

# Jenny's Cottage



**Chevin Forest Park, Otley**



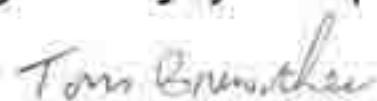
This book has been produced in 2011 by the Friends of Chevin Forest Park with the financial support of the Heritage Lottery Fund through a project called "Chevin Through Time". The White House and Jenny's Cottage are the two best known buildings on the Chevin, even though the latter building was demolished in the mid-1970s, and this stimulated us to produce two short publications to help keep their special memories alive.

We apologise if there are any inaccuracies in this publication or other information not included. If you want to provide any additional facts which you think are worth adding please contact us at [admin@chevinforest.co.uk](mailto:admin@chevinforest.co.uk)

A big "Thank You" to Otley Museum for providing many of the photographs and original documentary evidence, and also to Barbara Winfield for carrying out much of the detective work.

The "Chevin Through Time" project has seen a number of volunteers come together to help research the history of Chevin Forest Park and to identify and archive important historical documents. It is intended that the results of this research will be made more widely available through the Friends of Chevin Forest website [www.chevinforest.co.uk](http://www.chevinforest.co.uk) and stimulate more interest in researching this fascinating piece of land overlooking the market town of Otley.

We hope you enjoy the publications



Tom Crowther

Chair of the Friends of Chevin Forest

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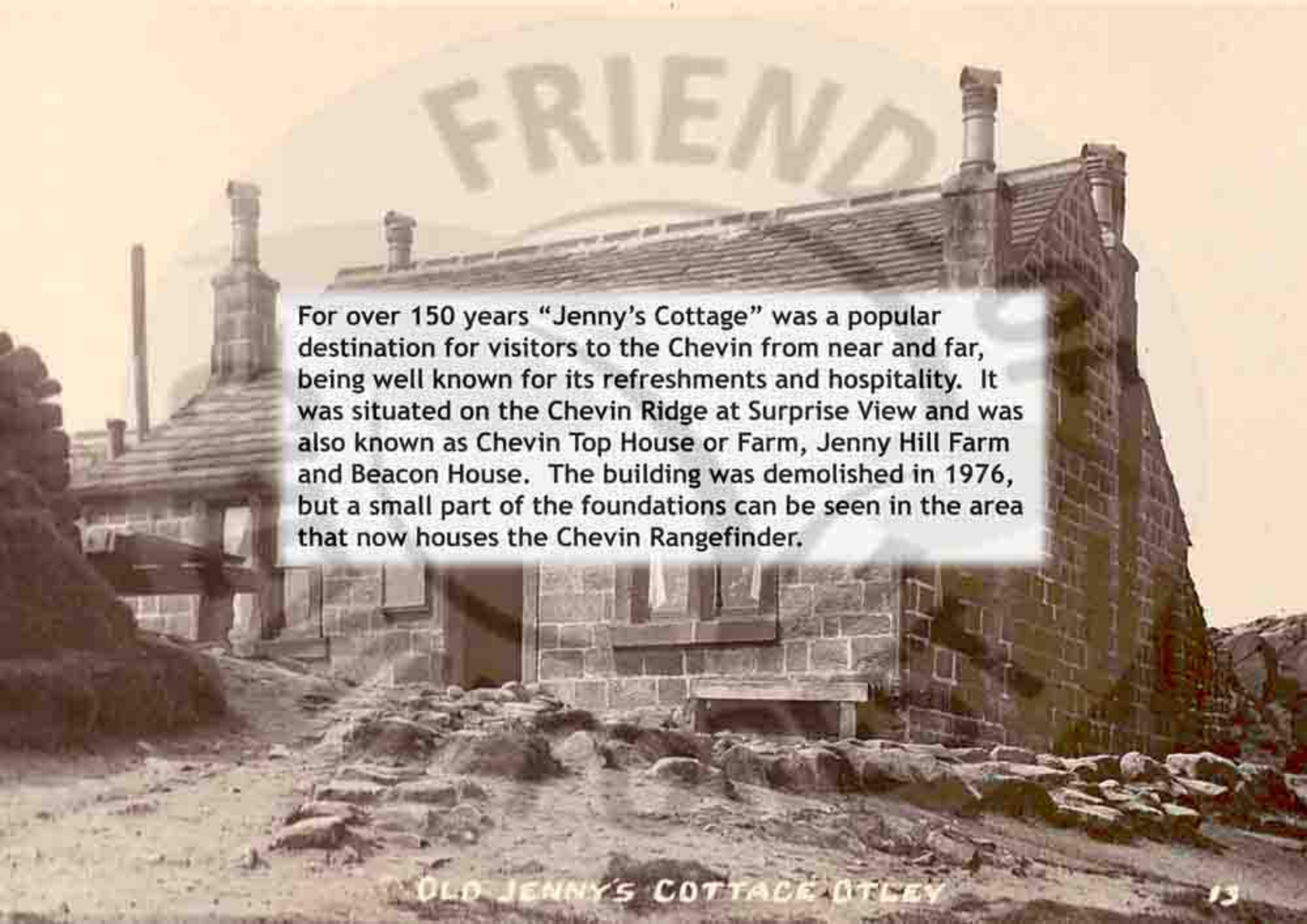


