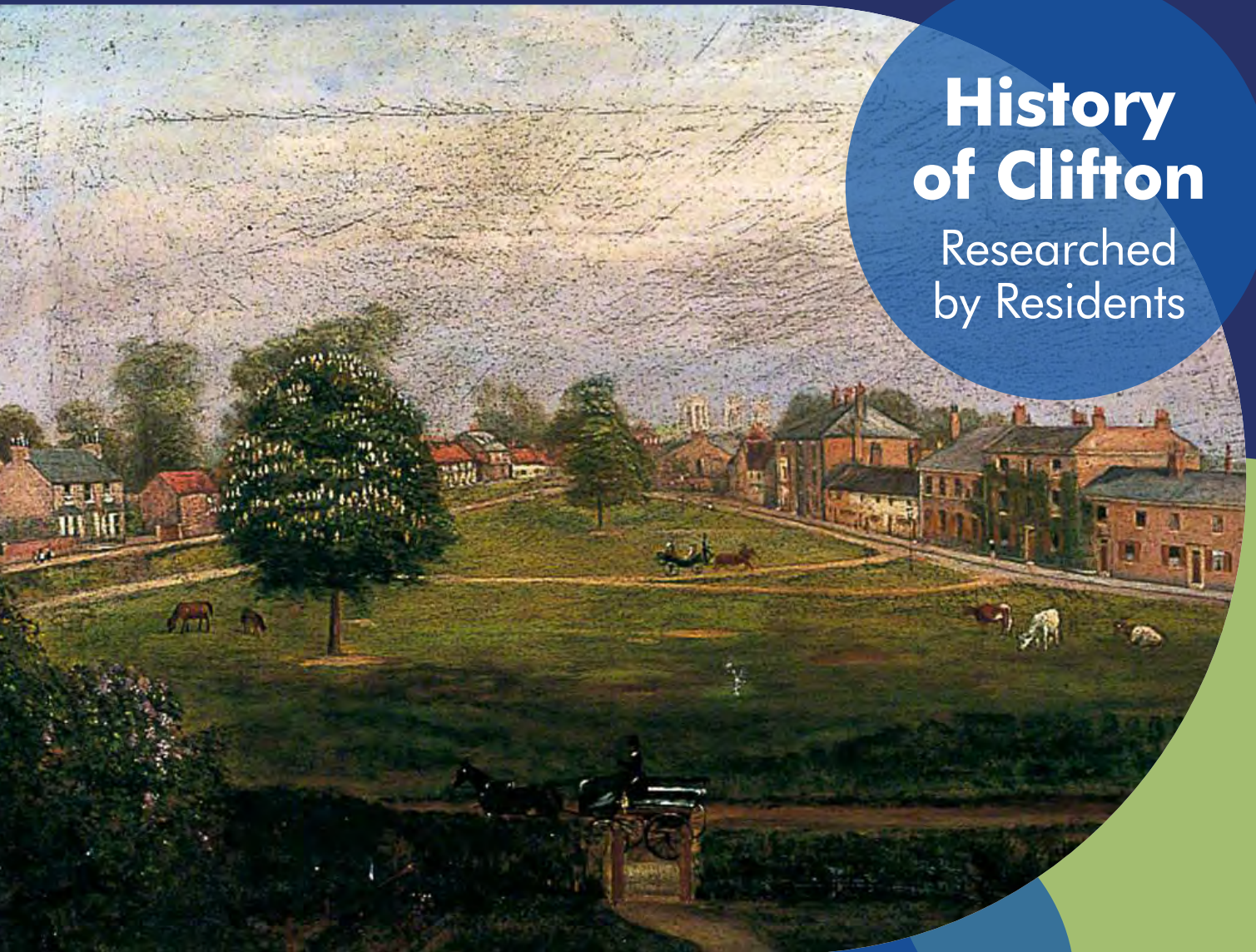


HERITAGE HUNTERS CLIFTON

2026

History of Clifton

Researched
by Residents



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Charity number 1092466

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York Museums Trust, as a National Portfolio Organisation, is supported using public funding by Arts Council England, which has made this project possible.

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Cookie Graphic Design is a small and friendly graphic design company based just outside York.

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Spellman Walker are a privately owned and highly successful commercial colour printing company with litho and digital capabilities. Based on the outskirts of Bradford, they provide services for clients across the UK.

CAVEATS AND LIMITATIONS

This project supports people to start researching history. We are not academic historians, but we are people who want to know more about where we live. Support is given to learn the basics but please be aware that researchers may have minor inaccuracies or might not have uncovered everything about their topic in the timeframe of the project.

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COVER IMAGE

Unknown artist, *Clifton Green: The View from My Window*, 1880, oil on canvas. York Museums Trust, YORAG: 567.

Heritage Hunters taking part in the project.
Image: York Museums Trust.

Welcome

CLIFTON 2026

Heritage Hunters is a project run by York Museums Trust. Now in its 5th issue, Heritage Hunters brings together a range of local individuals and groups to research an area of York; this time focusing on Clifton. Though the project is more about meeting people in the area and learning research skills, this year's researchers have uncovered a wealth of new information that we're so excited to share with you.

This time we've been thrilled to partner with Accessible Arts and Media, and you can see a range of artworks and texts from this collaboration throughout the magazine. The contributions are in 3 chapters: Landmarks of Clifton, as we explore the ground and sites that residents pass every day; Health and Charity in Clifton, across hospitals, private asylums, almshouses and sports clubs; Tracing Lives in Clifton, as we uncover the lives of both little-known and famous residents; and Living in Clifton, with personal tales of life in the area.

Plus, this year you can find out even more by checking out the Heritage Hunters website. Take a look, and enjoy some more fascinating facts, images and interactive maps that we couldn't quite fit into this magazine.

From a civil war military camp through to 1970s panda cars, there's something for everyone in this magazine. Our writers have done all their own research and have just been lightly edited so that their perspectives and insights come through. We hope you enjoy reading the magazine, and that it inspires you to look deeper and find out more about your own local area.

Samantha Lukic-Scott, York Museums Trust

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Scan the QR code or visit <https://heritagehunters.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk> to read more from our resident researchers.

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Before Bootham Crescent:

THE STORY OF A FIELD IN HISTORY

Steve Barrett

Steve is a former history teacher who has written articles for journals including the British Association for Local History, Family History Magazine and Heritage Hunters. He is Chairman of York Family History Society and Chairman of the Yorkshire Group of Family History Societies, and a member of the Richard III Society. He is a keen supporter of York City FC.

Since I was a child, I have been a supporter of York City Football Club. This story isn't about the club though, as much has been written about that.¹ I wanted to look at what was there before the ground was built - as far back as I could. What I discovered was amazing.

The site of the football ground was originally a plot of land known as Old Layre Close, owned in the 18th century

by Francis Barker and then upon his death, by his son, Thomas Barker of St Saviour parish. Thomas was possibly a tailor, who upon his death in 1710 left the 5-and-a-half-acre field 'situate in the parish of Clifton' for the benefit of the poor parishioners of St Saviour's in York.² He had a house on fashionable Gillygate.

Any rents from use of the land were to fund provision of 12 penny loaves of bread to the poor every Sunday outside St Saviour's church and also on Christmas day, no matter what day it fell on.³ Money from the rent on the field was also to be used to provide annually an apprenticeship to any poor boy or girl in the parish of St Saviour's, provided they were not attending the Blue Coat School in Peasholme Green or Mrs Wilson's Hospital. In 1819 there was surplus money, so the numbers of the poor receiving bread increased to 20 families. Tradesmen taking on poor apprentices from the parish could be paid up to £8 per annum. We know from the Charity Commissioner report of 1839 that the tenant of Old Layre Close was a man called John Lawrie who paid an annual rent of £24.⁴

There were open fields in Clifton (flatts as they were known in this area), that is, lands that were farmed in the medieval system of subdivided strips with common grazing areas (fig. 1). The land was enclosed with hedges and ditches by an Act of Parliament in 1764, although much of the land had been enclosed before that. Certainly, Old Layre Close was an ancient enclosed field mentioned in the 17th century. The maps I have seen show the field was an unusual shape - a rectangle with uneven lengths called a trapezoid, as I recall from school geometry lessons. Bootham Crescent football ground was never a 'crescent'.

In Clifton the 17th century had got off to a bad start. In 1603 the Parish Register for Clifton described an awful epidemic that had devastated the area: 'people dyed so fast that they could not be well numbered tyll the fifth of December following the cekeness (sickness) abayted'.⁵

The register also lists a baptism in 1640 that gives us a clue as to the history of the plot of land that was to be the site of the football

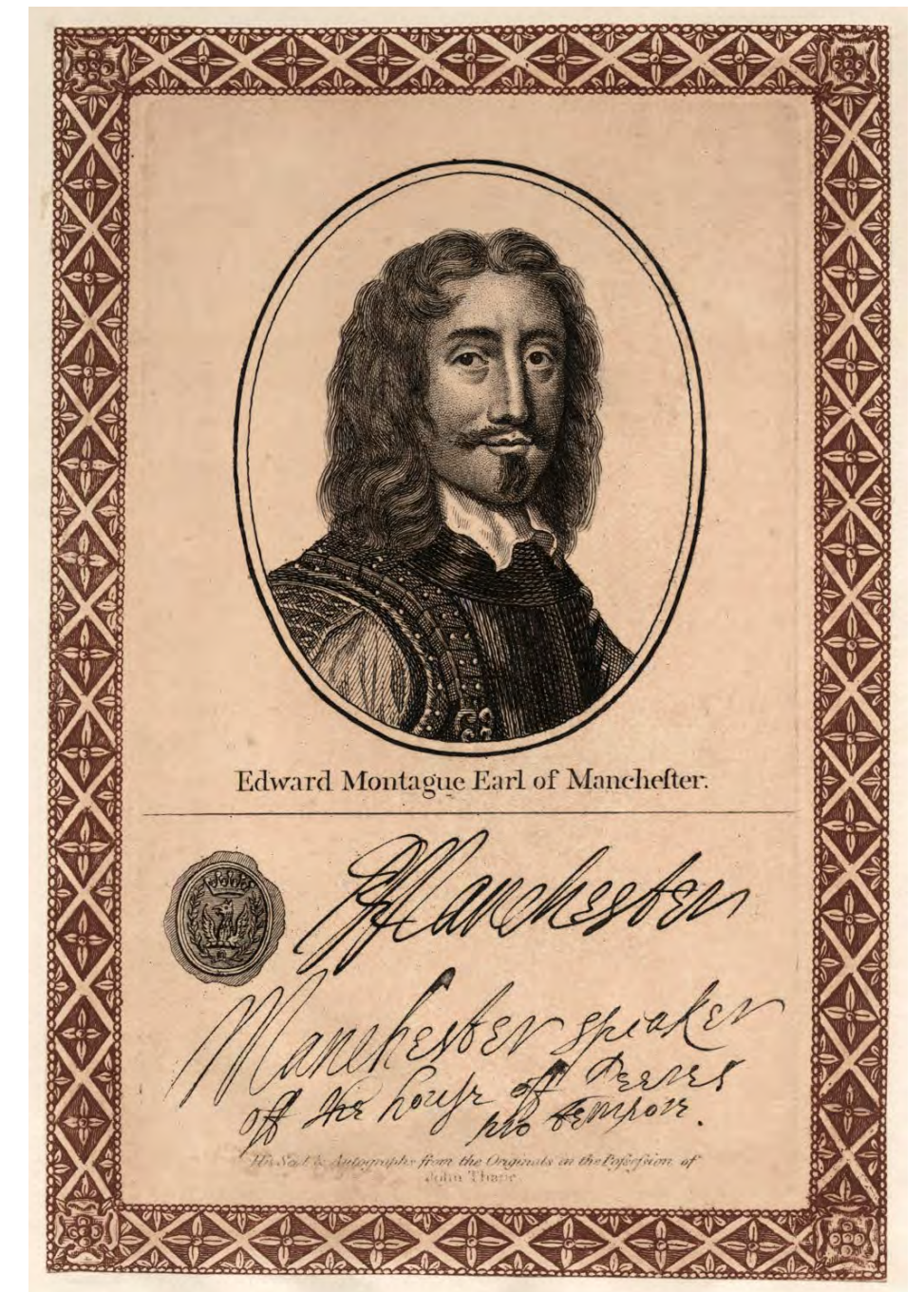


Fig. 2: Edward Jeffery (publisher), after unknown artist, Jacob Astley, Baron Astley, 1816, line engraving. Image: National Portrait Gallery, London.

ground. George, the son of Alexander Whitechurch, was baptised '[i]n the leager in the fields in Layre Close'.⁶ It is unlikely that George would have been baptised in a field so I researched the term 'leager', which turned out to be a 17th century word for a military camp. The field which was to become York City's football ground was the site of a military camp during the English Civil War!

It was well placed for one since it was already enclosed with hedges and ditches and lay adjacent to a road leading to Bootham Bar from the north. A 'Layre Close' in agrarian

history refers usually to a meadow or grazing pasture. Initially the field was set up with fortifications constructed by the Royalist forces with ramparts, ditches and cannon mountings.

Entries in St. Olave's parish registers during October and November 1640 mention 'the leager in the fields in Layre Close'. This camp, 'where several ramparts and bulwarks were thrown up' and many cannon mounted' was perfect for armies to prepare for battle.⁷ Sir Jacob Astley the Royalist General (fig. 2) and the Earl of Manchester the Parliamentary General (fig. 3) both encamped their troops on



Fig. 1: 1852 Ordnance Survey map of Clifton, York. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

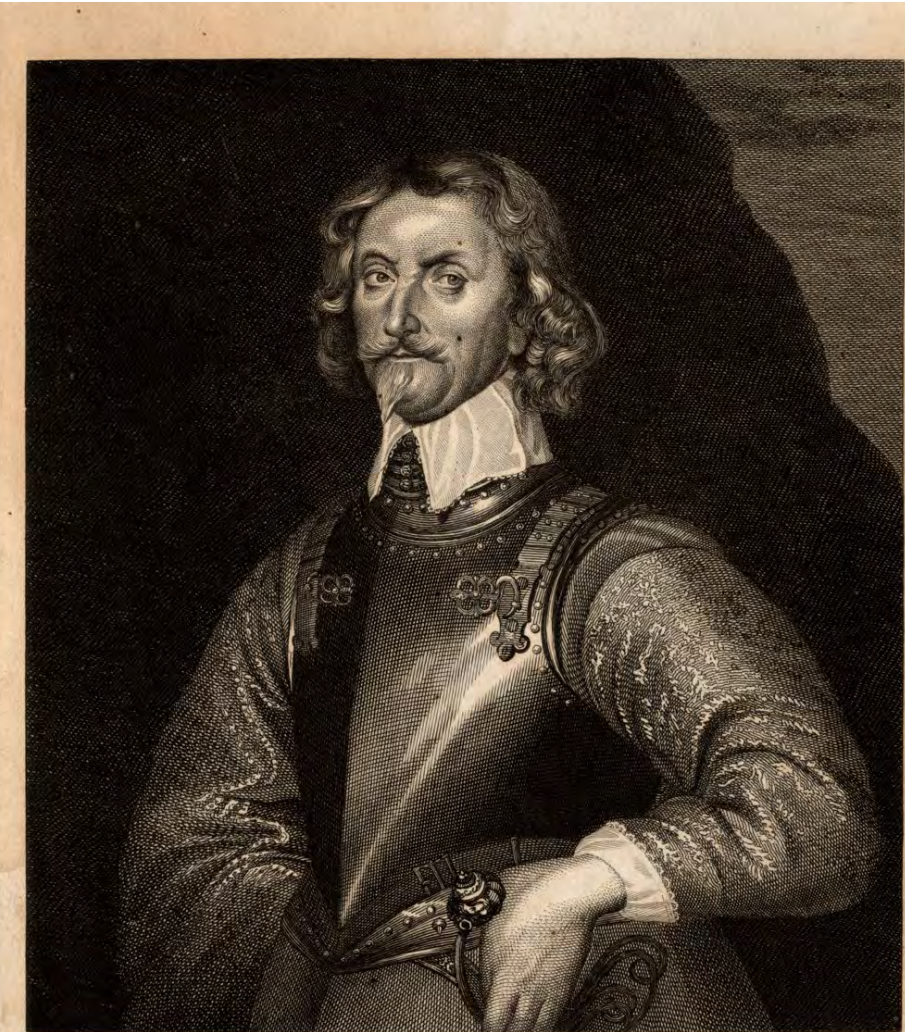
► Old Layre Close between 1640 and 1644 at different times.⁸

It was many years before the scars of the Civil War were healed. Even in 1725 a visitor could distinguish many of the earthworks erected eighty years before. Daniel Defoe passed it along the road on his travels and wrote:

‘York is indeed a pleasant and beautiful city and not all the less beautiful for the works and lines about it being demolished, and the city, as it may be said, being laid open, for the beauty of peace is seen in the rubbish; the lines and bastions and demolished fortifications have

a reserved secret pleasantness in them from the contemplation of the publick Tranquillity that outshines all the beauty of the advanced bastions, batteries, cavaliers and all the hard named works of the engineers about a city.’⁹

An old document from 1672, just after the Civil War, lists the people who were charged with contributing towards the expenses of St Olave’s Church in Clifton. The parish was chiefly owned by Sir Metcalfe Robinson, whose family had owned the estate of Clifton since 1606, with a lease for 300 years.¹⁰



JACOB L^d ASTLEY.
From the original.
Published by Edward Jeffery, Pall Mall, 1816.

Fig. 3: John Thane, after Sir Anthony van Dyck, Edward Montagu, 2nd Earl of Manchester, early 19th century, line engraving. Image: National Portrait Gallery, London.

Old Layre Close lay between Burton Stone Lane and what is now Grosvenor Terrace, but which in the late 18th and all of the 19th century was known as Asylum Lane as it led to the asylum now called Bootham Park Hospital.

