

Today's Journey

EYAM, FOLOW, GRINDLOW, GT HUCKLOW WINDMILL, BRADWELL, HATHERSAGE, FOX HOUSE

It was going to be a good day weather-wise, although at seven it didn't look it. The grey clouds keeping the blue sky at bay, the wind not as gentle as it could be. Anyway, what about the wall I was building. That's something that needs to be done. Until it is Patricia can't do much gardening. Only problem is I need some sand. Having escaped building the wall the Journey was on.

Where would we go?

"I like Eyam," Patricia said. "It has a living history, the places are still there from the plague, you can get into the feel of the times, it's not altered".

I stood there amazed at this outpouring of emotion Patricia presented then realised that at Eyam is one of her favourite shops.

I would need to be careful. However she was right about the "feel of history" and so to Eyam we set off.

We would need to change buses at Bakewell, and we arrived in good time for the connection. We were checking the timetable when a voice said "Are you lost, where are you going?"

We turned round to see a woman in her seventies sat down waiting for the Chesterfield bus. She was going to afternoon bingo she told us. Then she told us more, and more and more.

How does she ever hear the bingo caller I thought. She came up for more air and asked us where we were from. Matlock, just down the road.

"Do you know Glovers then?" she asked. I did. So we had a Glover story and more.

She told us about when her son was living with her, how difficult it was because she wanted to watch Coronation Street and he didn't. "He were younger" she said.

In the end she moved out of her home and into a flat. Such was the power of Ena Sharples and Albert Tatlock.

I thought why didn't she just get another television.

Very slowly I kept edging away only to be drawn into another subject for conversation. Where she once lived sixty year ago and clothing styles, prowlers, Chatsworth buses and Derwent Dams. Each time I edged away the magnetic call beckoned me back. This time to discuss how she managed to get two wardrobes and a three quarter length bed into her room, then a story about a fireplace surround and more and more.

Finally we got away saying our bus must be coming soon. What we didn't realise is that it was already there, but the driver had not changed the destination. Chatsworth suddenly became Sheffield.

Just as we were about to get on a woman asked us if "the X18 had left yet?"

Patricia replied she should go to the bus shelter because there was a woman there who seemed to know everything! The girl smiled and sensibly stayed put. Later we saw her getting on the same bus taking the woman to bingo.

We have been to Eyam many times but have never seen Mompessons Well. So we determined this time we would pay it a visit.

When we arrived at Eyam the place was awash with wedding cars, one couple being married in the church and another just down the road at Eyam Hall.

The trek up to the Well is through the churchyard and beyond into the fields on the hillside.

We overtook a group of four hikers who caught us up when the easily distinguished track came to nothing. Although the sign pointing to it had been broken in half it still pointed up the hill. Then another sign pointing in the totally opposite direction said "Path" on it. The way up the hill was not apparent as one would have thought such a place as famous as this would have a well trodden track to it.

The man got out his map and confirmed it was up the field just as the sign pointed, he then showed me a tiny dot representing Mompessons Well. He must have thought I was struggling to see it, (I was actually looking at another route back) when he said I have got just the thing for you.

He then produced a magnifying glass. I checked his rucksack and told him he had forgot the kitchen sink. So now we knew for certain where we were heading. Uphill.

Over the stone wall alongside the path two lost citizens from Bolivia were seen munching away. Alpaca or maybe they were Llamas, are not noted for grazing on the hills of Eyam but they seem as much at home here as they would in Cochabamba.

Having walked to the top of the field we now enter a wood and climb the stepped path onto Edge Road. A break in the trees which hides the full view most of the time shows the fields above Stony Middleton, wide open empty fields and a large quarry hole in front of it all. Black Harry Lane supposedly named after a highwayman, running across its top and disappearing into the distance.

The most captivating scene however was the village nestled in the hollow below. Its house rooftops of grey slate or moss stone seem even now to still retain the screams and cries of centuries ago as son and daughter, husband and wife succumbed to the deadly plague. The whole place looks huddled together as if embracing and understanding what each household has gone through and giving the moral support that will ensure it will not happen again. The individual village houses may have a plaque detailing who lived where and what number victim they were, but the full impact somehow strikes home when you see the whole village from the Edge Road. It is only in the stillness and silence can you truly reflect and sense the awfulness of what once happened below. Very moving.

We continue up the road and follow it towards the junction where the signpost to Foolow is written with a small letter "f". Maybe the printer had run out of upper case letters.

