

# **The Haunted Way**

**by**

**Neil Wesson**



Other books by the Author

A Collection of Ghost Stories Vol. I  
The Bell Rock Mystery  
Echoes – An Almanac of Ghost Stories

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This Book is dedicated to the author

Valerie Wood

for showing me the way...

My sincerest thanks must be given to

Sue Baker

for not only proof reading this book, but also  
managing to turn a bunch of nonsensical ramblings into something  
worth reading.

Thanks Sue, I owe you several glasses of wine.

## Acknowledgments

i. Ray Mears, for teaching the world bush craft once again. His techniques I have found invaluable in both writing this book and the days I spend out walking the Yorkshire Wolds, not to mention the introducing me to the Tahr Anorak.

ii I, \*Dr. Wes (4) would also like to mention the people below. They all along with myself raise large amounts of money from charity by walking the 42.6 miles from Keswick to Barrow ever year...

Dr. Dave *Top Bloke* Ellis (5), Dr. Dave *Viper* Robbie (4), Dr. Rachel Bedstead (4), Dr (*Yer Right*)Aiden Finn (2), Dr. Pat *Ginger Nuts* Williams (5), Dr. Keith Northern (4), Dr. Martin *Silver Fox* Hicks (5), Dr. Pete *Speedy* Norman (4), Dr. Pete Thompson (3), Woody (2), Bilo (1), Debbie (2), Rebecca (1), Ian *overtaken by a midget* Edmunds (2), and not forgetting the three seniors Tony (2), Frank (2) and Shaun (2), who looked strangely relaxed as they crossed the line.

iii. Thanks to David Stather for telling me a story about a ferry.

*\* The title Doctor is bestowed on any person who has completed the K2B walk on three occasions, a total of 127.8 miles. The numbers in the brackets indicates the amount times each of our happy few have traversed the walk at the time of printing.*



## Forward

The Haunted Way came into existence purely by accident. Being a keen walker I endeavour to find routes around the south end of the Yorkshire Wolds of varying distances. Sitting down with an Ordnance Survey Explore map in front of me I tried to pick a route between Brough and Sutton of around thirty miles. After many attempts of finding footpaths and measuring distances the route was finally picked.

The walk had to encompass several things; hills were paramount closely followed by plenty of interesting scenery.

Having traversed the route several times the thought of actually making this into a novel started to form in my mind. Already I had written several book containing short ghost stories set in many of the locations which I was walking through. Why not join them all up with one long tale? After that the full story just seemed to write itself, by the time I reached Sutton the whole story was just about written. The Haunted Way seemed to be an obvious name for both the walk and the book.

The intention for the book is for the reader to not only read and enjoy the story, but then put their boots on and walk The Way. Each chapter has a map showing the route concerned in the text, also I have included sketches of points of interest along The Way.

Enjoy reading the book, but make sure you walk The Haunted Way and see for yourself where the events documented happened and enjoy the Yorkshire countryside.

When walking The Way it is essential that you use the O/S Explorer Map 293. The maps provided in the book are hand drawn and are not to scale and a little unclear in some parts.

If The Way becomes popular it may even find its way onto the O/S map.

Enjoy

NW.





# Prologue



Waiting...

He stood and waited; that's all he could do. Time came and went though he did not feel its passing. The coarse material which hung off his skin irritated, it had done for so long now. How had he ended his days here in such a predicament as this; high up on the Wolds, cold and alone?

He waited, waited for her to come and have mercy on him; waited for her to free him from his torment. Then *that* would be time to take his revenge.

Not often did he think of the past even though that was all he had now, his memories.

Educated at one of the most prestigious boys' schools in Yorkshire, followed by a life of service to the common man. His vocation was that of a publican and a good one he was too. His skills at keeping ale were known and revered far and wide. A strange job for someone so well educated but then everything in his life had had a surreal edge to it. At school one of his best friends in the dormitory had foreseen his own death in a naval battle. Then, in his working life time, the strange events which had caused him to be chased across the county away from the tyranny subjected on him; all because of her. He did not wholly understand or believe the allegations centred on his wife, but he still ran; such was the sensation at the time. Finally he came to rest at the Ship Inn where under an assumed identity he earned his living. It was there that it all happened; the strange sequence of events that resulted in him spending the rest of his days here in a field. It was all because of her.

For what seemed like eternity he had gazed across the Wolds of East Yorkshire waiting for her to return, soon someone would come; he knew she could not stay silent for ever...

# I



“Map?” Alistair asked as Maddie closed the door of the large, whitewashed detached house behind her. The lock snapped shut with a clear distinct click. It was springtime now in this small part of East Yorkshire. All was coming alive with the onset of the warmer weather; the climbing rose which snaked its way around the large wooden archway framing the entrance to the house, was slowly forming buds on its branches. Shreds of red were already bursting through the green, trying to gain access to the sunlight.

Maddie could hear the sound of her husband’s patent leather shoes crunching on the gravel driveway which looped around the front of the mock Tudor style dwelling. The garage door hummed and groaned as it swung open unaided by her husband’s hand. It needed oiling but he didn’t have a clue about that sort of thing, she would probably end up doing that little job herself.

Maddie couldn’t believe, once again, he was going to drive them the half mile or so to the pub. She already knew, of course, that Alistair would use the excuse that he had to keep a clear head for the morning; or at least something along those lines. Though he was only twelve years her senior, she sometimes had the distinct feeling that the age gap between them was considerably more, even twice that, given some of his behaviour. He was so controlling at times; never letting go and enjoying himself. She presumed that it was so long since he let his hair down (not that he had much left these days) he no longer knew how to do it. “Lee will have sorted all that out” she answered, before putting her front door key into her shoulder bag which was instantly snapped shut.

Only the slightest hint of recognition at what she had just said came from the soberly dressed man who was, at that moment in time, deeply engrossed in trying to decide which of his Holy Trinity of automobiles to use for the short distance they needed to travel. For him, arriving in the correct car was far more important than actually being in the public house. He didn’t really like such places, far too many people of a lower class to himself; people he knew that should not be spending their money on such frivolities as alcohol, not when they couldn’t keep up their payments on credit cards, loans and mortgages.

Thinking back over the many years of their union, Maddie could not remember a single occasion when her husband could have been accused of dressing down. Even when it came to days off on holiday,

for example, he would invariably don slacks and a short sleeved shirt. On many of her regular shopping trips, which were becoming more frequent these days, she had bought him a selection of smart polo shirts and designer jeans. They all still sat untouched in the bottom of his wardrobe. Despite of all this, she still had the same feelings about him as she did when they first met.

So, he was older than her and dressed, well, like a bank manager? For all of this he was still a good looking man for his age and well paid. Maddie did enjoy the lifestyle his salary provided. She could shop with virtually unlimited credit; spend the morning at the gym or just sit at home reading through a whole selection of magazines dedicated to the housewife; publications which she would tidy away before the homecoming of her husband. Reading them was her guilty secret pleasure. Was that the reason she would set herself a challenge once a year? Tonight was the start of the planning for that very event.

In the rear view mirror, Alistair saw the garage door slide shut. The engine of the Mercedes purred like a contented cat as it idled. Once the passenger door closed the engine roared into life. Slowly and majestically the car pulled away up the drive; Alistair did not want to disturb the gravel lined driveway too much. "Did you bring the map?" he asked once again.

"No dear," Maddie said. He hadn't been listening, just as she had suspected.

"Won't you be needing it?" he asked flicking on the indicator while craning his neck to view the road which was partly obscured by the large laurel hedge.

Was she imagining it, or was Alistair caressing the leather bound steering wheel with his finger tips a little too affectionately? The thought almost made her cringe as his left hand released its grip and slid down and then back up the gear stick. "Sorry?" she said, suddenly realising that he had asked her a question. Maddie was still in a slight state of shock after witnessing her husband's subconscious urges toward the car.

"The map?" Alistair said once more; this time with a little more determination in his tone.

"Oh, yes," she was about to repeat the earlier answer when suddenly she changed thread, thankfully. Through the windscreen she saw the elegant slender figure of Sarah, walking by the side of the road. Sarah was accompanied by her boyfriend; both making their way to the rendezvous. They actually lived a little further away from

the pub than Maddie and Alistair, but they always walked. “Look, there’s Sarah.”

Alistair had already spotted Sarah. Did his lingering look last a moment longer than was necessary? Maddie had an uneasy feeling about her spouse’s gaze. As far as she could tell it was focused directly on her friend’s rear end? If he was doing this when she was there alongside him, what was he like with all the attractive women who worked in the bank?

Sarah had always turned heads. All her life she had found herself being the object of men’s affection. Though this was flattering, it was not always advantageous; she had on occasions found herself on the end of unwanted attention. Now though she was protected by the man holding her hand; she always felt safe when he was around. The difference in age between Sarah and Maddie was only a matter of a few months. At first glance, any passing observer would place Sarah in her late teens. Her long, flowing, straight hair had always been blonde, though these days that was no longer its natural colour. The silver Merc flashed by the pair; it was travelling far too quickly for the forty mile an hour speed limit. “Look at that?” Luke, Sarah’s boyfriend of six years, exclaimed. “Two minutes down the bloody road and they have to go in car, lazy sods?” His disdain for the driver showing clearly his voice.

“Luke.” Sarah was about to scold him about his comment but he was right. Why they couldn’t walk the short distance to the pub she could not say.

“No wonder he’s so fat.” Luke continued, “Sitting behind a desk all day then going to the pub in the car; at least he only drinks water, boring sod.” He had never really hit it off with Maddie’s husband. It all stemmed back to their first meeting. On that occasion, the soberly dressed banker hadn’t uttered a word of acknowledgement, or any other type of word for that matter, towards him. Luke instantly took offence at that; manners didn’t cost anything. Maddie, who he liked immensely, had introduced them. “Now then,” he had offered a perfunctory greeting. Alistair had merely chosen to ignore him. He simply made some kind of gesture toward the bar and strode off. Luke’s unbelieving eyes watched him, expecting him to dive deep into a conversation with a couple of old acquaintances, but no, Alistair merely nodded acknowledgement to another man and stood at the bar waiting in silence to be served.

Over the years it became obvious to him that this was Alistair’s way. The older man thought himself too good for the likes of him;

after all he was only a builder. Class differences didn't cut much ice with Luke, he would have laid a bet on which of the two of them earned the most. He was sure his wages eclipsed the salary of a desk bound clerk. First impressions mattered greatly to him; they lasted the longest and even now some dozen years later he still held an amount of contempt for Alistair. "It's all a show you know. He likes people to see him arrive in an expensive car. The key fob is always out on the table in full view, displayed for everyone to see. That and his mobile of course; just in case there's an emergency? What sort of crisis could happen in a bank at night?"

"I bet he's got a small knob?" It was a very rare event for Sarah to say anything derogatory about someone; even if she herself didn't care for them. When she did it almost shocked him, he always enjoyed it.

Sarah's life on the whole had not found its true direction as yet; not the direction she had hoped for. At school she had been an excellent pupil, her place was in the top form in all subjects and not only in the academic fields. Sport was a natural talent too. After only one year at high school she had claimed the captaincy of both the tennis and netball teams, while in athletics she quickly earned colours in both track and field disciplines. Her athletic and well toned figure was still a similar size and shape as it had been in her school days. In fact she would still wear the same tennis skirt on the odd occasion when picking up a racket to play.

Her headmaster, 'Big Ted Heath', had seen great potential in the bright young woman. On her last day at school he watched her go with a heavy heart as he knew that the school was losing one of its star pupils. He did, however, feel a sense of pride in the fact that she would succeed in whatever field she decided to enter.

The young Sarah had no trouble finding a university place; although the course she chose came as something of a surprise and shock to her mother and father, geology? The choice had come straight out of left field. As with all things, Sarah studied hard and completed her degree with little trouble. It was whilst at university that she took a series of menial jobs to keep her in pocket money. Living at home as she did, no student loan was required. Mostly working in the retail trade, it gave her a rest from studying. Firstly she took a position in the village supermarket. It was there that Luke first set eyes on the attractive young student. He naturally thought that someone as good looking as her would never be without a male companion by her side. He presumed they would be queuing up for

her affections, but he was wrong. On discovering that she was single, he finally plucked up the courage to ask her out for a drink.

Sarah was looking forward to the meeting to which they were en route. It gave her an excellent opportunity to regain some fitness. Christmas was now more than three months past, a distant memory but Sarah was conscious that the extra pounds added over the festive season were still in residence around her thighs. It was time once more to tone up.

As the pair walked down the road which led to the railway station, the welcoming lights of the pub could be picked out from the other residencies, like a beacon to weary travellers. Sarah suddenly stopped dead in her tracks, her arms unlocked from Luke's; instantly he too came to an abrupt halt. Turning he could see his partner rooting around in her bag, "What have you forgotten?" he asked in a kindly voice. Sarah was in the habit of forgetting something on most occasions, this was just another.

"Credit card bill." she said. A hint of panic had entered her voice. She looked through the various envelopes in her bag, but could not find the bill she required. Sarah clearly remembered writing a cheque for the bill and putting it in the envelope so kindly provided by the bank. Now she began to question her own actions. Had she put it in her bag or not? She could not recall.

"Is this what you're looking for?"

She looked up and saw, illuminated in the glare of the orange street light, was the elusive envelope in Luke's hand. He knew that the absent minded Sarah would probably forget to post it, so he took it upon himself to put it in his jacket pocket before leaving home.

"No wonder I couldn't find it." Smiling she took it out of his hand before giving him a token slap on the face with it. The walk back to the post box was only a matter of a few paces. The box was situated on a small triangular piece of grass, two sides of which were flanked by roads. Though this piece of greenery was capacious, several large trees grew on it protecting the grass from the elements. For as long as she could remember, this part of the village had staved off the perpetual change that had engulfed the area and not in her opinion for the better. The only evidence of the onset of the developer's plans was the flats she could see through the trees. Only a few years since an old court house had stood majestically on that site, now only soulless flats stood there. One relic of long ago still remained. On the grass verge sat a square patch of gravel, kerbed neatly and weed free. In the centre of it was a tablet of stone. This



was a way marker, informing travellers that York was some thirty miles away following what would have been the only road. As a girl she often thought how many people had used that simple stone for its original purpose, long before the days of cars and modern sign posts.

Indeed the stone itself had a history. It was buried during the war so invading soldiers could not use it to plot their position, but her favourite story connected to the relic was that of Dick Turpin. According to local legend Turpin was arrested in these very parts before being taken to York, put on trial and finally hanged from the neck until he was dead. Next to the turnpike the Ferry Inn Public House laid claim to the fact that Turpin was arrested in that very hostelry that fateful night. Sarah, however, had grown up in the neighbouring village of Welton and she knew an alternative story. The Green Dragon, Welton also laid claim to the notorious arrest.

The envelope fell into the blackness of the box, making the slightest thuds as it hit the bottom of the wire cage within. Last month the bill that had fallen onto the doormat had been larger than usual. Sarah's weakness for shoes had got the better of her on more than one occasion. February had also been a month of many birthdays, almost an epidemic; was May a good month to conceive? It must be. Whether it was or not, her credit card had taken a bit of a hammering buying the many cards and presents for both friends and relations alike. She felt a sense of relief as she had staved off the prospect of her card being closed for another month.

The lounge bar of the Buccaneer was the absolute epitome of an English country pub. The dark wooden beams which spanned the low uneven ceiling gave the appearance that the solid oak beams held the first floor. There was one person in the bar that night who knew otherwise. Adorning each of the beams hung many horse brasses and copper plates. In the hearth, a real coal fire burned brightly. The orange flames licked up into the flue while the heat radiated out, filling the room.

The room was sparsely occupied, only the regular tea time drinkers were in residence. Though the pub sat almost next to the railway station, it was very rare that a traveller would frequent the hostelry. All the rail goers seemed to be off the train and into their cars, not bothering to frequent any of the local businesses. Their minds must be full of sales figures, projected targets, child care, mortgages and how to keep the office tart quiet about that thing in the stationery cupboard at the Christmas party.

Originally the pub was named The Station Inn; the connection being obvious. Indeed in those days the pub had also taken in paying guests, either arriving or departing from the village. The name was changed in the nineteen sixties to The Buccaneer, as a note of tribute to the aircraft manufactured at the local aircraft factory.

In the snug to the right of the bar sat a selection of senior gentlemen, all with one thing in common. They were all ex-managers from that very factory which gave the pub its name. The circle of friends all drank some kind of spirit. None of their Doctors would have condoned their choice of beverage and certainly not at the rate they were drinking it. Each of them suffered from high blood pressure, a curse of management in the modern age.

Scattered around the rest of the lounge were a handful of drinkers. Three of them read newspapers, two favoured the broad sheets and only one indulged a tabloid. In these days of economics and carbon footprints, most of the broad sheets had changes to a more eco friendly format but still they could not be branded as 'tabloid'.

By the fire, alone at a table, sat a man in his mid forties. Everything about him gave the observer the distinct impression that this was a military man. From his hair to his bearing all was precise. The clothes in which he dressed gave him away as someone who spent much of his time outdoors. His clothes were made for protection against the elements, not for style. However, as practical as they were, not a crease could be seen in them. They had been ironed with the precision only achieved by a soldier. Neatly arranged on the table in front of him was a pile of five small books and an Ordnance Survey map. The map was obviously well used, its spine and edges were all a little dog eared, however, inside the covers the map was of pristine condition. Joining them on the table was a pint glass with over half a pint of bitter still remaining within it. This particular hostelry had always had a reputation for fine ales, as advertised on the sign outside the door. Most pubs had such signs, but in the case of this public house the notification was well deserved. The Buccaneer had a reputation for a 'cracking pint' of bitter. Lee took another mouthful of ale. A fine head still remained on the beer leaving a witness of its very existence on his well shaven top lip as he drank. He savoured the flavour as the dark liquid passed down his throat. Lee enjoyed the drink; he could not compare it to the same standard as it was kept in the days of a former landlord. Tony could keep a beer. When his beer was on form it had the taste of nectar. Still this was the best drink the village had to offer.

He looked at his wrist watch. Both his companions for that evening were late; only by some five minutes at that point but all the same late. He was not accustomed to waiting; when he gave an order it was obeyed immediately. Lee had left Brough when he was only in his early twenties; his destination was Her Majesties Forces, the army. The career move had not been of his own choice, it was on the advice of his father. After the trouble he had caused as a youth it seemed advisable for him to leave and let the dust settle somewhat in the village which, up to then, he had called home. His father had suggested that a tour of at least five years was called for, "Let things settle down." It seemed a good plan. His father didn't know at the time but a service life was at least twenty years, not five. It was beneficial then that Lee enjoyed military life, it suited him and he went his full 20 year term. The Good Service Medal (or the 'not getting caught' medal as they called it) he proudly wore on his chest on many occasions and was the one he prized most. If only his parents had lived to see it.

Since he left the army three years ago he had spent his days working part time; his field was in logistics management. After spending years in charge of his regiment the ex-RSM spent his latter days feeding the troops in the front line. These skills, though not enjoyed at the time, would stand him in good stead in civilian life. He was now earning a considerable wage in the consultancy field.

Lee watched the collection of overweight ex-managers chuckling in the corner. It was no wonder that they were all of that size because as soon as their glasses emptied the barmaid was called over for another round of drinks which she would deliver to the table without any of the men having to move. This act turned Lee's stomach. What made them so special that they didn't have to stand. Some of his old friends had parts of their legs blown off and they could manage to stand at the bar with everyone else. The expression on Lee's face showed nothing but distain.

A cold draught breezed past his legs as he heard the front door of the pub close. He looked over to see a couple walk in and go through into the restaurant, which was situated at the rear.

Lee's ears heard the distinct aristocratic roar of one of Alistair's beloved cars pulling into the car park. His eyes darted up to the clock, late as always. Taking another mouthful of bitter before straightening his shirt, he wanted to look his best, the creases on the shoulders were square, the cuffs positioned over the wrists. He was now physically

and mentally prepared for the first of the other two walkers to arrive, not to mention their partners.

Moments later the door opened and in came Maddie followed by the unsociable Alistair. The latter of the two made straight for the bar while Maddie instantly joined Lee in front of the fire. The smile on her face betrayed her feelings. She was so happy to see him again. They hardly ever saw one another these days, apart from their annual walk; maybe it was true about absence making the heart grow fonder. "Hello." Maddie exclaimed in an out of breath, excited voice.

"Now then." Lee returned the greeting in his normal fashion. The greeting was an honest one; he was so pleased to see her again. Since they had last met, Maddie's features had started to betray her age. The lines on her face that protruded from the corner of her eyes had deepened, while her hair had become much greyer, though he thought she disguised it well. Maddie had also gained half a stone around her midriff; at least that was his estimate. For all this she was still as attractive as she had been when he knew her as a young girl all those years before; before the army, before life had begun.

Unlike her own body she noticed at once that Lee's physique was in prime condition. The brown hair which crowned him bore no particular style; the wiry nature of it ensured that. It was however immaculately trimmed. A little longer than any military styling would allow but still the army life was part of him, that was evident to see. Lee, she recalled had always been muscular; his biceps filled the sleeves of his shirt then as now. A tattoo, a souvenir from his days in the army was visible under the short sleeve of his shirt. The design was mainly obscured but a scroll lay at the base of whatever it was. If a name, (presumably a woman's), had resided there at some point, then he no longer wished to remember her. The scroll had been coloured in, destroying any evidence of what lay there before. She wondered for a moment who would mean enough to him to have her name permanently displayed on his body. More to the point was how it came to be removed. What sad tale could have brought about that occurrence? She did not want to know, or at least that is what she told herself. Maddie's mind soon moved on as she caught a glance of his thighs, tightly enclosed in his combat trousers. Unbeknown to anyone else in the pub, a wave of lust rushed through her. She hadn't experienced such a feeling for some time now.

"Did you have a good Christmas?"

It was Lee's question that suddenly brought her back to the here and now. Her face became flushed with embarrassment, "Oh, er, yes,

yes thank you: did you?" Quickly she sat down on a stool and arranged her bags on the floor next to her, giving herself a chance to gather her thoughts together and try to subdue anymore thoughts along those lines.

"Ey' we did. We had two weeks in the Canneries over Christmas and New Year."

"I wanted to go away, but," she gestured toward Alistair who was still waiting for a member of the bar staff to make an appearance, "he wouldn't, the bank you know!" Maddie had always presumed that once her spouse had reached the rank of branch manager, he would be the one who could demand when he took his annual vacation and would not have to worry about the day to day running of the bank. Of course, that philosophy she had got wrong. "How's Gill anyway?" She thought it only polite to ask and changing the subject would attract attention away from her domestic affairs. Maddie had never really hit it off with his wife. She too was ex-forces, not to mention far too fit and well toned for the bank manager's wife.

"Fine, she's coming over a little later, just got a few things to do first." Lee knew that his old friend was only paying him lip service, he knew her too well. Gill didn't have any time for Maddie or Alistair, "A jumped up clerk," was her opinion of him, whereas "Lady Muck," or "Mutton dressed as lamb?" would suffice for her. Lee had mixed feelings with those views, he knew however that she was right, deep down he knew.

Maddie looked over her shoulder to see if there was any sign of her drink coming.

At the bar Alistair waited; this was unacceptable. He had been there for at least two minutes and no sign of any service. In his left hand he held a crisp new ten pound note; did he think by brandishing it in full view it would increase the chances of a member of staff approaching? He let out a heavy sigh and shuffled his feet on the same spot. The over long nails of his right hand clicked on the bar as he drummed his finger tips down with a constant rapidity.

"Won't keep you a minute." The voice of the barmaid drifted through from the restaurant.

"Ok." Alistair replied. Though he gave the impression of not being annoyed, he most certainly was.

The front door of the pub closed with a clunk, "Hiya?" Alistair cringed on hearing the overly high pitched squeaky voice. Sarah had arrived.

The young attractive blond sat down next to Maddie on the stool, leaving Luke standing. Slowly he followed her to the table where he enquired if any of the assembled party would like a drink? Sarah obviously wanted her usual pint of lager and Lee too accepted the offer; his own pint was almost depleted. So, with his order he turned toward the bar and for the slightest moment he paused; Alistair was there already. Taking a deep breath he took the few steps towards the bank manager, "Alistair." That was his only word to him.

Alistair was saved from having to make an effort with Sarah's partner by the return of the barmaid, wiping her hands on a tea towel as she rounded the corner, "Sorry for the wait, what can I get for you?" she spoke to both men, not knowing which had arrived first.

Alistair opened his mouth to speak, but he didn't get chance. "Two lagers and a bitter please." Luke had jumped in front of him. The younger of the two was probably aware of the fact and wanted to know if Alistair would lower himself to talk to him, even if it was only in protest.

Alistair was silent. He glared at the poor barmaid, who was wholly innocent in the matter. He saw this as a blatant snub. The girl had not worked at the pub long so clearly did not know who he was and his status in this hostelry. Luke, however, smiled a rye smile of self satisfaction at getting one over on the middle aged man.

So small was the barmaid, when she started to pull the hand pump for the bitter she could only just gain enough height for the leverage. Luke found it slightly amusing; her rather large chest also interfered with the business end of the apparatus, the swan neck. Why had she chosen this as a profession when she obviously struggled with the simple task of pulling a pint? After that performance he may himself change from his usual lager to bitter, just for that night.

"So, where are we going this year?" Sarah was more than a little excited by the prospect. So much so that she almost jumped up and down in her chair.

"Calm down Sarah," Maddie said smiling, "there is no rush, we're here all night." By the end of it she may even get a drink?

"Let's get the drinks sorted, then we'll look at a few books." Lee said with an air of calm.

"That's a point?" Maddie thought looking over her shoulder, where was Alistair with her drink? Luke was now carrying a tray containing three pints of beer back to the table, so where was hers? By the look of it, Alistair had just given his order and the young girl behind the bar was struggling to reach the optic containing the Gin.

She also noticed her husband's eyes were watching, far too closely, the girl's blouse which was stretched tightly across the curves of her chest.

Lee was opening the first of his maps as Maddie's drink arrived. "Thanks." Alistair made a gesture toward the collection of overweight ex managers sitting in the snug, 'obviously going to speak to much more important people than us' Luke thought to himself. He would have spoken the words out loud but didn't want to offend Maddie.

"Anyway," Lee wanted to return to the important matter in hand, this year's walk. "I've got some information on a selection of walks. The first is from Beverly to York, The Minster Way."

"Why the Minster Way?" Sarah looked a little puzzled before downing nearly half a pint of lager. Luke rolled his eyes, wasn't it obvious?

"I would think," Maddie began, trying not to sound patronising when addressing her friend, "that it links the two Minsters together."

"Oh yer, I never thought of that." Sarah appeared to be genuinely surprised at the answer, before letting out a large rasping burp. Quickly her hand covered her mouth while her cheeks turned a shade of scarlet. "Oh excuses me?" she said breaking out into a giggle, "it's this lager, full of bubbles."

"Very lady like I'm sure," joked Lee, "now, the Minster Way. It's fifty miles; we could do it in two days having an overnight stop. There are plenty of pubs that offer bed and breakfast on the route.

There are more walks, The Hutton Hike, The Ruston Way, The Headland Way from Bridlington to Filey. All the information is here if you want to have a look." He spread several leaflets on the table, each showing a rough map for rambles and vital information such as bus routes and places to stay. "The last one is a new walk, The Wilberforce Way. It's been made to celebrate the life of William Wilberforce and his works, anyway...

It starts at Wilberforce House in the old town," a reference to the oldest part of Hull, "and finishes at York Minster. Now this one is a bit longer than the others, sixty miles, so we would have to do it over two or three days. What do you think?"

Sarah was conscious of her stamina and didn't really want to do more than twenty miles a day. The previous year the three of them had walked the Beverly twenty. Though the actual walk was only twenty miles Lee had taken them a slightly longer way, it was a nice day and he was enjoying himself and for him that was a good enough reason for a detour. That night though in the bath, Sarah's legs

throbbled with pain and two of her toe nails dropped off. Twenty miles was enough for her and she told them so. “Maddie, any ideas for this year’s charity?” It was her task to find a good cause to benefit from the event. Normally she would either try and hit a local good cause or find out which charity Alistair’s bank had allocated itself to that year. On this occasion though, Maddie was about to surprise them all.

“I’ve had some thoughts about the walk as a matter of fact,” a note of pride, almost triumph could definitely be heard in her voice.

“Really?” Lee said, his eyes widening in surprise.

“Wow?” exclaimed Sarah, “well done.” Girl power.

Lee sat back in his seat, “Well then” he said, “the floor is yours.” Lee was so glad that Maddie had put some thought into the walk this year, too long had she lived in the shadow of a bank manager. They waited in anticipation of what she had to say.

“Well,” she started to speak as she sat upright enjoying her moment. Over the past, well, year or so I’ve been doing some research into, well, it started as a book about local crimes.” She paused for breath. Maddie had started the sentence with such ferocity that she had failed to pause for breath. “I was going to try and write a book about local criminals from history, anyway...” she took another lung full of air, “I found an old story about a highwayman who robbed the Archbishop of York on the road to Skidby. Now the thing is that the highwayman himself buried his stash, but was killed before he had chance to retrieve it. His ghost however still comes back looking for it to this day.”

“Really?” Sarah said, her eyes were wide open looking intently at Maddie.

“So,” she shifted slightly in her seat making herself comfortable, “I changed the book from local crime to local ghost stories.”

Lee smiled, ‘How female’” He thought to himself, though he did not let any sign of his thoughts betray him. Over the past twenty five years or so he had seen many things. His comrades in arms had fallen next to him in combat, they had died in their beds, even the poor individuals who had forsaken their lives in so called friendly fire incidents, but never had one of them returned from ‘the other side’. He knew such things were mere folly but, for many reasons, people wanted to believe in such things.

“So, anyway,” Maddie continued, “I’ve spent a lot of time finding out about different legends and folk stories from all over this area and have written them up and what I’ve found is that: well I’ll



show you.” She had to pause for breath at that point; her complexion had almost turned a shade of blue during the lengthy sentence. Her hands lifted books and beer mats alike looking for the map which she could use as a point of reference for her demonstration.

Lee cast a quizzical glance across at Sarah who was rolling her eyes in dismay. Her friend had seemed so organised this year, now however, her normal scatter brained self was emerging once more.

“Do you have your map?” she asked Lee, coming clean. Without looking he put his hand down on the table top and pushed a copy of the Ordinance Survey Map for Kingston upon Hull and Beverley, Number 293 across toward her. “Ah, thank you.” As the leaves began to unfold it became apparent to all that the small round table was far too small to accommodate the fully expanded sheet. “Oh?” she said, “Could you just...” both of her companions moved their glasses, but still the table was far too small.

“Move down.” Lee instructed her. Next to them sat a bank of three oblong tables, much better suited to the task of holding the map. Once settled, Maddie started her monologue once again. “Now, we are...” the village of Brough was situated at the bottom right hand corner of the page. It took a second for her to find her bearings before realising that the map was in fact up side down. “Oh, excuse me?” Maddie stood up from her stool, picking the sheet up she turned it through a complete half turn so the base was facing all of them. Sarah quickly raised her hand to her mouth to stifle a giggle; it was Lee’s turn now to roll his eyes. “Right,” Maddie was at last ready, “here we are. Right, we start in Brough.” The red painted nail of her right index finger pointed to the village. I have about a dozen or so stories that link certain points from here to Beverley and then from Beverley down to Sutton... What I thought was,” her finger was still resting on the map, “if we start here then go up Peggy Farrow, into Brantingham, across to Welton, then...” she paused for breath. “up to Skidby, Walkington and then Beverley. That will be day one. Right, we need to stop in ‘Monks Walk’ pub over night, I don’t think it’s connected to a ghost story, but *I* like it. So on day two we have to head north and cross the River Hull here.” It took a moment for her to locate the small road bridge to the north of Weal as it was so minute on the map. “Then down into Weel, over the fields to Wawne. Through Wawne and then a bit of a zig zag up then down into Swine, through Swine and onto the old Hornsea railway line. After that it’s straight on into Sutton and finishing at the pub.” She sat back and sighed with relief.

“How far is that?” Sarah asked a little concerned with the distance.

“Oh, I’m not sure.” Maddie answered biting her top lip with embarrassment.

“Well, don’t worry, we can work it out.” Lee took a small device out of his pocket; it looked a similar size and shape to a pen. In one end was a small wheel with a serrated edge, at the other was a small screen. He placed the device on the map. As he moved it across the page following roughly the route described, the numbers increased in value. Once the pointer reached the half way stage at Beverley, Lee read the figure from the display, “Seventeen miles to Beverley.” He said replacing the mile counter on the map and measuring the rest of the trek. “Eleven on day two. Getting on for thirty miles in all. We could do it easily in one day.”

“Oh no,” it was Sarah who interrupted, only a moment or so before Maddie had chance to, “not in a day?” Again Lee smiled at her. She knew, or at least hoped, he was only joking. Lee could easily complete the walk within the day without any effort. For him it would be the equivalent of an afternoon stroll but for her, however, it was not such an easy task.

“Well,” Lee’s voice suddenly rose indicating a note of authority, “I think that is an excellent idea. Well done Maddie, just one thing, what are you going to call it?”

“How do you mean?” Maddie had spent so much time planning the route, the thought of giving it a name had never occurred to her.

“There’s The Minster Way, There’s The Wolds Way, Heritage Way, so what’s this one going to be called?”

That is a good question, Maddie mused, “We can’t just call it ‘The Ghost Walk’, there are hundreds of them all over the country.”

“The Haunted Way?” the three words popped out of Sarah’s mouth without her fully realising what she had just said.

“Now, that’s a good name.” Lee exclaimed, a hint of surprise in his voice.

“The Haunted Way, yes that’s the one.” Maddie was in full agreement, “I will have that put on the top of the sponsor forms along with a little ghost cartoon, I think.”

Luke who was sitting a little way back from the table seemed to be impressed with his girlfriend’s flash of inspiration. As he opened his mouth to pass comment his attention was drawn elsewhere. The windows in the lounge were closed, but a strong smell entered the room. The aroma seemed to drift past him from the closed end of the

room and pass towards the door. As his nostrils' flexed in reaction, a feeling of nausea almost overcame him. Within seconds the smell was gone. It lingered in his mind, what had it been. The nearest reference he could make was old stagnant straw. When he was a boy he and numerous friends would play in the fields around the village. Come August the climbing of hay stacks was the pastime of choice. When it had rained the stacks gave off a certain smell and it was that smell which had momentarily danced on his senses.

The brief meeting was now concluded and the small party could concentrate on the business of enjoying a few drinks and reminiscing on previous walks they had enjoyed over the years.

By the time the clock struck ten, the lounge was filling up. With the extra body heat, the atmosphere warmed up and became a little close. A layer of smoke hung just below the dark wooden beams of the ceiling. Maddie was enthusiastically telling Sarah and Luke about her researches over the last year. Lee was at the bar trying to buy another round of drinks. At the table Maddie was in full flow when she was distracted by an old head appearing around the corner of the alcove set into the bay window. The man to whom it belonged looked as though he was approaching the century mark. His features were wrinkled and weather beaten, though he had a healthy outdoor glow about him. "Is it ghost stories you say?" he asked.

"Sorry?" replied Maddie, the noise in the room had increased somewhat and added to the fact that the old man's voice was barely more than a whisper, she found it a little difficult to hear.

"Was it ghost stories you were after young woman?" he repeated.

"Er, yes." Maddie said, "Local ones anyway. Do you know any?"

"I do lass." He said shuffling himself onto a vacant stool which sat alongside their table.

Luke who had been talking 'football' to a friend glanced over. He looked at the old man who had joined them with interest. At first sight he looked very much like a vagrant, but there was something about him, almost an air of seniority or command. Was he a friend of Lee's, an ex-army man? One thing he did notice was several pieces of straw adhered to his old brown jacket.

Sarah finished off her pint and looked across at Luke whose eye she caught immediately. She made a swift gesture with her empty glass which he understood; a refill was required. While her attention was still with him he mouthed the words, "Who's that?" to her with

reference to the uninvited guest. Sarah could only shrug her shoulders.

“There’s a story about the landlord of this place, going back a couple of hundred years but I can’t really remember it. There is another story though that happened just next door to here.” His old thumb gestured to his rear and the houses which made up the rest of the block. Both women had fallen for the charm of the old man and were engrossed by his conversation. “People often think that ghost stories only happen in the dark, gas lit streets of Victorian England but ghosts know nothing of time you know. Take what happened down here, not that long since...

Heaven Knows no Rage...

“Heaven knows no rage like love to hatred turned, or Hell a fury as a women’s scorn.”

It is often used in reference to women seeking revenge for their husbands and partners dalliances of philandering. It is seldom used to refer to a man's relationship with a woman, in life or death.

The ceilings were high in the semi-detached houses of the leafy street. High ceilings, just what was needed. The master bedroom’s design complied with the rest of the house’s architecture. He stood at the foot of the bed looking up at the point on the ceiling where the cord suspending the light emerged. The shade was a heavy glass bowl, far too heavy to be supported by the electric cable alone. A decorative chain hung down from a brass hook, the screws of which penetrated deep into a joist under the plaster. He knew it would hold he’d put it up.

The stool from her dressing table wobbled on the quilted bed as he stepped onto it. He held onto the light fitting with one hand to support himself, the other hand was occupied with something else.

A white piece of cord was now suspended from the hook in the ceiling, which held the gold coloured chain. It was the type of cord normally used for the hanging of pictures from a picture rail. On the bedroom wall a square of light blue stood out from its darker surroundings. The plain untarnished piece of wallpaper indicated where a picture had once hung.

She wouldn't like that; he would have to replace it. No maybe not.

The stool wobbled again under him and he transferred his weight to counteract the fall. He didn't want to fall; he could have broken a leg, or an arm or even his back. What a strange thought; worried about breaking a limb?

Steadying himself he put the makeshift noose around his neck, he couldn't make a proper noose, she was right, he was useless. With one final look around the bedroom; the bedroom he had shared with his wife for the past eleven years, he kicked away the stool.

If he were to have any second thoughts, it was too late. His home made noose tightened perfectly. So he wasn't that useless after all.

His legs swung out of control, as did his arms. The blood began to back up in the lower part of his neck, then he began to feel faint.

The last image his eyes saw was a silver framed picture on the dresser. It was of a happy day, an informal picture taken on their wedding day.

The image faded.

She closed the kitchen door behind her. The smell of something cooking in the oven filled her nostrils. Outside it was getting dark; the sun had set some twenty five minutes earlier. Mid summers day had only just passed and the nights were still short, she liked this time of year.

The smell was unmistakable to her; it was lasagne, her favourite. He cooked it so well, where was he? Why wasn't he in the kitchen, he normally was. Her husband was a creature of habit.

On the average day he would arrive home at 5.30pm and have dinner ready for her coming home at around 9.30pm. A fresh pot of tea would be awaiting her on arrival. He knew very well that if she ate too late in the evening then she would be up all night with either a headache or an attack of stomach cramps.

The teapot was empty, much her displeasure, as so was a bottle of wine standing next to the coffee grinder.

"Right." She said to herself. He was in for a roasting now. It was perfectly obvious to her what had happened. He must have come home, put the dinner in the oven, drank the contents of the bottle then fallen asleep on the bed while he had been upstairs. "Tough then." She thought to herself, tonight he would go without his dinner if he couldn't be bothered to come down.

At midnight she decided it was time to retire to bed and see what state her husband was in. He could be so lazy sometimes; she had been working hard all day at the office.

He too had been working all day; she never spared him a second thought. He was a builder by trade and spent his entire working life lifting, carrying and going up and down ladders with various pieces of equipment. It was hard, physical work and on more than one occasion he had worked to the point of exhaustion. What kept him in the trade? The money was good, the more work completed the better payday at the end of the week.

He needed the money.

Making as much noise as possible she climbed the stairs. He no doubt would hear her coming and jump off the bed, pretending to be folding up washing or some other task.

Tonight though, such an act would not wash with her. Why had he not come downstairs when she had come home? If he thought that this morning's lecture had been hard to take, then the one he was about to receive now would make the previous pale into insignificance. By the time she had reached the top step, her rage was at boiling point. She flung open the bedroom door and hit the dimmer switch with the side of her fist.

Shock and a feeling of sickness hit her as she saw her husband's lifeless body hanging in the centre of the room. The white cord around his neck tied around the hook supporting the light.

A second emotion swept over her, horror. What had happened? Did he do this himself or had someone else...

That thought was too horrible to contemplate.

Then anger once again surfaced, "Lazy sod." He'd taken the easy way out. He would rather kill himself than be with me.

Two hours later the Police had been and gone. Their investigations hadn't taken long to complete, it was definitely suicide. The body of her husband had also been taken away in an ambulance. Now she sat alone in the living room. It was the early hours of the morning now and the rest of the world was asleep.

Her mother would be arriving shortly to pick her up and take her back to the childhood home she knew so well. She had been advised to spend a few days away from the house, 'to come to terms with her loss.' As the Police counsellor had put it.

What loss? How selfish could he have been, doing that in the house?

Moments later she was gone, the house was empty and silent.

Well almost empty.

On the mantelpiece sat his mobile phone. If anyone had bothered to check the previously dialled numbers, they would have found the last five calls had all been to same number, 909090, the Samaritans.

The conversation could have been from any of life's lost souls. It followed the same pattern as a thousand others that week...

"It's my wife, she treats me like a..."

"Like what?" came back the friendly voice on the other end of the line?

"A butler, servant," a pause then, "a slave." Said his melancholy voice.

"Has she harmed you in any way?"

"No, not yet."

"She just treats you badly?"

"Yes."

"Have you spoken to her about it?"

"I have tried."

"That's good, and what did she say?"

"She always says it's my fault, I am to blame for everything that goes wrong or missing. I can't do anything right." His voice had started to falter. "She's told me that so many times that I've started to believe it myself now."

"Have you considered leaving your wife?"

"I can't"

"Why not?" the voice of the woman on the phone had a strangely calming effect on him. Maybe things weren't that bad after all.

"I can't afford it. All my money goes on the house, paying the bills and that sort of thing. Her money we use for food. If I left I'd have nowhere to go and no money to survive."

"That's not true; do you have any friends or relations you could stay with?"

"I've got to go now, she's just come in."

"Wait," said the voice, "There are hostels you can go to..." the counsellor couldn't get another word in, he was gone, the line dead.

For three days the house remained empty.

On her return she sat in the car looking at the exterior. A feature stood in the garden that had not been there on her departure. A white board had been erected, the legend on the top read 'FOR SALE'.

Soon she would move out of this house and get on with her new life.

Later on that evening the time finally came, it was time to go to bed, time to go into that bedroom. The room was warm and inviting as she changed into her nightclothes and slipped between the sheets. With the remote control beside her, she watched the small portable television mounted on the wall. Cupped in her two hands she held a mug full of hot chocolate.

While she was taking a sip of her hot sweet drink she noticed a dark shadow cross the TV screen, then return to normal

The tube must be on its way out, she thought to herself. She could afford a newer better one now. After that thought she slept well in the large empty bed.

The following night followed a similar pattern. Again the shadow moved across the screen, darker this time. The old set must be getting worse. Over the next few nights the picture quality on the bedroom TV slowly became unwatchable and by Friday the shadow was moving from one side to the other.

She began to nod off. Did she imagine it in the moment between the worlds of sleep and semi consciousness, or was the shadow in the room and not on the screen. She slowly drifted off to sleep.

All of a sudden she sat bolt upright in bed. She was looking at the TV but the shadow was in the room with her. It was swinging side to side, the harder she looked at it the more it formed a shape, the shape of a body hanging from the ceiling.

She fainted with fear, falling back onto her pillow.

The next morning she woke with a start. The TV was still switched on, the picture was perfect. The sun shone in through the south facing window, it was warm and bright outside.

Had she dreamt the events of the previous night? She was not sure now; it could have been a dream. She hoped it was.

The long awaited house move came two days later. She was glad to be putting the past behind her. A new bedroom awaited her, a new room with no 'Ghosts from the past'.

The day had been a busy one. Moving a lifetime's amount of possessions took military planning. Two rooms she had insisted on



being operational by the end of the first day, one was the kitchen and the other was the main bedroom, all the rest could wait until the morning. By eleven in the evening both rooms were in some kind of order.

The usual mug of hot chocolate was poured before climbing over the boxes and chests toward the stairs and then on to bed.

The new portable TV was still in its box, so tonight she would read a book in bed. After such an exhausting day, she soon began to nod off.

As she placed her book on the bedside table she took a sideways glance at the light fitting, nothing was there; at last she had escaped that awful room, the room she had once loved.

At 3am she woke, a dry feeling in her mouth. She would go to the bathroom and get herself a glass of water.

Where was she? Nothing was familiar to her eyes. Then it came to her. A new house, a new start, she sat up and felt a dread in her chest. For some unknown reason she felt paralysed, she couldn't move.

What was it, then it hit her.

Even though she was in a new house, a new bedroom she could never escape the past.

In front of her she could clearly see it now, the image of her dead husband, silently hanging from the ceiling.

“Wow, is that a true story?” Sarah asked her mouth agog.

Lee followed by Luke arrived at the table simultaneously, each carrying a drink in both hands. “Everything alright?” Lee asked eyeing up the old man somewhat suspiciously.

“Oh yes, everything's fine.” The older of the two women assured him, “This gentleman has just been telling us a fantastic ghost story about someone who lived down the road here and hung himself.”

“Oh yes?” Lee said seating himself. He quickly rearranged the glasses on the table so he could make room for his own drink, “Why was that then?”

“Something to do with his wife.” Sarah said in a sympathetic tone. She was feeling sympathy for the poor man whose wife had driven him to such an act as that.

“Well hung he was?” Luke laughed at his joke though neither of the women thought it amusing at all.

The old man sighed a heavy sigh and shuffled off to the bar. He had waited for one of his audience to offer him a top up of his pint, but none was forthcoming.

“Is that a good one for the book then?” Luke asked Maddie.

“Yes, I’m getting quite a collection now. I’ll tap him up for a few more when he comes back, I’ll buy him a drink. Maddie looked toward the bar. Around half a dozen people were now waiting to be served. Some brandished notes, others their empty glasses, but one thing she did notice was that there was no sign of the little old man. “Did anyone see where he went?” she asked looking around frantically. Maddie had wanted to buy him a drink for the telling of such a good tale and as a down payment for more of the same. All the party cast their eyes around the lounge bar. The little man was gone, was it Lee’s comment? Had that offended him? It was at that point that Sarah released another totally unladylike burp after drinking several large mouthfuls of lager. As they all laughed, the memory of the story teller faded into the night.



## Brough to Brantingham

With the Railway Station behind you and standing outside 'The Buccaneer' Public House set off in a northerly direction heading towards the oldest pub in the village, 'The Ferry Inn'. At the T junction, to the left you can see the small turnpike marker (*illustrated below*). The flats behind it are built on the site of the old Law Courts. Once the short distance to the mini roundabout has been travelled take a left, the bank will be on the right. Beneath you the stream passing under the road also splits the golf course a little further on the route.

After heading north along Cave Road and passing the golf course club house you come across Mill Lane which is on the east side of the road. A small triangle of grass is at the very start of the lane splitting the road itself. The first house on Mill Lane is called Langtry Lodge; this is referred to by Lee who recounts the story of how King Edward VII had the house built for his mistress.

Passing over the brow of the Hill the landscape opens out as you pass over the golf course. Almost at the top of the hill a crossroads of footpaths can be found. Head straight over and through the old Metal gate. Once at the brow of the hill look to the left, there you will see Castle House.

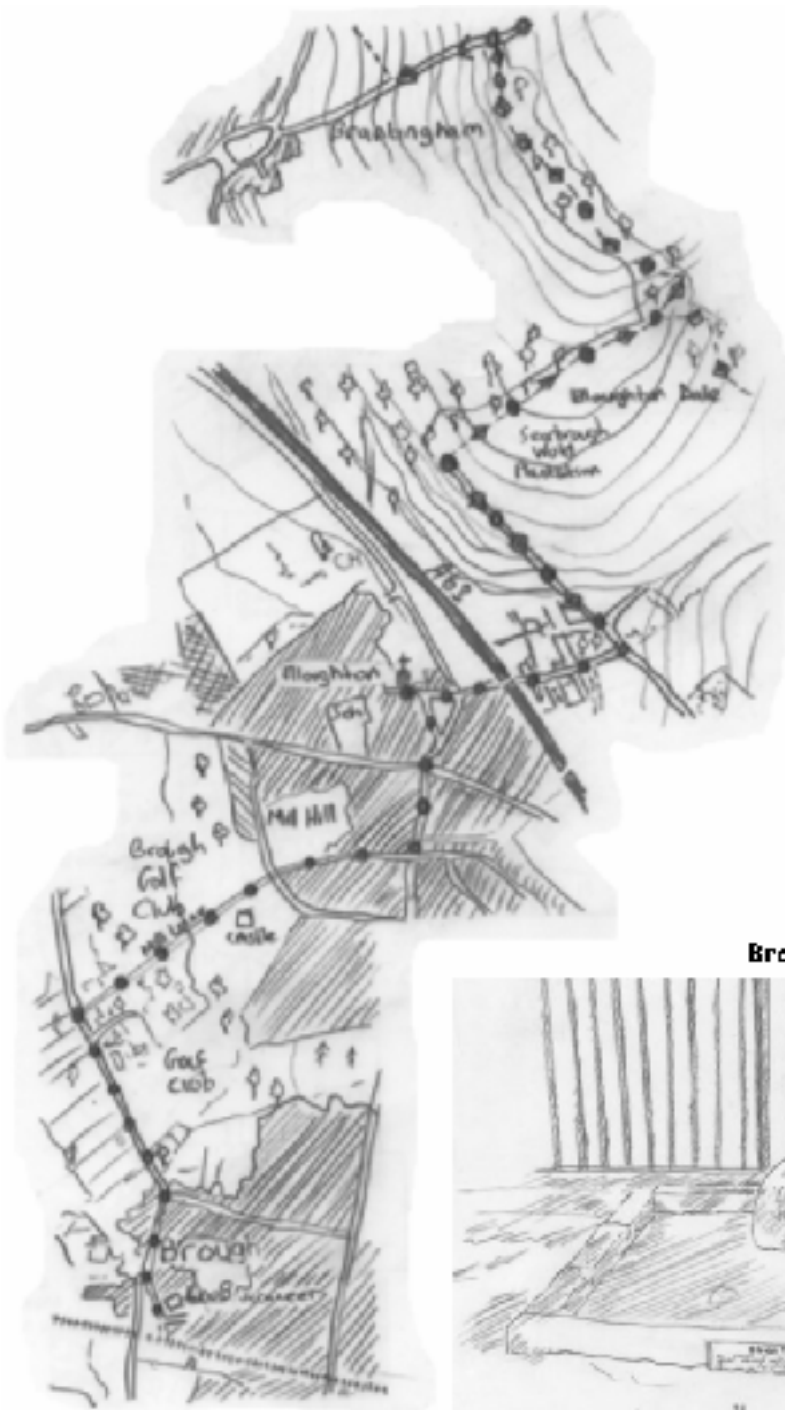
At the bottom of the lane, turn left and head toward the crossroads. It is here that Maddie tried to read 'Images From the Past', but the traffic noise interrupted. As they did in the story cross over the road and around the Half Moon public house. Cutting through the houses the church is easily found.

Once again cutting through the houses head back onto the main road and head north passing the post office and over the footbridge.

This is still in Elloughton though the A63 now divides the village. Continue north following the road around the sharp left hand turn. The road will then take a sharp right and heads off up the Dale. This is where the first off road walking commences.

To the left is Peggy Farrow house. The footpath is through the gate and heads easterly. Half way down Peggy Farrow Lane is the 'hanging tree', which one of the many trees it is has long been forgotten in time. The footpath takes a right turn, passing through a kissing gate, follow the path. The plantation is filled mainly with Birch trees, a good place to stock up on bark for fire lighting. Half way up this part of the track is another gate. Pass through and carry on in the same direction. Peggy Farrow Lane comes to an end at the next gate; a sign notifying that the bridal way ends also marks the boundary. Here the path splits. The right hand route heads toward Welton, take the left hand path, then at the gate turn left.

This final leg can be very overgrown at certain times of the year, but the battle is rewarded as finally when reaching Spout Hill you are welcomed with a fantastic panoramic view of Brantingham and the Estuary. On a clear day and with binoculars York should be visible.



Brough  
to  
Brantingham  
via  
Elloughton

Brough Turnpike GR937268



# II



## Day 1

The rendezvous was set: six a.m. in the car park adjacent to The Buccaneer public house. On this mid summer's morning, the sun rose well before four. Down in the village the roof tops were feeling the heat from their first glimpse of sunlight. It was at this point that Lee stepped outside his back door and took a deep lung full of the morning air. It may be something of a cliché, but for him the early hours of sunlight were indeed the best part of the day. In the apple trees, which grew in his garden, a chorus of birds sang in many various octaves and keys. In his hand he held a cup of tea, steam rose from it disappearing into the morning air. The grass was cool and damp under his bare feet, though dressed in only a tight fitting pair of boxer shorts he could feel the warmth of the sunlight touching his back. Sitting on the old garden bench he watched the nocturnal animals disappearing into the undergrowth. For the hedgehogs, badgers and voles their working day was over; time to hand over the world to the creatures of the daylight hours.

For many minutes Lee watched nature at work while he drank his brew. Once finished, he returned to the confines of the house; moments later the shower was running.

Neither of the women walking that day were awake at this time. Both had prepared their walking and overnight bags the previous evening, leaving plenty of time in the morning to concentrate on getting ready to leave the house and the rituals they must stick to.

Maddie woke at four. The sun was streaming in through the window even though the curtains were still drawn. She had allowed herself a very early night, much to her husbands delight. He sat for most of the evening in front of the television; a glass of whiskey in his hand. The glass still occupied its place on the coffee table beside the sofa. Maddie instantly spotted it on entering the room and within minutes the offending article had been washed and dried before finally being replaced in the dresser where it belonged. The whiskey bottle was neatly put back in the drinks cabinet and the living room window opened. If there was anything she could not stand it was the smell of stale alcohol, in particular spirits. Why couldn't Alistair even manage to put his tumbler in the kitchen and the bottle back where he had taken it from?

The kettle boiled, the toaster popped, she would have her breakfast then get ready; it was going to be a long day.

Sarah's alarm clock had started to beep at four thirty. The red digital figures now showed the time to be ten past five. Sarah was dreaming, she was thumbing through an Ann Summers catalogue, she could not understand why. On every page, mixed in with the various underwear, lingerie and other paraphernalia there was an alarm clock. Everything she looked at would seem to beep at her?

Suddenly she woke with a start. Outside it was bright sunshine, a sense of panic came over her as she realised that today was the day of the walk. Sarah always made the effort to be organised but, at last minute, she would always fail. On this particular occasion she had packed both her bags in plenty of time, most of her attention was focused on which items of make up would be inserted into her rucksack and which would nestle in the overnight bag. Eventually after much consideration and several new purchases, her affairs were set. Jumping out of bed she ran across the several pairs of discarded knickers which were thrown across the bedroom floor. The bathroom door banged closed as the shower began to run. Luke almost roused himself. He had felt his partner suddenly tense before jumping out of the bed but it was still far too early for him to rise. Another hour of sleep at least was still in store for him.

Sarah opened the fridge door; she needed something quick and easy for her breakfast, a yogurt. That would have to do for now, then her eyes widened, a bar of chocolate was staring her in the face. Technically it belonged to Luke, but as he was still in bed then the bar was fair game as far as she was concerned. In moments several chunks were rammed into her mouth as she put the kettle on. The sweet chocolate filled her senses with pleasure. Looking out of the window she could see the sun shining brightly. Though still low, the shadows cast by its light were strong and well defined. The kettle clicked off, ready to be poured. The aroma of coffee filled the kitchen. It was a smell Sarah had always loved, the rich smell always reminded her of the comfort of childhood.

A slow methodical thump came from somewhere on the first floor; she knew that sound, Luke had risen from his bed. His chocolate bar was still on the work surface and in her semi conscious state she could not pour hot water into her coffee and dispose of the incriminating evidence at the same time. Putting down the kettle she panicked for the second time that morning and for some strange



reason she did not immediately replace the bar in the fridge, instead Sarah broke off two more chunks and rammed them into her mouth. Quickly she tried to chew and swallow. Relief spread over her as she saw a cat jump off the extension roof and realised that was the noise from above; Luke was still fast asleep. She had so much to do in so little time and didn't want to be late.



The Buccaneer, Brough GR937267

Lee put his rucksack on the bench outside The Buccaneer public house. Checking his watch he could see that the girls were not late, at least not yet. There's still another ten minutes before that punctuality error. Though it was still early a handful of cars drove past. A train must be due to depart shortly. The sun was now well above the roof tops and shining brightly, Lee knew that the day was going to be a warm one, at least as warm as last years when they all ran out of water and had to divert their course in search of supplies. This year his pack contained mostly liquid apart from a small amount of rations and a miniscule medical kit.

He sniffed the morning air, already he could smell the exhaust fumes building; he couldn't wait to be up on the Wolds and away from traffic and pollution. Suddenly: "Hiya?" he heard the voice, but couldn't believe his ears. It sounded to him very much like Sarah. Turning he saw it was indeed Sarah. The young woman was walking toward him at pace. The pink shorts she wore seemed to him to be a little tight for walking any distance in but still he didn't mind that.

Sarah also sported a very tight, white t-shirt, the straps of her back pack only seemed to stretch the already over burdened material. At least she had taken his advice in regard to her footwear. The trainers on her size five feet looked well made, rugged and up to the task, unlike the pair she had worn the previous year. There was little wonder that blisters had covered her feet by the end of the first day. "Hello Sarah," Lee said somewhat shocked with her early appearance, "you all set?"

"I am." She replied taking her rucksack off and leaning it up against his. From one of its many pockets she took out a compact before sitting down on the table edge to check her lightly made up face. "I'll tell you what I've remembered this year..."

"What's that?"

"Blister plasters." Though she could well recall the blisters and not being able to walk, the memory of the pain had diminished over time and this year she was taking every precaution not to relive the experience.

"Of course," laughed Lee. He too remembered the state of her feet all too well as it was he who had spent over an hour puncturing and bleeding the fifty pence size pockets of fluid.

"Morning." a voice said before either of them saw another early riser as a large black Labrador appeared around one of the parked cars which lined Station Road, quickly followed by a small woman who looked more than a little harassed by the animal.

"Alright?" Lee replied while Sarah could only smile a little as she passed.

"I've never seen a dog taking a woman for a walk before." Sarah had a sarcastic side to her which Lee had never before experienced.

"So where's Maddie then?" Lee checked his watch.

The early train had come and gone, now all was still and silent in the village. Unconsciously, showing respect for the stillness, both Lee and Sarah sat enjoying the quiet morning sunshine. The clicking of a lighter igniting broke the calm. Seconds later a cloud of sweet smelling smoke drifted past Sarah's nose. Lee had lit one of his own brand of cigarette. The ex-soldier was widely travelled and had discovered many plants and herbs over the years in far off distant lands. All of these leaves he had brought back with him to create his own special mixture. Sarah often wondered if there was anything illegal in the mix. Last year she had caught a lungful of smoke and spent the rest of the night giggling to herself, more than normal that was.

A silver Mercedes majestically pulled around the corner of Station Road, a moment later it pulled into the car park of the pub.

“Here we go then.” Lee jumped off the table and after stamping on his cigarette end he straightened his clothing before meeting the new arrivals. The unconscious tidying of his attire was an automatic throw back to his days in the forces. No matter how knackered he and his men were, as British soldiers they always looked his best.

Maddie was first out of the car quickly rushing around the corner to meet her companions. Slowly following was Alistair, dressed as ever in one of his many pin striped suits. The boot of the car swung open with a click from the remote. He took a rucksack out. The bag



The Ferry Inn, Brough GR936268

was a similar design to Sarah’s in colour and size; Maddie's however had a number of extras attached. The overnight bag remained safely in the boot. Maddie was already engaged in a rapid conversation with Sarah, each talking to and over the other.

“All set then?”

Lee could hardly believe his ears, Alistair had spoken to him.

“Oh er, yes, ey?”

“Is this one to go?” on the ground was at Sarah’s overnight bag, Lee didn’t have an over night bag, he didn’t need one. Being trained by the Special Forces, Lee could survive on the smallest amount of

rations and equipment. His back pack was no bigger than either of the women's, but his skill in packing ensured it would be twice as full.

"Ey, that's Sarah's."

"Are you not taking one?"

"No, no need." From the look on Alistair's face Lee could surmise that he did not approve of the lack of baggage. He wasn't exactly sure what caused the look of disdain; was it the lack of an overnight bag? This would be to the banker a lack of status or was it a note of jealousy, the very fact that Lee could survive on his wits and only a hand full of provision. Not much more was said between the pair. The car pulled away leaving the three of them alone.

High above the road a large black rook perched on one of the many cables which splayed out from the telegraph pole. Closely it watched as the three people below donned their backpacks, snapped the buckles and set off walking towards the top end of Station Road. "Here we go then, good luck everybody." Maddie said, a sense of pride in her voice. So, here they were once again departing on a brand new walk; a walk she had devised. To Lee 'good luck' was a little uncalled for, so he just put it down to her enthusiasm for the event. All of a sudden after only a matter of yards Maddie took it upon herself to stop the trio. "Here we are then, the sight of the first ghost story."

Lee was a little frustrated, they had only just started, and the energy drink he had consumed a little earlier that morning was starting to kick in; not to mention the special mix in his cigarette. He wanted to walk, no run; that's what he felt he should be doing. With a sigh he stopped, after all this was Maddie's walk, her call. He decided not to protest, but allow her the moment.

"Fortunately we needn't stop here for too long, this is where the man hung himself. Do you remember the story we heard in the pub. You know the one the one man told us". "The ghost of a man who hung himself. It isn't here anymore though its spirit followed his widow to her new house." With that final word on the subject Maddie set off walking once again, much to Lee's delight.

"Oh; is that it?" Sarah said expecting a little more. They had heard the tale so there was no need to revisit it once more.

By the time it came to leave the road and turn onto Mill Lane West, Lee was heading the group. He looked over his shoulder to speak to the women when he suddenly realised that they were lagging behind. He was of course used to a faster pace than this; he would have to make an effort to match the girls' more leisurely speed.

“Come on girls, we haven’t done half a mile yet and your flagging.” It was only at that point Lee realised what an historic place this was. The road had been there for thousands of years, linking the capital to York. Since Roman times people had passed this way, first on foot, then cart and finally by car. In addition a more recent historical event had taken place, only some fifty years before. The first house on the left of the lane was surrounded by large trees and on a black wrought iron fence, a small plaque gave the name of the dwelling and also a hint to its historical significance, ‘Langtry Lodge’. Years ago it had been the home of a certain Lilly Langtry, mistress to King Edward VII. Local legend would have it that not only the house has been built for her on his instruction but also the railway station. The station would enable him to have easy access to her on his frequent visits. When you were the King anything was possible.

Sarah was the first to mention that Lee had shot off in front of them. Instantly she had cut off the conversation which they were having regarding the similarities between their back packs, bringing Maddie’s attention to the leader of the group. “Oh look, someone is impatient.” She began, “I don’t want him to get too far ahead.”

“Why?” Maddie, seemed a little confused, after all she knew where they were heading.

“Firstly he’s got the map and second; I quite like watching his backside.”

After a moments shock on Maddie’s part, both women laughed but tried to stifle it a little as they approached Lee. “What?” he asked. The humour was good natured and the atmosphere, they all thought, was a good way to enjoy the early morning.

Bird song was rife as they followed the by-way across the golf course. On such a beautiful morning as this Sarah wondered why she couldn’t see any golfers on the course. Only once did they hear the clatter of club on ball and that was some distance away. As the sound echoed around the trees several squirrels rushed across the pathway, obviously startled by the noise. Sarah had never really stopped and looked at nature before. ‘Why?’ she found herself asking. Living here in the country she had not come to appreciate the things which surrounded her each day; even the most basic of things, trees for instance. She knew the horse chestnut tree, the conkers gave that away, even then she knew that some varieties of chestnuts were edible but others not. At that moment Sarah decided to make an effort to learn more about trees, plants, animals and bush craft in general.

Though not the oldest part of the village, Elloughton crossroads was considered its heart. Each corner stood for a significant part of village life a pub, a church, the shops and the war memorial. Each was distinctive and each had a roll to play. Maddie instructed her two companions to be seated as she was about to tell the first of her ghostly tales. Such a short distance had been covered but this was the setting for the first story. It took at least two miles for Lee to find his stride when hiking and at this point he calculated only one mile had been covered. Sarah, however, never missed an opportunity to rest her legs.

Maddie removed her rucksack and took from it a piece of A4 paper, "Right here's the first story." As she arranged herself to read, several cars passed over the crossroad. She took in a breath to begin speaking, only to be interrupted by a passing lorry. This was not at all the setting she had imagined for her tales to be told. A certain amount of atmosphere was required for a ghost story and having lorries passing was not beneficial. She breathed out a sigh of dissatisfaction. "This is no good. I thought at this time in a morning it would have been quiet here."

Lee was sympathetic to the cause, "Why don't we go over to the churchyard, it'll be quiet there."

It was generally on the route of the walk, only the smallest of diversions. The plan was a good one, though Sarah had just made herself comfortable.

St. Mary's was old, the oldest building for several miles around. The original village had grown up around it. Now Brough, Elloughton and Welton were almost one and the same place. This part of the village though still remained in the past. Surrounding the church was huddled a collection of headstones, marking the resting places of generations of villagers. It was here in this green and pleasant piece of East Yorkshire that the three walkers stopped to hear Maddie's first story. The only place to sit was on top of the dry stone wall which circled the perimeter; Sarah could not quite climb onto it. She attempted the mount several times before Lee lifted her up, setting her down with a thump, almost like a father lifting a child onto a swing.

Sarah found herself on quiet a jagged stone and after a slight manoeuvre the point of the stone was in between her cheeks. Happy with the position she settled down to hear the tale; in fact it was not an un-pleasant sensation. Lee joined her on the wall as Maddie began speaking, "Right, this is quite a sad tale I think, it was told to me by a

resident of the care home where mother is. I've called it, Images of the Past...

### Images of the Past.

Norman Brown was nearing the end of his life. He and his family and friends knew the reality of the fact all too well. A stream of visitors came through his old cottage during his final few weeks.

The interior was a throwback to the days of Victoria and the Empire; much happier times in his opinion.

Born in the late part of the nineteenth century he had joined the army to fight in the Great War, as did many men in their early twenties.

Life in the trenches of Flanders was the worst kind of hell he could ever imagine, why had he volunteered for this?

He came back from the battlefields of France a stronger person both physically and mentally. If he could survive the constant barrage of guns, snipers and suicide advances by his own side into no man's land, then any of life's problems would be inconsiderable in comparison.

After the War, Norman returned to the spires of Oxford to finish his degree in mathematics, which he accomplished with ease. While there he took up a hobby that would interest him for the rest of his life, photography.

All his life he had been an avid taker and collector of photographs. He now owned hundreds of negatives and postcards of his home village, Elloughton in East Yorkshire.

On leaving Oxford he secured a post in one of the Grammar schools in Beverley. During this time he indulged himself in his two passions, teaching mathematics and when called upon doubling as the school photographer.

At the start of the school year, each form would have a picture taken and of course the entire school shot would be hung with pride on the headmaster's office wall.

By the time he himself had reached forty, he took the picture to hang on his own wall, for he was now head of the school.

All were of the same opinion that he was a fine and worthy head, taking the school into a new era. He held the post until the day he retired.

Norman's doctor had left for the day. Having completed his daily examination both doctor and patient knew that the inevitable

was now not far away. He had carried out his examination in a professional but light hearted manner, which his patient appreciated. As the sun started to set, the brown autumn leaves blew past the window, rain was on its way.

Norman put down the tray on the coffee table. It contained a cup of tea, plate of biscuits and a whole selection of different coloured pills. The tea he knew was hot, too hot to drink. He contented himself with watching the residents of the village struggling against the wind while his drink cooled down.

Once the brew was of a drinkable temperature he took a sip. Tea just didn't taste the same these days, not since he was advised by his GP to give up sugar.

Something drew his gaze to a large bound green book on the coffee table. Putting his tea down he picked up the volume.

As the front cover opened, the old hinge creaked. Beneath it lay a sheet of wax paper, it crackled as he turned the leaf over to reveal four mounted black and white postcards, all of which were scenes of the village from days gone by. A feeling of nostalgia swept over him like a warm summer breeze. The first card was of the main street, looking down towards the handful of shops at the crossroads. The streets were un-terraced and empty; how quiet village life was then.

The second card was a picture showing the front doorway into a pub. The pub was still there. A young girl in a flowery dress and bonnet stood next to a pram; was she still alive he wondered? The girl's eyes peered back at him, almost coming out of the photograph, penetrating his soul. For several moments they held his gaze and a shiver ran down his spine. The eyes were sad but familiar. They seemed to be there only for his benefit, only for him to see.

That night the rain swept through the village. A constant river of rainwater trickled down the main street as it did the window of Norman's cottage.

He hadn't done much that day, the rain depressed him, he never liked it. Rain reminded him of the last day of his headmastership, the day he left his rooms for the last time.

Several times that day his wrinkled fingers had passed over the cover of the photo album, never though opening it. All that day he had thought about that little girl in the photograph. Over and over the thought that he knew her went around in his head. Who was she? Where was she now? Who was the girl; well she would be a woman now if still alive. Some of the pictures in the album were very old.



A thought stopped him in his tracks. Yes some of the pictures were old, from as early as the turn of the century and many post war. The same girl was in all of them.

He could bear it no longer. Putting the album on his knee he slowly opened the cover.

There she was, still there, still staring back at him.

Sometime later he stood in front of the fire, his legs warming as the last embers died away. Outside the rain had stopped now and the sky was clear; a bright moon shone down casting shadows all around.

Norman studied the long black and white photograph. He remembered the faces of every pupil; the hard workers and the slackers, the intelligent and the less talented, the sportsmen and artists, he remembered them all.

At the end of the central row stood a girl, dressed in her uniform. The clothes she wore were of a different style but he was sure that the girl in the school picture was the same girl who had appeared in his collection of postcards. It was because of her that his life had changed...

A knock at the front door brought him back to reality.

Norman hobbled to the door putting the chain on before opening it. Peering through the crack he could feel the presence of someone there with him, but could not see anyone.

“Strange?” he didn’t normally have children playing tricks. He closed the door then paused; he was sure that someone was standing behind him, there was a definite presence in the room. Slowly he turned around, looking down the hall and then up the stairs but he saw nothing.

It was time for a cup of tea, then he would once again look through his postcard collection. It wasn’t long before the green volume sat once again on his lap; his cup of tea on the table next to him, steam rising and twisting out of the mug. As he took his nightly trip down memory lane, he saw her standing in the pictures, unobtrusive, but she had no right to be there.

Who was she? He asked himself. It would be the last time he asked himself that question, for then he suddenly remembered and a feeling of immense relief came over him as the past came flooding back to him. It was as though the levy on a damn had been breached and the water had come cascading over. The feeling of joy and relief was then suddenly eclipsed by memories that brought sorrow, fear and regret.

He put the album down beside him and slowly got to his feet. Staring at the picture over the fireplace he knew she was in that too. The picture he had taken years before, but yes, there she was at the end of one of the row, that poor girl, what was her name?

“Emily.” A voice said inside his head, a girl’s voice, “Emily Flowers.” The voice went on.

That was it, Emily Flowers, poor little girl.

“Poor little Emily.” The voice said again. He was aware now that the voice was not in his head, but coming from within the room.

His old body didn’t move quickly now, he found it almost impossible to move. Slowly his head turned to see an apparition facing him. It was a translucent grey figure of a small girl, her face white as a sheet.

