

Boroughbridge and District Historical Society

Keeping in Touch – December 2020

Chairman's Notes

Dear Members,

As we approach the end of 2020, I feel sure we will all be reflecting on what a strange year this has been. No doubt future historians will see the year as a turning point in numerous ways: the year in which a virus originating in China spread across the whole world, creating fear and shutting down the economies of advanced industrial nations; the year in which the BLM movement gained traction across the USA and Europe, leading to soul searching and new policies to address racial issues; the year in which certain social trends – working from home, living a simpler life and protecting the environment - were accelerated.

On a personal level, the virus and society's responses to it will have touched us all in some way. We will have had a quieter year, distanced from friends and relatives and unable to engage in many of the activities that give us pleasure. Sadly, for some, loved ones will have been lost. In these strange days some will have rediscovered the beauty of their local area, observed the changing seasons more closely and enjoyed a time of enforced but peaceful seclusion. We will have read more, learned to use Zoom and even rediscovered the art of letter writing. Certainly, we will have had loved ones on our minds and will have reflected on the value of the simple freedoms of our everyday life before 2020.

We have heard less of Brexit during the year, at least until recently. We will know within a few days of this newsletter whether we have secured a deal with the EU. Whatever the outcome of current negotiations, 2021 will be the year when our departure from the union begins to impact. For some, our new relationship with Europe will change little but for others there could be significant upheaval. The truth is that our departure from the EU is a chapter in our history that only time will allow us to evaluate objectively. More immediately pressing for everyone, though, is Covid 19. With news of vaccine breakthroughs and a roll out programme we can look forward to a return to old pleasures as we progress through 2021. At this stage we cannot predict when Boroughbridge Historical Society will meet again, but for now we can bring you some news and articles. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter. Here's to a Happy Christmas and a brighter 2021.

Peter Fleming

Slavery – The Boroughbridge Connection – Mike Tasker

Slavery and the slave trade have been very much to the fore in recent times with the 'Black Lives Matter' movement prominent on television and news media over the past few months.

You may ask what connection does Boroughbridge have with slavery and the slave trade? Surprisingly, it does have a remote connection, hardly known to most people.

In the mid-18th century the slave trade was at its height, with huge numbers of slaves being transported from Africa to colonies in America, with Great Britain being at the forefront of this appalling trade. Three characters are key to this story, they are Grenville Sharp, an antislavery activist,

James Somerset, a slave, and William Murray (later Lord Mansfield), the Lord Chief Justice, MP for Boroughbridge 1742 to 1756.

Our story starts with Grenville Sharp. He was born in Durham in 1735, the ninth son of 14 children. Their father was Thomas Sharp, the Archbishop of Northumberland. Grenville attended Durham school, but was largely educated at home. At the age of 15 he was apprenticed to a London linen draper who was a Quaker. He was a bright and intelligent youth who loved to argue and discuss things, but the people he worked with were mostly immigrants who spoke different languages. In order to discuss and debate things with them he taught himself Greek and Hebrew. Just a year after his apprenticeship ended, he lost both his parents, but nevertheless was able to advance his career, gaining employment as a clerk in the Ordnance Office in the Tower of London. Here he was able to widen his worldly knowledge and to pursue his musical talents with his equally musical siblings who together, remarkably, formed a family orchestra. They performed at brother William's house in London and on the family sailing barge on the Thames. (At one period William was Surgeon to King George III.)

Granville's involvement in activism was prompted by meeting a slave Jonathan Strong who had been badly beaten with a pistol butt and almost blinded by his master, lawyer David Lisle. Strong was cast out on to the streets, severely injured. After helping to treat his injuries Granville took an interest in his case and sought justice for him. He delved into English law relating to rights and liberties of individuals and after several legal battles with Lisle, Strong was given his freedom and lived the rest of his life as a free man.

Prompted by this case, Granville took up the cause against slavery, fought for its abolition, and for social and legal justice generally for the rest of his life. He fought for several other slaves in the country, but the powerful slave lobby was able to ensure that most of the cases did not go his way.

