

Companion  
into  
Derbyshire

# Companion into DERBYSHIRE

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WILLIAMS

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Derbyshire, with its romantic dales and massive tors, is one of England's fairest counties. The glory of Dove-dale, the grim grandeur of Kinder Scout, the great Flagg Bowl and the eerie Eldon Hole are all within its boundaries. This is a book which brings the tang of the peat and the fragrance of the heather. It gives glimpses of sheep dog trials on the moors, of Tissington in springtime when the inhabitants are dressing their wells, and of Ashbourne on Shrove Tuesday when football is played in the streets.

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blow. Crouched on the ground, the dog waited motionless, only an ear quivered, then he crept up, and half persuaded, half pushed, the fool into the pen and his companions followed. Boxer, who was waiting with the other three, had an easier task. They walked meekly into the pen, the crowd gave a sigh of relief and the whistle sounded.

"Well," mumbled the old farmer. "There wasn't much time to spare. Reckon I shall dream I'm counting sheep to-night."

## Part II. THE LOWER PEAK

### *CHAPTER FOUR: Padley and Stoney Middleton*

*The Eyres of Padley: The tragedy of Nicholas Garlick and Robert Ludlam: A walk down Middleton Dale: Eyam and the Plague: Cucklett Dell*

FROM the Surprise, a path runs through Padley Wood to Grindleford station. Grindleford, once a quiet, rather dull village, is now a dormitory for Sheffield business men. Rows of new houses prove its growing popularity and the only fragment of the past is Padley chapel.

Modern progress has encroached even here, for the Midland railway runs close to the chapel, and goods wagons are constantly shunting beside the ancient walls. The chapel and a few foundations are all that remain of Upper Padley Manor House, which early in the fifteenth century passed into the possession of the Eyres, by the marriage of Robert Eyre with Joan Padley. How real they seem to us, Joan in her tight, fur-trimmed gown and Robert in plate armour, from their brass in Hathersage church.

It was close to the Derwent, on the site of a smaller house, that Robert and Joan built a large manor house, suited to the needs of their ever-increasing family. It must have seemed an ideal spot, screened from the cold winds by thick woods, and within an eight miles' ride of the prosperous town of Sheffield. The chapel, which was attached to the Manor House, has recently been restored, and every year in July a pilgrimage is made to Padley in honour of Nicholas Garlick and Robert Ludlam, two priests captured there in

1583. The gable at the east end of the chapel was the manorial dovecote, but the nesting boxes are now blocked up.

Many generations of Eyres lived at Padley. There was Joan and Robert's eldest son, Robert, who married Elizabeth Fitzwilliam, and their grandson Robert and his son Arthur. The latter was married three times, but so heavy was infant mortality in Tudor times, that from his numerous offspring, he only left one child, a daughter, Anne. She was a great heiress and had many suitors, but, as so often happens, she married the heir to great estates, Thomas Fitzherbert. While Anne inherited Padley, Thomas came into the possession of Norbury on the death of his parents.

Anne and her husband, who remained true to the old faith, lived happily at Padley, until Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, when suspicion fell upon them. It was a time of deep perplexity, when the eye of every man was turned upon his neighbour. The fear of Spain was like a raging flame in the hearts of Englishmen; the cruel deeds of Mary's reign were fresh in their memory; and, as history has shown again and again, fear breeds cruelty.

A straw showed the way the wind was blowing. Before the new reign was three years old, Thomas Fitzherbert was imprisoned in the Fleet Prison. There he remained for thirty years, with brief intervals on bail, until he died in the Tower in 1591. Padley and his other estates were placed in the hands of his younger brother John, who lived at Padley, hearing Mass and giving shelter to priests, when the hue and cry seemed dangerously near.

Upper Padley Manor was an ideal spot for such a purpose. It commanded a wide view of the country round, and with its belt of woods and hiding places, offered many means of escape. There was only one drawback. A keen supporter of the government, George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, was

a near neighbour at Sheffield Manor. By his orders on January 29, 1588, a search was made at Padley for dangerous recusants, amongst whom was numbered John Fitzherbert, but he could not be found.

