

Topcliffe

A history by Mary Decima Watson.

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I would like to thank the people of Topcliffe for the help they have given to me, especially Mr. William and the late Mrs. Sigsworth, Mr. Hunt of Rainton, and the Staff of the Archives Library at Northallerton.

THANK YOU.

Mary Decima Watson.

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PICTURES (Note the images may be resized to improve legibility.)

Topcliffe Church St. Columba

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The Mill Dam

Topcliffe, Long Street in 1909 The new School built 1966 Mill House

The Chapel, Market Cross, New School, Mill House

and Court House Photographs were taken by Miss G. Harvey.

SOME OF THE BOOKS CONSULTED

History of the North Riding of Yorkshire by Nikolaus Pevsner

History of Thirsk by Jefferson North Riding of Yorkshire Vol. 2

The Vale of Mowbray by Edmund Bogg

History, Topography and Directory of The N.R of Yorkshire by T. Rainier Thirsk and
District in the 17th Century by Brown The Kings of England - Yorkshire N.R. by Arthur

Mee Canals of Yorkshire and the North East of England by Charles Hadfield A Short
Pedigree of the House of Percy by Lockwood Huntley, Beverley. The Falcon Vol. 1 by T.
J. Wilkinson 1889

O.here let us pause at the shrine of their name,

And kneel in the presence of their undying fame, For whilst tradition its glories shall
give, The names of De/Mowbray and Percy shall live.

Who of old to Topcliffe from Normandy came.

When proud monarchs shook at the sound of their name, Whilst now in rev'rence a sigh
let us utter,, Gaily their plumes in the breezes may flutter, And hoary with honour and
hoary with age,, Devoutly, their mem'ry our prayers shall engage..

by P. HALL..

THE PERCY FAMILY

The village is picturesquely seated on the crest of an eminence rearing boldly from the East Bank of the River Swale, some four miles South West of Thirsk. Topcliffe is in the Rural Deanery of Thirsk, Archdeaconry of Cleveland and the Diocese of York. The township is in the Petty Sessional Division of Birdforth and the County Court District of Thirsk.

In 900 it was known as Topclive, and then Topcliva. The area of the parish is 16,564 acres, the soil is loamy on a sub-soil in parts Kemper Marls, alluvium also occurs. The general elevation is undulating but low, some of the low ground sloping down to the Swale and Cod-beck, which is liable to flooding.

For centuries a famous seat of the Percy's and a resting place of the Kings of England, and even their destiny has been worked out here, on more than one occasion.

"Though it has dwindled to the quietitude of a rural village", it was once a market town of considerable importance. It has the shaft and steps of a medieval cross and a church looking down over the house tops to the graceful bridge where the River Swale comes swinging round one of its many bends. It has come from the water mill, after flowing by the richly wooded Baldersby Park.

At Maiden Bower, the ancient earthworks in a loop of the river, a mile from Topcliffe village, William de-Percy, who fought for the Conqueror at Hastings, built his timber Castle, the first home in England of this great and noble family, who were to help shape our History. Their medieval Manor House stood close by, one of their three Yorkshire Homes. Topcliffe saw many generations of the famous family lineone who fought in Palestine; the proud Earls of Northumberland who came into Shakespeare and the Ballad of Chevey Chase, and the Bishops Soldiers and Conspirators who belong to the story of our land. Here lived Richard de-Percy who saw King John seal the Magna Charta, Henry who fought at Crescy and another Henry who fought at Towton, William the poet who was beheaded at York and Shakespeare's melancholy Northumberland who was butchered not far from his great house here.

Time was, when Topcliffe was a place of real splendour. Back into the beginning of our History it has evidently been a dwelling place for Kings and Princes and even a High Priest of Druidism has performed his rites here. Footsteps of the old British race were strongly engraved in the soil hereabouts, even in the dedication of the Church to the good Apostle of Iona, St. Columba. A mile down river Maiden Bower, "Mai"-Great and "Don" a fortified hill, half a mile further down the Swale is Elmir whose ancient name was Elmer or Elm Tree (or Sacred) for the Elm was a witch tree in the Holy Land. One of the great and earliest feats of Conversion was here performed. About the year 620, and after the marriage of Edwin King of Northumbria to Ethelberga a Christian Princess and daughter of Ethelbert, King of Kent, St. Paulinas who usually followed the court preaching and Baptising, surpassed himself and brought about the foundation of a Bishops See at York. His crowd of converts became so great that in one day Paulinas is said to have baptised no fewer than twelve thousand in the river Swale.

Jefferson

"Topcliffe from Top of Cliffe Fort took her name, And her Cliffe mounted Seat confirms the same, Where streams with curled windings over flown, Bestows a native beauty on the Town".

A small town on the road to Boroughbridge which Leland describes, "An Uplandish Town", whose pretty Manor Place erected by the Percies stands on an artificial mound on the tongue of land between the river Swale and the Cod-beck. Marianus called it "Tadenclyffe" and says in the year 949 the Duke of Northumberland took at this place the Oath of Allegiance to Eadred, the West Saxon King of England. William the Conqueror granted the Manor at Topcliffe, with many others to William de-Percy, it was three miles in length and of equal breadth and contained 26 caracutes of land (a caractute is 90-120 acres) which were taxable, with a wood half a mile square. This Manor was chargeable with a yearly rental of Five Pounds.

The hand of William the Conqueror had laid heavy on the County of Yorkshire, fire and sword had blasted the country side. Into this solitary silence rode William de Percy. With indomitable energy Percy set about reclaiming the land. He toiled laboriously to bring peace and plenty into the district.

The ancient road known as Leeming Lane forms the Westerr. Boundary while the main road from York through Boroughbridge to Northallerton and the North crosses the Swale at Topcliffe Bridge. A wooden bridge was certainly built here before 1227 when a Royal Mandate was issued for four Oaks from the Forest of Galtres to repair the bridge at Topcliffe which at that time was broken down. This bridge was a favourite rendezvous for Parliamentary Troops during the Civil War. as thence they departed to either Carlisle or Newcastle, or to both. In 1640 when the Scots were advancing South, 12,800 men were lodged between York and Topcliffe Bridge, when they talked of insurrection in 1663 the rebels were said to have chosen this as their meeting place and to have marched to Northallerton with "Freedom". as their password. The place indeed, probably owed its origin as well as its importance to the crossing of the river Swale.

For 800 years a Percy held land at Topcliffe, which was enough to make it famous. From William the Conqueror in 1066, the Percies had 32 Lordships in Lincolnshire and 86 fell to his share in Yorkshire amongst which, Topcliffe and Spofforth were their chief seats for centuries.

William de-Perci unlike most of the Norman Warriors, who were clean shaven, wore a massive red beard that covered his chest. He was a man of gigantic stature, on account of his beard men called him "Als-Gernon", and by an easy word transition from his day the word Algernon became a favourite name of the Percy family. It will be seen that the Percies were a prolific family and yet the fourth Baron from "Als-Gernon", the Norman, eventually left but one daughter, upon whom the vast wealth and lands of the family rested. William de-Percy, the fourth Baron, had two sons and two daughters. The eldest, Walter, died unmarried, William was Abbot of Whitby Abbey, Maud married William

de-Newburgh, killed in the Crusade and left no children and the youngest was Agnes, a girl of seventeen. Agnes married Josceline de-Louvain. By the way, Josceline dePercy died sixteen years before his wife, but both were eventually buried in Whitby Abbey. They had at least four sons of whom Henry seems to have been the eldest and Richard the youngest. Henry died before his mother, and although he left a son William (a minor), nearly the whole of the Barony of Percy was usurped by his brother Richard. In 1204, Richard de-Percy had livery of all the lands which had belonged to his mother Agnes, and those which his Aunt Maud Countess, of Warwick held of the fee of Chester. He was one of the Barons who took part against King John, and was among the twenty Barons appointed to enforce the observance of the Magna Charta.

The Manor (previously mentioned) was a fortress designed by William de-Percy, and in 1174 was strengthened, Henry de-Percy created first Earl of Northumberland in 1385 obtained licence to settle the Manor of Topcliffe on himself and his heirs.

The First Earl of Northumberland, B.1342 D. 1407.

We now come to the most magnificent Percy of them all, and history takes an exceptionally interesting shape. Henry Percy afterwards the first Earl of Northumberland, was great grandson to the Lady whose memory the Percy Tomb was erected in Beverley Minster, and he looms large not only in History of Yorkshire but in our national life. At a time when boys in these days are still struKling with the three R's Percy was in France playing a man's part, and playing it well, in all those desperate battles that centre round Crescy and Poitiers. Fighting in those days was not quite so serious for those of wealth and degree as it looks. To capture a knight or a Baron was far more profitable than to kill him, he was worth nothing dead, but, alive and a prisoner, his ransom might mean £10,000. Of course, when powder and shot came into use as it did soon after this time, it was different. Bullets have a vulgar way of not knowing the difference between the body of a patrician and that of a peasant, and chance shots wandering about seeking a billet played havoc with prospective ransoms. Leaders on both sides aimed at capturing rather than killing. those whose arms and accoutrements bespoke a heavy ransom.

In those days even very young lads were taken to the wars, almost as soon as they left the nursery, and Henry Percy was no exception. The story of his youth is a story of the conquest of France. He figures in all the pagentry of war and peace of that time, and before he was seventeen he had married - a Neville of Raby Castle - and had taken his place as one of the foremost soldiers in Europe. Beverley had its share in the tumult of the times and constant streams of soldiers tramped through the quaint streets. Beverley streets, like York and London even, were death traps to the unwary, In Percy's time, the days of Richard the second, the streets were mere lanes, unpaved, ill lighted, and totally lacking in sanitation.

From Beverley. Percy hastened North on receiving news that Douglas was over the border pillaging and destroying the fair lands of Percy's Northumberland Lordships. It was at this time that Percy's name became so feared and hated in the Lowlands of Scotland. The Douglasses, father and son, had made sad havoc in the Northern Counties,

laying waste so far down as York and destroying what they could not carry away. Percy; and his young son, the Famous Hotspur, chased them over the border, and then exacted terrible reprisals. For years after the Scottish countryside bore witness to Percies raids, and the feud between the two families increased in bitterness and hatred. For so punishing the Scots the King created Percy the first Earl of Northumberland, and the title, since advanced to a Dukedom, is the Percy degree to this day.

Percy, whom we must call Northumberland to distinguish him from his son, paid homage to the young King Richard for his Earldom, and was for a time a considerable figure at Court. The new Earl, however was before anything else a soldier, Court life quickly palled upon so restless a spirit as his, and we hear of him again in the border skirmishes with the Scots. Some of these skirmishes were not small affairs with little harm done, many times the slain lay thick by fifties and hundreds upon the stricken fields after the battle. The first Earl of Northumberland was upholding the authority of the King in ceaseless, incessant strife; in Wales his son, Hotspur was doing the same; but when it suited his purpose the new King picked a quarrel with both and feeling himself strong enough, goaded the Percies into rebellion. Both the gallant old Earl and his son, the heroic Hotspur were killed in battle in this inglorious revolt; the son at Shrewsbury and later the father at Bramham Moor here in Yorkshire.

The Scrope family held an estate in the Parish of Topcliffe in 1590 as appears from the Privy Roll. The sixth Lord Scrope of Bolton, married the daughter of the Third Earl of Northumberland.

The Fourth Earl of Northumberland B.1446,- D. 1489.

In the fourth year of Henry the seventh's reign a subsidy was granted by parliament, for carrying on the French war in Britayne which was so oppressive, that the country was roused to indignation against the exactors of so odious a tax. According to Stow, everyone was taxed to pay one tenth of all his lands and goods. It was at all events, as large a tax or subsidy as had ever been granted to any former King upon any occasion. All the counties except Yorkshire and the Bishopric of Durham, readily paid the tax; but in these parts where Yorkists were very numerous, it was not so easily collected. Henry Percy born 1446, the fourth Earl of Northumberland, then Lord Lieutenant for Yorkshire, informed the King of the ferment which he had excited and begged the King's direction as to his future proceedings. The King answered "that not one penny should be remitted lest others should be encouraged to desire the like mitigation". The annunciation of this harsh sentence, when the principal men of the County heard the King's answer, this inflamed the populace, who rose and assulted the House of the Earl of Northumberland at Topcliffe, forced open the door of the Manor House and murdered the Earl with many of his servants.

The funeral of the unfortunate nobleman was carried out on a scale of magnificence probably never before witnessed in England. The mutilated body was embalmed, and placed in a leaden coffin with an oaken covering. The funeral set out from Topcliffe for Beverley, and immediately after the hearse came a host of mourners extending for miles

in solemn and gorgeous pageantry. The cost of the funeral amounted to £1,500 (equal to about £12,000 in modern money). Following the hearse were 12 Lords and 20 Gentlemen, 6 Squires, 160 poor folk as torch bearers, 500 priests and clergy, 100 grooms, £1,233 was distributed in funeral doles amongst the 13,340 poor persons who came to pay homage to the dead. Slowly this long and mournful procession wended its way, halting the first night at the Castle of Wresoil, and the next at that of Leconfield, both seats of the Percy family, reaching the Minster at Beverley on the morning of the third day, when Requiem Mass was sung and the body deposited in the Percy Chantry.

