Boroughbridge & District Historical



Newsletter
Spring 2026



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Spring Programme

Tuesday, 13th January

Alex Harvey: The Viking Age

Tuesday, 10th February

Rowena Moir: Yorkshire's Glistening Dale

Tuesday, 10th March

Ken Cothlith:

The Avro Aircraft Factory in Yeadon 1941-1947

Tuesday, 14th April

Lesley Newnham:

Our Great British Love Affair With The Seaside



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Notes from the CHAIRMAN

Happy New Year. I hope you all had a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Welcome to the spring newsletter. It is difficult to comprehend where the last 25 plus years have gone, the memories of the Millenium, the predictions of computer systems crashing worldwide, aero-planes falling out of the sky, utilities failing; and for all the talk of doom, in the end nothing happened leaping from the 20th to the 21st century. Which is more than we can say about the years since, how the world and our lives have changed.

Through these times Boroughbridge & District Historical Society, which had its 30th anniversary in 2025, continues to thrive with a loyal and friendly membership. We continue to have particularly good numbers attending each meeting, interested in the wide-ranging talks by our guest speakers. For this credit must once again go to our Speakers' Secretary, David Barley.

Thanks must also go to our resolute committee members, who ensure that meetings run smoothly and are well publicised, finances are maintained on a sound footing, and enquiries to our web site and by email, from visitor's requesting local history information, receive prompt attention whenever possible.

Thank you again to all our members for your continued support.

Peter Audsley, Chairman

2026 Committee Members

Peter Audsley:	Chair
David Barley:	Speakers' Secretary
David Bellwood:	Secretary and Website co-ordinator
Peter Fleming:	Newsletter Secretary
Jackie Glew:	Committee Member
Mark Learmonth:	Minutes
Mike Tasker:	Projects
Liz Winn:	Treasurer

History of the Postal Service in Boroughbridge

Peter Audsley

Today, in a world of instant communication, it is hard to imagine how difficult it was just to send a message or letter across country or even to a nearby town or village a few hundred years ago. It must be remembered that a substantial proportion of the population before the Industrial Revolution were unable to read and write, so it was usually royalty, politicians, clergy, the educated middle and upper classes, who typically found the need to send letters. The Post Office is over 500 years old, so with such a long history I'll concentrate on certain individuals, (some you will know and some you may not) that affected the early days of the Royal Mail and how Boroughbridge played its part.

The postal service began in the early sixteenth century as a means for government dispatches between major towns and ports. In 1509, Sir Brian Tuke held the position of Master of the Posts; he also served as secretary to Henry VIII and later to Cardinal Wolsey. He held the position from 1517 until his death in 1545. He was the first Governor of the King's Posts, a position that preceded the office of Postmaster General. Sir Brian Tuke played a major role in the establishment of an early postal service. Within a few years, a service was created connecting London with Berwick and extending into Scotland, as well as between London and Dover for communication with France and the continent.



Sir Brian Tuke

To claim that at this time that every part of England was within a fortnight's ride of London doesn't sound very impressive to us today; but it did in the times when to ride 30 miles a day was a good average to maintain over a couple of weeks. That is why Sir Robert Carey's ride to Edinburgh in 1603 continued to be talked about with wonder and incredulity for generations and went down in local folklore. The claim was Sir Robert Carey, a soldier, and courtier, rode a total distance of 382 miles in approximately 60 hours of riding time, changing horses on the way, over three days. He accomplished the feat to be the first to carry the news of Queen Elizabeth I's death, from Greenwich to the court of King James I in Scotland. His ride began at London Bridge at 10 o'clock on 24 March, he galloped up the Old North Road and reached Doncaster by nightfall. By noon on Saturday 26 March, he was over the border; but during that day's ride was thrown by his horse and kicked on the head. Although this forced him to slow down a little, he reached Edinburgh and was described at the time, 'beblooded with great falls and bruises', arriving at Holyrood just as the King was about to retire for the night. John Carey was rewarded for his efforts by being appointed as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber.

Compare that event to the recent passing of Queen Elizabeth II, when the news of her death had gone around the world in a matter of seconds.

The first letter office was opened in London in 1631 near Eastcheap, providing official mail service between London, Edinburgh, and other cities. Afterwards, private mail services were allowed but only permitted on routes not covered by the official post. On primary routes, correspondence was carried by horse-mounted post men and postboys, who subsequently delivered the letters to the local postmaster. The postmaster would then take out the letters for his area and hand the rest to another postboy to carry them on to the next 'post.' As you can imagine this was a slow process and the postboys were an easy target for robbers, and the postboys were not always known for their honesty and reliability, but the system remained unchanged for almost 150 years.

In 1635, King Charles I authorized the opening of the Royal Mail to the public, expanding access beyond the monarchy and court and thereby increasing the accessibility of England's postal system. The King wanted an efficient communication between the two capitals, a post to run night and day between London and Edinburgh and come back again in six days.

The first stagecoach service between the two capitals began in 1658. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, it became widely recognized that the system of using horseback postmen and postboys delivering the post was outdated and inefficient, although officials at the Post Office were slow to implement any changes. Mail delivery was at times unreliable, with letters failing to reach their destination due to incidents such as theft by highwaymen or postboys and postmen's dishonesty.

At around the latter part of C18th, John Palmer, a theatre owner from Bath, had organised a rapid carriage service to transport actors and props between theatres and he believed that a similar scheme could improve the postal services. In 1782, Palmer sold his theatre interests and went to London to lobby the Post Office, despite resistance from senior Post Office staff, who believed the speed of the mail could not be improved, William Pitt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at this time, accepted the idea, and was prepared to give Palmer's scheme a trial run.

An experimental mail coach journey on the Bristol route was undertaken, at Palmer's own expense, starting from Bristol on Monday 2 August 1784, at 4pm with five innkeepers providing the horses at 3d per mile. It reached London at 8am the next day, exactly on schedule. A journey that had previously taken up to 38 hours now took just 16 hours. The return journey was then made to Bristol, leaving London at 8pm and arriving at Bristol at noon the following day.