That summer excitement ran fever high in England. In Spain the Great Armada was known to be preparing; spy panic was rife, and where, it was argued, were spies more likely to be found than in households loyal to the Pope. Shrewsbury, as Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, took his duties very seriously. In spite of ill health, he paid a visit in person, with a band of attendants, at dawn on July 21, 1588. The surprise was complete. When the Earl hammered on the door, the household were sound asleep. No presentiment of danger warned them. Within the walls of the Manor House were not only John Fitzherbert but two Roman Catholic priests. All three were captured and removed to Derby.

From the first the priests were doomed. Nicholas Garlick and Robert Ludlam were Englishmen ordained at Rheims, who had returned in defiance of the law, to preach in England. The barbarous penalty of the age was inflicted upon them. They were hanged, drawn and quartered on Saint Mary's Bridge, Derby.

John Fitzherbert's life was spared, owing, it was rumoured, to a bribe of £10,000, offered by his son-in-law, Thomas Eyre, to the judges, but he remained in prison. His was a living death. In August, 1590, he was taken to London, and died two months later, just eleven months before death came to set free his elder brother Thomas.

John's eldest son, Thomas, is the villain of the piece. He was under the influence of Richard Topcliffe, the Queen's Pursuivant, and with his zeal for Protestantism, mingled a keen desire to see his uncle and father dispossessed, so that the Padley estate might become his own. His hopes were doomed to disappointment. Shrewsbury himself took

charge of the confiscated property; not perhaps without misgivings, for on September 15, 1589, he wrote to Walsingham to ask if the Council approved of this action.

All through the summer and autumn of 1589, the matter was in dispute, and finally Padley was restored for a time to the Fitzherberts.

But on Sir Thomas' death, two years later, the struggle for possession between nephew Thomas and Topcliffe was renewed, and after much litigation, Queen Elizabeth intervened and granted the Manor to Topcliffe. He held it until 1603, when Thomas' younger brother, Anthony, regained the property.

The great days of Padley Manor were over. After 1650, owing to the heavy recusancy fines and losses incurred as Royalists in the Civil War, the house was dismantled, much of the stone being used to build the farmhouse, which stands near the site.

Excavations have revealed the plan of the old Manor House. It was built in the form of a parallelogram, with a great hall. The chapel, on the south side of the courtyard, is a two-storied building, with three entrances. One, at the east end, for the family and their guests; another for the servants and the third, on the north side was a private door for the priest, which connected with his rooms in the Manor. An unusual feature is the great buttresses on either side of the chapel, disguised by the architect as chimneys, into which he built hiding places for priests. The roof of the chapel has carved hammer beams, and at the east end, angels are holding shields.

The chapel fell on evil days. It was used as a barn by the farmer, and later was put to still baser uses and became a cowshed. In January, 1932, it was bought by Monsignor Payne, rector of St. Mary's Derby, with funds collected in all parts of the country, and was restored and reconsecrated.



Plague Cottages, Eyam



Church and Saxon Cross, Eyam

On July 13, 1933, after an interval of 345 years, High Mass was again celebrated in Padley Chapel. What must have been the feelings of those present? All thoughts must have turned to the last time Mass was said in Padley. The congregation, in their Elizabethan ruffs and stiff brocades; the dim light, for even a flicker might betray their secret; John Fitzherbert and his wife, with their children, Anthony and his two sisters; the gleam of the candles on the altar and the low voice of the priest. It may have been Nicholas Garlick, the former Tideswell schoolmaster, or Robert Ludlam, saying Mass for the last time. Over everyone in the congregation hung a feeling of tension; they knelt with ears alert for the sound of a hurrying footstep or the hoof of a galloping horse.

Yet, as we have seen, when disaster did come, the household were not at Mass, but asleep in their beds. Then, in the dead of night, came Shrewsbury, furious and infirm, tortured by gout, but veiling his infirmity beneath a mask of rage. John Fitzherbert and his children were dragged from their beds, and hurried away to gaol, and the search went on, until at length the priests were discovered in the secret hiding place in the chimney.

