The Yorkshire Journal

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This year Aldborough May Day is on Sunday 8th May, Start Time is 12.30pm

The present red and blue striped maypole was built in October 1964 out of a ship’s mast and is topped with a gold leaf crown made from two First World War shell cases. It is permanently situated on the village green ready for the annual May Day fête.

Left and below: Local children dancing round the maypole on the village green in Aldborough

Right: This old postcard of Aldborough shows the old maypole on the village green
Welcome to the Spring issue of the Yorkshire Journal in which we feature four more interesting articles. Our first feature is ‘Some friends and acquaintances of the Brontë family’ by Margaret Mills. Most people will be familiar with at least some of the background story of the Brontë family. In Margaret’s article she gives an account of some friends and acquaintances who, at different times and in varying situations, touched the lives of the literary Brontë family, and were influential in their story.

Over the years Scarborough has sadly lost many of its attractions so well-known to generations of summer visitors. The Warwick Revolving Tower was removed in 1907 whilst Scarborough’s Pleasure Pier was almost totally destroyed in 1905 due to a severe storm and was not rebuilt. Probably the saddest loss to Scarborough, however, was its subterranean entertainment hall, known latterly as Gala Land. In Peter Wellburn’s article he outlines the history of Scarborough as a seaside resort and, in particular, recalls the fascinating history of Gala Land and some of its mystical atmosphere. By the late 1950s it was in decline and in 1967 it was demolished to make way for an underground car park.

For our next feature Geoff and Mary Wilson inform us about the significance of bats in Yorkshire and dispel some of the myths that have created negativity around these fascinating mammals. Their detailed article describes the different species living within the county and the environment in which each of these is usually found. In their article they look at the life cycle of a bat throughout the year and explain what to do if you find a bat. Geoff and Mary then describe how they rescue, rehabilitate and subsequently, where possible, release bats, and the longer term care that they give to those unable to be returned to the wild.

For our last story Jeremy Clark visits All Saints Church, Batley in West Yorkshire to unravel a story of a mysterious medieval effigy and grave slabs built into the external walls of the church. In his fascinating article he explains that the Batley effigy is very special because the broad flat ‘sword’ that he is wearing is probably a ‘weaving sword’ rather than a weapon. This indicates that the Batley effigy belonged to a successful man in the mediaeval textile business and probably dates to the late 14th century.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them. We welcome your comments.
SOME FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES OF THE BRONTË FAMILY

By Margaret Mills

Most people are familiar with at least some of the background story of the Brontë family, perhaps including the novels of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë. Also part of the Brontë family story are some of the personalities mentioned below, who undoubtedly had a direct influence on the lives and literary works of individual members of that talented family.

Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, Educationalist

James Kay was born in 1804 into a family of Rochdale textile manufacturers. Kay’s ambition was not to follow in the family business, but to study medicine, and after graduating from Edinburgh University he began to practise medicine in industrial Manchester. He would later turn from his work in medicine to become a pioneer in the establishment of a national system of education and the promotion of free libraries.

During his time in Manchester, Kay saw at first-hand the grim conditions in which working people lived, most of whom worked in the burgeoning mills and factories of a town which had experienced a population explosion, as increasing numbers of working men and women crowded into its already congested streets and alleyways, seeking employment and somewhere to live. The conditions Kay saw there, and in particular working and living conditions for the poor, would inspire him to campaign for public health reform and education for the masses.

Kay subsequently left Lancashire on his appointment to the post of Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, responsible for the East Anglian counties of Suffolk and Norfolk. He was responsible for the implementation of the new Poor Law, under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, a piece of legislation hated by the poor as it imposed the dreaded Workhouse regime on those who were destitute, infirm or unable to find employment to maintain their families for some other reason. As part of this legislation, the unemployed poor were encouraged to migrate to other areas if there was work to be had elsewhere.

Kay was still passionate about education for the masses, which he believed was essential for both the wellbeing of the poor themselves and for society as a whole. One of his published works in 1839 was a publication entitled The Training of Pauper Children.

Kay’s name changed to Kay-Shuttleworth in 1842, when he married Janet Shuttleworth, who was an heiress in possession of the beautiful Gawthorpe Hall, at Padiham, near Burnley in Lancashire (now a National Trust property). The story goes that Janet had written to him for advice about the local village school, in which she was very much involved, and the two of them had met and fallen in love. Janet, like other women, would normally have taken her husband’s last name upon her marriage, but in view of the fact that his wife was a member of an important family and a sole heiress, and her inheritance was conditional on retaining the name of Shuttleworth, Kay was seemingly quite happy to assume his wife’s name as well as his own, and their K and S initials can still be seen at Gawthorpe, incorporated into much of the ornamental features of walls and ceilings at the Hall.
Right: Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham, near Burnley in Lancashire (now a National Trust property).

Photo by James Perkins

Because the political influence that would come with his post as Assistant Secretary to the Whig government’s Committee of the Privy Council on Education, Kay-Shuttleworth was able to lay the early foundations of the British public school elementary system, and he is considered instrumental in being a moving force behind the 1870 Education Act. His hard work and burning of the midnight oil came at a price, however, and in the late 1840s he was forced to resign his Secretaryship of the Committee of the Privy Council when he had a nervous breakdown. One consolation was that in 1849, Queen Victoria offered him a baronetcy, which he accepted, in recognition of his work for public health and education.

Sir James now turned his attention to the new author from Haworth, across the moors in Yorkshire, whose name was on everyone’s lips following the publication of “Jane Eyre”. Perhaps seeking a new mission in life as an antidote to his previous stressful work, he wrote to Charlotte Brontë, asking to visit her at her home in Haworth Parsonage (Charlotte would later imply that she had no desire to meet him, and tried to put him off, but he seemed impervious to hints!). Sir James seems to have turned into something of a literary ‘groupie’, insisting that Charlotte pay a visit to him and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth at Gawthorpe, in spite of her obvious reluctance to maintain the acquaintance. Charlotte’s view of the baronet was quite waspish, she claimed that he showed his ‘white teeth’ too often for her liking!

Charlotte’s feelings about her subsequent visit to Gawthorpe Hall were mixed; on one hand, she felt that Sir James was too talkative, talking ‘at’ her rather than to her, which she found tiring and irritating. On the other hand, she enjoyed the company of Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, who was not only less pompous and autocratic than her husband (ironic, as the Hall was her possession by inheritance!), but was of a less talkative disposition. There were four Kay-Shuttleworth children, but Charlotte’s main attention was riveted by the children’s young German governess, perhaps feeling a strong bond of sympathy with the girl, bearing in mind that Charlotte had suffered acute unhappiness and homesickness while previously employed in the same role elsewhere.

In spite of her misgivings about Sir James, it was on a subsequent visit in 1850 to his rented house in Windermere that Charlotte would meet the author who would become one of her greatest friends – Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell. By the time the two women met, Charlotte had already conceived a warm admiration for the works of Mrs Gaskell, and her meeting with the lady herself did not disappoint. Their closeness included a mutual wariness of the garrulous and heroine-worshipping Sir James and in this it does seem that Charlotte was right to be wary; there was a strong element of hectoring in Sir James’s relentless pursuit of Charlotte’s company, both in London and on visits to Haworth at his own instigation, and in his insistence on Charlotte and her new husband, Arthur Bell Nicholls, accepting his invitation to stay at Gawthorpe Hall in early January of 1855. Kay-Shuttleworth had previously discussed with Arthur, (Charlotte’s father’s curate at St Michael and All Angels Church in Haworth) the possibility of him accepting an alternative curacy near Gawthorpe. Perhaps wisely, Arthur had deflected the proposal, even though it would have increased his salary considerably. Was the increase in salary worth the impracticality of a change of location and the threat of Sir James’ constant presence?

It was following this last visit to Gawthorpe Hall that Charlotte Brontë fell ill. At first, her indisposition was blamed on probable pregnancy – she had been married to Arthur since June 1854. Unfortunately, her illness was not simple morning sickness or similar; she became progressively more unwell as the weeks slipped into months, and on 31st March 1855, after nine months of marriage, Charlotte Brontë died in the bedroom of Haworth Parsonage at the age of 39, with her husband and aged father at her side. The bedroom was the same one in which her mother, Maria, had died 34 years earlier.
Lydia Robinson, wife of Branwell’s employer

“And here’s to you, Mrs Robinson...”. The film “The Graduate” takes for its plot the seduction of a young man by an older, more experienced woman, and might almost have been written about an episode in the life of Branwell Brontë, only son of the Reverend Patrick Brontë of Haworth, Yorkshire, and brother of novelists Charlotte, Emily and Anne.

Left: Branwell Brontë - self-portrait, 26 June 1817 - 24 September 1848
Courtesy of the Brontë Society

By 1843, Anne Brontë had been employed for two years as a governess to the three daughters of the Reverend Edmund Robinson and his wife, Lydia. She had also tutored the couple’s only son, Edmund, but the boy was now of an age where he required a male tutor, who would be able to give him a good grounding in the classics, which would be an essential requirement for university entrance at a later date. The Robinson family lived at Thorpe Green, near York: their home, Thorpe Green Hall, was destroyed by a major fire in the late 1890s and another house subsequently built close to the original site. Both Lydia Robinson, née Gisborne, and her husband came from very wealthy backgrounds. Edmund Robinson had taken Holy Orders, but did not practice as a clergyman. The estate that surrounded their home was vast, and the house itself the last word in Victorian luxury and comfort, as befitted a couple with a wide social circle and leisured style of living.

