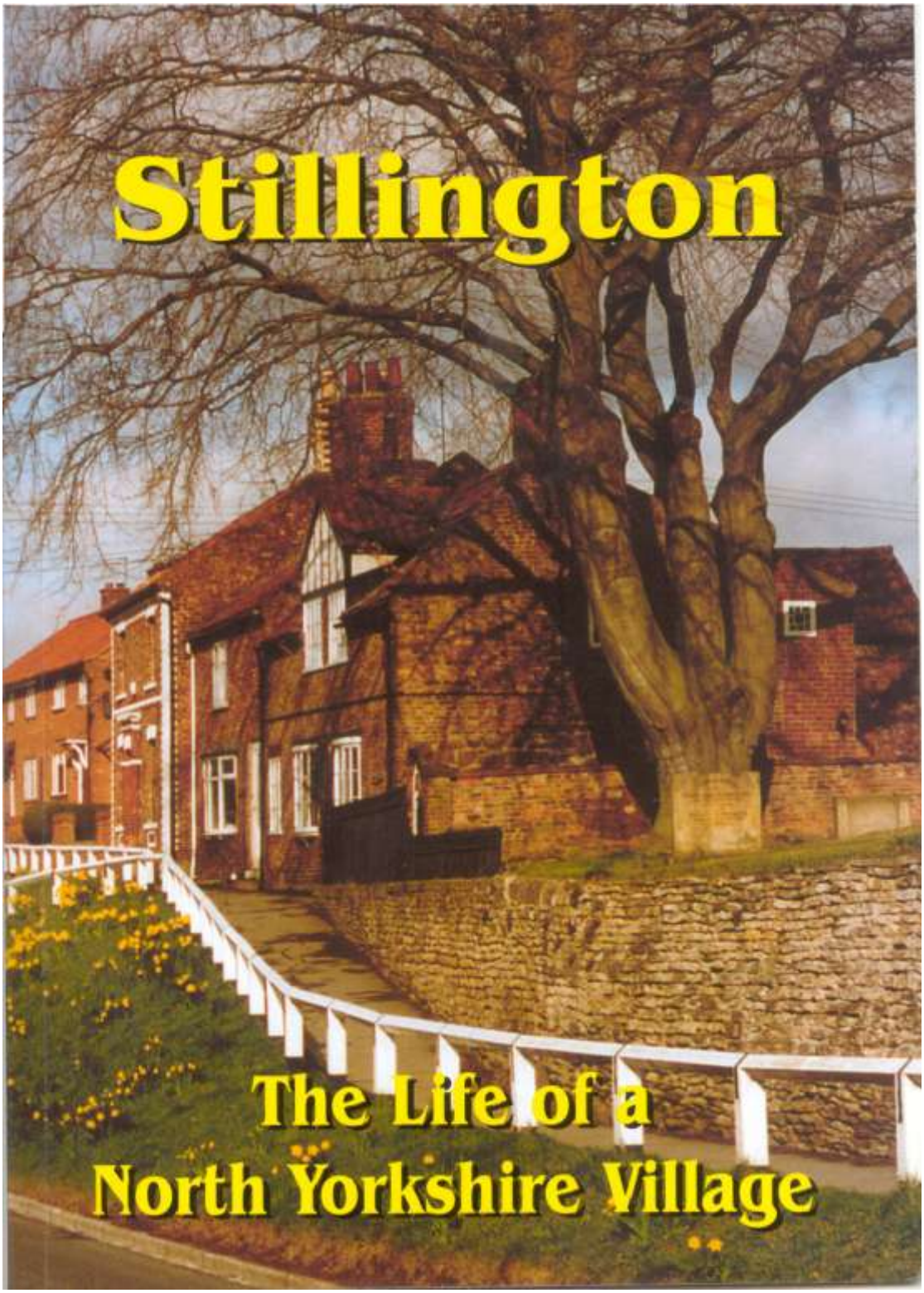
Stillington
The Life of a
North Yorkshire Village

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Produced by the members of the Stillington Village History Group

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Contents

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The Group is very grateful for all contributions. There was much more material than could be printed in a book of this size, so inevitably some had to be left out. The intention is to assemble all the material into an archive for future reference. Contributors can be assured that nothing will be wasted.

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1 - Introduction

Over the years, many people have visited Stillington, and each has seen it differently. Thomas Gill in his 1852 history *Vallis Eboracensis* saw it as a wild place. A village within the ancient royal hunting preserve, the Forest of Galtres, getting its name from *'the stealing town, where tradition says the original settlers obtained a livelihood by robbing the King's forest of its deer'*. Unfortunately for Gill's theory, the village was here and called Stillington, before the Normans set up their royal hunting forests, and before taking wild game became an offence.

Oswald Harland, researching for a 1951 book on the North Riding, visited and found a village which, in his words, *'I had always understood, was dull, and a trifle arid. I found it pleasing enough, though I don't think I should ever want to live there.*'

So what is the truth? - Gill's romantic village of rogues, living like Robin Hood, or Harland's sleepy little village where nothing happens? The truth, as ever, is somewhere in between. A thriving, active village for over 1,000 years, with for the times, a fairly large population. Nearly, but not quite, caught up in the Industrial Revolution.

With the end of the second millennium, in an era of almost unprecedented social change, the village decided it would like to mark the occasion by writing a village history. The question then arose, when do you start and finish a history? Trying to write a comprehensive history would be a major project. It would either have to be a very large book, or would have to miss out much detail. It was necessary to be selective. We have gone from the era of the horse to the space age within living memory, and the rate of change is such that things that were once taken so much for granted that they were not recorded, are in danger of becoming lost.

The Village History Group decided to take a very generous interpretation of 'a lifetime', and produce a snapshot of village life in North Yorkshire over the last lifetime or so.

2 - The Early History

Stillington does not mean *'stealing town'* as Thomas Gill claimed. The Domesday Book entry is *'Stivelinctun'*, a name we are more reliably told, which means *'The farm, or the Settlement, of Styfel'* (spelling tended to be phonetic in those days). Apart from knowing that the name is Old English, so Styfel must have been Anglo-Saxon, we know nothing more about the village's founder.

Styfel was not the first person to live here. In the Iron Age and in Roman times, the area was thought to have been a productive grain growing region. In Stillington itself, in the late 1950s it was recorded that a number of Romano-British querns (hand corn-grinding stones) had been found in the village. At the time they were being used as garden ornaments. Archaeological 'digs' in nearby Crayke have found traces of Roman pottery. The Romans also left their mark in the name of the river the Foss (from fossa = a ditch).

Romano-British hand quern.

After the Romans left, things changed. Around this time the area was a focus for early Christianity in Britain. Tradition has it that Paulinus, who in 627 led to the conversion to Christianity of Edwin and the Kingdom of Deira, preached at Stillington, the site being marked by 'Paulinus Cross' now corrupted into the present day 'Pouland Carr'. The neighbouring village of Crayke was an important monastic community, linked to Lindisfarne, and St Cuthbert.

In 878, following the Treaty of Wedmore between King Alfred and the Danish king Guthrum, Stillington became part of the Danelaw. This was when the Roman town of Eboracum was re-named Jorvic - modern day York. It appears that Norse families and Saxon families lived side by side in their own communities. Styfel was Anglo-Saxon, as was Essing who lived over to the west (Essing's would [wood] - Easingwold) and Streona who set up a community to the east (Streonshalch, - 'Streona's place', - Strensall). The '-by' ending to place names indicates a Norse settlement, as in Moxby, Huby and Uppleby. Even so, Stillington was still under Viking influence. Village place names such as Skeugh Farm and North Skeugh fields come from the Old Norse word 'skogr', meaning a wood (the Nordic equivalent of the Saxon 'wold').

The area became Saxon again when in 995, Alfred's three grandsons, Athelstan, Edmund I, and Edred re-conquered the Danelaw lands, but the Nordic names (and, probably, the Nordic settlers) remained.

After the Danes the Normans came, and they made the Domesday Survey. In 1086 the Lord of the Manor was the Archbishop of York, and there were ten carucates of taxable land and a mill, valued at three shillings. There were six villeins, two ploughs, eight acres of meadow and an area of wood pasture a mile and a half long, and half a mile broad. A villein was a tenant farmer who owed service and was subject to the rule of the lord of the manor. The village was not doing too well. In the time of Edward the Confessor, it was worth 40 shillings, but at the time of the survey, it was only worth ten.

It was the Normans who established the Royal Forests. Stillington became a village within the Forest of Galtres, subject to forest law. Royal Forests were still mainly farmland, but farming practices were controlled to favour the herds of wild deer and the growth of timber, as a source of income for the Royal purse.

Official records of this time tell us little about everyday life, but we do get the occasional glimpse. In 1270, Ralph le Rapere of Styvelington was pardoned of the death of a man unknown, it having been found before the Justices in Eyre that he had acted in self defence.

Any object or thing which caused the death of a person was called a 'deodand' and was forfeit to the King. It was sold by the King's Almoner, and the money used for charitable purposes. A list of Yorkshire Deodands collected in 1338 on behalf of Edward III includes the entry:

> *Libertas Beati Petri.* - De villa de Stylynton pro quodam tasso straminis de quo Alicia filia Roberti Bertram oppressa fuit as mortem. vj*d*

This roughly translates as:

> *Liberty of Saint Peter* - The village of Stillington, for the heap of straw by which Alice, daughter of Robert Bertram was crushed to death. 6d

In 1468, John Bedford (or possibly Bedforth) was appointed vicar of Stillington. He must have been quite a character for on 7th February 1471 he was reported for:

> *'keeping in his vicarage a common tavern and selling beer in his vicarage as if he were a layman, to the peril of his soul, the expense of his church, and the great scandal of the jurisdiction of the Church of York'*

Maybe Gill knew something after all, but the offence cannot have been too serious. John Bedford still held office, and when he died in 1497, his will was proved at the Dean and Chapter Court.

Another major change in the village came in 1616, when the manor passed out of Church hands and was leased to a William Ramsden. In 1625 the lease was granted to Christopher Croft, starting an association between the family and the village which lasted nearly 250 years. This was a time of social and political change, and when Galtres was 'deforested' in 1630, the village of Stillington was awarded 694 acres at a rent of 6/8d (33p) in lieu of forest rights such as the collection of wood for fuel, and pannage (the right to allow pigs to forage for food).

In 1649, Oliver Cromwell established the Commonwealth following the Civil War. Parliamentary trustees were appointed for the sale of the lands belonging to the Dean and Chapter of York, and the Crofts purchased the estate outright.

A couple of generations later, the pattern of village life was changed for ever, when the 1766 Enclosure Act abolished the traditional pattern of open fields, meadows and commons. In total, 1361 acres were 'enclosed' and allocated to individual owners. This brings us up to the time of Lawrence Sterne, who along with the Lord of the Manor Stephen Croft, and other 'Proprietors', William Stainforth Esquire, John Barker, Christopher Bell, Robert Wiley, John Stapylton, John Wright and John Hall, jointly promoted the Act. Following this, the village was roughly in the shape we see it today, and this is where the rest of this history takes over.

3 - Round and about the parish

The village grew along the ridge of high ground running east-west, above what would have been very marshy ground to the south. In Old Norse, the word 'carr' means marsh or marshy woodland. York Road, which leaves the village to the south, is also known as Carr Lane, and the row of houses facing the junction is Carr View. One of the medieval open fields to the south-west of the village was the Carr Field. Within living memory the land and road south of the village were so wet as to force vehicles to divert their route. There were two permanent ponds by the side of this road. One of these dated from 1767, when under the Enclosure award, the road was gated and the lord of the manor had to provide a pond as a watering place. These ponds no longer exist. Neither does the lake on land north of Roseberry Hill, shown on a 1767 plan of the parish, *'with a small building on an island in the middle'*. This was, perhaps a fishing house or summer house. This lake which was several acres in extent is not shown on Greenwood's map of Yorkshire of 1817-18 and had probably been drained by then. The island was visible as a mound in the centre of the field until the 1970s.

Whilst the road system of Stillington has changed little within the last two hundred years, some of the roads or lanes have become known by different names and their width and surface structure have been much altered to cope with increasing traffic. The busy road leading to Easingwold is also known as West Lane, whilst the relatively quieter route leading east continues to be known as Mill Lane, or Farlington Road.

The east-west route is generally regarded as the oldest of the highways but the Roman road from Aldborough in the west to Stamford Bridge in the east, is thought to run somewhere between Stillington and Sutton.

It is thanks to the medieval open field system that much of today's oldest road network exists, particularly the crisscrossed pattern of country lanes. Many of the unploughed strips or balks gradually became thoroughfares used by travellers, and lanes developed from there. The road leading northwards to Helmsley, also known as Jack Lane, is thought to be a former balk. The footpath stretching from North Back Lane to the adjacent fields is still known as Lucy Balk. Rumour has it that Lucy was a witch hanged from one of the trees along the path!

The four open fields of Stillington were known as the North Skew (or Skeugh) Field, the Crayke Park Field, the Carr Field and the Ing Field. The boundaries of the Ing Field are defined by the present Green Lane, Moor Lane, Wandell Balk and the Easingwold road. Wandell Balk also forms the western boundary of Carr Field, which lies between the Easingwold road on the north and a beck from Moor Lane to the York Road on the south. In 1766, the property on the Easingwold road known as Fox Inn Farm, did not exist and neither did the road to Huby which faces it, although it could be conjectured that this again may have been a former balk.

The present main road through the village is called 'Main Street' to the east of the York Road junction, and 'High Street' to the west of it, although only recently have "official" highway signs been erected to this effect. It turns sharply at the eastern end, where the pillars denote a former entrance to what was then Stillington Hall. It has been conjectured that the road originally continued eastwards in a relatively straight course but was diverted across the green in order to provide greater privacy for Stephen Croft, the owner of the Hall.

Running approximately parallel to this highway are back lanes. Originally for rear access, these have recently been officially named as North Back Lane and South Back Lane, although the latter merely runs to the south-east of the village. Both lanes have seen improved surfaces since housing development began in the 1960s. The back lane to the south-west has been left in a cruder form as housing has not yet developed here.

The B1363 road runs from York to Helmsley. Until the 1960s, it was the major road at the York Road junction, and vehicles from the west (Easingwold) direction had to give way to vehicles travelling from the south. In 1834, work was undertaken to lower the hill and ease the approach of horse-drawn traffic. However, the bank can still cause problems in winter weather!

The roads of Roman Britain were a testament to efficient organisation, but in the succeeding centuries they deteriorated and the hazards of travelling became notorious. For much of the time, each parish was responsible for the maintenance of roads within its boundaries. Individuals were required to do 4 and later 6 days work each year, but to inconsistent effect. For example, on 27 April 1652 Stillington was prosecuted for *"non-repair of the highway from Crayke-gate to Huby Fields"*. Many roads were gated, and on the 1767 enclosure map gates are shown on the Easingwold Road at the parish boundary; at the

junction of Crayke Lane with the Easingwold Road; on Crayke Lane at the parish boundary; on Jack Lane at the parish boundary; and on the York Road about half way between the village street and Roseberry Lane.

In 1768 the York to Oswaldkirk Turnpike Trust was formed. Records for 1772 to 1817 show Trustees meeting in several houses in Stillington, including the White Bear and the Boot Inn. These Trustees included the major local landowners - Lord Fairfax of Gilling, Lord Fauconberg of Newburgh, the Duncombes of Helmsley, the Harlands of Sutton, as well as the Crofts of Stillington and Lawrence Steme, Stillington's Vicar.