Modern stained glass windows in the chapel tell the drama of the priests. They show the scene of their arrest, and their cruel death at Derby. Nicholas Garlick is mounting the scaffold to encourage a fellow-victim, Richard Symson. The original stone altar, lost for many years, was discovered in August 1933, in the ruins of the Manor House, and was reconsecrated and restored to its former place. One of the windows shows it being discovered; a sexton and a man in spectacles are digging it up, while a priest stands by.

There are more memories of Joan and Robert Eyre at Stoney Middleton, a picturesque village three miles away. It recalls the hill towns of Italy, with its houses in tiers, one



Topley Pike, near Buxton



On Kinderscout

above the other, clinging to the rock face, and the gaunt limestone crags towering above.

Joan Eyre built a church in Stoney Middleton, as a thank-offering for the safe return of her husband from the field of Agincourt, and the font given by Joan and Robert still stands in the church. The building itself, however, is very unlike the fifteenth century church built by Joan Eyre. It is one of the strangest village churches in England. The fifteenth century tower remains, and round it in 1759 an octagon was constructed. There is apparently no nave and the litany desk seems to stand in the centre of the church. The architect, who designed the stables at Chatsworth and the Rectory at Eyam (pronounced Eem), is responsible for this odd structure and many people will agree with Dr. Cox's sentiments. "We can not help wishing that he had confined his attention exclusively to secular work."

The church is dedicated to Saint Martin, and there is a local tradition that it stands on the site of a well, where a Derbyshire soldier, home from the Crusades, was cured of leprosy by the water of the well. Dr. Short, writing in 1734, speaks of "three perpetually bubbling warm springs, close by the west side of the churchyard." The Romans knew them and appreciated their value, and near the church is the so-called Roman Bath, not that there is any evidence that it was made by the Romans. It is now closed to visitors, as so much damage has been done by rough horseplay.

Stoney Middleton has a flourishing industry—boot-making. There are no fewer than six factories, one is more than a hundred years old. I asked the advice of a small boy, playing with an old motor tyre, which one I should visit.

"Yon's best," he said, pointing up the hill. "If you take boots there, they come back better than new."

This was high praise, so along I went, and found a room crowded with benches, where men were making massive hob-nailed boots. No light ladies' footwear is made here.

Only solid boots, which will last a life-time, and are guaranteed to keep out the wet, even in floodtime. The weight of a finished pair is a revelation.

At first the noise seemed overwhelming. The clang of machines driving in rivets; the whirr of sewing machines; the friction of emery wheels, all blended into a subdued roar, yet in the tumult, each machine kept its individual noise. Gradually as my ears became accustomed to the din, I began to watch the process of boot-making. At the cutting table, a man with a sharp knife and keen eye was cutting uppers and tongues from a large sheet of leather. He measured the strip with his eye, laid on the pattern, and cut so that not a scrap of leather was wasted.

Next, girl machinists were stitching the sides together, their needles passing through the thick leather as though it were chiffon. Another girl pressed the backs in a machine, while a third inserted the eyelets, which poured down a tube and were fastened into place, while she worked a foot pedal. Meanwhile another machine was cutting soles, and these were joined to the uppers by young boys, who knocked in the nails.

Downstairs heavy machines were completing the process of turning leather into finished boots. Here the clang was deafening. Two elderly workmen, veterans in their craft, were knocking iron "tackets" into the soles in neat rows; a more difficult art than anyone would suspect by watching them. Then came the last stage of all, when the leather was smoothed with an emery wheel, and any fragments rounded off with a sharp knife. The finished products are piled up by the door, and Stoney Middleton may well be proud of its industry, for it boasts that its products are sent to all parts of the world.

The way to Eyam, the village made famous by the plague, lies through Middleton Dale. It seems a short mile, so en-

trancing is the scenery. In spite of the limeworks, which belch forth white clouds at all hours of the day, and the sophisticated footpath laid down for pedestrians, the dale still keeps its romance.

It remains much as Anna Seward saw it, when she was living at Eyam Rectory in February, 1765. In her day, Anna was a person of some importance. She knew such literary stars as Doctor Johnson, Fanny Burney and David Garrick. Her poems were read in London salons. Time has dealt harshly with her reputation, for her poems are too sentimental for this realistic age.

