

Today's Journey

BRACKENFIELD, MILLTOWN, WASH, HOCKLEY

The sun was coming out later they said. It looked a bit dull but we had high hopes for some warmer weather later on. So we set off for High Oredish, about an hours walk away. On our way out of Tansley heading towards the Knabhall and Red Hill junction we met once again the old rooster at Yew Tree Farm with his harem of hens gathered around him. He usually has something to crow about but today his feathers did the talking, shining and looking in peak condition it spoke volumes for his confidence. He strutted around like something on a cat walk, his comb always at the ready, this was his patch and he knows it like the back of his wings.

The moles at the top of the hill haven't had a good day though. Six of their number hang on a five barred gate, no more digging for them. Years ago people were paid the odd penny or two by the Overseer, and the mole skins were made into hats. Today their carcasses hang as a warning to other moles not to surface. Last time seven moles hung there, this bunch must have been blind not to notice what may have been in store.

As we make our way towards the boundary between Tansley and Ashover an old tractor comes chugging along. The driver is a ruddy faced man, wearing a cloth cap an old battered woollen jersey and a great beaming smile. The smoke from the exhaust puthers out just a few feet in front of him like some later version of Stephenson's Rocket. He looks like the Ag. Lab. equivalent of a joy rider.

After climbing the brow of the hill we descend Butterley Lane. On a clear day Hardwick Hall can be seen, it's windows glistening in the sun. Today the mist is taking a long time to clear.

At the bottom of Butterley Hill the tiny stream that runs into Carr Brook wends it's way under the road. The shrubs and trees worn with age waiting for the slightest weight to snap them.

There are a couple of farms that make up Butterley. The **HOLE** family at one time lived here, a record is made of the fact that HOLES of Butterley is buried near **COCKAYNS** "betwixt ye Yate and Church-poarch".

They were not alone the **TOMLINSON'S** from Butterley were also buried in Ashover churchyard, "at ye head of **Richard COWLISHAW** stone, before ye church poarch".

We turn right here towards High Oredish along Cold Harbour Lane. The **HENSTOCK** family lived up here. **Henry HENSTOCK** of Cold Harbour was buried in 1758 and **Rebecca HENSTOCK** also of Cold Harbour was buried in 1818 aged 66. Cold Harbour is a house hidden behind the trees.

As we walk along the lane a Council van is off the road and on the grass verge. "Looks like it's been stolen" I say to Patricia.

"Maybe they are here checking the drains" she replies.

I give her the benefit of the doubt because she has been feeling the cold up here, but I

can't help feeling she may be a little of the mark when on the side of the van in big letters is "Bedfordshire County Council".

The view from High Oredish is extensive and everywhere one looks there is something to behold. It's as if every cell of eyesight has been targeted by different locations each advertising itself to "look at me first", each tiny space and speck, near and far vying for attention.

Ahead of us in the distance is Clattercotes farm and we could walk the easy way down Berridge Lane to get there. However not too far away is Brackenfield and it's there where we next head.

We make our way past bright yellow flowered gorse looking like some moorland pile of gold from a distance, whole banks of it alongside the road which isn't particularly wide.

Before we descend the hill, in the distance, on our right, we catch a glimpse of Crich Stand.

The steep banks either side of the road, topped with hawthorn hedges tell us this sunken route has been used for hundreds of years. As we go further down the hill we see a sign showing we about to cross the border into Brackenfield.

There are no dogs patrolling the border line, just a bunch of daffodils under the sign to greet us.

I say "hello flower" and without further ado we are through Frontier Control.

As we head away from the Daffs we notice that the hedges have had a trim, neatly cut, short back and sides and apart from a few dead bits from last year looking very smart.

The lane here is one of those that goes on forever round the corner, never seeming to be able to see beyond it, and wondering what may be coming the other way.

A couple of old sheep sit with their backs to us, watching the ducks and geese flying over Ogston Reservoir. They deserve a rest having kept their half of the bargain by mowing the grass they lie on.

The far end of Coldharbour Lane comes into view. Here it narrows a little and the Holly hedge on one side can almost touch the Ivy opposite.

Trinity Chapel or Holy Trinity lies over the hedge some distance away in a wood, overgrown and in ruins. A new church was built for the folks of Brackenfield.

