

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 10 – April 2021 Edited by Anne Taylor

Dear all

Our 10th edition – myths, stories and legends. I had no idea when I started these newsletters in July 2020, that I would still be editing them, almost a year later. The Society usually takes a break after the April meeting and re-convenes in the autumn, so I shall do the same with the newsletters; the next one will be in September, with details of the future lecture programme. I hope these can be ‘real’ meetings, but they may have to be by Zoom. We shall not be organising summer trips this year but committee members have put together a list of venues you might like to try for yourselves, see the extra page enclosed.

Also enclosed is a short questionnaire about venues and meeting times – we have a few suggestions and would like your views please. Final Zoom meeting of this season is Keith Jagger’s film “Ten Westmorland Villages” Monday 19 April, 7pm, book with me as usual.

Anne Taylor at241@cam.ac.uk



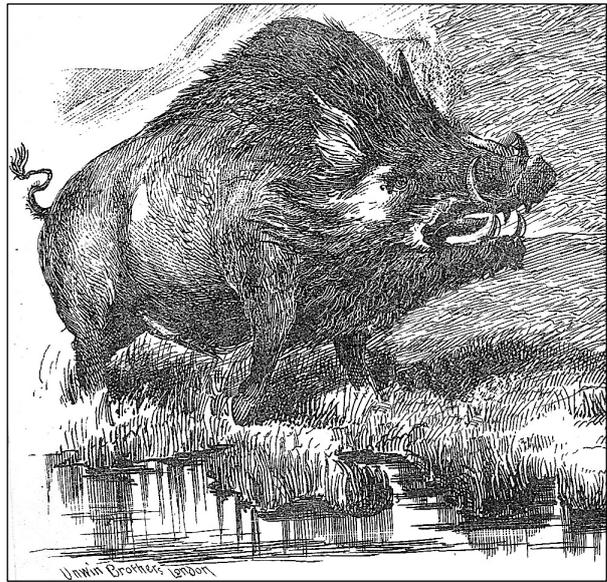
Wild Boar Fell, by Jean Marshall
 (of Pendragon Gallery, see March newsletter)

WILD BOAR FELL

Ann Sandell

Dominating the west of Mallerstang Valley, opposite Mallerstang Edge, the high and familiar peak of Wild Boar Fell towers over much of Upper Eden. There is a legend associated with this fell from when Hugh De Morville (died 1202) owned Pendragon Castle. Morville is accused of being one of the four knights who assassinated Saint Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, on 29 December 1170. It is said he

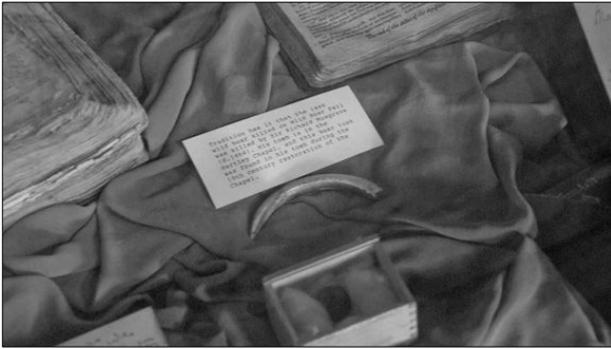
was the lookout at the door and didn’t actually participate in the murder. After the incident, legend says Morville returned to Pendragon Castle but felt unable to rest there because every time he looked at the profile of Wild Boar Fell he could see a strong suggestion of the recumbent Bishop’s face and mitre; the sight feeding his guilt.



From an engraving in *Legends and Historical Notes on places of North Westmoreland* by Thomas Gibson 1887

There are several local stories about why Wild Boar Fell was so named. One involves a Victorian Methodist preacher killing the boar with a dry sermon thrust into its mouth. Another involves Christopher Ewebank chasing a boar but this second is rather similar to that of Captain Ewebank chasing a deer at Ewebank Scar, where he fell to his death. However, there is additional detail to this second tale – that Phillip Hartley continued the chase with the boar killing his dogs and fatally wounding him. Now enter a giant who found the savage boar which sprang:

*Upon the man, who gave a jump,
 Then let him pass beneath,
 Then with a double thump
 Just laid him on the heath.
 So fell the savage boar
 Which gave the title to the hill
 That ne’er will pass away,
 For it is called Wild Boar Fell unto this day.*



The boar's tusk, on display in Kirkby Stephen Parish Church, photographed with the permission of Kirkby Stephen Parochial Church Council

The story that has the most credence, and is repeated by many authors, is that Wild Boar Fell is so named because it was where Sir Richard Musgrave, (born 1398, died 9 November 1464) of Hartley Castle, killed the last wild boar in England. Sir Richard is buried in the elaborate tomb nearest the choir stalls in Hartley Chapel, Kirkby Stephen Parish Church. When this chapel was being renovated in 1847, the tomb was opened and two sets of bones were found, plus a boar's tusk, giving some credibility to the tale. The other bones probably belonged to Sir Richard's wife, Margaret Elizabeth Betham, who died the same year. The boar's tusk is now in a glass display case inside the church.

