The People of Goole 1826

A research document with suggestions for the Goole 2026 Bicentenary

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Foreword: Who and why are the people of Goole 1826?

I would like to begin this document by outlining what it is and the methodology behind it. First and foremost, this document is for everyone who is interested in commemorating Goole's bicentenary in 2026 in whatever form this may take. I hope that you find my research accessible, interesting, and helpful for your projects and events. I have included some links to further scholarship and discussions of the practice of commemorations more conceptually, but please feel free to use or ignore parts of this document as you see fit. The choice of this format is largely to give you the freedom to present and celebrate your heritage.

Some brief background information on myself, I'm a postgraduate student studying for my public history masters at the University of York. This looks at any and all ways the past is conveyed in the present, through museums, media, education, commemorations, etc. Within this, I specialise in the presentation of social and cultural history, as well as innovative ways to present the past such as multisensory exhibitions. My work with the Goole Civic Society is the product of an 11 week placement carried out as part of this degree, where I have been asked to produce this research and consultation document.

A foundational aspect of this project is my desire to find out more about the everyday people who lived and worked in Goole; the people on the ground who established businesses, operated the canals, and laboured on the docks. However, a significant challenge has been that we actually do not know much about them! The majority of the early settlers were labourers who were illiterate or did not have the means to safely store and preserve letters and diaries in the manner of their wealthy, elite contemporaries. To make up for this, I have incorporated a methodology known as 'critical fabulation', created by Saidiya Hartman in 2008. This is essentially the evidenced creation of historical narratives to give voice and identity to people who are often excluded from the histories we tell, or are viewed as an anonymous mass. None of the people I will present existed in exactly the way they are being depicted here. All of them use real names, occupations, and experiences that are based on archival evidence, used to construct a cohesive narrative, through which we can reflect on the experience of Goole's founders.

My definition of 'early Goole' spans from its official foundation in 1826 to around the mid-nineteenth century incorporating the first 10-20 years where it develops from a port with a hotel and some houses, to a thriving company town. Due to the availability of census data, many of the names used for the people of early Goole are from slightly later, but naming trends and conventions are fairly consistent across the period.

On the note of evidence, a huge bank of information has been consulted for this project. Some of this is available for free online, but the majority is from physical documents stored in either the Goole Public Library or the West Yorkshire archive in Wakefield. I will attempt to note where certain records were found, and the details of relevant archives will be included in the bibliography.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to everyone who has helped me in this process: my academic supervisor Victoria Hoyle, the Goole Civic Society, the Goole 2026 group, all of the staff at the Goole library, and in particular, Margaret Hicks Clarke, John Clarke, Stephen Walker, and Alex Ombler.

Now, we can begin with a short piece written on the question that began this project back in February: ‘so what was Goole like back in 1826?’

Introduction: So what was Goole like back in 1826?

Back in 1826, Goole would have been very different to how it looks today. With construction work on the port and canal just complete, a flood of navigational workers would have been leaving to begin canal and rail projects elsewhere while new families would be moving in to take advantage of the trade opportunities provided by the fledgling port.

By the end of the year, just 21 permanent brick buildings were completed, in addition to the temporary housing used by labourers, housing around 450 early residents. Conditions would have certainly been cramped, it was typical of the decade for groups of working-class families of around 9-10 individuals to share a room, sleeping 4 to a bed and many on the floor. 1826 saw the establishment of the necessities (a market, smithy, and pub), facilitating rapid growth over the next few years. By 1828 there were 156 buildings, and by 1829, 178. By this point, population density reduced, there were 1104 people listed in the company census, with households ranging from 1-15 but averaging to around 5 per residence.

Some amenities were provided by Aire and Calder Navigation, the company responsible for the port, canals, and permissions for the creation of the town. They collaborated with local groups on public health efforts and provided gas lamps to light the town and land for houses, businesses, and later Goole's Church. However, other groups were also instrumental in the prosperity of Goole. Church groups created Sunday schools, workers set up group health insurance, and many businesspeople came to the town over the century.

The waterways themselves were staffed by a great number of people, the ports would have been bustling with the loading and unloading of goods, tugs guiding boats into the canal, and a series of lockkeepers making sure business flowed smoothly through the Aire and Calder waterways.

Now we will zoom in on 4 of the people that lived and worked in and around Goole during its first 20 years of existence and consider how their experiences differ and show a new side to Goole's history.

Character 1: Robert Bean, The boy on the dockyard

Robert Bean was a boy living with his mother and sisters in Goole's workhouse. The Beans have ended up here through poverty and are able to exist here, although the conditions are poor. The story follows Robert escaping from the workhouse early one morning to explore the dockyards. He experiences a myriad of new and different sights, smells, and sounds based on the goods that are moving through the port at this time.

Profile:

Year: 1840

Name: Robert Bean

Age: 12

Residence: Goole Workhouse

- Today, this is the site of the Tesco on Boothferry Road

Family:

- Mary Bean (29F), Robert's mother
    - Some records suggest that she was a single mother with 3 children, not referring to her as a widower like other women. She could be in the workhouse as a means to support these children born out of wedlock, something socially taboo at the time.
    - Other records suggest that she had a husband, Jonathan Bean. He was an agricultural labourer so would have received a relatively low wage that was also dependent on a good harvest. If this is the case, it is possible that Jonathan could not financially support his family so sent them to temporarily stay in the workhouse.
- Anne Bean (11F) and Emma Bean (2F), Robert's younger sisters

The names and ages in this profile are derived from 1861 census records from the Goole Workhouse.

The Victorian Workhouse

The Victorian Workhouse is a key feature of this period, part of national efforts to reform existing poor relief. A royal commission was appointed in 1832 under Edwin Chadwick to work out how this should happen, leading to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. A new government department the ‘Poor Law Commission’ was set up in London, while around 600 ‘Boards of Guardians’ were set up around the country, each responsible for a collection of parishes. One of these boards was set up in Goole in October 1837: the Goor Poor Law Union. It consisted of 20 elected members, each responsible for a certain parish under their jurisdiction. They were tasked with spending funds raised through taxation to help those deemed deserving of aid.

Following the recommendations of the reform act, financial support for the able-bodied poor (‘outdoor relief’) was no longer provided. Support for the sick, elderly, orphaned, or otherwise unable to work was available with the caveat of being confined to the workhouse.

Conditions within were deliberately harsh to ensure support was only given to those where were in desperate need. Families would often be separated, and inmates were severely restricted, being given workhouse uniforms, monotonous and poor quality food, and needing to abide by rules for leaving the workhouse for any length of time. They would also be given unpleasant jobs such as making rope and breaking stones. This was particularly harsh given that those who lived in the workhouse were often there due to illness or physical disability that prevented them finding employment elsewhere. Conditions gradually improved after a series of scandals but the system remained exploitative and generally unpopular.

The overall aim for these measures was to get all able-bodied individuals working, and any others off the streets. This reflects the general Victorian desire for a ‘sanitised’ and ‘respectable’ urban society.

Goole’s workhouse was built in 1839, designed by John and William Atkinson, the architects of many other workhouses in the region. It had the quarters for inmates arranged around a central courtyard where it is likely outdoor labour took place. Alongside this, there was accomodation for the masters of the workhouse, a kitchen, dining hall, washrooms, and a chapel.

Part of a map of Goole depicting the Union Workhouse from 1853.

As an able-bodied 12 year old boy, Robert would have been expected to carry out manual labour and potentially could have been sent out to work in local factories. The workhouses were not a prison, and inmates could leave under certain conditions (eg. time, curfew, distance, etc.) or forfeit the aid provided.

Workhouses were undeniably a cruel place that Robert would want to leave, providing the motivation for his story and desire to explore the dockyards, an open space characterised by movement, contrasting his everyday life.

The dockyard of early Goole

The dockyard would have been a busy space. During the day there would have been frequent movement of goods between boats, trains, and warehouses built adjacent to the docks early on in Goole's life. We can put together a fairly cohesive picture of what exactly would have moved through this port using rates documents published by the Aire and Calder Navigation Company. These are documents created by the owners of the port that outline the taxes that would need to be paid to move a certain material or product using their canals.

