

FRIENDS OF SWALEDALE MUSEUM

Newsletter No. 33
Spring 2022

A message from the Curator

Our Museum year started with a visit by the children and teachers of Pannal School just before Easter. The pupils are always inquisitive and energetic, and are invigorating to be with. They ask simple but devastatingly difficult questions that get our minds working. I would particularly like to thank Prue Drew, who, as other volunteers succumbed to Covid-19, helped us through the museum sessions. It was a great loss not to have Jane Sammells with us, who as well as overseeing the sessions on 'What did the Dales people wear in the 19th and early 20th centuries?' was going to launch some evening workshops on what Dales folk ate, up at Grinton Youth Hostel.

However, it does feel as if we are getting back into our stride after so much upheaval. Out of the chaos and uncertainty good things have come. We are now up-to-date with our inventorying, and have had time to do all those jobs which had been left on the back-burner. You will also see that we have moved the Friends of the Museum lectures to Reeth Memorial Hall. With Covid variants, and the fourth rounds of vaccinations, we definitely feel we have made the right decision. However I hope you will all turn out in force to support the lectures, as we have a big space to fill! I would particularly like to thank Kathy and Chris Browne for helping us settle in to the Memorial Hall; they have gone to enormous trouble to make us feel at home. We have donated our spare data projector to the Hall, so that we do not have to worry about stands and extra cabling, and feel this



This newly arrived flock of hand stitched sheep made from vintage blankets were made by Sue Richardson for our shop.

They were very popular with the Pannal School children.



Photo - copyright Scenic View Gallery

We would like to thank the Platinum Jubilee Committee for inviting the Museum to participate in the celebrations on Reeth Green on 2nd June. What a fabulous day it was for both young and old and all of us in-between, thanks to the brilliant

organisation, careful thought, and huge amount of time of the volunteers who planned this event. We had some splendid 1950s objects brought to our tent - two handkerchiefs with snazzy designs specially made for the Coronation, a splendid cake knife with red and blue inlaid inserts, which by chance went with a cake tin that someone else brought in. Then there was an object that stumped almost everyone - a brown ceramic butter bell. Now we all want one to keep our butter cool. We were surprised by a splendid Coronation mug, it was the only one brought to us! It came from West Yorkshire but we let it in. Everyone loved a beautiful pair of little scissors engraved with a crown, brought in by the granddaughter of the owner, with a little personal note. Then there was a wonderful archive of commemorative literature that covered not only the Accession and Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, but also of the monarchs before and after, a real treasure trove. We particularly liked the scrapbook, made by the owner when a little girl, full of news cuttings, but what makes it special are the lovely naive drawings of the Queen and family. Curators love people who do not throw things away!

is a small contribution to a potentially expanding business for the building. Chris has been a magician in sorting out some initial technical problems and I am personally very indebted to him for holding my hand through the first stages of our transfer. We look forward to seeing you at this year's lectures.

Since closing for the season in October we have been busy as ever answering enquiries, and we have lots of bookings for the archive. It is always fascinating to learn more of what people are researching. Andrew Alderson, for example, is engaged in a personal project to present some of the Alderson tithe data in a GIS (Geographic Information System) format and is now investigating the possibility of using the same technique to present the historical mining data in a similar way in terms of documenting the location of the shafts, levels and veins and to try and then link this to the individual Alderson families involved in the various

mines. This could naturally, he says, be expanded to any/all of the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale families.

Phil Wilson is writing a book about County Durham and how his family arrived there. He has asked us about John Binks (1831-1887) who was the brother of his great grandfather Robert Binks (1829-c1901). Their parents were Matthew Binks (1803-1849) and Mary Binks nee Lewis (1808-1853). John was a butcher by trade and held a stall at Richmond, and married (secondly) Ann Plews. John and Ann are buried in the Reeth Congregational Chapel yard. Although Phil's primary focus is Robert Binks, he is interested in his background and his youth. Therefore his father's trade as a butcher is one of the central areas he is researching, and asks 'is there information on John's butcher's trade in Reeth?'. He also wants to know what it was like to be a small tenant farmer in the early 19th century? So you can see why we are always learning, and continually searching our archive in new ways.

Having completed a full inventory of the Museum objects it was a joy to discover Soetsu Yanagi's, *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, a collection of essays, published in translation by Penguin in 2017. The author founded the Japanese Folk Craft (*mingei*) movement in the 1930s. His writing is inspiring and has made us look again at the everyday objects that make up most of our collection here in the Swaledale Museum. Yanagi celebrates the handmade functional objects of simplicity and beauty. He writes 'The objects that fill our everyday lives are our constant companions, made with care, built to last, treated with respect and even affection. ... Surrounded by them people felt comfortably at home'. These are 'Objects which devote their existence to service, which sacrifice their lives to the needs of the daily round, which work in the harsh real world without complaint, which carry out their duties with a sense of wholesome satisfaction, and which aim to bring a little happiness into everyday life'. Made by unknown craftspeople they do the job perfectly, and are freighted with associations and memories. We wonder if these words resonate with any of you? Perhaps we should display some of the Museum objects on white plinths, like works of art in a smart gallery? Would we think about them differently?



