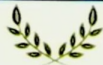




THE
WATERLOO MONUMENT
GROUP

STORY OF
A MONUMENT



War Memorials Trust

Bispham Hall
Scout Estate



THE WATERLOO MONUMENT GROUP

STORY OF A MONUMENT

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RESTORATION OF THE WATERLOO MONUMENT

Introduction

This project was first brought to my attention when I came across correspondence from Councillor George Seaward (Wigan Borough Council's Orrell Ward) dated 12th January 2002 in response to a letter from a constituent Mrs. C. A. Littler, a champion for the care and protection of local war memorials, seeking measures to restore the Waterloo Monument. Unfortunately, lack of funding, together with the retirement and untimely death of Councillor Seaward, delayed the project for an indefinite period, until a small group of volunteers interested in heritage issues took the necessary steps from 2013/14 to complete the project with the financial assistance of War Memorials Trust and additional support from The Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund, Wigan Council's Brighter Borough Fund, local societies and individuals.

We were also most grateful for the excellent work of the contract administrator, Lynda Jubb & Richard Clews of Jubb & Jubb Ltd., the structural engineer, Ian Weir, the main contractor Wayne Jolley of W.J. Structures Ltd., and Landscape Design consultant, John Harris, together with the support of Andrew Palin, Chairman of Bispham Hall Scout Estate, Alan Hayton, Assistant Warden, and my Waterloo Monument Group colleagues, Dr. J. A. Hilton, Mr. Tom Price, Mrs. C. A. Littler and Captain J. Aspinall,

John O'Neill

(Chairman, The Waterloo Monument Group)

**The poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850)
refers to the 'Victory Sublime' in his
'Thanksgiving Ode to Waterloo'.**

*Imagination, ne'er before content,
But aye ascending, restless in her pride,
From all that man's performance could present,
Stoops to that closing deed magnificent,
And with the embrace is satisfied.*



'Wellington at Waterloo' by Robert Alexander Hollingford.

THE WATERLOO MONUMENT

The Monument

The Waterloo Monument was erected in 1816 on the Bispham Hall estate by the owners, the brothers John and Robert Holt, to commemorate the victory at Waterloo. This decisive victory prompted many memorials throughout the country. However, unlike most, if not all such monuments, this one was erected on a private estate rather than in a prominent public place.

The Battle

The Battle of Waterloo was fought on Sunday, 18 June 1815, fifteen kilometres (nine miles) south of Brussels in Belgium, which was then part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. An Anglo-Dutch-Belgium-German army commanded by the Duke of Wellington and Prussian (German) army under Field Marshal Blücher defeated Napoleon's French Army.

Aftermath

The battle ended Napoleon's rule as Emperor of the French and his attempt to dominate Europe, and established a stable peace in Europe that lasted for half a century. Napoleon acknowledged Britain as 'the most powerful and constant . . . of my enemies'. Wellington summed up the battle as 'the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life'.

Restoration of the Monument

The deteriorating condition of the monument was discovered in 2011. The structure had developed a noticeable lean, parts of the stonework had cracked, and areas of inscription had been eroded. The wrought iron fixings between the stone blocks had rusted and expanded, displacing and breaking sections of stonework. The restoration was undertaken in 2016, and involved complete dismantling of the monument and rebuilding, using a lime mortar and stainless steel fittings. Missing and perished masonry was replaced with matching local stone, and the lost inscriptions were re-carved. Sympathetic treatment to the surrounding landscape ensured a suitable setting.

Dr. J. A. Hilton

THE BILLINGE AREA AT THE TIME OF WATERLOO

Billinge possibly took its Old English place-name from a group of people in the 6th Century following their leader Billa. The site was adjacent to the prominent hill over 550 feet high sloping on all sides providing spectacular views to both seaward and inland. It created an ideal sea-mark and, later, Beacon site that it eventually became. (In 1788 the Bankes family of Winstanley Hall built a summerhouse there.)

Owing to its semi-isolated geographical position, Billinge became home to a close-knit community.

The settlement developed into two distinct townships, Billinge Chapel End, the main village and Billinge Higher End to its north and in which Bispham Park and its Hall were to be located. The first Hall had been built in the mid 14th Century and its replacement in 1573. The name Bispham was adopted as a place and family name following its creation as a Manor for a bishop in medieval times within the Barony of Makerfield.

Today the main settlement lies within the borough of St. Helens and that of Higher End in Wigan.

The first official census in 1801 recorded a population of 1141 consisting of up to 300 households, which hadn't increased significantly by the time of the victory at WATERLOO in 1815.

A year later the Holt brothers, John and Robert, erected their monument in Bispham Park, 170 metres to the east of the Hall, the sandstone having been obtained from a nearby quarry.

Incidentally, in those days of limited means of communication, news of the victory took three days and two hours to reach England, and several days more to reach the Billinge area.

Over time, the main occupations that developed across this area of common, moss and moor were handicraft trades and manufactures including nail making, already widespread as a cottage industry from the 16th Century, coal mining from shallow pits and outcrops that had increased in significance from the 16th Century, including on the nearby Winstanley estate owned by the Bankes family. They, together with the Gerrard's of Garswood, were the principal landowners in the area.