**OTLEY MUSEUM**



The Wharfedale Printing Machine





For over 150 years "Jenny's Cottage" was a popular destination for visitors to the Chevin from near and far, being well known for its refreshments and hospitality. It was situated on the Chevin Ridge at Surprise View and was also known as Chevin Top House or Farm, Jenny Hill Farm and Beacon House. The building was demolished in 1976, but a small part of the foundations can be seen in the area that now houses the Chevin Rangefinder.



Before the 1780's, the Chevin was "common land" which local people were free to use to graze their livestock and to collect food, fuel and building materials.

Under the Otley Enclosure Act of 1783, common land was divided up and allotted to local landowners and required to be enclosed by walls or fences to mark the boundaries.

The plot on the summit of the Chevin where Jenny's Cottage later stood was given to Edmund Barker, of Potternewton Hall, Leeds, who came from a well known Otley family and who is buried in Otley Parish Church.

Location Of Jenny's Cottage



1783 Land Enclosure Map



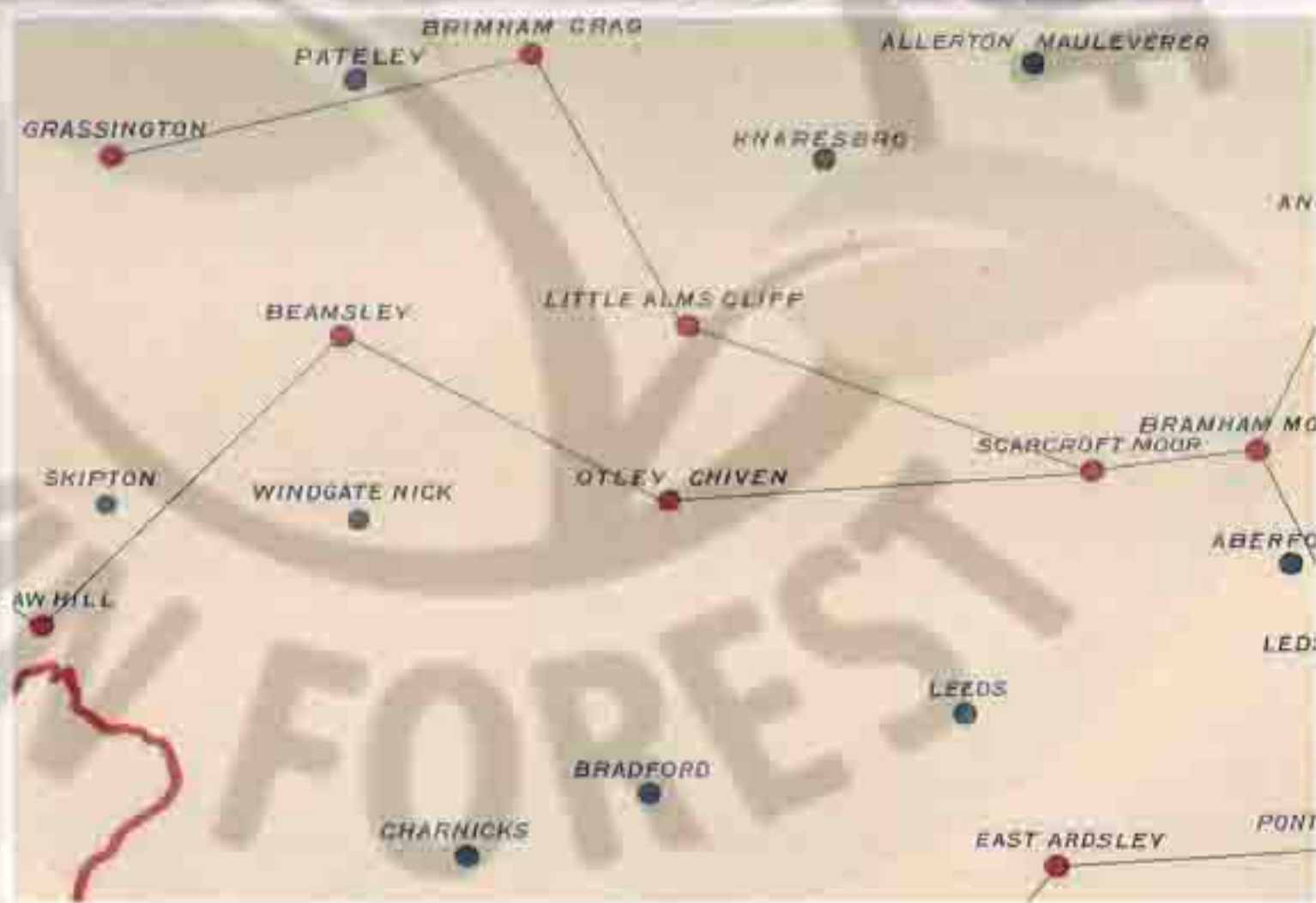
Although now in private ownership, the ancient footpaths passing through the property continued to be used by people travelling to and from Carlton, Guiseley and beyond, as set out in the Enclosure Award:-

