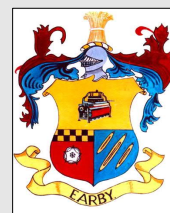


Earby Chronicles

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SOCIETY AIMS:

to raise awareness, foster an interest and facilitate research into the heritage of Earby & district including Thornton in Craven, Sough, Kelbrook, Harden, Hague and Salterforth.

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THE ANCIENT GAME OF KNUR AND SPELL

By Bob Abel



A Game of Knur and Spell as depicted by George Walker in 1814

This article was prompted when Pat Duxbury donated to the society a number of ceramic balls which her son had found in the becks of Earby. They were knurs used in the traditional pastime of Knur and Spell, the object of which was to smash the knur as far as one could using a wooden stick. I will not go into all the technicalities of the game in this article but give a flavour

of the sport and its local connections. Paul Breeze and Stuart Greenfield's book "Colne Giants – Tales from the Forgotten World of Knur and Spell" details the intricacies of the game.

There are, or were, many similar games played by children in the back streets. Herbert Hipgrave remembers a game where an object was rested on a brick, flicked up into the air with a stick and then hopefully hit with the same stick. Comparable games known by other names also existed far and wide.

Knur and Spell was essentially confined to the Northern mining and mill areas of Yorkshire and Lancashire, particularly in South Yorkshire and the Pennine districts and at one time was very popular in our locality. Its popularity has waxed and waned through the years with several revivals after periods when it had become less fashionable.

There is no doubt that the game has an ancient pedigree and some have even suggested that the



Herbert Hipgrave demonstrating the game

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words Knur and Spell and other terminologies signify a Viking origin. One of George Walker's pictures for his book illustrating "Costume of Yorkshire" of 1814, depicts a group of men playing Knur and Spell.

Like many other pastimes the game has its own technical jargon starting with the equipment. The knur in the 20th century was a ceramic ball officially weighing ½ ounce. These were originally manufactured to be used in kettles to prevent them furring up. This is a good example of everyday objects being adopted or adapted for use in the game; earlier versions used wooden balls. Herbert Hipgrave was advised that the ideal material for the stick was a railway shunter's pole which had to be tapered so that the narrow end would fit into a detachable head (The tapering also gave the stick a whip action). Various woods were used for the heads which were fixed on to the stick using pitch and string binding. Again Herbert was counselled that the tar used by local councils to seal road setts was an ideal adhesive.

Most equipment was home-made and there was much mystery and magic surrounding its creation. Some men became experts and would only share their skills with certain players. Peter Dawson tells of Hargreaves (Agg) Turner in Earby making the heads which generally consisted of two differing woods glued together. The Turner household had a permanent odour of glues and resins.

There are two basic versions of the game. In one the ball is launched into the air by means of a spring-loaded mechanism and the ball is hit on the rise; this version found favour in the South Yorkshire districts. In the other form the Knur is suspended in a loop from a gallows-like frame called a pin and hit from a stationary position; this was more popular in the Pennine districts particularly in Lancashire. The aim of the game in both versions is the same. A choice is made beforehand as to the scoring, of which there were two options. In Long Knock play the longest knock of a predetermined number (usually 20 or 25) of knocks won the match. In match play the combined length of all the knocks decided the winner. The length of each hit was traditionally measured in a straight line with a chain of 20 yards length. The players were also subject to the handicappers who, taking into account each contestant's age, experience and past performances, allotted a number of yards advantage.

The game obviously needs large areas as the knur can be hit over 200 yards distance. During the late 19th and into the 20th centuries the game became associated with pubs and most of the grounds were suitably sited. There are references to local matches at the Tempest Arms, Elslack, the Punch Bowl, Earby and Peter Dawson remembers Topsy Field behind the White Lion in Earby being used. The Stone Trough at Kelbrook, the Black Lane Ends, the Alma and the Emmott Arms and the Hargreaves Arms at Laneshawbridge were other popular venues.

Matches were usually played for money prizes and also attracted the interest of gamblers. As early as 1898 prizes of up to £90 (c £7500 at today's value) were being offered and in 1937 £100 (c £5000 at today's values).

In its heyday a match of Knur and Spell could attract 100s if not 1000s of spectators with hundreds of competitors taking regular part in competitions around the North of England. The game's popularity fluctuated in Craven area. In 1910 the game was regularly played at the Tempest Arms, Elslack. A handicap competition could continue over several weeks, each week the winners of the heats progressing in the competition.

The Craven Herald of 22nd October 1910 reports :

"The Knur and Spell handicap was continued on Saturday at the Tempest Arms Grounds, Elslack, before a fair crowd. Each competitor played 10 rises each with ½ ounce pot knurrs".

There were six competitors from Colne and Burnley with the winning strike of 107

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yards being hit by H Shutt Jnr. of Colne. Two weeks later the handicap was reaching the final rounds, again at Elslack, where Harry Shutt Jnr. (the noted Colne Cricketer) triumphed again with a strike of 83 yards, watched by a "Capital attendance".

Later in November a sweepstake match with local players took place at the Tempest with prize money of £10, with the following close result

J. Lund (Earby)	8 score and 12 yards (172 yards)
W. Bushman (Thornton)	8 score and 10 yards 1foot (170 yards 1foot)
H. Cowgill (Elslack)	8 score and 9 yards and 2feet

The length of strike was measured with a chain of 20yards length, hence 8 score was 160 yards.

Colne library has a photograph of R. Holmes, winner of a handicap match at the Stone Trough (presumably Kelbrook) on March 29th 1913. The ongoing competition had 113 contestants.



