

Part 1: The Northeast

Gatwick to York

Yorkshire

The Pinch

Quakers

Indomitable

Tanning

Light

Rail!

Ships

Gatwick to York

WestJet found Gatwick Airport, just south of London where it's been for a good long time. We found the washroom...uh, the toilets. The One Road Approach called for us to go first to York, then move counter clockwise around England, arriving back in London where we would stay for a week. In total, we'd be in England for 23 days.

Yup, we'd be on the move, all right. No time to dally on the beach at Brighton or surf the curlers in Cornwall. There were landscapes to see, people to meet, villages to wander, a thousand years of history to uncover, friends and

ancestors to visit and all of it, to capture in photos.

York it was. But how to get there? I had the train tickets, I'd plotted the steps and estimated times. What I didn't yet know was that the devil lay waiting in the detail. Indeed, the devil would be our travel companion.

It's a bit of a trek to York. It's tucked away in the northeast corner of England. Although by Canadian standards, the distance is hardly notable. It takes under 3 hours to drive there from London, the same time it takes me to drive on Vancouver Island from Victoria, where I live, to Courtenay. If you drove the length of Vancouver Island one way, you would have covered the distance from London to York and back to London again.

The real challenge in getting to York is to clear customs at Gatwick Airport in a timely way, catch a train into London's St Pancras Station, find King's Cross Station nearby,

validate your train tickets, find the right platform, the right train at the right time, the right car and the right seat and sit on it, ideally before it departs. We did so with a great deal of running about like headless chickens and had little time to spare.

Trains are a quick and painless way to travel in Britain. It's because they endure no roundabouts; it's A to B as the crow flies. Although their average speed ranges between 95 and 105 kilometres per hour, they can reach speeds of 210 kilometres per hour. British commercial trains are another animal. Maximum speeds for them run to 300 kilometres per hour and 400 kilometres per hour for Maglev trains. Magnetic Levitation trains do away with conventional wheels and track and use powerful magnets to minimize friction by suspending the train above its guide.

Fascinating, eh?

Three seats down and across the aisle from us was a woman who believed she was still in her office. For the first two hours of the trip, the entire car was treated to the inner

workings of her job. She was on the blower, at full volume, non-stop. One woman, who apparently could take no more, moved to another car; the rest didn't seem bothered. Perhaps they were all Yorkies heading home and that's just how Yorkies talk. Certainly, she herself was not bothered. I did ponder inquiring with the conductor as to whether they still had open cars at the rear of the train where social misfits could wail into the wind with

abandon. Ah, but we Canadians don't complain; we grumble beneath our breath.

York appeared at the end of the line precisely on time at 4:47pm. Had I looked closely, I might have seen train spotters on the platform, clicking their stopwatches at the exact moment the train's wheels came to a halt, then penning an entry into their little black books, disappointed perhaps, that they had failed again to catch out the rail service. I did see the train spotters later. They were chatting over coffee in a rail platform cafe, debating the best routes

to get from Huffington to Pough Corner.



York, Yorkshire

York and Yorkshire

We rolled our baggage along the platform with the half-hearted energy of new arrivals thinking ‘what now?’ “It’s an easy 20 minute walk to our digs.” I said to Randi. I had plotted a route and calculated the time. It pays to plan. “Which way?” she replied. Well, how should I know, said I very much to self. I’ve never been here. Boldly, I pronounced “This way.”

It was a ‘hither and yon’ adventure, the first of many on this trip. We left the station by the front door, which seemed reasonable, except it was the back door we needed. Like lost dogs, we wandered the streets, asking the way from sequential good Samaritans,

retracing our steps, consulting Google maps. By the time we turned the key at 45 County House, twenty minutes had become two hours. There are times when having the name ‘Brrruce’ is a distinct liability, or more to the point, being married to one. “Aghh, Mr Brrruce. Hail a cab next time, ya cheap jock.”

If you ask a Londoner if he’s ever visited York, he’ll likely reply “What for?” or “Where is it?” or “No time.” It’s not that they’re down on Northerners, they’re just caught up with being a Londoner. A good number of Northerners, on the other hand, have a firm view of Londoners that is less than admiring. In a 2013 poll, 42% of Northerners held a low opinion of Londoners, one percent more than the Scots even and much more than the rest of the UK. Yet only 28% of Londoners thought less of Northerners, possibly because they had never given a thought to anything more North-ish than the Manchester United, so how could they think

poorly of folks they knew nothing about?

The animosity of the North for Londoners is summed up in this popular Yorkshire joke:

A Yorkshire farmer see's a bloke drinking from his stream & shouts,

"Ey up cock! Tha dun wanna be drinkin watta frm theer,

it's full o hoss piss an cow shite".

The man says "I say old chap, I'm up from London.

Just here for a few days of touring. Might I ask you to speak a bit slower please".

The farmer replies "IF-YOU-USE-TWO-HANDS-YOU-WON'T-SPILL-ANY!"

Yorkies, much as they'd like to, have hardly cornered the market on English wit. Londoners are not slow to rebut:

A general inspecting troops in Hampshire ordered the parade to don gas masks. He paused opposite a northern soldier. Pointing to the eyepiece of his respirator, he inquired: "Soldier, where is your anti-mist?" Don't know Sir" came the reply" Think she's oop with Uncle Albert in Oldam."

Where was I? Ah yes, Yorkshire. It is by far the largest county in England, although three of them will fit on Vancouver Island where I live. At least the land will fit; the Yorkies will not. They are a bawdy lot, loud spoken and opinionated, frugal and proud, and as full of fun and kind-heartedness as one could find anywhere – provided of course that you don't wear a red rose on your jersey to footy matches or hail from London.

Who Let Them In?

Things were fairly peaceful in the days when Celts controlled Yorkshire. Then the Romans came in 43 AD

and shook things up. Here's the thing: when the Romans come to your neck of the woods they typically don't knock on the first tree. They knock the trees down and use the wood to build a massive house smack dab in the middle of your neighbourhood. Then they come calling – house to house, to get acquainted.

I'm just guessing now, but when a phalanx of highly trained soldiers wearing head to foot armour and holding spears behind an impenetrable wall of shields halts in perfect unison at your door, it would give you pause for thought. My thought is that one would quickly find a soft spot for the newcomers and invite them in for dinner. That they did...and like boorish guests the Romans overstayed, for four hundred years. By the late fourth century, Rome was rapidly losing its grip and by the early fifth century they had left England forever.

For two hundred years the Celts and the Angles happily filled the vacuum left by the Romans until the arrival of a new top gun – the Vikings from Denmark and later Norway.

Yorkshire folks thought they knew something about strong-minded intruders. The Romans had meant business. If you met a Roman centurion on a country road, you likely wouldn't stop to chat; you'd run for the nearest copse and lay low. But if you came face to face with a horde of screaming Vikings with descriptive names like Eric the Bloodaxe and Bjorn the Skullcleaver, chances are you would simply shit yourself on the spot and stand there, jaw in hand, until one of them lived up to their family name.

In this way, the Vikings took over a large swath of northern and central England and called it the Kingdom of Jorvik (thus York). For a hundred years, Vikings with anger management issues hung out in England until the locals finally said "This is ridiculous," and kicked them out.

