

The obvious sources of information about Great Ayton are the classic authors such as Graves, Ord and Atkinson, and Dan O'Sullivan's more recent and more comprehensive history of the village.

However, there are many other published books on Cleveland which include references to Great Ayton. This article is intended to be a guide to these sources, some of which are difficult to find.

Within each group books are listed by date of original publication. There is a summary of the information relevant to the village. Many of the books are available in the reference sections of local libraries; Northallerton and Middlesbrough can be recommended. Some of the older texts are available on the internet.

Some books written by people living in the village, such as George Dixon's natural history books, are included because of their close associations with the village.

History of Great Ayton School

Published for the Jubilee Committee, 1891

Extremely rare, copies likely to be several hundred pounds.

The first fifty years of the Friends' School, originally the North of England Agricultural School, largely written by George Dixon, the school's first superintendent. The school was established to educate the children of Friends who had married out of the Society: boys were trained as agricultural workers, girls for domestic service. George Dixon was an obvious choice for the position of the first superintendent, having farming and teaching experience and a staunch Quaker.

George describes his life before coming to Great Ayton, and how the family arrived at Philip Helseton's house on High Green in 1841 to start the school. The quite separate worlds of the day-to-day running of the school and the wealthy Quakers who formed the Committee managing the school are echoed in the separate chapters on the school and the work of the Committee. George's love of natural history is evident, and there is a good chapter on the provision of piped water and gas to the school, long before the village enjoyed either utility.

With the segregation of boys and girls, George allows two female governesses (teachers) to tell the girls' side of school life.

The book includes George Dixon's farewell and the years up to 1891, written by George's son Ralph, who became the second superintendent. The last chapter is a unique description of Great Ayton at the end of the nineteenth century. Finally there are lists of all the boys and girls who attended the school over the period 1841-91 and, rather strangely, a catalogue of apparatus for studying natural history which George Dixon, now returned from America, was hoping to sell.

Hand Book to the Herbarium, containing Botanical and English names of all the British flowering plants and ferns with their allied genera, to which are added full explanations of the Linnean System

George Dixon, Superintendent of the North of England Agricultural School

Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1845

Text available on Google books.

In his introduction, George Dixon describes his new method of teaching botany, from direct observation of specimens. He envisages groups of working men and schoolboys forming societies, purchasing a cheap microscope and a copy of this book, and beginning to study plants. This would have a tendency to "soften and subdue the mind, and draw attention from recreations of a more objectionable character" among the labouring poor and the children of the working classes.

There are chapters on 24 classes of plants, a description of parts of the plant, and an explanation of the Linnean classification, with rules for pronunciation. There is a chapter on how to discover the name of an unknown plant and a vocabulary of botanical terms.

Anyone who might have wondered at the academic standing of the superintendent of the Ayton School, which was founded to teach manual skills of farming and domestic work, should read this book.

A Descriptive Manual of British Land and Fresh-water Shells

Dixon and Watson

Ayton School, near Stokesley, 1858

This handbook was written by Ralph Dixon and John William Watson. Ralph Dixon, a son of George Dixon, would later become the second superintendent of the school. Watson, from Norton, was the first pupil enrolled at the school, when it opened in 1841. His brother, Alfred, was the second pupil. John Watson went on to become the "head apprentice" and then a teacher at the school. There are seven pages of coloured illustrations.

A Manual of British Lichens; containing descriptions of all the species and varieties

William Mudd

Great Ayton, 1861

William Mudd, a gardener at Cleveland Lodge, attended evening classes under George Dixon and became an early authority on British lichens. This manual was written while he was living in Great Ayton; in 1864 he was appointed curator of the Botanical Gardens at Cambridge.

Notes about Great Ayton in Cleveland

Collected by Rev. C.V. Collier

1896

Virtually impossible to find in its original form, but there is an excellent reprint by the British Library, for around £5 (prices as at 2012).

