

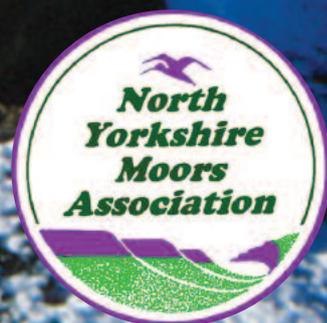
VOICE OF THE MOORS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS ASSOCIATION (NYMA)

ISSUE 126

WINTER 2016

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THE COMMON OR SOFT RUSH – *Juncus effusus*.

While we were sitting high on the Moors having a coffee break during the August NYMA walk, one of the group idly pulled some rush stems and started weaving them into a basket, and I realised that I had not written about this probably most widespread of our moorland plants, the common or soft rush, *Juncus effusus*. It is so typical and commonplace on damp moorland, fields, woods and verges, in fact anywhere un-drained, waterlogged and acidic, that we tend to overlook it although it is visible all year round.

It is a perennial with long tufts of smooth, glossy, light green, tubular, pith filled stems up to a metre or more tall with short sheath like leaves to the base. The loose clusters of light yellow/brown flowers with six similar sepals/petals are borne to one side of the stem with a straight, long bract, often brown tipped, above it.

Several other *Juncus* species occur widely on the moors so identification can be difficult. Two other tall ones have their flower clusters similarly placed to the side of their long stems, *J.conglomeratus* or compact rush and *J.inflexus* or hard rush. The compact rush is often found with the common rush but usually has a more compact flower cluster with the bract immediately above it bent at an angle, its stems are darker green, ridged and rough and it tends to prefer more fertile land. The hard rush has a laxer flower cluster and a bract often bent over at the very tip with hard, ridged, grey/green stems that have their pith interrupted by cross divisions, easily felt by running the hand down them, and it prefers more alkaline soils.

The other common *Juncus* species have terminal flower clusters. *J.acutiflorus* or sharp flowered rush is pale flowered but equally as tall as the former ones, while *J.articulatus* or jointed rush is a little smaller with darker flowers and jointed, flatter, often floating leaves both preferring damp ponds, wet flushes and track sides. They can be easily confused and may hybridise. Smaller still is *J.squarrosus* or heath rush with stiff tufts of leaves and stems and the two ground hugging *J. bulbosus* or bulbous rush and *J. bufonius* or toad rush, both with very loosely branched flower heads, which all grow on wet tracks, ruts and gateways where they can withstand trampling.

There are a few other less common, small *Juncus* species, particularly near the coast and a number of woodrushes or *Luzula* species, which have broader, hairy leaves but also belong to the *Juncaceae* family.

The name *Juncus* means to bind or to tie, an indication of one of their widespread uses in the past. There are few common names other than 'rush' although locally they were also known as 'seaves', which has continued in some place names.

The stems could be plaited to make a rough sort of rope or woven into baskets, though of no great strength, and they were sometimes used for thatching. But more commonly they were strewn on floors, particularly in churches, often accompanied by sweet smelling herbs or used to upholster 'greenbeds' or 'jonquieres', sofas and benches. As they grew near wet places they were linked to purity and cleanliness and became a symbol of hospitality, shelter and protection, keeping rooms fresh and welcoming, with rush beds being particularly used for the sick.

The rushes were changed each year with great ceremony, especially in churches. A rush bearing procession circling the village still takes place in Grasmere in early August with traditional rush 'shapes' and bundles. These woven shapes varied from place to place and were used as symbols of protection. In Ireland the



stems were pulled (never cut) on St. Brigid's Eve, 31st of January and woven into the legendary

St, Brigid's Cross which were next day hung in houses and animal sheds to ensure their safe keeping. This ability of the stems to be easily plaited or woven was also used by children to make dolls, games and toys as well a necklaces and bracelets, often threaded with daisy heads.

But the most important use for the common rush was for illumination. The pith could, with skill, be extracted in long lengths, this tedious occupation usually being performed by the young, infirm or elderly. The pith is cellular and highly absorbent and was soaked in suet or lard, usually waste animal fat from cooking, with bees wax added if available, to make rush tapers. These rush lights were once the main source of lighting in cottages, candles being expensive, but they burned very brightly, gave a clean, smoke free flame and did not drip, so could be safely carried.

Rushes were not much used in folk medicine but sometimes they were burnt and the ash mixed into a cream to use on skin conditions such as ringworm and shingles, to prevent scarring.

With this great dependency on rushes in the past in the poorer, isolated homes for lighting, thatching, carpeting, bedding and upholstery, it is of no surprise that their growth and spread would have been limited and in fact they were often protected from over cutting. So when we grumble of their increased spread on damp moorland and fields, perhaps we should re-think to find new uses for them as is being done with bracken, now being trialled to make peat-free compost and fuel 'brickettes' for burning on fires, both saving other natural resources.

Anne Press



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FUTURE ACTIVITIES FOR NYMA MEMBERS



NYMA members reach the summit

In addition to our regular walks programme, we're introducing a series of visits for members next year on other aspects of the North York Moors. These will include:

- A visit to a grouse moor to learn about how management ensures that heather and other flora - and the wildlife that depend on them - continue to flourish.
- An introduction to 'This Exploited Land', a major Lottery-funded Landscape Partnership initiative, at one of the beautiful locations in the National Park covered by the project.
- A tour of a Georgian mansion

near York with a private collection of paintings by the Staithes Group of artists, who were part of the British Impressionist movement in the late 19th century.

- A guided walk around a National Trust hill-farm in a remote valley where the occupants live and work using power generated on-site – they have to, since they are too remote to connect to the National Grid!
- A 'Fungal Foray' with local mycologists to learn about the often overlooked mushrooms and other fungi of our woods.

Dates for these visits will be circulated in the next edition of 'Voice of the Moors' and via our e-newsletter - please send our Secretary, Janet Cochrane, your email address if you haven't already done so, on janetcochrane55@gmail.com .

Cover: White cross or Fat Betty – Photo Ian Carstairs

www.north-yorkshire-moors.org.uk



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

NPS CONFERENCE 2016



The 2016 National Park's Societies Conference was hosted by The Broads Society and held at Belsey Bridge Conference Centre, near Bungay. There was a packed programme of meetings, field study visits and presentations. Friday evening commenced with the twice yearly meeting of the Societies chief executives and chairs organised by CNP. This was followed by a drinks reception celebrating CNP's 80th Birthday and a welcome by the president of the Broads Society prior to the first conference dinner. Friday's programme ended with a presentation by Mark Cocker author and conservationist. Saturday was taken up by study visits with a choice of two programmes. Some of us chose to go on a river trip to Waveney River Centre followed in the afternoon by a visit to Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve. The Waveney River Centre is a highly successful tourist venture focussed on river trips and a range of holiday accommodation units. Lunch was provided and we had two presentations, the first by the owner James Knight who described how the river centre has developed and its links with the adjacent nature reserve. The second presentation was by Matt Gooch the warden of the Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve who was also our guide for the afternoon visit. The reserve was reached by crossing the river Waveney on a novel custom built ferry boat operated by the River Centre. After an interesting walk through the Reserve we returned by bus to Belsey Bridge. The second conference dinner was followed with a lively presentation by Richard Starling on Reed Bed Management which is such an important and controversial area of management in the Broads. Completing the conference on Sunday there was number of presentations including a very well presented Broads Authority look at a "Climate Change Adaptation Plan" given by Simon Hooton and a particularly interesting presentation by Henry Cator on Farming in the Broads.

Congratulations to the Broads Society for an interesting look at the Broads and for such a well organised conference. Also thank you to Peter Horsley for his welcome taxi service to and from Norwich Station. Next year the annual conference will be hosted by the Friends of the New Forest- New Forest Association as part of their 150th anniversary celebration. It will be held at the Balmer Lawn Hotel Brockenhurst on Thursday 12th –Saturday 14th October.

