

BIDDULPH & DISTRICT GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEETINGS UPDATE:

It is hoped that we will be able to restart meetings in the library from March 2021. Please keep checking our website and ask at the library for further information.

NOVEMBER MEETING:

The Book Launch on Saturday 14th (0900 – 1100) & Monday 16th (1500 – 1700) has had to be cancelled due to the 2nd Covid Lockdown. Matthew in the Library; Adrian Lawton and David Outhwaite of the Society are in discussion and hope to sell copies of the book from the rear of a Red Land Rover on Saturday the 12th of December 2020 and the second Saturday the 19th of December both from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. outside Biddulph Library. Lookout for further information in the Biddulph Chronicle.

Please come along to Biddulph Library in December when the Society will be launching the new publication by Adrian Lawton on the 'Buses of Biddulph'.

In conversation with –

Adrian Lawton

What inspired your interest in buses and coaches?

I was born and bred in Biddulph High Street where I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. The front room upstairs had a bay window and was my grandfather Barker's sitting room and bedroom.

From when I was small, I spent hours keeping him company whilst watching the comings and goings in the street below. The bus service to Congleton was frequent in those days, particularly at teatime when a constant succession of buses brought workers home from the mills in Congleton.

As I grew a bit older, I was able to record the bus registration numbers, their make and the adverts on the side of the double deckers.

Like many families in that era, we didn't have a vehicle and Biddulph had lost its infrequent passenger trains years before so buses played a very prominent role in our lives.

I recall outings to Congleton (park), Tunstall (park), and shopping trips to Hanley and Newcastle. There were regular visits to see grandma Lawton at Brown Lees, picnic trips to Mow Cop castle and occasional trips to Leek on market days.

Buses also enabled other family events – my father's travel to work at West Heath Hospital in Congleton, my sister's visits home from the nurses' home at North

Staffs Royal Infirmary and my auntie's occasional visits from Ashton under Lyne.

Holidays consisted of a succession of coach day trips to destinations such as: New Brighton, Blackpool, Rhyl, Llandudno, Southport (flower show) and Shrewsbury (flower show).

Later, I was to travel on a contracted bus to school at Wolstanton. Unfortunately, I never had opportunity to ride on the any of the long distance coach services which connected Biddulph with London, Coventry, Glasgow and the north east of England.

All this exposure to buses and coaches helped to develop my lifelong interest in them.

So it was with my friends Peter Smith and John Dixon who have contributed material for the book – Peter's father was a bus driver and conductor with the North Western Road Car Co while John's father was that company's depot inspector in Biddulph.

Why did you decide to write a book about buses in Biddulph and how long did it take to research?

The short answer is that research took 47 years but it was a project of two parts and here is its background:

For many years, buses have played an important role in Biddulph because its railway was principally a mineral line and regular passenger services stopped in the 1920s. Buses enabled many workers to travel easily to their employment e.g. textile mills in Congleton, pottery works in Tunstall and the Victoria and Chatterley Whitfield collieries. Buses were also a source of employment in their own right. The independents such as Wells, Findlow and Biddulph & District as well as the larger operator, North Western employed many drivers and conductors who were in prominent view of the public and were well known residents of the town.

*Research for **Part 1** of the project commenced in spring 1973 when I realised that many first generation bus people were reaching advanced years and wouldn't be around for always. This was the time to visit them to talk about the "old days" on the buses. Based on their detailed recollections together with more general information published by others, I produced a paper which was published by Biddulph History Society in autumn 1973 in their "Transactions" series. In 1980, an abridged version of this paper formed a chapter in the book "Biddulph – by the diggings" also published by Biddulph History Society.*

***Part 2** had its origins late in 2018 when leaders of the History Society decided that it was time to bring the story up to date and invited my two friends and me to "do the honours". Although most of the additional material had been steadily accumulated over many years and was already at hand, a number of matters conspired to delay my "putting it together". I managed to complete this task in early spring 2020 and the first small batch of books was printed just before lockdown happened in March.*

The book is titled "Buses of Biddulph". It contains all my original work, now with numerous illustrations, and goes on to bring the story right up to date. It proved to be quite a time consuming job because the problem wasn't finding enough material to include but was deciding which items to leave out to prevent the book becoming too ponderous for some readers. Efforts have been made throughout to balance the content between the topics of: vehicles, staff, buildings, regulations and documents (such as tickets, timetables and tours publicity).

