient burial ground. It is surrounded by oak trees. Inside the bronze sculpture shows us how conflicts impact on the lives of people. It shows a dead soldier surrounded by service personnel, a man poised to carve the dead man's name on the memorial and another pointing to an open door symbolising the way to the After-Life. The sun shines through this open door onto a wreath placed on the floor on 11th November at 11am.

Probably the most poignant memorial is *Shot At Dawn*. It shows a figure based on a 17 year old service man of the Northumberland Fusiliers who was shot at Ypres in 1917. He is surrounded by 309 stakes representing those who were later pardoned. Six trees represent the firing squad and the whole memorial is set out in a semi-circle to symbolise a Greek Tragedy. The memorial is in the most easterly part of the site where dawn breaks.



There are also memorials for volunteer services such as the RNLi and other services such as the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service. A recent addition is a memorial dedicated to evacuees which stands at the entrance to a children's wood.

We would like to thank Peter and Jane for making the journey from Staffordshire to give us this fascinating talk. A summary such as this can't do Peter's talk justice. A visit to the site is also highly recommended as there is so much to see.

www.thenma.org.uk

Meetings will recommence in February

This was our first meeting in the Lees Suite. It is a very pleasant room with a very good screen and comfortable chairs. We hope you will be able to join us for future meetings which will recommence in February when Dorothy Bintley will talk about the Zeppelin raid on Cleethorpes when 31 soldiers of the Manchester Regiment died.

Remembrance Day, Saturday 11th November

We were invited by *Oldham Remembers* to provide a stall at an event in Oldham Library on Saturday 11th November. Myself, Carol and Elsie attended. We took some books about the war and leaflets about our society.

Unfortunately the footfall was not great but we enjoyed listening to Westwood Over 50 Brass Band who were fantastic and we learnt about some of the soldiers that Cath Ball had researched for the Oldham Remembers Campaign. We also enjoyed speaking to Maggie Hurley from Age UK who has researched and written about the Oldham soldiers who died in the UK as a result of wounds or illness sustained on active service in WW1. The book is called *Lest We Forget: Oldham's forgotten now remembered* and can be obtained from Age UK for a donation.

if you are interested in any of the books WW1 that are sold by the Society visit the online book shop.

<https://www.mlfhs-shop.co.uk/collections/textbooks-military>

Oldham and Peterloo

Robert Poole gave a talk to the Society in Manchester about Oldham's connections to Peterloo.

The list of Peterloo names on the MLFHS website names 51 people from Oldham. This number does not include those from places like Royton, Lees, Chadderton and other areas of Oldham so there were a large number of people from the Oldham area at Peterloo.

In the years leading up to Peterloo there were numerous reform meetings and expressions of radicalism around the Oldham area. Robert gave an account of the places and people in the Oldham area who were active in seeking reform.

In 1805 **Joseph Lees** of **Glodwick** wrote a poem called *Jone o Grinfilt* (Greenfield.) Robert thinks that it probably wasn't Greenfield in Saddleworth but near Glodwick. It is a poem written in dialect about a man who volunteers to fight against France in the Napoleonic War. A later version called *The Oldham Weaver* first appeared in 1815 and tells of the plight of the weaver.

In 1813, the organiser and reformer, John Cartwright, on a tour of northern England, visited **Lees** where he heard from a man called **Nicholson** that Unions had been formed in the vicinity. At Peterloo the black **Saddleworth, Lees and Mossley Union** banner was inscribed with the words "Equal Representation or Death, Unite and Be Free, No Boroughmongering, Taxation Without Representation is Unjust and Tyrannical, No Corn Laws, and Universal Suffrage." The contingent was led by "**Doctor**" **Healey**. This banner and its inscriptions reveal the radicalism of the area.

In 1816 a **Hampden Club** (a political campaigning and debating society) was formed in **Hollinwood** at the home of **Henry Whitehead**, a publican.

However **the** first public meeting of the club was held at **Royton**. At a meeting in **Lydgate** in 1818 **Samuel Bamford** suggested that the women at the meeting should be allowed to vote for or against the resolutions. Robert made the suggestion that this was the real start of women's suffrage. In 1819 there was a wave of Radical meetings including a delegate meeting at **Oldham** on June 7th when delegates from twenty-eight towns attended and where points for reform, including repeal of the Corn Laws, Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments, were drawn up. The chairman was **John Knight**. The feeling was that if reform didn't happen then people would die from starvation and so were prepared to die in defence of their rights. In August 1819, it was reported that drilling in had taken place at **Tandle Hill**. Captain Chippendale, of the Oldham militia, spied on the radical detachments forming there on the morning of Peterloo. After Peterloo the inquest into the death of John Lees of Oldham who died from sabre wounds, was held at the Angel Inn in **Oldham**. **James Harmer**, the radical solicitor, tried to change it into a trial of the authorities. However the inquest was a farce and it was cancelled with no verdict reached.

