

FOREWORD

I have been privileged to live and work in this beautiful part of North Yorkshire for most of my life. The 'hillside villages' with their backdrop of the Hambleton Hills have always been the jewels in this area's crown, and I feel very fortunate to have lived in Thirlby, 'up the road' from Boltby, for the last 27 years.

Even in my lifetime there have been vast changes. My late father, local Veterinary Surgeon Alf Wight (better known to the outside world as James Herriot), immortalised the way of life in the farming community of the 1940s and 1950s in his books. I welcomed the opportunity to write a short foreword to this history of Boltby, which looks back to the 'Herriot era', and far beyond that to life as it was centuries ago.

My first introduction to Boltby and its surroundings was as my father's 'assistant'. As a very young child I would travel around the farms with him; my jobs included opening gates along farm tracks, and fetching medicines and equipment from the boot of the car and delivering them to him in the shed or byre where he was working. I also entertained him in the car between visits with a wide variety of songs and nursery rhymes, not to mention an endless stream of questions. I took my 'work' very seriously; in fact, I considered myself indispensable. When I reached the age of five and had to start school, I was desperately worried as to how Dad would manage without me. I still undertook my duties at weekends, but I was most relieved when he seemed to be coping reasonably well through the week.

Throughout our childhood Dad made very sure that we got to know and appreciate the local countryside. Every week he would take my brother and me, sometimes with some of our school friends, on a 'Sunday Outing'; we looked forward to these occasions eagerly. For the most part our expeditions were around the Boltby area; favourites included the Drover's Road, Boltby quarry, the reservoir, Lake Gormire, the White Horse and Boltby woods. We would walk and explore, climb trees and pick flowers; my pressed flowers, fifty years on, still fall from the pages of Dad's old Veterinary textbooks. He also engendered in us an interest in the history of our surroundings; we would clamber over tumuli and amongst ruins searching for flints or ancient coins (mostly unsuccessfully), or try to imagine what the quarries of Kewick and Boltby were like in their working heyday.

At the age of eighteen, I left Thirsk to study medicine. I missed home terribly. At the end of each term, at the first opportunity, I would borrow my mother's car, take our Jack Russell terrier, Hector, and drive to the top of Sutton Bank. Weighed down, in my perception, by the trials and tribulations of another term of University life, I would walk along to that first glorious comer above the Whitestone Cliff and drink in the view over Sutton, Boltby and Thirlby to the Vale of York and the Pennines beyond. There was something comforting about the fact that it had not changed since the last time I'd stood there; somehow it enabled me to put my own little problems in perspective. As this history of Boltby shows, people and their experiences change rapidly; the landscape does not.

A few years after qualifying as a doctor, I was lucky enough to be offered a partnership in General Practice in Thirsk. I settled in Thirlby and worked as a GP for more than 20 years. There was a sense, even then, of history repeating itself; now it was my daughter, Emma, and our Labrador dog, Polly, accompanying me on my visits to human patients. I have many and varied memories of working in the Boltby area - some happy, some terribly sad. Occasionally it was quite exciting; I was once met at the bottom of Sneck Yate by a tractor when the snow was too deep for my car to get to High Paradise - not quite 'Herriotesque' but an adventure at the time.

These are just a few of the countless memories which constitute my own personal history of Boltby. I was fascinated to read in this book a detailed account of how present day Boltby has evolved. My father would have loved it. He was an avid reader of historical biographies, and on our many holidays together he was never happier than when he was exploring stone circles, ruined dwellings and old graveyards, from the dramatic ruins of Pompeii to the castles and Pictish 'brochs' of the Highlands of Scotland. This book would have been 'right up his street'.

I applaud the efforts of those who have painstakingly researched and put together this book. There is something in it to interest anybody fortunate enough to live, or have lived, in Boltby or its environs; I wish it every success.

Rosie Page

INTRODUCTION

Many hundreds of people have unknowingly framed this story, their individual lives creating the overall picture.

The villagers of Boltby decided that the turn of the second millennium should be marked by a lasting memento which would serve the whole community; after some debate it was agreed that there should be two objectives. Firstly the history of the village should be recorded and secondly money raised for the Village Hall. A Local Heritage Initiative (a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency) Grant made both objectives possible.

Various lumps and bumps in fields to the north of the village were thought to be signs of earlier habitation and the Grant was also used for archaeological surveys to see if this were true. The villagers of Boltby, with the help of many kind friends, have written the various elements of this book. The research they undertook has unearthed a history of Boltby, the people, their dwellings, their work and leisure activities as well as evidence of their much earlier ancestors. This record provides a fascinating insight into Boltby's past.

The income from the sale of this book will go towards the maintenance of Boltby Village Hall.

We hope you enjoy reading about us and our Village.