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SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

NINETEENTH – TWENTIETH CENTURY GRAFFITI IN THE FARMS OF THE YORKSHIRE WOLDS

Katherine Giles and Melanie Giles

Introduction

This paper is concerned with graffiti found in farm buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, dating between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. It uses an archaeological approach to explore the social and performative nature of these inscriptions, to analyse their content and character, and to consider the communities responsible for their creation. We argue that this was a vital medium of expression for a particular group of farm-workers – the horselads – and was part of the way in which they negotiated their status and identity during a period of great social upheaval and agricultural change (Giles and Giles 2007). We situate the making of these marks within the horselads' seasonal rhythms of labour and broader patterns of inhabitation. Finally, we explore spatial and stratigraphic relationships associated with graffiti panels, to elucidate different groups within these communities, and analyse how they changed over time.

The Farming Landscape: From the Nineteenth - Twentieth Centuries

The case study with which we are concerned consists of a series of farms located on the 'High Wolds', straddling the borders of East and North Yorkshire. The landscape is defined by an elevated ridge of chalk – the Yorkshire Wolds – which rises on the River Humber, curving in a north-easterly direction, to outcrop at Flamborough Head (Kent 1980). In the north-west corner of this chalk massif, the landscape is characterised by flat Wold tops, dissected by steep dry valleys or dales (Foster 1987). Its northern edge is defined by a steep scarp edge, prone to landslip, which overlooks the parish and estate of Birdsall: the centre of our case study area. As the chalk dipslope falls and flattens towards the east, the topography is more gentle (Leatham, cited in Woodward 1985: 34), with shallow valleys or 'slacks' cut by seasonally-active streams known as 'Gypseys' (Bevan 1999). To the north, the Wolds are defined by the Vale of Pickering; to the south, the Vale of Holderness; and to the west, the Vale of York. These vales are flatter and wetter, with long histories of extensive drainage, from the late medieval period onwards (Catt 1987; Van der Noort and Ellis 1995).

The soils of the Wolds are thin, light and loamy, occasionally overlain by patches of clay with flint and fed by springs and small streams (Furness and King 1978; Ellis 1990). In the historic period, they were used for sheep-pasture

and rabbit warrens (Harris 1960; Waites 1971). Colluvial activity has enriched the bases of valleys and slope-sides, creating areas more suited for small-scale arable cultivation, around nucleated settlements (Harris 1961). However, from the eighteenth century onwards, pressure to 'improve' the land and intensify both arable cultivation and the stocking and feeding of cattle (Hayfield 1998), led to what was described locally as a 'rage of ploughing' (Harris 1996: see Giles and Giles 2007 for a brief consideration of the different historical factors involved in this transformation). Such a shift was hindered by the need to marl and fertilise the thin, chalk soils to grow crops successfully, as well as provide additional surface water for stock. This latter aspect was redressed by the introduction of dewponds (Best 1930; Harris 1996; Hayfield and Brough 1987; Hayfield and Wagner 1995). Meanwhile, the increase in arable cultivation was managed through either the expansion of existing farms or the creation of new ones in more isolated areas, effectively to act as 'manure factories' (Hayfield 1991). A central fold-yard acted as a repository for manure gathered from both over-wintered cattle and the horse-teams stabled around the yard, who were needed for ploughing (Caunce 1991a). Following the winter, the cattle were turned out on the land, and the resulting mix of rotted manure and bedding could be spread across surrounding fields (Day 1985). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this was supplemented by artificial or bought-in fertilizers, but the underlying viability of the farm rested on this renewable resource.

Its success also rested on an expanding farming community needed to manage this system. Many farmers were tied into tenancy agreements with major farms or estate centres, such as Birdsall or Sledmere. Tenant farmers, known locally as 'hinds', increasingly took over the day-to-day management of the land, as well as responsibility for the labourers under their supervision (Hayfield 1998). On most farms, this community consisted of a shepherd, a stockman (know as the 'beastman' or 'bullocky') and the 'horselads': a group of young men who cared for and worked with the Shire and Clydesdale teams of horses, used for ploughing, carting and carrying (Brown 1991; Caunce 1991b). In addition, there would normally be at least one female servant to assist the farmer or hind's wife in the carrying out of domestic duties. Seasonally, this community might be swelled by additional labour for the harvest, including both Irish migrant workers (Gatenby 1948; Perkins 1976) and the local itinerant tramps and vagrants, known as 'Wold Rangers' (Antrim 1981).

The status of these different groups was structured by, and reflected in, the accommodation in which they were housed (Giles and Giles 2007). A main farmhouse, or (in the case of a larger estate), a separate 'Hind House', was occupied by the farmer and his immediate family, as well as the female domestic servants (as for example, at Vessey Pastures, Hayfield 1998). A dormitory room housed the horselads, whilst adjacent cottages or caravans might be provided for the beastmen and shepherds (Hayfield 1994). Somewhere within the farm complex, a small warming room with a grate, or kitchen with a range, was provided for the men to sit in at night, referred to as a 'slum' or 't'kip' (Neave 1971; Caunce 1991a: 163). As we have argued elsewhere, aspects of age, status and gender were carefully controlled by restricted access to areas such as the female servants' accommodation, and the use of separate entrances (Giles and Giles 2007). This was important, since the horselads lived closely alongside the farmer's family, and were 'meated in' for the year, following the Martinmas hirings (November 23rd): fed by the hind or farmer's wife, often eating at the same table (Caunce 1991a).

Whilst agricultural production was indeed increased, concern was expressed about the impact of this system upon the land. From the eighteenth century onwards, continual improvements were tried in the form of drainage, deeper ploughing and the addition of new types of fertilizer, as well as crop rotation (Young 1770; Marshall 1788; Strickland 1812). Inevitably, broader historical events and processes also took their toll. The Agricultural Depression of the 1880s, two World Wars, and the advent of mechanisation, all wrought great transformations in the demands made upon farmers, as well as the technology and workforce they used to accomplish it (Day 1985; Howorth 2002). The discussion below will try to situate graffiti within the context of these historical changes, to understand how the practice of wall writing was negotiated and reproduced at the local level.

The overall impact of such change has been to render many farm buildings redundant, as the communities have dwindled to a single family or individual tractor driver (Hayfield 1988, 1998). In the twenty-first century, rapid changes in agricultural policy and subsidy, and the demands of diversification, have further affected the farming economy of the region. As a result, most of the structures in which we have located graffiti are becoming ruins: whilst some have been converted or pillaged for materials, others have been demolished to avoid dangers of unstable masonry (Giles and Giles 2007). Since the graffiti is commonly found inscribed onto white plaster walls, these are especially vulnerable to damp, moss and mould. There is thus an archaeological imperative to record this material, before both graffiti and buildings disappear completely.

Methodology and Case Studies

The first stage of fieldwork consisted of a selective survey of buildings on the Birdsall estate in order to identify initial case studies. The farms of Foxhouse, Wharram Percy, Burdale Wold and Towthorpe were identified as having high

research potential. A second phase consisted of creating a simple photographic record of the buildings, and interior panels of graffiti, as well as the selective transcription of passages of text, to evaluate their interpretative potential. The third phase of the project, begun in 2006, has initiated a systematic recording methodology at four levels:

1. Reflectorless Electronic Distance Meter survey of the buildings are being used to produce scaled ground plans and elevations, in which panels of graffiti are located in relation to architectural details such as doorways, stairs and windows.
2. A full photographic record (in both colour and black-and-white) is made of the buildings, as well as internal and external details. Each wall panel is photographed, enhanced by close-ups of individual graffiti designs and texts, comprising an illustrative catalogue.
3. Elevations of each wall panel, at a scale of 1:10, provide the context for individual photographs, and provide a full transcription of text and images.
4. A final level of recording is reserved for important passages of text and images: selective tracings of these are made using acetate overlays, to capture details of style and hand.

As we have previously argued, since this recording system requires interpretation in the field, it enables us to identify important relationships between groups of images or pieces of text, which can be targeted for enhanced recording (Giles and Giles 2007). All of the examples discussed below derive from these four locations. However, once recording at these sites is complete, it is our intention to identify other examples within the estate, and the region more generally.

Results: Location and Characterisation

The four case studies analysed so far differ subtly in terms of location and character. At Towthorpe, most of the graffiti is incised with a knife blade and is restricted to a tack room (for horse-gear) and stable-block, within the yard opposite the main farmhouse. At Burdale Wold and Foxhouse, pencil graffiti is found on the walls of first-floor granaries, and both of these buildings are separate from the main hind and farm house (respectively). Meanwhile, at Wharram Percy, pencil-drawn graffiti is located in a small store-room above a wagon-shed and a first-floor granary (both within the same building range), again located a short distance from the farmhouse.

Whilst blue pencil or chalk is found on the walls at Wharram Percy, red and blue have been used at Burdale Wold. Most of the graffiti however, is drawn in grey, graphite pencil. In addition to the sharp, knife-blade incisions at Towthorpe, there are also deep decorative scratches and deliberate, defacing dents in the plaster at a number of locations, suggesting the rare use of a blunter tool or edge.

In terms of location, what these case studies have in common is that graffiti is clustered around doors and windows, or hatched openings around pulleys: where sacks were lifted in and out of the barns. It suggests that

6.1 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Foxhouse).

the graffiti-makers were selecting areas of good light to work in. A notable exception to this is the graffiti hidden in darker recesses at the backs of barns, which may have been meant for more restricted viewing (see below). In addition, farm-workers may have clustered around such openings, when they were taking breaks from work, within these buildings. At Wharram Percy, one example of graffiti notes that they were 'mixing seed corn' whilst at Foxhouse, another mentions they were '…ing the Foldyard' [clearing or cleaning?]. In addition, they may have been holed up in such rooms during periods of rain and snow, or winter evenings: keeping warm, keeping an eye on the weather, and watching comings-and-goings on the farm.

At Foxhouse in particular, individual comments support the idea that graffiti was often made when they were prevented from working. Comments include: 'Not a sheaf gotten: Pissing Wet time. Been weeks rain' and 'Threshing no good. Rain very good'. One small cartoon depicts a harvested field, with a line drawn across stacked bundles of corn, annotated 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Figure 6.1). Support for this interpretation comes from a biography of John Clare, which quotes from his boyhood reminiscences of visiting an isolated 'heath house' that was 'disinhabited and in ruins' (Bate 2003: 54) (Since he was born in 1793, this event would date to c. 1800). Local children crept in to examine 'the walls [that] were riddled all over with names and dates of shepherds and herdsmen in their idle hours when they crept under its shelter from showers in summer and storms in winter' (in Bate 2003: 54-55; Paul Stamper, pers.comm.).