*“And we have set out and appointed and do hereby award the following public Footroads to be forever continued as set forth and described in the Plan hereunto annexed, and we award that sufficient stiles shall be made in all the Fences that cross the said Roads by the Owners of the said Fences respectively. That is to say; A Footroad leading from the Top of Whitley Crofts southward through Henry Wilson’s Allotment marked with the number 110 to and through the Allotment of the Vicar of Otley, to and over Intack Road, through the west sides of Mary Hardcastle, Wm. Jackson and John Ritchie’s Allotments, also through the respective Allotments of Lawrence and Thomas Flesher and Edmund Barker to Guiseley Boundary as the same hath usually heretofore run. One other Footroad branching from the last mentioned road in John Ritchie’s Allotment and leading south eastward through the said Allotment and the Allotment of Edmund Barker to Carlton Road.”*

When Edmund Barker died in 1789, he bequeathed the land to his brother Henry, who in turn left it to Edmund’s daughters, Ann and Sarah, when he died in 1807. Ann married Robert Ray and Sarah married Robert Oliver and, remarkably, their descendants retained the ownership until the early 1970’s.



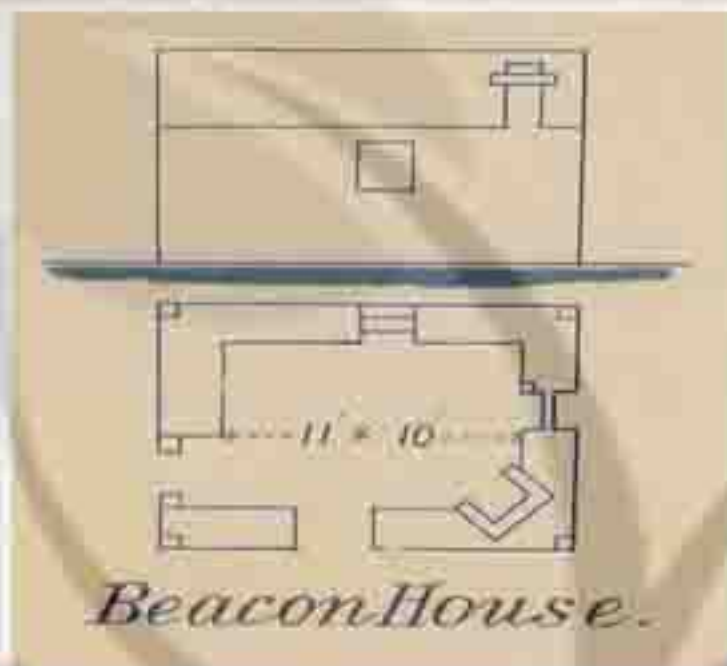
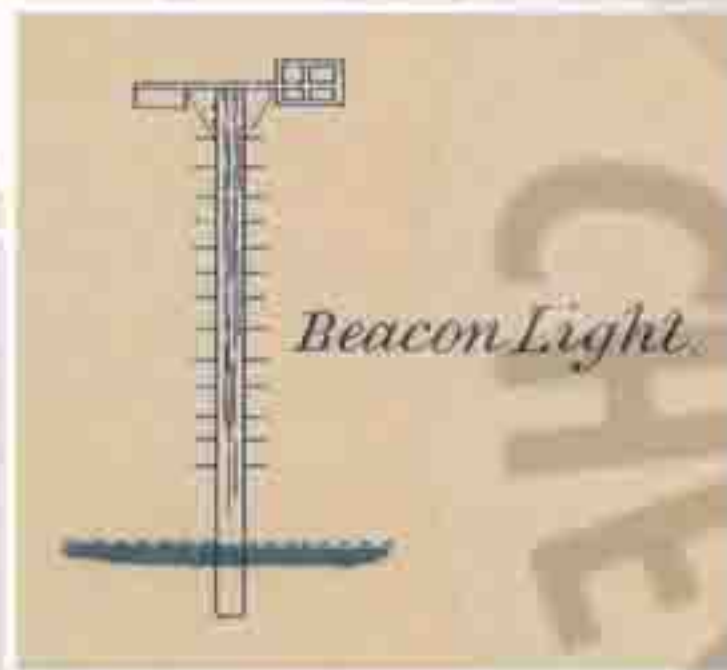
The official name of Jenny's Cottage, "Beacon House", reflects the origins of the building. Otley Chevin was designated as one of a chain of beacons established as a nationwide communication system around the end of the eighteenth century when invasion by the French was threatened. The nearby "Beacon Hill" (400m west of Jenny's Cottage) is probably where the original beacon was sited, as this is the highest point of the ridge and would have been clearly visible to the next beacon sites in the chain i.e. Beamsley, Almscliff Crag and Scarcroft Moor.



