

The Yorkshire Journal

Issue 4
Winter 2017

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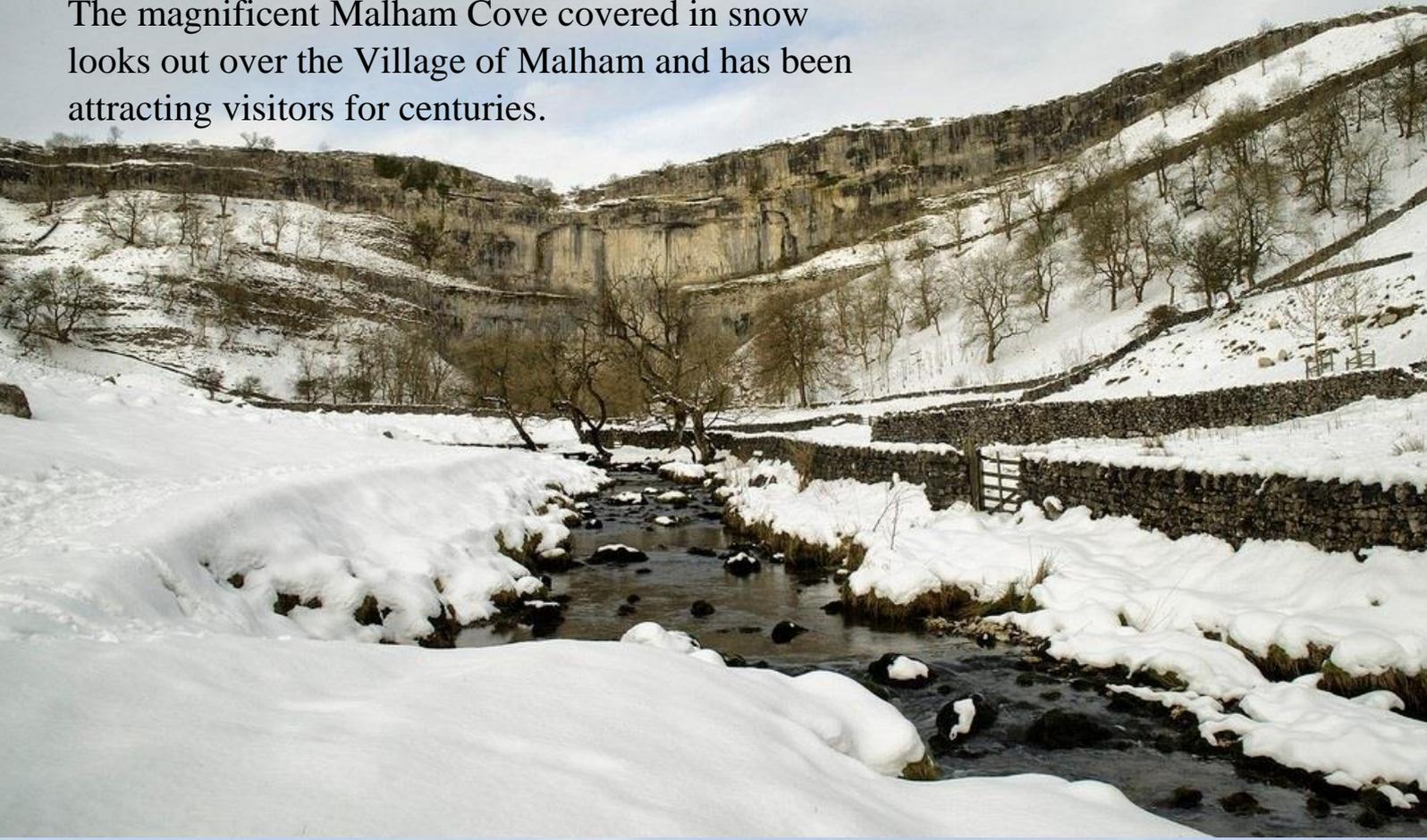
The Three Nuns Public House near Mirfield

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Kirklees Priory, the Nuns, Robin Hood and the Gatehouse near Brighouse

The magnificent Malham Cove covered in snow looks out over the Village of Malham and has been attracting visitors for centuries.



Pen-y-Ghent in Yorkshire Dales covered over in snow, it is the lowest of the three peaks and popular with walkers. Photo by Andrew Young





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Above: North Landing, Flamborough covered in snow. Photo by Ian Smith

Cover: Rosedale Millennium Cross, it was erected on the North Yorkshire Moors in 2000
Photo by Hector Patrick

All the staff at The Yorkshire Journal would like to wish our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year



Editorial

The Yorkshire e-Journal was set up in 2010 with the idea of trying to take the place of a number of small independent Yorkshire magazines which have all sadly ceased publication. The e-journal which is non-commercial quickly gained popularity far beyond the boundaries of Yorkshire. Readers feel at home with the Yorkshire e-Journal and comfortable in the knowledge that most of the people behind the articles and stories are from Yorkshire and passionate about our region, no matter that they are not all professional writers.

There is an obvious demand and interest in Yorkshire's heritage past and present for us to continue publication. However, over the past few years some of our members and writers have sadly passed away leaving only a few of us to try and continue regular publication. At times this has proved most difficult for us. So after this winter issue it has been decided to publish an annual issue of the Yorkshire e-Journal which will be published each December.

We hope that our quarterly e-journal has brought pleasure to our readers through the articles and features that have appeared, and that our annual publication will see more new writers with their work in print. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those readers of The Yorkshire Journal who kindly sent us messages of encouragement expressing their view that the Yorkshire e-Journal is one of those publications which is read and re-read, kept on the computer, copied and sent to relatives, friends and neighbours but never deleted! For our new readers who would like to see what has gone before, it is easy to download back issues of the journal from our website. Each issue contains fascinating articles about the people and the places that make Yorkshire unique.

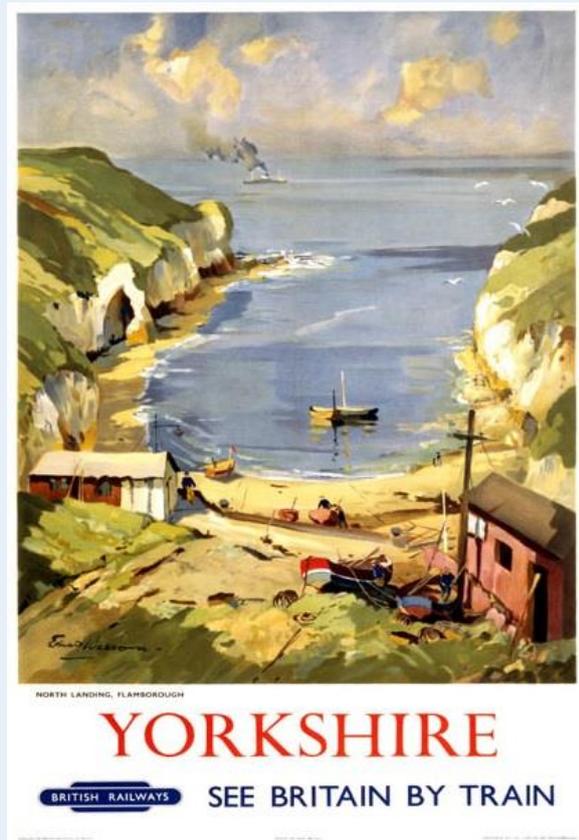
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Welcome to the winter issue of The Yorkshire Journal in which we feature four more interesting articles from our dedicated team of writers.



06 Jeremy Clark visits The Three Nuns Public House near Mirfield which has lost its Historical Name. Jeremy's article includes a full history of the original Three Nuns Pub which dates back to the 14th century.

18 Stephen Riley continues his fascinating story of Yorkshire's railway seaside holiday posters. In this issue he takes us to North Landing at Flamborough which has always been a popular area for tourists. The few railway posters that were produced show the small bay, spectacular chalk cliffs and boats commonly known as Yorkshire cobs. He also explains why Victorian and Edwardian visitors were attracted to Flamborough.



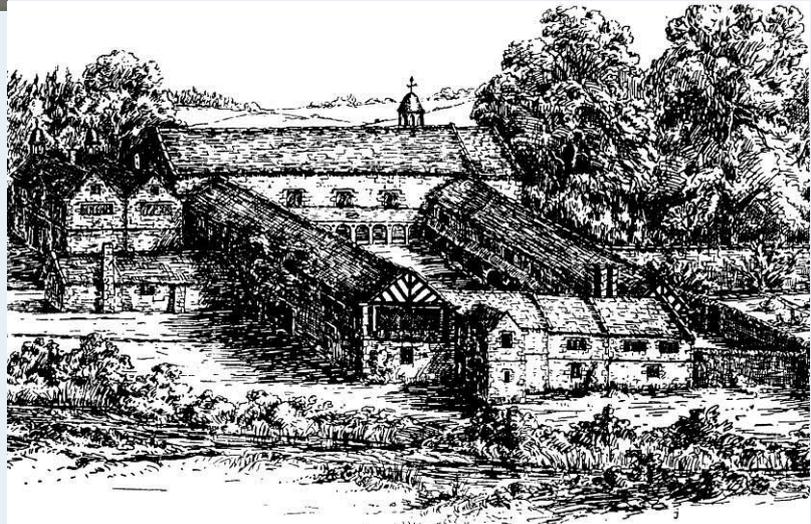
30 Margaret Mills takes a look at Norton Conyers near Ripon which may have a connection with Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre". Margaret explains that Charlotte visited Norton Conyers in 1839 and it is believed she heard the story of a mad woman locked in the attic in the previous century.



This may have given Charlotte the idea for the unfortunate Mrs Rochester in Jane Eyre, which was published in 1847.



34 Sarah Harrison and Jeremy Clark visit the site of Kirklees Priory and the Gatehouse which is under construction converting it into a two bedroom house. Their comprehensive article includes all aspects of the Priory, the Nuns Graves the site of Robin Hood's Grave and the history of the Gatehouse.



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

The Three Nuns Public House near Mirfield has lost its Historical Name

By Jeremy Clark

Last year the Three Nuns Public House near Mirfield underwent a renovation and was transformed into Miller & Carter Steakhouse which opened on 1st April 2016. The company dropped the Three Nuns name and covered over the Three Nuns carved painted stone plaque above the main entrance with a welcome sign. The explanation given by the company for the loss of the name is that Miller & Carter uses the brand name first followed by the location hence *Miller & Carter, Mirfield*. This is hardly a good reason for eradicating the Three Nuns name and will undoubtedly affect the historical importance of the area. They did however preserve the blue plaque on the wall next to the restaurant entrance installed by Mirfield Civic Society. It commemorates the link between the present pub and an early tavern that probably stood on this site in the 16th century and the connection with Kirklees Priory and the legendary Robin Hood whose grave is believed to be in the grounds of the priory. This blue plaque serves as an historical marker to commemorate these associations.



Left: The Three Nuns Public House before renovation. Above the main entrance can be seen a carved painted stone plaque representing three Nuns

Photo by Gary Peacock

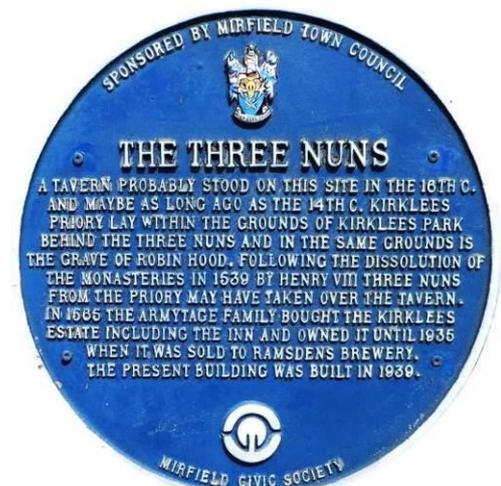
Right: The pub after renovation with the new name MILLER & CARTER – STEAKHOUSE. Mirfield the location is not included in the sign



Below: A detailed photo showing the three nuns carved painted stone plaque above the main entrance thought to represent the original proprietors. It has been covered over with a welcome sign



Right: The blue plaque on the wall next to the restaurant entrance is now the only reminder of the historical importance of the area

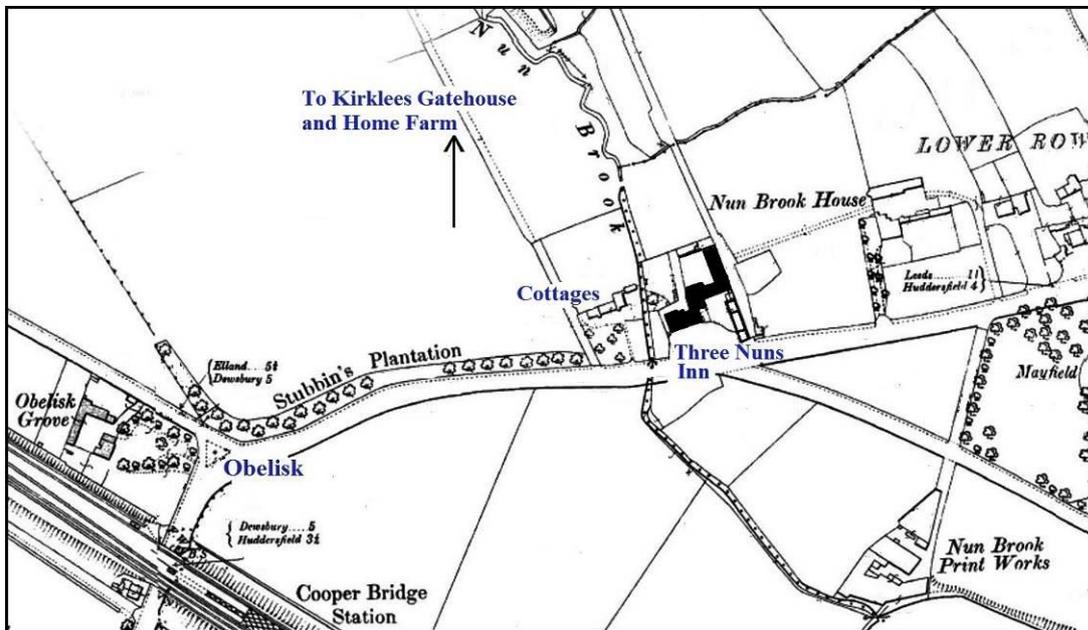


In 1935 Thomas Ramsden & Son Ltd., bought from the Armytage family the old Three Nuns Inn that probably dates to the early 1600s. By this time the building had fallen into a state of neglect and was in a very bad condition. Rather than renovate the old building the Ramsden's decided to build a new inn on the same site. Plans were drawn up in 1937 by Messrs J. Glendinning and G. Hanson, Halifax architects. Their design was in a mock Tudor style that was popular with pub architects in the 1930s. Construction of the building began behind the old Three Nuns that was to be demolished after the new Three Nuns was completed.

Right: The original drawing of the proposed front of the new Three Nuns



The old Three Nuns was demolished in 1939 and the site became a large carpark for the new Three Nuns which opened in August 1939, this is why it is situated much further back from the road. It is thought that the original Three Nuns extensive cellars still remain intact but sealed off under the car park.



Left: This 1907 OS map shows the site of the Three Nuns along the A69 Leeds Road.

To the left are two large cottages, near the south entrances to Kirklees Gatehouse and Home Farm.

The Obelisk or Dumb Steeple is situated in its original position on an island in the middle of the road junction. The large Obelisk Grove house stands in the grounds behind the

Obelisk. Also marked on the map is Cooper Bridge railway station which opened in 1840 and closed in 1950.

Right: This photo shows the nearly completed new Three Nuns behind the old one and its run down condition.

Notice the stone entrance porch with its pillars on the new Three Nuns building on the right, it resembles the one on the old Three Nuns on the left. In fact the building was designed to bear a resemblance to the old Inn that it replaced. The frontage of the new Inn has two entrances, one with a porch and two wings connected by a wall installed with windows. As can be seen in this photo this would also describe the frontage of the earlier building that probably dates to the early 1600s.



As can be seen in this photo this would also describe the frontage of the earlier building that probably dates to the early 1600s.

The present day Three Nuns is still an impressive building in its own right, the exterior remaining largely unchanged since its construction. Sadly the interior has suffered over a number of renovations. Originally the interior was divided into a number of oak panelled rooms in character with the mock Tudor theme. There was a series of small stained glass windows in the Bar Lounge depicting some of the many legends associated with the Three Nuns Inn and the surrounding area. During successive renovations the layout was changed to a more open plan some sections of the oak panelling remained along with the small stained glass windows.



Above the fire place in the snug, now the bar area, was a large painted panel featuring a picture of the three nuns. This painting is a copy by Cuthbert Crossley (1883-1960) a Halifax artist, of the original pub signboard, which was formerly located on the east wing wall between the roof and two windows. It is believed that the original pub sign was painted over 100 years ago by Jim Sayner a local decorator.

Left: The interior of the Three Nuns Inns in 1960 showing oak panelling. In the far distance can be seen the copy of the original pub sign above the fire place

Right: A painted copy of the original pub signboard above the fire place

Photo by Gary Peacock

There are obvious differences between the two signboards; the one above the fire place looks much slimmer but has been finely painted in some detail. There are two gothic stained glass windows above the nuns, which have been painted in detail with a column behind them. On the altar is a candlestick with a long lit candle. In the original pub sign which appears to be much plainer there are no stained glass windows, column or candlestick on the altar. The signboard looks broader with the words THREE NUNS running along the bottom of the sign.



Left: The original pub signboard as it was situated on the old pub wall in about 1900

Photo courtesy of Gary Peacock



In August 1949 the Three Nuns Inn was leased by the owners, Thomas Ramsden & Son Ltd., on a long term contract to University Hotels Ltd., of Huddersfield. They renovated the interior into a more open plan but sections of the oak panelling remained along with the small stained glass windows and its character was maintained along with the historical links with the area.

Ghosts - One piece of history that the Three Nuns would like to forget!

In 1983 The Three Nuns was closed for another renovation to modify the inn into a big family pub. Sometime after the renovation a wooden panel with a carving of a 'Ram's Head' on one side made an appearance in the inn. The story told in the pub and later in the press that during the recent renovations, in the cellars a board was discovered hidden away with the satanic image of a ram's head on it. This panel was made of solid oak and

varnished. It was about 30 inches long by 12 inches wide, the carving was quite poor and rather than a satanic ram it featured a rather pleasant looking fat sheep's head. The general manager Mr Richard Copeland was shown the board and decided to take it to another pub in the area called the Ram to be hung on the wall as a decoration.



Left: The general manager Mr Richard Copeland holding the panel with a carving of a 'Ram's Head' in the car park of the Three Nuns.

This was about the time when it was said that 'strange' events began to happen. On several nights the draft beer taps on the bar mysteriously became turned on emptying gallons of beer onto the bar floor and large stacks of bottled beer or spirits would mysteriously fall over to be smashed on the cellar floor. So the panel was returned to appease something in the spirit world that was supposedly upset by its removal. The panel was then fastened to the wall over the pool table. Shortly after, another attempt was made to turn the pub's image back to being a family type. The panel remained above the pool table until a subsequent renovation, when the pool room was replaced by new toilets. Today the panel cannot be seen in the pub and its whereabouts are supposed to be a mystery.

