

HELLO HAWES, NORTH YORKSHIRE 2008

Saturday 14th June

This, our first visit to Yorkshire, was a lovely gift from our son Dan, his wife Paula and their daughter of almost 5 months, Willow. Happily, our daughter Rachel was also able to join us for five days and so it was a rare family get-together and eagerly anticipated. The anticipation must have worked well, as we were ready to leave home at 07.50, with no hitches, no panic and not even anything left behind! The first part of the journey continued smoothly and we met Dan, Paula and Willow at Tamworth Services, junction 10 on the M42, at around midday. We'd been forced to change our route because there was a scheduled lorry go-slow on the M6, in which we would have become embroiled – and embroilment was definitely not part of the holiday plan.



Alan and Willow are reacquainted at Tamworth Services

Willow surveyed the scene quite serenely as we ate lunch (she'd just had hers) but she still seemed interested in our sandwiches. We stayed at Tamworth for about an hour, which enabled Dan and Alan to continue driving feeling refreshed. There were a few showers of rain, but they were very localised. The journey was tedious, but I always enjoy seeing different place names. Then the sight of a pub called *The Yorkshire Maid* and an old fashioned *North Riding Constabulary* sign alerted me to the fact that we had arrived in Yorkshire, whereupon all tedium evaporated on the spot.

My first impressions of North Yorkshire were good – wide open skies with interesting white clouds – the dales with their peaks, ridges and escarpments – the many criss-crossing dry stone walls and barns – pretty cottages – undulating roads – interesting signs to interesting places – yes, the feeling was definitely goooooood!

We drove through Hawes and on to our accommodation, which was a modernised old stone farmhouse, very spacious and comfortable. Meat hooks in the ceiling, however, led us to believe that the 'house' we were staying in was just the kitchen part of the whole farmhouse complex. Willow was avidly looking all around her, as Willow does. If she had a head like an owl (but with less feathers) she'd be very happy.



The old Yorkshire stone house

The setting of the house was quite inspiring, with a good view from every window of fields, trees, hills, peaks, the sky – wonderful! The green land just in front of the house was awash with buttercups – so pretty, almost like a yellow alpine meadow. The back of the house had a small garden with a few flowers, backing on to another hill and peak in the distance.



Buttercups, buttercups!

Alan drove Dan and me into Hawes to buy provisions from the Spar shop, which was small but adequate. Hawes looks to be a very interesting and popular little village, with lots of people out and about on a Saturday afternoon in June.

Back at the house, Paula made what she calls a poor man's pizza – although Paula and I aren't men, but I'll let her off just this once! This was a pizza type topping on ciabatta bread, plus some fresh pasta and was very enjoyable. Then it was time for evening pursuits, such as dish washing, Willow bathing, sitting and talking. Everyone was very tired, including Willow, so we all went upstairs for an early night. I particularly enjoyed being able to sit up in bed and see a Yorkshire peak on top of a Yorkshire hill, rising in the Yorkshire distance.

Sunday 15th June

Well, it's definitely colder up in these northern parts, as we had to put on the storage heaters! However, the bed is very big and cosy and I loved waking up and seeing the clouds over the distant peak. Yes, clouds – rather a lot of them, but we still decided to go for a walk, as the Teletext weather forecast was 'partly cloudy'. Willow had been wakeful during the night. Dan reckoned that he and Paula had probably managed 4.5 hours' sleep each. Babies!

Still, after a drive along and up some steep, undulating roads, we embarked on our walk in an upwards direction to Weatherfell in high spirits. There were some rather heavy grey clouds over where we were heading, but they seemed reasonably benign. All the same, it was somewhat chilly and Alan's hands became quite cold.



Alan, an old dry stone wall and a sheep

The path we were taking up to the top was an old straight Roman road and allowed us lovely views of the rolling dales and sun partly shining on the valley below. Willow was being carried

by Paula in the papoose, dressed in her yeti suit. It appeared she was slightly underwhelmed with the walk, as she fell asleep.



