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BARNINGHAM LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A selection of extraordinary lives featured in *The Archive,* newsletter of Barningham Local History Group

By JON SMITH

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Printed copies of this booklet may be obtained from
Barningham Local History Group
www.barninghamvillage.co.uk
Tel 01833 621374 or email jonxxsmith@gmail,com

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Introduction
The rich and the righteous, the doomed and the damned

WHEN in 2009 I produced the first issue of the *Archive*, the newsletter of Barningham Local History Group, I thought we'd be lucky to find enough material to fill half a dozen pages three or four times a year.

Eight years, 55 issues and half a million words later, I'm still astonished how much we've discovered to tell about the past of one tiny village and its neighbours.

Among the hundreds of stories we've printed are many about long-forgotten people who made headlines during their lifetime. Their existence would have remained buried in the past but for the arrival of the internet: the digitalisation of parish records, censuses, and above all local newspapers has made it wonderfully possible to re-discover them and put together the jigsaw of their lives and times.

This file offers a small selection of those I've found and written about in the *Archive*. They include the rich and the righteous, the poor and the persecuted, doers of good deeds and convicted criminals, the unbelievably fortunate and the tragically ill-fated, the daring, disgraceful, the doomed and the damned.

All gone but, thanks to the internet and the *Archive,* not forgotten.

Jon Smith
Archive editor
2017

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Who's who in this file

LEST WE FORGET

John Alderson
Dragoon at the heart of the Indian Mutiny

ON June 20th 1858, a young soldier from Greta Bridge sat down to write a letter to his parents 4,000 miles away.

John Alderson was 22, a private in the 14th Regiment of Light Dragoons, and he was about to take part in the last great battle of the Indian Mutiny.

John was among the thousands of British troops who later that day would storm the rebel-held city of Gwalior, south of Delhi, in a desperate attempt to wipe out its defenders.

"I hope we should soon have it over," he wrote to his parents, John and Emma Alderson, "for I have not been in bed for four nights past."

Soldier of the 14th Light Dragoons

John's father was a Startforth-born coachman working in Rokeby, probably for the Morritts. The family appears in the 1851 Rokeby census, which lists John, his parents, and sisters Harriet, Emma, Elizabeth and Mary.

His parents had earlier lived in Clerkenwell, Middlesex, where John was born, and Egglestone, birthplace of the two elder girls. The family had moved to Greta Bridge by 1846 when Elizabeth was born. Three more children – William, Eleanor and Jane – followed. Their mother came from Wiltshire.

We don't know when or where John joined the army, but he had probably been in India for some time. The 14th Light Dragoons, formed in 1715, had been permanently stationed in the sub-continent since 1840 and when John wrote his letter – the first chance he'd had to write, he said, for six weeks – the regiment had been in the thick of the Indian Mutiny fighting for many months. "We have done a good deal of hard and sharp work," he reported. "We gave the rebels a good drubbing at Coonah, but we lost many men with sunstrokes. My regiment alone has lost upwards of 50 men (sun-strokes and killed in action).

"We commenced the siege of Calpee on the 19th of May, and by the 24th we were in possession, and fired a royal salute from the walls. They retired on Gwalior, where we arrived on the 17th of June, and the prettiest little action came off that I have seen yet.

We completely took them by surprise and killed a great number, and drove the remainder out of their cantonments into the fort. We have surrounded the fort on every side. We are on the alert all day, and our lives are not worth two pice each

[a pice was an Indian coin worth one-sixty-fourth of a rupee – a tiny amount]. We shall stand a better chance when the cold weather sets in.

"I hope I shall live to see Old England again, but there arc ten to one against it; for you see men struck down by the sun, and dead and buried almost before you can look around.

"We took a great deal of treasure at Calpee and Jhansi, amounting to about 13 lacs *[1,300,000]* of rupees, but I expect the private soldiers will not get much of that.

"Some of the men got money from the Pandies killed, but I have never dismounted yet to strip any. The infantry have the best chance, but they earn it; for after a 14 or 15 miles' march they have to fight under a burning sun, 120 to 130 degrees. The 95th Regiment had 40 men dead of sunstrokes in one day. We go into action in our shirts and overalls. We expect to be sent to quarters, for the wet months, as soon as we have captured Gwalior.

"I hope it will turn out so, for it is now ten months since we were in quarters. Our tents would be of little use in the wet season."

The conditions sound appalling, but John was philosophical about them and his chances of coming out of it alive. "Dear Mother," he continued, "you will be sorrowful to hear of all this wretched work, but we are quite used to it now, and I take it a great deal cooler than I did.

"At first I used to bow my head when a cannonshot was ringing over us, but now that is altered. We must meet death when it comes, and a kind unerring Providence guides all for the best.

"I expect Rokcby looks splendid now – it will compared with this land; for we have come now over a thousand miles where scarcely a blade of grass was to be seen – nothing but a bare sandy plain, or high rocky mountains or Ghats. But this war will have an end soon. I am tired of it, and so is everyone; but still we can fight and conquer too.

"I hope you will read Sir Hugh Rose's despatches. He is our General, and speaks very highly of his brigade.

"I often think of old times by the Greta and the Tees. I should like to have but a chance of taking a few more trout from their streams.

"I hope all the children arc quite well. Give my love to all enquiring friends. I hope I shall meet them all again, but time makes great changes, and I might go out and lose the number of my mess before I am an hour older.

"I will be able to give you a few yarns when I get round the old fireside once more; as soon as we have settled this score here. We have lost almost all our officers (they have gone home, either on sick leave or wounded). We nearly lost our captain; he was wounded in three places at Coonah. Four of my draft-mates have been killed by the sun, and we have some that have lost their reason."

John stopped writing at that point, but we know he survived the onslaught on Gwalior because he resumed his letter four days later:

"The fortress and city of Gwalior were stormed on the 21st, by 2,500 British troops. Four of the head Rajahs are prisoners, and the Rana of Jhansi, who murdered all the Europeans of that city, was killed in the gardens, when the 8th Hussars charged. She was shot in three places.

"We took 2,000 prisoners and 25 guns; and part of our brigade are in pursuit of the fugitives. Still the loss on our side was heavy. I hope this will be the last encounter

for some time, for it is not pleasant to be moving about in a shower of bullets and cannon-shot. I have to thank God that I am still spared. If it should please Him to take me away, may His will be done.

"Bidding you farewell, I close my letter; and I remain, my dear parents, your affectionate son, John Alderson."

John's letter reached his parents, and it was reproduced in the *Teesdale Mercury* on September 15th 1858.

Whether he survived to return home we don't know: we can find no further record of him in the Army.

But there is a John Alderson, born in Middlesex (as our John was) at about the right date, who was a Chelsea Pensioner in the early 20th century. We'd like to think it was him.

● Not long after receiving John's letter, his family moved from Greta Bridge to High Coniscliffe. By 1871 they were in Staindrop, where his father died sometime in the next decade, and in 1881 Emma was listed as the household head, running the Kings Arms Inn in the village. In 1891 she was still in Staindrop, but retired, living with an eight-year-old grandson called... John. There's no record of them in 1901.

First printed in Archive 45, February 2015

Sources:

● *Brignall and Rokeby Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #10, 2011)*
● *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
● *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.com*
● *www.newspaperarchive.com*
● *www.nam.ac.uk (National Army Museum webite)*
● *www.ancestry.com*

Margaret Anderson

Servant whipped for not making her bed

GAMEKEEPER'S wife Jane Ellwood was walking back through the rain to her home at Rutherford on October 3rd 1892 when she saw a girl running across the fields towards her, crying and bleeding.

She recognised her as Margaret Anderson, a 19-year-old servant girl who worked at John Alderson's farm at Garnthwaite, two miles up the road at West Hope. Margaret was soaked through, her frock and apron shredded and open, and she appeared in a very wild state.

The reason soon became clear: she had, she sobbed, run away after being repeatedly thrashed with a riding whip by both her employer and his daughter Annie for not making her bed. Now she was heading for the river Greta to end it all.

A BRUTAL FARMER.

GRETA BRIDGE POLICE COURT

How The Northern Echo (top) and Teesdale Mercury reported the case

Mrs Ellwood took Margaret to the local land agent, Robert Weatherill, who sent her back to her mother's home in Spennymoor and then contacted the constabulary.

The following Wednesday Greta Bridge Police Court was packed when John and Annie Alderson appeared charged with assault. Both denied ever laying a finger on the girl.

Prosecuting, Mr Ingram Dawson said the evidence "would disclose a state of affairs which it would be difficult to realise in this civilised country". There had been systematic brutality for a considerable time which had driven Margaret to the brink of suicide. The defendants should be put behind bars.

Margaret appeared in court "respectably-attired", according to the *Teesdale Mercury* report, and told the magistrates she had worked for the Aldersons since she was 15.

"On Sunday October 2nd I was washing the milk bowls when my mistress came down and said I had not made my bed. My master took up a riding whip and beat me across the head several times. I have suffered a great deal in my head ever since. I have been just like a woman going out of her mind."

She said she usually made up her bed, but admitted that sometimes she just pulled the quilt over it. After the attack she did nothing: "There was no-one to complain to, I went on with my work as usual."

The next morning, she said, Annie came in and demanded to know if she had been talking to a Mrs James Holiday at Stang Foot. When she denied it, Annie took up the whip and struck her some 30 times

across the head, back and arms, saying "By rights my father ought to take a rope and hang you and then you would not be a torment to anyone."

Then, said Margaret, she was "told to kneel down and take up my clothes so she could do more" – a claim, said the *Mercury,* that caused a sensation in court.

Margaret refused, and when Annie threatened to fetch her father to carry out more punishment the servant girl ran away into the rain.

The Aldersons stoutly rejected the accusations, saying they had always been on friendly terms with Margaret and had even given her stockings as a present. The current problem had arisen after a brooch went missing in the house. When Margaret was asked whether she had taken it she had furiously denied being a thief and then thrown a coal-rake at Annie, who hit her twice with the whip to defend herself.

The court erupted in laughter when they produced a toy riding whip and claimed it was the one involved. "A formidable weapon," said Mr Dawson in disbelief. He showed it to Margaret: she denied ever seeing it before. The one they had used on her was a proper horse whip, with a cane top.

Annie's brother David was called as a defence witness. He had been there when the matter of the brooch was raised, he said, and Annie had acted only in self-defence after Margaret threw the coal-rake and then grabbed a brush, threatening "to split her — head".

It took the bench only a few minutes to reach their verdict: father and daughter both guilty. John Alderson was fined £2, Annie £5; they would also pay the costs of the case.

The decision, said the *Mercury*, "was greeted with loud applause, which was promptly suppressed by the officers of the court."

Margaret did not return to Garnthwaite.

First printed in Archive 17, June 2011

Sources:

- *Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
- *Barningham Brides 1581-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*

Edwin Atkinson
Joiner who took his uncle to court

BARNINGHAM joiner Edwin Atkinson finally lost patience with his Uncle Alfred in February 1899.

Months earlier he'd supplied Alfred, who farmed near Marske, with a dipping tub and drainer, and billed him for £5.

Alfred didn't pay up, and after several increasingly heated exchanges between the pair, 26-year-old Edwin issued a summons for his uncle to appear before Richmond County Court.

Alfred promptly put in a counter-claim. Details of this are unknown, but he may well have claimed the goods weren't up to scratch and not worth the £5 Edwin was demanding.

Uncle and nephew faced each other in court before Judge Templer on February 16, with a Barnard Castle solicitor called Mr Barningham representing Edwin and Mr C G Croft appearing for Alfred.

The judge ruled in favour of Edwin, and ordered Alfred to pay the fiver plus the costs of the case.

We don't know if the couple ever spoke to each other again after that. Alfred died in 1907, aged 76; Edwin was destined to die in the trenches in 1917.

● *The solicitor called Barningham appeared regularly in the local courts at the time, so often that if you search online for 'Barningham' between 1880 and 1910 you're more likely to come up with items about him than the village of the same name.*

First printed in Archive 24, March 2012

Sources:

● *The Yorkshire Gazette, February 18th 1899.*

● *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*

George Bell
Fanatic who got the apocalypse wrong

ON the night of February 27th 1763, thousands of people in London forsook their beds and gathered under the cold night air to await the Second Coming of Christ.

The world, they were convinced, would come to an end the next day. Those who believed would be transported to the glories of Heaven; those who did not faced the fiery pits of Hell.

The man who persuaded them this was going to happen was George Bell, a fanatical methodist preacher who, according to the authoritative *Encyclopaedia of World Methodism*, was born in Barningham.

He grew up here in the 1720s, went to London, joined the army, served as a corporal in the Life Guards, and in 1758 became an enthusiastic convert to Methodism.

Fired with his new-found belief and inspired by the Methodist leader John Wesley, he toured London in the early 1760s with a fellow fanatic called Thomas Maxwell, preaching a doctrine of sinless perfection.

"I am perfect," he announced. "I can no more fall from my state of perfection that God can fall off His throne."

God, he proclaimed, had done with preaching and the sacraments, and none could teach those who were renewed in love unless they enjoyed that blessing themselves. He claimed to be able to heal the sick, to foretell the future and even raise the dead – though he added hastily that the time for him to exercise this particular power had not yet come.

His words came to the ears of Wesley himself, who became worried about what Bell was doing in his name.

On November 24, 1762, Wesley decided to find out for himself what was going on. He went to one of Bell's gatherings, standing where he could hear without being seen, and prayed for nearly an hour with great fervour.

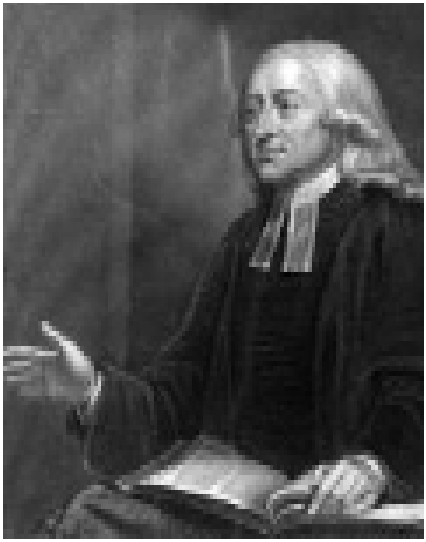
Then he told Bell that he did not approve of his message or the way he was spreading it among the people of London. But he went no further. If God was on Bell's side, Wesley told his brother Charles, there was no point in fighting it; if not, it would all come to nothing.

His refusal to denounce Maxfield and Bell publicly caused a serious division among the methodists, some of whom threatened to abandon Wesley for Bell and Maxwell. Wesley decided to defend himself, and on January 7th 1763 he wrote a letter to the *London Chronicle*. "When I returned to London two or

three months ago," he said, "I received various accounts of some meetings for prayer which had lately been held by Mr Bell and a few others. But these accounts were contradictory to each other. Some highly applauded them, others utterly condemned; some affirmed they had done much good, others that they had done much hurt.

"This convinced me it was requisite to proceed with caution and to do nothing rashly. The first point was to form my own judgment, and that upon the fullest evidence. To this end I first talked with Mr Bell himself, whom I knew to be an honest, well-meaning man.

"Next I told him they were at liberty for a few times to meet under my roof. By this means I had an opportunity of hearing them myself. The same things which they blame I blame also; and so I told him the same evening: and I was in hopes they would be done away, which occasioned my waiting till this time.



John Wesley

"But, having now lost that hope, I have given orders that they shall meet under my roof no more. What farther steps it will be necessary for me to take is a point I have not yet determined."

He did not have long to wait before being forced to make a decision. In early February Bell announced that he had had a revelation from above: the world was going to end on the last day of the month, when Christ would return to earth to sort out the sinners and the saved.

Wesley denounced these "prophecies of poor, wild men" which he had "opposed them from the moment I heard them." Whether he confronted Bell is unknown, but on February 4 the forecaster of imminent doom resigned from the Methodist Society and began to prepare for armageddon.

Five days later the *Chronicle* published another letter from Wesley. "I take this opportunity," he wrote, "of informing all whom it may concern (1) that Mr Bell is not a member of our Society; (2) that I do not believe either the end of the world or any signal calamity will be on the 28th instant; and (3) that not one in fifty, perhaps not one in five hundred, of the people called methodists believe any more than I do either this or any other of his prophecies."

He was wrong. Many did, and a wave of hysteria swept through London as the end of the month drew near. An account at the time said: "The terror occasioned by the wonderful prophecy spread far and wide." On the evening of February 27th Bell and many of his followers ascended a mound near St. Luke's Hospital in Euston to await events. Prayer meetings were held through the night.

Wesley spent the evening preaching at Spitalfields on an appropriate text –'Prepare to meet thy God'– and later wrote in his journal: "I largely showed

the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night.

"But notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake. I went to bed at my usual time and was fast asleep about ten o'clock."

At some point during the night the police stepped in. Bell was arrested, taken before a magistrate, and committed to prison for causing a public disturbance.

How long he remained in jail we don't know, but he eventually recovered from his religious fanaticism and faded from the scene, though continuing to preach as a radical reformer for many years.

He died "at a great age" in Paddington in 1807.

First printed in Archive 18, July 2011.

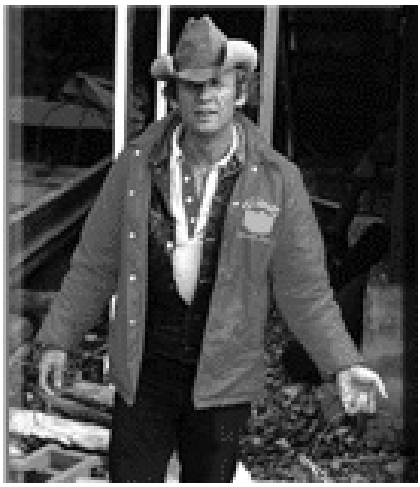
Sources:

- *Encyclopaedia of World Methodism*
- *Methodist History, 35:2 (January 1997)*
- *www.wesley.nnu.edu (Wesley Center Online): Wesley Letters*
- *www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk*
- *www.newspaperarchive.com*
- *www.historytoday.com*

Lanny Bryant
Wrestler descended from the gods

GO into Google, summon up the website of *Wrestling USA* magazine, and you'll find Lanny Bryant's life story.

Born in Amarillo, Texas, he's the magazine editor, a wrestling coach, a former professor of physical education and a member of America's National Wrestling Hall of Fame. He has a wife, five children called LanAnn, LaMonte, Cody, Lady and Shannon, and they're all descended from Alfred the Great.



Lanny Bryant

Well, that's what it says on the website, and there's a 73-generation family tree to back it up. The Bryants claim to have traced their family back to "practically every royal house of Europe" and their list of forbears dating back to 6 AD includes Charlemagne, Ethelred the Unready, Louis XIII, monarchs from Italy and Spain, any number of Dukes of Normandy, the Scandinavian kings Frithuwald, Frithogar and Freothelaf, and several Norsemen who thought they were gods.

Coming a bit more down to earth, there are connections, too, with the Cliffords of Ravensworth in the 1350s, and with the Bowes family of Streatlam in the early 1600s when various members were among the early settlers in Virginia.

And (which is why you're reading this) there's a link with the Vincents who lived in Barningham 700 years ago. The Vincents held land in the village as early as the reign of Henry II (1154-1189). William Vincent was a curate here around 1300, and John Vincent was at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. Eventually an Eleanor Vincent married a Thomas Beverley of Selby in about 1575 and their grandson Peter Beverley sailed to America and became a big noise among the early settlers. Eleven generations later along came Lanny.

We wondered how Lanny had traced all these Vincents, and sent him emails congratulating him on his achievement and asking if he'd mind telling us what his sources were. He hasn't replied.

First printed in Archive 14, February 2011

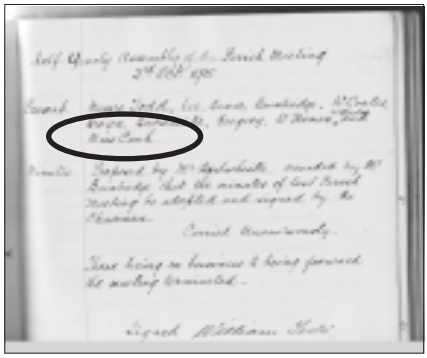
Sources:

- *www.wrestlingusa.com*
- *As Time Passed By, Merryne Watson, 1997*

Miss Cash
The woman who broke the sex barrier

TEN men made their way to Barningham's half-yearly parish meeting on the evening of October 3rd 1910. It was always men. No woman had ever set foot in a parish meeting, or in the vestry meetings which preceded them, even though the 1894 Local Government Act had given both sexes the right to attend, vote and stand as councillors.

So it must have come as an almighty shock to chairman William Todd and his nine fellow members when they arrived for the meeting in the village schoolroom and found Miss Cash was joining them.



Parish meeting minutes, October 10 1910: Miss Cash joins the men

We don't know anything about Miss Cash. She isn't listed on any local census return or electoral role, and the only mention we can find of her anywhere apart from the Barningham vestry minutes is in a *Teesdale Mercury* report of a marriage on May 30th 1914, when she gave the bride, Nellie Sayer, a china bowl as a wedding present. But she must have been someone of considerable nerve and determination to become the first woman ever to breach what had until then been an exclusively male bastion.

What persuaded her to go where no woman had ever gone before is uncertain, but she may well have been prompted by the rising tide of suffragettes' action in their battle for women's right to vote.

How her ten male companions reacted is unrecorded, but they clearly decided to escape from the situation as fast as possible. They approved the previous meeting's minutes by a unanimous vote (presumably Miss Cash put her hand up with the rest), decided that there was nothing else worth discussing, and went straight home (unless the ten stunned males went round the corner to the pub to recover). The meeting can't have lasted more than a couple of minutes.

Miss Cash was probably a bit disappointed, but evidently felt she had made her point because she didn't appear at any future meetings. Male supremacy reigned again until September 1913, when five women – Miss Cocker, Miss Atkinson, Miss Alderson, Miss Armstrong and Mrs Thomas, wife of the parish clerk – turned up at a public meeting to discuss establishing a Lighting Fund for the village.

Six other women attended another special meeting the following January, when the parish sent a petition to the promoters of a planned new railway to Hutton Magna, pleading that it be extended at least as far as Newsham, but no female ventured into the full parish meeting that April. Then war broke out. Suffragettes nationally abandoned their campaign for the duration. Mrs Thomas and

Miss Cocker put in a token appearance at the brief half-yearly meeting in September 1914, but after that no woman played any active part in parish meetings for another half-century apart from Lady Milbank, who came along to a couple of meetings with her husband just after they arrived in the village in 1919 – she consented to be a school manager – and Miss Elsie Gough, the rector's daughter, who turned up at a meeting of the lighting fund-raising committee.

Why were women so reluctant to get involved? No doubt there was a feeling that parish business was traditionally 'man's work' and there must have been plenty of household heads who disapproved of, or even forbade, wives and daughters getting ideas above their station.

The relatively few middle-class women who might have had the time, inclination and confidence to attend parish meetings were already busy with other organisations – the church, Sunday schools, sewing circles, jumble sales, waifs and strays committees (the parish magazines of the time were full of them) – and the tedium of parish meetings cannot have seemed an attractive alternative.

Working women – farmers' wives, agricultural workers, domestic servants – had homes to run as well, and it took a doughty labourer's wife with six children to tell her husband he was staying home at night to look after the kids while she went off to debate who should be the new assistant overseer.

So the parish meeting remained in the hands of the men, who in time also found better things to do. Attendances fell steadily over the next 20 years and eventually the parish meeting petered out. No meetings were held between 1931 and 1968 when, ironically, it was the women, in the shape of Barningham Women's Institute, who prompted its revival.

The 1894 Local Government Act was intended not only to give women a voice in local affairs, but to encourage more people of both sexes, rich and poor, to take part in the democratic process. In Barningham, at least, it proved a dismal failure.

For centuries most local government had been in the hands of vestry councils. Many of these – including the one at Barningham – had been largely dominated by the local squire, rector, schoolmaster and landowners. The 1894 Act took away their secular powers and handed them over to the new parish meetings, whose membership was open to all adults of either sex.

It was heralded as the dawn of a new era in municipal organisation, and Barningham's enthusiasm for the new body was reflected by the attendance at its inaugural meeting on December 4th 1894, when 33 people crowded into the village schoolroom. It was more than had attended any vestry meeting in the previous 25 years, and probably the most that had ever been to one.

