

FIELDEN TRAIL
Revisited

Jim Jarratt.

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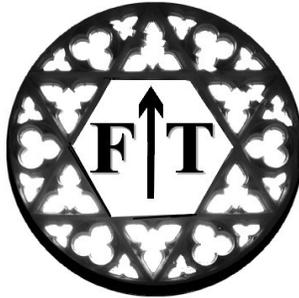
**A ramble through
Todmorden's past**

JIM JARRATT



FIELDEN TRAIL

Revisited



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A Ramble through Todmorden's Past

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First Edition

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JOHN FIELDEN M.P.

THIS STATUE

WAS RAISED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION

IN GRATITUDE TO HIM

WHOSE PERSEVERING EFFORTS

SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING

THE TEN HOURS ACT

ROYAL ASSENT IN JUNE 1847

**This Book is Dedicated to Mick and Cathie
and all the dedicated countryside volunteers at
CROWS,
(Community Rights-of-Way Service)
who have worked to recreate the Fielden Trail.**

**Without their enthusiasm for this project
I would never have considered taking it up again.**

Also to

**Richard Newman
for his informed, amiable fellowship and unfailingly
good humour sharing a potentially arduous enterprise
not normally undertaken by elderly men from the
encroaching shadows of the retirement home!**

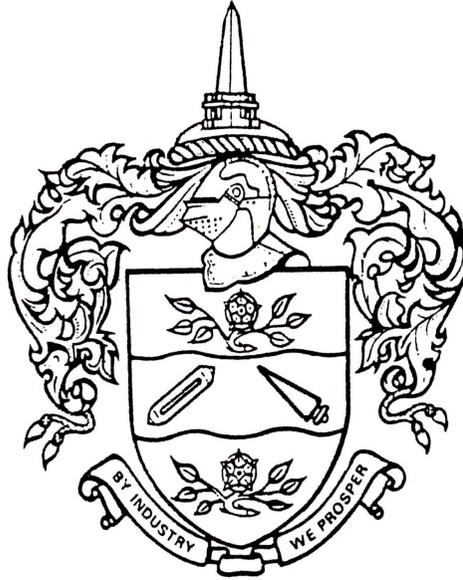
**“Ponder my friend, how Liberty,
is dearly won, yet easy lost...”**

Bob Pegg.

'Advice to a Young Lark Man'.

TODMORDEN

Amenities and Stuff!



Market Days. – Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Todmorden has a fine open air market and a traditional (recently restored) Market Hall. It is the best open air market in Calderdale, (probably because it is patronised from over in Lancashire!).

Early Closing Day. – Tuesday.

Todmorden Information Centre. 15, Burnley Road Todmorden OL14 7BU. Open Monday to Saturday 10am-3-pm. Tel 01706818181 or visit info@todmorden.co.uk

Railway Station.

There are regular train services to and from Manchester Victoria, Leeds, Chester and Blackburn. For timetable info. contact National Rail Enquiries.

Bus Station. - Regular bus services from Halifax and Rochdale run approximately every 30 minutes. Buses to and from Burnley run roughly every hour. Please see timetable information for routes 589, 590 and 592 . Another option is the number 7 operated by Rosso that travels to Rawtenstall via Bacup. Of particular value to *Fielden Trail* walkers is the two hourly **T8 Mankinholes & Walsden Circular Bus** run by TLC Travel.

Pennine Way. Youth Hostel Mankinholes. This was sold by the YHA to a private owner last year (2024) and is currently closed . Whether or no it will continue as walker/cyclist accomodation is currently unclear.

Supermarkets.

Morrisons. Waterside, Rochdale Road, Todmorden. Extensive parking. Decent cafe (you can eat al fresco in warm weather too!). Originally built (as Safeways), on the site of Fieldens main mill complex.

Aldi. Burnley Road, Todmorden. Built on site of Abraham Ormerod Medical Centre, (infamously known due to its association with Harold Shipman). Good parking, car charging points. Dodgy exit however, from the car park on to the busy Burnley Road – the bend and viaduct make it a blind exit.

B & M Bargains. Halifax Road, Todmorden. In premises of former Lidl store (new store further along road past the hospital). Sells most of everything. Good value.

Lidl. Halifax Road Todmorden. New and larger than your average Lidl. Large car park. Car charging point.

TOFS. – The Original Factory Shop. Halifax Road Todmorden. Across main Road from Lidl. Good selection of clothing, shoes and household things.

Parking.

.... is still plentiful in Todmorden, but less welcoming. In 1984 it was all free, but if you are wishing to say, *go for a hike*, these days, you will be hard put to find anywhere that isn't either pay and display or, as in the case of the supermarkets, short duration parking. Car parking is unrestrictedly free by the Swimming Pool at the far side of Centre

Vale Park, but that's over half a mile down the Burnley Road! I usually park on the back streets near my sons house. You need to get into the industrial parts of the town! Halifax based Calderdale Council, which Todmordians view with an ethnically traditional antipathy, have further regulation plans in store at present to fleece hapless motorists and interfere with local trade. Locals currently have been displaying protest placards! To people on the eastern side of town, the *council* is seen as a servant of Halifax interests, on the western (Lancashire) side of town, they are simply the enemy! Interesting times await!

Swimming Pool & Sports Centre. Ewood Road. Far end of lovely Centre Vale Park. (Of which more later!) Excellent pool and sports centre. (Better than anything they currently have in Halifax!) You will encounter it at the end of the *Fielden Trail!*

Library. – Todmorden Library. The Strand; Rochdale Road Todmorden, OL14 7LB. Phone: 01706815600. Good traditional library (not many of them left in Calderdale these days!) The old local council offices attached to it once housed the local Youth Centre, before being closed and the building sold off for private use.

The Hippodrome Theatre. – Built in 1908 as a traditional vaudeville theatre, 'Tod Hip' is Britains largest community owned theatre. Stan Laurel played here and the TAODS and related groups have been staging shows here for over 70 years! It also shows films from time to time. In an age when theatres end up as nite clubs or warehouses if they're not demolished, this place is a treasure! Recently there has been some demolition at one end of it, but it is part of an extension and refurbishment program aimed at making the 'Hip' an even better performance venue. Exciting times lie ahead!

Incredible Edible! Todmorden some years ago now, came up with the very bright idea of planting its shrub beds, flowerbeds and public horticultural spaces with edible plants, thus providing free food! This (as I know) was revolutionary, quite out of line with the traditional authoritarian wisdom of planting spiky plants designed to attract litter & keep people out! Since then many other places have taken up the idea.

Eating and Drinking. Good Fish and Chip Shops (best one is the the well hidden but locally famous Tudor Chippy! The local Asian Todmordians ensure a copious supply of Curries, and Pizzas etc.

Restaurants – or take away, it's all here! My favourite 'eating out' venue is the 'Top Brink' at Lumbutts, which you will *also* encounter on the *Fielden Trail*.

Tourist gift shops, trendy eateries, expensive chic hostelries, alternative lifestyles. If that's what you want, **Hebden Bridge is the place for you!**

Stuff!

Todmorden works for its living. Cotton has long gone, but not Todmordens industry. Its back streets, in some places a bit seedy. exhibit all kinds of trade, and local enterprise. It has a great sense of local community. It is a town proud of its roots and its heritage, and it is a good place to visit and to live. **Famous people.** Cockroft the physicist was born here, (by the Halifax Road near Der Street), also Keith Emerson - the whizz keyboard prog rocker was a Todmorden Lad and last, but by no means least there was Billy Holt of Kilnhurst.....mill worker, soldier, mobile librarian, communist, writer, speaker, raconteur, broadcaster artist, and international traveller, who famously rescued a horse (Trigger), from a Todmorden rag and bone cart. Billy lived with it, slept with it, and rode it all the way down Europe to Rome and back, sleeping under the stars. The real life 'Wizard of Whirlaw'!

'Toddywood' manifested itself here long ago, with TV police drama '*Juliet Bravo*', and more recently '*Happy Valley*'. In the early 70s I was an extra in a BBC childrens yarn called *Joey and the Sheep Rustlers*, which was filmed in Mankinholes! The film is now on You Tube, but the bit at the beginning I was involved in, is (typically) lost!

Tod also has a reputation for being a UFO 'hotspot.' A policeman was allegedly abducted by one and there have been verified 'sightings'! The best 'local' pubs (also allegedly) are the *Wellington* and the *Duke of Ork*. (No, its not a typo, the 'Y' fell off and the name has stuck!) The town also has a South Asian diaspora which is by now third generation and 'Todmordian' to the core! It's a grand little town, has everything it needs, and is generally happy with itself. Its founders would be proud!

(NEWSFLASH! As of Sept 2025, It's just changed its name to the *Duke of OK!*).

Preface

My work on the original version of *The Fielden Trail* began in 1984, forty years ago! It was originally suggested as a follow up for my first ever walkers guide, *Burnley to Bingley*, which was then in the course of being published by Pennine Heritage Network in Hebden Bridge. Unhappily, both enterprises collapsed into ruin when SCOSPA (Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities) pulled the plug on Pennine Heritages' project funding! Optimism was high, and it was a huge personal blow. (*Burnley to Bingley* never surfaced again until 2024!) As for the *Fielden Trail*, it was luckier, being taken up by Smith Settle of Otley, who finally published it in 1988. It was well received. The *Yorkshire Post* commented that

“*Brilliantly descriptive narrative makes this book a little gem*”.

Correspondences followed, lectures, slideshows, the high point of this Fielden interest being the gathering of the Fielden Society to welcome Mr. Marvel L Fielden, who had come all the way from Glen Allen, Virginia, to meet distant relatives and have me autograph his beautifully leather bound version of my humble paperback. It was a high moment in my life!

Yet time turns, and things move on. In the 90s came two Cicerone Walkers Guides to Yorkshire and Lancashire follies, lectures, magazine articles and even a Dales Diary TV appearance by the 'folly man'. I wrote a third 'Peakland' volume, and *The Beacons Way- A Discoverie of Witchcraft*, but these never made publication. At this time, feeling that there was getting to be more walkers guides than footpaths, I stopped writing them and moved on to different more reliable things like composing and performing songs.

By the Millenium, *The Fielden Trail* was long out of print and little more than a fond memory. Publishing was of little interest to me (if you discount music CDs!), But all that changed in 2018, with *Brigantian Whispers*, a book of supernatural short stories all set in Northern England. It was published on *Feedaread.com*, written and designed entirely off my own bat! The realisation that (thanks to technology) I could write, publish and market my own books entirely, at no personal cost, empowered me, and has led to numerous writing projects since that time. Among these was the *Beacons Way*, *Peakland Follies*, and last year, a fully revised and researched upgrade of *Burnley to Bingley*, achieved with help of Google Earth, detailed maps and route section visits.

But not the *Fielden Trail*. There seemed little point in resurrecting a book published so long ago, with the book now rare and the route forgotten. I was 35 years old when I surveyed it – now I am 75 years old.

But all this suddenly changed! In January (2025) I was contacted by Mick and Cathie Chatham of CROWS (Community Rights of Way Services) and *Fielden Trail* was on their agenda. CROWS is the local volunteer footpath conservation group that now does the work the Calderdale Countryside Service did before it was disbanded by the council. We had a meeting

together in the *Dusty Miller* in Mytholmroyd, where they explained they had received some funding, and planned to publish a guide leaflet to the *Fielden Trail*, resurvey and restore parts of it, and seed it with waymarks and information boards! Would I give them access to resources material? Seriously?? I thought it marvellous! I supported their project and further suggested that with my current resources I could perhaps make a revised new version of the original highly detailed book available, to support their leaflet. All this giving a new impetus to Todmordens old established history trail.

Recreating it has not been easy. A lot of things change in forty years. Many industrial buildings for example, which were still around in the 1980s, have since been demolished, to be replaced by supermarkets, and a new hospital. Uses of buildings have changed also, parking is no longer free, the town has lost its banks, and some of its hostelryes, yet despite all these things, Todmorden today is much the same place as it was then, probably better in some ways. It is a good place to shop, has a good swimming pool, a lovely and beautifully sited park, a library, the best traditional market in Calderdale, dramatic upland landscapes all around it and also a well established multi ethnic local population which proudly and resolutely sees itself as *Todmordian!*

Todmorden has great touristic potential, but (mercifully!) it's never going to be like twee Hebden Bridge or Haworth. It is a border town. Ignorant bureaucrats may have moved it entirely into Yorkshire (it once was Todmorden – *Lancs*). Its post codes are still OL rather than HX, and everyone who lives there knows that the actual *ethnic* county boundary runs underneath the Town Hall!

When I first visited Todmorden in 1983, I was a Bradford 'offcumden' who had only recently moved into upper Calderdale. We had settled in Mytholmroyd, but today my son and his extended family live and work in Todmorden, and we visit on a weekly basis, to shop and visit family. My daughters had their first jobs in the Safeways supermarket, and all our children and grandchildren have enjoyed the delights of Centre Vale Park.

Reworking the *Fielden Trail* in 2025, has been, (to put it mildly) both an intellectual adventure and a physical trial! On the 5 of April I set out on **Section One** to check out my first revised maps, thereafter following up with other such outings in May, June, July and August, **Sections Three** and **Four** being undertaken with an old friend from my Bradford 'Countryside Warden' days. Work on the maps was completed by the middle of August, all activity then moving onto the book Ms., which is essentially a revision and update of the original text, with, new more detailed maps, lots of new illustrations and considerable historical material not available 40 years ago.

This book represents my final tribute to the great little town of Todmorden. It has been a labour of love.

Jim Jarratt 2025

Contents

Todmorden Information. 9

Preface. 13

List of Illustrations. 17

Introduction . 19

About the Fielden Trail. 21

Section 1: Todmorden to Cornholme.

via West Whirlaw, Orchan Rocks & Hartley Royd.
25

Section 2: Cornholme to Dawson Weir.

via Wet Shaw, Todmorden Edge, Edge End and
Dobroyd Castle. 57

Section 3: Dawson Weir to Rake End.

via Gauxholme, Inchfield, Walsden and Bottomley.
93

Section 4: Rake End to Centre Vale.

via Stoodley Pike, Mankinholes and Lumbutts 135

Postscript. 206

Bibliography. 209

Index. 213

List of Illustrations

- 1. 'Honest John' Fielden, (Frontispiece), 5**
- 2. Todmorden Town Hall, 35**
- 3. 'Donkey Stones', 37**
- 4. Stansfield Hall (1984), 39**
- 5. Hole Bottom Mill, 41**
- 6. Ratcher East, 42**
- 7. 'On the Tops at Last!' 44**
- 8. Orchan Rocks, 47**
- 9. Hudson Bridge, 48**
- 10. Hartley Royd (1984), 49**
- 11. Hartley Royd 2025, 51**
- 12. Cornholme, 52.**
- 13. Mercerfield (1984), 53**
- 14. New Ley (1984), 53**
- 15. Bobbins, 56**
- 15. Fieldhurst Road, End of Section 1, 66**
- 17. Start of Section 2,66**
- 18. Roundfield , 68**
- 19. New Towneley, 69**
- 20. Robinwood Mill, 1985, 71**
- 21. Robinwood Mill, 2025 ,71**
- 22. Mons Mill (1984), 75**
- 23. Todmorden Edge, 76**
- 24. Edge End Farm, (1984), 78**
- 25. Ping Hold -stone head, 80**
- 26. Ping Hold -stone head, 81**
- 27. Dobroyd Home Farm, 82**
- 28. Stones (1984), 83**
- 29. Dobroyd Castle (1984) , 84**
- 30. Dobroyd Lodge, 86**
- 31. Dawson Weir, (1984) , 88**
- 32. The Flailcroft Gang! 92**
- 33. Hattersley Cotton Loom, 106**
- 34. Waterside Factory School, 107**
- 35. Laneside, 108**
- 36. Waterside House (1984), 110**
- 37. Gauxholme Skew Bridge, 115**
- 38. Pasture Side, 118**
- 39. Still Standing! (1984-2025), 119**
- 40. Nicklety, 119**

41. Inchfield, 120
42. Pickers, 121
43. Inchfield Fold, 122
44. Walsden. Travis Mill Lock, 123
45. Lightbank Lock, no31. ,124
46. Bottomley & Salter Rake Gate (1984), 129
47. Dean Royd Farm, 131
48. Hollingworth, 132
49. Rake End, 133
50. Link Path to Todmorden from Rake End, 134
51. Basin Stone, 150
52. Gaddings Dam (1985) , 153.
53. Gaddings Beach (1985), with Son Richard, 154
54. Cyril Webster Seat, (Pennine Way), 156
55. Long Stoop , Withens Gate, 157
56. Te Deum Stone, Withens Gate, 158
57. Stoodley Pike Monument (1985), with Son Richard, 160
58. Stoodley Pike – The stygian portal, 162
59. Fielden Hospital (1984), 165
60. Stansfield View Hospital (1984), 166
61. Packhorse Trough, Mankinholes , 167
62. Mankinholes, 170
63. The Top Brink Inn, 174
64. Lumbutts Mill, 175
65. Tod. Unitarian Church & Graves of Saml. & Joshua Fielden., 181
66. Grave of 'Honest John' Fielden, 182
67. Todmorden Sunday School (1984), 186
68. Golden Lion Inn, Fielden Square, 187
69. Fielden Square (1984), 189
70. Todmorden Hall (1984), 190
71. Todmorden Hall, 'Takkin' in shop' (1984), 191
72. Todmorden Masonic Hall, 193
73. Ridge Steps. 194
74. Christ Church, 195
75. Christ Church Vicarage, 196
76. Lovers Walk, 197
77. Centre Vale School, 198
78. 'Wisdom Window', Centre Vale School, 200
79. Centre Vale, 201
80. The Fielden Trail 'Revisited! August 2025 , 208
81. Jim Jarratt. (pic. Richard Newman), 226
82. 'A Gathering of Fieldens', 227

Introduction

In the autumn of 1983, I had never even heard of the Fieldens of Todmorden. Perhaps the name may once have rung faintly at the back of my mind in connection with the 'O' Level History classes of far off schooldays; but if it ever did, it had certainly been consigned to oblivion long ago. Even if I had, in the course of my casual reading ever encountered the name, I would never have thought of it as the potential subject for a book.

On 19th January 1984, I was chatting with one of my neighbours in Mytholmroyd, Kevin Hoyle. He knew of my interest in local history and told me that he had temporarily acquired some old papers from an acquaintance, papers that I might perhaps find interesting? The material, he informed me, related to the Fielden Family of Todmorden, who were local manufacturers. I was interested, though more casually than seriously, and told him that I would certainly like to have a look at the stuff, even though the Fieldens and their world were quite unknown to me.

That evening he presented me with a rather battered looking manilla envelope crammed full of old papers. Some were older than others, the most venerable of them being a parchment dating from the reign of James I, an indenture referring to a marriage settlement involving one Ralph Elmston, yeoman of Kent. Here was treasure indeed! This parchment, however, proved to be the odd one out, for, with the sole exception of an 18th century copy of '*The Spectator*', all the other documents were connected with the radical political movements of the early 19th century, The 'Ten Hours' Movement and the Fieldens. For the most part, the papers were political pamphlets produced by the Lancashire Central Short Time Committee, usually referring to the efforts of John Fielden M.P. in attempting to obtain a 'Ten Hours Bill'. There was a copy of Cobbett's Political Register, and various tracts on various subjects published by John Fielden's sons. But most interesting of all were the letters, which (with the sole exception of one written by Samuel Fielden whilst in Liverpool), were all written by John Fielden's second daughter, Mary, mainly to her brother John, who was at boarding school in Liverpool at the time (1836).

Not long after receiving these papers I mentioned them to my sister-in-law Esther, who had recently completed an 'O' Level History course at Bradford College. I was surprised to find that she had not only heard of the Fieldens, but wished dearly that she could have had access to material such as this when she was on the course! 'Did I not know,' she informed me, 'that John Fielden was an M.P. and a famous radical reformer, a champion of the workers who fought to improve working conditions in factories and mines?' John Fielden was, I was soon to discover, far more than just a mere

manufacturer. I was indeed surprised to find out that the tatty looking envelope contained material of immense historical interest.

I quickly realised that all this material belonged in a public record office, and not in a battered envelope in someone's bottom drawer. Here was an untapped source of local history of potential historical value. I later discovered that not even the local libraries could provide all of the pamphlets that were in this little hoard. And as for the letters - they were irreplaceable!

After a month or so of photocopying and recording information contained in the papers, I decided that it was about time I returned them to their rightful owner. I gave them to Kevin, who duly returned them. Shortly afterwards, Kevin, who worked at an old folks home in Rochdale, left his job; and when, sometime later, in the throes of writing *The Fielden Trail*, I asked him for the name of his mysterious 'acquaintance' who lent him the papers, I was stunned to find that he could not remember!

I can but hope that the papers (wherever they are) will eventually resurface and find their way into local archives, where they can be well looked after and further studied by anyone wishing to further explore the history of the Fieldens of Todmorden. The Librarian at Todmorden would particularly like to see the papers, and I can only hope that if this book catches the attention of their owner, he will see fit to come forward and take steps to protect these interesting documents from further deterioration.

So it was that Mary Fielden's letters left my life as mysteriously as they had entered it. But she had done her work: in me she had kindled an interest in finding out about her and the great and influential family of which she was a part. With old maps and a notebook, I laced up my boots and set off in search of the Fieldens of Todmorden. The result of that quest is this book. **Jim Jarratt Mytholmroyd 1984.**



About the Fielden Trail

Sometime in the middle of the 16th century one William Fielden, yeoman farmer, married and set up house at Inchfield, a remote farmstead in the Walsden Valley, deep in the Pennines. From such humble beginnings sprang a family who were to play a major role in the social and economic development of the Upper Calder Valley; whilst one of their number, 'Honest John' Fielden, was destined to make his name in parliament as a champion of the labouring classes, thus entering the name of Fielden into the annals of the nation's history.

In this book you will walk through town and countryside, through urban bustle and through wild and lonely places where the wind howls through shattered walls and tumbled stones. You will discover the Fieldens: who they were, where they lived and how they lived. You will also see how Todmorden grew from a small hamlet to an industrial mill town; you will see the coming of the mills, the canals, the railways, riots and revelations, rough-hewn hillfolk seeking salvation — and the right to vote. You will see how the Fieldens and the story of Todmorden are inseparable — nothing of any note ever happened in Todmorden without there being a Fielden around to witness it. In finding the Fieldens you will also discover the history of Todmorden.

Like Phyllis Bentley's *Inheritance*, *The Fielden Trail* traces the rise of a family of 'mill magnates', but with a difference - the people and places presented in this book are real! Todmorden and its surrounding districts was (and still is) 'home' to the Fieldens, who, unlike most textile barons, preferred to live near their workers and built their great houses nearby, rather than moving away to more genteel parts. Because of this, we are given the rare opportunity of being able to trace back their story through generation after generation without moving from the Todmorden area. In a day's ramble we can stroll through time and space, saunter through the centuries and visualise the whole panoply of Upper Calderdale's history through the eyes of one family — the Fieldens — who, even if they did not entirely bring about the development of Todmorden into a modern community certainly bore witness to all of it.

The Fielden Trail is a thematic history trail. It is not, however, a journey that involves an afternoon's gentle stroll around the 'sights' of Todmorden. On the contrary, it is a tough hike of some 19 miles or more involving a lot of repeated ascent and as much descent. **Section 1** to Cornholme and **Sections 2** and **3** to Dawson Weir and Rake End follow the upland shelf for much of the way, but **Section 4** takes to the high moors, following a route which involves some rough going along the high moorland ridge between Gaddings and Stoodley Pike, not a journey to be undertaken badly-equipped in inclement weather (which is the norm rather than the exception at Stoodley Pike!). I have divided

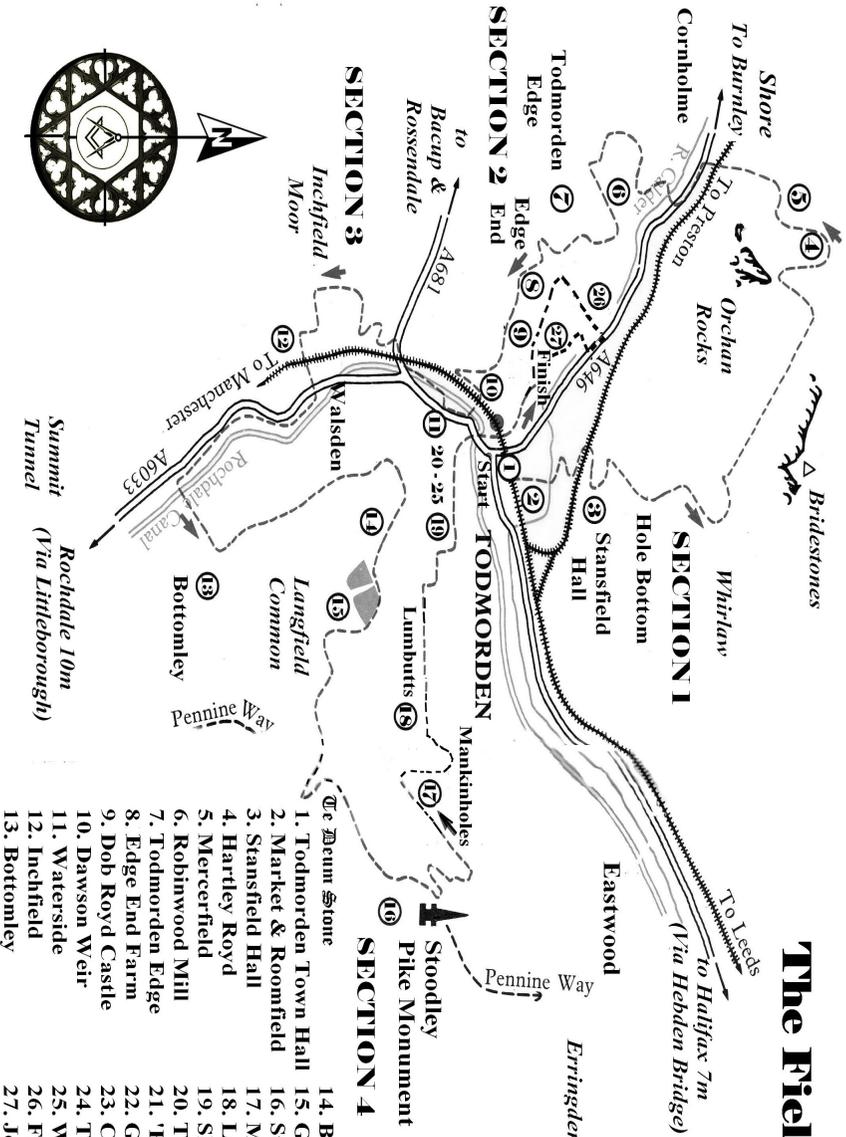
the walk into sections intentionally, the end of each section providing an easy escape route back to the centre of Todmorden. Thus it is possible to walk the *Fielden Trail* in sections as a leisurely ramble, or in its entirety as a tough challenge walk. In the early days of planning the *Fielden Trail*, I had great doubts about the possibility of such a route. It seemed that merely connecting locations with Fielden associations would not give me a walk that made any geographical (or historical) sense; but yet, as I researched my subject more deeply, I found that pieces of a puzzle have a habit of falling into place exactly where you want them to fall.

The geography of the *Fielden Trail* is fascinating. Unlike many walks, you finish up almost where you started, so this can be a walk for motorists. Todmorden lies at the confluence of two rivers and three valleys: the *Fielden Trail* follows the edges of all three valleys, creating a walk that constantly winds back upon itself, as if one were walking around 'The Legs of Man'. By the time you have walked the *Fielden Trail*, you will know the topography of the Todmorden area quite intimately, having viewed Todmorden from virtually every point of the compass. Even if you aren't the slightest bit interested in the Fieldens and find history boring (like my wife!) you'll find it's still worth doing just for the walk. Study or challenge, history or hike, you will find the *Fielden Trail* physically and mentally stimulating, walking through hill and dale, town and countryside, past and present.

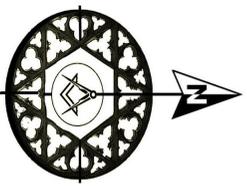
The full *Fielden Trail* is an arduous walk of almost 20 miles. Those undertaking it as a 'challenge walk' are strongly advised to prepare well. Stout boots, food and waterproofs are necessary, particularly on the upland sections. Follow the Country Code. Do not leave litter, climb walls or disturb livestock. Leave gates as you find them, beware of fires and keep dogs under control. The maps in this book should be used in conjunction with a suitable Ordnance Survey map, e.g. the *South Pennines 1:25000*.



The Fielden Trail



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Todmorden Town Hall 2. Market & Roomfield 3. Stansfield Hall 4. Hartley Royd 5. Mercerfield 6. Robinwood Mill 7. Todmorden Edge 8. Edge End Farm 9. Dob Royd Castle 10. Dawson Weir 11. Waterside 12. Inchfield 13. Bottomley | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Basin Stone 15. Gaddings Reservoir 16. Stoodley Pike Monument 17. Mankinholes 18. Lambbutts 19. Shoebroad Burial Ground 20. Tod. Unitarian Church. 21. 'Honest John' Fieldens Grave 22. Golden Lion 23. Conservative Club 24. Todmorden Hall 25. White Harre & Masons Hall 26. Fielden School 27. John Fieldens Statue |
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THE FIELDEN TRAIL

MAP INFORMATION



Site of 'Fielden' Interest
(With Trail Number)

20th July 2025

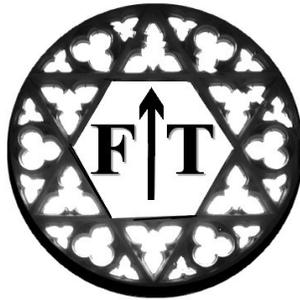


Mileage from Start
(With direction of travel)

	wall		Fielden Trail		gate with stile		gate stoops (or monoliths!)
	wall (broken)		footpath (other)		buildings		buildings (ruins)
	road (metalled)		packhorse way		canal with locks & towpath		woodland (mixed)
	walled lane (metalled)		Railway Line		cairn		post
	walled lane (unmetalled)		cutting		viaduct		moorland (boggy if clustered)
	open track, farm road,		tunnel		P.O. post office		wind turbine (farm)
	fence		river, watercourse		contours (rough)		St. stile
	St. stile		footbridge		comms. mast		antiquity
	Kg. kissing gate		spr. spring		antiquity		

While every effort has been made to make these maps as detailed and up-to-date as possible, it must be pointed out that they are based on original sketch designs made 40 years ago! They have all been revised and tested in the field to create a detailed and fairly accurate picture of the Fielden Trail as it exists today (2025). Nonetheless, it is recommended that you carry the appropriate O.S. Map, (Ordnance Survey 'South Pennines' 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure Map is ideal), which will not only provide more data about distances and contours, but will also prove to be invaluable in the upland areas, in the event of mist and (frequently!) inclement weather requiring you to take compass bearings.

SECTION I.

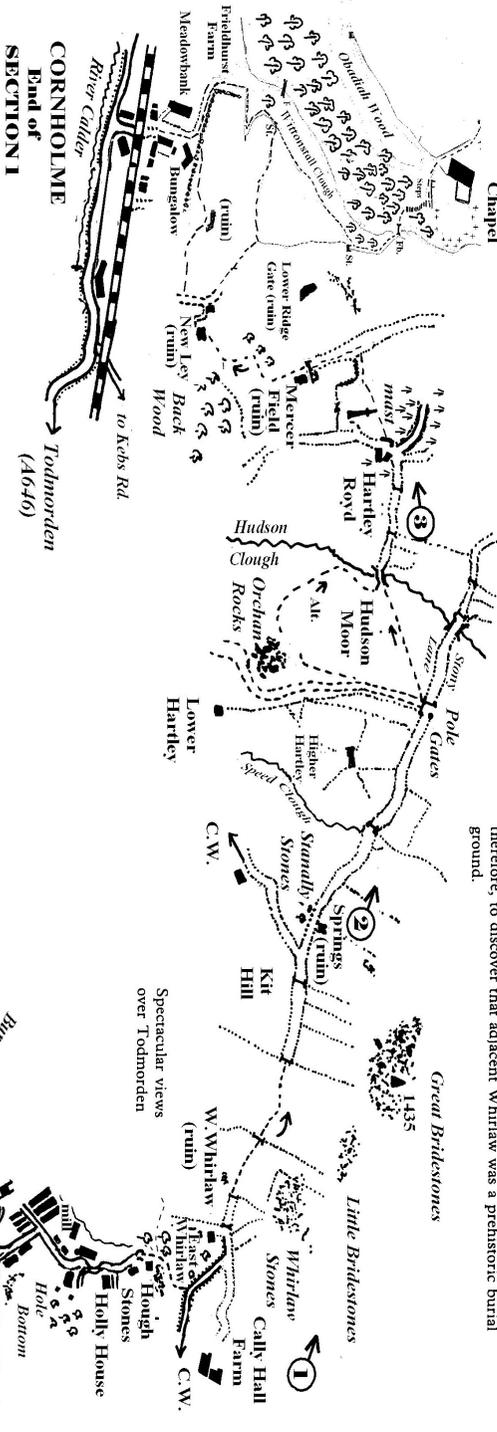


Todmorden to Cornholme

SECTION I Todmorden to Cornholme

SHORE

Shore Baptist Chapel



Whitlaw Stones

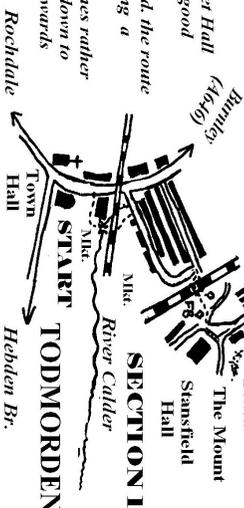
If ever there was a pagan site of worship this is it. Ancient peoples would have held this place in awe. It is no surprise therefore, to discover that adjacent Whitlaw was a prehistoric burial ground.

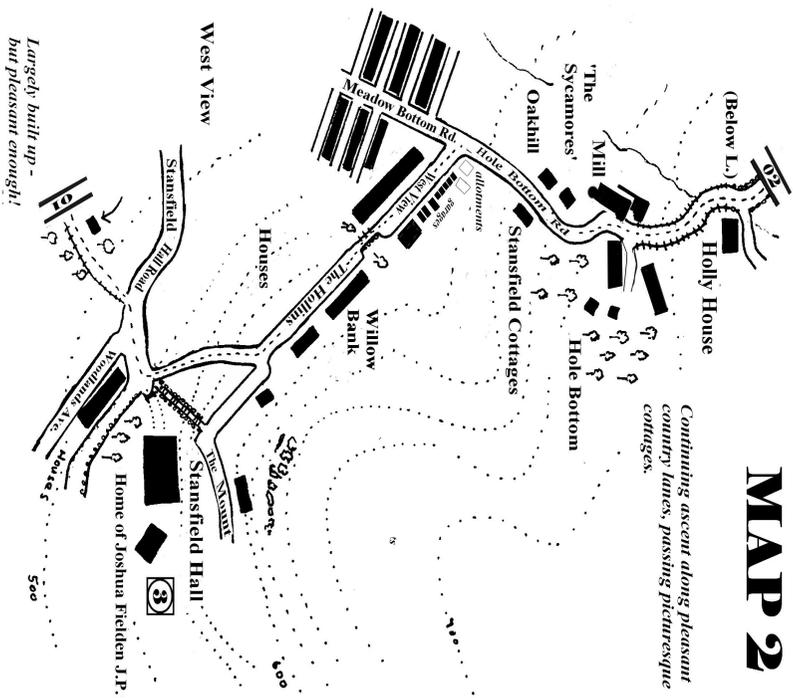
CORNHOLME
End of SECTION I
(A1046)

The official start of the Fielden Trail is at the Town Hall, but the route soon leads down the side of the Market Hall to a relatively new grassy area with flower boxes and seats, leading to a footbridge over the Calder. This is a good place to sit down for a moment as you get up your loins for the task ahead!

