

Today's Journey

YOULGREAVE to WENSLEY

After losing our way at Sawmills last journey I decided to use a compass to help us decide where to go. Opening the map the compass pointed north, not being happy with the place it was pointing to, we put it down again and again and it still pointed in the same direction. Not wishing to be beaten a fourth time we turned the map round and headed south ... to Youlgreave!

Our cockney mate, Den, having been given a reprieve from driving to the Seychelles was only too happy to take us, especially as he intended to show us an amazing view he regularly visits. He took us to Over Haddon and the view overlooking Lathkill Dale. Yes, we agreed, it was beautiful. On the way a pheasant had sat atop a limestone wall at the junction leading down to Conksbury Bridge. That pheasant was a clever bird. Very clever.

Back in Youlgreave we said our goodbye to Den. The place was cold to say the least but the hardy lads on the football pitch were doing their stuff or may be they were running round just to keep warm.

We walked to the other end of the village appropriately called Coldwell End and walked back towards the centre, passing as we did, the Wesleyan School dated 1887. Stones laid by **William BROSTER**, **Mrs BANCROFT**, **John SHELDON** and **Stephen GOODWIN** were now showing their age and the school had now become a private dwelling.

The children though have another school to attend in the village for which they must be very pleased about. The black and white fronted Farmyard Inn has on its walls two wheels, though unlikely to have been made by **James KENWORTHY** the wheelwright in the 1830's. Next to it the Wesleyan Methodist chapel states it was built in 1807 and extended a hundred years later. The impressive Old Hall is clad in twining branches which must look a picture in the summer but like any self respecting flower on a cold day they are all tightly wrapped up in their flower beds.

It's interesting to note how the names of places seem to change either by mistake or age. Holywell Lane, home to the large Wesleyan Reform church, is called Holloway Lane on the ordnance survey of 1900. Just up

the road is Co-op Hill Cottage, a strange name you would have thought until you see at the top of the rise the Co-op Shop.

It is now getting even colder and the thought of checking how cold the water is from Youlgreaves own supply of water, piped since 1829, is too much to think about. There's a shout goes up from the direction of the football field we suspect the hot water bottles have been delivered.

Youlgreave is a lovely village, its limestone built houses some with roofs like the waves of the sea are all sizes from Thimble Hall to three storey houses. One has the inscription TC and GC 1734. Two hundred and seventy years later it's still there. The Bulls Head looks inviting but if we go in we may never come out. In 1829, **Isaac SHIMWELL**, was the host, by 1835 **Ann SHIMWELL** was running the place.

The church boasts a clock with the date 1870. Its tower, like a massive block, is seen from miles away and dominates Youlgreave. **John HOLMES**, who died in 1876, aged 89 is commemorated with a stone that also gives his wife Ellen's age as 73 when she died in 1857. Also here are Sarah the wife of **Samuel ANDREWS** who died 19 July 1879 aged 63 and Rachel wife of **George SIDDALL** of Stanton who died 1865.

It is getting colder and as a last resort we go into the George Hotel, doing a roaring trade with walkers and locals alike. There are least four pictures of this Hotel within one room alone how many more there will be in the whole place is anyone's guess. It's a real friendly place with a resident "local". He only popped in to get some sausages he said but if he takes a chop home to his wife he will be alright! Yes, it sells all sorts, including a drink or two. His chop is presented to him a gift offering to his beloved. Still he requires another drink because of the cold or is it because of his beloved?

Among the crowd a group of people are discussing how many birds they had shot over the last two days. Sixty one. The pheasant on the Conksbury wall was a smart bird. We can't stop but have some chips to take out, nice and hot. We step outside, the potatoes cry they have forgotten their jackets. We head off down the side of the church for Bradford and, no, we are not lost!

There really is a place in Derbyshire called Bradford. It lies in the valley below Youlgreave and a small river with the same name once slipped into oblivion in February 1881. A huge chasm opened up in the river and it simply poured itself down the drain. Thousands of tons of rock were poured into the hole, the spoil from lead mines within Youlgreave and eventually the river was corked up.

Still huge pieces of wood, poured into the gulf, were seen floating down the river four miles away and making it's way towards Matlock. It is

worthy of note that a great flood inundated Matlock at the same time. Men stood on the railway bridge, which is at least fifteen foot above the road, to prevent debris and trees crashing into the railway bridge and bringing it down. It must have been a huge flood and one that has been forgotten in Matlock. Torrential rain for weeks before it seems was the cause and the same rains obviously had a part to play with the disappearance of the Bradford, sweeping as it did through the underground mines probably long abandoned.

