

A HISTORY OF KIRKBY FLEETHAM PARISH

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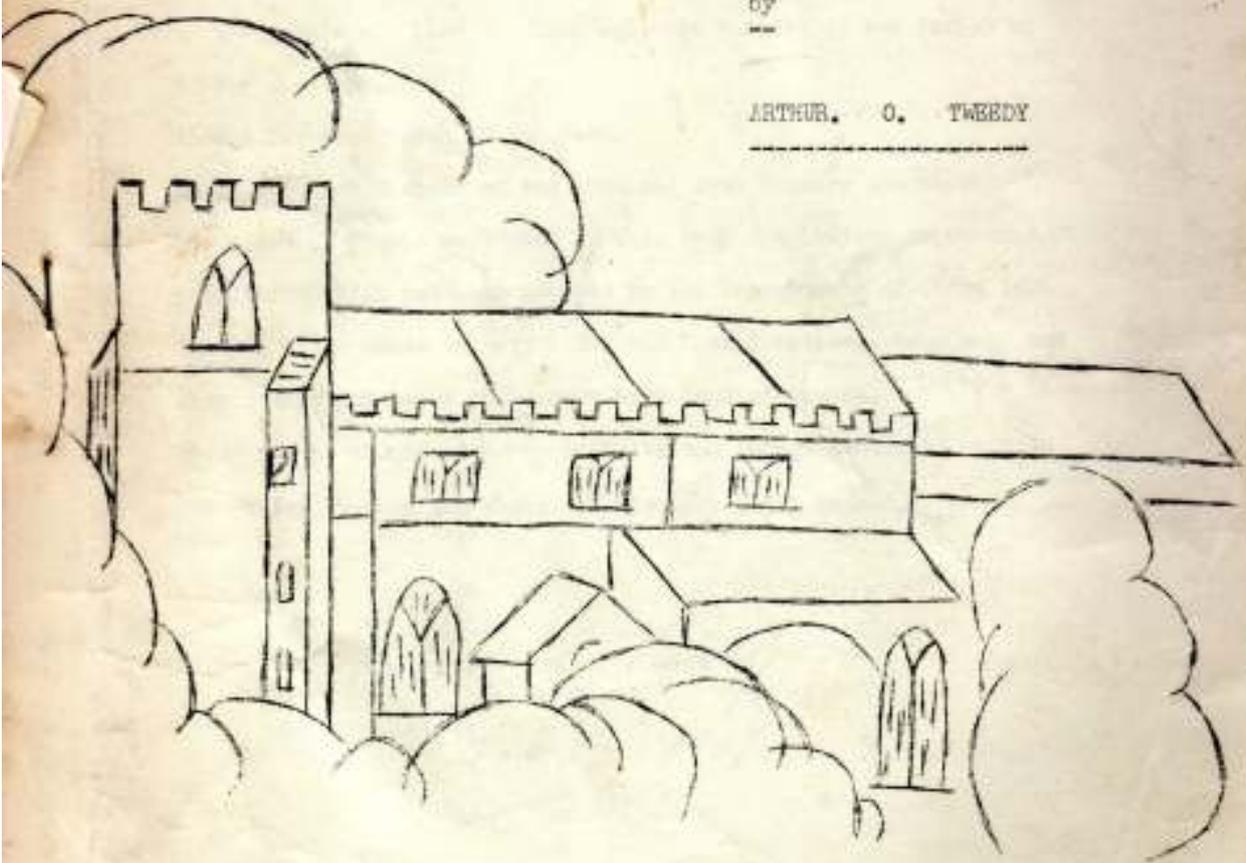
AND TALES THAT WERE TOLD

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by

ARTHUR. O. TWEEDY

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**A HISTORY OF KIRKBY FLEETHAM PARISH  
AND TALES THAT WERE TOLD**

**ARTHUR O TWEEDY  
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## **PREFACE**

### **Introduction**

Kirkby Fleetham Parish in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

This book has been written chiefly out of interest for the benefit of the people who like to probe into the History of the Parish of Kirkby Fleetham.

Also a few true tales of the Past.

It is a pocket History of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond. The names of the people mentioned in this Book are limited on account of permission which has been granted by the Descendants of those that appear. This makes it very brief and less detailed. Many very sad also delightful tales could have been told otherwise.

There may be slight mistakes in dates and things mentioned outside the Parish, but on the whole this is very small indeed.

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*The narrative has been interspersed with headings to help the modern reader find relevant sections to them. They do not appear in the original document. Otherwise the writings have been input in their original form. Some words, punctuation and symbols will appear to be unusual to today's eye. (2015)*

This is a true and simple story, written by request of a few parishioners, the History of the Parish of Kirkby Fleetham, also of farming and of some of the families of the past.

### **Post**

The postal address for Kirkby Fleetham until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was 'Fencote, Bedale'. The first Post Office here was a cottage opposite the Black Horse Inn, occupied by the Pearson family. Towards the end of the last Century, telegrams were sent there. Later the Potts family took over the Post Office on the site of the present bungalows, 'Village View'. Telegrams for Langton Hall were taken to the riverside, put into a tin attached to a wire, and drawn across by a large wooden wheel turned by a handle, a whistle being used to notify. The mail was brought from Bedale on foot and left at each village en route. A chosen resident delivered. The postman on the First of May each year was decked out from head to foot with all colours of ribbons as a symbol that all the rough weather was over. The mail afterwards was brought by horse and trap until the Great War, then cycles were used. The postman stayed in a hut at the Hall after delivery until time for collection on his return journey back to Bedale at 5 pm.

My Grandfather was Coachman, etc at Kirkby Fleetham Hall before and during the time when Edmund Waller, Esq, owned the Estate. He was also Sexton and Grave digger. He kept a frock coat and High Shiner in his saddle room and was always prepared to conduct a funeral at any time. He died as the result of a misfortune. The churchyard was very full and it was difficult to find a place to dig. He was digging a grave one early morning before his working time, when he suddenly sank into an old grave, the stench and shock finished him. He died shortly after, and it was then that the churchyard was closed.