John Palmer

The success of the trial led Pitt to authorise other mail coach routes and by the spring of 1785, coaches from London served Norwich, Liverpool and Leeds. By the end of that year there were services to Dover, Portsmouth, Poole, Exeter, Gloucester, Worcester, Holyhead and Carlise and by 1786 the service had reached Edinburgh. In that year, Palmer was appointed to the position of Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Mails.

So how did this slick operation work?

The coach, horses and the coachman were all provided by the contractors at their expense. Competition for these contracts was fierce. It meant status and all revenues from the carriage of passengers and parcels and passengers would go to the contractor. Palmer observed that early mail coaches were unreliable and poorly constructed, due mainly to contractors' cutting corners and having their coaches built on the cheap. A standardised design mail coach was required.



Besant Mail Coach

He reached an agreement with John Besant of Millbank, a London coachbuilder, for the exclusive supply of a patent coach design, which the Post Office began using in 1787. Besant later went into partnership with a businessman named John Vidler. On John Besant's death in 1791, John Vidler and his sons continued the business, supplying and maintaining the coaches until 1836.

John Palmer frequently disagreed with his superiors, including Postmaster General Lord Walsingham. In March 1792, it came to head, Palmer was suspended from the Post Office and later dismissed. He did not do too badly from his enforced retirement, he received an annual pension of £3000, a very tidy sum at this time. Following Palmer's departure, Thomas Hasker, who was previously Superintendent of Mail Coaches, was promoted to Surveyor and Superintendent of Mail Coaches and took on full responsibility for the mail coach organisation. In his new role, Hasker managed operational details and regularly updated his superiors on developments, unlike Palmer.

The average speed of the coaches at this time was usually 7-8mph in summer and about 5mph in winter, but as the standard of roads continued to improve, it had risen to 10mph around the time Queen Victoria came to the throne. The development of the mail coach system depended in part upon improvement in road building, including macadamisation of road surfaces and the introduction of toll roads. Military factors also played a part in improved road development, with the need for good communications to counter the threat of invasion, we were not the best of friends with France at this time.

As the coaches ran on a contract basis the only Post Office employee aboard the mail coach was the Post Office guard, who was heavily armed, carrying two pistols and a blunderbuss. He wore an official uniform of a black hat with a gold band and a scarlet coat with blue lapels and gold braid. He also had a watch regulated to London time, to keep differences in local time and recorded the coach's arrival and departure times at each stage of the journey.

From the establishment of Besant's patent coach in 1787, the livery remained unchanged to the end. The upper part of the coach painted black while the door and lower panels were maroon. The wheels were painted in what is now known as Post Office red. The Royal Coat of Arms appeared on the doors, along with the title 'Royal Mail' and the name of the town at either end of the coach's route. The guard sounded a horn to warn other road users to keep out of the way and a signal to the toll keepers to open gates and let the coach through unhindered, as Mail coaches were not required to pay tolls. As the Mail coach travelled through towns or villages where it was not due to stop, but still deliver mail, the guard would blow his horn, the guard would throw out the bags of letters to the Letter Receiver or Postmaster. The guard simultaneously grabbed his outgoing mail bags from the same postmaster.

Back in the 1700's, travelling at seven miles per hour, and with 30 post stops, the 400 miles between London and Edinburgh would have taken up to six days. Only five minutes was normally allowed at an inn for changing the horses and maintain schedule. To ensure horsekeepers were in place, the guard would sound his horn again, to signal for the horsekeepers to be ready, and to warn other traffic to give way, the mail coaches always having the right of way.

The letter rate in 1815 for a single sheet letter (going no further than the stated distance) was 15 miles for 4d, up to 500 miles for 14d. Posting a letter for the ordinary working classes at this time would have been prohibitively expensive.

John Cary and his team of surveyors and cartographers were commissioned by the Post Office to provide precise measurements of all postal routes, thereby ensuring the accuracy of distance calculations. It was commissioned by the Postmaster General and is based on actual measurements made by Cary for official purposes, under the direction of Thomas Hasker, Surveyor & Superintendent of the Mail Coaches.

The "Cary's New Itinerary" was first published around 1794 and went through several editions, with a significant 1828 edition featuring improvements and maps. It must have been a massive undertaking keeping each new edition up to date. Cary's maps can be viewed on the National Library of Scotland web site.

The first mail coach reached Boroughbridge on 7 July 1789, as part of a new service from London to Carlisle and Glasgow via Ferrybridge. At Ferrybridge, the mail was transferred from the Edinburgh coach and continued through Boroughbridge to its final destinations. A further change took place on 5th May 1825 when the Post Office introduced a London to Edinburgh express service, travelling North by Wetherby and Boroughbridge, rather than by York, saving approximately 2 hours.

Boroughbridge had two coaching inns, The Crown and the Three Greyhounds; only The Crown managed Royal Mail coaches and mail processing along with other stagecoaches. The Crown had stabling for around one hundred horses, and the Greyhound around 60 horses. Most stagecoaches served as public transport between cities and towns, carrying passengers and parcels, not as Royal Mail coaches. Coaching inns were spaced every ten to thirty miles for horse changes along routes like York to Ripon or Boroughbridge to Newcastle. Giving coach passengers an opportunity to refresh, or to stay overnight.

On the Great North Road, just before entering Boroughbridge the road from Knaresborough and Leeds joined this main road and on then North to Ripon, Richmond and Newcastle not forgetting the road southeast from York to Boroughbridge. One can see why the two coaching inns were so much in demand and kept very busy.



Penny Black Stamp

By the 1830s, the Post Office required reform. Postage rates were extremely high and still based on the distance carried, times and the number of sheets. From 1812 the cost of a one sheet letter from London to Edinburgh was 1s 1d, two sheets double that and 4 sheets 4s 4d. Rowland Hill, An English teacher, inventor, and social reformer proposed the uniform penny postage, putting the case if letters were cheaper to send the poorer classes would send more of them. Hill's proposal was for stamps to pre-pay postage, which resulted in the Penny Black. The charge was to be based on weight and not distance travelled, one penny per half ounce letter weight for anywhere in the UK, arguing the volume of mail would increase enormously and thus cover the costs, which it did. The Penny Black stamp, the world's first adhesive stamp was issued 6th May 1840.
Post boxes were first trialled in the Channel Islands and introduced to mainland Britain in 1853, where they became very successful.