New pits were opened by Clarke and German from 1812 on the west side of Winstanley Park linked by a rail system to the Leeds to Liverpool Canal

opposite Crooke Village for conveyance to markets by barge. There were similar developments in the Orrell area. However, no deep mining was undertaken to meet increasing demand until the 1830s.

Quarrying for local sandstone was increased in significance from the 16th Century as an important building material used locally and across a wider area. Many of the present stone buildings came from the local quarries.

However, agriculture became, and remained, the most important occupation with many local farms growing cereals and root crops, providing grazing for sheep and cattle and hay for winter feed, together with the rearing of pigs and poultry.

Farm wages were generally lower than in the trades and led to poaching as a common pursuit to supplement low incomes. (Orrell Colliery owned by Meyrick Bankes in 1817, paid 11d per day for a man and 6d for a youth.)

Transport was practically non-existent, apart from horse-drawn carts, generally on farms, pack-horses for conveyance of goods and materials and those few individuals who owned their own horses.

Contact with local communities beyond Orrell, Pemberton, Upholland or Wigan and St. Helens, 5 miles to the east and west, would have been a real challenge on foot.

Travelling tradesmen would break their journeys by stages at inns, like the "Foot of the Causeway Inn" built in 1721 (now the 'Holt Arms) on the edge of Bispham Park, along a purposely raised surface, called a causeway, to create a firm route across the boggy ground to Kings Moss and beyond.

The nearest place of worship at this time was St. Aiden's parish church built in 1718 on the site of an earlier chapel.

Its living was then in the gift of the Rector of Wigan. The Bispams, through Thomas Bispham, had family pews there.

Alternatively, the Priory Church Upholland, also then under the Rector of Wigan, was used as a Chapel of Ease.

Local Roman Catholics would attend the new St. James' Chapel in Orrell, built in 1798 or possibly a private one in Birchley Hall, whilst Protestant Dissenters could attend their place of worship in Orrell from 1810. Methodists would be served by travelling preachers as the nearest Wesleyan Chapel, at that time, was situated off Wallgate in Wigan and built in 1775.

There was little provision for formal education as most children were employed from an early age in the home, workshops, quarries, mines and agriculture.

Although as early as 1672 the local Eddlestone Charity contributed to the payment of a schoolmaster at Chapel End and rudiments of writing and reading based on the Bible were sometimes taught at places of worship and their Sunday Schools. A charity school was established at Brownlow just a short distance south of the Hall.

Forces, raised during the reign of George III (1760-1820) to fight in the Napoleonic Wars, came from volunteers and although a number were recruited in the Wigan and Leigh areas, none appear to have come from Billinge. Such forces were disbanded at the end of that conflict.

Fortunately, although the "Beacon" was prepared during that war period to warn of advancing enemy shipping, it was never needed.

John O'Neill

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HALL'S PAST OWNERSHIP

(From "The History of Bispham Hall" by W. B. Savigny –
revised edition 1976)

The Bispham family goes back to Robert Banastre who came to England with William the Conqueror.

The name of the Hall was derived from the marriage of Roger de Bispham and Margaret de Heyton in 1346.

The original Hall possibly dates from then but few traces, if any, remain within the building of the present Hall.

A farm stood on the site of the older building at

the time when the estate was purchased in 1948 by the South West Lancashire County Scout Council and demolished soon after, and now forms the site on the present car-park and Cub's shelter.

The new Hall, an Elizabethan manor house, dates from 1573 set in an extensive wooded park, by an agreement between Thomas Bispham of Billinge and William Smalshaye of Upholland.

The last male heir residing in the Hall was Thomas Bispham in 1727. He left one daughter, Margaret, who married Thomas Owen of Upholland. They had two daughters who married two brothers, Frances marrying Edward Leigh of London and Mary to Holt Leigh of Hindley Hall. The Hall therefore passed from the Bispham family to the Owen's and then to the Leigh's.

The Hall and estate eventually came into the ownership of Joanna Holt, aunt of Edward Leigh. She lived at the Hall until her death in 1794 and left the estate to her sister, Mary Norcross and then to her niece Mary Holt and finally to Mary Holt's children.

It is to Mary's children John and Robert that we owe the Waterloo Monument.



Sixteenth century Bispham Hall

The two brothers also started a Sunday school in one of the Hall's buildings.

Neither brother married. Robert died in 1829 and John in 1841. John left the estate to a remote cousin, William Mills and then to his eldest son on condition that they took the name "Holt". William Holt had been a small farmer in Cheshire and was a staunch Methodist and became associated with cottage meetings of fellow religionists in the locality including Upholland.

He invited travelling preachers to address local quarrymen in their place of work and this led to the building of a chapel at the foot of Crank Road in 1845. The stone above the door states that it was "Built by William Holt of Bispham Hall in 1845" - He died in 1852.

The estate was eventually sold to Meyrick Bankes of Winstanley Hall in 1871.

