The Yorkshire Journal

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Welcome to the Summer issue of the Yorkshire Journal. We start off with Stephen Riley and Sarah Harrison exploring the village of Dent, before boarding the train and heading south. They cover all the top tourists’ attractions in the village. Then taking the train from Dent Station heading south we discover more remarkable features and about the construction of the Settle-Carlisle railway line before going through the Blea Moor Tunnel to emerge in North Yorkshire.

Next Gary Peacock recounts the uprising of the Luddites that took place in 1812 in his article, ‘The Dumb Steeple, the Croppers’ Tale and Trouble at the Mill in West Yorkshire’. Gary explains that croppers’ livelihoods were put at risk by increasing mechanisation in the mills, which meant their families faced poverty and starvation. After a failed attack on Cartwright Mills, which resulted in fourteen men being hanged at York, new machines were installed in the mills and the croppers’ trade was nothing but a distant memory.

Mary Shaw then visits the model of an imaginary village of Bondville, at Sewerby, near Bridlington. Its layout covers many individual buildings and hundreds of little character figures. There seem to be activities for everyone. A model train runs round the village and boats move across the water. There is so much going on that only a visit to the model village of Bondville will cover everything.

Hilary Spencer takes a special look at the Bempton Cliffs on the East Yorkshire coast that were featured in the BBC’s special Easter Springwatch. Visitors come to watch the seabirds nesting on the narrow cliff-ledges. But Hilary recalls when people visited the cliffs for a very different reason. This was in the 19th century when men clambered down to harvest eggs from ledges along the sheer cliffs. Hundreds of people came to watch the ‘climmers’ as they were known. Fortunately the practice of collecting seabirds’ eggs came to an end in 1954 with the introduction of Bird Protection Act.

English history is full of action and excitement, and in this issue Jeremy Clark recounts the events that led up to the Battle of Boroughbridge. Edward II had a stormy relationship with the Barons, especially with the Earl of Lancaster. Matters came to ahead in 1322 at the river crossing at Boroughbridge. After what seems to have been a very short battle a truce was made for the rebels to retire into the town for the night, but instead they fled. Lancaster was taken prisoner and after a mock-trial was beheaded.

If history of a more peaceful, personal nature is more to your liking, you will find a great deal to enjoy in Peter Wellburn’s ‘Forge Valley - far from the madding crowd’. He recalls his childhood memories and how his great-grandfather had been born in one of 5 cottages in the valley. It was from these cottages that during the summer refreshments were served to the public, including royalty. One was also known as the chocolate shop. Sadly this row of cottages was demolished before World War II.

For our last article David Reynolds compares an old photo of an Edwardian Yorkshire cycling club to a scene in Alan Bennett’s first television play ‘A Day Out’. The cyclists pause for a smoke and running repairs which is similar to a scene in Alan Bennett’s play.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them. We welcome your comments.
Through the Blea Moor Tunnel
and onwards . . .

By Stephen Riley and Sarah Harrison

Before we board the train at Dent Railway Station and head south a quick visit to the village of Dent, which the station serves, is in order. The story of the Dent Railway Station has been published in the journal (TYJ winter 2014). Today the village of Dent is situated within the Yorkshire Dales National Park on the borders of Cumbria. Until 1974 it was historically part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, then traditional boundaries were swept away and new counties were created. Counties were amalgamated, new names were used and Yorkshire’s three Ridings were abolished as administrative units and areas redistributed elsewhere. This new order was created with less bloodshed than the old system that was established more than a thousand year ago.

Left: Marie Hartley’s map published in ‘The Yorkshire Dales’, 1956


At the time that Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby (distinguished Yorkshire history writers) were researching their book on the Yorkshire Dales, first published in 1956, Dent was situated in the West Riding. Marie Harley’s map which accompanies their book illustrates the county borders before the new ones were created in 1974.
Left: A view of Dent village. The square tower of the Church of St Andrew can be seen in the centre with many white washed houses. In the background is Rise Hill.

Dent is located in Dentdale which is a narrow valley on the western slopes of the Pennines. It is about 5 miles (8 kilometres) south-east of Sedbergh, 14 miles (23 kilometres) south-west of Hawes and 26 miles (42 kilometres) north-west of Settle.

The picturesque village of Dent is famous for its cobbled streets which are narrow and have no pavements, but are lined with whitewashed houses. The village has an art gallery, a blacksmith’s shop, 3 real ale pubs, 2 cafés, a village store with a post office and a Heritage Centre.

Right: A narrow cobbled street lined with some white washed houses in Dent. At the corner is a fountain shaped from a solid block of granite which is a memorial to Adam Sedgwick.

Left: Lucy working in her forge.

Nowadays the blacksmith is not a man but a woman named Lucy Sandys-Clarke who uses a traditional open coke fire at her forge. Lucy practises techniques employed by blacksmiths for hundreds of years. Her work ranges from traditional items to large-scale commissions such as architectural installations. Her smithy, which is on the edge of the village, is liberally decorated with horseshoes hanging from the beams, although shoeing horses is something that she does not undertake. There has been a forge on the site of Lucy’s smithy since about 1640 and she is proud to be part of that ongoing tradition.

At the Heritage Centre are displays of the working lives and social customs of local people over 4 centuries including tales of the ‘Terrible Knitters of Dent’. In addition there are information posters telling the story of Dent and Dentdale from prehistoric times to the present day, supplemented by videos featuring residents, past and present.

Right: Outside the Heritage Centre where agricultural equipment and a railway signal can be seen.
Dent’s church, St Andrew’s, has an elevated position making it a local landmark in the centre of the village. There has been a Christian presence on this site for at least 1000 years. St Andrew’s was first constructed in the 12th century and was rebuilt in 1417, restored in 1590, and again in 1787. A further restoration was carried out in 1889-90. The square tower has embattled parapets with a south doorway and a clock face. Norman features have been retained in the blocked north doorway, the tower and in parts of the nave including the pillars.

Left: The Church of St Andrews with its embattled parapets

Right: The old grammar-school converted into flats

Dent’s Grammar School was founded in 1605 through the generosity of various local benefactors who left the rentals from land and farms for that purpose. It survived for almost three hundred years before finally closing in 1897. The governors could not compete with the cheaper schooling being offered at the ‘National’ elementary school opened in Dent in 1845. The old Grammar School building was converted into flats for local people to rent on long leases from which supports educational grants. The building is located in the churchyard and a desk and chair from the school can be seen in the church.

Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873), is Dent’s most famous son. He was born on March 22, 1785 and was the third child of the Anglican vicar in Dent. He attended the Old Grammar School in the churchyard where he was first taught by his father, before completing his studies at nearby Sedbergh School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He became a professor of geology at Cambridge University and was one of the greatest field geologists of his time. There is a fountain constructed from a solid block of granite in the village centre, where the three cobbled streets meet, to commemorate him. There is also a Memorial to Adam Sedgwick in the Church of St Andrew’s.

Left: Photo of Adam Sedgwick taken in 1867

Right: Fountain of solid block granite that commemorates Adam Sedgwick at the centre of Dent

The Sill family also have a memorial in the church which is a constant reminder of Dent’s historical connection with the slave trade. The Sill brothers made a fortune in West Indian sugar and built Whernside Manor with the proceeds. They brought their slaves to the village causing sermons to be preached in the Dales against them.
Dent is also famous for its knitters. In the 18th century, both men and women knitted, often while walking to the fields. Their output of hand-knitted gloves and socks was enormous, providing an important supplementary income. The well-known phrase ‘terrible knitters of Dent’ really means ‘the great knitters of Dent’, but doubtless the terrible knitters will always be associated with Dent.

*Right: Knitter and traveller on the road-side in Dent. From a Wood engraving by S. Williams The Rural Life of England by William Howitt (1844)*

Today, the village of Dent is home to less than 700 people, but it is still a thriving community. Each June Dent hosts a Music and Beer Festival. The first event was held in 2009 and was hailed as a great success. The Dales Way, which is a long distance path, runs along the length of the valley, as does the River Dee, making the area popular with walkers.

Now it’s time to head back to Dent Railway Station by crossing over the Rive Dee Bridge and following the river. About half way back there is a waterfall known as Hell’s Cauldron near Gibbs Hall. About 2 miles (3 kilometres) further along Dentdale is the hamlet of Cowgill, then comes the Dent Railway Station, approached by a steep one in four road with hairpin bends.

*Left: The waterfall at Hell’s Cauldron, River Dee, Dentdale. The cauldron is an impressive waterfall and plunge pool in the often dry bed of the river. In normal conditions the 4m-deep plunge pool’s only outlet is through the cobble-choked bottom.*

*Left: This signpost at Cowgill is a reminder that it was once formerly in the West Riding of Yorkshire and is complete with the OS Grid Reference*

*Right: Back at the Dent Railway Station waiting for our train*
From Dent Railway Station

The train leaves Dent Station heading south towards the next station, which is Ribble Head. But before that the line crosses two huge viaducts, Arten Gill and Dent Head, before going through the Blea Moor Tunnel. The line skirts the fells and then crosses the Arten Gill Viaduct, which is tall and slender. It is built of massive blocks of Dent ‘marble’, from the now-disused quarries nearby. This stone was popular for use in ornamental masonry and was remarkable for its wealth of fossils. The viaduct which carries the line over Arten Gill Beck is 201 metres long and has eleven almost semi-circular segmented arches, each spanning 13.7 meters and having a radius of 7 meters. At its highest point, it carries the line 35.7 metres above water level. Arten Gill is the second highest of the twenty-four viaducts along the line, the highest being Smardale at 131 metres, going towards Carlisle.

Left: Arten Gill Viaduct, tall and slender with eleven arches

The viaduct’s piers are tapered, with prominent springings for the arches. Two sets of widened piers, which are designed to prevent progressive collapse should one of the arches fail, divide the viaduct into sections of two, three and six spans. The foundations of several of the piers are sunk 16.8 metres below the river bed onto bed rock.

John Sydney Crossley designed it as part his work on the entire railway. He was chief engineer to the Midland Railway, the builders of the line. A date stone of ‘1875’ can be seen above one of the arches on the north side of Arten Gill Viaduct. The viaduct is most impressive on the skyline, particularly when approached from below along a rough farm track up the side of the hill from Stone Houses, half way between Dent Head and Cowgill.