The coming of the railways saw the rapid decline of the mail coach service, across the country as well as the Turnpike Trusts. The opening of the Manchester to Liverpool railway on 15 September 1830, meant the loss of twenty eight stage-coaches and a revenue loss of over £8000 per year. This story repeated across the country with increasing momentum throughout the 1830s. *The Times* reported on 4 April 1839, 'Till lately upwards of seventy coaches passed through Hounslow daily, but now there only nine or ten.'

One cannot underestimate the effect the railways had on the horse drawn coaching industry in a relatively short time: horse breeders, feed suppliers, blacksmiths, coachmen and coach builders, Royal Mail guards, although many guards found work with the railways, but particularly the coaching inns and their staff, with many inns struggling and eventually going out of business.

Although the Great North Road still ran through Boroughbridge, unfortunately the new NER line ran through York and of little benefit to Boroughbridge. The mail coach service era in Boroughbridge ended in 1847, only 58 years after the first mail coach came to the town. There were still many horse drawn coaches on the road providing local services between provincial towns with no railway connections at the time, and of course horse drawn commercial and farming wagons and carts were still used.

William Hirst, who was Attorney & Land agent to the Duke of Newcastle, was well placed to take over the Boroughbridge postal service. In Pigot's 1834 Directory of 'Professions and Trades' he's listed as the Boroughbridge Postmaster, with the service run from the Crown. In 1854, the Post Office moved to Hirst's home, Chatsworth House (built in 1832), where it stayed until 1893.

The entry for Boroughbridge Post Office in the 'Yorkshire West Riding Post Directory' for 1857':

Post Office, William Hirst, postmaster. Letters arrive at 7.45am, delivered at 8.15am: dispatched at 5.45 pm. Post box closes at 5.15pm. Money orders granted and paid.

It then relocated to Boroughbridge High Street, run by Mr John Bacon. The post box at the top of High Street remains today next to GSC Gray's estate agents.

The 1893 entry in 'Kelly's West Riding Yorkshire Directory' provides a detailed account of the Post Office located at the top of Boroughbridge High Street during that period.

BOROUGHBRIDGE POST OFFICE

A parish formed 11 September 1866, from the parish of Aldborough, and is on the south bank of the River Ure, and Ripon and Boroughbridge Canal, a ¼ mile from Milby or Boroughbridge railway station on the Harrogate and Pilmoor branch of the NE Railway, 6 miles south-east of Ripon and 18 miles north-west from York.

Post Office, John Bacon, Postmaster. Letters arrive from York at 7.30am and 6.10pm delivered at 8.15am and 6.15pm; dispatched at 9.35am and 7.15pm. Sunday arrives at 7.35am, dispatched at 5.35pm. Facilities - Post, money order, telegraph office, savings bank, annuity and insurance office.

In 1894, the Post Office moved once again to Horsefair, this time further up the road to its present location. The Topham family business passed through three generations, from founder Joseph to his son Ronald, with Ian becoming sub-postmaster in 1973. In 1989, Ian was one of the many organisers of the Boroughbridge Mail Coach Bi-centenary celebration of the first arrival in the town in 1789 of the first Mail Coach. Ian retired from his position at the Post Office in 2003, and Nigel and Karen Hamilton-Evans subsequently assumed management of the business and are still here to this day.

Ian Topham died in 2023 aged eighty-four.



Bicentenary Franked Letter 1989



Boroughbridge Post Office Today

Close to Disaster:
Seventy Years of RAYNET—the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network

Brian Dooks, North Yorkshire County Coordinator

During January 30th and February 1st 1953 disaster struck on the east coast of England. A depression south of Iceland started to move south east, sea levels rose and this, combined with winds of Force 10 and spring tides, created a tidal surge that brought devastation to many coastal communities. Homes were destroyed and people had to be evacuated. In total, 307 people in England lost their lives. One of the main reasons for this body count was the lack of any organised means of emergency communication. Had warnings gone out in a timely fashion, many lives would have been saved.





After the disaster RAYNET was formed. Today, it has 1,600 volunteer members, licensed by Ofcom. The organisation works alongside Police, Fire, Ambulance and Emergency Planners. Examples of where RAYNET has proved useful include the Boroughbridge Flood of 1988, the Towyn floods, the Clapham Rail crash, Shoreham Air Show, the Cumbria floods of 2009 and the Lockerbie Disaster of 1988. In these circumstances they were able to provide communication where conventional systems were not in existence or were overwhelmed.



Devastation in Lockerbie

In the case of Lockerbie, the facilities and cooperation of RAYNET teams were essential to the management of the emergency and its search and recovery operations. Such was the scale of the disaster, some 8,000 man hours were volunteered, with people working in the most distressing circumstances.

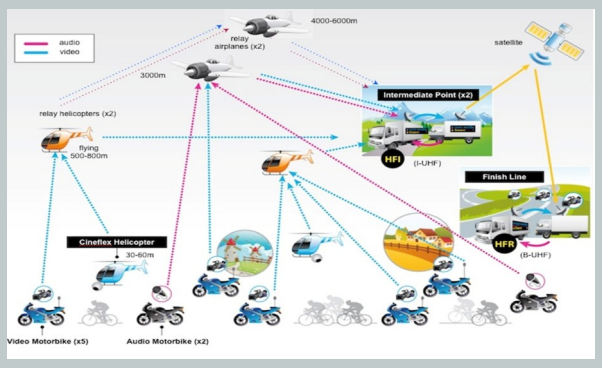
Many planned events also involve RAYNET, for example, they helped during the Olympic Torch Relay in 2012. Radio volunteers were positioned across North Yorkshire to ensure a reliable communication network at a time when the mobile phone system was under great strain and/or reception was patchy.



