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The Devil’s Arrows
A stone lined basin weir and cast-iron footbridge were built at the outlet of the lake. The weir is horse-shoe in shape and forms a 6 tier cascade waterfall. The walls of the basin are built up to support Thomas Telford’s Iron Bridge.
All the staff at The Yorkshire Journal would like to wish our readers a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year 2014

Cover: Market Place in snow, Malton. Photo by Nick Fletcher

Editorial

As winter once more tightens its grip on our beautiful Yorkshire countryside our team of writers have been busy researching and writing some really interesting articles for our winter issue of The Yorkshire Journal.

Jean Griffiths has been finding out about the Ancient Custom of Tolling the Devil’s Knell at All Saints Church, Dewsbury. In her fascinating article we discoverer that there is much more to this custom, which is surrounded by legends. Tolling the bell takes place on Christmas Eve, one toll for every year since Christ was born. Jean also takes us on a tour of the Minster. The Christmas carol ‘The Holly and the Ivy’ is one of the best known traditional English Christmas carols. They are both evergreen plants but in the lyrics the Ivy is hardly mentioned at all. Gillian Morris attempts to explain the meaning of this Christmas carol and how we use holly and ivy in Christmas decorations today. Jeremy Clark looks into the discovery of a hoard of Civil War (1642-1651) coins found by Dr Owen Johnson. He found them in a pot in his back garden at High Ackworth, near Pontefract, and it contained 591 coins and a gold ring. In Jeremy’s interesting article he explains the full story surrounding the hoard. The treasure is now safely secured, for the nation by funds raised to buy the hoard allowing it to stay in Yorkshire. It is on temporary display at Pontefract Museum. Between 1969 and 1973 Yorkshire Television broadcast the children’s drama series ‘The Flaxton Boys’. It was set at Ripley Castle in North Yorkshire. Sarah Harrison and David Reynolds visit Ripley Castle and outline the story and the young characters in the series. They also take us on a tour of the Castle and grounds and include the history of Ripley village. The Devil’s Arrows at Boroughbridge still remain something of a mystery. Jeremy Clark and Marcus Grant try to explain their importance and how they form part of a huge prehistoric ritual landscape. They reveal the history of the stones, where they came from, how they were transported and what they meant to the people who erected them.

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

Andrew Simpson
"The Ancient Custom of Tolling the Devil’s Knell at All Saints Church, Dewsbury"

By Jean Griffiths

‘Tolling the Devil’s Knell’ is an ancient custom of The Minster Church of All Saints, Dewsbury, formerly dedicated to All Hallows. The word knell means the ringing of a bell especially rung solemnly for a death or funeral. This is also called tolling the bell.

There are a number of legends surrounding this custom but the most well-known one associated with it concerns Sir Thomas de Soothill who was a local nobleman and lord of the manor in the 15th century. Sir Thomas was a man who suffered from fits of terrible temper. During one such fit of rage he murdered a young servant boy and hid his body in Forge dam, a mill pond near to Soothill Manor. When his temper had subsided, he realised the enormity of his actions and became afraid for the safety of his soul. It is interesting to note that there was no suggestion of being afraid of retribution from his peers for the murder!

However, thinking of how the Devil had got into him and in an attempt at penance for murdering the servant boy, he presented a tenor bell to Dewsbury Church, to which Soothill belonged. He instructed that on Christmas Eve, it should be tolled at a slow pace, as if for a funeral, once for every year since Christ was born. Sir Thomas hoped this would help to ward the Devil off from this part of West Yorkshire. The great bell was named “Black Tom of Soothill”, but it is now referred to as just ‘Black Tom’ and like the other seven bells in the Dewsbury bell tower, it carries an inscription which reads:

“I shall be here if treated just
When you are mouldering in the dust.”

This 18th century account is certainly based on fact. The custom has been going on for almost 700 years, although it was discontinued at one time in the early 19th century prior to receiving two new treble bells in 1828. It was then revived by the Rev. John Buckworth in the same year. It was also discontinued again during World War II, when all bell-ringing was banned except to signal enemy invasion.

To signify that the Devil died when Christ was born the ringing of the bell, known as the Devil’s Knell, was seen as a means of keeping the Devil away from the parish for the following 12 months. This year the bell will be tolled 2013 times on Christmas Eve.

The tolling starts from approximately 9.45pm and it is timed so that the last stroke of the knell coincides with the first stroke of midnight in time for the Communion service. The tolling of Black Tom is usually undertaken by two of the Minsters bell ringers taking it in turns to toll with anther member marking off the score. The bell ringers change over after ten or fifteen minutes. After the last year has been marked off on a score pad, it will be dated and signed by the bell ringers and witnessed by a church member.
The Special Stamp Issue

In 1986 the custom of tolling the Devil’s Knell at Dewsbury was chosen as one of five British traditions featured on the Royal Mail’s special Christmas stamps. The stamps were designed by Lynda Gray in the style of a medieval book illustration. The 31p shows a medieval bell ringer tolling the Devil’s Knell with a scribe checking off the years and an observer standing by.

Fact or Fiction

In fact there was a Sir Thomas de Soothill, he was born around 1472 in the 15th century at Soothill Hall. He married Margery Fitz William and they had one daughter Elizabeth who married Sir Henry Savile Sheriff of Yorkshire (1537-1541). Thomas’s wife Margery died before 1508. Then he married his second wife sometime in the same year, but it is not known who she was. They had one son Michael born in about 1509. Sir Thomas Soothill died on 29th December 1535 at the age of 63.

Michael the son and heir of Thomas de Soothill was described as a “weakling” and “idiot”. He died without issue so the Soothill estate passed through his sister Elizabeth to the Saviles, she having married Sir Henry Savile of Thornhill. This side of the Soothill family is now extinct, they lived at Soothill Hall at Lower Soothill from the 12th century, which is situated 2 kilometres north-east of Dewsbury. When Henry and Elizabeth first married they lived at the old Soothill Hall which had been built in the 1100s and extended at different times over the centuries. After their marriage in the 1500s Soothill Hall was expanded into what was called “a fine mansion built around a square court with galleries or lobbies on at least two sides”. Henry Savile died in 1558 and Elizabeth remarried Richard Gascoigne of Barnbow and for 12 year continued to live at Soothill Hall. They moved to Barnbow Hall only a short time before Elizabeth died in 1571. However, Richard became a devastated widower and continued to live at Soothill Hall for a further 21 years.

The Hall was then occupied by other notables including Bishop Henry Tilson who fled for his life in August 1645 after the Irish rebellion broke out. Sir William Savile provided an asylum for him at Soothill Hall which had previously been occupied by Tilson’s father and also the Greenwood family. To commemorate his life there, one section of the house has been named the Bishop’s Parlour. However, before his death on 31st March 1655 aged 80, he had been joined at the Hall by other members of his family. The Tilsons are known to have farmed at Soothill Hall until 1748 but after that the hall was looted and allowed to fall into a state of dereliction.