Old Taken from a copy of an 1803 plan showing the beacons for the West Riding



A small shelter for the beacon keepers was built on the top of the Chevin Ridge and in 1799 the beacon keeper, said to be a John Tillotson, employed three men to help make the beacon ready by collecting timber, tar and other combustibles.



"A typical beacon light and a plan and elevation of the accompanying hut (presumably the fuel store and shelter for the beacon's crew)"

West Yorkshire Archive Service: Wakefield



## THE LONG HISTORY OF THE CHEVIN BEACONS

When the fire was prepared to warn against Napoleon

By FREDERICK MORRELL

Old Jenny's cottage, which is now a ruin, was built on the Chevin Ridge, near Otley, in 1799, to house the beacon keeper and his family. The beacon was a large fire, built on the Chevin Ridge, which was visible from the sea. The beacon was used to warn of the approach of the French fleet in 1801.

### The Chevin

The Chevin is a small, rocky hill, situated on the Chevin Ridge, near Otley. It is the site of the beacon, which was built in 1799. The beacon was a large fire, built on the Chevin Ridge, which was visible from the sea.

The beacon was used to warn of the approach of the French fleet in 1801. The beacon was a large fire, built on the Chevin Ridge, which was visible from the sea.

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The earliest known tenants of Beacon House, or Chevin Top Farm, were Joseph and Jane Myers, both born in Norwood, above Otley. Joseph was a “hind” or agricultural labourer and would have been employed to farm the land around where the house stood. His wife, Jane, was known as Jenny and the building became known as “Jenny’s Cottage” or “Jenny Hill Farm”.



Beacon House can be seen marked on this Joshua Thorp map of about 1831, but was not on his 1821 map. This perhaps gives us some idea of when it started to be a farm.



In 1900 an Otley resident, John McLandesborough, published his reminiscences of his boyhood in Otley in the 1820's and 1830's and gives us a first hand account of Beacon House and Jenny Myers:-

*"Beacon House, in my younger days, was occupied by a hind and his wife named Myers, in the service of the late John Hartley, senr. of Otley Corn Mill. His wife Jenny Myers was known to all residents and to many visitors to Otley, few of whom had not derived pleasure from her kindness. She would lend her china and find boiling water for those requiring tea and who were provided with the needful requisites. In cases of picnics and parties visiting the Chevin, she would, if possible, allow them to have tea and dance in the barn attached to Beacon House."*

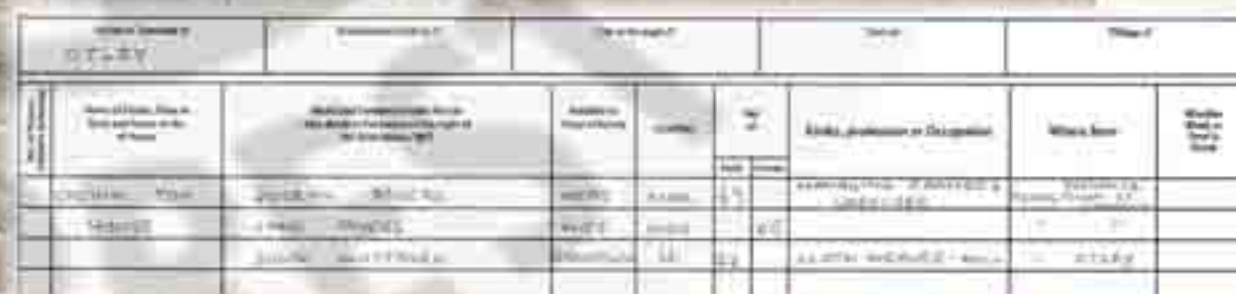
"Otley in the Twenties - Some recollections of boyhood by the late John McLandesborough - A native" (Reprinted by Otley Museum 1981)

It seems that the hospitality of Jenny Myers to the many visitors to the Chevin top formed the foundations of the later very popular and successful tea rooms which continued for the next 140 years.