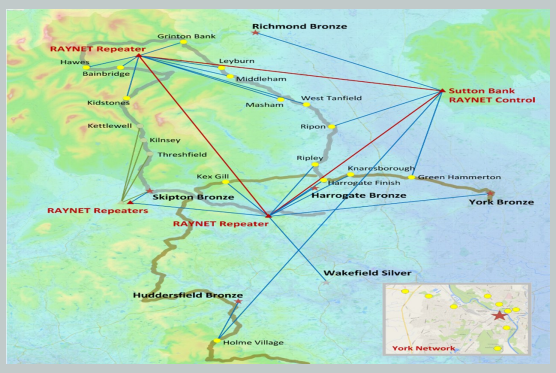
Brian Dooks in Bronze Control, Northallerton, during the Olympic Torch Relay

In 2014 the Tour de France came to Yorkshire. When Yorkshire was confirmed as the venue for the Tour de France the Government agreed to provide £10m through UK Sport. A not-for-profit company, Tour de France 2014 (Hub) Ltd was set up to manage the money. It was formed by Leeds City Council and UK Sport. Local Government partners included North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council and City of York Council. It worked with a total budget of almost £27 million.

They had responsibility for: traffic management, barriers, fencing and trackways; stewarding and marshalling; medical support and First Aid; temporary toilets, radio communications (An administration network - separate from Race Communications); and signage and wayfinding.



Tour de France Race Communications



RAYNET Radio Network Diagram



Bronze Control in Harrogate Police Station



Cote de Buttertubs Pass

RAYNET were essential for communication, as some areas of the county still had poor mobile coverage and it was believed the numbers of visitors could cause the mobile networks to crash. It was acknowledged that the volunteers did a magnificent job during the event.

Licence conditions do not allow RAYNET to accept payment for its services. After the Tour, North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council made donations totalling £8,000. This was used to pay RAYNET operators' travelling expenses and to cover the cost of business radio frequency hire.

The RAYNET Trophy is awarded for outstanding service and is not presented every year. It was awarded to Andy Evans, then Zonal Co-ordinator for Yorkshire, Mike Priestley, Keighley Group Deputy Controller, and Brian Dooks, North Yorkshire County Co-ordinator, for their work on the Tour de France at RAYNET's National AGM in Gloucester in October 2014.

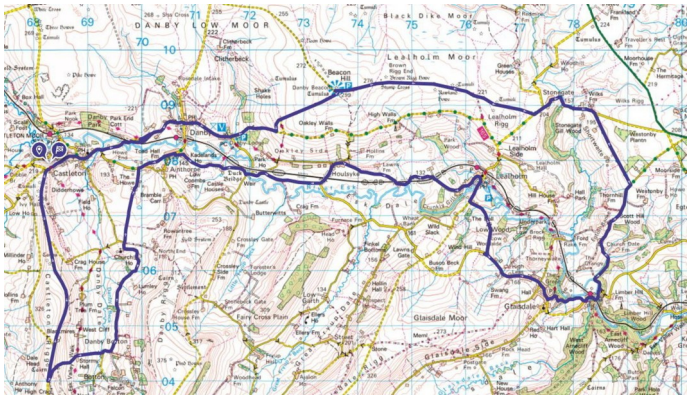
Poetry in Motion: John Costillo, C19th Bard, Preacher and Stonemason

Paul Kirkwood and Ian Jervis

In November, Paul Kirkwood told us about his twenty seven mile bike ride on the North York Moors, visiting sites associated with John Costillo. He was supported by Ian Jervis, in period dress, quoting from verses written by the bard.



Paul cycling the 'Bard Route'



The route followed by Paul

A bard is typically thought of as an artisan poet who writes and recites verse connected to their work and where they live and travel. John Costillo is associated with Eskdale. Other bards at the time included Richard Watson (Teesdale), John Thwaite (Hawes) and Jabez Raisbeck (Coverdale). In our own times we have Ian McMillan, the bard of Barnsley.

John Costillo lived 1792-1845. His parents lived in Leadholm. As a youth Costillo worked as a servant in a country house in Lincolnshire but soon returned to the North York Moors and took up masonry as a trade. Eskdale, Castleton, Danby, Leadholm and Glaisdale were the areas he worked and preached in. As a Methodist he wrote songs and poems; as a stonemason, he left his distinctive mark on many buildings, carving heads and faces into the stonework. He also carved road signs and built Cam bridge. Along the route Paul cycled, evidence of John's work remains to this day in many old stone buildings.

He wrote poetry using the local dialect as well as standard English. He died aged 53 and is buried at the Methodist Chapel in Hungate, Pickering.





Examples of John Castillo's stonemasonry

The Lucky Dream by John Castillo

Ya Kessmas neet, or then aboot,
When measons all were frozzen oot,
I went to see a country friend,
An hospitable hoor to spend.
For gains, I cut across o' t' moor,
Whoor t' snaw sea furiously did stoor.
The hoose I gain'd an' enter'd in,
An' were as welcome as a king.
The storm agean t' windey patter'd,
An' hail-steans doon t' chimley clatter'd.
All hands were in, an' seem'd content,
An' nean did frost or snaw lament.
T' lasses all were at their sewing,
Their cheeks wiv health an' beauty glowing.
Aroond the hearth, in cheerful chat,
Twea or three friendly neighbours sat,
Their travels telling, whoor they'd been,
An' what they had beath heeard an' seen.
Till yan did us all mich amuse,
An' thus a story introduce.
"I recollect lang saan," says he,
"A story that were tell'd to me,
At seems sea strange i' this oor day
That true or false I cannot say.
A man liv'd i' this neighbourhood,
Nea doot of reputation good,
An' lang taame strave wi' stiddy care,
To keep his hoosehod i' repair.
At length he had a curious dream,
For three neets runnin' 't were the seame,
At if on Lunnon Brig he stood,
He'd hear some news would dea him good,
He labour'd hard, beath neet an' day,
Tryin' to draave those thowts away;
Yet daily grew mair discontent
Till he at last to Lunnon went.
Being quite a stranger to that toon,
Lang taame he wander'd up an' doon,
Till, led by some mysterious hand,
On Lunnon Brig he teak his stand.
An' there he waited day by day,
An' just were boun to coom away,
Sea mich he thowt he were to bleame
To gang sea far aboot a dream,
When thus a man, as he drew near,
Did say, "Good friend, what seek you here,
Where I have seen you soon and late?"
His dream tiv him he did relate.
"Dreams," says the man, " are empty things,
Mere thoughts that flit on silver'd wings;
Unheeded we should let them pass.
I've had a dream, and thus it was,
That somewhere round this peopled ball,
There's such a place as Lealholm Hall;
Yet whether such a place there be,
Or not, is all unknown to me.
There in a cellar, dark and deep,
Where slimy creatures nightly creep,
And human footsteps never tread,
There is a store of treasure hid.
If it be so, I have no doubt,
Some lucky wight will find it out.
Yet so or not is nought to me,
For I shall ne'er go there to see."
The man did slyly twice or thrice
The Cockney thenk for his advice;
Then heame agean withoot delay
He cherfully did tak his way.
An' set aboot the wark, an' sped,
Fun' ivvery thing as t' man had said;
Were iver efter seen to flourish
T' fanest gentleman iv all t' parish.
Folks wonder'd sair, an' ,weel they might,
Whoor he gat all his guineas bright.
If it were true, i' spite o' fame,
Tiv him it were a lucky dream."