NEW GREEN LANES ALLIANCE

A new group has been formed to try and reverse the appalling damage which is being inflicted on the "Green Lanes" of the North Yorkshire

Moors by off-roading vehicles. Following the model set up in the Yorkshire Dales some years ago it is called The North York Moors Green Lanes Alliance (NYMGLA). A recent television news item highlighted the extent of the damage done to Coleson Bank which runs from Battersby to the Cleveland Way. It is hoped that this group supported by NYMA will put sufficient pressure on the North Yorkshire County Council Highways Department to act more effectively by imposing transport regulation orders banning motorised vehicles from the many "Green Lanes" that are presently under threat from this activity. What is clearly needed is a change in legislation to strengthen or change existing laws in order to make it less costly and easier for responsible authorities to impose bans on off-roading vehicles which cause so much damage at the expense of all other users.



Coleson Bank

SIRIUS MINERALS PLC

Sirius Minerals have announced details of the phase1 financing package which is aimed at covering the cost of starting construction on the mine shafts and surface structures at Doves Nest Farm and the 37 Km mineral transport tunnel from Doves Nest Farm to Teesside. The announcement made on the 2nd November follows a previous announcement on October 25th of a Royalty Financing Agreement with a subsidiary company of Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd of Australia. The subsidiary company called Hancock British Holdings Ltd was incorporated on the 13th October 2016 less than two weeks before the announcement of the Royalty Finance Agreement.

The financing for phase 1 takes the form of a Placing offer and a Convertible Bond Offering together with the Hancock deal which only provides funding after production has commenced. The Bonds are to be issued by Sirius Minerals Finance Ltd a subsidiary company set up in 2013 in Jersey and incorporated under Jersey law. Phase 1 funding is expected to raise the \$1.63 billion for the first part of construction with a further \$ 1.8 billion for the Harbour development still to be arranged.

In the overview in the regulated news statement, Sirius say they intend to achieve production from the mine by the end of 2021 but given that construction at the mine sites is not likely to start until the middle of 2017 this means the construction of the mine, the tunnel and the harbour facilities will have to be completed in less than four

years which is highly unlikely. The claim in the RNS that they intend to eventually increase production to 20 million tonnes per annum as well as complete additional infrastructure will require new planning permission.

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY STUDY

The study undertaken by Lynn Crowe, Professor of Environmental Management, which was triggered by the York Potash Ltd mining proposal in our National Park will be launched at the beginning of December. The research into major development both within and on the boundaries of National Parks was commissioned jointly by The Campaign for National Parks, The Campaign for the Protection of

Rural England and The National Trust. The findings of the study will be examined at a seminar following the launch on December 5th.

A BLAZE OF AUTUMN SUNSHINE

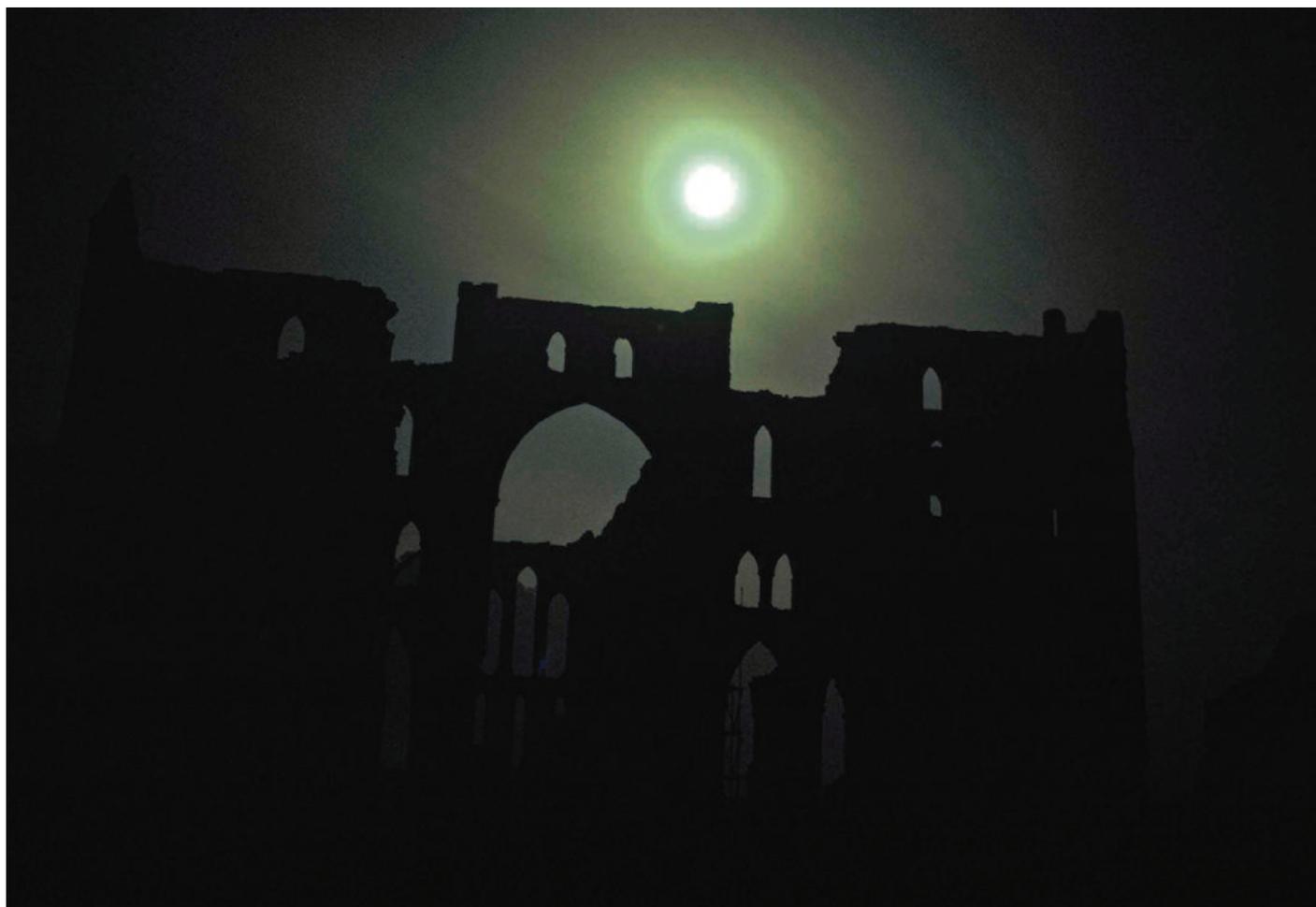
This heading borrowed from the title of Tony Benn's last diary is also fitting for the welcome extension of summer weather into September with temperatures of over 20°C and only a few days with recorded rainfall. With a favourable spring earlier in the year, fruit has been abundant and the autumn a magnificent blaze of colour. On this pleasant note I wish all our members a Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Tom Chadwick



PRESIDENT'S PIECE

A MID-WINTER'S TALE



TO MY MIND, nothing chimes so precisely with the vision of the English Countryside at its very best, than the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey. Tucked into a glorious wooded valley, their massive presence defies us not to stop and contemplate the people who once lived here and the lives they led.

While today, we can only imagine, never actually really know, what it was like when the bells of Rievaulx echoed around the hills and the monks and lay-brothers followed the daily religious cycle in its precincts, there are still times when we can get a little closer to how it

felt to be here centuries ago; at a time when there were no neatly mown lawns and visitor facilities; no constant drone of the internal combustion engine or aeroplanes in the sky; no power saws or strimmers, chain saws or lawn mowers on a Sunday.

That time is at night.