Left: Date stone of ‘1875’ on the arch on the north side of Arten Gill
Following close on is the Dent Head Viaduct which is the next viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle Railway after Arten Gill going south towards Settle. The Dent Head viaduct was built between 1869 and 1875 from massive blocks of Dent marble, and it crosses over the quarry that produced it. The owners of the quarry, Dent Marble Works, were paid £1300 in compensation for disruption to their business.

Left: Dent Head Viaduct.
Photo by Rob Sutton

Right: Dent Head Viaduct, by Williams, Frederick Smeeton, ibid

This viaduct is one of the most impressive structures on the line. At its highest point it is 30.5 metres above the public road, and over Fell End Gill which runs by on our left flowing into the River Dee. The viaduct is 182 metres long, with ten almost semi-circular arches each spanning 13.7 metres. As with the Arten Gill Viaduct, Crossley wanted to minimize the chance of progressive collapse should disaster befall the viaduct, so the arches are arranged in two sets of five separated by a wide pier in the centre. All the piers are tapered, with prominent arch sprinings. There is a date stone of ‘1875’ on the parapet of the viaduct.

Left: Dent Head Viaduct looking under the arches

Above: The date stone of ‘1875’ on the parapet of the Dent Head Viaduct
Soon after crossing the Dent Head Viaduct the line goes through the dark Mossey Bottom forestry plantation before entering the infamous Blea Moor Tunnel. At 2,404 metres it is the longest tunnel on the Carlisle to Settle Railway, and is 152 metres below the moor after which it was named. It is almost twice as long as the second longest tunnel, the Rise Hill Tunnel, taking almost five years to complete. The tunnel, which is a major feat of engineering was built between 1870 and 1875 and cost £50 per metre.

*Left: About to enter the Blea Moor Tunnel’s north entrance. The plantation of conifer trees now dominates the head of this valley*

The Blea Moor Tunnel was built with the aid of seven separate construction shafts sunk from the moor above along the alignment of the tunnel. This technique of sunken shafts was also used in the construction of the Bramhope Tunnel which has been published in detail in the journal (*TYJ summer 2013*). The shafts were about 3 metres in diameter and permitted sixteen separate gangs of navvies to be used during construction, one from each open end and two from the foot of each of the shafts. However it took hundreds of navvies to dig the tunnel. They worked day and night, seven days a week by candlelight, using picks and shovels. Steam winding engines were installed at the top of each shaft along the length of the tunnel to haul out the spoil. The navvies did have one advantage in building the tunnel, dynamite which was then a new form of explosive. It replaced the much more dangerous gunpowder.
Of the seven construction shafts that were sunk down from the moor above, four were filled in when the work was completed and three are still in use as ventilation shafts. When the line was in regular use by steam trains the smoke from them would rise through the three ventilation shafts onto the moor, filling the air with clouds of smoke. By the sides of each shaft there are massive soil heaps clearly indicating the route of the tunnel below. Spoil tips excavated from the tunnel’s entrances can also be seen immediately after exiting the tunnel.

The tunnel was lined with bricks which were produced at the brickworks sited near to the Ribblehead viaduct. The tunnel is 365 metres longer than proposed, because the cuttings on the southern side would have been too deep and a perpetual threat to traffic from landslip.
Entering the Blea Moor Tunnel on the Cumbria side we emerge in North Yorkshire. This is due to the boundary changes in 1974, for the boundary line between Cumbria and North Yorkshire is about half way through the tunnel.

Right: Blea Moor Tunnel north end, by Williams, Frederick Smeeton, ibid

The construction of the Settle-Carlisle Railway was the most difficult and hazardous feat in railway engineering in England, and this is much in evidence in upper Dentdale, where the track crosses two viaducts, Arten Gill and Dent Head, before entering the Blea Moor Tunnel.

Left: A view of the south entrance to the Blea Moor Tunnel looking south towards the plateau of Ingleborough across the wild and desolate moorland

Right: Above the south entrance to the Blea Moor Tunnel is the date stone of '1874'

Photo by Mark R Harvey
Terrible weather took its toll with several men drowned in the cuttings on Blea Moor Tunnel during a rainstorm in July 1870. Snow and floods held up the work over the following two years. The first passage through was completed by August 1873 and the arches at the north and south ends along with the brick lining were completed by November 1874.

Right: Map showing the village of Dent to Cowgill and Dent Railway Station. The Settle-Carlisle Railway line from Dent station curves round and crosses the two viaducts of Arten Gill and Dent Head, before entering the Blea Moor Tunnel and emerging at Little Dale. The three ventilation shafts are marked along the route of the tunnel

Occasionally during periods of extremely cold winters, ice accumulates inside the shafts forming massive icicles weighing several tons. However these do not stop trains running on the line.

These recent photos on the right and below show icicles that formed in and around ventilation shafts deep inside the Blea Moor tunnel as a result of the natural seepage of water through the ground. Even when the temperature rises above freezing in the open air, it can remain several degrees colder inside the tunnel.

In these conditions a 20mph temporary speed restriction is imposed through the Blea Moor tunnel and the Rise Hill tunnel, these being usually the worst affected.

As well as icicles, there is also a build up of ice at track level in the tunnel, giving the effect of stalactites and stalagmites in caves. Fortunately, the fact that trains run 24 hours a day keeps the ice off the tracks themselves.

Photos courtesy of Network Rail

Next time - On to Ribble Head and Settle
At Cooper Bridge in West Yorkshire, situated to the side of the busy junction, where the A62 between Huddersfield and Liversedge intersects the A644 between Brighouse and Mirfield is a stone column. It is known locally as the “Dumb Steeple” and stands approximately 26ft high topped with a stone shaped ball. It originally stood at the centre of a grassy roundabout but was moved to its current location when the traffic grew too heavy in the 1980s when the layout of the road was changed. The column is constructed from the local millstone grit, but there are no inscriptions or markings of any kind as to why it was erected or to whom, if anybody it commemorated.

However, the column is thought to date from the early 1700s and could well have replaced a previous monument on the site. The meaning of the name and its purpose have long been forgotten, but here are some of the more common theories:

The “steeple” part of the name suggests a religious connection and the proximity to the old Kirklees Priory could give this some credence, alternatively it may just refer to its shape. The “dumb” part of the name is even more puzzling. If we follow a religious theme it could be a corruption of “Domini”, Latin for “Lord’s”, making it the “Lord’s Steeple” (Domini Stapulus). Alternatively, it could be a corruption of “Doomed Steeple”; doomed being a reference to King Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries that closed the nearby priory. On a lighter note local parents when asked by their children why it’s called dumb, would often respond “because it says nowt!” Probably the best theory is that it is a shortening of “dumb man’s steeple” being a reference to the role it played in the Luddite rebellion. This theory is supported by the fact that prior to the Luddites rally, which took place there in 1812 the monument was simply referred to as the “Obelisk”. The large demolished house that stood close by being Obelisk Grove and the turnpike the monument stands at, which is the A644, is often referred to as the “Brighouse Obelisk Turnpike Road”.

Left: The Dumb Steeple in its present position at the intersection of the A62 and A644

Right: An early 1900s hand coloured postcard showing the Dumb Steeple in its original position on the island in the middle of the road. It was moved over to the side of the road when the junction was altered in the 1980s.

Left: A large house known as Obelisk Grove stood in the grounds behind the Dumb Steeple, the windows of which can been seen in this old photo
Regardless of the Dumb Steeple’s involvement with the Luddites it was already there before those troubled times, so what was its purpose? There are many theories and suggestions; it may originally have been the site of a Roman route marker, a medieval guide post to the cattle crossing at Cow Ford, now the location of Cooper Bridge. A most likely explanation is that it was simply a boundary marker for land owned by the priory and under the protectorate of the church.

Early Textiles in Mirfield

Fabric production has been carried out in Mirfield and the surrounding area for at least 800 years and in 2003 there are four remaining active mills still producing fabric for export all over the world. In the 1750s Hopton alone was listed as having forty weaving looms, the industry in those days being largely a cottage based one. Local families would have specialised in the different processes involved in the manufacture, a system known as “Putting out” was operated where by a “Master Clothier” would have delivered by packhorse the raw wool and yarn to separate cottages to be spun into yarn or woven into fabric. Later this would have been collected to be taken on to further cottages to be fulled, a process whereby the cloth is pounded to “full out” the fibres giving it a softer and thicker feel. Then finally it would have been delivered to a “Dressing shop” for finishing and from there to market.

The dressing shop was the only non-cottage based part of the process. It was carried out by men known as “Croppers”, compared to the numbers involved in other processes their numbers were small. The Croppers were highly skilled craftsmen upon which the end quality and hence value of the finished product depended. A well finished cloth’s value could be increased by a third. Entry to the trade was strictly controlled and an apprenticeship had to be served, the skill was often handed down from father to son. They even formed their own institution operating much like masonic societies.

They were well paid, for example an inn keeper of the time was quoted as saying “The cropper lads drink three times the amount of ale per night the spinners do!” Records show the croppers were indeed being paid at least three times the wages of most labourers. The craft that earned them such great esteem and wages involved raising the nap, (loose fibres in the cloth). This was done by stretching the cloth over an upright frame known as a “nelly” and combing it with teasels attached to a wooden frame. The cloth now with a raised nap would have a fluffy, furry surface that needed to be removed, this was done by laying the cloth over a “cropping board” (a long narrow table with a curved surface). The cloth would then be pulled taut using a system of hooks and lead weights. Next, the cropper would use the huge cropping shears whose blades were curved to match the cropping board to crop away the nap. This resulted in a cloth with a smooth and even surface. The job was slow and laborious; the cloth needing to be continually advanced over the cropping table, the shears themselves weighed in excess of 40lbs. The strength the croppers used to wield these shears would later be put to a less constructive purpose.
In the 1760s things began to change, mechanisation had arrived, the flying shuttle loom was being adopted all over Yorkshire. This new loom was not only faster than anything before but could be operated by one man. Production soared to such an extent that yarn that was still being spun by hand could not be produced in sufficient quantities. This problem was soon addressed with the advent of the spinning jenny capable of spinning up to forty threads at the same time.

*Right: A reconstruction of a cropping shop at the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield*

At this time the Master Clothier began to see the future, he was still operating the system of “putting out” the individual tasks to the self-employed cottage based spinners and weavers.

**Building Mills**

With increased production he found himself spending more time delivering raw products and collecting the finished product, with all this toing and froing he barely had time to sell the finished cloth! So why not bring all the processes together under one roof? The day of the mill owner had arrived.

