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We hope all our readers had a very Happy and Merry Christmas

And we wish you all the best for a Happy New Year 2011

The Yorkshire Journal is a quarterly publication, published in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter and is a free online e-journal available at www.theyorkshirejournal.wordpress.com
Winter is the coldest season of the year, between autumn and spring, marked by the shortest days and longest nights. With this in mind we have tried to give you a good read in front of a cosy warm fire by looking back at some of Yorkshire’s extraordinary folk that are remembered today for their legends, notorious deeds, some famous for hoaxes and others who have achieved inter-national success. In this winter issue we feature some of these famous individuals. For example there is the story of Emily Brontë and her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, first published in December 1847; and again in December 1850 under her real name, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a Victorian novelist whose connections with Yorkshire can be read in many of her works. Amy Johnson, Britain’s most famous aviatrix, a Yorkshire heroine who died in mysterious circumstances. Frances Griffiths and Elsie Wright are famous for taking hoax photos of the Cottingley fairies, but it was only a prank that went badly wrong. John Mackintosh, who gave away his toffee in 1891 and achieved national and inter-national success by 1914. There is also Flint Jack the so called ‘Prince of Counterfeiters’ who is little known today but in the 19th century he was a notorious forger of archaeological artefacts. But perhaps Yorkshire’s greatest fame is the legendary Robin Hood who died at Kirklees Priory, West Yorkshire and is believed to be buried at the edge of the priory grounds.

Other famous Yorkshire folk that have appeared in previous issues of The Journal include, Mother Shipton (TYJ 1 Spring 2010), Thomas Chippendale (TYJ 2 Summer 2010), and the notorious Cragg Vale Coiners (TYJ 3 Autumn 2010).

In the Winter Issue:

- **Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights and The Real Wuthering Heights**
  Sarah Harrison attempts to find the real Wuthering Heights that inspired Emily Brontë’s novel.

- **Mary Elizabeth Braddon and a portrait of Victorian Yorkshire**
  Although not a Yorkshire woman Ruth Morris highlights how she promotes Yorkshire in many of her novels.

- **Amy Johnson - Britain’s most famous aviatrix**
  Amy is best remembered for being the first woman to fly solo from Britain to Australia. But there is still some mystery about her accident. Amy's plane ditched in the Thames estuary, her body was never recovered.

- **The End of the Cottingley Fairy Tale**
  This is a fascinating story of two young girls that claimed to have taken photographs of real life fairies. But their prank had far more reaching consequences that they could have ever imagined.

- **He Gave Away His Toffee and Became Known as “The Toffee King”**
  In 1891 John Mackintosh gave away his toffee to the people of Halifax. By doing so he achieved national and inter-national success by 1914.

- **A Little Know Yorkshire Forger**
  Jeremy Clark tells the story of this 19th century forger who was once called the ‘Prince of Counterfeiters’.

- **Robin Hood’s Death and His Grave at Kirklee Priory**
  Robin Hood is perhaps Yorkshire’s most famous legendary figure, This stimulating story is about how he met his death and his grave near Kirklee Priory.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them. We welcome your comments.

Andrew Simpson
EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND THE REAL WITHERING HEIGHTS

By Sarah Harrison

Emily Jane Brontë was the middle sister of the Brontës whose writings brought them legendary status on an international scale and still remains a source of fascination more than 150 years after their first works were published. But their own story is a tragic one living at Haworth, an unhealthy poor town, where they all died young including their only brother Branwell. As children they spent much of their time roaming on the nearby bleak windswept moors where their inspiration may have come from creating stories and poems about their imaginary world of Gondle to amuse themselves. Charlotte, Emily and Anne left a remarkable literary legacy of powerful novels, poems and short stories.

Emily Brontë is best remembered for her one and only novel Wuthering Heights. This is now considered a classic which was initially published under the male pseudonym of “Ellis Bell” as writing was not considered a suitable activity for women. It was first published in December 1847; a new edition was printed in December 1850 under her real name.

Wuthering Heights is a story of all encompassing and passionate love between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, and how this unresolved passion eventually destroys them and many around them. Reviews at the time were mixed many critics were horrified by the stark depictions of mental and physical cruelty. Today’s critics find it richly imaginative and complex.

Wuthering Heights has also given rise to many adaptations and inspired works, including films, radio and television dramatisations and Kate Bush’s hit song “Wuthering Heights”. In 2009 the novel was given a brand new Indian makeover for a stage musical created by the leading British Asian theatre company, Tamasha. The musical toured cites and towns across England and Scotland. Also Emily’s Wuthering Heights has been voted UK’s favourite love story by a survey launched by UKTV Drama.
Withering Heights

High Withins is the name of a hill on Haworth Moor situated at an altitude of 452 meters which commands extensive views of the surrounding West Yorkshire countryside. It is located about 5 kilometres south-west of Haworth near the Pennine Way. The name ‘wuthering’ or ‘wither’ comes from a dialect word used especially in Yorkshire and Lancashire referring to turbulent weather.

The Withins farmhouse on Haworth Moor is reputed to be the site of Wuthering Heights in Emily Brontë’s novel which is now a remote, abandoned flattened-off ruined farmhouse just to the north-east of High Withins Hill and standing 430 metres high. Originally it was known as “Top of the Withens”. The Withins farmhouse was probably built in the second half of the 16th century by George Bentley or one of his relatives. It was inhabited by Jonas Sunderland and his wife Ann Crabtree from 1811 till 1833 at the time of the Brontës. It was taken over by their son, Jonas, and Mary Feather. The last occupier was Ernest Roddy a poultry farmer in 1926.

Although its appearance in the book does not match the house, its location does suggest the isolated and windswept site of Wuthering Heights. A plaque was fixed to a wall by the Brontë Society in 1964, in response to many enquiries it reads: “This farmhouse has been associated with “Wuthering Heights”, the Earnshaw home in Emily Brontë’s novel. The buildings, even when complete, bore no resemblance to the house she described, but the situation may have been in her mind when she wrote of the moorland setting of the Heights”.

Above: Withens Farmhouse in 1920
Right: The Withens Ruins today
The Real Withering Heights

Although the ruined farmhouse at Withins is sometimes considered to be an inspiration for Wuthering Heights, it seems more likely that the now sadly demolished High Sunderland Hall, one kilometre north of Halifax was possibly the original Wuthering Heights in Emily’s imagination, rather than the Withins farmhouse. But how much Emily took from High Sunderland Hall for her imaginary farm of Wuthering Heights is not known.

The most striking evidence that remains today comes from old photos and drawings that show the architectural features resembling Wuthering Heights. These are of the gateway which had various well carved scroll work and decorated masonry, over the principal door (front porch) where two large statues similar to those described by Lockwood a character of Wuthering Heights in chapter one of the novel:

“Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door, above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date ‘1500’ and the name ‘Hareton Earnshaw’.”

This one sentence in Emily’s novel has always been a mystery to those who have sought to identify Wuthering Heights. Of all the farms and halls in the neighbourhood of Haworth only High Sunderland Hall confirms the truth of her description in this part of Yorkshire. Emily would have been familiar with High Sunderland Hall. This building: now demolished was once home to the Sunderland family, which is about two kilometres from Law Hall where in 1837 at the age of 19 Emily came to teach. High Sunderland Hall was owned by William Priestley but inhabited by a tenant farmer, labourers and weavers and its decline was well under way when Emily was at Law Hill, Southowram, a kilometre south-east of Halifax. Law Hill was a three-storey house which was than an exclusive boarding school run by Miss Patchett. Emily did not stay long only about six months because of the strict lifestyle demanded; she had to work from 6am to 11pm each day and was more of a governess than a teacher.

Miss Patchett was in the habit of taking her pupils to see places of interest, such as the museum in Halifax and it is almost certain that High Sunderland Hall was sometimes on the list for one of their walks. It may have been on one of these walks that Emily visited High Sunderland Hall which must have made an impression on her, it used to be said that - “once seen never forgotten”. So Emily clearly saw the gateway and door (front porch) and was able to describe it in her novel many years later.

The gateway opened onto a paved path leading to the main door (front porch). The last part of Emily’s sentence of an inscription is fiction but the carvings were at one time real. The “shameless little boys” may refer to the roguish, leering faces that used to appear from the stonework on the gateway or to the two nude statues above the door (front porch) of the house.
Although these grotesque statues were not little boys, they were of a male and female. But now sadly the gateway and High Sunderland Hall are gone, only Emily’s words give them immortality and can be compared with existing photographs and drawings of the Hall.

The entrance described by Emily may be too grand for a farmhouse but she conceived Wuthering Heights as more than an ordinary farm and we have to give Emily artistic licence. Brontë experts have conceded that Lockwood’s description of his first visit to Wuthering Heights fits that of High Sunderland Hall, but Emily located it to Withens on Haworth Moor.

Left: A male statue above the main door

Below: The main front of the building

High Sunderland Hall, Horley Green, Halifax

High Sunderland Hall once stood on a plateau at Horley Green at an altitude of 304.8 metres overlooking the Shibden Valley, about one kilometre north-east of Halifax. There is no datable evidence as to when the hall was built but it is believed to have incorporated an earlier half-timbered framed mediaeval house. Richard Sunderland who died in 1573 may have been responsible for the construction of the hall because he married a daughter of John Rishworth and on the front of the building were the arms of the Sunderland and Rishworth families. His son also named Richard may have effected some improvements. He married Susan Saltonstall (daughter of the Lord Mayor of London) in about 1597. On the inner side of the gateway, which was built after the hall, was the arms of the Saltonstalls so it is likely that the gateway was built at the end of the 16th century. His son Abraham Sunderland married Elizabeth Langdale who was the daughter of Peter Langdale and sister of Marmaduke Langdale of Sancton in East Yorkshire, may have also made some contributions. It was the Sunderlands aim to impress and in this they succeeded in self indulgence, with battlements and ornate carvings, it was an impressive building. In fact the features were almost unique to High Sunderland Hall.
The main front was long and low consisting of four sets of long mullioned windows on both the ground floor and first floor. Stained armorial glass was placed in some of the windows. The front eaves were castellated and pinnacles give a castle appearance. A front porch between the third and fourth windows was bordered by circular pillars surmounted by square capitals. Both of these pillars had Latin inscriptions on them. The left-hand side pillar read “Heaven is the best country” and the pillar on the right-hand side read “The best home”. Two large extravagantly carved statues of a male and female stood on the square capitals overlooking the entrance. These may be Emily’s “shameless little boys” which fired her imagination. Centred between these two statues was a sundial fixed to the wall, in one corner of it were the initials A.B. which belong to Abraham Sunderland and a date of 1622.

A Latin inscription over the main door read “This place hates, loves, punishes, observes, honours - Negligence, peace, crimes, laws, virtuous persons”. Another Latin inscription set on the south front wall above the window read “May the Almighty grant that the race of the Sunderland may quietly inhabit this seat, and maintain the rights of their ancestors free from strife, until an ant drink up the waters of the sea, and a tortoise walk round the whole world”.

In the central window were several coats of arms belonging to other families with which the Sunderlands were subsequently allied. There were also many more inscriptions and mottoes at High Sunderland Hall and Emily may have remembered some of them, especially the one over the main door which may have suggested the themes of her novel.

The entrance to the front of the hall was by way of a large high stone gateway at the south-west corner of the building which had an arched doorway and square pillars on each side that supported a ledge above which was variously decorated masonry. In fact most of the gateway was well-carved and ornamented. A Latin inscription over the doorway once read “May no one who violates justice knock at this door” and “The fame of virtue is an everlasting trump”.

Above this inscription at the top of the gateway and centred in square stonework was a winged cherub with inflated cheeks, blowing a horn as if emphasising the inscription below. There was also a shield of the arms of the Inner Temple and on the left side of the gateway was a male nude figure. A number of laughing faces in various corners and crumbling remains of other decorations at one time could be made out.

On the reverse side of the gateway were two griffins, immediately above the door with the Saltonstalls coats of arms centred below them on the way out.
This gateway does not fit into the main building and was probably constructed as an afterthought. The most likely reason why this adjunct gateway to the hall was built in this position, instead of the front of the hall which would have been a natural position for a gateway, was because additional shelter was needed at this end of the hall.

The plan of the hall was in the usual local style, it had two wings with a large central hall which had a through passage way on the eastern side. The east wing contained the kitchen and buttery where food and drinks were prepared and stored. On the first floor above were two spacious chambers. The west wing was divided into two parlours and on the first floor were two chambers. Above the central hall was what is described as a ball room with an adjacent chamber. Smaller rooms at the back of the hall both on the ground floor and first floor could have been servants quarters and store rooms.

