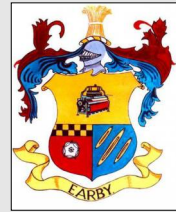


# Earby Chronicles



Edition 80  
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SPRING 2016

**SOCIETY AIMS:**  
to raise awareness,  
foster an interest  
and facilitate  
research into the  
heritage of Earby &  
district including  
Thornton in  
Craven, Sough,  
Kelbrook, Harden,  
Hague and  
Salterforth.

#### OFFICIALS

President:  
Bob Abel  
Phone 01282 843850  
Email:  
bobabel@talk21.com

Secretary:  
Margaret Brown  
Phone 01282 843932  
Email:  
margaret.brown  
2869@hotmail.co.uk

Editor of Chronicles:  
Stephanie Carter  
Phone 01756 794099  
Email:  
steph.carter123@  
gmail.com

Treasurer :  
Wendy Faulkner  
Phone 01282 863160  
Email:  
wendy@  
lbhfarm.co.uk

Committee:  
Trevor Tattersall  
Margaret Greenwood  
Ken Ranson  
Colin Dalby  
Steve Marshall

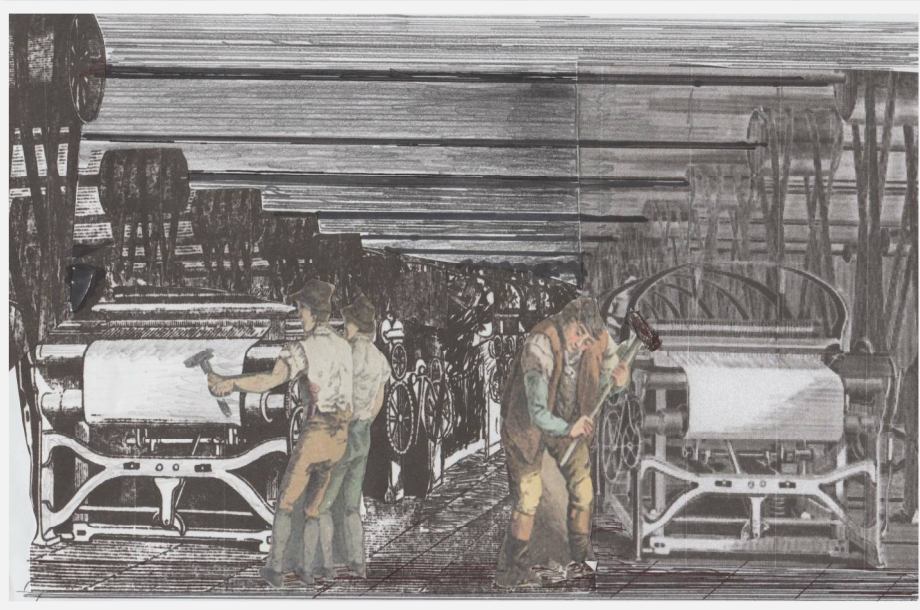
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## THORNTON CURATE'S ATTEMPTS TO GET EXTRA RELIEF

by George Ingle

For a few weeks in the Spring of 1826 parts of Lancashire and West Yorkshire were convulsed by riots and far more frequently fear of riots. People were starving, thousands were out of work, the workhouses were full and beggars abounded. Riots started in Lancashire on Monday April 24<sup>th</sup> and spread to Yorkshire on the Wednesday. Hundreds of local hand loom weavers, amongst the thousands who were starving, blamed the new power looms for taking their jobs away and tried to smash them.



Smashing Looms at Gargrave Mill

The Parishes of Thornton and Barnoldswick, which included Earby, were peaceful as none of the mills had power looms, but the inhabitants suffered greatly. Two brothers in Yorkshire, who had installed power

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looms in their mills, resisted the rioters with force. Military units were mobilised, men and boys were shot, some died and many were wounded.

The soldiers were deployed over a wide area to defend the mills which had the new power looms. From Halifax to Bingley and Skipton to Clitheroe they marched to forestall any attack on a mill. Otley was described as an '*armed camp*' with so many troops of the Hussars marching into the town..

Low Mill at Addingham was attacked on Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, but on the Thursday another attack was thwarted by the arrival of F Troop of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dragoon Guards under Captain Lee so the rioters moved on to High Mill at Gargrave. Rioters got into the mill there and smashed the new power looms. Both were used for spinning and weaving cotton. North Wing Mill in Bradford, which had just been equipped with worsted power looms, was attacked the following Monday and Wednesday.

The Riot Act was read at both Addingham and Bradford with the defenders of the mills firing into the mob on both occasions. Men and boys were seriously wounded whilst two boys of thirteen and eighteen were killed at Bradford. The military took the decision that as further attacks were likely, troops would be stationed at all the larger mills and guards were mounted, day and night, for the next six weeks.

