

History of Old Roads: Rawtenstall and District

By

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Introduction

Having talked with many old people about the old-time roads in Rawtenstall and district of 200 years ago, one sees a great change. There was not at that time the Bury and Burnley Road, nor the Haslingden and Bacup Road. Travelling in those days was through narrow roadways commonly called lanes or bridlepaths. The road from Rawtenstall to Manchester was up Lomas Lane through Balladen and over Horncliffe. The old highways and bridlepaths of those days we find broken through in places by new improved roads. The Bury and Burnley highway was built in 1801 and the Haslingden and Bacup road was built in 1826. Before those days the old highways and bridlepaths went along the river sides, or up over the hills, the reason, no doubt, being to keep the roads clear of water.

J.H.

Part 1

Beginning at Lomas Lane, crossing Bury Road where it as been very much raised, went down to the river Irwell and along the side of the river to Newhallhey Bridge, where the road has been raised considerably to build the present bridge. Also the Railway Tavern stands on ground where the old road went into Longholme continuing by the river, and passing Longholme mill to a point where the river Limy joins the river Irwell, which was crossed possibly by a wooden bridge. No doubt there would be many such bridges in the district at that time. This was the old Newhallhey Bridge, the repairs of which are mentioned in history. When the new bridge was built for the Bury and Burnley Road, it took the name of Newhallhey Bridge, and the old bridge was re-named Longholme Bridge, and there three roads met, one from Lomas Lane, one from Fallbarn, and one crossing the bridge and going along the side of the river Limy to the Wheat Sheaf in Rawtenstall Fold. Here a lane joins the main road formerly called Hurst Lane, now called Back Lane, which goes along the side of the Higher Mill to Three Lane Ends, the third lane coming from Deadwin Clough, later called Cloughfold, and Newchurch. Now this was before the present road from Haslingden to Newchurch was made by Blind Jack of Knaresborough about the year 1795. This was the second road made from Haslingden. Hence we have the name, Three Lane Ends.

There was no road then to Tup Bridge, nor any bridge there. Travellers would have to go to the Wheat Sheaf at that time. Just imagine, there was not a house at

Springside, Tup Bridge or Rawtenstall. Hurst Lane continued to Chapel Hill, Meadow Head, and was the old road to Lumb. Now continuing from the Wheat Sheaf to a little below Tup Bridge, the road crossed the river into King Street. It will be in the memory of some living that can tell of the old property at Tup Bridge being the homes of many people we knew. The property has been purchased by the Rawtenstall Corporation and is now a heap of rubbish. Now on the other side was a real old country inn called Bishop Blaize, after a man of that name who was martyred in the early days. He was adopted by the woolcombers as their Patron Saint. The woollen trade was in existence in the Forest 300 years before the cotton trade. The old Inn used to have a sign over the door with the picture of a Bishop painted on, and there were also emblems of the woollen industry on each side of the door. So this old inn would be one of the central places for business between Yorkshire and the Forest in those days. Further on was John King's house, now the Irish Club. Still further on in the space in front of Star works stood the old dungeon, and here were the stocks in the old days, which are spoken of in history. On the opposite side is the property of the late Henry Pilkington. The end of the last house nearest the Fire Station is rounded off down to the river. This is where the bridlepath crossed the river through Jumbles to Constablee. It was paved down to the water edge and there was a four-barred wooden gate on the other side which would be under some part of the Fire Station. This was when I was a boy. Now the main road went along the riverside past Holmefield and on where now stands the Roman Catholic Schools and Chapel and the bleachworks, and round by the river to Ashworth Arms. Here Burnley Road, by the erecting of the bridge, the road has been considerably raised, the old road going along the riverside until it meets the old lane from Haslingden via Collinge Fold. This was the first road from Haslingden into this district. The old highway continued by the river to a point where it meets Hollin Lane opposite the old Constablee Mill now used by a rag and bone dealer. There was once a bridge across the river here but put by subscription, a tablet of which is now in Whittaker Park bearing the inscription: "This bridge was built by the inhabitants of Constablee and in Wolfenden who contributed to the Constablee graveship." This tablet was found in a garden at Grange Higher Constablee by Alderman Compston. I remember the walls on each side of the river as though a bridge had once been there. There was no property between this old mill at Constablee and Tup Bridge as we see it today. The mill is older than the Bury and Burnley Road. Hollin Lane goes up the hill to Edge Gate and joins the old bridlepath from Crawshawbooth to Newchurch, that goes along the hillside passing Nook-o'-th'-Brow.

