

# Today's Journey

## MATLOCK

You can't call Matlock a "Today's Journey." I said.

"Of course you can! Have you ever looked at Matlock from an olden days point of view?" she said.

"Anyway it's far to cold," I said, "and...."

"Here's your gloves," she said.

Suitably wrapped up, with scarf beneath a white fleece, black gloves and black trousers I hoped we wouldn't meet a lost polar bear looking to pick up penguin! I checked the compass and kept an eye on the north looking for any stray bears.

We set off from home, pleased I suppose, that we don't live at number nine Great Cow Close as it was known in the 1840's. We pass the site of **William ELLSE'** house but occupied by **Thomas WILDGOOSE**, who also tended the fields below it. Those fields were owned by **Joseph PAXTON** and would later be the home to the Drill Hall and later still a fitness centre.

In front of the buildings stands a cherry blossom tree. Well not exactly standing, more slanting sideways but an amazing thing happens as you walk by it. It stands up straight and then leans towards the other side. An amazing optical illusion and not a pub in site.

Over on the opposite side of the road a lane leads to Dean Fields and passes the old house of **Ann TRICKETTS**. Ann, from Pentrich, was the wife of John, at 64, a year older than his wife and a retired engineer born at Clay Cross around 1787. They had a servant, **Mary WALL**, aged 13, from Ashover. From their house each morning they would see Masson and, in winter, like today, sporting a mantle of snow.

Further down the road, in Lime Tree Road, so called because a lime tree once grew in the middle of the road, stood the Matlock Green Independent Chapel. No longer in existence but, in 1851, it was a hotbed of Lancashire activity, with **John WHEWELL** from Darwen; his wife, Susannah, from Accrington. Today a large house in it's place has the

name **J IBBOTSON** carved crudely into the stonework, but you have to look hard see it.

Further down towards the Green and we come to the "Red Lion", a handsome pub and one that from the stone work around it has seen alterations over a number of years. **John ROUSE** was landlord in 1847; eighteen years before it was **George MOORE**.

Matlock Green is a community in decline, having lost its Post Office in recent weeks, it once had a sweet-shop, good old **Dolly WALL**, a kind old lady, weighing out the Liquorice Torpedo's by the quarter to many a Charles White school Child.

It still retains a newsagent, a chip shop and, of course, the "Three Horseshoes" but the Army Stores, **WHEELDON's**, the butchers and a motor accessory shop have long since gone. There was once a carpenter's shop on Knowleston Place and a boys school but that has gone. It stood near **WHEELDON's** butchers and, in 1851, **Joseph REEVES**, a fifty-six-year-old widower of Scropton lived across the road, he also was a butcher who had two sons Frederick and George living with him.

Bentley Brook which, according to the tithe map, once ran as a ford at the bottom of Tagg Hill or Church Street flows along the side of the houses on Knowleston Place. By comparing maps one can see that alterations to the route of the brook have been made just before Stoney Way, no doubt to try and alleviate the threat of flooding. An old print shows Stoney Way as an open brook, not walled, but with huge flat stones forming a bridge across the brook. Today Knowleston Place Cottages built in 1902 line its bank.

We make our way towards Hall Leys Park passing Derwent House built in the early 1700's and an even older building with a 1621 date and the inscription of WGW. Another building, an extension to Derwent House, bears the date 1772; it's about six foot wide and thirty foot tall. It to has an inscription I.K.

A memorial to a tragedy in 1911 next meets the eye. Police Constable, **Arthur WRIGHT**, who had joined Matlock Police from Buxton only weeks previously, lost his life in attempting to save a young woman he was escorting to the Police Station who, fearing the consequences of her actions, ran and jumped into the river.

Hall Leys is a beautiful park with room enough for children to run, skip, paddle, swing and slide. Adults play bowls or sit and listen to a band of a summer evening. At one time even the football ground was in the park. For those with a nautical taste of adventure you may take to the boats on the boating lake. Today, however, you will need an ice breaker before you

can venture onto the high seas. The ice does not seem to bother the ducks who sit on it without so much as a quack.

This quietness makes me wonder why Patricia has been so quiet herself, after crossing the bridge in the middle of the park, with the rivers flood levels recorded on it's stone work over the years. All becomes apparent, this way is the quick way to the shops. Patricia needs a diary! She already has one but feels she needs another. Why does she need another diary, a person can only record so much? She goes into the shop and emerges triumphantly with three, yes, three diaries! Samuel Pepys has a lot of explaining to do!

