

Why Judy Woods?

By Mary Twentyman

One of the most popular recreational beauty spots to the south of Bradford must surely be Judy Woods, a narrow band of beech woodland stretching from Wyke to Woodside and Shelf. Yet if you consult the Landranger or Explorer series to the Ordnance Survey maps you will search in vain for a reference to Judy Woods.

Many local history books, booklets and walk leaflet on the area will tell you that the woods take their name from Judy North or "Gurt Judy" who lived in the woods near Judy Brig (Bridge) and in the mid 1800's sold ginger beer, parkin pigs and spice sticks to the many visitors to the pleasure gardens and bridge. When the various versions are examined and compared it soon becomes obvious that they have one common source, the books of James Parker of Great Horton published in the early 1900.s. In fact it is quite surprising how little additional information about Judy has been added in the past one hundred years.

The writings of James Parker

James Parker published three books which are of interest when seeking the history of the Low Moor and Wyke area. These are:

1. Wibsey, Low Moor, Shelf and Coley in *Bygone Days* (1900)
2. *Illustrated history of Wibsey, Low Moor, Oakenshaw, Wike, Norwood, Green, Judy Brig, Royds Hall, Coley and Shelf* (1902)
3. *Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong* (1904)

There is no mention of Judy in the first volume but the second devotes three pages to 'Horse Close Bridge and Stick O'Judy', 'Old Judy and the Vicar of Wibsey Chapel and Judy's Gardens', and includes three line drawings and one photograph to support the 940-word narrative. 'Ramble from Hipperholme to Tong', under the heading of 'Judy Brig or Horse Close Bridge', again covers three pages but with four photographs and one line drawing. There is not much text this time, just some 280 words.

Parker also wrote a series of articles in the *Illustrated Bradford Weekly Gazette* in 1898/99, excerpts from which later appear in his books. There was a ten-week series on Wibsey, articles on Bierley, Coley and Shelf, and in the October 22nd 1898 edition, a short article entitled 'A Ramble to Royds Hall, North Bierley'. This item doesn't mention Judy but says of the cottages at Horse Close Bridge that they are 'now pulled down' and were birth place of Bill 'Lord' North.

The books of 1902 and 1904 seem to contradict each other about the parentage of William, Bill or 'Lord' North as he is variously referred to. The 1902 book says Judy had a son called John O'Judy's and that William was also one of her sons. The 1904 book, however, tells us that when Judy married Joseph North she had one son, John O'Judy's, and Joseph had "some children amongst the most noted of them were two son's, which are later named as Wm or Bill North and Benjamin North.

Parker is fond of saying things happened 'long ago' or in the instance of the making of the public gardens by the North family 'many long years ago'. He does, though, give some helpful dates:

- John O'Judy's died in March ²
- Judy herself died in 1870 aged over 80 years ²
- The pleasure gardens were broken up by Amos Kellet after John's death in 1869 ²
- Bill North died at Storr Hillside on 21st November 1881 in his 65th year ²
- Benjamin North died in Norwood Gren in March 1903.³ He left two daughters, the Misses North, school mistresses at Norwood Green Village School.

Numbers in superscript refer to book titles mentioned earlier

What were the books called?

In his books, Parker calls the local beauty spot and 'pic-nic' place beloved of the local inhabitants either 'Judy Brig' or 'Horse Close Bridge'. In an earlier reference on page 89² when mentioning Royds Hall, he tells us that in the cottages just below the hall (Horse Close Bridge) lives Barret Hodgson and his son, who are the game keepers and woodmen of Royds Hall Woods. He further informs us 'that visitors in summer time can have tea and refreshments at Mr Hodgson's'. Horse Close Cottages are just across the fields above Horse Close Bridge, so it would appear that in the early 1900's the woods were called Royds Hall Woods. This is confirmed by Johnnie Gray in his 1890 book 'One Hundred and Eighty Pleasant Walks around Bradford'. Horse Close Bridge or Brig is mentioned in Routes 109, 117 and 118 and Royds Hall Wood in Route 42. In the 1898 article in the 'Illustrated Bradford Weekly Gazette' Parker himself calls the spot Horse Close Bridge.

On consulting 'Round about Bradford' by William Cudworth (1875) we find that he talks about Horse Close Bridge and Royds Hall Woods, but he also quotes a disconcertingly familiar story concerning the Vicar of Wibsey Chapel.