Anyone who walks through the dale after night-fall can see it with her eyes. "This dale is narrow and the vast and sterile rocks rise on each side to a sublime height. The towers and pinnacles of these lofty rocks are, however, continually growing less and less distinct, picturesque and noble, broken and ravaged, as from time to time they are for the purpose of building, and of making and mending roads, and this by force of gunpowder and by perpetual consumption of the ever burning lime kilns. In the night they are very fine, emitting their livid flames which seem so many small volcanoes."

On the right rises the Lover's Leap, a mountain of limestone cleaving heavenwards. Tradition says that in 1760, a girl called Baddeley, whose love affair had gone awry, leapt in desperation, but escaped death and was picked up, only bruised and shaken. Then comes a ridge of limestone towers and pinnacles, frowning majestically upon the ant-like creatures on the road beneath. Finest of all, is one of Nature's illusions, a make-believe castle, complete with turrets and bastions, well-equipped to keep out the invader. So from moment to moment the scene shifts, and all too soon the rocks dwindle and disappear, and the road to Eyam passes through a leafy dell.

Eyam, with its Saxon cross, and staid grey houses set in a

girdle of emerald hills, seems an unlikely setting for tragedy. Yet two hundred and seventy years ago a drama as tense as any England has ever known was being enacted in this remote Derbyshire village. Fires were burning in the street, houses were barred and shuttered, here and there one bore the dreaded mark, signifying that someone within was smitten with the plague, and from time to time bodies were dragged forth for burial in the common grave. None had time to spare to toll the bell for the souls of those who had passed away; men shunned their neighbours lest they should be bearers of the dreaded infection, and horror stalked naked through the quiet streets.

Eyam has never forgotten those sufferings of long ago. Even to-day the village bears the scars. Beneath the shadow of the church stands Plague Cottage, where the tailor lived who received the bale of infected cloth from London. The kitchen, where he spread it to air, before the fire, remains practically unchanged. In the churchyard, near the Saxon Cross, is the grave of the Rector's young wife, Catherine Mompesson. She was little more than a girl in years, full of vitality and loving life and gaiety. Yet after sending her children to safety in York, she remained by her husband's side, and fought the peril with him, until in the terrible August of 1666, she herself fell a victim. On the opposite side of the path is the grave of Thomas Stanley, the vicar in Commonwealth days, a dour but honest man, who remained in Eyam and with his successor fought the ravages of the plague.

William Mompesson's grave is not to be found in Eyam. After those dreadful months of strain and anguish, when he lost what was dearest to him on earth, he came unscathed through the peril, but the associations of the place were too bitter. He had been there but six months when the plague broke out. Before, he had been chaplain to Sir George Savile at Rufford Abbey, and after the companionship of

that attractive aristocrat, he found his new living cramped and the people uncongenial. It was in September, 1665, that the plague claimed its first victim, George Vicars, the tailor's assistant, and throughout the spring and summer of 1666, it raged with unabated force, claiming 267 victims out of the 350 inhabitants, who stayed in the village.

Throughout this terrible time, William Mompesson showed superb courage. Never shunning the risk of infection, he visited the sick and consoled the dying, and, what was even rarer, he was able to inspire others with his own courage. It was by his orders that no one left the stricken village, from the autumn of 1665 until the plague was over, lest they should carry the infection to the world outside. No stranger was allowed to enter the village to bring food or clothing. By arrangement with the Duke of Devonshire, parcels of food and other necessities were placed in pre-arranged places, amongst them Mompesson's well, which stands high above the village on the Sir William Road. Here at nightfall men came from Eyam to fetch the parcels and to place their "contagious" money in a receptacle filled with vinegar as payment.

Never has the world seen such an example of self-sacrifice, as a whole community voluntarily abandoning itself to the ravages of this most terrible disease. Mompesson must have been a man of unusual strength of character, yet in a letter he reveals something of what he was enduring. "My ears never heard such doleful lamentations," he wrote, "and my eyes never beheld such ghastly spectacles. There have been seventy-six families visited in my parish out of which two hundred and fifty-nine persons died." On every hand can be seen the price of the sacrifice. Half a mile from the church is a field where seven members of the Hancock family, who died in eight days, are buried. They are known as the Riley graves, because the land was called Rylegleys. The churchyard is full of nameless graves.