Thinking about everyday objects I hope some of you will join us for our Patchwork Day with Helen Barnes (*left*) on 2nd July. It will be an opportunity not only to get stitching, but to learn more about some of our historic patchworks and quilts that we will take out of store. Helen's research visit was featured in our last Newsletter, and we

are very honoured that she offered to come back to give us this special day.

Perhaps I might see some of you at Reeth Memorial Hall on 30th July when I will be participating in the Summer



Collage cards made from print ephemera, available in the Museum shop and at the Makers' Market

Makers' Market. I will be making and selling jewellery made from vintage beads, bringing my wondrous selection of old beads from which you can choose your own colours and shapes, as well as collage cards made from salvaged ephemera, and lavender bags and peg doll kits made from rescued cotton scraps, ribbons and lace. Time to stock up with gifts or treat yourself. All proceeds will go to the Museum.

I would like to end this Spring report by thanking Tracy Little. I know I do this in every Newsletter, but she really is the pivot on which our communication with you and others hinge. She is very much more than our Membership Secretary and Publicity Officer. I am in awe of her ability to spin so many plates, her support of the Museum is just one small part of a network of those reliant upon her. Rob Macdonald keeps our website ship-shape and up-to-date, as well as offering very welcome suggestions for new features. Glen Steward looks after the accounts, a job he does with efficiency always laced with humour. Jocelyn Campbell retains a sharp memory of people, places and thing on which we regularly draw. Prue Drew is a stalwart supporter, thoughtful contributor, and good friend, while Alan and Julia Thorogood as foundation members of the Committee are there for wise counsel. Perhaps you would like to be our Chairman, convening and guiding our meetings, helping us get back on course. Let us know if you would like put up a poster for the Museum or the Lectures. Most of all we look forward to welcoming you all back to the Museum.

Helen Bainbridge, Curator

We have offered to help a researcher requesting temporary access to any photographs, postcards, family information or oral traditions and activities in relation to the people, farms and villages of Upper Swaledale, which could be shared or incorporated with permission and acknowledgment into an historical research project currently in process. The researchers would also welcome the opportunity to meet in confidence anyone who is willing to share such information. If you would like to help please get in touch with Helen Bainbridge via the contact details on page 8 and we will forward to those engaged in the project.

Northern Dairy Shorthorns and the Swaledale connection

The last newsletter included a contribution by Phil and Elaine Gibbon about their memories from the 1960s of a cattle-breed called the Northern Dairy Shorthorn prevailing on Swaledale farms. Such memories recall an especially significant period in the dale's farming history when economic pressures caused those distinctive reddish-brown-and-white cattle, for more than 100 years associated almost exclusively with the north-Pennine hills and dales, to undergo a rapid decline in popularity, leading to their complete replacement by the more profitable, black-and-white dairy breeds of Friesians and Holsteins. Such was the speed of change that the Northern Dairy Shorthorn came very close to extinction. Today, there are none in Swaledale, and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust lists it as one of the five most critically endangered cattle breeds in Britain.

However, that's not to say that Swaledale farmers never tried to save the Northern Dairy Shorthorn. When their traditional cattle first came under threat, back in the 1940s, local farmers were very active in mounting a defence. To understand those events, it is necessary first to know something of the earlier history of the generic ancestor breed of these north-Pennine cattle, known simply as the Shorthorn.

During the 18th century, traditional British Shorthorns were big, dual-purpose cattle, useful for producing beef and milk, but were not particularly robust, hardy, or good breeders. They were widespread in northern England and the north Midlands but over centuries had developed different naturally occurring regional characteristics. From about 1780, brothers Robert and Charles Colling, of Darlington, began a planned breeding programme to produce an improved Shorthorn from the variant existing in and around the Tees valley. The eventual result was a hardier, nimbler type of Shorthorn that produced stronger, early-maturing progeny.

The Colling brothers' Shorthorn gained rapid widespread popularity, and in 1822, named animals of the improved type were listed in the world's first pedigree cattle herd book. These pedigree Shorthorns were primarily found on the estate farms of the nobility and gentry, or of other large lowland farms. Although the aim of the pedigree was supposed to be to preserve the standard, some of these herds were deliberately further developed to become more productive in either beef or milk. And so new variants emerged within the pedigree. Dairy Shorthorns were developed to achieve higher volumes of milk, which was distributed as liquid. Whereas Beef Shorthorns, mainly from Scotland, were bred for muscle and were particularly successful, being exported in large numbers, especially to Argentina.