What about the Vicar's visit?

Cudworth's tale is very similar to that which Parker retells some twenty-seven years later.³ The gist of the story is that the vicar on one of his visits to the garden at Horse Close Bridge selects a plant, but when reminded by the lady of the gardens that he has not paid responds that first he must see if the plant is to thrive or not. Later, the same lady visits the his church to have a child baptised, and as she leaves the vestry is reminded that she has not paid the vicar his fees, whereupon she responds in like manner that she too will wait to see if the object in question thrives.

Both stories obviously refer to the same incident and both tell us the baptism in question was that of Bill North. Both agree that the vicar was the Revd Roger Powell and Cudworth helpfully adds that he took up the post in 1804 and died in 1833. He says the vicar was paying his usual visit to the gardens of Old North and both accounts recall his conversation there with Mrs North. However, Parker says this is a traditional story about Judy and the joke she played on the vicar, and the final words at the baptism are put onto the lips of Judy too.

Who lived at Horse Close Cottages?

On consulting the various census records it would appear that the two families called North were living in the cottages near the bridge in 1841. Joseph and Betty North, both aged around 50 years, were living together with six children including William and a Benjamin (the children referred to in Parker's books). Both Joseph and William North are said to be gardeners, In another house is John North aged 70, also a gardener, and Martha North aged 50. With them are four young adults surnamed Holmes. Could John North be the father of Joseph North? The 1841 census doesn't tell us the relationship of the various people in each household and the ages of adults are only given to the nearest five years.

Often assumptions about the relationships in the 1841 census can be confirmed by comparing households with the 1851 details, but at Horse Close Bridge this doesn't work as none of those in the Joseph and Betty North household are listed. Instead we have Judith Ellis aged 56, a widow and 'gardeneress' employing one man, and her son John Barraclough, aged 28, a gardener. Next door Martha North, now aged sixty, is a widow. Only William Holmes from the last census is still living with her, together with his wife. He is identified as her son aged 30 and a coal miner. This would suggest that Martha was John North's second wife and the Holmes children are from her first marriage.

On the 1861 census only one house remains occupied at Horse Close Bridge and there we find John Barraclough aged 38, a gardener, and his mother, Judith Barraclough, a widow aged 66 and a dealer in sweetmeats.

By the time of the 1871 census the cottages have been demolished.

Judith / Judy who?

The not very common Christian name Judith, together with a son called John, suggest that the 1851 census entry for Horse Close Bridge is Judy North and John O'Judy's. But why the different surname for Judy in each census and why isn't she Judith North?

The Marriage Register of St Peter's Bradford (now the Cathedral) helps to explain this:

5 October 1810

Joseph North and Betty Hodgson

1 November 1819

Joseph Barraclough, Weaver of this parish, and Judith Stocks, Spinster of the parish

10th April 1833

Isaac Jowett, Comber of this parish, and Judith Barraclough, widow of the parish
(Both make their mark)

27th August 1847

Joseph Ellis North, aged 57, a Widower and Gardener of North Bierley, father John North, a Gardener, and Judith Jowett, aged 53, a Widow of Wibsey Slack, father Joshua Stocks, a Carter
(Joseph sign the register and Judy makes her mark)

As Wibsey was just a chapel of ease, couples had to make the journey to the Parish Church of St Peter to be married, and all three of Judy's marriage took place there. The first to Joseph Barraclough, a weaver when she was aged 23 in 1819. They had at least four children, but only John, born in 1823, survived childhood. By 1833 Joseph died and on 10th April Judy married Isaac Jowett. The 1841 census finds her living at Slackside, Wibsey with Isaac, a woolcomber, and she is described as stuff weaver. Son John Barraclough is 15 years old and an iron miner. Isaac died aged 72 years on 5th February 1845. The cause of his death was asthma. It must have been a great change for both Judy and John when they moved to the cottage by the pleasure gardens at the bridge. John changed his occupation from miner to gardener and both took over the running of the garden after the death of Judy's third husband, Joseph North, whom she married in 1847.