John Castillo's grave stone,
sadly rather overgrown

Yorkshire Folklore, Customs and Traditions

Catherine Warr

The Leeds based historian and video maker Catherine Warr visited the society in December. Her talk was based on her book, 'Folklore History Traditions: A Yorkshire Year'.

A custom is a way of behaving or a belief that has been established over time. It is an accepted way of doing things in a society, sometimes called a tradition. Many such traditions are specific to particular areas. For example, the way we celebrate and 'see in' New Year has regional variations. Some customs can give us insights into life in the past, e.g. morris dancing, whereas other traditions have been developed relatively recently, such as charity tractor runs.



Leeds Morris Men

Knaresborough Tractor Run



In folklore fairy children, and changelings swopped at birth, often appear. In the 1880s the Grassington 'fairy hole' was talked about. There is a cave near there still known as 'The Fairy Hole'. For many years there resided in the town a poor deformed woman who was regarded by many of her neighbours as having been in her infancy a fairy changeling and she was treated accordingly. In Sheffield in the 1870s there was for a while ghost hysteria with reports of sightings all over the city. Often, these myths evolved into new stories, better reflecting changing times. For example, in Sheffield the ghost sightings evolved into sightings of 'spring heeled jack'. Stories of Robin Hood in the C14th bear little resemblance to the sanitised Robin Hood of Victorian times. This serves to show how legends often replace the original narrative of what actually happened.

Catherine suggested that folk beliefs were people's way of making sense of the mysteries that surrounded them. Arguably, modern myths such as UFO sightings reflect contemporary notions of life beyond our universe.

Catherine's talk was followed by questions that led to a lively discussion that touched on metaphysics; heavy stuff, helped along, of course, by the usual tea and biscuits!

WELLINGTON BOMBER CRASH IN MINSKIP

Peter Audsley

On the night of 2nd/3rd September 1941 the crew of this 104 Squadron aircraft had left Driffield at around 19.30 hours to undertake an operational flight to bomb Frankfurt. This was one of nine 104 Squadron aircraft tasked with the operational order. Owing to poor weather, at 20.20 hours a recall order was sent out to all crews, this was received by all 104 Squadron aircraft but owing to fog on their return to England the aircraft landed at various airfields. The crew of Wellington W5435 received the order to abort the flight and made for Yorkshire, they appear to have been trying to locate Dishforth airfield. In poor visibility and with the port engine having failed at 22.25 hours the aircraft crashed into trees near Trewitt's farm (Peach Tree Farm). The archaeology record, Ref. MNY26604, locates the exact crash site to the garden of Denby House (called St. Mary's at the time of the crash), adjacent to Peach Tree Farm in Minskip, to the south-west of Boroughbridge, possibly as the pilot was attempting a forced landing. The crew were injured, and all were taken to Harrogate Hospital for treatment to their minor injuries.

Wellington W5435 was built to contract B.71441/40 by Vickers Armstrong Ltd. At Weybridge and was awaiting collection in February 1941. It was received by 46 MU on February 1941 after a period of MU storage it was taken on charge by 104 Squadron at Driffield on 16tth April 1941, just after the unit reformed at Driffield. As a result of the accident on 2nd September 1941 Cat. F2/FA damage was the damage assessment, and the aircraft was struck off charge on 8th September 1941.

Pilot – P/O Robert Aubrey Alexander Doherty RAFVR (102594)

Second Pilot – P/O Phillip Dawson RAF (68808)

Navigator – Sgt. Kenneth Dudley Boyce RAFVR (743050)

Sgt. John Williams RAFVR (940751)

Wireless Operator – Sgt William John Hegan RCAF (R/60855)

Sgt. George Williams RAF (AAF) (818176)



Crew details

For service with 104 Squadron **Kenneth Boyce** was awarded the DFM, gazetted on 7th July 1942 and the citation refers to the incident near Dishforth: it reads, "This airman has participated in 40 sorties, 22 of which were over Germany and occupied territory in France. On one occasion after a night raid on Brest, one engine on his aircraft caught fire, and Sergeant Boyce was compelled to crash land. While operating from Malta, he received multiple injuries when an engine failed when landing and his aircraft crashed. After his recovery, he insisted on participating in further operations. During an attack on a convoy, Sergeant Boyce scored hits on a merchant vessel which subsequently sank. He has on many occasions been responsible for successful attacks in most difficult conditions. "He had enlisted into RAFVR in 1940 and was posted to 104 Squadron in 1941 after training. He was posted on detachment to Malta with 104 Squadron and later to Egypt.

