

Today's Journey

TIDESWELL, WHESTON and MONKSDALE

The weatherman had promised it would stay fine for Friday but Saturday was a different matter. So I asked Patricia if she would like a steady walk round Tideswell way.

Off course that's like asking a cat if it likes cream and she was ready in seconds. Within minutes of leaving home she wished she had brought her hand warmer, it was colder than expected. I wished I had stayed at home.

We caught a bus to Bakewell as we had to get a connection to Tideswell. The shops wouldn't be a problem because we only had ten minutes before the next bus. Good planning can pay dividends.

On the way we could see the sun shining on the distant hills and hoped it would stay that way.

After negotiating the narrow Hall Lane (in earlier times called Backside Lane) leading to Litton, hoping not to meet any tractor or other farm vehicle, we were soon on our way out of the village, going down Litton Dale and passing the land **John ARCHER** owned at the time of the Enclosure in 1764.

We arrived at Tideswell just in time for something to eat. The cafe was closed, but one thing Tidsa has is a chippy and the jolliest fryer in the Peak. Even the fish fingers join together and applaud.

It also has a launderette, and men who do the washing . We walked past that place quickly. I didn't want Patricia bringing any strange customs into Matlock. It also has a huge church, known locally as the "Cathedral of the Peak". Even from a distance it's spire appears over the house rooftops. The square in front of it contains an assortment of different shaped houses. Tall ones, "L" shaped ones, small ones square ones. It has all manner of houses dotted throughout the town including a mock Elizabethan black and white house. The sky overhead is grey matching the double gabled Bank. The hands I have are red matching the fire I left behind at home.

William BENNETT was probably alright in the cold .He had a house beyond Fountain Square on Back Lane. The cold of 1841 held no worries for him he was a weaver. **Mary DALE** as a seven year old attended Tideswell Congregational School, she also lived on Back Lane and her father Hugh did not have far to take her as the school lay close by.

Another weaver **Joseph SELLORS** lived on the right hand side on the approach to Tideswell from Litton. **Anthony SELLORS** lived near **Wm Bennett** and another **SELLORS**, another Joseph, a farmer lived in the Market Place.

1841 was also the year **Jos. BROCKLEHURST** was absent for a while. Lying in a cold, no doubt, Gaol at Chapel en le Frith. The minutes of the Board of Guardians for February the first of that year stating his furniture should be

seized for repayment of the debt and his costs to the Board for his detention. Later that year, in April **Sarah CHAPMAN** nearing childbirth appealed for help to the Board. Sarah was 31 and had three children Jane who was nine years old, Martha aged seven and John aged two. For her it would be even more difficult as her husband had been apprehended for thieving.

In 1839 **Mary BRAY** had a leg amputated. The result was that her allowance was diminished. Obviously the Guardians felt she was much better. In fact things got better still, for in 1840 the Medical Officer deemed that Mary have a wooden leg.

Mary obviously couldn't travel very far, but another Mary the eight year old daughter of **James BENNETT** of Church Street was about to leave for America. The Tideswell Congregational School records of 1878 inform us so.

We also were about to leave the place and head for Wheston. Patricia pondered for a while and asked, "is it anywhere near Weston super Mare?"

I checked her name tag, made sure the tattooed postcode was still visible behind her ear, reset her compass and headed up the Market Square on our way to Wheston.

We take the Manchester road, the route pointed out by an old sign fixed high to the side of a house. Another old sign beneath it points to Chapel. I imagine the coachman riding atop his coach could almost touch these signs.

The Star Inn has two benches in front of it, awaiting hikers and others who will pass this way. It's white frontage makes it stand out on the street and a welcoming sight. **Henry GILBERT** was looking after the place in 1829. We cannot stay, but have to press on. Others have stayed.

The church can be seen through the gaps and alleys between the houses and the Tideswell registers record those who have a permanent home.

Frances DAWSON was buried here in December of 1801. She was the fourth wife of **Joseph DAWSON**.

Samuel BENNETT was 78 when he died in 1812. He was mentioned as being the joiner. This no doubt to distinguish him from **Samuel BENNETT** a shoemaker, both are mentioned in the 1778 Land Tax.

Others came from further a field. Ann the daughter of **John and Peggy BAGSHAW** from Grindlow in Hope parish was buried here in 1802. **Hannah FROGGATT** a widow from Stony Middleton was also buried two years later.