Mathersgrave is a small hamlet of three or four houses, its unusual name believed to derive from a Mather who could not be buried in the churchyard for some misdemeanour and so was buried in a field. A date stone of 1643 is incorporated into a wall surrounding one of the properties and I wonder if this may be associated with Mathers death. What looks like writing above the date is too faded to read.

The Plough Public House appears on the horizon. It stands on the main Alfreton to Matlock Road and is known and identified on the Brackenfield Tithe map as Moor House but in the Tithe Schedule itself as Plough Public House. **William DOBBS** is the Landlord but **Matthew WRAGG** the owner.

As we have been walking for some while I tell Patricia we will call in later, and we pass the lane that leads into the back yard of the pub..

Just across from the lane, where the road bends the old surface is exposed, and white cobblestones show through. The alignment of the road as also altered slightly.

Chestnut House on the approach to Brackenfield is a stone built building with two red brick chimney stacks and cream coloured chimneys. There is also a dog here that warns the village of strangers. He is fastened up by a long chain and I have no worries with

copied with a loud bark.

Brackenfield is one of those places that seems to belong elsewhere. It is generally spoken of in the same phrase as nearby Wessington. Wessington is in Crich however. Woolley Moor, not to far the other way lies in North Wingfield but Woolley lies in Brackenfield. Brackenfield however is in the parish of Morton but is separated from it by North Wingfield parish and Shirland. It is an enclave. Well it was. Today it has it's own parish and has done since 1844.

Looking at the map I suppose Shirland would be nearest parish Church.

Ben HOYLAND a Brackenfield horse dealer was buried there in 1821 as was ninety year old **Sarah OSGATHORPE** who died in 1829, also from Brackenfield.

Most it seems did get buried at Morton. That's where eighty three year old **Ann SIMS** went in 1827 and the following year twenty eight year old **Rebecca KNOWLES** joined her.

One thing Brackenfield has is a Village Green. It is so big it seems to take days to walk round it. You hopefully get the impression that it is big. On this Green stands one tree and an old water pump. Nothing else. You could organize a marathon on it and still have room for a round of golf and the Horse of the Year show . It's basic shape is triangular and at it's flat side opposite the pointy bit stands rather grandly for a Village as remote as this, the School

At the close of the year of 1866 it had sixty pupils. They were well taught. In July of 1864 they were taught a "new chant" and no doubt the lanes of Brackenfield resounded to a chorus of school children giving it their all. There chanting was so loud that in October that year the chimney needed repairing and staff presumably and children went round the district collecting money to pay for it. While it was being repaired the children had a holiday. Which for the nine or ten children of Ashover Parish who attended Brackenfield was a welcome addition to the one they had earlier for Ashover Feast. This was held on the fourth of July. Ashover Independence Day !

In April of 1865 the School Log Book records the children were taught a Lesson in Compound Interest so maybe the chanting got a bit to much. If they thought they could arrive late to miss the lesson they were sadly mistaken. For one thing you would be spotted miles away as you walked across the village Green. There is no cover here. but the teacher had introduced a new tactic to combat lateness. Late comers were made to stay in at Play time.

It's a very gloomy day, the sun has not shone through, in fact there is a dew on the ground and my feet are soaking after going to take a look at the pump. It was renovated in 2000 for the Millennium a plaque states.

With squelching feet I make my way back to Patricia. She asks before we go any further can we sit down, " I want to change my socks." This is the second time she has done this. Only this year on going through Customs in Portugal we were told to empty our pockets. Out came the Passport, Wallet and keys, loose change, the usual stuff. Patricia had nothing except a pair of socks ,one in each pocket. I am as flabbergasted now as I was then. I check her rucksack. It's OK, the kitchen sink is still at home.

Having re-booted we carried on around the lanes of Brackenfield.

Some of these lanes were so important that in 1504 a bequest was made for the continued maintenance of Ogston Lane Other lanes and bridle ways were stopped up and other routes opened. Even the river on the Tithe map shows that it is in the process of

being altered. It is possible it had something to do with the railway.

Down the road from the School is Nether Farm, a short well manicured gravel drive leading to a moss paved yard. It's been touched up but the place still retains character and charm. The slate roof, slightly uneven is topped with two red brick chimneys. The house wall is partly clad in Ivy and what looks like a Wisteria which hopefully will flower when the sun decides to shine

Holly Cottage above Nether Farm was once occupied by **Robert KNOWLES** around 1840. Like a lot of the properties they were owned by the **TURBUTT** family from Ogston Hall.