Right: Lydia Robinson wife of the Reverend Edmund Robinson

Who better for Anne to recommend as a male tutor than her own brother, Branwell, currently in need of occupation? Branwell’s previous attempts at earning his own living may have not been exactly successful, but he was a clever young man, well-versed in the classics and an able and confident musician; he was also able to draw and paint, and to talk easily in company, and it is not difficult to imagine that the Robinsons must have found the young man prepossessing and congratulated themselves on the tutor’s obvious academic credentials.

Left: The front of Thorpe Green Hall taken in the late 1800s before it was destroyed by a major fire in 1898

At first all went well. But what happened next has been debated by Brontë historians over many years, and it is quite likely that the truth will never be fully known. What we do know is that Lydia Robinson was a lively woman, who in spite of having daughters almost grown up, retained a firm belief in her own attractions at the age of 43. Her husband was suffering from ill-health, seemingly diagnosed as dyspepsia, and it is reasonable to assume that he increasingly preferred a quiet life. The young tutor was 26 years of age – did he get the wrong idea about Lydia Robinson’s intentions, did she deliberately lead the young man on, or did something happen that was nothing to do with any physical attraction – perhaps a scandal of some kind in the surrounding area that reflected badly on the Robinsons? The usual conclusion is that Lydia and Branwell embarked on an affair; certainly a letter written by Branwell to one of his Haworth acquaintances strongly implies that the lady was overly affectionate towards him, and Branwell’s family firmly believed thereafter that there had been an affair, largely blaming Mrs Robinson for leading Branwell astray, which seems somewhat ridiculous. Everything was bound to end badly – and this is exactly what happened in July 1845, when a letter was sent to Branwell at Thorpe Green Hall by Mr Robinson (the Robinson family were on holiday at Scarborough at the time), dismissing him forthwith and making it abundantly clear that Branwell could have no further contact with any member of the family.

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So did the Robinson marriage survive what had happened? Yes, is the short answer. Did Mrs Robinson manage to extricate herself from any blame – perhaps by implying that the tutor had pursued her and she had not wished to worry her already sick husband by telling him, thinking the infatuation would not last? Or was Branwell’s dismissal due to other circumstances entirely? Many things about the events of summer 1845 and subsequent events do not seem to completely add up, however we do know that these events had great repercussions for the Brontë family. Branwell steadily declined in health and behaviour from this point onwards, his drinking and reliance on laudanum to dull the pain of his misery accelerated rapidly. There is an ongoing mystery about sums of money that came into Branwell’s possession following his dismissal. Who sent them – and why? Was it a payment to keep him quiet and to save the Robinsons embarrassment, or was it given in pity? Branwell’s hope was that on the expected death of the sickly Edmund Robinson, his widow would fling herself into his arms and they could be married. The inequality of their social positions, and his lack of money, expectations or any viable employment, seems not to have bothered him.

When news came of Edmund Robinson’s death in 1846, Branwell was initially elated – but slumped into a state of hysterical anguish when repeating to friends and family the news that a condition in the late man’s will meant Lydia Robinson would be unable to marry him, on pain of losing all her inheritance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this story was later proved to be completely false.

Try as they might, Branwell’s father and sisters were powerless to intercede, and could only watch as Branwell declined in physical health and mental state. Three years after his dismissal he died at the age of 31, possibly of consumption, no doubt hastened by his intake of drink and drugs.

What of Mrs Robinson? It may come as no surprise to know that following the death of her husband in 1846, she would be married within two years to the widower Sir Edward Dolman Scott, another wealthy man and sometime MP. She survived Branwell by 11 years, dying in 1859.

George Smith, Publisher

His name is largely forgotten today, but George Smith was one of the great Victorian publishers. In an age when literacy was booming, and when novelists were the acknowledged celebrities of their day, he inherited his father’s ownership of the London-based Smith, Elder & Co. publishing house in 1846. Twenty-two years of age at the time, George Smith was enterprising, ambitious and enormously hard-working, and would build up his business into an enormously successful enterprise.

After abortive attempts to get other publishers to take a commercial interest in her work and publish the manuscript, Charlotte Brontë finally submitted the manuscript of her masterpiece, “Jane Eyre”, to George Smith’s firm. The company’s reader, William Smith Williams, recognised it as a work of excellence, and made George Smith aware of his views. The story of how the book won George Smith’s approbation has all the hallmarks of a work of fiction, but seems to be soundly based on fact: he spent a whole day reading the manuscript that had enthralled Smith Williams, neglecting his meals and cancelling a previous engagement in order to keep on reading. The rest, as they say, is history: in 1847, “Jane Eyre” was published, to critical acclaim.

Charlotte’s sisters, Emily and Anne, decided to tread their own path and place their confidence in another publisher for their books “Wuthering Heights”, “Agnes Grey” and “The Tenant of Wildfell Hall”. Sadly, their experience with London publisher Thomas Cautley Newby would be not nearly as professional and pleasant as Charlotte’s with Smith.
The story persists that Charlotte Brontë was more than a little in love with the handsome and unmarried young man of business, eight years her junior. On the evidence available, it seems distinctly possible, but when he married, it would be to a beautiful young woman, Elizabeth Blakeway, who (unlike Charlotte) came from a monied family. Was it any coincidence that after previous rejections, Charlotte finally accepted the marriage proposal of her father’s poor curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls, and married him just a few months after Smith’s own wedding in 1854? In later years, and after Charlotte’s early death, Smith admitted that he had never remotely been enamoured of Miss Brontë. Perhaps it was as well that both marriages seemed to have turned out happily, although in Charlotte’s case hers was only the briefest of happiness, as she died the following year.

Smith’s career was increasingly successful, and he would publish work by many well-known writers, including William Makepeace Thackeray, Wilkie Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell. He died in 1901 and his company became part of publishers John Murray in 1916.

Right: 65, Cornhill, London - the premises of Smith, Elder & Co. It was into this building where Charlotte and Anne walked on Saturday, 8 July 1848, and shocked George Smith (who had already published Jane Eyre, but had never met its author) by presenting him with his own letter that he had addressed to ‘Currer Bell’: it took him several moments to realise that standing in front of him were Currer and Acton Bell - authors of Jane Eyre and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.

The Reverend William Weightman, Curate of Haworth Church

Born in about 1814 and a native of Appleby, Westmoreland, William Weightman studied at Durham University with the intention of becoming a clergyman, an ambition he would fulfil when he became part of the Brontë family story. The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Haworth, Yorkshire, would be his first curacy, and he took up his post as curate (or assistant) to the Reverend Patrick Brontë in about August 1839. He would live in lodgings nearby, to be close to his new job of officiating for his Vicar, visiting the sick and helping with numerous other church and parish duties which were part of a clergyman’s role, then as now.

We will perhaps never know his initial feelings about his new job, although he seems to have quickly established a rapport with both his Vicar and the Vicar’s son, Branwell Brontë, and cordial friendships with the Reverend Brontë’s three daughters, budding novelists Charlotte, Emily and Anne.
The daughters of the house were known for not finding it easy to make friends, and the township of Haworth offered little opportunity for them to meet others of a similar age and social class, but Weightman would be the exception. He seems to have been that unusual combination - someone who took his duties as a clergyman with the utmost seriousness in advance of his years, whilst still remaining approachable to those from a much lower social stratum, and still able to behave like a young man in his limited leisure hours.

*Left: William Weightman 1814-1842*

We hear of outings to sporting events in the company of Branwell, walks across the moors with the three sisters and, on occasions, including in these walks one of their two friends, either Ellen Nussey or Mary Taylor. There is also the touching little story of how Weightman hatched a mischievous plot to send individual Valentine cards to the Brontë sisters, something that had never happened to them before. Carefully, he disguised his handwriting on the cards, writing an individual poem on each one, then travelled some ten miles to post the cards, in an attempt to fool them! The plan didn’t work, of course, and they knew immediately who had sent them, but were pleased and excited by his kind thought, not remotely offended. Had William Weightman achieved very little else, he surely deserves a remembrance from Brontë devotees for this single, rather touching, act of good-humoured and innocent fun! Although Charlotte’s feelings of friendship towards Weightman later cooled a little, on the grounds that she believed him a flirt, it seems his flirtatious manner, (if it existed at all), was not aimed in her direction with any degree of seriousness!

Sadly, and in keeping with the many tragedies that surround the Brontë family story, Weightman’s stay in Haworth was not destined to be a long one. In August 1842, he succumbed to what was thought to be cholera – one of the scourges of Victorian life, epidemics of which were responsible for so many deaths during this period. Although in some cases recovery was possible, in Weightman’s case he was too severely ill to be saved, and died several weeks after first becoming ill. Weightman’s funeral sermon was preached to a packed church by a distraught Patrick Brontë on 6th September 1842; with emotion in his voice he would try desperately to try to find some personal consolation following the young man’s death, and to console his flock, describing Weightman as more like a son to him.