In 1815 **Robert** the illegitimate son of **Mary** wife of **John HUNT** was baptised here. She was from Belper and her husband was a soldier.

In 1820 Elizabeth daughter of **Hannah** and the late **Edward WILSON** from Chapel Milton was also baptised here, and a year later John and **Elizabeth BLACKWELL** came from the tiny hamlet of Windmill to have their son Benjamin baptised.

The register of 1796 also records on its front page the baptisms of Catholics.

Thomas and **William GORTON**, sons of **Thomas** and **Catherine** were baptised in 1796 and 1798 respectively.

James and **Elizabeth FROST** gave their girls names not likely to be forgotten in

this lead mining and agricultural community. **Annastatia** was born 1802 and **Clementina** in 1805.

Catherine the daughter of **James** and **Sarah FRITH** is the last Catholic baptism mentioned in the register in 1810. The Priest was from Hassop.

The road opens up here to a large area that was the Market Square. There are some grand houses here, Bagshaw Hall with ornate roof stands back above the road. Below is the usual red telephone box. It could double up as a shelter for the wind is blowing colder now. The sky is greyer but he who dares freezes. The houses immediately in front of the Market Square must have seen all sorts of activity but of them all the middle house, that belonging to **Nancy MOSLEY** saw most. Here was the Three Tuns and it must have been overflowing every Wednesday which was market day. The row of houses seem to rise in order of stature with that of **John WALTON** and **Richard CARTLEDGE** being the smallest, nearest the main road, along with the house owned by **Sarah HILL** but occupied by **John SHELDON** and **Joseph DAWSON**. Joseph was the Sexton, and he probably spent more hours next door than at home for next comes Nancy's Three Tuns then, **Isaac HALL** and **Michael HOWE** as tenants of **Emanuel MOULT** and to complete the row, **William FEARN** and **Robert HOWE** as tenants of **James BEECH**. The Tideswell Tithe map of 1841 records it all.

As we pass on into the unknown, we pass a large square shaped building, and right next to it a large open field. Rising above that field on the hillside are even more houses. One of which was the home and shop of **Robert HUNSTONE**.

Across from this field is a road, with a sign pointing to Wheston, one and a half miles. It's uphill and not called Wheston Bank for nothing. We carry on up the hill and wonder if we are on the right road, but after turning a big corner the road stretches out in front of us.

Being on top of the hill we can see a distinct lack of trees, yes there are some rows of trees dotting the horizon, but not nearly enough for our purposes, which is shelter. Patricia dons her hat and gloves She says she is OK apart from the ends of her fingers and toes which are numb.

The landscape is one of stone lined fields, all seem to be in excellent condition, no Hawthorn fences here, hence the biting wind. The fields are a lush green. There are no animals in them.

Suddenly a pair of cyclists speed past us wearing bright orange jerseys with the name Matlock Cycling Club on them.

I try to get us a lift, but too late. They have sped of into the distance, their orange jerseys getting ever smaller but showing us how far we have yet to travel, and Wheston is still not in sight.

A row of large trees on our left occupied by rooks, hides for a moment Crossgates Farm. On the approach it is limestone built double gabled dwelling but the far side its walls are slated, and certainly different. Four sheep, the first animals we have seen, are sheltered under a wall, the wind passing over them. We have to face it head on.

Across the road from the farm is a lane that led to a quarry, and a local walks down, his face ruddy as he catches the full blast of the wind.

The cows are in the barn, tucked up nice and warm munching on some human equivalent of a hot meal. Even the four horses in the field opposite have coats

on. Three of them walk up to a wall and all look over at the same time. We wonder what they are staring at. All is revealed when we see they have been talking to the sheep on the other side telling them to watch the wool on their backs as two frozen strangers are walking by.

Wheston is a farming community with the majority of the farms and houses built alongside the road that goes going straight through it. There are no shops or Public Houses but it does have a very artistic wrought iron garden gate belonging one of the houses. Very unusually shaped, looking like the billowing sail of a yacht in full flight.

Top Farm is a long building which has painted bright blue doors and windows. At the far end of the village is the appropriately named Bottom Farm.

In 1778 the Wheston Land Tax was produced. Assessed at eight pence per acre, it shows a list of landholders ,not all from Wheston and who paid what.