“Emily?” Norman said, love and warmth in his voice, “Emily, I, I, I...” he couldn’t find the words to say. After all these years of thinking about what he could have said to her, he had lost the ability to speak. He was truly sorry for what had happened; did she know that he was not to blame? The smile on her young face portrayed the fact that she had not returned for vengeance.

Nine days later in a hotel suite almost seventy people, all dressed in black, ate all manner of buffet food. Some drank wine, some whisky, others tea and coffee.

The air in the room hung heavy with smoke from countless cigars, pipes and cigarettes. All of the assembled were here to honour the memory of one man, Norman Brown.

Many tributes had been paid to the man recently departed; it had passed everyone by that he had been found with a postcard firmly gripped in his hands, clutching it closely to his chest.

When Norman’s doctor had called on his patient the day following his passing, he studied the body to confirm death before contacting the authorities. He noted that the postcard in his hand showed a view of Elloughton High Street looking towards Welton. In the foreground a young girl stood next to an old black pram.

Later, once the body had been removed, the doctor turned his attention to the postcard once more. The view was of the high street, but in the foreground the girl along with the pram had disappeared.

As the doctor cast his eye around the room full of friends, colleagues and relations of his old patient, he was remembering the postcard.

In one corner of the room a whispered conversation was taking place between a young mathematics professor from Cambridge, an old Master from Brown's school and a woman in her fifties.

The young Don was curious to find out why Brown had finished his esteemed career so early in life.

The old ex-master told the sad tale of a young girl who, while at the school, fell into the lake which was located on the school grounds. The lake was, of course, out of bounds to pupils but that didn't stop them from using it for swimming on hot summer days.

"When the girl drowned," he told his two listeners, "the Headmaster was held responsible, even though it was not his fault. He thought it was the right thing to do, resign that is."

"Is that right, I never knew." said the doctor, walking into the conversation, "Oh sorry, Doctor Wilson, Norman's GP." He shook the two men's hands and listened to their introductions before turning to the attractive if not older woman.

"Pleased to meet you," she said, "Emily, Emily Flowers."

"Very good," announced Lee.

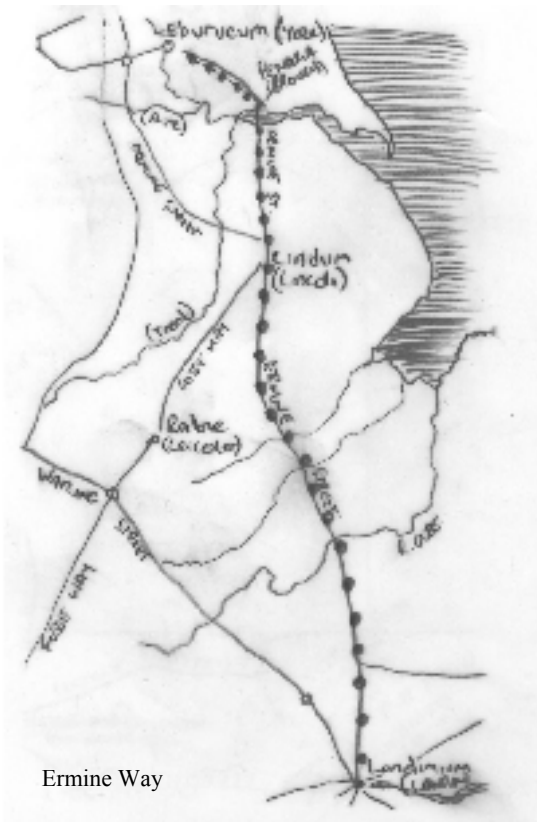
"Oh that was so sad." Sarah said, the young woman almost had to fight a tear back so overcome was she with the tale.

The village was deserted as it was still early, this being the most northern point and separated from the church and post office by the A63, the main road both in and out of Hull. A footbridge led them safely over the road and out towards the Yorkshire Wolds. A bend in the road was the signal for them to make the jump to an off road terrain and head off into the countryside. A five bar gate stood at the end of the footpath, carved on the top bar were the words, 'Peggy Farrow Lane'. Lee unhooked and opened it, "Who's Peggy Farrow?" asked Sarah as she passed through.

"I'm, not sure," answered Lee, "she must have been from around here though."

"Oh?" That hadn't really satisfied her curiosity.

"Well," began Maddie, "I think *I* can answer that one," while hanging her rucksack on the gate post. She removed another set of pages from the bag. "I think you should read this one Lee." Another story was in the offing and she wanted Lee to be the reader.



“Me, why?” he could not hide his surprise. Lee had never liked reading aloud, it made him nervous. He surrendered of course; taking the papers from her he could see that the story was considerably longer than the previous tale. So was that why she had made the request? From the tube which emanated from his bag he took a large drink. “Right, here goes...” “Tiberius Underhill sat in...”

“Start with the title.” Maddie interrupted him with the order; if this was going to be done she wanted it doing properly. Both girls who were perched on the fence by

this point giggled at his slight humiliation.

Lee cleared his throat, then, in an overdramatic way, he began once again...

Peggy Farrow Lane.

Tiberius Underhill sat in front of the fire, his feet elevated on a small three legged wooden stool; in his hand was clasped a cup of wine. Though he knew that he was now safe from tyranny or at least as safe as he could ever be, Underhill was convinced that spies were out in the surrounding Dales and woodlands in search of him. The small stone house in which he now resided was cold, even though that autumn of 1603 was unusually warm. Was this effect caused by the stone walls or was it due to another phenomenon? Once the fire had perpetually burned for days the walls would absorb enough heat to keep the dwelling warm.

Underhill had managed to save enough money to live a comfortable life here, where his recent long journey had to come to an

end. The small hamlet called Welton was a collection of houses and a church, nestling at the southern end of the Yorkshire Wolds. Just recently, the calls on his purse had been great and his wealth was not as great as it had been only one year since.

Tiberius was a man of both intelligence and education. In his youth he had studied law as he trained for a career in Holy Orders. Underhill was a man of god and both of these spheres of learning had served him well over the last year and more so in recent weeks.

He had been a man with a considerable fortune for many years, though over the last months his resources had dwindled somewhat. A life on the run was costly, as he had discovered. Having to pay people to keep their mouths closed had eaten into his fortune.

Now he could think back over his escape; for that is what he had made, an escape. Every time he thought of past events, a smile would come to his face. A smile of self satisfaction, safe in the knowledge that he had outwitted every person who challenged him.

A chill came over him as he recalled the actions he had set in motion over the last years. He pulled the blanket tightly around his shoulders and shivered. The fire was warm on his feet; flexing them to encourage the heat to circulate, he took another sip of wine. The drink warmed his innards as it travelled downwards toward his gullet.

His body almost convulsed in an involuntary spasm as he recalled having that very same feeling on two occasions in the previous months. The first time was on his long journey along Ermine Street.

He had been forced to leave his ancestral seat in East Anglia in somewhat of a hurry. Packing what he could into two saddle bags he abandoned his home; a property of some considerable size and value. His life, however, he considered to be of a higher value than property. The crowd which had elevated him into such high regard in the land had now turned upon him. The two bags which hung over one of his horses were crammed full of money and jewels. He would have been a highwayman's retirement fund but none ever attempted a robbery.

All had gone well on the journey along Ermine Street but as Lincoln approached, his attention was taken by a cat on the road side. The dishevelled animal was jet black and looked as though it had not had a scrap of food for several weeks. As he passed the wretched animal watched him, never once did it take its yellow eyes from him.

That night Underhill rested at an inn. He knew his journey soon would be at an end. The welcome was always warm for a man of God such as himself, in the land of Bede, north of the Humber Estuary.

The inn was comfortable to a point, fresh straw lay on the floor of the room which he was allocated, the bed clothes were acceptable. In the bar he ate a piece of pork the like of which he had never experienced, the quality surpassed even that of his own cook. The ale also had a pleasant flavour to it; he finished one mug full in an instant then called for another.

It seemed curious to the locals of the town that a clergyman should have such an appetite for ale? Underhill also knew that he should not consume it too freely, his guard could not be dropped for an instant.

As he sat and drank the ale, he listened intently to the conversations taking place around him. Most were concerned with the tending of the land, the local blacksmith's prices for the shoeing of horses and the irrigation of the land. With Lincolnshire being as flat as it was, water courses were invaluable to the farms as were the fens. He feared he would not see Lincolnshire again. He listened with interest, all knowledge was power.

The warmth of the room was suddenly changed as a blast of cold air shot through the room as the door opened. In walked a black cat exactly the same as the beast he had observed earlier that day. He took a slug of ale as he exchanged a cold hard stare with the animal's yellow eyes. His eyes returned to the doorway as he heard it close. A woman had entered; she was of poor dress and although still young she looked old. A lifetime of hard work had accelerated her years. In her hand she held a rolled up piece of paper and straight away she crossed to the collection of locals and showed them whatever was on the sheet. The cat still eyed him; a chill ran down his spine as he looked into its eyes. He could swear that he had seen those eyes somewhere before.

As far as he could see the poster that lay on the table bore a sketched picture of a man's facial features, his name and a sum of money were also inscribed on it. He could not hear the whispered conversation that followed and it didn't concern him to any great degree until the landlord joined in the conversation. He looked at the picture and then over towards *him*. All the locals took a sly look in his direction but to his relief, the general opinion was that the lodger was not the wanted man. Once again a self satisfied smile crawled across his face. The landlord though was not convinced.

Underhill spent an uneasy night in his bed. Demons haunted him, both men and women he had wronged in the past but forefront in

his dreams was the cat. Why was it foremost in his mind, in his dreams?

He feared for himself as the landlord seemed to know his secret, his true identity. All the rest he could fool easily, so simple were the people here, the woman, he was not sure of the woman.

When checking out the next morning the landlord stood bolt upright behind the bar as Underhill walked in, saddle bags over his right shoulder.

The landlord had erected an invisible wall between the two of them and Underhill knew the reason why. "You'll be leaving then?" the landlord's voice was devoid of any human emotion.

"Yes." Underhill said opening one of the pockets on his bags.

"Good thing too." The large man said.

The guest paid his tally and put his mark in the register.

"Is that the name your under these days then?" the landlord said unmoved all the while.

"I'm sorry sir?" Underhill replied continuing the bluff.

"Underhill, that's your name these days, is it?"

"It always was." Underhill said turning to leave, "Thank you for you hospitality." The last word was said with more than a touch of irony.

"Elizabeth Clark." The landlord said unprompted.

Underhill stopped dead in his tracks, "Sorry?" he said, but he knew who the man referred to; his first victim, Elizabeth Clark. After her trial me and my wife had to move away, we were cast in the same occupation as she..."

"I really don't know..."

"You know." The large man said through gritted teeth.

Underhill turned to face the large, burly man, "How much?" he hissed.

With that he took the saddle bag off his shoulders and opened a pocket from which he took a leather purse.

"Do you think your money will be welcome here?"

"I, I, I don't, surely to earn you silence, there must be a price?"

"That brooch on your lapel," the landlord said, "That would do."

Underhill's left hand touched the brooch which was made from the finest Whitby opal and had many memories attached to it. "This was a gift from the Bishop of York; it is very precious to me."

"Then now you may feel something of *my* pain."

Underhill rode off into the distance; the sky was overcast and grey. The landlord watched him travel down the road, unmoved.

When the traveller was out of sight the burly man turned towards the yard and shouted, summoning his wife, "Rose."

As Underhill drank the last few dregs of his wine he put another log on the fire. A definite chill had entered the air. Once the fire was burning again he sat down and thought of the hot summer days past. Maybe the thought of summer time would warm him?

Ermine Street came to a premature halt at the southern bank of the Humber estuary. Since Roman times a ferry had crossed the river at this point. That day was one of the hottest he could remember. As he stood on the exposed mud flats of the river the sun's glare reflected off the water, increasing its temperature to almost unbearable levels. The oarsman heaved to and slowly the ferry pulled away from the south bank. As he took his final gaze southwards he caught sight of the reeds moving on the bank and he could see two yellow eyes staring back at him. He knew deep down that he was finally rid of his pursuers and his past. Soon the ferry would dock in the land of the Venerable Bede, he would be safe to start a new life.

Here was his new life, only a hand full of miles north east of the ferry crossing point. He finally made his home on the outskirts of Welton. Being of Holy Orders the welcome was warm and in the inn, his presence was always welcome.

The ale house was named the Green Dragon Inn, after the symbolic representation of all which was once wrong with the kingdom. Did the feeling of dread overcome him once again. On this occasion it was no cat that entered into his orbit.

His welcome into the inn was as always warm; on his arrival a cup of ale would be put on the bar and no payment would be taken. His talks on all manner of subjects; ecclesiastical, moral and others would be listened too intently as were his sermons conducted as a guest preacher in the church.

Then, one night, the door to the pub opened and in stepped a woman of middle age, around the thirty mark he thought. Underhill was in the middle of a tale regarding the conversation of Hippo of Hugo. A cold blast of air hit him square and almost took his breath away. Everyone turned to the direction of the newcomer. Underhill glanced at her but paid her no heed as it became apparent that she was known to all present. "Mary, what will ya' be having'?" the landlord asked as the door closed behind her.

Underhill continued his narrative to the select audience and waited to accept this Mary into the group. She remained though at the bar, making no effort to join the seated group. At that time he thought



nothing of it but when his tale was finished he looked over to her. She was staring directly at him, which made him feel ill at ease and he refused to look directly at her. Finally he glanced over towards the woman.

That chill he had experienced at the inn in Lincoln, the exact same shiver ran down his spine. The eyes of the women bore into him; where had he seen Mary before?

Then in a flash of enlightenment it came to him, it was the cat surely. The cat that had followed him on this long journey; those eyes were now in the face of this women.

That event was almost six months ago and Underhill had almost forgotten the chilling events of the months past. Slowly he put his cup of wine down and slowly fell asleep. At the windows in the dark night two yellow eyes watched him.

The following morning was bright and cold and Underhill decided to indulge in a walk around the dale. Packing himself a chicken leg in a cloth bag, he set off from his small house and headed west. The sun was high in the sky though he could feel a distinct chill in the air. The route was mostly wooded. As he walked, the animal life around him watched in silence. Not unusual as forest creatures on the whole would keep themselves to themselves. As Underhill passed through that morning only one animal dared to move.

As he made his way down towards the neighbouring village of Elloughton he became aware of someone following him. Not wanting to let his pursuer know he had been detected by making an obvious about turn, he stopped next to gate post and bent down to adjust his boot lace. On returning to the vertical, his eyes made a sweep of the surroundings. No one was apparent though he knew someone was there in the undergrowth. Taking a fortifying slug of ale from a stone bottle he continued on his way.

Underhill would not have seen the eyes that followed him, they did not belong to any human form but were down low to the ground. Yellow cat's eyes watched as he went on his way.

He found himself now at an intersection of footpaths; the choice was a simple one, head home via Elloughton or continue onto the hamlet of Brantingham. Quickly he came to the decision to take the shorter route back home.

The footpath he followed took him down to the bottom of the hill and the landscape became less dense with foliage. The flat land had been turned over to arable use as opposed to the cultivation of timber.

The path was tree lined and cold. At this time of the year or indeed any time, the sunlight did not penetrate the ground. He felt something brush past the left side of his face but turning quickly he saw nothing; a cobweb maybe? A sharp pain penetrated his cheek where he had felt the movement and lifting his hand up to this face he could feel the slightly raised inflammation of a graze. Underhill gazed down the lane; he couldn't make out any figures in the undergrowth and foliage but the overhanging branches moved in a deliberate pattern as though someone moved through them

Underhill stood as motionless as a statue, a chill was running down his spine once again. From his pocket he took the stone bottle and took another mouth full of ale.

Once again he was on the move, his pace changed from brisk to curious. Each step was taken with a great deal of thought; his eye line was mainly focused towards the ground. Finally he looked up and it came as somewhat of a shock to him when he saw a woman standing about twenty yards in front of him.



Peggy Farrow Lane GR949284

Where she had come from he could not tell. Her eyes were familiar to him; yellow with a black slit running vertically. They were not the eyes of any human being.

He decided to approach and then pass her. With a slightly faster pace he set off down the footpath as the woman's eyes burrowed into his back. Once past her, he breathed a sigh of relief

before turning to see if she was still there. The women had vanished.

As he set off again with a happier disposition he stopped dead in his tracks as there she was again, ten yards in front of him.

Underhill stared at her agog.

“You,” the woman began, “you, I have followed you. My familiar spirits have watched you always.”

“Sorry, I don’t...”

“That night in the Lincoln Inn and now here, you saw me and my kind.”

“Lady, I do not know who you are, I have never been in Lincoln.” Underhill protested.

“I can believe you don’t know me, you never caught me. Not like hundreds of my sisters and brothers. I am here to avenge them.” Her tone was as cold as ice, her skin pale, but her eyes were of fire.

“Madam, I am just a simple clergyman who...”

Again she interrupted him, “You were a man of God then in Norfolk, Mathew Hopkins, Witch Finder General.”

The name was like a dagger cutting through his heart, he wished never to be called that name again. He was sure that if he was associated with that name he would surely hang.

The women smiled showing her yellowing teeth. “Yes, yes it is you and now I will take vengeance for my fallen people.”

“Really?” Underhill’s attitude became defensive, now his secret was out and they both knew exactly where they stood. If he was to be damned then he was not going willingly.

“You will burn.” She raised both of her arms and the scrawny fingers on each hand were spread wide apart, “I cast you in the burning hands of my master, Lucifer...” then suddenly she stopped.

Underhill’s eyes were intently watching her, digging into her very soul. She could feel something happening to her that she could not explain. Her feet were somehow connected to the soft earth beneath her as though she was rooted to the ground. Her arms and legs became stiff and she could not speak.

Underhill walked up to her and whispered in her ear, “I’ve been watching you, the last witch in these Isles, well almost?”

He stepped back and watched her skin turn to bark while her arms became branches.

In a moment, the woman no longer stood in the lane. Where she had stood there was only a tree. From one of the thick branches swung what appeared to be a woman hanging from a rope which was tied around her neck.

As Underhill closed the five bar gate at the eastern end of Peggy Farrow Lane he turned back. He could no longer see the woman hanging from the tree, in her place an extra branch hung down.

Now only one witch remained.

Lee turned over the last page, checking that he had completed the tale; it seemed to him to have finished somewhat quickly.

“And there is the tree.” Maddie pointed in a westerly direction down the lane. There indeed was the tree with a large heavy branch protruding out from it, hanging over the lane. In Sarah’s eyes it looked nothing like a witch, but then there has to be a certain amount of poetic licence in stories such as this. Over the years the tree could have changed.

“Why did you want me to read that story?” Lee asked

“Oh, I just wanted to point out that not all witches are women.”

“Is this the one?” Lee asked as they reached a particularly old and weather beaten tree. On the branch which the local witches were said to be hung sat a large black rook. It watched them intently, the blinking black eyes showing no reflection.

“I presume so.” Maddie said. After all she had only researched the stories, not the physical locations. “It looks as though it could be the tree, that branch up there would take someone’s weight”

Sarah shivered, she was deep in thought, the mental image of a woman hanging from that tree caused her great distress, not to mention her turning into a tree. “Oh, let’s go.”

Light was filtering through the branches as they walked up the steady incline along Peggy Farrow Lane. The thick canopy of the trees totally obscured the outside world. The temperature was also independent to the outside world. For all they knew this could have been in the middle of a forest and not a narrow plantation. Lee occupied himself by quickly looking around, constantly observing the living world around them. The smells which filled his nostrils were all as familiar as a voice to him. Smells such as damp, fallen birch and the droppings of deer were all prevalent. Looking about, he could see a world of opportunity here, where most would only see trees. The birch tree to him was a constant companion. Here in this wood many fallen trees lay around. The bark could be harvested and once dried it made excellent tinder and the fungus that grew between cracks in the bark also had its uses.

“So,” Maddie and Sarah were falling a little behind once again, “How’s life with Luke?”

“Oh not too bad at all. He’s working today.” He was always working. Some weeks she hardly ever saw him, he’d be out early and late in. Some nights it would be past midnight before he came home. Sarah didn’t mind the money he earned but she wanted some of his attention also.

“Does he work a lot of weekends?” Maddie’s voice contained an air of sympathy, she was all too aware of absent partners.

“Yes most.”

“Don’t you mind?” Maddie was thinking back to when Alistair was a lowly clerk and how she despised the bank for taking him away from her on what should be his days of rest. It was her who had to do the shopping, gardening and domestic duties all because of his working hours. Still these days they were reaping the rewards.

“Sometimes I do, especially when he’s been at work all day then goes off to the pub at night.”

“You always go as well though don’t you?”

“Yes, I suppose I do,” considered Sarah thoughtfully. “and of course the money’s good. He does work hard so deserves some pleasures.”

This part of the footpath was the first climb of the walk. Sarah could feel her calf muscles pulling tightly. Lee was almost at the gate which marked the end of Peggy Farrow Lane. For Lee this was without doubt the finest part of the world. Civilisation was only a mile away but for all that, here in the trees he felt miles away from everything and at peace with both nature and himself. He looked down into Elloughton Dale hoping to spot a fox or deer. As the chattering girls came into earshot behind him, he came to his senses and realised that the chances of seeing such beasts today would be remote. Absolute silence was required for tracking such animals, that and staying down wind of your quarry. These two luxuries were not apparent today. It reminded him very much of being in the bush lands of Australia some years ago. Then deer hadn’t been on the menu, kangaroo though he discovered was not unpleasant. On one of his many survival courses he had trapped one of the beasts; they feasted well on its meat for several nights. That had seemed so long ago now, it was another world to this. He could not decide which was more preferable, here at this time of the year or the sub continent. It had to be here at home in Yorkshire he finally decided.

The path once again headed westward. Over the previous week much rain had fallen on the county. This had resulted in the plant life springing into life. Across the pathway long, thick branches reached

out from bramble bushes while grass reached four to five foot into the air. Everything was wet from both the rain and the morning dew; sunlight was at a premium here struggling to penetrate through the thick canopy. From his rear Lee heard Sarah's squeals as the wet, thorn covered branches scraped along her uncovered legs. His own legs were hardened against such conditions, wearing shorts to him was a simple practicality. Trousers, no matter how water proof took on liquid. They would become wet and heavy taking time to dry. Skin however could be dried instantly.

The path leading to the roadway which ran up Spout Hill was all thick with foliage. Lee did what he could to stamp down the brambles, nettles and thorns though the squeaks' of half shock, half pain continued. A smile almost appeared on his face as he listened to them. Very little conversation had passed between the three since leaving Peggy Farrow. All their efforts were directed towards the terrain being covered. Sarah, who never remained silent for long had to contain her outbursts to 'ou' and 'ah' along with other such pronouncements as, "ooh ya' bugger?"

In front of them the footpath widened as light shone through the thinning branches. Lee could see the road; the top of Spout Hill was in sight.



## Brantingham to Welton

Having admired the view from the vantage point high on Spout Hill turn to face up what remains of the hill and set off. The tarmac road surface should make the going easier than the last stretch up from Peggy Farrow. This is a good opportunity to knock off any mud which has collected onto your boots. At the very brow of the hill the tarmac track turns to the left heading toward Wold View Farm. Your route however continues on over the rough track.

This part of The Haunted Way shares the same footpath as The Wolds Way, and the Beverley Twenty the fellowship will continue for several miles.

To the left only a field is visible at this time, while on the right a brief panoramic

view can be seen before the path heads behind Long Plantation. Also look out for a radio mast. The ground here is generally rutted with tyre tracks though recently a large log has been placed at each of the footpaths to try and deter motor bikes from using it. Access is gained via a slit in the log.

At the end of the path you will find yourself on Brantingham Dale Road. The road bends sharply at the point where the footpath joins it. Care is required on stepping out onto the road as cars coming from both directions will be blind to the fact that walkers are on the road.

Following the road in an easterly direction will bring you to a triangulated junction. Straight over is a Wolds Way marker indicating the direction to follow, into the line of trees.

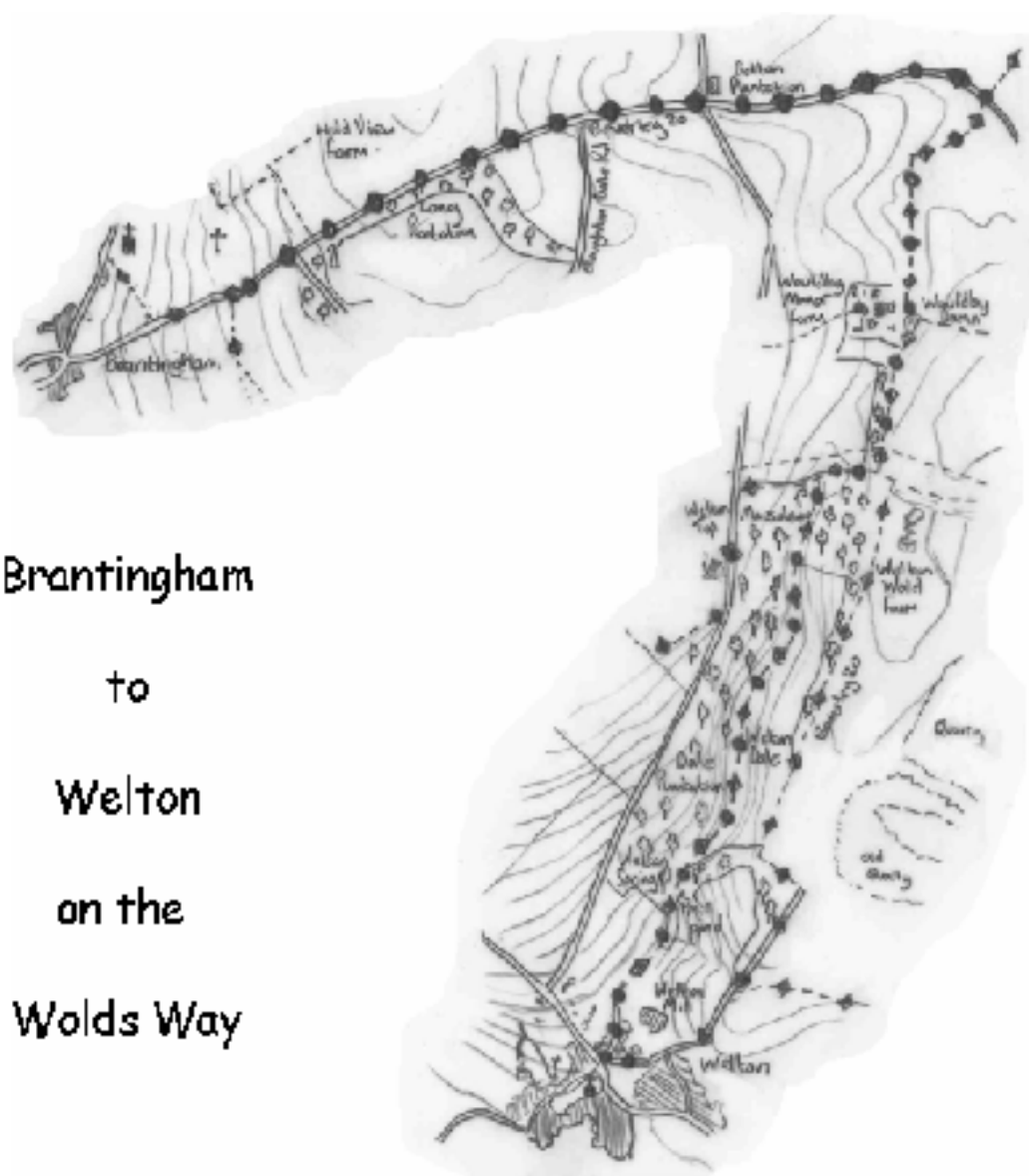
(*Bottom Plantation*). The footpath here is narrow and has to be walked single file, also this can become overgrown after heavy rains. As the path widens the ground may be waterlogged. Following this track until the crossroads at Turtle Hill. A four way sign will show that a right turn is required.

After only a short distance the footpath once again splits at Waulby Manor Farm. The farm house will be on the right as you pass, in front will be a pond (*Waulby Damp*). At this point a left turn is required followed almost immediately by a right one around the pond. Walk along the side of the field with the Plantation to your right.

At the end of the trees take a sharp left turn and head down the short slope until the path crosses the private road. Cross the road and into the trees. Depending on the amount of foliage on the look to the right. A Mausoleum is hidden in the wood, if you wish to view this from a better angle, continue walking up the hill before crossing the private road into the wood, then double back. It can easily be seen from that part of the footpath.

Follow the base of the Dale down and round past the Mill Pond. Go through a gate and past Welton Mill, a building which looks more like an old train station rather than a mill. Once again the track will now turn to road, follow this through the houses, you will be in the heart of Welton village. Turn left and you will see the seat which the three walkers in the book rested at. The acorn symbol is on the bench showing this to be part of the Wolds Way.





Brantingham

to

Welton

on the

Wolds Way



Raikes  
Mausoleum  
GR965292

# III



In a cutting situated at the bottom of the dale the traffic roared along the A63 trunk road. A perpetual stream of cars, lorries and vans choked the air with both noise and atmospheric pollution. Travel only a matter of a few feet away from that artery of communication and the sound is no more. Here sits the sleepy village of Brantingham. The village has avoided the onset of progress for many years, still remaining untouched by the trappings of modern living. The sole shop doubles as a post office, a red and yellow sign hanging above the door the only visible notification that the stone clad house was not a domestic dwelling. All the cottages nestled together, huddled around the central triangular green. In its centre an old water pump sat perched high on its plinth; a set of stone steps leading to it. The village pub was the only thing not in keeping with local architecture, though its designer had made some attempt to camouflage its age. Also this too was covered in stone, though the more recent extension and now the conservatory betrayed its true age.

Lee sat on the grass verge and looked down at the village. On a morning such as this the view was clear to the horizon. Down below the sunlight glinted off the weather vane, which sat on top of the church tower. The church had stood there for hundreds of years, testament to those who had laboured on it. The ground was damp and cold and his backside began to feel the effects. To prevent his rear from becoming more uncomfortable, he stood up and took in a breath of air. The kissing gate thumped behind him; his companions had finally caught him up. Both appeared to be a little dishevelled. Maddie's hair was more than a little untidy while Sarah's legs appeared to be the source of much concern. As she stepped out from beneath the canopy of trees, the morning light hit her face. The legs which moments earlier had felt cold, wet and sore suddenly felt warm and alive as the sunlight found them once again. Sarah almost had a feeling of exhilaration; it was good to be alive on a morning like this. Looking down onto the Vale of York, she had never before noticed how beautiful Yorkshire could be. Her life had always focused on the present; the here and now and on material concerns. Even on the previous year's charity outing, Sarah had never experienced a moment such as this. The morning mist hung in the lower lying lands whereas high above the hills, the sky was a deep blue. The complaints regarding the various issues, legs included, simply vanished as she looked around at the surrounding countryside. Though a little out of

breath from the climb she felt exhilarated. The trample through the undergrowth had been worth the discomfort, simply for the view.

“Up this way now.” Maddie pointed up the hill. The road here was once again hard black tarmac, though the solid reliable surface was all but brief. In a matter of yards they found themselves tramping through the long damp grass.

Lee remained stationary for a moment as the girls set off once more. In his hand he held on of his sweet smelling roll ups. Both women turned to look at him, making sure that he was following. It took a few more paces for them to realise that Lee was still stationary. Maddie had expected him to come striding past at any moment in his own inevitable way. “Where is he?” Sarah asked before Maddie could.

“Who?”

“Forest Gump.” Sarah laughed. Having seen Lee march off as he had already done several times that morning, the comparison was exact.

“Oh?” both of them held a little private joke together before turning to see him now still leaning against the dry stone wall gazing down at the village. “Are you coming?” Maddie called to him, “or can’t you keep up with us?” Again the pair held a private giggle at his expense.

The smoke exhausting from his nostrils caught the sunlight, giving him almost dragon like characteristics. “Do you want to hear a real ghost story?”

Maddie was instantly intrigued; she knew his feelings on the matter, a confirmed sceptic that was most definitely him. “They’re all true you know.” She said slowly walking back down the incline toward him.

“I can assure you that this particular one is vouched for.”

“Well, in that case...” Maddie realised that she didn’t have anything to take notes on, no pad, pencil or pen. Oh well, she would have to make mental notes of any names, places and events; jotting them down as soon as the opportunity arose. “The floor’s yours.” She said with a smile.

### Satan’s Well

Only darkness could he see. No matter which way his thoughts twisted he was confronted by darkness. That, he should be glad of. Up until recent times nightmarish images of torment were his constant

companions. Whether he is awake or sleeping the memories of his friends haunted him. Friends who had lost their lives in the cold muddy trenches that snaked across Europe.

Though asleep his body rocked to and fro, to and fro with a monotonous rhythm. In his mind he knew that he was sleeping but his thoughts were conscious ones.

Somewhere out of the darkness he heard the single shot of a rifle being fired, then a cry. A sniper had fallen, one of his brothers in arms.

All the men mobilised themselves. A German sniper was out in no man's land and he was part of the group who dealt with such a situation. The night sky was illuminated periodically by the bangs and flashes of bombs exploding. The bang that followed would hardly have an effect on him, the sound was a common one.

Instructions given to the unit, of which he was a member, fanned out along the trench. This activity was always the same, always a waiting game.

Flares and explosions lit up the exposed moonscape of the planes between trenches but still no sign of the elusive gunman was apparent.

The men found it hard on sniper watch. It was the middle of February and it was cold, colder than anything he had ever known. Hour after hour passed and though he was wearing a pair of thick heavy woollen gloves, the tips of his fingers were frozen solid. Would he be able to pull the trigger when the time came? Would he be able to arm the rifle? He shivered so much that he doubted that he could carry out such a simple task as this.

How many times had he asked himself, 'Why had he ever volunteered to come to this hellish place?' During his time on the front line he had witnessed the senseless waste of life as his friend and comrades had been murdered before his very eyes.

The corner of his eye twitched as the flash of a small flame or spark caught it. Slowly he turned in the general direction of the flush.

There it was again, he took aim. Holding himself steady took an almighty act of self control. He waited, knowing the third and fatal spark would come.

The enemy had made a mistake; whoever it was had been foolish enough to try and light a cigarette. Already his lighter had failed on both attempts and if he tried again that would be...

Bang. His gun fired. He had seen the light and emptied the barrel directly at the light source. He heard the groan of a man, someone dying, another death.

In the sky a flare crackled into life, illuminating the landscape.

Out in no man's land he could see the twisted shape of a body lying on its side. The eyes stared into space while his right hand slowly rubbed the left side of his chest. Slowly the rubbing stopped.

In front of him he noticed for the first time a pair of boots, the body attached to them he knew was the snipers last victim. He already knew it was his mate Nobby Collinson.

Though his hands were numb with cold he took hold of Nobby's feet and dragged him over the lip of the trench. As the lifeless body fell, it landed in a heap on the duck boards.

Bending down beside his friend, he whispered in his ear, "Nobby, Nobby." It was a useless act, but maybe he thought, just maybe.

He cleared the mud off his friends face in a desperate attempt to clear his mouth and nose. He scraped the thick wet mud from the eye sockets and then...

He jumped back in shock; turning to his left he was physically sick. The face of the body resting on the ground was not that of his friend Nobby, but his own.

A loud shrill steam whistle blew, echoing through his mind. He woke with a start or at least he thought he had. All around him was dark. Momentarily he panicked, his limbs stiffened and his breathing increased, getting heavier and heavier.

The whistle sounded again as a blinding light hit his eyes. For a second all he could see was a white light causing a stabbing pain in his eyes, then colours followed, all in a blur.

His brain was now making sense of his surroundings, he was on a train, it must have just emerged from a tunnel. Where was he? Had he missed his stop?

No of course not, the guard would have woken him. His brown suit was ruffled, the tie around his neck off to one side. His nightmare had been one of the more violent ones.

Standing he straightened his clothes and adjusted his tie. Taking a deep breath he sat back down in the seat.

Outside the countryside rushed past. During his time away in those dark days, he had longed to see England's greenery once again. He lived in the heart of the ever more industrialised city of Hull, the

King's town which sat upon the north bank of the Humber Estuary. In the last ten years or there about, things had changed and in his own opinion not for the better,

The Old Queen had died; the Empire was now on shaky ground. The Great War had engulfed Europe with a ferocity unseen since Napoleon. This was to him an age of change and he didn't care for it at all.

Though the train was only thirty minutes or so out of Hull he looked upon wide open countryside, the rolling hills of the Yorkshire Wolds and freedom all around. In the fields sheep gambled while cows slowly and methodically chewed lumps of grass ripped out of the earth. He was so pleased to actually see a red deer in its natural habitat. The animal watched the carriages pass along the line before disappearing into the wood.

The sunlight which streamed into the compartment window was suddenly broken away as the engine steamed through a cutting.

As the engine thundered through the wholly unnatural land formation, the squeal of brakes echoed out into the countryside around.

As he looked out of the window through the plumes of smoke, he could make out the sparse vegetation which grew on the chalky cutting walls. It was cool now in the compartment; an involuntary shiver ran down his spine, then sunlight once more.

The engine was pulling into Little Weighton Station. The sunlit fields were once more in full view to him. He stood up and reached up to the over head luggage rack and took down his brown suitcase. Pulling on his overcoat and putting his brown bowler hat firmly on his head, he took one last look out of the window.

The sloping edge of the platform quickly rose up to the level of the carriages.

Beyond the platform sat a newly painted white picket fence. His eye though was drawn up and beyond the confines of the station to the field beyond.

He could see a girl, no, a young woman. A young woman in a black dress watched from her vantage point on the side of the dale.

He stared at her for a moment and then the carriage jolted slightly, putting him temporally off balance. When he regained his balance he looked back to the hillside but the girl was gone, or at least he could no longer see her. Quickly he looked around trying to find her once more but the hillside was gone, the station house blanking it

out of sight. The brick building adorned with hanging baskets took his mind temporarily from the girl.

As the smoke cleared he watched the red light marking the end of the train disappear into the first of the three long deep tunnels which cut through the Wolds. Though it was early in the morning the sunlight was strong and had warmth to it; something he appreciated greatly.

The four studs on the base of his suitcase clicked as he put the bag down. Somewhere towards the south he could hear a crow crying in the morning air. With a sigh he checked his watch; the time was six forty five.

Looking around, he expected to see something or someone. Where was the Station Master. Surely if traffic was coming through the station, someone must be there to sell or collect tickets?

From somewhere out of sight the noise of horse's hooves on a gravel track came to his ears. Not only a horse though, but a cart if he was not mistaken.

Picking up the case he walked towards the sign marked exit.

From down the track came the horse drawn cart just as he had imagined. Sitting in the front, reins in hand sat a man in his forties whistling some cheery tune. Behind him in the confines of the cart sat bottles and churns of milk of various sizes.

The horse came to a halt and instantly its head dropped as it started to chew at the grass verge.

"Morning." Said the milkman, his voice as cheery as his whistle.

"Morning." He replied.

The milkman took one of the small churns from the back of the cart and delivered it to the back door of the Station house. "You just arrived, 'ave 'ya?"

"Yes." That was obvious; he had probably seen the train as it arrived.

"You must be Daniel Forester?" said the white coated man climbing back onto the cart.

Forester was more than taken aback, "How on earth do you know who I am?"

"Ah well, this is a small village you know, everybody knows everybody's business here. Your staying up at Drewton Farm aren't 'ya? The farmer, old Albert told me, well told one of the people in the village shop, it's all the same thing in the end."

"Old Albert; oh Mr Bell." He had always known him as Mr Bell and it seemed strange to think that he had a first name. For many



years he had only known the man who was to be his host for the next few weeks, as farmer Bell. They had never met; though the image of the farmer was firmly fixed in his mind. He imagined a large thick set man with a florid face, bad skin and large strong hands.

Now for the first time he wondered what he actually looked like. His wife and daughter also. Daniel remembered Bell had a daughter, Sonia. That was strange, he didn't know she existed but now he knew her name. The effects of the war were long and deep on his mind and it could play cruel tricks on him.

"It's a good walk up to the farm, do you want a ride? I'm on my way up there next." The horse finished its early morning snack and was readying itself to continue the daily round.

Daniel accepted the offer of a lift purely for the reason he didn't know where he was going. The milk cart set off back down the track from where it had just come. Daniel looked around at the early morning mist rising from the earth. What a wonderful site it was. Then he saw the girl; her long dark hair framed a little white face. Her eyes followed him as he passed.

Not a word of what the milkman said did he hear for those few moments. As the carriage moved on, Daniel strained his neck turning his head more and more to see the figure. Finally the angle became impossible. Manoeuvring his body to obtain a better viewing position, he looked up again but the figure was gone.

He opened his mouth to question the man who sat next to him. He wanted to know who she was and why she was spying on him. As he drew in a breath to speak he suddenly thought better of it. There would be plenty of time to find out for himself.

The journey was a short one, it took only a matter of a few minutes before the cart clattered over the rise of the hill. The old farm house then came into view.

A thin wisp of smoke floated vertically into the air from one of the half dozen chimneys positioned on the apex of the gable end. The milk cart drew up in the muddy yard; somewhere under all the earth and cow dung, laid a cobbled surface. In some places it could be seen poking through and Daniel thought how it would appear if the yard were cleaned. The image in his mind was a much better one than his eyes looked upon but this was a farm and muck was an occupational hazard.

The milkman jumped off the cart with a well practised efficiency, much practised over the years. "Here we are then." He

took a churn of milk off the cart and rolled it to the green door which Daniel presumed must lead into the farmhouse kitchen.

Why would a farmer be buying milk from the milkman? Oh well, what business was it of his.

Daniel dismounted the cart in a much more amateurish way and immediately he felt his shoe sink into the soft surface covering the yard. As his other foot found a selection of clear cobbles he lost his balance and took two steps forward to steady himself. As he did so, the sound of both feet entering soft muck reached his ears. He knew that keeping clean was going to be all but impossible in this environment.

Taking the brown case from the back of the cart he carefully made his way across the yard to the door. "Thank you very much for the ride." He said to the milkman, who was striding past him back to his transport. Daniel dare not walk and talk at the same time as it took all his concentration to stand and remain upright. Walking was out of the question.

"Don't mention it, good luck." He said turning the horse back on itself and making to leave, "You'll need it." The latter words were said in a hushed tone to himself and they were accompanied by a smile.

Daniel didn't hear as the words were drowned out by the clatter of the old cart wheels.

It was cold here and because the house, barns and out houses surrounded the yard, the sunlight almost never breached the barriers thrown up by the buildings. He gave an involuntary shiver before turning and knocking on the door.

"Albert, that must be Buller." It was a female voice he heard coming from behind the door, "Put the kettle on the stove." She continued. Who Buller was Daniel had no idea; maybe it was the milkman. It seemed to take an eternity for anyone to answer the door and when it did finally open he was confronted by a large woman in her late middle age. She wore a blue and white flowery dress; its chintz pattern gave it away as being from the Victorian era, now sadly gone.

Resting on top of the dress was a white piny which was looped around her neck and tied off at the back. As her eyes fell upon him they betrayed surprise and disappointment as she realised that their guest had arrived.

"Oh, er," in an effort to give a good impression to the young man at the door, she fumbled with the left hand side of her curly

brown/red hair. "You must be Daniel?" she said smiling. The smile lit up her whole face and Daniel knew he was going to enjoy his stay. "Oh my dear," she apologised, "What am I thinking, come in, come in."

He was ushered into a large kitchen. On the opposite wall to the outer door stood a black stove, the heat emanating from it filled the whole room. Instantly he felt warm and comfortable. This was a place he would love to call home. On the right hand side, fixed in the wall, sat a fireplace. At present no fire occupied the grate; no need for one. The left hand side of the room was occupied by domestic affairs. A large Belfast sink dominated, while a dolly tub and mangle sat alongside. In the centre of the room a large wooden table served as the focal point. The table was used in the preparation as well as the serving of food mainly cooked from fresh produce grown in the kitchen garden.

This single room was bigger than the whole ground floor of Daniel's small terraced house. It seemed to him that he was a world away from home, although geographically he had travelled only some fifteen miles. This rural setting was a world away from his life in the industrial centre of the town and his life in the fields of Flanders. The world he had now entered was so alien that he could have been on another planet.

His thoughts were interrupted by the warming aroma of freshly baked bread drifting across the kitchen.

"Take a seat, make yourself at home." Said the woman, as she rushed over to the stove. "I'll just get this out before it ruins." Quickly she crossed over the flagstone floor to the Aga. A towel hung over the handle of the main oven door and gripping it she opened the oven. In one swift motion the two round loafs of bread were dragged out of the oven and placed on the oak table. The heavenly smell of the bread engulfed Daniel. The tops of the loaves were crusty and glazed with what he could only presume was honey. He watched closely as small twists of steam rose from them.

"There we go, perfect." The woman pronounced flicking the towel over her shoulder. "So," she pulled out the chair directly behind the bread and sat down straightening out the creases in the pinny as she did so, "You must be Daniel, oh I've asked that?"

"Er, yes," Daniel replied, his mind was still thinking about the sweet smelling bread. "Oh, sorry," he rose to his feet and offered his hand to shake, "Daniel Forester." He wore a smile on his face as he spoke. Once hand contact had been broken he resumed his seat.

“You’re here for a holiday, I believe?”

“Yes, a much needed one. I had a bit of a bad time in France and...” his voice failed, breaking off before it showed any emotion.

“Yes, yes. It is such an awful thing what is happening in the world now-a-days. Just look at the poor Russian Royal Family and I don’t know what’s happening on the continent. There’s a lot to be said for the Empire you know, at least you know where you stand. I sometimes think we are the only civilised people on the planet. None of this would have happened under the old Queen. She would have put a stop to it there and then.”

With that point he did agree. The glory days of the Empire were coming to an end, the ashes of it he felt were all around them. The war was proof of that.

“Any road,” she continued, “have you had any breakfast yet?” He had, but that had been nearly two hours ago and now and coupled with the smell of the bread, his stomach was longing for food. Before Daniel could make a reply his hostess was on her feet placing a large frying pan on top of the stove.

“That would be lovely Mrs. Bell.”

“Oh, be on with ‘ya, Mrs Bell indeed, call me Maureen.” She laughed as a slab of pig fat was dropped into the pan and began to fizz and crackle.

Sitting back in his chair he took the opportunity to cast his eyes around the room. For the first time since arriving he noticed that the ceiling was quite high. He had always imagined old farm houses such as this one to have very low ceilings. Running across the ceiling was half a dozen dark wooden beams, twisted and knotted as though they were part of an old tree which the house had been built around. In the centre hung a gas light, how did they get gas out here? Still the lamp was lit so there must be a line. While he busied himself surveying the ceiling and other points of interest around the room Maureen had disappeared into the pantry. As the door closed behind her he thought the room for cold storage must be quite a size if she could walk right in and shut the door behind her. No sooner had she gone in she was out again carrying several rashers of bacon. Dropping them in the pan the fat spat out splashing Maureen on the wrist and arms. The woman didn’t even flinch as the red hot fat burnt her skin, “Do you like bacon?” she asked turning to look at her guest.

“Very much.”

While the bacon fried in the pan she cut two generous slices of bread from one of the freshly cooked loaves. Turning once again, she

fiddled over the meat frying in the pan, “So, how did you find out about us here?”

That, he thought was a good question. How had he ended up here? On his return from the war he had spent some time in hospital, several weeks if his calculations were correct. When he was discharged, Lesley, his wife had arranged a month of convalescence for him in the country. For the final two weeks she would join him here. His time back in England had been somewhat disjointed. Time either seemed to fly by or stand still, now he wasn’t sure even what month he was in.

“My wife is a local of these parts,” he began, “it was her who arranged it.”

“And a good thing too,” said Mrs Bell flipping the bacon over in the pan, “there.” She said taking the pan off the heat. The two sizable rashers of bacon were taken out of the pan and placed onto one of the thick slices of warm bread. Before performing the same operation with the other piece of meat she took the slice of bread and held it face down in the pan allowing all the hot fat to soak into the white bread. Around the edges the crust began to crisp up. The operation was mirrored with the other doorstep which made up the other side of the sandwich.

“Here you go Daniel.” She placed the sandwich plate in front of him, “Tell me, what do you think to that?”

Daniel looked at the plate on the table in front of him, it wasn’t so much a sandwich but an edible cushion. The smell that drifted up was fantastic; warm bread and bacon, was there anything in the world more appealing? Clamping both hands around it he raised it to his mouth and without the slightest hesitation he sank his teeth into it.

Biting off a mouthful he chewed, a moan of satisfaction hummed from his lips.

“That’s ok then.” Smiled Maureen; the satisfied sound was more than any words could utter. The kettle was now boiling on the stove; the whistle blew with a perfect pitch. Moments later a cup of hot tea occupied the table sitting next to the plate.

Daniel managed to swallow his first mouthful of sandwich, “That bacon is, well, lovely.” He said wiping a dribble of hot fat off his chin.

“It should be, it was walking around the yard this time yesterday.”

The prospect of the meat coming from a living beast for a moment almost put him off continuing with the sandwich, but only for a brief moment.

As he ripped another corner from the sandwich he felt an unusually cold chill on the back of his neck. It was so cold that the hairs on the base of his scalp jumped to attention. The icy cold burst was out of character with the room. The heat coming from the stove gave the room a warm feeling. Taking a look over his shoulder he caught the slightest glimpse of a young woman looking at him through the window. As he manoeuvred in his seat to gain a better view the image vanished. Was it the same figure he had seen earlier, it certainly seemed that way to him?

Suddenly another blast of cold air blew across the kitchen. Daniel turned quickly to see the door was open and daylight silhouetted a large figure framed in the doorway. Daniel's heart felt as though it had skipped a beat.

"How do?" said a deep gruff voice. The figure stamped his boots on the doormat. Great lumps of soil dislodged themselves landing all around him. As the door closed Daniel caught sight of his host, Arthur Bell. The man's face was red, weather beaten by many years of outdoor life. His clothes were somewhat shabby but at the same time practical.

"So," said the newcomer, banging his hands together and vigorously rubbing warmth back into them, "Who do we have here?"

Daniel got to his feet to meet his host, holding out a hand for Arthur to shake in way of a greeting. The burly faced farmer crossed the room to meet his guest, ignoring the hand he proceeded to slap Daniel on the shoulder and as he did a smile appeared on his face, "Don't get up young man, finish 'ya lawns."

Daniel was puzzled at the phrase 'lawns', not being of these parts he didn't know that the word in fact was an abbreviation of the word allowance, or in this case something to eat.

The good natured farmer sat alongside Daniel resting back on his chair. He spread his legs wide apart and slapped his palms down on his muscular thighs, while letting out a sigh of relief. "Any more tea in that pot mother?" he asked his wife, while his eyes cast a glance at the bacon sandwich in Daniels hands.

"Of course." She broke off cleaning the frying pan and poured another cup of tea for her hard working husband.

His old wide eyes followed her around the room with a loving glow; she returned his affectionate smile as she placed the mug down

before him, "So young 'un, how long 'ya here for and what are 'ya plans?" the two questions seemed to roll into one with the greatest of ease.

"One month, and as for my plans, I have none as yet. Perhaps you could advise me of any points of interest in the area or maybe I could help on the farm?"

"Oh," he began to laugh as the words came, "Ya' don't want to be messin' around with pigs if you're here to rest my lad. Its damn hard work, no, no you occupy yourself with other things. There's good walking and fishing about here and do you like trains?"

Did he like trains? He had never really thought about it. Trains were so common place never had he thought of them as more than transport. The walking and fishing though did appeal to him. Then there was that other matter to look into; the girl who had spied on him earlier.

"I only ask," continued Morris, "because we have three fine tunnels hereabouts, the finest you'll see for miles. 'Ya can get right through them if 'ya wish, can be a bit hairy though if you get caught when one of them bloody great freight trains comes through."

"I do have plenty of time, so I will take a look at them." Why not?

"Good on 'ya lad." The farmer downed his hot tea almost in one great gulp. Daniel watched in wonder, his own cup was still steaming hot; the slightest sip would be enough to scald his tongue into numbness. He must have the skin of an elephant?

Morris slapped his thighs once more before standing, "Well," he said flexing his shoulders, "this won't get the pigs fed." At the door he put on his hat and coat before disappearing into the sunlight.

Disappointedly Daniel swallowed the last piece of his sandwich, disappointed because it had tasted so good, he never wanted it to end. If that was a sample of what to expect then his time here would be a pleasant one.

Maureen, on seeing the empty plate immediately cleared it way, "Was that alright for you?"

"Yes thank you." He took another sip of tea; the sweet brown liquid was still at an undrinkable temperature.

The plate now sat on the draining board. Maureen dried her hands on a tea towel, "I suppose I should show you to your room, let you get settled in.

He followed her up the narrow staircase; his suitcase trailing behind him, banging on each wooden step. Maureen was talking

constantly to him as they ascended but he didn't catch many of the words. At the top of the stairs a wood panelled corridor met his gaze with three doors on either side and one at the far end. Maureen shuffled her way along the landing finally stopping and turning to face the third door on the right hand side. Taking a gold coloured key out of the front pocket of her apron she opened the door and went in. "Here we are then." She said as she disappeared into the room.

As Daniel entered Maureen was in the process of opening the sash window, allowing the cool morning breeze to fill the room.

The room itself was small, though more than enough space to navigate around the single bed, dresser and wardrobe. The sheets on the bed were white, each corner turned in and under the mattress at precise angles.

For a moment she paused and looked out of the window, surveying the land, "Lovely day, it'll be, I think." She announced, taking in a deep breath of air. Through the now open window Maureen could see the patchwork of uneven green, yellow and brown fields. It had only been a matter of minutes since Arthur had left the cottage but now he was far away across the land standing under the Great Ash tree which stood majestically over a mile from the farmhouse. "Nice day for a walk, I'll do you a bag of lunch and..." Suddenly her cheerful demeanour changed into a more solemn mood. Realising something was wrong Daniel replied in as cheery way as possible, "Thank you, I'd like that."

Without a word or look in his direction, she left the room. The figure she had seen silhouetted against the sky was not that of her husband, but some other.

Now alone in the room Daniel looked around. The sun was shining in through the window, giving plenty of natural light. He put his case down on the bed ready to be unpacked then stopped. Slowly he walk to the window and peered out. He scanned all the earth from the yard to the horizon, looking for anything that could cause such a reaction.

He could see nothing. In the barn, on the track, nothing right up to the ash tree in the distance. Nothing out of the ordinary, but then, how would he know if anything was out of the ordinary? He didn't know what was normal.

By ten o'clock that morning Daniel had finished unpacking his case. His shirts hung in the wardrobe, his briefs in the drawer. All was in order. The final thing to be removed from his case was a



silhouetted picture, a picture of his wife's profile, which he placed on the bedside table. Smiling to himself he walked out of the room.

Maureen heard the heavy thud of the lodger's walking boots coming down the stairs. As the door opened from the staircase she was placing the last item of the packed lunch into a cloth ruck sack. Flipping the top leaf over quickly, she fastened the buckles. "There 'ya go my dear," she said turning to face him, "that should keep 'ya going until tea time."

"Lovely." Did Daniel feel a little tension in the air; the mood had changed since his arrival that was true, but why. Had it been something he had said or done? The best course of action available to him was to go out for the day. He had his map and now his lunch, so there was nothing to stop him.

The sun was now high and hot, only one hour to go until midday; he had to find some kind of shelter to sit while he rested.

Daniel was now high up on the Yorkshire Wolds where banks of trees, copses and woods were in abundance.

Finding such a haven he sat down on a fallen tree and opened his lunch bag. "Well?" Maureen certainly knew how to fill a bag.

The wrapped up sandwich was two inches thick, a large slab of pork being the filling. It was now a very hot day. Pricks of sunlight shone through the trees intermittently blocking his view. How he had longed for days such as this during his time away. The War seemed to be a world away to him now. Once again he delved into the bag, this time producing a hard boiled egg. Now there was a rare treat, an egg. Cracking the shell on his knee his fingers quickly peeled off the hard outer shell. It was cooked to perfection and tasted sublime. Drink, that's what he needed now more than anything. Out of the bag he took a thick, dark green bottle. On the top of its neck sat a stone stopper. Beer, he hadn't tasted beer for many a long day. The cork popped out, allowing froth to bubble over the rim. Daniel paused and licked his lips before taking as large a mouthful of the liquid as possible.

The small copse he was currently resting in was cool. Not only was it cool but also silent; only the occasional tweet of a bird or the rustle of undergrowth broke the silence.

It was because of that very fact that when he thought a voice spoke to his rear, he quickly turned to see who had come upon him.

Distressed, he looked around. No one was behind him. Thinking on it, was it not so much a voice he had heard, maybe just the wind. Was there any wind today?

It was no surprise to him, all his senses had been affected by his experience in the trenches, why not his hearing too?

Once fed and watered he continued on his way. By the time he returned to the farm it had become late in the afternoon.

Maureen was taking in the now dry washing; the sheets which she folded were a brilliant white, the sunlight reflecting off them.

On seeing his approach she quickly bundled the material into the basket and hurried inside.

That night the temperature had cooled dramatically. A cool breeze ruffled the net curtains which hung at his bedroom window.

The gentle blast of night air was more than a welcome relief from the hot sticky uncomfortable nights of late. All day his clothes had stuck to his skin with perspiration, the change in temperature was most welcome.

He was dressed now in blue and white striped pyjamas, the jacket tucked into the trouser bottoms and firmly tied with a white cord. Removing his slippers he swung two tired legs around and under the crisp linen sheets of the bed.

For some time he lay quite still, unable to sleep. For what must have amounted for almost an hour he watched the curtains move to and fro in the breeze while beyond, the stars slowly moved across the sky in their stellar procession.

Many thoughts ran around the head resting on the pillow. His general feeling of calm was overshadowed by the uneasiness of his memories of those days gone by in the southern part of France. Another thought ran through his mind; who was that girl who had started following him around?

The open countryside was as foreign a country to him as France had seemed on his arrival. Maybe he would find the ways and customs here as strange as any overseas land.

That particular thought settled his uneasy mind and it wasn't long before he was drifting off into sleep, not even the noise of the owls and foxes woke him.

It was no animal noise, suddenly he sat bolt upright, a scream had roused him from the peaceful slumber. Had he actually heard someone cry out in the night, or was it all in his head? Was it a memory of the days now thankfully gone by? He decided that it must be the latter of the two.

The night air was warm, the breeze had dropped and the bed covers were heavy. He put a leg out from under the sheets and placed it on the upper side of the blanket. Slowly he began to drift off again.

That was when it happened; another scream drifted in the open window on the night air. A shiver of fear ran over him as he remembered the long cold nights of Flanders. Shutting his eyes tightly he buried his head deep into the pillow, forcing himself to sleep. When would these nightmares stop?

The next morning was again the beginning of another glorious summer's day. As the stairway door opened Daniel could smell the unmistakable aroma of breakfast drifting up from the kitchen. The buxom figure of Maureen was at the range manoeuvring a mountain of sausages, bacon and black pudding around in the large black frying pan.

"Just in time." She said turning to him, a smile filling her face. Minutes later a plate filled with all manner of farmyard produce graced the plate which sat before him. His health would certainly improve if the good lady of the house cooked a meal such as this every morning.

Just as it had been the previous morning, the smell of bread filled the kitchen, it was lovely. The aroma almost encouraged him to stay indoors on such a beautiful day as this.

Daniel sat back in the chair, almost too full to move. He was now on a second mug of tea, steaming hot, straight off the stove. The top of his trousers dug into his abdomen; when Maureen had her back turned he undid the double button on the waistband to ease the bloated gut.

"Any idea what you're going to do with yourself today dear?" Maureen flipped a tea towel over her shoulder, which up to that point had hung over the handle of the oven door.

"Yes," replied Daniel, "I'm going walking again, over the dale and down into that village I think." A casual hand made a gesturing motion toward the southerly end of the room.

"Oh well, there's a small handful of villages down that way, you should enjoy that, some nice pubs too." She opened the oven door and looked in, a wave of heat flashed across her face. Quickly she closed the oven and jumped up somewhat flustered, "Oh my dears, it's a little hot in there." She slapped the tea towel toward her face, the draft flicking her hair back and forth.

As she removed the empty plate from the table she noticed Daniels undone trouser buttons and a slight smile spread across her face as she turned away towards the sink.

With his rucksack on his back, Daniel made off through the farmyard and up the track into open countryside. Checking the map, a bearing was set and he walked toward the ash tree.

From the apex of the hill on which the old tree was rooted he surveyed the surrounding lands. So clear was the morning, he thought that the whole county must be visible from this high point. To the south was the river, easterly lay the flat lands of Hull and beyond, while to the west was the industrial heart of South Yorkshire.

Looking down the hill a dark figure was walking in a circular motion around a large barrel, or at least something of that description. The large frame of the figure could only belong to one man, Arthur Bell.

In the valley below, Bell was busying himself with what could only be described as maintaining the land. He had dug over three patches of earth, each patch around three feet in diameter. The three formed an equilateral triangle. At its centre sat what he could now clearly make out. The object he thought to be some kind of barrel was in fact a stone circular well. The well was a simple affair, just a low stone wall covered with a pointed roof shielding its innards from the elements.

Morris was so deeply involved with his task that he failed to hear the approaching rambler. "Morning."

Bell's head spun around, in his eyes was a look of terror and for a slight second Daniel almost thought of himself being in some kind of peril?

On the realisation that the newcomer was only his lodger, Morris's expression changed, a smile coming to his face.

"Oh, now then young Daniel." As he spoke his eyes flitted around scanning the area; had someone been here or was he expecting someone else. "I'm just..." he began, faltering for words, "Just tidying up the old well you know."

Daniel had taken note of all points of reference on his OS Map, to his recollection he could not remember seeing any reference to a well being in the area, but here it was. The only logical reason was that the well was a new feature on the landscape, added since the map was redrawn. "How deep is it?" Daniel asked taking a step toward it and peering in.

"I don't really know come to think of it. I've never had to get water from it myself; some of the villages still use it though. I try to keep it clear for them to get to"

Daniel crouched down and picked up a small white pebble. After a pause he tossed it into the darkness. For some unknown reason Bell gave a grimace as he did so.

Forester listened with eager anticipation for the sound of the waters surface to be broken. Seconds past, nothing came. "Must have dried up." Daniel said shrugging his shoulders, with that remark he took his leave, "See you later."

"Ey, have a good day." Replied the older man, with a hint of contempt in his tone?

By lunchtime Daniel Forester had traversed almost twenty miles. The path he now followed led steeply down to a road. Looking at the map he calculated that the village of Riplingham was only a mile or so away and yes, there on the map were the small blue letters PH. Taking a bearing he headed off towards the village and the promise of a well earned pint.

The sun was now at its highest point, he needed a rest. As he turned the corner of the lane leading into the village his gaze was met with an oasis on this hot summer's day. The pub was a long thin building; its exterior was of a Tudor style, whilst inside was more of the Victorian era than Tudor.

"Pint please." He said, placing both hands on the wooden bar. The landlord was a large individual who looked at him with more than a hint of curiosity. It wasn't often that strangers came into his pub, though with the coming of the railway the arrival of outsiders was becoming a more common event.

"Afternoon," a voice said from the right hand end of the bar.

"Afternoon." Replied Daniel.

The landlord placed a full glass of beer down on the bar and picked up the small pile of coins from next to it. He kept an eye on the stranger as he turned to put the coins into the money tray.

The first two inches of the cool liquid were soon consumed. The next half pint was quick to follow.

The landlord couldn't help but notice the self satisfied look on the young man's face, "You stopping local then?" he was short in his manor and matter of fact in his questioning.

"Yes up at," for some reason Daniel temporarily forgot the name of the farm, funny that, his memory was normally very sharp, "up at, with Morris Bell." He finished.

The man sitting at the other end of the bar shifted uncomfortably in his seat. Daniel could not see him clearly as his face was obscured by the shadow of the low ceiling.

“Oh, old Morris,” answered the landlord.

The man at the end of the bar downed his pint, slamming the glass down on the bar and leaving without speaking a word. “See’s ya later Edward.”

The door slammed shut, the man not answering the farewell from the Inn Keeper. A moments uneasy silence hovered around the bar following his departure. “Was it something I said?” Daniel enquired.

For several minutes the landlord said nothing as he vigorously polished a pint pot with a towel and watched the man known as Edward walk off down the hill towards the station. “There was a bit of a do between old Edward and Morris Bell. It was a few years since but still no one mentions it and Edward and Morris have never spoken since.” He paused, should he tell this outsider the tale? Then after a moment he decided that, why not. He liked nothing more than spreading a good story. “They both had a daughter you see, the girls grew up together; they *were* the best of friends. One day a man arrived in the village, and he arrived in style, driving a motor car no less.

It was the first time a car had come to the village and no one had seen such a thing before. Vans, yes and trains of course were becoming a common sight, but never a car.

Naturally he became the focus of attention, especially with the young ladies. The man was in his twenties and a handsome young man he was too. The girls swarmed around him like flies around a honey pot. The two most attractive girls for many a mile were Edward’s daughter Lisa and Morris’s daughter, Sonya. Both girls set their sights on him.

It was such a shame that two such good friends could do such awful things to one another over a man. Both were convinced that the motor car owning young man would take them away with him. How misguided young girls can be?

To be honest I can see their reasoning. Life here doesn’t change much, a life here for a young girl is marrying a farmer from one of the local villages and having children. When such a man arrives from the town, talking about his life, well you can imagine.

Over the course of a week they turned into the bitterest of enemies. It all came to a head one Saturday night; he was to blame as

much as them as he was playing them off against one another. He was leaving that night you see, what he'd said to them we won't ever know. One thing for sure was they both went to meet him."

He paused to look at the almost empty glass in the customer's hand. Daniel understood the gesturing nod from the landlord.

"Please, yea." He didn't care for the drink; all he wanted was the rest of the sorry tale.

"So, where was I?" he put the refreshed glass down next to the sole customer in the public house, "Both girls went to meet him at the arranged point; both unaware of the other being there. They both arrived at the departure point, bags packed.

You can imagine the conversation that took place between them as they waited; both thinking that he was coming for them, to take them away to the bright lights of the city. As far as we know well, now I come to think about it, I don't know, pausing he looked deep in thought.

"What?" Daniel asked impatiently, "What?"

"Well, he may have picked them both up and whisked them away but at the time we thought he never showed up to pick up either of them. Why did you think that?"

Oh yes, one of the regulars mentioned that he had seen 'the motor car' leaving on the Riplingham Road and not on the Cave Road where the girls were waiting."

"So if he didn't take either of the girls what happened to them?" Daniel expected an answer that would explain the situation.

The landlord fell silent, "Somethings are better left alone." He said the words in a gruff tone.

"If they are not here then he must have picked..."

A stare from the landlord's terrifying eyes stopped him mid sentence. Daniel resumed his pint in silence and began to scan the walls of the pub. Looking at the painted scenes of local areas hung from the picture rail. On the far wall was a fireplace; the summer now being at its height, no fire had been in the grate for many a month which puzzled him. Ever since entering the inn he could swear that he could smell the aroma of old soot.

The clock on the church tower was striking three o'clock as he walked past the lych gate. A foreign object had entered his boot which was beginning to irritate him immensely on every alternate step.

Leaning against one of the vertical supports of the gate, he removed his boot and shook out the irritant.

As he took his hand off the post he noticed something beneath it. Burnt onto the post were four dots. Three were arranged in a triangle with the fourth in the middle of the shape.

“Rings a bell” he mused to himself.

For a moment he thought he had caught sight of someone watching him from inside the church yard, somewhere in among the head stones.

Looking across the church grounds he could see no one. He was convinced it had been the strange girl that he had spotted the other day. Maybe it was just the heat combined with the beer playing tricks on his brain.

The next few days saw the weather change from hot sunny days to stormy showers and strong winds. Thunder rolled across the hills, valleys and dales of this part of East Yorkshire.

Daniel contented himself by helping with the running of the farm, never straying more than a mile or so away from the house. He enjoyed the work; it gave him a sense of purpose once more. Maybe that was something to do and a mental distraction from the ghosts of his past.

On one particular afternoon he was out in the fields when suddenly a storm sent sheets of rain lashing down upon him.

He ran for the nearest cover he could see, the only thing in sprinting distance was the Ash Tree. Its canopy was wide and the foliage thick, the perfect shelter.

Daniel sat down on the ground and lent against the thick old trunk. Below him in the valley he could see the well where Morris had been working a few days ago. There were three patches of earth disturbed by the farmers spade. They formed a perfect triangle with the well at the centre, where had he seen that pattern before? Picking up a stick he drew the pattern in the dusty earth next to him.

A triangle with a circle in the centre.

It meant nothing to him, “Coincidence?” he said to no one in particular.

Looking back into the valley, he could see Morris Bell standing next to the well. Bell and well, that was almost funny. He smiled at the thought but the smile was soon wiped off his face when a voice said in his ear, “Rains stopped.”

With a start he spun around to see Morris standing beside him. Taking a sharp intake of breath he looked back down into the valley.

The figure in the valley was gone.



As Daniel retired to bed that night he climbed the stairs and stood at the opposite end of the narrow landing corridor which led to his room. For a few moments he stood and listened to the movements downstairs, all was quiet.

Slowly he edged along the corridor. His breathing was heavy; his heart raced out of control while a single bead of sweat ran down his left temple.

As he reached the second door on the right he stopped. Was there a scuffling noise coming from the room. It sounded as though doors were being opened and closed.

He had never looked in this room as the door was always locked. Out of curiosity he had poked his head into most of the rooms, only the quickest of looks, but this one he had never gained access to. Was this their daughter, Sonya's room?

Slowly his shaking hand lifted toward the brass door knob. An icy cold draught ran down the back of his neck. He thought someone was standing behind him, a presence was there with him. How could that be, there was only one way in and out of the corridor and that door was closed. He turned the knob and this time there was no resistance, the door slowly opened.

Bracing himself he took a step towards the door ready to push it open.

A noise like a key being dropped onto bare floorboards clattered from the direction of his left flank and his mind shot back to the snipers in the trenches. He spun around to see only a shadow on the wall, his own shadow, cast by the moonlight.

Letting out a sigh of relief he took this as a warning and didn't take the investigation any further. As he walked the few extra feet to his own door, the shadow on the wall remained stationary.

Thankfully the following day, a Friday in mid June the sun shone once again. The flora and fauna of the woods and dales had seemed to have rejuvenated with the rainfall over the previous days.

Daniel was glad to get out of the farmhouse today and away from the farm. After last night the house had become oppressive, both Mr and Mrs Bell had not altered in their demeanour, it was the house he feared.

He had high hopes that getting out for the day would clear the cobwebs from his mind so he could return refreshed and with no preconceptions about the house.

For the first time he walked down to the three tunnels that formed part of the Hull to Barnsley railway. Morris had been accurate in his description of the tunnels; they were magnificent feats of engineering.

For several hours he sat on a hill and watched the numerous trains travelling through this part of the Wolds. Both passenger and freight used the line and he wondered how so much traffic was needed to maintain the industry of South Yorkshire.

The longest tunnel, Drewton was ventilated by a series of shafts from the tunnel to the surface, every half mile. This enabled Daniel to calculate the speed of the various engines.

Lunchtime was approaching and as he looked back on the morning's thoughts he was aware of several things about this place he could not explain.

The strange girl who seemed to be following him, the well that didn't appear on the OS Map and the significance of the triangle in the circle emblem which seemed to crop up around the countryside. Then there was the story of the two missing girls. What was that all about? Could all these events be connected in some way?

Subconsciously he found himself outside the pub he had visited a few days before. It was almost with a hint of surprise that he saw it in the distance. Was it due to the fact that he had approached the village from a different direction the other day? On that occasion he had approached from the Ripplingham Road and today the road leading to South Cave.

As always Maureen had packed him up with a bottle of stout; today though, the pub was favourable. He wanted to know more about the two girls and what had happened to them.

