

Alfred



ON THE TRAIL OF
ALFRED, LORD
TENNYSON
POET LAUREATE
THE LIFE

HISTORY MATTERS

TENNYSON'S
LINCOLNSHIRE

ON THE TRAIL OF
A POET LAUREATE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was a remarkable man, who led a remarkable life. He was the most successful poet of Victorian times and is still read and loved by many today.

Follow in Tennyson's footsteps – and join us on a trail through Lincolnshire learning about his life, love, heartbreak and verse and see the places which gave him so much inspiration.

"I am part of all that I have met"



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In 1889, Tennyson celebrated his 80th birthday and he received hundreds of letters and telegrams. His health however, was now in decline and eventually, a simple cold developed into something more serious and he died on 6th October 1892, at Aldworth.

Alfred was buried in Westminster Abbey, and the Dean of Westminster took the service. Emily Tennyson was too weak to attend, but the Abbey was so full, hundreds also stood outside.

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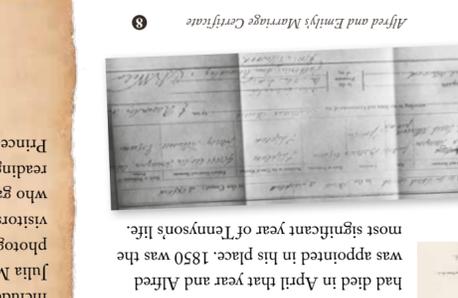
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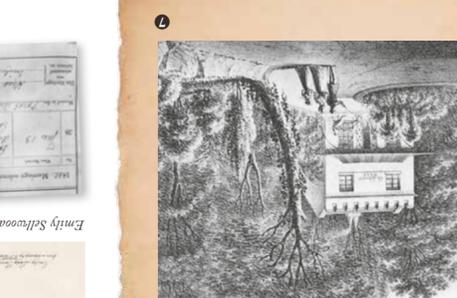
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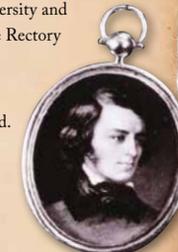
HEAD OF THE FAMILY

By February 1831, George Clayton Tennyson was gravely ill and his sons were brought home from Cambridge. He died on 16 March. Throughout his life he had felt bitterness towards his own father, who had disinherited him in favour of his younger son, Charles who was much more charismatic than George Clayton. However, Grandfather George was very generous to the Somersby family and this continued.

Alfred decided that he must now take responsibility for the family and never returned to University and the Tennysons continued to live at the Rectory for another six years.

Reviews of Alfred's latest volume, including one from Hallam, were mixed. Alfred, very hurt by criticism, often anticipated the same thing happening again, and he hated publishing new work for the rest of his life.

Newly engaged and back at Cambridge, Arthur Hallam was miserable. Disapproving of his son's choice of a 'socially inferior' bride, Henry Hallam ordered his son to take a year long separation from Emily Tennyson, but after witnessing their continued affection for each other, he changed his mind. Father and son went on holiday together touring Europe and in Austria tragedy struck. Arthur Hallam, aged 22, died in Vienna from a stroke. The Tennysons were the first people outside the family to be told the news by letter and Emily broke down completely. Alfred appeared to take the news calmly, in an effort to support his sister and the family. He was however, anguished over the loss and his grief inspired some of his greatest work.



During that summer vacation, Alfred returned home to Somersby, which was unusually peaceful, as his father was away. George Tennyson, Alfred's grandfather and a successful solicitor from Market Rasen, had paid for his son to take a trip to France in an effort to cure him of his addictions. The family held a number of parties that summer and here, Alfred met his future wife, Emily Sellwood, one of three children of Horncastle solicitor Henry Sellwood and his late wife, Sarah Franklin, whose brother John was a famous explorer.

At the end of the year Alfred brought Arthur Hallam to Somersby, and the family took him to their hearts. One Tennyson loved him much more than the rest of her family and Arthur and Emily Tennyson, Alfred's sister, later became engaged.

The following year - 1830 - brought two significant events: the publication of Alfred's Poems, Chiefly Lyrical and an expedition by Alfred and Arthur through the Pyrenees to take money and despatches to the Spanish revolutionaries. The journey through the valley of the Cauteretz was inspirational to Alfred, who often returned to those memories when writing.