A twenty-page publication covering Great and Little Ayton, Nunthorpe, Easby, Newton and Roseberry Topping. It is valuable as the earliest publication by a native of the village; Rev. Carus Vale Collier was the curate of Great Ayton.

The early history of the village is taken from Graves and from Yorkshire Inquisitions. Collier describes the village from Low Green to High Green, north of where is the new part of the village, commonly known as "California". The River Leven is crossed by a stone bridge with two arches, and two wooden footbridges.

The church is dedicated to "all the Saints". There is a good description of the interior but "plaster, whitewash, and cumbersome woodwork, including a three-decker, prevent one from seeing any piscine or other object of interest which may exist in the church". Collier states that was probably a chantry, dedicated to St. Mary. The will of William Marwood of 3 February 1540, stated that he was to be buried "in the church of All Hallows of Aiton, before the image of our Lady, on the north side of the church". He mentions the memorial to William Wilson and the Cook family stone in the churchyard. A brief history of the church again comes from Graves.

There is an interesting description of the part of the village around All Saints'. "Leaving the church and crossing King Street (the King Street leading from Great Ayton to Yarme) and the stone bridge, we get to the road leading from Great Ayton to Easby. What is now Bridge Street was formerly known as 'Wapping'. The Easby road at one time was known as 'Goat Lane'. Proceeding along this latter road we come to a slight ascent called 'Half-penny Hill', so named I am told, from the fact that a woman was found hanged on one of the wayside trees, with only a half-penny in her pocket."

Little Ayton merits only a page "this hamlet is not remarkable in any particular at the present day, except for its quiet beauty". Collier gives a brief history of the manor from the Conquest: Robert Mallet, the family of Malbisse, the Lords Eure of Easby, then through various hands until it was purchased by Henry Richardson, whose descendants still

hold it. Sir William Malbisse was said to have built a chapel at Little Ayton, but nothing remains “unless some worked stones which are built into the wall of an ancient barn here have come from the old chapel”.

Collier’s section dealing with Roseberry Topping is rather poor. He chooses to give Atkinson’s strange ideas of the origins of the name and he seems to confuse the Roseberry Well with the Chapel Well. He believes Ergum (Aireyholme) meant the site of an open-air place of sacrifice. He dismisses the legend of Little Prince Oswy “I can find no mention of anything in the genealogies of the Kings of Northumbria which would give any authority whatever in support of the popular local legend”.

He is much better when dealing with the pits, describing those subscribe to the “popular notion” that they were the foundations of a British village as “credulous people”. He thinks the hollows are the remains of old workings for ironstone or jet. He also says “as early as 1282 there was a small medieval ironstone furnace in Ayton, and perhaps the ore used there was obtained from those old workings on Roseberry, and these have since developed into a ‘British village’”.

Great Ayton, Stokesley & District, past and present; with a chapter on Bilsdale and its hunt

John F Blakeborough

T Woolston, Middlesbrough, 1901

Available around £50 (prices as at 2012). This book is sometimes referred to as “Bits of West Cleveland” although the original title page does not include this phrase.

Major Jack Fairfax Blakeborough (1883-1976) was a lover of horse racing and hunting and, from association with his father, a collector of Yorkshire folk-lore. He was awarded the Military Cross in WW1 and the OBE in 1975. He wrote over a hundred books, and was celebrated for his weekly “Country Diary” in the *Whitby Gazette* from 1907 to his death.

The book contains much on Great Ayton, written in collaboration with the village curate, the Rev C V Collier. Chapter I covers the village history from the Domesday Book and All Saints’ Church. Three of the pages on the church are devoted to music: the John Longstaff book, the musical instruments and their players.

Chapter II describes the village and its schools. The whinstone mining boom was at its height “there are many signs of growth and prosperity and the demand for lodging accommodation in the summer months increases”. He mentions the rivalry between the two ends of the village “lowenders” and “highenders”. The Postgate School and the Friends’ School are both included.