The door closed behind him and it took a few moments for his eyes to adjust to the lack of light in the room. No one was around so he sat at the end of the bar resting himself on a high bar stool and waited for the landlord to appear. Only half a minute had passed when he heard the voice of the landlord, "Hold on Edward, I'll be there in a minute." The noise of something being dragged echoed through the bar. The noise emanated from the back room and once the noise had stopped the inn keeper's voice spoke again, "Do you think he'll go for it tomorrow night..."

The landlord appeared in the doorway and when he saw that the new comer was Daniel and not Edward he stopped suddenly, taken aback by a mixture of shock and fright.

“Oh,” he said, “it’s you young man, er...” he paused as he steadied himself, “What can I get for you?”

Daniel pointed at the stout barrel, “Pint of stout please Landlord.” His mind was now hard at work. What was it with the locals around here, were they all scared of something and what was happening tomorrow night?

Of course it maybe something as innocent as a dominoes match or card school but why was there something at the back of his mind. Whatever it was the voice was telling him that something was very wrong with this place.

The pint of black liquor landed on the bar next to him, his money handed over the transaction was made. “Tell me,” began the sole customer, “the two girls, Sonya and, er the other one. What became of them?”

The landlord didn’t answer because as the question was asked he had already begun to slip away into the back room. He was obviously avoiding any more conversation about the event.

Daniel felt snubbed but then he was placed in a state of shock as a voice drifted through from the back, “Lisa, you mean?”

Daniel turned around to see the milkman standing beside him.

“Hello again.” He said to the newcomer.

“How are you enjoying Bell Farm then?” Asked the milkman with a broad smile on his red face, “Is Maureen feeding you well?”

“Just a bit.” Replied the younger of the two, patting his stomach as he did.

Just at that moment the landlord made a second appearance, “Albert, whiskey is it?” Without waiting for an acknowledgement a generous tot of scotch was poured into a glass and passed to the latest customer. As soon as his hand left the glass the landlord vanished again into the back room.

“Now, that was a curious occurrence?” what did happen to the two girls?” he took a step closer to Daniel and in a hushed tone spoke, “Some say that the man never showed, they got into a fight and one killed the other and this is the best part, threw the body into Satan’s Well...”

“Satan’s Well?” interrupted Daniel.

“Yes, you must know of it, it’s on old Bell’s land.”

“Oh yes I know of the well but I didn’t know what it was called.”

“Some say...”

“Hold on,” interrupted Daniel once again, he was suffering from an information overload by this point, “Who threw who down the well and what happened to the other one?”

“Oh, I see your point.” He paused for a moment, “You know; nobody knows. It was just said at the time that one killed the other then ran off.

Then, some say that the mysterious man turned up and took one off with him. Then there’s some say that he turned up and took one away with him while the other was too embarrassed to return so she either left for good, or killed herself.

He took a mouthful of whiskey before licking his lips.

“Why is it called Satan’s Well?”

“You know, I haven’t a clue. Maybe because it’s so deep. Maybe it goes down to the centre of the Earth, down to the depths of Hell?” He finished his drink then called out to the landlord for another, “Hello; hello, anyone serving?” After a pause and an impatient look over the bar he once again turned to Daniel, “Some do say though that the jilted girl, whichever one it may have been can still be seen. Well her ghost anyway. Seen at the well, still waiting for her man to collect her.”

As the landlord returned, the look on his face clearly told Daniel that it was time to leave. He had a feeling that the Inn Keeper had returned from the back in a violent mood. If it was because of something he had overheard or an event in the backroom he didn’t want to find out.

Quickly he walked up the dale and back towards the farm. The plan was to watch a few more trains running through the tunnels before returning to the farmhouse for tea.

Back on the hill overlooking the tracks he opened the bottle of beer which had travelled in his rucksack for most of the day.

As his head returned to the horizontal from tossing a draft of beer back into his mouth he became aware of a figure standing on one of the lines at the entrance of Drewton Tunnel. The glare of the sunlight made it difficult to see clearly, but someone was definitely down there.

From half a mile away a plume of smoke puffed out of one of the chimney stacks.

They were going to be killed if he didn’t move, were they mad? Could they not hear the train coming towards them?

He jumped up and ran down the hill. The rucksack on his back was a hindrance, twisting it around as he ran until it fell off his back.

By the time he was almost at the bottom of the hill the velocity was out of control but he could see the figure more clearly now. It was a woman, a young woman dressed in black. Soon he realised that it was the girl who had been watching him. Was that why he was here now, was it to save her from a horrible death on the tracks? “Get off the line.” He called as loudly as he could manage. Waving his arms trying to attract her attention but she just stood there, each foot on neighbouring sleepers, “Get off the line.” He called again.

The noise of the engine was getting louder and louder and he knew that at any moment the locomotive would come bursting out of the tunnel’s mouth.

At the bottom of the hill he fell against the wooden two bar fence which marked the boundary of the railway lines. As he lifted a foot onto the lower horizontal bar the girl’s black bonneted head rose to reveal her face. It was ghostly white with two cold lifeless eyes staring at him. As she did so the train thundered out of the tunnel.

Daniel grimaced at the thought of her being hit. When the brake van had passed he looked around but there was no sign of the girl.

Slowly he walked around the top of the dale back towards the farmhouse; deep in his own thoughts and pondering the events which had just happened and not knowing what to make of them.

He was so caught up in his thoughts that he never saw the figure of a young woman, dressed in black, watching him. She stood there silently; watching.

The following day all previous thoughts were put behind him. The time was coming up to mid afternoon and on the west bound platform of the railway station Daniel stood waiting in eager anticipation for the next train to come along, for it would be carrying his wife, Lesley.

A whistle blew. Before the echo had faded away a door in the station master’s house opened. Out stepped the station master fully uniformed with blazer and lamp along with two flags rolled up and tucked under his arm, one red, one green.

He peered past Daniel and down the line before checking his watch.

The brakes screeched as it came to a halt, perfectly placed along side the platform. Clouds of steam exhausted from under the tank engine as a voice called out, “Little Weighton.”

It was only one carriage door that opened. From within, an elegant woman around the age of thirty stepped out. She wore a blue and white patterned summer dress, whilst on her head was a matching bonnet.

Daniel caught sight of her and his heart took a leap, “Lesley!” he waved his arms to attract her attention.

The woman turned to see her husband; she was as pleased to see him as he was her. They embraced as though they had not seen the other for a lifetime.

The Station Master allowed himself a smile at the sight of the young couple reunited.

The train pulled away leaving only the two of them on the platform. The station master headed off back indoors, but stopped as he reached the entrance to the waiting room. He turned back to look at the couple. He was right, he had recognised the woman. Suddenly he felt a cold shiver run up his neck and decided to return indoors.

The happy couple walked up to the farm, both were in no rush, the day was too good to hurry. Daniel filled his wife in on his progress over the last couple of weeks, while she told him of the happenings of the smoke filled city.

Maureen had put on a huge spread for tea that evening. Knowing that a new guest would be arriving the Aga had been working overtime cooking many a dish for the evening meal.

The conversation throughout the meal had been light hearted and cheerful. On one or two occasions though Daniel had noticed a sinister undertone to a passing comment made by one or another of the assembled diners? It must have been his imagination, no more.

At ten thirty the sun had set and at last the sky was beginning to darken. Tonight was the eve of the summer solstice, the longest day. It was at midnight that Daniel awoke. What had made him wake he could not say, but something had. Next to him his wife was sleeping, her breathing rhythmic and deep. From outside he thought that he had heard voices but on investigation no one was present. He put his head back down on the pillow next to Lesley’s and started, once again, to drift off back to sleep.

Suddenly he woke again. This time something had changed. Lesley was no longer beside him. His first reaction was panic, then as his brain steadied down into a more logical thought pattern he came to the conclusion that she may have only gone to the kitchen to get herself a drink of water. After all it was a hot night.

He waited.

Nothing.

After a few moments, he could not tell how long had passed, a voice floated through the open window. “Lesley,” the way the single word was shouted out it gave the impression of someone calling out into the unknown and not someone talking face to face with another.

He took no notice of the voice, putting it down to his imagination or a half curious dream but, when the voice called out again, he sat up.

Lesley was the name of one of the girls who had been involved in the incident that had left such a scar on the residents of the village. For some reason a fear gripped him, not for himself, but for his wife. Swinging his legs out of the bed he peered out of the window. The moonlight was strong and it cast a large shadow of the Ash Tree sitting on the apex of the hill.

Below them, standing in the middle of the farmyard, was a figure, a small female figure. Was it she who spoke. As he watched her, she stood motionless. The voice called the name again, though it was her speaking he could swear her lips never moved. Then her right arm lifted making a beckoning motion.

Who was she speaking to?

Should he investigate? Or at least wake Morris, he must know who she was? Then terror overcome him senses, he could not believe what his eyes were seeing. Lesley, his wife, was walking across the yard towards the woman. Then ignoring her she walked straight past and away up the hill.

Quickly he put on his trousers and ran out of the room. The situation called for immediate action, Mr and Mrs Bell needed to be woken, with just the slightest of a pause outside their bedroom door Daniel knocked then entered. “Morris, so sorry but...” the moonlight streamed in through the window illuminating the bed, the bed which lay empty.

Never, not even in the trenches, had he felt so alone and afraid. So quick was his descent of the staircase he slipped, falling down the last few steps. Now in the kitchen he saw the front door wide open and he made directly for it.

“Daniel.” A voice said from behind him. Stopping only to turn and look, he saw no one. Who had spoken?

Once out of the farmyard and onto the track he could see Lesley at the top of the hill. Following her, about twenty yards behind, was the girl dressed in black. He couldn’t be sure before but now the girl who had been outside the yard was the same figure who had been following

him over the past weeks. The revelation only spurred the pursuit, his wife, he knew instinctively was in danger.

As he raced up the hill the figure of Lesley disappeared out of sight. She had passed over the hill, followed by the strange girl.

Over the panting of heavy breathing he thought he could hear voices, several voices chanting. Still he ran up towards the great ash tree. Also in the air was a smell, not an unpleasant smell like most on the farm, but the smell of something cooking.

As he peered over the top of the hill he looked down into the valley, a sense of shock, horror and fear ran over his entire body.

Far below there was a circle of thirteen people equally spaced around the well, Satan's Well. "Oh my God?" he said in a quiet voice. In the circle burnt three fires, each making up a corner of an equilateral triangle. Lesley was walking towards them. Did she not know what she was doing?

As she reached the well she suddenly woke from what must have been some kind of trance. Where was she? That she already knew, the last night she had seen such a spectacle as this had been the night she'd left the village. That night years ago she knew she could not stay here any longer. In that split second the awful events of that night came flooding back into her memory...

It had all happened one fine sunny week. Just as the weather had been of late. The two of them were inseparable, they did everything together. Both she and her best friend were the two beauties of the village, as a matter of fact, for several miles around. They shared everything, well almost everything.

One Sunday morning both dressed in their church best they walked home from the morning service together. Their parents were deep in conversation on some subject which was of complete disinterest to the girls. They walked on ahead; both were now in their sixteenth summer and attracting the eye of the young males for miles around. No matter what happened though, never was there a secret between them, not until that Sunday.

A roar broke the quiet morning air; the noise was then followed by a bright red open topped roadster. The heads of everyone outdoors turned to look at it. In the driver's seat sat a young man in his early twenties. The greased back brown hair stuck to his head extenuating the chisel like good looks and giving him the appearance of a boys own story book hero. All the men's eyes looked at the shining red car with a desire to one day own one. In the shorter term even just to sit in



this one and maybe be taken for a spin would be enough for the village folk.

For the two girls though the car held little or no interest, only the man seated in the cockpit held their attention. Both had similar feelings for this man and simultaneously they approached him. Both knew that if they were to marry any man (which would be the normal course of events) then this dashing young man was a prime candidate for matrimony. He held a much better prospect of providing a comfortable life than the farm hands and labourers they would meet at the annual village dance. Both set out their stalls that morning to try to capture a husband, both were now rivals.

Over the next week the two friends didn't see a lot of each other, both distracted by the quarry they had set their sights on. The motor car driving stranger took both of them out individually on more than one occasion; Sonya was told that her friend had been blackening her name, so she did likewise.

All was far in love and war? Where did friendship enter into the equation?

On two occasions she saw Sonya but only from a distance and then didn't speak. Lisa pretended not to have noticed her and carried on her way in any case making no attempt to communicate.

It all came to a head the following Saturday night. She had arranged to meet with her young man, Nick Old was his name, she didn't care very much for his name; he had a car and money. She stood at the crossroads with her suitcase alongside her.

Sneaking out of the house had been easy; no one was in that night. She had left a note explaining the situation and telling all that she would be in touch by letter within the week.

The evening was a warm one, she sat on her case, the walk up the road from the village had played heavy on her feet. The heels of her stilettos dug into her feet like chisels.

It was then the horror of the situation was realised as a familiar voice was heard over her shoulder, "What on earth are you doing here?" Sonya's voice was full of disdain.

"What am I doing here?" Lisa replied turning to see her old friend, "What are you doing here mores the like?"

"I," she replied, voice full of self importance, "I am here waiting for *my* boyfriend, were going away together you know."

"And who might that be?" the question was a loaded one.

"Nick, of course." A self satisfied smile appearing on her face.

"No, no you're not. I'm here to meet him."

“What would he want with you, you, you evil cow.”

“And what’s that suppose to mean?”

Sonya felt fully justified with the comment, “You tried poisoning him against me, he told me that and now you just happen to turn up here when we’re going away together. You’re pathetic.”

“Me?” a look of disbelief was on Lisa’s face. “you more like, you evil bitch. You found out about us then got jealous. I always get the best men first, you only get my cast offs; well you’re not having this one.” Sonya screamed, then from nowhere she pulled out a long bladed knife from her bag.

The next moment Lisa was running towards the wood being chased by Sonya. What had happened, why was she running for her life, from her friend? All she knew was that it was happening, this wasn’t a dream. Her shoes were now lost, long gone somewhere in the undergrowth. She breached the boundary of the wood, but did not stop. To hide from her friend who had obviously gone mad with jealousy she must get deeper into the trees. She saw Sonya follow her trail, but thankfully run straight past the point where she was hidden in a ditch.

Once she was out of sight the time had come to double back out of the wood and meet Nick.

As she stepped out onto the path Lisa heard a scream. Suddenly she panicked, that cry of terror had been Sonya in distress. Indecision filled her mind, in the end it was an overwhelming feeling of consciousness that won her over, Sonya, her friend was in trouble. As quickly as she dare Lisa took the path which Sonya had followed. Through the trees she could see a point of light. The sun had set now so what was the light?

As she reached the other side of the wood instinctively her legs stopped obeying a sense of self preservation which had overcome her. Through the foliage she could make out the ash tree which stood on farmer Bells land while in the valley below she could see a circle of bodies. The figures were all dressed in black their heads obscured by some kind of hood. In the centre of the human circle was the old well.

Outside of the circle burned three fires equally spaced forming a triangle.

Lisa watched in horror as Sonya continued to walk towards them. Should she run out after her friend and bring her back, save her, but she didn’t.

Something told her that showing herself would mean death.

One of the hooded figures turned to see Sonya walking towards them. The circle broke allowing her through. The young woman was trapped in the circle of interlinking hands. The black clad figures closed in on her. Slowly she edged towards the well, then falling backwards over the wall her cry echoed for what seemed like an eternity.

As she fell one of the figures shouted, “No...” at the same time throwing off his hood.

Lisa struggled to see who it was under the cowl, the light was fading and the distance between her and the well was great. Not only that but some of the other figures obscured the view. Then there was the glare from the fires. The voice though she did recognise, it was a voice she knew too well, her best friend’s father Morris Bell. Others in the assembled ring took off their hoods.

When she saw their faces, she took in a sharp intake of breath. The second person she recognised instantly, it was her own father.

Shocked, she knew the only thing to do was to run, run and keep running.

What had happened there? Was it some kind of Devil Worship, Satanic rights? It was called Satan’s well, was that why?

The next morning she stepped off a train at platform two of Hull’s Paragon Station. It was then that she decided that a new life was needed. She would live and work here, a new life, new name. From that moment Lisa no longer existed, she would be known as Lesley.

How had she come to be in this place? The last thing she could recall was lying next to her husband in bed under freshly washed crisp, white sheets. Instantly she knew where she was, but still didn’t understand why.

For a moment she looked beyond the assembled hooded figures. High up on the dale she could see Daniel, then below him another figure now walking slowly down the hill. As far as Lesley could make out it was a teenage girl. Had she just been dreaming about her, or had they known each other before.

Slowly the circle closed in on her, frantically she looked around searching for an escape route but none was evident.

Against her back she could feel the cold hard stone of the well.

Then all of a sudden a gap opened in the circle, a route to liberty, she thought. Then through the gap came the figure of a woman all dressed in black.

For the first time Lesley saw the features of her face, cold white, eyes dead to the world.

It was the face of her oldest friend, Sonya Bell.

From the top of the hill Daniel stood watching in horror at the spectacle below. Quickly he began to run down the hill shouting, “No, stop, are you mad?” his cries were to no avail.

The circle closed in on Lesley. Daniel couldn’t see what was happening; his only concern was to reach his wife before it was too late.

Suddenly the circle of black figures reached the well he heard a scream then all plunged into darkness as all three fires went out.

He stopped running, his bearings were lost. He lost consciousness.

When he awoke he was cold and damp. For a moment his mind could not distinguish whether he was still in Flanders or on English soil. The sun was just appearing over the horizon. All his clothes were damp with dew. His body shivered with cold, then realising where he was and what had happened the previous night he gave another involuntary shiver.

He was lying under the canopy of the great ash tree; his back ached as did his head.

As he sat up his two tired eyes saw something down in the valley. Getting to his feet to obtain a better view he could see a figure lying next to the well.

Moments later he was kneeling beside the body of a woman. From the rising and falling of her rib cage he could see she was alive. Placing a hand on her shoulder he rolled her over, the face was that of Lesley.

“Lesley, Lesley are you alright?”

As she turned to look at him a look of terror came over her face. The two grey eyes looked past him over his right shoulder.

Daniel looked around but could see nothing apart from the ash tree in the distance. What Lesley saw was the figure of her old friend. Sonya was standing over them both.

Silence filled the air for what seemed to be an eternity. The tale had lasted for well over half an hour and was told in such detail that Lee could actually have been there during the events that took place not so far away from where they stood. “That,” Lee finally announced, “that was my Grandfather.” He looked blankly in the

distance. Maddie didn't quite know just what to say. The story was as good a tale as any she had uncovered during her own research. That was it, most ghost stories were only that, stories, passed down from one mouth to another and no doubt embellished on each occasion. This however, if this had actually happened to his grandfather was worth further investigation. Many questions came to mind, the farm for instance, was that real or not, the well also, was that there? The tunnels featured in the story and they were real enough though access to them now was impossible. All this would have to wait for another day, today was for walking. All these queries could wait for a fireside chat over several pints of beer.

At the top of Spout Hill the roadway veered off and headed towards a farm but the public footpath, however, carried on in a northerly direction. Someone, the farmer no doubt, had laid a huge fallen tree trunk across the path. In its centre was cut a slit, allowing walkers easy access but blocking the way for off road motor cycles. The tall trees cast long shadows across the footpath and out into the ploughed field beyond. The ground was soft and waterlogged. Lee marched through the mud, 'the water level must be entering the tops of his boots?' that was at least Maddie's opinion. If it were, he felt no discomfort. Sarah was a little more selective in regard to the path which she took through the heavily waterlogged area. She picked her way through, attempting to stay on the verges wherever possible. The story about the soldier recuperating dwelt on her mind. How much of it was true and how much was embellishment; you could never tell with Lee. Sarah imagined being watched as they walked by that strange spooky girl in the story. It must, she thought, have been quite unnerving for him especially when he was in such a fatigued state. As these thoughts rolled around her mind she became a little paranoid as though someone was watching her. Maddie was only yards in front of her and Lee not too far in front of her but was someone behind them? The desire to look around grew and grew inside until she could resist the temptation no longer. Quickly she glanced over her right shoulder. The entire footpath back to the log which marked the apex of the hill was lifeless, no one to be seen.

Lee stepped out into the sunlight; the thin oblong plantation of tall trees had finally come to an end. Similarly at this end of the path another large log had been placed to deter motor crossers from entering the by way. Now over the brow of the hill, the city of Hull could be seen in full view. The hospital and football stadium were the main two focal points, way off in the distance. The land from that

point to the coast was flat, all of it reclaimed from the sea thousand of years ago. The great cooling towers of the oil refinery down at Salt End could just be made out through the mist which lay along the estuary. From their high vantage point, Maddie presumed that the remainder of the journey would all be downhill or at least on the flat for much of the trail; she would be wrong in thinking that.

Sarah took this brief opportunity to rearrange one of her socks; it had become twisted when a rather vicious bramble had taken hold of it. The stop also gave her a chance to ease the paranoia which was still prevalent in her thoughts. As she turned her head first in one direction then the other she gave the impression of surveying the land around, her eyes though stayed fixed on the path she had just walked. Relieved to see no one there, Sarah readied herself for the next leg.

Sarah's feelings had been correct though she did not know it, the two lifeless eyes which watched their progress as they left the path could not be seen by them. The two visual organs were in fact nothing more than rough stitching in a Hessian sack as was the mouth. All this belonged to a scarecrow which stood precariously perched on a wooden frame in the middle of a field. Its body, arms and legs consisted of sacks stuffed with straw. To add a touch of reality the farmer had dressed it in an old brown suit, a pair of boots made convincing feet. A bundle of twigs tied together sprang out from both arms giving the impression of fingers; straw was sticking out here and there from any loose joint. Judging from the amount of birds in the field the scarecrow wasn't having the desired effect of scaring crows, so why was it there?

"Did you know that this is part of the Wolds Way?" Lee announced as he checked the road for cars before crossing.

"Yes."

He knew Maddie would, of course. After all, this was her walk. She would have spent many hours studying the map, linking the route with her collection of stories. In truth, Maddie had collected the stories and then made them suit the map. By changing the occasional name she made the tales fit the route; all though for the next one she had programmed the path to fit the story.

"Where does that go?" Sarah asked focusing again on the walk.

"From Hessle to Filey, about ninety miles altogether, give or take..." Lee said with a smile.



Wolds Way GR963304

“Have you done that one?” Sarah was thinking how ninety miles would effect her poor feet, this was bad enough, but ninety?

“Next year I thought we could do it.” he was still smiling and for a second Sarah almost opened her mouth in protest, then she saw the slightly wicked gleam in his eye.

“Oh get off with ya?” she said as all three set off into the arch of trees.

## Welton to Skidby

Having rested on the Wolds Way bench turn to your left. The road forks off in three different directions at this point. The route will remain on the Wolds Way for a little while longer, so take the first turning on the left. Passing the council houses, the path starts to rise quite steeply here. On the right you will be able to look down into the Dale which a little while earlier you walked down.

Follow this path upwards. A little further up the rise is where we must bid a fond farewell to the Wolds Way which now heads off toward Melton and its finishing point under the Humber Bridge. Carry straight on up the path until you need to take a sharp left, then a little further a sharp right. To the right is one of the Quarries so it is possible that you may hear the odd explosion.

The footpath at this point runs along the side of a field to the right while Welton Wold Plantation shadows you to the left. On the right Welton Wold Farm comes into view, this signals the return to familiar ground. Cross the private road and turn left, then follow the bank of trees toward Waulby Farm. This is the route followed on the journey down to the top of Welton Dale.

Passing the pond once again, turn left at the sign followed by a right turn to run along the side of the farm. This part of the footpath leads back to the where the Wolds Way and Beverley 20 part companies. The four way sign post will soon be in sight once again. This area can become water logged after heavy rain.

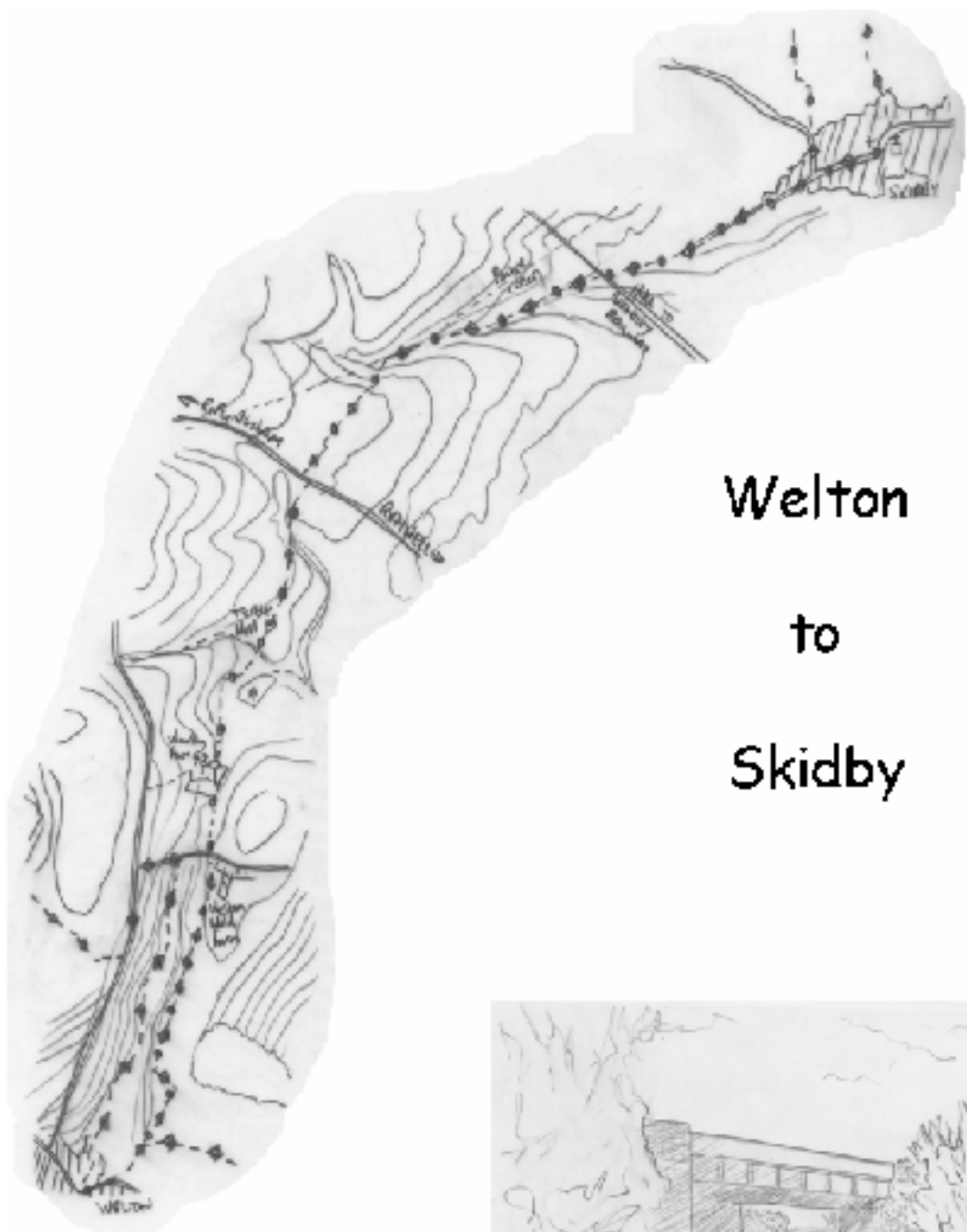
Cross the junction and head in a northerly direction up the hill. At this point an excellent view to the east can be seen. On the right is Nut Wood and looking forward you can see toward Skidby. The track drops down heading toward York Ground Farm. In the field are several sties and normally a large collection of pigs. Passing through the farm yard keep to the left and follow the road up.

At the end of the farm access track the route meets the Rowley to Riplingham road. Here you must make a left turn and follow the road. No footpath is available for this short distance. The footpath continues on the other side of the road and the marker can easily be seen. It is easiest to cross the road here and walk toward the traffic. The road dips so it is not difficult to observe oncoming cars.

At the marker take a right into the field and follow the path. Follow this path around the trees, keeping the hedge on your right. When virtually under the electric pylons the footpath meets a track, Riplingham Road. This is not a marked road, more of a track. Follow the track keeping the hedge on your left. At a large gap in the hedge swap to the other side.

Pass under the old Hull to Barnsley Railway bridge (*pictured below*) and keep walking until you come into Skidby. With Riplingham Cemetery to the right follow the road. At the junction stay right and go up the slight hill. As the road snakes around towards the village hall the old Norman church will be directly in front of you and the Methodist Chapel to the left.





Welton  
to  
Skidby

Hull To Barnsley  
Railway Bridge  
GR996325



Hull to Barnsley Bridge GR996326

# IV



The signpost stood in the middle of the small village green in Welton. Carved into the wooden board were the words 'The Wolds Way'. The village was as picturesque as any to be found in the Dales or Cotswolds. Many of the houses surrounding the Norman church of St. Mary's and the pond were old; hundreds of years old in some cases. The dwellings of a more contemporary age were also 'desirable'. What they lacked in age they more than made up for in size and elegance. At one end of the village was the pub, a large white building with a small collection of tables and chairs nestled in the small beer garden. The early morning quiet was suddenly broken as the three ramblers appeared from around a stone wall. The ducks which inhabited the pond didn't even notice as the walkers arrived, their only concern was finding bread crumbs left over from the previous day.

For Sarah this place would hold few surprises. For the first twenty two years of her life she lived here with her parents. This was the place of many firsts in her short life; first day at school, first boyfriend, her first car; all had happened here in and around this village. With some fondness she recalled her first sexual flirtations which took place on the back seat of her boyfriend's car, parked just up the lane from here. Her initials were carved into one of the trees on the village green, done one summers' night by a previous male admirer. She thought that he would be with her forever, that was never to be. Sarah was intrigued to hear what stories Maddie would provide for this place?

For the other two, Welton didn't hold the memories or emotional attachments which tied Sarah here. Countless times they had driven through on their way into Hull or Beverley, but never stopped to look upon the small green that lay under the walkers' signpost or for that matter sat to rest on the bench. "Right, Maddie announced standing beside the Wolds Way marker, "here's our next story." Around the seat were the scatterings of the previous evening's activities. This location was a favourite for the handful of village youths to assemble. Generally on most mornings a liberal scattering of fag ends would litter the base of the bench, often accompanied by an empty bottle of cheap cider. Today was no exception. Only a foot away from the litter bin was an empty box which had contained twelve cans of lager. Such an extravagant purchase would not

normally be made; an offer no doubt must have been on at the supermarket.



Lee was first to be seated. Sarah, he noticed was usually first to take the opportunity to rest, so on this occasion he made the extra effort to sit down before she could. That morning the group had only walked for approximately an hour and a half and already he had heard one too many ghost stories for his liking. Before setting off he presumed that only a hand full of tales would be recounted each day to compliment their travels, not as many as this though and still so early in the day.

Over the years many macabre tales had he heard sitting around camp fires in various parts of the world. On occasions such as that they were told to try and scare the audience in the dead of night. This was different, not quite the same atmosphere.

Sarah was quite out of breath as she reached the bench. The road down into the village was steeper than she could have imagined and by the time she had reached the bottom the walk had gravitated into a trot and then almost a run. Slumping down onto the seat she felt quite breathless. Her bottle blond hair which hung down over her face appeared even lighter against her red face. “That was a bit steeper than I remember.” She said out of breath.

“Sarah” began Maddie, “have you ever heard of the pub that used to be on Melton Top?”

For a moment she thought, “Err, where’s that?” As a resident of these parts she was genuinely puzzled by the question. Never before had she heard of Melton Top.

“Up in Scout Wood.” It was Lee who put her out of her misery.

The penny dropped, enlightenment shone on her facial features. As kids she and a number of others would ride their bikes up into the wood and, well, do nothing much really. As they got older then the location began to take on a seedier role. Fires and the lighting of them

were naturally the first thing to occupy the minds of the youths seeking sensation. As they grew up a number of her peers began smoking, then the use of drugs became prevalent. It was at that point Sarah and that particular group of friends parted company. In more recent times the location had become a hot spot for the latest craze to sweep the rural community, dogging. Because of its isolation this was a prime spot, as long as the scout camp was not occupied. For Sarah scout wood had always seemed, well, un-natural in some way, too quiet maybe? She had never felt wholly comfortable there though. Nearby were roads and a quarry but when she went up to the camp all was silent, as though standing in a vacuum. “Oh, Scout Wood, you should have said.” Then paused, “did you say pub? No I’ve never heard of a pub up there.”

“Then,” said Maddie, “you’d better listen to this...”

### The Search for Melton Top

The two septuagenarian’s greeted each other with a handshake. They hadn’t seen one another for, what was it now, twenty five years? Much had changed here over the past forty years since they had last stood on this spot. The location for this reunion was Hessle foreshore looking out across the Humber Estuary. Much had changed over the years, the most obvious development in that time had to be the single span suspension bridge which stretched out across the river linking East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Many other things had changed in this part of the county since the two young men had trodden the footpaths and byways that collectively form the Wolds Way.

It was forty years ago that the two old friends had walked the eighty or so miles of the Wolds Way together and now they were about to embark on part of that journey again. Their respective bodies had long ago passed the point of fitness which would have enabled them to complete the full journey but they had to do this last part once more. The stretch between the villages of Hessle and Welton would be re-walked, this time in reverse to their first attempt.

Ian and Neil had been at school together, then trained together as engineers. The War had come along and like all the men of their age they had been sent overseas to fight the ensuing threat posed by the forces of tyranny.

They served together in Burma, both were captured and held in the same POW camp.

After the War they were shipped home. After three years in the tropical jungle they wanted to see the rolling hills of England again and where better than at home in Yorkshire. So, before returning to their everyday jobs they decided to walk the Wolds Way.

Setting off from Filey it took them a week to get close to home. As they passed the village of Welton it was starting to get dark. With only three or four miles to go they wanted to push on and finish it. As they reached the wood at Melton Top the warm, inviting glow of a pub shone out in the darkness. In the dark it was not easy to make out what it looked like but it had two storeys and at least ten windows on the upper level.

“Come on, let’s get a drink.” Neil said enthusiastically.

“Well I suppose it’s too dark to carry on.” Ian replied. No need for any coaxing there. The two young men made for the door and Neil pushed it open in eager anticipation of a sit down and a pint. The door was made up of three panels of roughly sawn wood. It was difficult to see, but in the darkness he could see no sign of a lock. “Strange?” he said to himself as they entered. As the interior become visible to them, their faces dropped in disbelief.

“Are you up for this?” Ian asked Neil. He had always been the fitter of the two. Both were keen sportsmen in their youth with Ian always having the slight advantage over his friend in the more physical disciplines, whereas Neil had the edge over him in games requiring dexterity and skill.

“I don’t know, we’ll have to see. Should be though, we’ve walked a lot further.”

“We were a lot younger then though.”

“That’s true.” Come on then.” Ian led the way, walking off up the foreshore.

Leaving the monument marking the finishing point of the Wolds Way behind them, the two old men set off to find the place they sought. It had been the topic of conversation many times over the years, but neither of them had ever returned to that place.

The two engineers stopped for a moment directly under the Humber Bridge. They stood and looked up in awe.

“Now that’s what I call proper engineering.” Neil commented looking up at the north tower.

“Bit bigger than anything we ever knocked up.”

“Ey. You would know, you did bigger projects than I ever did.”

Ian had stayed in engineering all his working life. Neil however had become a writer a few years after the war. The conflict had left a profound effect on his life and he had published many books based on his own and his friend's experiences.

One mile further up River the footpath turned away from the waterfront and headed up hill and inland. The path was still lined by a bank of trees on either side, but now houses were built almost up to the edge of one side of the path. The sun shone through the branches causing a strange temperature change as they walked through shade to light.

At the top of this part of the track the unmistakable sound of heavy traffic greeted them. In 1948 there was no road here only a farm track. Now the only safe way across the busy A63 was via a steel footbridge a quarter of a mile down the road.

Neil entered the public house first followed closely by Ian. "Oh my God." Ian whispered into Neil right ear. It was the first time ever he had heard his friend use the Almighty's name in vain, or as a matter of fact with any type of reference.

The room was nothing like any public house either of them had ever been in. No pictures advertising brewers products adorned the wall. No horse brasses lashed to leather straps, even the bar was wrong. No pumps, no logos.

As the two twenty something's walked up the bar, all heads turned to view them. Who were these two young men with their strange clothes and bags on their backs?

Neil was the first to the bar. Behind it lay four large wooden barrels lying on their side, all had a tap fitted to the front end and a spile wedged in the top. Ian stood closely behind Neil and was taking a good look around the bar. Most pubs these days had mirrors behind the bar but not this one he observed. Looking round it was clear to him that this pub needed bringing into the mid twentieth century.

No electric lights were to be seen anywhere in this establishment or for that matter any gas light fittings. He supposed that it was quite possible. The pub was high on the hill, miles away from the nearest village. Maybe electric hadn't made it this far out or maybe the supply had been bombed and not yet reconnected. It is a little known fact that Hull and the surrounding area were heavily bombed by the Luffwaffa as they emptied their cargo on the way back to Germany.

The room was illuminated by candlelight only, behind each flickering lone flame was a polished metal plate; the sort of thing that was done in the middle ages. Ian turned his attention to one of the customers in the bar. It looked as though they had made their own cloths. Being from the city, Ian put this down to country living, he knew no better.

“Two pints of Bitter please.” asked Neil in a cheery voice. The thickset barman had a disagreeable look on his rough face.

“Pints?” he grunted. The barman, who was the landlord was more of an ogre than man. His hands were covered in warts and his face was red and blotchy, almost like a plague victim. The towel he carried over his shoulder could only be described as a rag the colour of reddish earth. “Jugs, you mean?”

“Er, yes, jugs.” Neil replied, not wanting to incur the wrath of this man.

The landlord put two mugs down on the bar, they looked home made, rough and irregular in shape. That summed up this place in Ian’s eyes, rough and very irregular. From under the bar his wart ridden hand took a large jug which was in a similar style to the mugs, he turned and filled it from one of the barrels. Once full he slammed it down on the bar, beer slopping over its sides. “Quarter.”

Neil looked at Ian, who returned his blank look. “Sorry?”

“Quarter.” He repeated.

From his pocket, Neil took a hand full of coins. “Er I don’t have a quarter of...”

“That one.” The landlord pointed at the one penny piece in his hand.

For a jug of beer Neil gladly handed the penny over. The two walkers sat down in the corner out of the way. Once seated the locals returned to their drinks and conversations.

“What’s going on here?” Neil’s voice was full of excitement.

“I don’t know, it’s like a throw back to the middle ages.”

“I know, fantastic isn’t it.”

“No it isn’t. We drink up then go.” Ian had a feeling that all was not right here.

“What, he only wanted a quarter of a penny for a jug of ale, we’ve got three left in the barrel.”

The conversation levels around the room dropped to a whisper as the locals intently watched the two newcomers. No one new had come here for years.



“You two.” Shouted the landlord who remained standing behind the bar, “Where are you from?”

“Is he talking to us?” Ian asked.

“I think so, best answer him. If not we might not get out of here alive.”

“Hull.” He answered.

“Hull? What the river? Is that why you wear such strange clothes?”

“Er no, not the river, the city around it.”

“Oh Wyke.” Added a man sitting in the shadows somewhere to the right of the bar.

“Wyke.” The word echoed around the bar, everyone saying the word at least once, followed by a hum of recognition. Neil was something of an historian and knew that before Hull had been granted the Kings Charter almost 800 years ago, the town had been called Wyke. Before Ian could answer Neil butted in, “Yes, that’s right.”

“You’re not local then?” asked a voice. It could have emanated from anywhere from in the mass of bodies hidden in the dark corners.

“This is freaking me out.” Ian said in a hushed worried tone.

“Don’t worry. These people are just a bit different from us, it’s their way.”

“I don’t fancy stopping here tonight.”

“We can’t go on tonight. The footpath in both directions goes through the wood, we wouldn’t stand a chance. If we tried walking tonight we could end up in the quarry. Anyway it’s not that bad here.” The beer was starting to take effect on him, it always hit Neil first, Ian’s tolerance was a little higher.

Maybe Neil was right, after all, they would be under cover here and warm.

The landlord was speaking to what they took for his wife. She was just about as ugly as he was. Were they talking about them, or was it just their paranoia?

The woman disappeared into the back room, her instructions had been given. “Are you two gentlemen having another jug?” asked the landlord. This time his voice was calm and friendly

“Er, yes.” The boys replied almost simultaneously. They didn’t know which was worse, the landlord being friendly or offensive. Neil began to stand to make the trip to the bar.

“No, no. I’ll bring it over yonder.” Once full the landlord brought the jug of beer over.

The brew was not the normal type of ale the boys were used to. It was very watery and there was not the remotest sign of a head on it. It did though have the desired effect on the senses that all good liquor should have. After the second jug Ian and Neil's apprehensions had disappeared and they were quite enjoying themselves, even conversing with some of the locals.

It may have been the effect of the beer, but no one in the pub seemed to know anything of modern day life. The War had not been mentioned. Usually on entering any public place, especially a pub, the talk was of nothing else. Were the locals enjoying a joke at the expense of the two visitors who had so recently arrived in the pub?

"Will you be staying the night?" asked the landlord.

"I think we may have too." Neil said with a smile on his face. This could turn out to be a good night after all.

"You'll have to share."

"That'll be fine." Neil laughed. "I'm sure we can be trusted with each other." Ian joined in the joke laughing loudly. The whole pub also appeared to be in on the joke as a ripple of laughter circled the pub.

Suddenly, the atmosphere changed as the door blew open disturbing the straw lining the floor and forming a pile against the bar.

One of the regulars jumped up and closed the door and the merriment continued.

The last jugs of beer were finished and taken away, only the dregs remained and the two mugs sat on the table. Most of the locals had left now, curiously passing comments such as "have a good night" and "enjoy yourselves." To Neil and Ian as they left.

Only half a dozen remained now finishing their drinks. The two boys would reply politely not knowing what else to say.

The back door behind the bar opened and two young girls came through into the bar. They were in their late teens, probably twins by the look of them, yes definitely twins.

They came out and positioned themselves uncomfortably near Ian and Neil.

"Ah, I see you have met my daughters said the landlord. They will show you to your rooms. Annie, Mary say hello."

Both the girls gave a shy look and quietly offered their greeting. Ian was sure that they had said "My Lords" at the end of the muttered greeting.

"Rooms?" he asked. Though the beer was flowing freely he remained strangely sober. "I thought we were sharing?"

Even Neil in his slightly inebriated state mentally pulled himself together at that point.

“Oh you will be.” said the master of the house.

The two girls led the two young lads out to the back of the inn and up the only flight of stairs. Annie stopped outside a door. “This is your room sir.” She said looking at Ian.

“If this is my room then who am I sharing with?”

“Why, with me sir.” Ian’s eyebrows raised as high as his forehead would allow, the look of shock which he gave to Neil soon changed to a beautiful smile.

Mary was standing at the next door along, “And you’re in here with me Sir.” She gestured to Neil.

The two flimsy doors closed as the couples disappeared into their rooms.

In the bar the landlord drank a mug of beer while his wife cleared the tables. “That’s two new sources of breeding into the village”

“We have to take whatever we can when it comes along.”

The line of trees was on a slight incline and bent round to the right. It had been hard work for the two old men, but they knew that they had to get to the top, their goal was close at hand.

Both of the sixty year olds were becoming increasingly out of breath but a hint of excitement spurred them on. Neither of them had mentioned the pub where they stopped forty years ago, somehow though they sensed that they were both thinking about it. When they had arranged this walk they had firmly in their minds why they wanted to do it.

Both of them were wheezing like a grampus when they made it to the top. They looked around but there was no sign of the pub. There was a building, but that was a camping hut used by the scouts, the purple logo gave that away. A fire had been burning recently, its charred remains lay in a clearing amongst the trees.

“It was here.” said Ian in disbelief.

“It can’t have been.”

“It was, I don’t think I’ll ever forget that morning.”

Neil looked around, “Look at the trees, they’re too old to have grown in forty years. It takes a couple of hundred years to grow this big.”

“So where was it then?”

“I don’t know. I thought it was here as well.”

“It must have been here.” disappointment was in Ian’s voice.

“Come on, Welton is just down the hill, we’ll go and have a pint in the Green Dragon.”

Both men set off once again, “At least its down hill from here.” Neil tried to cheer his old friend up. The thought of going for a well earned pint did that alone.

Neil woke early the next morning. Light was shining through the hole in the outside wall. It was a hole, not a window, no glass protected the interior from the elements.

The bed he woke up in was uncomfortable, hard and itchy. Still lying next to him was Mary. He remembered the previous night. He had drank much but still could remember. How strange it was, the landlord giving his daughters to them, what was the catch.

Getting out of bed he walked over to the window. He could see the river and the patchwork of fields growing all manner of various grains. One thing puzzled him, he was sure a telegraph pole was in the field at the bottom of the valley.

Now in daylight even though the sun had not yet made it above the horizon he could see the room clearly now. The previous night it had been illuminated by candlelight only, one of them still burnt. What a state it was in, it was no more than a barn.

Suddenly he froze to the spot, he could hear someone outside in the corridor.

Two pints of Bitter sat on a circular table in the Green Dragon pub. Behind each glass sat a melancholy man. Both remained silent for several minutes, both thinking of the night in that pub forty years earlier.

“Are you alright Gents?” asked the landlord as he passed, “Nothing wrong with the beer I hope?”

“No. No the beers fine.” Replied Neil.

“We’ve lost something.” Ian said to him.

“Oh yes and what’s that?” asked the middle aged innkeeper sitting down on a stool next to the table.

Neil decided to take up the tale, “About forty years ago we walked the Wolds Way. When we were up at Melton Top, we stopped at the pub for the night. The landlord was, er, most accommodating.”

“On Melton Top?” asked the curious landlord.

“Yes.” Ian said sharply as he entered the conversation. It sounded to him that the landlord didn’t wholly believe them.

“It can’t have been on Melton Top.”

“It was, I can assure you of that. I realise it was many years ago, but it was there.”

“Hold on.” said the landlord, “I’ve got a very good book about the village upstairs, I’ll go and get it. Keep an eye on the bar for me.” He left them alone for a while. There was no need to worry about the bar, they were the only two customers in the pub that afternoon.

Neil stood like a statue trying to make out what was being said outside in the corridor. The voices were muffled, but after a short while he began to get the gist of the conversation.

It was the landlords’ voice that was the most prevalent. “Did they both receive?”

The other voice, he presumed, was the wife’s. It was low and he wasn’t able to make out anything recognisable.

“Did you actually see them being seeded?”

My God, she must have been watching. The door was riddled with cracks. What kind of sick voyeurs were they?

“So if they did then they are ours. It’s only ten minutes until sunrise, then they’ll never leave. Once the sun comes up we will be back home.”

What the hell was going on here? He knew they had to get out now. It was a shame to leave the sublime young woman there in the bed. Last night, what he could remember of it was fantastic.

He had to warn Ian. He couldn’t go out into the corridor, the freak show was out there He and Ian had both been members of the Sea Scouts in their youth, this would stand them in good stead now. He only hoped that Ian had retained his knowledge of Morse Code. Knocking on the adjoining wall between their rooms he tapped out a warning, “Danger must leave now”

Yes he had heard, a reply came back. “Get lost going for another one”

Come on Ian, “danger danger must leave now”

The door of his bedroom opened. He held his breath, Ian came in.

“We’ve got to get out of here, I heard them talking. They’re going to keep us here for their daughters. Get what you can carry.”

“Ok.” Ian had never seen Neil so serious in his life and he knew something must be very wrong. Ian returned to his room and dressed quickly. He looked across at the bed, would it be that bad to stay here with her?

“Come on.” Neil’s whispered voice came from outside the room. Ian tiptoed out to join him. As he did so Annie opened an eye and saw him leaving.

“Father.” She screamed at the top of her voice.

“Hell.” Neil said as the landlord appeared at the end of the corridor, a pitchfork in his hands.

“Where do you think you’re going?” he growled.

“Run.” shouted Ian. Run where? The only exit was down the stairs and that was being blocked by a madman with a pitchfork. There was only one direction to go and that was back into Neil’s room. Mary was sitting up in bed wearing an old nightdress the raised voices had woken her.

She looked at the window and said only one word, “Quickly.” The boys knew what they had to do. Ian jumped out of the window. Neil turned to Mary, “Come with us.” He offered.

“I can’t, it would be pointless, go.” She had saved them, but why?

With a last look round he jumped out of the window, knocking the candle over as he did so. The dry straw on the floor instantly set alight. Mary sat in the bed and watched as the flames went higher, the wood frames bursting into flames in seconds.

The two young men picked themselves up and ran. As he passed the front of the tavern, Ian noticed the sign above the door, The Crusader. As they ran down the footpath, from behind them the voice of the landlord was unmistakable, he was closing in on them. “You two, come back, come back.” That was not the only sound drifting through the morning air, the sound of screaming could also be heard. The screams of the two girls as they burnt to death.

The sun appeared over the horizon blinding Ian and Neil as they ran for dear life. The voice calling after them stopped the moment the sunrise came, as did the screams.

They didn’t look back or stop running until they reached the foreshore at North Ferriby. Both of them were partly dressed such was the manner of their escape. Ian was bare chested, Neil was shoeless, but both were now safe.

“We,” panted Ian, “We, never go back there again.”

“Agreed.”

“What was that screaming and why did the landlord give up the chase so suddenly?”

“I think there are some things we should never ask or talk about again Ian.”

In that moment a silent pact was made.

As the landlord came back into the bar of the Green Dragon he could see two empty glasses on the table, Ian and Neil had finished their drinks. The landlord was eager to show the two old gents the results of his findings but business came first, “Two more pints gents?” both of them nodded agreement.

He brought the drinks over to the table before returning to the bar to collect his book. “This book is about this area. If it’s not in here then it didn’t happen.”

The two customers drank their pints as he looked through the volume. “Ah, here we are. ‘The Crusader’.”

The name sent a chill up Ian’s spine. That was the name of the pub, he had forgotten that. His face turned a ghostly shade of white and he felt sick. “That’s it.” he said in a low tone.

“I can’t see how.” Continued the landlord, “It says here that it burnt down. Over the years locals who have been out walking up in Scout Wood, that’s up at Melton Top on Mid Summers day morning have reported hearing the screams of the landlord’s daughters who were killed in the blaze.

“That’s it.” said Neil quietly, his face now pale. “Those two poor girls died in a fire.” he remembered the screams they had heard as they ran down that hill. “That’s where we stayed alright.”

“I doubt it.” said the landlord, “It burnt down in 1648, four hundred years ago.”

Silently Ian and Neil walked away from the public house. Each knew what the other was thinking, but remained silent.

They were lost in their memories, memories of the two girls they had spent their last night with.

Their quiet contemplation was broken by the landlord of the pub calling after them. They turned to see him holding Ian’s walking stick in his hands. “I’d forget my head some days you know.” Ian joked. It lifted the melancholy atmosphere which had befallen the two men. As they turned, the breeze which had been blowing that day dropped and all was still. Now the landlord’s voice could be heard a little more clearly,

“You two, come back. You’ve forgotten your stick. Come back, come back”

“I’ll never go up there again?”

## Skidby to Walkington

Set off in a northerly direction with the Methodist chapel to the left and the village hall on the right. Head to the end of the street and through the kissing gate. This area is often covered in nettles so beware. The footpath across the field is not well defined, the ground undulates and it is not easy to walk the same route on each occasion. The best thing to do is keep to the left and head towards the gate which is overshadowed by the trees. This field is normally full of cows, so watch your step. Once through the gate follow the path, it heads uphill and footing can be more than a little uneven. You will notice that two nation trails emanate from Skidby, I have walked both routes in the preparation for this book, if you have walked The Way several times it makes a pleasant change to change the route.

Follow the Beverley 20 footpath until Dunflat Road.

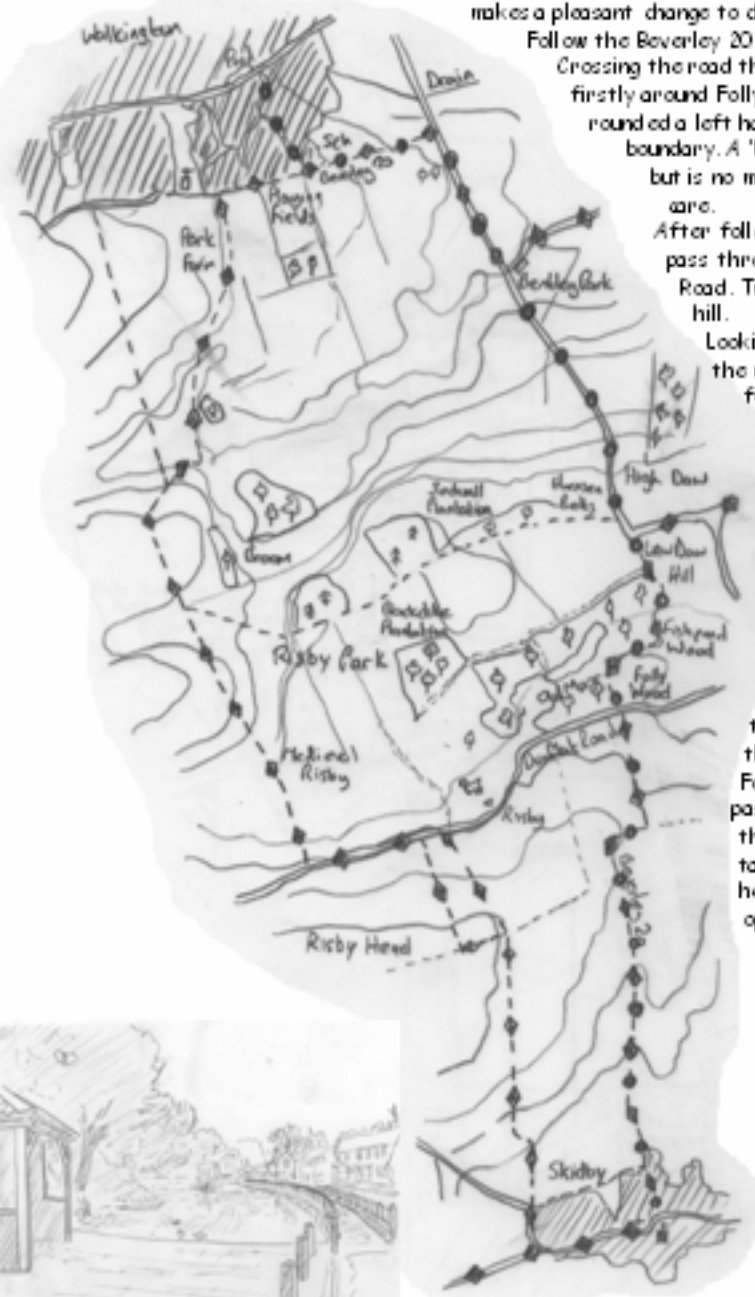
Crossing the road the path leads around a wooded area, firstly around Folly Wood then Fishpond Wood. Having rounded a left hand bend a small dyke marks a field boundary. A 'bridge' is provided to cross this dyke, but is no more than two planks of wood so take care.

After following the path for a short distance pass through the hedge and out onto Bentley Road. Turn left and follow the road up the hill.

Looking up the road Bentley Park House is the main feature. Just after the house a footpath heads east only, if you don't want to walk through ~~Walkington~~ turn right and follow the path through the wood. This path merges in the area known as Broadgates and slightly to the west of the A1079.

For those adhering to the route carry on up the road. Keep an eye out for the walking marker post which will be on the left hand side of the road. It is often obscured by the thick hedge high which runs along the field.

Follow the path under the hedge and passed the School on the right, then as the playing field opens to the left take the path through the houses and head north until the pond appears opposite







V



The morning sun was beginning to strengthen, with each passing minute the air became warmer. It shone in the bright, blue, clear sky like a large yellow balloon. All three walkers had donned their sun hats by this time; on Lee's instructions of course. Having an ex-soldier in the team was reassuring for the two women at least from a safety point of view; though on a more practical level he was thoroughly hard work. He would insist on them putting on an extra layer of clothing on each occasion they paused for a break. It was the correct thing to do; during a break the body still generates heat which is expelled through the skin in the form of sweat. To counteract the heat loss during rest periods all that was required was to don a waterproof jacket. Such a simple act could save a person from becoming dehydrated and in some extreme cases, loss of consciousness.

For Sarah this was just a pain, the constant removal of her back pack served only as an inconvenience to her. Why did they have to put a coat on when the weather was so hot?

Immediately after restarting they were greeted by a steep climb. That made sense, the walk down into the village had mostly been downhill so logically the journey out must be up hill. Maddie could feel the sun burning the backs of her arms; if the sun was having this affect on her now, what would it be doing to her by lunch time? Fortunately for her the footpath disappeared under a canopy of thick woodland giving her respite from the ultra violet rays, at least for a little while. Maddie knew that high on this wooded hill was a mausoleum; it was marked on the O/S Map, so by definition it must be over in that direction. She looked over to the left peering through the trees. Why had she never seen it? A strange thought to enter into her head while doing a walk based on ghost stories. There would be a tale told about such a place, but that would be tomorrow.

Somewhere in the distance the echo of a shotgun being fired brought Maddie's attention back to the present, "Farmers?" she said with a slight hint of disdain, "not happy unless they're killing something."

Sarah had toyed with the idea of becoming a vet on several occasions and tried to avoid meat whenever she could; she liked animals and never really felt happy about eating them. With Luke being in the building trade he liked his meat, which was understandable. His work was physical and he had to keep his strength

up. Constantly climbing ladders and humping bricks and joists around required both strength and stamina, both of which he had in abundance. On the whole, suffering meat was a small sacrifice to pay for being able to snuggle up to her firm, well toned boyfriend every night. She unconsciously smiled to herself as she became nostalgic for him. The upturned corners of her mouth suddenly dropped when, out of the corner of her eye, she saw a scarecrow watching her. So shocked was she that instantly she took in a sharp breath and so loud was the exclamation that Maddie halted dead in her tracks and turned to see her friend looking quite pale. Sarah's hand was raised to her mouth in shock.

"What is it?" her voice was full of concern as the look on Sarah's face would have turned an angel to stone.

"Look over there." She was gesturing to a scarecrow in the field.

Maddie had to agree with her friend that it was a scary looking object. Its body was made up of what appeared to be Hessian sacks crudely tied together around the neck forming a head and at the wrists and ankles. The mannequin was dressed in an old brown suit. Most of its seams and joints ripped apart by the ravages of time. "I wouldn't like to meet him down a dark alley?" she joked.

For Sarah it was no joke, "I've got the strangest feeling that I've seen it somewhere before?"

"Him?" enquired Maddie. Why had she said him, surely it would have been much more appropriate.

"It." Sarah corrected herself falling into line with Maddie's thoughts. Did she mean 'it' no, no she was thinking about it quite specifically, the thing standing in the field reminded her of someone therefore she referred to it as 'he'. The harder she thought the further out of reach the memory seemed to be. The same feeling that she had experienced earlier on the brow of Spout Hill was now filling her stomach once again. The thing that made her stop and take notice was... now she thought about it Sarah could not quite put her finger on that either.

"That's strange." Lee said in a raised voice, he was a little ahead by this time; he had not been party to the exchange between his companions.

"What?" shouted Maddie in his general direction. She was still more concerned with Sarah's outburst than any point of interest he may have to make.

"A scarecrow?" taking off his hat he scratched his head which was now covered in sweat.

“What’s he going on about now?” Maddie whispered as they set off toward him.

Just for a moment Sarah thought her imagination was playing some kind of trick on her. Were Maddie and Lee acting like an old married couple? At their last meeting in the pub the same thought had crossed her mind; was something going on between them? She decided that over the next two days her task would be to find out. No one could keep up the pretence for that amount of time, or so she thought.

“What did ‘ya say?” Maddie repeated herself, this time the question was more of a demand. On occasion the elder of the two women dropped her vowels; she could not keep up the pretence of the bank manager’s wife all the time.

“What, oh I was just looking at that.” He nodded in the general direction of the middle of the field.

“So were we.” Sarah’s face was still pale, the colour still absent from her normally red cheeks.

“What about it?” Maddie wanted to change the subject as quickly as possible; it had obviously had some effect on her friend.

“Did you hear the pop earlier?”

“The shotgun?” it was the elder of the two females who humoured him”

“That wasn’t a shotgun, wrong sort of noise.” If anyone could recognise the audible sounds of firearms in action then surely he was the man. To his ear the pop heard minutes before told him that it was no fire arm. “It’s more likely,” he began, “to be a bird scarer. That’s why I can’t understand why someone had gone to the trouble of making that hideous thing over there.” Again he nodded toward the scarecrow. This time it was he who had to take a second look. Lee was sure, well almost sure that it had changed its stance slightly. He opened his mouth, inhaled and prepared to announce his observation but was stopped short of actually speaking. Was it because he didn’t want to appear to be buying into the whole supernatural thing or was he just mistaken and didn’t want to appear foolish?

“A bird scarer?” Sarah asked. She could see the look on his face. That was how she had felt moments before, she didn’t look back. Whatever had caused such an expression on his face, she did not even want to know.

“Just a cartridge containing a bit of powder, they go off at regular intervals to scare the birds.” Slowly he turned his head away from the field and continued with the walk.



Turtle Hill GR972305

The path at this point descended into a hollow, a curious feature of the land, in the base of which was a large amount of standing water. Depending on the time of year the size of the pool could range from a puddle to a lake which completely obscured the crossroads of footpaths. The signpost, which indicated the four ways, pointed out that two of the paths were part of the Wolds Way; the path heading east travelled down to 'Nut Wood' while the other way was heading north and was known as The Beverley Twenty. The first part of the walk was now over. For Lee it was the best part but still there was plenty of walking to look forward to. The path to Nut Wood held memories for Lee. Every time he ventured past that sign he would recall a sunny day years ago when he had met a young woman riding a horse, that must have been, well before he joined up.

Footpaths were not as common as they had once been years ago; roads obviously formed the main arteries of the communication landscape now. Many local and national trails crossed East Yorkshire and due to the lack of paths they cross and on occasion followed the same route. The Beverley Twenty and The Wolds Way were a fine example of two co-joining paths. On each marker the Wolds Way was identified with the symbol of an acorn, whereas the trail from the Humber Bridge to the Minster in the heart of Beverley was not as yet

so well established and was defined by stickers on existing sign posts. It was the secondary trial which now made up the majority of the rest of the day's walking.

The smell of pigs filled the air as over the brow of the hill York Grounds Farm homed into view. At last they had reached a point where all signs of normal life were not evident, the senses embraced nature and its infinite cycle. For the prize porkers that roamed almost freely, grunting happily in the field, they cared not for the onset of the modern world. The only concern of theirs was the constant topping up of their feeding trough and a supply of fresh straw.

The pungent aroma filled Sarah's nostrils and she felt quite sick. Ever since she was a small girl the smell of pig manure reduced her to a state of nausea. Years ago when she had been no older than seven, the family took a holiday on a farm. She could remember it as though it was yesterday. The accommodation was a caravan, no running water, but electric was thrown in! The caravan smelt of calor gas and something else. Years later she came to recognise it as damp. Pigs were kept on the farm but only as a source of meat for the farmer and his family, not as a business concern. The first time Sarah had donned her Wellington boots and was led by the hand to visit the beasts the smell had hit her like the train which had brought them from the market. She tried holding her breath but could only do that for so long and then when exhaling she was forced to take in another large lung full of air. Breathing through her mouth didn't quell the effect either. Thankfully most of that week was spent away from the animals at other places of interest, none of which she could recall now. Was it only the pigs that had made an impression on her? The pigs and the caravan that is? Her most vivid memory of that holiday was being woken in the middle of the night by her father. She had heard the knock on the door of the caravan, the rapping quickly followed by an excited voice. She could not remember what happened next exactly but she recalled standing on the cold metal fence which surrounded the sty and looking on as the fat pig gave birth to a litter of piglets. They looked nothing like the character Piglet from the Pooh books; the smell was awful, she could remember that clearly.

"Morning." shouted a voice as the trio descended into the farm yard. The florid faced farmer nodded at Lee in a knowing fashion, raising his eyebrows as he cast a glance as the two women followed behind.

"Morning." Lee replied in a matter of fact tone.

Neither of the women said anything to him as both had seen the lurid look in his eyes and could read his thoughts instantly. Both however were diplomatic, simply smiling at him as they passed. ‘Let him think what he wants’ thought Maddie to herself.

Sarah however could only wonder if it had been he who erected that awful scarecrow? If the deterrent was of his making, then he must suffer from a twisted imagination. The creation of such an abomination filled her with an icy chill.

Riplingham Road was a long straight track, any person walking or indeed riding its length would have sworn it to be of Roman origin. The only feature which affected its course was at the western end of the path; a small copse, planted some time since, diverted the path around its perimeter. Other than that, the path was lacking in any feature apart from one that is. What was left of the route ran from the main road which broke off to the heart of the village of Skidby. The village was famed for one thing more than any other; the counties only remaining working windmill. Tourists from miles around would come and view its working mill stones high up in its dome. “Ok,” Lee began, “this stretch is a couple of miles or so.” he said looking at the OS Map. “This will take us into Skidby which is over halfway.” He knew the path well and had no need of the map; the consultation was purely for show. The terrain was not as easy for walking as the first third of the track. After that the surface became much more suited to the walker. Running almost adjacent to the footpath was a line of electric pylons supplying the village. ‘Gas, apparently, was also on tap’. He knew this for a fact; someone had informed him of this domestic wonder on the occasion of his nephew’s Christening. ‘Why?’ he thought, ‘why did the village idiot always pick on him to recount such news?’ “Where are you from?” the conversation began. The opening remark was brash and forward, but to the point.

“Brough.” He replied, trying to keep up the pleasantries, while taking an instant dislike to the man firing the question.

“Are they on gas there yet?” the suited man then asked.

“What?” came his reply almost in disbelief?

The fool in the suit then went on to recount how he remembered the gas line being laid and talked on the subject for several long minutes. It was only minutes, though time seemed to stop in this man’s presence.

Lee didn’t give ‘a monkeys toss’ for the gas pipeline and made his exit as quickly as possible. Now, whenever he found himself



walking through that village his pace would increase a little so as not to fall foul once again of that boring bast@rd in the seventies suit. He knew if he was spotted, the pipeline expert would be out from behind his net curtains like a shot to engage him in some other trivial matter.

For Maddie their next destination held many memories of her own, too numerous to recall; mostly memories which she had suppressed. She was a native of Brough and had grown up in that village, when it could still be called a village. After she and Alistair married a move to Skidby was enforced upon her. On first meeting her future spouse he had held the role of a relief landlord. It had been a matter of weeks after the return from honeymoon that he was offered 'The Half Moon', at the time Skidby's only hostelry. Naturally he had jumped at the chance of owning his own country pub. Visitors came to the village by the bus load to visit the windmill. On hot summer days the pub did, what was generally known as, a roaring trade simply with passing custom. The life of a country landlord took its toll on her husband and after only two years into the lease he showed signs of illness. A landlord works long hours, even more than he should especially in rural areas. Before the new licensing laws came into force pubs stopped serving at eleven o'clock, not however in villages such as this. It was not uncommon to be serving until the small hours of the morning

Alistair was close to a breakdown and became resigned to the fact that he must give up his life as a publican. The reference he received from the brewery was a glowing tribute to his efforts; in particular the testament in regard to his bookkeeping was second to none. The document secured the now departed employee, a future in running the company accounts for the entire firm. After that it was little wonder that he fell into banking. Maddie was pleased her husband had found such a role but she feared that if he had maintained his previous career then the job would have killed him. Returning to Skidby indeed had mixed emotions, they had earned a considerable amount of money during their stay here, but at what cost? Fortunately they managed to move on before the occupation of running a pub could have any detrimental effect on their health or marriage. Maddie had worked out the route and was more than a little apprehensive about returning to the village. The return was a good chance to bury the past and the 'ghosts' which haunted her still.

"How did you meet Alistair?" Sarah asked as they walked along the leafy lane.

"At school, don't you remember him?"

If Sarah was to be plainly honest then she had no recollection of him. "I think so." She sounded unsure and Maddie realised that she didn't remember.

"We didn't really get on at school, I suppose we were in different worlds then and, of course, our two sets of friends didn't really mix. It was once we left school that we actually started to talk; before I knew it we were seeing one another. That was for a while then we just sort of fell into marriage, all that in the space of well, only two or three years I suppose.

On more than once occasion Maddie had told Sarah of how they knew one another from their days at school, Sarah had no recollection of her friend from those days. The elder of the two would assure her that they were the best of friends. For many years Sarah had presumed that Maddie was a friend of her mothers, they looked a similar age. Maybe they had known each other at school, it was a possibility that Maddie had not aged well as she reached her mid twenties, Sarah never mentioned the fact she thought Maddie was her mother's age. "Have you always lived in Elloughton?" she was now fishing, trying to make a link which would hopefully trigger a memory of two.

"No," the darker of the two women bowed her head as she spoke, this was not a subject she wanted to broach, "we lived here for a while."

"Oh that'll be nice then, coming home again." Sarah thought the comment to be an innocent one.

Maddie said nothing; Lee was listening in on the conversation with interest. He knew of Maddie and Alistair's time in the pub trade from things she had told him. At the time he had been somewhere else in the world on active duty and never heard the details at the time, only the watered down version some time later. He turned back and flashed a reassuring smile at Maddie; it was most welcome.

Sarah felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end, what had caused that to happen? Realising that a faint buzz hung in the air, this she thought must be due to the pylons which now where almost overhead. Thankfully for Maddie it drew Sarah's attention away from the conversation.

In the distance protruding over the fields, the very top of the windmill which made this village famous could just be seen. Its sails were still as the air that morning was breezeless. Also the point of reference could be seen by the walkers. Approximately a mile away was a slight embankment and crossing the track was a bridge, the

design of which gave its purpose away immediately. It was once used for rail traffic.

“Ah, there she is, the grand old lady of East Yorkshire, The Hull to Barnsley Railway.” Lee seemed genuinely excited by the sighting. Maddie smiled, she knew what was to come.

Sarah seemed a little puzzled, “Where does it go through Hull?” She presumed that it terminated at Hull Paragon, the only line in this direction was Cottingham and that was several miles away.

“Its not there anymore.” Lee said sombrely. When he was a young lad he could remember the docks packed with ships unloading, freight trains were perpetually coming and going, diesel and steam engines both working the line alongside one another, serving the industrial heart of the county. The work was dangerous; his father had told him a story about a guard on a train who fell from his brake van and was hit by another locomotive. All that industry and now it was all gone.

“The next story is about that railway and that’s our next place to stop, that bridge.” Maddie informed them, pointing at the old construction.

Beneath the arch of the bridge it was cold and damp. The cast iron fall pipe which once would have taken water away from the brickwork was long gone; the elbow joint was all that remained, a sad reminder of a more industrial age when Britain built the world. Again on the damp earth was a reminder of the world in which we live now. For the second time that morning they saw an empty vodka bottle discarded by some youth after an evenings drinking.

Maddie looked around, disdain on her face. Where would they rest for the next tale?

“Hold on.” Lee suddenly jumped into life and shot off under the bridge disappearing around the other side of the embankment.

“Where’s he gone now?” Sarah stepped out of the morning sunlight into the shadow of the bridge.

It took a moment or so until she heard a voice calling, “Hello below!” it shouted. She turned to see Maddie looking up toward the bridge. Standing on the embankment Lee stood waving one arm from side to side emulating the ‘traveller’ character in the Dickens ghost story, The Signalman. Lee had watched the story the previous Christmas and enjoyed it immensely. He felt some empathy with the traveller. Like the man in the book he had been captive for many years and was now free. “Hello below!” he called again, “Come around the other side, you can get up easily.”

Their eyes struggled to adjust to the sudden change of light as they passed through and then out of the bridge's shadow. The path was not evident but Lee instructed them on how to pick the easiest route through the trees and brushes which grew on the embankment side. Standing on the top of the bridge gave them a completely different view of the landscape. The mill was almost in full view; its sails remained motionless and dormant.

