The Yorkshire Journal

Issue 4
Winter 2015

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In the entrance area to Sledmere House is the Waggoners Museum which tells the story of the Waggoners Special Reserve with photographs, papers, memorabilia and a medal collection. Sir Mark Sykes’ uniform is also on display.

The Waggoners Special Reserve was the brainchild of Sir Mark Sykes 6th Baronet and these men became some of the first to go abroad in the First World War, driving the horse drawn wagons with food, ammunition and other supplies to the frontline.

For more details on the Waggoners see the Waggoners Memorial at Sledmere, East Yorkshire.
Above: A picturesque wintry view of the elegant stone viaduct over the River Nidd, Knaresborough

Front cover: The 14th century Hospitium covered in snow in the Museum Gardens, York. Photo by Chris Gallagher

Editorial

All the staff at The Yorkshire Journal would like to wish our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. For our winter issue our team of writers have once again been busy researching and writing some really interesting articles. Christmas is the time when everyone has some happy recollections. For our first feature Paul Williams shares some of his precious boyhood memories during the seventies of his Christmas in Filey.

It is because of Charles Dickens that ghost stories are associated with this time of year. Philip Hartley visits the Counting House Museum in Malton to discover Charles Dickens’ connection with the town.

Our next feature is Peter Wellburn’s fascinating story of The Leeds Library which is a private subscription library hidden away in the midst of Leeds bustling shopping centre. The library is steeped in history and includes a ghost. Peter himself was the Librarian in the 1960s and is able to explain all aspects of its history.

Next Diana Parsons recalls the extraordinarily lives of a group of people who were known as the ‘Wold Rangers’ as told by Angela Antrim from her own memories. They roamed the lanes of East Yorkshire and each ranger has an interesting story behind them. When the last one died in 1987 all traces of their existence passed away.

Also linked with the ‘Wold Rangers’ is the Waggoners Memorial at Sledmere in East Yorkshire. Christopher Jowett visits this fascinating World War I memorial and explains why Sir Mark was determined to erect a special memorial to honour the waggoners. Their job was not to fight but to transport food, ammunition and other supplies to front line units.

Then Daniel Theyer pays tribute to Geoffrey Brindley a local Bradford man known as the ‘Jesus Man’. He became something of a local celebrity through walking, smiling and waving, although he remained an enigma. Geoffrey passed away in October 2015 and Bradford is not going to be the same without him.

For our last story Jeremy Clark visits King Richard III House in Scarborough which is now a restaurant to carry out a full investigation of its history. Jeremy’s comprehensive article includes all aspects of the house as well as the popular belief that King Richard III stayed there during the summer of 1484.

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

By Paul Williams

The Supersonic 70s - The Sweet, Abba, Starsky and Hutch, Elvis Presley........the British economy was tumbling as industrial workers were striking throughout that decade but life carried on as normal in a northern town.

My abiding memory of childhood Christmases during the Seventies was the overwhelming feeling of togetherness and the excitement that came with the annual visit to relatives in Filey, North Yorkshire, a town I came to regard as my second home.

Life was much more neighbourly back then; everybody knew everyone in the street. There were four houses in our little street. We were the only family and the other three residents were elderly ladies. My mother would bake for them and I would run errands when required. I also remember hitting a tennis ball against the wall of our terraced house for hours, dreaming of being a champion at Wimbledon.

Living on Teesside, life was settled and the highlight of the year was to visit Filey at the festive period, whatever the weather.

My aunt and uncle had a bed and breakfast business at number 14 Brooklands. We had to drive down the steep hill from the town, turning right on to the seafront and up the long, cobbled incline to the guest house. It was closed for two weeks over Christmas and my mother, father, sisters and myself spent time enjoying being with our relatives, or at least we did when we got there! On several occasions we had to turn back home at Whitby or Scarborough due to heavy snowfalls. I stared out of the car window passing one white field after another, feeling sorry for the sheep huddled together taking shelter against walls.

We arrived at lunch time on Boxing Day to tuck into yet another huge Christmas dinner. My aunt threw her heart and soul in to preparing the meal and would revel in playing the hostess as she emerged from the kitchen with plates piled high. My uncle pushed tables together to make one big eating area, placed crackers and paper hats at each place setting and would put an LP of Christmas carols on the record player.

After lunch we took what my father called a ‘bracing’ walk along the seafront. ‘Bracing’ is not the word I would have used for it, I can still feel the cold in my bones forty years later. Presents were opened upon return to the house. My aunt, an avid cook, made biscuits, jams and preserves, and presented them in hampers as her seasonal gift. A comic fan, I always received a Beano or Dandy annual which I read from cover to cover several times. We played with toys brought with us from Christmas Day or watched television; favourite programmes included The Morecambe and Wise Show, The Harlem Globetrotters, The Two Ronnies and On the Buses. Once I stood open mouthed marvelling at a ‘home cinema’ which was a huge screen and a film projector - I thought it was a movie camera - unveiled by my aunt and uncle.
The lights were turned off and children and adults sat together on an assortment of chairs munching crisps whilst watching films of Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin and Batman. Even by a small boy’s standard, the acting in the Batman film, circa 1940s, was terrible with unrealistic fighting and scenery.

My aunt and uncle were keen historians and loved the Victorian era. The B & B was decorated with rich wallpaper, ornate furnishings and lots of lace. Christmas was a time for my aunt to indulge in her passion for Victoriana. There was little money to spend on decorations but my aunt’s enthusiasm shone through in her determination to transform the house for the holiday. She took her inspiration from nature as the Victorians did using greenery, flowers, pinecones, berries and fruit. The bannisters were decorated with holly whilst mistletoe hung from the ceiling in the reception area. The real Christmas tree was the centrepiece of the lounge; a tall tree adorned with candles and underneath sat all the gifts waiting to be opened. I have some magical memories of sitting in that room, bathed in candlelight, watching the adults playing cards or board games as I drifted off into a contented sleep. On reflection Christmas was an exotic time, too. We had what I call ‘real’ nuts in little string bags, dates and satsumas piled up in the fruit bowl. I still get a tingle today when I buy my Christmas fruit, remembering those days when fresh fruit was a treat.

New Year’s Eve was an exciting day during our stay in Filey. My father and uncle headed to the pubs located around the High Street while my mother and aunt laid the table with pies, sausage rolls and cakes that had been baked earlier in the day and entertained my sisters and me until 11.30p.m., when the men returned home in time to see in the New Year. I always found New Year’s Eve a rather strange affair as women smelling of Babycham and sherry kissed me on the cheeks telling me I had grown so fast. Everyone danced and ate as Andy Stewart beamed from the television with his Hogmanay programme. I was puzzled one year on overhearing a conversation between my mother and my aunt - should they have a snowball then or wait until later? I wandered upstairs thinking where were they going to get a snowball from and for what purpose. Years later I realised it was a drink.

New Year’s Day was always a sedate affair. We awoke to the smell of a cooked breakfast, another rare treat, and relished the sausage, bacon, eggs and beans served on huge plates. The remainder of the morning we watched Champion the Wonder Horse, Flash Gordon (with Buster Crabbe, of course) and a Tarzan film starring Johnny Weissmuller. After lunch, the men wandered off to the pub for the afternoon as we children walked along the seafront with my mother and aunt to ‘blow away the cobwebs’. It certainly did that! I recall how dark and frightening the sea looked in wintertime, the seafront steel grey and cold and the snow so incongruous with the seaside surroundings.

I have lots of memories from that time and all of them centre on being together, the warmth and the camaraderie that came with Christmas. As a child presents were important but not as important as spending time with people who mattered. My uncle is dead and my aunt long since retired. I don’t get to Filey as often as I would like but when I do, it still feels like going home.
The Charles Dickens Connection with Malton and Ebenezer Scrooge’s Counting House

By Philip Hartley

Malton in North Yorkshire, is an attractive market town situated halfway between Scarborough and York. One of its claims to fame is with the novelist Charles Dickens, who was a great friend of Charles Smithson, a solicitor in the town.

At the age of nineteen, Charles Smithson began training as a solicitor in Malton and was taught by John his eldest brother. When John died, Charles moved within the business to London to continue training guided by Henry, another elder brother. After three years, Charles Smithson’s father died and Charles stayed at the London office whilst Henry returned to Malton to take charge of that office. It was during this period Charles Dickens acted as surety for a friend to buy into the Smithson’s London business; this how he met Charles Smithson and they became lifelong friends. Unfortunately, Henry, the elder brother died, so Charles Smithson returned to Malton to take over that part of the firm.

