Sunderland Antiquarian Society

Newsletter

February 2011

Sunderland AFC, Roker Park – match day c. 1930
Antiquarian News
The Society’s membership continues to grow, locally, nationally and overseas. The research mornings at the Minster are very well attended so do please come along – assistance and guidance is always at hand. The monthly evening talks are also being well attended. The society’s website goes from strength to strength and can be accessed at: www.sunderland-antiquarians.org
The site has a ‘Members Only’ area which current members can log in to with their password. Non-members do not have access to this part of the site. Any members who have not yet received their password should simply send an email to the Secretary of the society at P11cur@aol.com and a password will duly be issued. New articles, photos and features are being uploaded into this area on a weekly basis so do keep accessing this part of the website.

Forthcoming Lectures
8th February 2011: ‘The Old Shops of Sunderland’ by Phil Curtis
8th March 2011: ‘The Early Baptists in Sunderland’ by Bill Greenwell

Our illustrated monthly lectures all take place in The Minster Vestry) commencing 8pm and last approx one hour (doors open 7.30pm with coffee being served in the Minster Clock Tower Restaurant, if required). Non-members are always very welcome.

Fortnightly Research Mornings
The Society’s archives at The Minster continue to be open for research fortnightly on Saturday mornings 10a.m.-noon – 5th and 19th February, 5th and 19th March, 3rd and 17th April......... Non-members are most welcome.

The society’s archives are packed with documents, maps and photographs that may be of assistance to members in their family or subject research. Where we are able, we will provide help and assistance for research. Contact our map archivist, Norman Kirtlan, email: oldsunderland@yahoo.co.uk or our Chairman, Douglas Smith, email: dougallsmith2007@aol.com
Early Roker

Until the building of part of Roker Terrace and the Roker Baths Hotel (later to be known as The Roker Hotel) in the early 1840s, Roker was entirely rural. Maps of the 1820s and 30s show a windmill in the vicinity of the present Brandling Street.

In 1856 St Peter’s parsonage stood alone in the countryside on the corner of Roker Lane (later Roker Baths Road) and Fulwell Lane….the site of the present Cambridge Hotel.

Lowland House, which stood near Westburn Terrace, was the house for a farm which was bordered by the North Dock Railway and the present Roker Avenue and Fulwell Road.

Roker Farm covered the rest of Roker and was worked from a farm-house near Claremont Road. In 1856 it was farmed by Joseph Dunn and later by J.M. Ramsey when it became known as Ramsey’s Farm. It had a good dairy herd and was a working farm until about 1930.

A rural scene – part of Ramsey’s Farm in late 1920s – Today this is the Recreation Park
Claremont House, Roker, Sunderland

Claremont House and its entrance hall
Near the sea was Rock Lodge House, originally (C1784) the home of a branch of the Abbs family. The building ended as a private school for boys (Dobbies) in 1939.

The first housing in Roker, apart from Roker Terrace and the farm houses was a set of Sunderland Cottages, a style of building rarely seen outside Sunderland which were built from 1877 up to the first world war. Duke Street and Osborne Street led the way, without bay windows. Then came the streets named after Prime Minister Gladstone’s 1880 cabinet, Bright, Forster, Stansfield, Ripon, Hartington, Selborne and Cardwell, all dating from the 1880s. Moreland Street and Kingston Terrace are from the turn of the century as are Glenthorne and Dinsdale Roads. These terraced cottage, became the standard type of home for artisans (usually owner-occupiers) in this area. In Roker they were usually craftsmen from the shipyards in those days when shipbuilding was thriving. Rows of these cottages presented a gracious appearance behind their uniform wrought-iron railings (removed for the war effort in the 1940s).

The area which was bounded by Sidecliff Road, Park Avenue, Rock Lodge Road and the Cliff Park must have been the most prestigious area of houses in Sunderland around 1910. At that time there were nine mansions each standing in its own grounds.