Others living in **TURBUTT** properties were **George TAGG, William RADFORD, Joseph SOWTER, Joseph SMITHURST** and **John TOMLINSON**.

George MILNES had two houses let to **Luke COCKING** and **William WOOD**. Their houses stood opposite the lane that leads to Carr Farm that **John MILNER** held as the Tithe of 1840 indicates.

In the early 1780 's the Land Tax shows that **Job WRAGG** was at Car, and **Robert BANKES Esquire** was the proprietor. The Tax of two pounds was the fourth biggest in Brackenfield.

Another **Job WRAGG** occupying property of **Richard COWLISHAW** was assessed at thirty shillings. Presumably the Car reference was made to make it apparent there were two individuals with the same name. There was only one **Samuel HOLLINGWORTH** and one **Joshua PAGE**, both holding property of **Sir Ed. WILLMOTT** another important landowner.

There's a tiny Methodist Chapel off the Green, built in red brick, it like most of the houses here, stands alone, with no neighbours adjoining. It is so small you wonder just how many people actually got inside.

Overhead the birds are singing like mad, maybe they being higher up can see the sun. It's not exactly Springlike at all and there does not seem a chance the cloud will clear away.

Patricia is taking pictures but her hands are very cold but the prospect of taking one of a donkey means she will endure the cold for a bit longer. The donkey is standing in the middle of a paddock. When Patricia approaches it ignores her but a large dog in the house before the field does not. Fortunately it's bark is the only thing to worry about.

Having this re-assurance Patricia talks to the donkey, "Come on " she says, "I've come to take your picture".

Donkey is not a language I'm familiar with but my wife understands it completely. The Donkey turns around, walks towards the camera and smiles. Not a carrot in sight. Snap.

The road from here leads towards the ancient Manor House at Road Nook. **George WRAGG** lived here at the time of the Tithe. We however turn down Millers Lane where we encounter a few Jacobs Sheep with lambs on the lawn of Green Farm, an ancient building.

Across the road behind another old cottage lies the ruins of an old red bricked other house. Whosoever it was, they were familiar with people because two footpaths crossed directly behind the house.

There are many paths dotted around here and we dart into gaps in hedges, over stiles and climb fences to see the scenery from these viewpoints. However we must press on, we have a long way to go, the sun has failed us but at least the Plough beckons.

We leave Brackenfield knowing we haven't seen all of it today. Church Farm around the corner will have to stand another day before we come this way again .

We retrace our steps heading back along the lane that hides the Brackenfield Guard Dog. He is still on duty, but being securely tied up poses no threat. At least when he goes off, you know it is for a reason.

Others over the years have left Brackenfield as well. Not travelling to far were **George ALLEN** in 1750 and **John ALLEN** in 1774. **John KNOWLES** in 1776 completed a trio of men who went to nearby Ashover. **Blythe BOSWORTH** a fifteen year old blacksmith was also to leave the village. In 1861 he was an inmate at Derby Gaol.

Patricia wanted to be an Inmate at The "Plough" so we made our way down the road with daffodils on one side and a wall that looks as if it has been made with tiny loaves of brown bread on the other. Honeysuckle clammers through the hedges as it attempts to stake it's claim for when Summer arrives. At the rate we are going I think I must bring it a travel brochure.

We pass a field that once contained a huge pig. One day in a crowded house Patricia said to someone who had recently lost her mother, "Cheryl ,I saw a pig on Saturday and it reminded me of your mum".

Cringe.

"Oh Patricia, that is thoughtful of you".

It is not what were expecting. Fur flying, handbags at dawn, that sort of thing would have been acceptable.

It turned out that the lady who had died, loved pigs. Patricia knew that, but the rest of us didn't.

We turn along the old drive that has two stone pillars at its entrance, the gate that once hung across it long gone.

The walls, that have tumbled down into a mound in places, are covered in a green velvet moss so soft you wish you could knit something with it. I say to Patricia she ought to get together with her sisters and start knitting. She could call it Moss Sisters. It doesn't quite ring true so we abandon the idea.

The Plough is a nice looking pub and we are looking forward to going inside. The large picture on the side of the wall depicts a smiling moustached plough man, with cloth cap ,red neckerchief, grey shirt and black wescot, brown cord trousers and black boots, sat down munching on his lunch, his jug of ale at hand and his two faithful shires to keep him company. He looks content.

