

# HERITAGE HUNTERS

## ACOMB & WESTFIELD 2024

### History of Acomb and Westfield

Researched  
by Residents



Front Street, Acomb,  
York Explore Y9/FRO/10685



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The group was founded in 2000 by Geoff Hodgson who led historical walks around Acomb. After his death in 2004, the group continued and started a regular talks programme which continues to today.

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Acomb Green, York Explore Y/11510



# Welcome

## ACOMB & WESTFIELD

## 2024

**H**eritage Hunters is a project by York Museums Trust. This year, we have brought together residents, artists, organisations and local history groups to look into the past of Acomb and Westfield in the City of York. York is famous for Romans, Vikings, Medieval architecture, Georgian streets and Victorian industries but parts of the city have been overlooked in its narrative. Heritage Hunters works with residents in areas of York that have a wealth of history but has yet to have the focus they deserve. The project is not about uncovering new histories but is a way to support those who live in these communities and neighbourhoods, to find out more about their surroundings and to share it with their friends and neighbours.

We launched the project in September 2023 by partnering with York Explore and Acomb Local History Group. Over twenty people were interested in joining the project, some wanting to share their own memories, stories they already found or learn how to research local history. Together with York Explore, YMT produced a programme to support residents in researching their interests and organised events where they could come together to meet their neighbours.

In this magazine, you will see a fantastic glimpse into the history and people of Acomb and Westfield but this is just a starting point. Our researcher's work has been lightly edited to ensure their individual voices and interests come through for you the reader. We hope that people continue to research the area and share further the interesting, unique and important stories of the people of Acomb and Westfield.

**Philip Newton,  
York Museums Trust**

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Steve Barrett  
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Alan Powell of Acomb Local History Group and York Family History Society gives us a fantastic overview of the long history of Acomb.

**Seven Wonders of Acomb**

Artist Sam, takes us on an architectural tour of Acomb and prompts you to take a walk to see how they have changed.

**The Cold War Bunker**

As part of Heritage Hunters, we have a day trip to museums and heritage sites in the city. Yvonne reflects here on our visit to the Bunker, somewhere on her doorstep but never visited.

**My house on Carr Lane**

One of the main thoroughfares of Acomb, Carr Lane has many grand houses and Jenny investigates the history and people who lived in her childhood home.

**Backhouse "Known the world over" Quaker nursery in Acomb and Holgate**

A well-known family in York in the 19th and 20th centuries but very few traces of their work is left, and Cecilia digs into their influence and legacy.

**The Lords of the Manor of Acomb**

Acomb was a prosperous community and the Lordship, and its riches, were passed through many families over hundreds of years. Alan here looks at the Lords and their Stewards of Acomb

**Two Poems by Yvonne**

Another woman of Acomb, Yvonne shares two beautiful poems she wrote for us.

**'Say Not Goodnight' A Wander Through St Stephen's Churchyard with Tee Bylo**

Tee, a professional researcher, shares with us stories of people whose lives may have been forgotten but whose graves allow us a glimpse into their lives. This article does touch on difficult and sad subjects.

**From Open Fields to Council Estate: the development of Chapelfields in Acomb**

Steve Barrett enquires about the origins of the Chapelfields estate from medieval open fields up to modern times.

**St Stephen's Church**

This is a fantastic, deep dive into the history and clergy of St Stephen's Church.

**Memories of Milner Street**

Sandra has lived in Acomb all her life and recollects her memories of the street she grew up in.

**Was my house a wedding gift?**

A rumour about why their house was built prompted Kevin to look into who lived there.

**Anthony Foy and Watercress Charlie**

Anthony and Charlie, two men who lived 'outside' of the Acomb community but should be remembered in its history.

**Charlotte Richardson: Poet and Self-made Woman**

From humble beginnings and tragedy, Juliet asks us to remember Charlotte, a woman of extraordinary talent almost forgotten to history.

**Mrs Lindberg and her memorable moments in York**

Anda is interested in researching women in the Victorian period and has uncovered an influential woman who lived in Acomb who enjoyed putting on events.

**Reflections from Philip**

A few words to reflect on the fantastic research by the group and how it adds to the City's history.





1853 OS map, National Library of Scotland Re-Use, CC-BY (NLS)



Bishopthorpe Palace, York Museums Trust

# A BRIEF HISTORY of Acomb



Rev James Raine, York Museums Trust

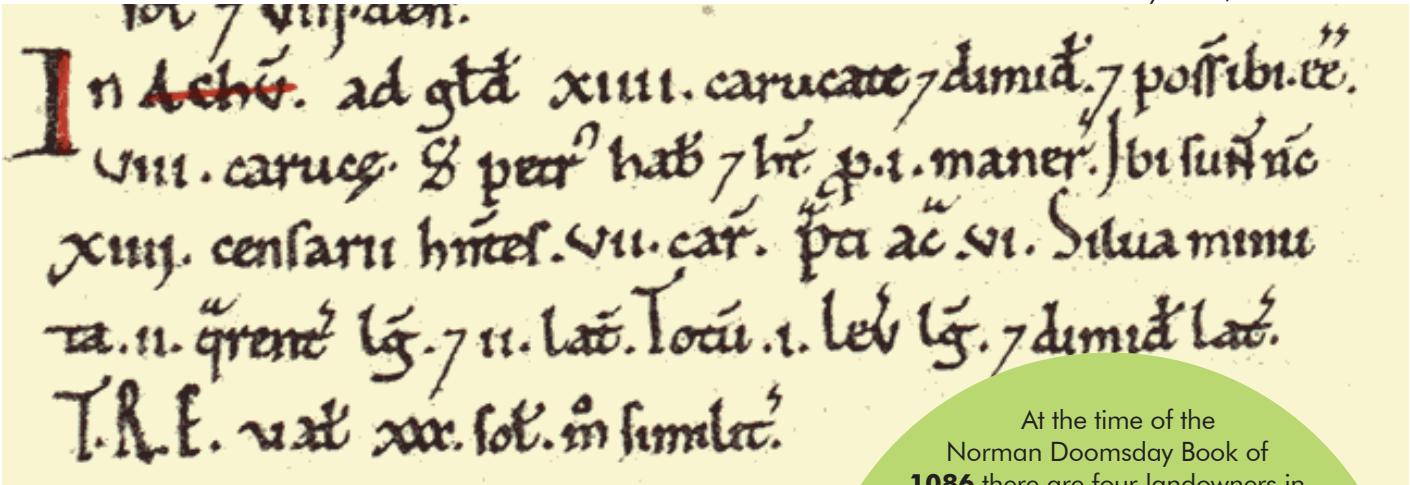
Up until 1937, Acomb was part of the West Riding of Yorkshire in the ward of the Ainsty and under the jurisdiction of Great Ouseburn Rural District Council.

Historically the township stretched from the river Ouse in the north to almost Tadcaster Road in the south, from the Regent building (former cinema) in the east, to three fields beyond Foxwood Lane in the west. The ecclesiastical Parish of Acomb included the villages of Knapton and Dringhouses. The Manor of Acomb covered both the hamlet of Holgate and Clifton without.

Much of the older part of the old village is on sandy soil over clay sub soil. This is said to have been deposited at the end of the last ice age. The name, with its many variations, is said to mean 'The Place of the Oaks'. There

has been speculation that it may have a Celtic connection, and that a shrine may have existed on what is now the site of St Stephens Church, but I have not yet discovered any documentary evidence to support this speculation. The remains of a Roman Villa were discovered in the 19th Century along the northside of Front Street by the reverend James Raine, which was confirmed by the Yorkshire Museum in 2023. As well as the Roman road to Tadcaster in the south of the township, there was a Roman road leading to the civil capital of the area, near Aldborough, this road was slightly south of the present Boroughbridge Road.

Extract from the Domesday Book, Public Domain



At the time of the Norman Domesday Book of 1086 there are four landowners in Acomb.

- St Peters, York Minster
- The King, William the Conqueror
- The Archbishop, Thomas of Bayeux
- A person called Ulfketill

This has been summarised as Saint Peters and the Archbishop being one and the same holdings and that the King has leased his holding to Ulfketill. There seems to have been fourteen tenant farmers, Ulfketill living there.

The Lord of the Manor of Acomb, with Holgate and Clifton, was the treasurer of York Minster under the Archbishop of York. The title of Lord of the Manor was leased out, usually on a ten-year lease to a number of people.

There, as far as I have traced, Acomb had had no large manor house as such. Records indicate it did have a 'Manor Court House' where fines were imposed on individuals living there. The courts were usually held twice a year, the results of each court recorded on sheets of vellum. These 'Manor Court House Rolls' are held at the Borthwick. Transcripts of these were done by Harold Richardson in the 1970s and published two volumes by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (YAS) in 1968

and 1975, the Earliest, Thursday 16 May 1544, up until 1937.

Note – The title Lord of the Manor was purchased by the Barlow Family in the 19th Century, the last one to have the title, before it was abolished, was Algernon Barlow.

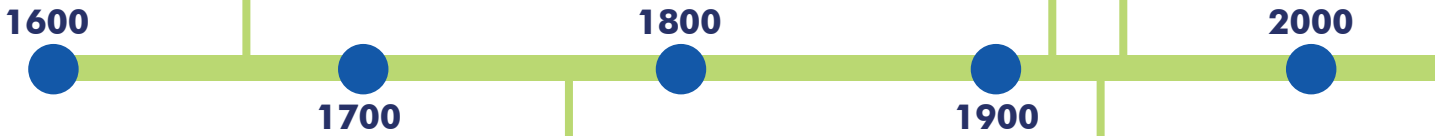


Bishopthorpe Palace, York Museums Trust

The outbreak of the war in 1939 brought a halt to the building work until it was reconvened in the mid-1940s. Since then, it continued at pace until almost all the green fields have gone, within less than one hundred years a rural country village has become two 'Wards' of the City, Acomb and Westfield, and has become one large conurbation.

Acomb Parish records date from 1663; again, a transcript of these records date was published by YAS in 1966 including a list of vicars, going back to 1313.

In the Great War, 1914-1918, more than one hundred and twenty men from Acomb paid the ultimate price.



1776 brought the biggest change to the village, with the introduction of The Enclosure Act of 1774. This was when the great open fields, Beckfield, Chapelfield, Farfield, Lowfield and Westfield, were divided up into one hundred and twelve 'parcels of land' and awarded to eighteen parties. There is no mention after this date of the 'common rights' of the inhabitants, in the Acomb Manor Court Rolls.

In 1937 Acomb became part of York, although some of Acomb's older properties were knocked down and the inhabitants re-housed in the new estate, the Triangle, Gale Lane, Tudor Road and Kingsway West. The York Corporation saw this as a chance to continue with the slum clearance scheme, having done the same with the Tang Hall Estate.



# From Open Fields to Council Estate



Rape Threshing, Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHAPELFIELDS IN ACOMB

We all see the number 1 bus heading for a terminus at Chapelfields. We don't even think about it – but where did the name come from? How long has it been built? Why the shape that it is?

Many of us from York Family History Society can trace our ancestry back to Acomb – a separate village in Ouseburn Rural District until 1937. Parts of Acomb are still unbuilt on. Chapelfields is rarely mentioned in the local history books of the area either as a field or as a housing estate, so this aims to put that right. (see Geoff Hodgson and Harold Richardsons books). In the Middle Ages and early modern period around 1600, Chapel Field was one of five open or 'common' fields

shared between the villagers of Acomb. It was close to an ancient chapel hence Chapel Field. What is usually referred to as the 'three field system', the farmers of these open fields agreed to grow certain crops in each field and when to leave a field fallow to replenish the nutrients in the soil. There was 'Far Field' from the Ouse to Boroughbridge Road, 'Beck Field' named because of the beck running through where Danebury Drive is now; Low Field which was between Tadcaster

**There were certain rules that had to be followed by everyone if the open field system was to work.**  
From the Acomb Court Rolls we find:

- 'no inhabitants of Acome or Holgate to gather grain in the fields before everyone had taken their sheaves into their barns' fine for not doing – 4 pennies
- George Skadloke common pinder (animal gatherer) not to allow anyone to collect corn in the fields until all the sheaves were carried away. Fine for collecting corn without permission – 8 pennies
- The inhabitants of Acome and Holgate not to leave their dead pigs lying on the ground but to bury them within an hour Fine – 10 shillings
- Robert Johnsons wife not to scold with anyone 3/4d

Road and Front Street and Westfield obviously located in the western part of the parish – and also, there was Chapel Field. The strips of Chapelfields seem to have been occupied by Richard Holgate, John Kirby, Peter Newarke and Robert Palezar according to the Rolls. There were a number of maps drawn in the 18th Century showing the enclosure or hedging of these vast open fields. Enclosure was planned in 1774 but implemented in 1776. Land was allotted to certain prosperous inhabitants and those that were not included in the redistribution were left landless and became labourers to the farmers. The Lordship of Acomb after enclosure was Giles Alcock – who

rented it from the Archbishop of York. Chapelfields was hedged and fenced and allotted to Messrs Alcock, Wharton and Hotham. In 1889 an Ordnance Survey map shows the Chapelfields bordering Acomb Green to the east, Acomb Grange to the west, Grange Lane to the south and Wetherby Road to the north. Askham Lane and Grange Lane are ancient. When the Ridgeway was created in the 20th Century, a new road was made at the bottom of the slope. The Manor Court rolls were like the minutes of the meeting of the great and the good of Acomb, often sitting in judgement on their tenants. The archives in York have them from 1516 to 1837.

Enclosures of Acomb, York Explore



Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust



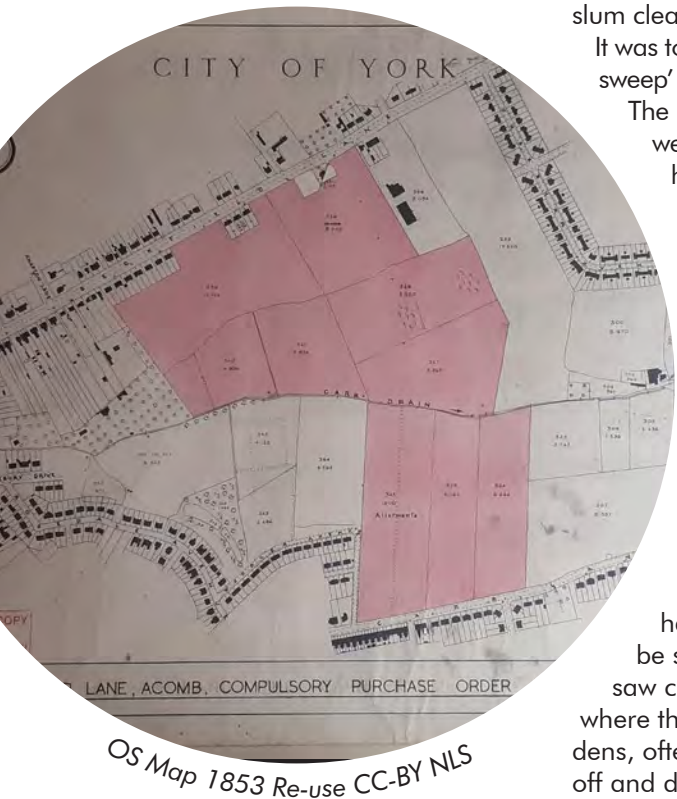
Lowkers, Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust





Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust

► Acomb for centuries had been in Great Ouseburn rural district, but in 1937 was taken over by York City Council, as the town expanded westwards.



OS Map 1853 Re-use CC-BY NLS

The planning of a vast housing estate on the Chapelfield lands was dreamed up in the 1930's and clearly styled on the Tang Hall estate to the east. The estate was planned to house people from the Groves area after a slum clearance.

It was to form part of a 'clean sweep' of the city's older housing. The houses on Chapelfields were to be powered with gas, have an indoor bathroom, a garden front and back and a kitchen. The first building work went on closer to the centre of Acomb in the Tudor Road, Gale Lane and Kingsway West triangle which were built between 1937 and 1939.

Then it all stopped. With the outbreak of the Second World War, only the drainage pipes for the Chapelfields estate had been laid. Not a brick to be seen. The period in between saw children using the ditches where the drains were to be laid as dens, often taking the iron casings off and dropping into the holes in

dangerous games of hide and seek. It was not until nearly ten years later in 1948 that planning (not building) began again on the Chapelfields estate.

Ridgeway was not an old road. It started on Wetherby Road and then dog legged to the right where Chapelfields road is now. The present Ridgeway connecting Wetherby Road with Askham Lane was created by the planners.

Older residents recall an old dutch barn on the estate – a relic from its rural past.

The actual design of the estate was the work of Mr E. Firth the City Architect. He revised the layout of the estate to mirror the shapes of the fields.



Farmers, Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust

The Chapelfields council estate occupied two thirds of the old common field, ending at Bramham Road.

An area anciently called 'the wandle' was planned as allotments for the keen horticulturists that had only dreamed of growing their own vegetables when they lived in The Groves, which in turn had formerly been a large area of market gardens before the mid-19th Century urbanisation of the suburb outside Monk Bar. An article on the Groves appears in our second edition of this magazine.

Chapel Fields estate was planned by Firth with a view on modern municipal housing design. Its road and avenues were curved with 'closes' rather than the rigid street patterns of Victorian buildings.

The historical landscape was respected to some extent. Grange Lane was renamed Askham Lane, and it was agreed that no public house should be built on the estate, reflecting the idea of New Earswick. The nearest pub was in Acomb village.

The new occupiers started to move into their new dream homes in the late 1950s and early 1960s.



Chapelfields Munciple Housing Estate, EPH/2/3186 York Explore



Costumes of Yorkshire, York Museums Trust



# ACOMB'S Seven Wonders

Take a five-minute walk in Acomb and you will see architecture spanning five centuries. Look a little deeper though and you'll find its story goes back millennia.

I would like to share with you a snippet of Acomb's history through seven buildings, I believe, are both interesting and important. I understand not all buildings can or should last forever but they are home to the story of community. With the physical reminder removed our collective memories can be lost. Hopefully you will be inspired to have a little walk and imagine what life would have been like in Acomb one hundred, two hundred or one thousand years ago and consider what modern buildings you expect to still be here in years to come.



## ACOMB MANOR HOUSE

Acomb Manor House is the oldest building still standing in Acomb. It was built around 1480. During the 19th and 20th centuries the farm was occupied by the Thomlinson family. They kept chickens, ducks, geese, pigs and horses. Crops included oats, wheat and barley along with sugar beet and potatoes. Wilf Thomlinson and his wife Gert would tell a story of how Dick Turpin stabled his horse at the farm. The building was extended throughout its history and thoroughly restored in 1987.



## REGENT CINEMA

Designed in the Art Deco style by architect William Arthur Kellett the cinema opened on 12 February 1934 with the film 'A Bedtime Story' starring Maurice Chevalier and Helen Twelvetrees. It had only one screen which could seat 899 people. The final film 'Sierra Baron' was shown 4th April 1959. The York trams would have stopped just outside the cinema, but this was being phased out and replaced by buses just as the cinema was opening.



## ST STEPHENS CHURCH

The building as we see it now is not the first church on the site. Nor even the second. Its predecessor was built after the Norman invasion to replace the Anglo Saxon church that previously stood on the site. It would have been similar to the church in Askham Bryan except St Stephens had a wooden, gabled belfry. Numerous alterations were made during its lifetime. In 1830, the building was in such a state of disrepair it was demolished and rebuilt as you see today.



## TRINITY CHAPEL

Trinity Chapel was built in 1879 to replace the Wesleyan Chapel of 1821. In 1964 the chapel closed when the congregation united with the Sanctuary Chapel (also on Front Street) and moved to the current methodist church. The Sanctuary Chapel was demolished and the Trinity Chapel converted to shops and housing. The frontage appears to have been altered at this time with the porch removed and lower windows partially bricked up



## CARLTON TAVERN

Built as a Victorian villa for the Russell family, it was originally named West Garth. In 1945 it became the Godfrey Walker Childrens Home (which was previously at 4 West Bank Terrace). This is an excerpt from a young woman coming from Hull to work there as a nurse.

"I arrived in York on a glorious day in May and asked a policeman the way to Acomb. As I walked out of the station, I thought I had come to paradise. Brilliant blue sky, white stone walls, green grass and trees. I'd left behind rubble and debris, sandbags and all the reminders of war."

I boarded a bus, and the journey took me past Lilac and Laburnum all in their full glory. Past the park with trees of many varieties until I finally walked up the path towards my new home."

The home shut in 1970 and became a pub in 1993. It was very close to being bulldozed but was saved by a local campaign.



## ACOMB HALL

Sadly demolished in 1986, Acomb Hall (also known as Blue Hall owing to its blue roof) was originally the manor house of a large estate covering the land between St Stephens Church and Carr Lane, going all the way back to Fish Ponds Wood. It was built around 1780 and has had numerous private owners until it became home to the Royal Fly Corps in the Great War. After the war it became Poppleton Maternity Hospital specialising in a method of childbirth known as 'Twilight Sleep' where mothers are given a cocktail of drugs to induce amnesia.

## COLD WAR BUNKER

Built in 1961 to monitor the immediate effects of a nuclear war, it was one of many throughout the UK. Summoned by a siren, the team of sixty Royal Observer's Corps volunteers would lock themselves away from friends and family. They would work to assess where a bomb might have exploded and the potential fallout. Supplies were limited however and after thirty days the occupants would have no choice but to leave. It continued to be used until the early 1990s and still contains much of the original equipment.



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# ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH, ACOMB

## A Miscellany

St Stephen's Parish Magazine for July 1887 records the festivities which took place to mark the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. There were banners and flags on Acomb Green and in the morning, a procession, and a service in the church to give thanks for the Queen's life. In the afternoon a military band played on The Green and separate teas were provided for the children and later for the adults. The loyal toast was received with 'the greatest possible enthusiasm' and 'honest Yorkshire cheers'. This was followed by sports, with £5 in prize money to be won and finally a bonfire and illuminations.

It seems to have been a grand day. Many similar community events, albeit on a more modest scale, are the factual nuts and bolts which would make up a social history of St Stephen's. Sadly, but not surprisingly the archives contain few similar colourful descriptions of the routine life of the church; no doubt they would have been seen by contemporaries too mundane to record or to preserve. In particular, I have been unable to find material about the effects of the First World War on the life of the parish. That is why I have described what follows as a 'miscellany' rather than a history.

The period covered is roughly from 1830 and the building of the 'new' church to the outbreak of the Second World War and coincides approximately with the incumbencies of three vicars: The Reverends Spencer, Tennent and Twidle.

### The New Church

Its foundation stone was laid on 23 April 1830. The Reverend JB Graham, a Parish curate, in front of an estimated crowd of two to three hundred which had turned out despite the day's incessant rain, striking it three times, proclaiming: 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost' and depositing some coins and other commemorative objects. Once the ceremony was concluded, the officiating party departed for a celebratory supper at the Marcia<sup>1</sup>. The church tower and nave were completed and the first service took place on 1 January 1832<sup>2</sup>, although the medieval chancel continued in use until it too was replaced in 1851<sup>3</sup>.

A plaque in the church celebrates the new enlarged church, announcing three hundred and thirty-eight additional 'sittings' of which two hundred and twelve were to be 'forever free and unappropriated' (that is, available to any of the congregation).

### Money

St Stephen's parish during our period was not a rich living. An indication of this comes in a note in the Church wardens' accounts for Easter Day 1894. In accordance with custom, the congregation's offering for the day were given to the vicar. The churchwarden records that £27 10s 1d had been received and that: "The vicar handed £20 to me which I sent to the Secretary of the Archbishop's fund for the Augmentation of Poor Benefices on the understanding that the amount would be doubled and returned to the vicar"<sup>6</sup>.

The following year the patron of the living wrote to the Reverend Tennent saying that he wished "that the Archbishop would give you a better living with less work"<sup>7</sup>.

Further official recognition of the difficulties faced by Acomb incumbents was reported by the Yorkshire Post in 1935: "The Archbishop of York intends to appoint the Reverend Arthur Twidle to the vacant incumbency of St Sampson which he will hold in addition to the vicarage of Acomb. This is in line with policy to improve the position of clergy in suburban areas... It is understood that the vicar will be able to employ one or more additional curates". As in fact he did.

### Evidence from the Registries

Records<sup>4</sup> for the early years of the new church indicate a fairly stable parish population. In the years 1830-1839 (inclusive) there were 221 baptisms in the church and 169 burials. The latter figure however does not include burials of unbaptised children whose deaths were not routinely registered<sup>5</sup>. Even without the figures for those who died stillborn or within a few days of birth, 44 infant deaths (children between 0 and 5 years) are recorded; 26% of the total. Those who survived infancy stood a fair chance of living into old age. Of the recorded burials in these years, 54 were of people aged 65 or over; 33% of the total, so that elderly parishioners were not an unusual feature of the parish at this time, although they would comprise a significantly smaller proportion of the congregation than would be typical for modern church attendance.

The registrations for the end of our period illustrate the growth of Acomb. Between 1930 and 1939, 861 baptisms were recorded and 780 burials; roughly a fourfold increase in both categories. The burial register records 164 infant burials, 21% of the total. Although the figure is shockingly high, any comparison with the earlier period would be misleading; this was a kinder age and The Reverend Twidle recorded all infants buried in the churchyard, regardless of baptism. The ages of some of the infants are given in hours or even minutes. During the 1930s, 360 of those buried at St Stephen's were 65 or over; 46% of the total.

In effect, parishioners in both periods who survived until their sixth birthday, stood a reasonable chance of living into old age.

A striking feature from the churchwardens' accounts is the smallness of the sums of money received and expended. Income was derived mostly from the weekly Sunday offerings but supplemented by bequests which were then distributed in accordance with the donor's wishes. Income in 1892 amounted to just over £215 and remained little changed for many years amounting to £220 in 1912 and £321 in 1922. Apart from the bequests, the warden's expenditure went towards routine maintenance of the church fabric and functions, with surprising sums paid to the church organist (£30 in 1892).

A terrier (an inventory) from 1857 paints a picture of poverty. The Vicarage is described as eight yards long and eight yards broad, consisting of one kitchen, one parlour, the floor of which were bricks and the walls plastered, the roof thatched with straw. In 1861 a churchwarden described it as 'a dilapidated cottage'<sup>8</sup>. The building has vanished but was located on Front

Street, Acomb, opposite the modern Acomb Explore<sup>9</sup>. None of the vicars in this period actually resided in the property. The contents of the church itself were listed as: one silver cup, two bells, one pewter flagon, two pewter plates, one folio Bible, one folio Book of Common Prayer and one quarto Book of Common Prayer<sup>10</sup>.

Simple burial for parishioners was relatively inexpensive: 1s 2d for a grave in 1835 but an additional £2 for a tombstone and £3 5s for a single vault or £5.10s for a double. Fees for interment of non-parishioners were much higher, starting at £5.10s for a single grave<sup>11</sup>. This may or may not have been an inducement to Acomb residents to remain members of the Church of England.

St Stephen's Church,  
photographed  
by Roger  
Barham

St Stephen's Church,  
by Sam Dredge





### The Incumbents

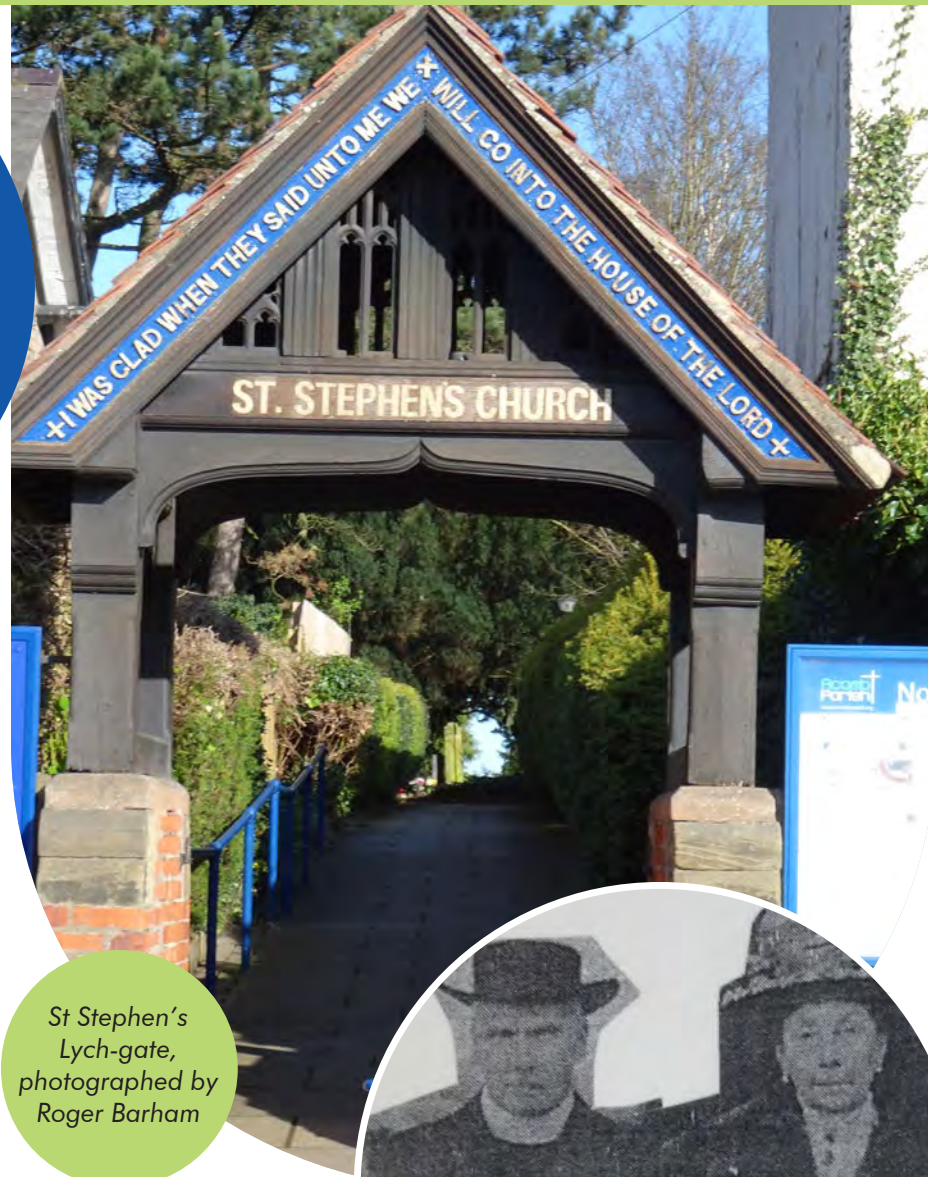
Our period was marked by a remarkable continuity in the ministers who presided at St Stephen's. From the time when Issac Spencer came to the living in 1836, the year before the accession of Queen Victoria, to almost the end of the Second World War, when Arthur Twiddle departed in 1943, the church was served by only three vicars.