Paula, Dan and a baby yeti

As we continued to walk, a few drops of moisture began to fall, but we carried on upwards because we were close to the furthest point of the walk. However, our destination lived up to its name and the weather really started to fall. We decided to backtrack to the car, which was a wise decision, as our trousers had become quite wet. Real North Yorkshire rain!

After returning to the house and drying off, a sandwich lunch was most welcome. Dan and Paula were feeling very tired, so stayed behind to rest (as much as you can rest with Willow) while Alan and I walked into Hawes. This took all of five minutes. The centre was crowded, as a number of bikers had arrived en masse. Everyone was very friendly in and around the shops and I noted with interest the Yorkshire accent (although I disappointingly didn't hear an *Ee by gum!* or *'appen*). However, I positively felt I was in Yorkshire when I saw a building named Herriot's and was forced to be really touristy and take a photo.

After calling in at ye olde Spar shoppe, we decided to walk on up the road to the Wensleydale Creamery – I hadn't realised we were in Wensleydale, home of the famous cheese! There was a thriving, well stocked gift shop there that also sold flavoured ice cream. Naturally, we had to sample some of this in order to really experience the holiday feeling. Alan had ginger, while I had caramel with butterscotch – it fulfilled its mission very flavoursomely.

All was quiet back at the house and after a vegetable stew followed by strawberries, a quiet evening followed – except for keeping Willow amused until her bath time, of course, when she normally splashes and makes a lot of happy baby noises. Tonight was no exception!



Willow checks the alphabet is correct on her toy

Monday 16th June

A sunny and bright morning greeted us, or was it us that greeted the morning? Anyway, we were due to drive to Lancaster in Lancashire, where we would meet Rachel from the train. Dan, Paula and Willow were going to visit a viaduct, an easy walk away.

Amazingly, we were all set to go at sometime past 9 and off we went along the scenic road with fields full of buttercups and the green dales either side, crisscrossed by dry stone walls and dotted with dry stone barns, with the road undulating in between.

We actually arrived in Lancaster one and a half hours before Rachel's train was due to arrive! My first impression as I emerged from the car in the long stay car park was that it was cold – more like a late September day in the south west. Once Alan had found his bearings (I don't think I have any of those) we walked into the town centre easily enough. It was a pleasant, mostly pedestrianised place, with a light and airy modern feel combined with an interesting historical background.

We took advantage of the modern aspect first and enjoyed a cappuccino and a shared muffin in Caffè Nero. Then we went looking around the shops (still the modern aspect) as Alan was in search of some elusive size 6.5 men's walking sandals. A pair of them, to be precise. He also popped into a camera shop for a quick chat – he is so much more of a shopper than I am!

It eventually became time to meet Rachel and so we walked up past the castle (the historical aspect). Alan noticed there was barbed wire along the top of the walls, which he presumed was to stop people climbing up the walls.

The train station was small and friendly, but it had several large coaches waiting outside. When Rachel's train arrived, we found out why – due to 'problems' the train was terminating at Lancaster and all passengers had to continue on the coaches. So we met Rachel amid a great throng of people and took some time getting out of the station. Once we'd walked to the car park and put Rachel's case in the boot, however, we were free to walk around with her.

After a quick lunch in good old Marks & Spencer, we spent a pleasant hour or more walking around, looking for various items. The shopping centre is fairly small, but with a definite good feel to its cobbled streets (the historical aspect). Interestingly, the cobbles themselves are larger than the cobbles in Plymouth. Well, I find it interesting, anyway...

After we'd taken our few purchases back to the car, we headed for the castle. It was quite big but extremely well preserved. As we were marching boldly up to the entrance, though, Rachel wondered if it was shut, as the heavy, big black door was closed. Then, still striding onwards and upwards, we saw a woman knock on the door – which was opened by a prison officer. Yes, Lancaster Castle appears to be Lancaster HM Prison! This was odd, as prior Internet searching had said it was open to the public daily and when we later found a leaflet in Tourist Information, that too said it was open?

