In this issue:

* Agatha Christie’s Disappearance
* Yorkshire’s Seaside Piers
* Wharram Percy a Lost Medieval Village
* Winifred Holtby: A Reappraisal
* The Disappearance of a Roman Mosaic
Above: All that remain of the Withernsea Pier are the historic entrance towers which were modelled on Conwy Castle. The pier was built in 1877 at a cost £12,000 and was nearly 1,200 feet long. The pier was gradually reduced in length through consecutive impacts by local sea craft, starting with the Saffron in 1880 then the collision by an unnamed ship in 1888. Then following a collision with a Grimsby fishing boat and finally by the ship Henry Parr in 1893. This left the once-grand pier with a mere 50 feet of damaged wood and steel. Town planners decided to remove the final section during sea wall construction in 1903. The Pier Towers have recently been refurbished.

In front of the entrance towers is a model of how the pier would have once looked.

Left: Steps going down to the sands from the entrance towers.
In this autumn issue we look at some of the things that Yorkshire has lost, have gone missing and disappeared. Over the year the Yorkshire coast from Flamborough Head right down to the Humber estuary has lost about 30 villages and towns. They have simply vanished beneath the ever encroaching waves of the North Sea. Besides the loss of these habitations, people have also chosen to lose themselves in Yorkshire for various reasons. Perhaps the most famous person to use Yorkshire as her retreat was Agatha Christie, but no one seems to question why she chose Harrogate in which to disappear too. The sea has not only been responsible for destroying people’s habitat but also for wrecking and demolishing Yorkshire’s Seaside Piers. At one time Yorkshire had six piers but today only one remains. Wharram Percy in the Yorkshire Wolds is one village that has been brought back to life thanks to archaeologists who have spent over thirty years digging it up. Today Wharram Percy is the most famous lost Medieval Village in Britain. Winifred Holtby, a Yorkshire author who died in the prime of life, is another Yorkshire loss. Had she lived, maybe Holtby would have gained the recognition she deserved. One of the biggest mysteries in Yorkshire Archaeology is the disappearance of a Roman Mosaic from the Brantingham Roman Villa in East Yorkshire. Fortunately, black and white photos were taken of the mosaic before it disappeared; allowing archaeologists to be able to make a reconstruction of the mosaic.

In the Autumn issue:

- **Why Harrogate? Agatha Christie’s Disappearance**
  Sarah Harrison attempts to discover why Agatha Christie chose Harrogate as her secret retreat. She also investigates how the fashionable spa town of Harrogate originated

- **Yorkshire’s Seaside Piers**
  A neglected aspect of Yorkshire’s history
  Susan Horton tells the story of Yorkshire’s long-lost seaside pleasure piers, and how disasters struck them, including storms and sailing ships

- **Wharram Percy in the Yorkshire Wolds: The Most Famous Lost Medieval Village in Britain**
  Jeremy Clark visits this interesting site where much of the village layout can be seen in the fields

- **Winifred Holtby: A Yorkshire Reappraisal**
  Robin Gilbank looks at the achievements and aspect of Holtby’s work, after a mini-series on BBC, based on her bestselling novel *South Riding*

- **The Disappearance of a Roman Mosaic from the Brantingham Roman Villa, East Yorkshire**
  Jeremy Clark investigates the disappearance of a Roman Mosaic from the Brantingham Roman Villa, East Yorkshire in 1948

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

Agatha Christie’s Disappearance

By Sarah Harrison

When Agatha Christie disappeared in December 1926 to Harrogate in North Yorkshire it was a fashionable spa town (and still is today) and everyone then appeared terribly elegant. Harrogate remains today a spa town and is a popular tourist destination. It originated in the 17th century, with two minor villages High Harrogate and Low Harrogate. The first mineral spring in Harrogate was discovered in 1571 by William Slingsby who discovered the Tewit Well located in High Harrogate and declared that the spring waters had ‘health giving properties’. In 1631 a second well was discovered close to the Tewit Well by Michael Stanhope and the town became known as ‘The English Spa’. From 1660 Harrogate Spa rapidly expanded. In 1663 the first public bathing house was built, and by the end of the century there were 20 constructed. Harrogate spa water was bathed in, as well as drunk and contains iron, sulphur and common salt. By 1700 Harrogate was well established and became a famous Yorkshire spa town. Bath Hospital later became the Royal Bath Hospital which was built in 1842 and the Royal Pump was built in 1842. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Harrogate was extremely popular among the English elite. Today the site of the Tewitt Well is marked by a dome in The Stray gardens. Other wells can be found in Harrogate’s Valley Gardens and the Royal Pump Room which, is now a museum and includes the restored old sulphur well.

Agatha Christie’s mysterious disappearance

Agatha Christie the world famous detective and mystery novelist is also most probably remembered for her strange and mysterious disappearance. She was 36 years old and already a successful writer when, late on the dark winter evening of Friday December 3 1926 she left her Styles home near Sunningdale, Berkshire. At around 9.45pm, without warning, she drove away from the house, having first gone upstairs to kiss her sleeping seven years old daughter Rosalind. Her abandoned Morris Cowley car was found in the cold early hours of the morning of Saturday 4 December. It was off the road, by a lake called the Silent Pool at Newlands Corner, a local beauty spot about 14 miles from Sunningdale. It was found by a 15 year old boy named George Best who was out walking beside the lake. The lights were on and the driver’s door was open but there was no sign of her. George quickly went to the police who were able to identify the owner of the car from a driving license left inside.
Also found in the car was a fur coat and an open suitcase with three dresses and some shoes half pulled out and various personal belongings. But before she left, Agatha had written several confusing letters to her husband, a letter to her brother-in-law, stating that she was going to a spa town in the North of England and another one to the local chief constable, in which she said she feared for her life.

**Above: Agatha’s car found at Newlands Corner**

After her disappearance Agatha Christie refused to talk about the incident, simply putting it down to a bout of temporary amnesia caused by grief over her mother’s death, earlier that year in April, who she had been quite close to. But perhaps more importantly, her husband Archie, was having an affair with a woman named Nancy Neele, which he made little effort to disguise. Whilst she was in Torquay dealing with her dead mother’s things, Archie turned up and informed Agatha that he was in love with another woman and wanted a divorce. At this point their marriage was over. On the day Agatha disappeared Archie had gone to the home of some friends to spend the weekend with his lover. Few people were convinced by the amnesia explanation and most thought she simply wanted to get away from a bad situation and embarrass her husband at the same time. What Agatha wanted was to get revenge on Archie. She wanted to give him a shock but it all went badly wrong. She made no mention of her disappearance in her autobiography and the two were divorced in 1928, with her later marrying archaeologist Max Mallowan.

With the help of one of her closest friends she carried out her plan by first staging a car accident and then travelling on to London where she caught a train to Harrogate. On the morning of Saturday, December 4 she arrived and took a taxi to the Swan Hydro Hotel, (now the Old Swan Hotel), and was one of Harrogate’s biggest and best hotels, near the centre of town. She signed in, under the name of Teresa Neele from Cape Town carrying only a small suitcase and looking very tired. Intriguingly she adopted the surname of her husband’s mistress Nancy Neele. Agatha was given a room on the first floor, room number five and cost seven pounds for a week.

Agatha Christie’s disappearance prompted a nationwide search involving over a thousand police officers and members of the public, and for the first time in UK history, aeroplanes were employed as part of the search effort. Agatha’s picture was on the front pages of newspapers and on 7 December a reward of £100 was offered for information. She once told her sister that ‘I could disappear any time I wanted too. I would plan it carefully, and nobody would find me’. In fact Agatha herself had created clues that suggested murder; she hoped the police would pick up her unfaithful husband, Archie a former First World War fighter pilot for questioning, to embarrass him and ruining his weekend with his mistress.