We know that, within sight of Old Layre Close from 1444 till beyond 1733, there were gallows on Burton Stone Lane. They are long gone now.

Records also show Clifton or Lady Windmill existed from the late-14th to the early-19th centuries in Burton Stone Lane. Between 1374 and 1413 it belonged to John de Roucliff. Other owners were Sir William Ingleby in the mid-15th century, and Sir William Robinson in the early-18th century. The last record of the mill being operational was in 1852, but there is no trace of the building now.

However, we can see from a survey in 1764 that the people who farmed and had crofts and cottages along Burton Stone Lane and it is very likely that one of these rented the land from Barker’s Charity for Old Layre Close at that time. We know that Thomas Mouncer, a wheelwright, lived and farmed very close to the Burton Stone itself, which is the base of a long disappeared medieval cross.¹¹ John Pick a husbandman and his wife Elizabeth daughter of Thomas Scruton, farmer, had as their abode ‘one of the small houses facing the Burton Stone’. Thomas Scruton also lived along the lane.¹²

Richard Lund was the likeliest tenant of the Close. He was a farmer and ale draper (alehouse keeper), and he and his wife Ann had their cottage adjacent to Burton Stone Lane. Lund had a sizeable acreage all around the lane, including Chapel Close, Lunds Close and Gossupps Close, with land extending to Lady Mill Lane, and a field known as Bull Balk extending down to the river Foss.¹³

The rental does not mention Layre Close as it did not belong to the Robinsons and so didn’t register on the inventory. Around Old Layre Close, however, were many interesting sounding field names, for example: Fettys field; Nether Flatt; Wandells; the Wranglands Gallows Broates (heath); Beggars Flatt; Hobthrush; and Hobs bed Flatt.¹⁴



In 1836 when the owners of the estate decided to sell up the whole of Clifton for speculative housebuilding, they were badly disappointed as a lot of the land remained unbuilt on for many years.¹⁵

Old Layre Close remained a field under the ownership of Barker’s Charity until it was agreed in 1881

to allow York Cricket Club to lease it and change its use. In 1913 a formal lease was prepared for the York Cricket and Bowling Club to use the field for their sporting activities for a further 10 years (fig. 4).

The cricket club remained on the ground until 1932 when the land was leased to York City Football

Club, who had previously had a football pitch in Fulford. The Bootham Crescent ground was built and ready to be played on in just four months. An aerial view clearly shows the trapezoid shape of the land, so after all the centuries, Old Layre Close now has another use - as a modern housing estate of the 21st century!

Notes

- 1 See Paul Bowser, *Bootham Crescent: A Second Home*, vol. 1 (Minsterman Books, 2019); David Britton, *York City: The Complete Record* (Breedon Books Publishing, 2008); and Dave Windross and Martin Jarred, *Citizens and Minstermen, A Who’s Who of York City FC 1922-1997* (Citizen Publications, 1997).
- 2 *Parish Register of St Olave’s, York, 1603*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, GB 193 PR/Y/OL/A.
- 3 Interestingly, an earlier site of the football club was Field View just north of Old Layre Close. This also was charity land owned by All Saints Pavement.
- 4 *The City and County of the City of York: A Comprehensive Review of Local Charities*, Charity Commission, 1839.
- 5 *Parish Register of St Olave’s, York, 1603*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, GB 193 PR/Y/OL/A.
- 6 *Parish Register of St Olave’s, York, 1640*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, GB 193 PR/Y/OL/A.
- 7 *Parish Register of St Olave’s, York, 1640*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, GB 193 PR/Y/OL/A.
- 8 See ‘History’, in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York*, vol. 2 (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England, 1972), British History Online, accessed May 22, 2026, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/york/vol2/pp7-34>.
- 9 Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies*, ed. Ernest Rhys, vol. 2 (JM Dent and Co, 1928), 28.
- 10 See *The Parish Register of St Olave, York 1650-1785*, trans. Nortman Bedford Pace, ed. Barbara Whitehead (York Family History Society, 1993); and *Parish Register Transcript of St Olave’s Church, 1540*, Familysearch.
- 11 See Fiona Davies’ article on *The Burton Stone* in this magazine.
- 12 *Clifton Enclosure Award, 1764*, Explore York Libraries and Archives, ENC/5.
- 13 A balk is an unploughed part of an open unhedged field which can have different uses.
- 14 A flatt is a Yorkshire name for an unenclosed field without hedges or ditches.
- 15 For a description of Clifton in the 19th century and the changing use of land, see Barabara Hutton, *Clifton and its People in the Nineteenth Century* (Yorkshire Philosophical Society, 1969).

Fiona Davies

Fiona has enjoyed researching the Burton Stone and has also been inspired to create a painting.

Fiona Davies, *The History of the Burton Stone*, 2026, mixed media. Image: Fiona Davies.

THE Burton Stone

1066 - 1540

In medieval times, the Burton Stone was the site of an ancient chapel and hospital dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. The lane was called Chapel Lane. In 1227 the chapel was the property of the king who gave the buildings to Dominican Friars. The stone is thought to have had a cross in the central hole and marked the northern city boundary, next to the chapel. Travellers prayed here before leaving the jurisdiction of the city, for safe passage through the Forest of Galtres.

1603 - 1604

The Burton Stone was probably used as a plague stone during York's worst recorded outbreak of plague when 3,512 died, said to be a third of the population of the city.

The depressions (where the cross had originally been) were filled with vinegar and coins placed in the

solution as a means of sterilisation. Those affected by plague or cholera could then safely buy food brought to the city boundaries by people in the countryside.

1545 - 1828

After Henry VIII suppressed the chapel and hospital of St Mary Magdalene, he gave the buildings to the local Burton family. By the early 18th century, the buildings fell into ruin. Records first mention an inn on the site adjacent to the Burton Stone in 1828. The inn was originally called The Plough but was renamed The Burton Stone.

1849 - Present Day

In 1849 the road was recorded on maps as Burton Lane, possibly renamed after the Burtons as a wealthy local family. In 1896 the present Burton Stone Inn replaced an earlier inn of the same name.

The stone was incorporated within the boundary of the new inn. In 1899 York Council agreed to pay Tadcaster Tower Brewery, owners of the inn, the sum of 1 old penny a year in rent.

NOTES

To find out more about the Burton Stone, check out:

- Charles Brunton Knight, *This is York: A Personally-Conducted Tour* (Herald Printing Works, 1954)
- Marguerita Spence and Marian E Everatt, *A Short History of York* (A. Brown & Sons, 1948)
- Van Wilson, *The Changing Face of Clifton* (York Archaeological Trust, 2011)
- York Historic Environment Record, 'The Burton Stone Adjacent to the Burton Stone Inn', MYO1673

We often pass Clifton Green. On foot, by bike, in our cars. When was the last time you saw a gathering there? What were people meeting for? And why did they stop?

Fig. 1: Clifton Green in 1984. Image: John Baker, CC BY-SA 2.0.



Beverley Foster

Beverley has lived in Clifton for 17 years. This is her first time taking part in the Heritage Hunters project, and she's enjoyed learning more about her local area.

GATHERINGS ON Clifton Green

I have looked at the Friends of Clifton Green committee minute book, which dates from 1904 to 1972, and a range of newspaper reports. They show how the residents of Clifton Green enjoyed this pretty setting (fig. 1). Throughout that period, people have gathered on the Green to celebrate royal occasions, for sport, and to mark the seasons with Guy Fawkes night, Christmas, and the May Feast.

Bonfire

Newspaper reports from 1855 to 1906 tell us that while Guy Fawkes night was commemorated across the city, including at St Peter's School, the Clifton Green bonfire was the main attraction with roundabouts, swings, coconut shies, and toffee apples.⁴

Throughout this period, newspapers declared the waning of interest in celebrating the once popular event,

the comparatively smaller size of the bonfire, and even the lack of a bonfire due to poor weather. Yet during the same period, they reported young people's excitement, and the joy of the crowds around the large bonfire and accompanying fireworks and Aunt Sallies, despite a thick fog.⁵

On the 250th anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot York did little to celebrate, although in previous years there had been pealing of the Minster Bells and special services. The paper blamed bad weather but reported that interest in Guy Fawkes night seemed to be diminishing as an observance.

Clifton Green did not hold a bonfire, 'the juveniles [...] having been put in terror by the constable'.⁶

Again, on the 300th anniversary Clifton Green did not hold a bonfire. Nor did many other places in York due to unsettled weather. The paper noted that in previous years residents had carried around effigies to be burnt.⁷

It wasn't always foggy though.

Royal Events

In 1893 the Duke (later King George V) and Duchess of York visited York on their return from Braemar. Having been presented to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, the royal couple were accompanied by a procession led by the Chief Constable from the station to Clifton Green. The route along Bootham and Clifton was to be illuminated and decorated for the event.¹

Over 40 years later, amid celebrations throughout the city for the Coronation of George VI, the Postal Band provided a concert on Clifton Green.²

In the fair weather of 1912, crowds enjoyed more than one bonfire as several smaller ones were ablaze across Clifton Green.⁸ However, residents complained of smoke, unsightly rubbish being piled up for weeks in advance (rather than the five days allowed), incombustibles (such as mattress springs and tyres) being left behind, and even a stray firework breaking through a bedroom window, sending glass everywhere. The mess was costly to clean up, and so the bonfire was banned in 1960.⁹



The York and Ainsty Hunt

On Tuesday 3rd January 1911, the meet attracted a crowd of around 20,000 as the hounds ‘passed through a double line of people for nearly a mile’.¹⁴ The popularity may explain why the committee requested the return of the Hunt there on ‘Boxing Day or some other day’ in 1932.¹⁵

Clifton Feast and May Day

Traditionally the big event of the year was the Clifton Feast, which took place for two nights around May Day. This was particularly key for the upkeep of fencing around the green, which was paid for with profits from the feast.¹⁶ The Ordnance Survey map of 1852 shows the site of the maypole (fig. 2), and the pub previously on the site of the Old Grey Mare was called The Maypole. This burnt down in 1648, so the May festivities around this site must at least stretch back this far.¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century, there were swings and roundabouts.¹⁸ Twentieth-century residents remembered ‘stalls, swing boats, shooting galleries [...] coconut shies, and hurdy gurdies’.¹⁹ Residents wanted to end the Feast from at least 1904, and in 1906 some residents raised a petition to have it abolished. But it was generally well conducted and was popular enough for the fairground owners to want to continue. The funds raised paid for the clean-up, and repairs and

maintenance of the green, including the fences and ashes on the footpath. In 1969 the committee discussed raising the amount paid by Mr Shaw, the fair showman, so that they did not rely on the Feast for funds: ‘[i]t was agreed that the Fair did more damage to the Green than good to the Residents’.²⁰ The fair wagon wheels churned up the soil, so that it didn’t recover from one year to the next. In January 1970 students from Askham Bryan took soil samples from the Green. If the fair was stopped, they offered to cultivate, dress and sow the area at cost. The hunt was on for the committee, Mr Shaw and the town clerk to find another site for the 1971 fair. However, Mr Shaw, had, enterprisingly, paid for five years in advance, and had the right to hold the fair for the remaining two years of the agreement. Twice in 1970 the committee wrote to Mr Shaw asking him not to return the following year. The second time they returned the £25 that he had paid for the final year. Weeks later Mr Shaw’s solicitors returned the cheque, as a new fairground had not been found. In 1972 the committee issued a circular asking residents if they would object to the fair being discontinued. 20% of the voting papers were returned with 514 votes for the fair to continue, and 553 against. The last Feast on Clifton Green had been held, and the fair moved to Victoria Park. The offer of a maypole was rejected in favour of a park bench: a sedentary end to a centuries’ long knees-up.²¹

Music and the Arts

In 1922 the committee decided to ask residents their opinion of having a band to play on the green for an hour or so, once a week, in aid of charity. I suspect that this proposal was unpopular as it was never mentioned again. In 1972 the York Festival of Arts requested the committee to assist in holding festivities out of the city centre. In reply, the committee forbade the use of Clifton Green for mobile living quarters and wheeled vehicles, and again there is no further mention of this event.¹⁰

Hymns and Carols

Music was often present on Clifton Green. A child born in the 1930s recalled ‘on Sunday evenings in summer they left chapel for a little service on the green with hymn singing. The Salvation Army band played on the green particularly at Christmas’.¹¹ In October 1969, the committee agreed that a Christmas tree for the green would be ‘a pleasant innovation’ and the following year they bought a tree which the council erected and lit.¹² The new tree and the carol singing proved a success. In 1972 the committee re-sited the sockets for the tree lights. They planned to have a band, a choir and mince pies. The committee themselves would have cheese and wine afterwards.¹³

Notes

- 1 Yorkshire Gazette, 30 September 1893.

2 Leeds Mercury, 22 April 1937.

3 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book 1904-1980, Explore York Libraries and Archives, FCG/1.

4 See Van Wilson, *The Changing Face of Clifton* (York Archaeological Trust, 2011), 11-15, and *York Herald*, 6 November 1864.

5 Yorkshire Evening Press, 6 November 1896.

6 York Herald, 10 November 1855.

7 Yorkshire Evening Press, 6 November 1905.

8 Yorkshire Evening Press, 6 November 1912.

9 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

10 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

11 Wilson, *The Changing Face of Clifton*, 11-15.

12 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

13 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

14 Midland Counties Advertiser, 12 January 1911.

15 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

16 Yorkshire Evening Press, 9 January 1905.

17 Hugh Murray, *A Directory of York Pubs 1455-2003* (Voyager Publications, 2003).

18 Yorkshire Gazette, 5 May 1888.

19 Wilson, *The Changing Face of Clifton*, 11-15.

20 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

21 Friends of Clifton Green Committee Minute Book.

Dr Belcombe's

PRIVATE ASYLUM AT CLIFTON GREEN

In the area of Clifton Green where Clifton Dale is now situated, there was in 1813 a Private Asylum opened by Dr William Belcombe, who was a doctor at The Retreat.

He was in partnership with Dr Alexander Mather. The asylum was for upper-class patients, and for '[c]ases of insanity in their early stages with a hopeful prognosis'.¹ In York there were many private establishments set up to treat mentally ill people (often called 'lunatics' in the 19th century). It was a lucrative business for the proprietors, and Dr Belcombe had two such establishments: Clifton House and Barker's House in The Groves.²

The building was large with rooms for 14 patients plus rooms for staff. The gardens to the rear of the property were split into 3, 1 for the ladies at 64 feet long, the gentlemen's garden at 96 feet long, and another garden at 144 feet long: a total width of 200 feet across a large area that is now covered in houses.³

However, it was in May 1818 that the asylum was the scene of an abduction, false incarceration and scandal.⁴

Jane Horsman was in her fifties and lived with her mother in a house at Poppleton (fig. 1).⁵ They had lived there for some 20 years, and they were 'respected, esteemed and beloved by all their neighbours'.⁶ Jane's mother owned a small farm adjoining their property which gave them an income of £40 a year and Jane's brother who was a surgeon in the East India Company provided an allowance for Jane and her mother of £200 a year. This allowance was administered by Jane's maternal uncle, Francis Bulmer.

Jane complained that the annuity paid through Francis had not been

paid by him as punctually as it used to be and he had fallen into the habit of 'doling out small amounts'.⁷ Francis complained of Jane's extravagance of having large wine merchant bills. Despite the Poppleton residence being used by the Bulmer family as a country house of recreation,⁸ Francis claimed it was Jane who was consuming liquor and threatening to harm herself with a razor blade. He instructed Jane's niece, Helen Scott, who was staying at the house to watch her for any unusual conduct.

Francis and his son, Reverend William Bulmer, set about to separate Jane from her mother, friends and comforts of her home and to break up the home at Poppleton. To do this they would incarcerate Jane at Dr Belcombe's Private Asylum, later known as Clifton House (fig. 2). On 7th May 1818, Rev. Bulmer applied to Dr Mather, who stated that the law required a certificate signed by 2 persons legally authorised to confirm that a person was 'insane'. Rev. Bulmer and Dr Mather then went to Mr Matterson, an apothecary in York who was acquainted with Jane, and who was legally authorised to sign a certificate. Mr Matterson said that he could not issue the certificate as 'he was not mad'.⁹ Dr Mather was infuriated by his denial and seized a poker and threatened to knock him down if he did not sign the certificate.

The certificate now signed by Mr Matterson, albeit reluctantly, they set forth to the Poppleton house, arriving

at around midnight. Jane was woken up, threatened with a straitjacket, and told that she would be forced to go to the asylum if she did not agree to.

In the early hours of the morning of 8th May 1818, Jane was put into a chaise and arrived at the asylum in Clifton. Jane was taken to a room by the matron of the house who used a strap to secure her leg to the bed and locked it with a padlock, and she remained like this for the next fourteen nights. The matron had been informed by Dr Belcombe that the person who was coming was known to secrete blades on her person and was at risk of harming herself. Jane was refused paper and ink to enable her to write to her friends. The matron later stated that Jane was rambling about the Bulmers and that her abduction was how they had taken her brother Edward to the asylum in Bootham, which she believed to be the ramblings of an insane person.¹⁰ Jane was told that she could see her friends as long as it was in the company of the Bulmers, whom she refused to have any contact with. During the course of her incarceration Dr Mather tried to arrange a meeting with Jane and the Bulmers who wanted her to make a signed declaration of her behaviour and agree not to have any contact with her mother or go within eight or ten miles of her.¹¹ Dr Mather did

Cath Naylor

Cath arrived in York 36 years ago knowing it was full of history. Clifton Heritage Hunters has opened up the area that she lives in and introduced her to so many interesting people from history that she had difficulty choosing who to write about! Cath has enjoyed discovering the area, discussing our findings with other members of the group and hopes that you, the reader, enjoy it too.

not elaborate as to why the Bulmers wanted this declaration.