The specific document used to look at the types of goods is the rates document from March 1854. There is no distinction between imports and exports on the document although this can be inferred from what it is. Here is a list with my annotations and suggestions for point of origin or destination:

- Ale and Porter (Casks)
    - Large amounts of Ale were exported from Britain to soldiers, administrators, and settlers. Indian Pale Ale (IPA) was created in the 18th century to be a long-lasting beer that could be brewed in England and then shipped to the colonies in large quantities.
- Argols- Residue from wine casks created during fermentation, used in dyeing as a mordant, a substance used to bind dyes to fabrics
    - Use within the production of vibrant British Army ‘red coats’
- Alum- Another material used for textile dyeing
    - Large production within North Yorkshire, potentially moving through Goole to reach textile factories in the South of England
- Antimony Ore
    - Mined in Britain and in colonial territories (predominantly South Africa and Australia)
- Bacon
- Butter Salt (Casks)
- Cocoa
    - Imported from West-African and Caribbean plantations, a hugely significant industry for emerging chocolate producers in the region such as Terrys and Rowntrees. This industry heavily relied on slavery and indentured servitude for the harvest of cocoa beans.
- Candles
- Chicory (prepared)- used as a coffee substitute
    - Significant production in France
- Coffee
    - Grown in colonies in the Middle East, Americas, and Africa
- Currants
    - Imported from Southern Europe
- Cement
    - A recent invention, the details of its history available here
- Dyewoods
    - Large amounts imported from India and South America for use in textiles, leather, and inks
- Emery Stones- an abrasive material used in polishing
    - Found abundantly in modern-day Greece and Turkey
- Grease
    - Transported for use as lubrication in factories
- Hardwood

    - Some varieties found in Europe, others imported from colonies. More abundant types used in construction, more valuable imported ones used for luxury goods
- Hides
- Lard
- Lead
    - Large mining operations in the Yorkshire dales
- Madders- A pigment used in dyeing
    - Large production in Holland
- Molasses- a common sweetener and component of home-brewed beer, made from refined sugarcane or sugar beet
- Millers' stuff- either the tools of millers (eg. grindstones) or grains to be milled
- Mahogany
    - A wood native to South America, large quantities imported from Jamaica
- Mustard (seed)
    - Grown widely across mainland Europe
- Munject- a type of deer
    - Imported from native regions- India and Southeast Asia
- Oil Cake
- Palm Oil
    - Imported from West Africa, a more detailed history can be read here
- Provisions (salt)
- Paints and Colours
    - A wide variety of products with a range of global origins
- Pitch and Tar
    - Large amounts used within shipbuilding industries
- Pearl
    - Imported from India, Southeast Asia, and Australia, increasingly popular for luxury jewellery
- Shell
    - Increasingly popular decorative item across the Victorian period, large numbers imported from across the colonies
- Rice
    - Cultivated in Southeast Asia and plantations in the Americas
- Rags
- Rosin
    - Used in paper-making
- Starch
- Sago- starch extracted from the sago palm
    - Imported from Indonesia
- Soap
- Saltpetre
    - Used in gunpowder and fertiliser, large amounts imported from India

- Soda- Sodium carbonate
    - Used in domestic washing and products such as soap and glass
- Sugar (raw)
    - Large amounts imported from American plantations
- Sumac
    - A spice grown and used in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions
- Steel
    - Large-scale mining and refining in North-Yorkshire
- Spelter- a zinc-lead alloy used as a cheaper alternative to bronze
- Safflower- a plant used in dyeing as an alternative to saffron
    - Large amounts grown and imported from India
- Sulphate of Ammonia- a byproduct of industrial processes such as steel refining used as a fertiliser
- Tartars- goods imported from Central Asia
- Tallow
- Tin
    - Large amounts mined in Devon and Cornwall
- Turnips
- Turmeric
    - A plant imported from India for both culinary and medicinal use
- Tobacco Leaf
    - Imported from plantations in the Americas
- Vinegar
- Valonia
    - Acorn caps of the Valonia oak tree used to make a black dye used in tanning, imported from the Ottoman empire
- Woad
    - A blue dye cultivated in Britain and Europe
- Scythe Stones
- Lump Sugar
    - Raw sugar from Caribbean plantations refined in Britain to be sold and exported. A system of taxes prevented colonial producers from viably refining their own sugar.
- Clocks in cases
- Toys
    - Mass-production making the large-scale import and export of manufactured products such as toys viable
- Tea
    - A major import from India
- Hair
    - A valuable commodity used in wig-making and jewellery
- Yarn
- Wines and Spirits (casks)

    - Much like beer, wine and spirits were exported to colonial territories for colonial troops and administrators
- Silk, Cotton and Woolen Waste
    - Higher waste from industrial production of textiles leading to greater use of these waste products to create cheaper products
- Oranges
    - A luxury fruit imported mostly from Spain and the Middle-East
- Lemons
    - Likely imported from Italy
- Glue
    - Produced on an industrial scale from animal bones and hides, used in a variety of industries such as furniture making
- Hops
    - Large production within Britain
- Glass Bottles
    - Large production within the North of Britain
- Coarse Paper
- Floor Cloth
- Felt
- Hams
- Heavy Machinery
- Iron
    - Large-scale mining North-Yorkshire
- Lead
    - Large-scale mining in the Yorkshire Dales
- Nails
- Oil (casks)
- Ropes
- Flax
    - Large-scale farming in Yorkshire
- Junk- likely scrap materials to be recycled and reused
- Jute
    - A plant grown in India and refined in Britain, Dundee being a major hub for jute weaving
- Coir Yarn
    - Yarn made from coconut tree fibres, grown in India, refined in Britain
- Woollen Cloths
- Low Soldiers' Clothing
    - Clothing likely being exported to supply colonial garrisons, the red coats that defined the British army during this period
- Carpeting
- Blankets
- Indigo
    - A plant imported from India, used as a luxury blue textile dye

- Common Oysters
- Wool
- Rags to Wakefield
- Leather
- Earthenware

An important thing to note from this list is the vast range of sources and destinations for materials. Many of the locations listed were also British colonial territories, situating the story of Goole within broader economic narratives of colonialism. This is both a story of trade and exploitation of colonised peoples. Also hugely relevant here is the export of products such as clothing and alcohol to the colonies, European products being a major social differentiator and status symbol for settlers and colonial garrisons.

To contextualise this briefly, during the nineteenth century Britain occupied territory across mainland North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, as well as a vast quantity of islands in the Caribbean, and the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. For an excellent visualisation of this, linked here is a website that maps the rise and fall of the British empire.

A deeper examination of British colonialism is beyond the scope of these resources, but the Museum of British Colonialism has created a great list of resources for learning about this, accessible here.

A few of these commodities are particularly relevant to Robert's story, in particular, the low-soldier's clothing, and some of the more unusual resources that he likely would have never experienced in the workhouse.

It may also be useful and interesting to consider the sensory experience of these items. Alongside some relevant items, I have included a discussion of smell. The Goole dockyards would have undoubtedly been a smelly place both from the goods on the docks, as well as the increasing use of coal-powered tug boats as the port grew in operation. Hence, I have included some extracts from a scent-history resource I will discuss in the next section that can help us start thinking about what it might be like to experience these goods during this period.

Low-Soldier's Clothing

As previously discussed, the uniforms moving through the port were most likely being shipped to colonial garrisons across the world. Since 1645, British military uniform included the iconic red coat, used across the majority of branches of the military (including colonial forces) during the 18th-19th century. The coats themselves underwent minor design changes but always retained the deep Venetian red fabric with white, blue, or yellow accents.

Some examples of redcoat uniforms from around this period, image taken from 'Regimental Nicknames and Traditions of the British Army' (1916)

It is likely that Robert would have been aware of these uniforms, but may never have seen one for himself. In particular, the vibrant red colour would be interesting, given that workhouse uniforms were very plain garments, often made by the inmates themselves.

The presence of military uniforms on the dockyards creates a distinct tension in being stored next to luxury goods from lands that soldiers wearing these uniforms would have occupied. This literally and figuratively positions the processes and actions of colonialism directly alongside its spoils. Being a child, this is not something Robert would be explicitly aware of, but it would likely be the source of further questions surrounding where and how certain goods made it to Goole (and Britain more generally).

Oysters

During this period, oysters were not the luxury food they are today. Due to large-scale fishing operations, they were a widely accessible source of food for the working class, particularly in coastal and urban areas. It is due to this overfishing that populations of oysters around the British Isles heavily declined and still are not back to their former prominence.

It is likely that Robert would have encountered oysters in the past (more likely outside of the workhouse) so the sight and smell would be familiar, but not on this scale. The immense movement of both fresh and pickled oysters would have undeniably caused quite a smell, potentially a horrible one if some of the oysters had begun to go off.

> “On the shell being opened, the oyster is minutely examined for the pearls: it is usual even to boil the oyster, as the pearl, though commonly found in the shell, is not unfrequently contained in the body of the fish itself.The stench occasioned by the oysters being left to putrefy is intolerable; and remains for a long while after the fishery is over. It corrupts the atmosphere for several miles round Condatchy, and renders the neighbourhood of that country extremely unpleasant till the monsoons and violent southwest southwest winds set in and purify the air.”

