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Hardcastle Crags is a popular walking destination, most visitors walk from Hebden Bridge into Hebden Dale. (also see page 13)
Editorial

Autumn marks the transition from summer into winter when the arrival of night becomes noticeably earlier. It is also a great time to enjoy a walk in one of Yorkshire’s beautiful woodlands with their magnificent display of red and gold leaves. One particularly stunning popular autumn walk is Hardcastle Crags with miles of un-spoilt woodland owned by the National Trust and starts from Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire.

In this autumn issue we feature beautiful photos of Hardcastle Crags in Autumn, and days out, for example Kirkstall Abbey and Abbey House Museum, Leeds, Mysterious carved rocks on Ilkley Moor, the Hambleton Drove Road and the White Horse of Kilburn. Also the story of the notorious Cragg Vale coiners and a fascinating story of the Nunnington Dragon and the knight effigy in the church of All Saints and St. James, Ryedale.

In the Autumn issue:

● A Day Out At Kirkstall Abbey And Abbey House Museum, Leeds
Jean Griffiths explores Kirkstall Abbey and the museum. Kirkstall Abbey is one of Britain’s best preserved abbeys which still stands substantially to its full height. In the Abbey House Museum are interesting displays covering the history of Kirkstall Abbey and a recreated Victorian Street of shops and houses which is very popular with visitors.

● Mysterious Carved Rocks On Ilkley Moor
Ilkley Moor is the most famous moor in Yorkshire; it is also one of the most important Bronze Age ‘art’ sites in Europe with nearly 300 identified carved rocks. But just what is the meaning of these mysterious carved rocks? and who carved them? and why? This article describes some of the well know carved rocks and attempts to answer these questions.

● Along The Hambleton Drove Road North Yorkshire
This article traces the Hambleton Drover Road which was used by drovers to bring their cattle down from Scotland to sell at English markets and what brought droving to an end. It also has a fascinating history along its way from prehistoric times to the present. Today it forms part of the Cleveland Way, a long distance footpath that is ideal for walkers.

● The White Horse Of Kilburn That Is Not A True White Horse
Alison Hartley makes a visit to the White Horse of Kilburn and discovers that it is not a true White Horse.

● The Notorious Cragg Vale Coiners Who Became Murderers
Jeremy Clark visits Cragg Vale, near Mytholmroyd, home to the infamous Yorkshire coiners. He discovers why they turned to a life of crime and visits three coiners homes and the gravestone of David Hartley in Heptonstall churchyard.

● The Nunnington Dragon And The Knight Effigy In The Church Of All Saints And St. James, Ryedale North Yorkshire
Sarah Harrison and Jeremy Clark recount the fascinating story of the Nunnington Dragon in Ryedale and attempt to give an explanation as to where the British dragon came from.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them. We welcome your comments.
The west door of the church

A Day Out at Kirkstall Abbey and Abbey House Museum, Leeds

By Jean Griffiths

Leeds is situated at the centre of West Yorkshire; it is a thriving vibrant city rich in culture. It offers unrivalled visitor attractions with experiences, from jousting at the Royal Armouries, to the stunning surroundings of the stately home of Harewood House and outstanding collections at the Leeds Museum and Art Gallery.

But only three miles on the outskirts of the city centre, bisected by the main A65 Kirkstall Road and set in tranquil surroundings, is Kirkstall Abbey, one of Britain’s best preserved abbeys. Before the rapid urbanisation began to engulf the ruins of the abbey, it was surrounded by countryside. In fact, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the main thoroughfare to Leeds actually ran through the nave of the church. The landscape surrounding the abbey has undergone considerable change since the time of monastic occupation, when Kirkstall was a secluded spot in a rural setting, bordered by only water and woodland.

The Founding of Kirkstall Abbey

Kirkstall Abbey was founded in 1152 by Cistercian monks from Fountains Abbey and built between 1152 and 1182 on the northern bank of the River Aire; it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The availability of water and woodland made the site at Kirkstall well suited to the establishment of monastic life.

At first all the buildings were of wood, but within a few years, these were being replaced by massive masonry structures in the local Bramley Fall grit stone. So quickly did the work progress, that the Church, the Cloister and all its surrounding buildings were all completed in the lifetime of Abbot Alexander, the founding abbot of Kirkstall, who died in 1182.
Water was necessary for drainage, washing, cooking, and drinking and also for worship purposes. It was channelled from springs and streams above the abbey and from the millpond that stood where the car park and sports pitches are now. Fresh drinking water was supplied to the abbey through lead pipes and bronze taps controlled the flow. The River Aire bounded the abbey to the south and was an important means of transport. Stone building blocks that were quarried nearby could be transported to the abbey along the river. Hawksworth Wood, which is now virtually consumed by a housing estate, stood to the west of the abbey. It provided shelter, fuel, and building resources such as thatch; timber was generally brought from elsewhere since Abbot Alexander, who completed the initial building work, was concerned to preserve the woodland at Hawksworth.

The ideal of the monastic life is that a man who enters it shall give up all share and interest in the affairs of the world and devote his whole life to the service of God. The monks at Kirkstall Abbey made a significant contribution in the areas of trade, industry and technological innovation. They were skilled craftsmen, producing leather goods, pottery, lead work for plumbing, weaving and metalwork. Kirkstall Forge being a reminder of this. One of the Abbey’s incomes came from the production of wool, from its large flocks of sheep.

**The Dissolution of Kirkstall Abbey**

Kirkstall Abbey thrived for over 340 years until its dissolution in November 1539 by order of Henry VIII, in his Dissolution of the Monasteries. The monastic activity at Kirkstall came to an abrupt end when the abbot, John Ripley, surrendered the abbey to Richard Leyton one of Henry VIII’s commissioners. John Browne, the Prior, and thirty other monks were immediately granted pensions, while according to tradition, the abbot John Ripley passed into retirement in the Gatehouse, which he converted into a home. From then on, Abbey House became a residence, first for farmers, then for notable Leeds families such as the Butlers of Kirkstall Forge. The house was sold to Leeds Corporation in 1925 and was opened to the public as a museum in 1927.

The abbey buildings escaped the wholesale destruction and plunder that occurred elsewhere. Having been stripped of its roofs and windows, the abbey served as a quarry for local building works. All the major buildings survived intact, most of them being re-used for agricultural purposes. The Chapter house, Chapels, and novices’ room provided housing for a herd of cattle, the laybrothers’ building became a barn, and the Cloisters were planted as an orchard. Grass, trees and ivy then began to engulf the ruins, giving them a particularly rich quality of pastoral and romantic beauty. To prevent the monks from returning, the main road into Leeds was diverted through the Nave and great East window. The current base of the window was installed during the Victorian restorations.

Right: An illustrated display board explains about the Church Road. Display panels like this one are placed on the walls around the abbey to inform visitors where they are and the use of the buildings.
Nevertheless, Kirkstall Abbey is considered by many to be one of the best examples of a medieval Cistercian monastery anywhere in Britain. The abbey still stands substantially to its full height, its massive structure presenting a unique example of early Cistercian architecture. Since its dissolution, the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey have continued to attract attention, famous artists such as J M W Turner, Thomas Girtin and Moses Griffith came to paint its picturesque ruins and today it attracts increasing numbers of visitors.

In 1889 Kirkstall Abbey was presented to the City of Leeds by Colonel John North. The City Council then began restoration work to preserve the ruins, which improved dramatically as ivy, grass and trees were stripped from its roofs and large sections of the walls were buttressed and repaired. On September 14th 1895, the planned works of preservation were completed, and Kirkstall Abbey was formally opened to the public by the Lord Bishop of Ripon and the Lord Mayor of Leeds.

Although the restoration of the 1890s was of the highest quality, it still left much to be completed, some of the masonry never having been re-pointed since the medieval period. So in 1980 the City Council commenced a long term programme of restoration to ensure that Kirkstall Abbey, the most complete example of early Cistercian design and building in the country remains intact for the benefit of future generations.

**Abbey Ghosts**

Since the dissolution of the abbey in 1539, sightings of ghosts have become common place. In the nineteenth century the local newspaper reported that ghostly apparitions had been observed in the nave of the church. One witness claimed to have seen a funeral procession of sombre men, clad in white, proceeding slowly down the nave.
More recently, staff and visitors have seen the figure of a former abbot of Kirkstall walking around the old gatehouse, which is now the Abbey House Museum. A member of staff felt a figure walk past but saw no one, the voices of children singing, and a figure seen in a window’s reflection when there was no one else in the building, are just a few of the recent happenings.