Surprisingly, given the unusual name, there are two possible baptism entries for Judy. The first at Wibsey Chapel (now Holy Trinity, Low Moor) Hall, husbandman, on 25th February 1795. There is also an entry at St Peter's, Bradford, on 28th March 1796 for Judy, the illegitimate daughter of Mary Stocks of Wibsey. At her marriage to Joseph North she gave her father's name as Joshua not Joseph, but as there is no way of knowing the name of the father of the illegitimate Judy North that doesn't help.

Judy was only married to Joseph for some two and a half years. He died on 3rd April 1850 aged 61 'old age'. His occupation was given as gardener. His death was registered under the name of Joseph North Ellis by John Barraclough.

It seems likely that the entry as Judith Barraclough in the 1861 census was either a misunderstanding or a clerical error on the part of the enumerator, who presumed that being John's mother she would share his surname.

The use of the surname Ellis in the 1861 census is interesting. Judy's late husband Joseph is usually referred to as simply Joseph North, but at the baptism of one of his ten children he is referred to as Joseph Ellis North. Interestingly, this is the only baptism performed by the assistant curate, L. Hind. All the others were by the Revd Roger Powell, the vicar who appears in the Cudworth / Parker baptism story. Instances of Joseph being called Joseph North Ellis or Joseph Ellis North suggests an alias or illegitimacy. As yet a baptism has not been found for either a Joseph Ellis or a Joseph North around 1789/90 (the birth date as suggested by his age at marriage and death). However there are baptism entries at Wibsey in the 1780's for children of the John who later married Martha Holmes, but as yet this is not proven. But if he is one and the same person then the illegitimacy/alias could be in an earlier generation.

Where is she buried?

In Wibsey Chapel (Holy Trinity, Low Moor) there is large, flat gravestone with the following inscriptions:

In memory of Jacob the son of Joseph and Elizabeth North's
of North Close Bridge, North Bierley,
who departed this life June 24, 1836 aged 22 years.

PREPARE TO FOLLOW ME

Also Elizabeth wife of the above Joseph North
who departed this life July 19, 1846 aged 58 years
SHE WAS A GOOD WIFE AND AN INDULGENT PARENT

Also a Wibsey, but in the Burial Registers, can be found:

22 July 1846 Elizabeth North, aged 58 years, of Horse Close Bridge

7 April 1850 Joseph (Ellis) North, aged 61 years of Low Moor

20 March 1870 Judy North, aged 75 years of Low Moor

Unfortunately, the Burial Registers at Wibsey Chapel give no indication of which grave people are buried in, but because there is plenty of space for extra entries on the grave stone quoted above, it seems reasonable to assume that Joseph is buried with his son Jacob and first wife Elizabeth and it must be very likely that Judy rests in the same grave too.

Who was Old North?

Joseph's father, John, is buried in the now disused and rather derelict, Wesley Place Wesleyan Methodist graveyard, a little further down Cleckheaton Road from Wibsey Chapel. Other entries in the Wesley Place Registers suggest that John's second wife Martha Holmes (née Hudson) was herself a Methodist and buried John there rather than with the rest of his family at Wibsey Chapel. One of Joseph's sons, John North, a timber merchant born in 1815, was very committed to the Wesleyan Chapel at Wesley Place and became one of the Trustees. Perhaps his step-grandmother who married his grandfather John North at St Peter's 14th May 1827 encouraged young John to join Wesleyans.

John North died on 6th December 1849, aged 83 years, and his son Joseph the following year aged 61 years. With this evidence it would point to John being the Old North of whom Cudworth speaks and Betty Hodgson, the first Mrs North, identified as the lady whose sharp wit inspired the story of the Baptism by the Revd Roger Powell.

What did Judy look like?

Parker's books have many illustrations and the three referred to above have various photographs and line drawings of Judy Bridge and the North family. One particularly fine picture entitled 'John O'Judy's likeness taking' has also appeared in two of Gary Firth's books. In addition to those in Parker's book there are another three photographs whose origin I have been unable to determine. One appeared in the 'Telegraph and Argus' in the early 1990's and was submitted by Mr Derek Tordoff of Mostyn Grove, Wibsey. He has since died and its current whereabouts is unknown. It has also featured in Wyke Local History Group's book by Grace Carter 'Wiche is Wyke', published in 1988.