~ Robert Percival, An Account of the Island of Ceylon (1803)

Oranges

These were a European import, but a valuable and luxurious fruit, enjoyed by the upper classes. There was also a wider tradition of giving an orange in a stocking as a Christmas gift. It is unlikely that Robert would have seen an orange, especially within the workhouse, so the experience of the fruit would be strange and new.

Foods are great examples for examining multisensory perception, with the vibrant colour, smoothness of the skin, pleasant, subtle smell of the peel (or unpleasant smell of rotting fruit), and citrus taste. These would all be new sensations for Robert, perhaps it is interesting to think about what it would be like to experience such a commonplace grocery for the first time.

> “So have I seen in Malta's pleasant isle,
> The orange tree at summer's happy tide,
> At once diffusing odours from its leaf,
> And golden fruit the fragrant bud beside.”

~ Chritstopher Marlowe and George Chapman, Hero and Leander (1598)

Tea

During this period, tea became a hugely popular drink across social groups. However, the type and means of serving the tea was used as a way to distinguish between classes. The upper classes tended to drink high-quality, light blends, without milk or sugar, served with elaborate and decorative tea sets. Low classes drank darker black teas, adding milk and sugar due to the strong flavour of these blends.

Robert may have come across tea in the workhouse, but due to the general goal of workhouse food to be as bland and utilitarian as possible, it would most likely have been watery and flavourless. The teas that Robert may encounter on the dockyard could range from common to luxurious and, stored in large quantities, would exude a distinctive smell.

Tea is particularly significant for thinking about British colonialism during this period since it was arguably one of the most widespread products of colonial occupation in everyday life.

> “Our ladies are our tea-makers; let them study the leaf as well as the liquor; let them become familiar with both vegetables, with their forms, colours, flavours, and scents; let us drink our tea upon the responsibility of our wives, daughters and sisters, and not upon that of our grocers. Let every female distinguish tea-leaves from sloe-leaves, as well as if she had served an apprenticeship in the warehouse in Leadenhall-street.”

~ Friedrich Christian Accum, A Treatise on Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons (1822)

Sumac

This spice is often primarily described by its ‘aromatic’ smell. It would have certainly been a new experience for Robert due to his prior experience of workhouse food. The spice is also a vibrant red in its powdered form, used in both cooking and dyeing, so would also have a visual appeal.

> “Ascending from the basket crown is a tripod of twigs of aromatic sumac, painted white; between the limbs of the tripod finely combed red wool is laid, and a downy eagle-feather tips each stick. The actor carries in his left hand a bow adorned with three eagle-plumes and two tufts of turkey feathers, and in his right hand a white gourd rattle, sometimes decorated with two whorls of feathers.”

~Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, Volume 1 (1865)

Why tell this story?

The story of Robert Bean follows him from a harsh life in the workhouse to the experience of freedom and discovery across the dockyards of Goole. This should hopefully provide an engaging narrative that is applicable to a wide variety of mediums. The dockyard in particular is a really interesting location to access some of the experiences of early residents. Particularly by engaging with a multisensory methodology that I will discuss in depth in the next chapter, we can begin to access the experience of early Goole, rather than passively absorbing facts about it.

The history of the workhouse I feel is an important one to include. A lot of focus is generally put on commemorating ‘great people’ (most often ‘great men’) who are responsible for financing or leading historical movements. There is definitely a place for these narratives, and they should still be told, but a key aim for me with this project is to give a voice to those often overlooked. The history of the workhouse allows us to access histories of poverty, welfare, and labour, histories of ordinary people trying to get by that are often more relevant to us today.

I also think it is important to engage with British colonial history in commemorative events, to acknowledge the global connections that helped provide the income invested in the fledgling town. Looking at this through the eyes of a child is an intentional choice, since I do not think it is productive or meaningful to lecture anyone about this history. From previous projects, I’ve found that encouraging people to reflect and think about questions like ‘where is this from?’ and ‘how did this get here?’ is a much better means to uncover the undeniable material presence of colonialism on the lives of ordinary people across Britain.

It is also worth bringing up here that the Aire and Calder Navigation Company operated only within Britain and (as far as I’m aware) has no ties to slavery or colonial exploitation. They have an indirect role in this narrative by owning the waterways these goods entered the country through. This is not a narrative specific to Goole, but one relevant to the whole country during this period.

None of this is to say that commemorations in 2026 should be focused on reparations or that we should directly bear the guilt of Britain during the 19th Century. My inclusion of this information is to look at Goole’s heritage through a different lens than has been done before, acknowledging this difficult history, and emphasising the vast interconnectedness Goole has had with the rest of the world.

Ultimately, Robert Bean’s story has been left purposely open-ended to allow different interpretations to imagine where he might end up, given this snippet into his life. He may end up being influenced by his childhood experiences and join the British army to go out and see the world, he may begin working on the dockyard himself when he

leaves the workhouse, he may be moved to a factory elsewhere within the area and finish his childhood separated from his mother and sisters. That is left up to you and your project.

Utilising smell within heritage

The use of multisensory methodologies within the presentation of history is something that I'm personally a huge advocate for so I'm very glad that one of the 'People of Goole 1826' provided such an excellent opportunity to talk about it! The vast majority of heritage projects only engage our eyes and ears, leaving 3 of the 5 senses unutilised, and with great potential for developing our historical understanding. I'll be primarily focusing on smell here, but many of my suggestions also apply to the use of touch and taste.

Using multisensory practices can be hugely beneficial for engaging a wide range of audiences with commemorations. They can make history accessible to those with visual impairments and certain neurodiverse individuals, as well as being an active means for engaging with the past for a wide range of people. Exhibitions incorporating smell or touch often tend to be marketed towards younger audiences, but this is by no means exclusive.

Some interesting examples of the incorporation of smell within heritage include:

- The Jorvik Viking Centre, York: Various scents are dispersed throughout a replica Viking village, based on archeological finds from the area. This was one of the earliest incorporations of smell into a museum space.
- London: Port City, London: a temporary exhibition in the Museum of London Docklands from October 2021 - May 2022. 4 bespoke scents were created by AVM Curiosities to accompany an exhibition looking at London's 20th Century dockyards ('The Warehouse', 'Handling Hides', 'The Docks', and 'Home'). AVM Curiosities has worked on a great number of interesting smell-heritage projects that are well worth a look/sniff.
- 'Follow your nose' tour at Museum Ulm, Ulm: A collaborative project between Museum Ulm and the Odeuropa team. Scents were created to accompany artwork in the museum based on what the painting depicted. The scents used range dramatically, from a pomander (a piece of jewellery fragranced with nutmeg, cloves, rosemary, cinnamon, rose, ambergris, and civet), to a scented depiction of hell (including smoke, sulphur, and faecal scents)

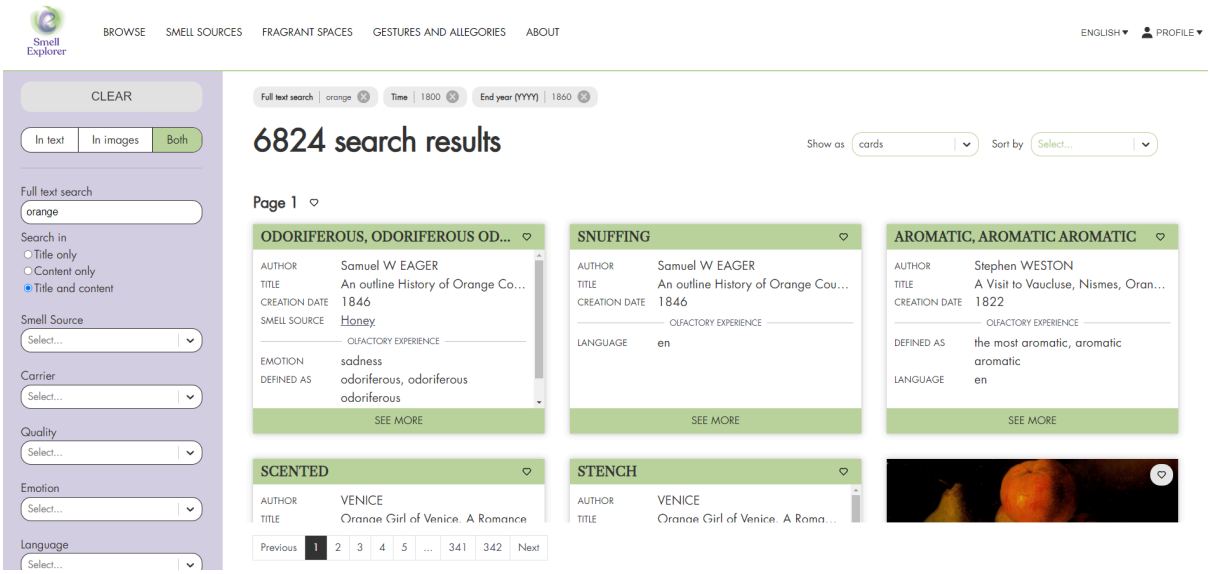
Why smell?

