





# **800 YEARS AND COUNTING**

**A celebration of the eighth centenary of  
Chapel-en-le-Frith and its church**

**by**

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# Down in Yon Forest

**Ann Orrett**

I am going to introduce this first piece with a quotation from Bruce Cockburn, a Canadian singer-songwriter:

*“If there were a contest for the title of the spookiest Christmas carol, this ought to win hands down. Collected earlier in this century by John Jacob Niles, it hails from North Carolina. I believe it to be of great age, though, both because of the melodic style and because of the lyrics, which resonate with the Grail myth, and with the ancient custom of every few years draining the blood out of one's king on to the soil to ensure its continuing fertility.”*

## ***Why did we stop doing that?***

The words to this song are closely linked to the Corpus Christi Carol, written down by a London grocer and first printed in his book *Commonplace Book of Richard Hill* early in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It was repurposed by Benjamin Britten during the 1930s.

I am going to sing a better-known version, collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1906 or 1907 from a Mr Hall of Castleton. It was recorded by Shirley Collins, an English folk singer. Her performance deviates slightly from the Ralph Vaughan Williams version. She didn't include the third stanza,

It has been suggested that “the hall” mentioned in the song was Bowden Hall in the King's Forest; so I think “the bells” could have been the bells of St Thomas à Becket church, which sounded the curfew each night, and were traditionally rung on Shrove Tuesday for the confession service; and of course every Sunday.

There's a caveat. The music and lyrics of folk songs, Christian or otherwise, change over time through oral communication. They weren't written down or scored in times past. You know what the memory is like, and what musical instruments you have to hand.

For me, the stone, the hall, the may tree (hawthorn) blossoming, the link there to Glastonbury and Jesus's crucifixion, the forest, the

noise of flowing water and the colours, all evoke our local landscape. Rather than “spooky” I find the song strangely peaceful and contemplative. You can't call my version authentic. The song is still evolving!

Some of the above information is attributed to a blog by Christian Nikolaus Opitz:

<https://historienerrant.wordpress.com/2011/12/23/down-in-yon-forest-a-song-about-christmas-easter-and-probably-the-holy-grail/>

- 1 Down in yon forest there stands a hall  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
It's gilded all over with purple and pall  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*
  
- 2 Down in that hall there is a bed  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
All scarlet the cover that's over it spread  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*
  
- 3 At the bed-side there lies a stone  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
Which the sweet Virgin Mary knelt upon  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*
  
- 4 Down under that bed there runs a flood  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
A half it runs water, a half it runs blood  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*
  
- 5 Down at the bed's feet there springs a thorn  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
It blooms its white blossoms the day he was born  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*

6 And over that place the moon shines bright  
*The bells of Paradise I heard them ring*  
To show that our Saviour was born that night  
*And I love my Lord Jesus above anything.*

\*

Eight hundred years since our first church was consecrated and our town was founded ...

But people lived and died around here long before that: witness the round barrow on Sitting Low, the henge at Dove Holes, the stone circles at Green Low, the hill fort of Castle Naze. Who were those people? What languages did they speak? Are we their descendants?

And there are traces of a Roman encampment with buried human remains. A holy well called Nanny's Well - "Nanny" was probably St Ann. In Anglo-Saxon times we were in north Mercia, and then the Danelaw. Our area became a royal manor owned directly by the crown.

When the Normans came, the Anglo-Danish royal manor became the Royal Forest of Peak. Crown property. It comprised Longdendale in the north, Hopedale in the east, and Campana, between Castleton and the River Goyt. Campana included us. It was also part of Hope parish; Hope boasted the only church in the Forest.

The Harrying of the North crashed the local population. Bowden, Chinley, Tunstead, Blackbrook and Combs aren't even mentioned in the Domesday Survey.

***Voice off: Harrying of the North? What was that? Who was Harry?***

Oh, Harry was long gone. No, dischuffed locals killed King William's officials in York, and that made Willie a very cross king. He went blue in the face, stamped his feet and ordered the entire population of the north of England to be slaughtered and their fields laid to waste.

***Voice off: Bit of an over-reaction.***

Ah well, he was a Norman bastard. Literally. Illegitimate son of Robert the Devil, Duke of Normandy.

*So what does the Domesday survey say about Campana? Anything?*

“Vasta est”. It is waste. Like all of northern England.

William Peveril, Bailiff of the Royal Forest, built an administrative centre at Wormhill but later moved it to a point between Castleton, Tideswell and Bowden. That location was called Peak Forest. It was where Willie Peveril lived. A church was built there.

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## **The Castle**

**Cheryl Baker**

William the Elder decided to build Peveril Castle at some point around 1070. It's not known exactly why the castle was built, but let us imagine one possibility.

A Forester swung into his saddle and glanced over the smooth track ahead of him. All was clear, but they were still in the manor yard. He and his master William would be riding for many hours to check the lead mine near Mam Tor. Much could hide in the trees and undergrowth in such wild lands.

'My lord, are you sure we don't need more men to ride with us? The Danes are on the move again –'

'Silence!' William snarled as he trotted out of the gate.

Harold bit back the fear and checked his sword was within easy reach. His lord was in a foul mood this morn. Too much talk of the world never sat well when his head was so full of ale fumes.

After several hours, the forested moors gave way to rough uplands, which turned to jagged stone teeth. Thankfully, the most dangerous thing they had seen along the way was a wild boar grubbing for acorns.

William paused on the high plane above the mine, surveying the surrounding hills and valleys.

'Look there –' The wind ruffled his fine wool tunic as he pointed to a spike of rock set at the end of a deep chasm known as the Devil's

tail. 'That would make a fine place to hold our swainmotes. Well above the reach of any Saxon dog.'

'You speak truth, my lord. No rogue would dare lay siege to that mighty spire. But how would those with legal business enter?'

Harold's excitable mount shifted, obviously bored with the discussion.

William shrugged. 'Are you blind? The chasm on the north side is little more than a ditch. My children could cross that, but I shall build a bridge for soft old men such as you.'

Harold winced at the rebuke. Perchance he would learn to hold his tongue one day, but not today.

'May we press on, Sir? The light is fading and the curfew bells will ring afore we reach your manor if we linger overlong.'

'The bells do not toll for me and I wish to have a closer study of that.'

William nudged his courser into motion down the hill. As they trotted past the deep cave, a stiff wind blew over them, but no demons rushed out. Then they moved around the base of the ridge and William craned his head this way and that. Obviously looking for routes that could be used to attack. But there were none on this side. So they pressed on to Cave Dale, a narrow gully between two rocky ridges. The steep path quickly reduced their progress to a skittering walk as hooves scrambled to find purchase on the slick rocks.

After they reached level ground, William waved at the crag again.

'Since the land stands apart on this side as well, it shall be a fine place for my stronghold. I trust you will build a fitting keep on those ramparts within the year.'

A surge of pride rushed through Harold, quickly followed by the daunting nature of this task.

'My lord, where shall I source the materials?'

William kicked his sleek grey mount into a trot.

'Make use of any stone you find. There is more than enough lying about in these hills. Save the timber for the hind and stags.'

Harold nodded. Although there was probably not enough loose stone, he could easily hire labourers to dig up more. And there was some finished stone at the old fort three miles away. If laid in the Norman herringbone fashion, that would add some regal elegance to this northern wasteland.

\*

***Did Peveril live in his castle at Castleton?***

No. The castle was only used for detaining and trying major offenders against the Laws of Vert and Venison and for occasions such as tournaments.

***Laws of vert and venison? What were they?***

Those were the laws forbidding commoners from taking trees or game animals from within the Royal Forest. The people were strictly controlled! Curfew bells were rung throughout the Forest, including Campana, from 1060 onwards.

***But if there were no people left after the Harrying of the North, who was there to control?***

Well, the population started to grow again. Both Bowden and Combs feature in 13th century records. Bowden was probably the most populous village.

