

MURDERS AND
MYSTERIES OF
THE NORTH
YORK MOORS

PETER
WALKER

**Murders and
Mysteries
from the
North York Moors**

PETER N.WALKER

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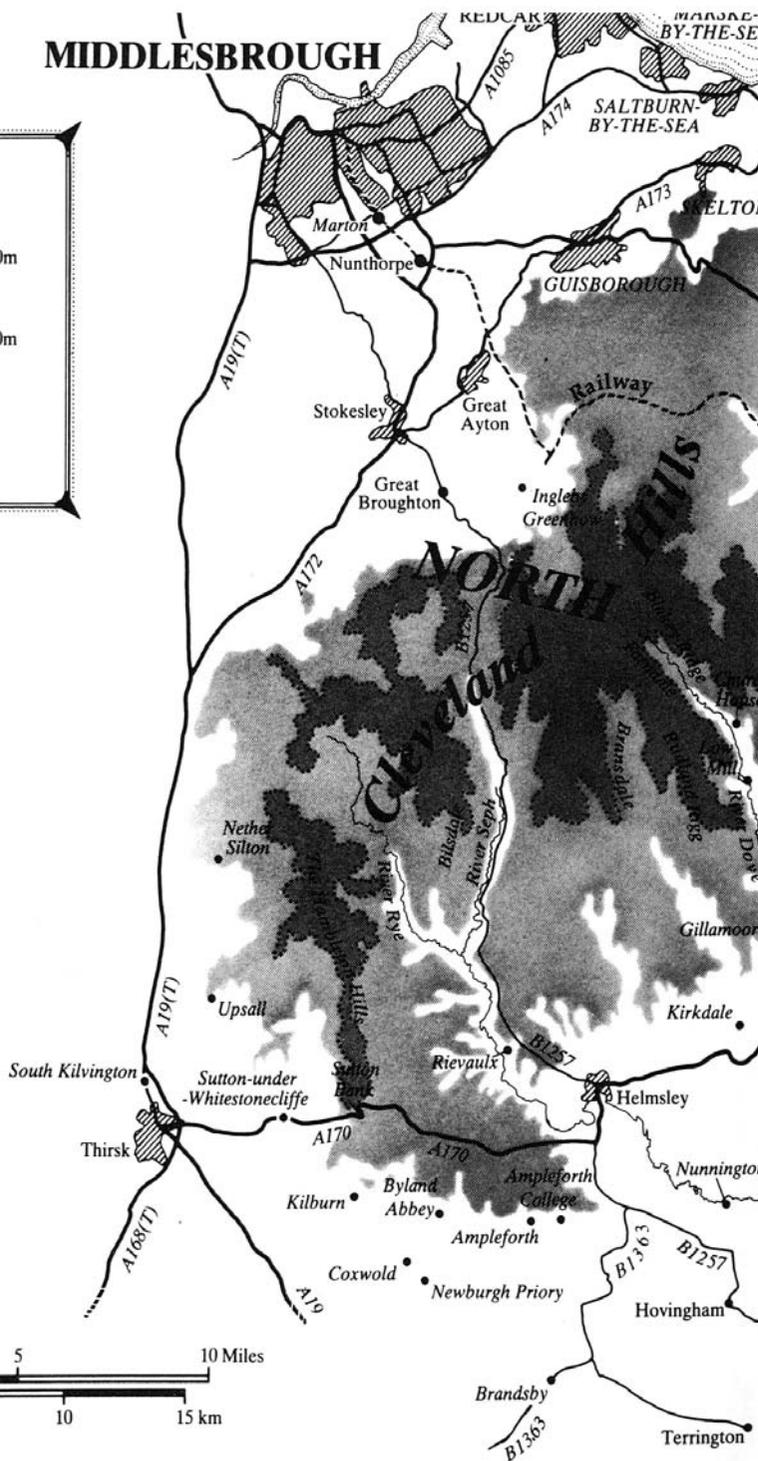
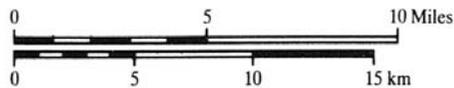
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MIDDLESBROUGH

Key

-  Land over 150m
-  Land over 300m
-  Roads
-  Main Rivers



NORTH SEA



Author's Preface

It is said that all the best stories survive because they are worthy of repetition by successive generations of people. In this modest volume, I have attempted to place on record some of the more enduring tales, both ancient and modern, which have their origins in the North York Moors. Many of these stories continue to be told either verbally or in print, and will continue to be related in future years.