R Holmes, Winner Stone Trough Handicap 29 March 1913

Note the whippet dog—another Northern pastime (photograph courtesy of Colne Library)

The First World War probably led to a decline in the sport and it wasn't until the 1930s that its popularity returned. In September 1934 the Craven Herald records a demonstration match on Pick Hill Field, Elslack.

"For the first time in many years a knur and spell match took place in Craven this week.

The match was played on the lower slopes of Elslack Moor where similar encounters took place nearly every week in the old days and considerable interest was aroused.

An attempt is being made to revive this old Yorkshire game in the district and there is already some talk of arranging a match between four veterans. Whether this once popular sport will return to favour no one can say. It seems hardly likely that knur and spell will appeal to the younger generation, yet there are plenty of old ones left to bring about a temporary revival at least.

Appropriately enough the first move in this direction has been made by two Earby

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men. Fifty years ago, Earby was known far and wide for the knur and spell "cracks" and the game was played by almost the entire male population."

Seventy-one year old Harry Pickles of Water Street Earby came out on top with a strike of 140 yards including a 20 yard handicap beating his nephew Tom Tuley (53) of James Street, Earby.

The veterans' match duly took place on the 8th of September at the Punch Bowl in Earby, the combined ages of the 4 competitors being 250.

"The players, who all live in Earby, were Mr Harry Pickles, Mr W Waddington, Mr T Varley and Mr J Taylor. The decision rested on the longest knock and each competitor had 15 tips at the pot knur. Mr Taylor won the match with a knock of 140 yards with Mr Waddington second with 120 yards.

The match was witnessed by a large crowd and was supervised by Mr Ned Eastwood of Earby who acted as referee."

The 1920s and 1930s saw a big revival in the game's fortunes across the north. This was probably due to men having plenty of spare time due to the depression and unemployment, combined with the fact that the equipment could be home-made without a great expense.

Paul Breeze and Stuart Greenfield demonstrate how popular the game became, describing a match at The Tempest Arms

"It was a very big occasion and there were thousands of people ... some even travelled from Halifax to watch. The landlord of the pub took barrels of beer out to the field on a tractor and there were so many people in the pub that they had to open a barn. The landlord later said that "the Knur and Spell men were the best customers he'd ever had in the pub. They would still be there at midnight".

On October 9th 1937, before more than 1000 spectators at the Alma striking grounds Colne, 48 year old Bill Baxter of Oak Street, Colne, defeated Jim Crawshaw, of Stocks Bridge near Sheffield, to win the unofficial title of World Champion.

World War 2 again put a damper on the sport and it wasn't until the mid 1950s before it flourished again locally. In fact Baxter was still the official World Champion in 1958 as no competition had been organised.

In 1956 Colne British Legion Club led a successful revival of the game and in 1958 the game was getting exposure on television and radio. The World Championship was revived and Roger Siddall, tongue in cheek in the Colne Times, ranks the venue, Elslack, with Old Trafford, Harringay Stadium and the White City as a sporting Mecca. Bill Baxter retained his 1937 title only to retire and relinquish it later in the year.

One problem which occurred was the severe shortage of knurs; they were no longer manufactured and to get them specially made was prohibitively expensive. Players started to use marbles and even moth balls to practice with.

In 1969 the Official World Championship was initiated with prize money and a cup. Further World Championships were held in 1970, 72 and 73. The latter was held at Dods-worth Colliery Sports ground, Yorkshire, where trouble erupted between miners and police due to residual animosity from the earlier miners' strikes. The consequent bad publicity resulted in a gap of 6 years before the next Championship event.

The fortunes of Knur and Spell were now declining again mainly due to a lack of

younger players coming into the game. It wasn't until 1991 that the next official World Championship took place and this turned out to be the last. Consequently the winner, Len Kershaw of Colne, remains the world champion today 20 years later.

Another Earby story is told by Herbert Hipgrave of Michael Chapple, the cricketer and father of England test cricketer Glen, trying the game on Earby's Applegarth cricket field. He was hitting the knur so hard that there was a danger of the projectile doing damage to surrounding property and he had to stop.

Harry Hill remembers Fred Townson playing Knur and Spell for his own pleasure on the sloping field beyond Sough Park behind Sough Bridge Mill. As a child Harry was given 1p for every knur he could find.

Peter Dawson recalls in the late 1930s going up of Gaylands Lane to see Knur and Spell being played in the field on the left hand side but he is not sure whether it was match or just practice.

THE EMBROIDERIES OF ST MARY'S LANCASTER

The Embroideries of St Marys Lancaster was the topic of our December speaker Hugh Barton.

Hugh's father, Guy, was the son of the land agent on the Clapham estate. He graduated in French and English at Cambridge University but his first love was art and painting. He joined the army as a Captain Instructor and when he was demobbed he took a position as art master at Marlborough School in Wiltshire.

Hugh described his mother as a craftswoman who used her talents in many aspects of artisan craft especially textiles.

During a visit to Lancaster Priory, Guy noted that the wooden pews looked very bare and cried out for some sort of decoration. He offered to design a set of embroideries to adorn the bare wood and, with an enthusiastic team of embroiderers of varying experience, started the project. The embroideries for the back panels depict the life of Jesus the boy and incorporate much religious symbolism into the designs. The seats illustrate the history of the City of Lancaster and a series of panels also represented the industries and businesses of Lancaster whom he asked to submit suitable emblems. One panel depicts the changing styles of furniture made by the famous local company, Gillows of Lancaster.

The main canvases, measuring 48" x 22", are 16 threads per inch Winchester canvas which is flexible and amenable to working on the knee without a frame. When the stitching was completed the canvases were taken into the garden, soaked in water, stretched on a frame and left out to dry naturally.

The number of different stitches was limited to eight for simplicity and the colours kept to a minimum allowing the texture of the embroidery work to help create the picture. Hugh's mother was invariably entrusted with embroidering the first panel of a set to make sure there were no unforeseen problems.