A close friend of Jane's was a widowed vicar's wife, Mrs Faber, who lived close to her in Poppleton. Mrs Faber made an application to Jonathan Gray, solicitor, on 13th May 1818, to ask him to look into Jane's case. Jonathan spoke with Dr Mather who confessed she was not insane and that the family had asked for her confinement as chastisement for a bad habit she had acquired, meaning the earlier accusation of consuming the alcohol. On 31st May 1818 Jonathan then went to the Visiting Magistrate Mr Dicken and a Visiting Physician Dr Wake, who visited Jane and was satisfied that she was not insane and that she did not need to be in custody, stating he had never known a confirmed

lunatic to be fully recovered in such a short time. An application was made to Dr Belcombe who did not pretend that she was insane but said 'Why I assure you, we don't get anything by her, we only get two guineas a week by her. People like her teach insane persons tricks, and we would therefore rather not have her here.'¹²

Despite these statements they would not agree to liberate Jane and it became a battle; the doctors, the keepers of the asylum and the relations on one hand, and her friends and benefactors on the other. Mr Dicken went to the asylum with two constables and some ladies who were friends of Jane to demand entry. They were refused admittance and the door barred. Jane was allowed to speak to the ladies from an upstairs open

window and informed them that Dr Mather had promised to let her return to her home the following Wednesday. The ladies informed Jane that Wednesday would never come and that her home at Poppleton had been shut up and abandoned. Mr Dicken then secured a workman to take off the door and Jane was liberated.

On 4th August 1819, 15 months after her incarceration, Jane brought a case of trespass and false imprisonment against Francis Bulmer, Rev. William Bulmer, Dr Alexander Mather, William Matterson, Dr William Belcombe and Helen Scott, her niece. The public gallery was full with barely room for witnesses to pass to give evidence, this being a case of notoriety. Many witnesses appeared who all confirmed that they had



Fig. 1: Ryder House, Nether Poppleton, the home of Jane Horsman. Image: Cath Naylor.

Fig. 2: Clifton Dale, the area thought to be where Dr Belcombe's Private Asylum was located. Image: Cath Naylor.



never witnessed Jane intoxicated and that she was of sound mind.

Rev. William Bulmer had stated in a letter to Jane's sister that Mrs Faber herself was frequently intoxicated and had been incarcerated in a lunatic asylum, to which Mrs Faber made a case of slander against him. The case was acquitted as the judge said that words written in private letters were not a case to be brought or else they would be inundated with cases.

At 3.30am on 5th August 1819, the jury retired and returned at nearly 4am, finding a verdict on behalf of Jane of damages £50 to be paid by each except Helen Scott. Jane did not return to her family home in Poppleton but took up lodgings with one of her friends who had attended court on her behalf as a witness.

The scandal of the court case does not seem to have affected Dr Belcombe and Dr Mather's reputation or business. Dr Belcombe died in 1822, and his son Dr Stephen Belcombe carried on the work at Clifton House until 1853 when he retired and put the house up for sale.

Jane's experiences were not unique. Eliza Raine, who spent most of her adult life in asylums and was a resident at Clifton House, wrote '[o]h that I had some kind friend at my side to fight amidst this mortal warfare in my defence, but I have not even that'.¹³ The unfortunate Eliza Raine, once 'Clifton House' was sold, was moved to another private asylum in York. Fortunately for Jane Horsman she had the courage and many kind friends and neighbours willing to fight at her side.

Notes

- 1 Dr Belcombe was a prominent figure in York at this time. His achievements included setting up the Schweppes company and developing their process of carbonated water for medical uses. Dr Belcombe was also the father of Mariana Belcombe, who, like Eliza Raine (discussed later in this article), had a romantic relationship with famed diarist Anne Lister. See 'The Belcombe Family of York', Anne Lister's Society, <https://sjriocain.wordpress.com/belcombes>; and 'The Story of Anne Lister', Borthwick Institute, University of York, <https://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/holdings/research-guides/lgbt/anne-lister>.
- 2 Robert Adams, *Flighty, Melancholic and Wild: 250 Years of Mental Health Care in York* (Quacks Books, 2025), 32-33.
- 3 Licence Application, 1845, North Yorkshire County Record Office, QSB 1845 4/14/34.
- 4 This research works primarily from a report on the case. For more details, see Mr Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman v Francis Bulmer The Elder, The Rev Wm Bulmer. Alexander Mather, Wm Matterson, Wm Belcombe M.D. and Helen Scott* (York: Thomas Wilson and Sons: 1819). For Dr Mather's defence of his and Dr Belcombe's actions, see Alexander Mather, *A Plain Narrative of Facts, Reception and Treatment of Jane Horsman* (York: John Wolstenholme, 1819).
- 5 Prudence Bebb, *Georgian Poppleton, 1714 -1830* (William Sessions, 1994), 21.
- 6 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 3.
- 7 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 4.
- 8 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 4.
- 9 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 5.
- 10 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 93.
- 11 Mather, *Treatment of Jane Horsman*, 31-32.
- 12 Fraser, *A Full and Impartial Report of the Cause of Jane Horsman*, 8.
- 13 Eliza Raine to Anne Lister, 24 July 1812, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale Archive, SH:7/ML/A/43. For more on Eliza Raine, see Tara Chappell, *India Hancox, Charlotte Knight, Isabella Phillips and Zoe Street, Eliza Raine (1791-1860)* (Herstory.York, 2024), <https://www.herstoryyork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Eliza-Raine.pdf>.

CLIFTON'S Almshouses

Sara Townsend

Sara has taken part in previous Heritage Hunters projects, and this time has investigated historic almshouses in Clifton.

Almshouses are charities run by volunteers to provide accommodation for older people, often single women, of limited means. They have been in existence for hundreds of years and were often originally called hospitals. These charities were a much-needed source of housing, especially in Victorian times as an alternative to the workhouse. The residents usually did not pay any rent and would probably have received a 'pension' from the charity.

Almshouses today provide affordable, secure housing with financial and health benefits. As they are charities run by volunteers they are independent of local councils and government, so they remain a permanent part of the community. Twelve almshouses remain in York. Three of them, including the largest, are situated in Clifton. No longer called hospitals, the three almshouses in Clifton are named after their benefactors.¹

Colton's Cottages 1911

This almshouse is located on Shipton Street, off Burton Stone Lane (fig. 1). It consists of 8 one-bedroom bungalows built in 1910 around a central lawn, with a further 4 built in 1930. In 1982 the kitchens and bathrooms were renovated and further updating took place in 1996 to provide central heating. It is run by Colton's Hospital Trust, with 5 trustees on the board. The charity provides accommodation for single women over 55 of limited means. However, Shipton Street is not the original site of this almshouse, which was in fact founded in 1717, making it one of the older charities in York.

Dr Thomas Colton was a non-conformist minister at the Unitarian Church on St Saviourgate from 1692 until his death in 1731, as well as chaplain to Lady Sarah Hewley. Sarah was one of the main benefactors of the church and Thomas gave the sermon

at her funeral in 1710. He made a deed in 1717 to establish cottages for 8 poor women. The cottages were originally on the corner of Tanner Row and Rougier Street, using funds

from land in Cawood and Thorpe Willoughby. They were in a poor state of repair and demolished in 1910 to allow the street to be widened and relocated to Clifton.²

Fig. 1: Colton's Cottages. Image: Sara Townsend.



► John Burrill Homes 1931

This almshouse consists of 3 Grade 2 listed buildings in Water End arranged around a very large lawn (fig. 2). There are 6 one-bedroom single storey homes and a central house for a caretaker. It was one the first almshouses in York to have hot and cold water. There are also allotments available to residents behind the buildings. The style and layout of the almshouse is characteristic and traditional, being three sides of a square to encourage a sense of community, and was designed by the architects Ward and Leckenby. The land for the almshouse was purchased in 1918 by John Burrill and previously owned by the parish of St Michael le Belfry. The money for the building, which was completed in 1931, was provided through the will of John Burrill dated 1922. He died in 1924 leaving £25,166 13s 6d, the equivalent of approximately £1.3 million today. The cost of the build was nearly half of the estate at £10,631 (£566,200 today).³

John Burrill was the son of Robert Burrill, born 1815, a gardener from Overton who moved to Clifton following his marriage to Caroline, a dressmaker, in 1849. The Burrills lived in 2 Ellison Terrace at Water End near Clifton Green (fig. 3) and stayed there all their lives. Ellison Terrace was built in 1815 and is Grade 2 listed. One of the houses (number 4) was occupied by John and Elizabeth Ellison, who married in 1807, so possibly he was the house builder and named the terrace after his family.

John was born in 1856 and had an older sister, Annie, who became a milliner. In the census of 1871, John was aged 14 and still at school. He later became an apprentice and by 1881 was a grocer's assistant.



Fig. 2: John Burrill Homes. Image: Sara Townsend.



Above: Fig. 3: Ellison Terrace. Right: Fig. 5: Burrill Avenue street sign. Images: Sara Townsend.

He worked at Samuel Border's, a high-class grocers on Coney Street. Samuel Border of Grimston Hall, Dunnington, was the head of the firm and the first president of York Chamber of Commerce, as well as Lord Mayor of York in 1899. John stayed with the firm for 50 years, all his working life, and rose to become a director. His obituary in the Sheffield Telegraph described him as a one of the 'leading tradesmen of York'.⁴

He was also involved in civic life as a parish overseer and was on the grand jury at the Yorkshire Assizes. In 1892, on behalf of his firm, he attended the inquest, in Sinnington, of William Cooper who was employed by Border's as a 'tea traveller'. Mr Cooper was travelling on business through the villages of North Yorkshire when he was thrown from the trap and sustained fatal injuries, although the driver survived. The accident was thought to have been caused by a faulty bolt. Sadly Mr Cooper left a widow and large family. This tragic episode may have given John the idea for the almshouses which he originally intended for members of the grocery trade.⁵

Despite his wealth, John continued to live with his sister Annie in Ellison Terrace, employing a domestic servant who also lived with them by 1911. Annie stayed on in the house after John's death in 1924 until 1930 when she died aged 76. They were both buried in the church yard at Overton where their parents were also interred (fig. 4).

Burrill Avenue in Clifton built in the 1930s was named after this lifelong resident who left the almshouse and its associated charity (fig. 5).



Fig. 4: Gravestone of John Burrill. Image: Sara Townsend.

Fothergill Homes 1935

In 1935, 10 cottages were built to accommodate 5 men and 5 women from the city of York. The buildings are located on Avenue Road, Clifton, and again the architects were Ward and Leckenby, using a similar traditional style (fig. 6). The money was made available through a bequest in the will of Jessie Ashton. The almshouses were to be independent dwellings for 'poor persons of good character' and named in honour of Thomas Fothergill.⁶

Jessie inherited a lot of land from Thomas after his death in 1874, including the estate of Kingthorpe a few miles from Pickering as well as land and property in York. Kingthorpe

House, built in the 18th century with 17 rooms, was sold following Jessie's death and the proceeds used to establish Fothergill Homes.⁷ It is a bit of a mystery as to why Jessie inherited the entire Fothergill estate. Her connection to Thomas is unknown and his will does not give any indication of their relationship.⁸

She was born Jessie Harcourt in Gravesend in 1844 and didn't marry until 1891 when she was 47 to Dr James Thornhill Ashton. While she and her husband spent time in Brighton, Matlock and London, a caretaker and staff looked after Kingthorpe. When Jessie died at the Langham Hotel in London in 1932, aged 88 and without any heirs, the contents of her

will were a 'surprise' as reported in The Yorkshire Post.⁹ Her estate was worth £137,000 (£8.4 million today). As well as the bequest to establish the almshouse, she left The White House to Dr Evelyn, who was a campaigner for the preservation of York's old buildings and churches who she had never met! Initially the newspapers assumed this was The White House in Clifton but in fact it was located at the bottom of Tadcaster Road, one of the oldest buildings in the area and previously known as Gallows House.

Fothergill Homes was able to expand after the war by amalgamating with other charities to form York City Charities. Land behind the house of John Bowes Morrell (founder of York Conservation Trust and Lord Mayor of York) on Burton Stone Lane was made available. Following the closure and sale of Inghams Hospital on Bootham, the residents were moved to Fothergill Homes in the late 1950s. It now accommodates 60 people, including couples.

Fig. 6: Fothergill Homes. Image: Sara Townsend



Notes

- 1 For more about almshouses, see The Almshouse Association, www.almshouses.org.
- 2 Carole Smith, *The Almshouses of York: Medieval Charity to Modern Welfare* (Quack Books, 2010), 103-105.
- 3 'John Burrill', *England and Wales National Probate Calendar 1858-1995*, accessed through Ancestry, 434.
- 4 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 9 July 1924.
- 5 *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, 24 September 1892.
- 6 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 22 June 1932.
- 7 *It sold, more recently, in 2014 for £4.5 million.*
- 8 *Will of Thomas Fothergill*, 27 May 1868.
- 9 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 22 June 1932.

CLIFTON ALLIANCE

Cricket Club

In 2024, Clifton Alliance Cricket Club claimed club cricket’s coveted ECB Yorkshire Premier League North title. It was another addition to the trophy cabinet of what club historian Paul Thorpe has described as a ‘force in local club cricket’.¹ But the club, like many others, has gone through myriad evolutions of its name and playing staff before becoming the team it is today.

North and East Ridings Pauper Lunatic Asylum (1847-1865)

Cricket was part of the life of the asylum from very early in its history. The first match played against another team was in 1849. The medical superintendent reported: ‘[c]ricket is a favourite game and was frequently played during the year. In the spring, I invited, through their medical officer, the patients and attendants from a neighbouring Asylum, to come here to play a match; this was followed by a return match played at Bootham.’¹³ He continued, ‘[t]he chagrin from want of success was forgotten in the good feeling that prevailed.’¹⁴

North Riding Lunatic Asylum (1865-1920)

The hospital changed its name to the North Riding Lunatic Asylum in 1865. The ground continued to host cricket matches as part of the pastimes for the patients but also welcomed a variety of other activities.

In 1867, a range of outdoor summer games were played, ‘not forgetting the time honored [sic] game of Cricket’.⁵ Two matches were played against the Wakefield Asylum. The medical superintendent notes that this introduced ‘friendly rivalry’ and afforded ‘change and recreation in the visit paid to each other: although unsuccessful, the North Riding received a stimulus that leads to hope for better things in the future’.⁶

Nearly 300 attended a ‘pic-nic and strawberry feast in the cricket field’ in 1870.⁷ In 1873 one of only 2

large-scale picnics taking place that year ‘[o]wing to the uncertain state of the weather’ was in the asylum cricket field, and ‘the enjoyment derived [...] was very great’.⁸ The medical superintendent’s report for 1876 declared that ‘[t]he annual fête in the Cricket-field was also a great success, the weather being also most favourable for the sport [...] Cricket, Lawn Tennis and other games being joined in with much enthusiasm’.⁹

Matches continued to be played. 1877 saw ‘[a]musements and Games of Cricket, Tennis, &c, [...] carried out with great success in the summer, no less than fourteen Cricket Matches, with neighbouring Clubs, having been played’.¹⁰

The cricket team experienced good success in the years between 1878 and 1880:

1878: ‘several cricket matches were played against neighbouring Clubs,

Claire Richardson

Claire has a family link to the cricket club that made it a perfect topic for her to find out more about. This has been her first foray into researching and writing an article.

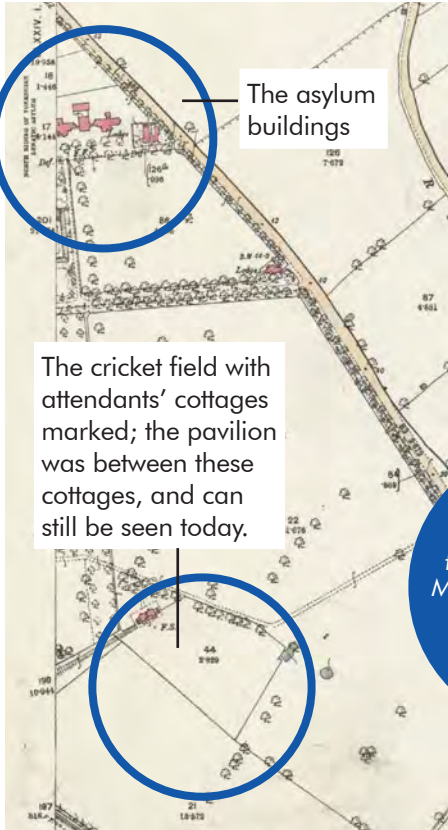


Fig. 1: Map of the cricket field. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

in which the Asylum team proved often victorious’.¹¹

1879: ‘during the summer months as many as twelve cricket matches were played against neighbouring clubs, proving a source of pleasure and interest as well to many unable to join in the game as to the players’.¹²

1880: ‘several cricket matches were again played with neighbouring clubs, resulting frequently in victory to the Asylum team’.¹³

In 1881, the first pavilion on the pitch was built (fig. 1), ‘for the use of the Patients during the Cricket season’.¹⁴ It was attached to the two



Fig. 2: 1926 North Riding Mental Hospital team, winners of the Myers and Burnell cup. Reproduced with the permission of Paul Thorpe’s estate.

cottages built for accommodation for married attendants.¹⁴

By 1884, the number of matches increased: ‘21 cricket matches were played against neighbouring clubs, of which no less than 12 were won by the Asylum team, 4 only being lost, 4 drawn, and 1 tied’.¹⁵

This would appear to represent a resounding success for the asylum’s team. The medical superintendent’s report in 1891 perhaps gives us pause for thought about who the players are on the hospital’s cricket team by this time: ‘[t]he Cricket matches and Picnics in the summer have also been much enjoyed by large numbers, and have tended greatly to relieve the monotony of Asylum life both for Patients and Attendants’.¹⁶

In his research on asylums and sport, Rob Ellis has looked at the

make-up of the North Riding Asylum cricket teams in the 1890s.

He discovered that the cricket team was made up of a range of people that included staff and people who were not directly linked to the asylum. Though patients also formed part of these mixed teams, teams made up of just patients usually only played against teams of other patients.¹⁷

North Riding Mental Hospital (1920-1948)

The third change of name from asylum to hospital reflected changing attitudes around mental illness and its treatment and care.