In the blackness, the wind sounds the same; the owls sound the same; and the River Rye sounds the same. Night, a time when the stars and the moon look the same, and the wood-smoke wafting low in the valley smells the same, as they did to those who built and lived in the

monastery - and just once, I found myself in this half-way-back-world, an a misty mid-winter's night shortly before Christmas.

I'd been working on an AV show on the Monasteries of the Moors. Trying to tap into the atmosphere of long ago, it struck me that it would be wonderful to photograph the ancient, soaring shape of this once, and still relatively, remote place, in the moonlight.

I just love the night, and visiting in the dark seemed a compelling idea. I called English Heritage for permission, to find my request met with the needs of officialdom, permits, insurance and formal applications along with a degree of mild consternation.

"Look", I said, "we are all in this together for conservation, why don't I just 'jump the gate' and take responsibility for myself".

We agreed on this pragmatic approach. I would get on with it; no-one would be troubled and I needn't involve anyone who might over-complicate the arrangement.

A few days after, late in the evening, I drove up out of Helmsely with my wife Jan, then slowly down towards Rievaulx Village, turned into a side track and quickly switched off the lights and engine, so as not to alarm or attract attention.

We wrapped up warmly against the cold, walked silently past a couple of cottages, climbed over the back gate and across the centuries into the world of the Abbey. A misty moon silhouetted the great rectangular shape of the transepts, growing more distinct as our eyes adjusted to the darkness.

With me, I carried my cameras, a tripod, a tape recorder and treble recorder, which I once played at junior school. I'd brought the latter two items, as I had the idea that if I actually played and recorded a sound-track in the nave of the Monastery, it would gain a quality which would enhance the production I was preparing.

We stood still in the centre of the ruins. It was magical; not frightening at all, but gentle and calm as I thought of the passage of time, in this now empty shell and the dramatic events of the mid-1500s which brought a centuries-old way of life to an abrupt end.

I'm not really very good at playing a recorder, but with a bit of

practice I'd mastered a single tune. I'd decided to play the music to a 1960s song called 'Still I'm sad', by the Yardbirds. Its haunting flow seemed to reflect a sense of spirit, which if you are sensitive to such things, makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

Some of the song's lyrics are haunting too " ... *now I find the wind is blowing time into my heart* ... " has long struck a chord with me, or maybe I make too much of it, for when I listened to it recently, it doesn't now seem quite so good as I remembered it.

We stood for a while, soaking up the atmosphere and listening to a silence, broken only by the low rumbling of the river.

The prospect of starting to play my recorder seemed something of an intrusion into this timeless peace, when I switched on the tape recorder and hesitantly struck-up the first notes of my chosen tune.

What happened next, no-one could have predicted in a thousand years; from all around the ruins hundreds of doves and pigeons started cooing softly. When I hesitated, they hesitated, when I started they started. It wasn't eerie, just immensely powerful, gentle and peaceful. Were these the souls of the long-departed inhabitants of the monastery, come to join me in celebration of this extraordinary place, I wondered?

Sadly, I never did finish my piece, thinking it would not sound very good with birds calling in the background. But, how I wish I'd carried on and kept it, a lasting reminder of a very moving and unique moment.

My photography complete, Jan and I worked our way slowly back towards the gate. Looking over my shoulder the ruins again stood stark in silhouette. A few yards further and suddenly I could no longer see so well. Turning again, the mist had closed in, the moon had disappeared; all had descended into complete blackness – the night had engulfed the Abbey, as if it had never existed at all.

Season's Greeting to everyone. Ian.

You can listen to *Still I'm sad* at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=j2UNkb-8OjA> ed.

NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS ASSOCIATION CONSERVATION AWARD 2017

The North Yorkshire Moors Association (NYMA) invites applications from individuals, community groups or organisations for its biennial Conservation Award. Projects should further the objectives for which the National Park was designated, namely to conserve and enhance the natural and/or built environment of the North York Moors National Park.

The Conservation Award is made on a biennial basis alternating with NYMA's President's Award. It is jointly funded by the North York Moors National Park Authority and the North Yorkshire Moors Association. The award was first made in 1996 and has been awarded for a wide range of individual and community projects:

- 1996 Wildlife Management, Rosedale Intake, Danby
- 1998 Dale Head Farm, Tree Planting, Westerdale
- 1999 Farm Conservation, West Farm, Sleightholmedale
- 2000 Faceby Village Hall Project
- 2001 Community Woodland Project, Littlebeck
- 2003 Ice House Restoration, Wyekham
- 2007 Oak Tree Planting, Oakridge, Staithes
- 2009 Mortuary Chapel Restoration project, Egton
- 2011 Wildflower Meadow, Robin Hoods Bay
- 2013 Woodside River Corridor, River Esk, Castleton
- 2015 Kirby Trod Restoration Project

Applicants should give details of the objectives of the work, the person(s) involved and the progress to date - the project need not necessarily have been completed provided that tangible progress has been made. Entries should be submitted using an application form (details below) by 31 March 2017 and will be judged by representatives from NYMA and the National Park. An award of up to £500 will be made to the winning entry and presented on Saturday June 10th 2017 at the Annual General Meeting of NYMA. Where it is judged that two entries are of equal merit the award may be split between them.

For an application form and more details please contact the NYMA Secretary, Dr. Janet Cochrane, on: janetcochrane55@gmail.com or 07570 112010.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

REMINISCENCES OF LIFE ON A SMALL REMOTE HILL FARM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS IN THE HAMLET OF STAPE IN THE 1960S

IT IS PERHAPS the realisation that the years are flying by and I am fast approaching my three score years, and because I am now a proud grandmother, that I increasingly find myself wandering down memory lane and recalling and reliving my idyllic childhood spent on a small farm at Stape, a remote village within the North York Moors National Park. I remember these as the best of days. But in reality how good were those far-off times that I now look back on with great fondness?

HARSH LIFE?

By comparison to today's standards, we had few material possessions, virtually no real luxuries, and no spare money. Life at that time was harsh and unforgiving for small-time hill farmers struggling to wrest a precarious living from the land. This was in the days before any significant supportive grants and subsidies. Yet despite the so-called 'hard life' that we undoubtedly endured in those days, I feel we were in many ways more contented, freer, and certainly more community spirited. In short, we were happier.

HORSEPOWER

Probably my earliest childhood memory is that of running excitedly across the farmyard whenever I heard the sneck being lifted and the gate opened. My anticipated treat was to be lifted up onto Tidy's back to hitch a lift as the horse was taken back to the stable after the day's work. Tidy was our faithful carthorse, the last one we ever had on the farm, and although we had a little grey Ferguson tractor at that time, my granddad mainly used the mare. I can vividly remember the powerful animal; she was grey and white, as gentle as a lamb, a lovely animal. I was only about three or four years old when inexplicably we didn't have her anymore. I don't know if she was sold or if she went to the 'knacker's yard'. This period was really at the end of 'horse power' era on farms, the working animals had had their day and were steadily being superseded by the power of the internal combustion engine in the form of modern-day diesel tractors, wagons, and other machines. Nothing remains the same but something special was lost when the horses went.

FORESTRY COMMISSION

Our small farm belonged to my granddad until he handed it over to my dad when I was about six years old. We had a moor-stray attached to the farm, an area of rough open scrubland, until, that is, the Forestry Commission bought the piece of land to plant trees on.

BITTER BLOW

One vivid memory I retain is of being out with my granddad and coming across several dead sheep. Strangely, they all appeared to have died at around the same time. Now the loss of precious stock (even a single animal) was always a great financial blow as money was always tight, but furthermore, to add misery to misery, the numerous dead animals on this occasion were breeding ewes. Sadly the cause of death of the sheep was found to be from chemical poisoning as a result of the sheep-dip that they had recently undergone. Several other farmers had suffered the same problem and lost stock also. The noxious chemicals from the sheep-dip had got into the sheep's blood stream through wounds and via cuts and grazes from recent shearing and had



proved fatal. This was a bitter blow, but there was no compensation in those days, the affected farmers and the wider community just had to grin and bear it and soldier on with things and cope as best they could.