For more detail watch a reconstruction of the inquest on youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejnhErFdJTY>

There is also a video animation about Peterloo on

<https://vimeo.com/156157535>

Robert Poole has asked if anyone knows anything about any of the people who were involved in any these events especially **Nicholson of Lees** who told John Cartwright about the formation of unions in the vicinity of Lees.

Also any of the names who were involved in the formation of the Hampden Club:-

I here send you an account of all that is come to my knowledge respecting the Reformers from the first establishment of the Hampden Club at Hollinwood to the present time. This club was first established by the following persons at the House of Henry Whitehead of Hollinwood Publican, viz. John Haigh and Joseph Haigh both of Broadway Lane near Oldham, Josiah Booth, William Booth, Henry Booth, John Booth, and James Bradley all of Hollinwood; John Kay, William Fitton, and another person that I cannot now recollect, from Royton; John Knight, William Benbow, and a man of the name of Buckley, from Manchester; Samuel Whittaker from Audenshaw (Brother to Thomas Whittaker of Stockport that was transported for administering unlawful Oaths), James Wilkinson (brother to Thos Wilkinson, one of the 38 Innocents), Robert Ridings (who was taken up under the Suspension Act), John Simister, John Blackley, and Joseph Fletcher (and I think Thomas Collinson of Failsworth, who is now confined in the Lunatic Asylum at Lancaster); John Anderton and Matthew Thorp, from Moston; and William Wilson from Chadderton. Before the establishment of the Hampden Club, the aforementioned persons usually attended Debating Meetings that were held at various places in this Neighbourhood, such as Oldham, Royton, Middleton, Ashton under Lyne, Staley Bridge, Bolton, Failsworth and Manchester.

(From **MCL** GB127.BR f 363 Di

Prefaced by a piece by Donald Read, 'The Hampden Clubs: A Lancashire Spy's Narrative', *Manchester Guardian* 2 Oct 1956. It is the narrative, written up c.1820, of a magistrates' spy. His superiors were Wm Chippendale, captain Oldham militia, & John Lloyd, clerk to magistrates in Stockport.)

Please email Robert Poole if you are able to help
robert.poole@mac.com

Help Needed at Oldham Local Studies

At the Society's October Quarterly Meeting in Manchester, Robert Poole mentioned the William Chippendale archive which is held at Oldham Local Studies and Archives. Chippendale was the local Home Office correspondent in the period leading up to the Peterloo massacre and work has now started to transcribe letters he sent and received together with other papers.

If you would like to help with this interesting work, either at the Archives or at home, contact Roger Ivens roger.iven@oldham.gov.uk

Local News

Private Walter Mills, VC

Oldham is set to remember the third recipient from Oldham to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

On **Monday 11th December** a service will take place in Oldham Parish Church at 11am to honour Private Walter Mills VC in Oldham Parish Church. A commemorative paving stone will also be unveiled in his honour in the grounds of Oldham Parish Church.

Walter Mills was born on 22nd of June 1894. He married Ellen Britt in 1913 at Christ Church Chadderton and his only child Ellen was born in 1914.

He was in the 1st/10th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment and in September 1914 the Battalion were posted to Egypt. In May 1915 the Battalion saw action at the Gallipoli landings. However it was on 11th December 1917 at the Red Dragon Crater near Givency, France, that Walter earned his Victoria Cross.

Following a strong gas attack the barracks were under pressure and were overwhelmed. In spite of being badly gassed Walter remained at his post and met the attackers single-handed throwing bombs at the enemy until reinforcements arrived. Due to his self sacrifice the line remained intact but Walter died from gas poisoning as he was being carried away from the action. He is buried in the Gorre British and Indian Cemetery.

Oldham Council are appealing for family members to come forward to join local dignitaries at the service and commemoration.

If you are a relative of Private Mills or just want to pay your respects contact Zubair Sedat.

zubair.sedat@oldham.gov.uk

Also see the Oldham Remembers website to learn more about Oldham's commemorations of 100 years since the First World War at

www.oldhamremembers.org.uk

Talks by Other Groups (which are not part of our society)

Saddleworth Historical Society Lecture

MANCHESTER : Sex, Death and Politics in the Georgian Town.

lecture given by Craig Horner senior lecturer in History at Manchester Metropolitan University.

7:30 pm **Wednesday 6th December**

Saddleworth Museum, Uppermill, OL3 6HS

Admission is free for members; £3 for visitors.

Royton Local History Society

Christmas Words and Music

A talk, with music, by Geoffrey Scargill at Downey House, Church Street, Royton at 7.30pm on **Monday 11th December 2017.**

Oldham Historical Research Group

Quiz Night

at Oldham Local Studies and Archives at 7pm on **Wednesday 13th December.**

Society News

We are currently looking to expand our popular Family History Help Desk team which is located at Manchester Central Library.

Volunteers need to:

- be members of Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society
- ideally have a minimum of two years family history research experience
- enjoy working with the general public (previous experience is helpful, though not essential)
- enjoy working as a member of a team.

This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about family history research and share your knowledge with other family history researchers.

If you are interested and would like to learn more about this opportunity please email: helpdesk@mlfhs.org.uk

We would like to wish you a Happy Christmas and all the very best for the New Year

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