By the 1770s hundreds of mills had sprung up across Yorkshire; the abundant supply of water providing power to further increase production. The new mill owners were rapidly becoming very wealthy men indeed. The cottage dwellers whose services where no longer required began to relocate from their isolated hamlets to the new towns that were rapidly growing around the new mills, providing labour for what was now becoming the first mechanised industry.

Meanwhile the croppers weren't doing too bad either, many new mill owners were still sending their cloth to dressing shops for finishing, with increased demand they too had expanded. Other mill owners built their own dressing shops, but the power of the croppers “institutions” let them, to some extent, dictate their own terms and conditions for employment. All in all the croppers weren't having a bad time of it, but that was about to change! As the efficiency of the new mills improved it became obvious that the dressing shops were a bottle neck to production. The only way to increase production was to pay more croppers or invent a machine to mechanise the job.

Such a machine was designed by John Harmer in 1787. The first cropping frames, as they would come to be known, mechanically operated the shears and advanced the material automatically by power being provide by pulleys from the mill wheel. One of these crude early frames tended by one unskilled operator could now do the work of ten skilled croppers.

At around the same time a device known as a “gig mill” was introduced. This simple machine also mechanised the raising of the nap.

With the existence of these two machines the croppers’ days were numbered and they knew it. Something would have to be done!
In 1812 Enoch and James Taylor of Marsden near Huddersfield, who were originally blacksmiths, acquired the right to produce cropping frames. During their time as blacksmiths they had produced agricultural implements and tools, among these tools were large heavy hammers. These same hammers would later play a part in this tale.

**Hard Times**

At around the same time the economy was in crisis. Britain had long been engaged in the war against Napoleon and now the Americans had introduced a foreign trade embargo. Due to this, taxation was high and export or import of goods was almost impossible. The harvests of 1810 and 1811 were poor and by 1812 the price of corn was at an all-time high.

_Wages had been reduced to improve profitability but still several mills had gone bankrupt. Looking for further ways to improve profitability, the introduction of the cropping frame seemed the ideal solution. The cropping frame had been in existence for 20 years or so but was not widely taken up in Yorkshire. There had also been an uneasy standoff between the croppers’ institutes and the mill owners. The croppers had managed to get a government sponsored committee to undertake an enquiry into the effect of introducing the cropping frame in 1812. Prior to this there had been some acts of violence against mills using the new technology. Unfortunately, the committee was unsympathetic and by 1812 the use of the unpopular technology was increasing rapidly._

The situation in Yorkshire was at the same time to some extent being mirrored in the Nottinghamshire stocking and lace making industry, where the uptake of new methods and machinery had initially increased production but also decreased the value and quality of the finished product. In this time of financial uncertainty the mill owners of Nottinghamshire responded in much the same way as their Yorkshire neighbours, more machinery was ordered to reduce skilled staff thereby reducing wages. Poverty among the mill workers was reaching starvation point when violence erupted. A local man known by the name of Ned Ludd (whether this was his real name is not known) led the workers to attack the local mills where they selectively set about destroying the machines. They could easily have destroyed all the machines or burned down the mills but this would only have worsened their plight so only the specific machines blamed for their poverty were destroyed.
The Nottinghamshire followers of Ned Ludd increased in number and became known as “luddites”. The luddites became more organised in their methods and began to give written notice to the mill owners of their intention if the offending machines were not removed. Quite a few mill owners paid heed of the threats and removed the machines. Further north, in Yorkshire, the croppers watched and started to make their plans. Liversedge man William Hall had been employed as a cropper prior to the introduction of cropping frames. He and several friends, many former croppers themselves, would meet in an upstairs room at the Shears Inn at Hightown. The croppers’ institution had now taken on a more sinister role. Poverty was all around them but more than any they had felt their own fall from a relatively “privileged” class into poverty. They had heard tales of “General” Ludd and the Nottinghamshire Luddites and their relative successes.

The Yorkshire Luddites Revolution

So they, along with like-minded groups from across the county, made their plans. The Shears Inn’s upstairs room became a regular Saturday night meeting place for representatives of other groups. Soon the Yorkshire Luddites were born swearing a secret oath known as “Twisting In”. (To represent the many twisted fibres making up a strong yarn.)

The Luddite Oath

“I of my own free will and accord do hear by promise and swear that I will never reveal any of the names of any one of this secret committee, under the penalty of being sent out of this world by the first brother that may meet me. I furthermore do swear, that I will pursue with unceasing vengeance any traitor or traitors, should there any arise. should he flee I Furthermore swear that I will be sober and faithful in all my dealings with all my Brothers and if I ever decline them, my name to be blotted out from the list of the society and never to be remembered, but with contempt and abhorrence.

So help me God to keep this my oath inviolate”.

Left: Old Enock (on display at Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield)

This large heavy sledge hammer was made by Enoch Taylor, he also made the frames it was used to destroy!

Enoch med em an Enoch breks em.

One man was destined to become the acknowledged leader of the Yorkshire Luddites. George Mellor became a frequent Saturday night visitor of the Shears Inn. Only twenty two years old and working as a cropper in his step-father’s dressing shop at Longroyd Bridge, he and several friends formed the nucleus of the local luddites. His youth, enthusiasm and fluency made him the ideal leader and he commanded great respect. His men even crowned him with the title “King Ludd”.

King Ludd at the head of his men, reinforced by other supporting groups from the surrounding area, carried out raids around Huddersfield smashing cropping frames and gig mills with large smithies hammers they called “Great Enochs”. Referred to with a sardonic note “Enoch makes them now Enoch breaks them”; Enoch Taylor both produced the hammers and cropping frames.

Demands in writing were issued to the mill owners calling for the removal of cropping frames and gig mills but had little effect. So the raids went on. The luddites grew in numbers and the organisation probably by now had mustered together over three hundred men. The luddites were beginning to have a free hand to do as they pleased. Initially there had been little violence but now as the movement gathered momentum acts of robbery and violence became more common place.

The authorities seeing law and order slipping away began to fear revolution so now tried to regain control. Rewards were offered for information and severe sentences handed out to those found guilty of involvement. Large numbers of special constables were recruited and sworn in to help uphold the law. (Many of whom were of dubious character and more interested in any potential reward to be earned.) The military were also called in to restore order but only small numbers could be spared from the ongoing Napoleonic war. Plus other than the secret meetings and raids there was little opportunity for them to take any action. The mill owners began to take things into their own hands fortifying their premises and hiring private armed guards. The military also came under pressure to provide guards for some of the more affluent and powerful owners.

Left: Details of the one hundred guinea reward offered in Huddersfield for information on persons involved in the destruction of machinery

Mill owner William Cartwright was one of the first to introduce cropping frames into his mill at Rawfolds, Cleckheaton in 1809. Other local mills soon followed the example. William Cartwright became a figure of hatred in the local towns and villages and word soon got out that regardless of Luddite threats more new cropping frames were due to arrive at Cartwright’s Mill. The local luddites led by William Hall acted quickly lying in wait that night on Hartshead Moor. They ambushed the wagons carrying the new cropping frames. The drivers were seized and taken prisoner until the new cropping frames had been totally destroyed.

No doubt buoyed by this recent success, at their next secret meeting at the Shears Inn a more ambitious plan was hatched to attack Cartwright’s Rawfolds Mill and destroy the existing despised machinery.
The Luddites attack on Rawfold’s Mill

They planned to attack the mill the following Saturday night, 11th April. That night as arranged they left their homes and local inns at different times, so as not to arouse suspicion, before making their way to the prearranged muster point in the field behind the Dumb Steeple. They were met there by the Huddersfield Luddites led by King Ludd, George Mellor. They were now some one hundred and fifty strong. King Ludd’s army must have been a strange sight that night. Lined up in the field they were armed with all sorts of weaponry, some with guns and pistols, but the majority armed with old swords or home-made weapons. At the head of the army men carried the great enochs to carry out the destruction. To avoid recognition they wore masks or blackened their faces. They were also dressed in all sorts of strange attire, many of them dressed in carter’s smocks, others had their coats turned inside out, some had put their checked shirts over their clothes and a few had actually dressed themselves partly in women’s apparel.

This strange army still growing in number set out on its three mile walk to Rawfold’s Mill. Along the way at a prearranged point they joined together with the Luddites from Leeds. They now numbered near three hundred strong.

William Cartwright was no fool, he knew an attack was likely and had made provision. He was also a captain in the Halifax Militia so had some understanding of military tactics. The mill had been fortified, the doors had been strengthened, the stairwells set with heavy spiked rollers to crush any attackers and a large acid carboy (a large glass container holding several gallons of acid) was kept ready on the roof to be poured on any attackers. Cartwright, along with four trusted employees and his dog, were sleeping on the premises along with five soldiers who had been detailed to guard the mill.

The Luddites managed to capture the two sentries posted at the mill gates, they then surged into the mill yard hurling stones through the windows and began smashing down the doors. However, they had recently been strengthened for this eventuality and little progress was being made.

Cartwright had been alerted by his dog barking and realising they were under attack ordered the mill bell to be rung to summon help. Hundreds of men were now crowded into the courtyard. The great enochs were being used on the doors but still they held strong. Cartwright and the soldiers now opened fire on the Luddites with muskets from the upper floors of the mill. The Luddites were caught in the open with little cover and now found themselves under heavy fire. Those with muskets and pistols tried to return fire but most of the weapons were old and their users untrained.

The soldiers however were trained and maintained steady volleys of fire into the packed courtyard. In the dark well aimed shots would not have been possible but due to the numbers in the courtyard men were still being hit. After twenty or so minutes the doors were still holding. Realising the battle was lost King Ludd and his men withdrew before more soldiers could arrive. Most of the injured being carried away but the seriously injured had been left behind. At first Cartwright refused to give them any aid until they divulged the names of the Luddite leaders. He later relented and they were first taken to the Old Yew Tree Inn and from there on to the Star Inn. It was there that the Rev. Hammond was called upon to administer the last rites and also probably to seek information from the dying men. One of the two, nineteen year old John Booth asked Robertson if he could keep a secret. After the eager cleric said yes, Booth responded, “So can I.” by the end of the day both men were dead and the oath they had sworn remained unbroken.
The luddites withdrew to lick their wounds, two had been killed and a number seriously injured. King Ludd was furious at the loss and probably also at the reality that the luddites were no real match for the authorities especially when they had the backup of the military. In one last show of defiance he planned now to kill the mill owners who defied his threats. He first made an attempt to shoot the much hated William Cartwright as he rode home from Huddersfield, the attempt failed.