Right: Charles Smithson Malton solicitor
Charles Dickens first visited Malton in July 1843, during which time Charles Smithson was living at Easthorpe Hall, near Castle Howard, sited on the Castle Howard Road, some two and a half miles west of Malton. He lived there until autumn of 1843 when he moved to Abbey House, in Old Malton, behind St. Mary’s Priory Church. Sadly Easthorpe Hall was destroyed by fire in the 1960s.

It is believed that when Charles Dickens arrived by the York coach, at the Talbot Inn, there was no available conveyance in which he could proceed to Easthorpe Hall. He was informed that a hearse was available and, without hesitating, Dickens chartered the unusual vehicle to travel the short distance to Easthorpe Hall.

Right: Easthorpe Hall, Malton, in about 1954. It was destroyed by fire in the 1960s.

Above and right: The Talbot Hotel Malton, in 1907. It was a busy staging post for horse-drawn transport. After a major refurbishment the hotel re-opened in 2012.

Left and below: Abbey House in Old Malton and behind St Mary’s Priory Church, now a residential care home.
As Dickens was a well-known author, his visit to Malton made interesting headlines in the Yorkshire Gazette of July 8th, 1843. It was recorded thus “We understand that Charles Dickens Esq, the admired and talented author of ‘Pickwick’, etc is now on a visit with his lady at Easthorpe, the hospitable abode of Charles Smithson Esq Solicitor, Malton, and that he has visited Malton Abbey and other remarkable places in the vicinity.” In all, Dickens spent three weeks at Easthorpe Hall and was clearly, enthusiastic about the place because he wrote “For I am quite serious in saying that this is the most remarkable place of its size in England and immeasurably the most beautiful”.

Left: The novelist Charles Dickens

At this time, Charles Dickens’ younger brother Alfred Lamert Dickens, a railway engineer, had an office in the Market Place and lived in Hillside Cottage, Greengate, Malton. He later moved to Derwent Cottage, Scarborough Road, Norton, at the time the York-Malton-Scarborough railway line was being built. It was during this period that he met and married a local girl from Stremsall near York, a village through which the line passed.

Some of Charles Dickens connections were not written down but are so obvious they must be true. The novel ‘A Christmas Carol’ was not written at Malton, but the Smithson family were told, by Dickens that the office in Chancery Lane, Malton, was the model for Scrooge’s counting house as it was a typical solicitor’s office of the time. The bells, heard by Scrooge, and feature prominently in the novel, were based on those of St Leonard’s on Church Hill. In the story, Scrooge wakes up and the bells of a neighbourhood church ring from six until twelve, then stop. It is interesting to note that the bells of St. Leonard’s Church have the same peal as St. Mary’s. Mary-le-bone in London, Dickens would have been aware of that fact.

Charles Smithson died in 1844, at an early age of thirty-nine. Dickens attended the funeral at Old Malton. He travelled by a fast carriage on April 5th, leaving York at seven in the morning and arrived in Malton at nine thirty, just in time for the funeral. Charles Smithson died without leaving a will; from a letter Dickens wrote to Charles’ wife, we know that he helped in the search for a will at the Chancery Lane offices and at Abbey House, Old Malton, Smithson’s final home.

Dickens later told the Smithson family that Charles Smithson was Mr. Spenlow of Spenlow and Jorkins, in the novel ‘David Copperfield’. The character also failed to leave a will upon his death.

Left: The grave stone of Charles Smithson. He was buried in 1844 in the newly-consecrated part of St Mary’s Priory Church graveyard.

**Ebenezer Scrooge’s Counting House**

Scrooge’s counting house in ‘A Christmas Carol’ is believed to have been modelled on Smithson’s office in Chancery Lane, Malton, which is in a narrow alleyway running between Yorkersgate and Market Place. The names Scrooge & Marley can be read on the windows when the shutters are open. The building, owned by the Fitzwilliam (Malton) Estate, is now the Counting House Museum, maintained and run by the volunteer group of the Charles Dickens (Malton) Society. The Society raise awareness of the author’s connection with Malton, displaying information about Dickens himself, the house he lived in, his large family of ten children, and the many authors of the time with whom he had friendships.
Additionally, there are paintings of a ghostly Jacob Marley, whose image is recognisable on the front door knocker, tight-fisted Ebenezer Scrooge and his kind-hearted clerk Bob Cratchit, and cartoon sketches of the well-known characters from Dickens’ novels.

‘A Christmas Carol’ was first published in 1843. The following year, after Charles Smithson’s death, Dickens sent his widow a signed copy of the novel, bearing the inscription “Mrs Smithson, from Charles Dickens, 18th April 1844.”


In November 2012, the book came up for auction in New York. The residents of Malton managed to secure it for £21,800 and there is a facsimile of it, with the inscription on display at the museum.

Left: Inside the Counting House Museum

The museum is open on Saturdays from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm, and occasional special event days. It can also be opened at other times for private visits by groups or school parties. For further information phone 01653 698701 or visit the website at www.dickenssocietymalton.co.uk.

Entry is free but visitors are invite to make a contribution to help with the rent and other running costs.

Left: Signed copy of ‘A Christmas Carol’ which read “Mrs Smithson, from Charles Dickens, 18th April 1844.”

Right: St Leonard’s on Church Hill is thought to originate from the late 12th century, with the spire and clock being added in the 19th century. The bells of St. Leonard’s Church have the same peal as St. Mary’s, Mary-le-bone in London, Dickens would have been aware of that fact. Somewhat unusually, this former Anglican church was handed back to the Roman Catholic Church in the 1970s, making it one of only a few medieval catholic churches in England.
Hidden away in the midst of Leeds bustling shopping centre is a storehouse of knowledge of which many of the good citizens of that city would probably confess they were unaware. Shoppers seeking out bargains in the now-pedestrianised precinct of Commercial Street may be forgiven for keeping their eyes fixed on the shops which occupy ground level and taking little notice of the handsome Georgian facade of no.18. The more curious, however, may notice that sandwiched between the Co-operative bank and the Paperchase store at this address is a double door which emits an aura of times past. In fact anyone entering this door may be forgiven for thinking they have come upon the real-life Tardis of Dr Who where time has stood still. However, instead of an army of Daleks the visitor will find a team of friendly librarians administering a collection of many thousands of books for the benefit of the library’s members; for this is the Leeds Library, a private subscription library for the use of its members who pay an initial membership fee together with an annual subscription which is used to maintain the premises and collections.

The Library was founded as long ago as 1768 by a group of educated gentleman in the city to provide them with access to books which as individuals they could not hope to obtain; this was a time when books were, of course, relatively expensive. Along with other northern towns and cities Leeds was, at this period, growing rapidly in wealth and population as a result of the technological advancements introduced in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Among the founding members one name is prominent, the Reverend Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), incumbent of Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel and one of the leading scientists of this age of discovery and invention. Schoolboys of a certain age may recall that he was instrumental in the discovery of oxygen. Priestley had, at this time, recently arrived from Warrington and was both a graduate of Edinburgh University and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Right: Portrait of Joseph Priestley painted late in life by Rembrandt Peale circa 1801
Indeed Priestley had no doubt been familiar during his tenure at Warrington of similar libraries functioning in Warrington itself as well as in nearby Liverpool. After the Library’s formation Priestley served as the first Secretary of the Library and its second President.

Once the Leeds Library had opened its doors to subscribing members other Yorkshire towns and cities followed its example, including Bradford, Hull and York. On the coast subscription libraries were established for the benefit of visitors to the now popular watering resorts of Scarborough and Whitby; at Scarborough such a library was established by local printer and bookseller, John Cole, where visitors to the town could view a range of newspapers as well as take out novels to amuse themselves during their stay in that town.

Right: Print of a Scarborough bookshop in 1812, note the fashionable black servant

However, of all the subscription libraries founded in England around this time and still functioning Leeds is now the oldest. The good citizens of London, however, had to wait until 1841 until that city established a library along the lines of its Northern cousin. That library is of course the London Library, the foundation of which owed much to the efforts of writer Thomas Carlyle.

Left: This image shows the Golden Cock public house in about 1910. The building to the right was formerly Joseph Ogle’s bookshop the original home of the Leeds Library which was at the first floor level and would have been approached from the back of the building via the alleyway

Until the collection came to be housed in its present premises in Commercial Street the books were housed in a number of rented premises in the centre of Leeds. As the collections grew it became necessary to seek larger premises to house the growing library. By 1804 it had become clear that the constant need to look for new premises was unsatisfactory and in September of that year the members voted unanimously ‘that the most eligible mode of procuring a new Library room is the building of one by subscription and that… a Sub-Committee [be] chosen from themselves to enquire for a suitable situation, procure plans and estimates, and also prepare… the means of defraying the Annual Expenditure’. Finally in July 1806 after protracted negotiations it was finally resolved to purchase the plot of land on which the Library now stands ‘in the New Road about to be constructed from Briggate to Albion Street’. The building went up in 1807 and the Library was transferred to the new premises and re-opened to members in July 1808.