I heard of two men whom I could name when boys, they saw on more than one occasion men dig out Skeletons and take them away with a horse and cart, no doubt to be sold. The Church was close to the Hall and a very lonely place and occasionally the Hall was closed for a few weeks so it made it quite easy to be done. The boys not reporting it at the time naturally thought the men were simply carrying out their duties.

The latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Hall was let for a short period to different Gentlemen. Lord Castlereagh having it for two summers. He used to have a Coach and Four in hand with postilion and long horn. The people in the village used to rush out when they heard the horn to see the Coach with all its splendour gallop through. On one occasion he was going to catch a train for London being rather rushed for time 'Don't spare the horses' was the command and round a well known nasty corner at Ainderby Steeple he ran over an old man's Donkey and cart killing the Donkey, the old man started cursing, His Lordship got out of the Coach and gave the man £5 'Will that do for you my man' 'Yes Sir' was the reply 'You can come and kill me another tomorrow. I can buy another for ten bob'.

It was all work and bed in those days for a very small return.

### ***Cottages & Agriculture***

Every Cottage in the village had a few acres of land to it, some more than others according to the size of the Cottage. I could point out a lot of these small fields and the Cottages they belonged to.

There were several Gait Fields for the Cottagers Cows for Summer keep. Some of these Gait Fields were over a mile to walk. The cows were milked in the field and the milk carried back before their regular employment commenced at 7 am and 5 pm after. This of course helped out the very small wages. Milk and Bread was more or less the chief food especially for the Children.

All the Women used to work very hard and many had to do the milking and attention to the Cows and their house work before they too went out into the fields to work. I remember my Mother walking two miles to hoe Turnips for one shilling and threepence a day and many more. The Women worked in the Fields almost three parts of the year, spreading manure, clot melling, looking, planting potatoes, etc Haymaking and Harvest, gathering sticks, stones and wool from the grass land and armed with a jobber stubbing Bell Thistles in the Spring and Summer. In the Winter snagging Turnips and Mangolds, Winnowing grain and Thrashing.

Hay Making was very hard work, all done by hand. Many acres were mown by the Scythe, an acre a day was a good hard days work. There are fields today go by the names such as 5 days mowing and 8 days mowing and so on. There were no Swath Turners and all had to be turned by hand the first time, on a big farm where Ewes and Lambs were kept, these were driven backwards and forwards in breaks across the field, their hind feet trailed across the hay, thus turning it or otherwise lightening it up to dry before raking into small cocks.

I was told by the late J Ingledew he remembered the corn being cut by Scythe before the Manual was introduced.

As a boy I used to go out making bands for sixpence a day. In fact every Man, Woman and Child had their bit to do.

As time went on the land was taken from the Cottages, chiefly through new ownership, the same rent being charged for the Cottage without the land. For instance my Father's first Cottage of four rooms and cellar pantry etc and 4 acres of land was £6 0. 0d for the year and the Rates 1/6d half year. At the Rent Audit twice a year a good dinner was served. One old man who lived with his Daughter same as many more, would not let him have any Breakfast so he could eat more at the Rent dinner. He was so ravenous when the dinner came he choked himself and was carried home dead. After this a shilling was given in lieu of dinner and still exists today. The Rents were very low and repairs were fairly good, owing to a good Landlord. Otherwise life would have been much harder.

There was no pension for old age and when a man got to the age when he could not carry on his normal duties he was given a job weeding and repairing the Carriage drives, riddling the gravel etc, at a much reduced wage. If this became too much for them they ended up in the Workhouse or were kept by relatives.

### ***Illness***

It had to be really forced work before a Doctor was called and many had to walk 5 miles and more for the Doctor who came on Horseback. I well remember my Mother having a finger amputated at home, she was chloroformed on the kitchen table.

Most Women did their own doctoring for all common ailments using their own prescriptions which were made in Winter time from Herbs, seeds and chemicals. They made their own soap, furniture polish and ointments.

There were always a few in every Village to act as midwives and nurses, some of them very efficient. Hospitals were very small, few and far between. I well remember some children taken to the fever Hospital at Bedale which was simply a tin hut. They were taken 5½ miles in a horse and cart. The cart been lined out with straw and a wagon sheet over them.

Everybody knew each others business and shared their pleasures and troubles. Entertainment was chiefly made by their own familys.

### ***Trade***

There was a cottage or two in the Village who had part of their living room as a shop where you could get groceries and all the oddments you needed, matches, tobaccos, sweets etc. Matches were two pence half penny for one dozen boxes, some tobacco at 2½d an ounce and some 3d and enough sweets for the family for 1d but were of poor quality.

The larger small holdings kept a pony and cart also a trap, they used to lead coal from the Station for the Villagers, their charge was 2/- a load about half a ton of coal cost 5/-, and taking visitors to and from the Station in the Trap was 1/6d.

There were all kinds of tradesmen and hawkers every day. There was in almost every Village a Blacksmith, Joiner, Shoemaker, Tailor and Vet. The Tailor would come to the Cottage when required and measure up the family for all their needs and stay there till all was made and fit and made up. The Cottagers fed and lodged him as part payment.

A Glazier used to come once a month with a case of glass strapped on his back. He gave us boys a penny each, 'Now,' he said, 'Get some windows broken or I shall soon be in the Workhouse. I don't know what's the matter with you boys, you've broken no windows for months.' He certainly got a bit of trade after but it was the end soon after the Police were called.

## ***School***

The School at Kirkby Fleetham in 1800 was a small Cottage on the North East side of the Village Green where now stands the bungalows called The Close. A small room which only held six scholars at a time, some went to school in the morning others in the afternoon and Miss Bolland was the Teacher. There was no compulsory going to school but 2d per head had to be paid to the Teacher every Monday morning. Many paid their dues had half a day at school the rest of the week went to work. An old man, Anthony Jeff, who died during the First World War at the age of 87 told me he went to this school. When the cottage was demolished in 1959 traces of the school was very clearly seen. The present School House and the first room adjoining was under construction at that time. The next room was added during my Father's School days in 1870, Mr Garret been the School Master. The wing on the back side was built during my school days in 1906 when approximately 140 Scholars attended. We were very fortunate we had a remarkable good School Master, Mr W Oliver. He turned out a lot of good Scholars some gaining very high positions. He took a keen interest in his Scholars and bought all kinds of things out of his own pocket to benefit them including cricket sets, football, quoits etc.