Two clergymen in the area, who tried hard to raise funds for those who were suffering from starvation in their parishes, were Rev Henry Heap in Bradford and Rev Mordaunt Barnard, the curate of Thornton-in-Craven and Barnoldswick. They tried to raise money themselves, but also wrote to the Secretary of the Home Department, Sir Robert Peel, for assistance. This was necessary, as Parliament would not give assistance for it was thought that state help would curb charitable donations. Most people, of course could not read or write and had no political voice as they did not have a vote. The riots were by people who could see their entire way of life and their communities being swept away and had no other way of expressing their fear and anger.

Rev Mordaunt Barnard wrote to Sir Robert on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April after the riots at Addingham and Gargrave. His passionate letter reflected the state of his parishioners and his own attempts to help them. He explained that 80% of his 6,000 parishioners in Thornton and Barnoldswick were out of work, parish relief was exhausted and though he had raised a local subscription to support 440 families that was now nearly exhausted. He went on to ask – '*If there should be any funds within your control which you could apply, however small the amount might be, it should be most gratefully received and faithfully applied.....I have myself submitted to the utmost farthing my limited income*'. He was also careful to point out that although there were disturbances in the area the people of Thornton had not taken part in them. The *Leeds Mercury* praised Rev Barnard for his '*humanity, zeal and intelligence*' in raising the £140 which had supplied 440 families with oatmeal at half price for the last three months. Oatmeal was the staple, and often only food, of working people at that time.

Following the Rev Barnard's letter five 'gentlemen' from the area also wrote to the Secretary of the Home Department. They were Matthew Wilson, William Birkbeck, William Wilson, Carus Wilson and William Alcock. They offered to form a committee to distribute any money which might be provided to relieve the distress in the parishes of Keighley, Kildwick, Thornton and Barnoldswick. They had obviously heard that the Lord Mayor of London had called a meeting – '*for the purpose of raising a subscription to alleviate the pressure of suffering which weighs so heavily upon the manufacturing classes of the north.*' The committee included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London and the Home Secretary with leading politicians and bankers. Also present was Dr George Birkbeck from Giggleswick who was the first president of the London Mechanics' Institute. Perhaps this was an attempt to include someone who had an affinity with

working people. The committee promptly set to work, collecting substantial subscriptions and distributing claim forms to the distressed areas.

However, Rev Barnard was not happy with the local group of gentlemen who had offered to form a committee to distribute funds as they could be '*influenced by local interests and prejudice*', so he wrote again. His long letter pleaded for money for Thornton and Barnoldswick, only regretting that they did not have '*within our parishes and gentlemen of rank and influence enough to urge our claim to its due extent.*' The other person who signed the letter was Christopher Bracewell, who presumably was not classed as a gentleman. Another letter soon followed, giving thanks for the £50.00 which had been donated and saying that he had met the gentlemen who were forming the local committee and he was satisfied with their arrangements.

It is difficult to know how much money eventually found its way to the people who were starving in the area. The local papers gave a weekly account of the sums allocated, for instance the Craven District received £1,000 in August 1826. Though there was no more rioting this did little to relieve the suffering, which continued for many years. To make matters worse, Joseph Mason, whose looms had been smashed at High Mill in Gargrave, applied to the Wapentake of Staincliffe for £300 compensation. This was awarded and all the parishes had to pay. The share of Thornton in Craven was £9.14s.9d.

## **EARLY DAYS OF EARBY CRICKET CLUB**

from the Chronicles' Editor

In April 1899, the members of Earby Cricket Club, which can date its history from 1859, decided to hold a grand bazaar to free the Club from mounting debt. Details published in the Bazaar Handbook and published in the Craven Herald, give an interesting insight into the earliest days of the Club.

"The club had a precarious existence up to six years ago when Alf Smith of Driffield was engaged as "pro". The same year the Craven Cup-ties were commenced, and the Earby Club after playing through to the final were beaten by Ingrow. In the following season the team again played through all the matches, but were vanquished by Skipton. Since then the Club has associated itself with the Ribblesdale League, and the result has been a great increase in the interest taken in its doings. The first season they played in the League resulted with the Club emerging with three clubs below the Earby contingent, and in the second year there were five below and only four above. The Club, by steady practice, is showing a tendency to make headway, and as a result of the bazaar which was opened on Saturday, it is anticipated that the end of the season now commencing will find the team well up in the Ribblesdale League, if not at the top.

The Club owe a word of thanks to Mr A J Birley, of Earby, who has shown a practical interest in the team, and the idea of the bazaar was largely due to that gentleman. The Club has again secured the services of Mat Myers, who, although the oldest player in the League, last year topped both the bowling and batting averages.