Attendances at vestry meetings in the years 1885-1894 (the only years we have attendance lists for) had ranged from 16 to 24, with an average of 21 – about 30 percent of the adult males eligible to attend (the 1891 census recorded 69 men aged 20 or more in the village). Over the 1885-1894 decade 53 of them, 77 percent, attended at least one annual meeting of the vestry.

Then the parish meeting took over. Its first annual meeting in March 1895 attracted 20 parishioners, but the number dropped steadily over the next 30 years. At the turn of the century it was down to a dozen or so; by 1904, the meeting's

Attendances at vestry and parish annual meetings 1885-1924

Male pop'tn aged 20+
1891 69
1901 62
1911 56
1921 u/k

	VESTRY		PARISH		PARISH		PARISH	
	1885	23	1895	20	1905	13	1915	6
	1886	23	1896	19	1906	16	1916	12
	1887	24	1897	21	1907	10	1917	7
	1888	23	1898	19	1908	15	1918	9
	1889	20	1899	16	1909	13	1919	7
	1890	16	1900	14	1910	18	1920	6
	1891	22	1901	12	1911	19	1921	8
	1892	16	1902	19	1912	12	1922	9
	1893	21	1903	18	1913	14	1923	8
	1894	19	1904	8	1914	13	1924	7
Average over decade		21		17		14		8
% eligible males per mtg		30		27		25		14*
% attending at least once		77		75		57		50*

* Estimate

tenth anniversary, only eight people made an appearance for the annual meeting in April, and the half-yearly meeting the following October was abandoned when only the chairman and the clerk turned up.

The average number attending annual meetings in the first decade of the new arrangement, 1895-1904, was 16.7, a quarter fewer than the number at the last vestry meetings. The figure fell to 14.2 in the following ten years and to 7.9 the decade after.

By the 1920s the average number had fallen to only a sixth of the eligible males and fewer than half the men in the village turned up even once. No meetings at all were held in 1928, 1929 or 1930. One was called in 1931 but after that the parish meeting went into self-imposed abeyance until 1968.

The decline in attendance isn't really surprising. Even before the 1894 Act the vestry meetings had lost many of their ancient powers – the right to appoint constables, to oversee local sanitation or control the upkeep of local highways, for example – and the new parish meetings no longer had any say in church affairs.

Bit by bit their importance waned as more power passed to the new rural and district district councils, and eventually the 1925 Rating and Valuation Act got rid of parish overseers of the poor. This ended much of the parish's influence over local rates, tax collection and poor relief, and without that, there wasn't much left for Barningham Parish Meeting to do.

There were occasionally problems that attracted a reasonable gathering – rubbish being tipped in the beck at the moor end, horses frightening children on the green, flagstones vanishing from the road beside the rectory – but the agenda for many meetings was profoundly dull.

Often it consisted of little more than approval of the previous minutes, the re-election of the chairman (a suggestion that there should be a different presiding officer each year was defeated early on, and for the next 70 years only resigna tion or death introduced a new occupant to the chair), and the appointment of overseers, assistant overseers and

school managers (usually a shuffling of roles among existing post-holders).

Apart from the occasional brief debate about who should keep the parish bull and a "hearty vote of thanks" to the chairman for his services during the past year, on many occasions that was about as exciting as it got.

Eventually Barningham decided that it might as well not bother. Deprived of its *raison d'etre,* in 1931 it went into a lengthy sulk which from which it took almost 40 years to recover.

It wasn't until March 14th 1968 that the parish meeting next met, in response to calls by members of the village WI who wanted a forum to discuss maintenance of the village green. How parish affairs were conducted in the intervening 37 years remains something of a mystery.

It is difficult to imagine that there was nothing of sufficient importance in all that time to require a decision by the parishioners, but it seems that such decisions, if any, were made on their behalf by people (the lord of the manor, the rector and the district councillors?) who felt no need for formal public de bate. One decision that perhaps shouldhave been made by villagers was who had the Bull Acre, the parish's only asset.

In 1931 it was in the hands of Henry Chilton, who was allowed to use it in return for keeping the fences and gates in good repair, paying any rates and tithes, and providing the services of a parish-approved bull for which he could charge two shillings for each cow it serviced.

In the 1940s the field passed to Newby Jackson of Wilson House, who later transferred it with the rest of the farm to Dennis Lowes. By the time the revived parish meeting considered the question of the Bull Acre in 1968, they agreed with Dennis that there was "negligible demand" for the services of a bull and abandoned the requirement that one should be kept. They decided the field should be registered as a charity and let out at an annual rent, accepted an offer from Dennis of £12.60 to cover the time he had used it, and from April 1970 it was rented to Hilton Nicholson for £5 a year.

Today it is let by annual tender, and usually commands a price of around £70 a year.

First printed in Archive 6, April 2010.

Sources:

- *Barningham Vestry Minutes 1869-1894 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #3, 2010)*
- *Barningham Parish Minutes 1894-1931 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #5, 2010)*
- *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Parish Minutes book, 1968-date*
- *www.genesreunited.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*

James Coates
Schoolmaster who tried to shut the pub

AFTER six hard days working dawn till dusk in the summer of 1785, the young men of Newsham knew exactly how they wanted to spend their precious Sunday off.

A long lunchtime in the pub, a few games of cards, football or cricket on the green, a wager or two on whatever took their fancy, and back to the pub in the evening for another lengthy drinking session that, with luck, would last well into the early hours.

What they definitely didn't want to do was spend the day in prayer.

Their disregard of the Sabbath upset many of their church-going neighbours and positively horrified young James Coates, who ran a small school in the village.

> *A prefligacy of Manners seems to reign triumphant in our Village... Every sabath day is abused by meetings in the Public houses and Fields... People assemble at Thomas Atkinson's Public House and there in open Defiance of the Laws of God, spend this holiday in riot and drunkeness, to the no small joy of their Host, who (I am well informed) delights in telling of his Sunday's profits.*

Part of a letter from James to the Rev Zouch

He'd grown up with the revellers but had become a deeply religious young man, worried not only about about the fate of his own soul but also the souls of those around him. His childhood companions, he believed, were risking eternal damnation by spending their leisure hours in the inn rather than church.

Matters came to a head on Sunday July 24th 1785, when, he recorded in his diary, a large company of cricketers spent the day sporting "without control" while Thomas Atkinson's village pub did a roaring trade.

Among the drinkers was a bridegroom returning from his wedding at Kirby Hill, who abandoned his new wife and got spectacularly drunk before she came back later to drag him home.

It was not just the people of Newsham, either: its reputation as the fun place to be on a Sunday had spread, and young men and women were flocking in from Barningham and other neighbouring villages. Newsham, decided James, was "the wickedest place in Yorkshire" and something had to be done.

He wrote to a local magistrate, the Rev Thomas Zouch of Wycliffe, urging action to close down Atkinson's inn and over the next few weeks raised a supporting petition which he sent to the North Riding Justices.

Atkinson, it said, "has kept a very disorderly house, with gaming and drunkenness, even to the great Profanation of the Lord's Day", and his licence should be revoked immediately.

The Justices agreed, and Atkinson lost his licence on Saturday September

Newsham Place is on the right as you leave Newsham on the road to Hexwith. It's pictured above left in the 1960s before conversion into two houses. The Coates family lived in the house to the left of the long byre, which served as James' schoolroom. Right: the converted byre which has retained the name Newsham Place.

17th. His customers erupted in fury. Over the next few days there were counter-petitions (signed by many who had originally supported the closure but now had second thoughts), threats not only to remove pupils from James' school but also to kill him and the poor village constable who was expected to enforce the inn closure, and mass demonstrations in the village.

Atkinson's wife announced that she would keep the inn open and keep serving customers, law or no law. There was, James wrote in his diary on the 23rd, "very Great Disorder in the Town," with drunkards "stachering and roaring up and down threatening what they would do to me."

He was so alarmed that he armed himself with a broadsword when he went out, but was determined not to be confounded in his mission to reform Newsham. "I am through divine Grace undaunted," he wrote. "My design is for a good End."

It got worse. On the morning of the 29th a mob who had spent the night drinking in Atkinson's set off on a rampage round the village, bearing an effigy of James which they shot at as they passed his home "uttering Oaths and imprecations alarming to every sober Persons" before setting fire to it on the village green.

What happened next we don't know. James' diaries come to an abrupt end at this point, and he died not long after, aged only 26. It seems, however, that the inn eventually re-opened: a family of Atkinsons were recorded as innkeepers in the village four decades later (the pub, on the village green, became known as the Bull).

If all we knew of James was his battle against the blasphemous behaviour of Newsham's young men, we'd be forgiven for concluding that he was a small-minded, selfish and interfering religious bigot. That would be grossly unfair.

He was a remarkable young man, passionate, intelligent, curious about everything in the world around him, enthusiastic about his garden, his pupils, and a host of pastimes that included building telescopes and experimenting with hot-air balloons.

He had, as we've seen, strong moral and religious convictions. It was a time when science was throwing up many questions about long-established be liefs, and John Wesley's methodism was encouraging theological debate and attracting followers throughout the country. James followed developments

on both the scientific and religious fronts with assiduity. But he was not just a scholar. His surviving diaries, which cover the 14 months up to October 1785, reveal someone with all the problems, doubts and dreams of any young man then or today. He fell in and out of love with remarkable frequency, worried continually about his health (with some justification, as it turned out), and harboured visions not only of establishing a successful boarding school in Newsham but one day making his name in London.

Apart from recording everyday life in a small Yorkshire community, James' diaries also contain great human dramas.

There was the farmer who went to the gallows; the swindler who ruined his neighbours; the wife with the secret will; the girl who married a man old enough to be her grandfather, much to neighbours' shocked amusement, and gave birth to his son next day; the scholar who drowned hundreds of miles from home.

Most harrowing is the tragic story of poor Betsy Jobling, who eloped with her true lover rather than marry James, and found herself weeks later pregnant, paupered, and a widow.

We don't know why James died. There is nothing to suggest it was from anything but some natural cause: there are frequent hints that he was not as well as he wished and he was prone to headaches and other health problems. He may well have been carried off, like many of his era, by some form of respiratory illness, perhaps what was then called consumption and we now know to be a form of tubercular pneumonia.

He left behind a unique record of life in a small Yorkshire community in the late 18th century which will interest, inform, amuse and at times bemuse the reader of today.

● James Coates wrote at least four diaries. The first two have long since disappeared and never been recorded; the third was in existence some 30 years ago, when a selection of entries appeared in the *Teesdale Mercury*, but has since been lost.

The fourth was owned by history group member Michael Graham, of Newsham, who gave it on permanent loan to the North Riding County Records Office at Northallerton shortly before his death in 2011.

Barningham Local History Group has published a book, *A Fleeting Shadow, which* contains all that remains today: those parts of the third journal published by the *Mercury*, and the whole of the fourth journal, transcribed by Jon Smith from the original at Northallerton. It includes extensive footnotes, a foreword by local historian Marion Moverley, photographs and index.

First printed in Archive 26, July 2012

Sources:

● *James Coates Diaries, held at North Yorkshire County Records Office*
● *A Fleeting Shadow, Jon Smith, BLHG Publication #13, 2012*

Thomas Coates
A fortunate farmer's lad... or was he?

AUGUSTUS Sussex Milbank, brother of Barningham's lord of the manor, died of a fever in Monte Carlo on April 10th 1887, aged 59. He left more than £1 million in today's money – and some very intriguing questions.

Sussex was unmarried, and his will left most of the estate to his nephew Powlett – apart from one bequest that raised eyebrows among all who read it.

A fifth of the money, £2,000 (about £200,000 today), was placed in a trust, the income from which was to be spent "for the benefit of Thomas Coates, of Barningham, until he shall attain the age of 38 years", whereupon he would inherit the whole amount on condition that he had enlisted at the age of 18 in the 2nd Life Guards, the Royal Horse Artillery or the North Yorkshire Regiment.

Augustus Sussex Milbank

If he failed to do this, said the will, he would sacrifice his inheritance, and the money would go towards the higher education of Barningham schoolchildren instead.

Thomas Coates was a boy aged about 14 at the time of Sussex's death, the son of George Robson Coates whose family had tenanted Park House from the Milbanks for at least 40 years.

Robson – he always went by his second name – and his wife Margaret had produced at least 13 children between 1869 and 1884. Thomas, baptised in 1874, was their third surviving son. What his many brothers and sisters made of the astonishing bequest is unknown, but speculation must have been rife among not only the Coates family but the rest of the village as well. It certainly made headlines across the country.

"In the records of strange bequests made by eccentric testators there can be nothing more passing belief," said the *Leeds Times*, adding (using a word to describe Thomas that would have far different implications today) that "the gay young recruit who enlists under such conditions may assuredly count on being an object of interest in either of the regiments which under the terms of the will he may have to select for his home." The *Derby Daily Telegraph* headlined its report "A curious will". Nearer home, the *Teesdale Mercury* said that "the young man Coates... will doubtless embrace the opportunity pre-

sented to him, and make a man of himself. A good start in military life, if such a life be congenial to his tastes, is by no means a bad beginning."

It went on to give us a clue – the only one we can find – to the connection between Sussex and Thomas: "His knowledge gained abroad in the service of the late Squire of Barningham will stand him in good stead."

Service abroad? This sounds as if Thomas had been employed by Sussex as some kind of a servant on his visits to the south of France, where he customarily spent the winter in the hope that it would improve his health (he suffered badly from asthma all his life). If so, the boy must have made an enormous impression on his employer to earn his inheritance.

It must have occurred to some people at the time (though it was never, of course, openly suggested) that perhaps the relationship was rather closer than merely that of employer and employee. There's no evidence to support this: in his youth Sussex had fallen in and out of love with a variety of women, some more suitable than others, and throughout his life he was known as something of a ladies' man who, in his own words in a speech in 1863, had just "never dared to marry". In any case, Sussex drew up his will in 1885, when Thomas was too young to have become his servant or anything else.

The other possibility, again unspoken publicly but much more likely, is that Thomas was Sussex's illegitimate son. This would explain not only the legacy but also the requirement that Thomas had a military career, something that Sussex himself would have liked but was denied by his poor health. It would also explain why the rest of the Milbank family accepted the situation with apparent ease: if Sussex was the boy's father, they must have been aware of it. Such offspring were hardly rare and, indeed, Sussex's grandfather William was just such a child. Thomas, we think, could well have been the result of a dalliance between Sussex and Margaret Coates or, perhaps, some other member of the Coates family whose child Margaret agreed to raise as her own – again, not an unusual occurence. If this was the case, it's not surprising that Sussex took a close interest in him and eventually offered him employment.

Whatever the truth of the matter, it fell upon Powlett Milbank, as his late uncle's executor, to supervise the boy's future. He obediently took Thomas under his wing, and in 1891 the boy was working as a footman at the Milbanks' main residence, Thorpe Perrow. The year after that he reached the age of 18.

Did he enlist in the army, as the bequest demanded? We're not certain, but we've found evidence of a Thomas Coates of about the same age belonging to the 17th Lancers in South Africa during the Boer War, and in 1914 a Thomas Coates, recorded as a 38-year-old Barningham-born farmer who had served with the 5th Lancers for a period up to 1902, went to Leeds to enlist as a special reservist in the army.

If that was him, that would have been the year he collected his fortune. We think he probably did, though there's no record of it we can find. It certainly didn't end up going to further the education of Barningham's schoolchildren.

Nor can we find any further trace of Thomas. We do, however, know something about what happened to the rest of the Coates family after Sussex's death. Only 16 days later Thomas's mother Margaret died at Park House, aged 45,

Sussex Milbank's home, a model farm he created in Barningham: Sussex House on the left, Hawsteads to the right

and was buried in Barningham churchyard. We wonder whether she had any idea what was in Sussex's will, not published until the following December.

Margaret's death left the Coates family in disarray. Her husband Robson was not a good man. In 1882 he had been involved in a fight in the Blue Bell inn in Barnard Castle, when he and a drinking companion Richard Pearson were plying a woman with drink and decided to take on three soldiers who wanted to join in (Pearson ended up being hit over the head with an iron spittoon: his assailant got four months' hard labour).

On another occasion Robson was before the magistrates for stealing a sheepdog, and within a couple of months of his wife's death he appeared before Greta Bridge Police Court for failing to send his children to school.

Four months later, in November 1887, he suddenly decided to leave Park House and put everything up for auction – all the household contents, farming stock, hay and equipment. Where he and the children went is uncertain, but they remained in the area and Robson seems to have devoted himself to spending the proceeds of his sale on drink.

The following March he was in court again for stealing the keys to Barnard Castle town hall, opening its gates and "performing antics" inside. A month later he was before the magistrates again, this time accused of being drunk and disorderly after fighting with police who had been summoned to eject him from the Black Horse inn. He unsuccessfully denied the charges, arguing that he'd walked seven miles home that night through knee-deep snow which he couldn't have done if drunk, and was fined ten shillings with costs.

A few weeks later Robson was summoned before the Greta Bridge magistrates to explain why he hadn't paid £2 3s 10d rates still owing on Park House farm. His solicitor (confusingly called Mr Barningham) said his client "had neither stick nor stone" with which to pay, but in any case it was ultimately the responsibility of the landlord, Sussex's brother Sir Frederick Milbank.

The magistrates disagreed and ordered Robson to pay up. Sir Frederick was much embarrassedby all this, so much so that he wrote to the *Teesdale Mercury* saying

that normally he would have paid the rates. However, as Robson had been seen spending "considerable sums of money in Barningham and other places" after the farm sale, he, Sir Frederick, assumed the rates had been paid. He was prepared to pay them himself, even though Robson still owed him a large sum in rent.

We're not sure who paid up in the end. Robson then appears to have left the area, ending up in Sunderland where he died a year later, in July 1889, aged 45.

His younger children were taken in by their uncle James Coates, who farmed at Caldwell. Thomas, his fortune by then a matter of public knowledge, had started work as a footman at Thorpe Perrow.

● Among Sussex's other legacies was one to the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, to whom he bequeathed "a Royal watch of curious make and with revolving face," given to Sussex (he was always known by his second name) by his godfather, the late Duke of Sussex. Only two of these, made in Germany by Bushman in about 1710, are known to exist. One – presumably the one Sussex owned – is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The other was sold at auction in 2012 for £8,000.

The Prince also inherited a long turquoise chain, given by Queen Marie Antoinette in 1786 to Sussex's grandfather, the late Duke of Cleveland. Other legacies included Sussex's military albums, including one that had belonged to the Austrian Emperor, which were left to the officers of the 2nd Life Guards.

First printed in Archive 30, December 2012

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- *Barningham Brides 1581-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
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Ben Cole
Landlord whose will divided daughters

IN 1926 Parliament passed the Legitimacy Act, making it possible for the first time in English law for children born out of wedlock to claim legitimacy if their parents later married.

Among the first cases brought under the Act was one in Teesdale, an acrimonious court battle between brothers and sisters over who should inherit the worldly goods of a Smallways innkeeper.

At the heart of the case was 60-year-old Hannah Elgie. Born at Cold Kirby near Rievaulx Abbey in August 1871, she was the daughter of a 20-year-old unmarried servant girl called Jane Metcalfe who registered the father as unknown on the birth certificate.

Despite that, Jane had a pretty good idea who it was: Ben Cole, a young farm labourer from the same village. They had met at the Northallerton hirings in 1870 and had been "walking out together" ever since.

Ben Cole, pictured around 1920

After Hannah's birth the relationship continued, and when Ben discovered in 1872 that Jane was pregnant again the couple moved with baby Hannah to Wycliffe, where they got married.

A second girl, Sarah, was born soon afterwards; a third, Alice, followed two years later; and then came two sons, the first named Ben after his father and the youngest Thomas. The family moved around as the children grew up, living among other places at Shildon, Evenwood, Gainford and Piercebridge, until Ben finally ended up as landlord of the Smallways Inn.

All the children, Hannah included, were recorded in censuses and school rolls with the surname Cole, and it was under this name in 1896, when Hannah became engaged to a Newsham farm labourer called Thomas Elgie (or Elgey: it varies in the records), that she published the banns of marriage in Barningham and Wycliffe churches.

She was much taken aback when, after the banns had twice been read out unchallenged, her father suddenly called on the Rector, the Rev Spencer Gough, and said that they were invalid because her surname was Metcalfe, not Cole. Why he did this is uncertain, but there is evidence that he didn't wholly approve of Hannah's choice of a husband:

he didn't attend the wedding, for a start. Whatever the reason, he was adamant that Hannah was not to be married under the name Cole, and after talking to the groom she signed the marriage register as "H Metcalfe, lately known as Cole".

Hannah became Hannah Elgie, and it may be that, like her mother before her, she'd left marriage a bit late. When the 1901 census was taken five years later the Elgies were recorded in Newsham as having two young sons, John, aged three, and one-year-old Thomas... and a ten-year-old daughter called Edith Cole who'd been born in Gainford when Hannah, presumably her mother, was just 16. Who her father was we don't know.

Ben and Jane left Smallways around 1905 and went to live in Gainford, handing the pub over to their son Ben. He died in 1915, and it passed to his widow Ada who ran it until her death in 1960.

Hannah's sister Sarah married a Joseph Butler and they ran the Dun Cow pub in Newsham. The second sister, Alice, also married and went to live in Leeds. Their brother Thomas was killed fighting in the first world war.

The family rift erupted after Ben died in 1929 and was buried in Barningham churchyard.

His wife had died 18 years earlier and he hadn't left a will, and Hannah's sisters Sarah and Alice decided that his estate – worth £5,000, about £500,000 in today's money – should be divided four ways between themselves and the children of their brothers Ben and Tom, leaving Hannah nothing on the grounds that she wasn't one of Ben's legitimate children. Hannah was horrified, took legal advice, and raised a petition under the new Legitimacy Act.

Sarah and Alice filed an objection and the case finally came before His Honour Judge Richardson at the County Court in Barnard Castle on October 21st 1931. Four barristers were in attendance – one representing Hannah, one for her sisters, one for the grandchildren and one from the attorney-general's office who presumably was there to keep an eye on what must have been one of the first cases brought under the new law.

Hannah's barrister, Mr E G Sykes, told the judge that the strongest evidence that Hannah was really Ben's daughter was the family Bible, in which Ben had listed all his children with Hannah top of the list.

Hannah herself gave evidence, saying Ben had never denied being her father. He had always called her "Our Hannah".

She was backed up her mother's sister Elizabeth, who confirmed that Ben and Jane had been courting when Hannah was conceived and that Ben had always acknowledged paternity of her. "He married her mother to father the child," she said.

Other witnesses included Ada Cole, widow of Ben junior, who gave evidence that Hannah had always been treated as Ben's daughter; her sister Mary Lodge, who told the court that Ben had told her he'd got Jane pregnant after the Northallerton hirings back in 1870 and that the baby had been called Hannah after Ben's sister; and Ben's brother Mark, who said Ben had talked of making a will in which he would treat all the children alike, including Hannah.

So far so good for Hannah. But then her sister Sarah took the stand. She had, she told the judge, heard her father declare that Hannah "was no daughter of mine". She disputed the handwriting in the family Bible, saying her father didn't

Landlady Ada Cole and child outside Smallways Inn around 1920, when the A66 still ran just yards from the front door.

know it existed as her mother kept it locked in a drawer. Her sister Alice also gave evidence, describing how her father had refused to allow Hannah be married under the name Cole.

Summing up, the judge said it was a very serious case. He didn't think the Bible was very important, and it was quite natural that Ben should have treated Hannah as one of the family.

The critical event was Ben's attitude to Hannah's wedding. He could not understand why Ben insisted on her being married with the name Metcalfe. "It seems more than the pique of a man whose daughter was marrying against his wishes, and points rather against Ben Cole being her father," he said.

"She was really married as not being the daughter of Ben Cole." As a result, he was not satisfied that Hannah had made out her case, and the petition was refused.

Hannah died in 1940. Whether she and her sisters ever made their peace we don't know.

● Ben Cole's estate was worth the equivalent of half a million pounds – a tidy sum for a man who started off life as a farm labourer.

Not only did he own Smallways Inn and its adjoining 52-acre farm, but he had acquired both the Dun Cow and Black Bull Inns at Newsham, the Shoulder of Mutton and 19 acres at Kirby Hill, and an eight-acre smallholding between Newsham and Barningham. "He may just have been very canny and gradually built up his investments," says his great-great-granddaughter

Lynne Otterson. "There are reports in the *Teesdale Mercury* referring to Ben renting land, farming, being a licensee, a hawker, and a carrier – he was one of the last of the old market carriers whose horse-drawn conveyances so regularly visited Barney market each Wednesday with his load of passengers and their wares.

