

BYGONES

Cathryn Walton takes a leaf through the history books

Cathryn Walton's interest in Leek's history began in 1980 when watching Gordon Honeycombe presenting a weekly TV programme on tracing his family tree.

As Cathryn knew her family had lived in Leek for generations she decided to trace her own family history. This led to her attending a WEA course in Leek on Edwardian Leek.

Along with others she contributed to a book entitled *Images of Edwardian Leek*.

Some time after the course finished, Leek and District Historical Society began and Cathryn became the secretary of that organisation for more than 30 years.

Cathryn remains passionately interested in Leek's history and hardly a day goes by when she is not researching, writing or answering queries about Leek's fascinating past. She has written many local history books and contributed articles to numerous newspapers, magazines and journals, presents talks and leads guided walks nearly every month.

That initial interest in genealogy remains and Cathryn has researched scores of family trees for people at home and abroad besides her own.



Ball Haye Hall. See more pictures overleaf

'Brough brothers never lived in Ball Haye Hall'

BALL Haye Hall, which stood near to the current Leek Swimming Baths, was built by James Hulme circa 1797.

This three-storey mansion was ashlar faced, had seven bays and an impressive doorway.

James had inherited Ball Haye from his uncle John Davenport and in accordance with his uncle's wishes added Davenport to his surname.

James Davenport Hulme was a doctor and moved away from Leek to Manchester where he was a physician at Manchester Royal Infirmary, a position he held until his death in 1848.

Although James Hulme was living at Ball Haye in 1811, he was looking to let the property in 1817 when he placed an advertisement in the *Staffordshire Advertiser*.

The advert described a large house with a walled garden, hothouse and 80 acres of land.

The tenant could occupy the house with or without the furniture.

The hall was involved in a chancery suit resulting in the house being let for several years before the appointed trustees offered it for sale in 1830 at the Red Lion in Leek.

The sale notice in the *Macclesfield Courier* of April 3, 1830 refers to the mansion house, pews in the church and cottages.

The rooms on the ground floor of the hall comprised entrance hall; dining room; drawing room; breakfast room; study; housekeepers and butlers rooms; servants hall, hot and cold baths, kitchen and other offices.

On the upper floors were 10 good bedrooms; four dressing closets and adjoining rooms for servants.

Outside were pleasure grounds and shrubberies, comprising 73 acres in all.

The hall was not sold at this time. The hall with its coach house, stabling for 10 horses, vinery and fish pond remained unoccupied or tenanted until 1853, when the hall and 43 acres sold for £5,150.

The purchasers included brothers Joshua and John Brough, who were nephews of James Davenport Hulme.

However, the Brough brothers never lived in Ball Haye Hall.

In 1854, Park Road, running from Ball Haye Road to Abbey Green Road, was laid out through the grounds of Ball Haye Park and Park Lodge was built.

The lodge to the hall was on Ball Haye Green and still stands.

The part of Park Road running from Ball Haye Road up to the house built by John for his own occupation was a private road indicating the need for another lodge by the entrance gates. John Brough built two houses in Park Road now known as The Park and Beechfields.

John Brough lived in the house now known as The Park.

In Victorian directories the address of the two houses was Ball Haye Park but in census returns they were known as Park Villas.

John Brough's son Edwin was a notable breeder of bloodhounds and employed Martin Care, a stud groom, to look after his dogs.

Martin with his wife and four children lived in the Park Lodge.

By 1861 Joseph Sykes leased part of the hall where he ran a private commercial school.

Sykes, who had been the master at St Luke's National School, taught mathematics there and had two boy boarders.

Sykes school at Ball Haye was of short duration as he had moved his school to Stockwell Street by 1863.

A few years later, Joseph Sykes became master of Leek Grammar School on Clerk Bank.

In 1870 the hall was leased to Andrew Jukes Worthington, a wealthy Leek silk manufacturer, whose Portland Mills stood in Queen Street.

He leased the hall with its garden and grounds together with the plantation, the lake and island and 26 acres of parkland for an annual rent of £204.5s.

Members of the Worthington family lived at Ball Haye until at least 1881.

The lake and island rented by the Worthington's still survive and many happy hours have been spent by Leek children feeding the ducks in the lake, even though nowadays they are not supposed to.

Older Leek people will remember John Hall who leased Ball Haye Hall from 1882 and lived there until he died in 1930 while staying at the Hotel Victoria in Monte Carlo.

Many Leek residents knew Ball Haye Hall as John Hall's and thought that he was the owner – but this was not so.