Sources

- Rev. W. Nicholls, *The History and Traditions of Mallerstang Forest and Pendragon Castle*, John Heywood, Manchester 1883 (reprint paperback Kirkby Stephen Press 2014).
- John Hamilton, *Mallerstang Dale*, Broadcast Books, 1993.
- J. Close, (1816-1891) "The Westmorland Poet." *Tales and Legends of Westmorland. Life, Manners, and Customs of the "Olden Time"* selected by Ann Sandell, 2005. Kirkby Stephen: Cerberus Printing, (J. Close, *Once a year, Tales & Legends of Westmorland No. 1*. J. Close, 1862).
- Douglas Birkbeck, *A History of Kirkby Stephen*, Soulby: Cito Press, 2000, quoting Thos. Gibson, M.D., *Legends and Historical Notes on places of North Westmoreland*. Appleby: J. Whitehead & Son, 1887.
- Dawn Robertson & Peter Koronka, *Secrets & Legends of Old Westmorland*, South Stainmore and Cumbria Council Library Service: Pagan Press, 1992.



Just as Upper Eden has its stories about the last wild boar, so Humphrey Head is supposed to be where the last wolf was killed.

THE LAST WOLF poem by Wendy Graham

Lonely I stand by the water's edge,
With nowhere else to run.
Breathless I wait by the lapping tide,
I feel that my journey's done.
The long hard chase from the distant fells,
Through the forest and down past the lake,
With hounds at my heels, and the cries of the
men,
Not pausing my thirst for to slake.
So now I stand, at this edge of the land
I must turn to meet my fate,
In the blink of an eye, the spear is let fly
And its path is unerringly straight.

Editor's Note: *Humphrey Head is a limestone outcrop near Allithwaite that juts into the treacherous sands of Morecambe Bay. Local legend has it that the last wolf in England was killed here in 1390 by John Harrington from nearby Wraysholme Tower after a chase all the way from the Coniston Fells. Of course details of the legend differ from known facts; for example Wraysholme Tower is a 15th century building as opposed to 14th, and John Harrington died in 1347, so the dates do not match. John and his wife are entombed at Cartmel Priory, but no wolves are depicted. However the Priory weathervane is in the form of a wolf's head. Wolves were still alive to be run to ground a century later; in 1433 Henry VI was sponsoring wolf hunts.*

For more detail on this question, visit the Cumbria Local History Federation website, www.clhf.org.uk and go to CLHF Resources, and the Bulletin Archives. An article on the Last Wolf is in Bulletin 84, pages 23-24. All the previous Bulletins are archived on the site, with many interesting articles – well worth a look.

www.clhf.org.uk



Who killed England's last wolf?

Those that know the legend put the blame firmly on John Harrington – he who built Holker Hall and whose effigy is found in Cartmel Priory.



THE HAND OF GLORY

by Elizabeth Davy

Many members will already know this story, but for those of you who don't ...

The Hand of Glory was the right hand of a convicted criminal taken from a corpse hanging from a gibbet, at a certain time of night. An amount of fat had to be obtained from the same source to make the candle which, when burning in the pickled and dried hand, gave miraculous powers to those who used it.

It was said that the flame caused all those nearby to become paralysed or stupefied, thus making robbery and murder easy for the owner of the Hand. The Hand of Glory was a much valued charm in the underworld community but, although there are many records of them, they don't turn up in antique shops or as family heirlooms.

However there is certainly at least **one** left, and I have seen it.

As a child I was often taken to museums and I have vivid memories of objects I saw in their tall glass cases. The Hand of Glory was in Whitby Museum and the little brown claw, deprived now of its magic powers, looked so fragile and filled me with such excited fascination that I have never forgotten it. Twenty years later I was thrilled to find that a Hand of Glory had actually been used at Spital on Stainmore, on a dark and stormy night in 1797.

At that time Spital was an Inn, run by George Alderson and his family. They had traded well at Brough Hill Fair and were putting away their money while the maid, Bella, drew the curtains and began to lock up; then she found an old woman on the doorstep, soaking wet and wrapped in a large cloak. George invited the old woman in and offered food and a bed for the night, both of which were refused. The family went to bed, leaving their guest asleep by the fire; Bella tidied up, feeling strangely uneasy. When she noticed a long riding boot beneath the cloak (some versions say a spur), she decided to pretend to fall asleep in her chair, and watch.

Soon the man, for it was indeed a man, pulled from his pocket a withered hand that clutched a candle, and lit the candle from the fire's embers. It burned brightly and the sleeping members of the household upstairs fell into an even deeper sleep.

The man then went to unlock the door and summon his friends but, as he did so, the maid

managed to fling herself at his unsuspecting back and push him out. She quickly locked the door again, blew out the Hand of Glory and rushed upstairs to wake the household. George's son grabbed his musket and fired out of the window, twice. There was silence, then one of the robbers came forward and said they would go away if they could have the Hand back. The answer was another musket shot, the robbers ran away and all was over.