We have previously argued that the majority of the graffiti was made by the horselads: the group of young men charged with ploughing, sowing, harvesting and carting, on the farms (Giles and Giles 2007). However, as this paper will make clear, contributions were also made by other individuals like the shepherds and beastmen, who entered these buildings whilst storing farm equipment and stacking grain, taking shelter from bad weather, or socialising in the few hours left to them, at the end of the working day.

Graffiti and the Making of Communities

Working in and around deserted buildings, archaeologists frequently encounter graffiti left not only by its original occupants, but by much more recent users of these structures. Since it is commonly perceived as part of a counter-normative or 'deviant' behaviour, graffiti can easily be dismissed as vandalism (Othen-Price 2006): an act of defacement that should be erased (Home Office 2003). Yet such inscriptions are an integral part of a site's history, and should at least be recorded if they are to be removed, since one era's scrawl becomes the next generation's written testimony of 'unheard' voices. The graffiti of trysting couples, underage drinkers, drug-users, tag-artists, pagans and tourists have equally important stories to tell (see Blain and Wallis 2004) alongside the scribbles of inmates in prisons, factory workers and soldiers holed up in trenches and bunkers (as exemplified in Cocroft et al 2006). In our own case studies, graffiti from the late nineteenth-century is frequently found alongside initials, dates and comments from the last few decades. For the reasons given above, all inscriptive marks have been accorded equal importance in our recording, regardless of date

Scholarly studies of graffiti support this interpretive strategy, since inscriptions were seen somewhat differently in the past, as part of a general 'writing art' (Abel and Buckley 1977, Reisner 1971). At its most basic, such graffiti conveyed the message 'I was here': establishing the presence of a particular individual or group, in a certain place, at a specific time (Fleming 2001; Jones-Baker 1993; Plesch 2002). Studies in this volume and elsewhere suggest that the adding of a specific date or year to someone's initials becomes increasingly common from the eighteenth century onwards. This may relate to growing literacy, but it may also indicate the intention of an author to record their presence there at a key moment – personal or historical. In addition, it may indicate an intention to revisit or return to the site in the future, whereby the dated graffiti became both a material mnemonic and record of time that had passed.

Sociological studies emphasise the way in which graffiti can

be used to covertly express proscribed views or opinions (Gonos et al 1976). Equally it can be used as a form of resistance: to 'anonymously' yet publicly denounce social or political hegemony, or question dominant values (Peet 1996). Even in these cases, a pseudonymous 'tag' may be used to denote authorship. Much depends on context: who sees it, where, and in what circumstances. Indeed, the very content and form of graffiti is often modified according to the function of the structures on which it is inscribed (Landy and Steele 1967). Graffiti can therefore be a powerful self-referential discourse used to construct and reproduce identity, especially amongst young men in urban or rural communities (MacDonald 2002). However, the placement of signs and texts can also be used strategically to discomfort, disturb or intimidate an area's residents, targeting aspects of identity such as ethnic origin, gender or religious affiliation (Stamp 1987; Jarman 1993).

How does graffiti help construct communities, both in the present and the past? The making of it involves a series of habitualised gestures that can be read by those watching, as evidence of an individual's identity and skill (see Bourdieu 1977). In terms of our case study of the Yorkshire Wolds farms, it was not simply the literacy and good 'hand' of the horselads that was under scrutiny, but also their wit and humour, and the ability to give an idea amusing or entertaining, graphic form. This went hand-in-hand with storytelling or musical skills, which were vital amongst a close-knit group whose leisure hours were few, and perhaps at times, mundane:

> *...it was a poor gawk who couldn't knock a tune out of a mouth organ or give a song to pass away the evening (Kitchen 1983: 59-60).*

Alongside physical strength, hardiness, and competence with animals and machinery, such social and creative skills were greatly valued. Within the farm graffiti, visual punning and colourful stereotypes are therefore complemented by rare attempts at realism, especially in relation to animals (horses, sheep and dogs at Burdale Wold, Foxhouse and Wharram Percy, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6) and vehicles (such as a threshing set at Wharram Percy, Figure 6.2, tank at Towthorpe and aircraft typology at Burdale Wold, Figure 6.3). For farm-workers who generally left school in their early teens, these scribbles called to mind the schoolroom, and familiar gestures of drawing and writing. The vertical plane of these walls may therefore have brought the school blackboard to mind, but these boys and men were still improvising with an unfamiliar 'canvas' and novel surfaces of limewash. Graffiti-making was a performance then: often involving bold or enlarged gestures, to make it readable. It took vision, to execute large or complex designs, or to position text and image at eye-level, to catch the attention of viewers close-up. Even such a mundane activity was fraught with small-scale politics, since the inscription of text always involves 'a struggle about who can get what inscribed' (Howe 2000: 65). The density of images discussed below indicate that such marks were subsequently scrutinised closely by one's peers, and – since they were permanent – were subject to approval or

derision through the work of later graffitists. We will argue that adding to existing panels of text or images therefore involved an embodied performance that was risky and daring (cf. Butler 1993), since it could enhance or mar an individual's standing within this intimate group.

The graffiti that survived defacement or erasure is an indication of the values and feelings that were regarded as legitimate or appropriate, in a continuing process of 'subversion and revision' by later generations (Howe 2000: 65). The density and frequency of these marks suggest that either the Hinds turned a blind eye to this practice, or that their control over their employees was weakened in such spaces. Alternatively, they may have appreciated some of its contents, especially if they had worked their way up the hierarchy to reach this post, and made their own mark on other walls. There is certainly a notable sense of pleasure and accomplishment in some of the designs: particularly the sweeping curve of thatched pikes and ploughs at Foxhouse and Burdale Wold: reiteratively cut or drawn, as if attempting the perfect symmetrical silhouette (Figure 6.4). Whilst we have argued elsewhere this may indicate frustration at being prevented from ploughing or stacking by wet weather (Giles and Giles 2007), they may also have been drawn at harvest time - the turn of the agricultural cycle - as a subtle mark of pride, achievement or tutelage of the younger lads. Another key design that is repeated at most of the sites is the daisywheel: comprising six petals enfolded in a circle. Once learned, it was an easy but impressive design to execute, and in its own way, marked a small rite of passage for young men within the group, learning such visual 'tricks'. However, according to Easton (1999), the hexafoil daisywheel also had apotropaeic connotations: representing the sun and its vitality. Since it was traditionally used to protect buildings, especially the home (Easton 1991), it may well have been copied by these men who had seen it in local cottages and barns. This is interesting since Connerton (1989) argues that communities are frequently bound together through the sharing of common rituals, expressed in public feasts and celebrations, as well as more intimate, unspoken traditions. These key symbols – the pike, the plough and the daisywheel – may have been part of a repertoire of images that the farm-workers recognised as their own pictorial shorthand. They may have represented key events in the arable cycle; stood for values of strength, fertility and protection; or were simply pleasing patterns. But each time they were copied and inscribed anew, the horselads participated in a small ritual of belonging that affirmed and celebrated their contribution to farm-life.
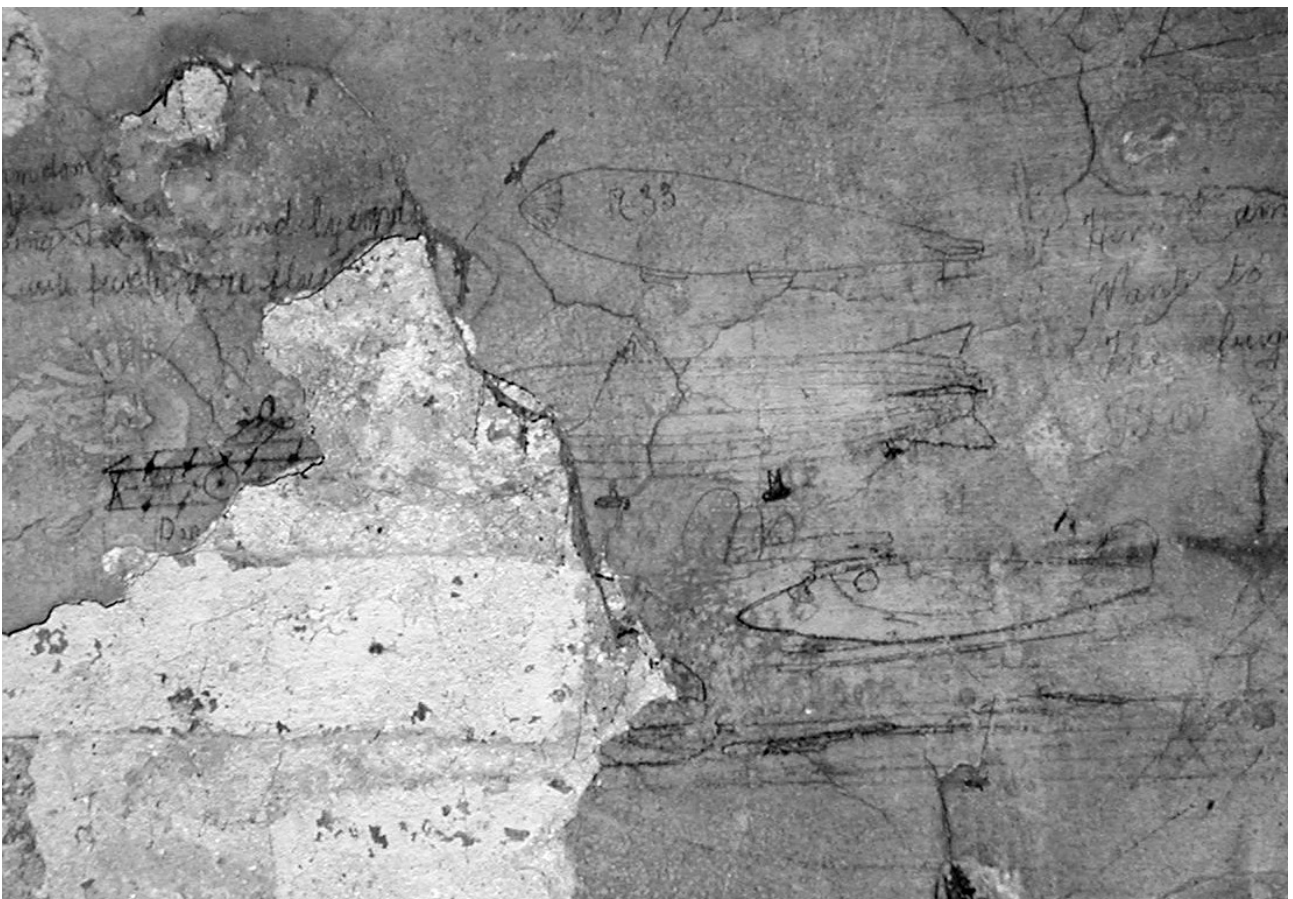
Graffiti Communities