*Left: The leader of the Luddites, Ned Ludd*

Next an attempt was made to shoot Colonel Campbell the commander of the military at Leeds outside his home but this also failed. Finally on 28th April mill owner William Horsfall was ambushed at Crossland Moor on his way back to Ottiwell's Mill, Marsden where he had, despite repeated threats, continued to operate new finishing machines. Horsfall was shot in the thigh, severely wounded he was carried by passers-by to the Crossland Moor Inn where he died from a loss of blood. The days of the luddites were drawing to an end, the smashing of machinery being one thing cold blooded murder another. Many of the men had no stomach for it.

The authorities responded by offering a huge reward of £2000 for information on the culprits. But the oath still bound the luddites together. It was not until autumn that year that Benjamin Walker broke the oath and betrayed King Ludd and the luddites. The authorities acted quickly rounding up ring leaders. The more lowly participants were given the chance to give themselves in and surrender their weapons. They were then pardoned and sent on their way, after all they could not imprison the full workforce. This process became known as “being untwisted”.

William Hall who had held his weekly meeting at the Shears Inn along with King Ludd (George Mellor) found themselves clapped in irons at York’s Castle Prison. They along with another local man, Benjamin Walker, were charged with the murder of Horsfall. The government was determined to reassert its authority; an example needed to be made and it was.
On 8th January 1813 the three men convicted of Horsfall’s murder were hanged. Just over a week later, on the 16th of January, fourteen other condemned Luddites were executed for their parts in the raid on Cartwright's Mill, in what was to be York's biggest ever hanging. Five of them were condemned for riot, six for burglary and three for robbery, having been convicted under the Frame Breaking Act that came into force the previous year. They were put to death in two groups by the executioner John Curry - seven at 11.00 a.m. and seven at 1.30 p.m. A "vast concourse" of people assembled on St George’s Field, York to see this mass "launch into eternity" as hangings were then known.

William Cartwright went on to become quite the hero among his fellow industrialists and they awarded him £3000 for the “heroic” defence of Rawfolds Mill. Benjamin Walker, the man whose treachery had helped send seventeen men to the gallows, served a short sentence for his part in the events and returned with his reward to his home near Marsden. Neither he nor the locals forgot his broken oath and he lived out his years both scared and shunned by former friends.

New and improved types of “finishing” machines were installed in the mills and within twenty years the cropper’s trade was nothing but a distant memory. Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo and worldwide trade was possible again. Steam had replaced water and the industrial revolution with its “dark satanic mills” loomed on the horizon. Since those few short months in 1812 Britain has never again come so close to civil war and revolution.

This song was sung at the time of the Yorkshire Luddite revolution; it quite accurately sums up their exploits.

THE CROPPERS SONG

Come cropper lads of high renown,
Who love to drink strong ale that's brown
And strike each haughty tyrant down
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Chorus:

Oh the cropper lads for me,
The gallant lads for me,
Who with lusty stroke the shear frame broke,
The cropper lads for me.

Who though the special still advance
And soldiers nightly round us prance,
The cropper lads still lead the dance
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Chorus:

And night be night when all is still
And the moon is hid behind the hill,
We forward march to do our will
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Chorus:

Great Enoch still shall lead the van,
Stop him who dare, stop him who can.
Press forward every gallant man
With hatchet, pike and gun.
Apprehended at The Black Bull Mirfield for making an attack on Rawfolds Mill

In the wake of the failed attack on William Cartwright’s Rawfolds Mill the authorities, newly armed with laws passed by parliament, came down hard on anyone suspected of having being involved in the riots. In those days it was the local Magistracy rather than the police who undertook the investigative work and Huddersfield Magistrate Joseph Radcliffe had swiftly rounded up and charged sixty four men with offences connected with the West Riding disturbances who were then incarcerated at York Castle.

Many of the accused had been identified by members of the public, no doubt the mill owners themselves partaking out of public duty and no doubt great zeal to settle scores arising from the events.

It was with this backdrop that the events below started in the Black Bull Mirfield one evening in June 1812. (This would have been in a previous building on the site of the present Black Bull Hotel.)

From the pages of The Leeds Mercury July 25 1812

Wednesday July 22. 1812 — JAMES OLDROYD

Was charged with assembling, with diverse other persons on the night of the 11th April, and there making an attack on the Mill of Mr Cartwright, of Rawfolds and with beginning to demolish the same.

This Prosecution was founded on an Act passed in the 9th year of the reign of George III, which makes it a capital felony for any person riotously to assemble and demolish any Mill, or to begin to demolish any Mill.

Mr Park, Mr Topping, and Mr Richardson, were Counsel for the Prosecutor, and Mr Raine for the Defendant.

Mr Park stated the case to the Jury, in which he laid it down as the law of the case, that the violent breaking of windows, when evidently done with such instruments, and under such circumstances as shows the intent to be to demolish the building, is such a beginning to demolish as comes within the meaning of the Act. And that every person so present with the rioters giving them his countenance and aid, is as guilty in law though no individual act of violence can be personally proved against him.
[We shall, conformable to our usual custom, state the case from the evidence of the Witnesses.]

Mr Cartwright, the proprietor of the Mill, was called for the purpose of proving the riot and the nature of the sufficient merely here to add, that the attack was made 20 minutes after 12 o'clock at night on the 11th April, by a considerable number of persons, but how many the darkness of the night did not give him the means of forming an opinion, the attack was made by fire-arms, hammers, mauls, and hatchets; all the windows on the side of the attack were broke in almost instantaneously, the lower windows by the instruments before mentioned, and the upper stories by discharges of ball firing and slugs.

The firing continued incessantly for about 20 minutes, it was accompanied by cries of "bang—up—damn you are you in—in with you—kill them every one." The party in the inside, of which the witness was one, repelled the charge by keeping up a constant fire on the assailants but the darkness of the night was such that the only guide they had in directing their fire was the flash, from the discharge of the fire-arms of the assailants. Witness supposes about 120 shots were discharged from the building, and about the same number from without. The attack continued about 20 minutes, when the assailants retired.

As soon as the Witness thought it prudent to open the door, he found that two wounded men had been left behind, (who afterwards died) and near the premises, in the direction in which the party had retired, a number of mauls, picklocks, masks, and bullet-moulds, were found, and which were produced in court. The wood work of the door, which was partially lined with iron, was entirely destroyed. The Witness said he had no means of forming judgment whether the Prisoner was there or not, but he had no reasons to believe he was there. The Prisoner was a person of good character and had no grounds for animosity against him.

Mr Cartledge, of Brow-bridge, near Elland, said, he was returning from Wakefield, on the 22d June, accompanied by Mr Ashworth and Mr Woodhead, they called at the Black Bull, at Mirfield, for refreshment and sat in the bar, it was about eight o'clock in the evening, the, room was separated from another room by a thin wood partition in which there was a small window, the glass of which was partly broken, heard a person say in a loud tone of voice, “I was at Rawfolds on the night of the attack, I was engaged there, I was close by the two men that fell,” the same voice said, that he never was in any association but one, and that was Ned or General Ludd's, (believes he used both expressions) had been in his service three years, that he had been faithful to him and would ever remain so. Witness said he spoke in a loud and boisterous tone of voice. Mr Ashworth, one of the party, went for a Constable, and the Witness went into the Room and enquired which of the party had used that language.

There were eight or ten persons in the room, he was pointed out by William Clarkson, and on the return of Mr Ashworth, they prevailed on him to go with them into another room, where he denied having used the words imputed to him.—On his cross-examination he said the man appeared to have had liquor, but was not drunk; and appeared to understand what he said and what was said to him; he said Mr Cartwright knew him, and if they disputed his character he would get a letter of recommendation from him. Witness first heard of Gen. Ludd about a year ago. Witness said the Prisoner spoke so loud; that he might have been heard by every person in the low part of the house.
Mr Ashworth stated the conversation at the Black Bull in these terms:—I heard a voice say, as if in answer to some person who had been contradicting him, "but I was at Rawfolds Mill that night, and I saw the man fall" or the men. Witness believes both expressions were used at different times. The same voice further said "I was never engaged in any association or society in my life but that of General or Ned Ludd, I have ever been true to it, and I have been in it three years." Witness said these words were not used uninterruptedly as he had stated them, it was an interrupted conversation, and many of the expressions were repeated several times.

After a consultation as to the course which it became their characters to pursue, it was determined to send for a Constable and Witness went for one, but did not succeed; on his return, the Prisoner was pointed out to him; and when he spoke he recognised the same voice; but lower and softened. Witness proceeded to state what he heard of the conversation in the room to which they retired, which was the same in substance as stated by Mr Cartledge; the Prisoner denied having used the expressions imputed to him; the Witness said he had no reason to believe that the Prisoner did not understand what he did or said; his spirits appeared to be elevated by the liquor he had taken.

Nothing material occurred in his cross-examination, except that the witness, judging from the boisterous tone and manner in which the words were used, should have thought them the words of a crazy person.

Wm. Clarkson (the person referred to by Mr Cartledge) stated that he was in the Black Bull public-house on the night in question, and heard the conversation, heard the prisoner say he was at Rawfolds Mill the night it was attacked, that he was engaged in the attack, and that he was near to his fellow creatures when they fell; he never had entered into any society, but he would abide by it as long as he lived. Witness said he considered the Prisoner as drunk from first to last.

Joseph Senior was also present, heard part of the conversation, but did not much attend to it. Remembers the Prisoner saying he was at Rawfolds Mill the night it was attacked, and was engaged in the attack; did not hear him say anything more; was not in the room when the conversation was begun, but the Prisoner and another person appeared to be talking one against the other. The Prisoner appeared to have two partners, (that is persons who were drinking with him) and one of them said to him, "hold thy peace, if there be a good trade and meal come down, Ned Ludd will die,"—(A laugh.)

This finished the case on the part of the Prosecution.