After a seemingly unimpressive start through Todmorden's industrialised hinterland along Stansfield Rd, the route soon becomes a steep but not-too-difficult ascent from the valley floor, via Stansfield Hall, eventually becoming a pleasant upland promenade along an upland shelf of old packhorse 'causesys' and gentle walled lanes.

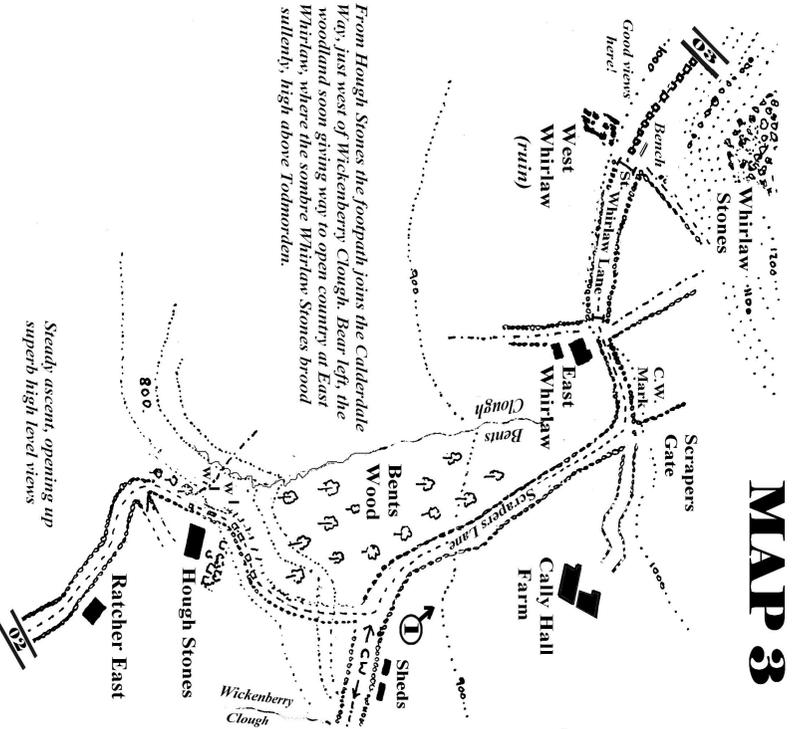
Here almost all of the Fielden Trail now comes into view! Beyond Hartley Royd, the route 'back down' becomes rather indistinct, but careful navigation (helped by new sites and route marking courtesy of CROWS), will get you down to the A646 At Cornholme. Here you will be able to get a bus to Todmorden, Burnley or Halifax or continue onwards to begin SECTION 2.





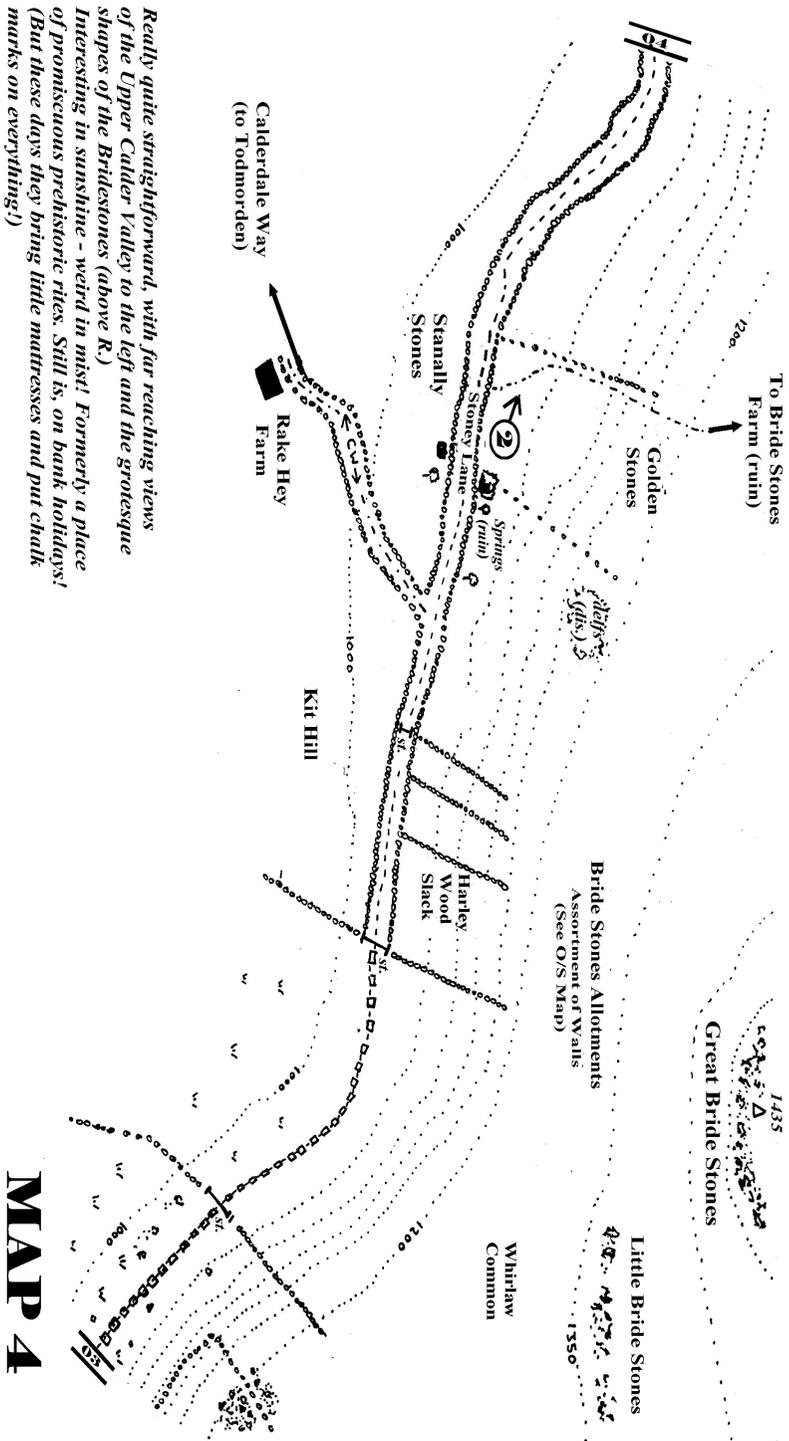
MAP 2

Largely built up - but pleasant enough!



MAP 3

Steady ascent, opening up superb high level views

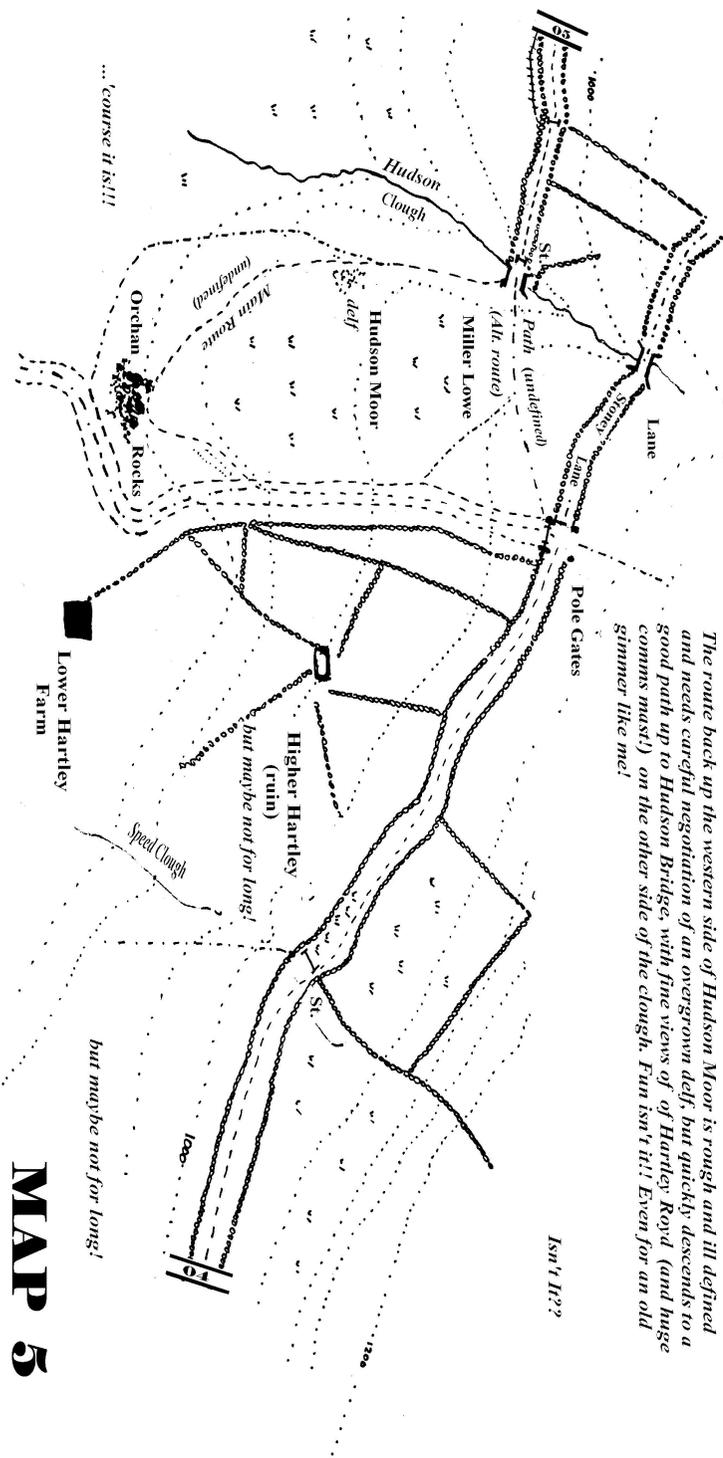


Really quite straightforward, with far reaching views of the Upper Calder Valley to the left and the grotesque shapes of the Bridesstones (above R.) Interesting in sunshine - weird in mist! Formerly a place of promiscuous prehistoric rites. Still is, on bank holidays! (But these days they bring little mattresses and put chalk marks on everything!)

MAP 4

From Pole Gates the path leads straight on towards Hartley Royd, via Hudson Bridge, but the pagan instinct will draw most walkers off-route to visit the Orchan Rocks dominating the gorge below. It isn't too much of a diversion and if you come on the right day you might see a druidic sacrifice! A route swings around the base of the rocks, but the Fielden Trail runs round the back of them, so you can climb and enjoy the view!

The route back up the western side of Hudson Moor is rough and ill defined and needs careful negotiation of an overgrown delf, but quickly descends to a good path up to Hudson Bridge, with fine views of Hartley Royd (and huge conns must!) on the other side of the clough. Fun isn't it! Even for an old gimmer like me!

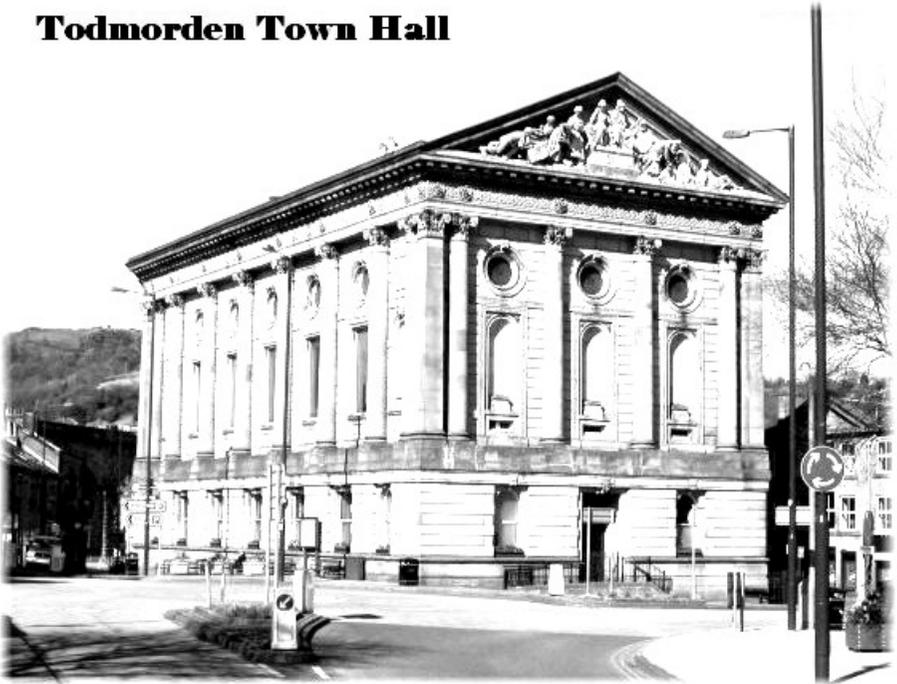


MAP 5

SECTION I.

Cornholme via West Whirlaw, Orchan Rocks and Hartley Royd.

Todmorden Town Hall



The *Fielden Trail* starts at Todmorden Town Hall and finishes by the statue of John Fielden in Centre Vale Park, a mere ten minutes walk away. Between these two points however, you have got around 20 miles of hike to tackle, some of it over rough terrain. So gird up your loins and let's get going, to the start of Section 1 of the *Fielden Trail* at:-

I. Todmorden Town Hall & St. Mary's Church.

Having got off the bus, or train (parking your car free for the whole day is no longer the option it was in 1984!) pause a moment, to admire the magnificent yet petite edifice of **Todmorden Town Hall**, which at the junction of three arterial roads stands by the busy mini roundabout that marks the epicentre of Todmorden. It contains perhaps the only ballroom where you can whirl your partner from Yorkshire into Lancashire! Designed in 1870 by John Gibson, it is in the classical style with a semicircular northern end, and is also endowed with fine statuary expressing the history of Todmorden on its southern-facing pediment. It cost around £54,000, and was built at the expense of Samuel, John and Joshua Fielden; it was opened by Lord John

Manners on 3rd April 1875, along with the unveiling of their father 'Honest John's' statue, which stood on the western side of the Town Hall before setting off on its travels. As indicated, Prior to 1888, the county boundary ran through the middle of the Town Hall, and this is indicated on the pediment. Walsden Water (which marked the line of the boundary) also flows beneath the Town Hall on its way to the nearby River Calder).

St. Mary's Church, opposite the Town Hall, was (despite its more recent looking appearance), founded between 1400 and 1476. Historically speaking, it pips the Town Hall as the being the true centre of Todmorden. Then, it had the junction of three lovely valleys almost entirely to itself, the only other building being nearby Todmorden Hall, to which it was connected by a small private footpath. Joshua Holden, writing in his *History of Todmorden*, said it all...

“no lovelier position could have been chosen. The chapel stands like a sentinel.... facing the rising sun on a grassy knoll which lifted it above the floods..... the Calder... a grove of trees... and on the lower slope across the valley – Stansfield Hall with the corn mill nearer to the stream.....”

If you can spare the time at this stage, give it a visit. The East Window commemorates Mr. John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle, whose widow presented oak screens in 1904.

Firmly embedded in the ground the Town Hall may be — not so 'Honest John' Fielden, with whom we have a very distant appointment in Centre Vale Park. So lace up your boots, check your watch and we'll be off!

2. Market and Market Hall and Roomfield School Site

Now turn right to the market place and the Market Hall. Its cornerstone was laid in 1879 by Mr John Fielden (Jnr), who also opened it the same year.

If it's a market day you will see some of the hurly burly and bustle of this independent little border town, which, as you will soon discover, has a charm and character all of its own which is not always immediately apparent. It was believed that when Aldi was built just across the road, thus completing the unholy ring of nearby Lidl, B&M Bargains and Morrisons stores, it would be *sayonara* to the traditional open market, but this has not proven to be the case. It has bucked the trend and is a mecca for outside visitors in search of diversity, quality, value and traditional informed and personal service. On Saturdays it is booming! When I first began the walk in 1985, Dawsons hardware shop, set into the front of the Market Hall (the access is

inside), had a handwritten notice which boasted 'DONKEY STONES ARE IN STOCK'. Here is a piece of social history in one phrase: once, in an age of rows of back-to-back mill workers' houses and cobbled streets, whitening your doorstep with a donkey stone was obligatory, and heaven help anyone who didn't bother to 'donkey' their front step — they were shunned by the rest of the street! Who says 'keeping up with the Joneses' is a modern phenomenon?



This was in 1984. In 2025, (amazingly!), Dawsons is little altered. It still sells traditional enamel wares, even the traditional 'billy' can for mashing tea! The outer window has a section displaying (not for sale!) items which might grace a museum. What a proud testament to a long tradition. Dawsons was founded in 1920 (105 years ago!).

Inside the Market Hall most of the old stalls are changed, and a handful idle, but business is still brisk! Especially in the realm of meat, pies and sausages! As you walk down the left hand side of the market, the large sign of Nick Fieldens butchers reminds you very forcibly that yes... this is *Todmorden* - Fielden country!

Near the market are public toilets (greatly reduced in size but now free once more!) and beyond them, the Euro Discount Stores, which stocks almost everything! The Post Office is next door and nearby there is the Central Methodist Chapel, a fish and chip shop and a traditional cobblers! The rest of the area is given over to Pay and Display parking (which in 1985 was all free!) sited on what was formerly streets and rows of now demolished housing. Behind the Market Hall is a footbridge over the river and a small green area with seats. This is the the 'take off' point of the *Fielden Trail*.

Not far from this bridge once stood **Roomfield School**.

Roomfield School (Now demolished), was the first Board School in Todmorden, opened in 1878. (The remains of the playground walls can still be seen around the flats.) The *Fielden Trail* does not visit Roomfield House (there is nothing to see), but instead starts out by crossing the little footbridge over the river behind the Market Hall. Pause on the bridge a moment and listen to the following harrowing tale from the statement of Henrietta Shepherd to her son Levi, concerning the brave deed for which her husband James Shepherd was awarded a testimonial and a silver medal from the Royal Humane Society:

"On the 14th August 1891 there was a terrible flood. The River Calder was in full spate, and [downstream of Todmorden] was running level with the Rochdale Canal, forming huge lakes across the valley. Here, at Roomfield, the school was flooded and children had to be rescued from the school. To do this, long planks were put across weft boxes to form a bridge, for the children to cross over. Whilst the children were walking on these planks, one little boy, Samuel S. Fielden, fell into the roaring river and was quickly washed out of sight.

At Springside [about 2 and a half miles downstream] people had been alerted about the accident, and were watching the river for a sight of the boy. One of these people, James Shepherd, Foreman Dyer at Moss Bros. Springside, saw the boy in the river and immediately jumped into the river, and reached the boy. Being a powerful swimmer, he managed to get the boy to the side of the river near Callis. Here help was at hand to pull them out. The boy was badly bruised by his rough journey down the river, and only survived a few hours. James Shepherd was none the worse for his ordeal. The courage of this man must be appreciated, when you realise that he had a wife and seven children at home. The youngest, twins, were just two months old.

Later James Shepherd was presented with his testimonial and silver medal.

On the face of the medal is engraved:-

'Presented to Mr. James Shepherd.'

On the reverse:- 'For saving Samuel S. Fielden from the River Calder, 14th August 1891. Presented with a testimonial from the Royal Humane Society for his bravery.'

The Fielden family also presented him with a new suit of clothes for the one ruined in the river. In one of the pockets was a gold sovereign."

So, as you stare at this babbling little brook and try to envisage what kind of a flood it must have been that could sweep a little boy to his death, remember that this is the Upper Calder. Disastrous flooding is all too frequent in these narrow urbanised gorges.

Cross the footbridge, passing behind the Bus Station, (the river flows between concrete walls here and the buses turn on the far

side), and go under the railway viaduct, which carries the railway at a high level over the rooftops of Todmorden.

Todmorden Viaduct carries the Manchester line over nine arches, seven of them with a sixty foot span, 54.5 feet above the road. The railway was opened on March 1st 1841, and Thomas Fielden, who was one of the railway company directors, proved to be a thorn in the flesh of the board's chairman on more than one occasion, as we shall see.

Beyond the viaduct, cross waste ground by a garage to emerge by a fish and chip shop. Here turn right down Stansfield Road.

High on the hillside to the right can be seen the tower of Cross Stone Church, which has Brontë associations. It was originally built centuries ago, to cater for the needs of upland farmers, being rebuilt in 1714, pulled down, and re-erected in 1835. It is was in a ruinous condition in 1984, but is today a residence. The Brontë sisters stayed at Cross Stone Vicarage in September 1829.

Now continue onwards, bearing gradually to the left. Soon Stansfield Road joins Wellington Road, coming up from the left. Turn right and pass across a footbridge over the railway, passing a power installation on the left, to emerge on Stansfield Hall Road near its junction with Woodlands Avenue. Bear right and soon a small road appears on the left, by a ginnel with steps, signed 'To The Hollins', close by the entrance gates to:-

3. Stansfield Hall, former residence of Joshua Fielden MP.



The *Fielden Trail* bears left up the hill towards 'The Hollins', but before continuing onwards, follow the road on to the right for a short distance, in order to get a peek at **Stansfield Hall**, a fine mansion by John Gibson. A peek is all you are likely to get, as the place is extremely well screened by trees and shrubbery and intimidating 'private' notices. All you actually *can* see is the upper storeys of a palatial neo-gothic Victorian mansion – but this is only the grander part of a much older residence. The east wing of the hall (quite invisible from outside) displays the traditional mullioned and transomed gable end of the original Stansfield Hall, which was built in 1640 for James Stansfield, on the site of an older residence (depicted as '*Stanfeld*' on Christopher Saxtons map of 1577, and mentioned in 1385). In the 1860s, it became the home of Joshua Fielden MP (1827-87), youngest of 'Honest' John's three Sons, who commissioned architect John Gibson (who built Tod. Town Hall) to add a large Gothic Revival style extension to the existing building in 1862.

Joshua was M.P. for the Eastern West Riding, and, like his uncle Thomas, was a director on the board of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. He married Ellen Brocklehurst of at Prestbury Church, on 14th May 1851, and besides Stansfield Hall he also owned Nutfield Priory in Surrey, also designed by Gibson, which, according to Mrs. Crabtree, my local informant (who has actually been there), is not unlike the house which you see here. In 1869, a railway station was opened nearby; this was because the junction at Todmorden faced towards Manchester and was awkward for through traffic to and from Yorkshire. The Stansfield Hall Station was constructed to remedy this fault and enable Yorkshire trains to serve Todmorden. No trace of it remains today. Of course the original residents of Stansfield Hall were the Stansfields, who we will shortly encounter again, although at a much earlier period in time.

From the gates of Stansfield Hall, bear left up the road past The Hollins. This passes The Hollins (below crags) and also Willow Bank. Beyond a row of red brick houses, the road narrows into a path for a few yards. then widens out again, passing stone houses on the left to emerge at Hole Bottom Road. Turn right up the hill. Ahead lies a curious 'folly tower' with a door leading into it and a white flagpole! This is no folly, but rather the 'stump' of what was once the tall mill chimney of Hole Bottom Mill.

Hole Bottom Mill was once a considerable undertaking, of which little now remains. It was originally a water powered cotton spinning mill built in 1790, later converted to steam and becoming the core of a range of ancillary buildings which stretched along the contour to either side of it.. The attached cottage we see today was probably the boiler house, but may also have been

part of the original 18th century mill. The main spinning 'shed', four storeys high and vastly larger, lay to the left. The more palatial domestic looking structure, which still stands to the right, was probably the mill master's house. The mill had a succession of owners and tenants. The original owners were the Stansfields. In 1834 it was tenanted by the notorious Hinchcliffes of Cragg Vale near Mytholmroyd, who worked children 15 and 16 hours a day.



Their cruel practices were not well received by the Fieldens and the generally more enlightened millowning community of Todmorden, who supported the 1833 Factory Act, and when they started instituting night work, they were ostracised by their neighbours!

What a place to work children! In 1833 just before the time of the Hinchcliffes, there had been a terrible incident at this mill, when a young girl of sixteen got her dress caught in unguarded machinery. Her clothes were torn from her body, and was so crushed that blood spouted from her mouth and ears. She sustained multiple injuries, her right arm, both thighs and her lower leg was fractured, both ankles dislocated, with one ankle bone protruding from the skin. She also had multiple lacerations on her back with a sharp piece of tin, as the machinery threw her around. Amazingly she survived the ordeal!

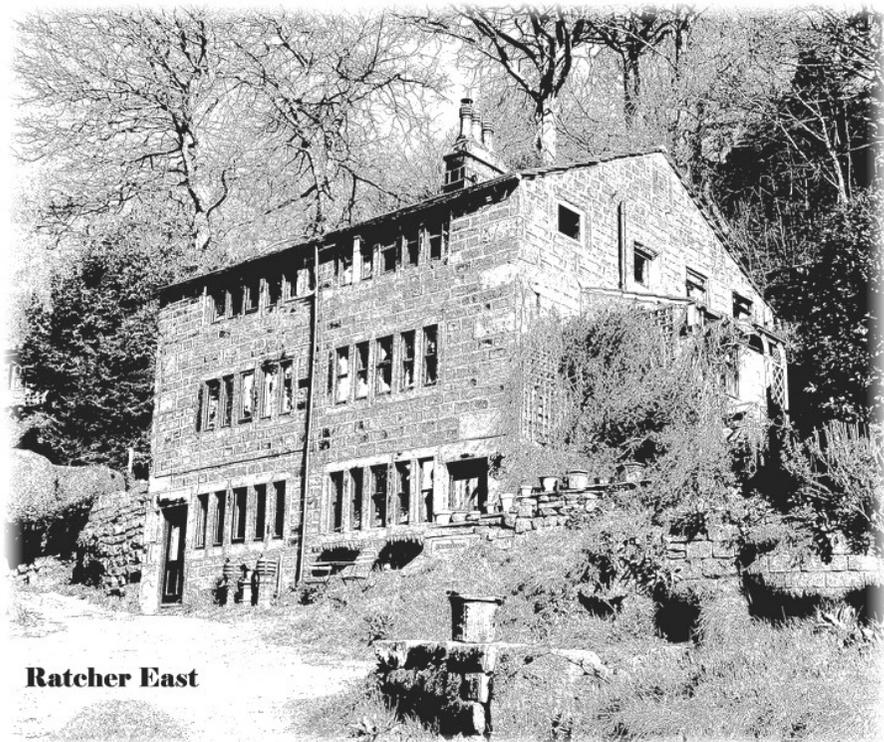
By 1853, the mill was in the hands of the Helliwell Family, who bought the mill and began enlargement, first building a weaving shed, soon to be followed by the boilerhouse/engine shed and chimney and more modern

machinery. But its problem had always been its elevated hillside site, which made to-and-fro movement of coal and cotton expensive, so this business struggled until the Cotton Famine wiped them out. Finally came Robert Fielden and Sons in 1877, facing much the same cost/ logistical problems. They ran it for some time, but by the twentieth century the mill was closed and its machinery stripped out.

Part of it reopened in 1905 – as Shuttleworths Laundry. It faced the same problems. All the laundry had to be horse-drawn up to the mill. An early motorised van replaced the horses, but could not handle the steep gradient under load. Sometimes it had to be pulled up by stout lads with ropes!

The end came in February 1918, when the main part of the mill was gutted by fire. It was replaced in 1920 by Oakhill, a rich house with private tennis courts. The gentrification of Hole Bottom has proceeded apace ever since! In the 21st century it is hard to imagine that such a dark grimy place ever existed!

*Where the track forks, take the left hand route to Holly House, beyond which the track continues onwards to Hough Stones. Before reaching Houghstones, the three storeyed cottage of **Ratcher East** appears on your right.* This is the sole remaining building of an earlier 18th century cotton manufacturing undertaking, known as Ratcha (or Houghstones) Mill. This was a small cotton carding and spinning mill, turned by water



Ratcher East

power. The 11 ft. diameter water wheel and mill race was on the right of the existing building, and up the slope behind it was a small reservoir to supply the head of water. The present building was one of *two* such buildings, identical in construction. 'Ratcha' was in the early 19th century the home of a Halifax man called Lawrence Wilson. He had been a journeyman bobbin turner (ie a bobbin maker) and had entrepreneurial ambitions. With his savings and £50 lent to him by 'Honest John' Fielden of Dawson Weir, who doubtless appreciated the value of a bobbin maker in his midst, he set up business in Hough Stones in a small building, that was to lead to greater things – as we shall see further along the *Fielden Trail*

*Beyond Hough Stones, the track becomes rough, (as in Hough and Clough!) and the **Fielden Trail** continues straight on, following a path under hawthorns, with the stream of Bents Clough appearing on the left, (where there are a number of well waymarked footpaths also heading off to the left). **Ignore these** and follow the main route, which bears right, ascending behind Hough Stones before heading upwards to enter the farm road of Scrapers Lane, with Wickenberry Clough descending into woodland on your right. Turn **left**, and follow it up to Scrapers Gate, with Whirlaw Sones and Whirlaw East farm becoming visible in open country on your left. At Scrapers Gate there is a meeting of ways. Here the farm road heads off right to Cally Hall Farm. Turn left here and follow the older track (**Calderdale Way**) that runs between walls with East Whirlaw Farm now below on your left, and the grim eminence of Whirlaw Stones on your right, towering ominously above Todmorden, dominating the skyline. Follow the **Calderdale Way**. Soon a ruin (West Whirlaw), appears on the left and beyond the gate (where there is a bench), the route becomes a paved packhorse 'causey' over open moorland, contouring the hillside among boulders and cotton grass.*

By the ruins of West Whirlaw is a good spot to break out the flask and sandwiches and reflect awhile. The bench carries a plaque remembering 'David Baxendale (1955-2015) who loved walking up here'. How could he not? We have now entered a different world. The urban world that crowded us in the centre of Todmorden is suddenly a vain illusion. Here the moors and hills rule. If the day be clear, there are magnificent sweeping views over vast open tracts of wild upland landscapes, a world of rolling hills, lofty and aloof, dwarfing the urbanised arteries of transpennine communication squeezed into the deep valleys far below. Stoodley Pike Monument is prominent, and on the far side of the Calder Valley above Todmorden, Mankinholes can be seen, nestling in its hollow below the moors. More to the right in the direction of Burnley, Todmorden Edge can be seen as a cluster of houses hugging the opposite hillside, as if wearing a woolly overcoat against the bleak winter weather. Below in the valley is Todmorden, where the start of the walk can be clearly seen. If you know

where to look, almost all of the upland sections of the *Fielden Trail* lie in clear view. If the world below us is modern, then the world above us dwells at the opposite pole. Whirlaw is an ancient prehistoric burial ground, and the strange contorted rocks of the Bridestones, weird and mysterious in mist, are an obvious pagan site. Indeed they offer the appearance of a natural Stonehenge. No ancient man could visit such a place

as this without being inspired to awe and worship. The ancient aura seems to



linger in the name 'Scrapers Lane', which also suggests to me, like the place-name 'Flints' at Crow Hill Sowerby, that ancient artefacts have been found here in more recent times.

As you pack your flask and continue onwards over open moor, the feeling of close proximity to the past becomes more intense. The landscape has changed, and has become more austere, more primitive. Todmorden, like most mill towns in the Upper Calder Valley, appears like a distant oasis of bustle and worldly activity far below. In winter it is flood-prone, yet relatively sheltered, and in summer it appears green and lush. Yet up here, on the upland shelf between the valley floor and the high moors, the real nature of the landscape becomes instantly apparent.

Here time has stood still. The prehistoric worshippers, the legions of Rome, they all departed long ago. In their wake came English, Norsemen and Danes, the first hill farmers, clearing the land, claiming rough pastures from the inhospitable hills, felling the ancient birch forests, digging peat, building farmsteads and laithes, keeping

livestock, and, perhaps most significantly of all, carding, spinning and weaving woollen cloth. No doubt there were ancestors of the Fieldens among these people, not to mention the Stansfields, Greenwoods, Radcliffes and various other ancient families indigenous to the remote fastnesses of the Upper Calder Valley.

In the wake of the farmers (in some cases before them), came the arteries of communication, the drove roads and packhorse ways; and, walking on the old causey stones below the Bridestones and Whirlaw, we might, in this quiet solitude, almost hear the jingle of packhorse bells. 'Long Causeways', ancient boundary stones and wayside crosses all abound in this area. Are they Tudor, Mediaeval, or Viking — perhaps even older? No-one knows. English history went its schoolbook way: red rose fought white, the monasteries were dissolved, first the Renaissance and then the Reformation swept Europe; yet right here, in these bleak northern uplands, we might still be in ancient times, such is the scarcity of information relating to this area as it was in those far-off days.

High above the valley floor on this upland shelf, what civilisation there was in the Upper Calder Valley first developed. (The valleys were flood prone, marshy and thickly wooded.) From this level, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, the pattern of development was to move downhill, building factories and towns, leaving solitude and desolation in its wake as the surge towards progress, industry and improved communications led embryonic industrialists like the Fieldens to abandon the stony places of their youth, and become dwellers in, and builders of, large industrial townships like Todmorden.

Up here, in the shadow of rock outcrops and moors, is where the Fieldens (and many families like them) began, eking out a harsh living from bleak upland pastures. Down in the valley is where they went to make their fortunes, and back to the countryside (in gentler climes), is where they returned afterwards to build their great houses, returning not as poor yeoman farmers, but as influential landowners, weighted with honours and privileges.

Walking amongst rough-hewn ruins on bleak hillsides we are now at the beginning of our trail of inheritance. Through these upland Pastures (and very likely along this ancient packhorse way) sometime in the middle of the 16th century came Nicholas Fielden, yeoman farmer of Inchfield in the Parish of Rochdale. His father, William Fielden, was also a farmer, though his roots are rather less clear, it being uncertain as to whether he came from Leventhorpe near Bradford, or Heyhouses near Sabden.

Whatever his roots, however, the business that brought Nicholas Fielden from his own home in the adjacent Walsden Valley to these

bleak Whirlaw uplands is quite clear: he came as a suitor. On this side of the Calder Valley dwelt Christobel, daughter of John Stansfield of Stansfield, and Nicholas eventually married her. Whether or not Nicholas and Christobel walked hand-in-hand along these hillsides, the wind in their hair, or were merely the unwilling victims of their parents dynastic ambitions, we can only speculate. One thing we do know is that their marriage, arranged or not, was fruitful, and we must Hope that they were happy together.

