

OTLEY WALKING FESTIVAL

2006

TEUTONIC LINKS

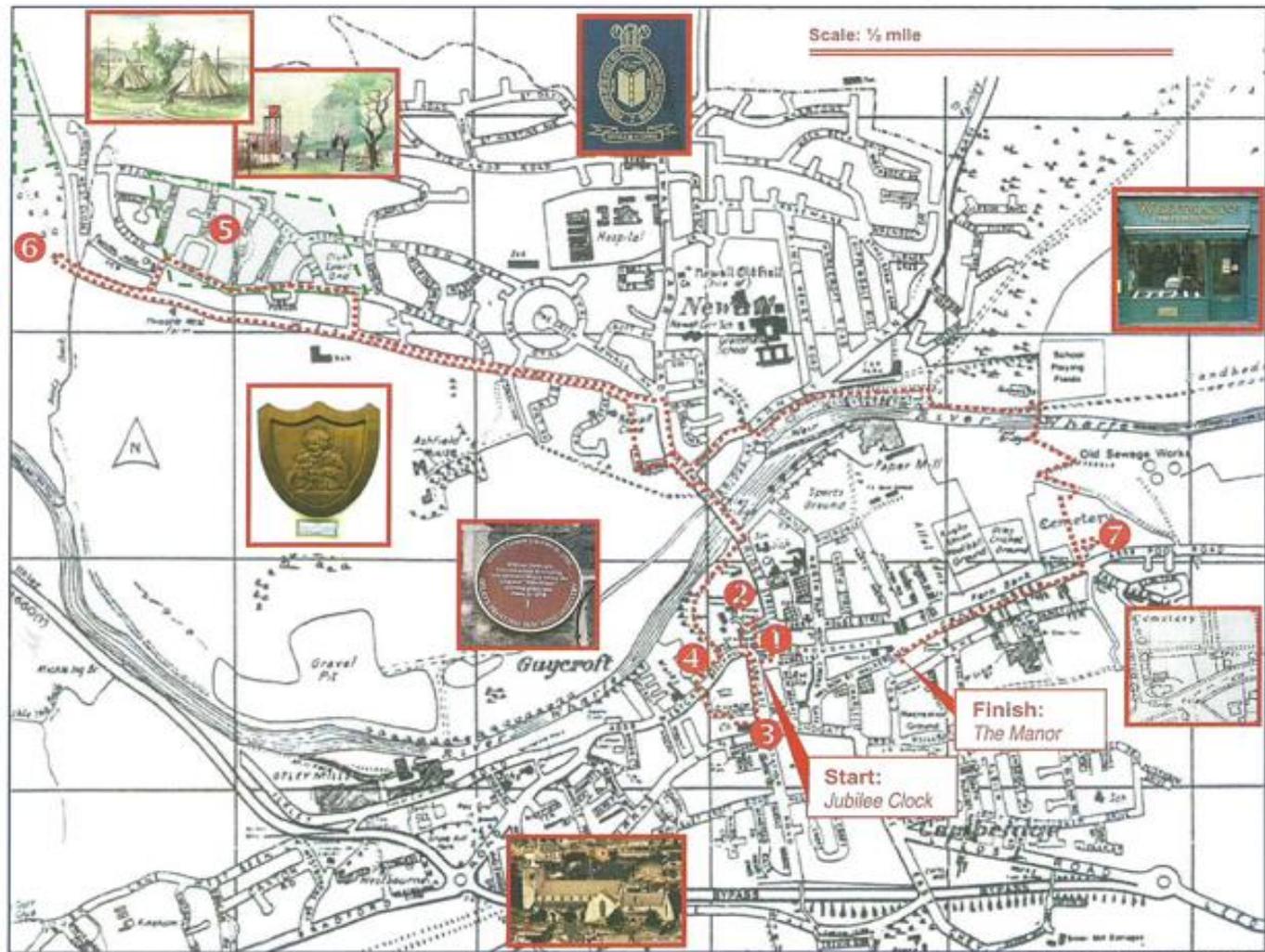
The discovery of much more about what links Otley with the Germanic world made it inevitable that "Teutonic Links" would have to be presented once more. To evoke the spirit of Otley Walking Festival and so that we can explore these links in the field, what better way is there than go on foot to have a look for ourselves this evening?

"Teutonic Links" at first seems unlikely as a theme for a walk in a quintessentially English country market town. The surprise is that there is much to justify it. There are tales of migration of peoples from northern Europe to Otley either as marauding raiders or as dejected men shunted here as prisoners-of-war. There were business people who brought economic prosperity, and even a would-be entrepreneur who might have changed the course of history.

We hope that our walk will not only exercise our muscles, but also bring out another facet of Otley's colourful past whilst helping to remove the dark veil from a part of our social history that has to date been largely hidden.

Although presentation of this walk marks the end of our research, the "Second World War Experience" archivists have agreed to take over our work on recording the experiences of those who lived through the war years for permanent recording.

I Andrew & S Wise, 17 June 2006



KEY

- The route of our walk..... 6 km (3.7 miles)
- Points of interest (*details overleaf*)..... ①
- Otley Camp (*sites of*).....

WGC

Wharfedale German Circle



This commentary relates to the plan overleaf. From the Wharfedale Observer in 1935 we found that there was a move to start an "Otley & District German Club", and indeed as the idea "attracted sufficient attention and interest", a public meeting was set up that July year to discuss it. We have not found out what happened then, but perhaps Wharfedale German Circle, founded in less ominous times (1988), eventually picked up the banner on their behalf.