He received a commission to the rank of P/O on probation (emergency) on 8th October 1942 (J34529) and was promoted to F/O (war subs) on 8th April 1943 and to F/Lt (war subs) on 8th October 1944. He Sadley died on 21st February 1946 in the Poole area of Dorset and is buried in Northampton General Cemetery. He was thirty-two years old.

Robert Doherty received a commission to the rank of P/O on probation on 7th August 1941. He was awarded the DFC for service with 104 Squadron (Gazetted on 24th October 1941). He was one airman who went out to North Africa with 104 Squadron's party in late 1941. He rose through the ranks and was later posted in 608 Squadron. On 23rd February 1945 as F/Lt he was killed and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. He was twenty-seven years old.

For service with 104 Squadron **John Williams** was awarded the DFM, Gazetted on 21st November 1941. He received a commission to the rank of P/O on probation on 27th April 1944 but by that time he was serving in the Technical Branch of the RAF. He rose to F/O on 7th March 1945. Sgt. William John Hegan would later recover from his injuries and be involved in a second accident in Yorkshire on 16th January 1942. Flying in a Wellington W5493 with 104 Squadron, the aircraft crashed into the North Yorkshire Moors, sadly killing several of the crew. Hegan was seriously injured and returned to Canada later in 1942.



Sgt. William John Hegan

Sgt. William John Hegan would later recover from his injuries and be involved in a second accident in Yorkshire on 16th January 1942. Flying in a Wellington W5493 with 104 Squadron, the aircraft crashed into the North Yorkshire Moors, sadly killing several of the crew. Hegan was seriously injured and returned to Canada later in 1942.

Sgt. **George Williams** was awarded the DFM for service with 104 Squadron in May 1942.

Phillip Dawson joined the RAF in 1940 but before he trained as a pilot he was serving as a ground gunner, when he shot down a Dornier near Croydon on 31st August 1940. After pilot training he served with 104 Squadron in 1941 and was part of the contingent that served in Malta and Egypt. In June 1942 he was posted away from 104 Squadron, later serving with 142 Squadron also acting as an instructor.

Sources: A.W. Hunt, Oliver Backhouse

Vickers Wellington

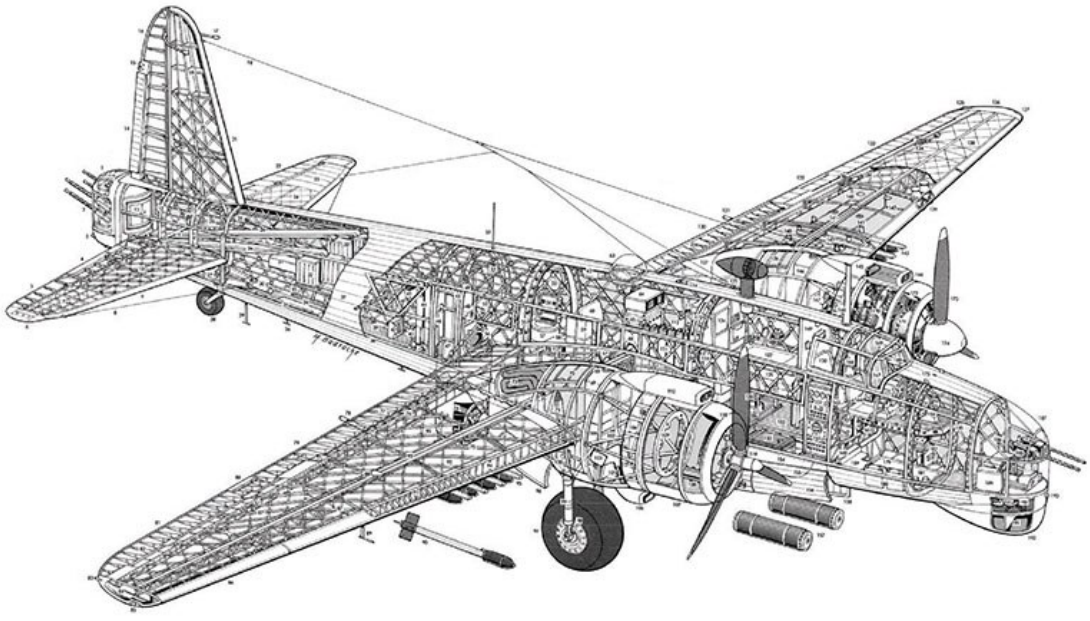
The primary British bomber used in the initial stage of the Second World War and throughout.



Manufactured 1936–1945

Four times the range and bombload of its predecessor “Wellesley”, the Vickers Wellington is the most produced British long-range medium bomber and anti-submarine aircraft during early World War II. The twin-engine Wellington is the only British bomber used throughout the Second World War and features a geodetic airframe designed by Barnes Wallis.
The fuselage was built from 1,650 elements, consisting of duralumin W-beams which formed into a metal framework. Wooden battens were screwed to the beams and were covered with Irish linen; the linen, treated with layers of dope, formed the outer skin of the aircraft.
At the end of production 11641 Wellington bombers had been produced.

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Boroughbridge and District Historical Society

Minutes of the AGM of Tuesday 9th September 2025, 7.30 pm

Apologies received from Mark Learmonth and Lorna Mills

A short period of reflection was allowed to remember long-standing committee member Christine Tasker, who passed away this year.

The minutes of the 2024 AGM were approved. There were no matters arising.

The Chairman's report was presented (see addendum 1).

The Treasurer, Liz Chapman-Winn, reported the society has £1022 in the bank and £231 held in cash.

The Secretary/Archivist, David Bellwood, presented his report (see addendum 2)

It was agreed the membership fees for 2025-2026 will remain at £20.

It was agreed the current committee members will remain in post for the coming year.

There was no other business

Date of next AGM: 8th September, 2026

Addendum 1

BDHS Chairman's Report 2025

Speakers Programme

2024

September

PORT MULGRAVE by David Barley

David gave a talk after last year's AGM meeting

Port Mulgrave is an old port on the east coast of North Yorkshire, north of Whitby between Staithes and Runswick Bay. David spoke about the history of iron ore mining in the area.