I have eliminated many which are pure legend, but have included some from which legends have subsequently arisen, especially the story of Sarkless Kitty (Chapter 3), the witchcraft tales (Chapter 6) and the planting of Whitby's Penny Hedge (Chapter 7, see p.103). The reader will make his or her own judgement about these yarns.

This collection of stories does embrace a long period of history, but in every one there is an element of mystery, in some cases together with a strong criminal

background. Although the North York Moors are not troubled with a high rate of murder or serious crime, I have included some, and probably all, of the unsolved murders which have occurred in and around this beautiful and remote corner of North Yorkshire.

Painful though it was to include the harrowing account of the murders of two policemen, both of whom I taught and knew well, and the subsequent hunt for their killer in Dalby Forest (Chapter 10), I felt this chapter could not be omitted. It has become part of the criminal history of England and it is an enduring tribute to the dedication and bravery of all police officers.

Much of the information in this book comes from my own files and records. In half a century of living here, and after more than twenty-five years of writing about the people, the culture, history, folklore, dialect, wildlife and topography of the North York Moors, I have amassed a huge collection of facts and information, some of which is distilled within these pages.

Having also served for thirty years in the North Riding Constabulary and subsequently the North Yorkshire Police, latterly as the Press and Public Relations Officer, I was associated with many serious

crimes and murders from the viewpoint of the press, radio and television. Fortunately, very few murders have occurred within the area embraced by the North York Moors and so it remains a place of Yorkshire calm within a very turbulent Britain.

In compiling this book, I would like to thank both the Cleveland Constabulary and the North Yorkshire Police for their help, and also the staff of the Cleveland County Library at Stockton-on-Tees and Middlesbrough.

In the latter case, when I visited the Library at Middlesbrough in 1987 to research the murder of the Middlesbrough taxi-driver, Edwin Youll, another mystery was created. Someone had stolen the relevant file . . .

PETER N. WALKER
1988

1 A Miscellany of Mysteries

The area known as the North York Moors comprises a tract of high ground between Middlesbrough to the north and York to the south. The market towns of Northallerton and Thirsk lie over to the west while the dramatic Yorkshire coast marks the eastern boundary. The coastal area is well known due to resorts like Scarborough and Whitby, and through the romantic fishing villages of Staithes, Runswick Bay and Robin Hood's Bay. Somewhat less well known is the range of deep dales and elevated, bleak moorland which lies between those points. There are lonely farmhouses and isolated villages, sparkling rivers and a wealth of wildlife surrounded by market-towns where the quality of life continues to be the envy of many. It is a part of England which is separated from the Yorkshire Dales and Pennines by the huge Vale of Mowbray and which even now remains largely undiscovered, probably because of

its distance from the main railways, roads and centres of industry and population.

The area collectively known as the North York Moors comprises an assemblage of many smaller moors divided from one another by steep-sided dales, some of outstanding charm and beauty. It was the beauty of the area which led to its declaration, in 1952, as a National Park. Now known as the North York Moors National Park, it covers some 553 square miles (1,432 square kilometres) and is one of two National Parks within the County of North Yorkshire. The other is the Dales National Park which includes the Yorkshire Dales and the Pennine region.

Lying immediately to the south of the North York Moors National Park is a recently designated area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is the Howardian Hills which includes parts of Ryedale and borders some fine market towns such as Helmsley, Kirkbymoorside, Pickering and Malton while embracing the renowned Castle Howard, made so famous by the television series *Brideshead Revisited*.

The whole of the North York Moors is steeped in history and tradition. For example, out of thirty-one manorial courts still surviving in England and Wales, five are within North Yorkshire and four of them

are within the North York Moors, all actively carrying out their functions, many of which relate to common land, grazing rights or rights of way.

In Eskdale, the Glaisdale and Lealholm Society for the Prosecution of Felons also survives. In the Middle Ages, societies of this kind existed to help the parish constable deal with local crime, and they were created when villagers formed themselves into associations for self-protection. They built up their finances from rewards for the recovery of stolen livestock, but as the modern police service gained acceptance and rural constables were posted to villages, these societies disappeared. The one at Glaisdale may be the only such survivor in England and Wales.

