Oswaldkirk
a living village
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Part One
2002
View of village from the west. Taken by Lindsay McLane, September 2002.
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Editorial

This is not a history of a village in the generally accepted sense and although it is a story of the past it is also about the present. It is founded on primary source material, memories, record books, minutes of meetings and newspaper reports. We have mainly avoided secondary sources in an attempt to reflect in as lively a way as possible, the real residents of Oswaldkirk, how they live and lived, what they did and thought and how they speak and spoke. People have lived below the Hag possibly since before the Roman occupation and certainly since the Anglo-Saxons discovered that the site provided ideal shelter from wind and weather. They live here now and we have included a brief section about contemporary life, proof that Oswaldkirk is still, after all these years, a living village.

Philip Entwistle
**Geological Origins**

Oswaldkirk lies in a sheltered position under the hill with natural springs of water. This has made it an ideal place to live for probably hundreds of years. Gradually people might have inhabited the area after the end of the last Ice Age, ten thousand years ago.

Our part of the world has been described in these words: Over one hundred million years ago, in the Jurassic period, most of Yorkshire was under a shallow sea with various layers of silt, sand, shale and clay. This was the age of monstrous marine reptiles of the Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus type. They may have hunted over this area.

The layer over the clay is Coralline Oolite (Coral Rag) and is composed of alternate layers of coarse shelly limestone, full of fossils and a hard flinty limestone known as calcareous grit. Exposures of this limestone can be found in quarries in the Oswaldkirk Hag, and fossils, especially the snail types, gastropods, are often found in local gardens and fields.

Then at the bottom of the sea was deposited a dark slaty clay, the Kimmeridge clay. Changes happened in the earth’s crust and there appeared a great double fault system of the Coxwold – Gilling Gap. Two faults ran east and west at about the level of Oswaldkirk and Gilling, the strata along this line snapped and the space between then sank down. The valley became quite flat before opening out to the vale of Pickering.

In more recent times in the Ice Age glacial sheets, unable to over-ride the Cleveland Hills, swept round both sides, blocking the outlet of the rivers to the east. Another glacier skirted the Hambleton Hills and dammed the Ampleforth valley. Then the vale of Pickering was blocked up and filled with water.

*This information is taken mainly from “The Ampleforth Country” First Edition.*

Helen Goodman
Early History

The parish of Oswaldkirk is in the district of Ryedale in the county of North Yorkshire. Named after the church dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon King Oswald, the parish is made up of two townships, Oswaldkirk and Newton Grange. The township of Oswaldkirk is a village situated on the south facing bank of the Hambleton Hills overlooking the Coxwold-Gilling Gap and beyond to the Howardian Hills. Newton Grange is situated on higher land to the north east and consists of four farmsteads, Newton Grange, West Newton Grange, Golden Square Farm and Bank Top Farm. Earthworks provide the earliest evidence of settlements in the area. Early Bronze Age round barrows and a Bronze Age ring ditch are visible in the north of the parish just south of Dropping Gill Plantation. Later medieval field systems can be seen to the south of Oswaldkirk Hall along with the medieval parish boundary-bank on the Oswaldkirk-Gilling border.

The first recorded reference to Oswaldkirk is in the Domesday Book in which it is referred to as Oswaldecherca or Oswaldecherce. The main land tenants are recorded as the Count of Mortain and Berenger de Tosny. Robert, Count of Mortain, was the largest land holder in the country after the king, with holdings in nineteen counties. Berenger de Tosny was the second son of Robert de Tosny (founder of Belvoir Castle) who had holdings in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire as well as in Yorkshire. (Hinde, 1985). Before this date there is no documentary evidence. Some think that a monastery was begun on a site opposite the church in the 9th century and never finished, but there is no documentary evidence for this either. Some have also suggested that the site was used by the monks from Byland before Byland Abbey was completed. The Abbey records are however quite complete and make no mention of Oswaldkirk. Local historians believe that the ruins described by George Frank (1888) in his book ‘Ryedale and North Yorkshire Antiquities’ are more likely to be from an early manor house than from any form of monastic building. Rushton (1986) reports that ‘fragments of a 15th century building have been found there, with Pickering family coats-of-arms from an early hall’. There are still three shields of the Pickering family, lords of the manor from 1316 to 1661, visible on the retaining wall beside the road opposite the church.

Written deeds are available from 1566 at which point the acreage of the manor was approximately 700 acres. This consisted of 100 acres of land (unspecified usage, presumed to be arable as meadows and pasture are listed separately), 50 acres of meadows, 150 acres of pasture, 200 acres of wood and 200 acres of heather. Plus 10 messuages (‘messuage’ is defined as a dwelling-house and its adjacent land and buildings), 20 cottages, 10 barns, 34 gardens, 10 orchards and an unspecified acreage of common. (Sumner Marriner, undated)

The Pickering family and their descendants remained owners of the Manor of Oswaldkirk until 1661 when the property was bought by a Mr William Moore. Dissatisfied with the old residence he pulled it down and in the late 17th century he built what is now known as the Malt Shovel Inn and then went on to build the present Hall.
The exact date of the Hall is not known but Michael Hanson (1986) of Country Life Magazine writes that his colleague at Country Life, Giles Worsley, puts it at around 1683.

The 1600s were troubled times, with the Civil War and the associated disruptions of church life. Much of the ancient stained glass in the region was destroyed at the time, probably by Parliamentary troops involved in the siege of Helmsley castle. There is no record of any direct involvement at Oswaldkirk, but Rector John Denton had become a Presbyterian minister in 1658 at a time when the Anglican Prayerbook was banned. He was a friend of the future Archbishop Tillotson who is said to have preached his first sermon at Oswaldkirk in Denton’s time. When the ‘New’ 1662 prayerbook was introduced, Denton refused to conform and was ejected. He went to live at East Newton with his in-laws, the Thorntons. Whilst there he got to know the new 20 year old Rector of Stonegrave, Thomas Comber, who was lodging at East Newton. Comber married a Thornton daughter and as a scholar and theologian eventually convinced ‘Uncle Denton’ to join the Episcopal Anglican church, and he became Rector of Stonegrave on May 27th, 1700. Thomas Comber went on to become Dean of Durham.

In 1768 the York-Oswaldkirk Turnpike Trust was created under an act for amending and widening the road from the city of York to the top of Oswaldkirk Bank. A turnpike had already been created in 1757 between Sproxton and Golden Square which was extended a year later to Oswaldkirk Bank Top. But it was not until 1803 that the Oswaldkirk Turnpike Trust finally set about bringing the Bank up to the standard of the rest. Whilst many turnpikes merely took over and improved existing roads the turnpike road from Helmsley to Oswaldkirk to Gilling was a largely new construction. The road was re-routed from Helmsley so it passed to the west of Sproxton and from Golden Square Farm it kept on the high ground above Newton Grange and West Newton Farm. The Oswaldkirk to Gilling section was a completely new link as earlier routes had been from Gilling to Ampleforth and not directly to Oswaldkirk. (Perry, 1977)

The Manor of Oswaldkirk passed from William Moore to his daughter and then to the Banner family. Upon the marriage of Mary Banner to Richard Oakley in April 1811 the title deeds show that the manor has more than doubled in size since the earlier description of 1566. The manor is described as consisting of 20 messuages, 15 cottages, 35 gardens, 35 orchards and around 1900 acres of land. The land is described as: 800 acres of land, 500 acres of meadows, 500 acres of pasture, 100 acres of wood along with unspecified acreage of common. (Sumner Marriner, undated).

The Rectory was extended in a more gracious style in 1836 by Rector Thomas Comber, for the princely sum of £1245 10s. Until the parish boundaries were tidied up in 1856, a substantial part of Oswaldkirk parish was in detached sections, mainly in what is...
now Ampleforth parish. These included the fields between Beacon Farm and Studfold Farm and ‘The Royalty’ near Tom Smith’s Cross. Other sections lay between Mill Farm, Ampleforth and Carr Lane and also part of the Ampleforth Abbey lands.

The last lord of the manor to own the whole village was Colonel Musgrave Benson who bought it in 1907 from the Trustees of the Page Henderson family.

Newton Grange is also mentioned in the Domesday Book and at this time was part of the Parish of Sproxton rather than Oswaldkirk. Around 1200 AD Robert, Lord of Sproxton, gave around a 1000 acres at Newton Grange to Rievaulx Abbey who held the land until the dissolution. Medieval field systems are still visible to the north of Newton Grange.

It is not clear at what time Newton Grange Township became part of the parish of Oswaldkirk. Roger Dodsworth the famous antiquarian who compiled the ‘Monasticon Anglicanum’ tells us in his preface that he was ‘born on April 24th, 1585 – at Newton Grange in the parish of Saint Oswald’s in Ryedale’. (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Helmsley and Area Group, 1963.) In 1639 Sir Henry Cholmley purchased the whole of Newton Grange Township and set about an ambitious building programme. In addition to a manor house, a chapel was built in a nearby field. In 1706 the estate passed into the hands of Sir Charles Duncombe who set about restoring the house to become his main residence, however his successor in 1713 promptly abandoned the plan and Duncombe Park was built instead. The Duncombes continued to own Newton Grange, restoring the chapel in 1765. (Yorkshire Archaeological Society: Helmsley and Area Group, 1963)

The chapel stopped being used for public worship around 1820 and by 1859 was little more than a barn. In 1879 it was decided to move the chapel. It was then moved stone by stone to its present position beside the Helmsley road in Sproxton. (Goodall and Laver, 1949)

Alison Hampshire and David Goodman

Sproxton Church
Owners of the Manor of Oswaldkirk

10th Century - Uctred.

1086 - Count of Mortain – given by William the Conqueror, his half brother.

1200 - Richard de Surdeval.

1230? - John de Surdeval had two daughters – Maud m. Peter de Jarpenvill and Emma m. William de Barton. William died in 1284.

1280? - Nicholas de Barton.

1284? - William de Barton.

1316 - Joan de Barton m. Richard de Pickering (1st).

1348 - Thomas de Pickering (1st) & Margaret. Thomas died in 1348.

1355 - Richard de Pickering (2nd).

1427 - Richard de Pickering (3rd).

1441 - John de Pickering.

1470? - Thomas de Pickering (2nd) died in 1509.

1509 - William de Pickering (1st). In 1513 he was Knight Marshall to Henry VIII, probably the last occupant of the Pickering House in Oswaldkirk. (He married Eleanor, daughter of William Fairfax).

1542 - William de Pickering (2nd). At age 24 years he was attached to the Court as a courtier and diplomat – he was said to be a possible suitor for Queen Elizabeth, but died unmarried in 1574.

1574 - Hester Pickering was William's illegitimate daughter. She married Lord Edward Wotton (1st). She died in 1596.

1625 - Their son, Edward (Thomas?) Wotton (2nd), conveyed the land to …

1628 - Nicholas Pay who held the Manor. In 1630 Anne, Nicholas’ eldest daughter, married Sir Edward Hales (1st).

1654 - Edward (2nd), their son, became a Roman Catholic and follower of James II.

1661 - William Moore (1st) bought the land and manorial rights from Edward Hales. William died in 1681.

1674 - William Moore (2nd). William built the present Hall for daughter Mary sometime after 1690. He died in 1720.

1700 - Mary Moore inherited. She married Edward Thompson, M.P. for York.

1784 - John William Banner, cousin of Mary Thompson, inherited.

1811 - Thomas Banner and Mary Banner, son and daughter of John William Banner inherited. Thomas died in 1826 and Mary married Richard Banner Oakley in 1811. She died in 1838.

1826? - Richard Banner Oakley inherited.

1838 - Edward Banner Oakley (probably Mary and Richard’s son) inherited.

1865 - Mary Cockcroft, from Scarborough, bought the property. (683 acres). She died in 1866 and Mary’s nephew, Robert Henry Page-Henderson died at the age of 39 – a brass plate in memory of him is in the Chapel Le Dale Church, near the Ribbleshead Viaduct.


1934 - Major Philip and Violet Gatty-Smith bought the Hall at the sale of the Benson estate.

1957 - Roddy and Sonia Heathcote-Amory bought the Hall for £6000.

1986 - David and Sara Craig are the present owners.
The 20th Century

Introduction

Life in Oswaldkirk has reflected most of the changes in the outside world during the 1900s and, being a small community of around 100 families, these changes have probably been more personal than in the country at large.

The Church in the early 1900s

In 1900, St Oswald’s church had just been restored and decorated in the High Anglican style under the care of The Revd Henry Temple, who was also Chancellor of York Minster. He died in 1904 after 23 years as Rector and was followed by The Revd John Bennett until 1919. The stained glass on the South side was put in in Bennett’s time.

Colonel Benson’s Kingdom

In 1907, all the land and buildings in the village to south of the ridge, except the Church, the Rectory and four small houses along the Terrace, were owned by Col Benson who lived at Oswaldkirk Hall. He also owned most of the land to the south of the village. The land beyond the top of the hill was part of the Feversham Estate, and to the east was Leysthorpe, a separate parish and a ‘lost village’ now linked to Stonegrave. The building and maintenance work was based in the ‘Estate Yard’, opposite the Old Post Office. The Estate Yard later evolved into a saw mill, and then a garage. Since then Rosegarth, Kirkstone Cottage, Hollygarth and Little Paddocks have been built on the site.
The Village School

There was a village school, which had its beginnings in the 18th century as can be seen in charity bequests for educating some poor children of the parish, for repairs to the school and payment of a school master.

By the 20th century the school was situated in what is now Southlands with the schoolmaster, John Rushton living in the end house, now Laurel Cottage. The school playground and swing were across the Terrace in what is now the upper lawn and garden of Ledbrooke House. Rushton was also the village registrar and his wife Elizabeth played the harmonium in St Oswald’s church for 14 years. The window opposite the Harmonium Chamber was dedicated in her memory in 1909.

In the first few years of the century a school inspector reported that the school was not doing very well and the sanitation was not up to the standards of the day – in the absence of main drainage that must have been quite a problem. In 1908 a dispute between the managers and Col. Benson, who owned the building, led to the school’s closure. The children then walked to Gilling school, each day. The path they took led across the fields and through Spring Wood where it joined the Gilling road. This continued until the late 1940s when school buses first appeared.

The Post Office and Shop

In 1910, ‘The Colonel’ completed a village shop and Post Office, which served the village well until the rise of the Car Age in the 1960s, which transformed village life in many ways. The Gatenby family were shopkeepers and postpeople until the 1950s. Before the new Post Office was built, there had been one in Ivy Cottage, next door. An even earlier post office is marked on the 1834 survey – on the Bank, just above what is now School House.
In the 1930s the Gatenbys opened the ‘Bide-a-wee Café’. This flourished mainly in the summer months and took the form of a marquee in the present yard. The guy rope fastenings are still in place.

**Village Population and Houses**

The population of the village was very similar at the beginning of the 19th century to what it is today, but with fewer buildings. Many of the older buildings were multiple houses. Weigelia and Bramleys were both double cottages – one up, one down with a ladder instead of a staircase. East Cottage was three houses – two until the 1950s. The east end of Manor Farm was a separate house, Well Cottage, with a gate by the present post box. Bank Cottage was two houses until the First World War and Rigg Cottage was also two houses, with the Dales and Mrs Skilbeck in the east part, and the Beecrofts in the west.

**The New Village Hall**

Col. Benson’s next venture was building the New Village Hall in 1913. This was a huge building for a village of this size, with a maple floor, 44x35ft, suspended on coil springs to add to the pleasure of the dancers. One of the popular dances of the 20s was the ‘Palais Glide’, in which every couple swung together to one side of the hall and then to the other. ‘The Colonel’ banned this as it made the floor move violently on its springs. He did not allow country dancing either, which had to be done in the loft of the Malt Shovel barn beside the village hall, with access by ladder. See page 60.

Col. Benson was unmarried, but lived with a formidable housekeeper called Mrs Horner. They used to preside at village dances from a balcony over the main entrance. Working boots were forbidden in case they damaged the floor. There were ‘proper’ toilets, a billiard room, committee rooms and a kitchen.

**The Village Blacksmith**

The Village Blacksmith, William Stabler, lived in what is now East Cottage and worked in what is now the garage and the various sheds which still exist behind it up the hill. George Skilbeck, the village joiner, was the son of Dick Skilbeck, who was joiner at Gilling village and a keen cricketer. George married Amy Rounthwaite, who worked at Grimston Manor, and they moved into the old Oswaldkirk school building. Daughter Mona was born in 1915 and son Dick in 1916.

William’s son Jim took over the business in the early 1900s and moved to Sunnyside (now St Gregory’s), which had more space and a well. Jim continued to work there until the early 1940s, by which time horses were beginning to be replaced by tractors. The Stablers were succeeded at Sunnyside by Mr Makin, the joiner, whose wife had a small draper’s shop just inside the front door.
The Great War

George Skilbeck marched away from the Bank Top to join the ‘War to end all wars’ and was killed near Rouen in 1918. Three other village families suffered a similar tragedy.

When George went off to France, the Colonel moved Mrs Skilbeck and family into Laurel Cottage. This move was so that Amy would not have to negotiate the steps of the School with two small children and a pram. It also gave her a house with a garden in which she could dispose of the household waste. Earlier this had to carried up the bank to the garden opposite the police house, now Sunnybank.

Twenty three of the ladies of the village formed a ‘Working Party’ in the village hall to provide warm clothing for the soldiers and sailors ‘at the Front’. The group was led by Mrs Ellison Horner, as recorded on the plaque in the present village hall.

There was still no mains water supply and although many houses had their own wells, the Terrace houses drew water from a hand pump on the well down the Gilling Road, now at the entrance to Holly Tree House.

The 1920s

A more normal life resumed after the war. Col. Benson built Cliff House in 1919 and Cragg Cottage in 1922. Both were in the sites of old quarries. The Bungalow was built at about the same time.

Many families kept a cow and a few pigs and some of the old cowsheds can still be seen. The cows were grazed on the relatively flat land at the top of the bank above the village to the south of the Bank Top fields and wall. The cows were driven down in the evening, for watering and milking, along the footpath behind The Mount quarry to the pond at the entrance to Birch Bank field.

The roads at the Bank Top did not follow the existing lines, and there was a grass triangle with a signpost in the middle of the junction. Round the signpost was a seat on which, the mostly male, residents used to sit and smoke and put the world to rights. The triangle was only removed in the 1960s in the interests of road safety.

The old Police House on the hill, then Sunnybank and now Bank House, was built in the mid 1800s and had three lock up cells – mainly used for the Drunk & Disorderly.

The Water Supply

Col. Benson’s next major project was to improve the rather basic water supply system which existed before the 1914-1918 War. The first artesian well was just to the north of the road beyond the Hall. The back wall of the shed can still be seen. The pressure and flow were not great.

The water collected in one of two large underground tanks across the road from which it ran by gravity to the Hall and a few other houses. The other tank was for ‘soft’ or surface water used for washing as the ground water was very hard. Both types of water were pumped by hand to tanks for use on the upper floors of the Hall and Rectory.

The 20th Century

The Village lock-up
A new well was drilled in the 1920s near the quarry by Hag Cottage (this was originally two cottages). The pressure from the well shot a jet of water high into the air. The village blacksmith, Jim Stabler, was there. This high pressure water was then piped along the village to the end of the Terrace and up to Cliff House and the Bungalow in about 1924.

Harry Maynard lived at the Police House at that time and had to carry his water up from the tap in the road side where the Cliff House drive is now (this tap was only removed in the 1970s).

Water for Bank Top Farm was taken from the tap at Sunnyside (now St Gregory’s) in a horse drawn tank, or else by yoke and buckets from the roadside tap. The Artesian Well is still operating and has sufficient pressure to deliver water to the new Hall Farm on the top of the hill.