The truth of the matter is that after renovation, the pub suffered problems with a large number of break-ins and loss of stock, with the manager coming under increasing pressure. So, enter a solution to the problem, it was a mysterious ghost who was causing the taps to be turned on and smashing all the bottles. This became a joke amongst the bar staff and the locals, but in reality they were simply trying to offset the stock problems that were supposedly lost. During the time of these occurrences the carved ram's head panel made its appearance; prior to this it had never been mentioned. It is likely that this panel was not found in the pub at all, during the renovation, but was brought into the pub and used as a deviation. All went according to plan, but afterwards the panel became an embarrassment. It was placed on the wall over the pool table. Following another refurbishment the panel was quietly take away in the hope that this story would be quickly forgotten. This is one piece of history that The Three Nuns would like to forget!

In 1991 an exorcism was carried out at the Three Nuns pub and in recent years several ghost hunts have taken place.

Miller & Carter

The Mitchells & Butlers pub and restaurant, the owners of the Three Nuns closed it down for a refurbishment and it was opened on 1st April 2016 as a Miller & Carter Steakhouse which is a specialist steak restaurant. However, this was no ordinary refurbishment it was an eradication of centuries of history. They were allowed to conceal or remove all evidence that it was once the Three Nuns in their renovation. The familiar yellow Old English sign on the roof was pulled down, the carved painted stone plaque above the main entrance representing three Nuns believed to be the original proprietors was covered over with a welcome sign. Fortunately they did not remove the blue plaque on the wall next to the restaurant entrance which was installed by Mirfield Civic Society. It serves to commemorate the historical importance of the area.

Inside all the historical pictures were replaced with photos and drawings of bulls reminding customers that these animals were slaughtered solely for their pleasure to eat steak! Also gone are the series of small stained glass windows.

When Miller & Carter wanted to remove and destroy the painted panel featuring the picture of three nuns above the fire place in what is now the bar area, their request was met with disapproval and they were refused. However, Miller & Carter were not going to be beaten by this, after all they have been allowed to conceal or remove other evidence, except for the blue plaque on the wall next to the restaurant entrance saying that it was once the Three Nuns. Their solution was simply to cover it over by mirrors thereby removing any trace of the Three Nuns.



Left: The painted panel featuring the picture of three nuns above the fire place in the bar area before it was concealed by mirrors.



Left: Now you see it.

Right: Now you don't



The Three Nuns has a reputation for being haunted, so spirits must make an appearance during the reconstruction work. To oblige the staff and contractors reported a series of unexplained happenings. But it was the electrician Steve Heath who was chosen to have a close encounter with the paranormal. It happened when he knocked over a box of screws and put them back only for them to be tipped out and left in a strange pile while he changed a lightbulb. If the Three Nuns is haunted then surely the spirits would not allow lesser mortals such as the Miller & Carter to destroy their place!



Left: In 1961 members of the French Circle visited the Three Nuns to admire the historic interior at dinner. Such visits were regular from organisations and societies both at home and abroad

Sadly visits like the one in the photo will no longer take place

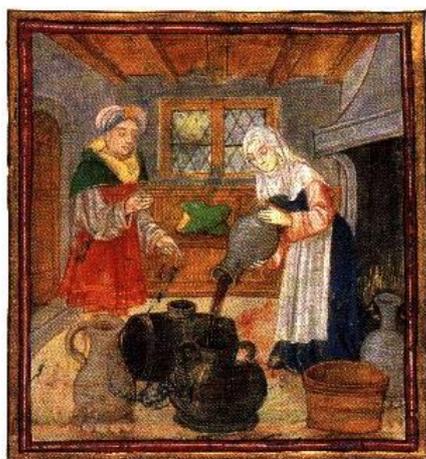
The Development of the Three Nuns

When the old building of the Three Nuns was being demolished in 1939 to make way for a large car park for the new Three Nuns which had already been built behind the old building, workmen discovered a half-timber framed building that had been incorporated into the building. It appears to have been located in the middle section behind the dressed stone frontage and was the full height of the Inn. This central half-timber framed building was found to be in good condition, roughly square in plan and was thought by the Halifax historian and archaeologist Mr T W Hanson who came to examine it, that the building dated to the 14th century. Although great interest was shown in this 14th century timber framed building no photos or drawings were made. Furthermore it was not recorded in any detail and it would seem that the timbers were not preserved.

Right: Drawing of a 14th century thatched half-timber framed house probably resembles to some degree the original Kirklees Priory Guesthouse



This half-timber framed building was most probably the Kirklees Priory Guesthouse to accommodate visitors to the Priory. It was conveniently situated off the main medieval highway and by the path that leads to the Priory. Also it can be conjectured that the building had two floors with three or four bedrooms, living and domestic quarters and a kitchen.



After the dissolution of Kirklees Priory on the 24th November 1539 it is claimed that three nuns took over the guesthouse and ran it as a tavern. Permission must have been granted to the nuns and presumably rent paid. Kirklees Priory had a brew house and producing wine and ale were part of the nun's main duties. In fact in medieval times everyone, young and old, drank ale with every meal. This was an extremely important part of the diet, as water was often dirty and the brewing process killed a lot of the germs.

Left: Two Medieval Women Brewers

Very few tools were required to brew ale which includes wooden containers (today called vats and barrels), with ingredients being water, yeast and cereal crop such as barley or oats, plus a source of heat. It would not be surprising, if in fact the nuns did turn the guesthouse into a tavern, because they were familiar with brewing ale and this would make a living for them and keep a roof over their heads.

Taverns in the medieval period were ordinary dwellings where the householder served home-brewed ale and beer. A sign was put up to advertise their presence to potential customers, and branches and leaves would be hung over the door to give notice that wine could be purchased. Pastimes like gambling and singing were part of the tavern scene.

Right: This illustration from a medieval manuscript shows a women brewer serving a traveller with ale or wine from a jug in her hand. The broom fastened to her house indicates that drink is available



The nun's tavern was situated on the highway between villages and would have attracted travelling customers besides locals. They could have also offered lodgings and food to travellers and in fact the favourite adult recreation of villagers was drinking. Both men and women would gather in a tavern to pass away the evenings.

When John Armytage took over the Kirklees Estate in 1564 he probably allowed the guesthouse on the edge of the estate at Nunbrook to continue to serve drink, by now it was probably well known and a profitable going concern. Although the nuns who started the enterprise, about 15 years earlier had died, it would have been taken over by new people. In about 1610 John Armytage's son Edward built the present Kirklees Hall, using stone from Kirklees Priory. It would have been about this time that a much larger purpose built public house was required. This was constructed in stone incorporating the timber framed guesthouse with an attached west wing. No dating stone appears to have been laid in the building, but it was named 'The Three Nuns' after or in memory of the sisters that first had the idea of turning the guesthouse into a tavern. Over the following centuries the Armytage family let the property as a going enterprise to a number of innkeepers.

Later in the 17th century a stone porch with columns was added to the west wing which was the entrance to the largest room in the inn called the 'banquet room'. The east wing was built in the 18th century and new stables with a two storey coach house were constructed on the east side when Mary Brewer Hardy was the landlord, this would be sometime between 1893 and 1899. The rooms in the inn had low ceilings, two of them were called 'Robin Hood's Room' and 'Little John's Room', and both rooms were very small. The seats in Robin Hood's room were covered with deerskin, the taproom had high-backed wooden seats and fixed over the fireplace in the kitchen was a turnspit for roasting meat. This completes the building of the Three Nuns in around 1900 although some minor alterations took place later on. The Three Nuns survived the English Civil War (1642–1651) and World War I (1914-1918) but not World War II (1939-1945), if it had, the Three Nuns may have in time become a 'Listed Building'. However, fortunately, long before being demolished a number of photographs were taken, mostly around 1900, which now serve as a record of the building.



Above: The Three Nuns around 1893 when the landlord was Mary Brewer Hardy. This could be one of the earliest photos taken of the Three Nuns. It looks as though the front of the building has just been painted white. On the wall above two windows on the east wing is the pub's signboard which shows three nuns praying. Standing outside are two dray wagons, they are delivering barrels of beer. Between them is a carriage with patrons. The pub building looks in reasonably good condition. To the left are two large cottages, near the south entrances to Kirklees Gatehouse and Home Farm



Left: This tinted photo illustrates The Three Nuns around 1903 when Arthur Joseph Cundey was the licensee. The stone porch with columns can be seen on the west wing to the left and the pub's signboard is on the east wing to the right between the roof and two windows. A tall flagpole has also been erected next to the signboard. On the

far left can be seen two large cottages with two trees in the garden without their leaves indicating that the photo was taken in late autumn or the winter of 1903

Right: This is not a very good photo, it was taken in the summer of 1904 when Arthur Joseph Cundey was still the licensee. It shows the arrival of number of horse carriages in front of the inn stopping for refreshment. On the right are the new stables and the two storey coach house



Above: The Three Nuns around 1905 when James Gray was the licensee. It was a regular starting point for the local 'Harriers' cycling club for many years. Bicycle stands can be seen on the left next to the porch and the circular sign on the wall belongs to the Cyclists' Touring Club, it first appeared on the building around 1903. The white board against the wall next to the other entrance is advertising a show. The group of cyclists standing outside the pub are getting ready to cycle off into the countryside





Left: A closer view of The Three Nuns taken around 1906 when the landlord was Annie Gray. Two empty dray wagons with their horses are standing on the forecourt. Presumably barrels of beer have just been delivered their owners have gone inside for refreshments and a rest. Bicycle stands can clearly be seen on the left next to the porch

Right: The Three Nuns around 1910 when Harry Ambler was the licensee. Barrels of beer have just been delivered and the horses have been taken to the stables leaving an empty dray wagon on the forecourt. On the left is a horse and cart with the driver



Left: This photo of the Three Nuns shows a lot of activity on the forecourt. It was taken in 1912 when John Ambler was the licensee. A group of people are standing outside with delivery wagons and horse. The pub had new stables allowing a change of horses if required. Note the wagon on the far left carrying bales of wool and Ellis Bros wagon next to it

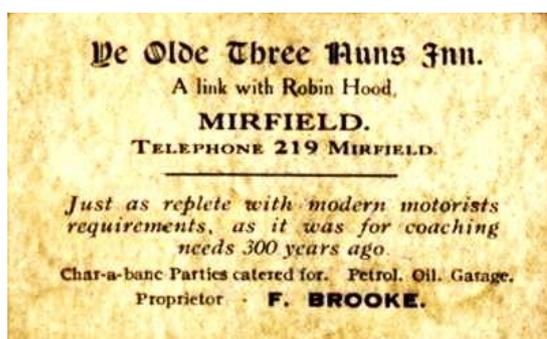
Right: This photo of The Three Nuns shows a classic vintage motorcar which looks like it could be a Bentley parked outside between the two entrances.



Although it is difficult to date this photo it was probably taken sometime in the 1920s when Thomas Brook was the landlord



Above: This photo was taken in about 1928 when Thomas Brook was the landlord of the Three Nuns. For hundreds of years the pub had provided stabling as a coaching inn, but now the motorcar was the new form of transport and being alongside the main Leeds road Thomas had the idea of providing petrol to boost his income. The two tall petrol pumps in front of the pub have glass illuminated globes at the tops indicating to passing motorists that petrol is available. The photos shows a motor car driving along the Leeds Road towards the petrol pump, although with the petrol pumps being in close proximity to the inn they rather destroy the illusion which the sign seeks to create



Left: One of Thomas Brook's old business cards

Ada Brooke took over the running of the pub after her husband Thomas died and in 1932 she sub-let part of the building to Messrs Walsh & Buckton for a motor garage, undertaking sales and repairs.

In the above photo notice that the circular sign on the wall belonging to the Cyclists' Touring Club has been removed. At this time cycling was in decline and the club's few members no longer met at The Three Nuns. Also the flagpole has been taken down, times are a-changing.

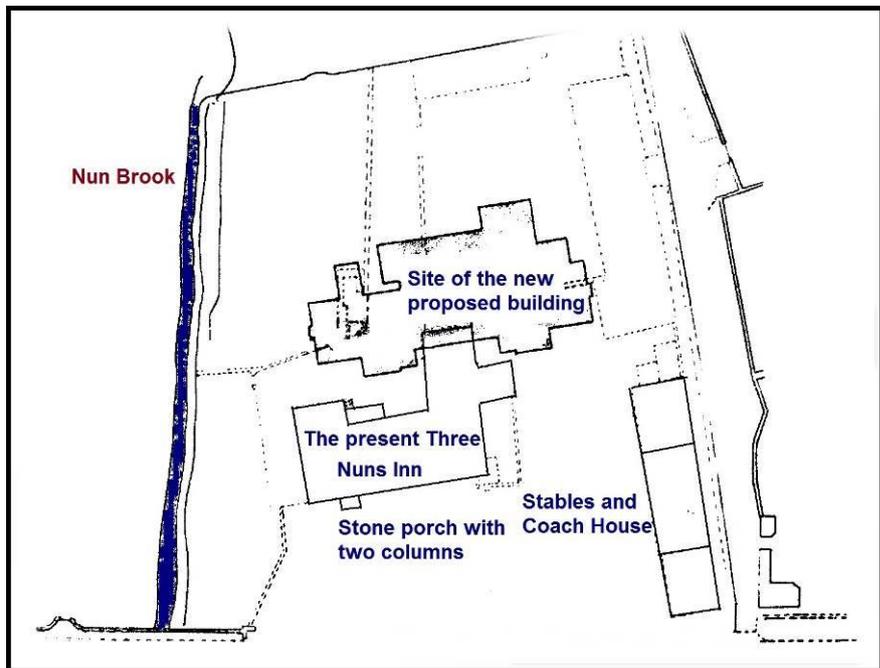
When the Inn was demolished in 1939 Arthur Parker of Ravenscourt, bought the 17th century stone porch that can be seen in all the photographs and said at the time he may erect it in his own grounds. Its whereabouts is now unknown.

Right: A close up of the stone porch with its two columns at The Three Nuns just before it was removed

In December 1938 John Reginald Greenwood took over the Three Nuns and was probably the last landlord before it was demolished in 1939.



Left: Plan of the Three Nuns with the new stables and coach house on the east side. The site of the new proposed building is drawn behind the present Three Nuns Inn



Although many photos were taken of the building from the very late 1800s to its being demolished in 1939, to the writer's knowledge no photos of the interior have survived.



Left: The Three Nuns around 1893 when the landlord was Mary Brewer Hardy. She may be the woman standing in the doorway. This could be one of the earliest photos taken of the Three Nuns and despite the building's historical associations it was demolished in 1939 to make way for a new inn

Right: The new Three Nuns after completion in August 1939 before it was opened for custom

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Frances Stott and Deb Walker for providing me with additional information on the old Three Nuns Pub.



Two Important Events that took place at the old Three Nuns Pub

The old Three Nuns pub had a number of historical connections, it is alleged for instance that Oliver Cromwell stayed at the Three Nuns on 2nd July 1644 en route to fight at the Battle of Marston Moor, west of York. It was also used as the meeting place by the Luddites prior to their gathering in the field behind the Dumb Steeple (known as the Obelisk in 1812) near Cooper Bridge. Some one hundred and fifty Luddites marched from here to Cartwright Mill at Rawfolds near Cleckheaton. They were fearful that they would lose their jobs after the introduction of new cropping machinery. In 1920 a collection of the Luddites' weapons was found in the ceiling consisting of knives and swords.

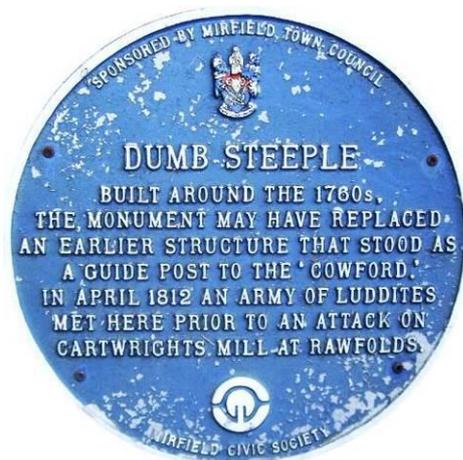
The Dumb Steeple is a stone column topped with a stone shaped ball situated to the side of the busy junction, where the A62 Huddersfield and Liversedge road intersects with the A644 Brighouse and Mirfield road. It originally stood at the centre of a grassy roundabout but was moved to its current location when the traffic grew too heavy in the 1980s when the layout of the road was changed. A detailed account of *The Dumb Steeple, the Croppers' Tale and Trouble at the Mill in West Yorkshire* by Gary Peacock has been published in *TYJ*. Summer 2015.



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

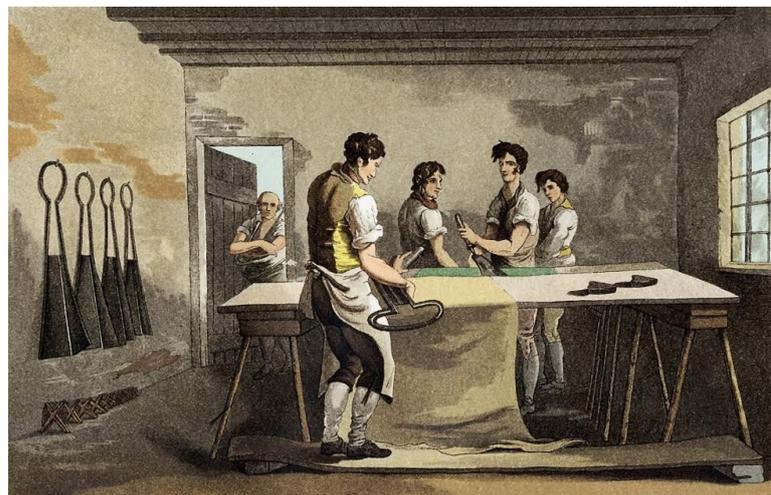


Above: This old photo shows the Dumb Steeple in its original location on a triangular island in the middle of the road before it was moved in the 1980s. A large house known as Obelisk Grove stood in the grounds behind the Dumb Steeple, the windows of which can be seen through the trees in this old photo



Left: A blue plaque on the wall opposite the Dumb Steeple installed by the Mirfield Civic Society to commemorate the meeting of the Luddites

Right: This illustration from George Walker's Costume of Yorkshire of 1814, shows a master cropper at work



Flamborough Railway Seaside Holiday Posters

By Stephen Riley

Flamborough was never part of the rail network and was only accessible from stations on the Hull Scarborough line, also known as the Yorkshire Coast Line. A number of railway posters were produced to promote rail travel to the Yorkshire coast which included North Landing at Flamborough. Before heading north from Filey to Scarborough (see Filey's Railway Seaside Holiday Posters & Development of the Seaside Town in *TYJ Summer 2017*) where the vast majority of railway seaside holiday posters were produced we first travel a short distance north-east from Bridlington to Flamborough. The railway station for Flamborough was originally named Marton, the village of which is situated on the Yorkshire Coast Line from Hull to Scarborough. It was opened on 20th October 1847 by the York and North Midland Railway. However, there were several other railway stations also called Marton, so on the 1st July 1884 the North Eastern Railway renamed it after the village of Flamborough which is just over a mile away to the east. On the 5th January 1970 it closed and in 1976 the station was given Grade II listed building status.