1 WEEGMANN (from 1869): *The Weegmanns appear to have been very active in Otley society at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century – noting their work on the Education Committee, the family's trade in pork butchery ("Epicure" Sausage & Pork Pies Fresh Daily), their organisation of civic functions, Ernest's association with the Wesleyans and William's membership of at least one building club, William's apparent interest in photography and allotments is recorded. The Weegmann name lives on in the butcher's shop on Market Place.*

2 NIKOLAUS PEVSNER (1902-83): *The building that originally housed Prince Henry's Grammar School (PHGS) still stands on Clapgate. Built in 1607, it was included in Leipzig-born Pevsner's "Buildings of England" book on the West Riding. The saying on PHGS's crest, "Ich Dien", is said to have been adopted by the Prince of Wales, together with the three white ostrich feathers, from John, King of Bohemia, who fell at the Battle of Crécy in 1346. According to Welsh tradition, Edward I promised to provide Wales with a prince "who could speak no word of English", and when his second son Edward (later Edward II) was born at Caernarvon, he presented him to the Assembly, saying in Welsh, "Eich Dyn" (your man). In 1990 a new language centre was opened in memory of Sam Chippindale, who was a pupil at PHGS. The school received Language College status in 1998, and eight new language classrooms and a computer room were opened in 2000. As a specialist Language College, PHGS conducts exchanges with schools in Lingen, Germany.*

3 THE SAXONS (c. 650-1066): *Although very little evidence of Saxon Otley survives (the name "Ottanleage" and the fragmentary remains of Saxon and Anglian stone cross carvings inside the Parish Church being amongst the most significant), it appears that the story of Otley goes back to around the middle of the seventh century, Otley being the centre of a large Anglo-Saxon archiepiscopal estate. The Saxons, and indeed the Jutes and the Angles, were Germanic tribes who made their way to England ("Land of the Angles") after the increasing disarray left by the Romans and the retreat of the Celtic peoples. The cross remains in the Parish Church and isolated relics in the grounds bear witness to these times. By coincidence, last year (2005) saw the 1,200th anniversary of the founding of Magdeburg, the chief city of modern Saxony. This puts the founding of Magdeburg slightly later than that of Otley.*

4 ASHFIELD WORKS AND OTHER PRINTING SITES (late C19th to 1940s): *There is in the National Register of Archives a schedule of documents relating to correspondence between Payne & Sons and the Daimler Motoren Gesellschaft dating from 1894 (ultimately from the archives of DP&E), regarding the possible production of Daimler engines and cars in Otley. The negotiations were arranged apparently by Wilhelm (anglicised: William) Weegmann. Later, there is another link. In wartime, PoWs would come by lorry with a guard to collect clinker from the boilers at DP&E (now the Waitrose site) to use as hardcore for paths they were making at Otley Camp.*

5 OTLEY PoW CAMP (c. 1944-48): *Otley PoW Camp was in two parts, one (it appears) being a "base camp" and the other a "German working camp", both sited on the north side of Weston Lane. A third camp, on the west side of Weston Lane as it turns north skirting Weston Park, was for British soldiers (but built by the PoWs at least in part), and used for training. The only remaining evidence of the camps on site can be found in a boundary wall to Weston Park in the form of a former entrance. During research, there were several remarkable finds. One of these was an original painting by former PoW Heinz Lutz, and copies of several others. The paintings pick up something of the nature of the camp – austere tented accommodation placed unceremoniously facing Otley Chevin on a boggy site with ivy-clad trees as one imagines would have typified the early C20th landscape. A wood carving of St Joseph, on display at the school of that name in Otley, was presented to Father Donovan in 1944 by a PoW whose identity sadly is not known. An aerial photograph of Otley Camp taken in 1948 and a group photograph taken inside the camp have further helped to piece together what the camp must have been like. During the war, OTLEY HOSPITAL was still associated with its former use as a workhouse. The hatted wards, demolished in February 2005, had been built to accommodate people who had been evacuated here from London workhouses. Amongst the German PoWs at Otley Camp, there were doctors and medical orderlies, and they had their own areas in the hatted wards where they looked after German casualties. There were also people who poured in from forced labour camps – Russians, Poles etc – who were brought here to be looked after, sorted out then repatriated. PoWs who were in hospital "acquired" materials, and the goods they made with them (such as carved wooden artefacts) were even sold in Otley shops. PoWs worked in the hospital grounds, mostly gardening, but some did maintenance work. There were vegetable plots at that time (they had been there since the hey-day of the workhouse). Other PoWs worked on local farms; they sometimes feigned bad backs to get some time off for hospital rest...*

6 WESTON HALL (c20th): *The article that appeared in the Wharfedale Observer in April 2005 about a link between the Dawsons of Weston Hall and Egelsbach in Germany and broken by WW1, is particularly poignant, as last year was the sixtieth anniversary of the end of WW2. The church at Egelsbach is celebrating its 300th anniversary, and through Emma Dawson's associations there in the C19th (when she rented hunting grounds and had a house built, still known as the "English Villa"), the link severed by WW1 could well be re-connected. A window in Egelsbach's church is dedicated to the memory of the Dawson family.*

7 OTLEY CEMETERY (C19th to 1940s): *The Weegmann vault is a large polished granite edifice towards the northern edge. Seven PoWs who died while interned at Otley Camp were buried in Otley Cemetery, but have since been removed to the German Military Cemetery in Staffordshire. The probable location is by the wall near the beech hedge at the boundary to the cemetery, behind the disused brickwork public conveniences. How the PoWs died is not clear; however, in one incident, some PoWs were transferred to a camp at Ripon. Rat poison got mixed with flour somehow, and three became extremely ill as a result. They were brought back to Otley where they died, and were apparently buried in Otley Cemetery.*

OTLEY WALKING FESTIVAL IS RUN ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS. PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO MAKE A DONATION TOWARDS THE RUNNING COSTS. THANK YOU!