Weightman seems to have been one of the few friends made by Branwell Brontë who were both friend and a positive influence: we may only speculate whether Branwell’s subsequent life story might have been very different, had Weightman’s friendship and positive influence continued.

*Left: The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Haworth*

*All the Brontë family but Anne was interred in a tomb beneath the present Church which was rebuilt after Brontë’s death*
In Xanadu… a subterranean pleasure dome in Scarborough

By Peter Wellburn

Many of the readers of this journal will, no doubt, be aware of Scarborough’s transition from a place where the local natural springs offered apparent cures for a wide variety of diseases to a resort where visitors to the town could enjoy a range of outdoor activities including the delights of sea-bathing. An article on ‘Sea Bathing and the First Bathing Machine at Scarborough’ by Sarah Harrison has been published in the Journal (TYJ spring 2012). Scarborough, of course, was different to other spa towns of that time, including Bath, Tunbridge Wells and Harrogate since Scarborough sat beside the sea and its natural springs, which attracted visitors to the town, ran into that sea.

The more entrepreneurial locals of that town were not slow to recognise that the numbers of tourists arriving in the town in search of medicinal cures might be increased significantly by encouraging these visitors to bathe in the sea as well as in the purpose-built bathing facilities which were fed by the health-giving springs. Although few, at this time, were likely to consider the sea inviting except, of course, for the sailors whose livelihood depended on the sea, Scarborough was especially fortunate in its efforts to promote sea-bathing, assisted as it was by a series of studies of the health-giving properties of the natural springs in the numerous spa towns.

This was, of course, a time when life expectancy was much lower than nowadays and effective medicinal cures for serious illnesses such as tuberculosis (at that time generally known as ‘consumption’) were, as yet, unknown. And so by the end of the 17th century Scarborough became the first spa town which also offered sea-bathing facilities and the tradition of the seaside holiday came into being. An article on ‘Scarborough Spa and the first British Seaside Resort’ by Sarah Harrison has been published in the Journal (TYJ spring 2010).

As well as making the journey to Scarborough in the hope of finding a cure for some troublesome illness visitors also began to arrive for ‘the season’, in other words it became a fashion for those with sufficient wealth to see and be seen by others of their social circle in Scarborough as well as in the other spa towns. In Scarborough booklets were published regularly for the newly-arrived listing those who had already taken up residence in town for the season. Clearly social networking is not the invention of today’s younger generation!

Over time theatres and concert halls were established for the entertainment of the summer visitors. Shops too were opened offering a range of goods including mementoes of holidays spent beside the sea and Scarborough was able to boast a number of libraries which for a season’s subscription provided access to a range of current literature as well as the latest newspapers for those wishing to keep abreast of news at home and abroad.
Visitors were encouraged to take early morning walks and rides before and after breakfast for the sake of their health and, when the weather was inclement, soirées were held in visitors’ lodgings with the possible attraction of a game of cards which lasted into the early hours of the morning. Thus visitors

‘Spare no expences themselves in adorning,
Who go about buying fine things all the morning;
And cards all the night take the trouble to play,
To get back the money they spent in the day!’

For those wishing to make the acquaintance of partners of the opposite sex dancing was provided in the town’s Assembly Rooms in Long-room Street whilst, for those unfamiliar with the latest dances private tuition could be obtained in one’s lodgings from local dancing masters. Last but not least, of course, was the town’s Spa which offered a range of entertainments such as concerts, dancing and card parties in addition to its raison d’être, the health-giving springs.

Right: The Scarborough Spa complex

It should be remembered that, throughout the 18th century and as late as the mid-19th century Scarborough was still a small town nestled around its castle headland which offered shelter from the north and westerly winds. Its prosperity had largely been based on commercial activity in the harbour, including fishing, shipbuilding and trading of goods through the numerous cargo boats which used its sheltered harbour.

A glance at maps of this period shows how the town remained centred around its harbour within the confines of its natural bay. In the 7th edition of Broadrick’s New Scarborough guide published in 1814 the number of houses offering accommodation to visitors was listed as 130. This was a time when the population of Scarborough was unlikely to have been more than 7,000 and the number of visitors for ‘the season’ probably in excess of 2,000. An indication of how cramped the accommodation provided at this time was given in the letters of Catherine Hutton (Reminiscences of a gentlewoman of the last century) to her father written in August 1806 ‘We dine 24 at Crathornes (her lodging house in Merchants Row; the ground floor housed a toy shop and the upper floors were made available to visitors)… Scarborough is crowded with Spawers; upwards of 60 dine at the Bell’. She was clearly somewhat disdainful of the social standing of some of her companions for she wrote, ‘Though the company is more numerous, I think it is upon the whole less desirable, the addition being chiefly cloth-makers and merchants from the West Riding; a set of honest, hearty fellows… who die by eating and drinking’

However, until the middle of the 19th century the would-be visitor to Scarborough had, of course, a major difficulty to overcome, which was the actual journey to the town. For many, of course, the journey had to be undertaken by coach and horses, which meant a slow journey punctuated by regular stops to change horses; in addition, of course, there were also the hazards of poor roads and inclement weather, not to mention the possibility of the occasional highwayman. For those who wished to avoid long hours cooped up in a carriage the alternative was to trust to one of the many passenger vessels which plied up and down the North Sea, not to mention the clemency, or otherwise, of the weather on those unpredictable waters.

A Trip to Scarborough, a plate from The Poetical Sketches of Scarborough 1813
In 1845 all this changed, however, with what was then one of the wonders of the new Industrial Age. 1845 saw the completion of the railway line from York to Scarborough and the arrival of the first trains into the newly-opened railway station. The spread of the railway network coincided with the growth of a middle class whose wealth was derived from the commercial opportunities made possible by the industrial revolution and enabled a new class of visitor to take its first glimpse of the sea.

Above: This picture dates about 1900 and shows the Scarborough Railway Station on the right which opened in 1845

Left: The Grand Hotel overlooking the South bay, when it was completed in 1867 it was the largest hotel in Europe

The arrival of so many visitors to Scarborough brought about by the railways resulted in a sudden burst of construction fever which saw the town grow rapidly away from the harbour towards the neighbouring hamlet of Falsgrave; in addition, rows of hotels and boarding houses began to spring up beside the castle and on the Esplanade overlooking the South Bay. Perhaps the most significant landmark of this building boom is the one which occupies a prominent position overlooking the South bay, the Grand Hotel. With over 360 bedrooms it was, on completion, the largest hotel in Europe.

One wonders what Catherine Hutton might have thought of the many visitors of all classes who made the journey in the trains which arrived from 1845 onwards. Towards the end of the 19th century and in the years leading up to the First World War the numerous railway companies began to offer all-in excursions to the owners of Britain’s factories enabling those companies to organise day outings for their employees to visit the seaside. One such was the visit organised by Bass Breweries of Burton Upon Trent to Scarborough on 24th July 1914 in what would ominously be the last chance for many of that company’s employees to enjoy the peace and relaxation of the English seaside.

Right: Booklet issued by Bass Brewery for excursion on the 24 July 1914

By this time, however, Scarborough had already begun to feel the effects of competition from other coastal resorts, notably the resorts of the Lancashire and Norfolk coasts and in particular of course those along the South coast of England, which were now also served by the new railway connections. It became a matter of civic pride for the many resorts to be able to offer potential visitors the latest attractions, at the same time creating increased revenue for local boarding-house proprietors.

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This was an era which saw the construction of numerous seaside piers and the laying out of public gardens at a great many resorts. Scarborough was by no means slow in offering such attractions, although its pier, opened in 1869 was unfortunately swept away by a storm in January 1905.

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

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

Among the attractions which many resorts began to offer were aquaria allowing their summer visitors the opportunity to view the denizens of the deep in their natural habitat. Frequently these aquaria offered a range of other entertainments including concerts and swimming facilities. By the mid-19th century entertainments in Scarborough were largely in the hands of the Cliff Bridge Company, a private company which had taken over the running of the Spa from the Corporation and owned a considerable amount of the cliff-edge land to the south of the valley separating the South Cliff from the rest of the town.

So it was not altogether surprising that in November 1872 the Company received a letter from a Mr Brearey suggesting that an aquarium might be added to its range of entertainments. In a curt response Mr Brearey was informed that the Entertainments Committee had already considered the possibility of an aquarium but ‘do not deem it advisable’. In May of the following year the Company received a letter from a local solicitor informing them that Mr McMillan, a director of the Brighton Aquarium Company, whose aquarium had opened in 1872, had conditionally agreed with the Town Corporation to build an aquarium in Scarborough on the site of the horse and carriage sheds and yard near the foot of the Cliff Bridge. The letter went on to suggest that the proposal would affect the Company’s adjoining property in the locality. At the time the Committee gave its approval to the plans, although subsequently the Company disassociated itself from the project as out of keeping with its select image. Nevertheless the idea gained sufficient approval amongst local businessmen for a company to be formed to bring the proposal to fruition. And so the Marine Aquarium Company with initial capital of £37,500 was registered in June 1874.