The old track bed was dry and dusty, the recent rain having drained away. The engineers who had designed and built this railway knew their trade well. "Right, are we ready for another?" Maddie asked, the story already in hand. "You'll enjoy this one." The comment was directed at Lee.

### The Navigators

*For nearly a century the Hull to Barnsley railway carried both passenger and freight alike, from the coal mine's of West Yorkshire to the East Yorkshire port of Hull.*

*The route taken by the engineers for the railway was fraught with difficulty. The major obstacle was to navigate a route traversing the system of hills known as the Yorkshire Wolds.*

*In many parts it was possible to overcome the difficulties by the use of cuttings and embankments. In three places though, a system of tunnels was dug. The longest of these was Drewton Tunnel stretching one and a quarter miles underground. Many of the men who worked on the project lost their lives through accident and disease. This short tale tells the story of just two of them who didn't die a natural death, but met their end as the result of a more macabre incident.*

In the year 1883 a collection of Irish and English navvies gathered high up on the Yorkshire Wolds. The travelling village of tents was a sight to behold, for it was not only the rough and ready men of the railway company who camped high on the hill but the women and children of their families.

The construction of the line was a five year project and the workers couldn't expect any holidays as the money was too good for them to jeopardise their jobs by taking time off to return home to spend time with their families.

The work was hard and the days were long, every hour of the daylight was utilised to its maximum effect.

The days and weeks merged into one and now in the third year of the construction, days and months didn't matter to the workers. Sleep, work, sleep that's all they knew.

Dates on the other hand mattered a great deal to the engineers running the project. These gentlemen were under constant pressure to keep on target and under budget.

Now the real test of the workforce was to begin. A series of three tunnels had to be driven through the hills. To add to the complications the top half of the tunnel was to be driven through clay while the lower half would be cut out of chalk. The clay would pose no problem and would be excavated easily; the chalk however would have to be blasted out.

At the start of the project gun powder was being used to blow out the cuttings. *Powder* was not a very powerful explosive. A decision was made to try a new type of explosive, nitro-glycerine.

No one realised how volatile this explosive was and several men lost their lives transporting the liquid, not to mention in the mixing process.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1883 work commenced on the longest of the three tunnels, Drewton Tunnel which was to be a whole mile and a quarter long. A series of shafts had to be sunk along the line of the track to the correct depth. The tunnel would then be dug out in short sections linking the shafts. Each shaft also served the purpose of an exhaust chimney for the smoke and steam generated by the engines that would pass through.

The night before the work on the shafts was due to commence, six men decided to sneak out of the camp to find some local entertainment. It was strictly forbidden for the men to leave the camp. They were being paid good money for their labours, plus the fact that bed and board were also provided. The company did not want the efficiency of the workforce compromised by alcohol.

Despite this, these six men walked the two miles down into the village of Little Weighton where the lights of the Black Horse Inn public house shone invitingly.

On entering, the band of men was greeted with silence as the locals eyed them suspiciously. The workmen on the hill were not entirely trusted; they were a law unto themselves. Rumour was rife, sheep and pigs were reported to have gone missing and that was not to mention the farmland they were destroying with their machines.

"Evening Gents." Announced the landlord in a friendly booming voice.

With the acceptance of the landlord to the strangers, the locals turned back to their drinks and conversations. Minutes later the six men were seated while the publican carried a tray containing six pints of ale over to them. The navvies watched him approach; none of them had taken a drink for a year. He put the tray down on the rectangular table.

“Cheers.” said Seamus in his broad Irish accent. Seamus wasn’t his true name; all the navvies had a byname by which they were known. This was for any man who fell foul of the law. No one knew their companions Christian name or any other name for that matter. If they didn’t know their name it would make any prosecution impossible for the police.

Around the table sat Seamus, an Irishman with the gift of the gab. He could charm the birds out of the trees with his stories, songs and jokes.

Digger was a local man, no one knew from where exactly, but the East Riding twang in his voice gave him away as a native of these parts.

Two Irishmen sat next to him, Blaster, who had the job of handling the new explosive and Boneman, so called because his previous job was digging graves in many of Dublin’s cemeteries. The last two men were from either end of England. Piper was from the depths of Cornwall while Miner hailed from the coal fields of the North East.

Each man devoured their drinks with intense ferocity. “You’ll be wanting another?” asked the landlord, knowing the answer before it came.

“Ey’ bonny lad, keep ‘um coming.” replied Miner wiping the froth from his top lip with his sleeve.

“I’ve been waiting a long time for that. So have I.” Blaster said sitting back on his chair.

“It sure is a fine drop of the ale, a gift from the Lord himself wouldn’t you say?” Seamus added to the compliments.

Moments later a second round of drinks arrived at the table.

“You men from the railway?” asked the landlord.

“That’s right Inn Keeper.” Digger replied.

“I hear you’re digging a tunnel through the hills?”

“Blasting a tunnel more like.” Boneman told him in between mouthfuls of ale.

“Blasting, make sure ya’ don’t disturb Brother Samuel.” He picks up the tray and turns to go back to the bar.

“Hold ya’ wee still there,” Miner called after him, “what do ya mean by that?”

“He’ll think Heaven is coming to claim him once I get going.” Lauged Blaster.

“This Brother, does he live up on the hills?” Seamus asked in a quiet voice.

“No, not live exactly.” Said the landlord.

“What then?”

“You won’t have heard the tale of Brother Samuel I suppose.” The landlord pulled up a chair and sat himself down.

“Two hundred years ago the Archbishop of York was making a journey from York Minster to Beverley Minster. He was travelling by stagecoach with four monks. As well as his travelling companions a large chest of money and jewels was on board the coach. Why the Archbishop and a collection of monks were in need of such riches I know not, but...

They stopped here at this very coaching house to change horses and for refreshment. That was not a wise move. In those days the Inn was frequented by highwaymen.

One of them got wind of the Bishop’s cargo, and when they left on the final part of their journey to Beverley, a highwayman followed them.

Once the coach was high up on the Wolds he made his attack. The occupants of the coach were made to disembark and remove the treasure chest.

No one knows exactly what happened then as there have been many variations of the tale told by the travellers passing through. All of them though agreed on one thing, one of the travelling companions was not a monk but a member of the militia appointed to protect the Archbishop.

The guard made an attack on the aggressor and the highwayman fired both his pistols. The guard was shot in the leg while the other shot hit one of the monks, killing him instantly.

The bishop was sent on his way to Beverley with the two monks and the wounded guard.

The highwayman was said to have buried the chest so he could return for it later. He dragged the body of the monk into a nearby copse where it was probably eaten by the wildlife.

The highwayman was caught and put on trial at Beverly assizes two weeks after the robbery but no one knows if he ever came back for the chest or whether it’s still buried up on the Wolds somewhere.

Many from round these parts reckon it's still there because Brother Samuel protects it from fortune hunters. He still stands over it watching for the highwayman to come back to collect it."

Five of the navigators sat still and silent listening to the tale. Digger however let out a large rumbling laugh. "Oh, well that's alright then, I'll keep an eye out for him."

"You shouldn't mock the spirits, he's been seen." Said the landlord, gravely.

"Get my friends another drink landlord and have one for yourself," he said in a cheery voice, "you've entertained us well with your story."

Silently the landlord returned to the bar.

The moon was full as they walked back up the dale toward the camp site. Much beer had been consumed and the walk back took longer than the journey earlier that night.

All were silent as they crossed a grassy field that served as the boundary of the camp. None of them wanted to be caught returning from their evening's drinking because, if they were caught, it would certainly result in dismissal.

Blaster was taking up the rear of the line when all of a sudden he walked straight into the back of a stationary Boneman.

"What the hell ya doing man." Blaster asked in an aggressive whisper.

Boneman said nothing, he just pointed up toward a small clump of trees at the brow of the hill. They were well illuminated by the full moon, a slight mist hung around them.

Blaster looked in the direction of Boneman's index finger. What was he looking at? "What is it?"

Boneman's voice faltered, "The Monk, he was up there. I saw him watching us."

Blaster knew there was no time for this. He pushed Boneman in his back, "Go on," he said, "get up there before we're seen, you've drank too much, that's your trouble."

Had he seen the spirit of Brother Samuel? Blaster hadn't seen anything; it must have been a trick of the light. That and the large amount of alcohol consumed.

The next morning at first light the workers were gathered together awaiting instruction for their day's labours.

Digger and Seamus were shown to a point high up on the Wolds. Their task was to start on one of the chimney shafts. As they started to dig, they heard a bang from down in the dale. It was louder



than any other explosion they had heard before. That must be Blaster with his new explosive said Seamus. Work must have started on the mouth of the tunnel.

The sun had been out and the morning was warm but now a cold mist had descended. As the two men looked above the parapet of the hole the mist had thickened so quickly that the bottom of the dale was lost in a white haze.

Above them about half a mile to the west, a hooded figure silently watched them digging.

Digger's shovel hit something hard. The sound that reverberated from the blade was not the usual clank of the tool hitting a stone or piece of rock, the sound was more of a hollow thud.

On hearing it Seamus turned to see what his friend had hit. "Sounds like wood." Seamus said. The two men looked into each others eyes. Did they already know what it was they had found? Both thought the same thoughts, could this be a box, a box buried two hundred years ago? "Get the earth from round it."

Both men started to scrape the clay away from the top of the box. Their hands were covered in mud and were numb with the cold, still this didn't deter them. With the top of the box exposed, they set about loosening the earth from around the sides. It was slow work; the box was surrounded by heavy thick compacted clay.

Finally, using the spade as a lever the box came free. Digger put his head out of the hole and looked around. As far as he could see no one was in the area. All was quiet, only a crow let out a series of rasping cries.

Seamus raised his spade ready to bring it down to release the lock.

"No." said Digger, "Not here. We carry on with our work; we don't want anyone to become suspicious. At dark we'll take it back to our tent, and then open it."

"Right you are." Replied the charming Irish voice.

The afternoon became colder, the atmosphere heavier Several times Digger felt a nudge in his back; he presumed that it must be Seamus having a joke with him. If it was, then the joke was no longer funny. "Would you mind refraining from doing that?" he eventually demanded.

"From what?" said the Irishman in a cheery voice?

"From jabbing me in the back."

"You wouldn't be having a laugh with me would ya?" he said smiling.

The dig continued, the chimney was now so deep that the debris had to be lifted out in buckets via a ladder. This took time; time was something they didn't have.

"I'll be going to get the big bucket and rope." Seamus eventually said, tired of climbing up and down the ladder.

"Off ya go then." Digger followed his friend up the ladder and watched him disappear into the mist. As he set off back down the ladder his eye caught sight of the chest. He wondered what was in it. Now back down in the hole he had loosened up a foot of earth with his axe. As he stood up straight to stretch his back, he once again felt the jab in his back. That joker must have quietly descended into the pit to play another joke on him.

He turned quickly to confront his friend. Seamus however wasn't there, no one was. A shiver ran down his spine. Quickly he climbed the ladder where he expected to see Seamus throwing stones down into the pit.

Seamus was nowhere to be seen. He was all alone. Not daring to return down the shaft, he sat on the chest. As he stared into the middle distance he could hear the sound of Seamus coming back up the hill. He stood to greet his friend because at that moment in time he would have welcomed the sight of anyone. In the distance he could just make out Seamus coming back up the hill, his silhouette black against the white fog.

The rasping sound of the crow took his attention toward the small copse of trees that sat on the top of the dale. He had not seen any birds flying, but they must be somewhere around.

Turning once more in the direction of the approaching navy he saw, he saw nothing. Where had Seamus gone? He'd just seen him coming up the hill. What was going on today? He sat back down on the box and waited.

"What will ya be doing sitting on ya backside man?" said the cheery voice of Seamus. It brought Digger out of his daydream with a fright. "We've got work top do ya know." He said dropping the large bucket and rope.

"You go down and shovel." Digger said, his face as white as the mist that surrounded them.

"Why would that be?" the Irishman asked suspiciously.

"I was getting a strange feeling down there, I didn't like it."

"You're losing your nerve." smiled Seamus climbing down the ladder into the hole.

As soon as his head was beneath the ground level, Digger started to lower the bucket. Seamus shovelled the muck into the bucket before Digger pulled it up and emptied the contents onto the ever growing pile. The cycle continued most of the afternoon.

Seamus was keen to finish the shaft, so when Digger was too long in returning the bucket he called up the shaft chasing him up, "Come on with ya, ya English woman, get a move on." After waiting for a minute he eventually put down his spade and began to climb the ladder. As his foot hit the second rung he heard the familiar sound of the bucket banging against the ladder on its way back down, "Bout time." he thought.

As darkness began to fall the blade of the shovel hit chalk. The shaft was finished.

Seamus climbed up the ladder to find his friend emptying the last full bucket of clay onto the pile.

"Right, let's get the chest back to..." Seamus looked down in disbelief. The spot where the chest had been was clear, the grass exposed, soil piled up all around it. "Where is it?" he asked.

"What?" replied Digger innocently?

"The chest man, the chest."

"He..." his voice broke off before he could finish the word, "But?"

"A joke's a joke. Now come on where have ya hidden it?"

Digger hadn't, "Me, you must have! I haven't touched it."

"I've been away down in that hole all afternoon, you must have moved it."

"I don't know how you could have moved it," said Digger in disbelief, "but I know I didn't move it."

Both men were convinced of the other's guilt. "You," said Digger, "must have done it." he pushed Seamus in the shoulder. That was the first time he had ever struck out at his friend in all the years they had known each other. Seamus stepped back to steady himself, his back foot landing dangerously close to the edge of the pit. "Well?" shouted Digger at him.

Seamus was not looking at his friend; he was looking over his left shoulder.

Behind Digger was the hooded figure of a monk, his head bowed.

"Well?" Digger repeated once more.

The monk slowly lifted his head to reveal his face. On seeing it Seamus froze to the spot. The monk lifted a hand and as if by some

invisible force projecting from his white finger pushed Seamus into the pit.

The body landed head first, the neck breaking on the hard chalk floor of the pit.

It was ten minutes before Digger turned around. Eventually he did, no one was there, but on the wet ground sat the box.

His heart was beating twice as fast as normal, he couldn't breathe.

The box was heavy, he couldn't carry it back to the camp on his own, he needed a barrow. Within a second he had formulated a plan. He would bury the box in the soil from the shaft then come back later to retrieve it.

That would keep it out of sight while the poor body of Seamus was retrieved from the shaft. He would have to report the accident and have the body removed. The chest could wait until after all that had been dealt with. He picked up his spade and began to move the earth. At 1.00am the following morning, Digger wheeled a barrow up the hill. Periodically he stopped and looked around. He was sure someone was following him. At the top, he looked down the hill again. Maybe it was just his imagination but he was sure he saw something moving in the moonlight.

He would have to work quickly. Picking up his spade he began to shovel. He didn't remember burying it this deep into the pile. For several minutes he dug, the sweat rolled off his forehead but frantically he continued with his work. He stopped to take a breather.

As he looked up there on the other side of the shaft in front of him was a pair of black shoes. Only the toes were visible, the rest was covered in a black robe. He followed the robe upwards. Around the waist was tied a rope belt, holding the garment in place. Further on up the face of a man was obscured by a hood.

It was the figure of a monk. Digger froze in abject terror. The monk lifted his head; his face was still obscured by the hood. He raised his arm and pointed a finger over Digger's shoulder.

Shaking like a kitten he slowly turned to see the blade of Seamus' shovel falling through the night air. It struck him in the temple killing him instantly. His dead body falling into the shaft.

“So that's what those things are on the way to Beverley.” enlightenment dawned on Sarah's honest features.

Lee raised an eyebrow a little; did she really not know what they were?

Lunchtime was only an hour away as they walked past the little cemetery which marked the boundary of Skidby. The centuries old burial ground was now neighbored by more contemporary housing, red uniform brickwork for as far as the eye could see.

By this time in the morning the second wave of life had emerged from the mixture of nineteenth century and more modern housing. The early morning Majors and dog walkers were now gone and the village was awash with people mowing their lawn or cleaning the car. The stereotypical activity of the Sunday morning male. No doubt they would be expecting a roast dinner waiting for them on completion of their morning's task. No such luck for the three walkers, they still had several miles of footpath to walk that day and of course, today was Saturday.

The heart of the village consisted of two very different churches, a village hall and of course a pub. On one side of the road was a small Methodist chapel, Lee could remember well the conversation re the gas pipeline which he had been subjected to within those walls. Its interior was so capacious that it could only hold a handful of worshipers at any one time. In comparison, on the other side of the snaking road was the centuries old Norman church sitting in its grounds, surrounded by trees. Through the foliage Maddie could see the clock mounted on the tower, the time read five past eleven, what? Was that all the time was? Surely it must be later? Her stomach didn't agree with the old time piece. Groaning noises were emanating from the direction of her midriff, time for lunch?

Sarah agreed whole heartedly. If there was one thing she liked more than drinking, it had to be eating.

"Right then, coats on." Lee instructed the two women as they began to forage in their packs for packing up boxes.

"Are you mad?" Sarah said. She was hot, though not realising just how hot until she removed her pack. The wet t-shirt she wore clung to her back as the air came into contact with it, suddenly it became much colder, almost unbearable. It was then that she realised Lee may actually know what he is talking about.

"Come on, you'll get cold and start to lose too much body heat." He had already donned his own waterproof. That particular garment was always at the top of his bag, ready for stops and sudden changes in the weather.

Sarah and Maddie made themselves at home seated on the grass and utilising the dry stone wall which surrounded the church for both shade and support. Sarah was the first to open her packing up. Covering all the contents was a white paper napkin which she used to handle all her food. The plastic tub contained an egg and cress sandwich, yogurt, apple and banana. Only after eating the banana did she notice that it had completely slipped her mind to pack a spoon. Fortunately for her Lee could supply the cutlery, a knife fork and spoon set was always in one of the many small pockets which lined the outer surface of his pack. The contents of Maddie's box were a little grander than her friend's. Sarah eyed up the contents with envy. Contained in its interior was a whole cooked chicken breast, the meat cut up into long strips. There was also two cherry tomatoes, an easy peel orange, three small boiled potatoes and half a bar of chocolate. Maddie's napkin was linen, red and white gingham checks, obviously from a picnic set. "Oh, I don't know what I was thinking I'll never eat all of this." She held the box out in front of her and instructed Sarah to, "Help yourself." Which Sarah did, no second invitation was required.

Lee also sat on the grass, though not against the wall. He preferred to sit cross legged. Beside him was his rucksack from which he took a bag made of some kind of coarse material. Untying the string which was around the top of the package, he unwrapped what look like a large handkerchief. In the centre was a large piece of belly pork, accompanied by a generous helping of crackling. Out of his bag came a sheaved, fixed blade knife which he soon had drawn and began to carve up the pork. In only a few moments the joint of meat was carved and consumed. The cracking was saved until the end of the feast. The crunch of it was so loud; Maddie could feel her own teeth hurt. Returning the knife to its leather housing and into the bag, he took a large mouthful of his energy drink from the aqua pack. Jumping to his feet he stretched and looked around the village.

The women couldn't believe that he could have eaten the slab of pork so quickly, they were in no rush.

From the interior of the church the old pipe organ sprang into action, someone must be practicing for the service tomorrow. Lee by this time was walking absent mindedly in and out of the trees. Maddie produced a small plastic salt cellar from her pocket and gently dusted the remainder of the chicken. "Do you want a little more?" Sarah took another couple of pieces. As she put them into her mouth the salt was sharp on her tongue but the combination of flavours was heavenly.

“What is that?” Maddie suddenly said looking around the almost empty road and green. She could hear something over the muffled chorus of Joy to the World. It was not unlike the sound of a stream running over rocks or a hosepipe watering the lawn on a summer’s afternoon.

“What’s what?” Sarah answered, licking her salty fingers.

“That noise, like water running. Can’t you hear it?” Maddie was looking into the middle distance channelling all her concentration into listening. There was no stream or pond here and the sound had no echo as though coming from a drain. A look of relief swept over Maddie's face as enlightenment dawned. Lee had stepped out from behind one of the numerous chestnut trees in the act of fastening up his trouser zip; a smile of relief was also on his face. What a typical male he was. In her mind she thought it was only small boys who ‘went’ behind trees. “Really?” she hissed at him, we are in a church yard.”

Sarah quickly turned to see him standing there proudly smiling to himself. He reminded her of her own little brother who would wear the same cheeky smile after doing something naughty. She had once found him walking around her bedroom wearing one of her bras. It was that smile he wore then she could see facsimiled on Lee’s face now.

“At least it wasn’t up against a gravestone.” He made light of the situation. When he thought of some of his evacuation habits in the past, in the field or the middle of a war zone you didn’t have time to stand or sit on ceremony. Some stories he could have told Maddie would make her hair curl, if it hadn’t been already.

Sarah found the comment highly amusing. Her cheeks turned red with embarrassment but was it because she laughed at his off handed joke or because she knew that he had taken a leak against a tree? Whichever, she found it funny enough to laugh out loud.

“I take it you’ve finished troughing?” Maddie asked him.

Firmly patting both hands on his stomach he replied, “Oh yes.”

“Well we haven’t, so if you don’t mind would you kindly refrain from urinating next to us.” Though the comment was clearly a shot across his bows, Sarah got the impression that a certain amount of affection was contained in her voice. This again prompted her to question that their friendship was not purely platonic.

“I’ve got a ghost story for you, if you want it of course. I thought it may pass a little time while we eat.” Lee announced, sitting

down once again as he spoke, knowing that he would have to wait a little while longer for the next leg.

“Is it a true story then?” Maddie said eyeing him suspiciously. She had seen that glint in his eye before, it was the signal for Tom Foolery, normally anyway.

“Well, why don’t you decide for yourself? It isn’t about Skidby I’m afraid, but about an old man who lived in Brough...”

### What a Way to Go...

He watched and listened with interest. Recently he had found that eavesdropping on conversations could be rewarding in many ways. Much knowledge could be gained on all manner of subject matter. Normally, matters of gossip mainly focused on someone who wasn’t in the room but sometimes the braver seasoned gossip would talk of someone in their orbit. Whilst talking they would firmly keep an observant eye on the subject ready with a knowing wink or cough to indicate the approaching danger.

He mingled, many a good tale was being told for the reason of this gathering. The occasion was one which he always had a feeling of discomfort. Pleasure was much more his standard emotion, but here he always felt a twinge of guilt at showing even a smile.

As far as he was aware, many of the people in the room faced such a dilemma. Some however laughed out loud, one man in particular. He was a large framed, portly faced man. His voice was the loudest in the room and as usual he could be heard saying such things as, “He knew him *very* well,” or, “Of course I helped in his career greatly. The advice I gave him stood him in good stead.” Etc, etc. The man went on.

Most people here were dignified, quiet and respectful. He did enjoy a good wake.

Looking around he could see most people gorging themselves with all manner of drink and fare, no one really cared, they weren’t paying. The one who was today’s benefactor had no more use for his money as he was rich anyway.

The assembled mourners were here to celebrate the life of inventor, author and satirist Albert Morris. He was the textbook mad scientist. His outward appearance was shabby. The untidy hair which sat on top of his head had not seen a comb for many a year. All his money had been spent on his inventions, experiments and his day to day living costs. Never really had he looked up from his work to



notice the temptations of modern living. The car that stood on his drive was the same Mini he had bought in 1966.

On occasion, members of his considerably large family would remove him from his world and take him out for dinner, normally at Christmas or birthdays.

He though, was always much happier with his work.

Every day in the post, envelopes would arrive, be opened and the cheques contained within would be put between the fruit bowl and the fireplace wall. When a collection had amassed he would take them to the bank.

His income was considerable, while his outgoings were miniscule.

All at that wake knew that, but what would happen to his money? An appearance was needed just in case; keep in with the family.

The party was now in full swing and most of the fabulous buffet was gone; only the odd celery stick remained on the empty plates. The bar bill was mounting, then, at precisely three o'clock someone tapped on a glass like the toast master at a wedding reception and called everyone to attention. A silence fell over the room. Standing at the back of the room he waited to see the reactions of all present to the reading of the will.

A small man stood at the opposite end of the room, he was a soberly suited man with slicked back hair and tortoiseshell glasses. In his hand he held a piece of paper.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he waited for absolute silence before continuing, "I am here in my official capacity as Mr Morris's solicitor and I will be following my client's express wishes by reading this document now.

Mr Morris was quite specific on the arrangements for his own internment. I have to read the following statement left by him." He cleared his throat before beginning. "This is my last message to the world. Albert Morris, the man everyone called a crackpot and crank, but made a fortune is dead. You know I am dead because you're here. I know the room will now be full of people waiting to hear what I have done with my money. All of you mocked me at sometime or other during my life but now you're here, so here are my final words. Not being a believer in the Almighty, I have left instruction that the coffin that travelled to the crematorium was filled with all my notes and books, they went up in smoke, none of you will profit from my work. My body has been recycled, used again.

The money in my bank account, however much it was, the last time I checked it was over two million pounds, was also in the coffin.”

A look of shock passed over the faces of those assembled in the room, everyone that is apart from one smiling figure at the back.

The solicitor continued, “Oh, yes, one last thing. I started to say that my body has been recycled. My good friend Ian, who is the village butcher, made a quick million by cutting me up and serving me in the food you have been eating here today.”

The room erupted in panic. Several people vomited where they stood, some drank vast amounts of whatever liquid they could find while many ran to the bar or out of the room. The figure at the back laughed, “Oh I do enjoy being dead, you always have the last laugh.” Albert Morris announced.

Maddie was in the process of raising a sausage roll to her mouth. On hearing the conclusion to the grim tale she stopped the motion and returned the snack to her lunch box.

“That’s not true is it?” Sarah thought that Lee had made an excellent case for it being given to him first hand. As soon as she realised the words must have been spoken to him by the dead man, an embarrassing tinge of crimson entered her cheeks. She knew that once again she had put her foot right in it.

Though Lee wanted to say that it would be difficult to have been told such a story by the person concerned he let it go.

The stile which marked the end of Church Lane was covered with nettles, in fact, little of the wooden structure could be observed.

This was another effect of the recent rainfall and brilliant sunshine. In



turn they crossed, Lee traversed the obstacle first. He made it look easy, so Sarah jumped in front of her friend. Several ‘ou’s’ and ‘ows’ later she landed on the other side. The lower half of her legs were covered with tiny white lumps where the stinging nettles had brushed against her. Why was Lee not affected? He must have skin like leather. Maddie also did not come away unscathed.

The sun was now at its highest point in the bright blue southern sky. The sweat under Lee’s hat had changed the colour of the fabric from its light brown to a more chocolate shade. Maddie was also feeling the effects of the heat, her back pack felt uncomfortable. The moisture coating her back cooled over the lunch break and consequently when she put the bag back on, the sensation of ice cold water being thrown onto her ran across her shoulders before heading southwards. She then realised that the bag was not sitting correctly.

In the rough undulating field the dozen or so cows lay down, their tails slowly swinging from side to side, swishing away the army of flies which hovered around their rear ends. Even the bovines were felling the effects of the heat that mid noon. Even though a liberal amount of factor twenty five had been spread on, Sarah could feel her exposed arms and legs beginning to fry. She wondered how long she could continue in the heat, “How far is it now?” her voice was no longer filled with enthusiasm, but slow and tired sounding.

“The next stop is Walkington, then over the Westwood into Beverley. So we’re well over half way now.” Maddie told her trying to cheer her up.

“How far over half way?” Sarah tried to hide the anxiousness in her voice. The truth was that she couldn’t manage another mile never mind the same again. The heat was draining her of all her energy reserves at a staggering rate. The pack on her back seemed to be twice as heavy now. Her legs hurt and her long blonde hair was a mess. Solace though was in sight. The footpath appeared to be vanishing under an avenue of trees; at last a little protection from the sun. At the entrance to the tree lined walkway she could see what looked like a man leaning on the metal five bar gate which was there for the sole purpose of preventing the cows from entering the shaded area. She couldn’t make out any of his features; the heat haze was rising from the field. This weather had set in for the day; Sarah looked into the azure blue sky, her own eyes mirroring its deep colour. Not even the tiniest wisp of a cloud could be detected anywhere from one horizon to the other. “Oh?” she thought, looking down once again; she could no longer see the man standing there. It must have been a trick of the light, a mirage. This was not the first time Sarah had seen such a thing. She remembered back to when she was a young girl, looking out of her bedroom window on a hot sunny day and seeing a silhouetted figure of a deer in the trees which stood at the back of her house. It was only visible from her window, if you moved the illusion was gone, was this a similar thing?

Lee could feel the drop in temperature instantly; it was pleasurable after the explosion of the midday sun. Holding the top bar of the gate he unhooked the chain which held the post. The metal was cool under his skin, though it had no effect on his overall core body temperature; the aluminium was a welcome relief on his hot hands. A shiver suddenly ran down his spine and he instantly knew that his ‘sixth sense’ was nudging him. He could not explain the phenomena, but many times when out in the field a similar sensation had overcome him, nine times out of ten, on investigation, he would find one of his men in difficulty. He turned to see Maddie following closely behind and despite her red face she seemed in good health. Gazing beyond her Sarah was bringing up the rear. Watching her closely, he could see the expression on her face was one of pain. Instantly he diagnosed the problem, lack of fluids. How many times had he seen it before?

Quickly he rushed back to the young girl and put her arm around his shoulder. She seemed a little dazed at the sudden attention, but offered no protest.

Maddie watched the events unfold with a sense of shock, “Sarah are you alright?” she asked with a concerned tone as the intertwined pair shuffled past her into the shade.

It appeared to Maddie that Lee was now running on automatic pilot; an efficient commanding officer looking after the troops under his command. He sat Sarah down leaning her against a tree and then with a couple of swift moves, his rucksack was off and he handed the tube from his aqua pack to her, “Here suck on this.” The statement was serious though he knew it would be taken as a light hearted comment by her, or at least that was his intention. He, like all men found her attractive and welcomed the chance to utter such a suggestion to her, even if it was only in jest. Sarah drank heavily from Lee’s pack, “That will sort you out,” he assured her, “it’s full of sugar and carbs.”

Maddie was crouching down beside her holding her hand and fretting like a mother hen around her chicks. “Are you alright Sarah?”

Sarah didn’t know. One minute she had felt fine, the next Lee had his arm around her then she was sitting against a tree. The bark was uneven and poked into her back. Lee’s arm had been rock solid, like a stone. He was strong, in all likelihood Lee could have picked up the waif like Sarah with one arm, popped her on his shoulder and walked off with her if he had desired. The experience for her had not seemed all that unpleasant.

She did enjoy the feeling of a well toned body pressing against her.

What was she thinking?

Maddie would kill her if she knew the thoughts running around in her mind. No, no she wouldn’t, probably.

Sarah was still a little disorientated. The feeling of something being wrapped around her brought her back to the here and now; Lee had taken out his waterproof and draped it around her shoulders, “Here keep this on.” She heard him say.

“I’m alright now.” The energy drink contained in Lee’s pack had worked wonders, the effect was instant. She did feel much better, in fact the urge to run was filling her, not only run, but run for miles.

“No your not, keep drinking.” He told her, his voice was calm, but insistent. “You haven’t taken on enough liquid, so you have become dehydrated. Drink as much of this as you can.” Lee left Sarah

where she sat and walked the few steps over to Maddie who was now sitting on the five bar gate.

“Is she ok?” Maddie did not take her eyes off Sarah for a moment.

“She’ll be fine in a minute or two.”

“I’ve been thinking,” Maddie said unfolding her map, “We could skip Walkington and go straight onto the Westwood.” The painted nail of the right index finger pointed the way.

“No, she’ll be fine.” He said glancing over to her. Even with sun tanned cheeks she looked a little pale.

For the next mile or so, Maddie took the lead and set the pace. Of course it was much too slow for Lee’s liking, he did however want to keep an eye on Sarah and the thought of watching her rear for a mile or so was not an unpleasant one. The formation was kept for almost two miles. Up and out of the covered tree line, along a track, over Dunflat Road and around Folley Woods. This leg of the journey must have been the quietest of the day. Sarah had held a drinks bottle in her hand intermittently taking a sip. The only one of the three who had uttered a word was Maddie turning and asking Sarah if she was ok? Lee could not help but think that it had been such a shame that Maddie had never had children of her own; she would have made an excellent mother.

The footpath came to an end as it reached the Bentley Road. The walk determined that they head north at this point. The road undulated from that point to the crossroads. Many dips and humps could not be seen, only the apex of the hills was visible due to the heat haze. The hill gave the illusion of floating in a shimmering lake; to Maddie she imagined it to bear a resemblance to Avalon the day Arthur made his final journey.

Sarah had removed her pack and was busy searching through its contents. “Are you alright?” Maddie asked, concerned that she was searching for tablets or drinks.

“What, oh yes, fine now thanks.” Sarah’s face was once again awash with colour

“Do you need anything?” her friend was about to remove her own pack ready for Sarah’s request but as she unsnapped one of the fasteners Sarah reassured her that it wasn’t necessary. On the ground lay a water bottle and i-pod, Sarah was prepared.

“I thought I’d listen to some tunes for a bit, it might help me concentrate.” She put the two white speakers into her ears and turned

on the machine. The slightest ching-tikka-ching came from them as the first of her favourites play list began. "Are we off then?" she said in an unnecessarily loud voice.

Lee nodded, at which point she turned on her heels and made a brisk pace up the first of the rises.

The road was not a busy one, its only function was to serve a small village; the other route had been made inaccessible some years ago by the building of a main road feeding Beverley from the Humber Bridge. Because of the sparseness of the traffic Lee and Maddie were able to walk along side one another. It was much easier to have a conversation that way. Talking to someone at your rear was never the easiest of ways to maintain continuity.

"How's life been treating you then?" it was she who opened the conversation. Did she really want to know? The answer to that was no, why had she asked?

"Since..?" he was quietly spoken, half afraid that they may be overheard.

"Since you went away." this was a conversation long overdue, a conversation neither of them had wanted to enter into on their previous walks, or at least not had a chance to.

"Oh you know; army life and all that." He was a believer in the past staying in the past, he knew too much about reopening old wounds. "I kept busy, training for two years, then out in the field protecting and serving."

Maddie knew all that, she had read the letters he had sent. "So you left and forgot all about your old life. It was easy for you." She knew that wasn't wholly true, it was however a cheap swipe at him.

"You didn't reply to any of my letters; I didn't forget, I never forgot." He forgave the dig at him; after all she was more than entitled to do so.

"How could I, if Alistair had found out well I don't know what I would have done. I burnt the letters; what else could I do?"

Maddie and Alistair became an item in their teens; they had always known that they would stay together for ever by the time they reached the age of sixteen. They were inseparable and not only them, but their respective families. On several occasions they had holidayed together and even spent a Christmas in each others company. It was a foregone conclusion that they would become engaged, married, have children and probably be together until they died.

“I’m glad you’re still with Alistair.” He was genuinely pleased that they were still together; that they had a bond which no one could break.

“He’s a good man, much more of a gentleman than you ever could be.”

“Yes, yes you’re probably right.” He smiled at her and she returned his smile; after all, once they had shared something wonderful.

“No probably about it.” Her voice was a little lighter, her expression not quite so hard.

“You never had children then?” was he taking a step too far with that question? He did really want to know, deep down.

“No; no after what happened I couldn’t have any more.” Her voice almost broke. A single tear ran down her cheek. The memory of loss still hurt.

“Sorry, I shouldn’t have asked.” he felt as low as he could go emotionally. He had heard something on one of his visits home but hadn’t been brave enough to contact her. It would have been too complicated with Alistair ever present. He had written, but no reply came. On several occasions he had picked up a telephone and started to dial the number but never had the courage. On one occasion in the Gulf when under fire, the chances of survival were almost none existent, he wished, preyed even, that he could have put a closure to the affair. Then, as time moved on, once again his nerve escaped him.

Maddie sniffed and wiped away a lone tear, “Oh that’s alright,” she said, not looking at him, “hay fever.” She lied.

“I never regretted it you know, what we did.” Now he couldn’t look her in the eye. It was something he had to say.

Maddie thought for a moment. How had she betrayed Alistair for a short dalliance with Lee. It was only ever with Lee, never again did she stray in all their time together and she knew that she never would again. “No, neither do I.” she said consoling herself with a happier memory of their time together, in a corn field on a hot summer’s afternoon, very similar to this one. The only things that saw them there together were the birds and a scarecrow.

“Are you happy? It was Maddie who broke the silence after a couple of minutes reflection. She had had time to compose herself now after the sleeping memories awoke moments before.

Sarah was a few paces in front of them singing away to herself, the words and tune unrecognisable, at least most of the time.



“I suppose so.” Lee said. He had never stopped and thought about it before, “I get by. My army pension is substantial and I have enough money from my consultancy work.”

“No, I’m not referring to money, are you happy with how your life turned out?”

He thought, “I do regret some things from the past. I’ve seen people killed in front of me; my friends. They will always haunt me until the day I die.

Some decisions I have made were also wrong. That seems a long time ago though now.”

She felt as he did, full of regret, but also glad in a way that things turned out as they did.

“Sarah!” Lee shouted. She didn’t hear, so engrossed was she in her music. “Sarah!” he bellowed again. This time she turned to look.

Removing one of the speakers from her single pierced ear she waited to hear what had been so important to draw her away from the music, “Yes?”



Walkington GR006370

Lee made a gesture with his arm indicating that a left turn was required.

She hadn’t even seen the gap appear in the hedge; maybe she had been paying a little too much attention to the play list. The gap in the hedge was a neatly cut archway (easily missed) and once she looked, she saw a wooden sign post bearing the legend B20. The flora and fauna of the thick hedge had almost obscured the post from view. The rain and sunny periods had also worked its magic in this part of the world, “Wow! The

Secret Garden?” the memory of childhood floated to the top of her memory pile. Such a good story and just like this, if an old gas lamp had appeared inside the hedge it could have also looked as though the path had come straight out of Narnia and expected to meet some kind of Fawn, instead the sleepy village of Walkington awaited them.

# VI



Only the occasional car passed through the village of Walkington, disturbing the several species of duck which made their homes in and around the pond. The heavy collection of birch trees were as still as stone, no breeze was in the air to rustle their leaves. The summer almost seemed wasted on Walkington. The old gas lamps, now converted to electric, which lined the main street took on a whole new life of their own in the fog laden snowy days of winter. No need for such things today. From one of the many streets that ran off the main road the happy chimes of an ice cream van drifted across the air like a modern day Pied Piper calling the children to follow. It was a very weary Sarah who sat down on the park bench which overlooked the duck pond. She knew that it was time once again to apply the sun cream, though it had only seemed moments before that she had the tube out of her bag. The backs of her legs had suffered the worst; the skin on her thighs and calves was becoming tight, the top of her arms also were a bright shade of red. None of this she could observe for herself as for some time now the sun had been at their back, casting a short shadow forward. They were heading in a northerly direction with the sun now due south. Lee let out a lung full of air, his bottom lip protruding, he forced the exhaling air over his sweat covered face, cooling it as it passed over his rugged features. "Hot enough for ya?" he asked the women. Maddie sat next to Sarah on the bench; she landed with a bump as the exposed skin of her legs touched the hot wooden laths. They almost burnt, even the bench was hot. Her face was glowing pink; she too was feeling the effects of the sun. For a moment she sat quite still before opening her pack, taking out her water bottle and taking several small sips. Even when desperate for a drink she could remain ladylike. Sarah however had no inhibitions; she drank thirstily from her own bottle before removing her hat and emptying an amount over her straight blond hair. The water ran down her face and trickled from her chin onto the wet white t-shirt which she almost wore. Lee looked as fresh as he had on leaving Skidby. He stood almost to attention; his feet shoulder width apart, his posture perfect. "How are we doing then girls?" he asked, "You should be putting your coats on you know."

Maddie interrupted him, "Oh give it a rest. We'll burn up if we put our coats on." She turned her attention to Sarah who looked surprisingly well considering the wobble she had had earlier. "Are you still alright?"

Sarah took another mouthful of water before replying, “Yes, fine.”

Maddie slowly bent over and took out a handful of A4 paper sheets from her bag, “Here,” she said holding out the papers towards Lee, “You look better than we feel.” Lee took the papers from her and thumbed through them. He saw that it was one of the longer tales. “It should cool us down; it’s set in the middle of a bad winter.”

Lee was comfortable with public speaking, but not reading. He had lectured many times but that was speaking with notes, reading gave no room for manoeuvre, no ad libs. He had already read one of the stories that day; he was hoping that would have been enough. Obviously not, so he took a deep breath and began to read...

### The Medium’s Note.

A heavy carpet of snow covered the rooftops and gardens of the houses in the village of Walkington. The flakes of snow shone like the lights illuminating the duck pond.

It was a cold night; the main street of the village was deserted, all of the residents deciding to stay in doors in front of their televisions, heating on full. Only one small dark coated figure left footprints in the clean white snow. The figure was hooded and carrying an old carpetbag. Slowly it moved along the footpath looking at each front door in turn before once again shielding its face from the driving snow and walking to the next abode.

Finally the figure opened one of the wooden garden gates and made its way up the path. A dark gloved hand brought the hammer on the door knocker down three times.

The three bangs echoed through the house. One of the occupants jumped out of her chair on hearing the sound. The other two cast worried glances at each other.

The visitor was expected.

Two weeks previously the three sisters who lived at Rose Arch Cottage were spending a quiet Sunday afternoon at home.

Louise was outside, wrapped up against the cold winds of early December. As she gave the rose around the door its final prune of the year, the wind was so strong it almost blew her off the step ladder.

In the kitchen Jo was peeling a selection of vegetables recently harvested out of the cottage garden, ready to make a batch of soup.

Rebecca, the third sister was sitting at the dining room table updating her collection. Rebecca was a fanatic on local history. She had amassed several books filled with all manner of postcards, photographs and newspaper cuttings about the village, both past and present.

Not much information was available on the village. Only occasionally would a photograph or news article come to light.

Rebecca had spent an evening on the internet the week previously and subscribed to a historical website concerning itself with the history of the many villages in the East Riding of Yorkshire. She was extraordinarily excited by her findings, but didn't tell her sisters of the information she had uncovered. A hard copy of all the relevant newspaper cuttings and reports had arrived in the previous day's post. This was the first opportunity she had had to really go through it. The reason for her excitement was that the story she had found actually concerned the very house she was sitting in, their home.

As she read through the documents her excitement subsided and a more sombre emotion swept over her. Not only that, but the names in the documentation she knew. One of the named people in the sorry sequence of events listed was their own mother.

The first piece of paper she decided to read in detail was a newspaper report. The headline was the strange leader, 'Death at a Séance.'

The newspaper article was dated 21<sup>st</sup> December 1939. It told of how on the winter solstice three sisters invited the medium, 'Rita Patterson' into their home. The reading to be given was to ask the spirits if their men folk would return from the battlefields of the Second World War safely. The spiritualist returned their hospitality by murdering one of the three, Mary Winterton, a young woman of twenty one years. At the court case the medium was accused of the murder of the young woman. Confusion ensued; the court heard that at that point in the proceedings the mediums hands were tied behind her back not to mention to the arms of the chair.

The article was not very forthcoming with actual information on the trial, so Rebecca searched through the other various sheets of paper from the court transcripts. The next sheet of paper to take her attention was a set of photocopied sheets containing the court records. Rebecca's eyes were immediately drawn to one name on the sheet, Judith Westward. That was the name of her mother. It looked to her

that her dear old mum had been one of the key prosecution witnesses, it read...

JUDITH WESTWARD, WITNESS: “The women (*referring to the accused, Rita Patterson*) came into the dining room and walked around the table three times then sat down in one of the chairs, the one nearest to the window. She took some things out of her carpet bag.”

SIR MORRIS GRIMSHAW: PROSECUTION: “And what were they?”

JUDITH WESTWARD, WITNESS: “A small wicker ball, a bell and a, well it looked like a plum line on a stand.”

She put them down on the table then asked us to sit around the table. Jane, my sister asked if we were to link hands or something like in the movies. She said, ‘No, that would not be necessary.’

It was then that she asked that her hands be tied to the chair arms.”

SIR MORRIS GRIMSHAW: PROSECUTION: “She asked you to do that?”

JUDITH WESTWARD, WITNESS: “Yes. I do believe it is what happens. Then she asked if any spirits were present. Nothing happened so she asked if I could turn off the light. When it was dark I could see that the ball on the table had tiny points of light on it, like an alarm clock.

Once I had sat down she began again. “Is anybody here in the room with us? Are there any spirits here with us?” she said twice.

Her breathing increased, faster and faster then seemed to stop.

As she took her last breath the bell on the table rang. I don’t know how it rang as it was open side down. It did though, we all jumped with fright. Then after a few seconds of silence the ball started to roll across the table. Without moving a muscle she then spoke, ‘Who is there?’

Then answered her own question. ‘Morris, Morris, who is Morris?’

I was shocked, Morris was the name of our grandfather, he was killed in the Great War.

Then she continued, ‘Death, death is coming, death is coming.’

After that she screamed, we all screamed then I jumped up and turned on the light.

We could hardly believe our eyes. Mary was slumped over the table with a bayonet in her back. We were in shock of course then Rita came out of her trance, saw Mary and screamed.”

Rebecca put down the court transcript; a sudden feeling of nausea had come over her. These events had taken place in this very room. She turned her head to look at the chair situated nearest the window, as her eyes settled on it she gave an involuntary shiver. The room which had seemed so warm and comforting to her all her life had now taken on a cold inhospitable feel. Why had she never known about any of this? All three of them had lived in the village all their lives; the subject had never been mentioned. Was it too gruesome to mention, or were the residents trying protect their feelings.

Rebecca turned over another photocopied sheet. It contained three articles taken from the Yorkshire Post.

The article explained in a not wholly accurate manner, the Police investigation leading up to the trial.

The murdered woman’s two siblings had both been questioned by the police in reference to the incident. Forensic evidence showed that the sisters’ fingerprints were not to be found on the murder weapon, only those of the medium. Rita Patterson had duly been arrested and charged with the crime. For the entire duration of the trial Rita Patterson had not been present in court, she had actually ‘gone out of her mind’ and was currently in the Castle Hill Hospital for the insane.

Rebecca took out the last piece of paper from the brown envelope. It told of the last day of the trial, the verdict on Rita Patterson was guilty. The death sentence had been wavered due to her current state of mind. Life in prison for the mentally insane would be her punishment.

Rebecca stared into space for several minutes trying to take in all she had just read. As she looked down at the table a cold, draft ruffled the hairs that made up her light fringe, then without warning she saw something out of the corner of her eye. She dare not look at what it was. Her heart began to race while the tips of her fingers tingled in an unforeseen attack of pins and needles. Half an hour ago she would have just turned to look at what it was, but now she couldn’t. The feeling of fear intensified as a scraping noise came from the direction of the window.

Summoning up all her courage slowly she turned to look.

Nothing.

Nothing there. Suddenly Rebecca almost had a heart attack as Louise's face appeared at the window. She waved her gloved hand which contained a pair of secateurs. Rebecca could only offer a weak smile in return. From the kitchen the smell of a vegetable stew came drifting through and the sounds of plates being placed on the kitchen table signalled the impending meal. Rebecca slowly stood up; her legs were like jelly as she crossed the room to the hallway door.

In the kitchen she sat down. Jo was busying herself spooning out the stew onto three green plates. She turned to see who had been drawn into the room by the aroma of her cooking. She saw her sister's ghostly white face, her eyes staring into space.

Jo immediately put down the plate she held in her hand, "Becks?" she said, the concern showing in her voice. Jo sat down next to her younger sister and stared into her lifeless eyes, "What's happened?"

Slowly Rebecca's head rose turning to look at Jo, "There's been a murder in our dining room."

That was not the sort of thing Jo was expecting to hear, "What?" she replied, a look of confusion on her face.

"Years ago, I mean."

Jo took a deep breath and was about to ask her just what she was talking about when Louise entered through the back door, bringing a cold blast of air with her. "Dinner smells good." She announced removing her gloves and scarf.

While removing her warm winter clothes she noticed Jo raising a finger to her lips in request for silence. Louise then saw the look on Rebecca's face, "Is something wrong?" she asked Jo in a whisper.

Rebecca took a deep intake of breath, "Lou, could you bring in all the pieces of paper off the dining room table please."

Louise, not knowing what to do, obeyed the request.

Over dinner Rebecca enlightened her sisters on the macabre events that had happened in that house all those years earlier.

None of them could understand how they hadn't any previous knowledge of that December night.

Their aunt had been murdered, all the family, friends and the village gossips knew of the tragedy, so how had it not made it to their ears?

After much debate over dinner, washing up and into the evening, they put it down to the fact that it was best forgotten about.



No one concerned with the affair was alive now so there was no way of finding out the truth of what had happened.

Even though this decision had been reached, none of them slept well that night. Every click, tick or noise from the nocturnal animals outside kept them all wide awake.

The next day was cold and bright. As the three sisters returned home from work the Christmas tree lights were shining brightly in the windows and gardens of the village.

As normal the three women sat down for dinner at seven o'clock and listened to The Archers. Louise finished the pasta dish first and now sat drinking a glass of wine while opening the post. Firstly she turned her attention to the envelope marked with her name, then the collection of junk mail and circulars.

The last envelope she came to was marked, 'The Occupants' followed by the address. The letter inside was hand written, the text though slightly shaky was almost copperplate.

As she read the letter her face dropped and a sickly feeling rose in her stomach. She took in a sharp breath as she read the name signed at the bottom of the page.

Rebecca and Jo saw the look on Louise's face and Jo turned off the radio.

Louise said nothing. She held out the letter in her shaking left hand. Rebecca took it from her and read it out loud.

To the Occupants,

On the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1939 a tragic accident occurred in your house. During a séance one of the occupants of the house was killed. To this day I still have no idea who was responsible or how the murder was committed.

I was wrongly accused of the murder of the young woman, despite being tied to a chair. I was the medium presiding over the séance and I was held responsible.

I am afraid to say that I lost my mind for many years while inside a mental institution. It was only by being able to talk to the spirits that I managed to return to sanity.

With your permission I would like to revisit the room and lay to rest not only my own ghosts and fears but bring to task the one responsible for my condition.

I will be arriving at six o'clock on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December.

Rita Patterson.

Oh my God?"

"She's still alive?" Jo said excitedly.

"I don't think it's a good idea." Rebecca said quietly. She had a very bad feeling about it. What would this woman do if she found out that they were descendants of one of the women there that night, did she know already?

Louise was the first downstairs on the following Friday morning, Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December, the winter solstice, the shortest day. As she opened the living room curtains her eyes were met with a thick blanket of snow covering the village. Her heart lifted for a few moments as she forgot about the uninvited visitor coming later that night. Louise loved snow, would they be having a white Christmas?

Breakfast that morning was a quiet affair and as they sat in the kitchen the snow started to fall once more.

Jo was the first out of the house. Having cleared her car of snow she slowly drove off down the road. Louise watched her go from the comfort of the living room. She cupped a mug of tea in her hand as she gazed out into the snow filled sky.

Finishing the last dregs of her cup Louise saw Jo's car come back up the road. Slowly she parked it on top of the snow free square of road outside the house.

"All the roads out of the village are blocked." Jo reported as she stamped her snow covered boots on the brown doormat.

"Well, you know what that means," Rebecca said looking around the kitchen door, "no séance tonight." None of the women had mentioned anything about the planned events due to take place that evening, though they all had thought of nothing but the séance all week. Now a lighter atmosphere had entered the house, the day was a pleasant one. Snow continued to fall until around lunchtime. The three women made the most of the extra leisure time they found themselves enjoying. Jo busied herself in the kitchen making yet another batch of soup, Louise spent the morning ironing then in the afternoon she had her head in the pages of Thomas Hardy. Rebecca filled her time by researching Rita Patterson on the internet. Though her searches were extensive only limited information was found about her among the several thousand websites quoted on various search engines.

The sun set on the shortest day and the women enjoyed an early dinner. They decided to go over the road later that evening to the pub for a drink. As they cleared away the cups and plates, Louise decided

that she would be the first in the bathroom. As she entered the hall something caught her eye. Through the two long thin vertical glass panels in the front door, the orange glow of the street lights that reflected off the snow was broken by a dark shape. Three knocks came from the direction of the door, "I'll get it." Louise shouted through from the hall. In the kitchen the other two sisters looked at each other in horror. As Louise opened the door, flecks of snow fell off onto the mat. There standing on the doorstep was a little old woman, a large carpet bag in her hand. All four women sat in the kitchen, each held a mug of tea. The old woman spoke very well for someone who must at least be in her nineties, Jo estimated.

"You know who I am, my dears?" she asked.

"We know." Rebecca replied.

"Do you know what happened here all those years ago?" it didn't take long before the conversation was in full swing.

"We've seen the reports and the court files." Louise told her.

"So, you know nothing, the same as I did then. Tonight though the waiting will end, my journey for the truth will end." She closed her eyes in silent thought.

"What are you planning on doing?" Rebecca asked curiously.

"Please can we go through?" She stood up slowly from the chair. Jo offered her an arm for support but she refused it. "It's alright dear, I remember the way."

The old woman led them down the hall to the dining room. After a short pause to gather her thoughts she pushed the door open then went in. Once inside she took a deep breath and smiled, "Oh yes, all is ready. They're all here."

"I am going to recreate the events of that night. I will sit in the same chair as I did then." She sat in the chair nearest the window before looking around the room. Bending over the arm of the chair Rita reached down for her carpet bag. Age was not on her side; Jo saw her struggling and rushed around the table to lift the bag up. From the now open bag the old woman took out a bell, wicker ball and a pendulum. Each was placed in the centre of the table. "Thank you my dear." She gestured to Jo to remove her bag from the table top, which she did.

"Now would you please be seated?" As instructed they all sat. "Would someone turn out the light please?"

"Wait," announced Rebecca, "your arms were tied to the chair last time."

“Oh yes, so they were.” She said remembering. How had she forgotten that? “There is some cord in the bag dear.”

Rebecca duly tied the old ladies’ frail wrists to the chair arms. “Now dear, the light.”

The light was switched off and Rebecca sat down in her chair. Only silence surrounded them for what seemed to be an age. Then out of nowhere the mediums’ voice broke the silence.

“Is there anyone in the room with us? Are there any spirits here?”

As before her breathing became faster and faster, then it seemed to stop. As she took her last breath the bell on the table rang. The three sisters jumped in surprise.

After a moment they heard the ball rolling across the table.

Her voice rang out once again, “Who is here with us?” Mary, is that you there, it is isn’t it, oh Mary.”

“Mary,” whispered Rebecca, “that was the name of...”

“Death,” Rita said calmly, “Death is coming.”

A scream rang out, no not a scream, what was it?

Louise had had enough; she jumped up and turned on the light. Jo then let out a scream. All looked down at the old woman slumped forward on the table, a bayonet sticking out of her back.

Louise and Jo both looked at Rebecca who returned the wide eyed stare.

All looked back at the medium, but the body had gone. The table was empty, no bell, pendulum or ball. One thing was on the table though.

It was an envelope, one single word written on it in a copperplate hand.

“Rebecca”

Slowly Rebecca picked up the envelope and opened it. The note was short...

To Rebecca,  
Thank you for awakening  
My spirit and allowing me  
To end this eternity.

Rita.

“Did any of that actually happen” Jo said slowly.

“We can check.” Rebecca replied. Louise looked at her wide eyed.

“What?”

“The computer. I turned the web cam on. It has been recording everything.” She sat down on the chair which was placed at the desk. With only a dozen clicks of the mouse an image had appeared on the screen.

The image was that room. The door opened, and the three sisters entered. Louise, Rebecca and Jo sat down, Jo then stood again and seemed to pick something off the floor and put it on the table before taking a seat. Rebecca then turned the lights off.

The screen was blank until Rebecca turned the lights on again.

That was indeed their actions apart from one distinct omission. Not once did they see or hear the old woman that had visited them that evening.

Through the intense heat that baked her pale skin an involuntary shiver ran down her back. The thought of the three women together in the dark and then; what an awful thought. She took another mouthful of water, but it wasn't enough. As she drank the liquid instantly poured out of the pores of her skin as sweat. She knew full well that they didn't have far to go now, over the Westwood and then into Beverley. It seemed to her though like a lifetime away. Many times she had driven to and from the town; in a car it would only take a matter of minutes to cross the pasture. How far could it be? Three, four miles tops. Those miles could have been a horizon away, that was how she felt now.

Maddie's attention had wondered. The end of the story didn't register with her. Minutes earlier a couple of cyclists had passed through, en route to who knows where, she didn't really care. What she did notice however was their muscular thighs tightly packed into their cycle shorts. Engrossed, she watched as they rose and fell like a piston. Even though they were now far up the road leading away from the village, her eyes could still just make them out. Alistair's thighs weren't like that, they were large and round; his wobbled when he walked. On realising that Lee had finished, she drew her attention back to the group. For a second or two she had become all hot and bothered, daring herself to have a slight fantasy involving her and the two bike riders. What had come over her?

Sarah was busy sucking on Lee's aqua pack, the energy drink which she drank after leaving Skidby had done her the world of good. It was almost like taking drugs, at least that was what she thought the effects of drugs must be like. It had sent her quite light headed, giddy even. Her head was a rush with something. It was like having a head full of angry bees. That was exactly what it felt like, a head full of angry bees. That feeling was again building up inside her. "Right let's go." Sarah was now rampant. The comment shocked both of her companions.

"She seems to be ok now." Maddie said with a look of puzzlement on her face.

"Ey." He agreed. "Now what were we talking about before..." his voice trailed off when he suddenly remembered the conversation which had engrossed them on the latter part of the previous stage.

"I think; that's best left well alone now don't you?" that particular ghost from the past had been laid to rest.

As the walkers left the duck pond behind them they passed a toddler with her mother. The child was dressed for the weather with a big pink sun hat covering her head from which a strap of the same coloured material passing under her chin held it on. From the basket beneath the pushchair, her mother produced a bag of old bread, already chopped and ready to throw into the water. Standing far too close to the edge of the pond for her mother's liking the child threw pieces of bread into the cool water. Only around half a dozen of the assorted species of duck ventured out to retrieve their dinner, for the others it was just too much effort in the hot sun. With each throw of the arm the bread would scatter in many different directions, mostly not on the lake at all but on the surrounding grass. "Come on quack quacks, dinner time." Her voice was of the sweetest high pitch.

"I don't think they're hungry today Gemma." Said her mother.

"Quack quacks no hungry mummy?"

Gemma was led away from the pond, disappointment clear on her young face but the promise of an ice cream from the village shop cheered her up no end. As she skipped off down the road she looked intently at an old man sitting on the bench where she had seen the two ladies sitting. He was wearing an old brown suit. Nothing strange in that, her Grandad Roger had a suit like that, but this one was covered with bits of straw and there was straw all around his feet.

Gemma tugged on her mums sleeve, "Look at that funny mister mummy," she pointed to the bench

She was slightly embarrassed at what her daughter had just said and was about to apologise for any offence that may have been given,  
“What sweetheart?”

“Over there on the bench?”

Her mother could see nothing.





## Walkington to Beverley

Leaving the tranquil pond behind head toward Beverley. This stretch of the Haunted Way is completely on tarmac. The road from the pond to the crossroads is covered with the canopy from the trees which line the road in summer they provide shelter cover from the sun and in winter the scene is something reminiscent of a Geishwa painting. At the traffic lights pass straight over and head toward Beverley.

The road crosses over the A1079, this area is known as Bondates. After the housing is a sports field closely followed the old chalk pit works.

Moments after seeing this small piece of industry the Westwood Pasture comes into view. Walkington Gate House is on the right just before the cattle grid. In front is the panoramic view of the Westwood with the market town of Beverley behind it. The Minster dominates the skyline with its towers reaching skyward. Set off down the road, an old windmill can be seen on the right, this now makes up part of the golf club clubhouse. It is worth bearing in mind that this area to keep half an eye out for rouge golf balls, though a private club this does not guarantee a quality of player?

As the road forks head right across the pasture toward the old windmill know as Black Mill (*pictured opposite*). If you have chosen to visit the mill head back toward the more southerly of the two roads.

You are now in Beverley. Keep walking along the road until the double mini roundabout comes into view. Pass straight over continuing in an easterly direction. Once past the houses the Minster will appear surrounded behind a black wrought iron fence. Walk around the Minster heading toward the north door, once there look to the north. There you should be able to see the Monks Walk sign suspended outside the pub. Why not stop for a well deserved pint, you are now over half way through the walk.



Black Mill GROZI 390

# VII



It was in North Africa that Lee first heard the song 'Road to Hell'. To him it would always conjure up images of hot desert highways reaching out across the dry arid landscape of the Sahara Desert. The slide guitar instantly formed the image of Southern America, somewhere not unlike his time spent in the deserts of the Dark Continent. The feeling of desolation he felt then was similar to how he felt now. The road which stretched from the crossroads at the Walkington boundary and over the Beverley Westwood was much longer than he remembered. They crossed the road bridge over the bypass and were now heading toward the pasture. The sweatband which ran around the inner brim of his hat was almost dripping; such was the amount of perspiration flowing out of him. The aqua pack on his back was almost empty, after that he only had the back up of 200ml worth of liquid left. In his head he was constantly calculating how much he would be able to take at which points. Lee knew that he had faced much greater hardship than this; his fears were not for himself, but his two companions, one more than the other. Shelter was available, the roads were lined with trees so the direct sunlight should not cause too much of a problem. Lee was taking up the rear constantly now keeping an eye on two in front.

"I never thought it would be as hard as this." Sarah sighed. Her shoulders had dropped and her eyes were fixed to the pavement.

"I know why did we have to pick a heatwave to do this in?" Maddie's voice was becoming croaky, her throat was dry.

"Right, all stop." Boomed the voice from behind. The girls stopped and waited. "Bottles out, lets take a minute and have a drink."

"Yes Sir." Maddie said in a mocking military tone. At least her spirits were back up. A car shot past them. It must have been travelling at around seventy, its wake brought a flurry of warm air plus the exhaust fumes which made breathing even more of a challenge. Sarah was bent double, hands firmly grasping her knees for support. "Come on Sarah." Lee began, in a soft tone, "Try and stand up straight, your breathing will improve no end." Sarah did as she was told. "Here, have some more of this." He handed her the bottle from his pack leaving himself only the very minimum of what he needed.

"Thank you." said Sarah warmly.

"Come on nearly there now." Lee helped them both with their packs. He watched as they started to round the bend. The change in

them physically was evident immediately as they saw the sign, 'Westwood Pasture'.

"Here we are." he said in a bright cheerful voice. He stood in between them and put an arm around each of their shoulders, "Not far now." All three stood and looked around at the view. Once they descended into Beverley the remainder of the walk would be mainly on the flat, this would be the last great view they would see on this walk. The most predominant feature on the landscape was of course the Minster. That tribute to the power of God dominated all around, standing like a beacon and signpost to travellers. In a way that was one of the reasons such things were built, always aligning north to south, a compass for past merchants and traders. Over to the east was the City of Hull; a haze hung over it. So much heat and pollution rose from it, hanging in the air and shrouding the buildings which reached out toward the sky?

Lee took a deep lung full of hot air, "Shall we go?" he pushed them off, his arms still on their shoulders but Maddie did not move. She seemed to be awe struck?

Staring down into the town her jaw dropped and her brown eyes opened wide. The colour was beginning to fade from her cheeks, was she about to faint? "What is it?" Lee asked. He had realised that she was not following and turned to enquire why.

Maddie's left arm slowly rose to the horizontal, pointing straight across and beyond the city she said in a dead voice, "Look?"

Sarah looked but could not see, "What?"

"Over there, above the Minster." Sarah looked as instructed, this time she saw it. She too could not believe the sight her eyes were seeing, "Its Brid. harbour?"

Lee turned and looked into the clear blue sky, she was right. Bridlington harbour could clearly be seen shimmering in the sky above Beverley.

"I think the sun's got to me, all these ghost stories."

"Well Mads, if you're seeing things then so am I." Sarah said not taking her eyes off the Illusium Morgana. That was the first time Sarah had ever shortened her friends Christian name. Normally her old friend would have taken offence at such disregard to her name but not on this occasion, her mind too was on other things. "This is too weird." The strange occurrence was made even more of an enigma by the fact that none of the golfers or public who were about enjoying the common could see the effect.

Lee looked at the vision, his hands resting on his hips, "That," he said rather proudly, "is a mirage, one of the best I've ever seen."

"Oh." Sarah had heard of such things, obviously, but never had she dreamed that one day she would see one.

"But why Brid. harbour?" Maddie asked as though she had been cheated out of a greater thrill. Why not the pyramids or the Eiffel Tower?

"Do you know how a mirage works?" Lee asked.

Maddie's eyes rolled around in their sockets, she had the definite feeling that he was going to tell them whether they wanted to know or not.

"I've seen them many times before; it's not always in hot countries, up in Scandinavia you tend to see a lot. When warm air and cold air are layered in a certain way and the sun is in the correct position light bends around in the atmosphere. So you can see images from past the horizon." His arms were animated as he illustrated that layers of air and the curvature of the earth. Lee was almost carried away with enthusiasm for the topic, never before had he seen one in this country.

As they walked down the road which split the golf course in half, the shimmering image vanished. It was probably still there but from their eye line it could no longer be seen. Even though the two women were hot and fatigued, they spoke with excitement and passion on the subject of mirages. "I couldn't believe it, I thought that they only happened in World War Two when pilots crashed in the desert and had to walk to civilisation."

Maddie had a similar view, of course in the summer she had seen heat haze rising from the road and cars being reflected in it, but seeing actual buildings appear in the air? "So did I," she replied, "it was always on Laurel and Hardy films, appearing in the desert and they would jump into an oasis only to find themselves splashing around in sand."

Lee hadn't joined the conversation up to that point, "That's were the expression 'castles in the sky' comes from." he interjected from the rear.

"Why castles?" Sarah asked turning her head back toward him as she walked. She had often come across the phrase in literature and even in modern pop songs. It was a fair question and Maddie was thinking along the same lines. In her mind whenever she had heard the expression, the image of great white fairy tale castles would be conjured up in her mind. Princesses in towers and heroic knights on

white steeds galloping to save her and all set on a billowing white cloud high above the peasants below, well that sort of thing.

“Ah well,” he said, this was obviously a subject which he enjoyed talking about. “Imagine when the Romans were here. The only buildings of any size would be castles or fortresses built by the invaders or the rulers of the different kingdoms of England, Northumbria, Wessex and the like. So when the illusion appeared the only thing recognisable would be a castle and because they appeared to float they were called castles in the sky. That’s why I called them Illusium Morgana. Mogana was the evil half sister of King Arthur and sort of Merlin’s evil equivalent. The images became known as her illusions, a trick to fox the good people of England.”

Sarah tripped and stumbled forward as they crossed the road. “Are you alright?” Maddie asked with concern.

“Oh yes, I think so?” she said regaining her balance after a couple of elongated steps.

“Right,” announced Maddie, her voice was brimming with authority and determination, “we want to be heading over there.” She pointed toward the old black windmill which sat on the top of the Westwood. Its silhouette stood out against the blue sky behind like a sinister black tower, as though Tolkien himself had created it. Its sails were now long gone, the main body however would remain for many a year to come. “I thought that would be a good place to read our last story of the day.”

Lee would have been lying if he had admitted that he was somewhat relieved at the thought.

The route to the old mill was short but the terrain was not the easiest to traverse. The grass was long, straw like and large brown cow pats in varying states of decomposition lay all around. Sarah for one didn’t want to fall victim to one, not this close to the end of the first day’s walking. If an accident had occurred earlier in the day then the pungent odour would have subsided by the time came to de-boot, this close was another matter. Many rabbit holes also littered the path, one wrong foot placing and an embarrassing fall would be guaranteed. Apart from the dogs the only other thing to be aware of was the people flying radio controlled aeroplanes. Father and son combinations mainly filled that part of the grassland. The aircraft no doubt belonging to the younger of the pairing, but the father was invariably at the controls. Several landing strips were cut into the long grass for the planes to take off and land. It seemed though that many

of the pilots seemed incapable at hitting the runways provided, instead crash landing them anywhere and everywhere seemed preferable.

One of the men battling with a control box shouted, “Look out, we’re trying to land.” as Lee strode across one of the strips. He stopped and looked at the man with a hard stare. Maddie expected him to say something or other along the lines of ‘well if I stand here I should be alright’ making reference to their inability to pilot the craft, but to her surprise he just carried on. “It must be the heat?” she whispered to Sarah.

Lee stopped and looked up at the imposing tower which now stood before them, “Do you know if this has any macabre history to it?” His tone was slightly mocking at first, but was absolutely genuine. Maddie seemed to have researched every footstep of this journey so far; he just presumed that she would have a tale for this location.

Maddie ignored him with a look of contempt on her face, “Here is a story.” Already her back pack was off and she had seated herself on the ground. The thought of being a mile or so away from the end of the first days walking had galvanised them into a new sense of life. Both Maddie and Sarah were once again back up to speed. In the latter case it was probably down to Lee’s energy drink, as for Maddie it was all due to the prospect of a cup of tea and putting her oh so tired feet up for a moment or so. “Come on, come on,” she hurried them. For once it was Lee who reached the point last, as he was bringing up the rear it hardly registered in his mind, not Maddie’s though.

## Gone West

The automatic garage door glided down into its frame. The white paint reflected the red glow from the black BMW’s break lights. Moments later the car pulled out of the drive and onto the main street that ran through the village of Walkington.

The journey to work was pretty much the same every day for Alexander Morgan-Taylor. The journey through the village was slow, the recently laid speed humps played hell with his front valance. At the traffic lights he, as usual, turned left and took the undulating road to the crossroads and then, as always, turned right.

Some days the eternal monotony of the route depressed him. Now, in his early forties, he knew that this was his life for at least another fifteen years. It made him think of the character Reginald

Perrin and his monotonous life. Could he also come up with a unique solution to his boredom as the fictional character had done?

The winding road brought him out onto the Westwood Pasture. In the distance he could see his destination, the market town of Beverley. At its heart stood the Minster reaching skyward, dwarfing all the other buildings.

A week ago, the Westwood had been covered in a white blanket of snow, the panoramic views from that high vantage point could have graced any Christmas card; on the other hand it made driving treacherous.

As he sped down the tree lined road, he passed the spot where it had happened. Never had he told anyone of the experience. If he had tried to tell the tale, well it couldn't be told. He himself didn't know exactly what had happened that night.

It had happened during last year's Indian summer. The Westwood was a hive of activity during the day, the sound of golf balls being hit echoed around the west end of the pasture as the players trooped around Beverley's exclusive golf club. The cows grazed while children flew all manner of colourful kites and ate the various products from the ice cream van.

As he drove home that winter's night six months ago, the pasture was dark and cold. It was late at night and no one was around. Travelling up the hill, the headlights of the car blazed into the darkness, the full beam illuminating the trees on either side with an eerie glow.

Something caught his eye. As if from nowhere a figure was standing by the side of the road. He was sure no one had been there seconds before. It was just someone waiting for a lift, he thought to himself, no need to stop. As the black BMW approached the figure stepped out into the road. Alexander was given no time to react. The body hit the wing of the car tossing it over the roof. In the rear view mirror Alex saw it land on the road.

The wheels screeched to a halt, each tyre leaving a black rubber skid mark on the road surface. He jumped out of the car running to the rear, as he did he fished around in the pocket of his jacket feeling for his mobile phone. Whoever this poor person was he would need an ambulance immediately.

Taking the phone out of the pocket the screen shone in the darkness, he quickly started to dial the number with his thumb, nine, nine, then stopped. Where was the body?



The road was empty, the grass verges were clear also. Slowly he walked to the spot where the body had fallen. Crouching down he examined the road. No trace of anything being there was visible, no blood, no scuff marks nothing.

Slowly he walked back to his car and examined the off side wing. Though it was dark, enough light from the head lamp reflected off his camel hair coat to see the wing. Rubbing his hand along it, it was clear to him that there were no chips or dents in the panel. Surely an impact such as that should have left some kind of mark?