The work at Lancaster was the forerunner to a number of design commissions in churches around the country the last one being for Winchester Cathedral.

Hugh's talk was well illustrated with slides and he also brought a number of examples of his mother's work from his home.

The evening was rounded off with festive refreshments and a hamper, the main prize in the Christmas raffle, was won by Nanette Venables.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION

Getting Better – Health Care in Earby down the Years

Our next publication looks at the ways we have fought illness and disease to stay healthy and alive. It covers a period from the days when there was no resident doctor in Earby, through the times when only those who could afford it turned to professional healers, until the Labour Party won a landslide victory in the 1945 General Election and in 1948 inaugurated the National Health Service, when for the first time an acceptable standard of medicine was readily available for all.

It examines the epidemics such as smallpox, diphtheria, tuberculosis and scarlet fever which once raged in the village. It explores the hundreds of herbal remedies and ancient cures, few of which were truly effective, and the demand for the plethora of commercial remedies with their extravagant claims up to the discovery of the first antibiotic, penicillin, a by-product of mould, by Alexander Fleming in 1928.



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FROM GRATEFUL WITNESSES HEALED. For Bronchitis, Mrs. LAURENCE, Green Street, Kent writes:—“Having found so much benefit from taking your Lung Restorer, I shall be glad if you will forward me another bottle. Stamps enclosed.” For Asthma, Mrs. EVERINGTON, Leicester writes:—“Please send me a box of your ‘Chest Beaters’, they have done me more good and relieve me sooner than anything else.”

See that Trade Mark FIGURE OF HOPE REGISTERED. **HALL'S HEALTH RENEWERS** FOR INDIGESTION, DYSPEPSIA, HEADACHE, AND ALL DISORDERS OF THE STOMACH AND DIGESTIVE ORGANS. 1/1½ & 2/9 BOX. To FEMALES, the Aged and the Young, they are invaluable. Those that take them regularly find that they act gently on the Bowels, giving no pain nor causing any inconvenience. **DO NOT CONTAIN MINERAL OR MERCURIAL COMPOUNDS. ARE SMALL, SUGAR-COATED, AND THEREFORE TASTELESS.** SOLD BY CHEMISTS AND STORES EVERYWHERE.—If any difficulty in obtaining Hall's Preparations, they will be sent on receipt of 14 or 21 stamps or P.O. crossed, payable to THOS. HALL, 24, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.

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The care given by Earby doctors, district nurses, ambulance drivers and members of the St John Ambulance Brigade set against the social conditions prevailing in Earby are explored. The changing face of hospitals is revealed, from the old infectious disease infirmaries and the time when few people would go voluntarily to such a place, to today when almost everyone with a serious illness wishes to go to one of these modern medical power-houses. Included also is an affectionate look back at Burnley Victoria Hospital and the associated fund-raising events held in Earby.

Today public expectations of healthiness are higher than ever; and environmental improvements, better living standards and much improved curative medicine are providing us with the possibility of a longer lifespan. But only by a look back into the not too distant past can we appreciate the advances made in health care in Earby.

With many illustrations, *Getting Better – Health Care in Earby down the Years* is a good and informative read. Look out for its publication!

Stephanie Carter

ODDIES BAKERY

The family owned business of Oddies Bakery, Nelson, was the subject of our January meeting. Lara Oddie is the fourth generation of the family to be involved with the business which was established by her great grandparents William Henry and Jane Oddie in 1905. To celebrate their centenary, local film maker Peter Copestake produced a film showing various aspects of the bakery and the retail outlets with commentary by Lara and her father. Lara showed this film.

The business has been gradually built up from their first shop at 21 Primet Bridge in Colne, when they had their own horse drawn delivery van, to the 16 outlets it now has in East Lancashire. They also bought Wildman's sports shop in Colne arcade on Market Street (in fact they bought the whole arcade) to convert into a bakery shop. The Savoy café and shop were opened in Burnley in the 1930s when a two course lunch cost 2/- (10p).

The products they now bake are a mixture of modern and traditional fare made incorporating both hand and mechanised production methods.

Did You Know?



Oven bottom cakes

Traditional oven bottom cakes are turned over during the baking.

The fig jam used for making fig slices is unique to East Lancashire.

Yorkshire is more noted for its pork pies and patties whereas Lancashire favours beef.

Oddies bake 4000 beef pies and 4000 beef patties a week. In collaboration with the Yorkshire Pork Pie Appreciation Society, Oddies developed a new pork pie recipe.

Sad cakes are traditionally an East Lancashire cake similar to Chorley and Eccles cake being made from pastry filled with butter and dried fruit. Sad cakes traditionally were larger diameter (approximately 12 inches) and flatter than Chorley and Eccles Cakes

There are different theories as to the origin of the name sad cake. Lara's version was that during the war dried fruit was at a premium and it was sad state of affairs that the pasties were often sparse on fruit, even lacking the fruit altogether. Another suggestion is that the sad cakes were made from the trimmings from other more luxury pastry products they were therefore sad relations.

Traditionally sad cakes were made to fit neatly into the lunch boxes of the mill workers and they could eat them without stopping work.

Modern equipment has taken much of the labour out of the bakery. In Lara's grandfather's day the baker used a peel to load and unload the bread oven. The peel, a long handled wooden shovel, has been used for thousands of years by bakers to move individual loaves in and out of ovens. Today a whole batch of loaves is placed on racks and wheeled into and out of the oven.

There is still a lot of hand work carried out at the bakery particularly the finishing and trimming processes. The filling for small custard tarts for instance is dispensed from a tea pot.