Smell is an important sense to include for a variety of reasons. Firstly, within the context of commemoration, it's significant that our sense of smell is closely linked to memory, smells often acting as a powerful trigger for specific memories. There are many scents such as coal or fish, that will likely evoke memories for people, especially if they worked in these industries.

Smell is also largely subjective, making it a point for discussion between people. There are smells that some love but others loathe, something that could be considered perhaps across generational lines.

Most importantly, smelling something involves active engagement with commemoration. During a year with a lot of amazing projects set out, people will quickly reach information overload. Smelling introduces a different part of the brain, bringing variety beyond audio and visual input, and can lead to a more critical reflection of past experiences based on people's experience of the smells in the present.

As a final note on this, it is necessary to distinguish between 'smelling something from the past' and 'experiencing the past'. While smell is an amazing way to access and reflect on the experiences of the people of early Goole, it's important to remember that noses are historically bound, and perception of smell has changed to some extent over time. With this in mind, a tool that I have found incredibly useful in my own exploration of smell is the Odeuropa Smell Explorer.



This is essentially a search engine for historical smells that lets you search for a particular substance within a timeframe, and find mentions of it within historical records. In this instance for example, I have searched for references to oranges from

1800-1860. This is the tool I used to provide quotes for the dockyard goods and a great way to better understand how a particular thing may have been perceived, and if that is similar or different to how we perceive it today.

How to practically use smell

This could be a huge section but I will keep things fairly brief! If you are interested in looking more into using smell within heritage and commemoration, I would highly recommend Odeuropa's resources such as their 'Olfactory Storytelling Toolkit'. However, this resource is designed primarily for Museums and larger institutions so may not be relevant to all projects.

Incorporating the dockyard smells can be really simple. Given the fact that the majority of the goods can now be found at a supermarket or online, an affordable way to incorporate smell is to use the items themselves. Some substances may require a bit of DIY or substitution, but the majority can be easily obtained.

Many companies also exist that aim to recreate historical smells, a prominent UK-based one that offers a variety of mediums and price points is AromaPrime who already work with a large number of heritage and entertainment institutions. Their products are really varied, with options such as 'Steam Train', 'Slimy Sewer', and 'The Fall of Rome'. This may be a better option for certain inaccessible or potentially harmful scents.

As for the application of the smells, it really depends on what you want to use it for. Scented items can be placed in a room or a synthetic smell dispersed to give a specific space a smell. Alternatively, scented items could be smelled directly or blotting paper can be dipped in scented oils and smelled to engage with a specific odour. If you are looking to have people guess smells, either items or oils can be placed in an opaque container.

What could you actually do with smell for Goole 2026?

These are some hopefully interesting and useful suggestions for how these ideas could be incorporated:

- Intergenerational engagement with specific smells: sitting down with the sole purpose of sniffing and talking about a smell. This could be an excellent way to get people talking about their own experience of Goole, understanding others, and reflecting on early Goole. Some examples that may prove fruitful include
    - Tobacco: There is a fairly sharp generational divide between the perception of tobacco smoke. From Goole's establishment until fairly

recently, smoking would have been commonplace (especially in pubs). For some, this smell may vividly evoke memories of enjoyable nights spent with friends and family, but for others, it may be perceived as a nuisance.
    - Coal: This is a more relevant example for bicentenary celebrations. It would be interesting to explore different generations' relationships to coal, particularly between people who work/worked on the dockyards.

- A smell tour of Goole: This could manifest in many forms, potentially as a walking tour around town with a collection of items / oils / scratch and sniff cards, each stop being centred around a particular smell associated with that location (eg. a business that operated there or something that happened). This can be an excellent stimulus for getting people to put themselves in the shoes of people within the narratives through a shared experience of a smell across time.

- Guessing objects by smell on the dockyard: Potentially a fun activity that is relevant to accessing the experience of early Goole. Particularly in regard to the more unfamiliar goods for the time, introducing the dockyard through a less refined and objective sense can tap into the aspect of unfamiliarity and discovery that defines Robert's experience.

- Recreating spaces from early Goole: If there are attempts to recreate spaces from early Goole, incorporating smell could be an excellent way to increase immersion and authenticity. This would likely involve more of the passive means of diffusing a smell throughout a room or space.

Character 2: Ann Croft, The lock-keeper’s daughter

Ann Croft was a young girl living with her family in the Lock House at Whitley Lock. Her father John was a lock keeper, responsible for monitoring the operation of the lock to let boats through the canal. John worked long hours keeping watch so passed the time by telling his daughter folktales that his parents had told him as a child. This is a more domestic story that centres around the stories that Ann is told, and the fantastical creatures that are within them.

Profile:

Year: 1832

Name: Ann Croft

Age: 6

Residence: The Lock House at Whitley Lock

Family:

- John Croft, Ann’s father. The name of a real lock keeper during the 1830s.
    - This was a relatively well paid profession, lock keepers also lived (either full or part time) in a house next to the lock so they were available whenever the lock needed operating.
- Mercy Croft, Ann’s mother.

These names are derived from 1830s census and financial records from the Aire and Calder Navigation company. Ann’s name in particular is from the wife of the son of a lock keeper from this region.

The role of locks and the lock keeper

Locks are a vital part of canal infrastructure, allowing boats to move up small inclines by trapping water behind gates. This diagram explains how they work:

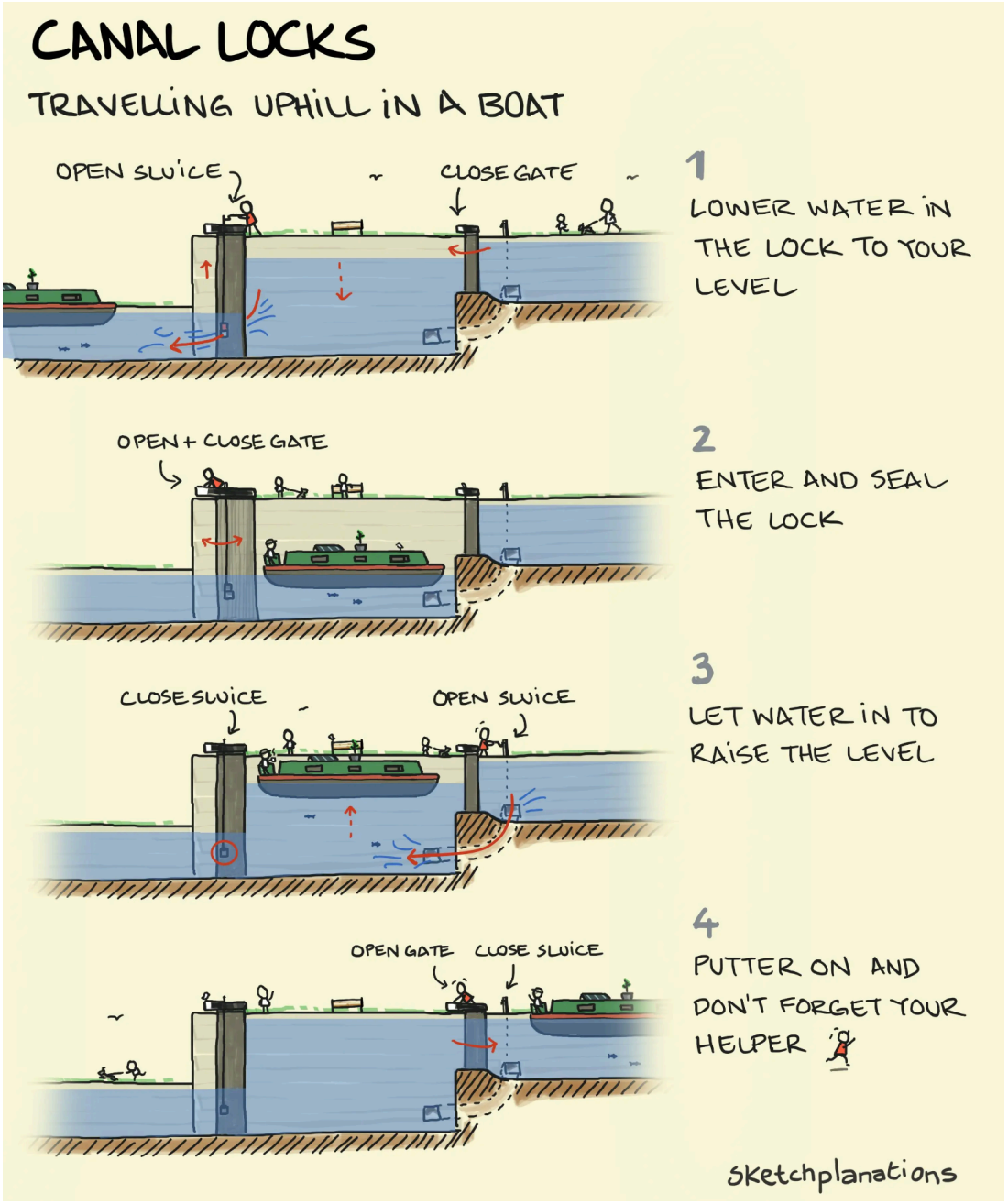


Diagram sourced from sketchplanations.com

Locks were introduced to England in the 10th Century, ‘pound locks’ were introduced in the 14th century, and this design has remained relatively unchanged since. Built for commercial shipping by Aire and Calder Navigation, the Whitley lock is an example of a broad pound lock.