What should he do now? Should he go home. To leave the scene of an accident was a crime, but then, what accident? Had there even been an accident? Had he imagined it all?

The stresses of work prayed on his mind somewhat at the moment. In his job as a solicitor he would have to read many last will and testaments; had his worries manifested themselves in his subconscious?

Eventually, after convincing himself no one was around and it was all in his head, he continued home.

That was almost six months ago now, every night as he drove past that spot he would try not to look at the point where it had happened, but he would. Not every night, just occasionally he would see the figure standing there; sometimes it would step out in front of him on other occasions the figure would remain by the road side.

Once at work Alex set about his normal daily tasks. The pile of mail that sat in the 'in box' was perpetual. So at 9.30 that night he decided enough was enough. The day had been bright and warm for the time of year and he had missed it stuck in that office all day.

As he put his briefcase in the boot of his car he looked up at the full moon shining through the only gap in a cloudy sky. The clouds that blotted out the stars looked as though they could burst into a torrent of snow at any moment.

The streets of the town were quiet as the black BMW pulled out onto the main road. The first flakes of snow were beginning to fall, shivering, he turned up the heating and a warming blast of air shot out of the vents at either side of the steering wheel.

So, would he see the ghost tonight? He had come to the conclusion that it must have been a phantom that he had hit that night. Someone who had been hit by a car before and was re-living the accident. That hypothesis was not an uncommon one in the world of paranormal research, or so he was lead to believe and that was another point. Up to that experience he was a non believer, but now his

opinion had changed somewhat. Would he see it tonight and what would it do, stand and watch, or step out in front of him? Whichever it was going to be he had become blasé to the sequence of events.

As he drove up the hill the trees glistened white with frost, they were the only points of reference in a black world. Snow flakes floated down intermittently leaving small water marks on the windscreen.

Alex took a tentative glance to the right hand verge of the road. No one living or otherwise was there tonight. Then panic.

The front end of the car started to shake and bump uncontrollably. He hit the brakes; slowly the car came back under control. He steered it off the road and onto the grass verge. Breathing a sigh of relief he examined the front end of the vehicle. A tyre had blown out. He got back into the car and took out his mobile phone. The first entry in the phone book was the AA, he pressed the dial key. The spare wheel in the boot was all ready to be fitted; in fact it had never seen the light of day before. Alex though was a professional, he didn't pay a yearly subscription to get his own hands dirty. It also had to be taken into consideration that he didn't know one end of a jack from the other.

It would be an hour before a mechanic could reach him. An hour, he could freeze to death in an hour.

He sat there looking out into the night. Not wanting to drain the battery he turned the lights off but left the radio playing. He listened with interest to the Moral Maze, but after only ten minutes the program finished. Nothing else on the radio interested him, so he turned it off. Several times he had the feeling that someone outside was watching him. All around was inky black. To his left the solitary glow of a light in the stand of Beverley Race Course shone like a pinprick in the night. Was someone out there watching him?

He was all alone in the middle of a large expanse of open ground, paranoia had set in. Occasionally he turned on the head lights only for his peace of mind. It was on one of these occasions that he realised where he was. The car had come to rest at the point where the ghost would watch him drive past.

He pressed down the locking stud on the driver's door, the central locking kicked in as the rest of the doors automatically locked. The temperature was starting to drop now, the interior of the car was getting colder. Shivering, he wrapped his overcoat tightly around him. Turning on the engine activated the heater, warm blasts of air circulated around. This waned though once the engine was shut off.

At last he saw salvation, in the rear view mirror he could see two lights coming up the road.

“At last.” He said to himself.

The lights drew closer as he got out of the car to greet them. As the vehicle approached he stepped out into the road so the driver would be in no doubt that this was the car he had come to the rescue of.

The vehicle didn't stop; the off-side wing hit his leg throwing him up over the roof. He landed in the middle of the road, his body broken and twisted.

The wheels of the black BMW screeched to a halt, each tyre leaving a black rubber skid mark on the road surface. The driver got out and had a look back to where the body lay, before returning to the car and driving off.

The bells of the Minster were sounding the quarter hour as the grand gothic old church came into view. Sarah had never actually stopped and looked up at the thousands of features ordaining the walls. She now corrected that omission. The majority of the features were what she presumed to be roses and hideous looking gargoyles peering down on all those who dare to glance skyward. Why on such a beautiful building as this would anyone want to put such hideous creatures? She didn't have much time to contemplate the thought as no sooner had the Minster been reached then they had passed it by. The cobbled street that led away from the east door was familiar to them though. It was at his point that they had started The Minster Way, one year ago. Each of them knew that a days walking was nearly at an end, in front hanging from the wall was the sign, ‘Monks Walk’.

# III



The Monks Walk public house was one of the oldest hostelries in the market town of Beverley. Oak beams crossed the ceiling while stone flags lay in the floor, all genuine features. The bar was only sparsely populated with a handful of afternoon drinkers. The local pub frequented by the three walkers, The Buccaneer, was old; at least two hundred years old, but this was out of the middle ages. The modern living along side the old featured here. Satellite television with stone floors, plasma screen with gas lamps, none of the aforementioned looked out of place.

One thing that struck them all straight away on entering, was how cool the temperature was inside in the pub; it was almost like stepping into a fridge. Was this possibly due to the large amounts of stone in the room keeping the temperature down?

“What can I get ‘ya?” asked the portly faced landlord. He was a rotund man, a florid complexion nestled somewhere under his thick full beard and grey hair. Around his neck hung a navy blue apron, white stripes running vertically through it. Was this part of his uniform, the traditional look, or had he just emerged from the kitchen after preparing a game pie or venison steak? That was certainly the impression he gave, or perhaps it was for the benefit of the tourists. Many Americans would pass through the pub on their way to either The Minster or The Friary. The Minster tour at Beverley was equally as good as the one in nearby York to our American cousins. The distance between the two historic sites was a mere stones throw.

The previous landlord had considered having busty barmaids and serving wenches in ‘traditional’ English costumes but the staff had one or two things to say about that particular idea.

“Why not,” Lee said a smile on his face. “I’ll have a pint of bitter girls?”

“Lager.” Sarah said without hesitation.

“Er, tea please.” Maddie followed with the only suitable drink out of the trio.

“Tea! will do.” The large framed man waddled off down the bar and poked his head around the kitchen door and uttered the single word, “tea” before waddling back again. He paused to reach for a half pint glass and holding onto the lager pump he held up the glass to seek clarification of the order, “Half was it?”

“Pint.” Sarah’s voice was full of determination. There was no way that a half pint would satisfy her thirst, not even a single pint would do that.

Two out of the three drinks sat on the bar, “That’s seven pounds and fifty thank you.” He said, taking the ten pound note from Lee. Turning to the till, he deposited the note and removed the change in one swift motion. So quick was he that the customer had barely put the glass up to his lips as the change was thrust towards him. “Ya’ tea will be along in a minute, I’ll bring it over.” With that he began to walk off.

Lee called him back, “Er excuse me, we’re booked in for the night, two rooms, a single and a twin.”

“Ah, you must be the Hall party?” he remembered the name clearly as only a handful of guests were stopping that weekend and all the other residents were already safely booked in and organised.

“Hales.” Maddie corrected him.

“Sorry, Hales.” He corrected himself casting half an eye over the older of the two women. From under the bar he took the room register and opened it somewhere in the middle, before flicking through another couple of leaves. “Right, let me see. I’ve put yourself and your good lady in 12A and your daughter in 14.” He handed over one set of keys to Lee and the other he passed towards Sarah.

“Oh?” a shocked exclamation jumped out of Sarah’s lips without the slightest thought. For a moment, not much more than a second, she could not decide which part of the misunderstanding she was most embarrassed about. Was it the fact that the florid faced man had presumed that she was the daughter of the other two; that would be a compliment. Or was it down to an emotion by proxy, for Maddie and Lee. To her it was easy to mistake them for a married couple but for someone else to come up with the same idea that had run around her head was; well? Did that prove something? Were her feelings right after all? Could they be mistaken for a family..?

No, of course not; they were of a similar age, not ten years between them. It was a difficult thing though age. When she was in her early teens, Sarah was able to walk into a pub and buy any drink she desired without being challenged, but now in her mid twenties, anyone meeting her for the first time would quote her as anywhere in the range of late teens to early thirties. She too was not skilled in this art, so she allowed the landlords comments to pass once the initial shock had waned.

As for Lee and Maddie, both were feeling a similar gut reaction. The prospect of them being married was not abhorrent to either. Maddie would never admit to such a thing in front of him or any other for that matter, but they must be well matched for anyone to even suggest or harbour such a thought. She did not know which way to look. Out of the corner of her eye she could see the look of shock on Sarah's face. She glanced at Lee and as their eyes met his eye brows lifted in a suggestive manner. She took it as it was meant to be taken, very suggestively, "I am married," she said in a half disgusted and half explanative tone, "and so is he." The landlord opened his mouth to try and speak, but she was far too quick for that, "And..." she took in a large lung full of breath, she did not want to be interrupted again, "not to one another and furthermore Sarah and I are the same age, well almost." It was a frantic and emotional outburst that left her quite breathless and physically drained. After the day's exertions, she did not have much left in the way energy reserves at it was. All she wanted was a cup of tea and to put her feet up.

"Well, I'm game if you are..?" Lee joked.

"Don't you dare?" Maddie hit back; her face as red as the landlords. The orchestrator of the outburst looked a little shocked as did the handful of regulars in the bar that afternoon.

The landlord tried to splutter out an apology but it fell on deaf ears, "Oh, err, I just thought..." he didn't get any further than that. The look on the woman's face said enough.

Maddie took the key from Sarah's hand and thrust into Lee's, "Here, I'll share with Sarah."

"It is a double bed, that one; is..." the Landlord informed her honestly trying to be of assistance.

"That's fine." Maddie snapped but suppressing her anger at that point. Her mind was thinking about the prospect of a cup of tea and while she detained him, her drink would not be forthcoming.

It was the most fantastic feeling of relief as they sat down and took the weight off their feet, at last. Maddie's tea had arrived and was yet untouched, far too hot to attempt. Lee had taken two deep mouthfuls of the dark brown bitter and was in the act of removing the froth from his top lip. Sarah however drank her way through nearly three quarters of a pint of the lively golden coloured lager. As she put the glass down a wave of nausea overcame her; her eyes widened to the size of saucers ready to pop at any second. Suddenly she held her stomach and a panic stricken look crossed her face.

“Oh my God!” Maddie said shuffling in her seat, “she’s going to be sick.”

Sarah’s stomach convulsed, her eyes opened even wider then; out came a huge burp, the like of which only a fifteen stone rough as hell navvy could produce. The whole pub looked over in her direction, so great was the extent of the sound. Even outside the noise could be heard over the hum of daily life. From somewhere a voice was heard to say, ‘nice one?’ Raising her neatly manicured nails over her red lips she said in the sweetest voice, “Excuse me.”

By the time the old wall clock in the bar was striking six o’clock they had all showered and changed. Lee was the first back downstairs; currently he sat on one of the bar stools reading the evening paper. Nothing much interested him in that particular publication. The cricket reports were virtually none existent. How he longed for the football season to come around again, at least the press would devote many column inches to that sport. Just to the right of the centre pages, was the puzzle page. Quickly and without any thought he solved the Dingbat. In the border set aside for the test were the letters EGES. “Easy,” he thought out loud, “scrambled eggs.” It was then he turned his attention to the crossword. One across, Graham first entertains guests (5).

Of course, easy...Ghost.

How very apt for this time, this place. He had no pencil to fill in the letters, though he found himself solving several more of the cryptic clues but without a pen what was the use. Idly he flicked through the local rag when one name caught his eye; someone he knew from his school days had won a classic Beetle, orange? He thought back to those physics lessons when his friend Steph could always be relied upon to calculate the equations the quickest. Strange how things sprang into his mind.

The front door opened allowing a warm breeze to drift through the bar. Lee waited for someone to enter, but no one did. He turned to see the empty doorway, “Must be a ghost?” he said chuckling to himself. The self satisfied laugh soon halted though as the internal door, which leads to the stairs, opened and then slammed shut again no one having passed through. Must be the wind, he concluded. That would be the simplest and most logical explanation.

As the pint reached his lips the interior door opened once again, he froze, not even the glass moved. He waited, though the prospect of



anything supernatural occurring was non-existent, he waited to see who, if anyone would enter.

After what seemed like an age Sarah's shapely body rounded the door frame. Did he breathe a sigh of relief, surely not? "Alright girl?" he asked. He often addressed her as a ladette and she was quite happy with that.

"I am now." She said manoeuvring herself onto the stool next to him. Her appearance had completely changed from an hour or so previously. When he had bid her farewell that afternoon she looked tired, bedraggled and pale. Now she shone radiantly. Her hair was clean, straight and brushed. The shorts that had revealed her long legs were now gone and replaced by a pair of tight blue jeans while the t-shirt she now wore was of a similar style to one she had walked in.

"Feel better for a shower?"

"Much." She replied slapping both her hands on the bar and looking for the Landlord. "Any chance of a drink in here then?" her words were not loud enough for anyone outside the confines of the bar to hear; she didn't want to give any offence by shouting.

"Is Maddie joining us?" Lee asked trying to sound as though he didn't care either way. Sarah wasn't sure if she was or not. Upstairs her friend had seemed in a strange mood.

"She'll be down in a minute, just putting the last touches on."

The only cosmetics Lee was familiar with was green, brown and black; many times he had slapped that on in the field.

The room key sat on the miniscule dressing table its fob showing the number 12A in gold leaf on green leather. The numbers were almost worn away. Maddie sat on the end of the bed staring at her reflection in the mirror. She had wanted a little time alone with her thoughts, her memories; such sad memories she had recalled today. For many years her mind had not ventured into thoughts of the events played out so many years ago. The conversation earlier that day had sparked memories she thought had been suppressed long ago, never hopefully to resurface.

In her hand sat a bottle of expensive perfume; so lost in her thoughts she replaced it on the dressing table without applying any to her person. The sound of the door closing behind her was also lost to her, as deep within herself she searched. She could remember the pain she had suffered both mentally and physically and briefly she allowed herself a long overdue sob. Then all of a sudden a feeling of warmth came over her as she recalled that passionate week or so with Lee,

when they had enjoyed all manner of carnal activity. In an effort to suppress the sensation running through her, she opened her legs slightly then a little more, before gripping the bed with both hands so tightly her nails hurt as they dug into the mattress. That single act also awoke more memories of another act committed by the pair in her own bed. So clear was it in her mind she thought that she could actually feel his hands on her.

With a deep exhale, Maddie quietly and unexpectedly allowed herself the smallest moan of pleasure. Instantly a wave of guilt replaced the feeling of enjoyment. Such experiences were to her unknown, what had triggered it? Was it the thoughts of the past or something else? The wave of pleasure she experienced was greater than anything Alistair could awaken.

With a brisk involuntary shake of her body, she brought herself back into the real world; that small room with a bed, dressing table and old wardrobe leaving little room to manoeuvre. With two quick flicks she sprayed herself with the perfume before closing the door behind her.

In the room, all was still. The late afternoon sunlight streamed in through the window; the shaft of light illuminating a million particles of dust still frantically moving in a chaotic fashion in Maddie's wake. On the dressing table the bottle of perfume so recently placed there, moved slightly. The hair brush that sat precariously on the edge, dropped to the floor.

In the hall Maddie stopped dead in her tracks, something had fallen in the room, whatever it was it could wait.

Though now Sarah sparkled, she still appeared to be tired. Her eyes were only half open as she stared into space. On removing her walking socks she had found several blisters on her toes, sole and heel. Even with the damage, the relief of removing her socks was heavenly. Feet were not her only concern; her inner thighs and calves had tightened up once the walking had stopped and as for her sunburn, well she didn't want to think about that. So bad was the chaffing from her knickers, it had resulted in a friction burn on her upper thigh; the full extent of this was not realised until the hot water from the shower came into contact with the tender flesh. Now however as she sat with a pint in front of her she felt in a much happier mood. The temptation to start a conversation with Lee in regards to Maddie was overwhelming. She wanted to gauge his response on the subject. This course of action though would be folly;

after all, if she could successfully interrogate a member of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, she didn't hold out much hope for the defence of the realm. "You know something?" Sarah began, "this might seem a bit strange, but..."

"What's that?" Lee said putting the pint glass back down on the bar.

"You know don't you that Maddie and me were at school together?" her grammar was terrible, but she knew that. The intention was to sound a bit thick or drunk as maybe that would put him off guard a little.

"So you two tell me, yes." Where was this going he wondered to himself?

"It's strange; I can't remember her at school. She can remember things that actually happened; I just don't remember her being there."

The look of puzzlement on her honest features purely added to the deception and was for his benefit alone; it may extract a little information.

"I knew she went to Hunsley High but who she knocked around with I have no idea. I didn't really know her until you both had left school."

"Oh?" nothing learnt there, "You're older than us aren't you?"

"Yes about ten years, why?"

"I was just wandering how you two knew each other?" she took a large mouthful of cold lager.

"Well, not sure really. I sort of knew her husband Al, though they weren't married then of course, so we just became friends." Not strictly true, but near enough, near enough hopefully to quench Sarah's thirst for knowledge.

That seemed fairly reasonable, proving it was something else. There was no common denominator between them apart from Maddie herself, school maybe. After another mouthful of the freezing cold beverage her mind wandered back to when she and Maddie had first rekindled their friendship. It had happened one Friday or Saturday night in the pub. She was in with her assorted family and close friends, celebrating her mother's sixtieth birthday. Being the youngest member of the party the conversation was not to her liking as the elderly collection chatted on all manner of subjects ranging from dead or absent relations, she could not tell which, to the over population of the village. So bored was Sarah with the whole thing she seemed to spend a large amount of time away from the table either at the bar or in the lavatory. Each time she made a journey away from the table she

would scan the pub in hope of seeing someone she knew. It was on one of these excursions, while touching up her make up, that she was recognised by the woman with dark curly hair who was standing next to her. The woman she thought was older than her, "Sarah?" the woman said in surprise at seeing her. She obviously knew Sarah, but who was she and where did she know her from? A look of delight was on Maddie's face at seeing her, so they *must* know one another.

"Sorry?" Sarah's response was one of a mixture of shock and surprise if she was to be honest.

"You are Sarah Burden aren't you?" her eyes opened wide, her head gave an involuntary nod in confirmation.

"Yes, do I..." before she could complete the sentence it was finished for her.

"Yes, it's me Maddie, Maddie Hales. Well I was Cummings then; we were at Hunsley together." Maddie spoke quickly trying her hardest to intone as much information as possible in one sentence.

"Oh yes, of course." She tried to give the impression that enlightenment had dawned. She smiled and quickly tried to think of something to say, "I haven't seen you, well for ages, I thought you'd moved out of the village." Whoever it was, that would have been a good excuse not to have stayed in contact.

"Well, yes and no. When I married Alistair we moved up to Skidby, but now we're back in Elloughton." These days the boundary between the two villages had long since vanished, separated only in name and the residents longing for a better house price. "Alistair's a bank manager now."

Sarah disliked any person who would gloat; it was not the first time one of her old school friends had boasted to her on how well to do they were now and how they married well along with their husband's prospects...

After the initial meeting they had met on several occasions and had become good friends over the space of a year or so. It seemed to Sarah that her friend Maddie had several unanswered questions surrounding her. "Lee," she turned once again to her companion but as she was on the brink of probing him for more information the internal door swung open. Lee's eyes look at the door and gave the slightest nod of his head. Sarah got the message loud and clear, Maddie had entered the room.

"So," Lee began clapping his hands together and giving them a rub of excitement, "where do you fancy for tea then?"

“Oh I don’t mind,” Maddie said joining them at the bar, “as long as we don’t have to walk far.”

“I’ll agree with that.”

Dinner in a small restaurant had been a very quiet affair. Each had eaten and drank well, indulging only occasionally in conversation on the day’s events. Any of the questions which still ran through Sarah’s head remained dormant and did not get asked. She was feeling far too fatigued for such things. Tomorrow was another day though.

As they ate Lee found himself watching intently exactly what his co-walkers were eating. His main concern over the meal was that the two women took the right kind of foodstuffs onboard. Constantly he told the girls of how vital it was to take on as many ‘carbs’ as possible. He was following his own advice; his meal consisted of chicken and pasta. Sarah however dismissed his advice in favour of taste; she ordered a vegetarian curry while Maddie ploughed her way through a fish pie.

The meal over the trio were much refreshed, but tired. The time was only around eight thirty; Maddie’s body clock was registering at way past midnight. Sarah was still going strong. The young blond had finished off the bottle of house red with the meal and had now moved on to bottles of lager, Beck’s. She presumed that the drink was slightly ironic, “Beverly Beck’s?” she giggled before clamping her lips around the neck of the bottle. Lee laughed at the analogy; Maddie simply rolled her eyes at the comment. It was Lee’s idea to stop off on the way back to the digs for a drink. He loved the Sun Inn public house simply because of its great age. The pub was reputed to be one of the oldest in the town, fifteenth century at least, that was according to the landlord. On most Saturday nights the pub would be the host of a live band and tonight was no exception. The noise was audible from outside on the street as they approached, much to Maddie’s displeasure. She didn’t like loud music at the best of times and the twenty miles she had walked that day added to the previous late night, this was not the best of times. Lee however loved live music and in fact played the guitar. On his ‘things to do’ list now he was finished protecting Queen and country, was to join a band. The song drifting off through the grounds of the Minster that night was one he would have loved to perform himself, Parisian Walkways. Under protest Maddie was convinced to enter.

The front door entrance into the bar opened, the PA was situated at head height immediately adjacent to the door. The deep booming bass which thumped out of it rattled Lee's left ear, it was fantastic. Sarah could take or leave live music, the noise was no greater than that of a night club which she would inevitably spend the night in some weekends. Maddie followed, fingers in ears, a look of disdain on her face.

The drinks purchased, they settled down at a table which, luckily for Maddie, was in a booth and out of earshot of the speakers' sound waves; but still it was far too loud. Lee sat on the outer side of the table facing her. From his vantage point he could still see the combo playing. They had moved on from Thin Lizzy and were now playing Status Quo, always a favourite with the punters because, after all, you can't beat a bit of Quo!

Maddie watched him closely; his foot tapped along to the four by four rhythms, head nodding and fingers tapping, he was away. Sarah sat on the end of the table between them. She too was enjoying the band but at the same time felt a touch of guilt that Maddie wasn't. As the song finished the front man and singer announced, "Thank you very much," to the crowd, Sarah lent over to Maddie.

"Are you alright?"

As Maddie drew a breath to reply the band struck up once again and her reply, if any, was lost in the noise of wailing guitars and drums. Sarah moved round the booth to sit next to her, "Sorry?" she shouted in the direction of Maddie's ear. Again she didn't hear the reply.

A glass of white wine accompanied by a bottle of lager landed on two identical beer mats. Maddie sat down in the wall seat and breathed a sigh of relief; Sarah landed next to her with a bump. As she touched down her thigh burnt with the stress of the day. "That's much more like it." Maddie said as they looked around the Monks Walk pub. They had decided to return here making the excuse that they were tired and ready for bed. Lee had stayed to watch the band and drink more beer, of course. Something he could do to the extreme.

For many moments they both sat in silence, each taking it in turns to take a drink. Both had the impression that the other had something to say, but dare not. Maddie seemed uncomfortable with the situation and finished her drink much more quickly than Sarah, "Another?" she asked as she stood en route to the bar.

"Please."

Maddie couldn't get away quickly enough. She stood at the bar and waited for assistance. It came quickly; too soon for her.

Sarah fidgeted in her seat; something about this whole situation was uncomfortable. Taking her mobile phone out of her pocket she checked to see if anyone had sent her a message. It was a fact of modern living that young women these days lived by text message alone and as usual she had five sitting in her inbox awaiting her attention. The first was from Helen asking if she was going out that night. A little late to answer now. The following two messages were also from Helen saying much the same thing. The fourth was from Tracey, she was having man trouble, no surprise there; she went through more men than Emmanuelle. The last was from Luke wishing her well. The last gave her a warm feeling inside. He'd be in the pub by now, but still he was thinking of her. The wallpaper on the small handset screen was a picture of the pair of them; she put it face up on the table and gazed at it longingly as she took a sip of her drink. She was missing him; it had not struck her until now. All day the walk or conversation had kept her mind occupied but now as the day was coming to an end, she missed her man. She wouldn't have her feet rubbed tonight or any of the sort of attention she was used to. Maddie sat down beside her once more and gently put the drinks down on the table top. What had happened at the bar Sarah could not tell, Maddie though seemed a little cheerier.

"Are you missing Luke?" she asked full of sentimentality. Maddie had spotted her friend gazing at the handset and guessed what it was she was looking at.

"I suppose I am." She said quietly.

"Is he a kind man?" Maddie asked.

Sarah thought the question was a little personal, not the sort of thing a friend would ask. If it were Tracey or Helen asking about her boyfriends they would have taken a different angle altogether the conversation would normally gravitate to sex. "Yes he is; not like some I've had."

"How do you mean?" a look of horror had blown across Maddie's face.

"Well some were no good at all. You know what men are like," she said, "they promise all sorts, but can't deliver. They're all mouth and no trousers." She finished off one of the bottles and pushed it aside. "All the men I have been out with, not many have measured up in one way or another."

“How do you mean?” Maddie was curious; surely she wasn’t referring to...

“Well you know, either their knobs are tiny or they go charging in like a bull at a gate like they had never heard of foreplay.” Sarah took another mouthful of lager.

Maddie was shocked to the core; taking a sharp intake of breath she covered her mouth in shock. Then after seeing Sarah’s expression both simultaneously burst into laughter. Sarah of course took this as a sign of encouragement, “I remember one bloke, he was older than me, about thirty I think, anyway he had a big black BMW, always wore a nice suit. Well I went out with him a few times, anyway when we got down to it, black sheets on his bed?”

Maddie’s eyes were wide open.

“He just shoved it in and went at it hammer and tongs, I thought the friction was going to set fire to my hair.” she gestured down towards her lap. “So I didn’t get much out of that one.”

“Was he rich though?” Maddie asked, she couldn’t help thinking about wealth.

“Oh sod that. I’d rather have a good moan than check the size of his wallet.

There was another one whose timing was perfect. He did all the foreplay quite well, but as soon as I was getting there and having a bit of a moan, he couldn’t contain himself. He would whip it out and shoot all up my leg or on my stomach. Tot’ dirty sod.”

Maddie couldn’t believe that Sarah could talk of such things and so openly, never mind having done such things. She certainly would never talk about her exploits, no matter how good or bad.

“Stuart was a strange one. I could never concentrate with him. He always insisted that I shout ‘arse’ at him while we were at it. You try having an orgasm while you’re shouting arse.

“Luke must be alright though; you’ve been with him long enough haven’t you?”

“Ooh yer.” Her eye brows raised nearly an inch. “He can be hard work though.” Sarah paused for breath. She could see Maddie eagerly waiting for more graphic descriptions of her habits. “How do you mean?”

“Well,” she began, her voice lowering as she shuffled along the seat toward her. She didn’t want anyone to overhear, or at least that was the impression she was trying to give her friend. “He likes me to dress up for him sometimes.” Sarah pushed her tongue into her cheek as she waited for a response.



“Really, what as?”

“It’s been a few things over the years; his favourites have always been my tennis kit from school, French maid and football strip. The only down side is that he always gets a little too over excited especially when I’ve got the maid outfit on and never lasts very long. I like to do it though, keeps him happy and if I’m a bit tired and he’s after a bit all I have to do is put the maid outfit on I get to sleep quicker than normal.”

“Wow!” Maddie didn’t know quite what to say. Never had she imagined Sarah was into anything like that.

Sarah, however, was enjoying this conversation. Never under normal circumstances would she have told anyone this, but she was feeling more than a little drunk now and it was clear to see a whole world had opened up to Maddie that night. “There are other little tricks I’ve got as well that help things along.” Oh well, in for a penny...

“Like what?” the response was a little too eager.

“I’m sure some nights he cracks one off in the bathroom before coming to bed, he takes ages to brush his teeth, anyway if he’s at it for ages and I’ve finished I tell him to get off and lie on his back. One of my little tricks normally brings him off in no time at all.”

“What’s that?” Maddie asked as Sarah paused for a drink.

“Oh just the unusual stuff, pull him off with KY jelly, shove it up my arse.”

Maddie almost choked as she tried to drink. As she began to cough Sarah delivered the final knock out punch, “Or if that doesn’t work suck him off and if nothing happening, shove my finger up his arse. Do that and he’s up, out, PJ’s on all in one shot.”

Maddie was getting redder as she coughed. Sarah realised that it wasn’t her drink that had made her cough, but laughter, “You’re mad?” she spluttered, it was clear that Maddie didn’t believe a word of it.

“What do you do for Alistair?” Sarah asked hoping for a few new ideas.

“None of that, that’s for sure.” The thought of anyone doing such acts with either their own or someone else’s backside made her cringe. She must have spent an extremely sheltered life, Alistair would never stand for anything like that, or at least that’s what she thought and not with her anyway if he wanted to or not.

“What then?”

“Well you know, err; we did it on the stairs once.”

“That’s a good idea, bent over on the stairs?” light was dawning in her eyes.

“Err yes.” The event had only happened once and even then it wasn’t how Sarah was imagining doing it.

“What else?”

“Not much I’m afraid. Alistair tried to make me, you know; give him oral once, but I soon put him straight on that score.”

Sarah was a little shocked and disappointed, no wonder Alistair always looked so miserable.

Maddie desperately thought trying to come up with something worth telling Sarah, but couldn’t, “we nearly tried it in the car once, it didn’t happen though, not enough room to get comfortable.”

“My first time was on the back seat of a car.”

“Was it any good?”

“No, bit of a shot in the dark actually. He said he’d done it loads of times, but it didn’t feel like that to me. It was all over within seconds.” Sarah burped, so strong was the out rush of gas she actually thought that she was about to vomit. After a slight moment of panic both of them laughed again. “What do you think of Lee? Do you reckon he’s a bit of a stud; he’s certainly got a bit of a bulge in his trousers.”

Before Maddie could answer, the door opened and in walked Lee. On seeing him both women fell into one another arms with uncontrollable howls of laughter.

“What?” he said innocently, “What?”

After purchasing himself a drink he joined the two women who were still giggling like school girls. “What are you two up to then?” he asked striding over the stool which he then sat on. Both girls took a look at his groin region as he did so; this led to another round of suppressed laughter.

“Right.” Maddie said, trying to bring an air seriousness to the table. “I was meaning to read a story over dinner, but forgot.” Rattling around in her bag she pulled out the now familiar A4 sheets that contained her stories. “I promise,” the two word phrase was slightly mispronounced, “Oh listen to me, I’m sounding a bit pished? I promise,” she began again taking a deep breath and straightened her back, “*this* will, be the last tonight.” Settling back she cleared her throat and began...

## The Headmaster's Ritual.

Only a few flakes of snow were now left hanging in the air. The landscape on that dark December night was lightly covered with a dusting of snow. The moon was full, but seldom made an appearance through the thick white laden clouds.

The grounds of Woodgates College were all but empty now, the majority of the staff and pupils had returned home for the Christmas break. Inevitably a hand full of staff and students would remain in the school over the festive period. Most of them in forced exile because they had nowhere else to go or the distance they lived away from the school was too far to travel. For the pupils, a boarding school even one as renowned as this, could have the feeling of a prison. At times such as this, however, they proved to be an admirable substitute for a home and family.

The snow had arrived on queue, for tonight was Christmas Eve. As tradition dictated, the evening would be split into two parts. At six thirty whoever remained in school would attend a carol service in the chapel. Such an event would not have been possible with the few remaining members of the school so the gates would be opened to the occupants of the local village. By making this gesture the congregation would swell the small chapel to almost its capacity.

Lessons were read out by the staff, carols sung by all. For some villagers this was the highlight of the season; for the pupils and staff, that pleasure was still to come.

The head of the school walked through the quadrangle en route to his official rooms. After giving the lesson on the virtues of the Christian church he had to prepare for the alternative sermon he would be conducting tonight.

As he walked around the quad he looked up at the sky. The clouds were big, white and heavy, brimming full of snow. It looked as though this year they would see another 'White Christmas'. As his head turned sideways, he caught sight of something out of the corner of his eye. Someone was in the quad with him. Nothing unusual in that but on turning to look over his right shoulder, he saw no one. Maybe it was one of the villagers returning home after the carol service? Was his subconscious playing tricks on him? In his head had he had spent so much time planning the evening's events, was it causing his eyes to delude him?

As he entered the Holderness block he could not shake off the feeling that someone was following him. Again his imagination ran wildly across the bounds of possibility.

The carriage clock, which sat on the mantelpiece in the heads private study, struck seven o'clock. Mr James, the current head, now back in his room sat in the red leather arm chair that resided in front of the roaring fire. The room was illuminated only by candlelight, giving it an atmosphere of wanton expectancy. On his desk sat five bottles, three wines, two Sherries and next to them were fifteen crystal glasses. Also adorning the desktop sat a large serving plate containing a pile of warm mince pies, lightly dusted with a sprinkle of icing sugar, mirroring the snowy scene outside.

As the clock finished striking seven, James heard the door knob turn. The quiet tranquillity of the room was broken as a procession of students and staff marched into the room.

Mr James closed the book he had been reading and removed his half round reading spectacles as he saw his fellow boarders enter with cheery smiles on their faces. He instructed them all to help themselves to a drink and something to eat before taking a seat.

An excited rumble rippled around the younger members of the audience as they all took a mince pie each. The pies were hot, having not long been out of the oven and as the youngsters blew on them to cool them down, the icing sugar rose like small puffs of smoke causing much hilarity. The general feeling in the room was light hearted and expectant. Once all the guests were assembled Mr James cleared his throat, like a conductor tapping his baton on the rostrum, the orchestra of voices fell silent.

"Good evening." The headmaster's whispering, husky voice spoke as he surveyed the audience.

"Good evening Headmaster." came the reply from the gathered bodies sitting in a semi circle facing him and the fire.

The firelight danced off their faces casting all manner of irregular shadows.

"For those of you who have not been privy to a Christmas at Woodgates before, it has become the tradition on the eve of the great Christian day that we all gather together here in this study to hear a ghost story, so tell me," he was looking at the very youngest boys, "who would like to hear a ghostly tale?"

The three first years present faced him, too scared to speak. The only time they had ever been in his presence was in the assembly hall. "Its ok boys, I don't bite you know"

His voice remained quiet and rough, but at the same time it held an element of trust and friendliness to it.

The boys all nodded excitedly at the prospect of hearing one of the head's now famous tales.

“Right then, tonight I’m going to tell you a tale about this very school.” He paused dramatically and waited for a reaction. “Did you know that the school is haunted?” His eyes stared at the boy’s faces. Of course all the masters knew of the story, but not the details. “Well, let me tell you how it came to be...”

James made a gesturing motion with his hand, moments later a scout appeared carrying a silver tray in his hand. On the tray sat an old silver goblet, in it red wine. The master’s old hand took it from the tray and thanked the scout as he placed it down on a small table next to the chair.

“This cup,” he began making a gesture toward it, “is old. In fact it’s the oldest thing in this room. Over the two hundred and fifty year history of the school this cup has been the property of whoever occupies this study. This is the Headmaster’s cup and this cup is the bedrock on which the school stands, literally. No one but the headmaster is allowed to drink from this vessel. Those that have, well they all met an untimely death.

The cup was discovered by a student here in the year 1801. That’s over a hundred years ago now.” He told the younger members of his audience who were listening intently to his every word. “The young man who found it was one of the most famous residents of the school ever, Nelson I. Cowes, later to become Commander Cowes of the HMS Victory. He stood alongside the great Admiral Lord Nelson as he fell.

Cowes was head boy here, Captain of the rugby and cricket teams, head prefect and academic. In the spare time he allowed himself he furthered his education in the library; reading up on the subject of archaeology. He showed a particular interest in local history and geology. In particular the small earthworks under the ash tree in the school ground...”

It was a cold winter’s morning as Nelson Cowes sat in the library. A collection of books surrounded him; several of them open at various pages. Two candles flickered light onto the dusty old pages, which he constantly stared at. With it being winter, the sun didn’t make an appearance until well after breakfast. Nelson had risen early that day, eager to continue with the mapping out of what he believed

to be an Iron Age settlement here in the grounds of the school. This part of East Yorkshire was a hot bed of brachylogy waiting to be discovered just beneath the surface of the earth. Roman and bronze age settlements were prevalent from the north banks of the Humber Estuary all the way to and past York and up to the Scottish border.

Many a morning, or in the fading light of the evening, he could be seen with a tape measure laying on the ground and a pencil and pad in his hand. Eventually the morning came when his research was at an end and he could begin digging. Taking a spade and a flask with him he set off for the ash tree.

In his head he had pinpointed the exact spot where he would begin his excavations.

Putting the bag containing a flask of tea down on the wet grass, he took a look around before driving the blade of his spade into the soft earth.

His trench developed over the spare hour he had before breakfast. As he thought of finishing the shift, the front edge of the blade rang with the sound of it hitting some solid surface. Tossing the spade aside he delved into his cloth bag and removed a trowel. Frantically he cleared the soft earth from what he soon discovered to be a stone wall. Had he found what he hoped was an Iron Age round house?

Sweat ran from his brow, the jumper he wore was now damp with perspiration.

The sun had risen, Nelson was late for breakfast. He collected his tools together and made his way back to the main school building. Before he disappeared over a hump in the undulating grounds he stopped and looked back. He had the strongest suspicion that he had left something behind at the dig. His spade was however in his left hand while in his right were the trowel and flask. He had taken nothing else out of his bag, so what was it he was thinking of? Looking back, for a split second he thought he caught sight of something near to the trench. Nothing was there, though, and of course no one was around at this time of the day; morning shadows, that's all it could have been.

“During that day,” continued James, “he sat through his lessons giving as much attention to his masters as he could spare. Latin was tedious, mathematics he enjoyed, Greek, he could not have given a damn. His attention was elsewhere even though it was Homer, his

favourite writer. Nelson loved the sea; often through his childhood he had longed for a life as exciting as that of Ulysses.

After lessons were over he took an oil lamp down to his trench and began to dig once more.”

The old paint brush removed the earth from the top of the stone wall. Crouching down Nelson held the lamp above a point of interest. Something glinted in the light.

Quickly he took his knife from the back pocket of his trousers and opened the blade. His heart began to race as the blade carefully removed the soil from around the object. The find could only be one thing, small round and thin. Having cleared the top he gently levered it out with his knife.

A coin, it was a coin, a real archaeological find at last. To think, two thousand years ago people lived here and bartered with others, right here on this spot. The thought filled him with pride that he was the one to find this centuries old coin, the first person to touch it since it was used for the purpose it was made for.

Holding his find in the palm of his hand he held it up next to the lamp.

He could make out the following inscription...

AVD CAESAR AG            MTR

Then on the reverse...

ROMA

Obviously this was Roman. The word Caesar made that easy enough to conclude, then his deduction was confirmed by the wording on the reverse face.

The coin was placed safely into his bag. How he longed to show the Masters his find; but at the same time he wanted to carry on with his work, wanting more and more finds.

After the euphoria of the coin nothing else came from the rest of the shift. Though the excavation of the wall made good progress no more finds of interest were apparent.

Mr James took a sip of wine from the silver cup. It warmed his throat as he swallowed. The wine was French he presumed and very

nice. “That night Cowes showed the coin to the House tutor, a MR Jones. Jones immediately told the Headmaster, who then summoned Nelson to his study.”

The younger members of the audience nudged one another in realisation that the Head was speaking of this very room.

“The Head, a Mr Majester.”

Several of the Masters had a chuckle to themselves, the Latin Master included, he knew most of all that the translation of Majester is master, so Head Master Master?”

With a rye smile James continued, “The Head showed a keen interest in the find as he himself had studied archaeology at Cambridge and was able to give Nelson some background information on the coin. Armed with the new information that it was of around 100BC and must definitely be Roman he carried on with his excavations. His theory that the site was indeed the remains of an Iron Age round house still had validity. The Roman and Iron Ages overlapped one another.”

Nelson’s fingers were frozen to the bone, the fingerless gloves he wore gave little protection against the cold, frosty evening. Every tiny stone which he knelt on would cause him agony, but still he continued. This trench; the second was almost finished and after giving it a look over in the morning, he could close it down and start another. As the trowel scraped away the loose soil from the bottom corner, he paused for breath. His chest became tight and he was sweating. Kneeling over the top of the trench he took in a long lung full of cold air. As he drew the sleeve of his jacket across his brow he became aware of someone watching him. Nelson didn’t want to turn around and look, something was stopping him. Nothing physical, but some kind of fear deep within him.

The trowel was still in his hand and his grip tightened around its wooden handle as he readied himself to strike out if need be. Quickly he spun around but could see not a soul in the area. Still he remained a little uneasy as he knew that an intruder could easily conceal themselves in the undergrowth. Simultaneously jumping out of the trench and picking up the oil lamp, he looked around for any sign of an observer. Something was out there, he could hear it moving through in greenery.

Then he saw it, two points of light in among the trees; he froze for a moment, then breathed a sigh of relief as deer stepped out of the trees into the moonlight.



This incident was not the most chilling moment of the night's diggings. As he bent back down into the trench, he heard a voice in his ear saying, "Go on". Did he really hear it or was it all in his head? Again he got to his feet ready with his hand tool for an attack.

All those in Mr James presence listened agog. He paused for a second and picked up the cup from the table, taking a sip of wine he began to talk again, "He continued digging..."

With the last swipe of the trowel the unmistakable sound of metal hitting metal rang in his ears. The last action of a wholly barren day had found something. With great care he removed as much earth from around the object as possible the oil lamp was brought closer to shed light on whatever it was.

Whatever the object was it was made of a dull silver metallic substance but as yet, not enough was visible to make any approximation to what it could be or from which period.

Nelson had to make a quick decision. Should he leave it in situ and return in the morning for a more detailed examination, or risk taking it out now and maybe causing damage to the artefact. Of course there was only one course of action to take. He covered it back over with earth and would return at first light when a more careful examination could be conducted.

It was an unusually scruffy Nelson who arrived at his first period the next morning.

Mr Hodgeson, the mathematics tutor, was renowned for having very little tolerance and even less sense of humour. He was a stickler for punctuality, "Punctuality should be as exact as mathematics" were his watch words, especially for his star pupils, Nelson included.

On sight of the young man's untidy clothes and tangled hair, the master instantly ejected him from the room. The rest of the class listened, straining to hear the conversation taking place outside in the corridor.

Hodgeson had just commenced the verbal barrage on Nelson when he suddenly stopped. To Nelson it appeared as though the Master had seen something over his own left shoulder. Then he realised what had caused the sudden silence. The familiar voice of the Headmaster said, "Is there a problem Mr Hodgeson?"

"Headmaster, good morning." Said Hodgeson, taken aback by the appearance of his superior. "It's this young man here Headmaster,

his appearance is not acceptable and he was a whole minute and a half late for the start of the period.”

The Head looked down at him “Go and get cleaned up boy.” Nelson quickly made off down the draughty corridor without a word of protest.

“Thank you Headmaster I...” Hodgesson was silenced by the Headmaster who raised a hand signalling that he himself wished to speak.

“That young man,” he began. “could be the future of this school Hodgesson. He has brains and a willing mind.”

“But, Headmaster, I thought I was to become head on your retirement?”

“My plans for that young man are longer term, you will have your day.”

Nelson straightened his tie and as he looked at his own reflection in the washroom mirror, the figure of the Headmaster appeared, “Well?” he asked.

“Pardon sir?” Nelson answered. The washroom was cold, he had washed in cold water and was now drying his hands on a cold damp towel.

“What have you found?”

“How do you know I’ve found something Sir?” Nelson neatly hung the towel up on the rail.

“You have always been the ideal pupil, never have you turned in late for a lesson and always well turned out. So today I see something has distracted you from your usual routine.” He really was a wily old bird the Headmaster; not much escaped his attention. “Run along now to your class, then I’ll see you in my study at lunch.”

The Head watched his young protégé walk off down the corridor then around the corner. Quickly he himself turned on his heels and made off towards his office.

Lunch time arrived and Nelson was first out of the class, running quickly up to his room and collecting something wrapped in a rag, he headed off toward the Headmaster’s office.

“Come.” Nelson heard the voice from the interior of the study and he opened the door and entered. The room was warm, a large fire was burning in the hearth and not only that, but an aroma of freshly brewed tea filled the air.

The Headmaster was standing at the window, looking out onto the wintery scene outside. He turned to see Nelson standing politely waiting for him to speak. In his hands he held a bundle of rags,

“Come over here young man,” the Head made a bee line for his desk, a smile on his face and a spring in his step. On arrival he patted the desktop and said, “On here.”

Nelson slowly placed the object on the desk, but did not unwrap it.

“May I?” asked the Head.

“Of course, you’re the expert.” Smiled Nelson

The smell of the tea came as a distraction to Nelson as he had not had tea for, well, so long he could not recall. Nelson would never have helped himself to a cup and there would be no chance of the Head offering him a drink now his attention was fully taken.

The archaeologist’s fingers slowly and carefully unwrapped the layers of cloth. Fold after fold were removed until finally his eyes were rewarded with the sight of something metallic. A shiver ran up the back of his neck. Removing the last coverings he revealed the object. Instantly he could see what it was; a wine chalice made of silver, solid silver.

As he stood it upright, Nelson felt a cold draught rush across the room. He gave an involuntary shiver but moments later the warmth of the room engulfed him once more.

For many a long moment the headmaster studied the cup, not once touching it. “Do you know what this is?” he asked the pupil. “Some kind of drinking vessel sir, for someone of importance I would guess.”

“You know I think you’re right young Nelson.” replied the Head. It was the first time he had taken his eyes off the cup as he looked up at the fresh faced youth.

Again the Head studied the cup.

The cup stood around six inches high. The round base narrowed off to a slender stem before opening out into the main bowl. The easiest description of it would be to say that it was not dissimilar to a heavy wine glass.

Though the surface was dull silver, discoloured over the many hundreds of years of it lying untouched in ground, a row of indentations could clearly be seen. Were these dimples once the inlays for one or more precious stones adorning its surface and if he was not mistaken, the rim had been gilded in gold. “If I am not mistaken this is the drinking vessel of a high ranking member of the community, it is possible...” he paused for a moment, sat back in his chair and placed all ten finger tips together, “Royalty possibly?”

A moment passed as the words sank into Nelson's head, royalty; that was what he had said, did the Iron Age people have royalty. They must have had a hierarchy. "Is it worth anything?" he asked tentatively.

"My dear boy, it's priceless as far as I'm concerned."

Nelson knew at that point a power struggle was approaching. Would he ever set hands on the cup again? "So what are we going to do with it; send it to a museum?"

The Head shot a quizzical glance at the young man, "God no," he laughed, "look, this belongs to you right?"

Nelson nodded.

"But," the master began again, "it was found on the school grounds. Now the old myths tell stories of things such as this and the trouble they cause when taken away from their rightful place. I think this cup belongs to the school and it should stay here, where it was meant to be."

What sort of things was the Headmaster speaking of? Was he referring to legal battles with ownership rights or was the reference to something more macabre? It was at that point Nelson noticed that the Headmaster was gesturing toward the coat of arms above the fire place. He had never made the connection up to then, of course. At the centre of the shield was depicted a cup, silver encrusted with what looked like rubies. Maybe the Head was right; the cup was meant to be here, judging by the arms then..? Now he was confused. How was the cup on the coat of arms so like the artefact he had excavated, how could it be almost the same?

The Head was also looking over the fireplace, "Look," he said turning as he spoke, "this find is yours, but if you agree to let the school keep hold of it, we will come to an arrangement."

When Nelson had left the room the Headmaster quickly found several reference books on Iron Age culture. He knew exactly what the cup was used for and it wasn't anything like the explanation he had given to young Cowes.

It took only fifteen minutes to find the page he sought; there it was in black and white. The cup was used as a ceremonial object, it was given to the human sacrifice for them to take their last drink on this earth and should only be used for that purpose on pain of death.

With a small sigh Mr James took a breath, "and that is exactly what happened.

Nelson presented the cup to the school and it has remained on that very mantle ever since.” He made a gesture with a flick of the wrist towards the fireplace. “Nelson had always wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps and join the Navy. So it agreed that the pay off for the cup was that when he returned from a life at sea Nelson I. Cowes would take up the position of Headmaster of Woodgates. It was an offer he could not refuse.

As the carriage drew up to the Iron Gates of the school, Nelson Cowes craned his neck eager to glimpse the first sight of his old school.

It would appear that nothing had changed, either with the building or the grounds of the old establishment. It was precisely because of that fact that he had returned as soon as his papers had come through. The school may not have changed but the world had. The life of Cowes had been ripped apart and turned on its head in the last year.

The year in question was 1806, five years had passed since he walked out of these very gates where the carriage had drawn up. In that fateful year England had lost one of her greatest heroes, the man he had fought alongside, Admiral Lord Nelson.

During his short time under the ensign, his career was one of excellence and swift promotion.

He rose through the ranks from Midshipman, Lieutenant and finally Commander. Because of the war against Napoleon’s Franco Spanish forces and the loss of many ships Cowes found himself aboard the flagship, HMS Victory. He was there on that fateful day when the great naval battle was won, but the Admiral was lost.

Cowes decided there and then as he looked down at the dying Admiral that he had seen enough.

The carriage came to a halt at the gate. After arranging with the driver the instructions for his baggage, he proceeded into the grounds on foot. How he had missed this place during his years away. The earth was cold under his feet, the trees were bare of leaves. The route he took to the buildings was not a direct one, he detoured off into the woods. His memories were filled with great fondness for that day when he found the old cup.

His cup, that’s why he was back. It was a foolish notion for an educated man such as he but he could almost hear the cup calling him back.

In the Headmaster's study, the current incumbent of the post, Hodgeson, felt uneasy. The previous night had been a restless one. He could neither sleep nor relax; a constant tension ate away at his mind. His body twitched with uncontrollable spasms all through the night. That day he had not stepped out of the confines of his study. A fire burned in the grate, though he was as cold as ice. A continuing buzz faded in and out of his ears. The sound he calculated was coming from the direction of the fire. He leant on his desk, both palms face down on its leather topped surface. Slowly he looked at the flickering flames of the fire then up to the mantelpiece. On it sat the inter house shield, a clock and in the centre the Iron Age cup. Carefully he cast his eyes over all three objects, searching for any sign as to where the noise could be coming from.

Then his attention was snapped back into the land of the living as he heard the sound of carriage wheels coming from the quad outside. Straightening his robes he crossed over to the large window and looked out at the golden autumn day.

A carriage was exiting the school gates but he could not see anyone in the quad. His eyes darted back and forth but still no one came in to view. As he turned away from the window he heard a crow yelp as though calling out to someone, was it him? Again he turned and looked out of the window but this time he did see someone approach.

The figure was a young man dressed in naval uniform, an officer no less. Hodgeson watched as the figure came closer and closer, then he recognised the man as Nelson I. Cowes. Hodgeson knew that Cowes would return one day; after all his predecessor had promised him the Head's seat in return for the old cup which he was now guardian of.

He, Hodgeson was head of Woodgates and that was final; he was not giving up the salary or position because of a deal made before his censorship had begun. A stand was in order. He took the cup from the mantle and put it on the desk. The humming returned to his ears as he did so. Then he took a single glass and a bottle of wine out of the drinks cabinet placing them also on the desk top.

Returning to the window he waited. The deep exhaling breath conduced on the glass pain frosting its surface. He could hear the crackling of the logs on the fire and he also became aware that some other presence had joined him in the room. Of course it had to be the young officer, did he not have the common decency to knock before

entering? It was then he heard the sound of the cup moving across his desk.

He spun around. How dare he touch the property of the school, Hodgeson was about to release a verbal salvo at the newcomer when he realised that he was still alone in the room. Before he had a chance to take stock of the situation, three firm knocks came from the door. His head spun around to look at the door then back to the desk; had the cup moved?

Paralysed for a second he was undecided which way to advance, to the door or desk? Again three firm knocks came from the direction of the door.

“The door was opened by a pale faced looking man; he looked deathly cold though the heat from the room almost caused Cowes to step back, such was the effect.

Nelson eyed up his former school master with surprise. The man had always been an upright rock faced individual. Nothing would ever shake him, or at least that was the impression he always gave. Something had distracted him though, that was more than evident.” James shuffled in his chair. The fire which warmed the occupants of the study on this cold night was a touch too warm for him at such close proximity. He turned his body away from the heat radiating out from the hearth. As his body moved, the material of his trousers touched the skin of his legs. The effect was almost painful, though the fabric cooled almost immediately. Beads of sweat had begun to form on his wrinkled forehead, while his shirt stuck to his back. He had an overwhelming urge to undo his stiff white collar, but the thought of disrobing in public appalled him. He continued regardless of his discomfort. “The young Nelson was ushered into the room. He seated himself on invitation before accepting the offer of a drink.”

The Headmaster turned his back on the guest to pour the wine. It would have been as easy to round the desk and face the newcomer, was this an unconscious effort to snub the young man who had, after all, returned to take up his post? He knew that probably this day would come, though when the news reached him that the former pupil had gone into action against the French, he had hoped that Nelson Cowes would not return.

Two drinks were poured, the first measure in the lead crystal wine glass, the second in the silver chalice. The head turned to face the naval man both drinks in his hands.

Nelson's eyebrows lifted one quarter of an inch as he caught sight of the silver cup in the Master's hand.

The head walked towards the seated figure slowly. Nelson waited to see which drink he would be offered, by rights it should be the cup he himself discovered all those years ago. In an obvious act of defiance though he was handed the glass. The head then seated himself opposite, "Well," began the senior man, "you seem to be the topic of the school gossip these days. The school is very proud of you Cowes. It is good for our reputation to have a handful of famous old boys and you fall right into that field."

Nelson remembered his old tutor well, mathematics, everything in its own place; that was his way.

"I am sure that my predecessor would have been most proud of you if he were still alive."

"What happened to Mr Henry?" Cowes had read of his old masters demise in a copy of The Times, which had found its way on ship. He knew very few details on the circumstances of his old mentor's death and was keen to know more.

The Headmaster sighed and looked down towards his feet. The pause hung heavy on the atmosphere of the room. The only sound which could be heard was the crackling of the fire.

Hodgeson sighed another heavy sigh as he raised his head. Though eye contact wasn't made with his visitor at that point, "My predecessor, Mr Henry, died on his last day here. The report you will have read in the periodicals was, well, somewhat edited. The day started with assembly as normal, at which he gave his final address to the boys. The Head boy, John Tompkins led the three cheers to honour of the outgoing master. At lunch time we, I say we, by that of course I refer to the staff, came into this very room for drinks with him. We all drank red wine which was most welcome that day. It seemed to take the edge off the great sadness we all felt. He drank from this very cup I hold now. Since you generously gave the cup to the school it has become the stuff of legend. My predecessor said that it was only for the departing Headmaster to drink from, before leaving the school."

"So why do you use it now?" Nelson asked hoping to hear him offer his office and rank to him there and then.

"That was only his opinion, something to do with its origins. I hold no knowledge of things, so I decided to use it today in honour of your return."

"I see?"



“So, the lunch was a pleasant experience for all concerned. The Head exchanged many tales with the pupils and masters who had passed through these rooms. At the end of the lunch period we all returned to our classes and left him alone in his study.

The afternoon passed. If I remember correctly there was a cold easterly wind blowing as the pupils returned to their dormitories to prepare for the holidays. I returned to the head’s study and on arrival I realised that something was amiss.

In accordance with etiquette I knocked on the door and after waiting a few moments I knocked again. Still no reply was forthcoming. Knocking once more I called into the room, “Headmaster?” the door was locked, I could not gain entry. It was at this point that I knew something was greatly wrong.

Being on the upper story I could not see if he was in his room not being able to observe through the window. Instantly I reported the Head’s none communication to several of my colleagues and a search of the school was undertaken.

As I myself rounded the south east corner of the quad I thought I saw the Headmaster walking in the grounds; he seemed to be making towards the wood. I went to investigate but could find no sign of him, so I returned to the building.

It was decided that we should enter the Head’s study so the door was forced.

On entering the room we could see nothing. The fire was still burning, though it was only embers in the hearth. Mr Wilkinson and I were the only two to enter the room and it was he who spoke first. I was standing by the fire, all the glasses from the lunchtime drinks were on the desk, the dregs of red wine still in them. The silver cup though sat back in its place on the mantle.

‘Hodgeson, look...’ Wilkinson said drawing my attention away from the desk. I crossed the room to see that the Headmaster was sitting in that very chair.” Hodgeson gestured across the room toward the leather chair which resided by the window. “His face was deathly white, his fingers cold and thin. Then I noticed that around his neck was a dark line. At first I presumed it to be a shadow of some kind.

We called the MO who told us what we already knew and feared, the Headmaster was dead. What followed though we could never have imagined. The sheriff was called in to examine the body. The man in charge informed us that the Headmasters death was not due to natural causes.”

“So what happened?” Nelson enquired eager to know more.

“Strangled? How, we will never know. The room was locked, doors and windows barred. How it was done, if it was murder, we will never know. The Sheriff’s men were baffled.”

A shiver ran down Hodgeson’s spine. Had the ghost of the old Headmaster walked over his grave?

It took several moments for the story to register in Nelson’s mind. The man who had done so much for him was dead, murdered. The old man was his reason for being herw, the reason he had returned; not to mention the reason he had joined the Navy as a midshipmen. It had been the Headmaster who had arranged the whole affair. “So you now hold the post of Headmaster?” what was Nelson thinking? Was it a coincidence that the man who had helped find the Headmasters body was now Head himself?

“That’s right.” Hodgeson picked up the silver cup and took a sip of the wine.

“You do realise that the position was promised to me on my return?”

“I do.” The head said with a rye smile, “but that was before circumstances changed. My predecessor would have no doubt stepped aside to make way for you if circumstances had have been different.”

“Will you stand down?”

“No.” said the Head. Why should he step down from a post which some people consider one of the highest posts in area, academically speaking? He had worked hard to gain this position and there was no way he would sacrifice it for an agreement made by his predecessor. A bargain made for the price of a silver cup was to him mere folly and held no authority over him. Suddenly he coughed, a slug of wine had ventured into one of the various tubes in his throat not used for consumption.

“It is said that the old Head Mr. Majester still sits in that very chair by the window.”

James’ audience in unison turned their attention to the chair by the window, all except one of the Masters, Doctor McDonald. McDonald was the history lecturer and his field of expertise was Iron Age Briton and he was concerned about something that the Head had said during the first part of his monologue. Not wanting to spoil the tale for the pupils he decided to remain silent for the time being. He would however air his concerns with the Head later.

Taking full advantage of the pause James took a mouthful of wine again shuffling his position in his seat. As the night passed the uncomfortable feeling he experienced grew, engulfing him but still he continued.

“The meeting between the two men finished on what I must presume was an impasse. It was never passed down how the meeting ended; but what followed was a strange occurrence indeed.”

The grounds keeper was packing away his various tools into the wheelbarrow. He was an old man now and his back ached as the result of many years bending over to prune beds and dig borders. A dew drop formed on the end of his nose before falling down onto the gravel. The old man took a large white handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the end of his large red nose.

He became distracted from his labours by the sound of carriage wheels rolling over the stone flags of the main quadrangle. Leaning on his yard brush he watched the four wheeler make towards the gate. As the window came into view he could see the face of a famous old boy, clearly visible but his expression did not hold any kind of delight.

The faithful old retainer continued with his work and as he exhaled, his breath condensed into a misty cloud in front of him. Through it he saw a figure, again it was someone he thought he recognised, “I wonder what he’s up to?” he mumbled to himself.

The figure he had seen was that of the Headmaster walking toward the site of the old dig he himself had filled in several years ago.

“Several hours later the grounds man was more than a little surprised when the Sheriff and his men arrived once more at the school.” James’ audience were still deep in thought about the ghost which sat in that very room, they were not expecting the revelation of another phantom in the school.

The grounds man watched the authorities arrive and enter the main hall. The Sheriff himself was met at the door by the Vice Head master of the school and the Proctor.

He watched from beneath the canopy of one of the many corses which littered the school grounds. An efficient authority had taken over the main block; that was how he was later to describe the state of affairs to his wife. One question came to mind as he watched the

comings and goings, where was the Head Master? Surely he should be there heading whatever it was that was occurring. Were these men searching for the Head? If so he knew where he was at present. Something was wrong at the school; that was clear to him now, he must inform the Headmaster.

Abandoning his tools he quickly made his way over to the site of the Iron Age findings. The grounds man managed not to be seen from the main building, this was not purely by accident; he did not want to be seen, after all, he didn't know what had happened.

On arrival he knew that someone was there with him, he could hear someone moving and feel himself being watched. He had spent many a long day and night out in these grounds and knew every sound, smell and feel of each place around the grounds. "Head Master," he said in a loud whisper, "Head Master." He repeated. No answer came. "There's something amiss at the school sir. Head Master..." no answer came.

There was no alternative left open to him now. He ran across the soft wet ground towards the school.

He was met at the door by a member of the Sheriff's office who immediately refused him entry to the building.

"Halt?" commanded the guard in front of the entrance in such a loud authoritative voice that he froze to the spot. The old man was so out of breath he could not gain enough breath to speak. Then what could he say? Could he tell them that the Head had disappeared from the wood?

"You cannot enter," began the guard, "Sheriff's orders."

"It's," panted the grounds man, "the Head..." such was his exhaustion that he almost bent double, not for years had he exerted himself to such a degree. "I have just seen him," he paused to breathe, "entering the wood yonder not two minutes since."

A quizzical expression crossed the face of the guard. That could not be, the old man was mistaken obviously. "Sorry Sir, but I cannot discuss matters or let you gain entry to..." he broke off repeating his orders as behind him the door opened. The grounds man craned his neck to observe the interior of the hall. Inside many people were gathering in the reception hall, the Sheriff's men made up the main body of the assembly though he could see several of the staff. Strangely most figures were looking upward to the upper landings of the stairs. The groundsman's eye line followed their own up into the higher levels. He could only see so far, as the top of the door broke his view, but what he did see was a pair of feet freely swinging in mid

air slightly swaying from side to side in the draft which always ran through the hall. He inhaled sharply and tried to gain a better view, but the door was slammed closed in his face.

“The pair of swinging feet belonged to the Headmaster, Mr Hodgeson.” James paused and took another drink. The cup was all but empty now, so with a swift nod of the head a scout was on hand to replenish the wine. Again he fingered his collar and looked down for a moment as though he was in some discomfort. Then without warning the continued, “That was the end of Hodgeson’s tenancy in the position as Headmaster.

What happened next no one was quite sure. All the accounts I have either read or heard passed down from some of the old boys all differ, there is a general consensus of opinion though.

Hodgeson’s funeral took place in the Chapel here at Woodgates. It was well attended as you could well imagine. All manner of tales were told in regard to the sad departure of the Head while at the same time happier times were recounted about him.

The account I hold most dear of the events was told to me in person by my predecessor, Winston Brady. He was Headmaster elect after Hodgeson, pending on the one condition, the reappearance of a certain Nelson I. Cowes. It was Winston who first encountered the second of the school ghosts.

Hodgeson had finally been laid to rest in the grounds of the school, as was tradition. It was time for the old boys to retire to the head’s study to reminisce on the past. This second part of the mourning was for old boys only, no current attendees of the school were allowed to participate.

Brady waited a while before entering the building where his study was located, he wanted a minute’s peace to say a silent prayer to his old friend. Once complete he thought of how his time as Head would possibly be the shortest in the school history. He had observed Cowes in the grounds earlier that afternoon, watching the burial from a discrete distance. He had been standing under the canopy of the trees in the wood where as a pupil he had discovered the Iron Age round house. No one assembled around the grave mentioned the fact that he was there. Brady wasn’t sure if anyone else but he had spotted the lone figure among the trees. He though wished to pass on his whole hearted support to the new Master. Brady wasn’t bitter about not being given the job, only merely a little disappointed.

For several minutes he waited in the quad. The clock mounted on the chapel wall went from five minutes past to twenty past the hour, yet still no sign of the naval veteran.

From within the warm inviting interior of the hall Brady could hear the chatter of voices and the chuckle of laughter. Sighing to himself he decided that he could speak to Cowes at a future point, but now he would join his fellows.

The heat from the large fire place warmed him immediately on entry. Removing his coat he shook off the drops of rain which had adhered to it and as he did so, the distinct feeling of a boney finger tapped his right shoulder, someone was trying to attract his attention.

Quickly he turned to see who had snuck up on him from the rear, but no one was there. In fact no other person could be seen in the vast entrance hall. Taking a step toward the door he looked out into the cold dark autumn afternoon, all was silent and still. So convinced was he that someone was playing a trick on him, he look around each square buttress which lined the wall of the hall to either side of the doorway.

He shivered, the afternoon was turning into evening and the easterly wind blowing around the quadrangle tonight would be a cold one. Quickly he returned into the warmth of the entrance hall and closed the heavy wooden doors behind him.

Apart from the distant sound of voices and the crackle of the fire all was quiet, or at least it should have been. He could hear the sound of something creaking. For a moment he looked around the large empty room. The rhythmic sound was too constant to be a door moving in a draft. It could have been a clock which required its workings oiling, though he could not see any time pieces in the room.

Having swept his eyes around the ground floor his gaze turned upward to look around the high ceiling and suspended light fittings. As his head turned upwards, his eyes where drawn toward what looked like, no it couldn't be...

“Look,” said one of the first year students, James wasn't sure of his name, Tompkins he thought, “it's snowing?” he called out in an excited voice. Though the fact may be a source of excitement for the more junior members of his group everyone else was hanging on every word the Head was saying.

Outside the leaded windows, thick flakes of snow had begun to drift down from the black inky sky. All the younger children gasped with excitement, the thought of having a white Christmas made up a

little for having to remain at the school. The rest of Headmasters audience were left in an emotional limbo, they all wanted to know what it was that Brady had seen all that time ago.

Mr James looked tired, one or two of the masters wondered if he'd manage to complete the tale before dropping off to sleep sitting in his chair.

The young members of the group finally settled themselves back down into their seats, ready for the final instalment. James finished the last dregs of his wine before preparing to continue.

Silence reigned for a moment. The Head seemed to be staring over his group toward the window. An uneasy murmur ran around the masters as he looked over their heads, just as one of them took a step forward James sprung back into life, "So, where was I? Oh yes..."

Brady could see something hanging down from the high ceiling; the shape was swinging on a rope. His eyes struggled to focus on what appeared to be a manifestation, semi transparent.

The creaking noise was perfectly synchronized with the swinging motion of the object, but what was the object?

The harder and more intensely he tried to make out the image the less he was able to focus upon it. Not until he turned away and caught sight of it from the corner of his eye did he see, the figure was a man, but not just any man. It was the man they had just buried an hour before in the school grounds.

Instantly he turned to look at the phantasm in an attempt to view it in more detail, but now it was gone.

"So we leave him there, standing in the hall all alone. Would you like to know what happened next?" James asked the question directly to the younger members of the audience, on his face he bore a smile, "Yes?" he prompted the awe struck students.

Most of them nodded indicating their eagerness to know.

"If the natural course of events were to follow then Nelson I. Cowes would have taken up his promised position as the Headmaster of this great old school, but it was not to be. How many ghosts have we encountered in this tale so far?"

"Two." Said one boy, quickly followed by several others.

"Two, you think. I counted three." He waited a moment for the revelation to take effect before continuing, "In the hall of this very building where you all walked tonight hangs a series of plaques

containing the details of famous old boys of the school. Did any of you notice the tribute for Nelson I. Cowes?"

Of course no one had, even the masters were blasé to the adornments which hung around the school walls.

James corrected their omission, "Nelson I. Cowes, 1782 – 1806. Killed in action aboard HMS Victory.

Cowes was killed at Trafalgar."

"But?" began one of the older boys, "he came back here after the battle to take up his post surely?"

"Yes, yes he did, didn't he? I think he came back for this," James reached his old hand over to the table and slowly picked up the silver cup. As he drew it back toward him his hands were shaking, "The cup he found. You know in all the years I have occupied these rooms it is the first time I have ever drunk from it.

So, there we are, three spectres walk the grounds of this fine old establishment and they are all connected in some way with this challis, and a poison challis it has been over the years.

That's it I'm afraid. No twist at the end of the story, but I find a story from real life much more chilling than any manufactured ghost story. When you're walking through the grounds or the hall keep an eye out for our uninvited visitors."

Later that night the last few masters were leaving the Heads study. The candles had burned low while the fire was glowing a deep red colour. Heat still radiated from it, warming the room.

Only three members of the staff remained and naturally the conversation was in association with the past affairs of the school brought on by the story just told. As they bid Mr James a goodnight the Head gave them a pleasant smile and thanked them for their attendance before wishing them the complements of the season, "Doctor McDonald, could you stay a moment, I will not take up much of your time."

The doctor was planning on speaking to the Head, so was glad not to have to find an excuse for his remaining in the study.

"You were keen to say something earlier this evening?" so the old Head had noticed his concerned expression.

"I did Headmaster. Your tale tonight awoke a memory from the research I did many years ago."

"Oh yes, was it to do with the supernatural?"

"No not really, it's the challis."



James broke his sentence, quite uncharacteristic for him, "Oh, what about it?"

Though slightly taken aback by the interruption the doctor carried on, "it's not a drinking cup. That cup is used for the last drink given to a man before bring sacrificed.

Could that be the reason for the trail of death which has followed it, and Sir you drank from it tonight." He stopped, almost out of breath, such was the intensity of his statement.

Mr James merely smiled and finished the dregs of his wine before replacing the cup on the table.

Christmas that year at Woodgates was a sombre affair. When the New Year had arrived the new Headmaster of the school, Doctor McDonald stood at the window looking out over the grounds.

The Christmas snow which had fallen deep and crisp and even had now melted away leaving the ground soft underfoot.

McDonald turned to look at the challis which sat in the middle of the mantle. Quickly he removed it from its spot wrapping it up in an old blanket.

Minutes later he was replacing the turf on a patch of ground in the wood where it had first been discovered.

Unbeknown to him, from behind his back, a figure stood watching him. The man dressed in a naval uniform, the style of which was worn around one hundred years previous, smiled to himself.

Three quarters of a century later bombs where falling in abundance on both Hull and the near by village of Brough, a strategic target, an aircraft factory.

Both pupils and staff required a shelter from the air raids. A team of men came to the school armed with picks and shovels, the turf was hardly off the ground when a shovel hit something metal, "Hello, what's this?" asked one of the workmen.

Lee sat at the bar, in front of him was a small glass containing a single Irish Whiskey, two cubes of ice drifted around in the dark liquid. The girls had retired to bed shortly after the last reading of the day. He hoped that Maddie would stay down with him for a short while. The conversation they had shared on the road to Walkington had not ended to his satisfaction. He wanted to talk, did he want more from her? that was exactly the question which he now contemplated. Many emotions ran through his mind that warm summer evening.

With fondness he remembered how good he and Maddie had been together; that memory was much more predominant in his mind than anything he had experienced with his wife, neither did he give any thought to Alistair. Maddie had already set her stall on Alistair during their dalliance, for him Lee had no regard.

He became aware that he was not alone at the bar. Looking up from his glass and his thoughts he saw the old man sitting on a stool at the other end of the bar. He must have sat there for some time; a glass of stout in front of him was three quarters empty, "Evening." Lee gestured.

"Now then." Said the old man. The sleeves of his collarless shirt were rolled up to his elbows, the belt line of his brown trousers was high on his stomach. "I 'erd that young lass telling her story. Do 'ya know that that lad lived 'ere. Not the one who went away, tuther one."

"Really."

"Ey, 'im and his wife. She was a bad lot some said. Some says she where a witch. They left. No one ever 'eard out of 'um again."

"It's Maddie you want to be speaking to, she is the historian amongst us. With a quick flick of his head he tossed back the remainder of his drink and returned his glass to the bar. "I'll wish you good night." He said to the old man.