### The Reverend Issac Spencer

Issac Spencer was a considerable presence in the cultural life of mid-nineteenth century York. A member of the York Philosophical Society, an art-lover and Chairman of the York School of Art, he was a life-long friend of William Etty who painted his portrait and from whom he commissioned at least one painting<sup>12</sup>. For most of his life he resided at Plantation House (also called simply 'The Plantation') on Poppleton Rd, opposite the junction with Carr Lane<sup>13</sup>, now vanished but commemorated by the modern Plantation Drive<sup>14</sup>. The Plantations is the subject of a painting done by William Etty in 1842<sup>15</sup> and is part of the collection held by York Art Gallery. In 1855 Issac Spencer was described as the second-largest landowner in Acomb (after Mr F Barlow, the patron of the living and lord of the manor).<sup>16</sup>

Issac Spencer's birth on 29 November 1795 is recorded in the Quaker Register of Birth Marriage and Death, his parents being Issac and Anne Spencer and his place of birth given as the parish of All Saints' Pavement, York. However, a note above the parents' names states that they were 'not members' (presumably of the local Quaker Meeting). Possibly they were opposed to the rites of the Church of England and to infant baptism. Issac senior's profession was stated as 'druggist'. He was to become Lord Mayor of York twice: in 1812/13 and in 1822/23.

Issac Spencer obtained a BA degree (subsequently converted to an MA) from Oxford University in 1834 at the comparatively advanced age of 38. This may have been with a church



St Stephen's Lych-gate, photographed by Roger Barham

career in mind as his appointment to St Stephen's followed two years later.<sup>17</sup>

The Reverend Spencer's life was not without its share of tragedy. His mother died and his father married again. He married Martha Jane Phibbs but their first child, another Issac, died less than one year old in 1830. Martha Jane died, possibly in or very shortly after childbirth in 1832, the same year as the birth of their only surviving child, William Henry. The Census for 1841 records that the Reverend Issac Spencer, now vicar of St Stephen's was living at The Plantations with his sister Mary. His son, eight-year-old William Henry was living with relatives in the Micklegate area.<sup>18</sup>

He and his sister were still at Plantation House on census day 1851, the Reverend Spencer being described there as a widower. Also resident were three female servants and a widowed housekeeper, Elizabeth Cleasby as well

as her nine-year-old son, described as 'errand boy and scholar' Issac married again but the marriage lasted only a short time before his second wife, Harriet a clergyman's widow, died in 1856<sup>19</sup>. In old age he seems to have left the Plantation, as the 1871 census records him living alone, described as a lodger at an address on Front Street.

Issac Spencer died, still in post as vicar of St Stephen's in March 1879, aged 83. He is buried, with other family members in St Everilda's cemetery, Nether Poppleton where the inscription on his gravestone is still easily readable.<sup>20</sup>



Rev and Mrs Tennent, courtesy of Alan Powell

### The Reverend RPT Tennent

Robert Percy Trevor Tennent was vicar of St Stephen's between 1879-1931. He is the longest officeholder in the history of the church. Robert Tennent was born in Notting Hill, in the County of Middlesex in 1852<sup>21</sup>. He was the eldest son of Robert B Tennent, described in the 1861 census as an East India merchant. RPT Tennent was educated at St John's Hall, a college of divinity in Highbury, London. He was ordained in 1874 and was appointed curate that year at St Paul's Church, Holgate before coming to St Stephen's as vicar in 1879.

In 1886 he married Mary Caroline Perry Hale in Tunbridge Wells. Mary Caroline had been born in Quebec, Canada in 1853, the daughter of a timber merchant who had retired to England.

On his appointment to St Stephen's, he found that he had inherited a 'troublesome scene'<sup>22</sup> and set about the task of bringing the church into better shape. One of the earliest such improvements was the provision of a new vicarage. This was funded in part by a grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who agreed to provide £750 for the purpose, on condition that the same amount could be raised from other sources. In the event a little more than £900 was raised, including £300 from Mr Francis Barlow, the lord of the manor and lay rector and a number of individual subscriptions ranging from £1 to £67 from the Reverend Tennent himself, who until then was living in lodgings in Gale Lane<sup>23</sup>. The total cost came to £1722. The building, on Acomb Green next to the present-day cricket club, was completed in April 1883<sup>24</sup>.

Evidently a man of energy, in the first ten years of his tenure Reverend Tennent introduced new pews, a lychgate, a replacement vestry, gas heating and lighting and the repair and augmentation of the church bells which had become unserviceable. He also took down the galleries in the nave to allow more light into the building and introduced an organ, in place of stringed music. Subsequent years saw the introduction of new stained-glass windows, and a new pulpit and lectern. On top of this, work was needed in 1897



'Free' pew in St Stephen's Church where anyone may sit, photographed by Roger Barham

to stabilise the church spire, even though it had been built less than seventy years previously<sup>25</sup>. One of his most enthusiastic supporters in these improvements was Miss Mary Anne Hales, the youngest and last surviving member of a family which had been associated with St Stephen's from the time when the new building was first proposed. She financed the new bells and the lychgate<sup>26</sup>.

All this was enthusiastically celebrated in the York Herald when a ceremony of re-dedication took place in 1889<sup>27</sup>. The writer commented on the alterations and 'many handsome additions' which had resulted in the emergence of a 'pretty and comfortable village church'. In particular the removal of the 'unsightly galleries' was welcomed as an 'undoubted improvement'. The celebrations were probably not helped however by the comments of the Bishop of Sodor and Man, addressing the congregation in the absence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was indisposed. The Bishop, noting that £200 remained to be paid off for the new organ, remarked that 'it would seem to speak in a borrowed voice until they could really say that all the expense had been defrayed'. The episode is a witness to both the tightness of finances and to the courageousness of Robert Tennent in his determination to beautify and improve his church.

The same article also highlighted the fact that the pews were available to the whole congregation without restriction (save for one or two where legal covenants applied). This was evidently something Robert Tennent felt to be important; some years earlier he had corresponded with Archbishop Thompson,

concerned that people were trying to reserve seating and had had been assured of the Archbishop's support in taking measures: 'to disabuse the parishioners of the impression that there is any freehold in a pew'<sup>28</sup>. The pews he installed bear the inscription 'free' carved into the wood.

The vicar was a busy man. In 1880 there were two Sunday services and two Sunday school sessions and a Wednesday service at the adjacent school. There were also bible classes for Young Men and (separately) for Young Women on Sundays and a Men's bible class on Wednesdays. The church also hosted weekly choir practice, a weekly Mothers' meeting and a monthly temperance meeting<sup>29</sup>. He was eventually moved to appeal<sup>30</sup> to his parishioners to consider funding for a curate but it was to be many years before such help was made available.

The Tennent family grew rapidly. By 1901 in addition to Robert and Mary Caroline, there were seven children (five girls, two boys) ranging in age from six to thirteen years<sup>31</sup>. The Census records indicate that during their time in the Vicarage the Tennent's employed, at any one time, three female servants: a cook, nurse (for the children) and a housemaid, although the personnel changed over time. The family was still together by the time of the 1911 Census but the youngest boy, Oswald was to die four years later, a Second Lieutenant, killed in battle at Ypres on his twenty-first birthday<sup>32</sup>. His is one of fifty-six names commemorated on the memorial plaque unveiled in the church in 1922.

By the time he left the parish in October 1931, aged seventy-nine, the Reverend Tennent was evidently unwell. A farewell message from him in the Parish Magazine says that he was:

"touched beyond expression at the bountifulness of your parting gift to me which in my altered state will prove of great service...I very much regret that my present weakness forbids a personal leave taking"<sup>33</sup>

The Tennent's moved to the South of England. Robert died in Woodchurch, Kent in 1932 and Mary Caroline in London two years later. At the time of Robert's death, the estate was valued at just under £17,500<sup>34</sup>. He is commemorated by Tennent Rd on the Cornlands Rd estate.



Silver Cup, photographed by Roger Barham





Rev Twidle, laying the foundation stone for the Acomb Church Hall, courtesy of Alan Powell

Parish Magazine, May 1929, photographed by Roger Barham



► The Reverend Arthur Edwin Twidle

It is difficult to be confident about the early years of Arthur Twidle's life because of census variations in the spelling of his surname, but it is possible that he was part of a very large family in Hull. He was born in 1888<sup>35</sup> and obtained a Licentiate in Theology (a qualification now abolished) from Durham University in 1912. He was ordained the same year and became curate at Guisborough, where he was also enrolled into the local lodge of the Freemasons. Between 1915 and 1919 he served as a chaplain to the Royal Navy and was then at Queensferry until made permanent curate at St John's Church, Micklegate in 1927<sup>36</sup>.

The Reverend Tennent's increasing frailty meant that an assistant was needed and Arthur Twidle was appointed curate in October 1929, becoming the vicar on Robert Tennent's retirement and living at Vicarage House with his wife Emily and three children.

He seems to have taken a leading role almost immediately, announcing in the parish magazine the introduction of regular Sunday Communion celebrations in addition

to other services and issuing invitations to meetings for private prayer, possibly indicating a preference for a 'high church' style of worship<sup>37</sup>.

The earlier copies of the parish magazine generally give little indication of the extent to which St Steven's was part of the Acomb community. However, by the end of the Reverend Twidle's time it was evidently a vital part of the social fabric. The parish magazine for August 1939 makes reference to scout and girl guide troops and to a mothers' union. It now ran to twenty pages, supplemented by articles syndicated from a London publisher, offering in addition to religious material, a serialised adventure story, poems submitted by children ('The Thoughts of Youth') and 'Our Workday Page for Women With Homes, which featured day by day instruction in the better performance of household duties and especially the practice of thrift (such as how to make two pairs of slippers for toddlers from one old pair of men's slippers)<sup>38</sup>.

By this time the Reverend Twidle had two curates to assist him, which may have enabled the church to take a more active community role than in previous times. On the eve of the outbreak of war, there were

four Sunday services, including two communion services and a third every first Sunday of the month, a Sunday School and a Vicar's Bible Class. On weekdays there were services of Morning and Evening Prayer every day and Communion Services twice during the week. The church also oversaw meetings for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.

The need to accommodate the increase in social functions led to the decision in 1932 to build a church hall, on Front Street, at a cost of just over £3500.

St Stephen's clergy also took an active role in the War effort; Reverend Twidle through involvement in air raid precautions<sup>39</sup> while one of the curates, Reverend HN Barratt, appears listed in the parish magazine as 'on active service'.

By the later 1930's national and international events were impinging on the lives of Acomb parishioners, and the concerns of that time can be traced in the Arthur Twidle's parish magazine editorials:

- **Anxiety:** "Momentous events are taking place in the world (ie. the Munich conference). What the outcome will be no-one can foresee"
- **(Short-lived) relief:** "No Christian will withhold from the Prime Minister one word of praise or gratitude"<sup>42</sup>
- **A statement of war aims:** "Our country and France are seeking for nothing more than the re-establishment of three great principles of freedom truth and honour" Against "...a regime which a Christian Commonwealth cannot live with; it is an evil thing which must be cast out of the world's life"<sup>43</sup>
- **Resolution in the face of disaster:** "The surest way of ruling out fear and failure is to look straight into the face of the danger that threatens and to meet it with firm resolve and determination"<sup>44</sup>
- **Looking for a better world:** "The Christian and World Affairs. Let us take courage and carry on in faith and hope and cheerfulness...What will England be like after the War? Let us prepare ourselves for the task ahead"<sup>45</sup>

Arthur Twidle's time at St Stephen's came to an end in 1943 when he was appointed rector of All Saints' Parish in Thwing, near Driffild<sup>40</sup>. He died, a Canon of the Church of England in March 1966<sup>41</sup>.

Whilst generalisations about historical periods are best avoided or treated with much caution, what these snapshots do seem to show is that the life of the Anglican church in the 1930s was very much more prosperous and vigorous than it had been a century before.

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# YORK COLD WAR Bunker

I have lived in Acomb all my life and today was a first for me. I was given the opportunity to visit York's Cold War Bunker and was very happy to be able to go. I had heard about it but never seen it and I wasn't sure where it was either. There are facts and figures on the English Heritage website, (on Google, type in, the history of York Cold War Bunker, and tap on the first English Heritage hit.) who also provide a floor plan, and Wikipedia which has three sections about the bunker.



Civil Defence Poster, York Museums Trust

When I thought about a bunker, I imagined row upon row of bunk beds and miles of shelving filled with tinned goods just like in the movies.

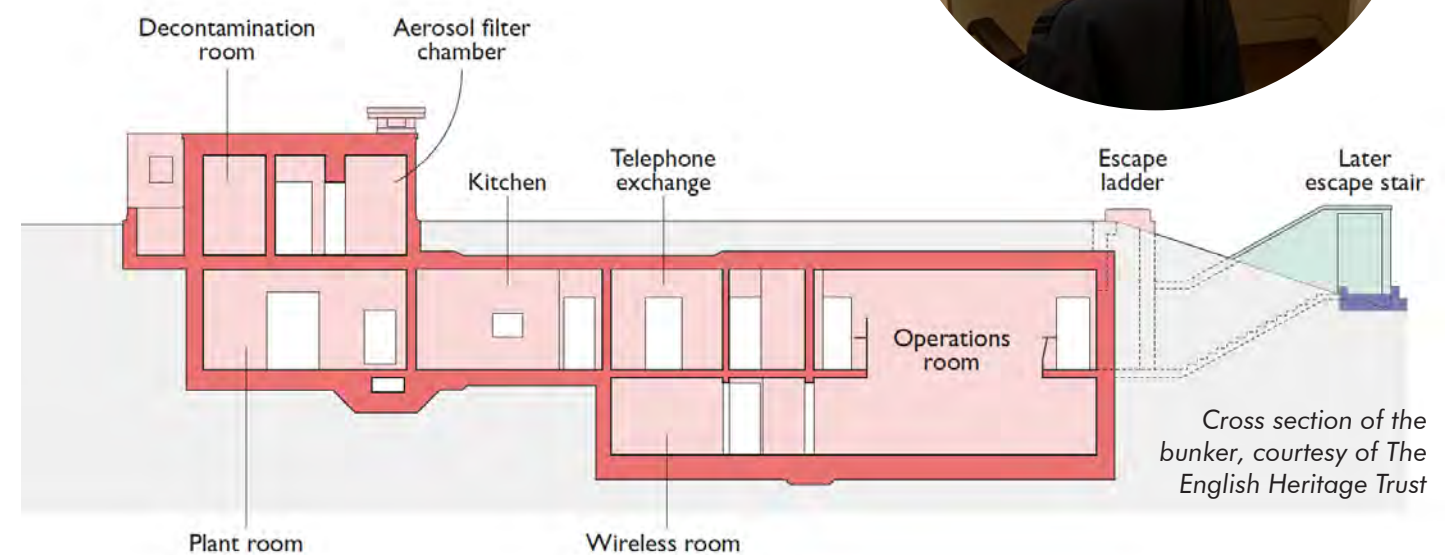
But this isn't that type of bunker, this is a place where in the event of an attack it will monitor air quality and the severity and movement of the radiation dust clouds, etc.

York is classified as a headquarters that can house up to sixty volunteers from the Royal Observers Corps, who would gather information from smaller bunkers with three people in each. These smaller bunkers are dotted around Yorkshire in various locations such as Fulford, Sowerby Bridge, and North Alpterton to name a few. In the event of a nuclear disaster, up to sixty volunteers were called and an armed guard was placed outside, and I thought, if he was outside what about the radiation? These sixty people were split into three groups of work/sleep/play, two engineers would be randomly selected from a list of ten people, and they were collected by the police and made to go inside. These people didn't know they were on a list and didn't even know there was a list. If anyone got sick, they would be removed immediately and locked outside. I can't help wondering if these bunkers were just there to put people's minds at ease as some of the stories



Heritage Hunters visiting the Operations Room, photographed by Philip Newton

Officer's Room, photographed by Philip Newton



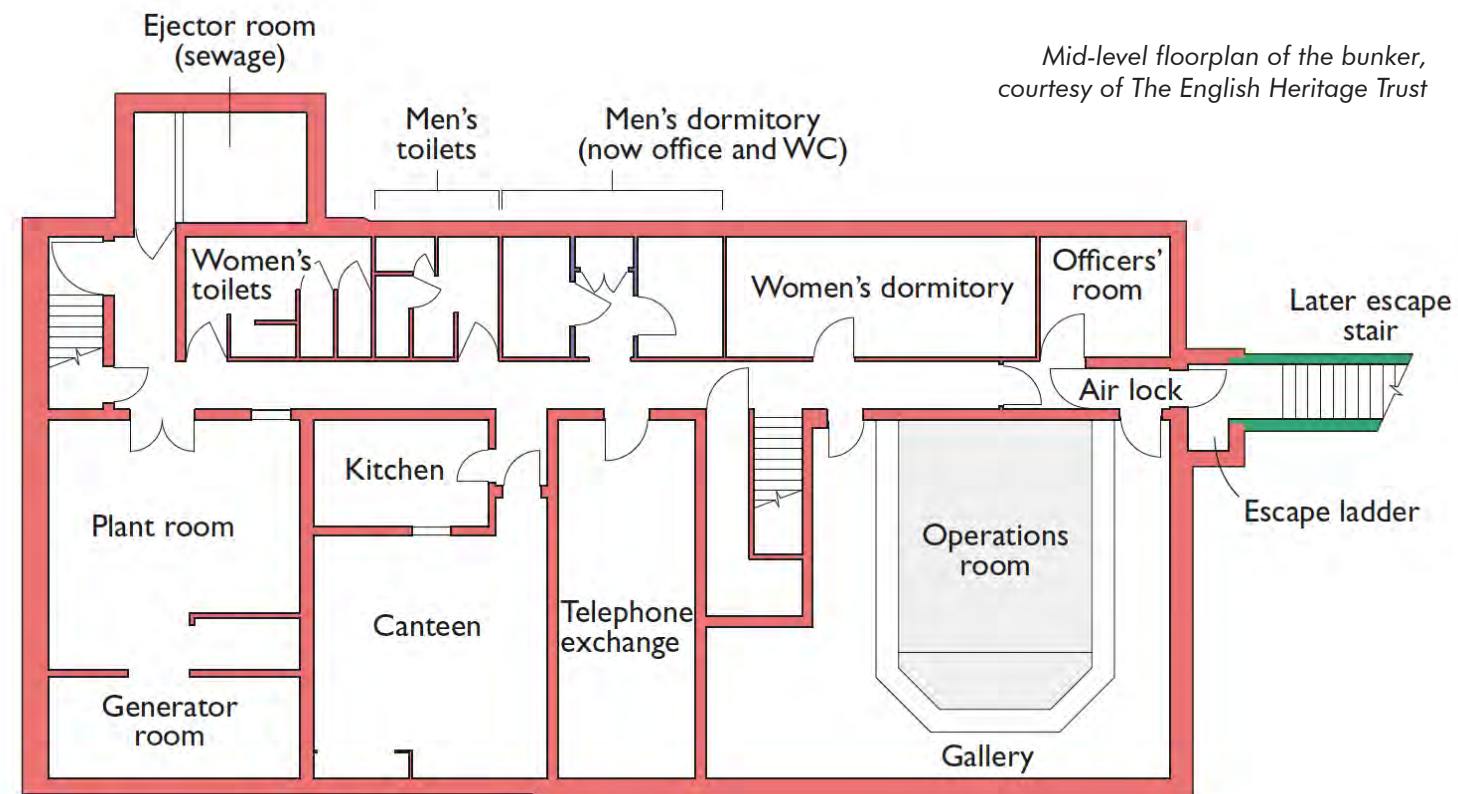
and real events are very worrying for everyone involved. Thinking back to when the bunker was built there wasn't much information on nuclear bombs and the aftereffects most of the propaganda was based on Second World War survival of bombs dropping, building a bunker in your garden, or bracing doors against the wall with sandbags on them, none of which would help you but gave you hope for the future.

You enter by climbing a flight of stairs and go through a blast door, there are rooms left and right. These were decontamination rooms with showers. You follow the tour guide along a short corridor to the top of another set of stairs. These take you back down to street level but with thick concrete and soil above you now. This floor had the basics like bunk beds, bathrooms, a kitchen, and a dining room. It also has a telephone exchange and the upper level of the



Entrance to the bunker, photographed by Philip Newton





► operations room from where you can see the lower level, we did not get to see this level up close as it is not part of the tour. You are asked to take a seat and watch an information video on the facility and the volunteers who were involved in the day-to-day running of it. At the end of the corridor was the officers' room. Which had the only radio, (tuned to radio four only). This would be the only way that they would know what was happening outside if the phones went down. The officers were not allowed to relay any information to the volunteers so that they would continue their job and not panic. There is also a small safe on the wall with information on, what I can only assume is, what to do if all is lost.

Originally the telephone exchange was run by people with headsets connecting one line to another. But with the advance of technology a telephone exchange computer, that could route a thousand calls and emails was installed complete with a Faraday cage to protect it from an electromagnetic pulse or EMP.

On the upper floor of the operations room, the gallery are chairs with little boards that swivel to relay incoming information to the operations team below. You have a decent view of the main floor below and can see the detailed maps down there. On the gallery, there is a machine that can

detect large amounts of light to show how big or how near the blast was. It uses light-sensitive paper and had to be changed regularly the volunteers were taught to change the paper with blindfolds on so they would be quick as the machine was outside, and

they were told to cover their mouth with a hankey because of the dust. I thought in typical Yorkshire "Shove an ankey over your gob and you'll be rite". No gas masks or special clothing provided. On returning they would have to shower in their



Officer's jackets, photographed by Philip Newton

### Also on the gallery floor was an amazing piece of top-secret technology called AWDREY, Atomic Weapons Detection Recognition and Estimation of Yield.

\*The AWDREY installation consisted of three separate elements: the sensor, the detection unit, and the display cabinet (timer). The sensor was mounted on the roof of the building. The detection unit was installed in a special room that was enclosed inside a Faraday cage; in the case of the Royal Observer Corps controls, this was the "Radio Room" that already protected the sensitive radio equipment from the effects of EMP. The 12 ROC AWDREY units were located at the group controls in Exeter, Oxford, Horsham, Bristol, Colchester, Carmarthen, Coventry, Carlisle, York, Dundee, Inverness and Belfast. This siting pattern provided sufficient detectors that the entire UK was covered, but the units were far enough apart that a lightning storm would be unlikely to trigger simultaneous AWDREY responses at two sites. (\*this paragraph of information is copied from Wikipedia)

clothes and then without any clothes on, these would then be placed in a sealed concrete box I wondered about this as they could only take a small bag with them what happens when you run out of clothes? They were told that this would reduce the risk of radiation exposure by 95%. I can't help wondering about that 5%, these people are locked in with it and everyone would probably have to take turns to go outside to collect and change that paper so the percentages would be rising.

The bunker was designed to be locked in for thirty days before the air would start to go bad. The filter system would need fresh air to keep going. A pipe would be opened up outside for sixty seconds and draw air in, this would be pushed through a charcoal filter and then it would be circulated. I asked how many filters were supplied and how many times could they use them this way, I was told one filter was



Heritage Hunters entering the Cold War Bunker, photographed by Philip Newton

provided and it could be used twice. I was shocked at first but then I realised that most of them would probably have died from radiation poisoning before the end of the second time using the filter.

In case of a power cut, a diesel engine will power everything. This, if used would run very sparingly as it wouldn't last very long, and the fumes would overwhelm the filtration system. There is always a risk of fire and the safety system they had was as follows: There was a counterweight held up by a wire made of solder, the theory being that the heat from the

fire would melt the solder dropping the counterweight and setting off the CO2 and causing the shutter to drop down sealing the fire in.

If you can climb up and down stairs easily then go and see for yourself. This sparked so many forehead slaps and OMG responses from me that when I discussed this visit with my family they responded with "Yeah but in the Second World War they thought a tin can covered with soil/sandbags would save you from a megaton bomb! It's all about keeping people calm and hopeful, giving them something to believe in." Point taken.



Milner Street, courtesy of Sandra Wadley



I was born at 52 Milner Street in 1944 and left in 1969 to get married. What memories do I have of living in Milner Street?

# MY STREET, Milner Street

Memories of going to the toilet at the end of the backyard. This toilet is ingrained in my memory as it was the place where I went to practice on the recorder, I wasn't very good. Having a bath in a tin bath in front of the black range, playing in the street and the back lane, the coal man and greengrocer with their horse and cart, the celebrations of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. As part of the celebrations for the Coronation, my cousin and I who belonged to the Patricia Humphrey's School of Dance performed a concert in Acomb Church Hall called "The Soldiers of the Queen"

Our Mum's made us some lovely uniforms of red and white. My self, my sister and my cousin all agree that the best memory was the community spirit and the friendship, nobody locked their doors, and

everyone looked out for each other. My nephew also remembers the outside toilet, the tin bath, the sash windows, the grate at the front door to clean your shoes, Frank Hodgson's corner shop, and his Granddads allotment behind the Severus Club, called the Ponderosa.

Milner Street was where most of my maternal family the Elliotts lived. At No. 8 Milner Street, Joyce and her husband Frank together with their two children ran the corner shop, Phyllis and her husband Frank and their three children lived at No 44. My Grandparent Rose and John Elliott lived at No. 48, and I lived at No. 52 with my mum Rose and Dad Clifford, and my two sisters. My granddad, my uncle and my father worked at the Carriage Works on Holgate Road. It was the railway coming to York in the 19th Century that brought about not just the building of the Carriage Works but also houses for the many workers needed. Three streets were built for



The Soldiers of the Queen dance concert to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, courtesy of Sandra Wadley

the workers, Beaconsfield Street, Gladstone Street and Milner Street. The first two were named after British Prime Ministers, Milner Street however was named after Alfred Milner, 1st Viscount Milner, a British statesman and colonial administrator, said to have been the instigator of the Boer war.

To me Milner Street appeared very old when I lived there but, the history of Milner Street goes back even further. According to the Enclosure Act of 1774, 19 acres of land was left to Miss Ann Heatley of Guildford, it was this land that the three streets were built on. I could not find any mention of Milner Street on the 1871 census so Milner Street must have been built sometime during the next ten years, as according to the 1881 Census, a man called James Campbell lived at 52, he didn't work at the carriage works he was a gardener. However, there were many workers mentioned on the census who did live in Milner Street.

The first mention of my relatives in Kelly's Directory Year Book is in 1949/50, my Granddad, father and uncle. These names continue being mentioned in the 1957/1975 Kelly's directories. Up to 1937 the West riding of Yorkshire was the administrator of Acomb, it then came under the administration of York City Council. For some reason the West Riding of Yorkshire numbered Milner Street from the Green Lane end. On a death certificate for my grandfather, it said he died at no 49, when to me he died at number 48.

Example of a shared yard and toilets, Calvert's Yard, Tanner Row, York, 157/a2/60 York Explore



York Carriage Works in 2014, DS Pugha CC BY-SA 2.0



# MY HOUSE ON Carr Lane Acomb



The photograph of Carr Lane around 1911 that started my research. Our house, number 61, is the second one from the left, with a square bay window and a square porch. (Unknown copyright)



Number 61 today. Photographed by Jenny Holmes

I lived at number 61 Carr Lane, a large, terraced house in Acomb, between 1970 and 1977. At the time, I thought of it as a grand Victorian house, Downton Abbey style, with servants rushing around!

My thoughts were helped by the servant bell board that was on the kitchen wall, the presence of a walk-in pantry and a scullery, as well as a separate formal dining room. Rooms with lovely fireplaces, even my sister's and my bedroom, where we displayed all our trinkets on the mantelpiece. A tiled hallway and large staircase that split into 2 on the first floor so as to access the front and back of the house (where I imagined the servants lived) all added to my thoughts. It even had a name,

Winterhurst, found on a stone plaque on the wall. In reality, it was nothing like that, but it didn't stop me loving the house. My mum, though, was very modern, and as was the way at the time, covered the lovely, tiled floors with carpet and lino, hid the fireplace in my parents' bedroom behind fitted wardrobes and removed that bell board!