As a result of this union, the farms of Hartley Royd and Mercerfield (which we are shortly to visit) passed to Nicholas' children, of which he had five (four sons and a daughter), before Christobel died sometime after 1582. Nicholas remarried, taking as his second wife Elizabeth Greenwood, who, in 1638 was described as 'living at Inchfield aged' (Nicholas having died in 1626). Whether or not Nicholas' children acquired these Shore estates as a result of their mother's inheritance or marriage settlement is uncertain, but it seems likely, as there would appear to be no record of any Fieldens living on this side of the valley prior to this period, which suggests that the lands originally belonged to the Stansfields.

Unfortunately the picture of the Fieldens in the 16th and early 17th centuries is not as straightforward as this. The Fieldens of Inchfield (and also Shore, Hartley Royd and Mercerfield) were not the only family of that name living in the vicinity of what was eventually to become Todmorden. On the opposite side of the Walsden Valley to Inchfield, at Bottomley, another family of Fieldens was firmly established. Whether or not they were cousins to Nicholas' family is not clear. One thing is certain, however- in the near future a Fielden was going to marry another Fielden and from this union was to spring that branch of the Fielden family with which this book is largely concerned.

*From West Whirlaw, the causey passes over the moor amongst boulders and heather, beneath Whirlaw and the Bridestones, which dominate the horizon on the right. After a succession of metal gates, the path becomes a 'green lane' running between walls. Continue to the next iron gate, just beyond which the **Calderdale Way** branches off to the left, down to Rake Hey Farm and Todmorden. Ignore this route, instead continuing onwards along Stoney Lane, passing trees and ruined farm buildings (named 'Springs' on the 1844 map). Perhaps this was a watering hole for packhorses - though barely a ruin, the line of the road running through the site is today always wet and usually a constant ribbon of water!*

Keep going and soon, after a gentle rise, the lane reaches a junction of paths at Pole Gates.

Here a choice must be made. It is possible to continue onwards to Hudson Bridge, but most people will not resist the temptation to visit the **Orchan Rocks** clearly visible below. After all, you will argue, I've talked at length about strange rocks and pagan rituals, but I haven't taken my route to any of them! Well now's your chance! Orchan Rocks are not very far off-route, and visiting them is well worth the necessary detour, so, just to make you happy, I'll take my main route that way! To do this, simply turn left and follow the track heading down towards it. A short distance down, you will encounter a stile on your right with a dog hatch (recently installed by CROWS). From here an obvious path bears to the right down Hudson Moor to the back of the rocks, where, if you can stand the 'airiness', a careful scramble will put you on the edge to admire the superb views over the gorge below. Even on a quiet day the wind seems to howl around the **Orchan Rocks**, but get out of it and you will quickly find somewhere to hole up, chill out and drink tea! Many names are carved on the slabs, although I could find no Fieldens among them when I was there. The Fieldens would have known this spot however, and, like us, would no doubt have marvelled at its strangeness.

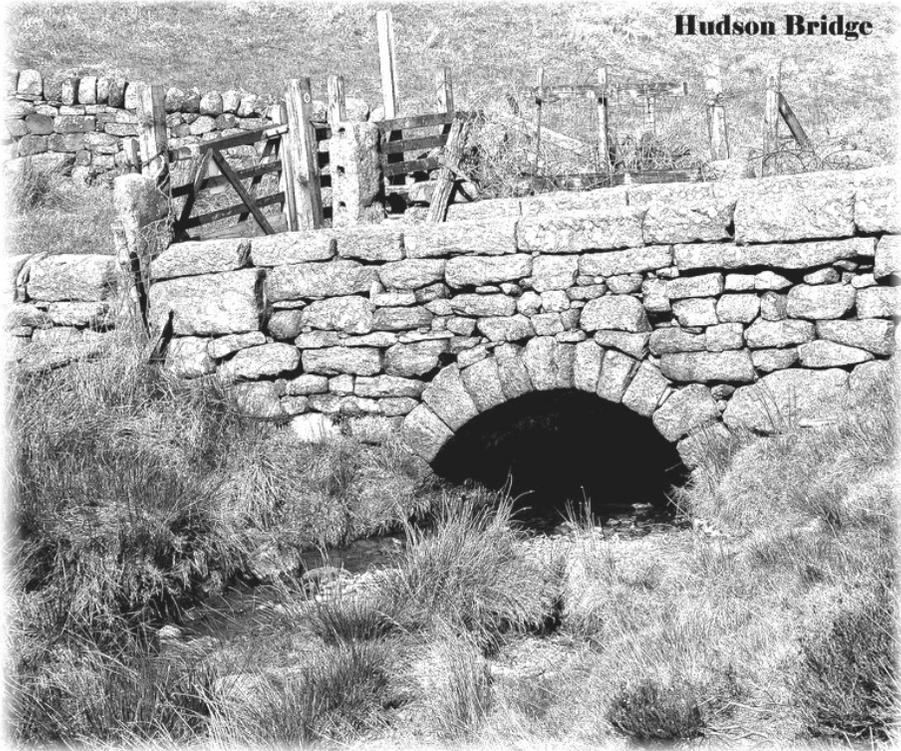
Orchan Rocks



From Orchan Rocks bear right and head up the far side of Hudson Moor. The going is at first rough, and there is no obvious path, but

*you can see the main path up to Hudson Bridge running clear and distinct by the wallside below. The problem is getting down to it, a situation not helped by an overgrown quarry delf on your left, which must be negotiated with care. Once on the main path, the route leads quite easily up to Hudson Bridge, with Hartley Royd clearly visible on the on the far side of Hudson Clough. Also visible is the huge communications array mast, which dwarfs Hartley Royd and everything around it. This also marks the impending end of **SECTION 1**. Soon we arrive at **Hudson Bridge**, a pretty little spot by a pretty little stream. This is the finest packhorse bridge to be found in this part of the Pennines.*

Our route now continues on to Hartley Royd. *Turn left, cross the*



bridge and then continue onwards. The landscape hereabouts has much changed since my last visit in 1984! Back then, it was bleak, open upland, with hard bitten farmers trying to eke a living from an unforgiving landscape, displaying the dereliction of many farms whose inhabitants had struggled and failed in their efforts. Today all that has gone – the landscape has been softened by wholesale tree plantations and displays all the trappings of affluent rural idyll! Poverty and hardship has been replaced by smart Range

Rovers and it feels like a playground of the affluent. Soon we bear left, entering the Hartley Royd farm road through an iron gate. Turn left to arrive at:-

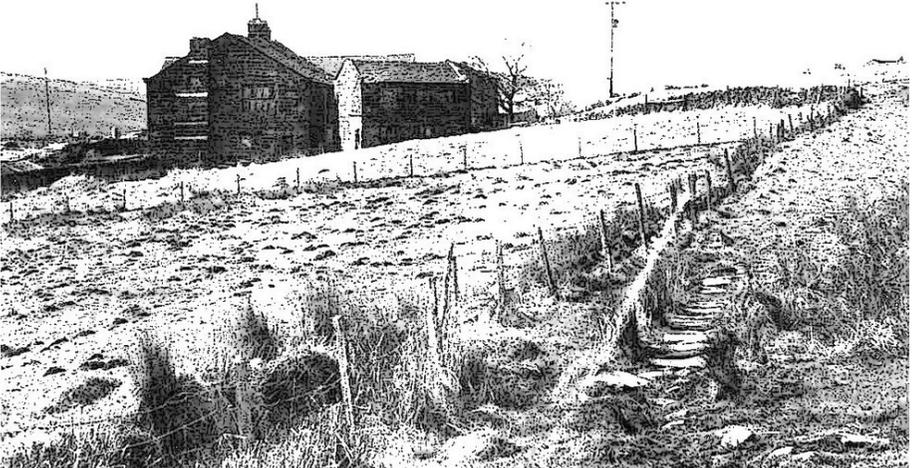
4. Hartley Royd

In 1624, Nicholas Fielden of Inchfield (whom we have recently encountered), made out his last will and testament, which divided his property amongst his children. To his eldest son John, he bequeathed "ffurther Shore" and a moiety (or part) of Mercerfield. Hartley Royd must have been included in this package, for in his own will John Fielden is described as 'John ffeilden of Hartley Royd, Stansfield in the County of York, Yeoman.' The second son, Abraham, inherited Inchfield, and his eldest son, John, also lived at Hartley Royd.

Abraham married Elizabeth Fielden of Bottomley, thus uniting two branches of Fieldens, and it is this line whose fortunes we are to follow. throughout most of this book. This Abraham Fielden was 'Honest John' Fielden's great, great, great grandfather.

But back to Hartley Royd. Further Shore passed to Nicholas' third

Hartley Royd 1984



son, Joshua, and the other half of Mercerfield went to the youngest, Anthonie. Confused? You soon will be! How, you will ask, does all this relate to the mullioned farmhouse that stands before us? Did John Fielden build the place? The first thing you will notice is the ornate datestone in the north wall, then you will try to read it, but its age

and very serpentine ornateness makes it difficult to decipher. Oh dear, it's in Latin! At this point I was lucky enough to receive the assistance of Mrs. King, the farmer's wife (in 1984). She said that people often tried to decipher the inscription, so much so, that her son had been prompted to sit down one day and find out what it actually did say. It reads as follows:-

**J FIELDEN
AND WIFE ELIZABETH
FROM HARM AT HOME 1724.**

Simple eh? No it's not — the date's wrong! The John Fielden we have been talking about died in 1645. This must be a later descendant, and referring to Fishwick's genealogy of the Fieldens only brings more confusion. Our "John ffeilden of Hartley Royd, Yeoman" had a son called John who "inherited his father's lands with the remainder to *his* son John" (my italics). This second John would have been at least 79 years old in 1724 so it seems likely that it was a third John, the grandson, who carved the datestone and presumably built the present house. I say 'confusing' because the same genealogy also speaks of another "John ffeilden of Hartley Royd", son of Abraham and Elizabeth Fielden. He is named in Elizabeth Fielden's will in 1673, and in accordance with his father's will conveyed Bottomley to his brother Joshua. *His* will is dated 14th February 1679!

One possible way of easing this sort of confusion is to realise that these wills are referring to land parcels and not to particular residences. The first John Fielden was "of Hartley Royd", yet he owned "further Shore" and part of Mercerfield. To farm it you did not necessarily have to live on it, and the Fieldens owned patches of land all over the place, houses being divided up amongst relatives, and new pastures being acquired by marriage. Eventually we reach a point where we have to speculate: the John Fielden who was Abraham's eldest son had two sons who inherited lands, Joshua of Swineshead and Nicholas of Shore. Neither of these could have been "from harm at home" at Hartley Royd in 1724, so I am led to conclude that it must have been the third John mentioned earlier who raised the datestone.

Looking at Hartley Royd raises more speculations. If this house was indeed built in 1724, what of the earlier house? The style of the present building with its mullioned windows and externally protruding chimneybreast is more evocative of the 17th than the 18th century. This fact leads us to two possible conclusions. Either the house was built in 1724 in a style which by that time was going out of fashion (this is by no means unlikely as Pennine hill farms were severely functional in design and styles were a lot slower to change than they

were in more 'civilised' areas), or the house was built in the 17th century and underwent alterations in 1724, which resulted in the datestone we now see. And a final question: irrespective of when the present house was built, was there an earlier, perhaps Tudor, house on the site? Or an even older one perhaps? We do not know, we can only speculate.

In 1648 George Fox began public work in Manchester, and William Dewsbury probably preached around Todmorden in 1653. In 1654 John Fielden of Inchfield and Joshua Fielden of Bottomley were reported as being Quakers. By association with his brother Joshua, it is apparent that this John Fielden is the same one who is referred to in the genealogy as being "of Hartley Royd" who "conveyed Bottomley to this brother Joshua". If he lived at Inchfield — his father Abraham did, and John was his eldest son — that should clarify further the mystery of who lived at Hartley Royd. John suffered for his Quaker faith: in 1665 he was fined for not attending church and as he declined to pay, a cheese was taken off him and sold for 4s. 6d. Three years later he suffered 31 weeks imprisonment for non-attendance, whilst the following year five of his oxen were seized and sold (at a value of £23) and he himself spent eight weeks in jail at Preston. His brother Joshua was buried at Shoebroad on his death in 1693. John died in 1698, but there is no mention of his resting place. There is another Quaker burial ground at Todmorden Edge

Hartley Royd 2025



and Mrs King informed me that at Shore there is a field called "t'Quaker Pasture." Quakers were not allowed any monuments or gravestones, so their burial grounds are not immediately apparent. (The site at Shore had an ornate stone gateway once photographed but now long demolished). Perhaps somewhere in "Quaker Pasture" at nearby Shore lie the mortal remains of "John ffeilden of Inchfield and Hartley Royd, Yeoman."

*The **Fielden Trail** now descends directly to the A646 Burnley Road at Vale near Cornholme, tucked deep in the upper reaches of the Calder twist Lydgate and Cornholme. Passing through a gate at the far end of the farmyard, a wide and very well maintained pasture is entered with no obvious path in view. On the left of the field is the huge communications mast first observed from Hudson Clough. Pass through through the centre of the field to the edge of the steep scarp from which you will be able to see the stile and waypost recently renovated by CROWS. Pass through the stile and head downhill to turn left through a second stile, just below which lie the ruins of Mercerfield. Back in 1984, I stopped off here for lunch. There were many such farm ruins on this steep hillside below Hartley Royd, of which little if any trace remains today. Yet they must all have a story to tell, and this is but one of them! But we need to go back 40 years!*

5. Mercerfield.

'.....Only the barn remained, and a rusty old fence straddled the ruins of what once was the house. There was an old door lintel here but the



Mercerfield 1984



New Ley 1984

inscription was quite illegible, being badly eroded. The nearest I could get was: **HE C ... 17 ...**'

On the other side of the fence was a more legible stone with the date 1829'. I did not see either of them in April 2025! Just a rash of ruin!

Mercerfield was divided between Nicholas and Christobel Fielden's sons John and Anthonie. It seems unlikely that there was a house there in the early 17th century... If there was, it must have been a tiny one judging by the ruins of the more recent house.

It was here, tucked snugly on the hillside in a hollow with fine views up the gorge to Cornholme, that I pulled out my coffee and sandwiches, I recall, and let my thoughts wander. Here, sitting amongst these evocative ruins, I was alone with the hills, beset on all sides with Johns and Joshuas, trying to find some clarity in the murky confusion, casting my mind back through time, trying to imagine what life must have been like for those yeomen farmers and their families.

What a different world it must have been for those early Fieldens. Nicholas Fielden's grandfather was alive in the reign of Henry VIII. He would have lived through the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and would have witnessed some of the repercussions of these events. Life must have been harsh, austere and uncomfortable in those turbulent times. Houses were cold and draughty, and lighting poor or non-existent. The noble 17th century farmsteads and clothier's houses we see on the hillsides today belong to a later generation of housing, born of a minor revolution in techniques of quarrying and stoneworking. Tudor houses in the Pennines were timber framed, often with walls of lath, wattle and daub rather than stone, and smokeholes in the roof rather than sophisticated flues and chimney stacks. Cruck houses, built with skills and techniques passed down from Norse settlers, were common, so backward was this remote upland area. Earthen floors and log fires —these are the kind of houses the Fieldens' mediaeval forebears would have known. The only towns of any note were York, Lancaster and London, and they were far away, almost in another world.

Nicholas Fielden's grandchildren would not have found life too comfortable either. Their homes, though more embattled and sturdy, could have been every bit as uncomfortable. They would keep livestock on these bleak pastures and supplement a meagre living by producing woollen cloth to be carried over the packhorse roads to be sold at the nearest market, first Heptonstall, then after 1779 the Halifax Piece Hall. Later, merchants and middlemen could become involved as the domestic textile industry developed, but at this early stage it would have been every man working for himself.

John and Joshua Fielden, Nicholas' grandchildren, like all the family, were persecuted for their nonconformist beliefs. They lived through the great Civil War, and were no doubt aware of — if not actually involved with the

skirmish "ovver t'hill" at Heptonstall between the Parliamentary garrison there and Mackworth's Royalists, who marched out of Halifax only to be repulsed by crashing boulders and fast flowing waters. They might also have witnessed the garrison's departure over the moors into Lancashire (perhaps along the very packhorse route that runs above Hartley Royd) and heard reports of the sacking and burning of Heptonstall by the Royalists. Perhaps, with their Puritan beliefs, they wondered if *their* families might next be ravaged and put to the sword? As Quakers, their sympathies would have no doubt lain with the Parliamentary cause, even if their faith forbade them to take up arms.

The only thing we do know is that they survived these turbulent times — probably by minding their own business. Humble hillfarmers like the Fieldens would have had little to offer the foraging armies of the Civil Wars. Indeed then, as now, the whole area would have been hostile to people in search of shelter and wholesome food. Good food came from the rich farming areas of the lowlands; the high hills and moors of the Pennines were only good for sheep farming and rough pastures. In the war, food supplies from the arable lowlands would have been cut to virtually a trickle, forcing up prices and bringing privation and hunger to the hillfolk of the Pennines, who eked out a living by selling their cloth. Times must have been hard indeed.

By 1670, nonetheless, John Fielden of Hartley Royd had become the largest landowner in the area. By 1775 however, this had dwindled to three small hillfarms, largely as a result, it seems, of inheritance practices and issues. The Fieldens fortunes were in decline, it seemed, but the domestic based woollen trade was still brisk, and the newly opened Piece Hall in Halifax offered a bright future – despite the more arduous journey to market! (But things were about to change drastically-as we shall see.....).

Here at Mercerfield is an excellent view of the little industrial town of Cornholme, tucked in at the bottom of the gorge below like a patient spider! Sited in the final upper reaches of the infant Calder Valley it does not line the banks of that aspiring little stream - the Calder in fact runs **under** it, the most obvious artery of communication (apart from the busy A646 Burnley Road), being the railway, which dominates this narrow cleft!

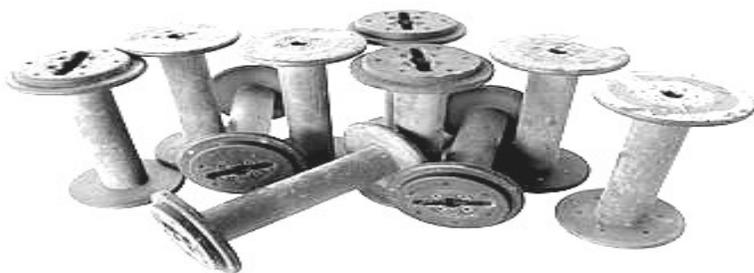
To tell the story of Cornholme we must cast our memories back to Lawrence Wilson, the journeyman bobbin maker we encountered at Hough Stones on the outward ascent from Todmorden. Two years after starting his business there in 1823, he removed to Pudsey, high in the Upper Valley, eventually erecting a much larger mill there on a 'holme' (an area of flat land) adjacent to an ascending woodland known as 'Corn Banks.' The name he gave to the mill was 'Cornholme'.

Thereafter, like Topsy it grew! A Methodist Meeting House and cottages in 1835, followed by the growth of a vigorous little industrial community centered around the bobbin works of Lawrence Wilson & Sons. This

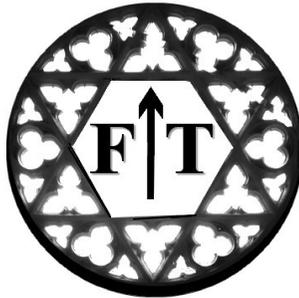
eventually became Wilson Bros, with other bobbin mills in Barnsley Athlone and Garston, and a fleet of ships importing timber from the sawmill in Athlone; this being the start of a long story beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say Wilsons became as rich as the Fieldens!

From Mercerfield, the descent into the valley is both steep and potentially confusing, largely I suspect, being due to long disused footpaths that have almost disappeared on this hillside. (such was the case back in 1984!) The ruined farmsteads also, have deteriorated massively over 40 years, New Ley in particular (see old pic), being quite unrecognisable to this author. Happily, CROWS have come to the rescue with some new stiles and a line of descending posts on the steep descent to what's left of New Ley, below which is an easy descent to the well defined path which heads R. along the bottom of the slope, round the bungalow to emerge into Frieldhurst Road, where a left turn takes us under the railway to join the busy A646 Burnley Road, just below the Cornholme Boundary sign.

*Another left turn winds down towards the Lydgate Boundary sign (pron. 'Liggit') and the bus stop which marks the Start of **SECTION 2.** (Note. Back in 1984 the bus stop had a seat in an alcove. A paved alcove remains, but there is now no seat and the bus stop appears to have been moved around the corner nearer to the Lydgate Boundary. There is no seat at the present stop, and in 2025, elderly, tired and exhausted I had to stand there for over an hour! It was a strange experience in this place....it was a lovely sunny day, the late afternoon sky being quite blue, yet cars were rolling down the bendy A646 with all their headlights on! The steep walls of the gorge blot out the sunlight! Of course if you take the bus, you will have to **come back** ! The (upwards) bus stop on the other side of the road, marks the Start of **SECTION 2.** But if the hour is late, you will most likely end your walk here!*

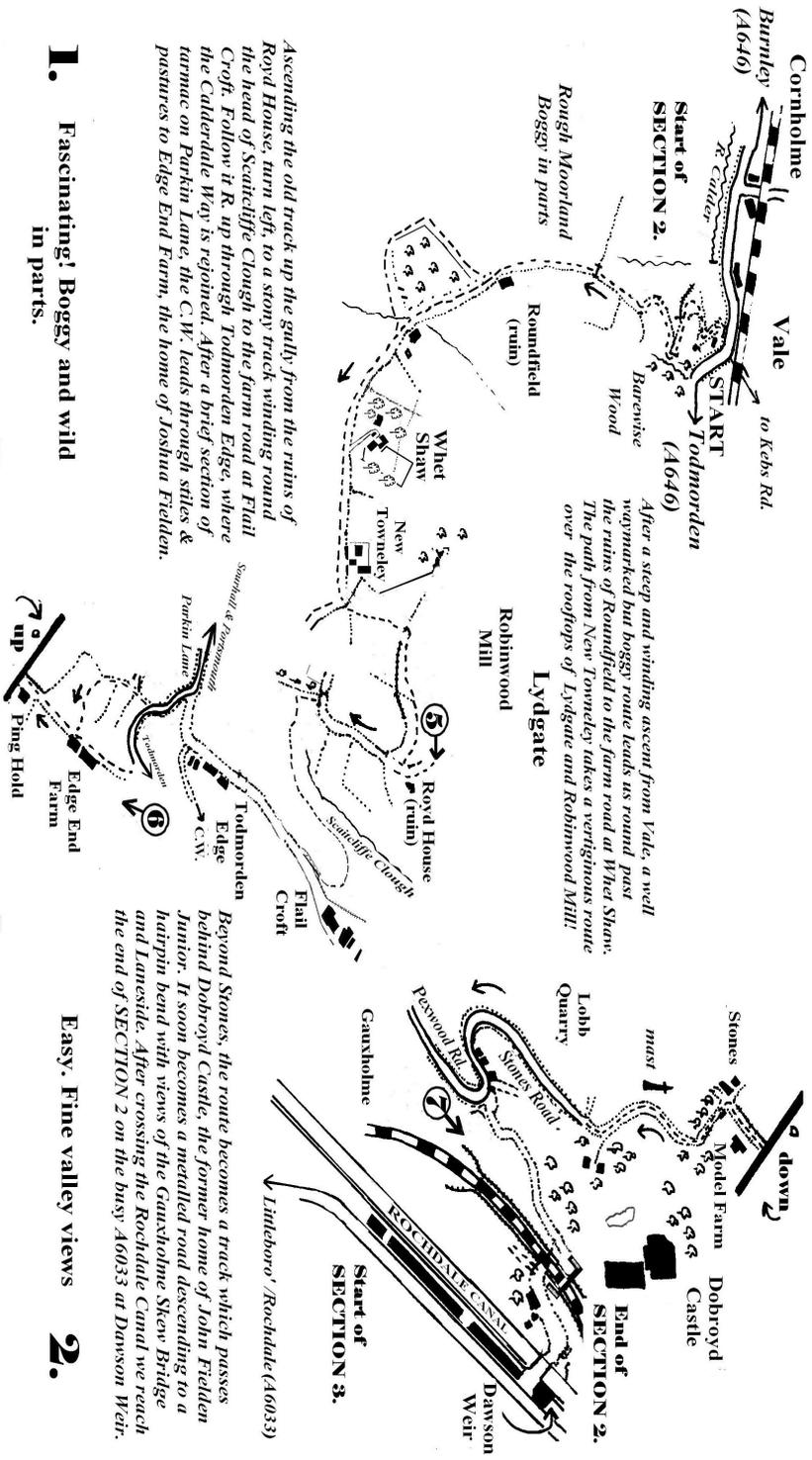


SECTION 2.



Cornholme to Dawson Weir

SECTION 2 Cornholme to Dawson Weir



Ascending the old track up the gully, from the ruins of Royd House, turn left, to a stony track winding round the head of Scatcliffe Clough to the farm road at Flail Croft. Follow it R, up through Todmorden Edge, where the Calderdale Way is rejoined. After a brief section of tarmac on Parkin Lane, the C.W. leads through stiles & pastures to Edge End Farm, the home of Joshua Fielden.

After a steep and winding ascent from Vale, a well waymarked but boggy route leads its round past the ruins of Roundfield to the farm road at Whet Shaw. The path from New Towneley takes a veriginous route over the rooftops of Lydgate and Robbinwood Mill!

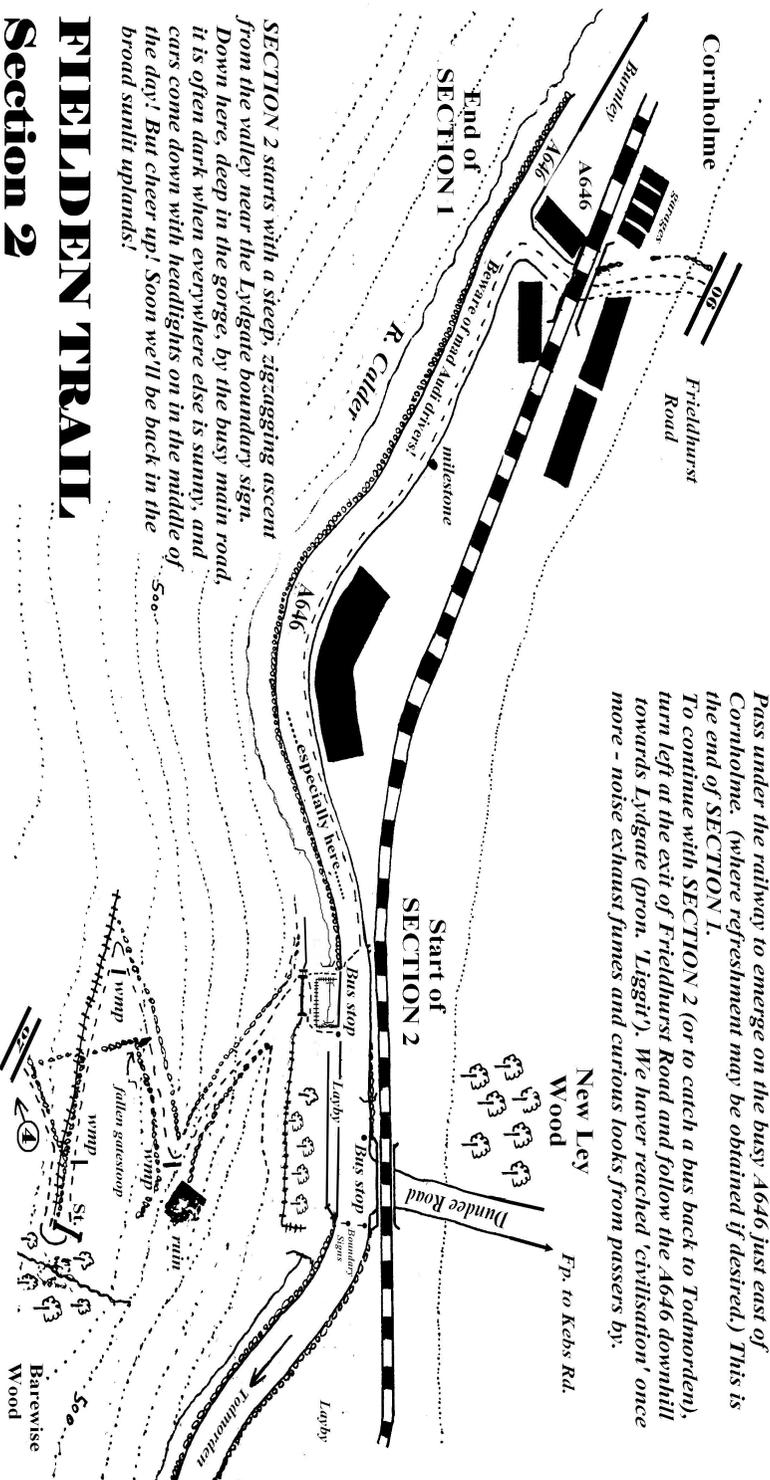
Beyond Stones, the route becomes a track which passes behind Dobroyd Castle, the former home of John Fielden Junior. It soon becomes a metalled road descending to a hairpin bend with views of the Gauxholme Stew Bridge and Laneside. After crossing the Rochdale Canal we reach the end of SECTION 2 on the busy A6033 at Dawson Weir.

1. Fascinating! Boggy and wild in parts.

2. Easy. Fine valley views

MAP 7

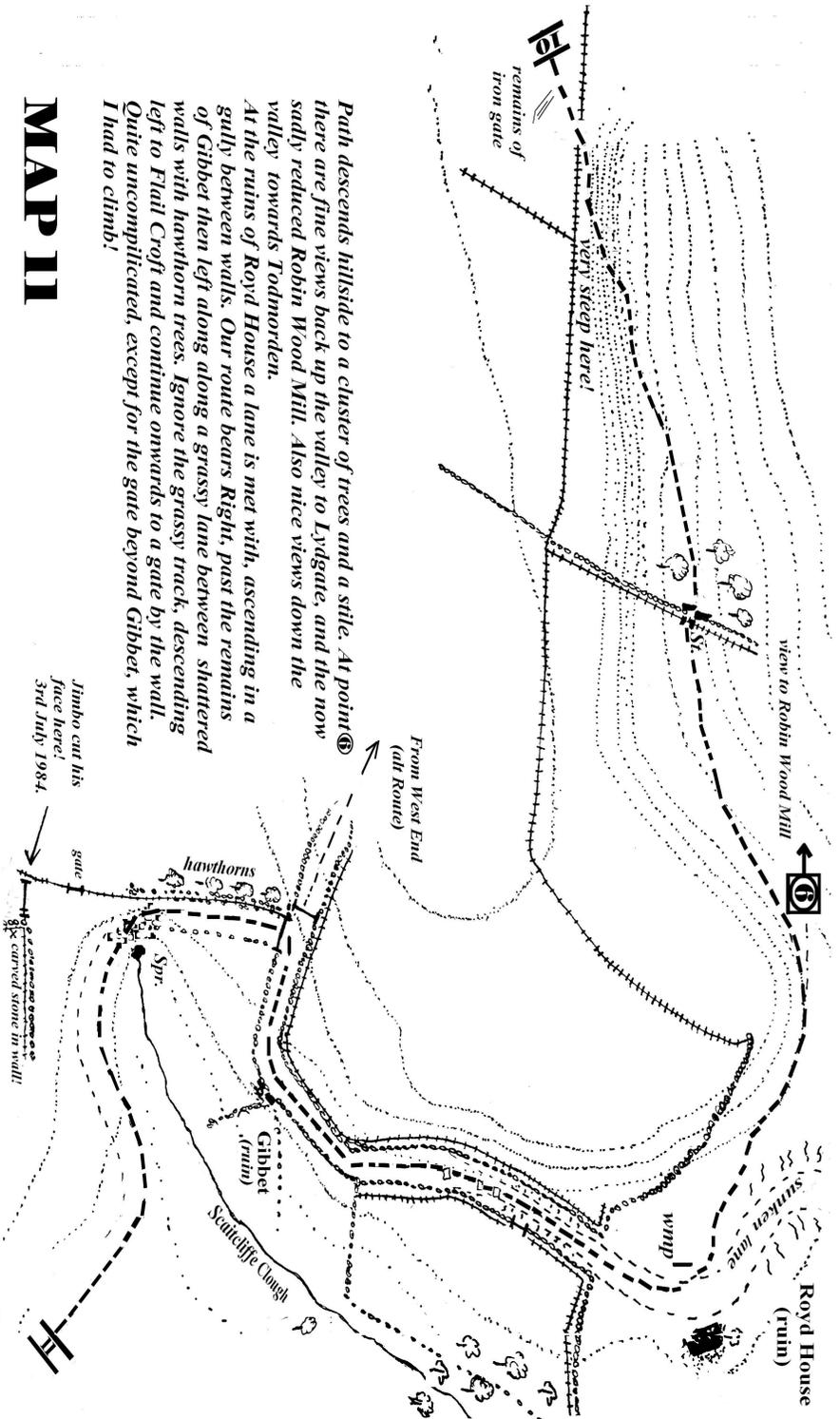
Pass under the railway to emerge on the busy A646 just east of Cornholme. (where refreshment may be obtained if desired.) This is the end of SECTION 1. To continue with SECTION 2 (or to catch a bus back to Todmorden), turn left at the exit of Frieidhurst Road and follow the A646 downhill towards Lydgate (pron. 'Liggitt'). We have reached 'chilistation' - once more - noise exhaust fumes and curious looks from passers by.



SECTION 2 starts with a steep, zigzagging ascent from the valley near the Lydgate boundary sign. Down here, deep in the gorge, by the busy main road, it is often dark when everywhere else is sunny, and cars come down with headlights on in the middle of the day! But cheer up! Soon we'll be back in the broad sunlit uplands!

HIDDEN TRAIL

Section 2

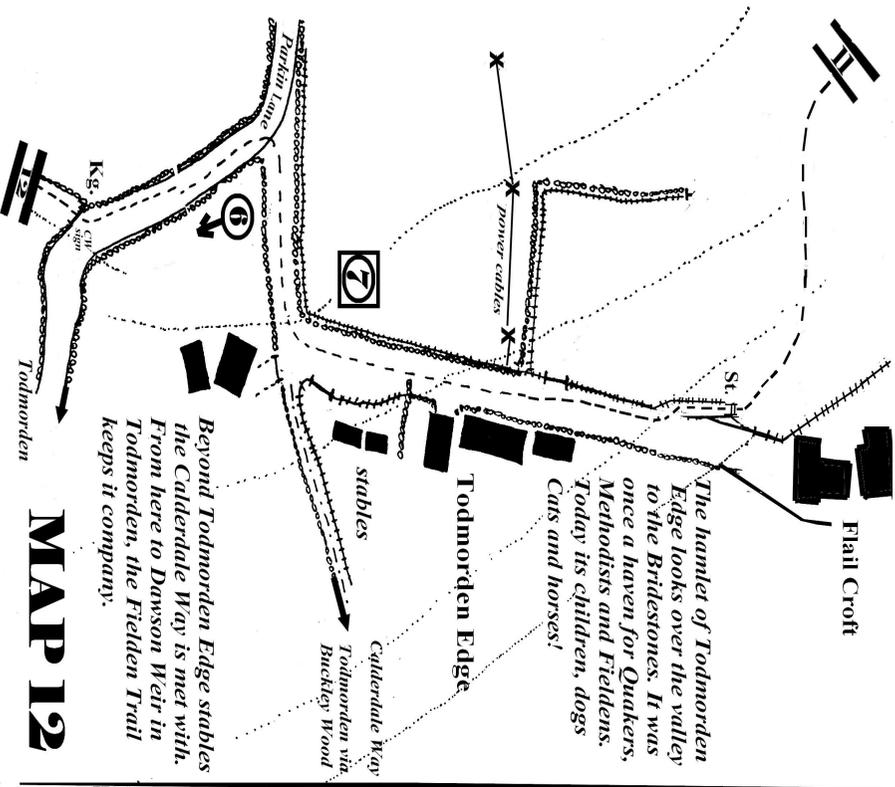


Path descends hillside to a cluster of trees and a stile. At point ⑥ there are fine views back up the valley to Lydgate, and the now sadly reduced Robin Wood Mill. Also nice views down the valley towards Todnorden.