"There is another reference to him running a wagonette to Barnard Castle – I imagine this would be a fore-runner to a motorised bus service.

"I expect he would also be paid rent by his daughters-in-law who were in the Smallways Inn and Black Bull house, and by the tenants of the other properties."

She was intrigued by our story of the sisters' court battle over who should inherit. "From my point of view (and that of my sister) as a great-great-grandchild of Ben and descendant of Sarah Cole/Butler who seems to have been one of the prime movers in the case, it reflects badly on our side of the family.

"But I'd like to think that it was two or three generations ago and no-one will hold it against us personally!"

Wednesday, October 21st, 1931.

THE COUNTY COURT.

...UESDAY.—Before his Honour, Judge ...ichardson.

Legitimization Petition Fails.

A petition under the Legitimization Law ...ecting the estate of the late Mr Ben Cole, ...allways, Newsham, was heard by his ...onour, the case occupying several hours. ...rs Hannah Elgie, West Hartley, Eggle... ...claimed legitimization as the natural ...ghter of Mr Cole, who married her ...ther after her birth in 1871.

...etitioner was represented by Mr E. G. ...ker, barrister, instructed by Messrs ...mer and Hinks, Darlington. Mr C. I. ...nkland, barrister, instructed by Messrs ...ith and Co., Leeds, appeared for the ...pondents, the two legitimate daughters of ...r Cole—Mrs Holden and Mrs Butler; Mr ...J. Swainston Goodger, Barnard Castle, for ...remainder of the family as guardian

The Teesdale Mercury's report of the court case

First printed in Archive 34, June 2013

Sources:

- *BLHG members Lynne Otterson and Barbara Mattley, descendants of Ben Cole*
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Muriel Currie
Schoolmistress defeated by defiant pupils

WHEN William Thomas retired in 1919 there was nothing but praise for what he'd achieved in his 22 years as headmaster of Barningham village school.

Nobody argued with Mr Thomas. From the day he arrived in 1897 the school boasted an exemplary record, praised every year by government inspectors for its organisation, discipline and academic achievement.

He was, by all accounts, a strong, fair and dedicated teacher, highly respected by pupils and parents alike. "The children are beautifully taught and showed a very pleasing interest," said a church inspector of scripture lessons in 1902. "The school is ably conducted and intelligently taught and trained," reported the Board of Education inspectors the year after. "Quite excellent," was their verdict in 1910, and "the whole tone is admirable" in 1916.

The school managers' solution to indiscipline: the cane, and plenty of it

Year after year there were similarly laudatory reports as the school's results were repeatedly well above average. Pupils' behaviour was good, too. In all Thomas's years as headmaster there were only two complaints, both about boys using "profane and disgusting language" in public. They had picked it up, the school managers claimed, from men they overheard in the village reading room, and the solution was simple: a hearty dose of the cane. Mr Thomas agreed, and responded appropriately.

A generation of Barningham villagers passed through his hands before he finally hung up his mortarboard in 1919 and handed the job over to someone else. That was when things started to go wrong. In his place the managers appointed the school's first-ever headmistress, Miss Muriel Farrow Currie.

She was just 28 years old, the daughter of a teacher in Wakefield, and she had probably never held a cane in her life, let alone wielded one. Her starting salary was £130 a year, little over half the amount Thomas had been paid.

Miss Currie arrived with high hopes, and they lasted about a week. The pupils took one look at this slip of a girl who was replacing Mr Thomas

They looked innocent enough, but Barningham pupils like these (the class of 1911) destroyed Miss Currie's dream of a career in teaching

and decided the days of strict obedience and good behaviour were over.

Attendances dropped to a third, and the problems began. Only a month after Miss Currie arrived the school managers reported that the police had to be called to deal with two boys (not her pupils) who had "occasioned much trouble ringing the bell out of school hours" before breaking into the building and "disturbing school furniture and books and disfiguring the blackboard." A few days later another boy rushed into her classroom in the middle of lessons and tried to take seize money from one of the pupils.

The managers were appalled, and outraged even further when a group of misbehaving pupils who had been ordered by Miss Currie to stay behind after lessons refused to obey her and simply "bolted out of school". The only way to deal with such "gross disobedience and defiance of the mistress," said the managers, was the cane, and lots of it. They told her to find a stick and use it, and if that didn't solve problems with discipline she was to call for the nearest muscular manager and let him sort it out.

It didn't seem to do much good. More than a year later Miss Currie was still reporting problems.

"On arrival at school this morning I found the desk broken open and the stick missing," she wrote in the school logbook on November 22nd 1920. A few weeks later a group of children using the school in the evening to practice for a Christmas concert ran riot, scattering library books around, walking over pupils' paintings with muddy feet and smashing their cardboard models.

Meanwhile, a government inspector had been round and his report didn't

make good reading. "The discipline is weak," he said bluntly. "The Head Teacher must obtain a better grip of the children." His report, sent to the school in June 1920, was so bad that poor Miss Currie kept it away from the managers, who didn't learn of it until six months later.

It was all becoming too much for Miss Currie. When she met a local farmer, Edward Brown, and he popped the question she didn't hesitate. On February 2nd 1921 she announced she would be leaving in the summer to get married.

The managers accepted her resignation, probably with few regrets, and promptly demanded that the North Riding Education Committee find a new head teacher. A man, they said. "We feel strongly that the school needs a master."

Northallerton was sympathetic, but male teachers were hard to come by: a whole generation had just died in the trenches. They advertised for a master in vain; and when they opened the appointment to teachers of either sex only one applied, Mrs Florence Roper, and she was hard to please.

Arriving in Barningham for an interview, she demanded to see the cottage she would be living in ("next to Woodside," say the minutes) and accepted the job only on condition that the house was fully repaired, brought up to date, and painted inside and out. The managers, grateful for anyone who would come, agreed.

Florence Roper was 42, mother of a 12-year-old daughter, and the widow of a tailor who had been killed in France in 1916. She had been headmistress at the village school at Well, near Bedale, and was a much tougher character than her predecessor.

A year later, in 1922, the school inspector reported that "this school is making progress." Attendances had improved, lessons were carefully prepared, the boys were behaving, the girls were receiving sound instruction in needlework, and "the singing is tuneful".

Miss Currie, meanwhile, had got married to Edward, moved into Glebe Farm with him, and had their first child in 1922. She died in 1946.

First printed in Archive 13, January 2011

Sources:

- *Barningham school logbook, held at Durham County Records Office*
- *Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Brides 1581-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

Frederick Dinsdale
Lawyer who collected aud-farrant words

WOULD you *chirm* or be *jarbled* if a *twitchbell* or *tenging ether* got *hanckled* in your *claise*? Do you know the rules for playing *blob-cap* or *hitch-i-beds*?

You'll find the answers in *A Glossary of Provincial Words used in Teesdale in the County of Durham*, first published in 1849, a 170-page compendium of 2,000 local words and phrases, with an explanation of many long-lost rural customs, pastimes and curiosities. It's fascinating.

The glossary was the work of Frederick T. Dinsdale, a man of many talents. He was born in Newsham around 1803, trained as a lawyer and became a doctor of law, a judge and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, with a passion for the language, tales and ballads of the North.

As well as producing the *Glossary*, he edited and illustrated a book of the ballads and songs of David Mallet, whose *Ballad of Edwin and Emma* was based on the tragic story of Bowes sweethearts Roger Wrightson and Martha Railton.

Cover page of the 1849 book

Little is known of his personal life. He left Newsham at an early age (in his preface to the *Glossary* he talks of Teesdale as a district 'with which I was once well acquainted') and appears to have spent much of his career travelling the country to preside over county courts. In 1861 he was recorded in the census as a visitor at Staindrop Hall, and ten years later he was at the Imperal Hotel at Upton-upon-Severn.

Between these two dates he appears to have got married, late in life, but we have yet to find out anything about his wife, their home or where he died, apparently sometime in the 1870s.

He was a modest man, so much so that the *Glossary* did not even carry his name as the man responsible for its creation, and he ended his preface to the book by saying self-effacingly 'that on commencing this collection I had not the least intention of ever publishing it'. It was probably the success of his Mallet book, published in February 1849, that encouraged him to publish the glossary six months later.

We should be grateful that he did, because much of what he recorded would otherwise probably have been lost forever. Some words, of course, have survived

and may be heard today at sheep sales, auction marts and the back bars of village pubs up the dale.

But without Frederick Dinsdale we would have been deprived of such wonderful words as *eccled* and *minniminni-moni-feet*, and know nothing about long-lost customs like *throwing the stocking* or *riding the stang*. Dip into the pages and you'll not be *bawked* or *blonk'd.* You may even find yourself a bit *gocks-bobbed.*

Translations: *Aud-farrant* old-fashioned; *bawked* and *blonked* disappointed; *chirm* moan; *claise* clothes; *eccled* tried; *gocks-bobbed* amazed; *hanckled* entangled; *jarbled* wet; *minni-minni-moni-feet* centipede; *tenging ether* dragonfly; *twitchbell* earwig. *Blob-cap* and *hitch-i-beds* were children's games, *throwing the stocking* a wedding custom, and *riding the stang* a painful punishment for errant spouses.

- Barningham Local History Group has reproduced the glossary in a publication called *Aback to Yuvvin* (the first and last entries in the book). There's a copy of the original in Barnard Castle library.

First printed in Archive 8, June 2010

Sources:

- *A Glossary of Provincial Words used in Teesdale in the County of Durham*, 1849
- *Newsham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #7, 2010)*
- *Aback to Yuvvin (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

John Fraunceys
Sinner assailed by the Powers of the Air

IF you take the footpath from the entrance to Long Green across Newsham and Barningham Moors towards Haythwaite, you pass Frankinshaw's Well and Cairn.

Where did it get its name? According to the *Lanercost Priory Chronicle* of 1289, one John Fraunceys of Gayles, also known as Frankish, that year "fell into the grievous sin of turning his back upon the Church, either visiting his beasts or wandering far and wide during the hours of Sunday service."

One Sunday, the story goes, he went further than usual to a remote spot above Newsham, where he came across "the powers of the air" who had assumed the form of dwarves dressed in monks' habits.

These powers called upon him to participate in a mock service and then fly away with them. But, "recalling the Passion of Christ he was able to remain on earth until these spirits of iniquity departed."

On arriving home, says the *Chronicle,* he took to his bed "and struggled for eight days to fly, until by confession and absolution he was cured."

You have been warned.

First printed in Archive 45, February 2015

John Gibson
Shopkeeper whose money disappeared

JOHN Gibson and George Martin were two very worried men when they arrived in Leeds for the Summer Assizes on Monday July 26th 1819.

Gibson, a Barnard Castle shopkeeper, was worried because a few months earlier he'd filled a box with bank tokens worth £66 (at least £3,000 in today's money), sealed it securely, and sent it off to his family's store in London.

It got as far as the coach office at Greta Bridge, where it was due to be transferred to the Glasgow to London mail coach. And then it vanished.

Also in court was George Martin, another worried man. Not only was he landlord of the Morritt's Arms at Greta Bridge where the transfer was supposed to take place, but he was also one of the coach proprietors – and he was being sued by Gibson, who wanted compensation for the missing money.

Barnard Castle postman Robert Davies gave evidence that he had taken the box to Greta Bridge, and Martin did not dispute this: indeed, he admitted receiving it and putting it on the list of items to go to London.

Miss Raynor, book-keeper at the Greta Bridge office, said she had booked the parcel and it was put into the coach, on an inside seat.

After that its whereabouts were a mystery. Nobody knew whether it was stolen from the coach before it set off, whether it was taken from the coach during its journey south, or whether it disappeared when it reached the capital. The only thing certain was that it never arrived the shop in London. Gibson argued that the coach company in general and Martin in particular were responsible for the safe delivery of the box. Surely, he said, putting it unguarded on an inside seat was negligence? Martin should reimburse him the £60.

But Martin had an answer to that. Gibson, he said, had been distinctly told by the postman in Barnard Castle that the coach proprietors would accept no responsibility for parcels worth more than £5 unless he paid an extra insurance fee – a sort of early form of registered post. Postman Davies confirmed that he had warned Gibson about this, but Gibson declined to pay extra.

Martin's counsel said the case should be dismissed, and the jury agreed. Gibson went home to lick his wounds, Martin back to his inn to celebrate.

No trace was ever found of the box or its contents.

There was no local police force in those days, so no one bothered to find the coach driver, passengers or visitors to the Morritt Arms to ask what they saw, if anything, on the day the box vanished.

Who took it? The case is still open.

First printed in Archive 47, June 2015

Source:

- *Durham County Advertiser, August 1826*

Rev E Spencer Gough
Rector who brought an alligator home

THE Rev Edwin Spencer Gough was the kind of clergyman beloved of Victorian England: a muscular Christian, a renowned sportsman, a man of absolute conviction, good humour and boundless energy who threw himself into his community and dominated its religious and social life for decades.

The Rev Gough, pictured c.1910

Gough – he always signed himself *E. Spencer Gough,* and we think Spencer was the first name he preferred – was born in London in 1845, the son of a headmaster whose family originated in Ireland. He won a Greek scholarship from Godolphin Grammar School in Hammersmith to Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of 17. After further study at Kings College, London, he graduated in 1867 and the following year moved to Leeds, where he became a curate at St Pauls Church and was ordained as a priest in 1870.

The same year he met and married an American girl, Caroline Lydia Morand. She was the 25-year-old daughter of Augustus Morand from Philadelphia, who had become famous on both sides of the Atlantic as one of the earliest pioneers of photography. His family had fled to America from France to escape the Revolution in the late 1780s, taking on the new surname of Morand to avoid identification. Augustus died in Barningham during a visit here in 1896 and is buried in the churchyard.

How and where his daughter met the young curate is uncertain, but the most likely explanation is that Caroline was visiting England with her father at the time. They were married in Leeds, where Gough got a new job as chaplain to the city's General Infirmary, and their first child, George, was born in 1871. Five more followed – Henry (1873), Mary (1876), Elsie (1879), Agnes (1880) and Francis (born during a visit to Pennsylvania in 1885).

In 1877 Gough became vicar of the parish of Burley in Leeds, and held the position until 1889 when he was offered the rectorship of Barningham. He arrived here full of enthusiasm and new ideas. Within months he had launched a massive fund-raising campaign to restore the church (in little more than a year it made over £1,500 – an enormous sum in those days) and a complete renovation of the building, inside and out, was completed

by the end of 1891. He started a parish magazine, chaired the vestry meeting, set up committees, organised the reading room, presided over concerts, oversaw the day and Sunday schools, and generally got involved in every aspect of village life – as well, of course, as carrying out his day-to-day ecclesiastical duties of preaching to, baptising, marrying and burying his parishioners.

He became Rural Dean of Richmond North in 1899 and an honorary canon of Ripon in 1911.

It was a busy life, but it didn't stop him pursuing his lifelong passion for fishing – he became chairman of the Yorkshire Anglers' Society in 1885 and in 1892 news of a salmon he caught in Ireland made *The Times* (see right). He had the fish stuffed, brought it back to Barningham in a handsome display case, and when he retired in 1925 presented it to the village school, now the village hall.

It remained on show there for almost 80 years, quietly rotting away, together with a copy of the *Times* report and a note from Gough saying the fish was 45.4 inches long with a 13.4-inch tail fin. It disappeared mysteriously some years ago and is still mourned by some (see *Archives 2 & 3*).

Salmon Fishing in 1892

By Mr. Henry Ffennell

At Ballinahinch a remarkable capture, for that district, was made by the Rev. E. Spencer Gough. Fishing with a 14 ft rod and with sea trout gut and a small fly he landed, after one-and-a-half hour's play, a male salmon, which, when weighed in Dublin two days after it was killed, scaled 37½lb. No doubt had the fish been weighed immediately after capture it would have been found to have considerably exceeded the above weight. So far as my researches go this fish is the largest taken at Ballinahinch of which we have reliable information. Some twenty years ago a salmon of 301b, was captured in the nets. Since then the heaviest salmon landed in the district was one of 261b, which was caught with the fly. The salmon taken by Mr. Gough, though not bright in colour, was a handsome shaped fish.

From *The Times* of April 7 1893.

Gough was a keen all-round sportsman, a regular on the grouse moor and an enthusiastic billiards player. He also found plenty of time to travel. In the first 20 years of his marriage he crossed the Atlantic on average once a year (he became known to ships' crews as the 'Bishop of the White Star Line'), visiting his wife's family, preaching in Philadelphia and exploring the United States.

Gough was an ardent naturalist, and on one occasion delighted his children by bringing home a live alligator from South America, which lived out its days in an aquarium at the Rectory. "It is curiously interesting to observe the movements of this strange creature and watch the lazy and languid evolutions of the monster when tempted onto the dry rock by the warmth of the sun," said a profile of Gough published in the *Teesdale Mercury* in October 1894.

It went on to describe how "skins of serpents and rattlesnakes, together with a magnificent and fearful-looking owl and an exquisite little oriel and nest adorn

the walls of the house." In later life Gough visited India and Ceylon among other places.

His wife Caroline died in 1902, her funeral packing the village church. Her eldest son George was by then a captain in the South African police and unable to attend, but Francis, Mary, Elsie and Agnes were there and other mourners included Caroline's aged mother and two of her sisters (one travelled from India, suggesting that Caroline had been ill for a long time and her death was not unexpected).

Gough remained Rector of Barn-ingham until 1924, when increasing ill-health forced him to retire to Littlehampton in Sussex. He spent the next few months trying to reclaim money he said he had put into the church accounts over the years. "I must have advanced some £300 or £400 out of my (overdrawn) banking account", he said in a plaintive letter to the churchwardens. Whether he got it back we don't know.

He died in 1927, four days before his 82nd birthday, and his body was brought back to Barningham to be buried beside that of his wife.

The church was full for the funeral on a chilly February afternoon. Lady Milbank was there to play the organ; the Rev Arthur Close, vicar of Hutton Magna, read the service, supported by a host of assorted clergymen from all over the area. There were hundreds of mourners including, said the *Teesdale Mercury,* Hannah Smith, "an old and trusted retainer of the family." She had joined the Gough household as a housemaid in her teens more than 35 years earlier and stayed with them, unmarried, to the end.

We know a little about what happened to some of Gough's children. George died before his father, though we don't know how. Francis married Frances Atkins and lived in Kuala Lumpur, where their son Michael, the well-known actor who died a couple of months ago, was born (see *Archive 11*). Henry was at his father's funeral, but we know no more about him. Elsie married someone called Elliott in 1920.

Agnes remained unmarried, living in Barningham with her father and serving for many years as the village district nurse before moving to Sussex with him when he retired. What happened to her after his death we don't know.

Mary married a newspaper proprietor from Leeds called Alexander Talbot Baines. Their great-grandchildren include Aiden Bucknall, whose email prompted this profile of a memorable and evidently much-loved rector whose legacy can be seen every time we visit Barningham church.

First printed in Archive 17, June 2011

Sources:

- *Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

Thomas Greenhow

Truant whose mother boxed officer's ears

THE Education Act of 1870, which made school compulsory for all children between five and ten, wasn't popular with everyone.

Farmers in particular resented having to send their offspring to school when they could be helping out in the fields, and parents were often in conflict with the education authorities.

Thomas and Elizabeth Greenhow, who lived at Crooks House, Barningham, were no exception. In 1883 they had eleven children, of whom seven were living at home, ranging from 12-year-old George, already working fulltime for his father, down to two-year-old John. Three others, eight-year-old Elizabeth, seven-year-old William and Thomas, aged six, were supposed to be at school but clearly this wasn't always the case.

GROUNDLESS ACCUSATIONS AGAINST A SCHOOLMASTER.

The next case was of considerable importance to schoolmasters and teachers, a number of whom were in court. Thomas Greenhow, farmer, Barningham, was charged by Mr William Porter, school attendance officer, with neglecting to send his son regularly to school. Complainant stated that from the 11th of October to the 10th of December the school had been open ninety times, and Thomas Greenhow, aged ten years, had only made eighteen attendances. For the three months ending September 10th, Barningham School had been open 102 times, and the boy had attended only fifty-four times.—Defendant pleaded not guilty.—The Chairman asked why the lad had not been regularly sent to school?—Defendant alleged that the master used the boy very badly. He had thrashed him severely, thrown him upon the ground, made his mouth and nose bleed, and sent him home with a black eye.—The Chairman asked why he did not summon the master.—Defendant added that the boy was taken into a class-room, and his hands tied behind his back, and a teacher, named Watson, held him to the ground whilst a proper good flogging

Start of the Teesdale Mercury's court report

On Wednesday August 22, 45-year-old Mrs Greenhow – daughter of Barningham joiner George Nicholson and, as we shall see, a fairly formidable woman – was summoned before the Greta Bridge magistrates and fined five shillings for allowing her children to play truant. Evidence against her was given by William Porter, the school attendance officer working for the Teesdale School Attendance Committee.

Mrs Greenhow paid up, but was incensed. Outside the court she walked up to Mr Porter in the street and, in the words of the *Northern Echo*, "very soundly boxed his ears."

She carried on hitting him until a policeman came on the scene and rescued the attendance officer. Mrs Greenhow was promptly arrested and a week later, at the same court, she was fined £2 plus 16 shillings costs – a tidy sum in those days – for assault.

She refused to attend the court, and didn't hear the chairman of the magistrates declare that it was "a most serious offence" and promise that the bench "would fully support Mr Porter in the execution of his important and responsible duties".

Tension between the Greenhows and the education authorities simmered on over the next three years, with frequent further compaints about truancy, until Mr Porter decided to put in another official complaint. This time he decided, probably wisely, to steer clear of Mrs Greenhow, and instead a summons to appear in court was issued against her husband.

On December 29 1886, Thomas Greenhow was charged at Greta Bridge

Police Court (R A Morritt, Chairman, sitting with Dr J Mitchell on the bench) with neglecting to send his son (the one also called Thomas) regularly to school.

Mr Porter told the court that from October 11 to December 10 the school had been open 90 times, and young Thomas had made only 18 attendances.

His father pleaded not guilty and alleged that the schoolmaster "used the boy very badly". He had thrashed him severely, thrown him upon the ground, made his mouth and nose bleed, and sent him home with a black eye. On one occasion the boy was taken into a classroom and his hands tied behind his back, and a teacher named Watson held him to the ground whilst "a proper good flogging" was inflicted. The boy, after receiving the flogging, turned and "bunched" the master.

Mr Greenhow said his son had been sent home and had to lie for days together on the sofa, with black marks upon his back. He was told the boy was not to be taken back to the school until the parent had apologised, and why had he to apologise to a man he had never seen in his life?

From the bench, Mr Morritt told him: "The master accuses your boy of gross disobedience and insults to the teachers. If there had been cause for complaint you should have complained to the school managers or summoned the master."

Mr Greenhow replied that he was very anxious to send his boy to school because he know very well how impprtant education was. He admitted bad attendance, but declared this was owing to the detention of the lad at home in a long harvest. The Chairman remarked that this could not be urged as an excuse.

Schoolmaster John Shaw was called as a witness and said the boy had been without a copy book for three months, and was told that if he did not bring twopence for one he would be sent home for the money. About half-past one o'clock on Friday he sent the boy home and informed him that if he did not come back during the afternoon he would be punished for playing truant.

He did not come back, and on the Monday morning he, Mr Shaw, inflicted punishment by giving one stroke on the hand with a cane, whereupon the boy kicked him. He inflicted two more strokes, and kept the boy separate from the others until 12 o'clock.

His mother brought him to school in the afternoon, and used very abusive language. Mr Shaw said he refused to admit the boy without first writing to the managers, and they told him he had not to allow the boy to come back until the parents had apologised. He denied the allegations of cruelty. All that he had done was justifiable, and legal.

Mr Morritt said testily that if no child was to be punished no school could be carried on. He himself when at school had been punished ten times as severely as the defendant's son.

"If every parent was allowed to act violently and bullyrag the schoolmaster, then the sooner such a state of things was altered the better."