Right: This image is an engraving of the Leeds Library by Thomas Taylor dated 1816. The entrance was the arch on the left. The next arch contained the bookseller’s shop of the then librarian, Mary Robinson. The library had opened in its new building on 4th July 1808
If members thought that the fine new premises in Commercial Street would alleviate the problem of further problems finding space for the library’s books, to their surprise, they were mistaken. With the passage of time the library shelves once more became increasingly full and it, consequently, became necessary to search for some means of accommodating the growing collection. Whilst drastic measures such as the disposal of some of the collections were introduced it finally became clear towards the latter half of the 19th century that new accommodation was once more required. The Library Committee began to look at a number of options including the rental or purchase of new premises but after a thorough examination of the title deeds of the Commercial Street site it was discovered that the Library owned a certain amount of land unused on that site which would enable an annexe to be constructed. And so in due course building of the annexe was begun in 1880 and resulted in the New Room which came into use in 1881.

Left: This 1950 photo shows the Leeds Library in Commercial Street. The double-fronted shop next to the library’s entrance in the central arch is that of E Barrows & Son, bookmakers. W. H. Smith occupy the double-fronted shop to the right with its extension nearing completion. The Leeds Library gates, removed in the 1950s can be seen.

One factor which has been a constant feature throughout the Library’s history in the accounts and reports of the Library Committee has been the funding, or lack thereof, to maintain the premises and collections. Whilst this has forced the Library’s Committee members and their Librarians to come up with ingenious solutions to improve efficiency it has, at least, had the happy result that the library retains much of the appearance it has had from the time when it first opened its doors in 1808 in Commercial Street.

Many years ago this writer, then a fledgling librarian, had the great good fortune to be called upon to assist in the library following the sudden illness of one of its outstanding Librarians, Mr Frank Beckwith. I was ably assisted by his Deputy, Mr Edward Bumby, who had joined the Library straight from school and spent his entire working life in the Library. There was nothing about the Library of which Mr Bumby was unaware, including more than a few interesting stories about individual library members. Having worked in a few libraries I quickly realised the individual character of this institution which had more the aura of a private members’ club than the municipal libraries with which most of us are familiar. I also had the good fortune to be summoned to the home of Mr Beckwith who was by that time beginning a slow but steady recovery. He was very kind in imparting his knowledge of the history and workings of the Library to this new member of staff.

In the meantime I learnt from Mr Bumby that one of Leeds’ outstanding literary families to which authoress Lettice Cooper belonged, were long-standing members of the Library. In fact one of my duties at the end of each day was to eject any members still on the premises. Almost invariably this included waking up Lettice Cooper’s brother from his deep slumbers in one of the reading rooms. I recall being introduced to members of the Committee as well as to many of the Library’s users, including a Mrs Rigg and her younger daughter. Mr Bumby kindly pointed out to me that the older daughter was none other than Diana Rigg who at that time had already become a well-known actress as Steed’s female partner in the television series The Avengers. I also recall that, as the Library was open on a Saturday morning, it was one of the Librarian’s duties to look after shopping purchases for members whilst the owners’ went in search of more bargains or perhaps to join friends for coffee in Schofields. Again it was Mr Bumby who advised me to look out for a charming lady of mature years who never failed to appear on a Saturday morning with a personal item which was certainly not shopping. Intrigued by this mysterious advice I waited on my first Saturday morning and my patience was duly rewarded by a message from the staff member receiving patrons at the street entrance.
Imagine my surprise when a charming lady handed over her ‘personal item’ which was none other than her pet Pekingese poodle. Fortunately the dog was perfectly behaved, although another member of staff pointed out that as her mistress was likely to be away for some considerable time it would fall to me to take the dog out ‘to stretch its legs’! This was several years before the All Creatures Great and Small series written by Thirsk vet James Herriot was screened on television. However, I have sometimes wondered whether Herriot had been acquainted with this lady and modelled his ‘Tricky Woo’ and owner on the lady and her pet.

The Library has been fortunate in having a number of distinguished and dedicated librarians on its staff and committee. Among the many Librarians who have gone on to important positions in other institutions mention may be made of Sir John Young Walker Macalister who subsequently became Librarian first at the new Gladstone Library at the National Liberal Club and later Librarian of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, and Henry Morse Stephens who left Leeds to become lecturer in Indian History at Cambridge University and later Professor of History at Cornell and subsequently California Universities in the United States. Given the longevity of this institution it is hardly surprising that the Library contains a wealth of valuable materials, much of which is unlikely to be found elsewhere. It has particular strengths in the humanities including history and, more specifically local history, as well as travels and biography. As with other libraries the Committee were frequently faced with the difficult question of what to acquire and what to reject. More than once Committee members were taken to task for their decisions in such matters and occasionally such criticism was voiced in the local newspapers. The library still acquires a wide range of new books for the use of its members as well as CDs and DVDs, and the collections now total some 140,000 volumes. Although it is certainly true that the institution is steeped in history, staff have been willing to embrace new technology and the Library has both a web page and a Facebook entry.

Any reader familiar with the Library may well be aware that its walls are believed to have witnessed an event which caused something of a stir at the time. The story was reported in the pages of the Strand magazine in 1908 as one of the best attested ghost stories in the United Kingdom. Although the names and places were thinly disguised the magazine records the supposed appearance of a ghost within the walls of the Library. The story appears to focus on a former Librarian who was thought to have supplemented his salary by selling library membership to more than the statutory number and using the resulting funds to supplement his salary. On being discovered he was believed to have committed suicide and his fate was to haunt the scene of his crime. Subsequent writers including Mr Beckwith and former Library President Trevor Hall have thrown cold water on this story and library users may rest assured that there have been no further sightings of the disgraced Librarian for many years. Although the sight of Victorian shoppers has disappeared from Commercial Street along with the visitation of the disgraced Librarian at no.18 it is not difficult, when the light fades and today’s shoppers have gone, to close one’s eyes and see again the hansom cabs with their horses and ladies in their crinoline dresses carrying parasols, hurrying along this charming street, some perhaps entering the doors at no.18 to ask the Librarian for the latest novel by the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, or Sir Walter Scott. Let us leave the last word to Mr. Beckwith who concurred with the view that ‘the Leeds Library made the fortune of Commercial Street’.
RANGERS OF THE YORKSHIRE WOLDS

By Diana Parsons

Angela Sykes was born at Sledmere House in 1911, and married Randal the Earl of Antrim in May, 1934. She spent most of her married life at Glenarm Castle in County Antrim. After the Earl’s death in 1977 she returned to Sledmere House and spent time reflecting on her childhood there.

Angela Antrim thought it worth telling what could be remembered of the Wold Rangers, whilst two or three of them were still alive. In 1981 she wrote a book, The Yorkshire Wold Rangers which was published by Hutton Press. I am using the information from the book in this article, together with some of Angela’s illustration.

The caravan stood in a copse at the side of a Wolds lane. In winter it was deserted, snow drifting around the margins of the wood sealing it off from the outside world; in spring when primroses carpeted the surrounding grassland, its owner returned. Then there was usually an air of busy self-sufficiency; a wood pile and buckets near the door, tools propped against the walls, a line of washing suspended between trees, a vigorously smoking chimney. George Smith, better known as ‘Dog Geordie’, one of the last of the so-called Wold Rangers, was at home.

Right: ‘Dog Geordie’ at home

The Rangers consisted of a body of some fifty itinerant men and women who, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, roamed the lanes of the East Riding. Although the origins of most are unclear there are several possible reasons for their existence; the industrial revolution which removed traditional rural crafts to the towns, the agricultural slump of the nineteenth century which reduced employment on the land, and the dramatic upheaval of the Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which deprived squatters of the common land. But some were simply misfits, their true identities lost in the mists of time, each with their personal reasons for abandoning conventional society. Together they formed a small army wandering the lanes, scratching a living, camping in the green lanes and scavenging for food.