In 2008 the Haunted Leeds team became the first paranormal investigators to carry out a full investigation in the grounds of Kirkstall Abbey, but no conclusions were reached.

A Visit to the Abbey

Today large parts of the Abbey can been seen and explored free of charge, which are situated in the grounds of beautiful public parkland. Most visitors arrive at the car park adjacent to the Abbey House Museum. Crossing the modern main road from the Abbey House Museum, which was cut through the site in 1827, visitors enter the park and follow the path that comes to the west door of the church which survives to roof level. Its entire 200 foot length is unbroken, with 8 huge columned arches. At services, there was a strict order from back to front. Closest to the west door is the Nave, where laybrothers and lay visitors sat. Closer to the front were aged and infirm monks, then monks and novices in the choir.

The tower that stands to the east end of the church is not the original 12th century structure; it was rebuilt in 1509-27 and during a storm in 1779, the north-west side collapsed. It is flanked on either side by transepts providing the important crucifix shape to the church. The north transept doorway gave access to the cemetery after funeral services.

A fascinating feature of the south transept is the ‘night stairs’ used by monks to reach the choir from their dormitory for night vigils which began at 2am.

The church with 8 huge columned arches

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Above: The east cloister walk. The double arches lead into the Chapter House

To the south of the church lies the tranquil square cloister, it had a covered walkway where monks would sit reading and writing. The buildings enclosing the cloister are well preserved, many still standing to roof height and others at least to first floor level. The east walk fronted the Library, Chapter house and Parlour. The north walk closest to the church, held the scriptorium where the monks wrote and studied. A number of doorways leading from the Cloister to other rooms can also be seen. After the church the chapter house was the most important building in the Abbey, it has many carved arches and pillars and some old stone coffins. It was here that the monks were given their daily tasks by the Prior every morning.

Right: Inside the Chapter House looking onto the square cloister

Below: Double arches lead into the Chapter House, old stone coffins can just be seen
The infirmary is to the south-east of the chapter house, which was built at the end of the 13th century and remodelled in the 15th century. Traces of profoundly complex and dangerous chemical compounds were discovered during excavations, suggesting that the monks were very skilled medical practitioners. Very little remains of the abbey’s infirmary today, the walls were stripped down to their present level in the centuries after the dissolution.

Attached to the southern wall of the infirmary was the visiting abbot’s lodging. This group of buildings has suffered from stone robbing and survives only as low walls. The southern range housed the domestic buildings. These included the reredorter, which was a communal latrine used by the lay brothers who carried out agricultural and manual tasks at the abbey, the warming house, the refectory and the kitchens.

To the west of this complex was originally known as the The Lane, the 12th Century arches provided access to the Lay Brothers Lane, which was separated from the Cloister by a high stone wall. The Malt House and Bake House came into existence in the 15th Century, following the decline in Lay brothers. The archway was converted into a malt house and bake house by adding the ovens and vat; these can still be seen today. The upper floor of the west range was used as the laybrothers’ dormitory.
The vaulted ground floor of the west range served as their refectory and for storage. In 1825, melting snow caused the collapse of the lay brothers’ dormitory floor and part of the dormitory itself.

To the west of the church and cloister lie the guest house, the bake house and the lay brothers’ infirmary. All of these were cleared to ground level during the Dissolution. Excavation of the guest house revealed that it was constructed between the 13th and 15th centuries.

After a £5.5M renovation programme there is a new visitor centre providing refreshments and toilets for the abbey’s visitors. The centre is built on the site of the reredorter. An illustrated exhibition tells the history of the abbey from its construction in the 12th century through displays and audio-visual presentations to offer a first-hand experience of every aspect of the lives of the monks who lived there.
The Abbey House Museum

The Abbey House Museum opened to the public as a museum in 1927 and during the 1950s Victorian street scenes of about 1880 were added. The entire museum underwent extensive refurbishment in the 1990s to redisplay and improve facilities for visitors. This refurbishment work was completed and the museum re-opened on Saturday 20 January 2001. Twelve new shops and houses were added to the Victorian Street for visitors to see. Other galleries in the museum include the Childhood Gallery and interesting displays covering Kirkstall Abbey. These include its construction, history and closure with finds from the excavations. There are features on every aspect of the lives of the monks who lived there and the history of the Cistercians.

Most people enjoy a journey through the carefully recreated Victorian Street of shops and houses, and experience the sights and sounds of Victorian life. It illustrates a range of shops and services, including the original shop fittings. On special event days, people in traditional Victorian costume wander around the Streets. There is the Hark to Rover Inn, a recreated Victorian drinking house, and the poorer residential district of Abbey Fold where life and death in Victorian times is examined. There is the comfortable warm home of the successful pawnbroker and the cold and chilly premises of the undertakers. Other displays show rare and interesting 19th century toys, games and dolls in the shop on Harewood Square, there is even a classroom at the local Methodist Sunday school.

*Shopkeepers in Victorian dress in the street*
Left and Below: Victorian Street scenes of about 1880

Below: A comfortable warm room in the Victorian street

Right: Childhood Gallery, Humpty Dumpty

Opening Times are: Tue-Fri 10am-5pm. Sat 12pm-5pm. Sun 10am-5pm. The museum is closed on Mondays except bank holidays 10am-5pm.
The Hardcastle Crags landscape includes deep rocky ravines, tumbling streams, oak, beech and pine woods and some of the best examples of upland meadows in the country.

At the centre of the valley is the Gibson Mill, a 19th century cotton mill which was water powered. It has been renovated and is a visitor centre telling the history of the mill and valley over the past 200 years, with interactive displays.
MYSTERIOUS CARVED ROCKS ON ILKLEY MOOR
Prehistoric rock art on Yorkshire’s famous moor

Ilkley Moor is the most famous moor in Yorkshire, which is immediately north of the charming town of Ilkley. In fact Ilkley Moor is just one of many small individually named moors. Its rough moorland landscape is covered in rocks, heath, peat and bog which provides many interesting attractions. Every year thousands of walkers come to Ilkley moor to explore all that its landscape provides. The fantastic rock formations, some of which are used by climbers, stand out across the open moors, which support wild life, plants, animals and moorland birds. Footpaths and tracks through the heather sometimes follow ancient routes and prehistoric sites dot the landscape. It is also one of the most important Bronze Age ‘art’ sites in Europe with nearly 300 identified carved rocks.

There is plenty of evidence that prehistoric people once lived on the Moors because when they abandoned the area they left behind their enclosures, hut circles, burial cairns and stone circles. Some of these can still be seen today. They also left some intriguing problems too! For example, marks carved on flat outcrop rocks in the moorland countryside. These carved rocks are found over a wide area and fall into several groups with a scatter of isolated rocks. Groups can be seen all round the moorland edges projecting out over the steep valley slopes commanding the largest views. The most important series are those found on the famous Ilkley Moor.

The most common carvings are circular hollows with encircling rings. These markings are termed ‘cup and ring’ by archaeologists. A cup is a circular hollow carved out of the rock by a sharp stone, flint tools or antler. Generally they are between two and ten centimetres in diameter and up to three centimetres deep. They occur on their own or with encircling grooved rings. The term ‘cup and ring’ applies when both are combined. Sometimes a grooved line runs from the central cup, crossing the rings. On occasions cup and rings are joined by two parallel grooves with rungs known as ‘ladders’ and are unique to Rombalds Moor.

They were first discovered in about 1866 and have provoked speculation ever since. The most elaborate ones were brought from the moors to the town of Ilkley in about 1892 and placed in a small garden opposite St. Margaret’s Church, in a railed enclosure. Dr. Fletcher Little bought these three rocks for £10 in 1890 from the owner of the land at Panorama Rocks, where they once stood. The land was due to be developed. The largest known as the Panorama Stone had to be cut in two places for transportation.
All three rocks are carved with cups and rings. The Panorama Stone has a complicated design all over it, although much of it is now unclear. The patterns are of multi ringed cups, many with unusual ladder markings linking both the cups and rings. The carvings are severely worn due to extensive weathering and are rapidly deteriorating, which explains their present condition.

To the south-east of Ilkley town on the moorland landscape is Hangingstone Ridge near the famous Cow and Calf Rocks, which are two huge rocks that dominate the skyline and command extensive views over the Wharfe Valley.