It was once believed that a secret passage lead from the centre of the house, one branch of the passage was supposed to lead into Shibden and another to the Parish Church in Halifax from which sounds of the organ were actually stated to have been heard by the last tenants.

In about 1820 the house was sub-divided into tenements and occupied by several different families. It was no longer occupied as a gentleman’s residence. By the 1940s it was reported that the building was derelict, unsafe and surrounded by barbed wire. The whole building was window-less and the staircases had gone. Mining was blamed for the bulging walls, but a report by the Ministry of Works in 1947 concluded that the building could be saved for a cost of £6,000. The owner of the building at that time, a Mrs Holden of Harrogate, offered it first to the Halifax Corporation and then to the Brontë Society. However, the high cost of repair meant that both offers were turned down. Sadly High Sunderland Hall was finally demolished in 1950.

The Rise and Fall, of the Sunderlands

The first Sunderland is recorded in the Wakefield Courts Rolls dated 1274 as Matthew of Sunderland, the name derives from the land where he lived and worked. Its elevated position accounts for the “high”. The family fortunes rose to their highest in the 16th century with Richard Sunderland who died in 1573 by which time the family possessed considerable properties in Haworth, Keighley and Bingley. The Sunderlands took an active part in the Civil War (1642-1651) on the side of the Royalists which sealed their fate. Abraham died defending Pontefract Castle in 1644 aged about 50. His son Langdale Sunderland a nephew of Sir Marmaduke Langdale, fought at Marston Moor, commanding a troop of the famous Northern Horses and was seriously wounded. After the war Langdale Sunderland made terms with Parliament which resulted in his being fined what was then a tremendous sum of £878 for his Royalist allegiance. This caused him to sell High Sunderland Hall to pay his fine. It was purchased in 1655 by Joshua Horton and since then it has been bought and sold many times. Langdale Sunderland lived out his life as a peaceful country gentleman and before his death in 1700 he had recovered almost all the money he had lost.
Haworth Parsonage and St Michael and All Angels Church

The Haworth Parsonage is where the Brontës lived from 1820 until Patrick’s death in 1861. Emily lived here most of her life, she moved to the parsonage when she was less than two years old and apart from relatively short periods at school or teaching, rarely left it. Emily eventually accepted a domestic life in the parsonage, cooking and looking after her father. She was an isolated, painfully shy woman and is reputed to have died on the sofa in the dining room on 19 December 1848 at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Emily was 30 years old. On 22 December she was laid to rest in the family vault in the church opposite the parsonage.

It is now the Brontë Parsonage Museum owned by the Brontë Society and the rooms have been restored to how they would have appeared in the 1850s.

At the time of Emily’s life, the Parsonage and its location looked very different. The trees that crowd the graveyard had not been planted and the house was right on the edge of the town, bordering directly onto the moors. The Parsonage was also smaller as the northern extension was not added until after she and her family had died.
St Michael and All Angels Church is where Emily Brontë's father preached and was rebuilt after the Brontë's died, so they would not have known the building we see now. The tower is the only original part and has bullet holes which resulted from Mr. Brontë's habit of firing a pistol off at it every morning. The family is buried in a vault below which is not accessible but there is a memorial chapel which was built in 1964 and plaques.

Visit Withins

Each year, thousands of visitors from all over the world make a literary pilgrimage to Haworth the place most associated with the Brontës to try to absorb the atmosphere of the hilltop village and the surrounding countryside. The ruin of the Withins farmhouse on Haworth Moor lies on the Pennine Way and is a popular walking destination from nearby Haworth.

There is a circular walk from Penistone Country Park near the Haworth Parsonage to the ruins of the Withins farmhouse which is a popular destination for walkers and tourists. It takes about 3 hours to do this 6 kilometres round walk. It goes across Haworth Moor over a cattle grid via the Brontë Waterfalls which is on the same popular path. About a mile and a half further on and over a few stiles the path goes uphill all the way to the ruin of the Withins farmhouse. Walk back by first rounding Harbour Hill and then walking along the moors back to the starting point at Penistone Country Park.

Nowadays walks are all well signposted and the paths are well marked. In fact such is the attraction to Japanese literary tourists that some footpath signs in the area include directions in Japanese.

The Haworth Tourist Information Centre has walking guides of the area which includes the Pennine Way.
Mary Elizabeth Braddon and a portrait of Victorian Yorkshire

Although not a Yorkshire woman she wrote and promoted Yorkshire in many of her novels

By Ruth Morris

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1916) was a very prolific novelist, writing over eighty works, a number of short stories, plays, poems and was the editor of two very popular magazines. Her principal residence was in Richmond-upon-Thames although she did live at Black House Farm in Beverley, East Yorkshire for six months in 1860 and acted on the provincial stage as Mary Seyton between 1852 and 1860. These connections with Yorkshire can arguably be read into her work. Forty nine of her novels mention Yorkshire and as much of her work was written in three volumes, ‘triple deckers’, this equates to a lot of references. This article looks at how Yorkshire was realised in Braddon’s literature in order to gain an understanding of the county in the mid-to late Victorian period.

Yorkshire is described as a distinctive place with a particular character. It seems to have a special lure, even to people who have not visited the county. Valentine Hawkehurst in Birds of Prey (1867) states this ‘I am going to Yorkshire . . . I begin to understand the nostalgia of the mountain herdsman; I pine for that northern air, those fresh pure breezes blowing over moor and wolds though I am not quite clear, by the by, as to the exact nature of the wolds. I pant, I yearn for Yorkshire. I, the cockney, the child of Temple Bar, whose cradle-song was boomed by the bells of St Dunstan’s and St Clement’s Danes. Is not Yorkshire my Charlotte’s birthplace? I want to see the land whose daughters are so lovely.’ Eve, who is a Yorkshire woman, expresses a similar desire in The Venetians (1892) as she only feels comfortable when in Yorkshire ‘This is not my country’ said Eve. ‘I feel like a foreigner here, though we have lived at the Homestead a good many years. Yorkshire is my country.’ Indeed this Yorkshire character is so distinctive that it is possible to distinguish the Yorkshire man from the non-Yorkshireman as suggested in The Lovels of Arden (1871) ‘The door under the porch stood open; but there were a couple of men in a sober livery waiting in the hall-footmen who had never been reared in those Yorkshire wilds-men with powdered hair, and the stamp of Grosvenor-square upon them.’

Perhaps some of this indelible character is the result of the history and politics of the county as hinted at in The Golden Calf (1883) ‘Ida knew all the great speeches, and indeed a good many of the famous scenes, by heart, and Vernon liked to hear them over and over again, alternately detesting the Lancastrians and pitying the Yorkists, or hating York and compassionating Lancaster, as the fortunes of war wavered.’ Yorkshire as distinctive can also be read into Braddon’s descriptions of Yorkshire food, architecture, language, environment and interest in horses.

Left: Black House Farm, Beverley. The house where Mary Braddon wrote ‘Three Times Dead’ in 1860
Yorkshire food is especially important in the character of the county. There are references to particular foodstuffs in *The Golden Calf* (1883), where ‘there was a loud cry for eggs and bacon, kippered herrings, marmalade, Yorkshire cakes’ and in *Robert Ainsleigh* (1872) the ‘ham was cured in Yorkshire. There was saltpetre in the pickle.’ Yorkshire cakes are especially important in *Dead Men’s Shoes* (1876) ‘No one who has not eaten Yorkshire cakes, and seen them made and baked in a Yorkshire kitchen, by a brisk and energetic Yorkshire housewife, can have a just idea of the celerity with which this operation can be performed.’ Similarly in *The Day will come* (1889), Yorkshire tea is evident ‘And did not everybody relish the tea, which might be described as a Yorkshire tea of a humble order; not the Yorkshire tea which may mean mayonnaise and perigord pie, chicken and champagne—but tea as understood in the Potteries of Hull, or the humbler alleys and streets of Leeds or Bradford.’ This last quotation shows differences across Yorkshire and so gives a more nuanced description of the county.

Specific places in Yorkshire are described in a positive manner, although these are fictitious. Many of the country estates are positioned in beautiful surroundings. Pevenshall Place in *The Lady’s Mile* (1866) ‘was in the Italian style,—a noble square white mansion, with a balustraded roof, surmounted by airy turrets, and a broad terrace walk, that commanded one of the loveliest aspects in Yorkshire. No vulgar architect had designed the Manchester trader’s dwelling’, in *The Lovels of Arden* (1871), Mr Granger’s house ‘is now one of the finest in Yorkshire—perhaps the finest, in its peculiar way. I doubt if there is so perfect a specimen of gothic domestic architecture in the county’, and in *Rupert Godwin* (1867), ‘The house she had chosen was situated upon a small estate in Yorkshire. There, secluded from the world, the Marchioness spent her quiet life, the greater part of which was devoted to works of charity and benevolence.’

The most extended description occurs in *An Open Verdict* (1878) and again this is largely positive ‘Little Yafford had perhaps some right to give itself airs, on the strength of being one of the prettiest villages in Yorkshire. It was like a spoiled beauty and felt that nothing could be too good for it. Great bleak hills rose up between it and the bitter east winds, a river wound in and out of the village like a shining serpent, and licked its green meadows and garden boundaries. The long low stone bridge was as old as the Romans. There was not an ugly house in the place—except that big barrack of Sir Philip’s and that was hidden behind the fine old elms and oaks of the park. There was not a neglected garden, or an objectionable pigsty. The gentry were all well—to-do people, who bestowed money and care upon the beautification of their homes.’ It is not just fictitious country estates which are described in a positive manner; the environment in general is also more beneficent.

Yorkshire is frequently described as being healthier than other counties. In *An Open Verdict* (1878), Sir Kenrick Culverhouse’s ‘bent back had straightened itself. He was able to endure the fatigue of a day’s fishing, in the wintry wind and rain. He was altogether a changed man. Yorkshire breezes had done much for him, but happiness had done more.’ These Yorkshire breezes seem to have a medicinal effect in *The Lovels of Arden* (1871) as well ‘Fortunately the woman of the house was friendly, and the rooms were clean. But the airs of Soho are not as those breezes which came blowing over Yorkshire wolds and woods, with the breath of the German Ocean.’
It is not just the breezes though, the moors are also beneficent in *Weavers and Weft and other tales* (1877) as ‘The walk through the rough weather suited his, Sir Cyprian Davenant, present temper. He could have walked many a mile across a Yorkshire moor that night, in the endeavour to walk down the anxious thoughts that crowded upon his mind.’ Perhaps as a result of the Yorkshire environment, Yorkshire people are harder than those from other counties as shown in *Rough Justice* (1898) ‘It seemed to her, indeed, that among those hardy Yorkshire peasants it was more difficult to die than to live. They suffered diseases that would have killed Hercules, and held fast by life for years after any London physician would have condemned a London patient.’ Yorkshire is also a place of happiness as shown in this last novel, ‘In Yorkshire she had felt more alive than she had ever felt since she left the Saxon.’ Madame Meynell too in *Charlotte’s Inheritance* (1868) ‘was happier in Yorkshire that I had been in London; for I saw more people and my life seemed gayer and brighter than in the city.’ All the memories of Yorkshire are also positive. Luce in *Lucius Davoren, or, Publican and Sinners a novel* (1873) remembers ‘Only the quiet life of a school in Yorkshire, where I was sent when I was very young, and where I stayed till I was seventeen. But the life seemed bright to me. I had governesses and schoolfellows who I loved, and green hills and woods that were only less dear than my living friends.’ The Yorkshire environment is therefore described in a positive manner.

One of the most recurrent descriptions of Yorkshire is in relation to horse racing. Three quotations will illustrate this although any number could be used. Erebus in *An Open Verdict* (1878) ‘was in due course shown to Mr Piper, who knew so little about horses as to be scarcely worthy to be called a Yorkshire man. His own particular vanity in the way of horse-flesh was a fast pony that could trot between the shafts of a light carriage for any number of hours without rest or refreshment. Anything beyond that was out of his line’, Elizabeth in *Strangers and Pilgrims* (1873), ‘was eager to hear about her favourites and jockeys as if she had been the daughter of some Yorkshire squire, almost cradled in a racing stable, and swaddled in a horse-cloth’ and in *The Lovels of Arden* (1871), ‘the mistress of Hale Castle had driven off, in the lightest and daintiest of phaetons, with a model groom and a pair of chestnut cobs, which seemed perfection, even in Yorkshire, where every man is a connoisseur in horseflesh.’ This interest in horses extends itself to language. In *Aurora Floyd* ‘Yorkshire is so pre-eminently a horse racing and betting county that even simple country folk who have never wagered a sixpence in the quiet course of their lives say ‘I lay’ where a Londoner would say ‘I dare say.’ Braddon also marks out the speech of Yorkshire characters in other ways.