We ask a woman which is the best way to Elton, she points us in one direction then goes inside and asks her husband. Sawmills springs to mind. She pointed us to the right hand road, then the left one after consultation. She asks if we are walking there, as its a long way, still she's done it before. She points to both roads this time, her finger smack down the divide. She walks away. We move forward tentatively.

I shout, "We're lost already!"

She points not the right hand one go to the left. Feeling better we step out, a hundred yards later the two roads meet! We are on our way to Elton.

We make our way up Mawstone Lane. This is another name change from the Ordnance Survey map, this time from Moss Stone Lane. The farm under the trees is Mawstone Farm with its usual complement of trucks and tractors dotted around the field. It looks old and established and isn't going to be moved whatever the weather which by now is cold to freezing. The wind chill factor doesn't come into it. That went home long ago to put a top coat on. I have a feeling it will come out to play again.

The remains of old quarries are to be found here aside Mawstone. To our right, in the valley below, lies Hopping Farm now acting as a caravan site. We climb the road and, since we left Bradford Dale, a cockerel has crowed his head off. I wish he would. I check my watch, it's nearly half past three but the cockerel will insist it's quarter to four. Apart from the chimes from Big Hen its a wonderfully quiet stretch of road.

Someone has erected a seat at the top of the hill, obviously someone's favourite resting spot and they have picked a lovely view. We look towards Middleton and Smerrill, the fields which are dotted with the occasional sheep and cows, look as if they are waiting to burst into Spring mode. The roadside hedges and walls are now replaced by posts and wire fencing giving a much more open environment. Stone posts along the road tell us this was once gated but now open all the way.

The quietness is interrupted by the approach of a motor car. It will be the first and last we encounter on our way to Elton. It is totally quiet again, a large unpopulated wilderness. We stand still just to stop and stare. It's

something you must do and we don't do often enough. Our busy lives crush it out of us some times but you must do it. Just stop and look. It's wild, it draws you. It's calm, it almost sedates you.

Suddenly, from out of the barrenness, a figure in the distance is spotted. He seems to be carrying a water container and we can only assume he took a wrong turn at Timbuktu. He is the only moving thing for miles, the animals are so small in the valley bottom that you can hardly tell they are moving. He disappears where to we do not know. Maybe it's a mirage. Maybe we are in Timbuktu?

Without warning the wind chill returns. It is not a mirage. Across the valley roads leading to farms stand out in contrast against the green fields, moving as they do up and onto flat top countryside. We see a sign written on a circular stone that has Spout Farm carved into it but then another sign, not so grand, painted on a piece of wood saying it's really Rock Farm. It's an old friendly building with tiny windows and a nice little pond and a trickle of a waterfall in the garden. We know about the pond because we have taken a wrong turning into someone's garden.

We retreat and make our way up a muddy track, through gates, over stiles and into a spell of torrential rain. The wind is howling the place is called Windygap Plantation. The wind is there but the plantation has been half blown away in former times. We shelter for a while under the few remaining trees but the caves in the hillside look a better bet.

We press on climbing to near nine hundred feet. The place is strewn with huge boulders and is dotted with gorse bushes. The ground underfoot is so wet we debate if we should use a snorkel, not having packed it, we use the canoe instead. That's how wet it is.

We cross a very dodgy stile, it sways as soon as you stand on it. I see millions of malicious molecules of H₂O gathering underneath waiting for the poor unsuspecting walker to fall, a bit like the crocs and the wildebeest at the Mara river.

Below us lies Gratton farm and the small group of buildings and houses that stand at the entrance of the steep sided and wooded Gratton Dale. We now come out of Bury Cliff Wood and onto the road to Elton. A series of four stone troughs stand here, no doubt used by the horses that carted the stone from yet another quarry just inside the Wood.

We make our way down Cliff Lane and past an old building propped up by masses of ivy. In the farmyard stands a Lamborghini, the fastest tractor in Elton. Just before Bury Cliff Farm is an ancient well, the walls surrounding it covered in moss. To our left on the hillside the tops of the houses of Elton can be seen peering Chadlike towards us. The large

complex that makes up Oddo House Farm stands to our right as we take an old path that brings us into the village itself.

At the end of Elton the tiny Primitive Methodist Chapel, bearing date 1843, stands close by to a long barn that has seen better days but it still manages to prop itself up. The wind whistles through the rafters which are easily seen because the tiles are few and far between. It has a feel of belonging and acceptance even though it is in a sorry state. It's been around for a long time and it's a friend of the family. You would miss it if it upped sticks, well bricks and rafters and left.