***Who did all the controlling, then?***

Under the authority of Peveril the Bailiff were the Verderers, who were knights of the realm directly responsible to the crown. The Verderers implemented Vert and Venison offences and prosecuted lesser offences at the smaller courts, the swainmotes. Then there were the Regarders, knights of the realm appointed by the King to make collective inspections of the state of the Forest every three years. Below them, selected local people took office by letters patent as Foresters, sworn to protect Vert and Venison in their own neighbourhood and to manage animal husbandry in the Forest. Or as Agistors, who took rents for grazing in the Forest.

***What were Letters Patent?***

They were formal orders from the king granting a position to an individual; so Foresters were royal appointments, too.

*And what were agistors?*

Agistors were people who took in cattle and cared for them, for payment.

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## **La plainte du forestier (The Forester's Complaint)**

**Ann Orrett**

The curfew bell tolled not for me  
As I pursued my enemy.  
It railed against the stunted oaks.  
Cursèd rain fell from my cloak.  
The ground all sodden, my horse held fast.  
I curled o'er his neck. Each step his last?

They know these ways, those Saxon scum,  
Along paths and ancient roads they run,  
Forewarned those plunderers of game  
Of deer, boar and hare, they're all the same!  
It's been many years and more,  
Since Normans slashed and raped the poor.

The laws of God and King returned.  
And yet these serfs, they've never learned.  
What do they show of care and duty?  
Out for cook-pot or sell their booty.  
I live amongst their heathen kin.  
I do my job. Their smiles are thin.

This man and dog I chase are swift,  
Although they left the deer adrift.  
I turn back, intercept them at the cross.

Church boundary marked; but Ah! my loss:  
I see dog and man brief upon the lea,  
As lightened by the moon they flee.

The rain now eased and finished chase.  
To hearth and warmth and friendly face.  
I stable, dry and feed the horse,  
Who runs a faithful, steadfast course.  
I stride in reddened glow of fire warm,  
Kiss my wife and take her palm.

She leads me through to sit and share.  
The children peep from round la portière.  
We eat beef and barley, a basic stew,  
With gathered herbs from garden grew.  
Abed I pray for family and my sorrow,  
And with God's help, again tomorrow.

\*

## **The Legend of the Black Greyhound**

### **Caroline Vallance**

Deer like a waterfall,  
A torrent running fast.  
Through the forest and past.  
But none for us they say.

Stags, does and fawns,  
So plentiful the beasts,  
End up at our lords' feasts.  
But we take one and we pay.

We cannot be afraid of  
Capture, crime nor fate,  
Just to know our family ate  
Good meat. It's the forest way

No venison for us,

No boar, mutton nor hare.  
Rabbit and pigeon our only fare  
Except on a rare feast day.

Swainmote is held  
Henry de Meadow accused.  
To admit guilt he refused.  
He will need to have his say.

His informer, William,  
Henry does claim,  
Has taken hundreds of game  
With his relatives, by the way.

But the Bailiff  
And the jury will only hear  
Henry's dog Collyng had a deer.  
He must a hundred shillings pay.

William and family  
On the King's beasts have dined  
They are twenty marks fined.  
Neither party spared anyway.

Henry's Greyhound  
Slim, black and gifted,  
Many a deer has lifted.  
A legend to this day.

For many years  
In Chapel could be found  
An Inn, The Black Greyhound,  
Named after Collyng they say.

\*

These various officials became more numerous as the population grew. During the 1100s a hunting lodge was built on a spur of land below Eccles Pike, in a wide valley sheltered by the long, high ridge of the Combs Moss. It was probably at Bowden.

Verderers and Regarders could ride to church in Peak Forest or Hope for weddings, funerals and regular services, but the lesser officials and the population of Campana had to walk, and it was too far. A chapel of ease was needed.

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## **The Foresters**

### **Stephanie Billen**

We knew, you see, that wood would rule,  
That forest laws must be upheld.  
Back then and till the end of time,  
Trees are precious, wood sublime.

We were servants of the king,  
The Royal Forest, our domain.  
Protecting game and wood with zeal  
From peasants who might sneak and steal.

We felt the pain of broken trees,  
Felled by traitors to the king.  
Poachers felt our righteous wrath:  
By law, we'd cut their fingers off ...

We felt our role was almost holy:  
Every vicar picked by us,  
Our chapel theirs by our decision -  
They preached to us with our permission.

Now you stand in Foresters Way,  
Your Aldi shopping stacking up,  
While all around the forest's gone,  
Consumerism - one big con.

We believed that wood would rule.

Instead you've let our life's work die,  
The meaning of that small word Frith  
Shrunken now to hollow myth.

Wake up, and treasure what is left!  
Be a Forester yourself!  
Your trees defend you from the weather:  
Protect them so they last forever.

\*

The Peverils backed the wrong side during the Anarchy of the 12th century, so they lost their lands. The Campana area was given to the earls of Derby. In 1225, the earl gave permission for the foresters to build a chapel in a stretch of woodland within the Forest - a Chapel-en-le-Frith. The chapel was consecrated by Alexander de Stavenby, 43rd Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, on 7th July 1226 and was dedicated to Thomas à Becket. The curfew bell for Campana was now hung in the new chapel. The Foresters appointed the vicar, and their successors continued to appoint vicars for the next 700 years. The original chapel was a much smaller building than the present church, which is mostly 18th century, but from the outset it had a crypt ... which is still there, under the modern building.

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## **Choosing a Vicar**

### **Cheryl Baker**

In the year of our Lord 1226, the Foresters of the Peak had many jobs, such as trapping wolves and maintaining the peace, but their most pressing task was to choose a vicar for the new chapel.

We shall never know precisely how this was done. We could easily imagine that foul spring rain could force two Foresters to seek refuge in the chapel. It was built on the hill where the animal trail from Yorkshire to the Cheshire salt beds crossed the lane from Glossop to Fairfield, so commanded fine views of the region and made it simple for travellers to find.

While the older of the two Foresters shook the rain off his hood, a booming voice from the depths of the building called.

'Thomas – is that you?'

A dark-haired man in a simple green tunic strode into the light of the doorway.

'Ah, Master Richard. You are looking well. Have you met my lieutenant, Adam?'

Thomas clapped his junior partner on the shoulder. The blond man of just sixteen summers bowed his head.

'The wolves are crafty this year. They've moved their den further into the hills and so we must follow, but the rain has mired the trail.'

Richard shook the young man's hand.

'Well met, Sir. Now, since we have gathered, we needs must discuss the matter of the vicar for this fine chapel.' He directed them to some benches in the building's nave.

'Do you think the church will be consecrated before Michaelmas?' Adam asked.

Richard nodded. 'The hope is to have the bishop here in July for St Thomas's day. Why?'

Adam looked sheepish.

'There's a serving lass in Bowden Hall. Her father has agreed we may marry, if I can find a church less than an hour's walk to say our vows.'

Richard chuckled.

'Let us choose with haste. We must not let our fellow disappoint his bride-to-be.'

Thomas scowled as he sat down.

'I have stated my choice as plain as can be. We could send it to the bishop today if you would just agree.'

Adam slumped to the seat.

'I've no wish to deny my elders, but 'tis doubtful that man can read. He gets most of the holy scriptures wrong.'

'But he's a fine lad from a most noble family.'

Thomas pointed at Adam. Richard passed Thomas a tankard of ale.

'How much did they pay you to say that?'

Thomas slammed the cup on the bench.

'That's outrageous. And what of the man you proposed? Your cousin was the most notorious thief I ever met. If he hadn't taken to the church, he'd have hanged for sure.'

Richard crossed his arms.

'You take that back. His bow carried no string, which is no crime.'