Throughout history the bakery has had to change and adapt as people's tastes

have changed especially for continental type products such as Danish pastries and French baguettes. Take-away sandwiches are now a large part of the shop business and they make some 20,000 sandwiches a week.

This précis only gives a taste of Peter's film which in another 100 years will be looked at with interest and no doubt amazement.

GERMAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR

Recollections of Constance Boydell
in conversation with Stephanie Carter (née Shuttleworth).



North Holme Farm

Constance used to work at North Holme Farm for the Shuttleworths during the War, before moving on to work at Greenberfield Farm Barnoldswick for the Hartleys. Now aged 90 she lives in Briercliffe Lodge, Barnoldswick and has many vivid recollections of her life on these two farms.

During the 2nd World War three Germans came to work at North Holme Farm from the Overdale Prisoner-of-War Camp at Skipton. One dropped out but Gottfried and Rudiger worked at the farm for quite a long time. Gottfried couldn't speak English but Rudiger did. He had been at university train-

ing to be a doctor, like his father, when he had to leave to join the German military. He was a pilot and was shot down somewhere in the Midlands.

They wore jackets with their prisoner of war number on the back. They came daily on a special bus from Skipton with 2 guards. Usually William (*my father*) met them at the station but one day he was not well. Emanuel (*my grandfather*) said he would go to meet them but he had severe arthritis and so Constance went down to meet them and escorted them up to the farm - she collected a stick on the way.

They were very good workers. They made wooden toys for the children at night when they returned to the camp. Rudiger became ill and Constance recalls that William took him to see Dr Fisher at Skipton. Cancer was a probable diagnosis and William wrote to the MP and others to try to get him repatriated. He got word that he was being sent back to Germany. His parents wrote a charming letter to William saying that their son had never stopped talking about the farm and the family.

Fortinata, an Italian prisoner of war, also worked at the farm. He was lazy and used to hide on the hay mew in the barn.

Alfred Hercher was a German prisoner-of-war at Greenberfield Farm, Barnoldswick. He slept at Kayfield Farm, Salterforth as there was no room at Greenberfield. After the war he had the option to return home, but he opted to stay.

At the age of 32 or 33 he died. The muck-spreader had a guard on and was very slippery. One day Alf didn't put the guard on and he slipped. His raincoat caught in a wheel and his arm was pulled into the machine. He screamed and Billy Hartley and Constance took him to Burnley hospital. He died on 5th November and is buried at Ghyll Church. Billy Hartley had photos taken of the funeral to send home to his parents. He had just bought a

new motor bike which Billy sold and the money from this, together with money he had saved, was sent to his parents. Constance had to go to court to give evidence at the inquest.

RICHARD MITCHELL AND HIS LEGACY

By Bob Abel

Richard Mitchell was born in 1797 and baptised at Thornton church. His father was Henry Mitchell whose profession is recorded as weaver. Richard was one of a number of siblings and the family were living at Nutter Cote at the time of his birth.

Richard appears in the 1851 to 1881 censuses for Thornton, variously described as – Retired butler (1851), Servant out of place (1861), Annuitant (1871) and Retired servant (1881). In each case he is recorded as unmarried. In 1851 he was 53 years old a somewhat young age for a servant to retire, so he must have had some private means of supporting himself for 46 years of “retirement” (he died in Thornton in 1886).



Nutter Cote Farm, Thornton

It is not so easy to trace people in the 1841 census since adult ages are normally rounded up or down to the nearest 5 years and their place of birth is not definitive only being recorded as being born in the county or out of the county. However, to date only one Richard Mitchell seems to fit. A Richard Mitchell is recorded in the 1841 census born in Yorkshire with an age given as 40 (Richard would have been 44 years old). Maybe vanity caused him to round his age down to 40. He was living in Park Place, Leeds, in the household of Rebecca Kirshaw, an elderly spinster, and he is recorded as MS – male servant. The household consisted of Rebecca Kirshaw (80), Mary Hopper (35) both of independent means, with Richard Mitchell (40), Isabel Barnaby (40), Elizabeth Carr (35) and Ann Nelson (30) all servants. Mary Hopper is a relative probably living as a companion to her elderly aunt. It transpires that Miss Kirshaw was the surviving daughter of Rev. Samuel Kirshaw, vicar of Leeds 1751-1786 and rector of Ripley.

Rebecca Kirshaw's will, proved in 1846, confirms that she was quite well-to-do. Legacies of £1000 and £500 were bequeathed to nephews and great nephews and there was silver ware and family portraits in the estate. The servants were also remembered and all got £10 and a mourning suit except Isabella Bromley who got £100 and some wearing apparel; she may well have been the house keeper. So Richard did not inherit a great deal from his late employer.

Jumping forward, a notice appeared in the November 19th 1886 edition of the London Gazette giving notice *“that all creditors and other persons having any claims or demands against Richard Mitchell, late of Thornton in Craven...formerly Gentleman's Servant... contact the executors ...or Carr and Sons Solicitors of Colne...”*.

Probate documents show that the value of Richard Mitchell's estate was £2144, a substantial amount for that time. After the provision of several small legacies (amounting to

about £135), the bulk of the estate was to be used to set up the "Mitchell Charity". The Executors and trustees of the charity to be - Joseph Nightingale – Stone agent Thornton in Craven, Thomas Cooper – farmer of Thornton in Craven, and Thomas Harrison Swire – book keeper of Earby. The money was to be invested and the income distributed "in a fair and honest manner amongst the poor deserving men, women and families in the locality of Thornton in Craven".