*Left: The Aquarium in the foreground before the tramlines were laid. Oppose is the Rotunda Museum, to the right is the Grand Hotel and just off the photo is the Spa Bridge leading to Scarborough Spa*
The plans were of sufficient importance to require a private act to be secured in Parliament, which was duly obtained in July 1875. If Scarborough’s Grand Hotel had been the largest in Europe at the time of its completion it was intended that the new aquarium would also be the biggest and best of its kind. The newly-formed company invested the then colossal sum of £110,000 and work began on a 2.5 acre site below the Cliff Bridge, an area considerably larger than a present-day football pitch. Creation of this underground pleasure palace took 3 years to complete and finally opened on Whit Monday 1877. There was clearly concern among some of the investors about the type of visitors who might use the new attraction and possibly cause damage and so an entrance fee of, initially, one shilling was fixed. It seems that the investors were somewhat over-optimistic over the pulling power of their new attraction, by then entitled The People’s Palace and Aquarium, as in the course of time the entrance fee was reduced to 6 pence (2.5p in today’s currency) and eventually the entrance charge was waived for visitors arriving in organised rail parties on production of their rail ticket.

The area was laid out in a style of Indian architecture modelled on Hindu and Moorish temples; contemporary sources suggest that the model used was the temple at Bindrabund. This was, of course, a time, when public interest in the orient and especially India, was at an all-time high (the title of Empress of India had recently been added to the other titles conferred on Queen Victoria).

The undertaking was of sufficient prestige for technical details relating to cost, size and layout to be recorded in the prestigious professional review, The Engineer. The interior was fitted out with coloured tiles many of which formed patterns showing sea creatures whilst the walls of the concert halls were decorated with paintings depicting pastoral scenes. Despite its size and the range of attractions which it offered, the Aquarium was clearly unsuccessful almost from its very start. Matters were not helped by the disastrous summer of 1879 when cold, wet weather dissuaded visitors from visiting the town and its underground attraction. One might have thought visitors would have welcomed the shelter which it offered in times of inclement weather but clearly this was not the case. It was soon offered for sale to the Spa Company in 1886 for £17,000, an offer which was summarily turned down, and eventually sold in the same year to William Morgan, manager of Blackpool’s Winter Gardens, and his associates for the knock-down sum of £4,500.

Left: A black and white illustration inside the aquarium showing exotic creatures and decorated tiles

Right: William Morgan manager of Blackpool’s Winter Gardens
Despite the financial, and other, misfortunes which befell the attraction contemporary photographs and, in particular, a painting of the period now in the possession of the town’s Art Gallery show that it must have been, initially at least, an impressive place to visit. As well as the promised tanks displaying a wide range of fish and other marine creatures there were swimming baths, concerts, and a theatre as well as a ballroom.

Right: A painting of the interior of the Aquarium illustrating the many coloured tiles

Courtesy of Scarborough Art Gallery

Left: Tropical fish and penny-slot machines inside the Aquarium

Right: The Aquarium theatre

Among the performers who appeared on the concert stage was the well-known music-hall personality Arthur Lloyd. There were also grottoes with cosmoramic and stereoscopic views, a monkey-house, an aviary and a seal-pond where visitors could watch the seals being fed at certain times of the day. The Aquarium’s main water tank (the largest of its kind at that time) also enabled special displays of swimming prowess to be provided, one such being that of Captain Matthew Webb, already famous as the first person to swim the English Channel, in August 1875, who swam in one of the tanks for almost 3 days consecutively in August 1880.

Left: Minstrels in the Indian Theatre

According to a report in The Times ‘he appeared to be little, if any, the worse for his long immersion’. A regular supply of the day’s newspapers and refreshment and billiards facilities enabled the proprietors to suggest that visitors could have ‘twelve hours continuous entertainment for sixpence’.

The Yorkshire Journal
Over the years a number of changes were made to the attractions offered at the Aquarium including the provision of a skating rink and a well-stocked zoo, which included lions, tigers, bears, wolves and many species of monkey. As with many summer attractions these were popular for a while but eventually popular interest waned.

Whilst photographs of Scarborough taken around the start of the 20th century show large numbers of visitors parading in the sunshine the events of 1914 were to turn people’s minds to something other than a visit to the seaside. And so interest in Scarborough’s many visitor attractions declined to a new low.

Above: The South Bay at Scarborough, looking north towards Castle Hill on the headland. This old photo shows the Grand Hotel on the left, with the beach below populated with holidaymakers who are blissfully unaware of what will happen to them and the country over the next few years. On the sands can be seen a number of bathing machine and on the horizon can be seen the tall Warwick Revolving Tower.

Left: A similar view of South Bay showing the Grand Hotel with the underground car park at the bottom of the photo which is the site of Gala Land demolished in 1967.
After the war a further misfortune hit the beleaguered attraction when, in 1925, George Smith, driver of the town’s tramcar 21 found his vehicle sliding out of control down Vernon Road, careering across the main road and through the outside wall of the Aquarium where it fell through the glass ceiling of the underground ballroom, finally coming to rest in the ballroom itself. Mercifully no-one was seriously injured and the cause was ascribed to a combination of greasy rails and brake failure.

Left: The aftermath of the tramcar in the ballroom in 1925

In a report to the Town Corporation in 1938 Borough Engineer H.V. Overfield and Professor of Town Planning, Prof. Adshead wrote that Gala Land (which was by now the new name for the Aquarium) should be demolished and turned into an underground skating rink with a surface carpark and gardens. Of course once again events in central Europe meant that the report’s proposals were shelved for the duration of the war. Interestingly the report’s authors predicted a healthy future for Scarborough in attracting visitors to the town but clearly Gala Land was seen as something of a white elephant. And so, after the 2nd World War, the attraction continued to function, although by now its useful life was drawing to a close. Concerts continued to be given, including by the renowned all-woman orchestra from the West Riding, the Ivy Benson Band, and a small switchback railway ran around the perimeter of the much-reduced premises, whilst visitors played on penny-in-the-slot machines or watched Edwardian ladies disrobe in the ‘what the butler saw’ machines. However, by the 1950s it was clear that the whole attraction was nearing the end of its useful life. Finally in 1966 the ‘attraction’ closed its doors to the public for the last time after which it was made into the underground carpark which we see today. As one who, as a small boy, was not infrequently rushed by my parents off the South Sands to take shelter in Gala Land when the skies darkened and a cloudburst emptied itself onto those relaxing in the Corporation’s deckchairs, I was sorry to see another of my childhood delights fall foul of the developer’s excavators. I confess too many an hour spent trying my skills against penny-in-the-slot machines as well as watching the Edwardian ladies or listening to the Ivy Benson Band. What was started with such enthusiasm in the latter half of the 19th century is now but a distant memory in the minds of a few.

Right: Demolition of the Gala Land buildings in 1967 to make way for an underground car park which still stands today

Left: A memorabilia poster of Gala Land advertising attractions for the beginning of a new season
The Yorkshire bat: information, rescue, care and release, and what to do if you find a bat

By Geoff and Mary Wilson

Background

Many people may be apprehensive about bats, possibly influenced by novels and films about vampires and old wives’ tales about bats getting caught in people’s hair. However, no British bats are vampires; their food includes the type of insects that could damage garden plants or which might bite humans. Bats are intelligent, social mammals; the smallest UK bat, the pipistrelle, has been known to live for up to 8 years, while some of the larger UK bats can live up to 30 years. However, all the UK bats are relatively small, ranging from the pipistrelle, weighing at the most 8g (0.28oz.) with a wingspan of up to 230 mm (9ins), to the noctule, weighing up to 40g (1.4oz.), with a wingspan as great as 400 mm (16ins).

Bats and the law

In Britain, all species of bats are protected; the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) that can be accessed online (links at the end of the article), provides guidelines on the legal aspects relating to bats. It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat or intentionally disturb one or more bats in a roost or obstruct a bat roost (where bats live when not hibernating) or where bats are hibernating, as it is to possess a bat either alive or dead. Exceptions include when a member of the public rescues a bat with the intention of seeking help for it, or performs mercy killing of a bat where there is no hope of it recovering (providing the person involved had not caused the injury). However, those who visit bat roosts or care for bats in need of rehabilitation or long-term care, have been granted licenses appropriate for their bat-related work. Because of the very unlikely possibility of their coming into contact with a Daubenton’s bat that is carrying a rabies type virus, bat workers are vaccinated against rabies (provided free from their GP) and are required to keep this protection up-to-date.

We are writing this article from the perspective of members of the East Yorkshire Bat Group; the group has a public education role, where we aim to raise awareness of bats by organising bat walks, exhibiting displays and acting as a resource at country fairs and fêtes, giving illustrated talks to groups and information on a one-to-one basis, when a member of the public makes contact about a bat in trouble. We take in bats that are in need of care and rehabilitation, in order to release them when they are, again, able to live in the wild. However, a bat should never be seen as a pet, but as a wild animal.