The **MIDDLETON** family is represented by **Peter** who paid twelve shillings and sixpence. Another **MIDDLETON, James** paid fourteen shillings. **George BARNESLY** paid two and sixpence and **Joshua NEEDHAM** was assessed at three shillings and eight pence. The biggest payer was **Peter BENNETT** who paid one pound and four shillings.

Twenty eight separate individuals are listed on the Land Tax for 1778 including Assessor **Joseph WRIGHT** and collector **William BENNETT**.

The Hathersage Roman Catholic registers contain entries for "Whestone", two baptisms noted were, on the 21 April 1828 **William** son of **William** and **Anna O'HARE** nee **NEEDHAM** and, on the 2 June 1828 **Isaac** son of **William** and **Joanna LOMAS** nee **SHEPPERSON**. Isaac the record states was born 8 March that year.

There has long been a Catholic influence here, and in 1763 **Robert FREEMAN** left a legacy of three hundred and sixty pounds for the Catholics at Wheston. Of course the church at Tideswell also recorded that in 1813 **John** and **Mary MIDDLETON** had their son **Thomas** baptised there. John was a farmer. **Martha HILL** also of Weston had her illegitimate son **James** baptised at Tideswell in 1817. She unlike **Mary HUNT** who was a married woman, was single.

The Enclosure of 1826 shows what appears to be a village pond at the side of the roadway but today if it hasn't disappeared, lies behind the stone walls. The biggest building is Wheston Hall in 1829 the home of **John ALLEN** Esquire. It is a square shaped building whose path has ornate carvings of something like pineapples atop either side of its gateway walls. It lies almost opposite the road to Peak Forest, which road rises and turns over one of those horizons you want to just to see what is on the other side. The Edge Rake mine was once here on the right but where the road forks to the left climbing into the distance to a height over twelve hundred feet was the High Peak Tavern.

The High Peak Tavern lay in a detached portion of Wheston almost in Peak Forest parish itself, but surrounded by the parishes of Tideswell, Peak Forest and Bradwell so it became an enclave. This is not unusual in this area for even single fields can belong to another parish even though they are surrounded totally by fields belonging one parish and some distance from the real parish itself.

The High Peak In and Wheston House Farm were subject to a sale held at the George Hotel in Tideswell on June 27th in 1887. It was a Wednesday and no

doubt the farmers who had earlier attended the market that day stayed behind for the six o'clock sale. Also being sold that day was Mount Pleasant farm, a near neighbour of the High Peak Tavern.

In 1887 **James BARBER** was the occupier of Wheston House Farm and **James BAMFORD** occupier of the Tavern and Mount Pleasant.

The sale was by James Henry Field.

We however had another route to go, along the Pennine Bridleway with its neat and perfect wall built alongside Wheston House and on the other side of the lane, the moss clad weather beaten wall that still refuses to lie down after centuries. It retains its character and shows true grit in the face of biting winds. The sun made a brief appearance, and for a while it was a near blue sky, but then it started to rain. We had not been promised this I said. That's for tomorrow. It stopped there and then.

The lane was already muddy but once we got to the high ground it was easier. There is an old tree here, possibly a long time ago struck by lightning, which has a branch sticking out of it resembling an axe embedded in the trunk. On a dark night it would put the frighteners up anyone.

Maybe **Thomas DAWSON** and **Robert FRITH** walked down this lane. Or even **Samuel SWINDELL** and **William WAINWRIGHT** all shown as being tenants in 1842. Also shown was **James WAIN**, he was six pounds in arrears and we would find later the perfect hideout from the rent man.

The Pennine Bridleway joins with a small road from Wheston, and on this road a van approaches ,the driver of which seems to ponder," are they actually enjoying their walk". Over the wall in the fields a flock of sheep stand motionless, they look like they are too cold to shiver, but on their backs is enough wool to keep an army of rocking chair knitting grannies going for years. They are probably as warm as toast.

Across the way a steep road rises out of the valley. Checking our map I tell Patricia not to worry as we are not going that way. Not that it wouldn't worry her. If it was vertical it would only be seen as a bit of a challenge to someone who regularly walks up Bank Road up to the top of Wellington Street in Matlock just for fun.