The Hierarchy of the Horselads

The earliest dated graffiti was made in 1875, at Burdale Wold, and is signed: 'William Cross 1875'; the latest, from Wharram Percy, is signed 'J.D. ALLAN JULY 1988'. These two dates frame the period in which the majority of the graffiti was inscribed. However, at Burdale Wold, a series of large, sweeping inscriptions in red underlie the later,

6.2 A possible depiction of a threshing/thrashing set (Wharram Percy).

6.3 An aircraft typology (Burdale Wold).

6.4 Thatched pikes and ploughs (Towthorpe).

and neater, graphite pencil. The majority of this appears to be sinuous, looped writing: especially names and tallies, but there are a few bold pikes, with out-turned tops, and thatching depicted by criss-cross designs or parallel lines. It is possible that this earliest graffiti is not just the work of horselads but shepherds, who may have used the red 'raddle' dye from their sheep to make these designs. Certainly, Burdale Wold is associated with shepherds right through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, since there are some affectionate portraits of sheep, as well as horses (see Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6).

One of the most common pieces of graffiti found at all of the sites except Towthorpe, is a hierarchy: a roll call of names - alongside the position each individual held - which is always dated (Figure 6.5, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8). This hierarchy dominated every aspect of their lives. Beginning with the 'Boss' (the farmer or hind: a position to which ambitious men aspired), the next line states the name of the 'Wag(g)' or 'Waggoner', whose duties on the farm included the onerous and physically demanding task of being able to 'stack, thack and carry barley' at threshing times (Caunce 1991a). Waggoner was the coveted position amongst the horselads, since he organised the working schedule, had the pick of the horse-teams and equipment, led the men to and from the farm, and set-off ploughing (in the 'fox hunting style: a peculiarity of the Wolds, Caunce

1991a: 74). It also meant that he was able to wash his hands first and sit down at the table before the other men, and got the pick of the double bedsteads (which were all shared) in the dormitory (Caunce 1991a: 83-84). Underneath him was 'Thoddy' or 'Thirdy', then 'Fowat' or 'Fourther', 'Fiver' and so on. Finally, there was the 'Wag lad' or 'least lad': often a new school-leaver of 13-14 years old, who bore the brunt of the teasing, corporal punishment and bullying by the older men.

As we have previously stated, these annually hired workers often tried to improve their position by changing farm, to gain as much experience as possible. This may explain why the hierarchies were so popular: the graffiti became an informal record of their progress up the ladder, to be seen by later horselads, working their way through the ranks. For example, at Burdale Wold in 1912, Herbert Watson is 'Wag' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8), but by 1925 at Wharram Percy, he was 'Boss' (Figure 6.5a). However, a second hierarchy at Wharram Percy dated 1925 suggests a complete change of staff at this farm, presumably after the hirings, since none of the names are identical. Perhaps this radical shift occasioned the commissioning of a new hierarchy, written adjacent, on the same wall (Figure 6.5b). The hierarchies are invariably in a single, good hand: possibly the most senior horselad present.

6.5a Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925a).

The Broader Farm Community

At both Burdale Wold and Wharram Percy, there are occasional expansions of the list. For example, the first 1925 hierarchy lists 'Shepherd' as well as two 'Labour' [Labourers?], and underneath them, 'Tomy Out' (see Figure 6.5a). 'Tommy Owt'/'Out' was an odd-job man, who generally worked with the horses but also filled in for sick or incapacitated stockmen and labourers elsewhere on the farm. Meanwhile, the second 1925 Wharram Percy hierarchy includes both '2 Shepherd', and '3 Shepherd' as well as 'Shepyad' [Sheeplad?]: suggesting a similar pecking order was being expressed to the horselad's hierarchy (Figure 6.5b). In addition, 'Beastman' is listed right at the bottom. In an adjacent room to this, the names of three 'Beastmen' were listed above a window hatch, dated 1929, and underneath, the name of a solitary 'Dairyman'. This may suggest that these stockmen had their own particular area to socialise or shelter in, at this time. A close relationship between these men and the animals with which they worked is suggested by affectionate portraits at many of the sites. Horses in harness at Wharram Percy, sheep, doves and a goose or duck at Burdale Wold, and two different dogs at Foxhouse, are all drawn in affectionate silhouette. However, we have yet to find a depiction of a cow or bull.

Finally, one of the Burdale Wold hierarchies dating to 1925 also seems to include several female names, one with the title 'lass wold'. They are inscribed at the end of the list and just to the left of the main text: as if an afterthought or later addition, but in the same hand.

Gender and Space: Cartoons and Rhymes

Whether the 'wold lasses' ever set foot in these spaces during this time is debatable. Much of the rest of the graffiti, both textual and graphic, suggests these were male spaces, with a strong oral culture of swearing as well as scatological and sexually explicit rhymes, ditties and songs. These verses were inscribed on the walls presumably for the entertainment of other horselads. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this kind of graffiti is often found on a back wall, away from windows and doors: presumably hidden behind sacks of corn or equipment (Giles and Giles 2007). This example from Foxhouse was similarly found on the back wall:

> *Here's health to those that drink whisky, Here's health to those that drink wine, Here's health to the prettiest lady, Who fixed up her belly to mine*

The rhyme was obviously so well known that all that was needed Burdale Wold was the first line followed by a series

6.5b Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925b).

of suggestive dots! There are a few silhouettes of women, including one with a beaded necklace at Burdale Wold, but other portraits (such as the 'bearded lady' named 'Lydia Durose' at Foxhouse) are rather unflattering. Marriage and sex were clearly topics of conversation and humour, as the following poem from Wharram Percy suggests:

Love is a feeling, a very funny feeling, a feeling that you've never felt before, a feeling that you feel, when you're going to have a feel, and a feeling that you feel for ever more.

An earthier ditty along these lines was found on the back wall at Burdale Wold. As we have previously argued, it is not surprising that a community composed of young, unmarried men, with restricted access to the opposite sex, were preoccupied with these matters. Some of the images are clearly pornographic, showing female genitalia or couples engaged in sex. Their inscription may have been

accompanied by much bragging and banter. However, such images would also have had an important didactic role, in introducing the youngest lads to the 'facts of life' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 10). As such, these were rooms in which important - if informal - rites of passage took place, and these men may have reflected somewhat fondly or humorously on these salacious images, in later life!

War-time Disruption

The impact of the First and Second World Wars upon these communities was considerable. During the former, a large number of horselads signed up for the 'Waggoners' Reserves' with Colonel Mark Sykes of Sledmere (Caunce 1991a: 206), and lost either their lives or livelihoods, for most of the horses that went out as sturdy carriers to the front lines, never returned (Howorth 2002). The absence of men during both wars meant that occasional labour was drafted in from the local barracks, and this may explain the presence of 'Sgt. Carr 5th Lancers' at Foxhouse. At Burdale Wold, someone has inscribed the place-name of 'Plymouth Sound', which may again indicate a war-time connection. The curious comment 'Coldstreams for Derby 1931' at the same farm may indicate an ongoing military connection - perhaps familial - during peace-time.

During both wars, these otherwise exclusively male spaces would have been frequented by women. At Foxhouse, the names of 'Edna Scott, Iris Faulknor Womens Land Army', are accompanied by two heartfelt comments: 'Threshing no good. Rain very good' and 'East, West, Homes Best' (Giles and Giles 2007: 352, 354). Whilst Land Army girls were not universally welcomed onto the farms (Howorth 2002: 87), one of them certainly made a fond impression, as someone has later scribbled next to it: 'Anyone know Edna Scott & Where is she now? Where does she come from? Write answer in square'. This graffiti not only tells us about how these communities were being transformed by larger historical events, but also that it was an interactive medium. Writers expected others to comment on or add to their scribbles, and they anticipated re-reading it at a later date. In this case, there must have also been some excitement at the hope of rekindling a connection with the past. The arrival of women into the farm workforce may have occasioned some self-censorship amongst the remaining horselads, as many of the most explicit depictions of women have scratched dents and pitting around the sensitive areas of the image (Giles and Giles 2007).

When the men did return from service, mechanisation was beginning to reduce the number of skilled horselads on the farm. Perhaps this is why so many of the hierarchies date between 1914 and 1940: since this was the period in which the system was most under threat. In addition, the traditional ranking system had broken down at the Front, where all men were 'waggoners' and wore the same uniform. Such graffiti helped re-institutionalise the hierarchy, once back on the farm (Giles and Giles 2007). Of course, these men brought back memories with them. At Towthorpe there is a carving of what appears to be a simplified landing craft, as well as a tank. There is a 'jug-eared' Kaiser at Foxhouse,

6.6 'Smoking Tommy' (Foxhouse).

as well as a 'smoking Tommy' figure (Figure 6.6) and 'drill sergeant' with baton. There is also an affectionate portrait of a soldier with epaulettes, high up on the wall at Burdale Wold. At Foxhouse however, there is a much less flattering portrait of a 'Sgt Major' figure, with greased hair, sharp teeth and flared nostrils, who is the butt of a visual pun based on the four circular medals and one cross, on his chest (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 11), which read: 'P R I † K'. These were the spaces in which men who had served in the army worked out their anger, in response to the events that had affected them.