The carvings on the north side of Hangingstone Quarry extend for about seventeen metres and are of an unusual design. There are many cups and rings with long grooves carved on its horizontal rock face. Three single cups are larger than usual but are now very worn.
A short walk up the ridge to the south-east can be seen the large Haystack Rock, which is visible for a considerable distance across the moor. It has ten single ringed cups one with a grooved line running from the central cup crossing the ring and about forty single cups. These are interlinked with grooves, which are spread all over its sloping roof shaped top.

This area is known as Green Crag Slack, which is boggy ground and contains the main Bronze Age settlement sites. There are some seventy carved rocks, three enclosures and a large cairn field in the vicinity. These include the Idol Stone and Rock, Pancake Rock, The Planets and many unnamed stones.

The smooth flat Idol Stone has twenty-five cups in four lines, eight are grouped together which are deeply cut and the seven at the centre are ringed by a long oval groove. The fourth row of cups, are now weather worn. A groove line surrounds the whole design.

The Idol Rock is not carved, but is an historical landmark. It stands two metres high, triangular shaped with a grooved pointed ridge.

The huge Pancake Rock is balanced dramatically on the crag edge overhanging the steep descent to the Cow and Calf Hotel. It has fifty cups, six are surrounded by a single complete ring and five with partial circles, but these are seriously weathered.
Carved rocks are also found within all the enclosures, two of them actually in the walling.

The ‘Backstone Beck’ walled enclosure just to the south-east of Haystack Rock has recently been excavated. Two circular huts were found with fragments of pottery and flint tools which date to the later Bronze Age of about 800-500 BC.

Right across the moor, north of Ilkley, is the superb large landmark rock known as the Badger Stone, which has a complicated design on its sloping faces. There are about ninety-five cups, three of them are surrounded by two rings, fourteen are single ringed cups and about ten encircling cups have a grooved line running from the central cup crossing the rings. On the south-west corner there appears to be an attempt at a swastika. This design may be of a later date, but still prehistoric. Other carved rocks with cups and rings in this area are Barmishaw Stone, Neb Stone and Wearly Hill Stone. The Barmishaw Stone also has the unique ladder pattern.

Below: The Barmishaw Stone and Plan illustrating the carvings of cups and rings and unique ladder pattern.
The Swastika Stone is the most famous single carving situated west of Ilkley on the edge of Woodhouse Crag. It is now enclosed on three sides with iron railings being carved on a flat slab. It has in an even more extraordinary variation on the theme, nine cups arranged in a cross, with a single meandering line twining around them. A tenth cup, perhaps an after thought, is included by means of a sickle-shape. The Swastika Stone is thought to be a later date than other cup and ring markings. In front of the carving is a 20th century replica that is often mistaken for the original.

In this area other carved rocks with cup and ring markings include Overdale, Gatepost, Anvil Rock, Sepulchre Stone, Piper Crag Stone and much further on the moor Doubler Stones.

But the question is, just what are these mysterious cup and ring marks and other patterns carved out of the rocks? who carved them? and why? We know they are prehistoric in date and the rock carvers used standard patterns. They also developed regional characteristics and local variations. There would have existed, an interchange of ideas with other groups, established while trading in commodities such as bronze axes and other tools. Similar patterns on carved rocks are found on the moors of other parts of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. In Northumberland, Scotland, Ireland and Western Europe are carvings, which look remarkably similar to those on Ilkley Moor. It is also possible that the people who made them had similar patterns painted or tattooed on their bodies. There are hundreds of theories as to the meaning of these carvings. One of the most considered likely is that these baffling carvings had an important ritual or religious significance though for now, it eludes us. The ladder patterns on the Panorama Stone may be a symbolic link between this world and the next or between earth and the heavens, with the rings representing the movements of stars and plants.
It is generally thought that cup and ring marked rocks date from the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age around 2800-500 BC. Although the curvilinear form on the Swastika Stone may date from the Iron Age. They are often found close to burial mounds and four have been found in Bronze Age burial cairns. There may be a link between the art and the dead. Perhaps with a belief in life after death. The designs on the carved rocks on Ilkley Moor may also suggest astronomical diagrams, maps and plans of settlements or records of families and burials. It is also possible that some carved rocks, because of their size shape and situation, were used as territorial or route markers. The purpose and meaning of cup and ring carvings remains a matter of speculation. They were not isolated monuments as they are today, but part of the landscape, fully occupied and exploited by the Bronze Age people. Whatever the reasons for these rock carvings, the sheer number and complexity demonstrate that, as a technique of communication, they played an important role of the life of the prehistoric people.

To see these most interesting and intriguing carvings, visitors need plenty of time for an expedition onto the moors, but walks should not be attempted in mist or low cloud. Wearing suitable clothing and boots is also recommended because many of them are remote and far from the nearest road. There are a number of tracks for visitors to follow to see these carved rocks in Hangingstone Quarry and on Green Crag Slack. Perhaps the best and easy route is from the visitor car park and refreshment kiosk below the Cow and Calf Rocks. Continue through the car park, past an information board and onto a paved footpath leading towards the Cow and Calf Rocks. Bear left in front of the Cow and Calf and follow the path up onto the moor, bearing right along a broad path that skirts the now disused Hangingstone Quarry. Head for the group of trees overlooking the road to Ilkley, from here a steep bank leads up to the Hangingstone Quarry Rock. Return to the top of the Cow and Calf and continue a steep short climb on a very broad sandy track that goes off to the right up the ridge. Turn right on the path to Green Crag Slack. In this area the Haystack and Idol Rocks are prominent on the moor.

The Swastika Stone can be visited by taking the main path along the edge of the moor. This is off Keighley Road were the Spicey Beck goes under the road. Turn right and continue along the path past the reservoir to the top of Hebers Ghyll. Cross the bridge and follow the wall until a path leads up through the bracken to the railings surrounding the Swastika Stone, which can then be seen.

To visit the Badger Stone return to the bridge over the Spicey Beck and continue up Keighley Road, heading up the moor, passing an 18th century mile stone on the right of the road, that reads, Keighley 4 Ilkley 1. Continue uphill to where the road becomes unmade and where a stream emerges from a culvert on the left. Cross the stream and continue on the faint path. On reaching the open moor the hump-backed Badger Stone is visible to the south.

The Ilkley tourist information centre have produced a leaflet outlining four walks to help visitors find their way around them entitled ‘Walks Around Cup & Ring Stones’, obtainable from the Tourist Information Centre at Ilkley.
This ancient highway is a reminder of the days when drovers brought their cattle down from Scotland to sell at the English markets of York, Malton and beyond. It is also known as Hambleton Street, and may be part of a prehistoric track. Today parts of the Hambleton section are nothing more than a moorland trackway partly used by the Cleveland Way. But there is still plenty of evidence alongside former travellers from prehistoric times onwards.

The original Drove Road ran from Scotland to England. It entered Yorkshire by crossing the River Tees at Yarm. Then passed through Crathorne, Scarth Nick and ran for 15 miles along the Hambleton Hills to near the top of Sutton Bank where it forked. One way continued south to York and the other route turned east along the present A170 over the Howardian Hills to descend eventually at Malton. It crossed the Humber and continued over the Lincolnshire Wolds and on to the south.

In prehistoric times the area was covered with forest in which would be animal trails on the high ground. Probably the first people used them when hunting in this region. In this way the earliest human tracks developed until eventually they made their own paths. One running near the western edge of the Hambleton Hills is a good example of an ancient highway.

The earliest people in this area were nomadic hunters of the Mesolithic period 8300-4000 BC (Middle Stone Age). They moved onto the Hambleton Hills in the later part of the Mesolithic period. They probably came along the trackways into this area, by hunting and camped on the high ground. Here their flint tools have been found below the layers of peat, which formed as the forest. The Neolithic people came along this route as far north as Kepwick. A long barrow, which is a burial mound of the Neolithic period 4000-2300 BC, can easily be seen just west of the Hambleton Drove Road. It is situated at the highest point on the Hambleton Hills, which is over 1,200 feet above sea level. The long barrow is 100 feet long and contained five skeletons of both adults and children. These were the first people to start forest clearance using their polished stone axes, which have been found at many locations on the Hambleton Hills.
The early Bronze Age people 2300-1200 BC may have entered the district along this route from the Yorkshire Wolds. They made beakers, highly decorated pottery, which have been found with skeletons in their burial mounds close to the Hambleton Drove Road. Now forest clearance was widespread continuing in the later Bronze Age period 1200-700 BC. These people cremated their dead and buried them in collared urns under round barrows. Many of their barrows are found on the Hambleton Hills on both sides the Drove Road. In the 19th century most of them were excavated revealing beakers, urns and ornaments.