Image of Whitley lock sourced from the Whitley community website, accessible here

The role of the Lock Keeper was to assist individuals with the safe use of the lock and collect fees from boats passing through, both as a source of income for Aire and Calder Navigation, and for the lock's upkeep. This job required long hours of staying alert to allow boats through throughout the day. Hence, it was often carried out by families living in the Lock Keepers House or a small group of individuals who lived locally. The job was very important for Aire and Calder Navigation so was relatively well paid, the provided housing also being a major perk.

19th Century Childhood

The childhood experience from this period is well documented and the subject of many in-depth studies, this section of the document will cover select elements that are particularly relevant to Ann's story. The Croft family's middle-class financial position makes Ann's life completely different to Robert's, far more comfortable, with many more opportunities. In general, there was a huge difference in experience of childhood between the rich and poor.

Ann would have been raised within the family home, her mother being the primary caregiver while her father focused on earning money. It is unlikely that they would have employed a nanny like rich families of the period.

It is also unlikely that Ann would have had to work at 6 years old, but would have been expected to help her mother out with household chores, learning from her to

take on increasing responsibilities as she grew older. There were very few laws protecting the rights of children during this period, children younger than her were frequently employed in factories, mines, or as chimney sweeps, working in appalling conditions with a high mortality rate.

It is likely, given the family's financial position, that Ann would have received some form of education (at least basic literacy and numeracy skills). Contemporary schools were typically very strict places focused on the rote memorisation and repetition of facts. Teaching was also segregated according to gender, boys and girls often being taught different subjects to prepare themselves for their different expected roles in society. Access to education hugely varied across both class and location, the vast majority being fee-paying schools only accessible to the wealthy. There was also the option of 'Sunday school', groups that ran after Sunday church services, available to the local parish children. Ann's basic education may have come from either a local fee-paying school or Sunday school (depending on what was available in the area), however, women were strongly discouraged (and in many cases prevented) from pursuing further education such as a university degree. Education was not mandatory for children until much later in 1870.

Ultimately, there were relatively few options for Ann growing up during this period. The scope of women's work grew over this period, with growing industrial cities, secretarial positions were made available to women, and morality movements opened up roles such as teaching and fundraising to aid the working classes. Despite this, the social ideal was still for women to become wives and mothers, or go into childcare if they did not marry.

Regional Folktales

Given Ann's probable literacy, an aspect of this period that I felt it useful to include for the purposes of bicentenary commemorations are the folktales and stories that Ann may have read or been told. Folktales also often had a didactic (educational) purpose, so this will also be taken into account when looking at our examples. Below I will outline 3 folktales from around Yorkshire that are relevant to the story and overall project before moving on to why and how folktales are so useful for understanding a period of history.

All of these examples are from Rev. Thomas Parkinson's 'Yorkshire Legends and Traditions' (1888). Given a lack of writings on early 19th century Yorkshire folktales, this is an excellent alternative since the stories that would have been passed down to the individuals interviewed by Parkinson would most likely have been actively told at the start of the century to be 'legends and traditions' by the end.

PDFs available for free online for Volume 1 and Volume 2

The Busky Dyke Boggart

The story revolves around a fantastical beast and an area of dark, haunted land. The Boggart itself was a supernatural creature capable of changing its appearance, but most often appearing as a large black dog with glowing red eyes. Black dogs are a common occurrence within folk tales, often being associated directly with death, or as an omen of impending death for either those who see it, or someone close to them. Stories about The Busky Dyke Boggart contain various versions of this over time. Some other examples include the Trollers Gill Barghest near Skipton, or the Black Shuck that roams the countryside of East Anglia. To clarify the different terms used, the boggart (shape changer) in this story frequently presents itself as a barghest (large black dog), so the creature is discussed both as a boggart and barghest. There are a variety of explanations for this widespread cultural belief, possibly linked to stories of Catholic priests performing exorcisms whereby they would transfer evil spirits into dogs and lead them out of towns and villages, into the hills.

Barghest Black Dog, an artistic rendition by Jaime Sidor

The area it inhabited, Busky (Bosky) Dyke, is a tract of land between a drainage ditch and a stream, covered in bushes (locally called ‘busks’ or ‘bosks’, giving it its name). This specific story originates from Fewston (near Harrogate), although it was a popular supernatural creature throughout Yorkshire during this period. By the time of Rev. Parkinson’s writings, a school had been built on this land, and the legend did not hold as much significance.

Rev. Parkinson wrote a poem based on the various tellings of the Boggart that I will reproduce here:

> Busky-Dyke, the Busky-Dyke,
> Ah! tread its path with care;
> With silent step haste through its shade,
> For “Bargest” wanders there!
>
> Since days when every wood and hill
> By Pan or Bel, was crowned;
> And every river, brook, and copse
> Some heathen Goddess owned.
>
> Since bright the Druid’s altars blazed,
> And lurid shadows shed,
> On Almas Cliff and Brandrith Rocks,
> Where human victims bled,
>
> Hag-witches oft, ‘neath Bestham oaks,
> Have secret revels kept;
> And fairies danced in Clifton Field,
> When men, unconscious, slept.
>
> Dark sprite and ghost of every form,
> No man e’er saw the like,
> Have played their pranks at midnight hours,
> In haunted Busky-Dyke.
>
> There milk-white cats, with eyes of fire,
> Have guarded stile and gate;
> And calves and dogs of wondrous shape
> Have met the traveller late.
>
> And “Pad-foot” oft, in shaggy dress,
> With many a clanking chain,
> Before the astonished rustic’s eyes
> Has vanished in the drain.

On winter's eve, by bright wood fire,
As winter winds do roar,
And heap the snow on casement higher,
Or beat against the door;

Long tales are told from sire to son, In many a forest ingle,
Of rushing sounds and fearful sights
In Busky Dyke's dark dingle.

But lo, there now, as deftly reared,
As if by magic wands,
In superstition's own domain,
A village school-room stands!

Where thickest fell the gloom of night,
And terror held its sway,
Now beams the rising sun of light,
And intellectual day.

Before its beams, its warmth, its power,
Let every phantom melt,
And children's Gambols now be heard,
Where "fearful Bargest" dwelt.

Yet softly tread, with reverent step,
Along the Busky shade;
There ghosts our fathers feared of old
Will be for ever "laid."

This story would likely have been told to children to try and keep them away from certain places. In this case, the Busky Dyke would have likely been quite marshy while it was used for drainage, so would not have been a particularly safe place for children to play. Hence, this story utilised cultural ideas surrounding large black dogs with warnings about the danger of certain places.

Walling in the Cuckoo

A much more lighthearted story present across the north of England during this period, this specific version from the village of Austwick.

> The villagers noticed that nicer weather and the growth of grasses required for grazing animals came about with the call of the cuckoo. Cuckoos are migratory birds that pass across Europe during spring and early summer, acting for the villagers as a marker of the changing seasons. Upon associating the call of the cuckoo with the coming of spring, the villagers were determined to surround the bird with a high wall the next time it flew over, trapping it permanently in the village and creating a permanent springtime.
>
> As winter ended, the villagers started to prepare themselves for the construction of the wall, waiting for the cuckoo to arrive. One day, the bird arrived and perched itself on a branch on the outskirts of the village. The Villagers immediately got to work, building a tall and sturdy wall. A few days later, the wall was almost complete, but the cuckoo (now rested and ready to complete its migration) took flight, soaring above them and calling out with its mock cry ‘Cuckoo, cuckoo’.
>
> The villagers were initially worried they had upset the bird and may never experience the joys of spring, but the cuckoo returned the next year to once again herald the coming of spring.

The message of this story could be read in a number of ways. It could reflect the relationship between humankind and nature, the permanent cycle of the seasons and the folly of anyone trying to stop or control it. It could also be more interpersonal, perhaps the idea that you shouldn’t attempt to hang on to particular moments since fleeting happiness should be treasured when it arrives and enjoyed in the moment, and that the colder, duller days are important to appreciate when there is warmth.