In stark contrast, there are few indications of antagonism between individuals on the farm: tensions between them tended to be sorted out in person at the hiring fair, rather than on the farm (Caunce 1991a). As they were only paid at the year-end, immediately before the new hiring fair, it is also unlikely that the horselads men would jeopardise their annual income by being disrespectful to the Boss or Waggoner. We might expect to see growing class-consciousness beginning to affect these communities, during the twentieth century (Moses 1999): in fact, the only evidence for this comes from Wharram Percy, where the symbol of a sickle and hammer is followed by the date '20-10-25' and title: 'The Soviet Government of Wharram Percy'. Whilst this may be the humorous work of a disgruntled employee (close to the end of their year's service and waiting for their annual pay) it may indicate that

6.7 Coat-and-hat gentlemen: Lord Middleton? (Foxhouse).

6.8a A full wagon.
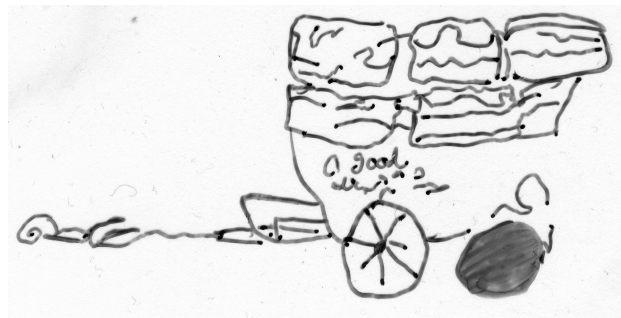

6.8b One pint (Wharram Percy).

some farm workers were developing more radical political views. One poem that is repeated twice at Burdale Wold is a more generic complaint about their lot in life, which reads:

If life is a thing that runs on wheels,
Death is a thing that every man feels,
If life was a thing that money could buy,
The rich would live and the poor would die.

In fact, the only graffiti that seems to refer to the owner of the Birdsall estate during this time comes from Foxhouse. It is a rather respectful depiction of two well-dressed gentlemen, in long-buttoned coats (one in a flat brimmed hat, the other in a bowler), drawn as if conversing on a tour of the estate (Figure 6.7). (The name 'Middleton' seems to be inscribed underneath.) The drawing must either refer to Godfrey Willoughby, 10th Baron Middleton, or his second son, Michael Willoughby, 11th Baron Middleton, who inherited the estate in 1924, following the death of his elder brother in the First World War. He may have been held in such high esteem due to his own distinguished military career, but oral history suggests he was also deeply concerned with the welfare of his tenants and farm-workers, including the itinerant Wold Rangers (Philip Hoddy, pers. comm.).

Mechanisation

Although the basic source of power on the farms was the horse, machinery increasingly began to affect their day-to-day lives. Notably, steam-powered threshing sets were moved from farm to farm, from autumn through to the spring, to 'thrash' the impressive thatched pikes of corn sheaves. Individual comments refer to this at Wharram Percy, where 'R. Boyes' and 'Jed Bryer'[?] declared themselves 'Thrashing kings 13th Oct 1939'. Another comment in the same room notes that the '20th April' marked the 'Last thrash'. Just along the wall from these inscriptions is the small but detailed illustration of what we take to be a threshing-set, dated 1925 (see Figure 6.2). The illustration of this machine is set near a depiction of a fully-loaded wagon, and underneath it, perhaps its reward: a brimming pint mug (Figure 6.8a and 6.8b)!

On the Yorkshire Wolds, the 'living-in' system of horselads and hinds persisted later than other regions. As a result, post-World War II agricultural change, especially the introduction of the tractor, radically transformed the make-up of these communities and the work they carried out (Whetham 1970). Contemporary hierarchies mimicked the earlier form of the rollcall, with subtle changes. At Burdale Wold, a 1922 list includes a single 'Tractor' driver, who is placed after the shepherd: perhaps denoting a lack of respect for this new machine. However, a fascinating hierarchy from Wharram Percy, dated 1941, lists 'Wag', 'Third' and 'Tomy Out', followed by a ranked hierarchy of three 'Tractor Driver' names, then 'Beast man', 'Cowy' and 'Sheeperd' [sic] (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 12). The

tractor drivers appear to have risen in status, and are seen as closely allied to the remaining horselads, with their own internal pecking order, even though they may have shared a machine.

Interestingly, the overall number of employees in this last list looks similar to earlier periods, even if their roles had changed. However, oral histories from the region indicate that many lamented the severing of relationship between man and beast (see Day 1985). Whetham even suggests that some of the first styles of tractor tried to mimic the relationship between horselad and horse (1978: 206) but notes that there was considerable doubt about the merits of these new machines well into the 1930s (ibid: 207).

Games, Play and Changes on the Farm

The final aspect of the graffiti we wish to discuss includes evidence for games. At Towthorpe, 'Merrills' boards have been inscribed onto the lid of a meal-bin as well as an adjacent windowsill, within the tack-room and stable (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 9). This popular local pastime was also known as 'Fox and Geese', and a similar game, carved onto a piece of limestone, was found in a medieval context at Wharram Percy (Hayfield, pers.comm.). In contrast, at Wharram Percy, several 'noughts and crosses' games have been deeply incised into the plaster, but these may be a relatively late addition, as they overlie the majority of the written graffiti. One piece of text from this farm, written in pencil, suggests that by the 1920s, children were also frequenting these spaces;

GENERAL WATSON

CAPTURED TUNNEL TOP

APRIL 6th 1921.

GENERAL J WATSON

SURRENDERED TUNNEL

TOP AFTER HOURS BOMBARDING

AND WAS AWARDED THE

V.C.

OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE

THEY FADE AWAY.

Richard Henry Harland.

The 'war game' to which this record refers, took place around the open-end of the air-shaft from the Malton-Driffield railway: a large mound at the end of the track to Wharram Percy, known as 'Tunnel Top'. It would have made an excellent vantage point on which to play 'king of the castle' but it is interesting that the game has been phrased within the idiom of a military victory and loss.

As well as their fond illustrations of animals and women, there are occasional drawings of features in the surrounding landscape. At Foxhouse, there is a depiction dating to 1949, of the early stone-faced building attached to the yard, 'as it was'. The drawing of this building (which may have been a folly, viewpoint or dining house, Stamper, pers.comm.) is later nick-named 'The Monkey House', perhaps alluding the goings-on that took place there by this date! There is also a very large but crude drawing of a barn. At Burdale Wold, there is a small cartoon of a bicycle: an essential mode of transport for these young men, which enabled them to socialise at week-ends (cf. Reffold 1984, Beckett 2000). An interest in modes of transport is also suggested by the lovingly detailed typology of air transport, at this same site (see Figure 6.3). An airship (the R33, built at Barlow, North Yorkshire in 1918) and possible zeppelin, a biplane and early jet, were drawn in pencil, in three-dimensional detail. The R33 has a strong local connection, and it is even possible that this draughtsman saw its pilotless launch of a Sopwith Camel, over the North Yorkshire Moors in 1920. Since the earliest jets date from the mid-1940s, however, this typology may also have been based on illustrations seen in books, newspaper pull-outs or tobacco/tea-packet cards.

The latest illustrations in these rooms allude to much younger occupants of these spaces. At Burdale Wold, 'Liverpool FC' is inscribed on one wall, near small cartoons of cowboys. From the 1950s onwards, the farms were usually occupied by a single farmer and his family, and additional labourers were housed elsewhere. It was at this point that the granaries and stables became deserted play-spaces for children, who in turn, read and added to the graffiti of a previous age. They began to make these spaces their own, or made new ones: at Wharram Percy, for example, a small 'kip' underneath the room in which the graffiti was found is lined with prize-winning certificates. According to the present tenant, these are the work of the Midgley brothers, who socialised in this room and left their own mark on its walls (Philip Hoddy, pers.comm.).

Conclusion: Constructing and Disrupting Communities

In the paper, we have argued that the writing of graffiti is a performative act, often created in front of an audience, and designed to draw people into reading, reflecting and adding to it, later on. We have analysed the character, location and content of graffiti in the late nineteenth – late twentieth century agricultural buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, and considered the motivations behind it. We have suggested that the making of graffiti was one of the means by which a distinctive community – the horselads – created and reaffirmed their identity. As an expression of frustration, desire, wit, skill, anger and pride, these carvings and inscriptions give us an unparalleled insight into the concerns of a group all too often marginalised in historical accounts. We have also identified other groups and individuals who entered the same buildings, and added their own names, marks and thoughts to these walls. Whether these were the beastmen and shepherds who worked alongside the horselads, the army recruits or Land

Army girls of war-time, the tractor drivers of the post-war era, or the children of the single-tenant farmers, their graffiti – and the responses and erasures that followed – embody the many transformations that the community underwent. Graffiti was therefore used by different groups as a vibrant, colourful means of self-expression, through which identities were performed, contested and re-negotiated, in a key period of socio-economic and agricultural change.

Acknowledgements

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Signs of the Times:
Nineteenth – Twentieth Century Graffiti in the Farms of the Yorkshire Wolds

Katherine Giles and Melanie Giles

Introduction

This paper is concerned with graffiti found in farm buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, dating between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. It uses an archaeological approach to explore the social and performative nature of these inscriptions, to analyse their content and character, and to consider the communities responsible for their creation. We argue that this was a vital medium of expression for a particular group of farm-workers – the horselads – and was part of the way in which they negotiated their status and identity during a period of great social upheaval and agricultural change (Giles and Giles 2007). We situate the making of these marks within the horselads' seasonal rhythms of labour and broader patterns of inhabitation. Finally, we explore spatial and stratigraphic relationships associated with graffiti panels, to elucidate different groups within these communities, and analyse how they changed over time.

The Farming Landscape: From the Nineteenth - Twentieth Centuries

The case study with which we are concerned consists of a series of farms located on the 'High Wolds', straddling the borders of East and North Yorkshire. The landscape is defined by an elevated ridge of chalk – the Yorkshire Wolds – which rises on the River Humber, curving in a north-easterly direction, to outcrop at Flamborough Head (Kent 1980). In the north-west corner of this chalk massif, the landscape is characterised by flat Wold tops, dissected by steep dry valleys or dales (Foster 1987). Its northern edge is defined by a steep scarp edge, prone to landslip, which overlooks the parish and estate of Birdsall: the centre of our case study area. As the chalk dipslope falls and flattens towards the east, the topography is more gentle (Leatham, cited in Woodward 1985: 34), with shallow valleys or 'slacks' cut by seasonally-active streams known as 'Gypseys' (Bevan 1999). To the north, the Wolds are defined by the Vale of Pickering; to the south, the Vale of Holderness; and to the west, the Vale of York. These vales are flatter and wetter, with long histories of extensive drainage, from the late medieval period onwards (Catt 1987; Van der Noort and Ellis 1995).