The water itself came from a considerable depth and contained a high level of iron sulphides, which gave it a smell of rotten eggs and a red/brown deposit anywhere it was allowed to stand in contact with the air. It was actually very healthy to drink, but visitors did not always appreciate this.

Col. Benson began to build another house up the track beyond ‘The Mount’. The back wall and water tap can still be seen, but this project was an early victim of planning regulations, and was never completed.

The Electricity Supply

Colonel Benson’s last major contribution to the village was the Electricity Supply, which was one of the first in the area. He thought that wooden poles were unsightly and installed the steel poles which are still in use. The pole by the church is particularly slim and unobtrusive. Electricity came to most for the winter of 1932. It was generally welcomed, but ‘Nap’ Hugill, who lived in Swiss Cottage West, refused to have it installed as “it would take too many matches to light”.

Up till then, oil lamps and candles had been the only source of light at night and cooking was done on oil. There were some paraffin street lamps and the bottom two feet of one can be seen on the terrace opposite the Old School House. This was last lit in 1939. The top was broken off and sent away to be melted down for the War effort – as were the cast iron fences from some of the graves in the churchyard.

Outsiders arrive – the first commuters

One of the last innovations of Col. Benson’s reign was the letting of two houses to total foreigners, from London and Northamptonshire. They came to the area at the beginning of the expansion of Ampleforth College under the leadership of Fr. Paul Nevill, and the introduction of ‘Lay Staff’ to help with the teaching. After an interview
to ensure that they were neither Socialists nor Roman Catholics, Horry and Kath Perry moved into the old school building, then called Dormer Cottage and now Southlands. Dick and Dorothy Goodman came directly from their wedding to live in the Bungalow in April 1929.

The End of an Era – The Estate is sold

Colonel Benson died on May 18th, 1932 and the medieval world vanished. One big problem emerged when no heir could be found and the whole village was placed in the hands of Jackson Stops and Staff to sell on behalf of the Inland Revenue. The faithful Mrs Horner, the Colonel’s Housekeeper, vanished from the scene without the expected inheritance. The contents of the Hall were auctioned and many residents acquired souvenirs. Nearly all the houses were sold, often to their occupants, on August 24th, 1933. The farms were sold also. Some of the Colonel’s more peculiar possessions, like the Village Hall, were not sold in 1933 and these were auctioned in July 1946. This sale also included Sunnybank, the old police house which still had water from ‘Standpipe nearby’, meaning 50 yards down the hill at Cliff House. The Village Hall had been rented by the Village Hall Committee, who had sub-let to the military during the war and accumulated enough cash as a charitable trust to buy the hall from the administrators. The Trust was set up by Major Philip Gatty-Smith, who had bought Oswaldkirk Hall, and Richard Goodman and it is still in operation.

The Drains

Until the mid 1930s there was only a partial sewage system in the village. It included The Hall, Rose Cottage, The Manor House, the Post Office, Ivy Cottage, The Malt Shovel, the Village Hall, The Bungalow, Cliff House and Cragg Cottage. Some other houses had water closets, presumably using a septic tank, others had earth closets or ash pits. By the end of the 1930s the District Council had extended the sewer along the Terrace and most of the village houses were connected to it and to the settling ponds in the valley, below Manor Farm, which are still in use.

Another ancient method of waste disposal which was in use until the 1930s is the pig trough. Many households kept a pig in a sty with a chute from the outside leading to a trough on the inside. Edible domestic waste was dropped through for the pigs, who recycled it into bacon.
The 1930s – The Tennis and Cricket Clubs

The playing field that went with the old school became a Tennis Court in the 1920s and the village Tennis Club was a major focus of village activities until the 1950s. The court was moved down to the site of the present Children’s Playground, which had been part of the land attached to the Red House but was given to the village by the Trustees of the Goodings family. Miss Goodings, who lived there at the time, was a keen tennis player, and had the then fashionable style of underarm service.

The new court was levelled with barrow and spade by another local character known as ‘Mac’, who was given to sleeping under hedges. The mowing was done with a small push mower, upgraded a bit in the 1940s when the cricket club closed down. The tennis club flourished until the 1950s, when better courts became available in the area as car transport became more normal.

The field below Pavilion House on the Terrace had been levelled as the Village Cricket ground in Col. Benson’s time, but it was a rather small. There was a wooden pavilion at the west side part of which can still be seen on the remains of the concrete foundations. The field was bought by Gordon Foster of Leysthorpe Hall at the sale and he built the two houses, Greycot and Sunnyholme on part of the site. The Cricket Club moved down to a more spacious field beside the Gilling Road, but closed with the dawn of the TV age. The most recent public use of the old Cricket Ground was as the venue for the Silver Jubilee Games in 1977.

The early 1930s were the beginning of what might be termed the ‘professionalising’ of the village. Mainly at first by lay staff employed by ‘The College’ and their families. Most of the other residents worked on the village farms, or were employed at the larger houses, or were connected with those who did. The forestry was another major employer, particularly in the 1940s and beyond. Plantations of Norway Spruce covered many of the local hillsides, and they were felled mainly to be used as pit props in the Yorkshire coalfields.

The first cars began to appear after the First World war, but the Colonel and his housekeeper still toured their estates in a Landau. The road to York, opened as the Oswaldkirk-York Turnpike in 1768, had too many sharp corners for the new vehicles and the village street was particularly narrow between the church and the large wall which had retained the Pickering’s Manor House in the Middle Ages. There were three stone carved coats of Arms in the wall, and a large buttress which further reduced the width of the road. Beside the buttress was a set of mounting steps – quite a common roadside feature (another survives opposite Golden Square Farm). At the east end of the wall was a set of steps going up into what is now the White House lower lawn, and up again to the upper garden, which was an orchard before the house was built in 1937.

Road Improvements

The Gilling road was widened and the bank corner improved in the late 1920s and the village street widened in 1937/38. The Pickering wall was taken down and rebuilt about ten feet further north, together with a new wall to retain the access track to the buildings above the wall – now the drive for the White House. Sadly the stones of the Pickering Shields and Coats of Arms were damaged in the process, but one is recorded in the Victoria County History.

Pickering Lion
Several new houses were built in the mid to late 30s, including The White House, Ledbrooke House, and Martins.

Steam Engine, Threshing Machine and Corn Mill

The yard above the wall by the church was used by Harold Wood, of Abbey House, to store his Steam Traction engine and threshing machine. He also had a corn mill in the one barn and a workshop in another – now demolished. The mill was driven with a belt drive from the traction engine which went through a slit in the wall to the engine which stood in the yard. Getting up the drive was quite an undertaking. The steam engine went up first and the threshing machines were winched up afterwards.
The Hag

The village landscape is dominated by ‘the bank’, which is a geological fault line dating from the great Ice Age. As a result we have a line of cliffs and quarries above lower levels of limestone rubble and clay. This mixture is very fertile, the slopes of the hill drain well and are good for trees, the lower levels are heavy soil, with a line of springs along which many of the houses are built. The bank to the west of the village is called ‘The Hag’. The word means a wooded slope and is related to ‘hedge’ and the Dutch ‘Hague’.

The Hag was quite wild until the late 1930s, when it was felled and coppiced. The result in the short term was about three quarters of a mile of scrub and brambles which were very well picked in the war years. The Reliance bus had a special stop for Bramble pickers. In the 1980s the slope was brought under better control and is now a middle aged wood full of wild garlic and bluebells in season.

Until the late 1940s, the slope of the hill came down to the wall at the edge of the road, and stones and other debris tended to fall onto the road. The present terrace was cut from the bank to avoid this problem. The Hag ended quite clearly at the White House rookery and the bank behind the rest of the houses on the Main Street and the Terrace was mostly orchard and gardens. Since that time new trees have become established and the rooks have moved down the village. The whole effect is that the Hag seems to have crept along the bank, which is now much more heavily wooded than in the early part of the century. There was a line of trees along the south edge of the bank top fields, from Thirklewood to above the Rectory.

Hitler’s War

Hitler’s War bought all developments to an abrupt halt and many changes to the village. Nissen huts appeared in the Manor Farm top field to accommodate the military. The King’s Royal Rifles came fresh from the evacuation of Dunkirk and The Grenadier Guards came shortly after them. The foundations of one of the huts can still be seen above ‘The Steps’ beside the church. The Village Hall was rented out as a recreation hall and sergeant’s mess. The Officers used part of Oswaldkirk Hall as their Mess, as guests of Major Gatty Smith and family. Some of them were billeted with village families.

Several young men from the village were called up to active service. Bill Osborne, who lived with his wife and small son in The Old School House, was killed when his ship was sunk in the Adriatic. His next door neighbour, Coz. Watson, fought in the North African desert and returned after the war to teach biology at The College. George Stabler fought in the European battles at the end of the war. Mona Dale’s brother Dick and Alf Hugill also went to war. Many of the men of the village were not called for active service as they were in ‘Reserved’ occupations, such as forestry or farming, or had other skills that were needed for the ‘Home Front’, such as an understanding of chemical warfare and protection against it. The village population was also enlivened by the arrival of ‘Landgirls’ who came to help work on the farms. Most people had some kind of war duties such as First Aid or Air Raid Warden, and the Home Guard was a major activity.

With the ‘Blitz’ at its height many school children came from Middlesbrough as evacuees and went to the local schools. They lived with families in the village. Some enjoyed the country life, but most could not wait to get back to their home towns,
which they did as soon as the Battle of Britain had been won, and the German bombers went elsewhere.

We were lucky in not having air raids, but one bomb did hit the chapel at Gilling Castle, with little damage. The night sky to the south was lit up at times when Hull or Leeds was attacked.

The local lanes, such as Stockings Lane, which had been mainly surfaced with crushed limestone up till then, were tarmacadamed to help the military to move around. Tanks exercised in Duncombe Park and arrived in transporters which found the bank corner a bit tricky. The bank corner was also restricted by a stone barricade jutting out from both sides and leaving a small gap which could be closed with a few girders. Each barricade had a small room inside and holes from which to shoot at the enemy. The foundations of the barricades still cause occasional subsidence holes in the road.

As the fear of invasion subsided, the whole area became a storage and training ground for the invasion of Europe. The road sides were filled with small open ended corrugated iron sheds filled with ammunition of all kinds – land mines, rifle bullets, gas shells, fortunately never used, and hand grenades. Some of the College boys used to collect specimens for dismantling, but this was discouraged.

Several houses built air raid shelters and at least one ‘Anderson Shelter’ survives at Ledbrooke House as a garden shed. Other more elaborate underground shelters tended to fill up with water and most people decided they would rather just sit under the table in their homes.

Many new airfields were built, including the one at Wombleton. The local quarries did good business supplying stone for the runways, and the Stone Lorries were a frequent, free and reliable addition to the bus service. Later in the war, the main air activity was our bombers collecting together to attack Germany, and the lucky ones returning in the morning. Wombleton was used mainly for training, but the trainees used to fly over the Bank Top with very little spare height.

**An International Development**

The first troops to live in the village were fresh from Dunkirk. These were replaced by training units and later by the Free Polish Army. The Poles brightened the social scene considerably and eventually left for D Day. Many were killed at the battle of the Falaise Gap. The village next became a prisoner of war camp, except that the Italians had surrendered, and were more like our guests waiting to return home. They entered fully into village life, made skis out of floor boards and taught us to use them on Birch Bank. They made toys and introduced us to the flavours of the local edible fungi. They also did invaluable work in the farms and gardens of the neighbourhood. One, Eugene Coccimiglio, stayed on, looking after the chickens at the Hall, and another married a nubile village maiden and they went to live in Rome. The Italians were followed by the Germans, some of whom obviously thought that the wrong side had won, but many of whom made good friends in the village. One, Herr Wegener, became a strong anglophile, despite what the local bombers had done to his home city of Hamburg. He and his family bought a bungalow in the village in the 1970s.

*Parrot made by Italian prisoners of war*
After Hitler's War

The late 1940s was not a good period, with no electricity in the afternoons, and shortages of just about everything, including money. The village responded by continuing to grow much of its own food, all kinds of vegetables, and keeping hens for eggs, pigs and geese, much as they had during the war and making much of its own entertainment, with village dances of all sorts. English Country Dancing was particularly popular, with a wind up gramophone for music. Dorothy Goodman was one of the local leaders in this. Tractors were still a rarity and fields were still hoed by hand.

Mrs Perry, at the White House, set up a small school in the house in this period. It flourished and peaked in the 1950s with about 20 pupils of primary age.

In 1939 a group of Polish student refugees had come to the area, with the support of Ampleforth College, and later they came to live in the Manor House, which the Abbey then owned. As student numbers declined, they moved in 1968 to what became St Gregory's House, and which had been the blacksmith's workshop and forge under the Stabler family. The students were looked after there by Col. and Mrs Dudzinski who had boys at Ampleforth College at that time.

A Serbian Orthodox community then came to live in the Manor House. A Dedication Service was held in the Manor House and it became St Symeon's House, together with its chapel. The community was let by Archpriest Vladimir Rodzianko, whose father had been leader of the Duma under the last Tsar. They had a caravan in the garden to house Orthodox theology students. In 1973 another caravan in the drive became their Chapel – complete with Onion Dome and icons. More of this can be seen on page 48.
Petrol Pumps and Garages

The Gatenbys at the Post Office had set up a two pump petrol station in the 1930s, across the road from the ‘Estate Yard’ which was by now a timber business, run by Percy Hugill. The pumps were of the ‘wind by hand’ variety situated on the ground which is now the front of Albro House. This was also the bus stop and a bit of a village meeting place, for instance in the 1945 general election. In the 1950s, the timber yard was sold to Ike White, who came to the village from Middlesbrough and started a garage with two electric pumps – a distinct advantage. The business grew with the growth in the use and availability of cars, tractors, and vans of all kinds. There was also a show room and a workshop. Ike married Rene Stockdale and lived with Rene’s aunt, Mrs Stockdale, in Pavilion House. They went on to build what is now Rimbaley on the Gilling road.

The coming of the Motor Car and the end of the Shop and Post Office

Until the 1940s, there were only about three cars in the village, and the shop was an essential part of village life, along with visiting tradesmen such as Thompson from Ampleforth. The Reliance buses provided a good service to York and Helmsley, and the United to Malton and Easingwold. Tal Benson of Ampleforth provided a taxi service. The coming of the car gradually put the village shop out of business. The Post Office continued a little longer and used the Village Hall for a time. The last Postmaster to run the Old Post Office was John Pullan, who retired in 1970. The office then continued to be operated in private houses, first by Sylvia Stephenson at the Bank Top and finally by the Deans, in South View, who were unable to find a successor when they left the village in 1977. See page 88.

The Post War Baby Boom

In 1953, the village lost its resident Rector and became linked to Ampleforth. The Rectory was sold to one of the many prolific Roman Catholic families of that period, mainly associated with the staff of Ampleforth College. There were at one time forty children between four families.

New Family at The Hall

The Heathcote-Amorys came to live in the Hall in 1957 and Roddy contributed greatly to village life, as churchwarden and chairman of the Village Meeting and in many other ways. He added the eagles to the yard gate. His brother was Chancellor of the Exchequer for a time, and his son David is in Parliament at the time of writing.

The Feversham Estate

The Feversham Estate sold the farms in the Newton Grange township in the 1940s and 1950s, mainly to other landlords at first, but the farms gradually came into the ownership of the occupying tenants.
New Building

Several new houses were built in the early 50s: Holly Tree House, Thirklewood, and The Steps. These were all built to the maximum permitted size limit in the post-war period, but have been extended later. Four new council houses were also built next to Broad Farm, followed by four more at the top of the bank and a detached Police House. This was the beginning of the major evolution of the village from a largely agricultural community to a mixed and increasingly professional population. This process was given a major boost by the local entrepreneurial building fraternity. The first was Jack Bradley of Gilling, who was a major feature of the national building scene. He bought the field belonging to Manor Farm below the Manor House, but unfortunately went out of business before the development could be progressed. The land was then bought by Norman Lilley of Hambleton Homes, to become Sketchmead Homes which evolved into part of Persimmon Homes today. He built the ‘New Estate’, which increased the number of houses in the village by nearly 25%. Surprisingly the population remained at about 180 adults, as it had been in the 1834 Census, but increased prosperity required more living space. Cheaper private travel made commuting more common. Whereas only a few years earlier the ownership of a car was seen as a definition of a prosperous middle class family, it was now almost essential to all.

The 1977 Silver Jubilee

The village held a great sports day for the Queen’s Silver Jubilee, on the old cricket ground followed by a supper with music from local talent in the Village Hall.

The New ‘New’ Village Hall

During the 1980s, it was apparent that the old ‘New Village Hall’ was becoming a liability and was no longer suitable for the type of functions that now took place. The main hall was so high that it was almost impossible to keep warm and people now expected a more comfortable place to meet. The Committee, headed by Mary Ogram, decided to sell most of the site for building and build a totally new hall which would be smaller and accommodate village events. After a good deal of negotiation with the Charity Commission, the County and District Councils and the Yorkshire Rural Communities Council, sufficient funds were obtained and the present hall opened in 1988. The stone from the front of the old hall was used for the new houses and the front of the new New Hall, and some of the old lime wood flooring was used for the main room – but without the old springs.
New Village Playground

One significant development in the 1990s was the conversion of the derelict tennis court below Holly Tree House into a Children’s Playground with much local fund-raising and generous grants. The original village school playground had been converted to a tennis court in the 1920s, so a circle was completed.

The Parish Meeting and Churches Together

Amongst other changes in the 1980s and 90s has been the emergence of the Parish Meeting as a well attended forum for taking decisions on local matters, and the increasing use of local lay people to conduct the worship in St Oswald’s church. Our Vicar now also covers Ampleforth, Gilling and Stonegrave and local leadership became essential if the church bell is to be rung and God worshipped at St Oswald’s each week. This system was set up by the Revd David Newton and the rest of the York Diocese came to discover that such a development is not only necessary, but desirable.

A further development has been the growing co-operation between the Christian traditions in the village. This began in the 1960s with a joint Good Friday procession through the village and has grown with a packed house for the Christmas Eve carols, led by a largely professional orchestra. Joint study groups are held during Lent and, so far, two ‘Songs of Praise’ events in the Village Hall which have been supported by around a quarter of the village.

* * * * *

In conclusion, Oswaldkirk has remained a small community of around 180-200 people since at least the early 1800s. Many other villages have been transformed by expansion in the 20th century. Oswaldkirk has escaped this particular change, although the standard of housing has been improved substantially. A village of our size has a special quality in which we can all know each other. If anything needs doing, everyone who wishes can be involved. Colonel Benson and Major Gatty Smith provided leadership in the first half of the century, followed by Brigadier Heathcote-Amory. Today we have an active Parish Meeting which fills this role.

David Goodman

The Corner – 1925
Farming

The Farming year in Oswaldkirk

My Grandfather, Ramsey Ward, became the tenant of the 296 acres of Newton Grange in the early 1930s and at that time the farm was owned by Lord Feversham. My Grandfather farmed in partnership with his wife Jane and his three sons, George, Ted and Clive. The farm was then run as ‘Ramsey Ward and Sons’. George was already married to Nelly and had a small daughter Jean. Soon their son George was born, and in 1936 Beacon Farm was bought. This was almost a 100 acres and joined with Newton Grange land up Stockings Lane. George moved to the Beacon with his family and the two farms remained as a partnership farming 400 acres. In 1937 Ted married Olive Wardell, whom he had known for many years, when both families were farming at Cawton. They had one daughter, myself, Dorothy. Their father Ramsey died in 1939, and along with their mother the three brothers continued to farm as the Ward Brothers. Clive married Rachel Richardson in 1943 whose family had farmed at Rudland. She was at that time helping her Grandmother and uncles, the Jackson family, who farmed at the neighbouring West Newton Grange. They had three children, Joan, John and Stephen.