This Earl was one of King Richard's Commanders in the fatal battle of Bosworth Field, the King was slain, and his General Northumberland was received into the Conquerors favour, "Put not your trust in Princes".

Sir Thomas de-Percy, his son, was advanced to the Earldom of Northumberland by Queen Mary and in the following reign he, in conjunction with the Earl of Westmorland and other gentlemen in the North, entered into a conspiracy which had for its object, the liberation of Mary Queen of Scots from her unjust imprisonment, and the re-establishment of the old religion. The first meeting of the insurgents was held at Topcliffe, but before the scheme was put into operation, the conspiracy was reported to Queen Elizabeth and the Earl narrowly escaped capture in his own home. The leaders had proceeded too far in their designs to abandon them now with any hope of clemency from the Queen, and they assembled their forces at Durham. Thence they marched to ,Staindrop, Darlington, Richmond and Ripon; restoring the ancient service in each place. At Ripon they put to flight the force led against them by Sir William Ingleby and proceeded to Knaresborough, and Wetherby and thence to -Clifford Moor. The next meditated descent was to be York, but received information that the Lord President of the North was there with 5,000 effective men, they proceeded to Barnard Castle, and laid seige to the fortress. The Garrison capitulated after 11 days, on condition they could march with their arms and ammunition to York. This was their greatest and last success. The rebel forces fled and their leaders fled to Scotland on the approach of the Royal Forces. The Earl of Northumberland was basely betrayed and delivered up by the Earl of Moreton. He was conveyed to York and there beheaded, opposite the Church of St. Crux in 1572, and for two years his head was exposed on Micklegate Bar, when it was stolen in the night by some person unknown.

King James 1, in coming to take possession of the Crown of England, stopped the night with all his retinue at Cox Lodge, Topcliffe. In the year 1646, the Scottish Army was quartered in this vicinity, and the Commissioners of Parliament agreed with the Scots, that upon payment of p200,000, the army should retire into Scotland and the King would be delivered up into their hands of the enemy. Upon arrival, half the sum was to be paid over at Topcliffe, the conditions of the treaty were to be performed. On the 11th May, 1646, the King passed through the town, with the Scottish Troops on their route from Newark to Newcastle. His Majesty dined here and bade adieu to one of his faithful sevants, Sir Henry Slingsby, and on the 30th January, following was delivered to the Parliamentary Commissioners. It has been observed that this seems to have been the only market in England for the Sale of Kings.

In 1512 an extract from the Northumberland house fare of a nobleman's family at his Castle in Yorkshire:

First a loaf of bread, manchettes, a quart of beer, a quart of wyne, half a chyne of mutton, and a chyne of beef, boiled, Swan to roast, Heronsue, Seagulls, and Peacocks, are among provisions ordered for the table, by this nobleman. It is remarked by Hume the Historian, that nothing can be more erroneous than the magnificent ideas of the moderns about Roast Beef of Olde England, as if it were the noble fare of antiquity. Nothing like this appeared in the cookery book of the Northumberland Household, where such a variety of provisions are specified.

The Percies were ever in the front ranks of Freedom and the name of Richard de-Percy is among the illustrious steel clad Barons who assembled at Runnimead and demanded from King John the granting and signing of the Magna Charta. The great Charter and formation of English Liberty.

There are no ruins to be found of the Percy stronghold in the way of stone work. Doubtless the structure was of wood, with a few courses of rubble or stonework as a base. Traces of ditches, earthworks, and terraces are still visible, but nothing to indicate the style of architecture or scale of its magnificence. It has been said, that this house of the Percy's stood on the site of a Roman Camp. Certainly this Apex of land where the Cod-beck and the Swale meet is the most advantageous spot for a camp or Castle in the district, and has evidently been used successively as such, by different people since the days of the Brigantes. Adjoining this position is a high circular mound of artificial construction with a series of seven terraces running spirrally around it. The hill does not appear to have been subject to any excavation, attempting to set at rest the secret of its origin.

A grand-son of Henry de-Percy, the sixth Earl of Northumberland was seized of the Manor of Topcliffe, which descended to his son Henry, the unfortunate Earl who was suspect of complicity in the Gun Powder Plot, with no other foundation than his relationship to Sir Thomas de-Percy, who had a chief part in it. An enormous fine was imposed upon him and was imprisoned in the Tower for more than fifteen years. In 1621 was released and in 1628 received confirmation of his Barony of Percy. He died seized of the Manor of Topcliffe in 1632 leaving as his heir a son Algernon. Algernon died in 1668 and was succeeded by his son, Joscelin who died in 1670. Joscelin left a Daughter Elizabeth; who in 1682 married Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset. History of the Percy Family is a scene of War and Blood, six of the Earls died violent deaths, as did many of the collateral branches.

Henry de-Percy the first Earl was slain at the battle of Bramham Moor, in 1408, Henry the second Earl was killed at the battle of St. Albans in 1455. Henry the third Earl, was slain at Towton in 1461, Henry the fourth Earl was murdered at Topcliffe by the mob in 1489. Thomas the seventh Earl was beheaded at York in 1572. Henry the nineth Earl, shot himself in the Tower in 1585, Thomas Percy the Earl of Worcester, brother of the

first Earl, was beheaded at Shrewbury in 1403. Henry Lord Percy, eldest son of the first Earl was slain in the Holy Land in 1400. Sir Thomas de-Percy the fifth Earl lost his life at the battle of Haggel-Moor, in 1463, Sir Thomas Percy second son of the fifth Earl was executed at Tyburn for conspiracy in 1537, It was very remarkable that John Neville created Duke of Northumberland by Edward the VI in 1464, after the attainder of the third Earl lost his life at the battle of Barnett, in 1472, and that of John Dudley, created Duke of Northumberland by Edward the VI in 1551 after the title became extinct on the death of Henry the sixth Earl without issue, and the attainder of Sir Thomas de-Percy, he was beheaded in 1553, as if some fatality attended the title.

It must indeed be interesting to those who have the power to carry their imagination back to far distant ages, and there, picture the scene as it would be at that remote period, when the steel clad armoured knights, in all the glory and glitter of the times, went forth into battle or to hold council, attended with all this regal grandeur, when echoes, awoke by the shouts of thousands of fearless clansmen, rang through the woods.

What a contrast between then and now, instead of all the turmoil and spoilation we may look around and see the beauties of nature ; liberty and love, fields rich with golden grain, gardens with fruit, vegetables and flowers, pastures with their flocks and herd quietly grazing, the farmers boys whistling along, and the larks in the meadows, the laughter of the children may be heard as they play in the village street, and their boundless mirth, as they race hither and thither by lane or footpath, picking flowers buttercups and daisies, which our ancesters toiled and fought for in early days and which through the blessing of God we have,had so bountifully bestowed upon us now.

Lord Leconfield

The son of the Duke of Somerset, Algernon in 1720 was in the next year created Lord Workworth, Earl of Egremont, Lord Cockermouth and Duke of Northumberland. He died in 1750, leaving only a daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Sir Hugh Smithson and a great dispersion of his titles took place.

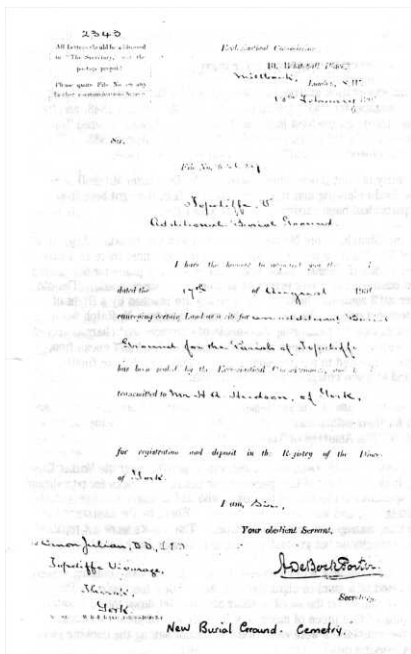
The Earldom of Egremont and Barony of Cockermouth went to his Nephew Sir Charles Wyndham, Baronet. He acquired the Manor of Topcliffe which descended to his son George, Earl of Egremont. He died unmarried in 1837 having settled the Manor and many other lands on his eldest illegitimate son George Wyndham, who was created Lord Leconfield. He died in 1869 and was succeeded by his son Henry, on his death in 1901 the estate passed to his eldest surviving son Charles Henry the present Lord Leconfield.

In 1891 the principal landowners were the Lord Leconfield and Mr. Thomas Stubbs Walker. The rateable value at that time was £7,759. The population of the township was 593 and in the Parish 1,429. In 1891 five single burner lamps with plain globes were ordered from Mr. Purdy at a price of seventeen shillings and sixpence. A sub-committee was to decide where these lamps had to be placed, with one at the foot of the stone steps

leading up to the reading room. These lamps were to be lighted each night during the dark nights, from the first night of the harvest home until March.

At the turn of the century most of the house holders in Topcliffe had rented land from the Lord of the Manor, Lord Leconfield on which they grazed a cow or cows. The tenant farmers and anyone renting land from Lord Leconfield were given the option to buy their rented land. Almost all these tenants bought holdings at a reasonable figure. It was said that the figure was ten times the amount of the rent which they paid,

In August 1908, Lord Leconfield gave a piece of land as an additional Burial Ground for the Parish of Topcliffe. The Vicar at that time was the Rev. Canon Julian, DD., LL.D., A copy of the deed conveying this land to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and registered in the Diocese of York, is over the page.



THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

The railway station at Topcliffe was opened by the Leeds and Thirsk Railway Company for goods traffic only, on the 5th January, 1848, and for passenger traffic on the 31st May, the same year. It was renamed Topcliffe Gate in July 1854, and reverted to Topcliffe, in April, 1863. The station was closed to all traffic on the 14th September, 1959.

A quantity of flint flakes were discovered by Dr. Carter Mitchell near the river Swale showing that the manufacture of flint (brought here from distant parts) had been carried on here at Topcliffe.

Near the Church, in pre-Norman times a fortress has stood. Also, in a garden of The Grove, a house standing in its own grounds, there is a moated site, that within it formerly

stood Moat Hall, a meeting place for discussing the town business, or where important matters were commenced. The old toll booth still remains where the upper rooms are reached by a flight of stone steps outside. The old toll gate was owned by a Mr Ralph Wood who had a device for measuring the wheels of carriages and charged accordingly. Farmers driving sheep and cattle and even flocks of geese from Ripon goose fair had to pay for each beast. The old toll gate finally closed and stopped charging travellers in 1898.

It is said that among the gentlemen of the county of Yorkshire, who compounded for their estate during the Civil War, in the reign of King Charles I was a Mr William Armitage of Topcliffe, in the sum of £800.

There has evidently been some stocks in Topcliffe, near the Market Cross. In 1902, it is said that the last person to be put in the stocks for punishment was a respectable tradesman of the town, who had indulged too freely in the intoxicating cup, and was put in the stocks. When, by the assistance of a young man, managed to make his escape. The stocks were not repaired after this occurrence but gradually rotted and wasted away.

A ducking stool was a device used in the punishment of scolding women, and consisted of a stool or chair fixed at the end of a long pole. The women were placed on the stool or chair and then let down into the water.

The keeping of this piece of machinery in order was of great importance, in 1623 two constables were each fined 15d for not having the ducking stool in proper working order.

Baiting the Bull dates back to Roman times and the game is deceptively difficult to play. The apparatus in the Swan Inn at Topcliffe in the Bar is simplicity itself, from a beam in the room hangs a brass bull nose ring, on the wall opposite an arm reaches up the wall, is a large hook. The object of the game is to get the ring to land quoit-like, on the hook. _ The Swan Inn gets a lot of its trade from the fishermen who come from all over the West Riding for the good sport to be had in the river Swale and Cod-beck.

The Black Bull also cater largely for the fishermen.

In 1889 Fred Barker was the registrar of Births and Deaths for Topcliffe sub-district, he was also Rates and Tax collector. John Barker was the licensee of the Golden Lion (now a cycle shop) due to be taken down as it is in a dangerous condition.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century Nathaniel Milburn was the Builder, William Reynard the Blacksmith, William Turner, Topcliffe Grange, a farmer, Thomas Walker, house painter, Edwin Smith, Thorpe Fields, a farmer, James Hudson Hudson, carpenter, Robert Barningham, shop keeper, Miss Bland, milliner, Edwin Dresser, painter, Moon and Lister, millers at Topcliffe Roller Mill.