Slightly mystified, we returned once more to the car park and drove back along the scenic road, with only one slight detour into a small, pretty village by mistake. As we left Lancashire and once again entered North Yorkshire, Rachel said that her first sight of the dales and peaks reminded her of someone's first sighting of them in a Jane Austen novel – very literary!

Alan wanted to stop at a viaduct we'd passed on the way – what is it with these viaducts and aqueducts? Brilliant engineering, I guess, but maybe it's a bit of a man thing, as I find them intrinsically boring. Still, we went for a short walk – a rather breezy, chilly short walk along a path, whereupon a train conveniently came across the top of the viaduct, which was good for Alan's photographic purposes.

The scenic drive continued until we reached the house. All was quiet, but that didn't last for long, as Willow was fretful. The rest of the day was spent in the usual late afternoon to evening pursuits of eating, dish washing, Willow bathing and watching some TV. As we went to bed, it was still a little light and the moon was rising from behind the peak we can see from our bedroom window.

Tuesday 17th June

Once the morning tasks (including keeping Willow amused) had been completed, Daniel suggested we all set off from the house on a short walk. It was dry but quite windy as we

traversed through fields of buttercups – nothing like traversing through fields of buttercups on a dry but quite windy morning to refresh the spirits, not to mention people (us).

Another notable feature of this walk was the particular type of stile we had to climb up and pass through quite frequently, so as to cross from field to field. They were made of solid stone and were in no way large enough for people of a certain width to pass through! We also came across a number of ramshackle dry stone barns that looked as if they had originally been very well constructed to withstand the North Yorkshire weather. The ubiquitous and rather lovely dry stone walls were also a sight in perfect keeping with the wild, natural landscape.



Dan consults the map



Dan still consults the map!

I was surprised to realise that we were actually walking along a small part of the Pennine Way – for some reason I kept being surprised by how far north we were, as well as being surprised by how much cooler it was in these northern parts compared to way down south in Cornwall. The sheep and cows we came across looked quite similar, though – except that some sheep we saw throughout the holiday appeared unshorn and therefore rather scruffy. The shorn ones looked much prettier. At one point on our walk, a farmer came along with some cows. “They won’t touch you,” he said comfortingly, as they came up close and personal and rather comparatively large to us.

Dan’s short walk went on and on, until it dawned on me that yes, it was indeed one of Dan’s ‘short’ walks, which meant it was at least a medium walk. We stopped for two cereal bar breaks and to me, that isn’t a short walk – but it was a good walk and I enjoyed it. I must keep reminding myself never to go on one of his long walks, though!

The latter part of the walk was near a river, close to a waterfall, but sadly the waterfall was rather short of water and therefore quite unremarkable. After emerging into more fields, we then suddenly entered a housing area and were soon in the centre of Hawes, where a market was in progress. Some fresh fish was purchased, along with a home made ginger cake from the baker’s shop and a few more bits and pieces from the Spar shop. Where would we be without the Spar shop!

It was then back to the house for a late lunch of sandwiches, crisps and salad, although Willow was happy with milk and some apple and banana baby food. Upon discussion of what to do next, Dan and Paula decided to stay at the house with Willow, while Alan, Rachel and I walked into Hawes. It was very cloudy, but fortunately didn't rain.

Alan bought a hat and a pair of gloves from an outdoor shop, so was very pleased. We then walked to the Wensleydale Creamery to show Rachel the gift shop (to where we shall be returning before we depart). I was the only one to indulge in an ice cream...

We walked back to the house for a fish stir fry – tasty fish from the market. Then the evening took its normal course, with the usual delightful task of amusing Willow, who seems to find feet of great interest. We later all watched a DVD together – *Hot Fuzz*, mad and amusing! As we prepared for bed, the sky over the peak visible from our bedroom window was very cloudy and more than a little moody.