Underneath the sign the words "warm welcome" makes us even more eager to take our place in the bar. We go around the outside where tables are waiting ,but it is to cold to sit outside, everyone must be inside. Patricia wanting to be first tries the door .It is shut.

Never mind I say there will be another pub somewhere. Our first visit to the Plough is aborted then. We shall try again another day.

The walls surrounding the Plough have been recently rebuilt and they look fit to stand another two hundred years or more. We make our way back across the empty car park, which is usually well used and trek slowly back down the moss covered walled lane. Just to remind us how cold it is, a horse turns up with it's coat on. That's two brochures needed I thought.

Retracing our way back to the foot of Coldharbour Lane we turn onto Carr Lane. On our left the hillside is topped by woods. A black rabbit darts between large tufts of grass then

disappears into the wood. On our right fields separated by hawthorn hedges have been dressed in pinstripe green. The trees scattered here and there awaiting their clothing, standing as they do, like mannequins in creations clothes shop window ,waiting for the return of the dresser.

In this area in the 1840's lived **Mary HOBSON** and **Richard GOODWIN**. Near neighbours **John LIMB Senior** and **Charles LIMB** no doubt calling across the road to each other about the how cold it was at the bottom of Coldharbour Lane.

Carr Lane is a long lane leading to Ashover. In the distance we note the barns and buildings of White Carr Farm. It stands below the road and it's yard is full of machinery. Nearby a drive to the farm is edged by a cluster of four or five oak trees.

Robert SOWTER was occupier here in 18440. The road back then, turned a sharp left at the farm and up along the edge of the wood. Today the road carries straight on past the farm.

As we approach the farm itself two dogs, one a black and white sheep dog, the other a Jack Russell come bounding from out of the farm yard ,up the embankment and growl. Unfettered and unafraid they watch our every move. Which isn't much because we are petrified. The big dog returns to the yard, but the Jack Russell remains. Suddenly I am gripped so hard that the top of my arm feels as if it has been fused to the bottom of the arm. Even through my jacket the pain is dreadful. I try to get away but the tenacity with which it holds on is amazing.

I cry to Patricia, let go.

She holds on for dear life. The Jack Russell has been outsmarted. It looks bemused, I am just bruised. Painfully so. It was like trying to escape from danger but making it a three legged race in the process. Patricia finally lets go, the Jack Russell seeing its victim available again makes another sortie. I find a long stick, (I half expected to find a heap of bones as well) and fend off the dog. With the blood finally getting through again and my arm returning to its proper shape I am like a swordsman possessed. Although I have only one point against Jack the lads mouthful I am victorious. Well ,call it a draw.

Patricia looks at me and says "don't ever bring me this way again".

I am in complete agreement. After what she has just put me through I think it would have been wiser just to let the dog bite me !

Having checked to make sure the Jack Russell hasn't gone for re-inforcements we carry on towards Clattercotes Farm. I re-assure Patricia the farm is set well back of the road and we are not likely to meet any more dogs.

To make things more relaxed a grey squirrel hops down a tree trunk and sits on the other side of a wire fence. A nearby notice says it is some sort of nature reserve but it doesn't keep the squirrel in, for he comes and goes as he pleases. I wonder if Patricia knows Squirrel as well as she does Donkey, for the little fluffy thing needs to learn to stay inside the reserve. I learnt a little at the Tufty Club but since we went decimal I lost it.

The "reserve" has a dancing brook running through it, doing a fox trot over stones, then slowing down to waltz past logs and putting its left stream in and its right flow out as it Hokey Cokeys along into the distance. The dead trees lay in the undergrowth undisturbed, decaying where they fell.

Older trees that are still standing are clad in a sheath of ivy, while the younger sort await their first encounter with the dark green creeper.

Climbing slightly uphill for a few yards we come to the other entrance of Berridge Lane.

It falls sharply and turns right. Across Berridge Lane is a ford. The floor of the stream now made up of old stone pavers. It's the same water we saw at Butterley earlier, here it just strolls along before tumbling down a series of steps and entering the dance floor of the reserve. For the traveller on foot there is a raised footpath along its length.

We don't walk Berridge Lane which would take us to High Oredish but return to the road and eventually come to Clattercotes Farm. True to its map reference it stands back of the road up a small well maintained walled drive. The house is a large grey tiled building, stone built and having three chimneys. Behind the house tall trees from Clattercotes Wood stand, one resembling a giant dandelion clock waiting to be blown.

