

Today's Journey

BRASSINGTON, BALLIDON and PARWICH

"Brassington wakes," said someone as we got off the bus. I suppose it is a sleepy village but today in glorious sunshine the place was alive and the flags were out. Did they know we were coming I said, but Patricia's eyes were already popping out of their sockets as the place was over-run with stalls offering goods of every nature. This was not going to be a good start, particularly as she eyed a roll of carpet. Having explained we would have to ditch everything inside the rucksack, and might not even fit the carpet in then she decided that a picture would like nice if we could get it home. This posed a problem until I said it would be dangerous trying to carry a picture over hill and dale as the glass might break, and anyway carrying a nine foot picture across the moor, someone might have thought we'd robbed the antique roadshow.

The place was buzzing, every turn saw a new stall beckoning, nestled like some late night convenience store, which is about, to close, the pull was magnetic and Patricia was the iron filings.

No, we don't need golf clubs and how are we going to get a lawnmower home. Presumably we would mow a meadow on the way. Maybe we could turn it into a green and we would need the golf clubs after all. There was even a stall selling everything for the biker, except the bike. I thought he was pushing his luck saying he had a sit on lawn mower for sale!

We had, or I had intended to be out of Brassington within ten minutes. Not that I don't like the place, it's a lovely village and rather than say there are three roads leading out of it, I think there are three roads leading to it.

There was even activity underground in previous times. A book of 1792 gives us the names of some of the proprietors of lead mines that year. **Henry GREATOREX** had Elder Torr, **William WATSON** White Edge, Provewell had **Richard WILD** at the helm and **Joseph BEARDSLEY** was at Haveatall.

A hundred and odd years before, in 1689 the Poll Tax for Brassington and Aldwark lists names still to be found in the area.

Henry SPENCER with his wife and children was assessed at four shillings.

Amos WHITE and his wife two shillings. Amos along with **William LANE** and **Thomas ALLSOPP** were collectors of the tax, which had been assessed by **George ALLCOCK**, **William TOPLIS** and **Jonathan STONE**.

George LEA, **Richard LEA**, **William WAYNE**, **William BUXTON**, **Thomas PEDLEY**, **John TITTERTON**, **Richard GRATTON**. **Stephen HOLLINGWORTH** and **James SPENCER** all paid one shilling. The two **William BUCKLYS**, junior and senior, both paid two shillings as did **Edward WARRINGTON**, **William SCATTERGOOD** and **Henry BELFIELD** who all had wives. **William DODS** had a wife and children and one servant for which his total amounted to six shillings. **Francis KIRKE** and **Daniel BAGSHAW** having wife and child paid three shillings.

We made our way into one of the many side roads and ways in Brassington confronted once more by stalls enticing Patricia, the fifteen minutes had now grown to thirty and like some force field it would take all to break through. We saw a beautiful picture of the Winnats Pass at Castleton.

Unfortunately someone had decided it lay elsewhere in another part of Derbyshire. I thought it's a good job he's not a Census enumerator.

We had a journey ahead of us, the sun was blazing and now forty-five minutes later we were still in Brassington. **Mary LEE** a pauper of Brassington made it to Manchester where the Ashbourne Board of Guardians regularly paid her account in the 1850s to their Manchester counterparts. On such a day as this it was hard to think of her cooped up in a mill or workhouse when the vast open spaces and limestone rocks, which surround Brassington beckoned. I wondered, did she ever have chance to climb Harborough rocks or walk over the hill to those at Rainster.

William HODGKINSON an orphan also moved out of Brassington to be apprenticed as a baker to **William Frank KENDRICK** of Wirksworth. Mr Kendrick asked the Board of Guardians that the lad have a pair of shoes to complete his outfit.

Now one hour later we were on the move. Passing Hipley farm with its name built into its green metal gates and our way out of the village. We left the people of Brassington to the Karaoke at The Miners Arms that evening.

Two hundred and seventy five years earlier a Dissenting Minister **James CLEGG** of Malcoff near Chinley in the north of Derbyshire received "a man who came for advice from Brassington". Earlier that day Clegg had been at Castleton. Did the Brassington man want to know just where the Winnats Pass was?