As part of this project, therefore, I decided to investigate 'my' house. This idea was also fuelled by the presence on York Past and Present of a

photograph of a short row of houses, labelled Carr Lane, and of which one of them was number 61! So, I started looking.

My initial investigation took on two strands, the history of the house, and the history of Carr Lane, as it appeared from the photograph that the row of houses were quite alone. I wondered when it began to look more like the Carr Lane we know today.

I had always imagined the house to be Victorian, but I couldn't find the street on the 1901 census, however it was there on the 1911 one. So, it seems the house was built between 1901 and 1911, making it Edwardian and not Victorian.

The first problem that I encountered was that on the 1911 census none of the houses were numbered. The heads of the households either gave the address just as Carr Lane or gave the name of the house. I took from that that the street was nothing like we know it now, and that it was populated by only a few houses and that they could be found just by name alone. Unfortunately for me, Winterhurst was not among the names given, I was still in the dark. So, I went for a walk to see what else I could find and was able to find houses that had their names etched in the glass above the front door. I could then match those up with the census and attach modern numbering to them. I could finally locate number 61. Then I started to use Find My Past.com and Ancestry.com to see what else I could find.

The 1911 census shows William Pearson as the owner of the house. He was a commercial traveller working in the seed trade. He lived



Hallway in 61 Carr Lane, photographed by Jenny Holmes

in the house with his wife Kate and their niece Gwendolen Candler, who was nineteen. They did not have any children of their own. He is shown to have been born in Wandsworth, London and Kate in Sussex. Gwendolen, however, was born in Leeds. Records show that Kate's sister and her husband, Gwendolen's parents, had already made the move to Leeds and William and Kate might therefore have moved to be closer to them. In 1903, Gwendolen's father dies, and her mother and younger sibling return to the South of England, so I think it is fair to say that this may be when Gwendolen moves in with her

aunt and uncle in the lovely new house in York.

In the 1921 census we find that the house is now occupied by William Henry Dixon Devey. He is thirty-seven years old, but sadly widowed. He came from the North East and was assistant to the secretary of the NE Railway. Looking at the occupations of the other residents of the street, the railway is by far the most popular for employment. Also in the house is Margaret Reed, aged twenty-eight, from Poplar in London, and her occupation is servant, the first mention of such, so maybe this is when the bell board began to first be used.



House name on the door glass at 77 Carr Lane, photographed by Jenny Holmes



Servant's call indicator box at 61 Carr Lane, photographed by Jenny Holmes



► The 1939 Register is the next document that can be looked at online. I found that the occupant was Sidney Melmore. He must have bought the house, therefore between 1921 and 1939, but I cannot pin it down any closer as yet. Sidney was the last person to live at number 61 before we did. Sidney's occupation is given as a geologist, mineralogist and crystallographer (retired). He was only forty-nine at the time, early to be retired, but as an addition in the notes section of the register, it states he was also a geologist working on behalf of the scientific advisory committee to the District Council. I think that that means he was advising the council where to build with probably a geological input. Underneath Sidney's name in the register there is a name that has been redacted, but also living at number 61. I think, therefore, that he too had a servant. When I looked into Sidney's background he came from a wealthy family, and had always lived in a house with servants, so this was something that he obviously just continued in his own home. He lived in the house for over thirty years.

When my parents bought the house in 1970 it was clear no-one had lived in it for a while and I clearly remember the outline of a pair of scissors that had been hanging on the kitchen wall and when removed had left a white outline behind. I have since discovered that Sidney Melmore died in 1969, so the house could have been empty for

up to a year.

With the wonder that is the internet, I then Googled Sidney Melmore, not expecting to find anything, but instead found pages of information. He gained a Bachelor of Science degree, though I'm not sure which university he attended, but another sign that his parents had been wealthy if he was able to attend university in the 1920's. Being a 'geologist, mineralogist and crystallographer' the internet showed that he had written many published articles on this subject, and was a member of Hull geological society. He had many other interests though, and was a member of York Philosophical Society, which is located in the Museum Gardens and built the Yorkshire Museum in the 19th Century, and was elected to their committee. He also wrote published articles on York Minster. But perhaps his biggest claim to fame is that he is the first person in the world credited, in 1949, as working out where astronomer John Goodricke was in 1739 when he discovered several stars. It turns out he was in the Treasurer's House and that he had observed from the 'north window of the top floor of the south-east wing, looking south towards the Minster'. Goodricke went on to be very successful, and a college at York University is named after him. Sidney even warrants a mention on his

Treasurer's House,  
York Museums Trust



Tansy Beetle,  
collected by  
Sidney Melmore,  
York Museums Trust



Wikipedia page. There is no wonder he retired at forty-nine, he was too busy investigating and writing books!

Given Sidney's date of birth, I also checked to see if he had served in First World War. Unfortunately, his records are amongst those that were destroyed by fire in the Second World War, but what remains is information about the medals that he was awarded, two, and shows that he served with The Royal Engineers as a pioneer. This is a soldier employed to perform engineering and construction tasks, so maybe his knowledge of geology might have come in useful when deciding where to build things.

CARR LANE DEVELOPMENT

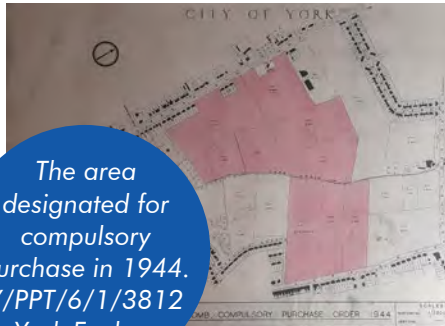
I used the Library of Scotland maps online to see if I could find any maps to help me date the development of Carr Lane. The earliest maps of Acomb all show the existence of Carr Lane but with no houses on it, so it is a very old thoroughfare. The earliest map I could find with houses on is dated 1907 and shows the row of houses containing number 61 which is detailed in the 1911 census, and also the existence of Barlow Street behind and a very short Dodgson Terrace linking them. Interestingly the row of houses is labelled Carr Hill. The 1911 census lists just twenty-three houses on Carr Lane, and we can presume that this is the short row of houses in the photograph, as a walk along Carr Lane today shows the houses nearer to Acomb to be of a later style. The census gives a combination of addresses, some just giving Carr Lane, and some the house name. There does not seem to be a theme to the house names, and I wonder if the original purchasers were able to choose the name of their house. The names range from place names such as Clovelly, Ravenscar and Lindisfarne to more grand names such as Jesmond House, and everything in between, such as Sunnyside, Inglenook and West View. The census also shows us that of the households, by far the biggest place of work was the NE Railway, generally in the offices, and four of the households had servants.

My dad had grown up in a street just off Beckfield Lane in the 1930's and 40's and remembered being able to see Carr Lane in the distance and playing on the land between. The land between, in the 'dip', the Carr, was empty of houses. It was given over to fields and allotments and had a stream running through it. The word Carr means a type of waterlogged area. What he could see was actually

that mainly only one side of Carr Lane was built on, even at this date, the right-hand side as you leave Acomb. The left-hand side was only built up to Woodlea bank. There is a map at York Explore from 1944 that shows the area at the time, when a compulsory purchase order for the land that made up the Carr was made. The map again shows the one-sidedness of Carr Lane at that time but does show that there had been some 'in-filling' of small pockets of land that had previously been empty. As you walk along the left-hand side of Carr Lane after Woodlea Bank now, there are many council houses on this side of the road, I presume as a result of this purchase by the council. My mum remembers a friend of hers living in what they called 'the police' houses, on the corner with Almsford Road, houses built for policemen and their families to live in I can remember a boy from school who lived at 27a Carr Lane, where a house with a big garden had sold off some of the land to build another house, but the numbers being already set, it had to be 27a. Indeed, this sums up the reason for no numbers, just house names, back in 1911. The land along the lane will have historically been sold piecemeal, with different builders buying different plots of land at different times and building different styles of houses. Numbers would not have been added until the lane was pretty much completed, otherwise the numbering could have been very hit and miss.

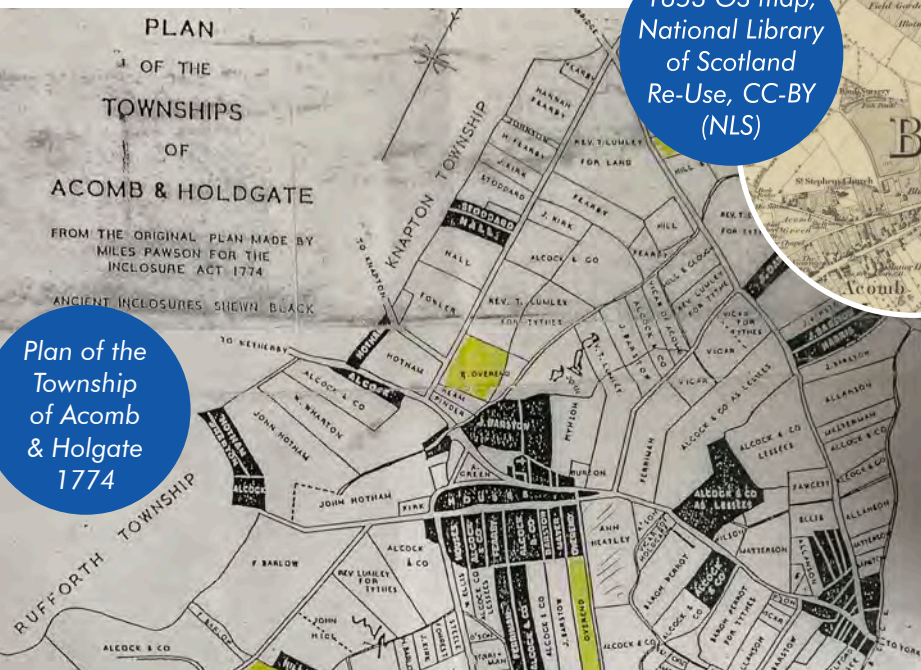
So overall we can date the left-hand side of Carr Lane, from the shops to Rosedale Avenue to pre-1944 and from Woodlea Bank to Boroughbridge Road to post 1944. The right-hand side includes the oldest houses to be found, along with more modern builds, mainly from around 1930 - 1940's.

The area  
designated for  
compulsory  
purchase in 1944.  
Y/PPT/6/1/3812  
York Explore



In conclusion, a walk along Carr Lane will show you a wide variety of house styles, from the Early 20th century to the more modern, all within close proximity to each other.

Whilst doing my research, I also went off on a bit of a tangent as well. Someone told me that on the war memorial on The Green, there is someone named Holmes, and they wondered if it was a relation of mine. As only a Holmes by marriage, I was unsure, so I had a look to see what I could find, and the most peculiar thing happened! It turned out that Sydney John Holmes was not a member of my husband's family, but at the time of his death in 1918 his family lived in Carr Lane, so perhaps in one of the houses in the first row to be built, along with my house. Explore in York also holds some letters and photographs that Sydney wrote back to his family from the front line, and as was the case at the time, the letters are just addressed to Coombehurst, Carr Lane. A book has also been written about his time fighting, including at Ypres, which Explore holds. It is strange to think that both Sydney Holmes and Sidney Melmore were both away fighting in some of the biggest battles of the First World War, and that only one of them came home, and how close to us world events can be. I haven't found Coombehurst yet on the census or on an actual house, but I am still looking. It was strange to be able to link the 2 things that I was researching together.



1853 OS map,  
National Library  
of Scotland  
Re-Use, CC-BY  
(NLS)

Plan of the  
Township  
of Acomb  
& Holgate  
1774

It is much harder to find information about what happened to the house after we left, but I do know that at one point it was occupied by students, and that when it was up for sale a few years ago I pretended to be an interested buyer and went for a look around! The estate agent said it was occupied by a single man with cats. The smell and sight of cat poo had already told me that! However, it was bought and soon back up for sale and the new owners had done a lovely job on it, as I discovered from photos on the internet, so I felt much relieved. I'm not sure who lives there now, but I hope they enjoy living there, just as we did.

1893



1909



1931



1941



Maps from The  
Library of Scotland  
which show the  
development of  
Carr Lane





Photographs courtesy of Kevin Newman



When we bought our house in Acomb in 2021 we were told that it was a built as a wedding present for the daughter of a famous York grain merchant, Campbell Penty, and his daughter who then never married. The evidence I have found so far doesn't seem to back this story up. However, the 'real' history of the house is still very interesting.

# WAS OUR HOUSE BUILT AS A Wedding Present?

So, why was it built? Who lived in it and why there? First things first, when was it built? I needed to find this to start to trace the history.

The house sits within a terrace of 'buff' bricked houses on York Road in Acomb. Its notably different from its immediate neighbours in several ways; its taller, double fronted and the detailed architectural finishings are unique in the row.

The previous occupants left us a picture of a transfer/stencil they made of "graffiti" found in the early 2000s under layers of wallpaper on the wall of one of the bedrooms. The stencil indicates that paper hanging was being undertaken on 14 April 1894.

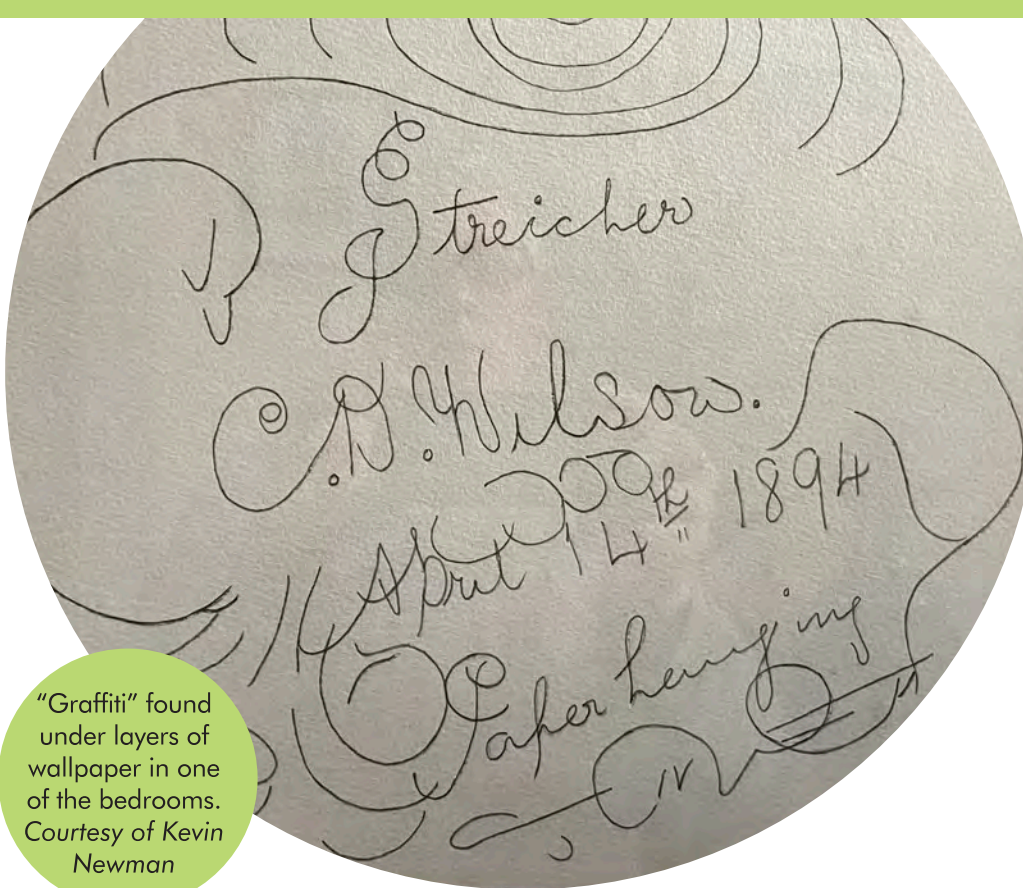
The map of Acomb, dated 1892, but surveyed in 1897, does not show the house, or its neighbours. Thus, if these two sources are to be trusted the house was built sometime between 1897 and 1894.

Our modern Register of the Title record shows extracts for the covenants on the property. This enabled me to examine the original Deeds, as I had the names of the parties involved in the transactions. The Wakefield History Centre provided me with the information I needed to trace the owners of the land in the late Victorian era.

### The timeline of ownership looks like this;

- **1886 (9 June)** - conveyance of the area of land that the house will eventually sit on part of, made between (1) George Ellis (2) George Benson (3) Mary Ellen Forrest (4) Susanna Forrest and others and (5) Clifton Ramsey Garwood.
- **1886 (7 July)** - George Ellis sells the land to Walter Green Penty
- **1891 (12 September)** - Walter Green Penty Architect and Surveyor sold the strip of land that our house and gardens occupy to Edward Elliott of 23 The Mount, York, Gentleman.

So, within the space of just over 5 years the land the house sits on is owned by three different owners the latest being Mr Edward Elliott. This then, is where the new story starts.



"Graffiti" found under layers of wallpaper in one of the bedrooms. Courtesy of Kevin Newman

Frustratingly, the Census return of 1901 shows no record of our house because, as it turns out, at the beginning of the 20th Century there was no such address.

To the right of our front door the very faint house name in the black discolouring of the stone can be seen. It's possible to make out the words "OAK DENE".

We had also been told that the house was once used as a Nursing Home in the 1950s and have spoken to people who actually visited the

property when it was that. There is an old wooden sign to be found in the outhouse of the property with "Oakdene Nursing Home" etched into it. The modern Title Deeds of the house show the house as "Oak Dene Nursing Home".

A Kelly's directory of the East Riding (1904) located in the York Library has a Mr Thomas Elliott living at Oak Dene in Acomb. This is repeated in the 1912 edition of the same publication. Furthermore in 1900, Cook's Trade Directory lists him, on Acomb Road, at



Shadow of Oakdale, courtesy of Kevin Newman



Courtesy of  
Kevin Newman

A black and white photograph of a row of Victorian-era terraced houses. In the foreground, a horse-drawn carriage is on the street, and a person is walking on the sidewalk. The image is partially framed by a blue and green circular graphic on the left.

Yorkshire  
Evening Post,  
Nov 28 1895,  
British Newspaper  
Archive

[illegible]

So, for these reasons I believe that the first people to live in our house are the Elliott family. It was called something different at that point, but a correlation of information leads me to this conclusion.

No servant is listed as living at the house in the 1901 but the household has a lodger in 1911.

The link for all this seems to be the name Elliott. In 1891 Edward Elliott bought the land from Walter Green Penty and a Thomas Elliott was living in a house on that land in 1901. Was this surname a coincidence?

According to the 1901 census, thirty years later, Thomas Elliott now aged fifty-nine, is living in Oak Dene in Acomb with his wife Ann, four sons and a daughter. Several facts let me conclude that this is the same Thomas Elliott that lived with his uncle in 1871. Firstly, Thomas' occupation is listed as a foreman blacksmith, as in 1871. His age also corresponds. Furthermore, his birthplace given in both 1871 and 1901 also compares; in both census it is (Bywell (or Benty Well), Northumberland. His uncle was also born in Northumberland about nine miles away from Thomas' birthplace.

three having moved out as they are still declared as living.

In 1891, prior to moving to Oak Dene, Thomas and family can be found living in Bishopthorpe Road and although his age is, interestingly, given as 49 instead of 49 his spouse Ann and their children's ages all match with the 1910 census data, as does his occupation. Absent that day from the family home was their eldest son, John (twelve). With a bit of searching, I found a twelve-year-old John Elliott in Pannal Ash, near Harrogate, in Ashville College on census day. The school survives today and was in 1891 only twenty-four years old having recently opened a new wing for more boy boarders. The fees were £25 in 1877, about £2000 today. Not an inconsiderable sum of money in the late Victorian. This was and is a big house, that needed a servant.

I found no record of Edward selling the house to Thomas, or anyone else and by 1891 he is a widower and has no relatives living with him on 59 Mount in Micklegate, York, according to the census of that year. In 1881 Edward and Frances were at the Smedley hydropathic spa in Matlock.

So, where does this get us in terms of the question? So far, there is no evidence that any of the male protagonists involved in the house

were grain merchants. The closest we have come to this so far was Mr Walter Green Penty. Penty is indeed the surname of a grain merchants from York, but our Penty appears to be a very well-known architect of the time; he was also was a York City Councillor for a period. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1886.

His son, Arthur, became even more famous after his father passed away and he is well regarded as an early 20th Century pioneer in the field of architecture. Walter Green Penty was, until 3 April 1890, in an architect's firm co-owned by himself and George Benson. The Yorkshire Gazette of 5 April 1890 published that the partnership had dissolved by mutual consent. All debts from the firm were to be paid by W G Penty. I considered that perhaps the land that Edward Elliott bought in 1891 was part of this arrangement, as George Benson's

name crops up in the 1886 Title Deed, but that George Benson was a farmer from Acomb and anyway George Ellis sells Mr Penty the land.

Walter Green Penty designed many architecturally regarded buildings in York including the York Institute of Art, Science and Literature, Elm Bank remodelling (with George Walton) and numerous distinctive Public Houses including the Bay Horse, Black Horse and Old Grey Mare, as well as factories and a whole terrace of houses (The Avenue) in Bootham, where he lived in 1901. Walter Green Penty died in 1902. Why was this man involved in our house? The covenants on the property in 1891 require Mr Penty to approve many of the aspects of the eventual design and he seems deeply involved. For now, the trail has gone cold. There are some records of Walter Penty and his architectural exploits in the York Explore archives but none that relate to this transaction.

MR W. G. PENTY, OF YORK.

The *Building News*, of July 11th, gave an admirable portrait of Mr W. G. Penty, of York, in its series of contemporary British architects. It is accompanied by the following biographical sketch:—Mr Walter Green Penty, F.R.I.B.A., the President of the York Architectural Association, has designed and carried out several important buildings in York and neighbourhood. Of public buildings his principal works are the York Institute of Art, Science, and Literature, the foundation-stone of which was laid by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales when visiting the Royal Agricultural Show at York in 1883, and the York Liberal Club, opened in 1888. He is the architect of several residences, amongst which may be mentioned "Burnholme," near York, and "Brooklands," Selby, Yorks. Several of the new blocks of business premises erected in the city of York during recent years are from his designs, and he has also been the architect of some large warehouses, flour mills, and other buildings of a constructional character on the banks of the Rivers Ouse and Foss; a flour mill, a house, &c., which, when completed, will be probably the most complete in the United Kingdom, is now in progress from his designs. He has also built a number of homesteads in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire. On the formation of the York Architectural Association in 1882 he was chosen the first president, and was again elected for a second period of two years in 1888. In 1888 he was elected on the City Council, but retired in the following year. He has also held the appointment of surveyor to the York Union Rural Sanitary Authority since 1876. He has taken a great interest in the York Archaeological Association, and has also lectured on various artistic subjects before the Yorkshire Institute of Art, Science, and Technology, the York Arts Guild, the Yorkshire Architectural Association, &c. He is the author of "The History of the City of York," published by Messrs. Baskett, of Lendal, York.

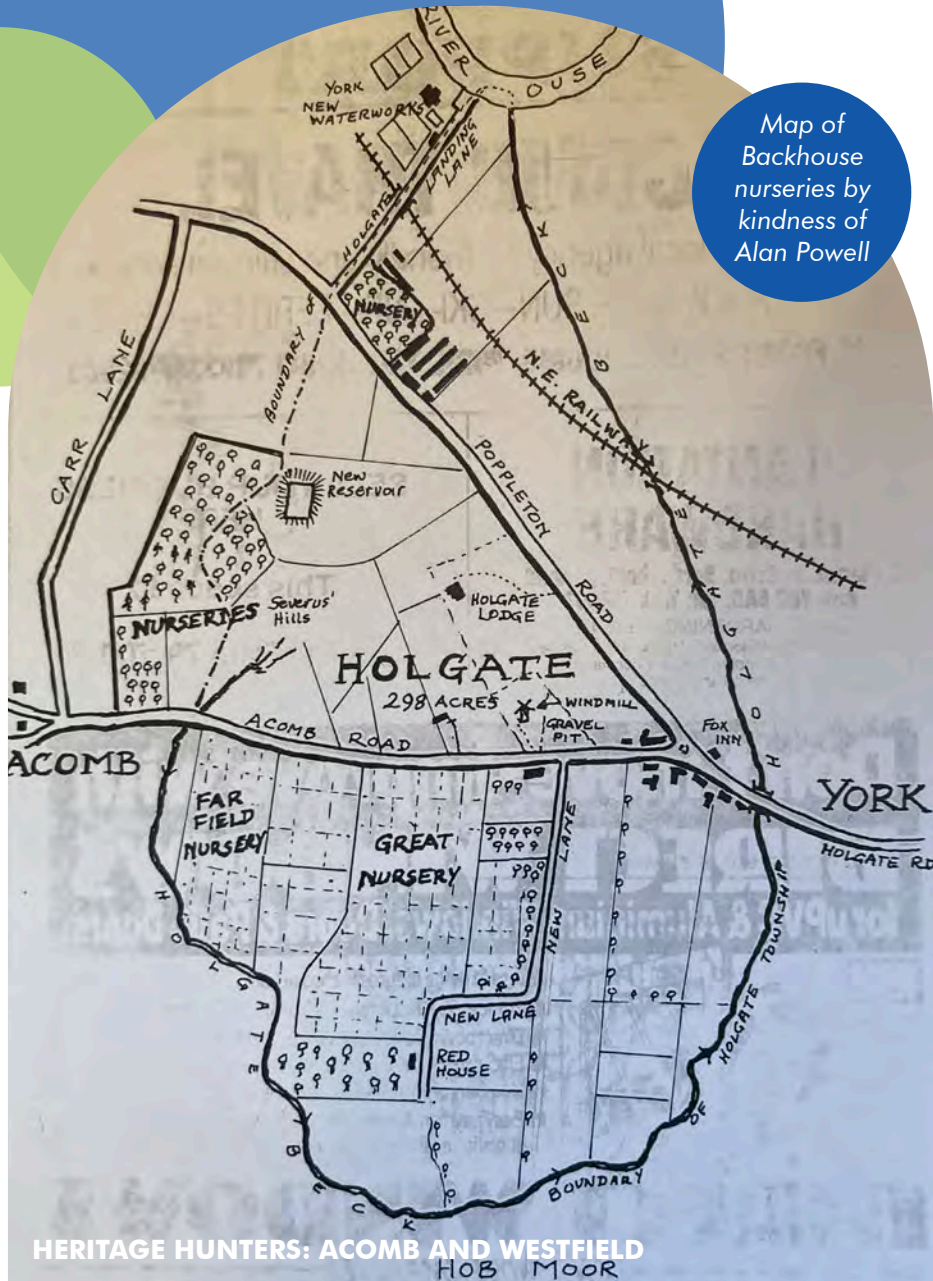
Yorkshire  
Evening Post,  
Feb. 1889.

Yorkshire  
Evening Post,  
July 1890, British  
Newspaper  
Archive



I moved to Moorgate in November 2023, and although it's strictly in Holgate, many people regard Moorgate as being part of Acomb. I soon learned that our house was built in 1928 on land that had been part of the internationally renowned and once thriving Backhouse nurseries, which straddled the boundary between Holgate and Acomb south of Acomb Road; they included land up the Severus Hills and on the north side of Poppleton Road, where Poppleton Road Primary School is now. I decided to explore the history of the nurseries and the Quaker Backhouse family.

# THE Backhouse's

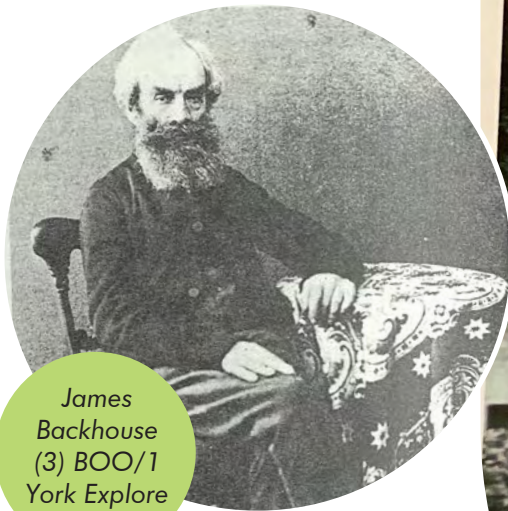


Map of Backhouse nurseries by kindness of Alan Powell

There were five Backhouse generations, each with a son called James Backhouse, so I have numbered them 1–5; I shall mostly be interested in nos 3, 4 and 5. The family wealth derived initially from the flax and linen trade and through the Backhouse and Co bank, established in Darlington by James Backhouse 1 (1720/1–1798) and his sons Jonathan (1747–1826) and James Backhouse 2 (1757–1804). Jonathan's son (also Jonathan) (1779–1842) was involved in the financing of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first public railway to use steam locomotives. Lord Darlington, angered by the route, which would have destroyed his fox coverts, tried to bankrupt Backhouse and Co by stockpiling the bank's notes, intending to present them for payment while the bank in Darlington had insufficient gold to honour them; but Jonathan outwitted him by driving post-haste to London to replenish his ready gold. When his coach lost a wheel on the return journey, he piled his gold onto the opposite side of the coach to balance the coach and drove to Darlington on three wheels, reaching Darlington just in time to thwart Lord Darlington's plan.