A series of earthworks and dykes run alongside and cross part of the Hambleton Drove Road. The Cleave Dyke system, which is now a series of ploughed out banks and ditches can be traced from Sutton Bank to Steeple Cross on aerial photos. It may have been constructed in the later Bronze Age or Iron Age and was probably territorial and for land management.

On the western edge of the escarpment at Boltby, was a small D-shaped Iron Age promontory fort. Three round barrows could once be seen within it. Now it is badly damaged by modern farming. However, excavations revealed a pair of early Bronze Age gold basket-shaped ornaments, probably hair ornaments and pottery beneath the ramparts. A cremation in a collared urn was found in one of the barrows. The splendid views from here are well worth the walk from Sneck Yate, southward down the Cleveland Way.

The Hambleton Drove Road cuts through the Cleave Dyke system at 5 or 6 places suggesting that the Drove Road is much later than the dyke systems. Although it could have been used as a prehistoric trackway before the dyke systems were constructed. The name Hambleton Street suggests it may possibly have developed in the Roman period.

But it was never a paved military road. It could have been used in Roman times because pottery and coins dating to the 4th century were found at Whorlton near the northern end and a Roman pottery kiln was discovered near Oldstead at the southern descent.
When the Romans left, the Hambleton Road was little used until the Saxon came to the district. Place-names are a useful indication of possible settlements in the area, but a rich Saxon burial mound has been excavated near Hawny, close to the Drove Road on Sunny Bank. It contained bronze, silver and gold ornaments with a skeleton of a young woman.

In 1069, when William the Conqueror and his army were reducing many townships in the north to waste they could have used the Hambleton Drove Road. Returning from a campaign around Durham and Teesside to winter in York, William and his escort were separated from his army in an over-night snowstorm on the moors. It is probable that they were using the Hambleton Drove Road, which was a direct route to York at this time.

The Hambleton Drove Road continued as a main road throughout the Middle Ages. It had a connecting road to Rievaulx and Byland Abbeys, which dates to about 1177. Mount Grace Priory near Osmotherley, Newburgh and the small convent at Arden near Hawny would also have had a branch road. These link roads would all add both to its travellers and goods traffic. By 1209 the Hambleton Drove Road was called the ‘main road to Cleveland’ and in 1246 it was described as ‘the King’s Way’ or ‘Royal Road’.

The Scots in their raids on north-east England would have used it in the 14th century. Scotch Corner below the Hambleton Inn is still marked on the maps to signify attacks that took place roundabout here in 1322 between Edward II and the Scots led by Robert Bruce. On this occasion the Scots forced Edward to flee in such panic that he left behind jewels and treasure.

**THE COMING OF THE DROVERS**

When the turnpike roads were set up in the 18th century the Hambleton section remained in its old rough state. It now lost its significance as a main thoroughfare. But toll roads proved too costly and time consuming for drovers moving large numbers of cattle over great distances. So drovers sought other routes away from turnpikes and once again the Hambleton Road was given a new lease of life as a Drovers Road. Animals including cattle, sheep, pigs and geese, were sometimes fitted with felt pads to protect their feet, were all driven along the Drove Road south from Scotland, grazing along the way. They were tended by a hardy breed of drovers who were nomads, travelling between 10 and 14 miles a day. Drovers had not only to contend with bad weather and disease but also with attacks by thieves. They also were required to know the countryside along the route to regulate the travel and rest days in order to get the herd to the market on time and in good condition. When the drovers reached the markets at Malton and York they sold their cattle and returned home with their money. Packhorses carrying lime, iron and other commodities also used the road.

There were originally four inns catering for the thirsty drovers as well as quarrymen. The Hambleton Inn is the only surviving hostelry on the A170. The Dialstone Inn near Sutton Bank is now a farmhouse. Limekiln House, a wayside inn, now in ruins, was once the centre of the lime-burning and distribution trade. The inn was known as the resort of smugglers and sheep stealers.

The remaining Chequers Inn is also a farm, situated one mile east of Osmotherley by the roadside. It was renowned for its turf cakes, bread cakes, baked under hot turfs, and for its day and night turf fire. It lost its 300-year licence in 1945 and is now a working farm, but provides tea room refreshments.
The title 'Chequers' was derived from the chequers which were issued to drovers to be exchanged for refreshment at the inn after their arduous trek over the Hambleton Moors. The Flintoff family kept the inn for over 100 years and tradition has it that the turf fire within had never been extinguished for over 150 years.

Left: The original inn sign is now enclosed in a glass case on the front wall with a cryptic message underneath:

“BE NOT IN HASTE
STEP IN AND TASTE
ALE TOMORROW
FOR NOTHING”

Right: The old chequerboard sign can be clearly seen in its original place on this old photograph

Once the drovers stopped coming, these moorland inns soon went out of business.

Alongside the Drove Road at Hambleton Downs was once one of the finest early racecourses in Britain. In 1740 an Act of Parliament decreed that racing could only take place at Hambleton, York and Newmarket. Hambleton Downs was more popular than those in York and regarded as the Newmarket of the north. Racing took place here from about 1612 till late in the 18th century when the course declined in favour of York and Richmond. In 1714 Queen Anne presented a gold cup prize. Another prestigious event held in 1715 was the George I Gold Cup worth 100 guineas. The Duke of Rutland won the race. Hambleton ceased to be a racecourse in 1755 but there are still signs to be seen. The name Dialstone is thought to derive from dial, or weighing machine, used to weigh in the jockeys after the races. In a wall opposite Dialstone Farm, once an inn near the finishing point of the racecourse, is a large flat stone on which the weighing machine is said to have stood. There are still racing stables at Hambleton House continuing the tradition of horse training and the gallops cut across the Drove Road. It is the highest training centre in Great Britain and is one of the oldest.

**THE END OF THE DROVERS, NOW THE ROAD IS TAKEN OVER BY WALKERS**

It was the railways that brought droving to an end in the 19th century. It became easier and quicker to dispatch animals by rail thereby enabling the breeder to slaughter his cattle locally and sending the carcasses to the markets. By about 1840 droving had ceased. Then cattle were moved only short distances on foot along the Drove Road.
Today the middle section of the Hambleton Drove Road between Black Hambleton and Sneck Yate is still a rough track, broad, grassy and rutted by cart and cattle tracks. It forms part of the Cleveland Way, a long distance footpath that is ideal for walkers. The road is straight and Tarmac from the Sutton Bank Visitors Centre then stops to become the famous Hambleton Road, here there are arrows for cycle trails.

The Cleveland Way begins at the market town of Helmsley, then it rounds the Hambleton and Cleveland Hills escarpments to the North Sea at Saltburn, following the cliff path south to Filey. This route takes you through some of the most picturesque scenery in North Yorkshire.

At the top of Sutton Bank, conveniently situated, is the National Park Information Centre, with a large car park, containing an informative exhibition about the area, a bookshop, café and toilets. It is open daily April-October and winter weekends. This area is a popular spot with visitors, which has one of the most spectacular views in Yorkshire across the Vale of Mowbray. It was here in 1802 that Dorothy with her brother William Wordsworth admired the view on their way from Grasmere in the Lake District to visit William’s wife to be at Brompton.
THE RUDSTON MONOLITH

The largest standing stone in Britain and it’s here in Yorkshire!

Only 8 miles inland west of Bridlington in the little village of Rudston, stands the tallest stone in Britain. It stands in the north-east of the churchyard of All Saints Church built in the 12th Century which attracts hundreds of visitors each year. The stone can be seen from the main road.

The village got its name from the monolith, ‘cross’ and ‘stan’ meaning stone. The popular the building of a church in his sacred hill and missed and the stone now rests where it landed!

The monolith date back to the late Neolithic or block of grit stone standing just under 8 metres be buried beneath the ground to a depth that stone is slender, with two large flat faces stone faces the midwinter sunrise in the this massive stone is between 30-40tones. weathered and eroded into a fluted peak cap to try to protect it from the elements. have been much taller than it is today.

There could be fossilized dinosaur footprints on one side of the stone which may have contributed to its importance to those who erected it. Dinosaur footprints have been found in the rocks along the Yorkshire coast so it is not impossible. They are very difficult to make out but one of the footprints may show the heel of a foot and three toes but you can decide if they are footprints when you visit the Monolith.

