

## from the parish mag

**125 YEARS AGO:** We are now in the middle of restoration work, and no longer meet in the Parish Church. On November 24th the contractors took possession of the church, and in a few days all the pews, gallery and flat ceiling had disappeared. It was with sad feelings that many assembled for the last time at the Communion rails.

— December 1890

**100 YEARS AGO:** There is a list of names of those who are at the Front, or are preparing and ready to go, in the church porch: twenty-five names now, you can read them over and do at every service have some of them in your thoughts every time you come to church.

— December 1915

**90 YEARS AGO:** A very pleasant and successful social (Whist Drive and Dance) was held at the Garage, Rokeby Park. The proceeds are to be devoted to the purchase of Rokeby parish crockery, very much needed. Today, more than ever, the work of the Church needs the "vim" and enterprise of our young people and we are beginning to value them!

— December 1925

**80 YEARS AGO:** By the

## TATES

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time this magazine is in your hands, Sir Frederick and Lady Milbank will be well on their way to India to spend Christmas with their eldest son, Captain Mark Milbank. I am sure we all wish them a good voyage and a very happy Christmas.

— December 1935

**65 YEARS AGO:** The three whist drives were successful from the money point of view and also provided social occasions for parishioners to meet and relax, though no doubt the playing of a hand of cards can on occasion be accompanied by a degree of tension. A little rivalry has not been a bad thing, and this is seen in the ascending scale of the takings: £6 9s 4d, £7 7s 8d, and £9 — expenses £2 5s, profit £20 12s.

— December 1950

**20 YEARS AGO:** During the last few years a new gadget has come along to take the place of the typewriter, called a 'word processor'. My goodness, how much easier it is when you have a lot of writing to do. However, my magazine copy is always written out in pencil — with the liberal use of an eraser.

— December 1995

## Barningham Local History Group

www.barninghamvillage.co.uk

Covering Barningham and surrounding area: Newsham, Dalton, Gayles, Kirby Hill, Whashton, Kirby Ravensworth, Hutton Magna, Greta Bridge, Rokeby, Brignall, Scargill, Hope and beyond.

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# Archive 50

THE NEWSLETTER OF BARNINGHAM LOCAL HISTORY GROUP  
B. A. L. H. LOCAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR 2012  
www.barninghamvillage.co.uk

xii  
MMXV

WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A HAPPY AND HISTORIC NEW YEAR



**Barningham WI members, date unknown (early 1960s?) but we have names, more photos, and a history of the WI branch which has called it a day after more than 80 years. See Pages 5-8. Photo from Neil Turner's collection.**

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BLHG NEW YEAR SOCIAL, MILBANK ARMS, SUNDAY JANUARY 3rd, 12-2pm  
NEXT BLHG MEETING: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9th, 6pm



## The Archive

THIS is the 50th issue of the *Archive*, a milestone we couldn't imagine when the newsletter made its debut at the launch of the history group six years ago.

During that time we've produced around 1,000 pages containing some half a million words (we haven't counted them, do feel free to check) and uncovering more stories about Barningham's history and people than we thought could possibly exist.

Editing the *Archive* has been a challenging but very rewarding experience. For various reasons, not least the fact that I too reached a significant milestone this month, it seems a good time for me to step back and let someone else have a turn in the editor's chair.

I hope to continue making contributions to the *Archive*, and wish whoever takes over every success.

THERE'S a renewal notice in this issue. If you've enjoyed the *Archive* this year, please return it soon to ensure you get every issue in 2016.

Happy New Year!

JON SMITH  
Editor



## The Archive

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Back issues of The Archive are available at £2 each (£1 for members)

Full index of contents on our website

## Awards, visits, wartime and plans for a party

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday December 15th 2015 at 6pm:**

**Present:** Phil Hunt (Chairman), John Hay (Vice Chairman), Margaret Stead (Treasurer), Ann Orton (Secretary), Jon Smith, Neil Turner, Eric Duggan, Sheila Wappat, Cate Collingwood, June Graham.

**Apologies:** Mark Watson, Janet Paterson, Jane Hackworth-Young, Linda Sherwood.

**Minutes** of the meeting on May 19th 2015 were accepted.

**Matters arising:** Phil congratulated Jon Smith and John Hay on their Archive award and Ann and Linda for their highly commended projects.

Visits to the lead mines and Richmond Museum were enjoyed by all and Ann was thanked for organising them.

Three talks had now been held at Dalton and the next would be on January 15th by Ann followed by John Hay in February.

**Correspondence:** The Chief Archivist at Northallerton asked if we would like to help research relating to conscientious objectors. It was agreed to consider this when we have more details. Jon said that Steven Graham had sent the group a copy of the Metcalfe family history as thanks for help he'd received. John Hay had received information from

### minutes

Bill Metcalf about village footpaths; he would follow this up.

**Financial report:** Margaret reported a balance of £473.07. It was agreed to leave the annual subscription at £10. Jon would put a notice in the next *Archive* and also in the *Flyer*.

**Publications:** Archive 49 had been circulated and 50 was in preparation.

**Transcriptions:** Cate had finished and Ann had nearly finished. Jon asked that they be sent to him.

**Oral History:** Janet was transcribing Frank Anderson's memories.

**WW1 & 2:** Phil told us about the Regimental War Diaries that it is now possible to access online. He has been researching details of his grandfather's war service.

Jon Hay had been looking at the Royal Observer Corps and the part Barningham played in it. See report in this issue.

**Any other business:** It was agreed that the New Year Party will be held on January 3rd at noon at the Milbank Arms and that we will ask for contributions of food.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday February 9th 2016 at 6pm.

ANN ORTON  
Secretary

## Mystery of the cups and rings packs village hall

TIM Laurie's talk on the prehistoric rock carvings on Barningham moor packed the village hall on December 10th.

Tim, a former Barningham resident and president of the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Society, gave a detailed and thought-provoking description of the carvings, notably the cup and ring marks which abound on the moor.

Such marks, dating back to the Early Neolithic period, are found throughout Europe. Nobody knows their purpose. Popular theories are that they had some religious significance or were an early form of written communication.

Tim's was the latest in a series of Winter's Tales talks organised by Barningham vil-



lage hall. The next, on February 18th (7.30pm start) will be by Teesdale archaeologist Percival Turnbull whose talk is entitled *Happy Families: The End of the Iron Age in the North*.

Tickets are £5 in advance, £6 on the door: details and bookings from Ann Orton, 01833 621024.

### cuttings

### 'Indecent' lads upset chapel

*From the Teesdale Mercury, December 30 1896:*

NINE young persons were summoned before the Greta Bridge magistrates for disturbing worshippers in Barningham.

The defendants, charged with indecent behaviour at or near a place of worship,

apologised to the trustees of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Barningham and paid the costs.

### Lighting up

*From the Northern Echo, March 28 1886:*

Mr Milbank J.P. of Barningham Park has erected, at his own cost, one of Hearson's patent automatic gaslamps near the arch leading to Barningham Church.

FOR SALE,  
The Glebe Lands attached to the Benefice of  
Barningham, in the County of York,  
Consisting of some 80 Acres, more or less,  
together with suitable Farm Buildings.—Offers  
for this Property may be made to the Rector,

*From the Teesdale Mercury, January 1 1913*

## Barningham History Group Publications

Where Lyeth Ye Bodies\* Guide to Barningham church, graveyard map, memorial details and list of all known burials.

Barningham Baptisms\* Listed by date, name and parents.

Vol 1: 1580-1800; Vol 2: 1800-1950.

Barningham Brides\* All marriages 1580-1950, listed by date, groom and bride.

Counted\* A-Z of census returns 1841-1911, arranged so that families can be tracked through 70 years.

Vol 1: Barningham, Scargill, Hope; Vol 2: Newsham, New Forest. Vol 3: Brignall, Rokeby. Vol 4: Dalton, Gayles & Kirby Hill.

Jam Letch & Jingle Potts\* History of Barningham farms, fields and fieldnames.

A Child of Hope\*\* Journal of Mary Martin, born on a local farm in 1847.

A Fleeting Shadow\* The diaries of young Newsham schoolmaster James Coates, 1784-85.

A Farmer's Boy\* Memoirs of life in the area in mid-Victorian days.

Aback to Yuvvin\*\* 1849 Glossary of Teesdale words & customs.

Barningham Vestry Minutes 1869-1894, Parish Minutes 1894-1931\*\* Transcripts of meetings, with background history, index and lists of named parishioners.

The Archive\*\*\* Group newsletter. Back issues available.

Barningham Memories 1 & 2\* DVDs of cine film of Barningham in the 1960/70s.