"Ey, good night; Lee"

Lee sat in bed propping himself with the two pillows provided by the landlord. On the top of the bedside table, which filled the gap between bed and wall, sat a cup of hot chocolate. Outstretched in front of him on the bed was the unfolded O/S map showing tomorrow's route. He traced the path with his finger, over the River Hull then down through Wheel, Wawne, across to Swine and then finally down the old railway line to Sutton. At a rough guess it was no more than twelve miles, for him easy, for the girls though; today had taken its toll on them and they had drunk far too much tonight. He had hoped for an early start in the morning, now though he couldn't see it happening.

He took a mouthful of the hot chocolate; it always tasted better after a few beers. Neatly folding the map away he placed it on the table before finishing his drink and placing the empty cup next to the map. As he lay in the dark his eyes gazed through the partly open curtains. The clouds which had come over, were illuminated by the bright full moon. In the voids between, he could see the stars twinkling away. The heavenly bodies were a constant comfort to

him. No matter where in the world he travelled the stars were always there. Obviously in the southern hemisphere the sky was completely different, but he had the moon, that was always a constant. As his eyes started to close he could hear a noise coming from the room next door. If he was not mistaken it was Maddie, the sounds she was making were unmistakable, he should know.

Maddie at this moment in time was in the throws of a deep sleep and was dreaming. This was not an unusual occurrence, she often dreamt of a whole variety of topics. This dream though was different to any other she had ever had. She was having sex with her husband. She knew it was him, though his facial appearance was more like Lee's. Was that why she was enjoying the experience so much? She could feel him inside her. It had the feeling of being a tougher more dominant presence than she was used too. Each time he thrust into her she groaned, she knew something was wrong about the whole experience, but God, she didn't care. Maddie suddenly felt a climax building, rising from the very tips of her toes and rising upwards. As she almost choked on the feeling she woke up.

The feeling was still tearing through her then, to her horror, she saw why. Deep in between her legs she could see Sarah's head moving up and down. Maddie's feelings were of disgust, surprise and pleasure all in one second.

With a sharp intake of breath she sat bolt up right, breathing heavily.

To her relief she saw Sarah was beside her soundly asleep, a deep sleep. Her chest was rising and falling rhythmically. Maddie could feel the region in between her thighs tingling, her breathing was still irate. Such an immense variation of emotions had swept over her all in the space of a second; pleasure was the dominator overpowering all others. She felt a little dirty at the prospect of Sarah helping her to such an ecstatic state. It was only a dream after all, she knew that. As she settled down once again she couldn't help but snuggle up next to the girl in the bed with her.

Sarah was not asleep and she felt her friend's body close to hers. She too had been dreaming, but unlike Maddie she wasn't entirely sure how much of a dream it had been. When Maddie's arm had come over her, her hand coming to rest on her right breast, she knew that the night would be a sleepless one. This had all happened before Maddie had woken. Sarah witnessed Maddie's dream from the outside and wondered many things about what was happening in Maddie's state of REM. She had also had a dream involving a sexual

act, though hers had no sign of any male stimulation; her own inhibitions were not quite as steadfast as her friends. Sarah could clearly remember in the dream Maddie completely indulging in whatever stimulation she wanted no matter how unorthodox. She had let the dream run its course and so great was her own orgasm that when she woke herself up with her cries of joy it was only then that she began to feel the enormous guilt of the situation. One thing troubled her more than anything. It was what Luke called the peanut effect. On occasion when Sarah had performed the finger up the bum trick her long painted finger nail would sometimes snag the wall of his anal passage. On the first occasion he likened it to passing a half chewed peanut and made reference to Christmas, a time when nut consumption increased for no apparent reason. This very effect she was experiencing now. Suddenly a flash of the dream came back into her mind, she thought the other person in the dream was Maddie, but for an instant as she gazed up at her partner, she saw only her own face, her own eyes looking back at her.

For many hours and long into the night she pondered on these thoughts, what had the dream meant? Maybe the conversation the two of them had shared was laying heavily on her mind? Well, at least she had been given a pleasurable experience, even if it was only a dream; she hoped Luke was not experiencing similar thoughts.



## Beverley to Weel

If you have taken the opportunity to visit the Monks Walk and avail yourself of a well earned pint turn left on leaving the front door and head toward the Minster. At the north door turn left and head around the building in a clockwise direction. On seeing the Sun Inn public house take a left turn and follow the road. This road will lead to the Beck.



Staying on the left hand bank follow the water course in an easterly direction. Almost at end of the Beck were the River Hull cuts across it the footpath takes a sharp left rounding a boat yard and then onto the river bank. Various boats are moored and this part of the river which makes for interesting viewing. Follow the path of the river until reaching Weel Bridge. At the bridge cross the river and then turn right. Follow the road, on the left is the refuse collection point. The road bends around to the left before turning to the right. The road will take a sharp turn to the left and head into the heart of the village. At this point keep right and follow the course of the river.



# IX



## Day 2

The old wall clock in the bar indicated the time with its two ornate and slightly rusty hands. Four, forty five, in the am of course. The bar was silent and still and the pungent aroma of stale beer filled the air. The smell was integrated into the very fabric of the building, the dark beams, the curtains, stools and stone floor alike, nothing escaped it.

Only two people were active at that early hour; one was the landlord, naturally as he had much to do. Breakfasts had to be cooked, the bar bottled up and made ready. At least on a Sunday he was given an hour's grace. English law, even in this day and age, did not permit a public house to open its doors before the hour of twelve noon. Much debate had swung to and fro with his regulars on that particular subject. It all started with the afternoon closing debate some twenty or so years ago now. Should pubs shut at three o'clock in the afternoon; not only on a Sunday, but every day? Of course opinions were divided on the subject. Some argued that if they didn't shut on a Sunday, for instance, most of the patrons would never make it home for their Sunday lunch, others however disagreed. Many people would indulge themselves in an afternoon's constitutional after a more filling roast beef and Yorkshire Pudding, then call in for a drink on their way home. Similar disagreements were all too forthcoming for the Sunday opening time. The landlord was glad that the bolted doors of his hostelry did not have to be unlocked until twelve.

The other early bird that morning was Lee. He opened his bedroom window and took a long lung full of air. Though the sun was out and the sky blue he could sense a distinct chill in the air. The weather was due to change, he could tell it as well as any barometer.

Before the Minster clock had struck the half hour Lee had walked a good mile or so. Already he had taken in the railway station, passed through Saturday Market and was now standing in Wednesday Market. In front of him he could see the west door of the Minster and above the roof tops of the houses and shops, the monumental tower which rose into the sky. Looking forward to a full English of eggs, sausage, black pudding was probably the greatest benefit to staying in a bed and breakfast.

In Room 12A Sarah lay in a deep sleep. Maddie could see her own reflection in the mirror of the small dressing table which sat in front of her. Her intentions for the present were to apply a small amount of make up and at least do something with her hair so it could be classed as almost presentable. It was pointless putting too much effort into the styling, soon it would be flattened under her hat, but she thought that at least some kind of effort was required to go down to breakfast. The events of the previous night hung heavy in her mind. What had happened in the small hours of the morning; she knew well enough that it could only have been a dream nothing more. It was the fact that she had enjoyed the experience so much that really troubled her. Was she turning toward a different way of life? It wasn't unknown; women who had enjoyed married life had suddenly gone over to 'the other side' or whatever they called it. Many examples of case histories were well documented in the pages of the weekly magazines she read. Was she about to be the next in line? What would Alistair say if he found out about it or Sarah for that matter? How would she feel knowing that her image had been utilised as a reference in such an act? She finally decided not to mention it to anyone, especially not to the two people concerned. That was the end of the matter. She ran the brush through her dark curly hair and felt it spring back into its perpetual curls. Walking towards the door, as she passed Sarah, Maddie looked down at her. She looked so calm and serene, almost child like. For an instant she thought of reaching out and touching her long blond hair, then desisted, deciding not to after all. Standing by the door she paused for a second, her hand on the door handle; "Sarah," she called out softly to her friend, "it's time to get up."

Sarah's body moved beneath the sheets as she grunted an acknowledgement. Convinced she was awake, Maddie stepped out of the room.

Sarah looked at the clock; the red on black display was showing seven o'clock, with a sigh she flopped back down onto the large pillow. The night's sleep was not a good one. For most of the night she lay awake and now this morning she had woken early, but pretended to be asleep. A conversation with Maddie was not something she wanted at that moment, not that early in the morning. In her head things needed to be straightened out. Which bits had she dreamt, which had actually happened? Maddie obviously wouldn't ever do such things as she had done in the dream, indeed it was possible that Maddie had never heard of such acts and this of course



would mean that the actual events could not have happened in any shape or form. It had to be a dream. In any event Sarah was almost too embarrassed to face her, why she wasn't sure. A dream was such a personal thing, unique to the individual, there was no way on this earth that Maddie would have any idea about what she had experienced.

When Maddie entered the bar, Lee was busily spreading a great knife full of marmalade onto a slice of toast, "Morning," he said in a cheery but muffled voice. The previous slice of toasted bread was crammed into his mouth, several crumbs shot out as he spoke, landing on the clean, white, linen tablecloth.

"Morning." said Maddie sheepishly as an awful thought hit her. Lee was in the adjoining room to the girls and recalling the outburst she had been guilty of the previous night; she wondered if he could have heard her? Sitting opposite him at the square table she asked, "Have you been waiting long?"

"Oh not too long." He lied, "I was up early so I went for a walk around the town."

"A walk!" the prospect seemed madness, wasn't he walking enough as it was this weekend?

"Yes, just a couple of miles to stretch the legs. My right knee was playing up a little, so I walked it off."

"Is that an old war wound?" Maddie was eyeing up his pot of tea with envy.

"You could call it that. It was certainly obtained on manoeuvres." The fact was he and his patrol had stood down one hot day in the Middle East. Come the night they spent a week's salary in the mess. On his way back to the tents he and a few others fell over a guide rope and landed one on top of another. He would have remained intact if it was not for the burly figure of Duffy, a towering Welsh prop forward who landed on his knee. At the time in his drunken state he thought nothing of it. Over the years, whenever a twinge had occurred in his knee, his mind would think back to that night and Duffy the Welsh wizard.

He didn't elaborate any more than that and thankfully was saved from any more interrogation by the arrival of the landlord, his notepad in hand.

"Good morning," he said peering at Maddie, "Can I get you any tea of coffee?"

"Tea please."

“And to eat?” he enquired; “full English?” most people requested the traditional morning meal. On occasion nowadays many people would want a healthier option, women in particular. After the offence he had caused to his particular patron, he tried not to repeat it.

“Yes please.” Maddie’s eyes lit up at the thought.

“Anything else for you sir?” he turned towards Lee. “Oh, er no thanks, I think I’m done.” A sheepish look entered his eyes.

“Was everything ok?”

“Spot on.” Lee patted his stomach in a self satisfied manner.

“You’re in 12A aren’t ya’?”

“Yes, that’s right.” Maddie replied.

“Did ya’ sleep alright?” an anxious look swept over the Landlord’s red face.

“Fine, why?” her tone was a little abrupt as Maddie was not sure if the inn keeper was making an inference.

“Oh, its just some people have trouble sleeping in that room; but if everything was fine, I’ll fetch ya’ breakfast.”

Maddie was a little puzzled by the comment but she let it pass, “You’ve had yours then have you?”

“Like I said, I was up early.” He then went on to explain the route which he had taken around the deserted medieval market town and his suspicions in regard to the changing weather conditions.

Several minutes later Maddie’s fully laden plate of eggs, bacon, sausages, beans, black pudding and mushrooms landed in front of her. She looked down at the mountain before her. How would she manage to plough her way through that? “There ya’ go.” As quickly as he had arrived the landlord was gone again.

“Morning.” He said as he passed through into the kitchen. Sarah was standing at the foot of the stairs. Two seats remained at the table; whichever she took she would be between her companions. Last night still hung heavily on her mind but she was not going to let it show. The smell of cooking bacon was drifting out from the kitchen and nothing was going to put her off that. ‘Sod it’ she thought, I got a free shag last night, so that’s one up to me.

Confidently she bounced to the table and sat down; she suddenly regretted that action as her feet were sore. “Morning all,” she said with a beaming smile on her face.

Both Maddie and Lee were surprised by her whole demeanour. She looked fantastic, her complexion was clear, slightly tanned from the previous day, no sign at all of a hangover, in fact her wide blue eyes sparkled. “You look well.” Maddie commented a little jealously.

“Amazing what a good nights sleep can do for a girl.”

They said their farewells to the Landlord and thanked him for his hospitality. At least Lee did; the two women did so only out of politeness. The early start Lee had hoped for was not forthcoming. It was gone ten before they managed to set off along the road heading towards the Beck. The morning was in complete contrast to the previous day. Though Lee had witnessed clear skies, his suspicion was correct, the weather had closed in. The sky was completely obscured, the air was damp and a mist hung heavy. The two females of the party had dressed according to the conditions, legs not on show today; instead they were covered by waterproof trousers. On their upper half each wore a waterproof coat of some description. Maddie’s of course was by far the more expensive of the two, Sarah’s was much more on the light weight side and as far as she was concerned a much nicer colour.

The previous morning they had started in good humour, plenty of conversation was forthcoming but today was a much quieter start. The mood of the party matched the weather, overcast and gloomy. The Beck area had changed a lot over the past few years and with several million pounds being spent on redevelopment it was now regarded as a ‘desirable’ area to live. Maddie broke the cold silence that hung over the trio, “My father used to work down here.”

“Did he.” Sarah answered with slightly more enthusiasm than was required for such a simple observation. The tone in her voice was unintentional, the object of the reply was to sound interested; in fact she wanted to sound as normal as possible. Sarah could not decide whether Maddie thought she was giving her the cold shoulder.

Maddie was happy and surprised at the reply as she too was aware of the atmosphere that existed between them that morning. Naturally she brought the blame solely on herself; the events of the previous night were only known to her but she couldn’t help thinking Sarah had some knowledge of them and that was the cause of the prickly start to the day. “He worked in one of the warehouses that were on that side.” She gestured over to the other side of the waterway. The industrial buildings were all but gone now, all converted into domestic flats.

“What did he do?” Lee asked. He was of course heading the group and was by now several steps in front. Lee knew Maddie’s father but was never aware of his employment history.

Sarah had always presumed that Maddie's father would be the owner of a company, director or chief accountant to a big firm. The instant she heard Maddie say that he worked here she presumed that he must have been a shipping magnet, owning a fleet of barges and keels, the sort of thing that once would sail up and down the Beck.

"He was, well one of the workers who moved the sacks of grain, loading and unloading." She was a little embarrassed by the fact that her father had such a lowly job. Someone of her social class should be the product of more professional parents; she regretted ever bringing it up and not have the quickness of thought to invent a more fitting occupation.

So her father was a labourer? She certainly married well. This gave Sarah quite an eye opening moment. She had always considered Maddie to be better than her as it were.

The waterway disappeared into the morning mist; nothing could escape from its white haze encapsulating all. Turning back towards the ancient market town, a similar view met the eye. No Minster towers, no trees, no medieval building were to be seen. The clear waters of Beverley Beck soon gave way to the less inviting waters of the River Hull. This far up stream the water still remained untouched by the mud banks which lined the channel in the metropolis. The less appealing part of the river was surrounded mostly by industry; a hundred years of pollution had flowed into the river before emptying into the muddy brown waters of the estuary.

Many different styles of pleasure craft moored up along this part of the river, cruisers and narrow boats alike. With the inclement weather that day, many of the owners had decided it best to remain at home and not venture out; unlike yesterday when a whole number of locals were messing about on the river.

The seams of Sarah's trousers rubbed against her very sunburnt legs. When they had started that day's walking it was an inconvenience, now however she was in some pain. Each step was becoming harder for her. It was then that it suddenly dawned on her; they were walking up stream, north? "Er, where are we going?" she asked. Having the idea that they were travelling the wrong way, she didn't want to be the bringer of bad news or make her self sound less than intelligent once again.

"The bridge." Lee called back

"Oh, and how far is that?" Sarah realised that however far they had to walk up stream then the distance would be doubled as they

returned on the eastern side. All that could be hoped for was it was not too far.

“About a mile.”

A mile there, then a mile back; it could be worse. Today’s route was only around the twelve mile mark, if she remembered correctly. So when they reached the river crossing that would mean two miles had gone and only ten to go. Things were looking up.

Maddie was only a matter of yards behind Lee who was wearing t-shirt and shorts as on the previous day. Did he not feel the cold? She was cold; the mist had a wintry edge to it and was more of a December morning than one in the midst of a flaming June. For a moment she stopped and waited for Sarah to catch her up on the tow path. “Do you think he feels the cold?” she asked with a suppressed giggle.

“Who, action man?” Sarah joined in the joke.

The congealed breath coming from Lee’s mouth puffed out above him as though he was a steam engine. His breathing was in time with the rhythm of his steps. “No,” Sarah corrected herself, “not action man he looks more like Thomas the Tank Engine.” They watched him vanish into the morning mist and with a spring in their step they chased after him.

From out of the mist the grey bridge appeared. It was small, much smaller than Sarah or Maddie had imagined it to be. Completely made from steel; large rivets stopping the structure from dropping into the dark waters. As their boots trampled over it, each footstep echoed through the mist. The river itself had an eerie feel to it, the fog lay along its course making it impossible to tell where the water began and the mist started. Maddie shivered as she looked down into the water. If she fell in, would anyone see her in the fog? This thought was the cause of another involuntary shudder.

On the east bank of the river the landscape was flat, so flat that they could only see a blank canvas stretching into infinity. Behind them was Beverley with its spires and hills, in front only flat land. Only a road sign served as a point of reference, not that Lee needed it. He knew to follow the road which ran south along the bank. The sign pointed the way to Weel; that was the only thing to the south at least on that stretch of road. Sarah had barely noticed the sign, neither had she studied the map, the village coming up she had not even noticed on her first survey of the route.

With no warning whatsoever the strangest of noises came out of the mist. Mechanical in origin, but still odd. An engine powered up

somewhere on the river, then quickly after a grinding sound and the constant rattling of something being opened and closed. Maddie listened and tried to imagine what it could be. When she was at school, one of the primary teacher's favourite books was about an old steam powered crane that lived in a scrap yard. The noise she could hear was how she had imagined the noise of that old crane would sound like. She almost missed a step when she heard a horn blow. The sound though came from the river, a fog horn, not a steam operated machine. Blue, why was she thinking about the colour blue; was that the colour of the crane in the story or was it for another reason? Her house colour at school was blue, was that it? Beverley to Maddie would always be associated with the colour blue, that was probably lost somewhere in her memory. Maybe it was because in the seventies many people painted their houses and sheds blue, or was it something her father had said to her. She recalled that at school they were taught about the English Civil War. To her and many of her class mates the Civil War had seemed so far away in another time and place. That was until her teacher mentioned the part in which Hull had to play in the proceedings.

King Charles II was marching north; the day was drawing to a close, so he and his party headed towards Hull. The city, protected by its walls, would be a safe haven for the night. When he reached the north gate of the city he was turned away, much to his disgust. The young Madeline could not believe that the actual King of England could be turned away. The Queen would never be turned away from anywhere in the world, it would never happen these days. On her arrival home her father continued the lesson by telling her that Lord Hotham and a selection of local big wigs came together on the first floor of the public house, the Old White Heart, on hearing of the King's approach. They decided that the city would not welcome him. On his rejection he and his men travelled north on to Beverley, where he knew he would be welcomed with open arms. Her father's exact words were, "Cos' they've always been a bit Tory in Beverley." Was that the reason she always associates Beverley with the colour blue?

The sound of gates crashing seemed a lot nearer now and though the mist was still thick, the reason for the noise could clearly be seen. A small refuse plant was situated here. As a skip was filled the gate on its entrance was closed, the compactor would do its work now. Everything had a simple explanation in the end, much too Maddie's relief.

Having passed the plant, the walkers soon found themselves in Weel, only a kink in the river and a field separated the two. Not a soul was about this Sunday morning as they walked through the village. Even if someone was in the vicinity, they would have been unable to see them as the fog was getting thicker. Still hardly any conversation passed around the group, Lee seemed to be in deep concentration finding the safest and easiest path to follow.

Sarah jumped as a dog leapt up at the fence of the first house on the left. It gave her quite a shock as it broke the silence. "It's like the village of the damned here?" Sarah whispered, not wanting to offend any of the residents who may be listening in.

"Oh, I've just remembered," Lee said excitedly, "I've got a story for you."

"Oh good." Maddie said with delight, "What's it about?"

"A bridge, not the one we've just crossed, but the same river."

"Which one then?" Maddie sounded a little impatient.

"You know the swing railway bridge down bank side?"

"Oh yes," interrupted Sarah, "You can walk over it now."

"That's the one."

Maddie seemed a little impatient, "Do you want to stop and tell it..."

"No, no, we'll keep walking, don't want to get cold do we?"

### The Bridge at the End of the World.

The muddy waters of the River Hull snaked through the city to which it had given its name. Rising at Great Driffield its course split the county of East Yorkshire almost in two before emptying into the Humber Estuary.

As the city became more industrialised during the early years of the twentieth century, the river suffered more and more with heavy traffic and pollution.

By the year 1928 the banks of the river that stood within the city boundaries were choked by factories, mills and warehouses.

Several bridges appeared spanning the dark waters, Drypool, North, Scott Street, Swan Street, the Railway Bridge, Clough Road and Sutton Road. The most important of all was the Railway Bridge which linked the rail network from Paragon, Hull's mainline station, to the docks and east coast resorts. Two tracks ran over the river, supported by the bridge which would swing open on occasion to allow the river traffic access up and down stream. Each time it closed,

the rails would again be in perfect parallel; a masterpiece of engineering.

Supported by the two sides of the structure sat the signal box high above the track. The underside of the box was thick with black soot from the passing engines, as were most of the windows. The operating of the bridge was all co-ordinated by the sole signalman. His duties included the opening and closing of the bridge, the signals on the approach and also the co-ordination of river traffic passing through that part of the system.

Because of the high volume of traffic passing through at this point, accidents were not uncommon. On a cold misty November morning in the year 1928, one particular tragedy took place. The sunlight was yet to filter through the mist that clung to the river as the two maintenance men walked onto the pathway which ran alongside the two sets of rails. A heavy frost had been left from the previous night's clear skies. The men's boots crunched on the slippery wooden planks that made up the walkway.

A problem had arisen with the locking mechanism of the bridge after a boat had collided with one of the supports. The fault had to be rectified before too much rail traffic crossed that morning. The vibration of the trains could work other pieces loose if the system was not replaced.

George White took his flask out of the cloth bag he carried to work most days and poured himself a cup of tea. As he drank he could feel the hot liquid creeping down his throat and into his chest and stomach. George was sixty four years old and was only six months away from retirement, just in time for the summer. His allotment beckoned. He offered a cup full of steaming tea to his workmate Mike.

Mike was a young lad of eighteen. He looked up from his open tool box and declined the offer, "No thanks, let's get the job done and we'll have a cuppa with the signalman."

From high above the track the signalman watched the two workmen preparing their tools for the job. Turning away he filled the kettle from a large water jug then placed it on the fire. The steam rising from the spout added to the blanket of condensation which had formed on the windows inside the box.

Mike picked up his two and a half inch spanner; the metal was as cold as the frost on the ground. It was so cold that the ice cold metal stuck to his hand. "That's cold," he said to George as he removed the spanner from his hand and shook it vigorously.



No answer came, he looked up and across onto the track. George was already busying himself removing the damaged locking system. Before venturing onto the line Mike looked both ways for rail traffic. He knew nothing was coming, the signalman would have warned them if anything was due. Better to be safe than sorry though, his mother always told him. It was a wise piece of advice, quite often on the railway, workers would be hit by trains. After a while the sound of an engine approaching became background noise, not noticed, a fact that had cost many a worker a limb or their life.

Removing the failed component took longer than normal. Water had found its way into the workings and frozen solid.

“It’s no good,” George said wiping the sweat from his brow, “it won’t shift.”

“Wait a minute, I’ve got an idea.” Mike jumped off the track landing on the walkway, losing his footing slightly.

At the top of the wooden staircase he opened the door to the signal box, a warm blast of air breezed past his face. On the opposite side of the room he could see the kettle on the fire; it was just coming to the boil.

“Just what I need.” He said to the signalman.

“Ey’ tea up in a minute or two.” He replied putting on his overcoat and hat.

“I don’t want it for tea; I need it to unfreeze the locking box.”

Mike descended the wooden staircase taking care not to fall foul of the frost. Kettle in hand, the signalman followed.

At the bottom he put down the kettle carefully on the walkway next to the tool box before closing the gates to the level crossing, “One due in two minutes lads.” The signalman warned the workmen. Moments later he was back in the warmth of the box.

The clunk of the signal dropping caught George’s attention. Through the mist he could see the pale red light had turned to green. A train was on its way, time to move. As he stood the knee joints in his old legs ached. Arthritis was setting in; it was as well that he only had another six months of his working life left to run. He was of the opinion that his old joints wouldn’t last much longer. The right knee joint had locked; he felt the pain that was becoming all too common. With an almighty effort he lifted his leg over the rail. As it landed he lost complete control on the frost covered floor. His body fell, the last thing he saw was his young apprentice running towards him.

With a thump his skull cracked as it hit the iron rail.

Mike was at his side instantly, “George, George.” he shouted. He did not realise that his friend and teacher was dead. Desperately he tried to lift the lifeless body off of the rails. With the surface of the bridge not conducive to the movement of heavy weights his efforts were in vain.

The sound of a whistle blowing came out of the mist.

“Run,” Mike heard a voice say in his head.

“George?” it was the voice of his teacher he had heard, he was alive after all.

One of the sash windows opened in the signal box, “Get off the line, get off the line.” The voice came from above. Mike turned to locate the source of it but all he saw was the approaching smoke box, funnel and buffers of a tank engine.

The whistle blew as the engine followed by six coal trucks thundered over the bridge.

Two days later on a clear autumnal November morning Mike’s mother Edith, father Michael, Sister Helen and Grandfather Thomas all stood on the walkway of the railway bridge.

His mother, Edith cried into a large tissue as did his young sister. The two men stood in quiet reflection. Thomas, his grandfather was experiencing a double tragedy.

He himself had been George’s teacher, his skills as an engineer passed onto his apprentice who in turn had passed the same skills onto his grandson. Now the end of the chain had come. He himself was nearing the end of his life, the doctors had said as much. His chest hardly functioned, a lifetime of smoke and soot had seen to that.

“You know if...” he began, but thought better of finishing off the sentence, at least out loud. He would have traded his life though if it would have brought back his grandson. He couldn’t help but feel partly responsible for the accident. He had trained George; he should have trained him better, if only he had been there. In his heart he knew that if he had been there, there was nothing that he could have done to prevent what happened, that did not make him feel any less responsible though.

Edith squinted as she laid a single rose on the walkway of the bridge, the morning sunlight blinding her. A lone tribute to her son. As she stood up she held the side of the bridge for support, faintness had come over her.

A chill entered the air as two men watched the four mourners standing on the bridge. One was elderly the other a youth, both had

the feeling that they had stood there watching for ever, but at the same time they had only arrived two days previously. Both smiled as they stood only feet way from the grieving party.

The four family members stood in silent reflection looking down at the river.

The sun disappeared behind a cloud, no not a cloud; it was a cloud of mist crawling upstream. As it passed the bridge the temperature dropped, with a thud something hit the bridge. Three of the party turned to see one of the four laying on the wooden walkway. The old man's face had turned white as he lay there dead.

Two old men, George and his old master Thomas stood together once more. As the mist cleared from the bridge the sun shone bright into the eyes of the remaining three mourners.

It was Helen who first noticed someone at the far end of the bridge. In the bright sunlight all she could see was a silhouette. She took three paces into the shadow of the signal box.

Now the figure was taking shape, it was Mike.

“Oh, that was a good one.” Sarah commented on hearing the conclusion.

“Did ‘ya like that?” Lee asked a smile on his face.

Sarah's attention was suddenly taken, the road split. In one direction it headed off into the village, the other direction took it along the river bank. “Which way now?” she asked, looking both ways and eyeing up the options.

Lee handed the youngest member of the party the map, “Here you go, you tell me.” Up to that point Sarah had left the map reading to her companions, quite happy to be guided wherever she was told. Now it was up to her, it wasn't as though she was totally ignorant of the route or map reading in general. It was just that she didn't want to do it right now but she decided that maybe she should. Trying to think back and remember the path she stared at the map. It did register



Weel GR064395

something but what it was, was not forthcoming. She decided to guess, “I think that it is...” then stopped. When looking at the journey weeks before it seemed curious to her that they were going to cross a field at a strange angle. They were almost at that point, so it had to be, “...the path to the right.”

“Very good.” Lee said congratulating her with a hint of sarcasm in his voice. “Off you go then.” Sarah had offered him the map back, he refused. “You keep hold of it for a bit.”

## Weel to Wawne

Passing through Weel follow the track which bends around with the river. After round half a mile the track bends to the left heading off towards Spring Dale Farm situated on Weel Stone Carr. At the bend a sign post indicates that the route crosses a field. Normally nothing is growing in this field which makes crossing easy, but the path is seldom walked and no obvious route is easily be seen.

The point you need to aim for is almost half way between the river and the fence to the east.

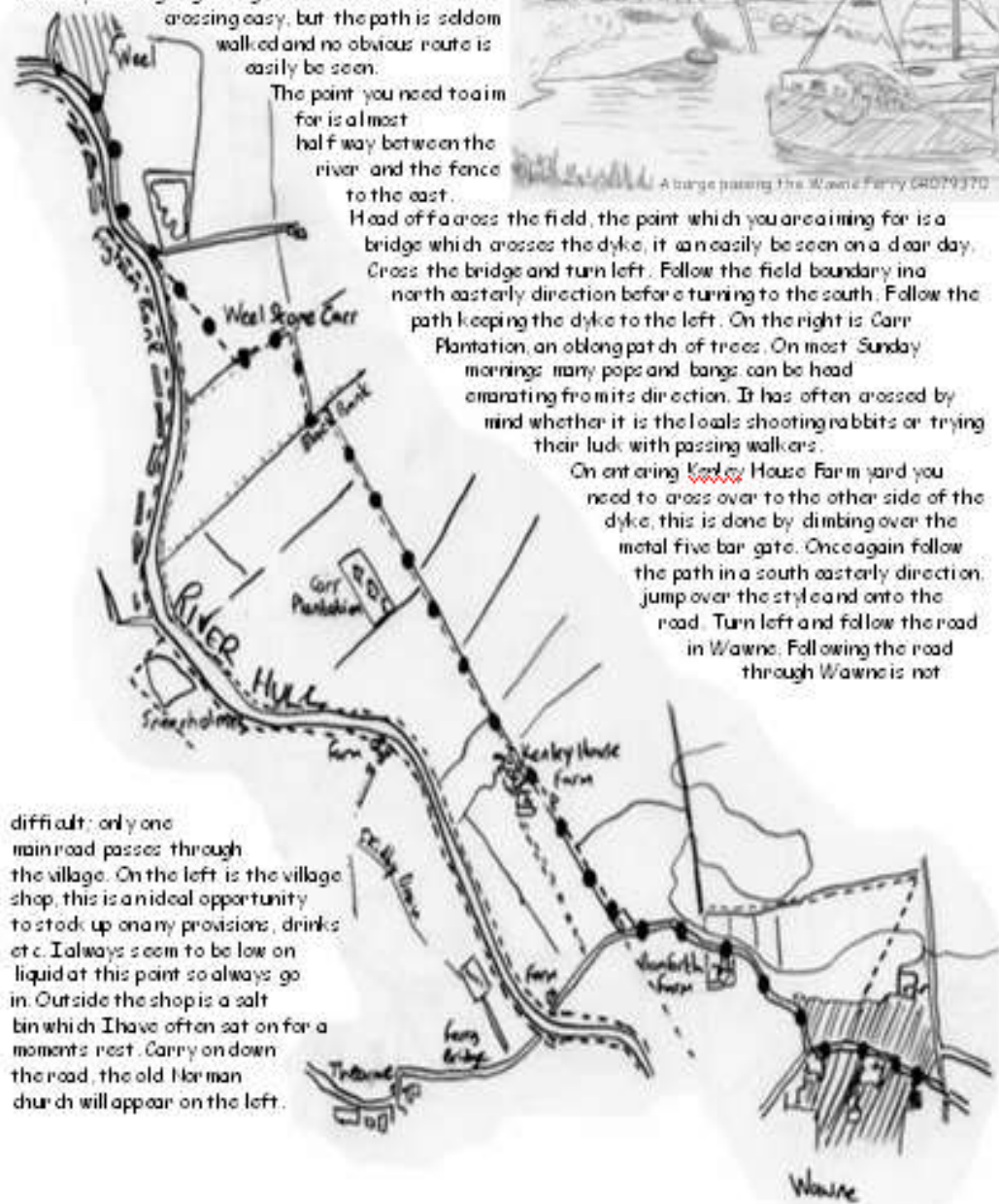
Head off to cross the field, the point which you are aiming for is a bridge which crosses the dyke, it can easily be seen on a clear day. Cross the bridge and turn left. Follow the field boundary in a north easterly direction before turning to the south. Follow the path keeping the dyke to the left. On the right is Carr Plantation, an oblong patch of trees. On most Sunday mornings many pops and barge can be heard emanating from its direction. It has often crossed by mind whether it is the locals shooting rabbits or trying their luck with passing walkers.

On entering Kealey House Farm yard you need to cross over to the other side of the dyke, this is done by climbing over the metal five bar gate. Once again follow the path in a south easterly direction, jump over the stile and onto the road. Turn left and follow the road in Wawne. Following the road through Wawne is not

difficult; only one main road passes through the village. On the left is the village shop, this is an ideal opportunity to stock up on any provisions, drinks etc. I always seem to be low on liquid at this point so always go in. Outside the shop is a salt bin which I have often sat on for a moment's rest. Carry on down the road, the old Norman church will appear on the left.



A barge passing the Wawne Ferry GR079370



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The rough track which serves Springdale Farm is made up of chalk pebbles in varying sizes. Over the years they have become compacted with the constant flow of farm traffic. Not many walkers come this way, even though the right of way has existed for many years; the nearest National Trail is some seven miles away on the other side of the river as the crow flies. The houses on the outskirts of Weel still shadowed them, at least they were still in view; the fog had not obscured them yet. Lee enjoyed walking in the fog; he loved the feeling of not knowing quite where he was. Many experienced walkers had lost their bearings in the fog. Some had fallen off the edge of cliffs or stumbled into boggy land all for the lack of a point of reference to make their aim. It was the unknown which he liked the most. When the fog lifts you could find yourself miles from your intended destination, even over short distances. "Right" said Maddie, "coats on." This time she would be the first to use the all too familiar phrase. I have two stories to read before Weel disappears in the mist.

"Two?" Sarah seemed surprised; "about this place?" she had come to the conclusion that this was defiantly a one horse town; probably stagnant since the Middle Ages. Coming from Brough she had always knocked the older residents and members of her family on the subject of village life and interbreeding. Many of her circle of friends would address one another as, 'our Dave' or 'our Sue'. Were all these people actually related? The easiest laugh she could obtain was on these occasions to hold her palm in the air in offer of a 'high five', but request anyone to 'give her six'. The joke would never failed to raise giggle. For all Brough didn't have to offer it would be classed as a metropolis compared to this sleepy hollow.

"Yes two." Maddie replied.

Lee already had removed his back pack and was taking something out. To Maddie's surprise and delight it was a flask. "Here you go girls, get 'ya gobs round this." In each hand he held one of the two built in cups, both full of steaming hot tea. They were taken gratefully by the girls who sipped them slowly.

## The Fallen Groom

A thin wisp of smoke rose into the air from the chimney jutting out of the thatched roof. Under it sat an old cottage, home of the

Smith family for the past three generations. Malcolm Smith was, as was his father before him, the village blacksmith. A trade which brought in a considerable income, though most of it was taken by his landlord, Squire Etherington. Etherington was the major landowner in the area and was rich with it.

Today though, thoughts of money were far from his mind. His daughter Penelope was to be married to Albert Morley, the Thatcher's son.

In the cottage Malcolm's wife, Rose, rushed around busying herself trying to dress her three daughters. Penny wore a simple white dress patterned with tiny red flowers; in her hand was a bouquet of marguerites and honeysuckle. Her two younger sisters wore similar attire with their own floral decoration of a honeysuckle ring in their hair.

A knock came from the two piece, stable style door. Malcolm opened it to reveal the smiling face of his brother, uncle of the bride. From the yard behind the newcomer, Malcolm could hear the clatter of horse's hooves on the cobbles. There stood Fanny, a large majestic filly; behind her a freshly polished carriage.

A shaft of bright sunlight shone into the well furnished study of Wawne Manor. The tastefully furnished room was filled with all manner of curios from the four corners of the Empire. The owner clearly had taste and money. Two young men occupied the room; the first was seated smoking a cigarette. Occasionally he would flick the ash from the end into an ash tray secreted in the top of an elephant's foot. In his right hand he held a glass of whiskey, the fourth drink he had taken in half an hour.

The second man was the squire's son. He paced back and forth through the room, he too was smoking and drinking. This man was Rufus Etherington and all his life he was accustomed to getting his own way. His latest plan though had gone awry. The girl he wanted for his wife was going to be married to another man. He was quickly trying to address the situation and formulate a plan of action. The only reason he was showing any interest in the Smith girl was because his father had told him that it was time he was married. At that time a shortage of available rich women meant that the prospect of marrying into money was out of the question. A second plan had to be formulated. If he could not marry for money then at the very least his wife must be good looking. Having an ugly poor wife was out of the question.



Penelope Smith was the only attractive girl of the right age in the village; so it would have to be her. When he had approached her father about the match, the woman in question had made it quite clear that it was unthinkable as she was betrothed to another. He was not used to being refused.

With a sudden jolt he refrained from circling the room and turned his attention to his companion, "Why, Cedric? Why? That's what I would like to know, why?" as he spoke he wagged the forefinger of the hand holding the cigarette at his friend. "She could have had all this," he said gesturing around with obvious reference to the house, "so why marry a labourer? Well?"

Cedric looked back at him with a blank expression on his face.

"Come on, you're an intelligent man. Why would she want to live in poverty when she could have all this? Rapidly he once more began to pace around the room, "Well?"

"I don't know; love?"

"*Love*, don't be a fool, *Love*? Money is what matters, money." Tossing back the contents of his glass he crossed to the dark oak cabinet and poured another drink before turning to Cedric and shouting, "Three times I asked her to marry me, three times."

Cedric felt all but helpless, he didn't know what to suggest, "So what are you going to do?"

"We," he enforced, "we are going to put a stop to this sham of a ceremony, then conduct our own marriage, my father has arranged things with the vicar, it will all be legal."

"What's the plan then?" Cedric sat upright a smile on his face.

Rufus reached out a hand toward the wall. He unhooked, then took down a Japanese sword. With one swift movement he pulled it out of the scabbard and swished it through the air. The cold metal blade generated a whooshing sound as it cut through the smoke filled room. Re-sheathing the sword he handed it to Cedric and smiled.

In the heavily wooded copse which ran adjacent to the village church, Albert Morley wandered along the footpath. The sun instantly blinding him as he picked his way through the trees. Through the greenery he could see the entire village assembling for the afternoon service. A wedding was a big event, an excuse for the whole village to don their finest clothes and walk arm in arm with their spouse to witness the joining of the next generation.

He smiled to himself as he saw all his friends and relations turning out for his wedding.

On the tower, the large clock face was showing the time at 1.50pm, ten minutes before Penelope would be arriving. Composing himself he straightened his tie and smoothed back his greased hair.

Time to go.

As he walked toward the edge of the trees his attention was temporarily caught by a rustling in the undergrowth to his right.

He took no heed, after all his mind was on other things. His negligence was something that would cost him his life.

Penelope's carriage pulled away from the blacksmith's yard. This would be the last time she left the house which had been her home for the last twenty years. She would return as a daughter and a wife.

Albert did not see anyone; the two men came from behind, a cowardly act. As Albert focused on the church door, open and welcoming at the end of building he was not aware of what was happening to his rear.

A sharp pain ripped through his midriff. Where had it come from? What was it? He looked down at his stomach. The white shirt, so carefully pressed by his mother that morning, was stained red.

Red with his own blood.

Protruding out of the crimson stain was six inches of cold metal blade.

The surprise and shock he had experienced suddenly turned to pain. Shock paralysed his senses and he fell to his knees. The earth was cool; he could feel it through his trousers, slightly damp.

From around his back he could hear a noise, then, he saw a pair of boots appear. Lifting his head for the first time he saw Rufus, the squire's son. "You?" the word fell out of his mouth.

Rufus just looked back and smiled. Someone else was there also; he could see Cedric, friend and hanger-on to Rufus, out of the corner of his eye. Both of them wore the same sickly smile. As he could feel his life ebbing away, through the trees he could see Penelope climbing out of the carriage, then nothing.

Rufus and Cedric looked down at the lifeless body. "Get him off the path." Rufus was speaking in a matter of fact tone, "Hide the sword and come back for it tonight. I'll have other things to occupy me."

Rufus lifted up the two legs; Cedric took hold of the torso. As he lifted the body the sword fell out, dropping onto the grassy ground.

The body was unceremoniously dumped into the undergrowth, the sword followed.

As Rufus ran into the church yard, the door at the south end was closed. He paused and composed himself and took several deep breaths, as the out of breath Cedric followed behind. "Right, let's do it." Rufus said, determination in his voice.

The door burst open. All in the building turned to look toward the back of the church. Silhouetted in the sunlight stood two men. "I'm here..." began Rufus, then suddenly broke off from his speech.

His eyes struggled to focus in the dim light. At the far end of the church with his back to altar stood the Vicar. In front of him were two people. The woman on the right was obviously Penelope, next to her stood; who?

This was not in the plan, who was standing where he should be?

Slowly both bride and groom turned.

"No?" shouted Rufus, "That's impossible." His face turned pale, ghostly white. His legs began to give way. "But we've just killed you."

The face of Albert stared back at him.

Rufus held his head in both hands, "No" he shouted. A pain shot through his midriff as he shouted, "You're dead." On feeling the pain Rufus looked down at his stomach. Protruding from it was a blood soaked blade.

To Cedric's surprise he found his hands on the hilt of the sword, the same sword he had used minutes before. Blood oozed out of the wound in his friend's back, covering his hands. He took his hands off the weapon on the realisation of what this must have looked like.

What was happening? He had left the blade in the corpse.

As Rufus fell onto the stone floor a pool of blood formed itself around him. Cedric looked up at the man who should have been lying dead in the copse outside.

The figure had gone, only the bride and the vicar looked back at him.

The story pulled at Sarah's heart strings. For many years she had dreamed of her own wedding. Many times she had mentally picked her dress, her flowers and of course her husband. The idea of the groom being savagely murdered by such an awful man turned her stomach. That poor young girl. She took a mouthful of the now tepid tea which she had not touched since the tale began.

“Right, here’s the next one.” Maddie put the first of the papers back into her pack and then cast her brown eyes over the next instalment.

### The Henge in the Wood.

Preston Owen sat upright with a start. His exhaling breath condensing in the cold morning air. He was lying in bed; though warm beneath the covers a cold sweat covered his overweight body. For many nights now, his sleep had been plagued by a dream. In it he was running through trees, but was he the hunter or the hunted. That he could not tell. Was this the reason he always awoke in such a quandary, not knowing? The dream always ended the same way, him standing in a ring of trees, the chase over.

Looking around the hotel bedroom he knew it was once again morning, ice covered the window pane. Wrapping one of the warm blankets around his large frame to protect him from the cold morning air, he wiped the condensation off the window. Looking out on the icy world he thought of the day ahead.

His lodgings were in a pub, The Buck Inn, a most civilised hostelry in the heart of Beverley.

Preston owned a company charged with the clearance of any major obstacles in the path of a new road being built.

These were changing times. Industry was changing the face of the country, both urban and rural. The world was becoming more industrialised. Factories were springing up all over the north of England; the world of cottage industry was dying, making way for the industrial mogul.

Along with new industry, a more effective transport network was required. Road and rail networks were snaking across the countryside. Compulsory purchase orders were given to farmers and land owners, telling them that their land was required to further the advance of the empire. Many protested at the onslaught of machines, but the links were still laid.

Preston Owen’s company were the first to arrive at any site. Their job was to clear the way for the road building crew to come along and lay the various aggregates.

Owen stoked the embers of last night’s fire; a red glow illuminated his face. Quickly he dumped a shovel full of coal onto the fire and after adjusting the newly laid coal with the poker he returned to bed, waiting for the coal to ignite. Only a matter of one mile away

Preston's band of navvies was already reporting to the foreman for their day's work. The task for that day was a large one. The course of the road had to pass through a wooded area, known locally as Henge Wood. The mysterious name for what was no more than a cops could not be found on any map, nor any evidence was there of any Henge, stone could be found in its boundaries but that was the locals name for the area.

From high on the dale which overlooked the wood a young man gazed down onto the area of construction in the valley. A shiver ran down the back of his neck as he saw the three traction engines chugging towards the edge of the wood, each connected to a chain driven rip saw. Something needed to be done before it was too late. This particular man was an enigma; his name was not known to any person. He spent his nights in bars and taverns along the route of the road, generating support against the builders. The name the locals had given him was Herne. How he had come across such a grand name he could not, or at least, would not say.

According to legend, Herne was the gardener at Windsor Castle who was falsely accused but, never the less, executed for stealing one of the Kings Deer. Maybe it was his love of the wild deer which roamed this part of the world that had earned him the name.

Owen knew of him though, and on several occasions the anarchist had appeared at sites due for levelling. Preston Owen had always informed the local constabulary of the existence of this trouble maker, brandishing him a Luddite. The punishment for being found guilty of that crime was still hanging.

On several occasions, Owen had despatched men with dogs and armed with shotguns to hunt him down. Each time they would return empty handed. On their second meeting, Preston Owen knew that this Herne was trouble.

The road had started at the boundaries of Hull and headed west. As the clearance operation reached Wawne, a group of men armed with pitchforks and picks attacked the workforce. That time they were unprepared for such action but from then on, a collection of weaponry was kept to hand at all times.

Early one morning, Owen was out unusually early. He could not sleep; something was troubling him. Slowly he walked through the early morning mist, surveying the land.

Only the strange cries of various animal life broke the morning calm. Owen had the strangest feeling trouble was in the air; was another attack due on his workers?

Looking around he could see the outline of a figure, dark against the white blanket of mist.

Owen strained his eyes to see who it was standing there. Slowly he took a step closer the dark figure.

After several steps he still could not see who it was. His pace quickened toward the figure leaning against the fence. As he gathered pace, the stranger turned and walked toward a clump of trees. As Owen reached the fence where the figure had stood, his quarry had entered the trees. He Turned slowly to view his pursuer then, with another step, he disappeared into the darkness of the canopy of trees.

Out of breath the overweight figure followed him up the hill.

On his arrival at the edge of the copse, Owens came to an abrupt halt. Gathering himself together, he took a deep breath and entered the trees. He walked as silently as he could; only a slight wheeze from his chest gave him away. Out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of a figure moving. Quickly he turned to see, but no one was there.

A cry came from his left flank; again upon inspection no one could be seen.

He crept further into the wood. Something in front of him was moving. Quickly he jumped behind a tree, then, ever so carefully peered around the trunk.

In a clearing he could see the man, what was he doing? He could not tell. Passing from tree to tree he slowly homed in on the trespasser.

The man was now sitting on the damp woodland floor, cross legged, looking down.

Owen picked a log up off the ground. It was sizeable, heavy and more than adequate for the job he had in mind.

Slowly he approached the seated figure. He raised the log above his head then gritted his teeth.

As he readied himself to bring the branch down, a crow cried in his right ear. The large, black bird flew across his face only inches away from his eyes. He jumped back but instantly readied himself once more. As he turned back towards the seated man, his eyes widened in fright. A stag stood on the spot the man had occupied. For a second he did not know where to look or what to think. His attention was drawn to a pain in his stomach, an unspeakable pain.

Sweating, he sat up in bed.

Once again, the anarchist had interrupted his sleep; something had to be done about this thorn in his side.

It was a tired looking Preston Owen who ate his breakfast that morning. He sat at the small table alone. Only two others were present in the room, but neither spoke to him.

Through the net curtained window, Owens noticed his foreman walking up the path; a concerned look on his face. Moments later a knock came on the door. The landlady ushered a well dressed man into the dining room, his frock coat and waistcoat pressed and bowler hat clasped in both hands.

“Morning Jenkins.” Owen said, his mouth still overflowing with bacon.

“Good morning Sir.” Jenkins faltered as the brim of his hat was passed through his fingers in a circular motion. He had more to say, but didn’t.

“Well, out with it man.” A morsel of meat shot out of Owen’s mouth and landed on the floor beside Jenkins shoe.

“We’re ready to start felling the trees in Henge Wood Sir, but...”

“But what man?” The gaffer was not amused and when he was of that frame of mind, his first instinct was to sack the bearer of the bad news.

Jenkins could see in his eyes that piercing stare that he knew all too well, “There’s a colony of deer in the wood. The locals want them moving before they’ll...”

His quiet voice was eclipsed by Owen’s thundering outburst. “Deer, deer man. I’ll give them deer. Flog every man of them. I’ll do it myself if they don’t start work.” Removing the napkin from his collar, he threw it down on the plate before picking his stick up and chasing Jenkins out of the public house.

En route to the wood, Owen thought back to the previous week. He had come across that bloody Luddite then; stirring up trouble with the locals. It was a small wood which had to be cleared. The man had neutralised several pieces of machinery and Owen had seen him in the act. Taking his shot gun off its mounting in the caravan, he set off in pursuit.

Just as had happened in his dream, the stranger vanished in the undergrowth. All he could do to vent his anger was to take it out on several deer. The memory prayed heavily on his mind as the carriage arrived at the site, the shotgun was on his lap.

As the black, two wheeler appeared around the corner of the hill, the labourers jumped up from their seated positions before the carriage came to a halt in the soft muddy ground.

Owen opened the door and jumped out of the still moving carriage, the shotgun was cocked and ready for use. "Right," he boomed, "where's the problem?" His staring eyes ran over all the men standing around him.

Slowly one lifted his arm pointing a finger towards the wood.

Owen spun his head around toward the trees. A collection of deer looked back at him, "You women; get in there." He ordered. No one moved.

"I'll have you all for this. I'll do it myself." As he began to storm off towards the trees, he shouted an instruction back towards the assembled workers, "Jenkins, bring the spare shotgun from my cabin, if it moves, kill it."

The men watched him fade into the mist. As the figure entered the trees the bang, bang of two cartridges being discharged echoed through the morning air.

A flock of birds flew off from their perches in the trees. After completing a loop, they once again settled down on the very same branches.

Jenkins turned towards the collection of caravans huddled together, "Mr Jenkins, sir," said one of the men. Jenkins looked at the concerned expression on the man's face. It mirrored all the men's faces. "It's not the deer Mr Jenkins," he continued.

"Then what is in those woods to make you down tools?" the foreman asked.

"I don't know Sir, but none of us dare go in."

The deer scattered in all directions and disappeared in the woodland undergrowth. Owens watched them flee in panic. He followed one, the head of the pack, the head stag.

Luckily it had not run but only walked off following the footpath and Preston gave chase. Back at the camp, Jenkins took the shotgun off the wall. From the desk drawer he took a handful of cartridges, two found a home in the twin barrels of the gun and then a slack handful went into his jacket pocket.

Owen proceeded with great stealth. Any noise could alert his quarry. The shotgun was ready for use, draped over his forearm. Slowly he made his way down the footpath; the mist making it difficult to see very far in front of him. The path had twisted several ways and now he had lost his bearings altogether.

He heard a crack, a twig breaking. He looked up to see in a clearing, the majestic stag, standing completely still. This was a



chance too good to miss. To bring the animal down he would have to get as close as possible.

Carefully he approached the animal. The beast was standing in a clearing amongst the trees. It had occupied itself by sniffing around the earth.

Owen approached, coming out of the trees and into the circular clearing. He couldn't believe his luck; the stag had not seen him. Owen wanted to be one foot or so nearer the animal, point blank range.

A fallen log stood in his way. Looking down he slowly stepped over it, careful not to make any sound. Under his foot a twig broke; crack. He froze to the spot like a statue. No movement came from the direction of the stag.

In tandem the gun barrel and his eyes rose to focus on the animal.

In shock, he took a sharp intake of breath. His heart raced, what was happening, in the place of the beast stood a man, the man known to all as Herne.

On his head he wore the head of a stag, antlers grandly reaching into the air. From his shoulders hung deer skins.

Owen stood paralysed.

"You will not need that."

The shotgun fell to the ground.

All Owens could muster in way of a response was the word, "You?" The word could only whimper out of his mouth; his knees buckled as he fell to rest on them.

The deerskin clad image in front of him started to phase into the mist, his head spun uncontrollably. It wasn't his head, the circle of trees had started to spin, the trees blurred into one ribbon of green and brown. The sound of rushing air passed through his head, although he could feel nothing against his skin.

Slowly the spinning stopped. No trees remained; his geographical position was the same, to his left the river ran towards the estuary. As the view came into focus he found himself in a ring of single stones, all standing at strange angles to one another.

In front of him stood the antler clad man; now he could see his face more clearly. It was the Luddite, damn the man.

"You were going to desecrate a sacred site." Said the figure, "For that there is no appeasement. The Lord Waylon requires your life, for these are his stones."

Owen tried to speak, but couldn't. Actions speak louder than words. He looked down for his shotgun; he would put an end to this once and for all.

The gun was no longer there?

Herne looked down on him, "So it begins." He said in an authoritative voice.

Once again the world turned. The blur of the landscape turned to the more familiar colours of the wood. The turning stopped once again.

He was back, back in the wood. From somewhere to his rear he could hear the sound of a shotgun blasting; that must be Jenkins.

He felt uneasy on his feet. Taking a step forward he steadied himself. His foot sank into the wet earth. Instantly he took a step back, that foot also sank an inch or so into the soft earth. Two more steps steadied his body.

Wait?

He had taken four steps to steady himself, but each leg had only moved once. He looked down at his feet. Feet? He no longer had feet. Four hooves supported his body. On his head he felt two antlers protruding into the air. No wonder he felt off balance with those on top of his head. His eyesight had also changed; the wood looked different, his nostrils flexed. He could smell scents as clear as pictures; a whole new world had opened before him.

Jenkins saw the stag, remembering the gaffer's words he let both barrels go at once. The stag fell.

Laughing he ran to the fallen animal, next to it lay a shotgun. Jenkins looked into its eyes; the piecing stare of Preston Owen looked back at him.

At the stile which marked the boundary between road and field, they cast their eyes across the field. "Over there somewhere," Lee gestured with a pointing finger, "is the bridge across the dyke." The mist was so thick that the far boundary of the field was completely obscured, invisible from view.

"Where?" Sarah didn't like going across a field. It belonged to someone, a farmer presumably; if it was her who owned the field, she would want people to walk around.

"You've got the map."

How did she know which way to go, they were surrounded by a thick blanket of fog.

“Here, let me show you.” From his pocket he took out a compass. Instructing Sarah to put the map on top of the gate post he laid the compass on top. “Right then, so that way s North.” He said pointing a finger into the fog. “So we line the vertical lines up north to south.” Every year he showed her the procedure, he didn’t mind, giving her the knowledge could one day save her life. “Now, the footpath on the map is pointing directly where we want to go, over there.” Maddie knew the direction of the path; to her it was obvious. “We could just look at the sign.” With a nod of her head she drew their collective attention to the Public Footpath sign which was bolted to the stile. The small piece of wood which showed the way pointed in exactly the same direction as Lee’s arm.

Sarah was first over; her thigh almost brushing past Lee’s nose, as she swung her leg over. Maddie followed, she however kept a close eye on Lee; she didn’t want him anywhere near her thigh.

Once over, Lee checked his bearings, “This way.” He said striding off.

Sarah’s fears of destroying crops were now quashed. She looked down at her feet as she walked. The ground was hard with all manner of plant life growing in the field. This field must have contained many different types of crops over the years. In a space of fifty yards or so she passed cauliflower, cabbage, sprouts and grass, obviously these mixed in between the nettles.

Lee stopped. He had momentarily lost his bearings. Both sides of the field were now invisible to the naked eye. In fact they could have been anywhere in the world. Not one point of reference could be seen. That was not strictly true. One thing could be seen in the field, the farmer had erected a scarecrow. Why in that field, nothing grew? The lifeless body was only a silhouette standing arms outstretched, crucifixion style. Lee took his bearings from the map. “Yes, this way.” He was off again striding blindly into the fog.

“Do you think he knows what he’s doing?” Sarah asked Maddie with a sigh.

“If there is one thing he knows all about that’s reading a map. They could see him in the distance checking the map once again.

“Are you sure?”

“Last night,” Maddie asked tentatively as they picked their way through the undergrowth and nettles, “did you get up in the night?” The subject of the previous hours of darkness was not one which she wanted to approach, something was worrying her.

“I don’t think so, why?”

“You don’t think so, how sure



are you?” Maddie seemed keen to know.

“Fairly.” Sarah knew that on occasions, after a heavy nights drinking, it was possible that she would have to pay a visit or two to the toilet and not remember. In the past she had moved things for no reason on these nightly trips, Luke’s contact lens solution for instance. On that occasion she hadn’t hidden it, just simply moved it from on side of the bathroom cabinet to the other. Last night though she had not drank that much to lose her memory.

“It’s just that my hair brush was on the floor this morning, I thought you may have knocked it off when you got up.” Not only had the brush been knocked to the floor, but was on the other side of the room.

“I don’t think so.” It certainly sounded like one of her nocturnal wonders, but she was so sure that she never got out of bed at any point during the night.

“Oh well it must have been me then.” She smiled, not fully believing her friend.

“Ah?” shouted Lee through the fog. “He stamped his heel twice on something, it made a deep thudding sound, the sound was of his boot hitting wood. Lee had found the small bridge. “There we go,” he

announced a few moments later as Sarah and Maddie approached, “told ‘ya.”

The small wooden bridge crossed a narrow dyke which headed towards the river bank in one direction and disappeared into the fog in the other. “I wonder where it happened?” thought Sarah to herself.

“What’s that Sarah?” Maddie asked.

“The Henge, I wonder where it was?”

“It’s certainly not on the map now.” Lee informed her. “If the skies were a little clearer, then it would be easier to see the lay of the land. Even things that disappeared long ago leave some kind of trace in the ground; earth works or even just a series of well spaced ridges.”

Looking around Sarah knew it was pointless, no way could she see any features.

“My bet is the field we’ve just come through.” Maddie announced. She spoke with an air of authority of someone who knew for definite.

“What makes you think that?” Sarah asked, full of interest. Lee had dismissed the conversation by this point and was taking a bearing.

“I don’t know. Maybe it’s just a feeling, but nothing much is growing in the field, is that why? Is it because the Henge was there or was it put there because nothing grew in that area?” her argument had gone back onto itself, recursion.

“There’s a thing,” Sarah thought out loud, “nothing’s growing in that field right?”

“Yes.” answered Maddie.

“So why is there a scarecrow in it?”

“I thought that.” said Lee looking up from his compass.

“Where?” Maddie hadn’t seen it.

“Over there...” Sarah pointed, but broke off. She had seen it standing in the middle of the baron pasture, now though she could see nothing. “Oh!” after a moment’s contemplation the answer was all too simple, “It must be lost in the fog.”

Only a matter of minutes had passed as the three walkers trekked down the side of the dyke. They were now completely disorientated. Beneath their boots was only grass; grass which eclipsed their ankles. Neither Sarah nor Maddie could estimate the distance covered. Sarah had the map once again, it would have been the simplest thing to do to look and make the calculation. Her mind was on other things. A slight sense of, well not fear, but apprehension had come over her. The last story had dealt with the spirits of old

England, if they were to make an appearance then, now in this eerie climate would be the time and place.

Lee stopped only a matter of feet in front of her, he muttered to himself something about “Half a mile?” he took hold of the top strand of wire on the fence which ran alongside the field and flexed it. Looking to the right he spoke, “This way.” No sign of a path was evident. The ground suddenly became very rugged and uneven. It appeared that cows were kept in this field. Hoof prints sank deep into the now dry hard earth, was that why the path was not visible?

“Well this is very pleasant I must say.” Maddie whispered to Sarah who was alongside her. Lee could hear her, though he was not meant too.

He smiled to himself thinking, ‘fair weather walker.’

“Oh I know,” replied Sarah, “what’s happened to the weather?” she wished that she had the foresight to bring a pair of gloves. The finger tips of both hands were cold. Maybe it was a blessing, her thighs were still burning; by the end of the day they would be red raw. “I was hoping for something a little cooler than yesterday, but not this. It’s like December.” She almost wished it was December, at least Christmas would be coming; something to look forward too. Last year Maddie had convinced her to do a charity walk of twenty four miles, called ‘Rudolf’s Romp’. A festive walk around the villages of the Wolds. The experience was not a pleasurable one for either of the women. By the end of it, neither felt in the slightest ‘festive’. The whole experience was cold, damp and long. The only positive was the cups of tea supplied en route. After the walk they had taken dinner at the Triton Inn, Brantingham and both vowed never to do the bloody Rudolf’s Romp again. Brantingham, that seemed like a world away now even though only a matter of twenty four hours separated it from their current location.

“My arms,” explained Maddie, “got the worst of the sun, I could hardly sleep for it last night. Every time I turned over I could feel it.” Every time she flexed her shoulders, the tight skin pulled. A large amount of moisturiser had been put on that morning and the night before for that matter but still they hurt.

“It’s the backs of my legs. The tops are the worst.” Sarah pointed a painted nail to where the buttock and thigh met.

Maddie recalled the very high cut pink shorts Sarah had worn the previous day and was not at all surprised. Most of the day Maddie had watched the skin on Sarah’s legs change from white to pink to red

and finally lobster. "I'm not surprised; those shorts you had on were a little..." she struggled to find a complimentary phrase about them.

"Tartish?" Sarah offered.

"I was going to say; short." She would never brandish Sarah a tart. She did find her comment amusing though. For all Sarah's good looks and slight superficial tendencies she could still laugh at herself, which was a good thing.

"Well they are, aren't they? I don't know why I chose to wear them; it's not as though I'm out on the pull or anything. I had just drunk a bottle of wine though when I was getting my gear together.

A rattle echoed through the air. Lee had reached a metal five bar gate. As he clamped both hands around the top bar the movement rattled the hasp. That noise was closely followed by a muffled bang. Maddie's head shot around to face the general direction of the noise. Over to the west was a copse, the sound seemed to have emanated from that direction. "Farmers aren't happy unless they're killing something." She met a lot of farmers at the Conservative Club dinners, which she often attended with Alistair. On the whole they seemed very arrogant and tight with money. This, however, was only her opinion and was not shared by her spouse. He assured her that the farming community were generous benefactors to many causes which came their way.

"That wasn't a shotgun." Lee told her.

"That was an automatic scarecrow." Sarah said proudly. She had remembered the conversation of the previous day. The difference between the sounds she could not tell, but Lee's comment was an obvious give away.

"Exactly." He was so glad that she had taken notice of his teachings the day before.

Next to the gate was a crudely put together stile. Lee didn't bother with it, he simply vaulted the gate. Standing erect once more, he gave a huge smile to the girls on the other side.

"Are you going to open it then?" Maddie asked in a battle axe, Les Dawson, mother in law type of tone.

The smile was suddenly whipped of his face and he opened the gate, bowing low and ceremoniously as he did so. Maddie walked through ignoring him, followed by Sarah who found the whole incident highly amusing, "Thank you Jeeves." She said looking down her nose at him, the moment his eyes caught hers she flicked her head skyward, the blond pony tail swishing around like a horse's tail behind her.

The gate closed behind them, its metallic clank echoes around in the fog. Another pop came from out of the white blanket which coated them. By this time they were used to these small noises.

In the small copse, Carr Plantation, stood a man. He had been standing there for longer than he could remember, waiting for someone to come past. The figure held a shot gun cocked over his arm. As he watched the three silhouettes walk along the side of the dyke, he took aim, then relaxed his weapon and stared into space. He then lowered the gun and waited for someone else to come along.

“How’s your mother?” Maddie asked her companion.

“Oh, the usual.” Sarah told her. As with all children, their parents never seemed to change. They always had been there saying ‘no’ to most things she wanted to do. Looking back over the last few years, Sarah realised that they were always right, though it didn’t seem so at the time. All they wanted was what was in her best interests. Always putting her first and she was grateful for that. She would never admit it. “She keeps dropping in the suggestion of marriage into conversation most times I see her.”

“Really, well that’s what mothers do.”

“It’s not very often, but she is persistent.” Never in front of Luke would her mother speak on the subject, he was spared that. Only Sarah had to put up with the occasional ‘advice’.

“Well” Maddie began, “she has got a point you know. You’ve lived together for a few years now so you’re virtually married anyway. Then there are children, if you want kids, well...”

“Hold on,” Sarah interrupted, “Who mentioned anything about having kids. The thing is, if we did ever get married she’d want me to have a big church do with a dress and bridesmaids. I don’t really want that. I’d rather have a beach wedding in the West Indies. She’d have a heart attack if we did that; so I think the best thing to do is not to bother.”

“Oh.” Maddie said. She always had Sarah down as someone who would want the full church wedding. What had brought her to such a conclusion she could not say, it just felt right.

“Anyway, we’re far too busy to be arranging a wedding, Luke never stops working. He’s either on site or doing guvvie jobs and anyway, he’s got our house to get finished before we start making any other plans.”

The path beneath their feet had changed to hard concrete. The footpath took them through Kenley House Farm. At this point the track changed from one side of the water course to the other. Only



another gate stood in their way. Nettles surrounded it so they had to pick their way through them, no other course was available. Sarah thought back to the previous day and the stings she had fallen foul of. At least today she was wearing trousers. Lee of course showed the way. Did he not feel nettle stings? In a matter of moments he had trampled a kind of path through the undergrowth. Both the girls leant against the gate watching him, the aluminium tubing which made up the bars was cold. Even through the two layers of clothing they wore, the cold could still be felt. Both realised that if Lee was not on this expedition then they would never have made it this far. They were grateful for his presence and ability. As the day wore on they would feel the benefit of his experience many more times.

Lee looked up to see them leaning on the gate, watching him hard at work. "You two alright?" he said sarcastically.

"Fine thanks." Replied Sarah. Maddie was wearing a large patronising grin on her face.

"There you go then girls, do you think you could trouble yourselves to pick your way through that?" His own voice was just as patronising in return.

Both the girls climbed over the fence and made their way along the makeshift path. As the stile at the end of the footpath came into view Sarah suddenly felt the temperature rise. She was beginning to sweat. As she touched the fence to which the stile was attached, the sun's rays hit her like a fire bolt. To the east, the sky was as bright a blue as yesterday. Looking westerly a white wall of fog eclipsed everything.

In front of them was the village of Wawne, looking splendid in the sunlight. The sudden contrast could not have been greater. Sarah was the only one of the three who wasn't wearing walking boots. As a result her toes were damp and cold, as were her finger tips; her thumbs were almost numb. Sarah could not believe the transformation in temperature. As she walked towards the sign heralding the village boundary and the thirty mile an hour sign, which was very rarely adhered to, her legs had started to sweat. The previous day's sunburn was chafing on the canvas trousers. She knew that they would have to come off and she would have to wear the small tartish pink shorts once again. Where could she change? She had never been to this place before. On first appearance it looked no bigger than Weel, only a handful of detached houses were visible from this point so they may be able to find a sleepy secluded spot somewhere along the way.

Lee and Maddie stepped out of the fog. As they stepped onto the road it was like stepping through a door into another warmer world. The sudden heatwave was also having a similar effect on Maddie. The several layers she had donned only an hour or so earlier had given excellent protection against the cold fog but now they acted as ballast, dead weight hanging off her. Instantly the waterproof was unzipped. She waved the two open halves trying to create air flow around her torso. It gave little relief; it would have to come off, "Hold on." She said to the others, "I'm going to have to take this off."

All three came to a halt. Lee was feeling a little smug, not so daft now as he, "Warm enough for you?" he asked.

Maddie looked back at him with a look of contempt as she bundled her jacket and waterproof leggings into her back pack. Sarah decided that now was as good a time as any to sort out her own attire and, opening her own pack, she looked for her shorts. Unfortunately, no places to change were apparent. Maddie had also come to a similar conclusion, so she would persist with her lightweight trousers. Sarah turned her back on the others and with a quick unceremonious act dropped her trousers. Her t-shirt fell over her knickers, resting on the tops of her legs covering and retaining her dignity. With a silent gesture, Maddie insisted that Lee turn his back on her to try and save at least a little of Sarah's embarrassment. He obeyed her as instructed, not however before making the most of the opportunity. If Sarah were to tell the truth; she wasn't that bothered. She had bathed topless on holiday, at least on this occasion she was moderately covered up.

Shorts fastened she was ready, "Are we all done then?" Lee asked before turning around and not waiting for a reply.

"Much better." Sarah replied.

Maddie could see her friend's sun burnt legs. They were mostly a brown tanned shade, the tops however did look sore, "Sarah dear, do you want some After Sun for your sunburn?"

"Yes please, I think I'd better."

Once again Maddie's pack fell from her back. Fortunately the tube of sun cream was in one of the outer pockets. Lee was becoming impatient.

"Do you need a hand with that?" he asked as she rubbed a liberal dollop of cooling cream into her thighs. Maddie shot him a second look of disdain in as many minutes.

"No thank you." Replied Sarah, a naughty glint in her eye.

"What about you Mrs, do you need any rubbing in?"

No reply came.

## Wawne to Swine

At the junction take the left hand road, this heads north. On the right is a row of houses, cross the road and head up the track in front of these. At the end of the street is a grange Croft Farm yard. This is always extremely muddy, keep to the left then follow the track known as Common Lane. The track slowly goes up hill, at the top there are stunning views of the fields.

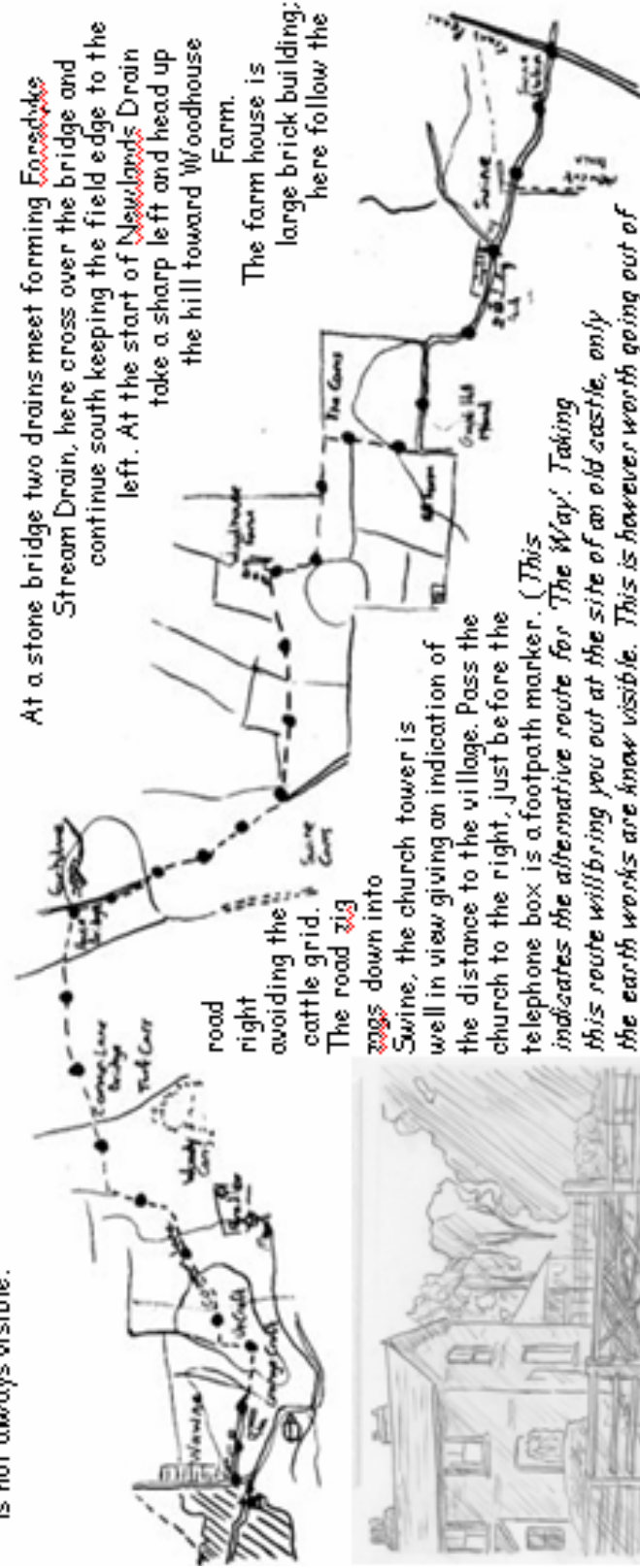
The path passes through a small wood, this is not shown on the O/S map for some reason, at some times of the year this area can become very overgrown, so instead of battling through it which I have done several times a farm track passes around its south side.