Yorkshire Fairies

Belief in fairies spans far back into the medieval period, with countless regional variations across Britain and Ireland. By the 19th century, fairies were becoming firmly rooted within the realm of fiction, but still a significant part of traditional folk stories. There was a particularly steep decline during the 19th Century in the popularity of fairy lore, particularly within urban areas. By this period, there were also a lot of ‘established’ fairy stories such as those by Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, cementing characters such as the king and queen of the fairies.

Fairies were conceived as being mischievous but generally benevolent creatures who punished the wicked and rewarded the fair. Stories often revolved around domestic life, the activities of housewives, and the stealing of infants. The importance of domestic life is an especially strong theme, a key part of the didactic role of fairy stories. This is clearly seen in part of a collection of fairy stories recorded by Joseph Ritson in 1831:

> When mortals are at rest,
> And snoring in their nest,
> Unheard, and unespied,
> Through key-holes do we glide;
> Over tables, stools, and shelves,
> We trip it with our fairy elves.
>
> And if the house be foul,
> With platter, dish, and bowl,
> Upstairs we nimbly creep,
> And find the girls asleep;
> Then we pinch their arms and thighs,
> None escapes, and none espies.
>
> But if the house be swept,
> And from uncleanness kept,
> We praise the household maid,
> And duly she is paid;
> For we use before we go,
> To drop a tester in her shoe.

The more lighthearted side of fairy stories is presented in verse presented by James Henry Dixon in his 1881 '[Chronicles and Stories of the Craven Dales]', a song recounted by locals in Elboton:

> **The Song of the Mountain Fairies**
>
> When the village is rapt in quiet sleep,
> And the forest hum is still:
> From our tiny mansions we softly creep,
> And hie to the thymy hill.
>
> There we merrily trip with our nimble feet,
> While the moonbeams gild the fell:
> And our melody is the music sweet,

That peals from the heather-bell.

And oft we gather a garland fair,
Of flowers and sprays so green-
And a wild wreath form for the flowing hair
Of our lovely Fairy Queen.

And then, from the beautiful Elfin land,
Where never did mortal tread:
We send sweet dreams and visions bland,
To float round the peasant's bed.

And ever we cause from the maiden's breast,
All thoughts of despair to flee:
And show her the form of her lover blest,
As he sails o'er the moonlit sea.

We know not the woes of the changing earth,
No cares do our lives annoy:
Our days are a round of endless mirth,-
One scene of eternal joy!

Some fairy stories had a more sinister tone, particularly those discussing the stealing of human babies. It was understood within fairy lore, that fairies had a particular interest in the birth of mortals, seeking to exchange their own infants with particularly fair human children. These fairies (referred to as 'changelings') would then grow up within human families, in all ways indistinguishable, while the human child would live an unhappy life with their captors. Some of the beliefs surrounding this can be seen in an invocation recorded by the Irish Rev. John O'Hanlon, read out to have a changeling taken away and a child returned:

Fairy men and women all,
List! It is your baby's call;
For on the dunghill's top he lies
Beneath the wide inclement skies.
Then come with coach and sumptuous train,
And take him to your home again;
For if he stays till cocks shall crow,
You'll find him like a thing of snow;
A pallid lump, a child of scorn,
A monstrous brat, of fairies born.
But ere you bear your boy away,
Restore the child you took instead;

When like a thief the other day,
You robbed my infant cradle bed.
Then give me back my only son,
And I'll forgive the harm you've done;
And nightly for your sportive crew
I'll sweep the hearth and kitchen too;
And leave you free your tricks to play,
When'er you choose to pass this way.
Then, like good people, do incline
To take your child and give back mine

~Rev. John O'Hanlon, 'Irish Folk Lore' (1870)

It is very likely that, as a girl, Ann would be told many fairy stories due to their associations with housekeeping and motherhood, two roles that Ann was expected to step into as she grew older.

With that all being said, if you know of any other folktales, stories or legends passed down generations or specific to Goole, I would highly encourage you to use them! The examples I've presented are taken from various books and online blogs focused on stories from this period in Yorkshire, but are not exclusive to Goole. These sorts of stories are at their most authentic when told orally and personally within a specific context.

Why tell this story?

First and foremost, this story provides an insight into the domestic lives of individuals within this period with the relatable and timeless tradition of telling stories and fairytales to children. This demonstrates the connections we have that we may not readily think about to our ancestors in the 19th Century in a hopefully interesting way. There is a lot of scope for comparison and reflection here on the types of stories that were told and the types we tell our children now.

The setting of this story around the lock is also highly relevant with the idea of emphasising Goole's branching connections as a fledgling town to various Aire and Calder Navigation sites across the area. These individuals may not have lived in the town proper, but it would still have been a bustling space, regularly visited to buy groceries and socialise.

Folktales are also an important and useful tool for understanding more about the culture of a particular place or time, acting as somewhat of a cultural archive. An archive can be far more than a dusty room full of books, it can be anything that retains information that can later be accessed. These stories contain social and cultural beliefs, some more explicitly displayed than others (eg. the role of women in domestic life shown through fairy stories). It is more than simply stating these beliefs, it shows them through the art that has them integrated within it.

That being said, it's important not to just retell old stories and reinforce the often sexist or discriminatory cultural ideas present in 19th century literature. As I alluded to earlier, this story primarily presents an opportunity to reflect on what, why, and how we tell stories. Fiction has a powerful influence on young people and can be used for amazing things, so should be used consciously (especially in a digital age with access to limitless stories).

Something else I want to highlight here is the importance of oral histories, and recording folk tales and traditions that we take part in so that they are not lost to time. With modern technology, we have a greater capability to record our stories than ever before. If you're reading this document wondering what projects could enhance the bicentenary, I would highly encourage the collection and display of oral histories.

As a final point here, there is a clear criticism to the idea of folktales as a historical archive, that these are just stories and are there for entertainment and don't necessarily have a message or meaning. I would argue that this is never the case. Even stories written purely to entertain reflect the time and culture in which they are written. Particularly in the case of 'traditional' stories, there is often a reason they have been passed down generations, most often that they are deemed important and worth remembering.

Character 3: Jane Earl, The local evangelist

Jane Earl was a middle-aged woman who moved to Goole with her husband, a Congregational Reverend, during the early years of its growth to help him set up a ministry in the town. She played an important role in civic life, being responsible for organising social events and raising funds for the Church. In this role, she also had a much greater level of agency than many other women during this period. The story follows her day around a rapidly growing Goole in 1830, visiting local businesses to secure donations for the establishment of the Zion Chapel in town (Completed 1831).

Profile:

Year: 1830

Name: Jane Earl

Age: 52

Residence: Prospect-place

Family:

- Rev. Henry Earl, Jane's husband. Married earlier in the century, the Congregational Reverend Henry has preached around Yorkshire before recently moving to Goole. Jane supports Henry's work both through domestic labour and supporting Church projects.

These names are derived from an 1830s census; there was a Revered Henry Earl who was a congregational minister married to a Jane Earl. However, this is still a speculative account and not a direct description of their lives.

Women in the 19th century

As discussed in relation to Ann Croft, women had limited opportunities during this period. More women were gaining employment but still culturally considered subservient to men and consigned to the domestic sphere. Women were considered to have an important role in supporting moral defence of the household and raising children in the correct way. Conservative Christian morality was very much at the centre of 19th century life. Given Jane's age, it is likely that if she had children, they would have moved out and started their own lives.

The Congregational Movement in Goole

Congregationalism is a sect of Protestant Christianity established towards the end of the 17th Century in England. Churches following this sect operate via congregational government, essentially operating autonomously from any central authority (eg. the Vatican or the Crown).

They are essentially a continuation of Puritan tradition, where each member of the Church is considered an equal follower of God. This manifests itself in practices such as the absence of godparents (since the whole congregation acts as godparents). There are also only 2 sacraments practiced, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Rev. Henry Earle arrived in 1828, initially preaching to a small group of 3 men and 9 women in a room at the Banks's Arms (now the Lowther hotel). Religious movements were very important for Goole during its formative years, providing many of the town's amenities not provided by Aire and Calder. There may have been some funding or land granted to these groups by the company but they largely worked independently. Projects coordinated by the Church included:

- One of the earliest purpose-built Churches to be constructed in Goole, the Zion Chapel in 1831
- A sunday school operating in the Lowther hotel, providing access to education for local children
- A penny-bank, offering small loans to people who could not access the big banks
- Support for travelling missionaries

In order to carry out these projects, the Church had to raise financial support within the local community. With the men needing to work, women like Jane played a vital role within the Church community by fundraising. These efforts would have involved the organisation of events such as dinners, parties, afternoon tea etc. Another of Jane's key roles would have been going around the village knocking on the doors of homes and businesses to raise awareness of fundraising events and collect donations. This would have given her access to more of the public sphere as she went around Goole's highstreet and beyond.