Opposite the Bede Memorial at that time was CLIFFSIDE, the home of Sir John Priestman who owned the Southwick shipyard. He was director of many companies – shipping, collieries and water and reaped a fortune from gold mine investments. He donated half a million pounds to local charities, paid for the Technical College Library, the Sunderland Eye Infirmary and the rebuilding of Bishopwearmouth Church. He also financed the building of St Andrew’s Church and still left over one and a half million pounds at his death.

Further up Sidecliff Road was GLENVILLE, occupied in 1910 by Stephen Moriarty Swan who was the joint owner of Hedley, Swan & Co of High Street East, the store which became known as ‘Joplings.’ He was Mayor of Sunderland in 1906, an elder of Trinity Presbyterian Church and a pioneer of Sunday School work at Roker Presbyterian Church.
In EASTCLIFFE lived Frederick Wade, a saddler, whose business was in John Street. Nearer the corner with Park Avenue was PARKSIDE home of Sir James Marr, who was a shipbuilder and Chairman of Laing’s shipyard from 1905. Turning up Park Avenue was LANGHOLME, owned by a Mr. S.H. Hedley, a mining engineer. Next, facing into Rock Lodge Road was THE CLOSE, owned by T.C. Wilson, a timber merchant whose yard was in Newcastle Road (later the bowling Alley site) and who imported via another yard which was a landmark on the north river bank just under Wearmouth Bridge. Next door was WEAR COURT belonging to Mr. W.H. Dugdale, the managing director of S.P. Austin’s shipyard. On the other side of the road was ROCK LODGE where Mr. C. Hutchinson lived. He was a shipowner and a partner in Hutchinson and Jackson, ‘compass adjusters.’ Finally facing Whitburn Road was FALSTONE HOUSE, the mansion of A.C. Thompson of Thompson’s Sawmills, which traded at the South Dock and Moor Terrace.

There was also a spread of very dignified housing around Roker Park. Roker Park Road was started from the north end near Sidecliff Road in 1893 to near completion at the southern end in 1909. Parts of Sea View Gardens, briefly known as Park View, and parts of Park Gate are from 1893. Parts of North Grove, Gillside Grove and Glenthorpe Avenue from 1901-2; the east side of Park Lea Road was built in 1909, Ravine Terrace in 1905, Park Parade in 1908 and St Andrews Terrace and Roker Park Terrace in 1911.

Looking up Sidecliff Road with farm on right. In the distance is Fulwell Road and the Fulwell Mill can be seen on the horizon.

Spreading northwards, Talbot Road was erected in 1929 with the northern part of Park Avenue, Clifton Road and Calderbourne, Cressbourne, Cambourne and Cliftonbourne Avenues all being built in the early 1930s.
The west part of Park Lea Road was completed in 1933. Mansfield Crescent with Malvern, Melvyn, Moine and Melrose Gardens were completed by 1935 and Merryfield Gardens by 1938.

NEXT TIME YOU ARE WALKING IN ROKER DO LOOK OUT FOR THE OLD MANSIONS-MANY OF THEM STILL EXIST.
Extract from ‘THE OLD-TIME FIELDS AND GARDENS OF
SUNDERLAND’
by J. James Kitts

On 11th October 1910 one of the members, J. James Kitts read a paper to the Society entitled ‘The Old-Time Fields and Gardens of Sunderland. He based this on personal memory but also used directories, old deeds and writings relating to properties within the old town dating from 1700 to 1850. The whole article is too extensive to reproduce here but here are some of the main extracts:

Ralph Thoresby, the historian of Leeds, passed this way in Nov 1682. He was on his way south and he speaks of Sir Thomas Williamson’s pleasant house and gardens at Monkwearmouth and states that he crossed the ferry to Sunderland “of late grown to a considerable repute and renown for coal and salt.” In 1758 a Mrs Montgau, who came over from Newcastle, speaks of “the frequent cottages on the moors, built for the pitmen, taking off something of the solitariness of the desert: Hylton Castle was a most noble edifice; Sunderland a good seaport town with a new pier, just being made at the expense of the coal owners.” About this time the Town Moor comprised some 50 acres, on which it was possible for the Freemen and Stallingers to graze their cows.