In the early years the farm was completely worked with horses and around eighteen were kept. My earliest memories are of the last two or three horses being in use when we were potato picking and leading (digging them up and taking them back to the farm) mangel-wurzels. The last foal to be born on the farm was in the late 1950s. When I was young we had two or three farm workers who lived in, plus another four or five who travelled to work from local villages. We also had casual labourers at busy times, hay making, harvesting and hoeing root crops. Mostly they were what was known as tramps. They used to sleep out in the buildings and used to come to the back door to collect their food. Some used to just call at the farm for food, stay the night and then move on. My Grandmother, who was a very kind-hearted lady, would never allow any of them to be turned away without a meal and somewhere to shelter for the night. When labour was scarce during the second world war, prisoners of war, billeted at Oswaldkirk village hall were brought in to help.

Spring was always a very busy time with the lambing, and also poultry, geese and ducks were kept. Their eggs were put under broody hens to hatch. They were then put out with the hen on the grass in a little coop with a small wire run in front. They were fed on bread and milk for a few weeks. When they were older they were allowed to run around the fields. We had a pond not far from the farmyard where they used to go to swim. They had to be brought back to the farm every night and let out every morning. They were slaughtered and dressed at the farm each year just before Christmas. We also kept a few hundred free range hens which were let out each morning and fed twice a day. The eggs were gathered and the hen houses closed up each night. On the arable side, after the winter’s ploughing, the corn was sown. Wheat, barley and oats were grown, then the potatoes and roots were planted which were all kept in strict rotation.
Hay time was the next busy time. I can just remember when the hay was turned with hay forks by hand, raked into heaps and made into hay stacks in the yard. In winter this was cut with a hay spade and fed in layers to the sheep and cattle. The advent of the hay turner and baler made hay making much faster and easier. At this time of year all the root crops were hoed by hand which took many hours of hard work. Work would also begin on hedge cutting, again done by hand with hedge slashers, then there were the thorns to rake up. This is another job that is now done mechanically. Next came harvest, I can still remember the corn being cut with the binder, and the sheaves stooked out in the fields, and then led home to be stacked either in the dutch barn, or in stacks in the yard which were left until winter.

Then came the threshing days, when the threshing machine came and extra men were hired. My mother and aunt would have around twenty men for dinner plus ‘lowance’ (see photograph) morning and afternoon. With the arrival of the combine harvester, much less labour was needed for harvesting.

After harvest came potato picking. Potatoes were spun out of the ground and hand picked in baskets. These were emptied into small carts pulled by the cart horses which would stand patiently waiting until they had a full load to lead home. The mangel-wurzels were pulled by hand and led back to the yard by the same horses and carts. They were then tipped into a heap and covered over with straw and soil to keep the frost out over winter. This was known as a ‘pie’ and was not uncovered until March. They were then fed to the cattle and sheep.

In the autumn after the lambs were weaned they were put into a small part of one of the turnip fields and fenced in by wire sheep nets. These nets were moved a few yards every day. They were also fed rolled corn and hay and this continued all winter with lambs being sold weekly at Helmsley market which now no longer exists. Originally they were walked to market until cattle wagons came into use.

Cattle were also reared on the farm; a few were born there from the cows we kept which were milked by hand. The rest were bought in batches and were bucket-fed milk for a few weeks before being moved into loose boxes. They were turned out in the summer months and fattened during winter in large open fold yards. They were fed on a diet of turnips, which were carried into the turnip house and put through a cutter, originally turned by hand and later by petrol engine. They were also fed rolled oats, chaff, hay and straw. They too would have been walked to market around two years of age but I remember them mostly going to Malton market by cattle wagon. In the autumn, many jars of plums were bottled to keep for the winter. The apples were carried up into one of the attics, carefully laid out on the floor and were used for baking right through until spring.

Pig killing days were another event in winter. The pigs were slaughtered, put in a long scalding tub, lifted onto a creal and the hair scraped off the skin. They were then hung for a few days before being cut into sides of bacon and hams. They were then salted in the bacon house before being hung in the farmhouse kitchen. The rest of the pig was made into brawn.
I was brought up, along with my cousins, at Newton Grange, which was quite an isolated place, with no bathroom or electricity. Lighting was by paraffin lamps or candles. Cooking was done on the kitchen fire with a large oven on one side and hot water boiler on the other. Needless to say, the kitchen fire was seldom let out and the kettle hung there always on the boil. Farmers' wives worked very hard, with no modern conveniences and lots of people to bake for. On wash days the big boiler had to be lit in the scullery, then the dolly-tub and stick were brought into use along with a big old fashioned mangle.

Butter making was another job that had to be done. The milk was brought in and put through a separator to take the cream out of the milk. The cream was put in a large churn, which was turned by hand into butter. As well as butter making there were baskets of eggs to be washed and packed each day. In the winter evenings the women would make clippie-rugs, sew or knit. We used to play a lot of card and board games. Jigsaws were another pastime, along with reading. In summer time we were mostly outdoors. If the lads who lived in were not working late, they used to play cricket, rounders and hide and seek around the farm buildings. In those days the cricket field was still used and we used to enjoy going to watch the matches and I still remember Uncle Clive playing in the Oswaldkirk team.

When Joan and I were quite small we were given a surprise: a load of breeding sheep arrived from Malton Sheep Fair and we were told there was a present for us. Father and uncle had bought us a retired donkey, which had previously worked on Scarborough sands. I'm afraid this donkey was rather stubborn, we would ride it a few fields away from home, then it would refuse to go any further. We would leave it and carry the saddle and bridle back home. This donkey went on to live with us for another twenty years.

We used to look forward to Oswaldkirk Show, where our farm used to show corn and roots and our mother's baking and eggs. We also used to go out gathering wild flowers to show. The Scarborough coach trip was another highlight of our year, as was the village Christmas party. The church Harvest Festival was also enjoyed; my father was on the church committee and a churchwarden for many years. We also attended the Sunday school there, which was run by Ike and Rene White.

For a number of years, every April, Sinnington Hunt Point to Point was run over Newton Grange land, with the car park and main entrance being on Jack and Betty Wikeley's land at Bank Top Farm. One of the riders who often took part was Harry Elliott who farmed with his father at Golden Square. The Earl and Countess of Feversham were masters of the hunt and their estate staff spent many weeks building the horse jumps each year. The Coronation in 1953 was another occasion long remembered, and although it poured with rain all day, we still enjoyed games, tea and dancing in the village hall. Joan and I were in fancy dress, dressed as a nurse and a Dutch girl. We were presented with a Coronation mug and a scroll with our names on saying we had taken part in the celebrations at Oswaldkirk. These are still among my most treasured possessions.
The arrival of electricity at Newton Grange in 1960 was a cause for great excitement and made a big difference to our way of life. On leaving school, all my cousins and I worked on the farm. Joan and I were both married at Oswaldkirk Church and held our wedding receptions at Oswaldkirk village hall. The three Ward brothers continued to farm together until the mid 1970s when they all passed away within two years of each other. Newton Grange was farmed by John and Stephen for a number of years after this. Sadly now the land has been split off and the old stone buildings made into houses. This was the end of an era and a sign of the times in farming. George still farms at the Beacon, while Jean, who is now a widow, keeps house for him.

Written by Dorothy E. Garbutt of Scawton, with assistance from cousins, Jean Bradley and Joan Turnbull (all formerly Ward)

Farming since 1950

In the 1930s there were horsemen, stockmen and day labourers working on farms, each having distinct skills. Many of the implements they used might well have been made in the parish. The main power source, apart from the strong back of the working man, was the horse. This meant that hay and fodder for horses was a significant part of any crop rotation, with leys and stands of red clover to power work where the most sophisticated implement was a horse drawn scoop or a binder. The community needed blacksmiths, builders, carpenters, foresters, harness makers, saddlers, sawyers, stonemasons, waggoners and wheelwrights to support its main activity – farming. Quarrymen were needed, for stone production and this, together with forestry, was the main diversification of farming at that time. There is no sign of any big scale commercial quarrying having taken place in Oswaldkirk at that time, although with eight quarries in the village, it must have been a major activity in the past. Some of the limestone was fired in lime kilns for mortar and agricultural use and at least two lime kilns could be seen until recently – one in Rievaulx Hole above the Hag, and one just below The Mount.
Farming was constrained not just by what the land would grow but by where and how the produce could be sold. Milk would not remain sweet during a journey to town, so poor was hygiene. Butter and cheese would use up milk surplus to local liquid requirements in the high time of the year, with the whey fed to pigs.

The coming of railways made a great difference and the local markets at Helmsley, Kirkbymoorside, Malton and Easingwold were all convenient for the railway. Stock or produce was taken there on the hoof or in horse drawn carts.

Later, new techniques, new timing, new chemicals, heavier use of nitrogen fertiliser and improved varieties meant that, for the first time in modern history, England became a grain exporter, with all the associated risks of an export business.

Progress continues. We have started to reverse reliance on the chemist and now pay attention to the biologist. A narrow band of tussocky grass such as cocksfoot will maintain a stock of aphid-eating beetles through the winter to reduce the need for the most dangerous of sprays. A wild flower verge with red clover keeps a population of bumble bees to pollinate field beans. Parts of a farm that are uneconomic to cultivate can be used to mount an assault team of benign insects to fight off pathogens.

Using a flow meter on the combine, with a G.P.S. satellite navigator feeding into a computer, we can find which parts of individual fields are not worth expending cultivation, seed and fertiliser on. We put them aside, generously grant-aided by Brussels, for biological warfare to preserve crops. I even hear it claimed that falconry increases small bird populations by removing magpies. We may yet see the grey partridge again.

John Lindley

Golden Square Farm

On the north side of the parish is Golden Square Farm, of 220 acres, owned by Don and Barbara Armstrong who came to Oswaldkirk in 1962. Lord Feversham previously rented it to tenant farmers who included Robert Stockhill, Mr Kitchen and Gordon Elliott. John Henry Gill, from Leeming Bar, bought it from the Feversham Estates in the 1970s. It was a mixed arable farm with two to three hundred sheep and on which they grew corn and potatoes and made hay.

Before they had tractors two horses were used to take the wagon up the steep fields but only one horse was needed to bring it back. At one time Mr Stockhill stopped smoking his pipe and with the money saved he bought fruit trees to make the orchard. It is said that he planted a tree for every day in the year. He was a Methodist Local Preacher and is buried in Oswaldkirk churchyard. A ghost is reputed to haunt the old farm and two people have been aware of it in recent years.

Nowadays part of the farm is a thriving Caravan park with camping facilities. It has a shop serving home baked bread, a well used children’s play area and room for 129 caravans. It achieved fame by winning national prizes for the best set of loos for six years running in the 1990s.

Barbara Armstrong
West Newton Grange

Harry and Julie Simmonds, with children William (then 7 years old) and Clare (then 5 years old) came here in May 1981, taking over from Mr Ray Burrell and his wife Noelle, who had been here for 32 years. At that time it was 333 acres. Some land near the river is in Harome parish, and roughly ten percent is woodland. The subsequent addition of land from Newton Grange Farm and from Bank Top Farm has raised the farm size to nearly 500 acres. The B1257 road forms the southern boundary, and the river Rye forms the northern boundary. The White Beck, an arterial drainage ditch first dug when the monks of Rievaulx farmed here, runs through the farm from west to east. Ray Burrell took the farm over as a mixed farm, but gave up keeping cows and beef cattle after a short time, and just had sheep until 1965, when they were sold and the farm became all arable. The north-facing slope, which forms the bulk of the acreage, is a free-draining limestone soil, with some clay loam soil on the lower part, and sand near the river. When we moved here, the farm had been all arable for fifteen years, growing spring barley (for malting), winter barley (for malting and stock feed) and wheat (for whisky!). We have continued with those crops, with the addition of oilseed rape and occasionally peas. The farm is now worked by one man, with seasonal help.

West Newton Grange is mentioned in the Domesday book, and is believed to stand on the site of a ‘Grangia’ run by the monks of Rievaulx. They were presented with the land by Robert, Lord of Sproxton shortly before 1200 AD. The original Lordship of West Newton comprised this farm, Bank Top, Newton Grange and Golden Square Farms. Research is still being carried out to establish the exact dates when the various subsequent occupiers were here, such as members of the Sandwith family, tenants from 1534 until 1740. The large family of Seamer who gave their name to the woods, farmed here from 1740 to 1916, benefiting from the huge boost in farm incomes towards the end of the Napoleonic wars. Many of them are buried in Oswaldkirk churchyard.

The farm was part of the Feversham Estate until 1946, and Mr Cook, from Kirkbymoorside was their last tenant. His daughter visited us early this summer and brought a photo of the house with her, as a 14 year old, in it. The farm was sold away from the estate after they left. Sinnington Hunt Point-to-Point was held across this farm up until the late 1960s.

The traditional farm buildings were mostly built in 1928, just before tractors were introduced, with a few much older, but they are too low for modern farm equipment. Two large steel framed buildings have been erected to store crops and large machinery. One old farm building has the names and weights of previous farm workers, such as ‘bullocky’, ‘stick boy’, ‘ploughman’, and others from the 1890s to the Second World War, with a few drawings, including a plough, and an aeroplane drawn by a German prisoner of war who was brought here to work from the POW Camp, Eden Camp, near Malton.

The house was mostly built about 1740, probably when the Seamer family first came, and has not changed substantially since then. The attic was used to store wool and a winch is still there, possibly early Victorian, which was used to haul it up. There is an
old duck pond near the house. The orchards, on the 1911 map but not the 1850 one, were probably planted when the railway came and were a source of income for the farmers’ wives, who used to sell fruit, sending it on the train to Leeds, the nearest station being Nunnington.

Julie Simmonds

Bank Top Farm

Stephen Wikeley has been at the farm all his forty four years and four generations of his family have lived in the parish. His mother, Betty, lived at Bank Top with her parents, William and Mary Metcalfe, from 1933. She married Jack Wikeley from Bridge Farm in 1948. Jack and Betty farmed 125 acres from 1975 until 1991.
Electricity was not installed in the farm until the mid 1950s. Usually two men were employed, with extra people recruited at harvest time, when Mary Metcalfe was feeding regularly twelve people for dinner. They had cows, sheep, pigs and two horses to work the land and their crops were wheat, barley and oats.

In 1991 sixty two acres were sold to Ian Armitage of Leysthorpe Hall and in 1992 another fifty acres to Harry Simmonds of West Newton Grange. Peter and Chris Burn now occupy some of the barns which they are converting into a house, and Stephen looks after a further ten acres.

Stephen Wikeley

Manor Farm

This was one of the smallest of the eight farms in Oswaldkirk. Manor Farm house was built in the late 1600s possibly about the same time as Ivy Cottage opposite. The present farmhouse was lived in by the Stablers, the Pickering, and then the Makins. Don Harrison and his family, who were related to both Charlie Oldfield and to Stephen Wikeley, lived and farmed there between 1942 and 1957. The farm had sixty to eighty acres of land, with a smithy, a fold yard and a stock yard, the remains of which can still be seen adjacent to the farmhouse. The farm would have had mainly cattle as the ground was not very productive for crops.

In the nineteen fifties and sixties the Cooper family sold the land gradually, firstly for a garage with petrol pumps, and then for housing, now Manor View and St Oswald’s Close. Otto and Rosemary Greenfield bought the house from the Coopers and have lived there for nearly forty years.

Brothercare at Manor Farm

Rosemary and Otto Greenfield, of Manor Farm, started the Brothercare charity shop in the old dairy in the early 1980s. All kinds of secondhand goods were sold and nearly £15000 was made over several years with the help of more than twenty volunteers. The money was distributed to many needy charities including the Red Cross, Save the Children, Vision, Cafod and towards supporting a child in Tibet. It was a remarkable venture.

Rosemary Greenfield

Broad Farm

After the dispersal of Col. Benson’s estate Broad Farm was bought by A.M.A. Syndicate Ltd who sold it to Frank Sparling in 1934. In 1946 he sold it to Major Gordon Foster, from Leysthorpe Hall, who passed it on to his son Michael Foster. Olga and I bought some land in 1968 from Manor Farm and then purchased Broad Farm in 1972. By 1990 we had seventy two acres.

During the last fifty to a hundred years wheat and barley were mostly grown on the farm. Oats and large quantities of hay were needed for the horses.
Silage was made in the 1940s and became an important part of their diet. They were used for working the farm as well as for riding – no Land Rovers in those days. I personally found an old Oswaldkirk Horse Show prize ticket when I was cleaning out the old stable, but undated. Broad Farm had its own threshing machine which was horse driven and a large granary in which to store the wheat. Potatoes were grown for human consumption, barley for feeding the sheep and turnips and mangolds for the cattle. I am sure that the Malt Shovel would have brewed beer using local barley. A few Shorthorn cows, a dual purpose breed for milk and beef, would be kept and milked by the farmer’s wife who would then make butter and possibly cheese. A sow would be in the pigsty for breeding pigs for bacon, but not on a large scale. Sheep would be brought in for fattening, having been bred on drier hillier farms, and free range poultry would feed on home grown wheat. Every village, including Oswaldkirk, had a slaughter house to deal with the cattle except for the pigs which were killed and cured on the farms. Pig killing parties were quite a social occasion in the winter. No farm was complete without a sheepdog or two and some cats, as rats and mice were an ongoing problem.

Now for the marketing: wheat would be taken to the railway station at Nunnington or Gilling by horse drawn transport. Cattle would go by rail also and would be driven along the road to the station by dogs. They would often be taken to the livestock market in Carlton Lane, Helmsley.

When we first came to the Broad Farm we grew hay, wheat and barley. A few years later we brought the cattle over from our other farm in Grosmont and developed our dairy farm which we worked for many years.

Martin Hogarth

**Hall Farm**

Hall Farm has a stone farmhouse, built in 1760, on the Main Street in Oswaldkirk with a superb view over the fields and in earlier days it was the farm for Oswaldkirk Hall. John and Mary Collinson owned and farmed the 300 acres from 1967 to 1992. Previous tenants of Col. Benson were Joe and John Wood, Mr Metcalfe and Mr Lister. There were farm buildings on top of the hill to the south and the Collinson family built a bungalow near them in 1989 into which Selwyn and his family moved in 1991. On their land they have made a pond and also a copse named after their daughter Beth as it was planted in the year that...
she was born. They grow wheat and barley together with sheep and suckler cows. The farmhouse with one acre was sold to the Morgan family in 1997.

Selwyn Collinson

**Bridge Farm**

Bridge Farm lies on the southern boundary of Oswaldkirk parish. The house was built in 1850 and was lived in by Ernest and Mary Ward in the nineteen thirties, followed by Francis and Minnie Wikeley who moved there from Tylas Farm, Rievaulx. George and Joan Masterman farmed there for Major Gordon Foster after they were married. They later moved to Birch Farm, Leysthorpe, and Bob Masterman moved into Bridge Farm.

In 1983 the Collinson family bought the farm with one hundred and fifty acres and Selwyn and Virginia moved into the farmhouse. In partnership with brother Marcus they farmed Hall Farm and Bridge Farm together. They grew wheat mainly and also had pigs and poultry.

In 1991 Bridge Farm Barns were sold to the Price family who have now converted them into several houses. In 1993 the Collinsons sold Bridge Farmhouse, together with three acres of land to Charity and Tim Meredith. The Meredith family, with their three children George, Sam and Cora, are emigrating to New Zealand this autumn and the house will change hands again.