Thomas took a swig from the tankard while peering at Richard. The man had cleverly positioned himself so that the window illuminated none of his face.

'His tunic was a' bloody. That's all the evidence I needed.'

Richard flung up his hands.

'He worked on my brother's farm and the cows were in calf. If you think that's as clean as the virgin birth, you're a clod-brained fool.'

Thomas passed the ale to Adam.

Adam took a sip, then leaned forward hesitantly.

'Perchance we appoint a friar? The abbey sends several with their roaming flock every spring.'

Richard snorted.

'You ever seen a skinny monk? They are the least devout among us.'

Thomas opened his satchel and pulled out a round loaf.

'Why else would they live apart? 'Tis so none see all the beer they drink and the meat they eat. What became of the drover's boy? The one that used to bring the messages from Peveril Castle. He was due to be ordained –'

Adam shook his head.

'Stone cold now. Fell off his horse and broke his neck.'

Thomas winced.

'Poor fool. I always said he rode too fast. "Where's the fire?" I used to say. You all heard me.'

Adam mimed a hand talking.

Richard snorted a chuckle, quickly hidden with a suitably sombre scowl.

'Aye, God rest his soul. Young Adam here is right, though, the illiterate chap's no good. We need a man that can verify wills. Too many wrongs have been done waiting for someone from the manor.'

Thomas stared at his loaf.

'Very well. A schooled man, but not a monk, only leaves your cousin's boy ...'

'He'd know the local area, which may prove useful,' Adam suggested.

'Perhaps ...' Thomas picked at the rough crust while pondering the choices. 'Since he'd hear all the confessions, I would stand by your cousin's nomination, if he passed on any deeds we should know about.'

Richard took a step back.

'You wish me to encourage blasphemy?'

Thomas crossed his arms.

'Nay, the king is appointed by God, so by extension, the forest is God's gift to the king. If someone mentioned to a servant of God they stole from the forest, it's God's providence that we should know and take action.'

Richard shook his head. Thomas's logic was convoluted, but he was too tired to argue it further.

'Very well. I shall mention it to him. But it is between him and God if he takes action.'

A small grin crept over Thomas as he broke the bread into three portions and passed it around the group.

'Good, we are agreed. Now say no more about it. I wish to eat in peace.'

\*

Disputes notwithstanding, the church was founded, vicars were appointed - and weddings were now celebrated in Chapel-en-le-Frith. We'll now move on to more recent aspects of the town's history; but history is continuous, and in many respects the present builds upon the past.

\*

## **Miss Middleton's Wedding Dress**

**Ann Orrett**

1<sup>st</sup> December 1701

Dearest Tom,

Wishing you a happy Christmas Season; I am so sorry that your Work prohibits you from attending our Wedding. I know that Mother and Jack were also looking forward to seeing you, and James says he misses talking to you at the Bull's Head.

It has been such a long time since we saw you last; it was at Father's funeral. Jack is going to give me away at the Wedding. He is using your old posh Breeches; we hope you will not mind; and your old Boots have polished up well, even if they were a little tight for his feet at first; however, the Tanner had a Stretcher that fitted, so now they fit better. I think Jack is planning to keep them for Himself, should he need them for Courting. "They emphasise my calfs," he assures me.

Are you still walking out with Mary? She sounds very pleasant and well educated. It is well that her Father was a Teacher. Who knows but that it will be Your turn to hear Wedding bells, if you are Promoted.

I believe that James and I have planned everything for the Wedding, with much help from Mother and my dear friend Ann. Ann is James's sister, and she was married in October, so she will lend

me the Overskirt, bodice and stomacher of her Wedding Gown, which is welcome news indeed; we are similarly built. I hope it will be Warm enough. Old Peter, the church gardener, who is one of the current Churchwarden's men, a Mr Thornhill - did not you work for him? - said it might Snow. The prospect of walking up Church Brow with my Wedding dress and Riding boots with snow upon the Ground fills me with dismay; but my woollen Cape, though it cannot cover my outfit completely, will be warm. James said I would look beautiful in a Salt Sack, so I must not be worried.

Did you not go to school with Edward Green? He suffered a nasty encounter with an old mare belonging to Mr Richard Bagshaw. Edward was collecting a young Horse for Adam Bagshaw, and the mare, who was in the same Field, took exception to him and kicked him in the chest, killing him stone dead! The Bagshaws paid for the coffin and the funeral. I believe I am warming to Dissenters; and I think James has already done so, even though he is the Parish Clerk.

James had a nasty encounter with a Church Bell on June last. Did I tell you of this in my last letter? I believe I did not, because I was so excited to be engaged, with a Wedding date already agreed.

Local joiners had been asked to remove the great Bell from the tower so it may be recast in Wigan, and James, as Parish Clerk and Blacksmith, was at the bottom, holding the rope. The bell was being lowered on pulleys, one of which broke, so that the Bell fell to the Ground, taking two beams of the Tower with it, swiftly followed by Ezekiel Shuttlesworth, who was above, guiding the Bell, together with his Crowbar and ladders! Neither man took much hurt; both walked away from the devastation.

'It was the kick up the arse from God I needed to Propose to you,' James said later.

The bell is now Recast and the Tower repaired, so the great bell will be Chiming for our wedding, thanks to the Churchwardens and donations from the local Gentry.

The Banns have been read three times and nobody has objected. I have assembled a dried flowerhead band to hold my Veil in place

with a few hairpins; it is only bleached cheesecloth, but it looks most becoming, with the cream cotton Overskirt and bodice, both embroidered with forget-me-nots and wild roses. I shall look like a "vision of loveliness", Mother says. I believe her judgement is not impartial.

Ann is to Visit this afternoon, to tell me of the Gathering to be held at their house after the wedding, and to explain who all their Family are. I expect they will recognise the Dress; but James says I must not concern myself about such trifles, for we will be together at last.

I hope we shall see you at Christmas, if there is not too much Snow. Take good care of yourself. The Wedding is to take place on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, immediately after Morning Service.

All my kisses to you, and kind wishes from all of us here in Chapel-en-le-Frith.

Your sister,

Ann Middleton (soon to be Mrs Ann Pickford).

\*

Let's hope Miss Middleton's wedding went without a hitch. But there are always hitches, even nowadays!

\*

## **A Modern Wedding: a Monologue**

**Anne Cawthorn**

She wanted a traditional church wedding; he wanted Elvis's Chapel in Vegas. She won. Of course. It was to be held at the local church, which was almost 800 years old. All her family's weddings, christenings and funerals had been held there and she wasn't going to break with tradition. He dreaded this formal setting. However, he relaxed when he saw the local vicar on the six o'clock news one

night, reporting his passion for riding rollercoasters on his days off. Perhaps it might not be so formal after all, he thought.

The couple had holidayed in Vegas, and the groom had decided it was the perfect place to propose. In the busyness of organising the holiday, he'd forgotten one important thing: to ask her father for her hand in marriage. They were already friends from the pub, but he wanted to do it properly. The couple were enjoying a meal in a very exclusive restaurant when, realising his omission, he excused himself and nipped out to ring the bride's father at home. Unfortunately, the bride's father was at work, so her mother suggested he ring Ferodo.

***Oh yes: Chapel, home of Ferodo.***

As employees were only permitted to receive important phone calls, her father came to the phone expecting to hear that something awful had happened. Instead, he was greeted with, 'Ay up me old, I'm just ringin' to see if I can marry your daughter,' announcing that they were in a posh restaurant in Vegas and Sylvester Stallone was just two tables away.

After he stopped laughing, her father said yes.

So the wedding was to be held in the ancient church. All was going well. It was a beautiful sunny day; that was, until mid-morning, when it started to rain. Boy, did it rain. By the time the bride and her bridesmaids arrived, the churchwardens were desperately trying to sweep away the mini lake that had built up in front of the church door. The bride seemed unfazed when she saw the puddle. She hoisted up her dress and paddled round it. However, the little bridesmaid, in a white dress and white satin shoes, was eager to jump into the muddy puddle. The bride's mother averted the catastrophe. She saw what was about to happen and promptly picked the bridesmaid up. Just in time.