This block of grit stone is believed to have Cayton Bay, about 10 miles away just south the nearest natural outcrop of this type of considerable feat of engineering and human such a large stone. It is not sure how the have been carried at least part of the way Derwent or the River Rye, floated on a Pickering which would still have been water: Like at Stonehenge, they could a sledge with wooden runners on the dragged the sledge over a long line of and sledge the people could drag the been quarried and dragged from of Scarborough on the coast. It is stone and would have been a effort in about 2000 BC to move stone was transported, it could by water by either the River large raft, to the Vale of under a substantial depth of have then loaded the stone onto bottom. They then could have rounded logs. Carried by roller stones over land to Rudston.

Rudston was an important area for the people of the late Neolithic or Bronze Age to quarry and transport such a large stone over difficult country using primitive methods. Since they did not leave us any written records we can only make an educated guess as to its use. In all probability the Rudston Monolith was probably used for religious ceremonies and rituals.
The so-called White Horse of Kilburn is the only major hill figure cut into the turf in the north of England. It lies on the steep slope of Roulston Scar, gazing down from its heights, a landmark for miles around. But unlike the huge famous White Horse of Uffington in Wiltshire, the Kilburn horse is different in two ways. It was not cut by an Iron Age tribe and in fact is not really white at all! In order to make a white horse the rocks had to be whitewashed. The underlying surface is a light clayish colour with grey outcrop rocks. When the horse was recently whitewashed, it was visible from Harrogate and from the walls of York.

It was constructed in 1857 and finished on 4 November in the same year. Thomas Taylor, a Kilburn man was a traveller for his brother’s successful provision store in London noted for its Yorkshire hams and bacon. On his business travels the famous White Horse cut into the chalk downs near Uffington inspired him. So on a return visit to Kilburn and having money, to spend, he decided to create his own. He organised and paid for the construction of a horse that was to rival that of Uffington. John Hodgson, a teacher from Kilburn School and friend of Thomas Taylor, was persuaded to create the outline of the gigantic horse with his pupils from a prepared measured drawing.

The artist, Harrison Weir, drew the original drawing. Thirty-three men were employed in cutting and clearing the horse. The main problem was that his chosen hillside, while suitably steep, was not chalk-based. To make the design stand out it had to be whitewashed. In fact it required six tons of lime to whiten the complete horse. During Thomas Taylor’s lifetime the horse was kept in good condition and periodically whitened. He paid the cost even though he later emigrated to Australia. After his death public funds were used to renew the horse.
The White Horse of Kilburn is Britain’s largest in surface area, covering just over an acre. The original designed measurements were 314 feet long and 228 feet high; it is currently 318 feet from head to tail and 220 feet high. In appearance it has a standing posture with a heavy body, a narrow head, a long tail, two ears, a large circular eye but no nostril. During its life it has nearly been lost many times. The horse was badly damaged by a hailstorm in 1896 and fell into disrepair after the First World War. It was renewed in 1925, following a campaign in the Yorkshire Evening Post and kept in reasonable condition until it was covered with bracken in 1939 for the duration of the war so that German aircraft navigators crossing over this part of England would not see this huge horse and know where they were! It was uncovered and whitened in 1946 but a storm in 1949 almost destroyed the horse yet again. Robert Thomson, the local furniture maker (with a mouse trademark) was prominent in keeping the horse in good condition until his death in 1955.

During heavy rain whitening and small stones are carried by streams of water down the legs and out beyond. This gives a blurred out-line appearance and sometimes the legs are extended to an unnatural length. To prevent further deterioration the lower edges were banked up with brushwood held in position by stakes, but this has had little effect. Periodic whitening is necessary to keep the horse looking good as whitewash fades in time. Down the years ingenious efforts have been made to find a suitable whitening agent. Nowadays chalk chippings are used. A White Horse Fund has been set up for the purpose of maintaining the horse, which is a distinctive and much loved landmark for miles around.

The best view of the horse is from two benches just inside Kilburn, marked by a sign near Stockings house on the road from Balk. This elevated position allows the best overall view of the horse although the ideal view is from the air. The horse can be visited by following the White Horse Walk signs from the car part and information centre at the top of Sutton Bank.

This is conveniently sited midway between the market towns of Thirsk and Helmsley. There is a long 1-in-4 climb to the top of Sutton Bank. From here the view of rich arable farmland across the Vale of York is one of the finest in Yorkshire. The walk crosses the main road and continues along a stone path to the top of Roulston Scar, which also offers extensive views all the way to the White Horse.

There is another car park, directly beneath the White Horse for visitors who do not want to walk too far! Whichever way of getting to the horse, visitors should be careful not to damage the figure by walking on it.
At the centre of the small village of Heptonstall in West Yorkshire, which is situated on the top of a steep hill near Hebden Bridge and which it overlooks, is the ruined Church of St Thomas à Beckett. Near the porch can be seen several gravestones, one is of David Hartley known as ‘King David’ of the infamous Cragg Vale Coiners, sometimes referred to as the ‘Yorkshire Coiners’, who was executed at York in 1770. His body was brought back to be buried in Heptonstall churchyard because in those days Cragg Vale was part of the Parish of Heptonstall. In the burial register the Vicar at that time entered the cause of death as ‘hanged by the neck near York for illicitly cutting and stamping coins of the realm’. His gravestone is now one of the show pieces of the old graveyard of Heptonstall and can be found 12 stones on from the porch and 2 stones down. At the top of the gravestone is the inscription ‘David Hartley 1770’ and below this are the initials and names of his family members.

**WHY THEY BECAME COINERS**

Cragg Vale, homeland to the coiners, is situated about 6km west of Halifax and about 2km south-east of Mytholmroyd. Cragg Vale branches off from another deep valley which is surrounded by bleak moorland. The remote farmsteads in this area above the valley were homes to farmers and weavers. Many worked long hours on hand looms to produce one piece of cloth each week, which could be sold to dealers at the ‘Cloth Hall’ in Heptonstall or the ‘Piece Hall’ in Halifax after it was built in 1777. The income from selling their cloth, combined with home grown produce, would allow these people to sustain a basic existence.

This is the background of the men who decided to turn to a life of crime and became a gang of coiners. Their poverty and very poor living conditions may have driven them to become coiners and some of their homes still exist today.

This does not excuse them for turning to crime and committing murder. Most people living in and around the area in the 18th century had the same hard lifestyle and were living on a basic income but this did not turn them into criminals.

By Jeremy Clark
In the middle of the 18th century there were several gangs of coiners operating in West Yorkshire and the Pennine area but what made this gang famous and brought about their downfall was the murder of a Government Official.

A MURDER IS COMMITTED

On Friday 10th November 1769 at about half past eleven at night, two men Robert Thomas and Matthew Normanton who were members of the Cragg Vale gang of coiners crouched, behind a wall in Bull Close Lane about half a kilometre from the centre of Halifax. They were waiting there to kill a man, William Dighton, a government supervisor of taxes. In fact this was not the first night they had waited for him - it was the third. This time they did not have long to wait. They soon saw Dighton walking up from Halifax. When he was opposite them they opened fire and shot him. One shot misfired but the second one hit him on his left forehead and killed him. The two men then went through the dead man’s pockets, taking his money. They then left leaving their boot marks on his clothing and around his body. They walked all the way to Mytholmroyd to Matthew Normanton’s home at Stannery End where Robert Thomas spent the night but both men could not sleep for thinking about what they had done.

William Dighton’s body was discovered shortly afterwards by his daughter, Susannah, their servant, Mary Broadbent, and a neighbour, Joseph Gledhill. His body showed marks of being stamped upon after he had been shot.

The coiners thought that if they could get rid of Dighton then things would go on as before but what they did not realize was that killing Dighton had the opposite effect. Far from giving up, the authorities were determined to bring the forgers and murderers to justice.

THEY FEARED WILLIAM DIGHTON

William Dighton was the Supervisor of Excise for the Halifax district. He had been called in because of the news of counterfeiting in the area and was to investigate the matter. In September 1769 with the help of 33 year old James Broadbent, a coiner himself but no more than on the fringes of the gang, informed on other members resulting in several arrests of men from the ‘coiners country’. They were taken to York Castle prison which was used for grave offences. Dighton promised 100 guineas to Broadbent for him to betray David Hartley who was regarded as the ring leader of the gang and another close associate James Jagger. Broadbent turned traitor again and gave King’s evidence against Hartley and Jagger lured by the 100 guineas which he never received. On the 14th October 1769 Hartley was arrested in the Cock Inn and Jagger in the Cross Pipes Inn Halifax. This was when Dighton’s days were numbered and the coiners unwisely took their revenge.