Perhaps because he was himself something of a misfit, the rangers found themselves an unlikely champion in Sir Tatton Sykes, the fifth baronet of Sledmere House. Born in 1826, and largely rejected by his parents, he grew into a strange, solitary and eccentric man. At the age of forty eight he married the eighteen year old Jessica Cavendish-Bentinck who was desperate to escape from her mother. It was an alliance which proved to be disastrous. Among her husband’s many peculiarities were his passion for eating rice pudding every day, and his habit of repeating himself so when Sledmere House caught fire in 1913, and his frantic agent appeared to tell him that it was about to be totally destroyed, his only response was ‘must finish my pudding.’ On his walks around the village he wore several coats at once, discarding them when necessary in an attempt to maintain a constant bodily temperature. To every ranger who saluted him he gave a shilling, and a further shilling for retrieving and returning the coats, actions which, unsurprisingly, made him extremely popular with these equally unconventional men and encouraged a kind of kinship.
The names by which these rangers were known locally often derived from their idiosyncrasies or physical characteristics. ‘Big-bag,’ an ex-soldier who was reputed to be a member of a well-to-do Gloucestershire family, was named for his huge kitbag and shied away from any responsibility, living in the loft of a pub, while ‘Tin Whistle Joe’ was a former sailor who played his instrument in pubs. ‘Mad Halifax’, a clergymen’s son, was renowned for his evil temper sometimes with good cause. He had a rude awakening one morning when an unsuspecting farmer thrust a pitchfork into the middle of a heap of chaff in which he was sleeping – naked.

Left: ‘Mad Halifax’ gets a fright

‘Ginger Joe Bryan’ who was named for his beard was an intelligent character with the air of a gentleman but his behaviour ‘in drink’ was best described as ‘uncertain’. In 1925 when King George V and Queen Mary were guests of the sixth baronet, Sir Mark, they were moved to inspect the new village war memorial. There they found ‘Ginger Joe’ defiantly settled in his favourite spot on the steps of the memorial where he could not possibly be overlooked and from where, for the duration of the royal visit, he resisted all attempts to move either himself or his hat, to His Majesty’s evident displeasure.

Right: ‘Ginger Joe Bryan’ and the royal occasion

The influence of Sir Tatton was carried on into the next generation by his son, Mark, who installed a bell at the back door of the house for the benefit of the rangers who, on ringing it, were guaranteed to receive a mug of tea and a sandwich. In fact Sir Mark’s hospitality extended even further. When a policeman, new to the area, found two of the rangers emerging from the hall drive he assumed that they were up to no good and accosted them, at which point an enraged Sir Mark rushed out of the house shouting, ‘How dare you do this...these two gentlemen are my guests.’ One cannot help feeling sorry for the hapless policeman.

Many of the rangers were popular with the estate farmers. Some helped out at threshing time, planted potatoes, cleaned out cess pits or gave a hand with the many horses then employed on Wolds farms. In return for their labour they were sometimes invited to eat their midday meal with the family. Others provided extra services. ‘Schoolmaster Tommy’ did farm accounts and ‘Mars Hammond’ was a knife grinder, while Blind Harry, who was fed by the villagers of Weaverthorpe, carried tea to the men in the stable yards and even had his own pig sty where at night he curled up in a sack of chaff. ‘Well, Well’, named for his favourite phrase, provided a primitive shopping service between Sledmere and Driffield which involved a sixteen mile round trip dragging a laden cart up hill and down dale. For this he charged two pence an item and was known to be scrupulously honest. Less popular were ‘Horse Hair Jack’, named for his habit of stealing the horse hair which the stable lads saved to sell to upholsterers at eighteen pence a pound, ‘Punch Copeland who was ‘good with his fists’ and ‘Hocks Coxworth’, an alcoholic. All three were to be avoided.
On fine summer nights groups of rangers often congregated in some secluded spot to ‘drum up’, or cook supper, each providing their own contribution for what usually proved to be a substantial feast. All were skilled poachers capable of acquiring a plentiful supply of rabbits, hares and pheasants, but they also relied on the generosity of farmers’ wives who occasionally provided pies, bread and vegetables, although not all were so inclined. In recent years one elderly lady still angrily recalled a ranger’s theft of a whole ham from her kitchen table.

Left: ‘Well, Well’

During the summer months most of the rangers slept out in the plentiful chalk pits which provided material for road repairs. These were particularly popular and competition for the best spot was keen; on a warm night it was rare to find one unoccupied. But in winter when the Wolds were swept by an icy blast straight from the Arctic, conditions were very different. While some farmers allowed rangers to sleep in their barns – ‘Cut Lip Sam’, a first class worker named for his hare lip, was not only allowed to do so but also ate with the family - others were understandably reluctant, fearing fires. At least one ranger, Tommy Milner, slept out in hedge bottoms winter and summer alike. In wet weather village smithies proved to be handy places in which to dry out and get warm and it was not unknown for the men to get themselves arrested for committing a minor offence in order to earn a spell of relative comfort in prison; if all else failed there was always the workhouse, known as ‘the spike,’ and regarded as luxury accommodation.

Mabel Murray, better known as ‘Croom Mabel’ from the wood she frequented, was until comparatively recently a familiar figure in the lanes near the villages of Helperthorpe and Weaverthorpe. An orphan, she had early become used to her independent lifestyle and although she had been known to consort with various rangers, including ‘Dog Geordie’, she really preferred to travel on her own, relying on the housewives in the villages through which she passed, pushing a capacious pram filled to the brim with the impedimenta of an itinerant existence, and the rags which helped to earn her keep. One villager, astonished to find Mabel camping out in a green lane while wearing a low cut lamé evening dress, was unable to resist saying as she passed, ‘see you’ve changed for dinner’.

The lanes of the East Riding are these days largely uninhabited. The mechanisation which now rules the prairie landscapes provides no opportunity for casual labour and the likes of Mabel and Geordie, the last of the independent eccentrics, were eventually taken under the wing of the state. Poor Mabel, whose four children had been taken away from her, was confined to an old people’s home where, like a caged bird, she yearned only for escape, while ‘Dog Geordie’, once a familiar figure wandering with his dog along the roadside in search of a free supper, accepted a modern council caravan in town with at least a measure of his old Independence. This Second World War veteran, captured at Dunkirk and imprisoned in both Germany and Poland, died in 1987 aged seventy six. His old caravan in the copse has now gone; nature has obliterated all evidence of its existence and with it has gone the last trace of a group of men and women who knew no better way of life than the freedom of the road and the camaraderie of their own kind. With their passing the Wold country of the East Riding has lost much that gave it a character all of its own.
Sledmere House and Gardens

Photo by Andrew Gallon

Photo by Neal Mills
The Waggoners Memorial at Sledmere, East Yorkshire

By Christopher Jowett

A unique and fascinating war memorial is situated at the heart of the Yorkshire Wolds. It stands at the Sledmere end of the Kirby Grindalythe Lane, on the B1253, frequently noticed by passing motorists but seldom visited. The twenty foot memorial commemorates the men of The Waggoners Reserve, who were a transport corps in the Great War 1914-19, and the idea was initiated by Sir Mark Sykes, BART: M.P., the sixth baronet of Sledmere House.

In 1912, soon after the Territorial Army was founded, Sir Mark Sykes (1879-1919), a local landowner and Lieutenant-Colonel of the 5th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment, had the foresight to plan a Waggoners Special Reserve, ready to be called up when war broke out. Over a thousand volunteers signed up and the reserve consisted of local men employed on the Yorkshire Wolds farms. Their job was not to fight but to transport food, ammunition and other supplies to front line units. They were paid a retaining fee of £1 per year. When the Great War started the volunteers served with their waggons and horses in France and Belgium. They performed with heroism from the Battle of Mons onward. Sir Mark was very proud of his men and, as the war drew to a close in 1918, he was determined to erect a special memorial in their honour.
Right: These three plans illustrate a man on his horse, pulling a loaded wagon, boats crossing the channel to France and the five mosaic verse tablets.

The baronet designed the ‘Wolds Waggoners Memorial’ with the assistance of the Sledmere estate stonemason, Alfred Barr, translating Sir Mark’s drawings for the Italian sculptor, Carlo Magnoni, who carved a remarkable monument consisting of a central shaft surrounded by four ornamental columns. The central shaft depicts carvings in three tiers representing scenes in the war. The images show the men in the fields at harvest time, enrolling for the Waggoners Reserve, receiving mobilisation papers, saying good bye to the family (there is even shown a man’s dog jumping at his heels), crossing the English Channel to France depicting fish and mines, then disembarking with the munition wagons. What follows are barbaric scenes of the Germans torching a church whilst another soldier drags a screaming woman by her hair. The retreat from Mons shows shells flying through ‘no man’s land’; the Germans are seen fixing bayonets with growling teeth before being beaten and chased across a bridge over the River Marne.

Left: Another three plans of the carved circular column depicting the men being kitted out in soldiers’ uniform ready to board the boats to France and the Germans being chased across a bridge over the Marne.