Another two photographs came into my possession only recently as a result of an article in the 'Telegraph and Argus' about the Friends of Judy Woods. It was given by Mr Peter Harrison who had found it amongst the effects of his late father. Percy Harrison had a photographer's shop at 687 Little Horton Lane from 1951 to 1970. The photographs had come into his possession at some point and he had made good copies of them. I now have the original glass ambrotypes complete with their gold-effect tin frames. I suspect the other photograph referred to above was also an ambrotype as it, too, seems to be in a similar oval tin frame.

The line drawing of 'Mrs North' bears a resemblance to the older woman in the photographs identified as Judy. The woman in the drawing looks younger than on the photographs and although only her head and shoulders are shown she does not seem plump. None of the photographs show Judy as a large woman and this is surprising as the name 'Gurt Judy' suggests a person of ample proportions. Judy's death certificate of

17th March 1870, when she was living at Salt Horn (and confirming Parker) states that she was 75 years old, the widow of John (sic) North, a gardener, might offer a clue. She died from 'Paralysis 6 years, softening of the brain'. Nowadays we might have said she had had a stroke and suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Perhaps she had wasted away since the stroke, and by the time the photographs were taken she was no longer 'gurt'?

This is one of the ambrotypes marked 'Judy and Son O'Judy'. The lady is almost certainly Judy North but the man is far too thin to be her son John Barraclough. I think it was taken outside the house at Horse Close Bridge as there are similarities to the house shown in some of the photographs and line drawing.

This second photograph was marked 'John O'Judy and his drinking pals'. None of these men in their Sunday-best collars and ties and sporting variety of hat styles looks like man identified by Parker as Judy's son John Barraclough. There are obviously out enjoying themselves and most can be seen puffing on a clay pipe. Look carefully at the man in the middle. In one hand he is prominently displaying a glass of something and in the other holds what could be a petticoat tail of shortbread. On the table, behind the upturned mug, is a pile of flatten biscuit rounds, the top one with a piece missing. I suspect it is not a shortbread petticoat tail which the man is displaying for the camera but a segment of ginger bread. The various jugs, bottles and glasses must surly contain Judy's celebrated ginger beer!

A legend is born

When Parker came to write his histories in the early 1900's, John and Joseph North had been dead for over fifty years, and Judy for thirty. Joseph's son, Bill North, who died in 1881, seems to have been quite a character and a "physical force" chartist. No doubt stories about them were still passes on as part of local folk lore. Another of Joseph's sons, Benjamin, died in March 1903, and it may be that his daughters, the school mistresses at Norwood Green, gave Parker some of the details about the North family. William Appleton was still alive and he may have provided the photographs, but its a mystery where the line drawings came from, unless it was someone regularly uses by the 'Gazette'.

Parker's books provided information about Judy and the Norths to a whole new generation. At that time the bridge already bore her name and not too many years would pass before Royds Hall Great Wood, Low Wood, Gannerthorpe Wood, Old Hanna Wood and Jagger Wood would collectively be known as Judy Woods. I suspect that without James Parker's writings we would be asking 'Judy who?'

INFORMATION DISCOVERED SINCE THE ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED.

Notes on the parentage of Judy Stocks.

The parish records entry says she was the daughter of *Joseph* Stocks, a husbandman of Royds Hall. On her third marriage she gives her father's name as *Joshua* Stocks (at the time of her two previous marriages fathers' names were not given). Other evidence supports the hypothesis that her father was Joshua

Burial of John Barraclough

This took place on 28th March 1869 at St Mary's Wyke. His father was buried at Holy Trinity, possibly in a pauper's grave and his mother Judy who died the following year was also buried at Holy Trinity probably in the same grave as Joseph North. It is interesting to speculate why John was interred at Wyke. On the 1861 and 1871 census John states he is married, but a marriage has never been found. It could be that his wife or her family had a grave at Wyke. Unfortunately the grave book, which could identify the precise grave and other occupants, was not commenced until after John's death.

Judy's sister

James Parker said that at the time of her death, Judy was living with her sister in Salt Horn. Her death was registered by Ephraim Brown and further research has discovered that his wife Rachel Crowther was the daughter of Squire Crowther and Hannah Stocks. All the above are buried in Wesley Place graveyard and the memorial inscription says Hannah died in 1883 aged 78 years. This would indicate that she was the Hannah Stocks baptised at St Peters Bradford 21 July 1805 daughter of Joshua Stocks.

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