According to an interesting statement published in the official handbook of the bazaar, the first treasurer of the Club appointed in 1859 was Mr G Chew and the secretary Mr Harry Pickles. After much difficulty the committee secured a field on the Moor above Earby, bearing the somewhat appropriate title of "Who-could- 'a- thowt-it" and the farm adjacent

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thereto bears the same name to this day. The first match was played on a fine Saturday in August against a team raised by Mr A Tillotson of Skipton, and resulted in the novices getting a good beating. At the return match a fortnight later the Earby contingent made a better show, the game being played at Sandylands. Mr Tillotson, above referred to, slipped so much when he was batting that he took his shoes off and played in his stocking feet. During the winter of 1859 Mr C Bracewell met the wishes of the Earby Club by letting them have a field at the Lane-ends. He granted it rent free, and himself became a subscriber. The Club gained valuable knowledge of the game from some Coventry weavers who had been brought to Barnoldswick by Mr W Bracewell, and some smart batsmen and fielders were turned out.

The Club has had its ups and downs since that time but the earlier doings still furnish an ever refreshing topic of conversation among Earby people. The game lapsed somewhat, but was revived in 1872 by a few of the then young men, notably H C Smith, J Parker, G P Hartley, T Wilkinson etc. who rescued the old cricket field and were provided by Mr Bracewell with a splendid rig-out of tackle. In those, the balmy days of the Club, matches were played with all the clubs of the surrounding towns – Keighley, Skipton, Colne, Nelson etc. but the professionalism that crept into the game led them far ahead of Earby, which had to be content with meeting teams of a less important calibre. Now however the Earby Club are prepared to say “Let ‘em all come” and when the improvements they contemplate are carried out, they mean to make things hum so far as the district clubs are concerned”.

The well-laden stalls were ranged round the hall in the Board School and included drapery and fancy goods, toys and sweets and tobacco. Refreshments were available and there were musical contributions, a minstrel troupe, palmistry and phrenology, lime-light views, living pictures, the graphophone and gramophone etc. The event was held over three days and openers included Walter Morrison and Dr Ferguson of Burnley, the ex-president of the Ribblesdale League. £111 was raised on the first day and the event was deemed a great success.

### **SALTERFORTH MOUNTING STEPS**

Ken Ranson



A Grade2 listed structure, situated off Earby Lane at the side of the Quaker Meeting House. Perhaps C18. Stone. Approx. 3 feet high. 5 steps on either side up to mounting platform. Probably in its original location.

## NEW RAILWAY STATION FOR EARBY

by Bob Abel

Apologies to those who thought a new railway station for Earby was imminent, but the Station referred to was opened in 1885.

The eleven and a half mile Skipton to Colne line was opened in 1848 as the last stage of the Leeds and Bradford Extension Railway and was intended as a link to enable trans-Pennine services from the West Riding of Yorkshire in to Burnley, Preston and other parts of Lancashire. There was no great celebration when the line opened as the link onwards from Clone had been delayed. The Bradford Observer reported "The opening was private and unmarked by the festivities which are usual on such occasions, the ceremonial opening being deferred, we understand, until the completion of the East Lancashire Line to Colne".

There were initially three trains a day in each direction between Bradford and Colne with plans to increase services when the Colne to Preston link was completed.

In 1884 work was commenced on the building of a new railway station for Earby, the proposal having been put forward several years previously. The 1st March 1884 edition of the Craven Herald reported:

*The Station – It will be interesting to the public to learn that active operations have now commenced at this place for the purpose of improving the accommodation. A large staff of men under Mr Kirk, Skipton, are now employed digging up the stones that were brought on to the ground a good many years since to be used for the then contemplated improvement. We understand that the first work to be done to be the building of broader and longer platforms on which the men are now busily employed.*

Why, we may ask, did Earby require a new station? There could be a number of reasons –

- The original station was only meant to be a temporary structure (Barnoldswick's original station was only temporary)
- In 1871 Earby became a junction station for the newly opened Barnoldswick branch line.
- By 1884/5 Earby was becoming a thriving textile manufacturing town and an increase in population was anticipated.

From opening in 1848 to 1884 (36 years) seems a long time to have a "temporary" station so the most likely option is a combination of the second two possibilities. It is certain that, with the opening of the Barnoldswick branch, passengers using Earby station would have increased and perhaps plans were put forward at that time to extend and improve Earby station. The article quoted above suggests that the building materials were delivered to Earby some years previously perhaps in the early 1870s. Why the plan was not implemented straight away can only be speculated upon. However by the early 1880s the village of Earby was on the verge of a major expansion which probably gave impetus to improving the station. Victoria Mill had had ups and downs during its history with a devastating fire in 1884 but it was about to be rebuilt. Mr Gill had acquired a plot of land and was about to commence building Grove Mill.