How Jonathan Backhouse balanced the cash 60 years ago by Samuel Tuke Richardson, cartoon 1876 © Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



James Backhouse (3) BOO/1 York Explore

James Backhouse 3 (1794–1869) broke with family tradition by not going into business in the bank. He was a delicate child whose asthma and subsequent tuberculosis led him to spend school holidays with Quaker friends and relations in Teesdale, where he explored areas that were more or less trackless; he became fascinated – even obsessed – with the local flora, and clearly this was where his future career would lie. After an apprenticeship with a nurseryman in Norwich, James and his brother Thomas (1792–1845) bought George Telford's nursery in York in 1815, thus founding Backhouse Nurseries. Telford's Nurseries had been established in 1665 at Tanners Row in York on land that had been part of a medieval Dominican friary. The Backhouse brothers moved the nursery to Fishergate when the railway came, and then in 1853 to Holgate, where they quickly became the biggest employer in the area, with a site of one hundred acres – bigger even than Kew Gardens. Here he and his wife Deborah built their house, West Bank, which was burned down in 2016 in a probable case of arson. James was closely involved in the development of the Yorkshire Museum botanical gardens in the 1830s, the updating of the trees planted along New Walk, and, thanks to the vision of his manager, Mr Gray, the planting of daffodils on the city walls.

As a Quaker, James 3's commitment to missionary work and what we would today call human rights was even stronger than his fascination with plants, and in 1831, soon after the death of his wife, he set sail for



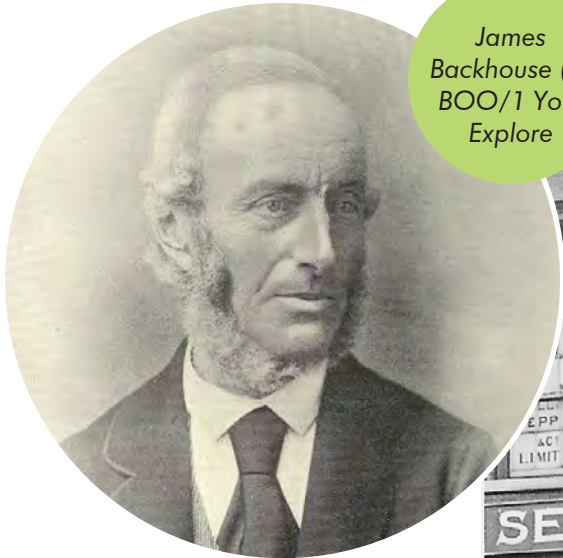
Nursery entrance and West Park House provided by Alan Powell, originally in Country Life



the 'penal colonies' with his friend, George Washington Walker, under concern for the treatment of convicts and the indigenous peoples of Australia, leaving his young children in the care of family members for nearly ten years. Their trip was financed by the central Quaker meeting (known as London Yearly Meeting): Quakers have always had an active concern for the inherent dignity of all human beings, and in many ways his attitudes and work were radical and forward-looking, though to modern sensibilities leaving his young children for so long seems shocking; however, in the nineteenth century many children were brought up by relatives, for instance if a parent had died. The work of James 3 and George Washington Walker involved caring for sick and injured convicts and making frank and uncomfortable reports to the Lieutenant-General of Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania), Sir George Arthur, about the appalling conditions convicts had to live under. Arthur encouraged James and Walker to make suggestions for improvements

in conditions of convicts and the Indigenous peoples. James wrote to Elizabeth Fry about the terrible condition of women prisoners on ships and about the general state of prisons. Appalled at the way lands had simply been stolen from the Indigenous peoples, James 3 wrote: 'we cannot but deprecate the short-sighted policy by which the lands of the aboriginal inhabitants have been wrested from them, with little or no regard for their natural and indefeasible rights.' In New South Wales the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, encouraged similar work in 1835–37, and their reports to him were also sent to British Friends





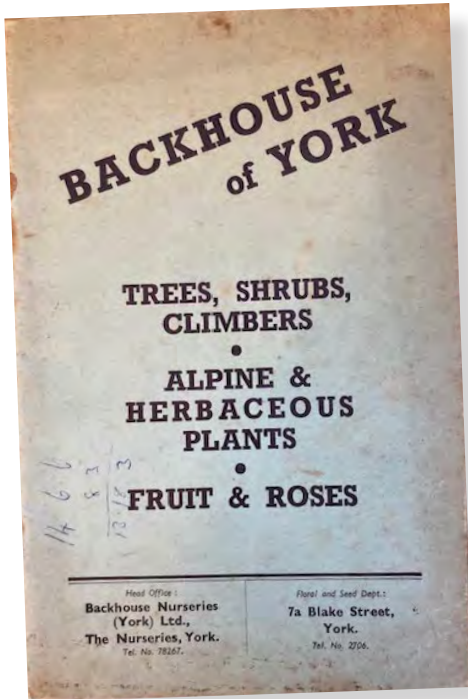
James Backhouse (4)  
BOO/1 York  
Explore

► and to the Colonial Office and were used by reformers of prisons and Indigenous settlements. The reports informed the basis of a new penal system in Tasmania whereby restorative justice was to be preferred to cruelty, vindictiveness and flogging: 'It is widely supposed that severity towards a convicted offender has a reformatory tendency,' Backhouse wrote. "This we conceived to be a sentiment radically erroneous.'

James and Walker were pioneers in recommending humane treatment of the mentally ill (as at the Quaker Retreat in York), they promoted temperance and founded schools and a Quaker meeting in Australia.



Backhouse premises on the corner of George Hudson St and Micklegate, unknown copyright



One of the many Backhouse catalogues, by kindness of Alan Powell

In Cape Town in 1838, they were equally forward-looking, establishing a multi-racial school for the poor. During his nine years abroad, James 3 sent many specimen plants back to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, along with detailed reports of his observations in the field. On his return he developed his garden at West Bank, which became the showcase for his now world-famous alpine collections. There was a mountain tarn with rocky crags and crevices in which to grow alpine and water-loving plants; streams and lakes and an artificially lit underground fernery were constructed; forty glasshouses housed the exotic and semi-tropical plants he had acquired. Acres of land were set aside to breed alpine, and other

areas were laid out as tree nurseries. His visits to Norway and the Arctic Circle in 1851, 1853 and 1860 with his son James 4 (1825–1890) have been less extensively written about. I wondered 'Why Norway?' The memoir written by his sister, Sarah, says little about plant collecting but much about his Quaker missionary work. Father and son went to give encouragement and support to the fledgling Norwegian Quaker meetings which had begun in 1814 when fourteen Norwegian seafarers who had been imprisoned in ships along the Thames during the Napoleonic wars (1807–14) came home. One of them had found a Quaker text in the library of a prison ship and had made contact with English Quakers.

While they were imprisoned and suffering years of hardship, English Quakers had an active concern for their wellbeing; when the prisoners eventually got home to Norway they began to hold meetings for worship in their own country. Between 1850 and 1870 the Quaker community in Norway thrived, thanks in part to the visit of English and US Quaker missionaries, whose publications circulated in Quaker schools and in the farming community of Stavanger. The missionaries' work was financed by the British Quaker Yearly Meeting. The support of the Backhouse father and son would be

very affirming as the new Quaker group found its feet and spread across Norway. While at home in Holgate, James 3 continued his evangelical work around the country and in Dublin. In 1865, when he was over seventy years old, he held over fifty-three public meetings in which he exhorted listeners to shun all forms of pomp and honorific clothing. James 3 did not receive recognition he deserved, perhaps because he did not publish much, preferring word of mouth; furthermore, his religious commitments made many demands on his time, and his main delight in exploring the countryside and botanizing. "Perhaps the truth lies in the character of the man: worldly, confident, well-travelled and an accomplished businessman of considerable reputation, yet a personality tempered by the humour and modesty of his Quaker beliefs. He had little

desire, and no need, to prove his botanical abilities." When James 3 died in 1869, his son, James 4 (1825–1890), carried on the business, now at its height. At the age of twenty, he had found himself more or less running the business during its heyday after the death of his uncle Thomas, and while his father was still away. By now the nurseries had become world famous, and the railway enabled the firm to meet orders for seeds and plants from across the country and even abroad. At this time of economic buoyancy, the middle classes had considerable disposable income, and the Backhouses were much in demand to design and plant their gardens. Just one such example is Burnby Hall Gardens in Pocklington, where the Backhouse firm designed and planted the rockery; I was delighted to spot the snowdrop named James Backhouse (*Galanthus James Backhouse*) there. ►



Galanthus James Backhouse at Burnby Hall Gardens. Photo: Cecilia Bainton



45-47 Moorgate, built on what was the nurseries, Y/11228 York Explore



► After the death of James 4, James Backhouse 5 (1861–1945) took over the running of the business at a time when the national economy was weak. A combination of land tax and a shortage of labour after the First World War made it impossible to maintain the labour-intensive gardens and planting. Although James 5 did his best to save the firm, in 1921 the nurseries were bought by a consortium of Sir James Hamilton, Mr H R Swift and the Hon Nicolas J Bateson. The Holgate Gardens Estate was formed, with a view to creating a garden suburb in what is now Moorgate and Hobgate. The firm closed in 1955, when the remaining park was bought by York City Corporation and is now known as West Bank Park.

The Backhouse grandfather, father and son (James 3, 4 and 5) were not only naturalists and horticulturalists; James 4 was an accomplished archaeologist and geologist, and excavated Moking Hurth Cave (also known as Backhouse Cave) in Teesdale with James 5, who became a renowned ornithologist and published a book on birds. In more recent times, York Civic Trust has erected a blue

plaque at 92 Micklegate where James 3 lived with his family prior to moving to West Bank;

Margaret A. Backhouse (1884–1977), a descendant of the same family, received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the Quakers in 1947 ‘for their pioneering work in the international peace movement and compassionate effort to relieve human suffering, thereby promoting the fraternity between nations’. In her acceptance speech she said ‘War will not cease until mankind has learnt the positive nature of peace. We speak of the present and the between-the-war period as “peacetime” but we all know that it would be truer to describe the condition as the period when there is no official warfare. There is not peace in the minds of men [sic] and there will not be until we have replaced misunderstanding by sympathy - fear by trust - jealousy and hatred by love.’ Acomb and Holgate should be proud of this family.



Blue plaque, 92 Micklegate, York, photographed by Cecilia Backhouse



Backhouse Nurseries, Acomb Road, Y9/ACO/1219 York Explore

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York Explore Y920BAC EPH/2/3281

S. Backhouse, Memoir of James Backhouse York & London 1870

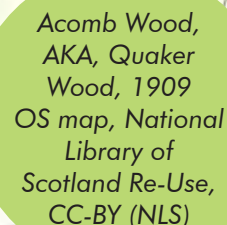
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Geoff Hodgson A history of Holgate in five parts 1999

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Alan Powell for generously sharing knowledge and some images relating to the Backhouse nurseries, and my husband, Toby Bainton, who helped me with translation from Norwegian.





Anthony Foy was a well known character in the Acomb area in the 1940s. A 'vagrant' who lived rough in Acomb Wood, an area just south west of Acomb's boundary, in Dringhouses.

The father, Michael, died in 1899 aged 46 and registered in York in

In 1911 the family is recorded at Keithley, West Yorkshire, living at 13

The next records that I have found for Anthony are entries in the Yorkshire Evening Post.

'Anthony Foy (45) Hawker of no fixed abode, was sent to prison at York today for a month for being drunk and smashing a window, value £2, it was his 27th appearance.'

**31 July 1935** 'Anthony Foy, (47) Labourer of no fixed abode, had 39 previous convictions, was fined 10s at York today for being drunk and disorderly.'

'About his 40th appearance said Yorks Chief Constable, Mr H.H. Hermans, when Anthony Foy (46) Labourer of no fixed abode, was charged, drunk and disorderly in Pavement last night. Foy was a harmless type but objected to anything involving hard work. He thought it would be a good thing if he was sent away from time to time to have a rest and get cleaned up. Foy was find 10s or 7 days imprisonment. The Chairman, Alderman Birch, remarking that he thought it would have been better to send him away for six months so that he could have a really good rest. But they wished to give him another chance.'

'When Anthony Foy (41) labourer of no fixed abode, appeared at York today on a charge of drunk and incapable. He has been released from prison only yesterday after serving a month sentence for a similar offence. The Chief Constable, Mr H.H. Hermans, said it was Foy's 42nd appearance, and it was rather difficult to know what to do with him. He suggested that he should be bound over so that he could have a word with him. When it was suggested that Foy should be fined 10s, the Chairman asked how could he pay 10s when he only had fourpence on him.

Foy says 'You might only fine me 5s'. The Magistrate decided to bind him over for 12 months. When told that one of the conditions of the bond would be that he should remain sober, Foy remarked that he would rather be fined 10s. The Magistrate however did not alter their decision.'

I have not been able to find much of Anthony after this date but we do know he died in June 1954 and he was 64.

This mixed broad leaf wood, was not in the Parish or Manor lands of Acomb (probably on the boundary of Acomb, Askham Bryan and Dringhouses). There is no mention of it in the Acomb Manor Court Rolls. It is situated at the southwest tip of Acomb Parish.

Some believe that it is so named, having once belonged to a member of 'The Society of Friends' more generally known as Quakers. I am not fully convinced with the explanation given for the name Quaker Wood.

I believe that it could be reached from the Gale Lane end of the old Kennel Lane, now Foxwood Lane, by crossing the former brickworks.

I used to go to it by crossing three or four fields off Askham Lane, beyond Kennel Lane, field farmed by Wilf Thomlinson and 'Jock' Penty.

There is no mention of Quaker Wood in any of the writings about Acomb, by Harold Richardson and Geoff Hodgson, nor in the Parish records.



Acomb Wood,  
photographed by  
Philip Newton

I must thank Yvonne, a fellow 'Heritage Hunter' for the following information. This was given to Yvonne by her mother who had lived not too far from Quaker Wood. Mrs Simpson, Yvonne's mother, is nearing her 80th birthday and believes that she was about eight or ten years old when this happened which would mean it was in the early to mid 1950s.

This is what he was called locally because he picked and sold watercress. I do recall being told that there was watercress growing in the stream that ran along the eastern side of Kennel Lane, now Foxwood Lane. Mrs Simpson tells us that Charlie also did casual work on some of the local farms.

She also speaks of him as an educated man who had 'dropped out' of the 'common world' when his business had come to nothing. Mrs Simpson also says that he would not accept handouts, so they shared their picnics with him, in return for the stories he told them about tanks, spies and pyramids.

She also recalled harvesting nature's bounty in its season, wild mushrooms, blewits among them, brambles, sloes, elderberries and hazelnuts, from the fields and hedges in the area.

Did Charlie and Anthony supplement their diet this way? With maybe an odd item of veg from one of the fields?



The Manor of Acomb historically included the Townships of Holgate and to a lesser extent, Clifton, the Parish of St Stephens Church, Acomb, historically included both Dringhouses and Knapton.

# The Lords OF ACOMB MANOR



The Manor of Acomb has its own court, which was usually held twice a year, in May and in October. There is anecdotal evidence from Acomb Local History Group's previous talks stored in York Archives, collated by John Ferry, August 2011, that Acomb had its own Courthouse, with a garden in front, but unfortunately no location for this building but in the vicinity of Manor Farm.

These courts were held in front of a 'Steward' acting for the lord of the manor and has a jury of up to fifteen jurors. The proceedings of these courts were documented on vellum. A collection of these 'Acomb Manor Court Rolls' is held at the Borthwick Institute, at York University. These have been transcribed by Harold Richardson and published in two volumes by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Vol.1 1969 and Vol.2 1978).

The first entry dates 16 May 1544 records 'Court with view of Frank Pledge of the Ven Master, William Clyff, Clerk, Doctor of Laws and Treasurer of the Metropolitan Church of St Peter of York, held on Thursday 16 May 36 (year) Henry VIII.'

It then goes on to list the fourteen jurymen who were to give judgement of the cases. The last entry in these rolls is for 1846. Not all the records survived, there are a few gaps in the court rolls.

### The Lords of the Manor

From pre 1066 until 1228 the Lord of the Manor was the Archbishop of York. From 1228 until 1547 it was the Treasurer of York Minster – The Metropolitan Church of St Peter of York, and from 1547 to 1623 in the hands of the King or Queen, and from 1623 to 1855 the Archbishop of York.

The Archbishop of York rented out the title 'Lord of the Manor' to certain individuals, usually on an eleven-year lease. In Harold Richardson's History of Acomb, he states that these individuals would not need to live in Acomb or have any connection to the village. To them it was a source of income. As far as I know there never was a 'Manor House' as such in the Village of Acomb, and whether the 'Lords' ever even visited is doubtful.

These Manor courts were there to raise funds by imposing fines on the inhabitants and those holding land

### A list of some of the people renting the Title and their Stewards over the years.

1571-1577	Lawrence Grene	Steward
October 1578 – April 1579	Lady Isabel Hall	'Farmer Thereof'
1579 – 1584	John Hall	Steward
1592 – 1612	Thomas Grene	Steward
1614 – 1616	Ralph Headlam	Steward
1612	Henry Newarke	Lord of the Manor
1619 – 1624	William Holme	Steward
1650	Richard Wood	Lord of the Manor
1650 – 1654	Henry Barir	Steward
1654 – 1654	William Webb	Lord of the Manor
1654 – 1654	Henry Barir	Steward
1661 – 1664	Henry Newarke	Lord of the Manor
1661 – 1664	Thomas Thomson	Steward
1664 – 1692	Richard Blanchard	Lord of the Manor (Farmer of Lord Richard Sterne Archbishop of York)
Gap in Records		
1716 – 1736	Elizabeth Blanchard	Lord of the Manor
1716 – 1725	Hungerford Blanchard	Steward
1725 – 1730	Edward Wilkinson	Steward
1734 – 1736	Wilkinson Blanchard	Steward
1737 – 1737	Wilkinson Blanchard	Lord of the Manor
1737 – 1769	Henry Masterman	Lord of the Manor

there. Fines were laid for exchanging land from one person to another, as on the death of an individual. For scolding, arguing, fighting, drawing blood (6s and 8d, double what it was if hitting someone, 3s 4d). For not having your pig noses ringed, for not keeping fences repaired, not cleaning the ditches and wells etc.

These fines were imposed by the Lord's Steward who held court.

From 1769 the manor court is held by three named individuals, Giles Alcock, Stephen Croft, Robert Bewlay, until the meeting on the 25 May 1818 – there are no more named Lords in the published rolls after this date.

- 1773 – John Cleaver replaces Robert Bewley until 1779
- 1779 – 1783 Lord of the Manor Giles Alcock and Stephen Croft
- 1783 – 1789 Timothy Mortimer is added
- 1789 Stephen Croft only named
- 22 Oct 1790 Croft is joined by Marmaduke Robinson

- By the meeting held 19 October 1789 Stephen Croft has gone, leaving Marmaduke Robinson as Lord of the Manor
- 8 May 1799 – Marmaduke is joined by Henry Dealtry
- The last Entry in the Acomb Rolls for these two is at the court held 25 May 1818
- In 1855 the Archbishop of York, the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Thomas Musgrave Archbishop 1847 – 1860, sold the title off to Mr. Francis Barlow for the sum of £20,500.

The title and position of Lord of the Manor of Acomb was abolished in 1925. The Last lord being Mr. Algernon Barlow, a solicitor from London who retired young and lived at Bossall Hall near York. His daughter, Miss Essex Elanor Barlow, lived at the White House, Number 12 Front Street, Acomb, until her death in 1963.



► SO, WHO WERE THE TITLE HOLDERS?

Newarke  
1524 - 1666

An entry in the Acomb Manor Court Rolls 26 October 1614 mentions 'Henry Newarke of Houlgate' (Holgate). A later entry in the Acomb Parish Register, reads 'Henry, son of Thomas Newark, babtised 1 Feb 1664/5. Henry Newarke Lord of the Manor 1612-1624. There is a gap in the records, 1624 until 18 April 1650.

1. Thomas Newark

In 1524 (9 April) paid 20s on 'Lands payable to the King' for 'Ville de Acome'

2. Thomas Newark

Born C 1607, in Acomb. Mrs Susan Robinson 13 Aug 1633 at Ryther, in 1635 inherited from his father the Lord of the Manor of Acomb, Holgate, Knapton and Clifton. He died 1658, probate 25 May 1659 at Canterbury

3. Thomas

14 July 1634 at Acomb, married Winifride Childers 1659 at Askham Bryan.

4. Henry Newark

Born after 6 Aug 1639 (not in Acomb Parish Register)

5. Arthur Newarke

Son of Thomas, 6 Aug 1639 (Bishops Transcripts)

6. Thomas Newarke

Son of Thomas 14 July 1634 (Bishops Transcripts)

7. Thomas Newarke

Son of Thomas 16 November 1661 (Bishops Transcripts)

8. Henry Newarke

Son of Thomas 25 Mar 1668

The Vicar of St Stephens from 22 April 1553 until his death in 1587 was Reverand Roger Newarke, the son of Roger Newarke and Isobel, nee Knight, born 1504, from South Dalton. There are seven entries for the Newarke's in Acomb Parish Registers and 126 in Acomb Manor Court Rolls.

Blanchard 1666 – 1737

Richard 1666–1692 | Elizabeth 1716–1736 | Wilkinson 1737.

There are a number of records for the Blanchards, covering this period. Mostly with a York connection, whether this is the same family, I cannot be certain.

1. Bishop Blanchard married Jawwe (?) on 22 Jan 1623 at St Crux, York.
2. Richard was buried 4 May 1639 at St Michael-le-Belfry
3. Richard married Frances Trip 1662 at St Michael-le-Belfry
4. Elizabeth, daughter of James, died 2 Dec 1645 at York
5. Elizabeth, married Richard Masterman 24 July 1653 (Quaker Records)
6. Rich Masterman of Huby and Elizabeth Blanchard of the same place
7. Elizabeth Blanchard buried 10 June 1715, St Mary, Bishophill Senior
8. In 1671 a Richard Blanchard paid 'Hearth Tax' in York
9. Richard Blanchard, cordwainer became a 'Freeman' of York in 1672/3
10. Probate for Richard Blanchard, York, Prerogative Court 28 Aug 1618

Other record for Blanchard's

1. Wilkinson Blanchard son of George died 2 July 1711, St Mary Castlegate
2. Hungerford Blanchard, married Judi Wilson 1708
3. Acomb Parish Records name the following members:
  - a. Ann
  - b. Dorothy
  - c. Elizabeth
  - d. Francis
  - e. George
  - f. Jane
  - g. John
  - h. Joseph Frobishea Blanchard son of William of York printer, buried 17 Sept 1788
  - i. Judith
  - j. Mary
  - k. Richard
  - l. Robert
  - m. Hungerford
4. Acomb Manor Court Rolls record the following names
  - a. Dorothy
  - b. Elizabeth
  - c. Francis
  - d. George
  - e. Hungerford
  - f. Richard, Gent
  - g. Richard, Senior
  - h. Wilkinson

Henry Masterman 1737 – 1769

Acomb Manor Court Rolls

There are sixty-six entries in the rolls for Henry Senior, one entry for Henry Junior, two for a Wildred and six entries for Christopher.

Acomb Parish Records

Two entries for Mr. Masterman and three for Thomas, two as witness 29 Nov 1817 'thomas Masterman the Younger, Parish of Malton, Butcher and Susanna Siddal, Spinster of this Parish'. On the 21 Aug 1817 he was witness at the marriage of William Wilson, from Hull to

Frances Siddal, on 21 Jan 1818 at the marriage John Boulton the Younger, New Malton, farmer, and Catherine Siddal. John Boulton and Catherine Siddal were witnesses at the other two weddings.

Other records for Henry Masterman

Henry, son of Benjamin, died 27 Sep 1664, St Michael-le-Belfry

Henry married Isabel Stannup 1665, St Martin, Coney Street

Henry, son of Henry, died 5 Sept 1729 at Thorne

Bishopthorpe  
Palace, York  
Museums Trust



Barlow

Mr. Francis Barlow purchased the Lordship in 1855 for £20,500. The manor, at the time, consisted of one hundred and sixty-two acres. Before the purchase in 1855, it was leased to the Barlow family. The last lease being a Mr. Francis Barlow Robinson. There is a gap in the Acomb Manor Court Rolls, from 29 April 1822 until 21 Oct 1845. The last entry in the transcripts is dated 23 Oct 1846.

Francis Barlow Married Alathea Masterman on the 23 June 1755 at Hillington, Middlesex

A son of George Francis Barlow was Baptised on the 8 July 1768 at St Clement Danes in Westminster.

George Francis Became Rector of Burgh, near Woodbridge, Suffolk (St Botough's Church 1814 – 1850)

17 May 1798 he married Harriet Mount at Tooting in Surrey

Geroge Francis Barlow, in 1848 had the Church of England School, Acomb, built. This continued as a

church school for more than one hundred years. On one record it gives the date of death as 6 Nov 1847, was the school built in his memory?

George F and Harriet had a son, John Mount Barlow, born 7 Dec 1814 and baptised 1814 at St Margaret Lowestoft

In 1845 John Mount Barlow became the Rector of Ewhurst Surrey. He married Charlotte Eliza Chutterbuck in 1854 at Alnwick.

The Reverand John Mount Barlow died 24 Nov 1895 at Ewhurst.

Algernon Barlow, last lord of Acomb Manor, was born 15 Jan 1856 at Ewhurst, the son of John Mount Barlow and Charlotte E. In 1861. John M was 46 and Charlotte 30, Algernon 5, Alathea 4, Lionel 2. Algernon attended private boarding school in Winchester, studied at Trinity College Cambridge and received a BA in 1878.

In 1879 at the Bar, address 9 Old Saure, Lincolns Inn

In 1881 and 1891, A barrister lodging with John and Elizabeth Heath at 33 Upper Gloster Street, Marylebone.

17 May 1893 Algernon married Essex Francis Thompson at Coniscliffe Church near Darlington. She was the daughter of Major Thomas of Walworth Hall near Darlington.

6 May 1894 daughter Essex (Essie) Eleanor born in London

By 1901 aged 45 he has retired and was living at Bossall Hall near York with Essex 36, Essex 6, and two servants.

Both Algernon and Essex died in 1926, their daughter, Essex moved to Acomb and lived at the White House, number 12 Front Street, until shortly before her death in 1963.

So, ending the long Barlow association with Acomb.

The position of Lord of the Manor of Acomb was discontinued in 1925, a year before Algernon's death.



# Charlotte Richardson

## POET AND SELF-MADE WOMAN

1775-1825

When we think of the romantic poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we tend to think about people like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley; all of these are men, and all had the relative freedom and independence to spend their time writing poetry about their lives and nature. It was surprising then, to find a female poet from the Georgian era who was not only published in her own name (unusual for a woman at that time) but who also lived as a domestic servant. It was even more interesting to find that this poet, Charlotte Richardson, came from York and spent the last part of her life in Acomb.

By using baptism, marriage, burial, newspaper and other records, I have been able to piece together Charlotte's life and that of her family. It has also been helpful that Charlotte wrote about some of her life, and the people in it, in her poetry. This means that we can hear her voice from 300 years ago and understand why she might have chosen Acomb in which to spend her final days. Her poetry has given us an unusual insight into her life from her own point of view and, as much as possible, I have tried to describe Charlotte's life using her own words.

### Early life

Charlotte Richardson was born Charlotte Smith on 5 March 1775. She was baptised at All Saints Church, Pavement on 6 March 1775. The baptism record gives us very little information other than 'Charlotte daughter of Hannah Smith'. We know,

however that she was born on 5 September from Charlotte's own poem 'On My Birthday' which she wrote in 1803 and dated 5 March (from Poems Written on Different Occasions (henceforth PWDO)). Almost all of the baptism records at this time record the name of the baby with the name of the father rather than that of the mother. Charlotte's is, therefore, unusual in that it names only her mother, Hannah Smith.

The assumption is that Charlotte was born illegitimate. Catharine Cappe (later to be Charlotte's sponsor and benefactress) describes Charlotte as being born 'under circumstances the most unfavourable' in her preface to Charlotte's first book of poetry. This may or may not refer to Charlotte's illegitimacy. Certainly, Mrs Cappe is not impressed with the circumstances of Charlotte's childhood home life in general since she goes on to attribute Charlotte's 'character' and 'subsequent conduct' as 'deserving of praise' owing

to its 'origin to religious impressions, early made upon her mind by the pious conductors of a Sunday-school'. In other words, if Charlotte had not attended Sunday-school, her mother would not have been able to bring her up as 'deserving of praise' 'distinguished for her uncommon quickness, docility and great desire for information' and therefore worthy of Mrs Cappe's and the reader's (and the subscribers of her poetry book's) attention. Mrs Cappe's dismissal of Hannah's part in bringing up her daughter seems harsh, as presumably it was Hannah who sent Charlotte to the Sunday school in the first place.