Having left Hipley Farm with its two stories and two red brick chimneys stuck above either gable we head towards Ballidon. Looking on the hillside at a solitary barn a young black cow runs from behind it, soon it is joined by more cows charging down the hill towards the gate. More appear at the top of the hill to join the stampede. There were Waines in Brassington and I half expected big John to appear on the horizon. Maybe he was shading himself having got of his horse to drink his milk. The sun was blazing.

We turned right and over the brow of the hill appeared Rainster Rocks which in the distance looked like the Emerald City, with its white turreted rocks clothed in Derbyshire green and topped with a perfect blue sky.

There must be many children, young and old who can remember clambering around the outcrop. We didn't have a yellow brick road but a newly mown field just asked to be sat upon. So we did, and there we drank lashings of ginger beer and danced in the hay. Well OK, so we sat down and had a sandwich, that is until the black flies moved us on.

At over eight hundred feet the views are extensive, but we couldn't see Ballidon, that lay over the next hill. We had behind us Bradbourne and to the right of Rainster Rocks and in the distance the route of the Cromford and High Peak Railway.

We made our way down the road to the junction of Lots Lane and turned down Pasture Lane. On our right the large fields were occupied with a few scattered dots of sheep. Further down a big white bull stared then snorted. It may have been something to do with Patricia's red umbrella which was needed for the

shade.

Brown butterflies settled among the purple thistles, the rich red elderberries looked ready to juice and the white umbellifers protected themselves from the burning sun. The wall was made as if a stone was thrown upon a stone held together with invisible Velcro and all the time as we walked its route not a single vehicle was to be seen all along its way.

The fields had been recently mown and the old ridge and furrow looked like field calming measures for speeding cows. Maybe the Brassington herd will meet with such restrictions.

At the bottom of the lane was White Edge with its limestone outcrops. It isn't a massive hill by any stretch of the imagination but by descending Pasture Lane, White Edge just looked bigger.

At the bottom of Pasture Lane hidden among a few broken trees was an old battered building. The map calls this area Hipley. It was here we crossed the main road. No sooner had we done so than ten, no twenty, more like thirty, even forty plus and finally fifty leather clad, army clad, T shirt clad, multi sized bikers and machines roared by. It seemed an age before they passed by and all was quiet again.

We started to climb White Edge, the path totally different from the one shown on the map, but we have got used to it. It's when the path disappears that it becomes a problem. We have a problem. We follow a "path" that leads us through thistles and under hawthorn bushes. It's a path the cows use. Suddenly in the distance three specks are approaching. One has four legs and doesn't understand English but the other two tell us Ballidon is just over the horizon. From the top of the hill we can look across the main road at Hipley Hill, with its "staircase" side, created by cattle over the years so one old farmer told us. Hidden among the trees are caves.

Turning mid way towards Ballidon the view stretches out in a patchwork quilt of fields. Some look frayed at the edges with thistles in abundance, others have hay laying flat in beautiful straight lines as if a seamstress has been at work. The field boundaries are of hedges, not like further the north where stone predominates. The fields lay out before us like some vast plain with a few odd farm buildings dotting the quilt. A few cows realising how hot it is, drink from a pond.



We make our way across the top where a stone stands upright in the middle of the field, it must have served as some kind of marker, from there we make our way to an ancient stile and down in the valley below all quiet and peaceful lies Ballidon.

How welcoming a sight Ballidon must have seemed to a weary traveller in ages past, nestling snugly under the hill and with

the prospect of food and shelter. Of course there was no supermarket back then and five hundred years later there isn't one now. There's no corner shop, newsagent or pub.

We go through the stile and make our way downhill where two tractors and trailers between them pile up hay in a huge mound.

The church at Ballidon is a small building that looks like it belongs in a western with its single bell situated at one end.

