

Today's Journey

Stanton Moor, Stanton Lees, Darley Bridge

So where we're going then ? Those words have been circulating around my head for weeks if not months. The Journey season was upon us having taken a sabbatical while we moved and moved again. It was inevitable they would be said once more as Paul arrived with his "new "car.

There was no escape and within minutes we were deposited on the edge of Stanton Moor and the car swiftly made it's way back to Matlock.

It wasn't a bad day, but you do like to be prepared for it. No hot water bottle, no ginger

beer, no gloves or boots. I guess that even the hardest Bronze Age man would have his sabre toothed thermals and woolley mammoth scarf on today. Not I. No, a short sleeve shirt and a light weight jacket that had I held it outstretched would have carried me over the moor hang gliding fashion.

The last time I came here the penny farthing wasn't invented.

We set on up the path to the first outcrop of rock and climb on top of it. Before us under a near clear blue sky lies the broad valley of Darley Dale, but from here we can see the cliff with Crich Stand a faint haze on the horizon. The hamlet of Tinkersley almost seems to be stretching itself outwards as if awakening from a deep sleep, making itself appear bigger than it is. We can spy the not so small tree that stands atop Oaker Hill and about which Wordsworth had a few words to say. The huge enterprise of Enthovens with its tall silver grey chimney carves a concrete swathe through the view, but there is still plenty of beauty to look at. Beyond Tinkersley lies Beeley Moor which in a few months will be awash with purple. The line of trees that mark out Tearsall on the Bonsall to Winster Road, Northwood and where ever you go it seems you cannot lose John SMEDLEYS Riber Castle.



The moor today has a mass of golden brown dead bracken, but Patricia notices a large amount of Rhododendron bushes. This is a bad sign, because when they are in bloom I know where we shall go that day.

The raging wind is doing its best to penetrate every gap in my jacket and doing a pretty good job. Even the hot water bottle would have put out the white flag. Still we battle on and

find on a fence a black woolly hat. Is this some kind of warning of things to come. Is it the last evidence that some poor unsuspecting soul lost his way on an even colder day. If it is, he will be pleased to know we found his glove as well, strung up on some barbed wire.

Patricia is well wrapped up, complete with her own gloves, and she tries this path and that path until she reaches the Cat Stone. I don't know why it's called the Cat Stone. Maybe the early inhabitants of Stanton Moor threw it at the sabre tooth tigers when they kept them awake at night.

The stone has footholds or handholds depending on if you are going up or coming down and very soon she is on top of the rock. I ask her what is on the top. These stones are usually carved with Kilroy or some initials. I hand her the camera and tell her to take a picture of the most prominent carving.

It says "66811" she says. Only when we see the picture it's the eleventh of August '99. ! What century is anyone's guess.

On the side of the rock in well defined features , beautifully carved are the words and date "1831 EIN". It is set in a smooth block as if it was going to feature above someones new house. It just needed cutting out and taking to its new home.

There's a tall tower on the moor with slits in the stonework, a little like crusaders fired arrows from. It is in fact a memorial to the Reform Bill of 1832 which Earl Grey, the then Prime Minister passed through Parliament. This Bill meant that voting qualifications were available with those persons having property to the value of ten pounds. That meant one in five male adults had the right to vote. It meant Manchester which had no MP now did and Old Sarum an Iron Age fort which had two MPs, one of the so called "Rotten Boroughs" was abolished.

Grey it is said liked the countryside and it's fitting that the "Tower" is built on the moor where another ancient site sits.

We ask a walker which path to the Nine Ladies. Unfortunately she does not speak the language, but I notice she is wearing a type of hat found in Lapland. It is cold, but not that cold. Nevertheless I make a note to look out for any loose reindeer. I mean if it does get colder I might need a lift of the moor.

Nine Ladies. These nine ladies weren't dancing, they were standing in a circle," to cowl to shiver", a group of stones that encompassed anything from a Temple to an ancient rock auditorium. Many years ago this place had an almost atmospheric presence, a wildness. Now the trees have gone, the bracken cut back and the grass mown. In fact I half expected Tiger Woods to appear. You could play golf here now. It's not quite Augusta but the silver birch trees, twisted by the constant winds make a beautiful backdrop.

There's another plus point. Although this moor was traversed by pack horses, panniers and packmen, not one decided to set up shop. Stanton Moor is a shop free zone.

We walk off the moor towards Lees Road. In a field Patricia notices a large stone and asks if one of the "Ladies" had done a runner.

