

Friendly Societies

Introduction

Long before the welfare state, trade unions, NHS or personal insurance, people joined together in 'Friendly Societies' united in the concept of mutual assistance should a fellow member fall upon difficult times. In Victorian times these national

organisations were very popular. Local branches were typically called 'lodges.'

Each member paid a small subscription and should they become ill, be unable to work or die then benefits would be paid.

Friendly Societies in Malton

In 1839 it was reported that 'The town of Malton is now pretty well stocked with secret orders, there being three lodges of Odd Fellows of the Manchester Unity, two lodges of Gardeners, two lodges of Shepherds, and the above court of Foresters. And that the females may be also accommodated, we have heard it said that a lodge of Shepherdesses is about to be opened.' [1] It is probable that sections of the community were not at ease with the secrecy in which these societies operated. This can be sensed from a number of reports in the newspapers promoting the benevolent aspects of membership. The Yorkshire Gazette carries a report of the funeral of Thomas

Skelton, a Malton hairdresser, and which includes ' . . . The deceased has left a large family of young children, and we may mention it as a pleasing proof of the real and practical good and actual benefit resulting from the order of Odd-Fellows, that he been ill and unable to follow his vocation for the long period of a year and a half, during which time he had received efficient relief from the funds of the society. In addition to this his widow will receive the funeral donation of £10.' [2]

Each society had its' own rules and customs. Funerals of deceased members were well supported and drew particular public interest.

Shepherds and Shepherdesses

Malton saw its first Shepherds Lodge in October 1837, and soon after, a second was opened, followed by a third Lodge at Old Malton. These first two Lodges at Malton were called the Victoria and Milton Lodges [3] They met at:

- Victoria Lodge: Cross Keys Inn [4]

- Milton Lodge: the house of Mr. Edward Wood, The Blue Ball Inn [5]

The Ancient Order of Shepherdesses likely formed the Shepherd's Delight Lodge in Malton in August 1840 [6] They met at the Black Horse Inn, Malton [7]

Ancient Order of Free Gardeners

The Rose of Sharon Lodge was opened in 1837 and met at the house of Mr. George Stokehill, The White Swan Inn, Malton [8] A second lodge in Malton of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners, The Star of Bethlehem Lodge, was opened on 4 November 1837 in Malton at the house of John Sanderson, New Globe Inn, and 32 members were initiated [9]

Early in 1899 the annual report of the Free Gardeners in Malton was published [10]. It showed a net increase of six to the adult membership to 320, and there were 62 members in the Juvenile Lodge. The report went on to illustrate the benefits paid to members. £219 16s 6d had been paid out by the seniors' lodge to sick members, and £7 to the juveniles. Funeral review took a further £39 2s 8d.,

and doctor's salary £36 17s 6d. Clearly there were some reserves as the value of the Lily of the Valley Lodge was said to be £1,968 15s 3d, and of the Rose of Sharon Juvenile Lodge £51 1s 10d. The Lily of the Valley lodge was based in Norton at the Union Inn, and in 1879 had 127 members [11]. They celebrated their 50th Anniversary in 1890 at which 56 new members were initiated [12]

William Walker, a brewer's labourer, was a member of the Star of Bethlehem Lodge of the Order of Free

Odd-Fellows

The membership for the Malton Odd Fellows Lodges in 1844 was as follows: Wentworth 197; Rockingham 119; and Milton 36 [5] The Odd Fellows were in existence prior to July 1837 as they appeared prominently in the Malton celebrations of the proclamation of Queen Victoria York Herald, 1

Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes

The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes opened a Lodge known as the Sir Arthur Arfeton Masters

Ancient Foresters

The Ancient Foresters opened Court no 733, to be known as the Stranger's Refuge, in Malton early in 1839, initiating twenty members at a beerhouse

Malton Benevolent Society

Founded in 1787 this was probably the oldest friendly society focussed on Malton. According to Copperthwaite's Survey of Malton (1841) it had 178 members in 1840, admitted those aged between 18

Dead Briefs

In 1841 Copperthwaite's Survey of Malton documents that there were 7 'Dead Briefs'. These existed so that members could provide for a decent burial. One such example, The Female Internment

Independent Order of Rechabites

This was a Friendly Society formed to promote total abstinence from alcohol. The various local branches were known as 'tents'. The 'Bethesda' tent was formed on Thursday 25 June 1840 at the Temperance Coffee House, Norton [20] when 16 members were admitted. 'We understand the society is similar to the other secret orders having

Friendly Societies

and Ancient Gardeners. ' . . . About 50 of this brethren assembled at the lodge room, and went in procession, the pall bearers wearing white scarves, and the rest black scarves and white gloves, to the house of the deceased, and from thence to the Church, where the funeral service was read by the Rev. Mr. Thompson, curate, and after that the "oration" of the order, by corresponding secretary, Ruddock. The procession again formed and returned in the same manner to the lodge room . . . ' [13]

July 1837. They held their regular meetings at the following inns:

- Rockingham Lodge: The Old Globe Inn [14]
- Wentworth Lodge: The New Globe Inn [15]
- Milton Lodge: Rockingham Arms [16]

Lodge in February 1919 at the King's Head Hotel, Malton [17].

known as the Hare and Hounds, Newbigin, the house of Mr W. Lapish. [18]

and 30 and membership was 14d per month. It paid out 7 shillings per week when members were sick (after 6 months 3 shillings) and £3 10s on death of a member or wife.

Society, or dead brief had 124 members and met to celebrate its sixth anniversary at the New Globe Inn [19].

like them for its object the relief of its members in sickness, etc., but with this difference, that it is conducted on tee-total principles, no intoxicating liquors being allowed to be used at the meetings.' The funeral of Mr. George Reed, a member of the Bethesda Tent, No. 208, took place in June 1842 [21] 'on which occasion there was a numerous

procession of Rechabites, both male and female, adults and juveniles, to follow the remains, and the streets were lined with spectators. The members

wore white scarves and black rosettes, and they had a very neat effect.'

References

- [1] York Herald, 13 April 1839
- [2] Yorkshire Gazette, 9th Feb 1839
- [3] York Herald 4 November 1837
- [4] York Herald, 30th May 1840
- [5] York Herald, 22 June 1839
- [6] York Herald, 22 August 1840
- [7] Yorkshire Gazette 28 November 1840
- [8] Yorkshire Gazette, 3 August 1839
- [9] York Herald, 11 November 1837
- [10] Yorkshire Gazette, 11 February 1899
- [11] Drifffield Times, 2 August 1879
- [12] Richmond & Ripon Chronicle, 19 July 1890
- [13] York Herald 23 May 1840
- [14] York Herald 1 August 1840
- [15] Yorkshire Gazette 9 Feb 1839
- [16] Odd Fellows Directory, 1844
- [17] Yorkshire Gazette, 8 February 1919
- [18] York Herald, 13 April 1839
- [19] York Herald, 5 June 1841
- [20] Yorkshire Gazette, 27 June 1840
- [21] York Herald, 25 June 1842