It stands alone in a field off the road and away from the village. It has no graveyard. There are two other people this day looking round the church, perplexed that the place is locked, they look around and move on. We look around and keep our eyes open for the bad guy dressed in black and packing a pistol on each hip. Even John Wain and a posse of Dallas Cowboys coming over the hill couldn't save us. They wouldn't get their horses through the stile.

If there is no bad guy, maybe there's a rattlesnake. We stand silent listening for the rattle. Suddenly I am bitten. Ballidon has no rattlesnakes but it has plenty of nettles. Where is Doc Holliday when you need him. I make do with Dock Leaf.

We walk the short path from the church and onto the road turning right towards the village. Apart from the two farm workers no one is about. Maybe they are hiding in their houses waiting for the "Noon Train", but there is no train here. Just one road going through the village.

A Land Tax dated 7th May 1711 records some of the people associated with Ballidon. Paul JODRELL Esq., Roger HUETT, John BUXTON, Samuel FERNIHOUGH, George ROE, George CLEATON and Elizabeth WATTSON. Both Samuel FERNIHOUGH and George CLEATON acted as Assessors and Collectors. A Widow ROBINSON was assessed at three shillings and eight pence while John BUXTON paid over twenty three pounds.

The Tithe Map tells us the fields to the left belonged to Miss Mary CLAY. A large "modern" house been built here, but tastefully done, so that it fits in keeping with the rest of the buildings. Mary CLAY also had land further down the road towards Ballidon Hall farm which was owned by William WRIGHT but occupied by George KIRKHAM. There's a Long barn associated with this farm which runs alongside the road and at one end is a bright red post box set into its wall. It is also covered in cobwebs and the other commodity Ballidon is noted for, dust. To be fair the dust from a nearby quarry around the corner only seems to affect the far end, certainly on the day we were there we didn't notice it at all until we moved nearer the quarry. It had however made its way onto the windows of the Long Barn and the post box.



For reasons only known to Patricia she had a letter to post, one for a new type of her gluten free bread. So she posted it. Through the cobwebs and dust and hoped that the Royal Mail would remember Ballidon. Failing that the Pony Express would have a letter for Doc Holliday and pick up the one just posted.

There are some wonderfully stone built houses here, surrounded by moss covered limestone

walls. Barns with well maintained steps to get into the upper storey through bright red doors. Barns held together with metal poles with the cross pieces showing on the outside walls like some giant fruit machine wanting one more "X" to hit the jackpot.

The house occupied by Samuel BERESFORD from Tithe map days is hidden partly by a large tree and partly by an ivy covered wall. A footway, or lane , leads past there towards Oldfield Farm neatly trimmed and looking in excellent shape. Joshua DOXEY had a house hereabouts belonging to the Earl of Mansfield. The cottage above is in need of some help to help it get back among the living. Its window panes divided into fifteen squares of cobwebbed glass and like its door needs a lick of paint. It probably needs water, electricity and gas as well.

Beyond and above it lie fields once used by Ann ALLSOP. The lane goes further up the hill from here, its walls at an outward angle as if built deliberately so. The trees lining its path let through glimpses of sunlight creating a daytime disco effect with a fantastic flickering light. I'm in no mood for the light fantastic. It is hot. Apart from that I left my dancing shoes at home.

In 1780 a Land Tax for the Hamlet of Ballidon mentions nine tenants. Paul JODRELL is also a Landlord as is John BUXTON who also occupies land of Lord MANSFIELD. Thomas TAYLOR is tenant to a Doctor TAYLOR and he pays the biggest tax of thirteen pounds nineteen shillings and four pence. John EDENSOR occupies property belonging John PORT Esq. and Mr ATHERLY Esq. rents out to both Thurstone DALE and George DAKYNE. It's the same property for which eight pounds sixteen and four is paid in tax. Owner George WHITE has two separate properties to William HEWIT and Gervas WOOD. As tenant William HARDING has two Landlords, John GREENSMITH and John BUXTON along with Mrs PHILIPS. The last two being listed together.

We return to the road and make our way towards to the church of All Saints. A car stops and the occupants asks us where the church is. In it are the couple who were looking around it earlier. They cannot believe this tiny church is all there is. They expected something bigger.