The sun is yellow, the grass is green, and my hands are blue as we make our way to the pretty place called Stanton Lees.

We descend the hill towards the Stanton Lees road. Across the valley **Jane WALL** and **John MILNER** farmers at Tinkersley in the 1850's had they been living may have seen the sheer delight on a walkers face as the cold blasting wind finally died. A pheasant imitating the steam train on the Rowsley Darley Matlock line seemed to give a croak of approval as well.

While we were on the moor Patricia pointed out that she could see the dwellings of the tree people. What she actually saw was someone's garden shed. However as we approached the junction on the Pilhough to Stanton Lees road, we did pass under the tree houses of the "Eco warriors". Wooden structures swaying precariously high up in the treetops, safety net half way down, rope ladders hanging from house to ground. There protests about the extension of quarrying in the area. Quarries and their activities are abundant around here, and have been for a long time.

Pilhough lies a mile from here. **Joseph COCKER** at age 82 lies at Youlgreave, He was from

Pilhough and was buried in 1852. **Ann WRAGG** of the same place joined him at Youlgreave at the ripe old age of 91, She went eleven years later and eleven years after Ann, another Ann also was buried at Youlgreave. **Ann HALLOWS** Pilhough was buried in 1874 aged just 35.

Stanton Lees is just half a mile away so we are soon there.

In 1834 Stanton in the Peak and Stanton Lees would be visited by typhus. Today Stanton Lees gets us, without the typh.

It's a charming hamlet, which we are sure many folk must pass by. The postman doesn't because there's a wall mounted letter box surrounded by dark green ivy warning the Leesians to get their mail in by four o'clock.

The approach to Stanton Lees has a wonderfully large tree and a mass of daffodils to greet you. In fact there are daffodils everywhere. In gardens, along roadside verges and even in the fields. Little clumps dotted here and there, following little streams down the hillside.

Across the road from the big tree a company of hens and rooster parade. The cockerel looks magnificent with not a feather out of place. Of course he always has his comb.

We take a turn up a small hill then descend as if looking down the end of a ski jump, only the road goes on instead of having a drop. Tiny, unusual stone sheds tucked away in the corner of fields, piles of old stone slates stacked up for future use no doubt and cottages high on the hillside under the wood below the moor greet us. As well as a big black dog that manages to push its wet nose inside my hat. I wasn't wearing it at the time !

To our left in the distance lies the Enthoven complex. Enthovens among other things deals with recycled lead and its site is the former Mill Close Mine. Also to our left are even more daffodils.

There are a few cottages here and there and at the end of the road Stanton Lees Chapel, which according to the road sign is one and a quarter miles from Stanton in the Peak. The **STEVENSON** name is mentioned on most of the stones built into the wall of the chapel.

As we look down and across the way we can see Warren Carr and Hill Carr Farm. The road towards them narrow and twisting and with hedges either side so tall that it reminds you of the countryside Postman Pat drives through.

As we move further down the road another small side road on or left comes into site. We take a walk along it, unsure if this one isn't private. It isn't, but I wonder how many people have walked along this little road with its houses and stone sheds built it seems below road level so that they look like miniature buildings. You can touch the roof of the shed as you walk by. Patricia falls in love with the place and a golden weeping willow or whatever it is captivates her. The views right into the distance are magical. The sheep on Bee Hill are oblivious to where they live. Just happy to be out munching away.

Purple flowers, blue flowers drape the walls. Yellow shrubs beam like torches. Roads the width of a matchbox flanked by stone cottages. This is not a place to leave in a hurry.

William HOUSLEY was all of eighty when he was buried in 1860 at Youlgreave. **Hannah** the wife of **Anthony HOLMES** was buried at Darley Dale in 1742. In 1831 Sarah the daughter of **Job** and **Sarah STONE** also of Stanton Lees was baptised at Darley. Job his son was baptised three years later. Now it was our turn to make the journey from Stanton Lees the one and a half miles to Darley Bridge.

Stanton Lees stands around six hundred and fifty feet above sea level. The road towards Hill Carr Farm falls around two hundred feet. Hill Carr Farm is built on a corner, a group of old stone farm buildings with black slated tiles. Its roadside barn bearing the name of the farm in black letters on an old white board.

There is a reference to **George PIDCOCK** in the Darley Dale 1798 Land Tax as tenant of Hill Carr.