Charlotte had a brother, John, who was born on 18 November 1776, and he is described on his burial record as 'the illegitimate son of ... Hannah Smith'. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Charlotte, born less than two years earlier would have been legitimate, especially as both children took their mother's surname of Smith. There is no

The Plantation at Acomb 1842 by William Etty, York Museums Trust

record of Hannah having married at any time and Hannah is described on her burial record as 'A single woman descent unknown'. On Charlotte's admission record to the Grey Coat School at the age of twelve, however, her parents are given as Hannah and William Smith. On Charlotte's son's birth record, in 1804, his grandparents i.e. Charlotte's parents, are recorded as Hannah and William Smith. It is possible that William was a relative given as 'parent' in order to give Charlotte some kind of respectability at a later date. The definitive answer about her parentage appears in Charlotte's poem 'To M. Smith - The Inquiry' when she states quite clearly:

*'A tender father's care I never knew,  
One only parent blest my early years;  
Beneath a mother's fostering shade I grew'* (PWDO)

We do not know exactly where Charlotte lived as a child, but the clues suggest that it was in the current High Ousegate area. Her baptism record lists her as being baptised at All Saints Pavement, York but no address. All Saints Pavement was the church

which covered the ancient parish of York All Saints Pavement with St Peter the Little, an area that now covers High Ousegate and sections of Parliament Street, Coppergate and Market Street in the centre of York. It is almost certain, therefore, that Charlotte's mother Hannah lived in this area when Charlotte was born. The baptism of Charlotte's brother John is also recorded at All Saints Pavement. On Charlotte's admission record to the Grey Coat School 12 years later, Charlotte's 'parents' are recorded as living in St Peter the Little – the area just off High Ousegate. So it seems that Charlotte was born and then spent her childhood around All Saints Church and in the area of the former St Peter the Little Church which had long since been demolished.

Whatever Catharine Cappe's dim view of Charlotte's upbringing, Hannah Smith must have been a remarkable woman to bring up two illegitimate children single handedly at the end of the eighteenth century. That she had contact with the church is clear since we know that Charlotte regularly attended Sunday school. As she was accepted by the church, it suggests that she had some form of respectability whatever the circumstances of her children's births. Whether she had support from family or somehow

worked for her living we do not know but the evidence suggests that she and her children did not live in extreme poverty. The area around All Saints Pavement was 'relatively wealthy' (British History Online) compared with other areas, such as Walmgate, nearby. The childhood Charlotte depicts in her poem to her friend Mary Smith in 'The Inquiry', is a happy one.

*'No anxious cares my happy mind  
distrest,  
Health and content still bloom'd upon  
my cheek,  
And cheerfulness dwelt ever in my  
breast.'* (PWDO)

This does not give an impression of a child living in poverty and deprivation. However, we know that Hannah Smith is unlikely to have been wealthy given that both of her children ended up in service and one of them in the workhouse. The mystery remains as to how an 18th Century single mother managed to raise her children in 'unfavourable' circumstances or, at very least, in the face of, what should have been, significant adversity. Charlotte speaks very fondly of her mother Hannah, not only in the poem 'To M. Smith', but also in the introduction to a poem written about Hannah's death, calling her: 'a tender indulgent mother' (PWDO) The woman that Charlotte became as an adult, cannot simply be attributed, as Mrs Cappe would like, to Sunday school and three years at the Grey Coat School. ▶



Charlotte's baptism record, All Saints, Pavement, 5 March 1775. Findmypast.com





**The Grey Coat School**

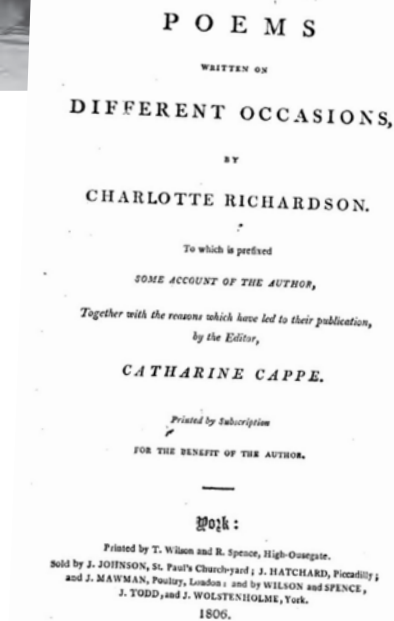
The Grey Coat School for girls had been established in York in October 1705 in Marygate, York. It was one of many schools set up at this time to educate poor children; to some extent in reading and writing but largely to address the moral conduct of the poor and to prepare children for a life in service (Barrett). The opening of the Grey Coat School for girls followed closely on the heels of the Blue Coat School for boys which was based in St Anthony's Hall in Peasholme Green.

The 18th Century was a time when benevolence ruled, and it was fashionable to contribute to the moral upbringing of the poor and to enable children to play a supposedly useful role in society rather than becoming beggars or vagrants. This was particularly so for non-conformists, those who did not follow the established Church or England or Anglican Church e.g. Catholics, Quakers, Unitarians, as they were not permitted to take up political roles in local or national government. This was a way of maintaining a role in society and as a public figure. The Grey Coat School was, therefore, established and managed by public subscription. Subscribers would pay quarterly, and they were then allowed

to vote for the entry of one or more girls to the school every three months. According to a summary of the records of the Grey Coat School held at the Borthwick Institute 'Subscribers giving more than one guinea a year held two votes, one for a boy to enter the Blue Coat School and one for a girl to enter the Grey Coat School.' (JISC Archives Hub) It is notable, however, that in the Admissions Register for the Grey Coat School (York Explore Archives) there is repeated reference to girls being 'excluded for non-payment' or being withdrawn with payments not being made in full. It appears, therefore, that there may have been a cost attached to attending the school paid by family or sponsors in addition to the subscriptions by wealthy benefactors. Or maybe that the benefactors themselves did not always pay up.

Girls at the school received board, food, and clothing. The clothing included a grey coat – hence the name – and, later on, clothing for when they left to go into service. (British History Online) The girls learned to spin and sew and undertake a variety of domestic duties. There was little emphasis on education as we know it today. The girls were expected to exhibit good behaviour at all times.

The school moved from Marygate in



1784 to premises in Monkgate which today are occupied by NHS clinics. This does not seem to have been in order to accommodate more girls since the school was set up to take forty girls and still had only between thirty and forty girls on role at the end of the 18th century. It may have made to improve conditions for the girls as the move came about only shortly before Catharine Harrison took over some of the administration of the school along with other female committee members (and under the critical eye of the Gentlemen's

Committee.) Catharine Harrison, later to become Mrs Catharine Cappe, had already established a Spinning School in York which offered an education to the girls employed in hemp spinning. The ground floor of the new premises at Monkgate were dedicated to a spinning and sewing room. Catharine, along with other women, started a number of philanthropic enterprises in York, many of them focused on the well-being of women and girls. She was 'determined to deliver a qualitatively better experience of schooling and work training than the girls had received to date' (Perriton)

It was into Catharine Cappe's new Grey Coat School that Charlotte Smith was admitted in 1787 at the age of twelve. Charlotte gained a place on account of her attendance at Sunday School. Her written entry into the admissions register was not made until 1 May 1790 where she is described as being fifteen years of age as the register was not created until that year. Charlottes' entry into the school is clearly given, however, as three years earlier on 2 June 1787. The 'attestation of the Honorary Member who proposes the candidate for admission' has not been completed. In fact, this column has very rarely been completed for anyone and seems largely to be used for notes. What has been added in this column for Charlotte is 'dead 1825' in a different handwriting, Charlotte's later marriage and subsequent name change has also been added in the name column, so we know that the admissions register was updated at later times. The admissions register lists girls who have been admitted to the Grey Coat School and to the Spinning School (and a few to the Blue Coast School) Charlotte was admitted to the Grey Coat School. Her 'parentage' is given as William and Hannah Smith, Peter the Little, York.

Mrs Cappe gives an account in the preface to Charlotte's first book of poems of why Charlotte was accepted at the Grey Coat School:

*'whatever in her character or ... conduct may have been deserving of praise, has owed its origin to religious impressions, early made upon her mind by the pious conductors of a Sunday-school. By these she was soon distinguished for her uncommon quickness, docility, and great desire*

*of information ; and on this account, at their entreaty, was admitted when she was twelve years old, into the Grey-coat School in this city' (PWDO)*

and what her life was like at the school:

*'Here she had little opportunity of mental progress ; the girls educated in that school, being intended for working servants, are kept very close to those occupations which may best prepare them for their future destination. They are indeed taught to read and write, but it is only a very small portion of their time that is allotted to this purpose. The Sunday is their only day of rest from manual labour, and this was seized upon with avidity, by the energetic mind of the poor girl we are describing. At church she was so attentive an hearer, that she brought away in her memory, whether from the Scriptures she heard read there, or the Sermon afterwards preached, many a serious admonition or moral document, which were faithfully treasured up for future use.'*

Mrs Cappe remains keen to attribute Charlotte's ability to read and write, and in particular her religious devotion, to the Grey Coat School and gives only a little credit to Charlotte herself for developing her talents.

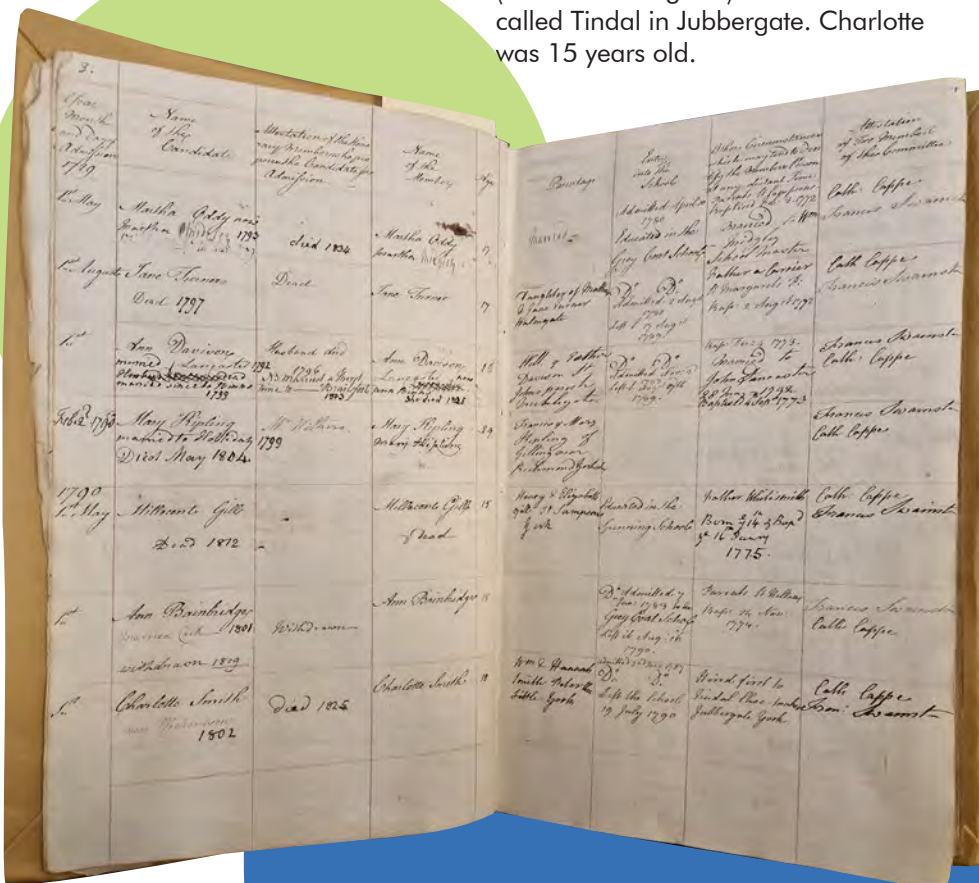
Charlotte seems to have been happy at the Grey Coat School. She describes it as:

*'The former scene of my happiest days' in her Ode to the Grey Coat School (PWDO).*

Even allowing for the fact that her sponsor and benefactress was Catharine Cappe and that Charlotte would not have wanted to offend her, she is overwhelmingly positive about the school. She describes the staff there as:

*'Dear honour'd guardians of my infancy, Whose kindness cheer'd my opening morn' And the school as a: 'Tranquil calm retreat'*

It cannot have been easy for her, therefore, to leave the school on 19th July 1790 to be 'hired first' (Admissions Register) to a shoemaker called Tindal in Jubbergate. Charlotte was 15 years old.



Grey Coat School Admissions Register for 1788-1907 YFF/1/2 York Explore



## Life in Service

We have accounts of Charlotte's life in service from Charlotte herself in her poems and from Mrs Cappe in her footnotes to the poems, from her preface to the poems and from the letter she wrote to the Gentleman's Magazine in 1805 about Charlotte's first book.

Charlotte would have been hired out as a maid of all work, so, basically, cooking and cleaning and doing anything else that was needed around the household. This in itself would have been a tough life, but it seems that Charlotte was, according to Mrs Cappe, 'not fortunate in her first service neither in the characters of the masters and mistresses, nor of the associates among whom she was thrown' (PWDO). Indeed, Mrs Cappe states, in her Gentleman's Magazine letter in 1805, that Charlotte was 'not well treated' in any of her first three service positions. In 1792 Charlotte wrote a poem 'Orphan's Prayer' which she describes as written 'when distressed with great unkindness'. In this, and another poem 'Prayer – written for safety and protection' in 1794, seem to indicate that she was unhappy and - according to Mrs Cappe's footnote to the poem 'thrown among associates whose example and conversation were in every respect low, corrupt and ruinous' Charlotte appears to have taken comfort from religion and we see this throughout her poetry, although she was apparently unable to attend any form of Sunday worship during this time.

On Friday 5 November 1790, just a few months after Charlotte entered service, her mother Hannah Smith died of 'fever' at the age of forty years. Charlotte wrote a poem 'Elegy' about the loss of her mother and describes not only being an orphan but also 'bereft' of friends (PWDO). Her mother was buried in the churchyard at St. Cuthbert's Church in Peasholme Green. It is not clear who paid for the burial or whether she had a gravestone. The graveyard has since been cleared.

This seems to have been a very lonely time for Charlotte and it seems that Charlotte did not remain in service with any of her first three

placements for very long, since some time in the 1790s, Catharine Cappe was able to arrange for Charlotte to be placed as a cook-maid with a wealthy widow's family 'where her good qualities were more duly appreciated' (Gentleman's Magazine 1805). Charlotte received £4 per year (approximately £400 today according to the Bank of England inflation calculator) and bed and board. She had access to books and to Sunday worship. Catharine Cappe recalls that at the time:

'Her library consisted of a Bible, a Common Prayer Book, the Whole Duty of Others, the Pilgrim's Progress, and one or two other books of like description; but having money sometimes given her to go to the theatre, she saved it from time to time, and bought herself Gray's Poems, Goldsmith's Poems, and the Death of Abel; and in addition to these, she accidentally met with the Vicar of Wakefield, and one volume of Lady Julia Mandeville'

So, it sounds as if Charlotte was not quite the uneducated cook-housemaid that some sources would have us believe.

In 1799 Charlotte's brother John Smith died. John had been apprenticed to a shoemaker in the same year, that Charlotte had started in service with a different shoemaker. John was apprenticed to a Lawrence Maunser on 24 September 1790 for seven years. He would have been just thirteen years old. This seems to have been an unhappy arrangement. According to Mrs Cappe, the 'unfortunate youth had' already 'been rendered a cripple by a blow received in childhood' and in his apprenticeship he was 'very cruelly treated by his master and, at length found an asylum in the city poor-house'. Charlotte visited him there regularly and he died, aged 22, on 3 January 1799 'the illegitimate son of the late Hannah Smith' (Burial record). John's death was attributed to 'decline' which suggests he had been ill for some time. Charlotte borrowed two guineas from her mistress (which Catharine Cappe assures the readers of the Gentleman's Magazine, she 'faithfully repaid') for his burial and he was buried in St Cuthbert's graveyard in Peasholme Green where his mother

had been buried. Again, no trace of the grave remains.

Charlotte as usual sought solace in her faith and in her poetry. Her poem describes him as 'the best of brothers' (PWDO) and she implies that she took on the responsibility for his emotional wellbeing after their mother died:

*'Early depriv'd of fond maternal care  
To soothe thy sorrow and assuage  
thy pain,  
Yet thy lov'd sister in thy griefs  
could share,  
And her affection, calm'd thy heart  
again.'*

In 1800, Charlotte herself was taken ill. In her poem 'My Recovery from Sudden Illness' written on 18 November 1800, she thanks God for restoring her to health. In her first book of poetry, she follows this with a number of poems about her faith and this seems to have been important to her. Catharine Cappe comments in a footnote to one of the poems that the sentiment in these poems: 'gives a faithful delineation of what passes in the pious mind accustomed to refer everything to God' It seems hardly surprising that Charlotte, who, at this time, was basically alone in the world, would look for comfort somewhere.



St William's College, College Street, York Y/11479 York Explore

## Marriage

In 1802, Charlotte was no longer alone as she married Robert Richardson. Robert was a cordwainer (a shoemaker rather than a shoe repairer) so it seems that the Charlotte had somehow maintained a link with shoemakers, either through her own life in service or her brother's apprenticeship or both. It looks as if Charlotte may have had some doubts prior to the marriage as she writes a poem in 1801 'Written, under great doubt, and anxiety of mind' asking God to help her with the decision and 'point the way' to her 'future happiness' (PWDO) (Mrs Cappe, in her footnote to the poem, thoroughly approves of Charlotte's asking 'God to direct and bless (her) matrimonial connections' and feels that if others followed her example the newspapers would be less full of unhappy cases.)

However, by Valentine's Day 1802, Charlotte is writing a poem to Robert to say that he is 'now (her) Valentine' and they were married on 31 October 1802 at St. Mary's Church Bishophill Senior by the Rector John Graham and in the presence of Charlotte's friend Mary Smith. (The church is no longer in existence having been knocked down in the 1960s.) At the age of twenty-seven, Charlotte was relatively mature to be marrying and Robert, at twenty-four, was three years younger. Catharine Cappe's preface to the first book describes Charlotte and Robert as having been 'long been mutually attached to each other' so this appears to have been a mutually happy marriage.

At the time of their marriage Charlotte lived in the parish of the Holy Trinity Church in Goodramgate,

presumably with the wealthy widow with whom she was in service. Robert lived in the parish of St Mary's Church, Bishophill Senior – the church in which they married. However, Robert appears to have been able to obtain a property where they could live and where he could set up his own shop. This was in College Street behind the Minster, where various documents show Charlotte and Robert (and later Charlotte on her own) living. Charlotte had apparently 'attained to the very summit of her wishes' according to Catharine Cappe. Charlotte would have had to leave her employment upon her marriage and probably assisted Robert in the shop.

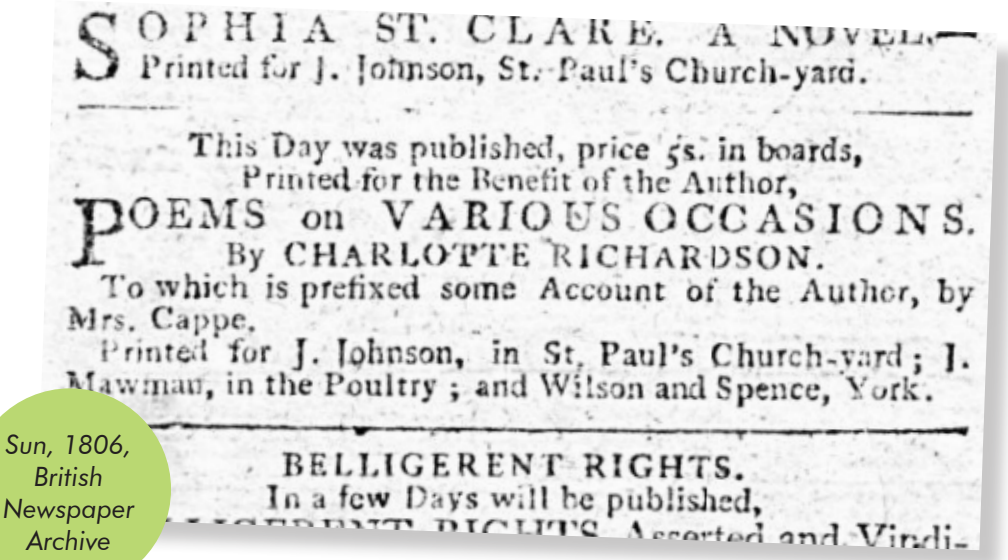
Unfortunately, the happy marriage and the relative prosperity was not to last. First Charlotte became ill. The



illness, according to Charlotte’s poem ‘On Severe Illness’ (PWDO) was serious and Charlotte thought that she might die. The poem is written to ‘the kindest of husbands’ and asks him not to be sad because she has been so blessed to be with him:

*‘Unequall’d love and tenderness  
were thine,  
Which time, not lessen’d, but the  
more increas’d .  
In thee the lover and the friend  
combine,  
Deep in my heart, thy kindness  
is imprcss’d.’*

Charlotte recovered but not long after this, Robert became ill with tuberculosis. When Robert ‘took to his bed’ Charlotte looked after him, ‘wiping the dew from his exhausted frame.’ (PWDO). In June 1804, at the age of twenty-six, Robert died. As they lived in the parish of St Michael-le-Belfrey he was buried in St Michael-le-Belfrey’s burial ground outside the city walls in Monkgate. Charlotte’s poem, written shortly before Robert’s death, ‘Paraphrase’ (PWDO) is full of reassurances that they will meet again in the afterlife, but after his death she wrote a poem which demonstrated her absolute devastation at his loss. He was ‘her all’ and for him ‘alone (she) wish’d to live’. And there are several references to him in later poems including a poem written on their wedding anniversary in 1805. However, Charlotte did have a reason to live, since she and

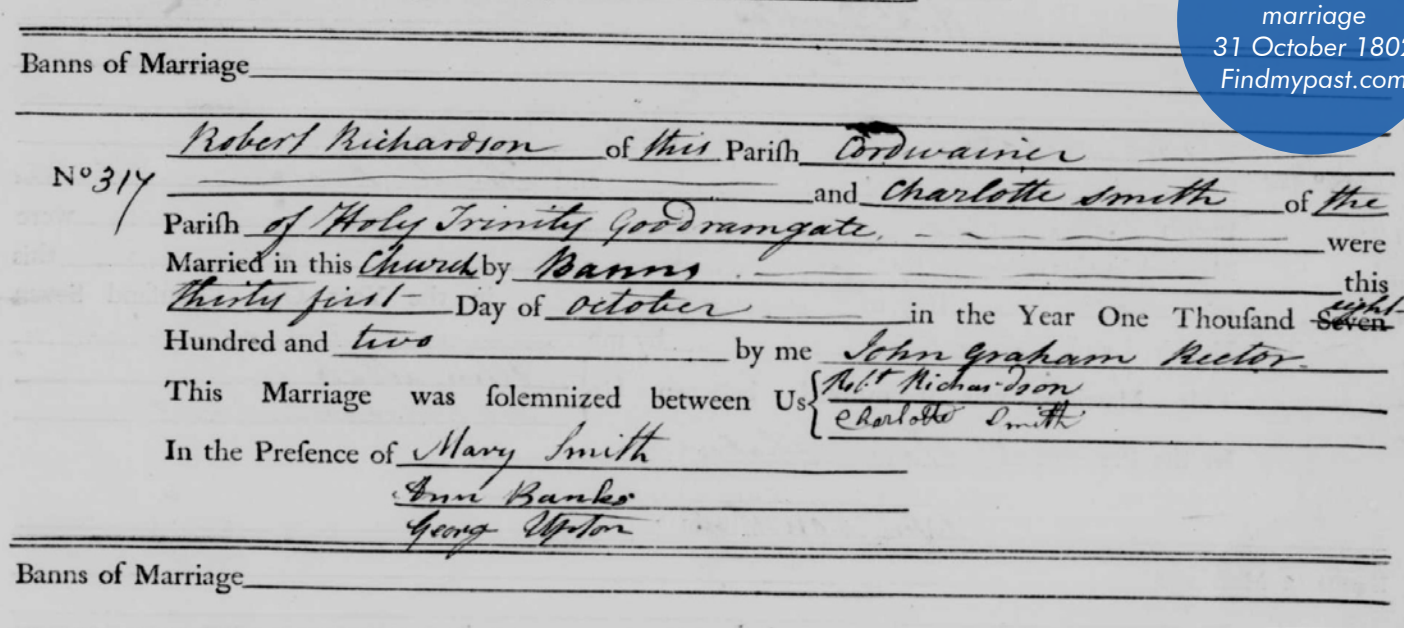


Sun, 1806,  
British  
Newspaper  
Archive

Robert had a son, Robert Harling Richardson, who had been born in March 1804 during the time when Charlotte had also been attending her husband’s sick bed. Catharine Cappe recounts how Robert Harling was healthy during his first few months and ‘remarkably lively and intelligent’ (PWDO) but that he then became unwell. Mrs Cappe suggests that he was in ‘a deplorable state of suffering, requiring his mother’s attendance night and day’ and that he became ‘nearly quite blind, owing to a complaint in the head’ (Gentleman’s Magazine 1805). Later sources - also suggest that Robert Harling was ‘in danger of going blind’ (Sales) but there is no mention at all in Charlotte’s poems to her son being blind and, in fact, in her poem ‘Thanksgiving – for the recovery of my sick infant’ (PWDO), Charlotte refers

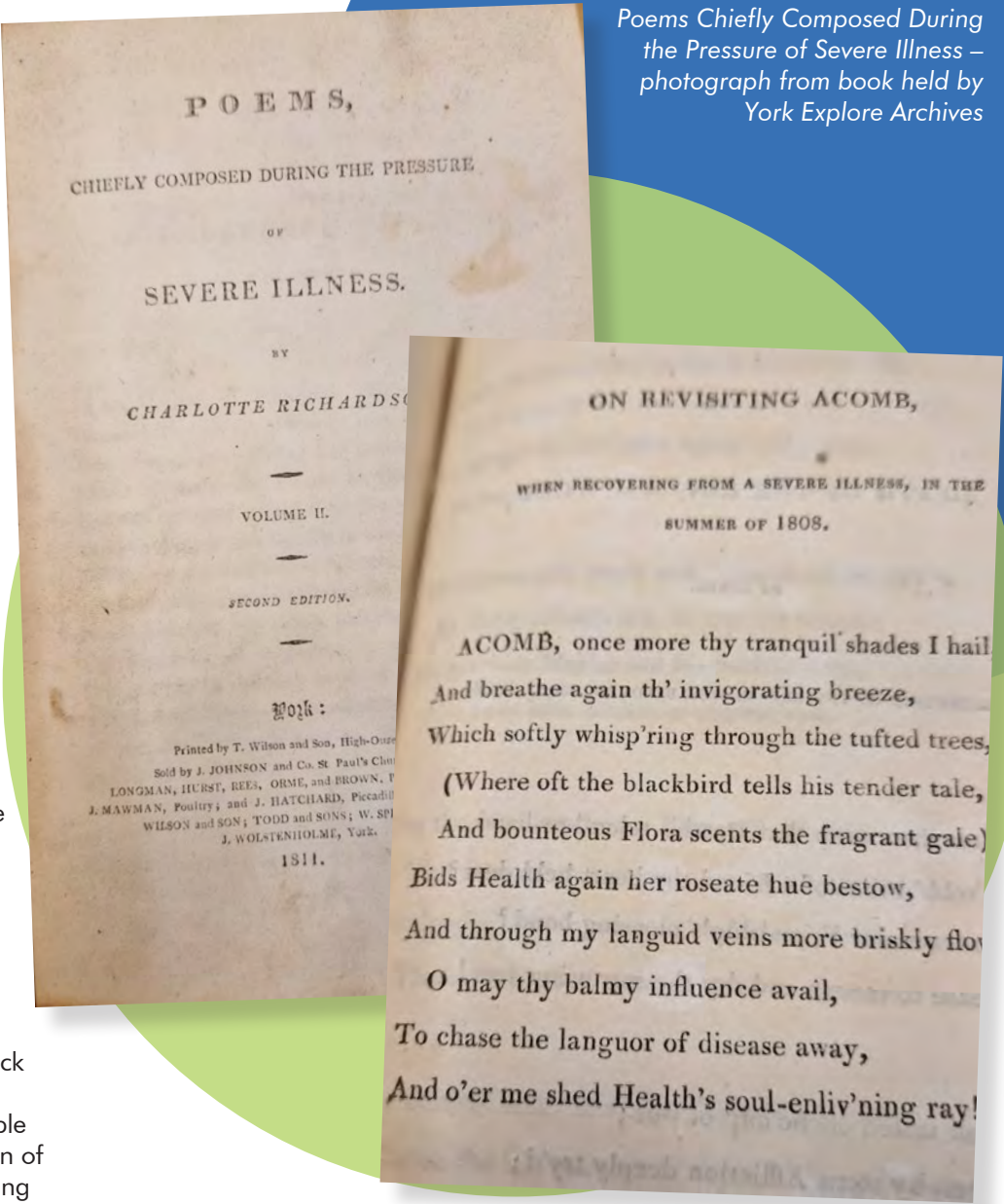
to her ‘lovely boy’ being restored. Catharine also describes him as being ‘nearly quite recovered’ at the time the first book of poems was published. It may be that Mrs Cappe slightly embellished the situation in her letter to the Gentleman’s Gazette as she was looking for sponsorship for the book, and that later sources picked up on the suggestion of blindness. Rodger Sales also suggests that Charlotte may have been so destitute that she spent some time in the workhouse. However, there is no evidence of this and there is later evidence that she remained in the property in College Street throughout. Charlotte refers to ‘kind and tender friends’ (PWDO) who supported her with sympathy and kindness during what must have been an extremely difficult time.