Even the celebrated crime writers Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, and Dorothy L Sayers, author of the Lord Peter Wimsey series, were drawn into the puzzle. Conan Doyle, who was interested in the occult, took a discarded glove of Christie’s to a medium, while Sayers visited the scene of the disappearance, later using it in the novel Unnatural Death.
What Agatha had not anticipated was the length of time required to locate her, the sensational press coverage that followed, and the intense public interest and speculation that were aroused. She embarrassed not only her husband but herself and was deeply upset at being suspected of arranging a publicity stunt to help her book sales.

Agatha Christie did nothing to arouse suspicions. She had breakfast in her room and sat quietly reading in the hotel sitting-room in the afternoons. She also enjoyed her stay too by joining in with the balls, dances and palm court entertainment. As the days passed and her picture continued to appear in the newspapers, several of the guests recognized her, but she laughed off suggestions that she was the missing author.

Finally, 11 days after her disappearance on Tuesday 14 December Agatha Christie was recognised by Bob Tappin, a local banjo player at the hotel. The police were notified, as was her husband Colonel Christie who travelled to Harrogate to identify her, but she kept him waiting in the hotel lounge whilst she finished dressing for dinner. Agatha Christie’s comment was, “Fancy, my brother has just arrived.”

Right: Agatha leaving the Swan Hydro Hotel, Harrogate

Over the years there have been many different theories about Agatha Christie’s disappearance. The two most popular theories offered for these strange events have been that either Agatha was suffering from memory loss after a car crash, or that she had planned the whole thing to prevent her husband’s plans to spend a weekend with his mistress at a house close to where she abandoned her car. The second explanation seems the most plausible one in view of new studies of the case. The reason why she wrote a letter to her brother-in-law was because he was friendly with both her and her husband and he was meant to act as an intermediary and get Archie to go and rescue her from Harrogate. This shows she was acting logically but was under a lot of strain with all the events that had happened to her. However, the true reasons for her disappearance remain a mystery to this day and she took the story of what really happened with her to the grave in 1976.

But Why Harrogate?

It seems likely that before Agatha planned her disappearance she saw an attractive and elegant railway poster promoting rail travel to the Yorkshire spa town of Harrogate in North Yorkshire at a railway station. Railway companies in the 1920s were quick to recognise the crowd-pulling potential of a well designed and painted poster. These posters adorned waiting room walls and billboards on railway platforms, so it would not be difficult to notice them. The story of Classic Vintage Yorkshire Railway Posters has been published in the journal (TYJ Summer 2 2011).

The two railway posters, right and top of next page, are the kind that would have attracted Agatha’s attention to Harrogate.

The poster on the right illustrates visitors strolling in the gardens in front of the Royal Baths, which were once a premier destination for the rich.
Agatha probably kept these railway posters in mind and thought about an elegant spa town far away from where she would not be immediately recognised as a successful author by the public. When she did disappear Agatha made sure that her brother-in-law knew where she was going. So there is little mystery why Agatha’s secret retreat was Harrogate and while she was there she lived the high-life in the Swan Hydro Hotel.

Nowadays Harrogate has established itself as a conference centre. The Great Yorkshire Show, an agricultural event, takes place each July. There is a large Antiques Show in September and in both spring and autumn there are Flower Shows and various art festivals.

Right: Harrogate on a brilliant summer day, the building in the background is the world famous Betty’s Tea Room

Betty’s is the queen of cafés or tea-shops. It stands at the top of Parliament Street overlooking Montpellier Gardens. Harrogate looks lovely in the early spring when the Stray, in the town centre, which is a common of some 200 acres, bordered by trees and intersected by paths is carpeted with crocuses.

Swan Hydro Hotel

Hospitality has been available on the site since at least 1777, and at some point it became known as the Swan Hotel. In the late nineteenth century it was extensively redeveloped as a fashionable spa hotel that included Turkish Baths and was renamed the Swan Hydro. After the Second World War the hotel reopened as the Old Swan Hotel. It was listed in 1975 as a Grade II listed building and has been recently refurbished.

In 1977 the film ‘Agatha’ starring Dustin Hoffman and Vanessa Redgrave was made at the Old Swan Hotel.
Yorkshire’s Seaside Piers
A neglected aspect of Yorkshire’s history
By Susan Horton

The development of many small Yorkshire coastal towns and fishing villages was mainly due to the expansion of the railways in the 1840s and 1850s which made travel more affordable. These towns and villages soon became thriving busy seaside resorts for Victorian tourists and in their hey-day of popularity the Yorkshire coast possessed no less than six pleasure piers. Piers provided an exclusive promenade away from the crowds as they required an entrance fee. Piers also offered good views of the coast, the sea and the partaking of the sea air.

Of the six piers built on the Yorkshire coast during the Victorian period, only the pier at Saltburn-by-the-Sea survives today. This is the story of the rise and fall of Yorkshire’s long-lost seaside pleasure piers at Coatham (1875), Redcar (1873), Scarborough (1868) which was the first pier to be built, Hornsea (1880) and Withernsea (1877), plus Yorkshire’s only surviving pleasure pier at Saltburn-by-the-Sea (1869).

The Coatham Pier

Coatham is now only a mile-wide district in the town of Redcar located in the north-east corner of North Yorkshire by the North Sea. With the opening of the Middlesbrough to Redcar Railway in 1846, Redcar and near by Coatham became a regular seaside resort for Victorian tourists.

The Coatham Pier was opened in 1875 and was intended to be 2,000 feet long. However disaster struck the Coatham pier when two sailing ships the Griffin and Corrymbus were driven through it in a storm in 1874 before it was even complete. It had to be shortened by 200 feet because of the cost of repairs and was re-opened with two kiosks, an entrance with an indoor roller-skating rink and located in the middle of the pier was a bandstand. In October 1898 the Coatham pier was struck again, this time by a ship named the Birger. The pier was very badly damaged and simply allowed to disintegrate afterwards. In 1923 the end of the pier was renovated and a glass and metal pavilion was added to the remains of the pier for concerts.

This was replaced by the New Pavilion theatre in 1928 which became the Regent cinema in the early 1960s. An anchor from the Birger can be seen on the sea front pavement opposite the Zetland lifeboat museum.

Left and below: These two 1898 photos show the Coatham Pier after being collided with by the Birger, splitting it in two and leading to its closure.
The Redcar Pier

Plans for the Redcar pier were first drawn up in 1866 when the Redcar Pier Company was formed, but work did not begin until August 1871. However the Redcar pier opened with flags flying, bands playing and with a festive crowd of holidaymakers and local residents on Whit Monday, 2 June 1873. The pier was an astonishing 1,300 feet long designed by J. E. & A. Dowson. At the seaward end it expanded to 114 feet wide so that bands could play to a seated audience of 700 and had a separate landing stage.
The pier suffered a number of accidents and misfortunes starting just seven years after its completion when in October 1880 the sailing brig ‘Luna’ lost its way on a voyage up the north east coast and collided with Redcar Pier cutting it in half. The pier was repaired at a cost of £1,000 but just five years later a steam ship, the SS Cochrane, which had been stranded on Redcar rocks, suddenly broke free on New Year’s Eve 1885 and drifted into the pier demolishing and actually carrying away the landing stage. This disaster was followed in January 1897 by the schooner Amarant which managed to sail clean through the pier causing a 60 foot breach.

During an August night in 1898 the pier caught fire burning the pier head down. Once again the pier was repaired at a cost of £1,000 - £1,500 but the bandstand was not replaced. In 1907 a pavilion ballroom was built on the pier behind the entrance kiosks. This proved to be so popular that the pavilion was extended in 1928 to include a café.

The history of the pier was then uneventful up to the Second World War when in 1940 the pier was deliberately breached for defence reasons, which was to prevent it being used by enemy invasion forces. A stray mine exploded nearby and seriously weakened the pier. Storms also took their toll so by the end of the war only a short section containing the pavilion ballroom remained.