It was a custom at the turn of the century for the tradesmen of the town to send out their accounts once per year. The joiners, the saddlers, the shoemakers and the village blacksmith. The farmers sold their livestock for the year, and would then settle their

accounts with the tradesmen. The village blacksmith's wife had her own special custom, she made a very nice spice loaf, so that when the farmers called to pay their accounts to Mr Reynard, the blacksmith. she would cut a piece of this loaf for the farmers, or anyone paying their accounts to eat while her husband attended to the business side.

Topcliffe Women's Institute was formed on the 30th October, 1930, by Mrs Wayte Hicks. Miss Pauling was the first President and she retired in 1940. The Institute celebrated 21 years, with a special party, to which all the original founder members were invited to take part. The Fortieth Birthday was celebrated with a party, the founder members were presented with a hand painted china cup and saucer.

The renovation of the Market Cross was one of the contributions to the Festival of Britain. The stone work of the cross base was repaired, but the actual cross top had worn away or had been removed way back. The articles buried for posterity were sealed in an airtight glass tube which showed that the market cross had been restored in 1951, these articles included :- 3d piece, 1 penny, razor blade, set of postage stamps, Women's Institute Programme, Topcliffe Show Schedule, Parish Magazine, Wesleyan Guild Syllabus, copy of a daily paper, Festival Service programme, a Mail Order Catalogue and a poster advertising the village Festival Functions. These functions included a tea for the elder citizens of Topcliffe and Asenby, which was organised by the Women's Institute.

The village of Topcliffe was in need of a suitable Hall or large room in which to hold their social activities. A committee was formed to raise this money required for this purpose. They worked very hard and finally their target was reached. A site was chosen, almost in the centre of the village in Front Street. In 1961 the Topcliffe Village Hall was opened officially by Mrs. Rayson, wife of Wing Commander Rayson, of Royal Air Force Topcliffe, deputising for the Station Commander and his wife. The Village Hall was built by the local builder Mr. S. R. Fryer, Asenby. From this ceremony, Topcliffe village people certainly have been able to enjoy their social functions in this spacious Hall.

Street lighting was introduced to the village in 1962 and has proved a great boon during the long dark winters.

The Rural District Councils were building houses to accommodate the families who were living in overcrowded accommodation or in old property, which were too delapidated to repair or improve. In the mid 1960's, Topcliffe was no exception with the need for houses, both for young couples, looking for a house to set up a home and re-housing people from older properties. The Thirsk Rural District Council purchased the land for the new Housing Estate, on which they built houses and a small block of flats, the East Lea Housing Estate.

A survey was made in the 1969-70 of properties suitable for improvement grants made available by the Government to Local Authorities, to bring property in their districts into line with modern standards, that is, having the essential amenities bathroom and indoor sanitation. The houses on the Bank Top at the end of Jubilee Terrace were tumbling

down, they were finally demolished, the site cleared and ten semi-detached bungalows for the retired pensioners of Topcliffe were built by Thirsk Rural District Council. Now known as "Swale View."

The most notable house of the old class was that of the Angel Hotel, a large and roomy house with long passages and furniture reminiscent of coaching days. It is in such a house where one would expect to still here the echo of the coachman's Horn.

In the days of travelling by the Stage Coach they would stop to change horses and the travellers would rest and take refreshment at the Angel Hotel, Topcliffe, when travelling to Newcastle and the North. The gentry travelling in their own carriages would also break their journey at Topcliffe to rest and take refreshment and to change their horses for the rest of the journey. They would do like wise on the return journey to London and the South.

The Angel Hotel was sold by auction after Miss Annie Sigsworth retired. She took over the licence when her brother Marmaduke died. The Sigsworth family had the Angel Hotel for forty two years. Everyone in Topcliffe knows Mr. William Sigsworth who has lived in the village for 78 years and is now in his 95th year. He led the anti-traffic demonstration and was taken for a flight in a helicopter by I.T.V., so that he could see what the traffic looked like from above.

A syndicate of property owners from Leeds bought the Angel Hotel, and made extensive alterations both inside and out.

THE ROLLER MILL AT TOPCLIFFE

A mill at Topcliffe was mentioned in the Domesday Book. In those days the mill must have assumed great local importance as it was owned by the Percys', the Earls of Northumberland who was Lord of the Manor, held a monopoly and usually charged heavily, the customers, for the privilege of having their own grain milled.

The Roller Mill certainly seems to have been the centre of industry in Topcliffe, and the biggest employers. The men worked three shifts and the mill was working day and night. The mill used to be a flour mill supplying people from York to Newcastle, and importing grain from all over the world. They were in competition with the big millers, but their products were as good. Big business companies stepped in and bought up their customers which proved, it was not economic to carry on with the flour milling ; so they turned over to cattle and poultry foods. Mr. Lister found that there was to be no place for the small mills and that they were going down and out of business.

A question arose, how did the Railway Company come to own the mill at Topcliffe, which had been in the Lister Family for 150 years. Sir George Gibbs about 1934 had big plans for his railways for Thirsk and Northallerton. These plans entailed the use of large amounts of water which he proposed to take from the River Wiske, which runs into the River Swale upstream from Topcliffe Mill. To do this Sir George had to acquire the

rights of this water which were owned by the mill, so he found himself in the position of having to buy the mill to use the water. The plans however, were never put into operation, as Sir George died, some time later and with him died the plans too ; leaving the Railways owners of the mill at Topcliffe and the Listers tenants.

Mr Maurice Lister was the miller at Topcliffe, which produced the well known and very popular brand of flour "White Horse Flour", until his retirement in 1961. At the turn of the century, the winters were very severe in those days, the River Swale was frozen over, hard enough to enable the local people (who were skating enthusiasts) to skate from Topcliffe Mill to Skipton Bridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Smart are the new owners of the Mill House who have had it converted. It has been granted a fully licenced restaurant for visitors. The English Tourist Board has assisted the development of Topcliffe Mill under Tourists Project Scheme for the Development Areas.

The top stones have been removed from the dam to relieve the flow of water in the river when swollen by heavy rains, as the land near the mill is liable to severe flooding at these times.

In May 1782, when workmen were placing a conduit in a field, a hole was disclosed in the earth under the root of a tree. By the stroke of an axe a quantity of gold flashed out, and on the cavity being scrutinised a sum of £51 19s 6d in guineas, half guineas and quarter guineas, was produced from it. Subsequently it was adjudged the property of Messrs. Mosier and Dresser, of Topcliffe Mill which had sometime previously been broken into, and upwards of £80 taken away. A servant had then been taken up and committed to York Castle, shortly afterwards a strange man and woman were observed to be very busy about this spot for some time. It was supposed that they had been sent to take up the money by the prisoner, but had not been sufficiently accurate in describing the place where it had been secreted.

TOPCLIFFE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

Topcliffe evidently had a very good football team known as the `Millers' in the 1920's. I understand the reason for this name was, that most of the players were workmen from the Mill at Topcliffe. Some of the Lister family played too. Their football ground was on the Northallerton Road where Anchordykes now stands, but before this house was built in the field.

They must have had a good team in those days as they were winners of the Allertonshire League in 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926. Winners of the Thirsk and District League in 1922-23. Winners of the Elliot Rose Bowl in 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926. Winners of the Milbank Cup in 1923-24. Winners of the Ripon League in 1923 and runners-up in 1924-25.

In 1938 they won the Thirsk Village Cup and the League Championship. During the war years from 1940 -1948 they were disbanded. In 1952-53 season they were playing well and succeeded in winning the Thirsk Village Cup. This match was played on a Neutral ground at Thirsk.

The players at that time were :- Jim Harvey, (captain), Tom Boyce, Brian Dresser, Stan Reynard, Frank Hammond, Keith Brown, Chris Burns, John Dunning, Ben Chapman, Richard Chapman and an airman from Royal Air Force Topcliffe. Topcliffe United were using the field at the rear of the Angel Hotel near the River Swale for their football ground at that time.

THE CHURCH OF ST. COLUMBA, TOPCLIFFE

The River Swale

The River Swale, which passes Topcliffe and joins the River Ure at Myton was held sacred by the Saxons and termed the Jordan of England, on account of the wonderful Baptisms in that river. It is said that ten thousand men were baptised in the river Swale in one day. This great feat was performed at Helperby by St. Paulinas, the Roman Missionary in the year 627. The same exploit is related to that of St. Austin and both rivers were called Swale, though one runs into the Thames and the other into the Ouse.

The Archbishop, after he had consecrated the River Swale, commanded by cryers and principal men, that they should with faith go in two by two and in the name of the Holy Trinity, baptise each other. Thus, they were regenerated by as great a miracle as once the people of Israel passed over the divided sea and Jordan when it was turned back. A strange miracle this was, but what was yet greater, the river cured all diseases and infirmities, who so ever stepped in faint and disordered came out sound and whole.

There was a Church at Topcliffe, for between the sixth and seventh centuries Aidian, a faithful servant of Columba, built a church at Topcliffe after the Scottish mode of building at that period, and dedicated it to that Saint. We also find that Christianity was taught there in the days of Oswin, a Saxon King who ruled the district at that time, and who was afterwards murdered ten miles from Catterick at a place called Willars Hill in 651. It may perhaps be correctly assumed not only was Aidian a Christian but Oswin also, and that he encouraged and taught the Word of God to his subjects. The church built in those days would be of very humble structure indeed, compared with the present one, being built of timber and thatched with reeds. This we may suppose to have been the introduction of Christianity to this part, at Topcliffe. The present church bears marks of antiquity, the first stone built church was erected in 1066 by William de-Percy. In 1258 the Archbishop, Walter Grey ordered that there should be a perpetual Vicar in the church. Richardus Caellanus was the vicar until 1288, William deSpoffard until 1290, Richard de-St. Nicholas until 1310 and then Richard de-Topcliffe.

It was granted by William de-Percy in 1226 to the Cathedral of York and is at present under the patronage of the Dean and Chapter. King Edward the sixth, in the second year

of his reign by his letters patent, granted to an assistant curate to the church of St. Columba, Topcliffe, and his successors for ever, the sum of £5, per annum, which was confirmed by Queen Elizabeth in 1559. On a flat stone in the North Aisle, the following inscription merits notice by visitors:- "Mr Francis Norton was buried here, May, 30th, 1649.

Another stone of greater antiquity and more polished workmanship is the monument of Brass. It is a large Flemish Plate, one of the best in England, the other is at Wensley. It is a Palimpsest, made up of different earlier brasses, among them one with an inscription of 1335, another 1361 and a third with parts of a man and lady and parts of a ship. The front plate has two figures under arches their pillows held by an angel, each above and behind, left and right are angels with musical instruments. The full length figure of Sir Thomas de-Topcliffe, 1365 and his lady, 1391, their hands clasped and their heads resting on cushions supported by angels, the feet of the man resting on a lion and hers resting on a dog with collar and bells. Tabernacle work with angels playing upon musical instruments, appear on either side, rising into clusters of niches, with rich drapery. In the centre compartment over each is a crowned figure on a throne bearing up the ascending souls of the deceased. On the border of the whole of the epitaph is inscribed in old English letters, (parts of which are missing). On either side is introduced escutcheon of a chevron between three peg tops, and the evangelistic symbols appear in the angles of the plate.

Connected with Topcliffe Church were certain foundations called chantries-endowments left that Masses and Prayers might be said in perpetuity for the souls of the departed inside chapels; two such chapels probably occupied what is now the North Aisle, those of Percy and St. Thomas the Apostle; the latter supposed to have been founded by the Topcliffe Family. There was probably another chantry at the Alter of SS. Margaret and Catherine, which, according to the will of Walter de-Sylton AD1401, existed at that time, and to which he bequeathed his Eucharistic Vestments. From the will of John Fox, who died in 1519, it seems that a portion of the church was called the Lady Chapel, for in his will he desired to be buried "Within the choir of the Lady Chapel". There were at least four alters in the pre-reformation church at Topcliffe: the high alter which yet remains, the alter in the Lady Chapel, the alter of SS. Margaret and Catherine, and the alter of St. Thomas the Apostle.

The last seems to have been of such importance as to give name to a portion of the church long after it was swept away, for in the church-wardens' accounts for 1686, there occurs an entry - "Received of Mr Norton for ye opening of ye ground in St. Thomas Quire for ye Burial of his daughter, Mary, 6s 8d."

The family of de-Topcliffe was connected with that of the Percy family and was anciently distinguished in the annals of the Yorkshire Church, John de-Topcliffe was Rector of St. Mary's, Castlegate, York in 1302. Another John de-Topcliffe was Rector of All Saints Church in that city in 1406, and a third John de-Topcliffe (alias Hexham, a native of Topcliffe) was Cannon of Hexham and Abbot of Whitby Abbey. Amidst the troubles preceeding the dissolution of the Monasteries he resigned his Office in 1538. An old

mansion, the home of the de-Topcliffe family, later became the George and Dragon Inn. It was later demolished.