The Rev George Hales, Rector of Barningham, rural dean and a manager of the school, joined the magistrates on the bench and said that since 1883 the school had had considerable trouble with the defendant's children and his wife. Three years ago, "when they had a most excellent master, beloved and esteemed by everyone", he inflicted moderate punishment on the defendant's oldest son, "a refractory lad", and

afterwards received a great deal of abuse from Mrs Greenhow.

The Rev Hales said he had written to the Education Department and asked whether the managers could refuse to take back into the school any child that would not conform with the rules and discipline.

The answer was that it would not be a violation of the rules if the managers refused to admit a child who defied the school rules. In this particular case the managers were justified in refusing to admit the boy unless a distinct promise of amendment was given.

The rector said that he went every day to the school, and considered the schoolmaster a painstaking, patient and kind teacher, and a thorough disciplinarian. Parents, children and the managers were perfectly satisfied with him, and he used no more violence than was absolutely necessary. If Mr Greenhow acknowledged that his son had misbehaved, and promised to assist in his behaving in the future, he would be readmitted to the school.

Mr Greenhow retorted: "It's all very well talking like that, but I don't want to see my son killed."

The Rev Hales was backed up by James Todd of Fairview, another manager of the school. "We have had had no end of trouble with these people," he told the court. He had gone with Mrs Greenhow to the schoolmaster, to whom she turned round and said: "You are a blockhead, fool, and a liar."

By this time Mr Morritt's patience was wearing thin. "It is all stuff and nonsense about your boy being killed," he declared. He considered the reason for not taking the boy back into the school was a perfectly justifiable one, and fined Mr Greenhow five shillings.

There were no more court appearances for the Greenhows. Within a couple of years the family – who had been in Barningham for generations – had left Crooks House, and there's no further record of Thomas senior or his ear-boxing wife.

Young Thomas survived the rest of his schooldays and in 1901 was working as a miner in Kirk Merrington, newly married and destined to become the father of at least two sons. Whether they were model schoolboys or regularly played truant like their father we don't know.

First printed in Archive 23, January 2012

Sources:

- *Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
- *Barningham Brides 1581-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*

Rev George Hales
Rector who set pupils a poetic task

WHEN Barningham's school pupils broke up for their summer holidays in 1888 they didn't go home empty-handed. They carried with them their holiday homework, set by the Rector, the Rev George Hales: forty lines of poetry to be learned off by heart.

Not all of them did it. When they returned to school those who hadn't learned the poetry were given a handwriting exercise by the rector. This is what he told them write:

"The Rector gave me a piece of Poetry to learn during the holidays. He thought it would be useful to me in years to come, as well as good for me in many other ways. He takes great pains every day to teach me, and tries to do everything he can to make me love learning, and the way in which I have shown my gratitude is by not caring to please him by trying to learn forty lines in thirty days.

"Only five out of fifteen present this morning knew the lines, and although the Rector promised no reward, he intended to give one, and so gave sixpence to each child who said the lines correctly.

"Had I learnt the lines it would have greatly pleased him, and perhaps the day may come when I shall be sorry I did not try to fulfil his wishes and endeavours for my good."

First printed in Archive 10, September 2010.

Source:
A sheet of paper found tucked into Barningham's National School Logbook for October 22 1888.

Kexwith Hannah
A very shrewd and hardworking lady

IT started, like so many of these stories, with the chance discovery of a report in the *Teesdale Mercury*, this one from December 1902.

Aldermen and councillors of Newcastle upon Tyne, it said, were meeting to sort out the distribution to the city's poor of a small fortune left to them by someone called Kexwith Hannah.

Kexwith? The remote farmstead high on the moors above Newsham? Armed with the history group's records, Google, Genes Reunited, Ancestry and a host of other websites (including of course the *Mercury* online) the hunt for Hannah began.

Isolated: Kexwith today

She was born in Kirkby Stephen in 1837, daughter of a farmer called Thomas Davis and his wife Jane.

Thomas, popularly known in the town as 'Captain' for reasons we can't unravel, had four other daughters and one son, all of whom were still at home in the late 1850s when their mother died. Some remained with their father, who was to live another ten years, but in 1863 Hannah left to marry Matthew Bell, a young lead miner in Swaledale. It was a shortlived marriage. Within a couple of years Hannah had left him and moved to the remote farmstead of Kexwith, where she got a job as housekeeper to John Alderson.

John, born and raised in Hope, was a bachelor in his early forties who had taken over Kexwith in 1860 from brothers John and William Shaw and was farming its 140 acres on his own. Hannah was clearly expected to do more than just look after the house, and she was soon performing all the work of a farmer's wife (though there's no evidence she shared John's bed).

She soon became known as Kexwith Hannah, "a stoutly-built, hardy woman – a daughter of the soil," said the *Teesdale Mercury* in her obituary four decades later.

"She came pretty regularly to Barnard Castle market, at least once a fortnight with a quantity of butter and eggs and on her return took a supply of coals and market goods of all kinds. On those days she must have been up very early to milk the cows and do other work, travel some 12 miles over moor roads by Barningham, and be at Barnard Castle by nine o'clock, and after returning at night, thsame milking and other duties to perform."

Another correspondent described her as "a frugal, economical, hardworking and industrious" woman. "Cradled in incessant toil, and early accustomed to the

hardships associated with moorside farming, she possessed all the hardihood of the sterner sex and could yoke a draught and drive a cart as well as any man skilled in husbandry.

"Of robust consitution and great determination, she was in all respects a 'fell' woman and, although quite illiterate, she had very shrewd ideas of usury, was a successful money-spinner and had really practical notions as to advantageous money-lending."

They clearly worked. Hannah had the working arrangement common in farmhouses at the time, whereby in place of wages she was given the farm's butter and eggs to sell, and allowed to keep any profit after the everyday household expenses had been met.

By the time John Alderson decided to retire, in November 1886, she had accumulated enough savings to decide that she could do the same.

She moved first to Reeth and then to Hudswell, where she bought four fields which she let out while living in a small cottage costing her less than 7d a week in rent.

She continued to live frugally, and for a decade and more the money mounted (in a bank? under her mattress? We don't know, but suspect she was wise enough to invest it at the best possible rates of interest.)

Then, in the late 1890s, she had an accident at home, went to the Cottage Hospital in Richmond, and was transferred to the hospital in Darlington. There they diagnosed inoperable cancer. She took lodgings in the town in Chestnut Street where she could be seen regularly by her doctor, and in her dying days asked solicitor James Watson and chemist Christopher Martin, both of Barnard Castle, to be her trustees to help sort out her affairs.

She wanted to make a will, she told them, and she knew exactly what she wanted to do with her money. There were four small legacies "in acknowledgement of kindness received"; the rest was to be distributed among the poor of Newcastle.

Why Newcastle? they asked. Why not Teesdale, Richmond or Reeth, where she had spent most of her life? "Newcastle is the biggest place I was ever in," she explained, "and it follows that there are most poor folks there."

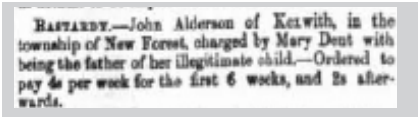
And how much money was involved? Messrs Watson and Martin probably didn't expect her to have much, perhaps £50 or so. They must have been astonished when she announced that she'd got more than £2,000 in savings – worth between £200,000 and £500,000 in today's money, depending on whether you compare prices or earnings. You could buy a three-bedroom terraced house for £250 in 1900; the average wage for a farm worker was under £1 a week, and even teachers earned less than £150 a year. It was an enormous sum and it's hard to believe Hannah saved it all herself.

Had she inherited a small fortune from someone? Did John Alderson show his appreciation for 20 years' loyal service by giving her a sizeable share of the profits when he sold his farm stock? Did she buy land towards the end of her life that increased enormously in value? Had she invested in some wildly successful enterprise? We don't know.

Anyway, there it was, £2,000 to be handed out to the poor of Tyneside. The recipients were to be chosen by the trustees, the only stipulation being that no single person was to get more than £5.

Hannah died in November 1899, aged 62, and was buried beside her mother under

a marble tombstone in Kirkby Stephen. It took a year to sort out the will, but in January 1901 the trustees met the mayor and deputy mayor of Newcastle, Aldermen Beattie and Ellis, to work out how the money was to be distributed.


BASTARDY.—John Alderson of Kexwith, in the township of New Forest, charged by Mary Dent with being the father of her illegitimate child.—Ordered to pay 4s per week for the first 6 weeks, and 2s afterwards.

Teesdale Mercury, October 30, 1861

They called in representatives of the city's Women's Benevolent Society, Charity Organisation Society and Poor Law Relief Organisation and asked them to draw up a list of 500 people, "the neediest and deserving poor, irrespective of creed or no creed."

The list was prepared, those whose names upon it were interviewed, and those who were deemed to be needy and deserving enough began to collect their legacies in February. Half the money was paid out then, the other £1,000 over the next two years.

There is no doubt the money was well received in Newcastle. "There is very great distress in the city at this time," reported the *Mercury* in December 1902, "and it is likely to become worse before the winter is over."

By the end of that year Hannah's last request had been fulfilled. The beneficiaries, said the *Mercury*, "will have just cause to remember industrious Kexwith Hannah."

IT SEEMS that Hannah was a little economical with the truth when she went to Kexwith, because the 1871 census records her age as just 26 (it was actually 35) and her surname Davis (her maiden name). In 1881 her surname was correct but her age was given as 35.

Did she tell John Alderson, who probably filled in the forms as she was illiterate, that she was almost a decade younger than she really was? Shrewd, frugal, hard-working... but not above a little womanly deception, perhaps.

AROUND the time John Alderson moved to Kexwith he had a dalliance with 19-year-old Mary Dent, daughter of farm worker Matthew Dent of Peake Hole, Hope.

Mary became pregnant and claimed John was the father. He contested paternity but in October 1861 was ordered by Greta Bridge magistrates to pay her four shillings a week maintenance for six weeks, and two shillings thereafter. The baby was christened John Thompson Dent.

The two Johns don't appear to have had any contact in later life. The boy, known as Thompson to his family, was brought up by his grandparents – Mary appears to have left the area – and in 1881 was working for farmer Robert Brown at Hall Green, Scargill. During the next ten years he moved to the Skipton area, where he was married and, not long afterwards, widowed.

He remarried in around 1892 and in 1911 was recorded working as a fitter in as-steel plate mill in Consett, where he was living with his wife Ann and four children.

JOHN Alderson clearly worked hard at Kexwith and developed the farm considerably during his 25 years there.

When his predecessors, the Shaw brothers, sold up in 1860 they put all their stock up for auction. It consisted of eleven cattle, three horses, 566 sheep and "a

quantity" of eatage on rented meadow land. When John sold off his stock in 1886 it included 51 cattle, two horses, 721 sheep and more than 1,200 acres of eatage – "as grand a lot as has ever been brought for public competition for some time, and sure to give every satisfaction to the purchasers," proclaimed Barnard Castle auctioneer Sidney Trery.

We'd love to know how much it all made.

First printed in Archive 29, November 2012.

Sources:

- *Newsham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #7, 2010)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

George Hogg
Poacher who wished he'd stayed home

GEORGE Hogg lived to regret the Thursday night in April 1870 when he left his home in Melsonby to go poaching in Barningham with a couple of mates.

Accompanied by his dog, they had netted a couple of good-sized rabbits near the Gillbeck plantation when they came face to face with Mark Milbank's gamekeeper, Mr Beadle.

"The keeper, with unwonted courage, assailed the poachers with a view to their capture," reported the *Teesdale Mercury* later under the headline *Night Poaching Affray – Clever Capture of One of the Gang*. "A struggle ensued, the men attacking Beadle with sticks; but the latter being a smart-built, powerful, athletic young man, rebutted his antagonists, seized Hogg, and threw him to the ground."

The other two men fled while Beadle and Hogg wrestled together – and then Police Constable Wright appeared on the scene. "The prisoner was safely lodged in Greta Bridge Police Station to await his reward from the magistrates," said the *Mercury*. We don't suppose he got his dog back.

First printed in Archive 19, September 2011

Source:
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.com*

James King
Landlord whose wife wrecked the inn

TIME and again Sergeant Slack had complaints about James King, licensee of the Oak Tree Inn at Hutton Magna, he told Greta Bridge Brewster Sessions on September 15 1897. King was intemperate, there were "repeated connubial quarrels" between him and his wife, and the inn was generally badly managed.

On Jubilee Day the place had been "like a pigsty", and King was found in Newsham, singing in a pub. On August 26 Mrs King was fined £1 by the magistrates for drunkenly breaking 18 windows in Hutton Magna and smashing up furniture after "painful scenes" with her husband ("he's fitter for an asylum than a public house," she told police when she was arrested).

Then, four days before the brewster sessions, Sgt Slack discovered that she had locked her husband out of the inn and was lying drunk inside. The magistrates, appalled, refused to renew King's licence and gave it instead to a Mr Snailham.

First printed in Archive 25, May 2012

Source:
- *Northern Echo, September 1897*

William Kipling
Blacksmith who beat the gallows

WILLIAM Kipling, born in Dalton in 1750, was not a good man.

Not content with earning an honest living as a blacksmith, he turned to crime and in August 1774 found himself facing the judge at Durham Assizes, accused with Charles Hunter of house-breaking.

This was a capital offence, and as soon as a guilty verdict was announced the judge wasted no time putting on his black cap and sentencing the pair to death.

For some reason the sentence wasn't carried out immediately, and on Friday October 28th William was still incarcerated in Durham Gaol awaiting his fate.

Somehow that night he managed to break out of his cell, scale the prison walls and jump to freedom.

Durham Gaol in the 18th century

He was still at loose on November 12, when the *Newcastle Courant* newspaper carried a Wanted notice offering a reward of two guineas (£2.10p in today's money, the equivalent of at least £50 back then) to anyone who caught him.

William was described as "five feet eight inches high, thin visaged, marked with the smallpox, very pale complexion, a red or sandy coloured beard much grown, flaxen coloured hair cut short round his neck".

When he fled he was wearing "an old brown Jersey coat cut out at the elbows, and mended with different colours and much burnt in the back with lime, an old black cloth waistcoat, a pair of ragged leather breeches, a pair of ribbed black and white worsted stockings, a pair of large round plated buckles". The notice, issued by the keeper of the jail, added that William left his hat behind as he escaped, and there's a hint that he'd leapt from a considerable height to gain his freedom:

"It is supposed," said the jail keeper, obviously hoping William was lying somewhere badly injured, "that he is much bruised or hurt in his fall."

Whether this was the case we're unlikely ever to know.

Although the Wanted notice was republished several times over the next few months, William vanished, and there's no record of him being captured and brought back to face the gallows.

Durham's old County Gaol in Saddler Street, built in the early 15th century, had just been enlarged in 1774 but was still very cramped. The warder had to pay for the right to

run the jail and made his money back by charging prisoners for food, drink and 'other services' which included providing straw for bedding and even water to drink. The jail had a licence that allowed one warder to sell alcohol and part of the jail was used like a pub.

Male and female prisoners were separated but conditions were no better for either sex. At night they were put into cells deep in underground dungeons that were badly lit and ventilated by the few holes in the ceiling.

The food ration was one pound of bread a day. The foul conditions meant that there were frequent attempts to escape but, if caught, prisoners faced being clamped in irons. When the prison reformer John Howard visited the jail he found men who had been chained to the floor for many weeks. In 1818 *every* prisoner was in irons because of an escape attempt the previous day.

Jailers were penalised if anyone escaped, and were able to extort more money from felons for removing the irons.

First printed in Archive 25, May 2012.

S*ources:*

- *Mike Kipling, BLHG member*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *Durham University Library and Heritage Collections*

Richard Kirtley
Youngster caught grabbling in the beck

YOUNG Richard Kirtley had just lifted the sixth trout of the day from Nor Beck when he looked up and saw Sergeant Slack getting out his notebook.

Richard and his mates Ralph and Henry Chilton, all of them Barnngham boys in their early teens, had spent the morning of June 16 1895 at the beck.

"I asked the lads what they were doing, and they replied they were grabbling for trout," Sgt Slack told Greta Bridge Police Court when the trio were summoned for fishing illegally.

He warned the boys they would be reported, and took possession of a handkerchief containing five trout about six inches long, property of Sir Frederick Milbank. It took five months to bring the matter to court because proceedings had to be approved by the local Watch and Finance Committee.

There was the added complication, said Sgt Slack (no doubt having to consult his notebook at this point), that the boys had been wrongly summoned under the Larceny Act, when it should have been under chapter 71, section 22 of the Salmon and Fresh Water Fisheries Act.

The magistrates decided not to fine the three offenders. But they did have to share the costs of the case – ten shillings (50p) between them.

First printed in Archive 25, May 2012.

S*ource:*

- *Teesdale Mercury, November 25, 1895*

Ada Lovelace
Byron's daughter and computer pioneer

IN *Archive 5*, Barningham's lord of the manor Anthony Milbank told the story of his ancestor Annabella Milbanke, who married Lord Byron and lived to regret it.

Byron deserted Annabella within a year of their marriage, but not before she had become pregnant with Byron's only legitimate child, Ada (he had several offspring born out of wedlock, including one, it's believed, by his sister).

Ada was born in December 1815 and showed an early aptitude for mathematics, which her mother encouraged in an effort to prevent her from developing the insanity increasingly shown by her father.

Ada Lovelace

As a young adult, her talents led her to a working relationship and friendship with fellow British mathematician Charles Babbage, and in particular Babbage's work on the Analytical Engine – widely regarded as the world's first computer.

Babbage was impressed by Ada's intellect and analytic skills, and called her 'The Enchantress of Numbers'. She developed a vision of the capability of computers to go beyond mere calculating or number-crunching, and translated an article on the engine which she supplemented with an elaborate set of notes containing what many consider to be the first computer program – that is, an algorithm designed to be carried out by a machine.

Throughout her life, Ada was strongly interested in scientific developments and fads of the day, including phrenology and mesmerism. Even after her famous work with Babbage, Ada continued to work on other projects and in 1844 was trying to create a mathematical model for how the brain gives rise to thoughts and nerves to feelings. Her interest in the brain came in part from a long-running preoccupation, inherited from her mother, about her 'potential' madness.

Her acquaintances included Charles Dickens and Michael Faraday, and she became a regular at Court. Described as 'dainty', she danced often and was able to charm many people.

In 1835 she married William King, 8th Baron King, and went to live on his large estate at Ockham Park in Surrey. She had three children: Byron, born 1836; Anne(1837); and Ralph Gordon (1839). In 1838, her husband became Earl of Lovelace

and she was styled 'The Right Honourable the Countess of Lovelace' for the rest of her married life.

In the 1840s, Ada flirted with scandal: firstly from a relaxed relationship with men who were not her husband, which led to rumours of affairs, and secondly, her love of gambling. This led to her forming a syndicate with male friends, and an ambitious attempt to create a mathematical model for successful large bets. This went disastrously wrong, leaving her thousands of pounds in debt, forcing her to admit it all to her husband.

Ada Lovelace died in November 1852 at the age of 36 – the same age that her father had died at – from uterine cancer probably exacerbated by bloodletting by her physicians. She was buried, at her request, next to Byron in Hucknall, Nottingham. Her name is revered today in scientific circles, and she is widely hailed as the world's first computer programmer.

The British Computer Society awards an annual medal in her name, the US Defence Department named its computer language Ada in her honour, and one of the tunnel-boring machines excavating London's Crossrail project is called after her.

Ada Lovelace Day is an annual event, celebrated world-wide in mid-October, whose goal is to raise the profile of women in science, technology, engineering and maths.

First printed in Archive 40, February 2015

S*ources:*

- *BLHG member Phil Hunt*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*
- *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
- *Archive #5*

Thomas Lodge
Tragic killer 'poisoned by his wife'

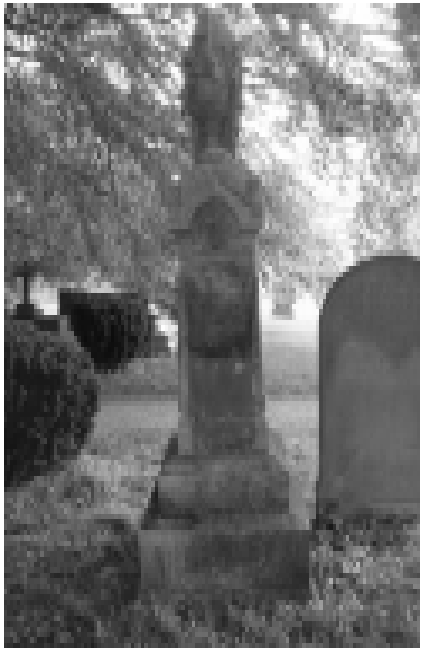
A TRAGIC shooting, an alleged poisoning, a wife suspected of murder, and a soldier who survived a war but still ended up on a war memorial...

These are all part of a tangled family history that we've been trying to unravel.

The story starts with a brief news report chanced upon by history group member Jo Crowe while browsing old copies of the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* on the British Newspaper Archives website.

Its edition dated November 7th 1896 told of an inquest in Newsham on four-year-old Charles Robert Lodge, youngest son of William and Charlotte Lodge of Newsham House.

Charles had got up the previous Tuesday morning and gone into his parents' bedroom with his much older brother Thomas William Atkinson Lodge. Thomas told the inquest that he found their father's revolver lying in the room, pointed it at the younger boy and jokingly asked "Shall I shoot thou?"



Thomas and Mary's grave in Barningham churchyard

Charles replied yes, Thomas pulled the trigger and to his horror shot the child through the chest. "I didn't know it was loaded," he explained later.

Hearing the shot, their father ran upstairs to find Charles mortally wounded. Despite the efforts of village GP Dr James Graham, who managed to extract the bullet, the boy died twelve hours later.

The coroner, Mr J S Walton, made it very clear that he thought William Lodge had been grossly irresponsible in allowing his sons to find the gun. He "severely animadverted on such a dangerous weapon as a revolver being left lying around the house" before the jury returned a verdict of accidental death, said the *Teesdale Mercury*'s report of the tragedy. The boy was buried a few days later, we think at Kirby Hill though we haven't traced his grave.

William Lodge, born in Whorlton in 1849, had lived in Newsham since 1867 when he moved into Newsham House with his young bride Charlotte (nee Hind, born in Arkengarthdale). He was almost certainly related to the family of the same name

who farmed at Eastwood Hall at the time, and was clearly quite well off: the 1871 census records him as "of independent means" with 49 acres of land rented out to local farmers.

Thomas was born in 1868; a daughter, Mary Annis, followed in 1871 but died at the age of two. There were no more children until Charles arrived, almost certainly very unexpectedly, in 1892.

At the time of the shooting tragedy Thomas was 28 years old, working as a joiner and living a few doors away with his wife Mary Elizabeth (nee Dent) and their five-year-old son William Henry. A daughter had been born early in 1896 but died within a few weeks.

Within 15 months of Charles' death, Thomas had also died, in what appear to be most curious circumstances. He was buried in January 1899 in Barningham churchyard, where his grave is marked by a handsome marble cross above a stone inscribed "in loving memory of our only beloved son... Thy will be done." On the side was added a memorial to his sister Mary Annis, who had died 26 years earlier.

The parish register notes that Thomas was living in South Bank, Middlesbrough, when he died. What he was doing there we don't know, but his death made headlines in the *Middlesbrough Daily Gazette* of January 16th 1899.

Under the heading 'Singular Differences at South Bank', it reported his death had caused "quite a commotion" after claims that he had been deliberately poisoned.

Thomas had died after a brief illness and a Dr Fitzgerald, who had attended the body, certified death from natural causes. But Thomas' mother Charlotte was not satisfied. She was convinced Thomas had been murdered by his wife, and demanded a second opinion and a full post-mortem. She and Thomas's wife "lived on anything but friendly terms," said the *Gazette* excitedly, clearly eager to see Charlotte's suspicions proved correct and the young widow Mary hauled before the courts on a murder charge.

The local coroner conferred with Dr Fitzgerald and decided the GP's decision should stand. Charlotte, however, refused to accept this, and made such a fuss that eventually Dr Fitzgerald agreed to call in a second doctor.

Between them they carried out a post-mortem and concluded that, despite all Charlotte's insistence to the contrary, there was no evidence of Thomas having been poisoned.

Charlotte and Mary returned home to Newsham, probably never speaking to each other again. Both Charlotte and William died within weeks of each other in 1924; Mary went to live and work as a servant at Smallways Inn and stayed there until her death at the age of 72 in 1943.