Selwyn Collinson
Reminiscences
mainly compiled by Flora Daly with help from David and Helen Goodman

Mona Dale

My first memory of the village was in 1920 as a girl of five, seeing the building of Cragg Cottage and the felling of the trees which had occupied the quarry. My mother, Amy, my brother Dick and I lived in Laurel Cottage. My father had been killed in the Great War, near Rouen in France in 1918. My mother had been born at Howsham, where her father was coachman at the Hall. As a girl Amy had learnt the piano, which she put to good use later, playing the harmonium at St Oswald's church until she was over 90. Amy worked at Grimston Manor as a girl and married George Skilbeck, son of the village joiner at Gilling.

Grandfather Skilbeck had been a keen cricketer who had played with Ranjit Singh at Gilling in his youth. His son George was also a joiner. Their first home was Southlands, which had been the village school until it was closed in 1908.

When George went to the war, Amy and the children moved to Laurel Cottage as the steps at Southlands were difficult for the pram – and there was no garden to dispose of the household waste. The move was suggested by Col. Benson, who owned virtually all the land and houses.

There was no water supply or drains at the time. Water was carried from the well down the Gilling road, or from the pump at St Gregory's yard. Water came to the Terrace in 1924 and Laurel Cottage had a tap by the back door, but we still had an ash pit and no WC. The other houses were supplied from taps set into the wall.

St Gregory's was then called Sunnyside and was the home of the village blacksmith, Jim Stabler, a bachelor, who kept a few cows on the common along the top of the village. They were driven home for milking, after a drink in the pond by Birch Farm gate. The cows also drank from an old bath by the pump below the Sunnyside yard. Jim's aunt also lived at Sunnyside, and his mother started a shop on the west side of the front door which sold sweets and odds and ends. Aunt Lil Skilbeck, came to live with us at Laurel Cottage, and later married Jim Stabler from over the corner.

As the village school had been closed, I walked with the other children to the school at Gilling, mainly across the fields, coming out to the road by Spring Wood.

I can remember Col. Benson taking his morning drive with Mrs Horner, his housekeeper, in a Landau with a very smart.
coachman – Mr Pringle. They came down the village, over to Gilling and back via Stonegrave. The Colonel later acquired a motor car for his tour.

The road to Gilling and beyond was widened in 1929, and the old right angle bends curved a bit. The village street by the church was widened in 1937. ‘Uncle’ Fred Gatenby from the Post Office acted as nightwatchman and I used to take him his supper, together with the three Gatenby daughters. The land in front of Southlands had been a rough playground with a swing in the 1900s. It was levelled into the village tennis court in the 1920s and became quite a centre of social life, particularly when increasing numbers of teachers from ‘The College’ came to live in the village. One such family shocked the village by putting their washing out on a Sunday!

I enjoyed playing in the village Tennis Tournaments which were major occasions in the summer. Aunt Lil used to provide teas at Sunnyside on tournament days.

My mother was an essential part of village life in the days before washing machines. She went to many of the village houses to help with the family washing. Each house had a ‘copper’, with a small coal fire to heat the clothes in water, a wash-board for more intensive cleaning and a mangle to squeeze out most of the water before airing on the line, or on a hanging frame, and finally ironing. It was a long job.

I lived for a time with the Goodman family, helping to bring up young David whilst his parents were dashing about in the social whirl of the 1930s. I married Alf Dale, who worked for the Forestry Commission and we went to live in what is now the eastern end of Rigg Cottage as tenants of the Beecrofts who lived in the western half. My mother lived with us and daughter Anne grew up there before we all moved into No 3, The Terrace, one of the new council houses in 1949. Alf enjoyed his work with ‘The Forestry’ and many of the woods in the area were planted and felled by the Forestry Commission. Alf distinguished himself by the speed with which he could turn trees into pit-props. I continued to help keep various houses in good shape and my mother helped Mrs Perry with the catering at the White House School.

I enjoyed taking a full part in village activities – the Women’s Institute, various events in the village hall, country dancing and as part of the team who looked after the flowers, brasses and other items in the church.

I became a Churchwarden of St Oswald’s in 1974 in succession to John Pullan, who was the last of the line of village shopkeepers. In 1997 I left the village to start a new life in Kirkbymoorside close to my daughter, four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren – so far.

**George Stabler**

I was born in Oswaldkirk in 1925. My father, Jim, was the village blacksmith and we lived in Sunnyside – now St Gregory’s. My mother, Lilian, was daughter of Dick Skilbeck, the village joiner of Gilling and sister-in-law to Mrs Amy Skilbeck. Lilian came to live with Amy and her family when brother George was killed in France in 1918.

My Grandfather was a blacksmith. He had learnt his skills at East Ayton in the late 1800s and used to walk from there to Scarborough to work on the iron hooks used in the construction of the Marine Parade. When he came to Oswaldkirk he set up business in what is now East Cottage on the Terrace. The garage for East Cottage was
built as a shed in which horses were shod and the forge and other parts of the work were done in the sheds up a few steps to the right of the garage.

Grandfather William had fourteen children and my father, Jim, was the only boy. He became a blacksmith also and moved house and business to Sunnyside with sister Charlotte. Sunnyside was a bigger house with better sheds for the forge and other work. There was also a well, with a hand pump, from which the family, the cattle and the business got their water. Aunt Charlotte kept a sweet shop opening onto the street beside the front door.

The Skilbecks lived just across the corner in Laurel Cottage. Lilian and Jim were married in 1924 and Jim was in his fifties when I was born in the next year.

We kept some cows which were grazed along the Bank Top and we had a cream separator which kept the family supplied with cream and butter.

I was called up into the army in March 1944 and saw active service with the Seaforth Highlanders in Holland at the time of Hitler’s final offensive in the Ardennes. From there we went on into Germany and ended up looking after German prisoners at Kiel. Of the 28 who went out with me several were killed and only two returned without injury. I had a shrapnel wound to my face, but fortunately it healed.

I was on leave at home and went to a dance at the Village Hall just before Christmas in 1945. Whilst watching the dancers from the balcony, I met a young lady called Frances, whose father had the shop and Post Office at Hovingham. We were married in 1950 and went to live in Hovingham. After a year we returned to Oswaldkirk to live at Well House, at the east end of Manor Farm with my parents. Jim had retired by then. Our children, Bruce and Angela were born there. There were only two bedrooms, so we moved to a larger house in Gilling, where Frances started a Post Office in the house, which was just a few doors from mother Lil’s old home. She came to live with us there after father died.

I worked in the ‘Forestry’ for fifty years and saw the work change greatly. In the 1940s everything was done by hand – with saws and axes and sickles. Trees were felled, cleaned and loaded onto horse drawn carts. Felling was piece work job, at 6d per tree. Making pit-props was a major business. Alf Dale and I won the Pit Prop making competition at the Yorkshire Show for several years – until we were no longer invited to compete.

Son Bruce has followed into the forestry business, now much changed with chain saws, chemical weeding and computer controlled logging.

Brenda White

I was brought up at Broad Farm and I lived in Oswaldkirk until I married in 1955. I used to walk to Gilling Primary School, and later when I went to Malton Grammar School I used to catch the bus from Oswaldkirk. The road from Oswaldkirk to Gilling had wide grass verges where there were ammunition dumps covered with corrugated iron shelters which were open at both ends. The noise of the wind howling through these shelters could be very frightening, especially on dark evenings.

My father, Sidney Pickering, had a milking herd and during the war land girls used to come to him for a month at a time, for tuition in milking cows. My parents used to deliver milk in the village twice a day because, of course, there were no refrigerators.
The milk was carried in an oval shaped can. Half the lid of the can was fixed, and the other half lifted up. Measures hung inside the can and were used to transfer the milk into the jug of the recipient. After 1934 we had a cooler and bottled the milk.

Before the war started we all used to go from Gilling station to Scarborough on a day excursion. In those days you could set your clock by when you saw the trains and buses go by. The buses ran from Helmsley to York every four hours. I remember how we laughed when a young man, who my father had just employed, overheard my mother say she wondered what time it was. He was so anxious to please that he ran all the way from Broad Farm to the Post Office and back to tell her.

The Post Office and general store was in the centre of the village, in the house which is now called the Old Post Office, and is within sight of the church clock. There was a joiner's shop on the corner in the house which is now St Gregory's, and for a short time there was a haberdashery shop in one of the rooms there. Previously these premises were a blacksmith's shop. In the snowy weather we used to go sledging and ski-ing down Birch Bank, and I remember the joy of sledging in the moonlight.

Near the beginning of the war I remember the Military Police were billeted in private houses and, soon afterwards, huts were built to house 200-300 soldiers on the ground which is now built over with post-war houses (opposite the Manor House and the White House). First there came a battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. They left in 1941 and were followed by the RASC and then the Grenadier Guards. The soldiers used to go on route marches of eighteen miles or so and do cross country running. Most of KRRC had been office workers in London and they found it tough at first. The Bren Gun carriers used to practise up and down Birch Bank, in between the trees and gorse bushes. The military requisitioned the old village hall for a Mess and occasionally there were dances to which the local young people were invited. During the war the village was of course blacked out like all the rest of the country. My father used to be a special constable, and one day news came that a parachutist had come down and was dangling with his parachute in a tree on the side of the Malton road. Most of the children turned out to look at him but they dare not go too close in case he was a German with a gun. The planes used to go out from Wombleton airfield on bombing raids. My sister used to do fire watching duty with Miss Smith from Cliff House. They used to walk up Stockings Lane, looking over the countryside for sign of fire.

When Dr. Richardson was the Rector he used to allow the Women's Guild to meet in two rooms at the west end of the rectory. The ladies used to sew things for the sale which they had in the summer. There were concerts at which my mother and sister used to recite in Yorkshire dialect, and there were whist and beetle drives, all in aid of church funds. There was a choral society who used to give concerts where choral works were interspersed with one act plays.

After the war there was a flourishing Women's Institute which was founded by Mrs Oade, the Rector's wife.
The last regiment to be stationed in the village was Polish. They left in 1944 and after the war my family was visited by a Polish man, who they had befriended, who had been badly wounded. He drove all the way from the south of England in a car for the disabled. Towards the end of the war Italian prisoners of war came to work on the farms. They were billeted in the Army Camp until 1945.

At the beginning of the war children from Middlesbrough were evacuated to the district and anybody who had a spare room had to take a child. Some of them stayed quite a long time.

During the war most of the cottages kept hens and a pig. During these years there was an enthusiastic choir at St Oswald's and there was a good church attendance. The soldiers used to march to church for church parade and the singing at morning service was lovely. Half the church was reserved for the troops. After the troops had left dances used to be held in the old village hall. The average attendance was about 200, but once 400 people packed in. I remember a special dance in 1951 where we all dressed up in gypsy costume. Later the dances were patronised by people from a distance who behaved badly and started fights and the dances were stopped.

David Goodman

I came to the village as a new born baby in 1932. My parents lived in the Bungalow at first. The only memory I have of that time is the oil lamp with a mantle and a red shade, which was the only source of light, apart from candles. We moved to the Manor House in 1934 and I have fond memories of sliding down the grassy bank (now wooded) behind the house. My father was one of the first two lay teachers at ‘The College’. The other was Horry Perry; his son Michael and I were the same age and were good friends, particularly when the Perrys built the White House next door in 1937. We moved into Ledbrooke House in April 1939. My mother and Kath Perry taught us at home until we were old enough to go the Gilling Castle in 1940. My best memories of that time were ‘The Cubs’ having adventurous afternoons in the Gilling woods above the lakes. It was all scrubland and bracken then, before the forestry had reached those parts.

The Ampleforth College Junior school was in temporary accommodation when I got there in 1944, as Avisford prep-school was in residence to escape the flying bombs on the south coast.

Model aircraft were my main relaxation both at home and in the Upper School. Little diesel engines were taking over from twisted rubber as a source of power. Otherwise there was a lot of hard work and my father’s teaching finally got me to University, after which I had two ‘Gap Years’ with National Service in the Air Force, mainly in an underground radar station at Seaton Snook. I then began my thirty four years, with ICI on Teesside. Helen and I had met at Stockton, whilst I was still doing National Service. We were married in Saltburn in 1960 and lived mainly in Middlesbrough. Three children later, we came, and I returned, to Oswaldkirk in 1974, first to Orchard House and then back into my old home – with a few updates. Twenty eight years later it is still great to be back.
I first came to live in Oswaldkirk in 1933 at the age of seven, and I left nine years later when I went to work in York. My father had been appointed gardener to Major Gatty Smith at Oswaldkirk Hall, and we lived in the cottage in the grounds. At that time the outbuildings at the Hall were used for various purposes. There was a defunct brewery and laundry as well as several stables and garages. The previous owner, Col. Benson, had had a lot of carriage horses and riding horses. In one building gas was made to supply the house. In the back yard there was a huge well, but in my time there was an electric pump which took the well water to the upper floors for bath water. One of the buildings on the roadside was Major Gatty Smith’s Estate Office. During the war part of the Hall was the Officer’s Mess and the laundry became the cookhouse. At that time the father of George Stabler was the blacksmith, in the house which is now St Gregory’s, at the bottom of Oswaldkirk Bank. Joseph Gatenby had the Post Office, and in the building over the road his brother, Herbert Gatenby, had a cycle repair shop where he also sold cycle lamps and charged the accumulators that were used for wireless sets. The Gatenby family also owned the petrol pumps. At that time there was not a repair garage in the village. Herbert’s shop was in the corner of what had been the estate yard which later became a timber yard run by Mr Percy Hugill. One day there was a huge fire which demolished the timber, and it was after that that Isaac White built his garage. Ike White lived in Pavilion House.

About a quarter of a mile beyond the Hall there was a field with a small brick building in it. This was where the cow belonging to the postmaster lived, and I remember seeing him walk along the road carrying his milking stool and pail twice a day.

In Abbey House lived the threshing machine man, and he kept his machine in the building which is now the garage for the White House. The threshing machine was powered by steam, and it used to be taken round the farms. In Hagg Cottage, on the way to Ampleforth, lived Mr Brown and his family. His son was a male alto singer and sang in the church choir.

Dr. Richardson was the Rector and he was a keen collector of fossils. He used to take the local boys to show them the fossils in the nearby quarries. At the Harvest Festival Service Canon Kyle from Carlton in Cleveland often came to preach. He had a broad Yorkshire accent and was known as the farming parson. At that time at the west end of the Rectory there was an outdoor staircase which led up to a room which was used by the Ladies’ Guild. I remember when Hag wood was cut down for timber. A team of men with twelve huge horses came, and the horses seemed to understand every word that was said to them. The ground of the wood was a carpet of aconites, then primroses and bluebells further up.

I remember the old village street and I remember when it was built up to make it more level and pavements were put in. At that time the wall was built which supports the drive up to the garage of the White House. There used to be a night watchman for the road building works. Once, due to an academic achievement of mine, my reward was to have my supper with the night watchman by his fire. Hall Farm had a granary, which during the war became a cobbler’s shop for the army. It is now the west end of
Hall Farm House. I was also in the cricket team. At that time the cricket pavilion was alongside the Terrace, but it had to be moved when Major Foster built the two houses where the Mastermans live. The cricket pitch was in the field behind the houses and the pavilion was moved to the side of the Gilling road. The footpath which runs from Broad Farm up the hill to the Bank Top was known as the Bunny Run because there were so many rabbits. One winter there was a very heavy snowfall which was nearly to the top of the telegraph poles on the Malton road. Tobogganing down Birch Bank was much enjoyed.

Raymond Wood

I was born in 1945 at Abbey House in Oswaldkirk and lived there until I was married. My parents bought the house for £350 at the sale in 1932 and I was told that the Hall was sold for £3500, ten times as much.

My father, Harold, had a mill, driven by a traction engine and a blacksmith and woodwork shop in the barns, which are now the garages, at the White House. My mother, Irene, was much younger than my father and they had six children: Ken, Chris, Ida (Babs), Stan and the twins, Wendy and me. My father died when I was eight so my mother had a tough time bringing us all up. She was well known for her good cooking and her rhubarb pies were much enjoyed. She took in lodgers to make ends meet and Bernard Vazquez was one of them.

I first went to school in Ampleforth at St Hilda's (thirty pupils then), then to Gilling and on to Ryedale School which I left when I was 15. I belonged to the Model Club at school and got interested in building free flight planes. I now make ones with an 8 ft. wing span and an electric motor. I used to deliver The Yorkshire Post to almost everyone in the village so I got to know people quite well. I earned 6 shillings a week. I did a lot of work helping Mr and Mrs Perry at the White House. Once I remember some boys pinching apples from the Perry's orchard being disturbed by my father. He chased them away and one of them jumped over the wall at the top of the drive. He did not realise what a steep drop it was and broke his leg. I don't suppose he pinched apples again.

Ike White used to run the garage and was the first person in the village to get T.V. He invited children in to watch cowboy films. He also ran the Cricket Club.

I went to work for Major Foster at Leysthorpe Hall, then for Mr Armitage, where I lived in Leysthorpe Cottages, but have now moved away to work at Ness Hall.
I first came to Oswaldkirk in 1947 to work as a member of the Women’s Land Army at Birch Farm. Eighteen months later I married George Masterman. We had three children and I lived and worked in and around Oswaldkirk until very recently. In 1952, when we had two babies, George contracted tetanus (lockjaw). He rapidly became very ill and was rushed into York Hospital where they warned me that it was nearly always fatal. However he was saved by penicillin, our prayers, and the fact that he was young and strong. He was the first such case to survive at York Hospital.

I have many memories of old Oswaldkirk. A very popular recreation was walking, especially on Sunday evenings when you would see whole families out together. Immediately at the top of the bank, in the middle of the road, there was a small green with a signpost in the middle and a seat all round. This was much used by all as a real meeting place, where the ‘news’ was exchanged, especially by the old men of the village, while resting on a fine day after a toil up the hill to smoke a pipe. One of the favourite walks was along the Terrace and across Birch Bank which was a hard wide path in those days. Then back along the top road to the roundabout, stopping there for a rest and to gather up the latest news and gossip from whoever happened to be sitting there at the time, then on down the bank and home. Another walk was up the bank, along the path that went in among the trees along the top of the village, and then back down the path behind the White House and on down to the church.

Some of the cottages in the village have now been enlarged and completely changed. It is most noticeable that nowadays everybody leaves their gate open, or else they don’t have one. Years ago, it was woe betide anyone who valued their garden and left the gate open, because a flock of sheep or a few cows were sure to be driven down the street, to or from the farm and fields. This was an accepted thing and part of village life. Bob Oldfield who, miraculously, with one arm (having lost one in the first world war) was gardener at the Hall. Bob Wright was the roadman. There was no fancy road sweeper then. Just a willing workman, with a brush, a shovel and a wheelbarrow. In the winter he would get up at 4am if it was icy, to salt the bank. He always had time to pass the time of day and have a little chat.

One of the favourite places for children to play was Birch Bank which was quite steep in places. In those days it was covered in daisies and buttercups and other small flowers. There was a quarry in the middle where the children went fossil hunting, and there were good trees to climb. The end nearest the village was covered in brambles, gorse and it was full of wildlife. On Easter Monday the whole village came to roll their eggs, not the chocolate ones of today, but hard boiled and all in different colours. We seemed to have more snow in those days and that was when they arrived with their sledges and toboggans, even tin trays. Mums and Dads joined in, snowball fights and all.
Dick Smailes

I moved to Oswaldkirk in 1949 with my wife and small daughter. This was the first time we had a house with a bath in it. We were able to move into one of the houses which the Council had built at the east end of the Terrace. These houses were for the workers at three different farms, and I was working for Mr Phillip Harrison at East Newton Grange. I used to bicycle to work, up the path that used to run diagonally across Birch Field up to the Malton road. The council houses at Bank Top were also for men who worked for certain farmers. We used to call the east end of the village the poor end, and the west end the posh end. We used to know the name of everybody in the village.