Willow delicately tests Grandad's sock for freshness

Wednesday 18th June

The day started at 07.00 and was a bit overcast, but there was no heavy rain and wind like the forecast said. So five people and a baby left the house at 10 and headed for Bolton Castle, about half an hour's drive away. The distant peaks were hidden in low grey cloud, but gradually a small patch of blue sky began to show. The roads were fairly undulating and narrow (but not as narrow as West Country lanes) with a few villages en route.

It was drizzling just a little with rain when we arrived at the castle – a big, impressive looking building. The entrance wasn't clearly marked, but Alan marched up some stone steps and opened the big door at the top. Fortunately it *was* the castle entrance and not another prison.



Rachel and Alan consider the mistakes of a past life

It was very cold inside the castle and the rain dripped on us a little in places like the courtyard, but it was quite atmospheric, with some interesting relics and some chanting monks' music in the background. I'm not sure what the monks were doing there and if I ever return to Bolton Castle, I shall check out the history properly beforehand! Apparently, the castle first came into existence in the 14th century from a crenellated manor house and was where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned before being moved nearer to London.



'What kind of strange place is this?'

We all took our time walking around the different parts of the castle, climbing up and down lots of stone steps. One part of the castle was more of a ruin than the other, more furnished part. After looking at the view from the top, we descended into the tea room below and enjoyed a coffee break, complete with some home made cakes. Willow was good the whole time, looking all around her with great interest and a variety of different expressions as usual. I'd so love to know what she's thinking...

After driving back to the house, we had scrambled eggs on toast for lunch, then deliberated about the afternoon. Dan looked on the map and found an interesting place amid the Dales with a tearoom. However, Paula was tired and Dan said he was happy to stay behind. So, it was just Alan, Rachel and me venturing out in the afternoon rain – yes, real rain by then!

It was a dramatic road (just the sort Dan would have enjoyed) with great swathes of hillsides, rifts, peaks and valley beds far below. Sadly, the view was obscured by the rain, but it was still quite a ride and reminded me somewhat of northern Italy.

We arrived at the very tiny village of Muker – it seemed to be just a handful of houses, a shop, a pub and a tearoom (in somebody's house). As we stopped, it absolutely poured with rain, so we sat in the car and waited till it lessened before venturing into a stranger's front room for a cream tea. The strangers were very welcoming, though, just the right mix of friendly without being over-friendly. The cream tea was really good too and this is praise indeed from someone who has experienced Devonshire and Cornish cream teas practically from birth!

It had stopped raining by the time we left, but there was nothing else we really wanted to do at Muker, so we headed back to the house. As we drove into Hawes, Alan wondered if we should stop at the Spar shop, but due to some confusion and misjudgement, the three of us later ended up walking into Hawes in the increasingly heavy rain. Alan was not particularly amused and I found out my walking shoes had given me a big blister. Still, the mission was accomplished successfully and we were soon sloshing and dripping our way back to the house.

The evening was relaxing, thanks to a tuna and pasta bake made by Dan and Paula, plus wine. This was followed by a rather hilarious interlude when Rachel and I gave Willow her nightly bath – she's such a wriggler!



"Mummy, they've got me!"

Dan, Paula and Willow then departed to bed, while Alan, Rachel and I ate holiday chocolate and watched a very interesting programme about a British woman who lived for a month with a tribe in Panama. And so to bed on a grey, rainy, Yorkshire night!

Thursday 19th June

The rain had ceased, but it was quite cloudy. As the forecast was for sun, though, we continued undeterred with our plans for a trip to Goathland in the Esk Valley, where *Heartbeat* is filmed – or Aidensfield to *Heartbeat* devotees.

Amazingly, we were all ready to leave at 09.20 and started the rather long journey, driving for over two hours past some interesting villages and the town of Thirsk, which had the first supermarket (Tesco) we'd seen all week. An interesting landscape feature we passed en route was called the Hole of Horcum. Rachel and I thought it looked like a meteor crash site, but on reading Dan's account of his and Paula's North Yorkshire walk in 2006, I see it's actually caused by the action of springs. I don't think meteors have springs. Disappointing!