The Normans

Next came the Normans who were actually Vikings who had forgotten they were Vikings. They were Vikings with a difference. The Normans had completed therapy, quelled their anger issues and learned to use their brains more than their reproductive gear.

The Normans were the new Romans. They rapidly built hundreds of large stone castles that served as bases to suppress rebels and control the land. The Normans never left. They just became the new fabric upon which the tapestry of England would be woven for centuries to come.

Those centuries passed. There were more hardships and wars – the Great Famine of 1315-1322, the Black Death of 1348-1349 that killed one third of the population, the Wars of the Roses in the 1400s, the English Civil War of 1642-1651, and multiple foreign wars before and after including the Crusades, the Hundred Years War, two World Wars and the Great Depression. There you have it – one thousand years of “I never said that.” “Yes you did, just now.” “No I never.” “Yes you did...”

York Today

Back to 2018. York is a fortified town, that is, it is (or more accurately was), surrounded by a wall, significant remnants of which survive today and can be walked. Inside the wall is the old town, where lie all the interesting venues for tourists, notably the cathedral known as Yorkminster and the Shambles, a fabulous and quaint medieval neighbourhood filled with pubs, eateries, boutiques, hotels in period conversions, 18th century government buildings, gardens and museums. The entire area can be walked from any side to the other in twenty minutes. Car traffic is light and limited to people with business within the walls. Everyone else walks and rides bikes.

Our lodging was just outside the city walls in an 18th century hospital conversion. It is a pleasant-looking stone three story Georgian structure called County House. It suited us perfectly. Just inside the front door of County House on the wall to the right is a plaque with the names of the donors who contributed the capital to build it.

These were the days before income tax when all major non-military expenditures were underwritten by the good graces of the wealthy. On the plaque was a Dr. William Richardson, probably a relative of mine, as the Richardsons of our family

hailed from Yorkshire. Did he work in this hospital 150 years ago,
walk in the room in which we slept?



Villages in the North York Moors, Yorkshire



Villages in the North York Moors, Yorkshire



Goathland, North York Moors, Yorkshire

The Papal Pinch

On our third and last day in Yorkshire (we could easily have stayed three weeks), we boarded a tour bus and headed for the North York Moors and the little town of Whitby on the east coast. It would be an eight hour day. That was my frustration limit for photos forgone to meet a schedule.

Guisborough, about an hour's drive north of York, had been on my 'must see' list, but there simply wasn't time and the reason for going had become less than compelling. There was a derelict cathedral there built by King Robert the Bruce, to whom I must somehow be related. The hope was that if I stood within the walls of this 13th century structure, I would assuredly be struck through the heart by a bolt of spiritual connectedness and the king and I would be soul-mates forever.

Then too, somewhere in Guisborough was my rellie, Sir Thomas Chaloner (1559-1615). Now there was an interesting chap. The Chaloners have Welsh roots which go back a thousand years to William the Conqueror. Princes and princesses lay in their family tree. Their expansive estate in Guisborough was a gift from King James I for the military support Thomas's father, also Thomas Chaloner, had provided in a successful campaign against the Scots.

Thomas Chaloner

Young Thomas was well educated and intellectual, and possessed a magnetic, affable personality and a noble bearing which allowed him to move in high circles. He was a favourite of King James I, who paid Thomas a princely sum for overseeing the education of his son, Prince Henry, Prince of Wales.

In 1580, aged 21, Thomas began making extended trips to Italy where he socialized with the nobility and with the learned men of the age. On his return, he quickly became a court favourite and married into an influential family.

Alum

On one of his trips to Italy, he visited the alum works in the Papal States. Alum was an economically important commodity in the day and Italy not only had high quality alum, it had plenty of it. Alum, short for 'aluminum,' was one of several naturally occurring salts. One form commonly used was aluminum sulphate. Alum was employed for curing leather, for medicinal applications, as a dye fixative in cloth (of huge importance) and, not insignificant for the under-thirties dating crowd, alum served as an under-arm deodorant.

The pope was no fool. He understood market economics. If you own all of something and everybody wants it, you will very quickly become filthy rich. He did — own it all and become filthy rich.

Thomas had a cousin, also Thomas Chaloner (imagine the confusion at family gatherings!), who was a naturalist and student of geology. Thomas the naturalist had noticed that where alum deposits lie, a particular clay is found and that the leaves of the trees which grow there are discoloured. He also discovered that there were several instances of this correlation

on the Chaloner's Guisborough estate. In other words, they had the alum. They just needed to know how to process it and they would make themselves fabulously rich.

The Pinch

As legend has it, when Sir Thomas visited the alum mine in Italy, he convinced two key mine workers (with hard, cold cash in hand) to hide in barrels and return with him to England where the men would set up an alum processing plant. When the Pope was informed of the ruse, he was outraged, issued a curse on Thomas and excommunicated him.

The Scoop

Setting up the processing plant had its challenges. The first was to pry the pissed and rigid Italians out of the barrels after a six week voyage (just kidding). They did have a few problems but in time the alum flowed out and the money flowed in. Regretfully, when King Charles I noticed just how much money the Chaloners were making, he took over the operation, earning for himself a banquet hall full of dough and a special place in the hearts of the Chaloners.

Still, they needn't have fussed. Like sulphurous gas from a volcanic cauldron, poetic justice has a way of rising above the maelstrom. In this case, it was the people of England who arose and dumped Charles into the Tower of London.

When the leg-shackled king shuffled into court, took his place in the witness box, then looked up to face his trial judges, his heart must have skipped a beat. One of them was Thomas Chaloner, son of Thomas, the courtier and, as it turned out, a signator of his death warrant. Charles just lost it — you know, his head.

Alum was in Britain to stay. The Chaloners got richer and as an expression of gratitude to the God of Justice, they changed their name to Chalumer (just kidding).

Sir Thomas Chaloner (1559-1615)

Relation: 10th Great Grandfather



Quakers

The story of my mother's family in Britain is as much about the inspiring lives of the people I recount as it is about the religion to which they subscribed, the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. For I have no doubt that their unwavering moral compass and the mutual support they afforded each other within their religious community served as the essential foundation upon which their remarkable endeavours were realized.

As our trip of England begins and with it, my foray into the family tree, allow me if you will to give a brief primer on this group of people who did so much to drag the western world out of the dark ages and into the light.

I am not a religious man. Indeed, I abhor organized religions for the grief they have brought and continue to bring to this planet.

Yet I make repeated references in this book to the Quakers. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, for three hundred fifty years, my mother's family was largely Quaker and thus I have a vested interest in learning about it. Secondly, the Quakers in my view are worthy of honouring for the astonishing amount of social reform that they were instrumental in bringing about at the cost of much heartache to themselves. So it is my considerable admiration for Quaker principles and social action (they put their money and their sweat where their mouth was) which brings me to speak of them here.

My mother's extended family lived all over England and , with the odd exception, they were all Quakers. They had deep Irish roots too, in Dublin, Belfast, Limerick and Cork. They were close-knit — they married, socialized and worshiped within the Quaker community — and they were all committed to providing not just social relief, but far-sighted social change.