Right: Location map showing the closed Flamborough Railway Station in relation to Flamborough and Bridlington



Left: This black and white photo of Flamborough Railway Station, was taken in December 1965. It is looking north while the gates are closed over the line. When this photo was taken the station was open to passengers and was situated just over a mile from the village of Marton to Flamborough and less than one mile to Sewerby



Right: A closer view of the Flamborough Railway Station shows that it was a substantial building for a minor station

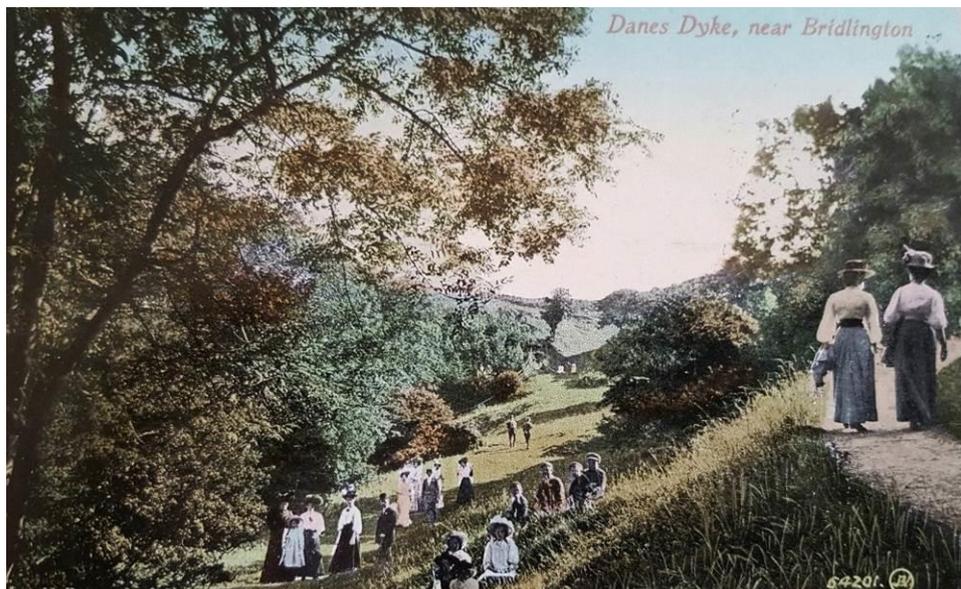
Flamborough Head juts out several miles into the North Sea between Filey to the north and Bridlington just to the south. The name Flamborough is spelt 'Flaneberg' in the Domesday Book, possibly from the Saxon 'Flaen' meaning an arrow or a sword, which the shape of the headland resembles. It consists of sheer distinctive white chalk cliffs as well as coves, sea caves and stacks. Flamborough Head has been designated a Special Area of Conservation and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSIS) for its wonderful scenery, bird life, wild flowers, geological and historic features including Second World War defences. The cliffs provide nesting sites for many thousands of seabirds, and are of international significance for their geology where fossil rhinoceros and elephant bones have been found.



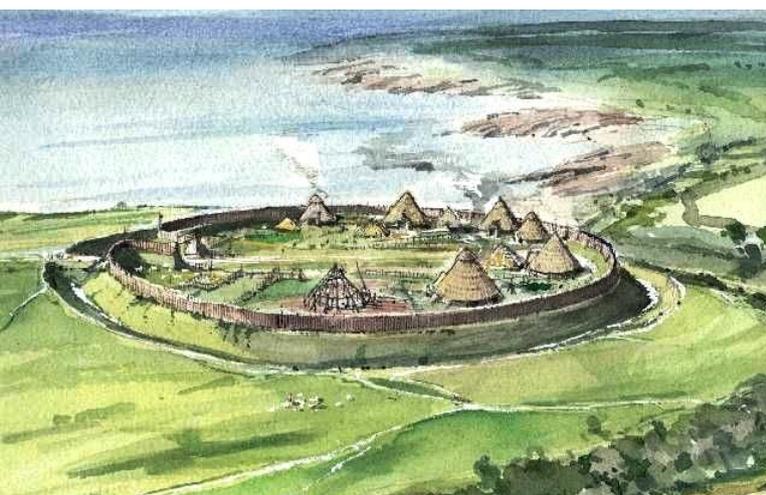
Above: Flamborough Head, white chalk cliffs with coves, sea caves and stacks

Above: Flamborough Head, white chalk cliffs with coves, sea caves and stacks

The headland forms an extension of the Yorkshire Wolds, an upland area which was heavily exploited from the early prehistoric period onwards. It was initially a source of flint to make tools and the area was settled during the Neolithic period followed by Bronze Age and Iron Age. Danes Dyke which is a linear ditch and dyke runs for a distance of two and a half miles across the whole of Flamborough Headland, from Cat Nab on the Bempton Cliffs in the north to Sewerby Rocks in the south enclosing an area of approximately five square miles of headland. It was constructed as a defensive feature and would have posed a formidable barrier, topped with a wooden palisade fence. Despite its name, the dyke is prehistoric in origin constructed in the middle to late Bronze Age although it is probable that it was later used and modified during the Iron Age and even as late as the 9-10th century AD. Bronze Age arrowheads were found during Major General Pitt-Rivers' excavation of the dyke in 1879. Today the bank and ditch are bisected by the B1229 and the B1255 and in 2002 Danes Dyke was designated a Local Nature Reserve.



Right: This 1913 tinted postcard of Danes Dyke showing that it was a popular place to visit



The sheltered landing places seems to have been particularly favoured from the early prehistoric period onwards. Small settlements of Iron Age and Romano-British date show that the headland was seen as a good location and it continued to be occupied to the present day. Throughout these periods boats were launched from both the North and South Landings by fishermen. They also supplemented their diet by collecting seabirds' eggs from the cliffs until the early 1950s.

Left: An artist impression of an Iron Age settlement at Flamborough Head

The collecting of seabirds' eggs on the steep, white, chalk cliffs of Bempton near Flamborough Head became prolific at the turn of the 19th century when egg gatherers worked together in gangs of four. One man who was suspended by a rope climbed down to collect the eggs. When he had finished egg collecting all three men at the top would haul him up. In 1954 the Wild Birds Protection Act was introduced which made the taking of wild birds' eggs illegal ending thousands of years of collecting seabirds' eggs at Flamborough.

Right: A gang of four egg collectors at Bempton Cliffs in the early 19th century. One man is being lowered for a second time down the steep cliff by a rope fastened firmly to a belt round his waist. Three men seated at the top lower him down and the climber swiftly descends the face of the cliff



On Whit Monday, which was the great day of the climbing season, hundreds of people arrived from all parts travelling by the Yorkshire Coast Line from Hull or Scarborough to the Bempton railway station when it was opened in the 1840s. It is the nearest railway station to the Bempton Cliffs, now the RSPB nature reserve which was a popular place to watch the climbers, as it was handy to reach from the railway station by charabanc.

Standing on the cliff tops are two lighthouse towers the oldest dating from 1669 and Flamborough Head Lighthouse built in 1806. The older lighthouse is set further back from the coast and was a Beacon light tower. The four storey octagonal chalk tower is 79 feet high and is the oldest surviving lighthouse in England. It was built in 1674 by Sir John Clayton, who was given permission to build three light towers around the country by King Charles II. Dues were to be collected from ships sailing around the headland. However, Clayton went bankrupt before he could build the other two. The tower was designed for a coal or brushwood fire to be lit on its top but recent restoration work has cast doubt on whether a fire was ever actually lighted. This may be because voluntary dues from passing ships were inadequate and so the light was never lit. The tower has been

put to other uses, notably a marine telegraph station in the 19th century. Today it stands silent a gleaming monument on a golf course. The present lighthouse built in 1806 at a cost of £8,000 became fully automated in early 1996.



Left: Aerial view of Flamborough Head showing the two lighthouses. The one in the foreground was built in 1806 and the one standing in the distance on a golf course was built in 1674

Right: This 1914 pre-World War One photo shows charabancs taking visitors from Thornwick Hotel near North Landing and the Bempton Cliffs to see the Light House and caves





Left: Sir John Clayton Lighthouse built in 1674



Above: Flamborough Head Lighthouse built in 1806

In the village of Flamborough is the parish church of St Oswald's which is essentially a 12th century church that was extensively rebuilt and restored in Victorian times. The chancel arch and font remain from the original Norman church, and the early nave arcading dates from the 13th century. It is the magnificent rood screen and loft, one of only two in Yorkshire, and dating from the 15th century that make this church outstanding. St Oswald is the patron saint of fishermen and the weathervane on the tower is of a fish,

Right: The parish church of St Oswald's in the village of Flamborough

Also near the village centre are the remains of Flamborough Castle, a medieval fortified manor house. Only three chalk walls can be seen standing that form the remains of a Pele style tower that dates to 1326.



Left: The Pele style tower of Flamborough Castle, a medieval fortified manor house

These were some of the tourist attractions for the Victorian and Edwardian visitor to Flamborough. The Yorkshire Coast railway line from Hull to Scarborough was interconnected with several junctions inland making the journey from West Yorkshire to the East Yorkshire coast more accessible to visit.

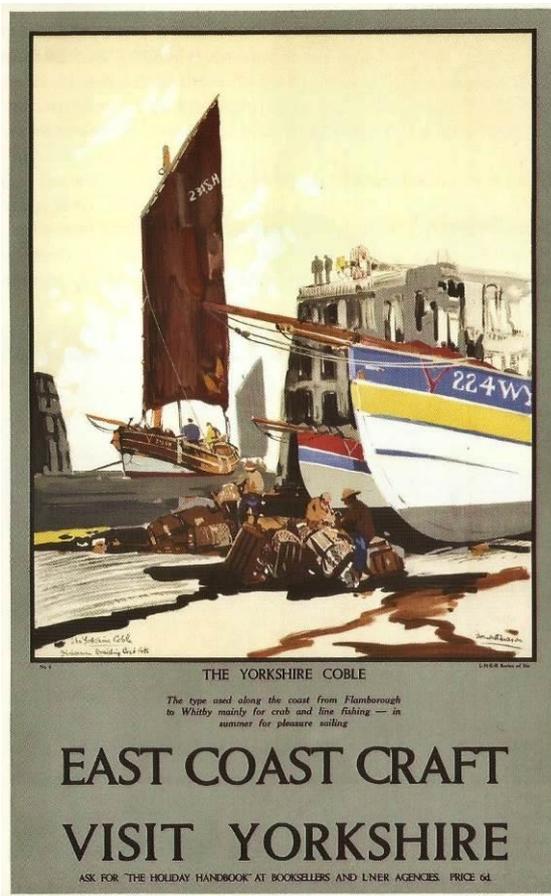


Above: Map of Flamborough Head highlighting important areas

Legend					
	YWT Reserve		Archaeology		Lighthouse & Shipping
	RSPB Reserve		Farming & Wildlife		Marine Wildlife
			Fishing		Migration
			Geology & Geomorphology		Seabirds
			History		Storyboard Display

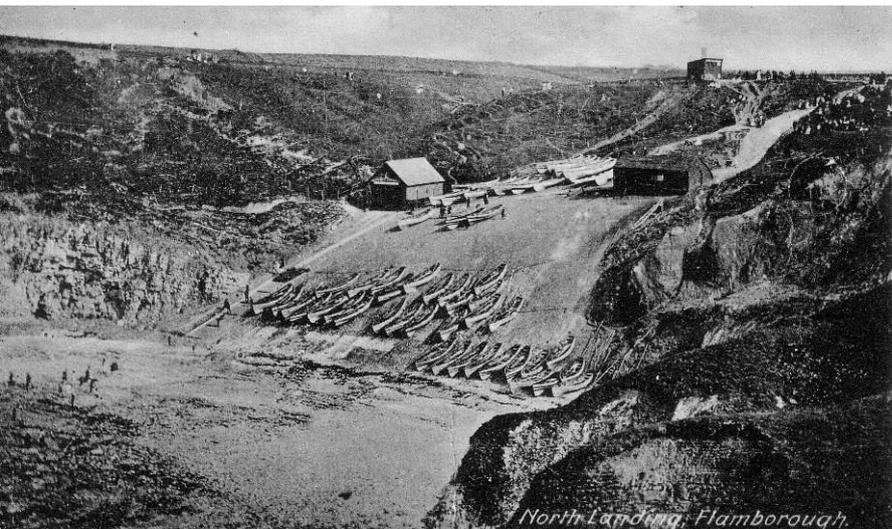
The North Landing Railway Posters

Three railway posters were produced that show views of the small bay called North Landing at Flamborough. This has always been a popular area for tourists. The beach is only about a quarter of a mile in length, backed by white chalk cliffs and is made up of sand and pebbles. On the beach are usually three or four boats moored up belonging to the local fishermen. These colourful wooden boats are commonly known as Yorkshire cobs. Generations of fishing families relied on them for fishing. In the 1920s, when diesel engines were introduced, cobs took on a new appearance. The sides were heightened as oars were no longer needed and the width and length were increased providing more room for up to four fishermen, extra nets and pots for crabs. Flamborough Head has also a more romantic side, being used by smugglers who would bring in tea, brandy, silk and cotton from their ships, moored not far from the cove, under the guise of a dead body in a coffin at night. Now-a-days the fishermen use cobs to take visitors around the North Landing headlands to view the magnificent cliffs from the sea, wonderful arches, coves, stacks and the caves used by smugglers.

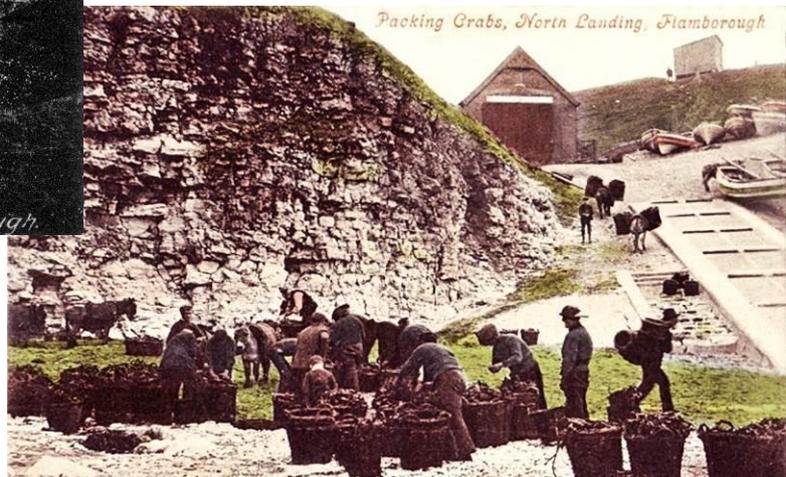


The first railway poster on the left, to be produced of North Landing is from the 'East Coast Craft' series and features Yorkshire cobs. This is the boat traditionally found here and all the way up the coast to Whitby. The artist is Frank Henry Mason (1875-1965) and the poster is dated to the 1930s.

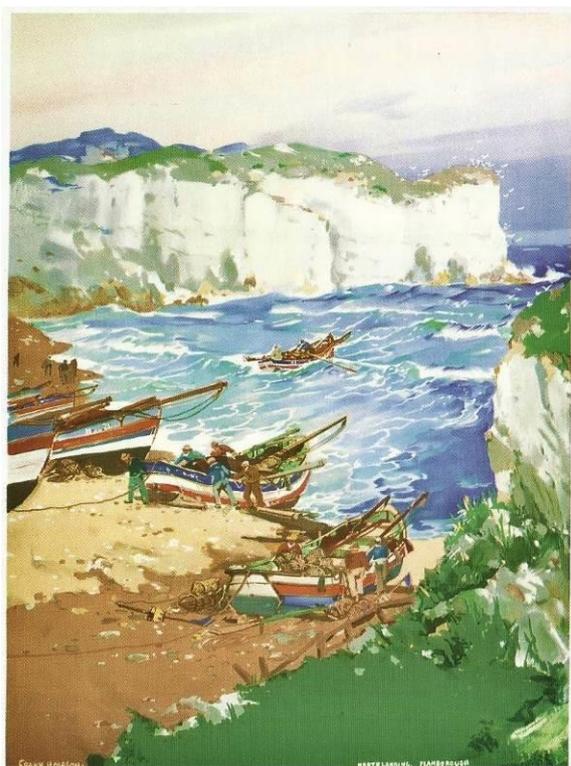
On the beach are two moored cobsles with fisherman examining crab pots. Two other cobsles in full sail appear to be going out to sea between the high white cliffs. Looking down from the cliff tops on the right of the poster are a group of visitors taking in with interest the entire scene below.



Left: This early 1900s photo shows many cobsles on the sloping beach at North Landing before diesel engines were introduced. The RNLB boat house with a slipway can be seen on the left



Right: This tinted old photo shows donkeys carrying fish in full baskets up the steep incline to the top. The RNLB boat house can be seen at the top of the photo with donkeys walking next to the slipway



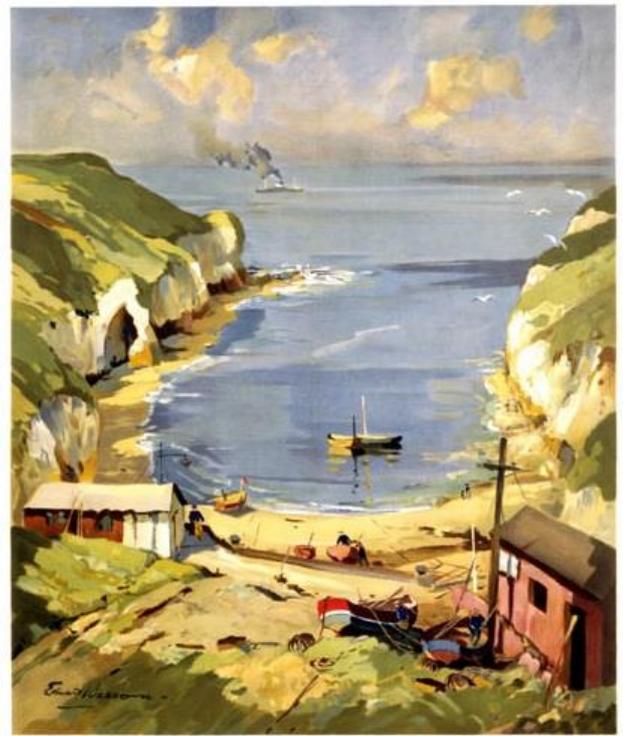
The next poster on the left is by Frank Mason (1875-1965) and is a British Railways Yorkshire Coast poster. It shows boats being launched during a North Sea storm, with wave after wave rolling landwards. During the Great Gale of 10th February 1871 some 20 ships were driven ashore at North Landing with the loss of more than 70 lives. This disaster led the RNLB to establish the brick boathouse shown in Edward Wesson's painting of the 1960s (see page 24). The sheer white chalk cliffs with birds flying around the headland complete this poster which dates to 1949.