The car park at Goathland was crowded, with several coach loads – obviously Aidensfield is quite a tourist attraction. The plan was to walk to a place called Grosmont, where we would catch the steam train back to Goathland. It was very windy indeed and the first thing that struck me was that Goathland is full of freely wandering sheep, who seem to have a predilection for pooping on the pavements. Perhaps it should be called Sheephland! It all somehow added to the atmosphere, though, which was one of a certain carefree acknowledgement of times past, when life seemed far simpler. Yes, I sound very old, but I'm actually only talking about the 1960s...

We started our walk to Grosmont - it was a green walk, mostly close by a river and much less windy once we were on the path. We stopped to eat our sandwich lunch along the way. When we continued, I was surprised to encounter a couple of cows in what looked like someone's garden. Upon perusal of Dan's writings, he also saw these "cows with pointy horns" – but his cows are sitting down and mine are standing up!



Very pointy horns!

Kay Santillo, 2008.

Willow seemed to enjoy the sights as we walked along and several women seemed to enjoy the sight of Willow, stopping to coo in her direction. She just looked at them with her grey eyes and accepted the adulation.

There were lots of trees on the walk and lots of steps, up and down. It seemed quite a long walk, but the latter part of it was along a well defined broad path – the Rail Trail, in fact!

As we neared our destination a couple of hours after starting out, the Rail bit of the Trail became apparent – a dream come true for steam train enthusiasts, I should imagine.

On arrival at Grosmont, the station itself was kitted out in the way an old style station would have been, although with the addition of a modern café selling modern snacks, of which we happily availed ourselves. Rachel remarked that the length of our walk today had been just about right and I agreed – any longer and it would have been one of Daniel's 'short' walks!



A train enthusiast's paradise

The steam train arrived and we joined the slightly mad rush to embark. People going to Goathland were restricted to the end three carriages, which meant a further distance to jostle along the platform with the crowd, but we all found seats (slightly apart, with Alan, Dan and Willow in one place and the rest of us in another). It was only about a 15 minute journey, which seemed too short, but it was very pleasant and relaxing and definitely a good way to travel.

So, we disembarked at Goathland, which was still very windy, and wandered along to see the Aidsensfield sights – the Aidsensfield Arms, the phone box on the village green in front of the general store, Scripp's garage complete with old cars of the era...



The price of petrol these days!

I'm sure there were lots of other places we missed, but the others were tired/politely bored and it was a long way back. Anyway, it was very crowded, as I found out when I tried to go into Scripp's garage, which was dual tasking as a gift shop. It was a bit difficult to take good photos, but I did manage a few.



The Aidensfield Arms

The drive back was tiring, especially for the drivers (Alan and Dan). The two cars made their way back separately, as Willow was crying a lot soon after we left, so Dan and Paula stopped to feed her, while we carried on.

We did, in fact, stop later at Thirsk for petrol and a drink and a quick saunter around Tesco for some bits and pieces of food, but all we really wanted to do was get back to the house in order to relax. The weather had been fine all day, if not amazingly windy, but as we approached Hawes, the rain clouds were heavy and threatening.

Tea was the remains of last night's pasta bake plus carrots, followed by some strawberries. The rain did come, but it passed over and the evening was reasonably sunny. Alan and Rachel attempted to bath Willow, but she was tired and cried. From the kitchen window, Dan and I noticed two rabbits in the back garden. There's a lot of wildlife in the field behind us and probably in the field in front of us, too!

Dan, Paula and Willow went up the generously proportioned staircase to bed between 8 and 9, while Alan, Rachel and I stayed up till 10 – wow! Last day tomorrow.