Sydney Smith, the celebrated cleric and journalist, and Rector of Foston for twenty years, was also a Trustee, but in 1829 he was moving on and relinquished his trusteeship. His letter of resignation conjures up the rosiest of pictures:

> *"Nobody can more sincerely wish the prosperity of the road from York to Oswaldkirk than I do. I wish you hard materials, diligent trustees, gentle convexity, fruitful tolls, cleanly gutters, obedient parishes, favouring justices and every combination of fortunate circumstances which can fall to the lot of any human highway ... I shall think on the 15th of my friends at the White Bear, Stillington. How honourable to English gentlemen that once or twice every month half the men of fortune of England are jammed together at the White Bear crushed into a mass at the Three Pigeons, or perspiring intensely at the Green Dragon! "*

Tolls charged on the York-Oswaldkirk Road

1768-1825

	1768	1789	1804	1825
Coach, Chariot etc & 6 horses	2s 0d	3s 0d	6s 0d	
Coach, Chariot etc & 4 horses	1s 6d	2s 3d	4s 6d	
Coach, Chariot etc & 2 horses	1s 0d	1s 6d	3s 0d	
Coach, Chariot etc & 1 horse	6d	9d	1s 6d	2s 0d
Wagon & 4 horses / beasts	1s 0d	1s 6d	3s 0d	
Wagon & 3 horses / beasts	9d	1s 1½d	2s 3d	
Wagon & 2 horses / beasts	6d	9d	1s 6d	
Wagon & 1 horse / beast	4d	6d	1s 0d	1s 3d
Each horse not drawing	2d	3d	6d	6d
Oxen, cattle per score (& pro rata)	8d	1s 0d	2s 0d	2s 6d
Calves, hogs, sheep & lambs per score (& pro rata)	4d	6d	1s 0d	1s 3d

Tolls from road users helped fund the maintenance undertaken by the parishes along its route.

At today's prices, 2s 0d (10p) in 1768 is about the equivalent of £5.53, and 6s 0d (30p) in 1804 is about £10.24. This "tax" was not welcomed by everyone.

Offenders convicted of avoiding payment were charged *"twenty shillings, to be levied and recovered by distress and sale of the offenders' goods and chattels "*. Anyone found guilty of damaging or defacing mile stones had to pay forty shillings, or face a month in York gaol. The trustees had the power to require landowners to remove obstructions along the road such as accumulations of rubbish, trees and excessive water from ditches. For example, the miller of Marton's Abbey mill was ordered to make a drain to remove the nuisance arising to the road from his pig-styes.

Individuals could lease the right to collect tolls. In 1802, John Sivers of Crayke leased the Brandsby Bar toll (erected at the blacksmith's shop) for one year at a rent of £64. In 1809 he secured the tolls at Bootham Stray and Wigginton Bars for an annual rent of *£500.* In 1810 he leased all three bars for the yearly rent of £482. In 1812 however, he was prevented from bidding due to non-payment of rent, and ultimately imprisoned in York Castle. At a meeting held at the White Bear in 1813 the Trustees decided that they would accept a payment of £l20, *"as a composition for the debt due from him*" and with that, gain his liberation.

In 1772 ". . . *milestones were to be erected ... in the form as follows: wood mile post 4 feet in length; every third mile a horsing stone; ...* ". Later, in 1776 it was ordered *"... that the mile posts be painted dark blue, with white letters and figures, old Roman capital letters and figures* ". At a meeting at the White Bear in 1789, it was ordered *". . . that the mile stones be repaired if necessary and that the letters or figures thereon be fresh painted",* and in 1814 it was ordered *". . . that mileposts be erected at the end of each mile where the present stones are decayed and defaced, and that the first mile from York be measured from Bootham Bar, or such other place as the distance has commenced, and be so expressed upon the first mile post*". Milestones still existed along the roads around Stillington within living memory, but as all road signs were removed during the Second World War in case of enemy invasion, these may not be the ones referred to in Turnpike Trust meetings.

The York to Oswaldkirk Turnpike Trust was dissolved in 1881 and responsibility for the upkeep of roads in general, was transferred to the County Council. Toll gates and tools were sold, with those tools from Stillington and Marton fetching £2 5s out of a total of £9 19s 6d.

Depending on direction, travellers passing through Stillington would also have to pass through some of its neighbours. On the road to Sheriff Hutton, lies Marton-in-the Forest. It gets its name from its position in the ancient Forest of Galtres and the fact that the area was a marsh (mar/mere) until drained and cultivated by the monks. The parish covers an area of approximately 2380 acres or 963 hectares, and like Stillington, is mentioned in the Doomsday Book. The site of the village can now only be identified by the existence of the church, an adjacent farmstead and a recently converted bam.

The present Church owes much of its form to the 12th Century, when an Augustinian priory was established about a mile away. This was originally founded as a dual house for monks and nuns in the mid 12th Century by Bertram de Bulmer of Sheriff Hutton Castle and the local landowner. By 1167, however, the nuns had been moved to a separate site at Moxby, two miles away.

In 1307, a neighbour Ralph de Nevill, seized some of the prior's cattle on the King's highway. As *'the high road from York to the north ran past its gates between the house and the river',* he had no difficulty in driving them *'without the county into the liberty of the bishopric of Durham'.* Ralph de Nevill seems quite a character, as not long afterwards, he struck one of the Canons of Marton, but was absolved from the excommunication which should have been his punishment.

It is not certain if Ralph de Nevill had to take the cattle all the way north across the River Tees into the County Palatine itself. He may just have taken them into the neighbouring Parish of Crayke, which from the time of St Cuthbert, was an enclave, or 'Peculiar' of the Bishops of Durham, and subject to their jurisdiction. In 1500 for example, Giles Whytfield who had stolen £12 in the city of York, fled to Crayke and claimed sanctuary. He was not returned to York for trial, but taken on to the Bishop's justices in Durham. Although Bishop Van Mildert sold his interest in Crayke in 1827, the right of Durham to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction over this tiny part of North Yorkshire did not completely end until a Parliamentary Act of 1844. It is open to speculation how many perpetrators of minor misdemeanours in Stillington and the surrounding area, escaped justice by crossing the boundary into Crayke (and vice versa). If the offence was small enough it might not be worth the trouble of pursuing the matter in a distant court.

By 1531, the Marton Abbey premises were already in a bad condition. A visitation by the Dean and Chapter (of York) recorded *'that the priory was impoverished and the infirmary in ruins'.* This visitation also made reference to the *'Prior's card-playing and dicing, remaining playing all night until the morrow, and doth lose 20,40 ... marks a night'.*

The priory was closed in 1536 following Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries Act of 1536. The site is now occupied by Abbey Farm, on the right hand side of the Stillington to Helmsley road. An account of the monastery made in 1535-6, (presumably as part of the process of dissolution) reported it as having: *'houses, buildings, dovecotes, orchards, gardens, meadows, pastures, fallow and arable closes, woodland, a watermill and five fish-ponds* ('stanks')'.

The position of these former fish-ponds can still be identified from the road, as a series of mounds and hollows. Apparently, these were formed within the original course of the River Foss, which was then diverted to the other side of the road to follow its present route. No medieval buildings exist on the site today; but the present farmhouse displays some sculptured details.

4 - A Working Village

O let us love our occupations,
Bless the squire and his relations,
Live upon our daily rations,
And always know our proper stations.
(Dickens, The Chimes)

Before the availability of fast, economical transport, most villages had to be largely self sufficient. So it was with Stillington, but this has changed over the last 170 years or so. According to Kelly's Directory of 1879, Stillington was a 'large pleasant village standing on sandy, clayey soil growing chiefly potatoes and corn with excellent grazing'. As a farming community, many of the trades pursued in the village were those supporting agriculture, like blacksmith, miller, joiner and bricklayer. Obviously other needs of the villagers had to be met and in 1823, for a village of 698 souls there were at least four pubs, two butchers, six shoemakers, four tailors, six joiners and two brewers as well as a grocer and draper, candle maker, plumber and glazier, cooper, schoolmaster, and, unusually, a surgeon. The 'big house', - Stillington Hall - would have provided employment for maids, cooks, garden boys and stable lads, running the house and grounds. Finally there was the Church with a vicar, at this time a member of the Croft family, and a curate, possibly the man who did the work. It is fascinating to see the changes over the years and discover when new trades entered the village.

In 1823 there is mention of a riding post passing through the village and dropping off the mail at 7.0 am on the way from York to Helmsley and doing the same on the return journey, arriving at 4.0 pm. The post man at the time was one William Garret. In 1840 the mail was delivered to 'Anne Robinson's house' at 8.0 am, by 1857 arriving at 6.30 am from York and delivered to her at the 'Post Office' - the first time it is mentioned by name. What ever time did the carrier leave York, 10 miles away, with at least one village in between? By 1872 there was a new post master, Thomas Sowray, and not only did the letters now come from Easingwold but the post office had become a money order office and savings bank as well. In 1925 it was a Telephonic Express Delivery Office, under the capable management of the sub-postmistress, Miss Thirza Gibson.

In the same year as the post office was first recorded (1857) there is mention of one William Barnett, Insurance agent, of the Provincial (Welsh) Insurance. From then on insurance agencies flourished. In 1872 Stephen Cattley was agent for four companies, one of which was the London Guaranteed Manure Co. and in 1901 the Annuity and Insurance Office was combined with the Post Office under Mrs Annie Gibson, sub-postmistress.

In 1823 the surgeon in the village was William Dennis, and throughout the records either a surgeon or a doctor is mentioned. Stillington, I suspect, has been very fortunate to have a doctor so close at hand. There is still this facility today, with a surgery run by Doctors Peter Jones and Barbara McPherson, who care for patients in the village and from a large area of the surrounding countryside. Now, of course, the term General Practitioner or G.P. is self explanatory but in earlier records doctors skills were spelled out in detail, for example in 1901 Dr. Gramshaw was a physician and surgeon as well as being medical officer and public vaccinator. A related appointment was that of registrar of births and deaths. This post was held by various people over the years. The first mention of it is in 1857 with the Insurance agent William Barnett holding the appointment. In 1879 William Sowray the post master was registrar and at the end of the century the miller William Gibson held the post. By the end of the 1930s the post had disappeared, presumably now there was a central office in York or Easingwold.

Throughout recorded history of English villages there is mention of pubs and ale houses, Stillington is no different. What may be unusual in a village this size is the number. Even today for a population of about 800 there are three pubs, the Bay Horse, the White Bear and the White Dog, all of which appear at the beginning of the period. Other pubs have come and gone but these three have stood the test of time. The Bay Horse, from 1840 to 1937 had only three families recorded as publican whereas the other two had many licensees. In some cases it proved a lucrative employment. One, Noah Wynn, who held the licence of the White Bear from before 1823 until about 1860 later appears in the records as the second largest land owner after the Croft family at Stillington Hall. Of course a pub was the meeting place for villagers. However, in the case of the White Bear it was also the meeting place, from its formation in 1768 to its expiry in 1881, of the trustees of the Oswaldkirk Bank Turnpike Trust. The turnpike York to Oswaldkirk must have made the life of the poor old mail carrier easier!

Today the three pubs thrive but not necessarily as our ancestors would recognise them. The White Dog is a flourishing Indian restaurant and take away and the Bay Horse is an Italian restaurant and pizza take away - how times change. The White Bear is still the meeting place it always was holding a village lunch on a monthly basis.

On the subject of food, it is interesting to note that whilst there have always been butchers in the village, and at one time an abattoir and a candle maker, unlike the nursery rhyme there have never been any recorded bakers. Whereas in towns a baker was a valued member of the community, not least because he often allowed people to cook meat in his oven after baking, in Stillington, apparently, all women baked their own bread. However it is possible that there were those who baked for sale. Certainly in living memory the wife of the blacksmith cooked meat pies for sale. One resident, who came from Marton to school in the village in the 1930s, remembers being given 2d twice a week to buy her lunch from the pie lady. Also recollecting that the gravy was kept hot on the stove until the last minute and poured in through the hole in the top of the pie so that it was piping hot. Now we know why pies have a pastry rose on the top - it is a gravy plug.

Rather as the Bay Horse was run by a surprisingly few families over a hundred and seventy years so it was with blacksmiths in the village. Although occasionally two were in business at the same time throughout the period only three names are recorded. Jonathan Slater already working in 1823 and last mentioned in 1879. Thomas Richardson appears in 1872 and continues until at least 1913 and Eustace Burnett who is recorded in 1901. His wife is mentioned in 1937 as the blacksmith although present members of the village maintain that she was just the owner. In 1913 Eustace Burnett junior is recorded as being a cycle agent - modern man, modern machine maybe?

In 1823 there are 6 shoemakers recorded and one name,that of Thomas Lowther, continues until it is last mentioned in 1901. Other names slowly die out. It must have been a profitable trade as earlier in the 19th Century the cordwainer (or shoemaker) was one of only 5 men in the village recorded as 40 shilling freeholders and therefore qualified to vote in council elections. Others it might appear turn to different trades. One of the shoemakers mentioned in the early records was John Hodgson but he also appears as the proprietor of a beer house. By 1857, when last mentioned as a shoemaker, the Boot and Shoe Inn is first recorded under his name. Could he have found a more congenial occupation?

Despite being largely self supporting the village did have contact with the outside world apart from the mail deliveries. In the 1820s there was a carrier recorded who left for York on a Saturday morning at 4.0 am and returned the same day. By 1857 there were two carriers and the journey was undertaken twice a week, on Thursday and Saturday. In the 1880s an omnibus service was serving the villagers on Saturdays and on alternate Thursdays from the White Dog for the fortnightly fair days in York. Just before the Second World War there was a daily bus service and a haulage firm carrying throughout the country. Today there is a regular bus service, something to be treasured in the present climate of poor rural public transport. The village could, until recently, boast its own bus company.

There have been many trades in the village, all necessary for the smooth running of a community largely isolated from the outside. As new inventions appeared and other services were required, so they found their place in the lives of those in Stillington. In the 1879 records, a threshing machine proprietor is mentioned. The present century saw a nursing home and a home for old men run by Catholic fathers. By the end of the 19th Century not only was there a doctor but a vet as well.

Within living memory there have been many businesses, some of them quite surprising. For many years between the two World Wars a travelling fair had its winter quarters in the village and in spring the refurbished rides were enjoyed by the villagers on the green. At the same time a hawker and rabbit skin seller was plying his trade. Fish and chip shops have been popular and at one time there were three. Today this number is down to one but a very popular facility it is. As in many villages the joiner also doubled as undertaker and in Stillington he was a wheelwright as well. There have been three forges over the years, one in the mill, and with the advent of motor vehicles a garage. As might be expected in a farming community horse dealers were part of village life. Some properties had different businesses in them over the years. One, for example, was a butchers and abattoir before the First World War but after the Second it was a drapers and wool shop. Another that had been a candle makers in the 19th Century later became a sweet shop, happily remembered by present senior citizens of the village.