Most Pennine hill farmers had no interest in either variant of the pedigree Shorthorns. Their non-pedigree animals, which they traded among themselves at much lower prices, had already developed naturally to become the hardiest of beasts, ideally adapted to their harsh environment. They retained the characteristics of the Colling brothers' original type, being also nimble, good breeders, and good dual-purpose animals. The emphasis was on dairy, but there wasn't the pressure to produce ever higher volumes of milk because the farms were too remote for fresh milk to reach consumers before going sour. Instead, the milk was converted on the farm into cheese, butter, and cream.

In Swaledale, an exception to this approach was that of a gentleman farmer, Francis Garth, of Crackpot, whose father had started a herd of specialist, pedigree Dairy Shorthorns from the 1830s. Francis maintained the herd for most of his long life, until 1904 when he was aged 87 and he sold the lot. It was reported in the press that he hoped the cattle would be distributed among his fellow dalesmen, as he had 'all along kept the herd going for the improvement of the stock of Swaledale, Wensleydale and Arkendale'. Perhaps he made his pedigree stock available to his neighbours at discounted prices.

Things changed in the 1930s when commercial dairies started sending motor lorries into the high Pennine dales to collect milk churns from farm gates, creating for these hill farms the first viable outlet for liquid milk. Gradually, farmers started to discover that this was a lot easier than converting milk into cheese, butter, and cream. But then, it mattered to achieve higher volumes of milk. That imperative became more pressing from the start of the Second World War in 1939. The national demand for liquid milk became so great that the government placed curbs on cheese making. To bolster milk yields, some hill farmers started crossing their traditional Shorthorn cows with bulls of other brown or red dairy breeds, such as Ayrshires and Red Holsteins. This practice threatened the survival of the distinctive Pennine Shorthorns, which many believed were the nearest true descendants of the Colling Brothers' original improved Teeswater Shorthorn of more than 100 years earlier, and were arguably more pedigree than any of the official pedigree animals.

In 1943, the call went up to establish a new pedigree for the Pennine Shorthorn, and it was a rallying cry that met with resounding approval throughout the northern hills, including among most of the hill farmers in Swaledale. The first general meeting of the Northern Dairy Shorthorn Breeders' Society was held at Appleby in Westmorland on 9 November 1944, by which time there were 1,244 members. The elected president was from Barnard Castle, the vice-chairman from Penrith, and the chairman from Nateby near Kirkby Stephen. The first council comprised representatives from 21 districts covering the north Pennines. Four council representatives from the Richmond district included Norman Brown, of Swale Hall, Harkerside, and Gregson Porter, of Bank Heads Farm, Low Row. In 1946, the first herd book was published. It listed by name and registration number 10,719 female and 1,028 male cattle, all deemed, after inspection, to meet the breed standard, and to be classified as pedigree Northern Dairy Shorthorns.

However, after such a promising start, the champions of the new breed soon found themselves fighting a losing battle against an unstoppable influx of black-and-white Friesians, with their far superior milk yields. Norman Brown, a staunch defender of the Northern Dairy Shorthorn, served as the Breeders' Society's vice-chairman in 1952 and then chairman in 1953, but his efforts were all to no avail. From the 1960s, Pennine dales farmers commonly started crossing their Northern Dairy Shorthorn Cows with Friesian bulls. The Northern Dairy Shorthorn herd book was discontinued in 1965; thereafter the remaining pedigree animals were entered in the main Shorthorn pedigree herd book, identified by the descriptor ND.

By 2007, the RBST recorded only 55 Northern Dairy Shorthorn females, in five small herds, triggering the start of a slowly growing campaign to save it from extinction. As of December 2020, the number of females was up to 270, which were being nurtured in 10 herds by specialist rare-breed enthusiasts. Five herds are in the north – at Grassington in Wharfedale, at Middlesmoor in upper Nidderdale, at Winton and Cliburn, both in the Eden Valley, and at Hamsterley in Weardale. The others, perhaps surprisingly, are in Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Essex, Devon, and Cornwall.

Will Swales



*Northern Dairy Shorthorns in Swaledale.
Reproduced by permission of Robert Nicholls
www.askrigg-studios.co.uk*

Swaledale features prominently in an exhibition at the North Yorkshire County Record Office giving a fresh take on North Yorkshire's history and heritage created by a trio of artists and county residents.

The exhibition is the culmination of the *Unfolding Origins* project, which has seen three artists in residence create a multimedia experience inspired by North Yorkshire's historic archive at the County Record Office, based on collections from Selby, Richmond and Ryedale.

Carolyn Thompson, the artist for Ryedale, became fascinated by the First World War appeal papers in the archive. These were from men appealing against their conscriptions to war based on their need to be at home working the land. Carolyn followed the stories of six men whose appeals failed and who ultimately lost their lives. She took what would have been their 'last walk home' from the local railway station to their last known home on the anniversary of their deaths. Along the way, she recorded sounds and plants and has created drawings and sound works depicting each. Lynn Setterington, the artist based in Selby, grew up in the village of Hensall. Inspired by memories of Selby's toll bridge and its queues of traffic, she explored the archive for the bridge's origins, looking at maps and ownership. Her work is a response to



Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan filming in the river Swale

the 30th anniversary of the bridge being toll-free.