Household	Name of Head of Family	Age	Sex	Occupation	Where Born
1	John Hartley	65	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
2	Jenny Myers	45	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
3	John Hartley	25	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
4	Jenny Myers	20	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
5	John Hartley	15	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
6	Jenny Myers	10	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
7	John Hartley	5	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
8	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
9	John Hartley	4	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
10	Jenny Myers	3	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
11	John Hartley	2	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
12	Jenny Myers	1	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
13	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
14	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
15	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
16	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
17	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
18	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
19	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
20	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire

1851 Census: Crown Copyright National Archives, London



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1	John Hartley	65	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
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12	Jenny Myers	1	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
13	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
14	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
15	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
16	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire
17	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
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19	John Hartley	0	M	Farmer	Yorkshire
20	Jenny Myers	0	F	Wife of John Hartley	Yorkshire

1851 Census transcription



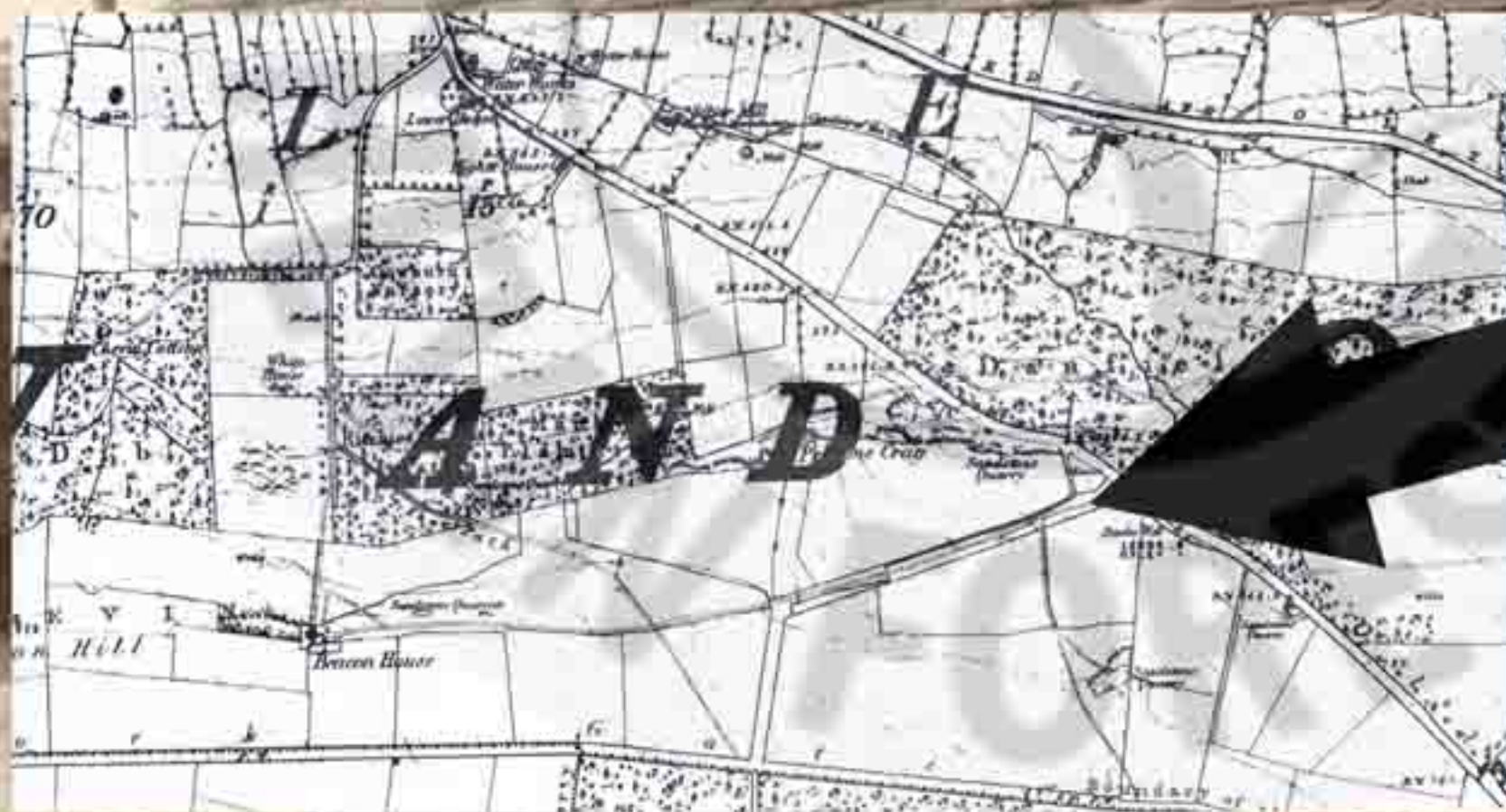
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OLD JENNY'S COTTAGE OTLEY