Charlotte and  
Robert Richardson  
marriage  
31 October 1802  
Findmypast.com



## The Poetry Books and intervening years

It was at this point in her life that Charlotte’s luck began to turn, and Catharine Cappe became her support and sponsor. Mrs Cappe will have known Charlotte from her time at the Grey Coat School and seems to have arranged some, at least, of her placements in service. There is also a suggestion in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography that Catharine Cappe’s brother was the Richardson family’s physician (presumably out of charity). Catharine Cappe describes, in the preface to the poems and in her letter to the Gentleman’s Magazine, having her attention drawn to Charlotte’s poems by a mutual friend. Having known Charlotte ‘from her infancy’ and the kind of education Charlotte had had, Mrs Cappe describes herself as being astonished by the quality of the poetry. There is no doubt that some of Catharine Cappe’s motivation for raising sponsorship to publish Charlotte’s poems, was to help Charlotte and her son get back on their feet financially after the death of the family’s only breadwinner. However, this was not Catharine’s only motivation. She had been struck by Charlotte’s continuing faith and piety even in the face of considerable misfortunes and saw the publication of Charlotte’s poetry as a way of putting forward her own message about ‘the great efficacy of religious principle’ (PWDO). Mrs Cappe is quite honest about this from the very start of her preface to Charlotte’s book. She wrote to a number of editors of periodicals in order to gain as many subscribers as she could and presumably hoping for as wide a readership as possible. Catharine Cappe, as a prominent York philanthropist, would also have known a number of wealthy local families herself. Catharine Cappe’s support for Charlotte and publication of her poetry was also a way of promoting herself and her own works. Catharine’s name appears with Charlotte’s in both volumes of poetry and that ‘her own publications are advertised at the back of the first volume’ (Sales). It appears that Catharine Cappe took control of the content of Charlotte’s



book and ensured that there was a mixture of poems about Charlotte’s own experiences and misfortunes in order to draw on the readers’ sympathies, along with poems about worthy causes and notable people in Mrs Cappe’s circle, including a poem about the death of her own stepson Robert Cappe and the death of Admiral Horatio Nelson. Catharine dismisses poems that Charlotte has apparently written analysing sermons or lectures as ‘little interest’ to the reader. Nor can Mrs Cappe help herself from interfering with the poems she has included and there are regular footnotes from her throughout the book, explaining what the poem is referring to, or just passing an opinion or – on one occasion – drawing the reader’s attention to one of her own

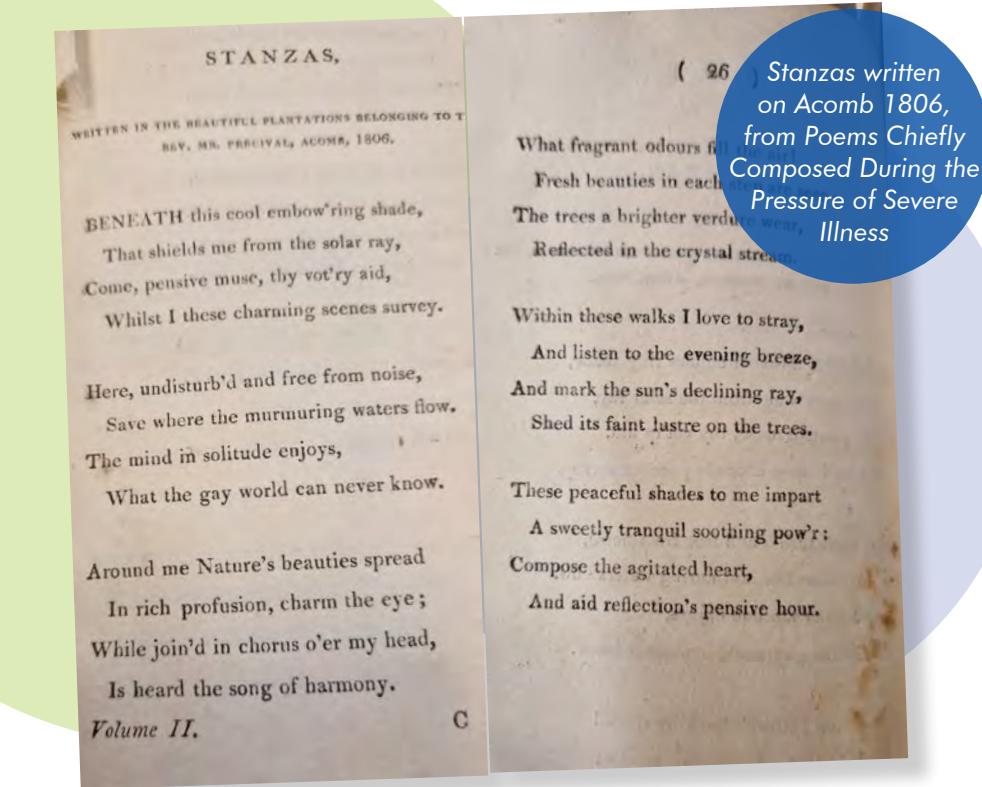
publications about the Grey Coat School! Catharine Cappe managed to raise enough subscribers for Charlotte’s first book to be published in 1806; many of the subscribers are named, with the amount they donated, at the end of the book. The book was called ‘Poems written on Different Occasions’ and was printed by T. Wilson and R. Spence of High Ousegate. Catharine Cappe also managed to have some of Charlotte’s poems published in newspapers across the country. The book gives us a good insight into Charlotte’s life and most of the poems are about Charlotte’s own experiences or are written to her friends. However we begin to see Charlotte’s growing interest in local affairs and in particular her interest in the development of the



▶ Retreat in Heslington, a new kind of institution where those with mental health issues are treated with calmness, care and compassion. (Charlotte had not yet become a friend of the family of William Tuke who established the Retreat but this would develop later.)

The book was sold, initially for 2 shillings and later for 5 shillings. Eventually one thousand four hundred copies were sold to subscribers and six hundred to the general public. Some of the money made was used to clear Charlotte's debts and £300 (approximately £21,500 today) was invested for her with an interest rate of 5% (Sales). With this income Charlotte was able to invest in property (either College Street or possibly even in Acomb) and to start a small school where she had 'thirty little scholars at 5s. per quarter and gave so much satisfaction to the parents, by the judicious treatment and by the rapid improvement of their children, that no doubt remained of her success' (Cappe, Letter to Athenaeum). There is a suggestion in the York Herald, many years later, in 1882, that Charlotte was a schoolmistress in 'one of the tenements of St William's College' which suggests that she was still living in College Street when she opened her school.

However, Charlotte became seriously ill in 1808 with 'an abscess in her side' (Cappe in Poems Written Chiefly



Composed During the Pressure of Severe Illness (henceforth PDSI)) and was obliged to close her school for a while which left her unable to support herself and young Robert. Once again Catharine Cappe stepped in and arranged the sponsorship and publication of a second book of Charlotte's poems: 'Poems Chiefly Composed During the Pressure of Severe Illness'. In the preface Catharine Cappe hints that the alternative to this would have been 'too degrading to propose' which suggests that Charlotte may have been on the brink of entering the workhouse. She received charitable payments between February and October 1808 from the York Female Friendly Society (of which Catharine Cappe was a founder). Charlotte had not been expected to live but she had surgery to relieve the abscess in March 1809 (Binfield) and she recovered.

The poems in this second book are again a mixture of Charlotte's own experiences and poems to friends and in praise of notable people in York – probably those who had donated to the first book. Charlotte writes a poem to Lindley Murray, the American Quaker and philanthropist who lived in Holgate. (Mrs Cappe apologises in her footnote for the presumption of including this without Mr Murray's consent, although in his later book about Henry Tuke, Lindley

Murray praises a poem of Charlotte's.) Charlotte shows an interest in politics, in particular in William Wilberforce and the abolition of the slave trade.

There are several poems to young Robert with several references to her ongoing sorrow at the death of his father. Young Robert seems to have been ill during this time and during July 1806 it seems that he and Charlotte were parted as she writes a poem while on the road to visit him.

It is also during this time that Charlotte seems to become very attached to Acomb. In 'Stanzas written in the beautiful plantations belonging to the Rev. Mr. Percival, Acomb, 1806', Charlotte describes Acomb as an idyllic place 'undisturb'd and free from noise' where:

*'Fresh beauties in each step are seen; The trees a brighter verdure wear Reflected in each crystal stream' (PDSI)*

The Reverend Percival is likely to have been Charles Percival who was a curate at St. Stephen's Church. (He had formerly been the Reverend Charles Miller before he took his wife's name of Percival when they married in 1792). The Reverend Charles Percival owned Acomb Hall, where Oak Rise is now, so this is possibly where Charlotte stayed or at least where she wrote the poem. At that time Acomb was little more than a village round the Green, St. Stephen's Church and Front Street. Acomb Hall had quite substantial grounds stretching down past what is now Woodlea Avenue.

Charlotte writes another poem about Acomb in 1808. It appears that she went back to Acomb to recover from her illness and Mrs Cappe, in her letter to the Athenaeum, describes Charlotte spending the previous Summer with a 'friend in the country' and this may well have been it. Once again, Charlotte describes Acomb as a place of tranquillity with an 'invigorating breeze' (PDSI). Acomb was clearly her place to go to find peace and quiet.

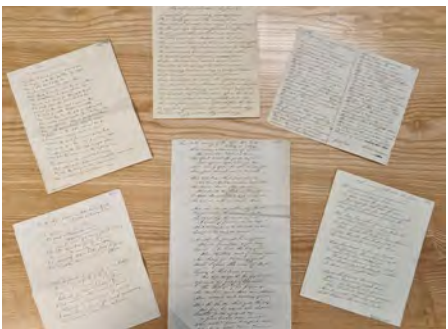
The second book of poems seems to have been a success as Charlotte recovered and was able to support herself from then on. It was even republished in 1811. It is also possible that she reestablished her school although there is no actual evidence of this.

### Philanthropic works

During her later life Charlotte appears to have become more involved in philanthropy and to mix with some of the better-known charitable families of York.

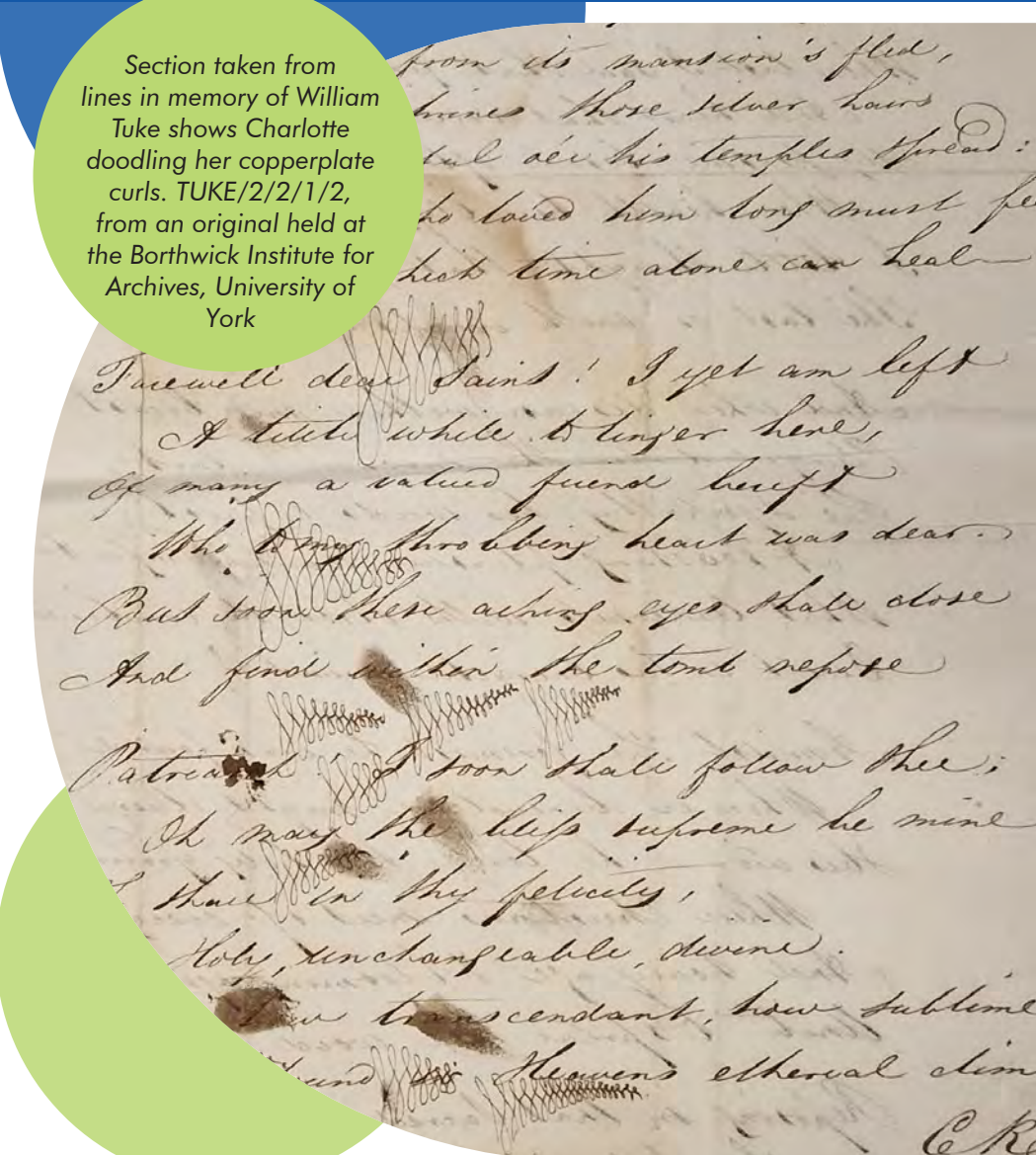
We know that she was friendly with the Tuke family, as there are a number of letters from Charlotte, written as poems, held in the Tuke family files in the Borthwick Institute. Among these is: a poem to Mr Henry Tuke (son of William Tuke, who established the Retreat) on his birthday in January 1814, shortly followed by one sending commiserations on his death in August 1814 (the poem about which Lindley Murray was so complimentary); a poem addressed to Samuel Tuke (Henry's son) in St. Saviourgate in memory of Mrs Mary Tuke, who died in September 1815; a poem to Esther and Maria Tuke on their leaving York; and a poem in memory of William Tuke himself who died in 1822 at the age of ninety. This last poem gives us an insight into Charlotte's handwriting as in the file, along with the neat copperplate version which Charlotte, presumably, sent to the Tukes, there is a rough, smudged version covered with Charlotte's doodled swirls.

In 1814, it appears that Charlotte still had property in College Street. The York Herald and the Hull Packet reported on the trial at the Guildhall on the 21 March 1814 of two men accused of theft from the cellar, part of the 'dwelling house' of Mrs Charlotte Richardson, in College Street, York. The burglary had taken place around Christmas 1813 and the men had apparently stolen leather 'the property of John Hogarth' and then sold the leather on to a shoemaker. So, it seems that Charlotte was either sharing with, or letting her property to, a shoemaker or someone who worked



TUKE/2/2/1/2, from an original held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York

Section taken from lines in memory of William Tuke shows Charlotte doodling her copperplate curls. TUKE/2/2/1/2, from an original held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York



with leather. All three men in this case – the burglars and the receiver - were sentenced to transportation.

The minutes of the York Female Friendly Society record that Charlotte was appointed a 'Visitor' on 21 May 1818. The York Female Friendly Society (YFF) had been founded by Catharine Cappe. It had been set up in 1788 to provide financial and medical support to girls leaving the Grey Coat School although this was expanded later to cover other working women. The offices of YFF were in St William's College which is also where Charlotte had her school and where she lived. As a 'Visitor' Charlotte had responsibilities for 'evaluating need and providing care for (the YFF) members'.

On 15 June 1820 the YFF set up the 'York Society for the Encouragement of Faithful Female Servants'. Similar societies were being set up in other cities to encourage and reward female servants for staying with their

employers. Wealthy benefactors (all of whom presumably had female servants) made donations to the society and female servants were given a copy of the bible and were nominated (by their employers) to be rewarded with gifts of money for remaining in service (British History Online) – and for good behaviour. Charlotte became the Registrar of this society. She would have been responsible for registering the benefactors and probably also the recipients of the rewards. The committee was chaired by the Lord Mayor and committee members included James Backhouse (Backhouse nurseries in Acomb) and William Tuke. Charlotte had therefore become well respected by this time and was mixing with some of the most influential families in York. In November 1822, the Yorkshire Gazette reports that Charlotte resigned the 'Office of Registrar' for the society, quite possibly because of ill health.



The last years

The last five years of Charlotte's life seem to have been sad and blighted by ill health. In 1821, her benefactress Catharine Cappe died. Mrs Cappe had encouraged and supported Charlotte since her time at the Grey Coat School and had probably been partly responsible for Charlotte mixing with some of the great and good of York and finding a place in society.

In May 1823 Charlotte's beloved son Robert Harling Richardson died at the age of nineteen. Charlotte was well enough known at this time for Robert's death to make it into the Yorkshire Gazette with Charlotte referred to as 'author of poems'. It appears that Robert was a 'youth of much promise' who died of a 'lingering illness'. He died in Bradford (although we do not know why he was there), but he was buried on 16 May in the graveyard of St Michael-le-Belfrey where his father was buried. This may have been because Charlotte still had her property in College Street in the Parish of St Michael-le-Belfrey or because St Michael-le-Belfrey was the burial site for the Grey Coat School. The ceremony was performed by a Reverend Graham who is likely to have been the same John Graham, of St. Mary's Bishophill Senior, who conducted Charlotte's wedding and had become a friend.

Charlotte was almost certainly in poor health by this time and, given her fondness for the tranquillity of Acomb, was likely to have been staying there. She died in Acomb on 26th September 1825 of at the age of 50. Although Charlotte had been in a 'very weak debilitated state' for several months, her death was apparently sudden and caused by a 'rupture of a blood vessel

in the lungs' (Probate record). Charlotte was buried, at her own request, with her husband and son at the graveyard of St Michael le Belfrey which was behind Monkgate. Unfortunately, the graveyard no longer exists and Charlotte (like Richard III) is buried under what is now a car park.

Charlotte's legacy

Charlotte did not leave a will, and her final wishes had to be interpreted from a rough and rather rambling draft that her friends found in a pocketbook under a sofa, after her death. The details of the rough draft and an attached affidavit are recorded in the probate record filed at the Borthwick Institute. The document and the affidavit sworn by Charlotte's friends, to prove that this draft and the pencilled amendments were indeed in Charlotte's handwriting and would have been her final wishes, gives us an interesting insight into Charlotte's

thoughts and her last days. The record describes Charlotte as a widow 'late of the City of York but dying in Acomb', which suggests that Charlotte was not a permanent resident of Acomb, although her friend Hewley Graham 'a gentleman' (possibly related to John Graham) describes visiting her at her 'residence in Acomb' a few days before she died. Charlotte's friends who swore the affidavit were (along with Hewley) Mary and Anne Cappe (stepdaughters of Catharine), Mary Smith (Charlotte's school friend) – all three described as 'spinsters'; the Reverend John Graham; and Oswald Allen, surgeon. Mary Cappe describes having received a letter from Charlotte the previous Christmas in which Charlotte had asked her opinion on various legacies she wished to make in her will, which were the same as those found in the pocketbook. Hewley Graham describes visiting Charlotte on 30 August and, finding her 'extremely ill' suggested that she should make a will and offered to help her do this properly. Charlotte's response was that she would do this herself, although she never did.

In spite of the rambling and informal nature of the document which is clearly a letter to someone – it ends 'If I could have come out for an hour or so I would have liked to have talked over many things with you ... my head is dizzy and my fingers weary so goodnight and may every blessing attend you' – it was accepted as Charlotte's last will and testament. The probate record index states that her estate was worth £450 (approximately £35,000 in 2024.) She left £50 to the Grey Coat School and £50 to a surgeon Mr William Matteson.

The rest was split between a long list of charities which included the Sunday Schools 'conducted by members of the established church' (i.e. surprisingly not the Unitarians or the Quakers), the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society. Sums of £5 go to each of her late husband's relatives with £10 to his sister Margaret which Charlotte specifies must be 'free from the control of her husband'. Various named people including Mary Smith also receive £5. As an afterthought at the end Charlotte adds 'F. Society £20.' (Mary Cappe states that the Female Friendly Society was a suggestion from her.) Charlotte also left personal items such as her desk, her clothes and her books to friends and to Robert's relatives.

Charlotte requested that a selection of her unpublished works be printed and the profits from this, along with any income from the books she has already had published, should be used for the 'promotion of female education in India'. There is a suggestion from Charlotte that she was still owed money from her previous publications: 'Mr Wilson has never made any settlement with me since the last editions were printed'. Charlotte's later poems were never published. The last poem of hers to be printed was in her obituary in the Yorkshire Gazette on 8 October 1825. However, her first book, Poems Written on Different Occasions is still in print and is even available as an e-reader.

Charlotte's greatest legacy is perhaps that she made something of herself from very humble beginnings and in the face of a life of sadness and adversity. From a background as an illegitimate child in the back streets of York and life in service, Charlotte was able to impress some of York's most influential people and their families with her intelligence and her talents. She was largely self-educated, attending sermons and lectures, and keeping up to date with national events to increase her knowledge. She lost her mother, her brother, and her new husband in quick succession but, with some support, managed to live out her life in relative prosperity. The notice of her death in the Yorkshire Gazette states her as known for her 'genius and talents'. The wording of her final will shows her to have been a strong advocate for women and girls and in particular for their education.

There is no memorial to Charlotte anywhere in York and it is difficult to know where any memorial would be. Perhaps in College Street where she seems to have spent much of her life but possibly, more appropriately, in Acomb which was the place Charlotte chose above all others as her place to recover and recuperate and eventually where she died.

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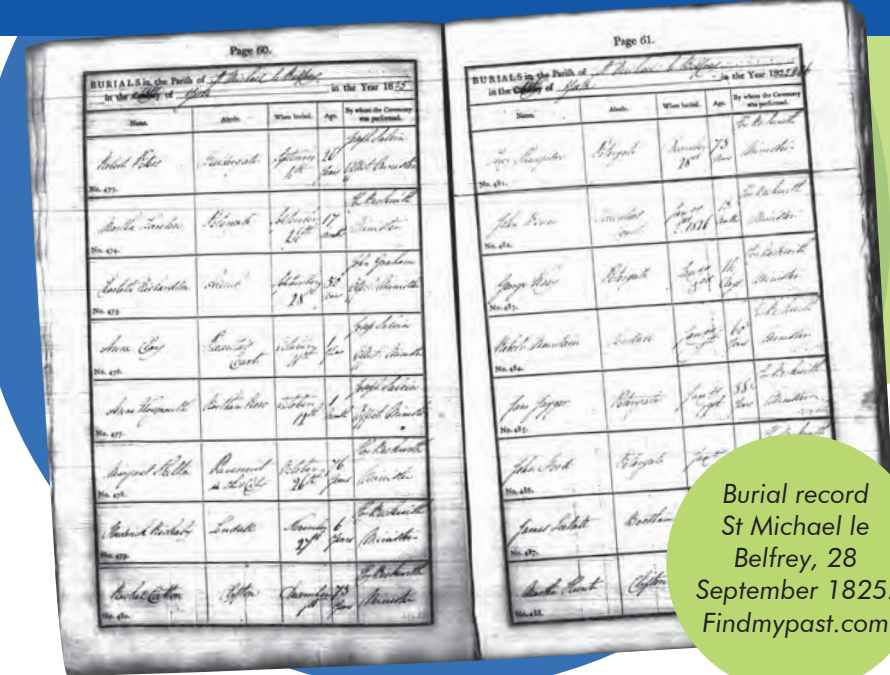
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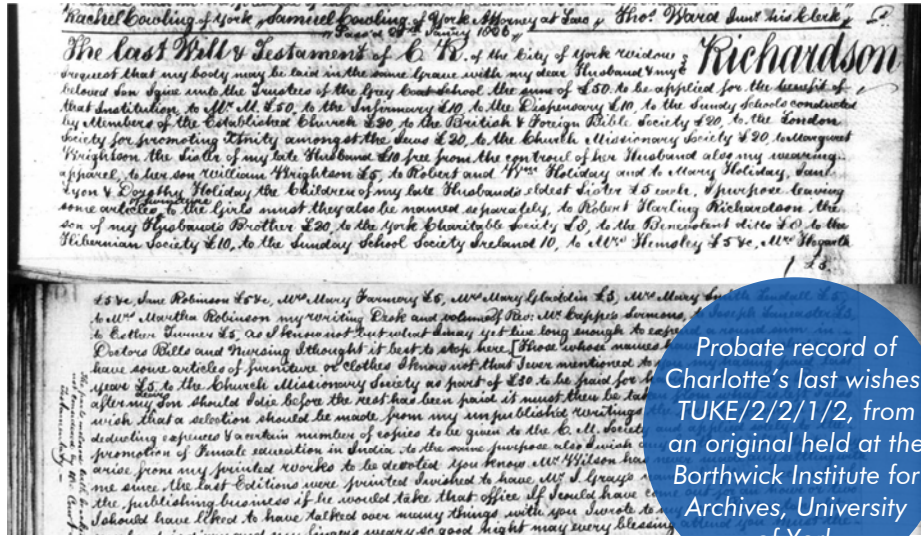
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Probate record of Charlotte's last wishes. TUKE/2/2/1/2, from an original held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York



**ACOMB**

Where did all the workers go, when the employers closed their doors?  
 We had the Sugarbeet, The Carriage Works, Ben Johnsons, and many more.  
 They closed Beckfield and Lowfield schools and lots of nursing homes  
 where did all those many people go, when they closed the doors?  
 Now Acomb is expanding fast, new houses built much more than a street or two.  
 And with them come the new families. Where will they be employed?  
 Where will their children go to school ours are bursting at the seams.  
 Hopefully, Acomb will be the place of dreams.  
 No doubling of traffic lines and the buses' daily route,  
 Maybe they will walk to work or for their daily commute  
 Will everyone work from home everyone is doing it now, or so I hear.  
 How big will Acomb be in another hundred years?

**A WALK IN FISHPOND WOODS**

My dog looked up at me with expectation hoping for a walk.  
 Sighing with reluctance I put on wellies and my coat  
 Grabbing up her lead giving her the stern talk.  
 If it keeps on raining, we'd need a blooming boat  
 We set off towards fishpond woods bent double by wind and rain  
 Why are we out in all of this we must be insane!  
 Underneath the trees canopy it's really quite dry.  
 I look up at all the birds and watch them as they fly.  
 We hear a crash of swearing words and laughter that's quite loud  
 Don't walk in the middle love it's very slippery and I just kissed the ground  
 We walked away with giggles glad it wasn't us  
 We stopped to hear the birds sing a song, thrush so I'm told  
 The birds have been here forever these woods are very old


**Mary Florence  
LINDBERG  
(nee HARGROVE)**

**Born** on 29 September 1861,  
**Baptised** on 02 October 1861.

**Married** on 29 August 1882 at the age of 21 in the Parish Church of St Olave, City and Ainsty of York, Yorkshire, England.

**Died** on 6 December 1920 (age 59 years), buried in Parish Church of St Stephen, Acomb, North Yorkshire, England.

**Thomas Henry  
LINDBERG**

**Born** on 25 August 1858 Middlesbrough, North Riding of Yorkshire, England.

**Died** on 24 April 1915 Leeds, West Riding of Yorkshire, England.

**Their children:**

Alice Mary LINDBERG, b. 1884

Olga Florence Annie LINDBERG, b. 1886

Oscar Henry LINDBERG, b. 1887

Mary Hilda LINDBERG, b. 1892

# Mrs Lindberg

## AND HER MEMORABLE MOMENTS IN YORK

Mrs Lindberg was born in York, later settling in nearby Acomb. She grew up in an intellectual family as her father was a local newspaper editor and a socially active person. She married a military person who was also an artist, brought up four children and actively participated local social events and charitable works. From the one side, it may not be such a remarkable biography on its own, but because there are not that many life stories about Victorian women, I decided to do my research about some of their personalities, bringing up at least a couple of the remarkable moments in Mary Florence Lindberg's (nee Hargrove) life.

Photographs by Anda Baraskina

I am very grateful for receiving guidance and support with information about Lindberg's family from Alan Powell, Vice Chairman of the York Family History Society. When we discussed Acomb's most noticeable personalities for my research with the aim to raise an interest about Victorian time, middle class, socially active ladies, he agreed that there is not enough research done and their work appreciated. Some time ago, after the acknowledgement of such a situation, he decided to create a compilation of facts about noticeable ladies from Acomb too, and not only men. From this research he advised me to look at Mrs Lindberg's life.

