

# YOUR PROJECTS

Celebrating the work of family and local history societies

## ‘We award prizes for the best projects’

The Barningham Local History Group have developed some fantastic ways of encouraging local people to get involved in their village’s history



**B**arningham is a small village in a great location, halfway between Barnard Castle and Richmond and just inside the border of County Durham. Despite having a population of just 240, the village has a remarkably active local history group that, although founded less than two years ago, has already produced a wide range of invaluable resources for family and local historians. Membership of the Barningham Local History Group is free (you don’t often get that sort of value these days!) but members are encouraged to pay the modest sum of £10 a year, in return for which they receive a monthly newsletter. 49 of the 68 households in the village have signed up to this publication, which works out as 72 per cent of the community!

The newsletter is no simple folded sheet of A4 paper, but a substantial publication packed with short articles about aspects of the village and the surrounding area in the past. There are old photos, house histories, news about the society’s projects and fascinating pieces about

historical topics – the August 2010 issue includes items on, among other subjects, the 1862 by-election, families in the 1841 census, the renovation of the church in 1890, a picture of the haymakers’ picnic in 1950 and even a ghost story. A lively and informative newsletter is really important in any local or family history society – it not only helps to keep members informed, but also gives an opportunity to

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pass on findings, report new information, and submit research queries. I’m also told that one member sometimes offers for publication “recollections of life in the 1930s and 1940s [which] have our meetings agog – they are frequently so scurrilous as to be unrepeatable in the newsletter”.

The group has hit the ground running when it comes to other resources, too. It has, for example, produced *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies*, a listing of every known burial at Barningham Church since 1503, with a history of the church and complete transcript of every monumental inscription in the churchyard. This is just the sort of resource that’s helpful to any family historian, but can also be useful for local historians investigating the community’s past. Following that, there’s a two-volume set entitled *Counted: Census Returns 1841-1911*, which covers the village itself, the adjacent community of Newsham and the scattered

hamlets that lie across the edge of the great moorlands southwards to Yorkshire.

And to ensure that local interest in the past is maintained, the group also offers its annual Archive Awards, awarding trophies and prizes for the best local history projects. It’s a great idea, and what particularly impressed me is the fact that this year’s two ‘highly commended’ entries were from 10-year-olds. Evie Ridgway created a video of life in the village today, and James Tirrell investigated the history of mole-catchers in the area. Getting both old and young residents involved has been a key feature of what success they’ve

enjoyed so far. Wonderful – we are often told that family and local history don’t appeal to younger people. What more hopeful sign to the contrary could there be than the success of Evie and James? ■ *Alan Crosby*



Group secretary Ann Orton receives an award for her research into a local chapel

### Fact file

**Membership fee:** The group is free to join, with a voluntary contribution of £1 per meeting going towards the cost of hiring the village hall. An annual subscription to the monthly newsletter costs £10.

**Meetings:** Held in the Barningham Village Hall, on the village green, once a month (see the group’s website for details of the next meeting).

**Website:** <http://barninghamvillage.co.uk/blhg>