Above: Barbaric scenes of Germans torching a church whilst another soldier drags a screaming woman by her hair.
A series of verses are inscribed on mosaic tablets on the memorial, composed by Sir Mark Sykes which read as follows:

Verse 1:
These stones a noble tale do tell,
Of what men did when war befell,
For in that fourteen harvest-tide
The call for lads went far and wide
To help to free the world from wrong,
To shield the weak and bind the strong.

Verse 2:
When from these Wolds twelve hundred men
Came forth from field and fold and pen
To stand against the law of might,
To labour and to die for right,
And for to save the world from wrong,
To shield the weak and bind the strong.

Verse 3:
These simple lads knew naught of war,
They only knew that God’s own Law
Which Satan’s will controls must fall
Unless these men then did heed that call
To save the world from wrong,
To shield the weak and bind the strong.

Verse 4:
‘Ere Britain’s hosts were raised or planned,
The lads who formed this homely band
To Normandy had passed o’er sea
Where some were maimed and some did dee
And all to save the world from wrong,
To shield the weak and bind the strong.
Verse 5:

*Good lads and game, your Riding’s Pride,*

*These stones were set by this roadside*

*The tale your children’s bairns to tell*

*Of what ye did when war befell*

*To help to save the world from wrong*

*To shield the weak and bind the strong.*

An inscription that surrounds the top above the four ornamental columns and the circular carved column reads:

“LT. COL: SIR MARK SYKES. BART: M.P. DESIGNED THIS MONUMENT AND SET IT UP AS A REMEMBRANCE OF THE GALLANT SERVICES RENDERED IN THE GREAT WAR. 1914-1919 / BY THE WAGGONER’S RESERVE A CORPS OF 1000 DRIVERS RAISED BY HIM ON THE YORKSHIRE WOLD FARMS IN THE YEAR 1912 THOMAS SCOTT FOREMAN. CARLO MAGNONI SCULPTOR. ALFRED BARR MASON.”

Sadly, Sir Mark Sykes did not live to see the memorial completed. He died at the age of thirty-nine whilst attending the Versaille Peace Conference in Paris, during the Spanish flu epidemic in February 1919. The memorial was unveiled in September 1920 by Lt. General Sir Ivor Maxse, Commander in Chief of Northern Command.

Regular reunions of the Waggoners Reserve were held until August 1988, when the last five survivors were invited as guests of honour to Sledmere House.

*Left: Sir Mark Sykes, 6th Baronet (1879-1919) photo take in about 1918*
A smile and a wave costs nothing
By Daniel Theyer

It was a grey September morning in 1970, when I set out for a walk to try and lift my mood. I had moved to Bradford a few weeks earlier to take up a new job. It hadn’t worked out and I was unemployed. Attempts at finding a suitable job had been unsuccessful, and weekly visits to the employment exchange to collect my dole money were depressing affairs. Oncoming rain made me wonder if I wouldn’t have been better off staying at home and the wetter I got the more depressed I became. Then saw a figure in the distance, striding in my direction. As it came nearer I could see that it was a man dressed in a brown robe, with sandaled feet, in the manner of a Franciscan friar. As he passed he smiled warmly and gave me a cheery wave. At the same moment the sun broke through the clouds and my mood lifted accordingly. Returning home I found a letter in the post inviting me to a job interview – in which I was successful, opening up a new career which would shape the rest of my working life.

Such was my first encounter with Geoffrey Brindley, the Bradford Jesus man. I saw him only a few times after that, and we never exchanged words, before moving to Baildon and subsequently to Holmfirth. I asked friends about him, but no-one really knew anything about him, except that he spent his time walking the streets of Bradford in all weathers, and that he wasn’t affiliated to a religious order. They had all seen him though and even then he was a well-known eccentric.

Until his death in October, Geoffrey continued to walk around Bradford and other local towns too. He became something of a local celebrity, and in the internet age websites devoted to him were set up for people to record their encounters with him, and plot his movements on an interactive map. Reading these comments it is easy to see how much he was loved.

"Geoffrey came to see my dad once a week and spent nearly every Christmas with us from the late 1960s until 1985, when my dad passed away. My dad used to make his robes and the cropped trousers he wore under them. Many a happy time was had when my sister Juliana and I were growing up. Geoffrey would bring his friends' children round to play with us and he once made us a wooden see-saw, which we had for years! I last saw Geoffrey in Bradford around Easter and we had a little chat. Everyone who walked passed said hello and gave him a wave. He was well loved. Rest peacefully, Uncle Geoffrey, your walk is done." - Kat

"Sad news. I remember him so well back in the 1970s, traveling on a bus from Eldwick to Bradford. I regularly saw him and always gave him a wave. I live in Inverness now, though I have seen posts regarding his illness. I can remember seeing him while on a visit back in the 1990s in the Nab Wood area. He waved and smiled. I think the only way to sum him up is that he made so many of us growing up in that area smile, and memories of him will never leave our hearts." - Susan Briggs

"I would like to add my own tribute and expression of gratitude for the life of Geoffrey Brindley and all he brought to our city and surrounding areas over so many decades. I was born in 1974 and grew up in Shipley. From my earliest memories he was as much a part of the landscape as Lister's Mill and Baildon Moor. More than anyone else he united Bradfordians through the simplicity of his life, through walking, smiling and waving. I have seen a few suggestions of a statue. I'd love to see not just one but a number statues dotted around the district inscribed with the simple words, "Geoffrey Brindley, Man of the People, He Walked, He Smiled, He Waved". - Michael Fryer, San Diego

"I am so sorry this man as passed away. I go back a long way remembering him. I am now 76 years old. Many times I would pass by this very polite man, in and around Bradford. I hadn't seen him for many years, because I now live in Cyprus, but he will be missed. Whenever you saw him he always had a smile for you. Lovely man." - Tony Gledhill
But who was he, and why did he behave as he did? Answering these questions is not so easy, as he rarely talked about himself, and had few close friends. Most people did not even know his name, not as it was necessary, he was usually simply known as the Jesus Man, but also as the Airedale Monk.

He was born in Buxton in 1927, the third son of Mary Allen and Andrew Brindley. His father was killed in a railway accident when Geoffrey was about 10 years old. After joining the Royal Navy in the early 1950s he had little contact with his relatives. Mr Brindley's cousin, Colin Watson, said "We never knew why he left his family and friends and not wanting anyone to know where he was."

He then got a job as a machinist in the International Harvester factory in Idle Bradford. One day in 1960 he told his colleagues that he was giving up his job as he needed to go to a quiet place to receive a message from God. He retreated to a cave near Settle where he remained for 12 days before emerging to commence his new life wandering the streets of Bradford dressed in a habit and sandals. He contacted the Bradford Telegraph & Argus and gave them a transcription of the message he had received from God. The paper duly reported the incident and quoted the opening paragraphs, which read

"Here is the word of the Lord as he gave it to me in Victoria Cave. This Great Britain has become in this day of 1960 a people which is drugged. Pills, tablets, injections, inoculations, tobacco, alcohol and too much prosperity – all these things have made it so.”

Geoffrey decided he must devote the rest of his life to show people the error of their ways. He had no home, no money, and no possessions, and relied on the charity of strangers for food and shelter. For example Ishrat Saleem remembers his father taking Brindley home for meals in the 60s: “My dad said Brindley was a spiritualist and wanderer. He had long hair then. A lovely man, always happy.”

“I remember when we use to play football at Myra Shay in Barkerend in the 1980s and he would join in wearing his sandals and robe. I remember saying to him you best go in the nets because kicking the ball will hurt your feet, but he just smiled and said ‘It’s ok, I’ll play where I am’. After the match he would invite us to his house where he lived on Barkerend Road for soft drinks and water, he would chat to us about school and what we wanted to do in the future. Because of him and my parents I became a good citizen of Bradford. I owe a lot to him and I will miss him a lot. RIP “Father”, as I used to call him.” - Arif Hussain

“I remember during my school years I got on the wrong bus and realised I did not have sufficient funds to get home. I remember how thankful I was when this person with a robe and sandals helped me out and I got home safely. Thank you for just being YOU.” - Naseem Hussain

“Around 20-25 years ago, I was travelling home upstairs on the bus, very upset, almost in tears but holding it back, wondering where my future would lead me. I saw the Jesus Man walking along and he looked straight at me and smiled and waved. It was like receiving a wave from God. He touched my life and although we never actually met and I never knew his name until now, he has and always will hold a place in my life. I agree with the suggestion that he should be celebrated with a statue.” - Linda Stone

"Devastated beyond words. I have waved and spoken to Jesus Man for 30 years. My children have grown up knowing who he was and to wave when they saw him. Bradford is not going to be the same without him. RIP Jesus Man - You are going to be missed by the whole of Bradford.” - Alana Mitchell

“I am so sorry to hear this lovely man has passed away, as a child living in Thornton he seemed to be everywhere, always with a smile and a wave. I always wondered how he walked such long distances. Even 50 years on and living at Apperley Bridge I have seen him walking on the side of the canal. He will be sorely missed. I would love to see a waving statue of him in centenary square.” - Linda Norton
Those early years on the road revealed a less well known side of his character. Still full of reforming zeal he twice fell foul of the law. The first time he was fined for his behaviour in trying to stop people from entering a bingo hall to save them from the sin of gambling. Unable to pay the fine he was only saved from jail when a religious studies teacher paid it for him. Shortly afterwards he served a short prison sentence for protesting outside a Beatles concert at the Alhambra theatre. Perhaps he then realised that trying to persuade people against their will was not the best strategy, as he then concentrated on helping people in trouble who welcomed his support.