\* £10 each + £1.50 p&p

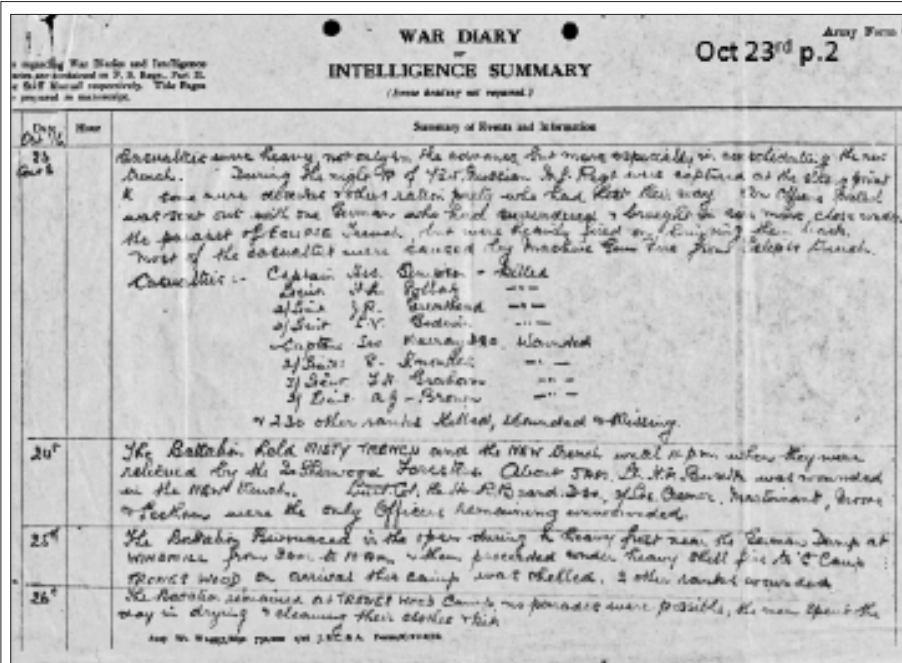
\*\* £5 each + £1 p&p

\*\*\* £2 each + £1 p&p

Discounts for history group members. We can also supply copies of *As Time Passed By*, a history of Barningham by Merryne Watson. Contact us for details.

More information on our website  
[www.barninghamvillage.co.uk](http://www.barninghamvillage.co.uk)





## Diaries of death and destruction

At our last history group meeting Phil Hunt showed us this page from a regimental war diary for October 23rd 1916, the day his grandfather, Edward Hunt of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, died in action on the Somme. Hundreds of such war diaries are available online at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). There's a small search fee.

## Local History Talks

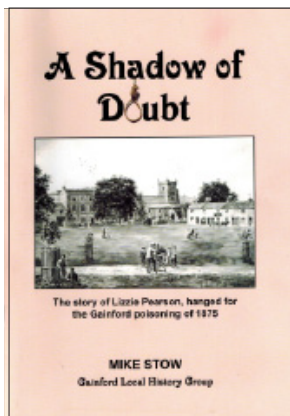
Dalton & Gayles  
Village Hall

Friday January 15  
Ann Orton, BLHG

Friday February 12  
John Hay, BLHG

Doors open 7pm, talks start at 7.30pm. Bar is open before and after the talks until 9.30pm. Admission £2.50 includes tea/coffee and biscuits. All welcome!

## Lizzie Pearson: hanged for murder, but did she do it?



LIZZIE Pearson went to the gallows in 1875 after being found guilty of poisoning her uncle in Gainford.

Local historian Mike Stow thinks she may well have been innocent, and Gainford History Society (with a bit of help from the *Archive's* production department) has just published his account of the murder and the reasons for doubting the verdict.

*A Shadow of Doubt* costs £3.50. It's available from Mike: 01325 730337, email [michael.mstow8@btinternet.com](mailto:michael.mstow8@btinternet.com).

## All there is to know about the Metcalfes (and Metcalfs)

STEPHEN Graham of Royston, South Yorkshire, contacted us seeking help with his family research.

Among the families he's interested in are the Aldersons and Metcalfes of Scargill and nearby. We dug out some information for him (and sold him a couple of our books). He was grateful – so much so that he sent us

a copy of a magnificent book about the origins of Metcalfes (and Metcalfs, Medcalfs and similar – they're all from the same line). The surname goes back to at least the 13th century, probably derived from a placename in the Dent area.

The book awaits inspection by our local Metcalf(e)s – contact Jon Smith if you'd like to see it.



### letters & emails

## Two more names for the roll of honour

I HAVE two more names of WW1 soldiers from the Barningham area who are not on the list in *Archive 49*.

I know they served as there are photos of them in uniform and, for one at least, I have seen his war medal. Both of them are uncles of mine.

The first is John (Jack) Alderson of Hope. The photo (right) shows him with his wife Mary in what might have been a wedding photo – taken in the second quarter of 1915 if it is. His cap badge shows Royal Field Artillery.

The second is his brother George Alderson. I don't have the photo but it is in the collection held by his granddaughter Marian Lewis of Hutton Magna, which shows him in sergeant's uniform but not wearing a cap so his regiment is unknown. Marian believes it was taken in 1916.

A search of army records did not turn up any details, and it is assumed theirs were among the record cards damaged and destroyed by WW2 bombing.

The 1911 census has John living at East Hope, while George is listed at West Hope, almost certainly one of the

Jack and Mary Alderson



house at Peake Hole. I hope this helps to fill in the gaps.

As always, I enjoy reading the articles in the *Archive* and I also read your meetings minutes. I note the comment about the House Histories being finished and wonder why the project did not extend to the houses at Hope?

It would have been interesting to hear what would have

been uncovered by looking at the history of the West Hope and East Hope farms, including the buildings in Peake Hole but also the Stang Inn on the road down to Barnard Castle from Arkengarthdale should, I think, have an interesting history.

DICK ALDERSON, Fife

● *Hope certainly deserves a look at – any volunteers? – Ed.*

## Waistells, Hanbys and Wilkinsons

I AM hoping your members' extensive knowledge of the area around Barningham and its people may help me to find Hanby Waistell and Jane Wilkinson where standard sources such as Ancestry have failed.

Hanby Waistell, whose mother was Mary Hanby, married Jane Waistell at Brignall in 1813. They had a son John born 1814 at Brignall. Jane's father was William Wilkinson, a farmer at Brignall in 1822.

I do not know when William was born, where he was born or when or where he died. Nor do I know who he married or when. Also I do not know where or when Jane was born or died.

Hanby's father was Jefferey Waistell, a farmer at Scargill and he was born 1788. Hanby was a farmer at Scargill in 1814.

Jane may not be a relative but a relative Mary Wilkinson, born Grinton in 1796, was living at Brignall when she married John Longstaff at Arkengarthdale in 1820. Hanby Waistell was a witness at her wedding and also at the weddings of two other weddings of relatives at Arkengarthdale.

I have finally tracked down where Mary's parents were born. It was Elland near Halifax. Her parents Thomas Wilkinson and Elisabeth Jack-

### letters & emails

son had children at Marske and Grinton and were buried at Grinton. He was a mercer (dealing in silk and woollen goods) living at Knaresborough when he married.

Hanby is not in the 1841 or 1851 census and he was buried at Bowes in 1834 age 46. Jane is not with him. Do you know any Wilkinsons who may be related?

I have noticed that there were many Wilkinsons christened in Barningham between 1790 and 1850 but there do not appear to be marriages of their parents before 1790 in Barningham. Do you know where they came from? On a separate issue, I was told recently that there was a pub at Holgate. I have not come across it. Do you have any details?

KEN LONGSTAFF  
Alcester, Warwickshire

## Where was the old school?

WE Westmarland descendants are doing some research into our family and sharing what we know to compile a history of our family.

A quick question, when was Barningham school set up? Before the building we all know as the village hall was built where would the school have been, if there was one? Our grandmothers and great grandmothers were educated, they wrote competently so we are trying to establish how they received their education. Jane Ann, Jan Westmarland's

granddaughter, told us she was a teacher at Barningham school before she married in 1914.

Reading *Archive 49* I saw the photo from 1934. It suggests Annie Lawson, my gran, is on the photo. She was always very young looking, but in 1934 she would have been 33 so it's definitely not her.

BID VAN DER POL  
Netherlands

● *Archive 13 carried an extensive history of Barningham schools. We've sent Bid a copy.*

## Gravestone by the river

I SPENT most of my childhood in Cotherstone before spreading my wings and daring to venture as far as Barningham!

I was always intrigued by a gravestone situated above the old Tees Mill in Cotherstone, on a footpath along the banks of the Tees, now part of the Teesdale Way.