Her son William Henry went to live with his grandparents, and later moved to Hawes, where in 1911 he was working as an apprentice joiner.

Six years later, aged 26, he enlisted in the army – Private 230733, Royal Engineers – and went off to fight the Germans.

He survived, though there is no further mention of him in the army files – no record of where he served, of him being discharged or receiving a service medal, for example. However, his name appears on the south face of Newsham's war memorial, which carries not only the names of those who died in the two

world wars but also those who served and survived.

William returned to Newsham, married, and worked as a joiner in the village until his death in March 1939. He had no children, and his branch of the Lodge family died with him.

- The first William Lodge featured in a number of news reports in the *Teesdale Mercury* that we discovered during our research.

In 1870 he appeared before the Greta Bridge magistrates accused by Newsham neighbour John Atkinson of "using slanderous langage to or against the complainant calculated to greatly injure his character, and for which there was not the slightest foundation". William in turn accused Atkinson of trespassing on his property. The bench, announcing that there was clearly a good deal of ill-feeling between the pair, bound them both over to keep the peace.

In 1888 he upset the same magistrates when he was summoned for not having a dog licence, which had been introduced – 7s 6d per dog (37½p) – ten years earlier.

William, 39, then living in Silver Street, Newsham, and describing himself as 'a gentleman living on his own means', decided he wasn't going to attend the court for so trivial a matter, and ordered his his wife Charlotte to go instead.

Facing the bench, consisting of the Rev C B Yeoman, vicar of Manfield, and Mr R J Dent, she apologised for not having a licence for the dog, a small terrier given to her as a present. They had simply forgotten to buy one.

The Rev Yeoman was clearly not in the best of moods. "Everybody should know that they are bound to take out a licence for a dog," he said told Mrs Lodge sharply.

"Mr Lodge seems to be blessed with a very bad memory. He forgets to take out a licence, and forgets to come here when he is summonsed, but leaves it to you to answer for his delinquencies, which is very unfair. We must put a stop to this kind of thing." He fined William 2s 6d, plus costs.

In 1898 William was summoned before Barnard Castle County Court and ordered to pay an outstanding bill of £13 3s 2d owed to Badcock and Sons, who ran a druggists and grocery store in the town.

And in 1911 he appeared at Greta Bridge magistrates court and accused one of his tenants, Thomas Metcalfe, of causing eight shillings' worth of damage to his front door during what was said to be a series of disputes between the pair. The case was dismissed.

First printed in Archives 24, March 2012, and 28, October 2012

S*ources:*

- *Newsham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #7, 2010)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

Rev Jonathan Lowe

Rector in court after demanding his tithes

IT'S 1689, and the Rev Jonathan Lowe is young, wealthy and very, very cross.

He had taken over the Barningham parish four years earlier and almost straight away come into conflict with most of his flock.

The row was over his tithes, the tenth portion of every farmer's annual produce that was supposed to be handed over to the church.

Until the early 1600s this had been fairly straightforward. Most of the village land was under the plough, and a tenth of all the hay, corn or whatever was produced was easily identified and collected.

But arable farming, then as now, was not the most profitable way of making money on Barningham land. Villagers knew they could get a better return from cattle and sheep, and in 1609 they won permission to enclose much of the land they cultivated – almost 1,000 acres.

Up to then it had consisted of three enormous fields, in which each farmer had areas clearly defined by grass strips, earth banks or other low boundaries. Under the new arrangement the land was broken up into much smaller fields separated by walls or hawthorn hedges.

The only opposition to the change came from the then parson, the Rev Thomas Hutton. He was worried about access to his Glebe lands (areas owned by the church), how he would work out his tithes, and how he was going to collect them if everyone's fields were enclosed. He was mollified when the farmers agreed to swap outlying Glebe land for fields of equal or better value near the church, and to pay for them to be walled or hedged.

They also promised to keep at least a third of their land under the plough, to let him travel with a cart or carriage anywhere he needed to go to collect his tithes, and to pay "a sufficient & reasonable consideration in money" in lieu of crops if necessary. No field would be turned over to pasture unless the farmer and parson had agreed the amount to be paid in advance.

This seemed a good deal to the Rev Hutton, who obviously thought collecting tithes in cash would be a lot easier than hauling hay around, and the system worked to the apparent satisfaction of everyone until the parson died in 1846. His

successor, Thomas Richardson, consolidated the position by coming to an agreement with the farmers that they should pay tithes based on the rental value of their land, at a rate of two shillings (10p) in the pound.

All went well until the Rev Lowe arrived. He was a bright young man and soon worked out that so many farmers were ignoring the 1609 agreement and gone completely over to pasture, feeding cattle on ground that might otherwise produce hay or corn and refusing to pay any tithes at all, that "ye Profit of this benifice may be reduced to less than a 3rd part of its tithe value".

He decided he would get a lot more in tithes if he demanded payment in kind rather than cash, and that is what he did. The farmers were aghast. Nobody had been asked to stump up hay or corn for almost half a century and almost all the fields were at pasture. "Not a fiftieth part of their Lands is plowed," they protested.

The Rev Lowe was determined and set out to collect what he could. The farmers blocked his way across their fields, and when he persisted they accused him of trespass, brought a case before the local court, and had him fined.

The parson was just about to take the matter to a higher court when Francis Tunstall, whose family had been at the forefront of the enclosures and become Barningham's biggest land-owners by far, discovered that he was deeply in debt. Pressed by his creditors, early in 1690 he decided to sell everything he owned in the village – the hall, park and gardens, houses, shops, tenanted farms and fields – to Acclom, second son of Sir Mark Milbanke, baronet and sheriff of Northumberland.

Acclom seems to have managed to bring the two sides in the tithes dispute to their senses, because there is no record of further litigation by either side. Whether the farmers decided to abide by the 1609 rules and offered a better deal or the Rev Lowe decided a third of a loaf was better than none we don't know.

He wasn't in urgent need of the money. He was wealthy enough without the tithes to buy a cottage and 80 acres of farmland when he arrived in Barningham, employed a curate, and left "a large fortune" to a niece when he died in 1729, widowed and childless.

First printed in Archive 7, May 2010

Sources:

- *Documents held at Barningham Park, including copies of the 1609 enclosure agreement, the Reverend Lowe's legal protests of 1689 and the transfer of Barningham Park from the Tunstalls to the Milbankes the following year.*

Frances McCulloch
Spinster heiress who spent a fortune

WHO do you suppose was the richest resident sitting down for Christmas dinner in Barningham 100 years ago?

Discount the Milbanks. They didn't move here on a permanent basis until some years later, and anyway would have been celebrating the festive season at their main residence, Thorp Perrow.

Not the cheese-mongering Todds, builders of Fairview, who were already in decline, in numbers and fortune. The rector? Well-enough off to spend months at a time wandering round the world on hunting and shooting expeditions, but not really what you'd call rich.

Step forward Frances Mary McCulloch, a 55-year-old spinster living alone (but for a servant or two) at Heath House. Tucked away in her bank account was the equivalent of about £3,500,000 in today's money.

She'd inherited it the previous May upon the death of her father Francis, and by the time she followed him into Barningham churchyard 23 years later she'd managed to spend about £3,000,000 of it. That works out at about £130,000 a year, which suggests she was either very fond of the good life or made some very bad investments.

Name lived on – in a song

NEIL Turner recalls a children's skipping song recited in Barningham for years after Frances' death. It began:

Miss McCulloch and Miss McDale
Went for a walk down Wensleydale
Now Miss McCulloch said to Miss McDale
By, you're looking very pale...

Sadly he can't remember any more of it.

In 1851 Frances' father was one of two McCulloch brothers in their early twenties lodging at the Barningham Academy. Whether they'd previously been at the school as pupils we don't know. They came from London, and both were described as annuitants – ie, they had private means – and came from a family with extensive interests in the iron-building business in Cumbria and on Teesside. Within a few months Francis had married a girl from East Layton called Anne – it could be that the impending marriage was the reason for the brothers staying in Barningham – and the couple returned to London where their only child, Frances, was born in 1853.

They came back to Barningham in the 1860s, and by 1871 were living in Heath House, rented, we think, from the Milbank family who had probably owned it since the 1850s. Sometime in the 1880s

Francis' brother Edward, an ironmaster from Tyneside and a Methodist preacher, moved into the house next door (now The Nook) which was owned by the Wesleyans and used by them to house their local minister. He had married a girl from Workington and they raised a family here. One daughter, Elisabeth, died in 1889: her burial notice is among ephemera held by the history group.

Frances remained unmarried next door, aged 46 by the time her mother died in 1899. Her father followed her to Barningham graveyard in 1912, and Frances inherited his fortune.

In 1918 she decided to move out and spend her final years in the more comfortable surroundings of a London hotel. Heath House was divided and let out to other tenants. But she was retained links with the village: her name crops up from time to time in the *Teesdale Mercury,* usually among lists of people who gave presents at prominent local weddings (she gave an ashtray when Mark Milbank was married in 1930, for example). In January 1928 the paper recorded that Frances, "who is much respected in Barningham, especially among the old inhabitants, has generously distributed packets of tea to the aged people, a custom she and her family have observed for over half a century."

She died, aged 82, in 1935 in her hotel in Hyde Park. Her body was brought back for burial beside her parents in Barningham.

Francis left an estate of just under £2,000 – worth a good six figures in today's money, but only a fraction of what she had inherited – and she bequeathed almost all of it to Mary Dales, her paid companion. Where she came from and how long she'd been working for Miss McCulloch we don't know, but the will was made three years before the death so they must have been together for some time. One thing this tells us is that Miss McCulloch had either lost contact with her relatives (there were cousins on Teesside, for example) or didn't want to leave them anything.

There must have been a few McCullochs around in 1935 wishing too late that they'd kept in touch with her.

Frances' only other legacy was a bequest of £80 to Barningham church, which delighted the rector, the Rev Percy Dodd, until he read the small print. Frances had stipulated that the money was to pay for a brass lectern, inscribed in her family's memory – and the Rev Dodds didn't need one: the church already had a lectern, a splendid carved oak affair that had been given to the church back in 1891.

After consulting his churchwardens, the Rev Dodds wrote to Frances' solicitor, James Watson of Barnard Castle, saying he'd be happy to take the money and spend it on something else of benefit to the church. Sorry, said Mr Watson. It was an inscribed brass lectern or nothing. "If you do not propose to purchase this, I cannot see my way clear to hand over the sum."

The Rev Dodd wrote back saying he really couldn't use another lectern, and Mr Watson replied sadly that in that case nothing could be done. "I am indeed sorry the legacy is one that cannot be utilised for any other purpose."

So the church forfeited its £80 – worth perhaps £4,000 in today's money. Mr Watson's decision must have seemed rather harsh to the Rev Dodd, and it raises two questions which we're never likely to have answered.

Why on earth didn't Miss McCulloch ask the church if it wanted a new lectern

(she must have known it already had a perfectly good one)? And what happened to the £80?

The will was drawn up in 1932 by Barnard Castle solicitor Harry Crawford Watson, named as the sole executor, and witnessed by Mrs Mary Ann Dobson, widowed landlady of the Milbank Arms, and a Miss E. Hannay of Barningham we can't trace.

A codicil to the will was added in 1934, replacing Mr Watson, who had died, with William Innes Watson (his son?). This codicil was witnessed by the owner and manageress of a private hotel in Bournemouth, where Miss McCulloch was apparently staying at the time.

● Ian Beckwith of Church Stretton in Shropshire wrote to the history group asking about the McCullochs. "In 1911 Miss McCulloch owned a house, 75 Pulteney Road, Wanstead in Essex," he explained. "Twenty-four years later my newly-married parents moved into this house and a year later, in April 1936, I was born there. I'd like to know more about her."

How and when Frances came to have the Wanstead property we don't know: she certainly owned it before her father died.

A tidy little lot, almost a century ago

TURN the clock back almost a hundred years, and join us in 1918 on the doorstep of Heath House, home of Frances McCulloch for most of her life. She's moving out to spend her final years in the more comfortable surroundings of a London hotel.

Up for auction today are the entire contents of the house, and we've got a list of what's for sale.

Just inside the door is a fine mahogany hallstand beside a large oak umbrella tub, a collection of plaster figures, a hanging lamp and six cases of stuffed birds.

Turn right into the main drawingroom and admire the Axminster bordered Turkish carpet with matching Axminster rug. There's a large leather settee, stuffed with hair; a six-foot-six Spanish pedestal sideboard; the late Mr McCulloch's gentleman's armchair, covered in crimson plush; various other chairs, a divan, and a drop-leaf table with claw feet.

All these, and much else in the house, are made of the best mahogany. Scattered round the room are ornaments, cushions, steel engravings, sporting prints, brass and wooden curtain poles and the chintz curtains to go with them. There's an impressive brass fire kerb and a large walnut coal box by the mantelpiece.

Down the hall in the dining-room

BARNINGHAM.

J. PARKINSON & SONS.

FAVOURED with instructions from Miss McCulloch, of Heath House, Barningham, Yorks., will Sell by Auction, on THURSDAY, MARCH 21st, 1918, on the above Premises, the main portion of the Household FURNITURE and EFFECTS, contents of Entrance Hall, Drawing and Dining Rooms, 5 Bedrooms, Kitchens, etc., including:—Mahogany hall stand, plaster plaques, plaster figures, 6 cases stuffed birds, 2 oak umbrella tubs, hanging lamp,

Fine Axminster Bordered Turkey Carpet, 4½ by 3½ yards;

Axminster rug, walnut coal box,

Large Mahogany Settee, in Leather, hair stuffed;

unique set carved chessmen, 6 ft. 6 in. Spanish mahogany pedestal sideboard, gent.'s fine mahogany arm chair, in crimson plush; 6 mahogany small chairs, in hair; folding chair, mahogany lamp table, gent.'s divan easy chair, gilded mantel glass, ornaments, down cushions,

12 Steel Engravings, Old Sporting Prints,

small mahogany leaf table, claw feet; inkstand, tapestry curtains, brass and wood cornice poles, lace curtains, chintz curtains, coal box, good brass kerb and brasses, tapestry carpet, 6 by 4½ yards;

Drawing-room Suite, Walnut, in Chintz Covering, 9 Pieces;

Job lot: ad in the Teesdale Mercury, March 20th 1918

is a nine-piece walnut dining suite, chintz-covered, and what auctioneer John Parkinson from Barnard Castle describes as "a very handsome ebonised and ormolu china cabinet" full of old china and curios.

Over the fireplace is a large gilded mirror in front of which stands an ormolu clock under a glass shade. On one side of the room is a pile of paraphernalia collected from all over the house: a spark guard, several copper hot water bottles, hearthrugs, a butler's tray and stand, a tapestry carpet, the inevitable corner whatnot.

Now for the upstairs and the secrets of Miss McCulloch's bedrooms – five of them.

There's a circular-headed brass bedstead, a brass and black bedstead, a feather bed and a chair bed; an enormous mahogany wardrobe with swing mirrors; another wardrobe, this one in walnut; a curled-hair mattress, dressing tables, piles of quilts and blankets, towel rails, bedroom chairs, two oil stoves, an old oak box, and two zinc baths (there's no bathroom in the house, of course, just a partitioned-off corner in each of the main bedrooms for the occupants' ablutions).

Lying forlorn in one of the long-empty spare bedrooms is a ping-pong set. It's probably been gathering dust since Miss McCulloch was a child: she had an elder sister, who died young, but no-one else to play with.

Back downstairs to the kitchen. There's a wide selection of cutlery, some of it very old; a Sheffield-plate salver, cruet stands, jugs and pewterware, crockery galore. In the scullery stands the washer, a laundry table, a harness stand, a wheelbarrow and sundry items in boxes that will sell as job lots.

The sale starts at noon, Mr Parkinson in charge. We've no idea how much everything went for, or indeed whether everything was sold. Mr Parkinson held another auction the following week, this time in Barnard Castle's Central Salerooms, and advertised among its contents "from various vendors" are a number of items that look rather familiar.

Mahogany wardrobes, anyone?

First printed in Archives 14, 30, 31 & 39

S*ources:*

- *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*
- *Miscellaneous papers held at Durham County Record Office.*

William Melville
Bastard heir who tried to shoot the rector

MAYPOLE wrecking and murder attempts: something very odd was happening in Barningham in 1787.

On July 28 that year, the *Newcastle Courant* reported that "Mrs Milbank, Lady of the Manor of Barningham, ordered the May-Pole in that village to be cut down, which had been erected upwards of two years upon the Green, where a May-Pole time immemorial had stood.

"The above-mentioned May-Pole, 23 yards long, was made a present to the Freeholders of Barningham, two years and a half ago, by John Sawrey Morritt Esq of Rookby Park."

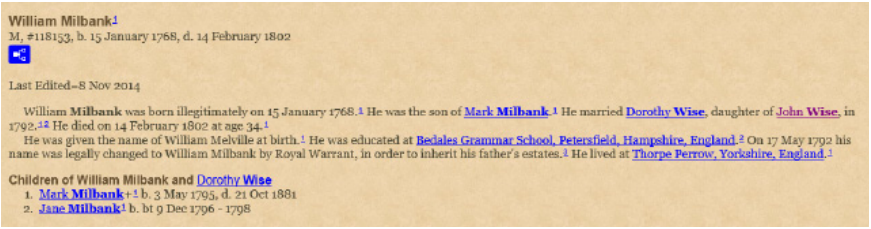
The first problem is that there wasn't a Mrs Milbank at the time. The Lady of the Manor was Miss Jane Milbank, unmarried eldest sister of Mark Milbank who had died 12 years earlier after falling off a haystack at the fairly early age of 42.

Mark had no known wife (there was a rumour that he'd once married a girl called Anne, daughter of a Charles Dodson, but no record of this has ever been found) and he certainly had no legitimate offspring who could claim to be his heir. So all his worldly goods passed to his sisters, which is how Jane got the ladyship of the manor.

But there was a young man, William Melville, who seems to have been widely acknowledged as Mark's 'natural son' after being born in around 1770 to an unrecorded mother. Where he'd lived while Mark was alive we don't know, but after his father's death William was effectively adopted by the Milbank family. They clearly believed that Mark was his father.

"The evidence of family portraiture and the concerted desire of his aunts and grandmother to secure the inheritance to him, sufficiently substantiate the claim," says the privately-published book *The Milbank Family* produced for a later Mark Milbank in 1966. Whether William's father made a death-bed order that the boy be raised as his heir "or whether the forlorn ladies themselves made it their common purpose when they laid him in the grave, we shall never know."

William changed his name to Milbank, lived with Jane and the other spinster sisters at the hall, and eventually, when Jane died in 1792, inherited the estate and the lordship of the manor. We'll come back to him in a bit. Meanwhile, back to 1787 and the fall of the maypole. Why did her ladyship decide the pole had to come down? Was



William Milbank[1]
M, #118153, b. 15 January 1768, d. 14 February 1802

Last Edited=8 Nov 2014

William **Milbank** was born illegitimately on 15 January 1768.[1] He was the son of Mark **Milbank**.[1] He married Dorothy **Wise**, daughter of John **Wise**, in 1792.[1,2] He died on 14 February 1802 at age 34.[1]
He was given the name of William Melville at birth.[1] He was educated at Bedales Grammar School, Petersfield, Hampshire, England.[2] On 17 May 1792 his name was legally changed to William Milbank by Royal Warrant, in order to inherit his father's estates.[1] He lived at Thorpe Perrow, Yorkshire, England.[1]

Children of William Milbank and Dorothy Wise
1. Mark **Milbank**+[1] b. 3 May 1795, d. 21 Oct 1881
2. Jane **Milbank**[1] b. bt 9 Dec 1796 - 1798

William Melville's entry at www.thepeerage.com

she, perhaps, a fanatical puritan, outraged by the public dancing around what was, after all, a symbol dating back to pagan days?

Was she angry with Mr Morritt, maybe feeling that he had encoached on her territory by erecting the pole on 'her' village green? If so, why had it taken her two years and more to get round to objecting to its presence?

Why did Mr Morritt give the pole to the village in the first place? And what did all the deprived freeholders of Barningham feel about their present being sawn down? They had certainly welcomed its arrival in 1785 – James Coates, the Newsham schoolmaster whose diaries the history group have published, went to have a look on the day it went up, and recorded that "there was to be much drinking and mirth around it in the evening". Maybe there was so much drinking and mirth over the next couple of years that the lady of the manor eventually decided it had to go?

We've no answer to any of these questions, and there's more to add to the puzzle.

The following October came another story in the *Courant*. Bills of Indictment, it reported, had been found by a Grand Jury at Northallerton Sessions against Thomas Mason, "gamekeeper to Mrs Milbank of Barningham" and others, for "cutting down the May-Pole on the Town Green of Barningham on the 23rd of July, where it had been erected time immemorial."

And that's it. There's no report of any follow-up trial, nothing we can trace about what happened to Mr Mason and the others who were part of 'Mrs' Milbank's assault on her villagers' maypole.

But there was another assault of a different and much more serious kind, one which raises even more questions about what on earth was going on here 225 years ago.

On November 3, the *Courant* announced that the Milbanks' adoptee William Melvile (that's how they spelt it) of Barningham "had been apprehended by a warrant from the Rev Thomas Zouch, one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the North Riding of Yorkshire, for assaulting and threatening to shoot the Rev Matthew Moore, Rector of Barningham."

Melville was freed after being ordered to find sureties who would enter into recognizances (guarantees) totalling £300 – an enormous amount at the time, reflecting the accused youngster's wealth – that he would keep the peace in future.

Now what was *that* all about? Why would young William Melville, aged only 19 in 1787, threaten the life of the Rev Moore, who was at least 80? Was it anything to do

with the earlier dispute (the Rev Moore was rector of Rokeby as well – had he unwisely stepped into the maypole controversy on Mr Morritt's behalf?) Was Melville incensed over some theological difference with the aged rector? Or had the young man simply lost his senses after a wild night's drunken capering round the maypole?

About the only thing we seem to be able to deduce from any of this is that Mark Milbank's bastard son was a bit of a tearaway, to say the least.

We presume he settled down a bit as he reached adulthood. He married Dorothy Wise in 1792, the year he inherited the Milbank estates, had two sons (the second of which died in infancy, shortly after his mother), and began extensive rebuilding works at both Thorp Perrow, his main residence, and Barningham, where he built the impressive stable block. This proved a greater strain on his resources than he'd imagines, and by 1796 he was forced to sack servants, sell his racehorses and get rid of the herd of deer in Barningham park to make ends meet.

William lived on only until 1802. On Valentine's Day that year he collapsed and died in an inn after taking his morning ride in Northallerton, aged just 34. He was buried at Well beside his wife and daughter.

His surviving son Mark, aged seven, eventually inherited the estates and the lordship of the manor.

First printed in Archive 31, February 2013

S*ources:*

- *BLHG member Marion Moverley*
- *The Milbank Family, private publication by Mark Milbank 1966*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*
- *www.thepeerage.com*

Harry Milbank
Daredevil, duellist and drug addict

FEW people have been born with a more solid silver spoon in their mouth than William Harry Vane Milbank.

The eldest son of Frederick Acclom Milbank and heir presumptive to the fabulously wealthy Duke of Cleveland, he came into this world on December 29th 1848, "a very fine boy" according to his uncle Augustus Sussex in a diary entry a few days later.

His early life was mapped out appropriately: Eton and then a commission as a cornet (second lieutenant) in the Royal Horse Guards. But once he reached adulthood he veered wildly from the conventional path his father and grand-uncle the duke intended for him.

Harry Milbank, pictured in 1876

Over the next two decades he forged an international reputation as an adventurer, womaniser, horseman, gambler, duellist and drug addict, spending his way through a vast fortune. His addiction to morphine wrecked his health, and he died of a haemorrhage in Switzerland at the age of 42.

Friends and admirers described Harry (as he was always known) as a chivalrous man "of great abilities and of a most winning and attractive character... brave to a fault." Others decried him as a spendthrift playboy who threw away what could have been a useful life.

Among the latter was his grand-uncle the Duke, who was so exasperated and concerned by his potential heir's profligance and scandalous behaviour that he spent a reputed £1 million in legal fees to ensure that Harry did not inherit his fortune and estates.

Money was a problem for Harry from an early age. Confidently expecting to inherit what friends called "pots of money" when his father and the Duke died, he just couldn't spend it fast enough.