Although he was friendly and approachable Geoffrey remained an enigma. When asked to explain his lifestyle he would reply, “I like walking” or sometimes, “I’m looking for an answer.” Inevitably he was approached by a string of local journalists over the years, but none of them came away any the wiser. Some people regarded him as a crackpot, many could not understand him, but most had a kind word for him. He simply became part of Bradford life, and never seemed to change. But of course the passing years did age him and in his sixties he accepted an offer from his friend George Armstrong to share his home in Baildon, staying there for the rest of his life.

“I am now 56. My father was an area officer for Bradford Social Services for 30 years and knew him through his professional work. In the early 1970s he came across him now and then on home visits to people who needed social work support. As a kid, I went on one such visit in Wakefield with my dad back in the 1970s. Geoffrey, (I did not know his name at the time and have only discovered it recently) would stay in the background and appeared to be both a welcome and permanent feature to those in need. He would sit quietly in the corner drinking tea and giving moral support. In this case, I think it may have been a family bereavement. Both of my parents were very positive when they saw him out and about. My family called him “Happy Harry” and we have used the name for 40 years whenever we saw him on the streets of our city. I think we will all miss his quiet fortitude and strength. He was positive force for good and his example gave people a sense of hope.” - Tim Whitcombe

“I remember growing up in Bradford and seeing Jesus Man in his distinctive brown robe and sandals. Always smiling and waving. Now in my 40s and living in London, I have always asked about him from my friends and family who still reside in Bradford. Today when my friend whose house Geoffrey used to visit told me that he has passed away, I couldn’t believe it. It has deeply saddened me and my family. The last time I saw our Jesus Man was about a year ago when he was walking along Otley Road in BD3, smiling as always. He will be missed. Bradford will never be the same without him. RIP.” - Azhar Rafiq

“Every Wednesday, Jesus Man would be in Eccleshill Library around 3pm. He would happily talk to me and my friends. We were around 14 years old. He was lovely and so nice to speak to.” - Marcia Pearson

“He always made me smile. I used to work as a lollypop lady at Littletown school in Liversedge. Every so often he would pass us on his long walk to Bradford. He always smiled and waved, and the children would smile and wave back. Even thinking about him now is putting a smile on my heart.” - Tracey King
In the run up to the 2012 Olympic Games Louise Szucs set up a Facebook page calling for Geoffrey to be nominated as one of the torchbearers. Her campaign attracted over 22,000 supporters. Sadly, but predictably, Geoffrey declined the honour.

In August 2015 he fell down the stairs at his Baildon home and was taken to the Bradford Royal Infirmary, where he died a few days later on August 24th. When this was reported in the local press the story was rapidly picked up by the national press, and tributes accumulated in their hundreds.

It seemed that everyone had something positive to say about him, and, collectively, they tell his story much better than I ever could.

Many ideas were put forward to honour his memory. Campaigns were started to have a statue erected and also to have a street named after him. Over £2,000 was quickly raised to give him a fitting funeral. The chosen venue was Bradford Cathedral, as this was expected to be able to accommodate the number of mourners expected.

I remember Geoff Brindley well. I worked with him at the International Harvester plant at Five Lane Ends. If I remember correctly, he came into work one morning and said he had had a message from god about the world coming to an end. He was one of the chosen few who would be saved, but he had to leave work at dinner time and go to some place out near the Cow and Calf rocks to be saved. The strange thing about all of this, was that he had never been a religious man (anything but). Anyway the foreman told him he couldn't have a gate pass but Geoff said he was going with or without the gate pass. He clocked off at dinner time and it was quite a long time before I saw him again. I could not believe it when I saw him dressed in his blanket and sandals, walking along Union Street and saying hello to every single person who passed him by. I also seem to remember him falling foul of the law on a number of occasions in the 60’s for standing outside Bingo Halls and preaching the evils of gambling. In 1970, I left Bradford and came to live in Sydney, Australia. I'm amazed that he is still doing his rounds at the age of 84 and I would like to add my vote to the quest to have him elected as a Torch Bearer for the 2012 London Olympic Games. Good luck Geoff.

Ken (July 2011)

I remember this Gentleman speaking with my Grandad in the '70s (Grandad died when I was 21 and I'm 55 next week) I have seen him many times, Leeds and Halifax as well as Bradford and he has always waved and smiled. I have wondered for many years who this man is as he never looks any older. He is amazing. Hope he carries on walking for many years to come. I am so glad that I have some answers to my questions with your web-site.

Sue (May 2013)

I lived on Keighley Road near Manningham Park in the 60s. I remember the Jesus Man from about 1966 when I was eight. My mum always spoke to him. The most amazing thing is, he looked middle-aged back then, and that was 47 years ago. He doesn’t look so different now. Whatever he has been doing it has been good for him. Top bloke, great to see him getting the recognition he deserves.

Ian (May 2013)
The funeral took place on October 13th. After calling at his Baildon home the funeral cortege travelled into the city from Shipley, along Manningham Lane, passing Valley Parade, and on to Hamm Strasse, Barkerend Road, to Thornbury roundabout before turning back along Leeds Road and Church Bank.

About 150 mourners applauded and waved as Geoffrey Brindley's wool coffin, donated by Hainsworth, the famous local textile firm (who are more used to providing fabric for royal wedding outfits) was carried from Bradford Cathedral at the end of the service.

The Reverend Sandra Benham led the service. She told the congregation: "He offered a constant witness. He was always there come rain, snow or hail. Always there, always the same. He had time for people, he was not in a rush, and he was not caught up in our so often frenzied world. He simply walked, waved and smiled." A local man, Michael Kerrigan, read a poem he wrote in Mr Brindley's memory, "A Touch of Jesus".

Farewell Geoffrey Brindley, we hope you are enjoying a well-earned rest.

I was born and raised in Bradford in the 1950's and like a lot of people I have fond memories of the guy who walked about and waved at everyone. We later found out his name was Geoffrey Brindle and I remember my mother telling me he'd been either arrested or cautioned by the police for causing a breach of the peace outside the old Top Rank bingo club (the Old Gaumont cinema for those who are as old as me and remember). He once walked past our house on Legrams lane and my younger brother who was only about eight walked up to Lidget Green talking to him (you could do that then). I remember having heard that Nike or some other sports shoe brand had tried to get him to wear their trainers!? The jogging Jesus doesn't sound right and I'm glad to say that the last time I saw him he was back in the Sandle I was surprised to see the comment that he'd died. I travel through Bradford regularly and I'm sure I've seen him since then. I hope he's still around for many years to come.

Pete (February 2013)

Geoff was an old friend of my late grandfather. I remember one rainy day standing at the bus stop in Bingley, when Geoff came walking past, wet through to the skin. I said hello and asked if he knew my grandfather to which he said yes he did. I invited him home for dinner to which he said yes. He is a charming and very polite and of course interesting man. Bradford is a better place with men like him around.

Nicky (July 2012)

"We all knew him as the Bradford Monk. From the very earliest as a young child, I would wave at him on my way to school at Canterbury or later at St Bedes. He would always wave back. I've seen him in bad weather or sunshine near Ilkley Moor and it always made him and me smile. He was literally a part of the infrastructure of this city and, quite frankly, as a child I thought he was on a par with Father Christmas. It was an unspoken rule to us that you wouldn't question him, but enough that he was always near. He tended to keep walking wherever possible, maintaining his beautiful aura. God bless." - Russ Whittingham
Geoffrey Brindley, The Bradford Jesus Man
Out On His Walks

Above: Geoffrey on a long lonely walk

Above: Geoffrey going into the pub for a well-earned drink after his long walk giving us a smile and a wave. Photo by Mark Davis

Above: Walking through the town, Photo by John Sargent
King Richard III House in Scarborough

By Jeremy Clark

Nowadays visitors to Scarborough walking along the seafront opposite the Harbour will undoubtedly come across an unusual, looking lopsided house sandwiched between other buildings but clearly much older. This is the King Richard III House, now a restaurant. It is so called because it is believed that King Richard III stayed here in 1484 when he was in Scarborough on naval business.

