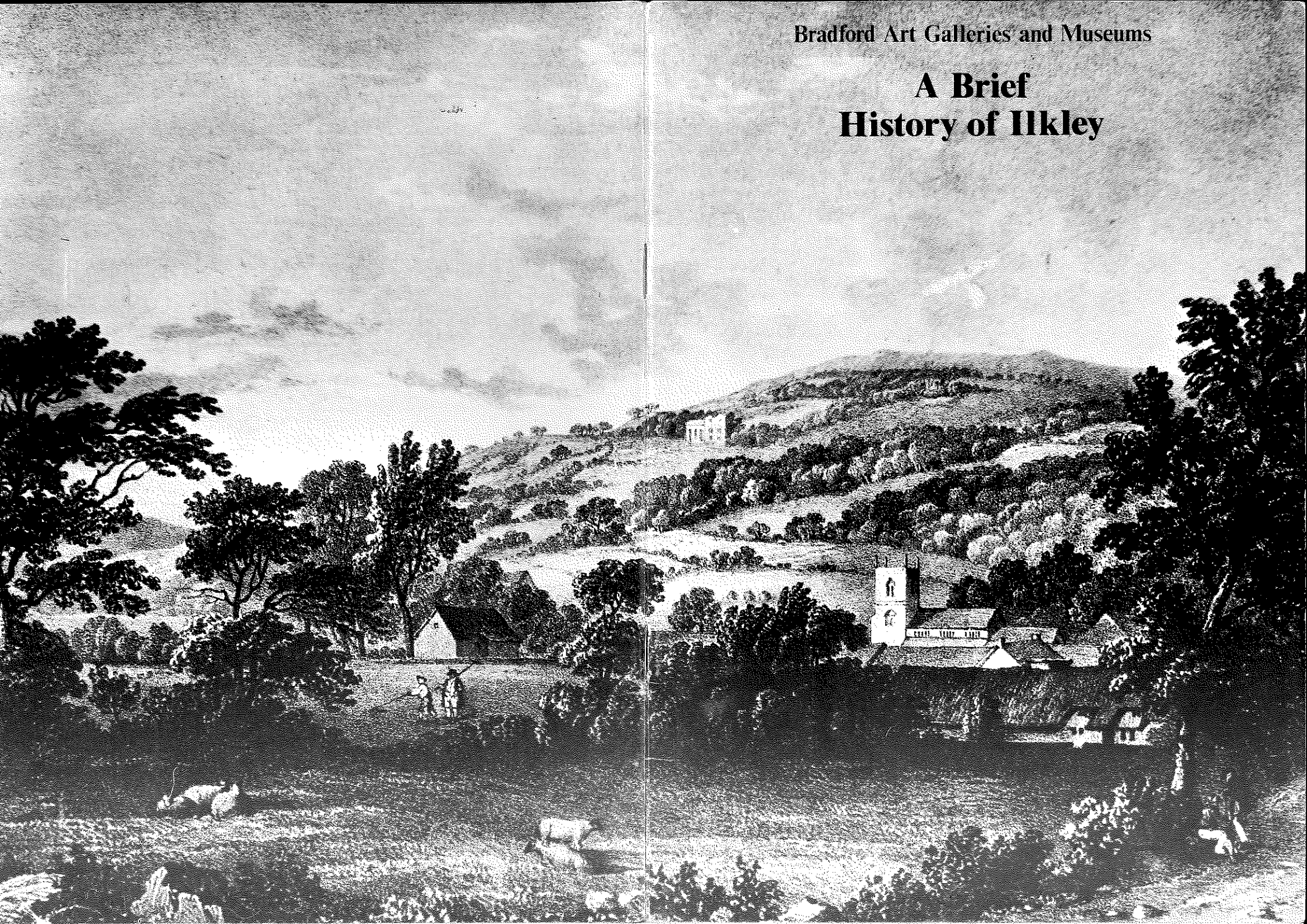


Bradford Art Galleries and Museums

# A Brief History of Ilkley



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**Cover Illustration.**

Ilkley c1830, from an engraving  
presented by the Friends of the  
Manor House in 1977.