Mr, Joseph Savage stated that he was a surgeon at Dewsbury, and attended the Prisoner, who was very subject to attacks of fever; he attended him up to the time of Pontefract Sessions, but was then under the necessity of being absent from the 6th to the 11th of April; left him medicines; he was in a debilitated state, and not able to endure much fatigue. Judging from what he saw of the Prisoner it would have been dangerous for him to have been out on the night of the 11th of April. Witness saw him on the morning of the 12th, and, from his appearance, he should have supposed he had had his usual rest the preceding night.
Mary Ward sleeps in the house of the Prisoner, who is married, and has two children. She went to bed at ten o'clock on the 11th of April, at which time the prisoner was in bed. He sleeps in the room they usually live in. Her child being unwell and restless, she got up again about eleven o'clock, and came down stairs to the fire; the Prisoner was still in bed, and spoke to her, and complained that he could get no rest. Witness soon after went to bed again, but her child continuing restless, she was under the necessity of getting up again. The clock then struck one. She remained up until near three o'clock, during which time the Prisoner frequently spoke to her, and, at the request of his wife, she gave him his medicine. The child being quiet, Prisoner advised her to go to bed, asking her what o'clock it was; she looked at the clock, and said it wanted a few minutes to three. Witness got up at six o'clock in the morning, and went to her father's house; Prisoner was still in bed. The Counsel for the Prosecution cross-examined her at considerable length, but she did not vary her testimony she accounted for sleeping at the Prisoner's, by stating that her father had six children, and only two beds, and had not room for her and her child to sleep.

His Lordship summoned up the evidence with great particularity, and observed that the riot and the beginning to demolish the mill had been clearly proved, but the material question remained, which was, whether the Prisoner was present at the attack. If he was present he was guilty. That he was present there was the evidence of his own declaration. The Jury would consider, whether under all the circumstances of the case they could be fully convinced that these declarations were founded in truth; they would examine the manner and the circumstances under which they were made; and from a careful consideration them, determine the degree of credit to which they were entitled. But it was right to state that these declarations, though fully proved were not confirmed by any corroborating circumstances. On the part of the defence, there was the evidence of Mr Savage, who appeared to be a respectable man, and the amount of whose testimony might fairly be stated as rendering it improbable the Prisoner should be there. If the evidence of Mary Ward had full credit given to it, and there was nothing improbable or inconsistent in the account she gave, and her evidence had not been shaken by the cross-examination.

If her testimony was believed, they must of necessity acquit the prisoner, as it was impossible he could have been there. The Jury would weigh all the circumstances of the case, and if upon the whole, they were convinced that the Prisoner's declaration at the public house was true, they would find him guilty; but if they believed it was not true or had a reasonable doubt upon the subject, they would acquit him.

The Jury, without leaving the box, found the prisoner—NOT GUILTY.

The verdict was received in perfect silence.

It may be proper here to add, that the most perfect order and decorum prevailed in the Court during the whole of the trials for rioting; and there is in the city no military parade, nor anything to indicate that the County is not in a state of the most profound tranquillity and security.
Sparrow Park, Liversedge, West Yorkshire –
A tribute to the ‘Luddite’ workers

To commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Luddite Uprising that took place in April 1812 a new small park has been created in Liversedge by the Spen Valley Civic Society. It is located at the junction of Halifax Road and Knowler Hill, not far from the Shears Inn, where the Luddites plotted their campaign against the mill owners. It was from here on 12 April, 1812, that 150 Luddites attacked Cartwright Mills at Rawfolds with hammers and axes, but were overcome by armed soldiers and fled. Two men were shot in the attack and a number seriously injured, they were taken by the military to the Old Yew Tree Inn and from there on to the Star Inn where they died.

On the 16th January, 1813 fourteen Luddites were executed for their parts in the raid on Cartwright’s Mill, in what was to be York’s biggest ever hanging.

The eye-catching centre-piece is the imposing sculpture depicting a cropper in defiant pose, with an 8 year old girl tugging at his leather apron. The child has been included to show they were ordinary family men. It was made by Pete Rogers and Alex Hallowes, and was funded by Veolia Environmental Trust.

There is an accompanying information board and plaque telling the story of the local area and of the croppers, whose livelihoods were put at risk by increasing mechanisation in mills, which meant that one machine could do the job of four men, so they and their families faced poverty and starvation.
Bondville Model Village at Sewerby, near Bridlington, East Yorkshire

By Mary Shaw

One quite outstanding miniature model village in Yorkshire is on the east coast at Sewerby, near Bridlington. It is renowned for its incredible attention to detail and takes the form of an ideal village called Bondville. It has not been modelled on an actual village, instead it is an imaginary place where we would all like to live.

The one-acre site has more than 200 individual and unique buildings which including two churches, a large number of shops, cafés and restaurants, hotels, farms, a petrol station, a castle, a ruined abbey, a school, even a blacksmiths and a harbour. Many hundreds of little handmade and painted character figures also populate the village going about their everyday lives. All the scenes are set in a beautiful landscape.

There seems to be activities for everyone. Some are taking part in a cricket match, others are playing bowls on the bowling green, and some are swimming in an open-air pool, while others are playing tennis. There is even an artist painting a picture on the harbour. A number are relaxing, drinking outside the village inn, and you can hear as well as see the band playing on the green.

There is a variety of colourful buildings including stone-faced homes, brick-built houses and half-timbered buildings. Two churches can be seen; one with the sound of hymns filtering through the lighted windows, and the other with bells pealing for a wedding, the participants of which are lined up in the churchyard to have their photographs taken.

A fine model train pulling carriages runs round the whole village along the miniature railway line. It meanders through tunnels, runs between trees, and stops at stations round the village. Boats move across the water to where fishing boats and cruisers are moored. In fact there is so much going on that only a visit to Bondville miniature model village will cover everything.

Many touches of humour can also be seen, one is of a cross-country runner, who, having escaped the farmyard bull, leaves a bit of his shorts on the bull’s horn. You get the odd feeling you are a visiting giant in an entirely believable and habitable village.
Left and below: The cricket match is in full swing and some of the spectators are having a drink outside the pub.

Left: The tennis court is next to the open air swimming pool, where a number are having a swim.

Right: On the other side of the tennis court is the bowling green where a small group can be seen taking part in a game.

Below: Time for a cup of tea and a cake at Molly’s Pantry.

Above: A walk around the ruined Abbey.

Left: The blacksmith is shoeing a horse.

Below: The train that runs around the village.

Right: An artist at work.
The Bempton Cliffs Climbers, East Yorkshire

By Hilary Spencer

BBC’s Springwatch returned for an Easter Special, featuring bird observatories on the East Yorkshire coast, at Filey and Flamborough. These are the famous Bempton Cliffs which offer lots of sheltered headlands, nooks and crannies for nesting birds. The hard chalk cliffs at Bempton, which form the largest mainland’s seabird colony in the UK, are also relatively resistant to erosion. The lofty, rugged cliffs stretch approximately 8 miles (12km) south from Filey Bay to the promontory Flamborough Head and are over 442 feet. (135m) at their highest point. Looking from Filey, you first see the cliffs of Speeton, then Buckton, next Bempton and finally Flamborough; these are the birds’ breeding cliffs. The programme was presented by Chris Packham and Michaela Strachan to watch the breeding season of the sea birds get underway.

Left: From left to right Michaela Strachan and Chris Packham at the Bempton Cliffs

In spring and early summer, the silent ledges on the cliffs become alive with birds. The incessant cries of birds rise continuously on the breeze. On this stretch, the cliffs are formed into many fantastic shapes and little bays consisting of circles, pillars and isolated columns, each distinguished by its peculiar name.

The Bempton Cliffs are home to a number of sea birds which include Gannets, Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Puffins and Razorbills. During the breeding season the cliffs are full with a quarter of a million breeding sea birds. The population of the gannets has greatly increased over the years, this is probably due to the lack of human interference. However, the population of kittiwakes and puffins has gone down. This may be due to the change in climate caused by global warming, which has affected the plankton that sand eels rely on and in turn the food source for these seabirds.

Left: Gannets on the ledges, Bempton Cliffs
Below Left: A Razorbill and right a Guillemot on Bempton Cliffs
Today around 100,000 visitors a year make the trip to visit the nature reserve at Bempton Cliffs, which has been run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds since 1969. They come to see the seabirds that nest on the narrow cliff-ledges in spring and summer. The star attractions are undoubtedly the puffins, with their large and colourful bills. Around 4,000 pairs of these lovely birds nest on the cliffs. The reserve is also famous for its gannets, Britain’s largest and most dramatic seabird, with a wingspan of up to 6 feet (2m).

**Cliff climbing or ‘climming’ as it was known at Bempton**

But in the 19th century people went to the cliffs for a very different reason. Men swinging precariously from the end of ropes, collecting eggs from ledges along the sheer chalk cliffs, was a regular sight. For decades the intrepid Bempton ‘climmers,’ as they were known, descended the cliffs to harvest the seabird eggs. Some were bought by collectors who admired their shape and colours; some were used for sugar refining and some used in the manufacture of patent leather. But most were eaten by local people.

Prior to the Seabird Preservation Act of 1869 Victorians used to shoot the birds nesting on the Bempton Cliffs for sport. This was usually undertaken from boats passing under the Bempton Cliffs, from this position they could kill thousands of birds. The shooting of the birds interfered with the egg climbers, as fewer birds could lay eggs for them to collect.

*Right: As can been seen in this photo of hundreds of birds nesting on the cliff, how easy it would have been for the Victorian shooting parties to slaughter them*

This slaughtering of birds just for fun also affected the local people, who relied on selling the eggs for an income. Consequently, in 1869, a bill was passed to stop the senseless slaughter. The number of seabirds on the Bempton Cliffs began to increase and egg collecting by the climbers continued.

Collecting seabirds’ eggs on the Bempton Cliffs really started in the 1830s. The rights to collect eggs lay with the farmers who owned the land that adjoined the cliff edge, this gave them a legal right to supplement their income by selling eggs. The farmer sub-licensed gangs of three or four climbers, to collect eggs from the cliff.

Pudseys Spring was the popular place to watch the climbers, as it was handy to reach from the village by charabanc. It was the best ground for exhibition climbing, as the climber could be seen from various points which jutted out to sea. On Whit Monday, which was the great day of the climbing season, hundreds of people arrived from all parts. From those same points you could see the place the climbers called Puffin Island, which was a large grassy slope 200 feet (60m) from the top of the cliffs, where there were more puffins to be seen than anywhere else along the cliffs.

*Left: Two Puffins on the Bempton Cliffs showing their colourful bills and red feet.*

Photo by Craig Jones
Old Dorr was another star attraction. It was the breeding ground of 20,000 sea birds, mostly kittiwakes. There was a charming bay there, which unfortunately was inaccessible to the public and could only be seen in all its beauty from the sea.

Jubilee Corner was first climbed in the jubilee year, 1887, hence its name. At that time it took the men three days to fix up a rope at that point. It was very difficult owing to the overhanging cliff, and gave splendid opportunities for exhibition climbing.