Three of Braddon’s novels use a lot of dialect to represent the speech of Yorkshire characters and these are Steve Hargreaves in *Aurora Floyd* (1863), William and Matilda Jeffson in *The Doctor’s Wife* (1864) and a number of characters in *The Lady’s Mile* (1866). Braddon also marks Yorkshire speech out as different in less obvious ways. In *Charlotte’s Inheritance* (1868) and *Birds of Prey* (1867), the narratives are peppered with a few terms which are distinctly ‘Yorkshire’ in order to mark the characters out as different. In *Charlotte’s Inheritance*, ‘Charlotte praised her husband as the most brilliant and admirable of men; after which pleasing flattery she favoured him with a little interesting information about the baby’s last tooth, and the contumacious behaviour of the new housemaid, between whom and Mrs Woolper there had been a species of disagreement, which the Yorkshire woman described as a ‘stand further.’ In *Birds of Prey*, aunt Dorothy fell asleep in a capacious old armchair by the fire, after making an apologetic remark to the effect that she was tired, and had been a good deal ‘tewed’ that morning in the dairy. The word ‘tewed’ used in this passage is to be fatigued, worn with labour or hardship.

**Braddon’s Representation of Yorkshire**

The popularity of Braddon’s work has waned considerably since its height in the middle of the nineteenth century. This brief article has attempted in some small way to rejuvenate interest in her work. Braddon’s references to Yorkshire are both numerous and instructive and suggest that it is not just writers who have lived in Yorkshire such as the Brontës who are useful in giving a portrait of the county but others, such as Braddon, can provide a more expansive understanding of the county.

*Left: Mary Elizabeth Braddon Novelist (1837-1915)*
Amy Johnson - Britain’s most famous aviatrix

A Yorkshire heroine who died in Mysterious circumstances

Amy Johnson CBE, 1st July 1903 - 5th January 1941, was born in Kingston upon Hull. She is best remembered for being the first woman to fly solo from Britain, to Australia. She left Croydon, south London, on 5 May 1930, flying her ‘Jason’ Gipsy Moth and landed in Darwin, Australia on 24 May, an epic flight of 11,000 miles. Her aircraft can still be seen in the Science Museum, London.

Amy went on to set an England to Japan record in a Puss Moth with Jack Humphreys in July 1931. With her husband, Jim Mollison, a Scottish pilot who had, during a flight together, proposed to her only eight hours after they had met in 1932, flew in a DH Dragon nonstop from Pendine Sands, South Wales, to the United States in 1933. They also flew nonstop in record time to India in 1934 in a DH Comet in the England to Australia air race. In 1938, Amy divorced Mollison and soon after reverted back to her maiden name.

After her commercial flying ended with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Amy joined the Air Transport Auxiliary, a pool of experienced pilots who were ineligible for RAF service. Her flying duties consisted of ferrying aircraft from factory airstrips to RAF bases.

Her Mysterious Death

It was on one of these routine flights on 5 January 1941, that Amy took off alone in thick, freezing fog from Blackpool airport. She was delivering a plane to RAF Kidlington airbase near Oxford, a simple 90 minute flight. Amy went off course by 100 miles and four and a half hours later, her plane ditched in the Thames estuary and was presumed drowned, a tragic and early end to the life of Britain's most famous woman pilot.

A dramatic rescue attempt followed, as HMS Haslemere set out to rescue survivors. Although Amy was seen alive in the water, a rescue attempt failed and her body was never recovered. The Halsemere's Captain, Lieutenant Commander Walter Fletcher dived into the icy waters during the rescue but he was brought out unconscious and died later of hypothermia without ever telling of what or who he saw.

There is still some mystery about the accident, as the exact reason for the flight is still a government secret and there is some evidence that besides Amy and Fletcher a third person (possibly someone she was supposed to ferry somewhere) was also seen in the water and also drowned. Who the third party was is still unknown. Amy was the first member of the Air Transport Auxiliary to die in service.

Without Fletcher’s account and a lack of further witnesses, it is likely that exact details of Amy’s death will remain an eternal mystery. There are many rumours surrounding her crash, none have ever been proven. It is largely accepted that the crash itself occurred due to bad weather and risky judgment.

However, in 1999 it was reported that Tom Mitchell, from Crowborough, Sussex, claimed to have shot the heroine down when she twice failed to give the correct identification code during the flight. He said: “The reason Amy was shot down was because she gave the wrong colour of the day (a signal to identify aircraft known by all British forces) over radio.” Mr. Mitchell explained how the aircraft was sighted and contacted by radio. A request was made for the signal. She gave the wrong one twice. “Sixteen rounds of shells were fired and the plane dived into the Thames Estuary. We all thought it was an enemy plane until the next day when we read the papers and discovered it was Amy. The officers told us never to tell anyone what happened.” This report has never been proven.
THE END OF THE COTTINGLEY FAIRY TALE, WEST YORKSHIRE

Why it became Yorkshires biggest Hoax

Just before the end of the First World War, in the summer of 1917, two young girls claimed to have taken photographs of real life fairies at the bottom of their long garden behind their house at Cottingley Beck. It is a popular belief that the photos they took started as a practical joke, but they were to have far reaching consequences. They are one of the most famous and long-running photographic hoaxes. The two girls photographed themselves with ‘fairies’ and fooled many people including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. But when we look at the photographs today we can see that the fairies are only drawings carefully cut out. Hardly anyone can look at these photos now and accept them as anything but fakes, so why did they fool Sir Arthur Doyle, who died at the age of 71 still believing in fairies? To answer this question and many more we must start at the very beginning.

The story of the Cottingley Fairies is well known and has been for over 80 years. Published in a number of popular magazines the variations differ and the truth has been somewhat distorted over the years. Now there is some more to be added to the story with a number of questions answered. The small scenic village of Cottingley where it all started is situated in the Aire Valley between Shipley and Bingley in West Yorkshire. Many of the historic buildings still stand and the famous narrow Cottingley Beck runs through the east side of the village. The Cottingley Beck with its waterfall was the scene and backdrop to the fairy photos. This runs only a few yards away beyond the back gardens of houses and runs north under the A650 Bradford Road into the River Aire on the other side of Cottingley.

It all began because little Frances Griffiths, 9 years old, coming home with her cousin Elsie Wright aged 16, slipped on some slippery stepping-stones in Cottingley Beck which runs through the woods behind the Wright's home and fell into the water. She scrambled up the side of the bank and crept into the house. Frances knew she was going to get into trouble and sure enough when her mother, Annie Griffiths saw the state she was in, severely scolded and slapped her. In fact she was repeatedly told off for coming home with her clothes wet after playing in the beck. Aunt Polly Wright, Annie Griffith’s sister and Elsie’s mother, asked Frances why she kept on going to the beck. In a flood of tears she blurted out, “I go to see to the fairies.” Elsie came to her defence and said that she too had seen the fairies. There was total disbelief by the parents. The girls went up to their attic bedroom that they shared because Frances and Elsie were each an only child, which was unusual in those days.
Frances and her mother, taken shortly after arriving in Cottingley in 1917. The photo was taken to send to her father serving in France.

This was in July 1917 when children had to make their own entertainment, there were no TVs to watch or computers to play on. For Frances Griffiths, then aged 9 the Cottingley Beck at the bottom of the long garden of 31 Main Street was her private playground. It fascinated her from the start; she would run home from school at Bingley and go to the beck that was covered by overgrown foliage, oak, thorn and ash trees. The sparkling waters of the beck with a waterfall not far from the end of the garden, was at the very centre of the whole fairy episode. Going to the beck to play made Frances feel happy with the sound of water running over the stones and in the sunlight, it was so peaceful and had a charm of its own. She could also escape the realities of the world and it was on these solitary visits that she claims to have seen fairy life beside the beck. Playing by herself, it is possible that she imagined seeing fairies, children at this age pretend all sorts of things when at play and Frances’ was alone and may have wanted company and this took the form of elves. The most common type that appeared in her imagination were “little men, dressed in green, wearing long stockings, coats and caps.” Frances and Elsie were close companions and would often disappear for hours taking sandwiches and drinks to the beck, where Frances would tell her cousin Elsie what she had seen. It seems curious that Elsie never saw fairies although she supported her cousin Frances story. It was also the time of the War, when people were faced with the possibility that their loved ones may not come home. Casualties were mounting and comfort was found in religion, prayer and other beliefs.

The Spiritualist movement was very popular at this time because they believed that there was a means of contacting deceased loved ones and they searched for evidence, any evidence that their souls and the souls of those they loved survived after death. Believing in spirits and the afterlife gave many people hope that they may one day be reunited. One of these institutions was the Theosophical Society, which also searched for evidence that life existed in other realms, the one in Bradford was favoured by Polly Wright and Annie Griffiths. It was in the midst of this unrest that the two girls conspired to take photos of fairies.

At this time Frances’s father, Sergeant Major Edwin Griffiths, was stationed in South Africa and went to Europe during the war after sending his wife and daughter from Cape Town to live temporarily with Frances’s Aunt Polly Wright, Annie Griffith’s sister and cousin, Elsie Wright in the village of Cottingley. This was in April 1917 when Frances was still nine years old. Elsie Wright was a keen artist who had been attending Bradford Art College since she was 13 and during the war she found work in a photographers’ studio, where she acquired skills to do simple retouching. In 1916 she worked for six months in the basement photographers’ in Bradford, where she spotted photographs, that is she cleaned away odd spots which appeared on prints. Later she coloured sepia photographs of soldiers fighting in the First World War that was still raging at the time.

Right: Elsie’s House 31 Main Street, Cottingley.
Elsie’s idea to cheer up Frances

Frances cried bitterly and was very upset, so in an attempt to cheer her up, her cousin Elsie, suggested that they take a photo of the fairies. At this Frances livened up and said “oh yes, let’s try and take one” in fact she became obsessed with the idea. So one Saturday afternoon in July 1917, Elsie persuaded her father Arthur Wright, who was one of the earliest qualified electrical engineers, to lend them his Butcher Midg quarter glass plate camera to take a photograph of Frances at the beck. Although Elsie had never taken a photo in her life, her father showed her how to operate the camera and use the viewfinder. He loaded up one glass plate and off the pair went to Cottingley Beck to take the first photograph. This was Elsie’s first photograph and was to become world famous. When the girls had taken the photo, which took about half an hour they returned home eager to see the plate developed. It was after tea when Arthur took the plate out to expose it in his under-the-stairs darkroom. Elsie also squeezed in and Frances waited outside, but listened to the conversation.

As the image slowly appeared through the solution, Arthur recognized the face of Frances and her elbow resting on a bank, but wondered what the strange white outlined shapes around Frances’s face could be. He thought that they looked like sandwich papers left lying around and began to tell Elsie off for being untidy, when wings appeared he thought that they might be birds, but when tiny legs and arms appeared, he fell silent. Elsie cried out with excitement “The fairies are on the plate.” Arthur’s reply was “You’ve been up to summat” and dismissed it as a joke. The photo they took was not meant as a practical joke, Elsie just wanted to try to keep her cousin Frances out of continuous trouble and she thought that this was one way of helping her. As for Frances, she wanted to get back at the parents for ridiculing her. So this is how it all started, as not has a practical joke just to fool the girl’s parents. It should have been a private family matter but later, it was taken out of their hands by fairy believers, who where the real perpetrators in the story, not the girls, they were only used by them to further their own course.
The first photograph was taken by Elsie at Cottingley Beck and is the most famous entitled ‘Frances and the Dancing Fairies’. The original image was faded and ill defined as can be seen in the original sepia print, the retouched print greatly improved the image which can be seen side by side.

It shows Frances standing in front of a waterfall and rocks. She is looking innocently into the camera and not at the fairies, with one hand held against her neck as four fairies dance on the branches in the foreground directly in front of her but her face is not obscured. Three of the fairies have wings, and one plays a set of pipes.

Arthur was aware of his daughter’s artistic ability at school, she showed considerable talent in drawing and painting fairies, and may have copied them from illustrations in children’s books. She attended Bradford Art College from the age of 13 and a half where she continued to draw fairies.

Elsie told her parents and her Auntie Annie Griffiths that these are the fairies. Frances agreed with her cousin and explained that this is why she had been going to the beck so often. The mothers did not know what to make of the photo. They had always known their daughters to be truthful and both had a great interest in spiritualism, but they put aside their daughter’s story of fairies and the matter was soon forgotten.