Note on council house occupants in 1949: The Terrace: Mr Walker worked for Ray Burrell, Dick Smailes as above. Mr Holiday and John Richardson worked for Major Foster. Bank Top: two for Major Foster, one for Golden Square, one for Newton Grange.

The Reliance bus used to run from Helmsley to York about every two hours, and on a Saturday it was often full. In 1949 there was no electricity and no telephone at East Newton Grange, just gas lamps. When I arrived for work the first thing I did was to put some cereals through the mill for feeding the animals. At first the mill was worked by a tractor motor, later by electricity. In one of the cottages (now ruined) at East Newton Bottom alongside the river there used to live a tanner. He used the water from the Rye for his work. When I was a young man I used to take my bath in the river in the summer time, and in the winter there was one bowl of water for all the workers to wash in, and there was a pecking order. By the last person the water was far from clean. There was one roller towel which had to last a week.

The Oswaldkirk garage was once Col. Benson’s stockyard.

Sylvia Stephenson

I came to Oswaldkirk, to 1, Bank Top, on Good Friday, 1955 with my husband and my first child, Denise. At that time our rent was £1 per week including rates and water rate. Now it is £109 per fortnight excluding rates. Oswaldkirk Bank was about the same as it is now. The old village hall was still there. When I was a girl I went to my first hunt ball there. In the Manor House lived Col. and Mrs Dudzinski who had come over from Poland. Twenty boys lodged with them. Col. Dudzinsky worked in the offices at the College. After those boys left school they moved to St Gregory’s. During the nineteen sixties they would go back to Poland on holiday. After they left the Manor House a Greek Orthodox priest, Father Rodzianko moved in with a number of boys of the Orthodox religion. Mrs Perry’s school was in the White House and her husband taught at the college. There is a story told that some nuns from York were going round the village collecting money. When one knocked on Mrs Perry’s door she told the nun that she was very busy with
her children. The nun enquired how many children she had and when the reply was
nineteen she didn’t press for a donation!
Betty Ward lived in Keilwey Cottage. She was disabled and she used to do knitting for
people. On a Sunday her father, Charlie, used to push her up the hill in her
wheelchair to where everyone went for a chat at the Bank Top. Birch Bank path was
a bier road down which they used to carry coffins to the church.
In East Cottage lived Bumper Cooper who used to organise parties and outings. Miss
Rugg, a retired missionary, lived in the schoolhouse. When Alf Dale’s dog was
knocked down she prayed over it, and the dog lived.
The first weekend in June was Parents’ Weekend at Ampleforth College and a number
of parents used to stay at the pub. The ladies wore long skirts and big hats. At that
time the beer was in barrels along the side of the bar.
When Ian and Carol Pickering were landlords, Ian organised a custard pie
competition for charity. There were trestle tables in the pub yard and you had to throw
pies at each other; there were two teams with sponsors. Jack Leng was the gardener
at Gilling Castle.
There was a local tramp, Spud Murphy, who used to push a greyhound round in a
pram. He used to do odd jobs on the farms and his wife was a tramp also. They used
to sleep in barns and when Spud was drunk he used to dance for the children.
Joan and Michael Moore were the first to live in the Police House at Bank Top, then
Peter Walker (of ‘Heartbeat’ fame), then later Alan and Renate Worden. Alan worked
on the North York Moors railway as a hobby, and Renate painted pictures of the trains
as well as other subjects. Mr Maynard at Sunnybank reared several children, and he
had to walk halfway down the bank to fetch water.
There used to be point to point racing from Wikeley’s farm half way round the valley.
The biggest difference between the village then and now was the gardens. Practically
every cottage grew their own vegetables, front and back. There was no need to go to
the greengrocer, in fact there was not much need to go shopping at all because vans
came round selling household supplies. The other big difference was the lack of
traffic. In the 1950s I was quite happy to allow my small children to walk down the
bank to the village shop and Post Office in the middle of the village.
In 1970 Mr Pullan, the postmaster, retired, and I took over as postmistress in our
house at 1, Bank Top for several years. My daughter Janice was born in the village and
still lives there.

**Len Brown**

I have lived in Leysthorpe and Oswaldkirk for forty three years. Kath and I came in
1959 and bought White’s Garage Ltd and ran it as a showroom for new cars and
repairing others until 1992. Previously I had run a garage in Holme-on-Spalding
Moor after returning from Army service. I was in the Signals Regiment, attached to
the Derbyshire Yeomanry Armoured Corps, serving in North Africa for two and a half
years. When I was young I lived in Malton and my first job, at fourteen years old, was
as a mechanic earning 7s 6d for a forty eight hour week. In 1964 we built a new
garage in Malton and ran it with the one in Oswaldkirk until 1972 when we sold the
Malton one to J.B. Motors.
At first we lived at Leysthorpe Cottages and Major Gordon Foster was one of my best customers. He bought at least six new cars from me for his family and I remember one especially that he bought for his daughter when she was eighteen. He suggested a second-hand one that was not too sporty but in the end I persuaded him that a new Austin A40 was just the thing. A bright red saloon one was what she requested and it was duly delivered to Leysthorpe Hall. It arrived so quickly that I had not had time to make out the bill but the Major telephoned to say that he did not want anything on his premises that had not been paid for and so I was obliged to do the paperwork speedily and rushed up to the Hall to give him the bill. We closed the garage in 1992 and Philip Thompson, my son-in-law, built three new houses on the site.

In 1964 I built a bungalow in Oswaldkirk, now Holmecroft, with stone I had bought from a partly demolished wing of Grimston Manor in Gilling, and then moved into another bungalow on the main street when Jack Bradley bought Manor Farm for £10,000, from the Cooper family, in order to build the new development. Northern Developments drew up detailed plans for seventeen houses but the land was built on finally by Sketchmead Homes, which later became Persimmon Homes. The footings and drains were laid down in 1967 but the houses were not built until a few years later. The old garages and my office which had been the old Reading Room for the village were demolished and twenty two houses were erected. Anthony Fawcett and Norman Lilley were the builders and the Lilley family lived in 1, St Oswald’s Close. Tragically Norman, his wife Sue, and son Mark with his girl friend, were killed as he was flying his aeroplane over the Channel in 1990. They are buried in a spacious grave in St Oswald’s churchyard.

One of my ambitions was to own a Garage and people said how useful it had been to the community, but another one was to breed race horses. This has given me great pleasure and I produced at least two flat race winners. It was good to live near the horses when I built Oak Lodge in 1989 in which I now live.
Aspects of Oswaldkirk

The Parish Church of Saint Oswald

The village of Oswaldkirk takes its name from the parish church of Saint Oswald, the Christian king of Northumbria, slain in 642 fighting against the heathen King Penda at the battle of Maserfield.

Nothing now remains of the earliest wooden Saxon church, but the nave of the present church is basically Norman with later insertions. It is possible that there was some rebuilding in the 13th century because the church had to be re-consecrated in August 1287 by Henry, Bishop of Candida Casa (Whitehorn), acting under a mandate from the Archbishop of York, John le Romeyn.

The Norman doorway in the north wall, now blocked, is visible both inside and outside the church. There was presumably a substantial stairway leading from the door to the floor level of the nave. The north door and narrow slit window to the west of it, both survive from the 11th or 12th century. The large windows in the north and south of the nave were inserted about 1320-1330 and the top panels of two of them contain fragments of medieval glass. Their quality suggests that there would have been much more pictorial glass in earlier times. Many medieval windows were destroyed in the 1600s but we have no record of what happened at Oswaldkirk.

The three tall arches at the west end were rebuilt between 1800 and 1850, replacing similar, lower arches which hid the small west window. The arched recess in the south wall no doubt contained the tomb of one of the Pickering family, Lords of Oswaldkirk.
from the 14th to the 16th century. The tombstone lying on its side is probably that of Sir Richard Pickering who died in 1441, wishing to be buried before the altar of Our Lady, where the pulpit now is, and leaving his green coat to be made into a vestment for Saint Oswald’s altar. The pulpit is 17th century. The bell tower is from the 19th century and contains two bells inscribed VENITE EXULTEMUS DOMINO 1684 and GLORIA IN ALTISSIMUS DEO 1683.

The Chancel and much of the woodwork in the chancel is 19th century. The church was substantially restored in 1886. One important improvement was the inclusion of a pitch damp course, which is essential as most of the floor is below ground level. Another innovation was a ducted air heating system, with an air intake by the door and hot air outlet behind the organ. The air was heated through a heat exchanger in the heater shed and if well stoked from Friday evening, the church could be warmish by Sunday – there is an additional hot air outlet into the vestry. The modern electric system is effective and was a bequest from a lady who found the Victorian system did not keep her warm enough, despite a fur coat. The old system was also quite labour intensive.

The east window which dates from the 1886 restoration shows St Oswald, his friend St Aidan and St Cuthbert, in whose coffin St Oswald’s wounded head was placed. It is now thought to be behind the High Altar of Durham Cathedral.

The wooden panelling in the sanctuary and in the south side of the chancel is 17th century. The gravestone of a Cistercian abbot lies in the north east corner of the sanctuary. This lay directly in front of the altar until 1886. Whether an abbot of Byland or Rievaulx is buried here is not known. The stone may have been brought to Oswaldkirk at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. There is a blocked up priest’s door in the south side of the chancel, and on the outside a 13th century cross can be seen on a re-used stone, together with some primitive sundials. In the porch there are fragments of Anglian or Danish carving and other stones. John Bunting, of Rose Cottage, cut a new carving based on the ancient carving of the Virgin and Child and kindly gave it to the church in the 1980s. See page 92.

The parish registers exist continuously from 1538 and the names of the Rectors of Oswaldkirk are known almost completely from 1320 to the present day. The Living of Oswaldkirk is an ancient Rectory which was in the possession of the Oswaldkirk Pickerings from about 1316 to the end of the 16th century. It remained in private hands until 1980, when the Feversham family passed on their rights to the Archbishop of York. In 1958 the living was united with that of Ampleforth, and the living of Gilling was incorporated in 1986. Stonegrave was added to the United Benefice in 1998 and the Vicar now lives in Ampleforth Vicarage.

The original Victorian harmonium was replaced with a somewhat better one of the same period, which was surplus to the requirements of the Castle Howard Costume Museum, and now our hymns are played on an electric organ, with two manuals and pedals which was kindly donated by a village resident.

Despite the fact that we now share our Vicar with three other villages, we are able to retain our weekly pattern of worship with the help of retired clergy and licensed lay leaders from the parish and beyond.

Revd Barry Keeton (Rector 1974-1979), revised by David Goodman
St Aidan’s Church

Before St Aidan’s church was built in the 1960s the Roman Catholic community worshipped in the village hall and in private houses. Fr. Cuthbert Rabnett and Fr. Edmund Hatton from Ampleforth, appealed for funds and Adrian Stewart of The Annet, Bank Top, remembers how in 1953 he was one of the first Old Boys of the College to subscribe. Richard Fairbairns, of Manor House, gave the land for the church in memory of his mother, Ethel.

The architect appointed was Ewan Blackledge whose youngest daughter and family now live in Oswaldkirk. The pale coloured windows were designed and cut by Derek Clarke. They depict choirs of angels round the throne of God and are said to be similar to ones in Coventry Cathedral. Our (then) resident sculptor John Bunting carved the striking Stations of the Cross in wood on the west wall and Fr. Edgar Miller, parish priest, has enhanced the church with many other carvings.

The church is dedicated to St Aidan who came from Iona in the 7th century at the invitation of his friend King Oswald and together they spread the Christian message in the north of England. Today the congregation is drawn from Oswaldkirk and surrounding villages.

Helen Goodman

Saint Symeon’s House (1968-1979)

For eleven years, between 1968 and 1979, the Manor House, the long low building which lies below the Hag north of the main road, just opposite the road to the estate, was known as St Symeon’s House and was a Hall of Residence for Ampleforth College.
Whether this row of joined cottages ever was the Manor House itself is doubtful. The actual Manor House probably stood on the site of the present White House where the coats of arms of the Pickering family are still to be found on the wall opposite the church. Nevertheless the building has a long history and there are stories of priest's hiding holes dating back to the days of recusancy.

There is nothing surprising about all this, but what is surprising is that this Hall of Residence was reserved for Orthodox Christians supported by grants to attend the Roman Catholic Ampleforth College along the road. The Russian Orthodox residence was in the charge of two Russian emigres, Archpriest Vladimir Rodzianko and his wife Mary. Both worked for the BBC Overseas Service (Russian Branch) and their two grandchildren were also boarders at St Simeon's.

The whole venture was facilitated by Abbots Basil Hume and Ambrose Griffiths, who both later became Bishops, under the Headmastership of Patrick Barry, who later became Abbot. Deacon Simeon Piers took over control of the House in 1975 when the BBC summoned the Rodziankos to London. At the height of this generous and far-sighted enterprise there were twenty young boarders resident in the house.

A little Orthodox Church was created in the drive to the Manor House. The church was a simple caravan fitted with an Onion Dome and passers-by would see the Icon, hear the sound of Orthodox chant and catch, wafted on the breeze, the scent of incense.

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The Oswaldkirk Charities

The Ancient Parish of Ampleforth/Oswaldkirk had a number of Charitable Funds, some starting in the late 1600s. They have been simplified, with the approval of the Charity Commissioners, into the funds that we have today. The Ancient Parish included quite a large part of what is now Ampleforth up until the mid 1800s.

The Ampleforth and Oswaldkirk Educational Foundation, had an income of just over £200 in 2001. The income is to be used purely for educational purposes, and in recent years we have divided most of the income equally between the two schools at Ampleforth to help children go on educational trips that they would not otherwise be able to afford, at the discretion of the Headteachers.

The Oswaldkirk United Charities was made up of nine separate but similar funds with less specific aims. They are listed below and were combined into one in 1997. The income in 2001 was just over £150.

Components of the Oswaldkirk United Charities:

- Mary Bowdery (Indenture) of 1854
- Mary Bowdery (Will) of 1878
- Dorothy Comber (Gift) before 1825
- Together as the Fyshe, Sidgwick and Thompson Indenture of 1762
- Mary Thompson (Will) of 1784

There were also two other gifts which seem to have either been absorbed or lost:

- Lady Catherine Cholmley (gift) before 1824, a rentcharge on the Worsley Hovingham Estate
- Sir Richard Vaughan (gift) before 1824, a rentcharge from land at Ampleforth.

The Lady Catherine Cholmley rentcharge was the subject of a lengthy correspondence in the mid 1800s between two generations of the Worsleys, at Hovingham, and the Combers, Rectors at Oswaldkirk. In essence the payment was for a sermon to be preached in the Newton Grange Chapel, which had become derelict and was rebuilt by the Fevershams at Sproxton in 1879. The Worsleys objected to paying for a sermon which was not preached and the Combers said that there was no point in ‘preaching to rabbits’ so the sermon was preached in St Oswald’s church instead.

The Trustees of both charities are headed by the Rector of Oswaldkirk, with four trustees appointed by our Parish Meeting and two from the Ampleforth Parish Council, each for a renewable period of three years. The Educational Foundation also has an appointee from the County Council.

David Goodman
Malt Shovel Inn

Nikolaus Pevsner in his architectural review of North Yorkshire mentions the Malt Shovel as particularly worthy, along with the Church and the Hall. He writes “From the street one would not guess that this Inn has a facade to the garden which makes it certain that it was once a house of some standing. Five bays, two storeys, the doorway and all the windows with pediments alternating between triangular and segmental horizontally as well as vertically. It is all a little crowded and overdone but all the more cheerful for that.” He dates the house as being between c.1720 and 1730 but fails to mention the fine old staircase which is still there, leading from the central hall. Apparently the whole edifice was built by William Moore, who later moved to the present Hall, having destroyed the medieval building as not being to his liking. It would appear that the first inhabitant of the house, now the Malt Shovel, was William Moore himself. The Inn is now a Grade 2 listed building, which protects it from any further development and preserves it for posterity.

Joan Masterman, in her ‘Memories of Bygone Oswaldkirk’ writes ‘The Mecca for most of the old characters in the village was the Malt Shovel Inn, one of the oldest buildings in the village and once a staging post for stage coaches passing through the village. Saturday night was the big night. The first bar had a huge open fireplace in those days with two great settles on each side of the table in the middle. There were no females in the 1940s except the Landlady Mrs Holliday. There were no carpets on the floor and none needed. Most of the chaps wore hob-nailed boots. Sunday suits were for Church and funerals only. There was a darts board on the interior wall and liberal dominoes among the pint pots. No food except the odd packet of crisps for the young chaps. The old ones were too busy with their pipes of tobacco.’ There is said to be a ghost who patrols the stairs and landing. There are stories of chairs and tables thrown into disarray and of objects flying though the air. However, in the late nineties, the Rector exorcised the building since when the tales of haunting have ceased. It does not take much imagination though to sit in the bar on a winter’s night and see other ghosts of past village worthies nodding sleepily over their pint pots, the air thick with tobacco smoke.

Philip Entwistle
The Village School

Oswaldkirk boasts an early development of educational establishments. Records show that a payment was made to a schoolmaster in 1762. Maps from the early 1800s show a school building at the beginning of the Terrace and in 1854 a newly built parochial, endowed school was opened on the same site. The academic teachings were supplemented by instruction in the Church of England doctrines and religious instruction was part of the daily curriculum.

Changes in the Education Acts in 1902 had little impact, as general education for primary school children was well established. However, in 1908 a new Education Bill was introduced which specified that schools providing sectarian religious instruction became non-provided schools, i.e. not paid for by the local Education Committee but receiving an ‘appropriate’ grant. All schools had to register a roll in excess of 30 pupils (Oswaldkirk had 38). Secular education, including non-denominational religious instruction was to be the norm for Education Committee (Board) schools.

Oswaldkirk school was administered by a committee of four managers under licence from the owner of the property, Colonel Benson. The chief influence was that of the Rector of Oswaldkirk, the Revd. J.W.G. Bennett. After running the school under Church of England guidance, Col. Benson insisted after the 1908 Bill that only secular education be provided at the school. This proposal was objected to by two of the managers, namely the Rector and Mr Seamer, both of whom contested the Colonel’s insistence that the majority of the pupils came from non-conformist families. It is interesting to note that said Rector was the only appointee in the village who was not selected by Col. Benson and that their relationship was somewhat acrimonious.

A published dispute ensued (Malton Messenger, Yorkshire Gazette and Yorkshire Post) and the debate was joined by the Earl of Feversham who supported the dissident managers. The dispute was not resolved amicably and, in September 1908, Col. Benson gave the managers notice to quit the premises. The Oswaldkirk School Trust was closed in December of that year.

Another unhelpful factor had been the school inspector’s report of May 1908 which indicated that the standard of education and sanitation at Oswaldkirk school was not up to acceptable standards and that the school had suffered considerably from repeated closures during the year.

The efforts of Rector Bennett to found a new Church of England school at the Rectory met with no success, despite
an agreement, in principle, by the York Diocesan Education Society that a grant should be provided for its establishment. The children of Oswaldkirk were henceforth to attend Gilling school – a two mile walk.

The school building was divided into three sections: what is now School House was the teacher’s residence; what is now Southlands was the school (and still retains the high windows installed to deter pupils from neglecting their studies); the corner property, now Laurel Cottage, was the home of the Headmaster, who was also the village registrar. Following closure of the school the registrar post at Oswaldkirk was assimilated into the Helmsley registry.