In 1926 the North Riding Mental Hospital won the Myers & Burnell Cup for the first time in the club’s history (fig. 2).¹⁸ New pavilions were then

Timeline

1847: Opening of the North and East Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum.

1865: The hospital changed its name to North Riding Mental Asylum. Cricket matches were played regularly.

1932: The North Riding Mental Hospital Cricket Club won the Myers & Burnell Cup for the second time. They went on to win it again in 1933, 1934 and 1935.

1948: The hospital became Clifton Hospital, and the club became Clifton Hospital Cricket Club.

1973: Thanks to an employee of the hospital playing for both Clifton Hospital Cricket Club and Alliance Cricket Club, a merger of the clubs was agreed: Clifton Hospital Alliance Cricket Club.

1993: The club bought and became the owners of the ground their predecessors had played on for more than 100 years.

1994: Clifton Hospital closed.

1849: The North and East Riding Mental Asylum played its first match against York Lunatic Asylum.

1920: The hospital became the North Riding Mental Hospital. The club, playing as the North Riding Mental Hospital, won its first Myers & Burnell Cup.

1950: Changes in the York Baptist Sports Club led to its cricket team forming a new team called the Alliance Cricket Club. It was named after the Alliance Boot Company, for whom the chairman of the club worked.²

1972: The last game was played by Clifton Hospital Cricket Club.

1996: The club opened its new clubhouse and adopted its new name: Clifton Alliance Cricket Club.



Fig. 3: 1985 aerial photograph of Clifton cricket ground. Reproduced with the permission of Paul Thorpe's estate.

all the fun of the fair, were held on 30th July, on the cricket ground, made gay for the occasion with flags and bunting'.²³

Following a fire in 1944, which destroyed the 1931 pavilion, the medical superintendent's report of 27th April 1948 stated that: 'the cricket ground has been improved'. Though 'there seemed little hope of replacement', 'by the ingenuity of the Clerk of Works, two army huts have been skilfully adapted and erected on the site of the old pavilion'.²⁴

This pavilion served for almost fifty years until the new and current clubhouse was completed in 1996. As visible in the 1985 photo, the 1881 pavilion between the cottages was still there, and was still used for storage (fig. 3).

Clifton Hospital (1948-1996)

As the National Health Service came into being in 1948, the hospital and team both had a change of name. Now called the Clifton Hospital Cricket Club, the team won the Myers & Burnell Cup in 1950 (fig. 4).

The merger of this club with the Alliance Cricket Club in 1973 led to the formation of the Clifton Hospital Alliance Cricket Club.

Towards the end of this era, Clifton Hospital was due to close, and its site was being sold off. The club had to battle to buy the ground that they had played on for more than a hundred years. They received the deeds on 22nd May 1993.

In 1994, Clifton Hospital closed and in 1996, the club opened its new clubhouse and adopted its new name: Clifton Alliance Cricket Club.

erected on the tennis and cricket grounds in 1931.¹⁹

The club's archive includes a 1932 article, 'Cricket at Mental Hospitals', that discussed the calibre of players who represented teams from mental hospitals: 'The strong cricket teams which Yorkshire mental hospitals can put into the field is the subject of this interesting article. Many well-known Council and League players are now to be found on the various staffs'.²⁰

This analysis certainly held true for the North Riding Mental Hospital team, who won the Myers & Burnell final in 1932, before going on to win it in each of the following three years.

This article includes a lovely quote about the ground at Clifton: 'Quite recently I had the pleasure of visiting one of the most pleasant grounds in the district [...] The match was between the North Riding Mental Hospital, York, and the West Riding Mental Hospital team from Wakefield. Situated on its own, away from the main road and the hospital building, the York ground, despite the heavy rains, looked, and was, in splendid condition'.²¹ This match is also interesting as we know that on this same ground in 1867 'friendly rivalry was introduced and two matches were played with the inmates of the Wakefield Asylum'.²²

In 1936, '[t]he annual sports, with

The Story Behind the Crest

The club's crest (fig. 5) shows a snake entwined in a set of cricket stumps, and is a version of the Rod of Asclepius.²⁵ Asclepius in Greek mythology was the god of healing, and is normally represented with his staff with a serpent coiled around it.²⁶

The Clifton Alliance crest neatly brings together the medical and cricketing histories. Unfortunately for Asclepius, Zeus, father of the gods, feared that Asclepius might have the power to make all humans immortal and slew him with a thunderbolt - possibly the first example of bodyline bowling.



Fig. 5: Logo of Clifton Alliance Cricket Club. Image: Clifton Alliance Cricket Club.



Fig. 4: Clifton Hospital Cricket Club, 1950 winners of the Myers and Burnell cup. Reproduced with the permission of Paul Thorpe's estate.

Notes

- 1 Paul Thorpe, *Clifton Alliance Cricket Club*, vol. 1: 1780-1982 (Paul Thorpe, 2017).
- 2 *The Alliance Boot Co Ltd* had its shop on Parliament Street in York.
- 3 3rd Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 2 April 1850, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/1.
- 4 3rd Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent.
- 5 21st Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, March 1868, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/2.
- 6 21st Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent.
- 7 Report of Commissioners in Lunacy, North Riding County Asylum, 2 August 1870, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/2.
- 8 27th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, March 1874, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/2.
- 9 30th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, March 1877, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 10 31st Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 26 March 1878, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 11 32nd Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, March 1879, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 12 33rd Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 31 March 1880, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 13 34th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 29 March 1881, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 14 35th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 27 December 1881, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/3.
- 15 38th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, March 1885, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/4.
- 16 44th Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, 31 March 1891, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/4-5.
- 17 Rob Ellis, 'Asylums and Sport: Participation, Isolation and the Role of Cricket in the Treatment of the Insane', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30:1 (2013), 83-101.
- 18 Myers & Burnell was a prestigious local cup competition, first played for in 1919, last played for in 2007.
- 19 Medical Superintendent's Report, 31 December 1931, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/8.
- 20 'Cricket at Mental Hospitals', *Sports Final* (Bradford and Doncaster), 1932.
- 21 *Cricket at Mental Hospitals*.
- 22 21st Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent.
- 23 Medical Superintendent's Report, 26 January 1937, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/9.
- 24 Medical Superintendent's Report, 27 April 1948, Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS/CLF/1/2/9.
- 25 'Our History', Clifton Alliance Cricket Club, <https://cliftonalliancecc.co.uk/about-cacc/our-history>.
- 26 'Asclepius', *Structural Medicine*, www-structmed.cimr.cam.ac.uk/Asclepius.html.
- 27 Paul Thorpe, *A History of the Myers and Burnell Cup* (Quacks Books, 2019).

Acknowledgements

'I would like to extend my most grateful thanks to the club, chairman Dave Heartshorne and Elaine Thorpe for their generosity in sharing the club's extensive archives.

Paul Thorpe sadly passed away in 2025. He has written a full history of the club, and a book on the Myers and Burnell cup.²⁷ The club welcomes anyone who is interested in further reading about the club and cricket in York to visit them and view the work that Paul has done, which is available in the clubhouse.

Many thanks to Neil Adams and the staff at the Borthwick Institute.

My thanks to Tim and Joe Richardson.

Fig. 1: Jan's sister outside Pavillion Cottages in the late 1970s. Image: Jan Wilson.



Jan Wilson

Jan is an Archivist at The Mount School and has long been interested in history. She enjoys research, and has delved into the history of her former home, the Pavilion Cottages.



Fig. 2: Pavillion Cottages. Image: Jan Wilson.

Pavillion Cottages

AT CLIFTON HOSPITAL

Reminiscences

In the late 1970s, our family moved to Cricket Field Cottages, situated within the grounds of Clifton Hospital on Shipton Road (fig. 1). My father had commenced employment as a storeman, and the accommodation was provided as part of his employment.

My recollections of our brief time living in the cottage are a mixture of fondness and discomfort. The property had not undergone modernisation, with a coal fire in the living room serving as the sole source of heating. During the winter, ice would regularly form on the inside of my bedroom window, which still bore a hole caused by a cricket ball! My mother would wake early each morning to light the

coal fire, ensuring the living room was heated before the rest of the family arose.

The cottages stand in open fields, reached by a tree-lined road (fig. 2). During the dark, winter evenings, my mother met us at the Rawcliffe Lane bus stop after school and walked us through the allotments and hospital grounds. But the seclusion of the cottages made countless adventures possible. I learned to ride the bike owned by the boy next door; we constructed a hideout in the garage and spent many hours roaming across Clifton Ings.

My father and our next-door neighbour, who worked as a charge nurse at the hospital, were just two

of the many staff members who had commuted down the road every morning to go to work. The place we now called home was once known as Pavillion Cottages. Over nearly a century, these cottages served as staff accommodations, and both their history and the experiences of George Freestone, one of their residents, provide valuable insight into the heritage of Clifton Hospital.

Building the Cottages

The 1921 census marks the first recorded mention of the Pavillion Cottages, although they had been associated with the hospital's estate for a considerable period prior to that date.¹

Recorded as 'a pair of cottages combined with cricket pavilion',² these buildings first appeared on the 1892 ordnance survey map, though they were constructed between 1881-1882 (fig. 3). The Committee of Visitors of The Lunatic Asylum Report in 1881 noted:

'Plans have been prepared for the erection of a pair of cottages to be rented by married attendants, it being desirable to have as many attendants as possible resident on the premises, or within easy distance in case of any emergency arising.'³

In 1882, the Medical Superintendent noted in his report:

'Amongst the many improvements and alterations made during the last year may be mentioned the erection of a pair of cottages for married attendants and a handsome and commodious Cricket Pavillion. This last will be found most convenient and serviceable during the summer month when various sports and outdoor games are being carried on.'⁴

The cottages, built in the grounds by asylum artisans and patients,¹⁸ were built of brick, with a beautiful wooden porch and decoration above the windows, very much in an arts and crafts style. An enamelled cream or brown Yorkist range provided hot water and cooking, and a glass covered yard which led to the outbuildings, provided protection from the weather when visiting the outside toilet! Although electric lighting was installed in the hospital in 1890, it was not installed in Pavillion cottages until 1933.¹⁹

Clifton Hospital

The 1880s were a time of gradual and general improvements at the hospital. In 1843, just over a year before the Lunatics Act of 1845 made the provision of county and borough asylums compulsory, the justices of the peace for the North and East Ridings agreed to unite for the purposes of building and maintaining a county asylum. Several locations were looked at before a site bordering Shipton Road in Clifton was decided upon. The architects chosen were the firm of George Gilbert Scott and William Bonython Moffatt, and the asylum opened in April 1847.⁵

The setting on the edge of the city was not chosen with a view to

removing the asylum's residents from society, but more for its open aspect and clean air. The aim was not only to provide care, but also to cure the 'insane' with a familiar, homely atmosphere, Samuel Hill, the first Medical Superintendent of the Asylum, remarked in his first Annual Report that 'open fires, the use of nursery fenders, and the total absence of window guards give a cheerful and social aspect to the wards'.⁶

The asylum was designed for pauper patients and admitted 150 during the first 10 months. By 1850 it was already overfull and 2 new wings were opened in 1851.⁷ Over the next 30 years, more land was purchased, drained and built upon as the asylum continued to expand. The asylum became the North Riding Mental Hospital in 1871 after the union between the North and East Ridings was dissolved.⁸

In terms of staffing, the asylum was run on economical lines. Initially, the medical superintendent was the only doctor present until the introduction of the assistant medical officer role in 1857.⁹ There was a total of 10 attendants at the asylum in 1848 to manage 79 male and 70 female patients.¹⁰ During the early years, there were no attendants assigned

to night duty, presenting challenges in providing round-the-clock care. Recruiting suitable staff proved difficult due to low wages, and retention was also an issue, particularly among women, who frequently left their positions upon marriage.¹¹

To address these staffing concerns, significant changes were implemented from 1876 onwards. Female staff were paid equal wages to their male counterparts, and pensions became available for those who retired after extended service.¹² Additionally, staff cottages were constructed for married attendants, helping to stabilise the workforce and support those with families.¹³

George Freestone

In 1921, it was George Freestone who walked along the road from Pavillion Cottage towards the prominent building with its central water tower, known as the North Riding Mental Hospital (fig. 4). He had started work at the North and East Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum on 15th April 1886 when in his early 30s.¹⁴ He had left his life on the family farm in Lincolnshire and moved to York, where he married his wife in 1888.¹⁵

George and his growing family lived in Rawcliffe Lodge on Shipton Road

Fig. 3: The back of Pavillion Cottages showing the cricket pavilion. Image: Jan Wilson.



for a while.¹⁶ But it was a long walk to work, so George must have been pleased when his family moved into Pavillion Cottages.¹⁷ For most of his career, George was employed as a day attendant, with a brief time spent as a garden assistant. In addition to his wage and his allocation of lodgings, strong boots and uniform, he received vegetables, 1 pint of new milk daily and skimmed milk twice weekly.²⁰

Before 1890 attendants were not specially trained, but in 1895, a group of attendants and nurses entered the examination for the Certificate in Nursing recently devised by the Medico-Psychological Association.²¹ In 1901, the staff records note that George received his certificate.²²

The year 1919 marked further family milestones for George: his youngest son, Herbert married and his oldest son Albert and his wife Gertude welcomed their daughter making George a grandfather for the first time. Albert sadly passed away in 1920, at the age of 29, while serving on HMS Wild Swan and is interred at York Cemetery.²³

The 1920s introduced additional developments in both George's circumstances and the operations of the hospital. Moves were made to allow patients greater freedom. Selected wards were declared open, and other efforts were made to improve the patient's environment including showing silent films in the Recreation Hall.²⁴ On 30th April 1926,

Fig. 4: The main entrance to the North Riding Asylum, later Clifton Hospital, pictured around 1900. Reproduced with the permission of the Borthwick Institute, University of York.



after 40 years of service, George retired on his hospital pension and left Pavillion Cottages. His son Herbert, who had followed in George's footsteps, becoming an attendant in 1913, took over the tenancy until his retirement.²⁵

Herbert and his family lived in Pavillion Cottages throughout World War 2, experiencing the Baedeker Raid in April 1942 when the hospital chapel suffered major damage. In March 1947, as the result of serious flooding, Herbert and his family had to be rescued by boat from the cottage.²⁶

In 1948, The North Riding Mental Hospital was integrated into the National Health Service, adopting the new name, Clifton Hospital.²⁷ In 1984, York Health Authority established a new strategy for mental illness services, prioritising the development of community-based care and gradually reducing the number of in-patient beds. These changes led to a steady decline in patient numbers at Clifton Hospital.²⁸

The hospital closed at the end of July 1994.²⁹ The following year, the site was sold, demolished and redeveloped. Clifton Park Hospital and The Dormouse pub are now part of the site. A few structures were preserved, including the former chapel. Rawcliffe Farm has been converted into accommodation for students, while the staff cottages, including Pavillion Cottages, remain in private ownership.

Notes

- 1 1921 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 2 'Building Record MYO4082 - Pavillion Cottages', York Historic Environment Record Building Record, <https://her.york.gov.uk/Monument/MYO4082>.
- 3 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 1/2/3.
- 4 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 1/2/3.
- 5 M. T. Haslam, *Clifton Hospital: An Era* (The Golden Flower Press, 1995), 21.
- 6 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 22.
- 7 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 23.
- 8 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 34.
- 9 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 33.
- 10 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 30.
- 11 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 34.
- 12 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 48.
- 13 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 42.
- 14 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 5/2/1.
- 15 'George Freestone', 1888, England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915, Ancestry.
- 16 1891 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 17 1921 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 18 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 1/2/3.
- 19 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 2/2/1/9.
- 20 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 5/2/1.
- 21 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 43.
- 22 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 5/2/1.
- 23 'Albert Edward Freestone', Royal Navy and Royal Marine War Graves Roll, 1914-1919, TNA Series: ADM 242/8; Scan Number: 0458, Ancestry.
- 24 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 58.
- 25 Borthwick Institute, University of York, NHS CIF 5/2/1.
- 26 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 87-89.
- 27 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 92.
- 28 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 148.
- 29 Haslam, *Clifton Hospital*, 149.

Cathy Brown

Cathy has been involved in family history research for 26 years, including for her own family and teaching others. She felt it was important for the lives of the servicemen on the war memorial to be known and remembered.

CLIFTON'S War Memorial

The First World War memorial at Clifton Parish Church was unveiled on 23rd April 1920 by Lieutenant-General Sir Ivor Maxse and dedicated by parish priest Reverend C. T. Alexander (fig. 1). It cost over £200, which was raised through public subscription, and commemorates the 48 local servicemen who died in the First World War.¹

The memorial was designed by Walter Brierley of Brierley and Rutherford Architects and sculpted by George Milburn. Brierley designed several Yorkshire buildings, including County Hall at Northallerton in 1903. George Millburn was a well-known

stonemason,² who was responsible for many local and national landmarks including the William Etty and George Leeman statues, as well as works for York Minster, York Art Gallery, and York Explore Library. There is a blue plaque marking the location of his stonemason's yard on the building between Bootham Bar and the De Grey Rooms in York city centre (fig. 2).