Mind you, my dad always maintained (as many other farmers did also, and still do) that sheep have a death-wish from the moment they are born. He believed the ovine animals were constantly on the lookout for any excuse to lie down and die, to roll over on their backs and give up the ghost. My dad had quite a dry humour, but he was never cruel or malicious.

A TWIST IN THE TALE

Another strong memory is that of being with my granddad when he was 'tenting' a few of his young sheep on a piece of what I imagine was common grazing land up near Mauley Cross some way from the farm. While the flock contentedly munched on the grass, safely contained and guarded closely by the dogs, my granddad would teach me how to plait using rushes. I was taught to hold the ends of the three rush stems or strands between my teeth and plait away from myself (I still use the same method when making cords for anything). However, what a palaver I had when my young daughter started dancing classes and needed her long hair plaiting and I had to reverse my technique and plait the opposite way round – towards myself, not away from myself. Very confusing and easy to get in a muddle!

ELECTRICITY

Electricity was installed in the farmhouse when I was seven years old. Before that we used Aladdin oil lamps and candles as our light source. I remember having my own miniature Aladdin lamp for bedtimes. I was an avid reader and would read by the light of my lamp.



WATER SUPPLY

We had no running water as such, but a boiler at the side of the black range with open-hearth fire and oven at the side. I remember one of my mum's weekly household chores was to black-lead the iron fireplace which she did religiously every Saturday morning. We were lucky as we could conveniently fill the water boiler from a tap we had

in the kitchen whereas many of our neighbours had only natural springs or wells outside in their gardens for their water supply with all the heavy carrying that this entailed. The side oven was used for all mam's cooking and we boiled water with the kettle swung over the fire on a recket.

EARTH CLOSET

We had an outside toilet. The good thing about ours was that it was relatively nearby in the enclosed back yard and although I was, like many little children, afraid of the dark, it didn't cause me too much grief. However, we often called at a cousin's on my mother's side and they had a toilet that was situated way out in the open well away from the house. When I needed to pay a visit to this remote loo during darkness, it scared the life out of me. Mind you, theirs was a dual 'double-seater' closet with two holes in the lid. Ours had only one.

FEAR OF THE DARK

I still feel a little shiver thinking back on my childish fear of the darkness and the pitch-blackness of the enclosed back yard. There were thirteen stone steps rising up from the yard to give access to the farm buildings above as the farmstead was situated at the bottom of a hill. I clearly remember having to regularly climb these steps in the dark. I can't remember why, but I do recall being petrified at night-time.

As we were Methodists, I attended the village Sunday School every week. One Sunday my teacher, who would only be about eighteen years old, but to me seemed so grown up, told us that if we prayed to God, He would protect and look after us. So after that whenever I had to go to the farm buildings, I would first put my hands together and ask Him to keep me safe and not let me be afraid of the dark – and then I'd sprint breathlessly up the steps. Unbeknown to me, my mum had overheard this and told my teacher. Many years later I was to be reminded of this action, in fact I met the same teacher at a family funeral recently and she took great pleasure in regaling the story again some fifty odd years after the event.

FUN AND GAMES

My parents had very little leisure time for fun and games, they were too busy trying to scrape a living from the land. There was a seven-year age gap between my elder sister and me so we weren't particularly close, although I do remember enjoying playing cards with her. However, I was fortunate that my granddad lived with us and I could spend enjoyable and instructive times with him. My granddad taught me to play dominoes (he also taught me to cheat but I've forgotten how to now!). He also taught me how to tell the time of day and my granny taught me how to knit, a useful skill I still have to this day. Maybe I will pass this skill on to my granddaughter!

CAT AND DOG

I loved doing jigsaw puzzles by the light of the Aladdin lamp and I recall I used to dress a black cat we had in my doll's clothes. How strange the cat must have looked. I also had a faithful companion, a working collie dog called Penny. My dad had trained Penny as a working farm dog as granddad's dogs would only obey and work to his commands. Unfortunately for my dad, Penny was very attached to me and would always leave him when it was time for me to come home from school. During school holidays the only way he could get her to go with him was by taking me along too. This suited me fine, as I was a real daddy's girl anyway and enjoyed being out and about with him.

PET LAMB

I remember having a pet lamb called Larry who we house-trained like a dog. Actually, I think Larry thought he *was* a dog! Larry used to lie in front of the fire along with the dogs and cats. Once he got too close and touched the hot hearth and burnt his nose and ended up with a blister on the end of it. Another time he foolishly had a scrap with the farm cat and came off worse and again got his nose badly scratched.

Larry the lamb was a cute pet, until, that is, he became Larry the full-grown sheep and took up the whole of the mat in front of the fire. It was even worse on a Friday evenings. Friday night was our bath night when we dragged in the tin bathtub from the yard and placed it in front of the fire and filled it full of hot water so we could enjoy our weekly bath in comfort. Larry, however, was not happy and had other ideas. He would try to upend the tub as it was in his way. Pandemonium ensued!

Larry was a real pet and used to go along with us to feed the chickens or follow us to the clothes-line when we went to peg out the washing. He never needed fencing-in or penning, he would not stray from the house. In fact, when dad finally decided he'd had enough and Larry should join the rest of the flock, our pet sheep had other ideas and kept breaking out and making his way home. Trouble was that the other sheep followed him along his escape route and then strayed away over the moorland causing more work for my father.

Eventually dad gave up trying to integrate Larry back with the flock and the pet sheep just lived out his life in the farmyard along with the hens, ducks and geese.

HENS, DUCKS AND GEESE

We kept hens, the eggs helping to supplement our income and we also reared ducks and geese for Christmas plucking and sale to make whatever extra money we could for presents. We would allow the hens to sit on the duck and geese eggs and hatch them out. This worked fine as the hens made super adoptive mothers, until that is, the ducklings and goslings inevitably found their way to the beck and took to the water, their strong natural instinct taking over. They abandoned their adoptive 'mums' and gaily swam up and down the beck while the harassed and distressed hens dithered on the beck bankside trying to entice them safely back on dry land.

BEWARE THE GANDER

I remember a real nasty gander we had. He would deviously hide behind things and then jump out and attack you from behind when you were passing. One day the gander went after my mum when she happened to be walking past carrying a big empty paper bag. She deftly held it open and in he went, right to the bottom of the bag. It frightened the life out of the wayward bird, but not for long and he was soon up to his mischievous tricks again.

On one occasion the gander bit and really hurt my mum. However, this was to prove fateful. In those days my mum had quite a quick temper and she was so angered by the vicious gander, she instinctively grabbed the goose and flung him with all her might across the fence and into the adjacent field. The upshot of this unfortunate fracas was that the gander came off the worst and sadly died from its injuries. My dad was not best pleased as it took ages for him to find a replacement gander. It meant we had a lot of unfertilised goose eggs that year.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

I remember a real sense of community spirit. You could always rely on help from neighbours if needed and everyone pitched in and helped

each other at busy times of the year or if someone was ill and needed an extra pair of hands or additional support.

Perhaps a drawback to our tight-knit community was that everyone knew everybody else's business, nothing could be hidden for long. There were few secrets. Both sad and happy times were shared. We were always on the lookout for each other and we seemed almost like one big happy family.

You could say we looked after each other from the cradle to the grave. For many years my mum used to go to bereaved households in the local community and prepare the dead person for the coffin and subsequent funeral. This was known as 'laying out' and a very important social duty that had to be done – by someone.