**Illustration left**

*A rear view of the Manor House  
and the exposed Roman wall.*



Gravestone of T. Flavius Bassus found at Cologne, dating from the 1st century A.D. Auxiliary cavalry of this type garrisoned the fort at Ilkley.  
(Courtesy of Romisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne).

## The Origins of Ilkley

Flint and stone tools which have been discovered on the local moors indicate that the Ilkley area has been inhabited from earliest times. People lived on the bottom slopes of the valleys hunting, fishing and gathering food. When the weather permitted they would have hunted on the higher ground where the forest cover was less dense. The emergence of agriculture in about 3,500 B.C. was accompanied by the introduction of new tool types and a more settled existence. Parts of the forested area were cleared in order to establish permanent settlements and allow the cultivation of crops and the grazing of animals. The introduction of metals, at first bronze and later iron, did not radically change the way of life of these people.

After the Roman invasion during the first century A.D. a ring of forts was built around the Pennines. Tacitus, describing the achievements of the Roman governor Agricola wrote:

“ . . . he gave the enemy no rest, but constantly launched plundering raids. Then when he had done enough to inspire fear, he tried the effect of clemency and showed them the attractions of peace. As a result many states which had maintained their independence gave hostages and abandoned their resentful attitude. A ring of garrisons was placed around them . . . ”

The Roman fort in Ilkley, founded about 79 A.D., was one of this ring of garrisons, linked by road to forts at Elslack, near Skipton, and Adel to the north of Leeds. The road from Littleborough in Lancashire to Aldborough near Boroughbridge also passed through Ilkley. The settlement was built on a platform cut into the natural slope of the land bounded to the east and west by streams, conveniently near a fording place on the river.

**Plans of the Roman fort, based on the results of excavations.**

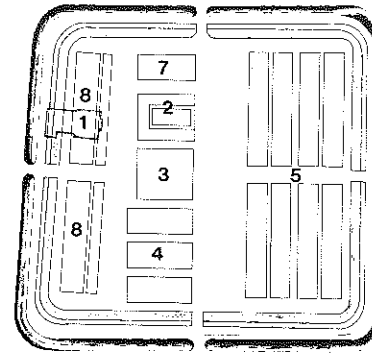
1 The Flavian fort c79 A.D. It was built of wood and would have accommodated a garrison of 380 infantry and 120 cavalry.

2 The Antonine fort 161-169 A.D. The fort was rebuilt on the site of the earlier one, but was destroyed during a native uprising.

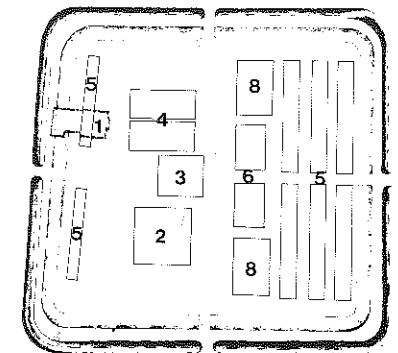
3 The Severan fort 197-198 A.D. This third fort was the first to make extensive use of stone as it was surrounded by a five foot thick defensive wall.

4 The Constantian fort c290 A.D.

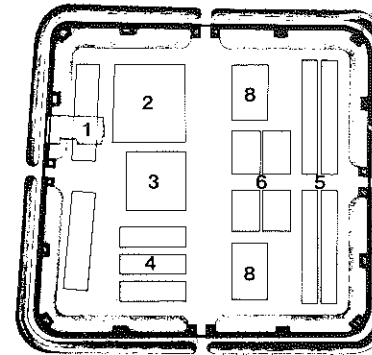
5 The Theodosian fort c380 A.D. The final layout of the fort is only partially known as more modern development has destroyed most of the evidence for it.