In his youth he hosted lavish parties at Barningham, when he would hide £5 notes in the gardens for children to find, and then forget where he'd hidden them. By the time he turned 21 four days after Christmas in 1869 he was in debt to the tune of £30,000 – a colossal amount at the time.

Two years later he owed more than £76,000 to creditors including milliners, money-lenders, jewellers and solicitors. Out of patience with his refusal to pay any bills, they forced him into voluntary bankruptcy. Harry reluctantly paid up,

explaining that he had plenty of money, and the promise of much, much more – an income of well over £100,000 a year when his ageing father and grand-uncle died. The judge called it "a case of a young man with splendid expectations".

Harry's second problem was women. Among his many debts was one of £1,000 to a Piccadilly dress shop for clothes supplied to a lady calling herself Mabel Gray. Tall, beautiful and refined, she was actually Annie King, a former West End shopgirl who in the 1860s became a notorious high-class prostitute (the *Times* delicately described her as a "celebrity") with a succession of wealthy lovers who presented her with what was reputedly the best collection of diamonds in London.

Notorious 'celebrity': Mabel Gray

Harry wanted to marry her, and it took strenuous efforts by his horrified father and the Duke – together with a large sum of their money – to buy her off. She died shortly afterwards of TB.

Harry promptly married someone else. His choice was Alice Sidone Bellroche, nee Vandenberg, a woman of unclear origins but "almost legendary beauty" who had become a prominent member of society on both sides of the Channel. The downside was that she had previously been married to the Marquis de Bellroche and was the mother of his two young children. Harry became their stepfather and the family set up home in the plushest part of Paris.

Legendary beauty: Alice Bellroche

The marriage horrified Harry's parents ("a terrible calamity – misery and disgrace for ever" his mother recorded in her diary) and confirmed the Duke of Cleveland's fear that Harry was not a suitable person to inherit his vast estates in England (among them Raby Castle – his titles included that of Baron Raby – and more than 100,000 acres scattered across ten counties, plus property in London).

In June 1872 the Duke spent more than £1million on legal fees and compensation payments to change his inheritance arrangements; Harry's father received at least £400,000

as part of the deal, and Harry himself came out of it some £120,000 richer.

The new heir was the Duke's third cousin once removed, Henry de Vere Vane, who in time became the 9th Baron Barnard and moved into Raby Castle, his descendants' home ever since.

Harry, meanwhile, devoted himself to the lavish life of an adventurous playboy. His marriage did little to quench his taste for dangerous interprise, and his exploits were frequently recorded in the press. The Washington *National Tribune*, for example, described him as a Don Juan whose principle occupation was "to spend money, fight duels and gamble."

Early on he spent a month in a Russian prison after being shot, captured and accused of spying for Poland; only the intervention of "a very highly-placed personage" saved him from transportation to a Siberian death camp.

On another occasion he narrowly escaped with his life after being set upon by a band of knife-wielding Lascars at an opium den in Hamburg: he shot two and the rest fled. Harry claimed later that he was trying to defend a girl being dragged into the den "and did what any man would have done" to protect her.

But it was his duels that made the most headlines. He fought at least 20 – some estimates make it as many as 28 – and won every time. Nearly all of them involved women, often other men's wives.

He fought three duels with pistols in Germany over his relationship with a young Russian countess, successively killing her husband, her brother and her brother-in-law, and being badly wounded himself. In Austria he fought a duel with daggers; in Paris he mortally wounded Baron Diech-stein with a pistol shot; and in 1892, only months before his death, he was facing an opponent on a deserted beach near Ostend.

If he wasn't duelling himself, he was happy to assist others who were, and on one occasion travelled as far as New York to act as a second for a friend challenged to a duel after being accused of adultery with Mrs Charlotte Drayton, a member of the fabulously wealthy Astor family.

"I was dragged into almost all of the duels against my will," Harry told a reporter for the Middlesbrough *Daily Gazette* in 1892.

"I very deeply regret that three or four of them have resulted fatally. I was dragged into so many affairs which I would much rather have avoided could I have done so honourably."

An example, he said, was when he escorted a lady home from a ball and after she had retired to her apartment received a message that she wanted to see him. "I went to what I suppposed was her boudoir but found it to be her bedroom, much to my surprise. She at once went into hysterics and of course I had a duel on my hands." Not everyone believed his version of events.

Harry fought his final duel on April 28th 1892, six months before his death.

It took place in Belgium, among sand-dunes on a beach near Ostend to avoid the risk of being seen and arrested (duelling was illegal there, as in most other countries).

Harry's opponent was a Frenchman, widely reported to be the Duc de Morny, son of one of Napoleon III's half-brothers, though there were widespread rumours that it was in fact an English aristocrat who wanted to keep his identity secret.

Whoever it was, he had made what the *Yorkshire Gazette* reported to have been "insulting remarks concerning the English" in a public dining-room, which were

overheard by Harry. "He deemed them too offensive to be passed over, and resented them," said the *Gazette*.

The two parties and their seconds agreed that the duel should be fought with pistols, at a distance of twelve paces, and that both Harry and his opponent could shoot as soon as the order "Fire!" was given.

"Both fired sharply on the word," the *Gazette* reported. "Mr Milbank was unharmed, but the Frenchman staggered and fell to the ground.

"The surgeon went up to him, and found he had been shot in the thigh, the wound being a dangerous one. It was bandaged by the surgeon, the flow of blood being arrested as well as possible, and he was then carried by his seconds to a boat and taken aboard a small yacht lying in-shore, which set sail and has not since been heard from.

Harry Vane, pictured in 1861 at the age of 13

"Mr Milbank returned to Ostend with his friends."

The duel made headlines across the world, and there was much speculation for weeks afterwards about who Harry's opponent really was. "One of England's greatest dukes," one London columnist announced excitedly, but as far as we can tell his identity was never revealed.

When he wasn't duelling, Harry spent most of his time in France. But there were regular visits to his racing stables in England and Germany, trips to Thorp Perrow and Barningham during the hunting and shooting seasons, and occasional forays further afield. He appears to have retained his position in the army for some time, though rarely being called upon to fulfill any military duties, and there is one report of him having played a part in General Gordon's Sudan campaigns of the 1880s.

And there were the duels – more than one a year throughout his adult life. "I have a pistol ball in my body, another in my thigh, a sword thrust in my arm, another in my hand, and so on," he told the *Gazette.* "Yet I have never been killed."

What did kill him was his drug addiction. He had long experimented with morphia, cocaine and other narcotics, and by 1892 he was seriously ill.

"His health was shattered," said the *New York Times* in its report of his death on October 24th at the Swiss resort of Davos, where he had gone in a vain attempt to get better. "When, several months ago, he left England it was known to his intimate friends that his case was hopeless."

Harry's body was brought back for burial in the churchyard at Well near Thorp Perrow. The stained glass east window of Barningham church was erected in his memory by his father Frederick and brother Powlett.

The death created a new crisis in the Milbank family. Harry had made a will in 1883 leaving everything to his wife Alice (he had no children by her), and to his parents' horror

that included the Thorp Perrow estate. This had not been the family's intention, but came about, as far as anyone could fathom, as a result of a series of solicitors' errors during complicated negotiations between Sir Frederick and his son back in the 1880s which should have left Thorp to Powlett.

Early in 1893 Harry's mother Aline wrote to Alice from Barningham, saying that "we are all most deeply grieved to hear that Thorp is left to you and away from Powlett and Freddie" (Powlett's 11-year-old son, the future third baronet and grandfather of Anthony, the fifth).

It was, wrote Aline, a "bitter grief to Fred in his old age to think that the old family place we all love must pass to strangers." Perhaps, she suggested gently, Alice might want to forego the inheritance, as the Thorp estate was heavily mortgaged, the house was empty and the property brought in no income. "How would you live there?" she asked. "The price you would get for it would scarcely cover the mortgages and would leave you penniless."

Alice was invited to Barningham for a family conference to discuss the situation, and eventually she agreed a settlement which restored Thorp to Sir Powlett in 1901.

The estate was subsequently sold and the family moved to Barningham. Alice spent the rest of her life in London, dying there in 1916.

● Duelling – "arranged combats between two individuals with matched weapons in accordance with agreed rules" – emerged in Europe in the late Middle Ages, a spin-off from the medieval code of chivalry.

Opponents agreed beforehand what outcome would give satisfaction: it ranged from merely drawing blood, however little, to serious injury or death. Deliberately aiming to miss (to suggest an opponent wasn't worth killing) was frowned upon and not always a good idea.

Swords and pistols were the most popular weapons, though in 1843 two Frenchmen fought a duel by throwing billiard balls at each other, and in the 1860s a German duellist chose two pork sausages, one infected with roundworms, and challenged his opponent to eat one.

At least 1,000 duels were recorded in Britain between 1785 and 1845, with at least one in six ending in death. Duelling was declared illegal in Britain in the 1840s and the last known duel in England was fought in 1852, though others involving Englishmen took place abroad until well into the 20th century.

Pistol duelling was an associate event at the 1908 London Olympics. Contestants used wax bullets, protective clothing and a shield.

First printed in Archive 48, August 2015

S*ources:*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *https://en.wikipedia.org*
- *The Milbank Family, private publication by Mark Milbank 1966*

Henry Nelson
Gentleman of the road, aka Baccy Harry

YOU don't see a lot of tramps around these days. And you certainly don't read lengthy obituaries of them in the local paper when they die.

But when Barningham-born gentleman of the road Henry Nelson went to meet his maker a hundred years ago, the *Teesdale Mercury* devoted columns to the story of his life, death and subsequent inquest.

Henry loved his pipe and was known throughout the district as 'Baccy Harry' because the only thing he'd work for was money to buy the tobacco he craved.

Born in the village in 1844, the son of stone mason William Nelson and his wife Harriet, he'd adopted "an out-and-out Bohemian life" as a young man, said the *Mercury*.

"He seems to have defied parental authority at an early age, and sternly to have resented yoke or service of any kind. He was habituated to the Romany life."

Henry roamed between Teesdale and Wensleydale, living on what he could beg from sympathetic farmsteads and occasionally doing a few days' labour in return. In May 1912 he turned up at Wilson House in Barningham, desperate for work, and farmer John Atkinson took him on. Henry stayed seven days; on the eighth he was found lying dead in the field opposite the farmhouse.

At an inquest next day, Dr Sanders decided he'd died of heart failure; despite his love of tobacco his lungs were in fine shape. "Thus has ended an existence which, though strange even to the verge of outrage, was yet uneventful," said the *Mercury.*

About 30 people followed Henry's coffin into Barningham church the following Sunday, when Canon Gough conducted what the paper described as a beautful service.

"Everybody seemed to have looked about him with a kindly eye," it reported. "So the ashes of the hapless and forlorn wanderer of the wind-beaten hills were returned to kindly mother earth, while his frailties are mercifully hidden in oblivion. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*"

Speak no ill of the dead? Worthy advice, but we fear this collection of stories would be pretty thin if we stuck rigidly to that.

First printed in Archive 26, July 2012

S*ources:*

- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*

Ellen Patterson
Sister whose good deed proved fatal

FOUR-year-old Ellen Patterson knew just what to do when her little brother Thomas Henry was thirsty.

She got a bottle off the kitchen shelf and gave it to Thomas to suck.

He was dead within five hours. In the bottle was a corrosive liquid used by her father William for treating blisters on animals, the jury was told at an inquest a few days later into the death of the 18-month-old boy.

Their mother Elizabeth told the coroner that she had left the children alone in the house at Greenbrough, near Newsham, on the afternoon of April 12th 1879 while she went to fetch a can of water.

She was only away about three minutes, but when she returned she found her son crying in the doorway, his mouth blistered.

She noticed a strong smell in the house, and recognised it as the blistering fluid she kept on a shelf where the toddler could not have reached it. Ellen refused to say what had happened.

The village doctor, Dr James Graham, was summoned but there was nothing he could do. The boy died soon afterwards.

The jury decided that young Ellen was the cause of the boy's death, but said she was "of such a tender age that she was not capable of judging the effects of the liquid" and could not be blamed for the tragedy.

The child was buried in Barningham churchyard, the burial register recording that he had been "accidentally poisoned by sucking a bottle of foot rot (sheep) dressing."

Six months later Elizabeth gave birth to a third child. It was a boy, and he too was christened Thomas Henry.

First printed in Archive 34, June 2013

Source:

- *The Teesdale Mercury, November 25, 1895.*

Agnes Robinson
Servant girl forbidden her true love

HE was the son of a local methodist minister, educated and destined for high things. She was a beautiful but tragically disfigured young servant girl, daughter of a widowed washerwoman. At the height of the Edwardian era they fell in love.

Their families, horrified at the thought of marriage between two young people from such far-apart social backgrounds, did everything they could to halt the relationship. In a romantic novel they would have triumphed, married, and lived happily ever after. But it didn't work like that in Barningham. They spent the rest of their days apart, regretting what might have been.

The story has been unravelling in emails across the Atlantic from Lynda Johnson in Spokane, Washington DC, who wrote to the history group asking if it had any details about her grandmother Agnes Robinson, born in Barningham in 1888.

Yes, we replied; in fact there had been mention of her in *Archive 10* which featured the Robinson family living at North View in the early 1900s. Lynda emailed back with more information and the pictures you see here.

Above: Mary, Annie and Agnes Robinson around 1905 – Agnes is turning her face from the camera to hide the loss of her eye. Left, Agnes in her seventies, pictured on her way to visit Barningham in the 1960s.

Agnes, her grandmother, was one of nine children of George and Elizabeth Robinson, and the unhappiness in her life started very early on. As a child she lost an eye, "put out by one of her brothers who was playing and threw a sharp object at her," says Lynda. "She had a glass eye but was disfigured, and they always removed her from school pictures and so on because of that. It is so sad as she was a beautiful woman."

Agnes left school, started work as a domestic servant in the village, and fell in love with the minister's son (whose name remains uncertain). "He would try to call on her," says Lynda, "but her mother would not allow or approve of it because they were in different classes in society, my grandmother being a disfigured servant girl."

Confirmation of all this came when Lynda crossed the Atlantic to visit Barningham with her mother in 1973. "We were invited to tea with a minister in Barnard Castle,

Agnes' sister Mary is the girl fourth from the right in the back row in the photo above, which shows Sunday school youngsters in Barningham's former methodist chapel around 1905. This is the only known photograph of the interior of the chapel, built in 1815, given a substantial facelift in 1868, and closed down in the late 1960s. It's now a private house.

One of the boys is her brother Bobby, destined to die of pneumonia in 1909. He, too, is in the churchyard, in an unmarked grave.

who related how his dad had told him that he had been in love with Agnes but had not been allowed to pursue that because of being in different classes," she tells us.

"I think my mom was shocked to hear personally that my grandmother had lost her chance at love and that it was all actually true."

By 1911 Agnes had left Barningham to work as a servant for a family called Waumsley who ran a grocer's shop in Nidd, near Knaresborough. She never married, but she did have a child – Lynda's mother Joyce, born in 1921. The father, says Lynda, was a farmhand called Todd "working at a place called Overlook Farm". We can't track this down, but we have found a family of Todds living in 1911 at Holme Bottom Farm in Nidd – and there were five young sons among them, any of whom might well have been Joyce's father.

According to Lynda, Agnes almost died in childbirth, and the baby's name was chosen by the nurses attending her. She was later registered as 'Joyce T. Robinson' – T for Todd, perhaps?

Agnes never returned to Barningham with the baby and was disowned by her

family. "It is all so sad," says Lynda, "but she loved Barningham so much and passed that on to me!"

Joyce went to the States as a GI bride after the war and Lynda was born there. In the late 1950s Agnes moved over to spend her last years with them, returning twice to Barningham to visit relatives. She died in August 1968 and is buried in Washington.

- Agnes was not the only Robinson girl to suffer great misfortune. Her younger sister Mary, born in 1894, lost her hearing after catching measles as a child, and grew up with severe speech problems.

While the rest of the Robinsons later moved away, she stayed in Barningham, living alone in one of the Heath Cottages until the 1960s. She then moved to Barnard Castle, where Lynda visited her in 1973 and recalls her as "quite a character". She died three years later and is buried in Barningham churchyard.

First printed in Archive 11, October 2010.

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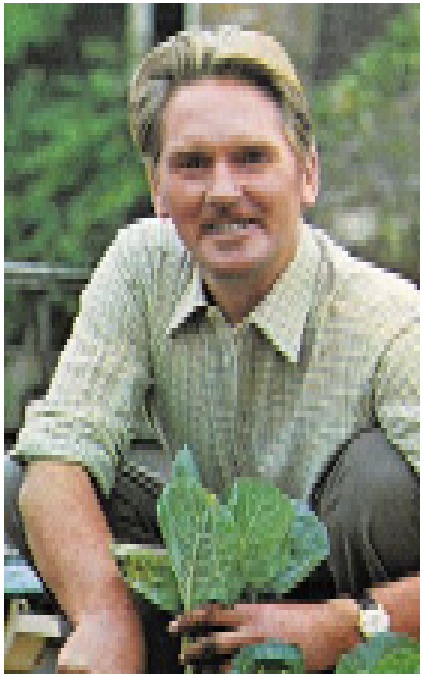
Geoffrey Smith
Our 'Boycott of the garden'



GEOFFREY Smith, arguably the best-known name ever to come out from Barningham, died five years ago this month.

Geoffrey Who? asked one of our younger history group members, and we realised that we'd hardly ever mentioned him in the *Archive*. So here, to put the record straight, is what they said about him when he died at the age of 80 in March 2009.

"Geoffrey Smith was sometimes known as the Geoffrey Boycott of gardening", wrote the obituarist in *The Week*. "A Yorkshireman born and bred, he played up to the image with his no-nonsense advice on Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time* on which he served as panellist for 20 years.

"Put the brown end in the soil, and the green end above it," he liked to say, "and you're in with a much better chance."

But Geoffrey was a highly trained horticulturalist of enormous range and skill, said *The Daily Telegraph,* a man who had a lyricism which complemented his occasional bluntness. "If I am depressed," he wrote in one of his bestselling books, "or I think the world's a filthy place, I just go and look at a flower."

Geoffrey was born in 1928 in the gardener's cottage at Barningham Park, where his father was groundsman. After boarding at Barnard Castle school – where he felt "incarcerated" – he initially chose forestry as a career, determined to work out of doors. But after a spell in the Stang forest he found he disliked the solitude, and decided to train as a gardener alongside his father.

He did this for six years, then went on to Askham Bryan College near York, where he was named the best all-round student. In 1954 he became superintendent of the infant Northern Horticultural Society gardens at Harlow Carr in Harrogate and over the next 20 years established their reputation, disproving received wisdom about what plants could thrive in the harsh northern climate.

In 1974 he left Harlow Carr to make his living as a writer and broadcaster, and two years later scored a hit with his own series, *Mr Smith's Vegetable Garden*.

Other hit series and their books followed in the 1980s, when five million people watched *Geoffrey Smith's World of Flowers* on BBC2.

Geoffrey was the first gardening presenter with "attitude". The advice he dispensed was always shaped by an ironclad self-belief and his own blunt opinion on the topic in hand, said the *Telegraph*: he never shrank from calling a spade a spade.

Although radio programmes were recorded at a different location each week, usually in far-flung draughty village halls in front of an audience of amateur gardeners, Geoffrey would always arrive promptly, having driven himself from Yorkshire, where his wife Marjorie had packed his bag and issued him with directions as well as a wedge of his favourite Wensleydale cheese and a hunk of her home-baked bread.

A courteous figure of the old school, he wore a rugged, outdoor glow and, although no one listening could tell the difference, he always arrived for the recordings in the impeccably-cut clothes of a prosperous countryman.

For all his success, said *The Scotsman*, Geoffrey was never happier than when walking in the county of his birth. "I don't need paradise," he once remarked. "The Yorkshire Dales will do for me."

Geoffrey Smith married, in 1953, Marjorie Etherington, who survived him with their son and daughter.

First printed in Archive 40, March 2013

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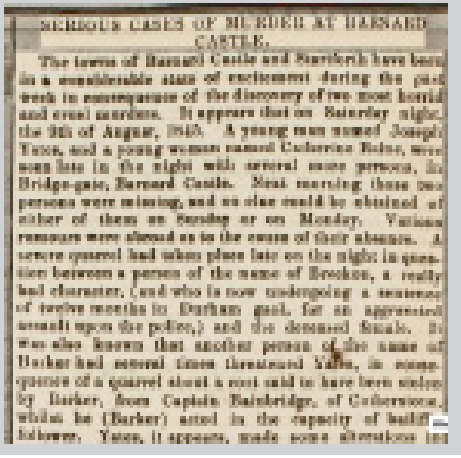
Ralph Leconby Snowden
Detective author of the bobbies' bible

THE news that young Joseph Yates and Catharine Raine had vanished overnight from their homes in Barnard Castle swept though 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.


SERIOUS CASES OF MURDER AT BARNARD CASTLE.

The towns of Barnard Castle and Auckland have been in a considerable state of excitement during the past week in consequence of the discovery of two most horrid and cruel murders. It appears that on Saturday night, the 9th of August, 1845, A young man named Joseph Yates, and a young woman named Catherine Raine, were seen late in the night with several more persons, in Bridge-gate, Barnard Castle. Next morning these two persons were missing, and no clue could be obtained of either of them on Sunday or on Monday. Various rumours were abroad as to the cause of their absence. A severe quarrel had taken place late on the night in question between a person of the name of Brocken, a really bad character, (and who is now undergoing a sentence of twelve months in Durham gaol, for an aggravated assault upon the police,) and the deceased Yates. It was also known that another person of the name of Barker had several times threatened Yates, in consequence of a quarrel about a rent said to have been taken by Barker, from Captain Bainbridge, of Cotherstone, whilst he (Barker) acted in the capacity of bailiff to him. Yates, it appears, made some alterations in

Yorkshire Gazette, August 8th 1846

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 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 Yorkshire-man 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 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,

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

and getting information from them was not easy. But Snowden persevered, and bit by bit he unravelled what had happened to Joseph and Cath-arine.

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 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 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 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 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."

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

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.

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

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, Gretna 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 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 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 And-erson, 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

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

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 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 Bridge-gate; in short, a witness whose word was hardly to be trusted.

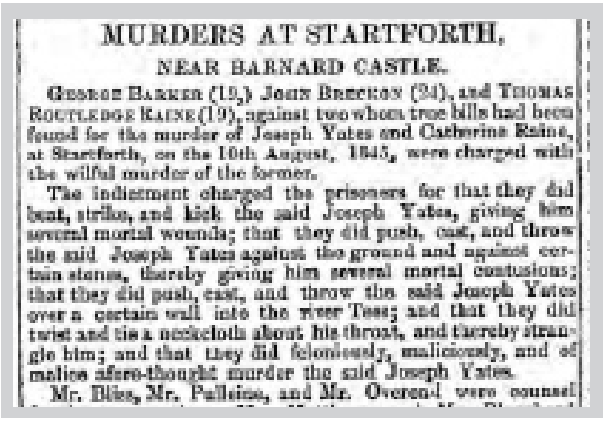
"It draws upon the utmost credibility of the human understanding," said the barrister witheringly, "to believe that she watched two people being murdered and said nothing about it for almost a year." The truth was that Ann "was too susceptible of imagination, led away with tales of horror such as she 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 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 throughout 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 as well. They stepped gleefully from the dock, jubilant at having escaped the gallows so many thought they deserved.



MURDERS AT STARTFORTH,

NEAR BARNARD CASTLE.

GEORGE BARKER (19,) JOHN BRECKON (24), and THOMAS ROUTLEDGE RAINE (19), against two whom true bills had been found for the murder of Joseph Yates and Catherine Raine, at Startforth, on the 10th August, 1845, were charged with the wilful murder of the former.

The indictment charged the prisoners for that they did beat, strike, and kick the said Joseph Yates, giving him several mortal wounds; that they did push, cast, and throw the said Joseph Yates against the ground and against certain stones, thereby giving him several mortal contusions; that they did push, cast, and throw the said Joseph Yates over a certain wall into the river Tees; and that they did twist and tie a neckcloth about his throat, and thereby strangle him; and that they did feloniously, maliciously, and of malice afore-thought murder the said Joseph Yates.

Mr. Bliss, Mr. Pullein, and Mr. Overend were counsel

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

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.

Baron Rolfe, judge at the second trial

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

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.