## ***Families***

The Blacksmiths shop next to the School was occupied by the Severs' family for well over 100 years. They came here from Cleasby near Darlington. Apart from shoeing horses they made ploughs and other farming implements.

At the other side of the road was the Veterinary Surgeon Mr J Fryer, his Ancestors lived at Green Gate and farmed there. Greengate House was afterwards let to a travelling theatrical family called Cliffords. After loosing a son by accident while playing on Kirkby Fleetham Green, who is buried in Fencote Church Yard, they left here and the house remained empty for many years.

The Metcalfe Family had the Black Horse Inn which was very small, the kitchen being used as the Bar.

The Three Tuns Inn at the bottom of the Village was occupied by Tallanteres in 1850 and owned by the Estate. There was a big long room above the stables at the back where the rent audit and dinner was served. The Village Concerts and Dances etc were held there. Travelling Salesmen had their sales in this room. The Inns were open all day from 8 am until 11 pm.

There was also another Blacksmiths shop at the end of the yard occupied by T Plews who later left and started business at Great Langton in 1899.

The house adjoining the Three Tuns Inn until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was occupied by two Millers, Burgess and Lambert, both Family's using the same staircase to go to bed. The mill was occupied by the Burgess Family for over 300 years. My Grandmother, and afterwards my mother, was asked by them to bake bread from their different grades of flour which won many Gold and Silver medals.

As a boy I used to go to the Mill for the Cottagers, for a stone of flour with a pillow case which was one shilling a stone. Many could not afford a sack which was 10 stone for nine shillings ready money.

The Mill was powered by two huge Water Wheels and steam. In 1910 a huge Gas Engine replaced the steam, the Fly Wheel of which weighed over three tons. After the Great War the Mill closed down owing to trouble flooding farm land.

### ***The Castle***

The remains of the Castle near the Mill still to be seen, the large Table Top mound standing approximately 12 feet above ground level and covering half an acre with the deep moat around and parts of the wall, was blown down by Oliver Cromwell about the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The draw bridge was on the East side, the Horselines on a separate mound facing South. There were seven towers on the Castle and an underground tunnel to Hornby Castle which was arched round with cobble stones, which was broken into by accident in 1935 when two horses ploughing in a field at Street House suddenly fell in, the roof of the tunnel having collapsed under them, one of the horses was injured, and in 1960 it was cut through near St Anne's Cross while constructing the dual carriage way. The Cromwell Guns were mounted on a mound one and a half miles away to the west and several cannon balls have been unearthed from time to time, one of which I sent to the Bowes Museum.

### ***St Mary's Church***

The Castle was occupied by the Stapletons. The first son of this family is buried in a crypt in the wall of St Mary's Church, his effigy in stone, known as the Crusader, lays on the top. A huge mound in the Church yard behind the Chancel with a cross mounted on top is where the remains of many people were re-buried.

They were dug out from under the floor to install coal fires for heating the Church towards the end of the last Century. In the west window there still remains some original medieval glass. The War Memorial for the Village men who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 is a large Alabaster Tablet fit into the wall near the font, cost £200, the money being raised by subscriptions. The names of the heroes killed are inscribed on this.

### ***Hall Farm, West Lowfields Farm***

The Hall Farm was farmed by a man named Henry Jackson who died in Bedale Workhouse, owing to his hospitality to the poor of the Village, he on more than one occasion has neglected his harvest by loaning a horse and cart to poor people to go for a load of coal.

The neighbour farmer Mr James Ingledew directly after harvest had all carts washed and greased and his men, (my Father being one) were sent to the nearest pit in Durham for coal which lasted through the winter. This was a 2 day journey, food for the horses and men were taken. The horses were unyoked at various places along the road where there was a pond or stream so the horses could get a drink and a feed. The miners used to look forward to them coming for a bit of Yorkshire pie. There were egg and bacon pies. As soon as they arrived at the pit the miners would dash up to them with the exclamation, 'Have you brought us a bit of Yorkshire pie, lad?' and they soon loaded the carts in return for the pie, the cost was half a crown a load.

In 1900 my Father was sent to Rainton near Boroughbridge with two horses and carts, a journey over 20 miles for two loads of scouring stone, for scouring the kitchen floors and door steps etc. This cost half a crown for the two loads and last over 40 years.

The present Farm House a West Low Fields was built in 1830, the late James Ingledew was first to be born in the house.

The builders came from Scruton and walked to work starting work at 6 am and finishing at 6 pm and took 6 months to complete. The bricks were made on top of the Terrace above the farm buildings, the clay pits are still there but gradually getting filled in, the Kilns remained there crumbling away until 1880. Part of the old Farm House still remains there as farm buildings, the bedrooms used as Granaries.

### ***Langton Bridge & River Swale***

The road from Kirkby Fleetham to Great Langton was just a rough cart track as far as North Low Fields, then more or less ruts to the river where there was a ford across the river and through the Langton farm yard to the main Northallerton road. The Langton Farm then belonging to the Kirkby Fleetham Estate where a boat was kept to row people across. Two pence per head was charged and the late Mrs J Stirk was the last boatswoman to row people across when she was a young girl living at the Langton Farm as a maid.

When the late Mr E H Courage became the owner of the Estate he had the Steel Bridge built together with subscribers. It was built by Dorman and Long,

Middlesbrough in 1902. A huge steel hammer was used to drive in the steel posts, weighing one ton. The steam engine stood on the main Great Langton Road for this purpose, most of these posts or stanchions were driven as far under ground as out. The second post on the left from Kirkby Fleetham was the most difficult, it struck rock and could not be budged after a whole days hammering, and four inches had to be cut off the top to make it level with the others.

There was a toll bar and three pence per wheel was charged, anything that could walk under the bar was free. All subscribers had a key, but others had to ring the bell and the occupants of the neighbouring farm took the toll and let them through, but this did not last much more than a year when the NRCC took over the bridge.