Chapter III is on Captain Cook. He includes three theories about supposed theft of a shilling at Staithes, dismissing any slur on Cook’s character with a quotation from Sir Walter Besant saying Sanderson himself had taken the shilling to pay for drinks.

Following in his father’s liking for collections of anecdotes, Chapter IV contains many recollections of the village in past times, including a ghost story. He quotes Mrs Eleanor Fawcett, who remembered the days when Ayton comprised “a few scattered one-storey houses with thatched roofs”. There are a few lines on non-Conformist churches. The Major’s love of horses is evident in the three pages devoted to Thomas Peart of Ayton, breeder of Cleveland Bays. The chapter continues with Margery Murpoot’s description of Roseberry but, strangely, without giving the reference to Joseph Reed and his play “The Register Office”. The chapter closes with some lines on the Wapentake of Langbaugh and a list of interesting dates from 1066 to 1901, many concerned with church history. There is a full account of the repairs, in 1897, to the spire at Christ Church which had been struck by lightning.

Chapter V, on the surrounding villages, includes Little Ayton, Newton (which came under the parish of Great Ayton, and Roseberry Topping. Chapter VI is on Stokesley, while Chapter VII returns to some of his father’s themes with legends of ghosts and witches, with a full description of the murder at Anngrove Hall around 1830. The final two chapters, VIII and IX, are on Kildale and Bilsdale (hardly surprisingly this is mainly on the Bilsdale Hunt).

Cleveland Village, being notes on Ayton-in-Cleveland

Robert Kettlewell, M.A.

Privately published by Robert Kettlewell and undated, but usually taken as 1938.

Very difficult to find on account of the limited number of copies printed.

Robert Kettlewell, vicar of Great Ayton, wrote this history to raise funds for work on the Marwood School House. Much of its content comes from the Churchwardens' Accounts from 1734 to 1844, which had recently been repaired and rebound by the Public Record Office in London. Kettlewell modestly omits that this work was done at his own expense. There are chapters on parish administration, church services, non-conformity, the fabric and fittings at both Anglican churches, and village occupations. Jack Fairfax Blakeborough contributed a closing chapter on village lore.

The opening page mentions four fragments of Anglian stonework in All Saints', which had been rescued from the vicarage garden by the Rev Collier in 1843, but later dwindled to three. Extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts are provided with background facts and comments. Kettlewell considers the years covered by the Accounts to be a time of spiritual poverty, and he comments that, during the entire period there is no evidence of a bishop ever visiting Great Ayton, although there was a visit by the Archbishop of York in 1825.

There are many fascinating snippets scattered through the text. Great Ayton was on the coach route from Redcar to Bedale and, in 1823, coaches passed through the village on three days a week. The doctor's surgery slate used for recording messages had been in use for at least a hundred years. Kettlewell quotes extracts from 1829 correspondence between John Kettlewell, farming near York, and his son Robert, at school in Leeds. Jack Fairfax Blakeborough's story of the Ayton parson, who also worked as village postman, and inadvertently sent his leather breeches to Northallerton instead of the mailbag, appears as a footnote. There is the tale of the tame jackdaw at All Saints. A villager confessed that in his youth it had been a prank to wet the wicks of the candles in church, just before the parish clerk tried to light them for the evening service. Joseph Ibbetson had arranged for the two small dams across the Leven by Marwood School so that the river might freeze in winter and provide somewhere for boys to slide, instead of them making the lanes dangerous.

Kettlewell reproduces the bellman's cry informing villagers of the lighting times of Joanne Pickersgill's bake-house oven, at the bottom of Bridge Street, and relates the tale of the theft of a cooked Christmas goose between the bake-house and Myrtle Cottage (but the gravy was left).

There are notes on Mrs Ibbetson, "the faithful shepherdess and exemplary hand maiden of the Lord" and the Sanderson and Fawcett families.

There is a useful history of the meeting houses of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Primitive Methodists. The first Presbyterian Meeting House was behind Ayton Hall, and had been founded by John Coulson; there is a photograph of the building.