Yet the question arises whether Mompesson's act of self-sacrifice was not really a terrible mistake. Did he not, by concentrating the inhabitants within a small infected area, increase the deadliness of the plague? If the people had scattered at the first outbreak, would they not have escaped more lightly? For Eyam was not the only place in England to be stricken by the plague. Already from May, 1665, plague had been raging in London, and 68,596 people had died, while in Derby, too, there were many victims. Yet no one paid so terrible a price as the wind-swept village of Eyam. To fears of infection and grief for the loss of loved ones was added the terrible feeling of being immured in a prison, from which there was no escape.

Fortunately for his peace of mind no such doubts troubled William Mompesson. Yet he paid a price as heavy as any. For in August 1666, as has been already said, he lost his wife, Catherine. In a heart-broken letter to his children, George, aged three and Elizabeth, aged four, he praises her piety, charity and frugality. "She never liked the company of tattling women and abhorred the wandering custom of going from house to house that wastefully spending of precious time, for she was ever busied in useful occupations. Yet though thus prudent, she was always kind and affable, for while she avoided those whose company could not instruct or benefit her, and would not unbosom herself to any such, she dismissed or avoided them with civility."

Poor Catherine Mompesson. This paragon of seventeenth century womanly virtues was only twenty-seven when she died, and her husband designed an elaborate table tomb to the memory. It stands in the church yard beneath the shades of a yew, little changed, except that the Latin inscription has been recut, as the letters had been worn away by the fingers of pious visitors. Mompesson, who prided himself upon his scholarship, took great pains in choosing the symbols of fleeting humanity and the epitaph. Look at the winged



hourglass, and the warning words: *Cavete. Nescitis horam.* (Beware. Ye know not the hour.)

Near Catherine's grave stands the Saxon cross, one of the finest in the county, and Derbyshire is famous for its Saxon crosses. Probably the cross stood originally on a hillside, overlooking the village; then it was erected on the strip of Common Land, near Eyam Hall, where the uprights of the village stocks still stand. Less battered and weather-worn than the Bakewell cross, it has deeply-cut scrollwork and a medallion with an angel, and four angels with sceptres round it; while on the reverse side is a choir of angels. Down the shaft is a beautiful vine, bearing bunches of grapes. Nor did the carver neglect to adorn the sides of the cross. On the north arm a figure holds a book, and on the south, is an angel. Authorities think the cross dates from 790. It has suffered from the ravages of time, and from its several removals, and the upper section beneath the head has been lost. A copy of the cross in its original form can be seen in Blundell's School, Tiverton, where it is the War Memorial.

The church has seen many changes since William Mompesson was the Vicar. One pillar and the font of the Norman church remain, and the fourteenth century nave and Tudor clerestory are as he saw them. Shortly before he came to Eyam, the chancel and part of the tower were rebuilt in 1618. It was in 1866, to mark the second anniversary of the plague, that drastic changes were made. Restoration, as they called it, was in the blood of mid-Victorian architects, and on Eyam they worked their will. The north aisle was rebuilt on a larger scale; the chancel, as Mompesson knew it, underwent a drastic restoration; while in 1882 the south aisle was remodelled and a porch was added.

Yet there are links with Mompesson still in the church. There is the pulpit from which he and his predecessor, Thomas Stanley, preached, and his chair is in the chancel, with the letters MOM 1665 EYUM. It was discovered in a

second hand shop in Liverpool and presented to the church. In the vestry is the cupboard in which the tailor is believed to have kept the roll of infected cloth.

The stained glass is modern, and at the West End is a Last Judgment, in which a neat spider's web in the right corner represents the signature of the designer, Webb.

In Cucklet Dell, a lovely dip in a steep valley, centres the drama of Eyam. It was here that Sunday by Sunday, when the plague was raging, William Mompesson, to lessen the risk of infection, gathered his flock and preached to them from a natural arch of rock, known as Cucklet Church. The key to the dell is kept at Eyam Hall, which like Tissington Hall is a fine Elizabethan Manor House, but it was refaced in 1676 with stones brought from Bradshaw Hall.