For fifty years King Richard III House was a museum with an antique shop next door. The building was bought in 1914 by E. Booth Jones, a Manchester antique dealer. His relative Edgar H. Burrows came from Birmingham to be manager. In fact during the First World War on December 16th 1914, German warships fired hundreds of shells into the town of Scarborough. Many building were destroyed but, fortunately King Richard III House escaped the attack which became known as ‘The Bombardment’.

The Tindall family have a long history as shipbuilders in Scarborough from the seventeenth century. When James Tindall died in 1748, the Tindall yard passed to his son John. John Tindall the elder (1722-1773) married Jane Dowker of the Salton gentry family in 1745. They bought and lived in King Richard III house from the Cockerill family who were also shipbuilders in the seventeenth century and owned other property in Sandside. Their ten children were born there, and when Robert Tindall was born in 1764, there were ten gallons of gin at the bed head for visitors. The house became the residence of Robert Tindall (1764-1828), then it was used has the Tindall’s office and stores, plans show the stems of ships being built on the sands opposite and reaching towards his house.
Right: The Tindall shipyard showing one of the last vessels, the barque “Thanes”, on the stocks.

From 1755 to 1807, the Tindall yard produced the largest number of ships built in Scarborough.

Shipbuilding at Scarborough ended in 1863

The poor documentation of families and owners, from the Middle Ages onwards has made it impossible to compile a detailed and accurate history of families connected with the building. In about 1801 the Tindall’s moved and the building was occupied by William Purcell a baker who made and sold ship biscuits or bread for every sailing tide. It next became an engineering shop owned by Thomas Varley. Some of the plaster ceiling was pulled down for shafting and machinery. It is also believed that the building was rented to a jet manufacturer. In 1830 Mary Forrest is said to have lived in King Richard III house, until she died in 1850. In about 1852 the bay windows were removed and the stone walls were plastered over to modernise the house. Subsequently the building became a greengrocers shop and until 1905, was occupied by varied tradesmen mainly fruiters and greengrocers. However, in 1890 it was occupied by Lewis Plummer a coble owner and trawl net maker.

The Seaman’s Mission Institute acquired King Richard III House in about 1908. The building was used to provide recreational facilities for boys under 16 who were considered too young to attend the main Institute. In about 1912 the mission allowed visitors to be shown around the house by the caretaker for an admission fee of 2d. The junior Institute closed sometime at the beginning of 1914 when Mr. E. Booth Jones bought the property and opened it to the public as a museum with his relative Mr Edgar H. Burrows as manager.

Left: This is probably the oldest photo of King Richard III house when it was occupied by Lewis Plummer a coble owner and trawl net maker in 1890. To the right with a long barbers pole is a tobacco shop. The building to the left is the Ye Old Buoy Inn which has steps and railings leading to a landing and the entrance door. In 1890 C. Horseman was the proprietor of the inn.

Right: Another old photo showing King Richard III house. It was taken a few years after the above photo. The steps and railings leading up to the inn have been removed and the ground levelled. It has a flat front with a sign running over the top of the ground floor window and door which reads “LATE RESIDENCE OF RICHARCH III. MAY 22nd 1484. A table can be seen outside under the window displaying groceries and provisions with a woman sitting on a seat. This photo was taken in 1892 when the proprietor was a Mr. John Wray. To the right is a Tobacco & Cigars Stores with a long barber’s pole. The sign along the top of the window reads “Gents Cutting & Shaving Room”. In the doorway can be seen the owner standing on the left and a fisherman on the right. To the left is the Ye Old Buoy Inn, C. Horseman continued to be the proprietor in 1892.
Left: Another old photo showing King Richard III house. It was taken a few years after the above photo. It has a flat front with the same sign running over the top of the ground floor window and door as in the above photo. Ye Old Buoy Inn to the left remains the same. To the right the long barber’s pole has been removed, however shop remains a tobacconist but has change hands, the new proprietor being Joseph Sinfield in 1901.

Right: This photo was taken in about 1908. It shows King Richard III house when it was taken over by the Seaman’s Mission Institute. In front of the building is a group of junior boys. This photo was probably taken when the institute was first opened. The flat front and sign running along to top of the ground floor window and door are the same as in the above photos. To the right is Camnis Fish and Chips shop run at the time by Benjamin Sanderson from 1905-1909.

Left: This photo was taken in about 1912. The notice board on the wall to the right of the entrance door indicates that the building was King Richard III house and that is open to visitors for an admission of 2d. The second notice board lists the name of the caretaker to be contacted for visitors to be shown around the house and officials of the institute.

In about 1915 Mr. E. H. Burrows converted the fried fish saloon, which it had become in 1910 into an antique shop.

The three storeys tall stone building with an attic, overlooking the harbour, dates in part to the fifteen century. It was extended by adjoining a two story hall on the east side and to the north with a rear range in about 1600. The original fifteenth century building then became the west wing to the much larger stone-built house. The interior would have also been refurbished at this time. The building was considerably altered in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Sadly the owner Mr. E. Booth Jones was drowned on the Lusitania on May 7th 1915. The business and property from the estate was then bought by his relative and manager Mr. Edgar H. Burrows.
Mr. Burrows decided to rebuild the bay windows at the front, which were removed in the mid-1800s when the house was repaired and modernised and to uncover the stone walls. The replica bay windows were based on an early drawing by Miss Wharton, published in the *Scarborough Philosophical Society Reports of 1846-1865* and date to about 1835. Her drawing shows how it originally looked which enabled the builders to reproduce the bay windows and in actual fact were laid on the original foundations.

Left: This drawing is by Miss Wharton and dates to about 1835 before the three storey bay windows at the front were removed. There are steps leading up to the front door of the house and another set of steps with a banister on the sides leading to the entrance to the building on the left. The ground level is much lower compared with photos of the building. The projecting boards and plinth indicate that the sea reached near the front of the building in the early part of the 1800s.

When Miss Wharton made a drawing of what has been called the ‘King’s Bedchamber’, on the second floor, in about 1808 it was furnished with an elegant heavy legged table, a cupboard and a four poster bed. This furniture was disposed by the Tindall’s in about 1808. The table went to Troutdale manor house then given to John Wharton. Eventually the table was passed on to Mr Roberts, late curator of the Scarborough Museum who sold it to Mr William Flounders an antique dealer. He in turn sold it to Major Brooke of Leeds. The four poster bed and cupboard went to Joseph Taylor, who presented them to the Duchess of Leeds before his death in 1810. They were reported to be in Hornby Castle in 1879. When the Hornby Castle estate was broken up in 1930, the furniture was sold off at auction and most of the house was demolished.

Also in Miss Wharton’s drawing can be seen the steeply-gabled roof, which has a decorated plastered ceiling below the attic. There is also decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast.

Right: Miss Wharton’s drawing of the ‘King’s Bedchamber’ illustrating the furniture, the decorated plastered ceiling and pattern on the chimney breast. To the right of the fireplace is the entrance door to the room and further to the right can be seen the steps leading to the attic door.

Left: Detail drawing by Miss Wharton of the elegant heavy legged rectangular table with scrolling foliage front frieze with possibly lion faces. In style and design it is likely to be Dutch and dates to about 1600-1650.
From Miss Wharton’s drawings and the detailed drawing of the four poster bed by John W. Whaley it seems likely that the furniture in the King’s Bedchamber are genuine seventeenth century pieces. The four poster bed is typical English in style, which perhaps dates to 1560-1620. The cupboard is probably later, perhaps 1600-1650 in date but in style and design is more Dutch than English. The elegant heavy legged table is about the same date, 1600-1650 and again is of a type more typically found in Holland than England. The Dutch connection with the furniture may have something to do with the Cockerill and Tindall families being shipbuilders in the seventeenth century and possibly trading with the Netherlands. It also seems likely that the furniture was installed in the house when it was owned by the Cockerill’s in the seventeenth century.