No history of village trades would be complete without mention of the mills. Stillington had one recorded in the Domesday Book and there is still one on the site today dating from the 18th Century. There have been two other mills in living memory, both upstream on the River Foss and within a mile of the remaining one. With changes in farming needs these became redundant and in the case of one of them changed use to become a barn, the other has vanished. During the period under review there have been three names associated with the mill and of those the longest standing is that of Gibson. Thomas Gibson is first mentioned in 1879 and his descendants still live in the village today. The mill ceased to grind in the 1960s and since then it has been a craft shop and hairdressers as well as winning architectural awards when it was converted into a home. It is now run for bed and breakfast guests. The millers' house is no longer standing and the mill pond is greatly reduced but the mill building itself

is a prominent feature of the area. People can still remember in drought years fetching water for the wash tub from the constant supply in the mill pond. Also there are the remnants of a pump by the mill that used to supply water to Stillington Hall 500 yards away.

Trades have come and gone over the period. Some were never recorded, such as those women who took in washing or the lady that ran a cafe, or the piano teacher. Neither is the grandmother of a present senior inhabitant who was the village midwife. It is interesting that in a village with a doctor, a midwife was still an important member of the community.

At the end of the 20th Century the numbers and varieties of trades and businesses have changed to reflect the rest of the country. No longer is there a forge or cycle shop but there is still a garage. The post office still continues to be the centre of village communications and the shop included in it is a life line for many. Stillington remains an agricultural village but the services required to maintain the farms come from further afield. Many of the inhabitants travel to work in York, Leeds, London and even, at one time, Oslo. With the advent of computers it is possible to run national and sometimes international businesses from within the village. At the present, working from home is a venture capitalist, a management consultant as well as a poet and broadcaster, an upholsterer and an antiques business. Until recently the village included an artist and a sculptor. All trades that could be related to those of an earlier era. The missing figure today is a vicar. No longer is there a resident priest and certainly no curate, as with many rural communities today Stillington is part of a benefice of four parishes. The numbers of souls has varied over the last hundred and seventy years but only increased from 698 in 1823 to about 800 today. Throughout that time some trades have endured but many have vanished to be replaced with a modern equivalent. Stillington trades continue to adapt to change maintaining a strong and viable community at the beginning of a new millennium.

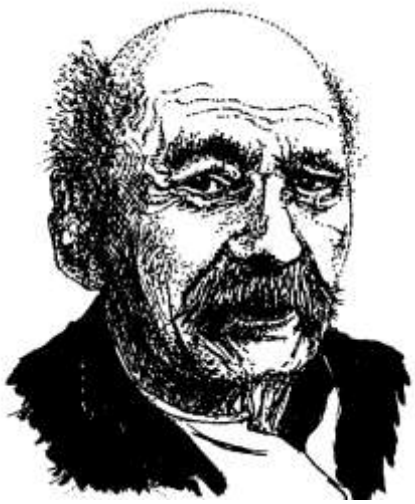
5 - Stillington People

A village is not just a place, it is a community, and over the years, there have been a number of well known residents. Lawrence (or Laurence - his name appears in official records in both forms) Sterne, one of the great names in literature, and the Croft family, famous in commerce are two examples. George Russell is famous in quite a different way - although he would probably be quite embarrassed by the attention. He was a jobbing gardener, and that is really all he wanted to be.

George Russell, MBE 1857 - 1951

At the start of summer the lupin stands like a multicoloured sentinel above the green of the average English garden. The perennial English lupin, as we know it today, is a comparatively new phenomenon. It was created by George Russell - The Lupin Man.

George Russell was born in Stillington in 1857. Throughout his life he remembered being taken, at the age of ten, to the annual flower show in the City of York. It was there that he noticed, for the first time, the plain but traditional blues and whites of the standard English lupin. He considered that something more noble should be possible from such an upright bloom.



Forty years later Russell began to experiment with his childhood vision when he first started to cross-breed the standard English perennial with the pollen from a more colourful German annual. He was not a professional horticulturist but throughout his working life had been engaged as a jobbing gardener - tending the lawns and hedgerows of those more fortunate than himself. All experiments with the lupin took place in his own time on his own allotment.

The experiments took some time. For fifteen years he patiently crossed and re-crossed his lupin cross-breeds, scrapping inferior seedlings until, at last, he successfully created a perennial English lupin which bore the bi-coloured splendour he had first imagined possible as a ten-year old.

By 1925 word of George Russell's phenomenal success with the English lupin began to circulate. He had created an allotment which blazed with lupins such as the world had never seen. It proved impossible to confine the fame of his private flower show. Nursery seedsmen from throughout the UK began to visit offering up to £50 for a plant, more than £1300 at today's prices.

Financial gain had never been George Russell's incentive and he steadfastly refused all offers. The seedsmen attempted to reason with him. He was no longer young! What would happen to the Russell lupin if Russell died? The final persuasive element came from the necessity to constantly guard his lupins against plant-pickers, and allotment-lifters!

Russell eventually succumbed. In 1927 he sold the rights to all his plants to Bakers (now Bells), the Midland based seed specialists. At the age of sixty-eight he finally left Yorkshire and became resident consultant with the firm in Codsal, near Wolverhampton.

The amateur botanist became honoured by the Royal Horticultural Society at the age of eighty and received national recognition with an MBE in the Birthday Honours List at the age of ninety-four. He remained modest throughout his life and once confessed that all interior work on the creation of the bi-coloured, perennial English lupin had taken place in his allotment shed but that all the work which had been undertaken outside, in the garden, could be attributed to the humble bumble bee.

Lawrence Sterne 1713 - 1768

Those who venture into the contemporary English novel are frequently surprised by the creative devices used by the writer, and by the subject matter. It is, in fact, unlikely that the reader will discover anything new! The man who is deemed by literary historians to be 'the Father of the contemporary English novel' is Lawrence Sterne, vicar of Saint Nicholas Church, Stillington, from 1745 to 1768. The literary masterpiece which provided him with the accolade of critics was 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman'.

Although Lawrence Sterne came to be revered in London literary circles and idolised by Parisian society it seems he never became popular in Stillington. The reason for the villagers' displeasure in their vicar may well have been that he did not choose to live among his parishioners, but chose, instead, to reside in Sutton-on-the-Forest, just two miles distant.

At the beginning of his clerical career Sterne conducted the Sunday morning service at the church of All Hallows, in Sutton, before walking across the meadows to conduct the afternoon service at Saint Nicholas. It has been reported that on one occasion he failed to arrive, his pointer having discovered a covey of partridges on the way. The vicar returned to Sutton for his gun.

Tradition also has it that Lawrence Sterne's unpopularity in Stillington was proven by a winter incident. Despite the advice of residents he persisted in skating on a village pond. The ice broke under him. All the parishioners turned their backs. None would go to his aid. Much to their disappointment the vicar managed to save himself.

Despite his unpopularity among the majority of his parishioners Sterne was not without friends. On one occasion Stephen, a member of the Croft family, invited Sterne to join his guests at Stillington Hall to provide an after-dinner reading from the manuscript of his work-in-hand, 'Tristram Shandy'. It seems the reading was not a huge success. Sterne considered that neither he or his masterpiece were receiving the attention they deserved. He let his temper rip and flung the manuscript on the fire. Thankfully Stephen Croft leapt to his feet, patted out the flames and saved the first volume of what has come to be recognised as the greatest shaggy dog story in the English language.

Lawrence Sterne was born on November 24, 1713, in Clonmel, Ireland, the son of a junior officer in the British Army. From the age of ten until his father's death, just eight years later, young Lawrence was sent to school in Halifax, Yorkshire. He was already familiar with the county, his uncle, Jacques, was precentor and canon at York Minster.

At the age of twenty Lawrence entered Jesus College, Cambridge, as a sizer - a student paying reduced fees. He graduated four years later and took Holy Orders in 1738, becoming vicar at Sutton-on-the-Forest, a living which he held for the rest of his life. The vicarage of the Stillington church followed in 1745. In 1760 he added the benefice of the village of Coxwold. Sterne died from tuberculosis in London on March 18, 1768 at the age of fifty-five. In a bizarre and rather gruesome twist of fate, his body was said to have been 'resurrected' two days later by body-snatchers. His remains finding their way back to the dissecting room of the Anatomy School of his own former University.

The Croft Family since 1605

It is widely accepted that Stephen Croft was the man who saved a literary masterpiece when he leapt to his feet at Stillington Hall to rescue the manuscript of Lawrence Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy' from the fire. The history of Sterne is well recorded. But who was Stephen Croft? Who were the Croft family?

The first member of the Croft family to be recorded in Stillington was Sir Christopher Croft, buried in the chancel of the village church in 1605. Little is known about Sir Christopher except that his family originated from Castle Croft, in the county of Bedford.

Sir Christopher was the first recorded representative of the Yorkshire branch of the Croft family but it is unlikely Stillington was his only home. During the 17th century land-owning families were unlikely to occupy a single home. They frequently owned six or seven manor houses in various parts of the

country. Those homes were occupied during their travels from place to place or their children were introduced to the different manors as they grew and vacated the childhood home.

The first member of the Croft family to be recorded in any position of authority in Stillington was a second Christopher, perhaps the son of the first Sir Christopher, who purchased a short-term lease of the estate in 1625 and became 'Lord of the Manor of Stillington'.

The second Christopher, Sheriff of the City of York in 1618, and Lord Mayor in 1629 achieved a personal knighthood in 1641 after entertaining Charles I at his house in York. Sir Christopher was evidently well-satisfied with the management of the Stillington estate. In 1649 he purchased the manor and obtained a second agreement which lasted a good deal longer than the first, short-term specification of just 'three lives'. Almost three hundred years were to pass before the final member of the Croft family to occupy Stillington Hall vacated the house and sold the estate.

Between the first Croft and the last came generation upon generation of soldiers and seafarers, Churchmen and merchant adventurers whose life-time achievements are now confined to the history books. There were triumphs. There were tragedies, as one memorial shows:

> *'Harry Croft, Crimean War, drowned off Balaclava in the disastrous storm of 14 November 1854 when four steam, ten sailing transports and four frigates were sunk. Age 29'.*

Sadly the Croft family have left behind few physical landmarks. The splendid Admiral's House, in High Street, was originally the home of William Croft, the 19th century Admiral of the Fleet who is reputed to have built the house after a seafarer versus soldier feud with his elder brother, Colonel Harry.

Today not all the family landmarks provide evidence of the family's wealth and fortune. Stillington Hall, built in 1734, was finally demolished in 1966 in order to make way for those houses which now form the Parkfield Estate. The walkway into Parkfield passes through the twin pillars, once a gateway into the grounds of Stillington Hall. The family crest, which once adorned the front of the hall is now cemented in, at ground level, at No 1 Mossy Terrace, Main Street. The crest can also be found in St Nicholas church it is reproduced beside the memorial plaque commemorating the lives of those many members of the Croft family who are buried in the graveyard at Stillington.

Surely the most enduring testimonial left behind to mark the ingenuity and invention of the Croft family must be found in the legacy of one who broke away from the convention of the wealthy land-owning family, left home and established himself as merchant adventurer. After completing his schooling John Croft, great-grandson of the second Sir Christopher, set sail for Portugal and enlisted in the wine trade.

The wine shipping partnership which young John Croft was to join, and eventually take over, was established in 1678. Although John remained a bachelor until his death in 1762 the company which he helped to found passed to his brother, Stephen. All of Stephen's five sons entered the wine trade and so the firm which originated from John Croft's 17th century enterprise continues to bear the family name through to the year 2000. Croft Original and Croft Particular are two fine sherries which remain in production from the present day House of Croft.

6 - The Big House

In any village, if there is a 'Big House', it can have quite an influence. Its very presence alters the shape and layout of the village. Firstly, there is the house itself, with park or garden where there would otherwise be fields. Secondly, there are the estate cottages and workshops. These are physical influences. The third effect is on village life. The family in the Big House have a considerable say in what goes on, both socially and economically. The Big House was simply called Stillington Hall and for much of the village's history was home to the Croft family.

Stephen Croft, who later became Lord Mayor of York, commissioned the building of Stillington Hall to the East of the Village in 1649, and the family remained in residence until 1895. The Hall was part of a large estate, the family being referred to in armorial directories as the 'Crofts of Stillington and Aldborough'. The family had major connections with the sherry and port shipping business, and 'Croft Old Original' is still a well known brand name today. We do not know what the first Stillington Hall looked like. It was rebuilt in 1733 and photographs show a grand house built in Palladian style with two and a half storeys. Most of the brick structure was rendered in the 1850s when a porch and conservatory were added to the east wing. Old photographs of the interior of the house show splendid examples of plasterwork, carving, mahogany panelling and magnificent fireplaces. Gated entrances to the grounds were from the York Road with an Avenue Drive across the parkland and from the village Main Street corner.

When the Crofts left, the house was first sold to Rawdon Thornton, and then in 1903, to Matthew Liddell. For the next 30 years, the Village remembers an employer who provided work for many families and businesses. Mr Liddell, who had a mining connection in Newcastle, built Home Farm in 1914 and he took a great interest in the farm work, particularly at threshing times. He would sit in the yard and watch the proceedings. Even, when he was unable to walk, he would be pushed down in a wheelchair.

He gave the village children an annual party at the Hall with tea and buns (and for many this was their first experience of a sticky bun). Tea was served in the Conservatory, the children taking their own mugs, and then it was fun and games on the front garden and over the Ha-Ha wall into the field. At Christmas time, the Village Carol Singers were invited to the Hall. The head Gardener, Spencer Corbett (whose father was also a Hall gardener), helped the Methodists decorate the Chapel for their Anniversaries and special occasions.

The Liddell family employed a chauffeur, groom, butler, housekeeper, cook and some 3 or 4 house maids. Some of the staff lived in the House, whilst others were in estate property in the village. They also employed as many as five or six gardeners. A famed Tulip tree grew near the conservatory in the garden and the extensive greenhouses produced grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers and peaches amongst other delights.

The Liddell family took quite an interest in the village. They were involved with the Village Hall, they provided the horses and carriage for King George VI's Coronation celebrations, and Mrs Liddell supported the Church and its fund raising. Mr Liddell died in 1934 and is buried at Easingwold Catholic Church. The estate was sold in 1936 - a sad day with many village people losing their livelihood.

Home Farm and the land was bought by the Church Commissioners and the Hall and grounds were bought by the Roman Catholic Alexian Brothers. Some of the monks were qualified Nurses and worked in the York City General Hospital in Haxby Road. The Hall was a Home for retired gentlemen and also a convalescent home. One such gentleman, a Mr Fishwick, is remembered for his billiards skill in the Village Hall and for umpiring cricket matches.

Whilst people of different religions did not mix at that time, the village children were welcomed into the grounds and they often found more sympathy at the Hall's Back Door surgery, than from the Village MD. Father Daws, who skated and flew kites, was a great favourite with the young lads. The double doors from Mill Lane into the walled garden were kept locked, but callers were welcome round the back. Brother Cerenus, a Frenchman, was in charge of the garden and handed out edible treats to the youngsters, whilst those families in need in the village were often supported. Many Catholic Villagers went to Sunday morning Mass in the Hall and the Christmas Midnight service was always full to capacity with generous refreshments for all afterwards.

During the War, evacuee children were housed in the coach yard buildings. Norman Collier, the comedian, and his brother were amongst the Hull evacuees. The children were schooled in the Village Hall; had snowball fights down the Main Street against the village children and Jim Cole used to train some of the boys in boxing.