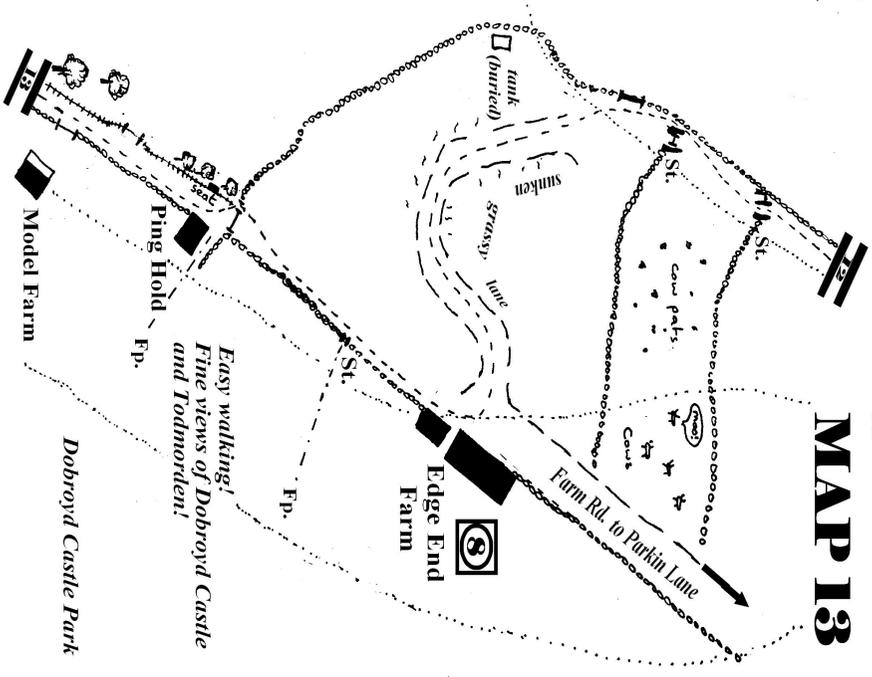
At the ruins of Royd House a lane is met with, ascending in a gully between walls. Our route bears Right, past the remains of Gibbet then left along a grassy lane between shattered walls with hawthorn trees. Ignore the grassy track, descending left to Flat Croft and continue onwards to a gate by the wall. Quite uncomplicated, except for the gate beyond Gibbet, which I had to climb!

MAP II

Jimbo cut his face here!
3rd July 1984.



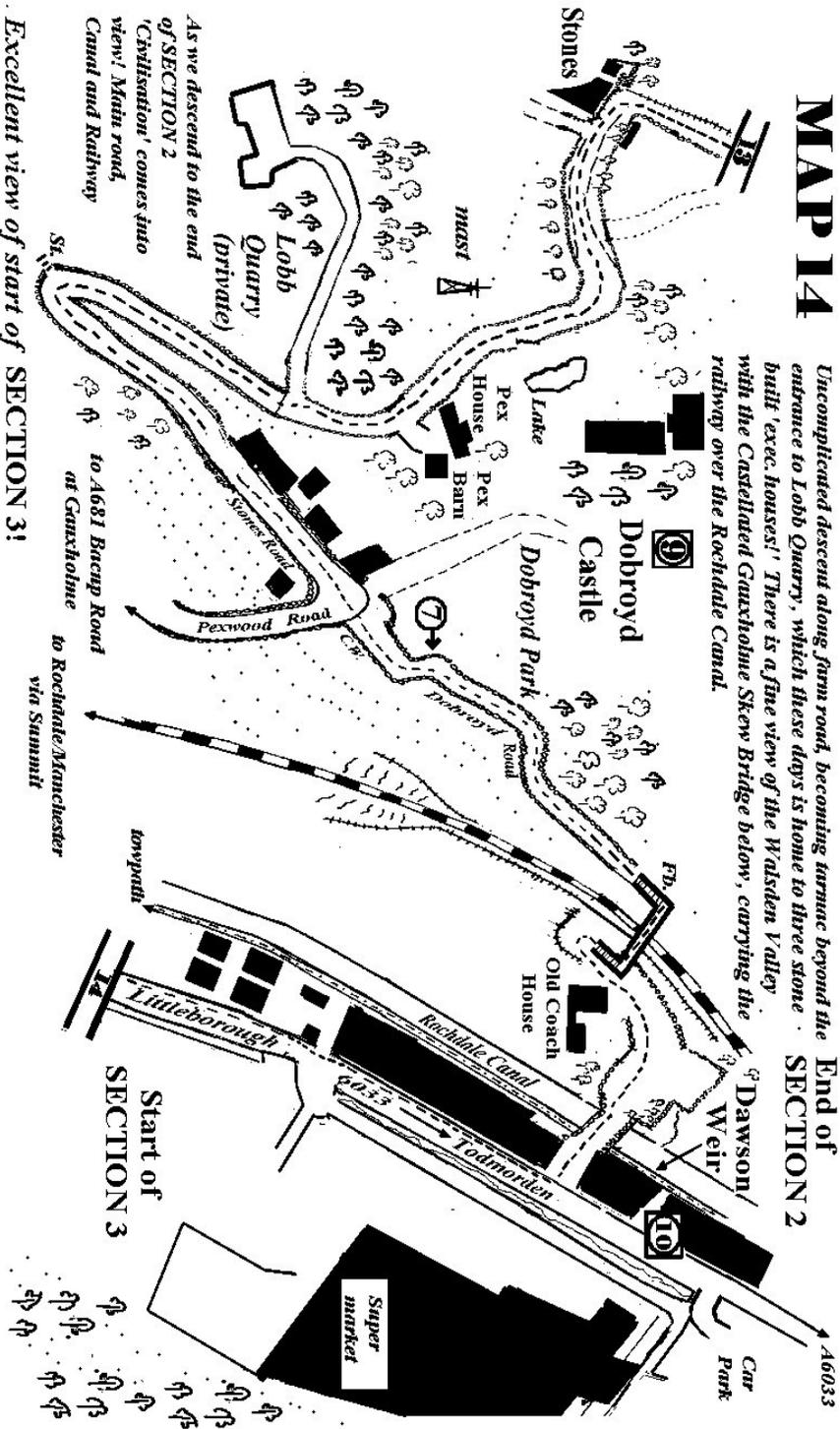
MAP 12



MAP 13

MAP 14

Uncomplicated descent along farm road, becoming tarmac beyond the entrance to Lobb Quarry, which these days is home to three stone built 'exec. houses!'. There is a fine view of the Walsden Valley with the Castledale Gauchohne Skew Bridge below, carrying the railway over the Rochdale Canal.



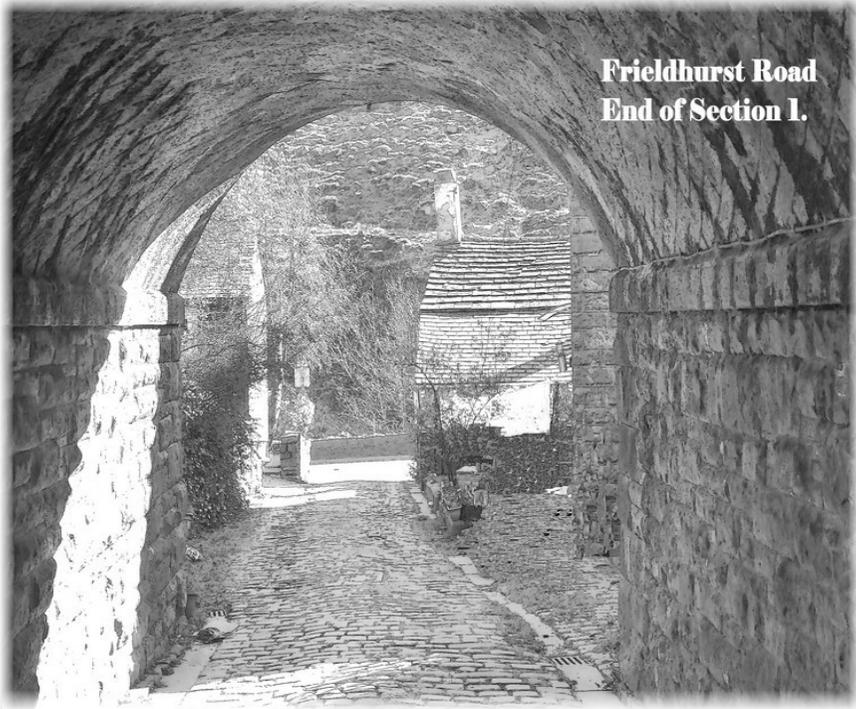
As we descend to the end of SECTION 2 'Civilisation' comes into view! Muth road, Canal and Railway

Excellent view of start of SECTION 3!

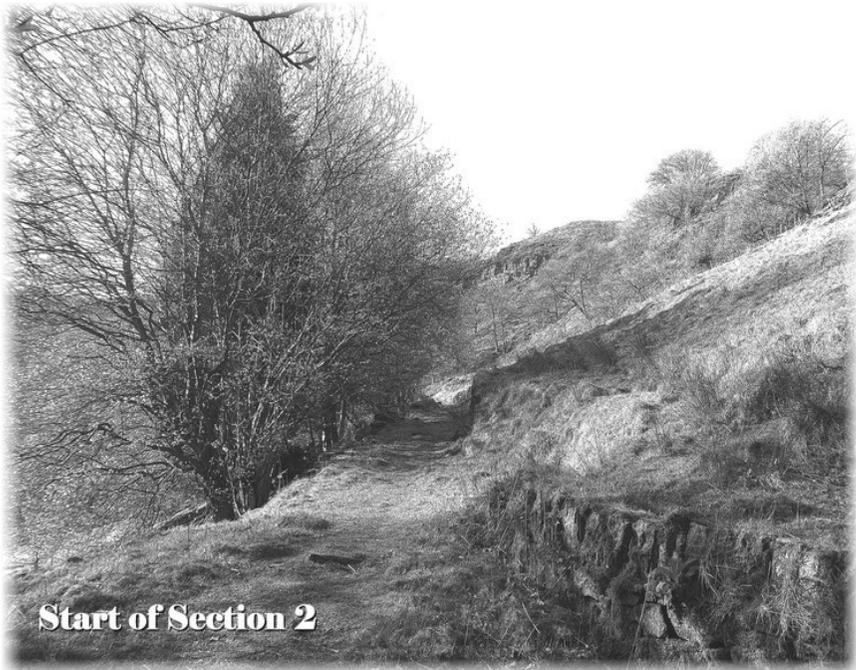
to 4681 Baccup Road at Gauchohne

to Rochdale/Manchester via Summit

Start of SECTION 3



**Frieldhurst Road
End of Section 1.**



Start of Section 2

SECTION 2.

Dawson Weir via Wet Shaw, Todmorden Edge, Edge End and Dobroyd Castle.

*If you are starting the section here you will have to take the Burnley bus out of Todmorden and get off at the stop just beyond the exiting Lydgate boundary sign (near Dundee Road), which marks the Start of **SECTION 2**. If you overshoot this to the next stop around the bends, you will have to retrace your steps down from the end of Frieldhurst Road (**SECTION 1**).*

*By the upward stop, there is a small pull-in for cars and a green area. Beside it, a footbridge crosses a little stream to a gate and stile, with a broad path heading upwards towards crags. This is the start of **SECTION 2**.*

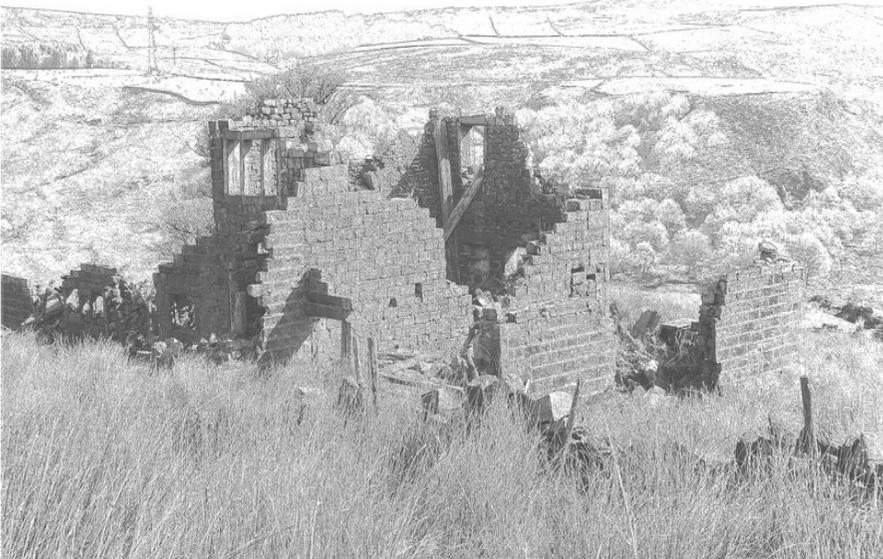
This 'little stream', incidentally is the infant River Calder, which rises not too far from here up beyond Cornholme and Portsmouth, its source being on the flat floor of the amazing Cliviger Gorge, a flat, 'dry valley' surrounded by steep (these days afforested) crags. This is the watershed. The gorge carries the road and the railway over towards Burnley. Soon, another stream rises *also* called the Calder. This is the *Lancashire* Calder – heading *westward* for the Irish Sea! Our eastward running *Yorkshire* Calder, is not always in evidence hereabouts, Having recently emerged from its often underground journey beneath most of Cornholme, it is now poised to gurgle out of sight beneath the boundary of Lydgate! Once upon a time there was no road or railway running up this defile. All the old ways, like everywhere hereabouts, ran over the upland 'tops', the valleys being left to their impenetrable wildness and flash flooding. The Industrial Revolution changed all that, making the Yorkshire Calder possibly the most 'mucked about' River in England! Prior to the steam age, the textile industries channelled its waters into their mill goits, for fulling, machine power and (eventually) electric lighting. Hereabouts Small industrial communities flourished with colorful local names like Vale, Pudsey, Lineholme, Lydgate and Portsmouth, much of them, (due to the constriction of the narrow valleys), being built over the ruthlessly culverted river. Today, the forest of chimneys and soot has gone. in spring and summer, there is charm, but in winter these narrow defiles can be dark, damp and depressing – frost holes with little sunlight. Back in the day, life hereabouts must have been 'oop North grim!

Our outward F/T route from the A646 seems initially to be heading towards the base of the huge crag that lies ahead, but after a short distance (at a waymark post), a second route suddenly appears, which veers steeply upwards to the right ascending to a steep, narrow path, leading (very!) steeply up the side of the gorge, following a curving route around the

*hillside, which eventually straightens out to lead up to the ruined farmhouse at **Roundfield**. At this point Hartley Royd and Mercerfield can be seen on the other side of the gorge.(in fact for most of **Section 2** you can see the outward route of **Section 1** across the Calder Valley).*

Roundfield is still an imposing ruin. It was derelict in 1984, having endured 41 years of rack and ruin! In the early 19th century it was the home of Sarah Fielden of Knowlwood, her husband being James Ratcliffe. They were hand loom weavers, but James was a man of greater practicalities, being something of an engineer. He created a dam up on the moor with water channels and a small water wheel to harness its power, which served to turn lathes and other woodworking machinery he had devised to supply the needs the domestic textile industry, primarily bobbins and shuttles. With the rise of the factory system however, and the decline of the domestic industry, the family gravitated to the valley, working as weavers and overlookers. Even in the mills, it seems their knowledge and skills were valued.

Roundfield



Beyond Roundfield, the route continues, and after skirting a plantation to avoid a bad area of bog, arrives at another ruined farmhouse. Here a distinct track becomes a gravelly farm road, leading to Wet Shaw, another one time Fielden abode which has being rebuilt in 1984, and today is well screened by trees and appears much more extensive than it did in 1984, when it was a bleak rough-and-ready cluster of vans and

*rickety sheds. The farm road continues onwards to **New Towneley**, which was the home of James Fielden, picker maker and his family.*

A picker maker was a specialized craftsman in the textile industry who crafted pickers, essential components for power looms. These pickers, typically made of leather in a variety of shapes and sizes, but sometimes of wood, were crucial for propelling and catching the shuttle, enabling the weaving process. Todmorden, in particular, was a centre for picker making, mushrooming with the development of the factory system and producing large workshops employing numerous people with huge production output well into the 20th century. Today pickers are still made in the traditional manner in India and China. (We will encounter more of this further along the **Fielden Trail**).



At the bottom of the large pasture immediately below New Towneley is the Eagles Crag or Bill Knipe, which drops off sheer into the gorge below. A path trace ran down to it 40 years ago, leading down to a fenced off stile (not hard to see why!) Today the Fielden Trail takes the defined right of way!

*At New Towneley a choice can be made. If you continue onwards, following the track, you will arrive at West End — just beyond which you will be able to follow a descending track which will rejoin the main route on its way to Todmorden Edge. This short cut will some take time and effort off the journey, but will deny you the opportunity of seeing a spectacular bird's eye view of Lydgate (Liggit!) in the Upper Calder Gorge and the now sadly reduced but still imposing edifice of Robinwood Mill, once one of the Fieldens' many spinning mills, but now probably the only one left. The **Fielden***

Trail takes the latter option and heads towards the valley. Take the easy option if you like, but I'm going to Robinwood Mill! (Safety Alert! If the weather is icy or wet, approach the following route with extreme caution! If the light is failing (or you suffer from vertigo!) ignore it altogether.)

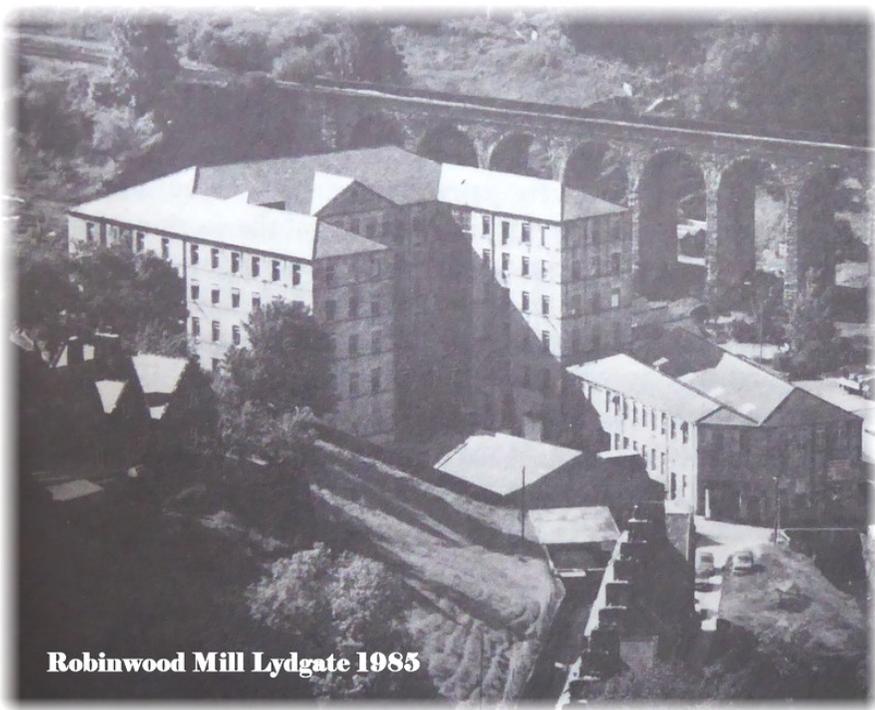
*From New Towneley, bear left through a gate and stile into a wide green pasture. Here there is no distinct route. Head diagonally onwards down the centre of the pasture to its opposite end (which is not obviously in view at first), to reach a gate gap, just before which you will encounter the remains at the original iron gate quietly rusting away in the grass! This will at least tell you that you are going the right way! As you pass through into the next field, you will see the path heading round to the edge of the (very) steep scarp. From here it descends diagonally (and steeply), a narrow trod capable of tumbling you down the hillside at the slightest trip or stumble! None of this was mentioned in the original **Fielden Trail**, because back in 1984, this section had a row of iron uprights and the remains of a handrail to help keep you safe. Sadly, this rotted away over the last 40 years, leaving only iron stumps hidden in the grass to create an even greater trip hazard. CROWS have made a sterling effort to rectify this situation, hacking out the remaining iron stubs, and installing a line of marker stakes. It still, however needs care! (Yeah I know! Old man harping on about safety - thats how I would have thought in 1984!)*

The path continues steeply down (and along) the slope, passing through gatestoops before heading round to join with the sunken road winding up to the ruins of Royd House. Just where it breasts the hillside, there is an excellent view back to Lydgate and the surviving part of Robinwood Mill.

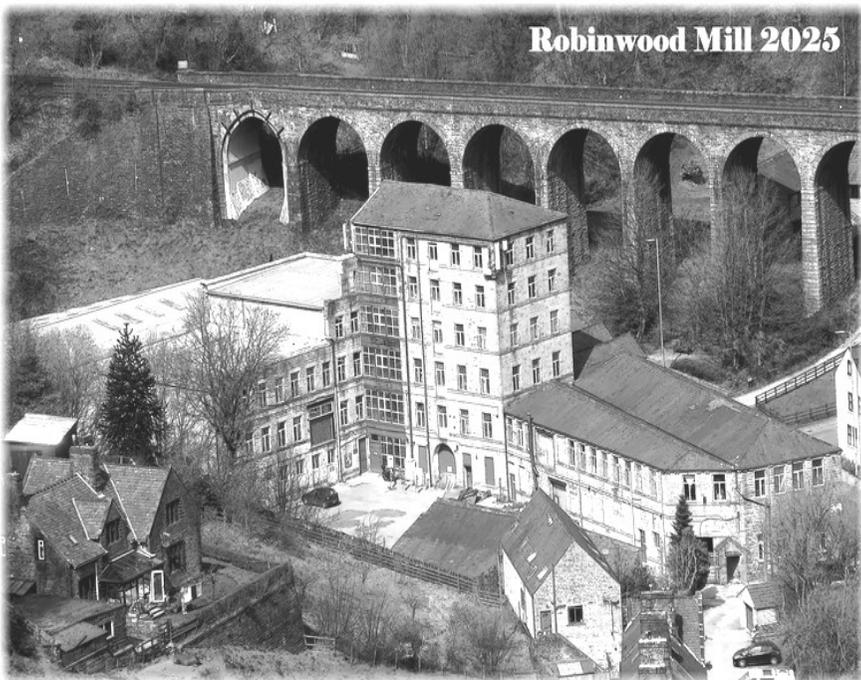
6. Robinwood Mill

This tall, grey edifice, nestling at the bottom of the valley, was once one of the Fieldens' spinning mills. Severely classical in design, it still manages to look imposing, despite the fact that half of it is now missing, having been partially destroyed by a suspicious fire in 1992. (Stephen Walker, director of one of the mills tenants, fled the country before his sentence after being convicted of trying to claim £5,000,000 insurance! Not long before then it had achieved fleeting fame, by being featured in an episode of '*Juliet Bravo*', which used locations all around Todmorden.)

What a handsome building it was. A cotton mill, yes, but quite unlike the **Mons Mill** further down the valley, which is more typical of a later generation of Lancashire cotton mills, those red brick giants which once



Robinwood Mill Lydgate 1985



Robinwood Mill 2025

dominated the landscape around Rochdale, Bury, Oldham and Manchester. Nearby is Fielden View and Robinwood Terrace, a uniform group of houses built in 1864, to house some of the Fieldens' workers and a villa, Robinwood House, to house the mill manager, built on a huge retaining wall towering over the mill. (See Pictures). The mill was originally built in the 1830s, by two brothers James and John Ramsbottom, plans by William Fairbairn of Manchester. They didn't keep it long. In 1844 the two men advertised the unused mill for sale. It was bought at auction in The **Golden Lion Inn** in Todmorden (for £3,900) in 1844, by 'John Fielden, the elder of the firm Fielden Brothers, cotton spinners and manufacturers of Todmorden', who quickly then developed and enlarged the complex for their own purposes, spending £34,000 and converting it to steam power over the next ten years. During this period it was described as having 30 horse power for much of the year from its mill goit (that is-water power), and proximity to Portsmouth Colliery, which provided its steam boilers with coal. Robinwood Mill never made any cotton cloth. It was given over entirely to spinning cotton, its sole purpose being to supply yarn for the Fieldens main Weaving shed at Waterside in Todmorden.

The Fieldens employed a substantial community in Lydgate. The mill continued to be run by 'Fieldens' family until 1960, when work ended. This period of course, marked the universal decline of 'King Cotton'. The Fielden family was forced to close the mill, because they couldn't compete with the cheap labour of third world countries like India and China, who with the advent of imported western spinning/weaving technologies, could now produce much cheaper goods of comparable qualities. Even to make a modest profit would need expensive hi-tech upgrading of machinery and streamlining, requiring completely new premises. As Robinwoods last Manager put it'-

"The buildings, although in good condition, are more than 100 years old. The disposition of the machinery over 6 floors of small area interferes with the material flow, resulting in excessive labour costs for material handling and supervision . In spite of all its handicaps, the mill is running at good efficiency, about average for a ring mill with old machinery."

Today, **Robinwood Mill** might seem a mere shadow of its former self, but looks can be deceiving! The surviving half of the mill is still in commercial use, and has been restored and modernised into a rental space that plays host to a number of small businesses, that include arts and crafts workshops, a pottery, a microbrewery and bar, a recording studio and various local enterprises. Despite all, the little community of 'Liggit' is still dominated by the mill and its adjacent railway viaduct, a masterpiece of 'alpine' railway engineering which towers above the deep, dark gorge.

At this point perhaps we ought to take a look at the cotton industry, which made the Fieldens their fortunes and is therefore closely bound up with the subject of this book. The cotton industry was literally created by self made men like the Fieldens between the years 1770 and 1840, in a period of spectacular growth. It continued to expand, reaching its peak in 1912 when 8 million yards of cotton were produced. After this date increasing foreign competition, along with various other factors, were to bring about the gradual decline of the industry. By 1803, cotton had already overtaken wool as Britain's leading export — quite an achievement for an industry based entirely on imported raw materials. The reasons for this sudden boom are varied. The invention of the Saw Gin by Eli Whitney was certainly a contributory factor to cotton's phenomenal growth, for it opened up a supply of cotton from the Southern United States at a time when other sources, for example the West Indies, were beginning to prove inadequate. U.S. growers consistently reduced their prices up to 1898, and this enabled Lancashire to create an industry which was to make the whole world its market.

Why Lancashire? Basically because it had all the right qualifications: cheap land, coal, and soft water which was ideal for bleaching, dyeing and printing, not to mention the powering of machinery. In Liverpool, facing the Americas, 'King Cotton' was to find his port, and in Manchester his market. In Lancashire there were fewer restrictive practices like guilds and ancient corporations to hinder the development of the new industry. In many ways pre-industrial Lancashire was rough, wild and poorly developed, but for the building of a cotton industry conditions were ideal, and, when it came, the growth was simply phenomenal.

The technology which made such a growth possible had been developing for some time. In 1733, the 'Flying Shuttle' devised by John Kay of Bury, triggered off a whole pattern of invention which was to transform the whole social and economic structure of those northern regions involved in textile industries. In 1760 came Hargreaves' 'Spinning Jenny', and in the 1770's Arkwright's 'Water Frame'. 1779 saw the invention of Crompton's 'Spinning Mule' and 1785 Cartwright's Power Loom. The development of the steam engine by James Watt ensured the gradual changeover from waterwheels and goits (artificial watercourses), to boilers and mill engines, with subsequent changes in the priorities of mill siting. The demand for coal rather than water and the need for inlets and outlets of raw and finished materials were to bring improved communications in the form of canals, and later, railways. The spate of inventions continued throughout the 19th century: Radcliffe's Dressing Machine (1803) prepared threads for weaving; Dickinson's 'Blackburn Loom' (1828) introduced picking

staves; The 'Self Regulating Mule'; 'Ring Spinning'; 'Northrop Looms'; 'Hattersley Looms', the list goes on, and on, and on.

The production of cotton cloth did not only involve spinning and weaving. The cloth had to be 'finished' and dyed, and a whole series of inventions and processes evolved to improve this area of the industry. Early methods of finishing were costly and slow. This was particularly true of 'bleaching', which in the late 18th century required many acres of grassland for exposing cloth to sunlight and water (crofting). Another process, 'bowking', immersed the cloth in alkaline lyes concocted from the ashes of trees and various plants. Cloth was 'soured' in buttermilk and washed in 'becks' filled with running water - all complex and time-consuming processes.

Then came the changes. In 1750 the use of dilute sulphuric acid reduced the time taken for souring by half. In 1785 the French chemist Berthollet devised a chloride of lime bleaching powder. New methods of mass-producing bleacher's materials like soda ash, caustic soda and chlorine gas were also introduced in the 19th century. 1828 saw the introduction of Bentley's 'Washing Machine'; and in 1845 Brook's Sunnyside Print Works in Crawshawbooth used steam power to carry the ropes of cloth through all the stages of the bleaching process. 1860 saw the use of caustic soda by John Mercer of Clayton-le-Moors to produce a silken finish on the cloth, known as 'Mercerisation', and in 1856 Perkins succeeded in extracting mauve aniline dye from coal tar, which up to that time had been a waste product from the gasworks. Previous methods of dyeing had involved up to 19 different processes, including immersion in cow muck!

The impact of all this development upon Lancashire was immense. The whole region was transformed where King Cotton held sway. Cotton brought new mills, machinery, houses, canals and railways. New communities came into being. The development of Todmorden from a small hamlet into a substantial mill town was almost entirely due to the cotton trade. The mill owner and his operatives were but the tip of the iceberg — a host of interests were involved, from engineers, architects and builders, to chemists, bankers and financiers. Cotton created a demand for textile machinery, steam engines and boilers, houses, gas, electricity and transport. As a result of the cotton boom, Britain's best engineering skills were concentrated in and around Lancashire; and Merseyside's chemical industry owes its origin to cotton's consumption of dyestuffs, bleaching powders and soap. Mining, ironfounding and glassmaking also served the cotton industry. Indeed, it seemed that King Cotton was everyone's employer.

Prosperity and growth however, were not the only new developments at the court of King Cotton. There were other, less agreeable

'innovations' like bad housing and sanitation, grinding poverty, child labour, dangerous working conditions, and, most significantly of all, unbearably long hours. "Overwork," wrote Leon Faucher in 1884, "is a disease which Lancashire has inflicted upon England, and which England in turn has inflicted upon Europe." It was in this context that the name of Fielden was to become universally esteemed, and to earn a fame far more enduring than that of mere charitable mill magnates, as we shall see. The Fieldens saw the benefits that might be derived from the factory system, but, unlike most of their class, they were painfully aware of the evils it created, and took steps not only towards easing the lot of the working man, but also towards his political emancipation, as we shall soon discover.

*By the remains of Royd House, which is now just a pile of stones overgrown with elder trees, we join with an ascending track in a gully which winds up the hillside, offering birds eye views of Centre Vale Park on our left. 40 years ago, across the road from the park, stood the magnificent **Mons Spinning Mill**. Mons was a much later mill than Fielden's at Robinwood, and was built on The Holme, a large open space where fairs and circuses were formerly held. It was demolished to make way for housing.*

Mons Mill 1984



The ascent continues (passing yet another ruin), until we arrive at a rusty old gate facing West End on the hillside, to the right of

another farm, Dike Green. (This is on the alternative route from **New Towneley**). If anybody decided to miss Robin Wood Mill from the itinerary and take the short cut, they should be waiting for you at **Todmorden Edge**. Now turn left (you will have to climb over the wooden gate) and follow a green track, which winds around the head of Scaitcliffe Clough, the stream itself emerging from a stone walled spring immediately beneath the rocky curve of the road, which passes into a large sheep pasture leading towards **Flail Croft**. CROWS have put a large waymark post in the middle of the pasture which the sheep have knocked down! They think you are leading them out of the pasture and if you turn your back on them and stop they will nudge your backside! Happily, at the far end of the field ,the exit stile appears far to the right of the field gate, at which point the sheep realise you are not letting them out and subsequently sulk off!

Beyond the stile, a path joins the farm road up to **Todmorden Edge** on the L. by the entrance to **Flail Croft**.

In 1707 **Flail Croft** was the home of Samuel and Elizabeth Fielden.They had moved from Todmorden Hall which was owned by his brother John. Their second son, Joshua,was born here in 1708. They lived at Flail Croft until 1714 before moving to nearby **Edge End Farm**. All the Fieldens at this time were Quakers, and were part of a large congregation of 'Friends' based round the (then) fairly isolated community of **Todmorden Edge**.



7. Todmorden Edge If Nonconformism had shrines then Todmorden Edge would certainly be one of them, for, like Shore across the valley, it has associations with both the early Quakers and the early Methodists. Quaker meetings were held at Todmorden Edge Farm and, as at Shore, there is a 'Quaker Pasture'. Early Quakers were persecuted, and Todmorden Edge saw its share of that. Henry Crabtree, who was curate of Todmorden in the 1680s, viewed the Friends with great distaste. With Simeon Smith, his servant, he surprised a number of Quakers from Walsden and Todmorden when met together at the house of Daniel Sutcliffe, at Rodhill Hey on May 3rd 1684. A fine of five shillings was imposed on each person present. As the fines were not paid, distraints were made on their goods. A month later, a meeting in Henry Kailey's house at Todmorden Edge was similarly disturbed and goods to the value of £20, an ark of oatmeal, and a pack of wool were taken.

Todmorden must have been noted for the number of Friends, for when those who declined to pay for repairs to the church and school at Rochdale were summoned by the Rochdale Churchwardens, it was stated that the majority of the offenders came from Todmorden, where Quakers were "both numerous and troublesome". Fortunately for the Fieldens and others of their faith, 1689 saw the passing of the Toleration Act, which enabled Quakers to register their meeting houses officially for the first time.

