

'BRIGHAM AND GREYSOUTHEN: OUR VICTORIAN ANCESTORS WHO SHAPED THE PARISH'

BRIGHAM PRESENTATION

1. Introduction

- a. Welcome
 - i. Explain why doing this project, personal interest.
 - ii. Thanks and support from Angus Winchester, Derek Bainbridge, Thomson, James Hickson, Jack Robinson, and others.

2. Introduction

- a. Tonight broken down into three sections;
 - i. St Bridget's Restoration.
 - ii. A look at the lives of some of the subscribers.
 - iii. Examine what Victorian society was like in the Brigham parish.

3. St. Bridget's: Background

- a. Origins of dedication
 - i. St Bridget's church, was, and is, dedicated to Saint Bridget of Sweden who lived in the 14th century, who devoted her life to caring for the poor and needy.
- b. History
 - i. It has been claimed that parts of the church date from the 11th century, with additions being added over the following centuries.

4. St. Bridget's: Background

- a. The church has undergone a number of repairs and renovations over the years; the two notable renovations of the 19th century took place from 1864-1865 (nave, tower, and aisle) and again in 1875-1876 (chancel) by William Butterfield.
 - i. In 1896 the organ was installed.
 - ii. The stained glass windows of the South Aisle and baptistery were installed in either 1864/65.
 - iii. In 1875 additional land was added to the churchyard making it around 1.9 acres.
 - iv. Large parts of the church were altered during the Butterfield renovations. However, considerable changes were also made in the 18th century, including the re-pewing of the church in 1790.
- b. Why did it need restoring?
 - i. According to many accounts, the repair and maintenance of the church fell into poor keeping. A number of letters to the editor were sent regarding the state of the church;
 1. 'Any changes from this state of things could hardly be for the worse.'

2. '£22 have been annually levied on the rate payers for doing twenty-two times worse than nothing towards keeping the church in repair.'
 3. '...the seats are something like the third class carriages on the Cocker mouth and Workington Railway.'
 4. 'Brigham Church will soon become an interesting ruin, if somebody doesn't repair it shortly.'
- ii. In January 1864, a meeting was held to discuss the necessary restoration of the church. Following the death of a local landowner £200 had been secured for the restoration. During the heated debate it was decided that it needed to happen and a plan was put into action. After permission was received and a guarantee provided, fund raising began in earnest.

5. Restoration Funding

- a. Isaac Fletcher wrote a paper, which he delivered at Brigham on 23rd August 1878.
 - i. Within his presentation he recounts the history of the church, touching upon the recent Butterfield renovations. He puts the cost of the two renovations at around £4,000; I was able to uncover an invoice by James Hawes, clerk of works on the project, on behalf of William Butterfield, detailing the breakdown of costs.
- b. Use of local labour
 - i. Whilst Butterfield was from London, the renovation project also made use of local day labourers, Palmer Robinson was a local joiner who also employed a number of men and boys from the local area, himself being from Cocker mouth. He was tasked with the woodwork in the porch area, and also with the pulpit. Parishioners also donated their time and helped with the restoration work to keep costs down.

6. Restoration Funding

- a. Bazaars
 - i. In an attempt to raise funds for the renovation, bazaars were held by members of the local congregation and friends, including Sister Fletcher, Sister Waugh, and Sister Harris. These women were the wives of notable men in the local community. Collectively, these bazaars were able to raise the remainder of the funds, which was about a quarter of the total.

7. Restoration Funding

- a. Subscribers
 - i. Donation totals for the 1865 restoration came to £2,045 0s 8d which today would total around £170,000. From the renovation subscriber list and through my research, I was able to identify 125 out of the 151 subscribers. After identifying the individuals, I was able; using census records, poll books, gazetteers, parish records, and archival

material, to identify what type of employment each of them was engaged in.

- ii. Using a similar pattern as what was used in the 1861 census, I broke the subscribers down into 9 categories;
 1. Gentry 18% - £272 - £22,690
 2. Professionals 17% - £248 12s - £20,740
 3. Commercial 4% - £62 12s 6d - £5,224
 4. Agricultural (farmers) 4% - £51 14 6d - £4,315
 5. Agricultural (labourers) 0-1% - £1 - £83
 6. Industrial (owners) 50% - £752 5s 6d - £62,760
 7. Industrial (labourers) 0-1% - £6 14s 6d - £561
 8. Non-productive 2% - £36 9s - £3,041
 9. Unknown 5% - £65 15s 6d - £5,847

This classification enabled me to explore the lives and circumstances of the subscribers and to work out where the money came from.