However, Abraham Mitchell, a nephew of Richard, challenged this charitable provision of the will using the Mortmain Act. Under this Act neither lands nor money for the purchase of land could be settled for any charitable purpose except by a deed executed at least 12 months before the death of the donor. The court found in favour of Abraham Mitchell and the Mitchell Charity was consequently declared void and the money lapsed to the next of kin. The court additionally decreed that the residue of the estate (presumably that portion not arising from land) was to be invested for Richard's original purpose of a charity. The court appointed L B Morris Rector of Thornton, Thomas Bond, and Christopher Barrett as trustees together with the three original trustees.

The case was finally settled in 1888 when £1095.12s 4d was invested to produce an annual income of £30.2s 4d for distribution to the deserving poor. This was to be in cash or kind e.g. clothing, coals etc at the discretion of the trustees. Up to 1893 the annual payments amounted to £12 in Thornton, £9 in Earby and £4 in Kelbrook. In 1893 £10 was distributed to 11 recipients including 12/6 to each of the Smiths almswomen in accordance with the verbal wishes of Richard Mitchell; a total of £11.2s 4d to 20 recipients in Earby and a total of £4 in Kelbrook amongst 11 people.

As for the source of Richard's wealth, the success of the mortmain case suggests that it came from land. His father Henry lived at Nutter Cote Farm in Thornton in Craven but he died intestate, his wife Mary being awarded probate. I have not been able to trace a will for Mary Mitchell. More research could be done at the West Riding Registry of Deeds at Wakefield to trace change of ownership of land to confirm any land dealings Richard was involved with and whether indeed he inherited Nutter Cote Farm.

EARBY 100 YEARS AGO JANUARY – MARCH 1912

CULLED FROM THE CRAVEN HERALDS by Stephanie Carter

January

- The Co-operative Society held a social in the Albion Hall. Music was provided by Clough and Longworth Band and there was an excellent supper.
- On Sunday a performance of the Messiah was given at the Baptist Church, with the whole performance described as "excellent".
- The Brass Band played through the streets.
- The Annual Wesleyan At Homes took the form of an entertainment by the choir (Thursday), a performance by the young men's glee party (Friday), whilst on Saturday the event was opened by R F Roundell JP of Gledstone and there was an excellent performance by the Widdicombe troupe of Merry Pierrots.
- The first series of At Homes was promoted by the congregation of All Saints Church at the Albion Hall. The church choir under the direction of E H Cunliffe gave a performance of Don Quixote.
- A social was held in the Weavers Institute for the Socialist Party with the Clough and

Longworth Band playing for dancing.

February

- The Albion Hall was filled on Wednesday for the visit of Major Roundell who gave an address on current policies – Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and Tariff Reform. (Home Rule was the process allowing Ireland more say in how it was governed. Welsh disestablishment was a way of the Welsh asserting a national identity and Welsh dioceses becoming separated from Church of England and becoming the Church of Wales. A tariff is a tax levied on imported goods. Tariff reform involved the Government policy of controlling trade between nations to support the interests of its own citizens.)
- Earby UDC held their annual dinner at the Station Hotel.

A False Alarm

“At 8.30pm the whole district was startled by the sound of the fire buzzer and on entering the streets everyone said” It’s Suff” meaning Sough Bridge Mill. As if they had heard the magic strains of the Pied Piper of Hamelin the people poured out of every house and every street until the main road between Earby and Kelbrook was packed with a rushing, panting flock of men, women and children. The fire brigade answered the call promptly and arrived at Sough Bridge with the hose cart in 9 minutes. Although the alarm sounded long and shrill there was no fire when the brigade arrived. Councillor Pickles was in charge of the operation which was intended to test the new buzzer and the abilities of the fire brigade. The affair was not regarded complacently by the hoaxed crowd and the remarks freely made were not complimentary to those who had arranged the proceedings.”

- The Baptist At Homes saw entertainment of the “first class order” with contralto Madame Appleyard, tenor Basil Trew and entertainer G Cattle (Thursday); whilst on Friday Mr William Miles of London, an elocutionist, gave a recital. On Saturday Mr Ernest Lord’s Excelsior Party was in operation.
- During the keen frost, there had been skating at the Sewage farm and on Foulridge reservoir.
- Talks were given to the Wesley Guild (William Tydall and the English Bible), the Brotherhood (Christianity and Economics) and the Naturalist Society (Microscopic Botany); whilst at the St John Ambulance 150 sat down to tea at the Wesleyan School followed by a social and dance at the Albion Hall with the Clough and Longworth Band playing for dancing.

March

- The Conservatives held their AGM and the topic for their Debating Society was Welsh Disestablishment. The Wesley Guild explored “the Grand Old Bible” and the Baptist Guild the poet Cowper
- The Conservative Rally held a tea prepared by Miss Hopkinson of Victoria Road Café, followed by dancing to Baldwin’s Quadrille Band from Barnoldswick.
- A Leap Year tea and concert was held at the Baptist Church.
- Since the movement had been put on a new footing, the Boy Scouts held their first annual meeting. No military ideas would be fostered by the troupe and it was hoped the movement would prosper.

Coal Strike

(The national Coal Strike of 1912 involved the struggle to develop a minimum wage for all

miners. It began at the end of February and continued until Easter).

The great national dispute was beginning to have a serious effect locally. There was some disruption to train services. A notice was displayed at Brook Shed to the effect that employment could not be guaranteed after 21st March unless the Coal Strike was settled. The Craven Herald reported that "On Saturday, children in large numbers appeared at the gates of Earby Gas Co. premises waiting their turn for coke and the sight of scores being turned away with empty bags and baskets was a pitiable one. The children then swarmed on to the new railway siding adjoining Colne Road and at least 3 children were engaged at once in digging and rooting out coal which had been tipped amongst the rubbish. There was considerable difficulty in keeping Victoria Mill running on Friday owing to the shortage of coal. Householders are suffering from the high cost of fuel and those fortunate enough to have a supply are using it sparingly. Those who are without have either to pay the exorbitant price or borrow from their friends. There have been instances where houses have been broken into and the supply stolen."