The Bishop’s Parlour was not too badly damaged and the Hall was re-built in the mid 1800s. Since then in the 1980s the Hall has been divided up and converted into five stylish apartments.
This is a similar story concerning a much earlier Soothill, known as Reginald who was described as Lord Soothill in the 1200s. He was also accused of losing his temper and killing a servant boy by throwing him into a furnace or boiling cauldron. In his case it is supposed that he attempted to atone for his deed by giving some land, known as The Bellstrings, to Woodkirk Church. It is said that this gift is commemorated at the church through a strange stone in the churchyard known as the Frying Pan Stone. This bad temper could have been a trait of the family and these stories may have got mixed up. They would have been passed down by word of month in tales and over the years these stories will have become distorted, embellished and exaggerated and quite possibly combined into one story long before being written down. According to historians writing in the 19th century the first account of the Soothill tale was written down sometime in the 18th century and has been reported in the same way ever since. We can only speculate about this legend and it is most unlikely that we will ever know the true story.

The Bells Today

There were originally six bells recast in 1725 and two new Trebles were added in 1828 to complete the octave. All these bells were recast in 1875 by John Warner of London out of the metal of the old bells with some addition. The old bells were last rung on 31st December 1874 and the present ones were brought into the town with great ceremony on 13th March 1875. They arrived by train and were drawn in a procession by seven fine horses, led by a brass band with the Mayor and Corporation following. The Choir, Churchwardens and congregation were also present. The bells were re-hung in 1964 by John Taylor & Sons of Loughborough.

Each bell has an inscription as follows:

Treble I mean to make it understood that though I’m little, yet I’m good

2nd Let brotherly love continue

3rd Ring, ring ye bells and sweetly tell That Christ hath conquered death and hell

4th Our voices shall with joyful sound Make hill and valley echo round

5th With loving voice I call to church and prayer And bid the living, for a grave prepare

6th So teach us to number our days that we may apply Our hearts unto wisdom

7th Gloria in excelsis Deo

Tenor I shall be here if treated just When you are mouldering in the dust  (This Bell has been nicknamed ‘Black Tom’).
**The Soothill family association with Dewsbury Church**

The de Soothill family were at one time most important and represented in Dewsbury Church. The South Aisle had always been known as the Soothill Aisle and the gallery over it the Soothill Loft, it was removed in 1887 when the church was modernised. In 1618 the coat-of-arms of the Soothills was included in the south Quire stained glass window, which is now missing.

In the Heritage Centre at The Minster Church of All Saints, Dewsbury is a complete, late 12th century grave cover of the Soothill family. It is mounted on a plinth and is the Church’s most impressive slab. It has a carved bracelet-derivative cross head rising from a stepped base all carved in high relief, with beaded ornament and acanthus leaves springing from below the head. The shaft below this has a winged dragon on both sides. There twisting tails sprout more acanthus leaves. In the upper corners are a man’s and horse’s head. Between them is the beginning of an inscription of which only ‘Hic iacet . . .,’ ‘Here lies’, remains legible.

This grave cover, along with two carved fragments of Saxon crosses, which can also be seen in the Heritage Centre, were found during restoration of the church in 1884-7.

*Left: The grave cover of the Soothill family in Heritage Centre at Dewsbury Minster*

*Left: Drawing of the Soothill family grave cover*

**Visiting The Minster Church, Dewsbury**

**History of the Church**

The Minster Church of All Saints, Dewsbury, which was formerly dedicated to All Hallows, is situated near the River Calder and is on the site where Paulinus is traditionally thought to have preached in AD 627. Paulinus may have also baptised people in the River Calder and the event was marked by a wooden cross, which was later replaced by a stone one. Fragments of a huge preaching cross, said to be the Paulinus Cross, were unearthed during extensive alterations to the Church between 1759 and 1767. The fragments of this cross can be seen on display in the Heritage Centre.

The first church on the site was probably built in the eighth century in wood. This would certainly have been replaced in stone soon after.

*Left: An artist’s impression of what the Anglo-Saxon Church might have looked like in the 9th century. At this time All Saints’ Dewsbury was a minster church*
The external appearance of the church shows no indications of its origins. What the Medieval church looked like is not exactly known. But it had a Choir, a Chancel, a Nave with a high-pitched roof and perhaps two small aisles as the arcades date from the 12th and 13th centuries. The Church also had a Tower as can be confirmed by the 12th century spiral steps to the bell tower. Also by the so-called ‘Consecration Stone’ built into the internal wall of the tower immediately to the right of the doorway at the foot of the stairs, probably of the 12th century.

The church can clearly be seen on Saxton’s map of Dewsbury dated 1600. However, during the Industrial Revolution the population of Dewsbury grew substantially and there was a need to extend the Parish Church. In 1767 the Tower was built around the original worn 12th century spiral steps and the outer wall rebuilt with wider aisles. Galleries were also put in, on both aisles with box pews and a three-decker pulpit. By 1878 the church was in an unsatisfactory state of repair, so in 1884-87 the Medieval Chancel was pulled down and new transepts, a choir and chancel were built. The south aisle was again rebuilt in 1895. The box pews were replaced by oak ones and were replaced by chairs in 2006.

Left and Below: The external and interior of Dewsbury Church in 1823 before it was renovated in 1884-87

In 1993 Dewsbury Church was raised to Minster status and the following year saw the start of an ambitious scheme to once again re-order the church to create worship, heritage, community, exhibitions and pilgrimage areas. These include a Heritage Centre created in the South Transept where Saxon stones and medieval cross slab grave covers are displayed and a refectory.

A Tour of the Minster

A free leaflet has been produced by The Minster Church of All Saints, Dewsbury, so that visitors can take a Heritage Tour around the Minster during opening hours. It includes a plan and lists all the interesting areas to explore.

Right: The Heritage Centre which includes exhibition boards, Anglo-Saxon and medieval carved stones
The oldest part of the church is the Nave which shows the shape of the Saxon Church before the Norman columns and side aisles were built to the south in 1170. To the north is the rare cluster columns built in 1220. The Saxon stonework which dates from about 980 AD is visible at a high level where a very large stone, the arch and an extended vertical joint meet.

The 13th century font was found badly mutilated by workmen during the rebuilding of the South Aisle in 1895. It may have been dismantled in 1649-60 when the use of fonts for baptism was frowned upon. The font has now been restored and is located at the east-end of the Nave.

The tower was rebuilt in 1767 by John Carr around the original worn Norman spiral steps. An octave of bells is hung in the upper tower, including ‘Black Tom’ on which the Devil’s Knell is rung each Christmas Eve. Built into the internal wall of the tower, immediately to the right of the doorway at the foot of the stair is the so-called ‘Consecration Stone’ which probably dates to the 12th century.
The Medieval stained glass window

In the North Transept is the medieval stained glass window which dates to about 1340. It was arranged in a three light window by Mr. Knowles of York in 1887. Previously, it formed part of a larger collection of medieval glass in the old Chancel, which was pulled down in 1884. It includes the arms of local families, many types of leaves, birds and animals.