The soils of the Wolds are thin, light and loamy, occasionally overlain by patches of clay with flint and fed by springs and small streams (Furness and King 1978; Ellis 1990). In the historic period, they were used for sheep-pasture and rabbit warrens (Harris 1960; Waites 1971). Colluvial activity has enriched the bases of valleys and slope-sides, creating areas more suited for small-scale arable cultivation, around nucleated settlements (Harris 1961). However, from the eighteenth century onwards, pressure to 'improve' the land and intensify both arable cultivation and the stocking and feeding of cattle (Hayfield 1998), led to what was described locally as a 'rage of ploughing' (Harris 1996: see Giles and Giles 2007 for a brief consideration of the different historical factors involved in this transformation). Such a shift was hindered by the need to marl and fertilise the thin, chalk soils to grow crops successfully, as well as provide additional surface water for stock. This latter aspect was redressed by the introduction of dewponds (Best 1930; Harris 1996; Hayfield and Brough 1987; Hayfield and Wagner 1995). Meanwhile, the increase in arable cultivation was managed through either the expansion of existing farms or the creation of new ones in more isolated areas, effectively to act as 'manure factories' (Hayfield 1991). A central fold-yard acted as a repository for manure gathered from both over-wintered cattle and the horse-teams stabled around the yard, who were needed for ploughing (Caunce 1991a). Following the winter, the cattle were turned out on the land, and the resulting mix of rotted manure and bedding could be spread across surrounding fields (Day 1985). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this was supplemented by artificial or bought-in fertilizers, but the underlying viability of the farm rested on this renewable resource.

Its success also rested on an expanding farming community needed to manage this system. Many farmers were tied into tenancy agreements with major farms or estate centres, such as Birdsall or Sledmere. Tenant farmers, known locally as 'hinds', increasingly took over the day-to-day management of the land, as well as responsibility for the labourers under their supervision (Hayfield 1998). On most farms, this community consisted of a shepherd, a stockman (know as the 'beastman' or 'bullocky') and the 'horselads': a group of young men who cared for and worked with the Shire and Clydesdale teams of horses, used for ploughing, carting and carrying (Brown 1991; Caunce 1991b). In addition, there would normally be at least one female servant to assist the farmer or hind's wife in the carrying out of domestic duties. Seasonally, this community might be swelled by additional labour for the harvest, including both Irish migrant workers (Gatenby 1948; Perkins 1976) and the local itinerant tramps and vagrants, known as 'Wold Rangers' (Antrim 1981).

The status of these different groups was structured by, and reflected in, the accommodation in which they were housed (Giles and Giles 2007). A main farmhouse, or (in the case of a larger estate), a separate 'Hind House', was occupied by the farmer and his immediate family, as well as the female domestic servants (as for example, at Vessey Pastures, Hayfield 1998). A dormitory room housed the horselads, whilst adjacent cottages or caravans might be provided for the beastmen and shepherds (Hayfield 1994). Somewhere within the farm complex, a small warming room with a grate, or kitchen with a range, was provided for the men to sit in at night, referred to as a 'slum' or 't'kip' (Neave 1971; Caunce 1991a: 163). As we have argued elsewhere, aspects of age, status and gender were carefully controlled by restricted access to areas such as the female servants' accommodation, and the use of separate entrances (Giles and Giles 2007). This was important, since the horselads lived closely alongside the farmer's family, and were 'meated in' for the year, following the Martinmas hirings (November 23rd): fed by the hind or farmer's wife, often eating at the same table (Caunce 1991a).

Whilst agricultural production was indeed increased, concern was expressed about the impact of this system upon the land. From the eighteenth century onwards, continual improvements were tried in the form of drainage, deeper ploughing and the addition of new types of fertilizer, as well as crop rotation (Young 1770; Marshall 1788; Strickland 1812). Inevitably, broader historical events and processes also took their toll. The Agricultural Depression of the 1880s, two World Wars, and the advent of mechanisation, all wrought great transformations in the demands made upon farmers, as well as the technology and workforce they used to accomplish it (Day 1985; Howorth 2002). The discussion below will try to situate graffiti within the context of these historical changes, to understand how the practice of wall writing was negotiated and reproduced at the local level.

The overall impact of such change has been to render many farm buildings redundant, as the communities have dwindled to a single family or individual tractor driver (Hayfield 1988, 1998). In the twenty-first century, rapid changes in agricultural policy and subsidy, and the demands of diversification, have further affected the farming economy of the region. As a result, most of the structures in which we have located graffiti are becoming ruins: whilst some have been converted or pillaged for materials, others have been demolished to avoid dangers of unstable masonry (Giles and Giles 2007). Since the graffiti is commonly found inscribed onto white plaster walls, these are especially vulnerable to damp, moss and mould. There is thus an archaeological imperative to record this material, before both graffiti and buildings disappear completely.

Methodology and Case Studies

The first stage of fieldwork consisted of a selective survey of buildings on the Birdsall estate in order to identify initial case studies. The farms of Foxhouse, Wharram Percy, Burdale Wold and Towthorpe were identified as having high

research potential. A second phase consisted of creating a simple photographic record of the buildings, and interior panels of graffiti, as well as the selective transcription of passages of text, to evaluate their interpretative potential. The third phase of the project, begun in 2006, has initiated a systematic recording methodology at four levels:

1. Reflectorless Electronic Distance Meter survey of the buildings are being used to produce scaled ground plans and elevations, in which panels of graffiti are located in relation to architectural details such as doorways, stairs and windows.
2. A full photographic record (in both colour and black-and-white) is made of the buildings, as well as internal and external details. Each wall panel is photographed, enhanced by close-ups of individual graffiti designs and texts, comprising an illustrative catalogue.
3. Elevations of each wall panel, at a scale of 1:10, provide the context for individual photographs, and provide a full transcription of text and images.
4. A final level of recording is reserved for important passages of text and images: selective tracings of these are made using acetate overlays, to capture details of style and hand.

As we have previously argued, since this recording system requires interpretation in the field, it enables us to identify important relationships between groups of images or pieces of text, which can be targeted for enhanced recording (Giles and Giles 2007). All of the examples discussed below derive from these four locations. However, once recording at these sites is complete, it is our intention to identify other examples within the estate, and the region more generally.

Results: Location and Characterisation

The four case studies analysed so far differ subtly in terms of location and character. At Towthorpe, most of the graffiti is incised with a knife blade and is restricted to a tack room (for horse-gear) and stable-block, within the yard opposite the main farmhouse. At Burdale Wold and Foxhouse, pencil graffiti is found on the walls of first-floor granaries, and both of these buildings are separate from the main hind and farm house (respectively). Meanwhile, at Wharram Percy, pencil-drawn graffiti is located in a small store-room above a wagon-shed and a first-floor granary (both within the same building range), again located a short distance from the farmhouse.

Whilst blue pencil or chalk is found on the walls at Wharram Percy, red and blue have been used at Burdale Wold. Most of the graffiti however, is drawn in grey, graphite pencil. In addition to the sharp, knife-blade incisions at Towthorpe, there are also deep decorative scratches and deliberate, defacing dents in the plaster at a number of locations, suggesting the rare use of a blunter tool or edge.

In terms of location, what these case studies have in common is that graffiti is clustered around doors and windows, or hatched openings around pulleys: where sacks were lifted in and out of the barns. It suggests that

6.1 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Foxhouse).

the graffiti-makers were selecting areas of good light to work in. A notable exception to this is the graffiti hidden in darker recesses at the backs of barns, which may have been meant for more restricted viewing (see below). In addition, farm-workers may have clustered around such openings, when they were taking breaks from work, within these buildings. At Wharram Percy, one example of graffiti notes that they were 'mixing seed corn' whilst at Foxhouse, another mentions they were '…ing the Foldyard' [clearing or cleaning?]. In addition, they may have been holed up in such rooms during periods of rain and snow, or winter evenings: keeping warm, keeping an eye on the weather, and watching comings-and-goings on the farm.

At Foxhouse in particular, individual comments support the idea that graffiti was often made when they were prevented from working. Comments include: 'Not a sheafe gotten: Pissing Wet time. Been weeks rain' and 'Threshing no good. Rain very good'. One small cartoon depicts a harvested field, with a line drawn across stacked bundles of corn, annotated 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Figure 6.1). Support for this interpretation comes from a biography of John Clare, which quotes from his boyhood reminiscences of visiting an isolated 'heath house' that was 'disinhabited and in ruins' (Bate 2003: 54) (Since he was born in 1793, this event would date to c. 1800). Local children crept in to examine 'the walls [that] were riddled all over with names and dates of shepherds and herdsmen in their idle hours when they crept under its shelter from showers in summer and storms in winter' (in Bate 2003: 54-55; Paul Stamper, pers.comm.).

We have previously argued that the majority of the graffiti was made by the horselads: the group of young men charged with ploughing, sowing, harvesting and carting, on the farms (Giles and Giles 2007). However, as this paper will make clear, contributions were also made by other individuals like the shepherds and beastmen, who entered these buildings whilst storing farm equipment and stacking grain, taking shelter from bad weather, or socialising in the few hours left to them, at the end of the working day.

Graffiti and the Making of Communities

Working in and around deserted buildings, archaeologists frequently encounter graffiti left not only by its original occupants, but by much more recent users of these structures. Since it is commonly perceived as part of a counter-normative or 'deviant' behaviour, graffiti can easily be dismissed as vandalism (Othen-Price 2006): an act of defacement that should be erased (Home Office 2003). Yet such inscriptions are an integral part of a site's history, and should at least be recorded if they are to be removed, since one era's scrawl becomes the next generation's written testimony of 'unheard' voices. The graffiti of trysting couples, underage drinkers, drug-users, tag-artists, pagans and tourists have equally important stories to tell (see Blain and Wallis 2004) alongside the scribbles of inmates in prisons, factory workers and soldiers holed up in trenches and bunkers (as exemplified in Cocroft et al 2006). In our own case studies, graffiti from the late nineteenth-century is frequently found alongside initials, dates and comments from the last few decades. For the reasons given above, all inscriptive marks have been accorded equal importance in our recording, regardless of date

Scholarly studies of graffiti support this interpretive strategy, since inscriptions were seen somewhat differently in the past, as part of a general 'writing art' (Abel and Buckley 1977, Reisner 1971). At its most basic, such graffiti conveyed the message 'I was here': establishing the presence of a particular individual or group, in a certain place, at a specific time (Fleming 2001; Jones-Baker 1993; Plesch 2002). Studies in this volume and elsewhere suggest that the adding of a specific date or year to someone's initials becomes increasingly common from the eighteenth century onwards. This may relate to growing literacy, but it may also indicate the intention of an author to record their presence there at a key moment – personal or historical. In addition, it may indicate an intention to revisit or return to the site in the future, whereby the dated graffiti became both a material mnemonic and record of time that had passed.