October

The Dere Street Dig - Mike Haken

Our guest speaker in October was Mike Haken, who talked about the Dere Street dig at Aldborough Moor Farm, Marton-cum-Grafton, in 2019. Mike brought along various 'finds' for members to look at, which added interest to his presentation.

November

Glimpses of the Past Through Six Local Sites - Peter Fleming

In November, Peter gave a talk to members based on six local sites. Each site provided an insight into attitudes, values and events from the past. The sites were: Alne Plague Cross and Plague, Bedale Leech House, Fountains Abbey, Thornborough Henges, Littlethorpe Pinfold, Ripon Workhouse

December

Model Villages and the Philanthropic Movement - Eric Jackson

In December Eric gave a very interesting talk on model villages, with a good slide show to illustrate the various locations he mentioned, Saltaire, Port Sunlight on Merseyside, Bournville near Birmingham, examples on how to provide decent housing and living conditions for working class people.

2025

January

Tancreds, Tudors and reason - Sir Andrew Lawson-Tancred

Sir Andrew talked about the political and religious upheaval and turmoil when Henry VIII made himself head of the Church in England and removing the power of the Pope.

February

Halcyon Days in Oman 1957-1958 - Mike Bevington

Mike who has given us talks in the past in connection with Fountains Abbey, Studley Royal and the surrounding areas as a site guide, gave a completely different talk, about his experiences joining the army in 1955, then volunteering to go to Oman in 1957; a rebellion had started to spread across the country and aid had been requested by the Sultan of Muscat.

March

The Medieval Wall Paintings of Pickering Church – Professor Kate Giles

Kate spoke about the discovery, restoration and conservation of the medieval wall paintings of Pickering Church.

April

Secret Wartime Britain - Colin Philpott

Colin gave an interesting and stimulating lecture based on his recent book on the subject, about the secret World War 2 sites and how the sites were able to be held hidden from the enemy. Colin also brought books along that he had written and had published

May

Schools for the Middle Classes: The Private School in Harrogate - Paul Jennings

Paul gave a lecture about the private schools of Harrogate during Victorian and Edwardian times.

June

The Mitford Men - Joanne Aston

Unfortunately, being on holiday I missed this talk about the Mitford family, with particular attention to the men involved in the lives of the famous Mitford sisters. I was told it had been a very entertaining evening.

July

The story of the Humble Milestone – heritage hidden in plain sight - Hilary Jones

Hilary, vice-chair of the Milestone Society, gave a very interesting talk about these often hidden and overlooked historical features by the side of our road network.

Events

A group of BDHS members visited the County Records Offices in Northallerton in the autumn. We were very well looked after and learnt a lot about what is involved in maintaining the archives.

In May we had a photo display in the library foyer, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the WWII in Europe, with images and stories from this time.

On Sunday 27 July it was the Boroughbridge and Aldborough Show held at Newby Hall.

Our stand was in a better location this year; we were located in the artisan marque, and found we had many more visitors stopping to view and talk with us, we brought the VE80 display, we had used in the library back in May, along with other photos of Boroughbridge from the early part of the last century and a book of old maps of Yorkshire. David Barley, Mike Tasker and I were in attendance.

Other Business

Our book 'A History of Boroughbridge' is still selling well, 36 copies have been sold since the last reorder. Mike Tasker had a further copy of his book on wartime Boroughbridge reprinted this year.

The Coaching Inn hotel group who took over the Crown Hotel in 2022, have published a guest booklet this year, written by Will Swales, titled 'A Brief History' of the Crown Hotel, an excellent, professionally researched publication of a very high standard, with interesting facts and information. A copy is available to view later during the tea break.

Thank you to the members of the committee: David Barley, for arranging the excellent speakers; David Bellwood our Secretary and Archivist, for dealing with all the enquires and looking after our web site; Peter Fleming, Newsletter secretary, for the excellent newsletters so well prepared and presented; Jackie Glew, our latest member for her support, advice and contribution; Mark Learmonth, our minutes secretary, unfortunately not here this evening due to holidays; Mike Tasker (what would we do without Mike? I can say no more); and finally Liz Wynn who has taken over the post as treasurer from Jackie Akers, who had to step down last year.

Thank you, to all our members for your support, without you, there would be no Boroughbridge and District Historical Society.

Peter Audsley

Addendum 2

BDHS Secretary's Report for AGM 9th September 2025

We regularly receive enquiries from non-members, both local people, and from further afield, regarding their own research, be it family history or other local history topics. Many of these I will deal with by myself, but more often I will need to copy in either the committee or specific society members regarding topics which might be of interest to them, or on which they have specialist knowledge. I'd like to thank all these members who are regularly willing to join in with assisting enquiries. Some enquiries are still ongoing, and are regularly discussed at the committee and other meetings. Sometimes, an enquiry can lead to an exciting development for the society, such as the Pullan family visit that I mentioned last year. This year, an initial tentative enquiry from Will Swales led to us being involved in the book which Will has now produced about the history of The Crown Hotel.

We continue to add archived documents and old photographs to the Members' Area of the website. There is a good selection in our archive, which is available for all members of the society to use. After the refreshments this evening, I will present a brief reminder on how to access the archive.

Recently, we have made the decision to stop having monthly archive meetings on Fridays. As most members now have good facilities at home for printing, scanning, and accessing the internet, it may be easier for people to help with the archiving in their own homes, so we will trial that for a while. We will continue to have Project Meetings as and when, but these will be held either at members' homes or some other venue, rather than the Jubilee Room.

Finally, I would like to thank all the other members of the committee for their support, and also Linda Dooks, who while no longer on the committee, is still always willing to provide much local assistance and knowledge.

David Bellwood

Boroughbridge & District Historical Society

Minutes of committee meeting held on 7 October 2025

Present: Peter Audsley, David Barley, David Bellwood, Liz Chapman-Winn, Mark Learmonth and Mike Tasker

Apologies: Peter Fleming and Jackie Glew.

Minutes of previous meeting (15 July 2025) were approved.

Treasurer's Report: £1,242.67 in bank account; £401 in cash including 7 new members who paid in cash at the AGM and the purchase of two books.

