

“ CONTEMPORARY OTHERWORLDLY GAZETTEERS ”



# INTRODUCTION



PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF ELMET



# INTRODUCTION

Before the production of a new map and gazetteer, we at the Contemporary Otherworldly Gazetteers (COG) first conduct a full survey of the region. This will of course include its geographical purview, boundaries, places of historical import and transport routes. But due to the nature of our work and mission, these methods remain somewhat insufficient.

The method we find most conducive to providing results is that of a Psychogeographic Survey. Psychogeography is no new science, neither is it some mystic art. It began to be defined during the 1950s as a way of understanding, in particular, the effects of urbanism and cities on the lives and emotions of their inhabitants. One particular emphasis of psychogeography has been on the subconscious organisation of an environment; in a way it is an attempt to *peel back* the city or the land to see what lies underneath, not in archaeological terms, but in psychological terms.

As is suggested in our name, we at the COG are not interested in the intersectionality of the mundane – how the roads and rivers follow the contour lines on a map – no, we exist for the purpose of exploring where worlds collide. Where can the boots of Roman soldiers still be seen on the landscape? Which footpaths can take you to

forgotten stations axed by Dr. Beeching? How are dead pre-historic men still honoured in our landscapes today? These are not questions answered by simply staring at a map. To begin finding answers one must look deeper. I say to *begin* to find answers as some answers may never be truly be found. One example from this survey is the Aberford Dykes (see page 42 for more detail). While it is possible that more information on them may be unearthed in future years, it is unlikely that we will ever be able to state with exact confidence the true purpose for their construction.

It is for these reasons why we remain gazetteers and not cartographers. The lines on the map only go so far as to instruct. They are descriptive in the simplest of terms, describing only what is *there* in plain sight. They ask neither *what* nor *how*. As functional objects there is little they can teach the reader. And while the past is our concern, it is not our purview. As such, we are concerned with the psychological and hauntological concerns of the landscape as we find it *today*. The past of course has a large role to play in this, but sometimes we catch a glimpse of forgotten futures too, lost timelines that accidentally spilled into ours like a time traveller with an oil leak. In addition, some parts of our landscape lie in flux, an observable fork in the road of history. It is for this reason we are the *Contemporary Otherworldly Gazetteers*.

Although a digression from the subject matter at hand, I trust it will aid and prepare the reader for what is to follow. And so back to business: While conducting this survey it became clear that there were two major themes found in the Elmetian landscape, namely *Violence* and *Belief*. These themes are not a neat summary of all



that has occurred in this region, but merely two salient parts of our psychogeographic survey we felt deserved a broader treatment. Alongside these are three separate foci which are not as thematically broad, but we felt were also deserving of space within this volume. These are: A brief toponymic study, a short piece on the Aberford Dykes system and a short exploration of the tantalising link between the village of Barkston Ash and Yggdrasil, the world-tree of Viking legend.

The purpose of publishing this survey was to better inform the reader of our processes and preparation in producing a map and gazetteer of Elmet for publication. It is, in a way, a form of ‘showing our workings’. We hope you find them valuable.



Looking across Towton Battlefield to the power stations in Drax and Eggborough, now decommissioned.