Work on the new station continued throughout 1884 and by December the Craven Herald was able to report –

*The New Station – The bridge over the main line at the station was put up on Sunday, the*

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*other portions of it having already been erected. Rapid progress is now being made and it is expected that the new station will be ready for use early in the new year.*



Two of the earliest photos of the 1885 station in the archive. Probably taken some 20 years after the re-build



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By April 1885 the new station was brought in to use and the Craven Herald was able to tell its readers

*The works in connection with the new station, which has been in hand for a long time now, are drawing near completion and on Sunday morning the station began to be used by the public. In comparison with the old wooden structure, the comfort and convenience to and from this place will be much increased. The largest of the two blocks is on the side nearest the village (the Colne platform) and comprises the booking office in the centre and general and ladies waiting rooms at the two opposite ends. An awning of glass, with iron frame work, runs along each side of this building thus providing greater shelter, which is a great improvement on the former miserable condition of things. A general and ladies waiting room have also been built on the Skipton platform, and the platforms themselves have been greatly enlarged and made much safer and more comfortable. The large iron bridge by which the public are to cross the line is not quite completed, but the old wooden hovel as it has not inaptly been called is cleared away so that the steps can be put up on that side and is expected to be in use in a short time.*

At the same time a new signal box was erected at the crossing – *The new signal box appears very clean and comfortable and it has been fitted up with all the latest improvements and contrivances.*

It sounds as though the track was realigned at the same time.

*The points etc. ... examined and approved about a fortnight ago by the Company's officials and a Government inspector.*

As a couple of post scripts:

- The following Whitsuntide it was reported the 500 tickets had been booked on the Saturday on scheduled and excursion trains and that another 1000 passengers originating from Barnoldswick had passed through Earby Station.
- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1885, in a situation very relevant to today, it was reported that the coroner, investigating a fatality at a level crossing elsewhere in the local area, severely criticised the Midland Railway for not taking the opportunity of the station upgrade to eliminate the level crossing by putting in a road bridge over the railway.

The Leeds Times for 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1885 reported -  
*...Thomas Blades, an 81 year old man has been killed at a dangerous level crossing at Kildwick... the coroner severely criticised the management of the Midland Railway directors. He doubted whether it was any use making any recommendations to such men. At Earby station they had an excellent opportunity of making a bridge, but they insisted on maintaining a level crossing.*

### **COPY OF A LETTER FROM JOSEPH MITCHELL, SENT TO TWO OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS (FRED AND EZRA), AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

*(I have attempted to copy this letter word for word without changing the punctuation etc. It was written in pencil and I may have missed some of Joseph's full stops and commas etc. Brian Mitchell nephew. 03.02.2014)*

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Plumpton –with- Westby  
Near Kirkham  
Lanncashire

16.5.(19)19

Dear Fred,

In reply to your letter of today's date. I am glad to hear that you are keeping OK & having a cushy time, but sorry that you cannot get back just yet. As you say the Army are doing pretty badly by both you and Ezra. You should have been among the first to be demobilised according to their own promises, but after all promises to them are like so many "scraps of paper". In regard to my going to Tasmania I would certainly like to go but I have not got enough of the "needful".

As for going back to the mill – I don't wish to do that – but as I have been out of work since February I think I shall have to go in the end. Both you and Ezra should be alright once you get free as you can get land under the Government in the country, and if you take my advice you will consider Poultry keeping & Fruit growing. You can make 50% on your capital with either of these with the minimum of labour & be independent.

I have applied for land under the offer of the Land Department of the Government of Queensland (Australia) which I consider the best in the lot, but I have just heard from London that there is no chance of sailing before 1920 & and the application will have to be made on arrival. I have just engaged an advertising firm to send me 50 applications for a job out to 50 different colonial firms operating abroad, but I don't know how I shall get along with it.

My advice to you would be to go for the Land either on your own or jointly say with Ezra, in whatever country you are going to settle in & go in for what I mentioned abroad as under the Government Scheme they will lend money & find the land. I hope you will be demobbed soon as I don't wish to leave this side without seeing you, but I can't stick it here with no work and no money & no prospects.

I have not been home for some considerable time & have not had much news but I think they are all OK. Dad is still on the munitions but he has aged by years since the war and I think he worries considerably about you & Ezra as you have been away so long & as you remember neither of you were a great age when you went. Albert is in Germany I suppose you will have his address. I have not seen him since he went into the Army nor as he seen me since I joined the RAF. I think he has had rather a rough time on the whole though I offered to show him how to get in as a Cadet. He seemed to prefer the Infantry as a Tommy. I hope you will excuse any shortage of letters from me as after I joined up I had to work early & late to get my Flying Certificate & Commission as I was put into the Naval Branch which took a six months course at study. Since I have been demobbed I have had some rather bitter experiences & I feel as if it is a case of my hand against everyman's & everyman's hand against mine. I rather think you will be about the last two left in the services from Salterforth & I hope you will be back soon.

Yours affectionately,

Joseph.



