

# Today's Journey

## **CUBLEY to BRAILSFORD via ALKMONTON, RODSLEY and SHIRLEY**

Now onto Derby Lane on the route of an old Roman road. The map shows me it is straight but not that it undulates like the waves of the sea.

Every so often we climb out of the hollow and look over to Staffordshire or down towards the power station cooling towers at Drakelow.

We pass through Hungry Bentley and see the new lease of life this lost village has procured. Long barns now being converted into dwellings. In 1829, the **OAKDENS Daniel** at Middleton Park, Philip at Bentley Hall were joined by Thomas, all farming the area. **Tommy HUNT** shod the horses. Three more farmers listed **COXON, JEFFRY** and Sam **MASSIE** made up the agricultural establishment.

We pass through Hungry Bentley, it doesn't take long, and press on to where the Millenium Oak planted for Hungry Bentley and Alkmonton is thriving at the junction before the right turn to Alkmonton. What a wonderful little place this is. The school house showing the clock at nine forty. In the road the sign says "Slow"; the clock is merely obeying instructions. The bell on the school house remains silent but it must have rung for the sake of our ancestors a hundred plus years ago. Down the road the little, unique church as if built with large pebbles is surrounded with a ditch almost as if it were some Norman castle with a moat. No doubt the farmer known as only **SAINT** in Glovers 1829 Directory attended here. Again an agricultural area **John COOPER, William MORLEY** and **Richard FELLOWS** make up the farming community.

We now follow the lane past the church steep sided in places, wide verges on rare occasions and down to the turning to Rodsley past Woodhouse and on to Bailys Close Farm where a single cow stood in the distance and tried to impress us with it's best moo. It's as if it wont go away until it's had it's picture taken, we duly oblige and though it looks so small in the distance it's manner was one of "look at me".

Up the road at Park Style the cows there have no time for that sort of thing, there's chewing to be done and a whole field of Friesians are busy making milk for later. At Park Style is the largest concentration of Foxgloves we have ever seen almost a purple forest.

We sit down at Rodsley crossroads, the seat was nicely donated. By the side of the seat the Rodsley Millenium tree is faring badly against Alkmonton and Bentley. Suddenly behind us a collie dog has crept up on us, he made no sound and would not go away until given some food. He put it in his mouth and carried it over to his home across the junction. Not long after he ambled across again taking his time to cross the road holding the traffic up. He was in no hurry, here was a dog with attitude, this is Rodsley.

Rodsley where even the trees lean against each other and form a tunnel as you approach the top of the hill and Rodsley where even a mole appeared, had a

look round, slowly turned back round and disappeared down a hole! My first glimpse of a real little man in black velvet.

**John FLETCHER** kept the "French Horn" here in 1829 and **William MANSFIELD** the "Three Pots". **John GOODALL** was the wheelwright who kept the wagons rolling down on the farms. **GILLMAN, BLAKE, TATLOW, REDSHAW, PHILLIPS, SHERWIN** and **SMITH** all having farms, all calling upon at one time or another on the services of blacksmith **George GREATOREX**.

We turn right at the crossroads for Shirley, this time it's the cows who have adopted the same ideals as Roodsley dog, strolling without a care from one field to the next across the road. Shirley Mill farm is where they live and they have a wonderful home. The mill has been unused for nearly one hundred years since someone was killed by the mill wheel and it was removed. **Ralph WALKER** was miller in 1829.

Shirley is a scattered parish and up the hill we approach the Saracens Head, **Bob GOODALL** Mine Host in 1835. It is shut. We now cross the fields to make our way to Ednaston. The fields of wheat cover the land we cross but this is no Turnditch, the path is there for all to see and quickly we reach the wood, we must go through and we do. Only at this point someone decides to alter the path, we skirt the field and the next one too but finally get to Ednaston.

Well, almost, a group of anchor coloured cows decide if they run towards us we will jump back over the stile and stay there. They are right! Eventually after having spoken kindly to them in a loud voice they let us through.

We can't find the final stile so we opt for climbing the old five barred gate only to have Jack Russell shoot out from under a three inch gap yap, snarl and run back under cover as we finally make an hostelry in Ednaston. **Joseph ARCHER** and **John HULLAND** are farmers here in 1829. **Joseph MORELY** and **John WALLBANK** make up the quartet. A swift drink here then and finally on to Brailsford, which has, like the rest of these villages, red brick buildings all along its long road.

A sign points to Thurvaston. Have we gone round in circles? No there are two Thurvastons. I'm glad my ancestor didn't come from one or the other, I may have been looking in the wrong place for years!

At Brailsford a pine tree seems to reach out halfway across the road checking up on visitors as if it were a toll gate keeper. This is a land of haycarts and hayricks, of cowherds and blacksmiths, of streams and brooks, of mills and millers. This is not the land time forgot this is the land that seemed to forget time.