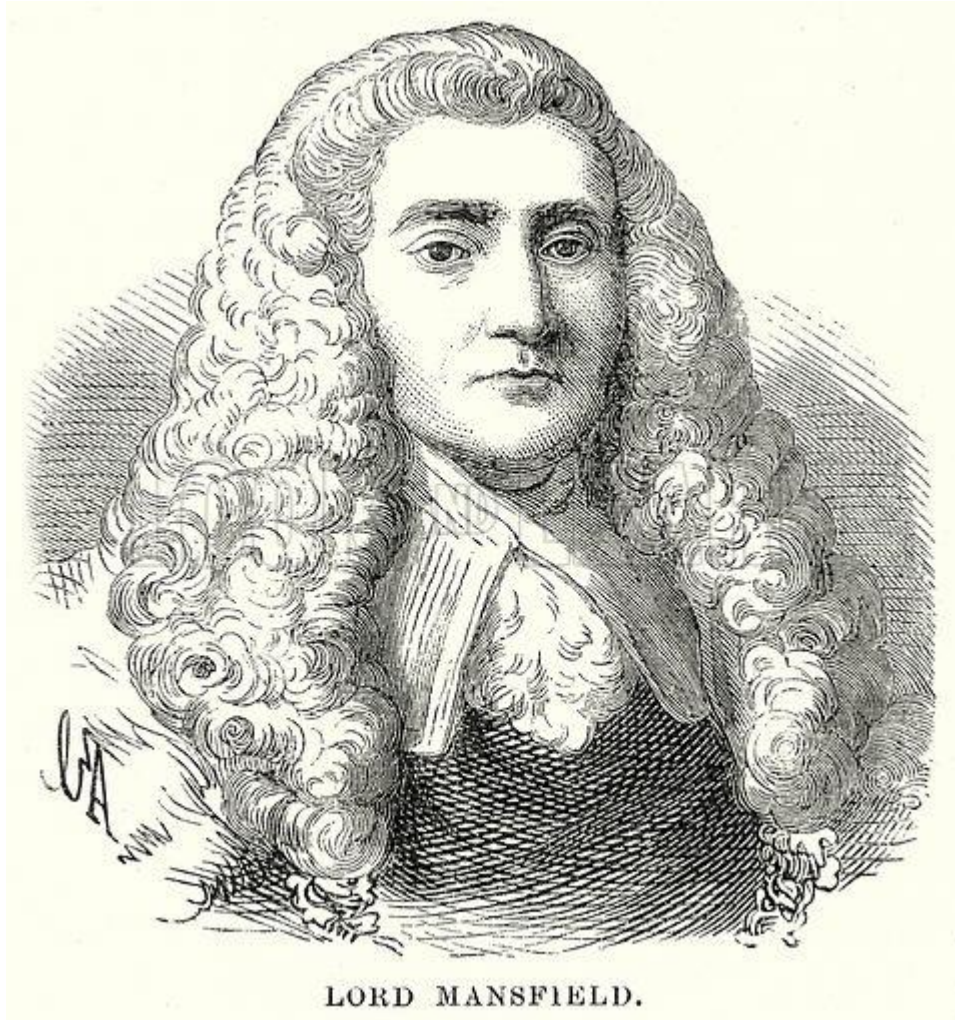
However, in 1772 the case of slave James Somerset was taken up by Granville Sharp which eventually led to a cornerstone turning point. James Somerset was a runaway slave from Virginia who had come to England with his master Charles Stewart in 1769. In 1771 he escaped, only to be caught by slave hunters after 56 days on the run. He was about to be sailed to Jamaica for sale. This came to the attention of Granville Sharp and a writ of Habeas Corpus was applied for. The Habeas Corpus law lays down that anyone who imprisons or otherwise incarcerates a person must justify this in law and give reason for the imprisonment or incarceration.