In the 1600s, there was growing unrest among commoners over the wealth, power and dominance of the Protestant Church. These 'non-conformists' were losing the faith in increasing numbers -- enough to be seen as a threat by the establishment. They were heavily persecuted and, routinely prosecuted – their

animals, crops and lands were confiscated, their backs were lashed unmercifully and many were imprisoned. Some languished in dungeons for years, some never returned. In the early days, Quakers were obliged to hold clandestine meetings in a member's home, taking the chance that neighbours would not report them.

By the 18th century, persecution was more limited to constraints on what a Quaker could do for a living. They could not hold public office, teach in the universities or work in the military or clergy (nor would they). This, as it happened, served them well, for it required them to make a living as merchants, craftsmen, educators, inventors, industrialists and scientists. Make a living they did. As the Industrial Revolution gained steam, Quaker businesses became renowned for innovation, quality and fairness, and they thrived accordingly. Quakers married within the Quaker community and Quaker businesses collaborated for mutual gain. They were devoted to their faith that called them to live a life of integrity, worship, hard work and community service. Our Yorkshire Quakers were no exception.

Although many of these entrepreneurial Quakers became wealthy, they never forgot their religious commitment to serve the

community – not just the Quaker community that required little help, but the community-at-large. This was not an obligation; it was a strongly-held devotion.

During the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, Quakers were on the streets of Dublin, Belfast, Limerick and Cork, operating daily soup kitchens that kept many from death's door. Quakers lobbied for prison reform (Elizabeth Fry), the cessation of press-ganging (kidnapping boys and men to serve on Royal Navy ships) and child labour, better working conditions in the factories and on ships, the abolition of slavery and equality for women, including the vote. Quakers were, I believe, the most progressive, effective, comprehensive, intractable force for social reform in the western world – ever.

Quakers valued education and educated with values. For hundreds of years, they built and operated their own schools, seven of which, continue to operate in England today. Contrary to the harsh, rote learning approach to education taken by mainstream school teachers, Quaker teachers encouraged, inspired, invited discussion and spared no resources to provide their students with an exceptional education.



Quakers Meeting. Egbert van Heemskerck the Elder

Indomitable

Mary Fisher (c.1623-1698)

In December of 1651, in the small town of Selby, Yorkshire, a man gave a talk to the Tomlinson family. Invited to listen was their indentured serving maid Mary Fisher (27). The man was George Fox who several years prior, had begun to preach his new religion, later known as Quakerism. George was a year younger than Mary, affable, magnetic and well-spoken.

Mary listened intently and by the end of the talk she had committed her life to the cause of spreading the word of Fox's simpler, individually defined way of relating to God. Mary lost no time with her quest. Within the year she was imprisoned in York Castle for 'speaking to a priest.' She remained there for 16 months.

Following her release in the autumn of 1653, Mary and Ann Austin, a 50 year old mother of five, arrived at Cambridge University where they admonished the students of the seminary for choosing a life in a church filled with privilege and corruption. The incensed Mayor William Pickering demanded the Constable to "whip them at the Market Cross till the blood ran down their bodies."

Mary was on a roll. Within two months she was again imprisoned, this time in Castle Garth, York, where she was thrown in with 60 Dutch prisoners of war. The men soon made threatening sexual advances. But the courage shown by Mary and the other Quaker prisoners so moved both the prisoners and their gaolers that they ceased to harass them.

When Mary was again released she set her sights on spreading the word of Quakerism abroad. In 1655, she and her companion Ann Austin boarded a ship in London and became the first Quakers to arrive on the shores of Barbados. Their conversion attempts were not well received by the largely Anglican residents, many of whom were too busy cavorting and drinking good

Barbados rum to listen. And I'm guessing that most of them were not of a mind to free their slaves who allowed them the luxury to drink and cavort. However, Mary and Ann did manage to convert the Lieutenant-Governor.

After a brief stay, they must have decided that Barbadians were a hopeless cause and that discretion was the better part of valour, for they sailed for New England. Their ship, the Swallow, docked in Boston, Massachusetts Bay Colony on the 11th of July, 1656. Word had reached authorities earlier that the women were coming and they were immediately imprisoned without food, water or visitors.

In the last half of the seventeenth century witch-hunts had become common practice in both England and New England. At its peak in England (1645-1647) over a hundred people (largely women) were put to death; in New England, thirteen women and two men were executed in the witch-hunts of 1647 to 1663. In the Salem trials of 1692-1693 20 more were put to death; five died in prison.

The two women, suspected of being witches, were intimately

examined for any sign. A mole or any unusual mark on their skin would be a death sentence. None were found. For five weeks, they were imprisoned. Mary and Ann survived only through the kindness shown by the elderly owner of a Boston inn, Nicholas Upsall, who through bribes, brought the women food and water. The captain of the Swallow was ordered to return the women to Barbados. From there, they found their way back to England.

What happened to Ann at that point, we don't know. But for Mary, this was merely a test run. She next decided that the entire Muslim world was needful of enlightenment and that the quickest way to convert the unwashed millions of the Ottoman Empire was to convert their leader, Sultan Mehmed IV, aka 'The Warrior.'

After a lengthy sea voyage, Mary and her five companions arrived at Leghorn (Livorno), northwest Italy. There she sought the help of the English Consul to arrange an audience with the Sultan. The consul quickly realized that such a meeting could result in political disaster for England, in no small measure because the English navy had just the previous year sunk nine of the Sultan's ships, and too, that Quaker zeal was likely not a good match with Muslim propriety. The consul suggested that her quest was perhaps, unwise. Undaunted, Mary persisted until

the harangued official relented; arrangements were made for Mary and her companions to board a ship, then in the harbour, that would take them to the Sultan.

Once underway, Mary discovered that she was the victim of a ruse; the ship was heading only for Venice. However, en route, a terrible storm drove the vessel well to the east of Greece. Mary saw an opportunity. She arranged with the captain for her group to disembark at Zante in the Greek islands. Mary had learned that the Sultan was not in Constantinople; he and his army were encamped at Adrianople on the modern day border with Greece. At Zante, the party of Quakers went separate ways, leaving Mary to make her way to Adrianople alone. For four or five weeks she walked through Greece, Macedonia and over the mountains of Thrace, relying on the freely given generosity of Greek peasants for food.

In the autumn of 1657, just prior to Mary's arrival at Adrianople, the Sultan had decided to move his capital from Constantinople, a place he loathed and feared for its disloyal and mutinous elements, to Adrianople. With him came his court and his 20,000 man army, now camped on the outskirts of the city. Two thousand tents were arranged in circles along the banks of the

River Moritza. It was a dazzling display of power. In the centre were the sumptuous, gold-embroidered tents of the Sultan Mehmed IV and his Grand Vizier, Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (1575-1661). These central tents together constituted a fabric castle complete with administrative offices, accommodation for pages, summer houses and of course, lavish dwellings for the Sultan and Grand Vizier. The opulence and magnificence of it all took the breath away.