In the wake of the Quakers came the Methodists. On 1st May 1747, John Wesley preached at Shore at midday; then later, at Todmorden Edge Farm, he called "a serious people to repent and believe in the Gospel". The following year, on October 18th 1748, the first recorded quarterly meeting ever held in Methodism took place at Chapel House, Todmorden Edge, under the chairmanship of that noted religious firebrand William Grimshaw (who was curate of Todmorden before his more famous association with Haworth). Methodism obtained many converts, and the Friend's Meeting House at Todmorden Edge, along with a Meeting House and a Baptist Chapel at Rodhill End, were sold to the Wesleyans.

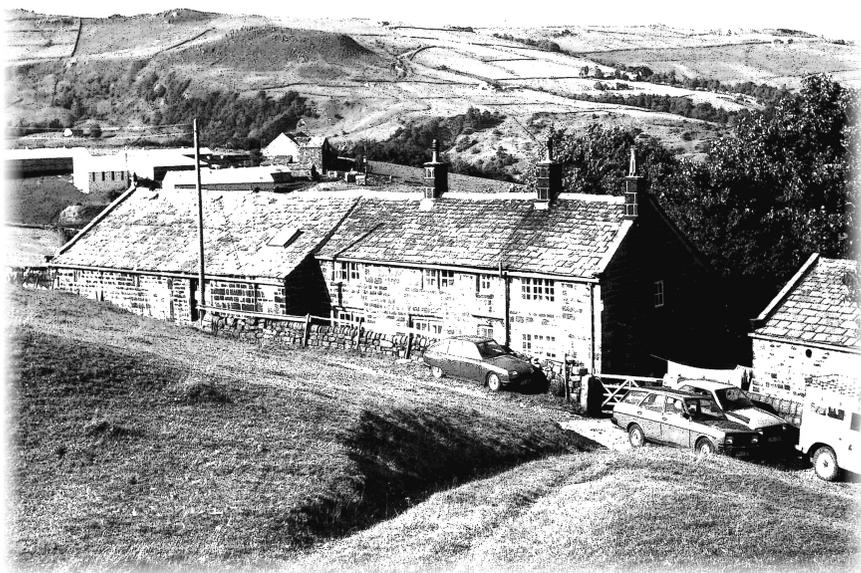
The Fieldens, unlike many of their Quaker brethren, were not converted to Methodism. They remained Quakers, but for all that, the Methodists were to play an important part in the establishment of Unitarianism in Todmorden, with which the Fieldens were actively involved.

From Todmorden Edge the *Fielden Trail* moves on to *Edge End*, the home of Todmorden's first industrial entrepreneur, and father of 'Honest John' Fielden — Joshua Fielden of Edge End. As we leave Todmorden Edge with its Wesleyan associations, it is perhaps worth

bearing in mind that John Wesley, for all his goodness and unwavering faith, went so far as to recommend child labour as a "means of preventing youthful vice". John Fielden, who was born 36 years later in 1784, would hardly have agreed with such a sentiment.

*On meeting the **Calderdale Way** by the stables at Todmorden Edge Farm, bear right, following the concreted farm road past a white gate to where it meets tarmac at Parkin Lane. From here the route continues without difficulty (following the **Calderdale Way**) to:-*

8. Edge End Farm



At Edge End Farm, we come to an important chapter in the Fielden story. Here is the scene of the Fielden's transition from farming and wool to industry and cotton. This low, embattled stone farmhouse hugging the hillside, was where the Industrial Revolution in Todmorden was born. The initiator of the chain of events which was so greatly to transform the fortunes of both the Fieldens and those around them was Joshua Fielden, 'Honest John's' father. Joshua Fielden was not the first of that name, nor would he be the last. His second son was called Joshua, and he was to have a grandson and a great grandson of the same name. As if that was not confusing enough, we also find that his father, grandfather and great grandfather were also called Joshua! Because of this I have found it

necessary to number all these 'Joshuas' in the hope of lending at least a little clarity to a confusing and misleading situation.

Back at Hartley Royd, we discussed Abraham Fielden of Inchfield who married Elizabeth Fielden of Bottomley in the early 17th century. Their third son, Joshua Fielden of Bottomley, although not the first Fielden to bear that name, was certainly the first Joshua in his line, so for that reason I have referred to him as Joshua (I). From him the Joshua Fieldens of Bottomley and Edge End run as follows:

JOSHUA FIELDEN (I) of Bottomley Quaker. Received Bottomley from brother John of Hartley Royd. Died 1693.

JOSHUA FIELDEN (II) of Bottomley. Died 27th February 1715.

JOSHUA FIELDEN (III) of Edge End. Born Bottomley. Died at Dobroyd. (1701 - 1781)

JOSHUA FIELDEN (IV) of Edge End and later Waterside. (1748 - 1811).

From this we can see that 'Honest John's' father was the fourth successive Joshua in his line. Joshua Fielden (IV) was a Quaker like his forebears, and who lived in "a bleak, pious fashion" at Edge End Farm. His uncle Abraham (1704-79), had inherited property at Todmorden Hall (this is a connection we will explore later) and was actively involved in the domestic textile industry. Joshua too, like most of the farmers around him, was involved in the production of woollen cloth, which was the traditional occupation of the whole district. By the mid 18th century the domestic system of cloth production had reached the height of its importance. Originally the farmer/weaver simply produced his cloth at home and carried it to market (a cloth hall had been established as early as 1550 by the Waterhouse family of Shibden). Soon however, the business diversified and expanded: weavers collected into small settlements, the weaving hamlets linked by causeys and packhorse ways; while local merchants often acted as middlemen, selling raw wool to the weavers and buying back the finished cloth. As a result of this, in the 17th and early 18th centuries prosperous clothiers' houses began to appear, many of them with a "takkin' in shop" alongside. By the mid 17th century Halifax had its own cloth hall, but did not completely supersede the Heptonstall one until the Halifax Piece Hall was opened in 1779.

Joshua Fielden, like most farmer/weavers in the Upper Calder Valley, had to work hard for his living. He attended Friends' weekly meetings at Shoebread, farmed, wove his cloth and every weekend walked to the Halifax market and back with the cloth 'pieces' on his shoulders, a distance of 24 miles. Yet times were changing in the latter years of the 18th century. Maybe Joshua was getting a bad back and sore feet, or perhaps he simply had an eye for the main chance. Whatever his reasons, Fielden realised (in the words of J. T. Ward) that "Todmorden's

geography permitted its embryonic industrialists to choose between cotton and wool." It was time to make that choice and Joshua chose cotton, a new material that perhaps offered more exciting prospects than the stolid, traditional pursuits of his forefathers.

Whatever his reasons may have been, Joshua Fielden turned his back on Halifax and was drawn westwards to the markets of Bolton and Manchester. It was time to break away from the established way of things.

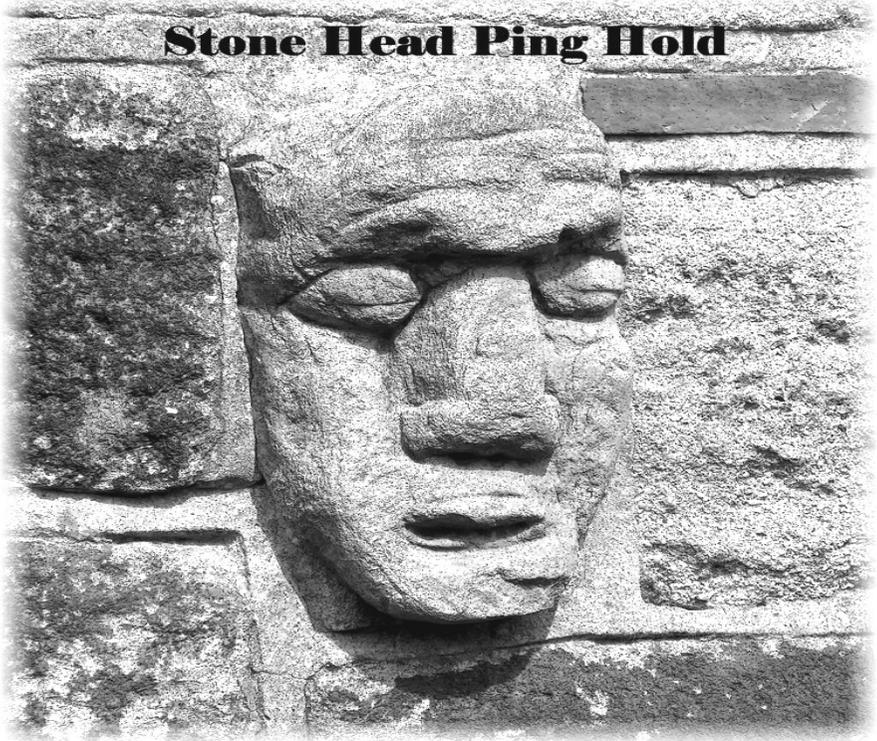
In 1782 Joshua Fielden (IV) sold Edge End, packed his bags, bought some spinning jennies and established his cotton business in cottages at Laneside. He could never have realised that in embarking upon this uncertain, risky venture, he would be laying the foundations of an industrial empire destined to be one of the largest in the world, and that his children would succeed to a wealth and fame far beyond his wildest imaginings.

*From Edge End, we continue onwards to the pretty gardens of **Ping Hold** on our L., which once had, as its name suggests, a pinfold, where stray animals were kept until they could be claimed from a 'pinderman' on payment of a fine. Of much greater interest however, is the collection of gruesome looking stone heads set into the front wall of the building.*



Stone Head Ping Hold

Stone Head Ping Hold



Now stone heads set on buildings are by no means unique in the Todmorden area. They are in fact, quite indigenous to Northern England, being found on stone farm buildings all over the South Pennines. There is a fine and somewhat ghoulish collection of them in the Cliffe Castle Museum in Keighley, largely unearthed from gardens in the Bradford area! Antiquarians believe them to be Celtic in origin, although on somewhat flimsy evidences - It is known that Celtic peoples (locally Brigantian) believed the head was the vessel of the soul, and consequently often took their enemies heads in battle to use as sacred drinking vessels. Also it is suggested that features on some of the heads - flowing moustaches for example, are suggestive of Celtic art motifs. Of course the stumbling points are their lack of uniformity and the complete impossibility of assessing their age. (I have a stone head on the wall of my cottage in Mytholmroyd over the door – I bought it at Gordon Riggs Garden Centre in Walsden for the Mytholroyd Boggart Trail - the obvious giveaway being that it is made of moulded concrete!) These (3) gentlemen at Ping Hold, however, are the real deal and as sinister and mean looking as they should be!

From here the lane continues onwards, passing the strange, crenellated turrets of the 'model farm' on the Dobroyd Castle Estate. Model Farms

(sometimes known as Demonstration Farms), were a distinctively Victorian educational institution, especially in new industrial areas like Todmorden which began to develop populations increasingly out of touch with farming practices. They were the rural version of what you might call a 'Skillcentre.' The 'keep' presumably was a barn and the two rectangular domestic buildings are now cottages. It remains as a fine monument to the relentlessly educationalist principles of the Fieldens.

Dobroyd Castle Home Farm



*Further along we quickly reach a large house today completely surrounded by trees (It was less so in 1984). It is characterised by iron railings and a boulder outcrop that seems to be almost supporting the house! It is called (appropriately enough) **Stones**.*

At **Stones** once lived another Quaker family, the Greenwoods, who were substantial landowners hereabouts. The Stones' Greenwoods originated from Middle Langfield Farm, which was the home of John Greenwood from 1675. In such a closely knit community as this, it was inevitable that sooner or later they would find themselves in dynastic alliance with their neighbours, the Fieldens, and so it was that on 4th June 1771 Jenny Greenwood, daughter of James and Sarah

Greenwood of Langfield, married Joshua Fielden (IV) of Edge End at the local Friends' Meeting House. The union was fruitful, as she had five sons and four daughters (one of which died in infancy). The third son of her brood was to find lasting fame. He would grow up to become known as 'Honest John' Fielden, humanitarian, Member of Parliament and factory reformer.



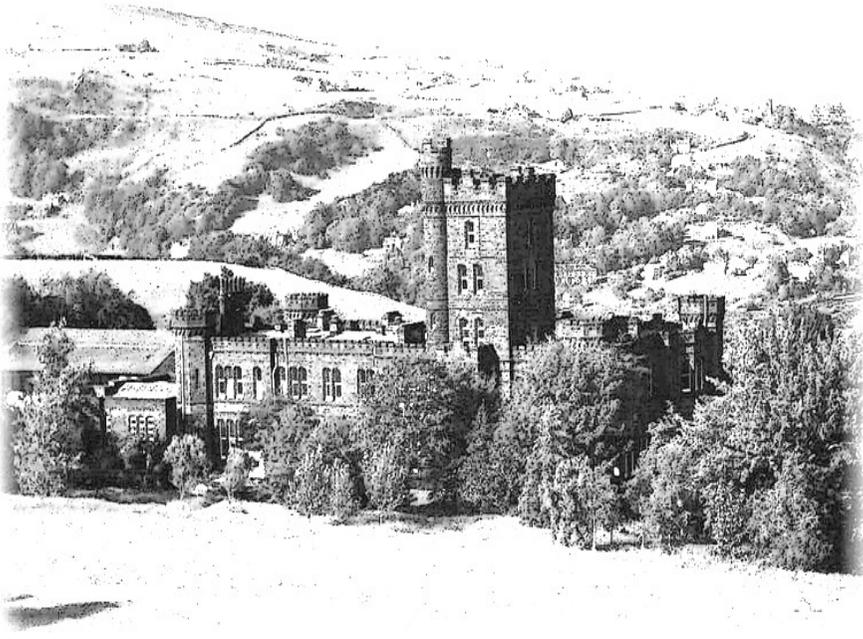
Beyond Stones, follow a gradually descending gravelly lane, lined with occasional groups of trees. On the right is a TV mast, and on the left, when the track bears slightly to the right, we see (pic) an extremely good view of:- Dobroyd Castle. Sadly this was in 1984. Today all you can see is the top of the tower sticking out of the trees!

9. Dobroyd Castle. Residence of John Fielden JP of Grimston Park, 'Honest John' Fielden's son.

Dobroyd Castle is the second of the 'great houses' which were the residences of 'Honest John' Fielden's three sons. Stansfield Hall was, as we have seen, the residence of the youngest son, Joshua Fielden of Stansfield Hall and Nutfield Priory, Surrey. Dobroyd Castle, most certainly the grandest of the three houses, was the residence of the middle son, John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle and Grimston Park,

Leeds. It was built between 1865 and 1869 at a cost of £71,589. When it was completed, 300 of the workmen involved in its construction were treated to a celebration dinner at the Lake Hotel, Hollingworth Lake. Like most of the Fieldens' later buildings, it was designed by

Dobroyd Castle 1984



John Gibson, who also designed Stansfield Hall. The story goes that the Castle, (which has 66 rooms and stabling for 17 horses and 17 acres of land) was built for love of John Fieldens first wife, Ruth, but the story did not have happy ending as we will eventually see.

John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle, was a landowner in the grand style. He was appointed High Sheriff and J.P. in 1844. (However, his father had refused to take a justices' oath in protest at the new Poor Law). By 1873 he owned 405 Lancashire acres and 2848 acres in Yorkshire. Ten years later his total rental was £9000. His grandfather Joshua (IV), the 'embryonic industrialist', had taken the Fieldens into the town. Grandson John returned them to the soil once more, but as landed gentry. John Fielden J.P. was the last surviving of 'Honest John's' three sons, dying in July 1893 at the age of 71. He had spent

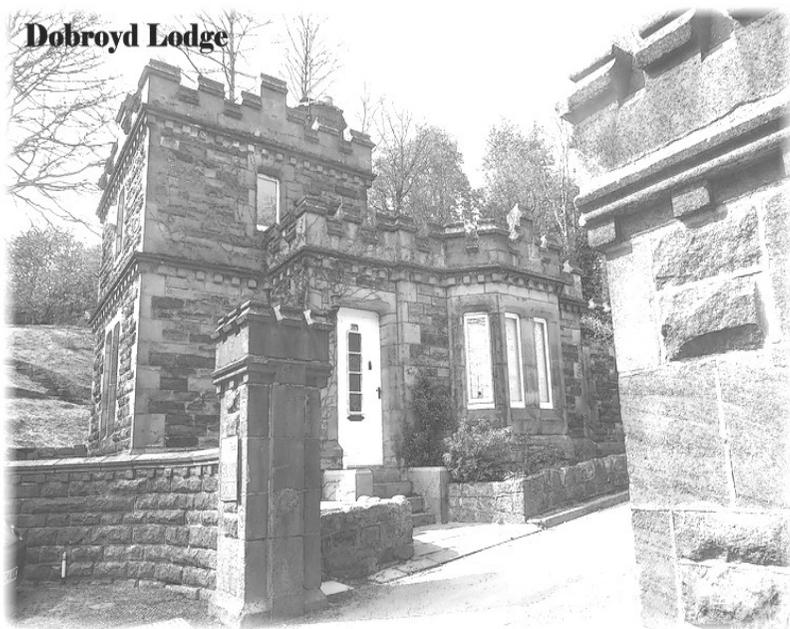
much of his life in a wheelchair as a result of a riding accident which shattered his leg. He was twice married, and in this context is the subject of an interesting story we will encounter further along the *Fielden Trail*.

Dobroyd Castle since those days has had a somewhat chequered career. It was purchased by the Home Office in the 1940's and became an approved school. In 1979, it became the privately run 'Castle School'. After closure in 1989, it was empty for six years, and starting to exhibit the signs of the incipient neglect and decay that all too often besets the grand houses of the Victorian Era. In 1995 however, it was finally purchased for £320,00 by the new Kadampa Buddhist Tradition, an international Buddhist Union founded by Kelsang Gyatso in 1991. Dobroyd was home to about 20 monks and nuns, and offered meditation and spiritual teachings to anyone inclined to visit. (ref. Conishead Priory Ulverston). The castle was used by Buddhists until 2007, whereupon there was once again uncertainty about its future, its roof needing repairs to a cost of around £200,000. Finally, in 2009 the building was acquired by Robinwood Activity Centre Ltd at a price of over two million pounds and was converted into an activity centre, offering all kinds of sports and outdoor facilities for residential outings by schools and interested parties. We most hope that this highly significant and beautiful building now has a rosy future.

*After surveying Dobroyd Castle, continue onwards, following the **Calderdale Way** down Stones Road, passing a barn and cottage on the left. This is **Pex House**. Originally called Pighill, it was a substantial farm at one time. It ceased to be when it was sold to John Fielden in 1865, who at that time needed land on which to build his castle. The house was then occupied by Peter Ormerod, father of William Ormerod, the second mayor of Todmorden.*

*Beyond the barn, the descent becomes steeper, passing the entrance to the (former) Lobb Mill Quarry and the road soon emerges onto a hairpin bend, perched precipitously on the edge of the valley overlooking Gauxholme. Looking onwards down the valley you can see the outward ascent of **SECTION 3**, winding steeply up the hillside en route to Inchfield and Walsden. Immediately below us, as we round the bend, looking almost like a scale model, the Rochdale Canal passes beneath the great skew bridge which carries the railway onto the Gauxholme Viaduct. Here is civilisation at last—mills, terraced houses and the sinews of industry. Beyond the **lodge gate** leading up to Dobroyd Castle, the metalled road bears sharply right and descends as Pexwood Road to the A681 Bacup Road at Gauxholme, where it briefly meets up with **SECTION 3** of the *Fielden Trail*.*

*Our route however, continues **onwards**, (sign 'No Through Road'), a meandering descent through woodland towards Todmorden above the railway.*



*Below, alongside the main road, can be seen the cottages at **Laneside** in which Joshua (IV) set up his cotton business. (SECTION 3).*

Even the railway below us was utilised by the Fieldens' ever expanding industrial empire (they were after all directors of the railway company). When the railway embankment began to subside in the early 1880s, The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Company were obliged to construct a huge double retaining wall to securely carry the railway high above the Rochdale Canal. It also carried Sidings which ran directly into the Fieldens two warehouses at Dobroyd, where an overhead gantry carried consignments to and from the mills. high above the canal. The retaining wall was constructed from four million bricks, today it is known as 'The Great Wall of Tod!'

Finally, we meet up with the railway line. From here, in 1984, a pedestrian level crossing led over the shiny tracks with wicket gates to open at either side, with notices warning you to look right and left (.....,or was it left and right?). Happily for us (but not until some poor sod got killed crossing one!), the authorities felt they had to deal swiftly with these types of crossing, and so now this one is replaced by a safe overhead footbridge.

*Having crossed the railway, bear left down Dobroyd Road. Soon, an old stable block appears on the right, and just beyond it the route passes over the canal to emerge on the busy A6033 Todmorden-Rochdale Road at the side of **Dawson Weir**, which is the substantial Georgian house on the left.*

10. Dawson Weir

At Dawson Weir we stop and reflect awhile, for we have reached yet another chapter in the Fielden story. (If you are in need of refreshment to assist this reflection, and if the hour be right, you can cross over the road to the cafe in nearby Morrisons).

Dawson Weir was originally a hostelry known as the *Coach and Horses*. On 12th September 1811, 'Honest John' Fielden, third son of Joshua (IV) of Edge End and Laneside married Ann Grindrod of Rochdale at Rochdale Parish Church. He was 27 years old, newly married and seeking a home in which to settle down and start a family. The newlyweds set up house here in this fine three-storeyed Georgian house sandwiched neatly between the turnpike and the canal. This was an age when manufacturers still lived close to their workers, and John made a shrewd choice in settling here, right at the heart of the Fielden's expanding industrial empire. Dawson Weir worked for its living from the start. It had a (now vanished) crane to load cotton to and from the canal, and a walled up crane door can be seen in the fabric of the house.

I imagine Dawson Weir as being a happy household, echoing to the patter of children's feet and the murmur of kindly servants. John and Ann were certainly prolific, for in this house were born seven children — three sons and four daughters. The three sons were Samuel (b. 1816), John (b. 1822) and Joshua (b. 1827). The daughters were Jane (b. 1814), Mary (b.1817), Ann (b.1819) and Ellen (b.1829). The three boys of course were the 'three brothers', two of which we have already encountered at Stansfield Hall and Dobroyd Castle. Their father was the son of a successful manufacturer who would soon go on to acquire a uniquely individual fame as M.P. for Oldham and a radical reformer — but in these days, although vastly wealthier than many of their neighbours, the Fieldens were nowhere near attaining those trappings of the landed gentry which 'Honest John's' three boys would come to enjoy in later life.

Life at Dawson Weir must have been genteel and moderately comfortable; wealthy by the standards of old Joshua's generation, but quite bourgeois when set against the princely lifestyles of later Fieldens at Dobroyd Castle, Stansfield Hall and Centre Vale. The house looks rather like a parsonage — early 19th century middle class. A clergyman like Patrick Brontë would certainly have not found Dawson Weir above his

station, and indeed the lifestyle of 'Honest John's' family at Dawson Weir must have been very like that which is now observable down to the smallest domestic details in the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth.

But for some personal insights into domestic life there from the pen of John Fielden's second daughter, Mary, there would be little else to say in connection with Dawson Weir. But her words echo down to us!

There is nothing sensational in the letters, as they are, for the most part, the letters of a young and rather bossy nineteen year old 'big sister' to her 'kid brother' John at the St. Domingo House School in Liverpool. The letters do however, give insights into daily events in 19th century Todmorden. Here are some examples:

"Dawson Weir May 10th 1836.

My Dear John

You are a very naughty boy not to have written to me since you returned to school ... I hope after you receive this that you will write and tell me you are alive. I expect my father will be coming here in a little more than a week as the Members of the House (of Commons) have a holiday of about ten days for Whitsuntide. All here are pretty well — you can tell John that Sam has exchanged the old cow for that horse that Sam has heard speak of and John Collinge has been breaking it in, and tell John that John Collinge says he thinks it will soon be ready for ME to ride. It will just do for a



Dawson Weir

ladies' pony. Ask John if he does not think it will look a great deal better with me upon its back than with him.

The weather is so fine at present, it is a delightful change from the bad weather we have had. Sam is so industrious you cannot think — he often gets up at five o' clock in a morning and goes into the mill ...

Your affectionate sister, Mary Fielden.....

It is not so hard to imagine Mary with her new pony. No doubt her brother's friend had designs on it also, as she seems to be rubbing it in that she had 'bested' him in getting the pony! No doubt she kept it in the old stable block we passed on the other side of the canal.

Not all of Mary's letters brought news so cheerful. Disease and death were constant companions in an age where sickness was rampant, and medical knowledge and hygiene virtually non-existent. In the 1830s the average life expectancy was far lower than it is today. Infant mortality in particular was high, a fact which no doubt explains the tendency of people to beget large families. The Fielden children at Dawson Weir were luckier than many of their class, for all seven of them managed to grow up and take their place as adults; though their mother, Ann, died in 1831 when Mary was 14 (her youngest sister Ellen was only 2). No doubt she was, like many nineteenth century women, worn out with bearing children. In 1834, John Fielden took a second wife, Elizabeth Dearden of the 'Haugh' in Halifax. Whether or not Mary liked her new stepmother is unknown, yet by 1836 she was attending yet another funeral, within months of getting her pony:-

"Dawson Weir September 18th 1836.

My Dear John

You will be very surprised and very sorry to hear that we have had another of our friends taken from us — about half past twelve this morning my Aunt Lacy of Stoodley departed this life after an illness of more than a week . . . she had a paralytic stroke which deprived her of the use of her right side ... We saw my aunt yesterday — she appeared very ill and much altered in appearance since we had seen her the week before. My uncle Lacy is of course very much distressed — but wears the affliction as well as can be expected — Someone will write to you again, either tomorrow or Tuesday and inform you about your mourning."

Betty Lacy (nee Fielden), wife of Henry Lacy of Stoodley Hall, died at Stoodley Hall aged 60. She is buried in the Old Churchyard at Todmorden. The grim theme of sickness and death continues in other letters. Earlier in the same year, Mary expressed concern over the condition of her mother, (actually her stepmother, Elizabeth Dearden), who had

dropsy in the chest and was seriously ill. (Nowadays this would be diagnosed as severe bronchitis or pneumonia). The prescribed treatment for such a condition seems, to modern eyes, more severe than the condition itself:

*"Doctor Henny told her that she required the greatest care, attention and quiet, that she has not to walk much, not to go downstairs and not to go uphill. He ordered her a blister and some medicine. She has a blister put on every other morning and lets it remain on for 24 hours when she has it taken off and some healing ointment put on . . . She is at the Haugh and will remain there, I suppose, until she is better. She went last Friday ... I do not wish you to tell anyone what my mother's complaint is as she might not much like it, and it may be better not . . .
Your attached sister,
Mary Fielden."*

A 'blister' or 'blister plaster' was used medically in those days to raise blisters as a counter irritant — it was composed of a compound of Spanish Fly (cantharis), beeswax, resin and lard, to make an externally applied medication. Because of (or more likely despite!) this treatment, Mary's stepmother recovered, to die two years after her husband, in October 1851, at the age of 63.

By this time Mary Fielden had married in the January of the same year, at the age of 34. Her husband was John Morgan Cobbett, son of William Cobbett, the famous radical journalist and author, who was her father's close friend and fellow M.P.. John Morgan Cobbett had attended her father's funeral in June 1849, and had no doubt consoled the grieving daughter. Certainly the Fieldens were no strangers to the Cobbetts, for in one of her letters in 1840 Mary states that "Mr. James and Mr. Richard Cobbett came here on Saturday night — Mr. Richard went back to Manchester this morning, but Mr. James is still here. . . ". These were presumably John Morgan Cobbett's brothers. Perhaps Mary's husband-to-be was the John who was at school with her brother, the one she 'bested' over the pony. Who knows? Whatever the case may have been, they were certainly well acquainted.

After her wedding, Mary left Todmorden and went to live with her husband at Farnham, Surrey (where there is now a Cobbett Museum). She bore him two sons, John Fielden Cobbett and William Cobbett and a daughter, (also Mary). Mary was widowed in 1877 and died in 1896 outliving her husband by 19 years. She is buried at Farnham along with her husband and family.

We will leave Mary Fielden with an amusing but also sadly revealing anecdote. As Ian Dewhirst once pointed out in his *'History of Keighley'*, emigration caused by hardship, poverty and the threat of the workhouse, was a common phenomenon in the 1840s and '50s. Even the penniless could escape abroad for a consideration; it was so easy, in fact, that men would often ship out for California or the Cape of Good Hope, abandoning wife and children to the workhouse:

"Dawson Weir. March 23rd 1840. to John Fielden M.P.

*17 Pantom Square
Westminster.*

My Dear Father, have you heard that William Greenwood the grocer (who came to chapel) went along with Thomas Dawson to America. It is said that he is gone out of the way of his creditors because he is in debt — but I have heard that they can pay their debts, if they receive what is owing to them. He has left his wife and family behind, and is gone intending to buy a piece of land, and if he thinks he can do well he will either send for or fetch his family . . ."

*Hoping soon to hear that you are well, with love
to you & my mother,*

I am dear father,

Your very affectionate daughter,

Mary Fielden —

We can only speculate as to whether or not he ever did. Perhaps there is someone now living in some part of the United States who can supply the answer?

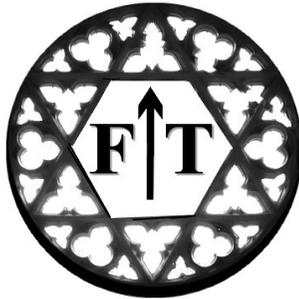
Dawson Weir (at least externally), today is little changed from when I photographed it back in 1984. It has, happily, acquired a blue plaque remembering 'Honest John'. At time of writing (July 2025), it was up for sale, and it being advertised online, the internet gave me a wonderful opportunity view it internally. Fireplaces, staircases, finely flagged ground floor and bits of the internal fabric peep out at you, but essentially the house is fully modernised inside with ensuite bathrooms, large fitted kitchen, office rooms, spacious lounges and multiple bedrooms – even a billiard room and a gym!. (Of course the downer is that there is only a small garden, and it stands beside a busy arterial road occasionally prone to flooding). But hopefully, its future should be assured by its historical significance!

*We have now reached the end of **SECTION 2**. If you parked your car at the start of Section 1, you will find it just five minutes walk away. Simply turn left for Todmorden Town Centre. If, however, your car is at the **beginning** of **SECTION 2**, you will have to follow the Burnley Road all the way up to Cornholme (catch the Burnley bus.)*

The Flailcroft Gang!

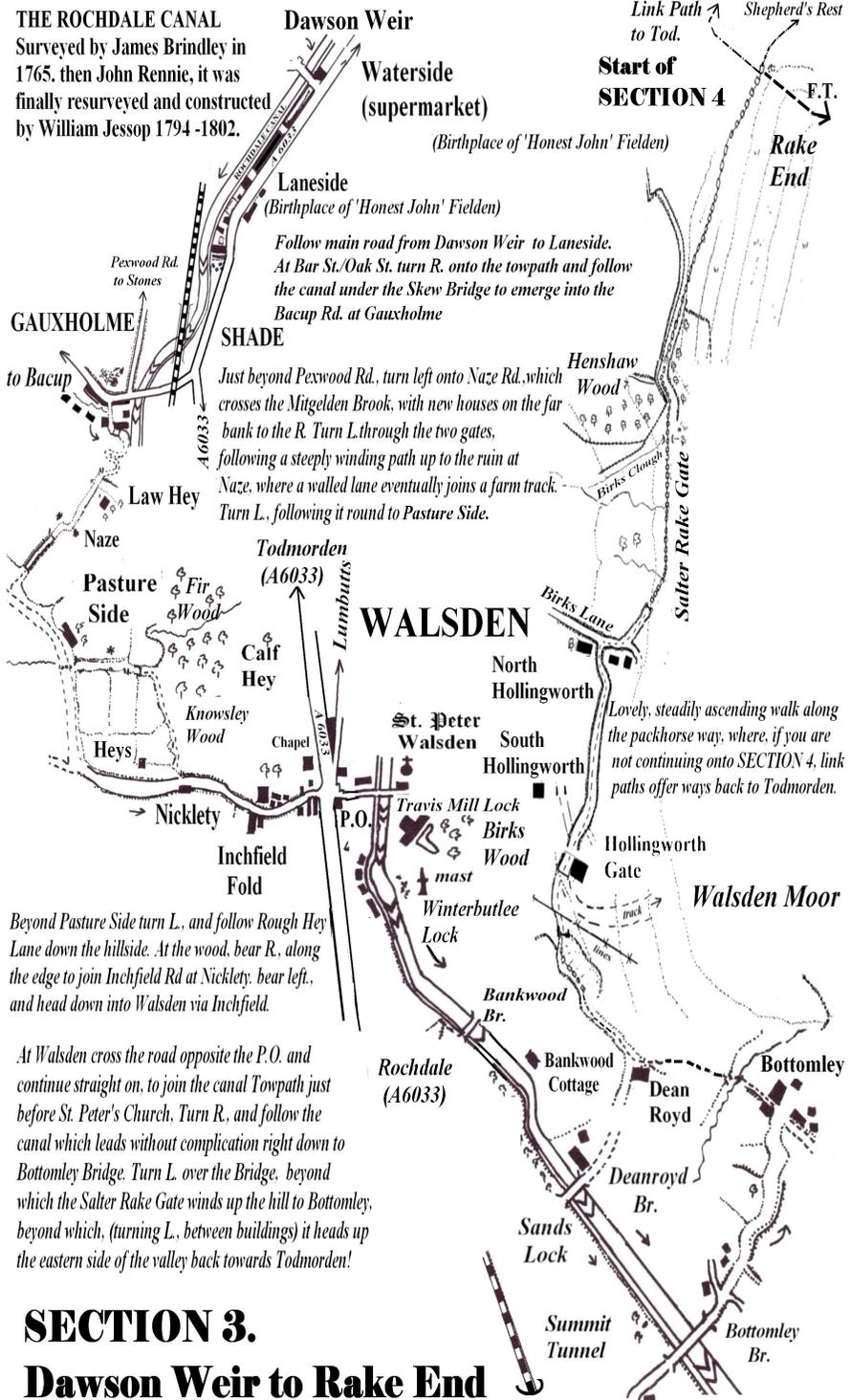


SECTION 3.



Dawson Weir to Rake End

THE ROCHDALE CANAL
 Surveyed by James Brindley in 1765, then John Rennie, it was finally resurveyed and constructed by William Jessop 1794 -1802.



Dawson Weir

Waterside
 (supermarket)

(Birthplace of 'Honest John' Fielden)

Laneside

(Birthplace of 'Honest John' Fielden)

Follow main road from Dawson Weir to Laneside. At Bar St./Oak St. turn R. onto the towpath and follow the canal under the Skew Bridge to emerge into the Bacup Rd. at Gauxholme

GAUXHOLME

to Bacup

SHADE

Just beyond Pexwood Rd, turn left onto Naze Rd, which crosses the Mitgelden Brook, with new houses on the far bank to the R. Turn L. through the two gates, following a steeply winding path up to the ruin at Naze, where a walled lane eventually joins a farm track. Turn L., following it round to Pasture Side.

Law Hey

Naze

Pasture Side

Heys

Todmorden
 (A6033)

Calif Hey

Knowsley Wood

Chapel

WALSDEN

North Hollingworth

South Hollingworth

Lovely, steadily ascending walk along the packhorse way, where, if you are not continuing onto SECTION 4, link paths offer ways back to Todmorden.