- b. Funding
 - i. Following the subscription, interest was added to the account each year, on average coming to around £30.
- c. Non payment
 - i. There were a number of subscriptions that were irrecoverable or went unpaid. For instance, the Bishop of Carlisle couldn't pay because he had agreed to pay on the day of the dedication ceremony, sadly however, he died before the renovation was completed.

8. Subscriber Map

- a. Subscriber map
 - i. This map provides an idea of where the different subscribers lived in west Cumberland. A small number of donors lived around the country, however the vast majority of subscribers came from within the parish boundaries. This is to be expected, in many cases, I have been able to identify how, and why individuals from around the country have contributed towards the restoration, typically due to family connections. Usually a family member will have been born, married, or raised within the parish or church area.

9. Total funding for the restoration

- a. So where did it come from?
 - i. Bazaars: 28% - £589 7d
 - ii. Subscriptions: 71% - £1,497 3s 6d
 - iii. Collection in School and Church: 0% - £8 7s 6d
 - iv. Sale of old church items: 1% - £16 19s 6d

10. John Harris

- a. Background

- i. Born in 1827 to Joseph and Mary Harris, John had a privileged upbringing, his father was a magistrate and landed proprietor and had managed to build a successful enterprise. He would later go on to follow in his father's footsteps and property management, going on to own numerous properties, including coalmines, and other industrial premises. Although his father had been born a Quaker, John was baptised as infant in St. Bridget's. His family were well known in the community, when Joseph Harris was buried, there were around 2,000 people at his funeral. He was made a JP in 1862 along with his father in law. He also served as the captain of the Cumberland Militia.
- b. Employment
 - i. The Harris family were a successful and hardworking family who gave back to the community generously. At a time when the dangerous working conditions of mines were subject to debate and controversy, the Harris family were well known for the care of their workers. In one particular event, an employee of his gave him some recommendations regarding how to make it a safer place to work, and John was recorded as having carried the recommendations into effect.
- c. Legacy
 - i. Although only married in 1857, John sadly lost his wife Ann-Mary when she died from complications as a result of giving birth to their daughter, Ann-Mary Harris in 1861. John would only live for a few more years until he died in 1863. Their two young children, Joseph and Ann-Mary, were taken into the care of their Grandfather, Henry Jefferson, and a trust was established to take care of their financial interests until they came of age. Some of their uncles were trustees, however, there was a family dispute after a pew that was to be purchased for their family in Brigham church was not being paid by the trustees. Ultimately Henry Jefferson, the grandfather took the trustees to the High Court/Chancel to force them to pay the fee. IN memory of the Harris family, his workers funded a stained glass window in the South Aisle of St. Bridget's, which would have come at a great cost. For the restoration, John Harris left £200 in his will, which today would be worth around £19,000.
- d. Victorian housing
 - i. What kind of housing did Victorians live in?
 - ii. For men like John Harris, housing would have been comfortable, grand, and costly to maintain. Brigham Hill where he lived, would have had 10 fires to start in the morning, to warm the massive house, which meant a significant number of servants would be needed to effectively run the household. However, the majority of the local population of Brigham parish would have lived in much

smaller houses, many of which were small cottages, often only having a few rooms, with no room to space. Later as the population of the area increased, there was a greater need to build new housing, men such as John Harris invested money in building houses for his workers. Many of these new houses would be two up and two down, and in some cases older houses were extended to provide additional room for families. The Lowhouses area of Brigham contained a wide variety of small housing with many quarries and workers living there. Some mine owners had resulted in building homes for their workers in order to recruit more labour which during the 1850s/1860s they were in desperate need of. Many Victorians would make as much use of the space as they could, and few Victorian children would ever get a room of their own! Often depending on the family situation, family members of different generations would have to share a home as well. You could say this might have resulted in the strong family values that Victorians have been viewed as having.