The Sultan (1642-1693) was but sixteen at the time of Mary's visit. He came to the throne at the age of 6, after his father was killed in a coup. Titles came with a risk. Young Mehmed IV had a rough start. When he was an infant, his parents had a violent argument. In a rage, his father tore him from his mother's arms and tossed him into a cistern. The harem saved young Mehmed but he wore a scar to remind him that in his world, even family can become deadly enemies.

Mehmed IV came to power in the midst of turmoil. The empire was crippled with internecine struggles, failed foreign campaigns and a demoralized army. The Ottoman's lost an important battle with the Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold I and a naval battle with the Venetians. Moral among his troops collapsed and the entire



F&J Richardson Factory, Newcastle-On-Tyne
Ottoman army walked off. His mother realized that the Ottoman

Empire itself was on the edge of collapse, and that a strong

and strategic Grand Vizier was required to retrieve control and reverse Ottoman fortunes. The man she chose was Köprülü Mehmed Paşa.

Köprülü Mehmed Paşa was the revered and feared chieftain of the Albanians,. Köprülü was a strong governor and a man of ruthless reputation. During his five years in office as Grand Vizier, Köprülü had 36,000 influential persons summoned to Constantinople and quietly strangled. By the end of the purge, not a man remained in the empire that could or would offer resistance to the Sultan. Beyond Köprülü's accomplishments with a garrote, he destroyed the Venetian Fleet (1657), restoring the dominance of the Ottoman Empire in the Region.

Enter Mary. Her challenge was to convince Köprülü to grant her an audience with the Sultan. There is no record of Mary's interview with Köprülü. What we do know is that he heard her out, then advised the young sultan to see her. The following day, Mary, aged 35, was ushered into the throne room with all the pomp and ceremony of a visiting Ambassador. Ranks of servants, guards, eunuchs and pages surrounded the Sultan, all dressed in a splendour of gold-embroidered coats and feathered caps.

Amidst this riot of gold and scarlet stood Mary, dressed in a simple grey frock, her countenance quiet, her deportment confident, her face filled with intelligence, intention and the presence of God.

Mary was received by the Sultan with kindness and deference -- a sharp contrast to the treatment she had borne at the hands of her countrymen. In the way of Quakers, Mary said nothing, waiting for the inward light to guide her words. There was an awkward silence. The Sultan offered to dismiss his courtiers, that Mary might feel more disposed to speak. She declined and at length, when the light came to her, Mary conveyed her message.

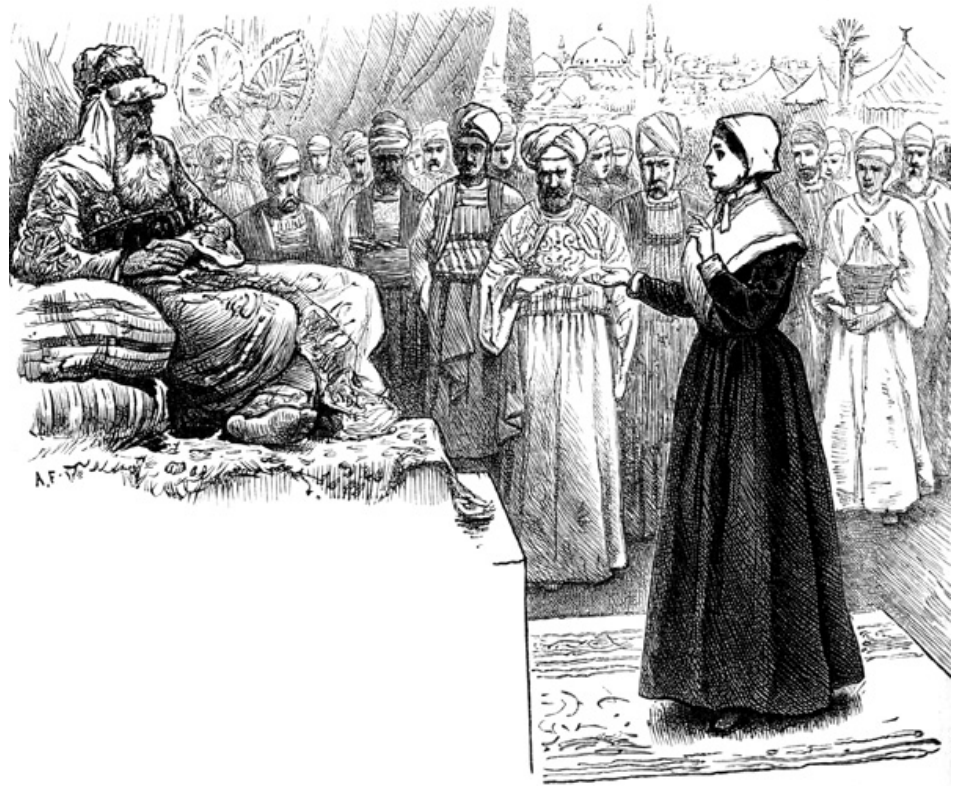
All in the room listened carefully and with gravity until she was done. Then she asked the Sultan if he had understood her message. He replied "Yes, every word of what you have said is truth." He invited her to stay in Turkey, and when she declined, he offered her an escort to Constantinople, for the journey was treacherous. Again she declined and made her own way unimpeded.

This plucky young woman, Mary Fisher, with her unwavering determination, courage and devotion inspired countless people across centuries to convert to and advance the Quaker cause.

Mary Fisher (1623-1698)

Relation: By surname and location

Scene: Mary receives an audience with the Sultan



Sultan Mehmed IV (1642-1693)

Relation: No relation

Leather

William Richardson (1660-1740)

Our tour bus wound down and down off the heights of the North York Moors as we edged our way towards Whitby on Yorkshire's east coast. There are no shoulders on these roads and no second chances. If you want to be home for dinner, you had best pay attention. As we neared Whitby, we passed through the little village of Great Ayton. It was here in the early 1700s that Captain James Cook (1728-1779) spent the latter years of his childhood.

History of Tanning

The word 'tanning' today conjures up images of lying on a tropical white sand beach or less appealing to me, in a proprietor's well-lit coffin-like box in the midst of a Canadian winter.

However, in the 1800s and for a few years before that, tanning meant something entirely different. Tanning was and still is the process by which animal hides are protected from decay and rendered supple for various uses. We call the result of tanning, leather.

Between two million and 100,000 years ago hominids became systematic and successful hunters. As well as hunting tools, they developed tools for fleshing hides. During Ice Ages, they utilized hides for shelters, likely building fires within. Experts surmise that smoke from the fires, over time, tanned the hides, making them re-usable over a lengthy period and resulting in the intentional use of smoke-tanning to provide a crude form of leather.

One hundred thousand years ago during the last Great Ice Age, Neanderthal man inhabited Europe. They used advanced hunting and hide processing methods which allowed them to survive and thrive, even in northern tundra. That suggests that they had perfected the making of warm clothing and footwear, that is, that they had knowledge of tanning and possessed skills in making leather products.