The case of 'Stewart v Somerset' was taken to court by Grenville Sharpe and was of such consequence that it had to be brought before the Lord Chief Justice Lord Mansfield. So, who was Lord Mansfield? He was born William Murray in 1705, son of a Scottish nobleman. His early education was at Perth Grammar School, Scotland, then at the age of 13 he gained a place at Westminster School in London where he excelled, by far its best student. He clearly had a brilliant mind. Oxford University followed, and on

James Somerset



graduation he was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn, where he soon established himself as an excellent barrister. He saw politics mainly as a stepping-stone to further his interest in the law, particularly law reform. In 1742, through the influence of the then Prime Minister the Duke of Newcastle, he was elected Member of Parliament for Boroughbridge. During this period as MP, his talents were recognised and he was appointed Solicitor General. He was noted for his "great powers of eloquence" and became the Government spokesman. He was described as "beyond comparison the best speaker in the House of Commons". He was appointed Attorney General and later, on the early death of his predecessor, he became Chief Justice, gaining the title Lord Mansfield. At this stage in 1756 he ceased to represent Boroughbridge as an MP.



In his capacity as Lord Chief Justice, he brought about modernisation of commercial law, modernisation of court legal system and procedures amongst several other important reforms. He has been described as the most powerful judge of the 18th century. His most famous judgement was the case brought by Grenville Sharpe relating to slave James Somerset. Mansfield had been reluctant to take on this case, perhaps because he foresaw the upheaval which would ensue with the powerful slave lobby, but when it became clear that he had to act, he applied his judicial expertise to the full. "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall". After protracted deliberation he gave his judgement – "The state of slavery is of such a nature, is so odious that the English Common Law could never accept it".

To his great delight, Grenville Sharpe's persistence had payed off, and as a result of this dramatic judgement James Somerset was freed. In addition, as a result of the judgement, some 15,000 black slaves were instantly freed in England. The slave trade itself between Africa and America was not

affected by this judgement, but the campaign against this trade was pursued by Wilberforce and others and would continue until its final abolition in 1806.

The connection of Boroughbridge to slavery was tenuous indeed, and evidence has not yet been unearthed to show whether William Murray ever gave Boroughbridge more than a passing thought. He was however MP for the town for 14 years, and unlike many of the town's MPs he did have a huge impact in Parliament and could certainly be regarded as one - if not the - most effective of MPs representing Boroughbridge.

Boroughbridge Railway

Attached as a separate document to this newsletter is an interesting piece by **Peter Audsley**. It comprises stories as reported in newspapers, from the first Boroughbridge Station proposal meeting in 1844, to the opening of the second 'new station' in 1875. The article text content is exactly as printed at the time.

I was fascinated in reading the article to be reminded of chains as a measurement. No doubt many people will recall from their school days what is meant by a chain! Just in case your memory has faded.....**1 chain 22 yds, length of cricket pitch; 10 chains 1 furlong, 8 furlongs 1 mile or 1760 yds.**



Winifred Jacob Smith MBE

This month's nominated Great North Yorkshire Daughter, from the *Made in North Yorkshire* Project, is Miss Winifred Jacob Smith. Winifred and her family were extremely community spirited and well known within the local area of Knaresborough. Alongside her invaluable contribution to the war effort during World War Two, Miss Winifred Jacob Smith is perhaps best known for bequeathing Scriven Park (now Jacob Smith Park) near Knaresborough to her community upon her death in May 2003, aged 91.

View of Jacob Smith Park in the sunshine. (Image courtesy of the Friends of Jacob Smith Park)



jobs left vacant after many farmers had gone to fight in the war. The work on the farms was labour intensive, and involved long days working in the fields.

The work of the Women's Land Army was crucial to feed the nation during both wars and even after the Second World War. Despite this, it has been argued that much of the work of the Women's Land Army has not always been fairly recognised.

After joining in 1939, Winifred soon became Organiser for the Women's Land Army for North Yorkshire, and later the whole of Yorkshire. This would involve carrying out welfare visits on Land Girls in their accommodation, and writing monthly Women's Land Army newsletters, which were sent out across Yorkshire, an example of which can be seen below from November 1943.