ANNIVERSARY DAY

Sunday School Anniversary Day was a special day. Why do I always recall it being hot and sunny? I'm sure there must have been some wet and cloudy days despite it being held each year on the second Sunday in June.

I said my first formal recital, or 'piece' as we called it, at the tender age of three and I can still remember it to this day.

Our house would be bursting at the seams on that day, like everyone else's in the village. We could easily have fifteen for lunch, forty for tea, and perhaps even sixty for supper. I don't remember where or how they were all seated, particularly on rainy days – we didn't have a big house! Everyone and anyone who had ever had connections with our village used to come back for Anniversary Day, often bringing with them new friends and relatives. Everyone, however, was always made welcome.

SCARBOROUGH TRIP

We used to have the Tea Feast every year and the annual Sunday School Trip to Scarborough, the famous seaside resort on the east coast. For many of us this was the only opportunity we had of visiting Scarborough. Mums, dads, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and uncle Tom Cobley and all, came along as well, a real community day out. As small children we learnt a lot from having adults around us, and not just our parents. We were welcomed wherever we went, it didn't matter if you were related or not. The kettle was always on and a biscuit and piece of cake on offer

CHRISTMASTIME

When we were young teenagers, we used to go 'Christmas Box Shouting' and 'New Year's Gifting'. This involved calling at all the houses and farms one-by-one in the village, the boys would do their rounds on Christmas morning, the girls on New Year morning. Our mission was to shout a traditional rhyme outside their doors wishing those who lived there good luck. The occupants would then respond by giving the well-wishers a few pennies or sweets as a thank-you treat. I can still chant the rhyme today!

Looking back now on those far-off times, the main questions I find myself asking is, are these nostalgic memories accurate and are they real? Was there no bad times? With the passing of the years, perhaps I am looking back on my early days through rose-tinted glasses, only remembering the good times? Nevertheless, those are my feelings today. Will my children and grandchildren remember and look back on their childhoods with the same fondness. I hope so. I'll just have to see!

Zee 'C'

THE GOOD TIMES



Penicillium vulpinium

SUMMER WAS PLEASANT, of course... a mixture of warm days and nights, scattered showers, plenty of sunshine if intermittent... so no complaints, BUT the good times began in Autumn.

Autumn arrived with a snap this year. The moor-land bracken turned quickly, the trees followed on with an increasingly vivid pageant in reds, golds and yellow. Autumn is the season of change and of decay. Oh, sorry to bring that up...but let's face it, we were soon up to our fetlocks in rotting leaves and I just loved it.

The "rotting" word is not one that Field Mycologists avoid; in fact, to a degree we actively seek out the moist, dank, dark places... for that is where the autumn fungi live, work and thrive. Summer saw the larger field fungi come and go, the "mushrooms" that we know are good to eat, as well as the flush of brightly coloured "wax-caps", giant puff-balls and a whole host of dung fungi... but to the woods soon became the order of the shortening days. Right up until the first frosts there were still be many species to be found in open pastureland and unimproved grassland, some coastal sand-dunes specialists and late wax-caps survived right through until winter bit deep... but for sheer diversity Autumn is the time to go down to the woods again... to the firs, birches, oaks and willows, the ash trees, pines and beech. We began this year with Cropton Forest.

Cropton Forest has been a much surveyed wood-land over the years, it is always abundant in species count and sometimes surprising in what can be found. This alien life-form is *Penicillium vulpinium* on what the collector hopes was deer-dung... though a substrate of *Turdus caninus* is not to be ruled out. Still, I am sure you would agree, a thing of beauty... if not in the conventional sense.

More commonly, we find the "macro" fungi... easily seen due to size, colour or location. The *Penicillium vulpinium* picture is only about one inch across whereas the great saddle-like brackets of *Polyporus squamosus* can be a couple of feet or more across a single tier. This is "Dryad's Saddle", a consummate destroyer of hardwood trees where it produces a white rot in the heart-wood. It is considered to be "edible whilst young" but at 68 years old I give it a miss... and so should you. It can be quite disgusting unless you are French.

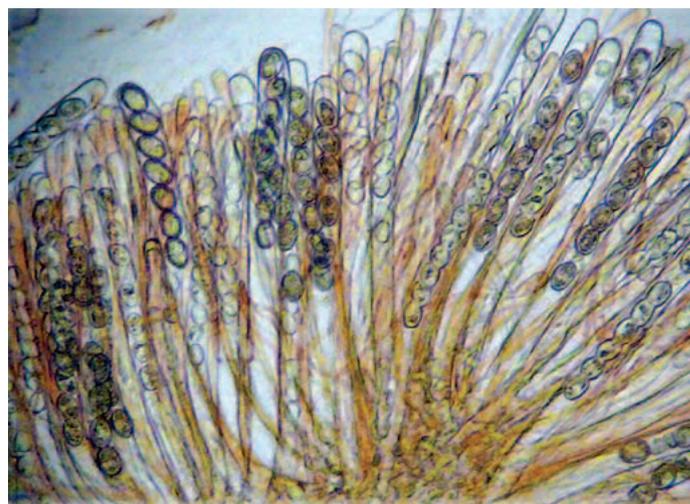
This edibility thing is very difficult. On public forays, in general, it is the wise leader who declares at the off that nothing edible will be found. Quite apart from the instantaneous reduction in the number of starving hopefuls attending, the comment is sound. Even some known edibles can cause pretty nasty allergic reactions in certain individuals and in a litigatory world it is best not to advise; having said that, there is no reason



Polyporus squamosus

to go in to the fungi-filled woods wearing face-masks and latex gloves. Most fungi must be examined quite closely in order to determine the species accurately... gills or pores, gills that slope, butt or stop short of the stem, colour of spores... often visible on caps below or on the stem of the fungi in question... smell, texture and, wait for it, taste. Caution required.

If there is an interest other than culinary the whole business of Mycology takes a more serious turn.



Scutellinia scutellata, magnified some 400 times

The first requisite, should you wish to extend your ignorance, and believe me the more you know the less, is to invest in books. Expensive books. Heavy books. Books that will fill a room... then get a microscope and completely ignore the weighty tomes that you have accumulated and just wonder at the sheer beauty of what you can see whilst peering through the lens. Above is the spore bearing surface of an "eyelash" fungus, *Scutellinia scutellata*, magnified some 400 times. The fungus itself is tiny, too, but is of a very conspicuous intense red or orange colour. The "disc" or "red-eye" is surrounded by a fringe of black "eyelashes", hence the name. The books will become indispensable later; and you will be hooked.

All the pictures in this short eulogy to fungi were taken "locally" this year. They show just a small sample of fungi which can be found with just a little patience and perseverance.



Children are great forayers...better eye-sight, closer to the ground and non-discriminatory...but probably lacking in patience until they make a discovery. Every foray produces something new, even for seasoned Field Mycologists, so it is easy to understand the fascination in young and old alike when a good day is over and the finds are laid out for identification. Take a look below and you will get a real sense of just how vast this Fungi kingdom is.

Let the good times roll!

Tom Kirby

Scutellinia scutellata



THE SCHOOL INSPECTOR CALLS!

Gervase Phinn is one of Britain's best loved comic writers, known for his best-selling autobiographical novels such as The Other Side of the Dale, Over Hill and dale, and Head Over Heels in the Dale. Early in his career he spent fourteen years teaching in a wide range of schools before becoming an education adviser and school inspector. He is now a freelance lecturer, broadcaster and writer, a consultant for Open University, Honorary Fellow of St. John's College, York, and Fellow and Visiting Professor of Education at The University of Teesside. He has a house in one of the picturesque seaside villages lying within the NYMs National Park. In the following piece he recalls his formative experiences when making his first visit to schools in the North York Moors area many years ago.