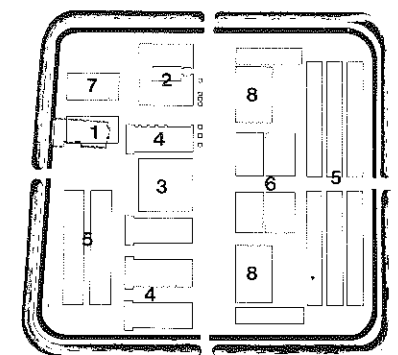
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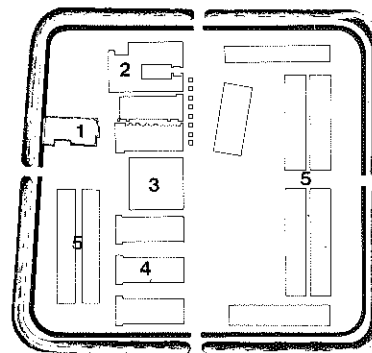
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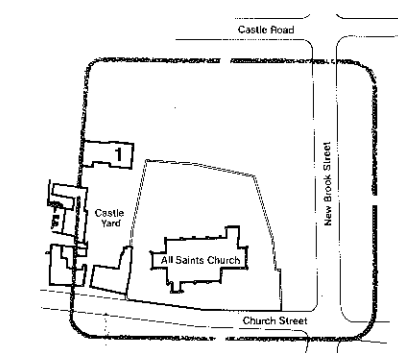
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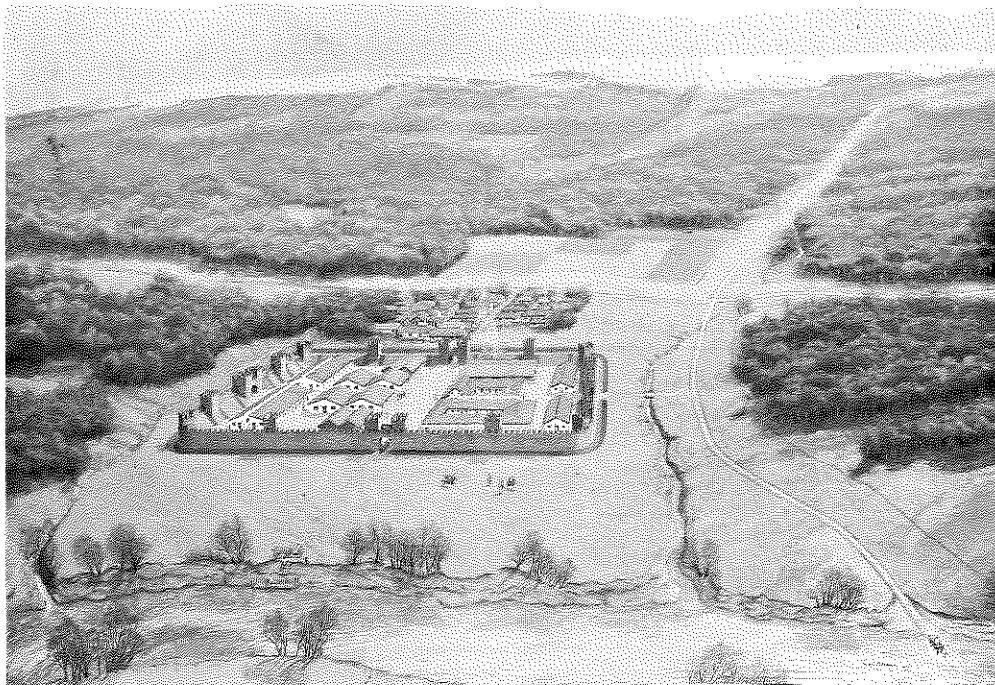
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Artists impression of the Roman fort at Ilkley in 197 A.D. viewed from the North.



The forty years following the governorship of Agricola (78-84 A.D.) were marked by civil and other strife elsewhere in the Empire. Reinforcements were drawn from the army in Britain and the territories in Scotland became insecure and were finally evacuated during the reign of Hadrian. A wall marking the northern frontier of the Empire was constructed by workers drawn from forts south of the wall and this withdrawal of labour probably led to the abandonment of the fort at Ilkley in the early second century. The fort was rebuilt about fifty years later but destroyed shortly afterwards during a native uprising. It was rebuilt again, and for the first time extensive use was made of stone rather than wood; there was some remodelling of the fort in about 290 A.D. The final phase of occupation in the late fourth century is not very well understood in terms of lay-out but it is the only period for which the identity of the garrison is known. Early excavations uncovered tiles stamped with the name II Cohort Lingonum, a garrison recruited in Northern France.

The three Anglian Crosses which now stand in the Parish Churchyard.