Friday 20th June

Time seems to have passed so quickly. Today was another day of white and grey clouds, but there was a fair amount of blue sky in the mix. Willow had been very wakeful in the night and Rachel had woken with a sore throat, but we had a relaxed breakfast of croissants and pain au chocolat from the Thirsk Tesco. It was then time to get ready, but ready for what? That was the trouble really, we couldn't arrive at any real decision.

However, by about 11.30, Dan, Paula and Willow had opted for a walk into Hawes, while Alan, Rachel and I had opted for a visit to Richmond, an interesting sounding Georgian town.

We drove along some very pretty roads for about 45 minutes, found the long stay car park and walked the short distance into the town square. There was a sudden shower of rain, so we took the opportunity to take shelter in The King's Head, the nearest likely looking pub. Despite its rather boring and common name, it was actually a little upmarket – the comfy chairs and the price of food gave that away! We enjoyed ourselves in the comfy chairs, though, with a welcome drink and a cheese wrap with salad each.

By the time we ventured outside again, it was sunny. Richmond Castle was nearby, so we headed up the hill for a visit. The castle had been built in the years after the Norman Conquest, on a rocky promontory above the river Swale. We took some time perusing an interesting exhibition of its history, from the 11th century to when conscientious objectors were incarcerated there in the First World War.

There was even a lovely little garden we came across. Rachel was suffering a little with her sore throat, so we sat by ourselves in the peaceful garden for a while. There surprisingly weren't many people in the castle at all, which added somehow to the pleasure of the visit.



A ruinous part with a pretty bit of wall



An unexpected, peaceful garden

Upon leaving, we found out from the lady in the castle shop *why* there was a lack of visitors. She explained that the Second Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment had been given the freedom of Richmond and were due to parade through the town with their bayonets. They were celebrating their return from a 6 month tour in Afghanistan, where two of their regiment had unfortunately been killed.

Alan tried to hurry back to the car park to avoid a likely traffic hold-up, but as we approached the car park, we heard the band. Then they were there, lots of them marching down the road, creating an impressive and strangely moving sight. I was secretly pleased that we'd been caught up in the parade!



Given the freedom of Richmond

A little while later, we returned to the car and drove back to Hawes along a road that was very green and leafy. To my delight, we were then on the same road we'd travelled on Wednesday to Muker and back, but this time the view of the stunning scenery wasn't almost totally obliterated by rain.

After arriving back at the house, Alan and I nipped out to the Wensleydale Creamery to buy some souvenirs, before returning for a triple birthday celebration. Dan's, Paula's and Rachel's birthdays are within ten days of each other, so as we were all together, it seemed a good idea to celebrate with birthday cake and a session of present opening.

This passed an enjoyable hour or so. Willow was very intrigued by everything, especially the lit candles on the cake and the wrapping paper. She seemed quite excited and was blowing raspberries, smiling and wriggling for Britain!

Spaghetti bolognese was the dish of the day, then it was winding down time. Alan and Rachel gave Willow her bath and we just passed the evening quietly watching a bit of television and doing puzzles. We were too tired to pack...

Saturday 21st June

Going home day! It was also Dan's actual birthday and it seemed very odd to have to leave and not spend the day with him, although it had been lovely to spend a week in Hawes together as a family. Willow was in a particularly delightful, smiling mood this morning, which made it extra hard to leave! We were taking Rachel home to Bristol on our way back to Saltash, so the partings were slightly staggered.

We were ready to leave at just before 10.00 and the long journey began – I was most sorry to leave the North Yorkshire roads behind, with their pretty, individual and often remote villages, amid all the green countryside.

Apart from a slight detour on to the M6 toll road by mistake (rectified rather magnificently by Rachel and her map reading skills, but still costing us £3.50 to leave the toll road) our journey was tedious but safe and we arrived home with Hawes and North Yorkshire just a memory.

I really enjoyed our brief foray into the dales, villages and castles of North Yorkshire – through the buttercup fields, the Rail Trail and the intriguing sounding place names. There seem to be so many places we would have liked to visit that I'm sure we'll be back – but next time I'm taking a good supply of warm clothing!