YORKSHIRE COAST
 BRITISH RAILWAYS SEE ENGLAND BY RAIL



Above: This 1930s postcard of North Landing is taken from a similar spot from where Frank Mason sat producing his seascape. The difference being the view in the postcard shows North Landing when the tide is at its lowest, allowing visitors to walk further out around the edge of the sea and to visit the many caves. Visitors can also be seen boating on the calm sea and on the sloping beach are some Yorkshire cobsles

The British Railways poster on the right is probably the best known of North Landing. It is one of Edward Wesson's (1910-1984) loveliest paintings dated from the 1960s. It shows the complete small bay when the tide is out with spectacular chalk cliffs covered with grassland at the top, to the rocky shore and sandy beaches. What is surprising is that very few people are in the painting. This was a time when the railways were having to compete with cheap package holidays and more car travel. In the bottom right hand corner of the poster can be seen the Royal National Lifeboat Institutions boathouse. Lifeboats were first placed at Flamborough in November 1871, in response to the Great Gale of 10th February 1871. Two Stations were established, one at the North Landing known as number one station and one at the South Landing was the number two station. The idea behind this was that one lifeboat could be launched whatever the conditions; if weather or sea prevented the launch of the lifeboat from the North Landing, the South Landing boat would be able to get away, and vice-versa.



NORTH LANDING, FLAMBOROUGH
YORKSHIRE
 BRITISH RAILWAYS SEE BRITAIN BY TRAIN

The village of Flamborough is in the middle and is the same distance from both stations. The crews were formed from the local fishermen. Both boathouses were constructed of red brick with grey slate roofs. In 1890 a slipway was constructed for the North Landing boathouse and in 1934 the boathouse was extended and the slipway was modified for the new motor lifeboat. However in 1993 the RNLI made the decision to demolish and re-build a brand new boathouse on the original site at South Landing to accommodate the new Atlantic lifeboat. The original North Landing station was closed but still remains standing today. The South Landing site is operational to the present day manned with a local crew from the village.

Left: A tinted post card of North Landing in the 1890s showing the boathouse on the right with many cobbles on the sloping beach before diesel engines were introduced



Right: A view looking up the slipway to the old North Landing boathouse





Left: A side view of the old North Landing boathouse constructed in red bricks with a grey slate roof

Right: The Mary Frederick lifeboat was in service at North Landing from 1887 until 1904. The only lifeboat earlier than her was called 'Gertrude' and operated between the years of 1871 and 1887



Left: The Elizabeth and Albina Whitley was the first motor lifeboat at North Landing, Flamborough. She was a 35 feet 6 inches Liverpool class lifeboat and the boathouse had been modified to accommodate her, a new electric winch built inside and a turntable placed outside at the top of an extended slipway. The Elizabeth and Albina Whitley served at Flamborough until 1948 when she was replaced by 'Howard D', a similar Liverpool class lifeboat

Right: Launching the 'Friendly Forester' down the slipway at North Landing on 30th May 1981



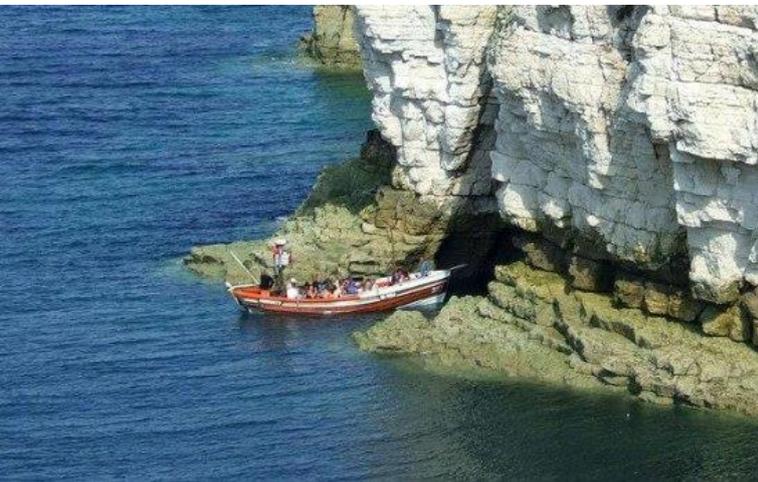
There are numerous caves around Flamborough Headland all have names and some are large enough for a boat at high tide to enter. Probably the most well-known cave is Robin Lythe's cave at North Landing which is the largest cave. When the tide is out it can be reached by walking through the entrance in the cliff. It has about a 50 feet high domed roof and gives magnificent views out to sea. The cave is named after a legendary smuggler called Robin Lyth who made use of the cave as a place of concealment for himself and his contraband.



Left: Inside Robin Lythe's cave at North Landing Flamborough. The entrance is dark and there are large sea water pools on the ground. It has a magnificent view outwards, the sea roaring, and lashing, foaming, and breaking in spray on the rock beneath.



Right: At Thornwick Bay named after Thor the Danish God of Thunder, Flamborough Head, are three large smugglers caves. Church Cave and Thorn Wick Cave are the largest and when the tide is at its lowest, it is possible to walk out and explore these caves



Left: A local coble taking visitors from the beach at North Landing into a smugglers cave. Then it goes around North Landing to see the birds nesting

Right: Another reminder of the smuggling days at North Landing is a carved wooden sculpture that has been placed at the top of the steps going down to the beach





PAUL JONES' FIGHT OFF SCARBOROUGH 23rd SEPTEMBER 1779

YORKSHIRE COAST BY L.N.E.R

PARTICULARS OF TRAIN SERVICES AND CHEAP FARES FROM L.N.E.R STATIONS, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

The above railway post is an unusual and historic one in that it depicts a strange event off the Yorkshire Coast. The sub-caption says 'Paul Jones fight off Scarborough 23rd September 1779', but it is actually John Paul Jones' battle off Flamborough Head. The battle involved a continental squadron of the US navy who were battling the UK for independence.

The artist of this LNER poster is Henry Manson and it dates to the 1920s. It shows the height of the battle, where the ship *Bonnehomme Richard* engaged *HMS Serapis*. The *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough* were escorting a larger convoy of merchant ships, when Jones' small squadron of his flagship plus frigates *Alliance* and *Pallas*, decided to make trouble. The *Countess of Scarborough* took charge of the merchant fleet, whilst *Serapis* took on Jones' squadron. The two ships had a broadside duel which took the lives of most of both crews and immense damage was caused to both ships. Jones' flagship was eventually holed below the waterline and started taking on water. The British captain, Richard Pearson, called for Jones' surrender but he refused to give in. The *Alliance* joined the *Bonnehomme Richard* in attacking *HMS Serapis*, the fighting came to a climax, leading to Pearson's final surrender. As Jones' flagship was sinking, he took charge of the damaged *Serapis* and sailed away victorious.

Around Flamborough Head are a number of ships' wrecks that still survive, in some damaged form, and can be seen at low tide. After the Great Gale of 10th February 1871 the photo on the right was taken showing parts of boats that were washed on shore at North Landing. It is a reminder of how treacherous the North Sea around Flamborough Head can be.





Another casualty of the sea was the SS Rosa, an Admiralty ship that went down at North Landing in 1930. A large lump of rusting metal trapped in the rocks that is the boiler of SS Rosa can still be seen today along with riveted steel plates scattered about on the rocks in the area. The Filey Brigg diving club have discovered many skeleton remains of shipwrecks in the sea off North Landing at Flamborough.

Left: SS Rosa washed up on the rocks at the North Landing in 1930



Right: The skeleton remains of a ship wreck in the sea off North Landing

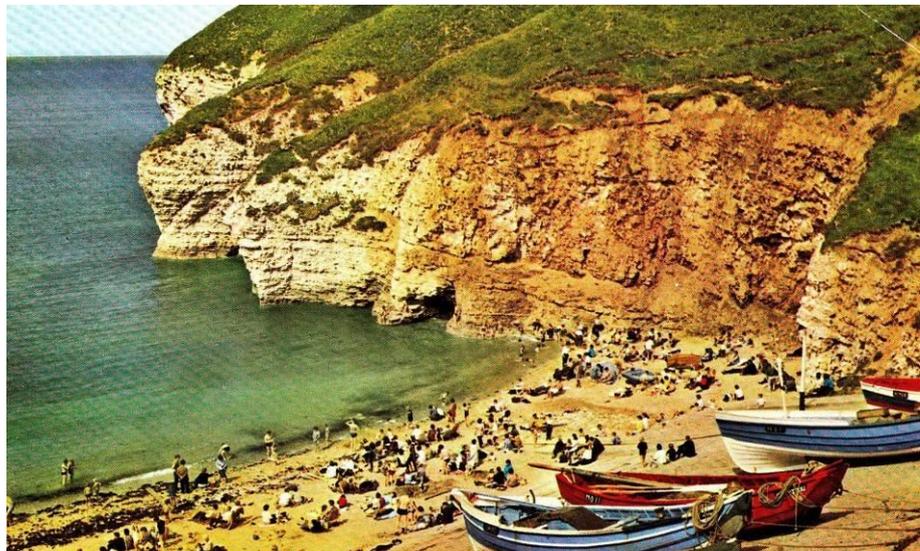
However, the most famous and elusive wreck the American *Bonhomme Richard* ship which sank on 23 September 1779 off Flamborough Head has yet to be found.

Today North Landing is a peaceful place and most visitors come by car but there are buses running from Bridlington to Flamborough. The nearest railway station is Bempton about 3 miles away (see map on page 22). People can sit on the beach taking in the sea air but few people really do and it is a place to explore. There are various walks from North Landing around the Heritage Coast and along the cliffs of Flamborough Head.



Above: A view of North Landing when the tide is out with the beach sparsely populated with visitors. Fishing boats still launch from here and in the middle of the photo you can see two boats (or cobbles) tied up on the sands. To the left of them is a tractor that dragged them up onto the beach. Another three boats can be seen further up the beach by the slipway. Photo by Angel Crutch

Right: This 1980s postcard shows how popular North Landing was with families compared to the above photo. These days have gone and times have changed.

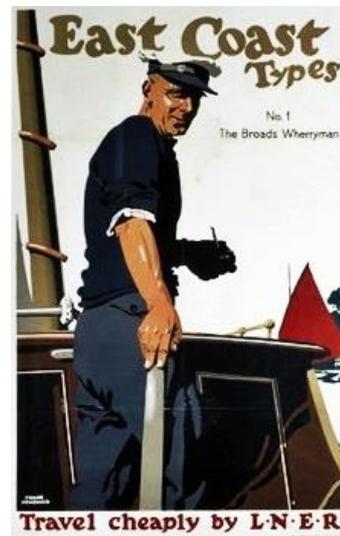
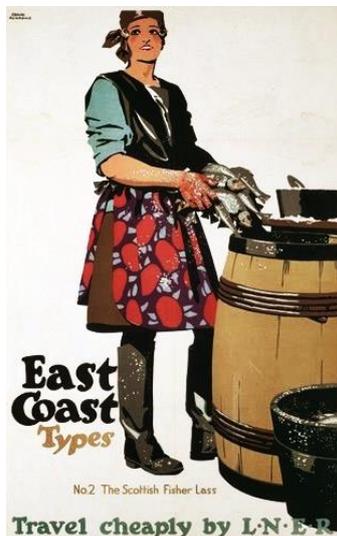


Railway Posters of the 'East Coast Types'

In 1931 the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) produced a set of six posters promoting rail travel to the East Coast. They were designed by Frank Newbould (1887-1951) titled *East Coast Types* and illustrated the different types of people frequently encountered during holidays at the East Coast. Frank Newbould studied at Bradford College of Art and joined the War Office in 1942. He designed posters for the LNER, Great Western Railway (GWR), Orient Line and Belgian Railways.

The first poster in this series is 'The Broads Wherryman' on the far right. It depicts a sailor on board a sailing wherry on the Norfolk Broads.

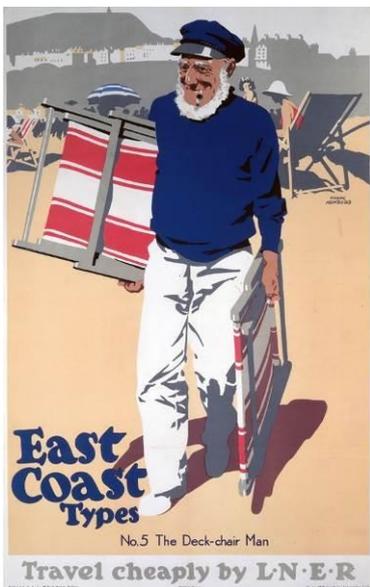
The second one on the right is 'The Scottish Fisher Lass'. It illustrates a woman picking fish out of a barrel.



The third poster on the left is the most relevant one to North Landing, Flamborough. It is titled 'The Lobsterman' and depicts a fisherman wearing an orange-red top wading ashore from a wooden boat which is also coloured orange-red to match his dress. This type of boat is commonly known as a Yorkshire coble and they are traditionally found at North Landing and all the way up the coast to Whitby. He is carrying a lobster pot containing crabs and lobsters and he looks somewhat pleased with himself.

The accompanying text reads 'East Coast Types No 3, The Lobsterman. Travel cheaply by LNER'.

Poster four on the right is 'The Scottish Fisherwife' which illustrates a woman with a basket on her back. She appears to be standing near a port with a ship in the background.



Poster no 5 on the far left is 'The Deck-Chair Man'. It depicts a jolly sailor man with a white beard, carrying two deckchairs across a sandy beach.

The last poster in this East Coast Types series no 6 on the left is 'The Donkey Boy'. It shows a smiling boy standing in front of a donkey on a white background.

Norton Conyers A “Jane Eyre” Connection?

By Margaret Mills



“I looked up and surveyed the front of the mansion. It was three stories high, of proportions not vast, though considerable: a gentleman’s manor-house, not a nobleman’s seat: battlements round the top gave it a picturesque look”. (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 11).

“We mounted the first staircase, passed up the gallery, proceeded to the third storey: the low, black door, opened by Mr. Rochester’s master-key, admitted us to the tapestried room, with its great bed and pictorial cabinet.

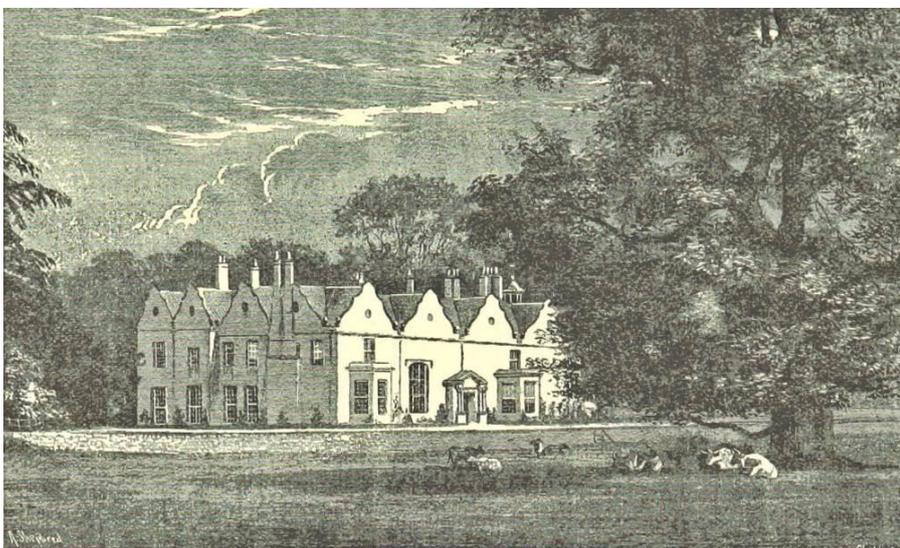
“You know this place, Mason”, said our guide, “she bit and stabbed you here”. (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 26).

Norton Conyers is situated some 4 miles from Ripon, and about ¾ mile from the village of Wath. The Grade II* listed, Norton Conyers may have influenced Charlotte Brontë when she created the character of the insane Mrs. Bertha Rochester (née Mason) in her classic novel, *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847. Generations of readers have held their breath as the ‘madwoman in the attic’ wreaks havoc on those who cross her path.

Between April and July 1839, Charlotte was working as a temporary governess in the employ of the wealthy Sidgwick family of Stonegappe, Lothersdale. Although only employed for some 3 months as a temporary substitute for the permanent governess, Miss Hoby, Charlotte was unhappy in the post and longed to leave. She found the children unruly and undisciplined, and felt that Mrs. Sidgwick treated her with disdain, but it is likely that there were faults on both sides, as Mrs. Sidgwick was later to complain that it was impossible to please Charlotte, and, on occasions, the governess had refused to get up in the morning. Mrs. Sidgwick obviously didn’t believe that anything ailed Charlotte, other than laziness!

It was during this period of employment that Charlotte was instructed to accompany the Sidgwick parents and their two young children, Mathilda and John, aged 7 and 4 years, on a family visit to Norton Conyers. It seems likely that this visit was welcomed by Charlotte as a respite from the confines of the schoolroom and her trials

in attempting to impart learning to her two disruptive pupils. When the visit took place, she may have heard of the legend of “Mad Mary”, a previous incumbent of the house who was confined to an attic room and closely guarded for her own safety, and that of others.



Left: This engraving is of about 1890 published in ‘The Literary Shrines of Yorkshire: the literary pilgrim in the dales’ 1892 by Stuart, J. A. Erskine. It shows Norton Conyers at the time of Charlotte’s visit

There seems to be no record as to why ‘Mad Mary’ was confined, although in *Jane Eyre*, the unfortunate Bertha had succumbed to hereditary madness after her marriage, and much is made of her history of promiscuous behaviour, all of these problems being previously unknown to her husband, Edward Rochester. To a budding writer and someone endowed with as much curiosity as Charlotte, the story of ‘Mad Mary’ would have been committed to memory, with the distinct possibility that it would be used in her writings, and it is often claimed that she used the features of Norton Conyers for the fictional Thornfield Hall, the manor house belonging to Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*.



Above: Front view of Norton Conyers

During the family’s visit, Charlotte may have also gathered information about the earlier history of the house, but she seems to have left no written record of what she was told, or her own impressions. Anglo-Saxon in origin but mainly late medieval, the manor house was owned by the Conyers family before 1399, passing into the ownership of the Norton family in about 1400. In 1569, the estate was confiscated because of the Norton family’s involvement in the Rising of the North, and the owner, Richard Norton, suffered the death penalty because of his perceived treachery. The estate was subsequently sold to the Musgrave family and when Richard Graham (who was afterwards created a Baronet) decided to marry one of the Musgrave daughters in 1624, he bought Norton Conyers as the couple’s home (there would later be disagreements with his father-in-law over the amount paid for the house). It would remain in the ownership of the Graham family, apart from a twenty-year break from 1862 to 1882. The current owners of the property are Sir James Graham and his wife, Lady Halina, the 11th generation of the Graham family to occupy the house.