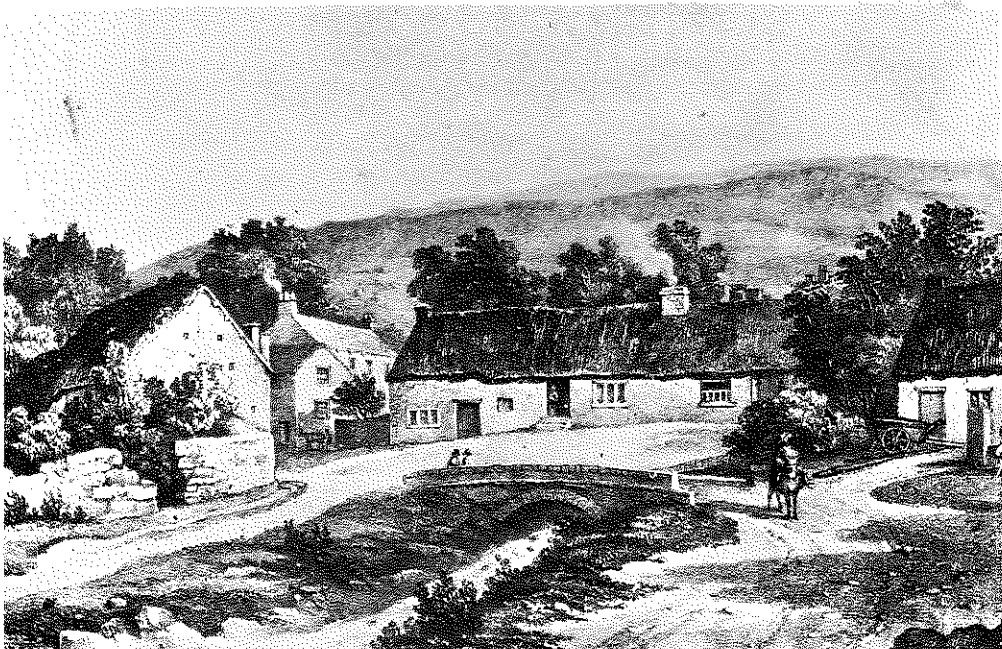


Nothing is known of the final abandonment of the fort in the late fourth or early fifth century but the civilian settlement which had developed around the fort undoubtedly grew and eventually the inhabitants erected the carved stone crosses now to be seen in the churchyard. They have been dated to the ninth century, and it is probable that lintels found built into the fifteenth century tower of the present parish church were once part of a building also of ninth century date, perhaps a church. After the official withdrawal of the Roman Army the local people continued to live by farming. There would have been small farmsteads in woodland clearings but this dispersed settlement still centred around the old Roman fort where the roads crossed. Many place names incorporate Anglo-Saxon elements e.g. **Addingham, Stubham, Beamsley, Burley, Middleton, and Denton.** (Ham — homestead; ley — clearing in a wood; ton — enclosure or village). After the Norman Conquest, the Anglo-Saxon landowner, Gamel, was dispossessed of his Manor of Ilkley and it was granted to the de Percy family; the Manor included the villages of Nesfield, Langbar, Middleton, Stubham and Wheatley, as well as Ilkley itself. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records that there was a church with a priest and that half the Manor was wooded whilst the remainder was uncultivated pasture or waste. The villagers of medieval Ilkley spent their time working in the fields, although a tax return of 1378 reveals that there was an innkeeper, a blacksmith, weavers, millers, a tailor and a wood-turner in the Manor. Every Wednesday there was a market and from October 16th - 23rd every year there was a fair. Half yearly courts were held in a Manor House, at which the Lord of the Manor received rents and issued fines as well as settling minor quarrels and disturbances. During the fifteenth century the Lordship of the Manor passed out of the control of the de Percy family and eventually came to the Middletons with whom it remained until early this century when the estate was sold.

The Civil War had little effect on Ikley, although Lord Thomas Fairfax, Cromwell's General of the North had his home in nearby Denton. William Middleton served the King and was made Lieutenant Colonel of a regiment of horse. He was besieged in Pontefract Castle and his lands were temporarily confiscated after his capture. Other than this, Ikley and the surrounding area experienced little change or turmoil until the Industrial Revolution.