As we leave Ballidon we look back towards where the quarry lies and wonder if Job BAINBRIGGE would approve, he had land in this area also belonging to William WRIGHT and the dust would have played havoc with his orchard. John HELLABY held Lower Maunsdale, a meadow even further away, but also recorded on the Ballidon Tithe, showing Thomas GREENSMITH as the owner.

The hills to our left now are dotted with harebells and cowslips, the limestone rocks outcropping at regular intervals. To our right the land is flat gradually rising in the distance to become rolling hills.

Having managed to evade the sellers of Brassington and now visiting a village without supplies or stores Patricia is determined to find something. She walks confidently along the road and stops at a path through the field. "Is this it" she says. Above her head in big bold metallic letters is a signpost, a real signpost, not one burnt into wood which simply says "Public footpath" or has a horseshoe burnt into it. No one which boldly declares in white, green and rust, Public Footpath to Parwich.

Having seen the way pointed out to us we set off across the fields to Parwich.

With the sun bearing down relentless the bright red umbrella was put to use. It swayed dangerously, it had never been put to such use, it knew only rain. Such was the heat it began to shrivel. It was only a matter of time before it ended up with a cherry in a cocktail glass. We all needed shade.

We cross a small wooden bridge with a trickle of water running beneath it. This footway must have been around for a long time. The stone before the next stile shone as if the morning cleaner had gone over it with polish until it resembled silver. How many muddy boots had trod this way over the ages. Maybe **William YATES** boots did prior to settling himself in Winster in 1727. There's a tiny barn in the field over to our right, complete with roof. It looks in good shape like the Ballidon houses, and why not, we are still in the parish of Ballidon. One large field later and we cross the border into Parwich. There are no border guards and they use the same currency. We cross Highway Lane. Here on a small triangle of grass we stop for running repairs. Some creature has bitten Patricia, there's only one puncture mark so unless it's a rattler with a tooth missing she would be OK.

In 1812 **William BROWNSON** had drawn up plans showing the route which would be best for Parwich, better than the intended new branch from Newhaven. It would join at Whitemeadow Gate in the parish of Bradbourne. Whitemeadow was farmed in 1829 by **Thomas SMITH**.

Maybe Tommy Smith didn't know the ins and outs out the road debate it being some seventeen years before, and maybe Highway Lane was not the route Billy Brownson had proposed, but Highway Lane does join at Whitemeadow Gate and it does join the Newhaven road at Pikehall.

Whatever route it was, he certainly had a lot of support. **Thomas** and **Samuel SWINDELL** signed the document as did **Francis** and **Henry ALSOP**, **John** and **Thomas DAKIN**, **Edmund PLATTS**, **James KEELING**, **Enoch WEBSTER**, **John SUTTON**, **John FERNIHOUGH**, **Thomas LEES**, **Samuel WRIGHT**, **George BROWNSON**, **Thomas WOOD**, **John KIRKHAM** and **Richard BERESFORD**. All made their signature on a cold tenth of January. Could it be the other route would have been difficult for the gritter lorry and snowploughs. Two years earlier in 1810, a survey of **Philip GELLS** land in Parwich named **John WRIGHT** as occupying ten acres including Seven Acre meadow which actually amounted to just over five and a half acres. **John BUXTON** had Mill Green and **Samuel LOVATT** over eighteen acres including Middle Meadow End and Holy Well Meadow. He also listed a **William TAYLOR** having Ferrars Piece in land at or near Bradbourne. **William TAYLOR** held nearly eighty acres.

We move along the narrow lane with its hedges on both sides, a break in one enables us to see the spire of St Peters. As the road sweeps to the right a sign says "Parwich". Patricia is flummoxed. I have seen this look of amazement before and ask, "well, where did you think we were heading for?"

I suppose seeing the course of the Cromford and High Peak railway caused the confusion, not that she needs much help. No, Parsley Hay is where you hire bicycles, this is Parwich.