Left: Common pipistrelle ‘in typical pose’
Bats sleep by day and feed during the night, navigating and locating their prey by emitting high frequency sounds; these bounce off insects and are then picked up by the bat, allowing the insects to be located and caught – echolocation. This demonstrates how precise bat flight is; while they may swoop down to near head height, bats avoid any obstruction. The sounds emitted for echolocation are too high a frequency for us to hear, but can be picked up and made audible by using a bat detector, a small battery run hand held apparatus.

Other concerns that people may feel have arisen from confusing bats and mice. Bats are the only mammals that are able to fly and belong to the order Chiroptera (meaning ‘hand-wing’), while mice and other rodents belong to the order Rodentia, derived from the Latin verb ‘to gnaw’. Unlike rodents, bats neither gnaw nor make nests. Their droppings look similar to mice droppings, although bat droppings smear like charcoal (providing they have been feeding on their normal diet of insects) whereas mice droppings are hard.

While bats have muscular and well developed chests and shoulders, allowing flight, their hips and legs are less powerful. The wing membrane is made up of two layers of pigmented, hairless skin, with nerves and blood vessels, supported between the bat’s fingers. When not extended for flight, the third and fourth fingers fold the wings away, under their bodies. However, the thumb, free of wing membrane, ends in a claw and is used by the bat to walk on.
Bats hang upside down, by their hind legs for long periods of time; in this position, the digits on their ‘feet’ resemble a ratchet, locking them into a flexed, hooking position until disengaged, using little or no muscular activity.

There are more than 1300 species of bats globally, living in every country apart from the poles. There are 17 species of bats living in the UK, of which 7 species found in Yorkshire; these are the noctule bat, whiskered bat, brown long eared bat, Natterer’s and Daubenton’s bats and the common and the soprano pipistrelles.

The noctule bat

The noctule is the largest of British bats (wingspan: 320 - 400mm, weight: 18g - 40g). It is one of the first (along with pipistrelles) to emerge in the evening, even before sunset, when noctules forage for around 2 hours; they are then active for another half an hour at dawn. They fly above the tree level, but make steep dives to catch their prey, which includes beetles, mayflies and winged ants; they may be attracted to street lights to feed on moths. Noctules are tree dwellers, roosting and sometimes hibernating in holes in trees and also bat boxes; they have occupied bat boxes in Allerthorpe and Millington woods.

Bat boxes

Bat boxes are artificial roosts fixed to trees or – less often – walls, as long as they are not north facing. The wooden bat boxes resemble bird boxes but do not have the typical round entrance hole; bats access bat boxes from the bottom, after climbing up a grooved piece of wood leading in a ‘bat ladder’. Also available are woodcrete boxes, which are made from a mixture of wood and concrete and are usually cylindrical, with the entrance at the front.

Left: A woodcrete bat box in the woods at South Landing, Flamborough
In East Yorkshire, bat boxes in woods are surveyed every spring and autumn and the results are recorded; this also allows the state of the boxes to be monitored and repaired / replaced as necessary. Some bat boxes contain bat droppings or insect remnants, suggesting that bats may have used the box during the night, to rest between episodes of foraging. In other bat boxes, birds’ nests, snails or earwigs indicated alternative usage. Sometimes, sleeping bats are found actually in bat boxes during surveys.
Natterer’s bat

The Natterer’s bat, a medium sized bat (wingspan: 245mm - 300mm, weight: 7g - 12g), usually flies low, among trees, taking insects off foliage, but sometimes flies over water. Their activity reaches a peak an hour after sunset; there is then a lull before they resume, but they may also emerge 1-2 hours before sunrise. During the summer, colonies of Natterer’s bats are found in stone buildings with timbered beams, including churches, castles and barns, but they hibernate in caves and similar locations. They eat midges and other flies, small moths, caddis fly, lacewings, beetles, small wasps and spiders. They hibernate underground, often in caves or mines. In bat surveys, they have been found at Harpham Church.

Daubenton’s bat

The Daubenton’s bat is medium sized (wingspan: 240mm - 275mm, weight: 7g - 12g), lives in close proximity to large areas of water, and forages for insects – small flies and midges, caddisfly and mayfly – over water. They live in tunnels, caved, mines and bridges, sometimes in close proximity to other bat species, and hibernate in caves, mines and other underground locations. They have been recorded at Burton Agnes and Brandesburton. Daubenton’s bats, very rarely in the UK, have been known to carry a rabies type virus.

Brown long-eared bat

The brown long-eared bat, is another medium sized (wingspan: 230mm - 285mm, weight: 6g - 12g), but has ears that are nearly as long as the body. They feed on moths, beetles flies, earwigs and spiders; while they may eat smaller insects in flight, they will consume larger insects on a perch, sometimes leaving an accumulation of wings underneath. They may fly close to the ground, and become prey for predators. They roost in old buildings, barns, churches or trees, but their territory includes open areas with trees, for example, around Thorpe Hall, Rudston and Pocklington. The brown long-eared bats that we have been involved in their release, were found at Driffield, in a car park (see illustration below) and in a house at East Ayton, having flown through an open window. Interestingly, when the woman who found this bat first discovered it one morning, it had its ears folded close to its body and they were not visible. It was not until we visited her house at dusk, with the aim of releasing it, that it displayed its ears. Once outside, it flew off with no hesitation, watched by the couple whose house it had been found in. During the winter, brown long-eared bats roost in tunnels and caves, also buildings and trees, hibernating when the temperature drops to just above freezing.

Left: Brown long-eared bat, found in a dehydrated state in a Driffield car park
Whiskered bat

The whiskered bat, a small bat (wingspan: 210mm - 240mm, weight: 4g - 8g), emerges within half an hour of sunset but will continue to be active throughout the night, foraging along hedgerows or the edge of woodland, for small insects including moths, and spiders. They usually roost in countryside buildings, including barns but hibernate in caves or tunnels.

Common pipistrelle

The common pipistrelle, another small bat (wingspan: 200mm-235mm, weight: 3g - 8g), is the commonest and most widespread of British bats. Although they may live in the countryside, they often roost in suburban and urban areas, so are the species of bat that people see. In the summer they roost in eves of houses, under tiles and in cavity walls. During the winter, they hibernate in crevices of buildings or trees, but also in bat boxes. They eat small flies including midges and mosquitos which they catch in woodlands, hedgerows, grassland, farmland, urban and suburban locations.

Soprano pipistrelle

The soprano pipistrelle (wingspan: 190mm - 230mm, weight: 3g - 8g) was only identified as a separate species from the common pipistrelle in the 1990s. They feed on wetland habitats, also around woodlands, hedgerows, and suburban parks and gardens. During the summer, they roost in crevices in newer buildings, under tiles, in cavity walls, also tree holes and bat boxes.

The common but also the soprano pipistrelle bats represent the majority of the bats that we have cared for and released; they came from the Bridlington and Driffield areas, also localities further south of Bridlington, reflecting the preference that these bats have for suburban roosts.

Nathusius' pipistrelle

This larger pipistrelle (wingspan: 228-250mm, weight: 6-16g) is a migrant from Europe, so has not been included in the 7 species of Yorkshire bat; however, it has been recorded in bat boxes at Top Hill Low, a nature reserve run by Yorkshire Water, near Watton.

Populations: stability and fluctuations

In 2014, national data from the BCT of the above bats, suggests that from hibernation surveys (but not supported by the roost count), the Natterer’s bat population may be increasing. While roost counts of the two pipistrelle species suggested that there may have been a decrease, because they use more than one roost in summer, some roosts can remain unknown. However, this may reflect that they move from roost to roost, as field surveys were a more positive result. The Daubenton’s, whiskered, noctule and brown long-eared bats showed fluctuation but relative stability.

Lifestyle

Bats forage in the same area to feed, although this may change throughout the seasons and in different weather conditions. Research in the 1990s suggested that pipistrelle bats may use social calls to protect their feeding areas. It has been shown that they prefer to forage over organic farms, because the hedges tend to be higher, water quality better and insects are more prolific. Bats are territorial and return to the same summer roost, although sometimes, pipistrelle bats will move roost if it becomes too hot during the summer.
A year in the life of a UK bat

Although weather conditions may cause variations, bats maintain an almanac of activities.

In January, they are hibernating, and in a torpid state; this means that they have a lower body temperature, a lower metabolic rate and breathe more slowly, allowing them to use their fat stores, built up over the previous autumn, more economically. They choose hibernation sites that are cold and at a constant temperature, sometimes using caves or tunnels where they can hibernate undisturbed, for example, the old railway tunnel at Burdale near Wharram Percy.

By February, they are still in hibernation, but have little fat left, and if the temperature rises to around 16 degrees Centigrade on a sunny afternoon, they may emerge from the hibernation roost to eat and drink. They quickly return to the hibernation roost when the temperature drops.

In March, if the temperature rises, they will seek food and water, although if it turns colder, they will, again, become torpid.

In April, they will come out of hibernation, usually returning to the same summer roosts and forage at nightfall; they need to build up their body weight after hibernation.