The Elton Methodist Chapel dated twelve years earlier than the Primitive one has now become the village hall. We pass Well Street and opposite stands the Duke of York public house. It is a big building, looks the part and many a weary traveller must have taken some nourishment here. **Robert JOULE** looked after it in 1829 and one can imagine the horse and carts that would pack the yard in the front of the pub back then. It is still open today, late evenings and on Sunday lunch times. A welcome stop for many a walker.

Across the road the parish church stands. In its grounds lie **Mary** daughter of **Francis and Hannah MILNER** of Dudwood Lane, who died 29 September in 1864 aged thirty. **Henry and Elizabeth WATTS** are also here he died 1869 aged fifty six and Elizabeth was seventy one when she joined him in 1895. The four year old son of **John and Mary Ann POTTER, William**, died in 1833, while **Samuel and Mary STONE**, a well known Elton surname, lie together he died August 28th in 1836, Mary died ten years later on the 30th of July. Her age seems to read 82 but the weather has played its part in weathering away the stone.

Elton School like so many of these villages has its school bell at the ready. For whom the bell tolls? Well, in 1889 -1890, the likes of **John J. HARRISON** then aged 13 and 16 year old, **Percy CHARLESWORTH**, **Clement SMITH** was eleven at the time. I don't know if he was related to **Joshua SMITH** but he had an attendance record that would make the school bobby tear his hair out. Out of a possible 116 attendances **Joshua** decided he could make do with just forty five. On the other hand, **Arthur STONE**, fell just three short of the maximum.

A large building called Homestead farm is set back off the road it looks as if it has had an important past. There's still a farm just before it right next to the main road. Across the street an old pump still stands as a reminder of another time. The houses do their bit as well. Lovely old cottages with cobbles before them. The glow of a fire in a nearby house reminds us what warmth was.

We are now approaching the new end, the East End of Elton. Here we find a new phone box. We give Den a call, earlier he had asked where we

were, and we told him to get a map to try and find where we were on it. We then thought does he think we need picking up. We hope not for today's journey would be a brisk walk if he did.

"Den," I said, "I hope you aren't going to pick us up."

"No," he said, "I'm sat here in front of the fire having a cup of tea, no chance mate." Den knows how to make you feel good.

Across the fields the two pillars of Robin Hood's Stride make you wonder how big his bow and arrows were. It makes you think what a brave man the Sheriff of Nottingham was or what a fool he was. A friend had once told us how he could see his mother striding out in the distance marching across the fields to fetch him in when he was late. He could see this diminutive figure way in the distance walking with purpose as he awaited his fate. It's true, the fields here are open, not many trees to block the view. There is no chance of a surprise attack, you just know as a young lad what you are going to get long before you get it!

We pass Dudwood Lane which leads down to Dudwood Farm and on down Chadwick Hill. A couple of barns either side of the road seem to be keeping each other company, trying desperately to huddle together to keep warm. They say Elton is a top coat colder than anywhere else. If I could speak I would ask for one. Within a matter of a few hundred yards we have descended some 150 feet and crossed the boundary into the almost tropical climes of Winster.

On approaching Winster we were greeted with what is now becoming a familiar sight, thirteen dead moles hanging on a fence! Their handiwork still to be seen in the field over the wall.

On the 6th April 1779 **Joseph DUNN** committed himself to 21 servitude in catching the moles of Winster parish. Perhaps there were none in Monyash where he was from, or maybe he had done such a good job there he was head hunted by the likes of **George BLACKWELL, George HAWLEY, Anthony FOXLOW, Isaac HOLMES** and **Thomas ROBERTS** just some of the many signatories to his contract to clear Winster farms of the little man with the velvet coat. He received the sum of five guineas a year for his legalised work.

Just round the corner is a drive to the former home of **William BRITTLEBANK** who, in 1821, killed the surgeon of Winster, **William CUDDIE**. A sketch records where CUDDIE was standing on the sloping lawn, at the front of Bank House, when he was shot and how the bullet passed through his body and lodged in the tree behind him.

The churchyard recalls that **Thomas SMITH** died on the 28th of February 1851 at Dong Dong in China, while serving in the 59th Regiment of Foot.

He was twenty eight. **Thomas STONE** is also buried here, his grey slate tombstone stating he died in 1855 on the twelfth of May aged twenty one. He was born too late and died too late to hear **Caleb WILCOCK** the designated organist appointed 30th May 1775 play his funeral march

Winster is a typical Peakland village, with hidden corners and something to see at every turn. It attracts people from all over the place and not just now. In 1698, on the 26 Mar, **Samuel GAMBLE**, a webster, from Stanton in Youlgreave parish made the journey to set up home there as did **Anthony FOXLOW** who came from Taddington in 1700. The **INGMAN's** also came from Baslow. **Edward GODBEHERE**, his wife Anne, John and Thomas their sons and daughter Grace made the journey from Cromford in 1731. One year later **Thomas and Katherine SLATER** came from Alsop en le Dale and in 1732 **William and Ann SLATER** came from Chelmorton.