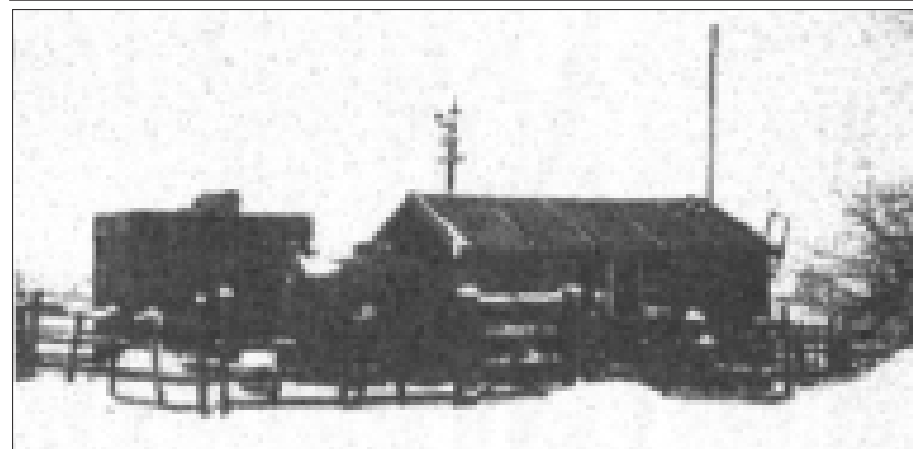
It was really interesting to read the article from John Hay in *Archive 48* about this gentleman. He must have had a strong connection with these parishes and a real fondness for Cotherstone, or perhaps he just enjoyed the walk and the views from the banks of the River Tees.

LISA HOCKHAM  
Barningham

## Fishing fame

DID you know that the former rector of Barningham, the Rev E S Gough, was quite a famous angler? He was a founder member of the Yorkshire Angling Association in 1884, which became the Yorkshire Fly Fishers Club, one of the most exclusive clubs in the North.

JOHN AUSTEN, Durham



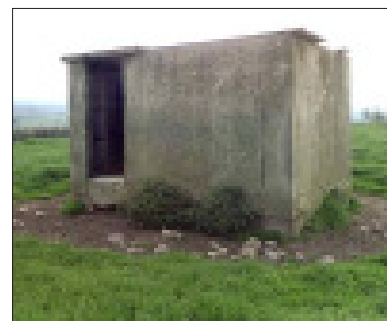
### observer posts

*The WW2 observation post buildings at Barningham and, below, observers on duty*

around the shaft was beginning to crack. Internally the post was flooded to a depth of two feet. It was almost completely stripped of fittings and fixtures above water level.

Much of this can still be seen today. All evidence of the WW2 observation post on the Nort Beck road has long since disappeared.

● A Cold War era observation post at Chop Yate on the North York Moors, very similar to the one at Barningham, has been fully restored and visitors can see the equipment and instruments designed to keep us fully informed when the Russian H-bombs arrived.



*The later observation post on Eggmartin Hill*

### Drop us a line

The *Archive* welcomes comments, contributions and queries about its contents or any topic relating to local history. Email the editor, Jon Smith, at [jonxxsmith@gmail.com](mailto:jonxxsmith@gmail.com).



## Watching out for planes and bombs

*JOHN HAY enlightened our last meeting about the observation posts in WW2 – and after*

THE Observer Corps was formed in 1925; 'Royal' was added by George VI in 1941. The service was stood down in 1995.

The role of the ROC in WW2 was to spot enemy aircraft flying under the radar scans and report their type, height and direction. To do this their base had to be above ground.

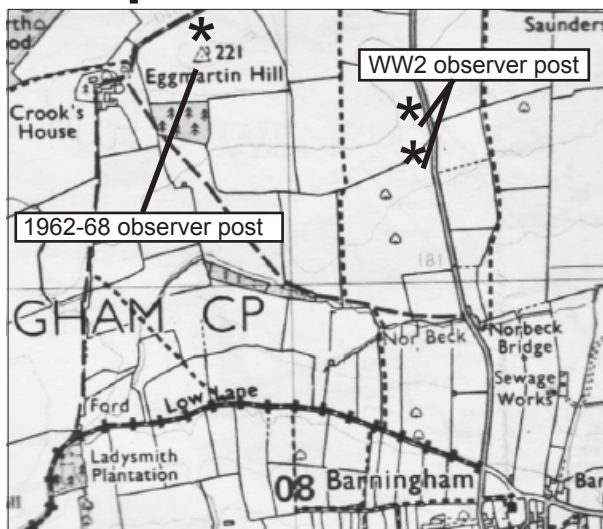
There was such a base in Barningham, a wooden above-ground A type observer post, in a field halfway up the road from Nor Beck bridge to Wilson House, on the left hand side.

"The post hut was used for storage and sleeping was in a trench, dug nearby, with cots to the sides and ankle deep in dog ends," recalls Neil Turner, whose father Sam was the chief observer.

Archive 32 published pictures of Sam and fellow observers Willie Todd, Colonel Gilmore, Edgar Lee, Amy Etherington and Hannah Brown on duty in 1943 outside an 'above-ground' building.

Sam used the Micklethwaite post instrument which was sited outside on a small three-sided platform. This plotted the location, height and direction of the enemy aircraft. There was a telephone connection nearby to call the central control room with the information.

At the end of WW2 it was realised that the demands of the nuclear age and the Cold War were going to exceed the capabilities of the ROC unless a major building and com-



observer posts



Observers in action

munication programme were started. Aircraft recognition and monitoring was no longer the important role: instead, the effects of a nuclear weapon attack – heat, blast and fall-out – were now to be monitored.

The ROC became part of

the UK Warning and Monitoring Organisation reporting on confirmation of a nuclear strike, warning of radioactive fallout, its path and intensity, and providing post-attack information in conjunction with the meteorological service for fall-out prediction.

Barningham's roadside observation post was unsuitably positioned, and a new one was created on Eggmartin Hill, close to the trig point east of Crooks House (OS Grid Reference NZ07811157).

It included an underground shelter accessed by a shaft some 20 feet deep. On the surface was a concrete 'Orlit A' structure with an instrument table nearby.

It was opened in September 1962 and remained in operation until October 1968.

Thirty years later an inspection report said all surface features remained intact but ventilation louvres were missing and the concrete apron

## The rise and fall of Barningham WI

*Bereft of members, the village Women's Institute closed down this year.*

*MARGARET STEAD looks back on its 82-year history*

IT all began on Monday October 30th 1933, when a meeting was held in Barningham Schoolroom to discuss the formation of a Barningham Women's Institute.

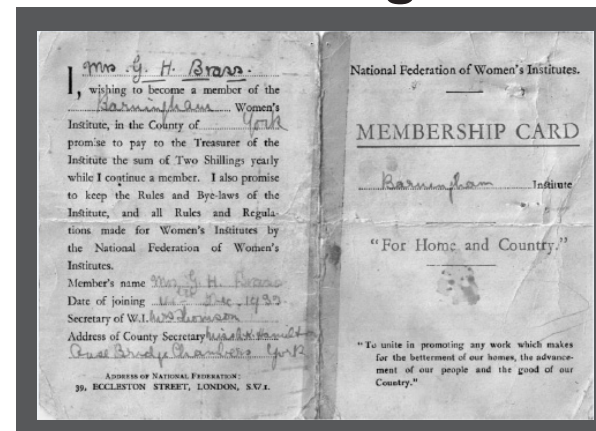
Forty-four people attended the meeting, at which the rector's wife, Mrs Helena Dodd, formally proposed the formation of the Institute. She was seconded by Miss Fairley, and the resolution was passed. A committee of ten was elected, with Lady Milbank as president – a position she held until 1949, when ill-health forced her resignation.

It was decided that meetings be held on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7.15 in the evening. This time of meeting continued, apart from some changes necessitated in wartime, until the closure of Barningham WI in 2015.

Fifty-six names were given as members; girls would be allowed to join on leaving school, and new members would have to be admitted by the committee. I wonder if any were blackballed!

The first actual meeting was held in the schoolroom on November 14th. It opened with the singing of *Jerusalem* – and finished after tea with the practising of *Jerusalem*, so apparently the first attempt was not of the highest quality, although the 52 members present must have included some reasonably proficient singers. Surely?

Most of this first meeting



Founder member Nancy Brass's first WI membership card from 1933

### barningham wi

appears to have consisted of hearing the rules of the WI and creating an Outings Fund, but members were also told that the school managers would allow use of the schoolroom for the monthly meetings for the sum of £1 a year, and Lady Milbank donated three dozen teaspoons to the Institute.