The weakened small toe bones of 40,000 year old human fossils found in a Missouri cave suggest that sandals were being worn then. Coloured leather, sandals, bags, cushions and leather clothing, dated between 5000 BCE and 2000 BCE have been found in Nubian tombs. I could go on but here it is in a nutshell: tanning and leather have been around for a very long time. And most of us will agree that despite the advent of synthetics, there is still nothing like a finely made leather purse or shoe.

Up until the late 1800s, leather was widely used for footwear, clothing, harnesses, carriage suspensions, book binding, vellum, fastenings and in large quantities for fitting out sailing ships and factories. There was simply nothing to replace the superior qualities of leather. It is strong, flexible, hard-wearing and waterproof.

When Cook's family arrived in Great Ayton, the Richardsons had been farming the area for one hundred years. They were well landed and well off. Young James Cook left Great Ayton for the history books, but the Richardsons remained. In the late 1600s, William Richardson (1660-1740) made a fateful decision. He decided to supplement his farming income by tanning leather.

The new endeavour went so well that it was not long before tanning replaced farming altogether and all three of William's sons had become tanners.

The Richardson Tanneries

For the next 300 years, the Richardson name became synonymous with tanning. Generations of sons grew the tanning business at several Yorkshire locations, the largest and most successful of which was at Newcastle-On-Tyne, the famous Edward & James Richardson (est. 1863). By 1913 their factory was enormous (image overleaf). Over the ensuing decades, E&J Richardson produced not only a wide range of tanned leather but almost every conceivable leather product as well.

How It's Done

For the curious, here's how tanning was traditionally done (trap yourself a rat in the backyard and follow along).

There were nine stages which could take up to a year to complete:

1. Plug your nose with wads of cotton soaked in Vicks Vapo-Rub (my idea)

2. Preserve the skin with salt
3. Wash the skin to remove the salt
4. Treat the hide with urine or lime
5. Scrape off the flesh, fat and hairs with the hide over a beam
6. Treat the hide with dog or pigeon faeces or animal brains
7. Soak the hide in progressively stronger solutions of tannic acid to prevent decomposition
8. Dry, then treat with wax or oil
9. Find another way to make a living

Great Ayton was the perfect place to build tanneries because it had an over-abundance of dog faeces, pigeon droppings, urine and lime — all the essentials for tanning. Tourism, for some reason, never thrived in Great Ayton.

All Good Things...

In the 1970s, Edward and James Richardson could no longer compete profitably in the global marketplace and closed their doors. The Richardsons moved on to other things. Today, Hugh and Tom Richardson of Northumberland, have a thriving ice cream business. From the hides of dead cows to the cream of live cows, life goes on.



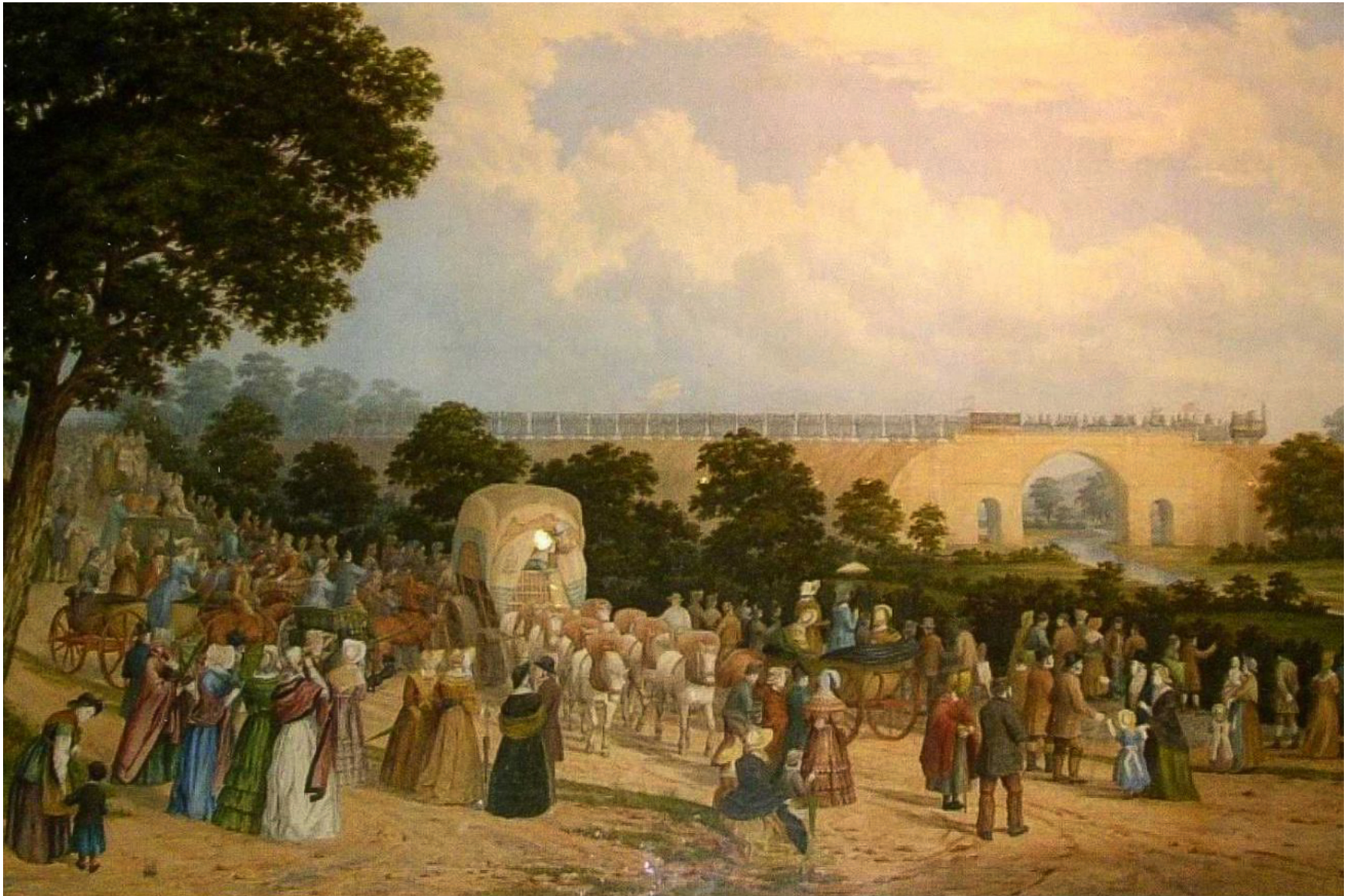
Opening day at the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Yorkshire

Edward Richardson (1835-1890)

Leather Manufacturer

Relation: 1st cousin 1x removed of husband of great-aunt





Opening day at the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Yorkshire. Artist: John Dobbin

And There Was Light

John Richardson Wigham (1829-1906)

By the mid-1800s the Richardsons had been in the tanning business for 200 years. One could say they had ‘made it.’ It would have been easy for family members to just continue doing what they knew best — tanning. Yet periodically, that spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship which seemed a part of their very DNA manifested in some remarkable and world-changing way.

Take the case of John Richardson Wigham (1829-1906), a Richardson on his mother’s side. John

was born a Quaker in Edinburgh. His father manufactured shawls. His mother died when he was one. At 15, his father sent him to Dublin, Ireland to apprentice under his brother-in-law, Joshua Edmundson (1806-1848). Joshua’s company, Edmundson and Company, worked iron, founded brass and manufactured gas generation plants.