The service started well, though the bride and groom were extremely nervous, not least because the church was packed. It was fine until they arrived at the part in the vows where they had to repeat, 'Till death do us part.' At this point the groom's nerves got the better of him and he was unaware that he'd repeated the words

incorrectly, by saying them in the wrong order. Not many noticed him say 'till death us do part' in the style of Alf Garnet's 1960s comedy show. But the vicar had, and he was not amused.

'I will repeat it once more,' pronounced the vicar, insisting that the groom needed to say the words correctly. Of course, this made the groom even more nervous, so it came out the wrong way again. To everyone's amazement the vicar insisted they try for a third time, adding that it would have to be said properly. At this point, a deep intake of breath was heard from the whole congregation. The palpable tension spread throughout the church like a Mexican Wave. Everyone was on the edge of their seats anxiously waiting to see what would happen if he got it wrong. Again.

Fortunately, he got it right this time and the relief spread throughout the congregation. Once the tension had subsided, it was replaced by a wave of emotion. Looking behind me, I was surprised to see some of the ushers with tears in their eyes. However, this was nothing compared to the bridesmaids, who stood under the pulpit facing the congregation. They were all crying, but one of them was crying so hard that her false eyelashes floated off her eyes on to her cheeks. The congregation were treated to the sight of her picking them off before handing them to the chief bridesmaid. Much to everyone's amusement, the chief bridesmaid deliberately held them up, examined them, and reached across and ceremoniously placed them in the pulpit on top of the Bible, which was open at the next reading. The vicar must have wondered what they were when he returned to the pulpit to give that reading, but if he did he never showed it.

All went well for the rest of the day, except that the rain continued to pour down in torrents.

As for the vicar, he may be retired now and riding rollercoasters around the world, including Vegas.

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## **INTERVAL**

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# The Running of the Deer

## David and Ann Orrett

Lord Peveril stood on the lordis seat  
And an angry man was he,  
For he heard the sound of a hunter's horn  
Slow winding up the lea.  
He look'd to north, he look'd to south  
East and west looked he.  
'Oh holy cross,' the Norman cried  
'Who hunts in my country?'

'Belike they think the Peveril dead  
Or far from forest walk;  
Woe worth their hunting, they shall find  
Abroad is still the hawk.'  
Again he looked where Helldon hill  
Joins with the konying's dale  
And then once more the bugle blast  
Came swelling along the gale.

'Mount, mount and ride,' the baron cried,  
'The sound comes o'er the lea,  
These outlaws, who now drive my deer,  
Shall soon our quarry be.'  
All down the slope, along the flat  
Against the hill they ride,  
None pull the rein till every steed  
Stands fast at Gautriss Side.

'Hold hard! They're here!' the Peveril said  
And upward held his hand,  
While all his many kept behind  
To wait their lord's command;  
And westwards, on the bolt-edge moor

Beyond the rocky height  
Both hounds and hunters, men and horse  
And deer were all in sight.

'Who are these who break Forest Law,  
Who fear not Peveril's sword?'  
Up spoke Sir Payne t' Peveril, and said  
'Of Bowdon he's the lord;  
Sir Bruno, hight, a franklin brave,  
One of the Saxon swine  
Who feast each day on fat fed beef  
And guzzle ale not wine.'

'Beshrew his horn and beshrew his heart!  
This land he may not ride.  
If he kills a deer, by the Conqueror's bow  
By Forest Law he'll bide.  
Ride on, Sir Payne, and tell the churl  
To cease his hunting cheer  
And come before his surzerain lord  
Who waits his presence here.'

Sir Payne rode swiftly across the dale  
Followed by his gentles three,  
Nor stayed his horse till he had reached  
The hunter's company.  
And then he said, 'Fair sirs, you ride  
And drive our deer as free  
As if this land were all your own  
And not in Forestry.'

Sir Franklin cried, 'I'm not his man,  
And Peveril knows full well  
Though within the bounds of his forest walk  
It likes me sooth to dwell.'

My manor of Bowden I hold in chief  
For good King Harry's might,  
And you can only force me hence  
If strongest in the fight.'

Each Saxon then upraised his spear  
Or twanged his good yew bow  
And the Normans who rode out unarmed  
Couldn't match this threatening show.  
Lord Peveril viewed their bows and spears  
And marked their strong array  
And so grim he smiled, and softly said,  
'We'll right this wrong some day.'

\*

A bell in the church was rung on Shrove Tuesday to summon people to confession at the start of Lent. This is done in many churches in England. The tradition dates back to the first pancake race in Olney, Buckinghamshire, during the 15th century.

The settlement that grew around the chapel of ease, the chapel-in-the-wood-in-the-royal-forest, gradually superseded Peak Forest as the administrative centre. Chapel-en-le-Frith therefore became the “capital” of the Royal Forest of Peak. This made the town locally important. Also, it lay on or close to trade routes between Cheshire and Yorkshire and the south. But it wasn't granted a market until around 1600. Thereafter, the market flourished. You can see the evidence today: the cobbled market square is surrounded by pubs, there's a market cross (which might actually be older than 1600) and there are stocks to accommodate minor miscreants.

\*

## **The Old Pack Horse**

**Simone Hubbard**

I was four and a half when we moved to Chapel-en-le-Frith in 1973. It wasn't the easiest name to spell and pronounce. It is shown on a map in 1579 as The Chapell in ye firthe and there were seven other variations on maps up to 1830 alone!

As I got older it became apparent that spelling it out over the phone was also a challenge - especially when I mentioned the word hyphen!

After I'd got to grips with such a long town name came the name of the pub we'd moved into: the Old Pack Horse. Despite looking at the pub sign of a packhorse for almost sixteen years I never really thought about the history. Before the post code system was widely used we regularly received Christmas cards intended for other Old Pack Horses in the area. I never really questioned why it was such a popular name, but of course we were all on Packhorse routes with our history going back to the mid 15th century.

Essential supplies such as stone, grain, cloth, coal to power the blacksmiths' forges and salt to preserve meat etc. needed to be transported. Teams of up to 40 sturdy packhorses would carry up to 240 lbs each along narrow, muddy and uneven country tracks covering about thirty miles a day, heading to various market towns. They needed to rest, and many packhorse and other inns were born from farmhouses. That was case for our pub. Looking back at the records, it might have been Town-End Farm, but I've not been able to verify that.

As well as providing food, drink and sometimes a place to stay the night, the inns were also a place to meet. In fact a famous boxer Bendigo Thompson stayed at the pub the night before a fight in 1837. There's a field up near Slack Hall known as Bendigo's field where the fight took place. As the need for packhorses dwindled, the use of public houses continued. They were a perfect place to socialise.

This was the case when I lived in the Old Pack Horse from 1973 to 1989. The pub would be busy on most nights and at weekends it was packed.

Indeed it was a busy Saturday night in April 1984 when I met Martin Hubbard. We began dating, and the pub was a convenient place to meet up in. We got engaged when I was 19 and then married the following year in June 1989. Then the Old Pack Horse became our “local”.

Smoking was commonplace throughout the time I lived at the pub. The rooms would be thick with cigarette smoke that stung your eyes and clung to clothes and hair.

For many years, a lady called Alice sometimes played the piano on a Saturday night. It was in the Smoke Room directly below one of our bedrooms. Despite the piano being hideously out of tune and stained with nicotine, the customers loved singing along to the likes of “Roll out the Barrel” - much to our dismay, as we would be trying to sleep upstairs. Of course we were well acquainted with barrels. We all knew when it was dray delivery day as the barrels of beer thudded down to the cellar.