The nature and scale of death during the First World War was almost incomprehensible to the people of Britain and the Commonwealth. There were thousands of bodies needing to be buried and many more thousands of servicemen whose bodies would

never be discovered. Journalist Fabian Ware, who had been too old to join the army, was working in a mobile ambulance unit run by the British Red Cross in France. He saw the need for a dedicated team to document and bury the casualties. The War Office eventually transferred his unit to the British Army and it became known as the Graves Registration Commission. Further duties were later added including communicating with bereaved relatives. The Imperial War Graves Commission was then established by Royal Charter to include the maintenance of the grave sites for ever. The author Rudyard Kipling,

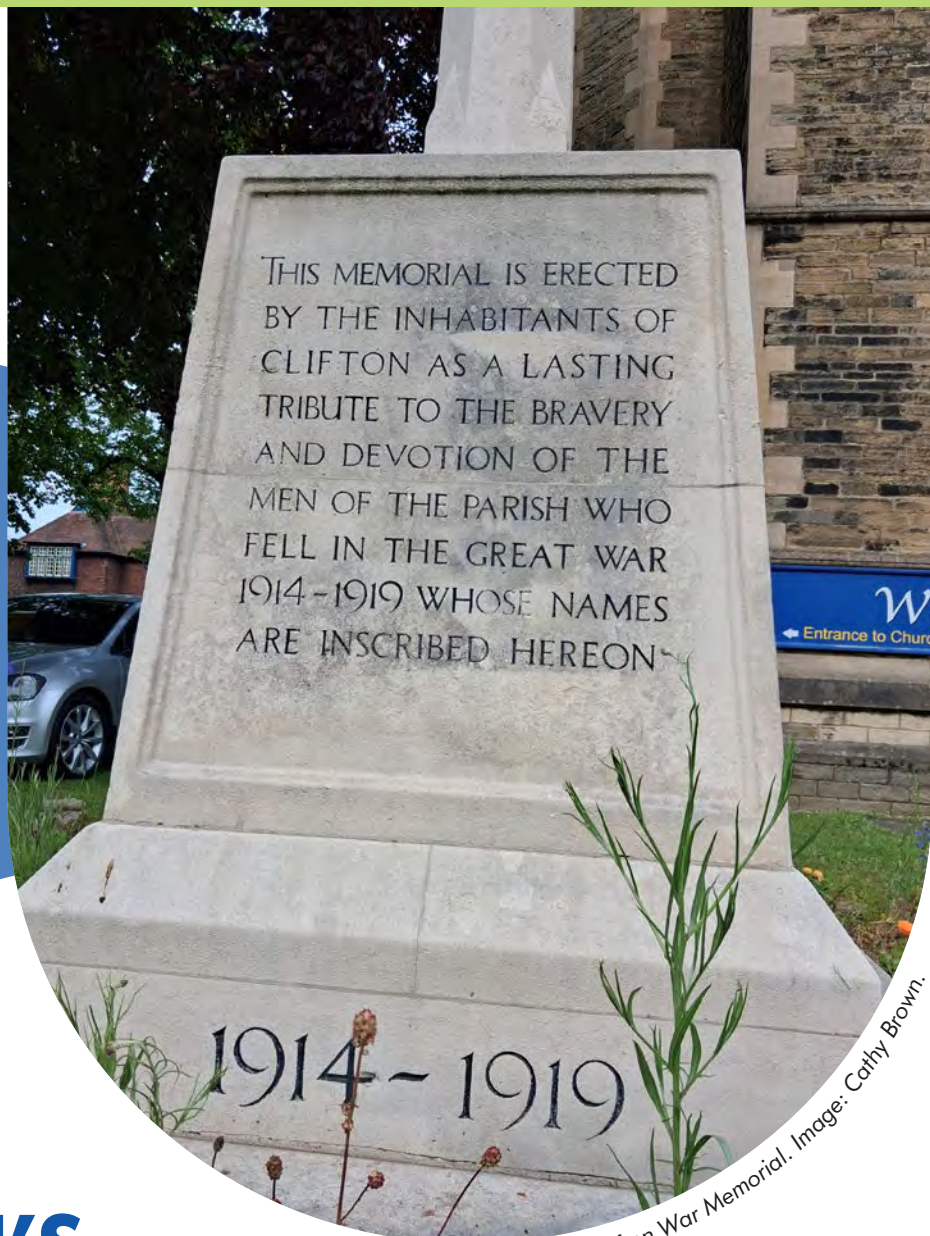


Fig. 1: Clifton War Memorial. Image: Cathy Brown.



Fig. 2: Blue plaque for George Walker Milburn. Image: Cathy Brown.

who lost his son John in the war, was responsible for the phrases 'Known Unto God' on the gravestones of unknown soldiers and 'Their Name Liveth For Evermore' on the Stone of Remembrance.³

The burials of fallen servicemen abroad had not happened previously. However, the scale of loss of life was such that the British government was unable to repatriate the dead. Many families were upset about this as they did not have the money or necessary health to travel abroad to visit graves.

The vast majority of the lost servicemen named on the Clifton Parish Church war memorial are buried in France and Belgium but some as far afield as Yemen and Baghdad. Two, however, are interred close to home at Fulford Cemetery in York.⁴ This article will concentrate of three of those named: Major Alwyne Percy Dale OBE and Captain Leslie Cartmell Hossell (who were next door neighbours), and Lieutenant William Neville Scawin.

Major Alwyne Percy Dale OBE

Major Dale served with the West Yorkshire Regiment 5th Battalion. He died on 1st March 1917 at the age of

35. He is buried at Queens Cemetery, Bucquoy, France. He was born in York in the spring of 1880, the son of Jane Helen Dale, of 10 The Avenue, Clifton, York, and the late Robert Percy Dale, former York Alderman and solicitor. Alwyne was the third generation of York solicitors in his family. His grandfather Robert, who died in 1883, was also a prominent local lawyer.

In the 1881 census Alwyne Dale was a baby living with his parents at Burton Cottage, next to St Peter's School. By 1891 Alwyne was living at Ashbank, a large house on Shipton Road, now with his two sisters Lillian and Helen, and his brother Charles.⁵

The Dale family were well known in wealthy York's social scene. Aged 12, Alwyne attended a huge children's costume party, the Juveniles Ball, at the Assembly Rooms (now Ask Italian) on Blake Street. As reported in the Yorkshire Gazette on 21st January 1893, Alwyne was there with his sister, Lillian. Also present were children from the Terry and Rowntree families as well as Neville Scawin and his brother, Harry.⁶

According to the Nottinghamshire Role of Honour, Alwyne attended St Cuthbert's College, a school in Worksop, and then enrolled at Clare College, Cambridge in 1898 when he was 18.

In the 1901 census, there is no record of Alwyne, which could mean that he was serving in the Army abroad. It was reported in the Leeds Mercury 21st July 1917 that Alwyne had served in the Boer War, referred to as 'the African War'.⁷ However, his parents and sister, Helen, were still living at Ash Bank on Shipton Road.

By 1903 Alwyne was 23 years old and had graduated from Cambridge. There was a news item in the Yorkshire Gazette on 4th July of that year that his father, the town clerk, had successfully requested that Alwyne be employed in his office as an articled clerk.⁸

Alwyne took part in some lively voluntary work in York. On 28th February 1905, the Yorkshire Post reported that he was the assistant stage manager for York Operatic Amateurs, who put on a performance of the comic opera Falka to raise money for York Soldiers' Institute.⁹

He later qualified as a solicitor, working in York and Knaresborough, and was admitted to the Bar in October 1906. Sadly, his father had died in March of that year while convalescing in Scarborough after a long illness. By 1911 Alwyne was back living in the family home 10 The Avenue, Clifton aged 30 with his younger sister, Lillian, and his widowed

mother. Alwyne's sister Helen was not present at the time. Her death, aged 22, was reported on 10th May 1913 in Basle, Switzerland where she had died suddenly of heart failure while travelling home from a long trip abroad.

Following his death on 1st March 1917 Major Dale was recommended to receive the Albert Medal for Gallantry for actions that took place not in the face of the enemy. He had averted a disaster by throwing live bombs away from his men. However, instead of this he was awarded a posthumous OBE. On his death Alwyne left £2,305.

Captain Leslie Cartmel Hossell

Captain Leslie Cartmel Hossell served with the West Yorkshire Regiment 1st and 8th Battalion (Leeds Rifles). He died on 8th August 1916 in the Somme, aged 24, and is buried at Thiepval, France.

Leslie was born in Birmingham in 1893, the son of a wool merchant and fellmonger (sheepskin dealer). In 1901 the family were living in Handsworth, Birmingham but by 1911 they had moved to 11 The Avenue, Clifton. They lived in a large semi-detached house and were the next-door neighbours of the Dale family (above) at number 10.

Leslie's parents, Edith and Percy Hossell, had two children. Leslie was employed as a clerk for his father's business. Their daughter, Margaret, was born in 1896. She trained to be a doctor and later worked as Medical Officer at Rowntree's factory.

On his death Leslie left £273 to his father in his will. A poem was written on Leslie's death by his best friend and poet Captain Eric Fitzwater Wilkinson.¹⁰

Notes

- 1 'Clifton War Memorial, Non Civil Parish - 1455280', Historic England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1455280?section=official-list-entry>.
- 2 'George Walker Milburn (1844-1941)', York Civic Trust, <https://yorkcivictrust.co.uk/heritage/civic-trust-plaques/george-walker-milburn-1844-1941/>.
- 3 'The Creation of the CWGC', The Commonwealth War Graves, <https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-story/the-creation-of-the-cwgc/>.
- 4 See our Heritage Hunters website for their names and those of 48 others.

- 5 Ashbank was more recently used as York Council offices and is currently awaiting renovation.
- 6 Yorkshire Gazette, 21 January 1893.
- 7 Leeds Mercury, 21 July 1917.
- 8 Yorkshire Gazette, 4 July 1903.
- 9 Yorkshire Post, 28 February 1905.
- 10 See Eric Fitzwater Wilkinson, *Sunrise Dreams and Other Poems* (E. Macdonald, 1916), 48.
- 11 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 27 July 1915.
- 12 With thanks to Anna-Louise Shankland and Carol Fox for sharing their research into W. Neville Scawin.

Fig. 3: W. Neville Scawin. Reproduced with the permission of Anna-Louise Shankland.

Lieutenant William Neville Scawin

Lieutenant William Neville Scawin served with the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment 5th Battalion (fig. 3). He died on 15th April 1918 aged 36, and is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium. He was the son of William and Florence Harker Scawin, of Ravenslea, on Shipton Road, Clifton, born in January 1882. Known officially as W. Neville Scawin, he grew up with two brothers, Harold and Maurice.

No record has been found of Neville in the 1891 or 1901 census. It is possible that he was away at school and university. In 1911, Neville was living with his parents at Ravenslea, Clifton. He was listed in the census as a 'painter artist' aged 28. His father, William, was working at 26 Blake Street as a stockbroker.

Neville is commemorated on the St Peter's School war memorial. His last promotion was reported in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph on 27th July 1915.¹¹ The following year his mother died in September. She is buried at York Cemetery and he is commemorated on her gravestone.

On his death, Neville left £11,100 to his brothers Harold, a surgeon, and Maurice, a stockbroker. Following his death a letter was received by his family from a German soldier who described finding Neville's body. He drew a map of the site, showing where Neville had been buried (fig. 4).¹²

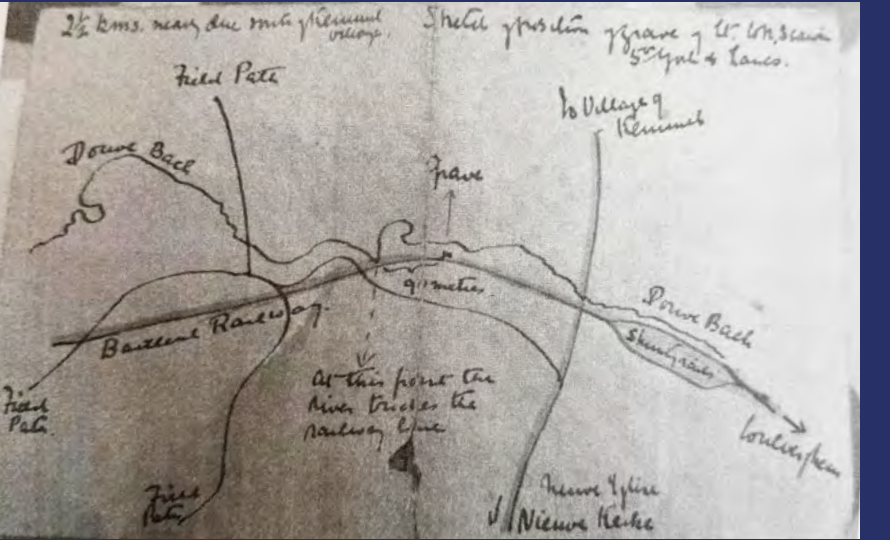


Fig. 4: A map showing the location where W. Neville Scawin's body was buried. Reproduced with the permission of Anna-Louise Shankland.

Edna Annie Crichton:

'THE LITTLE WOMAN WITH THE HEART OF A LION', 1876- 1970

For 69 years, Clifton was home to a remarkable woman. Edna Annie Crichton was the first female Lord Mayor of York and only the second woman to be given the honorary Freedom of York. She served on the York City Council for 36 years, continuing even in the face of personal tragedy and adversity. Many people in Clifton remember Edna because of Crichton Avenue, but this article reveals the full story.

Family life

Edna was born Edna Annie Sturge on 8th May 1876 in Gloucestershire. She came from a Quaker family with a history of involvement in pacifism and in the abolition of slavery.

Juliet Burton

Juliet has been involved in two previous Heritage Hunters projects, and enjoys both the research and meeting other people. She is always keen to learn more about York, and this time has focused on Edna Annie Crichton.

After leaving school, Edna worked in London at the Passmore Edwards Settlement (now the Mary Ward Settlement), a social welfare organisation that provided education, health and free legal aid services to deprived communities. Edna met her future husband David Sprunt Crichton when he was sub-warden at Mansfield Settlement nearby.

Edna and David married in the Quaker Meeting House at Charlbury, Gloucestershire, on 22nd August 1901.¹ David had acquired a job as the first Welfare Officer for Joseph Rowntree, so the couple set up home in York at 37 St Mary's. David supported a range of activities, including the Rowntree's football team, athletics, choral societies, amateur

dramatics, and was a founding member of the in-house journal, the Cocoa Works Magazine. The Crichtons mixed regularly with the Rowntree family, who also lived in Clifton.

David was an active member of the City Council Education Committee and spoke across the country on education reform. Edna served 6 years on the Health Insurance Distribution Committee from 1911 and then on the York Board for Poor Law Guardians until 1922. The couple had two children: Vida, born on 15th August 1902,² and David born on 30th October 1906.³

Achievements and tragedy

Edna had become a leading figure in the new Women Citizens' Association 'designed to help educate women into a new role in public life'.⁴ In 1919, she was elected to the City Council as an independent candidate.⁵ She was the first woman in the country to be put forward by a women's organisation and then successfully elected.⁶ She stood for women's views and voices, believing that women knew more about matters such as housing, education and child welfare than men did.

On 21st January 1921, Edna's husband died suddenly. According to Edna's sister May, he died as the result of 'wartime strains',⁷ but it seems that he had been suffering from 'indifferent health' for only a fortnight. He 'had visited [...] the house of a friend on Sunday evening, but after his return home he was taken ill and he died within about half an hour'.⁸ David was buried at the Quaker burial ground at the Retreat. Seebohm Rowntree spoke at his funeral and messages of sympathy included one from the Duke of York (later George VI). It was later in the 1920s that Crichton Avenue was built and was named, not for Edna, but for David as one 'highly honoured in that district'.⁹



Fig. 3: Edna with Yves Mahé, Free French Pilot (who shot down the raiders on 29 April 1942) at the Mansion House in July 1942. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, CRI/1.

Political life

Despite her loss, Edna continued as a councillor and was re-elected in 1922. In 1925 Edna was elected unopposed to the new smaller Clifton ward. There was cross-party agreement that no one would stand against her as housing 'was a sphere which was essentially that of a woman [...] in which it would be folly to throw aside the experience Mrs Crichton [had] gained'.¹⁰

Edna took in lodgers as a source of income, and later also bought the neighbouring 36 St Mary's. One lodger, Marian Prout, was a close friend who, when she died in 1954, left everything to Edna and Edna's daughter Vida.¹¹ It was surprising to find in shipping manifests that Edna and Marian took a trip to New York in 1935. They left from Southampton on 9th October,¹² and returned to Liverpool over a month later on 18th November.¹³

In 1934 and 1937, Edna was again elected to the Clifton ward with a massive majority. In 1937 she beat her only opponent 2 to 1, supported by both Liberals and Conservatives though still an independent. 4000 houses had already been built during Edna's time, many of them in Clifton. It is said that Edna visited every family in a house that was to be demolished as part of the slum clearance.¹⁴

In November 1936, Edna became a magistrate. On this occasion, the

Leeds Mercury describes her as 'the first and [...] only woman member of the City Council' but also as a 'prominent social worker'.¹⁵

The war years

Edna became the first female Lord Mayor of York on 8th September 1941. The exceptional circumstances of war meant that she was accepted without the usual committee meeting. The news was widely reported, with the Yorkshire Post stating that Edna was 'presented by the women of York with the scarlet gown, richly trimmed with fur, which becomes her civic dress for the year' but expressing concern about the cost of the materials at a time of rationing.¹⁶ No doubt Edna and the 'women of York' ensured that the gown was made using as few clothing coupons as possible.

This was a testing time for Edna as a Quaker with a firm belief in pacifism, but she focused on the objective of the war being to 'win the peace – a just peace'.¹⁷ She paid a personal price, as her son David died in hospital in a prison camp in Germany. David had been captured at Dunkirk in 1940 and had become ill in captivity. As the mother of a prisoner of war, Edna was already Chair of the Prisoner of War Relatives Club.

Edna dealt with her grief by continuing her work. As well as carrying out her mayoral duties, she

Fig. 2: Edna's official picture as Lord Mayor in November 1941. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, CRI/7



Edna Annie Crichton

first woman Lord Mayor of York
1941-42

Member of York City Council
1919-1955

Alderman and Honorary Freeman
of the City

Lived here

Fig. 1: Blue plaque on 30 Clifton. Image: Keith Seabridge, CC-BY-2.



Fig. 4: Edna broadcasting to Canada from the Mansion House roof with York Minster behind her in September 1942. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, CRI/1.

▶ still chaired the Housing Committee and attended a variety of other committee meetings.