After 1948, the hall was taken over by the Catholic Verona Fathers - some were Italian - who used the building as a Catholic Boys' School and trained young men for the priesthood and for missionary work. Over one hundred pupils attended at one time; and the boys were regularly walked round Roseberry. The Hall was no longer an Open House. Nuns were sometimes in residence probably attending to cooking and domestic affairs. Meat deliveries which used to take over one and a half hours in the Brothers' days, were now conducted in silence, and produce was handed over through a window. The number of pupils and students gradually grew less and the Fathers left in due course and went to Mirfield.

Albert Breeds, from Leeds, was the next owner during the 1950s. He lived there, whilst stripping the building of many of its architectural features. The House became derelict and was eventually demolished by Embleton Brothers from York in 1966. Then, through a succession of builders the Parkfield housing estate emerged. This made a dramatic change to the Village affairs, and the numbers attending the village school. The stables and coachyard were taken over by H Morse and Sons coach business. This was later joined by John Manson and Son's motor repair and maintenance business. The final stage for part of the yard is a private housing development.

What is left of the Hall? Many artefacts were salvaged and are possibly installed in various properties nationwide. The Coat of Arms is fastened onto the North wall of Mossy Terrace with the Motto - To Be or Rather To Seem To Be. A fireplace is at the Gables Restaurant at Birdforth; the lounge door in Lees House Stillington; and a stone plaque depicting missionary work in Africa is built into the Bay Horse/Mossy Terrace garden wall.

The Green and its surrounds formed part of the Croft Estate. Records tell us that the remains of the old pinfold (probably on the Green) were removed in 1892. An old photograph shows a timber framed house on the East boundary called Cromwell House. This was built in 1630 and finally dismantled in 1920 and removed to Boston, Massachusetts by one Leslie Buswell, related by marriage to the Croft family. The house, known as Stillington Hall, is a private residence, but often used for special functions.

The old Wesleyan Chapel, Main Street.

7 - Church and Chapel

St Nicholas Church is a fine stone building located in the centre of the village. Much of it dates from the 15th Century, although the North Wall dates from 12th Century. The octagonal font is believed to be Norman, and the east window contains a few fragments of what is possibly medieval stained glass. The Tower contains three bells, one of which is 15th Century. The church was extensively restored in 1840, and the slate roofs date from this time. A singing gallery over the West end of the Nave was removed in 1932.

The Church Clock, which has been cared for by the Hutchinson family for some 70 years, has been maintained and overhauled for nearly a century by the Newey clockmaking family; the most recent renovation in 1996.

Outside the church, some of the stones in the Chancel wall have grooves worn, so it is usually claimed, by archers sharpening their arrows during archery practice. Just above the grooves, there is an old sundial. A 12th or 13th Century sculpture of St Nicholas can be found above the arch of the main doorway.

The Church has some excellent examples of wood furniture made by Robert Thompson of Kilburn, bearing the mouse trademark. The tower screen was erected in 1935; the communion rails are in memory of the Bullen family; and the side altar, the Pulpit and Choir Stalls were dedicated in 1936. The coloured window on the north side of the nave was given by the Denton family and the east window glass is in memory of Myna North.

At the chancel step there is a large blue granite flagstone which formerly possessed two brass Shields of Arms under which is buried the body of Sir Christopher Croft of Stillington Hall. Knighted by Charles I, he was Sheriff of York in 1618, and Lord Mayor in 1629 and 1641.

Above the Chancel step is the Royal Coat of Arms dated 1739 which was ordered by King George II to be displayed in churches were parishioners were of 'doubtful allegiance'. Although rare, other examples do exist. Another is to be found in St Bega's Church, Bassenthwaite Lake.

The pipe organ was made and bought by public subscriptions and fund raising in 1926; an electric motor blower installed in 1936 - the bellows previously being hand pumped. A sign of changing technology, an electric organ was purchased with the help of a private donation in 1994.

Methodism has also played an important role in the village. The earliest document for the former Primitive Chapel, built on the York Road corner, is 1819 transferring a building 12.5 yards long by 10.5 yards wide from George Walker, the builder, to the Trustees. It was a brick building, with a tiled roof, a central door with two large windows either side, and a low front boundary wall with iron railings. It was furnished with pitch pine benches, and music was supplied by a harmonium.

By the 1920s there were few worshippers and generally the Chapel was only attended by others for special occasions. Its use as a Chapel declined, and in 1935 it became Chick Morse's cycle repair shop. During the War years it was used as a collection point for cardboard and scrap metal. It was eventually demolished in the early 1950s (along with two cottages) as part of road junction improvements, and the bus shelter was built soon after.

In 1844, a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built between Wandell and Dene House in Main Street (although there may have been an active Chapel before that - some old directories say that the Wesleyan Chapel was established before the Primitive one). It was a red brick building, with a grassed frontage and iron railings. The main entrance opened onto a porch with stairs leading up to a substantial gallery and an organ, worked by bellows. From the porch, side doors opened into the Nave with three sets of pews, a pulpit at the front and railings in front of the communion table. For Anniversaries, boards were placed on the railings to form a stage. Extensive alterations between 1894 - 1899 were paid for by members' subscriptions, public collection and some grants. We are told that it was a lovely warm building compared to St Nicholas' Church; possessed some beautiful wood furniture; and could seat in excess of 400 persons.

With support dwindling and the huge costs of maintaining such a large building, the gallery was first dismantled and then the Chapel Members took the brave decision to demolish the building and convert the old School building into a new Chapel. The old Chapel site was duly cleared in 1970 and the new Chapel officially opened in May 1972.

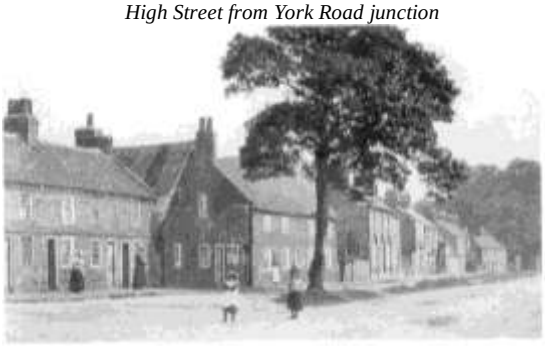
8 - Images of Stillington

Village Green showing Village Hall and the timber framed house that was taken down and sold to USA

York Road junction showing Primitive Chapel

High Street from York Road junction

Main Street looking towards Hall - Bay Horse on the right



Main Street before 1907 showing cottages demolished when School & later BATA store and shop were built
Adults: Jane North (left) Mrs Robinson (right)

Village School 1907, showing the wall dividing the girls' and boys' playground

Water Mill - Farlington Road

Stillington Hall with Head Gardener Spencer Corbett, c 1920

St Nicholas' Church 1998

Village Transport abut 1905 - wagon used for weekly delivery from Mill in Long Street, Easingwold
Ernest Wood (left) Mr J Hodgson (right)

Celebrating of the Coronation of George VI - May Queen 1937
Left to right:Jeff Shepherd, Eric Metcalfe, Charlie Morfoot, Margaret Averill, Peggy North.

Building Coach for the procession, Boat and Lighthouse for the Village Pond, in Hall stableyard. Left to right Roger Kerrison, Bert Thompson, Algie Richardson, Charlie Thompson

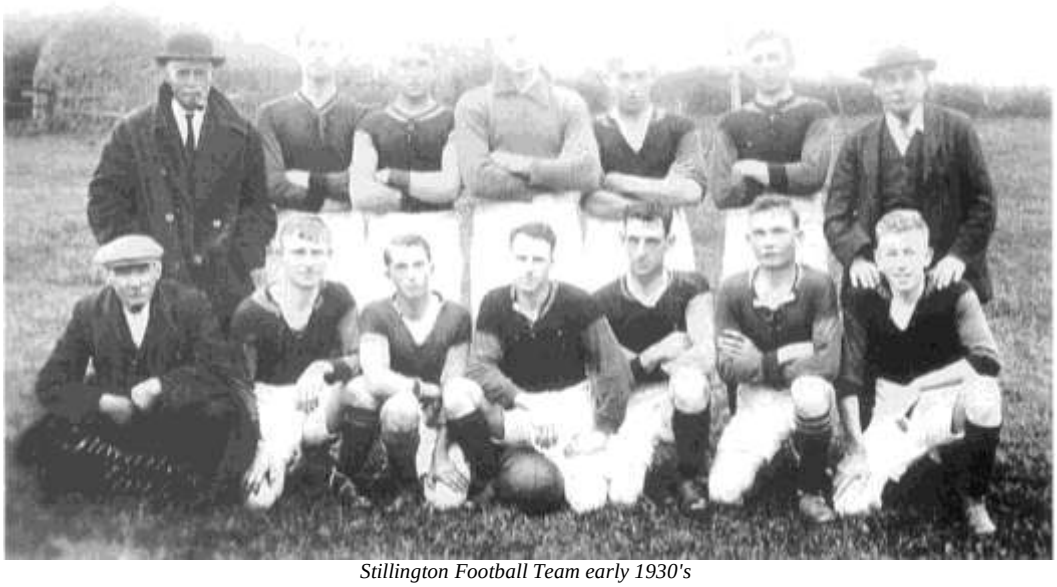
Main Street - BATA shop 1920's
John Hutchinson

Stillington Post Office 1940's
postman William Appleby

Corn ricks in stackyard, South Back Lane 1942 Thomas Aynsley (81yrs)

Peace Celebrations at Stillington Hall, July 1919

Opening of Village Hall - September 1929. *Back row left to right: Miss Tenniswood, Mrs T Hugill, ?, Tom Horner, Dick Wood, Miss Tenniswood, Tom Lofthouse, Spencer Corbett, John B Hutchinson, Rev H W Smith, Dr C H Bullen, Dr & Mrs Hughes, Louise Maskill, Mr E E Newman (church organist), Mary Farrow, Mrs Newman*
Front row left to right: Isobel Souter, Nellie Hope, Elsie Tindall, Charles Hutchinson, Mrs C H Bullen, Mrs W H Metcalfe, Mrs H W Smith & Donavan, Lily Corbett, Mrs Corbett, Mabel Denton, Elsie Neesom, ?, Mary Horner



Stillington Football Team early 1930's
Back row L-R:: ?, George Wood, Alan Redshaw, Norman Wood, Bill Burnett, Arthur Barker, Tom Horner
Front row L-R: ?, Owen Atkinson, Billy Redshaw, Arthur Denton, Richard Wood, ?, George Burnett

Stillington Cricket Team 1950's *Back row left – right: Tom Horner (Umpire), Eustace Burnett, Rich Wood, Arthur Midgley, Leslie Moreland, Henry Otterburn, Charlie Denton, Norman Wood*
Front row left – right: Jack Scaife, Cecil Wood, Cecil Hugill, Bill Burnett.

Stillington School 1930 *Back row L-R: Frank Atkinson, Cecil Wood, Bob Gibson, Raymond Moreland, Leslie Hutchinson, Cecil Hugill. 3rd row L-R: Amy Woodward, Betty Denton, Edna Hugill, Peggy North, Betty Crowther, Gwennie Dixon, Marjorie Smith, Muriel Hardy, Eileen Vester, Stella Smith. 2nd row L-R: Lilly Davis, Lucy Grice, Cynthia Skaife, Nancy Simpson, Margaret Averill, Mary Atkinson, Mina North, Joan Grice, Nancy Bradley, Joyce Simpson, Katie Grace. Front row L-R: Raymond Souter, Frank Yorke, John Vester, Norman Mothersdale.*

9 - Stillington Country

There is little evidence today of the Forest of Galtres as it appeared in medieval times but all the indications are that it was something like the present state of Strensall Common. This is an area of mixed wood, scrub and some farmland, a few miles to the south east of Stillington, which has been largely unchanged because of its use for military training. The name 'Galtres' which is of Scandinavian origin and means "boar's brushwood" and it appears to have been open woodland rather than dense stands of trees. Within that woodland, the original red deer gave way to roe deer and by the 16th century some 800 fallow deer were recorded. These were strictly preserved as the stock of the King's deer park.

Alongside the deer in this landscape of bracken hills and old oaks the hunting licences given by the King indicate that fox, hare, badger and cat were all present. Some grazing took place in the forest and over the years, as the villages grew and agriculture become more important, the woodland was converted into the landscape of fields, hedges and woodlands which make up the surroundings of the present day Stillington.

The parish contains a rich variety of habitats; farmland, small woods, ponds, ditches and gardens which are home to a wide range of animals and plants. This provides a rich pattern of nature throughout the year. It shows that in and around the village there is a fascinating variety of wildlife which provides a constantly changing backcloth to everyday life.

WINTER

The early months of the year test the endurance and resilience of plants and animals. Gardens provide havens and feeding places for birds with tits, house sparrows, tree sparrows, blackbirds, robins and greenfinches jostling for food. In the frozen fields flocks of winter thrushes, redwings and fieldfares from Scandinavia can be seen whilst woodpigeons and stock doves descend on green crops poking through the snow.

Even in these cold days there are signs of animal life. Molehills often appear during a thaw and, on warmer days, rabbits venture out to make the most of winter crops.

Although the trees and hedges stand stark against the winter sky the golden flowers of lesser celandine can be found in sheltered hollows and aconites make a brave yellow splash against the dark earth.

Warmer days towards the end of January see the first stirrings of Spring. A few bees begin to forage and the birds begin to tune up their spring songs. Blackbirds, mistle thrush, robin, starling and hedge sparrow all remind us that a new season is on the way.

February brings flocks of lapwings returning to the fields on their way to breeding territories in the hills. Song thrushes tap snails on their 'anvils' and nest boxes are eagerly claimed by great and blue tits. This time of year can also bring exotic visitors such as waxwings feeding on cotoneaster berries as they make their way back to the Scandinavian forests where they will breed.

Drifts of snowdrops in the hedge bottoms make a cheering sight against a dark hedge and a frosty winter sky.

SPRING

As March progresses the pace of life quickens. A pale green mist spreads along the hawthorn hedges and snowy clouds of blackthorn blossom against the bare branches indicate a 'blackthorn winter'. Daffodils start their glorious display along the banks of Main Street and the York Road.

Carrion crows begin rebuilding their nest and early nesters such as the blackbird and song thrushes will be sitting on eggs by the end of the month. Life in the village goes on against a constant background of birdsong as blackbirds, greenfinches, goldfinches, tits and collared doves hold forth from dawn to dusk. Garden ponds and ditches carry the spawn of frogs and toads and insect life becomes more obvious with ladybirds and bees taking advantage of warmer days. In the evenings pipistrelle bats begin to be seen around the lofts and barns where they have spent the winter.

As the tide of winter visitors moves off a surge of summer birds returns. The chiff-chaff calling its name from the top a birch tree is often the first sign of the great body of birds returning from the warmth of Southern Europe and Africa. April is the month when house martins and swallows return to their familiar nesting sites. The silvery, tinkling call of the willow warbler and the call of the cuckoo along South Back Lane are sure signs that winter has been left behind.

The larger mammals also become more obvious as the season advances. Fox cubs - though rarely seen - emerge from their earths and the first brood of grey squirrels is born. Rabbits on meadow land enjoy spirited chases and hares, though much less common, indulge in their energetic boxing matches.

The wild flowers move on from the golden yellow of dandelion to the bluebells which carpet the woodland and hedge bottoms. The woods of the parish come into their own with the unfurling of fresh green leaves and a constant chorus of woodland birds. The first butterflies, peacock and small tortoiseshell and hoverflies are also seen in gardens and sunlit glades.