Now to continue from Constablee Bridge by the river side to Laund Mill, we find another interference. The mill has been rebuilt. The old mill left space between itself and the river for the old road which went along the river side where the lodge is, to a point opposite the present urinal in Burnley Road, and where there was a stone yard. There the road crossed the river on the other side. This information is from a friend, Mr Collinge, of Whittle Street. His father, the late John Collinge, of Lower Constablee Farm, told him where the old road went, and that it crossed the river here on to the other side, and then along by the river. On the same place we now see the new Burnley Road to Sunnyside. Then it went along the riverside through the printworks to Rakefoot, where it turned up

through the village of Crawshawbooth past the Black Dog. In the next building was the Old Spout House, which I well remember, and which at one time served a good part of the village with water. On the opposite side was the old Mansion House, where Doctor Kerr lived. There was some very old property where the Manchester and County Bank stands. I am informed that the old dungeon and stocks (spoken of in history, cost £25 to erect in the year 1700 and the cost of the surrender was 16s 6d, and was paid in 1705) were somewhere about this Bank, the road continuing on past Hudson's Mill and Pilling Well to the bottom of Goodshaw Lane, thence on to the Morrel (sic) Heights of Goodshaw Chapel.

Part II

Beginning at the old Newhallhey Bridge and now renamed Longholme Bridge, at the junction of the river Irwell and the river Limey, and joining the old highway from Bury to Burnley.

Following the side of the river Irwell from this bridge to Fall Barn Fold there is a road going through the Fold to a barn in Bacup Road, where it was joined by a footpath from Fall Barn Fields, and continuing from here in something like a straight line up behind St John's Church and Kenyon's Brewery, where just above it joins Dobbin Lane. This I am told by a friend of mine, whose grandfather could tell of the road. From Fall Barn the old highway went alongside the river Irwell, passing Alma Cottages to Clough Bridge, now called Cloughfold. Just above Alma Cottages the Gas Company, when they built their purifying house, turned this road from the river round their building and alongside the gable end of the Newchurch Company's mill to the river again, and along the riverside to Clough Bridge. My mother lived at Clough Bridge when she was a girl. The land on which the Newchurch Company's mill now stands and all their houses and right above their reservoir and right across to Hill End Lane, was her father's farm. She well remembered the old bridge before the one we now see. I have heard her tell which way the roads went and the fences, and where there were wells of water situate before there ever was a building on that side of the river. Here at the bridge four highways met. Hill End Lane was a highway over the hills to Rochdale. Dobbin Lane went to Higher Cloughfold and over the hill to Lumb. One from Fall Barn, crossing the bridge, went up by the side of the river where the railway is today to Hareholme woollen mill, which was built in 1798 and was the first mill lighted with gas in Rossendale. This mill belonged to William Dockery. There were many acres of land to this mill and the late Mr Frank Rawlinson of Myrtle Grove told me a good many years ago that the site where the Smallpox Hospital is at Ridge and belonging to the Rawtenstall Corporation, was intended for a residence for the owners of this mill and estate but that it was not built, possibly through death. Past the mill and across the river onto the Ridge on the other side near the track of the railway, along the Ridge to Holt Hill Bridge. Here also four roads met. One from Lench, one from Newchurch along Dark Lane, one from Hareholme and one from Waterfoot that went through the old mill yard. There would be no mills here at that time. The road went in something like a straight line, under where the railway is into Warth Lane. Just below Seville's bakehouse the late John Taylor lived at Meanwood when he was a boy long before these hoses were pulled down, and he gave me information about this

road, namely that Warth Lane from this bend direct into Bacup Road had been made for the convenience of railway development. Warth lane from this point to Waterfoot Bridge at the bottom of Cowpe Road does not seem to have been much interfered with. At Waterfoot Bridge three highways met, one from Cowpe that goes over the hill to Rochdale; one from Miller Barn Lane that was in the old days the highway to Bacup and Burnley; and one from Rawtenstall.

(Signed) John Hargreaves
May 1928.