

HARPER SOULBY

My research, as part of Wakefield Historical Society's Westgate project, has covered six properties on that important street, numbers 70, 72, 74, 76 and 78. The house and warehouse at number 72 was first inhabited by Harper Soulby, a woolstapler. His brother John occupied the property at number 70. The brothers were in partnership as woolstaplers. Harper and John Soulby's father, Henry Soulby, was born about 1730 in Malton. He was a grocer. He married Elizabeth Harper in 1753 and they had six children. Harper was born in 1763 and brother John three years later. Henry died in Malton about 1800. By 1786 the brothers were in Wakefield. Harper married Dorothy Newton at All Saints Church, Wakefield. The couple had six children but three died in infancy. The three remaining were Henry born 1789, Emma 1790 and Maria in 1794.

Land Tax records of 1790 show Harper and John living adjacently in the Kirkgate area. By 1801 they both moved to the brand new properties on Westgate. They do not seem to have an easy relationship because in 1807 they were both in Court for Breach of the Peace. They were both bound over for twelve months with a surety of £200, an enormous amount at the time. John had also been in Court in 1794 for causing terror and disturbance to a William Barstow.

Even though they had criminal records, John was made a Constable of Wakefield in 1812 and Harper two years later.

Their business partnership was dissolved and Harper continued his trade with his son Henry. John sold all his Wakefield properties in 1819 and moved to Wisbech.

Harper continued as a woolstapler on Westgate but lived at Cliffe House, Cliffe Parade, Wakefield from at least 1814. He died on 23rd January 1827.

The newspaper reported:

"On Tuesday last, at Wakefield, Mr Harper Soulby, of the firm Harper Soulby and Co. Woolstaplers, in the 64th year of his age. He enjoyed a good state of health until within an hour of his death."

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