Every year on the last Sunday in August a commemoration Service is held in Cucklet Dell. Popular imagination has been fired by the self-sacrifice of Eyam and from Sheffield and Manchester and even further afield come girls and youths on tandem bicycles, reinforced by motorists and hiking parties, who gather on the steep slope of the Delph, while the local inhabitants and the farmers are thrust into the background by these intruders. The green slopes of the dale form a natural amphitheatre and the hillside is black with people, as the clergy and choir wend their way in slow procession from the church to the Dell "to offer thanksgiving for the noble examples of self-sacrifice shown by the Villagers".

Hymn singing is a feature of the service. No fewer than ten hymns are sung by the congregation, mingled with the cawing of jackdaws, who dart in and out of the crags. A visiting clergyman takes his stand beneath the rocky arch and gives a short address on the meaning of self-sacrifice.

Some, in the light-hearted congregation, may recall the scene as it was two hundred and seventy years ago. Then the August sun blazed down pitilessly, as if it would dry up

the last drop of moisture and destroy the yellow grass in the Delph. The congregation was sparse, shabbily dressed, with white, drawn faces and haunted eyes. Each shunned his neighbour and in every mind was present the fear of what awaited their return. Even in this brief absence they might find that the dreaded pestilence had entered their homes. Yet all listened intently and looked eagerly at William Mompesson's thin, aristocratic face and his auburn curls, ruffled by the breeze. For was he not giving them a message of hope and comfort, telling them to be of good cheer, and to fear not the pestilence, for God had them under his protection?

Eyam is a village where old customs linger. Every evening the curfew is still rung, as it has been for generations, to guide wanderers lost on the moors. In the road opposite the Forester's Arms is a metal ring discovered in 1911. It dates from the bad old days, when bull-baiting was as popular in Derbyshire as bull-fighting is in Spain to-day. The unfortunate bull was fastened by a chain to the ring, and the dogs of the village were set on it, and encouraged until they had worried it to death.

No visit to Eyam is complete without a tramp across Eyam Moor, that wild strip of Derbyshire moorland, which looks down on the village. It is a four mile walk across the moor to Hathersage, starting from the churchyard, where the path skirts the tomb of Henry Bagshawe, the Derbyshire and M.C.C. cricketer, who died in 1924, and whose exploits are commemorated by the bat, ball and stumps on his tombstone. The path joins the Sir William Road, once the old Sheffield-Buxton highroad. It is very old and may be Roman in origin; certainly it shows the Roman contempt for detours, and runs straight as a die over the top of the hill and plunges down steeply to Grindleford Bridge.

On the left side of the road is Mompesson's Well, really

a stone water trough, where the village people placed their money in a receptacle filled with vinegar, and fetched their parcels during the plague. Soon the road crosses Eyam Moor, and a track on the right runs to Hathersage. A slight detour leads to Wet Withins, a stone circle, about a hundred feet in diameter. It stands on the north slope of the moor, a thousand feet above sea level, and consists of a circular mound, with entrances on the north and south, and an inner circle of upright stones, of which ten of the original sixteen still remain. The largest stone is four and a quarter feet in height. The monolith, which stood in the centre of the circle, has disappeared. Some authorities, including Mr. Trustman, believe that an avenue of stones like the one at Avebury led up to the circle.

In winter Eyam Moor is wild and lonesome, and when the wind howls across the grass, the village people say that they hear the Archangel Gabriel's hounds baying. They shudder and hide their faces, for it is a sound of ill omen, said to foretell death and disaster to the village of Eyam.

Returning to the track, there are grand views on the way to Hathersage of White Edge and Totley Moss, and Home Wood. After passing Leam Farm, the track develops into a lane, and skirting Hazleford Hall, the three ridges behind Hathersage spread out like a fan, with the Derwent sparkling far below, and behind a background of dark crags. It is a lovely piece of Derbyshire, and just behind Highlow Hill a glimpse can be caught of Highlow Hall. All too soon the lane joins the highroad, and after crossing the Derwent at Leadmill Bridge, dips down to Hathersage station.