Redcar Borough Council bought the pier in 1946 for £4,500. The 1953 east coast floods caused further damage but the pier remained open. However, in 1980, the pier was declared unsafe and was closed. The council accepted an offer to buy and remove it for just £250 and the site had been cleared by March 1981.
The Pier’s Ballroom

During the 1950s the ballroom was popular among holidaymakers and residents but by the 1960s the ballroom had dropped in popularity. Only 150 people had attended the last Friday night dance when there used to be over 400. It was believed that the dated 1930s décor was also blamed for the decline of the pier’s ballroom dancing.

The poster on the right was produced by British Railways in 1962 to promote rail services to Redcar. It shows Redcar’s reduced pier only extending a few yards out to sea. The artwork is by Hugh Chevins and is titled ‘Redcar’

Finally in January 1976 it was announced that the ballroom was to close with the café operating on a day-to-day basis. The rough seas were once more held to blame with the waves ‘upper cutting’ the pier and lifting the ballroom floor out of the retaining bolts. But Redcar had not quite given up on its pier. By July of the same year work had started on repairs with the pylons being cemented and the ballroom floor being re-bolted down. The Cleveland Organ Society announced that they were interested in installing a Wurlitzer, so things were looking up.

Left: The Wurlitzer safely installed at Redcar Pier, for the next 18 months anyway, with George Blake (seated front) and Colin Wall (left) and Bob Bowman.

In April 1978 the council heard that the pier once again had to be shortened because of structural problems. Some small huts the seaward side of the ballroom were to be removed and the pier was to be squared off to ‘make it tidier’. The cost for the work was estimated at £38,000, a lot of money even in 1978. But by September 1978 the mighty Wurlitzer was in place with George Blake at the controls. However the first performance was not given until Easter Sunday 1979, the Wurlitzer even attracted celebrity organist Reginald Dixon all the way from Blackpool to play on Redcar pier which was a boost for the pier.

But unfortunately this was not enough to save the pier. Only 18 months later it was announced that the pier had to be demolished. The council had commissioned a report which estimated repair and running costs at £185,000 while demolition would only cost £30,000 so the pier had to go.

The six-ton Wurlitzer was saved, removed and reinstalled at James Finegan Hall in Eston. Demolition started in December 1980 and would continue over many weeks and months.

So that was the end of the pier at Redcar which once stood opposite Clarendon Street at the foot of Redcar Lane, where it meets the Esplanade.

Right: This old postcard shows Redcar pier in its heyday with holiday makers on the sands
The Scarborough Pier

Further south of Coatham and Redcar along the Yorkshire coast line is Scarborough which is the largest holiday resort on the Yorkshire coast. Scarborough has been popular with visitors since 1626 when Elizabeth Farrer discovered natural springs bubbling out beneath a cliff which led to the establishment of a Spa. This story has been published in the journal (TYJ 1 Spring 2010).

Above: This old postcard shows the Scarborough North Pier and sea front

Left: This old photo was taken soon after construction of the Scarborough North Pier in the late 1860s.

When the York and North Midland Railway came to Scarborough in 1845 it was much easier for visitors to reach the town, which led to a more large-scale investment in tourism. In fact Scarborough railway station holds the record for the longest seat in any railway station in the world and Scarborough soon developed into the first and most famous English seaside resort.

The Scarborough pier was one of the first tourism investments and was the first pier to be built when it was opened in 1868. It was thought that the pier would be a good promotion with investors expecting to reap bumper benefits; however they were to have their fingers burned.

Right: This photo shows Scarborough’s pier-head refreshment room with seating along both sides.

In 1863 the Scarborough Marine Promenade and Jetty Company was formed to build a pier in the South Bay. Unfortunately there was fierce opposition to the scheme, not only from the Scarborough Piers and Harbour Commissioners, but also from Scarborough Corporation and many townsfolk. No more was heard of that plan but three year’s later construction began on 14 September 1866 on the North Bay Promenade Pier, to the design of Eugenius Birch who had previously created Brighton’s famous pier. It took three years to complete the building work and a change of contractors delayed the opening ceremony until 1 May 1869 when it was first opened to the public and had cost £12,135 to build.

Left: Scarborough’s North Pier stretching a thousand feet into the North Sea.
The pier was 1,000 feet long and 23 feet wide, with seating along both sides. There was an entrance building and a pier-head shelter for band concerts. There were even facilities for angling and boats could dock and deliver passengers to visit the pier. Entrance charges were 1d a day and 6d for a weekly ticket but unfortunately, the pier was not a financial success. Maintenance costs proved to be too high and visitor numbers too low and began to decline.

Frequent steamer damage lost the pier important income and annual revenue had fallen to £80 in 1888. When the nearby ‘cliff lift’ closed, the pier company was wound up.

It was sold in 1889 for £1,240 and £10,000 was spent by the new owners. The pier-head was enlarged and a pavilion was added. The original tollbooths were replaced by an entrance building and restaurant. But even top-name variety shows failed to generate sufficient income and the pier was sold again in 1904, for £3,500.

*Right: The Pavilion entrance to Scarborough’s North Promenade Pier. The hoardings on both sides advertise Vasey’s Teas & Coffees – ‘None Such’, ‘Best of All’*

On 7 January 1905, the pier was almost totally wrecked. A severe gale destroyed the whole structure and just the entrance and pier-head was left standing. The pier was not replaced and the pier-head pavilion was demolished. Because of the pier’s history of storm damage it could not be insured and it was decided it would be unwise to rebuild it in view of its unprofitable past. The 1889 entrance building survived until 1914.

*Right: This photo shows the storm damage to Scarborough Pier on 7 January 1905.*

*Right: This photo was taken from under the almost collapsed entrance to the pier, it show the extent of the storm damage, the pier-head has been left standing isolated out at sea.*

An interesting fact is that one of the first ever recognised picture postcards, from September 1894, featured Scarborough Pier.

Following Scarborough’s lead other piers were built along the Yorkshire Coast at Saltburn-on-sea in 1869, Coatham in 1872, Withernsea in 1877 and Hornsea in 1880.
Hornsea Pier

Hornsea was transformed into a seaside resort in the latter half of the 19th century. The paramount reason for this was the opening of the Hull and Hornsea Railway in 1864 which enabled more people to travel to Hornsea’s seaside, and local people were able to earn their living by providing accommodation and services for holidaymakers. This line was opened by Joseph Armitage Wade (1819-1896) who promoted and masterminded the railway. On Saturdays and particularly after Bank Holidays were introduced in 1871, Hornsea also played host to excursionists who came mainly from Hull. The busiest day of the year was the Bank Holiday on the first Monday in August.

Hornsea Pier was another scheme that was originated by J. A. Wade, in 1865 when he founded the Hornsea Pier Company. However, by 1871, apart from sinking ten piles, no work had taken place. This was due to the failure of the railway to make a profit and was later in conflict with Pierre du Gillon, who formed the Hornsea Pier, Promenade, & General Improvement Co. Wade then formed a new company in 1873.

Pierre du Gillon had acquired the land to build a pier in 1873. He obtained a Board of Trade order in 1876 for a 2,454 foot pier with a tramway. In June 1877, the House of Commons passed both pier bills and Hornsea, a town with a population of just 1,500, seemed destined to have two piers. But by April 1879, Pierre du Gillon's company was bankrupt and Wade’s pier, designed by Eugenius Birch to a length of 1,072 feet was completed in May 1880. However, the pier did not open immediately due to a dispute between the Pier Company and Birch, who had not been paid.