In 1800, Ikley was a village of only 240 inhabitants. Many of the houses were thatched and a stream ran the full length of Brook Street, crossed by a bridge at the upper end, near the present Grove.

The top of Brook Street, Ikley, c1800.



Lord Thomas Fairfax of Denton, General of the North for Oliver Cromwell.



From the middle of the eighteenth century, "taking the waters" at the various spa towns of England and Europe had become fashionable and medically approved. Graceful resorts grew up, often developing into towns of architectural beauty. The fashion in these spa towns was to drink the waters which usually contained various minerals but by the beginning of the nineteenth century the popularity of the spas was declining.

Accounts of a new system of hydropathy, discovered by a Silesian peasant called Priessnitz, began to arrive in this country about the year 1810. Patients were immersed in cold water or wet compresses were applied to various parts of the body in order to drive out "morbid matters" in the blood. Exercise, fresh air and a simple diet were important. In England the first hydropathic establishments were built with these considerations in mind, particularly as the waters required no special mineral content.

Ikley already had a reputation as a spa because of the spring at White Wells. The water in this spring was considerably colder than normal spring water and it was believed that the tingling sensation following brief immersion was highly efficacious. The springs were visited by the middle classes of Leeds and Bradford.

White Wells, Ikley, 1857.



"Sitz bath and Wet Sheet. 6 o'clock winter's morn."  
 "This is delightful! Very!"  
 (from "Pleasures of the Water Cure" published 1857).

In 1843 Hamer Stansfield, Lord Mayor of Leeds, built the Ben Rhydding Hydropathic Establishment at Wheatley, one mile from Ilkley. It was an ideal location, with its pleasant surroundings and clean air, conveniently sited on a regular stage-coach route.

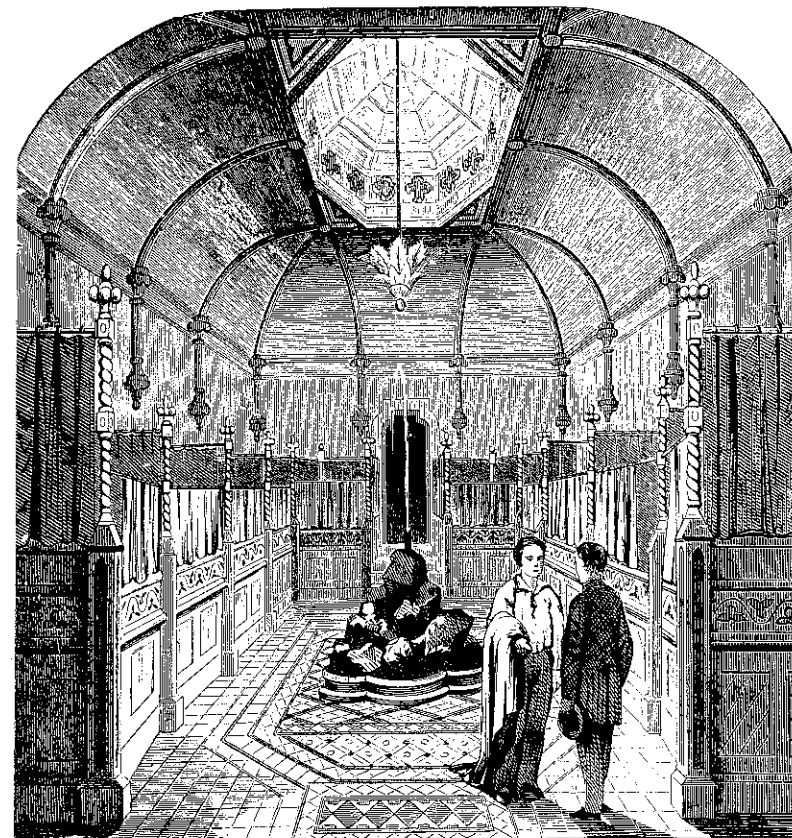
It was not an immediate success but in 1847 a new physician was appointed. Dr. William McLeod had an excellent professional record, great energy and an astute business mind. Under his guidance the hydro prospered and by 1863 he owned the entire business. Patrons were offered comfortable, though austere, accommodation, the constant attention of the resident physician and a regimented life-style based on regular exercise, bathing and food. Its success promoted a period of building in Ilkley.