What were the most unexpected and interesting things you found while researching the book ?

Back in 1973, I never expected to see some of the photographs of local buses and scans of various documents which have come to light since then. In particular, friends Peter Smith and John Dixon (who is a volunteer archivist at Manchester Museum of Transport) have unearthed a great deal and other bus enthusiasts have been helpful too. I find it very interesting to contrast the methods of researching and producing part 1 and part 2 of the book.

In 1973 there was no internet, word processing and no emails. My sources were printed documents and word of mouth. When I had written the text I managed to persuade a young lady, who at the time worked in the same office, to type it all out for me.

Forty-seven years later, much use was made of on line material, photos and scans of documents all of which were transmitted as email attachments. I was able to word process the entire text myself and David Outhwaite was then able to incorporate the numerous illustrations amongst the text and to prepare the work for printing. It's a very different world!

When will the book be available and how much will it cost ?

A socially distanced book launch will take place on Saturday the 12th of December 2020 and Saturday the 19st of December from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Biddulph Library. The book cost is £5.00.



Left:

The photograph is of David Haydon, proprietor of Hollinsheads Coaches and Richard Tidd, Adrian's godson, after a coach trip they took together circa 1990.

If you are inspired by Adrian and have ideas for a local history project that you would like to pursue – please get in touch. The society may be able to help with information, finance and printing.

Contact: Madelaine: madelainelovatt@hotmail.com

Elaine: e_heathcote@yahoo.com

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER: Do you have anything you would like to add to next month's newsletter? We would very much like to have your Christmas memories – especially from childhood. How did your family celebrate? Please contact either Elaine or Madelaine with your suggestions. Thank you.

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My Ancestors were named “Biddulph”:

Emma Sweetland got in touch with the society recently with a query about her ‘Biddulph’ ancestors. She says *“I am finding that many seem to use the names Biddulph and Biddle interchangeably, particularly at the time of the civil war and the Cromwellian reign. Quite often in the parish registers it will say ‘alias Biddle’. I just wondered if you had heard of this before or might know why an alias was used?”*

A search of the Biddulph parish registers, pew plans and memorial inscriptions could not reveal any ‘Biddles’ or ‘alias Biddle’. The only variation was an additional ‘e’ on the end - BIDDULPHE.

Edgar Tooth in Vol 1 of **‘The Distinctive Surnames of North Staffordshire’** states *‘locally, Biddulph, is known as ‘Biddle and it occurs in this form as early as 1471, when John Bidyll of Bidyll was hauled before the local assizes. In the Norton in the Moors parish register Hugh Biddulph (1614) is alternatively entered as Hugh Biddle de Bagnald in 1610. The name Biddle therefore, in our county, is more often than not from this local dialect variant’*. Tooth adds that *‘in other parts of the country it goes back to the Saxon noun*

‘bydel – ‘beadle’, who was the medieval counterpart of the modern village policeman.”

So it would seem that in Staffordshire, the surname Biddle is a local pronunciation of the place name ‘Biddulph’.

After reading the references sent, Emma replied with a little more detail. She has mapped the baptisms of her Biddulph ancestors and it would seem that the further south they go in the county and the further away from the place ‘Biddulph’, the more they use the name ‘Biddle’. Her quest now is to actually find a link to Biddulph – the place.

Does anyone have any interesting ‘surname stories’ that they could share?

-TREASURE HUNT- TREASURE HUNT- TREASURE HUNT- TREASURE HUNT-

David Outhwaite very kindly organised a socially distanced ‘Treasure Hunt’ last month. At least 12 members took part at various times of the day. Answers to the clues were to be found by walking the length of High Street, part of Tunstall Road and all of John Street.

I very much enjoyed the challenge even though it was going dark when I started. Sadly, I know that I haven’t come first, as I couldn’t answer all the questions. If you were unable to have a go on the day – the Treasure Hunt is still available. Ask at the library for the clues! The closing date for entries is now the 31st of December.

Elaine Heathcote

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