

Today's Journey

WENSLEY

We had tried to get to Wensley on other occasions but time prevented us from giving it proper attention. Today would be different but we wouldn't be there until quarter past four when the Hulleys bus Number 172 to Bakewell would take that route.

We can see Wensley nestled on the hillside in the distance from where we live, a long village that hugs the road that twists and turns on its way to Winster.

We arrive at the top of Wensley on a beautiful Spring day, just the hint of a chill. The flowers in the garden of Cliffe House seem to be thriving though. In 1849 **Thomas** and **Elizabeth STEPHENSON** lived here and would probably have also approved of the two brown hens running around the drive. In the valley below two sheep chew on the lush grass of Wensleydale. Oblivious as to what is going on at the other end. Beyond them on the horizon stand Tearsall Trees, grouped in such a way as to be known locally as "the Toothbrush".

I turn around and standing before us the "Red Lion". A double gable ended building, with stone slab slates. The mullioned window frame is accompanied with leaded windows. The last pub we went in was called the "Red Lion" so why stop at just one.

On approaching the entrance a note written in red ink on a piece of cardboard informs us walkers must not enter the rooms with muddy boots on. Please use the covers provided. A box of plastic carrier bags emblazoned with the names of various shops is placed in the doorway. I check my shoes, no mud, and march in without any designer label bags around my feet.

The place looks empty, no Juke box, no dart board, no pool table. Not even a landlord. Presently a dear old lady appears from the back, and serves us our drinks. Suddenly Patricia astounds me by saying to the landlady, "do you remember me from when I came to the "Poetry Club" here?

The landlady can't remember Patricia but then Patricia remembers the different wines that were offered on such nights and it all comes flooding back. She still can't remember Patricia but she can remember everyone else. Patricia remembers the wines. This took place over twenty years ago. They reminisce for ages. The landlady tra la la's in between the brief

interludes when each decide what to talk about next. She is of the old school, interested in people and friendly because she is friendly. On the way out she looks as if she is about to hug us. She told us "the building dear is four hundred years old", how long it has been a pub I do not know but in the mid 1800's **James ALLEN** was the occupier of the "Red Lion Inn" although **Andrew BRITTLEBANK** was the landowner.

We step out and cross the road to a line of stone cottages called Eagle Terrace. Clifton House is set back off the road, high on the hillside and a fitness fanatics dream with more steps than a Fred Astaire dance routine. Back in 1849, the year of the Tithe, **William WILBRAHAM** was the owner of a ruin, an unoccupied house. There are a few such unoccupied buildings, each reluctant to fall down.

The Reading room bears the date 1892. Yew Tree and Rose Cottage look like framework knitters cottages with their windows stretching high along the top of the cottages.

Wensley is a village of small stone built cottages that have been extended and renovated over the years. Such cottages were once occupied by the likes of **Joseph DERBYSHIRE** whose stable and wheelwright shop up the road seem to have survived his house.

Alexander WOOD occupied a house owned by **Anthony WOOD** alongside a little jitty that leads to the dale below and **Thomas ALLEN** and **John FAWLEY** were neighbours occupying **Wm YATES** two houses as were **John DERBYSHIRE** and **Stephen WALL** occupiers of **William FROSTS** two houses standing on the Green and now under the watchful eye of a huge sycamore tree. We walk the same path that they must have done as they crossed the Green possibly to the Crown Inn. Once owned by **Hugh HOLE** and occupied by **Adam CLAY**, **George STEVENSON** and **James ALLEN** the Inn which once boasted a brew house is now a private residence. **Grace VICKERS** also had a home down this way along with her garden. She paid her rent also to **Hugh HOLE**.

We stand and take in the wonderful view looking towards Matlock. In the middle Ribber stands proud on its hillside overlooking the town below, to our right we look towards Tearsall and Jug Holes and the back of Salters Lane. Slightly to our left the famous tree on Oaker Hill which seems to have come of age. For a long time this tree seemed to remain the same size. Today from this vantage point it looks fully fledged. Patricia says it looks bigger from here than it does from Oaker! We take in Hackney and Two Dales and on into Darley Dale, a glorious view.