Further financial problems forced the pier into receivership following the 1880 AGM. Additionally, on 28 October 1880, the ship ‘Earl of Derby’ collided with the pier during a storm, destroying the pier-head and part of the main structure, reducing the pier’s length to 750 feet. The pier was repaired but deteriorated from this date; it opened to the public on Regatta Day 1881 and then was open during the following twelve summer seasons between 1885 and 1896. However, most of the entrance money was swallowed up by maintenance and repairs, and particularly by lawyers’ fees, it was sold for scrap and was demolished in 1897. The entrance building continued to be used as an amusement arcade until the late 1920s.

The Withernsea Pier

The construction of the Hull and Holderness Railway was partly to develop the coastal village of Withernsea in Holderness, East Yorkshire into a new seaside resort and where the line terminated. It was opened by the York and North Midland Railway on 27 June 1854. This railway line provided a cheap and convenient holiday for Victorian workers and their families, as well as boosting Withernsea’s economy.

Left: This photograph shows the remains of the pier shortly before it was demolished in 1897

Right: This old photo of 1878 shows the entrance towers to the pier and almost its full length
The Withernsea Pier, Promenade, Gas & General Improvement Co. was formed in 1871. Work on the 1,196 foot long pier began in 1875 to the design of Thomas Cargill. It opened in August 1877 having cost £12,000. There was a saloon on the pier-head and a large brick-built gateway. Day-trippers from Hull helped generate a small profit.

Left: This photo shows the coal barge Saffron on the beach after breaching the pier in 1880

The pier was gradually reduced in length through consecutive impacts by local sea craft, starting with the coal barge ‘Saffron’ in 1880 which destroyed a 200 foot central section of the pier. It was rebuilt using timber instead of iron but storms on 28 March 1882 washed away the pier-head and the saloon. The pier was not repaired but continued in use. There was another collision by an unnamed ship in 1888, then on 20 October 1890, the Grimsby fishing vessel ‘Genesta’ crashed into the pier, destroying more than half of the remaining structure, which was now just 300 feet long. A further collision by the ‘Henry Parr’ on 22 March 1893, left the once-grand pier with a mere 50 feet of damaged wood and steel. Town planners decided to remove the final section during sea wall construction in 1903.

The entrance towers which were modelled on Conwy Castle were not demolished and one of these became a coastguard station in the 1950s and, later, a gift shop. They have recently been refurbished.

Left: Two views of the entrance towers of Withernsea Pier which were modelled on Conwy Castle

The above poster was produced by London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) when it was quicker by rail, of the Yorkshire coastal resort of Withernsea. In the background it shows the entrance towers of the Pier. It is by the artist Maud Briby, dated to 1923-1947 and is simply titled ‘Withernsea’.
Saltburn Pier

Saltburn-by-the-Sea is a seaside resort in the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland in North Yorkshire, about 12 miles east of Middlesbrough. The seaside resort of Saltburn was founded in 1861 by the entrepreneur Henry Pease of the famous Pease family. In 1861 he built the Zetland Hotel one of the world’s earliest purpose-built railway hotels, ensuring that the newly arrived railway line continued past Saltburn Station and terminated with its own private platform. He considered Saltburn an ideal place to build a resort for Victorian tourists but to make the place really viable, attractions had to be constructed and one of the first was a pier.

Right: The Saltburn Pier today

The Saltburn Pier is the most northerly surviving British Pier and the last remaining Yorkshire one. The history of the Saltburn Pier tells a remarkable tale of a structure defying the elements. It was built in an exposed position facing due north into the unforgiving North Sea in the little seaside resort of Saltburn in North Yorkshire and was commissioned by the Saltburn Pier Company in 1867. It was designed by the new town’s engineer John Anderson and work began in December. John Anderson was also the designer of the original cliff lift which was a 120 foot wooden vertical hoist and its successor. The pier was completed two years later in 1869 and was opened in May of that year and the hoist was in operation 14 months later.

Right: This 1870 photo shows the original cliff lift and the pier at its greatest length before the sea and careless ships took their toll. A couple of ships can be seen waiting to disembark and board passengers at the end of the pier.

The Saltburn pier was the first iron pier to be built on the North East coast and consisted of wooden decking supported by iron trestles. When it was completed the pier was an impressive 1,500 feet long, which is more than twice the length it is today, and had two circular kiosks at the entrance. It proved to be an immediate success with over 50,000 visitors paying to stroll on it during its first six months.

At the far end there was a landing stage for steamers to disembark their passengers from Middlesbrough, Whitby and Scarborough, whilst a band performed on the pier head, thus increasing the amount of visitors to the new resort of Saltburn. The company also gained revenue from advertising spaces on the pier for 5s per annum. This early success enabled the Pier Company to announce profitable dividends for its shareholders and by October 1873 it was announced that all the shares had been disposed of.

Four years later during 1873 it was decided to build a saloon at the pier head and to provide gas lighting along the length of the pier. This proved to be reasonably successful and at Whitsun 1875 it was reported that 'the whole stretch of the 1,500ft promenade appeared to be literally alive all day'.
However, as we all know the sea can be cruel and unforgiving on our coast and the first of numerous disasters struck the pier during the night in October 1875 when two tremendous gales struck the pier destroying the landing stage, the pier head and part of the pier deck.

The Saltburn Pier Company repaired the damage but at a reduced length of 1250 feet the lost section of the pier along with the landing stage, which had rarely been used was not rebuilt and the pier re-opened in 1877. At the same time the company decided to sell both the pier and the cliff lift which it also owned. The sale at auction at the Alexandra Hotel settled on £800 (over £67,000 in today’s money) in 1880.

The new owners were the Saltburn Improvement Company who carried out a number of improvements to the pier in 1884. The pier head was widened and windshields installed, a bandstand, and refreshment rooms were added. The entrance kiosks were replaced by two larger buildings designed to match the style of the entrance to the new incline tramway which was built to replace the hoist. One kiosk was used as a café and the other as ladies and gentlemen’s cloakrooms.

On 20 July 1887 the gas lighting was replaced and the pier was illuminated for the first time by electric lighting. Saltburn blossomed into a popular resort during the later Victorian, early Edwardian period. The pier itself provided genteel band concerts during the summer months and bracing promenading over the water.

The pier-head suffered further storm damage in 1900 but escaped relatively unharmed for the next twenty years until May 1924 when the china clay vessel ‘Ovenbeg’ (formerly the Russian registered St Nicholi) collided with the west side of the pier causing a great deal of damage, leaving a gap of 210 feet. A barrier was erected at the end of the shortened pier which enabled the remainder of the structure still to be used for promenading but the bandstand was no longer accessible. It was announced in 1929 that the gap was to be repaired and in the meantime visitors were entertained in a theatre built at the shore entrance in 1925 for dancing, concert shows and meetings. The damage caused by the collision was finally repaired, five years later, in 1930 and the full length of the pier was re-opened.

The London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) was the second-largest of the ‘Big Four’ railway companies. During its existence from 1 January 1923 until nationalisation on 1 January 1948 it produced 100s of posters promoting train services to Yorkshire’s coastal resorts and was well known for its slogan ‘It’s quicker by rail’. The story of Classic Vintage Yorkshire Railway Posters has been published in the journal (TYJ Summer 2 2011).
Above are three LNER posters promoting train services to Saltburn-by-the-Sea, all the artwork dates from the late 1920s. The poster on the left is by J Greenup and the two posters on the right are by Henry George Gawthorn. Notice how in all three posters the pier features prominently with a view of the cliffs and beach. The two posters on the right also show the entrance to the pier. The resort was also famed for its white sands.

Purchased by the local council in 1938, Saltburn Pier like Redcar Pier was sectioned in 1940 for defence purposes, which meant having large gaps blown in the structure for fear of German invasion. By the end of the war the pier was in very poor condition. A planning application to repair the pier was granted on 13 April 1949 but, due to the shortage of steel, restoration and repair work was not commenced until 1951. The pier was finally re-opened to the public in April 1952 (the official opening took place on 31 May 1952) with over 25,000 visitors using it during the first month.