Also in Eskdale, at Egton Bridge, there is an annual Gooseberry Show where giant gooseberries are shown, and still further down the valley, a steam railway runs across the moors to Pickering and makes use of a route pioneered in the 1830s by George Stephenson. Their survival is some indication of the continuing fascination of life upon these moors.

The North York Moors contain England's largest expanse of open heather and some of its most dramatic and beautiful

countryside. It is known for its legends and folklore, its adherence to centuries of custom and its long and fascinating history. There is a wealth of castles and ruined abbeys, ancient churches and delightful village inns. It is an area which contains its own mysteries, some of which have become folk-tales, but it is not known for its association with serious or unsolved crimes.

At the western side of the massive county of North Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Dales and Pennine moorlands have had their share of involvement in major criminal investigations. These cases have included the now infamous Yorkshire Ripper, the Moors Murders and the Black Panther series of crimes, but they did not occur remotely near the North York Moors – they were in a completely different part of Yorkshire. Though it cannot be denied that crime is committed within the North York Moors, much of it is minor by nature, consequently a book of this kind cannot be filled with stories of dark, murderous deeds or unsolved mysteries. This is, therefore, a mixed collection of moorland mysteries and true crime.

There are many minor mysteries, however; for example, who are the seven seamen buried in the churchyard of St Oswald's parish church at Lythe, near Whitby? During the

1914-18 War their bodies were washed onto the shore below this fine old church, among whose early priests was John Fisher. He was to become St John Fisher after his stand against Henry VIII's Reformation. But in spite of widespread enquiries in Britain and overseas, the sailors have never been indentified. They are remembered upon the war memorial which stands beside the church.

Where is the burial place of St Cedd? Is it within Lastingham church or Kirkdale Minster, both of which date to the seventh century and are only some four miles apart in the pretty Ryedale countryside.

Cedd came to Lastingham in AD 654 to found a monastery, probably the earliest in Yorkshire. He died in AD 664. He was buried in the open air, but later a stone church was built and he was interred to the right of its altar. This might have been at Lastingham where an ancient crypt exists below St Mary's Church, but a rival claim is made by the little Minster at Kirkdale which was built around the same time. Two gravestones stand loose inside this old church, and one used to carry an inscription to the memory of King Ethelwald; it was he who asked Cedd to build the monastery at Lastingham. Could the second tombstone have been dedicated to Cedd? The inscription has gone, but there is a tale that in AD 866 as

the Danes were ransacking local churches, the remains of Ethelwald and Cedd were removed from Lastingham to Kirkdale for safekeeping. So which of these quiet little churches now contains the remains of this famous English saint?

And where is Robin Hood's Cave? Years ago, there was a rumour that, deep within Arncliffe Woods between Egton Bridge and Glaisdale and overlooking the River Esk, there was a large cave used by Robin Hood and his Merry Men. It was said they sheltered here when they were evading those who hunted him, and an unlikely extension of this story was that an underground tunnel linked the cave with another at Robin Hood's Bay. I have dismissed the tunnel legend as mere fantasy, but searched without success for any sign of that cave. Is this also fantasy?

There is another curious puzzle on a six-foot-tall stone pillar at Nether Silton in the hills above Thirsk. In a field overlooked by the church and the old manor house, there are rows of initials and the date AD 1765. The letters are:

HTGOMHS

TBBWOTGWWG

TWATEWAHH

ATCLABWHEY

AD 1765

AWPSAYAA

They are said to mean, 'Here the grand old manor house stood; the black beams were oak, the great walls were good; the walls at the east wing are hidden here; a thatched cottage like a barn was here erected year AD 1765; a wide porch spans a yard and alcove.' But why erect this post and carve it with such a curious message?

Another puzzle stands by the side of the Brandsby-to-Terrington Road, not far from Dalby to the south of the moors. This used to be an old drover's road and cut into the turf on the verge is-what looks like a massive fingerprint which is some twelve feet across. It is surrounded by a neat white wooden rail and is probably a relic of a game called The City of Troy. Mazes of this kind have appeared in various parts of England, but few survive today. They have had names like Julian's Bower, Robin Hood's Race, Walls of Troy or Shepherd's Ring.