In the early morning of 29th April 1942, York was hit by an air raid as part of the Baedeker Blitz which targeted cultural rather than military sites. The destruction across the city was significant with major damage in the Clifton and Bootham areas, The Burton Stone housing estate was particularly badly hit. Edna was living in the Mansion House at the time and the Guildhall behind it was destroyed. Edna's house in Clifton also suffered damage. Up to a third of homes across the city were destroyed or damaged. Over 94 people died and nearly 300 were injured.¹⁸

Edna took charge, setting up the control room in the Mansion House. The Press reported that she was: 'an inspiration to its citizens [...] working untiringly for about 18 hours,

superintending ARP arrangements, visiting hospitals, and first aid points and generally alleviating distress among the victims.'¹⁹ Edna personally visited victims of the raids in Clifton and in other parts of York. She established the Lord Mayor's Air Raid Distress Fund to dispense grants totalling over £10,000.

Edna was incensed when the BBC broadcast that the Minster had been spared during the raids. She sent a telegram saying that she believed that this would make the Minster a prime target for later raids. Nevertheless, this did not stop her broadcasting to Canada from the Mansion House roof, with a view of the Minster behind her to show that it had been spared, although not until September that year.

In November 1942 Edna was elected as the first female alderman in York, having missed out by 1 vote 5 years earlier.



Fig. 5: Edna's gifts received for Freedom of the City. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, CRI/1.

The aftermath of war

Edna remained a councillor for 10 more years after the end of the war. The postwar period became difficult for Edna as an independent as the growth of party-political politics took over. In 1954 she nearly caused a riot with her proposal that council rents be increased but that rebates be provided on a means tested basis. Edna had to be escorted, for her own safety, from the Guildhall through crowds gathered in St Sampson's Square. In 1955 she lost her role as Chair of the Housing Committee for the last time.

The later years

At the age of 79, in 1955, Edna was not re-elected to the council. On 16th September 1955 she was awarded the Honorary Freedom of York. She was only the second woman to be awarded this honour.²⁰ Tributes were paid to her for her 'calm and dignified' approach during the war and for her achievements in housing.²¹ She described how honoured she was to receive the Freedom as 'an old woman' and 'one who is not somebody'. She lamented the growth of party politics and stated that the element of council work which has interested her most was the 'human side'.²² She received a scroll and a 'silver box' of 'her favourite cigarettes'.²³

In her retirement, Edna enjoyed playing chess and 'bridge, reading romances, smoking du Maurier cigarettes' and visiting friends.²⁴ She went to the cinema just up the road from her house (now Clifton Bingo Hall). In May 1969, she faced one more sorrow when her daughter Vida, who had been living with Edna, died at the age of 67.

On 3rd March 1970 Edna died while recovering from a broken hip in the Grove House Nursing Home. Her ashes were scattered on her husband's grave in the Quaker burial ground. In the address of her memorial service at St. Olave's Church, John Dronfield (headteacher at St Peter's School) paid tribute to how her personal tragedies had enhanced her 'understanding of the difficulties and misfortunes of her fellow citizens.'²⁵

Her memory lives on

On 22nd June 2017, York Civic Trust placed Edna's blue plaque on 30 Clifton.²⁶ 3 former and 1 current female Lord Mayor attended the ceremony. Edna's name and the years of her mayorship are written on a sword holder in the Minster, under the names of 2 (1 twice) 18th century Lord Mayors.

Edna was a mother and a grandmother, and her legacy is, of course, continued by her grandsons and their families. Ironically, Edna is still best remembered by the people of Clifton because of Crichton Avenue; named for her husband, but forever associated with Edna Annie Crichton, the 'little woman with the heart of a lion'.²⁷



Fig. 6: Edna's memorial in York Minster with inset enlargement. Image: Juliet Burton.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to, among others, the late David Rubinstein for the information contained in his *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*,²⁸ and to Dorothy Nott for her support and her lecture on Edna.²⁹ I hope I have managed to bring a few different perspectives on Edna's story with the additional use of other sources including censuses, electoral records and other public and archival records.

Notes

- 1 Edna was proud of being a Quaker and was a member of the Quaker Clifford Street Meeting House (now Friargate). Her children were also brought up as Quakers.
- 2 Vida later worked in York for the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust and was active in supporting Seebohm Rowntree in collecting data for his second great survey on poverty. She went on to work for the Westminster Group of newspapers, whose chairman was John Bowes Morrell. Morrell had married Edna's childhood friend Bertha Spence, so the two families were very close.
- 3 David attended Edinburgh University after Oxford. He was athletic like his parents and went to Carnegie College of Physical Education in Leeds before becoming a PE teacher at Oakham School in Leicestershire (also a Quaker School). He played hockey for the Scottish national team. In 1939, just before war broke out, he obtained a post in Manchester University as organiser of PE.
- 4 Dorothy Nott, 'Edna Annie Crichton: York's First Lady Lord Mayor' (Sheldon Memorial Lecture, University of York, 21 October 2025).
- 5 Edna represented the Bootham Ward. At the time there were only 6 wards in York and Bootham covered Clifton, Bootham, and the Groves.
- 6 Sylvia Jane Dunkley, 'Women Magistrates, Ministers and Municipal Councillors in the West Riding of Yorkshire', PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1991, 153.
- 7 Mary Sturge Gretton, *Re-cognitions* (Hall, 1951), 79.
- 8 'Mr. D. S. Crichton, York', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 January 1921.
- 9 *Housing Committee Minutes*, 16 December 1929, Explore York Libraries and Archives, Y/COU/5/10/4/2.
- 10 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 15 October 1937, in Dunkley, *Women Magistrates, Ministers and Municipal Councillors*, 155.
- 11 'Marian Prout', *Probate Record*, 1954, Find My Past.
- 12 'Aquitania', *Cunard White Star Limited Shipping Manifest*, 9 October 1935, Find My Past.
- 13 'Edna Crichton', 18 November 1935, UK and Ireland, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960, Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistical Department and Successors, The National Archives (UK), series BT26, 1,472 pieces, accessed through Ancestry.
- 14 David Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton* (Quacks Books, 2013), 17.
- 15 'Honour for Only Woman Councillor', *Leeds Mercury*, 23 November 1936.
- 16 'York's First Woman Lord Mayor', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 10 November 1941.
- 17 *York Evening Press*, 10 November 1941, in Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*, 20.
- 18 'Raid #8 "Baedeker Raid" (29 Apr. 1942)', *Raids Over York*, <https://raidsoveryork.co.uk/raid8-29-apr-1942/>.
- 19 *York Evening Press*, 30 April 1942, in Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*, 23.
- 20 The first woman had been Mary, the Princess Royal, so Edna was the first female commoner.
- 21 *York Evening Press*, 3 May 1955, in Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*, 32.
- 22 Edna Annie Crichton, *Transcript of a Speech*, 16 September 1955, Explore York Libraries and Archives, CRI/6.
- 23 Nott, 'Edna Annie Crichton'.
- 24 Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*, 35.
- 25 John Dronfield, 'Eulogy', *York Evening Press*, 10 March 1970, in Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*, 32.
- 26 'York's Blue Plaques: Edna Annie Crichton', York Press, 3 March 2018.
- 27 John Dronfield, 'Eulogy', *York Evening Press*, 10 March 1970, in 'Edna Annie Crichton, York's first woman Lord Mayor', HERSTORY.YORK, <https://www.herstoryyork.org.uk/edna-annie-crichton-yorks-first-woman-lord-mayor/>.
- 28 Rubinstein, *Homage to Edna Annie Crichton*.
- 29 Nott, 'Edna Annie Crichton'.

A Rowntree Family Enclave:

WATER END, SHIPTON ROAD AND RAWCLIFFE LANE



Fig. 1: OS Map 1907 published 1909. National Library of Scotland.

Val Burgess

Val is a retired NHS Human Resources Manager who has had a lifelong interest in history. She has been a Clifton Without resident for over 30 years and has really enjoyed learning more about her local area through this project. Her interest in the Rowntree Family was sparked when she took part in York Theatre Royal's community production of His Last Report in 2025, which told the story of the life and work of Seebohm Rowntree.

Houses

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, several members of the Rowntree family moved into or had houses built in a small area of Clifton, with houses and grounds often adjoining each other (fig. 1). Most of these houses were substantial villas with sufficient space for the family and their servants. At this time the Rowntrees were cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, and their factory was based at the Cocoa Works on Haxby Road, York, employing over 2000 people in 1902.¹

Members of the family who lived in Clifton were:

- Joseph Rowntree, founder of Rowntree & Co Ltd²
- Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, Joseph's son, later company director and social reformer
- Agnes Macdonald, Joseph's daughter
- Peter Macdonald, Agnes' husband and doctor at the Cocoa Works
- Winifred Naish, Joseph's daughter
- Frank Rowntree, Joseph's nephew
- Theodore Rowntree, Joseph's nephew



Fig. 3: Children and donkeys at the Hungate Carnival in Homestead Park. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, HMU/P/9/38.

Rawcliffe Holt:

home of Winifred Rowntree Naish

In 1907 Joseph had Rawcliffe Holt built for his younger daughter Winifred who married Arthur Duncan Naish that year. Designed by the architect Fred Rowntree, a second cousin of the Rowntrees, it had a first floor connecting door with Clifton Lodge. Winifred and Arthur had three children, and she died only a few days after the birth of her youngest son. Arthur continued to live in the property with their sons, even after remarrying. Both Clifton Lodge and Rawcliffe Holt were left to the Joseph Rowntree Trust on Joseph's death.

The Homestead: home of Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree

The Homestead was built in 1897 for Seebohm and his wife Lydia Potter by Fred Rowntree. It had extensive grounds with an aviary, a monkey house (sadly both were destroyed in an air raid in the Second World War), and a fish pond. The gardens were first opened to the public by Seebohm in summer 1904 for children attending York elementary schools, providing donkey rides, see-saws, sand-heaps and organised games (fig. 3). In 1908 the Hungate Children's Carnival took place there, a free event for children from one of the poorest areas of the city. In 1936 Seebohm sold the house and gardens to the Joseph Rowntree Village Trust (now the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) for £12,000, but the house continued to be lived in by his son, Peter, until 1978. A condition of the sale was that the gardens would continue to be maintained as a public park.³

Clifton Lodge:

Joseph Rowntree's final home

The house was originally built for solicitor David Russell in 1852 (fig. 2). Joseph and his second wife Emma Antoinette (Tonie) Seebohm moved to the house in 1905 from Penn House at the top of St Mary's on Bootham. Joseph lived at Clifton Lodge until his death in 1925.



Fig. 2: Clifton Lodge. Image: Borthwick Institute, University of York.



Fig. 4: Photograph of Winifred Rowntree as a young girl, around the time that she set up the club. From an original held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, RFAM/PHO/JRF/4/9.

Fig. 5: Club membership certificate. From an original held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, HGC/1/4.

Ouse Lea, Shipton Road:
home of Agnes Rowntree

Ouse Lea was a large red brick building with stables, coach house and gardens on the site of the modern Ouse Lea development, backing on to Homestead Park. The property was owned by Joseph Rowntree and, following his death in 1925, it was leased to Agnes for three years before she purchased it from her brothers in 1928 for £4700.⁴ It was demolished in 1961 and replaced by the current Ouse Lea development, with 80 homes built on the site.

Haverford: home of Frank Rowntree

From 1908 Haverford was the home of Francis (Frank) Rowntree, a nephew of Joseph Rowntree, and his wife Emily. He was an engineer at the Cocoa Works, and founder of the York branch of the Fabian Society.⁵ It was originally built in 1842 as Cliffe Villa, or Cliffe View, for draper William Catton. Seebohm Rowntree purchased three acres of land behind the villa in 1905, and the house was renamed 'Haverford' after Haverford College in Pennsylvania. This was in memory of Seebohm's eldest brother and Frank's cousin, John Wilhelm Rowntree, who had died and was buried there in 1905. After Frank died in 1918 it was managed by and later sold to the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust. After some restoration following war damage it opened as York Youth Hostel in 1945.

Clifton Lawn,
Shipton Road:
Theodore Hotham
Rowntree's home

Built in 1858, Clifton Lawn was the home of Theodore Hotham Rowntree, nephew of Joseph, and company secretary from 1897 to 1924.

Beverley House,
Shipton Road:
a home and offices

Beverley House was the home of Thomas Appleton, who was managing director at the Cocoa Works. He worked for the company for over 50 years and died at Beverley House in 1949.⁶ The house was later used as company offices, and then as the office of the Local Government Ombudsman. The site has recently been redeveloped as luxury flats with one of the new buildings named Appleton House.

The Honesty Girls Club

Winifred Rowntree Naish formed the Honesty Girls Club in 1902, when she was 17 (fig. 4). Membership was open to girls in the Leeman Road area of York, a primarily working-class area of terraced houses. The aim of the club was to provide education and entertainment for girls of a similar age to herself, and Winifred continued to run it until her early death at the age of 30 in 1915. Entry to the club cost 2 pence with a subscription of a penny a week, with a cheaper rate of a halfpenny for siblings.⁷ The club had 24 members when it began but the membership grew to 188 by 1915. It was compulsory for members to learn needlework, but they also learned millinery, dancing, copper working, amateur dramatics, singing, swimming, morris dancing, folk songs and nature studies. In summer the club would often meet in the gardens of Clifton Lodge, and instead of needlework the members played tennis, bowls and rounders, and enjoyed the gardens.

In 1913 the club introduced a membership card (fig. 5), which was given to every girl who had been a member of the club for 3 years.⁸ After 5 years of membership, club members were presented with a framed copy of the card.

The club also organised an annual country holiday for members, and it was noted in 1912 that Filey was particularly popular being 'not too quiet [...] but it is free of the rowdy element noticeable in some of the larger watering places'.⁹ The Annual Report for 1915 records that the coast was avoided because of the war, and Winifred arranged for members to holiday on a farm near Byland Abbey, where they enjoyed country walks in the area, and were very excited to travel there by car.¹⁰

In 1913 Winifred delivered a paper at the Conference of the National Union of Women Workers on the club education classes in relation to home life. In this she made it clear that role of the club was not just to prepare young women for marriage, but to:

"[t]each our girls to think for themselves [...] I should not like to give the impression that in our clubs we cater for our girls, only to prepare them for married life [...] it is surely

most important to give them wider interests and capabilities so that a girl shall not feel that marriage is almost a necessity if she is to have any comfort or enjoyment in life."¹¹

The annual report for 1915 records the club's response to the death of their founder and president:

"The death of our dearly loved President on 11 March came upon us as a stunning blow. On Monday of that week we had been rejoicing together over the news of the safe arrival of her third little son. Some of us heard with anxiety on Wednesday that Mrs Naish was seriously ill, but no one dreamt that on Thursday morning we would hear that she had passed away."¹²



Lunaria annua:
'Honesty', from the
membership certificate
of the Honesty Girls'
Club founded in 1902 by
Winifred Naish. Image:
Karen Morley.

Over 110 club members attended her funeral, and the club sent a wreath of mauve and purple flowers and a bunch of honesty. In the Annual Report it was noted just how much the club owed to Winifred's inspiration and ideals.

After Winifred's death, her husband Arthur took over as president of the club, though older members mainly ran it. The club continued to provide a wide range of classes and activities along with annual holidays at the seaside or in the countryside, and Christmas parties for local children. The club operated until around 1940 when the final Annual Report was published.

Notes

- 1 For more on the Cocoa Works, see Alex Hutchinson and James Maxton, *The Cocoa Works, York: A History of Rowntree's and Nestle in Chocolate City* (Nestle, 2013).
- 2 In 1869 Joseph joined his younger brother Henry Isaac in the small cocoa and chocolate making firm of H.I. Rowntree & Co. Henry died in 1883 and Joseph expanded the company and registered the new name in 1897.
- 3 For more on the history of Homestead Park, see <https://www.homesteadpark.org.uk/history>.
- 4 Papers of Agnes Macdonald, Borthwick Institute, University of York, RFAM/AM.
- 5 See <https://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/explore-rowntree-history/rowntree-a-z>.
- 6 'Obituary', *Yorkshire Post*, 11 March 1933.
- 7 *Annual Report of the Honesty Girls Club, 1912*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC/1/1.
- 8 *Annual Report of the Honesty Girls Club, 1912*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC/1/1.
- 9 *Annual Report of the Honesty Girls Club, 1912*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC/1/1.
- 10 *Annual Report of the Honesty Girls Club, 1915*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC/1/4.
- 11 Winifred R. Naish, *Club Educational Classes in Relation to Home Life, 1913*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC1/3.
- 12 *Annual Report of the Honesty Girls Club, 1915*, Borthwick Institute, University of York, HGC/1/4.

