The Giant's Stone - William Bradley

On an otherwise unremarkable street in Market Weighton, Yorkshire, stands a stone with a remarkable story.

Known locally as the Giant's Stone, it is associated with William Bradley, a Market Weighton man who became famous in the early 19th century for his extraordinary height and reputed strength. Bradley was born in Market Weighton in 1787 and grew to a reported height of 7 ft 9 in (2.36 m), becoming known as "The Yorkshire Giant".[1][2]

By the age of 18, Bradley was reportedly around 7 ft 9 in tall and weighed approximately 27 stone (171 kg). After leaving school, he worked as a farm labourer and, according to local accounts, his size meant that he regularly broke ordinary agricultural tools and required specially made equipment.[1]





Figures 1 & 2. William Bradley commemorated by a life-sized statue in Market Weighton. The statue was carved from oak, reportedly from a tree thought to have been growing during his lifetime.

Bradley also became known for taking part in wagers and demonstrations of strength. One story describes him competing to load a wagon of manure faster than two ordinary-sized men.[1] Another, and the story most closely associated with the stone, tells of a wager in which Bradley was challenged to carry a large boulder into Market Weighton.[1][3]

The Giant's Stone stands on Londesborough Road, opposite All Saints' Church, and is accompanied by a life-sized mural depicting Bradley carrying the stone.[3][4]



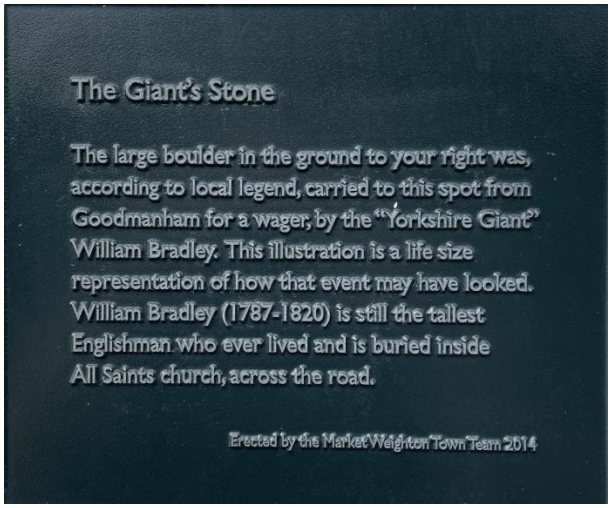
Figure 3. The Giant's Stone and a life-sized mural depicting Bradley carrying the stone.

According to one version of the local tradition, Bradley carried the stone from the neighbouring village of Goodmanham to its present location, a distance of approximately one mile (1.6 km).[3] Other accounts give a much shorter distance of around a quarter of a mile (400 m), which would place the supposed starting point closer to Market Weighton.[1]

The difference between these accounts is significant and illustrates the difficulty of establishing the precise details of a traditional feat of strength. It is possible that the story has changed through retelling, or that the original starting point was understood differently. It is also unclear whether Bradley was expected to carry the stone continuously or whether he could put it down and rest during the journey.[3]

William Bradley died in Market Weighton in 1820 at the age of 33.[1][2] His remarkable size and reputation ensured that his name remained part of the town's identity, and he continues to be commemorated through a life-sized wooden statue, heritage material and the Giant Bradley Heritage Trail.[2][5]

The stone itself has also survived as a physical reminder of the story. Today it appears partially embedded in the pavement and damaged, meaning that it should be regarded as a historic object and not available to lift.[3]





Figures 4 & 5. The Giant's Stone and memorial plaque.

The exact circumstances of Bradley's feat may never be known. What has survived is the tradition: a giant from Market Weighton, a wager, a heavy stone and a story of strength that has remained attached to the same town for generations.

The Giant's Stone represents more than a lifting challenge. It is a piece of local heritage where stone, place, folklore and strength meet.

References

[1] I'm From Yorkshire — *William Bradley – Life, Career & Death*. Biographical information concerning William Bradley, his height, weight, agricultural work, wagers and the story of carrying the stone into Market Weighton.[1]

[2] East Riding of Yorkshire Council — *Market Weighton Conservation Area Appraisal*. Information on William Bradley, including his height, life in Market Weighton and the life-sized statue commemorating him.[2]

[3] Lifting Stones — *The Giant's Stone*. Account of the Giant's Stone, the Goodmanham tradition, differing accounts of the distance, the mural and the uncertainty surrounding the precise circumstances of the feat.[3]

[4] All About Yorkshire — *William Bradley The Yorkshire Giant – Britain's Tallest Man?* Information concerning the Giant's Stone, its location opposite All Saints' Church and the traditional account of Bradley carrying the stone from Goodmanham.[4]

[5] Giant Bradley Heritage Trail — Market Weighton. Local heritage information concerning William Bradley and the heritage trail commemorating his life and connection with Market Weighton.[5]