Nicklety

Inchfield Fold

P.O.

St. Peter Walsden

Birks Wood

Winterbutlee Lock

Hollingworth Gate

Walsden Moor

Beyond Pasture Side turn L., and follow Rough Hey Lane down the hillside. At the wood, bear R., along the edge to join Inchfield Rd at Nicklety, bear left, and head down into Walsden via Inchfield.

At Walsden cross the road opposite the P.O. and continue straight on, to join the canal Towpath just before St. Peter's Church, Turn R., and follow the canal which leads without complication right down to Bottomley Bridge. Turn L. over the Bridge, beyond which the Salter Rake Gate winds up the hill to Bottomley, beyond which, (turning L., between buildings) it heads up the eastern side of the valley back towards Todmorden!

Rochdale
 (A6033)

Bankwood Br.

Bankwood Cottage

Dean Royd

Bottomley

Deanroyd Br.

Sands Lock

Summit Tunnel

Bottomley Br.

Link Path to Tod.

Start of SECTION 4

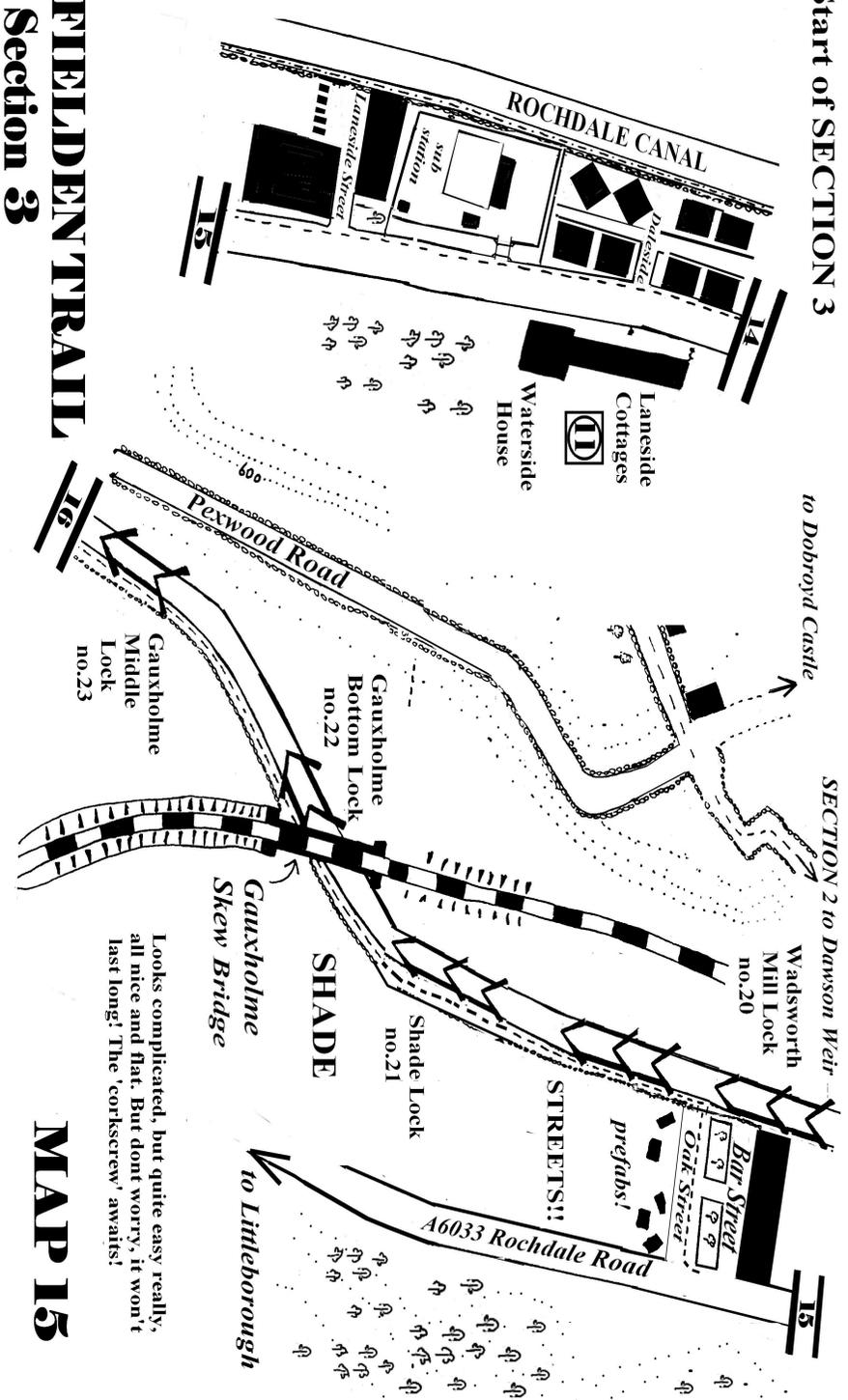
Rake End

F.T.

SECTION 3.

Dawson Weir to Rake End

Start of SECTION 3



**FIELDEN TRAIL
Section 3**

MAP 15

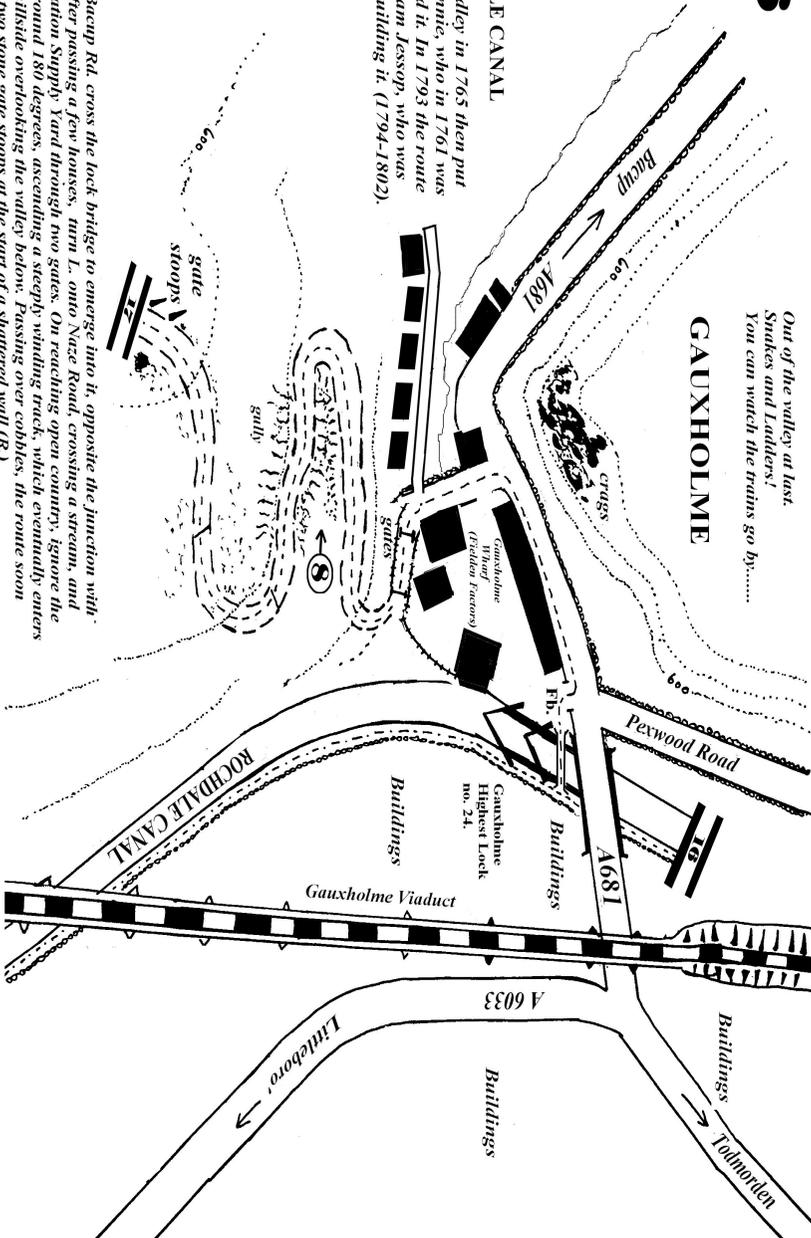
Looks complicated, but quite easy really, all nice and flat. But don't worry, it won't last long! The 'corkscrew' awaits!

MAP 16

*Out of the valley at last.
Snakes and Ladders!
You can watch the trains go by.....*

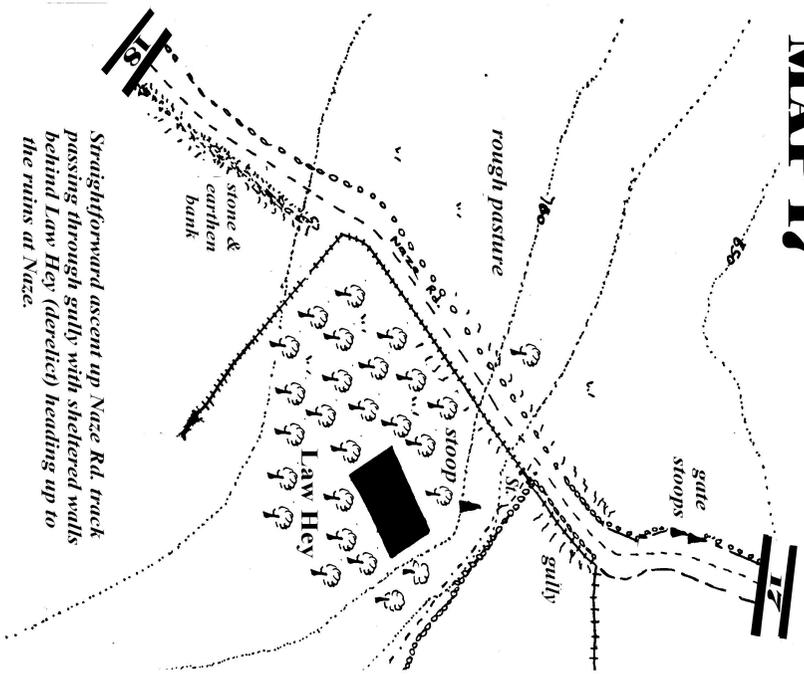
THE ROCHDALE CANAL

Surveyed by James Brindley in 1765 then put in the hands of John Rennie, who in 1761 was asked to design and build it. In 1793 the route was re-surveyed by William Jessop, who was finally responsible for building it. (1794-1802).



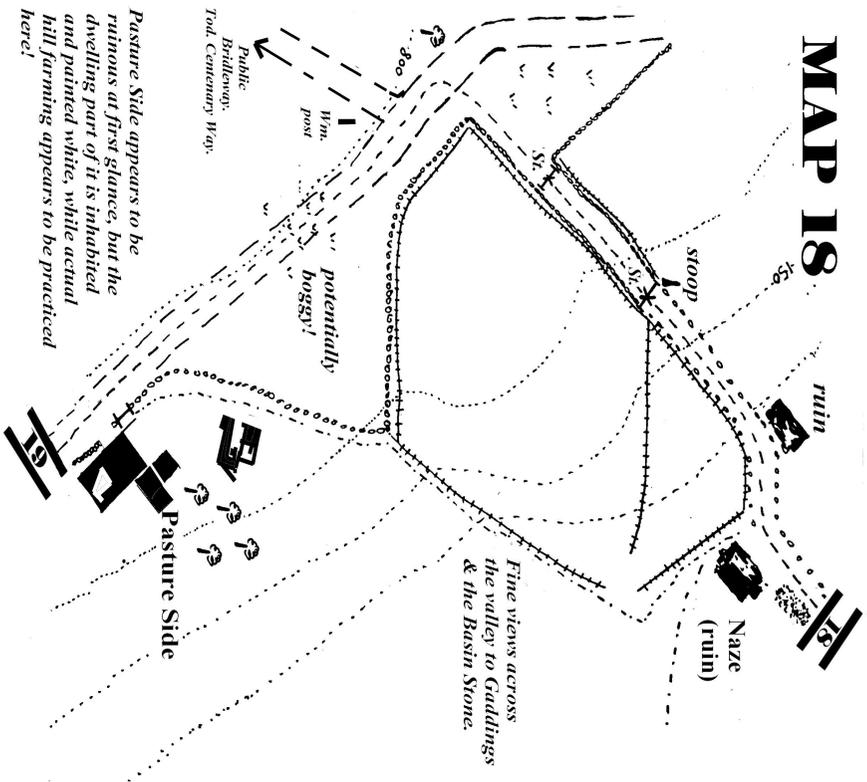
Having passed under the Bacup Rl. cross the lock bridge to emerge into it, opposite the junction with Pexwood Road. Bear L. After passing a few houses, turn L. onto Nice Road, crossing a stream, and passing behind The Navigation Shop. Yard through two gates. On reaching open country, ignore the route onward and double round 180 degrees, ascending a steeply winding track, which eventually enters a gully; to emerge on the hillside overlooking the valley below. Passing over cobbles, the route soon bears R. again, then L., to two stone gate stoops at the start of a staired wall (R).

MAP 17



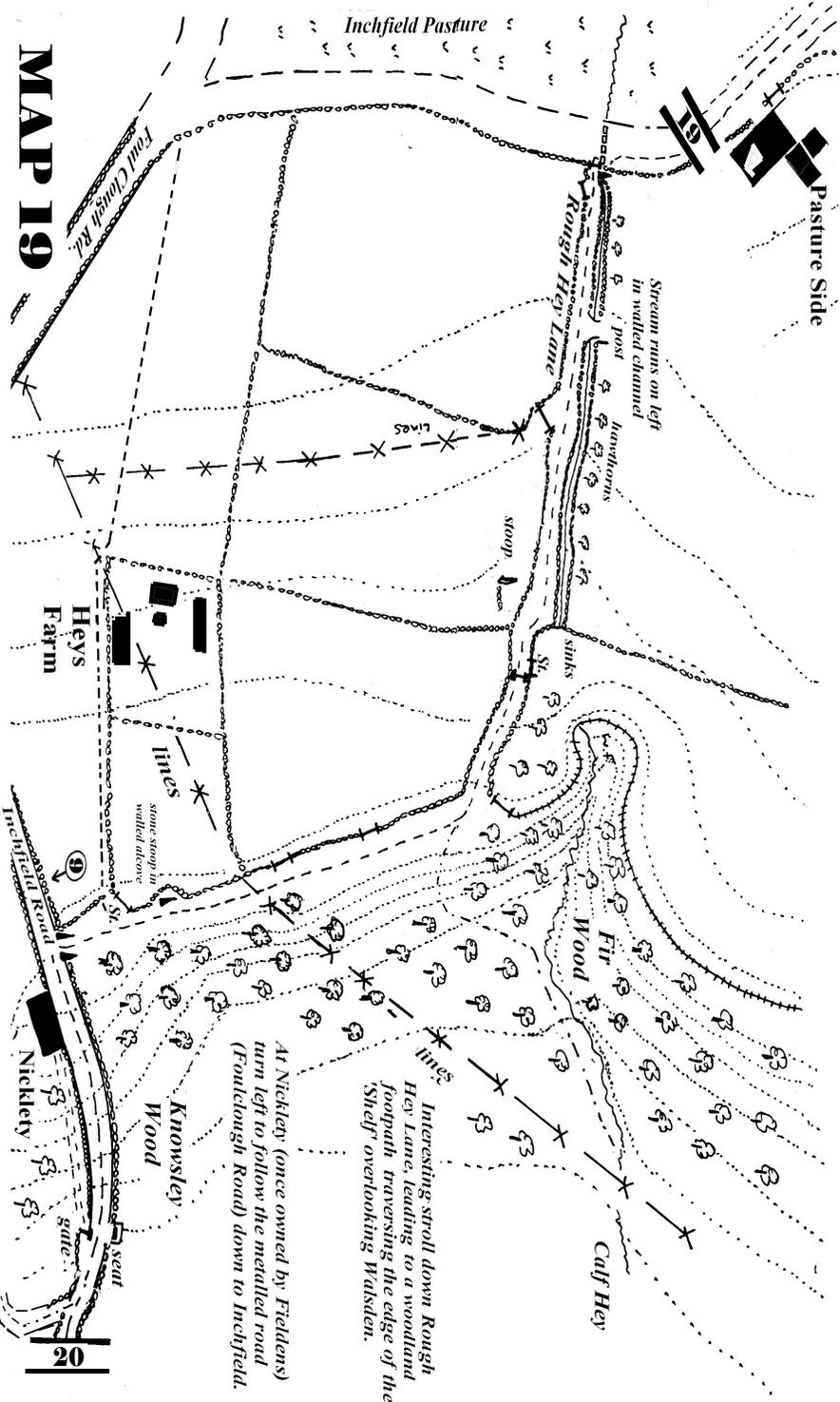
Straightforward ascent up Naze Rd. track passing through gully with sheltered walls behind Law Hvy (terrace) heading up to the ruins at Naze.

MAP 18



Pasture Side appears to be ruins at first glance, but the dwelling part of it is inhabited and painted white, while actual hill farming appears to be practiced here!

Fine views across the valley to Giddings & the Basin Stone.



MAP 19

Inchfield Pasture

Pasture Side

Stream runs on left
in modified channel

Rough Hey Lane

Heys Farm

Inchfield Road

Nickley

Knowsley Wood

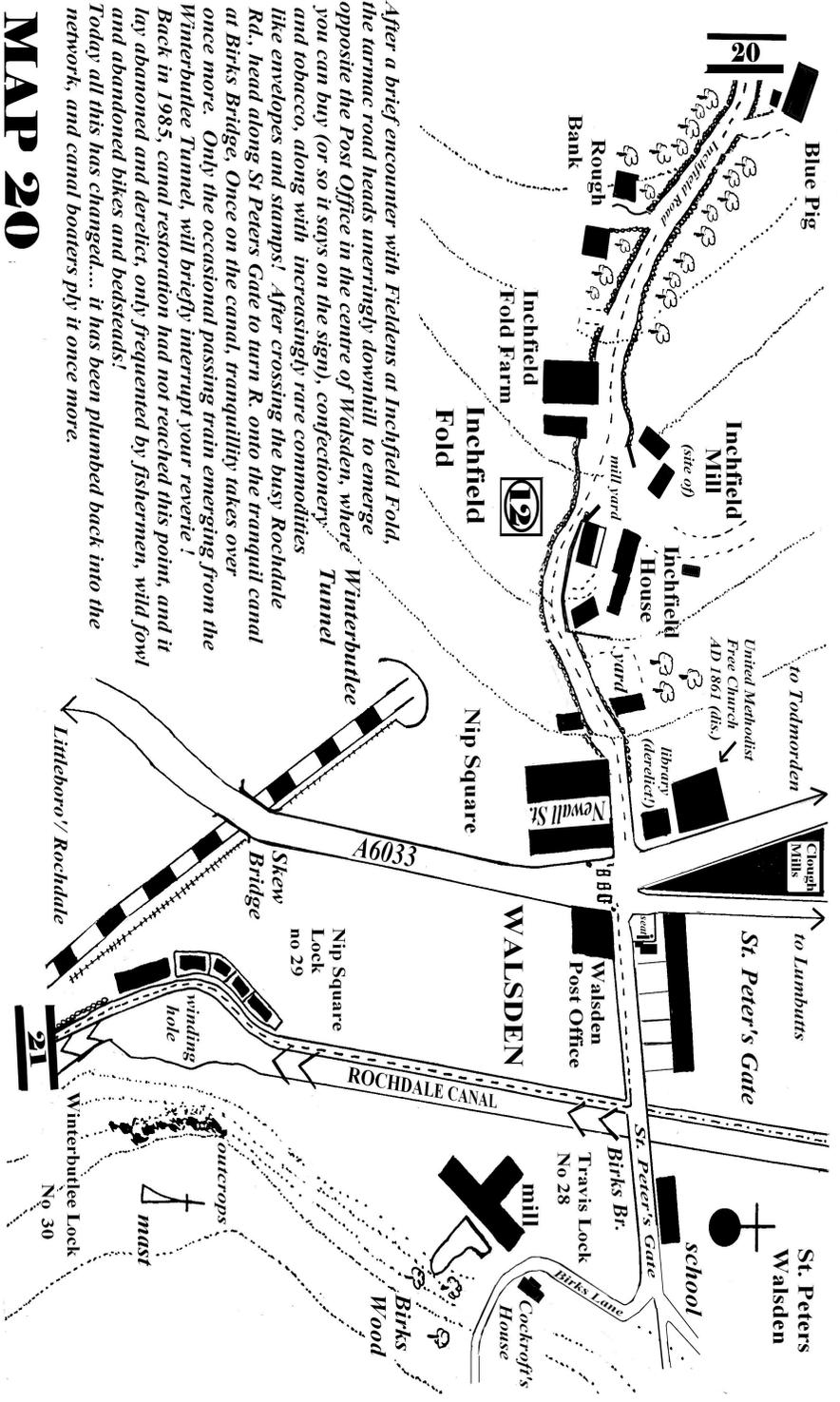
Fir Wood

Culley Hey

At Nickley (once owned by Fiddens)
turn left to follow the metalled road
(Foulclough Road) down to Inchfield.

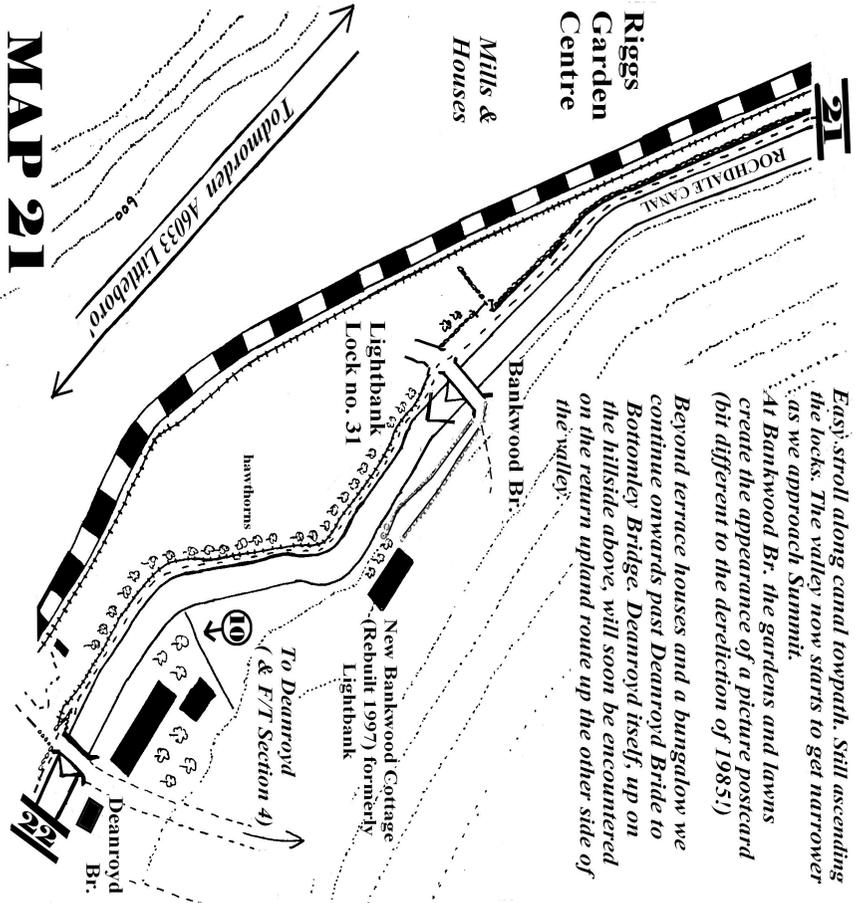
Interesting stroll down Rough
Hey Lane, leading to a woodland
footpath traversing the edge of the
'Shelf' overlooking Walsden.

20

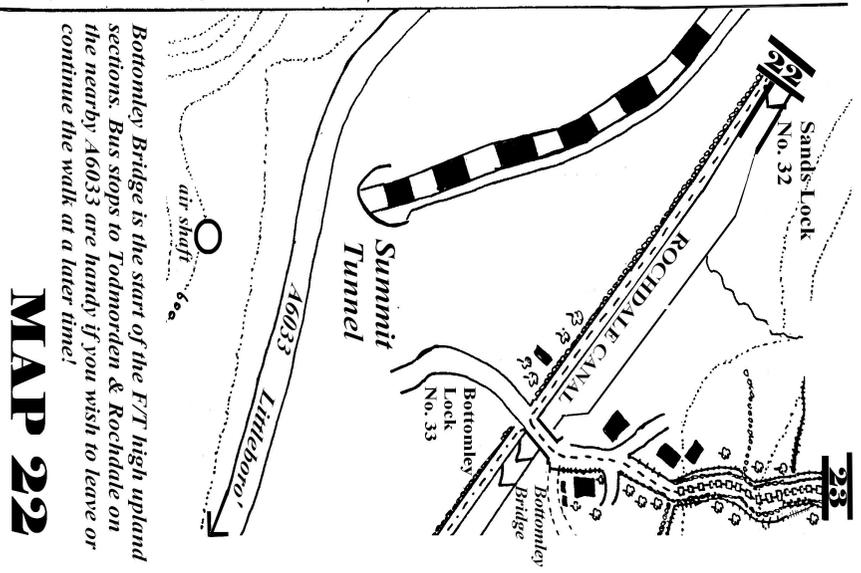


After a brief encounter with Fieldens at Inchfield Fold, the tarmac road heads unerringly downhill to emerge opposite the Post Office in the centre of Walsden, where you can buy (or so it says on the sign), confectionery, like envelopes and stamps! After crossing the busy Rochdale Rd., head along St Peters Gate to turn R. onto the tranquil canal at Birks Bridge. Once on the canal, tranquility takes over once more. Only the occasional passing train emerging from the Winterbutlee Tunnel, will briefly interrupt your reverie! Back in 1985, canal restoration had not reached this point, and it lay abandoned and derelict, only frequented by fishermen, wild fowl and abandoned bikes and bedsteads! Today all this has changed.... it has been plumbed back into the network, and canal boaters ply it once more.

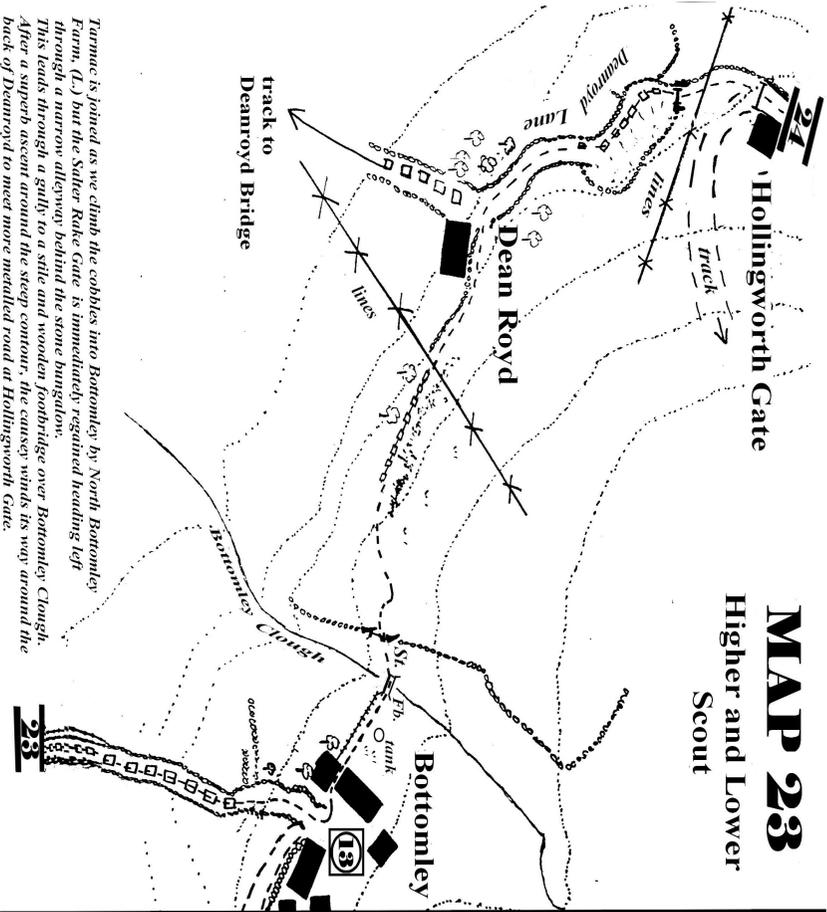
MAP 20



Easy stroll along canal towpath. Still ascending the locks. The valley now starts to get narrower as we approach Summit.
 At Bankwood Br. the gardens and lawns create the appearance of a picture postcard (but different to the dereliction of 1985!).
 Beyond terrace houses and a bungalow we continue onwards past Deanroyd Bridge to Bottomley Bridge. Deanroyd itself, up on the hillside above, will soon be encountered on the return upland route up the other side of the valley.



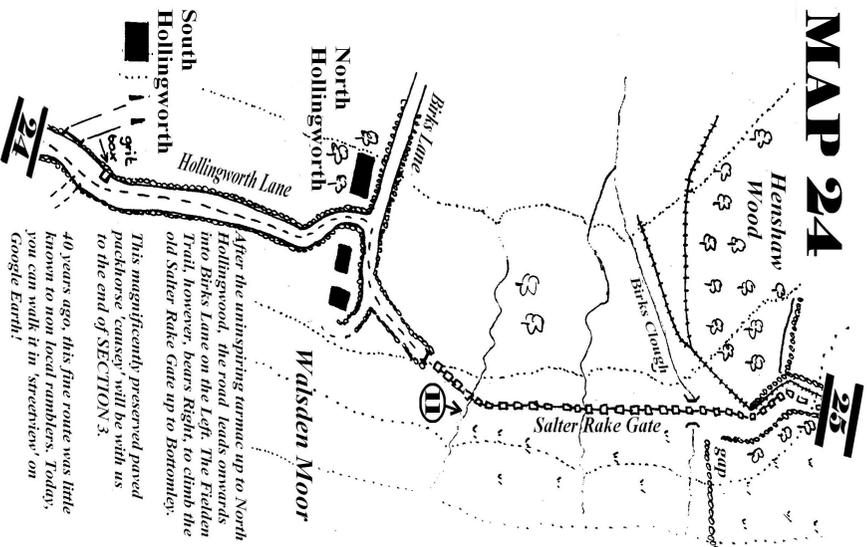
Bottomley Bridge is the start of the F/T high upland sections. Bus stops to Todmorden & Rochdale on the nearby A6033 are handy if you wish to leave or continue the walk at a later time!



Turnpike is joined as we climb the cobbles into Bottomley by North Bottomley Farm, (L.) but the Salter Rake Gate is immediately regained heading left through a narrow alleyway behind the stone barnyard.
 This leads through a gully to a stile and wooden footbridge over Bottomley Clough. After a superb ascent around the steep contour, the causey winds its way around the back of Deamroyd to meet more metalled road at Hollingworth Gate.

MAP 23

Higher and Lower Scout



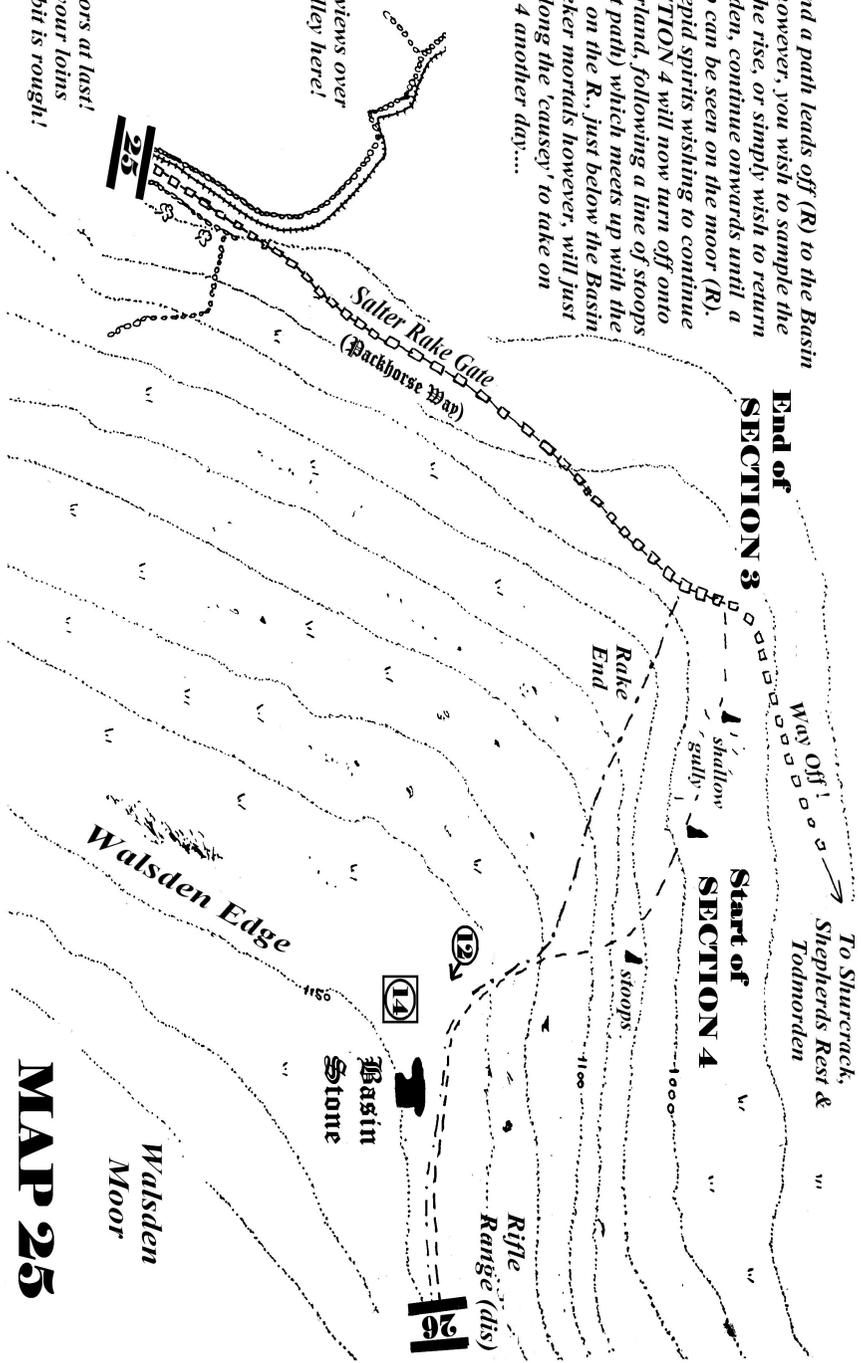
After the uninspiring turnpike up to North Hollingworth, the road leads onwards into Birks Lane on the Left. The Fielden Trail, however, bears Right to climb the old Salter Rake Gate up to Bottomley.
 This magnificently preserved paved packhorse causey will be with us to the end of SECTION 3.
 40 years ago, this fine route was little known to non local ramblers. Today, you can walk it in 'streetview' on Google Earth!