About a month after the first photograph was taken, Elsie felt that she too would like to be photographed with a nature spirit of some kind, so she drew a colourful gnome and cut it out. Once again the girls borrowed Arthur Wright’s camera and went up by the old oak trees beyond the banks of the beck. There Frances took a photograph of Elsie with a small gnome like figure. This second photo was taken by Frances when she was just 10 years old and was a less expert photographer than Elsie. It was taken on a fairly bright day in September, 1917 and like the first, the plate was developed by Elsie’s father Arthur, which turned out to be very badly under-exposed and unclear, as might be expected when taken by a young girl. The appearance of another strange figure on the glass plates was too much for Elsie’s father. He knew the girls were playing tricks but when he questioned them, they adamantly denied any trickery and insisted that these were the fairy folk with whom they were playing. Arthur refused to lend his camera to them any more and he put the photographs away in a drawer because he considered them to be pranks.

This photograph was greatly improved, entitled ‘Elsie and the Gnome Fairy.’ Elsie is seated on the grass at the top of the bank near Cottingley Beck. According to Elsie the gnome is wearing black tights, a reddish jersey and a pointed bright red cap. The wings are more moth-like than fairies and of a soft neutral tint. Elsie explained that what seemed to be markings on his wings are simply his pipes, which he was swinging in his left hand. The small gnome like figure dances near her hands, which are on her lap. At first glance her hand looks elongated and distorted not like a natural human hand; Frances suggests it was camera slant. Another suggestion is that it is not one distorted hand but both hands, one sitting on top of the other.
A third explanation is that the hand is a drawing attached to the gnome’s hand, so the gnome and the hand is all one piece. This would help balance the gnome and two of Elsie’s real fingers can be seen poking through between the small fingers of the cut out drawing to hold it in position. So it looks like Elsie is reaching out her hands to the gnome who is stepping forward onto the hem of her wide skirt. In Frances’s confession she pointed out that you can see the head of a hat-pin poking out of the gnome’s chest. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle saw it too, but he believed it to be the creature’s navel and took it as evidence that fairies reproduce in the same way as humans do! The powers of observation so important to Sherlock Holmes were sadly lacking in his creator. Doyle wished so badly for the fairies to be real that, when confronted with evidence to the contrary, he was unable and unwilling to see it.

The parents determined to find evidence of the girls’ prank, perhaps in the way of drawings or cut outs, carried out a most rigorous search. They looked everywhere, in the girls’ attic bedroom, the dustbins, along the beck and up the embankment, but nothing was found. The parents gave up the search and the glass plates and photos were put away and the fairy talk soon faded away. Only the family and a small group of friends knew about the fairy photos, and some were given copies of them as a novelty. One of the reasons why they could not find evidence for cut-out drawings was because the girls dropped the cut-out fairy figures in to the swirling beck after taking the first photo, which would have carried them down to the River Aire on the other side of Cottingley.

It is possible that the fairy affair might have ended here had it not been for Polly Wright and Annie Griffiths taking an interest in Theosophy and going to crowded meetings in Bradford at Unity Hall in Rawson Square. It was at one of these meetings in the summer of 1919 that the matter first became public, because the lecturer mentioned fairies. After the meeting was over, Polly Wright stayed behind and approached the speaker and asked her if she thought that fairies were really true. If so, she said, then two photographs which her young daughter and niece had taken the summer before might be true after all. Polly’s question was to cause controversy for many years to come, which no one could have anticipated. Some months later the Bradford Lodge requested the Wright family to part with the glass negative plates and sepia prints which had been stuffed away in a drawer and forgotten as some kind of joke that the girls never owned up to.

In 1918 Frances’ father arrived back in England and the Griffiths family moved to Scarborough, North Yorkshire. Frances’s father was stationed at Catterick after having been decorated in war and attained the rank of regimental sergeant major.
Enter the Fairy Believers and Perpetrators

This was the heyday of spirit photography, a bizarre phenomenon in which unscrupulous photographers made large amounts of money by producing photographs of the sitter accompanied by another-worldly spirit or the ghost of a relative who had died in the war. Many Spiritualists were led to believe that the camera could see what the human eye could not. Against this background, a wide range of people began to take Elsie and Frances’ photos seriously.

Edward L Gardner, who was a leading Theosophist and President of the Blavatsky Lodge in London, first came to see the photos in 1919 after they had been passed on to members of the Bradford Theosophist Society. The lecturer that Polly spoke to sent Gardner two small prints and asked for his advice. Gardner was a partner in a jobbing building business and an ardent fairy seeker who had been studying fairy lore for years. He wanted to believe the photos were genuine, and he approached the situation with extreme prejudice. In February 1920 he wrote to Polly for the loan of the negative plates, they were retrieved from the Bradford Theosophists and sent to him for inspection. When he received the two quarter plates he found that one was fairly clear but the second one was much under exposed.

Fred Barlow, who was a leading authority in the country on psychic photography and in particular faked photographs, was asked to express his opinion. He wrote to Gardner on 28 June 1920 “I am inclined to think, in the absence of more detailed particulars, that the photograph showing the four dancing fairies is not what it is claimed to be . . .” But only a few months later his opinion sharply changed after seeing three new photos taken in August 1920, and wrote on the 12 December 1920 “I am returning herewith the three fairy photographs you kindly loaned to me, and have no hesitation in announcing them as the most wonderful and interesting results I have ever seen”.

During this time, Gardner submitted the plates to two first-class photographic experts who had the ability to examine the photographs fully. They both declared the plates to be perfectly genuine and unfaked. The leading expert at the time was Harold Snelling who had recently set up on his own as a photographer. He was an expert on faked photographs who had been instrumental in exposing several ‘psychic’ fakes. Gardner was also informed by Snelling’s former employer that “What Snelling doesn't know about faked photographs isn’t worth knowing.” In his letter to Gardner dated 31 July 1920, Snelling wrote “These two negatives are entirely genuine un-faked photographs of single exposure, open-air work, show movement in all the fairy figures, and there is no trace whatever of studio work involving card or paper models, dark backgrounds, painted figures, etc. In my opinion, they are both straight untouched pictures.”

Earlier he had only examined one of the plates and reported that “This plate is a single exposure... These dancing figures are not made of paper nor of any fabric they are not painted on a photographed background - but what gets me most, is that all these figures have moved during exposure....” The figures that Snelling was referring to were the paper cut-outs of the fairies, but how could he have known that they moved, the original sepia photo was so blurred and the figures did resemble bits of paper. The answer is simple the breeze at the beck stirred the figures. Snelling’s opinion was seen to be unquestionable, so when he passed his approval that the photos were indeed genuine, Gardner was convinced.

He asked Snelling, who was an expert on photographic retouching to make positives from the negatives so that the originals could be preserved untouched. Then new negatives were prepared from the originals which were retouched and enhanced to make finer prints. In fact Snelling had ingeniously removed a number of shadows and lines which would later be rediscovered in the original photos and show how the ‘fairies’ were two dimensional cut-outs. Snelling knowingly or unknowingly made the fairies out to be more real than what they were in the original photos, after all he was an expert on photographic retouching and a leading expert on faked photographs. He made the fairies lighter and defined, they look flat and do not match with the rest of the photo, this is the reason they looked at the time convincing.
These retouched prints were to be the basis of any investigations of the fairies and not the original photographs. Snelling made up a number and copies which were sold to the interested public at 1s 6d (small prints) and 2s 6d (large prints). Gardner also requested Snelling to make him contact positives and two lantern slides of the photographs. These lantern slides were shown by him at a lantern lecture at Mortimer Hall, London and through this the photographs came to the notice of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Doyle had been commissioned by the Strand Magazine to write an article on fairies for their Christmas issue, to be published at the end of November 1920. He was preparing this in June when he heard of the two fairy prints in circulation. Gardner’s cousin Miss. E. M. Blomfield sent Doyle two fairy photos, in her letter she wrote “They appeared too good to be true!” how right she was. He eventually made contact with Gardner who showed him the retouched photos and let him borrow them. Doyle was the national secretary of the Theosophical Society, a deep spiritualist and respected speaker who went on a world wide crusade for Spiritualism in the 1920s.

Right: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle author of ‘The Coming of the Fairies’ 1922

On hearing of Snelling’s opinion, it was proposed, and agreed, that if the negatives survived a second expert’s judgment, preferably Kodak’s, then Gardner and Doyle should join forces and make the photographs a leading feature in the Strand article. From the beginning, contrary to the impression the public later gained of him, Doyle was on his guard. He showed the prints to Sir Oliver Lodge, a pioneer psychical researcher, who thought them fakes; Doyle tried to convince him by explaining that the photos were taken “by two children of the artisan class, and that such photographic trickery would be entirely beyond them . . .” but failed. On 5 July 1920, Lodge passed on the photos to Kenneth Styles who was a fairy authority who considered them a fraud and could also tell the studio they came from. So it would seem Gardner’s photographic expert on photography, Snelling was described accurately. Styles came very close to saying that the photos after being taken were then made to look like real live fairies in a studio. He wrote to Doyle on 18 July 1920, on the photos “The more I think of it the less I like it” and pointed out the modern hairstyle of the fairies.

Doyle and Gardner decided that the plates should be submitted for a further examination. Gardner thought it would be a good idea to get a more careful examination of the negatives made than before. Although they were thoroughly examined the first time, Gardner went over to see Snelling at Harrow and had a long interview with him. Snelling told Gardner that he is perfectly certain of two things, connected with the photos, namely one exposure only and all the figures of the fairies moved during exposure, which was ‘instantaneous’. Snelling convinced Gardner on these two points but ignored the possibility that it was the ‘fairy’ figures themselves which might be fakes.

It was also decided that Gardner would go to Yorkshire and interview the family in their home environment and that Doyle would take the negatives plates to Kodak, after he had received them in the post from Gardner. Doyle had sent Elsie a letter on 30 June 1920 in which he told her that he would send her one of his adventure books and on the same day he also sent a letter to Arthur, Elsie’s father, asking for permission to use the photos in his article in the Strand magazine, Christmas issue and suggested that no names be mentioned and that 5 pounds be paid by the Strand or a five years free subscription. In response, Arthur wrote on 12 July 1920, that they received a letter from Gardner at the same time proposing a visit at the end of July. Then they could explain everything to him and also thanked Doyle for sending Elsie the book. By 14 July 1920 Gardner was thanking Polly in his letter for her kind letter, inviting him to come and visit them towards the end of July.

Gardner went to Cottingley on 26 July 1920 for two days. On this occasion Frances was living in Scarborough. The Strand magazine would pay for his expenses plus 25 pounds for the interview. He stayed overnight at the Midland Hotel, Bradford. Gardner spoke to the Wright family at length who answered all his questions willingly and frankly. Then he walked down to the beck with Elsie and had his photograph taken by the waterfall to verify the site. Arthur explained to Gardner that Doyle could use the photos in the Strand magazine, but firmly declined payment, saying that if the photographs were genuine they should not be soiled by being paid for. Gardner returned to London content that they were all honest and respectable people and wrote to Doyle that he was convinced of the genuineness of the photos.
On the other hand Doyle’s meeting at Kodak did not go so well. He saw Mr. West, Kodak’s manager and another expert of the Company. They examined the negative plates at some length, the results of their inspections were that “Kodak were not willing to give any certificate concerning them because photography lends itself to a multitude of processes, and some clever operator might have made them artificially.” Kodak was not given the chance to examine the original photographs, if they had, then they may have seen that the fairies looked two dimensional and were just paper cut-out drawings fastened to the shrubbery. No great photographic skills were required, though the photos do show good artistic composition and Elsie had artistic skills. The faked photos may have been exposed and that would have been the end of the matter. A remark made by one, was that “after all, as fairies couldn’t be true, the photographs must have been faked somehow.”

Kodak’s findings did not deter Gardner, he remained convinced that they were genuine fairies, that had been spoken of in hundreds of tales and sightings throughout history. This was the proof he had been waiting for, to him they did exist and other people needed to see them. Such was his belief in fairies that he devoted his life in proving there existence. Doyle was not as convinced as Gardner and wanted further proof. He recommended that if more fairy photographs were taken then the matter would be confirmed. In fact Doyle did suggest in one of his letters to Arthur that if Elise could take another photo of the fairies it would “silence the doubters.”

By now a number of people were claiming to have seen fairies, but without photographic evidence. This is why Elsie and Frances’s photos showing fairies were of paramount importance to the fairy believers. To them it was the only evidence they had and were not going to let go. To Frances and Elsie it was a private family matter but now other people where getting involved. They know that the fairies were only paper cut outs and could not understand why other people believed they were real.