This area is open and the views go way into the distance with not a building in site. No wonder the place is dotted with sites of ancient crosses, one of which is in Wheston, one on the road to Wheston near Crossgates and another on the Buxton Turnpike Road.

As we descend gradually a large house at the junction of the Buxton Turnpike road comes into view. Monksdale House does not appear on the 1826 Enclosure .Today it stands alone apart from a long barn in a field across the way.

The other road at the junction with the Buxton Turnpike road here is the old Ashborne Lane, as it is called on the Enclosure, or Monksdale Lane on later maps. We are heading down Ashborne Lane. We were, it is standing in about a foot of water and for us impassable.

We can now go left and back to Tideswell or right and down into the valley bottom. Not wanting to revisit Tideswell we head down into the valley below. Limestone outcrops dot the fields and from a distance they look like sheep grazing.

The hedgerow has recently been clipped back and as we descend it starts to warm up a bit.

We have descended two hundred feet but have a climb of three hundred to get

out of the valley, for before us looms the uphill climb to Hargate Wall and Wormhill.

We stand in the broad valley bottom, open grass fields either side of the road beckon us. They seem the better option for the detour has knocked our schedule to pieces. Apart from that I didn't want to walk uphill for three hundred feet. Patricia then surprises me and says she has been here before. I say we haven't been here before. but she says long ago she was in a walking group who went this way. In fact they even had a blind man among them. That swung it. We turned left into Monksdale. A notice board states that some parts of Monksdale are a bit stony. If a blind man can get through I think we can.

The field we enter is covered in mole hills, hundreds of them. The ground is a bit boggy though there is no sign of a stream.

At six o'clock every morning **James LEECH**, so Glovers Directory tells us, despatched letters to Taddington from the Post Office in Tideswell. The Post Office in Tideswell is the only shop Patricia managed to enter, then it was for "supplies". She did like at Ballidon have a letter to post, so into the big large letter box it went. It is a letter box with a difference because it had a flap over the letter slot. What I was thinking as we entered this dale was if the chap on the horse came by I would hitch a lift as he took his letters to Taddington, but he leaves at six in the morning. Maybe **James HIBBERSON** and Co carrier would pass this way or The Champion Nottingham Coach. Maybe the Champion didn't pass this way at all but it passed within half a mile of Tideswell daily back in 1829.

Never mind a quick stroll through the dale and we would be home and dry.

The fields which narrowed quickly seem to suck you into a funnel, we go round a limestone cliff and very soon we are out of sight. The only creature we saw on this "nature reserve" was a grey squirrel scurrying across the wall and stile to the entrance of Monks Dale Wood.

The valley quickly closes in and the branches of old dead moss covered trees crack loudly as you snap them as you walk by. Underfoot sharp limestone boulders with hardly a flat surface in sight ensure you keep moving. It may be light outside but down here it's twilight and one owl hoots to another about how wise they are perched high in a tree instead of clambering over rocks, dead trees, mud and water like some.

I have my doubts about the blind man.

This place could have changed the course of history. Ned Kelly could have holed up here with Billy the Kid and Dick Turpin. Robin Hood is still probably here in his Lincoln green, a perfect disguise.

The steep sloping patches of Limestone scree and boulders look menacing under the steep cliff sides. Not that you can see the cliff. It's hidden by masses of dead trees. There are no leaves on them, but the entanglement is so great they form a perfect barrier.

The "path", on the map a flat green dotted line, is in reality, almost non-existent. The stones jut out every few inches or so, little pinnacles, it's like walking on the back of a stegosaurus, this is the real Jurassic park.

Here is the perfect spot for **James WAIN** to evade the rent man.

The trudge goes on for ages, the SAS must use this place in training. It is a route march. Its taking us what seems nearly an hour to get through.

Patricia comes up with the thought that she doesn't think this is the dale she walked down after all, she doesn't recognise it any longer. I gathered that gem within minutes of clambering over ducking under and breaking through branches.

Finally we get to the end of the dale, but not before climbing a hundred feet up some hewn out steps, some six inches high, others about two foot high, just to make sure your guiders at the back of your knees were still working!

We finally ascended out into the blue skies we had missed while in the depths. Into Millers Dale village. The Anglers Rest looked welcoming, but just then a bus came along. We had had a grueller so hopped on board. Chesterfield we said. OK said the driver as he took our money ...change at Tideswell !!!!!!!