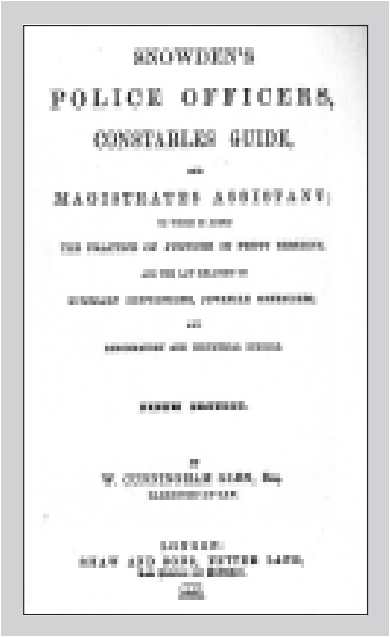
Snowden was born around 1805, almost certainly in North Yorkshire, and began his career as a law enforcement officer with the Preventative Service in Tyneside, one of the fore-runners of today's police. It could be dangerous work: the first mention we can find of him is in the Newcastle *Journal* of 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 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.


SNOWDEN'S

POLICE OFFICERS,

CONSTABLES GUIDE,

MAGISTRATES ASSISTANT;

Title page of Snowden's textbook

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 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


This day is published, price 7s. 6d., bds.,
THE MAGISTRATES' ASSISTANT and POLICE OFFICER and CONSTABLE'S GUIDE, being a Summary of the Duties of Magistrates and Peace officers. By RALPH SECONBY SNOWDEN.
London: Shaw and Sons, Fetter-lane.

Morning Chronicle, November 14th 1846

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 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 Start-forth'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.

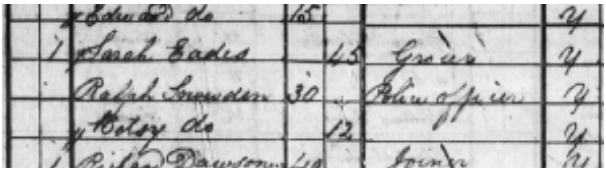
The book was still in general use well into the last century and it is today regarded as one of the most readable and illuminating guides to Victorian crime and criminal justice system.

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 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



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

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 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 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 in1863, 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.

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.

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.

● *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.

First printed in Archive 50, December 2015.

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Jack Stapleton
Bus operator who faced rivals in court

RIVALRY between Teesdale bus operators was fierce in the early days – and in 1927 it led Jack Stapleton to court.

He was accused of using one of his buses – almost certainly *Pride of the Road* pictured below – without a hackney carriage licence.

PC Cameron told Barnard Castle magistrates that he saw Jack in Newgate with the bus, a 14-seater Fiat painted red and yellow, but discovered that its licence plate belonged to another vehicle, a 20-seater Guy.

A few days later he came across Jack at the wheel of the Guy – which had the licence plate that he'd seen on the Fiat. Jack denied switching the plates.

Jack Stapleton

Jack suggested that PC Cameron hadn't actually seen the Fiat in Newgate, and was relying on information given to him maliciously by rival operators. The officer stoutly rejected this, and produced two witnesses who backed him up.

One was Robert Etherington, who told the court he'd definitely seen Jack driving the Fiat in Newgate. Questioned, he admitted being a driver for a rival bus operator, Sam Turner of Barningham (they later became brothers-in-law) but insisted this had nothing to do with it.

He was followed into the witness box by George Maude, who said he too had seen the red and white Fiat. It was true that his brother ran a rival bus service, but that was irrelevant.

Jack told the magistrates that his Fiat was in fact painted green and grey, and on the day in question it had been in his garage at Hutton Magna. It hadn't been used for months since the crank shaft had snapped. It was only long after the alleged offence that he got a replacement part, and he produced a dated bill in court to prove it.

The bus he was driving in Newgate, he insisted, was the Guy, which *was* red

and yellow. Two defence witnesses, Henry Harker and William Sanderson, backed him up, and the case was dismissed.

The rivalry didn't diminish, of course: in fact, we suspect things probably got rather worse after all that.

Pride of the Road, was one of the first, if not *the* first, to run regular services between Barningham, Newsham and Darlington.

Jack – real name John William Stapleton – set up his bus company after the first world war. By 1934 it was based in Newsham and he had at least two buses running three services from Barningham – to Darlington via Hutton Magna, and to Barnard Castle via Smallways and via Wycliffe. Others services ran from Hutton to Barnard Castle and from Greta Bridge to Caldwell.

The company was taken over in 1950 by J H Maude, who were in turn later taken over by Burrells. Jack died in 1955, aged 59.

First printed in Archive 32, March 2013

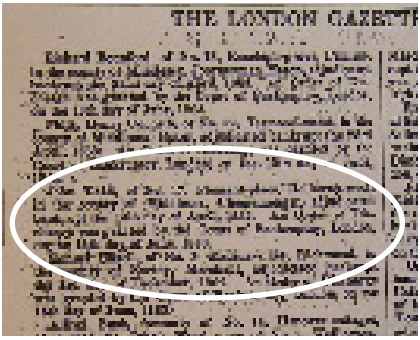
Source:

- *The Teesdale Mercury, December 28th 1927*

John Todd
Cheesemonger who fled the village

JOHN Todd arrived in Barningham in the late 1860s, barely 40 years old but already retired after what he claimed had been a successful career as a cheesemonger in London.

A decade later he fled the village in disgrace after a scandal that involved forged documents, illegal tax-gathering, emergency parish meetings and a child of possibly uncertain parentage.


THE LONDON GAZETTE

Todd's bankruptcy discharge notice in The London Gazette, 1863

John was born in Brignall in around 1829. Who his parents were is uncertain but they were almost certainly one of the Todd families who had farmed in the area for generations. Where he spent his youth is also a mystery— he wasn't listed in either the 1841 or 1851 censuses – but we do know that he married a 19-year-old Gainford farmer's daughter called Margaret Ellen Appleby in Barnard Castle in December 1859. Her father, James Thompson Appleby, had previously run a butcher's shop in the town and it could be that the wedding took place hastily under the shadow of a threatening meat cleaver, as the couple moved immediately to London where their first child, Mary Ann, was born shortly afterwards in a lodging house at 17 Pleasant Place, Holloway Road.

He wasn't the first Teesdale Todd to live in the capital. Several from the Brignall area had built up flourishing cheese-mongering businesses there in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and young John took full advantage of the family connection, distant though it probably was. He became a cheese-monger himself, but he clearly didn't have his relatives' business flair. Within two years, as Margaret prepared to give birth to their second daughter, Laura, he went bankrupt.

He spent much of 1862 being grilled about his affairs. The London Gazette recorded summonses for him to appear before Thomas Winslow, Registrar of the Court of Bankruptcy, in April that year, and to face Edward Goulburn, Serjeant-at-Law and Bankruptcy Commissioner, the following June.

Somehow he managed to pay off his debts – helped by one of the other Todds? – and his bankruptcy was discharged in June 1863. He'd clearly learnt some heavy financial lessons, because within a couple of years he had bounced back and made enough money to return to Teesdale as a 'retired cheesemonger' living on his own means.

He set up home in Barnard Castle, where his first son, a boy named John after his father, was born in 1866, closely followed by another daughter, Eleanor. In 1868 he decided to move to the country, and came to Barningham. Exactly where he lived is uncertain, but all the signs are that he took over Manor Farm, a prestigious enough

property for him to describe himself as a 'landowner' in the 1871 census.

His choice of the village was probably influenced by the fact that there were already plenty of other Todd households here. There was James Todd, a 67-year-old retired cheese-monger who had built Fairview. There were his sons, one also called James who was farming in the village, the other another retired cheesemonger. There were two William Todds, one farming at Bragg House, the other on the road to Scargill. There was an Elizabeth Todd, unmarried and living with her widowed sister Jane Bainbridge (formerly the village postmistress) and their unmarried brother Edward, another retired cheesemonger.

The place was crawling with them, and no doubt they all welcomed another Todd into the community, confident he would be a useful citizen and a credit to the place.

They must have wondered fairly soon whether they were right, because one of the first things he did after moving into the village was chop down a tree in the Bull Acre, which lay next to his land. The village elders were incensed. At a meeting of the Vestry (the Victorian equivalent of the parish meeting) on March 21st 1870 they told John Todd that unless he apologised within three days they would take him to law.

He came clean, replying: 'I hereby regret having given instructions to Hodgson Lee to fell the Tree in the Bull Acre, but I would not have done so but was informed that the tree belonged to myself. Yours respectfully, John Todd'.

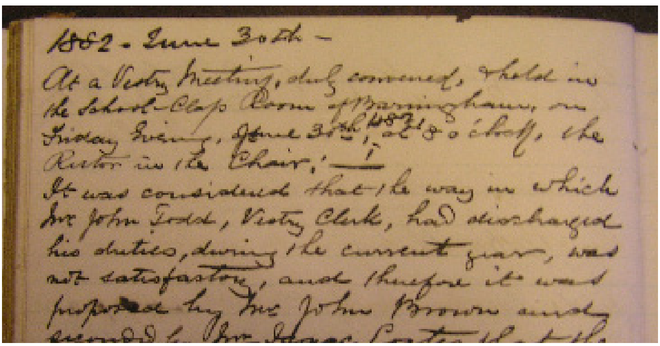
He went quiet after that for the best part of a decade, during which more children arrived: Elizabeth, Emily, Edith, William, Henry and the last, Margaret, in 1881 (at least, we think it was his last – see later on).

It was a large family and it made heavy demands on the purse of a retired cheesemonger with only the interest from his savings and the rent from his fields to live on. Eventually it all became too much for him, and he decided the only way out of his financial troubles was to take to crime.

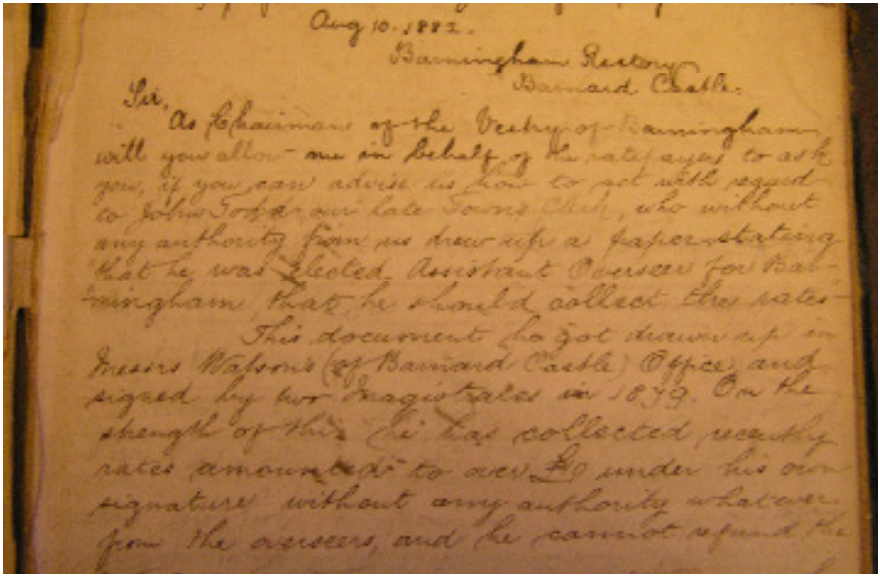
In March 1879 he'd been elected Vestry Clerk. It was hardly an arduous job, involving little more than taking the minutes at the twice-a-year Vestry meetings and writing the odd letter, but it paid £5 a year.

His appointment caused some controversy. The previous clerk, John Spencely, hadn't been at the meeting and was clearly unhappy about being replaced, immediately demanding that the decision should be rescinded and he get his old job back.

Members met again next month and unanimously voted to turn him down; Mr


1882 - June 30th -
At a Vestry Meeting, duly convened, & held in the School-Class Room of Barningham, on Friday Evening, June 30th 1882, at 8 o'clock, the Rector in the Chair; —
It was considered that the way in which Mr John Todd, Vestry Clerk, had discharged his duties, during the current year, was not satisfactory, and therefore it was proposed by Mr John Brown and

Todd denounced: the Vestry Minute of June 30th 1882



Aug 10. 1882.

Barningham Rectory
Barnard Castle.

Sir,

As Chairman of the Vestry of Barningham will you allow me on behalf of the ratepayers to ask you, if you can advise us how to get settled up to John Todd late Town Clerk, who without any authority from us drew up a paper stating that he was elected Assistant Overseer for Barningham, that he should collect the rates

This document he got drawn up in Messrs Watson's (of Barnard Castle) Office and signed by two magistrates in 1879. On the strength of this he has collected yearly rates amounting to over £9 under his own signature without any authority whatever from the overseers, and he cannot refund the

"A forgery": the Rector's letter to the District Auditor

Spencely stomped off and never attended another meeting. There was another little problem at the time, something to do with the water in John Todd's well. Members agreed to hold another meeting the following week to investigate, but for some reason the meeting was never called. Perhaps the new Clerk, struggling to come to grips with his new duties, simply forgot about it.

He was re-elected Clerk the next three years, during which he took a growing role in parish affairs, on several occasions proposing motions for the nomination of churchwardens. Then it all went wrong.

On the evening of Friday June 30th 1882, an emergency meeting of the Vestry was convened in the village school class-room, chaired by the Rector, the Rev George Hales, and 15 parishioners – far more than normally turned up at such meetings. John Todd was not among them: he knew what was coming.

The gathering agreed unanimously, according to the minutes (taken by the Rector), that "the way in which Mr John Todd, Vestry Clerk, had discharged his duties, during the current year, was not satisfactory, and therefore it was proposed by Mr John Brown and seconded by Mr Isaac Coates that the Chairman be requested to ask Mr John Todd to retire from his office, immediately, and also give up, at once, all the books, papers, writings, and materials belonging to the Township of Barningham."

If he did this, they agreed in a further motion, he would be allowed to keep half his salary for the year. What the minutes didn't say was just what John Todd had been up to.

It was quite simple. Three years earlier – immediately after being elected Vestry Clerk – he'd gone into Watson's solicitors in Barnard Castle and asked them to draw up a document which he then got signed by a couple of local magistrates. It stated

that he'd been appointed an Assistant Overseer, with all the rights and duties that entailed, and one of them was collecting income tax from the people of Barningham.

For the next three years that's just what he did, pocketing the money and telling nobody. How much he stole is unknown, but it may well have been about £50 over the three years he was at it – about £2,500 today.

"He has collected recently rates amounted to over £10 under his own signature without any authority whatsoever from the overseers, and he cannot refund the money," wrote the Rector in a plaintive letter to J. Radford Esq, the District Auditor, after the truth came out. "The document was a forgery, as he never was elected Assistant Overseer." The result, said the Rector despairingly, was that it was "impossible for us to get our books into the order desired."

Three weeks later, on July 21st, another meeting was called. Village shopkeeper Benjamin Morrell successfully proposed that they sue John Todd for money he owed them, specifically money he had collected from the Poor Rates the previous May.

The proposal was "carried unanimously with one exception", but the minutes (taken by William Gray, village schoolmaster, who had been quickly roped in to take over as Clerk) don't tell us which of the eight parishioners present – Richard Westmarland, George Sowerby, Benjamin Morrell, Ralph Goldsborough, Edward Brown, Robson Coates, James Alderson or John Brown – stuck by their erstwhile colleague. Or it might have been the Rector, who must have guessed that litigation would be throwing good money after bad.

John Todd didn't pay up. The following November another special Vestry meeting was summoned to discuss what could be done, and members agreed, though not unanimously, to tell him that if he paid up the missing money he could keep £2/15/- in owed salary.

They also decided that to make sure no Vestry Clerk would ever again claim the right to collect taxes. They did this by simply abolishing the role of Vestry Clerk. Mr Gray's appointment was rescinded, and he was instead elected as an Assistant Overseer (same salary, £5 a year) **"**to perform all such duties as appertain to and are incident to the office of an overseer of the poor, except in so far that nothing in this resolution shall empower the said William Gray to collect, or disburse any rate, rates, or money for, or on behalf of the Overseers of the Poor, or the Township." For the next decade the Vestry Minutes were recorded by the Rector.

There is no evidence that John Todd ever paid anything back. The affair seems to have been quietly dropped, and in April 1883 the Vestry Meeting audited and passed the parish accounts as if nothing had happened.

By that time the Todds had long fled from Barningham. They went to live in a terraced house in Gladstone Street, Darlington, where John died in early 1892, aged 63. His widow stayed there for some time, at least until 1901, with some of the children (including Edith, only 28 but already a widow with two young sons).

The census returns for that year raise
a final little mystery about the family life of our disgraced cheesemonger.

Back in 1882, just after the flight to Darlington, another girl, Minnie, was born. She was duly recorded in the 1891 census returns as John's daughter. But after his death she was listed as a grand-daughter, and it could well be that she was the illegitimate child of John's eldest, Mary Ann, 20 at the time of the baby's birth. If

that was the case, he probably feared the social opprobrium of having an unmarried daughter even more than the wrath of Barningham Vestry over missing money.

No wonder he fled.

● *First printed in Archive 4, February 2010.*

Sources:

● *Barningham Vestry Minutes 1869-1894 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #3, 2010)*
● *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
● *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
● *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
● *www.genesreunited.co.uk*
● *www.gazettes-online.co.uk*

Robert Todd
Farmer whose day out ended in tragedy

IT was the last Wednesday before Christmas 1869, and Haythwaite farmer Robert Todd had had a good day out at Barney market.

At around 5pm he set off home in his cart, drawn by a horse that had probably done the same trip scores of times before.

But this time was different. The night was pitch black, and as they crossed Howgill Beck on Barningham moor the cart strayed off the road and overturned.

Robert, a 65-year-old widower who had farmed 300 acres at Haythwaite for more than 20 years, was thrown into the water, pinned face-down beneath the cart. Although the beck was only a few inches deep he was unable to move an inch. In a few agonising seconds he drowned. "The sad event has caused a feeling of great gloom in the village, the deceased being highly respected," reported the *Teesdale Mercury* under the headline 'A Melancholy Accident'.

An inquest was held at Haythwaite on Christmas Eve and the jury returned a verdict of accidental death, adding a strong recommendation that all dangerous fords should be protected by posts and rails, painted white, "which might serve as a guide in the darkness."

Robert's body lies in Barningham churchyard. His only son, 16-year-old William, took over the farm, and he too was destined to be recorded in these pages. See next entry.

First printed in Archive 21, November 2011

Source:
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.com*

William Todd
Tenant who denounced 'tyrant' landlord

BARNINGHAM readers of *The Northern Echo* on the morning of Tuesday September 28th 1880 were astonished to see an empassioned letter from a local farmer denouncing his landlord, Mark Milbank Esq, as a tyrant.

William Robert Todd, 36-year-old tenant of Haythwaite farm's 800 acres, complained bitterly that after recently renting a few extra fields from someone else, Mark had summoned him to the Hall and forbidden him to go shooting on his newly-acquired land – or anywhere else.

"I returned home and wrote to Mr Milbank stating if that was the only condition upon which I could farm his land, I had no alternative but to place the same at his disposal," wrote William in his letter to the *Echo*. "Such an exhibition of social tyranny" should be made public. Mark, who was 84 and had reached an age when he wasn't going to waste what little time he had left arguing with rebellious tenants, promptly accepted the resignation.

William soon regretted sending the letter. He and his father before him had farmed Haythwaite for nearly 40 years, he had a wife and four young children to feed, and he had nowhere else to go.

Swallowing his pride, he asked if he could have his farm back and offering to hand all his shooting rights over to the Milbanks. Too late, said Mark. Four days later a front-page advertisement announced that Terry & Coates, the Barnard Castle auctioneers, had been instructed by William to sell everything he possessed.

By the end of the month he and his family had left Haythwaite.

First printed in Archive 11, October 2010

Source:

- *Teesdale Mercurys, September 1880*

Alfred Vivian
Academy pupil seized and held hostage


LAW INTELLIGENCE

LITTLE Alfred Vivian, lost and bewildered, stood sobbing quietly on the platform at Kings Cross.

Eighteen hours earlier, as dawn broke on June 1st 1854, he had been hauled from his dormitory bed at Barningham's Academy boarding school, carted unceremoniously to Richmond station, and put in a third-class carriage on the first train to London.

All seven-year-old Alfred had with him was a ticket pinned to his collar with his name on it and his mother's address near the Oval in Kennington.

Nobody told his mother he was coming, nobody was there to meet him when he arrived twelve long hours later, and he hadn't any idea where to go or what to do.

"He was found crying bitterly on the platform," the High Court of Justice in London was told later as it learned of the extraordinary events that led up to Alfred's traumatic journey. Eventually someone noticed the boy's distress, took pity on him, and led him to the station inspector's office. The ticket was examined, the Oval address discovered, and a porter was summoned to take him to his mother.

Alfred's ordeal had started long before. His mother Anne had been deserted by her husband sometime around 1850 and in 1851 she was living in Lambeth with their six children. Their father Joseph, a master carpenter, was in Bethnal Green and not long afterwards he disappeared – to Australia, it was thought.

Anne was left to bring up the children. She had enough money from annuities to manage, and decided to send two of her sons, 14-year-old Richard and his young brother Alfred, to become pupils at the Academy.

Their arrival was greeted with enthusiasm by Thomas Grainger Coates, the 74-year-old one-armed schoolmaster who had been running the Academy for a quarter of a century. He was renowned as a martinet whose pupils lived in awe of him, and probably some fear as well. "He ruled them with a rod of iron," one pupil recalled years later in the *Darlington and Stockton Times*, "and thrashed his pupils so hard with his one arm that had he possessed two he would have knocked the life out of them."

Times were becoming hard in the 1850s for 'Yorkshire' schools like the Academy, struggling in the wake of Dickens' damning revelations in *Nicholas Nickleby* – the number of pupils fell by half between 1850 and 1860 – and every extra scholar was very welcome.

Early in 1854 Anne Vivian became worried about reports of Richard and Alfred

suffering from "a certain eruptive disease" which they had caught at the school, and travelled to Barningham armed with medicines. They didn't work: Anne caught the disease herself (it was never identified, but seems to have been a fairly minor complaint) and eventually decided to take drastic action.

Without consulting Coates or his wife Sarah, Anne took the boys away to a local hotel – possibly the Morritt Arms. Coates had already given her a bill for £22 of school fees and she sent him £10, saying that was all she had to hand and, anyway, Coates should be paying her for the cost of her medical treatment and inconvenience.

The schoolmaster was having none of it. The next day Coates, his assistant George Clarkson and a labourer called Nicholson made their way to the hotel, where they found that the boys had bolted themselves inside their bedroom. As Coates hammered on the door demanding to be let in, Richard leapt from the window and escaped just before Nicholson arrived with a ladder, climbed up to the room and grabbed young Alfred.

Their mother, distraught, begged for his return but Coates was adamant: no money, no son. He dragged the boy off before the Rev William Fitzwilliam Wharton, Rector of Barningham and a local magistrate, and demanded an order approving his action.

The Rector was understandably nonplussed. He promised Alfred that he would do his best to make sure no harm came to him, but said he had no powers to act in such a situation. Frustrated, Coates took the terrified youngster back to the Academy and locked him up.

Anne went to the top. She employed Old Bailey barrister John Walter Huddlestone, the man who not long afterwards won fame by prosecuting William Palmer, the Rugeley Poisoner hanged in 1856, and who ended up as Baron Huddlestone, one of the foremost judges of his age.

Huddleston issued a writ of *habeas corpus* against Coates, demanding the release of the boy. The Press loved it. 'Detention of a Child by a Schoolmaster' shrieked the *Yorkshire Gazette*; 'School boy Held as Ransom' was top of the page in the *Westmorland Gazette*. Even the much more sober *Morning Post* devoted a column to the story.

In the dying days of May 1854 the case came before the Court of Queen's Bench, part of the London Central Court, which ordered Coates to deliver up the boy to his mother within four days, by the morning of June 1st at the latest.

The deadline passed, there was no sign of the boy, and the court sat again. Enough was enough, the judges decided crossly. Coates and his wife were declared in contempt of court and the pair of them were ordered to be brought to court, under arrest if necessary, to explain what they were up to.

Unknown to the court, the Coates had been to their lawyer, a Mr Kirby, who told them they hadn't a leg to stand on.

At the last minute, with great reluctance, they decided to release the boy and bundled him off by train on the morning of June 1st.