SUMMER

The hectic pace of natural life is at its peak in the early summer. The glorious displays of blossom are replaced by the setting of fruit amongst dark green leaves. All is freshly minted and the crops look well in the fields.

Swifts, swallows and house martins are etched against blue skies. Occasionally their calls become more frantic as a sparrow hawk streaks across the rooftops. Turtle doves, the true sound of summer, are heard around the village and the roadside verges become blanketed with a white tide of cow parsley. In the woodland, along the side of the stream, red and white campion brightens the shadows under the trees and the violet coloured rhododendrons, which serve as a reminder of the formal parkland, are in full blossom.

An early morning walk in late May or early June show nature at its best. Over thirty species of birds can be seen in fields and gardens. Skylarks pour forth their song and every hedge and wood rings with the calls of birds. Occasionally the deep call of the heron is heard as it flies from one of the farm reservoirs to a breeding site outside the parish.

Early summer is also the best time to see roe deer. These attractive deer standing about 4 feet tall with a chocolate brown coat can be seen in ones and twos moving back to woodland where they will spend the day after grazing in the early dawn. The sight of these deer brings to mind something of how the Forest of Galtres must have looked in years gone by.

Warm summer winds can sometimes bring an invasion of the beautiful painted lady butterfly. These frail insects ride the wind from southern Europe and add yet more colour to village gardens where tortoiseshell, peacock and large white butterflies are drawn to the sweet smelling magnet of buddleia bushes.

And yet, even in the height of summer, there are first signs that the tide of birds which made their way northwards only a few short weeks ago are returning from their breeding grounds. Lapwings from the moors flock to the stubbles. Common sandpiper and oystercatcher from hill streams and greenshank from the north of Scotland or Scandinavia pass over the village, sometimes alighting on the farm ponds. These passing visitors mark a turning point and the misty mornings of late July with bushes cocooned in dew-laden gossamer give a foretaste of the autumn to come.

August is a time of harvest. The combines are busy in the fields and the fruit and flowers of the gardens bear witness to the hard work of the gardener. The Gardening Club show in mid-month delights the eye and fills the spectator with awe at the scale and perfection of the produce on display. In the gardens themselves there is the same keen appreciation by birds as carrion crows and starlings feast on apples and plums on the tree and blackbirds and wasps gorge themselves on windfalls. Hedgerows too bring forth their harvest with rose-hips and blackberries beginning to ripen and sloes and elderberries taking on their rich dark colours.

In one area colours are more muted at this time of the year. The mallard which have nested on the duck pond go into their summer 'eclipse' plumage. Gone are the glossy green heads and elegant grey backs of the drakes. For a short while they take on a drabber brown while their winter finery grows through and they once again look their immaculate selves.

By late August the main body of swifts has moved off southwards. Their screaming parties no longer fill the air. The village population of swallows and house martins, augmented by the year's young birds, feeds on the rich harvest of flies and midges as they too stock themselves up for their long migration. It is a source of never ending wonder that these small birds can find their way to southern Africa and then return to the same barn or cottage eaves in Stillington some six months later.

AUTUMN

September is a month of mellow mornings and golden afternoons. Plums and apples make a carpet on the lawn and the field mice gather together their winter store of hazelnuts.

The leaves begin to turn and early morning mists give way to days which are warm echoes of summer. The birds find their voices again after the hectic rush of the breeding season and the wistful song of the robin is a sure sign that we are entering the mellow fullness of autumn. Willow warblers, passing through, give brief bursts of song as they make their leisurely way southwards. The calls of tawny owls fill the evening air and the telegraph wires serve as convenient gathering places for the late swallows and house martins.

Into the mellowness of October comes the calls of winter thrushes making their way westwards to find a kinder winter home. The thin 'tseep' of redwings can be heard in the night sky and the 'chack' of fieldfares flying over the fields reminds us that the seasons have nearly turned full circle.

The horse chestnut trees release their harvest of shiny conkers - aided by well-aimed sticks - and there is a steady fall of leaves from trees and shrubs, hastened by the first night frosts. The fullness of the month is reflected in the general pace of life in the village which becomes more ordered as gardens are tidied with all prunings and clippings set aside for the village bonfire.

In the grey days of November lapwings and golden plover can be found on the plough-land, the plover in their dull winter dress almost invisible against the soil. Mistle thrushes 'churr' from treetops and grey squirrels gather in their store of nuts. Moles are as active as ever with many a molehill appearing among the green blades of winter cereals.

And so the days slip into December. The birds make the most of the short daylight hours to build up their energy reserves against the cold of winter nights. The garden bird tables and feeders come into their own and mixed flocks of tits and finches forage in the woodland. Sometimes these parties include the elegant long tailed tit, the black and gold siskin and the brambling from northern forests. Great spotted woodpeckers come boldly to the garden while jays remain well hidden amongst the trees. A kingfisher is occasionally seen along the beck where the fishing is clearly more productive.

Animal, plant and insect life are bedding down for the winter. The first snows cover the fields and sharp frosts decorate the hedges with a rime of silver. Bright winter days remind us that the seasons will turn and that the first signs of new life will show themselves in a few short weeks.

10 - Farming - a Way of Life

Stillington Main Street runs roughly East to West along a ridge, the land falling away to the north, east and south. Houses on both sides originally had long gardens running down to a back lane. A number of these were farms with forage and grain stores behind the house, housing for pigs, hens, and horses, and for cattle, which after milking were led along the back lane to outlying fields. Six examples existed in the 1970's, and two now remain. A number of post-enclosure farms can be found outside the village, with the farmhouse and buildings surrounded by their fields.

The soil dictates the type of farming, and in the village it is generally good Everingham Aeolian soil, sand over clay, with the east end of the village tending to be more clay than sand. It is generally over pH 7.0. Close to the village, south and west towards Moxby, Sutton and Huby it is all light and sandy, and so good arable land. To the north and east from Brandsby Road towards Marton it is heavier clay and makes good pasture. The introduction of lime, grant aided in the 1940's by the Ministry of Agriculture, made the heavy land more workable. Within this broad picture there are pockets of sand and clay, for example Sugar Hills at the top of the lane from the Marton Road to Marton Priory. In 1998, in the parishes of Stillington and Marton, the Archdiocese and the Church Commissioners owned 1300 acres, five farms and the old Vicarage.

The pre-enclosure map of Stillington has field names which indicate areas of wood, pasture, meadow, and pear trees. The four fields were Craike Park Field, North Skew Field, Carr Field and Ing Field. These, along with the common wastes, meadows and pastures were enclosed following the Act of 1776. The enclosure award lists eighty two names. The largest single award was 51 acres 2 roods and 32 perches [20.92 hectares] to John Sowray and the smallest - 1 rood and 2 perches [0.105 hectares] to Robert Field. Other awards go the Ann, William, Robert and James Field, John and Thomas Wilkinson, William North and Roger Bellwood. The names North and Bellwood can still be found in the village. Twenty people had awards of between 2 and 3 acres or approximately 1 hectare. The Vicar, the Crofts, Grace Sherwin and Thomas Tinniswood have more than one award, and were the major landowners.

Enclosure made a tremendous improvement to the productivity of farming and so to prosperity, as evidenced by the number of 18th century brick farmhouses on the main street. John Tuke's 'General Views of the Agriculture of the North Riding of Yorkshire 1800' claims:

> *'the improvement made upon the open fields and wastes after the inclosure has been very great, principally by the adoption of the turnip and clover husbandry, and by the cultivation of artificial grasses, the stock has been greatly increased in numbers and still more in value and the crops or corn rendered so much superior to what they were when the fields were in their open state and fallowing was practiced, that there is nearly as much corn grown as when the whole was arable by inclosing waste lands, large tracts that were of inconsiderable value is now brought into culture ... and the number of labourers increased also'. ... 'Very few of what may be called large farms are anywhere to be met with, the Riding being generally occupied by tenures of moderate extent'*

In 1778 the York Agricultural Society awarded its prize of three guineas (the equivalent of about £175) for the best potato crop grown on a rood of land, to George Hutchinson of Stillington. His crop was one hundred and twenty and a half bushels. That is 4,386 lbs on a quarter of an acre or just under twenty tonnes per hectare.

In the South of England William Cobbett was drawing attention to the very poor wages of the agricultural worker of 8 shillings (40p) per week. In the North Riding, Tuke states

> *'...no people are better paid, work harder or are more economically maintained than the farming servants of the district ... To these early habits, may much of the future comfort of this class be fairly attributed'.*

Women worked very extensively on the land. Again, Tuke says:

> *'The dairy is entirely theirs and they perform at least half the harvest work; they labour at that season with the men ...; they weed the corn, they make the hay, they mould the fields and perform a multitude of the lesser occupations of husbandry ... . At home when the weather or season does not permit the labours in the field, the women spin flax or wool chiefly for the use of the family'.*

In the 1970's women were still hand roging [weeding] corn.

According to Marshall in 1788 specific changes in agriculture following enclosure included *'the greatly increased meat produce ... perhaps threefold*'. In the arable world rape *'brings most money into the county*'; other crops included oats, barley, pulse, wheat, grass, clover, turnips, potatoes [for cattle and swine] flax and tobacco. So it was not the Common Market that introduced rape to North Yorkshire;

although the 18th century rape was not oil seed rape - but rape grown for its green tops as part of the root rotation and used as feed for sheep.

From 1910 onwards the growth of motor transport caused a decline in the number of horses. The 1914-1918 war had a major effect. Fifteen percent of men employed in agriculture in June 1914 had left by July 1915. Some went into the armed services, others to the developing war industries. Wages were still above the national average. Whereas the 1914 army allotment compared with the normal wage in the southern counties of England and Wales *'they were substantially lower than the customary earnings of the northern workers*'. 1916 saw the start of subsidies for sugar beet and in 1925 the sugar beet factory opened in York.

1921-9 saw an agricultural depression with 100,000 acres going from cultivation to grass and rough grazing. During the 1930's the main potato crops of 'Majestic' and 'Redskin' sold for £2.50 a ton - if you could find a market. Wheat was 'Little Joss' and 'Standard Red'. Twenty five hundredweight to the acre was a good crop. There was a five year rotation of crops - grass, oats, wheat, roots, barley and grass. The oat crop was for army and racehorse use, sold for £2.50 a ton to Bannisters or delivered to Easingwold station. In 1934 wheat was £4.50 a ton delivered to Easingwold station. The lowest price Tom Yorke's father could remember. About 1938 varieties changed with yields going from twenty five hundredweight an acre to today's two, three, four and more tons per acre. Fertiliser was a phosphate, potash and sulphur mix used at one to two hundredweight per acre. In the 1990's half a ton per acre, and more was used.

Dairy shorthorns were home bred. Bullocks were fattened, reared gently on grass, wintered twice and sold for beef at about three years old. Good flavour! The sheep were Mashams and reared as fat lambs. A young girl usually caught the sheep for the clipper. Clipping by hand-shears taking up to half an hour each. Many clipped sixteen a day - a very few fifty two. Today, with electric clippers a sheep is shorn in about five minutes.

In 1932 fields were about eight to twelve acres each and ploughing was with horses. The traditional one acre a day was still the norm. Ploughing was at a depth of three inches on grassland and four inches for corn. Today the standard is five inches. In 1938 tractors were used, first the little grey 'Fergy' and then the standard Fordson. By 1942 horses finished altogether on some farms but they were used on others until 1956. In 1997 a man ploughed 800 acres with a second man following drilling and sowing, in nine or ten weeks. In the 1930's cleaning out a foldyard by hand was a week's work. Now, a tractor can be in the yard loaded up and out in six minutes.

In the 1930's cattle were fed oats, but increased scientific knowledge proved there was more nourishment in barley, and cattle were fed half -and-half. By 1951 oats had gone completely out of fashion and barley remained. The barley was kept for home consumption and the wheat sold. The rotation changed with more grass and two or three consecutive crops of wheat. One local farm recently had its eleventh consecutive crop of wheat. The third crop was troublesome, but subsequent crops increased each year.

During the 1939 - 45 war, the German submarine blockade greatly reduced the amount of food imported. The government was determined that the country should not reach the near starvation levels of 1917. One of the steps taken was the re-introduction of the Land Army who had been so successful in the 1914-18 war. All women over eighteen who were not in a reserved occupation or had small children, were required to join the women's branch of the armed services, the armaments industry, the hospital service or the Land Army. Girls were paid £1 2s 5d (£1.16) per week by the farmer, and the Land Army provided a uniform of four Aertex shirts, corduroy jodhpurs, fawn overalls, green pullovers, socks, wellingtons, big strong brown shoes, a green tie, trilby hat and badge. Clothes were rationed for civilians but these clothes did not require coupons, and were replaced whenever a girl asked for them - and they had plenty.

A number of girls came to Stillington to work on the farms. Several married local farmers and have contributed memories to this history. Bessie, from Leeds, who became Mrs Bessie Yorke, did not wait to be called up, but volunteered in 1940. As a volunteer she was able to choose where to come. Her sister's farm at Farlington had applied for a land girl and the authorities at Morley did not know it was a relation. The medical inspection simply consisted of a comment 'you look fit enough anyway'. Work included helping with morning milking, hoeing, pulling turnips and mangolds and taking the milk, in ten gallon churns, to the village by horse and cart. Milking was by hand - morning and evening - and in the middle of the day for newly calved cows. The hens were Rhode Island Reds, Brownley Gold and Light Suffolks. They were free range, let out fed and watered in the morning, and again in the afternoon when the eggs were collected. At dusk they were shut in the hen huts to protect them from foxes. About forty hens were kept to each hen house. They bred their own chickens with one cock to

twenty hens. Eggs were hatched in April. Chicks were kept in a hut with a warming light for about a month, then gradually let out in a wire run till they started feathering. They started laying at about twenty four weeks.

Bessie had a fortnight's holiday a year but no travel passes. Recreation included dominoes at the Blacksmith's Arms, and village dances, travelling by bicycle to Sheriff Hutton, Flaxton and Sutton on Forest, coming back at 2am; the dance cost 6d [2½p] started at 9pm and finished at 12.30am and had a live band. A bus ran on Saturday into York travelling via Brandsby, Crayke, Stillington and Sutton on Forest leaving at 8.30am returning at 12.30pm. To go to the pictures at the Empire, the bus left at 6.30pm returning at 11pm. On Thursdays there was one bus at 10am returning at 4pm. Farlington had an annual Sports Day with mens' races, chasing a cockerel which Bessie won once, chasing a greasy pig and a fancy dress dance.

Bessie and Tom Yorke married in 1943. They started with five cows and fifty hens. Bessie helped with feeding, milking and the calves. She also made butter and cream for sale to a local lady who had a market stall. Quantities varied according to the milk available. Cattle feed included turnips, cut by a hand-turned machine and rolled oats. Feeding Tom and the farmhands included morning lunch at 9.30am, dinner at 12 midday and afternoon break at 3pm - tea and something to eat. At harvest they had '6 o'clock' outside, a sandwich, scone, a piece of pie and a piece of cake. When they finished they had a warm meal at night. Flour for bread, teacakes, scones and cakes came from Bannisters at Easingwold. A 14lbs [6.5 kgs] bag lasted a month. Bannisters used to come for orders on Thursdays, for delivery the next Monday. Later Bessie biked to Stillington, took the bus to Easingwold, delivered her order, visited the bank for wages and did general shopping.