By May, bats are fully active; the females will occupy summer roosts together, forming maternity colonies in readiness for raising their young. In contrast, male bats are found either singly or in small groups, although male brown long-eared bats may be present in maternity roosts.

In June, the females, after a 6-9 week pregnancy, give birth to a single pup, initially less than an inch long that are suckled by their own mothers. However, female bats will keep other bats’ pups warm in the maternity roost while their mothers are out foraging.

Suckling continues into July; by the time they are 4-5 weeks old, their mothers will encourage them to fly and forage for insects, although bats born later in the season will still be quite small. When inexperienced with flight, these ‘juvenile’ bats lack confidence and may be found on the ground, where they soon become weak, dehydrated and hungry and can fall prey to cats and other predators.

In August, bats are starting to build up reserves of body fat for hibernation.

The mating season starts in September; the males guard their territory, use special calls to attract the females. Female bats then store the sperm and do not become pregnant until the spring. They continue to build up fat reserves.

In October mating continues, as does the building up of fat for the winter; they also seek suitable hibernation roosts. If the temperature falls, they may have initial periods of torpor.

By November, their episodes of torpor lengthen; this stops them burning off body fat when their food source of insects is more scarce.

In December, bats are hibernating.

Right: Even bats that are unable to live in the wild, hibernate in captivity
Bat predators and other dangers

The main predator of UK bats is the domestic cat, while from the air, owls can pose a threat to young bats. It has been suggested that the risk of predation by day is a major reason why bats fly less frequently during the day but it is also because they do not have to compete with insect-eating birds for food.

Wind turbine blades can cause external damage to bats, especially to the wings, but also lung damage can occur from the pressure fluctuations behind the turbine blades; these bats could appear injury free.

Although pipistrelles are associated with living in urban areas and some bats forage for moths attracted by streetlights, generally, bats avoid crossing roads where street lighting is very bright and traffic noise acts as a deterrent, although it does not affect bat echolocation. Nevertheless, bats are killed by road transport. Wire gantries – ‘bat bridges’ – have been built to assist bats to cross roads, but found ineffective; while underpasses are more successful, they are dependent upon whether bats could maintain their original course and flight height from the ground. Although these bat crossings are not represented in Yorkshire, the University of Leeds are carrying out research into this subject.

While there are reports from the US and Australia of bats being injured by barbed wire, there is little evidence to support that this is a problem for UK bats.

Finding a bat where you would not expect to

You may find a bat in your home. If it is flying round a room and it is a warm evening, close the door to the room, open the windows as wide as possible and dim the lights; it may then fly out again. If it appears to have left, check places where it might have hidden, for example, the folds of curtains or behind picture frames.

If it is daylight when you find a bat, and it is flying, wait until it lands (you should never attempt to catch a bat in flight). Using gloves, disposable, kitchen or others that are not fluffy, place the bat in a box, for example, a shoe box with air holes punched in the lid and with a cloth, tea towel or paper towels to allow it to hide under and add a clean bottle top, for example, from a plastic milk bottle, for water and keep it in a quiet, dark place of safety until dusk. Make sure that the box is reasonably secure, for the bat’s safety; we had a bat in our care that pushed against the flexible tank lid hinges, exiting the tank and appeared, to our great surprise, shuffling into the kitchen, one floor down!

Preferable on a warm, dry evening, the bat can be released. Open the box outside and place it on a shoulder height wall, with the box on its side, to allow the bat to crawl out, and wait for it to fly off. While this is taking place, ensure that the bat is not in danger of predation by cats. If, after 15 minutes, it has not flown or if the weather is unsuitable for release, contact the BCT. You will probably be given the name and telephone number of a local person who will probably be a bat carer.

When you telephone a bat carer, you will be asked where the bat is now, what the problem is, if there appears to be any obvious injury and whether it is keeping still or active. If it is June, July or early August, the bat carer will enquire whether the bat is very young, as this could indicate that bats may be roosting nearby. Baby bats have little or no fur; when they have grown fur but are still very small, they are described as ‘juveniles’. Collection by (or delivery to) the bat carer can then be arranged.

If you find a grounded bat of any age, or perhaps, your cat may bring in a bat that it has caught, again, you should contact the BCT. A grounded bat is not going to take off and fly; your assistance will help to save its life; again, put it in a suitable box until you seek help.

Recently, we had a call about a small, dishevelled juvenile bat that a mother and her small daughter found in their garden in Bridlington. It was hot and sunny, so they positioned the little girl’s slide to keep the sun off it, and contacted us. A few weeks later, an adult bat was found on a quiet road at Brandesburton, again looking tousled and weak. Other bats in need of a helping hand included one that was hanging in a porch of a guest house. The owner left it there, but when it did not leave, he telephoned for advice. We collected all these bats, and – to a greater or lesser extent – helped them.
A frequent source of referrals, however, are the local vets. When a member of the general public takes a bat to the vet, the vet examines it, and if necessary, may give treatment, for example, for the infestation of external parasites. The veterinarian practice also gives the bat water, and sometimes, a pâté-like food; contact is then made with us to collect it.

‘Ectoparasites’: external infestation of bats

These include ticks, mites and fleas on the skin, fur and wing, or occasionally tail membranes; however, they are specific to bats and will not infest humans. Although bats may have one or two such parasites with little impact on them, young bats (from crowded nursery roosts) or more mature bats if unable to groom due to injury or illness, may have heavier infestation, as the parasites have been able to multiply. Although some are scavengers living on the hair and skin, some suck the bat’s blood, weakening it. Ticks can create holes in bat wings, which can become sore and discharge. These parasites (but not ticks) can be removed using a fine, dampened, sable paint brush.

When the bat is taken in by a bat carer

Whether the bat is being collected from a vet’s practice or the call has been from a member of the public, we fill in any gaps in the information we have already recorded regarding its history, when and where it was found, whether the bat has drunk any water (or if it was at a vet’s, if it had eaten), whether and to what extent it had been moving, and if there had been any apparent improvement or deterioration. We also look to see (or ask) if the bat has passed urine and had bowel motions. If the bat has come from a vet’s, the practice usually have the contact details of the person who handed the bat in. This enables us, initially, to let him or her know that it is now with bat carers and to ask, when it was ready for release, whether the finder and often other members of the family would like to be present. We aim to release it in a suitable place in the vicinity of where it was found. Sometimes, during the summer, we have had up to three bats in our care.

Above: Tanks of bats receiving care
Initial assessment of a bat

Initially, we will observe the bat; how it is moving, and any obvious injury that can be seen. If it is reasonably calm, we may perform an external examination, looking at the head, both sides of the body, and gently extending the wings. However, if it appears stressed and thrashing around, the examination would be delayed until it had settled down. If the bat comes to us via a vet, it will already have been examined and we will be informed of the outcome of this and of any treatment given. This is added then to the bat’s initial documentation and this is maintained about each bat until it is released.

Bats contaminated by potentially harmfully substances

Bats can be affected by numerous contaminants, some of which can have extremely adverse consequences to them. As they groom on a frequent basis, the ingestion of either the contaminant or of the substance used to cleanse them, can result in fatalities. For this reason, there are BCT guidelines that bat workers follow when cleaning bats which ensure that no further harm is caused to them.

Dust, powder or cobwebs can be brushed off, again with a small sable paintbrush, or if necessary, the gentle use of a baby’s toothbrush. Oil-based materials can be cleaned away using butter, margarine or vegetable oil, which thin the contaminant, followed by mild soap or detergent. Lastly, this is washed off using tepid water, taking care to keep the head dry. The bat can then be dried in an airing cupboard or other warm place. Tar can contaminate the fur, but the affected areas of fur can be trimmed away; bats naturally moult and grow new fur during the summer. Fly paper is also a threat; this can be cut away where possible and the remaining stickiness can be cleaned off using butter, margarine or oil, which would then require further cleansing.

The condition of bats that come into our care: a continuum from an uninjured bat at one end, to a bat that is close to death, at the other

It may be that bats reported to the bat carer have not been injured and are able to fly off independently, following appropriate advice. However, at the other end of the continuum, bats may have broken bones, puncture marks from cats’ claws or torn wings, also as a result of cat claw damage, bee stings or fishing hooks. Holes in wing membranes sometimes mend, and bats can manage to fly with old but unhealed holes. However, if the hole is cat related, there is a risk of infection and an antibiotic may be necessary. Even after healing, there is the danger that scar tissue will impede flight. Fractures need assessment by a vet, but if the injury is too great, then euthanasia may be the kindest option.

Sometimes the bat that we have taken in for rehabilitation has been injured more seriously than it would initially appear, and it dies. Although this is sad but in care, its last few hours are, at least, in a place of safety and relative comfort and it can eat and drink if it wants to. In the wild, it could have spent this time dehydrated, on the ground, possibly feeling over heated or cold and fearing predation.

Bat rehabilitation

If we are handed a bat that cannot, at the time, be released back to its own environment, we look after it until it is ready, keeping it in a tank. Unless it has been found with another bat from the same roost, we do not place them together, as this would constitute a risk of cross infection.