Early Life

Winifred was born on 4 August 1911, in Humberton (between Knaresborough and Boroughbridge), to parents Jacob and Dora Smith. It had been tradition within the Smith family for the eldest son to be given the first-name Jacob, however as Jacob and Dora only had daughters; they incorporated 'Jacob' into Winifred and her elder sister Dorothy's surname, so the tradition could live on. The Smith family had long established roots within the farming industry in Knaresborough; and Winifred's mother, Dora, was President of the Knaresborough Women's Institute (WI).

Yorkshire Women's Land Army

At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Winifred, aged 30, and her sister Dorothy joined the Women's Land Army for North Yorkshire. The purpose of the Women's Land Army was to fill the agricultural

Photograph of Winifred (left) and her sister Dorothy (centre) at a Women's Land Army recruitment stand. (Image courtesy of the Yorkshire Museum of Farming)

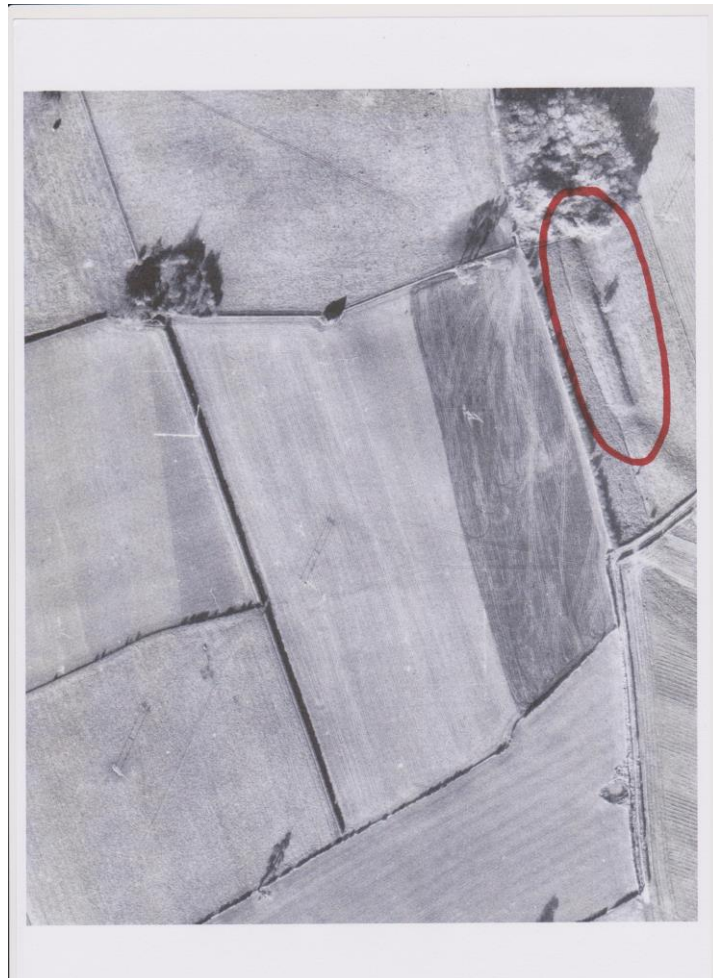


Dog Kennel Lane Project – More Thoughts

David Barley & LindaDooks

As a reminder, and to put new members in the picture, The Dog Kennel Lane Project was an archaeological research project set up by our society in 2014 with Heritage Lottery funding of £10,000. The group consisted of members of the society together with interested people from within the community. We worked under the guidance of professional archaeologist Kevin Cale and researched a small area in the parishes of Langthorpe and Newby-with-Mulwith, north of the river Ure and west of the A1-M.

