A History of Leigh



This history tells the story of Leigh from the bronze age to the present day and gives a sense of the ways in which life in this area has changed over time. It is true that there are no dramatic events in Leigh of the sort that excite the national news or make the grander history books, but this is a story of people surviving and making a living while struggling with poor land, patchy seigneurial support, and poverty. A community that survived to become self-sufficient and to create lasting, sustaining institutions.

Written by Harriet Hall using information gathered as part of her MA into Local history and collected by a number of local residents. The history is a community resource and we anticipate that it will be updated and added to as others gather information.

Harriet Hall

Book details:

100 pages £8

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somes and his family and describes Bell's own family. Neither of his two sons wanted to live at Mynthurst and both died without issue. His daughter married and had a daughter of her own. Bell died in 1931 his funeral being in London with a memorial service in LeighChurch. The estate was sold and split up - the house possibly being bought by Vernon Wood who was listed as living there in 1941 and who was



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Some of the spreads from the book

Leigh into the early 20th century - directories and census records

dditional records to the census are provided by the Kellys' and Additional records to the Call Directories. In one dated 1891, among the principal landowners recorded are Daniel Watney, the Duke of Norfolk, the Freshfield family and the Charringtons. The commercial listings are limited, but include several farmers, a miller and baker, Geo Parsons, post office and shopkeeper, Miss Clara Charman at the Plough Inn, Frederick Manser in charge of the Seven Stars and George Flint, blacksmith. The population estimate of 523 is taken from the 1881 census. By 1907 the Holmesdale Directory gives more detail describing Leigh as 'an old-fashioned village which has seen very few changes during recent years'. It goes on to say that it 'achieved some notoriety in 1905 on account of the alleged insanitary conditions of its schools'. The report notes that 'some' improvements have been carried out. It is noted that the Patron of the living, which has been held since 1884 by the Rev. Clement Lucas, MA and is of the annual value of £160, is Sir John Watney'. Sir John is also Chair of the Parish Council and of the School Management Committee. Captain H J Charrington is President of the Cottage Garden Society. The population is reckoned to be about 500. Under the commercial listings, are 16 farmers and 6 men employed at Mynthurst. Henry Flint is publican at the Seven Stars, but the Plough is now run by William Parsons while G C Parsons runs the Post Office which includes groceries and 'general provisions'. Besides Parsons the surnames Pescud, Flint and Lucas abound.

In the Census of 1911, the number described as farm labourers has shrunk to 60 with 10 farmers, but there is more detail on other farm workers with 19 waggoners on farms being listed along with 13 cowmen/dairymen, seven female dairy workers and three farm horsemen. There is one farm and estate steward and one farm bailiff.

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immediatorly, it was noted that it should be first at the boston
of the gradies. Finally, in Jane 1953, it was recorded that at houses
area now occupied.

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- In December of that year however, a parish meeting was called regarding the need for more houses in Leight and to discress whether a public inquiry was needed to enablish this requirement. The meeting, which included on parishioners, resolved that

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 3. The front piece of land be left as an open space and added so the village green.

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