Kettlewell includes lists of churchwardens and parish priests before handing over to Jack Fairfax Blakeborough for the closing chapter, written at Aireyholme in 1938. After the inevitable piece on "T'hunt o' Yatton Brigg" he goes on to relate aspects of Ayton in the past: the Maypole on Low Green, the foot races which were part of all Ayton's weddings until recently, the low end of the village (proper Yattoners) and the high end of interlopers. There is the antipathy towards Stokesley, where the inhabitants had learned all they knew from Yatton fools. Jack remembered being present as a boy at a mell supper at The Grange, when there was dancing to an accordion, singing, and a local play. Older residents remembered the white garlands, from the funerals of virgins and children, hanging up inside the church. It was an unpardonable insult not to attend a funeral to which you had been bidden, widows had to tell bees of a death in the family, and Jack remembered seeing Ayton hives draped in black. He also said that it was possible to buy funeral biscuits in Ayton until the 1890s.

Ayton School, the Centenary History 1841-1941

G. Alston Watson

Ayton School, 1941

Widely available about £10 (prices as at 2012)

This covers some of the ground of the first fifty years' history, but with a better recognition of the central role taken by Thomas Richardson in establishing the school. Following the layout of the first history, there are parallel chapters about the school and the Committee. More detail is given on Ralph Dixon's time as superintendent from 1866 to 1895. With the arrival of Frank Rivers Arundel in 1896, the ethos of the school began a move away from its founding concept to be a more normal school with an academic curriculum and a headmaster. The next headmaster, Herbert Dennis, married to a grand-daughter of George Dixon, served from 1913 to 1940.

Again following the precedent of the first history, the girls' side of the school is narrated by ex pupils and staff.

Ayton of Old in pictures

Malcolm Race

Christ Church Parochial Church Council, 1987

Occasionally available at around £10 (prices as at 2012)

A small booklet of old photographs with explanatory notes, including the Stone Bridge, the Leven in flood, various village views of streets and churches, the station, the Thistlethwaite family, the 1924 cricket team, the 1926 carnival and the 1934 Armistice Day parade. Inside the back cover is a reproduction of the programme of Great Ayton Choral Society's first concert in 1920.

Great Ayton, the Parish and the People

Edward Appleyard

Great Ayton Parochial Church Council, 1971

Very rare

A small booklet written by the Rev Appleyard to commemorate the opening of the Youth and Community Centre at Christ Church by Princes Margaret. The author acknowledges that most of the text comes from his predecessor, Robert Kettlewell, who published "Cleveland Village" in 1938, with additional material from Arthur Mee's King's England volume on the North Riding. However, there are a few original points. Arthur Negus admired the Sanctuary chairs, dating from 1678, and moved from All Saints' to the new church. In Christ Church, there are memorial windows to Dr William Augustus Loy and to Dr Charles Stuart, and a window by Hugh Easton in memory of the fallen of the Second World War, featuring Cook's Monument and Roseberry Topping.

A Visual History of Great Ayton

Ruth Gaudie

Stokesley and District Local History Study Group, 1982

Very rare due to the limited number produced.

This is a simple booklet of stapled photocopied sheets with hand-written text by Ruth Gaudie. Of interest is the page on the Guinea Pig Inn, the gap in the railings at the side of the Leven opposite the Buck Hotel for drawing water, the sign "Minchin" over the doorway of the Cook Cottage on Easby Lane (Minchin ran a horse-drawn wagonette between the village and the station. Ruth includes notes on Ayton in her grand-father's days; he was Ralph Dixon (1836-1916) the second superintendent of the Friends' School. William Henry Thistlethwaite was an uncle, and she has some notes about the grocery shop. There is a useful guide to the sequence of extensions to the right of the original premises of the Ayton School in Philip Hesleton's house on High Green, and maps of the village showing key buildings.