In Richmond, artists Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan produced a collaborative film exploring Swaledale, taking inspiration from the landscape, maps and waterways and how they have developed. *Swalesong* also features photographs by the Kearton Brothers, Swaledale residents and pioneering wildlife photographers of the early 1900s. The film's score was created by Sam McLoughlin, who recorded his river harp in the current of the Swale. The soundtrack also includes historic audio interviews, from the 1960s, with local people who remembered Neddy Dick, an eccentric 19th century musician who was well known for instruments made from nature.

"The archive is so vast," said Mr Jordan. "I think there is something like eight miles of shelving, so we thought early on we'd try to narrow things down. The Swale emerged quickly. "It appealed to us in terms of the history of place, of people and the river could become a symbol to thread things together. Our work often layers together natural history and cultural and social history."

"Initially, we looked at the river south of Richmond, but once we had delved further into the archive we decided to look at the source of the Swale. We started to research areas around the source and Keld became a focus point." This led them to a local history display in the village and a chat with the local archivist.

"That's how we first heard about Neddy Dick, who lived there in the late 19th century and was well known for his musical instruments that he used to play sounds from nature, he used nature to create the sounds," said Mr Jordan. "For example, he would wire up tree branches to his harmonium, and he made a lithophone, which was new to us. It is an instrument made from rocks that he pulled out of the Swale."

At the County Record Office they learned of wildlife photography pioneers the Kearton brothers, who were born in Keld and were active around the same time as Neddy Dick. The Swale, Neddy Dick and the Keartons became key elements in the film, supported by a natural soundtrack by the filmmakers' friend, musician Sam McLoughlin, whose river harp was placed in the Swale to generate sounds, fitting neatly with Neddy Dick.

Margaret Boustead, Head of Archives and Record Management, said: "The archives held at the County Record Office tell an amazing story of the people and places of the county

over many centuries. We want as many people as possible to experience the archive as a living record. This exhibition helps to do that by bringing a handful of the archive's stories to life through fresh eyes. I hope many people are able to visit us at the County Record Office to see the work for themselves."

The exhibition is free to view at North Yorkshire County Record Office, Malpas Road, Northallerton, from Tuesday to Friday, 9am to 4pm, until 29th July 2022.

The project is a collaboration between North Yorkshire County Record Office, Chrysalis Arts Development (CAD) and other partners, including Selby District Council, Ryedale District Council, Richmondshire District Council, ArtUK, Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Extracted with permission from the NYCRO blog. See <https://nycroblog.com/> to read the full article.

NB There's a short video on the Museum website about Neddy Dick, see: <http://www.swaledalemuseum.org/explore.html> and Kimberley Starkie from NYCRO will be our speaker on 29th June, focussing on researching Swaledale & Arkengarthdale in the archives at the County Record Office. Also, on 20th July, Helen Guy from the Keld Research Centre will be speaking on 'The Legacy of the Kearton Brothers.'



Sam McLoughlin playing his river harp in the Swale



The Kearton display



Neddy Dick and his lithophone

The Mystery Marker on Calver Hill

In mid-March Malcolm Hewitson contacted the Museum with an enquiry. He had been on top of Calver Hill just above Reeth and had come across a stone cross on the ground, pointing north and wondered if we had any information on it. We searched our files but could find nothing.

We are lucky to have access to a wide network of knowledgeable people, including Will Swales who copied the question to his own network, including members of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group. Mike Walton responded noting that 'Looking at it on Google satellite maps ... it is actually aligned a few degrees west of north. I'm wondering if when it was originally built it was aligned to magnetic north using a compass. I remember from my schooldays that magnetic north varies around the country and changes with time. I therefore wonder if one could calculate a possible age for the cross by comparing its alignment with the current direction of magnetic north and knowing how it varied round here in the past'. Les Knight sent him a link to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website which shows a map with lines indicating the direction of magnetic north over the past 300+ years. Using his old adjustable set square Mike managed to roughly measure on his screen the angle of the cross relative to true north as seen on the Google satellite view. The angle, he found, was between 11 and 12 degrees west. Then using the NOAA webpage he adjusted the date until magnetic north for this area was around 11 to 12 degrees west. The date came out at around 1944 to 1945. (The previous time that magnetic north was at a similar angle to due north was around 1715 to 1718.) Therefore if his presumption that the cross was aligned to magnetic north when it was laid out is right, then he guesses that it is some sort of war memorial – either to mark the end of the Second World War, or perhaps to remember a crashed aircraft, though Mike notes that a Google search did not reveal any record of a plane crashing on Calver Hill. Mike wonders that if there was a crash perhaps someone remembers it. Is there anyone out there who can help us?