We walk along the road, whose hedges have recently had a short bark and swipe, they look as if they have been dragged through a head backwards. Beyond the hedges and tucked out of sight is Sabin Hay. This place is well hidden although we noticed it from the top of

Stanton Moor. Postman Pat would need more than Jess, he needs his black and white Sat. **Charles** and **Ann WILMOT** from Sabin Hay had a lad named after his dad baptised in 1830 at Darley Dale. Charles was a labourer and I would imagine the walk home from anywhere would be the last thing he would need after a gruelling days work, although he may have been a labourer on the farm. Sabin Hay seems that remote. The same year **Mary Ann** daughter of **Isaac** and **Catherine LONG** also from Sabin Hay was baptised at Darley. Nearly a century before **Joseph WATTS** of the same place had his daughter **Mary** and son **Thomas** baptised in the early 1740's.

On route to Darley we come to a group of fairly "modern" houses called Warren Carr. A quiet place on the bend in the road with a nice bed and breakfast place. You can also get Free Range eggs here. Those hens at Stanton Lees must have plenty of stamina to get up these hills.

Most of the houses are stone built and modernised although in the adjoining field rusting farming implements stand idle waiting for the return of the shire.

Almost out of sight down a road are more houses, making Warren Carr seem bigger than first imagined. A copse of birch and wild cherry serves as a boundary and a screen.

We are now at three hundred and thirty five feet and approaching what must be Cowley Hall with its two columned frontage. Cowley Hall was the home of **Clement SORBY** who in 1852 married **Eliza ALSOP** at Darley. Although a "Hall" it is dwarfed by the works of Enthovens. What would Clem have thought of his view today, although back then he probably had Mill Close to contend with.

The road widens here to enable large lorries deliver their loads of old car batteries and other lead products for smelting.

As we turn the corner we are confronted by the long straight run of Oldfield Lane and all the way to Darley Bridge. A few nearly white clouds scurry by and a tiny stream all of four foot wide flows under the road to emerge as a one foot wide trickle.

"Darley Bridge Post Office" in faded red paint is displayed on a tall narrow building. A for sale sign means that Pat the Post no longer calls in. Next door the Three Stags Head arrayed with flowers hanging from baskets all around the walls looks inviting. However it is shut.

Stanton Lees has no shops, not even a bus service, Darley Bridge however boasts two pubs and no shops. All in all it's been a good shopping day so far.

In 1857 John BENTLEY was innkeeper of the Three Stags, which was actually part of Wensley and Snitterton Township whereas The Square and Compass over the bridge lies in Darley Township. **Robert CLAYTON** served the ale here in 1857 and probably had since 1829 when a **Robert CLAYTON** appears as victualler here according to Glovers Directory.

Bridgetown has seen it's fair share of tragedy, it's narrow street and heavy lorries gives everyone cause for concern. However it is the river where tragedy struck all too often.

In 1742 **Ann KNOWLES** from Oaker Side was found in the river .

John LEES may have had a few to many in 1825 when he was drowned in the river having "just left the Publick House at Darley Bridge". He was 27.

Jacob FLINT also of Bridge Town was two years younger. He, when attempting to catch some wood in the river, fell in and met his death.

Walking over the bridge it is easy to topple into the river, but the river itself on the Matlock side gives the illusion of being placid, shallow and no doubt others have fallen victim to it's beguiling charm.

In May of 1814 the daughter of **William DUNN** of Bridgetown died as a result of drinking "oil of Vitriol" Frances was only two years old.

This small community of adjoined stone cottages sits either side of the busy road. Pretending to be a terraced row they look across to each other keeping a watchful eye on each other, while they themselves stand back from the road protected by a narrow pavement and a grey stone wall behind which are tiny gardens.



Back on the road to Wensley stands the delightful Potters Cottage, its tall chimney stack with two chimney pots placed at one end of the building, its blackened slates and small square windows and fancy doorway give it a character all of its own.

So we cross the bridge, with its "drop in and see me some time" parapets and walls. We pass the Square and Compass, a delightful pub and head for the bus to Matlock which we have to catch near the Whitworth Institute. Patricia has other goals in mind. For on this road opposite the Institute is a shop that sells the kind of sweets you could die for. Old fashioned sweets, in jars, not boxes, for a quarter of an ounce not kilos. Today is not her day, but I promise we will come again when it is open.

We get to the bus stop and have just three minutes to wait. Soon we are on our way to Matlock and come upon the roadworks that will once again reshape the community where we live, as a road bridge is to be built over the Derwent, This time we hope with walls big enough to stop you falling over the side and into the river below.