The new committee must have had a busy time over the next two months, as much progress had been made. The monthly programme for 1934 was arranged, including such topics as soap making and fancy knitting. A dance had been held to raise funds for some necessary equipment for the meetings, and permission had been obtained to erect a shed at the back of the school to hold the WI property. (Does anyone know anything about this shed? I've found no further mention of it in the WI records.)

Various articles had been donated and gratefully received. These included a three

burner stove, with oven (Lady Milbank), a trestle table (Nurse Monk) and a washing-up bowl (Mrs R Jackson). Other articles were purchased, and by February the WI appeared to be fully functioning.

At the March meeting, eggs were collected for Darlington Hospital. This became an annual custom until 1944, after which no mention is made of egg collection. The number of eggs collected was considerable – usually well over 300!

Throughout the Thirties, the Institute continued to flourish and attempt to "improve and develop conditions of rural life," the stated main purpose on the front of the first programme.

There was certainly a strong educational element to the activities – dressmaking classes were held at Heath House over the winters of 1935 and 1936, and were well attended (17 members).

Choral classes were also held (perhaps still practising *Jerusalem*?), and classes in



**Sir Frederick Milbank was a guest at this WI party sometime in the 1950s. Among the ladies we can identify are (back row) Ada Anderson, Bella Powell, Edith Wright, Olive Walker, Ann Lawson, Ethel Bulmer, Amy Etherington, Nan Maughan, May Lee, Gran Etherington and Nancy Nicholson; (second row) Mrs Brass, Mrs Thompson, Agnes Lowes, Mrs Hutchinson, Polly Atkinson, Jessie Cowell, Sylvia Atherton and Amy Clark. Front two on the left unknown.**

bottling fruit and vegetables – this last a three-day course with a lecturer from Leeds University. First Aid classes were also organised.

There was a great variety of talks and demonstrations at the monthly meetings, including such varied topics as “Travels in India” – a lantern lecture by Sir Frederick and Lady Milbank, glove making, “Helping our Children to grow up,” wine making and “Gay songs.”

The social half-hour which usually followed tea apparently had some interesting activities – on one occasion members took part in “Spear- ing the Rabbit,” which I hope was not as violent as it sounds. Other activities mentioned were “Catching the Snake’s Tail,” “Walking a Straight Line Blindfold” and “Garaging a Car through a Mirror.”

At other times cards or danc-

### barningham wi

ing were organised – on one occasion the dancing went on until midnight, as a charity fund-raising activity.

Fund-raising activities were a frequent part of the WI calendar. Whist Drives, Tea Dances, and Garden Parties all helped raise funds for varied causes, not only for WI funds. As war approached, funds were raised for child refugees and also for the Red Cross.

The start of the Second World War brought some changes to Barningham WI. One of the first suggestions to be made was to invite all teachers and assistants accompanying evacuees in the locality to become honorary members of the WI.

Times and venues of meetings were changed, as winter meetings were to be held in

the afternoons because of the blackout. Obviously, the schoolroom would be in use during the week, so the October meeting was arranged for a Saturday afternoon – with the proviso that no tea would be served after the meeting to allow members plenty of time to get home to prepare family teas.

Further changes were made, and next meetings were held in the Gun Room at Barningham Park. By the end of 1941, the Reading Rooms had become available, and in December the WI moved in.

A billiard table in the Rooms was sent to Eggleston Auxiliary Hospital, a piano was borrowed, and the WI set to and cleaned the place. It was decided to refer to the Rooms as “The Institute.” On January 16th 1941 the Annual Social (Whist Drive, Supper, Dancing

### ralph snowden

Beverley. He was a 27-year-old schoolmaster, born and brought up in a house on the Desmesnes, Barnard Castle, where his father John was a stonemason.

Joseph was one of at least three Lawson brothers who went into teaching. He was recorded in 1851 as a pupil teacher; in 1855 he won first class honours in his first year at Durham’s Teacher Training School. Ten years later the family had moved with him to the schoolhouse in Elvet Church Street, Durham, where he was teaching at St Oswald’s grammar school; presumably Betsey moved in with them after their marriage.

Their first (and as far as we can tell, only) child was born in Durham in 1863, christened Eleanor after Joseph’s mother.

By the time of his marriage Joseph was already making a name for himself in the world of education. He was secretary of the Northern Association of Certified Church Schoolmasters, and later held the same position with the National Association for Promoting

Freedom of Worship. In 1866 he resigned as Master of the school (the vicar and colleagues presented him with “a very handsome timepiece” to mark the occasion), moved to Queen Street in Durham, and went freelance, advertising in the local press that he was available to receive private pupils and “prepare young gentlemen for Public Examinations”. There was, he said, accommodation available for “two or three little boys as boarders”.

Joseph was a religious man, and in 1871 switched from teaching to the church and was ordained. He started off as a curate at Brancepeth, became the first vicar of St John’s Church in Brandon in 1878 (salary £300 a year), and remained there for the rest of his life. The 1891 census records Joseph and Betsey at Brandon; the 1901 census lists Joseph as a widower, staying at a house in Galgate, Barnard Castle. We can’t find a record of Betsey’s death. Joseph died

in 1903, shortly after retiring, and he was buried at Brandon. Eleanor was recorded living with her parents in 1881, when she was 18 and still a scholar. We can’t trace her after that, though there is a record of a marriage of an Eleanor Lawson in Durham in early 1882 (her husband may have been called Pickering or Feeney) and a widow of the same name was living with two children in Darlington in 1891.

Ralph’s brother John, the York police constable and father of the second Ralph Leconby Snowden, was married to Jane and had five children: Sarah Jane, born 1841; William Hugill, 1844; Ralph Leconby, 1847; Elizabeth Leconby 1849 and Margaret Ann, 1850. In 1851 they were living with their widowed grandfather George, by then 73, who died not long after.

What happened to the rest of them is a mystery. Not one of them appears in any later census, and it may be that the family were among the many who emigrated from England in the 1850s.

## You can’t win ’em all: the lost expenses

SNOWDEN was paid a salary by the local Association but relied upon the courts to reimburse him for his expenses in bringing criminals to justice.

Magistrates weren’t always as generous as he would wish, and he had to fight hard from time to time to get his money back.

One of the biggest expenses was the cost of appearing as a witness at the sessions and assizes at York. In 1841 Snowden was among a deputation of North Riding police officers who petitioned the magistrates for increased fees.

They were paid five shillings a day for attending court, plus 6d a mile for travel to and from York, which was, they said, quite inadequate and unfair: officers in the West Riding who hadn’t nearly so far to go got ten shillings plus 9d a mile. The magistrates reluctantly agree to raise the daily rate to seven shillings and

sixpence, but refused to budge on the mileage.

Snowden didn’t win all his battles over money. In 1844, when he submitted a bill for £8 14s after he and an assistant took three prisoners by coach from Greta Bridge to York Castle, the magistrates’ finance committee calculated that this worked out at a shilling a mile per prisoner. Snowden could have saved at least £3 if they’d gone by rail, said the committee, not least because only one guard would have been needed “as it was almost impossible for prisoners to escape from a railway carriage”.

In future, they ordered all such trips to be made by rail if possible, and accompanying officers would be paid only five shillings a day.

The expenses issue clearly rankled with Snowden. He devoted a full ten pages of his guide for police to exactly what could be claimed, and how to make sure they got it.



name south of Stokesley, not the one in Teesdale). He took her back to Nunnington, where we believe Ralph was born later that year.

Five more children – Sarah, Jane, Mary, George and John – followed between 1807 and 1815: all were dutifully recorded in the parish registers. Why Ralph is missing we don't know: perhaps he was already well on the way when his parents married, and for some reason he went un-baptised. It may even be that he'd been born before the wedding, and was recorded under a different name.

The first positive record we can find of him is from 1827, when he married a Susannah Harper at Slingsby on November 3rd. She was 28, born at Slingsby on July 28th 1799, the daughter of Christopher and Dorothy Harper who had married the previous year. A brother John was born two years later; a sister Elizabeth in 1803. We can't find any record of Christopher's birth, but he would fit in well with the family of Christopher (born 1732) and Ann Harper, who had seven children. If the two Christophers were father and son, the line can be traced

1	Sarah Eades	45	Greta	74
2	Ralph Snowden	30	Blind of pain	74
3	Betsey do	12		74
4	Richard Sanders	40	founder	74

**Entry in the 1841 Greta Bridge census. Ralph's age was rounded down: he was in fact about 36**

### ralph snowden

back a further generation to Benjamin and Anne Sparling, married in 1726.

Ralph and Susannah's first child, Betsey Snowden, was born at Slingsby and christened at Nunnington on September 2nd 1828. The name Betsey is unusual, and perhaps it was a family name for Ralph's mother Elizabeth. A second child, Sarah, was born in the village on January 16th 1831, but died on March 18th the same year.