The lowest row of figures represents the occupations carried out in three of the four seasons. The first panel depicts a man with a jug of drink beside him, threshing corn with a flail to separate the grain from the chaff. This is the occupation for winter. The second panel is harvesting the corn with a sickle which represents summer. The occupation for autumn is represented in the third panel by a man in shoes about to hit the tethered pigs head with the back of an axe. It is tied to a tree so it cannot escape. The season for spring is missing.

The Minster Church of All Saints Dewsbury, formerly dedicated to All Hallows is open daily 9.00am to 3.00pm and visitors are welcome to look around. Refreshments are available in the refectory which is open Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 2.30pm. Guided tours can also be arranged.
The Holly and the Ivy

By Gillian Morris

The Christmas carol ‘The Holly and the Ivy’ is one of the best known traditional English Christmas carols. It was written in the 17th-18th centuries, but the original author and composer of the carol are unknown. The version that we are familiar with today was modernized and published by Cecil Sharp (1859–1924). The Holly and the Ivy are evergreen plants and in the lyrics the Ivy is hardly mentioned at all. It is believed that Holly and Ivy have Pagan origins used to celebrate the Winter Solstice Festival and ward off evil spirits and celebrate new growth. The Holly was thought to be a male plant and Ivy a female plant. When Holly and Ivy are combined as a decoration it is said to represent the union between men and women. In Iron Age Britain the Druid priests carried out Winter Solstice religious rituals, but little is known about the Druid’s beliefs and practices. There are no pictures of Druids so we do not know what they look like, if they wore special clothes or were they dressed the same as other Iron Age people.

Right: An illustration of how Druids Priests may have looked in Iron Age Britain, each one is wearing an Ivy wreath on their head

The word Holly originates from the Old English word ‘Hollin’ and sprigs of Holly and Ivy were taken indoors during the winter, which is very cold and bleak, with the hope that the occupants would survive these difficult conditions. Since Holly and Ivy were believed to represent men and women, it was said that whichever was brought into the house first would dictate who rules the residence. They believed that both plants were powerful and magical and being evergreen was a reminder in itself that the earth never dies, but merely sleeps during the winter months.

Bacchus, the Roman god of drinking, is always depicted with a wreath of Ivy as it was said to ward off drunkenness. Not a particularly good omen for the festive season perhaps!

Left: Bronze statue of Bacchus from Pompeii, Italy of the 2nd century BC

When Christianity was introduced to Western Europe, some people wanted to keep the greenery and give it a Christian meaning. The Christians adopted the prickly Holly leaves as representing the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when He was crucified. The red berries are like drops of blood that were shed by Jesus because of the thorns. This is how the Holly tree has become to be known as a reminder of the Passion of Christ. Ivy has to cling to something to support itself as it grows. This became a reminder that we need to cling to God for support in our lives.

This makes it clear why evergreens such as Holly and Ivy came to play such an important role in Christmas celebrations. But what is not so obvious, at first glance, is the origin of the title, ‘The Holly and the Ivy’. Is this carol really about Holly and Ivy? Below are the lyrics, so that we may take a closer look:-
The holly and the ivy,
When (Now) they are both full grown
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.

Chorus:
The rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry groan
Sweet singing in the choir.

The holly bears a blossom
As white as lily flower
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour.

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.

The holly and the ivy,
When (Now) they are both full grown
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.
As can be seen from the verses above, ‘The Holly and the Ivy’ takes the Holly plant which is deeply entrenched in the pagan past and imbues it with Christian symbolism. The general consensus of the subject could be inferred as follows:

1. Holly’s ‘white as lily flower’ in the second verse is a suggestion to Christ’s purity, through Mary.

2. In the third verse, an association is drawn between the red colour of Holly’s berry and Christ’s blood.

3. Holly’s thorny ‘prickle’ in the fourth verse is a reference to the ‘crown of thorns’ worn by Christ.

4. The bitter taste of Holly’s bark mentioned in the fifth verse. This could refer to the drink offered Christ as he hung on the cross.

But where does the Ivy take part in the Christmas carol? Except for its appearance alongside Holly in the opening verse, and the last verse which merely repeats the first, it is not mentioned at all in the song. If this one, insignificant reference to Ivy were to be omitted from the lyrics the song would not be affected. In all probability ‘The Holly and the Ivy’ is based on much older songs, when earlier people were closer to nature and appreciated plant relationships. Perhaps noticing an Ivy vine in the forest twining itself around a Holly tree, for instance, they were able to compare and connect the two plants together. Ivy has to cling to something in order to support itself to grow. The result of observing the connection of these two plants, in this way, the Holly and the Ivy became intertwined. This association resulted in songs being sung and handed down for many years and eventually was transferred into the Christmas carol that we know today.

How we use Holly and Ivy today

Today sprigs of Holly are used in Christmas decorations, tucked behind the tops of pictures and mirrors, vases are filled with them and Holly with its dark green leaves and red berries are made into wreaths to hang on front doors. A little piece of specially selected Holly is usually kept for the top of the Christmas pudding. The Holly and the Ivy continues a long tradition first introduced by the Pagans 100s of years ago and now plays an important role in our Christmas celebrations.

Right: A Holly wreath to hang on the front door

Right: A little piece of Holly on top of the Christmas pudding

Above: Holly and Ivy are frequently illustrated on Christmas cards. This old Christmas card is a tribute to the Christmas carol
Vintage Christmas Cards Illustrating Holly

Left: This vintage Christmas card gives the feeling of nostalgia of an Old Fashioned Christmas. Collecting Holly in the snowy wood for the home.

Right: Robins combine the Holly with its red berries in these two vintage Christmas cards.

Right: Children are also represented with Holly.

The Holly and the Ivy is sung at Christmas time in most Churches, Minters and Cathedrals throughout England by well know choirs.

Left and right is the King’s College Cambridge choir, singing ‘The Holly and the Ivy’.
The Ackworth Hoard near Pontefract West Yorkshire

Now safely secured to stay in Yorkshire

By Jeremy Clark

The village of High Ackworth where the hoard was found is situated about 5 kilometres south-west of Pontefract and about 11 kilometres south-east of Wakefield. The small River Went flows between High Ackworth and Ackworth Moor Top.

In 1642 the English Civil War broke out and the area around Ackworth consisted mainly of Royalist supporters, who fought for the king. Many volunteers went to man the garrison of Pontefract Castle. However, during the successful second siege of Pontefract Castle in 1645, the Royalists garrison made an honourable surrender to the Roundheads, who were also known as Parliamentarians. Ackworth was now occupied by Roundhead soldiers, who caused some damage to the church and who were also responsible for replacing the cross at the top of the medieval monument in the centre of the village with the present ‘ball’ shape which now sits there.

Left: The medieval cross in the centre of High Ackworth village

It is in this background that the Ackworth Hoard may be viewed. In fact hoards of coins from the English Civil War 1642-1651, are not unusual as these were turbulent times.