In common with most manor houses, Norton Conyers has known many changes over the years and it is a mix of historic styles, with additions made in the Stuart and Georgian periods. The Dutch gables on its frontage probably date from the late 17th century and since inheriting the house from his father in 1982, Sir James has discovered just how much expensive conservation work has been required to prevent the house from falling into ruin, and to conserve it for future generations of visitors to admire and cherish. The word ‘challenging’ does not begin to describe the upheaval the Grahams have suffered over a period of 30-plus years. Major restoration work has needed to be done, in particular to combat a major infestation of death-watch beetle in the wooden floorboards discovered in 2005. The work has necessitated applying for grants from the Heritage Conservation Trust and visitors can view the many photographs which were taken during the restoration work, charting its progress and amply demonstrating how much care and attention has been given to revealing the layers of history that make up this wonderful home.



Readers of *Jane Eyre* who visit the house will be quick to notice the features mentioned in the book – the display of portraits in the hall, the wide Oak staircase, the battlemented roof and, of course, the attic. A ‘secret staircase’, hidden behind a concealed door in the wood panelling on the landing leads to the attic, and the staircase was discovered in late 2004, having been blocked up many years ago, possibly as long ago as the 1880s. It is believed that the staircase was originally constructed in the late 17th century and was for the use of the servants in going to and from their working areas to their sleeping accommodation. It is certainly a utilitarian, narrow, gloomy flight of stairs, unlikely to have been built for the use of generations of the family. Although the secret door on the landing can be seen, neither the attic nor the concealed staircase can admit visitors, as they are not currently in a safe state of repair for public access, although it is hoped that restoration work will be done on them in due course. In 2015, Sir James and Lady Graham won a much-deserved Restoration Award for the work done so far, which was presented by the Historic Houses Association and Sotheby’s.

Left: The narrow, gloomy flight of stairs leading to the attic



Above: The legend of the “Mad Woman’s Room” hidden in the attic mentioned by Charlotte Brontë. The attic is reached by the above secret staircase

Other features revealed by restoration work so far include painted Tudor boards, 18th century plaster ceilings and examples of highly decorative wallpaper dating from about the 1760s. This wallpaper had been covered up behind plasterboard for centuries, allowing it to be finally revealed in a beautifully preserved condition, with the freshness of the colours still evident. Visitors can view the Dining Room, the Hall, the Parlour, the Landing (with the ‘secret’ door), the ‘Best’ Bedroom, King James’s Room (James II and his second wife, Mary of Modena, visited the house in 1679) and the Library, which readers of *Jane Eyre* will not want to miss. In the book, Mr. Rochester designates the library as the schoolroom of his ward, Adele Varens, and here Jane Eyre, Adele’s governess, found.... “a cabinet piano, quite new and of superior tone; also an easel for painting and a pair of globes” (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 11). Visitors today will find that the library has, indeed, been refurnished with these items, just as Charlotte Brontë described them in her novel. Apart from architectural and other decorative features, visitors will also be able to admire fine furniture, family portraits, fine art and other family treasures which are on display.



Left: Sir James and Lady Graham in the Hall



Right: Paintings and family portraits on the wall in the hall

Any visit to the house would not be complete without a walk around the garden. Five minutes' walk from the house and laid out in 18th century style, there is an Orangery which is accessible to visitors and a small ornamental pond, in addition to herbaceous borders, flower beds and parkland. The magical winter snowdrop display in the grounds is not to be missed. Fruit, vegetables and flowers are also available for sale. The garden is suitable for disabled access, although the main gravelled garden path has a slight incline.



Above: The gardens, right the small ornamental pond

One final speculation: although we have no record of Charlotte's opinion of Norton Conyers, it's interesting that the last name 'Graham' was used by her younger sister, Anne, as the married name of her heroine, Helen Graham, in her acclaimed book, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, published in 1848, just a year after *Jane Eyre*. We know that the three Brontë sisters discussed the plots and characters of their novels with each other, and perhaps Anne decided that if Charlotte had no desire to use the name in her book, she would take it instead! We may never know for certain, but we can speculate!

For further information about Norton Conyers, 2018 times of opening, group visit enquiries, etc. contact The Visits Secretary, Norton Conyers, Wath, near Ripon, Yorks. HG4 5EQ.

Telephone: 01765 640333.

Website: nortonconyers.org.uk Email: info@nortonconyers.org.uk

Kirklees Priory, the Nuns, Robin Hood and the Gatehouse near Brighouse West Yorkshire

By Sarah Harrison and Jeremy Clark

The site of Kirklees Priory is situated between Brighouse and Mirfield and south-west of the village of Hartshead in West Yorkshire. The location of the priory is in private grounds of the Kirklees Estate on elevated ground alongside Nun Brook, a stream that runs into the River Calder to the south-west.



Left: Google Map showing the location of Kirklees Priory in relation to other important sites. Miller & Carter, Mirfield was formerly The Three Nuns

Kirklees Priory

Kirklees Priory was a small nunnery founded in the reign of Henry II, probably around 1155 by Reinor de Fleming, the manor Lord of Wath-upon-Dearne. The small nunnery was of the strict Cistercian rule and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and St. James. The White Ladies so named after the colour of their habits which were probably home-made of undyed wool or linen with a black head-dress.

How the Nuns Lived and Their Income



The everyday life of the nuns was rigorous, attending daily Offices, beginning the day at 2 am for Matins. The meals were frugal and all but the sick or infirm shared the indoor duties as well as working in the fields. Spinning and weaving was a regular occupation along with baking and brewing ale. They did however employ labourers for building work and more difficult hard work. On occasions the Prioress accompanied by the Chaplain visited the villagers to advise over matters concerning land ownership. One of these disputes took place in 1314 when Prioress Alice de Screvyn was before the court with Richard, Chaplain of Hartshead, having accused him of taking her cattle. Alice was in court once again in 1327 accused of a debt by Thomas de Tothill. A complicated dispute arose in about 1373 over 18 acres of land in Hartshead involving four chaplains and two witnesses from the village. Elizabeth de Staynton was the prioress at this time.

Another responsibility of the priory was to take in and look after widows and unmarried women with occasional orphaned girls. In the case of Elizabeth de Staynton (1332-1376?) and her sister Alice who were they daughters of John de Staynton, were sent to Kirklees Priory by Hugh de Toothill of Brighouse, after he married Joan the former wife of John de Staynton. Joan had four daughters by John and with her consent Hugh married off the two oldest, Isabel and Joan to his sons, and the youngest, Elizabeth and Alice, he placed in the order of Kirklees Priory.

His intentions were for his two sons to enjoy the entire inheritance that had been left to the four sisters. However, the sisters' guardian William de Notton recognised the poverty of the priory and that the girls' vocation had been made before they were capable of distinguishing between a spiritual and a secular life. Also, that it had not been endorsed by Hugh, through devotion or charity but in order to annul a deed. This was brought to the attention of Elizabeth and Alice but being under the age of thirteen they confided in William and subsequently in the presence of Hugh, requested him not to revoke their vocation, if Hugh would grant them certain rent for their support, out of the tenements which had been a bequest to the girls. An agreement was made whereby Elizabeth and Alice remained at Kirklees and benefited from an annual payment completed in a document dated 20 December 1344 when Elizabeth was twelve.

The larger part of the priory's income depended on gifts and bequests of money and land, usually made in return for a promise of regular prayers for the benefactor and his family. Probably the greatest gift was made at the end of the 14th century by Sir John Burgh, the Patron of Mirfield. On his death he bequeathed to the Priory the Rectory of Mirfield, the right to appoint clergy with Greater Tithes and 50 acres of land. The nuns thereafter were able to live mainly on the income of the Rectors of Mirfield until the dissolution of the priory in 1539.

Disobedient Nuns

As the order became rich, in the first half of the 14th century the conduct and discipline of some of the nuns was scandalous and brought severe criticism from the Archbishop of York, William Greenfield. The three young nuns most involved were Alice le Raggid, Elizabeth Hopton, and Joan Heton. Alice le Raggid a Hopton girl was led astray several times by the temptations of the flesh, running away and then wanting to return. In 1303 Archbishop Greenfield wrote to the nunnery bidding them take her back. In 1313 a similar order was made for Elizabeth de Hopton. However, it became public rumour that Elizabeth de Hopton, Alice le Raggid and Joan de Heton were admitting both clergy and laymen to the secret places of the nunnery from which a suspicion of sin and great scandal arises.

In 1315 these rumours had reached the Archbishop who wrote to the Prioress ordering that no nun was to admit or talk with any cleric or layman except in a public place or in the presence of the Prioress. One of the problems was that many of the nuns were the unwanted daughters of the elite with no real vocation for the strict Cistercian life. The sisters were often admonished by visiting bishops for indulging in worldly ways, keeping dogs, trimming their habits up and for inviting men into the priory.

The Dissolution of Kirklees Priory

Kirklees Priory was dissolved by King Henry VIII on 24th November 1539, it was surrendered by the Prioress who at the time was Janet Kyppes (or Joan Kyppex) aged 50. Joan Kyppes was only the Prioress for little more than a year before surrendering the Priory. It was Cecily Topcliff the former Prioress, who when Kirklees Priory was listed in the dissolution Act of 1536, obtained a licence exempting the Priory from suppression. This was on 13th May 1538, when Cecily Topcliff is said to be 60 years old. The Priory continued as before, for worship and hospitality and consisted of nuns that had been there on 4th February 1536, before the passing of the Act.

Left: Portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger. He was King of England from 21 April 1509 until 28 January 1547



It would seem that Cecily Topcliff died sometime after May 1538 then in the same year Joan Kyppes was made Prioress. Eighteen months later in 1539, after the Second Act of Dissolution, Joan Kyppes surrendered the priory. At this time only 7 nuns are recorded remaining at the priory including the Prioress, which is probably not more than half the usual number. From the Royal Commissioners survey of the Priory for 1536 the choir of the church had 22 stalls for the Nuns indicating that there was a falling off in numbers at some time prior to the dissolution. The Nuns were all given pensions and the annual income of the priory at that time was £29 18s. 9d.

This was not a great deal of money in which to keep 7 sisters and the cost of repairs to all the buildings. Pensions credited to the nuns were for Joan Kyppes the Prioress aged 50 and Joan Leventhorpe aged 60, a senior nun 40s each, Isabella Hopton aged 50, Agnes Brook aged 50, Isabella Rhodes aged 40, Katherine Grice aged 25 and Isabella Saltynstall aged 24 33s 4d each. Although Isabella Rhodes had borne a child she nevertheless received a pension.

There is no record of Cecily Topcliff the former Prioress being credited with a pension, this confirms that she must have died sometime after May 1538 or she would have been included in the pension records. It is always assumed that because Cecily Topcliff was the Prioress when Kirklees Priory was listed in the dissolution Act of 1536 and obtained a licence exempting the Priory from suppression that she must have been living at the time the priory was dissolved on 24th November 1539, this is simply not the case. Likewise in the case of Elizabeth de Staynton she is said to be the first Prioresses in about 1155. However, Elizabeth and her sister Alice were entered as novices into Kirklees Priory in 1344 when she was 12 years old so Elizabeth de Staynton could not have been the first Prioress.

After the dissolution of the Priory it is said that Joan Kyppes (1487-1561) the last Prioress retired together with four of her sisters to a house subsequently called Paper Hall in Mirfield, which was on Flash Lane and is now demolished. She would have been 75-76 years old when she was buried in Mirfield Church on the 5th February 1561. But which of her four sisters went to live with her at Paper Hall is open to speculation.

Right: Paper Hall, Mirfield in 1910



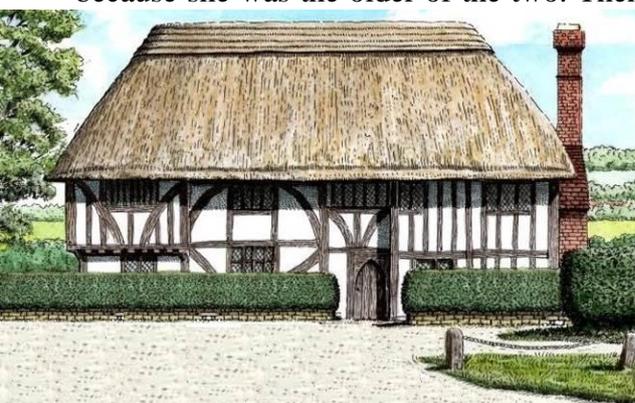
Agnes Broke (1496-1564) had died by 1564 and is presumed to be buried in the Parish Church of Huddersfield. Katherine Grice (1514-1552) probably died before 1553. Isabella Hopton (1486-1564) had died by 1564. Jane Leventhorpe (1479-1543?) very probably died soon after the dissolution of Kirklees Priory. She was 60 years old in 1536 so she probably died well before 1544. Isabella Rhodes (1496-1564) appears to have died by 1564. Isabella Saltynstall (1512-1584) seems to have gone to live in Halifax soon after the dissolution of Kirklees Priory; she may have died around 1584.

Tradition claims that the four sisters that went to live at Paper Hall in Mirfield with Joan Kyppes, were Agnes Brook, Isabella Hopton, Isabella Rhodes and Isabella Saltynstall. Joan Leverthorpe and Katherine Grice may have sought refuge at the guesthouse near Nunbrook.

There is no evidence that these events took place. It is however, reasonable to surmise that Joan Kyppes retired at Paper Hall in Mirfield because she was buried in St. Mary's Church Mirfield on the 5th February 1561. She may have taken four sisters with her but this does not mean that they lived the rest of their lives at Paper Hall in Mirfield. Joan Leverthorpe and Katherine Grice could have turned the guesthouse into a tavern and run it together at Nunbrook for only a few years before one of them died. This was probably Joan Leverthorpe, because she was the older of the two. Then it seems likely that two of the other sisters came to join Katherine

Grice and ran the tavern as three sisters, until the last one died around 1560. It would have been frequented by locals and travellers and become accepted and recognised for its hospitality.

Left: This drawing of a 14th century thatched half-timber framed house probably resembles the original Kirklees Priory Guesthouse. See pages 6-17 for a detailed description of the Three Nuns



There are many theories and ideas about the nuns after the dissolution, particularly the three nuns who theoretically sought refuge at the guesthouse near Nunbrook and then ran it as a tavern. Some of these theories are unacceptable and some plausible but the real truth about the three nuns will probably never be known.

After the dissolution of Kirklees Priory

In 1539 the priory passed to King Henry VIII who had a survey made of the all the buildings a few years before the dissolution. According to his dissolution surveyors the priory buildings were small and poorly built, many windows were unglazed, including those in the infirmary and in the prioress's chamber.



There were few chimneys, even the kitchen did not have one, and probably the smoke would escape through a hole in the roof. In some of the rooms charcoal fires would be used in braziers. The chaplain appears to have had a chimney in his room and there was a fireplace in the parlour where guests were received. From the summary it can be concluded that Kirklees Priory was small, financially poor and apparently of little importance and with such relatively small possessions it is not surprising that not much care was taken of the written documents concerning it. This is the cause of all the controversy and confusion which does not help when the scanty written records that are available are misinterpreted and alternative theories proposed. In fact, for the legendary Robin Hood connection with Kirklees Priory, which over shadows and clouds the history of the Priory, the reality is that the insignificant small Kirklees Priory would receive very little attention. The supposed grave of Robin Hood lies on rising ground enclosed with iron railings on a low stone wall about half mile from the gatehouse, from where he is said to have shot his last arrow from his deathbed through a window to select his burial place. Hopefully Robin Hood still lies undisturbed in his last resting place where his arrow fell.

Description of some of the buildings recorded in 1536 by the Royal Commissioners of the Priory

The Church 80 feet by 21 feet with a high roof covered with slate, glass windows containing 50 feet of glass with a high altar, 2 altars in the choir, 2 beneath and 22 stalls in the choir for the nuns.

The Cloister south of the church 40 feet square breadth 7 feet, 3 parts covered with slate, chambers over the other parts, without any glass.

The chapter house on the east of the cloister 16 feet square, under the dorter (dormitory) with 3 little windows 6 feet of glass.

The dorter (dormitory) over the chapter house 40 feet long, 18 feet broad, covered with slates.

A parlour under the dorter (dormitory) 18 feet square with a chimney, 2 bay windows.

Five little chambers over the west end of the cloister for the Ladies and others to work in, covered with slate.

The hall at the west end of the church 30 feet by 21 feet, without glass covered in slate.

A parlour at the upper end of the hall 24 feet by 16 feet, covered with slate, no glass.

The Prioress Chamber at the north side of the nether end of the church 24 feet by 16 feet timber walls covered with slate, no glass.

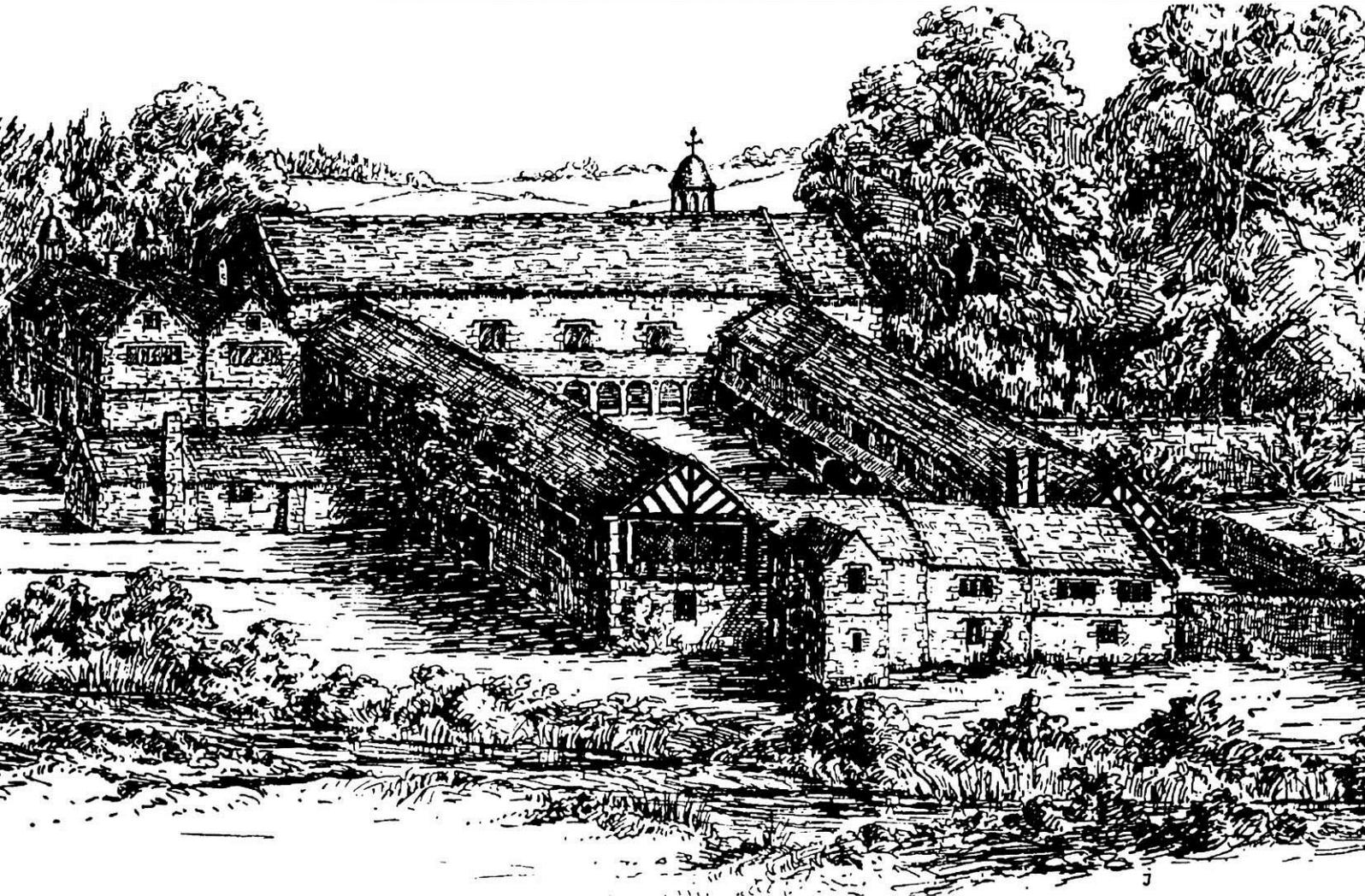
A low chamber called the fermery (Infirmary) at the nether end of the fraytour (refectory) 18 feet square, old stone walls, a chimney and no glass.