The stone 'cross' on Calver. Online discussions suggest that it's actually the remains of a wall rather than a deliberate construction. Does anyone know for certain?

We are hugely impressed with Mike's powers of deduction, and the interlinked expertise of SWAAG. Tracy Little, Friends of the Swaledale Museum Secretary, reminds us that during the Second World War the American air force, and probably the RAF, practised up here, aiming at the White House which was then an uninhabited ruin. Were there other markers up here to do with navigational exercises?. She also asked Will Swales if we have any idea where the name Calver comes from? She has seen suggestions that it was a corruption of Calvary, which of course leads to crosses. Will responded with a no, and a detailed and convincing alternative explanation. He says that no place-name expert has attempted to explain the name of our Calver Hill, and he is not aware of any early records of the name that might give clues in the spelling, although no doubt there will be some records somewhere. Fortunately there are other Calver place-names around the country, and one in particular has good evidence that seems to be a match for ours. It is in the Hope Valley in the Peak District - the village of Calver, which sits below Calver Peak. You can compare the two hills if you open two web browser windows and set them side-by-side on your screen, then search in Bing Maps, Reeth in one window, and Calver, Derbyshire in the other. Change the view from Road to Ordnance Survey, then adjust the image to view the shapes and positions in the landscape of the two hills. You will see that they are very similar. As the Derbyshire Calver is a settlement name, there are good early records of the name (in Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Dictionary of English Place-Names*): 1086 Domesday Book – Calvoure, 1199 – Calvore, 1239 - Calfover. From this, the elements of Calver (in A H Smith, *The English Place-Name Elements*) are deduced to be: OE (specifically northern OE, or Anglian) calf 'a calf' OE ufer/ofen 'a slope/hill/ridge'

As he has mentioned in his talks, the great landscape and place-name researchers Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole conducted extensive fieldwork studies into all the different types of hill names and the different shapes they represent. They concluded emphatically (*The Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 199) that ufer/ofen – refers to: 'a flat-topped ridge with a convex shoulder'. They said the term was employed 'with remarkable consistency' throughout England. Will thinks that it fits very well with the shapes of Calver Hill and Calver Peak, and suggests that the origins of the names are the same – meaning 'calf ridge' In the case of Calver Hill, the ridge was probably originally a woodland cattle pasture, which would explain the present name of the convex shoulder of Calver Hill – Riddings Ridge. Riddings means 'cleared land'.

Helen Bainbridge

Queries...

Michael Jacobson, a research assistant at the University of Illinois, asks: "I was wondering if you might know of or be in possession of any graffitied (17th/18th century) gunstocks similar to the attached pictures within your collections. While my professor is especially interested in the coat of arms of Jerusalem I know that any graffitied gunstocks, whether with initials or other symbols, would definitely

be of interest." If you can help Michael in any way, please contact him directly on mj29@illinois.edu



This very large wooden ladle (*left*) was found in a barn at Frith on the moor above Keld and is now on display in the Keld Resource Centre. The general consensus seems to be it was for cheese making but do you have any other ideas?

One of the Friends of the Museum has asked if there is a harmonium for sale anywhere locally. If you have one to spare, please let us know and we'll pass the message on to her.



In the snowsteps of Thomas Armstrong

In my quest to find Uncle Tom's actual words (as opposed to his stories) I'm beginning to feel that I am following, not just in his footsteps but, in his snowsteps.

In my last 'footsteps' article, Uncle Tom's February 1966 radio interview occurs as snow starts to fall. Olive Shapley, the interviewer, recorded that *"while I was there (at Lawn House) it started to snow and the snow began to lie and soon the only spots of colour in this quiet landscape seemed to be the birds hopping around on the cobblestones and this terrace Mr Armstrong had made himself."*

I also have some correspondence from the Harper Collins archives, when Uncle Tom may have been hoping for snow in 1953-54 and later, in 1957, snow (or the lack of) is again discussed! But back to 1953...

On Christmas Eve 1953, a file note recorded that Collins' Chairman had talked to Tom the day before and that he *"was in very good form."* And Tom was also *"doing quite a number of revisions to Pilling Always Pays"*, re-writing *"the main incident about the secretary,"* and that *"he is coming down (to London) in January or February."*

On January 21st 1954 Smith (of Collins) writes to Armstrong discussing the new novel, *'Pilling Always Pays'*, and concludes his letter saying *"that Pilling strikes me as one of your best characters, likeable and well drawn."*

On January 28th 1954 Armstrong replies delightedly to Smith, *"If you come to think of it this is really the first time I have drawn a major character with his weaknesses, failings and doubts."* Tom goes on to say, *"My snag just now is the weather. Just now, extraordinarily enough, our parts for nearly 20 miles around are an oasis of brilliant sun and icy cold, but not a trace of snow. But if the snow comes we'll almost certainly be cut off. So could I arrange provisionally to see you next week..."*

There is further correspondence between Smith and Armstrong organizing the London meeting for the following week on February 4th. However the correspondence re-starts on February 4th with Smith advising he is keeping 16th February entirely free for a meeting. Did it snow or was Tom still making revisions or both?