A large and elegant monument has been erected to Sir Metcalfe Robinson, Baronet who died 6th February, 1688 at the age of 59. Close by the monument lies the interred body of Sir William Robinson who was High Sherriff for the County in 1689 and Lord Mayor of York in 1700. He was for many years Member of Parliament for the City of York. He died 22nd December, 1736 at the age of 82.

On the South side of the Chancel are deposited the remains of Sir William Robinson's elder son, Sir James Robinson of Newby, who died on the 4th March, 1770.

A church existed in Topcliffe at the time of the Domesday Survey and it was granted by the second William de-Percy to the use of the fabric of the Cathedral of York. In 1292 a vicarage had been ordained the Advowson has remain with the Dean and Chapters of York. The Alter is a good example of early Jacobean woodwork. The East window presents a noble appearance being large and lofty but has been stripped of some of its stained glass. Much do we regret the misguided zeal which prevailed during the civil wars of the seventeenth century and which is justly chargeable with the destruction of the ancient religious lights which were the ornament and pride of each venerable church. In the North aisle one pane, defended by the large mullions of the window has escaped and exhibits the Percy Aims. Outside the old chapel wall, on the South side of the church, are some stones with deep groves or scores. It is supposed that these marks were caused by people sharpening their arrows and other weapons here before going to fight. It might be that the warriors of those days imagined that a weapon sharpened on a consecrated building would be more efficacious.

In the reign of Charles the second, Mr James Calvert was ejected from the church at Topcliffe by the Act of Uniformity. He was a graduate of Clare Hill, Cambridge. About 1675 he became Chaplain to Sir William St.ricland of Boyton and afterwads to Sir William Middleton, of Northumberland. He was a man of great learning and piety and died in 1698.

Topcliffe Ecclesiastical Parish in 1831 was Asenby, Baldersby, Catton, Dalton, Dishforth, Elmire with Crakehill, Marton-le-Moor, Rainton with Newby, Skelton-on-Swale and Topcliffe. These are now separate Parishes. The church was re-built in 1855 except the East Window, it is believed to be the original, built in the 14th century. The church was again re-built in 1858. It is an edifice of stone consisting of chancel, naive, North aisle and South Porch and an embattled Western Tower with eight pinnacles and containg four bells. The four bells in the Tower:- one with an inscription "Jesus be our Speed", 1622, Bell No. two "Jesus be our Speed" 1620 and a third bell 1725, bearing the mark of Samuel Smith of York; the fourth bell was recast by Warner in 1880. The larger of the Communion Cups Silver inscribed, "This Communion Cup was dedicated and given by Sir Metcalfe Robinson Baronet to ye Church at Topcliffe in Yorkshire, 1669". It bears a London mark of the same year. The second cup is inscribed, "Topcliffe thro Gregory William Raper, Churchwarden, March 26th, 1664.

The hall marks are undecipherable. The Paten bears the inscription "Dedicated to God's Service Ye Charge of Ye Parish of Topcliffe, Anno domini 1680". The marks are H.L.z. The Flagon is Copper plated with silver and dates from the end of the eighteenth century. The registers begin in 1569.

In the chancel on the South side is an extremely interesting window, although it is not attractive at first, because the colours are strident, but the design is typically pre-Raphaelite and has some of the tension of the illustrations by Rosette in Moxon's Tennyson of 1856. It is signed E. B. Jones, 1857, this is the earliest of stained glass. In the porch is the head of an Anglo Saxon Wheel Cross, in stained glass.

Ancient history concerning the church says, that Burial Garlands custom was used in Topcliffe church. By the abundant zeal for our ancestors, virginity was held in great estimation, in so much that those who died in that state were rewarded at their deaths with a Garland or Crown on their heads, thus denoting their triumphant victory over inclinations of nature. These Garlands were curiously wrought in filigree work, with gold and silver in resemblance of Myrtle, whose leaves were fastened to hoops, the larger were made of iron. Besides these crowns, the ancients had also their depository garlands, the use of which were continued even until late years, (and perhaps may still be retained in some parts of the kingdom). Garlands at the funeral of the deceased, were carried solemnly before the corpse by the maids and afterwards hung in a conspicuous place within the church in memory of the departed person.

The Garlands were generally made of wood after the following manner: the lower rim or circle was a broad hoop of wood where onto it was fixed at the side thereof, part of two other hoops crossing at the top, at right angles, which formed the upper part being one third longer than the width. These hoops were covered with artificial flowers of paper, or dyed silk and sometimes of dyed horn. In the centre part, from the top hung a white glove made from paper, where on was written the deceased's name, age, etc. The long strips of various coloured ribbons or paper were intermixed with gilded or painted shells, together with other ornaments according to the skills of the performers. This custom first originated from the Greeks and Romans.

The Reverend Hawkins came to Topcliffe in 1838, and during the early part of his Ministry at Topcliffe, two old people, a man and a woman, who occupied an alms house next to each other at the neighbouring village of Dishforth, in due course they became very fond of each other. So much so, that they decided that one house would do instead of two. So they applied to the Rev. Hawkins to make them man and wife, and the good man that he was, saw no legal bar to their matrimony. The aged Wooster was very hard of hearing, and in answer to the clergyman's "wilt thou 'take this woman to be thy wedded wife, etc." he turned to his intended spouse, "what did he say Nanny?", she explained in a loud voice, "He wants tha to tell him if tha'll hev ma fer thee wedded wife", the old man warmly replied, "wha of coarse ah will, why thoo knaws that's just what we cam heer for to hev tha." In the vestry the minister put the usual question of age, and again she turned to prompt him, "He wants to knaw hoo oade thoo is," "Wha thoo knaws ah'm' just seme age as oade Bobby Johnson, we wur breathe born et seame day."

The Rev. Hawkins was vicar at Topcliffe for 53 years. He was a large hearted Christian and a man who was benevolent to the poor, he was a man respected by all. He died in October 1891 at the age of 78. A marble cross in the churchyard marks his resting place.

In 1901 the living was a vicarage nett yearly value £400 with six acres of Glebe and a house in the gift of the Dean and Chapter of York, and held by the Rev. Walter Frederick Rowsell, M.A. St. John's College, Cambridge since 1892, and then by the Rev. Henry King Quilter, M.A. of St. Peter's College, Cambridge, in 1901 he was Canon Prebendary of York. The township of Topcliffe is charged with a tithe of £100, payable to the Vicar.

Several of the windows are stained glass Memorials. The carved Reredos was a gift of Thomas Petch of Marton-le-Moor in memory of his wife, Mary, who died in 1869. The Vicars of the Parish of Topcliffe were the Rev. John Julian, M.A., D.D., 1905, The Rev. Charles B. Pauling., from 1913, the Rev. Charles H. Pauling, L.Th, from 1939, The Rev. A. W. G. Fletcher, B.A., from 1958, he was also the Padre to the Royal Air Force, Topcliffe.

A Memorial Plaque in Honoured Memory of 20 people from Topcliffe who gave their lives in the Great War, 1914-1918. Added to the Roll of Honour and given by the people of Topcliffe and Elmire in Memory of Ronald Appleton, John Houlston, and J. Wesley Rook, 1939-1945.

The Reverend and Mrs. Pauling worked very hard for the Parishioners of Topcliffe. Mrs. Pauling was a wonderful person, one cannot speak too highly of her work for the children and the older people of Topcliffe and District. When they retired they were much missed at Topcliffe.

The Clocksmiths were called to repair the Church Clock in the Tower of St. Columba's Church at Topcliffe, but found it was getting beyond repair. A new clock rather smaller in size, was installed in the Tower in 1968.

The Rev. B. O. Allen came to Topcliffe as Vicar in 1965, but resided at Dishforth in the vicarage for a short time, until his vicarage at Topcliffe was completed. The original vicarage was a large rambling house standing in its own grounds. At the front of the house, the french windows open out onto the lawns of a landscape garden. A high wall surrounded the vegetable garden, on these walls were trained a variety of fruit trees. A part of this garden was taken for the new vicarage. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the Old Vicarage and part of the grounds to Doctor Dias. The general practitioner for Topcliffe, and is now the Medical Officer for the Army at Topcliffe Barracks. He was a founder member of the Road Accident AfterCare Scheme in the North Riding, Topcliffe District.

The vicar of Topcliffe has now the Parishes of Dalton and Dishforth added to his living

The cemetery gates were a gift to the Parish of Topcliffe by the Royal Air Force Station, Topcliffe in 1966.

THE METHODIST CHAPEL AT TOPCLIFFE

While the village church forms a Memorial of long-past ages, dating back to Norman or Tudor times, preserving for us the architecture of some distinctive period, the village chapel can show little or nothing but antiquity which at its best is under 200 years old. The old-fashioned village chapel, indeed is one of the most important links which bind the past to the present. Around it, modest as it is, gathers memories of other days, when neither steam nor electricity had disturbed the village life. The old people of that day, would tell many tales about the times when the chapel was first built and the first coming of the Methody preachers to the village. They would describe the rather rough reception which these pioneers got. They would also call to mind the efforts made to build the Chapel.

There does not seem to be a record as to when Methodism was first introduced into Topcliffe, but it is reasonable to presume the latter part of the 18th century. From an old deed (an abstract of which is given) "Indenture in three parts made this 23rd day of July 1802, between Henry Eeles of Northallerton of the first part, and William Stevens of Ripon, Wesleyan Minister of the second part, and John Plummer of Topcliffe of the third part, hath agreed with the said Henry Eeles for the absolute purchase of the parcel of ground, herein after mentioned, for the sum of £140 for the purpose of erecting thereon a meeting house or place or Worship for the Society of Methodists." Now this indenture witnessed that in consideration of the sum of £140 by the said John Plummer, the said Henry Eeles, doth convey all that plot or parcel of ground situated in Topcliffe, containing in breadth in front from North to South, 29 feet, abutting on a dwelling house of the said Henry Eeles, on or towards the North, on a Blacksmith's Shop on or towards the South, on the front of Topcliffe, on or towards the East by an apple orchard, and on or towards the West by the back street of Topcliffe. Together with all and singular houses, buildings, stables and garden, etc."

Deeds signed by Henry Eeles and William Stevens, July 23rd, 1802.

The first Methodists Chapel in Topcliffe was a very modest building, capable of seating 150 hearers. It was simply a square building, with 4, dlerly round one side and the end. The gallery had high backed pews and a tall person would nearly touch the ceiling with his head. Half the floor space was occupied by benches, and the other half with pews, opposite stood the Pulpit, a high box reached by a flight of steps, and made to look brighter than the rest by having a cushion on the desk. There on resting the two volumes with which the services were conducted, The Bible, and the Wesley Hymn Book. Three or four antique candlesticks with wax candles in them were used for lighting on the dark evenings. In those days the hymns were given out two lines at a time, (which was a wise rule) as few people could read and hymn books were scarce too. There were few tunes in use in those days and the singers sung from their hearts, which is after all, the main thing. They were not very artistic in their singing according to the records.

Methodism, fortunately, during its history was not so easy to persuade people to listen, but the chills of the opposition, only served to make for stronger perseverance. Topcliffe, like almost everywhere else, there was opposition, but in spite of this, Methodism grew and prospered and became an influence in the village and neighbourhood. In the course of time the old chapel became too small as the congregation increased.

Many hallowed associations were connected with the old chapel and there were many regrets when the mention of a larger building was to take its place. The old Chapel had been a place of worship for the Methodist Service for 38 years. To secure a larger place for worship the two principal difficulties were, means and additional land. Topcliffe Methodists eventually overcame these two difficulties. Adjoining the old Chapel were two houses ; one of these was taken down to make room for the new Chapel, and the other was used for a Chapel-keepers residence.

The foundation stone of the new Chapel was laid by Mrs. Dresser of Topcliffe Mill, on July 28th 1840, and the opening service took place on October 16th, 1840. The sermons were preached by the Rev. J. Rattenbury of York. This Chapel continues to the present day, but from time to time has had various improvements and additions, much has been done towards making the seating accommodation more comfortable. An organ was added to improve the music and the arrangements for a choir. The lighting and heating have been improved. The Schoolroom was added in 1882. The Methodist Chapel was formerly connected with the Ripon Circuit, but on the formation of the Circuit at Boroughbridge it was transferred to the Boroughbridge Circuit.

CHARITIES OF TOPCLIFFE

The charities subsisting in the Ancient Parishes of Topcliffe were in 1901 under the management of the Foffees appointed in accordance with a decree of Commissioners of Charitable uses, dated 16th June, 1674.

By a scheme of the Charity Commissioners established by an order dated 5th July, 1901, the several Parochial Charities were consolidated, the body of Trustees to consist of Thirteen Persons, one ex-officio Trustee, the Vicar of Topcliffe, for the time being and twelve representatives, Trustees, two appointed by the Parish Council of Topcliffe, one each by the other parishes, Parish Councils or Parish Meetings, of the nine Townships of the Parish, and one by the District Council of Thirsk and Wath alternatively.