In April 1827, Jacksons, Booksellers and Printers at Louth, produced Alfred's first appearance in print, a small volume, Poems by Two Brothers. Unusually, Jacksons paid Alfred and his brother Charles £20 for copyright. The brothers spent some of their money hiring a carriage to ride to Mablethorpe, a favourite holiday destination, and shouted their poetry joyously to the sea.

UNIVERSITY AND FRIENDSHIP

In 1827 Alfred joined his two elder brothers at Trinity College, Cambridge. The brothers, all tall and unconventional looking, stood out from other students and having only been used to the small and close world of his family, Alfred found it difficult to mix.

Almost a year later, Arthur Henry Hallam entered Trinity as a student. Son of an eminent historian, Henry Hallam, Arthur was a charming and vivacious young man, who was highly regarded. Arthur and Alfred instantly became friends. Both of them were elected to a discussion group, limited to 12 people and known as The Cambridge Apostles, where Alfred became a popular contributor to debate. Almost all the group members remained life-long friends, and Alfred's friendship with Hallam was perhaps the most influential of his life.

In June 1829, Alfred was persuaded to enter a poetry competition, and he won the Chancellor's Gold Medal.

Still very shy, he asked a friend to read the poem in public at the Senate House.



CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, born on 6 August 1809 at The Rectory, Somersby, was the third surviving child of Reverend George Clayton and Elizabeth (nee Fytche) Tennyson.



The Tennyson children went to the village school and were also taught by their father, using the 2,500 books in his library. Alfred enjoyed learning and began to write poetry at an early age.

Aged 7, Alfred's father decided he was ready to go to Louth Grammar School. He hated the severe discipline and bullying and after four unhappy years returned home to Somersby Rectory to be taught again by his father who, although an educated man, was erratic in his tutoring. By 1820, Alfred's family home was very 'crowded', with his parents, six brothers, four sisters, servants and a variety of pets. His affectionate mother brought her children up as free spirits and Alfred was known in the neighbourhood for wandering, book in hand, at almost any hour of day or night.

Sadly, his father suffered from severe depression, blamed on a family disagreement and his growing dependence on drink and drugs made him ill. Evidence implies that he suffered from epilepsy, which was aggravated by his drinking. Elizabeth and her sensitive children were frightened by his unpredictable, sometimes violent, behaviour. Often left to his own devices, Alfred would read or write poetry.



Mr William Cadney village schoolmaster

HISTORY MATTERS

ON THE TRAIL OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

1. SOMERSBY

Nestled in a quiet corner of the Wolds is the tiny hamlet of Somersby, the birthplace of Alfred Tennyson and most of his eleven siblings. Somersby House, the former rectory was home to the Tennyson family from 1808 to 1837. Patriarch George Clayton Tennyson became Rector of Somersby and Bag Enderby in 1806. The house needed to be extended before they moved in, and again in 1819 to accommodate the ever expanding household. Before he could read, Alfred used to go out in stormy weather, spread his arms and say: "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind..."! From a very young age he had decided he wanted to be a poet, and a famous one. He would wander the leafy lanes, or through Holywell Wood, sometimes at night, composing poems. Much of his most famous and lyrical poetry was written during these Somersby years. During the latest restoration work carried out on St Margaret's Church in 2015, a graffito was found high in the belfry on stone that had previously been hidden. It simply reads 'AT 1837', the year the Tennysons left Somersby. Was this Alfred signing off? The tomb of George Clayton Tennyson, who died in 1831 is in the graveyard at Somersby, west of the porch. A display case of Tennyson memorabilia and a bust of Tennyson is in the Church. Somersby House is a private home, but does open regularly for fundraising events.

i Further information can be found at the entrance of St Margaret's churchyard.

2. BAG ENDERBY

Just a quarter of a mile down the road from Somersby is Bag Enderby, the 'other Tennyson' church. Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, one of the founders of the National Trust, wrote the wonderful 'Memories of the Tennysons', interviewing several cottagers from Bag Enderby who had grown up with the Tennyson siblings. They were remembered fondly, a very handsome family and always with their noses in books. The stump of an old wych-elm tree at the fork in the road is known locally as 'The Poet's Tree'. It had a long, low branch that stretched out across the road and had to be supported by a stake. The Tennyson children would play on it and John Wesley also preached under this tree.

i Further information can be found in the tower of St Margaret's Church.