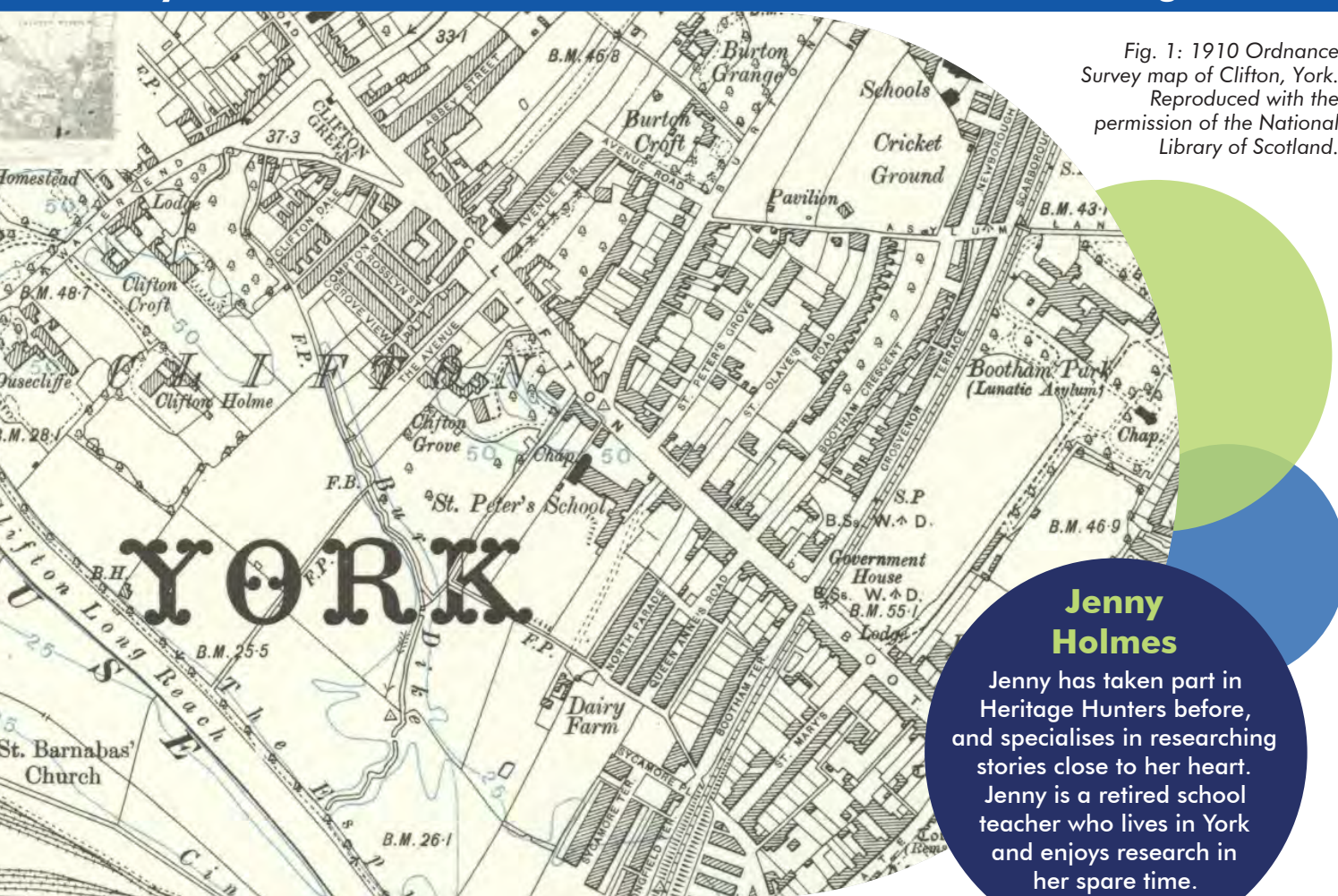


Fig. 1: 1910 Ordnance Survey map of Clifton, York. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Jenny Holmes

Jenny has taken part in Heritage Hunters before, and specialises in researching stories close to her heart. Jenny is a retired school teacher who lives in York and enjoys research in her spare time.

The Echoes of Bootham Crescent:

A CLIFTON DETECTIVE STORY

I have been fortunate enough to be a part of Heritage Hunters before, first researching and writing about the houses and places that shaped my own life. But for this edition I decided to research my late husband's previous homes in Clifton.

Mark passed away a couple of years ago. Because he is no longer here, I cannot ask him those small, vital questions that bring a house to life, so I have tried to do it myself, at times having to recall memories of what he told me many years ago.

My investigation began with a foundational mystery: did Mark actually live in Clifton? He had lived in two different houses on Bootham Crescent, but was the Crescent truly part of Clifton, or was it actually in Bootham?

The breakthrough came from a photograph posted on the Clifton Local History Group Facebook page. It shows two horse-drawn carriages, one poised to enter the Crescent, the other attempting to leave. But the true treasure lay on the walls of the houses flanking the entrance. Mounted there are two street name plaques: to the right, the sign reads Bootham; to the left, it reads Clifton. It appears that Bootham Crescent serves as the literal boundary line between these two historic areas. Mark, it seems, lived right on the edge, but crucially,

he lived on the Clifton side. With the first problem solved, the real 'detective work' could begin.

A walk down Bootham Crescent shows the street is a patchwork quilt of brick and mortar that suggests it was not built in one grand sweep, but rather over a long, stuttering period. Some houses carry signs of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, while others appear almost brand new. To pin down the chronology, I went to York Explore to consult their map collection, supplemented by digital forays into the Library of Scotland's archives. The maps tell a story of 'in-filling'. In the mid-19th century, Bootham Crescent was a ghost, it simply wasn't there. Instead, the grand houses that faced the main road of Bootham possessed deep, sprawling gardens that stretched far back into the landscape. Over time, these gardens were sold off and carved up to form the street we recognise today (fig. 1).

I turned my focus to the house where Mark's story began: number 18 (fig. 2). He was born there in 1963, into a house, so Mark told me, that his paternal grandparents had purchased for his parents and three older siblings just a few years prior. It is a handsome, double fronted terraced house, possessing a sense of balance and proportion that suggests a

comfortable middle-class origin. With a living room, a dining room, a large kitchen, a pantry (which, according to Mark's sister Sharron, was freezing) and four bedrooms, it was a house built for a family.

However, the modern geography of the street presented a puzzle. Number 18 is the second house in a long, continuous row of terraced houses that stretch toward the bottom of the Crescent. But where were numbers 2 through 14? They are absent from the terrace. On the corner where the street meets Bootham, there is a building that was once a newsagent during Mark's childhood, now transformed into a guest house, next to modern houses and a small block of flats.

Did the terrace once extend all the way to the corner? I wondered if the infamous Baedeker Raids of 1942, the Luftwaffe's retaliatory strikes on England's most beautiful historic cities, had left a scar here as I had heard that this whole area had been affected by them. Perhaps houses had been demolished, only to be replaced by the modern structures of today. It was time to dig deeper.

The archives at York Explore yielded an annotated diagram of the fledgling Bootham Crescent. This document was a revelation. It showed the street in its infancy, built only on

one side, the right-hand side as you walk down from Bootham. There were conspicuous gaps in the row, suggesting that various builders or individuals had purchased plots at different times, leading to the eclectic mix of styles. It showed the house on the corner, later to be the newsagents, with a very long garden, followed by a vacant space, and then the start of the terraced row. It also confirmed that the house now known as number 18 was originally number 2.

Most importantly, the diagram also listed the original owners of these plots. The owner and occupier of the original number 2 was a man named Charles Moses. Using Ancestry and Find My Past, I began to reconstruct Charles' life. In the 1881 census, he was recorded living at number 2, which firmly dates the house to the Victorian period. Charles was a currier, a skilled leather worker who would have been part of York's thriving trade economy. He lived in the house with his wife, Jane, and their five children: Arthur, Mary, Charles, Alice, and Frederick, and 2 lodgers.¹ By 1901, Charles and Jane were 61 years old. Their own children had flown the nest, but the house remained full, for they were living with 3 boarders. One, Margaret Richardson was a school teacher (a theme that would continue the further I investigated Bootham Crescent), and a servant.² In 1911, having been married for 46 years, they are still living in the house with Margaret.³ Charles passed away in early 1921, having called number 2 his home for four decades.

Following Charles' death, the 1921 census shows new occupants: James Robertson, originally from Newcastle; his wife Dora, originally from Holstein in Germany; and their daughter May. James worked for the North Eastern Railway company as a rent collector.⁴ The family were there until 1923.

I can find no record for the house in 1924 or 5, but the 1926 York Directory shows 2 new occupants: Thomas and Henry Nicholson. As yet I know little about them, except that in the York Trade directory Thomas is listed as a referee (class 3).⁵ He lived in the house until 1931. What Thomas' record in the directories does show, however, is that, in 1929, the



Fig. 2: 18 Bootham Crescent. Image: Jenny Holmes.

► houses in the street were renumbered and number 2 became number 18, so we can now date the renumbering of the street.⁶

The York Directories are a valuable resource as they list all the streets in York and their residents in a given year, so they were able to let me see that in 1932 a woman named Emma Sykes moved into number 18. She was 64 years old and had previously lived at 51 Stonegate, where she helped her mother to run a provisions store from 1871.⁷ She moved into the house with

Elizabeth Gott, who had previously been a servant in the shop. Thus began 7 years for Emma in the house, always joined by a lodger.

The 1939 Register was the next official document available to study, but it posed a problem: the residents for number 18 were listed as 'away',⁸ but luckily the Directories tell us that Emma was still there. Where she was, though, remains a mystery. There is a possible death record for Emma in 1955. However, she had left the house by then for in the 1951 York Directory the houses occupant was Charles Manners.⁹ He is

the last occupant before Mark's family move in. The house then became home to Mark, his mum and dad and 3 siblings. They lived there until the early 1980s.

Then, my mother-in-law did something

rather unconventional. She discovered that a lady further down the street was selling number 50, The Gables Guesthouse. Perhaps fancying a change in career from her work for the railways, my mother-in-law and the owner of number 50 decided to swap houses, as Mark put it. I am certain money changed hands, but to the outside observer, it was a simple exchange of keys. By this time, Mark was the only child left at home, so Mark, his mum and step dad, packed their belongings and migrated down the street to the much larger number 50.

Number 50 (fig. 3) was a grander affair: set over 3 floors it had 7 bedrooms, a dining room, a living room, and a kitchen.

Tracing its history, though, was a fresh challenge. The renumbering of the street meant I had to work out the original number of number 50, and it turned out to be number 18.

The records for the original number 18 (now 50) revealed a revolving door of middle-class York residents:

1901: Theodore Rowntree, of the famous family of chocolate producers, with his wife Katherine

Fig. 5: Photo of number 18, showing how the brick colour hints at the rebuilding after WW2. Image: Jenny Holmes.

and a servant, Mary Rolling. He was the Rowntree secretary and Liberal Councillor for Bootham on York Council from 1912 to 1919.

1911: Ernest Unwin, his wife Ursula, and their servant Gertrude Pettinger. He was a schoolteacher.

1913: Hugh Richardson, from Newcastle, was a widower, who lived with his 2 children. He was an assistant school master at Bootham School and left the house in 1916.

1920: John Thomas Grey was also a school teacher from Durham, this time teaching at St Peters school, and lived at number 18 with his wife.

1921: Albert Atkinson, his wife Jane and children Arthur and Doris lived in the house until at least 1939.

1951: The building appears to have been divided into 3 flats, and owned by Norah Harrison, as she is the constant occupant whilst others come and go.

1980s: The Holmes family arrived in the 1980s.

Early 2000s: After my mother-in-law passed away, the house was sold and converted into holiday apartments: a final evolution for a house that has seen over a century of York's changes.

I cannot end this history without returning to the Baedeker Raids of



Fig. 3: 50 Bootham Crescent, formerly The Gables Guesthouse. Image: Jenny Holmes.



Fig. 4: Bootham Crescent after the Baedeker Raids over York. Image: Explore York Libraries and Archives, HMU/L/43/6.



April 1942. The street you can walk down so peacefully today was once a scene of devastation (fig. 4). If you walk down the street today, look at the bricks of number 18. There is a subtle change in the colour of the bricks where the house was rebuilt after the war. It is a scar, healed over but still visible if you know where to look (fig. 5).

So that is my story, of 2 different houses in the same street, both telling us something of the story of Clifton. But Bootham Crescent is more than just a street: it is a survivor. It survived the carving up of Victorian gardens, the renumbering of a growing city, and the fires of the Luftwaffe. And, for a little while, it was the place that a boy named Mark called home.

Notes

- 1 1881 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 2 1901 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 3 1911 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 4 1921 Census of England and Wales, York, Yorkshire, Ancestry.
- 5 1926 York Directory, Explore York Libraries and Archives.
- 6 1929 York Directory, Explore York Libraries and Archives.
- 7 1929 York Directory, Explore York Libraries and Archives.
- 8 1939 Register, Yorkshire (East Riding), Find My Past.
- 9 1951 York Directory, Explore York Libraries and Archives.

REMEMBERING

Clifton Aerodrome

Stuart Castle

Stuart has always lived in Clifton, and is passionate about sharing local history with people.

I have lived all my life in the same area, first down Eastholme Drive, and then off Green Lane, just round the corner. When living on Eastholme Drive, I remember playing in a field more or less opposite. We had a den and a tree house, more of just a platform really. We would play football until it was so dark that you couldn't see the ball. We'd also collect bits of broken blue and white pottery, and bits of clay pipes. One of the other lads kept all the bits in an old washing up bowl. These were reminders of when the whole area was farm land.

Kentmere Drive had yet to be built. I have a photograph of me and my baby brother sat between my legs, across the road is a field that used to have horses in it. This is what became Kentmere Drive.

I had always known about the aerodrome, my dad would often tell

us about it. Like when he worked at Armstrong Patents, who made shock absorbers. The factory was in some of the old aircraft hangers. Dad would tell me about the man who had a Vincent motorcycle and would be one of the last to leave at the end of the shift but would go sailing by everyone else. They used the old runway to come out onto Green Lane. Dad would say one of his regrets was not taking any photographs of all the old Halifax bombers waiting to be scrapped. They had their noses poking through the hedge on Green Lane, with all the bomb runs and other artwork on their noses.

They scrapped roughly a thousand Halifax bombers on the old aerodrome, a pile of scrap metal, about 80 feet high was the result. It closed as an RAF aerodrome in 1946 and returned to being a civilian flying

club until 1952. The entrance to the aerodrome was off Green Lane and is still there today (fig. 1). To get to the scout hut on Green Lane, you go through the old entrance. The black stone walls either side of the entrance are allegedly stone from the old York Prison, where the Crown Court and York Castle Museum are today. The scout hut itself is sat on the old grass roundabout in the entrance to the aerodrome. Not far from there was the old civilian hanger, as well as a bungalow and a clubhouse close to the roundabout.

My dad was always keen on aircraft. He would tell of the time he and his parents had walked to the aerodrome to stand and watch the private aeroplanes, and that my grandfather had the opportunity to rent a house not far from the aerodrome. My grandmother said it was a lovely looking house, but it was too close to the aerodrome, and there's another war coming so this will be one of the places that'll get bombed. It did get bombed, a bomb landed not far from the entrance to it in 1942. But my grandparents and father lived at the time down Mount Ephraim, which is a cul-de-sac. There is a large wall at the end of the street, the other side of this is the railway station. Their house received blast damage from when the station was bombed in the same raid.

After we moved round the corner, we would play as kids on the old aerodrome (fig. 2). The original civilian aeroplane hanger was still standing, full of pigeons and pigeon poo! Further over towards what was Armstrong Patents, there were two pill boxes that we would play in too. A farmer would keep his cows grazing



Fig. 3: Road sign on Water Lane, Clifton. Image: Stuart Castle.

on there, and there used to be a water trough more or less where the first house is next to the scout hut on Green Lane. When the air was cold, you would be walking down Green Lane and a cow would cough, and a stream of steamy breath would come through the hedge. There was no footpath back then. On the other side of the road was a field with ponies in, this later became the group of roads around Keats Close. We would ride old motorcycles until they expired, some people would learn to drive a car on the runways. At one time there was a go-kart track. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a stunt show on the aerodrome with a man driving a car up a ramp and through the side of a large removal type lorry. Another use was as a car park for when the Pope came to the Knavesmire in 1982, when buses transported people from the aerodrome to the Knavesmire and back.

For a time at least, one of the hangers on Green Lane was used to sell army surplus items. A cousin of my father bought an ex-army lorry there. Apparently, as he was driving home in it, there was a loud bang of a noise from the back of the lorry. He stopped and had a look round. When he looked in to the back of the lorry, he found there were two ex-army motorcycles in there, and one of them had fallen over. He returned it to the place of sale, and asked if they knew of the two motorcycles. They said yes, the motorcycles were part of the lot.

The last thing that the old hangers were used for was as a grain store.

This picture, while light-hearted is based on a tragic incident that happened at Clifton Airfield in the 1940's. A Handley Page Halifax bomber was coming in to land over the road that runs past the former 'Bumper Castle' pub. The aircraft came in too low and its wheels clipped the top of a passing truck causing the plane to crash killing several members of its crew.

My picture is not intended to depict the tragedy or make light of it. I just simply took the ideas and depicted a different aircraft – a de Havilland Dragon Rapide, which was a short aircraft of the 1930s and used by the RAF during World War 2. The aircraft is skimming over a Bedford QLD truck that was used by the British forces in the war as well. The truck is buffeted by the plane's slipstream, leaving both it and its driver astonished.'

David Roberts

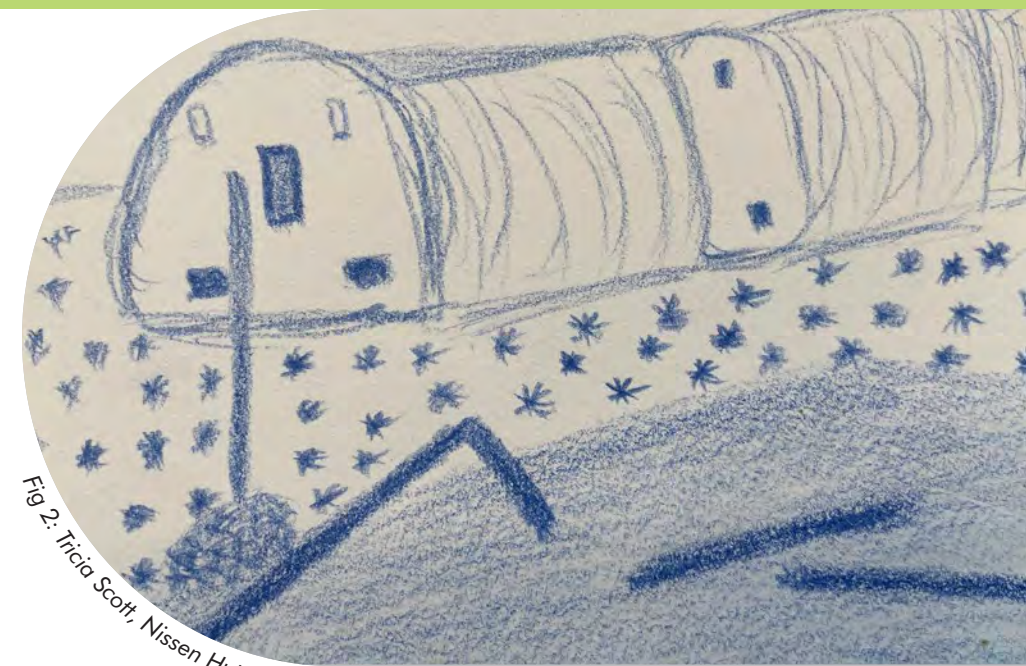


Fig. 2: Tricia Scott, Nissen Hut at Clifton Airfield 1957, 2026, coloured pencil. Image: Tricia Scott.