In the book called “The Warming Stone”, Ada Hitchens remembered:

Beer was delivered to the inns from the breweries by horse and dray. Once I remember two horses coming loaded with barrels when one horse took fright at the top of the hill. It bolted and the second horse was sliding behind with sparks going up from its shoes like bonfire night. The barrels rolled off the dray and bounced down the road. People ran in all directions to save injury. One lady was standing on a stool cleaning her windows when a barrel went on to the pavement and missed her by inches.

I don't think “Roll out the Barrel” was composed to remember that incident.

\*

One block of setts in the square near the market cross is supposed to be the place where Robin Hood's legendary companion Will Scarlet died on 14th December 1283. This might remind us of the song with which Ann and Dave began this half of the performance, *The Running of the Deer*. As Ann said, it was adapted from Bella Hardy's rendering of a song collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams early in the 20th

century. It's on Bella's CD, *The Dark Peak and the White*, which contains a number of songs derived from Jewitt's *Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire*. One of them, *Squire Frith's Hunting Song*, has a local connection.

Samuel Frith, generally known as “Squire” Frith, lived a lot later than Robin Hood and Will Scarlett, or Bruno of Bowden. He was the grandson of a Tideswell tallow chandler called Jasper Frith, who came from a local yeoman family. Through a good marriage, Jasper acquired Bank Hall, previously Little Ridge farm on the Marsh Hall estate, and his family became minor gentry. Samuel, the “Squire”, was born in 1753 and died in 1828.

Other halls in the Chapel area are associated with important historical characters. For example, northeast of Slack Hall and Bowden Hall in the east of the parish is Ford Hall. This was the home of the Reverend William Bagshaw, the “Apostle of the Peak”, after he was ejected from the vicarage of Chinley under the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

In 1648, the Duke of Hamilton's army marched south in support of Charles I and were defeated at Preston. The prisoners were marched to Chapel-en-le-Frith and imprisoned in the church for sixteen days. The conditions were so squalid that forty of them died.

***Oh yes. The Black Hole of Chapel. Not our town's proudest moment.***

They're buried in the churchyard. A further ten died when they were marched from Chapel towards Cheshire.

\*

## **A Prisoner's Letter**

**David Orrett**

The nails screamed at me as they were forcefully ripped from where they had lain for hundreds of years. I stepped back to get better leverage and the stone under my foot moved. The last floorboard lifted, I looked down at this stone. May as well set it in

place; all the others appeared firmly set. I crouched down and my fingers felt around the edge of the loose stone. Then I reached for a cold chisel and began scraping until I had cleared enough rubble to be able to grasp it firmly. I pulled it out.

Inside the hole, amidst all the debris, was a leather pouch. I lifted it and placed it on a tombstone, and then I cleaned up the hole, added some fresh cement and set the stone back in place.

The pouch was obviously old, and although it was quite hard I was able to ease the thong that secured it. Inside it was a single piece of paper. I rooted through my tool box for a pair of long-nosed pliers, cleaned them with WD40, dried them and made sure they were clean and free of grease. Using the pliers, I slowly extracted the paper from the pouch - fortunately, it wasn't brittle - and laid it on a piece of kitchen roll.

It looked like an old flyleaf from a book. Lines of writing crossed its surface. I knew I should let the church keep it, so I decided to document what I'd found. I took several photographs of the pouch and the paper from different angles using my phone. Four numbers at the top the page stood out: 1-6-4-8.

Returning the paper to the pouch I went up to the body of the church and explained the situation to the minister. He took the pouch, but when I mentioned the date, a shadow passed over his face.

'Is that date significant?' I asked.

'Sadly, yes. It refers to the darkest and saddest part of this church's history, when a large number of Scottish soldiers were held here as prisoners after the battle of Preston. They were part of a large force of Royalists who were decimated by a much smaller group of Roundheads under Crowell's command. The exact number of men is unknown, but reports of the time suggested there were over 1000 men. During the sixteen days they were held here in the church, a total of 40 died, since they were neither fed nor given water or aid. Some died later as they continued their journey to Chester. Of those who survived, some were conscripted into the army, and those that volunteered were sold as slaves. I think this

pouch, and this letter, must have been hidden there by one of those captive soldiers.'

Later, I downloaded the photographs I'd taken on to my laptop and began to decipher the writing.

28<sup>th</sup> Day of August 1648.

My Dearest Cathryn,

My last letter I managed to give to a man journeying to Kilmarnock to visit old Sir William. I hope it found you. I pray that You, Mother and little Cathryn are in good health.

God willing, I am most hopeful soon to be returning Home to my beloved family and my calling as quarry clerk.

I so miss you and little Cathryn. I surmise she has grown so that I shall not recognise her on my return or she my visage.

All is Bedlam here. Nothing has gone well. Us foot soldiers, having been ravaged by Cromwell's men of horse, find ourselves imprisoned and herded like cattle among bleak hills.

Now we are in a Kirk in a landscape not unlike Ayr. It is whispered, we are to be pressed to Chester. Some prisoners were released on our journey, for where I know not.

I fear that one or two among our crumpled throng are looking for Trouble where none exists. I keep my own Counsel.

You would laugh so at my Quill, made from a Blackbird's feather. It is not easy to write; were it not for a fellow prisoner who kept his knife hidden I could not do so. The tryst is that I give him half the paper and what remains of the Parish Clerk's ink.

So 'tis only a single Page, my love, and dreaming about holding you and little Catherine in my arms.

God be with you both. Pray for me.

Samuel.

Just a letter written by a man to his wife, no mention of the horrors he'd endured. I wonder if Samuel ever made it home - or did he never leave Chapel?

\*

John Wesley visited Chapel-en-le-Frith four times between 1740 and 1786. He first came here on 28 May 1745 and preached in Chapel Milton, where the miller tried to drown him out with the noise of the water wheel.

***Methodists! Pah! Is it befitting for any gentleman to grow his hair lank and loose and make his face a shop-window of Puritanism, eschew the brandy-house, the delights of the street, the theatre and the cock-fight, and prove himself a saint by being spoken against everywhere?***

Twenty years later, Wesley preached in a field at Townend. By the time of his third visit on 1 April 1782 a Methodist chapel had been built. An archway inscribed "1780" at the back of the current Townend Methodist Church is all that remains of the original building. Wesley's friends Grace and John Bennet asked him to make a fourth visit on 3rd April 1786, when he was eighty-six years old. The Bennetts are buried in Chinley Independent Chapel.

During the 19th century the town expanded rapidly, helped by the coming of the railway in 1870. Central station and the Midland Railway line were closed to passenger traffic in 1967 and the line is now freight-only. It terminates at its junction with the Hope Valley line, by way of Chapel Milton Viaduct, near Chinley signal box. Nowadays, passengers only have the south station on the Buxton-Manchester line, a mile from the town centre.

\*

## **Reminiscing About Chapel**

### **Anne Cawthorn, Simone Hubbard and Pete Stellings**

*Doris and Ethel are two elderly ladies who meet up each morning for elevenses. They have been neighbours for years and love gossiping over a cuppa. Doris has been a widow since her Bert died a few years ago and Ethel's long-suffering husband is Fred. Ethel is making them a cuppa when Doris arrives, appearing at the kitchen door.*

**Ethel:** Come in Doris, I was just making us a cuppa. Fred won't be a minute. You're later than usual. How come?

*(Doris sits at the table whilst Ethel brings three cups of tea over)*

**Doris:** It was those blasted traffic lights around the house that's propped up. I wouldn't mind, but it's been falling down since I was at junior school. And that was a long time ago. *(sips her tea saying)* I was ready for this.