The interest in this area was triggered by my memories of a strange long mound down “Dog Kennel Lane” (Lowfields Lane on OS maps), a lane we used to roam as children. This mound was about 130 metres long and 20 metres wide. Unfortunately, it was bulldozed level by the farmer who farmed the land in the 1970's. This germ of interest was pursued when I met Bob Jones at a "Finds Day" at Ripon Town Hall in 2012. The following day he contacted me and said he had looked at a 1971 aerial photograph and said, "There was something going on". A section of this photograph, with the mound outlined in red, is shown below.



1971 aerial photograph showing the mound outlined in red

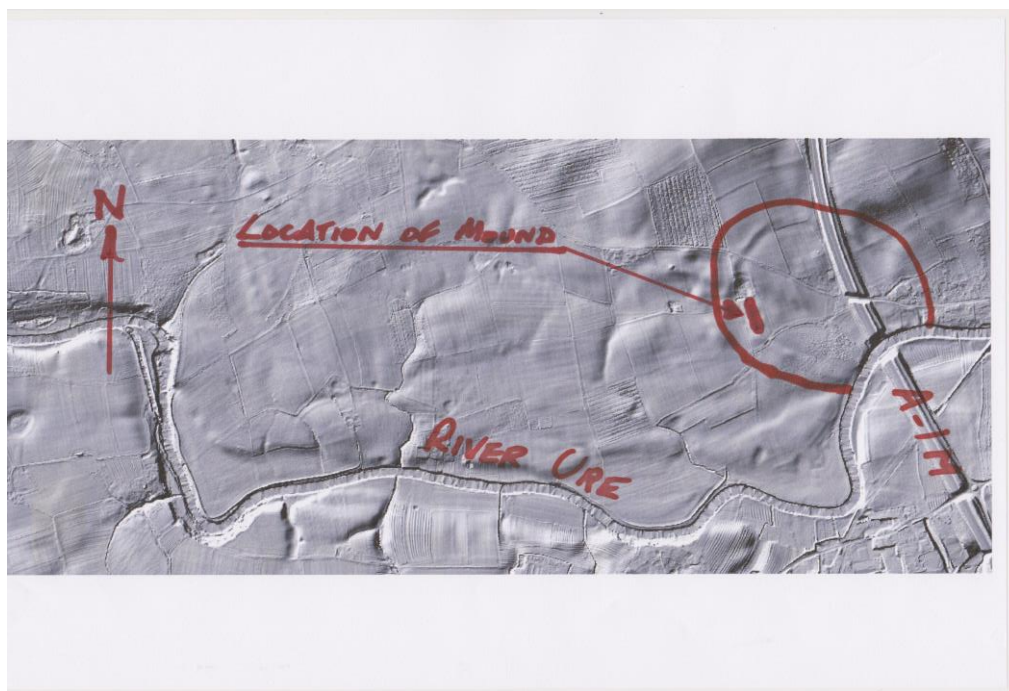
Unfortunately, old photographs of this mound have not been found. However, this year, at the time of the Summer Solstice, when the activities at Stonehenge were curtailed because of Covid, a mention was made about the Durrington Walls. This is the site of a large Neolithic settlement and later henge

enclosure within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. One of the photographs of this site really caught my attention because it looked exactly like my memories of the mound down Dog Kennel Lane. This photograph is shown below:



The Durrington Walls Wiltshire

The only difference down Dog Kennel Lane was that there was a pronounced, shallow, gently sloping ditch on the inside of the mound, maybe 1 metre deep and 25 metres wide. I feel that this is another piece of evidence supporting the view that this was possibly part of some form of enclosure 2000 to 4000 years old. For information I have also shown below the lidar image showing the relief of the area. This indicates the possibility of a U shaped enclosure at Langthorpe looping down to the river (in red), and the location of the mound as part of this enclosure.



Sometimes a project such as this still leaves lots of unanswered questions. However, our findings resulted in devising a five mile circular walk with an accompanying leaflet detailing the route and the history of the area, together with an eighty page report which is available for members to view on the society website. Hard copies are available for loan by request. We are grateful to the National Lottery for funding the project.