Today most of the primary school children attend St Hilda’s or St Benedict’s schools in Ampleforth village, and when they are eleven they move on to Ryedale Comprehensive School at Nawton/Beadlam.

Babs Miller-Pratt

Oswaldkirk Cricket Club 1930-1939

A faded blue exercise book containing the Minutes of Oswaldkirk Cricket Club from 1930-1939 represents the only tangible evidence we have at the moment of an important aspect of past village life.

The Cricket Club flourished before 1930 and after 1939 but the only material evidence we have for its existence is this cursory Minute Book. The rest of our information depends on memory and hearsay. Still, this glimpse of the past, however brief, is fascinating.

It is clear that the Great War (1914-1918) still held its sway over residents of rural England. The inaugural President of the Club in 1930 was Colonel Benson, who remained in this office until his death in 1932 when the Secretary noted his loss to the Club and when the Committee, prompted by the Rector, stood for two minutes in silence. The next President, appointed that year, was Major Foster and although the Vice President at that time, the Revd. J.L. Pugh Thomas, had no military title, the succeeding Chairman in 1935 was Major Gatty Smith. The Club captain for the 1934 season was one Sergeant Kelly.

The Minutes are generally brief and confined to names of elected officers. However at the end of 1930 a special meeting was held ‘for the purpose of arranging a gate to be made into the Tennis Field so that the cricket roller could be used by Tennis Club members, who would pay 2/6d to the Cricket Club for the use of the roller and the gate.’

In 1935 a major step forward was the appointment of a groundsman for the coming season. Mr G. Bowes accepted this position for the munificent salary of 2/6d. per week. This arrangement may not have worked very well for by 1937 it was agreed that ‘the Committee members do it.’ We can only speculate that Mr Bowes had either not been a success or had been unhappy about the pay!

However, information about the social life of the village is much more interesting. On Easter Monday 1930 the Club held a Whist Drive and Dance in the ‘New Hall’ in aid of funds. In 1931 another dance was arranged which was attended by the Easingwold Band. Admission was 2/6d and refreshments were free. There was to be a Spot Prize and a Waltzing competition. The Dance was obviously a great success for, at the
following meeting the Secretary noted that £20-4-9d. had been raised. For “future experience” he chose to list the food purchased and provided viz:

An unspecified number of napkins; 4 lbs. of potted meat; 4 sandwich loaves of bread; 2 lbs. of tea; 1 bottle of coffee essence; 4 lbs. of sugar; 2 lbs. of butter; one and a half gallons of milk; and finally, 5 doz. bottles of mineral water. So the days of innocent enjoyment are recorded.

On the 9th of May 1939, with war looming, the Oswaldkirk Cricket Club closed its books. Cricket kit was sold off to Gilling C.C. for the sum of £7. The Cricket Pavilion and Roller were loaned to the Oswaldkirk Tennis Club to be returned in the event of the Cricket Club being re-formed. The last sad entry for 1939 should be recorded in full. ‘It was proposed by Mr Horner and seconded by Mr A. Dale that the two new cricket balls be sold to Gilling Cricket Club for the sum of 10/- carried.’

Philip Entwistle

The Home Guard

The BBC programme ‘Dad’s Army’ may be partly responsible for the idea that the L.D.V. (The Local Defence Volunteers), later to be known as the Home Guard, was something of a joke. But when Anthony Eden, in the dark days of the summer of 1940, announced the formation of this volunteer army, the men who came forward, many of them already veterans of the First World War, did not regard it as such. Nor
incidentally did the enemy according to a letter to The Times newspaper in February that year. The Germans did not see the Home Guard as part of the British armed forces at all. Members of the Home Guard if captured were to be treated ‘as terrorist guerrillas and shot’. Consequently the fate of any volunteer was clear and there was nothing very funny about that! However, even although in reality the Home Guard was never called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice, we can say with certainty that every one of them was prepared to die for his country.

The Home Guard was never called into action so most of the information we have about them concerns preparation for hostilities in the form of training exercises. We know that our local branch (Nos 1 and 2 Platoons B Company) commanded by Captain Perry (White House) had nightly defensive duties to perform. We know that there were road blocks (two in Oswaldkirk), Bridge ambush points (1 NCO and 12 men at Newgate Bank), Observation Posts to man and airfields to defend. B Company Battle H.Q. is noted as the ‘Czech’ Hut, Helmsley (Tel. No. Helmsley 83). Three of the Observation Posts (O.P’s) appear to have been the responsibility of B Company and were manned every night. A secret communique from Battalion command in May 1941 reports that on inspection of these Posts, although no great fault was found, one B Company O.P. was manned by only two men. ‘Manning parties should be not less than three’. The communique goes on to insist that the role of H.G. companies is ‘to defend their own village and not to go hunting paratroops some distance away’. The regular army, in the form of the 11th. Armoured Division was expected to enter the area in June.

Co-operation with the local Searchlight Detachments was encouraged because these sites had better communication resources than the Home Guard who had to rely on the primitive local telephone system. The telephone line in this sector passed through exchanges in Pickering and Malton. Failing the telephone, and it often failed, communication was through Cyclist Dispatch riders or Pigeon Post. The latter two forms of communication, it was noted, were highly unreliable and ‘should only be used as a desperate last resort’. Local searchlights were sited at Ampleforth and Laskill. Mrs Marion Brookes (who lived as a child in the Old Post Office) remembers being lifted to the landing window to see the searchlights.

Road Blocks were only manned in an emergency by enough men ‘as to be able to close them’. ‘Any stranger should be examined by one man whilst the rest should cover him with their rifles from concealed positions’. First Aid Posts were set up, the nearest being in the Vicarage, Hovingham. There was a look out post at the top of the bank, to the left of the gate to West Newton Grange, and a tent for brewing tea and councils of war across the road in the wood round what is now Thirklewood garden. The village had a road block at the bottom of the bank, jutting out from the wall to Red House on one side and Laurel Cottage on the other.

A letter from Lt. Drake (B Company Liaison Officer) in December 1943 to Lt. Lund (H.Q. Information Officer, Manor Farm, Broughton) apologises for the failure of B. Company guides due to pressures of work and illness. ‘I hope you are finding things not too difficult in your struggle to manage your farm and the Home Guard – a tough job!’ It must be stressed that all Home Guard personnel had full-time civilian jobs to do and that they sacrificed much spare time and every evening to their part-time military role.

In a Battalion shooting competition on the 16th July 1943, four members of B Company, L/Cpl Makin, Pte. Dale, Pte. Cooper and Pte. Thompson scored 70 points each in firing the spigot mortar.
A message (31st July 1943, not to be published) from the General Commander in Chief H.Q. Home Forces to all Home Guard Commanders states:

The Home Guard was created as the partner of the Field Army with the task of defeating any attempt to invade this country. Although the task of the Field Army has changed to the invasion of Europe our partnership continues, since you will contribute to the security of the base from which we operate. I have every confidence in your ability to undertake this responsibility. Thus you make a direct contribution to the final victory and set an enduring example to the nation in service and self-sacrifice.

I send to you and all under your command my sincere thanks and my best wishes for your future. I shall always count it a great privilege to have served as your Commander in Chief.

(Signed General Commander in Chief)

This seems a fitting tribute to the local men, from this village, who volunteered their time and were prepared to give their lives for their country in the years between 1940/45.

B Company Commander, Major R.T. Pearson MC. (Ampleforth)
B Company HQ Pearson and Wards, (Bondgate, Helmsley)
Second in Command, Captain H.G. Perry (White House, Oswaldkirk), No.1 Platoon Commander, Lt. W. Black (Ness Lane, Nunnington), No.2 Platoon Commander Lt. W.H. Bond (Ampleforth College).

Philip Entwistle

The Parish Meeting

All villages in England have either a Parish Council or a Parish Meeting. These two bodies are often confused. There are very few similarities between the two although both represent their village. The Parish Meeting is an assembly of every village inhabitant. Every parishioner is entitled to attend meetings, to speak and to vote. In this way decisions are the product of the whole village and not just a small elected group. No matter how few people attend the meeting this would still be the case, for those who have failed to attend have freely decided not to exercise their right to do so. Unhappily the earliest Parish records have been lost but we have the minutes of a Meeting on January 3rd 1894, chaired by George Skilbeck, regarding the safe keeping of the Charity deeds and appointment of trustees. There were probably occasional meetings in earlier years.

Parish Meeting Minute from 1894

Aspects of Oswaldkirk 55
The Oswaldkirk Parish Meeting is well supported today. Average attendance per meeting is about 25 to 30 villagers and every household receives an agenda for every meeting held. Discussion is lively and all decisions are reached by democratic vote. The main business of the year falls into a number of well-defined categories such as speeding, footpaths, dog-fouling, Neighbourhood Watch and general unsociable behaviour such as bonfires. The most important decisions made concern planning and the future development of a village which lies at the very heart of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. Decisions about planning are not only crucial for the present welfare of the village but also for future generations who will live in or visit this area in the years to come.

It is for these future generations that the Parish meets and it is on the shoulders of those who attend the meetings that the responsibility for the survival of this beautiful environment lies.

The Officers at the time of writing are:

*Chairman* – Ian Henley
*Treasurer* – Eric Dunstone
*Secretary* – Philip Entwistle

Previous Chairmen include: Brigadier R.H. Amory (about 1960 to 1976), and David Goodman (1976-2000).

Philip Entwistle

**Minute Book of Oswaldkirk Village Hall**

**February 1937-1946**

We have at the moment no records of the Village Hall, its constitution and activities, before 1937 but on February 1st 1937 at a Public Meeting which forty villagers attended, a revised scheme for the working of the Hall was presented. A motion that the Hall be carried on as a Village Hall on a tenancy (of a Mr Cundall) on a three-year lease at a rent of £15 per annum was passed. It was stipulated that the Landlord should be responsible for the external upkeep of the Hall with certain responsibilities for internal woodwork and fireplaces and that the tenants (the village) should be responsible for general internal upkeep.

It is clear that at this juncture the Village Hall was not owned by the village, being rented from the Landlord owner. At the same meeting a Ladies Section was formed to cater for all the ladies of the Parish. A Committee of twelve men and four ladies was duly elected.

The meeting then went on to discuss what was uppermost in its mind the forthcoming Coronation celebrations. A children's sports, gifts of mugs, a dance and a ‘Free Tea’ for all the village were proposed and unanimously carried.

The Village Hall with its superb sprung floor constituted an important centre for local dancing and it is not surprising that a dance on Easter Monday, to raise funds for the Coronation celebrations, and another free dance for Coronation night should be
proposed and carried. Major Philip Gatty Smith was thanked for all the work he had accomplished to secure the Hall (albeit rented) for the village. It would seem that the Hall had fallen into some disrepair for ‘workmen’ are mentioned although essential repairs were to be deferred until after the Coronation celebrations. Also furniture for the Hall was scarce and it was agreed that the Cricket Club should be asked for the loan of its chairs and that a second hand mirror should be purchased (cost 2/6d) for the Ladies cloakroom. Mr Stabler, the blacksmith, offered to freely make ‘two iron fire kerbs’ for the fireplaces.

The going price for local dance bands (raised for the special occasion of the Coronation because they were in great demand) was £5. This was considered too high so an alternative Whist Drive for Coronation night was proposed and accepted. (18 packs of cards to be purchased from Boots.)

By March 1937 the Committee was deeply into negotiations for a second hand piano from Greys of York, price £18.18s and the construction of a stage, using tables and trestles. The first record of the names of local bands can be found in the March entry. Baxter’s band is to be engaged for a dance on April 23rd for £2.5s or failing that Sails Band (5 musicians) for £2.15s. Masters of Ceremonies, ticket office accountants and ticket collectors are appointed. Posters are ordered with the important proviso for dancers that ‘they should wear slippers’. This is the first dance to be arranged in the newly acquired Hall and obviously it is regarded as both an experiment and a serious undertaking. Persons selling twelve tickets or more were to be given one free ticket as a bonus. The dance was a great success. It made a profit of £13.10.6d. and another was planned for June 18th. Failing Sails, Hudson Smith’s band from Easingwold, should be booked.

The big day May 12th 1937, Coronation Day, arrived. It rained all day. A rival firework display upset arrangements for the Whist Drive. The starting time was brought forward from 8.30 to 7.00pm. Twenty-four hands of whist were proposed but immediately there were requests from the players for a reduction to twenty hands because they wanted to watch the fireworks, and some were going to dances at other villages. The organisers complied. The Whist Drive ended early, prizes were distributed and there was a general rush for the doors. ‘By ten o’clock’ the Minutes sadly record ‘the Hall was empty.’

Before and preceding the second world war the proudly proclaimed ‘New Village Hall’ provided a focus for nearly all village activities. A report of a public meeting on 13th May 1938 provides us with information which properly reflects its importance and also the health of the village at that time.

Quarters were made available for the Men’s Club and also a Branch of the County Library. Rooms were available for meetings of various village societies. The Tennis Club, Cricket Club and Conservative Association all met regularly in the Hall.
A Ladies Physical Culture Class was held as were Jumble Sales, Whist Drives, Social Evenings, Concerts and Lectures. As the war approached these lectures took on a more serious tone and were mainly concerned with the rather frightening topic of Air Raid Precautions. The Village Hall would also convert to a Cinema. It had a piano, a stage and chairs. (The same chairs that we use today.)

However, the greatest attraction of the Village Hall before and immediately after the Second World War was the finely installed and magically sprung dance floor. It was the envy of every village in Ryedale. We have in the archive a beautifully kept Account Book for Village Hall Income and expenditure 1938-1952. The quality dance floor assured regular bookings for the Sinnington Hunt Ball and from outside bodies, clubs and the police. What is most intriguing is the number of local bands available all usually hired for fees under £5 per night. The band would usually be given supper (7/-) as an additional bonus. A list of different band leaders provides some indication of the variety and popularity of native musicians in the years between the wars: – Birdsall’s Band, Baxter’s Band, Waller’s Band, Holm’s Band, Train’s Band, Richardson’s Band, Appleby’s Band and McEvoy’s Band. Occasionally a solo pianist, Mr Atkinson, was hired: his fee was 12/6d.

After the war the bands are hired, more exotically, by name: The Moonrakers, The Masqueraders, Bukavestas, The Rhythemaires, Lloyd Stotts, The Premier Dance Band and the Harmonica Band. (This latter group was only paid 10/- rather than the stipulated £5. It would be interesting to know why.)

It was an era of self-entertainment and flourishing amateur music of a type which we shall probably never see again.

Philip Entwistle

The Village Hall

Speech at the opening of the New Hall by David Goodman 23rd April 1988

The history of Oswaldkirk Village Hall is a remarkable reflection of the changes that have occurred in the village over the last 80 years as the village developed from a static and almost feudal society which survived in Oswaldkirk until the 1930s, to the more fluid age of the second home, the Bed and Breakfast, and the commuting, consuming, society of today.

The Old Hall was built entirely by the generosity of Col. Benson, who owned almost every square yard of the parish, and presided over his realm as a benevolent despot. He must have been very proud of his village and thought it should have a Village Hall. Not just any old hall, but the best.

He built to the highest standards with billiard room, meeting rooms, a stage and the magnificent sprung floor, which was famous all over the area which he protected with coconut matting when not being danced on, and woe betide anyone who tried to come in their working shoes when there was a dance. There was a balcony, rather like a royal box, above the main entrance from which he could supervise proceedings.

Memories of the Colonel’s time include children’s parties at Christmas, whist drives, concerts, and young ladies walking from the other side of Gilling to come to the dances.
During the Kaiser's war the hall was used, amongst other things, by the Ladies Sewing Circle to knit for the troops and provide some shreds of comfort in the Flanders mud. The plaque which commemorates their efforts will shortly be installed in the new building.

After Colonel Benson died in 1932, the hall was run by a committee, who kept on the tradition of regular dances and other events such as produce shows. The Hall was also hired out for local activities such as the Ladies League of Health and Beauty. My only memory of the hall in the '30s is as a very embarrassed small boy watching my mother and a dozen or so other young ladies doing what we now call aerobics in skimpy green shorts and tunics.

During Hitler's war the Hall was used by the military, as a recreation hall, Sergeants' Mess, a first aid centre and for the occasional dance. It accommodated the Grenadier Guards, and the Free Polish Army who livened up the social scene considerably, before leaving us for D-Day and the battle of Falaise.

Later on, the Hall was used by the Italian prisoners who were very glad to be out of a war that they were not very keen on in the first place, and who taught us to ski on Birch Bank using bent floor boards.

The committee raised enough money, from rents and events, eventually to buy the Hall with the aid of a National Fund, and set up the trust under which we now operate. The first trustees were Major Gatty Smith, whose son is Sandy Mackenzie Smith, and my own father. Their foresight has been a great help in our present venture.

In the late '40s and early '50s the Hall was if anything too successful, with 300 and more at dances. The job of policing and management became increasingly difficult not to say dangerous. There is regretfully nothing new in the present tendency to mindless belligerence.

There were also many village events, dramatics, choir, country dances, concerts, produce shows, WI meetings and evening classes. The Hall was also used by both the Methodists and Roman Catholics for their services. Two personal memories: Horry Perry playing "Sheep May Safely Graze" on the piano in a concert at the end of the war, and local talent show on the stage in about 1951. My contribution was as part of a country dance team organised by my mother, and I remember some adverse comment regarding the way my partner's skirts swung in the more lively sections.

The coming of the motor car, television and the smaller numbers of people in their more active years
gradually caused the hall to be used less. Expectations of comfort also were raised and people were not so prepared to sit in sub zero temperatures for their entertainment. Attempts at electric heating were not very successful and the use of the Hall declined. More recent years had their successes, with produce shows, old time dances, a children’s ballet class run by Miss Toase, badminton, a play school, discos and bingo. The 1977 Jubilee dinner and concert was a very enjoyable event that many of you will remember, and the years 1985/87 were particularly successful.

But despite the enthusiastic efforts of the committee and the support of the community, it became apparent that the old hall could not be maintained in a safe and usable condition. And the Trustees, headed by Mary Ogram, commissioned a study of the possible options, carried out for us by Sykes Able of Harrogate. The result you see before you today is thanks to the hard work of Bill Cowling’s team and the watchful eye of Geoffrey Waters. Some details may not be quite finished yet, but it is sound, warm and usable.

Our ideas could not have reached fruition had it not been for the generous help and commitment of the Local Authorities. Our most grateful thanks are due to the North Yorks County Council, The Rural Communities Council and in particular to the Amenities Committee of the Ryedale District Council without whose help we would have a major liability, rather than what you now see before you.

On behalf of the Trustees of the Oswaldkirk Village Hall, and of the whole community I have much pleasure in asking Councillor Daphne Stead, the Chairman of Ryedale District Council, to open our new Village Hall.
The Living Village Today

In the autumn of 2002 Oswaldkirk is a lively and pleasant village in which to live. Almost every household has a car and buses pass daily through the village to the local towns and to the city of York. One hundred and eighty five adults live in the parish the oldest of whom is Gretel Greenfield who is proud to be 90 years old and feels that she has not yet retired. The youngest is newly arrived one year old Rebecca Fram whose grandfather designed St Aidan's church. There are thirty four young people of sixteen and under as well as numerous dogs, cats, sheep, geese, hens and one donkey. In total there are ninety seven houses including two working farms, one pub, two churches but no shop or post office.