An article called "Yorkshire Rambles", published in the Leeds Mercury in 1872, makes references to the farm and the fact that the Millers continued the tradition of serving refreshments to visitors :-

*"A good cup of tea with fresh eggs and capital cream can be had at a small house on the Chevin Top. Cultivation has extended to the summit of this elevation, a ploughed field at the back of the house being sown with barley, which grows short in the straw but is said to bear well in the ear"*



Miller Lane

1851 OS Map: Crown Copyright. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey

OLD JENNY'S COTTAGE OTLEY



In the late 1870's Thomas Veal moved to Chevin Top Farm with his wife and family. He was born in Bolton-upon-Swale, North Yorkshire, where his father was an agricultural labourer. Thomas had worked as a farm servant for a while in his teens. Prior to taking over the tenancy, he was employed as a coachman, first in York and then in Otley, and was a relatively inexperienced farmer.



1893 Map: Crown Copyright. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey

With the numbers of tourists visiting the area increasing after the opening of the railway line to Otley in the 1860's, Thomas obviously saw the financial benefits of establishing more permanent "refreshment rooms". He made extensive alterations to the building, adding tea rooms on the east side, a store room and a cafe to the rear or south side, and bedrooms.



He built up a successful business and stayed there for over twenty years. It is said that he saved his profits in a teapot and with them he built what is known as "Teapot Row", off Leeds Road.



1891 Census: Crown Copyright. National Archives, London



After leaving Chevin Top Farm in 1907 he went on to live in Sugar Street, Otley, and died in 1924 aged 87 years. In Kelly's 1877 and 1881 Trade Directories he is also listed as a Tobacco Dealer.







On the 27th of September 1907, Charles Kirk, a wheelwright who had previously been living and working in Yeadon, signed a tenancy agreement for "Chevin Top Farm".

*Agreement with Mr Charles Kirk for yearly tenancy of Chevin Top Farm*

*Between Herbert Greenwood Teale, Leeds, Solicitor for Ray and agent for the Hon. Edward Algernon Fitzroy of Foxhill, West Haddon, Rugby and Charles Kirk of Yeadon, Wheelwright*

*Agree to let Farmhouse, Stable, Mistal and other buildings and land known as Chevin Top Farm, lately in the occupation of Thomas Veal*

*Yearly rent of £65 payable on 2 August and 2 February*

*Must keep all fences, walls, ditches, drains etc and inside of the said farmhouse in good repair and condition*

*Once in every three years to paint in a workmanlike manner all the inside wood and ironwork usually painted with two coats of good and proper oil paint and to colour and whitewash all such parts of the said premises as are usually coloured and whitewashed.*

*To consume in as far as practicable all the roots, crops, fodder, hay and straw upon the premises and for any part thereof sold off the premises to bring back the equivalent in good manure.*

*To use the manure thereon and to keep the lands in good heart and condition and cultivate, manure and manage the same according to the most approved course of husbandry.*

Ray and Fitzroy Estate Documents (West Yorkshire Archives)

Charles Kirk only stayed at the farm for two years. Perhaps he did not take to farming life or maybe he found the location too isolated - it is said he slept with a shotgun over his bed!

OLD JENNY'S



From September 1909 until the late 1950's the tenancy of Beacon Hill Farm was held by successive generations of the Blackburn family.

Senior Blackburn moved to the farm in late 1909 with his wife, Mary Hannah, and his children, Jane (15) and John (12). He had previously been a well known pork butcher in Newmarket, Otley and had always been successful at local shows with his hams and home cured bacon.

Recalling her early days at the farm, Jane remembers that it was not an easy life :-  
*“there was no electricity or water in those days. If we wanted water we had to carry it across the field from a pump”*. When the weather was really bad they were unable to use their horse and cart to get to Otley for essential provisions :- *“as a young girl I had to carry food up the Chevin from town”*.

GENUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911

1911 Census: Crown Copyright. National Archives, London

Name	Relationship to Head	Marital Status	Years married	Sex	Age 25 1911	Occupation	Where born
BLACKBURN SENIOR	HEAD	MARRIED		M	40	FARMER	YORKS HOUFORTH
BLACKBURN MARY HANNAH	WIFE	MARRIED 15		F	38		YORKS OTLEY
BLACKBURN JOHN	SON	SINGLE		M	12	FARMER'S SON WORKING ON FARM	YORKS OTLEY
BLACKBURN JANE	DAUGHTER	SINGLE		F	15	FARMER'S DAUGHTER DAIRY WORK	YORKS OTLEY
BLACKBURN ANN	SISTER	SINGLE		F	58		YORKS EARLSHINGTON
RYDER SARAH	VISITOR	SINGLE		F	24	MILL HAND WEAVER	YORKS OTLEY

1911 Census transcription



13  
Jenny's Hill.



**F**ew visitors to Otley can fail to be impressed with the imposing grandeur of the Otley Chevin, which rises 925 feet like a sentinel to the south of the town. Its magnificence adds a charm to the valley that cannot be overrated, and no visitor should leave the district without ascending one of the easy inclines that lead to the summit.