The first people to react of Dighton’s appearance were the local innkeepers of the district. They played an important part in the counterfeiting operation. It was their job to take gold coins which were fairly new and had not been clipped out of circulation. The coiners would then file or clip them so that some of the gold was removed and a new edge ‘milled’ onto them so as to make the smaller coins unnoticeable and get them back into circulation. The filings or clippings would then be melted down to make new blanks which would be made into new coins by stamping onto them new 'heads and tails' by means of skilfully created dies. These new counterfeit gold coins would then be put back into circulation by the local innkeepers. It was easy for them to do this late at night in dimly lit surroundings where customers were not aware what was going on. But when Dighton came, several innkeepers left the district as they did not want to take any chances. The coiners were not as sensible and thought that if they could get rid of Dighton then they could continue with their counterfeiting operations in safety.

Isaac Hartley the brother of David believed this and from the evidence collected later it was clear that he was the real organiser of the murder. When his brother David Hartley was arrested Isaac promised 100 pounds to anyone who would kill Dighton.
Isaac and his friend James Stansfield, also persuaded Broadbent who was now better at being taken in and blackmailed by Dighton, that David was innocent and that he might be prepared to retract the statement made to the magistrate. So it was agreed and Broadbent went with his father, Isaac and Stansfield to York where he made a new statement clearing the two men of their crimes. Bail was not forthcoming so they tried to do the same before Justice Leedes at Bradford who had taken his first incriminating statement but he was inclined to believe the original story. Hartley and Jagger would remain imprisoned until their trial.

**A REWARD AND DAVID HARTLEY’S EXECUTION**

The murder of William Dighton, one of their own officers, greatly angered the Government of the day and forced them to take coining seriously. The Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire Charles Watson-Wentworth, the Marquis of Rockingham, took charge of the case. Robert Parker a Halifax solicitor who was associated with Dighton was also instrumental in hunting down the coiners gang and he was determined to catch Dighton’s killers.

A reward of 100 pounds was offered for information leading to the arrest of the murderers which included a free pardon to anyone except the killers who would turn King’s evidence. A further 100 pounds was promised by the Gentlemen and Merchants of Halifax making the reward money 200 pounds.

Now people wishing to give evidence found it easier and by the end of 1769 a list of 80 suspected coiners had been drawn up which included 30 from Cragg Vale as well as other areas: 20 from Sowerby, 15 from Halifax, 7 from Wadsworth and 6 from Warley and Midgley. Posters were also pasted on walls across the West Riding giving details of these wanted men and by December 1769, 30 arrests were made. Three of these arrested men were Matthew Normanton, Robert Thomas and William Folds and they were followed by the arrest of James Broadbent, Dighton's informant. All four men were sent to York to join David Hartley and their fellow coiners and await their trial. The first two men were guilty of Dighton’s murder and in fact it was the bullet from Normanton’s pistol which had killed Dighton. David Hartley now turned informer in the hope of saving his own life and accused Thomas and Normanton of the crime.

His statement did not help him and he was tried at the Spring Assizes on the 2nd April and found guilty of counterfeiting which carried the death penalty. He was hanged at the Tyburn gallows near York which is now the site of the York Racecourse on Saturday 28th April 1770 along with James Oldfield a gang member who had been tried and sentenced with him. James Jagger who had been arrested on the same day was later freed. David Hartley’s wife, Grace requested that her husband’s body be released to her for burial in Heptonstall churchyard and so on 1st May 1770 David Hartley was laid to rest.
Another coiner Thomas Hyde turned King’s evidence and secured Broadbent’s release and a trial date was set for the remaining three men accused of Dighton’s murder for the Autumn Assizes of 1770 but they were not given bail.

**THE MURDER TRIAL**

The trial of the three men accused by Broadbent on the murder charge took place at the Autumn Assizes of 1770 in August. The evidence against the murderers was not strong and the conflicting statements did not help which lead to Folds being acquitted early in the trial. Because of the contradicting statements, lack of any firm evidence and the fact that most of the case was based on the evidence of Broadbent an informer who was also a liar and perjurer the jury had no alternative but to acquit Normanton and Thomas, they were set free. Their acquittal on the murder charge meant that, even if new evidence came to light, they could not be tried on the same charge again. Their escape from the gallows seems to have had little effect on the coiners, they went back home and continued their coining activities as before.

Robert Parker was positive that Mathew Normanton and Robert Thomas were guilty of Dighton’s murder and continued to gather evidence against them. He first obtained a statement from the coiner Thomas Clayton that he had accompanied the two men and had witnessed the murder. Then a statement from John Sladdin who had overheard a conversation between Isaac Hartley, Normanton, Thomas and Clayton where Hartley promised 33 guineas to each man for the murder of William Dighton.

**THE TRUTH AND EXECUTION**

The consequences of these statements lead to the arrests of Robert Thomas and Matthew Normanton for the robbery of Dighton together with Thomas Spencer who had collected the funds used to pay the murderers and Thomas Clayton who faced coining charges. To begin with they all accused one another of the murder but from the outcome of their accounts it became clear that Spencer had waited behind the wall with the two others on the first two nights but on the third night, the night of the murder Spencer had spent the evening at Mytholmroyd, where a goose fair was being held. This new evidence was enough to convict Robert Thomas but having been acquitted of the murder of Dighton he could no longer be charged with that offence but at the Summer Assizes he was found guilty of highway robbery and sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on Saturday 6th August 1774 at York, after which his body was brought to Halifax and displayed on Beacon Hill held in place by chains arranged in such a way that his right hand pointed to the scene of his crime to warn others of his kind of the consequences of their actions.

Thomas Spencer and Thomas Clayton were both acquitted due to lack of evidence and with insufficient evidence against Matthew Normanton, he was given bail and a new trial date was set for the Spring Assizes of 1775.

There was no doubt of his guilt and this was his second reprieve but he did not leave the district instead he stayed at his home Stannery End near Mytholmroyd. When the time came for him to stand trial he failed to appear, so a warrant for his arrest was issued. In his absence the Judge, Mr Justice J. Gould, sentenced him to death. When the Sheriff’s men went to Mytholmroyd to find him Normanton was told about this and ran away into hiding but was soon captured and taken to York where he was hanged on 15th April 1775.
Before being hanged Normanton made a full confession and said that only he and Robert Thomas were involved in the shooting. His body too was brought to Halifax to hang in chains on Beacon Hill alongside the remains of the body of his accomplice. Thomas Spencer who was cleared of all charges was hanged at Beacon Hill in August 1783 alongside 19 year old Mark Saltonstall after taking part in the Halifax Corn Riots and being the ring leader.

As for Isaac Hartley, David’s brother who was the real organiser of the murder plot, he was never brought to trial owing to the lack of evidence, he eventually died at White Lee on the other side of Mytholmroyd in 1815 aged 78.

**COINS COUNTERFEIT**

Portuguese coins were recognised and accepted currency at the time and were chosen by the coiners to counterfeit but the choice was more likely to have been made by the engravers who made the dies rather than the coiners, which required skilled craftsmen. The reason why Portuguese coins were counterfeit rather than English was because Portuguese coins were not as well-known as guineas and half guineas and no one would know what to look for in a suspicious coin. Another advantage was that there was no ‘head’ both sides had geometric designs.

Great skill was also needed by the hammer, too hard the metal disc would crack not hard enough there would be little design showing on the disc. David Hartley seems to have been the hammer man which earned him the name ‘King David’. There was a lot of crude workmanship and many of the coins produced were obviously not genuine guinea coins but large numbers exchanged hands in West Yorkshire.

Three engravers were mentioned at one of the trials as producing the dies, Thomas Sunderland of Halifax, Joseph Shaw of Bradford and a man named Lighthoulers who is believed to be the engraver for David Hartley’s dies.

**DISCOVER THE AREA WHERE THE COINERS LIVED**

It is often written that the Dusty Miller Inn in the centre of Mytholmroyd was where the Cragg Vale Coiners plotted the murder of William Dighton in 1769 and was a favourite meeting place. But since it was built in about 1785 as a coaching inn by Dr John Alexander it seems very unlikely that any of the coiners were alive before it was built, Thomas Spencer was the last coiner to be hanged in 1783. Isaac Hartley is the only one that could lay claim to have frequented the Inn in his old age but not as part of a coining gang for him those days were over.