*Right: Kittiwakes, Bempton Cliffs*

Photo by Keith Scholes

There were four men in an egg collecting gang and climbing was a perilous business, requiring fitness and skill, using primitive equipment available at that time. Before the First World War, the men wore a thickly-padded cap to protect their heads from falling stones, but afterwards they started to wear the tin helmets used in the war. A leather harness was strung over his shoulder and around his waist and two linen bags were hanging by his sides.

*Left: A climber swinging out fearlessly at Jubilee Corner, Bempton Cliffs*

A hand-rope was made fast to an iron stake driven into the ground, and was then thrown over the cliff. The climber took the hand-rope in his right hand, and in the other an iron stake with a pulley at the top. Walking backwards, he fixed the stake into the ground at the extreme edge of the cliff. He laid the waist-rope, which was fastened firmly to a belt round his waist, over the wheel. Three men were seated at the top in a row behind each other, their feet firmly planted in holes. The ropes used were of strong hemp 300 feet (90m) in length and renewed every second year. The ‘lowerer’ wore a leather belt or saddle, round which the waist-rope was passed and held with both hands resting on his thighs. The lowerer slackened away and the climber swiftly descended the face of the cliff. His boots had toe plates, with edges turned down like a horse’s shoe, to enable him to walk on slippery ledges.

Some of the cliffs had a sheer drop of more than 400 feet (122m). It relied on the climbers having a great deal of skill and trust in each other. On arriving at a ledge where eggs were visible, he rapidly transferred them to the canvas bags and kicked himself free from the ledge, throwing his weight on the rope, and so was lowered to other places, were he repeated the operation, clearing off all the eggs he could find. The climber would only come back up when the canvas bags were full of eggs, and this could take up to two hours.

At Jubilee Corner, where the crag hung considerably, three wire ropes were permanently fastened, by means of which the inner shelves, otherwise inaccessible, were reached.

Despite taking huge risks trying to collect the eggs, the climbers were never reckless. The men would only go out in fine weather and would not risk going down the cliffs in the rain or strong winds.

A regular code of signals was used by which the climber below could let the man at the top know what he wanted. A single tug signified that the climber was ready to ascend. All three men at the top would then begin to haul up their comrade from below. He kept kicking himself clear of the cliff face until he reached a part where he could walk on the slope of the cliff. On reaching the top the eggs were emptied into a large market basket. The other men, meanwhile, coiled up the ropes and prepared for a move to the next spot. At the end of the day the eggs were all pooled and shared out between the men, with the man who went down the cliffs getting the biggest share. They collected the eggs of the gannets, guillemot and razorbill mainly, which are quite large, about the size of a goose egg.
Right: This 1908 photo shows a group of five men, who collected eggs from birds’ nests on the cliffs at Bempton. The man in the centre is the fearless climber, and the photo illustrates all the equipment used to undertake the work to collect eggs. They can be seen in a short 8 minutes silent black & which film ‘The Egg Harvest - Cliff Climbing at Flamborough’ at

http://www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com/film/egg-harvest-cliff-climbing-flamborough

This film highlights the technique they used in collecting eggs and is well worth watching.

The rewards must have been great, in 1908 a dozen eggs sold for a shilling and it was estimated that the average daily take of each gang was between 300 and 400 eggs in season. A phenomenal number of eggs were collected by the climbers even though there was only a small window of opportunity. The egg collecting season would only last six weeks from the middle of May to the end of June and became quite a tourist attraction. At its height, the climbers estimated that around 130,000 eggs a year were taken from the cliffs, however, it is more likely to be about 70,000 that were actually collected.

What began as just a way of bringing in a little extra cash became quite big business. These eggs brought some real money into the local economy.

Left: From an information board on egg collecting at Bempton cliffs, RSPB nature reserve

The Death of a Climber

Surprisingly, there has only ever been one recorded death among the climbers at Bempton, despite the dangers. This was the death of Joss Major who was collecting eggs on the cliffs on 7th June 1910. It would seem that a rock was dislodged and fell on his unprotected head, knocking him unconscious. His mates holding the rope at the top of the cliff found it odd when they did not get a response to their signal from him to move onto the next ledge of the cliff. So one of them went down to see what had happened to him. When they discovered that he had been injured a Dr. Wetwan from Bridlington was sent for. He examined Joss Major at the scene. The rock had apparently fractured his skull and eventually he was taken to Lloyd’s Hospital at Bridlington, but died two days later.

The accident did not stop the egg collators from continuing their dangerous work, for it was not a common occurrence. There was always loose rocks in the chalk so this was the main danger. The men on the cliffs had to be agile and there are very few cases of them falling.

The End of Egg Collecting

The farming of eggs ground to a halt in 1953, prior to the 1954 Bird Protection Act. When laws were introduced banning the practice they ended a 200 year old industry.

The effect that egg climbers had on the birds differed according to the species. Guillemots generally seemed least affected, obligingly they laid a second egg and even a third in the same season. However, what the climbers did not understand was that although the first egg had a good a chance of being fertile, the second and third eggs had less of a chance. Kittiwakes became alarmed and would circle in a frenzy around the intruder. Razorbills with their short flattened beaks, which are as sharp as a razor, would often attack the climbers’ face or hands. Even puffins could become vicious despite their comic appearance.
The best place in England to see, hear and smell seabirds!

Each year, 250,000 seabirds flock to the cliffs between Bempton and Flamborough to find a mate and raise their young.

From April to August, the cliffs are alive with nest-building adults or young chicks taking their first faltering steps. Between mid-April and mid-July, the much-loved puffin also makes its home here. You can get close to the action from six, safe cliff-edge viewing platforms. Inside the seabird centre there is an exciting exhibition area, large TV screens screening live images from the cliffs along with a well-stocked shop, including the best selection of binoculars and scopes on the East Coast.

Light refreshments are also available and can be enjoyed on a decked area overlooking the wildflower meadow or on nearby picnic tables.

With huge numbers to watch, beginners can easily learn the difference between gannets, guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and fulmars.

Opening times

The reserve is open at all times throughout the year. The new seabird centre is open daily from 9.30 am to 5 pm in summer and 9.30 am to 4 pm in winter. Please call 01262 422212 for Christmas opening.

Entrance charges

Adults £3.50; Children: (5-17yrs) £2; Family ticket (two adults/two children) £8.50; RSPB members: free. Please note: no overnight parking is allowed on the reserve.
Finding your way around Bempton Cliffs

To help you decide where to explore, we have estimated the time it takes to walk to places from the visitor centre. To Jubilee Corner or Staple Newk viewpoints is about 20 minutes. To Bartlett Nab or New Roll-up viewpoints allow 10 minutes. To Grandstand is about five minutes. The circular route from the visitor centre to Grandstand is wheelchair accessible, as is Bartlett Nab.

The Dell is a wooded oasis that attracts farmland and migrating birds.

Public footpath
Walk along the public footpath to our five cliff-top viewpoints. You'll be amazed at what you can see!

Nature trail
There's something special to see every season from this trail.

In spring and summer, marvel at England's largest seabird colony and enjoy the breathtaking view.

Dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies abound in summer, then in autumn and winter you might spot hares, or even deer.

Key
- Water
- Grassland
- Woodland
- Cliffs
- Shrub
- Viewpoint
- Parking
- Visitor centre
- Picnic area
- Toilets

For more information about the accessibility of RSPB Bempton Cliffs, please visit rspb.org.uk/bemptoncliffs
Boroughbridge is a small town in North Yorkshire, historically it was part of the West Riding of Yorkshire. It is situated approximately 5 miles (8 kilometres) south-west of Ripon, 9 miles (14 kilometres) north-east of Harrogate and 17 miles (27 kilometres) north-west of York. The Great North Road ran through the town crossing the River Ure which flows through Boroughbridge. With the coming of the stagecoach, Boroughbridge, with its many inns, became one of the busiest staging posts on the Great North Road. In 1963 Boroughbridge was by-passed by the construction of the main A1 dual carriageway.

The origin of the name ‘Boroughbridge’ lies in its location relative to Aldborough, the principal settlement during the Roman period and known as Isurium Brigantum. After the Norman Conquest, Dere Street, the Roman road that headed north from York, was diverted half a mile (0.8 kilometer) to the west of Aldborough by building a new wooden bridge over the River Ure in the 12th century. The new town of Boroughbridge grew up. The road which used to lead from Aldborough to the River Ure degenerated into a grassy lane and eventually ceased to be a road. Because of the volume of traffic the wooden bridge needed constant repair, strengthening, widening and rebuilding. It was not until the 16th century that the bridge was built of stone. The Old Town became known as ‘Ald-Borough’ (Aldborough), the new town became ‘New Borough on t’Brigg’ (Bridge), which became ‘Borough on t’Brigg’ and finally Boroughbridge.

The Battle of Boroughbridge was fought between troops loyal to King Edward II and those of the rebellious Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. They fought for control of a narrow wooden bridge where the Great North Road crossed the River Ure and a nearby ford. To understand the cause of the dispute between Edward and Lancaster we have to go back a number of years.
When Edward I died in 1307 he left a depleted treasury because of his obsession for control over Scotland which earned him the nickname “Hammer of the Scots”. He successfully conquered Wales in 1284 and made his own son Prince of Wales in 1301 at the age of 17. The debts undermined Edward II’s ability to continue the war as his father had wished. Edward I, who was known as ‘Longshanks’ because of his height, also had the strength of character to control the nobles, but his son, Edward II did not. His incompetence and corrupt rule, complicated by his promotion of his male lovers, brought the kingdom close to anarchy.

After his father’s death he immediately recalled his first favourite, the arrogant Piers Gaveston, from exile. Edward I had banished him to France for his bad influence on his son. Gaveston was given the Earldom of Cornwall, and was able to wield such power that he caused major conflict, which enraged the nobility. Attempts to banish Gaveston led to armed conflict and in 1312 he was captured and subsequently executed at Scarborough Castle under the orders of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, and his allies.

Edward II was devastated by his favourite’s death and vowed revenge on the men responsible, which he would achieve ten years later when Lancaster too would be executed.

By 1318, Edward had a new favourite, the vain but able Hugh le Despenser, a grasping individual who carried out a campaign to increase his own power against the English nobility, particularly the marcher lords on the Welsh borders. Once again Lancaster was one of the leaders of the nobility who demanded Despenser’s exile at a parliament in 1321. With many of his leading nobles close to rebellion the king acquiesced and Despenser went into exile.