But problems quickly returned for Saltburn pier as early as 1953 when severe gales damaged the pier and further repairs were needed because the structure was dangerous and it would cost £5,000, that’s the equivalent of over £95,000 today. Rebuilding work was not completed until 1958, then the council raised the entrance fee from 3 pence to 6 pence towards the cost of repairing the pier.

More storm damage occurred in 1959 and the council seriously considered demolishing the pier. In February 1960 it was estimated that it would cost £14,000 to dismantle the pier, but £5,000 had to be spent on immediate repairs anyway. The council treasurer reported that since 1948 a total of £64,000 had already been spent on repairs. To demolish the pier after so much had been spent was a step too far for the council and so by February 17 1960 they voted to retain the pier. Despite these problems the pier remained a popular attraction throughout the sixties with up to 90,000 people using it.

During the 1960s the pier continued to defy both the North Sea and those in Saltburn Council who wanted to demolish it, three companies attempted to paint the pier two going bust in the process.

Trouble came again in the 1970s. In 1971, 1973 and 1974 piers were lost at the seaward end leaving the pier in a dangerous state. On 29 October 1974 a severe gale washed away the pier-head, badly damaged the remainder of the deck and reduced the length of the pier to 1,100ft. Finally, in 1975, the local council submitted an application to the Department of the Environment to have the pier demolished.

A local MP Leon Brittan held talks with the Ministry of the Environment and it was reported that an application for a grant from the Historical Buildings Association had been made, so in the meantime no demolition could be carried out. The wrangle continued for months until it was announced in October 1974 that there was hope of a grant from the English Tourist Board, so the pier might be saved after all, but the weather and the sea had other ideas.
On the nights of October 28 and 29, 1974 a storm washed away the pier-head and badly damaged the rest of the pier. Dawn revealed a tangle of twisted girders and tons of debris on the beach. Ironically just 12 hours beforehand, the pier had been inspected by the Historic Buildings Council. In 1975, the council requested permission to demolish the pier, but with the help of ‘Save The Pier’ campaign a public enquiry concluded in April 1976 that only the thirteen trestles at the end of the pier should be removed. Restoration of the remaining 681 feet was to cost £52,500. The pier re-opened to the public on 29 June 1978. A café/restaurant opened in the entrance buildings in 1979. The roof was renewed and restored in 1993 to its early 20th century condition using Welsh and Westmorland slate.

**Left: The pier has always been popular with sea anglers, and it was their association who joined the fight to save the pier.**

However by 1996 it was again in danger, but help was just round the corner, thanks to the Lottery. In October 1999 it was announced that nearly one million pounds had been granted by the Heritage Lottery Fund to rebuild the pier.

Finally in May 2000 serious work on revamping the pier started with a £1.8 million re-build involving the removal of parts of the pier and sections being totally reconstructed. Saltburn pier underwent a major restoration programme designed to return it to its former glory. It was officially re-opened to the public on 13 July 2001. In 2005, a new lighting system was installed by Redcar Borough Council at a cost of £385,000. The new lights give the pier the appearance of being moon lit even when there is no moon.

Those who supported the preservation of Saltburn Pier over the years had been vindicated and the true value of this Victorian pier was at last recognised by one and all.

Today Saltburn Pier remains an iconic landmark with, as we have seen, a stormy history in more ways than one as it continues to defy the sea. The success of the pier restoration has been widely acknowledged, and the pier, along with the town’s cliff lift, won a top placing in the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Heritage Awards.

Saltburn was also voted ‘Pier of the Year’ in 2009 by the National Piers Society.
Wharram Percy is the most famous deserted Medieval Village in Britain which number over 3,000. It was first identified by the late historian Professor Maurice Beresford, University of Leeds, in 1948 and excavation took place each summer from 1950 to 1990 by teams of archaeologists. Initially the excavation work was started by Professor Beresford but John Hurst took over the running of the excavation. In fact Professor Beresford appeared on Channel 4 Time Team Extra in 1998, episode 08 High Worsall North Yorkshire. In this program he is showing Robin Bush the presenter, around the site and explaining the layout of the village.

Right: At the centre, St. Martin's Church with a thatched-roof. Peasant long-houses are on the western edge of the valley
In June 2002, English Heritage’s Landscape Investigation Team began a detailed investigation and survey of the ruined church, grassy lanes and overgrown foundations which are now all that can be seen of the once thriving medieval community of Wharram Percy.

The name Wharram is thought to be an Old Scandinavian word meaning “at the bends”; Percy is the family name of the Duke of Northumberland who were Lords of the Manor from the 12th to the 14th century. Wharram Percy has been marked on maps since the early 1850s when the surveyors of the first six inch Ordnance Survey map recorded the field above the church as ‘site of ancient village’.

Right: Aerial view showing the outlines of houses, Photo Google Earth

The Medieval Village

Today Wharram Percy occupies a remote but attractive site in a beautiful Wolds valley. The village ran along a high plateau on the western edge of a valley where the outlines of many lost houses can be traced on the grassy plateau. At the bottom of the plateau in the valley are the remains of an 18th century farm, the vicarage, and substantial ruins of St. Martin’s church in its churchyard and the site of the medieval dam and mill pond now a recreated fishpond.

First settled in prehistoric times, Wharram Percy flourished as a village between the 12th and 14th centuries, before final abandonment in about 1500.

In the Middle Ages Wharram Percy contained two main streets. One is now a path running gently up onto the plateau. The other ran along the eastern edge of the plateau, fronting onto rows of medieval farmsteads. The type of houses excavated took the form of longhouses with an inner room used for sleeping or as a dairy, a living room with a central hearth, a cross passage, and beyond it a room used as a cattle byre or for other farming purposes. They also had cruck roofs which were thatched.

Above: Reconstruction showing the south manor in the early 13th century, by Stephen Conlin © English Heritage Photo Library

Left: Inside a longhouse showing a living room with a central hearth, a cross passage and a room used as a cattle byre
The village had two manor houses. The one located at the centre of the village was demolished soon after 1250. The northern manor house has not been excavated but it is believed to have been an impressive one. It was owned by the Chamberlain family in the thirteenth century but in 1254 Peter de Percy had acquired all of the village and by 1403 the village was part of an exchange of lands between the Percys and Hiltons. In 1573 it was sold to Matthew Hutton, later Archbishop of York. But it was during the time when the Hiltons owned the village that the final depopulations occurred. At its peak it may have contained 150 persons.

The Black Death of 1348-9 does not seem to have played a significant part in the desertion of Wharram Percy, although the large fall in population in the country as a whole at that time, must have made relocation to a less remote spot, more likely. The villagers of Wharram Percy seem to have suffered instead, from the changes in prices and wages in the 15th century, which gave pastoral farming (of particularly sheep), an advantage over traditional cereal farming. The village was finally abandoned in the early 16th century when the lord of the manor turned out the last few families and knocked down their homes to make room for extra sheep pasturage. In the 17th century all the land was given over to sheep but it was ploughed again in the 18th century. The present worker’s cottages are all that remain of the 18th century farm. They were occupied until the 1970s.

The only building to have survived from the medieval period is the church, dedicated to St Martin. It started as a small private chapel and developed to incorporate two aisles as the village population grew and just as the village was depopulated so the church was reduced in size to a single nave. It continued to be used but congregations declined sharply when a new, more conveniently situated church was built in neighbouring Thixendale in 1870. The church gradually became dilapidated and by the time the last service was held there in 1949 it was in a severe state of disrepair. Its fate was sealed when the lead from the roof was stolen and early in 1960 part of the tower fell down after a storm. Today the church is an elegant ruin. The dig came to an end in 1991 but only about 5% of the site has been excavated.
Visiting the site of Wharram Percy

Wharram Percy is still privately owned, but it is managed by English Heritage, it is open to the public all year round and the entrance is free. Only the ruined church is visible above ground, but much more of the village layout can be seen in the surrounding fields.