We can find no record of Susannah after this. She was not recorded in the 1841 census or thereafter and it may be that she died young, perhaps at or shortly after the birth of her second child. There are a number of Susannah Snowdens whose burials are recorded in parish registers, but none with sufficient detail to prove that one might be Ralph's wife.

However, the theory that Ralph was widowed some time in the 1830s is supported by the fact that in 1841 only he and Betsey, then aged twelve, were recorded living in Greta Bridge. They were lodging at the village grocer's shop, run by a 45-year-old widow called Sarah Eades. We don't know where Betsey went to school but she was clearly a bright child and well-educated. Where she went after her father died in 1847 is unknown: there's no record of her in the 1851 census. But in 1861, aged 31, she was working for maltster Richard Sanders and his wife Catherine.

They lived at the New Inn in Leven, near Beverley, and Betsey's job was governess to their three youngest children, aged three to eleven.

Betsey was still single, but that was soon to change. On February 20th 1862 she married Joseph Lawson at

## More arrests, but serious crime plummeted

SNOWDEN'S success in fighting crime was well demonstrated in his annual report in 1845.

From 1840 to 1844 the number of cases dealt with in the Greta Bridge area each year rose from 141 to 168, the result of his efficiency in pursuing offenders. But the nature of crimes had changed dramatically. In 1840 there were 28 committals for trial on serious charges of felony and misdemeanour; in 1844 only nine. At the other end of the crime scale cases of vagrancy rose from 29 to 48 (the magistrates congratulated Snowden on

having virtually eradicated vagrants from the area) and the number of unlicensed hawkers prosecuted more than doubled between 1840-41 and 1843-44.

Far fewer serious crimes, many more minor offenders before the courts: proof, said the Police Association, of the "unabated exertions" of their excellent police superintendent.

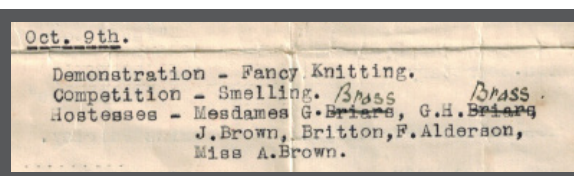
● Then, as now, the majority of crimes were committed by youths and young men. In 1844, Snowden reported, 87 of the 168 cases involved people aged under 25; only nine were over 50.

and the raffle of a pheasant and a chicken) marked the official opening of the Institute.

Several new activities began. Sewing parties were organised for Red Cross work, and a National War Savings Group was started. WI headquarters appealed for recruits for the Civil Nursing Reserve and the Land Army. (No record of any Barningham volunteers, unless anyone knows differently.) Sugar for fruit preservation was available from the Liaison Office in London – and 6cwt was ordered! There must have been great interest in fruit preservation, as two separate talks were given on the topic during 1940. Talks were also given on How to Grow More Vegetables in your Garden, and it was impressed on members how necessary this was, because of the shortage of vegetables in towns.

Members also helped to make camouflage nets. A frame was provided, and set up outside, nets were fixed to the frames, and camouflage material attached to the nets. The WI proudly recorded that they had camouflaged 16 nets in the summer of 1941.

Fund raising went on apace,



**Extract from the 1934 programme: what on earth was the October competition about?**

### barningham wi

with the Red Cross, the WI Ambulance fund, the Lifeboats, the Forces Christmas Fund, SSAFA and St Dunstan's among the recipients. In 1945, the Welcome Home Fund joined the list.

The WI decided to organise a children's Christmas treat, and in January 1941 arranged a visit to the "pictures" followed by tea at a café. This treat became an annual event. Over 60 attended a party at the institute in 1942, and each was given a gift, a cracker and a balloon. The following year, the children were given 6d, a chocolate biscuit and a dip in the bran tub. (In 1945, they were given a savings stamp. I wonder how that was received! But they had had a trip to the pantomime, with a packet of sweets.)

The Christmas parties con-

tinued for many years – the last one mentioned in the WI records was in 1981, by which time it was combined with the youth club party. Perhaps someone knows more – or different?

Throughout the 50s and 60s, the WI continued strongly, but in the 1970s came change. The county boundary changes meant that Barningham WI, until then in the Yorkshire Federation, found itself in County Durham.

There followed a lengthy and at times heated debate as to whether Barningham could remain part of the Yorkshire Federation or not. At first, this seemed possible, as in January 1975 the members of Barningham were asked to state their wishes. Unanimously Yorkshire.

In September of that year, they received a letter telling them they were now part of the Durham Federation. More letters were exchanged, and Barningham continued within Yorkshire, as part of the Swaledale Group. Letters continued to be exchanged, with Barningham arguing that the Boundary Commission had been asked to look at altering the boundaries to put Hope, Scargill and Barningham back into Yorkshire.

To no avail. Barningham received a letter from HQ telling them to arrange to transfer to Durham "forthwith," which



**WI garden fete in 1956: names, anybody?**



**WI walkers and dogs, 2005: Susan Turner, Ann Orton, Elizabeth Carrick, Dorothy Bartle, Felicity Thompson and Sue Prytherick**

they did in 1980. Not exactly forthwith, but these things take time, especially if they are not popular. However, the change was eventually accepted, and the Institute continued to flourish.

In 2004, some members of Barningham WI, keen members of the Walking Group, produced a Book of Barningham Walks, which was several years in the making.

It was published in April (with a book signing at Otakars in Darlington) and celebrated with a launch party in June. This party, hosted by Sir Anthony Milbank, was a joint celebration of the book launch and the completion of the Fountain Restoration Project. Guest of honour was Geoffrey Smith, well known from Gardeners' Question Time, who had written the introduction to the Walks book.

Barningham WI continued for another ten years, with

## barningham wi

some notable successes in county darts competitions and county quizzes, but by the end of 2014 it became regrettably clear that its days were numbered.

Falling membership made



**Drama group 1979: who'd put on a show with black and white minstrels today?**

## Front cover photo

Back row: Mrs Cuthbertson (GRanville), Mrs Fizell (Woodside), Mrs Lowes (Hollies), Mrs Brass (Park View), Mrs Wright (The Cottage), Mrs Cowell (Park View), Polly Atkinson (Pear Tree Cottage), Mrs Bulmer (Elim Cottage), Nan Maughan (Park View), Nancy Nicholson (West End), Margaret Barker (Virginia House).

Front: Mrs Hutchinson (Saunders House), Mrs Anderson (Lilac Cottage), Mrs Atherton (Post Office), Mrs Powell (Shaw House), Mrs Walker (Heather Cottage), Mrs Lee (Church View), Mrs Etherington (Woodbine Cottage), Mrs Clark (Park View), Amy Etherington (Fair View Cottage), Mrs Stanwick (Ravensworth).

it difficult to afford speakers and find willing members of the committee, so it was reluctantly decided it must close.

But who knows – there may once again be a demand for such an organisation, and another meeting may be called, as in 1933.

cluding the Earl of Darlington, owner of the Raby estates, the Morritts of Rokeby and the Constables of Scargill.

The new superintendent was not going to be satisfied catching the odd poacher, however. Criminals of any kind were his quarry, and he began a rigorous campaign to rid the area of them all. Over the next few years the Greta Bridge court was kept busy with a steady procession of horse thieves and highwaymen, beggars and burglars, rustlers, robbers, tricksters and trespassers and late-night trouble-makers. Many of the offenders he prosecuted were fairly trivial – vagrants, thieves who took clothes from washing-lines, servants who helped themselves to employers' silverware, travellers who stole teaspoons from the Morritt Arms – but there was some serious crime about, too.

In December 1841 a poacher fired a gun at Snowden in Hartforth, narrowly missing him, and a few days later his assistant was stabbed while they investigated the theft of geese. In 1842 there was a murder in Startforth, in 1843 a child murder in Forcett, and in 1844 a mass riot at Barnard Castle races when Snowden was attacked by an angry mob (he'd tried to shut down the beer tent) and was badly injured, escaping only by threatening to shoot his assailants.

His efforts won him much respect but few friends among the criminal fraternity. The rest of the community were well pleased, none less than the local landowners, gentlemen and farmers. In July 1843 more than 300 of them met in Ovington to present Snowden with a testimonial to his work: a purse containing fifty sovereigns (well over £5,000 in today's money) and a gold watch



**Morning Chronicle, November 14th 1846**

## ralph snowden

worth half as much again. Snowden was overwhelmed by the gift, and promised that "neither perseverance, exertion, nor readiness to act in the execution of my arduous duties shall be wanted" in the future.