Great Ayton, a history of the village

Dan O'Sullivan

Published by Dan O'Sullivan, Great Ayton, 1983

First edition of the authoritative history of Great Ayton. Chapters on early history, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ralph Jackson's diary, industry, local government, churches and schools, and a general description of the village.

Read all about it, a selection of news cuttings about Great Ayton and district from 1926-1959

Published by June Imeson, Trustee of Yatton House, Great Ayton 1984

Tom Kirby, a local reporter, amassed a large collection of press cuttings before he died in 1962. This booklet reproduced a selection of 136 cuttings taken from Tom Kirby's files kept in the Great Ayton Library. Note that, in the examples below, the dates refer to the newspaper date, not the actual date of the event described.

- 8 October 1926 A Stokesley RDC councillor asserted that the working men of Ayton had less backbone than a herring.
- 5 November 1926 Ayton boys once had a rhyme sung round the bonfire on Low Green:
Awd Grimey sits on yonder hill,
Ez black ez ony crow;
He ewsed ti wear an awd black coot
Wi buttons down befor.
- 2 February 1927 Death of Worthy Pearson.
- 12 February 1927 A rat hunt at an Ayton farm killed 60 rats. A ferret was badly mauled. A rat got up one of the ratter's trousers, giving him "a hectic five minutes" before it was strangled.
- 10 June 1927 Great Ayton's Carnival inaugurated by A.K. Cumbor two years before.
- 7 March 1928 Auction sale of four dwelling houses on Levenside for £415.
- 4 May 1929 Mains water supply now almost completed. It was anticipated that the installation of mains electricity would be completed in June.
- 1 June 1929 Parish Council complained about wooden poles to carry electricity cables, which would "disfigure the rural charms of the village". They wanted metal standards throughout the village.
- 4 July 1929 Argument in the Parish Council over the provision of a ladies' public convenience.
- 26 October 1929 Inquiry into the death of Oliver Jackson of Marwood Cottages. He had been walking on Easby Lane when a young hare crossed the road. Jackson set out to catch it, tripped, and fell in the path of a passing car.
- 2 February 1935 The front and one end of a football pavilion on Monkabecque-road were blown down in a gale.
- 29 March 1935 "A decided and much-needed addition to the amenities of the village" by replacing whinstone paving with concrete flags.
- 5 July 1935 12-year old Alan Suggitt overbalanced while riding a bicycle alongside the Leven and fell in. He was immersed for nearly half-an-hour.
- 2 November 1935 A pleasure fair on Low Green did not meet with financial support, business being very poor.
- 8 January 1936 Opening of new Women's Institute hall, designed and built by the local firm of Messrs. Robson Brothers.
- 22 January 1937 Major J.B. Pennyman told a meeting in Great Ayton that war was a very remote possibility, but went on to describe what housing would be needed in Grea Ayton for Teessiders escaping bombing.
- 13 July 1937 The authorities in Melbourne were accused of vandalism by their internal alterations to the Cook Cottage, making the stable at the rear part of the sleeping quarters.
- 10 December 1937 Lecture on air raid precautions.
- 21 May 1938 Death of Mr. Thomas Watson, one of the last old whinstone quarry workers.
- 8 July 1938 Building of St. John Ambulance Hall by Messrs. Robson Brothers using rustic red bricks from the Commondale Brick Works.
- 30 September 1938 A.R.P. wardens kept busy assembling gas masks in the British School. Distribution was completed within a day or so.
- 9 September 1939 Great Ayton received its first consignment of evacuees, 300 children, mothers, teachers and helpers from Gateshead. Mr. Noel Kitching was the billeting officer.
- October 1941 A small daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Muxlow of Summerhill Farm had a remarkable escape when temporarily left in a milk float and its horse bolted through the main street.
- 10 March 1942 Great Ayton people do not want to add "Middlesbrough" to their postal address.
- 7 September 1942 Mr. Edwin Johnson aged 84 and Sir John Fry aged 78 both recently climbed Roseberry Topping.