## KELBROOK PUBLIC HOUSES

### Halfway House, Stone Trough (Old and New) and the Craven Heifer

Margaret Brown and Wendy Faulkner

The story of Kelbrook's Public Houses and Inns is also one of the development of transport from pack horses through to canals, turnpikes, railways and on to motor vehicles. Our first visit is to the earliest of Kelbrook's Inns the **Halfway House**, so called because it was half way along the old green track from Elslack to the Cloth Hall at Colne via Cob Lane. This was a road from very early times and used until the coming of stage coaches. The traffic would have been pack horses, salters and drovers travelling from Cheshire and Lancashire to Yorkshire along the Ribble/Aire Gap, as well as local traffic, carts, ponies, horses and foot travellers going to and from the manor at Thornton and the mill at Earby and on to Skipton in the East and Colne in the West, taking produce and cloth to sell. This ancient route along Cob lane did not drop into Kelbrook past Moor Gate Farm but turned off the lane to go below Thick Bank Farm, dropping down on to Dotcliffe Lane. At the head of the lane was "Halfway House" a wayside Inn which catered for the pack horse trade, providing food and accommodation for drovers and pack horse carriers. The building is still in existence at the top of Dotcliffe Lane on the right hand side. The remains of the old route are also still visible climbing the hill towards Thick Bank. Looking at the front of the building, the middle part was the Inn; the cottage on the right was the stables and the cottage on the left was the innkeeper's house. The old barrel-vaulted cellar is still in existence, as is the connecting door between the pub and house, though it is now blocked. At the gable end there can still be seen the openings for the stable doorway and the upper opening for hay to be lifted into the hay loft above the stables. The beck running down the hill past the front of the Inn was used by the inn keeper to clean his barrels. Just upstream from the Inn there is a small pond area that possibly could have been used to collect water.



Halfway House

The demise of the Inn started with the arrival of the Leeds Liverpool canal. The Skipton to Burnley section was completed in 1796 and the full canal in 1815; after this time there was little need for the pack horse trade. Also the development of the stage coach routes for passenger travellers at around the same time decreased trade further as the route was changed to what is now the back road to Foulridge which was better for the coaches. The traffic carrying corn to the mill would also have ceased in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

as around 1800 - 1810 the corn mill in Earby was converted to a cotton mill, though this was burnt down in 1812. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1815 would also have affected this trade when it became cheaper to buy corn imported to the area via the canal. So the old pack-horse route fell out of use as a trade route and was only used locally as a footpath. This of course meant the end of trade for Halfway House.

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However there was still a need for a stop-off to change stage coach horses and for travellers to stop for a meal- break which is when the Stone Trough farm became a way-side Inn. The original **Stone Trough Inn**, typical of many 18<sup>th</sup> century inns, was a combination of inn and farm to ensure the landlord a reasonable standard of living. This road was, incidentally, first mentioned in a Kelbrook deed of 1220.



**Old Stone Trough**

The Old Stone Trough did not last very long as in August 1823 a group of local land-owners, manufacturers and professional men met in the King's Head in Colne with a view to having the road from Colne to its junction with the Skipton/Preston road at Broughton (the A59) turnpiked. Their objective was to provide better transportation and communication links between Colne and Skipton and the villages in-between, than those provided by the existing Colne / Skipton turnpike over Pinhaw Moor. This would facilitate the expansion of the cotton industry in Lancashire creating trade contacts into Yorkshire. The Act of Parliament granting this was passed in April 1824 and the road completed in 1826, with the exception of the stretch between Kelbrook and Sough due to a disagreement over the land. As part of the upgrading work a new section of road was built from Foulridge through the fields by way of Great Hague Farm to Kelbrook to by-pass the steep inclines at Lancashire Ghyll, Stone Trough Brow and what is now Waterloo Road in Kelbrook on the original road. The new Stone Trough Inn and the Craven Heifer were built following the completion of the road.

Evidence of the stage coach travel is shown in documents from 1920. These were used in trying to settle the disagreements regarding who had the responsibilities of maintaining the highway between Foulridge and Earby which had never been resolved since the building of the turnpike. Copies of these documents are in the Society's archive. They include statements from local residents regarding the use of the road for instance -

The old public road from Foulridge to Kelbrook was used by stage coaches who used to stop at the Stone Trough to change horses. It was known as the old public house.

-George Wilkinson, born 1844, (then aged 79) says that "his people say that stage coaches used to come on the old road"

- James Wormwell, born 1944, stated that his mother informed him that the fare was 1d from Mereclough to Kelbrook bridge

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The **New Stone Trough** was originally known as the Wilson's Arms because Matthew Wilson provided the capital to build it, and remained so called until the 1860's when it was renamed. The original Stone Trough had closed after the new road was opened. The inn included farm buildings and stabling for travellers' horses and all the early occupants were innkeeper/farmers. Emanuel Fellows farmed 50 acres and employed three farm labourers. Harry Rainford, a later occupant, brewed his own beer using water from a spring under the cellar, whilst his wife provided home-made food. The need for a wayside inn on the turnpike declined, once the railway was built in 1845 bringing to an end travel by stage coach, although there would have been some passing trade to support the inn alongside the farming business. With the coming of motor transport trade increased again. The inn was radically altered and extended in 1990 into the 36 bedroom hotel we have today, once again becoming a place for travellers to rest and eat.