Sociological studies emphasise the way in which graffiti can

be used to covertly express proscribed views or opinions (Gonos et al 1976). Equally it can be used as a form of resistance: to 'anonymously' yet publicly denounce social or political hegemony, or question dominant values (Peet 1996). Even in these cases, a pseudonymous 'tag' may be used to denote authorship. Much depends on context: who sees it, where, and in what circumstances. Indeed, the very content and form of graffiti is often modified according to the function of the structures on which it is inscribed (Landy and Steele 1967). Graffiti can therefore be a powerful self-referential discourse used to construct and reproduce identity, especially amongst young men in urban or rural communities (MacDonald 2002). However, the placement of signs and texts can also be used strategically to discomfort, disturb or intimidate an area's residents, targeting aspects of identity such as ethnic origin, gender or religious affiliation (Stamp 1987; Jarman 1993).

How does graffiti help construct communities, both in the present and the past? The making of it involves a series of habitualised gestures that can be read by those watching, as evidence of an individual's identity and skill (see Bourdieu 1977). In terms of our case study of the Yorkshire Wolds farms, it was not simply the literacy and good 'hand' of the horselads that was under scrutiny, but also their wit and humour, and the ability to give an idea amusing or entertaining, graphic form. This went hand-in-hand with storytelling or musical skills, which were vital amongst a close-knit group whose leisure hours were few, and perhaps at times, mundane:

> *...it was a poor gawk who couldn't knock a tune out of a mouth organ or give a song to pass away the evening (Kitchen 1983: 59-60).*

Alongside physical strength, hardiness, and competence with animals and machinery, such social and creative skills were greatly valued. Within the farm graffiti, visual punning and colourful stereotypes are therefore complemented by rare attempts at realism, especially in relation to animals (horses, sheep and dogs at Burdale Wold, Foxhouse and Wharram Percy, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6) and vehicles (such as a threshing set at Wharram Percy, Figure 6.2, tank at Towthorpe and aircraft typology at Burdale Wold, Figure 6.3). For farm-workers who generally left school in their early teens, these scribbles called to mind the schoolroom, and familiar gestures of drawing and writing. The vertical plane of these walls may therefore have brought the school blackboard to mind, but these boys and men were still improvising with an unfamiliar 'canvas' and novel surfaces of limewash. Graffiti-making was a performance then: often involving bold or enlarged gestures, to make it readable. It took vision, to execute large or complex designs, or to position text and image at eye-level, to catch the attention of viewers close-up. Even such a mundane activity was fraught with small-scale politics, since the inscription of text always involves 'a struggle about who can get what inscribed' (Howe 2000: 65). The density of images discussed below indicate that such marks were subsequently scrutinised closely by one's peers, and – since they were permanent – were subject to approval or

derision through the work of later graffitists. We will argue that adding to existing panels of text or images therefore involved an embodied performance that was risky and daring (cf. Butler 1993), since it could enhance or mar an individual's standing within this intimate group.

The graffiti that survived defacement or erasure is an indication of the values and feelings that were regarded as legitimate or appropriate, in a continuing process of 'subversion and revision' by later generations (Howe 2000: 65). The density and frequency of these marks suggest that either the Hinds turned a blind eye to this practice, or that their control over their employees was weakened in such spaces. Alternatively, they may have appreciated some of its contents, especially if they had worked their way up the hierarchy to reach this post, and made their own mark on other walls. There is certainly a notable sense of pleasure and accomplishment in some of the designs: particularly the sweeping curve of thatched pikes and ploughs at Foxhouse and Burdale Wold: reiteratively cut or drawn, as if attempting the perfect symmetrical silhouette (Figure 6.4). Whilst we have argued elsewhere this may indicate frustration at being prevented from ploughing or stacking by wet weather (Giles and Giles 2007), they may also have been drawn at harvest time - the turn of the agricultural cycle - as a subtle mark of pride, achievement or tutelage of the younger lads. Another key design that is repeated at most of the sites is the daisywheel: comprising six petals enfolded in a circle. Once learned, it was an easy but impressive design to execute, and in its own way, marked a small rite of passage for young men within the group, learning such visual 'tricks'. However, according to Easton (1999), the hexafoil daisywheel also had apotropaeic connotations: representing the sun and its vitality. Since it was traditionally used to protect buildings, especially the home (Easton 1991), it may well have been copied by these men who had seen it in local cottages and barns. This is interesting since Connerton (1989) argues that communities are frequently bound together through the sharing of common rituals, expressed in public feasts and celebrations, as well as more intimate, unspoken traditions. These key symbols – the pike, the plough and the daisywheel – may have been part of a repertoire of images that the farm-workers recognised as their own pictorial shorthand. They may have represented key events in the arable cycle; stood for values of strength, fertility and protection; or were simply pleasing patterns. But each time they were copied and inscribed anew, the horselads participated in a small ritual of belonging that affirmed and celebrated their contribution to farm-life.
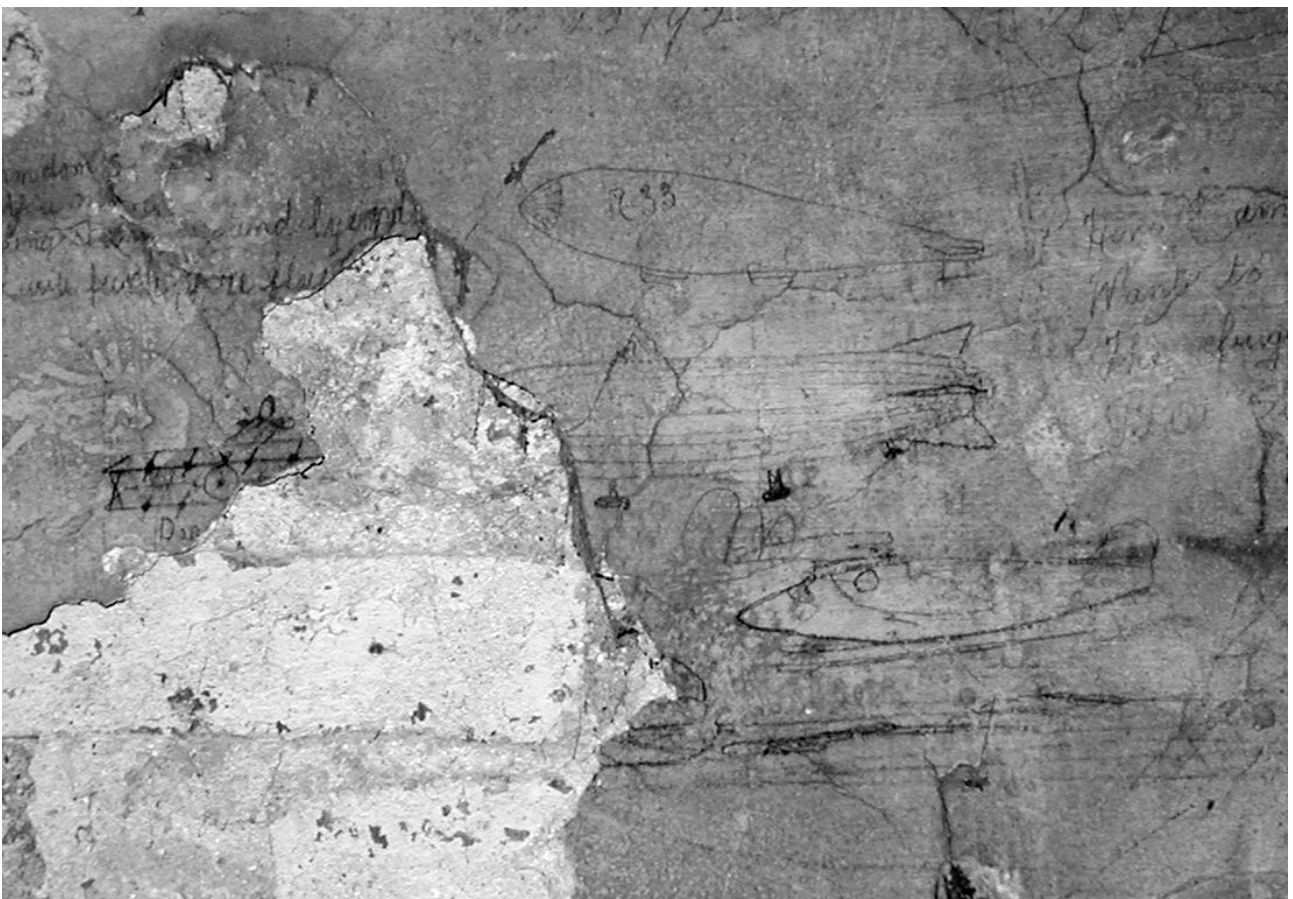
Graffiti Communities

The Hierarchy of the Horselads

The earliest dated graffiti was made in 1875, at Burdale Wold, and is signed: 'William Cross 1875'; the latest, from Wharram Percy, is signed 'J.D. ALLAN JULY 1988'. These two dates frame the period in which the majority of the graffiti was inscribed. However, at Burdale Wold, a series of large, sweeping inscriptions in red underlie the later,