**Ethel:** How was your holiday?

*(Before she can answer, Fred walks in wearing a bee-keeping outfit. Doris turns to look at him.)*

**Doris:** What the devil are you doing dressed like that, Fred? You look as though you've just emerged from a jungle. *(She laughs with Fred)*

**Fred:** *(Gives Doris a twirl)* Bear Grylls, perhaps? *(They laugh again)*

**Ethel:** *(who is definitely not amused!)* Bear Grylls be damned. He looks ridiculous and this latest hobby is even more ridiculous. It's costing us a fortune.

**Doris:** I've obviously missed all this with being away.

**Ethel:** You have missed nothing, Doris. *(Ethel then notices a bee on Fred's shoulders.)* Quick Fred, get out of here and take that stray bee with you before it stings me and Doris.

**Fred:** *(looks across at Doris and waves before retreating to the garden)* See you later Doris.

**Ethel:** So, Doris, I saw you go out earlier. Where have you been?

**Doris:** I was looking round the graveyard at the top church, There are some interesting graves dating back to the 1700s.

**Ethel:** What prompted this? I have never known you to be interested in graves before. You don't even have one for your Bert. He's still residing on your mantelpiece. Graveyards! Now this is something new.

**Doris:** Well, it's the church's 800-year anniversary, and they have arranged lots of things over the summer. Perhaps we could go. Do you think you are fit enough to climb up the stairs to tour the tower?

**Ethel:** Not with my angina, I'll pant like an old dog. Fred might join you.

*(Fred arrives back in to hear Ethel. He is dressed in his normal clothes)*

**Fred:** I'd be happy to join you, Doris. In fact, that reminds me of a limerick. *(Reads limerick)*

Is this a game of who dares,  
To be first to climb up those stairs  
Up the tower we'll trek  
Out of breath, Oh heck!  
I hope up the top there's some chairs.

**Ethel:** I didn't go to the top church when I was younger as my family are Methodists. In fact, one of my many great grandfathers was the Blacksmith of the Peak. There is a book about him. He was converted to Methodism by the Sparrowpit village people, who John Wesley had converted when he preached in Chapel in the 1700s.

**Doris:** Well, I never. I thought Methodists didn't drink. But you can drink with the best of them Ethel.

**Fred:** She certainly can *(sits back and laughs)*. You wouldn't think that Ethel used to collect the temperance money when she was a girl.

**Ethel:** Yes, Grandma was a big Methodist. You could only drink ginger wine at her house. Church three times on a Sunday – in your Sunday best.

**Doris:** I can remember me and my brother being made to go to Sunday School. He always reckoned that it was so Mum and Dad could have sex whilst we were there! *(All laugh)*

**Fred:** Yes, and I can remember the old Shoulder of Mutton pub, across from Chapel Methodist church, having what they called "a Methodist window". This is where the men could have a sly pint after the evening service without anyone seeing them.

**Doris:** That's a bit hypocritical. *(Ethel and Fred nod in agreement)*

**Fred:** As for the drinking, Ethel keeps topping her wine rack up with Aldi's Deal of the Week.

**Ethel:** True. It's looking quite healthy at the moment. If I died, Fred would be quite a catch if he brought some floosy

home and she saw all my wine and prosecco lined up. (*All laugh*)

**Fred:** I'll not be having any floosy. One wife like you Ethel is enough for any man.

Our Ethel's a bit of a lass  
A floosy at times with her glass  
It's that wine deal at Aldi  
That she drinks and gets randy  
As a wife no one can surpass.

**Doris:** Er ... changing the subject ... Did you do anything memorable when you were younger, Fred?

**Fred:** As a matter of fact, I did, Doris. You must have heard about the train crash at Chapel South station in 1957 and the famous train driver John Axon, who was one of the two people killed that day.

**Doris:** I remember it vaguely. But I'm younger than you, Fred.

**Ethel:** He was given the George Cross for his bravery because he'd diverted what could have been an even bigger disaster. They even wrote a song about it.

**Fred:** That's right, I was sixteen at the time and me and my mate had gone out for a ride on our bikes. On our way back we called in to see the signalman in the Chinley signal box. It was just up the line from Chapel station.

**Doris:** Was that allowed?

**Fred:** No, but we kept out of sight, and he liked the company. He made a good cup of tea. We were in there that day and we heard an almighty bang. The signalman immediately said, 'There's something serious happened up the line'. So, we got on our bikes and cycled like mad to Chapel South station.

**Doris:** What did you see, Fred?

**Fred:** Carnage and smoke everywhere. They were steam trains in those days. One goods train was tipped on its side and there was coal everywhere.

**Ethel:** Do you have any stories about Chapel, Doris?

**Doris:** Yes. Do you remember the Target Wall being demolished in 1991? It had been there since 1910, and it was used for rifle practice during both wars. After the war it wasn't used,

so as kids we used to play around it. There was a plan to demolish it, which our town council was opposing, as they wanted to have it listed.

**Ethel:** Yes, I do remember it. The Chair of the council was due to be interviewed about his plan to save it on the Look Northwest TV programme. He had carefully prepared what he was going to say.

**Fred:** Yes, but the night before, someone bulldozed it down.

**Doris:** So, when the wall had been flattened, he didn't know what to say. Me and Bert were watching that interview, plus half of Chapel. We were gutted when all he could say, when asked about what had happened, was that he was 'Sick, sickened to my boots'.

**Fred:** Yes, he drank in the same pub as me. So, for weeks afterwards, every time he came into the pub, everyone chanted in unison: 'I'm sick, sickened to my boots'!

**Doris:** It took a long time for him to live that one down.

**Fred:** I can think of a limerick for that.

Me and Bert did not give two hoots  
As we took that wall down to its roots  
It was our secret quest  
And we gave it our best  
We made the Chair sick to his boots.

Right, I can't spend all day reminiscing about the good old days - I'm off for a haircut.

**Ethel:** Your hair has never looked as good since George Cosadino cut it.

**Doris:** Ooh, my Bert used to go to George - he'd be gone for hours and came back with 'something for the weekend' that George had slipped him!

**Fred:** Ey, good old George - we'd put the world to rights! Here's to George.

**Ethel:** Yes indeed. In fact, here's to everyone past and present who made and makes Chapel what it is.

\*

Chapel Poor Law Union was established in December 1837. The union workhouse was built about 1840 on the Whaley Bridge road. It consisted of an entrance range and an accommodation block of three wings centred on an octagonal hub, an infirmary and an isolation hospital. It was later converted into an old people's home. Early in the 1980s it was demolished.

\*

## **Night Watch**

### **Caroline Vallance**

The nights are the worst. I recognised the rough feel of our Martha's rash last week. She'd been shivering and complaining her throat was badly, so I knew. I spoke to the nurse, Mary, who took her straight to this ward. At least this Fever Hospital has hot water. The one in Leeds where we were when our Samuel was struck down was an awful place.

I did hope our Martha would be spared the scarletina. Fewer children seem to have been afflicted these past two years and she is now eight, but her white-coated tongue turned a fat ripe strawberry, so there it is.

Her fever is yet to break and our nurse, who is a young Welsh woman of cheerful disposition, works many hours every day, except for Sunday morning, so is bone weary and has to sleep. I volunteered as a pauper nurse to spend the nights in the ward. The hospital is a way away from the main workhouse, as befits a fever hospital, so I am here to mop brows and wet lips; but then to summon help when needed, from our young Mary or, if more serious, from the Medical Officer in town. Often he takes a day to show himself, being busy with his own wealthy patients, despite the stipend he receives from the Poor Law Union. It then falls to me and nurse Mary to do what we can with the few unguents and potions we have. I had many fevers as a child and hope that God has done testing me and that my strength has passed on to my children.

