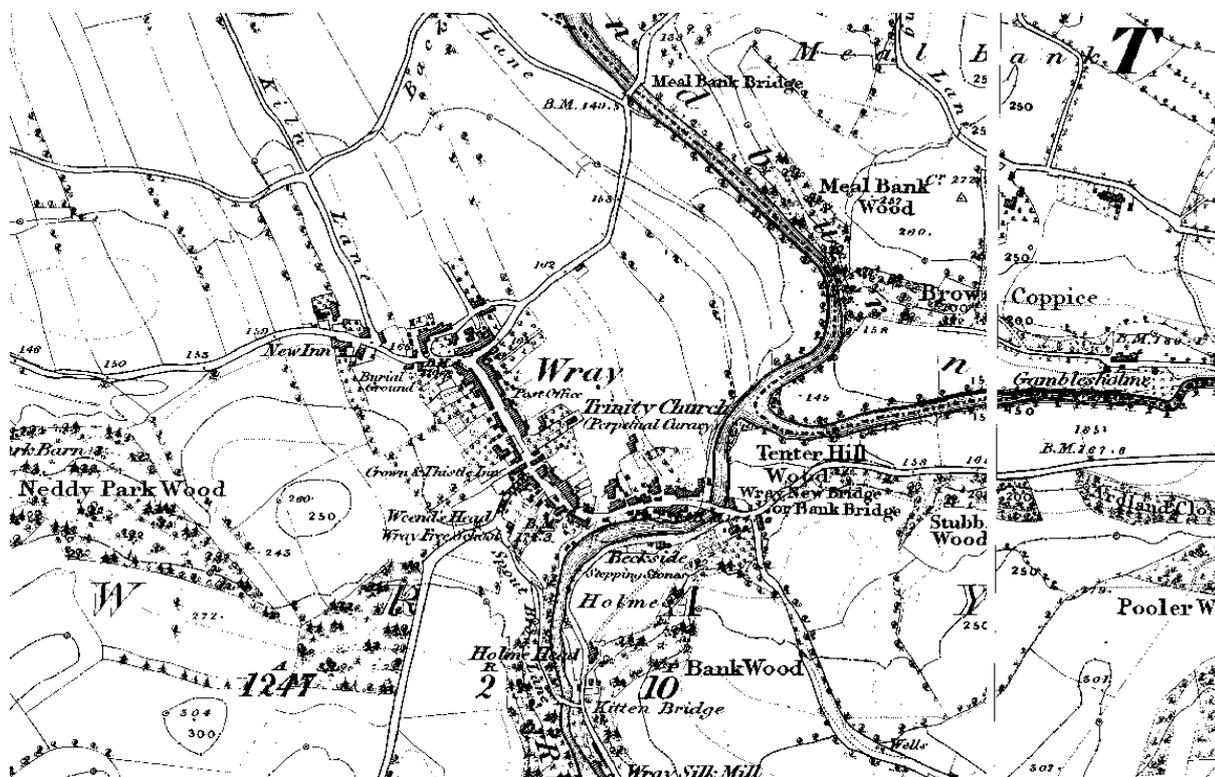


THE LAHS EXCURSIONS IN 2015-16

EXCURSION TO WRAY

On 30 July 2016 about 20 members and guests visited the village of Wray in the Lune Valley. Although best known for its annual scarecrow festival, the village has a full and varied history, as Mike Winstanley's guided tour made clear. Mike pointed out some of the notable houses with datestones, largely from the late 17th century, and also the houses associated with prominent families several of whom went on to make fortunes in London or the West Indies. He introduced the group to the village's religious history ranging through Quakers, Wesleyans and Free Methodists to the Anglican church designed by Edmund Sharpe, the Lancaster architect. The group also visited the site of the devastating flood of 1967, now a tranquil garden with a delightful mosaic by a local artist, Maggie Howarth. It was once the site of terraced houses and workshops lining the River Roeburn. However, it was Wray's industrial past – including coal mining, woodland industries, making hats, swill baskets and nails and, above all, textiles – that dominated the landscape. The final port of call was Wray Mill, complete with a row of workers' cottages and a late-nineteenth-century spinning and dressing shed. This was built on the site of an earlier fulling mill in the early nineteenth century, initially as a cotton mill. For most of its existence it was a waste-silk spinning mill, operated by a succession of firms, including Hinde & Company, which also operated Ridge Lane silk mill in Lancaster. After silk spinning ended in 1890, it was used, although not intensively, as a bobbin and wood-turning mill before conversion to houses. The group returned to the Bridge House Tea Rooms for much needed refreshments.



Wray in 1845. <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives-and-record-office/search-the-archives/old-maps-of-lancashire.aspx>

Here are some sources for further information on Wray and its history.

David Kenyon *Wray Remembered: a photographic history of the life and times of a working village* (published privately in 2008): a wonderfully illustrated and informative book.