This North Yorkshire example probably got its name from Trojeberg, for similar mazes have been known in Scandinavia. It seems Shakespeare referred to a game called City of Troy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which he wrote in 1594, although experts do not believe this maze dates to his time. It may have appeared in its

present form as recently as 1900. One suggestion is that it replaced a similar one made in 1860 which had been copied from a carving on a nearby barn door. A local custom is to walk clockwise around the ridges nine times while making a wish. This ritual might have come from a religious or superstitious source, or it might have been utilized as a mysterious means of effecting cures for ailments and diseases.

But no one really knows.

A far more dramatic event occurred at a location still known as Shaw End. This lies above Lealholm in Eskdale on the path of a minor road which leads across the moors via Glaisdale Rigg and into Rosedale. Shaw End is marked by crossroads, one of which goes into Glaisdale, one into Fryup, and the others into Rosedale and Lealholm.

In 1871, a farmhouse stood near these crossroads; it was called Shaw End and during that year, or the one that followed, a terrible thunderstorm occurred one Saturday night. As dawn broke on Sunday morning, the local people were horrified to discover that lonely Shaw End House had been obliterated as if by an explosion. Only the charred remains of the house were left.

Fragments of lead window-frames were found hundreds of yards away, the stones of the house walls were scattered far and wide, the old metal oven from the kitchen was twisted into an almost unrecognizable shape while every scrap of combustible material, including timber, furniture and household goods, was burnt to nothing. But what of the occupants?

A farmer, his wife and young son lived here, and there was no sign of them. A search was therefore organized and it was soon evident that at least two bodies had been cremated. Grim, discoloured patches on the stone flags of the ground-floor bedroom indicated where they had been consumed by the inferno. But it was known that the little boy, aged five or six, also slept in that room with his parents, and there was no sign of him.

In a forlorn hope that he had avoided certain death, a man called Robert Hick began to search the remains of the outbuildings and there he found a pile of old sacks, a feature of such outbuildings. By chance, he lifted the top off the heap and there, to his surprise, was the little boy, sleeping soundly. He had escaped unscathed. The boy could not say how he had escaped the blast nor could he say what had happened to his parents or the

house. Mr Hicks decided to look after the child and brought him up as his own.

But what had happened at Shaw End that awful night? It was probably a thunderbolt, but no one knows.

So far as crime is concerned, however, there are at least two unsolved criminal mysteries at lonely wayside inns upon the moors, and here it is fitting to include a note that a reminder of one of our earliest recorded murders is still to be seen on the North York Moors. The crime was committed in AD 626, but the wrong man was killed.

An assassin was sent by the King of the West Saxons to kill Edwin, King of Northumbria, in a battle for control of this vast north-eastern kingdom. It stretched from the River Humber up to the Scottish border and included the North York Moors. As Edwin journeyed across Fylingdales Moor, the assassin struck with a poisoned sword, but Edwin's devoted man-servant, a Christian called Lilla, leapt between the assassin and his King. Lilla died as a result.

So impressed was Edwin that he became a Christian and he later built a fine stone church at York; that is now York Minster. To honour Lilla, a stone cross was erected on the moors where he fell and that is now called Lilla Cross. It stands upon Lilla

Howe almost in the shadow of Fylingdales Ballistic Missile Early Warning Station, so bringing the ancient and the modern into stark contrast.

Through Lilla's selfless act, Edwin survived the attempt on his life and brought Christianity to these remote regions, an act which is marked by the proliferation of abbeys and churches around the moors. Lilla Cross is the Moors' oldest Christian relic, and perhaps it is also our earliest record of a murder upon these same moors.

Lilla Cross is a landmark upon those moors, standing some 959 feet above sea level. For years it served as a guide to those who trekked across the heights from Robin Hood's Bay to the remote moorland community of Saltersgate, then known as Saltergate. In medieval times, there were many tracks across these moors, many of them using Lilla Cross as a waymarker. The present route from Pickering to Whitby did not exist until 1759, this being an extension of the first road to be build in the Whitby district. The first one ran from Whitby to Saltersgate, an indication of Saltersgate's importance.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a constant procession of fishermen with strings of horses and carts bearing loads of fish; they trekked

to Saltersgate from Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby, the former making use of the Old Fish Road sometimes known as the Salt Road. Based on the route of an ancient medieval track, it led from the coast via John Cross Rigg, Blea Hill Beck and over the Green Swang to Lilla Howe. From there, the route crossed Lilla Rigg and then ran via Worm Sike Rigg and Loose Howe Rigg until it met the rough track which ran across the bleak moors from Whitby. Some remains of that ancient Fish Road now form footpaths but the latter part, from Lilla Howe to what is now the A169 Whitby-Pickering Moor Road, is within the restricted area embraced by the Ballistic Missile Early Warning Station at RAF Fylingdales and consequently not accessible to the general public.