The Gyle house (Fermenting House for ale) at the southern part of the cloister, 20 feet square.

The brew house and bake house at the southern part of the inner court, 36 feet by 20 feet, stone walls and covered with slates.

An almshouse which is recorded as 'wtoute the gate' (the gate to the outside) at the time of the suppression. (Probably the site of the present gatehouse which is away from the Priory buildings).

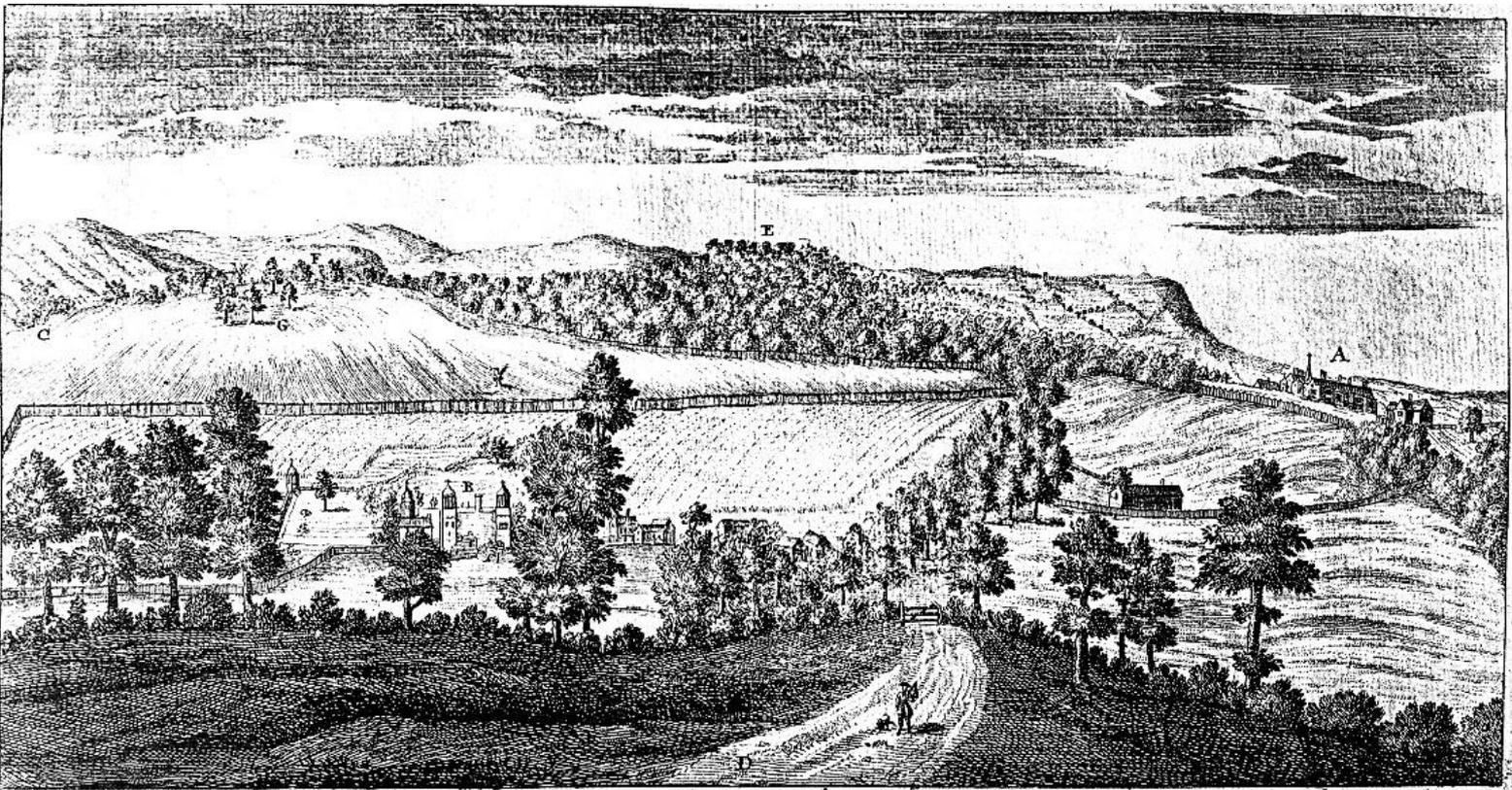
Right: The site of Kirklees Priory, the only remains left standing are left the Gatehouse and right Home Farm buildings



Above: Kirklees Priory as it may have looked before the Dissolution based on records and archaeological excavations that took place in 1902-5. There are some differences from the plans of the buildings located at the west end of the church on the left of the illustrations. Drawn by J Holbech 1916

An Assessment of Kirklees Priory

The earliest illustration of Kirklees Priory and grounds was published in William Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum*, 1776 Vol. II plate 99. It is titled 'The Prospect of Kirkleys Abby where Robin Hood Died. . .' and is a copy of Dr. Nathaniel Johnston's (who was the Armytage's family doctor), original drawing in about 1665. Considering that the new hall, the current Kirklees Hall a listed Grade I* building, was developed by the Armytages in about 1567 and considerably altered and enlarged in 1610 when the Jacobean north facing range was constructed, using most of the stones from the priory, very little if anything would be left standing of the priory buildings to base a drawing on, so it can only be a conjectural reconstruction.



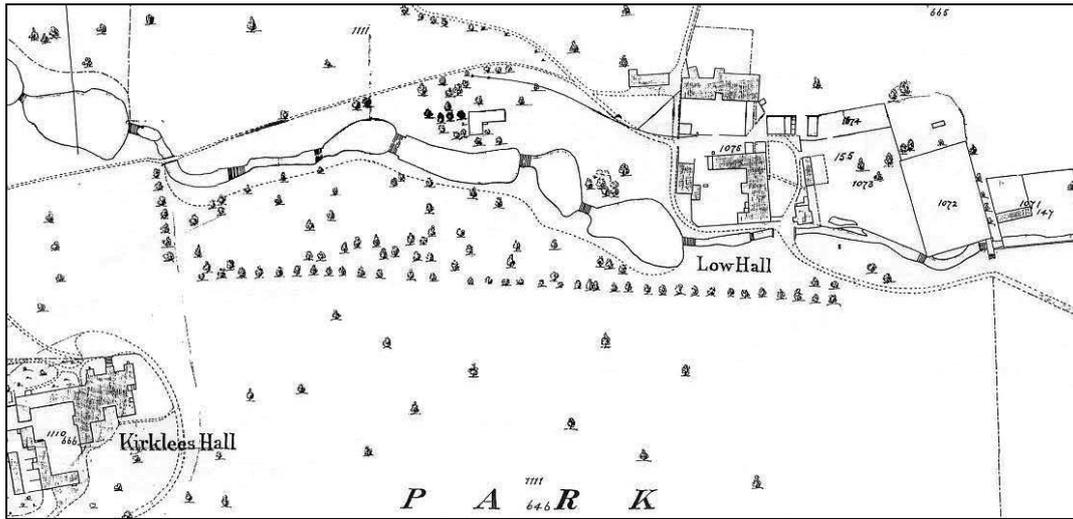
The Prospect of Kirklees Abbey, where Robin Hood dyed, from the Footway leading to Heartishead Church, at a quarter of a mile distance. A. The New Hall. B. The Gatehouse of the Nunnery. C. The Trees among which Robin Hood was buried. D. The way up the Hill where this was drawn. E. Bradley Wood. F. Almondbury hill. G. Castle Field.
 Drawn by D^r Johnston among his Yorkshire Antiquities. P. 54. of the Drawings. E. Kitchin Sculp.

Above: The reproduction drawing that appears in William Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* 1776. According to Dr. Johnston, the Prospect was drawn 'from the Footway leading to Heartishead Church, at a quarter of a mile distance'. This view is from the north, depicting the buildings of Home Farm, the Malthouse and Kirklees Hall in the distance. Area B is identified as 'The Gatehouse' with corner towers that bears no resemblance to the present gatehouse, this cannot be correct. In reality, by this date little if anything of the priory survived. A in the drawing is referred to as 'The New Hall' this is Kirklees Hall situated on the nearby hillside, a noticeably large building that was built with the stones from the priory. The subject of the drawing is the legend of Robin Hood's death and his grave is marked C in the drawing situated amongst the trees. The current walled and railed enclosure containing the medieval grave slab fragment is thought to be early 18th century in date. This drawing demonstrates the long association of Kirklees with the Robin Hood legend.

Three months after the dissolution of the Priory the site was leased to James Rokeby in February 1540. In 1544 the property was granted to John Tasburgh and Nicholas Savile. By this time Henry VIII's demolitions had stripped the lead from the roofs of the buildings and removed all the window lead and melted it down. Roofing slates and church furniture was also sought after and removed. This would have rendered most of the buildings uninhabitable. After passing through various hands Robert Pylkyngton conveyed the whole manor to the merchant and clothier John Armytage of Farnley Tyas in 1565. The mention of manor or mansion house would indicate that a manor house had been built on the site by this time.

After the priory was abandoned it was plundered for usable building materials. It seem likely that part of the church, because of its superior quality building materials was transformed into a hall. This was the earliest hall on the site and later becoming known as Low Hall. A geophysical survey carried out in 2007 indicated that the church and east wing were demolished for building stone quite thoroughly with the south and west wings retained as Low Hall. Probably other parts of the priory buildings were demolished to make way for the hall. Robert Pilkington and his wife Alice Savile may have built Low Hall in about 1550 and made it their residence until 1565. When John Armytage bought the estate in 1565 Low Hall would have also provided a temporary home for the Armytage family until Kirklees Hall was built at the end of the 16th century after which it became the Armytage family principal residence of the estate.

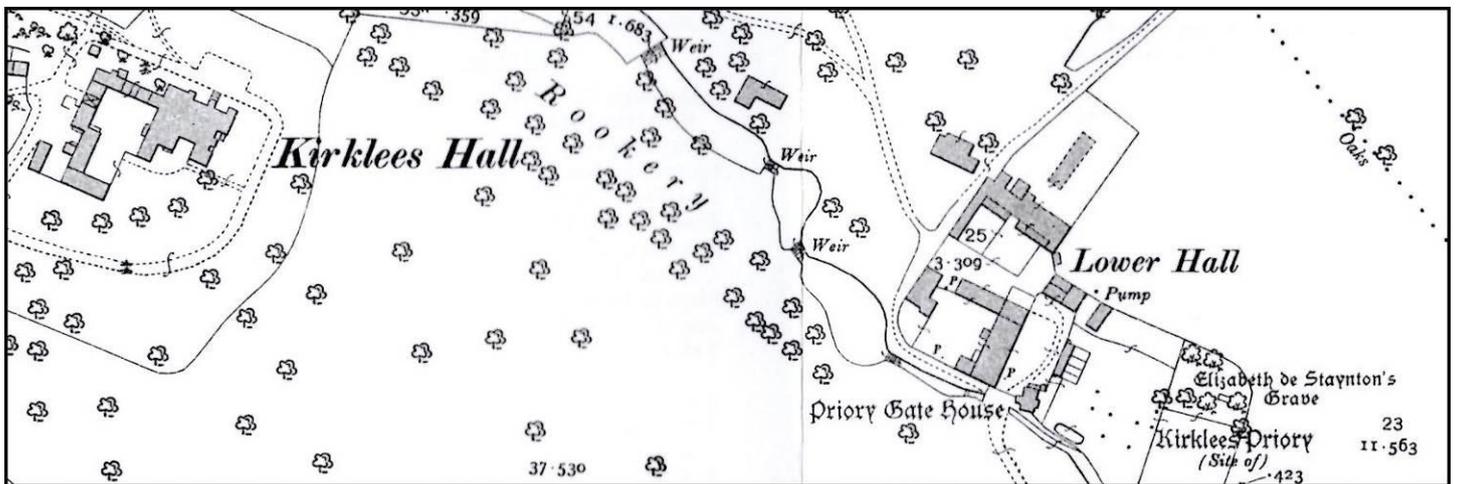
There is some ambiguity as to the exact location of Low Hall. An old map marks the site to the south-west of the priory near to the farm building and on an OS map dated 1894 Lower Hall (Low Hall) is marked next to the farm buildings indicating that the farm is Low Hall. However, the farm was not Low Hall and was subsequently re-named Home Farm



Left: This old map shows Kirklees Hall on the left and the words Low Hall south of the farm buildings

Below: OS map dated 1894 shows Lower Hall (Low Hall) marked next to the farm buildings indicating that the farm is Low Hall.

The site of Kirklees Priory is south-west of Lower Hall and also marked is Elizabeth de Staynton's Grave and the Gatehouse



When Low Hall was made redundant the site appears to have suffered more extensive stone robbing during extensions, repairs and rebuilds of Kirklees Hall and the nearby farm buildings. This complex farm became Home Farm which includes a number of 16th and 17th century buildings. It is not clear when Low Hall was demolished, but it was perhaps in the 17th century. Masons marks that are claimed to be that of the priory have been found on local buildings. These buildings include the Three Nuns Inn, when it was first built in stone in about 1610 (see pages 6-17), many of the Home Farm buildings the Gatehouse and Kirklees Hall. The dry-stone wall surrounding the site, also most likely used stone from the priory.

The only remains left standing today is the late 16th century Gatehouse, a listed Grad II* building adjoining Nun Brook and the nearby 16th and early 17th century Home Farm buildings. To the north-east of the priory site situated in the coppice are the 'Nuns' Graves' one of which is that of Elizabeth de Staynton.

The Nuns' Graves

The so-called 'Nuns' Graves' are situated in the grounds of the new Priory Gardens House amongst trees and bushes. A rectangular enclosure surrounded by iron railings with four corner octagonal pyramid-tapered stone columns with pointed caps was constructed for the graves slabs in the late 1800s by George Armytage. It contains two medieval grave slabs set on later stone plinths, with fragments of medieval grave slabs forming the paving around them. Today most of the iron railings have been removed but the four corner octagonal tapered stone columns with pointed caps remain in place.



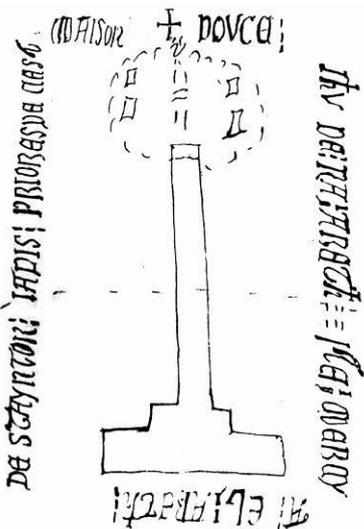
Left: This old photo of the Nuns' Graves illustrates the iron railings and the four corner stone columns constructed in the late 1800s by George Armytage. The grave slab of Elizabeth de Staynton can be seen in the foreground mounted on a raised stone plinth along with another unknown medieval grave slab

The exact location where these medieval grave slabs were found is not known. According to George Armytage, 1906 Excavations at Kirklees Priory, Yorkshire, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquarians*, 21, 175-186, the grave slab of Elizabeth de Staynton was found in digging among the ruins of the priory in about 1706 together with other medieval grave slabs fragments. This would have been during stone robbing for extensions and repairs to Kirklees Hall and the nearby farm buildings. A further two fragments belonging to different medieval grave slabs were uncovered on the north side of the church in 1863 when work to install hen runs in the priory field revealed building foundations. A plan was drawn of the observed wall lines but unfortunately the position of the grave slabs was not included in the drawing.

Right: The grave slab of Elizabeth de Staynton mounted on a raised stone plinth. The coping slabs of the small wall that encloses it has an inscription which reads 'To Elizabeth de Stainton: late: Prioress: of this: House: Sweet: Jesus: of: Nazareth: Grant: mercy:'



Photo by Lorraine Stock



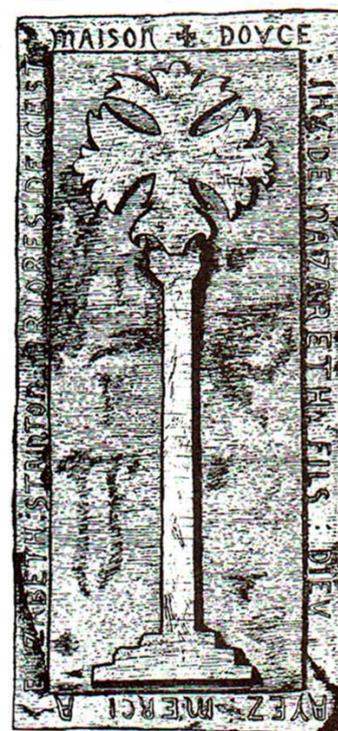
Elizabeth de Staynton's grave slab was engraved by Thomas Hearne in the second volume of Leland's *Itinerary* 1712. It is only a rough sketch and shows a rectangular slab bordered by the inscription 'DOUCE JHU DE NAZARETH FITES MERCY A ELIZABETH DE STAYNTON JADIS PRIORES DE CEST MAISON'. It appears to have had quite an elaborate cross head.