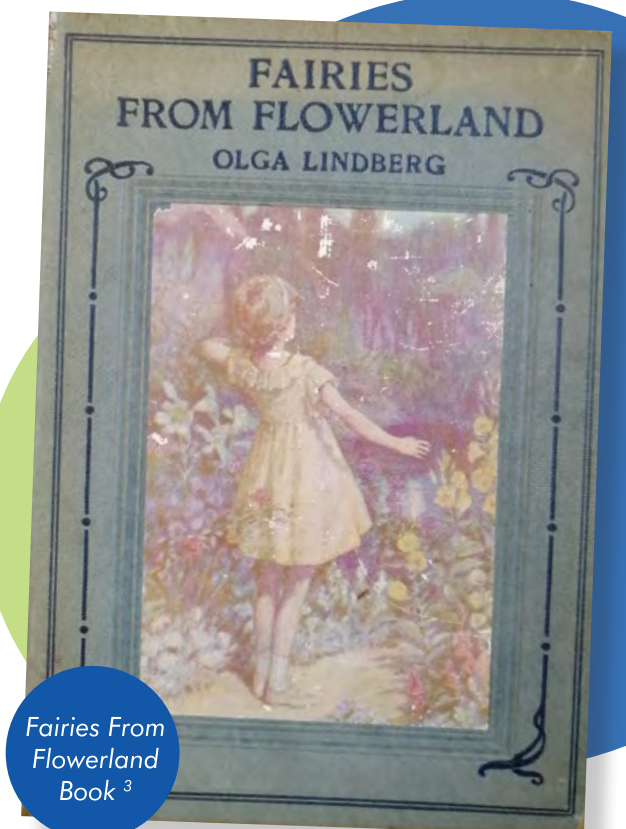
It is interesting that Alan's and Lindberg's families are connected also with the fact that Alan's relative was a housekeeper in Hargrove's household: "In 1881, my great aunt, Sarah Dale was working as a servant for the Hargrove's in Marygate. She was there at the time when Mary Florence (Mrs Lindberg) gets married, and one could imagine she helped the new bride with preparations for the event." Later, when Alan's parents live in close neighbourhood to the Lindberg's in Acomb, just two houses between them, Alan also remembers a lovely occasion from his childhood.

Alan Powell remembered: "Miss Olga Florence Annie Lindberg, the second daughter and second child of the Lindberg's, was resident at the Hollies, Nr 27 Front Street in 1923. She was still there in 1939, when we moved into the house next door Nr 29 'Chestnut View'.

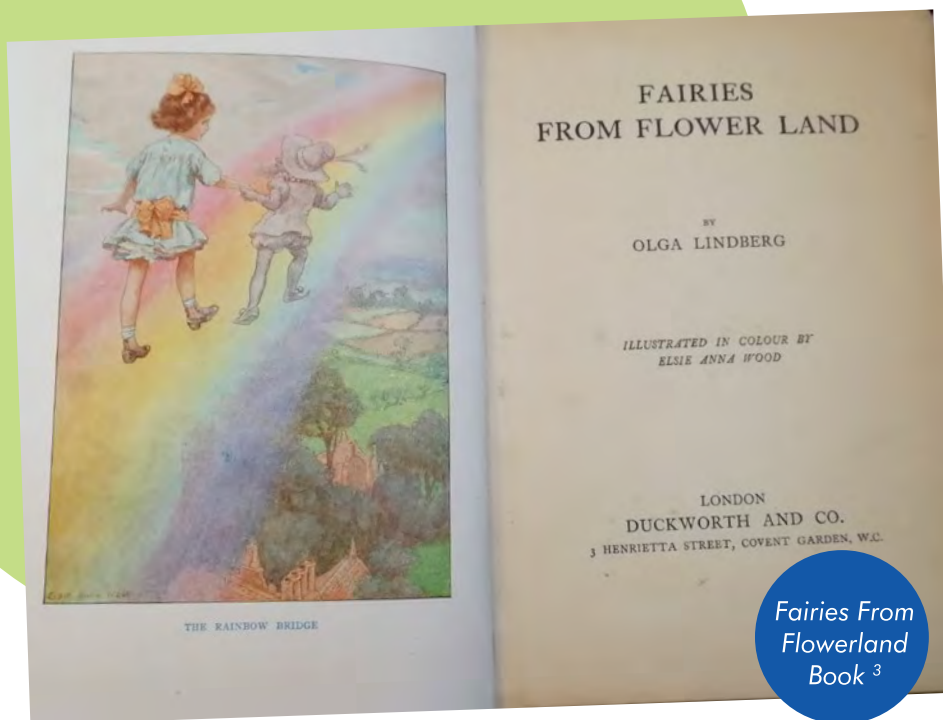
Although only in her mid-fifties, I remember her as an 'old lady'. While I was ill with sore chest pulmonic, Mrs Lindberg very kindly bought me a small gift from Littlewoods newsagents (three sheets of 'scarpers' to stick into a 'scrap book', a popular pastime from Victorian times). Miss Lindberg moved from Acomb in the 1940s, the house became home to an army officer and his family. Olga F.A. Lindberg died August 18, 1951. (Probate Dec 13, 1951, late of Heat Court Barton Road Torquay, and left for Oscar Henry Lindberg (her brother), RTD Lieut. Col H.M. Army £3120, 12 S, 5 Pence.)<sup>2</sup>

Olga's life itself is full of unusual facts. As

A.Powell found out there is a record of Miss Lindberg sailing to New York on the ship 'Umbria' on the 23 January 1897, when she would have been only 11 years old at the time! In the 1911 Census when the family was living at Acomb House Front St, Olga aged ▶







Fairies From  
Flowerland  
Book<sup>3</sup>

25, is entered on the Census as an 'authoress'. There is a book by Olga, published in 1915 entitled 'Fairies from Flowerland', published in London by Duckworth and Co, and dedicated to her father. It is a book intended for children, containing stories about elves, fairies & wizards etc. It contains six coloured pictures by Elsie Anna Wood.

The book was published in 1915, at the time of WWI raging and with Olga's father dying the same year. She would have been an adult and as an unmarried woman at the age of 29 and still living in her parent's house, she would have been marked as a spinster.

The early 20th century is marked as pandemic with beliefs in Fairies, not only by children but most seriously by adults as well. People created their own outbreaks of fairy fever through the astonishing spread of books, art, photographs, and artefacts in this period.

Alice Sage wrote, that 'Fairies were everywhere: in children's books and plays of course, but also in grown-up poetry, and even newspapers. ... The symptoms of fairy fever included fascination, obsession, and a suspension of disbelief. Passion overcame rationality. Sufferers might be seized with inspiration to write fairy poetry and drama, choreograph fairy ballets, or craft elaborate costumes from tulle, tinsel, and spangles. These eruptions inevitably spread the contagion. Some sources identify

Sherlock Holmes author Arthur Conan Doyle as 'patient zero' for the postwar outbreak, and Carol Silver has blamed his publication of the Cottingley Fairy Photographs in December 1920 for the spread of 'temporary fairy fever'. However, Doyle was far from an isolated case. ... In adults, though, a preoccupation with fairies could be a serious affliction, especially when combined with other mental and physical illnesses, as in the cases of fairy painters Richard Dadd and Charles Altamont Doyle. In both these cases the obsessions with, and visions of, fairies were presenting symptoms of underlying issues. ... Looking back, it seems that the stress of wartime had lowered the population's defences. Early signs included stockpiling of fairy images.<sup>14</sup>

One can only speculate at the moment of Olga's and her siblings' underlying issues, what anxieties they felt because of the war or the reasons why they left their parents' home so late or never. Their income and status in society would allow them to find suitable marriage offers for all three daughters, yet they were living in a big house with many servants all together with their parents. The youngest daughter married first but the only son and the second oldest daughter Olga stayed single till the end of their life.

Mary Hilda Lindberg, youngest of Lindberg's children was born in 1892 and baptised on 2 May 1892. She was married to Hugo E. Everard who was born in 1884, St Andrews, Scotland,

and died in 1959, Claro, Yorkshire, West Riding, England.

When they married in 1912, Great Ouseburn, Yorkshire West Riding, she was only twenty and among the youngest, being under the official adulthood age of twenty-one and the first from all the sisters to find a husband. He was born in Scotland, but in 1907 travelled to Honolulu, Hawaii and Vancouver, Canada at the age of only twenty-three. When he married, he would be twenty-eight, or eight years older than the bride, which was considered a very comfortable age gap between a husband and wife in those days. Though his travels around the world would give much more life experience than Mary who had grown up in seclusion in her family house and the not so big town of York.

They had a son the next year, Angus Hugo Oscar Everard, born in Acomb, later living in New Zealand (1913-1998) and a year later a second son Michael S. Everard Mr (1914-1931 or 37, there is no precise information about his life or death).

Mary Hilda died in 1922 at a quite young age of thirty. Her sons would be only eight and nine years old. Hugo, Mary's widower, remarried in July 1925 to the Helen S. Marnoch in Chelsea, London, they didn't have any children.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Mary Fenwick (nee Lindberg) would have been aged thirty-three when she married in 1917, quite late by the leading opinion in those days and her husband, born in 1890 at the Malvern, Great Malvern, Worcestershire, would be six years younger than her. Their marriage would have been one of the rare joyful moments in that otherwise dark and remorseful time for their mother Mrs Mary Florence Lindberg and the whole family.

Mrs Lindberg's first child and oldest daughter Alice has a remarkable life story in itself as A. Powell noted that she joined Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service as a V.A.D. (Voluntary Aid Detachment) and became a nurse. At the age of thirty, in April 1915 she embarked for France and became a member of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corp, reg No 13490.

Before the 1850s, British Army medical services were organised by regiment and consisted of male nurses

only. It was not until 1881 that the Army Nursing Service was established (no significant records of the Army Nursing Service have survived). In 1902 it was reorganised and became Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS). On 16 August 1909 the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) was formed to provide nursing and medical services at times of war. It was organised by the British Red Cross Society which had previously been known as the British National Aid Society.<sup>6</sup>

Mr and Mrs Lindberg's only son Oscar Henry Lindberg was born in York in 1887, baptised on 26 January St. Olave's Church, Marygate, York. There is little information in Ancestry.com about him, only that he was a pupil aged fourteen in 1901 at Uppingham, Rutland, England (possibly Uppingham boarding school), which is nearly 130 miles away from York. In the 1910 Census he is noted in Acomb House where his parents lived and as a twenty-four year old 'traffic probationer N.E.R.'. There is only one more note about Oscar, that in 1920 he lived in Barkston Ash, West Yorkshire, England, without further information about his marital status or date of death. A. Powell in his notes mentions that on 15 September 1914 Capt. Oscar H Lindberg temp 2nd lieutenant, Infantry, and on 3 November 1914 this appointment

was cancelled. The 5 of Dec 1939 London Gazette states Capt. Oscar H Lindberg to be 2nd lieutenant (43443) late R.A.R.O., with his sister dead in 1951 (Olga), he was mentioned to be a Lieutenant Colonel, RTD.

For an only son and heir to the Linberg's name and quite substantial family inheritance, his life story is very unknown. Compared with the other siblings, there is the creativity of his sister Olga and her published book, younger sister Mary's early marriage and two sons, Alice's serving as a wartime nurse abroad. Their mother Mary Florence Lindberg, lived through all her children's good and bad times, as she lived long enough to see them all as fully grown adults.

Lindberg's family household moved from Bootham (5, St Peters terrace, Bootham, Census 1901) to Acomb House (23 Front Street, Acomb, Census 1910). The house itself stands very grand on Acomb's central street even today, serving the community as flats and offices to rent.

In 1911 Mr Linberg, aged fifty-two, lived in Acomb House, with wife Mary Florence, forty-nine, daughter Alice Mary, twenty-six, daughter Olga Florence Annie, twenty-five 'authoress', son Oscar Henry, twenty-four, traffic probationer N.E.R. and youngest daughter ▶

The First World War was very demanding for Mary Florence not only because of the stressful times themselves, but due to the following sad moments in her family life:

- death of mother Mary Sarah Hood (1828-1914), July 1914, York, Yorkshire, England
- less than year later the death of husband Thomas Henry Lindberg (May) (1858-1915) 24 April 1915, Leeds, Metropolitan Borough of Leeds, West Yorkshire, England
- and three years later the death of her father William Wallace Hargrove (1826-1918) 3 Oct 1918, York, Yorkshire, England<sup>8</sup>



Right: Acomb  
House  
Above right:  
number 29<sup>7</sup>



Mary Hilda, nineteen. There was also a Lydia Dale, eighty, widow visitor, Jessie Davidson, cook, thirty-eight, Edith Ward, thirty, housemaid, and Olive Foster Brune, kitchen maid.

And just a couple houses further from this house is A. Powell family house Nr.29, which is mentioned in his memories about Olgas visit when he was unwell in his childhood.

The family head and husband of Mary Florence, Thomas Henry Lindberg was born in 1858 in Middlesbrough, educated at St Peter's School in York, studied art at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. The school still exists nowadays and educates their pupils in diverse art forms. 'Slade's foundation in 1871 was the result of the request from Felix Slade who envisaged a school where fine art would be studied within a liberal arts university. In offering female students' education on equal terms as men from the outset, Slade played a key part in the introduction of women to UCL. Since its inception Slade has been at the forefront of developments in the field of contemporary art and welcomed students from all over the world.<sup>9</sup>

At the 1881 Census, Thomas, aged twenty-two, an art student, was living with his aunt Alice Peirson, a widow at 25 Orsett Terrace, Paddington. These terraced houses still exist.<sup>10</sup>

Alan Powell found out that Thomas served in the Army, probably in Malta, where some of his artwork could still be found. He was a member of the Corp of Volunteer Artillery, York Arts Guild

and on the committee of York school of Art. He is listed in Knowles 'Book of York Artists'. One source says he was 'a fine artist & portrait painter'.

The York School of Art moved into the York Art Gallery building on exhibition square in 1892. From 1892 to 1972 when moved to a purpose-built building on Tadcaster Road, York school of Art functioned as an academic, vocational, cultural, and social centre for York.<sup>11</sup>

The J.W. Knowles & Sons collection comprises around six hundred volumes and bundles of documents, and over 3,000 glass plate negatives and lantern slides. (John Ward Knowles was a keen local historian. The bulk of the paper-based collection reflects this, covering his and John Alder Knowles' research interests in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The collection includes volumes of research notes on York and other themes (KNO/1 and KNO/2); York art and artists (KNO/3); Yorkshire churches, including York Minster (KNO/4); stained glass (KNO/5); York people and places (KNO/6); York music and musicians (KNO/7); acting and the theatre, including the Grand Opera House and Theatre Royal (KNO/8); and heraldry (KNO/13). The collection also includes volumes of manuscripts created by John Ward Knowles and John Alder Knowles on a variety of subjects (KNO/10 and KNO/11); as well as documents retained by them, presumably for research purposes (KNO/12)).<sup>12</sup>

T H Lindberg's death and funeral was recorded extensively across several newspaper publications. Sheffield Daily Telegraph wrote on the 26 April 1915: "DEATH OF MAJOR T.H. LINDBERG OF YORK. The death of Major Thomas H. Lindberg, of Acomb, occurred on Saturday at a nursing home in Leeds, where he had gone for an operation. .... He took a deep interest in military matters, and in 1879 obtained a commission in the Reserve forces, being transferred to the Militia in 1893; Captain and Hon. Major Northumberland Fusiliers (Militia), and served in Malta during the South African war, 1900-1901 (Mediterranean medal). He subsequently served with the 5th Provisional Battalion, 1901-2, and upon the reorganisation of the Militia in 1908 was gazetted to the Land Forces Reserve of Officers. His first military service was in the old 1st Volunteer Battalion (Prince of Wales's Own) West Yorkshire Regiment, at York, and in 1893 he was transferred to the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Pontefract Militia). At the outbreak of the present war Major Lindberg was employed on recruiting duty, and then became instructor of musketry at Hurworth-on-Tees. He married the only daughter of Mr. W.W. Hargrove, who survives him with two daughters and a son, the latter now holding a commission in the Army. Major Lindberg was a prominent Freemason and Past Master of the Albert Victor Lodge, York."<sup>13</sup>

The Masonic Great War Project provides us not only with information about Major Lindberg (because of his connection with Masonic Lodge and Acomb War Memorial), but also his wife and children. "Mary Florence Lindberg started service at Nunthorpe Hall in 1915 aged fifty-four, working as a nurse. She carried out six weeks duty at the Station Rest Van in 1915 and ninety hours at the Stranded Soldiers Club. Mary completed service at Nunthorpe Hall in 1916. She was living at Acomb House, Acomb in 1911, with her husband, Thomas Henry Lindberg, who was an artist living on private means. He had also served in previous conflicts and was described as a Reserve Officer (Land Forces). In 1914 Thomas Lindberg was a Major of the Northumberland Fusiliers (24461) and was on a Special List, Home Service

only, New Armies. Tragically Major Lindberg died on 24 May 1915 at the age of fifty-six in Leeds. Mary's son, Captain Oscar Henry Lindberg, served with the Northumberland Fusiliers at Gallipoli in May 1915 and later served in France. He survived the war.

Mary's daughter Olga Florence Annie Lindberg was an authoress. Another daughter, Alice Mary Lindberg, was a VAD in QAIMNS and became a nurse working for the British Committee, French Red Cross and was awarded medals. She disembarked for France in April 1915 at the age of 30, becoming a member of QMAAC (Reg. No. 13490). Alice married Cuthbert Addison Fenwick at Great Ouseburn in December 1917. Her husband served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Guernsey Artillery and departed for France in Apr. 1918."<sup>14</sup>

Mrs Linberg's (nee Hargrove) father William Hargrove was an early nineteenth century editor, publisher, and historian of the newspaper The York Courant. The youngest son of the Knaresborough bookseller, Ely Hargrove. William moved to York in 1813, where he took up ownership of the York Herald newspaper. He edited the paper for thirty-five years and published several books on the history of the city, such as the three-volume history printed in 1818. He initially wanted to reprint the monumental 1736 history Eboracum by Francis Drake, but there was little demand for another edition of the work.<sup>15</sup>

Alan Powell believed he was also instrumental in setting up the Mechanics Institute, the forerunner of York Technical college. It was founded as the Mechanics Institute in 1827. Providing day and evening lectures and classes in a wide range of practical subjects including trades, sciences, and commerce. In 1838 its name was changed to The Institute of Popular Science and Literature. A purpose-built hall was opened in 1846. In 1885 a new building at Clifford Street was opened which incorporated the library and art school. In 1891 the corporation bought the Institute to be used as a technical school. The library stock formed the first free library in York which the corporation opened in 1891. It became the City of York Institute of Science and Art in 1891. See Also - York Mechanics' Friendly Society.<sup>16</sup>



York Pageant poster<sup>18</sup>

## The York Pageant in 1909

Mrs Lindberg was part of The York Pageant (York Historic Pageant) in 1909 as the Colour Committee President (Executive committee or equivalent) and her husband Major Lindberg was the Master of Design.

If we look at the Advertisement, the colours are bright and attractive, kind of reminiscent of a stained-glass window in a mediaeval church, where stories intervene with historical attributes and artistic imaginings.

One can really sense the importance of the occasion, the pleasure, and the responsibility of being a part of it. It

was The Event of the time, sensational and more extravagant than any other, and no-one would have wanted to be away from it. There is a possibility that the children of Thomas and Mary Lindberg as of many other families with their relatives would be involved in the preparation or even be in the midst of the actors and performers. And there is evidence to this opinion by information provided by A. Powell: "1909 York Pageant, (listed under: York Mystery plays). 'Illumination: from shadow into light. Final Tableaux and songs. Miss Olga Lindberg of



25 Orsett Terrace, Paddington<sup>10</sup>



► Clifton taking the part of a 'page' in the production. This is a long list of names and address in the cast list, from booklet published by the York Herald, a number of these from Acomb."

The scale of this event was enormous and not only by the amount of people who organised it, but also by the amount that participated as actors, supporters, and visitors. Details are described in 'The York Pageant', The Redress of the Past, where information is gathered from newspaper cuttings and articles.<sup>17</sup> The Pageant was advertised as having two thousand five hundred performers; however, many newspapers' reports state three thousand performers or more were involved. Not only humans participated in Pageant, but also a large number of horses were used. Music was live and under the direction of local composer, T. Tertius Noble.

Major Lindberg was an artist by profession and chosen to be a Master

of Design to contribute to the scale and Gala event for the pageantry master L. N. Parker.

In a very strange and coincidental happening, the very next day after writing about this poster, admiring its style and colours, I went for Christmas lunch with my work colleagues. The pub Royal Oak in York has a first-floor dining room and there, next to the fireplace and behind the opposite person's heads, between the potted artificial palm plant leaves, I noticed a picture. At first it looked like any one of those old prints decorating any pub walls, but something familiar was there. I stood up and looked closely. The picture, to me, was more like an original drawing and brought me such surprise when I read out loud: 'York Historic Pageant, 1909'. It goes without saying that my friends were surprised too about my strange behaviour and so I tried to explain to them my research.

The picture shows a feminine figure in a historical period costume, and below is the text - Lady Plantagenet

Period A D 1200. In the top left corner stands a heraldic shield with three golden lions on a red background and with text under that stating Royal Arms. I could not see the signature on the picture and could not turn it around to look at the back of the framing for any notes. But... it is the same year and same theme, and there is a real possibility that the Lindbergs to saw this design of the outfit, consulted on or even made it themselves. I think that one of the supporters or sponsors were the landlords of the pub Royal Arms and the lady of the house at the time would dress like one of the historical personages and so was asked and provided with the design of an appropriate historical themed outfit especially made for her. What is truly behind this picture, hanging in the pub, needs to be researched more.

Next day I visited this pub and told them about my interest. Very kindly they agreed for me to leave a note to their landlord for a meeting or conversation about the subject once they return from holidays abroad. Unfortunately, there is no more information at the moment, but as a possible lead for further research I am intending to check the Directories of 1909 to see if there was such a pub and who owned it, maybe it stood in the same place and was renamed later? With any luck, the current landlords could show me at least some leads about the history of Royal Oak or pictures. There could be other similar pictures on other walls as I remembered another one next to the Plantagenet lady, showcasing an advertisement and holding similar architecturally pictorial elements as the York Pageant's poster.

The historical Pageant was performed outdoors in the Museum Gardens (York) and there were six performances. The theme that year was a History of York throughout the ages. Louis Napoleon Parker, so called 'The acknowledged inventor of modern historical pageantry', chose to end his career as a pageant Master and that was his final performance as a director of a large-scale attraction. It was to be at York. Who would not agree that York with its mediaeval centre and the great Minster of St Peter's towering over all, did have the past on show for all to see. York

offered Parker exciting material to work with in terms of its past, and he made the most of this.<sup>20</sup> The announcement of his retirement came well ahead of the pageant itself, which helped further publicise the show.

The book 'The York Pageant July 26th to 31st 1909: Book of Words, Master of the Pageant, Louis N. Parker. York, 1909' was made and there are estimates that around ten thousand copies of it were printed, this including the copies distributed to pageant actors. Surely at least one of them found its way to the executive lodge and so to the heavily involved family of Lindberg's.

The pageant raised an income of £762 9s 7d or the balance after expenses was distributed to the eleven local charities. All the seats were reserved and under a cover, the most expensive of which cost a guinea. The exact capacity of the grandstand is unknown; however, a notice in an auction seeking a buyer for the grandstand following the pageant indicates that it could seat 'more than five thousand' or twelve thousand standing.

Descriptions of the event say that "26-31 July 1909, the pageant took place each day at 3pm. There was a week of dress rehearsals beginning Monday 19 July. On Wednesday 21 July, six thousand spectators attended the rehearsal held in the afternoon, including members of the press. A press luncheon took place before the performance during which the pageant master gave an address. He stated that York would be his final pageant."<sup>21</sup>

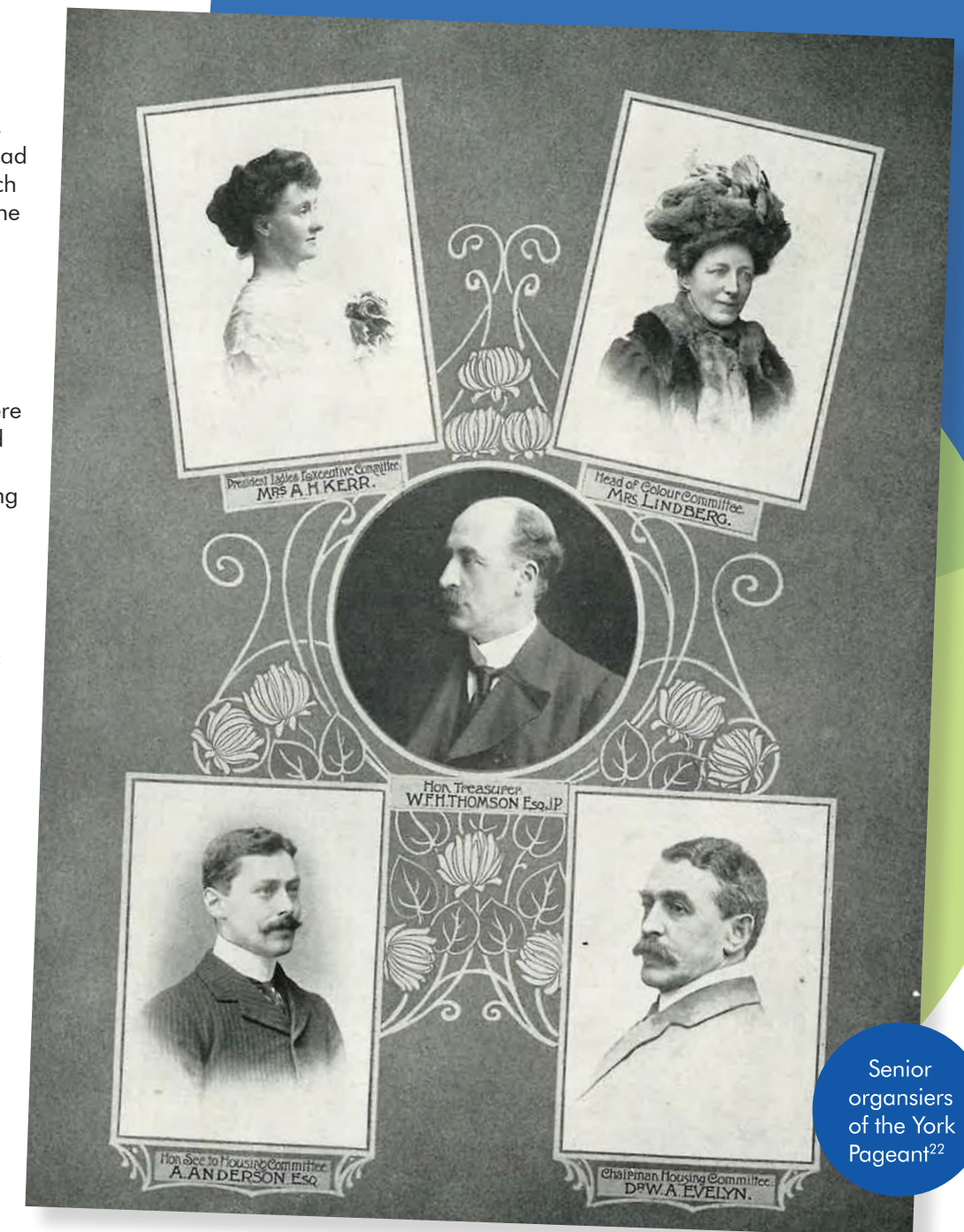
There is also a note that York employed a relatively compact team of senior organisers, given the size of the event and the type of governance

which was usual in this period for large civic pageants. Names of officials have been retrieved from a newspaper clipping, collected in a book of similar news cuttings, most of which do not have their original source or date appended. Thanks to that source we can find that Mrs Lindberg was the Colour Committee President. She was a leader of a not so small group of people as the Colour Committee consisted of 17 members (headed by a woman; made up of 1 man and 15 women).

Her husband, The Master of Design, Major Lindberg, sat on the executive

committee and on no fewer than six sub-committees. Collaborating between family members in such social occasions was not a rarity or only one's family tradition.

"In addition to the main executive committee, there were a number of sub-committees; each of the latter appears to have had at least one representative within the membership of the executive. It seems likely that many wives of men who sat on the executive were also involved with the pageant and were active in other sub-committees. Indeed, there were two, large women's committees:



Senior organisers of the York Pageant<sup>22</sup>



York Pageant Poster, photographed by Anda Baraskina<sup>19</sup>



► a 'Ladies' Executive Committee', which had over sixty members, and a 'Ladies' Working Executive Committee'. Many women appear to have sat on both. It appears that the Ladies' Working Executive was responsible for most of the hands-on organisation, overseeing the work of such sub-committees as the Cutting Out, Head-dress and Colour Committees, each of which had either an exclusively female membership or one dominated by women. On the Ladies' Executive, on the other hand, were a number of well-known names associated with York's confectionary manufactories, including Mrs T.W.L. Terry and Mrs O. Rowntree, suggesting this may have been more of an honorary body."<sup>24</sup>

## Supporting WW1 soldiers and sailors at York

When the First World War started, Mr and Mrs Lindberg were a slightly older than middle-aged couple with grown up children. After thirty-three years of marriage, Thomas died from natural causes in Leeds at the age of fifty-six and Mary was left as a widow being fifty-three years old. He died while serving as temporary Major in the 3rd Bn Northumberland Fusiliers. Their children were adults at this time, the youngest daughter being already twenty-three.