But why carry loads of fish to Saltersgate which is some eight miles from the sea as the crow flies, and some twelve very tough miles by that tortuous footpath?

The reason was salt.

Until January 1825, salt was heavily taxed. An excise duty of ten shillings per bushel had been imposed in 1798, rising to fifteen shillings by 1805. It was reduced to two shillings in 1823 then abolished soon afterwards in 1825. A bushel was eight gallons, this form of measurement being used for salt, and fifteen shillings

would be around a month's wages for a plough lad on a farm. Perhaps this shows the excessive nature of this tax. At its height between 1798 and 1805, there was a massive amount of salt-smuggling, with Customs and Excise officers constantly alert for smugglers, for those who traded in salt or in liquor.

Fishermen needed salt to preserve their catches, especially when they had to be transported great distances from Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby, so a brisk trade in the smuggling of salt was established. The focal point for salt smuggling in this area was a remote moorland inn called the Waggon and Horses. Built in 1648, it stood in the centre of a huge expanse of heathery wilderness at the edge of Lockton High Moor, albeit in the shelter of a steep hill below the rim of the incredible Hole of Horcum. Several ancient tracks met here and several cottages and farms surrounded the inn, but it was, and still is, noted for its solitude.

Today, that same inn stands beside the A169 Pickering-Whitby moor road and is known as the Saltersgate Inn where it acts as host for travellers of the more modern kind, although it is still occasionally cut off by snow during the winter. A photograph inside the bar gives some indication of

the depth of snow that can fall here and another picture shows the inn when it was called the Waggon and Horses.

But an ancient murder mystery surrounds this lonely hostelry.

It resulted from a battle between some salt smugglers and an exciseman. The date is uncertain although it probably occurred around 1800 when the salt tax was at its highest rate and this date can be associated with another legend about the peat fire which still burns in the bar. The inn's isolated location made it the ideal place to hide large amounts of salt, and so tons of it were brought here by traders and secreted in the cellars. The beams contained rows of fish-hooks while the inn's many cupboards were used to store the salt so that it was always ready for use. It had to be kept dry so that it would run freely, so a salt-box would probably have been built into the wall near the fire. Many remote farms, cottages and inns around the North York Moors had salt-boxes built into the walls close to the fire. These were hollowed-out sandstone troughs measuring about thirty inches long by twenty-four inches high by eighteen inches deep.

A shallower trough was inverted to form the lid and a small part was cut out so that a hand could be inserted to bring out the

salt. These stone containers kept the salt dry because the peat fire was never allowed to go out, and its constant heat warmed the entire wall around the fireplace. At the Saltersgate Inn, it is said the peat fire has never been allowed to go out since 1800, when the present fireside range was built into the bar by Dobsons of Pickering. When I called in the summer of 1987, a fire of logs was smouldering in this magnificent and famous grate, although I was told that turves of peat were placed over it during the night to maintain the tradition and to keep the fire burning.

Sometime around the turn of the last century, therefore, a group of fishermen from Robin Hood's Bay had trekked across the deserted moors, bringing their loads of fish to be salted here. By this time, there was an increase in the traffic passing Saltersgate Inn because of the new road which had been built in 1759, and because of the effect of the Turnpike Acts which produced even better roads which were fit for coaches. But the fishermen travelled at night so that the darkness would shelter them, and as they approached the lonely inn, they saw no light in the window. In the south-facing wall there is a tiny window and it was here that a lighted lantern was placed to show that excisemen were

around. The absence of a light meant that it was safe to continue.

And so the little party of horses and men completed their journey. However, a lone exciseman, whose name is lost to history, was lying in wait and no one knew he was there. No one had been able to warn the incoming group. The exciseman concealed himself as the fishermen arrived and he waited until he could obtain firm evidence of their illicit purpose, finally creeping down into the inn's cellars as the fish-salting was in progress. After months of investigation, he had caught the fishermen and the innkeeper in the act and had succeeded in obtaining all the proof he required.