Right: Ackworth Hoard in situ

On 21 July 2011 Dr Owen Johnson, 53, who works at Pinderfields hospital in Wakefield, was inspecting a hole dug by builders in his back garden, when he saw part of a ceramic pot protruding from the soil. When he tried gently to pull out the buried pot it cracked in half spilling out a number of gold and silver coins; Dr Johnson said it was “like coins from a slot machine.” The brown glazed pot contained 591 coins, a gold ring and a piece of leather. The finds were reported to Amy Downes, Finds Liaison Officer for South and West Yorkshire, who carried out an initial assessment of the hoard and conducted an excavation of the site. No further coins were recovered and the hoard was transferred to the British Museum for a detailed examination.
The Hoard

The hoard was made up of 52 gold coins and 539 silver coins and a single gold ring inscribed with the words “when this you see, remember me”. The earliest coin is a gold half sovereign of Edward VI minted in 1547-9, and the latest are Charles I silver coins minted in 1645-6. Most of the coins are English of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. There are also a few Scottish and Irish coins, besides silver coins of Albert and Isabella and Philip IV from the Spanish Netherlands. These Continental coins are known to have circulated widely in Royalist areas, and may represent payments sent from the Low Countries by Charles I’s wife, Henrietta Maria, to finance the Royalist cause.

The hoard of coins dates from the Civil War and was probably buried between 1645 and 1646, around the same time as the second siege of Pontefract Castle. The face value of the 591 coins at the time they were buried was £85-12s-0d, which was a significant amount of money, and puts it among one of the larger hoards recorded for the Civil War period.

The Gold Finger Ring

The presence of the gold finger ring makes the hoard very unusual, giving it a more domestic aspect than most other hoards which only contained coins.

The ring found in the pot with the coins is a thin, lightweight gold posy ring. It has a plain exterior band, which is rounded. The interior of the band bears the inscription, “when this you see remember me”. This inscription was in use from 1596 to at least 1735, but because it was discovered in the pot with the latest coins dating to 1645-6 the ring must have a similar date. The diameter of the gold ring is 20.42mm, with a band width of 4.39mm and the thickness of the band is 1.21mm, it weighs 4.9g.
The Pot

The pot that contained the hoard is post-medieval, earthenware covered, with a dark brown glaze. The vessel is complete although broken into two pieces and is probably a Cistercian ware bowl or jar.

Since the latest dated coins found in the pot are 1645-6, this confirms that the pot is also of a similar date. Cistercian ware was so-called when examples were found on the sites of Cistercian abbeys in Yorkshire, dating from the later 15th to the 17th centuries. This type of pottery was produced at the important manufacturing centre at Wrenthorpe, also known as Potovens, near Wakefield, some 15 kilometres north-west from High Ackworth.

There is no indication that the hoard was added to over time. Therefore the coins found in the Ackworth hoard can be regarded as a single deposit made on one occasion. They reflect the currency at the time they were hidden. They cover over four monarchs Edward VI (1547-1553), Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and the first two Stuart kings of England, James I (1603-1625) and Charles I (1625-1649). The bulk of the coins in the hoard are of Elizabeth I, so there is a possibility that the hoard was put together over a long period of time rather than being taken from circulation at any given moment.

All the coins are in good condition and it was decided that the hoard was Treasure Trove at the treasure inquest in Wakefield. It was concluded they had been deliberately hidden with intent to conceal and subsequently recover. The hoard was valued at £54,492 and in order for it to stay in Yorkshire, the Wakefield Council launched a campaign to raise funds to buy the hoard for public display in the Pontefract Museum. This they have managed to do with donations coming from various groups.

The only mystery is who was the owner of the hoard? Whoever buried the hoard did not return to recover it; perhaps he was killed or was forced to flee and prevented from doing so during the Civil War (1642-1651). It is likely that the owner concealed his valuables for safekeeping, presumably from the Parliamentary troops. Also as an insurance against their seizure, he may even have been involved as a soldier in the conflict. Was he even a local person, or somebody passing through who buried his savings in a place which he might reasonably expect to find again? We shall never know.

Right: The Ackworth Hoard is now on temporary display at Pontefract Museum, awaiting a new permanent exhibition
The Middleham Hoard, North Yorkshire

The Ackworth Hoard is not the largest or the most valuable to have been found in Yorkshire from the Civil War period. The Middleham hoard of silver coins is considered to be the largest ever to have been discovered. It was found by William Caygill, near Middleham, North Yorkshire. William, a keen metal-detecting enthusiast found the hoard in June 1993 whist digging; he struck a pot with his spade and discovered it was filled with silver coins. He then uncovered another two pots over the next few days. The three locally produced handled jars contained a total of 5,098 silver coins, which are believed to have been buried in about 1647. Most of the coins in the hoard span the reigns of Edward VI, Philip and Mary, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I.

The condition of the coins varies greatly, those from the Elizabethan period are worn and crude in appearance, having been in circulation for over seventy years, but others, like the Charles I coins, are virtually as good as when first struck. The principal denominations of the coins are half crowns, shillings and sixpences. There are also a small number of coins from provincial mints, a few Scottish and Irish issues, as well as over 200 of Spanish Netherlands. Although a few of the coins were retained by museums, most were returned to William who decided to sell them at auction. The coins were sold in multiple lots on the 4th July 1995 by the auctioneers Spink & Son Ltd for £77,000

Pontefract Castle in the Civil War

The defences at Pontefract Castle were not put to serious practical test until the castle was held by the Royalists during the Civil War. Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Parliamentarians, wrote: ‘(The castle) is very well known as one of the strongest inland garrisons in the kingdom.’ Pontefract Castle was garrisoned by the Royalists supporting the King and suffered three sieges without being taken by force. There was a heavy bombardment by cannon and many defenders killed. Only starvation could bring the castle to submission, the Royalists were forced to surrender in 1645 and this was repeated in 1648-9.

The final third siege lasted nearly five months until the Royalists finally surrendered on 24th March 1649, two months after the execution of Charles I. Pontefract Castle was the last Royalist garrison in England to surrender. Only three days after its fall Parliament issued a demolition order of the castle, having already regretted sparing it after the first siege. Local public opinion was greatly in favour of such an act to stop the fighting in their area and by June 1649 one of the greatest medieval fortresses in England had been reduced to rubble.

The only part of the castle to escape destruction was the main guard, in the barbican, which was used as a debtor’s prison. The stone from the ruined walls of the castle was used for buildings in the district. By 1720 extensive areas of the castle grounds were cultivated for liquorice by Dunhills. The cellar-cum-powder magazine, which was used as a dungeon for Royalist prisoners at the end of the third siege, was used for storing the harvested liquorice plants. The story of Pontefract Cakes and Their history has been published in the journal (TYJ 4 Winter 2012).
Ripley Castle in North Yorkshire was the setting for the historical period drama The Flaxton Boys created by Sid Waddell. This children’s drama series was made by Yorkshire Television and was broadcast on Sunday teatime between 1969 and 1973. It ran for 4 series and 52 episodes each of 30 minutes duration. Although this historical drama was made for children it also appealed to adults.

The series is set at Flaxton Hall, (Ripley Castle) located near the fictional Yorkshire village of Carlston between Harrogate and Hull. Each series follows the exploits and adventures of a different generation of boys, in 1854, 1890, 1928 and 1945. It had distinctive opening titles, featuring the boys running and bounding through the grounds and in front of Ripley Castle to the inspiration of Sergei Prokofiev’s Classical Symphony No. 1.