At threshing time there was a team of fifteen men. Tea for morning break was provided in an enamel bucket with sandwiches and scones. Dinner included Yorkshire pudding, a joint of beef or meat and potato pie. Three o'clock was provided but the men went home for their tea.

Audrey, who became Mrs Audrey Shepherd and now lives at Marton Park Farm, came to Stillington from Redcar, aged seventeen, in September 1945. This was four months after the end of the war in Europe, but food was still in very short supply and direction of labour continued. She had no formal training but came straight to one farm, which she didn't like, and then to Sparrow's White Bear Farm. One grandfather and several uncles were farmers, so this helped. Work included milking cows, leading horses to work in outlying fields, drilling potatoes, turnips, carrots and oats, slashing hedges and picking potatoes and beet. Mrs. Sparrow skimmed milk to make her own butter; there was a bottling plant for the milk which was delivered round the village by van. Picking potatoes was not a favourite job. The potatoes were spun out from a horse-drawn machines or spade-lug tractor, picked up by hand, put in buckets then stored in the field in a 'pie' or clamp. A great mound of potatoes protected from the weather by straw at the bottom, then potatoes, more straw and then covered with earth.

The farm workers included two German prisoners of war who lived in the farmhouse. Other prisoners of war (some as young as sixteen) lived in a hostel at Thirkleby and the army brought them in daily by bus for jobs such as potato picking.

Pigs were kept by a Miss Carter on South Back Lane near where Don Austin currently has his glider container workshop. In the 1940's many people had a pig, fed on waste, which they killed for meat. There were still pigs kept at the bottom of Jim Cussin's garden in South Back Lane in the early 1970's.

Farming is still very important in the life of Stillington. There are some large fields but also some small ones. Potatoes, sugar beet, barley, wheat, grass, rape and flax are still important crops. Potatoes are planted and harvested by machine rather than hand. They are not stored in field 'pies', but temperature and humidity controlled barns where they are graded and bagged in 25 kg bags, or (mainly) sold in a 25 tonne bulk container loads. Straw is carried to stack yards in huge bales weighing half a tonne each. The army no longer requires hay or oats for its horses. Much grass is now made into silage rather than hay. The weather is still important for the harvest but modern machinery allows the shorter straw grain to be safely harvested even when there are adverse conditions, the grain being dried (at a cost) and stored in silos.

B.S.E. (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) has badly affected the local beef and dairy farmers. Even if their own animals have not been infected, cattle over 30 months old can not be used for human consumption. Older cattle have to be slaughtered and incinerated, leading to a heavy fall in prices. This, together with marked falls in the price of sheep, pigs, grain and milk, causes severe financial concern for local farmers.

There are still a number of large gardens some with spare produce for sale at the gate, with money just left in a tin. Visitors from the south are astonished. We live a privileged life in this village.

11 - 'You don't see banties...'

Many of the changes which have taken place happen so gradually, that only the older people realise that they have changed at all. Keeping domestic animals as pets, rather than for food, is one such change. As one older resident reminisced:

> *'Many of us young 'uns used to keep rabbits, banties and such like. We'd scrounge feed from the farmers, then roll the oats in Cobbler's rollers that he used for the leather...'.*

Like both the Cobbler, and his roller, 'banties' have gone.

There are perhaps only three households in the village who now keep poultry, compared with the majority of families some 50 years ago. Similarly, there are probably only two farmers who now have livestock, in buildings, within the village. Traffic sounds are probably heard from some direction 90% of the day, and there is air traffic to consider - both from the Armed Services, commercial aircraft and private use.

There is no sound of the Pump pumping water from the Foss up to the Hall, no sound of the old men breaking up cobbles all day long on the green. (They were broken by hand, and used to repair roads and tracks.) There is no smell of 'night soil' drifting on the wind, or the occasional smell of a load of manure, but we now get the more intensive smell of slurry being spread, or the chemical smells of pesticides and fertilisers.

There are certainly fewer trees and hedgerows with the change in farming methods, and fewer birds calling, as their habitat and food supply have changed. Ground nesting birds have certainly suffered with less grassland and meadow available, and we have seen the demise of the corncrake, with its distinctive call, from this area.

Vermin such as foxes, magpies and carrion crows were kept in control by frequent shooting. Young rooks were shot, and rook pie was a regular meal at that time of year. Rabbits were shot or trapped, and sold for food. Rabbit pie was regularly served up by the landlady of the Bay Horse, when the Church tenants came to pay their annual rent. The number of rats and mice was greater around the farms and stack-yards. Grain is now stored indoors, or in silos, and the vermin are controlled with 'rentokil stuff' (although Rentokil is actually the name of a company). Local gamekeepers used ferrets to catch rabbits, and stray dogs were liable to be shot on sight. There would also be a stoat and weasel count at the end of each season. The carcasses were hung in line on fencing, just as dead moles were hung up after the mole catcher had been doing his rounds. Visible proof, for all to see, that the job was being done thoroughly.

Hundreds of rabbits were sickeningly affected by the myxomatosis outbreak in the early 1950s - a consequence of an attempt at biological control which went wrong. What had once been the foxes' staple diet was no longer desirable. Foxes had to change their eating habits, and were even known to take cats as food. A more common sight is game birds such as partridges and pheasants which were originally introduced solely for sport shooting. Pheasants are still bred for shooting, and perhaps a third of their numbers are taken, with the remainder falling mainly to foxes - either directly, or as carrion after an encounter with a motor vehicle. Dwindling habitats and free-roaming dogs mean the chances of birds rearing young outside protected rearing areas are limited.

The owls of Stillington have declined since the 1970s, with the general 'tidying up' and removal of their usual habitats - the old barns and open sheds of the farms and small holdings - and the change in their food supply. The bat population has suffered in a similar way. House shutters used to be a favourite resting place for these creatures. The last rookery in Stillington Parish went with the removal of some of the larger trees in the Vicarage garden in the 1960s.

The filling in of ponds, efficient drainage of land, fertilisers, pesticides and past contamination by sewerage, all contributed to a decline in waterlife. Dace, roach, the odd perch, chubb, pike and eels were all remembered living in the river Foss, and many field and roadside ditches harboured eels. Today, kingfishers are no longer seen near the waterfall, otters have gone, and water voles are rare. Frogs, toads and newts are harder to find, and are more easily found in garden ponds than in the wild.

Wild flowers were part of the scene in meadows, and on the road and track sides. Workmen who were ditching used to replant any that had been moved. However, all is not lost, seeds still remain and will regenerate when they are allowed to do so. Badgers are now a protected species, and their numbers are on the increase. Farmers saw very few in the 1940s, and their numbers were kept down later, following a possible connection with Tuberculosis infections in cattle. Despite the area's former status as a hunting forest, deer were virtually unknown in the 1940s, but residents now often comment on sightings in and around the village.

12 - Stillington at War

In 1914 life in Stillington continued as though it would never change. Cricket was a large part of the village social scene and on 24 January over 200 dancers in fancy dress attended the annual Cricket Club ball in the council schoolroom (now the village hall). Come the start of the season Stillington lost by 25 runs to St Michael le Belfry (York) but beat local rivals Huby by a similar margin. The Yorkshire Gazette makes no mention of the likelihood of hostilities until the report of the fortieth Huby and Sutton on the Forest Show when Lord Furness, proposing the toast to 'The King', briefly mentioned the terrible crisis through which the country was passing. Everyone hoped 'events would turn out better than appeared to be at present'.

Following the German invasion of neutral Belgium on 4 August, war was declared on Germany. The team from the Army Pay Corps resigned from the local cricket league. Ryedale Show was held at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, on 11 August but Pickering Show was cancelled due to the outbreak of hostilities.

The Great War seems to have passed above the heads of Stillington Parish Council. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities the Council met infrequently and its main interest appears to have been the Stillington Consolidated Charities Fund, the Calvert's Widow Charity Fund and the appointment of a governor for Stillington Village School. People from the village went away to war. Quite a number did not return but there is no mention of them in Parish records. Existing church records are also incomplete.

One local man, Fred Burks, had already enlisted in the Green Howards in 1906 and held the rank of sergeant. At the beginning of what promised to be a short war he was stationed in Guernsey. On 28 August he left for the Western Front in Belgium. By Christmas 1914 he had already seen active service near Ypres, a city as yet undamaged, fighting against a Bavarian regiment which included Corporal Adolf Hitler.

His Battalion marched to Armentieres in Northern France where despite the season of goodwill the only break in hostilities came in Christmas week when the German troops requested a pause to recover their dead. During that period soldiers from both sides fraternised; exchanging cigarettes, cigars and souvenirs - the only time such an event occurred throughout the war. The British higher authority stopped it happening again!

Back home in England the well-known Yorkshire pacifist Arnold Rowntree encouraged military service, stating that he would keep jobs open for all Rowntree employees who volunteered to serve the colours. He declared that war was 'not a picnic' and that soldiers would 'march hour after hour for 30-40 miles carrying 90 lbs on their backs'. He was right. Meanwhile the recruiting sergeants, resplendent in red sashes, marched through the towns and villages recruiting men to serve as soldiers. A visit to Stillington on 20 November 1915 recruited three men for the Green Howards. Raymond Hayes, from Farlington, was posted to active service in France. He was killed on 22nd March 1918.

Some soldiers returned safely. The two men recruited alongside Raymond Hayes, H Burden and R Barker, survived the war. Some had lucky escapes: Pte Lawrence Fothergill was in the firing line and had, 'A marvellous experience. He had his hat shot off but is luckily none the worse'. Others were not so lucky. Arthur Hobson joined the Green Howards and served on the first day of what came to be known as the Battle of the Somme. Unlike over 20,000 of his compatriots who were killed in action, and 37,000 who were wounded, Arthur survived only to be killed at Arras on 24 May 1917.

Alf Stubbs, who lived on the village green at Stillington, joined the 18th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment - the 'Manchester Pals'. On 12 October 1916 he was waiting in a muddy trench, soaked to the skin, to attack Ligny-Thilloy, in the Somme area. At 2.05 pm, after a short five minute bombardment, the Manchesters attacked and the Germans retaliated. Heavy machine gun fire made progress impossible and the British suffered terribly. Alf Stubbs sadly became one of the 250 Manchesters, out of 350 who started the day, who were dead, wounded or taken prisoner.

Harry Thompson of Ashfield Cottage, Main Street, was recruited into the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment. He was killed in the third battle of Ypres. At Passchendaele Harry had served alongside Sergeant Burks who had now survived some of the worst battles of the entire war. But Sergeant Burks was killed in action on 6 May 1918. The battalion diary for the day records, *'Quiet with nothing of importance to report'*. Doubtless his wife and family would strongly disagree with that!

The First World War did affect whole families. The Borwells - brothers George, Tom, Charlie, and sister Doris, were all in the forces. Charlie joined the Yorkshire Hussars, serving in Mesopotamia, Russia and India. Tom joined the Green Howards and was in training at the end of the war. Doris served with the WAAC in Suffolk. George had joined the Army in 1914 as a driver in the Army Service Corps and was drafted to the front in May 1916. Twice he was mentioned in despatches for taking up supplies under heavy shell fire. In the Spring of 1918 he was transferred to the West Riding Regiment and had only been in the trenches a few days when he was killed.

Reg and Percy Dight lived with their parents on Main Street. Percy was a regular soldier in the Royal Artillery and rose to the rank of CQMS. He was awarded the Military Medal and Bar for bravery and was mentioned in despatches on a number of occasions. Towards the end of the war he returned from France unable to work and suffering from a combination of gas poisoning and shell shock - a complaint not recognised by the British Army as an illness. His brother Reg also joined the Royal Artillery and served alongside his brother in France. They were standing together beside their gun when Reg was shot dead by a German sniper.

Gunfire was only one of the many hazards. Robert Gibson of Stillington Mill, joined the Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoon Labour Corps. Usually their regiments were unarmed and spent most of their time labouring at, or close to the front line - building or repairing bridges and roads, deepening and widening trenches, constructing wooden walkways. At the end of the war Bob sadly caught pneumonia and died in the military hospital in Beverly. He is buried in Stillington graveyard - one of few local soldiers to have a personal memorial in his own home village.

Although the Parish Council records show no commemoration to those who were killed in action during the First World War, their names are recorded on monuments and memorials which decorate the Belgian and French countryside bearing testimony to the sacrifice of British soldiers. The name of Alf Stubbs is recorded on the monument at Thiepval, along with 70,000 other British soldiers, as 'having no known grave'.

The names of Fred Burks and Harry Thompson are recorded on the Tyne Cot Memorial. Arthur Hobson and Reg Dight are on the Arras Memorial, George Borwell on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial and Raymond Hayes on the Pozieres Memorial at Albert.

The Great War ended on 11 November 1918. Those who survived came home to the great relief of their families and started to pick up their lives again. Among the survivors was John Hutchinson, of Slingsby. John had enlisted in the Green Howards in 1916 and had spent a large part of his military service training recruits at Rugeley, Warwickshire. In 1920, after demobilisation, he married, moved to Stillington and became manager of the BATA store. He was later to become a well known Stillington figure, closely associated with St Nicholas Church, where he became secretary, vicar's warden and bellmaster.

After the war life in Stillington went on much as before. No welcome home is recorded from the Parish Council. Repairs to Lucy Balk, Joe Stees and Jenny Wren footpaths continued to dominate Parish business. Stiles needed repairing, new gates needed erecting and the Vicarage had a Hit and Miss paled hand-gate and palings erected by Mr Hugill for £9/7/6d.

The First World War was supposed to be 'The War to End Wars' but it was not to be. The 'Roaring Twenties' came and went and a new generation of young people grew up not remembering the 'Great War'. Even so, the storm clouds were gathering over the whole of Europe.

In 1935 the National Peace Ballot was held. A threat from Germany was now a real possibility and strenuous efforts were made to keep the peace. Britain may have been neutral, but British volunteers left to fight in the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, at about the same time as the coronation of King George VI, came the first official hint of trouble. Easingwold Rural District Council asked the Parish Council to set up an Air Raid Precautions Committee. Dr Bullen, the village GP, assumed responsibility for Red Cross work, R W Wood became organiser of rescue parties and William Redshaw offered to organise motor cars and lorries when needed. Rev H W Smith, the vicar, was appointed Principal Air Warden. Public lectures on air raid and anti-gas precautions were organised.

On 3 September 1939 war was declared. Evacuees from Hull and Middlesbrough came to Stillington. 'Dig for Victory', 'Buy a Spitfire' and 'Buy a Tank' weeks were held in the village. Salvage collection got into full swing and Stillington Boys Scouts assumed responsibility for collecting waste paper, tins and scrap iron. Fund raising events were held in the Village Hall where Fur and Feather shows were popular. Farmers donated stock for auction.

Cigarettes were a vital need for soldiers. In January 1940 a collection raised £4/13/0d and paid for twenty-three tins. Stillington formed a branch of the Home Guard with forty-seven members. Initially known as the Local Defence Volunteers, local wags claimed that LDV stood for 'Look, Duck and Vanish'! Apparently the qualification required to join was an ability to climb the steps to the top of the church tower and keep watch! Training for the Home Guard took place in the Village Hall with manoeuvres in the grounds of Stillington Hall. These men were entrusted with protecting the village in the event of enemy attack and guarding ammunition stored in the Nissen huts which appeared on spare land and by roadsides leading to Stillington.