**More photos were needed by fairy believers and perpetrators**

In August 1920 Polly wrote to Frances, who was coming up to 14, describing how Gardner wanted to invite her and Elsie, who was now 19 years old to take more photographs of the fairies during the school holidays. Frances accepted Gardner’s innovation and travelled from Scarborough by train where she had gone to live with her mother and father after the First World War, for a two week stay with her cousin Elsie. Gardner who had previously interviewed Frances and her mother Annie Griffiths at their home in Scarborough was delighted. So Gardner caught the train from London to Bradford, and arrived at Cottingley Bar by tram. He brought with him two Cameo quarter plate folding cameras and two dozen secretly marked plates. He met the family and explained to the two girls the simple workings of the cameras and giving one each to keep. Just like Arthur’s Midg Quarter Plate camera, which was used for the first two photographs, the Cameo camera captured images on glass plates. Gardner asked the girls to photograph the fairies again, they said they would but only if they could be alone. It is common in fairy lore that only children are able to see the little creatures. However, Elsie was now 19, a young woman not a ‘child’ and had been earning her own living for some time. This did not pose a problem for Gardner and he left them to it. This is why the three new photographs exist today. Gardner returned to London praying for sunshine so the fairies would come out.

In a letter to Gardner on Sunday 22 August 1920 Polly describes the events of Thursday 19 August 1920. The morning was dull and misty so no photos were taken until after dinner when the mist had cleared and the sun came out. Polly went to her sister’s for tea and when she got back the girls had only managed to take two fairy photos, Polly was disappointed. Two days later in the afternoon of Saturday 21 August 1920, the girls went to the beck again and walked around by the old reservoir where they had not often been before, but it was dull and drizzly. They took several photos but only one had something on it. Polly thought the photo a “queer one”, and could not make it out. In Polly’s P.S. she wrote “they did not take one flying after all”.

Arthur developed all the plates and made prints from the three showing images. He packed the plates in cotton wool and returned them to Gardner in London. He knew they were fakes, so how such intelligent men could be fooled by his Elsie, who was at the bottom of the class and left school at the age of 13. Frances was a month away from her 14th birthday and had won a scholarship to go to grammar school, being both industrious and intelligent.
Polly applied Theosophical reasoning, accepted the photos and supported her daughter in the existence of nature spirits. Arthur never understood it until the end of his days; he died in 1926. Before Doyle had shown an interest in fairies, Arthur held him in high regard; afterwards he found it hard to believe that such an intelligent man could be fooled by his Elsie and he went down in his estimation.

It must have been at about this time that Frances and Elsie thought about the consequences of their actions, any retractions at this point would truly have resulted in considerable embarrassment all round. Important people were involved; money and time had been spent by Gardner and Doyle. So they had no choice but to go along with their deception it was too late to back out. They did promise that they would reveal the truth once all of the principals in the case had passed away, especially Doyle, whom they did not want to embarrass when it came out the photos were not real.

Gardner was pleased to receive the three secretly marked plates and immediately took them over to Harrow to show Snelling, who without hesitation pronounced them as being as genuine as the first two. He also declared that the ‘The Fairy Sunbath’ was utterly beyond any possibility of faking! Gardner let Illingworth’s expert examine the plates, and they too endorsed Snelling’s view. Once again it was Snelling who made the fairies out to be more real than what they were in the original photos, by retouching and enhancing them to make better prints.

Gardner then sent an urgent telegram to Doyle with the news that the girls had managed to take another three photographs of the fairies. They were later posted to him in Melbourne, Australia, where he was holding lectures on spiritualism. His reply included: “My heart was gladdened when out here in far Australia I had your note and the three wonderful pictures which are confirmatory of our published results. When our fairies are admitted other psychic phenomena will find a more ready acceptance... we have had continued messages at séances for some time that a visible sign was coming through...breaking down materialism and leading human thought to a broader and more spiritual level.” Doyle was a strong believer in the spiritual and the afterlife and had been a keen speaker on the subject for many years. Theosophy gained support during the War and Doyle’s own son, Kingsley died in 1918 shortly before the Armistice from pneumonia following injuries received at the Battle of the Somme.

Doyle may have been a great writer but he was no photographic expert. This did not stop him from giving an expert opinion. Gardner expected he would endorse the fairy photographs as authentic. In the end he was wrong about the authenticity of the photographs, but his sincerity and wish for the betterment of the people goes without question. However, such sincerity does not excuse the lack of attention paid in the fairy matter.

The three new photos

Photographic experts who were consulted at the time declared that none of the negatives had been tampered with, there was no evidence of double exposures, and that a slight blurring of one of the fairies in the first photograph indicated that the fairy was moving during the exposure. They seemed not to even entertain the simpler explanation that the fairies were simple paper cut-outs fastened on the bush, jiggling slightly in the breeze. Doyle and other believers were also not troubled by the fact that the fairy’s wings never showed blurred movement, even in the first of the three new photos of the fairy calmly posed suspended in mid-air. Apparently fairy wings don’t work like hummingbird’s wings. Also the fairy figures have a flat appearance. But spiritualists at the time accepted the photos as genuine evidence for fairies.
The first of these three new photos is entitled ‘Frances and the Leaping Fairy’, in which Frances’s profile is slightly blurred because she moved slightly during exposure (see photo on page 24). The winged ‘leaping’ fairy appears very crisp suspended in flight just in front of her nose because it was fastened in place. The background and the fairy are not blurred! This image was particularly criticised for the contemporary hairstyle of the mystical creature which was in fact a cut-out drawing fixed to a branch by a hatpin. It was also pointed out that the fairy’s farthest leg does not logically connect to the body; a problem easily explained when Elsie admitted she had drawn it wrong. But, at the time, the problem was proclaimed as proof that they actually were pictures of fairies. The logic was, that since fairies are ethereal creatures, the misplaced leg was proof that the body was a temporary creation. All fairies are elusive, and are usually invisible to mortals, but some are more ethereal than others. Unlike the earthbound nature fairies, ethereal fairies are closer to the world of spirit than matter.

The second photo is of 19 year old Elsie gazing at a fairy who is offering a bunch of flowers. It is entitled ‘Fairy Offering a Posy to Elsie’. This fairy may be standing on a branch and critics at the time pointed out that the fairy looked remarkably fashionable with its bobbed hairstyle and sheer dress.

The third and last photo is entitled ‘The Fairy Sunbath’ it was created with a simple frame and knicker elastic construction pushed into the long grass. With a pull of the elastic, the fairies would fall backwards from their slots in the frame, thus providing a sense of ‘fading’ when the camera caught the motion. The picture was successful for being a double exposure showing one of the fairies twice. It is the only one that looks as if it could have been an accidental or deliberate double exposure.

Doyle still wrote: “Seated on the upper left hand edge with wing well displayed is an undraped fairy apparently considering whether it is time to get up. An earlier riser of more mature age is seen on the right possessing abundant hair and wonderful wings. Her slightly denser body can be glimpsed within her fairy dress.”

Left: This photo is of Elsie when she was 19 years old and is entitled ‘Fairy Offering a Posy to Elsie’

Right: Double exposure photo showing one of the fairies twice
Publication of Photographs

At the end of November, The Strand magazine published their 1920 Christmas Edition which included Doyle’s article entitled ‘An Epoch Making Event - Fairies Photographed’ and to their amazement, it stirs up so much interest that every copy was sold within days. In fact it was the Strand magazine where Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories were first published to a worldwide audience. Doyle had written the article before his departure for Australia and did not hear about the last three photos until he was in Melbourne in 1920. Also he was not in Britain when the article appeared, to hear it praised in many quarters by readers, but many more ridiculed him and questioned his sanity.

One remark was made that “It is easier to believe in faked photographs than fairies”. Doyle was unmoved by public discontent and humiliation of his fairy article in the Strand magazine, and both Doyle and Gardner were inundated with letters from other people who also claimed to have seen fairies but no photographs were taken.

Following The Strand’s publication, Gardner gave a lecture to an audience at the Theosophist Hall in Brompton Road, London in which he showed five slides of the fairy photographs and as expected, the crowds of spiritualists cheered with delight at the ‘proof’ of the existence of fairies. Sometime in 1921 Elsie coloured the famous five black and white photographs for Edward Gardner. Her interest in photography was really to make pictures for colouring in which she had artistic skill.

The public now demanded more from Doyle, so in 1921 a second article appeared in the March edition of The Strand ‘Evidence for Fairies – with more Fairy Photographs’ which includes the last three photographs. The responses were not all kind and the most repeated view was that the fairies had very fashionable hairstyles. Doyle then committed himself to write a book on the subject, entitled ‘The Coming of the Fairies’ which was not solely based on events in Cottingley but was a collection of fairy stories and sightings all over the world. It was completed in the winter of 1921 and published in March 1922.

Seeing, is believing

The last visit to Cottingley was made in August 1921 to confirm that the girls were in the company of fairies. Doyle still wanted more proof of the Cottingley fairies. Geoffrey Hodson, a former British Army Officer was recommended to Doyle. Hodson pursued a life of spiritualism, clairvoyance, yoga and healing and was a respected expert in his field. If anyone could see the fairies apart from the girls, it would be Hodson. He was about 31 years old and early in his career when he went to Cottingley with his wife and Gardner, who resolute as ever left cameras and plates with instructions. Frances came over from Scarborough yet again and between the 3rd and 19th August 1921 the girls and Hodson went every day, in all weathers to the beck looking for fairies and nature spirits. It would seem that Gardner was pushed out of it; he stayed at the Midland Hotel, Bradford and made a few notes during the period of the 2nd when he arrived until 11th August. He wrote how bad the weather was and that only on Wednesday did the girls and Hodson see many nature spirits, but they did not take any photos. In fact Gardner wrote more about the weather conditions than sightings, which was the reason for being there. This was probably because he was not allowed to go with them; he had to wait each day for their news. It must be remembered that if it had not been for Gardner the whole fairy episode would not have come about. He was quite happy to have the support and involvement of Doyle who left all the arrangements to him, but now Doyle brought in Hodson a clairvoyant to look for fairies with the girls. It is possible that Gardner thought that he should be doing this and his pride must have been hurt. Not to be out done by Hodson, on Wednesday afternoon 3rd August he walked into the woods for about three miles by himself in the hope that he would see fairies but had no luck. On the afternoon of Thursday 4 August he spied on them probably thinking that if they saw fairies then surely he too would see them, but nothing was seen.

Geoffrey Hodson in 1980 aged 93
The period from 12-18th August was rewarding as they were positively over run with every kind of nature spirit coming from all directions. Hodson claimed to see wood elves under some beech trees as well as dancing fairies in a field and many more spirits, but unfortunately could not produce a single photo. Hodson’s lengthy and detailed report, of fairy sightings at Cottingley was published in Doyle’s book ‘The Coming of the Fairies’ 1922 and again in Gardner’s book ‘A Book of Real Fairies’ 1947 which takes up a large part of the text in both books.

In Hodson’s book ‘Fairies at Work and Play’ 1925 he says that he was convinced that the girls were genuine as were the photographs they took. He spent some weeks with them and their family, and became assured of the genuineness of their clairvoyance and of the presence of fairies.

Hodson was in error about the genuine nature of the photographs as in his assessment of the straightforwardness of the girls. In fact, years afterwards, Elsie and Frances openly admitted that they humoured Hodson along, to a sometimes ludicrous extent and had a lot of fun at his expense throughout his stay. They were amused by his gullible attitude and would point out non-existent fairies which he then claimed to have seen as well, and exaggerated their sightings. To their astonishment, their childish pranks were well received by the clairvoyant who claimed to see whatever the girls told him they saw and more. It could be that Hodson did not want to be outdone by a couple of girls after all he was a respected expert in the field. To Hodson the nature spirits were not visible on the physical plane and his powers proved to be considerably greater than the girls, so it is possible that he had imaginary experiences that were only genuine to him. This is why no photographs were taken of all the rich and varied fairy life they claimed to have seen at Cottingley Beck in August 1921. Both Elsie and Frances considered him a fake. In the end because of many contradictory twists over such a long period of time, perhaps it just became too difficult in his final years for Hodson to be able to recognise the reality of the photographic fraud. After his Cottingley experience he went on to become a distinguished writer on clairvoyance. In 1983, when he was 96 living in New Zealand, he heard the true confessions and thus became the only surviving member of Doyle’s and Gardner's team to know the truth. Hodson died on 23rd January 1983 at the age of 96.

For four years Elsie and Frances had sustained their deception but it would be more than four decades before the affair surfaced once more.