But he was never to leave that inn, dead or alive. A tremendous fight followed, during which the exciseman was killed; whether this was done deliberately or by accident has never been determined. In the eyes of the law of that time, it would be regarded as murder. Everyone knew the penalty – it was death by hanging, usually with the body being gibbeted afterwards. The men knew that the fight between a lone man and a party of tough fishermen going about some illegal business would be regarded as murder if the authorities ever heard about it, and

so they decided to cover up their crime. After all, travellers did get lost upon those moors; many lone horsemen and solitary foot travellers died and were never seen again, their bodies being left to rot among the deep heather, so who could prove that the exciseman had ever reached Saltersgate?

Confident that their crime would never be discovered, the fishermen and the innkeeper agreed upon a conspiracy of silence and decided to bury the corpse beneath the hearth which contained the old peat fire. And so it was done; their deed would never be known. Very soon afterwards, in 1800, a new fireplace was installed and that is the one which can be seen today. The exciseman is said to be buried beneath it.

Inevitably rumours began to circulate about the death of the exciseman, but they never progressed beyond the stage of being rumours. Perhaps the fishermen boasted of their perfect crime? Perhaps the locals of the Saltersgate Inn had heard the story? Maybe the installer of the new fireplace had uncovered the corpse and agreed to keep his silence? Since that time, the peat fire has never been allowed to go out, and a legend has arisen that if it does go out, the ghost of the exciseman will return to haunt the inn.

From being a smugglers' haunt, the Waggon and Horses became a noted coaching inn; a toll-gate was installed here and horses could be obtained for the Neptune and Royal Mail coaches which ran past several times a week from the 1820s.

Today, it continues to provide accommodation for travellers, many of whom sit and gaze into the historic old fireplace whose flame has burned for nearly two hundred years. But does the body of a murdered excisemen lie beneath it and if so, who killed him? No one was ever brought to justice.

Stories of suspicious deaths or even murder continue to circulate about another moorland inn where, at various times, three people are said to have died under suspicious circumstances. Sadly, the accounts of these deaths are very limited.

The inn was the Lettered Board at Hamer which occupied a desolate and lofty position between the moorland villages of Glaisdale and Rosedale. Only a windswept pile of stones and a patch of uncharacteristically smooth grass surrounded by a sea of heather remain visible as reminders of that ancient inn. It was once a thriving house where huge flocks of sheep were farmed, but those moribund relics are all that is left and they stand beside the unclassified moorland

road that runs between Rosedale Abbey and Glaisdale. The ruins are not far from Hamer Bridge which is marked on Ordnance Survey maps, roughly a mile away among some long-deserted coal pits.

Surrounding the ruins is the bleak moorland, a windswept, open area thick with heather but devoid of trees, and a short distance to the north is the beautifully named Blue Wath Beck which flows from the moors to join Wheeldale Beck, the Murk Esk and eventually the River Esk. To the south, Hartoft Beck runs across the moor and into Rosedale where it joins the River Seven. This lonely pile of rubble is therefore upon the highest point of these moors, well over a thousand feet above sea level.

Today the location is known merely as Hamer, although Hamer House or Hamer Inn are names which have been used in the recent past. Most references ignore the correct name, i.e. The Lettered Board Inn, and its lonely address is variously given as Rosedale, Fryup or Hartoft. The forty-two-mile long-distance Lyke Wake Walk passes the ruins where support vehicles often wait among the stones to nourish hikers with refreshments and practical assistance. Years ago, several moorland tracks converged at this place and the main route was once a

monks' trod, the local name for a footpath, linking the abbeys of Whitby and Rosedale. The precise age of the old inn is uncertain, although I would estimate it has witnessed at the very least some three centuries of severe moorland winters. From its uncertain beginnings, the inn has been the focal point for many weary travellers, while today's motorists drive past with barely a thought for this innocuous heap of stones.

It is difficult to believe that coal-mining brought men to these remote moors although evidence of the old pits is still visible near the remains of the Lettered Board. In its heyday, the farmers of Eskdale would despatch wagon-loads of coal from these pits to places in Ryedale such as Cropton, Hutton-le-Hole and Kirbymoorside, and would later return with wagon-loads of lime for their fields.