5 July 1943	Rev. J. Eaves Tinsley, acting vicar of Great Ayton, attacked the dances held in the Parochial Hall "Excess in drinking, breaches of sexual morality (such as divorce and so-called remarriage), immodesty of dress, speech and demeanour, unpleasantly suggestive elements in dance and concert turns, and undisciplined pleasure-seeking by young people ..."
19 May 1944	Two Great Ayton brothers, Dennis and John Judson, who had not seen each other for two years, met by chance in an Italian dentist's where they both went with toothache.
13 September 1944	Captain Cook's Monument had been damaged in a severe thunderstorm. There were rumours circulating that the monument was to be dismantled to prevent its use as a landmark by German pilots.
30 September 1944	A new bridge had been erected across the Leven to give access to the Easby Fields and Bridge Street via the Holly Garth.
12 May 1945	Celebration fires on Roseberry and Low Green. Fireworks, saved from before the war, were let off. Church service time rearranged so people could listen to the King's speech. Natural fireworks that evening with flashes of lightning and hailstones the size of marbles.
15 June 1946	Service personnel from Great Ayton received £3 from the Welcome Home Fund.
12 June 1948	Additional telephone kiosks erected outside the Buck Hotel and the Women's Institute.
24 July 1948	Mr. Dennis Blake received the D.F.C. with a letter from Buckingham Palace signed by the King.
18 February 1950	Signs carrying street names put up around the village.
29 December 1951	Dr. Robert Murray retired after nearly 50 years of service to Great Ayton.
17 August 1953	Plans for 200 houses and space for a cinema and lock-up garages on the old hostel site were put to the Parish Council.
8 January 1955	The Parish Council spent some time discussing whether the Christmas tree should be illuminated; the cost of bulbs was very considerable.
7 May 1955	Land at Waterfall Close donated to the village by Mr. Robert Alcock.
22 October 1955	New Working Men's Club opened in Cleveland Street.
4 August 1956	The Grange Preparatory School closing down.
13 June 1959	Mr. Ted Johnson celebrated his 101 st birthday.

Great Ayton Church History; The Two Churches of Great Ayton

Alan Marchant

Christian Inheritance Pamphlet No 14, Stockton-on-Tees, 1989

Very rare

A booklet on the history of the two Anglican churches, with sketches. These, in the case of All Saints' purport to show the building at various stages in its history, but must be treated with caution. For example of All Saints' with its 15th century tower and spire, demolished in 1788, looks very much like the lower part of the new 1788 tower and is at odds with the George Cuit drawing of around 1788, Cuit being noted for his unfailing architectural accuracy.

Cooks' Cottage, Melbourne

Joint Management Committee, Cooks' Cottage, Melbourne

Undated guidebook

This Australian guidebook describes the rebuilt cottage and its garden, created in 1978 for the 250th anniversary of Cook's birth. As this is a later guidebook, the cottage is described as Cooks' Cottage rather than Cook's Cottage, and the text clearly states that it was his parents' house. However, the 48 page booklet does little to dispel the idea that the cottage is really Captain Cook's cottage:

"The young James Cook cannot have lived there for any significant time" (James was 27 years old when his father built the cottage and had long since left Great Ayton).

"The cottage of Great Ayton, where Captain Cook always went in the intervals between his voyages to the South Seas" (there is only evidence for two such visits).

In the garden plants were used that "could feasibly have been in cottage gardens in Great Ayton in the mid-18th century at the time of Cook's childhood".

Victorian Cleveland Sketchbook 1886-1889

Henry T. Robson

Barnard Gallery, Stockton-on-Tees, 1995

Occasionally available around £20 (prices as at 2012)

Reproduction of sketches made by Stockton iron founder Henry Robson. He visited Great Ayton for holidays over this three year period, making many sketches of the countryside which give an invaluable record of the village and its surroundings at that time.