On the 5th February Armstrong writes to Smith saying *"Dulcie, Billy (William Collins, the Chairman) and yourself, in that order have all objected to Hilda Schofield (the secretary) and so I must submit. As a matter of fact I feel quite certain now she was wrong, and I think I see a very pleasant way of changing her to something quite interesting. I've put everything aside for the moment and all being well I shall have the sections to do with her when I come down."*

On February 12th, there is another letter from Armstrong to Smith where Tom suggests a provisional lunch arrangement for February 14th and hopes that *"British Railways perform as they should,"* but does concede that *"with the mist and sleet as it is anything could happen as to time of arrival."* Tom also informs Smith that *"Hilda Schofield is coming along very nicely,"* that *"there is nothing of the gold digging, blackmailing woman about her as before."*

The correspondence shared with me then skips to February 1957 when Armstrong writes to Smith that *"Here we have had an extraordinary winter so far, mild beyond belief. Altogether this has been quite unnatural but for once I haven't minded, as heavy snow and the like can be a pretty tiring job to deal with, and an anxiety to some extent always."* Smith replies that it is *"a change from what we were experiencing this time last year (1956)."*

The 1953/54 editorial issues obviously get resolved as *Pilling Always Pays* was published in October 1954. As to whether it snowed in 1954 I recently found a photo of a snowy Lawn House (above right) in my grandparents' photo album, which seems to confirm there was indeed snow in 1954 (or was it 1956?)! The date on the back of the photo is not the clearest.

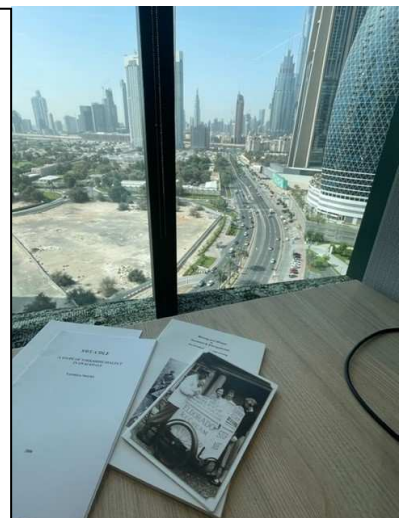
As always I would love to hear from any one who can confirm or deny snow falls in 1954 and/or 1956 or who have any memories of Tom and his wife, Dulcie.

Linda Bray aka Lawn House Publications & Thomas Armstrong's Great Niece
LawnHousePublications@outlook.com



Linda has finished her project to digitise all of Thomas Armstrong's books and *King Cotton* is now available as an Amazon ebook on Kindle. *King Cotton* describes the terrible destitution which fell upon Lancashire when the American Civil War cut off the supply of cotton from the Southern States and silenced the mills upon which so many thousands of people depended on for their bread. It describes too, the gallantry with which these people placed principle above existence, supporting the North and President Lincoln because they were fighting slavery, even though the Northern ships were preventing the arrival of the slave-grown cotton. Indeed, it was only the 'silent example' of Lancashire cotton workers which deterred the pro-Southern English government of the time from entering the war on the side of the Confederacy. Without British non-intervention there might have been no Union of the States and the history of the world would have been far different. Abraham Lincoln himself recognised this when he paid tribute to the 'divine Christian example of these humble English folks'.

We're always amazed at some of the places our publications find their way to. Jonathan Terry sent us this snap of a couple of the Museum booklets on his window sill in Dubai! Can you beat this? Let us know!



A Trove of Betty Webster Articles

If you've looked at the Museum website recently you will probably have seen the 'Breaking News' section, using extracts from old newspapers compiled by Marion Moverley. A recent offering concerned a Swaledale born lady who was famous enough to crop up in the Weekly Times of Melbourne, Australia. 'Mrs Betty Webster of Aysgarth, Yorkshire, will have reached the great age of 107 years, she having been born at Thwaite in Swaledale towards the end of February 1790. Mrs Webster's father was a centenarian as also were three of her aunts'. Through the Reeth Gazette and our regular email circulation list Helen asked if anyone knew anything about this remarkable lady.

Astonishingly several people did know of her, sending us photographs and further information (including the fact that the ages of her relatives might have been somewhat exaggerated!) Particularly fascinating was the framed picture from Dave Stringer-Calvert, a distant relation of Betty's through marriage, of Betty and four of her direct descendants who were all alive at the same time in 1896.