Initially, we spend quite a lot of time with a new bat; although they are wild animals, we feel, and we have heard other bat carers also expressing the thought that bats often seem to recognise that we are trying to help them. First, we encourage the new bat to drink. Sometimes it is clearly very thirsty and will drink enthusiastically once put in front of a milk bottle top of cold water.

Right: Brown long-eared bat, drinking copious amounts of water after being dehydrated
If it does not make an effort, we hold it in a gloved hand and offer it sips of water from a plastic teaspoon. If this is not successful, a dropper dispensing water onto the lips sometimes – happily – triggers mouth opening and drop by drop, the bat has a drink. If this is does not work, a fine sable brush dipped in water will encourage the bat to suck water off the bristles.

We then encourage it to eat. UK bats catch insects on the wing. As a substitute, we buy living mealworms which we prepare by pouring boiling water over them, just before offering them to the bat. This way, the worms are killed instantly and without pain and the bat has fresh food. However, because mealworms are unfamiliar to the bat, we have to encourage it to take nourishment by cutting the freshly killed worms in half, squeezing out a little from inside, and offering the bat the juicy cut end while holding the worm with tweezers further down the body. This takes patience, but the time taken is rewarded when the bat takes its first mouthful.

**Left: Bat becoming accustomed to eating mealworms being offered**

Unless it is unwell, this is soon followed by quite a few more mouthfuls and the empty worm skin is discarded. The bat sometimes resembles the typical image of a baby bird, with mouth open awaiting the next morsel. It does not take long for it to eat mealworms unaided.

**Right: Becoming used to being fed mealworms and awaiting the next**

If the bat is reluctant to eat, we continue to encourage it to drink, and offer reconstituted Royal Canin babydog dried milk (comparable to the milk that mother bats provide; it is fed to baby bats in care – on a short-term basis – until they are weaned). Sometimes, after a while, the bat will progress to eating mealworms. Although we feed debilitated bats more frequently, we usually provide our other bats with one meal of mealworms and give them fresh water at dusk, to coincide with the time when they would normally be foraging.

**Left: Juvenile bat that would not eat but enjoyed milk out of a teaspoon**

Before leaving them their mealworms and water, we change the ‘carpet’ of paper towel on the floor of the tank and the paper towel ‘wallpaper’ up one side. This is especially important if the bat has ectoparasites, as they sometimes leave the bat’s body, and this allows for them to be destroyed. However, because urine, droppings and (occasionally) waste food, collects on the paper towels, all the bats in our care all have ‘clean sheets’ every day! We place the type of grooved board (bat ladder) in the tank; to allow the bat to hang underneath as if it was in a roost; this is also cleaned.
We feed the mealworms on porridge oats and wheat germ, and add a lettuce leaf; the worms eat the vitamin C rich lettuce and the bat then eats the worms. We have only had one bat that showed any symptoms of dietary insufficiency; she was in permanent care, as her wing was so damaged, she could never have flown. One May, she developed bald patches on each side of her body, but seemed unperturbed. We sought advice, and were recommended to place some of her worms in a tub with babydog dried milk, so that the worms ate the powdered milk and she then ate the worms, ingesting the many nutrients found in this milk. This was effective and in less than three months she had a luxurious fur coat again.

Above: Bald patches appeared along each side of the bat’s body

Left: Full fur regrowth

**Bat release**

Our aim is to release bats – after rehabilitation if necessary – back into their own environment. We do this as early as we can, but make sure that they are eating, drinking and physically able to live in the wild. This includes ensuring that the bat is able to fly; we do not have a bat flight cage, so we stage practice flights in the bathroom, after placing a blanket over the bath and taps, a fur fabric under blanket on the carpet and drawing the curtains. We do this at dusk, when bats would normally be foraging; we hold the bat at shoulder height, on an outstretched palm, and wait for it to become ready for flight. This usually involves it ‘shivering’ in order to warm its muscles. At this time it may extend the wings and fold them again, before it flies either round the bathroom, or at least to the far side, landing on the curtain, from which it may take off again. If it lands on the blanket over the bath or the fleece on the floor, it does not manage to take off. In nature, a grounded bat may try to climb up a vertical surface to give it the height it needs to fly. One small juvenile liked to sit on a paper towel covered mildly warm wheat bag, while he was getting ready to practice flying. Bats stretch their wings while in their tanks, seemingly readying themselves for flight.

Right: Wing stretching in the tank

As soon as a bat is eating, drinking and able to fly, we release it; again, this is at dusk, and on a dry and not too windy an evening, in its home environment. If possible, we involve the people who originally found it. Sometimes the release is a family affair, when children stay up to witness the release and have gone to school the next day telling a story with a happy ending and with paper handouts about British bats!

As when practicing flight at home, we hold the bat on an outstretched palm at shoulder height and wait for it to take off. Although we aim to take it back to where it was found, if this is unsuitable (one bat was found in a Driffield carpark – for example) we then look for a bat friendly area nearby that would also be within its recognised territory. Ideally this would be where there were trees but also areas of clearing to allow flight. We then watch it swoop and circle above us, and pick up its echolocation with a bat detector. Sometimes, it takes off as soon as it has been lifted from its tank.
One juvenile that we had rehabilitated had her last meal at dusk, before travelling from Bridlington to Flamborough in her tank, for her release. As if she sensed that she was going to be released, (we had tried taking her ‘home’ a few days previous to this, but she had not flown off), she ate ravenously throughout her journey as if not wanting to waste one mouthful, despite the rocking of her tank as we drove along. Once she was lifted out of her tank, recognising her home environment, she flew off. We could see her in flight and picked up her echolocation with a bat detector. She appeared to be foraging, hoping for a second helping!

While another bat was being driven, in her tank, for release at Driffield, she became seemingly more attentive and looking round, as if she was aware that she was nearing ‘home’, as we passed Nafferton. When we released her, she circled, initially, very low over our heads, as if she was looking down us. Then she flew away.

Yet another bat, when we took her back to her territory – the grassy area near Gypsy Road, at Bridlington – she seemed reluctant to fly, so we decided to take her back for further rehabilitation. On the way back to the car, we decided return to give her one last try. As if realising, when, once again, she was held on an outstretched hand, she ran up the author (GW’s) arm and took off from his shoulder. We saw her circling and swooping before we lost sight of her, although continued to pick her up on the bat director.

No two bats are the same!

In the same way that horses, dogs or cats have their own characters, so do bats! We have not yet had one that we have thought – personality wise – was like another. The bat that we cared for permanently, because of her damaged wing, never ate in our presence, choosing to wait until we left the room, before engaging in any type of activity. However, we installed a nest box camera in the roof of her tank, and could watch her from the sitting room, running around and enjoying her worms! She particularly liked the tender, white mealworms that had just shed their skins and those (also white and tender) which had just changed into the pupa stage, so we picked these out for her whenever possible.

One bat did not seem to like music, although this was never loud, while another appeared to enjoy company, sitting on the ‘groundsheet’ grooming while we were there, disappearing underneath the ground sheet when left alone.

Some bats, once they get used to eating mealworms, eat very quickly and make a start as soon as they have been put in front of them, apparently, with much relish, while others consume them in a much more delicate manner, sometimes waiting, preferring to eat later. Especially when human company is new to them, while being handled, some bats make a short ‘kiss’ sound that is audible to humans; while some do this frequently, particularly when new to care, others are much less vocal.

In conclusion, bats may be seen flying overhead, but unless – for some reason – they come into contact with humans, this is the only experience that many people have of them. However, they are fascinating creatures and well worth finding out about. We hope that this article has stimulated your interest. Now, if you find a bat in need of a helping hand, you know how to help it.
Further reading and sources of the information used in this article

The BCT run websites of information both for people who know little about bats to those who are licensed to undertake work with bats.

East Yorkshire Bat Group:

https://eastyorkshirebatgroup.wordpress.com/

North Yorkshire Bat Group:

http://www.nybats.org.uk/

South Yorkshire Bat Group:

https://sites.google.com/site/sybatgroup/

West Yorkshire Bat Group:

http://www.westyorkshirebats.org.uk/

BCT: the Bat Helpline (0345 1300 228)

BCT sites:

http://www.bats.org.uk/

Local bat groups:

http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/local_bat_groups.html

Information about bats, including sheets describing the 7 species of bats found in Yorkshire, and ‘a year in the life of a bat’:

http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/uk_bats.html

Bat roosts:

http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bat_roosts.html

Bats and buildings:


Bat licencing:

http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/licensing.html

The Bat Care Guidelines:

http://www.bats.org.uk/publications_download.php/1110/Bat_Care_Guidelines.pdf_ok

The Bat Rescue Manual by Maggie & Bryan Brown from Otley, who have worked in bat conservation for around 30 years:

http://www.gainsboroughbathouse.org.uk/page34.html

This is manual is an invaluable reference for bat carers, but also see the authors’ informative website:

http://www.gainsboroughbathouse.org.uk/index.html
A Mysterious Medieval Effigy and Grave Slabs at All Saints Church, Batley, West Yorkshire

By Jeremy Clark

The church of All Saints, Batley is set in the industrial centre of West Yorkshire, 11 kilometres south-east of Bradford, 12 kilometres south-west of Leeds and 2 kilometres north-west of Dewsbury. The first mention of a church was in the Domesday Book of 1086 when Batley is recorded as ‘Bateleia’, although there may well have been an earlier church on the present site.