The Charities included in the said scheme (as varied by a further scheme of the 19th May, 1905) are so far as they can be identified as follows:

1613 Pullaine Leesland, 2 acres 3 roods and 25 perches in Topcliffe devised in 1613 by the will of the Rev. Ralph Kay to the vicar of Topcliffe, let at £6-10s, per year.

1717 Land at Firby, containing 6 acres purchased with certain poor stock, in 1717 let at £15 per year.

1747 Land at Asenby containing 6 acres, the gift of George Easterby in 1747, let at £12 per year for distribution of cloth in certain of the Townships.

In 1905 there was also £12-10s, in the Thirsk Savings Bank in Trust for the poor of the parish of Topcliffe and £39-7s-11d, in the same bank in Trust for the poor of the township of Topcliffe.

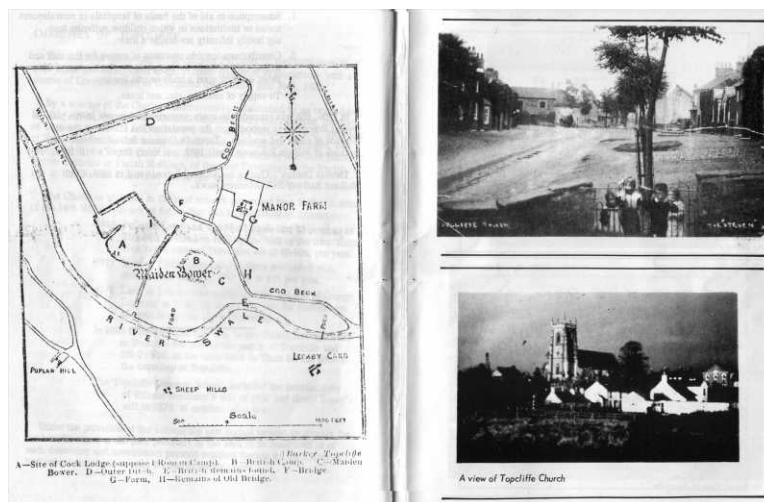
The Topcliffe Grammar School, included the benefactions of William Robinson's will of 1653 and Henry Roper's will in 1674, to mention but a few.

Under the provision of the scheme the nett annual income applicable for the benefit either of the poor generally of the area to be benefitted or of such deserving and necessitous persons resident therein as the Trustees may select under one or more for the following needs:

1. Subscription in aid of the funds of hospitals or convalescent, homes or institutions in which children suffering from any bodily infirmity are taught a trade.
2. Contributions towards provision of nurses for the sick and infirm, cost of outfit for any person under the age of 21 years entering upon a trade or into service.
3. To supply of clothing, etc. and loans.

In 1905, £63 was expended on coals, groceries and money, to the poor of several townships in proportion to the population and £17-10s in the distribution of cloth and woolsey. Topcliffe Grammar School included benefactions of William Robinson's will 1633, and Henry Roper's will 1674.

Thomas Durham's Charity for National Schools will in 1865, £120 Midland Railway 2.5% debenture stock.





An Aerial view of the Mound.



An Aerial View of Topcliffe



The Old Market Cross



The Old Court House



The New School



Topcliffe Mill House



Anglers' Centre opened

Lord Lambton, of the English Tourist Board, opening Topcliffe Mill Restaurant, the first phase of the development of Topcliffe Mill as a special and holiday centre for anglers, unveiled the mill's new possession - a fish basket, the largest fish caught at the mill to date.

Topcliffe Mill restaurant has been converted from stables, attached to an eighteenth century mill and is situated on the renowned upper reaches of the Chase river system adjacent to the village of Topcliffe, near Thirsk, and close to the A1. The Mill is being developed by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Smart, to provide a full range of sporting facilities for anglers, as well as comfortable accommodation, restaurants and bars.

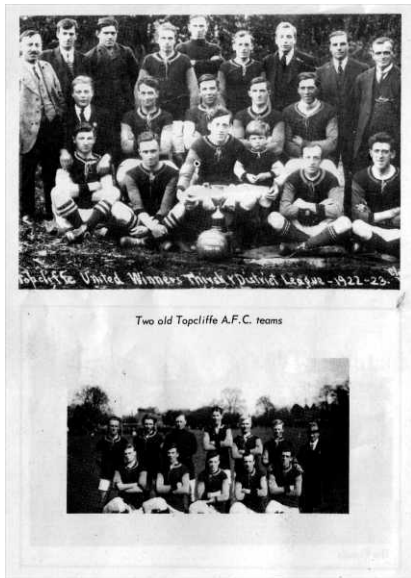
The English Tourist Board has assisted the development of Topcliffe Mill under the Tourist Projects Scheme for the Development Areas. *By kind permission of Mr. Smart.*



The Chapel



The Floods



WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS OF TOPCLIFFE

In the early years of the 19th century a well known character of Topcliffe was Bessie Wood. She was quite a character, and a hard worker, she would work from just after midnight until eight o'clock in the evening, all for one shilling per day, washing clothes and charing.

Another well known character was old Stooly, a cripple from Kilburn. Who having lost the use of his legs from above the knee, managed to work leis way about the world by a kind of stool arrangement. By his primitive means of locomotion, he worked the feasts and fairs in and around the Vale of Mowbray, selling nuts, etc.

But by far the best known character was Bobby Johnson of the Shoulder of Mutton at Asenby. By great industry and shrewdness as an Inn-keeper, Butcher and small Farmer, he had amassed the fortune of between £20,000 to £30,000. As he had no children, but several nephews and nieces, he was an object of some interest.

One of his nieces lived with him and one day a man called on horseback, while he was having a drink, he bent down to the young lady and said "I'm come to put love to thee", the prompt reply, "If its me you want, ah's here, but if its brass your after, its all settled on Barker's bairns.

Bobby, on one occasion was driving home from Ripon market, when he learnt that the Prince of Wales was with a Shooting Party from Studley and was having lunch on the lawn at Hutton Moor House. Without more ado, he drew up his horse and went up to the shooting party and enquired for the Prince. Being a well known character, he was introduced to the Prince, who shook hands with him. Bobby remarked, "how are ye, ah's pleased to see ye, hoo's yer mother, ye mun tell her ye have shaken hands we oade Bobby Johnson of Asenby".

John Meek was the miller at Topcliffe in the early years of the 19th century. He was a miserly old fellow and is known in the Yorkshire Oddities as "Old Meally Face". He was parsimonious that he was wont on going from his house, he would press his face into the flour in the bin, leaving its impression, so that on his return he might discover if any flour had been taken. He would severely reprimand his wife for her extravagance.

Frank Cooper, although he was blind, brewed his own beer for the public house, The Black Bull.

THE PARKS

From Topcliffe the road runs for about half a mile to Gallow Green where the Lord of the Manor's Gallows stood in the thirteenth century, until recently the green was open space or common land where the gipsies encamped at the fair time, but it has now been enclosed. At the South East corner of the square a flight of steps lead to a chamber where the Lord of the Manor used to hold his courts Leet. In the chamber is an oak table which tradition asserts, a ransom was paid for King Charles to the Scots.

About 150 yards beyond the toll booth, Winn Lane leads at right angles to the main road, to a field called Manor Wood where the site of Cox Lodge was, three quarters of a mile South East of the village. King Charles the first dined here on the 11th May, 1646 on his way North with the Scots. In 1174 Geoffrey, Bishop Elect of Lincoln, fortified the castle here in support of his father, Henry the second and rival to Mowbrays Fortress 'of Thirsk. Geoffrey gave custody to William de Stutville and in time of the war spent £7 - 10 - 2d in building and strengthening the castle. This castle was of the Mount Bailey type which probably never had any masonry defences. This was the favourite home of the unfortunate Henry, Earl of Northumberland.

Topcliffe Parks lie in the North of the Parish and on either side of the highway to Northallerton in this part, called the new road. The Parks were first mentioned in 1314 and ten years later poachers were active as they were in 1332 and 1334. The Officer of the Forestry of the Moskwith or Great Park was an hereditary position in the 15th century, Joscelin de-Topcliffe left a daughter and heir, Beatrice who married Adam, the Forrester, and lived in the beginning of the 14th century. Their eldest son, Alan, died without issue, and was succeeded by his brother Richard, who left two daughters and co heirs Maud and Christina. Christina, widow of William Biresworth was succeeded in Office by her daughter Margaret, who left daughters as co heirs. Isobel, the younger in 1454 quit claim to her sister Elizabeth, and her husband Oliver Stockdale, her right of Office which carried with it a house, two gardens and an orchard and considerable land in the Park. Their son Christopher Stockdale was parker at the time of his death in 1554. He left a son Anthony who held office and land of the Manor of Topcliffe in 1557 and was succeeded by his infant son Richard. Richard with Helen his wife sold office with its appertivant in 1599 to Edmund Norton for £200.

Richard Norton was keeper of the little Park in 1599 and Edmund Norton was made under keeper by Henry Johnson son and heir of Sir Thomas Johnson to whom Henry the

Eighth gave lease of Herbage in 1637. At this date herbage was valued at £10, yearly. A further grant was made in 1642, the herbage of Haverlunde within the park, this was especially reserved for the deer. Among fees received by Royal Officers in 1607 were £6 - 13s - 4d to the steward and master of the game here and £6 - 1 s - 8d for the keeper of the Great Park. These Parks cover some nine square miles were divided up into farms, but some still bear the name of Topcliffe Park. The present Manor House, just over the Cod-beck is a building, erected, it is said on the site of the stables of the old castle. In 1890 to mention some of the farmers farming at the farms of the Park:Lancelot Cousins, Topcliffe Parks, Thomas Dale Craythorne, Topcliffe Park and Low House, Joseph Barker, Topcliffe Park, Samuel Suffield, Topcliffe Park, Edwin Smith, Hagg House and Topcliffe Park, William Bellamy, East Lodge, Thomas Bumby, North Lodge, John B. Dale. Salmon Hall and West Lodge.

GRI STHWAITE.

Grithwaite is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey. In a document dated 1314 it is described as a Hamlet, and there was said to be four tenants in Bondage, six Cottagers, and a watermill. The said Hamlet was burnt and destroyed, by the Scots. Those who were tenants were killed. Grithwaite was never a real Manor although it was so called in 1380, and also again during the 15th and 16th centuries. Its decent follows that of the Manor of Topcliffe, Grithwaite, formerly a Hamlet survives in two adjacent farms in the North East of the township of Topcliffe.

BALDEBSBY PARK.

A stately Georgian Mansion previously known as Newby Hall (and is still perpetuated in the next Parish of Rainton with Newby) was built for Sir William Robinson in 1720. The Architect for Studley Royal, Mr Colin Campbell designed the main part of the house at Topcliffe, William Etty, a master mason from York, designed and built the wings. The final effect was a central block with flanking pavillions joined by a corridor.

In the forties, the owner was a George Hudson, who was born in 1800, and known as the Railway King. At that time he was at the zenith of his fame. His square pew in Topcliffe Church was upholstered in rich crimson, in which he had a reading desk where he used to stand up with his portly back to the Vicar. If the sun shone on the occupants of the pew, Mrs. Hudson would put up her fine parasol. In those days, wind and stringed instruments sent forth their music from the East end of the gallery. On all matters connected with the railways, Mr. Hudson was looked up to as the greatest authority. The entertainments at his mansion in the city were patronised by the greatest nobility in the land, none were too great to do homage. His round of visits among the Peerage was like that of a Prince. The railway mania was followed by a reaction and the crash came. Mr. Hudson was speedily dethroned. He died in 1871. It was his foresight and ability which placed York and Yorkshire so firmly on the Railway Map and stimulated much that was to follow in further building of the railways. Mr. Hudson greatly enlarged and improved the magnificent mansion and the beautiful grounds of Baldersby Park which was sold to

Viscount Downe in 1853. The Dowager Viscountess Downe married Sidney Levison Lane, Esq., J.P., D.L., he was the third son of the late John Newton Lane.

In 1900 Mr. J. Brennand, a Cotton Magnate purchased this spacious mansion, built of stone, situated in a park of 200 acres, well wooded and stocked with fallow deer. Walter Morgan was the farm baliff, James Henry Hathaway, the Gardener, George Henry Pearson was the land steward, and James Watson was the game-keeper. Mr. John Brennand was very unfortunate, that during the years of depression, his investments and mills were reduced in value so much, that he was unable to live and keep up this vast mansion and estate. The Hall and grounds were sold in 1927 and purchased by Miss Yates Lee. Miss Lee purchased the Hall and forty acres of Park land for a boarding school and re-named it 'Skellfield School'. The school was opened in September, 1927 for the Education of refined young ladies of well to do people. The Principal and Headmistress bought the Park and Mansion as an ideal setting in surroundings which the daughters of Ambassadors and Landed Gentry were accustomed to.

