

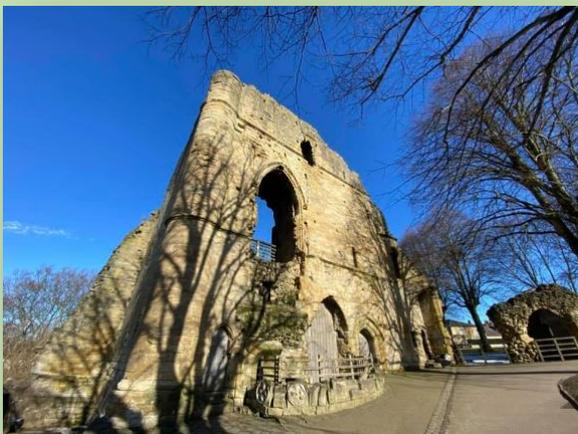
The Royal Forest of Knaresborough



The Harrogate area has long been associated with the Victorian era and has been promoted as a Victorian Spa Town. Whilst this is all true it fails to address the true development of our history and how the wider area as a whole is intrinsically connected.

I have lived in Harrogate all my life. My parents, grandparents and great grandparents, bar one great grandmother: Agnes Story Swales nee Shepard, who was born in Leith, Midlothian, Scotland in 1870. We were all from The Forest of Knaresborough. My ancestry DNA verifies this making me 44% English & North Western Europe. After the passing of my parents I became more fascinated with our history, as many people are. I wanted to know more, so I began searching and the more I found out, the more intrigued I became.

“Who Do You Think You Are?”



I never knew the answer to that question?

I'm beginning to know now.

Once I began my research into our local history I noticed something quite strange, there was an unbelievable amount of rich history on our doorstep. It appeared that this area was a key place in the history of Britain.

Of course it was? I had never really thought about it before.

To list a few places: York, Fountains Abbey, Knaresborough, Bilton Park, Haverah Park, New Park, Bolton Priory, Ripley Castle, Fewston, Timble, Plumpton, Spofforth, Nidderdale, Ribston Hall, Thornthwaite, Padside, Killinghall. The list could go on and on. Whilst you recognise some of these places I bet you are surprised by some entries to the list?

Discovering The Royal Forest of Knaresborough

As I continued to dig deeper one phrase kept coming up time-after-time: *The Forest of Knaresborough*. The history and bond between our area becomes more evident in the formation of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough. This period in history was created by our pagan, barbarian pirate ancestors, ‘Normans’ to me and you. The Royal Forest created a connection to the places our Norman ancestors lived. They took what was great and made it better. Much in the same way we try to do today. They identified the beauty and plundered the rich sources of food and land to build their great wealth. They also destroyed anything and anyone who got in their way, which gave them the notorious title, The Plantagenets, Britain’s Bloodiest Dynasty.

What struck me more than anything though was the fact that we all descend from these people

The indigenous people of the British Isles have a combination of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Norman ancestry, Wikipedia.

At this point I should say I am by no means an expert in History – my degree was in Theatre, I have a passion for our history which makes me an amateur historian I suppose. I will wear that badge with pride.

Get Involved and Support our Project

This brings me onto my proposal I am currently creating an exciting new project to connect the past and present life in The Royal Forest of Knaresborough. This project aims to build on my research, the history available to us and our hidden history, to re-connect the people and places in this beautiful area. To discover our local history and begin to make connections with the past before it's lost forever.

My aim for the project will be to tell stories from our past and present life through video, audio and texts. Meeting people and discovering the places that make this area so special.

I'm currently seeking support with the project to enable there to be a standalone website packed full of fascinating history, stories and links on how the area has developed into what we see today.

I would love everyone to be involved and invite individuals and businesses to connect and tell their stories, so we can begin to build a true picture of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough, its history, people and places.

If you would like to get involved or wish to know more then please get in touch. Stories are better shared.

"This period in time has a significant impact on who we are and the way we live today. I want to use this as a reference to explore our lives through a shared understanding and experience, documenting the present whilst looking to the past, and the future of this wonderful place."



More about Mark

I have a combined honours degree in Theatre with Arts Management, from Dartington College of Arts, University of Plymouth, and a post graduate in Drama from the University of Leeds. My Media training includes: Screen Yorkshire, University College London, National Film and Television School, and the British Film Institute.

I also work in supporting roles for ITV and the BBC and have produced everything from short films to live Drama.

Over the past 30 years I have produced a wide variety of projects for numerous clients, including a High End Broadcast TV Pitch to the BBC.

I have also worked as a teacher of Theatre, Drama and Media in schools and collages throughout Yorkshire and the South West.

I am now developing a business as a Voiceover Artist and Media Producer whilst still continuing to work freelance in the TV and Film Production industry.

I have already attracted interest in the project through social media platforms and have begun to create content which can be viewed on my website. As we move forward I hope to continue to grow and develop the project into a full-time venture, one which would employ a small team of people working in various disciplines to bring this amazing history to life once more.

Thank you for your time.

I hope you will be interested in being involved in our venture. My best wishes. Mark.

How to get involved as an individual:

- [Join our Facebook Groups](#)
- [Tell a story](#)
- [Spread the word](#)
- [Become a Flower in our Forest](#) and donate to the development of the website.

As a business:

[Tell your story](#) (through pictures, text, audio or video we would love to help you tell your story and share your history)

Connect with us through [a business listing](#)

Sponsor a story.

Donate to the development of [our standalone website](#).