The **Craven Heifer** was always a village pub because of the difficulties building the section of road. The new road came to a sudden stop outside the pub door. The section through Kelbrook to Sough was finally completed in 1929. Consequently all traffic passing through Kelbrook had to do so by way of Main Street and Church Lane, effectively putting the Craven Heifer into a cul-de-sac, without any passing trade.

When it was built it was known as the Scotsman's Arms and in 1871 as the Grey Mare, before becoming the Craven Heifer in the late 1870's. Once again the early publicans all had second jobs. In the 1841 census William Halstead was firstly a joiner, then in the 1851 census as publican as farmer and inn keeper of the Scotsman's arms. John Shuttleworth was a butcher and Midgley Barrett a clogger. From 1881 until the early 1900's the publicans were also farmers. By 1891 Jacob Bell is noted as farmer and licensee of 'The Craven Heifer'. So it had changed its name but perhaps not for the first time because there is a reference that describes Jacob as keeping 'The Grey Mare'. In 1911 Henry Bailey was

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the licensee and the next was Jimmy Talbot and his wife Gladys in the 1950s. He was nicknamed 'Banana Jimmy' because at one time he sold bananas on the market. Gladys's father was called Ayrtton and was licensee of the Seven Stars in Barnoldswick, At one time a man called Alphonse, nicknamed 'Fonce' had the Heifer; he was noted for being miserable and having bad ale!



The Craven Heifer was a famous prize-winning heifer from Gargrave, bred in 1807 by the Rev. William Carr of Bolton Abbey. It was widely exhibited as a freak as it grew so big. It weighed over a ton. It was obviously well known as it is the source of many pubs called "Craven Heifer". Also it was used on the bank notes of the Craven Bank issued in 1817. When the Bank of England took over the issuing of notes local farmers asked for those "wi a coo on them" (*sic*) to be brought back. The Craven Bank was formed in 1791 and had offices in Skipton and Settle. It was started for the benefit of cattle drovers and dealers to allow them to safely deposit their money.

The slide show can be viewed on the web site under "talks" at [www.earbyhistory.co.uk](http://www.earbyhistory.co.uk)

### WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THESE RECORDS?

An entry in the Earby Urban District Council minutes for 19<sup>th</sup> May 1926 reads as follows:

#### *WAR FUND RECORDS*

*Correspondence from Mr J Hartley of 4 Alder Hill Street was read requesting the council to receive into their custody minute books, account books, correspondence etc. belonging to the undermentioned funds which have now been closed*

*War Distress  
Belgian Refugees  
War Pensions  
Soldiers Parcels  
Ambulance Van  
War Memorial*

*The sum of £3850-17s-9d had been collected by the committees of the above funds. 695 orders for goods were issued to the Distress Committee and 320 parcels were sent by the Soldiers Parcels Committee.*

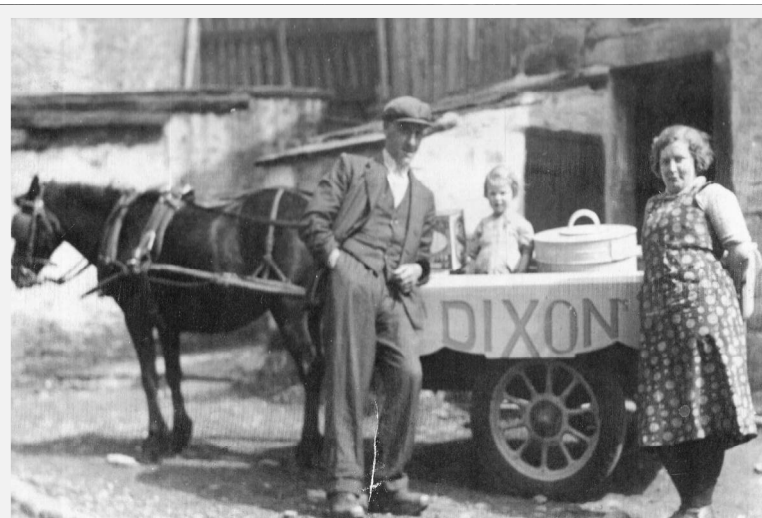
*RESOLVED – That the records be received and stored by the Council*

*ALSO RESOLVED – That the Council record their appreciation of the valuable assistance which had been rendered by Mr Hartley and other executive officers connected with the above funds.*

Did the documents disappear from the council's archives or were they destroyed in 1974 when Earby Urban District Council was superseded by Pendle Borough Council?

What interesting reading they would have made.

## DOWN MEMORY LANE



Dixons Ices—the best ever?  
The Editor would be pleased  
to hear your memories.



## **Cottages.com: A COMPANY HISTORY FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO MARKET-LEADING SPECIALIST**

by Louisa Parkinson

With almost 500 employees based at Spring Mill in Earby, Cottages.com is one of the area's largest employers and has seen 36 years of growth; from its humble beginnings in 1979 as the Country Holidays, to becoming the UK's leading cottage holiday provider.