In the grounds are the remains of a circular Temple ,also two Obelisks. Some of the deer-sheds are still to be seen, where the fallow deer were fed and had shelter from the severe winter storms at the beginning of the century.

During the war years the school was moved to a smaller establishment and Skellfield was taken over by the Army. A company of Canadians were stationed there. When the war was over the school returned. Miss Lee retired, and a Board of Governors was formed to give guidance and to supervise this Boarding School. The new Headmistress was Miss Stockdale. A very high standard of Education had to be maintained. The teaching staff were very hard to find, also domestic staff was difficult to get. The school was closed in 1969. The Hall stood empty for quite a while, with only a caretaker to safeguard the property from vandalism.

In due course, the property came up for sale, it was purchased by Mr and Mrs. Murray-Steele. In 1972 the present owners set about the task of converting the Mansion into apartments of various sizes which could be made available for retired or semi-retired people wishing to live in beautiful surroundings and spacious accommodation but not wishing to cater for themselves. The house is fully centrally heated, splendidly comfortable and offers an excellent cuisine. The residents have their own private apartments. Each suite is wired for the telephone and there is an intercom system. It is of course furnished by the residents. According to Mr. and Mrs. MurraySteele, their scheme to provide such accommodation is unique in the North of England. They love Baldersby Park and have already spent a large sum of money converting and preserving the building. As conversion of the stables block proceeds, more accommodation will become available and incidentally, it may well be that Baldersby Park will end by employing more local labour than some of the new factories and warehouses in this district.

CANALS AND NAVIGATION CONNECTED WITH THE RIVER SWALE

In the mid-17th century and when conditions were favourable, craft could get up the River Ure to Boroughbridge and the Swale to Topcliffe. However, in 1742, by which time a Don Act to improve the river to Fishlake Ferry on the River Don had been passed, Richard Ellison was reported to be again proposing a Bill for the River Swale. The first discussions of what was to come later, to become the Leeds and Liverpool and the Rochdale Canals. In the summer of 1766, having been encouraged by those who, in September, announced meetings to consider opening a communication from Hull by York to Ripon using the river and canal and then seeking subscription towards a Bill. This led the property owners of estates, and others interested in the navigation of the River Swale, to meet at Thirsk in December to consider any locks built below Swale Nab would interfere with the navigation of the Swale and whether an Act to make it more navigable would be useful. John Smeaton, using the earlier surveys by Palmer and Ellison, then re-surveyed the River Ouse and Ure. In turn, a group at Thirsk were encouraged to make the Cod beck navigable from the town to the Swale, for one chief inconvenience to Thirsk and the whole of the Vale of Mowbray is the scarcity and high price of coal. Petitions for the Ouse, the Ure and Ripon Canal, the Swale and Bedale beck and the Cod beck were considered together by Parliament early in 1767. Smeaton gave evidence, John Grundy appeared for the Swale and the Bedale beck, estimating them at £19,844 against a subscription of £24,950 and was supported by Robert Wilson who, however, wanted a four mile canal from Morton Bridge to Bedale. Evidence for Cod beck was given by Richard Firth, who estimates it at £6,100. The Three Acts were therefore passed in 1767 for the Swale to Morton Bridge, with a branch to Bedale up the Bedale Beck and the Ure to the Ripon Canal.

The first Act proposed to extend navigation from Swale Nab, 28 miles of winding course past Helperby, Topcliffe, Skipton: on-Swale and Maunby to Morton bridge, some 4 miles from Northallerton. The Acts named two sets of Commissioners, one for the Ouse section, the other for the Swale and Bedale beck, together with power to raise money by borrowing or annuities.

On the Swale, locks were planned at Myton a little way above Helperby, Topcliffe Mill, Wiske Mouth and Gatenby with two on the Bedale beck at Leeming and below Bedale itself, where a basin would be built. John Smith was the Engineer in charge of the Ouse section and the Swale with Bedale beck navigations improvement. He decided to build his first lock at Topcliffe, apparently so that stone could be boated down to it from Holme, where there was land access to the Rainton Quarry from whence the stone came. On the 15th June 1768, John Smith encountered labour difficulties as the workmen required more money, 15d to 18d per day. A week later they would strike unless they were paid 20d per day. He had also to cope with variable changes in the river level, which several times had damaged the works. A 25 ton timber carrying boat was ordered at Selby, and in October it got to Topcliffe. Before this John Smith had chosen and built a secondlock at Leckby, 200 yards above the mouth of the Cod beck.

On the 25th January, 1769, John Jackson wrote,
"The earth and sheets removed and taken away, the water let into the cut, the lower gates opened and keel run into the lock which being filled with water by opening the upper

sluices was soon done, the upper gates being then opened the keel with our colours flying (and amidst the loud Hussahs of the people, there met) sailed through the first lock on the River Swale, which, without vanity, it may be said, if not the best, one of the best and completest locks in England."

The following day a timber keel from Malton reached Topcliffe bridge, and with another passed through the lock on the 27th.

Work was done on the Cod beck at Thirsk, where a basin and wharf were built in 1768. The the beck was deepened and straightened down to the only lock that was built at Sowerby.

Some work was probably also carried out on the proposed lock at Dalton bridge near Topcliffe, for which tenders were invited in May, 1769. Then the funds were exhausted and no more was done, though a newspaper reported on July 10th, 1770, that two new 40 ton vessels had reached York from Thirsk, the first two cargo carrying craft to make the journey. Some canal schemes of the 1790's included branches to Northallerton, Bedale and Thirsk and later the making navigable of the Swale and the Wiske past Northallerton, to Great Smeaton, about eight miles from Darlington seems to have been briefly considered, in connection with the contemporary Stockton Canal Projects. Another scheme proposed a canal from the Swale via Coxwold. In 1800 an advertisement called a meeting to consider reviving the Swale Act.

The Great North of England Railway from Darlington to York via Northallerton and Thirsk was opened on the 4th January, 1841 seriously affected the river and canal traffic.

TOPCLIFFE FAIR - GRANTED 1327

The village would seem to have been built round a square, the market square in those days. In the West and the river side stands the fine old church of St. Columba. The original plan is now obscured by the erection of the block of houses on the central part of the square. Some trace of this is that the stalls at the ancient fair were pitched on the cobbles around the Market Cross.

The fair took its origin from a giant which Edward the Third in 1327, gave to Henry de-Percy for the vigil day and the morrow of the Translation of St. Thomas and a weekly market day, to be held on a Wednesday.

P. Hall, in his book "Thirsk and District", has translated the Charter that was granted to Henry de-Percy, by King Edward the Third, on the 15th February, 1327.

It reads thus:-"For Henry de-Percy, The King to Archbishops, Abbots, Priors, Earls, Barons, Justices, Sheriffs, Reeves, Ministers, and all his Baliffs and faithful men, greeting, know ye that we, of our special grace, have granted, by this our Charter have confirmed to our beloved and Faithful Cousin, Henry de-Percy, that he and his forever have one market on Wednesday in every week, at their Manor of Topcliffe upon Swale,

in the County of York, and one Fair there to continue during three days, that is to say, on the eve and on the day and the morrow of the Translation of St. Thomas the Martyr, unless the same Fair be to the nuisance of the neighbouring markets and to neighbouring fairs. Wherefore we will, etc. These being witnesses, The Venerable Father Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, John, Bishop of Ely, Chancellor Adam, Bishop of Hereford, our Treasurer, Henry Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, John de Warren, Earl of Surrey, Roger de-Mortimer of Wygmore, Thomas Wake, Gilbert Talebot and John de-Rocs, Steward of our Household and others. Given by our hand at Westminster the Fifteenth day of February, 1327, by writ of Privy Seal."

The market days held on Thursdays and Fridays were abandoned in 1792. The Ancient Fair was held on three days, the 17th, 18th and 19th July. The first day was for the sale of Sheep, the second for Horses and the third was Lady Fair Day, when the lads took their girls round the sweet and trinket stalls, which supplied fairings. Until recently, bough houses were in existence at the fair, where beer was brewed for customers invited to the house for a drink, marked by green branches displayed above the doors. During the fair days, two men were appointed by the Lord of the Manor, to parade the streets to keep law and order. One carried an ancient halbert and the other a pike. On Topley Fair Day anyone could sell beer by licence. People travelling to the fair could quench their thirsts at any of the drinking booths, these booths were erected at Norton-le-Clay, Dishforth, Rainton and Asenby. During the fair, free fights were continually in progress, down Mill bank, and it was gradually understood that every quarrel which had occurred during the year, no matter how trivial, had to be settled at Topcliffe Fair, with a stand up fight. It was a long standing custom and died hard.

The Fair became a nuisance and several attempts to have it abolished came to nought, as the Doctor, Dr. Carter Mitchell ("The Old Doctor") as he was called in those days, tried to uphold the ancient traditions and as he said, -He had brought quite a lot of these gipsies into the world." However, in 1956 the Medical Officer, Dr. Slater was appalled at the state of the lanes where gipsies had camped, either just before the fair or during the fair. From a health point of view, she appealed to the Lord of the Manor, Lord Leconfield, and to Parliament to have the fair abolished. A reply from Lord Leconfield was "that he was in favour of the wishes of the majority in Topcliffe". The Charter Fair was eventually abolished by Parliament.

The horse dealers do come to Topcliffe, but just for the day, that is the 18th July.

THE SCHOOLS OF TOPCLIFFE

A free Grammar School was founded here in 1549, but by whom is not known, the Master, a Mr. Bovill was paid by the Feoffees*. It was endowed with about £82 per annum arising from various bequests. Trustees were appointed in July, 1674.

* FEOFFEES : -(Charitable bequests to the Parish, which are numerous are under the control and management of a body of 12 trustees or Feoffees, instituted by a decree of Commissioners of Charitable uses in 1674, who distribute the produce in certain

proportions anon,' several townships, in compliance with the intentions of the donors. There are upwards of twenty acres of Poors'land, left by various persons yielding an annual rental of about £54 and some small rent charges amounting to about £10).

There is an entry in the table of Benefactions in Topcliffe Church, "John Hartforth, of Topcliffe in 1588 gave £10 to the school, Topcliffe", with which, together with another sum of money given by the parishioners was purchased one cottage in Topcliffe, and five roods of land in Peterfield and four acres, 25 perches in Outwood.

In 1761 an exchange of lands took place among several proprietors in Topcliffe, the land in Outwood was given to the Earl of Egremont and land in Peterfield was taken in lieu thereof for use by the School. The Rev. James Scrow s, the Headmaster, with the consent of the Feoffees. Lord Egremont agreed to fence it, two acres three roods.

The principal properties belonging to the school, 61 acres, 36 perches, lying in the townfields of Skipton-on-Swale under a devise by Henry Ra.per, a citizen of London, by his will dated January, 1674, £10 per year only from the estate to Firby Hospital and the residue of the rents to the schoolmaster of Topcliffe and his successors. Skipton-on-Swale estate was let by the Feoffees for £70 per annum. It is believed that some slight alterations have been made in the property by exchange of lands.

Funds were being accumulated for the building of a dwelling house for the schoolmaster. He also received an annual sum of £16 a year from the Grocers' Company respecting which there is the following entry in the table of Benefactions in the Church, "William Robinson, a citizen of London gave to the school at Topcliffe £16 per annum for ever to be paid by the Grocers' Company of London". The schoolmaster was paid £44 per year out of the rents of the Skipton Estate. The Trustees resolved that the master appointed should be able to speak Greek and Latin tongues and he should be a member of the Church of England and that he should teach or have an usher to teach such scholars as desire it.

Thirty free scholars, chosen from different townships should be admitted to the school for instruction. The master and scholars should attend church on Sundays. An increase in salary to £60 together with allowances, the surplus money towards the fund for building a house for the schoolmaster.

A meeting was held on 12th December, 1809, the proportions of scholars to the school from the several townships were as follows:- Topcliffe 6, Dalton 4, Elmiere with Crakehill 1, Asenby 3, Dishforth 4, Marton 1, Baldersby 4, Skipton 1%, Catton 1% and Rainton 4. Thirty boys are selected by the trustees for which they respectively act, and to continue at school until they are asked to leave to make room for new pupils. They are children from poor persons. Only one boy has taken Latin lessons, they are taught reading, writing and accounting with no charge to their parents except for books and 1/6 for each boy for fires in the winter (heating). Each boy has to be able to read the Church Catechism.

The present schoolroom, rebuilt in 1812 by means of voluntary contributions, on the site of an old schoolroom in the churchyard, at Topcliffe. It is of Tudor design of three bay mullion windows, between 70 and 80 boys attended the school.