Then, in 1848, Joshua died unexpectedly, aged 42. He contracted Typhus while working the Quaker soup kitchens during the Irish potato famine. His death left his wife, Mary Wigham (1818-1906), John’s sister, with 5 children under 8. Desperate, Mary asked John, then 19, to take over the family business.

Despite his young age and limited education, John proved to be an astute businessman. He narrowed the focus of the business to building improved gas plants (a plant was the mechanism which converted liquid fossil fuel to gas) of his own design and the enterprise

flourished.

Marine Applications

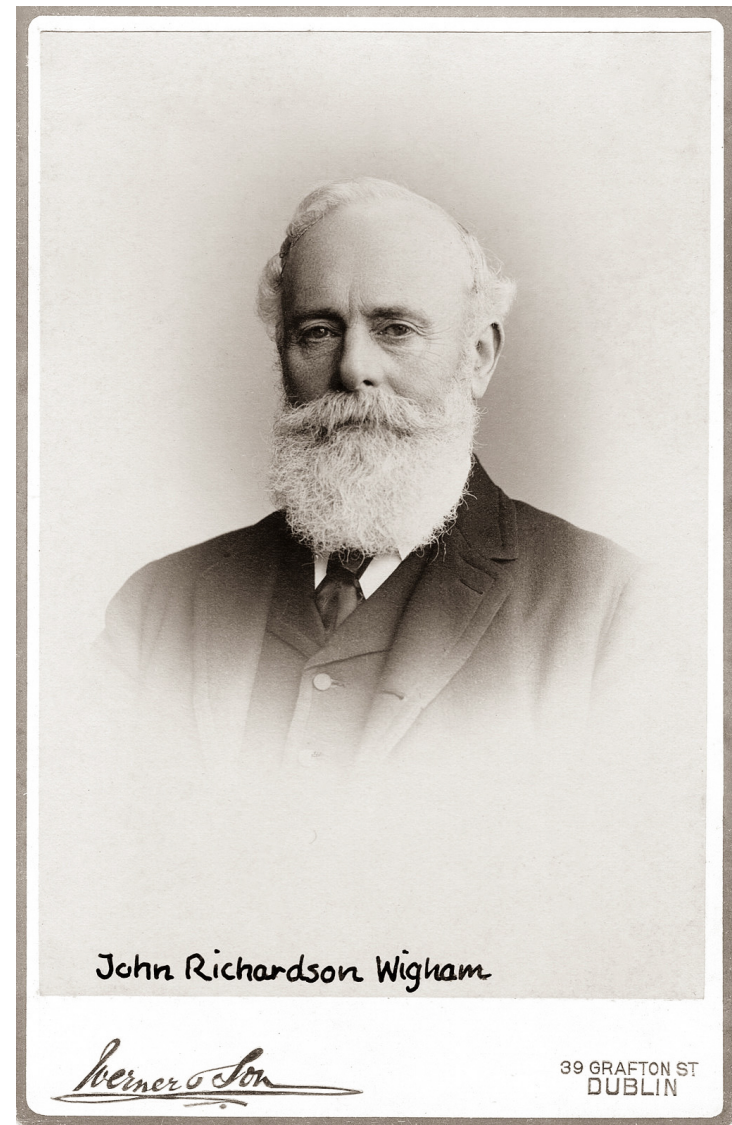
John's Richardson relatives built ships on the Clyde. No doubt he conversed with them at family gatherings about maritime matters. That got John thinking about expanding the business into navigational aids, in particular, developing lighted buoys for river navigation which would remain lit in severe weather. John patented the first successful lighted buoy in 1861.

In 1863, the Dublin Ballast Board gave John a grant to develop gas lights for lighthouses. In 1865, John's new gas light was installed in the Bailey Lighthouse on the east coast of Ireland. Experiments were carried out which identified the best fuel source for the light. The resulting design was 4 times more powerful than comparable oil lamps of the day. In 1868, Edmundson and Company installed an improved version of the light at Baily Lighthouse which was 13 times more powerful than the most brilliant light then known, an astonishing accomplishment. Then, just two years later, Wigham made another monumental innovation, an intermittent flashing mechanism, which timed the gas supply by means of clockwork. When this mechanism was combined with a

revolving lens in Rockabill Lighthouse, the world's first lighthouse with a group-flashing characteristic was produced. That innovation was of tremendous importance to navigation because it gave each lighthouse a unique identification, ruling out errors of position. It most certainly saved thousands of lives across the world.

Other inventions followed - better oil lamps, gas-lights, electric lights, gas-powered fog signals, buoys and acetylene lighting. John died in 1906, hard at work on a new innovation. For his life-saving accomplishments, John was twice offered a knighthood. In keeping with the Quaker abhorrence of titles, he twice declined.

John Richardson Wigham (1829-1906)
Lighthouse engineer
Relation: uncle of wife of 3rd cousin 3x removed



Rail!

Tom, our tour guide, had given us an hour to poke around Whitby, a lovely little fishing port where the Richardsons, for generations, once flourished in both tanning and shipbuilding. Tom gave us a choice to either hop back on the bus or take the Whitby to Pickering steam train to Pickering where he'd pick us up. What choice was that?

Tickets in hand, we waited on the station platform until The Northlander, with its seven carriages rolled into the station, let out an enormous hiss and stopped. There is something magical about trains, especially steam trains. Perhaps it's a guy thing, although I noted that everyone on the platform, men, women and children, seemed tickled to be there. I was. Fifty minutes in a time machine. How good is that?

The Northlander ambled along through the valleys of South Yorkshire, skimming the edges of occasional small villages, crossing pretty creeks, garnering little attention from the locals. Anxious to take pictures, I left my seat and walked forward to the debarking platform where I could reach through the window in the door and shoot the loco and cars as they arced around curves.

My mind wandered first to my childhood. In 1952, when I was five, my grandparents gave us tickets to take the CPR to Baie d'Urfé near Montreal to spend the summer with them and our eastern cousins. For a little boy, it was a magical trip. It took six days for the crossing. Black porters (and they were all black, an early version of reverse discrimination, I suppose), dressed sharply in all white uniforms, helped us to embark and debark at stations along the way. They were the kindest, most courteous of souls with deep south accents. We had our own stateroom and each late afternoon at precisely the same time, our dedicated porter came by to turn down the berths. The dining car had white linen table cloths, flourished white napkins and silver place settings embossed with the CPR logo. When we neared the Rockies something unforgettable happened. Our diesel engine was switched out for a steam locomotive. Steam locos have a

smell about them that once experienced is never forgotten. At the rear of the steam train was an open car — a regular lounge car with no windows, where one, in theory, could spend an afternoon reading, looking out and breathing in the fresh mountain air. No. That did not happen. I couldn't read but more to the point, the car was beset with smoke and soot from the loco. It filled my hair and lungs and covered my face in soot. About seven minutes was all a human being could take. Still, a nice idea.