6.2 A possible depiction of a threshing/thrashing set (Wharram Percy).

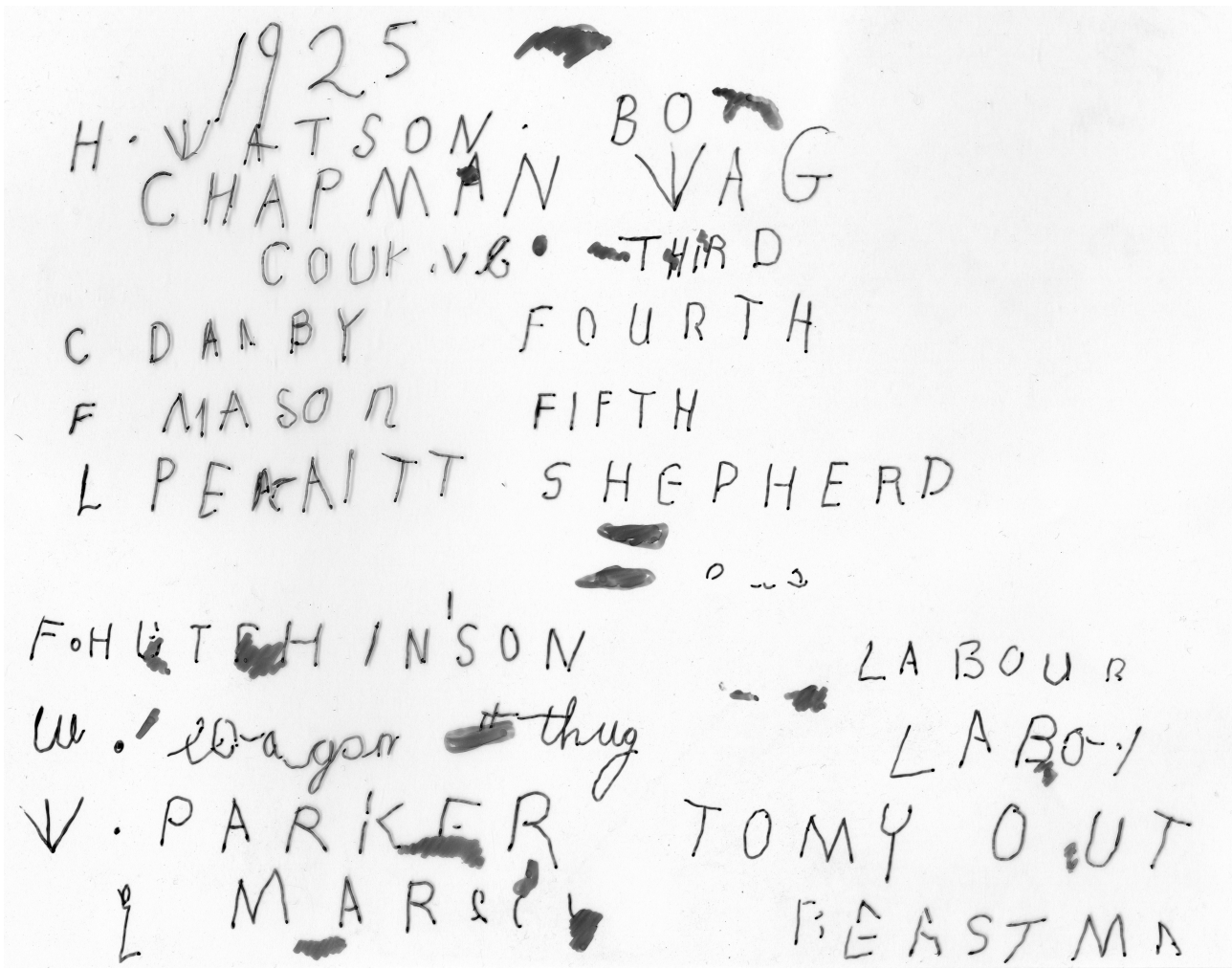*6.3 An aircraft typology (Burdale Wold).*

6.4 Thatched pikes and ploughs (Towthorpe).

and neater, graphite pencil. The majority of this appears to be sinuous, looped writing: especially names and tallies, but there are a few bold pikes, with out-turned tops, and thatching depicted by criss-cross designs or parallel lines. It is possible that this earliest graffiti is not just the work of horselads but shepherds, who may have used the red 'raddle' dye from their sheep to make these designs. Certainly, Burdale Wold is associated with shepherds right through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, since there are some affectionate portraits of sheep, as well as horses (see Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6).

One of the most common pieces of graffiti found at all of the sites except Towthorpe, is a hierarchy: a roll call of names - alongside the position each individual held - which is always dated (Figure 6.5, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8). This hierarchy dominated every aspect of their lives. Beginning with the 'Boss' (the farmer or hind: a position to which ambitious men aspired), the next line states the name of the 'Wag(g)' or 'Waggoner', whose duties on the farm included the onerous and physically demanding task of being able to 'stack, thack and carry barley' at threshing times (Caunce 1991a). Waggoner was the coveted position amongst the horselads, since he organised the working schedule, had the pick of the horse-teams and equipment, led the men to and from the farm, and set-off ploughing (in the 'fox hunting style: a peculiarity of the Wolds, Caunce

1991a: 74). It also meant that he was able to wash his hands first and sit down at the table before the other men, and got the pick of the double bedsteads (which were all shared) in the dormitory (Caunce 1991a: 83-84). Underneath him was 'Thoddy' or 'Thirdy', then 'Fowat' or 'Fourther', 'Fiver' and so on. Finally, there was the 'Wag lad' or 'least lad': often a new school-leaver of 13-14 years old, who bore the brunt of the teasing, corporal punishment and bullying by the older men.

As we have previously stated, these annually hired workers often tried to improve their position by changing farm, to gain as much experience as possible. This may explain why the hierarchies were so popular: the graffiti became an informal record of their progress up the ladder, to be seen by later horselads, working their way through the ranks. For example, at Burdale Wold in 1912, Herbert Watson is 'Wag' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8), but by 1925 at Wharram Percy, he was 'Boss' (Figure 6.5a). However, a second hierarchy at Wharram Percy dated 1925 suggests a complete change of staff at this farm, presumably after the hirings, since none of the names are identical. Perhaps this radical shift occasioned the commissioning of a new hierarchy, written adjacent, on the same wall (Figure 6.5b). The hierarchies are invariably in a single, good hand: possibly the most senior horselad present.

6.5a Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925a).

The Broader Farm Community

At both Burdale Wold and Wharram Percy, there are occasional expansions of the list. For example, the first 1925 hierarchy lists 'Shepherd' as well as two 'Labour' [Labourers?], and underneath them, 'Tomy Out' (see Figure 6.5a). 'Tommy Owt'/'Out' was an odd-job man, who generally worked with the horses but also filled in for sick or incapacitated stockmen and labourers elsewhere on the farm. Meanwhile, the second 1925 Wharram Percy hierarchy includes both '2 Shepherd', and '3 Shepherd' as well as 'Shepyad' [Sheeplad?]: suggesting a similar pecking order was being expressed to the horselad's hierarchy (Figure 6.5b). In addition, 'Beastman' is listed right at the bottom. In an adjacent room to this, the names of three 'Beastmen' were listed above a window hatch, dated 1929, and underneath, the name of a solitary 'Dairyman'. This may suggest that these stockmen had their own particular area to socialise or shelter in, at this time. A close relationship between these men and the animals with which they worked is suggested by affectionate portraits at many of the sites. Horses in harness at Wharram Percy, sheep, doves and a goose or duck at Burdale Wold, and two different dogs at Foxhouse, are all drawn in affectionate silhouette. However, we have yet to find a depiction of a cow or bull.

Finally, one of the Burdale Wold hierarchies dating to 1925 also seems to include several female names, one with the title 'lass wold'. They are inscribed at the end of the list and just to the left of the main text: as if an afterthought or later addition, but in the same hand.

Gender and Space: Cartoons and Rhymes

Whether the 'wold lasses' ever set foot in these spaces during this time is debatable. Much of the rest of the graffiti, both textual and graphic, suggests these were male spaces, with a strong oral culture of swearing as well as scatological and sexually explicit rhymes, ditties and songs. These verses were inscribed on the walls presumably for the entertainment of other horselads. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this kind of graffiti is often found on a back wall, away from windows and doors: presumably hidden behind sacks of corn or equipment (Giles and Giles 2007). This example from Foxhouse was similarly found on the back wall:

> *Here's health to those that drink whisky, Here's health to those that drink wine, Here's health to the prettiest lady, Who fixed up her belly to mine*

The rhyme was obviously so well known that all that was needed Burdale Wold was the first line followed by a series

6.5b Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925b).

of suggestive dots! There are a few silhouettes of women, including one with a beaded necklace at Burdale Wold, but other portraits (such as the 'bearded lady' named 'Lydia Durose' at Foxhouse) are rather unflattering. Marriage and sex were clearly topics of conversation and humour, as the following poem from Wharram Percy suggests:

Love is a feeling, a very funny feeling, a feeling that you've never felt before, a feeling that you feel, when

you're going to have a feel, and a feeling that you feel for ever more.

An earthier ditty along these lines was found on the back wall at Burdale Wold. As we have previously argued, it is not surprising that a community composed of young, unmarried men, with restricted access to the opposite sex, were preoccupied with these matters. Some of the images are clearly pornographic, showing female genitalia or couples engaged in sex. Their inscription may have been

accompanied by much bragging and banter. However, such images would also have had an important didactic role, in introducing the youngest lads to the 'facts of life' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 10). As such, these were rooms in which important - if informal - rites of passage took place, and these men may have reflected somewhat fondly or humorously on these salacious images, in later life!

War-time Disruption

The impact of the First and Second World Wars upon these communities was considerable. During the former, a large number of horselads signed up for the 'Waggoners' Reserves' with Colonel Mark Sykes of Sledmere (Caunce 1991a: 206), and lost either their lives or livelihoods, for most of the horses that went out as sturdy carriers to the front lines, never returned (Howorth 2002). The absence of men during both wars meant that occasional labour was drafted in from the local barracks, and this may explain the presence of 'Sgt. Carr 5th Lancers' at Foxhouse. At Burdale Wold, someone has inscribed the place-name of 'Plymouth Sound', which may again indicate a war-time connection. The curious comment 'Coldstreams for Derby 1931' at the same farm may indicate an ongoing military connection - perhaps familial - during peace-time.

During both wars, these otherwise exclusively male spaces would have been frequented by women. At Foxhouse, the names of 'Edna Scott, Iris Faulknor Womens Land Army', are accompanied by two heartfelt comments: 'Threshing no good. Rain very good' and 'East, West, Homes Best' (Giles and Giles 2007: 352, 354). Whilst Land Army girls were not universally welcomed onto the farms (Howorth 2002: 87), one of them certainly made a fond impression, as someone has later scribbled next to it: 'Anyone know Edna Scott & Where is she now? Where does she come from? Write answer in square'. This graffiti not only tells us about how these communities were being transformed by larger historical events, but also that it was an interactive medium. Writers expected others to comment on or add to their scribbles, and they anticipated re-reading it at a later date. In this case, there must have also been some excitement at the hope of rekindling a connection with the past. The arrival of women into the farm workforce may have occasioned some self-censorship amongst the remaining horselads, as many of the most explicit depictions of women have scratched dents and pitting around the sensitive areas of the image (Giles and Giles 2007).