Left: The rough sketch of Elizabeth de Staynton grave slab engraved by Thomas Hearne and reproduced here from S. J. Chadwick 1902 'Kirklees Priory' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 16, 319-368

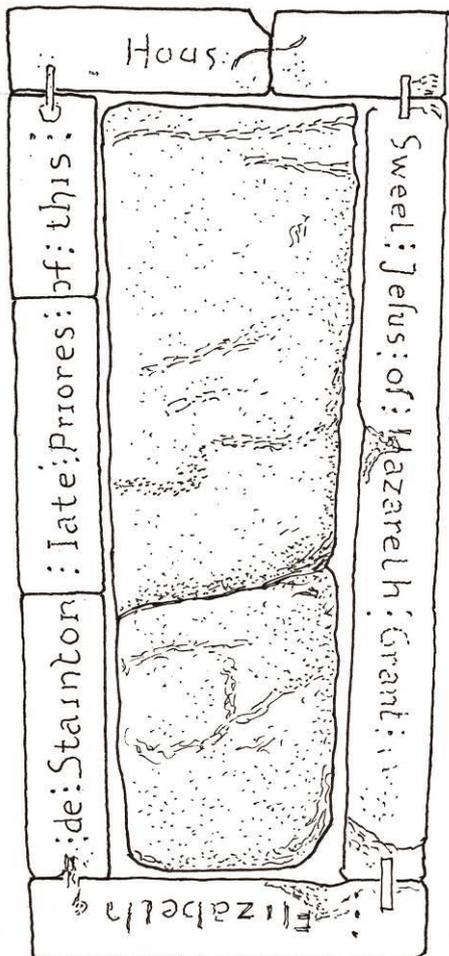
A more detailed drawn of Elizabeth de Staynton's grave slab by Ethel W Walker is given in Camden's *Britannia* 1789. Walker's illustration shows a rectangular slab bordered by the inscription in Norman-French - 'DOUCE : JHV : DE: NAZARETH : FUS : DIEV: AYEZ: MERCI : A : ELIZABETH : STAYNTON : PRIORES DE CEST MAISON' which is slightly different from Thomas Hearne's engraving. The English translation is given on the coping slabs of the small wall that encloses it which by the style of the lettering suggests a late 18th or possibly early 19th century date.

The illustration shows the grave slab in some detail. It has a step base with a plain shaft and a clustered terminals cross head. Over the years it has suffered significantly. The grave slab is now broken, excessively decayed and weather worn, there is no trace of the inscription and the cross is completely worn away. Although no date is given on the grave slab, Elizabeth de Staynton is believed to have been prioress sometime in the 14th century.

Right: The grave slab of Elizabeth de Staynton drawn by Ethel W Walker from Camden's Britannia 1789.



Left: A recent drawing of Elizabeth de Staynton's grave slab by Peter Ryder. It illustrates the extensive decay suffered over the years and the coping slabs with the inscription which reads 'To Elizabeth de Stainton: late: Prioress: of this: House: Sweet: Jesus: of: Nazareth: Grant: mercy:'

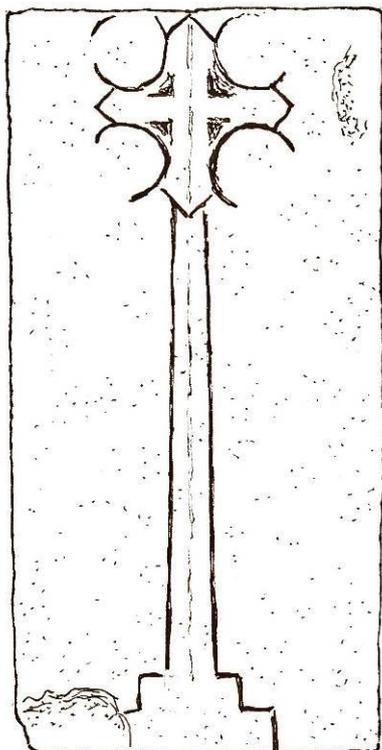


Right: Photo of the second medieval grave slab. It is weather worn and damaged in the left-hand corner. It looks to have been trimmed and probably re-cut. Part of another medieval grave slab with an inscription can be seen on the left

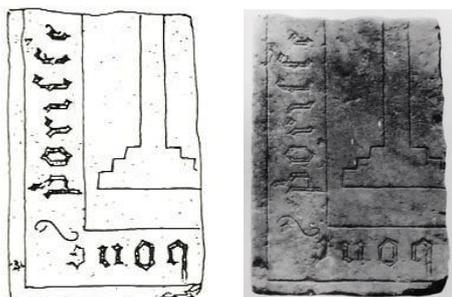


The second medieval grave slab is also set on a raised stone plinth immediately to the east of Elizabeth de Staynton's grave slab. It appears to have a two-stepped base with a plan shaft and a bracelet cross head. It is a common medieval design, but it looks to have been trimmed and probably re-cut. The top of the decorated cross is too close to the edge of the stone and the treatment of a single deeply incised line for each 'bracelet' is unusual for genuine medieval work. The edges of the stone show parallel tooling of the 18th or early 19th century. It is also weather worn and damaged in the left-hand corner and probably dates to the 14th century.

Left: A drawing of the medieval grave slab illustrating the design, showing the cross too close to the edge of the slab, drawing by Peter Ryder

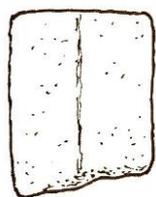
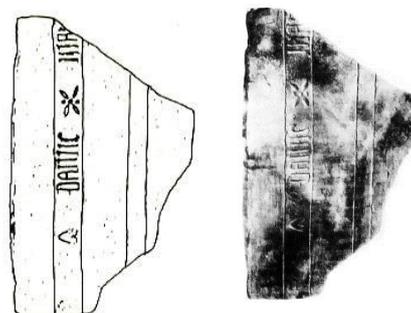


Fragments of further medieval grave slabs form the paving around the two medieval grave slabs set on stone plinths. Two of these were uncovered on the north side of the church in 1863 but they cannot be identified. These medieval grave stone fragments were cleaned and photographed in about 1901.



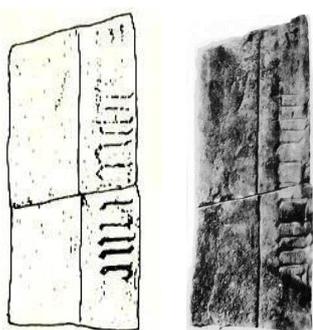
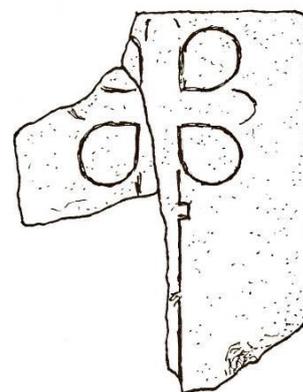
Left: At the south-east corner of the enclosure is the lower part of a grave slab which probably represents the left corner of a slab. It has a three-stepped base and cross shaft with a border containing a fragmentary inscription which reads '**bone poriffe . . .**'? This grave slab fragment has a late medieval date.

Right: Situated vertical alongside the raised second medieval grave slab is part of another grave slab whose position can be seen on the left in the above photo. This larger piece of slab shows what appears to be a cross shaft and a band, but not really a border with part of an inscription. Between the lettering of the words which are not easy to read are two elaborate symbols one is in the form of a cross and the other is a heart. This grave slab probably dates to the late medieval.



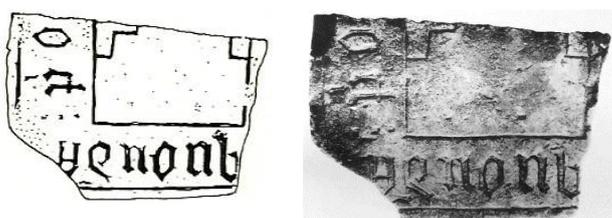
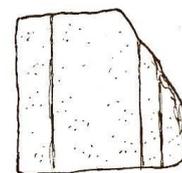
Left: This small fragment belonging to a medieval grave slab is situated vertical and directly above the larger piece of slab which can be just seen in the above photo at the top left. It only has one incised line that could represent part of a cross shaft.

Right: These two broken pieces of a grave slab are situated on the north-west side of the enclosure. The pieces join together which probably represents the upper right hand corner of the slab. It has most of the bracelet cross head with rings between the arms and the shaft appears to have a cross bar. This grave slab probably dates to the late 14th century.



Left: These two adjacent fragments are situated at the north-east corner of the enclosure. They form the edge of a grave slab that has a border with part of an inscription in black letters '**ppicietur**' is recognisable. These grave slab fragments date to the late 15th or early 16th century.

Right: This fragment is situated at west end of enclosure, it forms part of an incised cross shaft and a border or panel. This grave slab probably dates to the late medieval.



Left: This fragment is part of the base of a grave slab showing a cross shaft with a step base and part of a border with a black letter inscription '**quounda...**' It is probably late medieval but cannot be located now.

Drawings by Peter Ryder, courtesy of Dr A McClain the photos are reproduced here from S J Chadwick 1902 see page 41

These medieval grave slabs probably account for some of the Kirklees Prioresses. The following is an incomplete list of the Prioresses but these are the names of the ones that are known:

Sybil	occurs	1240
Alice le Mousters	occurs	1305
Margaret de Clayworth	elected	28 September 1306
Alice de Screvyn	elected	10 January 1307-8
Margaret de Seyvill	elected	10 May 1350-1361

Elizabeth de Staynton was twelve years old in 1344 when she entered into Kirklees Priory as a novice. However she did eventually become prioress sometime between 1364 and 1376. Elizabeth de Staynton was certainly prioress in about 1373, being mentioned in a charter granting licence to acquire more land for the priory.

Alice de Mounteney	occurs	1403
Cecilia Hyk	occurs	1486-1491
Joan Stansfeld	elected	4 June? 1491-1499
Margaret Tarlton	elected	24 April 1499 on the death of Joan Stansfeld.
Margaret Fletcher		1505-27
Cecilia Topcliffe		1527-1538

On 13 May 1538 Cecilia Topcliffe obtained a licence exempting the Priory from suppression and it is believed that she was 60 years old. According to some authors Cecilia Topcliffe was still 60 years old when the priory was dissolved on 24 November 1539, this is some eighteen months later. The truth is that she died sometime in 1538 in the same year Joan Kyppes was made prioress.

Joan Kyppes		1538-39
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On 24 November 1539 Joan Kyppes or Kippax the name varies, surrendered the priory, at the time only 7 nuns are recorded remaining at the priory including the Prioress. They were all credited with a pension. Joan Kyppes was the widow of Adam Stocks and after his death in about 1517 she entered into Kirklees Priory under her own name when she was about 30 years old. Presumably there were no children from their marriage. She remained at Kirklees Priory for 20 or so years. Joan Kyppes died in February 1561 and her burial is entered in the parish register. She was then probably about 72 years old and by the standards of the time this was an old age to attain. In the old St Mary' Church, Mirfield there was an inscription around an arch on the north side of the chancel that read: '*Dame Joan Keppas, late nun of Kirklees, buried February ye 5th day 1562*'

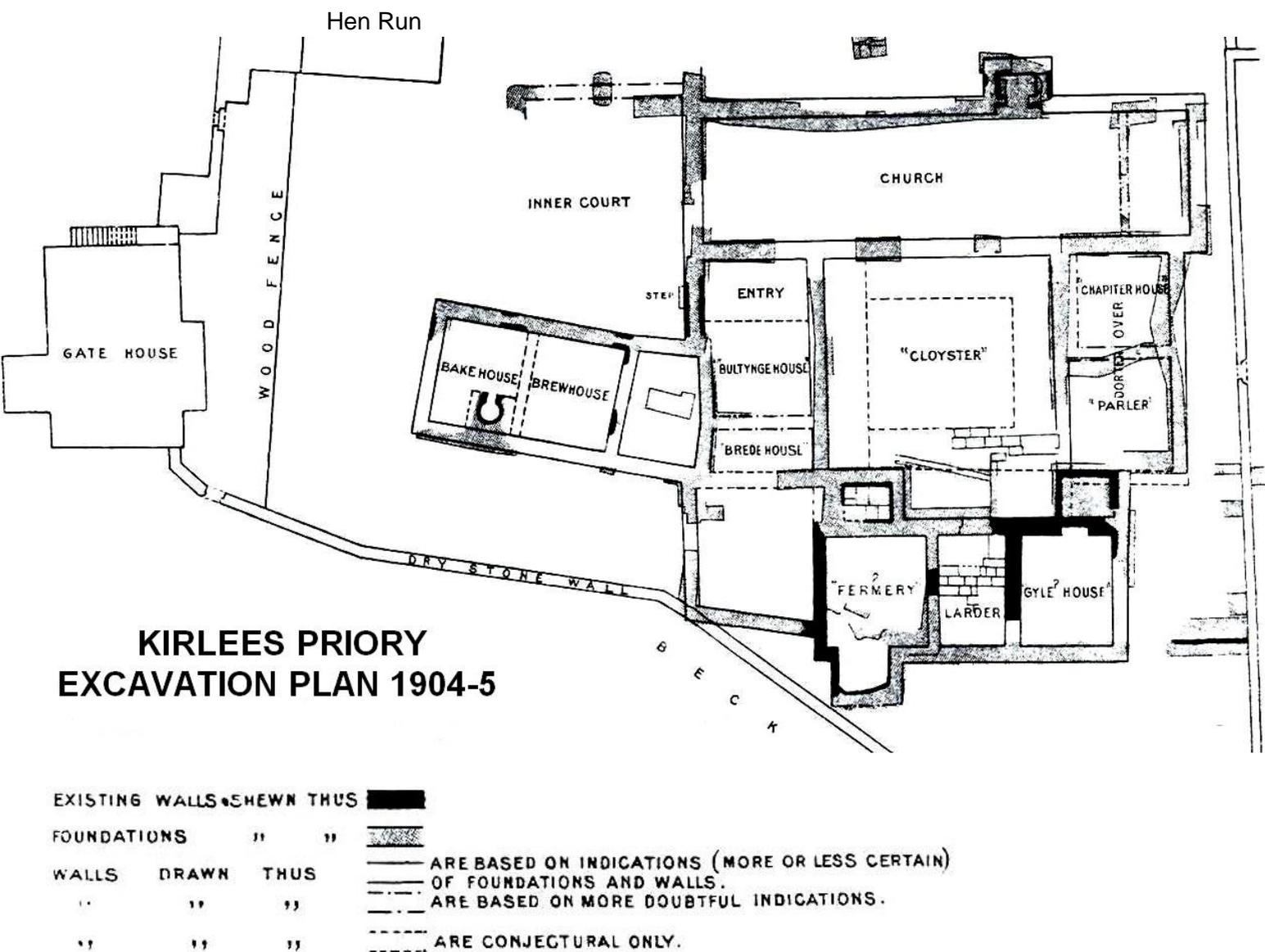
Archaeological Investigations of Kirklees Priory

In the early 20th century the sixth baronet, Sir George Armytage and the owner of Kirklees Estate was interested in archaeology and history. He conducted a number of excavations during the last century which resulted in the making of several plans of the priory, each varying slightly from one another. He also conducted a smaller scale excavation at Castle Hill where he uncovered remains of a rough stone walling within the rampart, concluding that the site was a Roman fortification.

The uncertainty of the exact layout of the priory led to investigations using geophysical survey techniques carried out by the University of Bradford in 2007. This project resulted in a plan of Kirklees Priory that differed in measurements from the plans made previously but included all the same buildings.

The constant heavy stone robbing of the priory over many years led to little standing remains surviving by the time George Armytage began excavating the site. The first remains of the priory were uncovered in 1863 when work to install hen runs on the western side of the priory field revealed building foundations. A plan was drawn of only the visible foundation wall lines, this was the first plan to be made of the site. George Armytage and John Bilson later carried out a more systematic archaeological excavation of the site between 1902 and 1905. They uncovered, but not fully excavated, wall lines resulting in a second plan of the priory's inner court, using the 1536 Royal Commissioner's written survey of the priory as a guide to interpretation.

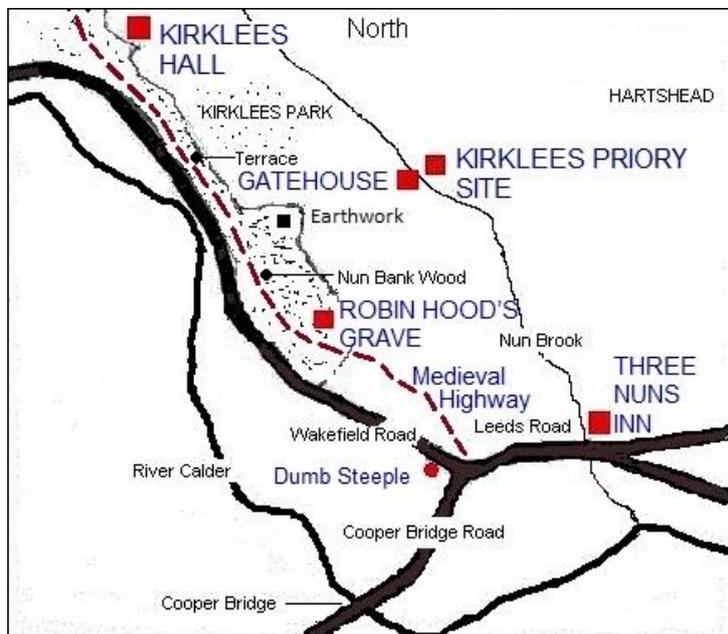
These 1904-5 excavations revealed that the remains of the church were heavily robbed of stonework and did not have transepts or any marked division between nave and chancel. The projection on the northern side may represent the remains of a porch or bell tower. A plan of Sir George's excavations was made by John Bilson showing that the cloister was attached to the south side of the church with domestic buildings on the three other sides. These include the prioress's lodgings as well as a brew and bake house. Unfortunately Sir George never published an excavation report detailing his finds and excavation approach. Once the excavation was completed Sir George placed inscribed marker stones at the four corners of both the church and cloister for any future investigations. The Gatehouse was turned into a small museum focused on the priory and the legend of Robin Hood.



Above: Excavation Plan of Kirtlees Priory 1904-5 by John Bilson (Y.A.J., 20 1909). The Royal commissioner's survey of the priory of 1536 describing the buildings was an important source in the production of this 1906 excavation plan

Robin Hood's Grave

Kirklees Priory is famous as the place where it is believed that Robin Hood was betrayed and killed by the Prioress. The Gatehouse which is now being restored is supposed to be the site of his death with his grave located about 650 yards south-west of the gatehouse. This account was accepted as early as 1489, fifty years before the Priory was dissolved when it was first printed by Wynken de Word, a pupil of Caxton in the ballad 'The Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode'. This is the oldest and the most authentic ballad relative to Robin Hood.



Robin Hood is alleged to have lived sometime in the 13th and 14th centuries and his popular image is well known. It is said that he met his end at the hand of an evil nun, the Prioress of Kirklees, who bled him to death. Although how he met his death is open to speculation.

Tradition has it that Robin a dying man summoned his friend Little John to his bedside by three blasts of his trusty hunting horn, before firing his arrow from the upstairs gatehouse window to mark where he wanted his burial place to be. Another story is that Robin's shot was so weak that Little John had to fire an arrow for him.

Left: Map showing the site of Robin Hood's Grave and the Medieval Highway in relation to Kirklees Priory

The story goes that Little John actually fired two, the first falling in the River Calder the second on the spot where Robin's grave is believed to lie. After this Little John kept his promise to Robin not to harm the prioress concerned who was strongly suspected of being involved with Robin's death.