Opposite the Dusty Miller is the B6138 Cragg Road which passes through the picturesque valley of Cragg Vale where three of the coiners’ homes can still be seen today. There are several walks to where they once lived. The most popular ones are from The Hinchliffe pub and from the Withens Clough Reservoir car park. To get to both places turn off the Cragg road at Church Bank Lane this goes past St John’s Church to The Hinchliffe pub which has a display case about the coiners, further along this road brings you to the Reservoir car park.
From both places follow the footpaths that lead to Hill Top farm this is where the coiner Thomas Greenwood lived. A short walk further on is Keelham farm where John Wilcocks lived who was a senior member of the coiners gang. It is a good example of a moor edge farm with the house, barn and cow house all in one block.

Bell House is about three fields away and the last house between the valley and the moor. This is where David Hartley lived and carried out his illegal coining activities.

The Coiners' Barn at Bell House has now been renovated into holiday accommodation by the owners Liz and Nathan Smith, ideal for those who want to get away from it all.

On the east side of Cragg Vale near Mytholmroyd were the homes to three other coiners. Walking from Mytholmroyd, over the railway bridge, along Hall Bank Lane, on the left hand side of the road, is New House. It is a two-storey house with a porch. The date on the outside has been erased but inside the door there is an inscription ‘W.M.G. 1718’. Thomas Spencer lived here who was involved in Dighton’s murder but was hanged in 1783 for being one of the leaders in the Corn Riots. Following this road for about one kilometre, leads to Stannery End the home of Thomas Clayton and Mathew Normanton. This is where Robert Thomas spent a sleepless night after he and Normanton had killed Dighton.

Isaac Hartley lived out is life at White Lee off the Midgley Road on the other side of Mytholmroyd, he died on 5th March 1815 aged 78.

The Tourist Information Centre at Hebden Bridge has a leaflet on ‘Walks Around the Villages’ which includes one on Cragg Vale. It contains three walks with a map that outlines them and they are easy to follow.
After visiting David Hartley’s gravestone the museum which is located next to the ruined Church has a very interesting exhibition on the Cragg Vale Coiners, and explains about counterfeiting and why they murdered to conceal their illegal trade. On display are the original dies used to make their gold counterfeit coins and other equipment.

The museum is housed in the old Grammar School Building which was established in 1642 but the present building was rebuilt in 1771 and it continued to be used as a school until 1889. In 1898 it became the Yorkshire Penny Bank and the staff were careful to preserve some of the original features of the school which included a black oak desk at which pupils took their lessons and can be seen inside the museum today. Other exhibitions show how important Heptonstall was and the surrounding area from prehistoric times to the present day.

The museum is open from Easter to the end of October Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 11am - 4pm admission is free.
Knur & Spell an Old South and West Yorkshire Game of Golf

This picture by George Walker c.1817 shows how the 'spell' worked and how the distance was measured by pushing sticks into the ground at regular intervals.

Knur and Spell is an old English game and can be traced back to the beginning of the 14th century. It was once a popular game, mainly in South and West Yorkshire, until the early part of the last century, played on Shrove Tuesday and Good Friday and has been dubbed 'poor man's golf'. In its heyday the game attracted huge support, frequently accompanied by betting with hundreds of pounds changing hands.

The name derives from the Norse for ball game 'nurspel', indicating that it may have come over with the Vikings, although 'spell' is also a northern word for a piece of wood.

The game was played in a large open field with a wooden ball about the size of a golf ball, the knur, which was released by spring from a small brass cup at the end of a tongue of steel the spell. When the ball flies into the air it is struck with a clubbed stick, the bat. The aim of the game was to propel the knur, ball the greatest possible distance, either in one or a series of strokes.

A claim to the world record for the longest distance was made on 11th November 1889 at Lightcliffe, when Fred Moore of Halifax sent the knur a distance of 372 yards, 1 ft, 18 inches. One of the biggest contests to be held in the last century, took place at Roomfield Lane, Todmorden on 1st October 1870; there were 72 entrants and over 1,000 spectators.

The game largely died out but a revival took place at the Spring Rock, Greetland in the 1960s, culminating in a so-called world championship in 1969, when as many as 5,000 people were said to have turned out and the event was filmed by Yorkshire TV, which presented a cup to the winner. Championship contests continued during the 70s but declined and petered out in 1979. Today the game is no longer played except as a folk lore revival.

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According to folklore a medieval knight is supposed to have killed a dragon and saved the village of Nunnington in Ryedale and was commemorated in the form of an effigy in Nunnington Church. There is no doubt that this story and many other dragon legends have been exaggerated through the years but this does not mean that their origins are not based in fact.

The picturesque village of Nunnington is on the north banks of the river Rye, which gives its name to the area of Ryedale. It is situated about 16 kilometres north-west of Malton and about 11 kilometres south-west of Helmsley. The highest point of the village is to the south where the church of All Saints and St. James stands.

The legend of Sir Peter de Loschy and the Dragon

The tale goes that the village was terrorised by a dragon which destroyed all the crops. But the valiant warrior, Sir Peter de Loschy, who rode all the way up to Scotland trying to find something brave to do in order to win the hand of his beloved, heard about the savage beast of Nunnington on his way home. So here was Sir Peter’s chance to save the small village by killing the dragon which lived on Loschy Hill. Before the fight Sir Peter covered his suit of armour in very sharp razor blades. Then with his trusted dog Sir Peter advanced on the dragon. All at once the creature threw its thick snake like body in coils around him which were cut to pieces by Sir Peter’s armoured blades. However just as soon as the pieces were cut they rejoined themselves. Another attack was made on the creature. This time Sir Peter hacked off pieces of the dragon but once again it joined them back together again. It was a difficult and a terrible battle, then the brave Sir Peter had an idea. To prevent the monster rejoining the pieces, he gave them to his dog which snatched them up, ran off with them and buried the bits of the worm in the field above the Church of Nunnington about one mile away. This stopped the dragon from reassembling itself.

The fight raged on until Sir Peter struck his last and fatal blow at the creature’s head and gave the last piece of the monster to his dog to remove. The dragon was dead and buried. Sir Peter was so pleased with his dog that he bent down to pet it and the dog in return licked his master on the face. But the dog’s tongue was covered in the monster’s venomous blood and they both died. The story goes that the villagers were so grateful to Sir Peter for getting rid of the dragon that out of gratitude for their deliverance Sir Peter de Loschy was commemorated in the form of an effigy placed in Nunnington Church.
Today the village of Nunnington appears to have survived the terrors of the dragon and remains quiet and unspoiled. Loschy Hill where the dragon lived and was killed by Sir Peter is situated about a kilometre west of Nunnington just east of East Newton SE647793, which is more of a gentle rise than a proper hill standing at about 77 metres height.

The British Dragon

For thousands of years dragons were thought to be real creatures but it was not until the medieval period that tales of knights fighting dragons started to flourish. It would seem that knights quickly discovered that dragon-hunting was very profitable, and soon most of the dragons were destroyed in a very short time.

According to dragon legend the creature that Sir Peter fought with and killed was not a true dragon. The true dragon is described as a gigantic reptilian beast with four legs. It has two leather, bat-like wings and is covered with armoured scales. Its head is usually depicted with horns or a crest. It has a spine tail and savage teeth and claws. The true dragon’s main weapon is its breath; its most famous being the jets of flame that it spat from its jaws.

Sir Peter’s dragon was a limbless worm, an immense snake which is the second largest in number to appear in British legends. Worms did not breathe fire but spat venom or blew blasts of poisonous gas. A worm would often poison whole areas, withering crops. As well as its deadly bite and breath, the worm crushed its prey in monstrous coils like an outsized python or anaconda. Worms seemed to be fond of milk which is an odd diet for a reptile and would often suckle from cows. They were also known for being able to rejoin severed sections of their bodies, making them exceedingly hard to kill.

Also according to a 17th century document, the worm’s lair was a big round hole three yards wide and about half a mile from town, the worm was thought to be over a mile long.

Evidence for the Yorkshire Dragons

No research work has been undertaken on where the Dragons came from, probably because most people think that dragons are just mythical creatures that appeared at different time periods in legends and fairy tales. But until the early 20th century people took dragons very seriously.