It was said that the Hand of Glory remained at Spital for many years afterwards.

This story was demanded by my young grandchildren, every time we travelled through Stainmore, looking out for Spital.

Editor's note: *This story was published in About Yorkshire, 1884, by Thomas and Katharine Macquoid, but similar stories appear all over Europe; one of the earliest was recorded in the late 16th century. For this version, set in Spital, the date is sometimes given precisely, as 27 October 1797, and in other versions the maid can only extinguish the candle using milk.*

Spital is on the Roman road section of the A66 not far from Rey Cross, on the way to Barnard Castle, NY910121.

Francis B Chancellor repeats the story in Around Eden, 1954, giving Macquoid as his source, and Jane Gardam re-tells it in her 1981 novel The Hollow Land. A Hand of Glory also appears in the Harry Potter novels by JK Rowling, and in several horror films. Kirkby Stephen Grammar School pupils appeared in "The Hand of Glory" as part of an evening entertainment 1959 produced by Arthur Salter.



There is still a Hand of Glory in Whitby Museum, found in a cottage at Danby, and given to the museum in 1935, see this link for more information:
www.thewhitbyguide.co.uk/hand-of-glory/



BOGGLES

Anne Taylor

Boggle, bogle, boggart, bogeyman, brownie or dobbie are all words used to describe a ghost or mischievous wandering spirit. These spirits were known to sour the milk or stop the cream turning to butter, so a witch stone or a piece of rowan wood might be hung over the door of the byre or dairy, as protection. A witch stone is a stone with a natural hole through it – miners used to collect them too, to wear around their necks for luck. The sculpted, water-worn stones that top garden walls were also known as fairy stones or witch stones, placed there in the past to keep all these spirit intruders away. Today we just think of them as decorative. Dobbies and brownies are more benign than boggles, and could be appeased with a small bowl of milk left out overnight in the dairy. The rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) was thought to be a powerful protection against all evil spirits – rowan trees were planted beside the farmhouse, and farmers and drovers used goads or gads cut from a rowan when moving their stock:

*“Woe to the lad
Without a rowan tree gad”.*

It was thought that several boggles and dobbies wandered around Kirkby Stephen. Jingling Annas was a ‘rather aggressive ghost’ that walked on Frank’s Bridge at night, jangling her chains. She was said to have been a prisoner at Hartley Castle and drowned in the river after escaping. However, some stories say she haunts a former bridge over the Eden, just outside Kirkby Stephen, on the Appleby Road.

The Orton Dobbie is remembered in lines written by Dr Thomas Gibson – a spirit (or was it?) behind all sorts of strange happenings in the 1850s in an isolated farmhouse:

*The cradle rocks, the kettle jumps off t’fire,
And t’churn is met walking quite entire,
Without the aid of man or woman’s wit,
No rest at all – the cause knows not a bit.*

*A domestic, more than half suspected,
Was watched, but seldom was detected.
The wise went to unravel; the sages met,
But nothing could make out or knowledge get.*

Dr Gibson noted that many people thought the Orton Dobbie had been arranged by the local residents ‘for pecuniary profit.’

Then there are the white ladies who are said to haunt Pendragon Castle at midnight, and a little further south along the road in Mallerstang is

Boggle Green, just past The Thrang, on the eastern side of the road. A place where you might encounter a boggle perhaps?



Holed flint stones from the beach, ideal witch stones

SOURCES

Thomas Gibson: *Legends & Historical Notes of North Westmorland*, 1887

John Hamilton: *Mallerstang Dale*, 1993

Chris Howkins: *A Dairymaids Flora*, 1994

F Marian McNeil: *The Silver Bough*, 1956

Peter Lewis: *Did You Know*, 2020 pers comm



THE LAST TREE OF INGLEWOOD FOREST: TO A PICTURE FRAME

Anne Taylor

Mary Powley of Langwathby was a notable 19th century poet. Here she records what happened to the last oak tree of this ancient woodland:

*Last tree of the forest – last oak of the wood!
That landmark and umpire, six ages hath stood.
When the men of Carlisle came their boundary to ride,
'Twas to thee that they looked, o'er the moss, as their guide.*

*Apart – not in ranks, with the chiefs of the wood,
With his children around him, the patriarch stood.
And here is a relic – a frame made of part
Of the old forest giant’s unperishing heart.*

Powley continues for a further six verses and then adds this note: “On Wragmire Moss, until 1823, there was a well-known oak, known as the last tree of Inglewood Forest, which had survived the blast of 700 or 800 winters. It fell from sheer old age ... on the 13th June 1823. Relics of the wood of this fine old oak are preserved in many homes of Cumberland people; in forms of cabinet, sideboard, bookcase, and picture-frames.”

SOURCE: Powley, M. 1875. *Echoes of Old Cumberland, Poems and Customs*.