Helen Goodman

Young people speaking:

Neil Thompson

The Thompson family moved to Oswaldkirk two years ago and last year Neil decided that he would take on the milk round when Betty and Derrick Watson retired. He delivers milk, eggs and newspapers at top speed to many houses in Oswaldkirk, Hovingham, Cawton and Gilling. The residents are all very pleased to have deliveries on the doorstep.

Twenty two year old Neil plays cricket at Hovingham and generously helps to cut the churchyard grass at St Oswald’s church. He says what he likes best about the village is the warm and friendly community spirit. The only disadvantage is the lack of a shop but that does not worry him as he has a car and can borrow his father’s motorbike.

Beth Hollins

Beth Hollins, who is eighteen years old, has lived in Oswaldkirk all her life, apart from one year in Australia. She attends Easingwold School and is studying Theology and Philosophy, Art, Psychology and General Studies for her ‘A’ levels. She organises an Amnesty International group at school and is working for her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. This included a difficult four-day expedition in Scotland, in inclement weather. Beth has played the clarinet in the Oswaldkirk Symphony Orchestra at Christmas time. She has done karate and a life guard course at the local sports centre and is now learning to drive. She intends to go to university but has not yet decided in which direction her life should go.

She feels the disadvantage of rural life is being isolated from friends, as transport is a problem, and there is little to do in the village. Although she would like the cinema and shops to be closer, she does enjoy living with her family in the country.
Tabitha Grove

Sixteen year old Tabitha’s main interest is Drama which she is studying at York Sixth Form College having taken her G.C.S.Es last summer. She has loved acting all her life and parts such as Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Alice in Wonderland and the Dame in Puss in Boots have come her way. She is currently working behind the scenes at the 1812 Youth Theatre in the Helmsley Arts Centre and has a small part in the production of Twelfth Night. Recently she passed her Senior Gold Medal for Acting and won the Judi Dench Award for the highest marks in this examination in the Yorkshire area.

Although she is isolated from city activities Tabitha finds the peace and quiet of the village refreshing. After school she wants to travel and then on to study all aspects of working in the theatre.

Ed Collinson

Ed’s all consuming passion is BMX biking. It is a hobby that started when his grandparents bought him a bike five years ago. He rides more or less every day and is constantly improving and rebuilding his machine which has now become quite valuable. He travels all over the country to attend different race tracks and skate parks but dirt riding is what he enjoys most. On Hall Farm, where he lives, he has built mud jumps in the wood and practises hard, polishing up daring and complicated tricks of riding on one wheel or turning the bike underneath himself as he jumps. So far he has broken his collar bone, an arm and several ribs and as he says it is not something for the fainthearted. He finds it scary but enjoys the excitement.

Ed is at Malton School, in Year 11; Art, and Design and Technology are his favourite subjects. He wants to go to college next year and hopes to do an Arts and Graphics course.

The disadvantage of living in an isolated place is that he is a long way from friends, shops and the rest of civilisation. What he does like is the space and the view and he finds it exhilarating to be exposed to the elements on the top of the hill. And yes he does help on the farm but would rather be riding his bike.
The Playground

Through the initiative of many people: Sarah Stow, Doreen Roberts and Mary Thomas and their committee, money has been raised to create a new playground for the young people of our village. It uses the ground that was originally the village tennis court and has adventure climbing equipment, a springy horse, swings and an area for football. Generous gifts were received from a dozen groups to start the project off including £1000 from North Yorkshire County Council and £500 from Persimmon Homes. £1000 is raised most years by organising a Street Fair and this year in addition there was a Barn Dance and Hog Roast to help celebrate the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. As a result the committee hopes to erect a grand slide to enhance the facilities.

The Village Hall

Many activities go on here including weekly table tennis, St Simeon Singers practise regularly, monthly Parish information mornings happen and various meetings, exhibitions, and parties take place.

Dancing

For many years Oswaldkirk village hall has had a reputation for social dancing. Energetic Cajun dancing is taught by Glyn Roberts, of Swiss Cottage West. This sort of dancing comes from Louisiana, U.S.A., with French and Canadian connections. It is about enjoying music, learning dances: one step, two steps, waltzes and the whirling jitterbug, and making new friends. ‘Laissez les Bons Temps Rouler’ – ‘Let the Good Times Roll’.

For the last fifteen years Scottish dancing has been enjoyed in the hall. The lively music inspires everyone to do graceful leaps and turns in complex movements for reels, jigs and strathspeys. A group of younger dancers are rapidly becoming competent and however tired people feel at the beginning of the evening by the end they are rejuvenated and relaxed. Parties are held in the summer and at Christmas, and haggis and whiskey are consumed on Burns’ night. The dancing is taught by Moira Wood and Helen Goodman. Also Glyn and Christine Price from Bridge Farm Barns practise the spirited Argentinian Tango every week.
The Pantomime

A report from the Malton Gazette, in December 2001, written by Flora Daly:

On Saturday evening December 1st, in the Village Hall a version of ‘Snow White and the 4 Dwarfs’ was hugely enjoyed. Can ever a small village have produced so much talent, and can ever an audience have participated with so much enthusiasm? We all arrived up to thirty minutes before the performance began, and we were seated round small tables with a glass of wine, served by a team of ‘French’ waiters with white aprons and black moustaches. As we already mostly knew each other, there was soon a good party atmosphere. The Conductor and Tambourine, Sue Elm, then took the audience through all the songs, because we were to sing as well. Most of we older ones knew the tunes, for they were music hall tunes from our youth. An excellent and sensitive piano accompaniment was provided by Jean Beadle. The pantomime had been written by Philip Entwistle, with considerable input from the cast, and was based on the Snow White story with intrusions of characters from other pantomimes, and it was very funny. The producer was Doreen Roberts, who was also the originator of the whole idea and the cast were Ursula Webb, Selwyn Collinson, Glyn Roberts, Doreen Roberts, Ian Henley, Rosie Wilkinson, Philip Entwistle and Caroline O’Neill. The sets and costumes produced by young people and adults from the village were simple and effective, with just the right atmosphere of fairy-story-land. We had been asked to bring our own supper, to eat during the interval with another glass of wine. This made an opportunity to move around and speak or wave to other people. Then when the cast joined us at the end we were still one big happy party, and I think most of us were still laughing several hours afterwards.
The Millennium Mosaic and Footpath

To mark the start of the new Millennium, a Village Mosaic, was designed and produced with the help of Margaret Murphy from Rural Arts, North Yorkshire. More than twenty five people, led by Mark Clook and including eight children, enjoyed learning the techniques involved. It was great fun to work on it and much creative talent emerged. It now stands at the entrance to the Village Hall and depicts the Oswaldkirk Millennium Trail. The project was started late in 1999 and finished in the spring of 2002. Funding of £1500 was raised from the North Yorkshire Millennium and Small Project Funds, together with Lottery Grants for Local Groups, Awards for All scheme. The project also included small mosaics to act as waymarkers on the trail.

The Millennium Trail itself was created after many years of discussion to divert an old footpath to pass on a more convenient route along the top of the village bank. Particular thanks are due to the Ampleforth Abbey Trustees and the National Park Authority for the creation of a new section of path and steps down through the Hag beyond Oswaldkirk Hall.

As well as the trail and the mosaics, a leaflet has been produced which includes a brief guide and history of the village. Also a Yew tree, twenty centimetres high, grown from a tree two thousand years old has been planted just inside the church gate.

Neighbourhood Watch

Several people have been looking after this village for over six years as a neighbourhood watch team and we are grateful for their care. The village is divided into eight groups and the police send out messages which alert residents to possible dangers. During the Millennium Bonfire Party the neighbourhood watch people took it in turns to walk round the village to ensure that it was safe. They work quietly and effectively and on one occasion were responsible for helping the police find an intruder red handed.
The Malt Shovel

Peter and Debbie now run the pub which is owned by Sam Smiths of Tadcaster. Special events are put on every month or so: a brass band, a singer, pool knock-out competitions, raffles and also weekly quizzes have been enjoyed. They are open seven days a week, serving home cooked meals and they much appreciate the support of the local community.

Churches Together

There are weekly services in both churches and in the spirit of the Ampleforth Covenant – ‘we rejoice in the growing partnership between our churches at national, regional and local levels’. The young people of St Oswald’s church meet at the Wednesday Tea Time Club for Christian teaching with music, drama and games. People from both churches take part in joint Lent Groups, there is a Procession of Witness on Good Friday along the main street, and also they join together at Harvest and Christmas time. Two well attended ‘Songs of Praise’ have taken place in the village hall with moving contributions from various members of the community.

And So …

Winston Churchill, speaking about the first victories in North Africa during the Second World War, said:

‘This is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning’

We hope that this brief social history is not the end of anything, but the beginning of a continuing process of collecting pictures, objects, original sources and memoirs to be added to a growing archive of the history of Oswaldkirk.

* * * * *

The Archives

One of the main intentions of the Oswaldkirk History group – apart from the production of this book – was to create a growing archive of historical and informational material for the use of present and future generations of villagers. It is intended to provide accommodation for this archive and to appoint a Village Archivist through the Parish Meeting. An archivist is now appointed; details from Parish Meeting Secretary.
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge generous help from a number of people and we would like to thank in particular those who have contributed to the text.

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Our sources include:

The Borthwick Institute; County Records Office, Northallerton; Eden Camp Archive; Malton Library; North Yorkshire National Park; Sites, Monuments and Records, County Hall, Northallerton; Yorkshire Evening Press and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
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Photographs

Despite our best efforts to trace the owners of some of the prints we have been
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Convener and Secretary – Helen Goodman
Treasurer – Harry Simmonds
Editor – Philip Entwistle

Flora Daly
Philip Entwistle
Helen Goodman
Alison Hampshire
Sandy Mackenzie Smith
Team at Bank Top Farm in the 1930s

“Views from churchyard looking east – 1954”
Oswaldkirk
a living village

Part Two
2008
Update for A Living Village – 2008

As a living village, Oswaldkirk has evolved in a number of ways since the book was completed in 2002.

The most structural of these changes has been the refurbishment of the Rectory, where the last major change was in 1837 and Broad Farm on the Terrace, from a traditional 19th Century farm with barns and a horse mill, into three executive style houses. Martins, on the Gilling Road, has been extended and fitted with Gothic style windows. It is now known as Havoc Hall. There is now no working farm in the village, but the land is well cultivated and grazed from three outlying farms in the Parish and another farm in the next Parish.

We now have a ‘First Responder’ group who are trained and equipped to respond quickly to anyone who is taken sick before the ambulance can get here. The Yorkshire Air Ambulance has also been called in for a number of traffic accidents and this is supported by local donations.

The Village Hall is well used and we have a number of new activities. The latest of these is ‘Pilates’ which has several sessions in a day. The Art group continues to meet weekly as well as the Simeon Singers, which was founded in the village and seems to appreciate the acoustics and piano. Scottish dancing draws enthusiasts from quite a wide area. A weekly all age tea and cakes club was meeting until recently on Thursdays. This has just evolved into an all age ‘Books, Biscuits and Banter’ session at around mid day to encourage the use of a large collection of books, videos and DVDs. The problems of the world are no doubt sorted in banter, with the help of a few biscuits.
We now have a village walk researched and led each month by committed enthusiasts. The walk is well publicised and supported. We are fortunate to have such a variety of beautiful local countryside - and good pubs at which to finish with a lunch. Non walkers are also welcomed to the end of walk meals, which gives an additional dimension to the social side of the day.

Our Parish is one of the first in the area to produce a Local Plan for the District Council which helps the Parish Meeting and District Council when planning proposals are discussed. The Parish Meeting thrives and often gets around 15-20% attendance. As a ‘Meeting’ rather than a ‘Council’ all voting adults are welcome to attend and vote. In 2008 we won the ‘Calor Village of the Year’ award for our part of Yorkshire and at the time of writing we are preparing for the North of England contest. It was good to hear that we scored particularly highly on the personal aspects of our community - as well as for being the only village which produced tea and cakes for the judges rather than just tea.

We have even more active young people in the parish now and the playground is well used. Around a dozen come to the Wednesday Tea Time Club after school. This is something like what Sunday Schools used to be, but more fun and with good tea supplied by the parents, who also do the washing up. The children have produced some remarkable works of art, with the help of an inspirational mum. Examples below:

Mobile for the Feast of Pentecost
'The Fruits of the Spirit'

The village archives are growing slowly. Until a few years ago the Parish Records of St Oswald’s church were all handwritten and kept in the church safe. We have been fortunate in having had two Rectors who produced them into a more accessible form. The Revd Patrick Rowley typed out the list from 1538 until 1837 and these are now available on disc. We have two printed copies for the village archive. This covers the period from Henry VIII until just before Queen Victoria. The earlier date was also the time of William Tyndale who translated the Bible into English, so that ‘every plough hand’ could read it for themselves. Oswaldkirk is unusual in having a complete list of Rectors from 1302, the time of Edward 1st. The earlier section is also in our archive.
but not yet on disc. It was compiled by The Revd Barry Keeton who followed Patrick Rowley in 1974.

One of the most interesting of our Rectors is Dr John Dee, from 1567/8 to 1574, who probably never lived here, but was amongst other things, a Mathematician, Astronomer, Astrologer, Alchemist and Chemist. He was also a friend of Queen Elizabeth and of Francis Drake. Research is continuing into contemporary documents and various more recent books about his life. His association with Oswaldkirk seems to have been due to his friendship with Sir William Pickering whose family arms feature on the wall opposite the church.

In more recent history, The Ampleforth Abbey Trustees have let us copy a drawing of our church and village street in 1900, drawn by Fr Maurus Powell, then a young monk, who went on to become the headmaster of the Ampleforth Preparatory School in Gilling Castle.

The picture shows the village street as it was before the road was widened and the wall on the right moved back into the hill. The young lady could have been carrying water from one of the wells on the south of the road. The ivy by the barn is hiding the top of the buttress and the coats of arms, which are now visible on the reconstructed wall.

An archaeology student from York University has recently been awarded a PhD for her work in researching the history of the Medieval Manor of Oswaldkirk. The first Manor House was probably built in the late 14th or early 15th Century, by the de Pickering family whose Coat of Arms features on the remaining wall, (see main book). They seem to have been national rather than local figures. The other Arms are of the de Barton family, whose connection with the village is also uncertain. It is probable that the Manor House was unoccupied or neglected for many years and became a useful source of building stone. Possibly some of it could have been used in what we now call the Manor House. Modern archaeology benefits from imaging cameras, which can explore into the ground without having to dig into it. They found part of a drainage system which suggested that the original manor could have been on the North side of the high wall with the shields. What remains of the original building is uncertain, but
it could relate to the present buildings. The large barn would have been a good site for a dominant house. There may also have been some link with the layout of the churchyard across the village street. The White House, built in the 1930s on the site of an old orchard, may have older antecedents.

The Oswaldkirk Parish Register 1538-1837

With money still remaining from the grant we obtained for the production of the History Book, Helen Goodman has had printed two copies of the Oswaldkirk Parish Register. Beautifully and clearly presented, one copy will remain in the Archive but the other will be available for perusal by anyone who wishes to inspect it and absolutely fascinating it is! Four names, Masterman, Thompson, Benson and Fawcett occur frequently showing a connection with the village through time. The number of Births, Marriages and Deaths in the parish would imply a larger population than we find today although we must remember everyone attended Church in those days. 1623 must have been a hard year, for sixteen people were buried then and the years 1568-9 were pretty prolific for births, nineteen being listed. In 1832, births were listed to fathers, three of whom were labourers, one a school master, one a stonemason, one a blacksmith and one a gamekeeper. Also listed was a birth to a single woman.

It is recorded that some people were buried in wool, one child was born in the Church porch and in 1827, Cain O’Hara aged 5, from Ireland, was buried in the churchyard. This brief review merely skims the surface of a wonderful record of our English history. The most interesting entry of all is that of Dr John Dee MA, a Tudor mathematician and Astrologer, servant of Queen Elizabeth and arch dabbler in the Occult who was appointed Rector of Oswaldkirk in 1567.

Philip Entwistle

Update for A Living Village – 2008
The Oswaldkirk Feast
A Conversation with Robert Wright, Oswaldkirk. June 1966

The Feast was usually held in about May or June and all the farm workers would have the week off work. There would be stalls, and travelling shows, coconut shies, sweets, hot peas (hot green peas), and sometimes even a gypsy to tell your fortune.

The Burnsides and others used to attend, from Kirkbymoorside. Each year there would be a lot of dressing up, and usually a Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress who used to pass through the village in Tom Horseman’s Waggonette (he was the publican of the Malt Shovel). The whole crowd would stop at each house and the occupants would be ‘fined’ on some frivolous pretext, of having a window open, or a curtain hanging out, or grass growing between the flags. Everybody took it all in good part and the money which was collected in these ‘fines’ was used for the drinkings at the end of the day.

The last Lord Mayor he could remember was called Harwood, who was the postman at Oswaldkirk. The part of the Lady Mayoress was played by a man called Dick Magson, who worked for the Russells who owned West Newton Grange. (Harwood also used to play a similar part in the feast at Stonegrave). The Feast began to peter out during the Great War and it was never revived afterwards. Colonel Benson, the Squire at that time, decided to hold an Agricultural Show in Oswaldkirk, (to make up for the absence of a Feast?), and the first year it was held in the Paddock below the Malt Shovel, now owned by the Coopers. In subsequent years the Show was held in the Well Field at the west end of the village. Because Colonel Benson had military contacts there was always a military band and there would be Horse Show ing, and Riding and Driving, also beasts, but no pigs or sheep because there were no pens.

Apparently some of the tenants were not satisfied with the autocratic way that Colonel Benson ran these events and they demanded that a Show Committee be formed to organise it in other years. The Colonel was not keen on this and the Committee found that they could not get the military band without his co-operation and soon afterwards the Show began to fall in through lack of support. The boys from Castle Howard Reformatory came with a band one year but the Show was in decline by the mid 1920s.

An update of the four young people interviewed in the village in 2002 when the Oswaldkirk History Book was first published

Neil Thompson

Neil finished with his Milk Round last July and is having a breather from getting up to work in the middle of the night. He now lives on his own in Oswaldkirk and is employed by a local farmer. He also does gardening and occasional repairs for people
in their homes and gardens. He cuts St Oswald’s churchyard and is invaluable in helping with the November Bonfire and Fireworks.

Neil’s main hobby is still cricket but he also enjoys clay pigeon shooting and maintaining old cars at which he is well qualified as a mechanic. He has recently acquired a lovable cocker spaniel, called Paddy, so long walks are now on the agenda. Riding a motor bike is also an enjoyable pastime.

Beth Hollins

After leaving Easingwold School Beth attended Manchester University and studied Social Anthropology, obtaining a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree.

Beth, now 24, lives in central London and works for the Royal Horticultural Society. She is part of the Events Organisation Team who plan fund raising Galas for the Chelsea Flower Show and for Hampton Court Flower Show. She is much enjoying all the liveliness of the capital city and has plenty of opportunities to attend concerts and the theatre. However she does come back to Oswaldkirk to visit her family and to enjoy the rural peace.

Tabitha Grove

Tabitha is currently working for North Yorkshire Youth as the Youth Volunteer Adviser for Ryedale and Scarborough. Her job involves helping to represent a nationwide charity called ‘V’ and working with young people aged between 16 and 25 years. She is finding them opportunities for volunteering which are both relevant and fun, as well as making sure they are recognised and rewarded for the valuable work they do.

Tabitha is still living in Oswaldkirk. She and her family are in the middle of renovating their house and making it into two smaller houses, one for Hilary, her mother, and the other for her partner Ross, and herself.

Ed Collinson

Ed, now 22 years old, has just finished at the University of Northumbria, in Newcastle, studying in the Arts and Social Sciences Department. He was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree, with First Class Honours, last summer as well as the Paul Mason Sculpture Prize for the best piece of sculpture in his year.