Although twenty-one years had passed between the end of World War I and the start of World War II many of those who saw military service between 1939 and 1945 had vivid memories of the previous war. The two sons of Sergeant Fred Burks (the gallant Green Howard who had fought through many of the worst battles in WWI and finally been killed in action just six months before the end of the war) enlisted in the British Army. Francis Burks was, like his father, a regular soldier. He joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in 1933, serving in Gibraltar and Burma before being demobilised in 1946. His brother, James, enlisted in 1939 and served with the Durham Light Infantry and the West Yorkshire Regiment. He saw service in Egypt and Tunisia before being wounded in Abyssinia in 1941. He, like his father, lost his life as a result of war. He was killed in action in Sicily in 1943.

Percy Dight, the son of CQMS Dight of the Royal Artillery, did not see service as a regular soldier. As a farmworker he was declared to be in a reserved occupation and joined the Brandsby and Crayke Home Guard under the command of Captain Bullen from Stillington. Percy remembers that twice he was stopped in York to show his exemption card to prove that he wasn't in the Army. To Percy the Home Guard were 'playing soldiers'. One rainy Sunday they lived up to the description. His corporal took the platoon into the pub where they played cards all day!

To those who saw active service away from home 'playing soldiers' - or 'sailors' or 'airmen' - was an impossibility. Leslie Hutchinson volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1940. He joined HMS Kashmir, operating anti U-boat patrols in the English Channel and North Atlantic. Later his ship went into the Mediterranean, accompanying HMS Kelly in the bombardment of the airfield at Maleme. Ordered to proceed to Alexandra, Egypt, HMS Kashmir was attacked by German Stuka bombers off Gavdas Island, received a direct hit and sank. Leslie was killed and is commemorated on the Memorial at Suda Bay.

In 1944, Charles Hutchinson was called up into the RAF but transferred to the infantry. After advanced jungle training at Comilla he joined the West Yorkshire Regiment and took part in the battle of Meiktila commanded by General Bill Slim. He spent some time in Chittagong Military Hospital being treated for jungle sores. Being a talented musician he was delighted to find a piano in the hospital and his recovery was greatly aided by playing it. He returned to England and was finally demobbed in 1947.

Bert Thompson, who worked for a local builder, was called up, joined the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, and was posted to India. He had many unpleasant experiences fighting the Japanese in the jungle. Like many others he couldn't get home quick enough when the war ended. He left for Stillington without even collecting his medals. These he only received on his 80th birthday when his family applied for them. Bert Thompson's brother, Charlie, who worked on the roads for the Council, was called up and joined the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment. He was in the North African and Italian campaigns. He too was also waiting to get home to England and Stillington. His letter to the White Bear wished everyone a Happy Christmas and showed him sitting on a large tin of spam dreaming of turkey, Christmas pudding and the odd drink or two.

Cecil Wood, a footballer who had trials with York City, joined the Royal Engineers in 1939. He saw service in France and Belgium before being evacuated from Dunkirk. Transferred to the Middle East, for bravery in the field he was mentioned in despatches on 12th December 1941. He was captured in 1942 and became a Prisoner of War. He was released from Stalag IVB in Saxony. His girl friend, later to become his wife, Margaret, was shown a photograph of freed POW's and was amazed to see her future husband in the photo - safe but not home. Cecil Wood finally returned home on 14 May 1945.

Throughout World War II the Army had huge camps in the Vale of Pickering. Many convoys went through the village, some so long they took 2-3 days to pass. Tanks were frequently parked in the grounds of Stillington Hall. Once a track came off a tank and it veered into the front door of Corner

House. The resident was at the door with a child in her arms - not surprisingly she disappeared into the depths of the house with great speed when the turret buried itself into the house.

The war brought employment for many. East Moor air base, three miles from Stillington, was a Royal Canadian Airforce base. Before the war a farm worker's weekly wage was about £2 but one of the village blacksmiths, Ernest Burnett, found that when he went to work at East Moor, he could earn £5 a week.

Canadian airmen frequently visited the pubs in Stillington and batmen brought leather boots and flying jackets to the Stillington cobbler, Arthur North, for repair. One sad task when a plane was lost was to give away boots and jackets left by the crew.

Associations formed between local girls and the visiting aircrews. Gertie Burks, who lived on the Green and worked at Home Farm, had a Canadian boy friend. Stillington was in line with the main runway at East Moor. Loaded aircraft took off very slowly and gained height above the village. She could easily recognise his plane by the number on its wing. Many hours later she waited anxiously for his return and knew she still had a date when his plane flew back from Germany.

Trainee pilots sometimes crashed. One came down in Folly wood. Another crashed on Sugar Hills where the Army had a look-out tower. The pilot managed to climb out and raise the alarm by telephone but the WAAFS on duty hadn't heard a thing. About fifteen soldiers and WAAFS were billeted in the village with their office in part of Wandell House. In addition to the Sugar Hills look-out, they worked a searchlight on the Green.

The village was never bombed but a land mine was dropped at Seaves Farm, near Brandsby, and a great deal of glass was shattered. Another bomb fell close to South Farm but the blast went over the hill at the back of the house without causing any damage.

In May 1945 the war in Europe ended. The church bells, which were to be used as emergency signals, had not sounded since 1940. On 8 May they rang out to celebrate VE Day and they rang again on 15 August for VJ Day. The Welcome Home Committee raised money for gifts for all who served. Flags and bunting decorated the village, there was a bonfire on the Green, a sports day for children and a whist drive with proceeds to the Welcome Home Fund. And the bells rang... and rang... and rang...

13 - Learning and Playing

Village Schools

Schooldays inevitably feature strongly in childhood memories. The present Village Hall is built on the site of the National School erected 1820. The School was supported by fees, subscriptions and government grants. When the school first opened, 36 poor children were educated free, and in the late 1880's some children were paying 3d (1(p) a day. A stone in the north wall is inscribed *'1821 National School - Peace and Prosperity'*. A photograph shows a long brick building, either painted white or plastered. Kelly's Directory for 1905 states that the school (built for 120) had an average attendance of 75 under the Master, Arthur Mewis.

A Wesleyan school, (which later became the site for the new Chapel), was built in 1859/60. Originally built for 100 children, Kelly's Directory for 1905 records an average attendance of 34 boys and girls.

In 1907, the children moved to the new Council School, formally opened on 16th October, by Col. Legard, Chairman of the North Riding Education Committee. Classes started on October 17th with 112 children on roll. The attendance for the first day was 95 in the morning and 98 for the afternoon.

School Managers were Matthew Liddell (voted Chairman), R Souter, J Farrer (Correspondent for the Wesleyan School) Thomas Wood (Correspondent for the Church School), W Mattison, W S Appleby and Rev Newman. There have been seven head teachers:

William Metcalfe	October 1907 - April 1945
Charles E Denton	April 1945 - December 1966
E M Wilkinson	January 1967 - August 1971
R Danby (temporary)	September 1971 - February 1972
Dennis Richardson	February 1972 - March 1988
Robert Audsley (temp)	April - July 1988
Hilary Henderson	September 1988 to the present day.

A row of cottages on Main Street was demolished, and the red brick School was built. The Infants class was on the eastern wing and the large classroom was divided with a wooden partition for the Junior and Senior classes. Water was pumped into an open tank in the porch from a well in the back yard. Limewashed earth closet toilets were in the rear playground. Electric light was installed in 1939. Water installation started in the village in 29th June 1937 and the school's toilets were converted to the 'water carriage system' in the autumn of 1940. Temporary toilets were installed in 1978 with indoor toilets finally coming in 1989.

The school had playgrounds to front and rear, and school gardens stretching down to Back Lane. Playgrounds were divided by brick walls, with a wooden door. The older boys took the front yard near The White Dog. "Boss" wouldn't allow football in the playground, so that was played in the street, and the children often had a big skipping rope right across the road.

The school garden had six or seven plots, mainly growing vegetables. Tended by the older boys, they were handed on when they left school at fourteen, as young men. Twice weekly gardening sessions often featured the surreptitious smoking of woodbines, (purchased with the 2d refund on empty bottles), down Lucy Balk.

The Senior girls had lessons in Cooking and Housewifery, from a travelling Cookery Van - an extending trailer on four wheels. For a short spell in the 1930's the older girls travelled by bus for cookery lessons, at first to a centre at Wigginton, later at Uppleby, Easingwold.

Farlington had its own school catering for infants, through to fourteen year olds. A past pupil remembers twenty to twenty five children, all in the one room. Farlington school closed in the late 1930s. Children travelled to Stillington school on foot or cycled, from Marton, Farlington and outlying farms and homesteads. Mr. Morse's School Bus and Taxi service started in 1948.

Pre- World War 1, Harvest holidays were taken late August to September, with Potato Picking holidays in October. Records also show a number of official closures, some for celebrations and Royal occasions - Coronations, Weddings, Jubilees and Funerals. Others were for trips and outings. One was for the sun's eclipse in June 1927. Other closures were for less welcome events - Measles epidemics in 1912 and 1920, Mumps in 1914, and lack of heating fuel during 1942, 1946 & 1947.

Some days off were not official. There were a number of distractions which might cause pupils to play truant. These included the Easingwold Point to Point races and Bush Beating days for the boys. There was also the Hunt, which would meet outside one of the Pubs. As one young Hunt Follower remembers, sometimes the school bell would go and children would be right down Easingwold Road. 'You'd have to leg it back up the road and at school you had to line up in front of your class...'.

Pupils could gain scholarships to Easingwold Grammar School, and the first one to do so (in 1910) was William Mattison. In 1970, selection examinations to Easingwold School were abolished. Most children now transfer to Easingwold School when they are eleven years old.

The effects of the Second World War stand out in the school records. From September 1939 the village was home to evacuee children. The first group, of 116 (mainly Roman Catholic boys from St Charles School) came from Hull. In July 1940 another 103 came from St Patrick's Junior Boys and Girls Schools in Middlesbrough. The Village Hall was used as a temporary school room until June 1943. Over 50 of the children were accommodated at Stillington Hall with the Roman Catholic Brothers and others stayed with families in the village and surrounding district. Many evacuee children only stayed a matter of days before returning home to their parents. The remaining ones, apart from the one or two who stayed with their adopted Stillington families, had all returned to their homes by December 1942.

In December 1939 Hunter and Smallpage of York organised the black-out of the school windows. Brother Edmund, from Stillington Hall, came into school during the winter of 1939 / 40 to give a series of First Aid lessons. From November 1941 the school became a Rest Centre for emergency purposes. Blankets and cushions were provided, and stayed in school until the end of 1944. There is only one mention of late opening after air raid warnings, this was in July 1941. In May the same year, a local farmer asked for about twenty five lads (aged over twelve years) from the Village Hall school to help with carrot pulling and potato setting. The boys would get an extra week's holiday to the Whitsun week and have a week off their holiday at a later date.

School dinners were also a wartime innovation, they started on 22nd August 1944 with 41 children being served. Meals were taken in the Institute – the Village Hall - which was used as a Dining Centre for the Council School right through to October 1956. By 1951 about 60 children were served their midday meal, supplied from the Central Kitchen at Strensall. By 1956 the purpose built in-school kitchen was completed. Meals were cooked at Stillington for Sutton on Forest Primary School. During the 1970s they were also cooked for the WRVS Meals on Wheels Service, until this was transferred to the Tanpit Lodge Kitchen in Easingwold.

In September 1970, a new wooden classroom was erected for the Infant class. With the development of the Parkfield estate, the roll increased from 71 to 121 and four classes were run from the existing premises. By 1977 with 117 on the roll, (35 in Class 1, 32 in Class 2 and 50 in two Infant classes), the School Doctor had to examine the children in the Village Hall owing to lack of space!

The wooden classroom was destroyed by fire in July 1990, about an hour after the children had left school. A replacement classroom arrived during the holidays for school to continue the following term.

There are now over 70 children attending the school and plans are going ahead to build an extension to the Infant classroom.

School buildings were also used for other activities. There was a Methodist Sunday School from 1920 through to 1943 run by Mr and Mrs Smith and the Manson family amongst others. The Garbutts started the Wesleyan Sunshine Corner, which was similar to a Sunday School.

In 1936, Fred Baker started a Boys Club in the old Wesleyan school building with one evening a week for Bible classes and another for hobbies, handicrafts, gymnastics or Scouting activities. The older boys helped to renovate the building, which was also used for a mixed Youth Club.

During the late 1920s, the Council School was also used as a meeting place and for social occasions – the Gymkhana Committee, the Druids Club, Village Garden Produce Association, Church Whist Drives, Dances and Concerts. The School was used as a Polling Station for Local, District and General elections, and in 1979 for the election of a candidate for the European Assembly.

The Village Hall

When the new council school opened, the old school fell into disrepair, and this raised the question of what to do with it. Some activities had transferred to the new school, but a public meeting in January 1928 elected to renovate the old building for use as a Parochial Hall. This was done with the aid of public subscriptions, village fund raising, and a grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (on the understanding that the Hall was also available for Marton and Moxby). A kitchen, ladies toilet and a fuel store was built, and the Hall was officially opened by Squire Liddell, in September 1929 with Mr Turton MP in attendance.

From this time we have more detailed records of the use of the Hall as a meeting place. Organisations using the Hall included Men's and Women's Clubs; a Girls' Club; the Fur and Feather Society; the Horticulture Society and the Scouts and Guide movement. Recreation was a priority, with dances; concerts; billiards; keep fit classes; and film shows provided by Mr Fred Baker and later Mr H Smith of Easingwold. Official uses included Rates Collection centre; Weights and Measures centre; Polling Station; Chiropody Clinic and Baby Clinic. From 1939 The Home Guard also met in the Hall.

In 1962 the Village Hall underwent its next alteration with a Committee Room, cloakrooms and toilets added along the front of the existing building with a new entrance. Loans were invited from the Village residents to pay for these alterations, together with numerous fund raising events. The Hall is operated by a hard working voluntary management committee, and ownership has been secured with the Official Custodian for Charities.

The Green round the Village Hall used to be the location for Stillington Feast which was held each Whit week, with horses, caravans, shows and amusements. The Village was spruced up for the occasion and children earned extra pocket money by weeding the cobbles. Half days were taken off for cricket matches; children danced round the maypole; bought "Spanish" - a liquorice flavoured drink; mushy peas from Bob and Anna Leeman; Shipley's Fair would come out of their village winter quarters in Woods' builders' yard, with equipment repaired and painted up for the start of another season on the road. A travelling circus occasionally used the Green during the 1920s and 30s. There are memories of elephants being walked up to Town End Pond for water and showing off some of their tricks with the lads' sweet bags.

The Sports and Social Club

As early as 1883, Stillington had a Cricket team in the Forest of Galtres league. They played on the Well Field, part of the Stillington Hall estate. At first, only the actual square was fenced off , but when the land was bought by the Church Commissioners, cattle were also kept clear of the outfield. For many years there were two oak trees on the field and one on the boundary; they were eventually felled when the estate was sold. Rolling of the cricket pitch was done by pony, with its feet specially covered. The entrance to the field was either through the estate gates from York Road or down South Back Lane from the rear of the Hall coachyard.

The earliest pavilion was a white painted hut with a red roof. This became a store when a York railway carriage arrived to be used as a new pavilion and tea room. The remains of this carriage were removed from the rear of the Sports & Social Club in June 1997.

Meanwhile, Football had been played on the Novey, a field to the South of the Well field, for many years. After the War, the land was needed for farming, and the pitch then moved to Bob Gibson's field, on the West side of York Road.