It is situated just south of Wharram-le-Street on the western edge of the chalk wolds, North Yorkshire and is clearly signposted from the B1248, Beverley to Malton road. The Yorkshire Wolds Way long distance footpath passes to the east of the village.

There is a small English Heritage car park about one and a half miles south of Wharram-le-Street. Then it is only about half a mile’s walk along an uneven footpath, which is steep in places, that leads to the deserted Medieval Village. The site is also accessible via the Wolds Way. The large scale of the village site which is approximately thirty acres only becomes apparent on climbing up the side of the valley where on a plateau humps and hollows indicating the foundations of houses and the boundaries of gardens can be seen.

Above: One of the visitor’s graphic information panels on the site

There are a series of excellent information panels that tell the story of Wharram Percy, and recreate the original appearance of the buildings. They have been put up by English Heritage placed at the north and south entrances to the site.

There is a guide book for Wharram Percy called ‘Wharram Percy: Deserted Medieval Village’ produced by English Heritage price £1.99 which is available from Kirkham Priory and Pickering Castle but cannot be purchased at the site itself because there are no entrance facilities.

Left: This map shows the village at its largest about 1400
Winifred Holtby: A Yorkshire Reappraisal

By Robin Gilbank

With the release of a new BBC mini-series based on Winifred Holtby’s bestselling novel *South Riding* (1936) there has been fresh interest in this East Riding author who died at the age of just thirty-seven. This is of no small satisfaction to me, since I have been researching her life and literature for about a dozen years now. Although she is frequently pigeonholed as a “middlebrow” novelist, her life was multifaceted and she found popular acclaim as a novelist, feminist, and civil rights campaigner. One article can only really scratch the surface of her achievements. Hence, this essay will focus upon a particular aspect of work – namely the depiction of Yorkshire, her home region.

Right: Alice Holtby and her daughter
Winifred (Courtesy of the East Yorkshire Local History Group)

Holtby’s friend, biographer, and literary executor Vera Brittain was adamant that in time she would be recognised as the latter day counterpart of another tragically short-lived writer from the north of England, Charlotte Brontë. Some literary critics might scoff at this overblown praise. In terms of her sustained evocation of the landscape and people of the county of her birth, Holtby ought to be rated more highly than she has hitherto been.

Winifred Holtby was born at Rudston, near Bridlington, on the 23rd June 1898. Her father, David, a prosperous farmer, came from the area. His extended family owned and operated a number of farms across the eastern end of the Wolds, making the surname known and respected over a large swathe of the region. However, Winifred’s mother, Alice (nee Winn), was a Wensleydale woman, who had long ago transplanted herself from East Witton.

Mrs. Holtby was by all accounts a formidable woman who delighted in having her fingers stuck in many pies. She moved to the East Riding in order to become a governess and ended up marrying a relative of the children she looked after. Twenty-five years of agricultural graft at Rudston followed. Alice and David Holtby became noted for their charity work, which seemed to spring from a sense of middle class *noblesse oblige*. Mr. Holtby is remembered as a rather gentle, even taciturn character, who struggled to remonstrate with pay demands from his workforce.

Left: Winifred Holtby’s childhood home at Rudston
Winifred Holtby was born in Rudstone, Yorkshire. At eighteen, she attended Oxford University’s Somerville College where she met life-long friend Vera Brittain. Holtby worked as a journalist and novelist. South Riding was her last novel, completed just before her death from kidney disease in 1935. The novel was published posthumously to wide acclaim, winning the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1936.

Holtby died in a London nursing home on 29 September 1935. A memorial service was held on 1st October 1935 at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London, followed by a funeral service and burial the following day at Rudston Church.

As the economic situation became more uncertain after the Great War, the couple sold up and retired to Cottingham, near Hull. From their comfortable villa, “Bainesse” on Thwaite Street, David and Alice watched with pride their younger daughter’s rise to fame as a journalist and writer of fiction.

Winifred Holtby’s first novel, Anderby Wold (1923), published when she was just twenty-five features autobiographical elements. The main character is an East Riding farmer’s wife who has an ill-starred relationship with a red-haired socialist. Anderby is clearly modelled upon Rudston, and the public house named the Flying Fox could so easily be the Bosville Arms, which still trades to this day.

The name “Anderby” crops up in numerous Holtby short stories, written at intervals throughout her career. Elsewhere she engages directly with her home village itself, offering a poetic explanation for the origins of the monolith which stands in the parish churchyard in ‘The Legend of Rudston’, and recounting a touching memory of a childhood Christmas in ‘Harking back to long ago’.

Her second novel, The Crowded Street (1924), also has a Yorkshire setting and relates the development of Muriel Hammond who grows to adulthood in the stultifying village of Marshington. She lacks the qualities which would make her eligible as a spinster and becomes bothersome to her parents. The book is not Holtby’s strongest work and feels a little rushed in the execution. Nevertheless, it was reissued in 2008 by the small Persephone Press and met with some enthusiastic new reviews. Most twenty-first century critics saw the protagonist as being a tarter, less appealing version of the novelist herself, with The Spectator describing Muriel as the Bridget Jones of the 1920s minus the Chardonnay!

The backdrop of Richmondshire, her mother’s home patch, initially emerged in an unlikely place in Holtby’s writing. After finding modest acclaim, though little remuneration, for her tales of Wolds romance, she opted to pursue something completely different. Her next project was to write a fictionalised biography of the medieval religious reformer John Wyclif (c. 1325-84) whose origins lay around Hipswell. Entitled The Runners it tells the story of a confused young man named Will Fielde who comes to suspect he may be Wyclif’s lovechild.

The Runners is totally unlike any of Holtby’s other novels. In flavour, it is somewhat similar to historical thrillers by the likes of Ellis Peters and Candace Robb – only the paternity mystery is nowhere near as compelling as the whodunits found in those books.

According to Vera Brittain in Testament of Friendship, J.B. Priestley, who worked as a reader for the publisher John Lane, sat Holtby down in a café and morosely explained to her why the novel was unlikely to ever be published. To him it felt like an odd and unsatisfying mixture of real-life history and romance fantasy. He was saddened that somebody who wrote so passionately about contemporary issues should have attempted such a misguided experiment.

The typed manuscript passed through the hands of nine publishing houses before finally being abandoned. The document is now housed in the Winifred Holtby Collection at the new Hull History Centre where it may be viewed by members of the public. This archive is a veritable goldmine for Holtby enthusiasts and contains hundreds of unpublished letters together with drafts and typescripts of her fictional work.
Evidence has emerged that she perhaps sank temporarily into a period of disenchantment with her homeland. During the mid 1920s, Holtby felt moved to tour the north of England expounding her hopes for global peace to ordinary folk who did not necessarily possess the same broad perspective on world affairs.

At one village hall not far from her parents’ former home she got a lukewarm reception. Talking on the subject of ‘International Relations in regard to the League of Nations’ at Hunmanby she was confronted by a sparse gaggle of locals. Many may have been deterred by the wintry weather or have simply been unaware of the event owing to a lack of advertising. Whatever the truth of the situation, it must have proved singularly unsatisfying.

The MC, Mr. Frank Witty, introduced her somewhat condescendingly as “the daughter of David Holtby”, being apparently unaware of Winifred’s standing as an author!

As Holtby approached the age of thirty, her interests broadened still further and her pace of work became ever more breathless. Seven months in South Africa cemented her hatred of racial discrimination.

After the debacle of The Runners the publication of another novel The Land of Green Ginger (1927) marked something of a return to form. A large portion of the drama takes place in a village named “Letherwick”, which Holtby tells us is based upon East Witton. There is a poignant scene where some children mourn the death of their favourite big black sow (called “Mochyn Du” from the Welsh for “black pig”) in a foot-and-mouth epidemic.