DICKENSIAN SOCIETY

As we celebrate the 200th birthday of Charles Dickens, did you know there was once a Dickens Society in Earby? In February 1914 members celebrated the birthday of the great novelist at the Cross Keys, East Marton. Under the presidency of Mr S V Heap, a dinner and social evening was enjoyed. There were toasts including "To the memory of Charles Dickens", speeches which included "elocutionary expositions of the great novelist's characters", and songs. "The ruddy glow of the log fire at the Cross Keys was truly reflected in the hearts and minds of those who assembled to do honour in the memory of 'the Prince of Penmen'".

THE SINKING OF THE LANCASTRIA – A LOCAL MAN'S STORY

Operation Dynamo was the code name for the now famous evacuation of allied forces from France via Dunkirk in May / June 1940 when defeat was turned into pyrrhic victory by the bravery of the crews of the little ships. Some two weeks after Dunkirk, operation Ariel was launched to rescue more British troops and nationals via the west coast of France. The Lancastria, a requisitioned liner which had been converted into a troop ship, was sent to take part in the evacuation. Two local men were onboard the ship when it was sunk.

James Brotherton was drowned and his name is amongst those remembered on Earby war memorial; William (Bill) Bellamy from Salterforth survived to tell his story. In fact Bill wrote of the experience and entered it into a war story contest organised by the Sunday Pictorial newspaper. Fifteen of the 6600 stories received were published in 1960 in book form entitled "Murder in the Air" and William Bellamy's account of the sinking of the Lancastria was included under the title "End of a Trooper".

Bill Bellamy was born in Wharton near Camforth in 1916. He was the youngest of a large family who moved around the north of England and had strong connections with Barnsley before finally settling in Salterforth at West End House. He was in the building and tarmacing business locally with his brother Jim, they were willing to take on any job large or small and were well known in the area. They were more of the traditional builders working in stone, often being called upon to repair stone walls.

When his brother Jim died, Bill carried on the business and Ann his daughter re-

members that he tarmaced the whole of the long drive from the A59 to Stirk House Country Hotel on his own. They had a large wagon which they kept in a barn which doubled as a store next to the house. When Bill decided he had had enough of the physical side of the building trade he got a job as building inspector for Pendle Council and later for Bradford Metropolitan Council and based in Keighley.

Bill's experience in the building trade was put to use when he joined the army in World War II; he was assigned to the Royal Engineers and spent some time building runways for the RAF. He also served in Gibraltar and was in France when the German Army began to push towards Paris in 1940.

The chapter is too long to reproduce here but with the permission of his daughter we include extracts from it which we hope will give a flavour of the tragedy which unfolded around Bill.

Bill was a member of a company of Royal Engineers based 30 km from Nancy and they were ordered to destroy their petrol and ammunition dump and make their way to St Nazaire on the French Atlantic Coast. The convoy of weary troops arrived at the docks after an uncomfortable journey dodging the dive-bombing and machine-gunning Luftwaffe. After an uneasy 24 hours on the quay side, a destroyer took them out to the ill fated ship whose name S S Lancastria was visible under its coating of wartime grey paint. The liner normally carried 2000 passengers but on that day some 6000 or 7000 were packed into her.

Having made himself as comfortable as he could on the top deck awaiting his turn to go for a meal Bill's eye was caught by a silvery shape merging with the clouds or was it his imagination? Thinking nothing more of it he dozed only to be awakened by the sound of explosions. A nearby troop ship, the Oronsay was under attack from German dive-bombers; "Now it was our turn, I heard the scream of diving Stukas and saw a stick of bombs splash into the sea, missing the ship and the spot where I was standing at the rail by about 20 yards.... Ship's officers were ordering soldiers to get below deck as much as possible to avoid bomb blast and splinters... I thought it would, perhaps, be safer below and I could find the dining saloon at the same time. He pushed and elbowed himself to the dining saloon on E deck when "As I stepped through the door with food in sight at last, the ship shuddered under the impact of a terrific explosion. It reverberated throughout the vessel like thunder in a huge cavern. Crockery flew from the long dining tables and crashed to the deck. The lights flickered and doused. Only dim blue emergency lights remained.

For a split second we were stunned. Then before I knew it, I was being whisked bodily down a companionway by a stampeding mass of men, like a straw in a powerful current. It was goodbye to the saloon and my meal"

The deck was now aslant and getting steeper by the minute. "Fear gripped those who thought they were trapped... I found myself amidst a mass of men clawing their way for the stairways connecting the decks. One stairway... groaned and creaked, then collapsed. The banister rail was torn away from its iron sockets and crumpled like tissue paper under the weight of hands grasping it. ... I managed to pull myself up the outside of the stairway before its collapse and haul myself to the deck above". Bill managed to reach the top deck



Bill Bellamy in Gibraltar

by which time "the ship was listing steeply. She was sinking fast". A bomb had entered the ship via the funnel and blown the bottom of the ship out. "I knew that in the bowels of the ship were thousands of men... nothing on earth could save them."

The deck was filled with panic-stricken service men, hundreds had dived overboard, many to be killed by flying debris from the ship. "I glimpsed a group of soldiers straining to launch a boat which, to my amazement contained civilian women and children... As I went over to help the boat jammed on the rails, then tilted, throwing the women and children screaming into the sea."

"It was only too obvious that the Lancastria was going to turn turtle... The port side was now horizontal and I climbed onto it through the rail... We were now on a flat, huge steel deck, slimy with oil and seaweed and I hoped that this hulk would still float and that we would be saved. As the minutes ticked by our steel island became smaller ... Like thousands of others, I had no life belt. I cursed myself for not learning to swim back home at the Nelson baths".

