

Teesdale u3a

Report on Monthly Meeting – 24 March 2022

If you heard Maria Glot deliver part one of her talk about Saltaire, the World Heritage site in Shipley, then you would have been looking forward to part two. Maria did not disappoint and delivered the second half of her entertaining talk at the last u3a monthly meeting in her own individual style.

She began with the death of Titus Salt in 1876. There were 4,500 dignitaries at the funeral and about 120,000 people lined the streets. Special trains were laid on so the public could see the open coffin. Titus Salt Junior, the youngest son, took over the running of the business, and later bought adjacent land and property known as Milner Field. This house became an important part of the Saltaire story.

In 1743, Sir James Milner was living in the then manor house. He had a 16 year old daughter who wanted to marry a man considered by the family to be unsuitable. So, the family arranged for him to be transported to America. The daughter was so distraught by this that she hung herself from a tree in the grounds and it is said that she put a curse on the house. Her father and mother then died shortly afterwards and there followed a series of owners of the house, where members of their family came to a sudden and early death.

Titus Salt Junior rebuilt the house with no expense spared. Milner Field became one of the most luxurious houses in the country, often visited by royalty. In 1873 he moved into the house with his wife Catherine Crossley, a daughter of the Halifax carpet manufacturing dynasty. At this stage the weaving business was not doing well, largely because of international competition. Titus Salt Junior died in 1887 and the business went into voluntary administration in 1892. James Roberts took over the mill and made it profitable again. He was an excellent business man. He had manufactured blue uniforms no longer needed for the Russian army on the assassination of the Tsar and sold them to the newly formed Royal Flying Corps, later to become the RAF. However, the curse of Milner Field continued and there was a growing reluctance to move into Milner House, which was eventually abandoned in the 1930s and demolished in the 1950s. The factory itself had its ups and downs but was busy and profitable during WW2 but went into decline with the development of artificial fibres and closed in 1986.

Maria is an inspirational and knowledgeable storyteller, and this was a fascinating story. The vote of thanks was given by Ian Royston. The next meeting is on Thursday 28th April when Max Adams will be speaking on his book 'Unquiet Women'.

Ian Reid