I then imagined September 27, 1825. It was opening day for the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR), a day for the history books, for it was the world's first public railway to use steam locomotives. It was a business venture. The objective was to make money by moving coal from the collieries of County Durham (North Yorkshire) to ports on the east coast. There, colliers, coal carrying sailing ships, transported the coal to market, notably to London.

The public had been invited to go for a ride. Seating for 300 had been installed in a dozen coal waggons. Six hundred turned up, stuffing the seated wagons, additional empty wagons and the wagons filled with coal. They were off. A man on horseback

waving a flag led the way. Smoke and steam belched from Locomotive No.1 and on the gentle downslope, the remarkable speed of 12 miles per hour was reached.

Men on horseback galloping alongside could not keep up and fell away. Then something else fell away — a wheel on the wagon carrying the surveyors and engineers. The wagon was promptly removed and off they went again. Then repairs on the locomotive were required, a 35 minute stop. In two hours, travelling at an average speed of 8 mph, the train reached the Darlington Junction where ten thousand people were waiting to greet them. That evening, 102 people gathered at the Town Hall to celebrate the extraordinary achievement.

Quaker Edward Pease (1767-1858) was the major promoter of the railway. He issued shares promising a five percent return on investment. Two-thirds of the shares were sold locally and the remaining shares were purchased by Quakers across England.

Getting to opening day had been a challenge, to say the least. Building the railway required the consent of Parliament. A private bill was presented but failed, as the proposed route passed

through the Earl of Eldon's estate and one of the Earl of Darlington's fox coverts. A new route was proposed which satisfied the earls, but not Viscount Barrington whose estate the alternate route transgressed.

The challenges continued but one by one were surmounted by Pease who drove the project forward. The S&DR received Royal Assent on 19 April 1825. The terms: anyone could use the railway with their own suitably built vehicles on payment of a toll; the line must be closed at night and land owners within five miles of the line could build branches and make junctions. The S&DR became known as "the Quaker line" and Edward Pease, in some circles, was referred to as the 'father of railways.'

This really was the beginning of the Age of Railways in Britain. More railways built by others followed; new industries were born in iron and steel and locomotive manufacturing, and railway mapping and industries which depended on the efficient transportation of their goods, flourished.

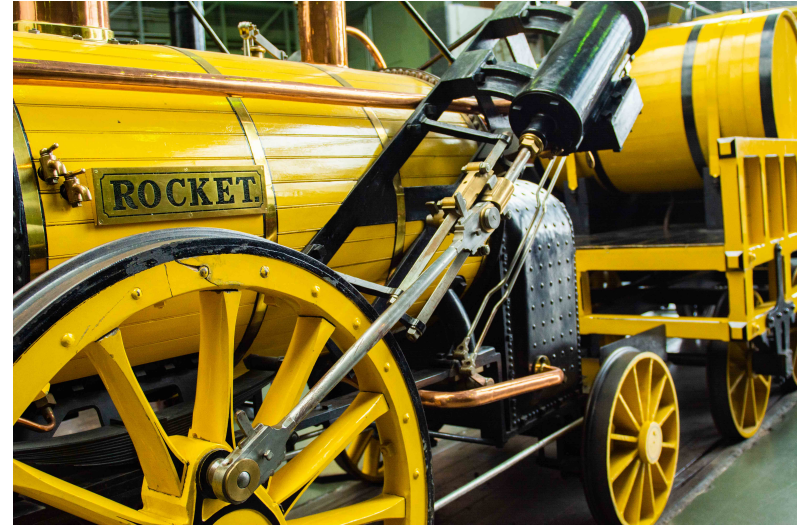
The day before our steam train ride to Pickering, we had visited the incomparable National Railway Museum in York. I had a field

day, spending hours shooting British locomotives representing a century and a half of improvements. Among them was 'The Rocket,' designed by George Stephenson in 1825. Stephenson was Pease's engineer partner and the technical genius behind the S&DR project. The Rocket brought together several innovations which made it the most advanced locomotive of its time and served as the template for locomotive manufacturing for the next 150 years.

Tom was there to greet us at Pickering Station. We re-boarded the tour bus and drove on to York, our last day in Yorkshire complete.



Opening day the Stockton & Darlington Railway, Yorkshire



Volunteers carry out all operations of the Whitby to Pickering Steam Train

Stephenson's 'Rocket', an improved version of Locomotive 1

Waiting for the Whitby to Pickering Steam Train

Whitby to Pickering Steam Train

Sir Edward Pease (1767-1858)

Woolens manufacturer, entrepreneur. raised the capital and acquired the licence to operate the S&DR

Relation: 2nd cousin 2x removed of husband of my great-aunt



Ships

John Wigham Richardson (1837-1908) was born in Newcastle-On-Tyne to Quakers Edward Richardson and Jane Wigham. He attended Bootham School in York, famous for its high quality education based on Quaker values. John's nephew, Charles Merz, pioneered electricity distribution, inventing the concept of synchronized grids now used world-wide.

The family business was leather tanning, however John's interest was shipbuilding. He apprenticed first as a draftsman, then in steam tug construction. In 1860, at age 23, John started his own shipyard, Neptune Works (known widely as Wigham Richardson), with a loan from his father. His was one of the first shipyards to build steel ships. As a pacifist Quaker, John did not build vessels for the British Navy.

In true Quaker fashion, the shipyard's steam engine also powered the neighbourhood's electric lights. As well, John's concern for his worker's well-being led him to found the Worker's Benevolent Trust, a precursor to trade unions. In his latter years, John left the Quaker faith and became an Anglican, probably because of pressure from his business partner, Swan Hunter, to bid on lucrative Admiralty contracts.

The first ship built was the 65 foot paddle steamer Victoria, used as a ferry carrying passengers, carts and livestock. As years past, Wigham Richardson's ship-building experience grew with the size and complexity of the ships they built. At the same time, they built marine engines which they used in the ships they constructed and which they sold to other yards on the Tyne and across Europe.

Wigham Richardson went on to build all manner of ships. In 1888, after 28 years in business, they built a four-masted, twin-funnelled ship, 408 feet long, with accommodations for 1040 passengers. From 1895 to 1901 the yard was expanded to 18 acres, allowing the construction of 12 freighters.

The company's timing was exquisite. They got in on the ground floor of steam-driven steel ship building at a time when there was a high demand for efficient marine travel for both cargo and passengers on coastal and trans-oceanic routes. As well, it was a time of mass migration and a desire by the wealthy to travel in style. Large ocean-going vessels with unimaginable amenities became both essential and avant garde. By the early 1900s, however, Wigham Richardson found itself unable to advance to the high-in-demand, lucrative liner contracts. It had the expertise, yet it simply could not raise the required capital alone.

The Mauretania

The issue was resolved in 1903 when Wigham Richardson merged with Britain's other large ship-builder, Swan and Hunter. The merger was specifically designed to allow the companies to jointly bid on the contract to build the super liner Mauretania for the Cunard Line. Their bid was successful and the new company Swan Hunter Wigham Richardson went on to build many more ships. Between 1906 and 1912 Swan Hunter Wigham Richardson was in its prime, producing the largest tonnage of ships in the world. In 1907, the company's output in tonnage accounted for **15% of the world's shipping**.