We have a feeling there is more to this little village and it's dale than meets the eye. We would not be disappointed.

There's a Square at Wensley that seems to be the centre of the village, it has a post box, an old fashioned red telephone box, a seat to rest on after walking up the hill and a mangle.

Well the mangle is in the front of a house and I don't think the tumble dryer need worry about being scrapped.

Every now and then a cold breeze rushes past but the sun is trying its best to keep the place warm. It will succeed and the warmth gives us a wonderful feeling of well being. We walk down the road and see masses of mushrooms, some as big as a car tyre, then across the road two places named Holme Lea and further down still a huge black tin barn, painted brightest black with a television aerial sticking out of it.

The mushrooms have been carved out of stone and the tin barn has been converted into a home. As for the two Holme Leas we leave it for the postman to sort out.

Wensley Gate House owned by the Nottingham and Newhaven Turnpike trustees and in 1849 occupied by **John WRIGHT** is no longer standing but the house opposite owned by **George NUTTALL** and lived in by **John TAYLOR** still stands. In fact his garden has turned into a takeaway as a blackbird descends and takes off with a beakful of grub.

Daffodils and rock plants adorn the side of the roads and Ivy House just about hangs onto it's title as it's in danger of being named Aubretia Cottage.

Wensley has a Hall, in 1829 the home of Barmaster, **Anthony ALSOP**. He had nothing to do with propping up the bar but was the man who ruled over disputes regarding lead mining.

We set off towards the dale but not before encountering an even bigger mangle in the yard of a house. Lead minings a dirty business but the thought of whiter than white miners in "Suddo" clean overalls traipsing in the early morning light to work across the fields fascinates me. They must have been nearly as white as the Trig point on top of Oaker Hill.

It has now turned into a very pleasant evening, one that makes you want to stay out and walk miles, but we have to get back. The street lamps in Wensleydale are a few years off being built and I have left the lantern at home.

We are not the first to leave Wensley. In February of 1841 **Joseph BARKER** then aged 78 and living with his wife of 67 were applying for relief before the Bakewell Board of Guardians, they had a son and three daughters but needed some assistance in Belper where they now lived. **John TOPLIS** aged 77, also applied for help, for him and his 78 year old wife but they were resident in Chesterfield.

Sarah ROTHWELL wife of **James**, left Buxton to come to Wensley but ended her 37 years when she was buried in the churchyard at Darley Dale in 1828.

Anthony SPENCER was 49 in 1865 when he also left Wensley to be buried at Winster.

Now it was our turn to say a fond farewell to this village, and headed for the green pastures of Wensleydale. We use the jitty we had walked down before, past West View, until we come to a stile behind the cottages that will allow us access to the dale. We hope.

The stile posts are about two feet tall, four inches thick about a foot wide with a six inch gap at the top and a four inch gap at the bottom. We pass through and check our ankles for puncture wounds.

Patricia points out the rich deep blue hue of the clumps of Bluebells she passes as she makes her way to the dale below. I start my descent without crampons or a safety net as I trip the Light Fantastic over the sixty seven steps put in place over the years. Light and fantastic I suppose are pushing it a bit in describing the plod downhill, but tripping is very descriptive. My concentration is focused on counting the steps. Six, seven, eight. Patricia shouts "what are you counting them for?". The word "for" sends my brain into overdrive then a stall, I thought I had counted eight. I retrace my steps and start again.

At the bottom of the steps lie the remains of **Joseph DERBYSHIRE'S** garden although I don't think you would recognise it today. Up the lane leading out of the Dale is where six widows almshouses and gardens were situated. We turn into the Dale and go towards Snitterton. We have been this route before so take a slight detour onto the other side of the Dale along a cart track that must have been used by farmer and miner alike. The fields open before us, lined with broken down limestone walls. In the distance stands a large building that has seen better days, so big it has a buttress to hold it up, it hasn't worked for the roof has lost a lot of its cover and the walls have collapsed in certain areas. It's a large barn and must have been important in the past. It has next to it and enclosed by a circular stone wall a large pond. The map calls it Dalefields Barn. In the next field another barn, dwarfed by Dalefields tries its best not to be overawed by its superior. It may not have a roof and one side has disappeared but an old bath ensures it has its own supply of water.