In 1856 Wells House was built near White Wells, followed in 1859 by the building of Craiglands, Crossbeck (1861), Troutbeck (1867), Stoney Lea (1892), The Spa, Moorlands, Marlborough House, and Rockwood House. Even the smaller boarding-houses were calling themselves hydros by the end of the century. Building stone was locally supplied from the Hangingstones and Grainingshead Quarries.

The opening of the railway in 1865 made Ilkley more accessible to visitors — Ben Rhydding Hydro acquired its own railway station which was specially adapted to the needs of invalids — and opened up the district as a dormitory area for the prosperous middle classes from industrial Leeds and Bradford.

Parcels of land from the Middletons' Estate south of the river were sold to developers between 1868 and 1894 and land north of the river was made available from 1890. A rash of speculative building followed.

The Ben Rhydding Hydropathic Establishment, built in 1843 by Hamer Stanfield.



The "Roman Baths" at the Ben Rhydding Hydro.



The growth of the town brought changes. Roads were improved, mains gas was supplied to private houses, street lighting was introduced, a system of reservoirs was built by a private company and the older properties were demolished. In 1869, a local board was set up with, fittingly, Dr. McLeod as a member. The Urban District Council was formed in 1894. Victorian philanthropism found outlets in the erection of convalescent homes for the poorer classes, financed by donations from the guests at the hydros. This period also marked the beginnings of the tourist industry in Ilkley. "Donkey" Jackson hired out animals to take people to the wells and moors and John Shuttleworth opened a bookshop and photography shop selling post-cards, magazines, tourist ephemera and treatises on hydropathy. Mr. Vickers, a bookshop owner, opened a lending library, whilst cabs were available for hire, the "rank" being in Brook Street.

Towards the end of the century the popularity of the hydros began to wane. By 1902 only Craiglands and Ben Rhydding offered the services of resident physicians. After the first World War, Ben Rhydding was being advertised as a "golf hotel" and only the east wing of Craiglands was reserved for patients "who are willing, and earnestly desire, to maintain the strictest quiet after 9 p.m." The major development of Ilkley was over but its role as a leisure centre has partly compensated for the loss of the hydros. It continues to serve as a dormitory town for the neighbouring cities. Following local government re-organisation in 1974 it became a part of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

The Grove, Ilkley, 1872.



Brook Street, Ilkley, after the construction of the Railway Bridge carrying the line to Bolton Abbey.

## The Manor House

Although named the Manor House, there is little to suggest that this building was ever the administrative centre of the Manor of Ilkley. It is more likely that Middleton Lodge, the home of the Lords of the Manor, fulfilled this function and that this building was simply a yeoman farmer's house or perhaps the Vicarage.

The South facade of the Manor House.



The house incorporates three separate phases of building. The principal remains of the earliest period of building are the arch of the main entrance, the Caernarvon arches leading off the screens passage and the arched rear entrance which belong to the 15th or 16th century. The oak screen in this passage has been reconstructed using the original tie beam which was found incorporated into a partition wall during restoration of the property in 1961. The modern oak panelling was inserted into the existing mortices. Additional evidence of this early phase includes the foundations of the west wing which rest directly on the Roman defences to the fort. The distinct boundary to the building plot has probably been operative since the building was erected. The massive foundations of the eastern wall of the house appear to be more substantial than those associated with later building phases, and they have been found to contain fragments of 16th century pottery. It is therefore likely that the present east and west walls of the building follow the line of those of the medieval house now represented only in the area of the passage.

The Caernarvon arches in the screens passage.



The medieval structure was probably built of stone rather than being fully or half-timbered, to judge from the scarcity of re-used woodwork in the roof. It probably consisted of a main open hall, with a gallery, separated from the kitchen and other service areas by the screens passage and there would have been a private withdrawing room or solar in the upper storey of the east wing. Access to this would have been through the chamfered doorway next to the fireplace. Beam sockets in the wall indicate that this door could be barred from the inside. The privy, set into the east wall of the solar, is an interesting feature not always remaining in houses of this period. During the late 16th century or early 17th century the front of the house was remodelled. The smaller masonry blocks (which may have been derived from the long-abandoned Roman fort), the round-topped mullioned and transomed windows and the small gable section on the front facade of the house belong to this period. The entire roof structure belongs to this phase of development and is of orthodox king post type.