The Parson’s Directory of 1792 allots seven pages to Sunderland informing that ‘it is a seaport town, situate on the south banks of the river Wear. At high water the German Ocean amost surrounds it…….This place and the two Wearmouths contain near 30,000 inhabitants. Communication with other parts of the country is kept up by means of a common stage wagon to Newcastle three times a week returning the same night: a wagon from Durham twice a week and one from Stockton every Thursday. There is a very handsome church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, a chapel dedicated to St John and six meeting houses for Protestant dissenters of different denominations. The High Street is about a mile long with several streets running from the south side of it.’

Where St Pauls Church, Hendon, now stands there was, about 60 years ago, (around 1850) a large timber yard. Green fields covered the space occupied by Henry, Addison and Bramwell Streets and from there gardens stretched almost to the sea. Hendon beach had a very different aspect with no gasworks or South Docks extension interfering with its beauty.

There was boating on the stream at the foot of the gardens of Cumberland Terrace, then an aristocratic neighbourhood. (see photograph) In the wintertime ice skating took place there.

Just a little to the south-west were the spacious Hendon Gardens running down to the valley. The Victoria Gardens covered the space now occupied by Cuba and Manilla Streets and others. These and the strawberry gardens took the place of our modern parks: a large number of people visited these gardens where fruit was supplied. At Diamond Hall there was also a large garden with a spring in the centre of it.

About this time the Hendon district had something of the same appearance that Sunderland Parish had at an earlier date. A large number of allotment gardens occupied the space now covered with Christopher, Thompson, Mordey, Clementina Streets etc, there being an open country right up to Stockton Road. The Valleys of Love, with its sweet hawthorn hedges, the footbridges over the burn, the fields and rope-walk on the other side of Hendon Lonnin, separated from the part built upon, by Building Hill Lonnin. All have long disappeared.

When Penshaw Branch Railway was being constructed, the land what is now Toward Road was considerably raised by deposit of the ballast removed from the railway cutting. It had been a lovely narrow green lane. The site of the southern part of the Extension Park was occupied by gardens and orchards. A magnificent show of blossom in spring-time drew
admiring visitors. The north part was used as a cricket and circus ground. At the west corner was Metal Hall, the residence of Thomas Sanderson the town crier, umbrella maker and poet. Holmeside, also, was a narrow lane with dyke and hawthorn hedge on the north. Through the hedge, we boys used to watch the ropemakers on their walk with the material they were spinning wrapped in large quantities round their waists.

From Fawcett Street there was but one small whitewashed cottage until we came to Crowtree Road, Olive Street, Derwent Street, Stockton Road and Albion Place and very few houses at the end of the Low Row, then Rennison’s farm house, but no more westward. When Mary Street was built my father and his family went to live at No. 1 but we returned to the town. It was too lonely out there, so far in the country!

Cumberland Terrace, described as an aristocratic neighbourhood in the mid 19th Century

Subscriptions

Membership subs are paid annually - £15 for an adult and £25 for husband and wife. If your subs are due then please do forward the same to the Treasurer, Mr R. Hope, 25 St Gabriel’s Avenue, Sunderland, SR4 7TF. This entitles you to 6 bi-monthly newsletters per annum, a free booklet on an aspect of Sunderland’s History (published annually) and free admission to the archives which are open Saturday mornings (fortnightly) 10.00 – noon at The Minster. The monthly talks held in The Minster Vestry are also free (details on page 1)

There is also access to the Members Only area of the Society’s website with an exclusive password being issued to all members.

Go to [www.sunderland-antiquarians.org](http://www.sunderland-antiquarians.org)

NEW MEMBERS ARE MOST WELCOME and should send subs to the Treasurer who will arrange for a welcome pack to be sent. Alternatively you can join through the website (PayPal)
Above: Opening of Roker Pier September 1903
Below: The Saltgrass Inn
Above: 1966 - demolishing the North end of the Station

1858: The old Wearmouth Bridge with Scott and Horn’s Bottle Works in the foreground
A day not to be proud of! - The end of the old Town Hall