

Happy New Year!

Hope everyone has had a nice Christmas.

Heritage Events On hold until mid February!

With the uncertainty around the Covid situation we have decided to 'err on the side of caution' and have unfortunately cancelled our Heritage events planned for January, including the Memories Café and also our Escrick Heritage Group meeting at the beginning of February. We hope you will understand. We very much hope to be back up and running starting with the Heritage Hub on Monday 14th February..... we will though confirm a little nearer the time.

Escrick Heritage Group Meetings - 2022 programme

Delighted to share with you our finalised programme for 2022. Hopefully there will be something of interest for everyone As you will see, even though we are starting a little later in the year than planned, we have an extra daytime meeting in May. If you have any ideas for the 2023 programme please do let us know.

2022 Programme Escrick Heritage Group

2nd March	An Edwardian Cookbook – 'Durability, Efficiency, Economy' by David Lewis
6th April	'Derwent Valley Light Railway' by Jonathan Stockwell
4th May	History of the Gardens of Escrick Park Estate. Louise Wickham. Open meeting - Guests £5
9th May	'Who's who, What's what & What's next' History Naburn Hospital Site by Judy Nicholson & Barbara King Note 2.30pm!
1st June	'Jubilees of years gone by' with Exhibition launch
6th July	Visit to Skipwith Hall & Gardens & Skipwith Church *Note meet at Skipwith at 6.25pm Pre-booking essential
3rd August	'Tellin't tale' by Rod & Pam Dimbleby (New Year's Membership Due 31st August 2022)
7th September	Memories of village sport and recreation
5th October	'The brickyards'
2nd November	'The Gun Powder Plot' Eric Jackson
7th December	Christmas Traditions

All at Escrick Church starting 7.30 pm except 9th May & outing on 6th July

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Remembering Floods and Snow

Thank you very much to everyone who shared their memories and photographs at our December meeting. Special thanks to Nathan Culpan of York Consortium Drainage Boards for coming along to speak to us.

Over the next few months we will be putting the photographs and memories on the website, and in the spring we will be taking up Nathan's offer to organise a trip to the Stillingfleet pumping station. It should be really interesting.

Platinum Jubilee

As we look forward to celebrating the Queens Platinum Jubilee in June, it is a great opportunity for us to look through our boxes of photo's to see if we have photographs or memorabilia of Jubilees past. As part of the Parish celebrations we plan to hold an exhibition in Church, to be launched on Wednesday 1st June at our Escrick Heritage Group meeting.

If you would be happy to help with the planning it would be great to hear from you. Also if you have anything you would be happy to share for scanning, please do get in touch. All being well we will hold our first meeting to discuss the display at the Heritage Hub at 2pm on 14th February.

John Coates, John Coates Smith and the Colley and Dring Family history

Thank you very much to Brad Colley from Australia who has sent us a copy of his book for our archive on John Coates and John Coates Smith (Remembered on our War Memorial) and The Colley family.

The book will now be available as reference for anyone interested. If you would like to read it, please just let us know or ask at any of our Heritage events.



Murder Most Foul in the Parish of Escrick!

And finally for this month, a little light reading for you! Thank you to Sam Taylor for sharing with us this factual short story about events from 1841. Happy reading!

Wishing everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year, and we look forward to meeting up in February 'all being well'!

Murder Most Foul in the parish of Escrick

The time : Midday

The date : Tuesday, October 26, 1841

The place : Hag House, a farmhouse at the southern end of the parish, close to the Selby road, the centre of a holding of just over 20 acres, the property of Lord Wenlock.

Dramatis Personae:

Joanathan Taylor, the local former tenant, aged 61; his wife Ellen, aged 53, the present tenant; their six children, two daughters and four sons, ranging in age from 13 to 30. Four years before the events of October 26, Jonathan Taylor has abandoned his wife and family for another woman and had led a life of dissipation in York and Hull. As a result, he had forfeited his tenancy of the Hag House, which had been transferred to his wife and sons. However, Taylor had very recently returned to the farm, evidently a reformed character.

The events of October 26:

The six children had left the house early in the morning to pick potatoes in a field half a mile away. Ellen Taylor was left to clean the kitchen and prepare dinner for the family. Jonathan Taylor had left the house very early, he claimed to go to Selby. Ellen, the younger daughter, was the first of the children to return to the house after potato-picking; this was soon after noon. She was horrified to find their mother 'quite dead', lying upon the hearth, near the fire, the lower part of her person burnt. The Riccall surgeon Robert Fielding was sent for and arriving incredibly promptly by 12.30pm he pronounced that Ellen Taylor died almost two hours before – at about 10 or 10.30am. The cause of death was almost certainly strangulation, judging by the bruising on her neck (a view confirmed by later medical testimony). The burning, which almost certainly took place after the victim has died, was judged to be a clumsy attempt on the part of her assailant to present her death as an accident.

Suspicion immediately fell on Jonathan Taylor, the husband of the victim, who found it difficult to provide a convincing alibi for the morning of the attack. He was duly charged with the murder of his wife. He claimed that after leaving the house at about 6am he had visited the kennels and then walked to Selby, returning to the house about 4pm. However, no-one could confirm that he had been at the kennels, even though there was someone there all day; and there was proof that he had been present at the house at 9.30am, blocking access to the house to Robert Kettlewell, the miller's boy from Riccall, who had come to collect some barley for milling (Taylor told Kettlewell that his wife was potato-picking with the rest of the family). Two road menders working all morning very close to the farm on Riccall lane, confirmed that nobody had visited Hag House other than the millers boy: there was a house dog at the farm which 'barked furiously' at any stranger and there was no such barking (apart from at the visit of Kettlewell) on the morning in question, thus eliminating any possible assailant other than the accused. Taylor's alibi simply did not stand up. His motivation the prosecution alleged, was to steal £70 from his wife, which he knew she had, the proceeds of a sale of some farm stock some weeks before.

The jury did not need to retire to consider their verdict: after a whispered discussion in the box lasting just five minutes, they returned a verdict of guilty. The judge, Barron Rolfe, pronounced sentence of death, accompanied by the heavy moralising:

‘You have been found guilty of the highest offence known to the law, an offence at which our nature most revolts, and you have committed this offence under circumstances of a peculiarly aggravated nature. The person on whom you have committed this offence was not some stranger, nor some person against whom you appear to have had any reasonable ground for complaint; but it was committed on the partner of your bed and the mother of your offspring....’

‘The prisoner’ reports *The Yorkshire Gazette* of March 12, 1842, ‘received the verdict and sentence in the firmest manner; and did not evince the slightest feeling or agitation throughout the day’.

In the weeks between Taylor’s conviction and his execution, he was visited by friends and members of his family, perhaps in the hope of persuading him to admit guilt and express remorse for his terrible crime. They were to be disappointed.

The sentence was carried out at York Castle soon after noon on Saturday, April 9, 1842. Large crowds gathered, estimated at ten to twelve thousand, to witness the spectacle. Robert Nall, of Sheffield, also convicted of murdering his wife, was executed at the same time. Taylor, unlike Nall, asserted his innocence to the last.

Footnote: Several generations of the Taylors, beginning with Thomas, Jonathans youngest son, were tenants of Approach Farm (originally Approach House) which replaced Hag House, the scene of the murder in the 1840’s. At least one descendant of Jonathan Taylor still resides in the locality.

The material for this article was provided by Katy Duggan, of Riccall. I am very grateful to her for her meticulous research and for her permission to share this short article.

Sam Taylor (unrelated to Jonathan)