In 1729 **William SHIMWELL** was bound apprentice to **Thomas WRAGG** of Clattercotes. One hundred years later **Elizabeth BAMFORD** is the farmer there.

We are on the Knott Cross road. Here roads from all directions converge. For here is a "T" junction followed very quickly by a cross roads, although one of the roads is now a bridle way. This place appears on numerous Turnpike plans but Knott Cross farm is the only building here.

To our right on a triangle of grass the signpost points to Clay Cross and Tibshelf, to our left back towards Tansley and Matlock. We turn left and walk past the farm.

Knott Cross Farm lies behind a large stone wall but the house is so big it appears above it. A single chimney stack in the middle of the grey tiled roof, whose gable is topped by a ball of stone at its apex.

It has a row of tiny mullioned windows running three quarters of its length, the remaining quarter solid stone. Ivy has claimed the middle section. At the time of Ashover Tithe around 1850, the owner was **John BRIGHT** but it was occupied by **William MATHER**.

After leaving Knott Cross and its knotted pattern of lanes we turn a sharp right along Oakstedge Lane on our way to Milltown.

From High Oredish, or High over dish as various documents call it, the area we are now walking can be seen to good advantage. Ashover Hay to our right as we walk Oakstedge Lane appears as a wonderfully rounded hill. From down on the road we cannot see the tiny community above our heads and beyond the trees.

Behind us and heading towards Butterley the road gently twists and turns like some black snake making its way through the grass.

On our left the open fields of Greenfield Farm living up to their name in a blaze of shades, like some carpet salesman's pattern book, and beyond the farm the superb looking Ravens House, its multi gabled top mimicking the edge of a rip saw. Beyond the house, the fields rise gently until they reach the edge of Ravensnest Wood. In those woods lies a silver coloured camera, which we lost many years ago while walking through it. We put it down near a spring and forgot to pick it up. Maybe the raven has it in its nest. I make a note to watch the birdie!

Greenfield House is separated from Greenfield Farm by a hundred yards or less of lane and a group of half a dozen or so tall trees.

The huge outcrop of exposed hill that is the quarry lies in the distance.

Opposite the lane that goes to the Greenfields and Raven House is another that climbs the hill to Ashover Hay. On the top the tiny Primitive Methodist chapel was once even tinier as an extension on the side of the building shows. Down the road which turns to the right building work is going on renovating the stone built grey slated outbuildings and house. The perimeter wall has been fixed together again and the verge cleared of

debris.

Coming back up the hill the road which dissects it runs past a group of houses that must be the centre of Hay. Dogs wag tails as their owners natter in the lane. A scene that has been repeated many times over the centuries.

Without the introduction of a fanfare for the first time today the sun makes an appearance. Gradually as the curtain of cloud rolls back against a backdrop of blue, there stands the Star. We have waited a long time for this event. I check my watch. It is five minutes to five. Nearly five hours since we left. It puts in a performance to remember. It is so hot I take my jacket off and take a drink from the canteen. It is giving it's all. Suddenly the curtain falls. It is five o'clock. We await an encore. Like Elvis, "it has left the building".

The old fading Ashover Enclosure map shows an area called Milltown Road, this was once called Goodalls Lane back in the 1780's. Indeed Milltown did have a **GOODALE** family for **John GOODALE** was paid four shillings for the rent for **John CANTRIL**. **Joseph** and **William CANTRILL** also rented houses here paying **Mr DAKEYN** and **John HOLE** ten shillings respectively. **Joseph KNOWLES** was paid eight shillings, which was the rent **Phales SPENCER** was charged. **Phales** was also called **Thales SPENCER**. I suspect there were not many Phyliss' in Ashover at the time to compare how to spell their first name.

Another **Joseph CANTRILL** was bound apprentice here to **George MATHER** of Mill Town back in 1778. Seven years earlier **Richard HOPKINSON** became apprentice to **John TOWNDROW** also of Mill Town.

At the age of fifteen **Joseph BARBER** of Ashover was hired to **Edward ADDY** of Brampton. He had served him since 1812.

James WILLGOOSE aged 29 in 1815 was born in Eckington, his parents belonged to Upper Haddon. About 1813 he wed **Ann KNIGHT** in Sheffield and now a framework knitter here he was in Ashover.