MAP 24

At Rake End a path leads off (R) to the Basin Stone. If, however, you wish to sample the view over the rise, or simply wish to return to Tothmorden, continue onwards until a stone stoop can be seen on the moor (R). Those intrepid spirits wishing to continue along SECTION 4 will now turn off onto open moorland, following a line of stoops (no distinct path) which meets up with the main path, on the R., just below the Basin Stone. Meeker mortals however, will just continue along the 'causey' to take on SECTION 4 another day....

Lovely views over the valley here!

High moors at last! Gird up your loins the next bit is rough!



End of SECTION 3

Start of SECTION 4

MAP 25

SECTION 3.

Dawson Weir to Rake End via Gauxholme, Inchfield, Walsden and Bottomley.

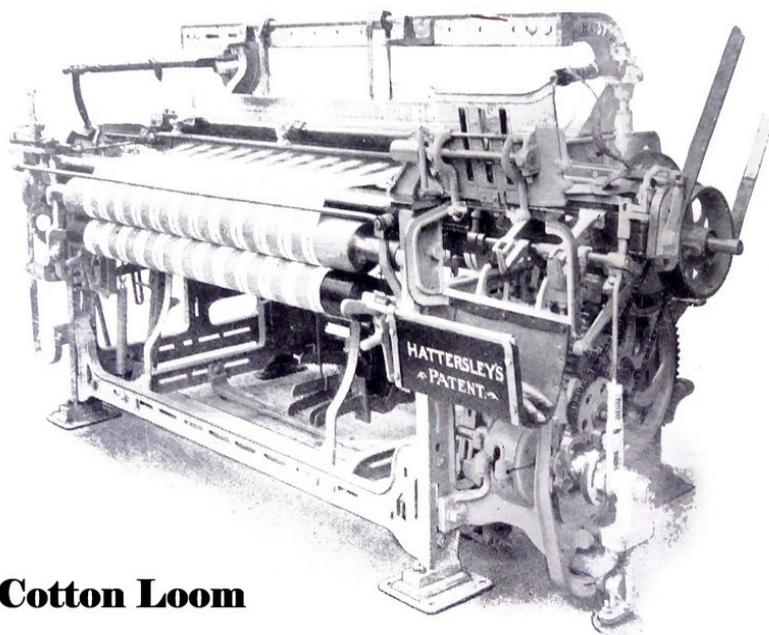
*Now if you wish to continue or are starting SECTION 3, follow the A6033 Rochdale road right from Dawson Weir. Just beyond Dobroyd Court, still on the right, you will pass some firemen's houses, with a beautifully carved Todmorden coat-of-arms over the front door. Opposite, on the other side of the road, was **Waterside Mills**, which once covered the area now largely occupied by the entire Morrisons Supermarket Complex, including the car-park downstream of our current position. I say 'downstream' because the Walsden Water (now running in the channel just across the road), was culverted beneath Waterside Mills, and supplied their mill pond. In 1984, there was a narrow footway on that side of the road, nudging the gaunt curving outer walls of the gutted factory, most of the sites innards having been in a state of progressive demolition since 1961, when it was finally closed. This was not the first Waterside Mill, being in fact the New Mill, the earlier mill on the site having been being seriously damaged by a mill fire in 1901.*

Waterside lay at the epicentre of the Fieldens huge Cotton Empire, which at its peak was running numerous cotton mills up and down the valleys providing yarn for their vast Waterside weaving sheds. In 1855, Fieldens owned 1,600 looms, 100,00 spindles and had a workforce close to 2000 people. It was originally founded by Joshua Fielden of Edge End and Laneside (who we encountered up at Edge End), and developed by his five sons, of whom John and Samuel were the most prominent, as we shall see. By the 1960s 'King Cotton' had gone. It could no longer compete with countries like India, who had reverse engineered exported British technology, and undercut profitability. After its final demolition the site was developed, and by 1987 had become a Safeways Supermarket. To its credit, the Supermarket chain respected local tradition by displaying a prominent portrait of John Fielden in its café, along with various historical photographs of old Todmorden. My daughters both worked in the cafe and on the tills there, and I would convey them to and from Mytholmroyd for their shifts.... I used to parody the Kate Bush song '*Rubber Band Girl*' while I was driving.

'Tod and back dad me.... I'm an unpaid Safeways employeeeee!'

Safeways was bought out by Bradford based Morrisons in 2003, and remains so today. Its cafe is still popular, but sadly all its historical images (apart from a solitary sepia print of Cornholme in

the entrance area to the toilets), have disappeared. 'Honest John' has left the building!



Cotton Loom

Proceeding onwards down the main road, almost opposite the car and lorry exit from Morrisons, we encounter a large, mill-like building, sporting the remnant of a very ancient looking clocktower and a yard opening on our right. This was the **Waterside Factory School**, established by 'Honest John' Fielden in 1827.

In that dark time, young children were universally employed in factories (and mines), working long hours in potentially dangerous conditions. There was no compulsory elementary education for children (that didn't arrive until the Forster Act of 1870), and, as we have seen, some employers treated children brutally. This was not the case at Fieldens – 'Honest John' was a radical, and he took the radical step of setting up a school available to any child employee over the age of 10, whose parents desired it. He set up a 'half time' system whereby the children could divide their working day between factory and school.

It was quickly in demand – within a very few years it had over 100 pupils paying tuppence a week for two of the 3R's (not writing!), geography, knitting and sewing, tuition being provided by John and Lydia Fielden. By 1851 the school was teaching children from age

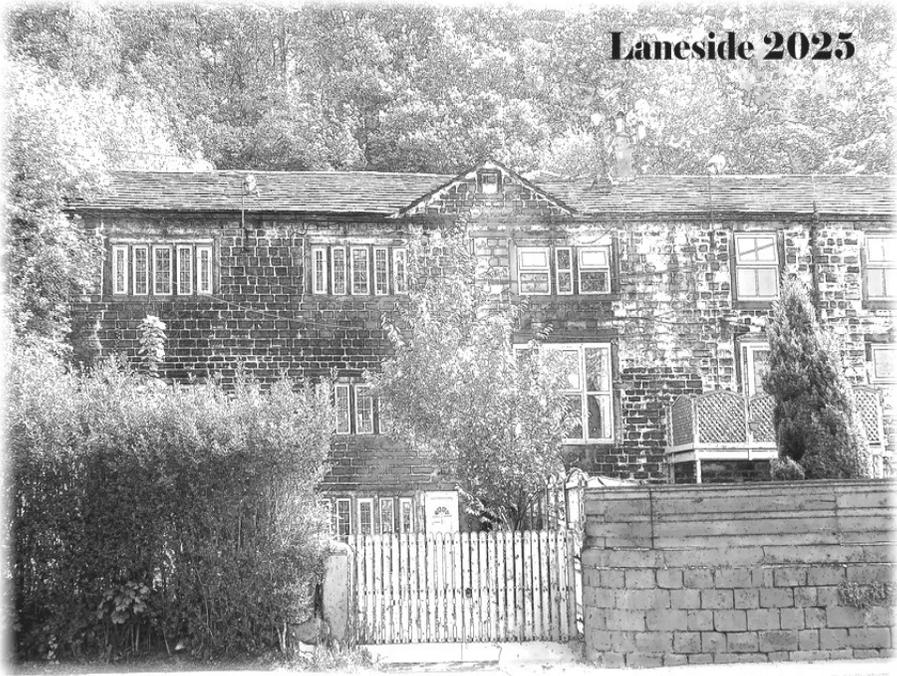
five to fifteen. The school is probably unique – it was (and is) a brutal looking building, being part school, part offices and part warehouse. In later times it became the Municipal Technical School and the Old Fire Station and today is used industrially. One feels that if 'Honest John' had built a choragic monument or a chinese pagoda he would have found some place to install a crane door!



John Fieldens School

From the Waterside Factory School we continue onwards a short distance, with a housing development (Daleside) on our right which in 1984 was the council gritters yard. Across the road stands -

II. Laneside Cottages Here are the original cottages where Joshua Fielden (IV) set up his cotton business in 1782, after moving down here from Edge End. As a yeoman farmer, he had, with two or three handlooms at his disposal, combined farming with cloth manufacture at Edge End. Now, at Laneside he abandoned woollen manufacture and became a cotton spinner. The cottages you see here originally had two storeys. When Joshua Fielden moved here his family occupied one of the cottages, the other two being used for spinning. By this time he had been married nearly eleven years and had fathered two sons, Samuel and Joshua; and three daughters, Mary, Betty and Salley. (Mary Fielden of Dawson Weir was their niece — Betty Fielden being the 'Aunt Lacy' referred to in Mary's letter).



The cottages at Laneside. Joshua Fielden began cotton spinning in these cottages after moving from Edge End in 1782, and the little gable that carried the crane hoist for the cotton is clearly visible.

At Laneside the family prospered, mainly as a result of caution and hard work. They managed to keep consistently employed and gradually expanded their business as trade increased. A third storey was added, along with a warehouse crane (the walled-up hole where it was mounted is still visible in the centre of the building). Later, when they decided to use steam power, they built a stone mill of five storeys and seven windows in length alongside one of the cottages (this is now demolished). The family home was also improved upon, the more grandly styled Waterside House being built onto the southern end of the cottages.

Four more children were born to the family here. Three sons, John, James and Thomas, and another daughter Ann (who died in infancy), raising the family total to nine. Here is the complete list with dates:

Samuel (1772-1822), Mary (1774-1812), Betty (1776-1836), Joshua (1778-1847), Salley (1780-1859), John ('Honest John') (1784-1849), Ann (1786-1786), James (1788-1852), Thomas (1790-1869).

Life at Laneside must have been rather more Spartan than that of succeeding generations. After all, there was a business to be established and a living to be made and, as was usually the case in the Lancashire cotton industry, you weren't spared the long hours and the hard work merely because you happened to be 't' maister's lad'!

John Fielden and his brothers were brought up "to the mill." From the age of 10, John worked 10 hours daily in the mill. Every Tuesday he would set off from Todmorden at 4am with his father to sell cloth in Manchester, returning around midnight with a cart full of raw cotton, having walked a distance of around 40 miles! It was a hard life, and no doubt helped to form the attitudes and opinions that would be displayed by 'Honest John' in later life, when he was an M.P. fighting for the rights of his workers. His brothers also were to develop similarly radical opinions.

Why the sons of an old Tory like Joshua Fielden should grow up to become uncompromising radicals, no doubt perplexed the pious old man. The boys appeared to Joshua to be "as arrant Jacobins as any in the kingdom." No doubt their education was a contributory factor. These were not the days when the sons of manufacturers were sent to private boarding schools for the wealthy; on the contrary, they were lucky to get an education at all. John and his brother were educated by a village school-master who could neither read nor write but yet turned out pupils who were excellent readers and writers. This schoolmaster was well known for his Jacobin views:- he supported the aims and ideals of the French Revolutionaries and instilled these ideas into his pupils. Not surprisingly, when political feeling was running high at the end of the 18th century, Joshua, the strong Tory, decided to remove his sons from the influence of "the holder of such revolutionary opinions". He obviously did so, but one suspects that perhaps it was rather like shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted!

Joshua retired in 1803 though he lived on until 1811. The eldest brothers, Sam, Joshua and John, took over management of the business, and changed the name of the firm to Fielden Brothers; while at some time after the death of Samuel in 1822, the premises became known as Waterside. Year by year the business expanded, first hand spinning, then water frames, then steam. In 1829, a large weaving shed with a capacity for 800 looms was erected. At the time of its construction it was the biggest shed in the world. More spinning mills were built, and a second, even bigger weaving shed was erected. By 1844, the Fieldens had (as discussed earlier), their own private railway siding and warehouses. Individual members of the family bought smaller mills from time to time, all used for spinning, in the valleys which ran up into the hills from



**Waterside House.
(Birthplace of 'Honest John' Fielden M.P.)**

the main valley. They owned mills as far afield as Mytholmroyd, and whole communities — Lumbutts for example — depended entirely on the Fieldens for their livelihood.

In the early days at Laneside the consumption of cotton was small, little more than a weekly cartload. But as transport improved, so did the amount of cotton which could be processed in the Fielden's mills. In 1846 some 400 bales were used each week, each containing 500 lbs. In 1830 gasworks were constructed to light the mills — this being the first gasworks to be established by any private concern.

Even at the tender age of seventeen, John Fielden began to show an interest in the welfare of his workers. In 1803 he and his brother Joshua opened a Sunday School in a large room where they taught reading, writing and arithmetic to the children who were employed in the factories during the week, and for whom there were no other chances for education. When in 1806 the town proposed forming a Sunday School Union for raising funds for the education of the children of the district's poor, John was one of the workers in the movement, and, for at least 12 years taught and superintended in the three voluntary schools of the Union, where 700 children were taught every Sunday, who (says the 1818 report), **"were it not for the institution, would remain in the grossest ignorance and spend the sabbath in a very unbecoming manner."** The annual cost of educating these 700 schoolchildren was less than £60. Later Fielden was to run a school of his own for the town children, and this developed as a result of the birth of a new force in the religious affairs of the area:- Unitarianism.

By 1817, Fielden Bros. Employed 3,000 handloom weavers. Wages did not exceed 10 shillings a week and when power looms came on the scene they fell as low as three and four shillings. Children at this time often learnt at home to weave, the warp and weft being brought to outlying farmsteads from spinning mills in the valley. Weavers with two ordinary looms received eight shillings a week; a loom with sheeting, 12 shillings. Loom Tacklers were much better paid, receiving 18 to 20 shillings a week. No doubt they enjoyed other privileges too — a verse in the old song "*Poverty Knock*" runs:

***"Tuner should tackle me loom
he'd rather sit on his bum
he's far too busy a Courtin' our Lizzie
an' ah cannot get him to coom . . ."***

The days of the handloom weavers however, were numbered. Progressively the Fieldens moved away from manual methods in step

with the rest of the expanding cotton industry, and turned to factories and power looms. Such a process could not be halted — it was inevitable. They had to keep up with the times. In 1829, Laneside and Waterside were merged, and, as we have already mentioned, a giant weaving shed was built. The Fieldens nevertheless actively aided the declining handloom weavers.

By the 1830's poverty and unemployment were widespread. The average weekly wage of the inhabitants in outlying districts in 1833 was 4s 3d, or 10s 3d per family. Corn was expensive, and oatmeal, skimmed milk and hard cheese formed the main diet of the working classes. For those without a job, the predicament was even worse. The bad situation in the industrial north was by no means helped when in 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed, which forced the unemployed to accept hard labour, imprisonment and humiliation in the workhouse. The Fieldens' active (and at one point violent) opposition to the new Poor Law forestalled the establishment of a Union Workhouse in Todmorden for many years, and forced the guardians to give outdoor relief.

After the Napoleonic Wars, fierce post-war competition had forced Fieldens to increase their working hours from 10 to 12 (11 on Saturdays). Horrific as this sounds, it was, nevertheless, fewer hours than those worked in most cotton mills at that time. To feel obliged to lengthen the hours of labour at a time when technological changes were making conditions more unpleasant, shamed the radical mill masters, and brought them out in support of factory reform. John Fielden was especially moved at the plight of the handloom weavers. In 1835, he wrote that he was "applied to by scores of handloom weavers who were so pressed down in their conditions as to be obliged to seek such work, and it gave me and my partners no small pain to be compelled to refuse work to the many that applied for it."

What was life like, then, in the new factories? In Todmorden, the Fieldens' mills and sheds stretched from Laneside to the heart of Todmorden, creating a solid block of industrial buildings that partially exist (albeit in a different commercial form), to this day.

In 1835 they entered the merchant's house of Wildes Pickersgill in Liverpool and eventually owned warehouse premises as well as properties in Manchester. Even though the Fieldens were the most enlightened of mill masters, actively concerned with the welfare of their operatives, conditions in mills were, nevertheless, harsh by modern standards. During the agitation for Factory Reform numerous books and pamphlets were published, some whitewashing the industry and describing conditions as ideal, others portraying cotton mills as "hell on earth". What were the facts?

One thing is certain: cotton mills were usually dirty, ill-ventilated and filled with unguarded machinery. Dust was often a problem. The air was filled with minute particles of cotton called 'Fly'. The worst place for this was the 'Scutching Room' where bales of cotton were opened and prepared for the machines. In a Scutching Room the dust was often so dense that it enshrouded the workers like a fog. Temperatures could also be most uncomfortable. In a weaving shed it could get as hot as 92 deg. F. Ventilation varied from mill to mill, sometimes good, sometimes bad. Often it was the fault of the operatives themselves:- underfed, badly clothed, they had a dread of cold air and would not open the windows. There were no safety regulations and moving parts were not screened or guarded. Driving belts with adjustable buckles were particularly dangerous. The shaft which delivered the power from the mill engine ran along under the ceiling and had drums on it at intervals, connected to the machines by drive belts. A careless mill girl could get her clothes (or worse still her hair), caught in the buckle on the moving belt and be flung over the driving shaft. There was no compensation for accidents, and families of victims had to rely on the charity of their workmates or the mill master.

Work was tedious and tiring. Mule spinning, for example, entailed walking endlessly to and fro. In 1832 John Fielden was elected first ever M.P. for Oldham. (This was a new seat created by the Reform Bill). One day, he and some fellow M.P.s met a deputation of working people in Manchester, one of whose delegates gave him a statement which contained a calculation of the number of miles which a child had to walk in a day in minding the spinning machine. It amounted to 25 miles! Adding the distance to and from home each day, the distance was often pushed up to 30 miles. 'Honest John' was naturally surprised at this revelation and wasted no time in investigating his own mills. To his dismay, he found that children there were walking nearly as far.

Last of all there were the hours. In his book, *The Curse of The Factory System*, John Fielden laid the blame for all of the ills of the cotton industry at this single door. To reduce the monotony, to improve the health and safety of the workers, to prevent children from falling asleep at machines and walking these fantastic distances, it was necessary to do one single thing - reduce the appalling hours of work.

However good the mills were, the hours were apt to vary enormously. Cotton was ruled by the trade cycle. If trade was bad, there could be months of enforced idleness with short time and unemployment. When trade was good, there was terrible overwork. It was by no means unknown to begin work at 6 am on Monday and work through till 11 at night on the following Tuesday. Then you would start at 6 am again on

Wednesday and work through until 11pm on Thursday. Then you would finally start on Friday at 6 am and work until 8pm Saturday. Sunday was the Lord's Day. You got up early and went to worship. With these working times the total working week added up to around 120 hours! It is hardly surprising that accidents were so frequent with workers dozing off and falling into the machinery.

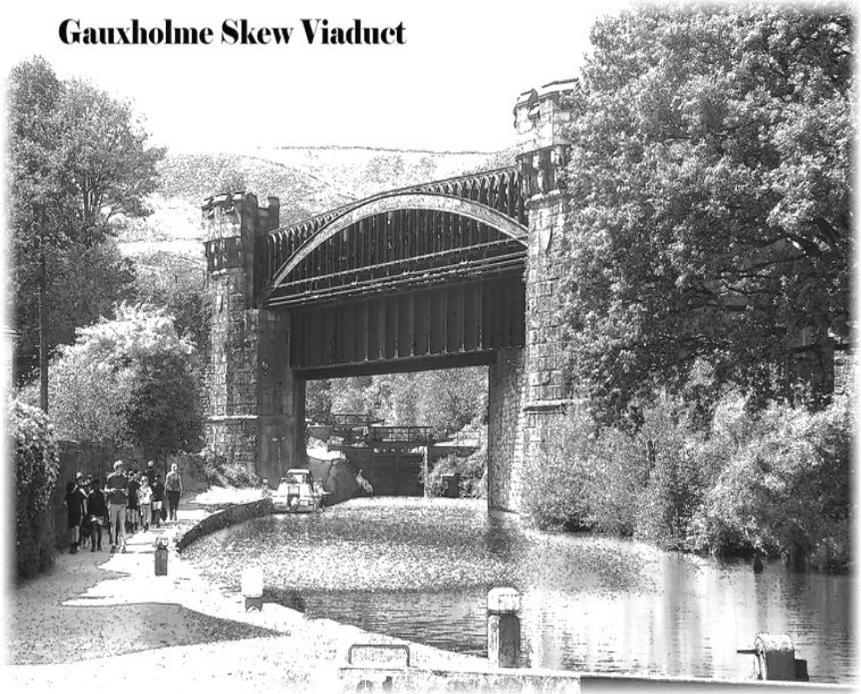
'Honest John' Fielden realised that such hours as these were not merely unjust, they were criminal — "a curse". Consequently he dedicated his life toward attaining a *Ten Hours Bill*, arguing, rightly as it turned out, that short time would not serve to reduce efficiency and output, but would actually increase it. In pursuit of this aim he was single-minded and uncompromising. Yet Fielden went further. Unlike many factory reformers, Fielden held Chartist principles, and argued that the workers had a right not only to fairer working conditions, but also to an education and political emancipation. He was a true champion of the working man, and we will discuss his political career further along the *Fielden Trail*.

From Laneside we continue onwards along the road, towards Gauxholme, turning Right onto Oak Street, (where there is a superb group of still inhabited post war Tarran Mk. 4 prefab bungalows.) The end of the street gives access to the canal.. Turn left onto the towpath, just beyond Wadsworth Mill Lock (20). Restoration work was in progress on the derelict canal back in 1984 - the canal had been made navigable between Hebden Bridge and Todmorden, and work gangs were expanding outwards at both ends. Today, the canal has been completely restored from Sowerby Basin to Rochdale.

This part of Todmorden, known as Shade, is reputed to have gotten its name from a large building called 'Wood-Shade' which was used as a smithy, workshop and timber storage building, erected as part of the Rochdale Canal's construction works back in the late 18th century. I say 'reputed' because it could be that Wood Shade is merely a local pronunciation of 'Woodshed'. Then there is an alternative theory – Shade gets its name because (like Cornholme), it gets limited sunlight throughout the winter months owing to its location.

*After passing Shade Lock, the towpath runs under the railway beneath a superbly constructed and massive skew bridge. This is the **Gauxholme Viaduct** we saw from above in **SECTION 2**. The railway passes over here at a height of about 40 feet. This section of railway, Hebden Bridge to Summit, was opened on 31st December 1840, the first passenger service along it being in March 1841. The Gauxholme Viaduct has 17 stone spans of 35 feet. This skew bridge over the canal has a 101 foot span with stone turrets at either end. It represents a considerable feat of engineering for its time. The girders are inscribed "R.J. Butler Stanningley Leeds 1840".*

Gauxholme Skew Viaduct



After passing Gauxholme Lowest Lock, immediately beneath the skew bridge, the towpath continues onwards towards Gauxholme. Pexwood Road can now be seen descending on the right, almost parallel with the canal. The next lock, Gauxholme Middle, is a place to reflect awhile before leaving the canal in favour of the neighbouring hills.

As might be expected, the story of the Fieldens is closely tied up with the arrival of both the canal and the railway. We have already seen how the Fieldens used the railway to their private advantage. Their enthusiasm for it, and the trading benefits it brought, had always been immense. It comes as a bit of a surprise therefore, to discover that when some 50 years earlier, in 1790, a group of businessmen met in Hebden Bridge to propose a **canal** from Sowerby Bridge to Manchester, the Fieldens of Laneside were among the group of local mill owners who opposed the scheme!

The reason for this opposition was water. The canal promoters planned to divert streams feeding the river to supply the navigation, thus reducing the need to build numerous catchment reservoirs of their own. The Fieldens, along with most of the other Calderdale mill masters, insisted that they needed all of the available water for their mill goits, in order to power machinery and to facilitate their bleaching, dyeing, fulling

and printing processes. They complained that, in times of drought, mills would sustain considerable financial losses for want of water, and that the expanding industry, which was creating new mills in large numbers, was further stretching the already limited water resources. Water was all-important to the mill masters, as it was often used again and again, falling from mills high up in the moors to newer mills in the valley bottoms. Indeed water was vital to their livelihood.

Because of this, when the Rochdale Canal Bill came before Parliament, it was thrown out on its second reading because of petitioning by mill owners and the proposals of a rival canal company which suggested a "less troublesome" route down the Ryburn Valley, which would have involved a tunnel under Blackstone Edge. In 1792, the Rochdale promoters held another meeting and resolved to try again. This time they set out to appease the mill owners, whose opposition they had previously underestimated.

It was suggested that only excess water should be fed into the canal, and under normal conditions streamways would flow under the canal, following their normal course. This time opposition softened slightly, so much so, that a group of Todmorden mill owners were actually converted to supporting the canal. Among them were the Fieldens, who began to realise that the benefits of a canal might come to outweigh the disadvantages. The battle continued, but eventually, after agreeing to build catchment reservoirs on the moors, which would supply both mills and canals, the Rochdale promoters began to see light. Times were changing — steam engines were being installed in the mills, and it was apparent that the manufacturer's needs would soon be for coal rather than for water. On 4th April 1794 the Rochdale Canal Act was finally passed by Parliament.

Work began immediately, although the canal was not completed until 1802. The Act of Parliament for the Rochdale Canal gives a list of streams where only surplus water was available for the canal company. The streams were almost all in the Todmorden area, and many of them had Fielden properties along their courses — Mitgelden Clough, Warland Clough, Stoodley Clough and Lumbutts Stream. One entry reads:

"At the call or weir next above Todmorden belonging to Joshua Fielden", water might be turned into the canal "only when the stream shall flow over such call or weir more than 2 7/12 inches mean depth and 30 feet broad . . ."

By August 1798 the navigation was completed as far as Todmorden, and barges were bringing in coal and raw cotton. The canal company at the outset charged 2d per mile per ton of merchandise when a lock was passed, otherwise 1.5d per mile. Fielden Bros., one of the first companies to go over to steam power, profited immensely from the

new navigation, yet water still continued to be a problem (especially after the Manchester section was opened), and it wasn't until 1827 that the canal finally had an adequate water supply (by which time we are on the eve of 'The Railway Age').

Nevertheless, the Rochdale Canal played its part. Barges brought in raw cotton and took away calicoes, fustians and velveteens. At this time 60,000 lbs of cotton were being spun weekly in Todmorden, and 7000 pieces of calico manufactured, so the Fielden's consumption of cotton had gone way beyond old Joshua's weekly horse and cart. In 1825, a company was formed with the intention of building a Manchester to Leeds Railway, and in 1830 George Stephenson and James Walker surveyed a route that would largely follow the line of the Rochdale Canal. The canal company, naturally enough, offered fierce resistance, but its days were numbered. Ironically, the same 'progress' that had created the canal now brought about its demise.

Today, the days of commercial carrying on the Rochdale Canal are long past. In 1984, MSC funded schemes struggled to develop its derelict local section as an 'amenity waterway'. The Rochdale Canal Co. gave way to British Waterways (BWB), which in turn became the Canal & River Trust (CRT). Today the whole Canal has been officially adopted and made navigable. It is plied by the hired vessels of visitors, and boat owner/enthusiasts alike. Moorings are well occupied and many 'boaters' dwell permanently on the canal.

Continuing on our way, the towpath soon passes under the A681 Bacup Road, to arrive at Gauxholme Highest Lock, which has a massive set of new lock gates, the whole lock having been magnificently restored. Now it is time to leave the canal (for the moment at any rate), and to climb out of the valley. Turn right, passing over the lock footbridge. Opposite, a little further along the canal, is the Navigation Supply Co. which is housed in canalside buildings where there was once stabling for 14 boat horses and 14 cart horses, this being the old Gauxholme Wharf. Having crossed the bridge over the lock, bear right, passing through a gateway onto the Bacup Road. Opposite is the bottom of Pexwood Road (coming down from Dobroyd Castle and Stones. Not too long ago the hillside here was wooded, and somewhere near this road junction on Friday April 25th 1755, a crowd gathered at the bottom of Pexwood to hear the preaching of John Wesley. The relevant entry in Wesley's diary reads as follows:

"About ten I preached near Todmorden. The people stood row above row on the side of the mountain. They were rough enough in outward appearance, but their hearts were as melting wax. One can hardly conceive anything more delightful than the vale from which we rode from thence; the river ran through the green

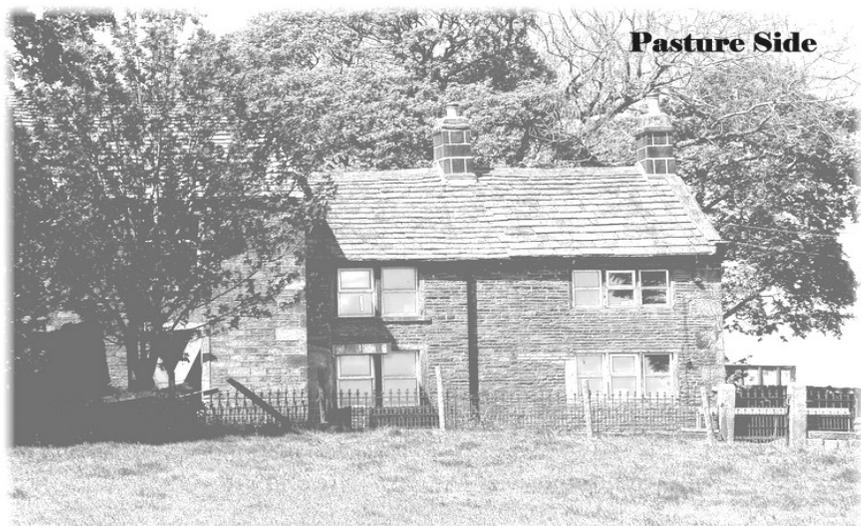
meadows on the right and the fruitful hills and woods rose on either hand..."

Shortly afterwards Wesley also preached and stayed at nearby General Wood, where he had a shirt repaired. Here at Gauxholme, the Edge End Fieldens had a mill. From the will of Nicholas Fielden of Edge End, 1714: "Item, I give and devise unto my said son Nicholas fourscore and ten pounds, together with all my right, title, benefit, etc.... and unto all that one drying killn, watercorn milln, and raising milln, commonley called Gauxholme Milln, and with the appurtenances, when he shall attaine ye age of twenty and four years . . . I witness whereof 1, the said Nicholas ffeilden have hereunto put my hand and seal the ninth day of November 1714 . . .Nicholas ffeilden of Edge End in Hundersfield in the County of Lancaster, Clothier."

O. Fielden

Having entered the Bacup Road from the canal, turn left, then left again to follow the route from Naze Road which winds steeply up to the gully behind Law Hey Farm, which is now derelict. Soon the left hand fence gives way to a low bank of earth and stone, more reminiscent of Cornwall - where such dikes take the place of stone walls - than Yorkshire. At the end of this bank we arrive at the ruins of Naze — a pile of rubble and dark stones in the midst of which stands an incongruous modern brick arched fireplace. Here are good views over to Stones.

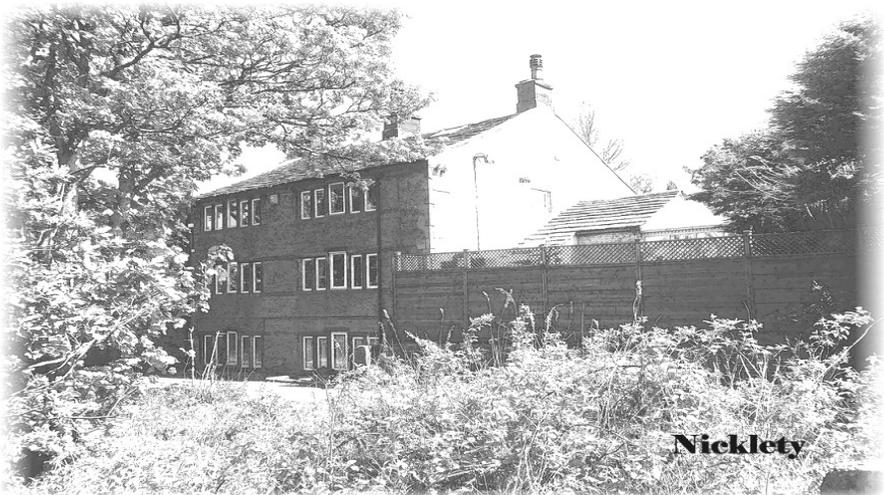
From Naze the route leads without undue difficulty to half ruined Pasture Side.



**Still Standing!
1984-2025**



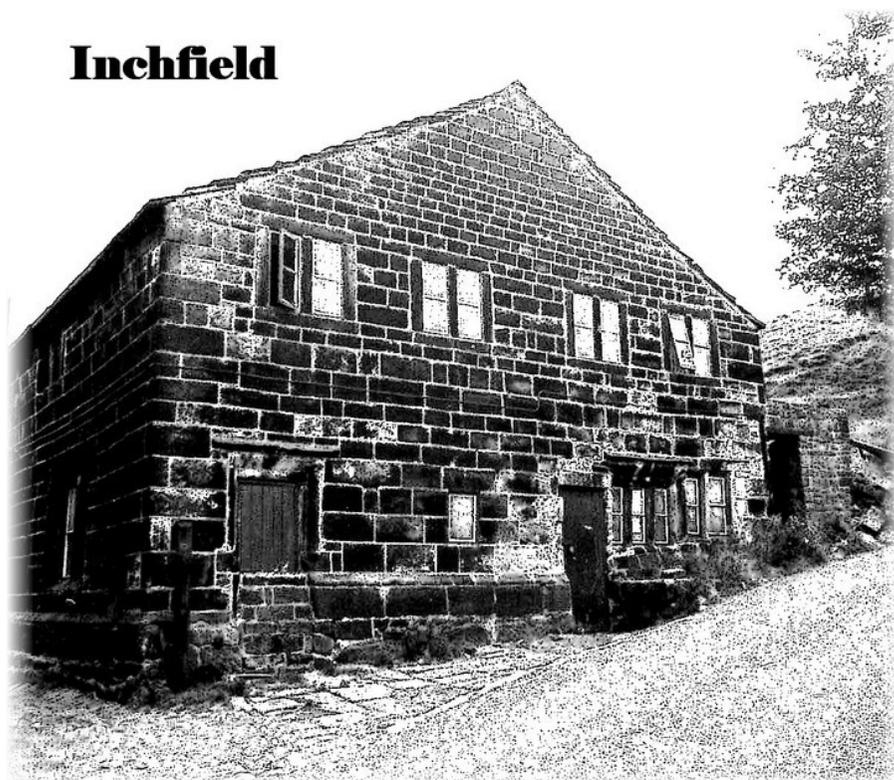
*Just beyond Pasture Side, turn left onto Rough Hey Lane, and follow it down the hillside to the edge of woodland, overlooking Walsden, Turn right, following the wall to enter Foul Clough Road opposite a three storeyed dwelling (**Nicklety**). This was once owned by Fieldens. Turn left once more following the metalled road very steeply downhill towards Inchfield.*



A short distance down, the entrance to a cottage appears on your left, with a very intriguing sign- **The Blue Pig** (though nothing looking like a public house is in evidence). A kindly old lady passing with her dog told us the tail (sorry-tale!). The house was originally known as Knowsley Cottage, built in the 18th century, in what was then an isolated spot. William and Betty Crossley settled there in 1822 with their six sons, and engaged in weaving, gardening and odd jobs, but most lucrative of all was "*Hold thi Tong*"- beer sold without licence to anyone who asked. The cottage remained with the Crossley Family until 1906. In the 20th Century the 'shebeen' tradition of the cottage continued, when it became an unofficial 'Working Mens Club' known as the 'Blue Pig'. this lasted until around 1955, when it became a mere cottage once more.