The present church was built in 1485 around an earlier church of about 1330 of which the south nave pillars and chancel arch have survived. It has a west tower with an overhanging embattled parapet, a south porch, two chantry chapels enclosed by oak screens on either side of the chancel and a modern north vestry. The south chantry chapel was founded in 1334 by Adam de Copley and is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The screen surrounding the Lady Chapel was erected in the latter part of the 16th century replacing an earlier screen.

In the north chancel is the Mirfield chapel which was probably founded by Sir William and Lady Anne Mirfield in the late 15th century and is dedicated to St Anne. It is enclosed by its original 15th century screen and within it is a monumental tomb with alabaster effigies of a recumbent knight and his Lady with their hands clasped in an attitude of prayer. They are probably of Sir William who died in 1508 and his wife Lady Anne. At the east end of the south arcade the chancel arch has its original narrow 14th century rood stone staircase with a plain pointed arch. The narrow stairs would have once led up to a rood balcony which originally spanned the gap in between the pillars.

On the east side of the south entrance porch along the south wall lies an intriguing but damaged and somewhat eroded by exposure to the weather, early stone medieval effigy. It was removed from the south chantry chapel in 1830 when the first organ was installed. The effigy was placed on a monumental tomb in the south churchyard which was the only available place.
By the late 1800s the churchyard became extremely overgrown and unkempt with tombs and gravestones often leaning at crazy angles. This state of affairs was changed in the 1960s through a Garden of Rest scheme. Gravestones dating from the 18th and 19th century were moved to the churchyard boundaries and some with inscribed markings were used as paving stones for pathways eroding the inscriptions that were written on them. The stone effigy with its low plinth was moved to the position that it now occupies. The broad churchyard is now a public park and thoroughfare.

The effigy is in poor condition with missing lower legs and feet, 140 cm long. The face, arms and hands are almost entirely obliterated and the surface down to the waist is much worn. Scatcherd, a local historian, first recorded this effigy in 1830 (The History of Morley, of the Parish of Batley and West Riding of Yorkshire), as representing the ‘full-length figure of a man’, and Sheard, another local historian further describes the effigy in 1894 (Records of the Parish of Batley in the County of York) with a short tunic ‘reaching a little below the knees, the legs were clothed in tight hose, and the feet in pointed shoes’. What he does not record is what the feet were resting on, if anything.
It would appear that both these historians saw the effigy before it was broken off at the legs. The plinth itself was made to fit the effigy after he lost his legs. It seems most likely that Sheard saw the effigy some years before recording it. He may have made a note at the time or remembered what he saw when writing his records. If this were the case, then perhaps the legs were lost in the middle of the 19th century.

The effigy depicts a civilian, dressed in a graceful gown with voluminous sleeves that are wrist length, but narrower over the forearms than the upper arms. His hands are bare and appear to have been clasped, uplifted on the breast in an attitude of prayer. His garment has deep pleated vertical folds, which flare out slightly at the hips into a skirt. The convoluted folds that represent the hem of the gown, where the legs have been broken off are better preserved and can clearly be seen.

Above and right: The civilian effigy on the east side of the south entrance porch. Both photos show how badly damaged it is, dressed in a gown and pleated skirt.

According to Sheard the legs were clad in tight hose and wearing pointed shoes on his feet. Further examination of the effigy reveals that he must have been cross legged and that is why the skirt is shown higher on the figure’s right side. The thigh is raised, so that the right leg can cross over the left. The right knee must have been undercut which is why there is a hollow in the convoluted hem folds. If the legs had been straight there would have been the same hollow on both sides. The head and face have suffered deliberate mutilation and the face is completely obliterated. The head as it now exists is bare-headed, rests on two cushions, the lower is rectangular, quite flat and largely intact. The upper is much smaller, badly damaged and is deeply dished in response to the weight of the head and could, originally, have been hexagonal.

Below: The convoluted folds that represent the hem of the gown, where the legs have been broken off can clearly be seen in this photo with the position of the dagger, ‘sword’ and drawstring purse

The cushion is supported on both sides by angels, which have almost entirely been obliterated. Their bodies lie back over the sides of the lower cushion, but only the wings of the angel on the right side can be clearly identified. Around the waist the effigy wears a plain belt 3 cm wide with a small dagger, a broad flat ‘sword’ and a purse. The dagger, which is a simple, small straight dagger, lies across the folds on the left hip. The broad flat ‘sword’ which he also wears on the left hip in front of the dagger, is straight and reaches down to the hem of his gown with a simple drawstring purse lying on top. There is no obvious indication of how they were attached to his belt, as they must have been.
There is a long tradition regarding the identification of the effigy that he represented a man that was a schoolmaster of the parish of uncommon severity, and who, on that account was killed by his own scholars with his own sword. This story was related to Scatcherd a few years prior to 1830 by his friend the Rev. Matthew Sedgwick (1796-1831), who at the time was the curate of All Saints Church, Batley and master of the Batley free grammar school. Scatcherd was not convinced by this story and suggested that the Batley effigy represents a vicar of the church or a schoolmaster of Batley. However, no evidence has been found to support Sedgwick’s story or Scatcherd’s suggestions.

The Batley effigy has a number of both interesting and intriguing aspects, together with a range of problems. There is no inscription or arms to identify who the effigy is commemorating which makes it difficult to establish it. Equally problematical is the matter of dating the effigy. The only feature distinguishing the Batley effigy is the broad flat ‘sword’ that he is wearing by his side. Sheard in 1894 came to the conclusion that it was not a ‘sword’ and was never intended to be one and further suggests that the Batley effigy was probably a merchant of the staple. In all probability the ‘sword’ is a ‘weaving sword’ rather than a weapon and this would indicate the subject’s professional status which makes the Batley effigy very special. It would have been made of wood rather than metal and the design of the ‘weaving sword’ on the effigy depicts this, being flat and the same width, probably terminating in a slightly broad rounded end. A weaving sword was used on a horizontal loom that had no treadles and no shafts. A weaver would sit at the front of the loom to throw the shuttle, while an assistant raised groups of heddle rods and inserted a weaving sword to tighten the weave. This type of weaving seems to have ceased in the early to the mid Middle Age, possibly associated with advances in loom technology.

Weaving was one of the most widespread trades in the Middle Age. Initially it was dominated by women but men took over the trade which increased in status. Also the growth of the weaver’s craft led to the merchant guilds. This would indicate that the Batley effigy belonged to a successful man in the mediaeval textile trade and a date of the late 14th century is suggested which relates to some extent to his attire.

**Two Medieval Grave Slabs**

Built into the external walls on the south side of the church are three sections of medieval grave slabs. Two of these sections probably belong to the same slab. All three probably date to the late 12th or early 13th century when they were reused as building material for the present church built in 1485.

![Left: Position of the medieval grave slab built into the external face of the west wall of the south aisle. It is difficult to locate due to its high elevation near the sloping south aisle roof](image1)

![Below: A close up of the medieval grave slab showing the detail carving](image2)

![Left: Drawing of the medieval cross grave slab cover, showing details of the carved cross. Courtesy of Peter Ryder](image3)

The medieval cross grave slab cover represents the upper part of an incised slab built into the west wall of the south aisle. It is a rectangular slab with missing base which has a carved narrow shaft. Carved in relief within the sunken circular head is a bracelet derivative. On the right of the cross shaft appears a fragment of an emblem, probably one quillon of a sword. This cross grave slab cover probably dates to the late 12th or early 13th century.
The position of two sections, probably of the same medieval grave slab built into the external face of the south clerestory near the west end of the wall. This grave slab is more easily recognisable.

Right: A close up of the two sections showing the detail carving of the medieval grave slab.

Left: Drawing of the two sections of the medieval cross grave slab cover, showing details of the carved cross. Courtesy of Peter Ryder.

These two sections are probably of the same slab, built into the external face of the south clerestory, near the west end of the wall. This cross is carved in relief with five lobed terminals within a sunk circle. The incised shaft has a stepped base and probably dates to the 13th century.

I would like to thank Brian and Moira Gittos for providing a copy of their assessment of the Batley effigy and for a number of valuable comments and suggestions. To Peter Ryder for permission to reproduce the drawings of the Medieval Grave Slabs from his Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in West Yorkshire (1991).
Left: The south side of the church where three sections of medieval grave slabs are built into west wall of the south aisle near the sloping south aisle roof and the south clerestory near the west end of the wall.

Right: At the east end of the south arcade the chancel arch has its original narrow 14th century rood stone staircase with a plain pointed arch. The narrow stairs would have once led up to a rood balcony which originally spanned the gap in between the pillars.
Above: The Black Bull at Haworth where it is alleged that Branwell Brontë declined into alcoholism and opium addiction

Left and below: Branwell’s famous favourite chair during his many visits to the pub is still on display in the Black Bull

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