**Where have all the Fairies gone?**

After 1921 no more sightings of nature spirits were reported from Cottingley and the publicity from Doyle’s book ‘The Coming of the Fairies’ gradually died down. After the death of Doyle in 1930, there were very few investigations into the Cottingley fairies. This was because access to the Cottingley material was barred by Gardner and later his son Leslie, in whose possession it remained, and only became available in later years. Gardner may have felt that only he should be responsible for any further research work on the Cottingley fairies which made him famous. After all, he was the first one to perpetrate the Cottingley fairy story and he did not want anyone to find any evidence that it could all be a fraud. It must be remembered that he was the one to give instructions for the photos to be retouched to make the fairies as real as possible. Technology in photography was improving every year and by the 1960s new techniques for examining the photos brought them more into question. So better to keep the negatives and photos away from those who wanted to scrutinize them and expose them for what they were.
Elsie had jobs mainly with an artistic background and eventually left Cottingley for America because of all the publicity. There she met her husband Frank Hill a Scottish engineer on leave from India. She moved back with him and they lived in India until 1949 after the declaration of independence, then they returned to England and settled in Nottingham. She had one son Glenn. Elsie’s mother Polly died in 1956 at the age of 79 after being looked after by Elsie. Polly knew nothing about the truth of the fairy photographs as she fully believed in them.

Frances returned to South Africa and married a soldier Sydney Way in 1928. He rose to the rank of Warrant Officer and had many postings overseas, the longest spell being in Egypt. Frances had two children, Christine and David. Eventually Frances’s husband Sidney left the Army and they went to live in Ramsgate on the south coast. Her two children were now grown up and lived away from home.

Edward Gardner rose in the ranks of the Theosophical Society and after many lecture tours in Britain and one in America became one of its most prestigious members. In 1945, in his seventies, he brought out his book on the Cottingley Fairies entitled ‘Fairies: A Book of Real Fairies’, but added very little to Doyle’s account. Although more than 25 years have passed, the story is once again headline news with renewed interest. Gardner’s book was generally regarded as the standard work on the subject for many years. In the early sixties the fairy photos had not been proven to be fakes but without access to the negatives it would be difficult, or that they were such obvious fakes that no proof was now needed. Gardner’s last publication was in 1966, more than 45 years after the story, entitled “Pictures of Fairies: The Cottingley Photographs” (Published by the Theosophical Publishing House). The book was a hit and people were captivated once more. But only 4 years after the book was published, Edward L. Gardner died in 1970 at the age of 100 in the Theosophical home for the elderly, after believing in the Cottingley Fairies for more than 50 years. He left all his correspondence between Doyle and the Wright family to his son Leslie Gardner, packed away in an old blue suitcase.

Right: Map of Cottingley in 1917

In 1973 Stewart Sanderson of the English Department at Leeds University and President of the Folklore Society, persuaded Leslie, now in his 80s to donate his father’s correspondence to the Brotherton Collection at Leeds University. By now some of the letters were damp and had partly disintegrated. Leslie Gardner also gave five glass plates which he imagined to be the originals of the photos. On examination, it was found that the first two original prints suggested they were not from the negatives. Gardner’s son Leslie died in 1982.
Doyle’s reputation as the brilliant mind behind the legendary Sherlock Holmes was severely damaged and people began to see him as an old man who was fooled by two schoolgirls. To Doyle, Theosophy and its beliefs were real and it was the majority who were wrong. Doyle wanted to believe in Spiritualism so badly that he could not see how fake the photos really were. To do so would destroy the life-after-death foundation in which he and thousands of others so greatly wished to believe. Unknowingly, his articles and book on the Cottingley fairies perpetrated the fraud. In July 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle died aged 71 still believing in fairies and the afterlife; more than 8,000 mourners came to his funeral at The Albert Hall in London.

For more than fifty years Elsie and Frances remained loyal to their promise, that they would not reveal the truth until all of the principals in the case had passed away, especially Doyle, whom they did not want to embarrass when it came out that the photos were not real. The only person to know the real truth from the very beginning was Arthur Wright, Elsie’s father, he knew that Elsie and Frances had faked the photos somehow and just could not understand why Doyle thought they were real fairies. It was always a mystery to Frances too how anyone could be so gullible as to believe that they were real and take them seriously. Gardner, Doyle, Snelling and Barlow were wrong about the photographs being real fairies, although in Snelling’s case he was the one that doctored the photos to make them look like real live fairies in order for Gardner and then Doyle to proclaim them as true live fairies, just what they wanted. Polly Wright and Annie Griffiths were wrong when they believed their daughters to be truthful.

In 1965 a national daily newspaper tracked down Elsie in Nottingham who was now in her sixties. Elsie told the reporter that she preferred that the matter should be buried and people should make up their own minds. She would often say to reporters and the media about the photos “let’s say they are figments of our imagination, Frances and mine and leave it at that”. After the death of Edward Gardner, Elsie who was now 70 was interviewed at her home in 1971 by BBC’s TV Nationwide and Frances who was now in her sixties. Elsie did not want to upset Gardner, but now that he was dead, she did not mind talking, but made no confession. Frances had nothing to add. Now only Hodson was still alive but both Elsie and Frances considered him to be a fake. So they where not too worried about him. The situation had changed in their favour, because important people surrounding the story had died; now they were totally in control and on equal footing because class barriers had come down.

What the media wanted from Elsie and Frances was a confession on how they faked the photos, for they were obvious fakes to most people. A popular idea put forward was that they were cut-outs. For six more years Elsie and Frances put off various reporters but the media were intent on solving the mystery.

Yorkshire TV’s Calendar came up with the idea of bringing them back to Cottingley Beck in 1976. It was the first time since the twenties that they had been back at Cottingley together. Austin Mitchell interviewed them but their account of 1917 and 1920 remained as cryptic as ever, they did not confess and own-up. Frances determined as ever claimed to have seen fairies and that the photographs had not been faked. At the end of 1976 Elsie was 75 and Frances 69, so surely after almost sixty years it was time for the truth, but they may have seen publication possibilities and they were unwilling to work with each other. An important factor is that both Elsie and Frances had silently observed Gardner and Doyle making money from publications on the Cottingley affair. Doyle was very businesslike when it came to dealings with publications. Elsie did not appear again with Frances on the TV and it was Frances who dominated the interview with Austin Mitchell, and who was to continue to dominate further debates. In 1977 the author Fred Gettings accidentally stumbled on important evidence while working on a study of early nineteenth-century book illustrations. He found drawings by Shepperton in a 1915 children’s book, ‘Princess Mary Gift Book’ illustrating a poem of draped dancers which are almost identical pictures of the fairies in the photos, that may well have been Elsie’s inspiration.

*Draped Dancers in the Princess Mary’s Gift Book*
At last the truth comes out

It was in a snack bar opposite Canterbury cathedral where Frances had just been to pray that she confessed privately to Joe Copper in September 1981. Over a cup of coffee she told him that she could see the hatpins holding up the figures in the first photo from where she was. She has always marvelled how anybody could believe they were real fairies and took it seriously. This first photo of Frances has always haunted her, every time she saw it, her heart used to sink. Frances swore to Elsie that she would not tell anybody and kept her word down the years. She confessed this because the month before Glenn, Elsie’s son confronted her with the Shepperton picture and she confessed to him that she had copied the cut-out figures from it.

Frances had brought over the ‘Princess Mary’s Gift Book’ from South Africa when she came to Cottingley in 1917. Glenn never knew, and persuaded Elsie his mother to confess. As Elsie had told Glenn, Frances could now tell Joe Cooper. So Frances almost told the truth at last, she said the other three are fakes, but the last one is genuine, “It was a wet Saturday afternoon and we were just mooching about with our cameras and Elsie had nothing prepared” she said. “I saw these fairies building up in the grasses and just aimed the camera and took a photograph.” Elsie insists that all five photographs are of cut-outs, she had drawn all the fairies figures on stiff-paper including the ones in the last photo. Then cut them out using sharp tailor’s scissors, borrowed from Frances’s mother, who worked as a tailor in Bradford. Then all they had to do was secure them in place by long hatpins, fastened with zinc oxide bandage tape to a bank of earth or bushes.

Frances was the first to make a public confession, which was released in an article to The Times on 9th April 1983, when she was 75, it was a straightforward account, she says: “I’m fed up with all these stories... I hated those photographs and cringe every time I see them. I thought it was a joke, but everyone else kept it going. It should have died a natural death 60 years ago.” Frances recalled how stiff paper cut-outs and hatpins had been used, but she maintained that the last photograph called ‘The Fairy Sunbath’ was of real fairies, taken by her. Determined to the last Frances could not bring herself to admit that the fairies were all in her imagination. So now Elsie, aged 81 had reporters round at her Nottingham home. She decided to confess for the sake of her family and explained about the last photo. Frances was not there at the time so she just saw a way to take it. In fact the last photo is an unintended double exposure of fairy cut-outs in the grass. It seems they became confused regarding which plates they had used and which plates had not been exposed. So they accidentally used one plate twice, creating a double exposure, which is very obvious in the dual fairy wing impressions at the right side of the print. They probably did not intend to do this and that is why both can be sincere in believing that they each took it. Elsie went on to explain how she had produced the photos by waiting until her parents were out, then copied fairy pictures from the ‘Princess Mary’s Gift Book’.
In July 1986, Frances passed away aged 78, still believing in fairies. The photos were admittedly faked but she insists that she really did see fairies.

Elsie, with whom she captivated generations, died two years later in April 1988 aged 84. Her last words on fairies are “No I don’t believe in fairies. Never have and never will”.

They gave us a story that has stood the test of time and has done no harm to anyone. It may be that the real hoax was ‘the confession’, made in the hope that they could spare their families from the press, and that somewhere in the spirit world they are both having the ‘last’ laugh.

Memorabilia for Sale

In 2001, just one original photograph of the Cottingley fairies fetched £6,000 pounds in auction.

Arthur Wright’s Butcher Midg camera that the girls used to take the first two photos was sold at Sotheby’s to S. J. Robinson in 1972 and is now in the Kodak Gallery at the National Photography Museum in Bradford.

The Princess Mary's Gift Book, 1914 was sold to raise funds for charity.

A collection of glass plates and other negatives were bought by an unnamed buyer at the Bonhams & Brooks auction in London’s Knightsbridge. The archive consisted of master copies of the original photographs along with a three page commentary by Gardner, who commissioned photography experts to prove that the pictures were not faked. It included previously unpublished pictures of Elsie and Frances holding hands and posing with Arthur and Polly Wright. Gardner had passed this collection on to the British Theosophical Society, from where they were handed down to a series of owners until their present owner; reportedly Hodson put them up for sale.

Frances’s daughter, Christine Lynch decided to sell more material relating to the story in auction at Sotheby’s on 16 July 1998. Frances’s collection of slides and a signed first edition of Conan Doyle’s book went under the hammer for a total of £21,620 pounds. They were bought by London bookseller Simon Finch, who reportedly planned to sell them on.

The only known surviving contact print from the original Arthur Wright negative, unfortunately very frail and not in very good condition is owned by J. Mawson.

Copies of the photos were given to friends by Elsie and Frances and they remain in private ownership. It is not known how many of these still exist.
HE GAVE AWAY HIS TOFFEE AND BECAME

KNOWN AS “THE TOFFEE KING”

But the secret to his success was Violet Mackintosh’s new toffee recipe

Staff Reporter

In 1891 an unusual advertisement appeared in the Halifax Courier. It invited people to taste a free sample of toffee on the next Saturday morning, at a small confectioners shop in Halifax. Hundreds of people came to take up the offer. But long before closing time a sign was hung in the window saying simply ‘all gone’. On the following Monday another advertisement appeared in the paper which read ‘On Saturday last you were eating Mackintosh’s toffee at our expense. Next Saturday pay us another visit and eat it at your own expense’. And they did!

This small confectioners shop was 52 King Cross Street, Halifax the original starting place of Mackintosh toffee. The premises were demolished in 1970 in order to build a major ring road. But it was here over 100 years ago that Violet Mackintosh discovered a new recipe, which she perfected into a chewy toffee and by which John Mackintosh built up their business by giving it away. In those days there were not many examples of true toffee available, and it was mostly hard and brittle. At this time caramels were being imported from American, much softer than English toffee. Violet Mackintosh had the idea of blending English butterscotch with the America caramel. On a range in the shop’s back kitchen she began experimenting using a copper preserving pan. The result was “Mackintosh’s Celebrated Toffee” and the origin of toffee, as we know it today. The recipe was a closely guarded secret for many years. John, Violet’s husband, developed the business methodically and eventually became known “as the Toffee King”.

Above The original shop in King Cross Lane, Halifax

Original advertisement as it appeared in the Halifax Courier

ON SATURDAY LAST, you were eating MACKINTOSH’S TOFFEE at our expense; NEXT SATURDAY pay us another visit and eat it at your own expense.
Few would have guessed circumstances would have turned out so well when John and Violet Mackintosh opened their small confectioner’s shop in 1890. They lived above the shop and struggled to make ends meet until they got the idea of making and selling their “celebrated toffee”. But John had a flair for promotion, which played an important part in this success story.