The schoolmaster receives an annual payment of £4-10-1 on account of an annuity of £5 payable out of His Majesty's Exchequer. This sum was received by the trustees until 1818, and was added to the fund for the master's house. Since then it has been paid to the schoolmaster.

On the 3rd of November, 1818, the sum accumulated at the Claro Savings Bank in Ripon was £248-8-6, it was agreed by the trustees to let it remain in the bank with its accrued interest. It had not been determined to what extent the fund is to accumulate before it is applied to its destined purpose. A question arose with regard to the Annuity and that it should be paid to the Curate of the Church and not to the assistant teacher. Mr. William Topham was the assistant and also the Curate and that the money should be paid to him.

The Rev. Ramshaw, was Curate and Schoolmaster for many years, the person holding both these offices of curate and schoolmaster would make it immaterial to the party receiving the annuity in what right it was paid. There seems to have been some controversy with regard to the annuity from the Chancellor of the Exchequer but eventually it was resolved that it was to be paid to the Curate of St. Columba's Church at Topcliffe.

The Day Charity.

The Rev. Francis Day's will, 26th March, 1674, £100. Two poor children from Marton, Rainton, Baldersby, Dalton, Skipton and Catton chosen by the Vicar of Topcliffe and Trustees.

A mortgage of the tolls of the Turnpike Road from Boroughbridge to Croft Bridge and Darlington for securing the sum of £100, having made it by indenture on 28th September, 1766. The Testator in his lifetime a legacy to the Rev. Charles Cooper, Vicar of Topcliffe and others by deed of assignment dated 6th February, 1764 upon trust mentioned in the will.

Richard Marshall in 1789 left 40 shillings: £50 for the education of the poor children of Marton-le-Moor.

£250 Navy 5% Stock left by William Croft.

Tenders and other papers relating to the building of the schoolmaster's house at Topcliffe in 1840. Six tenders were received. The house was built in Church Street on the site of an old dwelling upon which there was at the time a small stable.

A school for girls and infants was erected in 1842 and was attended by about 100 children, 80 of whom were paid for by the Feoffees at the rate of one penny per child per week.

A public elementary school was erected in 1848 for both girls and boys and was enlarged by Lord Leconfield in 1892 for 150 children. The average attendance was 118, the headmaster was Mr. George William Hillyard, until 1921, Mr. Burton succeeded Mr. Hillyard in 1922.

This school was not found suitable to modernise, to bring it into line with the standards required by the North Riding Education Authority for Primary Education. A new modern school was built on a site near the Northallerton Road to the North end of the Village. This school was opened on the 6th September, 1966 to accommodate Topcliffe children and also the children from the Village of Dalton. The Official Opening however, was not until the following year. On the 20th July, 1967, the Rev. C. Smith, Vicar of Easingwold, performed the opening ceremony, also present were Alderman Butterfield, Lord Masham and Councillor Fletcher.

The old school building was sold. Planning permission was granted by the Local Planning Authority for the conversion of the school building into two bungalows.

TOPCLIFFE AERODROME COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The school was opened on 2nd March, 1953, to make specific provision for children living on Topcliffe Royal Air Force Station and to relieve the pressure on Carlton Miniott Village School, to which they had previously been transported and where accommodation was no longer sufficient. For the first five years of its existence it was an all age school, but after reorganisation in the Thirsk area, following the completion of the Grammar Modern School, it provided education only for children between five and eleven years of age. Of the 136 children on roll, all except five are those of service personnel ; the period of stay at the school varies between one term and two years ; annual turnover approaches 60%, and no child has yet remained here from 5 to 11. The school, therefore, has to provide for a shifting population and deals energetically and successfully in the main with two very difficult problems, that of settling children in quickly, and that of devising work for the able child whose stay may be very short.

The premises have been adapted from existing service quarters.

The Platform Party at the Official Opening were :

The Rev. J. Mason (Chairman, South Otterington Parish Council) Mrs. Brocklebank
Mr. L. S. Grimsdale, H.M.I. Mr. Barraclough
Mr. J. R. Bumby (Chairman, Topcliffe Parish Council) Mr. Cooke
Alderman Reed (Clerk, Topcliffe Parish Council)
Mr. H. Horner (Clerk, South Otterington Parish Council) Canon A. R. Lee
Mrs. J. D. Davies

Mr. G. A. Lomas (Chairman. Thirsk R.D.C.) Air Vice-Marshal Tuttle Alderman Jones
Group Captain J. G. Davis Mr. J. Brocklebank

The premises were extended on June 3rd. 1974, by the addition of two temporary classrooms.

In October, 1973, the Station was vacated by the Royal Air Force. and the Army Personnel took over.

TOPCLIFFE AND DISTRICT SHOW

The Topcliffe and District Show was first held in 1950, with classes for cattle, sheep, pigs and horses, honey, jam, bottled fruit, cookery and handicrafts. There were classes for school children, including a miniature garden and a bunch of wild flowers. Garden and horticultural produce classes. The evening gymkhana commenced with the open leaping. Trade stands in the horticultural section was always an added attraction for the visitors to the show.

A photographic section was added in later years. Major Turton was one of the first Presidents of the Show.

The Royal Air Force Band from R.A.F. Topcliffe played selections of music during the afternoon and evening. The Bedale Hounds paraded in the main ring during the afternoon.

The catering and liquid refreshments were always by tender each year as was the supply of ice cream. One of the local shop-keepers from Topcliffe village had a stand on the field for the sale of sweets, confectionery and soft drinks. The show was held in a large grass field at the Mill, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lister. When this field was to be ploughed out, the Governors of Skellfield School were approached and permission was given to hold the show in Baldersby Park and an ideal setting for a show and gymkhana. Miss Stockdale, the Headmistress and her pupils gave the show their full support, especially in the cookery and handicraft sections.

The jumping classes were operated under B.S.J.A. rules.

A dog show was introduced in 1956, a year later was added a Leadrein pony class, also a fancy dress parade both on foot and mounted fancy dress, these classes were an added attraction among the children of all ages.

Classes for breeding ponies were introduced in 1961 for brood mares, foals, yearlings, two year olds and three* year olds. The riding classes for young riders were always well patronised. One of our first class riders of today was a keen competitor in the first instance, at Topcliffe and the local shows.

Mr. J. Killing was the Secretary for a number of years, Miss Peacock was the Secretary when the show was closed, in 1967.

ROYAL AIR FORCE TOPCLIFFE

No history of Topcliffe would be complete without the inclusion of the history of Royal Air Force Topcliffe and the successful role they operated during the 1939-1945 War.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force, The Viscount Trenchard, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., L.L.B., attended the opening ceremony of R.A.F. Topcliffe on the 7th September, 1940, and afterwards he chatted to the station personnel for about 30 minutes.

Topcliffe's entry to effective service coincided almost exactly with the major change in R.A.F. Operations from defence to attack. Under the command of Group Captain J. F. Hunter, C.B.E., M.C., the station came under operational control of No. 4 Group, Bomber Command, Nos. 77, 78 and 102 squadrons, equipped with Whitleys, and later Halifax's flew from Topcliffe for raids on German targets including Berlin, Hambourg and Keil during the first years of the Bomber Command offensive. On the 8th October, 1940, the first aircraft was lost on operations. Two members of the squadron in the early days were Pilot Officer Cheshire, later Group Captain Cheshire, V.C., D.S.O., D.F.C., and Wing Commander D. C. T. Bennett, later to become Air Vice-Marshal Bennett of the Pathfinder Force.

The first enemy action over Topcliffe came on the 1st November, 1940, when a lone raider circled Topcliffe and then bombed the satellite station at Dalton. Again on 2nd April, 1941, an enemy raid on Topcliffe by Heikels, one raider was damaged by A.A. fire. On the 3rd April, 1941, the aircraft from Topcliffe 77 and 102 squadrons were engaged in the raids on the Sharnhorst and Greisenau at Brest. No. 77 and 102 squadrons continued to participate in the mass Bomber attacks against Germany and occupied Europe using Dalton and then Dishforth as satellites.

The King and Queen visited Dishforth on 25th March, 1942, where 51 Squadron (Halifax's), gave a parachute demonstration (dropped 90 paratroops). A month later these Halifax's were mentioned in operations after conversion training from Whitleys. In April, 1942, with the introduction of heavier aircraft, runways became a necessity at Topcliffe after a call to the station by the Commanding Officer, most personnel including W.A.A.F.'s turned out in the evening to help build the new runways. The 30th May, 1942, 20 aircraft of 102 squadron were used in the first 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne. The first of the Canadians (French) arrived to form 425 Wellington Squadron on the 27th June, 1942.

The first record of the Topcliffe squadrons participating in a mass bomber attack was on the 10th February, 1942, when 23 of the 201 aircraft engaged on a raid on Hanover were from Topcliffe. The transfer of R.A.F. Topcliffe to No. 6 Group took place on the 25th September, 1942. By the end of 1942 the Royal Canadian Air Force Squadrons, Nos. 405, 419, and 425 had arrived, to be followed later by Nos. 424, 426 and 428.

On the 1st January 1943, Topcliffe was officially designated an R.C.A.F. station, but from time to time R.A.F. personnel formed part of both ground and aircrew. Aircraft were Halifax's and Wellingtons, and the role of the station was to contribute to the ever increasing effort being made by Bomber Command. In mid-1943, No. 1659 Operations Conversion Unit moved to Topcliffe and crews were trained for Halifax's and Lancasters. The Unit Diary for 1943 records that the conversion of 423 crews to new aircraft had been completed. From September 1940 to March 1943 squadrons at Topcliffe and the satellites flew on 3,102 operational sorties. Towards the end of 1943 Topcliffe was officially transferred to No. 7 Group (Training) of Bomber Command, although training had been its main role for sometime. From January 1944, the Conversion Unit pushed out a continuous stream of trained crews to the squadron and to achieve this, the unit flew an average of 1,750 hours per month. In June 1945, the training school re-equipped with Lancasters. Topcliffe continued as a training unit until the end of the war, when it was used as an R.C.A.F. Holding Unit. through which thousands of Canadians passed on repatriation.

In September 1946. No. 5 Air Navigation School moved to Topcliffe from Jurby. The school was equipped with Ansons and later with Wellingtons. and the training of 5 courses began on the 14th October, 1946. No. 5 Air Navigation School became No. 1 A.N.S. Topcliffe and later moved to R.A.F. Hullavington in July 1949, and Topcliffe was taken over by Transport Command. The station accommodated Nos. 47, 53 and 297 squadrons, all of which had just returned from America where they had taken part in the Berlin Airlift, Valletta, Yorks and Hastings were used and passengers carried included His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, The Right Honourable Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary) and The Right Honourable R. A. Butler (Chancellor of the Exchequer).

In September 1952, Topcliffe was the scene of much Press Activity, as it was one of the Hastings from this unit supporting the North Greenland Expedition, that crashed in bad visibility on the ice-cap. On the 15th September, 1952, in bad weather conditions and very little visibility, one of the Hastings (Flt. Lt. Clancy), whilst trying to see the very small D7i hit the ground. The captain somehow stopped the aircraft cartwheeling by using his strength against the turning movement of the aircraft. As a result of the struggle his seat and backrest were twisted out of position. The aircraft came to rest with surprisingly few injured crew members. The Engineer F. S. Burke was unconscious with bad head injuries and two of the passenger/observers had injuries. After about an hour, the crash scene was reached by Cdr. Simpson and other members of B.N.G.E. A base was set up and everything done to alleviate the hardship of the injured men. Medical supplies and other immediate needs were dropped next day by other Hastings. The crew then settled down to practical antic survival training. Mention is made several times of the leadership and ingenuity of Flt. Lt. Clancy. On one occasion, huge steaks were dropped to the survivors by American aircraft and this resulted in a 'guest night' being held in the fuselage of the aircraft with the B.N.G.E. members as guests. After a week in terrible conditions, the temperature was- 390 F, an American Albertros Amphibian managed to land on the ice-cap and took off the three injured men. The pilot of the Albertros was

quite prepared to taxi all or part of the way to Thule, but fortunately managed to take off. Two days later another aircraft, a Ski Dakota, managed to land and take off the rest of the crew. Meanwhile Topcliffe was besieged by the Press and the B.B.C. as the crash and survival were top news of the day in the U.K. The station was flooded with calls and mail offering sympathy, goodwill and practical help, with everything from food to blankets. When the relief Hastings took off it received a 'Royal' departure and was packed with donations to help the survivors. Clancy and company had now reached Iceland and then flew home. Their reception at Topcliffe was according to eye-witnesses, a triumph for Flt. Lt. Clancy as he turned out to be a natural and modest raconteur. It took three hours for the crew to clear the press. Final words came from Cdr. Simpson, who in a letter to 'The Times' commended Clancy for his "leadership and ingenuity in relieving the suffering of the injured men and maintaining everybody's morale". .