Other owners and tenants of the Hall included William Brancker who left in 1876 and the Honourable Robert Gerard who had married a granddaughter of Meyrick Bankes.

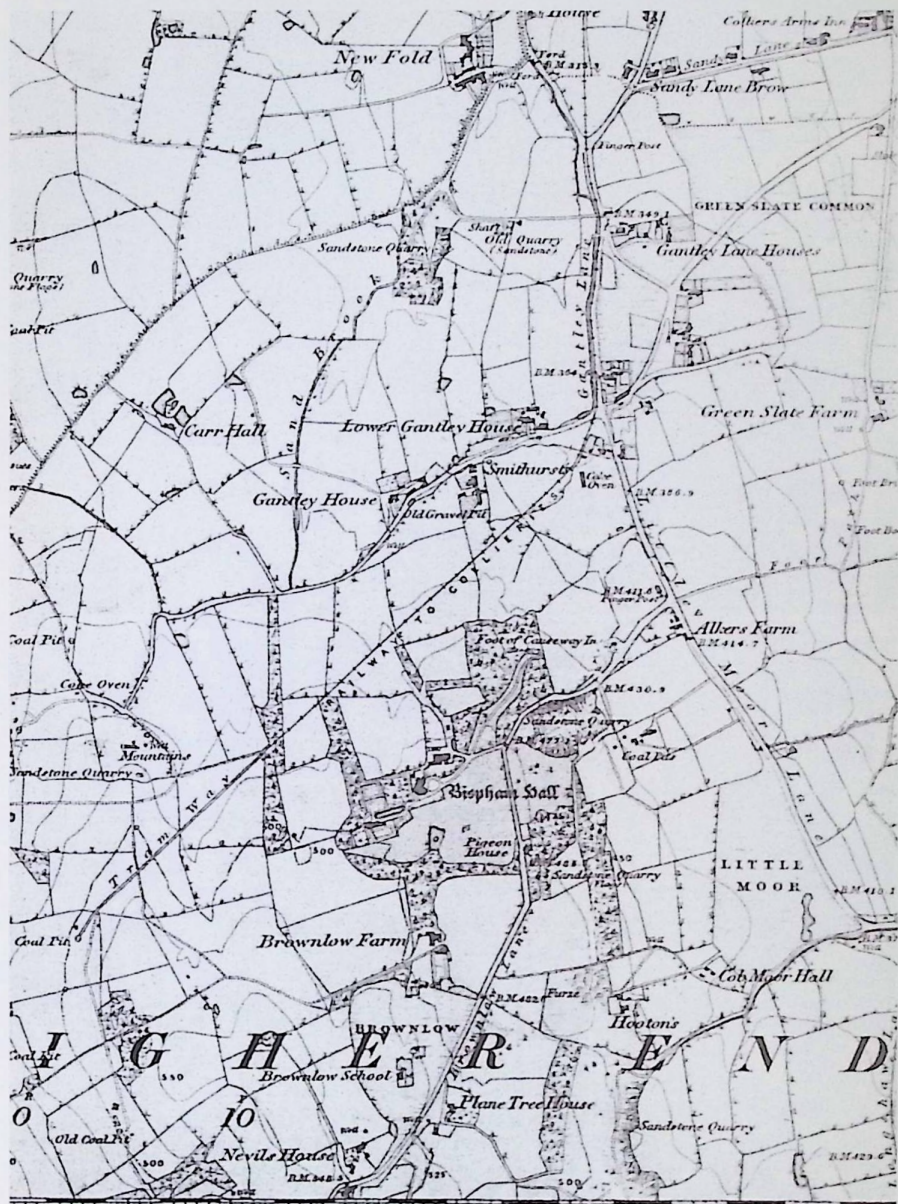
Robert converted much of the estate's farmland to woodland as he was a keen huntsman.

Mr. E. Douglas of Pemberton Colliery lived in the Hall from the 1890s to the 1920s. It was then occupied by a Mr. Partington and, later, remained empty until 1941 when the First Orrell Scout Group rented part of the estate. And in 1943 the Scouts included the Hall itself and estate into their tenancy.

During the Second World War the Hall was given special status if bombed and during that time housed refugees.

In 1945 the estate was purchased by The Boy Scout Association of South-West Lancashire and the grounds were used extensively for camping. The Scouts and friends also repaired parts of the Hall within their means. But in 1978 the upper storeys were destroyed by fire. However, a subsequent owner lovingly and appropriately restored the Hall. But even before that restoration work had been undertaken "Historic England" stated that this Grade II listed building, "remains one of the most complete survivals from the 16th century in the historic county of Lancashire."

SECTION SHOWING MAP OF 'ESTATE'



Reduced extract from 1st 6" Ordnance Survey, (1846)
of the Bisham Hall Estate and area

RESTORATION WORK

(Photographic images by John Harris)



Two centuries of weathering



North face of the square plinth



North surface of the obelisk



Obelisk dismantled to its plinth



Sectional repairs



Plinth undergoing restoration work