In 1959 a Public Meeting was held to consider purchasing the cricket field and a further six or seven acres adjoining, from the Church Commissioners. An initial offer had been turned down in 1936, but this time an offer of £300 was accepted. The Football Club moved across, and the Stillington Playing Field was established, run by the Football and Cricket Committees. A new road entrance was made from York Road and a children's corner was established with slides, swings and a rocker.

In 1961 an extra piece of land to the north was purchased for a new pavilion, Bar and Social Hall. A wooden ex-RAF building was brought from the Redcar area. This provided a Social Hall and two changing rooms, and was partly financed by a house to house collection in the village. It was opened in 1962, by Cllr Jack Wood, (later Lord Mayor of York) on what was to be the first annual village Sports and Gala Day - these ran until 1980. The brick lounge and bar extensions were built in the early 1970s; the social hall was later widened with a brick shell built and two new changing rooms.

In 1974 the Park land was bought by a Mr Backhouse of Scarborough, and he had ideas about establishing a Golf Course. Finances proved otherwise, and the Farm and remaining land were bought

by John Sparrow and family. This created another opportunity to expand the recreation facilities and an adjacent three acres of land was bought by the Playing Field in 1974, followed by a narrow strip - some six or seven yards of land - in 1976.

Three red shale tennis courts were built in 1976-77; the bowling green was laid in 1978; a hockey pitch was marked out in 1979 and two squash courts were built in 1983. A new children's play area was created near the entrance in 1988 and for the Millennium, the area is being extended and re-equipped. The new brick Bowls Pavilion was built with the aid of Lottery funding and was officially opened in 1997.

Apart from paid cleaning and bar staff, the entire sports complex and its various sections have been planned, developed and are maintained on an entirely voluntary basis. This includes the upkeep of pitches, bowling green, courts and their surroundings.

New Bowls Pavilion.

14 - Village Life

Perhaps the one thing which turns a village from a place into a community is village life. In many urban areas, there are lots of people, but no real community spirit. Stillington is very fortunate in having a lot of different organisations and groups which keep the community spirit alive. This is a record of some of the things which go on in an active village.

The Bonfire Committee

With increasing cost and the ever growing requirement for stringent safety precautions, organised fireworks events are becoming ever more popular. Stillington's has become so attractive that attendance now has to be restricted to around 1000 people in order to avoid overwhelming village facilities. On the day, children and supervising adults use tractors and trailers loaned by local farmers to collect masses of combustible material for the most enormous bonfire. Meanwhile an army of workers prepare a tent for food, barriers for safety, and a fireworks launch area. The evening commences with a flaming torch light procession through the village led by the guy. Once he is in place the bonfire is lit with the torches and the fun begins with hot food, hot drinks, hot bonfire and brilliant fireworks.

The Charity for relief in Need

The Charity was established in 1976 by a Scheme of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales. It combines the Consolidated Charities Scheme of 1892 (itself revised in 1897 and 1916, and by the 1960 Charities Act) with the 1839 Charity of John Calvert. The eight Trustees apply the income from the Charity to help either individuals or organisations from the Parish of Stillington, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress. Grants of money may be given, or items, services or facilities may be provided. In 1998, besides individuals and three village organisations benefiting, flowers were given to the sick and infirm at Christmas and all village residents were invited for a free Christmas Lunch.

The Classic Car Club

Stillington Classic Car Club was formed in 1991 when Chris Thurstans purchased his first car, a 1928 Model A. Since then the club has grown to approximately 20 members from Stillington and York. They meet regularly during the season for various events, and have about twelve classic cars.

The Craft Group

In 1989 Muriel Law and Hilda Nash thought they needed some kind of craft stall at future bazaars, so they arranged a meeting at Muriel Law's house asking for volunteers to join them. This was the start of the craft group. For the Christmas bazaar they decided to make wreaths and table decorations. This was a huge success. They then incorporated the idea of cream teas every Bank Holiday Monday at the Chapel. In ten years the Group have raised a substantial amount of money for the Church and Chapel. All thanks to a willing band of approximately nine ladies.

The Duck Keeper

In 1999 Vic Green took over the job of Duck keeper from Richard Frankland. Numbers vary considerably, but at one point in that breeding season there were approaching forty mallard ducks on the pond. They are fed twice a day; and numbers take their toll naturally or being hit (by vehicles) whilst in flight or crossing the road.

The Gardening Club

Stillington Gardening Club was founded in 1979. It meets monthly in the village hall from September to March with a programme of speakers and an average attendance of 30. In 1999 membership stood at 200+, with an annual subscription of only £2 per family. Members give and raise plants for the end of May sale. This with subscriptions funds expenses. There are summer visits, with the produce show between mid August and early September. Members have discounts including seeds and fertilisers. Both the committee, which in 1999 still included two founder members, and the membership, reflects a balance of long-term and recent residents.

The Neighbourhood Watch

The 302 properties, within the confines of the village, are divided between 36 co-ordinators. Stillington now receives information via a "Ringmaster" automatic system used by the North Yorkshire Police. Messages are received either from the Police or from our own "Village Grapevine" and then disseminated to all residents.

The Parish Council

Stillington has seven Parish Council Members who are elected for a four year term. The Parish rate, which forms part of the District Council tax, is set annually - and most of the expenditure is taken up by grass cutting and payment of the Parish Clerk. The Parish Council meet monthly in the Village Hall and all electors are invited to attend.

The Pastoral Care Group

A Pastoral Care Scheme was set up early in 1995 by a group from the Methodist Chapel and St Nicholas Church. It aims to give support to anyone in need either directly or by contacting the appropriate agency. The village is divided into five areas each supported by two ladies. The co-ordinator of the scheme is Desmond Redding. The group is very much aware that a great deal of spontaneous care takes place in the village. The existence of the group should ensure that everyone in the village knows someone whom they can contact.

The Playgroup

The Playgroup meets in the village hall every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. The Group has one paid Supervisor who is aided each day by two unpaid helpers. During 1999, between 10 to 14 children have been registered with the playgroup. The Government's 'Free Nursery Places For All four Year Olds' started in 1997. Unfortunately, the Group was not able to meet the criteria for receiving funds. Today, therefore most of our children leave the playgroup at the age of four and start the local school where Government funding was granted.

The Royal British Legion

Formed in 1925, the Stillington and District Branch of the Royal British Legion will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2000. The Royal British Legion is the largest ex-service organisation in this country and its main aim is to help all ex-service people and their dependants whenever and whatever need exists. As most of the ex-service people from World War II are now over 75, claims for help grow. The main source of funds is the annual poppy appeal in the first fortnight in November. The Stillington branch also holds a Remembrance Day ecumenical service in Stillington, Brandsby and Sutton churches in turn, with poppy wreaths laid on the local War Memorials.

Scouting

Sadly the Stillington group of Brownies and Guides were disbanded in 1998, owing to a shortage of volunteers to be leaders. The Brownies now meet at either Easingwold or Huby and Guides go to Easingwold. Cub Scouts join in with the Moxby pack meeting at Huby Village Hall and the Scouts go to either Moxby or Easingwold. Perhaps, if volunteers can be found, Stillington can have its own groups again.

Stillington News

By the start of the Millennium Year, Stillington News was 5 years old. Published monthly for the villages of Stillington and Marton cum Moxby, it carries news on all aspects of village life. Its purpose is to give information about every organisation in the villages and to keep the housebound in touch. Funded by voluntary contribution, it is delivered free to every house within walking distance, with extra copies available at the Post Office. Four months after its inauguration, The Stillington News was awarded a "Community Action Award", sponsored by Tyne-Tees Television and Taylors' Tea of Harrogate.

The Sunday School

The Sunday School meets weekly in the Chapel on Sunday mornings throughout school term time. Once a month, there is a joint Church/Chapel Family Service held in alternating venues. There are normally six teachers who work on a rota system, and some eight to ten children with an average age of four to ten years attend.

The Women's Institute

The W.I. currently has twenty five members, meeting on the second Wednesday of each month, in the Village Hall. Run by a committee of eight members, the Millennium Year Chairman is Mrs Kath Brown. Meetings start at 7.30 pm, with a short business session and then a speaker. Topics are very varied and cater for all interests. As an example, in 1999 subjects covered included The Flowers of Greece, Whitby Jet Jewellery, The Brontes, The Salvation Army and Physiotherapy. The August meeting is a social event, usually an outing, such as a visit to the local theatre, with a meal beforehand. The W.I. is always open to new members, especially from the younger residents of the village.

Dominoes, Pool and Darts Leagues

'Pub' games are an important feature in the social life of the village. The Bay Horse has a team in the Summer Darts League. Teams from the Bay Horse and the Sports and Social Club also play in the John Smith's Easingwold and District Summer Pool League. However, the darker winter evenings allow more time for social activities. The Bay Horse has a darts team in the Easingwold and District Darts League. The Sports and Social Club and the White Bear both enter two teams, and the Bay Horse has one team in the John Smith's Easingwold and District Pool League. The White Bear, the Sports and Social Club and the Bay Horse 'A' and 'B' teams play in the "Villages" 'Dominoes 5's and 3's' league. Matches are played on a 'home and away' basis, linking Stillington's social life to that of Easingwold and the surrounding villages.

The Sports And Social Club

The Stillington Sports and Social Club, founded in 1959, is south of the village off the York Road. The land is vested in the Charity Commissioners under the Playing Fields Association, and is run by the local committee. The club house has two main rooms each with a bar. It is the venue for many social activities such as bingo monthly quizzes which raise money for local good causes, and country music nights. It is also 'home' to the rest of the groups and organisations described below.

The Bowling Club

The Bowling Club, opened by Yorkshire Bowler Bob Ashman, is now in its 21st year and currently has 44 members. Teams compete in the following leagues: Hovingham District (Rinks), York and District Private Clubs (Triples), Galtres League (Triples) Hovingham Mini-league (Triples) and the veterans play in the Hovingham District League (Triples). Each season the club holds an Open Pairs Tournament and a two-wood Open Singles competition.

The Cricket Club

The Cricket Club has two teams in the York and District Senior Costcutter's League (in Division 2 and Division 5) and a team in Division 2 of the Pilmoor Evening League. Junior cricket has recently taken off in the area and Stillington has had an Under-14 side in the Galtres League since its inception. For 1999 there has also been an Under-16 team in the York and District Mitchell Sports League. Collis King, an ex-test cricketer from the West Indies, has been playing with Stillington for the past four seasons (1996-99). In 1999, the club installed two artificial practice wickets and nets with aid from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

The Dancing Group

The group started about ten years ago. Initially there were ten members from the village; and they now have about forty members, mainly from the surrounding area. They do Sequence and Modern Ballroom, and it is all good exercise for all ages.

The Line Dancing Group

This energetic pastime became very popular during the 1990s. Every Tuesday from February 1996 to Easter 1998 Dave and Marion Ford led a full hall at the Sports and Social Club. However, as other venues have taken up Line Dancing the numbers have reduced. The group continues to meet led by Bob and Pauline Young who have been in charge since May 1998.

The Football Club

The Football Club has certainly been in existence for over 100 years. At present the First team is in the Leeper and Hare York and District Senior League Division 2, and the Reserves are in Reserve Section C. Junior football has been played in the area for about 25 years and some of the youngsters have gone on to sign professional forms. The Corinthians Under-15 and Under-11 sections are playing at Stillington for the 1999 - 2000 season.

The Hockey Club

The Hockey club's first gathering on the pitch in December 1979 produced over 30 players, and included the future international player, Andrew Bolland from Easingwold. Games have always been played on Sunday afternoons and initially were friendly matches for Mixed, Men's, Ladies' and Junior Girls' teams. The Club now caters for Ladies and Junior Girls, with friendly matches being played with fixtures from Driffield over to Pickering.

The Jazz Club

In 1994 a jazz band that had been regularly playing in Easingwold stopped because of lack of support. However, two or three villagers felt that there was an audience locally for live extemporised music and so The Stillington and Brandsby Jazz Appreciation Society was born. Concerts are held at about three monthly intervals, and several excursions have been made to the Pickering Jazz Festival. Mike Green, an accomplished jazz band leader from Harrogate brings a varying group of musicians which usually make a four-piece line up. They mainly play melodies written either just before, or in the early part of this century. The events in the social club are free and are funded by a raffle and generous support by enthusiasts.

The Squash Club

Dickie Jeeps, Chairman of the Sports Council, opened the Courts in 1983. The Club has a mainly senior membership of about 100 players. For the winter season, there are four Men's teams and two Ladies' teams playing in the York and District Leagues. During the summer, two Mixed teams play in the Mitchell York and District League.

The Tennis Club

The courts were opened in 1977 by Gina Huntington (LTA Coach) and Malcolm Huntington (Wimbledon Umpire). The shale surfaces were replaced with an all weather surface in 1986. The Club caters for all standards and has over 100 Senior and Junior members. In 1999 there were two Mixed Doubles teams playing in Divisions 2 and 5 of the York and District League, and a Ladies' Doubles team in Division 5 of the Fulford Ladies League.

15 - Into the Third Millennium

Stillington has been a Yorkshire farming community for the whole of the first two millennia (and probably longer). In that time, many villages suddenly found themselves at the centre of trade or industry and either became huge towns or cities - or found themselves swallowed up by a more illustrious neighbour. Middlesbrough, at the heart of industrial Teesside, with a current population approaching 150,000 had 29 inhabitants in 1879. Other villages simply died. Their residents scattered, and they ended up as just a name on a map. Perhaps the most famous in North Yorkshire is the lost village of Wharram Percy, but there is an entry in the Doomsday Book for Stillington's neighbour - the village of Moxby. It now only exists in the name of the parish, and the farm.

Often the trigger for growth could be something comparatively small. In the 18th century, 'Canal Mania' swept the country. Canals - the motorways of their day - transformed many villages into communication and distribution centres. In 1793, the Foss Navigation Company obtained an Act to authorise the construction of a canal from York to Stillington Mill. In the event, their money ran out, and it was never built beyond Sheriff Hutton.

In the 19th century, canal mania was replaced by railway mania. Again, the existence of a railway depot, caused many small communities to blossom into first distribution, and then manufacturing centres. Even a station which gave easy access to a neighbouring city was sometimes enough to start a building boom. In 1887 an Act of Parliament authorised the construction of the Easingwold Light Railway. In 1888, a prospectus for the sale of the Croft estate, confidently claimed:

> *'An Act has been obtained for a Branch Railway from Alne to Easingwold, and it is anticipated that before long the line will be extended via Stillington to join the Scarborough Railway at Strensall'.*

Even then, estate agent's advertisements had to be scrutinised carefully! Where the station would have been, and the effects it would have had, are open to speculation.

In the 20th century, the flat terrain of the vale of York made it an ideal location for World War II aerodromes. Although they only had a very short operational life, former airfields have been developed as industrial estates and retail parks, often in locations which would never otherwise be allowed. It may have been a fairly arbitrary decision to site an airfield at East Moor, rather than West Moor, on the Stillington to Easingwold road. If this had happened, the village might have been linked to its larger neighbour by an industrial estate. The planners might have proposed an entirely different regional development plan and the village might have lost its identity.

So many things could have happened, so many small changes could have had major consequences for the village - but they did not. Stillington enters the third millennium as the same sort of community as it has been for the first two - A North Yorkshire rural village. Long may it remain so!