- Roseberry Topping, 12 August 1886. Shows the buildings of Roseberry Ironstone Mine in the distance and Ayton Banks Farm in the foreground.
- Captain Cook's Monument, 3 August 1887. A distant view, probably from Easby Lane.
- Sheep on the Hills, August 1887. View looking towards Roseberry Topping from Ayton Moor.
- Captain Cook's Monument, 4 August 1887. Close-up with seated figures in foreground, one with raised umbrella (against the sun or the rain?)
- Brookside Cottage, Great Ayton, 18 August 1887. View of the rear, possibly from the opposite bank of the Leven. Shows the cottage and the end of Hinmers Chapel.
- Mill near Ayton, August 1887. A good view of the rear of Grange Mill with the Topping in the distance and the spire of the new Christ Church visible. In the foreground is the outlet from the unusually covered-over tail race of the mill.
- Lonsdale, 27 August 1887. Lonsdale Farm in the foreground and Oak Tree Farm in the distance.
- Ayton Church, 30 August 1887. The new Christ Church from Ayton Hall, with the vicarage to the right.
- Near Ayton, 2 August 1888. Possibly Woodhouse Farm, between Easby Lane and the River Leven.
- Top of Roseberry, 7 August 1888. Shows a belt of conifers around the lower slopes of the summit and the pre-1912 rockfall western face.
- Farm House near Ayton, 9 August 1888. Unidentified, but has Roseberry Topping in the background, might be East Angrove.
- Ayton Banks, 18 August 1888. Has Summer Hill Farm in the middle distance.
- Lonsdale (from the Kildale Road), 23 August 1888. Oak Tree Farm is in mid-picture.

History under the Hammer

Joyce Dixon

North York Moors National Park, Helmsley, 1996

Very rare

The story of how the Cook family cottage on Easby Lane came to be dismantled and taken to Australia, written by the daughter-in-law of Arnold Dixon, one of the three Dixon brothers who owned the cottage. The sorry tale of how the Dixon brothers did not want the property, how the Parish Council showed no interest, and how it failed to be sold at the auction on 28 June 1933, is well known. The booklet details the negotiations with the Australian authorities and its sale. The Dixon family continued their lack of respect for history; referring to the cancelled cheque for £800, Joyce Dixon writes "Years later I saw the cancelled cheque, but sadly believe it was destroyed inadvertently, under the pressure of an enormous of an interesting, but unmanageable, large sack of papers during the break up of the family house after the deaths of Mr and Mrs Dixon.

There is the text of the notice placed outside the cottage before its demolition, inviting visits at 3d per adult and 1d for children. This refers to the property as "Captain Cook's house" early evidence of the myth that James Cook had lived there.

There is a good account of the demolition and re-erection in Melbourne, and of the obelisk now on the Easby Lane site. Tucked away towards the end of the booklet are some odd facts. Four farmers used to eat their Christmas turkey dinner inside the Easby Moor Monument (this would be before the doorway was blocked off after the restoration of 1895. The author claims that Gloucester old Spot pigs might have originated in Hawaii and been brought to England by Cook! She also points out discrepancies in the number of crates containing the bricks and stones of the cottage on its voyage to Australia. Various reports gave the number as 253, or nearly 300, or 249 cases and 40 barrels.

An amusing typographical error in the bibliography is where Ord's History of Cleveland, published in 1848, is credited to Ovid (43 BC to 17/18 AD).

Bourgeois and proud of it

Audrey Linklater

Audrey Linklater, Great Ayton, 1996

Now unobtainable due to the limited print run.

The privately-published autobiography of Audrey Linklater (née Lithgow). Her parents, Samuel and Audrey Lithgow, bought Ayton House on Easby Lane in 1938. At the time it was still a large house, with stables and a coach house and twelve acres of land on the east side of Easby Lane. The coach house was in use as a farm. Samuel bought the house and land, but not the farm. At the start of the war, they employed a cook, two maids, a cleaner and a washer woman and three gardeners. Sam joined the A.R.P. and the house was used as a store for food in case of invasion. The dining room was stacked from floor to ceiling with boxes of food, enough to feed the village for a month. Sam started to keep goats for their milk, and also had a pig and some hens. Audrey joined the Women's Land Army, driving to work in an Austin Seven, the family's third car!