John was one of the partners in Brough, Nicholson and Hall who were manufacturers of sewing silks, braids, binding and trimmings.

Their Jacquard looms produced blazer badges, braids, labels, silk pictures and bookmarks. They were very substantial local employers with 630 employees listed in 1891.

John Hall was a leading Wesleyan Methodist, a trustee of West Street Sunday School and a manager of Leek Council School as well as a J.P.

He gave an address to the Duke and Duchess of York when they opened the Leek Municipal

Technical and High School and County Silk School in 1900.

John Hall was a generous man and would open the gardens at Ball Haye Hall on summer Sundays for Leek people to enjoy. He also allowed local children to skate on part of the pond in winter. John gave an annual garden party in the grounds of the hall, and 300 people were invited to this event in 1929.

On another occasion The Salvation Army provided musical entertainment at a charity event in the grounds held on behalf of Wesleyan missionary work.

William Spooner Brough – the heir of the Brough family died unmarried in 1917 and left the property to his nephew HH Brindley.

Brindley sold the hall and 27 acres to the trustees of the Leek Memorial Cottage Hospital in 1931.

It was intended to build a new hospital in the grounds but owing to the outbreak of World War II this did not happen.

I'm told that a thermometer stood near to the Monument where the total money raised by Leek people towards the new hospital was displayed.

During the war, Nissen-type army huts appeared in the woods and grounds of the hall where American officers were billeted. Ball Haye Hall was used as a Polish Club from 1946 and later was converted into flats.

Eventually the hall became derelict and was demolished in 1972.

Have you any memories of Ball Haye Hall, John Hall, skating on the pond, American soldiers, money raised for the proposed hospital, etc, *The Leek Post and Times* would love to hear from you

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Cathryn Walton takes a leaf through the history books



Lodge on Ball Haye Green.



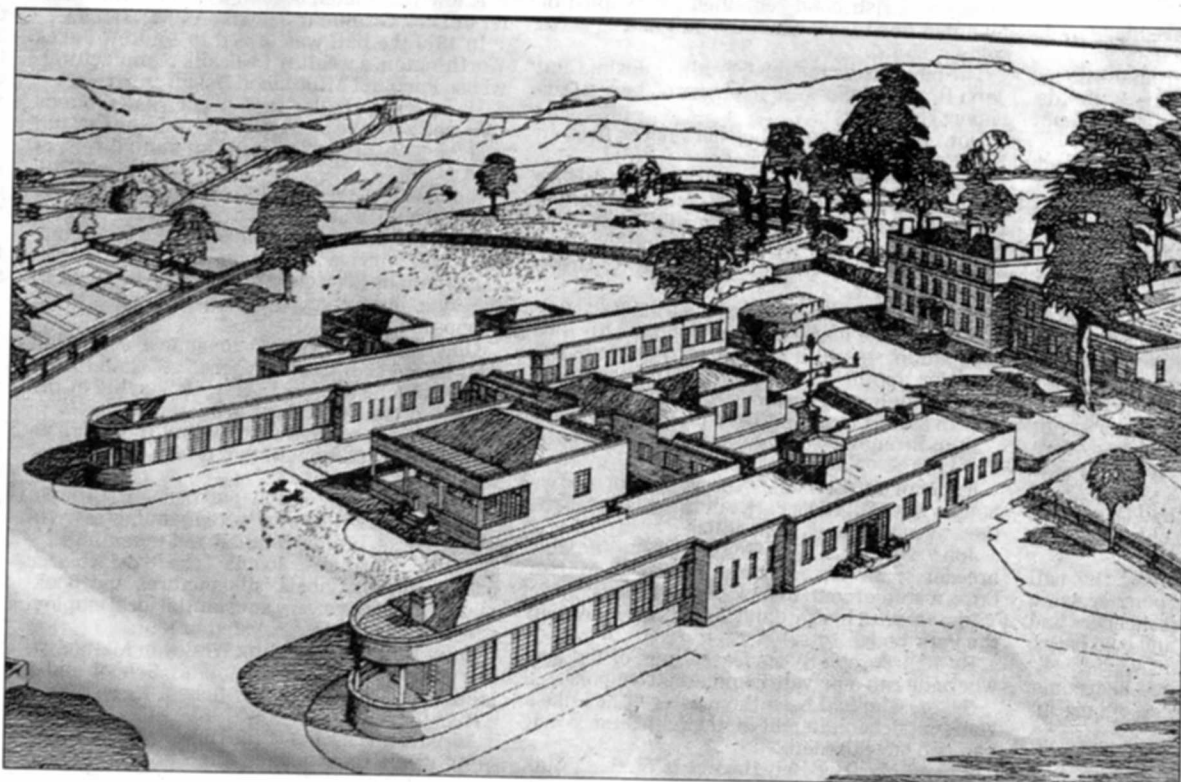
Park Lodge.