It is a treacherous river when in spate owing to the one hundred and ten feet of fall from Catterick Bridge to the Steel Bridge mentioned. It has claimed hundreds of farm stock from time to time. Mr Courage was told what a dangerous river it was, on seeing it in the summer when low he laughed and said, 'I've seen more water run down a gully.' He had not been very long when it burst over a hundred yards of banking in two places and flooded scores of acres leaving much damage.

Half a mile of new road was made at the outside of the river bank to suit the bridge, another small bridge was built over the stream at North Low Fields, the old original bridge over the stream is used for agricultural purposes and the old track over the river bank.

Beyond East Low Fields stood a large farmhouse which was owned by the Strangeways, and farmed at one time by a family who were also clippers and coiners. When the police got on to their track they moved to the Richmond area. Although strongly suspected they were never caught. This house was supposed to have one of the most beautiful staircases in the country. It also had secret rooms behind the very wide chimneys where the clipping and coining was undertaken. The house afterwards was occupied by an Aunt of mine who was rescued out of the bedroom window by boat after the river had burst its banks and flooded the area, which had been done a few times. They then left and went to Canada and the house remained empty for a few years, then somehow but never known, it got burnt down and the bricks etc were led away to build the Gamekeepers house near Kirkby Hall. It was then that the secret room was found which contained the clipping and coining apparatus.

### ***Raisin Hall***

Further across to the south west is Raisin Hall, a small holding which many years ago was a market garden owned by a family named Baines and later

by the Wildons. A cowshed built on a large piece of common land near the Penfold was owned by J Lambert already mentioned.

### ***The Penfold***

There were large patches of land in various parts of the parish of this nature. They were all enclosed during the first few years of 1900 after the enclosure act of 1831. The Landlord was never questioned on this until he enclosed the land and cow byre mentioned when he had five pounds to pay to the descendants of the said J Lambert for the building.

The Penfold opposite was destroyed in 1962 for road widening. The Penfold was the property of the Estate and watered by a stream running through one corner of the building, its purpose was for putting in stray cattle. The owner of the cattle had to pay one shilling per head to restore them. This was done away with after the 18<sup>th</sup> Century after youths for a joke took the Parsons pony out of his field several times, the Vicar having to pay one shilling each time for its recovery. It stood in a corner of the Home Garth field in which the Castle stood. I was told as a boy by an old gentleman that a man from a Village the other side of York had dreamt on three successive nights about the Castle here and had dug out a lot of treasure. He told his friends of the dream he had and described the place so clearly, a friend told him there was such a place and he had seen it. So they set off and came to the place and started to dig but were eventually stopped by the Bailiff.

### ***Fleetham Lodge***

We then travel further to the West to what used to be a most beautiful house standing in its thickly wooded grounds known as Fleetham Lodge. It was there where Mary Queen of Scots stayed one or more nights while on her escape before being caught at Leyburn Shawl and imprisoned at Bolton Castle.

Also the headless body of Lord Derwentwater who was executed for Treason on Tower Hill in 1716 at the age of 27 and was permitted to be buried at Dilston or Devils Stone in Northumberland, stayed one night at Fleetham Lodge on the journey, the home of John Conyers Hudson at that time.

This house was burned down in 1902 all except the room where the two said people stayed. This room facing the road North East remained intact, it belonged at that time to Mr W Plews who had the Leeming Bar Brewery.

### ***Fencote Hall***

His parents lived at Fencote Hall until approximately 1880 and indeed were the most valued people in the whole parish. Many poor families would have almost starved to death but for their hospitality. Half a beast was bought by them every week from the Butchers Shop and Slaughter House just across

the road (The Butchers Peacock Bros). This was boiled in a huge copper twice a week and made into a soup by their servants and Mothers and children would go with their cans on these days and were given this excellent soup in quantity according to the size of the family. Each Christmas the old people were given a Christmas dinner and a pair of blankets and flannel night gown and shirts, alternate year by year. Apart from this they supported all needy cases and are believed to have contributed to the building of St Andrews Church at Great Fencote in Gothic style.

### ***St Andrew's Church***

The present J Henderson's Great Grandfather who was a Joiner did all the woodwork which was all pitch pine. This was built by them to save many people a 3 and 4 mile walk to the Parish Church of St Mary's, there being no transport whatever apart from the farmers and tradesmen who went on Horseback and the Gentry in their highly polished Cabs and Phaetons which took ones eye with their Coachmen in High Shiners and Cockade and Long Whip.

### ***Families***

A little further from Fencote Hall stands a large House of Jacobean style, very nicely designed and built, which belonged to a William Walker who was a Brewer and owned the Farm adjoining. He was described as a very proud man. After his death in about 1880 he left the House and Farm to the late J Kirby and family, they were very kind and generous people, a real asset to the parish.

Almost opposite this is the Blacksmiths Shop owned by the Dodsworths for 4 or 5 generations, they were all outstanding Craftsmen in their trade.

A little further on the right hand side of the road stands 2 small cottages, until the year 1900 were a Public House. The Landlord at that time being Mr T Fletcher. He was also a clipper singer and Breaker for the Bedale Hunt Kennels, later taking the Kings Head at Bedale.

Then a few yards further on is Low Salutation which used to be a Coaching Inn and later becoming a Joinery business owned by The Hudsons who left the place about 1910, which is now a Farm House.

A little to the south on the Low Street as it is known locally is Stud Farm, this was the home of the famous local Jockey, John Osborne who lived and trained there until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century before moving to Richmond. After this the Bedale Kennels were moved to their present site and using some of the late Jockey's stables and Cottages for their staff.

Above the Kennels to the west we come to St Anns Cross, this is reputed to be the point where St Ann crossed the old Roman Road on her journey into Wensleydale.

The well built square cottage on the corner now a small holding used to be known as Mooters Castle and owned by the Burgess' Flour Mill at Kirkby Fleetham, is where a second Mooter used to take place, as used to be said by the old residents. 'Mooter' was a kind of measure taken from the sacks of corn which the farmers took there to be ground into meal or flour in lieu of pay for the services of grinding by the Millers.