When me, my beloved John and our three children set off from Scarborough for work in Leeds, we had great hopes. John found employ as a labourer for bricklayers and we lived in rented rooms in the city. Busy with the children who were all young, Jacob being just

nine months, I still managed to find employ at the market for a few hours before dawn helping set up a butcher's stall, three days a week. John was happy to sleep with the children for the hours before I returned and he went to his labours. But when young Samuel fell ill I had to stay home to nurse him, and so went my job. When John was injured by a wall collapse he could not work for a month. We had no money for rent, so we came here to Chapel, where John's cousin gave him work.

We found a small cottage with a decent rent and I took work in a local shop, whilst our cousin's wife tended to our children and hers, but again bad fortune visited. John's cousin was taken with consumption and his wife re-married. Her new husband, a local farmer, a widower himself, needed her and her older children to help him tend to the farm. John's job was gone as his cousin was the bricklayer he laboured for, and so again we had to leave our home and come into this place. It is much better than the Leeds Workhouse. There are just over eighty of us in here, and James the manager and Emma, his wife the Matron, look after it well and make sure we all have some occupation, except of course the imbeciles and idiots.

John has just found work again, helping build a large house high up above the railway station. This should give him work for a few years and now we are looking for somewhere to rent. Once Martha is better I will work again in a shop if I can.

I keep the nightlight burning and inspect the patients as I walk quietly between the beds. There will be none die alone and in the dark here.

Ah, my dear Martha. You are cooler now and sleep more easily. I do think you may have passed the worst. If, when morning comes, you can manage some gruel, you may leave by next Sunday. Then we will wait to see if all is well and rheumatic fever does not follow.

I will pray tonight, and tomorrow we may pray together if God hears me.

\*

Chapel-en-le-Frith Town Hall in Market Street was completed in 1851. Its big wrought iron gates and broad shallow steps to the imposing front door exuded authority, especially on a court day, the third Thursday of the month, when persons accused of crimes were

sent for trial in the Capital of the Peak and the frontage was crowded with high-ranking police officers, reporters, spectators and caterers.

In the market square there's a horse trough, which was placed to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. There's also a war memorial. The proximity of the memorial to the horse trough might remind us of the importance of horses in warfare until well into the twentieth century.

\*

## **Chapel War Horses**

**Julie Harratt**

On 21 April, 1917, there were over two and a half million horses in Great Britain. According to the horse census, over fifty-one thousand of them met the criteria for requisitioning by the army. Newspaper reports claimed that at least five of these horses were requisitioned from Chapel farms, but the exact number was not recorded.

Lieutenant Colonel Neil Fraser of the British Army wrote: 'The horse, mule and donkey were the unsung heroes of the war. Without them, the armies would have ground to a halt. They died in their thousands, but they never failed us even in the darkest of times.'

This fictional tale, based on fact, describes the likely fate of one of those horses. It comes straight from the horse's mouth.

As a fine majestic four-year-old chestnut gelding I was a great favourite on Bankhall Farm, pulling the family gig to markets and fairs. It was a bit of a squash if more than three loaded themselves into the gig, but I was strong and could pull them to their chosen destination without faltering. If it was just me and Joe, we would detour to the Beehive for refreshments, water for me and a few pints for Joe. But even when Doris stood at the farmhouse door in

her flowery pinny, hands on hips and eyebrows raised at our late return, I would never tell.

I was still young when the War broke out. In fact, I honed my skills trotting down Long Lane into Chapel to watch young men congregating, proud in their new uniforms, ready to board trains to the unknown. Many, many tears were shed. Many farm girls, missing their sweethearts, wrapped their arms around my neck and whispered stories about their secret trysts into my mane. Some tales were a bit racy for a young horse, if I'm honest. But I would never tell.

In April 1917, Joe came to my stable. He had been ordered under the Defence of the Realm Regulations to complete a return about the horses he owned. 'Just a paperwork exercise, lad,' he said. A couple of weeks later he came to my stable again, wrapped his arms around me and cried. Not the gentle cry of the farm girls, but great heaving sobs as he struggled to catch his breath and whisper, 'I'm sorry, lad'. This was not the tough farmer I knew, unfazed by any setback. I didn't understand what was wrong, but still did my best to comfort him. I would never tell.

A few weeks later I started on my journey to the unknown. Train after train to a place called Portsmouth, then lifted by crane on to a ship. We sailed in padded horse boxes, but it was an ordeal. After landing in Boulogne and more train rides, I arrived at the Western Front. My senses were overwhelmed: ears bombarded by the screeching noise of battle, unfamiliar rancid smells invading my nostrils, my hoofs sucked down into mud - not the mud I rolled in at Bankhall with the pure clean smell of earth, but thick deep sludge that clung to my legs like glue. I wanted to rear up and gallop away, but they needed me to pull the field ambulance. I couldn't let them down.

I made hundreds of journeys across the cratered ground, carrying broken injured men to the first line medical stations. I listened to their anguished cries, turning my head to comfort them as they waited to be transferred. Sometimes I could see their light fading.

Their cries for their mothers and sweethearts would go unanswered. They would travel no further. But I would never tell.

After months I grew weary and weak. I needed twenty pounds of feed a day and fodder was often in short supply. Every night a young Captain would gently stroke my head, sometimes offering me a morsel saved from his rations. He told me how he dreaded the coming of each dawn when he would lead his men into battle, fearing that his courage would fail him. By virtue of his upper-class birth, he had been given a King's commission to be the leader of men. He was just a boy, really, overburdened with responsibility, forced to ignore his fears, the harrowing experience of constant battle, and maintain morale with unrelenting duty and honour. He could unburden himself to me. I would never tell.

One morning on my way to pick up the wounded, exhausted and with artillery fire pounding in my ears, my hoof became mired in the mud. I felt my leg snap as I fell into a water-filled shell hole.

I knew I'd never gallop across Bankhall fields again, or trot across the cobbles to drink from the market trough. When the shot came it was a relief. I hope I made the Chapel folk proud.

On the war memorial in the marketplace there are 667 names of Chapel men who bravely fought during the First World War. Five hundred and eighty-nine returned. Seventy-eight lost their lives in France. They should all be remembered and honoured. But spare a moment to remember their equine comrades; and if you shed a tear at the sacrifice of the Chapel war horses, don't worry. I'll never tell.

\*

Chapel-en-le-Frith's largest and best-known employer was Ferodo Ltd, producers of friction materials for the motor industry. Ferodo was formed in 1897 by a local gentleman, Mr Herbert Frood. It remained a family concern for over a hundred years; it is now part of the international conglomerate Federal-Mogul. But the Ferodo workers needed the annual holidays.

\*

# The Lazy-Fortnight

## Caroline Vallance

Madonna, Erasure and U2. It is the eighties, but  
For any boys in Chapel the Pet Shop's shut.  
I really can't believe it, never worked anywhere before  
That at the height of summer for a week they'll shut the door.

Yes, I get the Ferodo Factory's closed, so the workers there  
Get to have a holiday, but it really can't be fair  
That these days when we have commuters living in town,  
And many tourists too, the bloody shops shut down.

Of course we have to eat and so many an essential shop  
Stays open for food, and there's always the Co-op.  
The post office and off-license, too, daren't close their doors,  
But of chemists there are two, and the busy one is ours.

So the owner has decided to maintain the tradition. Fine!  
One closed, one open. But that would have to be mine!  
So we spend a good half day moving prescriptions and stock  
From top shop to bottom for locals who still find it a shock.

Even though it's been happening for many a decade  
We are often faced with an unwarranted angry tirade  
From old Harry or Ken or Nelly or Blanche  
Who've been banging on the door of the High St branch.

We've put leaflets on prescription bags, and a great big sign  
Went up at both chemists', plenty warning time,  
But many haven't seen, or forgot that they had,  
And of the extra walk, even downhill, none seem glad.