If you have a look at the road sign pointing towards Water Lane, at the traffic lights next to the Toyota garage, it still says Grain Store a quarter of a mile (fig. 3).

Today there are still bits of the old aerodrome left. On the other side of the York bypass, the A1237, you can still see part of one of the old runways. Along that same stretch of the bypass as the old runway was the large wall and grass bank, which was for training the guns of the aircraft. When I was a kid, we would go and dig out the old spent bullets. Behind the car sales place on Wiggington Road, which used to be Pulley's garage,

there is still one of the hard standings for a fighter aircraft. These were for the RAF aircraft station on there during the war. Planes like the Westland Lysander, and later the American built P51 Mustang, were built for the RAF and were used for photo-reconnaissance duties.

I have many happy memories of the old aerodrome, either playing on it, or taking my old dog on there to run wild. The area has certainly changed a lot over the years.



Fig. 1: Entrance to the old Clifton aerodrome. Image: Stuart Castle.



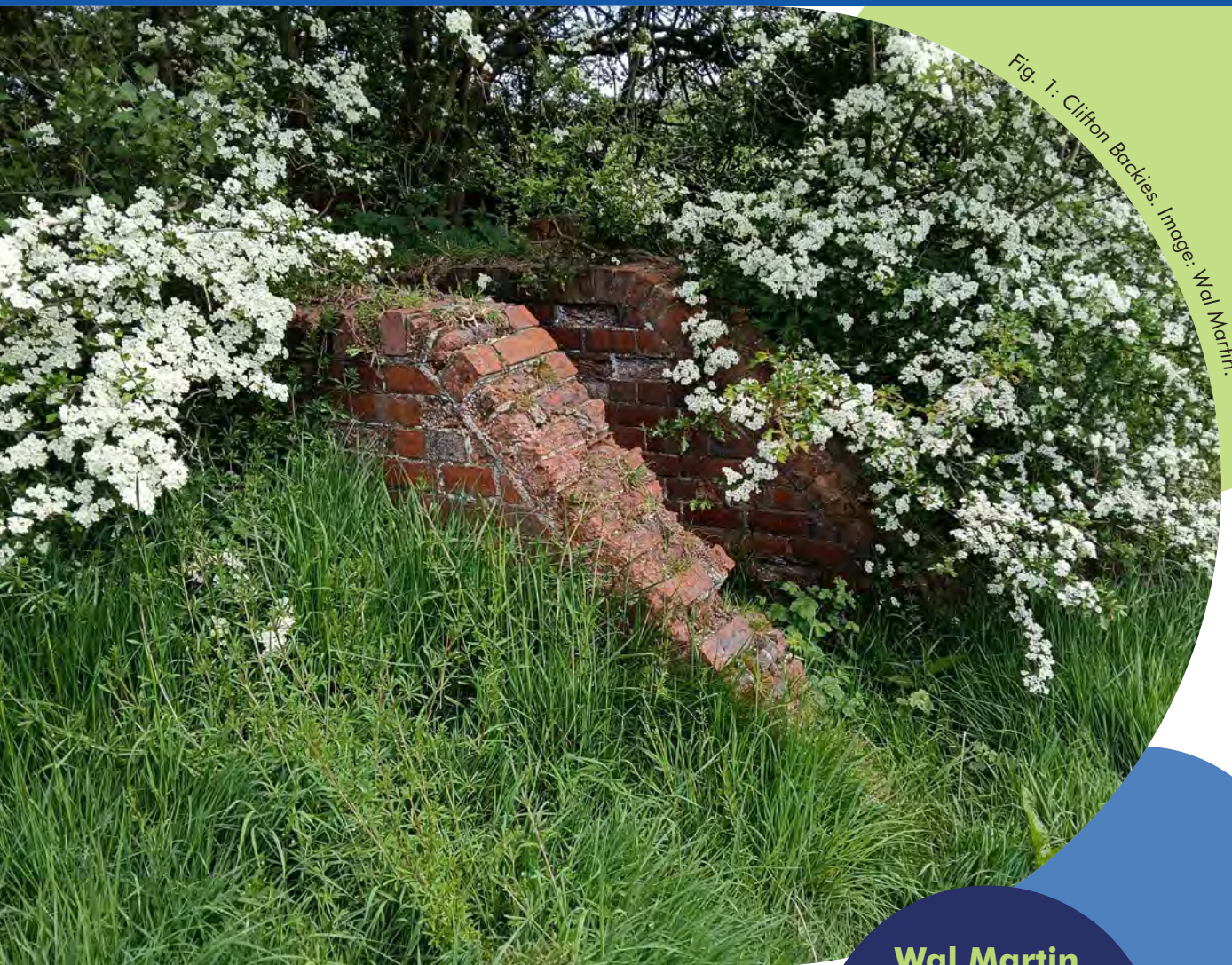


Fig. 1: Clifton Backies. Image: Wal Martin.

A CLIFTON Memoir

Wal Martin

Wal grew up in Clifton and lived there until 1978. He's enjoyed a stroll down memory lane, and bringing together his recollections of life in the area.

Growing up in Clifton

Although I was born in Kitchener Street just off Huntington Road, my earliest memories of my childhood are of growing up with my brothers (John, Pete and Al) in Crombie Avenue, a council estate which runs parallel to Kingsway North.

We lived at the Crichton Avenue end of the street opposite the playground of Burton Stone Lane (BSL) girls' school. The school was opened in 1942 and lasted until 1985 when it was demolished, largely to make way for housing. The central section of the school, which housed the staff room, administration block and gymnasium, was retained and became a community hall until 2010. It is now

The Marjorie Waite Court.

The playground and tennis courts also doubled as our playground during out-of-school hours. There was never a shortage of playmates. On the opposite side of the school to Crombie was Evelyn Crescent. Both streets had 3- and 6-bedroom houses so there were always plenty of kids of varying ages knocking around to play with. A great presence in our lives at the time were the Pallisters and Halletts: two great families who occupied two of the 6-bedroom houses and were integral to our adventures, travels, games and fun and are all fondly remembered whenever I think of my formative years growing up in Crombie.

But there was a curse: the ogreish

presence of the school caretaker Mr Hepworth ('Eppy') who lived close by. He was very 'old school' and often frightened the life out of us. He would chase us out whenever he saw, heard or (I'm sure) even sensed we were larking around in his pride and joy, regardless of how many 'hundreds' of kids were playing at the time. Once shooed away, we were all too wary to go in again - until the next time. I even remember seeing my mam taking a short cut through the schoolyard laden with shopping bags after an expedition to the BSL shops only to be spotted by 'Eppy' and promptly sent back around the school perimeter.

But the yard was tailor made for any number of us to play footy, cricket,

hide n seek and many other games; some of which we created ourselves, all of which were stopped the moment we were called in for tea!

Gratey was also a favourite game of ours where you'd try to dribble a tennis-sized ball around your opponent and score a 'goal' in the grating housed in the kerb. These were conveniently situated opposite each other, and, at its height, there would be half-a-dozen or so games taking place up and down the street. Back then there were fewer cars on the roads which allowed this. These days there's too much traffic, so the opportunity to hone their ball-dribbling skills has been taken away from today's youngsters.

Clifton Aerodrome and t'Backies

The Backies (short for the back fields) is now a formal nature reserve called Clifton Backies and was a large area of scrubland occupying land adjacent to Clifton Aerodrome which was the chosen target of many of our adventures. Opened in 1936 as a civil airfield, it was commandeered for the duration of World War 2. It regained its civilian status in 1946 but that was short-lived as the airfield was permanently closed in 1955.

I was born in 1953 so my earliest ventures onto the Backies would have been around 1960-61 when there was still plenty of evidence of its (then) recent history. The runways had been invaded by nettles, brambles and cleavers, but the clues of its previous existence were hard to ignore (fig. 1).

There was the 'big red building', which we were all warned by our parents and older neighbours 'never to go in' but once out, the rules were forgotten: there were always plenty of us to look out for each other and the Backies was beyond 'Eppy's' jurisdiction. We never knew what they were warning us about as there was never anything to worry us anyway, apart from tons of sheep droppings.

These droppings, along with a mix of the aforementioned foliage, also occupied the floor of what we grew up believing were air-raid shelters but later learned were actually for bomb and ammunition

storage. We'd enter these and let our imagination run riot and then head off to an area of bushes, imaginatively nicknamed 'Bushy Land'.

It's here where we'd go 'todd' wanging'; a 'todd' being a blob of mud which we would mould around the 'wanger', a bendy twig. Once secure, we'd fire these at our nearest buddy rarely achieving the accuracy intended. The rare occasion when our aim was successful was like scoring the winner at Wembley and the recipient of the todd would have a red

reminder, along with the sting, for the rest of the day (squash players will be able to relate to this).

Many years later, while walking on the Backies during lockdown, I was pleased to see that many of these bomb shelters were still there although, for some reason when I ventured into them, I was surprised to notice that I could now see over the top of them. What a difference 60-odd years and a couple of feet in height make! The big red building was conspicuous by its absence.

Kingsway North (KN)

As previously alluded to, my home street of Crombie Avenue ran parallel to the south-west end of KN which has a broad strip of grass separating the opposite sides of the houses. The popular consensus at the time was that this was the result of a planning error, but no-one I knew then seemed to know the real reason for this. I have since learned that it was actually part of a scheme to reduce traffic in the city and is the remnant of an unfinished plan to build a dual carriageway between Kingsway West (in Acomb) and KN to bypass the city.

In the late 1990s it underwent a facelift. KN (and indeed Crombie Avenue) suffered a bad reputation and was often in the Evening Press for the wrong reasons. Crombie was nicknamed Panda Alley because of the regular visits by the constabulary in their panda cars, often seen in TV's Heartbeat (fig. 2). I never knew why they were called panda cars; pandas being black and white whereas these cars were turquoise and white!

KN's facelift entailed tidying up and planting of trees to make it much more aesthetically pleasing. Prior to this it had become (as it had been for years) a dumping ground for prams, bikes and any unwanted household goods. The northern leg of KN had now been renamed Burton Green, presumably in an attempt to distance itself from its dubious past.



Fig. 2: Panda car. Image: Phil Parker, CC-BY-2.0.

York City and York RLFC

I also spent a lot of my weekends (and pocket money) going to see the local teams, usually with my best chum Graham Hardingham. The teams always seemed to play their home games on alternate Saturdays, so it was easy for us Crombie kids to attend matches at both grounds, especially as their grounds were both about 15 minutes' walk away. Admittedly, I was more into footy than rugby so I would venture to Bootham Crescent if there was a clash of fixtures.

Back in those days, the Rugby League only had one division of 30 teams who would each play 36 matches. I shudder to think what the logistics the Rugby League faced to arrange a season's fixtures, but it did give us all an opportunity to see the country's best players. I still remember the thrill of seeing Wigan's 'Welsh Wizard' Billy Boston charging down the wing for the first time.

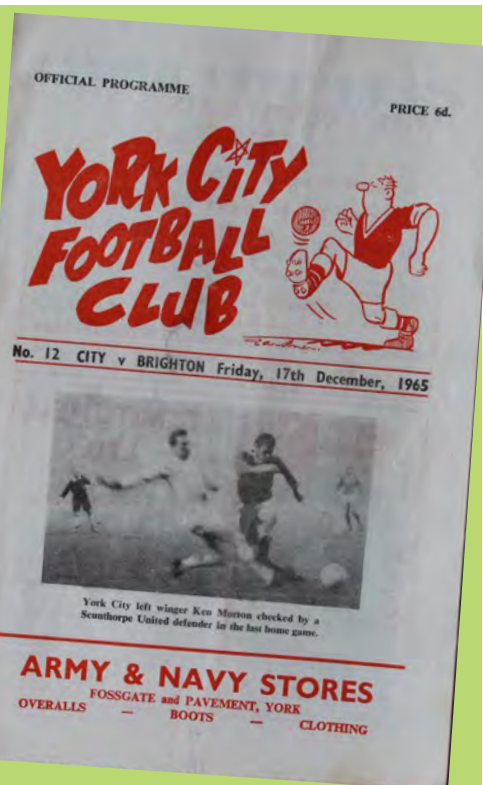
The same can't be said for dear old 'City', often languishing in the bottom half of Division 4 despite

York City Football Club Programme for City v Brighton, Friday 17th December 1965. Image: Reproduced with the permission of www.oldfootballprogrammes.co.uk.

having what we believed to be a great side. Famous names at Bootham Crescent were few and far between though a home FA Cup tie v Stoke City in 1969 gave us all the thrill of seeing World Cup winning goalie Gordon Banks in action in a match won 2-0 by Stoke.

But the City players were our heroes and their names still roll off the tongue today: Tommy Forgan, Barry Jackson, Phil Burrows, Ron Spence, David Dunmore and 'Flying Scotsman' Andy Provan on the wing (my all-time favourite City player) to name but a few.

We had a halcyon season in 1964-65 when finishing third to gain promotion to Division 3 for the first time in our history (although we had played in Division 3 North from 1929 to 1958 when it was abolished, and so became one of the founder members of Division



4) but '65 was the first time we had actually won promotion. Much later, 1983-84, we became the first team ever in the Football League to reach 100 points (101 actually) in a season.

Entertainment

You will have gleaned from the above that back in the day we largely made our own entertainment. There was only a choice of 2 TV channels - BBC and ITV. There was no or little daytime telly (although I do remember watching toddler classics like Andy Pandy, Bill and Ben and the Woodentops). Broadcasts generally began around teatime with shows like Black Beauty (about a black horse) and a stream of Westerns like My Friend Flicker (Flicker being a horse), Champion the Wonder Horse and The Lone Ranger (on his shining -white steed, Silver) - a proper horse fest! There were more Westerns on telly back then than there are cookery programmes today as later on we were treated to epics like Rawhide, (which saw a young Clint Eastwood cutting his teeth in the profession), Wagon Train, Laramie, Maverick; the list was endless.

Away from the telly, we had Clifton Picture House (fig. 3) on our doorstep in which you could feast on yet another stream of Westerns (just in case you were missing them). These were interspersed with regular offerings from Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard. Not content with wowing us with their vocal prowess, they often ventured into the film world with such classics as Elvis's GI Blues (featuring the hits Wooden Heart and Blue Suede Shoes), Blue Hawaii (Can't Help Falling in Love and Rock-a-Hula Baby) and Cliff treating us with Summer Holiday (Bachelor Boy and the Shadows Foot Tapper) and The Young Ones. We lapped 'em up!

That brings my memoir to an end. Thank you for taking the time to read it.

Fig. 3: Clifton Bingo, formerly Clifton Cinema. Image: Wal Martin.



CLIFTON Today



Tawny Mining Bee from Rawcliffe Meadows. A vast wilderness of scrubby marshland with reeds and grassy plains and trees (very tall ones). I saw a wild rabbit run past me and a woodpecker at a tall height pecking aloud. Both animals never sat still and vanished among the natural meadow wonders. Instead an unusual bee appeared, a honeybee type, but a reddish, furry kind. A bee I have never seen before. Apparently, it is called the Tawny Mining Bee, somebody educated me. A unique find of nature amongst the meadows.'

Chris Robertson



'Heron Foods (down Burton Stone Lane). This is where I used to get my biscuits and tea.'

Bethan Kelly

'At Christmas I went to an event at Homestead Park. In the room on the left, a famous wreath-maker ran sessions for people to make their own natural wreaths. It was very popular! In the room on the right a lady played guitar, and even though it rained all day, everybody was dancing and having lots of fun. I love going to the park.'

Kayley Quinn





JOIN US ONLINE

If you've enjoyed the articles in this magazine and want to find out more, take a look at our website. Complete with an interactive map and a wide range of extra facts and images, it's a treat for anyone who loves local history.



PROJECT Reflections

Heritage Hunters supports residents to learn research skills, meet new people, and connect with the heritage of their local area. I've been honoured to take on the mantle of running this year's Heritage Hunters project, and have learnt so much from everyone taking part.

We've tried some new approaches this year, including working with Accessible Arts and Media to explore how heritage, places and people can inspire us creatively. Bringing together creative responses with the research done by residents, and seeing them inspire each other, has been a particularly special part of the project.

This year has seen a mix of previous participants and people new to the project come together and learn from each other. I've particularly admired

the bravery of participants for sharing (often personal) stories and getting stuck into trying something new.

Those who have taken part in the project are not professional researchers, and they have all shown great dedication to this project amid a range of other commitments and circumstances – for this, all I can say is a heartfelt thank you, and congratulations for what you have achieved.

Samantha Lukic-Scott

NEXT STEPS

The Heritage Hunters project is run by York Museums Trust, who care for a wide range of collections and stories about York and North Yorkshire. You can find out more about our collections and ways to get involved by looking at our website, or by visiting York Castle Museum, the Yorkshire Museum, or York Art Gallery.

If you would like to find out more about local history, Explore York Libraries and Archives can help with enquiries and research.

To get involved with future versions of Heritage Hunters, check out the York Museums Trust website or email participation@ymt.org.uk.



Heritage Hunters taking part in the project.
Images: York Museums Trust.

York Castle Museum



All tickets last
for 12 months
and
York Children
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York Castle Museum is part of York Museums Trust. Charity number 1092466. Photography by Anthony Chappel-Ross.

*For more information about ticket pricing please visit our website.