We approach the village via Nether Green, a long white painted house set back behind us looks very striking. The Tithe map of 1846 seems to indicate it is owned and occupied by **William WEBSTER**. Along the road is a huge Sycamore Tree and it comes as no surprise to see the pub is also called the Sycamore. Which is also the name that **Thomas KIRKHAM** as Landlord in 1846 knew it as. Of course it is so hot we just have to go inside for a drink and get out of the bright sunshine.

When we walk in the adjustment to our eyes is wondrous. We can't see a thing. Dark characters sit in dark corners and nine white eyes stare back. There's either a pirate here or Parwich has a Cyclops among it's regulars. I am sure Doc Holliday was cutting the cards. I was going to mention about the nettle sting but as held four kings I thought better not. A man in black tapped on his eye patch and grinned, he had five aces.

"Let's go and sit outside" I said, this is West Derbyshire.

The Sycamore is a three chimneyed building, white fronted and enclosed from the road by grey stone walls. The enclosure contains tables all occupied by thirsty drinkers. We however make our way to the side of the building and sit at a table under the shade of a coolabah tree. Well a bush of some sorts. It is very pleasant with other folks sat at other tables enjoying the afternoon sun. We are then visited by a wasp intent on supping my ale. I tell him to go away as I don't have a straw for him. A quick swipe with the hand does the trick. He comes back with a friend. Of all the glasses in all the world he has to drop into of mine. I console myself with the fact that his hangover is going to be worse than mine. A wasp with a headache. What does he take as a cure? Maybe they have waspirin.

Not long after a lad on a push bike announces that there is a sale up the road. Patricia's eyes sparkle. I've just dealt with one pest. He announces it, with an Oxbridge accent, to the folks at the far table. Someone asks him if he is local, he says no. He has just come from Birmingham on the train, and then tells everyone who doesn't know where Birmingham is, that it is near Glasgow. This is one potential Census enumerators nightmare. What about the train, could it be it is one of Ballidons best kept secrets and the "Noon Train" still runs. He then proceeds to tell the occupants of the next table the same thing finally making his way to us. He describes with excitable detail this Emporium just up the road. His voice is such that he only needed to say it once. The whole of Parwich can hear him. The man with the "golden voice" on Chesterfield market has real competition, for this one has an upper crust accent to boot.

In 1713 **Joseph CALDWELL** performed a similar duty, he was paid one shilling and sixpence "Proclaiming the peace". He was the Churchwarden for Parwich that year and his accounts reveal a little of the activity going on in his hometown.

Philip BERESFORD was paid seven shillings and five pence for glazing the church windows. The bird population was sixteen down because **William LEES** and **Thomas SHAW** were paid two shillings each for killing eight ravens apiece. **Richard BENNETT** repaired several locks and **William MILLWARD** pointed the church windows.

The biggest event that year concerned a yew tree. It had to be paid for when someone had to fetch it, for setting it and **George DAKEYNE** was paid for the wood to "Rail it about". **William MILLWARD** and **John YATES** were paid five shillings for "railing it".

The most interesting entry concerning the tree, is one shilling and four pence paid, for two days work about the yew tree by "great Tom" and another.

In 1689 seventy different households are shown as paying Poll Tax, once again familiar names are found among the records.

Robert DALE his wife and six children paid eight shillings, **Geo DAKIN** his wife

and two children paid four shillings as did **Henry BERRISFORD**. Another **George DAKIN** with a wife and three children paid five shillings. **John YATES**, **Jane GOULD**, and **William MILWARD** paid one shilling. **Richard WEBSTER**, **George CRESWELL** and **Thomas BROWNSON** all married men paid two shillings.

Other persons mentioned include **Joseph BASSETT** his wife and daughter paying three shillings, **William DARRINGTON** two shillings and **Maud BRIDGFORD** one shilling.

The collectors were **Richard BERRISFORD** and **Anthony SWINDELL**, a **Richard SWINDELL** also paid three shillings poll tax for himself, his wife and child.