There are at least three excellent methods by which this may be accomplished. The old road up the East Chevin leading out of Bondgate may be taken, turning to the right through Miller Lane when about a mile from the town; or the easier climb up the West Chevin at the opposite end of Birdcage Walk may be more acceptable, as affording an easier gradient. Here the visitor should turn to the left twice when about three-quarters of a mile away. The third route is up the shorter but steeper incline, the entrance to which is immediately opposite the end of the wooden bridge that spans the railway near the station. This is about a twenty-minutes climb. On all three roads are comfortable resting places, and all lead to Jenny's Hill, from where a remarkable surprise view of the valley of the Wharfe is to be obtained, the finest in the district.

At the summit is Jenny's Hill Cottage, where the visitor will find every accommodation to meet his bodily needs and to refresh him after his stiff pull up the hill. Here he may sit and bask in the sunshine, whilst mine host—Senior Blackburn, who has only lately taken over the management—will provide him with anything he may require.

An excellent tea is provided for the modest outlay of 8d., or with ham and eggs 1/6. Refreshments of a lighter kind are also in readiness, and everything may be relied upon as being of the best possible quality. Mr. Blackburn is skilled in the art of catering, and he is accustomed to providing for large parties, who will find that coupled with quality are very moderate prices. Visitors from Leeds and Guiseley will find the Chevin easy of access from the train terminus at Guiseley. After alighting, take the route past the Post Office, and turn up the hill to the left. Then take the first path across the fields near the quarries.





REFRESHMENT HOUSES RECOMMENDED.

OTLEY.

The oldest Refreshment House in Otley and one that is very central for visitors is

**STORR'S**

In the Market Place, at the opposite corner to the Jubilee Clock.

Storr's bake all their own confectionery, and can guarantee its purity.

Teas provided.

**The Jersey Dairy**

The best dairy in Otley is in Westgate. Visitors will find here a plentiful supply of rich milk and cream, eggs fresh from the farm, good sweet butter. Home-made Jams and Marmalade.

**PURE CREAM CHEESES**  
a speciality.

**H. VARLEY,**

Proprietor.

**A. OUTTERSIDE**

(Late Brown).

**The Cadema Cafe**

Bradford Road, **MENSTON.**

Cyclists and Tourists catered for at moderate charges.

Sweets, Fancy Chocolates and Biscuits from the best makers.

Afternoon Teas.

Fancies a Speciality.

OTLEY.

For the

**BIGGEST and BEST**

**FISH SUPPERS**

TRY

**L. CAVILL,**

Beech Hill, Otley.

Close to Bus Terminus. Trams pass the door.

Only the Best Quality of Fish. Potatoes and Drippings used.

**I. GRANVILLE**

— & CO., —

**"The Cafe,"**

5 Westgate, OTLEY.

Teas and Refreshments.

Parties Catered for.

**CAFE ACCOMMODATING**  
**60 PEOPLE.**

OTLEY.

Every visitor should see the Surprise View of the Wharfe Valley from the top of the Chevin.

On the extreme summit is the Refreshment House of

**S. BLACKBURN**

where Luncheons, Teas and other Refreshments are provided every day, including Sundays, at very reasonable rates.

Large or small parties catered for.

Large Ground for Games.

Over the years Senior Blackburn and his family worked together to develop the farm and tearoom. They were renowned for their welcoming hospitality and for providing quality refreshments at reasonable prices. They even offered a "large ground for games". One satisfied customer said :- "an excellent tea is provided for the modest outlay of 8d....or with ham and eggs 1s. 6d. Mr Blackburn is skilled in the art of catering and he is accustomed to providing for large parties".



Mrs Hannah Blackburn c.1920

According to the late Reg Rawling, former Head Forester of the Danefield Estate, "Mr Blackburn renamed the place 'Surprise View'. This was painted on the roof and 'TEAS' in large letters on the front wall. He erected a hut with a let down side, which resembled a caravan, from which he sold aerated waters from the type of bottle with the glass stopper in it."





FRYING-PAN ROCK, CHEVIN TOP, QUILLEY



Old Jenny's, Oldy Chevin



After her marriage to Robert Slater, Jane and her husband continued to live with her parents at Chevin Top Farm, helping to provide refreshments for the many visitors. According to Jane, *"the cottage was very popular with visitors. It had the reputation that the doors were never shut. Whatever the weather, people called in for a cup of tea and a snack. We were visited by people from all over the world"*.