To the left stands a quaint old building known as High Salutation which used to be a main Coaching Inn for the London to Newcastle Coaches. An old man William Jameson who died aged 94 before the Great War told how his father was Blacksmith at this Inn and his mother used to strike the big hammer for him. She wore a poke bonnet and was as rough and strong as a man. He also shod cattle driven from Scotland to the Yorkshire markets these were shod with a thin plate on the outside of each clove, these cattle were shod in order to save them from getting footsore on their very long journeys by road.

Further north is Glebe Farm which it is supposed to have been a Glebe for the parish of Melsonby, at one time.

### **Brewery**

Coming further down the Low Street we come to the Brewery which was owned by the late J & D Linton who brewed some very good beer and bottled spirit and like the Burgess's at the Mill employed a lot of local labour and also bought a lot of local farmers barley for this purpose. As a boy I have been sent to the brewery several times by the old women of the village for bottles of Whisky and Gin for medical purposes which cost half a crown a bottle for Whisky and two shillings for Gin. Beer was eight shillings for a nine gallon barrel if ready money was paid, nine shillings otherwise.

During the Brewery period we used to go with a barrow and get a large sack of grains for sixpence which fed the Cottagers pigs for quite a while.

Round the corner down Lumley Lane locally known as the Brewery Road, there is now a red house which used to be known as Delicate Barn which belonged to a small local farmer named Tommy Delicate. Afterwards it became the property of the Linton Brewery which they converted into a dwelling house for a workman. During harvest operations in 1875 in this barn when the corn was scamped, that was cutting with the old manual reaper, there used to be three or four sets of people in each, a man, woman and a boy, these followed the reaper at even distances round the field, the man

gathering with a special rake with four long teeth for the job. The women bound the sheaf and threw it clear of the machine for its next round and the boy made the bands, their wages were, the man 2/6, the woman 1/9, the boy 6d per day. It came a heavy shower one day they all ran into the barn and had to stay there until the corn was dry again. Being near the Brewery the boys were sent there for a pail of beef of which they all had a good drink before they took it into the barn. They were soon laid out drunk and had to be carried home. That ended the harvest for the day and the boys were taught a lesson they never forgot.

Further down this Lumley Lane is a Cottage known as Lane Villa which was built by Robert Atkinson a local joiner who lived at Fencote. There was a Butchers Shop there, Slaughter House, Stable and other buildings. The Butchers business was carried on by the Hares Family, later falling to a son George Hare who did not like Butchering took up photography and later had a studio at Northallerton.

The branch road from Lumley Lane known as Greengate Lane, to Kirby was the main road. The Kirby Lane, now the main road, was private and had a fence and gate across the road just above the Newkin Cottages. The Hearse was the only vehicle allowed up and people walking to Church and by coach on Sunday, all farm carts, tradesmen and cattle had to use the Greengate Lane. After the introduction of motor traffic it got severely trespassed, the gate and fence across the road had disappeared and no indication of privacy remained and eventually in 1928 was taken over by the Council.

### ***St Mary's Church***

Beyond the Hall Farm near the river stood the original Village of Kirby. The site and founds were unearthed during World War 2 when ploughing operations took place. This Village was washed away by the floods from the River Swale and the occupants had to flit and start building the present Village of Kirkby Fleetham, thus getting its name, 'Kirkby Flit(by)ham'. Ham being a Saxon word for village, so that becomes one reason why the Church is isolated from the Village.

According to History the Church of St Mary's was first built during the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Then the Monks rebuilt when they came to settle there in early 1200 and moved to Whitby in about 1400 when it became a private Church for sometime as a Monastery, the Vicar or Priest living on the site or near where now stands a Summer House by its entrance to the kitchen gardens of the Hall. The Church is built of stone in the Norman and Gothic styles consisting of Chancel and north side with south porch and transept and an embattled western tower containing 3 bells. The church was completely restored in 1872 in memory of Mrs Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence who's family previously owned the Estate and lived at the Hall and affords 220 sittings. The register

dates from 1591, it is in the Diocese of Ripon. It is reputed that the bells were the original cast in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. I was told by my Schoolmaster of two men who came from London to take a carbon copy of an inscription around the outer edge of the bells to verify this statement.

A very fine old sundial built in the Tower approximately 20 feet from ground has been proven by a late Sexton, Mr Issac Blakey, also the late Albert Blakey his son. The Tower used to be cloaked with ivy and was cut by the means of a small wood seat pulled up with a rope over a gin at the top of the Tower. The man doing the operation with a Slasher pulled himself up to any height required. The last man to do this job was Mr R Pearson when almost at the top he accidentally cut the rope. He now lies buried where he fell on the ground, after this sad accident the ivy was destroyed approximately in the year 1880.

But there is usually a silver lining to every dark cloud and so it was in the case of a former old Sexton, his son who was a Butcher bought some cheap carcasses from local farmers which were infected with disease and sold the meat after which many people became very ill from which some died. The Police of course got on the trail and the old Sexton his son in the Church Tower and took him food and drink every day for a period of nearly six months until he had got all the necessary arrangements made for him to go abroad. Then suddenly one night he disappeared from the Tower and went overseas where he did extremely well. He certainly had some good friends to hold their peace although knowing full well he could not be arrested in the Church.

There are some rather curious and interesting Tomb Stones in the Church Yard, the Epitaph of one:

‘Erected to the memory of Elizabeth Brown who departed this life February 24<sup>th</sup> 1836 aged 70 years.

Farewell Vain world I’ve had enough of thee  
And now am careless what thou sayest of me  
Thy smiles I court not nor thy frowns I fear  
My cares are past and my head lies quiet here  
What faults you saw in me take care to shun  
And look at home enough theres to be done  
Where’er I liv’d or dyd it matters not  
To whom related or by whom begot  
You now cannot ask no more of me  
Tis all I am and all that you shall be.

From what I was told many years ago by an old Local Joiner, Elizabeth was a single woman who had 5 or 6 children, in those days a girl who had such an

unfortunate moral lapse was despised and ignored by the rest of the community and had a very hard life.