Above: Brougham outside Ball Haye Hall.



John Hall.



Right: Plan of proposed hospital at Ball Haye.



Lake and island.

VMCK

LOCAL HISTORY

Leek & District
Historical Society

THE meeting this month was led by Dr Phylomena Badsey and was entitled "Vera Brittain, Her Life Known and Unknown", concentrating mainly on Vera Brittain's life and experiences during WW1 and based for the most part on Vera's autobiography of the Great War, *A Testament of Youth*.

The meeting was very well attended and Dr Badsey addressed a packed house and quickly launched herself into an equally packed and highly informative lecture which she delivered at an almost alarming pace. What follows then is very much an abridged version of hopefully correct details – my apologies, but no prizes, for any errors.

Vera was born in 1893 into a nouveau riche family, having made its money in the manufacture of paper in the mills at Cheddleton and in the Potteries.

To elevate its social status the family moved from Newcastle to Macclesfield and then to Buxton where Vera was brought up as befitting of a genteel young lady, frequently often to her chagrin; she had no time for the social gossip and snobbery of the Buxton elite. Instead she had a burning ambition to study at Oxford, but she cut short her studies after the outbreak of the Great War to become a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, (VAD).

She began her training at the Royal Devonshire Hospital in Buxton, at first as an ancillary nurse, but she quickly earned the respect of the professional medical staff, and was encouraged to train in the treatment of the patients who were there for convalescence.

In 1915 she was promoted to the 1st London General Hospital in Camberwell, where her duties included the taking of temperatures and blood pressure and also the 'nerve stirring business' of changing dressings without the luxury of anaesthetic or pain-killers and on wounds which were almost invariably severe.

This required nerves of steel for both the patients and the nursing staff.

During this time she became engaged to a friend of her brother, Lt. Roland Leighton, and later that year heard by telephone that he had died of his injuries in December 1915 after a gunshot wound to the stomach. After this blow, at the beginning of March 1916 Vera volunteered for duties overseas.

She first went to Malta where working on the hospital ship 'Britannic' she encountered the traumatic afflictions of the casualties from Gallipoli; where besides the appalling injuries the staff had to treat cases of malaria, dysentery and typhoid.

After the ship was sunk by a German torpedo, Vera was transferred to the land hospital on Tawny Island, Malta where she worked from September 1916 to May 1917.

Her role involved much TLC and strict standards of hygiene and cleanliness and she was awarded an "Efficiency" stripe.

After eight months she resigned her post and returned to England, intending to marry Victor Richardson, but he was subsequently wounded in June 1917 and died of his injuries.

Vera immediately re-applied for overseas service and, unusually, was accepted again.

This time she was stationed at Etaples on the Western Front where the hospital consisted of a series of wooden huts linked by duckboards and where one third of the patients were dying of their injuries.

It was here that Vera recorded in a letter that the "atmosphere was heavy with sepsis".

It was a testament to the skilled nursing and to new surgical techniques and innovations that patients recovered at all, but of course, only to be sent back to the front line.

By September 1917 she was working in the British surgical ward where most of the patients were suffering from tetanus and gas gangrene caused by

trench mud and bacteria deep in the wounds. This led to clinical shock in the patients which in most cases led to death, only those treated quickly survived.

To combat this, an innovation called the Carrel Dakin method was adopted after being promoted by the Duchess of Sutherland.

This involved flushing out the dirt and bacteria with a sodium hypochlorite antiseptic solution.

In June 1918 Vera was given leave to return home to her parents and it was there she suffered yet another personal blow.

Her beloved younger brother Edward had been killed in action on June 15, 1918, while fighting on the Italian front, something that haunted her for the rest of her life.

To escape her sorrows she spent the remainder of the war working once more in the London hospital.

Throughout the war she had kept up a correspondence with her brother, her fiancé and two other friends in which they had all shared very detailed descriptions of their activities and of their feelings towards the War.

These letters can be read in *Letters From a Lost Generation*, compiled by Mark Bostridge in 2008.

All four of these young men lost their lives during the conflict and, together with her experiences of nursing men with horrific injuries, this left Vera with very mixed and disillusioned views about the reality of war.

At the end of the war she returned to Oxford to complete her studies, after which she became a writer and journalist.