He may not have ventured as far as Hay, and he may not have been a noticeable fellow, but someone who couldn't hide was **Widow ELIOT**. She was seen "going about with child" and had made a Private Agreement for the child to be looked after. **Thomas BUCKNALL** had agreed to pay twenty five pounds "if the child live till it is a munth old". That was in 1802. In 1805 a Bastardy Order names **Elizabeth ELLIOT** as the person responsible for the upkeep of the child. That same year both mother and child are dead. Was this the same child born around 1802, did she receive the money from **Tom BUCKNALL**. He was well out of the area, living in Barrow upon Trent.

We make our way down a little road back onto Oakstedge Lane. Hikers are making their way up as we pass little cottages with sloping gardens dotted with primroses. As we approach the junction with Brown Lane we see the Miners Arms. Surely says Patricia this is open. Patricia tries the door.....

At the junction with Oakstedge Lane and Brown Lane stands a farm house, it's front garden lawn producing a scattering of daffodils under two large dark green firs. A couple of smaller trees stand shivering, there branches stretching upwards as if looking for a blanket from on high. The farmhouse is a long stone building, with patchy pale green moss on the stone tiled roof.

An old barn with seven or eight steps leading up to its green door stands next to the house while the perimeter wall, it's top row perched haphazardly, tries its best to repel all boarders.

The sign says Gin Lane, it stands next to the old pound. It's a bit misleading because

older maps show Gin Lane around the corner ,turn right and first left. Still it's an appropriate name near to where the Miners Arms Inn is situated.

The place like the barn across the road has a green door.

There was no piano but they laughed a lot behind the green door.

Patricia pushed on the door. We were in. A friendly face greeted us and asked what we would like to drink. The snug was clean and empty, it was ours. The noise came from an open room next door from a crowd celebrating. As I stood at the bar out of sight from the room ,a voice rich in grape juice asked the barman if he was serving "old George". The barman looked at me and told the questioner it wasn't George. Which still left the "old " bit un-answered! As it was probably his pub I gave him the benefit of the doubt and an address of a very good optician.

Patricia noticed that someone had a bag like the one she nearly bought in Derby. There wasn't much chance of going to the shops here, so we discussed the merits of its colour and size, how many pockets it had and all the secret little places she could keep her socks in.

During all the revelry people came and went saying hello as they passed through the snug. One man after saying goodbye came back carrying a bag of presents. What had we done to deserve this I thought. He then walked passed us and handed the bag over to the person he had come to party with. He had forgotten to give him his present and nearly drove back down south with it.

Another lady tried desperately to find the exit, she was already walking towards it ,when she stopped turned around and asked Patricia the way out !!

Five seconds later she was heading in the totally wrong direction and I called out to her to stop and so prevent her from walking through a brick wall.

Patricia's sense of direction is the stuff of legends. Two days later things went from bad to worse. Someone on the road just outside Tansley and heading towards Alfreton wanted to go to Matlock Bath. She came up with the classic, "Well you're going the right way, but on the wrong road "!!

We leave the "Miners" with its gold coloured name stretching across its frontage. Its green painted window frames supporting the small square glass panes.

Up the lane bow windows front a row of cottages leading up to Gin Lane.

Others left also. On a more permanent basis.

In 1632 the Inventory of **William SPENCER** of Mill Town showed he had pewter and brass worth eighteen shillings. It also revealed he owed brass. **Eline HENSTOCK** was waiting for four pounds and **George BOWER** two pounds three and four pence. Williams wife Grace having to sort out his affairs found the Inventory revealed he was "worth" twenty four pounds but owed in total half of it.

We had a bus to catch, nearest stop was at Kelstedge, we had hoped thirty minutes would be enough walking time, but what we didn't realise is this was a Bank Holiday and things were not going to go our way.

It was like trying to catch the last "Train to San Fernando". If we miss this one, we may never catch another one, at least today.

We walk down the round and at the junction with Hunt Lane head for the Wash House.

The drive to the Wash House is a gravel path, manicured gardens either side and the place hidden behind a tall green conifer hedge. **George BOLLINGTON** lived here in 1857, a farmer. A nearby road is called Sheepwash Lane, and the name of the house may have something to do with it. I don't think it was an early launderette. The Amber across the road, no more than a stream would have been sufficient.