Another Epitaph in memory of George Morgan who died 1814.

All Travellers who may pass by  
Stop here a while and cast an eye  
Like you in Life I once was gay  
The next moment turned to clay  
My Wife and seven children dear  
And honoured Sister mourn me here  
With them on earth I hoped to stay  
But God he called me hence away.

Another for the Family of T Burgess who died 1852 aged 74 years.

Blessed Angels guard their sleeping dust  
Till Jesus comes to wake the just  
O may they wake with sweet surprise  
And in the Saviours pinage rise

### ***Water Courses***

There are three strong streams which supply the farmlands with water, two crossing the Lowfields road north east of the village, the first known as the Old Woman's Beck, the other as the Fiddle Beck. The third one at the west of the village is known as Tee Wath, which crosses the Lumley Lane just below Friars Garth Farm. The farm house stands on the site of an early church or place of worship which stood there in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century before St Mary's Church was built. There is an indication of this by a stone coffin still on the farm, used by the farmer, Mr Whitfield, as a water trough.

### ***Kirby Hall***

Sir Miles Stapleton's descendants after the destruction of the Castle who died in 1290 took up residence on the site of the present Kirkby Hall. Afterwards it became the home of William Laurance who died in 1785. He being heir to the Estate, had, it is understood the Hall rebuilt. His coat of Arms beautifully carved on huge blocks of stone are still to be seen in the Stable yard near the Hall. They were removed from above the doors of the Hall by the late Mr E H Courage when he completely restored the Hall soon after taking possession of the Estate in 1888.

There is a very close connection with Kirkby Fleetham and Ripon with the Laurances. This has been proven by the most beautiful carving in white marble of the Weeping Lady in memory of the said William Laurance, carved by the famous Sculptor John Flaxman. There are also being a huge monument in Ripon Market Place strongly guarded by iron railings to this effect. The Laurances also owned Studley Royal Estate.

The Pools were also a noted family living at South Lowfields at the end of the old green lane in 1670, one of his sons died in May 1750 aged 65 another son died in November 1782 aged 84. Very little remains of the house and farm buildings, the area being fenced round and planted with trees, locally known now as the old house planting. Further to the East is a belt of trees stretching from near the present South Lowfields to the River which is still known as Pools Planting.

Until two years ago at the South East end of the Village was the entrance gates to the terrace stood on each side a strong built dwelling of dressed stone, Castle like style, the living room at one side of the drive entrance, the bedroom at the other, the occupants having to go outside cross the road six or eight yards to go to bed. The rent of this was ten shillings a year, the occupier acting as Gatekeeper and Bailiff for the Terrace. A few hundred yards further on was a row of Beech Trees with seats around them, a short distance from this was a Summer House one of four or five spaced out to the end of the wood near Hooker Hill, all of different designs and material.

An old man, George Dobson, used to sleep in the latter near Hooker Hill in a kind of attic in the roof and did occasional work for the neighbouring farmers. In 1870, when he died a very strange thing was revealed. The lanes round about were supposed to be haunted and very weird noises was heard at intervals, people when they heard these awful sounds dropped their groceries and parcels and ran, this carried on for a few years. Then afterwards in the old man's Summer House attic was found a riddle with a sheep skin tightly bound over this and it was with this contraption that the awful weird noises were made, thus the man was living very well by terrifying other people and collecting their groceries etc.

Back again down the Terrace we come to the old back lane, a very steep bank leading to the Hall Farm rather a dangerous bank in the Winter time. It needed a very good horse to pull a ton up or shaft one down. A powerful and valuable horse many years ago coming down this, its load was large Bottles of Vitrol the horse stumbled, a bottle was broken and splashed the horse which almost went mad with pain and finished up in the deep ravine below, where it died from severe burns. At the bottom of the bank built under the clay bank is the old Ice House which contained a brick built pit or well eight feet deep, this pit was filled with Ice in the Winter led by horses and carts from ponds on the Estate. Usually two men breaking up the Ice on the ponds and with a drag pulled the Ice into heaps around the edge ready for the carters to lead away. This was tipped into the doorway of the first compartment, other two men putting it into the pit, one shovelled it in, the other had a beater with a long shaft which beat the Ice tightly into the pit, salt being sprinkled over this at the same time. Then kept for use in the Summer.

Immediately beyond this are two staff cottages which according to history I am told by Col. J Courage used to be a kind of Brewery which brewed home made beer and wines, later becoming a Farm House, for many years before being converted into cottages, a stone above the door dates 1679.

Then past the Hall we come to a long steep foot path along the side of the wood then across the Terrace onto the main road known as Bumpty Corner.

The footpath, a right of way to the Church, called Bumpty immediately below is the long gallop where race horses were trained in the eighties.

Down to the village close to the Newkin Cottages in a small field can be seen traces of the Tythe Barn which belonged to the Vicarage many years ago, where the Parsons Tenth was stored. This was a very sore point with most Farmers, in those days when the actual Tenth was taken a lot of cheating took place. During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century most of these Tythes were bought up by the Squire thus saving a lot of unpleasantness.

We come a few yards further down to Wood View, a Small holding which I occupy, above the front door is a stone upon which is carved PTA 1743, this stands for Pearson, Thomas and Annie, who were Joiners. His brother living opposite the Black Horse Inn was a Stone Mason, they helped to build the Railway workshops in Darlington. They walked to Darlington to work using footpaths most of the way which cut the journey considerably. They walked there on Sunday night and returned the following Saturday night and did this for two to three years.

In or about the year 1855 William Walker became the occupier and carried on his business as Joiner and Wheelwright. The Joiners Shop was attached to the house with two double doors opening to the road. The late Mr Robert Mallaby became apprentice here later becoming Estate Joiner afterwards on his own account with a Joiners shop at Great Fencote. Then carried on by his son, Mr H Mallaby, with a shop at Kirkby Fleetham.

### ***Village Hall & Green***

On the site of the Village Hall used to be a full set of Farm buildings including six stalled stable, cow byre, coach house and granaries etc. These buildings were cleared in 1928 for the building of the Village Hall. Until then the buildings belonged to the Vicarage which is supposed to have been the Farm House.

