

History for Dummies

Now that Simon Keegan has offered convincing evidence that King Arthur was alive and well and living at Outlane, aka Camelot, it is perhaps an opportunity to air some other important local history events which have not received the attention they deserve.

That Boleyn Girl

It is not widely known, for example, that Anne Boleyn was a regular visitor to Marsden where she could indulge her hobby of legging it through the canal tunnel. She did this so often that she is said to have developed the most powerful leg muscles in England. It was this which made her so attractive to Henry. "That wench can crack walnuts with her thighs," he once dribbled. For more than 200 years Anne held the record for the fastest legging-it through the tunnel. It was not until 1803 that Jane Austen managed to knock five minutes off her timing. This record still stands, although Kim Kardashian is said to be training vigorously for a new assault on the record. "Given the size of her bum," thinks Jessica Ennis-Hill, "she should be able to crack it in under an hour."

Burnt Offerings

Almondbury historian, Bertie Cupcake, has suggested that King Alfred famously burnt his cakes on Castle Hill. "The scorched stones are still to be seen, surrounded by several layers of burnt crumbs. It is not true either that Alfred purchased his ingredients in Tesco at Winchester. I have his till receipts which show he bought all his flour from Lidl at Aspley. His big mistake was to use self-raising flour instead of plain, not heeding the advice of Mary Berry whom he dismissed as "a cantankerous old scold obsessed with sponges." How he ever defeated the Danes at Ashdown is a mystery, since he never managed to bake a proper cake."

The Food of Love

Hepworth is already famous in the annals for its resistance to the plague in 1665. Less well known is the visit by Beethoven to the village in 1820 whilst on a whistle-stop tour of England. He gave the first performance of the Moonlight Sonata in the snug of the Butcher's Arms. Already profoundly deaf he pounded the piano with such force that afterwards it was fit only for the tip at Meltham. Complaints about the noise from the pub poured into the council office. A spokesman for Kirklees said: "I have never heard of Beethoven, but sincerely regret the distress he has caused in the village. Unfortunately all our resources are at present engaged in the important work of cataloguing potholes, so I can only suggest that the villagers equip themselves with ear plugs, especially as I understand that the New Mill male voice choir is planning a performance of Wagner's Ring Cycle at the same venue in the near future."

"History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree on"

Napoleon