Three years later in January 1846, as Snowden wrestled with the mystery of Startforth's double murder, the Wycliffe, Ovington, Hutton and Scargill Association held another presentation to the police superintendent. This time he received a solid gold ring and pencil case "as a testimonial of the high estimation in which he is held by those who have witnessed and experienced the benefit of the signal and indefatigable services which he has rendered."

There was a proposal in early 1847 to raise money for a public testimonial to Snowden for his efforts to bring Barker, Breckon and Raine to justice, but he died before this could be done.

As well as chasing criminals, Snowden was working on something that would keep his name and reputation alive long after his death: his textbook on crime and courts for police and magistrates. Entitled *The Magistrates' Assistant and Police-Officer and Constable's Guide*, it was published to much acclaim in November 1846. "Far more useful than any other such work," said the *Justice of the Peace* journal. "The most

perspicacious and complete treatise upon its subject we have ever seen," enthused the *Law Times*. "A work of great utility," agreed the *York Herald*.

It sold out fast, and new editions were printed regularly over the next half-century, updated by prominent legal experts but retaining Snowden's name in the title.

The book was still in general use well into the last century and it is today regarded as one of the most readable and illuminating guides to Victorian crime and criminal justice system.

SNOWDEN was born in or around 1805, probably in North Yorkshire though no record of this can be found.

However, just a couple of months after his death in 1847 a child was born in York to a police constable called John Snowden, who christened it Ralph Leconby Snowden. It seems too much of a coincidence not to deduce that the infant was named after his deceased uncle, and that Ralph and John were brothers.

If this is the case, John and Ralph were two of six children born to George and Elizabeth Snowden at Nunnington, a village some four miles south of Helmsley on the edge of the North York Moors. George, a blacksmith, had himself been born there in 1784, and in January 1805 married Elizabeth Leckenby at her birthplace, Whorlton (the village of that



## The man who wrote the bobby's bible

IF you trawl through newspaper reports of court cases at Greta Bridge in the early days of Victoria's reign, one name keeps cropping up: Ralph Leconby Snowden, police superintendent for an area stretching from Cotherstone to Gilling West.

It was a name known to everyone in the area, from the lowest petty criminal to the loftiest magistrate.

By the 1850s it was instantly recognised by law enforcers throughout the country after the publication of his guide to fighting crime and running the courts that remained every British bobby's bible until well into the twentieth century.

Snowden was born around 1805, almost certainly in North Yorkshire, and began his career as a law enforcement officer with the Preventative Service in Tyneside, one of the fore-runners of today's police. It could be dangerous work: the first mention we can find of him is in the *Newcastle Journal* of March 20th 1833, which reported him being attacked near Corbridge by four men who dragged him from his horse and stole his watch and money.

Despite this, he gained a reputation as a resourceful and effective policeman, and in 1839 was working undercover as what can only be described as a spy at Chartist meetings in Newcastle. Chartism was a national working-class movement for political reform in Britain which existed from 1838 to 1858, taking its name from the People's Charter of 1838, and had particular support in industrial areas. Its strategy was supposed to be exerting peaceful pressure on politicians to concede manhood suffrage, but it inevitably attracted those of a more revolutionary nature.

Snowden, suitably disguised, attended several Tyneside meetings and recorded what was said. In November 1839 he reported to the Newcastle magistrates that a Dr John Taylor, a republican, had urged Chartists to use gunpowder to achieve their ends; in December he took notes as a

ralph snowden

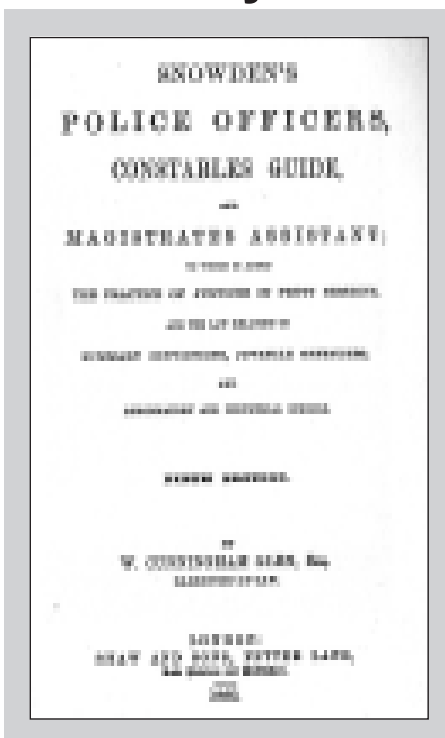
mason called Edward Charlton "excited a gathering of more than 100 men unlawfully and seditiously assembled" to rise up in insurrection.

For some reason – perhaps his cover was blown and his safety endangered – Snowden decided soon afterwards to leave Tyneside and further his career in the safer environment of North Yorkshire.

He applied for and got the job of superintendent of the Greta Bridge Constabulary. It was a time of transition for policing in England. Law enforcement had long been in the hands of village constables, often reluctant volunteers, and

local 'associations for the prosecution of felons' set up by landowners and gentry with the primary aim of pursuing poachers. The first proper police force had been established by Robert Peel in London only a decade earlier, and other major urban areas were now starting to copy the capital's example. It would be another couple of decades before rural areas followed suit.

Snowden was answerable to the extravagantly-titled General Association for the Protection of Property and Prevention of Crime within the Wapentake of Gilling West, an organisation chaired by the Earl of Zetland that represented local landowners in-



Title page of Snowden's textbook

## Detective Snowden's last case

*Two bodies, three suspects, one dogged policeman. JON SMITH investigates a double murder 170 years ago.*

THE news that young Joseph Yates and Catharine Raine had vanished overnight from their homes in Barnard Castle swept through the town on Sunday August 10th 1845.

Rumours abounded, the most popular theory being that the couple had run off together, though some wondered darkly whether Joseph had done away with the girl and then fled.

They certainly knew each other, but there was no evidence of any romantic relationship. He was a tailor in his early twenties, living in Galgate; a small, soft-voiced man described by some as almost effeminate. She was not yet seventeen, but had been living apart from her widowed father for years, lodging in Bridgegate beside the Tees, unemployed and perhaps taking the first tentative steps towards a career in the world's oldest profession.

For two days nothing was heard of the pair. Then on the evening of Tuesday 12th a servant girl walking beside the Tees at Whorlton, four miles downstream from Barnard Castle, came across a battered body wedged between rocks in the river. It was Joseph.

Speculation about his death and the whereabouts of Catharine continued for ten more days. Then she, too, was found dead in the river, 20 miles away at Hurworth.

A dreadful accident? A suicide pact? Separate inquests were held, the coroner and jury in each case content to bring in a verdict of "found drowned" without bothering to call any expert medical evidence.

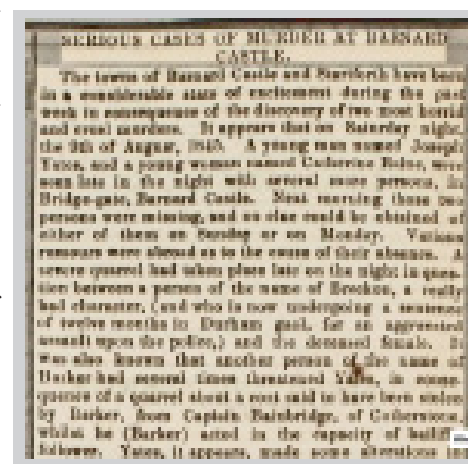
And there the matter would

### double murder

have rested were it not for local magistrates Henry Morritt of Rokeby and Archdeacon Headlam of Wycliffe, who shared doubts about the double death and asked Ralph Snowden, superintendent of police at Greta Bridge, to investigate.

Ralph Leconby Snowden was a ground-breaking detective, a 40-year-old Yorkshireman who had been appointed to take charge of the Greta Bridge police force at its inception in 1839.

Over the next six years he built up a nationwide reputation as a tenacious investigator and pioneer of efficient police procedure, winning a string of successful cases which brought him commendations and awards from grateful magistrates. In 1845 he was putting the finishing touches to a book based on his success, a guide to crimes, courts and convictions that would become the bible for Victorian police officers, JPs and court administrators



Yorkshire Gazette, August 8th 1846

throughout the country.

In the months that followed the mysterious deaths of Joseph Yates and Catharine Raine, Supt Snowden knocked on scores of doors in the Thorngate and Bridgegate area of Barnard Castle. It was a rabbit warren of narrow streets and back alleys containing tenements, workshops, pubs and houses of ill-repute, a place renowned as the haunt of criminals and prostitutes.

Its inhabitants were not usually enthusiastic about helping the police with their inquiries, and getting information from them was not easy. But Snowden persevered, and bit by bit he unravelled what had happened to Joseph and Catharine.