The Village Green with its roads through is supposed to be six acres but part of the Green,  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre, was enclosed many years ago, the enclosed portion now a garden. The Green had quite a lot of fine trees a few years ago some

of which were unique being a variegated Sycamore, others were Lime and Elm.

At the north end of the Village Green at the Cross Roads stands a big Sycamore tree known as Prince of Wales Tree. This was planted after a Ceremony when King Edward VII became Prince of Wales. A little further up on the other side of the road is the Flag Pole which was put in by the late Mr E H Courage in 1910 for the Coronation of George V, when the hole was dug out by the Estate men ready for the concrete base the Schoolmaster, Mr William Oliver put all the names of his Scholars inside a bottle which was placed within the concrete, also in another bottle the names of the Estate men who did the job.

### ***Reading Room***

A little way from this stands what used to be the Reading Room and Billiard Room etc, this at one time was a small cottage which was converted into the Reading Room by the Squire for the benefit of the Parish in 1900 for which a rent was charged at one shilling a year. My mother being the Caretaker for the whole period of its existence as such approximately 35 years.

### ***Cricket Pitch***

In 1892 the Cricket Pitch was relaid and levelled and a new metal roller was supplied by the Squire and was weighted by ballast of water weighing one ton. Two years later the water was not drained and the frost cracked one side and still remains so today. Later the plugs were taken out and filled with sand. The previous roller was a five foot wide stone one and very uneven. This was dumped at the wood end and is now in the Bowes Museum. The posts around the pitch were huge and clumsy standing on four legs and were very awkward to move. Cattle and Horses grazing on the Green knocked them over. Then Metal Sockets were set in the ground for the posts to fit into these, being my Father's invention. Cricket in those days was not a working mans pleasure.

### ***Kirkby Fleetham Feast***

Kirkby Fleetham Feast and Show used to be the greatest day of the year which is held on the second Monday and Tuesday of August, often starting on the Saturday and finishing on Wednesday. People came from miles around to show and meet their friends. There was always a show for the best cottagers pig, the pens being erected in the late Mr G Fryers, Veterinary Surgeon's field, with the farmers mares at the other side of the field.

All the women in the Village had a baking day before this and two men would go from house to house with a clothes basket collecting cakes etc, on the Monday morning and everyone, where ever he came from got a good feast free. Through this it is supposed to be the reason of the word feast.

The sports were always very good and amusing. The first set of steam roundabouts that came in 1888 were made at Leeming and they were bicycles connected with long iron rods and driven round a track by steam, but were not very successful to the owner, for when he cut off the steam to stop, the youths used to set off and pedal them for quite some time. The following year they came they had a brake fixed to stop them. This was the last time, the more modern ones came after. There have been three sets on the green at once. The steam engine that drove them also the vans were drawn from place to place by horses.

After the feast the next big event was the 5<sup>th</sup> November which was eventually curtailed. The youths threw onto the fire garden gates and even a Pony trap, which got severely burnt before the owner recognised it who was acting as Stoker.

There was a Policeman almost in every Village in the eighties, like the Special Constables of today but no uniform, usually a big burly man was chosen for the job.

### ***Farm Work***

There were scores of farm youths on the farms in and around the parish before the Great War all living in at farms. The hirings in the local towns was a great day for them. They lined up in the market place for hire and were bombarded with all kinds of questions on farming and do's and don'ts including your religion. Church or Chapel you had to go at least once on a Sunday or you had to have a very good reason for not attending. Usually £5 to £6 for the year for a lad, rising up to £18 to £20 for a man, from 5.30 am to 5.30 pm and plenty of unpaid overtime in Hay and Harvest. Many farmers got their youths from down south, they were a pound or so a year cheaper.

There were a few characters among the farmers. One at his farm sale many years ago sold eleven lads boxes who had run away from time to time. Another would get up at 2 am and run the iron wheeled barrow up and down the corser under the lads bedroom and shout at the top of his voice, 'Good morning Mr Robinson are you here already, and our men are in bed yet'. Of course the Mr Robinson did not exist. The lads hearing this were up and outside in a jiffy but the youths eventually got wise, one bought a watch at the hirings, one day he was leading turnips, the farmers helping saw him looking at his watch grabbed it from him and banged it on the cart wheel saying, 'I'll tell you when to loose without that thing'.

I could tell truthfully a lot of mean tricks that were played on the Farm Worker in those days. A Farm Worker was merely a slave and a convenience for the Farmer and spoken to like a dog. A lot of the Farmers had no manners and

would have been lost in their business had it not been for the experience of the Worker. Although they were not all like this there were many good first class reasonable Farmers. A man who was lucky enough to get a job with the latter usually stayed his life with them. In a lot of cases the Farmer was little better off than the worker. £10 an acre was said to be needed to take a farm. This was to fully stock live and dead and a years rent etc. but many have been taken with considerably less capital and have done extremely well. It was common to see scores of acres laid waste and even derelict farms. But all land no matter what condition is valuable today.

A plough, harrows, cart and grass reaper were the chief implements, many had no more. This land was and had to be well ploughed with a nine inch fur and the corn was sown by hand on this and harrowed in. Rows were made with the single mouldboard plough and split, which would give the modern farmworker of today a headache, much of the work was done by hand with very quaint old tools which needed strength and skill. The farm labourer as he was called deserved a much better title than this, he was indeed a very conscientious and experienced hard worker. He was easily spotted when in town by his dress and walk and was often scoffed at by the Town people with shouts of 'Milkey Bungy' and 'Get lasts weeks cow muck off your boots' etc, which was sheer ignorance as he was still is their bread and butter. But as the old proverb says 'money makes the mare go but manners make the Gentleman'. As an old Gentleman said to me some time ago 'I love all horses, most dogs but only some people'.

There was quite a lot of class distinction, if a person got a few pounds into his pocket it certainly swelled his head, even onto his last rites when the Capitalists Coffin was taken up the Altar and the poor man's Coffin went to the back of the Church. Thank goodness this old custom was stopped by Canon Walker when he became Vicar of Kirkby Fleetham in 1919.