The Highstreet of Early Goole

The highstreet of early Goole would quickly become a bustling place as businesses moved from temporary stalls to permanent venues as the town became established. Based on financial records and personal accounts, we have a good idea of what business would have operated during the first few years.

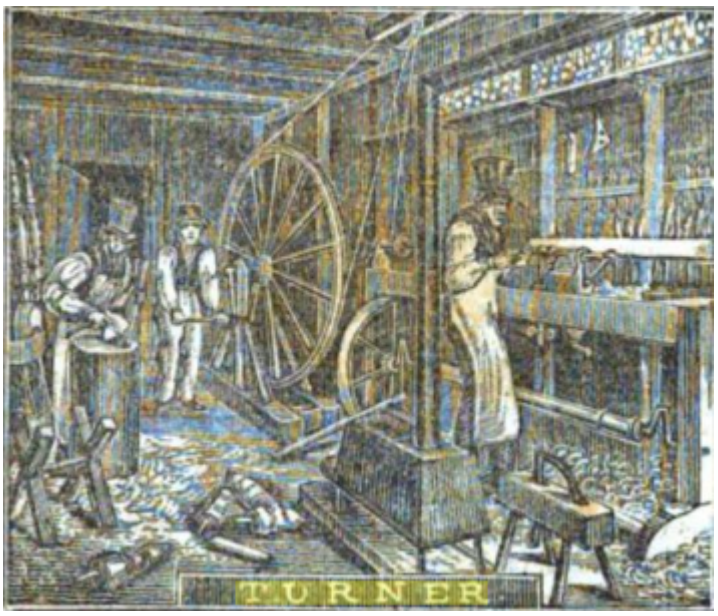
There is some nuance here between private businesses and those supported or operated by Aire and Calder Navigation. While details of the businesses are unknown based on the documents I've found, it is likely that most were private businesses if they were not vital for the activities of the company. Grocers, butchers and alehouses would spring up where there was a market for them, but carpenters, shipwrights, and blacksmiths were vital for creating the tools needed for canal work. There was likely some level of financial aid or land granted to private businesses, but they were not directly operated by the company.

Some of the details for 19th Century definitions of trades are taken from Edward Hazen's 'The panorama of professions and trades' (1845). This is a great resource for looking at some of the other business that come later to the town such as chemists and confectioners.

Carpenters

During this period, the carpentry trade was usually specialised across 4 different professions, all working with wood but on different scales and using different techniques.

- The Carpenter: Working with large pieces of timber, preparing and joining them together to create frames for structures or reinforce brick or stone walls. They would have been heavily involved in the construction of Goole's many new buildings, creating wooden frames and roofing.
- The House Joiner: Creating the smaller elements of the house such as decorative details, window frames, doors and their casings, and built-in furniture such as mantelpieces. This differs from the carpenter with greater use of stains and finishes.
- The Cabinet Maker: Making all varieties of furniture (not just cabinets!). They were often also skilled at other crafts such as upholstery.
- The Turner: Using a lathe (a tool for rotating wood) to create a variety of small wooden tools and goods such as bowls and cups. This was also used within furniture making.



Depiction of a lathe within Hazen's work

It should be noted that most individuals working with wood did multiple jobs, many carpenters were also joiners, and most cabinet makers would have a lathe and be capable turners.

Shipwrights
People who made boats. There is no evidence to suggest that boats were built within the first years of Goole's existence, but shipwrights were present to repair boats passing through the port.

Blacksmiths
Working with metals (mostly iron and steel) to produce a variety of goods. Tools, metal kitchenware, and horseshoes would all be greatly in demand. A subsection of blacksmithing was the nailer, literally a person who made nails. This was a very important job supporting the construction industry.

Butchers
During this period, butchers would have been responsible for both the slaughter, preparation, display, and sale of animals and animal products. Farmers from surrounding regions would drive their animals to the town to be sold to the butcher. Meat was very expensive during this period, so many families would only have had it once a week.

Fishmongers
Someone who sold fish. Fish would likely have been a much more plentiful source of protein for the residents of early Goole due to the town's connection to the coast. Fish would be purchased from fisherman or provided by fishing operations run by the fishmonger themself.

Grocers

The grocery shop was a new addition for this period as the highstreet grew out of the traditional marketplace. Grocers sold a variety of staple goods such as flour, sugar, tea, and vegetables. Goods would be brought in large quantities for cheap and then sold on to the townsfolk. The market was the primary place of business during the first years, a permanent storefront being unlikely until the mid-19th century

Inns

Inns played a vital role in the 19th century, providing a more affordable way for a greater number of people to travel longer distances, staying overnight and receiving food and drink. Many of the migrant and temporary workers involved in canal work would have relied on inns for shelter and subsistence.

Beerhouses

Beerhouses differ from inns since they did not provide accommodation, instead catering towards the local population, providing a place to socialise. They were increasingly legislated regarding who was allowed to attend across the century, government seeking to discourage drunkenness by requiring a certificate of good character signed by neighbours. These were also predominantly male spaces (although many women worked in brewing).

Shoemakers

Shoemakers / cordwainers crafted new shoes from leather, while cobblers repaired and refurbished existing items. The process of making shoes involved sewing together different parts according to the size of the person's feet. General shoe sizes existed during this period for convenience, although they were different to today and not standardised.

Banks

Banks would not have been used by ordinary residents of Goole, they were primarily for wealthy individuals to earn from investments and keep money safe, and for businesses to apply for loans. A large number of old banking buildings exist in Goole due to the great potential of shipping businesses, especially for colonial goods.

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Insurance companies

With the rise of industrialisation and business boom of the late 18th, early 19th centuries, the number of insurance companies grew massively, specialising in a variety of types (eg. life, health, shipping, fire insurance). It is likely that the majority of insurance companies operating in Goole would be specialising in shipping but it's possible there was also a health and life insurance provider for local workers.

Why tell this story

This is an important narrative to include since it provides a woman's story outside of the household sphere. While volunteering with the Church, Jane still faces social limitations and in many ways is defined by her husband, but she is given a much greater amount of agency, ability to socialise, and access to money than many women during this period. This narrative (and the women who held this position) are particularly interesting for how they are able to enjoy these freedoms within an inherently oppressive system. Domestic narratives of women are still important to tell, but already seem to have a place within Goole's heritage landscape within the museum. They would also be excellent to include in bicentenary celebrations but there is not a lot I could write here that you could not learn there!

Part of my reasoning for including the 'the local evangelist' narrative is also to highlight the role that religious movements had in Goole, providing practical, spiritual, and social support for many of the town's early residents. This hopefully builds upon the overall narrative that Goole was built by the countless different hands of individuals and groups that are frequently left out of the narrative.

Practically, the narrative provides an interesting and different perspective for walking through the streets of early Goole, interacting with the different businesses not as a consumer, but as a somewhat separated party. There are many different ways that this walk through Goole would have been perceived by different people, and just as many ways it could be represented. Thackray Museum of Medicine presents an example of how this perspective shift can be integrated into heritage displays, using 'character cards' in a walkthrough of their 'Disease Street' gallery. Visitors are encouraged to look around the gallery, following the narrative of a certain individual to get a different perspective of the street each time they visit. Something like this could be applied to the bicentenary, perhaps with a walking tour through Goole based on each of the 'people of early Goole' in this document.

Character 4: Patrick ‘Bones’ Kelly, The Irish navvy

Patrick ‘Bones’ Kelly was a labourer who emigrated from Ireland during a period of famine in Ireland during British rule. Patrick was one of the hundreds of thousands of navigational workers (known as navvies), travelling labourers who built Britain's canals and railways (mostly by hand) during the industrial revolution’s transportation boom. This narrative looks at the day-to-day life of a navvy, and the important role that immigrants played in the foundation of Goole.

Profile:

Year: 1826

Name: Patrick ‘Bones’ Kelly

Age: 29

Residence: Temporary ‘shanty town’ accommodation behind the Banks’s Arms (now Lowther Hotel)

Family: No family in Goole during this period- as a poor immigrant, it is more likely that his family would have remained in Ireland and money would have been sent back to them were possible.

This name is based on common names from the 1864 Irish census. Navvies were travelling workers so were not included in local records for Goole. Many names during this period were Anglicised due to the British occupation of Irelan, imposition of the English language, and an English bureaucratic system that often ‘translated’ names to an equivalent.