They were last seen, he discovered, walking together along Bridgegate towards the county bridge at around one o'clock on the fateful Sunday morning. A weaver called Francis Cooper came forward to say he'd spent the evening drinking with Joseph, and had

## double murder

left him near the bridge not long after midnight. Another weaver, John Robinson, remembered seeing Joseph and Catharine there a little later, Joseph with his arm round the girl, and they were talking. "I think they were tipsy," said Robinson, "because I saw them stagger."

Several Bridgegate residents told Snowden that they had heard shrieks during the night, coming across the river from the area known as the Sills on the opposite side. Snowden started questioning people in Startforth, and one resident, Alice Galland, told him that on the way to church next morning she had come across a pool of blood beside the road beside the Tees. The ground was trampled as if there had been a struggle and more blood was spattered on the low wall between the road and the river.

There was a young man staring at it, she said, looking "very pale and dejected". When she returned at mid-day the bloodstains had been covered by mud and dirt. Other people, including Startforth sexton Robert Crampton, said they, too, had seen the blood.

All this convinced Snowden that Joseph and Catharine were the victims of foul play, and before long he had discovered two more crucial witnesses.

The first was George Dobson, an accountant who came forward to say he had been enjoying a late-night pipe outside his home in Bridgegate when he saw Joseph and Catharine walking towards the bridge, followed by half a dozen other young people. One of them he recognised: 18-year-old George Barker, who lived in



**Scene of the crime: Joseph and Catharine crossed the county bridge and met their deaths on the road beyond, on the Startforth side of the river**

Galgate and, it transpired, had good reason to wish Joseph harm.

Some months earlier Barker had approached the young tailor asking him to carry out alterations to a coat that he claimed he had bought at a sale in Cotherstone. In fact it was stolen, and Barker was now facing trial at York Assizes for its theft.

Joseph was sub-poenaed as a witness, and on the day before his death Barker was overheard threatening to give him "a good milling" if he gave testimony in court.

The second new witness was a man called Jacob Solomon, who had seen the young man standing by the blood-stained path the morning afterwards and knew who he was: 18-year-old Thomas Routledge Raine. He was unrelated to the dead girl, though sharing the same surname: Raines were (and still are) plentiful in Teesdale.

Armed with the names of Barker and Raine, Supt Snowden delved further and discovered that the pair had been drinking together in various pubs on the fateful night,

accompanied by 23-year-old John Breckon. Witnesses were found who identified them as three of the group seen following Joseph and Catharine over the county bridge on the night they vanished.

Snowden was now in no doubt that Barker, Raine and Breckon had confronted Joseph and were responsible for his death, but despite all his efforts he couldn't prove it.

His investigations came to a frustrating standstill, and it was almost a year before someone came forward to give him the proof he needed.

ANN Humphreys was a 21-year-old factory girl, unmarried but the mother of a child fathered by Catharine Raine's brother.

She lived in Bridgegate with her father, sister and baby, and late one night in July 1846 she arrived in distress at the home of Elizabeth Sutcliffe, a friend living nearby, and asked her whether, if she knew about a murder, she would tell anyone about it.

"She was crying and seemed to be sore troubled about some-

## double murder

time they came back with a unanimous decision: Guilty.

Baron Rolfe agreed. It was impossible, he said, that anyone who had heard the evidence could doubt that the three men had not only committed robbery but were guilty of "two of the most barbarous murders that the annals of criminal justice can furnish."

Addressing the convicted men in the dock, he told them: "You have undoubtedly succeeded in defeating the ends of justice. I am perfectly certain that if the former jury had heard what has been detailed today, they would not have had the remotest doubt that you were guilty of two barbarous murders and that you had planned the murder of the young woman Ann Humphreys."

He could not, he said grimly, send them to the gallows he believed they richly deserved but he would sentence each of them to the maximum possible punishment available for larceny: transportation for 15 years.

BARKER and Raine spent the next three years in jails and prison hulks before being put aboard the convict ship *Scindian* in 1850 and shipped out to a penal colony in Western Australia.

Whether they eventually returned to England is unknown, though men of the same names appear in court records here in the 1870s and later.

We can find no record of Breckon being transported or indeed any further mention of him after the trial.

Ann Humphreys returned to her job as a winder in a



**Baron Rolfe, judge at the second trial**

carpet factory and in 1861 was still unmarried and living in Bridgegate. Ten years later, still single but now unemployed, she was lodging in Liversedge near Halifax. There is no census record of her after that and no mention at any time of her child.

Supt Snowden went back to Greta Bridge a broken man.

## Angry taxpayer protested at the high price of justice

THE first trial at York Assizes cost £570, the second £617, and there was a £122 police bill on top of that – a total of £1,309, about £140,000 in today's money.

It was far too much, said one angry reader of the *York Herald* in a letter to its editor in April 1847, "a lavish expense that should be the subject of searching inquiry and deep investigation."

The writer, who bravely hid his identity behind the *nom de plume* 'A Political Economist', said the enormous expense of

His relentless 18-month pursuit of Barker, Breckon and Raine had exhausted him, and by the time he had achieved their conviction his health was rapidly deteriorating.

On May 23rd 1847, just four months after the second trial, he died at the age of 42. He was buried at Wycliffe six days later. No trace of his grave remains.

● *The story of the Startforth murders and the subsequent trials was extensively covered in the newspapers at the time. Our report is mainly based on the most detailed ones we could find, in the Leeds Times of December 19th 1846 and March 20th 1847. If you'd like to read them in full, they're available on the British Newspaper Archive website.*

*The historic photographs of Bridgegate and Startforth come from the Parkin Raine collection held by the Fitzhugh Museum.*

*We'd welcome any further information about the characters involved, good or bad.*

dispensing justice was unfair to the tax-payer and "it would be a great national benefit if these heavy charges could be economised.

"If they could be procured and dealt out by those in authority at a cheaper rate to John Bull's pocket, more would that hearty and plain-spoken gentleman be satisfied," he concluded.

Quite how he thought the cost of the trials could have been reduced he didn't explain.



## double murder

as well.

They stepped gleefully from the dock, jubilant at having escaped the gallows so many thought they deserved.

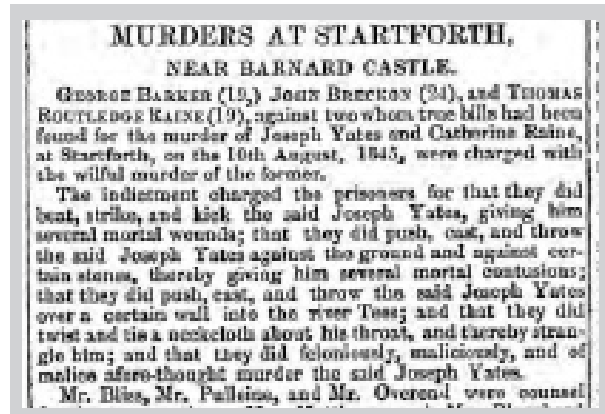
The press and public were astonished by the verdict. It was, said the *Bradford Observer*, “the most extraordinary trial ever heard within the walls of York Castle.” The paper was one of many to praise Supt Snowden for his efforts to bring the men to court: “For extraordinary incident, complexity of evidence and manifest research on the part of those who have got it up, we think it has been unparalleled.”

SNOWDEN was as astounded as anyone, and must have been furious that all his work had come to nothing. He had no doubt that Barker, Raine and Breckon were guilty, and it wasn’t long before he discovered that most of the jurors had agreed with him.

Today it is strictly forbidden to question or reveal what goes on in the jury-room, but back in 1846 there were no such restrictions and the press wasted no time in finding out how the verdict was reached.

Nine jurors, it transpired, had been convinced of the accused men’s guilt; three thought them innocent and stuck to their guns. They argued for more than eight hours before the majority gave in rather than face another night in the castle. Not guilty, they agreed wearily, and went home to bed.

Snowden wasn’t going to surrender so easily. While Barker and Raine celebrated their freedom over Christmas and Breckon looked forward



**Report of the trial in the Leeds Intelligencer, December 19th 1846**

to joining them as soon as his spell in Durham jail was over, the policeman was busy seeking fresh evidence, new witnesses and the support of local magistrates who shared his dismay at the verdict.

Within a fortnight of the trial ending he was ready to act. On the morning of New Year’s Day 1847 Barker and Raine were astonished to be re-arrested and brought before the bench at Greta Bridge, accused this time not of murdering Joseph Yates but of robbing him upon the queen’s highway. Bail was refused, and Snowden personally escorted them under guard back to York Castle.

They remained locked up there until March 16th, when a large and excited crowd in the public gallery at York Spring Assize Court saw them re-united with Breckon in the dock and charged with “feloniously stealing and carrying away one sovereign, two half-sovereigns, six crowns, six half-crowns and other monies, the property of Joseph Yates.”