During this time, two other Hastings from Topcliffe took Sir William Penny, a team of scientists and some very secret equipment to Australia for what was to be Britain's 'A' Bomb in the Monte Bello Islands.

If this was not enough, the Nekuip Coup d'état in Egypt necessitated a stand-by of a further two aircraft.

A gradual change of role took place in the Summer of 1952, when Coastal Command Squadrons (36, 203 and 210) moved to Topcliffe from R.A.F. St. Eval. In the Spring of 1953, Transport Command aircraft left Topcliffe and the station came under the control of No. 19 Group Coastal Command. Nos. 203 and 210 squadrons were at this time flying Lancasters but later converted to Neptunes. In June 1953, No. 203 squadron provided an escort for H.M.S. Britannia, with Her Majesty The Queen aboard, between The Bay of Biscay and the English Channel. Topcliffe remained within Coastal Command until March 1957, when the station became again an Air Navigation School.

From March 1957, to January 1968, R.A.F. Topcliffe was the home of No. 1 A.N.S. in No. 25 Group, Flying Training Command. No. 1 A.N.S. had been disbanded at Hullavington in April 1954, but was revived again in the Spring of 1957 at Topcliffe, where its role was to relieve No. 2 A.N.S. of some of its commitments. Initially, one task was the training of Radio Observers for Fighter Command, but in May 1957, the first Navigation Refresher Course assembled. Varsityes and Valettas were used for training.

No. 1 A.N.S. left Topcliffe in December 1961, and moved to Stradishall, and a new Chapter in the history of the station opened on 1st January, 1962 with the arrival of No. 1 Air Electronics School from Hullavington. In the Autumn of '62, Topcliffe renewed its association with Transport Command, for in addition to the Air Electronics School, the Northern Communication Squadron operated from this unit, using Devon, Anson and Pembroke aircraft. To these, aircraft were added in July 1965, the Beagle Basset.

In the Royal Air Force in 1956, communications from aircraft were the responsibility of the Air Signallers, as a secondary task, the signallers were responsible for the simple fault-finding and the control of the electrical systems. With the advent of the 'V' Bomber

and more complex equipment in maritime operations, a need arose for a new air-crew member, who could operate complex airborne equipment and advise Command at all levels on the use of this equipment, and to meet these requirements, the Air Electronics Officer was involved. The syllabus of No. 1 Air Signallers School at Swanton Morley in Norfolk was extended and in July 1956, the training of 11 Air Electronics Officers began. The first Chief Instructor was Wing Commander Ramsey, a member of the Technical (Signals) Branch. At the same time, a shorter course was instituted, to convert commissioned and non-commissioned Air Signallers to the new category. In recognition of the changing role, No. 1 Air Signallers School became the Air Electronics School on the 1st April, 1957. This No. 1 Air Electronics Course passed out on the 10th July, 1957, when the Commander-in-Chief Flying Training Command, Air Marshal Sir Richard Atcherley, K.B.E., C.B., A.F.C., presented brevets to the course, which was then posted to the newly formed 'V' Bomber conversion units. During the training of the first course, Wing Commander McGreig, a navigator with Special Signals Qualifications, took over as Chief Instructor. In December 1957, the Air Electronics School moved to Hullavington in Wiltshire. A regular Winter Survival training scheme was carried out in the Cairngorms, and other features of leadership and expedition training included the Devises-Westminster canoe race and the setting up of a Cross Channel canoe record. Wing Commander Maynard arrived in December 1962, to relieve Wing Commander Banyard as Chief Instructor. A year later the school moved to Topcliffe and the leadership and field training was soon adapted to the new area with the exercises quickly taking place in the Hambleton Hills. In December 1962, occurred the first Air Electronics Officers Reunion Dinner at which seventy A.E.O.'s had as the guest of honour, the Air Officer Commanding No. 25 Group, Air Vice-Marshal H. J. Kirkpatrick, C. B. , C.B.E., D.F.C., M. A.

The school's first Air-Electronics Officer Chief Instructor, was Wing Commander L. Davies, arrived in March 1963, and held the post until June 1965, when relieved by another Air Electronics Officer, Wing Commander W. J. Heeley.

Royal Air Force Topcliffe closed and the Army took over on the 26th October, 1973. It is now Topcliffe Barracks.

A Farewell Message from the Station Commander at Royal Air Force Topcliffe

What is it about Topcliffe that makes it such a congenial place in which to live and work?

With the impending closure of the station as a Royal Air Force establishment I have been pondering on the ingredients that blend to create what is one of the happiest units I have been privileged to serve at.

The location, of course, is a major feature, Topcliffe being neatly positioned between the Moors and Dales which dominate this beautiful part of the world. The shape of the camp with its compact technical, domestic and married quarter sites is conducive to community life, so to is the size of Topcliffe. With its current strength of about 700, including about 100 Army, and 150 civilian employees, plus 250 or so dependants in

married quarters everyone knows everyone else at least by sight. The neat and tidy appearance of the station also contributes to our pleasing environment.

However, there is some other factor at work at Topcliffe, something less tangible but nevertheless all pervasive and important. Call it atmosphere or spirit. It is a happy contented feeling of the kind one experiences on entering a joyful home. I believe that even the least sensitive among us experience this feeling at Topcliffe even though we may not always manage to identify or express it. Possibly this atmosphere is produced by the thousands of people who have lived and worked at this station. Certainly for at least 20 years in its many different operational and training roles Topcliffe has had an enviable reputation for being a happy thriving station. We who are here now are but the latest to enjoy it.

This is the age of big business. Even in the Service the demands of efficiency and cost effectiveness are producing conglomerates. Fortunately, the Royal Air Force is fully alive to the value of the individual and the need to ensure that his interests are not submerged in an ocean of technicalities or bureaucracy. In the Service, as in the world at large, it is people or more properly, persons-that count. Now the people we identify collectively as Topcliffe are dispersed throughout the Service, although happily many will be going to other stations in Yorkshire. I hope that the postings are to the liking of everyone (although I confess to some qualms about mine) ; and I am confident that wherever our people go they will take with them the spirit which has characterised Topcliffe. I have the dubious and unsought distinction of being the last station commander at Topcliffe. Moreover I have had only a year in this choice post. But this is not only an end of term report of a departing Station Commander. It is a valedictory statement too, and on behalf of all of us who are leaving Topcliffe.

We would wish to thank all those who have helped make the station a highly efficient training unit and a lively, happy community in which to live. It would be unwise to catalogue the individuals and organisations who, have made outstanding contributions for one may be unfair by praising some and failing to mention others. Indeed it would not only be invidious to make such distinctions it would also be exceedingly difficult for there is no section of the station which has not excelled at some time or in some manner. It is the concerted efforts of everyone, working harmoniously that has earned Topcliffe the praise of our higher formations and the envy of other stations.

I am immensely proud to have been associated with Topcliffe. My wife and I have been supremely happy in this friendly, efficient station. Our thanks go to all who have made it so, to all members of the station, servicemen, civilians and dependants, with whom we have had the pleasure of working In this shrinking world and Service we shall surely meet again to warmly recall the splendid times that were Royal Air Force Topcliffe. Good fortune to you all and thank you.

The Station Commander,
(Group Capt. Wm. C. Milne)

The actual hand-over was on the 26th October, 1973.

TOPCLIFFE AND ASENBY BY-PASS

In 1963, a Government White Paper, "The North East Programme for Regional Development and Growth", announced that special funds were to be set aside for the project because the Government had recognised the need for improvement between the A1 and Teesside. Except for the Borrowby Hill - Knayton by-pass, which is under construction, the Asenby -Topcliffe by-pass is the only outstanding section of the 22 mile carriageway still to be built.

The proposal is to construct a dual carriageway road about 1½ miles long on the South-east side of Topcliffe and Asenby to join the existing dual carriageway roads at each terminal point. The length of the Trunk Road to be superseded by the proposed by-pass lies between Common House, and the Bottoms, at Asenby. Quoting a survey prepared by the Northern Economic Planning Council in 1969, Mr. Graham said " It is a matter of regret that Teesside is still served by a public road system built before the last war and now a very large chemical complex and a large steel complex, both built since the end of the last war.

The main road from Teesside to the A1 is inadequate and is a source of much dissatisfaction among users of the road. We consider the matter of road improvements to and from this major port should have been given higher priority. Commenting on the lorry traffic through the village at 12% a year which is much higher than the national average". There is no doubt the serious traffic conditions on the existing road, especially through Topcliffe, demonstrate that a by-pass is essential and extremely urgent." It is contended that not only is the need for the by-pass beyond question, but also the proposals represent the most practicable improvement scheme. It is further submitted that a proper balance has been achieved between the conflicting demands of road traffic and the need to make adequate provision to accommodate private interest and to protect the environment of the two villages.

The need for a by-pass at Topcliffe and Asenby was extremely urgent because lorry traffic through the two villages had doubled since 1965, it was claimed at a five hour public enquiry conducted by a Inspector for the Department of the Environment at Topcliffe on Tuesday, 22nd January, 1974. The meeting was unanimous in its support of the proposed by-pass, the only objectors being four people who disagreed with the details concerning its line of construction.

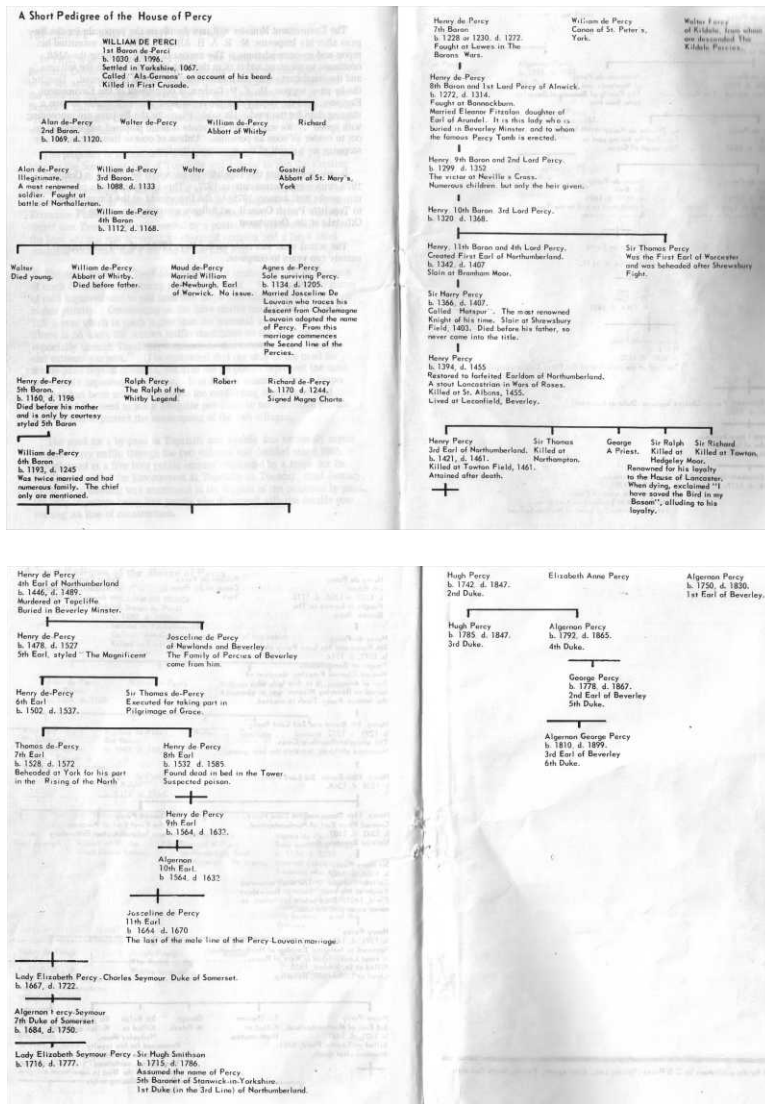
The Environment Minister will now decide on the proposals for the Bypass after his Inspector. Mr. R. A. H. Allen, M.I.C.E., has submitted his report and recommendations. The amount of traffic utilising the A168 continues to increase and it is in the best interests of both the villages and the inhabitants that the traffic situation should be relieved. Despite the by-pass support, Mr. F. M. Graham, a department of the Environment Engineer, told the inquiry that the department was still unable to give a starting date for the road. He said -Plans for the By-pass are proceeding with speed". We

want to get the whole scheme prepared and ready to go out to tender as soon as possible. Unless of course there may arise any stoppage as a result of the economic situation. -

It is expected that the Topcliffe By-pass will be started in October, 1975. with a completion date in 1977. This information was passed this week (20th January 1975) by the Department of the Environment to Topcliffe Parish Council and follows a visit to the village by Officials of the Department.

The actual start was made on 3rd May, 1976, and will take approximately two years to complete.

A Short Pedigree of the House of Percy



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Webmaster of St-Columba's Church Topcliffe. 11/12/02

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