A row of Hawthorn bushes are covered in white flowers and lower branches covered in a bright yellow moss. We go over and inspect this sight and also to look over the old gate which blocks our entrance to the fields below. We just want to see the view. We are greeted by a flock of Jacobs Sheep, their horns poised menacingly. We are not going to bother them and the feelings mutual as they chew on the meadow grasses after giving us the once over.

One thing you are aware of up here is the lead mines. They have been and still are dangerous. In 1821 **Samuel HARDY** an eleven year old son of **William** and **Mary** "came to his death accidentally at Mount Pleasant Mine". This mine was situated just a few fields behind Dalefields Barn. Two years later fifteen year old **Anthony HARDY** met his death by falling

down a shaft at Mill Close Mine. Both lads were buried at Winster. Buried at Darley another young man, 21 year old **James BARNES** from Oaker Side was killed in a mine near Tearsall called the Dalefield when a large stone fell on him.

Today many are covered or capped with concrete, some with large railway sleepers, others with large branches of trees thrown across them and others with nothing it seems but nettles. You can see them all over the place and you must keep to the paths. Depressions in the ground are avoided like the plague, piles of stones covered in grass have been avoided for a long time as the paths detour around them. Even so it's not easy finding your way, even with a map, and white painted stones seem to indicate to the unwary and lost the way to go. We are grateful for one such painted stone, which leads us to a small stile and like many stiles, its little wooden gate. We go through the stile and meet the sheep of Jacob. There's a stand off, one of us has to back down. Eight pointed horns and sixteen feet block our approach. They glare at us as if we were mint sauce salesmen. They hold a conference and finally stand aside. We say thank ewe, as we carry on our way.

Across the way below Oaker Hill, Patricia points out Kirby Lane, or in her parlance "the road to Castleton". It's going to take more than painted white stones to help some people !

We stumble down the hillside pass a dead oak tree and scurrying rabbits as we resume our journey back in the Dale itself.

A couple of lambs find protection with their mother behind a five bar gate that is shaped like a shepherds crook at each end. Further down the Dale Patricia discovers yet another mangle! Or is it. If you mangled your clothes on this machine they would be mangled. It has two large chopping blades. Although rusty it looks lethal.

A large sign on an old zinc shed points the way to Matlock. In the adjoining field two horses have the field to themselves until a lamb pushes its way through the fence. One of the horses rolls over on the ground as if laughing at this invasion.

It has been an enjoyable journey, the rain held off, the sun shone and the evening air still and warm.

We end our journey walking towards Snitterton and its Hall. The calves in the fields getting used to running in short bursts. **Robert SYBRAY** must have seen it all before. He was at the Hall in 1849 as was **Joseph SYBRAY** twenty years earlier. **Roger COTTERILL** also a farmer in 1829 had seen it all. But we hadn't.

As we came along the lane we saw the white of a new born lamb. It lay motionless for what seemed an eternity. In time it seemed to move, it was struggling to get up. The mother was occupied with another lamb

that must have been born a few minutes earlier. We kept a safe distance not wanting to intrude or frighten the family. The newer lamb started to bleat, the mother ignored. It bleated some more, the mother replied with a stronger bleat and a sniff of the new born. The lamb still struggled to rise. We stood motionless for many awhile.

"Will it be alright" said Patricia. My knowledge of farming is not one of my strong points but I affirmed it would be OK. Still we couldn't move. Finally I said we'll have to go. Patricia said I wont sleep tonight unless I know it will be alright. You will have to phone farmer Dunn, I mean it. Suddenly the mother responded to the lambs bleating and giving it a gentle nudge helped the lamb to it's feet. It didn't stand for long, but the next time it stood up by itself and although we don't know its weight it took its first feed at six thirty six.

We called it "Wensley", so if you drive that way and you see it as you pass by, say hello. You can't miss it, it's a white one.