In October 1321, Queen Isabelle, wife of Edward II, set off from London on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. The Queen had intended to spend the night at Leeds Castle, in Kent, but was refused entry by Lady Badelsmere. Lord Badelsmere had been despatched by the King on a delegation to the rebellious lords but had joined them. The Queen attempted to storm the castle with her escort but failed. This enraged the king, who raised a large army and laid siege to the castle, which was quickly taken. Lady Badelsmere, along with her children, was imprisoned. Her husband had gathered the support of some of the marcher lords and their army marched as far as Kingston-upon-Thames, before withdrawing into the Welsh Marches. This was one of the few times during his reign that Edward showed the energy and military skill of his father, carrying out a successful military campaign along the Severn Valley.

During this period Lancaster had remained in the North, despite the pleas of the marcher lords for him to come to their aid. Eventually, Lancaster, accompanied by Lord Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, and Lord Badelsmere, set off south with a large force. He was too late to aid the marcher lords.

By the time Lancaster reached Burton-on-Trent, in early March 1322 the River Trent, with its swollen waters and banks ensured that neither force could attack the other. The two armies faced each other in a stand off until the king crossed the river at another crossing, leaving Lancaster with little option but to retreat.

On returning to his castle at Pontefract his force had been reduced to no more than 1,000 men many having deserted. The king’s army was following steadily behind the rebel force. Lancaster was persuaded by Roger De Clifford to retreat north to the Earl’s great castle at Dunstanburgh in Northumberland. The castle was a formidable fortress and within easy reach of Scottish support. The retreat would cross the River Ure at Boroughbridge and then continue north.

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At Boroughbridge Lancaster received a surprise on 16 March 1322, the northern bank of the river was held by troops loyal to the king.

Unbeknown to Lancaster and his allies, the king had ordered Sir Andrew Harcla, Warden of the Western Marches, to gather what forces he could and march south through Yorkshire to prevent Lancaster’s possible retreat north. By the night of the 15th March the royal forces under Sir Andrew de Harcla had reached Ripon. Importantly, he was far better informed of the rebel army’s movements than they were of his. While at Ripon he received news from a scout or ‘spy’ that the Earl of Lancaster’s forces were on the march along the Great North Road and could be expected to reach Boroughbridge the next day. So that night Harcla marched the six miles to Boroughbridge, where the road crossed the River Ure. If he could reach and take the bridge before Lancaster arrived then he would be in a very strong tactical position. With his archers and spearmen he would be able to hold a determined charge by Lancaster’s forces.

In a rare episode of strategic insight, the king had got it right and Harcla’s force was in an ideal position to stop the rebel’s northward progress. Harcla deployed his men to block both of the crossings, the bridge and a ford about half a mile (0.8 kilometer) to the east. He had about 4,000 men, drawn largely from Cumberland and Westmorland. It is clear from the various accounts of the battle that they included knights, men at arms, spearmen and archers. However, of the 214 knights and nobles listed as engaged in the battle it would appear that just 76 were on the royal side. Harcla had sent the horses to the rear and the bulk of his men were deployed on foot to hold the north part of the bridge, with spearmen blocking the crossing supported by archers to flank them. The ford was defended with a force of archers supported by spearmen. It is likely that the river was high and the ford may not have been easy to cross; the archers may have added to this by planting defensive stakes to cover the crossing.

Lancaster was apparently unaware of the threat from the north, or at least its proximity when he reached Boroughbridge on the 16th March. Indeed so poor was the Earl’s scouting that it was only once they had begun to take quarters in the town that the rebels discovered Harcla already held the bridge. With the army of the Earls of Surrey and Kent in close pursuit, retreat was not an option.

First of all, Lancaster sought to negotiate with Harcla, the commander of the royal forces. But, even though Harcla owed his status as a knight to Lancaster, he would not change sides. Though next year he would be executed as a traitor, as a scapegoat for the failure in the campaign against the Scots. At this point Harcla must have realised that there was little future in the rebel cause. Lancaster’s army was far outnumbered by the various royal forces that were in the field. There was now no alternative for the rebels but to fight for control of the bridge, or they would be caught between the two forces and would then have no hope of success.

Lancaster then split his forces, of about 1,000 and although outnumbered, was far stronger in heavily armoured knights and men at arms. One account lists 138 barons and knights, by name, as fighting against the King, which included important figures. The rebel forces left the town in two columns to engage Harcla. One, made up of knights and men at arms under the command of the Earl of Hereford and Lord Clifford, on foot they were to take the bridge, which was too narrow for a mounted attack. The other, under Lancaster himself, was to mount a cavalry attack on the ford.
Hereford, with his standard bearer and a few knights attempted to cross the narrow wooden bridge, by charging against the spears, in advance of the rest of his force. Hereford’s standard bearer and two other knights were killed in the assault. The rest were driven back, many of them wounded including Clifford who had been seriously injured by both spear and arrow. One source claims that Hereford was killed by a single Welsh spearman who had crept beneath the bridge and thrust his spear upward between the timbers, underneath Hereford’s armour and killed him.

This story is similar to that told of the lone Norwegian of the battle at Stamford Bridge in 1066 and there may be some confusion between the two. This story has been published in the journal ‘The Forgotten First Battle of 1066 at Fulford, near York’ (TYJ Spring 2013).

The attack across the ford did little better. The river at Boroughbridge is now about 40 metres wide and may have been a little wider in the 14th century. As a result of the heavy shower of arrows fired by Harcla’s archers from the northern bank, Lancaster’s first cavalry attack, which must have had to cross open meadow ground, did not even reach the water’s edge before being forced to retreat. One account suggests that the archers were so effective that the cavalry could not attempt another assault, thus throwing the whole battle array into disorder and effectively ending the action.

After what seems to have been a very short battle, Lancaster negotiated a truce with Harcla to allow his troops to retire into the town for the night, either to surrender or to give battle once more in the morning. Harcla agreed to a truce which has been suggested as being due to his sympathy with Lancaster’s cause. He is also seen as giving Lancaster and his supporters the opportunity to slip away in the night. Harcla’s forces remained deployed at the crossings for the rest of the day and night in case of a surprise attack.

Very early on the following morning of the 17th March, Harcla led his men across the river and entered Boroughbridge. He called for Lancaster to surrender, but there seems to have been no question of organised resistance, because many of the rebel troops had fled during the night. Lancaster, however would not surrender, instead he had taken refuge in the chapel of St James. Harcla’s men rushed in and took Lancaster prisoner, Clifford and Badelsmere were also captured and could have expected little mercy from the king. They were right, Edward now had his vengeance.

Lancaster was taken to Pontefract where he was paraded through the town much to the joy of its citizens. He had not been a popular lord. He was brought before the king and on the 22nd March and was given a mock-trial before being beheaded in direct imitation of the death of Gaveston on a hill outside the town. Some 30 of his followers were also subsequently executed. Lancaster’s body was buried in the priory church in Pontefract, where a coffin containing a skeleton found in 1828, which was suggested as being that of Thomas Earl of Lancaster, but is now thought to be a Roman burial.
Badelsmere was taken to Canterbury and Clifford to York, where they were tried for treason and hanged. Edward was elated by his successful campaign. He had a victorious army in the North and his rebellious barons had been put down. Now was the time to finish the business with the Scots, who were still raiding into his northern counties, but that, is they say another story.

**Consequences**

The defeat of the rebel forces at Boroughbridge was important because it finally dealt with the long standing conflict between the Earl of Lancaster and the king. The execution of Lancaster and many other of the rebel leaders cleared away Edward’s main opponents. But, rather than this resolving the problems of his reign, the king simply created more enemies. He reneged on all the limitations on royal power that the barons had forced Edward to agree to over the preceding years. He also continued to promote Despenser, further alienating the remaining nobility. The Scottish war continued to go badly, with defeats at Myton, Yorkshire on 20th September 1319 and then the near capture of the king himself at Byland Abbey, Yorkshire on October 1322. These raids saw the Scots plundering at least as far south as York.

While Edward’s incompetent rule became increasingly unpopular, the Earl of Lancaster’s tomb at Pontefract became a place of pilgrimage and supposedly of miracles. Finally in September 1326 Edward’s wife, Queen Isabella of France, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, exiled enemy of Edward led an invasion from France. The king’s support melted away, Despenser was captured and executed and Edward forced to abdicate in favour of his son who was crowned Edward III in January 1327. Edward II was imprisoned at Berkeley Castle and murdered there.

*Right: Isabella and her lover Roger Mortimer can be seen in the foreground in this contemporary illustration, while Edward’s favourite, Sir Hugh Despenser, is brutally murdered in the background*

**Visiting the Battlefield and other sites**

Today, the battlefield has been largely engulfed by the town, but in 1322 Boroughbridge had probably not yet extended as far north as the bridge. The land on either side of the river would have been floodplain meadow. But, while the bridge was probably very close to its present site, it is uncertain exactly where the ford lay, making it difficult to appreciate exactly how all the forces were deployed and where they fought.

A visit to the site allows a good understanding of the historical terrain. It is easily explored on foot from a car park within the town and despite urban expansion, the battlefield can still be well appreciated on the ground. From the bridge there is a very good view of the ground on both sides of the river and as far upstream as the weir. There are also a good network of public footpaths and other access by which to explore the battlefield. Unfortunately there are no interpretative boards or maps related to the battle either on site or in museums in the area.

English Heritage rates the battle of Boroughbridge in the top 43 important English battles.

*Left: Battlefield Map showing the position of the bridge, the ford and both armies*
Above: Ordnance Survey map of Boroughbridge and Aldborough showing the battle positions and other sites © Crown Copyright 1999

The chapel of St. James where the Earl of Lancaster took refuge after the battle was demolished in 1851. It has been replaced with a new St. James church built on a completely new site in Church Lane. All that remains of the Norman chapel that stood on the southern edge of the market place is a few fragments of carved stone built into the vestry wall of the present church, which include the head of a Norman doorway discovered when the chapel was demolished. The old font by the porch has been replaced with a new one.

There is a stone panel on the bridge, which states that the first stone bridge, on the downstream side, was built in 1562; it was widened in 1784. Then, in 1948, a lorry fell through the bridge into the river. The bridge had to be rebuilt in 1949 on the upstream side and widened. This inscription is between two different coats of arms, which both have three White Roses.

Below: The stone panel on the bridge

Right: The blue memorial plaque

On the south side of the bridge is a blue memorial plaque commemorating the Battle of Boroughbridge that was fought at the then wooden bridge.