A little more about St Mary's Church, before restored there was round the walls private boxes complete with seats and doors for each family.

The old Band Stand was used as a Thrashing Board by the late J Ingledew also his son Henry until his death in 1933.

An old cottage at Fencote demolished recently was left by the owner occupier to the Church to be used as a meeting room for Church affairs in or about 1880 was locally known as the Gossip House.

The Wesleyan Chapel at Great Fencote was built in 1913 to replace an older building nearby. All the Farmers in the Parish helped in some shape or form by leading bricks or gravel etc. There has been one or two wedding at the Chapel.

The Fencote Green is common land and hawkers and Caravans could stay on the Green for long periods, whereas Kirkby Fleetham Green carried Manorial Right and the stay for these vans etc was limited to twenty four hours. The fall of this Green is 12 foot. The roads were very narrow and rough and all made from stones from the river, these were raked into rows on the river bed by the road men with iron rakes, then eight or ten Horses and Carts hired from the Farmer by the Council would have a few days leading the stones at intervals during the year. These were tipped every 40 yards along the road sides, 4 load in a heap. They were afterwards broken by the road men who were usually two very old men, some of these were used for patching, the Horse and Carts pressing them in. The Steam Roller being used for resurfacing.

The first Steam Engine used for Thrashing in the Parish was by the late Mr J Engledew in 1860 but these were portable and to be transported by Horses. Two horses were used for the Engine and two for the Thrasher, they were mounted on low metal wheels and were a heavy draught. There were no tiers and the straw was handled loose or tied up by hand, prior to this the thrashing was done by usually 4 horses yoked into the starts of the old horse Wheel. He was the first Farmer to get a Self Binder, a Hornsby, which needed four horses to pull and was only a four foot cut. It was badly damaged by the women when left in the field at night, the women thought they were getting done out of a days work. This machine tied up the sheaves with wire, this was a very troublesome task when it came to thrashing and was later made to tie up with string.

Quite a sensation was caused near this farm in the Terrace by a Gamekeeper who thought there were poachers around. He set some man traps to catch them but instead of that he forgot where he had placed them and got into one himself which broke both his legs. He also got instant dismissal. The traps were then broken up by the Squire.

### ***Morton Bridge Ghost***

My Grandfather, Miller Jim, as locally known, has told me many times that he along with others from Great Fencote used to walk to Morton Bridge to cry down a Ghost. There was a Murder there of a young woman, she lived at Leeming Bar and jilted her young man who was a farmer. He came on horseback one night and told her that her Grandmother was very ill and wished to see her, he said he would take her on the horse to Fairholme where she lived, she agreed and off they went. When they got to Morton Bridge she realised he was taking her the wrong way so she jumped off the horse and ran getting over the railings near the Bridge, her dress got caught in some wire and she fell backwards over. It was then the Murder was committed. Afterwards the Ghost of the young Lady appeared and people

from the surrounding villages with the Vicar went at alternative bights to cry down the Ghost which took a year.

The working class people were indeed very poor, the average wage for a man was from 15/-d to 18/-d per week. A lot of their children were very poorly fed and clothed and wore all kinds of quaint old clothing whether they fit or not. I have seen boys wearing ladies costume coats, braided and leg of mutton sleeves as they were called, I have worn clothes far too big for me. The poor old mothers used to say with a sad heart 'Never mind you are covered up and nobody will ask you what you wore when you grow up'.

### ***Music***

They were really sad days financially but happy and loving in other respects. The people on the whole were very kind and generous and many excellent Craftsmen and some very clever Musicians who would certainly have made fame had they been living today in 1966.

One outstanding character, Jackson Dent, played the Cornet in Catterick Band. He could play almost any kind of instrument. He travelled all over England with the Theatrical party named Cliffords, previously mentioned. The travels of course were made by Horses and Vans in those days. He was also an expert in Hedge Laying.

Another old man, George Merrington, a Monumental Mason who had carved many of the Tomb Stones in the local Church Yard could play anything on a penny Tin Whistle, also a Gew Gow 'Jews Harp', he could make them talk as the old people used to say.

George Walton who lived in the Cottage which became The Reading Room went by the name of Wallops which was the name of a game or sport of his which he took around the country to all the Shows during the Summer.

Before the Great War the Hurdy Gurdies used to visit the Villages once or twice a week some took a monkey with them for collecting the coppers. The German Bands often came, one old man Tom Pennock a Mason who was a fine Violinist would loose half a days work to hear them play. He used to say whether I go to Heaven or Hell I shall have to come back to hear the German Bands.

### ***Cricket Teas***

The Village had a first class Cricket Team and many notable Cricketers have played on the green.

My Mother used to provide the lunch, she used to boil a whole ham of two stone or more in the Copper and vegetables etc out of the garden. She cleared a very large bedroom and the sitting room and put in benches and chairs where the lunch was served. For the whole thing she received £5 from the Club.

The majority of couples who married were both locals and walked to the Church to be married, many had less than £5 saved for this purpose and set up their homes.

### ***Reading Matter***

There were few newspapers. The Darlington and Stockton Times being the chief paper which came to Leeming Bar Station every Saturday morning. An old lady, Mrs Fishburn from Fencote walked with a pram, sometimes a barrow, to the station three miles every Saturday morning, then delivered them to the Villages and out laying farms for many years, which took a full day, for which she received 4/-d, it was considered as a good well paid job. An Evening Paper came to Scruton by the 7pm train and we had the delivery of these for many years. My elder brother and sister walked to the station 2½ miles every night, and delivered the Evening Paper for which they received 4/6d a week. The price of the Darlington and Stockton Times was 1d, the Evening Paper ½d. After this the Northern Echo came every morning in the same way as the others to the station and delivered by a local agent which was a ½d and a great blessing it was.

I like many more have taken the Northern Echo since it first appeared in the Village about 50 years ago or more. There were of course other weekly and monthly papers such as Tit Bits and Police News. Many after being read, were handed round the Village to people who could not afford to buy one at even then the very low price. Some together with Magazines, Books etc were sent to the Reading Room by the Gentry for the benefit of the poor.

These of course are talked about today as the Good Old Days