3. HARRINGTON

Harrington Hall was home to Arthur Eden, his wife Frances (widow of William Baring, MP) and her three daughters, Fanny, Georgiana and Rosa from 1825. Alfred, in his twenties and smitten with the very beautiful Rosa wrote a number of poems to her focussing on the image of a rose, with 'Maud' being the most well-known and associated with the terraced garden at Harrington. Due to their differences in social standing and wealth, a union was never to be. Harrington Hall is a private home.

i Further information can be found in St Mary's Church, adjacent to Harrington Hall.

4. LOUTH

Alfred's parents were married at St James' Church, Louth in 1805. Alfred was sent to the Grammar School (already attended by his brothers Frederick and Charles) from the age of seven to eleven, when he returned to Somersby to be homeschooled by his father. The building he knew was replaced with a red brick and ornamented building in 1869. Alfred spent four unhappy years at the school; he was bullied. The headmaster, who was related to Alfred's mother, was very cruel in his teaching methods. After he left the school Alfred refused to ever go down Schoolhouse Lane again.

i Further information can be found in St James' Church and in Schoolhouse Lane, just inside the boundary railings of King Edward VI Grammar School.

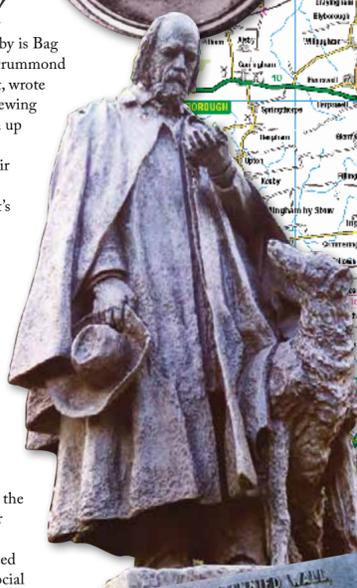
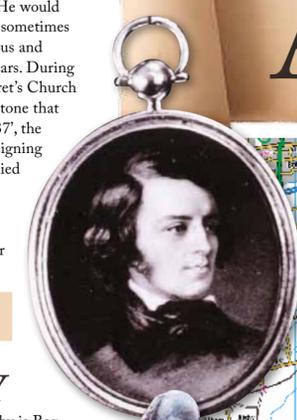
5. SPILSBY & HALTON HOLEGATE

The market town of Spilsby was home to the Franklin family. A statue of the explorer Sir John Franklin stands in the market place, yards away from the family home which is now a shop, at 25 High Street. There is a plaque to him on the wall of the building, at the entrance to Franklin Passage. Sir John Franklin was uncle to Emily Sellwood of Horncastle, who married Alfred Tennyson. Alfred wrote the epitaph to Sir John which is found in Westminster Abbey. This is also inscribed around the plinth of Spilsby's statue. Nearby Halton Holegate was home to the Rawnsley family. Revd T.H. Rawnsley and George Clayton Tennyson became great

friends and so too did their children. Revd T.H. Rawnsley, on the death of George Clayton Tennyson became guardian to the younger Tennyson children. The vivacious Sophy Rawnsley was the inspiration for 'Airy Fairy Lillian'; she remained a close friend to Alfred throughout his life, as did other members of the Rawnsley family.

Halton Holegate church stands high above the 'hollow gate' of the road. There was a footbridge across into the garden of the rectory where the Rawnsleys lived.

i Further information can be found in the porch of St Andrew's Church, Halton Holegate.



FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL,
I PLUCK YOU OUT OF THE CRANNIES,
I HOLD YOU HERE, ROY AND ALL, IN MY HAND,
LITTLE FLOWER, BUT I COULD UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU ARE, ROY AND ALL, AND ALL IN ALL,
I SHOULD KNOW WHAT GOD AND MAN IS.