As Sam grew older and could not cope with the large property, in Audrey's words "the rot seemed to set in". The house was divided into two dwellings, bungalows were built in the grounds, trees were felled and land sold for building houses.

Great Ayton, a history of the village (second edition)

Dan O'Sullivan

Published by Dan O'Sullivan, Great Ayton, 1996

This second edition covers a similar range of aspects of village history, but in more detail. The open field system merits its own chapter. There are now separate chapters on Industry before and after the railway, and on the established church and other denominations.

Ayton Happenings, past village events in pictures

Edited by Malcolm Race

Produced for the Parish Church Funds, Great Ayton, 2000

Booklet of photographs featuring the re-vamped Cook Museum in 1999, Princess Margaret opening the parochial hall extension in 1971, and assorted scenes from the village.

Great Ayton - A North Yorkshire Village 2000AD

Joni Essex

Room for Design, Stokesley, 2000

Occasionally available around £10 (prices as at 2012)

A comprehensive record of the village and its inhabitants at the millennium. Many of the photographs are by Joe Cornish. At the end of the book there is an invaluable, street-by-street list of every house in the village and the names of the people living there at the time.

Quakerism in Cleveland (1651-2002)

Donald Gill

Donald Gill, Great Ayton, 2002

Virtually unobtainable

In spite of the title, this is really a history of Quakers in Great Ayton. Topics covered include the establishment of the meeting house, early sufferings through disputes over tithes and the swearing of oaths, revival following the opening of the North of England Agricultural School, and some of the prominent local Quaker families (Richardson, Hesleton, Martin, Hodgkin, Fry).

There is a transcript of the memories of Helen Thistlethwaite(1890-1988) in conversation with Maurice Wilson. The tensions between the traditional Quaker' views on dress and speech and the younger generation are revealed.

The bankruptcy of the Pease business empire in 1904 is told from the minutes of the Quaker Monthly Meetings. In the twentieth century, two World Wars tested the Quakers' commitment to conscientious objection. There is further material on the Friends' School and its buildings, and on the interactions between the school, the Monthly Meeting and the village. Appendices list local scholars at the Ayton School, and short biographies of three Friends associated with the village: A. Herbert Dobbing (1893-1970), Norman Gaudie (1887-1955) and Anne Pease Fry (1913-2001).

Lost on Easy Moor, the last flight of Hudson NR-E

Ian Pearce

Printability Publishing, Wolviston, 2003

Copies available around £20 (prices as at 2012)

The story of the Lockheed Hudson which crashed near Captain Cook's Monument in February 1940. Three of the crew of four were killed, the injured survivor sought help at Borough Green Farm, Easby. The factors behind the accident are explored and there are brief biographies of the crew. Details are given of what can be seen at the site today.

Roseberry Topping

Editor Ian Pearce

Great Ayton Community Archaeology Project, 2006

Out of print and unobtainable

A large volume covering all aspects of Roseberry Topping: origin of the name, geology and natural history, prehistory and the Bronze Age hoard, Farming and fox hunting, myths and legends, beacons, the summer house, industry, the mysterious pits, tourism and Roseberry in art and literature. There are many photographs by Joe Cornish and other illustrations.

Great Ayton Conservative Club, the first 100 years, 1910-2010

Ernie Taylor

Great Ayton Conservative Club, Great Ayton 2010

Copies may be available at the Conservative Club

A short history of the club, founded as the Great Ayton and District Unionist Club in 1910. It has been in the same premises throughout its hundred years, at first rented from the Donaldsons next door, and purchased after several attempts in 1965. In the intervening period the club contemplated buying land to build new premises, or purchasing Cliff Rigg on Newton Road, but nothing came of either suggestion. The booklet covers club staff, officers and activities.