Yorkshire is rich in dragon legends this could be due to cultural influences, such as the Vikings. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, compiled in about 891, the first Viking raids against England occurred at Lindesfarne off the coast of Northumberland in the year 787.

Although the Vikings are best remembered for attacking, pillaging, and then retreating in their swift ships, they often became permanent settlers, York being one of the most important long-term Viking settlements.

Right: Artist impression of Viking long ships landing at Lindesfarne off the coast of Northumberland in the year 787
Also the Viking long ships became known generally as “Dragon Ships” because they were often mounted with a dragon or serpent’s head on the prow. This was because the Vikings were very superstitious and the dragon’s head was simply to frighten away sea monsters and spirits but no actual dragon heads from their ships have survived. This tradition of placing a dragon’s head on the prow of ships existed for many years and the Normans who were originally Norsemen had Viking-style ships, which can be seen on the Bayeux Tapestry.

Many of the churches in the Ryedale area contain carved stone crosses which often show “dragons” which are Anglo-Danish and date to about the 10th century. The most famous are the wormy serpent-like creature carvings known locally as “Ryedale dragons”.

**Serpent Creatures Carved on Stone Crosses**

Three of the five well known stone crosses in St. Andrew’s Church Middleton which is only 17 kilometres north-east of Nunnington have carved serpent-like creatures on one side and warriors or hunters on the other. The two best examples are one with an oval head bowed to the left and almost filled by a circular eye. The mouth is open pointing down biting with angled fangs at a plant strand which appears to have wrapped itself around the creature’s body binding it at regular intervals, or its own extended tail, which passes through the creature’s jaws. The body has a double outline of uneven width which sweeps round in a reversed-S, with the tail behind its back having flukes. The creature is bordered by a single long panel whose base is roughly concaved. The second one is very similar to the first caught up in a plant strand but its head is turned frontal showing its two piercing oval eyes. The plant strand passes through the creature’s looped split jaws and its body of varying thickness has a double outline. This serpent-like creature is bordered by a double framing panel, the inner strip being narrower. The crosses are Anglo-Danish and have been dated to around 950.

*Right: Stone cross in St. Andrew’s Church, Middleton the carved serpent-like creature is caught up in a plant strand or its own extended tail.*
Another two stone crosses which bear wormy serpents can be seen in All Saints’ Church at Sinnington north-west of Nunnington and west of Middleton. They appear to be both similar in profile with their heads to the left bowed down with extended snouts and in profile they look like seahorses. One has a circular eye and the other has an oval eye both date to the late 10th century.

A stone cross fragment was discovered near St Helen’s Hill on the River Wharfe about two miles below Thorp Arch in West Yorkshire and is now in St. Peter’s Church East Marton, North Yorkshire. It not only shows a wormy serpent but a man actually fighting it. The man appears to be dressed in a loin cloth and brandishing a weapon which could be a sword or a club of some kind. All around him are the twisted coils of the wormy serpent of uneven proportions in width from broad to narrow. The serpent the man is fighting appears to be the same size as a large python but much longer. The carving continues around all the faces of the almost square cross, but the edges have been battered and obscured in some places. The features of this carved stone displays double outlines but it is not Anglo-Danish. It dates to the 12th century.

Left: Stone cross in St. Andrew’s Church, Middleton of a carved serpent-like creature which is also caught up in a plant strand but its head is turned frontal showing its two piercing oval eyes.

Above and Right: Stone crosses in All Saints’ Church at Sinnington the heads of the carved serpent-like creatures are to the left bowed down with a tube like mouth and in profile look like sea-horses

Left and Right: The fragment of this stone cross in St. Peter’s Church East Marton, North Yorkshire shows a wormy serpent in twisted coils of uneven proportions with a man fighting it.
However a man struggling in animal coils does occur on an Anglo-Saxon cross in All Saints Parish Church Rothbury, Northumberland. At the bottom of the scene there is a small male figure who is gripping in each hand the feet of the two rearing four-footed animals. Most of the creatures appear to be serpents coiling from top to bottom biting each other on the way down including the two four-footed animals at the bottom which are biting two of the serpents on each side. This figure is the principal feature of the composition and is thought to represent a scene in Hell. The cross shaft fragment is dated to the early 9th century.

It cannot be proven that the origins of the Yorkshire wormy serpent-like creatures came from the Vikings or were related in any way to the Anglo-Danish stone crosses that have carved serpent-like creatures on them and date to the 10th century. This is just one of many theories, but the tales of knights fighting dragons date from the 13th to the 14th centuries when storytelling flourished.

Left: Stone cross in All Saints Parish Church, Rothbury in Northumberland showing a man struggling in animal coils.

Nunnington Church and the Knight Effigy

The church of All Saints and St. James Nunnington where the effigy of Sir Peter de Loschy is supposed to be commemorated, dates from the late 12th or early 13th century. In the south wall of the nave, placed in an arched recess is an effigy of a knight in poor condition that is cross-legged, his feet resting on a lion, he wears a finely carved suit of chain-mail with a surcoat. The knees are protected by plain knee caps. His hands are placed in an attitude of prayer clothed in mail mittens holding a heart in his hands. His head is resting on a cushion and his sword hangs by his belt, the shield he carries on his arm has mostly been broken away. However from what remains of the shield on which can still be traced the arms of a knight which are a fesse (a broad band drawn horizontally across the middle of the shield) between two chevrons (zigzags) which would be red with three pierced molets of stars on the fesse, so sadly it does not belong to the brave Sir Peter de Loschy but to Sir Walter de Teyes.

Left: The arms of Sir Walter de Teyes.

Right: The Knight Effigy of Sir Walter de Teyes, in the south wall of the nave

Photograph courtesy of Yvonne Steele
Sir Walter de Teyes

In 1297 Sir Walter de Teyes, Knight, married Isobel after the death of her first husband Simon de Pateshill who died in 1295 the same year as her father. Isobel inherited the manors of Stonegrave and Nunnington on the death of her father Sir John Stonegrave, being the last of his line. Sir Walter de Teyes received an interest in these manors from the king.

Sir Walter frequently served in the Scottish wars under Edward I and Edward II. In 1309 he was made joint Governor of the City of York with Robert de Hastings. In 1322 he witnessed the defeat of the English at Byland by the Scots under Robert Bruce.

He died in 1325 but how he met his death is not known but the manors passed to Sir John de Pateshill the son of Isobel by her first husband. The legs of Sir Walter de Teyes effigy are crossed but whether or not he actually took part in one of the Crusades is not recorded.

Left: The Knight Effigy of Sir Walter de Teyes, in detail

Photograph courtesy of David Richardson
Britain's Oldest House found in North Yorkshire

Not only does Yorkshire boast the largest standing stone in Britain it can now claim the oldest house in Britain!

A view of the Star Carr field, the two test pits in the foreground are from the 2006 season

Archaeologists from the universities of York and Manchester have unearthed a wooden house next to the ancient lake at Star Carr, which is five miles south of Scarborough, in Flixton. Star Carr is the most well known of all Mesolithic sites which dates back to 9,000 B.C. The site was first excavated in 1949-1952 by Grahame Clark of Cambridge University and is famous for its rich assemblage of artefacts which include rare pieces such as antler headdresses which could have been used in rituals, flint arrowhead and shale beads.

The remains of the house have been dated by radio carbon to at least 8,500BC when Britain was part of continental Europe and predates what was previously Britain's oldest known dwelling at Howick, Northumberland, by at least 500 years.

Right: Antler Headdress

The house was a circular structure about 3.5 meters wide (11 feet, 6 inches), constructed of timber posts but it is not known how the walls and roof were covered, but it could have been thatched or animal hides used, and the floor area could have been covered by reeds.

Archaeologists believe that the house had been rebuilt over time and that there were likely to have been other houses at the site.

The people living here would have been among the first settlers returning after the last ice age, when the glaciers retreated. They would have migrated from an area now under the North Sea, and hunted animals including deer, wild boar, elk and wild cattle.
The team of researchers excavating the site, which would have overlooked a giant lake, have also found a wooden platform which is the earliest evidence of carpentry in Europe and an 11,000-year-old tree trunk with its bark still intact after being preserved in peat.

Star Carr is internationally important, but the wooden remains are very fragile and there is a new excavation currently underway to recover information before it is lost forever.
The largest standing stone in Britain

THE RUDSTON MONOLITH

In Yorkshire

The stone is slender, with two large flat faces, stands just less than 8 metres tall