The Mauretania made its maiden voyage in 1907. It held the Atlantic Blue Riband speed record until 1929. During World War I Mauretania was used as a transport and hospital ship. Over her lifetime, she made 269 double crossings of the Atlantic in addition to her work in the war. She was much loved by her loyal patrons. Even today, she is the largest ship ever built on the Tyne.

On July 4, 1935, at 6:30am, she arrived in a half-gale at Rosyth, Scotland to be scrapped. A lone piper stood on the quayside playing a funeral lament. When her great engines were shut down, Mauretania gave a final deep shudder and fell silent. Twenty-eight years of hard service came to a close. The following Sunday, Mauretania was opened to the public for one last time. Twenty thousand people showed up.



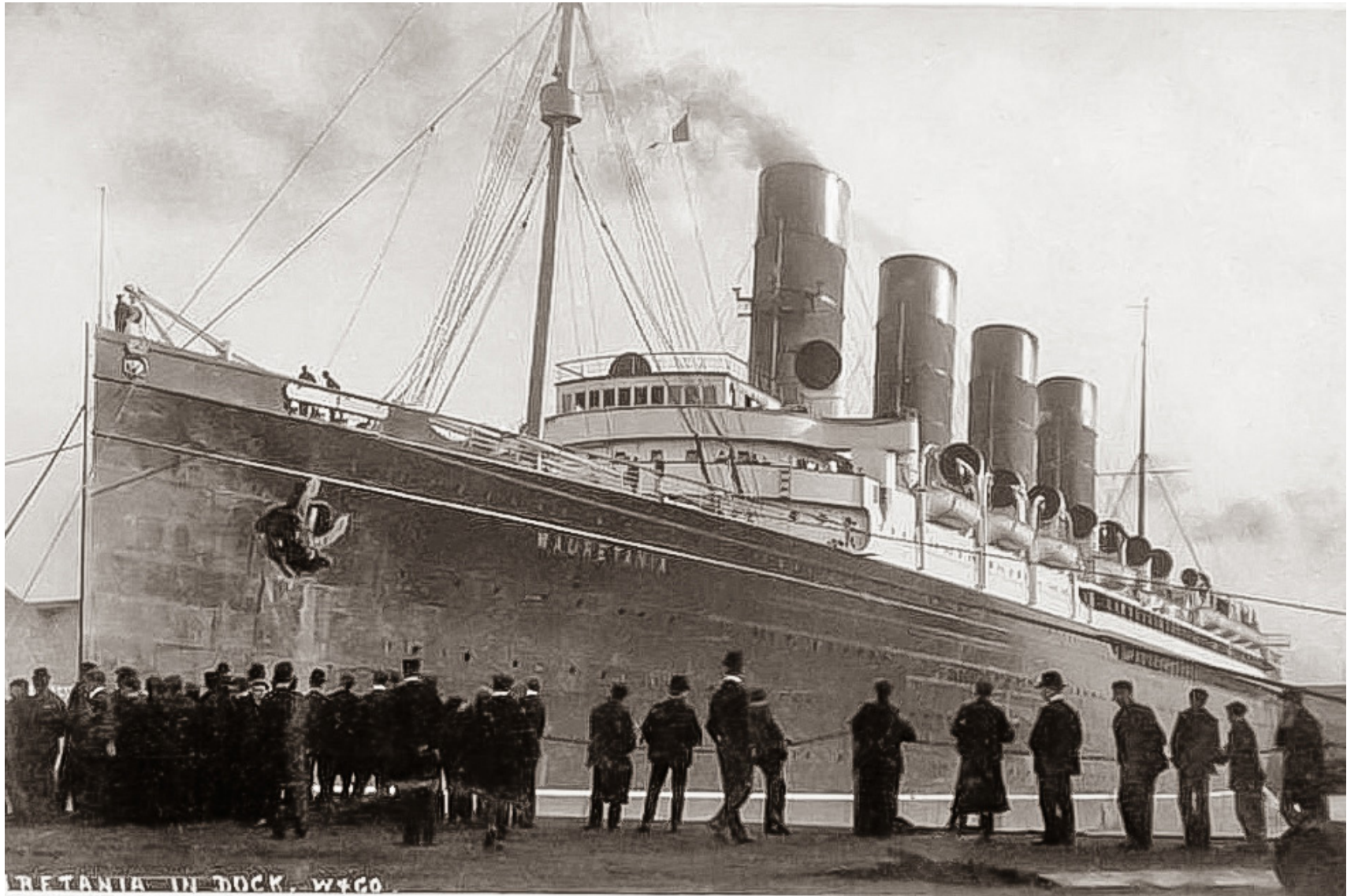
Interior of the Aquitania, illustrating the sophistication of luxury liners in the day



Interiors of the Mauretania



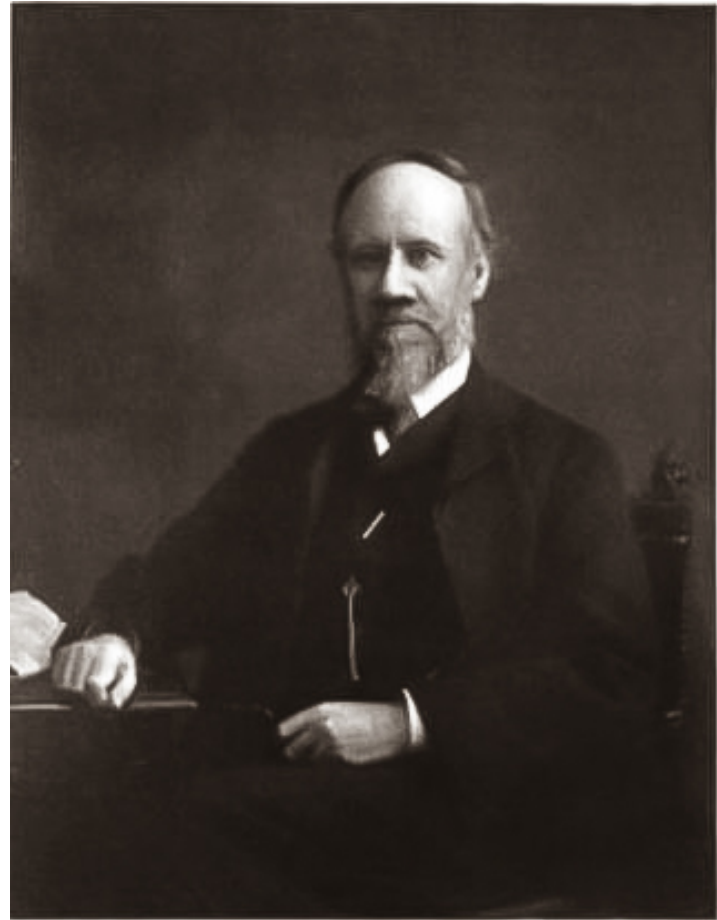
Interior of the Aquitania



Mauretania

John Wigham Richardson (1837-1908)

*Relation: 1st cousin 1x removed of husband of
great-aunt*



Wigham Richardson
1905.