The nickname ‘Bones’ is typical of navvies who were considered to be abnormally thin and lanky. Given his immigration due to famine, it is likely he would have arrived underfed. Nicknaming was a common practice in navvy groups as a means of building camaraderie and getting around the issue of people having the same name.

Immigration from Ireland

To understand the mass immigration of Irish workers, it's necessary to first provide a brief summary of the state of British-Irish relations around this period.

English rule had been in effect in Ireland since the 12th Century Anglo-Norman invasion, and there has been varying levels of control imposed over its people since. From 1494, Poynings law made the English monarch's consent required for the calling of an Irish Parliament, and from 1541, the English monarch was legally considered the King of Ireland. Tensions increased over 17th century conflicts such as Oliver Cromwell's reconquest from 1649-51, and by the end of the 18th century, Irish Catholics held only around ~5% of the total land.

In 1798 there was an attempted rebellion by the United Irishmen that was crushed by the British, leading to the 1800 act of union, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This gave the Irish representation in an expanded shared government, but also reinforced control over Irish people, laws, and trade.

The Irish people were also suffering from a system of land ownership and tenancy known as the 'middleman system'. The majority of Ireland was owned by English nobility who left the management of their property to middlemen who divided the land to be rented out. This system had little regulation so middlemen could readily exploit tenants, offering smaller pieces of land for increasingly extortionate rents. A population boom in the previous century meant that a lot of people were needing to get by with smaller space for planting crops.

This land system led to increasing use of the potato as a staple food due its fast growth and small space taken up in comparison to wheat. The majority of Ireland were reliant on potato harvests, particularly because grain and dairy produced on large estates was exported to England. When harvests failed (and once potato blight made it over to Europe later in the century), conditions were especially harsh.

Conditions in the 1820s were not as bad as they got by the 1840s in the Great Famine, but were bad enough that many chose to emigrate and look for work in Britain or (if they could afford the passage) America. The majority of immigrants had little social mobility due to poor standards of education and general discriminatory attitudes, so could only find employment doing manual labour. A significant proportion (around 30%) of navigational workers in England were Irish immigrants and they worked all across the country (particularly in the North where the most new infrastructure projects were taking place).

Role of Navvies on Britain’s waterways

Canal work during this period would have been overseen by an engineer or foreman, but the digging was carried out by hand by large teams of navvies with spades and picks. The men would dig the channel to the desired length and depth before lining it with ‘puddle’ (a wet clay mixture) to make it watertight. The clay would be packed down by either driving sheep or cattle along the canal, or by the navvies themselves stomping on the clay. In some areas, other materials such as limestone were used to waterproof the floor of the canal. Once the canal was waterproof, water could be diverted from nearby rivers or lakes. Alongside cows and sheep, horses were vital for the construction of the canals, being used to transport the heavy materials in carts.

This was a dangerous job, carried out in all weather conditions. The main threat, the banks of the canal breaking and collapsing, often led to the loss of limbs or even death. The work was also physically exhausting, working long hours shifting immense amounts of earth with few breaks or provisions.

A photograph of navvies working on the Manchester Ship Canal in the late 19th Century

Life as an Irish Navvy

In addition to the back-breaking work they undertook, navvies also had significant social challenges, particularly immigrants from Ireland.

Generally, navvies were negatively treated by local populations, seen as troublesome drunkards and a necessary evil of industrialisation. The poor living conditions and frequent alcohol consumption of this predominantly male group

(except in some cases where navvies had families that travelled with them) was incompatible with prevailing conservative Christian ideas of respectability, moderation, and civility.

This distrust was heightened towards Irish navvies due to contemporary concerns surrounding immigration (religious differences, political impacts, job competition, cultural degeneration, etc.).

Navvies often lived in poor conditions, temporary slums set up for the period of work and then taken down and built over. Early accounts of Goole talk about the block of dense lower-class housing behind Aire street and its magnificent buildings such as the Lowther Hotel (where the engineers stayed). It is likely that Aire and Calder Navigation housed the navvies here so they were close to the work site and could be monitored. Many would have slept on the floor or shared beds with other navvies due to the cramped conditions.

Nicknames being used by navvies have already been mentioned, ‘Bones’ being because of Patrick’s slim, undernourished physique. They were usually chosen based on physical characteristics (often derogatory) but may also have referenced other character traits, behaviours, or past incidents. Other examples of real navvy nicknames included:

- ‘Kangaroo’, ‘Slenderman’, ‘Straight-up Grip’ all to refer to tall and thin people
- ‘Punch’ and many variations thereupon such as ‘Ten-ton Punch’, ‘Pig-tail Punch’ and ‘Tea-pot Punch’ to refer to shorter and larger men
- ‘Bees’-Wings’ for someone with long arms
- ‘Ginger-Bill’, ‘Copper-knob’, or ‘Mahogany Top’ for someone with red hair
- Many nicknames were based off a person’s place of birth, such as ‘Bristol Jack’, or ‘Dublin John’

Alongside nicknames, navvies also used rhyming slang as a way to build community and communicate more inconspicuously under the watch of their foremen. Examples included:

- Pig’s ear - Beer
- Mince pies - Eyes
- Bill Gorman - Forman
- Bryan o’ lin - Gin
- Frog and Toad - Road
- Daisy roots - boots
- Blackbird and thrush - brush
- China plate - mate
- Cherry-ripe - pipe
- Elephant’s trunk - drunk

Why is this story important

This story is particularly important due to its combined nature as both an immigration and working-class narrative.

The vast majority of existing commemoration practices surrounding Goole (and almost everywhere the world over) focuses on investors and leaders of projects over those that provided their labour to make it a reality. There is definitely a place for wealthy and socially important individuals in our heritage, but with ‘the People of Goole 1826’ project, I want to focus on those who contributed an immense amount of effort to manually dig waterways across Britain.

It is also particularly important today since immigration is an ongoing and hotly contested issue, and the anxieties surrounding Irish immigration in the 19th century are largely the same as immigration anxieties today. I consider it important that a significant number of the people who worked on Britain’s infrastructure were immigrants who were often not welcome where they were being sent to work. Similarly to the dockyard narrative, the presence of international navvies shows the interconnectedness of Goole to different histories happening during this period.

An interesting thought exercise that could be included in bicentenary projects is imagining the celebration of the finishing of the port from the perspective of different individuals, particularly a closely involved outsider such as Patrick. Accounts from the Morning Chronicle recount a procession of boats along the river, accompanied by musicians, banners, and a 21 gun salute fired from 12lb anons. Alongside this, there was a dinner hosted at the Bank’s Arms where the heads of the company likely met with the engineers to congratulate them on their work. While this was going on, perhaps the navvies (who would probably not have been invited to the formal celebration) went to the newly established beerhouse, taking some brief respite before being sent across the country to their next job.

Hopefully from this document, we can reflect on a great number of things. Some questions that stuck out for me writing are:

- Who actually founded Goole? The people or the company?
- How does class affect the experience of the town in its early years? How would Robert’s experience of the highstreet and market differ from Anns or Jane’s?

- How far can we link Goole to the rest of the world through trade, labour, etc? How many degrees of separation might it take to connect Goole to the whole world?

I sincerely hope that the narratives presented have helped to both explain and question Goole's heritage in a manner that is helpful to the creation of many different and amazing projects that I can't wait to see next year!

Using space within commemorations

As a final practical discussion of using these narratives within the bicentenary, I thought I would briefly discuss the use of space within commemorations. There is a huge amount of scholarship on this subject, particularly regarding the attachment of stories to places to create lasting and meaningful heritage projects that I will attempt to summarise.

Using the physical landscape can be an excellent way to connect heritage to the current day, by highlighting the idea that we live in a world that is a result of those that have come before us. This is referred to by some as creating a ‘storyscape’ for a place. That is not to say that every site needs to be preserved exactly as it was or needs a blue plaque on every corner. There are many ways that the past can be integrated into the present, one of my favourites being the use of artwork such as the Reuben Chappel art trail in Goole. Experiences are also very effective, seeing reenactments or talking about history on the spot where it happened.

With this in mind, I have tried to place each of the narratives somewhere physically within Goole where it could be told, discussed, performed, depicted, or presented in whatever medium you choose.

Robert Bean

- The site of the former Goole workhouse (the Tesco on Boothferry Road)
- The dockyards

Ann Croft

- Any lock in and around Goole, with the design remaining largely the same, it’s not vital to find a 19th century one like Whitley Lock
- Countryside regions were the stories she was told might have been set

Jane Earl

- The site of the former Congregationalist chapel
- The highstreet and market of early Goole, could be told on the modern highstreet or its older streets such as Aire street, Calder street and North street

Patick Kelly

- The dockyards where he would have worked
- The area behind the Lowther hotel were it was likely the Navvies were housed