The following extracts are just a selection of what one of our members was able to find out about Betty's life, largely through newspapers accessible through the online library database *Trove*:

Regular newsletter readers will know me as the great niece of Thomas Armstrong but may not know that I live in Australia. I was therefore intrigued to see the 1896 Australian newspaper cutting on the Museum website and decided to respond to the challenge to find more information about Betty Webster using my knowledge of the Antipodes.

A quick search of Trove (an Australian online library database which includes newspapers) for 'Mrs Betty Webster of Aysgarth' turned up 18 articles including the 1896 cutting from Melbourne's *Weekly Times*. She is mentioned in two articles in 1890, three in 1894, one in 1895 and 12 in 1896. The articles appear in both city and rural newspapers across New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland.

In April 1890 news of her 100th birthday is reported under the 'The Queen and the Centenarian': Mrs Betty Webster, of Dale Grange, Askrigg, Yorkshire, attained her hundredth birthday on February 25, and certificate of her birth having been sent by Mr Winn, of The Grange, Aysgarth, to Sir John Cowell, master of the Queen's household, the following letter has been received in reply: "Windsor Castle, February 27. Dear Sir, I am commanded by the Queen to request that you will have the goodness to say to Mrs Betty Webster, of Askrigg, from her Majesty, that she trusts that she may live to celebrate in health for some years to come the anniversary of the 25th instant, which marks her entry on her 101st year.-I am, yours truly, J. C. Cowell."

In 1894 two articles titled 'Northern Longevity' report Betty's 104th birthday, one adding that she lives with her daughter, Phyllis Blades, aged 76, and her son-in-law, Christopher Blades, aged 85, so that the united ages of the three occupants of the house amount to over 265 years. One 1896 article reports that: "She keeps wonderfully well, and lives with her daughter in a small cottage. She claims to remember being taken to be baptised when three years old. Up to being a hundred she walked regularly to chapel every Sunday."

Sadly, not long afterwards, her death is reported in no less than nine articles. In these we learn that she kept her mind to the last, was addicted to tobacco for 50 years, that she was left a widow 70 years before, had eight children, 15 grandchildren and numerous great grandchildren.

A Google search turned up several other links including one to an obituary where Edmund Cooper records: "Betty Webster was 106 years old when she died. She was born in Thwaite, in Swaledale, on February 25, 1790, and she was christened at Muker chapel. Her father, William Alderson, was a lead-miner who lived to be 87 years of age."

At the age of 20 economic conditions in Swaledale compelled Betty to seek work in a Lancashire cotton mill where she stayed for four years. Returning to the dales she married a farmer from Askrigg who died at the age of 30 leaving her to support her eight children by knitting and farm work. Four died young but the remainder eventually married and Betty was persuaded to go into an almshouse, where, at the age of 50, she developed a liking for tobacco. Later she lived with a daughter and son-in-law at Aysgarth. She and her son-in-law spent the evenings of their declining years puffing their pipes as they sat side by side before the cottage fire. He predeceased her by one year, aged 85, but her daughter survived her. After 76 years of widowhood, Betty died on June 14, 1896. She was buried in Askrigg churchyard.

Another link gives more details of her life, written by one of her relatives, who explains that she was a frail baby and was baptized privately when only three days old; the event she could remember walking to was her later public baptism. She was able to work in the hay field at the age of 80 and at 90 she narrowly escaped serious injury when she fell from a platform made up of tables and chairs whilst she was whitewashing the ceiling. She lived in the Almshouses until she reached the age of 100, doing her own cooking and housework.

Betty received visitors regularly after becoming a centenarian. She retained her faculties and was able to recall the Peninsula War, the rejoicing after the Battle of Waterloo and three Bainbridge men who fought in that battle. She had been 'devoted to the weed' for some 50 years before her death, having taken up smoking on doctor's advice! A photographer (J B Smithson of Leyburn) took her photograph regularly on or near her birthday every year. The last one was taken in 1896 and was presented to Queen Victoria, Betty being the Queen's oldest subject.

Linda Bray

NB Trove is an incredibly useful resource for events all over the world, not just in Australia.

You can find it here: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>



Betty Webster (centre) with descendants who were all alive in 1896. Top L Phyllis Blades, née Webster (1819-1897), top R, Margaret Sarginson, née Blades (1848-1926), bottom L, Elizabeth Stringer-Calvert, née Sarginson (1870-1943), bottom R Joseph Stringer-Calvert, born 1896.

Friends' Programme of Talks
All to be held in Reeth
Memorial Hall at 7.30pm
Please note new venue!

Other events may be added during the course of the season

Wednesday 22nd June

Richard Lamb

'Barney Beck Revisited: Old Gang and Surrender Lead Smelting Mills including a rare Insight into the fascinating World of Slag Mineralogy'

Wednesday 29th June

Kimberley Starkie

'Researching Swaledale and Arkengarthdale using the resources at the North Yorkshire County Record Office'

Saturday 2nd July

A Patchwork Day (in the Museum) with Helen Barnes - morning workshop followed by a look at the historic quilt and patchwork collection.
 £30 for the day, £25 for Friends.