Two other children also figure in Parwich history. In 1558, **John and Anne BUCKLOWE**, described as orphans underage make complaint that **Thomas ALSOPP** of Ashborne along with **Hugh FOWNE**, **Humfrie ALSOPP** and **John ALSOPP** had carried away divers goods and chattels from their house in Parwich.

Over four hundred years later it would be children again instrumental in ensuring that divers goods and chattels would leave Parwich. Aided and abetted by Patricia.

We stroll casually past the Sycamore and Parwich pond with its flotilla of ducks enjoying the sunshine and grateful it isn't raining.

Not far from here are two adjoining cottages, one a storey higher than the nearer. Both are bedecked in flowers in hanging baskets and trailing plants which run under the mullioned windows of the far one and across to the doorway of the nearer. Pink, red, orange and white flowers vie for space with variously coloured bushes in the neat and tidy gardens.

Anthony BERRISFORD in the 1840's lived next door to Thomasin ROE who had the three storey building. Did their houses look a picture back then as they do today?



William EVANS was a major property owner according to the Tithe map and award of 1846. His houses were lived in by Thomas SHAW, William Roby LOMAS, Jacob SWINDELL and Henry PRINCE.

Thomas HETHERINGTON and William WEBSTER lived in houses belonging to William WRIGHT.

Near the junction leading to Alsop en le Dale, and at the side of the road stood a table on which were all manner of goods. This was the

"Emporium", for the lad who could sell a wet suit to a whale was sitting on his bike, smiling to the four stallholders as his victims walked ever nearer.

"This is good, and have you got one of these, you might need this one day, and

these look pretty, and every home should have this, not many people own one of these, and you've got to have that and if you have this you get this with it". Patricia enjoyed every minute of it. I had no chance as four stallholders and one ten year old Skegness Sunday market salesman with an Eton accent and a wife who mistakenly thought Ballidon sounded like Basildon, and expected shops made the most of my weakness. I put it down to the sun. We came away with two vases and left five very happy children trying to work out how much each received. The lad was soon on his bike looking for more custom and trying to boost his commission.

Up the road lies the school with its white clock face (set below a pointed tower) on show to all the late comers and prodding an extra burst of energy out of those who think they may just make registration. It has six or so steps leading up to its front door which must have seen many a tumble as the bell for hometime rang.

Philip GELLS survey of 1794 no doubt listed the great grandfathers of children who would attend that school. William and George LEES are mentioned as are Ruth ABELL and John ABEL. Anne and William WEBSTER, George BROWNE, Francis ROE, William JOHNSON, William PEARSON and William YEATES among others.

William YEATES may have been an ancestor of someone listed simply as YATES of Parwich in the Board of Guardians book in 1850. He is listed because he had a fractured leg. He probably slipped on the polished stone when going through the fields to Ballidon.

In 1852 E. HADFIELD received extra medical care. The Guardians recording it was needed for "childbirth". She may have been the Ellen HADFIELD of Basledon who appeared in the Board minutes in 1850. Like Patricia she thought Ballidon sounded like her hometown, but somehow ended up in nearby Parwich.

We walk down the road towards the bus shelter which must be the biggest in Derbyshire. You dare not walk to the back in case you haven't got five minutes spare to get to the front should the bus appear suddenly. It makes Terminal 2 at Manchester Airport look like a phone box.

There are some wonderful old cottages across from the stop, a well manicured green, a wooden seat under a big tree, occupied by two ladies setting the village to rights. Not that it needs much doing.

The bus arrives and we climb aboard, will go back up the road towards the "Emporium" and four smiling, happy, rich children give us a wave goodbye. We turn the corner on the road to Alsop en le Dale. The long grey stone walls and five chimneys on what was once Thomas SHAWS home, along with another unidentified occupier back in 1846 must have seen many a coach, both petrol and horse drawn pass this way. Mr BRITTLEBANK lived this way also, at Parwich Lees.

It had been a glorious day, in a very peaceful part of Derbyshire. We arrived home via Ashbourne. Eight days later Patricia received a parcel. It was her special bread.

Ballidon Post box is alive and kicking. Next time you pass through try it and see for yourself.