Today Cottages.com offers more than 10,000 self-catering holiday cottages across England, Scotland and Wales; 650 across Ireland; and more than 2,400 cottages, gîtes and villas throughout France. However the business began its life in much smaller surroundings, at Gargrave in North Yorkshire. With a handful of employees, Country Holidays was founded in 1979, offering self-catering cottage holiday breaks throughout the UK. Customer demand was immediately high and Country Holidays soon outgrew its office space, moving to the Spring Mill building in Earby in 1987.

The company's independent founder then sold Country Holidays to global holiday giant Thompson Holidays, who then acquired the Blakes and English Country Cottages family of brands, and relocated their operations from Norfolk to Earby, adding to the growing portfolio of properties. Similarly acting as booking and marketing agents on behalf of the property owner, the new brands fitted seamlessly in to the existing business model of Country Holidays.

In the late 1980s, the business branched out from UK holidays, testing the appetite for cottage holiday accommodation overseas, by launching two new European brands: Country Cottages in Ireland and Country Cottages in France. Following the immediate success of this new overseas portfolio, Chez Nous was acquired in the late 1990s, and relocated to Earby from Holmfirth in Yorkshire.

Quickly becoming established as the UK's largest self-catering holiday provider, the company launched online "umbrella" brand cottages4you, providing one-stop access to the whole portfolio of brands. Leading the way in both traditional brochure bookings and online reservations, cottages4you soon became a household name and the internet hub of cottage holidays.

In 2001, American giant Cendant became the new owner of the business and quickly acquired rivals Welcome Cottages based in Embsay, North Yorkshire, and International Life Leisure based in Leeds. These brands were merged with the existing business to become Cendant Vacation Rental Group UK, offering an even wider choice of holiday accommodation throughout the UK and Europe than ever before, and eventually operating fully out of the Spring Mill offices.

As Cendant Vacation Rentals UK went from strength to strength, the Individual Travelers Company and KT Leisure were then acquired, providing yet more choice of holiday accommodation offered by the market leading specialists.

2006 saw a name change by parent company Cendant and the Wyndham Worldwide Corporation was born. Still operating as such today, Wyndham Worldwide has over 30,000 employees across the globe and is one of the world's most trusted names in hospitality.

In 2009 Recommended Cottage Holidays was acquired, followed in 2010 by Ho-

## Earby Chronicles

seasons – the field leaders in Holiday Parks/Lodge and Boating holidays, and European villa specialists James Villa Holidays, resulting in business becoming collectively known as The Hoseasons Group. With Hoseasons based at Lowestoft in Suffolk and James Villa Holidays in Maidstone, Kent, the group's base spread throughout the UK.

Never resting on its laurels, in 2013 the company acquired the Cumbrian Cottages family of brands, with small offices throughout Cumbria, Northumberland and Yorkshire; and was quickly followed by Salcombe and Dartmouth Holiday Homes, which operate out of Devon, providing yet more diversity and choice within the family of brands; and seeing The Hoseasons Group become Wyndham Vacation Rentals UK.

In 2015 online brand Cottages.com was born in order to meet the ongoing digital demands of the modern customer. Replacing cottages4you, Cottages.com encompasses Spring Mill's entire cottage portfolio and provides an online portal to what is now an unrivalled selection of self-catering holidays. Selling more cottage holidays than ever before, with more properties on sale, Cottages.com has quickly established itself as the website to take the cottage holiday market forward, winning Best Accommodation Site at the industry Travelmole Awards 2015.

An office refurbishment and open day have started to cement Cottages.com's name in the local community. Following many name changes and acquisitions, Cottages.com is etching itself in the name of holidaymakers and employees, striving to become the local employer of choice, with career opportunities spanning call centre, marketing, finance, IT and many more specialist fields, all contributing to providing holiday excellence for its customers and cottage owners.

With over 450 team members, a staggering 49% have over 10 years' continuous service, making Spring Mill a thriving and experienced working environment and Cottages.com a clearly popular choice of employer in the local area. With many changes over the 36 years from founding the original brand, natural growth and through the many acquisitions, Cottages.com is ideally placed to continue to dominate the market and adapt to consumer demands, using its wealth of expertise to lead the cottage booking industry for many years to come.



Call Centre Country Holidays



Call Centre at Launch of Cottages.com

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015/16

After 2014/15's hectic programme particularly with the WWI centenary events we thought we might have a quieter year last year. This did not happen.

In June we held the Society annual dinner at the White Lion when the after dinner speaker was the Rev. Trevor Vaughan.

Also in June Craven's Part in the Great War Web Site was relaunched at an event in Skipton Town Hall and we were invited to have a display stand there to which we took some of the WWI exhibition boards.

In August we put together a cycling exhibition for St Peters Church to coincide with the Tour of Britain coming through Earby.

September we had the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society and another exhibition was mounted showing the social events that took place over those two decades. This coincided with the launch of Stephanie's latest book "Maids' Tales".