The main characters in each series are a young member of the Flaxton line and his closest friend, both portrayed as being around 14 years old. The storylines are drawn mainly from the traditional Boys’ Adventure genre, including plots such as hidden treasure, cryptic clues to be solved, ghostly apparitions, unscrupulous villains, and spies. Each series is essentially self-contained in terms of cast and character.

The exterior scenes were filmed first at Ripley Castle and the interiors at the studios in Leeds. The characteristics of Ripley Castle appealed to both the producer and director because of its appearance, but most of all the variety of locations within its grounds which include the lakes, park and gardens. The interior scenes were not replicas of the period rooms in Ripley Castle. They were specially designed sets for Yorkshire Television and had spacious halls, study rooms, drawing rooms and creepy cobwebby cellars. Sid Waddell may have taken the name Flaxton from its village, located between York and Malton, 2 kilometres north-west off the A64.

One of the problems was to find boys with reasonable talent for each of the four series. The director and producer had to go through about 2,000 candidates that applied for the parts of the Flaxton boys for each series. Some of the Yorkshire lads who were successfully selected to play a role in The Flaxton Boys went on to become fulltime actors which include Peter Firth, David Bradley and Alan Guy.
Peter Firth was chosen to play Archie Weekes in the first series of *The Flaxton Boys* in 1969. He was born in Bradford, West Yorkshire and went on to play a variety of starring roles in films and on television from then to the present day. Peter is best known for his role as Sir Harry Pearce in the BBC One show ‘Spooks’, of which he is the only actor to have starred in every episode of the show’s ten-series lifespan.

Right: Peter Firth played Archie Weekes in the first series of ‘The Flaxton Boys’ that was set in 1854

In the second series David Bradley played Peter Weekes in 1970. David was born in the hamlet of Stubbs, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire and is well known for his role of Billy Casper in *Kes* at the age of 14. The story of *Kes* has been published in the journal (*TYJ* 2 Summer 2012). Unfortunately his limitations as an actor are very apparent in *The Flaxton Boys*. However, he did go on to play a variety of roles on television and in films from then to the present day.

Left: Philip Maskery who played the part of David Stilgoe and right David Bradley played Archie Weekes in the second series of ‘The Flaxton Boys’ set in 1890

In the third generation of *The Flaxton Boys*, 1971 which was set in the summer of 1928, Alan Guy played the part of Jonathan Flaxton. Alan comes from Halifax, he first decided on an acting career when he was nine years old when he won a talent competition in Blackpool as a ventriloquist. He has appeared in a number of TV series and the crime film *Give Us Tomorrow* in 1978. John Ash played the part of William Pickford, Jonathan’s friend. Although he was only sixteen at the time, John had a list of acting achievements both on stage and television.

Left to right are Alan Guy, played Jonathan Flaxton and John Ash played William Pickford

The fourth and final series of *The Flaxton Boys* 1973, takes place in 1945, as World War II comes to an end. During the war Flaxton Hall has been requisitioned for use as an army facility. Matthew Flaxton befriends Terry Nichols, an evacuee from London who has no home to return to following the death of his parents in a bombing raid. The series closes as the troops prepare to leave Flaxton Hall as the war draws to its end. It is implied that Terry will find a permanent home at Flaxton Hall with Matthew and his family.

Left: Philip Baldwin from London played Terry Nichols and right: Andrew Packett from Shipley, West Yorkshire played Matthew Flaxton in the final series

Andrew Packett played Matthew Flaxton, he comes from Shipley, West Yorkshire. However, it would appear that he did not continue his acting career. Philip Baldwin who played Terry Nichols comes from London and unlike Andrew he did continue to appear in a number of TV series.

The Flaxton Boys continued to be repeated on various networks both in the UK and overseas until the early 1990s. However the series has never been released commercially on Video or DVD, although it is understood that all 52 episodes are archived at Yorkshire Television.
The following words about Flaxton Hall were spoken by narrator Gerry Cowan to launch the epic period drama ‘The Flaxton Boys’ on 21 September 1969, ‘today it’s in ruins and to find it, you must wander away from the beaten track and across the rolling hills of the Yorkshire countryside. It stands now remote and quiet, but could those bricks speak, what tales they would tell . . .’ .This describes the fictional Flaxton Hall but not the delightful Ripley Castle which was the setting for the historical drama.

Ripley Castle is situated about 6 kilometres north of Harrogate and about 12 kilometres south of Ripon in North Yorkshire on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The Castle and Gardens are open to the public all year round and make a fascinating and entertaining day out, in a beautiful location, with memorable surroundings. It was the television series ‘The Flaxton Boys’ that was filmed at Ripley Castle that prompted a dramatic rise in the number of visitors, turning the establishment from a local into a regional attraction. It is only a very short walk through the market square to the Castle’s entrance. Tickets are purchased in the Castle Gift Shop in Castle Yard which also includes toilet facilities and opposite is a delicatessen together with the Castle Tea Rooms.

The castle dates from the 15th century and has been the home of the Ingilby family for 700 years. The present owner is Sir Thomas Ingilby and the family is one of the ten oldest in the country still in the same residence. Consequently there are fascinating stories to be told about the castle and its inhabitants and because it has belonged to the same family for 26 generations, Ripley’s colourful and sometimes gruesome history is well documented. The arched gatehouse was built in the 1450s and the tall castellated tower dates to 1555 these are the oldest parts of the castle. The remainder of the castle was rebuilt in the 1780s, but the coach house and stable blocks, which enclose the courtyard, were not completed until almost 24 years later.

Right: The imposing castellated tower of 1555. 

Above: The arched gatehouse built in the 1450s
Today, visitors can enjoy a guided tour around the castle which brings the history of the castle to life with amusing anecdotes of the Ingilby family. The tour starts at the castle's front doors leading into the hall, which dates to the 1780s and takes approximately 1hr 10 minutes to circulate the six rooms that are on display. One of the portraits hanging in the alcoves on either side of the front door is of Sir William Ingleby (1518-1578) who built the Tower. He is portrayed in a full suit of armour with the blazing castle in the background on his right. Further into the hall are paintings showing what the castle and village looked like before 1780 and provide a historical and architectural record. Most of these were demolished and rebuilt by the Sir William Amcotts Ingiby (1783-1854).

In the centre of the hall, above the doorway to the Morning Room, is a portrait of King Edward III (1312-1377). Tradition has it that Thomas de Ingilby (1320-1379) saved the King’s life from a wild boar when they were hunting in the Knaresborough Forest. In gratitude the King knighted Thomas and granted him the use of the boar’s head emblem as his family crest. He also gave “free warren” in the Forest, that is, the freedom to hunt there and subsequently the right by charter to hold a Monday market and an annual horse fair lasting for three days in Ripley.

In the Dining Room are portraits of recent generations of the Ingilby family and at its centre is a wonderful chandelier. The Round Drawing Room features a set of four Chippendale chairs and two settees. The story of Thomas Chippendale has been published in the journal (TYJ 2 Summer 2010). Also on display are three game tables and a rosewood teapoy, c.1840, which is like a tea caddy on legs. The best views of the lakes and parkland are to be seen from any of the windows in the Large Drawing Room. The portraits in this room reflect the history of three consecutive generations of the family, spanning the period 1682-1815.