Continuing a few yards on we arrive at Mompessons Well.

It was here goods were brought in for the beleaguered villagers below, and money left in return. From this spot you cannot see the village at all.

The well, actually a flowing partially hooded stream is surrounded by a large spiked fence nowadays. People still throw money in the "Well" and make a wish or maybe some form of prayer. To the right of the Well in the distance is Ladywash Mine with its tall chimney matching the row of trees that stand like a row of soldiers on parade.

We retrace our steps back to the junction leading to "foolow" .There must have been a shortage of upper case letter "F"s because it is the same spelling on both sides of the signpost. Maybe it was Black Harry who came in the night and took them. A capital offence. We keep our eyes open looking for a highwayman, but all we see is a mail man with a couple of letters !!!

To say it is a bit windy up here is an understatement, and the more we climb the stronger the wind blows.

In a corner of a field we see some dirty grey woollen sheep going into an entrance on

one side and coming out spotlessly clean on the other. They must have had a good soak because they have also shrunk. Then we notice a pile of fleeces stacked up. What a day for a hair cut. The sheep huddle together like frozen lamb chops and look towards us pleadingly for a jumper or scarf. I have neither, the weatherman said it would be warm. I don't remember any of their kind offering me a scarf when we met their cousins on a freezing day when we went to Wheston. We got through it and so will they.



We take a turn left through a stile and head through the fields and down the hill back towards Eyam. On the top of this exposed edge the wind is howling. It turns us almost inside out like the Wind sock above Hucklow. It takes all our strength to stand still and face the full onslaught but it is exhilarating. If ever the Eyam plague was air borne, on a day like to today it would have been in Sheffield in three seconds flat.

The village below seems still, the fields across the way seem devoid of people and livestock. We make our way down through a small wood, passing bright yellow gorse on the way. We come to Edge Road again but instead of crossing it and returning down the fields we turn right and take the road into the village.

Patricia remarks that some of them must have been fit to climb the hill to collect provisions for you can't imagine an unfit person making it up there. Of course some were unaffected by the plague.

We look back up the hill to where we had come from. High in the sky a glider from Hucklow does a turn. What would the folks of 1665 have made of that !

The reason I am on this walk is that I don't have any sand to build a wall. I am reminded of the wall however when we arrive at the Nook, for here an old wall is being repaired,

and we can see from the old part which is still standing, that the newly built length has been put together with the same care and expertise as the original. I need cement to make my wall stay put, but as I have said I needed sand.

Further down the road, there it is. Bags of builders sand for sale, placed at the end of a long drive. At fifty pence a bag I can just afford half a bag, but luckily my rucksack is full and I can't take it home.

As we walk down the hill into the village on our left is what looks like a Mongolian nomads home. A circular building completely different from anything else in Eyam. These are the toilets!

Across the road is the Museum. Here you read and see artefacts from the Plague era as well as the lead mining industry which occupied many folks around here.

I suppose the chair belonging to William Mompessom, found in Liverpool must take pride of place.

The Weather Vane is in the shape of a big black rat.

Further down the road there are two stone troughs but hopefully we will find somewhere with a seat to have a drink.

In 1734 way up north in Malcoff, James CLEGG, a travelling Doctor was making up something for Eyam couple Thomas DRABLE and his wife to take. Whatever they had wrong with them we are not told, but Clegg records in his diary that he spent all morning at home preparing their medicine.

The house at the bottom of the road stands solid, its roof of stone edged by two chimneys either end. Its frontage having a central door which is topped with a semi circular arch jutting a couple of inches out of the wall.

Another house, Laburnum Cottage is not dis-similar, but having one chimney at one end and the other centrally placed, the house no doubt taking its name from the Laburnum tree now sporting its yellow dangling flowers.

Eyam has a tiny Post Office, not as small as the one at Smalley, but small enough. It stands next to "The Rookery".

This shop is one of Patricia's favourites in all our travels. It is plied with all sorts of things, ice cream, small toys, china, pots, brasses, farming implements, a framed family tree of the ARCHER family of Elmton, pictures, posters, sweets, wines, pencils, postcards, plates, vases, from a few pence to lots of pounds. They even do teas, and a "Take Away" service.

In this shop I once saw an old mug with a picture of High Tor, Matlock, on it, before the railway came through it. At the bottom of the scene cows were in enclosed fields. The fields have long gone since the railway of 1847 restructured everything. I hesitated, left the mug on the shelf, but it being Eyam, it plagued me all night. I rang the shop the next day and it had gone, all for five pounds! I still visit The Rookery in the hope someone may have took it back.