In 2014 contact was made with the History Society in Marl, the Pendle twin town in Germany. They were organising a WWI exhibition and were invited with all their twin towns to contribute to the exhibition. The Society was honoured to accept the invitation to represent Pendle at the Germany exhibition. A selection of our WWI exhibition panels were loaded into the back of the car and taken over to Germany where there was a warm welcome. There were contributions to the exhibition from Turkey, Hungary, France and Eastern Germany as well as Marl and Earby.

We had stalls at the Spring and Autumn Fairs here at the Community Centre and a stall at Pendle Heritage Centre's open day.



## Earby Chronicles

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This year we saw the launch of the Society's Face Book page which seems to be very popular with some 250 members signed on.

Chronicles is as popular as ever, ably edited by Stephanie. I have seen one academic thesis which acknowledged a reference to the Chronicles.

Again could I make my annual plea for items to be considered for publication in the newsletter. It doesn't have to be a weighty article, it could be snippets or memories etc. If you are not confident about writing an article tell us the story and we can write it up. It would be good to get a regular "letters to the editor" section as well.

Stephanie keeps up her annual book publication; she has done ten up to now and is currently working on her latest volume on the subject of crime to be launched in the autumn.

We have struggled on without an official Programme Organiser for several years now but still managed to get a varied and interesting programme. Margaret and Wendy are focusing on using our archives to produce more slide shows of local relevance and in December we had a local film night.

### **Community Heritage Room Archive**

The community heritage room was officially opened in September 2012 to bring together all the History Society's documents, books and artefacts into one place. It enables us to give access to all the material to anyone interested. Over the last 31/2 years the archive has grown considerably as we have received donations of material.

The committee is conscious that the archives could be more widely used and we are trying to encourage more people to visit. Last year we had a small group of pupils from Salterforth school using the archive for their research and Cottages.com came to visit for help in the preparation of a display of the history of Spring Mill to be put up in their board room.

How many have visited the archive room?

We are open on Friday mornings so why not drop in and see what we have or just have a coffee with us? We want to use the archive room as a focus for the Society's activities and encourage both members and non-members to visit us.

### **Future**

The biggest thing hanging over the Society is the possible closure of the Community Centre. We and the Community Association are fighting hard to ensure that the centre remains as Earby's Community Hub. It would be a tragedy if we were to lose our Archive facilities having put so much work into it.

The LCC budget for 2016/17 has now been passed and news will emerge over the coming months as to which buildings around Lancashire will close. Whatever happens Earby Community Centre will be subject to drastic changes.

In the mean time we have a full programme of talks planned for this year and are well on with 2017s programme.

Margaret Brown and Wendy Faulkner will be furthering the project to find out about the Earby corn mill and old Earby, trying to locate the original medieval settlement.

Stephanie's latest book will be published later in the year.

## EXTRA MEETING

Archaeologist Dr Keith Boughey from Leeds has written a book "Life and Death in Prehistoric Craven—Welbury Wilkinson Holgate and the Excavation of the Hare Hill Ring Cairn". It is based on his research, using modern techniques, into the finds made by Welbury Holgate and his sisters into Earby's early history and in particular their excavation at Hare Hill on Thornton Moor and its Bronze Age burial site.

The cairn contained the cremated remains of 15-20 individuals. Following the death of Welbury Holgate his family donated his many finds to the Craven Museum in Skipton and these artefacts and records form the basis of Keith's book. The reason why we are putting in an extra talk is because Keith has a limited supply of books and did not want to wait until the 2017 programme was arranged before coming to Earby. The committee felt that his talk was of such local relevance and didn't want to miss him, so thought the best solution was to add an extra meeting.

Dr Keith Boughey's presentation will take place on:

**TUESDAY 21st JUNE at 7.30 pm at the Community Centre**

We do hope you will support us on this occasion. The committee are encouraged to see increased numbers at our monthly lectures. If you have any ideas for speakers or subjects of interest, we would be pleased to hear from you. Likewise information for the quarterly Chronicles would be most welcome.

### PROGRAMME

**15th March "My Convict Ancestors", Sue Hayter**

**19th April "Water Powered Mills", Janis Heward**

**17th May "Traditional Farmhouses in NE Lancashire, Craven and Bowland", Kevin Illingworth**

**21st June Welbury Holgate's Excavations on Hare Hill, Keith Boughey**

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### DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members details are held on computer for mailing and compilation of a membership list. The details will not be used for any other purpose without the express permission of the member. If you do not wish your details to be held on computer please inform the Treasurer immediately.

### THE SOCIETY

Meets at the Community Centre, New Road, EARBY on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. (except for outside visits).

**ANNUAL  
SUBSCRIPTION  
£7.00  
UK £9.00  
Overseas £13.00**

### Contents:

Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy of information in this edition, this cannot be guaranteed.

### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

**Don't forget** this is your newsletter. Send in articles, photos and any other anecdotes, so that we get as wide a flavour of Earby & District, yes that means Thornton in Craven, Kelbrook, Sough, Harden and Salterforth as well.

### EDITOR

Stephanie Carter  
01756 794099