Retracing our steps, we move along Dale Road, it's buildings all shapes and sizes. An old advertisement, painted on the outside of a shop, tells us where "Frisby's" shoe shop was.

Across the road, the "Olde Englishe" stands guard on the corner it's roof looking like an attempt at a Bavarian Castle. Along this street today can be found Turkish, Indian and Chinese eating places all under the watchful eye of "Evans". The Jeweller's clock which hangs, it seems, halfway across the pavement and has done so for a hundred years. "Evans" were also opticians so many a Matlock man or woman would have entered the shop and noticed at the same time the displays of jewellery.

Patricia has a watch and glasses so I think we are on safe ground here. However she also had a diary!

The old "Palace" cinema, operating in 1911, has long since gone has have other shops from Dale Road, "Peacocks", with it's wooden floors that made the need for door alarms obsolete long before they were invented. "Halls and Co.", "Manchester Stores", "Marsdens", and "Davis's", the chemists, who had great big coloured jars displayed in the window, all long since gone.

We move towards Matlock Bath passing under the railway bridge placed there in the late 1840's. **Moses WEELDON** had cause to remember this bridge because it was while working there, in February 1849, as a young mason, he accidentally fell from the top and fractured his thigh. He was attended to by **Mr CHINERY**, the doctor who conveyed him home to Matlock Town and felt he had great hopes of Moses "doing well".

The railway brought thousands daily into Matlock. Three thousand came in May 1851 from Leeds, Gloucester, Birmingham, Newark, Rugby and Lincoln. Seven trains carried the excursionists, some of whom paid 10d for a return fare from Birmingham.

Later that year, **Mrs GREAVES**, from the "Rutland Arms Inn" at Bakewell, and aged around eighty, made her first trip by rail from Rowsley to

Matlock Bath. She took with her from Bakewell to Rowsley, for the benefit of the servants on the station there, "two legs of mutton and a joint of pork, ready cooked with pickles, bread, etc. together with 10/- to purchase some ale. Now I know where the "Fat Controller" comes from.

Another incident involving the railway concerns **Matilda WALTON**, a twelve year old girl, who had been living in service in Sadler Gate Derby with **James WALTON**, a grocer. She had become ill and sent home by rail to Matlock. At Matlock Bridge, **Mrs ROPER**, landlady at the "Queens Head" on Dale Road noticed how ill Matilda was, she gave her some brandy which apparently revived her but next day she died. Her mother had been a widow for only a week when Matilda her daughter died.

The "Boat House Inn", back in 1829, was the domain of **James FLETCHER**, he was also a butcher. By 1847, **Charles EATON**, was "vittualler." He came from Snitterton and his wife, Susan, would no doubt astound the regulars about the huge stone monument she grew up by near Salisbury in Wiltshire. **George CHAMPION**, a seventeen-year-old Matlock lad, and **Charlotte KNOWLS**, the same age but from Darley both served as general servants. Today the "Boat House" is covered in ivy and the building like the ivy has spread somewhat in size.

Behind the pub is the remains of Harvey Dale quarry. Across the road from the "Boat House" are still to be found the steps to the boat that ferried people across the river. There are no steps on the other side but an intrepid fisherman has rigged up a piece of a wooden ladder.

The opposite bank, in 1851, was once worked by **Timothy SPENCER**, another victualler, later that land would be turned into allotments. Today would be the perfect day to grow frozen vegetables!

We make our way towards Matlock Bath and the white cliff that is High Tor. Before 1851 Matlock had been given the designation "the Switzerland of England." I am sure there must be other places worthy of such a title but the name stuck and the cable cars crossing high above the A6 add to the illusion. Such is the grandeur of this huge rock that, for hundreds of years, artists have put paint to canvas in trying to capture the essence of High Tor. Where they painted, sketched or photographed from is still called "Artists Corner". It just wasn't photographic paper or canvas that the picture was transferred to.

I once saw an old jug with a picture of the Tor without the railway tunnel which runs under it, on its lower slopes a herd of cows were grazing. The trees were not a big as they are today. The railway changed all that as the land was ripped open to lay the track.

We now cross the Derwent at a new bridge, built in 1881, the old one having been washed away in the great flood. **Mr MARTIN**, from "Artists

Corner", won the bid for the wreckage of the bridge, which was still in the river, as long as he took it out of the river himself. The remains of what appears to be the old metal posts are still to be seen under High Tor to this day.

We now pass under the railway tunnel and up the cobbled path which will take us pass the entranceway to the High Tor Pleasure Grounds.