Patricia visits the shop not in hope, but in certainty. She knows I always go inside to check on the missing mug, not that it would make any difference if I didn't. Patricia and The Rookery have become firm friends.

Near The Rookery stands the ancient Eyam Hall, the Wedding party have left, the steps vacant, the photographer gone. Eyam Hall has been in the **WRIGHT** family for a long time. There view across the road giving them a grandstand view of any vagrant or culprit placed in the stocks.

Here also stands an imposing red brick built squared town house.



The stone built cottage of the first plague victim, possibly one of the most photographed houses in Derbyshire bears the name of its victim. **George VICARS** name also appears twice in the burial register.

A ruffed hand with extended finger points to the words "Here followeth ye names with ye number of ye persons who died of the plague"

Then under the word "Number" is written VICARS 1st. then 7 (September) Bur. **George VICCARS**. George so famous they named him twice.

Jutting out alongside the house is the home of the plagues third victim, **Peter HAWKSWORTH**.

During the early weeks before many would have realised what was happening, another **HAWKSWORTH**, this one **William** was marrying **Sarah FURNISE**. They were wed between victims four and five on the 23rd September 1665.

Across the road a row of houses fronted by small gardens, some tucked inside black railings, others by shrubs, display all manner of windows. Squared sash windows, old curiosity shop bow fronted windows, dormer windows, windows hidden behind old wooden shutters. All face the church where another wedding is taking place. There are still cars parked from the earlier wedding all bedecked in ribbon and we trust they all make their way to the right reception.

We take a look at the bus timetable and as we do so, a bus, unable to get near us because of the cars drives by.

"Have yer missed yer bus then" a voice booms out. A rosy faced woman asks if we want a timetable, she's got one but will have to go inside to find it. We had already looked at the timetable and had one in the bottom of our bag as well, but it required negotiation of

the highest diplomacy when we said we didn't need one.

"It's no bother, it's somewhaere in house, let me find it foyyer".

No it's ok we said, so as to placate I asked her how far it was to Bradwell.

"How far, 'pends on how fast thee walks, two Derbyshire miles I shud say, I does three miles an hour, an am over seventy, shud do it in hafe an hour".

Well, we ask, does the bus stop at Foolow ?

"If thas goin Foola ya can run rest o' way"

We thank her, smile and walk away as the rucksack on my back becomes decidedly heavier for some reason.

We take a quick look at the churchyard, one of the gravestones records the **COOPER** family. Jane the wife of John died aged 67 and John was 76 when he died. Children Sarah and Alexander both died in infancy, but Edwin another son fared better. He was thirty when he died, a long way from home in the East Indies. Charles ,another son died 2nd March 1833 in his thirties.

Sophia BROWN, her stone at the entrance, encrusted with a dry crinkly moss, has plenty of space below her name to fit others on, but she is listed alone. She was 68 when she was buried in 1850, or could it be 1830. Like the **COOPER** stone it is hard to see if it is 1852 or 1832 when they were buried.

The Land Tax for 1785 shows another Cooper, **Abraham COOPER** as an Assessor along with **Samuel SYDDALL**. **George ANDREW** and **Simon SKIDMORE** were collectors.

We make our way down to the square to await the bus which hopefully will be coming up the Dale.

An old map details a boundary dispute between Eyam and Stoney Middleton, it records that in the Dale a woman was found dead. Stoney Middleton refused to bury her, Eyam to their credit, gave her a burial. It was something the people of Eyam would get used to.

We waited in the Square for our transport, staring at the white walled Eyam Tea rooms, nicely offset with matching red telephone kiosk and post box. However our sights are set on Foolow, and very soon the bus arrives.

We set of up the slight hill passing the Plague Cottages, the Stocks and the Hall. I am sure I saw Patricia wipe a tear from her eye as she passed "The Rookery", or was it a secret code that said "I'll be back "?

On our right the sloping Eyam Edge is arrayed in masses of yellow gorse, hiding activity of long ago when the likes of Twelve Meers, Old Pasture, Black Hole, Middleton Engine, Black Engine, Bradshaw and Dusty Pit mines were working.

We pass the "Waterfall". Not exactly Niagara, not big enough to get it into any book of records, but enough to get it into the Eyam Glebe Terrier. There the terrier of 1612 describes it as "the great Waterfall", lying west of a road at the Waterfalls mouth and **William WILSON'S** land east..