This trade, and other passing horse-drawn vehicles plying between Whitby and the south, meant that Hamer's isolated Lettered Board Inn was a very busy establishment.

There are tales of dozens of horse-drawn vehicles being assembled outside at one time, with strings of powerful horses enjoying a break as their drivers relaxed inside. The drivers always carried sacks of fresh clover for the horses, while the

men enjoyed egg-and-bacon pies made by their wives, or the wives of their farmer customers, and washed them down with pints of beer from the inn.

It is said that one famous customer was Captain William Scoresby (1760-1829), the famous navigator, Arctic explorer, whaling expert and inventor of the Crow's Nest. In 1806, with his son (also called William) as chief mate, he took a ship closer to the North Pole than any other man. The senior Scoresby was born at Cropton near Pickering, the son of a farmer, and he lived there for a while, travelling across the moors to Whitby from where he operated his highly successful whaling enterprise. He employed several men from Cropton on his whaling expeditions. Later, he had two houses in Whitby, but regularly made this trip across the moors from Whitby to Cropton. He probably came along Glaisdale Dale where even now two farms record that this was the route from Whitby to York, London and beyond. Those farms are still called York House and London House.

Hamer's role as in inn declined after 1870, the year a local writer called Joseph Ford was born at the remote house. His father was landlord and I have a copy of a licensing application dated 1858 in which

the liquor licence of the Lettered Board was transferred to Joseph Ford Senior.

The younger Joseph Ford, who died in 1944, has left behind some stories of Hamer and they provide a vivid picture of the windswept and snowbound inn. He relates how elderly travelling salesmen would trek onto these moors, even in the height of winter, to sell trinkets from bags and baskets. These were mendicants and old soldiers, and they often met their deaths on these inhospitable moorlands.

There are stories of how sheepdogs, during the spring and summer after a particularly hard winter, would find the decaying bodies or bones of these men. Bodies were found lying near the streams or other isolated places where they had fallen, unable to reach the warmth or security of Hamer or any other shelter. The weather had killed them.

One harrowing story concerns an old cork-seller. Farmers' wives and innkeepers were his main customers and Joseph Ford's mother knew this man. He died on the moor during one of these ferocious winters, and his skeleton was found very close to the inn, with his basket of corks nearby. The corks identified him to his searchers, but many who perished in similar circumstances were never identified.

But three mysteries continue to haunt Hamer. I cannot pinpoint the date of any with accuracy but believe the first mystery occurred around the latter years of the last century, probably as the inn was beginning its decline. Two men called Hicks and Atkinson travelled by horse across the moors from Whitby towards Rosedale and stopped for the night at Hamer. I do not know their business, nor the reason for them being on this road. However, they were given a room at the inn and went to bed early, each in good health and in good spirits. But the following morning, both were found to be dead. There were no signs of injury or of a struggle, and even though an inquest was held, the cause of their death was never determined.

I have one account which suggests that these deaths were an awful accident. It seems that the room in question had been newly-plastered, and that it had no chimney or fireplace, and no ventilation. Furthermore, the water in the plaster had swollen the woodwork of the door and windows, and the unfortunate guests may have suffocated through lack of air or inhaled some noxious fumes from the drying plaster.

Not long after this incident, the Lettered Board ceased to be an inn. The precise

date is not certain, although there was a Lettered Board Inn at Hartoft which was licensed in 1901 and it is believed this licence continued until 1929. The house did continue as a private dwelling until late in the 1930s, the last family to live there being called Boddy. I remember the inn shortly after it was abandoned as a house, and the second mystery is a story of a murder that was committed here.

Very little is known of this crime. The victim was said to be the wife of one of the long line of licensees.

After the murder, he moved down from the moor to a cottage in an adjoining dale where I am assured his descendants still live. But I can find no formal record of this murder, nor of any legal outcome or prosecution.

The third murder, of which nothing has apparently been printed, is said to concern two wagoners who viciously fought one another in the bar of the Lettered Board. One picked up the heavy poker and savagely killed the other. Thereafter that poker was chained to the hearth so that it could be used only for tending the fire. The landlord did not want a recurrence of that fight, and the poker was still chained there within living memory. But it appears

that the full circumstances of this fight have never been made public.

And it is too late now for the meagre remains of Hamer's lonely Lettered Board Inn to reveal its deepest secrets.