When Mr. Burrows began restoring the interior in 1915 he discovered blocked-up old stone doorways on one side of the building and on the other side early windows which had been filled in, showing that it was not only part of a much larger house but was also a detached building. The earliest detailed illustration of King Richard III House is in John Setterington’s pictorial engraving of Scarborough dated 1735. It illustrates the building with a two story hall and the extended west-wing. These extensions shown on this engraving do not remain today but with features of St. Mary’s Church give reason to believe that the general appearance of the building was fairly portrayed and seem to confirm Mr. Burrows opinion. Between 1780 and 1800 the adjoining two storey hall and the rear west-wing of the building were demolished leaving in part the original fifteenth century house standing, which remains today and the area around the building redeveloped. To the east side a lower small building was attached and to the west a larger building was constructed. Today the King Richard III house is a Grade I listed building.
Restoring the interior was no easy task as the thick walls were covered with boarding, plaster and wallpaper and the rooms had been sub-divided into several sleeping quarters. All of this was stripped away to reveal their original state with old stone doorways, fireplaces, beamed ceilings and windows. On the ground floor oak rafters rest on a massive beam of about 1600, supported by stone corbels that showed traces of the bullocks’ blood applied as colouring. Only two sections of a decorated plasterwork frieze survived. They were identified just below the rafters above the stone doorway that formerly led to steps to the second floor, but now gives access to additional setting for the restaurant, with the second sections further to the right. The decoration is in the form of fleur-de-lis scrollwork and the frieze probably ran around the four walls decorating the room.

The elaborate decorative plasterwork of the ceiling on the second floor, known as the ‘King’s Bedchamber’, survived all the previous alterations. However, it was hidden beneath coats of whitewash obscuring the finer details in the plasterwork. When Mr Burrows cleaned away the dirt and the thick layers of whitewash the impressive fine decorated plaster ceiling was revealed.

It was decorated with a geometrical multi curve and square panel’s pattern of thin ribs. The central feature is of the York Rose, the Arms of Richard III and prominently displayed at each of the four corners is the bull of the Nevilles (the family arms of Anne of Warwick, Richard’s Queen). The decoration also includes fleur-de-lis, foliage, sea serpents, parrots and a group of three rabbits each complete but possessing only three ears between them. The plasterwork is probably the work of local plasterers undertaken in about 1600 when the interior was refurbished.
The decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast also survived but suffered some damage. The decoration consists of a gothic pointed arch, with decorative scroll work and the centre piece depicts a figure on a plinth.

Right: Decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast.
Courtesy Sara Griffiths

Left: Detail drawing of the decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast.

After restoration work was completed to the three large rooms to something like their former appearance Mr. Burrows equipped them with antique furniture of various periods and with collections of domestic pewter, copper, and brass ware. These were displayed in the three rooms alongside suits of armour, swords and curiosities.

Left: The ground floor showing the original oak beams and stone fireplace with a roasting spit in front. A suit of armour stands to the right of the fireplace. The decorated plasterwork frieze can just be seen below the rafters and above the stone doorway leading to steps to the second floor. This room is filled with a large range of antiques.

In the stone-flagged floor, half concealed by the oak chest, which can be seen on the right, is a trap-door to the cellar, where it is said, although without foundation, that there is an underground passage that leads to the castle.

Right: This first floor room was named the Kings Hall, the fireplace can be seen set in the middle of the wall, with steps on the right leading to the second floor known as the King’s Bedchamber. It is full of furniture and objects set around the room. To the left of the fireplace, standing against the wall is what looks like an Egyptian Sarcophagus.
One additional curious feature that Mr Barrows included in the building was a stone carving of King Richard III he bought in the Midlands. He set the sculpture on the outside wall next to the entrance protected by an iron grill. This grotesque stone effigy chained by the neck with a crooked body, holds a skull in one hand, wearing a metal crown on his head, the feet are cloven and was supposed to have portrayed the character of King Richard III. Conversely, his physical condition and appearance were not a magnification of his character. This little grotesque stone figure was sadly stolen a few years ago and has not been recovered. It is believed that it was thrown into the harbour, but this cannot be proven. The iron grill was removed after it was stolen. However, the grotesque stone effigy was not an original feature, its intention was to intrigue and encourage visitors to the museum.

Over the years the museum attracted a small number of visitors and the antique shop next door helped to finance the museum. When Mr Burrows died his son, C. H. Burrows took over the business with his wife. They produced a booklet for visitors to the museum outlining the history of the building which also gave some details of King Richard III’s stay in Scarborough. Regrettably Mr Burrows and his wife sold the building in 1964 and it became a café and then restaurant which it remains today.
King Richard III in Scarborough

After he was crowned in 1483, King Richard III made a northern tour. He was at Scarborough on May 22nd 1484 and again from 30th June to 11th July. His purpose was to assemble a fleet to fight and to resist the expected invasion of Henry Tudor, later Henry VII. It is reputed that King Richard III stayed in the house named after him on the foreshore during the summer of 1484. He might well have found this location beside the harbour within view and easy access of his ships more convenient than the castle. Nevertheless, he did stay for a time at Scarborough Castle because writs, warrants and other documents were sealed by him on 22nd May and 5th July and were ‘given at the castel of Scardeburgh’. In fact he was the last monarch to reside at the castle. However, Royal orders issued after 5th July were ‘given at Scardeburgh’ so it is possible that Richard did stay in the house built on Sandside in the fifteenth century for a few days, even though there is no conclusive evidence to confirm this.

Although not recorded in documents, the original house is thought to have belonged to Thomas Sage (circa 1430-1497), one of the town’s leading burgesses and the richest ship-owner. He was a very wealthy man who had property in the area and was well-disposed towards Richard.

In 1485 King Richard III granted Scarborough a new charter, making Scarborough a county rather than a borough. This was subsequently revoked after his death by Henry VII.

King Richard the III (2 October 1452 - 22 August 1485) was King of England from 1483 until his death in 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth Field. He was the last king of the House of York and the last of the Plantagenet dynasty. His defeat at Bosworth Field was the last decisive battle of the Wars of the Roses.

After the battle Richard’s body was taken to Leicester and buried in the Church of The Grey Friars. His body was found in 2012 during an archaeological excavation and on 26th March 2015 his remains were reburied in Leicester Cathedral rather than in York Minster as many of his supporters had hoped.

Left: A facial reconstruction of the head of King Richard III with blond hair and blue eyes. DNA testing suggests that this would have been his colouring.

Right: A plaque in remembrance of King Richard III inside Leicester Cathedral.

Left: Aerial view of the harbour and front at Scarborough. King Richard III house can be seen in the blue circle. To the right is the curtain wall of the castle, which extends along the whole length of the promontory overlooking the town. At the top right is the Barbican and Gatehouse to the castle.
When the building was taken over as a café in 1964 a few alterations were made to the interior on the ground floor. The stone fireplace was removed and replaced with a flight of stairs to a newly built kitchen at the rear. The stone-flagged floor was covered with wooden floorboards and the blocked-up doorways to the former Antique shop next door were cleared to make entranceways to additional setting areas of the restaurant. The stone walls and the oak rafters which rest on a massive beam were retained in their original condition.

Right: King Richard III house as a museum in the 1950s with an antique shop next door

Left: King Richard III House as a café in 1986

Despite these few alterations it has kept its medieval appearance which it had at the time of King Richard III, even though there it is uncertain that he actually stayed here.

Today the restaurant is smartly decorated and has a good atmosphere. Full suits of armour are suitably placed while parts of armour decorate the stone walls.

However the second floor, known as the ‘King’s Bedchamber’, which has the elaborately decorative plasterwork ceiling with the York Rose, the Arms of Richard III, is not open to the public. The remains of part of the fleur-de-lis scrollwork frieze can be seen on the ground floor of the restaurant on the east wall above the stone doorway giving access to the additional seating area. There is also seating outside in front of the building with views of the harbour.

Right: King Richard III restaurant today, with visitors setting outside

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Patricia Davis, Senior Library Assistant, North Yorkshire County Council Library, Scarborough, for her patience in dealing with all my many bibliographic inquiries; to Dr Adam Bowett, an independent furniture historian and external specialist lecturer at the University of Buckingham for his valuable advice on the furniture illustrated in Miss Wharton drawings referred to in this article. I am deeply indebted to Sara Griffiths, King Richard III Restaurant for providing photographs of the interior used in this article; to Peter Wellburn, for bringing to my attention the 1892 photo reproduce on page 29 from the Ward Lock & Co Illustrated Guide Book to Scarborough circa 1909 and for a number of valuable comments and suggestions. To the East Yorkshire Family History Society who provided a copy of Scarborough: The Undercliff Study report by my late friend John Rushton.
Burton Agnes Hall, with a frozen gladiator

In front of Burton Agnes Hall is the frozen gladiator with snow piled up on him

Right: In the summer he is free from the winter snow

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