The farm and tea room would have been especially busy in the summer time, with many people enjoying picnics, climbing the rocks or taking part in the local tradition of bilberry picking.





C.1911/12



C.1911/12



C.1910



OTLEY CHEVIN





C.1925



JENNY'S COTTAGE THE GRAYN OTLEY

C.1930



Jenny Hill Otley Cheshire



OLD JENNY'S COTTAGE OTLEY



Senior Blackburn left Chevin Top Farm on September the 23rd, 1934 after 25 years, and went to live in Whitely Croft Road, Otley with his wife Hannah, and his daughter Jane and her husband. Senior Blackburn died in 1937 aged 66.



Senior Blackburn



Senior Blackburn's son, John, and his wife Edith, who took over the tenancy



## 25 YEARS ON OTLEY CHEVIN

### MR. BLACKBURN'S MEMORIES

#### SEEING WHARFEDALE IN MOONLIGHT

Twenty-five years on Otley Chevin in the house that perches, like a tiny outpost of the town, high on the crown of the wind-swept hill, is an experience which most people would envy, but not attempt to emulate.

It is almost that length of time since Mr. and Mrs. Senior Blackburn left their pork butcher's business in Newmarket, and moved into the house on the hill known to most people as Jenny's Cottage. Actually, it is not a cottage, but a farm of some 70 acres, with the title of Beacon House Farm. Now they have returned into the town to spend a well-earned retirement in less boisterous surroundings than the top of Otley Chevin.

#### Storm Perils

But Mr. Blackburn does not agree that his new surroundings will be more attractive or more pleasant. Experiences have flocked in upon him during his long spell of life on the hill-top. He has been snowed up in the house for three weeks at a stretch, lost many times in the thick fogs which frequently enshroud the hill, and, because of the isolated position of "Jenny's", he has had more than the normal load of trouble. Yet he is enthusiastic about it all.

"I have had lots of experiences, both rough and smooth, lot of hard work and plenty of good fun," said Mr. Blackburn to a "Wharfedale Observer" reporter. He told of the fierce storms of wind, rain and snow which have swept Chevin top during his time. Snow has often covered the tops of the walls and on one occasion "Jenny's" was cut off from the Royalty Inn, 150 yards away on Yorkgate, for three weeks at a stretch.

Fog has been the chief danger owing to the steep falls and rocks which abound in the area. Mr. Blackburn was lost for an hour one foggy night when he had been visiting his nearest neighbour at the Royalty Inn and attempted to walk across the field home. He eventually had to follow the field wall for direction.

On many occasions the weather was so bad as to prevent Mr. Blackburn taking out his horse and trap to do his customary shopping in Otley. He had then to walk into the town and carry the load on his back, sometimes having to make two or three journeys up the steep path in the middle of the hill.

#### A Scare

Mr. Blackburn scoffed at the mention of loneliness and ghost scares. "I have walked home from Otley at all hours of the day and night and only once been scared. That was in the depth of winter when a fox ran right under my nose and 'yapped'. It made my hair stand on end.

He added that the previous tenant of Jenny's Cottage slept with a gun fastened over his bed. "We have gone to bed many a night with the door unlocked," he said.

Mr. Blackburn said he had never grown tired of the panoramic view from the top of the Chevin, and he stated that the journey to the top was as popular today as ever it had been, and well worth the trouble. Those who have made the pilgrimage and partaken of the homely products on the Blackburn tea-table will put up both hands in agreement.



#### "Diamonds in the Moonlight"

Mr. Blackburn's advice is to see the view on a clear, bright, moonlight night. "You will see more diamonds than ever there were in Kimberley," he said. People did not realise how beautiful was the scene, probably because it was on their doorstep and they did not bother to find it out. He contended that the scene at night rivalled Blackpool illuminations.

He tells the story of a Leeds man who was taking in the view, and asked how long the view had been there. He had been to Switzerland five times, he said, for the scenery, and had not seen anything more impressive than Wharfedale from the Chevin.

Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn celebrated the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of their wedding on Wednesday. Their only son, John, has taken over the tenancy of Jenny's Cottage.

Wharfedale & Airedale Observer 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1934





The tenancy was passed to Senior Blackburn's son, John and his wife Edith, who lived there with their three children, Mary, Cyril and Jack. They continued to run the farm and cafe until 1945.



Members of the Lusardi family outside their bungalow

At this time there were several wooden bungalows and caravans in the field at the back of the farm. One of these belonged to the Lusardi family from Leeds. Anita Mason, nee Lusardi, has vivid memories of being evacuated to her grandfather's bungalow at the beginning of the Second World War, and the wonderful times they had exploring the Chevin and playing on the rocks.