When the men did return from service, mechanisation was beginning to reduce the number of skilled horselads on the farm. Perhaps this is why so many of the hierarchies date between 1914 and 1940: since this was the period in which the system was most under threat. In addition, the traditional ranking system had broken down at the Front, where all men were 'waggoners' and wore the same uniform. Such graffiti helped re-institutionalise the hierarchy, once back on the farm (Giles and Giles 2007). Of course, these men brought back memories with them. At Towthorpe there is a carving of what appears to be a simplified landing craft, as well as a tank. There is a 'jug-eared' Kaiser at Foxhouse,

6.6 'Smoking Tommy' (Foxhouse).

as well as a 'smoking Tommy' figure (Figure 6.6) and 'drill sergeant' with baton. There is also an affectionate portrait of a soldier with epaulettes, high up on the wall at Burdale Wold. At Foxhouse however, there is a much less flattering portrait of a 'Sgt Major' figure, with greased hair, sharp teeth and flared nostrils, who is the butt of a visual pun based on the four circular medals and one cross, on his chest (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 11), which read: 'P R I † K'. These were the spaces in which men who had served in the army worked out their anger, in response to the events that had affected them.

In stark contrast, there are few indications of antagonism between individuals on the farm: tensions between them tended to be sorted out in person at the hiring fair, rather than on the farm (Caunce 1991a). As they were only paid at the year-end, immediately before the new hiring fair, it is also unlikely that the horselads men would jeopardise their annual income by being disrespectful to the Boss or Waggoner. We might expect to see growing class-consciousness beginning to affect these communities, during the twentieth century (Moses 1999): in fact, the only evidence for this comes from Wharram Percy, where the symbol of a sickle and hammer is followed by the date '20-10-25' and title: 'The Soviet Government of Wharram Percy'. Whilst this may be the humorous work of a disgruntled employee (close to the end of their year's service and waiting for their annual pay) it may indicate that

6.7 Coat-and-hat gentlemen: Lord Middleton? (Foxhouse).

6.8a A full wagon.
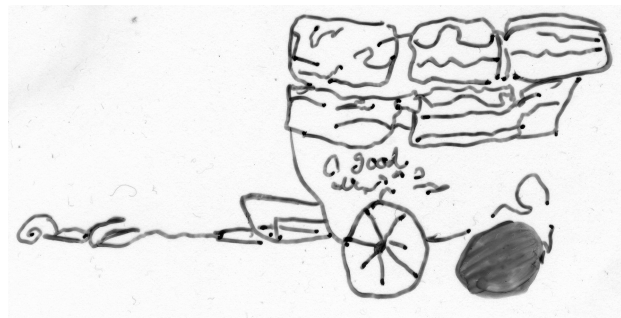

6.8b One pint (Wharram Percy).

some farm workers were developing more radical political views. One poem that is repeated twice at Burdale Wold is a more generic complaint about their lot in life, which reads:

If life is a thing that runs on wheels,
Death is a thing that every man feels,
If life was a thing that money could buy,
The rich would live and the poor would die.

In fact, the only graffiti that seems to refer to the owner of the Birdsall estate during this time comes from Foxhouse. It is a rather respectful depiction of two well-dressed gentlemen, in long-buttoned coats (one in a flat brimmed hat, the other in a bowler), drawn as if conversing on a tour of the estate (Figure 6.7). (The name 'Middleton' seems to be inscribed underneath.) The drawing must either refer to Godfrey Willoughby, 10th Baron Middleton, or his second son, Michael Willoughby, 11th Baron Middleton, who inherited the estate in 1924, following the death of his elder brother in the First World War. He may have been held in such high esteem due to his own distinguished military career, but oral history suggests he was also deeply concerned with the welfare of his tenants and farm-workers, including the itinerant Wold Rangers (Philip Hoddy, pers. comm.).

Mechanisation

Although the basic source of power on the farms was the horse, machinery increasingly began to affect their day-to-day lives. Notably, steam-powered threshing sets were moved from farm to farm, from autumn through to the

spring, to 'thrash' the impressive thatched pikes of corn sheaves. Individual comments refer to this at Wharram Percy, where 'R. Boyes' and 'Jed Bryer'[?] declared themselves 'Thrashing kings 13th Oct 1939'. Another comment in the same room notes that the '20th April' marked the 'Last thrash'. Just along the wall from these inscriptions is the small but detailed illustration of what we take to be a threshing-set, dated 1925 (see Figure 6.2). The illustration of this machine is set near a depiction of a fully-loaded wagon, and underneath it, perhaps its reward: a brimming pint mug (Figure 6.8a and 6.8b)!

On the Yorkshire Wolds, the 'living-in' system of horselads and hinds persisted later than other regions. As a result, post-World War II agricultural change, especially the introduction of the tractor, radically transformed the make-up of these communities and the work they carried out (Whetham 1970). Contemporary hierarchies mimicked the earlier form of the rollcall, with subtle changes. At Burdale Wold, a 1922 list includes a single 'Tractor' driver, who is placed after the shepherd: perhaps denoting a lack of respect for this new machine. However, a fascinating hierarchy from Wharram Percy, dated 1941, lists 'Wag', 'Third' and 'Tomy Out', followed by a ranked hierarchy of three 'Tractor Driver' names, then 'Beast man', 'Cowy' and 'Sheeperd' [sic] (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 12). The

tractor drivers appear to have risen in status, and are seen as closely allied to the remaining horselads, with their own internal pecking order, even though they may have shared a machine.

Interestingly, the overall number of employees in this last list looks similar to earlier periods, even if their roles had changed. However, oral histories from the region indicate that many lamented the severing of relationship between man and beast (see Day 1985). Whetham even suggests that some of the first styles of tractor tried to mimic the relationship between horselad and horse (1978: 206) but notes that there was considerable doubt about the merits of these new machines well into the 1930s (ibid: 207).

Games, Play and Changes on the Farm

The final aspect of the graffiti we wish to discuss includes evidence for games. At Towthorpe, 'Merrills' boards have been inscribed onto the lid of a meal-bin as well as an adjacent windowsill, within the tack-room and stable (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 9). This popular local pastime was also known as 'Fox and Geese', and a similar game, carved onto a piece of limestone, was found in a medieval context at Wharram Percy (Hayfield, pers.comm.). In contrast, at Wharram Percy, several 'noughts and crosses' games have been deeply incised into the plaster, but these may be a relatively late addition, as they overlie the majority of the written graffiti. One piece of text from this farm, written in pencil, suggests that by the 1920s, children were also frequenting these spaces;

GENERAL WATSON

CAPTURED TUNNEL TOP

APRIL 6th 1921.

GENERAL J WATSON

SURRENDERED TUNNEL

TOP AFTER HOURS BOMBARDING

AND WAS AWARDED THE

V.C.

OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE

THEY FADE AWAY.

Richard Henry Harland.

The 'war game' to which this record refers, took place around the open-end of the air-shaft from the Malton-Driffield railway: a large mound at the end of the track to Wharram Percy, known as 'Tunnel Top'. It would have made an excellent vantage point on which to play 'king of the castle' but it is interesting that the game has been phrased within the idiom of a military victory and loss.

As well as their fond illustrations of animals and women, there are occasional drawings of features in the surrounding landscape. At Foxhouse, there is a depiction dating to 1949, of the early stone-faced building attached to the yard, 'as it was'. The drawing of this building (which may have been a folly, viewpoint or dining house, Stamper, pers.comm.) is later nick-named 'The Monkey House', perhaps alluding to the goings-on that took place there by this date! There is also a very large but crude drawing of a barn. At Burdale Wold, there is a small cartoon of a bicycle: an essential mode of transport for these young men, which enabled them to socialise at week-ends (cf. Reffold 1984, Beckett 2000). An interest in modes of transport is also suggested by the lovingly detailed typology of air transport, at this same site (see Figure 6.3). An airship (the R33, built at Barlow, North Yorkshire in 1918) and possible zeppelin, a biplane and early jet, were drawn in pencil, in three-dimensional detail. The R33 has a strong local connection, and it is even possible that this draughtsman saw its pilotless launch of a Sopwith Camel, over the North Yorkshire Moors in 1920. Since the earliest jets date from the mid-1940s, however, this typology may also have been based on illustrations seen in books, newspaper pull-outs or tobacco/tea-packet cards.

The latest illustrations in these rooms allude to much younger occupants of these spaces. At Burdale Wold, 'Liverpool FC' is inscribed on one wall, near small cartoons of cowboys. From the 1950s onwards, the farms were usually occupied by a single farmer and his family, and additional labourers were housed elsewhere. It was at this point that the granaries and stables became deserted play-spaces for children, who in turn, read and added to the graffiti of a previous age. They began to make these spaces their own, or made new ones: at Wharram Percy, for example, a small 'kip' underneath the room in which the graffiti was found is lined with prize-winning certificates. According to the present tenant, these are the work of the Midgley brothers, who socialised in this room and left their own mark on its walls (Philip Hoddy, pers.comm.).

Conclusion: Constructing and Disrupting Communities

In the paper, we have argued that the writing of graffiti is a performative act, often created in front of an audience, and designed to draw people into reading, reflecting and adding to it, later on. We have analysed the character, location and content of graffiti in the late nineteenth – late twentieth century agricultural buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, and considered the motivations behind it. We have suggested that the making of graffiti was one of the means by which a distinctive community – the horselads – created and reaffirmed their identity. As an expression of frustration, desire, wit, skill, anger and pride, these carvings and inscriptions give us an unparalleled insight into the concerns of a group all too often marginalised in historical accounts. We have also identified other groups and individuals who entered the same buildings, and added their own names, marks and thoughts to these walls. Whether these were the beastmen and shepherds who worked alongside the horselads, the army recruits or Land

Army girls of war-time, the tractor drivers of the post-war era, or the children of the single-tenant farmers, their graffiti – and the responses and erasures that followed – embody the many transformations that the community underwent. Graffiti was therefore used by different groups as a vibrant, colourful means of self-expression, through which identities were performed, contested and re-negotiated, in a key period of socio-economic and agricultural change.

Acknowledgements

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