The Library is the first room in the tower that was built in 1555. Sir William Ingleby (1594-1652) was the head of the family at this time; his portrait is above the fireplace in full armour.

In fact it is reputed that Oliver Cromwell stayed the night at Ripley Castle, in The Library, after defeating the Royalists at the battle of Marston Moor on 2nd July 1644. Sir William Ingleby and his sister “Trooper” Jane who was disguised as a man, wearing a full suit of armour had been fighting on the Royalist side at the battle. They were fortunate to escape alive, although Jane was slightly wounded. They reached Ripley before Cromwell’s cavalry arrived in the village. Sir William immediately went into hiding, almost certainly in the secret hiding place in the knight’s chamber at the top of the tower.
When Cromwell came seeking admission for the night it was his sister Jane who admitted Cromwell, with a pair of pistols at her side. Having told him she expected that neither he nor his soldiers would behave improperly, led the way to the hall and into The Library. Here she sat the whole night, with the victorious rebel general Oliver Cromwell two pistols in her lap to ensure that he behaved with decorum and to prevent him from searching the house for her brother. In the morning at his departure, Jane observed, ‘It was well he had behaved in so peaceable a manner, for, that, had it been otherwise he would not have left this house with his life’.

When Jane was asked ‘Why two pistols?’ she replied ‘I might have missed with the first’.

Cromwell’s troops shot their prisoners against the gatehouse and church walls. At eye level on the left-hand side of the archway are several holes left by musket balls, evidence of the execution of several prisoners. Muskets were notoriously inaccurate and some of the shots were wildly off target.

The front staircase is an outstanding feature of this part of the hallway. Towering above it is one of the best armorial stained glass windows ever made in this country. It was made by William Peckitt in 1784/5, acting on a commission from Sir John Ingilby following the rebuilding of the castle. The window depicts the family history from 1350 to 1780.

The centre portrait on the wall in The Tower Room, next to the staircase is of King James I, who became King James VI of Scotland in 1567. In 1603 en route to his coronation in London he spent the night of April 16th at Ripley. Word of his weakness for “favourites” preceded him, and a fine new plaster ceiling in his honour was erected in the principal bedroom. The Tower Room was at that time divided into two parts one served as a dressing room and could be occupied by a royal servant who could also protect the doorway from the then only access point, from the stone spiral staircase in the corner. The two fireplaces ensured that both halves of the room were kept warm. The new ceiling was suitably designed to persuade the king that the Inglebys would make worthy favourites. It was a wonderful gesture, although entirely self centred and Sir William was rewarded with a knighthood shortly afterwards.

The floor has a strange history. It was originally the deck of the frigate “Rose”, commanded by Admiral Sir Thomas Frankland, who died in 1784. The “Rose” had given Frankland so many bitter-sweet memories; it had made his fortune and witnessed the death of his son. When the ship was dismantled in the 1750s, he had the deck transferred and laid as a floor at his home, Thirleby Hall near Thirsk. When the house was demolished in 1927 the floor was bought by Sir William Ingiby who re-laid it in The Tower Room as it was thought it would be a pity if it were lost.
The Knight’s Chamber is the final room of the tour and also the most spectacular. It was completed in 1555 and was to become a place of safety for the northern Catholics. The Chamber has the original oak ceiling and wall panelling. On a wood panel is a portrait of Francis Ingilby (1550-1586), he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1584. Within two years he was captured and suffered martyrdom in 1586 being hanged, drawn and quartered at York.

Right: Francis Ingilby (1550-1586)

Left: Sir Joslan Ingilby and his 8 year old son Thomas, shortly after the discovery of the priest’s hole in 1964. On the left is the Armada chest

In the south-west corner of the room is a Priest’s Hole which was discovered in 1964 when work was being carried out on the panelling. It was carefully concealed in the masonry between the Chamber and the stone spiral staircase, it contains a small stone ledge to serve as a seat and there is a small ventilation hole in the masonry to let in fresh air.

The hiding place remained undiscovered, doubtless being used by Francis’s brother David Ingleby (1547-1600) on many occasions until his death in 1600. David was rebellious and supported the more extreme and militant wing of Catholicism. Its closely guarded secret of its whereabouts had died when there was no longer any need to use it.

An Armada chest by the wall was used by Sir William Ingleby (1518-1578). He built the tower and his portrait is above the fireplace. He was treasurer of the border garrison town of Berwick-upon-Tweed from 1558 and this is the chest that he kept the garrison’s wages in. It has sixteen locks (or latches), all worked by one massive key.

To the right of the fireplace is a portrait of Sir William Ingleby (1546-1618) who hosted King James I but then became involved in the Gunpowder Plot. At his trial in London the case collapsed when key witnesses were bribed to change their testimony. Sir William escaped execution and was able to walk away from court a free man.

Other furnishings include a cockfighting chair, c.1780. It was designed for a professional gambler.

This room also contains a remarkable collection of arms and armour, collected from both sides of the English civil war battlefield. There are also firearms on the table (a Thurston snooker table, made in c.1890), which include flintlock muskets. Inside the glass case are a number of objects and artefacts including “Trooper” Jane’s bible with her signature, medals, coins, fossils and a Bronze Age axe found on the estate in 1958.
The Walled Gardens and Grounds

After visiting the fascinating castle there are the delightful and magnificent grounds to explore. The terrace in front of the castle leads to a few stone steps to a path that goes to the walled gardens. The entrance is just off the path to the right through a wrought iron gate. On entering the gardens the long herbaceous borders on the left can be seen, which create a splendid bloom of colour between June and October as well as a glorious fragrance. The Palm House and Hothouse at the centre of the gardens were constructed by Sir William Amcotts Ingiby in 1817/18. Trees, such as palm trees and peaches trees and other exotic plants were grown in the hothouses at a great cost to Sir William. The Palm House in fact stood in the middle of two hothouses and Sir William suggested in a letter to his successor in 1847 to clear this range of hothouses which he maintained more for other people then himself. His advice was taken and the western range was duly pulled down and the eastern range was renovated in 1994 to house the current collection of tropical plants, ferns and cacti.
The walled kitchen garden contains an extensive herb bed and an extraordinary collection of rare vegetables, grown in cooperation with the Henry Doubleday Research Association, near Coventry. The fruit trees belong to traditional English species and comprise a mixture of cooking and eating apples. The pleasure grounds contain a collection of specimen trees from around the world planted at Ripley from the 1840s onwards. In spring the ground is covered with daffodils, narcissi, snowdrops, aconites and bluebells.

Through the pleasure gardens is a gazebo, a stone building based on a Greek Temple which is another enterprise of Sir William Amcotts Inglby’s grand designs. North of the temple is an ice house which was an early form of deep freeze. The ice would be taken to the castle to help preserve food and treat fevers.