Ashover parish is full of unusual place names. Fabricken, High Oredish, Wine Tavern, Press, Dick Lant and Ravens Nest. Now we approach one more. Of the five houses belonging to the parish of Ashover in Miltown Quarter, one was "**Mary COWLISHAWS** house, in which is two Dwellings, and is Commonly known by the Name of Common Bank (or Jetting Street) below ye fall-mill"

Ann ADAMS also had a house in Jetting Street. The Ashover Tithe shows it as Jetting Street and it is so named today, and the area must have been one of activity as a quarry was situated here, along with the Fall corn mill and the River Amber running alongside. In later times a narrow gauge railway also made its presence felt. Beyond the mill and across the river stands Demonsdale Farm situated on the patriarchially named Abrahams Lane.

We don't walk Abrahams Lane but turn towards Fall Gate. Like so many places in Ashover parish it consists of a group of houses all giving each other moral support to stay together.

The sky is a pale blue, the same colour as my hands and an old brown horse is sporting the same colour coat. I console myself that at least if I am old I am at the heart of fashion when it comes to choosing the "in colour".

The horse has a few words asking how is distant relation in Brackenfield is going on. We tell him the last time we saw him he was smiling, and have a picture to prove it. We turn left at the junction, and take the gradual climb towards Hockley. On our right is the Fall Hill with great chunks carved out of it by quarrying and great holes dug into it by lead mining. Not that you would know. Hidden as it is by trees and fenced off at appropriate places.

The view on our left is a different one altogether as we look down on the wide open spaces with the Amber glistening and squirming along in the valley below and Abrahams Lane keeping a straight and narrow course. Across the river the hillside rises in a belt of green disappearing into the edge of Cockerspring Wood.

Hockley appears in the autobiography of **Leonard WHEATCROFT**. He himself it appears gave it the name. He wanted to build a house at Sir William's Well, "but our goodly parson Obediah, that small profit, would not suffer it, because I have puld downe his fathers intacke in Asher hill".

So said Leonard "then did I fall on in my owne ground, and begun to rid for a house stid in a place which I call now by the name of Hockley".

Leonard helped to supply and plant an orchard at Clattercotes when it was newly built. Our Len was a bright chap, philosophical, always pondering. In 1671 pondering was his business between "gardenin and riding" he "rit downe" these questions.

"What mettell is the sight of the eye made of".

"Why have men bearded and women none".

Then he got into some serious pondering. "Why have sum women beards and sum none".

"What is the cause of oure yoaning when we see another yoane", and no doubt scratching his head at the time came up with, "What is the cause that a flea makes a red spot when she bites, and a Lous a whit one".

Len also asked an additional twenty five other mind benders, some not fit for publication or to be only read beyond the nine o'clock watershed.

A circular stone displayed outside the cottage identifies his home.

We carry on the Hockley road into Ashover itself. We have no time to look here today for we have a bus back to Matlock to catch. Missing it doesn't bear thinking about.

Today's Journey by Mike and Patricia Spencer

When we arrive at Kelstedge the timetable tells us we have just over an hour to wait for the next one. It is now ten past seven. The pub looks inviting, it is full of rowdy shooters. We have a drink and face the inevitable. Slack Hill.

Slack Hill looms before us, its top hidden in the clouds. Its slope is so long and steep it feels as if we are about to tackle the Eiger. There is no footpath on Slack Hill, but a very wide uneven grass verge. Now it is wet. We have no option but to get soaked as cars race up the slope. This road at one time had a series of twists and turns that made it almost impossible to scale in Winter. Now it is almost a straight piece of road.

Without the aid of crampons or ropes we carefully ascend.

I check Patricia's oxygen levels at regular intervals. We cannot stop, there is nowhere to stop. At one time I tell Patricia the Lord Nelson was here. On hearing this she takes out the binoculars and repeats Nelson immortal words. "I see no shops".

The Lord Nelson was another pub. It would have been handy to have around today as leg lag takes its toll. Finally after half an hour of lung burning climbing we make it to the summit. When we are here we find a seat. We try and move it half way down the hill to where it's needed, but the concrete it is set in is solid. We carry on with renewed energy or maybe it's because we are going downhill.

It will be nine o'clock before we finally arrive home. Patricia sits down and yawns, I follow suit. Sorry Leonard, we still don't know the answer to that one.

Michael and Patricia