But she struggled to adjust to normal life; Vera had entered nursing with an idealistic view of the necessity of war but her experiences led her to question its futility, a stance which led to government distrust of her during WW2. Her work in journalism educated her in international relations, she was well aware of the workings of politics.

Having been a working woman in WW1 she was greatly involved in the feminist movement.

After graduating in 1921 she lived and worked for a time with fellow student and writer Winifred Holtby, producing feminist and pacifist articles for magazines.

In 1925 she married George Catlin, a political scientist and philosopher.

They had a son, John and daughter, Shirley Williams who became a Labour cabinet minister.

In 1936 Vera became a Christian pacifist and spent part of WW2 driving ambulances in London.

She was an anti-apartheid activist during the 1960s and eventually gave up her journalistic career in 1968 due to her failing health.

She died on March 29, 1970.

As stated earlier this is just a brief journey into the facts with which we were regaled on Monday evening and more details of Vera's life and works can be researched by going online, if only to check my interpretation.

Anyone interested in how the auxiliary hospitals worked during WW1 might be interested in the Foxlowe's role as a convalescent hospital at that time.

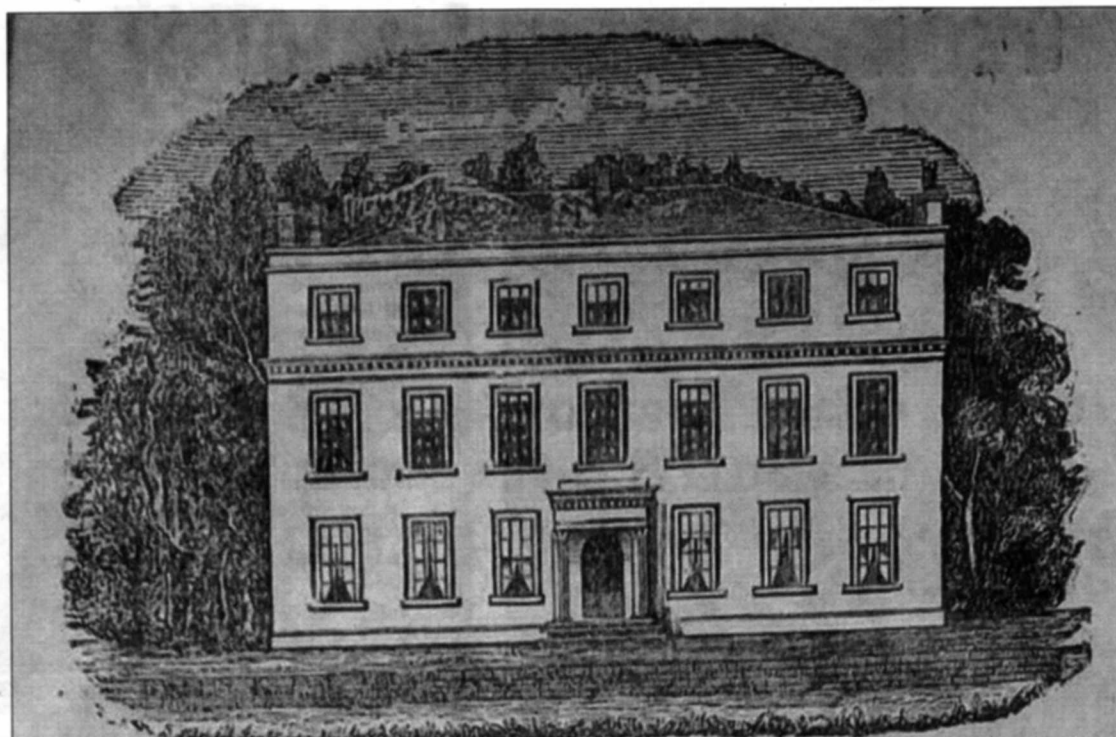
The Leek & District Historical Society produced an edition of its *Chronicles* journals last year, entitled *Foxlowe As A Red Cross Hospital* and copies may be purchased at the society meetings, from Picture book or from the art room at the Foxlowe.

Thank you for staying with me this long – Dr Badsey, on seeing me taking notes, was expecting a 5,000-word essay – this is only about 4,000 short.

Our next meeting will be on the subject of "Lost Houses of North Staffordshire", led by our own Catherine Walton, and will be based on research on houses which she describes as "demolished, derelict or just different".

It will take place on Monday, November 13, 7.45pm in the Dove Room, Moorland's House, Leek.

Gillian White



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