A copy of the leaflet is shown below:



Notes from the Archive Group – Linda Dooks

During the past few months we have had several enquires which make interesting reading. Members of the Leake family were asking about their family in Skelton so we referred them to the John Holt book which has lots of information about the history of Skelton and the Leake family. Entitled *History of a Yorkshire Village: Skelton On Ure*, a copy is available from Boroughbridge Library.

Emma Heard from Wiltshire, as you will see, contacted us about the location of a house she had stayed in at Boroughbridge. Interesting also was a query from Andy Lancelot about the origin of a silver-plated dish he had inherited inscribed with details from the Holmes family at Ellenthorpe

thanking the Peirsons for help during the time they worked for them. Andy only knew that his Mother Joyce Steel before her marriage had lived at Ellenthorpe at one time.

Our society Treasurer, Jackie, was helpful with Keane Silverwood's query re the Blacksmiths at Roecliffe. Two other queries were regarding the Relton family, farmers at Boroughbridge and the history of Hambleton house down St Helena. Latterly we have been helping William Husband with his family history involving Whixley. His great Great Grandfather was vicar there in 1850. William has kindly offered to write a resume of the family history for our newsletter.

Thanks go to committee members Peter Audsley, John Winn and David Bellwood for help on several of these queries.

If anyone does have any further information that could help with the enquiries or would like to help with the projects do let us know.

There are still plans to celebrate the 700 anniversary of the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322. Just a reminder - we are having a further reprint of the Boroughbridge book hopefully in time for Christmas. If you require copies please contact Mike Tasker.

Best wishes to all, Linda.

Boroughbridge Secondary Modern School – Can you help?

Pauline Barker contacted the society about 2021 being the 50th anniversary of the closing of Boroughbridge Secondary Modern School. She wondered if more information could be put together concentrating on the time of the Secondary Modern School from it being built to it closing, with past pupils' memories, photos and West Riding County Council education policy documents. Pauline would love to be part of a team recruited to work on this. She reminded us that although not a grammar school, Boroughbridge Secondary Modern School was an important part of many people's education.

This sort of project could be undertaken by our archive group, though they will have quite a lot to deal with once they can recommence meetings with a battlefield trail and celebrations for the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Boroughbridge needing attention.

If you have information, photos, documents or just memories of the school please contact Linda Dooks so we can assess how we might move forward. Similarly, if you would like to get involved with this project please let Linda know.

Ideas for 2021 Trip



Hello Everybody. We do hope you are all keeping well. What a long time it is since our last meeting, was it early March? Whenever it was the months have passed slowly at times and we have had to be patient, following the rules to keep us safe. Plenty of time to think! With this in mind let's all come up with a wish list. Cancellations of holidays, special events and many other plans put on hold! Let's be optimistic and say, "Yes, we are going to have a History Trip in July 2021" and make this a very special outing.