Right: The gazebo, a stone building based on a Greek Temple which is another enterprise of Sir William Amcotts Inglby

The Lakes and Deer Park

The path down the stone steps opposite the front entrance of the castle leads down to an Iron Bridge designed by Thomas Telford in about 1840, which enables a walk above the basin of the horseshoe waterfall. This is the way to the lakes and deer park.
The lakes were excavated by Mark Faviell in 1844, on the instructions of Sir William Amcotts Ingilby after his second wife; Mary Anne discovered Capability Brown's plans for the landscaping of the estate. She realised that there should have been lakes in front of the Castle and because of their expense they had not been made. Previously a small narrow stream flowed down the centre of a rather boggy valley. She went to stay with friends, after announcing that she would not be returning until the lakes had been dug. It was estimated at £2,500 to do the work, however, the bill came to £3,000. Sir William was so furious that there was very nearly a divorce case over it. Sluice gates were installed to enable the lakes to be drained and dredged. The lakes are now home to many species of wildfowl including Canada and greylag geese, mallard, teal and widgeon, and great crested grebe. Fish species include pike, chub, tench, perch, carp, bream, roach and rudd.

The Deer Park contains two heads of deer. The red deer are the larger species of the two and are in a paddock right at the top of the park. The fallow deer are part of a herd that has grazed in the park for over 500 years. In fact Ripley has one of the few medieval deer parks that still contain deer. They range in colour from white to almost black, but are more usually light brown with lighter speckles. The stags or bucks of both species grow large antlers and can become quite aggressive during the rutting season in September and October.

The park also contains a remarkable collection of ancient oak and chestnut trees, several well over 1000 years old, much older than the castle itself. They still look magnificent with their impressive girth and gnarled branches.
Ripley Village

Right: The Boar’s Head Hotel overlooking the Market Cross which is probably medieval. The name which appears across its front above the doorway is covered over with ivy

Below: Portrait of Sir William Amcotts Ingilby (1783-1854)

The name Ripley is probably derived from ‘rip lea’, meaning the field by the banks of the river. This indicates that the first settlement was probably situated by the River Nidd. The peaceful village of Ripley is now by-passed by the A61 from Harrogate to Ripon and virtually all of Ripley belongs to the Ingilby family. Sir Thomas Ingleby (c1290-1352) married the heiress Edeline Thwenge in 1308/9 and acquired the Ripley Castle estate with its mediaeval manor house as her dowry. A weekly Monday market and an annual three day Horse Fair were held at Market Square in the centre of Ripley, however they both died out in the early 1900s. In the 1820s Sir William Amcotts Ingilby (1783-1854) discovered that most of the village properties were in a deplorably dilapidated condition. The picture of the village on page 23 is a record of market square and the thatched cottages that fronted onto it in about 1780. In fact Sir William had a most unsettled childhood being only 11 years old when his parents went into exile. He was left with domestic staff and the lack of discipline led him to be an alcoholic by the age of 18. He did however share his father’s fondness for travel. Before Sir William Ingilby demolished the village he travelled to France and visited a village in Alsace-Lorraine and was impressed by the French architecture. On returning to Ripley he rebuilt the village modelled in the architectural style of Alsace-Lorraine. Ripley’s Town Hall was built in 1854 and has the inscription hôtel de ville carved in stone across the front. The castle and All Saints’ Church were saved from being demolished in the reconstruction of the village.

In the middle of the cobbled Market Square are a War Memorial and the Market Cross. The Cross is probably medieval, and it was moved from its original location at the junction of the roads to Pateley Bridge and Bishop Thornton to complete the Market Square in the 1830s. Adjacent to the cross are the village stocks used to punish those who had committed minor offences or caused disturbance in the village. The Boar’s Head Hotel overlooks the square; it provides food, refreshments and a comfortable bed for the night for passing travellers. The origin of the name The Boars Head is the emblem of the Ingilby family.
In the 19th century, Ripley was a coaching stopover on the Leeds to Edinburgh coach road and originally had three inns. The Boar’s Head was then the Star Inn, and the six pointed Star is also part of the Ingilby family crest. However, Sir William Ingilby, who was a religious man, noticed after he left worship at Ripley All Saints’ Church across the square from the Star, that some of the parishioners headed straight to the inn. As a result, Sir William banned Sunday opening in 1919, all three landlords were unable to survive without Sunday trade and closed. In 1990 Sir Thomas Ingilby decided to end the ‘dry spell’ and the Boar’s Head Hotel came into being in the same building as the original old Star.

In the south east corner of the square is the stone carved Boar’s Head drinking fountain complete with modern taps. It was Sir Thomas’s oldest son, also called Thomas (1310-1369), who saved the king from being gored by a wild boar whilst on a hunting expedition. He was knighted and granted the use of the boar’s head emblem as his family crest.

All Saint’s Church is situated bordering Market Square and dates from about 1400 and succeeded an earlier one that was built further south overlooking the River Nidd. This church partly fell into the waters but some of its stones were used to construct the new church. It contains the tomb chest of Sir Thomas Ingleby (1290-c1352) and his wife Katherine. Near the entrance door is the medieval cross base known as the ‘Weeping Cross’. It is believed that after the battle of Marston Moor, Cromwell’s troops lined up some of their prisoner’s against the east wall of the church and shot them. Musket bullet hole marks can still be seen in the wall.
Left: Entrance to Castle Yard, tickets to the castle and gardens can be purchased in the Castle Gift Shop which also includes toilet facilities.

Opposite is a delicatessen together with the Castle Tea Rooms.

Right: The Gardens and hothouse

LOCATIONS

1. Ripley Castle
2. Gift Shop and Castle Yard
3. Castle Tearoom
4. East Wing
5. Gatehouse
6. Walled Gardens
7. Kitchen Gardens
8. Pleasure Grounds
9. Deer Park and Lakeside Walk
10. The Boar's Head Coaching Inn
11. All Saints' Church
12. Birchwood Farm Museum
13. Chantry House Art Gallery
14. Ripley Village Store
15. Hotel de Ville
16. Ripley Endowed School (1702)
17. Village Stocks
18. Delicatessens
19. Boar's Head drinking fountain
20. Car Park and Public WC's
21. Show field
Boroughbridge in North Yorkshire where the Devil’s Arrows are located, is a small town situated about 21 kilometres north-west of York and 7 kilometres south-east of Ripon. The Devil’s Arrows consists of three huge standing stones that remain from an original four or five and are among the least understood and most neglected historic monuments in Britain. They are also known as the Devil’s Bolts, the Three Greyhounds and the Three Sisters. The Arrows stand unevenly spaced on a northwest, southeast alignment and the line of the three standing stones is some 174 metres long. The two northern stones stand in a field by the side of the A168 and the busy A1(M) motorway, the third is separated from them by the Roecliffe Lane and they are located on the western outskirts of Boroughbridge.

The lowest stone is at the northern end of the row close to a field boundary, it is rectangular and rather squat 5.5 metres but what it lacks in height it makes up for in its broad face compared to the other two more slender stones by having a cross section of 2.6 by 1.4 metres, set at right-angles to the alignment. Like the other Arrows its top is deeply grooved with ruts that are slightly out of vertical. The middle stone is 60 metres to the south which stands about 6.7 metres tall and is almost square in section, 1.5 by 1.2 metres, with a slight but noticeable lean to the south.