By this time, Alice Holtby was a widow, though found a second wind through local politics. Now that women could vote and stand for public office, she became the first female elected to the East Riding County Council and subsequently its first lady alderman. Her staunch conservatism and Anglicanism was on the surface at odds with her daughter’s growing radicalism and free thinking. Even so, their bond was deep and enduring.

Left: Plaque at 52 Doughty Street, London. After Brittain’s marriage, in 1925, to George Catlin, Holtby shared her friend’s homes in Nevern Place and subsequently at 19 Glebe Place, Chelsea, and became an adoptive aunt to Brittain’s two children

Winifred, who had her home in London, cared less for Cottingham than she did for Rudston and the Dales. That did not prevent her from using the suffocating atmosphere of the suburbs as the setting for Poor Caroline (1931). The great novelist Arnold Bennett, then not far from death, devoured the novel and in his review column passed an approving one-sentence nod to the writer rather than provide a fuller synopsis which would spoil it for potential readers.

From this high watermark of success, Winifred Holtby would be dealt a crushing blow. Whilst campaigning on behalf of the Independent Labour Party for the 1931 General Election she experienced abdominal pains. Doctors discovered she had Bright’s Disease and would not survive more than a few more years.

Upon being diagnosed with terminal illness, Holtby devoted her remaining energies to South Riding. This was to be her panoramic masterpiece, depicting not just a single village, but a whole slice of fictionalised Yorkshire. The subtitle of the work is ‘An English Landscape’ and it captures the at times desperate situation of rural communities during the Depression. Of course, the notion of there being a “south riding” in Yorkshire is totally fanciful not to say semantically incorrect. As the word “riding” derives from the Old Norse “thriding”, meaning “a third part”, a fourth riding is totally incongruous. As she sketched out the novel, the authoress drew her own little freehand diagram, locating the invented Riding in the southeast corner of her home county. The most northerly town is Hardrascliffe (corresponding to Bridlington); the main conurbation is Kingsport (corresponding to Hull); the seat of local government is Flintonbridge (corresponding to Beverley); meanwhile there is also the shire village of Maythorpe, which is presented as a typical East Riding farming parish.
Withernsea, the East Coast resort where Holtby wrote portions of South Riding

Other worthy projects were jettisoned by the ailing Holtby, and in the face of much physical torment she shuttled backwards and forwards between London and the East Riding packing as much as she could into what would be her last days. The seaside town of Withernsea, a favourite spot with weekenders from nearby Hull provided a welcome bolt-hole. Aspects of that place fed into her depiction of Kiplington, one of the main centres of action in the novel. It is there that the energetic schoolmistress Sarah Burton throws her all into saving a floundering public school, in so doing becoming unexpectedly infatuated with the local Tory squire and councillor Robert Carne.

Holtby had hoped in part to pay tribute to her mother and one of the main characters in the book, the matronly Alderman Mrs. Beddows bears more than a passing resemblance to Alice Holtby. Famously, Mrs. Holtby took umbrage with the notion that colleagues and constituents might identify her with Beddows and resigned from the county council upon the appearance of South Riding in the shops. It is doubtful that the novel marred the old lady’s image of her deceased daughter. More likely it chafed against Alderman Holtby’s Victorian need to compartmentalise her existence into separate spheres of civic duty and personal relationships. That coupled with her understandable grief, must have brought about the need to terminate her public life. She retreated to a nursing home in Harrogate where she attained a measure of anonymity, whilst remaining in contact with Holtby’s close friends including Vera Brittain. By curious coincidence, Brittain submitted the finished manuscript of Testament of Friendship, her intimate biography of Winifred, on the very day that Alice Holtby passed away – 31st July 1939.

Holtby had hoped in part to pay tribute to her mother and one of the main characters in the book, the matronly Alderman Mrs. Beddows bears more than a passing resemblance to Alice Holtby. Famously, Mrs. Holtby took umbrage with the notion that colleagues and constituents might identify her with Beddows and resigned from the county council upon the appearance of South Riding in the shops. It is doubtful that the novel marred the old lady’s image of her deceased daughter. More likely it chafed against Alderman Holtby’s Victorian need to compartmentalise her existence into separate spheres of civic duty and personal relationships. That coupled with her understandable grief, must have brought about the need to terminate her public life. She retreated to a nursing home in Harrogate where she attained a measure of anonymity, whilst remaining in contact with Holtby’s close friends including Vera Brittain. By curious coincidence, Brittain submitted the finished manuscript of Testament of Friendship, her intimate biography of Winifred, on the very day that Alice Holtby passed away – 31st July 1939.

Left: Holderness, near Halsham, the type of countryside which inspired Maythorpe in South Riding

South Riding, which came out the year after its author’s demise, was an immediate bestseller. Its popularity was no doubt compounded by people’s awareness of the poignant circumstances under which the book was composed. The first movie adaptation of the work, directed by Victor Saville (1938), is a rather odd period piece which both takes liberties with the original novel and omits vital details in order to compress the story into a viable running time for the cinema. Apparently audiences in London were incensed by the spectacle of Carne hunting foxes and booted and jeered at the squire, played by Ralph Richardson. The casting of that production proved less than satisfactory. Vera Brittain complained that in choosing Marie Lohr, then in her sixties, to portray Alderman Beddows the filmmakers had prioritized glamour over substance.

Many of the deficiencies in the first movie were ironed out in the small screen series South Riding, broadcast in thirteen installments on ITV in the backend of 1974. Alongside Dorothy Tutin as Sarah Burton and Nigel Davenport as Carne, the veteran actress Hermione Baddeley took on the mantle of Beddows, imbuing her with a pitch-perfect mixture of gusto and compassion. From the moment she strides into the council chambers in a bonnet bedecked in pansies and cocks a caustic sneer at the press gallery, one realizes that the author’s intentions have been brought to fruition.
As an uncanny item of trivia, it is odd to observe that *Upstairs Downstairs* has very recently been revived as a mini-series. The original run of that period drama coincided with the 1970s *South Riding*, in which Hermione Baddeley’s elder sister Angela, playing the flinty Edwardian cook Mrs. Bridges. Famously their joint exposure led to a good-humoured spat between the two theatrical *grande dames*. As Angela Baddeley related on a chat-show, in one episode Bridges passed a comment about a decrepit friend by the name of Beddows. This prompted an angry missive from Hermione who took it as a slur on her age. In truth, this was merely an unfortunate coincidence.

Digressions aside, the revival of interest in Holtby should hopefully draw more people to delve into her distinctively Yorkshire literary world and even visit the sites associated with her life. The grounds of her former home at Rudston are occasionally open to the public during the summer.

Also her grave lies in the village. The tombstone is in the form of an opened book bearing the epitaph the authoress’ mother chose for her: ‘God give me work until my life shall end/ and life until my work is done’. On the opposite page is written ‘In Loving Memory of Winifred Daughter of David and Alice Holtby Died in London 29th Sept, 1935 Aged 37 years’.
More imposing in scale is the monument to David and Alice Holtby outside Priory Church, Bridlington. It is inscribed with a paraphrase from Percy Bysshe Shelley, stating: ‘She has out-soared the shadow of our night’. That sounds like a good estimation of Alderman Holtby’s character.

As a final note, where should a literature enthusiast keen to learn more about Winifred Holtby begin? Well, to my mind it is best to start at both the end and the beginning. Tens of thousands of copies of South Riding were published and it can be found in practically every circulating library and second-hand bookshop. Anderby Wold is far scarcer, but reading the two works together gives some insight into how her skill and ambition developed over all too short a career. In 2011, the Virago Press reissued all six of her novels, having previously printed the set once before in the early 1980s.