By now a great pressure of steam had built up within the ship's hull and steel plates began to burst open. "I jumped clear... down I slithered into a still cold underworld. Frantically ... I pulled myself back. I did not relish being scalded to death, but neither did I wish to drown.... I had to get away or be sucked down with the sinking ship. A few yards away a large oblong box floated with four men clinging to it ... I reached it and clung on for dear life.

Just in time... For as we floated away, the stricken Lancastria, propeller sticking in the air, slipped to her doom, taking with her those trapped inside... There was a tremendous underwater explosion... The sea spurted forth great fountains of black oil which settled around us in a thick blinding and choking film."

To add to this misery the German planes strafed the helpless survivors and tried to set the oil alight by dropping flares. French fishermen braved the mayhem trying to rescue survivors. "Snatches of song came from the soldiers on rafts. 'Roll out the barrel, we'll have a barrel of fun'. The song grew fainter. We were drifting out to sea unnoticed." One of the men on the box became hysterical nearly capsizing them. Having managed to steady the box Bill noticed he was the only one left on it, the other two had disappeared.

"My neck ached unbearably with the effort of trying to keep my face clear of the oil smeared water and exhaustion was catching up with me. For the last four days I had little to eat or drink and hardly any sleep. The urge came over me to let the box go and sink gently into the sea, it would be simple. I had seen many do it that afternoon. I resisted... I wanted to see my family and friends in England again. I hung on grimly... My body became numb... I was determined to keep going but I was near the end of my endurance. I did not feel afraid of death – only a strange sadness... soon there will be just an oblong box bobbing on the waves... no one will know how I died"

"I must have been slipping into unconsciousness for I never saw the small coaster heading for me... a rope dangled and I hardly had sufficient strength left to grasp it. Willing hands grabbed me, heaved me over the rail and lowered me to the deck, I lay there weak and trembling on the deck but no one bothered with me, they were too busy looking for other survivors...

"Well past midnight... I stumbled ashore... for one wild moment I imagined that I was back home in an English port... within half an hour I was between snow white hospital sheets fast asleep".

The nightmare was to continue as the patients were roused and all those who could walk were ordered to go to the quayside. It was the last chance of escape as a ship was leaving in half an hour.

"This time I made it safely back. Zig-zagging through an avalanche of enemy bombs and bullets we docked safely at Plymouth."

There was a news black out on the disaster so as not to dampen the euphoria over the successes at Dunkirk.

"... 2,477 had been saved. I knew that by some miracle I had been chosen to live through the greatest sea tragedy Britain had known"

Bill's family began to realise now why he came home so pale and drawn after his horrific experience. In later life two memories predominated for him. One that there were women and children caught up in the tragedy and from a personal point of view that he had to plunge into the sea knowing that he couldn't swim.

Bill was a quiet unassuming person for whom his family and the countryside meant the most to him and family walks both locally and in the limestone country of the Yorkshire Dales meant a lot to him. It came as quite a surprise to the family that he entered a newspaper competition where he had to describe the horror of and his survival from the sinking of the Lancastria, he wasn't one for talking about it even to them.

BUSINESS AND PLEASURE COMBINED YORKSHIRE HIRING FAIRS

This year's AGM was followed by a talk about the Yorkshire Hiring Fairs by Dr Stephen Counce, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Central Lancashire. In the north of England farm labourers were hired on annual contracts in contrast to the south, where the larger farms had a permanent staff of labourers usually on low wages.

The northern farmers hired their labour at the annual hiring fair which became a major event in the country calendar. The system had worked for hundreds of years and all attempts to change and modernise the tradition came to nothing. It was only with the dramatic changes in farming methods in the 1940s that the hiring fairs became redundant.

Martinmas in November was the usual time for the fair and towns like Otley and Settle were crowded with farming folk. Skipton had a smaller version when labour was hired for the hay harvest.

The farmer walked up and down the crowds of potential labour and when he saw a likely candidate the farmer and labourer negotiated annual terms. The hiring was founded on trust; no paperwork was involved, and once an agreement was made between farmer and labourer it was sealed with the "fastening penny" which was given to the employee; there was no other payment until the end of the contract period. The agreement was legally binding on both sides and it was only in rare exceptional cases that disputes went to court. The hired labourer lived at the farm; his accommodation and food were provided and at the end of his contract he was paid what he was due.

At the end of the contact it was usual for the labourer to get re-employment elsewhere and this helped him to gain experience in different situations. Domestic staff, as well as labouring staff, were also hired at the same time. If a farm was large enough to have several live-in workers they had to be looked after.

Wages fluctuated with the prevailing circumstances of supply and demand. Areas near the growing industrial towns had to compete with factory wages. In times of depression, the 1920s for example, wages were depressed because men were willing to accept lower wages knowing they would have accommodation and be well fed for the year.

Naturally at Martinmas the labourer had his year's money in his pocket and could af-

ford to let his hair down. This combined with the fact that things were usually quiet on the farm at this time of year meant that a holiday and celebration, often better than the Christmas holiday, was enjoyed.

The age range of this labour force was on average from 12 to 25 so the careful man could save his money over this period and then when he married he could get a farm tenancy in his own right.

Once the business was over the people enjoyed themselves. The pubs were open all day and the shopkeepers were glad of the extra business the fair brought to the town and were prepared to put up with disruption and rowdiness. The men bought treats for their loved ones and watchmakers in particular were busy as most labourers liked to keep a check on the time when they were out in the fields.