More information and even pictures about the volunteer duties in York station can be found within the Members of Clements Hall Local

History Group. They are exploring the Scarcroft, Clementhorpe, South Bank and Bishophill areas of York and have been researching the role of women in the First World War. Most of them gave their time, energy, and support in whatever ways they could. Facing tired, disoriented, and stressed-out soldiers between their travel arrangements, between units or hospitals would be a hard psychological and physical load to bear as volunteers provided 24/7 service. Keeping in mind that Mary Lindberg at that time was already at the honourable age of fifty-three, her contribution to the community would be extremely valuable but also very harsh on her. Military concepts in general would not be strange to her as we can read about her husband's military achievements and her son joining the army later, but losing her husband in an already stressful time of war could be the main reason for so many hours of work done by Mrs Lindberg.

There is an entry about Mrs Lindberg in the Members of Clements Hall Local History Group. Pauline Alden writes: "Mrs. Mary Florence Lindberg lost her husband at the beginning of the First World War. As well as working as a VAD nurse locally at Nunthorpe Hall Auxiliary Hospital, she also gave her time to helping at the Stranded Soldiers Club and the Station Rest Van. York Stranded Soldiers' and Sailors' Dormitories put up stranded servicemen in the Assembly Rooms, Blake Street and in 1917 offered bed and breakfast to over 28,000 persons.

During the war hundreds of thousands of servicemen passed through York railway station, travelling to or from active service. They would have been hungry and tired and could have waited hours for connections. The station buffet closed at 5.30 pm and the service was poor. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Canteen opened on 15 November 1915 on Number 3 Platform, York station (now platform 1). The North Eastern Railway Company provided two carriages placed at the buffer end of the platform. These supplied cut-price food and tea or coffee to



Soldiers and sailors buffet, York Station, unknown copyright

any servicemen leaving or passing through the station.

The Yorkshire Evening Press of 16 November 1915 describes the formal opening of the canteen. Mrs. Morrell, the President of the Ladies Committee responsible for running the canteen spoke at the opening. It had been constructed out of two of the railway company's saloons and the expense had been borne by the North Eastern Railway Company. It was divided into three sections: the kitchen, the canteen, and a retiring room for lady helpers. The canteen was described as a model of neatness, exceptionally well fitted up by Mr. Pick and Mr. Endgard, who were responsible for the details of construction.

Major Watson (General Secretary of the NER) opened the canteen and hoped that it would serve many soldiers and sailors who journeyed through York. He also hoped that the

railway staff would direct any member of HM Forces waiting for trains and in need of refreshment towards the canteen.

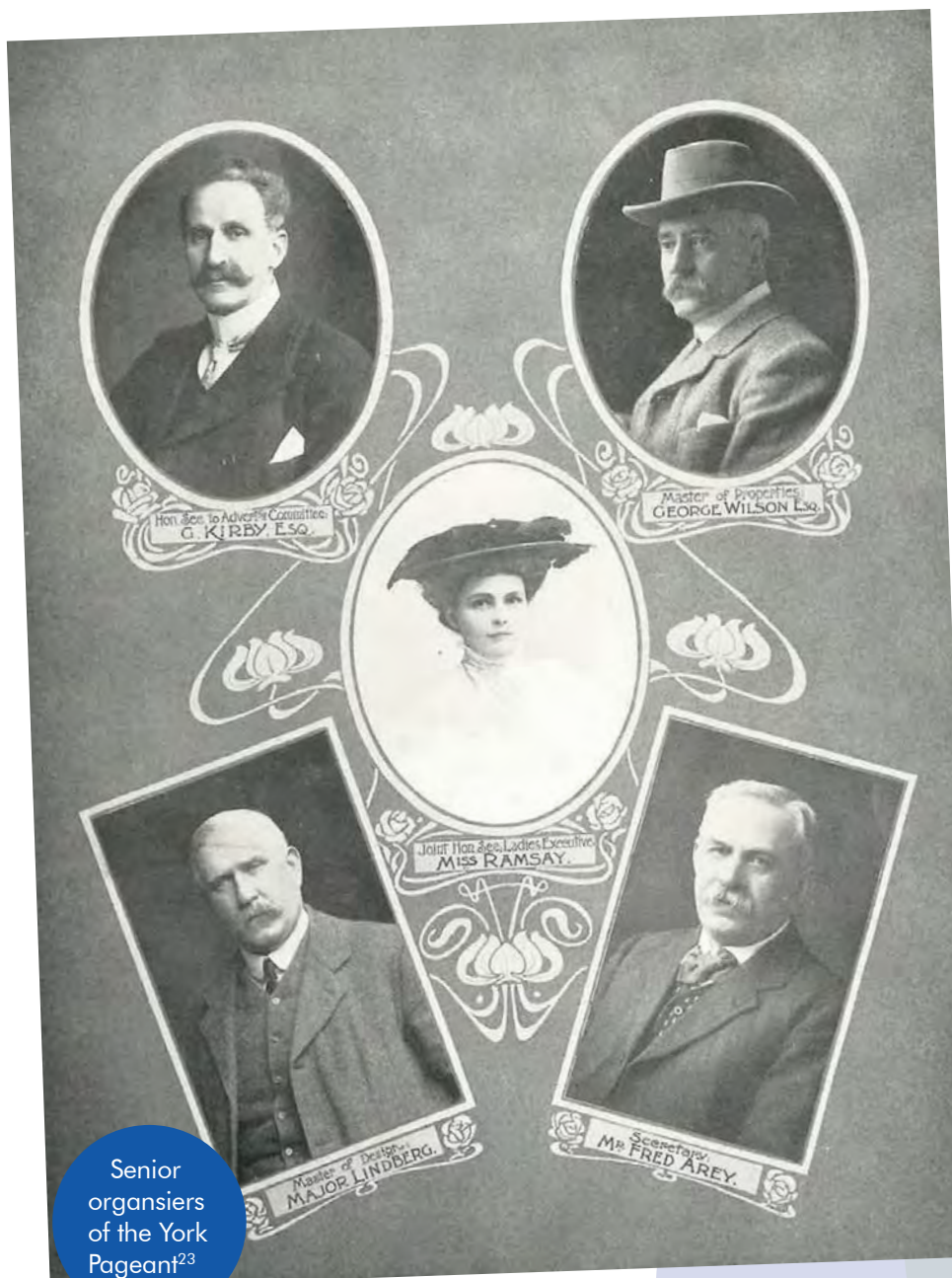
It was open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week until it closed on 23 May 1919. During this time, it served refreshments to four and a half million soldiers and sailors – an average of eighteen thousand per week. In its first year of opening £7,630 was spent on tea, coffee, and food (the equivalent of £330,000 today). In 1917 the average spent on mugs was £12 per week (about £596 today).

The volunteers at the canteen provided a friendly face and a kind remark. This would have meant a great deal for the men and boys who could have been away from home for a long time. In some cases, ladies running the canteens are thought to have written to the families of

servicemen they met, reassuring them of their safety. The volunteers worked tirelessly there for long hours, and a traveller commented on the busy aspect of York station in the small hours.

"Service men predominate and there are many civilian passengers. Arriving trains disgorge sleepy passengers and large quantities of parcels, newspapers, and mail. What struck me was the unselfish service given by the ladies of the Soldier's and Sailor's Canteen where business was very brisk indeed." (NER Magazine, Nov. 1918, Vol.8, No.95).

It would not have been easy for the volunteers to remain positive and welcoming. They would have seen terrible injuries, especially when the ambulance trains came in. When the canteen closed in May 1919, Mrs. Morrell, President of the Ladies Committee, remarked that all the



Senior organisers of the York Pageant<sup>23</sup>





Nunthorpe Hall  
– 19th Century  
engraving by  
P.Hyde<sup>28</sup>

volunteers needed a holiday!”<sup>25</sup>

Nunthorpe Hall, where Mrs Lindberg started her nursing job in the First World War, was one of York's most lavish Victorian houses, built 1870-88, with a sumptuous interior looking out over the Knavesmire. It became one of the great centres of York's social life when Sir Edward Green moved there in 1888. It was demolished in 1977. During World War One the Hall was lent to the Red Cross by Sir Edward Lycett-Green, for use as a hospital. The house was described as being put into perfect order by Mr. and Mrs. Lycett-Green, who bore all expenses not covered by the government grant. The hospital opened on 1 October 1915, with a convoy of men direct from the Battlefield of Loos. Initially there were fifty beds, organised into eight wards. The hospital's capacity was later increased to 76 beds. When it closed

on 14 April 1919, staff had treated nine hundred and fifteen patients in total.<sup>26</sup>

In a summary about Nunthorpe Hall Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses (VADs) work Clements Hall Local History Group write that at the outbreak of the First World War, VAD members eagerly offered their services to the war effort. The British Red Cross was reluctant to allow civilian women a role in overseas hospitals: most volunteers were of the middle and upper classes and unaccustomed to hardship and traditional hospital discipline. Military authorities would not accept VADs at the front line.

VADs carried out duties that were less technical, but no less important, than trained nurses. They organised and managed local auxiliary hospitals throughout Britain, caring for the large number of sick and wounded soldiers.<sup>27</sup>

## Married in St Olave's church, buried in St Stephen's church, Acomb

Mary Florence Lindberg (nee Hargrove) married her husband Thomas Henry Lindberg on 29 Aug 1882 at the age of twenty-one in the Parish Church of St Olave, City and Ainsty of York.

St Olave church was a very old and ancient building even then, when the couple celebrated their marriage vows. It was smaller than we can see it as today, as an extension was built just five years after the wedding, but already altered fifty years ago to accommodate more people and also provide chancel and space for choristers. As a long-established church in the central part of the city, St Olave's congregation contained many well-known and respected parishioners. We can see that by the provided assigned seating plan after a major restoration to finally repair the serious damage it had sustained during the siege of York.

Parishioners were 'at a loss where to seat themselves' and so in 1723 the churchwardens and other prominent church members applied to the consistory court of Archbishop William Dawes to gain his approval for a new pew allocation plan and it was granted. Helen Robb in her research 'Eighteenth Century St Olave's - Restoration and Social Order' found "An incredible hand drawn document, dated 1723 and discovered in the Borthwick Archives, reveals much about the internal layout of the church, who was worshipping here and how members of the congregation were seated according to their social position, eighty years after the English Civil War ended."<sup>29</sup>

In the 19th Century the church's capacity needed to be increased to match the growth of population of the parish. A gallery was inserted in 1832 but this was not sufficient. New churches had to be built and parishes formed. Thus, from St Olave's were

taken the parishes St. Thomas, Lowther Street 1855, St. Philip and St. James, Clifton, 1871, St Luke's Burton Stone Lane, built 1900, created a separate parish in 1930. St Olave's was one of the first churches in York to be influenced by the Tractarian or Oxford Movement with its emphasis on dignity and order in worship. Not only therefore was the church extended to provide space for more people, but also a chancel for better sanctuary and room for the surplice choir. In 1879 the chancel was built to the design of the York architect George Fowler Jones, and a vestry in 1899 by Demaine and Brierley also from York.<sup>30</sup> Whether it was that rich history or respectableness that was the reason why the Hargrove's and later Lindberg's families chose St Olave's church as their congregational church is unknown, but later in the next generation, Mrs Lindberg's daughter Alice decided to be married in the Parish Church of St Stephen, Acomb instead. Mr and Mrs Lindberg, both of them are buried there too.

Mary Florence Linberg left a substantial sum of around £250000<sup>32</sup> in 2023 money in her will, sharing her inheritance between her only son and oldest daughter Alice Mary Fenwick, who married Cuthbert Addison Fenwick on 12 December 1917 in Parish Church of St Stephen, Acomb, North Yorkshire, England. He was promoted on 15 Aug 1915 as Second Lieutenant of the 1st Gloucester R.G.A.<sup>33</sup>

Mrs Lindberg died in 1920 (age 59 years) and is buried in Parish Church of St Stephen, Acomb, North Yorkshire, England. Though records of the church go back many centuries, fate has not been so favourable to it.

The earliest records of St. Stephen's Church go back to the 12th Century. In 1830 the old church was reported as "ruinous and in decay and not capable of repair and is unfit for the purpose of celebrating Divine Service and Sermons therein". A faculty was obtained to build a new church to a design by Joseph Hansom. The present church was completed in 1832 but the old chancel remained. The chancel was rebuilt in 1851, and much of the old stone was used in rebuilding. The church has been added to and altered a number of times since then, the latest being after the fire at Christmas 1992.<sup>34</sup>

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> 1909 YORK PAGEANT PRINT ~ A. ANDERSON DR EVELYN THOMSON LINDBERG RAMSAY AREY <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/14192297103> 15/12/2023 15:30
- <sup>2</sup> Memories from A. Powells collected information, handwritten materials, shared with author mid-January 2024.
- <sup>3</sup> Fairies from Flower land, book belongs to A.Powell, photos taken in meeting in 08/01/24
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/selcie/2021/03/01/fairy-fever-in-the-aftermath-of-the-first-world-war/> 20/01/2024 16:38
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/119451704/person/240181371702/facts> 20.01.2024 18:03
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/military-nursing/> 09/01/2024 17:14
- <sup>7</sup> Both photos of houses from an author, 19/01/2024
- <sup>8</sup> [https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/6924198/person/6078000647/facts?\\_phsrc=xsj12&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/6924198/person/6078000647/facts?_phsrc=xsj12&_phstart=successSource) 20/01/2024 13:38
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/about/history/> 09/01/2024 11:53
- <sup>10</sup> [https://www.google.com/maps/@51.5175681,-0.1849541,3a,75y,155.17h,103.29t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s6-rSj-GzFnhcKnY\\_qU4PA!2e0!7i16384!8i8192?entry=ttu](https://www.google.com/maps/@51.5175681,-0.1849541,3a,75y,155.17h,103.29t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s6-rSj-GzFnhcKnY_qU4PA!2e0!7i16384!8i8192?entry=ttu) 09/01/2024 19:55
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.friendsofyourkartgallery.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-history-of-york-school-of-art.pdf> 09/01/2024 12:14
- <sup>12</sup> [https://explore.york.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Knowles\\_collections\\_guide.pdf](https://explore.york.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Knowles_collections_guide.pdf) 09/01/2024 12:25
- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.masonicgreatwarproject.org.uk/legend.php?id=1905> 11/12/2023 21:12
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.masonicgreatwarproject.org.uk/legend.php?id=1905> 11/12/2023 21:12
- <sup>15</sup> <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1140543/history-and-description-of-the-ancient-city-of-york-v-2-by-wm-hargrove> 09/01/2024 11:40
- <sup>16</sup> <https://archives.explore.york.org.uk/index.php/mechanics-institute-technical-college> 09/01/2024 19:37
- <sup>17</sup> Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton, Paul Readman, 'The York Pageant', The Redress of the Past, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1354/> 11/12/2023 22:54
- <sup>18</sup> York Pageant 1909: advertisement. Image supplied by David Guyton for the [historicalpageants.ac.uk](http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk)
- <sup>19</sup> York Historic Pageant, 1909. Lady, Plantagenet Period A D 1200. Pub 'Royal Oak', 18 Goodramgate, York YO1 7LG. 12/12/2023, 15:00
- <sup>20</sup> <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1354/> 11/12/2023 22:38
- <sup>21</sup> <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1354/> 11/12/2023 21:49
- <sup>22</sup> Scan from page purchased as '1909 YORK PAGEANT PRINT ~ A. ANDERSON DR EVELYN THOMSON LINDBERG RAMSAY AREY' from eBay 29/12/2023 14:16
- <sup>23</sup> Scan from page purchased as '1909 YORK PAGEANT PRINT ~ A. ANDERSON DR EVELYN THOMSON LINDBERG RAMSAY AREY' from eBay 29/12/2023 14:19
- <sup>24</sup> <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1354/> 11/12/2023 22:15
- <sup>25</sup> <https://www.clementshallhistorygroup.org.uk/projects/world-war-1/the-contribution-of-women-in-the-first-world-war1/supporting-ww1-soldiers-and-sailors-at-york/> 13/12/2023 17:00
- <sup>26</sup> <https://her.york.gov.uk/Monument/MYO4845> 15/12/2023 14:59
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.clementshallhistorygroup.org.uk/projects/world-war-1/the-contribution-of-women-in-the-first-world-war1/nunthorpe-hall-the-story-of-an-auxiliary-hospital-in-world-war-one/> 15/12/2023 15:13
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- <sup>30</sup> <https://www.stolaveschurch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/History-of-St-Olaves-Church-Henry-Stapleton.pdf> 27/12/2023 13:18
- <sup>31</sup> [https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/1904/images/31874\\_222853-00086?pld=1535697](https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/1904/images/31874_222853-00086?pld=1535697) 20/01/2024 14:03
- <sup>32</sup> <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> 20/02/2024 14:17
- <sup>33</sup> <https://wyndhammarsh.co.uk/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I12467&tree=CledwynMarsh#cite3> 20/01/2024 14:22
- <sup>34</sup> <https://www.acombparish.org/history-of-st-stephens.html> 27/12/2023 14:36

Probate,  
Ancestry.com

**LINDBERG** Mary Florence of Acomb House Acomb Yorkshire widow died 6 December 1920 Probate London 7 January to Oscar Henry Lindberg esquire and Alice Mary Fenwick (wife of Cuthbert Fenwick). Effects £6541 16s. 9d

31



# 'SAY NOT Goodnight'

## A Wander Through St Stephen's Churchyard

Photograph by Tee Bylo

The brilliant and inspirational author Lailah Gifty Akita once wrote that "The graveyard is the ever lasting home of every man" and nestled in the shadow of the quaint St Stephen's Parish Church in Acomb with its decoration of Tadcaster limestone, a wealth of stained glass and the fish topped weather vane perched upon the steeple – a beautifully tranquil churchyard awaits the curious visitor.

And although a churchyard has stood on this site since the Saxon Times and despite the historical importance of precious monuments and the tombs commemorating the fallen tended by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission – St Stephen's Churchyard remains a working cemetery; in particular for the interment of ashes.

Although a haven for the preservation of wildlife under the care of the Eco Church Team – there is also much to delight any tombstone tourist who loves nothing more than whiling an hour or so wandering around a local graveyard.

I have been a passionate taphophile or grave hunter since my teenage years and St Stephen's Churchyard remains a favourite of mine; not only because it is the place where my beloved grandparents now rest but also for the diverse array of tombstones and monuments erected in tribute to those long-forgotten folk for whom this fascinating place remains their everlasting home.

From coach builders, farmers, surgeons, soldiers, mathematicians, babes in arms, to genteel ladies, gentlemen and glaziers with their lives rich in detail and set in stone – many of their stories have yet to be revealed.

Why not walk awhile?

The main entrance walkway to St Stephen's Parish Church and churchyard situated is on York Road and is dominated by the distinctive Grade II listed lych gate, erected in 1882 and dedicated to the memory of one Henry Hale (1810–1881) who had raised vital funds towards the restoration of the church.

Historically, the lych gate was symbolic of the space between consecrated and non consecrated land and by which the bearers would wait alongside the coffin for the arrival of the priest before burial.

As you walk along the long path framed by attractive evergreens of yew and holly and enter the churchyard facing north in SECTION D - there is a plaque upon a bench erected in memory of the infants who had died at birth at Acomb Hall, which was once the maternity hospital for the City of York.

Often laid to rest in common and unmarked graves and usually left unrecorded within the parish register – this monument remains a powerful yet poignant tribute.

A common or public grave would be a plot belonging to St Stephen's Parish Church and would be used to bury those who did not have the financial means to pay for their private burial rights.

The dead were usually buried along side perfect strangers with the bodies of babies and infants buried at the feet of the adults.

One such grave was used for the burial of HANNAH NORTON, the illegitimate child of Jane Norton, who had been born at the Workhouse in Market Weighton on the last day of January in 1838.

Upon hearing of the news that Jane had married Charles Gowland and was now in a respectable position by which to care for her daughter, a Guardian of the Poor Law Union had travelled with Hannah to Acomb on December 20 1840 and in the absence of the volatile Charles, the pretty and healthy infant was reunited with her mother at their home on Acomb Green.

Despite the protestations from Jane that her husband was not willing to care for her daughter – the guardian had no reason to fear for Hannah's well being.

Following the departure of the Gowlands from their cottage in June 1841, and with the new residents expressing concern about a foul smell from the direction of the coal hole; an investigation would lead to the discovery of a child's body wrapped in a bundle.

With an inquest now opened, and with Hannah's identity confirmed by the clothing that she had worn December

last and that she had died by assault and strangulation on the day that she had been returned to her mother – Jane Gowland quickly became a person of interest.

Following her arrest, and incarceration at York County Jail, the heavily pregnant and distressed Jane was brought to trial on July 18 1840, and despite the evidence from others of her expressed dislike for Hannah, her fear of her husband's temper and a defence proffered that she could not have acted alone in the killing of her daughter – she was duly acquitted.

Perhaps to escape the notoriety of her sensational murder and illegitimacy – little Hannah Norton was quietly buried on June 24 1840 under the assumed name of 'Sarah'.

If you continue to walk northwards along the path between SECTION B and SECTION D, and with the old chancel of the church to your right – you might happen upon a tall headstone which proudly stands before the little distinctive blue door of the vestry.

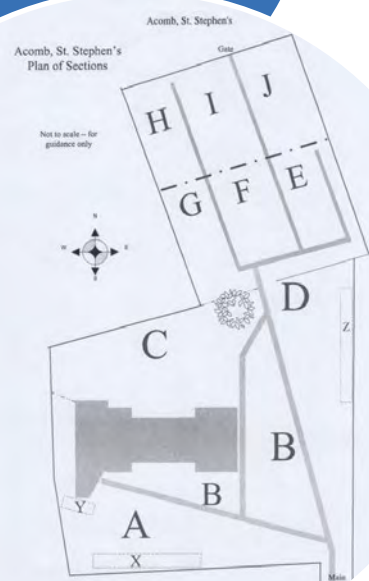
This headstone with its elegantly curved top etched in fine script with the words 'In Affectionate Remembrance' commemorates the resting place of one DIANA ORVIS, who was born in Epping Forest in 1849 to William and his wife Sarah Bray.

By the Census of 1861, William, a Huntsman had relocated to the York & Ainsty Dog Kennels in Acomb with his family which included Diana and her elder sister Elizabeth.

However, the years following were not to be kind to the Orvis family.

Following the death of his wife Sarah in February 1863 at the age of 53, William quickly married widow Mary Metcalfe in the Parish Church of Knaresborough on June 20 of that same year and their son William was baptised at St Stephen's Parish Church in May 1865.

In June 1868, William's daughter Sarah who had died from heart disease at the age of 22 was buried along side her mother in a gable situated on the path edge near the vestry door.



Burial map,  
courtesy of  
Tee Bylo



Photograph  
by Tee Bylo



Sadly, that same year the Orvis family would be left shattered by the deaths from the effects of Diphtheria of four year old William on October 26 and the year old Alfred Relton the following day.

And, on February 4 the following year, William, along with several others including Sir Charles Slingsby from the York & Ainsty Hunt would perish as they along with their horses crossed the River Ure by ferry near Newby Hall.

William was buried the afternoon of February 9 in St Stephen's Churchyard.

Alas, tragedy would continue to befall the Orvis family with the death of the 29 year old Elizabeth in August 1870 from heart disease and although Diana now the only surviving daughter had left Acomb to live in Bishophill for a time – her body was returned to St Stephen's Churchyard on August 27 1871 after dying from the effects of strep rash and severe oedema.

The beneficiary of her sister Elizabeth's estate and that of her father William – Diana ensured that her father's family were generously provided for, with articles of mourning for her step mother Mary and with the rest of her worldly possessions including her cushions and tea caddy for one of her dear friends.

A favourite headstone of mine is the monument to one FRANCIS MEGGESON who died in 1797 and is buried with his wife Mary and their two daughters Maria and Charlotte.

For those with an interest in gravestone symbolism – the pointed arrow with the flaming torch nestled inside this monument speak of the promise of their ascent to heaven.

Nearby is the large floor monumental stone slab to the family of GEORGE BLANSHARD which will appeal to those who enjoy a read in Latin!

If you were to wander westward in SECTION C – you can marvel at the inscription on the headstone of one JAMES STANSFIELD, a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and who lived to the age of 76 before his death in Acomb in 1864.

Turning eastwards and walking towards SECTION D will bring you to the foot of a large floor stone monument established by the children of the 70 year old widow ANN TINDAL whose cause of death was recorded as 'Decay of Nature' on July 15 1839.

Described as the 'Tenderest of Mothers' – the inscription tells us that although her life was one of hardship and sorrow, her death was that of peace.



Photograph by Tee Bylo

If you keep to the path as you continue to walk northwards towards the lower churchyard – you will see a headstone with an usual carved top and without inscription, however, if you take a look on the other side – you will see a tribute to one JOHN DALES, a druggist, Alderman and Lord Mayor of York who died in his eightieth year on the last day of March in the year 1838.

As his second term of office as Lord Mayor ended only in 1830 during his seventy second year – John was obviously a man who relished a challenge!

SECTION F is to be found within the lower churchyard and nestled within the long grass, and wild flowers is the tomb of EDWARD TENNYSON, the brother of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, poet laureate.

As Edward had been institutionalized since his teenage years, his death at the age of 77 at the Lime Tree House Asylum in May 9 1890 from the effects of mania and exhaustion – his monument adorned with a cross and inscribed with the words of 'Mercy Jesus

'Say Not Goodnight, But In Some Brighter World Bid Me Good Morning'

FRANK GOSDEN (1880-1947)

Photograph by Tee Bylo

Mercy' speaks of a plea for the perfect peace which had eluded him in life.

*One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but  
strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

Ulysses

If you turn once more and return to the path towards the upper churchyard – you may pass an unusual headstone decorated in patchwork in tribute to one ELIZABETH HUBBACK who died at the age of 26 on October 4 1811.

As her youngest daughter Sarah died a mere 24 days later at the age of 13 months – it is possible that both mother and child had perhaps been seized by the same illness.

Elizabeth's husband George, an affluent gentleman who had moved to Acomb from Billingham in County Durham would have the melancholy task of arranging the burial of their five year old daughter Elizabeth in January of the following year as she had died from the burns which had consumed her small body after her clothing had caught fire on New Years Eve.

Their son Robert Gamwell Hubback would later marry Frances Kerr, a daughter of Lord Charles Beauchamp Kerr of Farnham and although Robert and Frances would lead a peripatetic existence moving from one fine house to another throughout County Durham with their ever growing family and retinue of servants – both would eventually find their everlasting home here in St Stephen's Churchyard.

I hope that you have enjoyed this briefest of wanders through the fascinating and idyllic St Stephen's Churchyard and if you are eager to learn more about my research about St Stephen's Churchyard or if you have any family history tales to share – I would love to hear from you!

Happy wandering!

### About Tee Bylo

Known as The Dead Sleuth and an enthusiastic taphophile with an interest in tombstone symbolism, Tee Bylo is a professional genealogist, writer, historical researcher and public speaker. Tee sleuths throughout Yorkshire and beyond.

# Project reflections

## FROM PHILIP

Heritage Hunters is more than just a project; it's discovering new areas of research, not looked at by mainstream museums. Through the amazing efforts of our resident researchers, we're not only unearthing forgotten facts and figures but also revealing the diverse experiences and perspectives that have shaped Acomb and Westfield, and indeed the entire city of York. As we delve in to history, we're reminded that the past is not static or fixed; it's changes with each new discovery, perspective, and interpretation.

But "Heritage Hunters" is more than just research; it's a call to action for people to explore their own history, whether it be their family, the stories of their local community, the buildings around them, or their personal interests and experiences. By supporting residents to connect with their history, through Heritage Hunters, in a small way, we can support people to connect with where they live.

Together with residents of Acomb and Westfield, we're not just preserving history; we're actively shaping it, ensuring that it remains relevant and accessible to future generations.

This is truly my favourite project, to work with people, living in an area to ask questions about where they live and sharing their findings with their neighbours.

### Thoughts from our participants

I had only been living in Acomb a week or so when I picked up a leaflet about Heritage Hunters in Acomb Library. I decided to get involved as I thought it would help me to get to know my new neighbourhood as well as my new neighbours – and so it has proved. I was surprised and delighted to find that my house is built upon land that used to be part of the Backhouse Nurseries – I hope it means that my garden soil will prove to be fertile!

Cecilia

Really enjoyed doing the research and looking at the photos of not just Acomb but also of York. Living here I think we take York for granted and don't appreciate it.

Sandra

The Heritage Hunters project may seem daunting at first, but everyone involved with the project (including the other participants) is so helpful and supportive that it is easier than you might think. I have enjoyed every part of the project – not just becoming absorbed in my own piece of research but also hearing fascinating memories, stories and research from the others.

Juliet

A brilliant way of getting people involved in the history of their community. Now you've read this - check out editions 1 and 2 on Hull Road and The Groves.

Steve

Taking on board what everyone has done, I will look on Acomb in a new light as I walk around. At the risk of sounding 'over the top' it will add a dimension; a walk-through time as well as space!

Roger

### Where to go to get more information

If you would like to find out more about researching local history, York Explore can help with enquiries and you can find more information on York Museums Trust website.