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6. GUNBY HALL

Tennyson was well-known to the Massingberd family as Alfred attended Louth Grammar School and later Trinity College, Cambridge at the same time as Algernon Massingberd. He wrote Algernon's beautiful sister Mary Neville, known as Mimosa, some lines entitled 'Woman of noble form and noble mind' whilst she was experiencing marital problems of dramatic proportions. Mimosa was part of a circle of friends known as 'The Husks', this sorority included three of Alfred's sisters. Gunby Hall was given to the National Trust by the Massingberd family.

i Further information can be found at Gunby Hall.

7. SKEGNESS & GIBRALTAR POINT

Long before the coming of the railway and the development of Skegness as a popular resort, the Tennysons spent holidays there. They lodged in what was called The Moat House, and later Skegness House, a house at the top of Drummond Road with a bridge to the front door. At that time Drummond Road was nothing

more than a sand track leading to Gibraltar Point via The Vine Hotel where they are believed to have stayed too.

The Gunby family lived at Sykes Farm at Gibraltar Point and they spoke of Alfred as a boy visiting the farm during his beach wanderings. He loved their pears and especially the jam that the farmer's wife served up. She used to tell the tale that Mr Gunby, who had been playing his violin at the Hildred's Hotel, when on his way home in the early hours of the morning saw Alfred wandering about the dunes and talking to himself, or as Mrs Gunby put it, 'a-raavin' and 'a-taavin' upon the sand-hills in his shirt sleeves an' all'. She confided 'We all thowt, he was crazed'.

The source of the Wainfleet Haven (River Steeping) which flows out into the Wash at Gibraltar Point is in the Wolds near Somersby, where it is known as the River Lymn, thought to be the inspiration for Alfred's popular poem, 'The Brook'. Hallam Tennyson, Alfred's son talks of it not being the inspiration for 'The Brook', but for 'Flow down cold rivulet to the sea'. However if you know the course of the Lymn and the lie of the land, then you will be inclined to well believe the former. Gibraltar Point is now a National Nature Reserve with a visitor centre and café.

i Further information can be found at Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve

9. HORNCASTLE

Until 1953, a handsome 18th century building stood on the corner of Manor House Street and the market place in Horncastle. Known as Sellwood House, it was home to widowed solicitor Henry Sellwood and his three daughters Emily, Anne and Louisa. Henry had married Sarah Franklin, sister to explorer Sir John Franklin. The Sellwood sisters mixed in the same circle as the Tennyson family, attending dances at the Assembly Rooms (still part of the Bull Hotel), and visiting the Tennysons in Somersby. It was during one of these visits that Emily fell in love with Alfred. Emily's younger sister Louisa went on to marry Alfred's older brother Charles in 1835. It was at their wedding in St Mary's Church that Emily, who was bridesmaid, was thrown together with Alfred, who then fell in love with her, and wrote her a sonnet entitled 'The Bridesmaid'. By 1837 both families had accepted Alfred and Emily's engagement, but they didn't marry until 1850, the year Alfred, now famous, was made Poet Laureate. Alfred actually broke off the engagement in 1840 feeling he couldn't support her and correspondence was stopped between them. However due to the intervention of the Rawnsleys of Halton Holegate the rift was healed and they were finally reunited and went on to have a very happy, and long marriage.

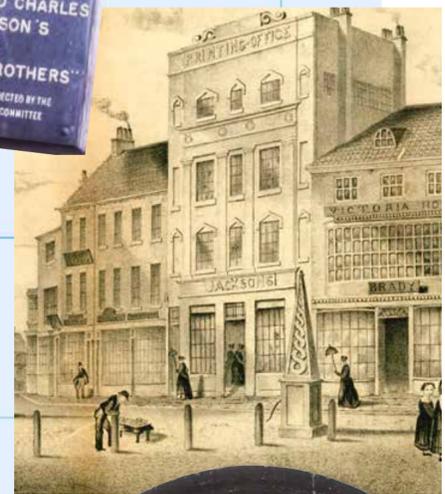
i Further information can be found in St Mary's Church.

10. CAISTOR

Alfred's grandfather, George Tennyson, a lawyer practising in Market Rasen, married Mary Turner, whose family lived in a fine home in the Market Place and had land in and around Caistor.