Then of course there's the "special" item, only kept in  
On their shelves for Dora or Betty and their many kin  
Of which we weren't aware, and so left behind  
That shop girls scurry to retrieve. Their journey's timed

By impatient customers whose bottoms shall  
Only touch that awful grease-proof paper Izal,

Or for whom the smell of carbolic soap  
Is better than that fancy perfumed stuff on a rope.

Then on the last Saturday we do it all again:  
Load everything up. Oh, what a pain,  
Trying to remember those items we owe  
And second guess where the customers will go

To pick them up! Of course, we'll be wrong  
And spend many a journey all week long,  
Bringing them back down to patients who will  
Not see why they should walk up that hill.

But it should be noted that in all this hubbub  
One thing you won't see closing is the pub.  
Yes, town is quiet for a week or two,  
But those that are left and visitors new

Seem much more thirsty and favour a good brew -  
And I don't mean tea, though I'm sure some do  
Drink it when no alternative's there.  
Of course, of those saints I'm not aware.

It's the regulars, rather, who make themselves known,  
Who stagger in then have a good moan,  
As in those days pubs closed at three  
In the hope the big drinkers would go home for tea.

But the walk of shame is winding and long,  
And we're on their way, so what is wrong  
With a short rest and a chat whilst they can? -  
While we pray, please, no chip pan!

But quite often our prayers are in vain.  
God! Thornbrook Road's on fire again.  
Luckily the fire station's just opposite, and those  
Hard-working brave men just need a long hose

To reach the kitchen and the offending pan  
To reduce the damage as much as they can  
That results from the holiday spirit taken neat.

Can't wait for the end of Wakes Week.

\*

Wakes Week. Where would Chapel have been without it? And where would it have been, where would it be, without the Carnival?

\*

## **The Parade, and the Passage of Time**

**Simone Hubbard**

After it was revived in 1971, the annual carnival parade took place on the first Saturday of July. Our pub had the advantage of being situated on Hayfield Road at the back and Market Street on the front, so there were many viewing points to choose from. In those days the parade consisted of many Carnival Queens from surrounding towns, brass bands, dressed-up floats from various organisations, dancing troupes, and anyone else who fancied dressing up and taking part. It was very popular. Hundreds of people watched it wind its way from Ferodo, finishing in the Memorial Park, the whole thing taking about 45 minutes. In the late 1990's the carnival switched to the middle of June, and recently the High School on Long Lane was the parade's finishing point.

In 1987, Martin and I took part on a float entered by Martin's boss, John Kelly, who was the owner of a joinery workshop on Market Street. The theme was "Hang the Cowboys", with tag line *use your local established tradesmen*. I remember it was a roasting hot day and the streets were lined with people watching.

In 1990 I was "roped" into helping my mum in the Girls' Brigade. Thereafter I was part of many carnival processions covering many themes and many weathers. Ironically, the last carnival I did was a joint float with the Boys' Brigade. The theme was "Cowboys" I walked alongside dressed as a cowboy!

It's only one day, but it testifies to the continuing character and vitality of the town, a character and vitality that should survive into the future ... for the next 800 years, at least.

Every second, minute, hour, day, month, year, and if we're lucky a few decades, we make a footprint on history. Whether we live, go to school, work, attend hobbies or a celebration, we're creating history. Of course, we think nothing of it at the time. There may be photos or a news article to look back on but accounts of everyday life are limited.

I stood in this room twenty-three years ago, trying to imagine how it would look today as Pete the electrician was busy rewiring.

My friends Chris and Alan Theyer had bought the building to convert it into a restaurant. Martin's business, Britannia Woodworking company, played a part in the renovations. At that time I could remember the shop downstairs when it was a hardware shop called Mason's. I'd shopped there a couple of times, usually as errands from the TSB bank where I worked.

Chris and Alan named the restaurant "Rems", which was an acknowledgment of the name of the building, "Remscot House". During my research for the 800 years and counting theme, I've learnt that many years earlier it was Remscar House. That title seems to have originated from the surname Ramsker who appear in the Parish Registers between 1640 and 1718.

When Chris and Alan sold Rems it was renamed a couple of times to Chapel Bistro and Twin Beaks - yes that's right Beaks not Peaks! In 2010 Martin's friend Gareth bought the business. Gareth revived the name "Rems" and asked Britannia Woodworking company to design and make the bar.

I would never have imagined that this building, and particularly this room, would become such a big part of my life. Whether it's Creative Writing, Spoken Word, Chapel Arts committee meetings, I feel as though I'm never away; and strangely, aside from my own book launches, the location has been chosen by other people; which makes me think that mysterious forces are at work ...

\*

"The next eight hundred years at least" - indeed, that's the right note on which to finish our performance!

\*

# 800 Years in the Future

## Stephanie Billen

So I've been doing some digging - not literally. No one digs any more. Far too destructive. No, I mean digging into the past. I'm a member of Chapel Arts Creative Writing Group and they've decided to do a *live* show (Ha! I'll believe that when I see it!) to mark the town's sixteen hundred year anniversary.

To be honest, I'm finding it hard to separate the ourstory of Chapel from the ourstory of the planet. Our generation has moved away from that kind of localised thinking. But it is what it is, so here I am, sitting on a massive log in Chapel's Memorial Forest and wondering: what's this place supposed to be memorialising?

Someone told me the big stone gates are the actual memorial, but to what? I tapped my tattoo and it said it opened in 1921, as a "park", whatever that means. Maybe the tree planting was something to do with remembering those who died of the Spanish Flu? That must have seemed significant even then. It certainly does now, so many global pandemics later.

So I took that thought along to the writing group and there's this woman who's an ourstorian, or fancies herself as such, and she says I'm all wrong and she's seen old photos on the Cloud showing it as being mainly "laid to lawn". I've no idea what she's talking about so she explains it's like the grass we have today only cut to about an inch above the ground! What's our wildlife meant to do with that? It shook me because I've always been interested in ourstory and I know that Frith means forest, which makes perfect sense because there are trees every few yards now, plus this Memorial Forest and the much bigger forest stretching all around us. My tatt says that it was originally called the Royal Forest and the big church - on the hill above Rems Café - was originally called a chapel - the Chapel-in-the-Frith. Neat, eh?

Anyway, know-it-all says she's not sure the Memorial Forest - park, whatever - was anything to do with the pandemic. There were loads of wars then, so it was probably connected to one of those. I guess when wars meant people actually died then you would want to commemorate your loved ones. Psychological warfare, like we have now, isn't really like that. I mean we're mourning our loss of sanity all the time. That's just normal. But as my Great-Gran likes to

say: 'Cheer up. Nobody died'. She's 140, by the way, and not going anywhere.

Hey-ho. What else feels ourstoric around here? I thought the trees were, but from what that woman says, loads must have been planted relatively recently after one of the climate crises.

The main road through town where the AI-tram goes - has that always been there? Ironically, horses and carts probably moved faster than the tram, given that the supposedly temporary force field brings it to a standstill half the time while they make their interminable repairs to that derelict house on the High Street. Of course that tumble-down building really is ourstoric - everywhere else is just modern timber towers.

I don't feel I'm getting very far. AI's all bollocks (to use an ourstoric word). It just makes things up! The old books, if you can find any, are much more reliable. And I like how they feel in my hand as I rustle the paper pages. These days I don't trust anything I can't touch. All our other senses are subject to manipulation, which I know is necessary given what happened to the planet - but like now, it's good to sit here running my hand over this warm, dry bark with its satisfying grooves and fluffy moss and know that it's been a tree. Really know it.

Some of the greeny grey ones I can see in the distance may not be. I accept that. But here in the Memorial Forest, I can go round touching trees and their little veined leaves and see all the different birds and animals and I know that unlike humans, they definitely can't be deceived. No, this is the real deal. I can breathe here.

So maybe I'll write something about this - the Memorial Frith. It's the best thing we have in this town. The Frith-en-le-Chapel - it'll outlast us all.