11. Isaac Fletcher & William Fletcher

- a. Background
 - i. Two brothers born to John Wilson and Mary Fletcher, Isaac in 1827, and William in 1831. After completing his education in London, Isaac was to return to West Cumberland to work in the family business of mining. William however finished his education early to help with the family business. Both brothers ultimately left the Quaker faith at some point in the early 1860s. Isaac went on to become a churchwarden at St. Bridget's whilst William refused to be baptised until many years later. Isaac became a Liberal M.P representing Cockermouth in 1868 and remained so until his death. William also became MP for Cockermouth in 1879 and served for one year following the sudden death of his brother. The Fletcher family lived in Tarn Bank just north of Greysouthen where Isaac had an observatory built, due to his fascination with astronomy. Whilst William later moved and lived in Brigham.
- b. Employment
 - i. Isaac and William were to form the Fletcher, Miller and Company mining corporation. This partnership also involved other notable people from the area, including the Harris family. They owned a number of mines in the area, as well as limestone quarries just across from St. Bridget's. They would go on to own and operate many mines throughout West Cumberland.
- c. Legacy
 - i. Due to personal issues, poor health, and financial burdens, Isaac Fletcher took his own life in 1879. His family were shocked by the suicide and put a great strain on the relations of the remaining

family members. A trust was established to manage his remaining assets, although he owed an extraordinary amount of money to the Carlisle and District Bank (worth around £500,000 today). The reports following his death however sang his praises as a dedicated community leader always willing to support those in need. With regards to his faith he described himself as 'A non-conformist by birth, and a Churchmen by choice', but he was always willing to preside over a body of non-conformists as readily as he would at the church. William survived his brother by a number of years, he would live until 1900 and became the Chairman of the new County Council whilst remaining involved in the coal industry until his death. For the restoration, Isaac donated £225 pounds, which today would be worth around £19,000, and William donated £200, which would be worth around £17,000.

- d. So what was life like in rural Cumberland?
 - i. Some extracts from diaries, and letters, provide some insights into what might typically happen in the day of a wealthy industrialist;
 - ii. 'Meals were a central part of family life in which the elder children joined. William would depart for his various offices after a large breakfast at 8am, have a sandwich lunch, and walk the half mile back home from Brigham station in the evening smoking a cigar. Dinner was served at 6pm followed at 8.30pm by tea with buttered toast and cake; afternoon tea did not feature and if callers came they were offered a glass of wine and biscuit.'
 - iii. During this period it became increasingly popular for dinner parties to be held;
 - iv. 'During the 70s the Fletchers held large dinner parties for 20-24 people quite often. For those occasions, extra staffs were engaged, another cook would arrive 2 days in advance to deal with the entrees and sweet elegancies; some guests would be staying for the night, and might bring a coachman and perhaps a butler would help to serve at table. They would then have their own beef and beer in the servant's hall. Coffee would be served after the meal, and tea would be brought at 10am after which the local guests would depart.'
 - v. We can learn that for wealthy industrialists, it was a comfortable lifestyle; food was plentiful and with the advent of the railroad, enabled families to travel around the county and to other parts of the country with relative ease. William Fletcher was a director on the local railroad company and so consequently had a carriage that he and his family could use for their own travels. Life would also appear to be very structured for the well to do families; journals were kept meticulous recording the daily activities of the family.

12. Septimus Hodgson

- a. Background
 - i. Born on October 25th, 1829, died in January 30th 1888. His father, William, was a farmer of 95 acres. He came from a big family,
- b. Employment
 - i. Septimus was a trained veterinarian and had trained at Edinburgh University, as one of his sons would later go on to do the same. It would appear he worked as a veterinarian his whole life, although he also owned some land that he either rented out or farmed himself. He and another veterinarian were appointed inspectors of cattle in the Cockermouth area as a result of a plague affecting the cattle.¹ He was admitted to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1879.²
- c. Legacy
 - i. Septimus left his family in comfortable means; his probate was valued at £1,126, which today is worth around £110,000. Importantly, he left them with good educations and many of his children went on to be successful in life.
 - ii. When Septimus' probate was proved on 14th April 1888, at Carlisle by his widow, 'Mary Jane Hodgson of Brigham'. His personal effects amounted to £1,126 19s. 5d which today is worth around £110,000. He donated £1 which today is worth around
- d. Victorian Education
 - i. *Who would have been educated in Victorian society?*
 - ii. Whilst some of his children went to university, others also went on to become farmers. Skilled workers, including veterinarians, lawyers, and doctors would require a university education, however for a lot of Victorian society, this was an incredibly expensive luxury. There were a few people who went on to be incredibly successful in Victorian society without much formal education, but for most, from around 1833 education involved attending local national schools. It was later in 1880 when all children aged 5-10 by law, had to attend school. During the 1860s though, farmers might pay around 6d a week for each child to attend school. So school was really for those who could afford for their children not to be working and earning money, and for those who could afford to pay for them to attend school.