Charles Tennyson, Alfred's older brother, inherited the estate in Caistor and Grasby from his great uncle, Samuel Turner, and took on the Turner name. For some time he and his wife lived in the house in Caistor Market Place.

i Further information can be found in Caistor Arts & Heritage Centre



FROM THESE PREMISES
WAS PUBLISHED IN 1827
ALFRED AND CHARLES
TENNYSON'S
'POEMS BY
TWO BROTHERS'
THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY THE
LOUTH MUSEUM COMMITTEE

11. GRASBY

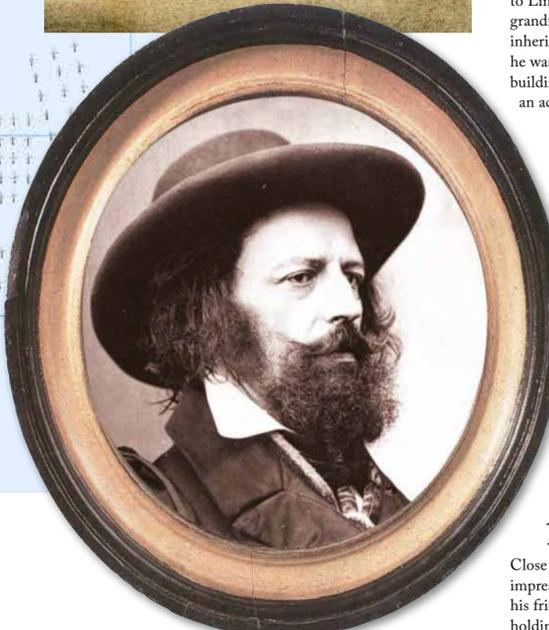
Grasby, a village on the edge of the western Wolds enjoys views to Lincoln Cathedral some 24 miles away. On the death of his grandfather, Alfred inherited property here. His brother Charles inherited a house at Caistor and Turner land at Grasby where he was priest. Charles built a new rectory and oversaw the building of a new church and school in the parish. He was also an accomplished poet.

i Further information can be found in All Saints Church.

12. TEALBY

The charming village of Tealby was the home of Tennyson's grandfather and later his Uncle Charles Tennyson, who added D'Eyncourt to the name. He extended the modest medieval manor house into a grand castle with moat, and called it Bayon's Manor. Used by the army in WWII the house, by the mid 1960's, was in a sorry state of neglect and was demolished. The Viking Way runs along part of the old driveway.

i Further information can be found in the porch of All Saints Church.



13. LINCOLN

Close to the Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral is the impressive, commanding bronze statue of Alfred Tennyson by his friend, the sculptor George Frederick Watts. It shows Alfred holding a stem of Ivy-leaved Toadflax and a plaque at the base quotes his poem, 'Flower in the Crannied Wall'.

The Tennyson Research Centre is housed at the Lincolnshire Archives and forms the most significant collection on Alfred, Lord Tennyson in the world, donated by, and bought from the poet's descendants by Lincolnshire County Council with public donations. This collection includes his hat, coat and books from Tennyson's own library, along with volumes from the libraries of his father, his brother Charles and his eldest son. There are letters, family papers, manuscripts of poetry and plays, proofs, illustrations, paintings and photographs. Used by researchers and scholars from across the world, visits from individuals and groups are welcome but must be booked in advance.

i Further information can be found at Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire Archives, St Rumbold Street, Lincoln LN2 5AB, Tel: 01522 782040 Email: tennyson@lincolnshire.gov.uk

8. MABLETHORPE

Mablethorpe was another holiday destination for the Tennysons. They would stay at a cottage north of the town centre, close to the sand dunes. It is a private home, named Tennyson's Cottage. When Alfred and Charles had their first book published by Jackson's of Louth in 1827 (entitled 'Poems by Two Brothers') they hired a carriage with the proceeds and rode to Mablethorpe to shout their triumph to the sea. Alfred with his passion for the sea would often escape to Mablethorpe to be on his own and wander the dunes. The Lincolnshire coast was the inspiration for several poems including 'Break, Break, Break'. Once the Tennysons had left Somersby, Alfred would return to Mablethorpe for holidays or to write.

i Further information can be found in Seaview car park, overlooking the sea.