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A 14th century column 18 feet (5.5 metres) high, consisting of four shafts banded together, was erected to commemorate the battle which took place in 1322, and stood for centuries in the market square at Boroughbridge. However on the 21st April 1852 it was moved to just outside the town of Aldborough to make way for a war memorial. The Battle “Cross” as it is known, is probably one of the country’s earliest war memorials.

*Left: The monument at Aldborough as it stands outside the Village Hall today, where it continues to deteriorate, which is evident when compared to the above photo taken in 1895.*

*The above photo also shows the flagged surround on which the cross stands and which nowadays is covered over by soil and grass to lift the triangle verge some seven inches higher than the road.*

On a wall opposite the monument is a blue plaque, which commemorates the relocation of the “cross” from Boroughbridge and the Boroughbridge Battle of 1322.

*Right: The blue memorial plaque at Aldborough*
Left: The Battle “Cross” monument situated on a triangle green outside the Village Hall

**Finds from the Battlefield**

In 1792 a little below the present bridge, during flood protection works along the river bank, bones, fragments of armour and axe-heads were discovered.

Then on the 13th August 1881 workmen excavating for the erection of new machinery in the corn mill of Lofthouse and Hammond, on the south bank of the river just to the west of the present bridge, found a spear head 17 inches long, and broken below the shaft. Silver coins of Edward II have also been found on the Battlefield site. From time to time metal detectors have swept the site but no more finds have been made.

Above and right: Illustrations of the bridge

Left and below: the Bridge in 1895 before being rebuilt and widened in 1949

Left: the bridge in 1955 after being rebuilt and widened in 1949
Visitors driving eastward to the coast at Scarborough via the A178 road from Pickering might be forgiven for rushing the last lap of their journey, with the promise of a superb view of the castle and the sea, as they descend from Racecourse Road into the outskirts of the town. However, for those with more time to take in the delights of the local scenery, a detour northwards at the village of East Ayton will bring them into a narrow sheltered valley, the Forge Valley of this title, and into Scarborough via a roundabout route through the pretty villages of Hackness, Wrench Green and Scalby. Locals of Scarborough will no doubt be more than familiar with this local beauty spot but some may be unaware of how the valley got its name.

As a small boy living in Scarborough in the 1950s I recall being taken by my parents on Easter Mondays to roll Easter eggs down the slopes of this valley. Eggs in those days were, of course, of the hard-boiled variety, often hand-painted, rather than the shop-bought chocolate eggs with which we are familiar nowadays. I recall too that this was clearly a local tradition as the valley was teeming with parents and children intent upon the same activity. In due course I learnt that my family had a special connection with this valley as my great-grandfather had been born in a cottage in the valley which was, in fact, the home of his mother. To confirm this piece of family history a postcard was produced from time to time showing a row of 5 cottages standing just below the road level and overlooking the valley’s stream and stepping stones. I was told that at one of the cottages refreshments were provided to the many visitors to this beauty spot. It was not surprising therefore, that my father used to bring my sister and myself for walks along this stretch of the valley, especially at the end of summer when there was a plentiful supply of blackberries!

Right: The famous 5 white washed cottages, with the River Derwent flowing at the foot of them

Like most small boys I always seemed to have a fascination for water!

Left: The terrace at the front of the cottages from where refreshments were served during the summer to the public including royalty. It was also well-known as the chocolate shop. The boxes displayed on the wall contain the ‘famous’ chocolates
Those familiar with this pretty spot will no doubt appreciate the peace and quiet to be found here. It is especially beloved by ornithologists for the rare birds which inhabit this narrow valley with dense woods rising on both banks of the stream. However, it is truly a place of peace and relaxation for anyone wishing to get away from the hustle and bustle of modern life.

Right: Forge Valley is a place of peace and relaxation

As its name suggests there was, indeed, a forge located in the valley. It seems likely that the forge was started by the Benedictine monks of the Hackness Priory of SS Peter and Hilda perhaps as early as the 13th century. In common with many of the dales which make up the North York moors there were plentiful deposits of iron ore and this, combined with the valley’s unlimited supply of wood, made the area a natural one for iron-working. It is believed that the cottages were occupied by the workers at the forge, which continued in use until the mid-19th century, when the furnaces of Teesside began iron and steel production on an industrial scale.

Below: A view of the now demolished cottages from above

The cottages sadly are no more, having been demolished by the Corporation in the years before World War II. As well as homes for the ordinary folk who worked the land hereabouts there are, of course, important properties in the vicinity, for example Hackness Hall, built in the 1790s as the residence of the local Derwent family, and Hackness Grange, built in the early 1800s and now a hotel, whilst Hackness village boasts a church (St Peter’s) built in the 11th century and retaining fragments of an 8th century cross.

Above: Hackness Hall
Photo by Andrew Locking

Right: Hackness Grange built in the 1880s now a hotel
Hackness can rightly be proud of one of its native sons, Matthew Noble, born in the village in 1818 who served as an apprentice stonemason under his father before leaving to work as a sculptor. His work is to be found in many parts of the country, especially in London.

A good many Scarborians will also be aware that a certain William Smith came to Scarborough in 1824 with plans for a museum explaining the then new science of geology as it applied to the stratigraphy of the Yorkshire coast. Smith had already acquired a reputation as the ‘father of geology’ by creating the first geological map of Britain, which he presented to the Geological Society of London. In the years after Waterloo the importance of geology became recognised as a means of determining where coal and other minerals might be found. Landowners whose properties contained such natural resources became millionaires overnight! However the learned members of the Geological Society plagiarised Smith’s important discoveries leaving the unfortunate Smith facing bankruptcy. With his wife suffering bouts of madness Smith decided to venture north to seek shelter with his friend, Sir John Vanden Bempde Johnstone, 2nd baronet of Hackness Hall.

Above: The newly built Rotunda Museum, illustrating the iron Cliff Bridge that crosses the valley, built in 1827. The Grand Hotel is not seen, as it was built later. The two wings were added to the building in 1860. The illustration is by Nathaniel Whittock

Whilst there Smith drew up plans for a new museum in Scarborough, setting out the geology of the region. With the help of Vanden Bempde Johnstone the plans eventually came to fruition in the form of Scarborough’s magnificent Rotunda Museum, recently restored to its former glory. The story of the Rotunda Museum and its Restoration at Scarborough has been published in the journal (*TYJ* winter 2011).

Generations of schoolchildren who have studied Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night may be interested to learn that the person on whom Shakespeare is believed to have based the comic character of Malvolio is another Hackness inhabitant, Sir Thomas Posthumus Hoby, who was Lord of the Manor of Hackness at the time when the Great Bard was writing his plays.

As public transport became more generally available Forge Valley became a local attraction to visitors to Scarborough who were able to make the journey by horse and coach or by the newly-constructed train service, which offered a station called Forge Valley on the Pickering line. Later visitors had the opportunity to view the valley from the ‘comfort’ of a motorised charabanc which departed at set times from the forecourt of Scarborough Railway Station. Among the many visitors to the valley was Queen Victoria’s eldest son, Edward VII, who was a regular participant in the annual shooting events.

In recognition of the wealth of flora and fauna to be found in this enchanting part of the world the valley has been designated a national nature reserve. There is a wide variety of trees which are attracted by the moist conditions of this narrow river valley, including alder, willow, ash and elm. In turn the dense foliage provides breeding opportunities for a good number of small birds such as nuthatches, redstarts and black caps, as well as larger species including herons, jays and greater-spotted woodpeckers, whilst the river provides an excellent habitat for crayfish, trout and otter.
When I was old enough to explore the area near my Scalby home a bicycle ride to Forge Valley was one of my special pleasures. How I envied my great grandfather growing up in this special place! Anyone planning a visit is recommended to look at an informative booklet produced by Natural England describing how the valley was formed and what the visitor may expect to see. The leaflet ‘Forge Valley Woods, National Nature Reserve’ is available online.

Right: The online leaflet ‘Forge Valley Woods, National Nature Reserve’

It would be invidious to recommend intending visitors a particular season to view this spot. Visitors will be equally enchanted in spring when the woods are carpeted with spring flowers or in winter when the valley is blanketed in snow. Each season has its delights and with such a wealth of natural resources its particular charm is in never knowing what one might find! Whatever the season Forge Valley truly offers a haven of peace and quiet to those who come to visit.

Left: Forge Valley lies near East Ayton, with its small ruined castle

The valley is one of the finest examples of mixed deciduous woodland in north-east England

Below: Footpaths follow the River Derwent as it bends along the valley and convenient car parks make this beautiful woodland easily accessible on foot
The valley was formed by rushing glacial meltwater following the last ice age, located on the slopes of the Derwent river valley, and the woods are one of the best examples of mixed deciduous woodland in north-east England.
A Yorkshire Edwardian Cycling Club

By David Reynolds

The above photograph shows members of an Edwardian cycling club pausing for a smoke and running repairs beside a sunny, leafy lane somewhere in the Yorkshire countryside. (Photograph courtesy of Ian Dewhirst).

It is a reminder of a scene in Alan Bennett’s first television play ‘A Day Out’, which has been published in the journal ‘A Nostalgic Look at Alan Bennett’s “A Day Out” (TYJ Autumn 2013).

The idea came from an old photo of a cycling club just before World War I that Alan saw, which inspired him to write the play. The story is set just at the time the photo was taken and follows an Edwardian Yorkshire cycling club on a day trip from Halifax to the ruins of Fountains Abbey. On the way they discuss their lives and concerns, blissfully unaware of what will happen to them and the country over the next few years.

The cycling club stops at "The Sportsmen" for a drink before continuing their ride through woody glades. Mr Shuttleworth, played by David Waller, and who is the founder of their cycling club, devises a short cut, but any time saved is lost after he has a puncture outside a church where the congregation can be heard singing. One of the members goes off to get a bowl of water from a nearby house, but his interest in the woman who answers the door is quickly damped down by the appearance of her burly husband. Mr Shorter, played by James Cossins, repairs the puncture, lecturing the others on the technique.

The scene in the photo above, shows two of its members repairing a puncture while the others look on, some are sitting on a stone wall by the side of the lane, two or three are smoking, while a few are smiling as though they are also being given a lecture on the technique on puncture repairs.
The cycling club finally reached their destination - the ruins of Fountains Abbey, where they had lunch. Then some of the members played cricket before slowly cycling back home on their bicycles.

Photo by Jeremy Clark
Brodsworth Hall and Gardens
Near Doncaster, South Yorkshire

It was built in the 1860s in the Italianate style. The gardens have been restored to their Victorian splendour, reflecting the desires and aspirations of Victorian country gentry.

Photo by Jeremy Clark

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