Please send all your ideas and wishes to me on margaret.tasker322@btinternet.com

or telephone me on 01432 322862

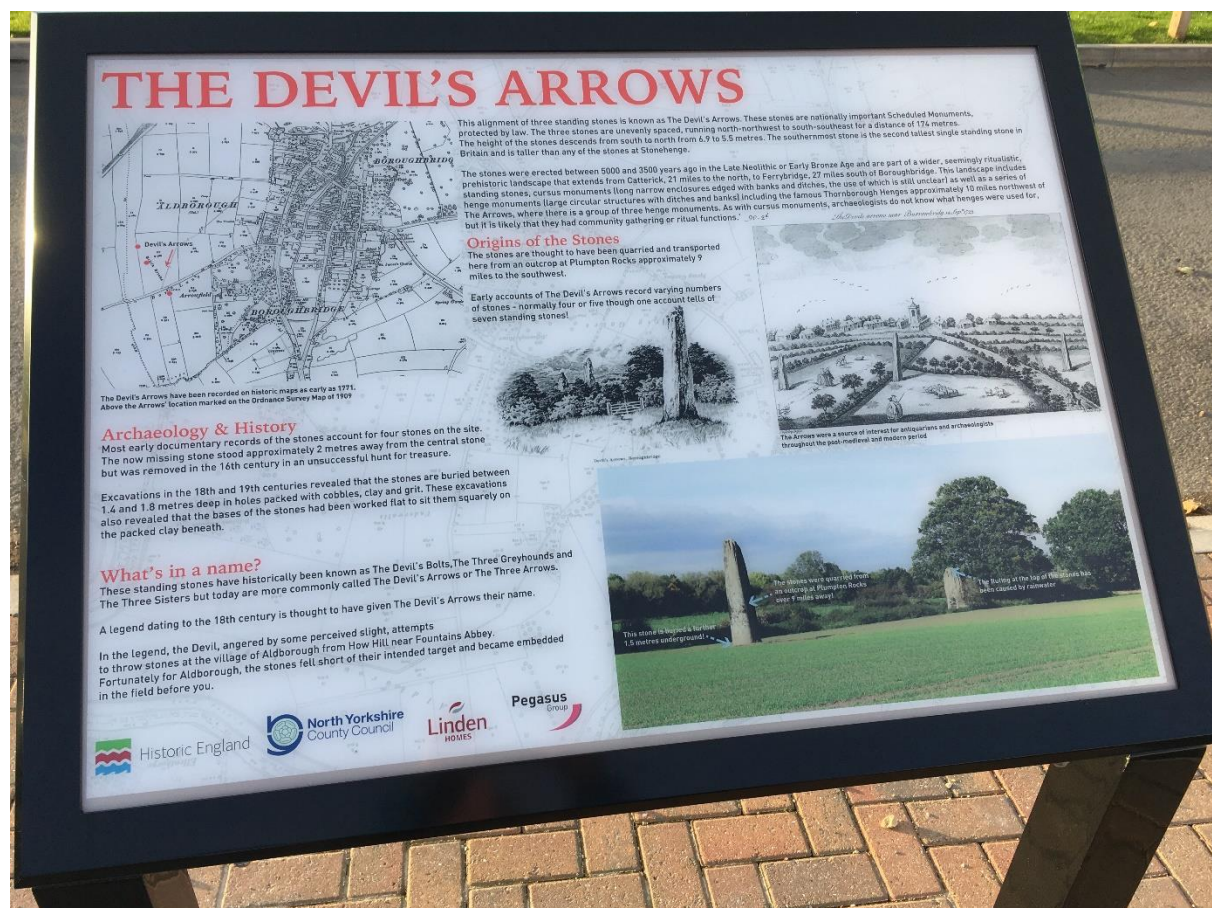
or in writing to 48, Chatsworth Grove, Boroughbridge, YO51 9BB

May we take this opportunity to wish members and their families a Happy Christmas & a Healthy New Year. Take care and stay safe

Good wishes **Christine & Margaret Tasker**

Devil's Arrows

A new information board has been erected at the Devil's Arrows site, paid for from community funds generated from the house building on the Boddy's site. The society had some input at the proof-reading stage.



A Boroughbridge Ghost Story

The winter season is traditionally associated with ghostly happenings. However, the story that follows relates to memories of a summer holiday in Boroughbridge. It was written by Emma Heard who contacted the society to try and shed light on where the house in the story might have been located. Linda was able to supply the following answer:

I think we have narrowed it down to a couple of houses adjacent to what was Potters Yard, where they had heavy lorries going in and out of that area from a quarry and cement works. There is a bed and breakfast around there now called Lock House. The garage is next door and Milby Cut, which is a short canal to bypass the weir on the river. Your dad was right, the old cattle market was across the road. It is a housing estate now. Also in that area was the railway station which closed in the 1960s.

If we have any psychics in the society.....enjoy!