John Mackintosh was born on 7 July 1868 at Dukinfield, Cheshire, the second and oldest surviving child among three sons and five daughters. He moved to Halifax with his parents when only a few months old, his father to become an overseer in a new cotton spinning mill belonging to Bowman Bros. From ten John worked as a half-timer in the same mill where he remained for twelve years. At thirteen he became a full timer. John became engaged to Miss Violet Taylor, the daughter of James Taylor, a carpet weaver, having met her at Queen’s Road Methodist Church Halifax when he was 18 years old.

His strict Methodist upbringing perhaps explains his Christian caring attitude towards others. John though still working in the mill at 21, paid for Violet to be apprenticed for two years to be a confectioner. On 29 September 1890 they got married at the Queen’s Road Methodist Church Halifax and, with £100 they had saved, used it to open a small pastry cook’s shop in King Cross Lane, Halifax. The honeymoon was postponed and the few days between their wedding and the opening of their shop were spent in getting together the stock for their business - A tub of butter, a sack of sugar and a few pastries. John continued working at the mill and Violet made pies, buns and jam tarts to sell in the shop. John’s aim was to provide only the best specialities.

It was Violet who made the first toffees. She noticed a lot of children came into the shop with their parents so she decided to make toffees for them. These were enormously popular. After six months of its opening John left his secure job at the mill to devote all his time developing the business. He gave considerable thought to this and decided he needed a special line in sweets that would be unique to his shop. So he concentrated on Violet’s toffee, with her new recipe. This was to be his celebrated toffee.

The first supply of toffee was boiled by Violet in a ten-pound wedding present brass jam pan, over the kitchen fire. It took an hour to boil and cool ten pounds of toffee. After a while the shop was known as “The Toffee Shop”. With increasing sales the shop was too restrictive so John rented a stall in Halifax market and put a man in charge. The toffee was still boiled at home by Violet and poured into trays. It was then packed in a tin travelling trunk and trundled down to the market in a handcart, later by horse and cart, and broken up with a hammer on arrival.

Left: The first advert for Mackintosh’s toffee 1895

Above: Original toffee Recipe used by Mrs Mackintosh in 1890. Written just before her marriage and opening of the shop in King Cross Lane, Halifax
Within four years the toffee takings outweighed the rest of the shop’s sales and the business outgrew the small premises. They decided to move from retail to wholesale, selling their toffee in bulk to other shopkeepers. In 1894 John and Violet transferred to a warehouse in Bond Street, off King Cross Lane Halifax and began a manufacturing business making toffee. He sold his retail shop and remained a manufacturer from this time. The business expanded and in the following year slightly larger premises were obtained on the top floor of a warehouse in Hope Street. In the afternoons and evenings, using a horse and trap, John would go around the neighbourhood selling his toffees. Soon he could afford to employ others to do the selling.

As trade continued to increase he formed a joint-stock limited liability company, John Mackintosh Ltd. The first Mackintosh factory was built in Queen’s Road equipped with modern machinery, opening in 1899. Business continued growing, so did profits until John Mackintosh had built his “Toffee Town”. John went on to achieve national and inter-national success from China to Peru. The Chinese loved their toffee to be nicely coloured pink, and was specially manufactured to meet their taste. John used an Advertising Agency, which began a national advertising campaign in leading magazines and newspapers promoting Mackintosh’s Toffee. Over a dozen varieties of toffee were advertised, Creamery Toffee, Broken Scotch, Yorkshire Dairy, Yorkshire Buttercups, Aniseed Toffee, King of All Toffee, Invalid Toffee, Cream of Malt Toffee, Sherbet Toffee, Caramel Toffee, Everton Toffee, Honey and Butter Toffee, and by 1914 his Toffée de Luxe was advertised. This was just one way he kept ahead of competitors.

It was the Americans who gave him the title “Toffee King” when he started a factory in New Jersey in 1903. They were not familiar with toffee until he promoted it there. As the liner he sailed on drew near New York, he received the surprise of his life. A tugboat was decorated with flags and a large streamer running from bow to stern flaunting the words “Welcome to the Toffee King”. He had now entered into the American business world. In winter sales were excellent but the American summer reduced his toffee to treacle, a spoon was needed not a hammer. However, John Mackintosh would not be beaten. He eventually found the remedy and applied it, producing a toffee that would keep hard in almost all conditions in any climate. In every magazine and newspaper throughout America John’s photo appeared with a label, which read, “I am the Toffee King”. Before 1914 he set up factories in Canada and Australia.
However, disaster struck on the night of 29 October 1909 when the Queens Road new redbrick factory was destroyed by fire. Using his insurance John Mackintosh decided to relocate to a larger factory and start again.

Right: Albion Mills which became Mackintosh’s headquarters

This was to be at the empty Albion Mills adjoining Halifax railway station, originally a carpet factory, where toffee production continued. By 1912 Albion Mills works was a huge manufacturing concern and became the firm’s permanent headquarters. Here toffee was boiled in large steam heated pans, cooled, then wrapped by hundreds of girls. The Queen’s Road factory was also rebuilt and used to manufacture chocolate for coating toffees. By this time Harold Mackintosh, John’s eldest son, was in charge of the firm. This paved the way for Quality Street, an assortment of 18 different sweets which was launched in March 1936 that the company has been renowned for ever since. Mackintosh’s by the 1930s was the largest employer in Halifax, now widely and popularly known as “Toffee Town”.

John Mackintosh died at his home ‘Greystones’ Halifax on Tuesday 27 January 1920 aged 51 leaving three sons, Harold, John and Eric. His wife had been ill for some weeks. On this morning sitting quietly at her bedside he suffered a heart attack, and died. John Mackintosh had achieved much in a few short years and was a man before his time in so many ways. Sending a tin of toffees to each of the 670 Members of Parliament in 1905 reassembling after the winter recess was just one of them. It was newsworthy then because the people were not sure what to make of it. He formed personal friendly relations with his employees and with his suppliers and customers. These relationships are commonplace today, but eighty years ago it was quite different. His wife Violet died in 1932. In a locked drawer in her desk was found a small square box containing three important possessions, an early photograph of John Mackintosh at the age of eighteen, a letter from her Sunday School and a page out of a penny notebook, containing some recipes, written in Violet’s hand, among them the first recipe for the toffee. It was due to Violet’s important training as a confectioner’s assistant that the shop became a great success, the main reason for this was the discovery of her winning toffee recipe.

In 1921 one year after the death of the founder John Mackintosh the company became John Mackintosh & Sons, Limited under the Chairmanship of his eldest son Harold who later became Viscount Mackintosh of Halifax. He remained Chairman until his death in December 1964. In May 1969 John Mackintosh & Sons Limited merged with Rowntree and Company Limited of York, to form a new company – Rowntree Mackintosh Limited. There was still heavy family involvement until it was taken over by the Swiss multi-national Nestle in 1988. Then Mackintosh’s name disappeared from the business. Members of the family confine their interest in the empire built by their forebears to eating the products, Toffo now being the only product that bears the name Mackintosh.
A Little Known Yorkshire Forger

By Jeremy Clark

Over the years Yorkshire has had its fair share of hoaxes and forgers. Probably one of Yorkshire’s earliest recorded hoaxes was that of Mother Shipton, a sixteenth-century seer who supposedly made a number of startlingly accurate predictions. But it is uncertain whether she actually existed. Her story has been published in the journal (TYJ 1 Spring 2010). There are also the notorious Yorkshire coiners, who in the 18th century counterfeited gold coins. This story has also been published in the journal (TYJ 3 Autumn 2010). But perhaps Yorkshire’s most bizarre hoax was the Cottingley Fairies, highlighted in this issue of the journal. The pictures became among the most widely recognised photos in the world but it was only a prank that went badly wrong. Today there are many hoaxes and forgers that have yet been unproven. Famous examples include crop circles, photographs of aliens, Bigfoot in North America and the Loch Ness monster in Scotland.

Our story is about one of Yorkshire’s almost forgotten forgers who though not an archaeologist was in the 19th century forging many different kinds of artefacts including prehistoric flint tools. This was when collecting archaeological items by Antiquarians was at its height. In Yorkshire John Robert Mortimer (1825-1911) who lived in Driffield and Antiquarians like Canon William Greenwell (1820-1918) were digging into prehistoric burial mounds and collecting flints and other archaeological items from Yorkshire farmers who found them in the fields. In fact Mortimer trained local farm workers and labourers to identify objects of archaeological interest and he paid them for artefacts and stone tools they found. This is the background to our now little known Yorkshire forger.

Flint Jack

In March 1867 ‘Flint Jack’ the so called ‘Prince of Counterfeiters’ was described as ‘a notorious Yorkshireman, one of the greatest imposters of our times’ in the London Times, 19 March 1867, when he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for theft at Bedford. His real name was Edward Simpson (1812-1875) of Sleights, Whitby and was also known under a number of other names. Simpson was an infamous Victorian forger of stone tools, pottery, coins, stone axes and fossils just to mention a few of his forgeries. Although much has been written about his adult life, it is often difficult to tell fact from fiction. Before his life of deception, at the age of 14, it is believed that Simpson started to gain his knowledge of geology and archaeology while in service with a Mr Merry (or Dr Murry) and then later from Dr. Young, the Whitby historian, who occasionally employed him during the 1830s. For some years after the doctor’s death Simpson led an honest life as a collector of flints and helped in archaeological investigations.

Right: This portrait of Edward Simpson (Flint Jack) was taken in 1869; he has a hammer in one hand a piece of stone in the other.

He could have worked for Dr. Ripley for a further 6 years until around 1840. In 1843, Simpson saw a British barbed flint arrow head and was asked by Mr. Dodgson if he could copy it, Simpson said he would try. Victorian museums were keen to obtain ancient artefacts, which created a boom in the buying and selling of forgeries. In around 1845, Simpson set about forging antiquities to maintain his alcohol addiction. He initially started his trade in forgery on the East Yorkshire coast at Bridlington Bay where he obtained his flint. Later Simpson set up a pottery in the woods near Staintondale, between Whitby and Scarborough where he manufactured British and other urns, flint and stone implements. He then wandered around the country vending his faked antiquities. The main area where he passed off his work was in North-East Yorkshire, particularly Whitby, Scarborough, Bridlington, Malton, and York.
During one of Edward Simpson’s trips to London in 1859, he was accused by Professor Tennant with the forgery of antiquities. Simpson confessed and gave a public demonstration of his skill of the manufacture of fake flints at the Geological Society in London on 7th January 1862, which earned him genuine praise. In 1866 the Malton Messenger printed an article about him ‘Notice of the extraordinary life of Edward Simpson of Sleights. The notorious manufacturer of spurious antiquities who is universally known as Flint Jack’.

It was drink that was Simpson’s downfall and by forging flint tools and other antiquities he provided money for his craving, which lasted for a period of about 23 years. But after this publicity he could no longer sell his replicas (or ‘dooplicates’ as he referred to them). Simpson sunk deeper and deeper into desperation, until at length he became a thief, which led to his conviction for theft on two counts of, a barometer and a clock in March 1867 at Bedford, where he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

Many of his tools and replica ‘artefacts’ can be found in the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum and in the Yorkshire Museum.

Above: This photo is of Edward Simpson as a much younger man, with hammer and flint and much shorter dark whiskers, perhaps twenty years earlier than the photo above. His clothes seem old and worn, though perhaps they are his flint knapping clothes.

Flint Knapping

Edward Simpson was one of the earliest to experiment in duplicating prehistoric flint tools using the flint knapping technique and he became skilful at reproducing several different types. The term ‘flint knapping’ refers to the process of shaping or breaking off pieces of flint flakes by using a round pebble, called a ‘hammer stone’ or a deer’s antler, from a large piece of flint called a ‘core’. In fact flint splits into sharp pieces when struck in this way making it not too difficult to produce hand axes, blades, arrowheads and other stone tools.

Although Simpson did not realise this at the time, he just wanted to make money for his alcohol addiction. Stone Age tools are beautiful and fascinating objects, the processes used to make them by prehistoric people left distinctive marks on the tools they made. This helps archaeologists understand the techniques they used and they have conducted scientific experiments in order to study these different techniques.

Right: This projectile point was signed by Flint Jack, at a time when he had become famous enough that such a keepsake was worth having.
Flint knapping was the skill of the Stone Age people necessary to make all different types of flint tools including scrapers, knives, saws, arrowheads and hand axes. Today flint knapping has become a unique hobby with the majority of knappers producing copies of Stone Age tools. Collecting signed copies of these modern-made tools from flint knappers has become very popular; they are however, fully aware and concerned about confusing Stone Age tools with modern tools and responsibly deal with this.