The judge this time was not Mr Justice Cresswell but the far more assertive Baron

Rolfe, a distant relative of Horatio Nelson and a man destined twice to become Lord High Chancellor of England. One of his first decisions was to consider a defence plea of *autrefois acquit* – that the case should be dismissed straight away because the men had already been tried and acquitted, and nobody could be tried twice for the same offence. Nonsense, he ruled: this was a quite different case.

Over the next two days all the evidence produced at the first trial was repeated, with a few new witnesses. They included a man called Harrison who had shared lodgings in Bridgegate with Barker in the summer of 1845. He told the court that on the morning after the alleged robbery he picked up a pair of Barker’s discarded trousers and several coins – three or four shillings’ worth – fell out of the pockets. He remembered being puzzled by this as Barker had had only one shilling to his name the night before.

On the evening of March 17th the jury was sent out to consider its verdict, and this

thing,” Elizabeth said later. Ann, who had been clearly been out drinking all evening, eventually broke down and explained why she had asked, and Elizabeth persuaded her that she should go to the police.

The story Ann told Supt Snowden was dramatic and convincing. On the night Joseph and Catharine vanished, she said, she had been unable to sleep and gone out into Bridgegate. There she saw the couple being followed by Barker, Breckon and Raine, who invited her to join them. They all went over the county bridge, turned left and walked a short distance along the road beside the river to the Sills.

There Barker confronted Joseph about his appearance as a witness in the coat theft case at York, demanded money and then began to beat him up. Raine and Bracken joined in, “heavy blows were struck”, there were shouts of “Murder!” and screams from Catharine. Ann watched horrified as the three assailants shared out a handful of coins they had taken



**Bridgegate in the late 1800s, photographed from the Sills on the Startforth side of the Tees where Joseph met his death.**

## double murder

from their victim, who was slumped, groaning, against the wall beside the river. A few moments later there was a loud splash and Joseph had vanished. “The water was very rough, and he was gone,” said Ann. “I don’t know which of them laid hands on him. I heard no noise from him after the splash.”

The group then walked back towards the bridge. “Barker asked me if I would tell about it, and I said I never would.” He made her swear by God that she would say nothing.

“He then asked Catharine and she said she would be damned if she didn’t tell the police as soon as she got into town. I never saw her alive again. She went into the river. Barker said if he thought I would tell he would fling me in too. Breckon said that if I did tell, God would strike me dead in a minute.”

Ann went home, terrified, and told nobody of what she had seen until eleven months

later, when a combination of gin and a guilty conscience finally overcome her fear of divine wrath for breaking the vow to remain silent.

Snowden was delighted. Ann’s revelations, he was sure, would be enough to send Baker, Breckon and Raine to the gallows. The local magistrates agreed and issued warrants for their arrest for the wilful murder of Joseph and Catharine.

Finding Breckon was no problem: he was already locked up in Durham jail, serving a twelve-month sentence for assaulting a police constable. The other two had fled.

Snowden tracked Barker through Weardale to Stanhope, where early in August 1846 he found the wanted man among the hundreds of labourers working at the ironstone mills. “He was greatly excited and trembled much” when arrested, reported the *Yorkshire Gazette*.

Raine had travelled further afield, but Snowden doggedly followed his trail via Newcastle, Carlisle, Greta Green and beyond to the Scottish village of Ecclefechan. Backed up by three other officers – “well-armed with truncheons, Mr Snowden carrying loaded pistols,” said the *Gazette* – he found Raine at four in the morning of August 7th, asleep in a lodginghouse for navvies working on the nearby Caledonian railway.

Barker and Raine were taken back to Greta Bridge and remanded to Northallerton jail.

THE trial of Barker, Breckon and Raine opened at York Assizes on Monday December



**York Prison, now the Castle Museum. It still houses the city's Crown Court**

14th 1846 before the curiously-named Mr Justice Cresswell Cresswell, who would later make his reputation as a pioneer of divorce law reform but at this stage in his career was better known for his indecisiveness when faced with criminal proceedings. The court was packed, and the trial that followed made headlines across the country.

The three men were charged "that they did beat, strike and kick Joseph Yates, giving him several mortal wounds; that they did push, cast and throw the said Yates against the ground and against certain stones, thereby giving him several mortal contusions; that they did push, cast and throw the said Yates over a certain wall into the River Tees; that they did twist and tie a neck-cloth about his throat, and thereby strangle him; and that they did feloniously, maliciously, and of malice aforethought murder him." They were also due to be charged with Catharine's death, but the court decided to deal with that separately once Joseph's case was resolved.

Press reports said the prisoners "appeared quite unconcerned" as all firmly denied the charge. Three barristers called

### double murder

Bliss, Pulleine and Overend appeared for the prosecution; two more, Matthews and Blanchard, defended Barker and Raine, and a sixth, Pickering, represented Breckon.

Over the next two days a string of prosecution witnesses appeared before the court to testify against the accused. One by one they gave evidence of the three men following Joseph and Catharine across the bridge, of hearing the screams, of seeing Raine at the scene next morning trying to erase the bloodstains.

The star of the prosecution case, of course, was Ann Humphreys, who repeated the story she had told Snowden about her role on the fateful night and then faced extensive cross-examination from the defending counsel.

Was it not true, asked Mr Matthews, that Ann had told a friend that she'd seen the ghosts of Joseph and Catharine weeks after their bodies were found in the river, that Catharine "smelled strongly of brimstone", and told her not to be afraid? Was she not in truth suffering from delusions and was her story not the fabrication of a madwoman whose

word could not be trusted? Ann vehemently denied all these allegations and stuck firmly to her version of events.

To make sure that she would appear as a witness, and to prevent any attempt to nobble her, Snowden had arranged for Ann to be held in prison until the trial took place. It was a wise decision, the court heard. Matthew Cruddace, a prisoner who shared a cell at York Castle with Breckon, gave evidence that they had discussed Breckon's involvement in the Barnard Castle case and Breckon had said that "if ever he had the chance he would kill the girl."

There was also vital evidence from Emmanuel Tenwick, a blacksmith present when Joseph's body was recovered from the river at Whorlton, and William Anderson, a lecturer at the York School of Medicines.

Tenwick told the court that when he touched the dead man's battered head, blood flowed onto his hand. Anderson said that this would only happen if the wounds were inflicted before death; if they were the result of Joseph's body striking rocks in the river after he had drowned the blood would have coagulated or been washed away.

It was well into the afternoon of the second day of the trial before the prosecution concluded its case and the defending counsel had their say. There was, argued Mr Matthews on behalf of Barker and Raine, no conclusive evidence that they had beaten and killed Joseph. Nobody had seen them do it, and the alleged motives – revenge by Barker, theft by Raine – were pure supposition. Both men



**Bridgegate in Victorian days and, right, before mill demolition in 1957**

claimed alibis for the night of the alleged attack, and several witnesses were produced who swore that they had seen both men elsewhere at the time.

As for Ann Humphreys, said Mr Matthews, she was a woman of dubious character, the mother of an illegitimate child, a frequent visitor to the inns and gin-shops of Bridgegate; in short, a witness whose word was hardly to be trusted.

"It draws upon the utmost credibility of the human understanding," said the barrister witheringly, "to believe that she watched two people being murdered and said nothing about it for almost a year." The truth was that Ann "was too susceptible of imagination, led away with tales of horror such as she had read from the newspaper" and had made the whole thing up. Joseph and Catharine, Mr Matthews told the jury, had simply fallen or thrown themselves into the

### double murder

river while under the influence of drink.

Breckon's counsel, Mr Pickering, agreed. No motive had been suggested for his client's involvement and Ann Humphrey's statement was "false from beginning to end." Who could believe a statement made by someone who claimed to have watched a murder yet remained "completely unmoved without making any outcry or giving vent to any pity or sympathy". She was clearly lying, and his client should be acquitted.

There the defence case rested. It was gone 10pm and the judge decided that he had heard enough for the day. The jury, who had been listening to the case non-stop for almost 14 hours, must have been very grateful to get back to the rooms in the castle where they were accommodated through-

out the trial.

THEY were back in court at nine next morning, when the prosecution lawyers made their final speeches and Mr Justice Cresswell summed up all the evidence. He studiously avoided reaching any conclusions. What it all came down to, he told the jury, was whether they believed Ann Humphrey's account of what had happened. If so, they should convict the three accused of murder. If they had any substantial doubt, they must acquit.

The jury retired to consider their verdict at a quarter to two and it was almost nine hours before they returned to announce their decision: not guilty. The prosecution decided there was no point in pursuing charges over Catharine's death and Barker, Raine and Breckon were formally acquitted of her murder