THE FIRST SCHOOL I visited as a school inspector was a small, grey, stone primary school, high on the moors. It was in a folded hollow beneath tall sheltering oak trees and set high above a vast panorama dusted with snow and dotted with isolated farms and hillside barns. It was like being on top of the world.

'You are not expected!' the school secretary told me sharply when I informed her I was a school inspector here to spend the morning observing the teaching and examining the children's work. The woman had a narrow bony face dominated by thick round glasses which made her eyes look unusually large and staring.

'I did write,' I told her. 'I said I would be calling in this morning.'

'Well I don't know anything about it,' she said. 'Mind you, I'm often the last to know. If you wait here, I'll get the head teacher.' She strode off down the corridor grumbling to herself.

It wasn't long before the head teacher made her appearance. She was a tall woman with a round red face and tiny, very dark eyes. She was closely followed by the secretary. As they came closer, I noticed the dubious looks on both their faces.

'I wonder if I might see some means of identification?' began the head teacher, gazing fixedly at me.

'You can't be too sure these days,' added the secretary peering at me behind the huge frames. 'I mean, you could be anybody!'

I produced my official identification which the head teacher scrutinised.

'I wrote to you saying I would be coming,' I told her.

'I can't remember any letter. Can you Mrs Garbutt?'

'No, I can't,' replied the school secretary.

'Well now I am here -' I started.

'Oh, it's not convenient at the moment,' said the head teacher quickly. 'We've had an outbreak of nits!'

The reception at the next school I visited could not have been more different. I was greeted by a beaming caretaker.

'You're from the Education Office, are you?' he asked with a bright and expectant look in the small eyes.

'Yes, yes,' I replied. 'I'm from the Education Office. I think the head teacher is expecting me.'

'Oh, oh, come this way, come this way,' said the overalled figure. 'We've *all* been expecting you. It's so good to see you.' The caretaker, poking his head around the school office door, announced with great enthusiasm to the school secretary, 'He's here, Mrs Higginbottom! The man from the Education. He's here! He's arrived!'

The secretary jumped up excitedly. 'Oh, good morning,' she beamed. 'It's so good to see you. The head teacher will be over the moon.'

I was overwhelmed by such a warm welcome. I felt like the Prodigal Son.

'It's so good to see you,' enthused the secretary.

'Well, I'm very pleased to be here,' I replied.

'I'll just tell the head teacher you've arrived.' She paused and patted me affectionately on the arm. 'I can't tell you how delighted we all are to see you.' The caretaker nodded enthusiastically in agreement.

The head teacher, a tall, horsy-faced woman, strode into the room a moment later and greeted me with a vigorous handshake.

'At last!' she cried. 'We've all been expecting you. I cannot tell you how pleased we are to see you here! You will have a cup of tea and a biscuit before you start, won't you - that's if you have the time.'

'Yes, yes,' I replied, 'that would be very acceptable.'

The head teacher nodded to the secretary who departed to get the tea. 'It's just that I appreciate that your time is very precious and you may wish to make a start at once. The sooner the better as far as I'm concerned.'

'Well, we're here for the remainder of the afternoon,' I replied.

The head teacher shook my hand. 'I'm very pleased to meet you,' she said, before adding, 'Won't it take longer than the afternoon?'

'I shouldn't think so,' I said smiling. 'It really depends on what I find.'

'Well, I think you'll find quite a lot needs doing,' she said, her words accompanied by grunts of agreement from the caretaker and the

secretary who appeared at the door with two cups of tea. 'They are just not working and try as we might we can't get them to work. We've had such a lot of trouble this week.'

'I've tried my best to get them to work but it's no good,' added the caretaker shaking his head. 'They just won't work!'

'This does sound serious,' I said, taking the proffered tea and lifting the small china cup to my lips. From the look of the school as I entered, it appeared to be a very bright and welcoming place, and the quality of the children's work on the walls seemed to me to be of a high standard. 'And you say they just won't work. Why is that?'

'Well, the weather, as you might imagine, might have had something to do with it. They were frozen solid last week.'

I replaced his cup on the saucer with a tinkle of china. 'Frozen solid?' I repeated. 'They were frozen solid?'

'We thawed them out but they just froze again,' replied the head teacher.

'We've been going out of our minds with the smell,' said the secretary.

'Anyway, that's what you are here for, Mr Davies, to tell us why they won't work and to sort it out. And I must say this school will be a lot brighter and more welcoming when you've finished.'

'Phinn,' I said.

'I beg your pardon?'

'It's Phinn. Mr Phinn.'

'Aren't you Mr Davies from the Education Office - Premises and Maintenance - to see to the problem of the boys' lavatories?' asked the head teacher with a rather alarmed look on her face.

'No, no,' I replied. 'I'm Gervase Phinn, the school inspector, to see about the curriculum. I wrote saying I would be calling. The head teacher looked crestfallen. Her face took on the long, gloomy expression of a saint who is approaching certain martyrdom. The eyes of the school secretary looked pebble-hard behind the heavy frames of her spectacles and the caretaker looked singularly menacing.

The head teacher cheered up a little when I delivered a glowing report at the end of the afternoon and she became positively jaunty and light-headed when he promised to take up the cause of the boys' lavatories back at County Hall, as a matter of urgency.

'You will find in education, Gervase,' the Chief Inspector informed me, when I reported back to him on my first visits to schools, 'that nits and lavatories often take precedence over learning.'

Gervase Phinn's new novel, 'A Lesson in Love', in the 'Little Village School Series' and published by Hodder and his new collections of anecdotes and poems, 'Schooldays are the Happiest Days of Our Lives' and published by the Dalesman are available in all good bookshops.

NYMA WALKS 2017 (FIRST QUARTER)

Saturday 14 January: Meet at 10:30 at Great Ayton car park (parking here or along the High Street) for c. 5 mile walk across fields to Stokesley returning along the riverside back to Ayton. May be muddy conditions. Walk leaders Heather & Colin Mather Telephone 01287 669104

Saturday 25 February: Meet at 10:00 Clay Bank car park (GR573033) where Cleveland Way crosses the B1257 for c. 5 mile circular walk with climbs in Bilsdale. Walk leader Wendy Smith: wendy.smith@uku.co.uk

Saturday 18 March: Meet at 10:00 outside Swainby church (GR478020) for c. 7 mile Swainby circular walk, visiting villages of Potto and Hutton Rudby. Mainly flat terrain using field, farm and riverside tracks. Car parking on roadsides throughout Swainby Village. Please park safely. Walk leader Kath Mair: Telephone 0797 4288056

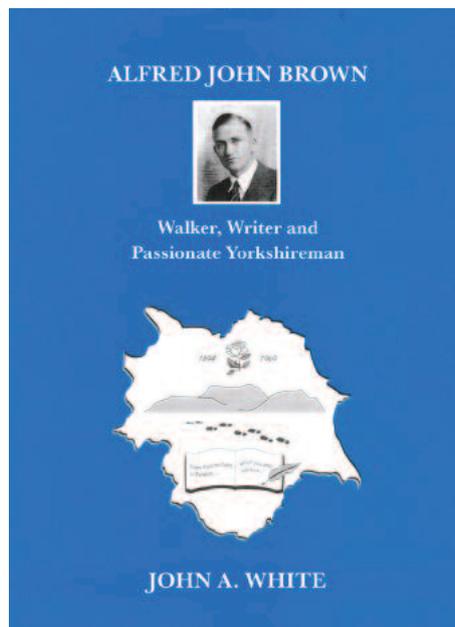
Contact and confirm arrangements nearer the time with walk leaders. Please come dressed and equipped to suit the prevailing winter conditions. All welcome!