Thanks largely to Professor Marion Shaw, who almost single-handedly championed Holtby for a long time, we have a modern biography of her entitled The Clear Stream (1999). This takes an objective, at times critical view, of the author, where Brittain tended to cast her as a twentieth-century saint. A selection of her shorter fiction, including some rare magazine pieces, has been gathered together into Remember! Remember! (1999), also edited by Shaw. To my mind, at least, these tales are the equal of Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, or other female authors of that generation who have escaped being tarred with the “middlebrow” brush.
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A ROMAN MOSAIC FROM THE BRANTINGHAM ROMAN VILLA, EAST YORKSHIRE

One of the biggest Mysteries in Yorkshire Archaeology

By Jeremy Clark

The site of the Brantingham Roman villa, East Yorkshire, was first discovered in late September 1941 when two geometric mosaic floors and hypocaust, (an under floor heating system), were accidentally discovered by workers in a quarry. They stumbled across the amazing finds in the course of quarrying stone in a quarry known as the ‘Cockle Pits’. The mosaics were hastily exposed and recorded before being reburied until after the war. What followed is one of the biggest mysteries in Yorkshire archaeology.

The site of the Roman villa is located south-west of the village of Brantingham, East Yorkshire which is about 3km north of Brough-on-Humber and about 16km west of Kingston upon Hull on the western flank of the southern end of the Yorkshire Wolds.

In 1948 a team of archaeologists from the Hull Museum returned to the site. It had been decided to lift the mosaics and bring them to Hull for display in the museum. The team set to work preparing the mosaic floors that were found at the site during the war for transportation to the museum in the city. All seemed to be going smoothly, the mosaics were successfully lifted and all was set for their journey. But overnight the larger of the two mosaics rather unimaginatively called ‘The First Geometric Mosaic’ vanished. It was stolen! All that remained of it were a number of black-and-white photographs. The smaller ‘Second Geometric Mosaic’ was safely removed and installed in the museum. The missing first mosaic has never been recovered and it has never been established exactly how it was stolen.

THE MISSING GEOMETRIC MOSAIC

David Neal a mosaic expert then with the Archaeological Drawing Department of English Heritage, set to work to see if he could reconstruct the mosaic and to his surprise, he succeeded. This showed that it was possible to reconstruct mosaics which no longer existed, from black-and-white photographs and even to restore the colours. Today only the full-colour reconstruction scale drawing of the First Geometric Mosaic survives to show what the stolen mosaic would have originally looked like. It measured about 3.55m by 2.05m and had at its centre a motif resembling an open umbrella picked out in different-coloured tesserae, all surrounded by a crow-stepped pattern and another circle, this time of guilloche. On either side of the central panel were two smaller squares, one with a chess-board motif in red and white and the other bearing an endless knot.

Right: Painting of the lost mosaic by David Neal based on photographs taken of the mosaic in 1948 ©David Neal
THE SECOND GEOMETRIC MOSAIC

Fortunately the Second Geometric Mosaic was left behind and can now be seen in the Roman Gallery of the Hull and East Riding Museum. It measured 2.74m square and features a very unusual ‘running pelta’ pattern in the centre framed by triangles placed end-to-end as a border. Around the outside is a wider border of overlapping scales. An alternative name should be given to this mosaic because of its pattern called ‘The Scales Mosaic’.

Right: Part of the Scales Mosaic

The Scales Mosaic was not lifted in one piece. First it was carefully drawn then the small coloured cubes called tesserae that make up the mosaic were dismantled and sorted into bags. They were then re-set in concrete as separate slabs. In fact one of these slabs has been used as part of the walkway in the Roman Gallery at the Hull and East Riding Museum. So if you visit you can actually walk on the same floor that the inhabitants of the villa at Brantingham did nearly 1700 years ago.

Above: This illustration shows only about half of the mosaic
© David Neal

THE TYCHE MOSAIC AT BRANTINGHAM

In 1961 a large figured mosaic was excavated close by in a field north of the quarry. It measures 11m by 7.8m and dates to the middle of the 4th century, about 330-335 AD. Because of the importance of this mosaic it was removed for display in Hull and East Riding Museum. At its centre is a distinctive figure wearing a crown that some experts believe is a 'Tyche' (pronounced tie-key), of the Parisi, the local tribe of the area and this has given the mosaic its name. An alternative theory is that the central figure represents a Muses (Greek goddess).

It is surrounded by reclining water nymphs whose left elbow in each figure rests on a white overturned vase and the right arm is extended, holding a reed in the right hand - the symbol of spring. The legs of each figure are wrapped in a white garment and the left leg is bent. A red stole is draped over the lower body and looped around the left arm.

Left: A reclining water nymph holding a reed in her right hand and resting her elbow on an overturned vase
Each of the two end friezes was decorated by a row of four figures that perhaps also represent muses. Unfortunately only three of the original eight have survived but all are slightly different.

**Left: Painting of the Tyche Mosaic by David Neal ©David Neal**

**Below: One of the figures at one end of the frieze which could represent a muse**

**THE BRANTINGHAM ROMAN VILLA AND PETUARIA ROMAN TOWN**

The Brantingham Roman Villa would have been closely associated with the Roman town know as Petuaria at Brough-on-Humber during the Roman period which served as the capital of the Celtic tribe of the Parisi until it burned down some time in the mid-4th century AD.

Petuaria marked the southern end of the Roman road known now as Cade's Road which ran roughly northwards for a hundred miles to Pons Aelius (modern day Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

The Roman galleries in Hull and East Riding Museum have recently been refurbished and have been designed to resemble the centre of the prominent Roman settlement of Peturia that grew up in the 1st century AD as a civilian settlement attached to a fort. It was the only walled town in the region and, by the late third century, its earthen ramparts had been replaced by imposing stone walls. Excavations have uncovered the remains of the defences and what may have been workshops, but have so far failed to find any of Petuaria’s grand civic buildings.

The town lay on the north bank of the River Humber, about 8 kilometres west of Hull and during the Roman Empire it was on a direct route from the important Roman towns of Lincoln and York.

The 4th century Roman mosaics in the museum are laid out as floors, much as they would have been in their original villas in the area. They are widely considered to be one of the most extensive collections of Roman Mosaics in Britain.
Montpellier Parade Harrogate

The London and North Eastern Railway poster on the left shows Montpellier Parade, Harrogate. The scene was illustrated over seventy years ago. Since this poster was produced quite a few changes have taken place. All the shops have different occupants they include pubs, restaurants, cafés, tea shops, antique shops and gift shops. Today Harrogate is better known as an Exhibition and Conference centre town with the Harrogate International Centre, centrally located. This poster is titled ‘Harrogate’ and is dated 1935, by Gordon Mitchell Forsyth.

Compare this postcard on the right of Montpellier Parade Harrogate with the LNER poster above. It is published by T.W. Dennis & Sons and dates to the 1970s. The view is at a different angle looking up the parade rather than across from the gardens in the LNER poster.

Although the postcard on the right is relatively recent, a few changes are apparent as can be seen in the two photographs right and below.

Right: Sotheby’s is very prominent in this photo looking up the Montpellier Parade

These two recent photographs where taken at different angles, right looking up the Montpellier Parade and left across from the gardens. Once again a number of changes have taken place. The most obvious one is that Sotheby’s have replaced the Chadwick Hosiery Company Ltd. and most of the other shops have different occupants but are not so noticeable.

Left: A wide angel view of Montpellier Parade looking across from the gardens.
St. Martins Church

It is the only building to have survived from the medieval period at Wharram Percy which, is the most famous lost medieval village in Britain.

The Yorkshire Journal is a quarterly publication, published in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter and is a free online e-journal at www.theyorkshirejournal.wordpress.com

Every effort has been made to determine copyright on illustrations in The Yorkshire Journal. We apologise to any individuals we may have inadvertently missed. The Editor would be happy to correct any omissions.