One of the best known flint knappers is Phil Harding. He has reproduced some beautiful flint tools on Channel 4’s ‘Time Team’. On the Skipsea, Humberside programme, 13 March 2005 a reconstruction of a flint axe was organised, but unfortunately this was not shown on the programme. Making the axe proved to be extremely time-consuming, demonstrating the amount of work that must have gone into making stone tools during the prehistoric period. Members of the Skipsea History Group volunteered their time and energies to polishing a flint axe knapped by Phil.

Their work was timed and between them, working in shifts, they clocked up an impressive 22 hours of polishing! The volunteers’ time was taken up grinding off the rough edges against a block of local sandstone, trying to get it as close as possible to the smoothness of the original found on the site. Phil was very impressed by their efforts and the results of their work, which clearly showed just how much work, would have gone into producing an object like that one.

Phil demonstrates flint-knapping at craft shows and to local societies. There are also many workshops and courses on flint-knapping, where they teach the basic art and understanding of flint knapping and how to make a range of prehistoric tools from arrowheads to axe heads.
Captain James Cook, History’s Greatest Explorer and a well known Yorkshireman

Captain James Cook (1728 -1779) was born in Marton, Middlesbrough. He was an 18th century explorer, navigator and cartographer, rising to the rank of Captain in the Royal Navy, which he joined in 1755. His most notable accomplishments were the discovery and claiming of the east coast of Australia; the European discovery of the Hawaiian Islands; and the first circumnavigation and mapping of Newfoundland.

He saw action in the Seven Years' War, and mapped much of the entrance to the Saint Lawrence River during the siege of Quebec. This allowed General Wolfe's stealth attack on the Plains of Abraham, and the attention of the Admiralty and Royal Society. Crucial moment both in his personal career and in the direction of British overseas exploration, and led to his commander of HM Bark *Endeavour* for the voyages. Cook charted many areas and coastlines on European maps for the first time. His achievements can be attributed to a combination of seamanship, superior surveying and cartographic skills.

Cook died in Hawaii in a fight with Hawaiians during his third exploratory voyage in the Pacific in 1779.
ROBIN HOOD’S DEATH AND HIS GRAVE AT KIRKLEES PRIORY

Staff Reporter

Yorkshire’s greatest legacy to the legendary Robin Hood is his grave, situated near Kirklees Priory in West Yorkshire. Although how he met his death is open to speculation. It is also believed that Robin Hood had his origins in Yorkshire! There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Robin Hood was an historical character, not a myth or legend. He lived sometime in the 13th and 14th centuries and his popular image is well known. It is said that he met his end at the hand of an evil nun, the Prioress of Kirklees, who bled him to death.

Right: Robin Hood’s Statue at the Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre

The story is mentioned in ballads passed down by word of mouth, recited in tales rather than sung. These tales were eventually written down, but not before the original storyline became distorted and elaborated. The first tale to be written was probably *The Lytell Geste of Rrobyn Hode* in Chaucer’s time. It was printed around 1498 by Wynken de Word, a pupil of Caxton and is based on fact, which can be backed up by contemporary evidence. Charlotte Brontë was a frequent visitor to Kirklees Priory and she helped to immortalise the legend in her book *Shirley*. Today there are many versions of Robin Hood’s story.

How Robin Hood Died

The earliest tale goes that Robin Hood fell ill and wanted the prioress of Kirklees who was his cousin to bleed him. However, the prioress and her presumed lover, Sir Roger of Doncaster who either was a knight or a priest, plotted to kill Robin. Will Scarlet warned Robin against going to Kirklees, so he set off to the small priory with Little John for protection.

The journey appears to have been made during the winter. On the way an old woman or witch cursed Robin Hood and a little further along, women were weeping as Robin passed by, and they give him a gift, maybe a charm. Robin fights with Sir Roger, the prioress’s paramour, in which Robin despite his injuries, seriously wounds ‘Red Roger’ and leaves him for dead. Robin was then bled to death by the prioress, though it is also said that it was a friar or monk who did the deed.

Tradition has it that Robin a dying man summoned his friend Little John to his bedside by three blasts of his trusty hunting horn, before firing his arrow from the upstairs gatehouse window to mark where he wanted his burial place to be. Another story is that Robin’s shot was so weak that Little John had to fire an arrow for him.
The story goes that Little John actually fired two, the first falling in the River Calder the second on the spot where Robin’s grave is believed to lie. After this Little John kept his promise to Robin not to harm the prioress concerned, who was strongly suspected of being involved with Robin’s death.

*Left: Artist’s impression of Robin Hood shooting his last arrow held up on his feet by Little John whilst he draws his final arrow.*

Whether Robin, a dying man or Little John could have actually shot an arrow the distance between the gatehouse and the present gravesite is questionable. It is approximately 650 yards and must have been a difficult feat with a longbow, six feet long, positioned out of a narrow window. Traditional modern bow shooting experts are sceptical of this shot. In Tudor times a good Bowman could shoot over 200 yards, but this falls over 400 yards short of the reputed distance of Robin Hood’s and Little John’s range.

It is not certain whether or not the Kirklees prioress was trying to ease his pain or, was in the pay of Roger of Doncaster (Red Roger). There are few historical facts concerning her identity and many historians simply ignore the prioress. At the time of Robin Hood’s presumed death, which could be about 1347 Dame Mary Startin was in office. She became prioress in 1344 and died of the Black Death, which swept England in 1349. Although according to one ballad the prioress, after Robin Hood’s death began to reproach herself and in a fit of despair committed suicide by poison the very next night. It is also claimed that Elizabeth de Staynton was related to Robin Hood and was the prioress that bled him to death. But in 1347 Elizabeth was only fifteen years old so clearly could not have been the prioress. However, Elizabeth de Staynton did eventually actually become prioress sometime between 1360 and 1393.

**Kirklees Priory**

The site of Kirklees Priory is situated near Brighouse off the A644 Wakefield Road and is thought to have been founded in the twelfth century by Reinor de Fleming, the manor Lord of Wath-upon-Dearne. The small nunnery was of the strict Cistercian rule and dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. James. The White Ladies so named after the colour of their habits, at first led exemplary and hard lives. As the order became rich, in the first half of the fourteenth century the conduct and discipline of some of the nuns was scandalous and brought severe criticism from the Archbishop of York. It is hardly surprising that Robin Hood came to no good amid such wayward and irresponsible females. Henry VIII dissolved the infamous priory in 1539 when only eight nuns were living there. In fact it was Joan Kyppes who surrendered it on 24 November 1539.

According to Henry VIII’s dissolution surveyors the priory buildings were small and poorly built and many windows were unglazed. There were also very few chimneys, even the kitchen being without one. The site of the priory was granted in 1544 to John Tasburgh and Nicholas Savile. In 1565 they sold the priory to the Armitage family who plundered the stones to build a new hall. The only remains left standing are the small gatehouse adjoining the stream and the nearby farm buildings. The oldest part of the gatehouse was built at about the end of the 15th century. It has very thick walls, narrow windows and half-timber gables. John Armitage probably added the stone gables with dressed walls about 1610, when the greater part of the Hall was built.

*Left: The 15th century gatehouse at Kirklees Priory*
The farm buildings are likely to be post-medieval work. Sir George Armytage excavated the foundations of the small church and cloister in 1863 and again in 1904-5. Before they were covered over, a plan of the priory was made based on these excavations. This plan shows that the cloister was attached to the south side of the church with domestic buildings on the three other sides. He also placed a boundary stone at the corners of the church and the cloister court for any future investigations.

Left: Kirklees Priory Gatehouse, illustrating the narrow windows


The Site of Robin Hood’s Grave

The prioress did not in fact bury Robin Hood where his presumed arrow fell. He was buried near the side of the highway, where it is said he used to rob. The present site is situated at the edge of the priory grounds overlooking Wakefield Road between Mirfield and Brighouse. This was so that passers by and travellers seeing his grave could continue their journey without fearing for their lives.

Over his grave the prioress laid a gravestone cover bearing the names of Robert Hood, William of Goldsborough and others. The gravestone is first recorded in Grafton’s Chronicle, of 1568. He describes the stone with a ‘raised cross bottony on a Calvary of three steps sculptured thereon and an inscription, Here lie Robard Hode, Willm Goldburgh, Thoms,’ the rest of the final name appears indecipherable.
Camden’s Britannia of 1607 states ‘At Kirklees nunnery Robin Hood’s tomb with a plain cross on a flat stone is shown in the cemetery. In the grounds at a little distance, lie two grave stones, one of which has an inscription for Elizabeth de Staynton, prioress there’. However, Robin Hood was not buried in the cemetery.

Dr. Nathaniel Johnston made a drawing of Robin Hood’s reputed gravestone in about 1665. It shows a slab with a cross having clustered terminals and a three stepped base, carved in relief. The border inscription commencing ‘Here lie robard hude’ may have been added later to ‘Willm Goldburgh Thom . . .’ the rest of the inscription appears to have been obliterated. This could have been a genuine medieval gravestone cover. The inscription is the same as described by Grafton. The nineteenth century navvies who built the nearby railway largely destroyed the gravestone. They chipped and carried away pieces, which were said to serve as a cure for toothache. As a result of this destruction, Sir George Armytage enclosed the grave with iron railings on a low stone wall. Into the side he inserted a block of stone with an inscription recording the events, formerly lying by the side of the grave. However, this epitaph is clearly a fabrication bearing traces of eighteenth century attempts at medievalism.

In the churchyard of Hartshead, largely a Neo-Norman church overlooking Kirklees, is the lower part of a rectangular gravestone. It has been suggested that this could be part of Robin Hood’s missing gravestone. The incised design is of a roughly drawn three stepped base and a cross shaft, with the lower terminal only of the cross head, which is of a serrated leaf-like form. This design is very similar to Grafton’s description of 1568. However, there is no border inscription as shown on Dr. Johnston’s drawing of about 1665.
Also the Hartshead gravestone is probably 15th or 16th century, so it is unlikely to be Robin Hood’s missing gravestone cover. This design is very common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and there are 100s of examples to be found all over the country.

For now the reputed gravestone cover of Robin Hood will have to remain lost and unsolved. The border inscription around the head of the slab being ‘Here lie robard hude . . . ’ may be a later addition to a genuine medieval gravestone cover. In truth, it is most likely that we will simply never know if the gravestone drawn by Dr. Johnston was Robin Hood’s. As for a body, records show that an earlier Armytage, Sir Samuel, had the grave exhumed in about 1740 but no body was found. Since the gravestone had been moved elsewhere it is not surprising nothing was discovered. To undertake a worthwhile survey the entire surrounding area would have to be been scientifically excavated.

Left: The lower part of a gravestone in Hartshead churchyard with an incised design of a three stepped base and a cross shaft which probably dates to the 15th or 16th century

The Mediaeval Highway

Thomas Jefferys first mapped the site of Robin Hood’s grave and the highway, which passed by in 1771. In mediaeval times the so-called highway was not the present Wakefield road between Mirfield and Brighouse, which runs through the valley near the River Calder. It is quite a considerable distance from Robin Hood’s grave on the hillside. The roads in the mediaeval period were very bad and the highway referred to would have been little more than a rough track. It originally entered the Kirklees estate at the obelisk, which still stands at the busy junction of the A62 and A644. Then it skirts the brow of the hill past Robin Hood’s grave continuing through Nun Bank Wood to eventually enter the village of Clifton. John Armytage improved the surface of this road and made it approach his newly built Kirklees Hall.

Right: Map of Kirklees © Crown copyright, Ordnance Survey

He also erected what is now the Old Lodge and added wrought iron gates at the entrance to his park in about 1610. This mediaeval road passes to within 66 yards of Robin Hood’s grave, which can be reasonably regarded as near to it, compared to the 166 yards down the turnpike road, which was constructed in 1815. On Jefferys map Robin Hood’s grave is drawn so prominently that it touches the highway. With the construction of the Turnpike Road the old highway was discontinued and closed as a public road. The land, which the old mediaeval road ran through, then became the property of the Armytages who owned the adjoining grounds.
Robin Hood remains one of the most famous and best loved heroes of British history. In the past people came from far and wide to visit the famous sites at Kirklees. Sadly, nowadays the site of Kirklees Priory and Robin Hood’s Grave are no longer open to the public. It is most unfortunate that these important historical and archaeological sites are neglected. Even the remaining gatehouse, which is a listed building, is in a derelict condition and in much need of repair.

Left and above: Robin Hood’s Grave in the 1890s and 1910 enclosed with complete iron railings on a low stone wall with only a few trees surrounding the grave
The ruins of Fountains Abbey covered in snow, stand in peaceful surroundings on the bank of the River Skell. The abbey is one of the loveliest in England built in the 12th century.

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