It has probably been passed by hundreds of motorists yet lies within thirty feet of the road side.

On the hillside lies the hamlet of Bretton, or at least the white painted Barrel Inn, standing proud, it's outline clear against a grey sky.

Foolow is a small village with a lot of character. The "Bulls Head Inn" is another white painted building, with a small pointed arched entrance porch, it's grey slate roof standing in contrast with the walls. There are flower baskets hanging from the outside wall and

tables outside decked with colourful shades. Two "A" frames are chalked up with the menus on offer.

Our first experience of this pub came about some years ago when, being a novice at this sort of thing, one "A" frame declared, "Drinkers wanted, no experience necessary".

It seemed to good an opportunity to miss out on this training session. So we enrolled. Ever since, when we feel a little rusty we venture for a refresher course.

In side the Bulls Head the walls are covered in theatre posters, and we are reminded that it cost three shillings and four pence to get into the Gallery at the St Helens Hippodrome back in 1934. The "chairs" we sat in were actually theatre seats, but it has all manner of seating as varied as the cottage windows in the houses opposite Eyam church.

Here you can get postage stamps and darts accessories, which are placed alongside an American Dollar Bill and an array of Tankards.

There's an old piano which must have been regularly used because the paved floor of the pub is shiny leading to it.

Hanging next to the bay window seats on the wall overlooking proceedings is the bulls head itself.

The Tithe for Foolow shows **Anthony MORTON** as being the Landlord in 1843, he may have known the head of the bull on the wall as well. I asked Patricia her appraisal, how would she describe the pub. She commented on the different table styles, the food, the fireplace, but said she didn't notice much but the wine was good!,

Maybe **James BRICKHILL**, **Jeffrey PALFREYMAN** and **Peter REDFERN** also appreciated the wine or beer back in 1843, they all lived in Foolow when **Tony MORTON** was landlord.



We take the road towards Housley and Stoney Middleton just to look at the views of

Eyam Edge. Away in a field is a small dale that curves away from us, beckoning us on as if by enchantment. The spell failed, but not for the want of trying. We shall be back to discover what lies beyond the dale, Linen Dale connects up with the waterfall, maybe they did their washing there in the past!

The stone enclosed fields house a few sheep here and there, plenty to eat for all. On the other side of the road another field is a mass of yellow that stretches for as far as you can see with bright shiny yellow buttercups swaying gently. Only in one corner of the field do they yield to the white and pale green of Umbellifers. The wall alongside still manages to keep itself upright despite looking like a makeshift barrier, although one that has stood a few good years.

The row of houses, stone built, some with mullioned windows, others with door ways topped with heavy and wide lintels, others with windows almost at pavement level, look like the same houses as found on the Tithe map, not much added or taken away, although they have been brought up to date. Somewhere in 1843 among this village **Jeffrey PALFRERYMAN** had a shop. In 1857 **John LEE** and **Joseph MIDDLETON** were shopkeepers, while at nearby Brosterfield **Wm PLATTS** was a shoemaker as was another **MIDDLETON**, this one being **Thomas**.

Godfrey ELLIOTT occupied a farm of about twelve acres at Bretton belonging to **George MARSDEN** in 1843, In 1857 **Edward ELLIOTT** farmed Shepherds Flatt.

Joseph SIMPSON from Bretton was a carter, no doubt in demand by William WYATT a lead merchant.

Retracing our steps we head towards the "Bull" but turn to make our way out of the village and head towards Grindlow. We say goodbye to the wonderfully large tree that gives shelter from any approaching storm for the sheep as they graze contentedly. The wide open view with few trees in evidence, just miles of stone enclosed summer green fields disappears behind us.

Foolow has character, where would you find two post boxes side by side, one in a wall one on a telegraph pole. That's probably a first class post.

On the village Green stands the remains of Foolow village cross with what seems to be an old Bull ring as used in baiting the bull in times past.

We pass the Wesleyan Chapel and the village duck pond whose inhabitants shelter under the additional safety net of a road sign displaying one single duck in a red triangle.

We leave Foolow passing along the stone and overgrown hedgerows, so overgrown in places that an elder tree has grown across a stile entrance.

The sky is a slate grey, the wind blowing strong as we find the next entrance across the fields. In the distance we can see a figure behind another stile and leaning on a gate. We take our last few steps in Foolow parish as we get set to cross the boundary that will take us into the territory of Grindlow.

We check our passports, make sure we have travellers cheques safe and secure, along with our bus pass, and approach...