

### Sheffield's Pub Signs and their Origins

At our March meeting Enid Vincent and her co-presenter Phil showed us but a small part of the huge photographic collection of pub signs they had assembled from across the UK since the 1970s. There were more than enough fascinating pub signs from the immediate Sheffield area to keep us all interested.

We usually think of pub signs as a simple painted advertisement hanging outside a pub, but we were frequently reminded of the fact that signs come in many forms and materials, in wood and stone, metal silhouettes, tiles, plastic, painted pictures, single- and double-sided, and sculptures and mouldings.

Although many names are fairly common, such as the *Red Lion* (there are thought to be some 600 bearing this name), many are unique to particular places. Pub signs can be grouped in a variety of ways. Many pubs were originally connected to monasteries with active breweries and the religious connection is often reflected in the name of the pub and in the sign. References to monarchy are also popular, either with specific reference to historical events (the *Royal Oak*) or to specific monarchs. Other signs refer to significant local aristocrats, often via their coats of arms.

In our area, many signs relate to local industries (the *Miners Arms*, the *Grindstone*, the *Bessemer*) and to agriculture (the *Wheatsheaf*, the *Bull's Head*). Travelling can also be a common theme, and a number of our pubs have signs with a railway-based theme, perhaps associated with railway stations. Radical politics are also a fertile source of ideas for signs (*Corn Law Rhymer*), and brewing itself generated some appropriate names (*Three Tuns* and the *Barrel*). There are also plenty of signs associated with the armed forces (*Nelson*, *Wellington*) and so on. Finally, sports make an appearance (the *Cricket Inn*).

The story behind a pub name can sometimes reflect an item of national interest, but is often associated with more local happenings. The *Noose and Gibbet* on Broughton Lane, beside the Sheffield Arena, is an example, albeit gory, of the latter. It carries an effigy of the gibbeted body of highwayman Spencer Broughton, who was hanged in 1792 for robbing the Rotherham mail coach the previous year. This pub sign serves to remind today's clientele of that event, even if they are unaware that Broughton's gibbeted body was left to hang on Attercliffe Common for 36 years afterwards.

Because the pub has traditionally been a place where local people can regularly meet each other, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that pub signs frequently reflect some, often historical, aspect of local identity.

#### **A Date for your Diary: SHEFFIELD HERITAGE FAIR:**

Millennium Gallery, 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. Admission Free

### The Barrel Tavern

On the same subject, we recently discovered that a beerhouse called The Barrel was operating in Hangingwater in the early nineteenth century. The 1841 and 1851 census records tell us that one Alethea Biggin, a widow, had been in charge of a beerhouse in Hangingwater, but its precise location and its name had remained a mystery. That is, until members Stuart and Ann Barratt uncovered this information whilst researching Ann's Creswick family history.

Alethea and her husband, Joseph Biggin, appear to have been running the beerhouse as well as renting a few acres of farmland nearby (now Hangingwater allotments). Joseph died in 1832 but Alethea continued running the beerhouse until her death 23 years later. It was the report of her death in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* in December 1855 that revealed the name of the beerhouse: the *Barrel Tavern*. And by interpreting the census Stuart and Ann have identified its location as one of the cottages in the small terrace on the corner of Oakbrook Road and Jenkin Lane (now Hangingwater Road).



Location of the Barrel Tavern, Jenkin Lane

These buildings were later incorporated into the more salubrious sounding *Kensington Market* by builder and horse-bus driver Robert Middleton, but the above photograph shows the rear of this terrace before these changes took place.

### The Highland Laddie

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the name of the pub that we know today as *The Bull's Head* was instead *The Highland Laddie*. Back then it was a mere beerhouse where the owner, Jonathan Swann, worked simultaneously as a pen and pocket knife manufacturer. By 1851, he may have gone up in the world, being described as a "cutler and inn keeper". His successor, Jonathan Dungworth, continued with a dual role – innkeeper and saw-handle maker. Interestingly he had married Hannah Biggin, the daughter of Alethea Biggin, whom we met earlier running the Barrel Tavern in

Hangingwater Road.

By 1871 the pub was under the stewardship of Charles Slowe, and perhaps, as “the publican and licensed victualler”, he had concluded that *The Bull’s Head* was a more appropriate name for the up-coming suburb of Ranmoor. However it was still only two thirds of its current size: the left-most cottage was still in private occupation. (see the photo below).

But the name *Highland Laddie* has always intrigued us. Early landlords had been born locally, rather than in Scotland. Perhaps it was the name of a famous racehorse, or was in some way connected to travelling salesmen known as Scotch drapers? But a more likely explanation has emerged. Across the country there appear to have been several pubs with this name, for example in Hull, Darlington, Wigton Stockton on Tees and Ashton under Lyne. Could this name have been influenced by the tune *Bluebells of Scotland* written for the piano by a Mrs. Grant of Laggan in 1799? It was apparently written to mark the departure for Europe of the Marquis of Huntly and his regiment, and quickly became very popular as the piano became a fixture in middle class homes. The song’s first line is: “*Oh where, tell me where is your Highland Laddie gone?*”



**The Bulls Head c.1880**

## **The Roman Camp at Whirlow Hall Farm**

We had been intrigued by talk of a Roman site recently excavated at Whirlow Hall Farm, and the Society was lucky to have *The Time Travellers’* Dorne Coggins and assistant Mike tell us about it at our April meeting.

The Whirlow Farm Trust instigated the exploration of the area’s history by securing a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It was known that Whirlow had been an estate of some importance in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and that it had been owned by the Bright family for hundreds of years up until 1720. Lead smelting had taken place on Bole Hill, and Whirlow Wheel was in use grinding corn between the early 1500’s and 1901. After Sheffield City Council purchased the remains of the estate in the 1920s, Whirlow Hall Farm Trust was set up to provide educational support for schoolchildren and local communities.

But early archaeological digging work in 2011 showed

that the site appears to have been occupied since Paleolithic times (10,000 BC), and furthermore a geophysical survey revealed a large Iron Age enclosure in Hall Field dating from around 700BC to 43AD. It then emerged that the site was later occupied by the Romans, who in the first century AD remodeled the site for their own purposes. The Whirlow location was a northern frontier of the Roman Empire a century after Julius Caesar. To the north were the Brigantes, a British tribe against whom the Romans first fought but with whom they later seem to have coexisted.

The evidence found in 2011 excavations, which were only permitted to last three weeks, was extended by another dig in 2016. A further geophysical survey has identified what is thought to be the site of a Roman watchtower at the highest point on the farm. This could have been one of a chain of towers extending from the Humber to the Mersey with a direct line of sight to the known Roman Fort at Templeborough in the east and possibly the Hope Valley in the west.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire the Whirlow site has been occupied continuously. The evidence of significant buildings and structures stretches from medieval times through to the Tudor and Victorian periods, and can still be located in parts of the current farm.

Dorne and Mike are volunteer members of *The Time Travellers* a local group of archaeological enthusiasts. The number of artifacts recovered in Whirlow, both by excavation but also by careful examination of ploughed land (“field walking”), is quite stunning. Findings come from many different periods; they include Paleolithic flint tools, Bronze Age arrowheads and locally-made Roman pottery, as well as imported glassware and clay pipes from more recent times. What is especially interesting is the evidence of trade, even in very early times. For instance, many of the flint tools used a type of flint not found anywhere local; they must have been transported, and presumably traded, from elsewhere.

There is a lot more information about the Whirlow Hall excavations on *The Time Travellers* website (<http://www.thetimetravellers.org.uk>). Well worth a visit!

## **Ranmoor Society Committee 2018**

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