ALFRED JOHN BROWN – WALKER, WRITER & PASSIONATE YORKSHIREMAN BY JOHN A WHITE

THIS BIOGRAPHY is a huge book in every sense of the word: it is the author John White's magnum opus. Not only is it big in terms of the number of pages/words (over 500 pages and 180,000 words) but it also contains a colossal amount of detailed information and facts about the life of its main subject, the walker, literary hotelier, author and poet Alfred John Brown. While the book is ostensibly a biography of the main protagonist and the Yorkshire landscape that he so cherished, it is much more than that and has various interesting strands. For instance it is also a slice of history from the times, touching as it does on two World Wars and the intriguing part that Brown played in them; it is a fascinating social documentary; it gives an insight into the wool trade; it gives an overview of the country hoteliers trade; it is a comprehensive bibliography; and the book also contains a useful synopsis and appraisal of the many books and writings of AJB.

The book is also a surprisingly hefty tome, which not only exercises the mind, but also the body. So much so, that out of sheer curiosity this reviewer could not resist placing the book on the kitchen scales – it weighed-in at 1688 grams (3lb 12oz), certainly no pocketbook and not a volume one would wisely choose to carry in one's rucksack when out tramping. However, its heft is due not only to its size, but in large part to the quality material it is made from, it being printed on heavy art paper. Nevertheless, the book retails at £15, which is remarkably good value for money.

The book is testament to the enormous amount of dedicated, meticulous research and hard work by the author John White who must be congratulated on painstakingly producing the first compilation of such an interesting story and long-overdue definitive biography. Alfred John Brown, or AJB as he was/is fondly known and remembered by many of his admirers, was a devout Yorkshireman and one of the most prodigious hikers (or trampers, as he would prefer to be called – for some inexplicable reason he detested the word 'hiker') of the first half of the 20th century. AJB was born at the close of the Victorian era in Bradford, a Yorkshire city built on the commercial wool and worsted weaving trades in which AJB worked and was closely associated for most of his life. He died in 1969 at Sleights in North Yorkshire and is buried there in the graveyard of the Anglican Church of St John the Evangelist (there was no Catholic graveyard in Sleights). The poignant words taken from perhaps his most well known poem are inscribed on his headstone – *'There must*



A.J. Brown, right, talking to a dalesman near Goathland

Yorkshireman. Furthermore (with a little imagination), they will be allowed the opportunity, albeit vicariously from their armchairs, to once more walk in the footsteps and share in the experiences and enthusiasms of one of the greatest ramblers and topological writers on Yorkshire in a 'golden age of walking' in the twentieth century: time to don your boots!

Ainsley

be dales in paradise, which you and I will find.'

During the seventy-five year span of his lifetime, AJB, who loved his native county of Yorkshire with an unshakeable life-long passion, probably tramped over more of its 'broad acres' than anyone before or since. His foot-slogging tramps (despite him being dogged by years of chronic illness) over almost every tractable square yard of his beloved Yorkshire, 'God's Own Country' as he regarded it, he recorded in his unique topological books starting with his first, *Four Boon Fellows*, in 1928. His books were not, however, just bland walkers' guide books, but were idiosyncratic texts covering AJB's personal account of the landscape, the local lore and legend, the people and farming characters that he met along the way, and his impressions of the pubs and hostleries that he visited and stayed at. He was a great lover of good ale and country inns and deeply lamented the demise of the old-style traditional pubs and the loss of the rustic charm and often quirky hospitality and friendliness that they offered.

He went on to write six more 'Yorkshire' books (one of which was the official North York Moors National Park Guide Book 1958, 1959, 1963, 1965, and 1967 editions), two novels, four personal or 'semi-autobiographical' books, and a book of verse, *Poems & Songs*, published by Horne & Sons of Whitby in 1949, all now avidly collected by his fans.

John A White's biography of AJB is undoubtedly a lengthy and challenging read, however, for those who make the effort they will be well rewarded with a full appreciation of the life and times, the work and achievements of a truly remarkable

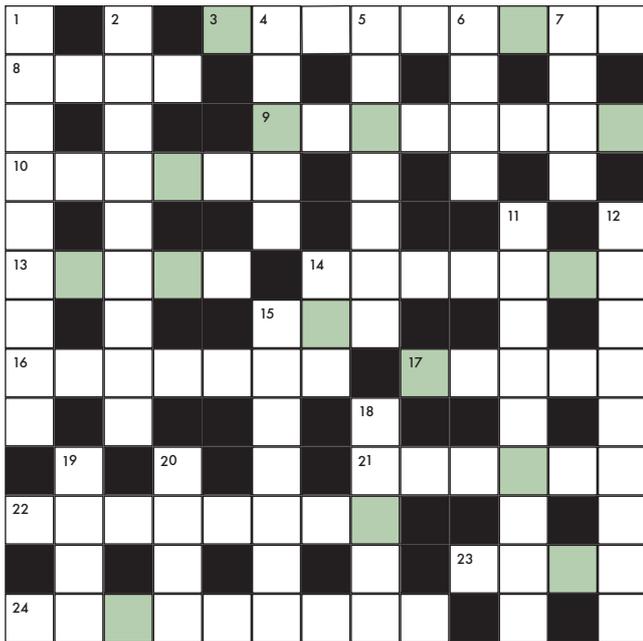
The book (ISBN 978-1-5262-0511-7) can be obtained by sending your details and remittance to:

Tracey Thorne, Director, Smith Settle Printing & Bookbinding Ltd., Gateway Drive, Yeadon, West Yorkshire LS19 7XY

Email: tthorne@smithsettle.com, Tel: 0113-250-9201

Cost £15 per copy plus £3.50 p&p Cheques payable to Smith Settle Ltd.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD No 75 BY AMANUENSIS



ACROSS:

- 3&10 The fastest avian in our skies (9,6)
- 8 One hears he's in a whirlpool (4)
- 9 Set fire to again, perhaps? (8)
- 13 A man turns into a spy (5)
- 14 He releases spirit at Christmastime (7)
- 15 One found in pack (3)
- 16 Gold or silver for example (7)
- 17 Consent to a green inside (5)
- 21 Sofia is upset when taking hundred in embarrassing failure (6)
- 22 Worker has a tedious duty in seclusion (7)
- 23 Lied about the specialist food shop (4)
- 24 Flavourful point where the money's made (9)

DOWN:

- 1 Carnivore found at the Tower of London? (9)
- 2 Philanderer hesitates twice following a mature person (9)
- 4 Merits large vessels one hears (5)
- 5 A runner goes along its full length (7)
- 6 The smallest turn around (4)
- 7 Flower of Egypt
- 11 Talks about home locations (9)
- 12 Exercise requiring no oxygen
- 14 Carry out part of the play (3)
- 15 One of six for example (7)
- 18 Frequent description of decimalisation? (5)
- 19 Photo break (4)
- 20 Hear about a flightless bird (4)

Take the letters from the coloured squares and solve the anagram from the information given:

A 13th century fortification on the outskirts of the North York Moors National Park. The original structure was built by the Normans at the command of William the Conqueror in 1069 – 1070. It was used as a royal hunting lodge, holiday home, and stud farm by a succession of medieval kings. It remains particularly well preserved due to it being one of only a few of its kind unaffected by the 15th century Wars of the Roses and the English Civil War some two hundred years later. It is a scheduled monument (SM) and looked after by English Heritage: a lovely place to visit.



CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 3&10 peregrine falcon 8 eddy 9 rekindle 13 agent 14 Aladdin 15 ace 16 element 17 agree 21 hasco 22 anchor 23 deli 24 sparmint
DOWN: 1 befeater 2 adulterer 4 carns 5 Eskdale 6 runt 7 Nile 11 addresses 12 anaerobic 14 ac 15 anagram 18 often 19 snap 20 rhea
ANAGRAM ANSWERS: Pickering Castle

FAIRY WORLD OF HOAR FROST

There is still, however, one phase of winter scenery that has engraved itself as deeply as any other in my recollection, and it is one I have observed under various aspects, and on divers different occasions. What I refer to are the singularly lovely creations of a rime or white frost, on the occasions which there are so large an amount of moisture in the atmosphere as to lead to a heavy deposit

I remember one occasion on which the deposit was so heavy that ordinary rushes became rods of more than half an inch in diameter, the merest dry bents – windlestraws, or winn'lstraes as we call them here – the thickness of a big cedar pencil, and every small twig in the hedges a bar of glittering jewellery. It was a glorious winter's day, with some three to four inches of snow on the level in the fields, and a temperature so frosty in the morning that the moisture of my breath congealed with every expiration on the hair about my mouth and chin.





A MAMMOTH TALE

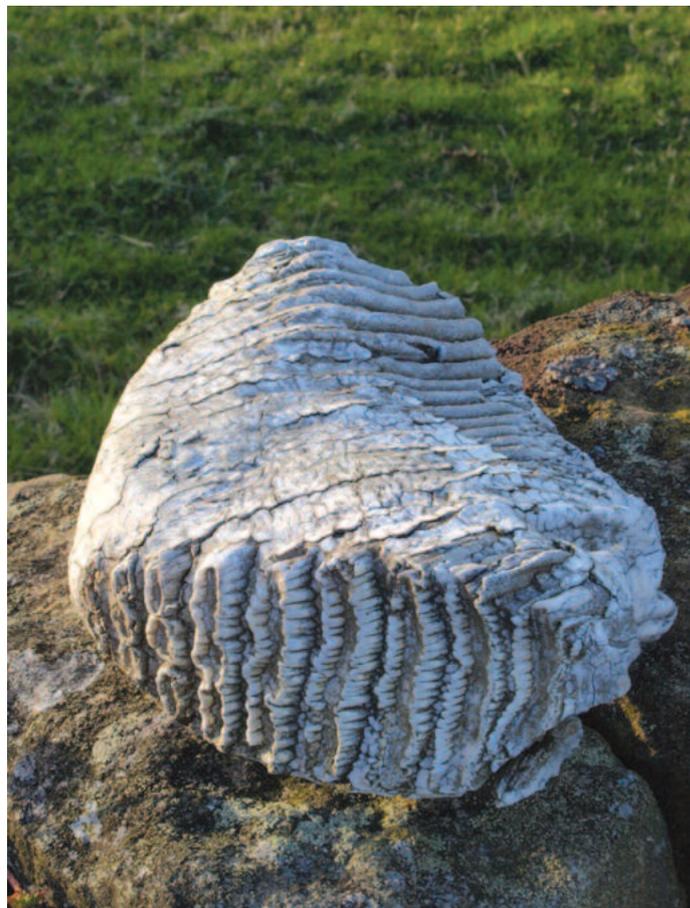
GROWING UP in the Esk Valley in the late 60's and 70's was to us children a joy. We managed to entertain ourselves outdoors, in all kinds of weather. We were never bored. Fishing for eels and trout, catching rabbits with our terriers and ferrets, climbing trees, collecting birds eggs (it was legal in those days and every country lad had his egg collection). We even had pet jackdaws that we raised and trained from fledglings. They are highly intelligent birds and would perch on our shoulders as we cycled along on our beloved pushbikes. We cycled for miles, up and down the dales and over the wild moors. We never wore helmets and had many spills and permanently grazed knees. Winters were much colder in those days and you could guarantee good falls of snow. Sledging or 'plazzy-bagging' was a must, igloos were built and snowball fights broke out all over the village.

We were fascinated by nature and the wildlife all around us and soon learned to identify and name all the local birds and animals. We caught, gutted, skinned and ate countless rabbits (until the shameful myxomatosis was introduced – we kids called it myxy!). Fossils were highly prized and were actively sought in the spoil heaps near the quarries up Glaisdale dale and in the shale banks by the river in Arncliffe woods. Belemnites and ammonites were particularly highly prized and 'devils' toe nails' common. I still have a few nice fossil specimens on my window sill, some are of fern fronds and fossilised coral but my latest addition is something rather special and highly unusual.

A good friend of mine was clearing out a ditch in his garden when he came across what he thought was nothing more than a large piece of light coloured stone, which he placed on a bench in his garden, not realising what it was. A fishing friend of his paid him a visit and immediately asked him why he had a mammoth's tooth sitting on his garden bench (it helped that the friend happened to be a vet)? After cleaning the unusual fossil, the tooth looked splendid and he rang me to see if I would take a look at it and agree on its identification. Now I'm not very familiar with 10,000 year old mammoths teeth but it certainly looked very much like the ones which I had seen in books. It is quite staggering to envisage mammoths living locally just before the last ice age. Living in the Esk valley we can see quite clearly where the

ice from the North Sea bordered with the great lake in the upper Esk Valley and no doubt the tooth could have been carried great distances by the receding ice before being deposited in my friends garden all those thousands of years ago. The tooth is now residing on the sill of my bay window, having very kindly been donated to my meagre collection!

Hawkmoth



*You can keep up to date with **Hawkmoth** sightings as he is now on Twitter as GPF MOTHMAN1. On a regular basis, he posts photos and information of the interesting moths that he has observed and caught as well as that of any other particularly interesting flora and fauna he encounters.*

On looking at any of the objects I have named with a little attention it was seen that the incrustation depended on what may – for the purposes of illustration – be described as a coating of fur, every constituent filament in which was as compound as the upper shoot and branches of a fir tree. There was the spire on an infinitesimal scale, with the wall of radiating spurs at its foot, and the same repeated at the foot of the second shoot or leader, and so on.

Anything more strangely, mysteriously, ethereally beautiful I never beheld. Each twig, each grassy seed-stem, each blade of grass, and especially each longer and thicker shoot or rush, was a miracle of symmetry, beauty, perfection, composite of myriads of marvels on a lessened and lessening scale.

But these wonderful creations by nature's jeweller were not limited only to the vesture of such objects as those I have named. When I went

forth on my afternoon's expedition to Fryup Church – for it was a Sunday that this fairy world ornamentation greeted my eyes – and had made my way into a large smooth field, on pausing to look back towards the north-west and north sides of the snowscape, having the brightly shining sun on my side as I did so, my eye was caught by the myriads of glittering points that gemmed the whole surface of the snow. The whole area for hundreds and hundreds of square yards was lit up in this way; and there was not a hue or a lustre displayed by the diamond that was not repeated by thousands of resplendent facets bestrewing the field. Here were simply acres of lustrous diamonds.

*This rhapsodic depiction of a winter landscape is taken from the Reverend J C Atkinson's famous book *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish* first published in 1891, just ten years before the death of the Victorian canon.*

A WARNING MERRY GENTLEMEN

(Can be sung to the tune of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen)

A warning, merry gentlemen,
Our Earth is in despair.
We're burning all our fossil fuels,
Throwing CO2 to the air.
Our only World is fast becoming
A place too hot to live
So again a stark warning I must give,
I must give
Global warming is the warning I must give.

Don't rest, you merry gentlemen,
Act now without delay
We've not much time, to toe the line,
To change, to save the day
Let's mend our ways, prolong our days
Upon this precious Ball
So once more I put out this clarion call
Clarion call
Let us strive to save the planet for us all

Raise hope, you merry gentlemen,
For our children yet to be
Man's future stands, cupped in our hands,
It's we who have the key
Let sense prevail, we must not fail
Be wise, please heed this plea.
Or this World that we love will cease to be
Cease to be
And be lost to us for all eternity.

HAVE A GREEN CHRISTMAS!
Ainsley

**Wishing Everyone a Peaceful Christmas
& a Happy & Prosperous New Year**