Christine Workman, Emmeline Garnett and Phil Husdon on the hatting industry, swill basket making and coal mining respectively in M. Winstanley (ed.) 2000 *Rural Industries of the Lune Valley* Lancaster: Lancaster University, Centre for North West Regional Studies

Mike Goth on the mill in *Contrebis*, vol. XXVIII (2003)

http://lahs.archaeologyuk.org/Contrebis/28_27_Goth.pdf

Emmeline Garnett 2002 *The Wray Flood of 1967* Lancaster: Lancaster University, Centre for North West Regional Studies

Mike Winstanley

EXCURSION TO CHESTERS FORT, HADRIAN'S WALL

The second all-day excursion of the Society's 2016 season was to Chesters Roman Fort (Cilurnum) on Hadrian's Wall on 3 September. The journey was via Lanercost Priory whose excellent coffee shop has been visited by us before – and probably will be again. Traffic accidents (not us) en route caused some delay but we arrived safely to meet our guide, Graeme Stubbs from English Heritage, which owns and administers the well-kept site. Graeme proved an excellent choice, pitching his talk at just the right level for the group.

There is a lot to see at Chesters as it has been well (though not completely) excavated over many years and there is still plenty to do. It is well to remember that the fort was occupied by the Romans for more than 250 years and during that period there were many alterations and much rebuilding. The jewel in the crown is probably the bathhouse (always an important feature of Roman life), which is exceptionally well preserved. Large sections have survived and were well explained by our guide. This brought the tour of the site itself to an end, leaving time for a visit to the extremely good museum.

Our stay at Chesters was rather longer than expected and that, together with the heavy rain, meant that the planned visit to Carlisle was abandoned and we arrived back in Lancaster in the early evening.

George Howson

EXCURSION TO EDMUND SHARPE'S THREE POT CHURCHES

A 'pot church'? Yes, all three of the only pot churches in the world are in Lancashire. An excursion to visit them was arranged by Lancaster Archaeology and Historical Society, Lancaster Civic Society and St. Paul's Church. The 'pot' in question is terracotta (literally 'fired earth'). The architect, Edmund Sharpe (1809–77) had a practice in Lancaster and was persuaded to use the excess clay that was extracted with the coal from the mine owned by his father-in-law, John Fletcher of Bolton. The fired clay could be moulded into any shape and used to make everything from the structural building blocks to beautiful interior furnishings. It was cheaper than the normal building materials of stone and wood. Having seen the churches, I can truthfully say it is impossible to distinguish between the two sets of materials. The only way to convince yourself that it is terracotta is to touch it. It is very cold to the touch.

The first church we visited was St. Stephen and All Martyrs Church, Lever Bridge, Bolton, built in 1842. It is a strangely truncated building, set among trees. It once had a very beautiful spire, which was modelled on that of Freiburg Minster in Germany but had to be removed. I believe Fred Dibnah had a hand in that! Sharpe, as an architect, was very influenced by the Gothic architecture of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries and built this, his first pot church, with these ideas in mind. Inside, it is very heavily decorated with terracotta: the pew backs and ends; the carved decorations on the roof trusses; the blind arcading; the friezes; the window tracery; a very richly decorated organ case; the font, pulpit and altar; and finally the floor tiles, now sadly replaced and stored in the basement. It is hard to believe that everything one can see in this beautifully and intricately decorated church is made of terracotta. Everyone was in awe of the skill and artistic excellence on show here. We were treated to some welcome coffee and delicious cakes in the church hall.

Sharpe's second pot church was Holy Trinity Platt Church in Rushholme, Manchester, built in 1845 and sometimes known as 'The poor man's church'. It has very beautiful proportions and its flying buttresses are said to resemble claws. The interior has been mostly stripped out and is now a very large hall with tall, delicately spaced arches. The roofs of the side aisles are set very much lower than those of the nave. It is the tower with its spire which really excites the attention. It is very beautiful and is perfectly proportioned; the square base is half the full height and the central, short portion is, I think, octagonal; and on it sits the beautifully tapered spire. There is very little external decoration: it is the delicate banding of the spire which gives the church great dignity. And of course, all we can see internally and externally is made of terracotta.

We then headed northwards via the Botany Bay Canal Mill where we had lunch. Botany Bay commemorates where the navvies who worked on the Canal were encamped. Many moved on to Botany Bay, Australia.

Our final visit was to St. Paul's Church in Scotforth, built in 1874 and Sharpe's last. He came out of retirement to build it because he wanted something that would stand as a monument to his skill as an architect. It is Romanesque in style with rounded interior and window arches and rounded pillars inside. The apse and the tower show a French influence, the tower having a saddleback style roof. Terracotta was used conservatively since the walls were built of local stone, the terracotta being used only for the decorative details. There is no central isle, thus precluding processions, and the door to the vestry is very narrow so that the priest cannot wear flowing robes! The apse, which is an acoustic chamber, is very beautifully painted and the church slopes towards the altar, because Christ went down to the water and then He goes up again into the sanctuary. We were treated to a very welcome cup of tea and refreshments at the back of the church.

Our very grateful thanks go to Michael Haslam for his meticulous planning and expert notes on the places we visited. These excursions are always so enjoyable and it was lovely to join with the Civic Society and members of St Paul's Church.

Judith Horsfield