The 17th century king post roof.



The mullioned windows with drip-mouldings above were inserted into the west wing during the mid. 17th century. A late 18th century cottage (now demolished) was built onto the eastern end of the house where an 18th century chimney stack remains.

The Manor House was known as 'the Castle' until 1956 when Mr. Percy Dalton gave it to the Local Authority. Prior to this it had been divided up and used as five cottages. The Manor House has been used as a local history museum and art gallery with a lively programme of exhibitions since the restoration was completed in 1961.

The mullioned windows with drip-mouldings.





The Manor House and Castle Yard  
in about 1870.

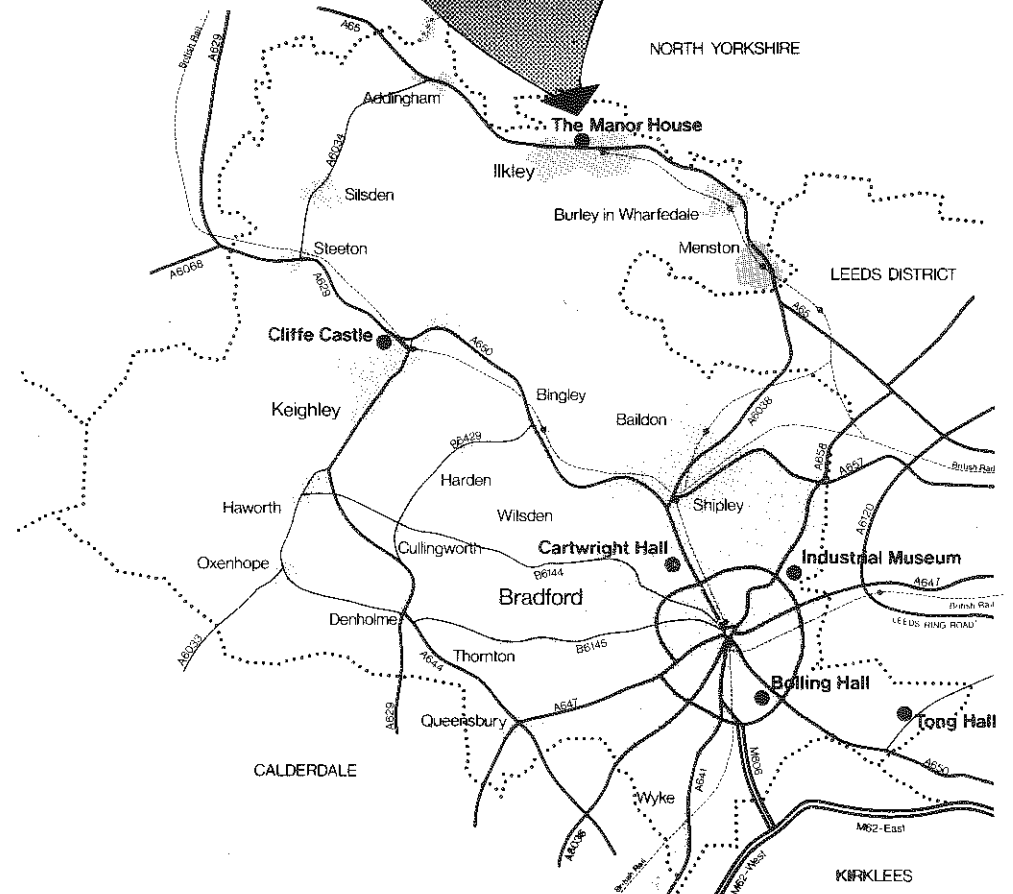
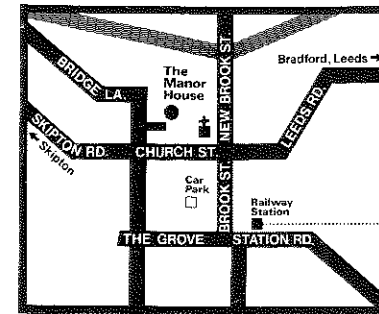
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# The Manor House

Castle Yard Ilkley LS29 9DT

Opening hours April-September 10.00-18.00 October-March 10.00-17.00



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