¹ The London Gazette, January 19th 1866, number 23056, p. 314-315.

² Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, *The Register and Directory of Veterinary Surgeons* (Oxford, 1884), p. 140.

13. Peter Robinson

- a. Background
 - i. Born in 1832 and died in 1906, Peter Robinson lived and died in Brigham, spending all of his working life, as far as we can tell, here in the village and in the surrounding area.
- b. Employment
 - i. Peter Robinson worked a number of different jobs. Different census' show that his work changed frequently, likely a result of Peter relying on getting work where he could. He worked as a quarrier, a roadman, and other manual labour jobs in order to earn money. Interestingly, he worked well into his 70s, working on the roads even then. Later his descendants would go into the joinery and woodworking business; no doubt he was also involved in this field at some point during his life as well.
- c. Legacy
 - i. Peter can be described as a member of the working class who worked tirelessly for his family. Although he died without any great wealth, he lived a long and productive life. For many of the working class, we know so little, whatever we do learn tends to come from the wealthy members of society who could afford to keep records, and were in a position for them to be kept safe. He donated half a crown 2s 6p to the restoration, which today would be worth around £10.
- d. Victorian Mining and Quarrying
 - i. What were conditions like for miners and quarry workers?
 - ii. Mining and quarrying became a major source of employment for Victorian workingmen. These photographs show a number of men and boys posing whilst these pictures of Kirk Cross Limestone Quarry were taken. For many miners, they could expect wages of 4s a day in 1865, which equates today to being £16.68. The wages were relatively low compared to other parts of the country due to an influx of Irish workers into the area. Many miners became members of trade unions in an effort to avoid exploitation. Due to the nature of the work, there were regular accidents, with many being fatal. To reduce the risk of fatalities government inspectors were appointed to reduce the risk of accidents, although both the colliery owners and the men themselves continued to ignore guidelines. Long days, dangerous work, and low wages meant mining work was not the luxurious work that men aspired to, but provided work nonetheless which would allow their families to get by.

14. Conclusion

- a. Why was there a restoration?
 - i. Needed to return it to its original condition, parishioners were being put off by the poor condition it had fallen into.
- b. Who were some of the Victorian Ancestors who helped shape the parish?
 - i. Local landowners, labourers, coal mine owners, the gentry and aristocracy, and more played a part in the restoration of the Church and in the leadership of the parish.
- c. What would life have been like in Victorian society?
 - i. We have looked at the types of housing in the area, what life would have been like, the types of education people might receive, and finally at the conditions miners and quarry workers might expect to be working in. We have learnt that life would have been quite difficult, conditions hard for those living on the subsistence line, and only those with wealth could expect many of the luxuries of a good education, and being able to travel the country.

15. William Parkin

- a. Background
 - i. Born in 1822, died in 1889. His father had also been a miller at Southwaite mill.
- b. Employment
 - i. William was a miller at Southwaite Mill and employed a number of men to help him.
- c. Legacy
 - i.
 - ii. When William Parkin died, his personal estate was valued at £217 17s. 10d., two of his sons, William and John Richardson proved the probate on 12th May 1890. William donated £1, which today is worth around £84.
- d. Farming in Victorian society
 - i. What role did farming play in the community?
 - ii. For many it was their livelihood, others worked on farms as labourers, some moving from farm to farm for work. The produce of larger farms would be taken to markets, small farms might grow enough for their family and then what is left would be sold. Large landowners would rent land to tenant farmers, sometimes for long periods of time.

16. Questions?

Thank you very much.