Wednesday 6th July

Dr Christine Hallas

SORRY - CANCELLED

Saturday 16th July

Visit to Gunnerside Gill - see panel right.

Wednesday 20th July

Helen Guy

'The Legacy of the Kearton Brothers'.

Wednesday 3rd August

David Johnson

'Lime kilns in Swaledale & Arkengarthdale: the where, the when and the what for?'

Wednesday 17 August

Prof William van Vugt

'Portrait of an English Migration: North Yorkshire People in North America'

Wednesday 21 September

The John Squires' Lecture

Will Swales

'Marshal-General Plantagenet Harrison: Richmondshire's fake prince of the royal blood'

Wednesday 28 September

Shaun Richardson

'Removed and Revealed: Some Effects of the July 2019 Flooding on Archaeology in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale'.

COST: £4 for Friends and £5 for Visitors.

For more information or to book:
 phone 07969 823232

or email: helen@swaledalemuseum.org
 Doors open at 7pm, lectures are 50-60 minutes with questions. We anticipate great interest so we recommend booking in advance. Please watch the local press & posters for occasional alterations to time/date &, if coming from a distance, **please check with the Museum** before setting off.

A new event which has just been organised is a Field Trip to Gunnerside on Saturday 16th July led by Richard Lamb and archaeologist Shaun Richardson. This all-day tour is designed to introduce the topography and former industries of this northern tributary of the River Swale to those up for a challenge. It encompasses walking mainly on public footpaths, which can be pretty uneven, through some very narrow stiles, up and downhill, although avoids crossing the Gill unless water levels are sufficiently low. We will climb from the village up to Potting, pass below Whin Hall and above Winterings before dropping down into the valley to see the workings at Sir Francis Level including the introduction of the then latest technology. Continuing upstream we come to Bunton Level with its smithy, ore storage bins and dressing equipment including a waterwheel-driven crusher; a most convenient place to have lunch. Further up we come to Blakethwaite smelting mill which displays an unusual method of furnace arch support, and a truly incredible flue arrangement. From here the intrepid can explore higher up to examine the two dams, the upper showing the curious mode of construction revealed after the 2019 flood damage. The return journey is, after a gentle rise, downhill and provides an excellent vantage point to overlook the morning's perambulations. En route features of interest will be pointed out and explained. The route has been chosen particularly to allow spectacular viewpoints over the valley giving comprehension of the landscape and its former mineral exploitation. £25 for the day for Friends of the Museum, £35 for visitors. More information and booking from Helen, see contact details below left.

Nine Standards Revisited

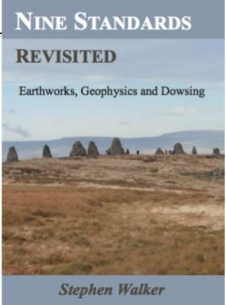
Stephen Walker was one of our early speakers and has now written a book on his research into the enigmatic structures on the border between Swaledale and Cumbria.

"Most fell-walkers know that a single cairn on the skyline will guide them to a well-worn path, but the huge drystone structures up on Nine Standards Rigg have intrigued and puzzled generations of visitors to the Upper Eden Valley just east of Kirkby Stephen. Why were they built? Why nine? Why there?"

An earlier book traced historical references to them back at least to the early twelfth century and possibly to the sixth century, while noting that they have periodically collapsed and been rebuilt, hence they appear to be ancient cairns and also to some degree a modern folly. But that work established the Nine Standards as a monument worth further research, which is now described in the present book. Funds were raised to pay for professional geophysical surveys; kind offers of otherwise unobtainable technical material were received; and archival and literature research summarised the geographical context, and unearthed details of a Bronze Age gold torc found close to the Nine Standards, while the frequent visits to the site and surrounding area over the years located numerous other man-made features.

The technical inputs, especially aerial photos and satellite imagery, gradually extended the research beyond the immediate site of the cairn ridge to include a record of what is actually there in relevant adjacent areas. The aim was to establish and document a wider context for the Nine Standards monument, in the hope that such a contribution might help to encourage further archaeological work including excavation to verify the main findings."

ISBN: 978-1-910237-62-5 222 pages, paperback 155 x 230 mm, 82 colour photographs £15 retail available end June 2022



Mystery Object



It's been suggested that the previous mystery object (left) was possibly a tool for making braid which would clamp to a table and allow two threads to be twisted together. This was suggested by a visitor to the Museum who had seen one in a country house kitchen but couldn't remember where, so if you spot one, please let us know! Our new object is made from box wood, 8 inches long and opens like a pair of scissors but has no cutting edges. It does

however have a rounded hollow inside the handles and we do actually know what this is! Any suggestions?