We're All Going on a Summer Holiday

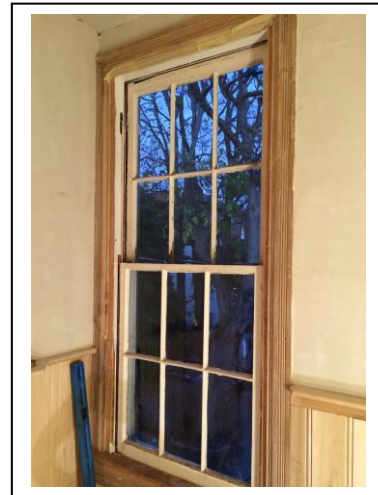
I was around ten and my brother was two years younger than us, so it must have been around 1987. Our family took a summer family holiday to the lovely little town of Boroughbridge in Yorkshire. My mum had booked a self-catering house for a week, which was being rented out to tourists. Joining us was my nan and the family dog, Gem.

I remember we left home really early as it's a pretty long drive from London to Yorkshire. The whole family were happy to arrive at our new temporary home and whilst it was old fashioned, it was clean and homely. My brother and I were to be sharing a room, my mum and dad their own bedroom and my nan had her own room next to the downstairs bathroom.

After such an early start we were all really tired. There was a warm, cosy downstairs extra reception room with a sofa and desk. Settling down on the sofa I curled up and fell asleep. I was probably only asleep for an hour or so but when I awoke, I caught the whiff of pipe smoke in the room and a feeling of being watched whilst I 'came to'. I can only describe it as a comforting feeling and not scary at all. I didn't really think anything of it at the time.

Yorkshire isn't known for being a hot place but, luckily for us, it was pleasantly warm that week. My mum and dad left some of the windows open that first night to keep the bedrooms cool. The windows were the old-fashioned sash windows you find on Victorian era houses. The sort you push up and down on a pulley system.

This part of the story was relayed to me later. I wasn't aware of it at the time. Apparently, between 4-5am these noisy, empty tipper truck type lorries started to roll along the road next to the house. The road was more of an unmade, pot-holed driveway that lead to a quarry. As the empty lorries went along the track they made a real racket as they hit the pot holes. My mum recalls it was very noisy and woke her up. The next thing she heard was the sash windows closing. She didn't say it was all of them but certainly more than one.



I should point out, these windows need a good tug in order to shut them. They don't just fall down of their own accord. This strange occurrence happened every night. When the lorries started to rumble down the drive next door, the windows shut, one by one.

Despite the early wake-up calls, we had a lovely week in Yorkshire and on our last morning, the owner of the house arrived to take the keys from my parents and lock up. My mum mentioned to the lady how noisy the lorries were when they started up each morning.

"Oh yes," the lady said, "my dad used to get annoyed with them too. He would get up every morning when they started, shut the windows and go to the loo before going back to bed."

My mum asked the lady if this was her dad's house. "Well it was," the lady replied, "but he died a year ago. It was a year ago this week actually."

What we didn't realise at the time was that my slightly psychic nan, who tended to have trouble sleeping, would watch a shadow, head into the bathroom every night after hearing the windows shut. She assumed she hadn't seen who it was properly and thought it was my dad. However, she did admit, she never saw anyone 'leave' the bathroom afterwards.

Could it be that the old owner of the house was still getting annoyed with the noisy lorries and continued his nightly routine of getting up to shut the windows and visit the loo? Was he the man I sensed in the spare reception room on my first day there, smoking on his pipe and carrying on like he was still alive? I would think, it is a strong possibility.



Happy Christmas to all society members and their families. We will be in touch again during the spring.
Finally, if you are still looking for Christmas presents the book below may be of interest.....

TIMOTHY HUTTON (1779-1863)
of Clifton Castle and Marske-in-Swaledale
The Life and Times of a North Yorkshire Gentleman

by Jane Hatcher

Accompany Timothy Hutton to social events in Richmond and elsewhere! Experience North Yorkshire moving from the Georgian era into the Victorian period of industrialisation!

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A Yorkshire story, and a good read!

*With many colour and black & white illustrations
and Yorkshire family pedigrees*

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