The tallest Arrow is at the southern end of the alignment across the road that leads from Boroughbridge to Roecliffe. It is partially hidden under trees behind a gate in its own fenced enclosure and stands 6.9 metres tall and squarish in section 1.4 by 1.2 metres. The top is deeply grooved and its great size is somewhat dimished by the trees near it. This stone is the second tallest standing stone in Britain only beaten by the gigantic 7.8 metres monolith in Rudston churchyard about 78 kilometres to the east. This story has been published in the journal (TYJ 3 Autumn 2010).
Left: This stone is situated close to a field boundary and is rather more squat, 5.5 metres tall.

Above: The middle stone measures about 6.7 metres tall with a slight but noticeable lean to the south.

Left: The tallest of the three standing stones, it stands nearly 7 metres tall and is partially hidden under trees in its own fenced enclosure.
It is interesting that although the Devil’s Arrows form an alignment the three stones do not stand in a straight line, the middle monolith is offset slightly to the west. The Devil’s Arrows have been remarkably neglected in recent years by archaeologists and very little has been written about them that is not repetitious.

The number of Arrows, their source and transportation

It is also difficult to establish the original number of stones that once stood here in a line, three, four or five. From records of early antiquarians we know that at least four Arrows stood here in centuries gone by. In the 16th century the antiquary John Leland visited Boroughbridge sometime between 1535 and 1540 when he inspected the stones. He recorded four stones and describes the two middle standing stones, as being one taller than the other. Some 30 years later in 1592 William Camden the great topographer came to Boroughbridge just after the smaller of the two middle stones had been pulled down by those in search of buried treasure. But whether a fifth stone had actually been part of the Arrows must be left unresolved. Leland and Camden did not see it and it was not until the late 17th century that it was mentioned by John Aubrey. This information originally was in a letter from the Rev. Edward Maurice (Morris) the Vicar of Aldborough from 1677 to 1720 indicating that in “anciently” times there were five arrows. If there was a fifth stone it seems very likely that it was pulled down and broken up for building material long before 1535. Its existence must remain questionable. There is less doubt about the fourth arrow which may have been dragged off in the early 17th century to construct the bridge over the River Tutt on the entrance to the town. The top part of this stone is said to stand in the ground of Aldborough Manor.

It is also believed that the stones came from an outcrop known as the Plumpton Rocks about 12 kilometres to the south-east. Today Plumpton Rocks is a natural beauty spot where, at Lover’s Leap around the small lake are weathered outcrops cut into fantastical shapes by the winds.

Left: Reconstructed drawing of hauling a huge stone on a wooden sledge along timber rollers

Right: Plumpton Rocks at Lover’s Leap

Transporting the gigantic stones, which are made of millstone grit, the lightest weighing over 25 tons, would have been a remarkable undertaking for prehistoric people. It is believed that the huge stones were hauled on a wooden sledge along timber rollers that could be taken up and moved forward. The stone would have been pulled by ropes. It would have taken approximately six months to transport one single stone pulled over about 12 long kilometres by two hundred people from the Plumpton Rocks to Boroughbridge. This enterprise would have required a community effort rather than a single prehistoric settlement. Once the stone was dragged to a prepared hole it would be levered up using wooden timbers and ropes and carefully moved into the hole.

At the top of all three Arrows are deep grooved ruts that are slightly out of vertical. These are natural gouged channels caused by four thousand or more years of exposure to the rain and frost which have given them a fluted appearance. This effect of weathering can also be seen at Rudston which is now safe-guarded by a lead capping. No such protection has been given to the naturally fluted Devil’s Arrows.

Excavation Work

All three stones were excavated in the 18th and 19th centuries. An area around the middle stone was excavated in 1709 which found a further 1.5 metres of the stone below ground level as well as cobbles and clay used as packing material and it could be subsidence of this material that has led to its present off vertical tilt. The base of the stone was found to be flat. The smallest stone close to a field boundary was excavated in 1876 revealing a further 1.4 metres of the stone beneath ground level. The tallest stone was excavated in 1881, its square base was buried a further 1.8 metres beneath the ground surface. During these limited excavations no artefacts were found that could date the formation of the Arrows.
Clearly there is need for further modern archaeological investigation to be carried out to resolve the issue of the number of standing stones and dating them. A Resistivity survey is probably one of the most effective ways followed up by excavation work. However, at present no University has shown any interest in making a study of the Devil’s Arrows.

**Legends**

There are several stories connecting the Boroughbridge stones with the Devil. The best known one says that the Devil was angry with the nearby Christian settlement at Aldborough. He was standing on How Hill, just south of Fountains Abbey and in trying to fire his arrows he overestimated his strength. Every one fell short, embedding themselves in a line in the field outside Boroughbridge.

The Devil’s failure was not unusual, in legends he was always missing his aim, although at Rudston church he did better, the stone landed in the churchyard only 3.7 metres from his target.

Such legends seem to be deep rooted in history but in fact are no more than two hundred years old. There is no mention of the name ‘Devil’s Arrows’ before 1692. It would seem that the stones were first called ‘arrows’ in a letter to John Aubrey and they have been called the Devil’s Arrows ever since 1692.

**The Devil’s Arrows**

The Devil's Arrows date to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. It is likely that the site was simply a row of standing stones situated south of the River Ure. There are a number of significant Neolithic henges and Bronze Age round barrows situated close to this river to the north-west of the Devil’s Arrows. These are the Cana and Hutton Moor henges, the destroyed Nunwick henge and the three famous henges at Thornborough all are situated within 18 kilometres of the Devil’s Arrows.

It has been suggested that these sites seem to have been laid out in some form of linear arrangement in prehistoric times known as the “Devil’s Arrow’s Ley” A survey of this prehistoric alignment concluded that statistically the alignment has a much greater probability than by chance. It is impossible not to come to the conclusion that all of these monuments formed part of a huge prehistoric ritual landscape based on the valley of the River Ure.

The site for the Devil’s Arrows was probably chosen because of the proximity of the River Ure, which may have been vital to the ceremonies at the site. The stones lead uphill from the water and are graded in height, the tallest at the head of the gradient with a blocking or terminal stone at the lower end. Between the wide spaces of the erected stones there could have stood great wooden posts. However, without a geo-physical survey followed by excavation the site cannot be determined.

The stones are aligned on the most southerly midsummer rising moon so it is possible that rituals may have taken place by the standing stones at important times of the year such as Midsummer’s Day. These three standing stones have had a long life and no doubt have meant different things to different people. They still remain something of a mystery, requiring further research but they were clearly meant to be seen and to impress themselves on our memory and that they have achieved by their presence today. For now all that we can do is look at these huge standing stones in amazement and use our own imagination as to what may have taken place here thousands of years ago.

*Left: Drawing of the Devil’s Arrows at Boroughbridge by Stanley Bond*
In snow the Gatehouse of Kirkham Priory

In the foreground are the remains of a 14th century cross

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