Follow the track toward **Fairholme House Bridge**. Do not cross the drain, the marker indicating the footpath direction is not always standing. Follow the west side of the (**Cowcliffe Drain**) in a southerly direction. When the grass is long the path is not always visible.

At a stone bridge two drains meet forming **Foresyke Stream Drain**, here cross over the bridge and

continue south keeping the field edge to the left. At the start of **Newlands Drain** take a sharp left and head up the hill toward **Woodhouse Farm**.

The farm house is large brick building; here follow the



road right avoiding the cattle grid. The road zig zags down into

Swine, the church tower is well in view giving an indication of the distance to the village. Pass the church to the right, just before the telephone box is a footpath marker. (This indicates the alternative route for 'The Way'. Taking this route will bring you out at the site of an old castle, only the earth works are now visible. This is however worth going out of your way to see, or as I do, change the route each time I walk it.) Pass the marker and head out of the village, the Station House is approx. half a mile.



# XI



If an alien being from another world had fallen from the skies and landed on Earth at this very point, even they would have realised that this was a Sunday morning. As they walked through the neatly arranged estates, which made up the north side of the village, outside every neatly trimmed house someone was either washing their car or cutting the lawn. In many ways this was as Skidby had been yesterday. Were all villages the same in Yorkshire and was this fair county typical of English village life? Maddie had the feeling that every one knew everybody else's business in this place. As they all went about their relevant tasks, one eye would always be on their neighbours' comings and goings. Only a couple of locals managed to pass the time of day with the three ramblers, their accents giving away the location. The over pronunciation of u's and r's meant they had to be approaching the city of Hull. As the crow flies, Hull was only a matter of a few miles away. The huge estate of Bransholme was within spitting distance of the village but looking around this part of rural England, it seemed miles away from the uniform council housing of Europe's biggest estate.

The small village shop was approaching rapidly, "Right," announced Lee, "Does anyone need anything; this is your last chance before Sutton." He of course was well laden with all he needed but he wasn't so sure about the girls, Sarah had run out of liquid yesterday which was probably the worst thing anyone could do in heat such as this.

After what she had described as a 'wobble' yesterday, Sarah decided to stock up on energy drinks and promptly disappeared into the shop. Outside on the footpath sat a green bin used for the storage of salt; something which had not been used for many months. Lee sat on the bin and Maddie saw it bow slightly under his weight. "Careful," she advised, "You'll go through that." Her eyes gestured down to the receptacle below him.

"Oh it should be fine." An air of confidence was in his voice.

"You think so?"

"It has done before." He didn't elaborate for a moment then decided to inform her, "I stopped exactly here and had lunch, a bag of nuts and a bottle of Guinness if I remember correctly." How civilised that would be right now. If his memory served him, Wawne did have

a pub once, now it had regenerated itself into a Chinese restaurant. A shame they could have popped in for a quick one.

Maddie tutted; how typical. It would not have surprised her if he wasn't secretly hiding a bottle of beer in his pack now, for emergencies? She also fancied a sit down on the salt bin, but thought twice about it. She wanted to appear strong, sitting down would be giving in. The lid also may not be able to take his weight let alone their combined bulk.

Sarah emerged from the shop looking pleased with herself. Never before had she seen sweets in jars, all racked up behind the counter. She had seen them in re-runs of seventies television programs and in the old reading books at school. It seemed a world away; she hadn't been born in the seventies. In her left hand she held a bottle of isotonic orange, in the other, one of the hundreds of celebrity obsessed magazines that occupied most of the newsagents' stands. She saw Lee's eyes dart down and look at the periodical in her hand; his eyebrows raised half an inch. "Glad to see you're not wasting your money on frivolities?" They all knew that the comment offered no malice.

Another similarity to Skidby homed into view, the church. Just as before the Norman place of worship sat in a leafy yard, headstones dotted around like they had been scattered like seed. Unlike the crops growing in the fields, the headstones were at all angles. The clock on the tower showed the time, midday, lunchtime.

Deja-vu; the girls leant against the wall, seated on the cool grass in the shade of a Horse Chestnut Tree. Their lunch that day had been supplied by the landlord of the Monks Walk. The fare was exactly what they needed, cold ham, pork and cheese.

"Do you have a story for here then?" Lee asked, his mouth overflowing with pork slices.

"I do as a matter of fact, Maddie replied. "I was just about to read it."

## Echoes of Melkor

Emily Lightowler walked through the village. She was on her way home from the weekly trip to the cemetery, which stood adjacent to St. Peters Church.

Emily visited the six hundred year old church every Saturday afternoon; or at least one of the graves which was situated to the north side of the building. Every Saturday she would visit the flower shop on the crossroads which stood at the centre of the village to buy whichever bunch looked the brightest. Once her purchase was made, Emily would walk through the assortment of cottages that made up the village of Wawne, then on through litch gate and into the church yard. To gain access to the graveyard she had to pass through a pair of old black wrought iron gates. They clanked shut behind her as with a sigh she looked to the far north east corner. Her eyes fixed themselves on a plain headstone. The flowers which had been placed there the week before had now withered but they would soon be replaced with the fresh spray which she had in her arms.

The task was complete; now she spent over an hour in silent reflection for her recently departed husband.

He had been a pilot in the Royal Air Force. His Lancaster Bomber had been hit over Germany but due to his skill as a pilot, he managed to fly his semi-crippled aircraft back to the shores of England.

On landing he sustained near fatal injuries. It took him two weeks to die in a hospital bed, both legs gone. The rest of his crew survived the crash landing and paid outstanding tributes to their friend and brother in arms. He was buried with full military honours and Emily had never been so proud.

Though only a year ago now, it seemed so long to be without him.

After saying her final farewell for that day she turned and walked back towards the village. On reaching the iron gate, she stopped; turning to her left she looked at the large stone figure mounted on a large sarcophagus, or was it a plinth? She never could remember the difference between the two.

The figure she had always presumed to be an angel but now she actually looked at it in detail.

What was it about this piece of stonework that captivated her? It was old and covered in moss; ivy ran around the base obscuring any legend.

Not since she had been a young girl had she noticed it. The effigy wasn't the prettiest of things Emily had ever set her eyes on, but still she had always been drawn to it. When she was a young girl it was fear, now curiosity. For several moments she stood gazing upon

it. The statue looked down on her, “At least I’m giving you a little attention?”

The door of Ivy Cottage closed behind her. She took off her coat and hung it on the rack while stamping her feet on the door mat, “Only me.” She called into the inners of the house.

From the dining room a voice answered, “Everything alright?”

“Fine, I’ll get on with dinner.” She said walking through into the kitchen.

The second voice belonged to Wilfred, her brother. Wilfred was four years her senior, now retired, most of his life had been spent in the confines of York University. His role in that seat of learning was as Lecturer in English History.

His retirement had not quashed his thirst for knowledge in his field. Now he had embarked on a new project, the history of his home village.

Most of the information gathered so far was taken from the personal testimonies of the residents. Stories handed down from generation to generation, father to son, mother to daughter.

Pictures were however in short supply and he knew that this would be one of his longer projects. He was, after all, still writing papers for the University and they took priority on his time. Still there was no rush to finish his book; after all it was only a dalliance.

Emily’s thoughts lingered on the events of the afternoon. She decided that next Saturday she would take her cutters and prune the statue of the choking ivy that clung to it.

The following week she honoured the promise she had made to herself. The route she took was always the same, up and over the crossroads then through the cottages. The first hour of the visit was dedicated, as always, to the maintenance and nurturing of her husband’s grave; grass trimmed, flowers refreshed. One flower though, a rose, was taken out of the arrangement and placed to one side.

Once the grave was in order, she weaved her way through the head stones towards the gates. On arrival she looked at the statue and sighed. The secateurs were taken out of her bag and the pruning began.

The ivy now removed from around the statue’s legs, Emily set to work on the plinth.

The stonework was green and damp; even now in the warm summer, its lower half was decidedly clammy.



Though the statue had been there for as long as she could remember, Emily didn't know anything of its history; if it had any.

Scraping the remains of the growth which clung to the cuboid, her eyes scanned the stone for any inscription which would give her some clue as to the monuments origins.

As she cleared away the undergrowth, nothing was apparent. Maybe it was merely there to ward off evil spirits from entering the grounds.

Once finished, she took the single rose saved from the bouquet and placed it at the feet of the stone man. She presumed it was a man, if it was a woman then she felt more than sorry for the unfortunate model.

She was happy with her afternoon's work; all was now neat and tidy. Affectionately she ran her fingers over the statue's foot before turning and leaving the church grounds.

Around six months later, Emily was walking home from her weekly trip to the church yard. The war was over and though winter had arrived, the sun was shining and her brother had returned from his lectures in Leeds, filling in for an ex colleague for the autumn term.

On her return to the cottage, she found her brother sitting in front of the fire reading the paper. Emily was so glad to have Wilfred home again; she had found the house rather empty without him. Though the neighbours were always popping in and out, she found herself with not much conversation. On several occasions Emily had found herself talking to her late husband's head stone and the guardian statue next to the gate, Was that what the statue was there for, a guardian?

During these moments of one way conversation, she would be thinking more and more on the origins of the statue. Then it came to her, there in her own home was Wilfred, the oracle of knowledge on all things local.

"Wilf." She said.

His head appeared over the newspaper, "Yes?" he answered.

"The statue that's just inside the gate of the church yard,"

"Oh yes." He said curiously.

"What do you know about it?"

He allowed the newspaper to fold itself and rest on his lap while he thought for a moment. As he did, the furrows of his brow deepened and his eyes moved around the room as if searching for something.

“You know,” he said after a moment, “I don’t know anything about it.” He thought again, “Oh hold on. I seem to remember Granddad once told me that it marked the spot where the master stone mason who built the church was buried.” That was it. For all his historical knowledge, that was all he knew about something on his own doorstep.

In the weeks that followed, Wilfred made several enquires into the history of the church, its buildings, architects and connections to the local area. All the official records in the normal reference books told him very little. The date the church was built, names of the masons who worked on the building and costs to complete the project. Only one paragraph made any reference to the statue in the yard. The chief mason, a man called Farough, died before finishing the building work. His body was buried where it fell and the statue was erected by his assistant who modelled it on his gaffer.

While Wilfred picked his way through numerous reference books, Emily took a walk to the wool shop which was situated on one corner of the crossroads.

The church yard was not on her route between the cottage and the wool shop, nevertheless, she found herself walking past the liche gate. Was she being drawn to the graveyard or was she just curious?

Emily reached the bend in the road; her back was turned towards the church. No one saw, least of all Emily, or heard the grinding sound of stone on stone as slowly the ugly head of the statue turned to look down the high street.

The war was now but a distant memory in people’s minds. A new decade had dawned. The sixties had arrived and Wilfred was now in full time retirement, apart from his labour of love, the history of the village. The folder containing his manuscript and assorted notes had lain untouched for several years now and was all but forgotten about. It was only when sorting through a cupboard of old books to be sent to the church jumble sale that the dust covered file once again saw the light of day again.

The prospect of completing the manuscript gave him a thirst for life; he was enjoying his chosen subject.

On a windy autumn night he sat by the fire reading through his assorted notes. He arranged them into a workable order and considered the chapters they would be divided into. Once the task was complete he found half a dozen pages with random notes scrawled on

them. All the etchings referred to the same subject, St Peter's Church. This omission must be corrected before he could present his notes to be published.

Where would he find information on the church? The building itself of course, he then remembered he had done a small amount of research some years ago. Emily had asked about something.

The following day was Saturday. Rain came and went intermittently through the day; the wind blew the leaves off the trees and littered the pavement as Emily passed the cream telephone box and blue police box which stood at the crossroads. In her shopping bag were the flowers for that week's trip to the grave of her husband, long gone, but still fresh in her mind.

Wilfred also battled through the autumnal weather that afternoon. His journey though took him in a different direction, to an old dishevelled cottage. At the front door, he knocked three times with his walking stick then stepped back to await a reply.

Within a few seconds he heard the sound of a bolt being snapped, slowly with a creak the door opened.

Framed in the doorway stood a man of similar age to himself. The resident of the cottage had pure white hair in contrast to Wilf's own brown locks.

"Come in Wilf." The man ushered Wilfred inside.

Kneeling at the graveside, Emily removed the dead leaves from around the headstone. The smell of decaying foliage filled the air; Christmas was coming and the nights were drawing in. Emily's mind was far away from the cold weather, it was on more pleasant things; the days gone by before the war. All of a sudden she was brought back to that cold afternoon with the feeling that she was being watched. Two eyes were burning into the back of her head, she didn't know who was watching her, but she knew they were there. Emily stopped digging and put down the trowel. Still in a kneeling position, she slowly turned around, firstly looking tentatively over her right shoulder then her left.

Though much movement was apparent, leaves blowing and trees bending in the wind, she could see no one around.

Throughout the visit the uneasy feeling continued to plague her but each time she looked, nothing was to be seen.

Was it the stillness of the graveyard, whilst the wind blew all around? The large oak trees provided a natural barrier against the wind; could this be the explanation for her unease?

The grave was now tended; time to turn her attention to other matters.

In front of the modest fire in the grate, two septuagenarians sat drinking a glass of stout. Wilfred had fallen in love with the dark drink during a time spent teaching in Ireland.

The owner of the house, Morris had always drunk it, after all “It was good for you?”

The ensuing conversation was one of nostalgia. During their life times many things had happened. In their youth only local events ever made an impact on the village or their lives. Now with the mediums of newspapers, radio and the new television services, events all over the world were at hand. Much had changed.

Two World Wars had had its effect on the community; many had left and never returned.

The conversation reflected the changing world, “Things were better in the old days,” Wilf remarked. It was a comment which had passed between them on many occasions.

As the second bottle of stout was being poured into the straight pint glasses, Wilfred steered the conversation round to the matter in hand.

“So, you want to know the murky history of St. Peter’s, well you’ve come to the right place.” Morris sat back in his chair feeling self satisfied. His good friend may have the qualifications but he could trump him on this subject.

Wilfred took a note pad from his pocket and unscrewed the top of his pen, ready to take notes.

Disappointment followed as Morris listed continuous names and dates of Vicars, Rectors and Vergers, their dates of residence and well, that was it; nothing out of the ordinary.

Morris, once he had realised that Wilfred was no longer writing, knew that his friend had come here not for the official history of the church or its parish but the unedited version of events down the ages. “Is this not what you want to know?” he asked, a gleam in his eye.

“Something a little more interesting maybe?” was Wilf’s retort; his eyes mirroring the same gleam of excitement.

“Well then. Let’s see what I can come up with.”

Outside, the late afternoon was drawing into early evening. Emily still had the sensation of being watched. She wondered to herself, should she go home, back to the safety of Ivy Cottage. Then

once she had checked all around, she knew that it was only her own senses playing tricks on her mind. She still had a job to do.

Wilfred and Morris were now burying their noses into a third glass of beer. This was such a pleasant afternoon they both thought to themselves, but did not mention it to one another.

“That was a good tale Morris,” Wilf laughed almost choking on the next mouthful of ale, “but I don’t think it will make it into the book.”

Morris was also laughing, “A little too saucy for you?”

“Who’d have thought it of such a nice old man?”

Their laughter eventually died away but while a smile remained on Wilfred’s old wrinkled face, Morris’s features hardened; his eyes looked downward, not wanting to make contact with his visitor’s.

“What is it Morris?” a concerned voice asked.

After a moment’s pause Morris spoke in a quieter, sombre tone. “I don’t know whether to tell you such a tale. Something’s are better forgotten.”

“How do you mean Morris?”

“There is a story handed down from my father, the like of which,” he paused, deep in thought. “Well I have not passed it on to my sons; I had hoped that it would stop with me. With me it dies.” He put his glass down and sat back in his chair.

“If you told me the story I wouldn’t put it into print, I would still like to hear it though. I can assure you that it would go no further than these four walls.”

Slowly and silently Morris shook his head, “It must die with me.”

An uneasy halt fell over their discourse. Wilfred had the distinct impression that he had overstayed his welcome. Downing the last remaining inches of his glass he was about to stand when Morris spoke...

“Six hundred years ago this village decided to build a church.” The voice was quiet and almost sorrowful. Wilfred sat back, but made it clear to his old friend that he had put his note pad on the floor by the side of the chair.

“An architect by the name of Ainley was commissioned to design and build the church.”

“Are you referring to St. ...?”

“Yes, St. Peter’s, or at least the bell tower and part of the main building.”

The foundations were laid and blessed as was most parts of the building but when it came to the laying of the keystone for the tower, something strange occurred.”

“What was it?”

“The cement around and under the stone would not set. The builders put it down to a bad batch being mixed, so they made another. The foreman and architect insisted on overseeing the mixing personally. Still, when it came time to lay the stone the stuff ran away into the soil either side of the foundations.”

“Did this happen or is it just a tale?”

“I can only tell you what has been passed down to me.

It was an embarrassment for all concerned. The Archbishop had come all the way from York to do the ceremonial laying of the stone, a full day’s ride, in those days.

Apologies were made to the visiting hierarchy while the workmen set about trying to make good what they had failed to do during that day. Then, as dusk came, a strange looking man walked onto the site. What exactly was strange about him was never passed down or, at least, has been lost in the telling of the tale. Something was amiss with the stranger that much is known. I do wonder what it was now; anyway, he walked onto the site. Everyone’s eyes followed him as he passed through the crowd and straight up to Ainley. The man tapped him on the shoulder and the architect turned to face him. Ainley was somewhat taken aback at the sight of the man, but asked in a polite voice, ‘Can I help you sir?’

‘What are you doing here?’ the voice of the stranger was raised in anger.

‘Building a church.’ Ainley answered in disbelief, the project had not been a secret.

‘You can’t build here.’ The stranger shouted back, by all accounts he had a wild look in his eyes that would have turned a horse lame.

‘What?’

‘You can’t build here, this is our place.’

The assembled men all took a step closer as the two men stood toe to toe. They all were of the same opinion; they all feared for the gaffer. This newcomer had obviously come with issues of them being there and in particular with the chief. Several of the men picked up shovels, some had picks; all were ready to defend Ainley.

‘Your place?’ Ainley questioned.

“This is the place we come to meet...” he broke off and turned to leave. After taking only three steps he stopped and turned to face the gaffer, ‘Stop this blasphemy or I will curse your soul. On completion of the abomination you will be petrified until such time as I see fit, stone will come to stone.’ With that he was gone.

One of the men gave chase but after only half a minute he returned. The stranger was nowhere to be seen.”

Wilfred listened in awe at the strange tale. Never in all his years living in this place had he heard such a tale. “So, what happened to him?”

“Who knows? We do know that the church was completed. He was credited for the construction but after that there was much rumour and speculation around the village as to what happened to him.” If Morris knew anymore than that, he wasn’t going say. At least that was the impression Wilfred was getting.

“Such as?”

“Oh many theories have sprung up over the years but the one which has been told the most is the pentangle story.”

“Pentangle?”

“Yes, you know, as used in the Dark Arts. The story was that the church, or at least the location, was one used by worshipers of Satan to hold black masses. That particular spot, where the church sits, is at the centre of a pentangle of several natural power points; each point being the point of the five sided star. As you know that particular shape is the one these people use. Don’t ask me what the points are, I haven’t the faintest idea.

The architect, Ainley was said to have had a curse put on him by the leader of the Satanists...”

“The man who turned up in the yard?” Wilfred jumped in enthusiastically.

“That’s right. The outcome of the curse was that he would be turned to stone. Some say he is walled up in the thick walls, some say he was turned into one of the gargoyles that ordain the bell tower, while others insist he was turned into the statue that stands at the gate as a warning to the Devil’s followers to beware.”

“So whatever way he met his end, he would become part of the stonework. That’s poetic justice for you.”

“Well some people used to believe it but now I think it’s had its day.”

Both men sat back in quiet thought. A branch tapped the window, blown by the ever increasing wind. The small act suddenly

awoke something in Wilfred's slightly inebriated head. What was he trying to remember?

"Oh, I'd almost forgotten," Morris said with a start, "the curse could be broken and Ainley freed from his prison, now how was it...?"

Wilf's mind found the memory it had been searching for, "What is it?" a hint of panic had entered his voice.

"Only the power of good, a Christian act could break the curse, the greatest good of all, love."

"How, exactly?"

"The giving and receiving of human kindness for twenty summers shall release him; or something like that anyway. I can't remember the exact phrase my grandfather told me; it was sixty or so years since."

"Emily?" Wilfred said, standing and putting on his overcoat.

In the church yard Emily had finished pruning the base of the statue. All the grass and weeds were now trimmed back and cleared away. Autumn was here; this would be the last time she'd be required to carry out this particular task until the spring.

Tidying her tools away into her plastic shopping bag she looked up at the statue, "Hello statue," she said kindly, "You don't get any better looking do you."

As she bent down to pick up the single flower from the spray bought for her husband's grave, the sound of grinding stone made her freeze to the spot. The sound was coming from above her. Slowly she looked up, no one was there.

As she stood up again, she placed the flower at the feet of the stone man.

Reaching out to stroke the stone foot she heard a cry, "Emily, no..." the voice was familiar to her, was it Wilf's voice, she turned to look but couldn't.

Her fingertips were stuck to the foot of the statue. Her arms were tingling, her body becoming immobile suffering from some kind of paralysing effect.

Faintness was overcoming her, though she did not fall. Then all was still.

Wilfred walked at pace along the side of the church yard wall. His heart raced. He could no longer see his sister standing in the graveyard. Where had she gone? She must be bent down out of view he concluded, still an uneasy fear overcame his reasoning.



The story of the statue coming back to life played on his mind. Of course it was only a myth, a story handed down; embellished over the centuries. Still he wanted to make sure Emily, his sister, was safe. He entered the churchyard through the liche gate, which was there to keep the evil spirits out of the holy ground. Out of breath but still determined, he pushed open the iron gates of the graveyard.

Standing in front of him was not what he had expected to see. Where his sister should have been, was the man. His clothes were, well somewhat simple and covered in what appeared to be brick dust. His face and hands were pale, wrinkled and drawn.

He stood staring at the statue which guarded the gate. At his feet, the green shopping bag Emily always brought with there but still no sign of his sister.

The man stood completely still, petrified, an exact mirror image of the stone figure.

“What have you done to my sister Emily?” Wilfred asked in a somewhat broken voice.

All the man could do was look at the statue in front of him.

“That was a fine story lass.” said a voice from somewhere above. Lee had seen the old man appear on the other side of the wall sometime earlier, while Maddie was mid story. He decided not to say anything not wanting to put Maddie off her stride. Both women looked skyward to see him looking down on them.

“Oh, er thank you very much. Maddie said looking quite embarrassed.

“You enjoy a good ghost story do ‘ya?”

Sarah thought he looked familiar but a lot of old men looked alike to her.

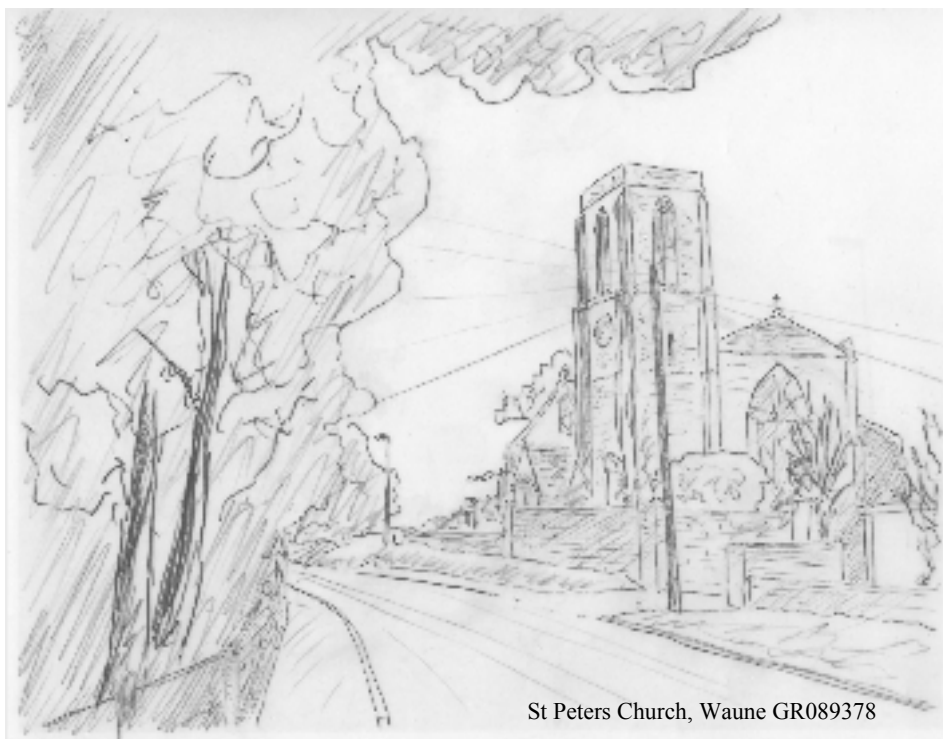
“Yes I do, its becoming a bit of a hobby of mine. Collecting ghost stories that is.”

“Ey, what about you young ‘un.” He was now addressing Sarah though, compared to him, any of them could be classed as young.

“Not really, but I enjoy...”

“Your mother’s.” Interrupted the old local.

“I’m not her mother.” Maddie protested, “We were at school together.” Lee couldn’t help but smile to himself.



St Peters Church, Waune GR089378

“Sorry young lady. At my age it becomes a bit hard to tell ages apart.”

Apology accepted said Maddie. “Do you know any good stories?”

“Ah well, I probably used to but now I don’t remember things as good these days. He thought for a minute, gazing high into the trees.

Lee shook his head in disbelief. Maddie knew just what he was thinking, ‘silly old sod’ or something running along those lines. He was about to suggest that they move on and away from the old man: when...

“There is that old ‘un ‘bout the ferry.” His gaze remained high in the tree.

“The ferry?” Lee asked curiously.

“Ay, that’s right young Lee, the ferry.”

Maddie picked up on it first; how did the old man know Lee’s name? To her that would remain a mystery. Lee, however, looked at the old grey haired man with a rye smile; did he know something neither of the girls did? Had they met before, if so, where. Did they know each other at all?

“In days past,” his gaze dropped to eye level, “The ferry would pass from here across the river to Theame...”

## The Ferryman

“It was a snowy Christmas Eve in the year of our Lord 1897 that a tragedy took six true Christian souls from this village.

You see, the church which still stands here has a choir and it was there it happened to.

Months earlier, so it was said, a couple came through the village heading south. They asked the church for shelter but they were turned away. The verger, Derek Barclay, turned them out. Some said that he knew of them and said they were undesirable. Some said that they found lodgings in the Inn across the way; it's not there now, shame.

The pair came to church that Sunday morning and the Verger tried to refuse them entry but the Vicar would not turn anyone away from God's house. The Verger's tongue though was wicked and he held the ear of many in the village.

When they left after a few weeks, the Inn Keeper had nothing but praise for his guests. Their bill was paid in full and he made it known to all his customers that they were honest, decent people. The verger was in the Inn that night; he did not appreciate what he was hearing. Finishing his drink, he slammed his mug down on one of the tables and stormed out. As he walked back to his small cottage, which still sits next to the church, he had the feeling of being watched. A rustling in a bush or a bird flying from a tree; all made him spin around in anticipation of seeing some kind of pursuer.

As he reached his front door he noticed something hanging from the rose arch. It shone in the moonlight, as did the cord it hung on. Something else caught his eye; a single rhythmic drip fell from it. He looked at it through his drunken eyes and struggled to focus upon it. He reached up to take it down but stopped as horror took a hold of him; the object hanging down was a heart, freshly ripped out of what? The organ was small; surely it could not be human?

As he bent over to be sick, he saw its origin. His own cat lay under a bush, its innards ripped out and trailing from its stomach.

The front door of the Inn burst open and framed in it was the figure the Verger, pale faced and holding a dead mutilated animal in his arms.

All that happened during the summer and as autumn turned into winter; life again became normal once more in this village. On Christmas Eve it was always the tradition for the choir to sing in the church for the carol service and then walk around the village singing as they went. In those days, a group of houses sat on the west bank of the river, Theame they call it these days. Anyway a ferry linked the two halves of the village. It would travel across when ever needed, day or night. The ferryman would charge a toll on normal occasion but the carol singers always had their toll waived, in both directions. Having stopped off at the pub to have a few drinks, the choir set off to the jetty. As was tradition, the leader of the choir, Derek Barclay, took along a drink for the ferryman who downed it in one mouthful. The journey across was swift and good natured. On the west side of the river songs were sung and the residents came out of their cottages and brought wine and food for the singers.

As they boarded the ferry boat for the return journey snow started to fall. The verges though was not cold, he was sweating, his gaze transfixed on something. The boat man was wearing a hooded cloak, his face obscured from view. Barclay watched him heave to and fro, his arms pulling on the oars. Slowly his head lifted and his face became visible. The face was not that of the ferryman but the woman who had been refused entry to the church earlier that year. Only he seemed to notice; could no one else see? His voice was lost to him. He pointed at the woman pulling the oars. No one heeded his outburst; they had all consumed far too much wine to care.

Suddenly Barclay stood up and pointed toward the east bank. There standing at the riverside was the same woman who was sitting in front of him; the figure watched the boat intently. "Look!" he shouted, "look!" the other singers could see nothing. To gain a better view one got to his feet, then another.

The boat became unstable, listing from side to side before capsizing. Not one of the passengers came back to the surface, so bad were the undercurrents.

On the bank the figure of the woman watched the events and smiled.

Now on a cold Christmas Eve night, the villagers swear that you can still hear the sound of carols being sung from out over the river."

“Is that a true story?” Maddie asked. If it was, she wanted it for her book.

“It is lass.” The clock struck the half hour, “I, must be ganning now.” He said before turning and walking off.

His brown suit hung off him like old rags, so thin was his body. Sarah noticed something strange but something she had seen before somewhere, straw was stuck to him in several places as though he had been lying in a field. “Do you know him?” Maddie asked Lee as she stood up, brushing herself down to remove the collection of crumbs which lay on her.

“No, but I’ve seen him somewhere before.” For many steps Lee thought of exactly where their paths could have crossed. Like a flashing memory he knew it was there, in the back of his mind, but at the moment access was denied. A colour was in his mind, yellow or was it brown and the memory felt warm, whatever that meant?

In the church yard the old man watched them disappear around the corner and out of the village, “You do know me Lee my boy, Crowman is the name. We spoke only last night and many times before that.”

Several rabbits ran across the path in front of Lee; eagle eyed he spotted them. An instinctive nerve sent his right hand around his frame as he whipped the knife off his belt and all in the same movement he drew back his arm to launch the blade at the small animals.

“Don’t you dare?” came a voice from his rear. Turning he saw Maddie, a scowl on her face. Sarah wore a shocked expression; how could someone be so cruel to want to kill a little bunny.

Lee smiled, “Sorry, force of habit.” He carefully replaced the knife back in its scabbard without the slightest effort.

Survival was something Sarah had never had to think about. On occasion she had seen part of a television program that her father had been watching about a man who went to live in the jungle for a month or something. She had seen him make a house out of a tree. The actual practicalities to brush craft had never mattered to her, unlike Lee. “Do you actually eat rabbits the that you catch?”

“Well yes of course I do.” The question seemed to be a strange one to him.

“Really?” her face screwed up in disgust. She actually felt sick.

“What do you think we eat when we’re stuck out for days on end?”

“Well, er, I don’t know?”

“When you’re in the field you eat what you can get your hands on; once that your rations have run out anyway. Rabbits, lizards, snakes, frogs, birds and there’s a whole host of plants, berries and fungi to eat. Some of the animals we have to eat raw, a fire would bring unwanted attention.”

“But,” Sarah interjected, still not quite believing. “What I’m trying to say is, they’ve still got their fur on, do you know if they’re clean or not?”

Lee laughed a little but managed to stifle it as he saw that Sarah was being deadly serious, “There’s nothing fresher than still running around. I can see your point though. This is what we do, when you’ve killed a rabbit what you have to do is take your knife and cut its head off,”

Sarah winced at the thought.

“Then,” continued Lee, “you cut down its stomach, lengthways and remove its innards. On bigger animals such as deer, the liver would be instantly removed put on the fire then eaten. It gives back a lot of the energy you expelled in the chase.

I was in Scotland last year for the deer cull as a matter of fact. They have to kill so many or they breed and take over. On the first morning I shot thirty. The gilly...”

“What’s a gilly? Sarah had never heard of anything like it.

“Gamekeeper. Anyway, the gilly in charge of the shoot took me to the big house to meet the Laird, that’s Scottish for lord.” He said before Sarah asked. “I had afternoon tea with him. *“Tell me young man; how did you ever manage to shoot so many beasties in one morning, it must be some kind of record”* he said pouring out tea from a silver teapot.

That’s easy, I said, I used a machine gun.”

“Oh get off with you.” Sarah laughed. Maddie wasn’t impressed, she had heard it before.

“Anyway, rabbits.” Lee took a deep breath. The path here was hard going even though they were at the highest point of this part of the walk. Beneath them the earth was waterlogged. Many Land Rovers and tractors had passed this way recently, more puddles than firm ground marked their way. Lee’s boots were more than a match for the terrain. The girls, however, hopped to and fro trying to avoid a disaster. “So you remove the insides then skin it. The pelt comes off quite easily, when helped with a knife or sharp stone. Then to cook it you have to start a fire.”

That was another point Sarah could never understand. She always thought that the only way to make a fire was to rub two sticks together. If she had voiced such thoughts the party would have had another lecture on the art of fire starting, she decided not to mention it.

“Make a spit, shove a stick right up its arse and out the mouth, then pop it on the fire. It depends on what type of wood the fire is made up of how long it takes to cook. Each type of wood burns at different temperatures.” As they rounded yet another right angle bend of tree lined track, it opened out into a panoramic view of fields. A small copse sat on the right, blocking the view to the east, “Ah,” Lee said, he had only just finished his lecture on the cooking of rabbits, were the girls ready for another? He took a long suck on his water tube before taking a deep breath, “That’s were I started a fire once.”

“Not for a rabbit?” Sarah said.

“No, just to make a warm drink. I got caught out in the rain and sheltered there for a minute. I made a fire and I heated some of the water in my aqua pack, perfect. As he looked down at where his feet were landing, Lee suddenly came to a halt. He had spotted something, “Look, Sorrel.”

“What’s Sorrel?” Maddie had been feeling a little absent from the conversation for some time now and spoke before Sarah could interject.

“Sorrel is a plant, an edible plant. It comes in three different forms.”

“Morning.” A new voice had entered the conversation.

“Good morning.” Maddie returned the greeting. She looked up to see a rough, red faced man staring at her from over the hedge. His attire gave his occupation as a farmer and so did his aroma. He positively reeked of pig manure.

“I see you’ve got ‘ya eye on the Sorrel.” He said looking down at Lee who was by this time crouching by the plant. “That’s the broad leaf, that is.” The accent in which he spoke was a curious mix of Hull and country.

“Yes, this type is my favourite.” Lee told him, breaking off a leaf and biting it in half.

“Ey, well don’t eat it all, the wife meks tarts out ‘o that you know.”

“Tarts?” Maddie asked.

“Ey.” The farmer recounted the family history and how during times of hardship his family would turn to eating all manner of leaves,

roots and rodents alike. So knowledgeable was one of the women in his family, she was said to be a witch in days gone by. The latter comment produced a chuckle from his red face. Lee, however, knew that Maddie's curiosity had been woken and the prospect of losing more drinking time was looming. It would disappear into nothingness as she probed the old man for information. He contented himself with another leaf.

Sarah had tried to show an interest in his ramblings but he was constantly contradicting his own memories. She decided that if any of the facts were true, it would be more by chance than judgment. As her mind faded away onto more trivial matters, the last thing she realised was the farmer talking about a long dead relative who lived in either Beverley or Sutton or even Brough. Nothing, of course, to do with Maddie having told him the outline of their walk. What would Luke be doing now? She looked at her mobile phone, the time was two o'clock. Maybe he would be doing the housework; more likely though, he would be working or having a pint with the lads somewhere in the vicinity of a large screen showing football. She wished he could do a little more around the house occasionally. When it came to ripping out fireplaces or plastering, she couldn't stop him. Trying to get him to Hoover, that was another matter. He was very houseproud, something she was not expecting when they moved in together. It was he who took her to task for leaving her knickers on the bedroom floor and her tops over chairs or the bannister. She was not alone in her state of shock; his mother was also struck dumb. A sudden shiver ran down her spine as a memory surfaced in her mind's eye. Was this a subconscious reaction to the mother in law syndrome or was it something the rambling old man had said. The fact that something had registered and caused her an unpleasant reaction was obvious. Someone had told her that men marry someone who reminded them of their mothers, again a shiver ran down her spine.

The farmer was at that moment talking about cows and how they had a liking for something or other that his wife cooked up. Sarah who now thought of herself as an expert on bird deterrents after her instruction of the past two days asked the farmer how exactly he went about warding off their feathered friends. For some reason, in her absent mindedness, she thought the farmer had said crows, not cows. Instantly she knew that she had said something stupid. The blood rose to her pink cheeks, turning them a deeper shade of red.

"I don't need any scarecrows young 'un, I keep cows."



Lee strode ahead not unlike a man on a mercy dash to the overgrown plantation of trees where he had let it be known, "I had a dump in there once?" To Maddie's disappointment the track through the trees was far too long. The going was difficult, nettles grew infinitely obscuring the path, the branches of the trees hung down across the clearing and even Lee's efforts to clear the way for the girls were in vain. It was then he found a solution; a track ran around the south face of the plantation probably an access for the farmer's tractor.

The next way marker was due, his eyes searched for any sign of it, he knew exactly where it should be, still he looked.

Over the past mile Sarah had begun to realise that she was in severe pain, her feet, thighs, hips, neck all hurt and then there was the sun burn on top of all that. For the previous mile Lee had noticed a limp forming on her left leg. Maddie too had noticed and watched her closely for several minutes; it was obvious that Sarah was struggling. She decided that it was down to her to keep Sarah moving and to keep her own spirits up. "You know," Maddie began rushing up to her from the rear, "You're so lucky."

Sarah did not understand the statement, she was in so much pain, her normally pristine hair was a tangled and knotted mess, her general feeling was not good, "Do you!" Why?

"I do. We're almost the same age but you have lived a very different life to me haven't you?"

It was something she had never thought of before. "Have I?"

"Just look at you, still single, living in sin." Both found that old expression somewhat amusing, a generation had passed since such things were considered the conversation stuff of curtain twitching gossips. Maddie could quite easily slip into that bracket; she liked nothing better than keeping up with the neighbourhood news. "You have a gorgeous boyfriend, with a fantastic body and you still look young. I, however, am married to a balding bank manager and look at least fifty."

Sarah was a little more than flattered; she had never realised that Maddie had looked upon Luke with envious eyes. Now Maddie mentioned the fact, she could see the gaping differences between them. Sarah looked on her friend now, through the eyes of a third party. She saw the lines which protruded from the corners of her eyes and mouth and her neck was wrinkled and starting to droop. Never again would she see Maddie quite the same.

“You don’t,” her voice was tinged with sympathy; “you look younger than me. Bet you feel younger than me right at this minute.”

“Are you suffering?”

“Just a bit.” That was an understatement. “Alright I’m knackered.” She sighed before taking a long drink of the mixture prepared for her by Lee earlier. “Luke will be out of luck tonight, he’ll have to watch one of his DVD’s, mind you that’s exactly what he’ll have been doing last night.”

Sarah never failed to shock Maddie. Luke owned DVD’s of what she could only presume would be of adult content. The thought of such things made Maddie’s skin crawl; why did Sarah appear to be so relaxed with the whole concept, “He’s got blue videos?” she had to lower her voice as the opening was high pitched and loud.

“They all have you know, all you have to know is where to look.”

“Well Alistair hasn’t.” Maddie said, matriacal in temperament.

“Have a look in his tool box or the videos marked football and boxing, they always hide them in there we never watch *them*, do we?”

“He hasn’t got a toolbox?” Maddie wore a puzzled expression as she thought on. It was also a fair bet that he didn’t have any recordings marked either football or boxing. Sport of any kind didn’t figure much in her partner’s life. “Have you watched them?” Before Sarah could reply, she knew what the answer was going to be, or at least she hoped she knew.

“One of them...” not the answer the older woman was expecting. “I only watched a little bit of it on fast forward. Two women in a changing room after a tennis game doing stuff in the shower.”

Maddie was speechless.

“I don’t know what it is about girl on girl ‘action’ that men like. I asked him once, he just said he didn’t know; though they were pretty fit girls in it.” Sarah waited for a reaction, she had dropped the seed that maybe she had experienced some kind of thrill by viewing it. The reaction was slow in coming, but it came.

Maddie’s mind was thrown back to the previous night, “Did, did...” she spluttered out desperately trying to find something to say. Rescue thankfully was at hand. Lee, moments earlier, had overtaken them and was currently a little way down the track. He had come to a stop, compass in hand, taking a bearing, “Oh, what’s he up to?”

Sarah smiled to herself, embarrassing Maddie was such an easy task. The slightest mention of sex had her face turning a bright scarlet.

“It’s this way.” Lee was facing south. To his left was a high sided drain. Its overgrown banks looked scarily steep. The path which Lee was pointing out was lost in a sea of waving grass. Evidence of someone passing this way was there to be seen, if you looked hard enough. The grass had a trail through it. The natural uniform was interrupted by a line swaying through it. It was evident that the long stems had been flattened and not returned to their natural position.

“What, down there?” Maddie looked but could not see.

“Look,” Lee showed her the map and indeed the path ran alongside the drain.

Looking down towards his feet, Lee picked up a fallen sign. It was not as well made as the signs which stood high on the Wolds. Its construction was of a thick branch, a spike at one end to be put in the ground no doubt. On the other the branch was cut at an angle slightly over forty five degrees. On the exposed oval face, a simple arrow showed the direction of the footpath. After two attempts to put it back into the earth he gave up. The girls watched him as he laboured; he knew that they were not looking forward to trailing through the long grass. Sarah had little idea that their course would take them through this terrain for so long. Each time a damp strand of long grass whipped her thigh, the sunburn stung for a second before the cool water soothed it. The cycle of pain and relief was constant. Once the path ran into a track once again, she was almost at the point of bursting into tears. Her poor legs, what a mess. Maddie too had also suffered, her trousers were sodden. Though the weather was warm and dry, the long grass was damp as the sun was unable to penetrate the mass.

Little conversation had passed between them for the last mile or so as they all concentrated on passing through the long grass. Now the path had turned into a farm track, presumably for the farm visible at the top of the slight incline. They slowly worked their way up the path. Somewhere in the distance, a rook was crowing its rasping song. The bird was not that far; it sat in a tree looking down on them. Its black eyes watching intently. It was not the first time the black oily feathered bird had seen them.

The previous conversation was still in Sarah’s mind. Maddie had hoped it had passed, not unlike other things which had occurred during the last twenty four miles. Sarah, however, had her own

agenda. “Have you got any porn videos?” She asked Lee.



Although more than a little shocked, he didn't show any kind of emotion. “Yer, of course.” Sarah gave a smug smile of satisfaction, not to mention a cheeky raise of her eyebrows. “Unfortunately they're all on video and we don't have a player now, everything's on DVD's now: why do you want any?”

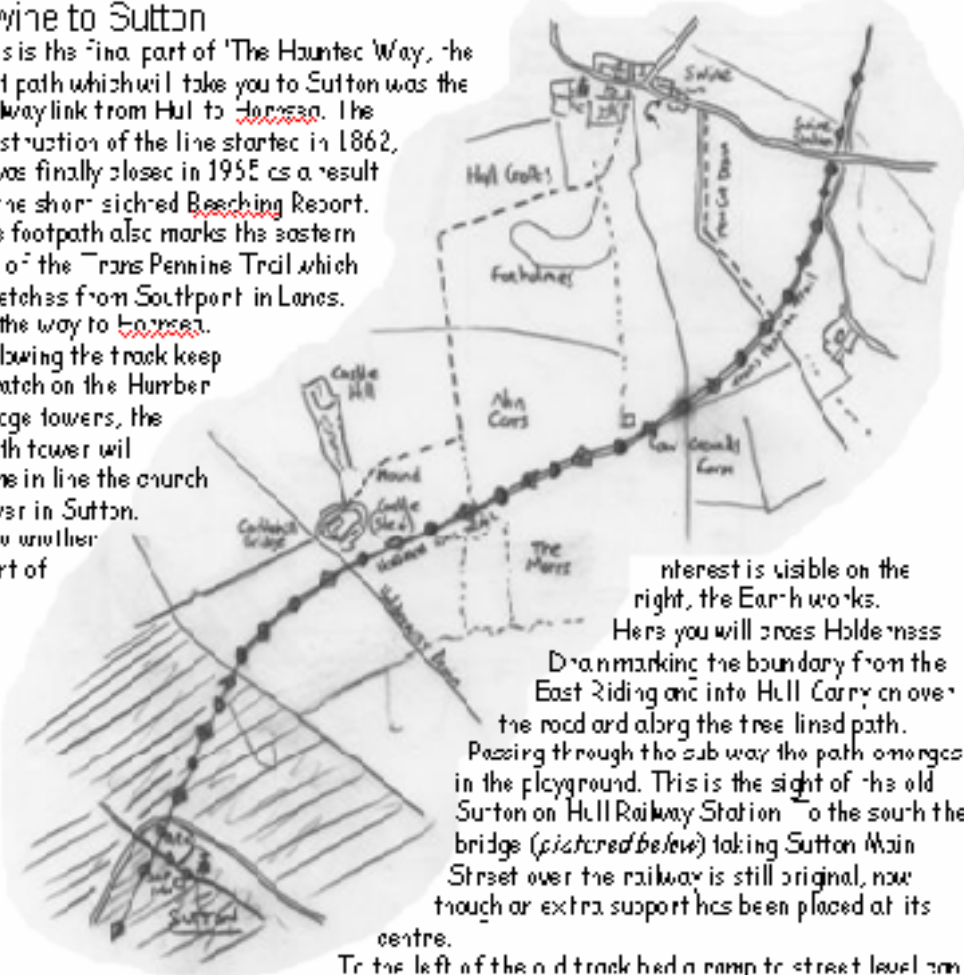
Swine was fast approaching; the church tower was clearly in view. The landscape had changed and the view to the south stretched out for miles. The twin towers of the Humber Bridge, or at least the top halves of them, were visible over the rolling hills. Many features of Hull were also visible. The huge chimney situated at Stoneferry, of course, was the main feature of the horizon. Even the tops of the cranes on the docks could be made out. Features from twenty miles apart were all visible from the small road into this sleepy village. “Careful!” Lee shouted at Sarah, so busy was she looking at the view she completely missed the cattle grid only feet in front of her. One more step and she would have put her foot down one of the gaps in the grid. Coming to a halt, she changed direction and walked around and through the gate. Tiredness had overcome her, Maddie to for that matter. Sarah's body was starting to shut down and she was beginning to struggle.

This stretch of The Haunted Way was the final stretch before the home straight. They all knew this and didn't want to linger in here. The main feature of the village was, of course, the church. This was the case in most of the villages they had passed through on their walk. Strangely enough, pigs seemed to feature highly in this village. Many of the house names bore some reference to the bovine creatures. No sooner had they entered, they were leaving; which came as a bit of shock. No shop, no pub, how did people live here? Maddie could not imagine an existence without a whole range of domestic amenities. She often wondered how she had managed to survive in her home village before a hairdresser and various nail bars and boutiques had sprung up as a result of the invasion of the commuter population. Brough had expanded to a ridiculous size but with the masses came the comforts they demanded. The road to the old railway station and abandoned railway line was silent, not a car, horse or any other form of transport was in sight. This was a small eddy of calm before entering the outskirts of the city.

## Swine to Sutton

This is the final part of 'The Haunted Way', the footpath which will take you to Sutton was the Railway link from Hull to London. The construction of the line started in 1862, it was finally closed in 1955 as a result of the short-sighted Beaching Report. The footpath also marks the eastern end of the Trans Pennine Trail which stretches from Southport in Lancs. all the way to London.

Following the track keep a watch on the Humber Bridge towers, the south tower will come in line the church tower in Sutton. As another point of



interest is visible on the right, the Earth works.

Here you will cross Holderness

Drain marking the boundary from the East Riding and into Hull. Carry on over the road and along the tree lined path.

Passing through the subway the path emerges in the playground. This is the sight of the old Sutton on Hull Railway Station. To the south the bridge (pictured below) taking Sutton Main Street over the railway is still original, now though an extra support has been placed at its centre.

To the left of the road track had a ramp to street level can be seen, the house to the immediate left was the old station house. Turn left and you are in Sutton. The church which the events with Feggy Crowman is on the left and the Ship Inn is directly opposite. In the interests of fairness, there is also 'The Duke of York' pub with in a stones throw. The pub marks the end of The Haunted Way.



Old Sutton Railway Bridge. © R000000



Church yard and the Ship Inn. © R000000

# XII



Seemingly in the middle of nowhere stood what looked like a house and now this old station house served as a domestic dwelling. Without local knowledge, or at least an O:S Map, any passing motorist rushing over the old level crossing would consider it a farm house or just the secluded home of a recluse. Outside the back door a washing line stretched from the wall to a pole erected on the platform. Under it, on modest lawn, sat a child's bicycle. The only give-away that it had once been a railway station were the two platforms which were still in a semi decent state of repair. Another clue, likely only to be spotted by the eagle eyed was the road, raised a couple of feet to meet the height of the old track bed which crossed it. It sat in a leafy tree lined area. The trees, now well established, had grown since the abolition of the line, some forty years ago.

On the east platform Lee, Maddie and Sarah sat with their legs dangling over the side. The old platforms were now overgrown with trees and the bright sunlight mottled the track bed with a million patches of light. Under the covering of foliage the air temperature was cool, a welcome respite from the harsh sunlight. "Well ladies, home straight now."

"Good." Said an exhausted Sarah.

Maddie knew of course; she had designed the route. She knew that the last part of walk was a hard stretch. Had she chosen the right way to get to Sutton? There was an alternative path they could have taken. From the village they could have travelled south across country and down to an old earth works. That would have probably been a better route but unfortunately she didn't have any stories regarding the earth works. Local history and the internet could not shed any light on the location. She did however have a story in regard to their current location, the old station house. She began to read with a great amount of atmospheric enthusiasm.

## Return to Swine

Over the last two centuries countless ghost stories have been told on a dark, cold winter's evening and many of these have had a railway station as their location. This little tale is no different to them, except in one detail; this story is a true tale. How do I know?

As someone once said, 'Because I was there'. The rambler who sought sanctuary from the freezing fog was I.



I am now eighty three years old and I had to put this story down on paper before I die.

What follows are the events (as I remember them) that happened on a cold winter's night in February 1963.

The line now stood abandoned. Lord Beecham's axe had fallen some fifteen years since. Where the majestic old steam engines once ran up and down the branch line linking Hull to Hornsea, only a footpath and cycle track now remain. The occasional hiker or cyclist now traversed the once busy line, only the stations remained. Such was the old Victorian station house situated half a mile from the village of Swine. The warm inviting light shone out from the windows into the fog bound darkness of that February night.

The building had lain empty for many years; the only inhabitants included the nocturnal creatures of the area and the occasional vagrant. Nine months previously, a retired doctor and his wife had bought the building. His worsening heart condition had forced him into an early retirement, but at fifty five he needed a new project and this was it.

Where there were once waiting rooms and ticket offices now there stood living rooms, kitchens and bathrooms; all the modern comforts and all done by his own hand. Both the interior and exterior were styled on the Victorian era; a tribute to the original builders of the line. Although the medical profession had taken him into its sphere, he had always been a fan of the Victorian engineers and the railway builders most of all. Men like Stephenson and Brunnel had been heroes to him.

Doctor Majester and his spouse, Catherine were in the midst of hosting a dinner party to celebrate the finishing of the final part of the redevelopment. Two guests sat at the table, Ian and Karen Hanson who were old friends of the hosts. Much merriment had taken place during the evening so far, and throughout the meal. Most of the conversation had been spent on nostalgia and their collective salad days.

Now the meal was over, the two men both held a large glass of brandy in one hand and a cigar in the other, while the women sat over two steaming cups of black coffee.

"You've done a marvellous job on this old place." commented Ian. His florid face looking around the maroon painted walls. Silhouetted profiles hung on the walls as well as the framed images of

steam engines hanging down from the picture rail. The grandfather clock, which stood in the corner of the room, was striking ten o'clock.

"It cost a fortune," said Catherine, as the last chimes died away. "He had to have genuine 1880's fixtures, fittings and well, everything. Taps, door handles, you name it.

"It all looks so new though." Karen added, not really knowing what to say, Victoriana was not her strongest suit.

The brandy-laden house guest was the first up from the table, loosening his belt discretely as he crossed the room. He came to rest by the hearth, turning his back to the fire; he felt the heat prickling on the backs of his legs. Turning to retrieve his glass from the mantle piece, Ian's eye was taken by one of the numerous objects sitting above the fire. Next to the carriage clock sat an old Acme Thunderer whistle, now heavily tarnished with age. Picking it up, he examined it in the closest detail. It was obviously old but the original pea was still in tact, "What's this old man." He asked his old friend.

"Oh just something I found in what's left of the chippings' outside." For some reason unknown to the other three assembled diners, the doctor's manner had turned somewhat cold and distant. His attention seemed to be taken by the window leading directly out onto the platform.

"What on earth's the matter Edward?" Karen asked with a concerned tone in her voice.

"Oh, er nothing; just not sleeping very well at the moment. I just seem to slip off now and again." His mind was on other things; that face, the face that haunted his sleeping hours. Had he seen it pass the window? If someone or something had passed the window no one else had seen it.

An uneasy silence befell the room. Was it the Doctor's imagination or had the temperature in the room dropped? "It's a strange thing," Edward broke the silence. His tone was grave; so much so that everyone turned, giving him their full attention. "It's funny Ian that you should mention that old whistle, it's since I found that thing that my nightmares started."

"What nightmares?" his wife asked a look of concern showing on her face. She knew he was not sleeping well but as for the reason for his unrest, she had no idea.

"About two weeks ago I found that piece down in the ground at the south end of the north bound platform. I picked it up and jumped up onto the platform to take advantage of better sunlight and to see what I had found. It looked very much like an old Stationmaster's

whistle. I stood looking up the line trying to imagine what it must have looked like a hundred years ago. I raised the whistle up to my lips and blew. It was full of soil, but I still managed to raise a shrill note out of it.

As I turned to come back into the warmth of the house, I caught sight of what I presumed to be a rambler coming down the line. Something told me that he, whoever he was, was worth a second look. I turned back to look northward up the line but I saw no one. I presumed it must have been the shadows in the trees forming the outline of a man.

That night I had the dream that has troubled me to this day. It really is the strangest of things; I was here, not now though, years ago when the station was active. It was a very busy station then.” His voice was distant, as though reaching back through time. He was no longer in the here and now but remembering days gone by. “It was a cold February morning, but I was in my shirt sleeves and waistcoat; the sleeves of the shirt were rolled up, my arms were cold and the end of my nose numb.

A slow moving cattle train came through the station. It was due to stop off at the cattle loading platform around the bend in the track. I can see it as clearly as I can see you three. It slowly rolled through and as it slowed to a stop around the partly tree lined bend; it looked hazy in the dream, though the sun was shining. I took a drink from the hip flask which I held in my right hand. In the other hand I held a whistle, very similar to the one in your hand Ian. I can remember which hand it was in. Under my arm I had two flags, one green, one red.

The signal remained in its lower position, the light shining green, it did not change. No, that’s because it was my job to change it. That was my job, Stationmaster and Signaller for that one solitary signal. It was cold on the platform so I took another drink from the hip flask before going back into the Station House.”

The sound of a knock came from the direction of the front door. It brought the three diners back to the present with a jolt but the doctor remained in the past. “I’ll go,” said Catherine leaving the table, “I cannot imagine who it could be at this time of night though?”

As his wife disappeared out of the room, the Doctor continued his tale. “The next thing I was aware of is waking up in this very room, my, or should I say the Station Master’s office. The fire is blazing, the bell is ringing, traffic coming up the line; the express is

on its way. It would stop today; the signal is at red as the cattle train is still off loading.

Had he changed the signal? I could not remember doing the actual act of pulling the lever, yes of course I had, and I always did. That was my job.

The noise of the engine wasn't right though. By the sound it was at full steam, not powering down like it should have been. I jumped out of my chair knocking over the empty hip flask, which fell to the floor from its resting place on the chair arm.

I hurried to put on my hat and coat, they wouldn't go on correctly, I felt disorientated falling against the wall next to the door at one point. How long had I been asleep? I did not know. In a state of half undress I rushed out onto the platform. No one was there, the express was not in service on this pass, the carriages were empty.

The train thunders through the station, the cut is filled with smoke and steam making visibility difficult. The last two cars of the train passed me, the only thing I saw was the guard at the rear of the brake van hanging his flask up next to the red flashing lamp denoting the end of the train. The brake van disappeared around the bend in the track.

"How had this happened?" I said to myself, I looked up at the signal. Now I come to think about it, I was standing in the same spot as I stood the other day when I found that whistle. The signal, the signal was at green." The Doctor was speaking even more slowly now. "It was my entire fault. I must have been worse for wear with drink and not changed the signal." He sat back in his chair exhausted by the tale. His eyes stared into the middle distance. Remorse filled his heart.

"It was only a dream." The reassuring voice of Karen spoke calmly to him, reaching out to his troubled soul.

The attention of the two guests was temporarily taken by the return of Catherine into the room and she was not alone. Following closely behind her was the figure of a man, well wrapped up against the cold winter weather. On entering the room he made straight for the fire, bending down in front of it and outstretching his hands toward its warm glow.

Catherine, leaving him to warm himself by the fire, came over to the table to inform her husband and guests of the newcomer's situation. "This young man got lost when the fog came down. He's on his way to Hornsea. The poor man looks half frozen to death, I told

him he could come and warm himself by the fire, he's been walking all day."

"I'll take a look at him; give him a quick check over in a moment," said Majester once again putting on his doctors hat, before standing up from his chair to attend to the latest guest.

"I heard the slamming on of the brakes, screeching through the cold morning air. The thumping sound of the boiler added to the plumes of smoke coming from the funnel rising over the trees clearly indicated to me that the driver had put the engine into reverse. The iron wheels scraped along the rails, sparks flew up from wherever metal touched metal. The mighty engine continued towards the last truck in the stationary cattle train. The driver of the express blew the whistle in vain, even if the driver of the cattle train had been aware of the approaching engine, there was no time to react, the slow moving tank engine could not pick up enough speed to outrun the express.

Knowing all was lost the driver and fireman leapt out of the cab both landing in the soft ploughed field that lined the track.

The almighty sound of the crash came as the back end of the brake van of the freight train ripped off the smoke box of the express. The express pushed the smaller train two hundred yards up the line before running out of steam. Fortunately the freight train was empty of people or beast, as was the engine of the express, the guard in the brake van was thrown across the compartment and instantly broke his neck on the brake wheel in the centre of the car, death was instant.

I suppose it was lucky that there was only one casualty from the crash."

"You are speaking as though it actually happened Edward." Ian was puzzled, was his old friend losing his mind? Could he no longer determine reality from dreams?

"The other day I took out the last of the old cupboards in the out house and I found this." He hands an old newspaper cutting from his breast pocket to Ian who, furnishing his nose with a pair of reading glasses studied the piece. "It is a report of the crash in my dreams."

"Just a coincidence, I'm sure of that, after all we are both men of science we cannot condone a link between dreams and reincarnation."

"No, no of course not." Faltered the doctor as he walked over to the newcomer. As he did Catherine gave a concerned look at her two oldest friends.

The rambler still remained bent over the fire, “Now my man.” Said the doctor, “Let me take a look at you, it’s alright I am a Doctor.”

The walker slowly turned to face the Doctor as he became upright. His features were obscured; his hood remained over his head covering his face. His hands slowly came up to his head to remove the obstacle.

At the table the two women spoke in hushed voices about Edward, “Is he alright?” Karen asked Catherine.

“I don’t know, he’s been a bit distant these last few days. He won’t tell me why, you know what he’s like. This is the first I’ve heard of any of this.”

Doctor Majester suddenly felt a dread the like of which he had never experienced before. Not only had someone walked over his grave, but he felt as though he was been buried alive. A pain shot across his chest as his heart spasmed out of control. The last thing he saw before he fell to the floor was the hideous burnt and twisted face of the guard he had last seen disappearing into the trees from the back of the break van of the Hull to Hornsea express of 1888.



Old Swine Platform GR137358

Lee finished the last dregs of a bottle of Guinness before wiping his mouth with the back of his forearm. “Where did you get that?”

Maddie asked seeing the bottle. Up to that point he had not been in her eye line.

“The fridge.” He smiled.

“So you’ve had it in your bag all the time”

“Well; yes.” The bottle was put away in the draw string bag and sealed.

“You haven’t changed.” Maddie jumped down from the platform and readied herself, “Come on then, not far now.”

He gave the same Cheshire cat grin back to her as she had made to him on many occasions as he walked past her heading towards where the level crossing used to be.

Maddie simply gave a ‘tut’ of disapproval as he passed. Her cheeks were alight with the sunburn, she raised a hand to one, even before it touched, the heat could be felt radiating from it. Looking at Sarah she decided that she had come off lightly. The younger woman’s skin was fair; the slightest hint of the summer sun would change its tone instantly. She was at present trying to lower herself off the platform; the slightest movement would cause her uncovered legs pain. When she had precariously lowered herself down onto the concrete edging its cool amberoid temperature had come as a welcome relief to her hot thighs, moving however was not easy. Each time she edged forward the gravel in the cement mix scraped, the pain was equivalent to a thousand pins dragging across an open wound. Fortunately Maddie was on hand. It was Maddie who help her jump down and steady herself on her feet. Slowly Sarah began to walk, everything was sore, still not far to go now. From her memory of the journey this was now the home straight and at the journeys end was a pub where she decided that she would drink like a Viking, purely as pain relief if not as a sense of achievement.

Lee obviously had already crossed the road as the girls stopped at the kerbside. He was framed by the large ark of trees which had grown either side of the old line.

Sarah remembered setting off across the road, hobbling along each step becoming slightly less painful than the last. It was then that the sound of a car approaching caused her to look up, the white car shot past at a great speed missing her by a matter of inches. The wake as it passing almost blew her over so close was the encounter.

Lee, standing at the kerb edge watched, an overwhelming feeling of helplessness swept over him. The car was between the women and him, he did however recognise the car, how couldn’t he. The vehicle in question was the first car he had owned, a white Capri,

even the registration plate was the same, surely it must have gone for scrap years ago?

The events on the road suddenly paled into insignificance as the most pronounced feeling of *deja-vu* overcame him. Clearly in his mind's eye the vision was there, him in that car at that point speeding, all those years ago. Beside him was his girlfriend of only a few weeks; she had just given him the news. Her period was late by one whole week. Instantly he had feared the worst, his life was over. Selfishly he gave no thought to her, she was sixteen, he three years her senior. This could signal the end of any chance of him having a future, things from that day would change, but what of her? She was seeing some other man on a long term basis; their relationship was on a short term contract as far as he was concerned. For her, all she wanted was a little excitement away from the humdrum normality of life. She had become engaged to a man who was on the way up in life; his prospects were great, so it was said, though he was not the most exciting of individuals. Lee's heart and mind were racing; the faster his main organ pumped blood around his body the less his brain functioned. Unconsciously his right foot was pressing down against the accelerator, the car gained speed. As the car bounced over the raised level crossing he remembered seeing three people, at the time and with other things on his mind it did not recognise one of his thoughts, now however the memory resurfaced, it was three people standing on the road at this very moment in time that he had seen. One man on the left watched the two women, the younger of which was crossing the road.

Sarah was in shock; Lee had sat her on the platform and was feeding her the energy drink from his pack. He did not speak to either of his companions regarding the car; he still didn't believe it himself. Doubt had started to enter his mind. How could he have seen his car speeding over the crossing just as he had done twenty or so years ago after that day in Hornsea with the girl he betrayed.

Sarah coughed as she drank bending almost double as she did, Maddie rubbed her hand up and down her back, half in sympathy and half trying to help the flow of liquid. As she did Maddie realised that the motion of her flat palm was uninterrupted by any kind of strap, Sarah was not wearing a bra? Why should she be momentarily shocked by that fact? After listening to some of Sarah's tales of how she carries on, why would a simple thing as that surprise her? Minutes before Sarah's face was red, now all colour had drained from it.



“Are you alright?” Maddie asked in a quiet voice. Lee looked on in silence, he was concerned for her, she just had the shock of her life and was in extreme danger of a second, though to Sarah it seemed to last for ever. She never had understood the expression, your life flashing before you. She did now however. As she sat on the platform edge the experience ran over and over in her mind. She saw the old car speeding toward her. As it reached her she closed her eyes and waited for the inevitable. The darkness was eternal, no pain came, she had expected it to hit her any second; the car was on a collision course. Slowly she dared to open her eyes. The bright light blinded her for a second, was she dead? Slowly her pupils adjusted to the light. In front of her was Lee, behind she could hear Maddie. Where was the car? It had disappeared around a bend, had it happened? The more she thought about it the more she thought it couldn’t have.

Lee could not tell what was running through his mind. There was no feasible way that he could have been driving that car. Racking his brain he tried so hard to recall the memory of some twenty years earlier, who had been the woman he had almost hit?

“I think so?” Sarah said looking up from beneath the brim of her cap. She was aware of the sunburn on her legs again, feeling was returning. A cold feeling had come over her and her body shivered an obvious sign of shock. The numbness still filled her fingers and toes, her nose was also running.

“He’s a bloody maniac driving like that? If I ever get my hands on him...” Maddie was furious with rage.

“Did you recognise the driver?” Lee asked. Could this solve the questions in his mind? He hoped that she would describe the driver with no reference to him.

Maddie paused; to Lee the seconds seemed like an eternity as he waited, “I didn’t get a good look at him.”

“It was a man then?”

“Yes, he seemed familiar, but I didn’t get a very good look believe it or not.” The hard stare on her face held his eyes for several seconds, it made him feel uncomfortable. His mouth became dry, palms began to sweat. What was she trying to tell him?

The tree lined stretch of dismantled track opened out into the bright sunlight. The warmth in the sun’s rays filled Sarah’s face full of colour once more. The sparkle had returned to her eyes and life back to her body. She was now running purely on the effects of the endurance drink which she had consumed on Lee’s instruction. “How far is it to go now?” she asked warily.

“Let’s have a look.” Lee said taking out his map. Quickly he folded it to show the eastern half and in particular the Hornsea Rail Trail. “We are about; here.” He pointed the index finger of his right hand down onto the map. “And we are going here.” The position he quickly triangulated swiftly like an ornithologist recognising a robin.

“How far is that then?” to Sarah the distance on the map looked miles; her heart sank like a stone dropping into a deep dark pond. The waters of which no, life could ever see out.

“Oh only a couple of miles now.”

A couple! Sarah was a little happier, she had estimated much more, but then it was still two miles on her poor feet.

Maddie too was also feeling the effects of the miles pulling on her. Both hips clicked with each step and what felt like a blister the size of Africa had formed on the heel of her right foot. She too doubted whether her own frame would last out the two remaining miles.

Lee could have upped the pace at this point to at least five miles per hour now. If he was walking alone then he surely would have. Walking with a group was something completely different. The girls he knew were struggling somewhat, so he had to keep their spirits up and most importantly keep them moving. Any stopping now and their muscles would seize up quickly. “Come on, let’s keep moving. I want you to look for something quite odd.”

“How do you mean?” Maddie asked a puzzled and tired look on her face.

“Right; look over there,” he pointed south and to the left of the old line, “There’s Sutton church, now look over there.” This time he gestured to the other side of the line. “There is the Humber Bridge.”

“Yes?” Maddie's curiosity had been roused.

“Keep looking at the south tower and the church tower. It’s a bit odd but do you think you can get them to line up?”

“What?” Maddie said, not believing that they could line up with one another. Sutton was to the east of Hull while the bridge was far out to the west. As she looked over in that direction the Wolds made up the horizon. Only yesterday they had walked over those very hills and up to Beverley. The tower of the Minster was now no longer visible, whether that was due to the carpet of fog which they had past through or the contours of the land she did not know and was not particularly bothered about at that moment in time. Again she checked the locations of the towers; still they showed no sign of alignment.

“Ouch?” Sarah let out a shout of pain. She began to limp on her left leg. From nowhere a stabbing pain had erupted on the ball of her foot. It feels as though a knife had been inserted causing an explosion of pain.

“What’s wrong?” asked Lee spinning around to see her limping.

“Something’s gone on the ball.” Sarah winced as she spoke.

“Like a volcano erupting?”

“Yes, that’s exactly it.” How did he know so precisely what she was feeling?

“Blister bursting. Not to worry, it’ll save you bursting it later.”

“I don’t believe it.” Maddie shouted out as though she had been given a new lease of life. Lee knew why. “You’re right, the church and bridge are in line. I don’t believe it!” she repeated.

“That just shows you how we’ve come round.” Again he took his map out and showed them. “Unfortunately the south tower isn’t on the map so we can’t get a precise fix, but we must be about here.” Again he pointed out a point on the map.

“Oh yes.” Maddie was generally excited by the strange phenomenon, then many things over the past two days had warranted a second looking at.

# XIII



On the boundary which marked the bloated village of Sutton-on-Hull sat an ancient earth work. Its appearance was one of a land based ripple out from a central point, as though some astral being had dropped a huge bolder sending shock waves out on the land around. Where a fort or castle had stood, now only the ramparts were left to observe the passing years. Maddie's preferred route for the home stretch of the walk passed these earthworks. Unfortunately she had no stories, ghost or otherwise to tell in regard to the site. Though she looked through all her fifty or so collected tales, not one would even pass as vaguely connected with this place, therefore, she decided to seek an alternative route via the abandoned railway.

The open countryside and rolling hills of the East Riding were about to become a thing of the past as they crossed over the Holderness Drain and into the city. In an instant everything in the world changed. The footpath signs changed from wood with carved lettering to metal, white text on a blue background giving all manner of mileage information. The distances to Hornsea, Liverpool and the Holland ferry all given on the small board. The occasional pop of a bird scarer was replaced with the rasping, fizzing drone of small engine motor cycles, as the under aged, non crash helmet wearing youths raged up and down the old track bed. The air quality was also notably poor. The fresh air of the country had been replaced with the aromas of petrol, BBQ's and dogs. The end was in sight. It was such a shame that Swine didn't have a pub; the walk could have ended there.