Secretary's/Archivist's Report: (i) The previously circulated report was highlighted. (ii) Website: DBe had recently circulated instructions reminding members of the committee how to upload material including categorising it appropriately. He hoped that there would be more material (including photographs) uploaded as a result. (iii) Social media: PA thanked JG for her ongoing work with the Facebook page. (iv) The JR had been booked for all the main meetings during 2026.

There had been correspondence (all replied to) from the following people and organizations: Karl Winship; John Grainger, a journalist at the *Stray Ferret* and Michael Busby. There had been follow-up from correspondence reported at the last meeting (both replied to) from Lynne Bagley, and Andrea Tamme,.

Project Meetings: It was agreed that there would be regular project meetings on the third Friday of every **other** month in the JCR (subject to there being enough agenda items to deal with). The first of these meetings would be held on 21 November 2025.

1611 Project: MT updated the meeting on the considerable progress made. He used an enlarged map from the mid-nineteenth century (the earliest currently available) to illustrate where those mentioned on the 1611 survey were likely to have lived and discussed a range of other issues the project raised. PA thanked MT for his ongoing work on the project.

Langthorpe Parish Council Records since 1895: DBa has taken the lead with this work and has made contact with Mike Tasker. He will keep the meeting updated as progress is made.

Thoughts going forward: It was felt that the programme was always well attended, and the speakers have all been interesting and engaging. However, it was agreed that at the next meeting, all members would be asked if there were any topics about which they would particularly like to have talks.

Tea Rota: 2025 October PA; November ML; December DBe; **2026** January PF; February JG; March LC-W; April ML; May PA; June DBa; July DBe.

Any Other Business: It was agreed that it was appropriate to promote the meetings of other local historical societies when requested to do so, subject to there being no conflict with our group (e.g. speakers also coming to Boroughbridge meeting).

DBa reported that he had received minutes for Kirby Hill Cricket club 1952-1957 and would bring them to the next project meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 6 January 2026 at 7.00pm Holly Bank.

Secretary's Report 08/10/25

General

I have booked the Jubilee Room for all Tuesday evenings for 2026.

Dates: 13 January, 10 February, 10 March, 14 April, 12 May, 9 June, 14 July,

8 September, 13 October, 10 November, 8 December

Correspondence & Enquiries

1. M B has enquired about the Kruckenberg photos, in particular any of the Old Vicarage in Lower Dunsforth. I was able to give him access to some of those in our collection, for which he has sent an email of thanks. He also asked about any photos showing the interior of the building. Linda has suggested that NY Archives and Harrogate Library have some further Kruckenberg photos, so I have referred Michael to those places.

2. J G, a Senior Journalist at The Stray Ferret has asked for information about the discovery of a Romano-British settlement where the Gladman development is planned. Peter (A) suggested he get in contact with David Roberts from FORA (Friends of Roman Aldborough), who may have more information, but we feel the find might be too recent for too much information to be available at this time.

3. K W wrote for more details of the society, and to ask if we have ever received a presentation on the Latin inscription on Huby's Tower at Fountains Abbey. Huby's Tower bears a Latin inscription on each face of the tower. Dr Michael Carter of English Heritage has tracked down the source of the text to a Breviary which was once owned by Abbot Marmaduke Huby which incredibly is now in Christ Church College library . K writes that it would be wonderful to listen to a presentation on that subject if that is at all possible .

Follow-ups:

4. L B, a Boroughbridge resident, has recently learned that different developers have submitted three local fields as possible sites for development:

HK-BOR-0015 land to the south of Roecliffe Lane (adjacent to the single Devil's Arrow)

HK-BOR-0010 land to the east of the A168

HK-BOR-0011 land to the west of Marine Lane (field containing two Arrows).

L B intends to oppose these proposed developments and wondered whether members of the History Society would be interested in working together, should NYCC approve these green fields as sites for development. L has sent a summary of the situation as she sees it. "Obviously you may wish to check the details, rather than accept my interpretation. If your members have strong views about these three fields that are threatened with development. I hope we can work together to protect them".

5. A T is interested in 2 of the monuments inside Aldborough Church, with inscriptions. I took photos of them and sent them on, she replied to thank me and asked: "Do you know if it's possible to find out who oversaw/paid for plaques installed at the church?" I am unaware if churches keep records of such things. I know the Artist Rifles are attributed as the sponsor, but if I was looking for a specific name or trail of persons that were connected to its installation, or even of the members of the congregation around the time period, is that something the church has records of? This is something that I could commit to visiting in the future and doing the work myself if this is a possibility".

Andrea has now followed up on this to say that she has found out all the information she wanted. She asked for permission to use the photos in a presentation. I have given permission.

Crackpot Hall

My choice of place of interest for this newsletter is Crackpot Hall. Over the years various tales have been created about the place and its inhabitants, which chime with the talk we had on Yorkshire folklore and 'myth creation'.

Surrounded by breath-taking natural beauty, Crackpot Hall is a tumbledown 18th-century farmhouse set amidst the rugged terrain of the Yorkshire Dales, near the village of Keld in Swaledale. The hall's architecture, with its sturdy stone façade and traditional Yorkshire vernacular design, reflects the resilience of its inhabitants against the harsh elements of the embracing landscape. The name "Crackpot" likely derives from the Old Norse word "Pot" meaning deep hole and the word "Crack" with Olde English origins and which translates to crow, also the name of a nearby cave. The farm-house was forced into abandonment in 1953, owing to subsidence caused by nearby lead-mining at Beldi Hill.

Stories of hidden passages and ghostly apparitions add an air of mystery to the already bleak atmosphere. One local myth surrounding the house involved a four-year-old child named Alice, who was "discovered" by authors Ella Ponte-fract and Marie Hartley roaming "wild" and barefoot with her dogs in the countryside near Crackpot in the 1930s. The travel writers declared her language an unknown dialect and sparked national speculation. However, Alice Eleanor Harker was later discovered to be a local farmer's daughter who lived her later years in Carlisle!





Crackpot Hall, now part of the Gunnerside Estate

Peter Fleming