November was also a quite time for the travelling fun fairs so they tended to make some off-season money by attending the hiring fairs

Some evangelical church leaders preached against the fairs as being dens of iniquity but there is little evidence that this was the case. There were cases of drunkenness and fighting which was only to be expected.

Dr Counce's talk gave an interesting insight into a country custom which has been overtaken by modern practices, but which still has echoes in today's conditions of high unemployment with the jobs fairs being held around the country.

ST MARTIN'S DAY FROM WIKIPEDIA

St. Martin's Day, also known as the Feast of St. Martin, Martinstag or Martinmas, the Feast of St Martin of Tours or Martin le Miséricordieux, is a time for feasting celebrations. This is the time when autumn wheat seeding was completed, and the annual slaughter of fattened cattle produced "Martinmas beef". Historically, hiring fairs were held where farm labourers would seek new posts. November 11 is the feast day of St Martin of Tours, who started out as a Roman soldier. He was baptized as an adult and became a monk. It is understood that he was a kind man who led a quiet and simple life. The most famous legend of his life is that he once cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar during a snowstorm, to save the beggar from dying of the cold. That night he dreamed that Jesus was wearing the half-cloak Martin had given away. Martin heard Jesus say to the angels: "Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is not baptised; he has clothed me."

NEW WEB SITE

The Society now has a new web site which went live in February. The address is:
www.earbyhistory.co.uk

The web site will be not only a source of information about the Society but also a resource for members researching both local and family history. By degrees appropriate archives from the Society's collection will be made available on line.

There is also a members only section for those members who would like to register

The team who are managing the site are gradually getting to grips with the technicalities and would be grateful for any feedback or suggestion on both the appearance and content of the web site.

SOCIETY AGM HELD ON 21st FEBRUARY 2012

Chairman's Report for 2011

Firstly finances: Income against expenditure has improved from 2010, turning a loss in 2010 to a healthy surplus in 2011. This is mainly due to a 75% increase in the value of book sales following the phenomenal success of Stephanie Carter's book on "Farming in Earby", a grant from Lancashire CC for £275 via County Councillor Keith Bailey towards the printing of the book and a donation of £50 from Earby Town Council. Obviously the income from the books was not all surplus as the major expense for the year was printing costs.

Another major expense is the cost of running the monthly meetings at a total of £404 (slightly down on 2010). The nominal entry charge for meetings totalled £211 (down £30 on 2010).

Archive room expenses have totalled just over £200 but more of that later.

Total monies in cash and accounts is £2229.82.

Membership numbers now remain relatively static year on year losing some members and gaining others. Currently we have some 127 on the books

2010 has been another interesting year with the threat of the loss of the Community Centre and our venue, both hopefully now secure for some time to come.

The main highlights of the year have been:

- The highly successful "Farming in Earby" book launch at the Parish Council Rooms. This was combined with the opening of an exhibition on "Recycling Past and Present" in conjunction with Pendle Council. The exhibition was then transferred to Earby Library for a further 2 months.
- The start of a new Society web site www.earbyhistory.co.uk. At this point I would like to thank Ken Hartley for his sterling work at getting us a web presence in the first instance. Hopefully the web site will gain us new friends and perhaps a few more members.
- The Heritage Room – following the successful campaign to keep the Community Centre open the Community Association was approached to see if the Society could have the sole use of the office above the photocopier room. A meeting of the CA committee unanimously endorsed the proposal and now the job of fitting the room out and transferring the Society archive in has started. Some steel cupboards have been purchased and Colne Library has donated a surplus plan cabinet for us to store maps and plans in. We shall be trying to get funding to defray the further expected costs involved. This is going to be a major project for the coming year at the end of which we will open the room to give better access to the archives and resources we have.

One of the highlights of this coming year will be the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebration. The Society will play its part in the festivities by mounting a 1950s exhibition.

We also look forward to Stephanie Carter's next book on Health Care in Earby which is getting close to completion.

The Society newsletter, "Earby Chronicles", continues to be as popular as ever and hopefully we can keep up the flow of interesting articles. It is always said that the newsletter

Earby Chronicles

is for YOU to submit items to for inclusion and I would encourage anyone to do so.

In conclusion can I thank the committee and other helpers who have assisted in the smooth running of the Society and make a plea for more of our members to take a more active part in the organisation of the Society. There will be people among us who have skills and the new ideas we need. Please volunteer your help.

Election of Officers for 2012/13

The following officers were returned

Chairman	Bob Abel
Vice Chairman & Editor	Stephanie Carter
Secretary	Margaret Brown
Treasurer	Wendy Faulkner
Archivists	Margaret Greenwood & Wendy Faulkner
Programme Secretary & NRCC Rep	Wendy Venables
Web site / IT	Vacant
Committee Members	Trevor Tattersall, Mary Corteen

There being no proposals for discussion the AGM closed at 7-50 pm

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 20th March –Stanley Walmsley—“Ringing through the Changes”

Tuesday 17th April—Nigel Hampson—“Titanic”

Tuesday 15th May—Margaret Curry—“From Eden to Paradise—the History of English Gardens”

June/July and August—no meetings

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DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members details are held on computer for mailing and compilation of a membership list. The details will not be used for any other purpose without the express permission of the member. If you do not wish your details to be held on computer please inform the Treasurer immediately.

THE SOCIETY

Meets at the Community Centre, New Road, EARBY on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. (except for outside visits).

**ANNUAL
SUBSCRIPTION
£7.00
UK £9.00
Overseas £13.00**

Contents:

Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy of information in this edition, this cannot be guaranteed.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Don't forget this is your newsletter. Send in articles, photos and any other anecdotes, so that we get as wide a flavour of Earby & District, yes that means Thornton in Craven, Kelbrook, Sough, Harden and Salterforth as well.

EDITOR

Stephanie Carter
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