He is now converting an old barn on the farm as a studio, is studying English Literature on a Distance Learning Course, and working at furthering his career. He is applying to study for an MA degree, possibly at the Royal College of Art, or the Royal Academy or at the Slade.

Asked what he does in his spare time? He draws.
Other young people in the village

Bethany Alexander

The year 2008 has been an amazing adventure for Bethany beginning with a trip to Hollywood. This was an educational Field Trip with her College class preceding her examinations. Seeing film sets, catching far away glimpses of famous actors and absorbing the atmosphere of an exciting place was a rich experience.

In April she celebrated her 18th birthday and then successfully completed her ‘A’ levels in Film, Drama and English at York College. For one of her examinations Bethany directed her own short film, shot on location here in Oswaldkirk.

After spending the summer working at McConnell Thomas, a delicatessen in Kirkbymoorside, Bethany went backpacking around Europe going mainly to Italy and Spain. Seeing Michelangelo’s David in the Gallerie dell’Academia in Florence was a great delight; she will certainly return to this captivating city. Bethany is now working again and her next destination is to Australia and New Zealand.

Bethany is a regular and popular visitor to the Wednesday Tea Time Club in the village and is a great asset there. She also looks after several children in a ‘baby sitting’ capacity in the evening. She also enjoys visiting the theatre and has found the Minack Theatre in Cornwall an exhilarating encounter. Her favourite musical is ‘Blood Brothers’ by Willy Russell which she has written an adaptation of, has performed in it and has seen it three times.

In September 2009 Bethany will be starting a Degree course in Theatre Arts but does not yet know which university will chose her! She is hoping to pursue a career in the media.

Josh Butler

Josh is 13 and is in Year 8 at Ryedale School where he enjoys studying Design Technology and Food Technology. His main passion is sport especially football where he plays in the Under 14s both for Duncombe Park and for his school. He also loves cricket, rugby, cross country running, athletics, tennis, and achieved an Honours badge for swimming. His basketball team won an area competition organised by Ryedale School. He lives at Golden Square Farm on the northern outskirts of Oswaldkirk and loves riding his 100cc Honda Motor Bike around the farm. He also belongs to the Ampleforth Youth Club where he plays pool and computer games.

Katie Mennell

Katie has lived at the top of Oswaldkirk Bank all her life. She and her parents, Janice and Andy and her brother Jim live next door to her grandmother, Sylvia Stephenson, who featured in the book: ‘Oswaldkirk - a living village, 2002’. She has school friends in the village and enters into the many activities on offer, including the Christmas parties, the Bonfire with fireworks and has applauded at the summer cricket matches.
Katie is in Year 9 at Ryedale School and enjoys most of the subjects that she studies, doing well in English, Mathematics and Science. Her favourite subjects are Design Technology and Art. As her school has a Performing Arts Status she participates in the high standard of Drama and Dance and belongs to several clubs. Music and singing are a great pleasure to her and she has learnt the guitar for several years.

The Girl Guides are also of great interest to Katie. She has earned several badges including the 'Traditions of Guiding' which involved camping, walking and cooking. A Party badge was also much enjoyed and last year she and two friends went in for the ‘Guiding Star’ Singing Competition in which they reached the Regional finals.

**Thomas Stone**

Thomas, known as Twm, came to live in the village over three years ago with his parents Jill and Peter, one younger sister Ceri and two younger brothers, David and Patrick. He is now twelve and in Year 8 at Ryedale School. He enjoys studying all subjects but especially likes Science and Languages. In his spare time he learns the piano, Grade 5 standard, and the violin, Grade 4, and weekly attends the Scarborough Music Centre. At school he is a member of the History Club and the Fiddle Band and in between does karate, swimming and can just about manage to ride a unicycle.

In the village Twm has helped to tidy up Chestnut Bank; he has been a regular member of the Wednesday Tea Time Club and rings the church bell for Family Services. He goes with his family to most village events: Cricket matches, Bonfire with fireworks, Safari lunch, and to the playground.

Recently he was the financial expert on his school team ‘Dynamite’ during the National Enterprise Week 2008. They won the Ryedale and Hambleton area competition with their idea of how best to market Castle Howard. Their prize, as well as a gift voucher, was a free Annual Family Membership to the stately home.
Oswaldkirk
a living village

Part Three
2011
Extended Village History Book

To celebrate the Millennium a group of Oswaldkirk residents met to write a brief history of the village. In 2002 we published ‘Oswaldkirk – A Living Village’. 300 copies were produced and we sold out immediately.

An update was produced in 2007/2008 as part of our successful application to win Yorkshire’s Calor ‘Village of the Year’ Award.

Information discovered regarding Colonel Benson

In August 2010, John Lane, of Queensland, Australia, had been looking at the village website and sent an e-mail to the Goodmans informing us that one of the facts in our book was completely wrong. John had never heard of Oswaldkirk until he began his historical researches on his antecedents.

In describing the owners of Oswaldkirk Hall, the elegant Queen Anne residence at the west end of the village, we had stated that Colonel John Musgrave Benson, Lord of the Manor from 1907-1932, had died intestate. He told us that this was not true; and so unfolded a fascinating story.

John Lane’s family research, and that of the executors of John Musgrave Benson, led to John Lane’s great grandfather, Felix Benson, being traced as the beneficiary of the Benson estate and effects in the mid-1930s. The inheritance was established through a shared great grandfather, Robert Benson, who married Hannah Parkinson. Their son Robert, a Wool Stapler from Leeds, married Mary Musgrave in 1810. Robert and Hannah had several children including another son, William. Both Robert and William each had a son named John.
Robert’s son, John Benson, 1819-1889, was born in Leeds and became a wealthy Gentleman giving his profession as Share Broker. He married Emma Dawson and lived at Highfield House, Potter Newton, Leeds. They had four children: Lucy Emma, 1859, died aged 18 years; Mary, 1861, who died aged 10 months; John Musgrave, 1863-1932; and Mona born in 1868, who died aged 40 years.

John Musgrave (the Oswaldkirk Colonel) was sent to Oakham School, Rutland, and then in 1881 entered Magdalene College, Cambridge where he was a member of the Magpie Debating Society. He then joined the army.

John fought in both Boer wars, with the 3rd Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment. He served in South Africa and in the Orange Free State in 1903. He received both the Queen’s Service Award and the King’s Service Award medals. John Lane has inherited these medals and he wears them with pride on ANZAC day each year.

In 1907 John Musgrave Benson bought Oswaldkirk Hall and much of the village from the Page-Henderson family. He reigned there as Lord of the Manor and checked possible new residents to ensure they were neither Socialists nor Roman Catholics before allowing them to rent one of his houses. In April 1911 there were three servants at the Hall: Lily Ward, (25), cook; Kate McLaren, (20), waiting maid and domestic; and Ann Magson, (17), servant. His mother Emma came to live with him and died at the Hall in 1910.

In his Cambridge days

Col Benson in the Boer War

Col Benson’s Medals

Extended Village History Book
On or after 1915 Mrs Ellison Horner became housekeeper at the Hall. Research suggests that she had two young daughters, Gwendoline and Barbara, and was married to Charles Horner Ellison who served as a Horsemanship in the Army Service Corps. Charles states his address on his discharge papers as Oswaldkirk Hall, c/o Mrs Ellison Horner. He was discharged due to ‘Constitutional’ disorders in 1918 and died in 1920, aged 48. Mrs Horner was a formidable lady and accompanied the Colonel everywhere. A story is told by Brenda White, (see page 37) about her sister Kathy Cooper, nee Pickering, of Manor and Broad Farm, who, when 3 years old would sit on a rug outside her house, recuperating from an accident. When the Colonel passed her she would always stop and talk and bought her ‘goodies’ from the village shop over the road. When she was ten she called at the Hall collecting for a school charity. He was very ill but she was invited in and was amongst one of the last people to see him alive. Soon afterwards he was taken to hospital and died there on 18th May, 1932. Mrs Horner was still in his service when he died, but she apparently inherited nothing from him.

The Colonel looked after his village well; he put in water, electricity and built a vast village hall as well as maintaining his rented houses. When he died, his Estate was broken up and many of the residents bought their own homes (the sale brochure cover is shown on page 15). It was generally understood there was neither Will nor heirs but this understanding is now known to be incorrect.

Robert Benson’s younger brother, William, 1790-1847, had one son, also called John, 1819-1902, who served in India in the British Army, in the 18th Regiment of Hussars, for eighteen years, and after discharge went to live in Molong, New South Wales, Australia in 1854.

John Benson married Ann McCarthy, the daughter of two convicts, and they had several children amongst whom was Felix (1864-1940), nicknamed Chubby. He was employed in Molong as a carrier in the days of bullock teams, and had a family of ten daughters with his wife Catherine. Felix was the man who inherited a great deal of money from his second cousin, Oswaldkirk’s Colonel Benson. It seems that The Colonel’s ‘effects’ realised £81,000 - the equivalent of which is over £4 million today.

See ‘England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administration), 1861-1941’.

Felix and Catherine’s daughters were Ann, Ethel Maude, Emma, Pearlie, Linda, Helena, Irene, Veronica, Barbara and Thora. John Lane’s grandmother was Ethel Maude whose daughter Jean was John’s mother.
John Lane from Queensland has provided us with a copy of John Musgrave Benson’s Will written in July 1908 with a codicil added in June 1910. John Musgrave left £20,000 to his aunt Lucy Elizabeth Nicholson and her children. Lucy was the sister of John Benson’s mother, Emma Dawson, and had emigrated to Sydney, Australia, with her husband Stephen. The children were prevented from inheriting more as their name was not Benson.

Recently the burial place of Colonel John Musgrave Benson was established to be the same church where he was christened in 1864 and where the Benson family tomb can be found in the graveyard. The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Moor Allerton, in Leeds was built in 1853 when the Benson family lived nearby at Potter Newton. John died on 18th May, 1932 and on the 21st there was a service in St. Oswald’s Church followed by a burial at St John’s Church conducted by Rev. Pugh Thomas, the Rector of Oswaldkirk. In 1859, Robert Benson, John’s grandfather, must have been among the first to be buried at St John’s in a grand stone tomb. His wife Mary, their son John, with his wife Emma, and many of their granddaughters were buried there. The names on the tombstones do not include John Musgrave, possibly because he had no surviving local relatives. A large stone slab with no inscription probably covers the remains of our Colonel. His death is recorded in the official Burial records, kept in the safe in the church and found for us by Mike Wadsworth, archivist. There is a fine stained glass window (1889) given in memory of John Benson, the Colonel’s father, who also gave the original organ. As you may imagine this was an exciting find, especially for John Lane, who felt his researches were now ended with the resting place of his ancestor located.
In 2011 Bob and Jayne Buck, from April Cottage, Oswaldkirk, were visiting Queensland and made contact with John and Hazel Lane.

Bob writes:

IT’S A SMALL WORLD

We had flown half way around the world, to a country where it takes as long to fly from Brisbane to Sydney (both on the East Coast) as it does from UK to Portugal. How amazing then that it would take us less than 40 minutes to drive from the house of Jayne’s niece (basecamp for our 6 week trip to the antipodes) to the home of John and Hazel Lane.

The welcome was wonderful as we drove up to the end of Sauvignon Drive, Morayfield, Queensland to convey various gifts and all the best wishes sent from Oswaldkirk.

During the two hours of our stay we swopped stories of family history, doing our best to satisfy the voracious appetite of John for all things that relate to our tiny village in North Yorkshire. This was helped by the use of our earth-shrinking technology in the form of ‘Google Earth’ allowing us to ‘walk’ John around our village.

We also sat down to the generous spread that Hazel had prepared. Such splendid hospitality.

The smallness of our world became even more staggering when it emerged that, in addition to John’s connections to Oswaldkirk, Hazel was almost certainly related to Bob. Her family were also Bucks and, from Bob’s recent research, and Hazel’s family history files, it appears that one of the shared ancestors went over to Australia around the middle of the 1800s, NOT – as you might be thinking, as a convict, but rather as an intrepid entrepreneur!

Small world indeed.

Sir Henry Manisty – a distinguished and colourful resident of Oswaldkirk Hall.

Sir Henry Manisty (1808-1890) was the son of Rev. James Manisty, Vicar of Edlingham, Northumberland, and Eleanor, daughter of Francis Foster of Seaton Burn Hall, Northumberland. He was educated at Durham School. He became a barrister and was called to the Bar in 1845, practising on the Northern Circuit. He became a QC, and then a Judge in 1876. His portrait hangs outside the Library at the Law Society and another one at Gray’s Inn.

Sir Henry did not live at Oswaldkirk Hall for long and may have rented it from the Page-Henderson family.
Kelly’s Directory of 1875 records his main address as Bryanston Square, London, but also of Oswaldkirk Hall. There is a copy of a letter written to the Lord Chancellor noting his address as Oswaldkirk Hall in our Archives. Earlier in 1869, his grandson, Adam, son of Elizabeth and Edmund Macrory, died in Oswaldkirk of Scarlet Fever. There is a copy of the Death Certificate also in our Archives. By 1883 Sir Henry was living at Thurland Castle near Kirby Lonsdale.

He spoke with a Northumbrian accent all his life. He loved port wine and was said to have had a specially adapted quill pen that served as a straw and, at particularly challenging moments when trying a law case he could be seen sucking his quill pen intently, with his inkwell filled with port. Probably fictitious. However there is a famous anecdote about him as a very old man. He was warned off port for several months, until his doctor, knowing he wouldn’t last much longer, relented and said he could take it up again, to which he is said to have replied ‘Aye Doctor, but what about the arrears?’

Sir Henry and his wife were committed church goers and may well have contributed to the restoration of St Oswald’s Church whilst they were in the village. There is a much admired stained glass window in Durham Cathedral given in his memory.

His great, great grandson, also Henry, visited Oswaldkirk recently researching his ancestor and sent these anecdotes about Sir Henry. The present day Henry Manisty is also a lawyer, now working for Kreab Gavin Anderson.

**Margaret Dade**, a lively 91 year old, visited Oswaldkirk recently to revive old memories, with her son Phil and daughter Janet.

She had stayed in Oswaldkirk three times in 1941/2 to be with her husband, Chick, who was serving in the King’s Royal Rifle Corps. He was also stationed in other places and wrote to his sweetheart, later his wife, every day.

Margaret worked in London during her early married years. She vividly remembers the blitz with horrific bombing over London. Her husband was away fighting in Europe and after every night neither knew if the other one was alive.

In Oswaldkirk she recognised the places she knew in the old days which included the Old Police House, now Bank House. She stayed at the Bungalow, now much changed, with Vera and Tom Sargison. She also remembers the old Village Hall. Chick lived in one of the many Nissen huts in the village and we can still see the base of one of these below the west end of Chestnut Bank near ‘The Steps’ where the Heath family lived for over fifty years.

**Above:** Margaret and Chick Dade in 1941 at The Bungalow

Margaret Dade revisiting Oswaldkirk in 2011
The Old Post Office
& memories of the Gatenby Family from Marion Brooks.

I was born in 1942 at Oswaldkirk Post Office. My mother, Nancy Gatenby, was the youngest of three sisters. Joyce, the eldest, was a nurse in Leeds. Olive, the second daughter, helped run the shop and Post Office, and my mother also helped in the shop. My father Harry was away serving in India, and did not return until the war was over in 1946.

I return to the village each year to go to the family graves in the churchyard, so notice how the village has changed over the years. My cousin Joyce and I played for many happy hours in the old orchard, where St Aidan’s Church now stands and also up the bank at the back of the old shop. I went there each summer holiday for two weeks, and I have the most wonderful childhood memories of this place that I still think of as home.

There is a picture of the Old Post Office on page 11. Just across the road was the Estate Office in the 1930s, which became a timber yard and then a Garage in the 1950s by the hard work of Ike White who came from Middlesbrough and lived in Pavilion House with his wife, Renee. (More on page 21). An early picture of the garage is shown below, with two people, yet to be identified, talking together and Sid Pickering of Broad Farm, delivering milk on his bicycle on the other side of the road.
News and events – 2011

Rosemary Ramm
Rosemary Ramm has written to us looking for information about the Ella family and also the Thorpes, many of whom were buried in the churchyard in Oswaldkirk. Rosemary's great, great grandfather was James Thorpe, born in 1796, landlord of the Malt Shovel Inn, who married Hannah Ella. They had ten children one of whom was James Ella Thorpe, Rosemary's great grandfather. On the outside of the east wall of the porch at St. Oswald's Church is a tombstone of the Ella family, now much eroded.

John and Ursula Webb

John and Ursula recently celebrated their Diamond Wedding. They have lived in Oswaldkirk for twenty five years at The White House. Their contribution to village life is immeasurable – to St Oswald's Church, to the Village Hall and in their concern for everyone.

Madeleine Bunting, daughter of John and Romula, who lived at Rose Cottage as a child, has recently published a book entitled 'The Plot'. It is a fascinating story of local people and places based on her research and experiences, describing the land her father bought and on which he built a chapel, near the village of Oldstead.

The Oswaldkirk Conservation Area

The status of the Oswaldkirk Conservation Area has now been enhanced following a detailed assessment by staff at the NYMNP which included consultation with residents and other interested parties. The resulting document, "The Oswaldkirk Conservation Area Assessment" will come into force from the beginning of 2012 and will be used to standardise and inform all planning decisions made by both the NYMNP and RDC planning authorities.
Recent events:
We have many delightful events in the village not mentioned in our earlier publications.
These include: Safari Lunches, Hog Roasts, a Murder Mystery evening, Charity coffee mornings, village walks, Carol singing round the village, Operation Christmas Child, Red Nose Day and the Wednesday Tea Time Club, the Women's Group and the Book Group.
The village has recently adopted the old red telephone box which will be refurbished and used as an Information point.

Thomas and Charlotte Conacher, in the church, for the Wednesday Tea Time Club.
**Village Life**

Village Life in Oswaldkirk in 2011 is friendly, cooperative and helpful – probably much the same as it has always been. Being a small community with shared interests means everything from special cricket matches to Christmas tea parties, firework nights to pantomimes, are widely enjoyed by everyone from the newest arrivals to the longest living inhabitants.

Whilst not a regular group activity, cycling is becoming something that those with wardrobes full of shrinking clothes have taken up with a vengeance. An increasing number of Oswaldkirk residents are enjoying longer and more adventurous rides together.

Regular or irregular events, and there are many, are not all that Village Life in 2011 is about. There remains in Oswaldkirk a strong sense of belonging, and a real sense of community which as a relative newcomer both surprises and delights. Whether it is a short-term incapacity, long-term illness or simply a blocked drain, there are always people ready to help, support or operate a plunger – now that’s Village Life!

*John Sutherland*
The Banting carving in the church porch

St Oswald’s Church from the valley
Acknowledgements

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John Lane, Hazel Lane, Margaret Dade, Henry Mamity, Bob Buck, Jayne Buck, Kevin Booth, Rachel Booth, Martin Brooks, Gerard Simpson, David Lee, Rosemary Ramm, John Sutherland, Roger Dexter Smith, David Goodman, Helen Goodman.

We would also like to acknowledge the photograph on page 88 of the road and garage in Oswaldkirk. Copyright The Francis Frith Collection.

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LEADER is a European initiative for assisting rural communities to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity in their local area. The acronym stands for Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale – links between actions of rural development. LEADER is now part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which is administered by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Subsidiary to the main LEADER programme is the Small Scale Enhancement (SSE) Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to co-ordinate and deliver small scale community projects which have been highlighted by members of the community.

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