Sarah was becoming increasingly irritated with Lee's, 'Come on, nearly there' comments. They were meant to keep her spirits up, too much of a good thing could be a little tiresome.

"Look at that?" he suddenly said pointing to a tree. The up beat inspirational Lee had suddenly changed to an angry outraged Lee, "Bloody..."

"What?" Maddie asked in surprise.

"Why," he began, continuity had returned to his vocabulary, "if people are going to go to the trouble of cleaning up after their bloody dogs, why do they then throw the bag away into the trees. If they left it on the grass it would break down in days so why put it in a bag which takes years to degrade? Lazy sods, what's wrong with taking it home with them?" his voice had become exasperated once again and was reaching a crescendo, "I'd go round and shove the bloody shit through their letter boxes." It was a passionate outburst and with good

reason. Several of his men had been struck down in the field by the effect of dog faeces; they were wild dogs with every right to be there. The effects were long standing. So ill were his men that the mission was aborted. Consequently life was lost, Britons died in foreign lands under torture and all because of dogs.

Cars shot past before them. The old line was now crossed by the village by-pass but the walk was unbroken as an underpass allowed easy passage under the busy road.

“Well, this is it.” Maddie announced.

In front of the trio was a children’s playground. Climbing frames, swings, slides and roundabouts were dotted around in a random layout in the park. On the east side was a grassed area where the football pitches were located. In the main play area was a basketball court. The only reminder that once a railway had passed through here was the old road bridge which spanned the cutting to the south of where the station once stood. Unlike Swine, any evidence of a railway station was now long gone. Platforms, track, signs, all gone to the wrecker’s yard, sheer vandalism. The station house, however, did remain; that was up the incline which led from the platform to the village. Any sign of railway occupancy had been removed in the seventies.

“Can we sit down before I fall down?” Maddie said removing her back pack. As the air came into contact with the ringing wet back of her t-shirt, she let out a quick “oh!” Maddie hoped that sitting down would bring some kind of relief to her aching body. The laths of the seat caused pain in her buttocks and, shuffling slightly, she endeavoured to find a more comfortable position to sit in. Her backside was throbbing. Again Maddie adjusted herself and again no relief was forthcoming. The decision was made to simply live with the discomfort. Sarah had settled next to her, judging by the twisting of her features she too was in pain, but then Maddie already knew that.

Lee stood; his legs shoulder width apart, his back straight. The only sign of discomfort he showed was when he stretched his arms above his head and arched his back. A slight sign of pain shot across his face. “That’s better.” Lee said. The ex-army man looked far too at ease with himself for the two girls liking.

“Right, are we ready for the penultimate story..?”

Lee knew the finishing line and the pub were only around the corner, couldn’t this wait a short while?

Obviously not.

## Lost Luggage

The bright sun shone down on the East Coast main line station. Only the stationmaster pushing a trolley interrupted the peace and tranquillity of the warm summer afternoon.

Half a mile down the line the signal changed, the line was clear. In the distance a whistle blew and the unmistakable sound of a steam engine came into audible range.

Above the cutting that bent round to the right obscuring the sight of any oncoming traffic coming up the line, plumes of smoke puffed high in to blue sky looking as though the smoke box was generating cloud formations. Then from around the bend in the track came a 0-6-0 Tank Engine pulling its train behind it.

It slowed as the engine approached the station the two yellow and brown coaches stopping precisely in alignment with the station platform.

Smoke and steam blew across the platform as the rear door of the second carriage opened. The guard stepped down onto the platform, "All change for Filey." he shouted.

Only one other door opened. The guard walked the length of one of the carriages to assist the only two passengers disembarking at that point.

A man in his late fifties was climbing down from the compartment. His suitcase causing him an amount of difficulty.

"Here, let me help you with that Sir." The guard took the case off the passenger and placed it on the platform, "Mind the step Sir."

The man stepped off the train then turned to hold out a steadying arm to his wife who took hold of it before carefully stepping down herself.

Albert Parker slammed the door closed once his wife, Helen was clear.

Your connection shouldn't be long." He said checking his pocket watch before touching the peak of his cap in an informal salute.

He returned to the rear of the train before blowing a sharp note on his whistle and waving the green flag he had held, up to that point, under his arm. Mounting the train once again the engine got up steam and pulled out of the station. The steam and smoke slowly clearing as the carriages' rolled past.

"Good afternoon." said a voice.

Albert turned to see a young man coming out of the cloud of smoke.

He was smartly dressed in a brown suit; in his hand he carried a briefcase. His hair was slicked back with cream and neatly trimmed around the back and sides. Albert put his age at circa late twenties. How refreshing it was to see someone of that age smartly dressed. Most people of that generation these days were dressing themselves like 1950's American teenagers or in the new psychedelic inspired fashions that were so popular in London. These days, this was the 60's he supposed things changed.

"Good afternoon" replied Albert.

"Good afternoon young man." As did Helen.

"Warm day," said the young man mopping his brow with a clean white perfectly folded handkerchief.

"Why don't you sit in the shade?" Albert said to his wife.

"Yes, it's hard work today." Helen seated herself on one of the long benches, which were positioned next to the station house. The building was a riot of colour, hanging baskets adorned the walls set at regular intervals.

"Are you on your holidays?" asked the young man.

"Er yes, yes we are." replied Albert, "Are you?"

"No such luck I'm afraid. I am on my way to a sales conference in Scarborough. Great isn't it, I'll be stuck inside all week missing out on the glorious weather."

"What line are you in?"

"Castings mainly, for steam loco's."

"Really." Albert had worked man and boy in the railway industry and Helen knew that she wouldn't feature much in the ensuing conversation. Albert didn't only work on the railway but was passionate about the engines he worked on. She had lost him for the present, she would think though of the reason they were going to the small seaside town of Filey.

Nearly thirty years ago Helen and Albert were married in an old church in the village of Sutton-on-Hull. The reception in the church hall after the service was a simple affair. Ham salad followed by apple pie and custard were on the menu for the wedding breakfast guests.

The day after the newly weds were on a train bound for the town of Filey, their honeymoon destination.

The weather then had been similar to today's, warm and sunny. It had stayed like that the entire week. The long lazy days lasted a



lifetime though the week passed in a flash. The holiday was over too soon and the couple returned home and moved into their small terraced house.

One month later Helen found out after a trip to the Doctors that she was pregnant. It was going to be hard work with a child, times were hard, but the couple were overjoyed at the prospect.

Summer turned to autumn and Christmas loomed. Then tragedy struck the Parker household. Helen miscarried on Christmas Eve. She blamed herself; she had climbed on a chair to place the star on top of the Christmas Tree when the pain started.

They had had such big plans even the baby's name was decided. They were going to call him, or her after the place they had spent an idyllic week on honeymoon, Filey.

Every year now they would come back to the same place and stay in the same bed and breakfast. Every year they would take a period of time to remember their child, the child that never made it.

With each passing year the pain of the loss subsided, but the memory remained.

The sun was hot; she could do with a drink, "Albert." She said interrupting her husband who was deeply engrossed in his conversation, talking at great lengths of valves, rods and pistons.

"...that way," continued the young man, "we can ensure that the grain in the metal runs truer. Any flaw in the piston grain then it is more likely to shatter with excessive use."

"Exactly my point, I've been saying that for years." Arthur said enthusiastically.

"Arthur." repeated Helen.

"Oh sorry were you speaking dear?"

"Is there a buffet here? I could do with a cup of tea."

"I'll take a look. The Station Master must be about here somewhere." Albert disappeared into the Station House.

"Here, allow me." said the young man. As if from nowhere he took a flask and poured out two cups of tea. He passed the larger of the two plastic cups to Helen.

"Thank you young man." She said before carefully sipping the hot brown liquid.

"It's my pleasure." He walked to the edge of the platform and looked down the line. "Shouldn't be too long now, your train."

"Oh I'm in no rush, this tea is lovely." she said taking another sip.

“No I can’t see anybody around.” Albert said as he appeared from one of the two black doors in the Station House. “Oh, I see you’ve got a drink now.”

“The kind young man has shared his flask of tea with me.”

“Oh, that was very kind of him.”

The sound of the signal dropping turned their collective heads.

“There, I told you it wouldn’t be long.” smiled the salesman.

The train came around the bend.

“Here, let me.” The young man picked up the suitcase which still occupied the same piece of platform it had done for the past fifteen minutes.

The train pulled in. The guard, ever ready to help, walked along the platform and opened the door for his passengers.

“Mind the step please.”

“Goodbye young man.” Helen said climbing into the compartment. “Thank you for the tea.

He handed the case to the guard who took it on board.

Albert boarded, closing the door behind him. As the door slammed shut Albert slid the window down. “Thank you for a stimulating conversation young man.” He put his hand out of the window to shake hands with his new friend.

“Thank you,” he returned the compliment, “here’s my card.” From the breast pocket of his jacket he took a small white business card and handed it to Albert before shaking his hand.

The whistle blew and the train started to pull out. “Goodbye.” shouted Albert.

The salesman’s voice was lost in the noise of the engine, to Albert though; he could swear he said...

“Did you here that?” he asked Helen.

“Did he say goodbye Mum and Dad?”

“That’s what I thought.” Albert leant out of the window to look back. As the smoke cleared he looked back at the platform, no one was there.

The station was empty.

He sat down on the chair looking at his wife.

“What is it Albert?”

“He’s gone.” He said with a quiet voice, so quietly Helen could hardly make out the words over the noise of the engine.

For a moment Albert sat in quiet contemplation. In his hand he could feel the small oblong of card. Slowly he turned it over and read the words printed on its face.

“What is it?” asked his wife.

He couldn't say any thing, stunned into silence by the name on the card, 'Filey Parker'

Maddie said nothing for a moment. When she had written the story, the full impact had not occurred to her. The weather there on that day mirrored the conditions in the story but that was not the only comparison. Maddie also knew the pain of losing a child; was that the only compassion in the tale between her and Helen? No she thought not, they both had a hint of the child they had lost.

The last quarter of a mile was for Sarah the worst of all. Access to the oldest part of the village and the pub was up an incline. By no means a steep hill but still more than enough for the weary young women. Each step seemed like walking on broken glass. Her feet were damp with sweat and liquid vomited from a burst blister. To her relief the black iron gate at the top of the hill was open. Then suddenly, there it was, the centre of the medieval village of Sutton. The Norman church proudly at its centre looked down on the modern buildings which flanked all but its eastern face. Many trees lined the road giving the area a tranquil feel even though cars aplenty rushed through. “There she is,” said Lee pointing like Ahab sighting the giant whale, “the Ship Inn.”

IXV



## The End of the Way

A bright summer Sunday afternoon was generally a busy time for village pubs. The post Sabbath lunch constitutional for many people would be broken only by stopping for a well earned pint in the pub. No one had earned their drinks more than the three walkers recently arrived. Around the back of the pub, in the car park which doubled up as a beer garden, a collection of children were running around screaming in excitement, only stopping to drink vast amounts of fizzy orangeade. Inside seemed a world away. The low hum of conversation was interrupted by the cheering coming from the bar. A number of adolescent sports fans had gathered to watch the football being projected onto the large screen. The two female walkers sat with their backs against the padded wall seats. Both looked as though they had walked through a war zone. The male of the party however looked quite spritely and downed his pint of Guinness with relish and enthusiasm. "Same again?" he said standing up from the table. His t-shirt was sweat stained and tight fitting and as he stood it could clearly be seen sticking to the rippling six pack which made up his stomach. The women simultaneously declined the offer of another as their own glasses were untouched. Never before had Sarah felt this way in regard to the consumption of alcohol. The drink was in front of her, a pint of ice cold lager. Condensation had formed on the outside of the straight glass, beads of which ran down until they absorbed into the beer mat. All she could do was to look at it with longing, lacking the strength to raise a hand and pick it up. Two feet along Maddie found herself in a similar predicament. In front of the older women sat a black tray, sitting on it were a tea pot, steam rising from its spout, a small cup and saucer, a jug of milk and sugar bowl containing both white and brown sugar cubes. Nothing on it had been given the slightest attention. Maddie was intently watching Lee who was engaged in light hearted conversation with the young black haired bar maid. "Look at him, he never changes." That was the second time that she had uttered those words. "Does he really think he stands a chance with her, she's young enough to be his daughter?"

Sarah received the impression that Maddie had somehow put her foot in it as for some unknown reason her friend's cheeks flushed to an almost shade of plum. "What's his wife say about all his flirting?"

“She’s just as bad.” The answer was slightly spiteful. Sarah presumed that they must have some kind of history between the two of them. That warranted an obvious question.

“Was there a disagreement over Lee at some time in the past? To her there was only one answer to that.

“I don’t think I’ve ever met her?”

“You’d know if you had, Maddie cast a quick glance at Lee making sure he was still out of earshot before continuing, “She’s a bit, well loud. All fur coat and no knickers if you know what I’m getting at?”

The barmaid let out a high pitched laugh as Lee turned away from the bar and headed back to the table. As he sat he drank almost a quarter of the black Irish brew, “Alright girls?” he smiled. The froth from his drink adhered to his top lip, giving him a large white moustache. Sarah laughed and at last she managed to pick up her glass and take a mouthful of cool lager. Lee spurred on by the small joke launched himself into an impression of an air force commander, they all seemed to have large amounts of facial hair. Sarah laughed once more; she was beginning to feel much better in herself. Maddie said nothing; the slightest shake of her own head showed her dismissive feeling for his foolery. Finally and silently she managed to pour herself a cup of tea. “Good news, I’ve had a word with the barmaid and she said that if you two want to go in the back to freshen up then just pop through.”

Maddie experienced a slight twang of guilt. There she was casting aspersions on his character and behaviour when all the time he was putting their interests over his own. After all, she thought, that was the army way. “Thank you. She said with great gratitude while her conscience tugged slightly. “Before we do that, I’ve got one last story to read, the last of the Haunted Way.”

“What’s it called Maddie?” Sarah said after swallowing over half pint, followed by her trade mark burp.

One of the locals who occupied a bar stool turned a degree to see who had made such a noise. The man’s eyebrows raised at least an inch when he realised that the young attractive blond was the culprit. Sarah sat there looking slightly embarrassed with her hand over her mouth as she looked from right to left making sure that no one had observed her, her bright blue eyes held a twinkle in them.

“The Ship’s Cellar and its all about this pub.”

## The Ship's Cellar

Trevor Horseman pushed the staple firmly into the hasp. The door was now locked for another evening, only eight hours until the bolt would be pulled back and the doors opened again.

These particular heavy oak doors guarded the entrance to a small pub in the village of Sutton. The old building was the centre and hub of village life. The community would gather together here on cold winter evenings to talk through the issues of the day. A hundred years ago the conversation would be primarily of farming and any local village gossip. These days themes had moved on to world events and sport with local issues coming a poor third to more interesting topics.

Times had definitely changed; new houses had been built on the extremities of the old. Farmers selling their land, earning more money in one transaction than during a lifetime of toiling with the plough. More and more new people now came into the village, but never seemed to spend any money or their time in the pub. The locals though still came through the old doors.

The time was now two thirty in the morning. Trevor was tired and all he wanted to do was go to bed. He hadn't imagined that running what was still classed as a country pub, though now in the middle of the ever expanding city, would be such hard work. He had served his time in the busy pubs of Hull and Beverly. In one evening a thousand people would pass through the doors, but still, he was always in bed at a reasonable hour.

Running a country pub was a completely different ball game. It was the unwritten rule that the bar didn't shut until the last customer was ready to leave the premises or the landlord collapsed where he stood.

He disconsolately looked around the room. It could be worse, only fifty or so glasses needed putting in the washer. Then the cellar needed sorting out and there was the bottling up to do.

With a sigh he wandered around the bar collecting glasses. Once all of those were safely in the machine he retraced his steps collecting up all the used ashtrays.

One by one the spent contents of each tray was emptied into the swing top bin then each received a clean out with an old paint brush before a wipe round with a damp cloth.

A cold draught passed over the back of Trevor's neck as he moved the brush around the last ashtray. This was a cold old building

and when the wind blew down the main road, all of the windows and doors would rattle.

The floor of the pub was made up of large heavy flagstones. Bits of grass and dust would blow across the room from the door to the fire place on a stormy night but tonight was not a stormy night. Not a cloud obscured the star filled sky, no wind whistled down the main street. From the cellar, the sound of something falling and rolling made him jump back from the door which lead down into the dark cold room. In fright he dropped the ash try, it shattered into a thousand pieces as it hit the stone floor. Slowly he got down on his knees and started to brush the pieces up. For a moment he had the strangest feeling he was being watched, but the feeling passed as quickly as it had arrived. He put it down to being over tired; sleep is what he wanted the most at this moment.

This was not the first time a strange occurrence had happened to him in the week he had held the tenancy. The previous night he had been doing the rounds in the cellar when he noticed the pressure valves on top of the larger and cider barrels. Each one regulated at twenty pounds per square inch, but as he watched each valve in turn dropped, and then returned to the normal atmosphere. Trevor could think of no explanation for this curious event. Each barrel was on its own system. It gave him an uneasy feeling and that night he finished his cellar work in record time.

Once again he was experiencing the same uneasy feeling. The locals would tell tales of hauntings around the various places in the village, including the pub. Trevor never took any notice of the stories; ghosts were, to him, part of another time when people weren't as educated as they were now. In days gone by, anything unexplained would be put down to supernatural causes.

Now having experienced events over the last week, he wasn't so sure of his convictions.

That night his sleep was broken several times by dreams of a man walking through his head, or was it the pub, he could not tell. One thing for sure was that it was disconcerting.

At eleven o'clock the following morning he withdrew the bolt from the door. Looking around the bar he wondered how he had managed to get everything ready for opening time again. Wearily he walked back behind the bar, closed the flap and waited for his first customer.

As was the norm, the first person through the door was Mike. With him came a cold blast of air.



“Snow in the air?” he announced as he removed his overcoat, hanging it on a peg, followed by his hat which he placed on top.

“Pint, Michael?” Trevor asked as he took a straight pint glass from underneath the bar and positioned it under the bitter pump.

“Ey.” The elderly Michael shuffled across the stone floor. Years of strenuous work on the farm had taken its toll on his legs. The knees that struggled to support his large frame were all but seized. The elderly man lifted himself onto the barstool that was neatly tucked into the alcove created by the end of the bar and chimney breast.

“There you go young Michael,” Trevor said, putting the pint of bitter down on the bar towel.

Mike let the liquid settle into its pristine measure before burying his nose into the froth.

“You know the other night,” began Trevor, a hint of apprehension in his voice, “When you were all telling Ghost Stories.” Trevor felt a little uneasy bringing up the subject. His reaction to the tales told that night was one of out and out scepticism but now it would appear that he was about to make a U-turn.

“Oh yes, that load of old rubbish.” Chuckled the old man.

Trevor was slightly taken aback. It was Mike who out of all those gathered around the fire that night, whose belief in the supernatural was the greatest, his stories the best.

“What? You mean none of them were true?”

“Well, they’re only stories aren’t they? People in the village have been telling them for years, probably embellishing them each time they’re told. Why do you ask?”

“Oh it’s just that...” he broke off thinking better of it.

“Things in the cellar going amiss are they?” in a sinister tone Mike finished the sentence for him.

A shiver gripped Trevor for a moment, how did he know, what did he know about the history of the pub. Much more than he himself no doubt. “Yes, how did you know I was going to mention the cellar?”

Mike smiled, “I’ve lived here all my life, there’s not much I don’t know about this place.” He took another long drink from his glass and settled himself back in the alcove.

“Oh, it must have been about the turn of the century,” he began, “a man by the name of Miller was landlord of The Inn then.” Mike loved telling his stories about the village. Just about everybody had heard the full repertoire, but now he had a new ear. “At that time there was a lot of trouble with a bunch of gypsies who were camped

locally. They would come in the pub and drink most of the night. It was good news for the publican, but not for the villagers.”

“Was there trouble?”

“Apparently so. In those days no one locked their doors, day or night, there was no need. Then things started to go missing in the night. The police constable was called from Hull. He, like the villagers, knew who was to blame.”

“The Gypsies?”

“Ey. They were canny buggers though. No one ever caught them in the act as it were.” Mike drained the last remaining contents of his glass. Immediately Trevor started to pull another pint.

“So where does the pub come in?” he asked, turning to put Mike’s money in the till.

Mike was waiting for more refreshment before continuing. The drink was topped up by a sharp pull on the pump, and then seconds later it was in Mike’s large rough old hand.

“Right, where was I?” the first inch of beer was drained from the glass.

“The pub.” Hinted Trevor.

“Oh yes, the night it all came to a head was the night the gypsies did a runner.

They had been in the pub all night. At closing time a few of them didn’t want to leave. The landlord along with a handful of farmhands threw them out. Miller shut up for the night.

In the early hours of the morning they came back. Three of them, they had been drinking back at the camp and come up with a plan to pay the landlord back. They decided to steal a barrel of bitter from the cellar.

Breaking in through the hatch, they put two planks down to roll the barrel up. The thing was, because they had had so much to drink they were making a right old noise, Miller heard them and came down to investigate.

When he got to the bottom of the cellar steps he could see two of them pushing the barrel up the planks while the third stood at street level and was pulling on a rope which he had hooked around it.

So engrossed in what they were doing, the thieves never heard him. Miller picked up a piece of rough cut timber he used as a lever for moving barrels and approached them. ‘What do you think you’re doing?’ he shouted at all three.

As the two in the cellar turned toward him the timber came down on one of the thieves shoulders, throwing him against the wall.

The timber swung in the opposite direction hitting the man on the other end of the barrel.

The accomplice standing at street level could not hold onto the rope any longer. He let go, the barrel rolled back into the cellar. It hit Miller, the weight of it crushing his skull.

The murderers were never caught, but since then, and that was over a hundred years mind, no gypsies have ever come into the village again.

Some do say that he stops any of them at the border of the village as they arrive; some say he's in the cellar putting the barrel back in its place, the barrel that killed him." Mike sat back deep in reflective thought. It was a gruesome but sad tale. His ghost had been spotted on the premises, always by the customers though. How much validity could you put on those sightings?

Trevor pushed the bolt into the staple. The pub was now closed for another night. He looked up at clock on the wall, ten past two. The glass washer hummed away in the corner, one last job before bed.

Slowly he walked down the stone cellar steps.

As he tapped a barrel of bitter, he didn't notice the pressure valves dropping then returning to normal pressure. He did feel the shiver as an icy cold blast shot down his spine, just before he heard a bang followed by the rolling sound of a barrel.

'Evening Miller.' Said the landlord to an empty cellar."

The shadows outside were becoming longer as the sun lowered in the sky. The afternoon was turning into evening; its warm rays still had a bite to them. The car park cum beer garden was now almost empty apart from one table where three walkers sat. The remnants of a Sunday dinner decorated the table top, all had finished eating. Maddie and Sarah sat with their backs to the setting sun; Lee still wore his hat, offering his eyes protection. The vast amount of windows at the rear of the properties now acted as mirrors reflecting the bright evening sunlight. Instead of being blinded by one of the reflective panes the women seemed to be under bombardment from, they decided that the time had come to move back inside. Sarah was glad to move once more as her skin was feeling the effects of the sun and becoming itchy. Moving seemed to be a problem though; while sitting almost every muscle in her body has seized up.

Back inside and glasses replenished they sat next to the dormant fire place and reminisced about the last two days adventures. The Haunted Way had certainly hit all the criteria for a successful

walk and Maddie's planning and attention to detail had proved itself well. "Favourite parts?" she asked openly.

Both her companions considered the question long and hard. So many parts made up the two days, deciding on one particular stretch was no easy task. For Lee though he had already cast his vote. "Peggy Farrow to Spout Hill definitely. For me there is no other place in the world like it, and I've seen a few."

"Sarah?" enquired Maddie.

"Me, I don't know really, there were so many good bits. Anywhere were we could see for miles, they were my favourite bits. Top of Branny Dale or up past Wawne." Sarah suddenly remembered the mirage she had seen up on the Westwood. She was about to speak but Lee had already started to talk and she could not be bothered to interrupt.

"What about you Maddie, what was your favourite bit?" Lee asked staring deep into her eyes.

"Oh the road to Walkington I think." Lee cast his mind back and recalled yesterday's conversation while Sarah had worn her MP3 player. An uneasy silence suddenly fell over the group. Maddie though broke it, "And which story did you like best?"

"Lost Luggage." Sarah said instantly, "That one was so sad."

Maddie agreed, but could only force out the words, "Me too."

"I liked the one about the vanishing pub in Melton, what was it called?" he asked trying to remember. It was on the tip of his tongue, but he couldn't quite remember.

"The Search for Melton Top."

"That's the one." He said drinking deeply.

"Any particular reason for that one?" it was more than a leading question posed by Maddie.

Was she referring to what he thought; the incident at Swine? If that was the case then she was far more astute than he had given her credit for. What he experienced only that afternoon and the two old men in the story were not a facsimile of one another, many points did bare similarities? The past coming back to the present was the obvious comparison. The girl in the car with him seated along side and carrying his child must bear some resemblance with the two daughters of the landlord who were 'seeded' by the two young walkers. Passions ran high in both situations, how should he answer the question posed to him? He wasn't in the habit of avoiding interrogation, especially as trivial as this. In this period of life he thought it best to avoid opening old wounds.

“No, none.” He replied. A double negative? Was that a giveaway?

Around them the hostelry was filling up with evening drinkers. Another football match had started on the big screen, many ‘ous’ and ‘ah’s’ drifted in from the adjoining room. Sarah attempted not to remain in the same position for too long. A combination of stiffness and sunburn was getting the better of her. Checking her mobile phone she became aware of the time, six thirty. The passing of time was a concept which she had paid no attention to over the past two days; there had been no need for clock watching. Now once again they were slaves to its passing, “We should think about making a move soon or we’ll miss the train.”

“What time is it?” asked Maddie.

“Half six.”

“Oh plenty of time for another one then.” Lee said pouring the remains of his pint down his throat. So quickly was his drink thrown back that a bead escaped from where the glass met the corner of his mouth.

Again Lee stood at the bar awaiting the attentions of the plump dark haired young barmaid, who bore an uncanny resemblance to a young Maddie. The older version of Maddie gave an involuntary shiver as she watched him purchasing his drink. “Are you cold?” Sarah asked.

“Has someone opened the door?” Maddie answered. Both looked; the front and back doors both remained closed. “Somebody is walking over my grave.” Maddie had turned quite pale. Her face was completely void of colour; the eyes looked black and set deep in her skull.

“Are you sure you’re ok?” Sarah had turned to face her directly. The abrupt movement strained her abdomen muscles. “Can you feel it?”

“What?” Sarah answered in a concerned voice. What had come over her friend?

“The cold, it’s so cold.” Maddie had begun to shiver almost out of control.

Sarah grabbed Maddie’s hand, “Maddie what’s wrong?” her raised voice attracted the attention of most of the people in the room at that time. Lee turned to see Sarah’s face intently looking at him, full of concern. He rushed back to the table almost falling over one of the stools en route. Taking his jacket off the chair he quickly wrapped it around Maddie’s shoulders.

“Her body temperature is dropping; it’s common after prolonged exercise. Keep this around you.”

Maddie suddenly sat bolt upright, the colour flooded back into her cheeks, no sign of her prolonged shivers were now in sight.

“Evening,” said a voice opposite her, “I overheard your conversation earlier, telling ghost stories were ‘ya?”

All three turned to see an old man standing before them. Maddie had the strangest feeling that she knew him from somewhere but couldn’t quite place him. Sarah tried not to look at him too closely, something about him made her flesh crawl. The skin on his face was drawn tight to the bone, whiskers poked out of his chin, his hair was greased back. He reminded her of a dirty old man, the sort all children were warned against. He asked if he could be seated, “My old bones aren’t what they used to be you know. He said not waiting for approval before lowering himself precariously onto the spare seat adjacent to Lee. Sarah looked at his hands, they were white, no signs of life in them. His fingers made her wince, long thin and bony, each nail was black with dirt. The brown pin stripped suit which hung off his skeleton like a frame was threadbare, stained and smelt like old straw and manure. For a moment she thought of making an excuse to go to the toilet and getting out of his aroma but as she was about to, she realised that she was blocked in on both sides and getting out would mean pushing past the old man which was the last thing she ever wanted to do for fear of catching something.

Lee was watching her reaction and was somewhat surprised by it. She was young; he knew that; did old aged repulse her so much?

“That’s better,” said the old man, making himself comfortable, “now,” he began, “There’s a ghost story connected with this ‘ere pub.”

Maddie who had done her research could only come up with the one supernatural tale in regards to the hostelry and told him so.

“Its not that story you’ve just told, young woman,” he corrected her, “I’ve never heard of that one before.” That wasn’t surprising, Maddie had actually doctored the story, and the pub in question where the cellar was haunted was actually in Hotham. “This is to do with the landlord here nearly two hundred years since. It doesn’t start ‘ere mind, he was from Beverley. Albert Crowman was his name, at least that was the name he went by when he came to this village. In them days you could have different names in different villages, nobody would ever know, a by name it was called. Some

folks who worked on the river or railways would ‘av half a dozen of ‘um.’

Crowman, he went to school in Beverley, posh one at that. His friend fought next to Nelson ya know at Trafalgar. When he left he got a job working for a brewer who supplied many houses around this area.

One winter’s morning when a bout of the influenza had struck the city, he was forced to help out the dray man with the deliveries. They were bound for the village of Brough.”

The three listeners suddenly focused their attentions upon the old man. He paused; it was so obvious that he almost expected a response. Sarah shot a concerned glance across to Lee who nodded a reassuring glance back at her; everything was fine, nothing to worry about.

Maddie’s memory, though tired was stirring; several things he had said sent her mind spinning into action.

“As they arrived at the Station Inn both he and the driver were cold from the journey and looked forward to warming themselves by the fire. The landlord came out to meet them, a glass of brandy in each hand. He knew that they would be all but frozen from the ten mile ride across the open landscape.

The two men tossed the drinks back in one quick movement and thanked the landlord. As the first of the barrels fell onto the pig the drayman was laid out on the snowy ground by a blow to the head. Standing where the drayman had just stood was a rough looking individual, a wooden club in hand. Some villainy was afoot and Crowman himself would have fallen foul of it but for one thing. The attacker and Crowman squared up to one another and as the club was raised for a second time his eyes looked through and past Arthur at a second scoundrel behind him. The second fall of the club didn’t find its target. With a quick movement Crowman moved out of the way allowing the weapon to fall on the second mans head. As the landlord came running out the two criminals had fallen to the ground.

So grateful was the proprietor that Arthur was offered a job and lodgings at the Inn; which he took. Not long into his stay he met a young woman who, as far as anyone knew, was from another village. She too worked in the Inn and was very popular with the customers. No man ever overstepped the mark with her; none would have wanted to come a cropper of Crowman.

The landlord who was never in the best of health died of a fever. No doctor could tell what had brought it on, but it caused his

throat to swell and he suffocated. Crowman married Peggy and took over the running of the pub.

“Now,” he shuffled in his seat, Sarah shivered, she was convinced that he was attempting to gain a better view of her cleavage. “As far as we know all went well for some time until rumours started to spread around the village about Crowman. It was said that he was having relations outside of his own marriage. Several women came forward to confess of their adulterous behaviour with the landlord. Wives, daughters and betrothed were all a target for his passions and all gave in willingly to him. Officially their view was that he had forced his attentions on them but between themselves the womenfolk would confess to one another of their willingness to experience him and satisfy themselves.

Evidence was gathered by a local squire and a deputation visited him in the pub where he was quizzed in regards to the accusations.

It took only a short while for the squire to become disillusioned with the claims. Each time an incident was presented he answered with a similar plea of defiance. Each occasion put forward by the women of the village, each day, each time Arthur Crowman was serving in the Public House and not only that, but serving the husband of the accuser. The Squire, so disgusted with the nature and fiction of the people in the village, walked out having announced that ‘Such an upstanding member of the community as Arthur Crowman should be beyond reproach.’ As you can imagine feelings ran high, but the mood tempered.” He paused for breath and reflected on what he had said up to that point. “It wasn’t long however until a sixteen year old girl was overheard in the church telling a friend that Crowman had taken her virginity the previous day.

The very next day Arthur and Peggy Crowman rode a small cart out of the village and headed over the wolds to Beverley.”

A flash of inspiration suddenly hit Maddie; it was a moment of enlightenment. The conclusion to the story was obvious, “Don’t tell me,” she began full of enthusiasm, “one of the men who tried to steal the beer barrel was killed in the fight outside the pub and it was his ghost who was seeking its revenge on him. All the women probably dreamt that they were having sex with the landlords...” then stopped to think. The old man looked at her for a moment, but said nothing, “I’ve done a lot of research over the past years into the supernatural and these ghosts in dreams would be consistent with many stories.” She waited with baited breath for a reply, but also did not want to say



too much about her previous night's dream, if that was indeed what it was.

“Ey lass it could have been like that I suppose. That's just the start of the tale that is, we've a bit to go at yet.”

Maddie felt rather foolish at the premature outburst. When she was younger she had taken one of her fathers books down from the shelf in the dinning room, it was by Arthur Conan Doyle, one of the Sherlock Holmes stories. One line in particular had always stayed with her, ‘One cannot theorise without the facts.’ Maybe she should try and heed the warning.

Because of the contacts he had made in his home town it was possible to find employment. Again it was in the pub trade. The pub he and his spouse managed is still there, it's called The Monks Walk, do you know it?”

For the first time Sarah looked at him in the eyes. She was in shock, after a second or so her eyes darted across once again to Lee, “Yes,” he answered not relinquishing the eye contact with Sarah, “we know it.” a shiver was running up Sarah's back, up to her neck and out around her shoulders, she gave an involuntary shiver. The question and then the pause made by the old man was more than a little suggestive, as though he knew the events of the previous day.

“The pair had taken ownership six months since when rumour started regarding the goings on in the many rooms situated on the upper floor. It was said that the rooms were used for indecent rendezvous.

Now this hostelry was a shilling a night, a good weeks wages for many, so a shilling extra expenses for other services was more than most could afford. For many months only wealthy men stayed there. Then for some reason the lower members of society began to frequent the public house. Rowdy boat men, who where not as discrete as the more affluent clientele, began to come and go through the doors. They drank more and talked more often in loud voices to the wrong people. The final straw came when a lady guest woke one night to find a large man standing over her completely undressed. She screamed, fortunately Crowman was only yards down the corridor, he threw the man out without as much as a stitch on his body.

The local magistrate ordered an investigation into the goings on in the licensed premises. No witnesses came forward to testify that they had stopped there for anything more than a bed for the night and no women came to say that they where under the employ of the venue.”

“My theory still stands.” Maddie said, not perturbed by the old story teller.

“Beverley had a much bigger population than a village such as Brough, so rumour was slow to spread. As word passed from person to person the tales of the lecherous landlord didn’t make it back to the pub. The women of the market town were not as simple as those who dwelt in sleepy Brough. They knew how to keep things among themselves, and they did. Old Arthur gained himself somewhat of a reputation among the women of higher classes in the town, only in their intimate circle would he be discussed.

It was not often that a female would be allowed to enter a public house, but some on occasions were permitted access with their husbands naturally and even then not a word or nod of recognition would pass between the host and lady guest. This was in contrast to other female visitors.

Crowman was a member of the ‘Order of Traders’. A group of men who would work with one another, shall we say, in business that is. His fellow members would visit the pub out of hours and on occasion would be accompanied by their wives. He could quite easily give the impression that he and the ladies had never before met. Never during the visit would he give them a second glance unlike his wife who appeared to know them with familiarity. Was this due to the master of the house relating details of their solo visits or was she an accomplished hostess? Whichever it was, she was a master of the art. Sometimes only hours after a visit would the rich merchant’s wife end up in Arthur’s bed. More often they would not return for days or even months but one way or another they would return. It would be one of these very women who would ultimately be his downfall.

The chairman of the Order of Traders was a stony faced fleet owner. His dislike for his fellow man was renowned. He ran the society with regimental discipline as he did his own household and business. The servants feared him; his family feared him and none more than his wife. It was because of the terror he stowed in them that the staff would continuously attempt to gain some kind of favour with him. Any pilfering or slack behaviour would be reported back to the master for him to deal with in his own manner. It was one of the staff who overheard a conversation between the tyrant’s wife and one of her close circle of friends. She was telling the house guest of her affair with the landlord of the Monks Walk and her experiences of what could only be described as almost ecstasy.

The servant could hardly curb his enthusiasm, betraying her would hold him in good stead with the master. Later that day on the master's return home an eruption ensued which would have rivalled that of any volcano exploding. The servant received a thrash across the face with the back of the merchant's hand for his betrayal. A large ornate ring on one of his fingers ripped a deep gash into his cheek. That however was paled into insignificance by the beating and humiliation his wife received; Crowman would be next on the list. The betrayal he felt two fold, not only his possession had been taken in the form of his wife, but his fellow trader had betrayed him, for him an abomination of a crime.

Fortunately one member of the staff in his employ was a regular of the Monks Walk. He, on hearing of the prospective beating due to landlord headed off to warn him.

The wronged man set off the short distance over to Wednesday Market, marching towards the pub. In his hand he carried a sword stick which he unsheathed as he walked with determination.

For some reason he never made it in time, Crowman and his wife had fled. Some confusion surrounded the whole affair after that. Some said that the landlord had received word probably from the servant who had befriended him though others said that not only did the wronged man never make it to the pub, but was never seen again. Whether that was out of shame, did he leave or did something else happen to him on the short walk?

It was several weeks after that incident Arthur Crowman and his wife turned up here in Sutton village, because it was a village then."

"Don't tell me," Maddie interrupted, "he was landlord here."

"In this very pub, he was lass. Crowman was popular, that story you were telling a little earlier, I'm sure that wasn't him though."

Maddie's research was pretty thorough and never had she come across the man. Also it seemed strange that this character in his story had at sometime held the post of landlord at each of the pubs on the route, too good to be true.

"All was well," he continues, "until one night. Across the road in the church a service was in progress, Evensong. Most of the villagers were in residence as was normal. Crowman was not in attendance, he was in the pub serving the passing traders. Peg, was somewhere around, he presumed that she was upstairs.

The service was by all accounts the usual lecture of how the common man was not worthy of breathing, ‘You filthy sinners’ I’m sure you know what I mean? In those days things were all different, people feared the church. In highly catholic areas the priest would come knocking on every door and take all your money before you had chance to get down the pub with it. The entire congregation would heave a sigh of relief as the final patronising words ended. Most were happy to head straight across the road and through these doors for a little corruption. Usually the villagers would enter wearing a smile on their faces; on this evening though a look of concern was on their faces. In those days this room was illuminated by candle light so it was quite dark, I still remember that you know.

It took a moment for the newcomers’ eyes to register the fact that Crowman was behind the bar. Several had heard his voice coming from out of one of the upstairs windows. The words drifting through the evening air sounded not unlike a woman in the throws of, well intercourse.” He seemed a little embarrassed at openly talking of such matters in front of the two women but it was an essential part of the tale and had to be announced. “Being of good manners none of the village folk would ever mention such an affair as this. Some were unsure in regards to the situation, others talked to one another in hushed tones.

As the last of the congregation passed under the shadow of the lytch gate the Reverend smiled to himself, another service over. Locking the heavy oak gates he turned to head back toward the Vicarage. A warm summer breeze drifted over him making his robes billow out around him; he too heard the cries of passion.”

Sarah thought it quite sweet that he cowed in embarrassment anytime he made a sexual reference. Did he not want to use such suggestive terminology in front of the women or was he just old fashioned, from a time when such subjects where only discussed behind closed doors?

“The voice he heard was that of a woman crying the name ‘Arthur’. The smile suddenly dropped from his face as he recognised the voice; it was the voice of his own wife.

Moments later the door of this very pub burst open, framed in the doorway his robes billowing in the breeze stood the vicar. His breathing was heavy; almost a snarl was coming from his throat. He looked desperately around the room. His embarrassment was complete, not only was his wife upstairs with the landlord, but most

of his congregation was in attendance to witness the outrageous events.

The clergyman took a step into the pub, his eyes could not see, quickly they adjusted looking one way then another. All eyes looked back at him, his appearance had changed from a peaceful man of God into some kind of wild animal, a metamorphosis which up to then would be associated with followers of the Devil, 'Where is he?' he growled, 'Where's Crowman?'

'I'm here vicar.' Arthur replied standing behind the bar, in his hand a jug of ale.

The Reverend strode up to the counter not relinquishing his gaze on the man for a second. Crowman knew something was amiss. He stood there before the Vicar dressed in his usual large white apron tied across his waist.

'I don't know how you came down so quickly, but by God I will have satisfaction from you.' he shouted at the landlord, 'You sir are an evil abomination of the worst kind sir.'

Arthur looked puzzled, 'Vicar, please,' he began, 'what are you saying?'

'I don't know how you did it man, but I heard you upstairs making devilry with my wife. What despicable demons have taken over you sir? You are the worst kind of scoundrel...'

'I have been here all this afternoon; I can assure you of that sir. Please Vicar, if you won't accept my word then please ask your own flock.'

Taking a deep breath he turned away from the bar and looked at the assembled villagers, 'Well?' he demanded, 'is it true?'

Slowly reactions came; a grunt of confirmation was followed by the nodding heads and words to the affirmative.

'In that case,' the Reverend snarled, 'who is upstairs?' without so much as a pause for breath he shot through the door leading to the staircase. As he climbed he could hear the sounds of his wife and another, the sounds were unmistakable, they were emanating at the far end of the corridor. He raced to the door, it was locked. Crowman was instantly behind him coming to assist him, his bulky frame made short work of the door, it burst open, and both men fell into the room.

Beneath the covers of the bed two bodies writhed around, 'What in Gods name is going on?' the Vicar bellowed.

The two figures beneath the covers instantly stopped moving. The top edge of the sheet folded back to reveal the face of the vicars wife. A look of shock was on her face; her hair was tangled in knots

hanging on her shoulders and strewn across the pillow. She wanted to protest, but could not find any words on seeing her husband face, 'You whore.'

In a matter of seconds the irate clergyman stood by the side of the bed, his right hand was raised high above his head ready to administer a thrashing that would take his spouse to within an inch of her life, the other appendage grasped hold of the sheet ripping it off in one fell swoop. The image presented to him was not what his eyes had expected to see, his striking hand almost fell to his side so limp was the feeling that had overcome him. Beneath the sheets was Crowman, not Arthur, but Peg.

The vicar's wife cowered away from her husband only to see Arthur Crowman standing on the opposite side of the bed, fully clothed, her cheeks which were flushed with excitement before suddenly drained of all colour, she looked as white as a spirit. She saw, but could not believe. Out of the corner of her eye she briefly saw the naked body in the bed next to her, it was Peggy. A scream came from her lips. The noise was cut short by the falling hand of the vicar. The contact with her cheek was so ferocious that the bone cracked. Again and again the hand came down making contact with her. Once he was satisfied he turned his attention to the other woman. 'And as for you, you, you harlot.' He rounded the bed with an outstretched arm ready to grab the landlord's wife.

Arthur was still in shock. He did not know what to think or do. Never in his wildest imaginings would he ever have seen this. His reaction was somewhat different to the clergyman. Whereas the 'man of God' had hit out he felt all together deflated. Deep inside his stomach was in pain, the pain of a knife twisting, grabbing his organs and ripping them apart. Nausea was beginning to rise up into his head. He knew that the vicar had to be stopped before the wild man killed his wife. For all his strength Crowman was struck dumb. Peg pleaded with him to save her, all he could do was stand leaning against the wall, shoulders drooping and staring at the sight in front of his eyes.

Downstairs in the bar everyone listened to the goings on upstairs in silence. Not a word was uttered or mouthful of ale consumed as at first they heard shouts of anger followed by a banging and more shouting. Cries of help were heard by several people descending the stairs, the sound echoing through the silent pub. The crimson face clergyman was first to appear in the door that led to the stairs. He was walking almost backwards as he passed, soon it was clear why. In his hands was a main of black hair, a second later Peg

appeared at the door being dragged by the hair? Dressed in what looked like some kind of night shirt she half walked half crawled as the vicar yanked at her long hair. All waited in silence once again, no sign of Crowman or to the other person; the vicar's wife presumably, why was that?

As the God fearing cleric dragged the woman across to the church he shouted many insults and proclamations of what would happen to her in the next world. 'Satan's demons will have you for all eternity, there will be no depravity which you will be spared' he shouted, 'my God, how can such women walk this earth, Lord?' he yelled towards the sky before returning to the bruised and battered woman at his feet, 'you whore?'

By the time the pair reached the main door of the church the vicar was exhausted, still he had work to do. Blood wept from the body of the woman on the ground, her feet, knees, hands and elbows all points which had come into contact with the rough gravel road. Large clumps of hair had come out of her scalp where it had been pulled, roots and all. She lay on her side, face to face with the gravel path. The night shirt she wore was ripped and tattered, much of her dignity now gone.

'You have forsaken all your Christian rights,' he said bitterly as he looked down on her, 'you are now the property of the Devil' he removed the cord from his robes and gripped it tightly in his hands. Peg looked up, she thought that he was going to strangle her with it, but he didn't. That only left one thing, she thought he was going to tie her up and have his way with her before he finally killed her. She tensed every muscle in her body making it as hard as possible for him to manipulate her. He grabbed a tight hold of one of her blooded ankles attached the rope as tightly as he could around it. The rope burnt as it dug into her already broken skin. His hand took hold of the other foot; she was not going to give in without a fight. Using the small amount of strength she still had her leg kicked out at him firstly to his body then to his head. She was too weak to exert any real force. In a moment he had bound both feet together, she lay helpless and vulnerable on the ground."

Sarah had a sickening feeling in her stomach. She had an awful felling that she knew what was coming next. No doubt the woman would have been left on the ground, for all the men folk of the village to molest in what ever manner they felt suitable in punishment. The thought that it actually happened here, well across the road. Sarah however was wrong.

“Slowly out of the pub the villagers appeared one by one, each craning their necks to see what exactly was happening in the church yard. The woman, who most presumed was the landlord’s wife, Peg was on the ground at the vicar’s feet. He seemed to be pacing around her shouting all manner of unholy odes. Occasionally he would lift his hands towards the heavens and plead directly with God before once again casting aspersions upon the woman.

The vicar, after one last reach to the skies disappeared in to the innards of the church. Seeing his leaving as a chance to advance, the crowd outside the pub moved across the road, slowly. None knew exactly what was happening. Seeing the vicar come forth once more into the sunlight all sought a place to view, out of sight of the rampaging cleric. In his hand was a bottle, he emptied a large amount into his hand before throwing it on the fallen woman, while carrying out the act he read passages from the Bible, ‘It’s a exorcism’ said the Verger in a hushed tone, ‘he’s trying to remove the Devil from her.’

‘Will you renounce Satan?’ they heard him call. They heard no answer come. That was hardly surprising, the events happening were some way off and the breeze stifled the sound. If any reply of repentance had been forthcoming then none heard. ‘My Lord was crucified for us, when I see the likes of you I think why did he put himself through so much pain?’ he lifted her feet and pushed her against the door. Peggy’s head drooped down; she could hardly lift it she was in so much pain. ‘You are now in my power, I want you to know how it feels, make you feel like my wife felt did when you...’ his voice trailed off, he could not bring himself to think of the incident in which he had found them. He held the two lapels of the night shirt in his fists and started to rip them apart, the garment started to tear, but then he stopped; no, ‘I’m not an animal.’ He said pinning her back against the door.

She had no idea what would happen now, was he going to show her mercy, she drifted in and out of consciousness. Her left arm had been stretched out; the vicar was holding her hand against the door, why?

The answer was not long in coming. A creasing bolt of pain shot through her mind and body, again and again the pain blinded her as the vicar drove a nail through her palm and into the oak door. Once it had been driven home he repeated the process on the other hand.

From her palms he could see blood flowing out, crimson rivers of life force running out of her. He drew the back of his wrist across his sweating brow, he too was covered in her blood, and a red stain



crossed his fingers. Exhaustion had come over him, dropping the hammer he slowly walked away leaving her there nailed to the door. The villagers could do nothing but watch, open mouthed, but they dare not do anything. Remember I told you that people were scared of the church then and would never take a stand against it.”

“That is awful.” Sarah exclaimed, “Nailing her to the church door just for a bit of lessa action?”

“If it’s true,” Maddie interrupted, “then that tops any story I’ve heard.”

“It’s true enough young lady, but I haven’t finished as yet.”

“Do you want a drink Mr..?” Lee asked.

“Ey, I would lad, Stout.”

Now with a fresh pint in front of him he proceeded to recount the final instalment.

“It got dark later that night, a hot summers day had turned into a humid summer night. Even though the clock had struck eleven some time ago the land was not shrouded in darkness. The western sky was still bright, orange and yellow mist filled the sky. Not a song bird was about in the village. All the locals had not dared set foot out of their homes all evening, no one wanted to come across the vicar, someone though was around.

The wooden gate which bordered the church yard banged shut. A solid dark figure walked up to the main door. The lifeless body of a woman still hung on it. The vicar looked at the corpse with distain. ‘It would seem judgment has been carried out. I hope you are now in hell, burning and in pain whore.’

‘Shh,’ a voice whispered, it had come from his rear. Quickly he spun around to see who was with him. Frantically he looked, but could see no one. He could hear some thing, the sound of a distant laugh. It mocked, the laugh was mocking him. In his hands he held the Holy Bible, he grasped it tightly, ‘burn in hell,’ he sneered through clenched teeth.

‘What do you know of Hell?’ said a voice behind him.

He jumped around and in shock dropping the book as he did. Before him stood a woman in a night dress just as Peggy Crowman had worn, was wearing. In fact it was her, standing there in front of him, Peggy Crowman, the woman he had dragged across the road and nailed to the church, there in front of him. She was unblemished from the trials of earlier that day; neither a mark nor scratch was on her body, the night shirt she wore was without the rip he himself had put there.

‘What do you know of hell?’ she asked once again.

‘No, no you’re dead.’ Without turning he pointed towards the church door, he dare not turn around to face the corpse, not when it standing in front of him.

‘You cannot kill me; I am the bringer of the darkness and light.’ She smiled.

The bringer of light that referred to one name and one name only, ‘Lucifer’. His left hand reached up toward his neck where a small wooden crucifix hung on a leather chord. Finding it his hand held it tightly.

‘Ha,’ she laughed, ‘do you think I’m in league with the Devil, oh you have missed the meaning of it all. You should embrace life not stop people from enjoying it. Let me tell you now, I am a being, God’s creation that works with the earth, not against its natural course as you.’ She paused and drew a breath.

‘I send you into the darkness,’ she raised her arms above her head and smiled.

He could do nothing, helpless he watched. His faith would stand tall against any servant of Satan, of that he was most confident. Both hands now clasped the symbol of his worship which hung around his neck, knuckles white with fear, eyes wide he watched her. Pain began to pass over him in great waves. From his two tightly clenched fists blood began to bubble out from in between his fingers, ‘arr,’ he let out a gasping scream, both his hands opened in front of his eyes, both were covered in blood to such an extent that he could not see any wound, defiantly he chastised her again, ‘No, no I forbid you to cause me pain, return to where you came, in the name of the one true God.’

She simply smiled in defiance.

That evil smile was the thing that scared him the most; deep down in her eyes he could see pure evil. Finally he turned to see the door where earlier he had given the woman her punishment. The door was empty now, no sign of the events of that afternoon.

The last thing he ever saw was her face. The nails in his hands were the worst type of agony. His whole body was suspended on those two points; he truly was taking the full burden himself. To relieve the pain he pushed his feet down in an attempt to support his frame. It was then that a second string of agony rushed through his already mangled body, a nail had been put through his ankles. He had not done that to her, why had she needed to cause him more pain than

this. 'It's not the first time someone has tried to silence me,' she began, 'and it won't be the last.'

In his mind a vision of that afternoon flooded back to him, driving the nail through the woman's hand, then the other and finally standing back to look upon the devilish woman, the figure though was not that of Peg Crowman, but his own wife. Had he in his rage crucified his own beloved wife?

'Now you see.' Her voice was cold and short.

The vicar's face twisted in agony, he screwed his eyes up tightly, a natural reaction against the pain, when he opened them again she was gone. He was not sure how long had past, or whether he was conscious all the time. She had left him there, alone to die.

In the pub Arthur Crowman sat with two friends at one end of a rough wooden table. A single candle sat in the centre of the table. Each one of the three had a mug of ale in front of him, all sat in silence, none knew quite what to say in regard to the events of that awful day. Even if any one of them had a valid point to give, none wanted to air it. For many minutes, silence had hung over the room. The only sound was the pint mugs being placed back down onto the table. 'Do you want another?' Crowman asked one of the other two men who had that moment downed the dregs of his beer.

His friend didn't know what to say, 'Please,' was all he could manage, at least that was polite.

As Crowman poured out three more mugs of ale, the sound of someone knocking on the front door caught all of their attentions. The two seated drinkers looked at one another; their wide open eyes flickered in the candlelight.

Arthur paused for a moment, holding the jug steadily as he waited. As he put the jug back down on the bar the knock came once again. 'We're closed,' he yelled in a rough, but emotional voice, the days events had obviously taken its toll on him.

A moment of silence passed without event, though it was no more than half a dozen seconds the eerie silence seemed to last an eternity. A rattle on the door came once more. Something this time was different; the initial sound had come from the front door, now it was the internal door being knocked upon. Each man froze to the spot, the knocking suddenly became manic, was a mad man on the other side of the door, it could only be one person; the vicar.

The door banged open, each man watched too petrified to move. The doorway was completely in darkness, none could see who had opened it, 'Arthur,' out of the darkness came a soft voice. The

first impression of the assembled was that it was not unlike the vicars wife, Arthur Crowman knew different.

‘Peg?’ he said into the darkness.

The two seated men felt the distinct urge at that point to leave. They were here to offer support and that is what he would get. On the realisation of the true identity of the caller, a woman who by rights should be dead they both decided that their first instinct was the correct one.

Arthur sat down in the same place he had occupied for most of that evening. In front of him were the two departed men drinks resting untouched ‘Drink?’ he offered her pushing one of them over the rough wooden table towards her. His wife was still standing in the shadows, on hearing the offer she stepped out of the darkness into the flickering light. The vision he saw before him came as somewhat of a surprise. Peggy Crowman looked as young, fresh faced and alive as she had on the day they first met. She still wore the night shirt which she had on when the vicar consumed with rage took her out. The dress showed no signs of a rip, tear or splash of blood. Slowly she walked over to him and sat down opposite.

‘You look at me with disbelief?’ she said.

‘Why shouldn’t I?’ of course he did, though he had not seen it, word had got back to him about the events that followed the breaking down of the bedroom door. If those reports were accurate then how on earth or in heaven for that matter was she sitting opposite him right now?

‘You know what happened?’

‘I have been told.’ Crowman's voice was calm, he didn’t know how to speak to her, so many emotions ran through his body he couldn’t pick any one prominent feeling.

‘You were not there?’

‘No it was witnessed though.’

She could not trick him into thinking that the actual sequence of events were any different to the facts reported back to him.

‘Was it? You know, people never see the actual events the same as each other.’

‘They saw, they all saw you being...’ his voice broke off, too much emotion was coursing through him, ‘...and I saw you in the room, I saw you being dragged out by the hair.’

‘You didn’t try and stop him?’ it was more of a statement than a question. Her tone indicated a sense of forgiveness for his lack of concern for her. The truth of it was that he thought his wife deserved

what happened to her, such acts were Devilry. ‘What did you do once I had been taken out?’

Arthur looked blankly into the darkness, ‘Sat,’ he said, ‘just sat and did nothing.’ He remembered the numbness as he sat there in the bedroom in between the vicar’s wife and the open door. He tried to stand, but fell against the wall and slid downward toward the floor not coming to rest until his head rested on his knees. On the bed was still the unconscious body of the other women. After that his memory was a little blurred. He must have passed out at some point. Time elapsed uncontrollably; he could not remember the church clock striking or the shadows lengthening. When he came once more to his senses he helped the woman out of the building and to safety before her husband could return for her. How long he was out he could not tell, it must have been some time.

Arthur recounted the story to his wife. As he talked her attention was captivated by his voice. Even in the light of all those dreadful events, his first thought was to help the poor woman before anymore punishment could befall her. It warmed her heart to hear him speak the tale. Though he didn’t realise it, many more candles were burning in the room than had been previously. Had his tones warmed more than his spouse’s heart? ‘It doesn’t matter what happened to me, I’m just an Inn Keeper, what I want to know,’ his voice raised, ‘is what happened?’

‘When?’ she answered as though the woman he thought he knew so well didn’t all together understand the question.

‘You!’ he shouted, ‘you being crucified, nailed against the church door. Look at you now sitting there; pristine, no sign of, of...’

‘I wasn’t there,’ the words were said in such an off hand manner that Arthur almost didn’t register them, ‘I spent the afternoon here with you.’ She waited for a reply.

‘You were out there, they all saw you.’ He paused to contemplate the repercussions of her claim, ‘I heard the screams, your screams...’

‘What you heard, my dear husband were the screams of the vicar nailing his own wife to the church door, the depraved creature that she was.’

‘What, no...’ how could it have been, even though they had been caught in medio coitum the clergyman he knew so well would not have perpetrated such an act on any fellow man, let alone his own wife.

‘You thought it was me who died this afternoon?’

‘Yes.’

‘You were not alone. The vicar also thought that it was I who he pinned against the hard wooden door then rammed the nails through my hands.’ as she spoke the thumbs of her left hand rubbed the palm of the right. ‘Little did he know that it was his wife’s hands?’

‘But...?’ his disbelief was growing, more and more questions were raised as she spoke, how had the vicar’s wife come to be where Peg had been seen?

‘She was seeing the images of Morgana.’ She told him in way of explanation, not that he understood. The name to him was familiar. Thinking back to his classroom days a distant memory of the authoritarian legends came floating through his mind. ‘He was seeing me through eyes not his own, in the same way his wife could see you as I used her for my own pleasure. It is an easy illusion to play on someone; all that is needed is the correct roots and a little suggestion. I have done it many times before in many different places.’

It took Arthur a little time for this to register on his brain. What was she trying to tell him? The harder he tried to string the facts together the harder it became, ‘Roots?’

‘Yes, official anis santicular to start with is an excellent relaxant, then one or two other specialised leaves.’

‘This sounds to me like...’ No one nowadays though believes in such things; three hundred years ago perhaps such an act would appear as Devilry.

‘Yes,’ she interrupted, ‘Witchcraft, I believe you were about to say.’

‘It was you,’ enlightenment had come to him, ‘You was the one who abused the women in Brough and Beverly, you used me to mask your goings on. All those poor women thought I’d...’ he tried to stand but couldn’t. ‘What trouble have you caused over the years, and all at my expense?’

‘The vicar knew, I don’t know how, but he knew. Perhaps he and someone from Wawne had talked? So I had to silence him.’

‘Wawne, the verger he knew didn’t he, that’s why he wouldn’t give us a roof for the night.’

‘It couldn’t have been the verger, he’s dead.’ She smiled recalling that last Christmas Eve. ‘The vicar was punished for nailing his wife against the door; I decided that he should undergo the same fate. So now he hangs there on his own church door instead of her. She is sleeping, waiting.’ She drank the mug of ale which sat before her then slammed it back down. After wiping the remnants of the beer

from her mouth she looked deep into his eyes. They were a deep brown colour, dark like deep black holes in a snow driven meadow. ‘He wasn’t the first I have had to despatch and he won’t be the last. Many, many years ago there was a man called Hopkins, I followed him for two hundred miles before we met. All the way through Lincolnshire then here in this county, he won that battle. I was imprisoned by him for so long, how long I don’t remember. I lost count how many times the snows came; how many times the earth sprouted buds. The leaves fell and the snows came again, so many times did the cycle turn. Bewitched, in the form of a tree, I waited until a young man came along looking for firewood. The tree he cut down was my bonds.’

‘That was me.’ He hissed. His mind recalled the day he had gone looking for firewood in the midst of winter. His searches led him to Peggy Farrow Lane.

‘It was. So as you can see, if Mathew Hopkins the witch finder general could not end my existence, a vicar from a country church had no chance.’

‘Mathew Hopkins?’ he knew the name, of course the man who was responsible for the hanging of over two hundred witches.

‘The man who murdered my own kind will be revenged.’ Her eyes had changed; they were no longer deep and dark but had turned to a bright shade of yellow. A cat light slit had replaced the round pupil. ‘As for you my dear husband,’ the tone of her voice had an edge, a harshness to it, almost spiteful. Then it changed once again, softening to a more loving tone, ‘You have always stood by me no matter what, for that I thank you. Unfortunately you know now who I am and that cannot be allowed.’ She thought for several moments. ‘No matter how much I know it to be wrong I cannot send you to your death, you will live as long as I do. You can watch over the land and wait for your deliverance.’”

“Is that it?” Maddie asked in disbelief, she thought she had the makings of an excellent novel.

“Ey, that’s it young lady, that story is well known in this village among the older ones. They all heard it from their father and fore fathers. It’s been passed down you see over the generations. The young ‘uns today have no interest so I’m giving it to you to keep alive and I can see you already have.”

What did he mean by that? She thought to herself. What happened next? What happened to Arthur Crowman and his wife? It

was then she made the connection, the Crowman's wife, Peg, was she Peggy Farrow, the same Peggy Farrow who was in her story, the resemblance was exact.

“Come on,” the old man said standing and stretching his back, “oh, excuse me, my old back. That’s what you get with being in the same place for too long. Leave ya’ drinks ‘ere, I’ll tek ya’ over to the church where ‘ya can see the door. The holes are still in it.”

The sun was low in the sky and much larger than it had been earlier. The sky to the west was lined with deep reds and oranges. The rays of the burning ball of fire were still warm and blinding, Sarah squinted as she looked left to cross the road. The old man who was to be their guide in the church grounds was already half way across. In the darkness of the pub he had appeared to be old and frail and seeing him now, in what was left of the daylight, she could see he was. Sarah though not any expert at putting an age to people estimated that he must be eighty if a day. The telling of the tale must have fortified him in someway because now he almost skipped across the road heading toward the lych gate. Next to the gate was a telephone box painted a light shade of cream. All boxes in and around Hull were this colour, a red box in Hull was as rare as a police box. Sarah noticed the box, why were phone boxes on the street these days, most people owned mobile phones; maybe the signal in this part of town was particularly poor.

For someone of Sarah’s generation who had always owned a mobile and a MP3 player the thought of having a phone for public use seemed strange. “Here we are then, this is where it happened, right here.” He said pointing at the heavy old oak doors.

The church yard was covered in heavy foliage of varying kinds. Large horse chestnut trees dominated; their canopies spreading out over the moss covered headstones. Stones that told of many lives lived in and around these parts over the past two to three hundred years. Many thick bushes also circled the small church; the effect of all the greenery was that of a damper; sound didn’t penetrate the confines of the holy ground. This truly was a sanctuary away from the outside world.

Maddie didn’t notice but Sarah did though. The busy bustle of traffic suddenly seemed far away, Lee occupied himself by reading the head stones which lined the path from the gate to where the old man stood. He still looked familiar to both of the women, though neither said anything to one another. His presence to them was



strange enough as it was. He stood at the door, leaning on his stick, patiently waiting for the three of his students to come to order.

“So,” he began, “this is where that poor woman was nailed to the door.” He paused and ran his hand up the wooden door until the second finger of his right hand found what it sought, “Ah, here it is.” Dropping the finger slightly it revealed a square hole; each side of the hole was approximately a quarter of an inch in width. “Do you see them?” he asked Maddie. His eyes were focusing on her and her alone. The manner in which his eyebrows raised half an inch indicated that he really wanted her to see.

“I do.” Maddie said in awe. The very fact that the holes from the old square nails existed proved the validity of the story. As she gazed at the small orifice she was stricken by a feeling of *deja-vu*, had she been here before? Of course she had, when she was a child. At the age of, well she wasn't exactly sure, around seven maybe, all the family were invited to the wedding of Maddie's Aunt Val. Though the memory of the actual ceremony had long passed into the archives of her mind, she could still recall the reception in the village hall. She could remember running in and out of the building, it must have been quite annoying for the people sitting in the area of the exit. Outside that afternoon it had been cold and misty. Most weddings were generally held in the summer months but the timing of this one she could not recall. The white cube lamp shade which hung over the main door was suspended from an old gas lamp fixture. On entering the hall she observed that the light was on, then later that afternoon it had been turned off. After doing a lap of the reception room and a quick look under the top table she ventured outside once again. The light had come on once again, was this some kind of magic? Did it know when the fog had descended? The thought that someone could have simply turned it on didn't cross her mind, a child could think of much better explanations for mysteries such as this.

Another memory, suppressed somewhere deep within her, surfaced. There was something about the door which started memories and the memories were not happy, but painful.

“You remembered.” Hissed the old man quietly.

“Yes.” Maddie said. The world beyond the churchyard now seemed isolated; an intense feeling had crippled her now. Maddie desperately tried to grasp the missing link in her mind.

“My wife, Peg, she had a daughter. In her family there was only a single girl born in each generation. From her down through the years. Tell me, do you have any brothers or sisters?”

The answer was no, she never replied. There was no need to.

“And you, you have a single daughter?” he looked over at Sarah who was standing with Lee reading the headstones.

Maddie’s first reaction was panic, how did he know about Sarah? Her eyes though had already betrayed her. “Oh no Sarah’s not my...” she knew the protest was pointless.

“She looks like her father.” He paused, waiting for a reaction. None was forthcoming. “Does he know?”

“No, he thinks I lost the child in pregnancy. He left me you see, went off and joined the army.” Suddenly Maddie changed tack. Who was he to tell her such things and expect her to tell him the things she held most dear to her. It was then it struck her, a lorry hitting her would have caused less of a reaction, “Wait a minute, just who are you?”

“Just a storyteller. The tale I told you across the road in the pub was not one from folk law, they were actual events. You wanted to know how the story ended, well I know. In fact it hasn’t come to a conclusion yet?”

Arthur Crowman vanished along with his wife for the third time. On this occasion though they didn’t resurface. Peggy Crowman or to give her real name, Peggy Farrow, moved back to one of her more recent homes, up over the wolds in Welton. Arthur who now knew of her true identity had to die but she couldn’t bring herself to do it. She felt some kind of love for him. In all the years she had lived with him he had protected her when the mob turned on them, she did not kill him.

Instead he now stands high on the wolds dressed in Hessian sacks and a brown suit scaring birds. She thought that being called Crowman he should spend the rest of eternity scaring birds. He still stands there now waiting for her to return and set him free,”

“And did she?” Maddie asked quietly.

“You did.”

“What?” her voice was almost a whisper; she had completely lost the thread of what he was saying.

“She had a daughter, I mentioned that a little time ago, that girl also followed the pattern and gave birth to a single girl. Finally, some generations later you came along and have kept the ancestral line going,” he gestured over to Sarah. “Maybe you had some kind of memory left over from those days gone by which made you make this journey, you were the link that set me free.”

“Are you..?”

“Yes.”

“You were in the Buccaneer.” She recalled

“And other places along the way.”

“Maddie’s face dropped turning a pale opaque colour, “Last night, I dreamt...”

“That will have been Peg. She may be long dead, but her spirit still walks this Earth. I come across her from time to time, she no longer sees me though, such a shame. I could have had my imprisonment ended a long time since.”

Maddie suddenly jumped in shock as she felt a hand rest on her shoulder. Quickly she sprung around expecting to see Peggy standing there; she was confronted though by Lee’s beaming smile. “Are we done?” he asked, thinking about his half pint of stout still languishing in the pub.

“No, I want to hear the end of this great ghost story our friend is telling me.”

“But he’s gone.” Lee observed, several minutes ago. He had walked back over the road toward the Ship Inn. Lee presumed it must be the sun effecting Maddie, she did look very red.

As Lee walked off toward the gate, Maddie turned to see an empty space where the man had stood, Arthur Crowman had left, his story now told.

As the trio entered the front door of the pub, Maddie turned back to take one last look at the church; the graveyard was empty. Only a large black rook watched her, its black eyes intently focused on the woman entering the pub. Maddie saw it and smiled.

The eldest of the two women didn’t utter a word for some considerable time, her cup of tea sat in front of her going cold. Sarah and Lee chatted and drank perpetually for the next hour; the topic of conversation didn’t penetrate Maddie’s thoughts. She could not help but think of the revelations that had recently unfolded. If the old man was right, then she was the descendent of a witch. A woman who took on Mathew Hopkins and could cause illusions. The only problem was that the man she had received the information from had been dead for two hundred years. Had the sun got to her?

“Taxi for Burdin?” a voice called from the door.

“Come on, that’s us.” Sarah said tapping Maddie on the arm.

“Sorry?” Maddie replied.

“I couldn’t be doing with buses and trains so I rang for a taxi.”

Maddie was so glad; she too wasn't relishing the prospect of the journey back.

Moments later the two women sat in the back of the car as the driver opened his door, "Where to Mate?" he asked Lee who was standing on the kerb edge.

"Brough, mate." he called back.

The rear window rolled down, framed within it was Sarah's tanned face, "Are you getting in or what?" she asked him; becoming slightly impatient.

"Nar", he said, "I think I'll run back."

# XV



## Ten Months Later

The house which Sarah and Luke had made their home was not on such a grand scale as Maddie's or Lee's but was never the less furnished with excellent style and taste. Laminate flooring stretched throughout the ground floor from back to front. In the kitchen the smell of garlic bread and pizza drifted out of the oven. All was calm now in that room, the trays containing the finger buffet snacks were now unwrapped and carried through into the dining area where the celebrations were continuing.

Two hours ago, the sign of the cross had been marked on a baby's forehead, a baby whose appearance was unexpected. The infant girl would spend most of the following afternoon being passed from one friend or relation to another. Sarah had never seen so many family members gathered together in one place. Many she did not recognise, she presumed that they must be on Luke's side.

Outside on the patio was a crowd of older relations muttering away to one another, each of them a glass in hand? Sarah watched them from the relative quiet of the kitchen where Maddie joined her, "Are you ok?" she asked.

"Oh yes, she replied, "Just a bit..." Sarah was feeling quite emotional, today was a day that should never have happened, but she was so thankful it had.

"She looks just like you." Maddie told her at a loss for anything else to say.

"She does doesn't she. I can't see any of Luke in her." Sarah sounded concerned, would people think that her partner was not the father? "It's the strangest thing though; she has eyes just like yours?"

At first Maddie dismissed the observation with an off hand gesture, then she recalled the words she had been told on that summer's evening last year. The descendants from which she and Sarah allegedly came always had a single daughter.

Maddie looked out into the garden where the three elderly guests sat.

Outside the elderly gathering sat around the plastic patio table, their conversation was basically about days gone by. "I never go out at night these days, you know." Said Sarah's aunt.

"No," Uncle Bill added, "Too many gangs of young 'uns standing around on street corners for me."

"I know it's an old fashioned view, but," it was Luke's grandfather who joined the conversation with the old chestnut which

many of his conversations boiled down to, “these lot need a spell in the army, conscription. It never did us any harm, did it?” a ripple of acknowledgment ran around the table, “What do you think Arthur?”

The newcomer sat down on a free garden seat and put his glass of beer down on the table, he wore an old brown pin striped suit. As he sat down one or two of the elderly guests noticed that he had several pieces of straw stuck to his trousers. “Oh I don’t know; I’ve known much worse than the young lads these days.” Replied Peggy Crowman.

FINI



Neil Wesson started writing at the age of 30. Starting on screen and stage plays he soon progressed onto short stories as well as longer works.

As well as writing Neil is a keen sports fan and an accomplished musician, and hat wearer.

*Picture taken at the Scarborough Cricket festival, 2006. c.*

Contact the author...

[wes@wes.karoo.co.uk](mailto:wes@wes.karoo.co.uk)

or check out Neils web page...

[www.neilwesson.spaces.live.com](http://www.neilwesson.spaces.live.com)