They made out affidavits explaining what had happened, saying they'd asked Kirby to warn Alfred's mother that her son was on his way. He wasn't the most efficient of solicitors, and the letter wasn't sent until far too late.

Mrs Coates disputed claims that Alfred was despatched empty-handed. On the contrary, she claimed, she put him on the train with plenty of food: a rhubarb pasty, a

seed cake and two large pieces of cheese – plus nine pence to buy ale on the journey. She'd even offered him sandwiches as well, which he'd refused.

A few days later the judges met to decide what further action, if any, to take. Mr Huddlestone argued strongly that the Coates should be punished, because Alfred hadn't been restored to his mother by the deadline set by the court. Mr Kirby contended that the Coates had done their best, and the boy had been delivered back home, albeit a little late.

After taking all the statements home to consider, Mr Justice Wightman delivered his decision on June 14. The contempt order was discharged, and each side would pay their own costs.

Thomas Coates died the following November, and the Academy passed into the hands of George Clarkson: it finally closed down in 1875.

We don't know what became of the Vivian family. There's no record we can find of Joseph having arrived in Australia, though that doesn't mean he didn't go there. The rest of his family are missing in the 1861 census, but ten years later an Anne Vivian who may be Alfred's mother surfaces, aged 69, in Torquay, living in style with a nephew and seven servants including a butler.

Of poor little Alfred we can find no trace.

First printed in Archive 26, July 2012

Sources:

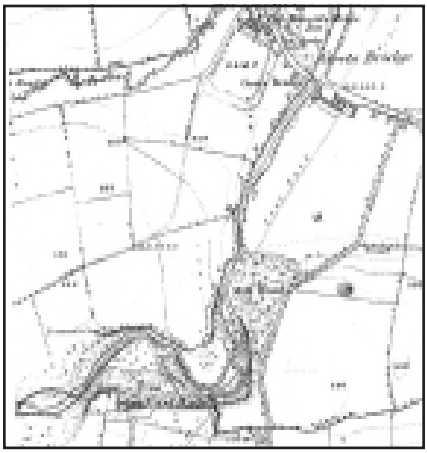
- *Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (BLHG Publications #4, 2010)*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk*
- *www.genesreunited.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

James Wild
Disaster-hit milne wreet saved from ruin

THE magistrates presiding over the North Riding Quarter Sessions at Richmond in July 1663 listened sympathetically when James Wild appeared before them and begged for help.

James, listed as "a milner and milne wreet" (miller and millwright), lived beside the river Greta in the woods between Eastwood Hall and Greta Bridge.

He had spent his life, he told the magistrates, "in good and creedable manner" and had contributed to the relief of the poor "to his utmost proportion" until 1660, when disaster struck.



Mill Wood, seen on the 1857 Ordnance Survey map

His corn mill "was by a sudden accident of fire wholly burnt down and consumed". He battled on for another three years, but in April 1663, fire struck again. "At about two of the clock in the morning, fire consumed and burnt down a kilne, stable, woodhouse, and bakehouse, with two horses standing in the stable, some corn, and all his work geare, and much considerable house stuff as bedding, tables, and timbers."

The two fires cost him more than £140, and left him "in a sad and necessitous condition, having little or nothing whereby to maintain himself, his wife and six little children, but is in much debt and like to be cast into prison."

His plea clearly went down well with the magistrates. They granted him permission to seek "the gratuities and charitable benevolence of all well-disposed people" in the area, recommended that all parsons should give details of James' plight from their pulpits the following Sunday, and ordered churchwardens to collect donations from the congregations.

It worked. Among the churches that raised money was Manfield, which raised three shillings and ninepence – enough to buy nine sheep in those days. If other parishes raised similar amounts, James would have been able to feed his wife and children and start anew.

Whether he returned to what was left of his mill and house and started rebuilding them we don't know, but evidence of buildings on the site can still be seen today. The place where they stood is still known as Mill Wood.

First printed in Archive 7, May 2010

Source:

- *Records of North Riding Quarter Sessions 1663*

Wild Man of the Moors
'Lunatic' who proved a disappointment

CHILDREN in Barningham were warned not to stray far from home in the summer of 1864 after reports of a strange being roaming the moors above the village.

"It is rumoured that a 'wild man' has recently been seen in this vicinity," announced an excited *Teesdale Mercury*. "He is described as being but scantily clothed, his almost naked body being in some degree protected by a strong natural growth of hair. "When last seen he was devouring a rabbit which he had caught. He runs with surprising swiftness. It is said that he has been observed near Spital on Stainmore and also as far down the country as Newsham and Barningham."

Two weeks later the *Durham Advertiser* reported that the creature had been caught at Thorpe by PC Martindale from Greta Bridge police station.

"As soon as the man saw the officer he took to his heels, but Martindale followed and, after a smart chase, captured him," said the *Advertiser*. The man, aged about 35, covered in black mud and dressed only in a fragment of an old dressing-gown, was brought before Greta Bridge magistrates.

To everyone's surprise (and probably disappointment) he failed to live up to his reputation. The man who had caused women and children to flee in terror and led one farmer to barricade himself in his house appeared quite harmless in court.

"There was nothing ferocious in his aspect," said the *Advertiser*. "He was either unwilling or unable to give any account of himself, merely ejaculating 'God bless you' etc."

The magistrates decided he was probably a harmless lunatic who had escaped from confinement, and remanded him for a fortnight to Northallerton Jail.

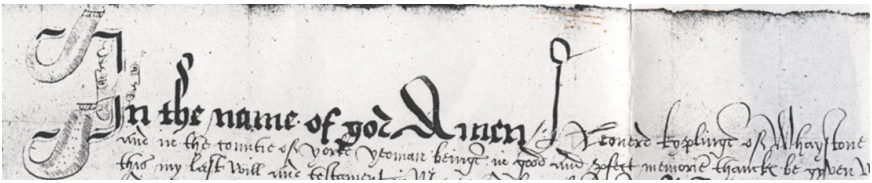
What happened to him thereafter isn't recorded.

First printed in Archives 17, June 2011, and 33, April 2013

Sources:

- *Teesdale Mercury, August 1864*
- *Durham Advertiser August 1864*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.com*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchive.com*

???
Unknown clerk with a sense of humour



JUST cast an 'eye' over this...

It's the beginning of a will made by Leonard Kipling of Whashton, proved in 1592. Look carefuly at the initial letter I, which is enlarged on the right.

There are two little faces, one each way up, on the side of the central stroke.

The clerk who drew up the will was clearly a man with a sense of humour (and plenty of time on his hands) whose little joke still raises a smile four centuries later.

First printed in Archive 40, March 2013.

Lest We Forget
Roll of Honour 1914-1918

ALDERSON Henry, 20555, Pte Leicestershire Regt 2nd Batt. Born 1893 in Romald-kirk, son of Margaret Bennett of Hawthorn Cottage, Barningham, and late John Alderson. Died of wounds 8.10.1917, aged 37. Buried British Cemetery at Godewaersvelde, France.

ALDERSON John Henry, 12329, Sgt 18th Batt Durham Light Infantry. Son of David S Alderson of Hill Top, Barningham. Died 12.4.1918, aged 28, buried Bailleul. Plaque in Barningham church.

ALLISON William Cook, 199968, Gunner, Royal Field Artillery. Son of Mr & Mrs Allison, married to Ada (nee Poole). Died 6.8.1917, memorial Menin Gate, Ypres.

ATKINSON Edwin, 101244, Pte 9th Field Company Royal Engineers. Son of Edwin & Mary Atkinson, married to Elizabeth Ann, Barningham. Died 10.7.1916, aged 45. Buried Couin British Cemetery.

BARNETT William, 28133, Cpl, Yorkshire Hussars, Alexandra's 6th Batt. Gamekeeper at Barningham, married to Isabella, one child born after his death. Died at Passchendaele 15.8.1917, aged 29, body never found.

COLE Thomas, 28271, Pte 9th Batt Yorkshire Regt, Alexandra's Princess of Wales' Own. Born 1881, son of Benjamin & Jane Cole, married to Margaret (nee Watson) of Barningham, six children, living at High Dalton Hall in 1915. Died 23.6.1917, aged 35, buried Dickebusch. On Kirby Hill Roll of Honour.

DOBSON Christopher Henry, 49806, Pte 2nd Batt Lincolnshire Regt. Son of R H & M A Dobson, Barningham. Died at Passchendaele 17.4.1918, aged 18, buried Tyne Cot cemetery, Belgium.

GOLDSBOROUGH John Ralph, 3/31325, Pte 13th Batt, East Surrey Regt. Grandson of Ralph & Ann Goldsborough, who ran Milbank Arms 1860-1906. Died 6.12.1917, aged 19, buried Cambrai, Rouen. Plaque in Barningham church.

JOHNSON Christopher Brown, 2508, Pte 4th Batt, Yorkshire Regt. Son of William and Sophia Johnson, Earby Hall. Died 6.9.1916, aged 22, on Somme. Body never found. Named on Thiepval Memorial, plaque in Barningham church, on Kirby Hill Roll of Honour.

KITCHEN Lancelot C B, 9537, Pte King's Regt Shropshire Light Infantry.

Son of Charles & Rose Kitchen, Elim Cottage, Barningham. Died 30.6.1916, aged 23, buried North Gate, Baghdad.

MARTIN Jeffrey Victor, Pte, Number & Regt u/k. Born Newsham 1888, married to Maria (nee Charlton), lived Middle Herrington. Died of wounds in Sunderland War Hospital 25/11/1918 aged 30.

PINKNEY John William, 26696, Pte Loyal North Lancashire Regt. Husband of E A Burrell, Rose Cottage, Barningham. Died 9.2.1918 aged 20. Buried Buffs Road.

SAYER Robert, 3/10872, Pte Durham Light Infantry. Stepson of Hezekiah Birtwistle, Barningham gamekeeper. Wounded at Battle of Somme, died at Grouse Cottage, Barningham, 17.5.1917, aged 37. Buried Barningham.

SHEPHERD, Thomas, 22066, Pte Duke of Wellington's 10th Batt. Born 1885, married Florence 1909, two children Leslie & Gladys. Lived at Post Office, Barningham. Died 27.10. 1918, aged 33, Italy.

TAYLOR J B. Possibly John Brown Taylor, a Barnard Castle butcher's lad listed in the 1911 census who became a lance corporal in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and was killed in France in 1918. Barningham link unknown.

Thomas Shepherd

1939-1945

BURRELL, Robert.. Killed in action, details unknown.

BURTON, Leonard. Son of Barningham Park butler. Killed in action 1944.

DURHAM, Gordon. Army captain, lived at Hillside. Killed in action, details unknown.

POWELL, Sidney. Son of William and Agnes Powell of Westoe Cottage. Killed in action, 20.9.1943, aged 22.

WATSON, Leslie. Killed in action, details unknown.

Sources:

- *BLHG member John Hay*
- *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

The following four items are what we imagine some of the above might have told us had they lived.

In Their Own Words
Cpl William Barnett


LEST WE FORGET

"I'M William Barnett, fifth name down on the war memorial in Barningham churchyard, one of fifteen men who left the village to die in the World War One trenches.

I was born in 1888 way up on the western coast of Scotland at a place called Craignish, though I don't remember anything about it because within a couple of years my family had moved to a new life on the Welsh borders.

We went to live in Elton, a village near Leintwardine in Herefordshire. My father George was a gamekeeper, and I think he worked for the Milbank family on their estate near Presteigne, just a couple of miles away. When we arrived, there was just dad, my mum Margaret, my older brother Donald and me. Two more brothers and three sisters followed over the next few years.

After leaving school I followed in my dad's footsteps, became an under-gamekeeper, and at the age of 19 moved to Barningham to work for Sir Powlett Milbank on his estate there.

I found lodgings in the village with Mrs Anne Halifax, a stone-mason's widow, and soon settled in. Head gamekeeper was Hezekiah Birtwistle, a tough old bird but fair, and we got on well enough. Those were the days when Sir Powlett lived most of the year in Wales, but came up to Barningham for the shooting season.

Our job was to make sure there was plenty of game for him and his party. On one shoot in September 1910 alone they bagged 1,939 grouse and 52 snipe – plus a score of rabbits and hares. Then came the war. A lot of the lads in the village enlisted straight away, but I wasn't so struck on the idea and anyway they said it would all be over in a few months.

It wasn't, of course, and the papers were full of calls for the rest of us to sign up. Even the rector as good as said in the pulpit that we should be ashamed of ourselves for not going off to fight the Hun. I was courting Bella at the time, and she didn't want me to go. But in the end I gave in. We got married in November 1915, had a few months together, and then I went off to the recruiting office.

I joined the 6th battalion of Alexandra Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment – the Green Howards – and in 1916 arrived in Flanders.

I survived 15 months out there, eleven of them at the front, rising to acting cor-

poral. I got one brief spell of leave early in 1917, and Bella wrote not long after to tell me she was pregnant with our first child.

It was born that summer but I never got to see it. On July 31 we were thrown into the Battle of Passchendaele. I was trudging back from the front line along a railway line with a couple of mates when a German shell landed close by and blew the three of us to bits.

They never found what was left of me, and I've no grave, just my name on the war memorial. It's on the one at Leintwardine, too. The next name on that one is another Barnett, my kid brother Alexander.

Leintwardine war memorial, which carries the names of both Barnett brothers

Alexander was a bit of a hero, and a fortnight after I was killed he was awarded the DCM after single-handedly keeping a group of Prussian machine-gunners at bay. It didn't do him much good. He was killed in the same place as I was, just three weeks later.

It was a terrible time for my dad. My mum had died in May, and now he'd lost two sons within five weeks. He must have dreaded anything happening to my youngest brother John – we knew him by his second name, Barlow – who was also in the thick of it in France. Somehow he managed to survive the war.

I wasn't a hero, I just did my bit like thousands of others. "A steady, well-respected chap," was how the rector de scribed me in the church mag when he added my name to the village roll of honour.

First printed in Archive 29, November 2012

Sources:

- *Counted: Barningham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #4, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
- *Barningham Brides 1581-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #9, 2011)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *Leintwarndine Local History Society*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

In Their Own Words
Pte Christopher Johnson

LEST WE FORGET

"I KNEW as soon as war was declared on that hot August day in 1914 that I would have to go to fight the Germans.

I talked it over with my dad and mam, William and Sophia Johnson. We lived at Earby Hall in Newsham, and I was their second son, aged 20 at the time. Dad was a farmer, and me and the older children (nine of us altogether) worked for him. My parents weren't happy about me going to war, but they didn't stand in my way.

The war memorial at Thiepval: 72,000 of us died near here

So a few weeks later there I was, off to Northallerton to volunteer. Private Christopher Brown Johnson 2508, 4th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment, that was me. I was really keen to get to the front. All over by Christmas, they were saying, and I didn't want to miss out on the fun.

Fun? We'd no idea what it would really be like, and it was six months before we found out. We went for training in Northumberland and it wasn't until April 1915 that we were ordered to France. We arrived in Boulogne, first time I'd ever been on a real ship, and they marched us off to Belgium. We thought we'd get more training but they threw us straight into battle.

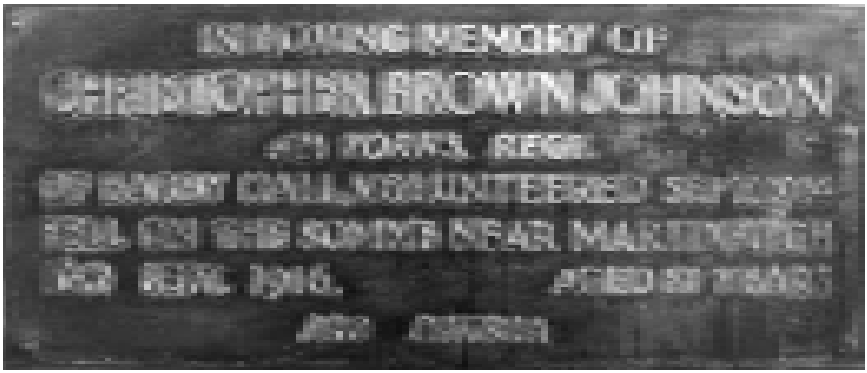
The Germans were pouring through Ypres, using chlorine gas for the first time. We stumbled towards the front, everywhere mud and chaos, buildings destroyed, bits of bodies by the roadside, and then we came under fire. A dozen of us were killed that day. And that was just the start.

Over the next two years we lost thousands of men, tens of thousands, dy ing as we battled over tiny patches of foreign ground, winning a few hundred yards, losing them, winning them back again. You can't imagine what it was like. Nobody can. I survived two years of it. I managed to get home on leave a couple of times, and I was in Barningham church only a few Sundays ago. My dad's a churchwarden there.

Then came the Battle of the Somme, summer of 1916. It started in July and was still going on in September. At 1pm on the 17th we were ordered out on a bombing raid, told to attack and capture two German-held trenches.

Thirty-seven of my group died in the attempt. Our sergeant-major, John Bainbridge from Bridge Farm in Ravens-worth, was one of the first to fall. I was among the rest.

They never found what was left of me. My name's on the war memorial at Thi-



epval, the village we were trying to apture on the day I died. There are 72,000 names on it, every one somebody like me who just, well, vanished.

My name's on both the local war memorials back home, at Newsham and Barningham, and my parents paid for a brass plaque in the church. That's it at the top of the page. My younger brother Lancelot's name is on the Newsham memorial, too, but he was one of the lucky ones. He came home.

First printed in Archive 21, November 2011

Sources:

- *Newsham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #7, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

In Their Own Words
Pte John Peacock

LEST WE FORGET

I WAS born in 1900, just before the old queen died. My dad Nathan was a labourer for a railway wagon builder in Shildon, and that's where we lived. My mother Caroline came from Crook and they'd been married eight years by the time I came along.

I wasn't their first child, but I was the first to survive. Mam had already lost two babies and another one died when I was very small. Then came my brothers Nathan and William. They were the lucky ones, too young to go to war – Nathan was only ten when it ended, and William just nine.

Things were difficult at home, what with the baby dying and everything, and I spent a lot of time staying with my dad's sister Mary Ann. She'd married a farmer called David Pearson and lived in a village called Newsham across the Tees in Yorkshire.

Their home was Newsham House, a grand house to look at with a fancy front door and columns outside, but at the back it was just an old farmhouse and that's where they lived, renting it from the local big-wigs, the Milbanks. Mary Ann and David been married since about 1903 but didn't have any kids and I suppose I was a sort of substitute son.

After leaving school I got a job with a butcher in Shildon, and not long after that the war broke out. I couldn't wait to join up, and soon as I dared I went along to the recruiting office in Bishop Auckland and signed on.

That was in 1916, February 17th. I told them I was eighteen and they believed me – or at least they said they did.

Private Peacock J, No 204000, 19th Battalion the Durham Light Infantry, that was me, and they sent me off to France to machine-gun Germans.

You don't want to know what it was like. I spent two years and more at the front before they started talking about an armistice, peace, the end of the war, going home. A few last skirmishes, and it would all be over.

On the last day of October 1918 – Halloween Night, funny that – I went out on patrol in Flanders as usual and a bullet went right through me. Eleven days later,

the war ended. Bad luck or what?

My name's on Newsham war memorial: Peacock J. You might have seen it and wondered who I was. Now you know.

First printed in Archive 12, November 2010

The war memorial on Newsham green

Sources:

- *Newsham Census Returns 1841-1911 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #7, 2010)*
- *Barningham Baptisms Vol 2 1801-1950 (Barningham Local History Group Publications #12, 2011)*
- *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies: Barningham burials (Barningham Local History Group Publications #1, 2009)*
- *www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk*
- *www.teesdalemercuryarchive.co.uk*
- *www.ancestry.co.uk*

In Their Own Words
Pte Robert Sayer

LEST WE FORGET

"JUST about every man in the village went along to the meeting they held outside Barningham Reading Room that evening in September 1914.

There was this Mr Plant there, from Croft, who turned up in a very fancy motor car and stood up in it to tell us all about the war.

Captain Milbank was there too, and he gave a real stirring speech, urging us all to volunteer for the army. A dozen of the younger lads were tempted: it would be a chance to do their bit, see something of foreign parts, it had to be better than lifting potatoes for the next few months and everyone said it would all be over by Christmas so they didn't want to be hanging about.

So they put their hands up and said they'd go. From Barningham there was young Tommy Blades, John Alderson, and Harry Gough the rector's son. Five volunteered from Newsham: brothers George and Jimmy Peacock, Ray Bulmer, Chris Johnson and James Maude.

A couple of days later they all were on our way. All the kids from the school came out to give them a cheer, the rector read them a good-luck sermon and handed them each a New Testament, everyone sang God save the King and away they went, riding out in style in motor cars sent by this Mr Plant.

Me, I thought I'd leave it to the youngsters, for the time being at least. I was 34, a footman at the hall (my step-dad was Hezekiah Birtwistle, the head gamekeeper), and still single but hoping that might change before long. There was this girl, well, young woman, about my age, Bella Chillas from Scotland who'd gone to work as a domestic servant in America but came back to England in the summer of 1913. My mum came from Fife and knew her family, she invited her to Barningham and that's how we met.

We walked out together till she went back to America, and we kept in touch, I think we both hoped we might end up together once the war was over.

Which wasn't by Christmas, nor the Christmas after either. More lads from the village went off to war, and they began to take older men too – Edwin Atkinson, the joiner, was 43 when he joined the DLI in July 1915. He was the first man from Barningham to die at the front, killed in October 1916, same month as young Chris Johnson. By then I was

SAYER. In loving memory of Robert Henry Sayer (late R.S.F.), of Barningham, who died March 21st, 1917.

The flowers we lay upon his grave
May wither and decay,
But the memory of the one beneath
Shall never fade away.

— Ever remembered by sister and brother-in-law (N. and J. Jamieson).

SAYER.—In loving and affectionate remembrance of Robert Henry Sayer, who died at Barningham, on 21st March, 1917.—"Though death divides, fond memories cling."—Inserted by his loving friend, Bella Chillas.

In Memoriam notices from family and Bella Chillas in the Teesdale Mercury, March 1918, a year after Robert's death. There was a joint In Memoriam from family and Bella in 1919, a brief single notice from the family in 1920, but nothing thereafter.

out there too. They'd introduced conscription for all of us between the ages of 18 and 41, single men first, and I knew I had to go. I joined the Royal Scots Fusiliers, just in time for the Battle of the Somme.

Twenty thousand of us died on the first day, tens of thousands more in the following weeks. Hundreds of thousands were wounded, me among them. Badly injured, I was sent home to Barningham.

Bella, bless her, came to nurse me. She arrived in Liverpool aboard the liner *New York* on October 10th, went straight to Barningham, and nursed me for the next six months. She did her best, but I knew there was no hope. On March 21st 1917 I died at home in Grouse Cottage, Bella at my bedside.

Robert's grave in Barningham churchyard

They buried me in Barningham churchyard ten days later, a week before Easter. The grave's marked by a cross, leaning a bit these days and parts of it hard to read. You can see it, just north-west of the church porch. "Until the day dawn", it says.

Harry Gough, by then a major in the army, was there and draped the Union Jack over my coffin. His father, the Rev Spencer Gough, said in the parish magazine afterwards that I was "a fine young fellow" – young? I was 37! – who had died "before he reached the prime of life." He paid a really nice tribute to Bella, too. She had, he wrote, nursed me "with touching and pathetic constancy." She was a real comfort to me and my mum and step-dad, and I often wonder what became of her.

● Robert was the son of a shepherd, also called Robert, who moved to Barningham

in 1878 with his wife Ann and daughters Margaret and Ellen. Robert junior was born the following year, another son Daniel in 1882.

Their father died, aged 35, in 1883. His widow had another child, christened Jessie Cassell Sayer, in 1887, whose father was not recorded. Ann married Hezekiah Birtwistle, also widowed, in 1893 and brought up six of his children as well as her own. She and Hezekiah both died in 1923. They're buried in Barningham churchyard, next to Robert.

We can't find any trace of Bella after 1917.

Grouse Cottage is now called Heather Cottage.

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Sources:

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- *www.ancestry.co.uk*
- *www.genesreunited.co.uk*

The end?

If you have a story about someone who deserves inclusion in this file, please let us know.

Contact me on 01833 621374, email jonxxsmith@gmail.com

Thank you.

Jon Smith

Archive editor, Barningham Local History Group