It wasn't just from Derbyshire the people came **Joseph and Jane LEES** came from Oldham. Their Settlement certificate was signed by one **Oswald MOSLEY**. They all had papers that were in good order, however one survives from 1737 that is anything like the real thing but served the same purpose. Written on a scrap of paper about two inches by six inches and no doubt treasured until handed to the Overseers of Winster who carefully placed it with all the other official documents is a Settlement Certificate from South Wingfield.

*It reads: This is to satisfi the overseeor of the pore of Winster that wee will take care of **John BALL** wife a cordin to Law from the over seeor of South Wingfield **John NUTTALL** overseeor - 27 Sep 1737*

What also attracts people is the habit the folks from the village have of running through the street with a pancake in a frying pan. It takes a brave man to recall the runners back to the grid in case of a false start. A flat cap on the head of an official is no match against a frying pan in the hand of a competitor! Yet every Shrove Tuesday these brave people, year in year out, put their whistles in their mouths and potentially their head under a frying pan.

Winster Hall has a balustrade around it's top making it look very grand but not lovers leap proof, for legend has it that a couple forbidden to marry leapt to their deaths from the roof.

Perhaps Winster's most famous building is the Market House that opens, according to one guide, on Saturday afternoons, which is good because we can go and get some shelter from the now biting wind which seems to follow us from Elton.

Winster, it seems, feels aggrieved its near neighbour is one coat colder and is doing its level best to beat that. Unfortunately, the small print says

the Market is only open in Summer. We are in luck though when we see a shop open, we decide to stock up with firelighters, hurricane lamps, thermal gloves, scarves and those big Russian hats that have the bits that hang down the side of your face to keep your ears warm. That was the plan but instead we decide to go for a quarter of Winter Mixture instead. We can't carry that lot and the canoe!

We come to the school at Winster, now with a full array of playground materials; how much different today than from the early days of school education. Walks around the village, nature walks being the means of recreation for many schools. Some children, or their parents, decided school was just too far to get too. So it was that some children from Grange Mill and Ible decided just that and left. What time would they have to leave to get to school on time? I don't suppose the journey home was much better because by the time they got home it would be almost time to set out again!

John DURDEN, in 1835, was a carrier that every Saturday made his to Chesterfield, we could have done with him now. Not only is it cold but it decides a drop of hail wouldn't go amiss. Thankfully it doesn't last long but we wish the **BURTON** boys were back in town, they were the blacksmiths in 1835 and a cosy chat by the fire with **Tony** and **Joshua** would do nicely.

The Land Tax of 1779 shows an **Anthony FOXLOW** at Bright Gates, **Daniel INGMAN** had a house, **David LOXLEY** had a shop, **Jacob HALL** was described as a miner and **Thomas ROBERTS** as The Barmaster, showing the strong links with lead mining in this area. **Jacob MORTON** had a share in School farm along with **Micah WILLCOCK**. **George ROWLAND's** widow held Lord Scarsdale Farm along with **Robert HALL** and a **Mr GOODWIN**. A **Mr John BRADLEY** had a part of Repton School farm along with **George BLACKWELL**. In the same year, **George BALL**, was assessed at four pence for his house. Was he related to **John BALL** who carried that scrap of paper with him from South Wingfield forty two years before? **Richard DALE** was also listed then the compiler adding "or widow". So had he recently died? The Executors of **Richard MARCHINTON** were also mentioned.

Whose houses had we passed, whose had been pulled down, that's another story in itself. What mattered now was to get to Wensley. The crafty cockney had phoned to say he would pick us up opposite South Darley school which is just below the hill in Wensley.

We set off at a brisk pace along a road that, if ever they close Silverstone or the Daytona race track, it would serve as a perfect substitute. You can't imagine great great grandad thrashing it on the old cart, besides there is too much to admire.

The fields leading down to the valley is dotted with lead mines. Cambridge and Clough Woods hide pleasant walks and small deer. It's beautiful and peaceful. We carry on, the Red Lion appears on the horizon as we approach Wensley. It's getting dark, Den is waiting we hope at the bottom of the road. Twice we have approached Wensley, twice circumstances have stopped us from recording it's history. It's now too late to see anything properly apart from the frost glistening on our eyebrows!

Wensley will wait for another day. A journey all to itself.