Right: Artist's impression of Robin Hood shooting his last arrow held up on his feet by Little John whilst he draws his final arrow

Whether Robin, a dying man or Little John could have actually shot an arrow the distance between the gatehouse and the present grave site is questionable. It is approximately 650 yards and must have been a difficult feat with a longbow, six feet long, positioned out of a narrow window. Traditional modern bow shooting experts are sceptical of this shot. In Tudor times a good bowman could shoot over 200 yards, but this falls over 400 yards short of the reputed distance of Robin Hood's and Little John's range.



Left: Kirklees Gatehouse in 1907 before falling into ruin and neglect



It is not certain whether or not the Kirklees prioress was trying to ease his pain, there are few historical facts concerning her identity and many historians simply ignore the prioress. It is also claimed that Elizabeth de Staynton was Robin Hood's cousin and was the prioress that bled him to death. But at the time of Robin Hood's presumed death, which could be about 1347 Elizabeth was only fifteen years old so clearly could not have been the prioress. However, Elizabeth de Staynton did eventually actually become prioress sometime between 1364 and 1376.

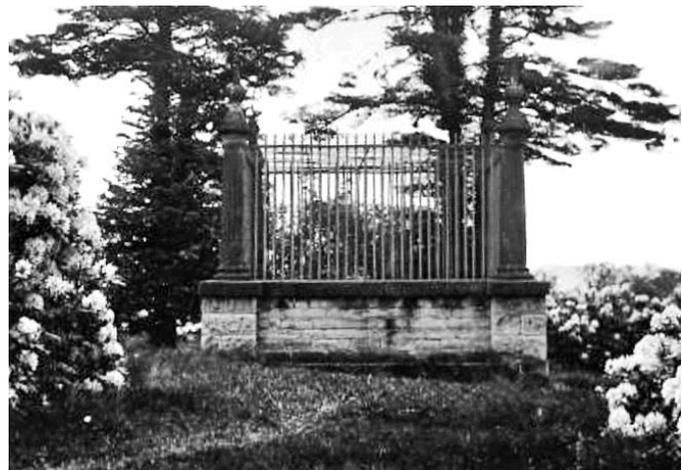
The Site of Robin Hood's Grave

The prioress did not in fact bury Robin Hood where his presumed arrow fell. He was buried near the side of the highway, where it is said he used to rob. This was so that passers-by and travellers seeing his grave could continue their journey without fearing for their lives. In medieval times the so-called highway was not the present Wakefield road between Mirfield and Brighouse, which runs through the valley near the River Calder. It is quite a considerable distance from Robin Hood's grave on the hillside. The roads in the medieval period were very bad and the highway referred to would have been little more than a rough track. Thomas Jefferys first mapped the site of Robin Hood's grave and the highway, which passed by in 1771. It skirts the brow of the hill past Robin Hood's grave continuing through Nun Bank Wood to eventually enter the village of Clifton. This medieval road passes to within 198 feet of Robin Hood's grave, which can be reasonably regarded as near to it, compared to the 498 feet down the turnpike road, which was constructed in 1815. On Jefferys' map Robin Hood's grave is drawn so prominently that it touches the highway. With the construction of the Turnpike Road the old highway was discontinued and closed as a public road. Over his grave the prioress laid a gravestone cover bearing the names of Robert Hood, William of Goldsbrough and others. The gravestone is first mentioned by John Leland in his *Collectanea* dated about 1540 he writes, 'Kirkley monasterium monialium ubi Ro. Hood nobilis ille et lex sepultus'. Translated reads, 'monastery of Kirkley where the famous noble outlaw Robin Hood is buried. In Richard Grafton's *Chronicle*, of 1568 he describes the stone with a 'raised cross botonny on a Calvary of three steps sculptured thereon and an inscription, Here lie Robard Hode, Willm Goldburgh, Thoms,' the rest of the final name appears indecipherable. William of Goldburgh is mentioned in Grafton's *Chronicle* as one of Robin Hood's men.

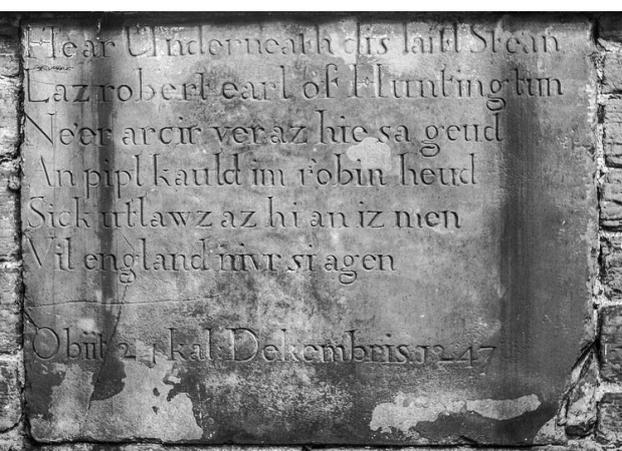
Camden's *Britannia* of 1607 states 'At Kirklees nunnery Robin Hood's tomb with a plain cross on a flat stone is shown in the cemetery. In the grounds at a little distance, lie two grave stones, one of which has an inscription for Elizabeth de Staynton, prioress there'. However, Robin Hood was not buried in the so called nuns' cemetery.

Dr. Nathaniel Johnston made a drawing of Robin Hood's reputed gravestone in about 1665. It shows a slab with a cross having clustered terminals and a three stepped base, carved in relief. The border inscription commencing 'Here lie robard hude' . . . may have been added later to 'Willm Goldburgh Thom . . .' the rest of the inscription appears to have been obliterated. This could have been a genuine medieval gravestone cover. The inscription is the same as described by Grafton in 1568.

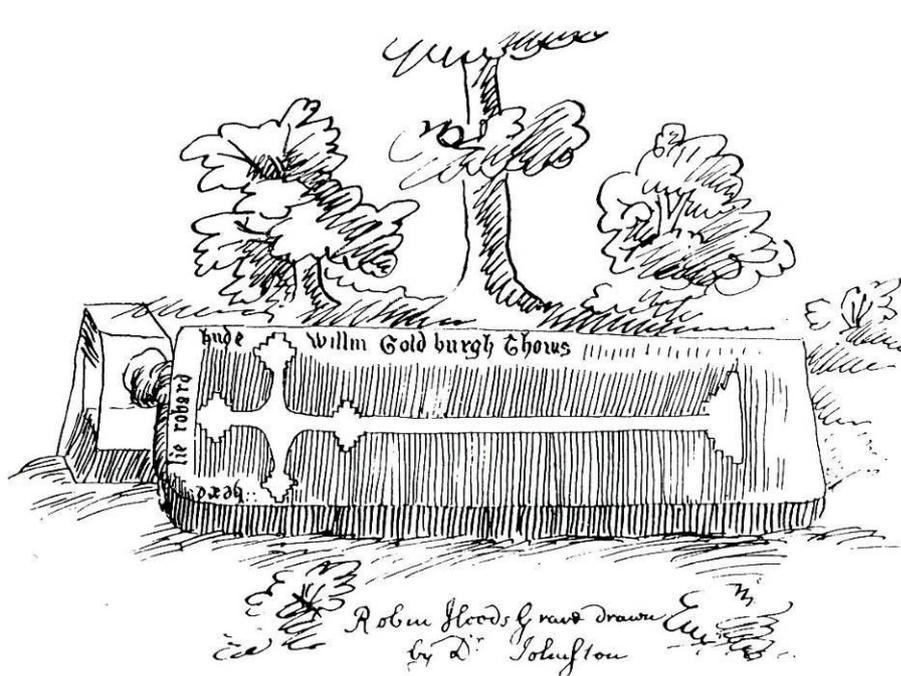
The nineteenth century navvies who built the nearby Lancashire and Yorkshire railway largely destroyed the gravestone. They chipped and carried away pieces to place under their pillows which were said to serve as a cure for toothache. As a result of this destruction, Sir George Armytage enclosed the grave with high iron railings on a low stone wall and railings were also fitted across the top to keep out vandals. Into the inside wall he inserted a block of stone with an inscription recording the events, formerly lying by the side of the grave. However, this inscription is clearly a fabrication bearing traces of eighteenth century attempts at medievalism.



Above: The complete Robin Hood's reputed grave enclosed with high iron railings on a low stone wall and railings fitted across the top. It also has 4 stone corner columns capped by finials shown in this 1910 photo

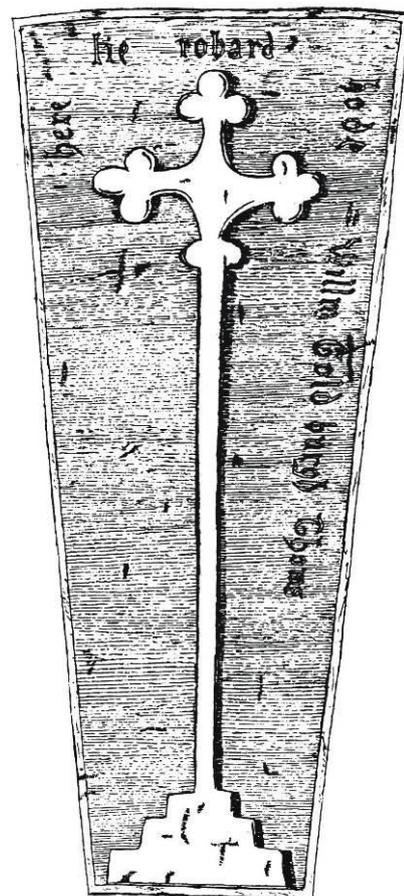


Left: The inscription on the block of stone built into the inside of the low stone wall which reads: Hear underneath dis laitl stean - Laz robert earl of Huntingtun - Ne'er arcir ver as hie sa geud - An pipl kauld im robin heud - Sick utlawz as he an iz men - Vil england nivr si agen - Obiit 24 kal: Dekembris, 1247



Left: Dr Nathaniel Johnston's drawing of about 1665 showing a slab reputed to have been the gravestone of Robin Hood at Kirklees Priory. The name 'robard hude' is almost certainly a medieval version of Robin Hood

Right: Enlarged drawing of the reputed Gravestone of Robin Hood at Kirklees Priory by Ethel W. Walker and Dr Nathaniel Johnston 1665



The design of the reputed gravestone of Robin Hood is very common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and there are 100s of examples to be found all over the country. For now Robin Hood's alleged gravestone cover will have to remain lost and unsolved.

In truth, it is most likely that we will simply never know if the gravestone drawn by Dr. Johnston was Robin Hood's. As for a body, records show that an earlier Armytage, Sir Samuel, had the grave exhumed in about 1740 but no body was found. Since the gravestone had been moved elsewhere it is not surprising nothing was discovered. To undertake a worthwhile survey the entire surrounding area would have to be scientifically excavated.



Left: Today sadly the grave monument has fallen into disrepair, all of the railings on the south side have been removed and the stone work is decaying

Robin Hood remains one of the most famous and best loved heroes of British history. For the past 450 years, the Kirklees Estate has been owned by the Armytage Baronets and for most of that time, the family were keen to exploit their association with the grave of such a popular hero. People came from far and wide to visit the famous sites at Kirklees. However, in the mid-20th century with the development of the estate from landscaped parkland into a modern agricultural concern, their attitude changed. The public were consistently refused access and the monument itself

left to decay. Today, the grave monument is in a deplorable state with a mass of twisted railings and crumbling stonework decaying away beneath a canopy of yew trees.

In recent years however access to Robin Hood's Grave has become somewhat easier, with open days organised annually by Calderdale Heritage Walks. Still people continually trespass to visit the site and arguably this situation will persist until the site has proper public access. It is hoped that in time the Robin Hood connection will be recognised as a tourist potential and this will provide a welcome change. This will not only return an important part of England's folkloric heritage to the people, but hopefully put an end to the hysteria and resentment which has tainted so much discussion of it.

The Gatehouse at Kirklees Priory

The much needed renovation and repairs to the Gatehouse at Kirklees Priory which has gradually fallen into disrepair is now under construction converting it into a two bedroom house. The Gatehouse is a listed Grade II* building and was placed on the English Heritage at risk register. Historic England secured funding and a grant was made available towards repairs and development for the single building. English Heritage believed that this is the best solution to save the Gatehouse from further deterioration and remove the building off the at risk register. The work is being carried out by Wiles and Maguire, York who are award winning specialists in conservation and restoration of historical buildings.



Above: An external view of the neglected Gatehouse from the east taken prior to partial collapse of the timber frame at the right hand side. This east side faces the paddock which contains the partly excavated remains of Kirklees Priory.



Right: This photo shows the same view as the above one. It was taken in 2016 and shows the structural shoring put up following partial collapse of the timber frame

History of the Gatehouse

The Gatehouse was almost certainly never a gatehouse as such, but might be related to an almshouse recorded as being a 'wtoute gate', wtoute is an abbreviation for without, meaning outside the gate or the gate to the outside, at the time of the suppression where old or poor people could live without having to pay rent. A mid-17th century drawing illustrates the priory remains which identify the Gatehouse as a twin-towered structure that bears no resemblance to the present building see pages 38-39. It seems probable that the Gatehouse post-dates the dissolution of Kirklees Priory in 1539 and was the original site of the domestic development, following the sale of the site by the king's commissioners, prior to the building of Kirklees Hall on a new site situated on the nearby hillside.

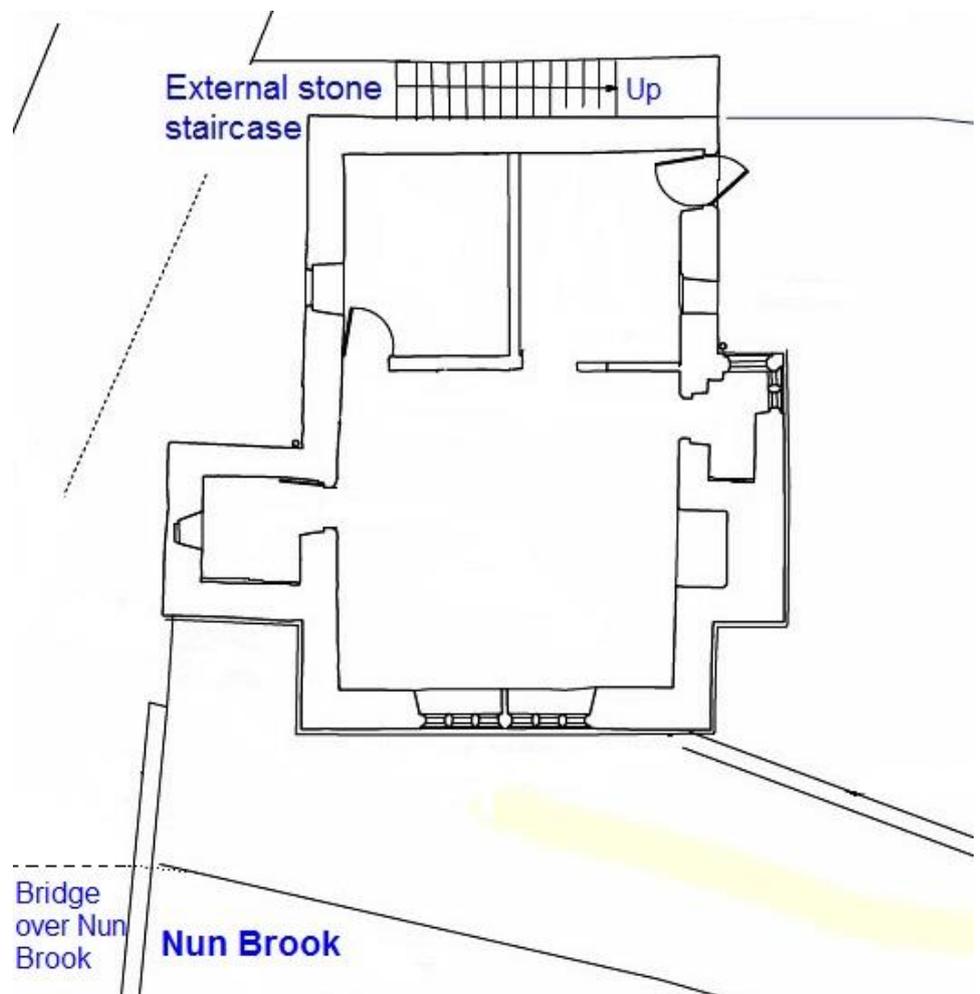
The east and west gables are timber framed to the first floor, the west incorporates decorated carved hunting scenes on the slightly curved tie beam, hardly suitable subject for a pious nunnery, but suggesting the building was used as a hunting lodge during the Tudor period. At ground level the building appears to have been constructed with stones reused from the Priory, many of which bear the Priory masons marks. The upper level is accessed via an external stone staircase located on the north elevation. In the late 16th century/early 17th century, the Priory Gatehouse was extended to the south to provide an additional room at both levels, served by a large chimney stack. A two storey porch was also added to the west elevation during this period and the building has been subjected to successive alterations particularly in the late 19th century including the renewal of the stone slate roof.



Above: The slightly curved tie beam that was on the west gable carved with a vine scroll and a hunting scene. It has been removed to this position for conservation work

Right: Ground floor plan of the Gatehouse before work began restoring the building. It is approximately 11 metres by 8 metres.

Internally the north section is divided into two rooms to each floor level by later brick walls, some of the north-south cross wall appears to be 18th century, but the rest of the brickwork appears to be late 19th century



The Gatehouse subsequently appears to have been used as an outbuilding on the Kirklees Priory Estate, possibly since at least the 18th century. The large ground floor room had a large fireplace and cold slabs, as well as internal shutters to the south window, indicating that the lower storey was used as a game larder early in the 20th century when it was modernised.

The south side room on the first floor, had a smaller fireplace with doors to the closets. The late 16th century roof timbers survive in the north range. Beams that crossed the ceiling had a number of hooks to hang game or York ham. The large first floor room was used as a museum to display items discovered during the 1904-05 excavation. The building has been disused for at least sixty years.



Below: The small fireplace with a door on the left to a small projecting closet which has a corner window



Above: Late 16th century roof timbers and beams with hooks to hang game or other such animals

By legend it was from the Gatehouse that Robin Hood, on his death bed, shot an arrow from a window and was buried where the arrow fell some 650 yards away in the wood. Although the supposed grave is marked by an early 19th century monument, even if Robin Hood existed, he cannot have died in the existing Gatehouse as he is supposed to have lived at some time between the late 13th and the early 14th century, and the Gatehouse building dates from the late 16th century.



Left: The west gable of the Gatehouse in 1914 showing the timber frame to the first floor. It incorporates a decorated carved hunting scene on the slight curve of the tie beam

Right: A closer view of the timber frame of the west gable with structural shoring for protection against collapse. The decorated carved hunting scenes on the slightly curved tie beam is visible in the photo



Acknowledgements

The writers would like to thank Dr Aleksandra McClain for providing the drawings of the medieval grave slabs by Peter Ryder from the project of Cross Slabs in Northern England 1000-1600, based in the Department of Archaeology at the University of York. To Margaret Harley for her valuable advice and suggestions.

Cauldron Falls in snow

Photo by Mike Estes



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