Finally, with the centre of Walsden now well in view, we reach the industrial hamlet of **Inchfield**. The mill at Inchfield was still there in 1984, albeit in a ruinous state. Today (apart from some cyclopean foundation walls), it has entirely disappeared, leaving only the cottages.

Inchfield



12. Inchfield has very long established associations with the Fieldens, although one would hardly realise this, looking at the present buildings. Here lived the Nicholas Fielden who we encountered in **Section 1** courting Christobel Stansfield. Here also lived his son, Abraham, who married Elizabeth, the daughter and co-heiress of James Fielden of Bottomley, thus uniting two branches of Fieldens. By the early 17th century the Inchfield Fieldens were starting to proliferate and prosper. Abraham's brothers were firmly established at Shore, Hartley Royd and Mercerfield. Now, stemming from this new marriage, succeeding generations of Fieldens were to become associated with Bottomley, which is the next stopping point on our journey.

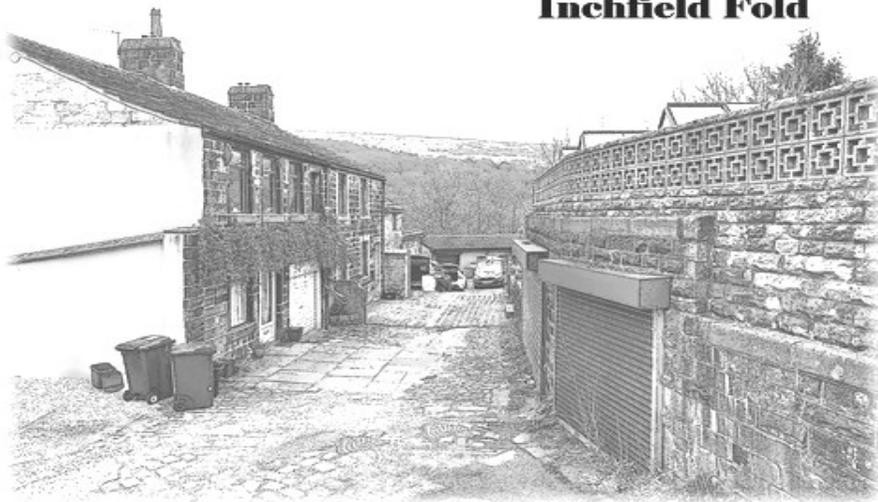
Abraham was not the last Fielden to be associated with Inchfield however. On the authority of the farmer's wife at Inchfield Fold I am informed that the three storeyed house at **Nicklety** belonged to one Thomas Fielden; and that the nearby mill, Inchfield Foundry, belonged to one Josiah Fielden, whose sister lived nearby at Inchfield House. Inchfield Fold Farm bears a datestone with the initials GTM 1631 and these, I am told, are the initials of George Travis, who built the house. What of the Fieldens? Well, according to 'Honest John's' family tree there are no 'Fieldens of Inchfield' mentioned after the early 17th century, so perhaps the land was sold off to George Travis, who built the present house. But this was no means the end of Fieldens in this area.

Around 1820 one Robert Fielden and his brother James, set up a picker making business. (*See New Towneley Section 1*). They started out in nearby Walsden, but in 1827 they moved up the hill to **Inchfield Fold**. James eventually moved to another mill, but Robert remained at Inchfield Fold, eventually trading as Robert Fielden & Sons. By 1854 they had expanded into cotton production, acquiring Birks Mill in nearby Walsden and running both enterprises concurrently. Three of Robert's sons died young, and when Robert himself died in 1874, the business was inherited by Robert Junior, who ran it with the remaining brothers Thomas, Samuel and John. Robert



Junior died in 1897 at the age of 70 (on Bacup Railway Station while running to catch a train!). yet 'Robert Fielden & Sons' endured until 1936, having been reportedly largest picker maker in the world!

Inchfield Fold



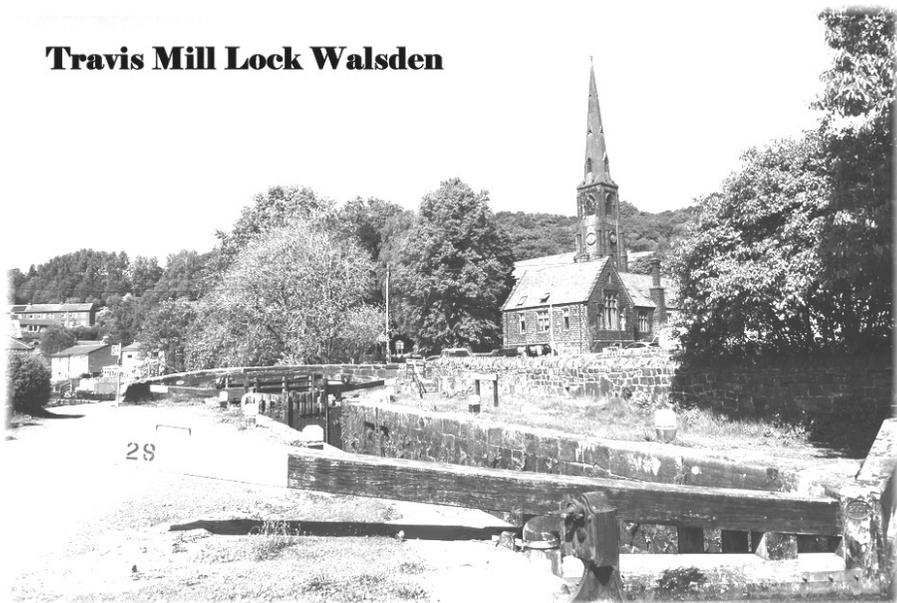
From Inchfield Fold we simply follow the road into Walsden, emerging onto the busy A6033 road near the now derelict local branch library on the left. (The Fieldens with their enlightened education agenda must be spinning in their graves!) Cross the road to the Post Office opposite. Here is a chance to purchase refreshments if required.

Walsden is one of those place names with Celtic associations. Like Walshaw near Hebden Bridge it contains the place name element 'Walsh' or 'Welsh' — the English term for 'foreigner', implying that there was a 'British' (ie Celtic) enclave in this area for many centuries after the English (and probably also Norman) conquests. Only the English could come along and call the native British 'foreigners' in their own country!

Early Fieldens (as we have seen), lived at Inchfield, and at Bottomley (which we are about to visit). But here in Walsden originated a stirring story in later times, little known of in England but of historical significance in the United States. For here, during the 19th century, when the canal, railway and turnpike began to turn Walsden into a manufacturing satellite of Todmorden, Abram Fielden, a one time hand loom weaver, newly made a steam weaver, became the father of a son, Samuel, on the 25th February 1847. Samuels mother Alice, a small dark woman, weakened by a life of hardship, died when Samuel was 10 years old. He had three brothers and three sisters. Like his father, Samuel grew up to be a

big, strong bear of a man with a quite fearsome appearance. But appearances can be deceptive. Sams father was an eloquent, highly intelligent man. A supporter of the Ten Hours Movement, and a Chartist, he had shared the political platform with the likes of 'Honest John', Richard Oastler and Lord Shaftesbury. Young Samuel took after him in every way, but in the end he was destined to a new life – in America.

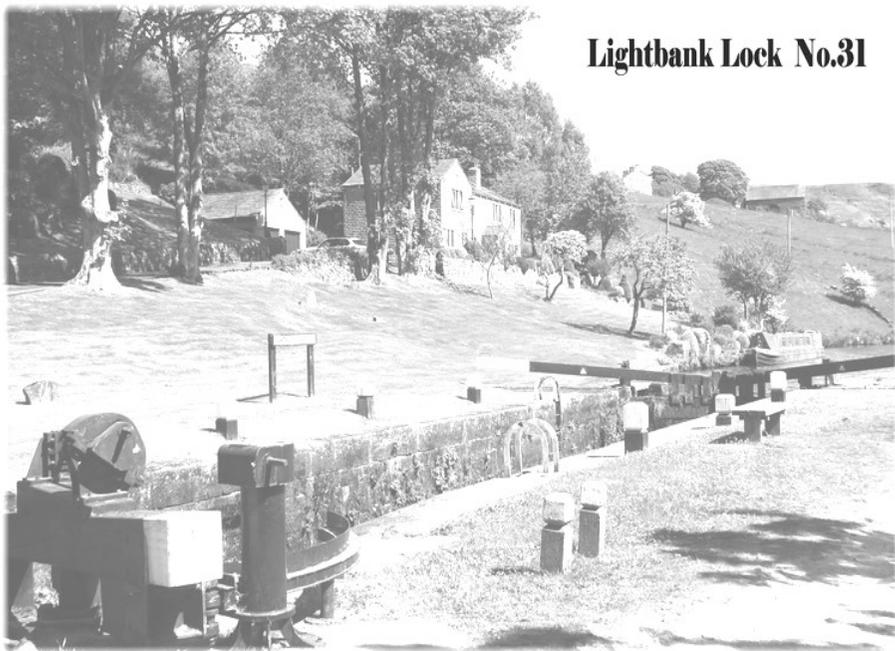
Travis Mill Lock Walsden



Samuel went into the cotton mill at age 10 as a half time Labourer, working there until he became a full timer at the age of 18. (The other half, under the new factory laws, being attendance at the factory school.) He eventually learned to *be* a weaver and a beamer (a warper). Between 1861 and 1865, Samuel and his family, like all mill operatives in Lancashire, endured the horrors of the Cotton Famine or, as they called it, 'The Panic'. This was caused by the closedown of the Lancashire mills when the supply of cotton from the Confederacy dried up, due to the Northern blockade. It is worth remembering that in Lancashire townships, 'King Cotton' had become a monoculture. People had no work, no money and no relief. Children and adults starved to death in their homes – men were reduced to begging in the streets, women often to selling their honour. Liverpool Merchants were ruined, many of them supported the Confederacy. It might be remembered that the ill-fated *CSS Alabama* had been built in Liverpool in the yard of Jonathan Laird with Lancashire wealth. Because of these facts, there has grown up a belief that Lancashire supported the Confederacy against the Union. But this was largely untrue – Ordinary Lancashire mill folk

supported the North, Anti Slavery being their moral and religious duty. As Samuel put it -

“All these horrors we suffered, as did thousands of others, and be it remembered the Lancashire operatives never passed a resolution to recognize the South as a belligerent, never dreamed of interfering in any way, morally or otherwise, though they were the only sufferers, and those who did in England were those who were placed above the possibility of being affected by the war.” When the war ended and the cotton returned, there was great joy and celebration All over Lancashire.



Lightbank Lock No.31

Samuel became a Methodist Stalwart with a developing career as a Lay Preacher, and continued working in the mill until the spring of 1868, when it was reported in the *Halifax Courier* that the Chapel Anniversary Services at Blackshawhead Wesleyan Chapel had been '*preached by John Greenwood and Samuel Fielden.*' Samuel was now 21 years of age. By July of the same year, now free of his father's interdict, he had taken the plunge and emigrated to America.

This didn't just happen on impulse. As a youngster he had longed for the romance of being a sailor, and on a visit to Liverpool, the place of his dreams, his fantasy had been somewhat dulled by the reality. But then there were stories of backwoodsmen, trappers and indians and adventures on the frontier. The dime store novels had arrived! So finally, Samuel left in pursuit of his new life.

Samuels life in the United States is really beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say, he arrived in New York with £3 in his pocket, worked briefly in Brooklyn, then Providence and Cleveland Ohio, then on to Chicago. He travelled around downriver to Vicksburg, exploring Mississippi and Arkansas, later writing about what he observed and the continuing plight of the Negro American boys had died to 'free'. Having returned to Chicago, in the autumn of 1879/80, he returned to Todmorden to fulfill a 'matrimonial engagement' and visit his now ageing father and visit his mother's grave. (Abram Fielden did not live much longer, he died August 27, 1886, and was buried in Walsden Churchyard 'under the hill' with his wife.)

The 'Matrimonial Engagement' was his sweetheart, Sarah Gill, a fellow weaver at Waterside. They were married by the Revd. Joseph Dyson at Salem Chapel, Hebden Bridge on 13th Dec. 1879. When Samuel came back to Chicago, he had a wife and was soon destined to have a daughter (Alice) and later a son (Harry). With hard work he set himself up as a teamster, having acquired horses and a wagon. He also continued with his religious activities, becoming a lay preacher at the Episcopal Methodist Church, preaching to various congregations around Chicago. It was here he discovered the teachings of Socialism, becoming also a member of a local Socialist Working Peoples Organisation, eventually becoming its treasurer, and one of its public speakers.(All of this well in tune with the Chartist radical thinking he had brought from Todmorden!). On the 4th May 1866, Samuel was delivering stone, and had no knowledge of a workers demonstration planned at the Haymarket Square that evening. On returning home he was called to an urgent meeting of his local group, it being his duty as their treasurer. There he heard of the Haymarket Demonstration. Soon there came a request from the Haymarket asking for speakers, and Samuel, along with Albert Parsons, another would-be-speaker, decided to go there and make an address. When they got there, another man, August Spies, was just ending his speech. Then Parsons made a decidedly lengthy oration. When it was over and it was Samuels turn, he was somewhat reluctant:- Parsons had made a long winded peroration, and with rain coming on, he had left with his family, as had the Mayor of Chicago, who had also been listening to the speakers. By now it was 10 pm. (the end of the event) and most of Samuel's intended audience was drifting away! Samuel spoke for ten minutes on socialism and the need for workers to stand united, and how the laws of the rich and privileged offered no justice to the working man.

At this juncture, he was interrupted by the arrival of police Captain John Bonfield at the head of a group of armed police officers, who threatened what was left of the crowd and ordered them to disperse immediately. Samuel protested, but was not looking for trouble and stepped down from the waggon from which he had been speaking. Than out of the blue, someone threw a bomb which exploded in their midst, killing one officer and wounding others. The police then fired into the crowd. Chaos ensued as their frantic, undisciplined gunfire also cut down many of their own number with 'friendly fire' (so typically American!) Eight policemen died and many people were injured. Samuel was shot and wounded in the knee as he fled. He got the wound dressed, and limped home. The following day he was arrested and charged with 'conspiracy in the bombing'. In all, seven men were arrested, except for Albert Parsons, who turned himself in.

At the trial, it was quickly established that none of the men of the so called 'Chicago Eight' had thrown the bomb (indeed at the time of the explosion, Parsons had left the meeting and was having a meal with his wife and kids just down the road!).

Samuel, being the last to step off the stage, became the main 'fall guy.' A Pinkerton detective stated that Samuel had been overheard suggesting the use of dynamite and killing police officers. Other witnesses claimed he had incited the crowd, saying 'Here comes the bloodhounds of Police now! men do your duty and I will do mine!' Police officers reported that they had seen him produce a gun! Samuel of course denied all this, and many more reliable witnesses reported that he'd never said or done any such thing!

What followed was a grave (and later infamous) miscarriage of justice. Samuel Fielden was sentenced to death along with six others, but his humility saved him – after an eloquent and sincere letter to the governor of Illinois, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Parsons, and Spies, however, along with two others - Engel and Fischer, were hanged on November 11th 1887 (The other condemned man Lingg, having cheated the hangman with a smuggled blasting cap in his cigar!).

Of course, as with 'Peterloo' and the 'Guildford Four' in England, the aftermath of these events changed American History. The injustice had to be answered. The police had lied. After six years in prison, Samuel was finally pardoned on June 26th 1893. After his release, he left Chicago for good, heading west with his wife and children to a ranch on Indian Creek in the La Veta valley in Colorado, where he died on February 7, 1922. His gravestone may still be seen. Alice died in 1975.

So back to the Fielden Trail! From Walsden Post Office, continue onwards towards Walsden Church, and on reaching the canal bridge, turn right onto the towpath, passing Travis Mill Lock (No

28) *on the left. From here onwards, until we reach Bottomley Bridge, we simply follow the canal towpath once more.*

(Short optional Diversion!) Walsden's most famous son was Sir John Douglas Cockroft, the nuclear physicist, who was the eldest son of John Arthur Cockroft, a mill owner, and Annie Maude Fielden. Cockroft was born on Stanley Terrace, in Todmorden on May 27th, 1897, moving at the age of two to Birks Lane Walsden, by his fathers cotton mill, where he lived until he was 28, being first educated at the C of E School in Walsden, and later in Todmorden. His home, a double fronted house with a blue plaque, just round the corner from Travis Lock, may be quickly inspected by crossing the canal and bearing right towards the nearby mill. Having read the plaque, retrace your steps to the towpath.

The Rochdale Canal on this section of the walk is now especially beautiful, the dark days of its dereliction being long behind it. It is a haunt for boaters, anglers and waterfowl. Views to crags and steep hillsides are fascinating, unsurprising, perhaps, considering the Rochdale is one of the highest canal routes in the country. Between the next lock along, (Nip Square Lock no 29) and Winterbutlee Lock (No 30), the canal opens up into a what seems like a small lake, but is actually a huge **winding hole** designed for the purpose of turning boats around, which on narrow, shallow, canal ways (The Rochdale is considered a 'broad canal!'), can sometimes be a difficult undertaking, depending on the length of your boat! (**Note: 'Winding' in canal speak, is not winding the bobbin but winding the baby!**) There seems to be a pattern/purpose here, as beyond Winterbutlee Lock, a *second* slightly smaller winding hole immediately opens up and as we head on upstream towards our final departure from the canal at Bottomley Bridge, there is a progression of winding holes heading up to to Summit and beyond towards Littleborough. All this recalls when this peaceful haven was part of the busy sinews of industry. At the head of this steep pass, the little community of Summit, today famed for its great railway tunnel, was actually the child of a tunnel that was planned but never built – for the Rochdale Canal. As usual, it was about capital, the 3000yd. Canal Tunnel being abandoned in favour of 14 extra locks and a shorter summit pound. But, when the canal finally opened up to boats in 1804, business boomed! But not for long..... Soon came steam – and the railway! Nonetheless the canal managed to remain in business effectively until the end of the Great War, when the rot finally set in. 1937 marked its last end-to-end boat trip and in 1952 it was effectively closed. How it was resurrected from the cold (puddling) clay in the late 20th century and restored to its present grandeur after a long uphill struggle by its friends and enthusiasts, is a long and interesting story. Suffice to say the canal is now

fully restored to the national waterways system and is a treasure of our industrial heritage!

Continuing on our way along the towpath, we are soon joined by the railway on the right, which, just beyond Bottomley Bridge, enters the Summit Tunnel, the first airshaft of which can be seen up on the hillside. Before we set off for Bottomley, let me give you some bits of information about this magnificent railway tunnel, which, when it was constructed, was regarded as being the wonder of its age.

Work began on its construction in the spring of 1838, and on 5th September 1839, it claimed the lives of three men and two boys. On 22nd January 1840, three more workers were killed in the tunnel. By 31st March of that year, the cost of the tunnel had exceeded the original estimate by £47,051. Finally, on 11th December 1840, the last brick was keyed in with a silver trowel. According to an account in the Manchester Guardian: "***Gentlemen of the first respectability accompanied by numbers of ladies were seen with lighted candles advancing toward the place to witness the ceremony of the completion of the great work. The ladies and gentlemen present were invited to a cold collation at the Summit Inn, while the workmen were regaled within the tunnel***". At the time of its completion the Summit Tunnel was the longest railway tunnel in the world, 2885 yards long and containing 23 million bricks.

*At Bottomley Bridge we turn left, leaving the canal to continue on its journey to the summit pound 'ere it falls away down the other side of the pass towards Rochdale and the tideways of Lancashire. Passing bungalows, where the tarmac veers left, a blue painted Public Bridleway post with waymark announces an obviously well used route winding up the hillside towards Bottomley. This is the superbly paved and cobbled **Salter Rake Gate** still in a marvellous state of preservation. Its popularity could be in part due to the fact that someone has posted it on **Google Earth Streetview**, making it possible for you to follow it on a mobile phone or ipad – even if you are lying in bed at home!*

Halfway up the ascent to Bottomley are llamas! They are appearing all over the South Pennines these days – but I photographed one back in 1984! Finally the path climbs up steeply to (briefly!)rejoin tarmac at Bottomley, its rough hillfarms now idylls for the affluent!

13. Bottomley is a key place in our Fielden saga. Generations of Quaker (and earlier) Fieldens lived and worked here, and at one time this small cluster of buildings was a small weaving settlement of

some note, being situated on the Salter Rake Gate, the main packhorse route over to Lumbutts and Mankinholes, which was an eastern branch of the better known Reddyshore Scout Gate. (The word 'Gate' in this context means 'way', and is an old Scandinavian usage). Salt came this way into Yorkshire from the Salt 'Wiches' of Cheshire from time immemorial, and doubtless woollen and (briefly) cotton goods flowed in the opposite direction also.

**Bottomley
& Salter Rake Gate 1984**



At Bottomley in 1561 lived James Fielden, son of another (unknown) Fielden who lived here in the reign of Edward VI. This James Fielden was great grandfather to the Elizabeth Fielden who married Abraham Fielden of Inchfield. The line runs as follows:

James Fielden Cisley
Jeffrie Fielden (lived at Bottomley in 1567)
James Fielden Isabel (d. 1594)
Mary J. Clegg
Elizabeth (b 1594)
Abraham Fielden of Inchfield

Abraham and Elizabeth's sons, John and Joshua, as we have already mentioned, became Quakers, and from them all the 'Bottomley Fieldens' are descended.

When I arrived at Bottomley in 1984, first surveying the *Fielden Trail*, the weather was stifingly hot and the farmer there, Mr. Stansfield, invited us (Peggy the dog and I) in for a drink. Mr. Stansfield told me that as a boy he had farmed up at Kebs and Bridestones (this is, of course Stansfield ancestral territory). I thought it strange that just as Nicholas Fielden had inherited Stansfield lands by marriage way back in the 16th century, now, in the 20th century a Stansfield was in possession of lands that had traditionally belonged to the Fieldens since time immemorial! Strange indeed are the workings of fate.

Before we continue on our way, here is a little anecdote concerning the Fieldens of Bottomley:

"When Jane Fielden was a girl of nine years old, her grandfather, Samuel Fielden of Bottomley gave her a soup plate, which bears on the flat part a florid picture of Katharine of Aragon, stating that it belonged to her great grandmother and grandmother, who was then dead. 'It had always belonged to a Jane . . .' She kept it carefully until as an old widow woman living with her daughter at Strines Barn Walsden, she gave it to her grand daughter Jane Crowther, afterwards wife of John Travis, who gave it, (again) to her niece Jane (Crossley) Stenhouse, a few years before her death; so that the piece of old delfware is still travelling with the name 'Jane' ."

*The Salter Rake Gate leaves Bottomley as a narrow path between buildings on the left, passing a septic tank as it descends to the footbridge over Bottomley Clough. Beyond the stile, a superbly evocative paved 'causey' winds steeply around the contour (you can almost visualise the packhorses, bells and drovers!) to emerge behind **Dean Royd Farm**.*

Dean Royd was recorded in 1430. A stone survives from an earlier building with the date '**1675 IAG**' (John & Anne Greenwood?), but the present entrance inscription is carved **I.G.M.G 1715**. (John and Mary Greenwood). Generations of Greenwoods spun, wove cloth and farmed here, right down to the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1789, the Greenwoods allowed their farm to be used for Methodist gatherings. Along with Bottomley, Dean Royd became connected with the foundation of the first Sunday Schools in the area around 1809. The first Sunday School was at Bottomley Farm, but Deanroyd was a bigger building and easier to get to, so it was

utilised when larger gatherings were required, and 1810 saw the first Sunday School Anniversary at Dean Royd. Eventually it was agreed that a new permanent Sunday School should be constructed and John Fielden of Bottomley donated land down by the canal for it on condition that he could send one scholar to the day school free of charge!

Dean Royd Farm



*From Dean Royd The Salter Rake Gate, paved in parts, contours along the hillside to Hollingworth Gate, where we enter a metalled road leading to North Hollingworth. **Hollingworth** too, has Fielden associations: Abraham and Elizabeth Fielden's son, Joshua (1) of Bottomley ('Honest John's' great-great grandfather), married Martha Greenwood of Hollingworth before a J.P. on 21st October 1656. Their third son, Thomas, inherited Hollingworth, and he lived there until his death in 1762. There are three farmsteads here, Hollingworth Gate, South Hollingworth and North Hollingworth (today, all swish and gentrified). As to which of these three houses was the residence of Thomas Fielden, is a question I am unable to answer. I would hazard a guess at South Hollingworth, but really the 'Fieldens of Hollingworth' demand more intensive research.*

From Hollingworth Gate the tarmac road continues to North Hollingworth. Here, turn right, then left to a walled lane leading to a farm gate at the edge of open moorland. Beyond, the Salter Rake Gate takes over once more, with an extremely well preserved

packhorse way, which leads over moorland to up to its summit at Rake End.

Hollingworth



For my money this is one of the most interesting parts of the *Fielden Trail*. True, we have encountered old packhorse ways before, most notably at West Whirlaw, but in my view this is one of the most dramatic sections of packhorse track in the district. Today, the world of the Drovers/broggers and jagger ponies with their wooden harness frames and jingling bells has long passed into history, long long gone! Nowadays, (if you go on the right day!) there is just the occasional rambler and the moorland wind and rain.

What is most striking about this ancient moorland route is its sheer narrowness. If one packhorse train were to meet another coming from the opposite direction, there is no way they would have been able to pass each other without one train or the other having to give way and take to the moor. No doubt the issue as to who should 'Give Way' created many a heated argument long ago, when these lonely moorland tracks were busy arteries of communication.

Rake End



*The **Salter Rake Gate** ascends the hillside to the cairn at **Rake End**, where there is a **crossroads** of paths. **This is the End of SECTION 3.***

*The Salter Rake Gate continues onwards, as it meanders round the moor edge where the Walsden Valley gives way to Calderdale, heading down the slope by Shurcrack, to disappear under the Lumbutts Road near the **Shepherds Rest Inn**, where there is an (infrequent) bus down to Walsden and Todmorden.*

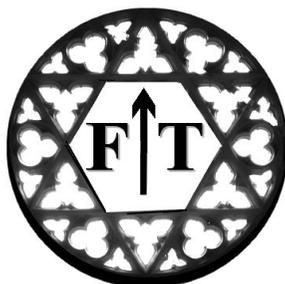
***The Fielden Trail**, however, takes the right hand path upwards, following a very well defined route up the open moor towards the Basin Stone and Gaddings Reservoir.*

*For any **Section 3 walkers** wishing to **get off** the Fielden Trail, and desiring a quick link path to Todmorden, take the left hand path down the slope from Rake End, and at the junction by the intake wall, turn right. This path winds around the base of the hill a short distance, to a gate on the left, entering Moor Lane, beyond which a path leads directly around the back of the farm following a boggy route down to the Lumbutts Road by Blackwater Dam. Cross the road and pass through the stile opposite, which leads down past the dam to emerge into Shoebroad Lane which descends to Fielden Square with the **Calderdale Way** and part of **SECTION 4** for company!*

Link path to Todmorden from Rake End



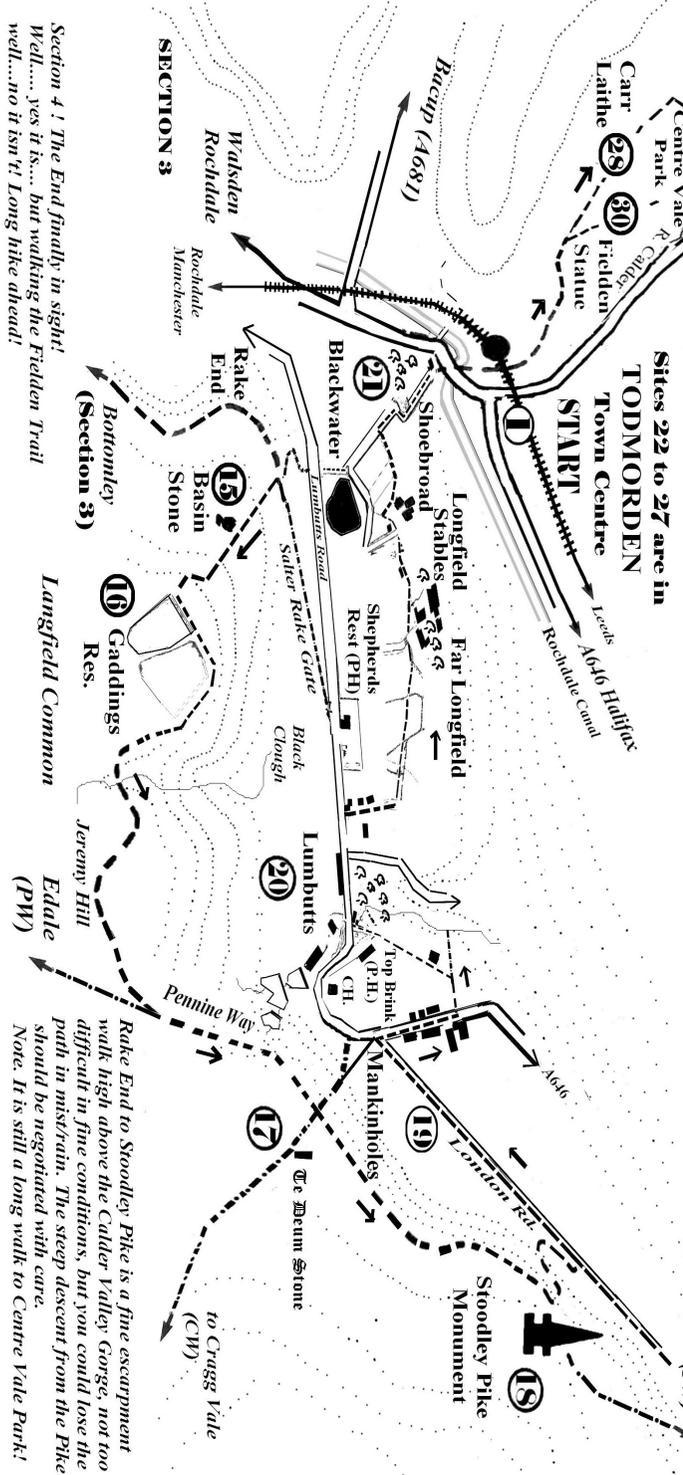
SECTION 4.
Rake End to Centre Vale



via Stoodley Pike

SECTION 4 Rake End to Centre Vale

Section 4 is the longest (and highest) upland part of the Fielden Trail. If you are tackling the whole walk in one journey you will find it to be the sting in the tail! Like the little girl with the curl, when it is good its very good - but when its bad... well, if you are even vaguely in doubt about the weather - make sure you have appropriate walkers gear and equipment. Stoodley Pike is rarely a haven, being miserable and draughty much of the time! Also watch out for touristically minded sheep - they will mug you for your sandwiches!



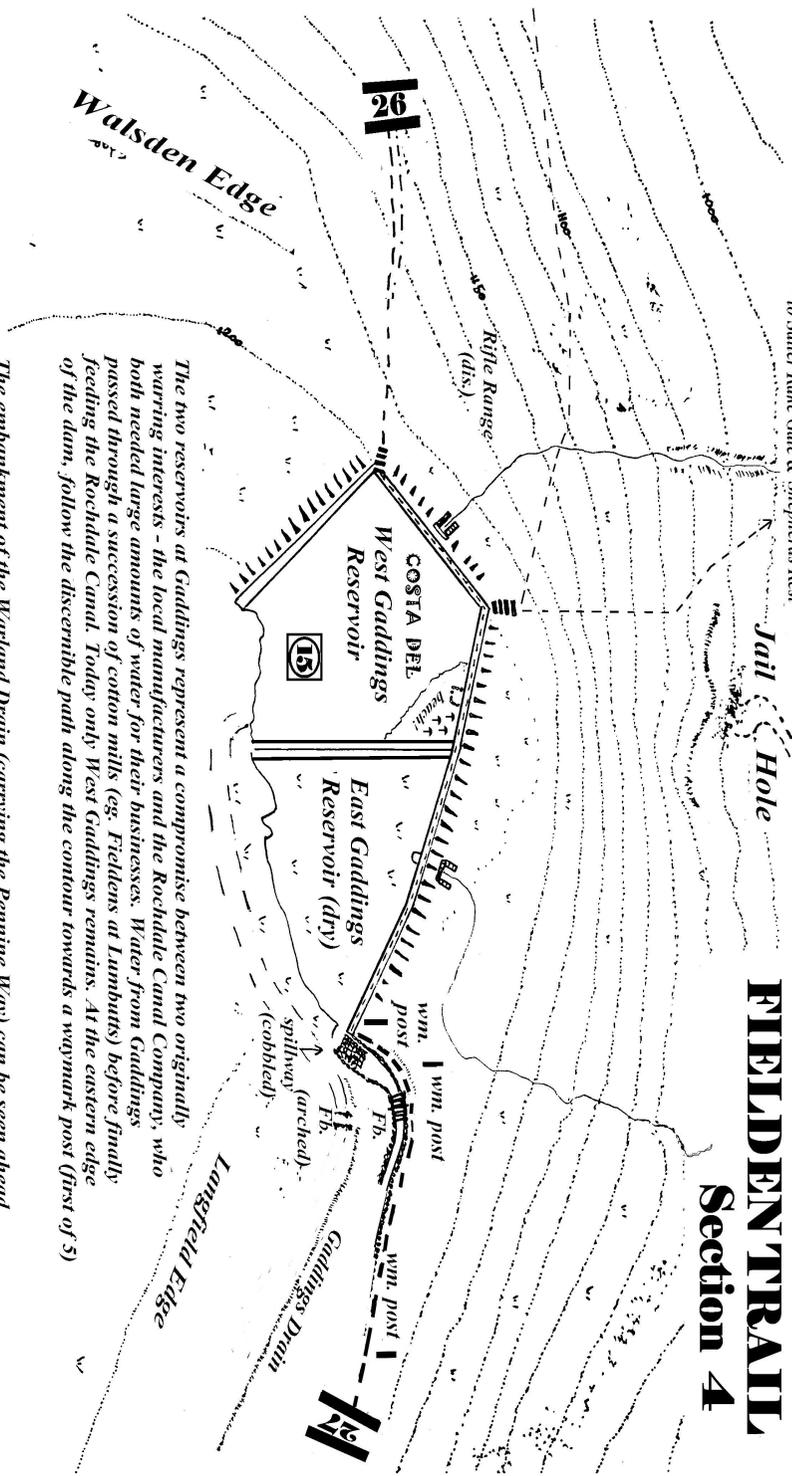
*Section 4 ! The End finally in sight!
Well... yes it is... but walking the Fielden Trail
well...no it isn't! Long hike ahead!*

*Rake End to Stoodley Pike is a fine escarpment walk high above the Calder Valley Gorge, not too difficult in fine conditions, but you could lose the path in mist/rain. The steep descent from the Pike should be negotiated with care.
Note: It is still a long walk to Centre Vale Park!*

to Salter Rake Gate & Shepherds Rest

Jail Hole

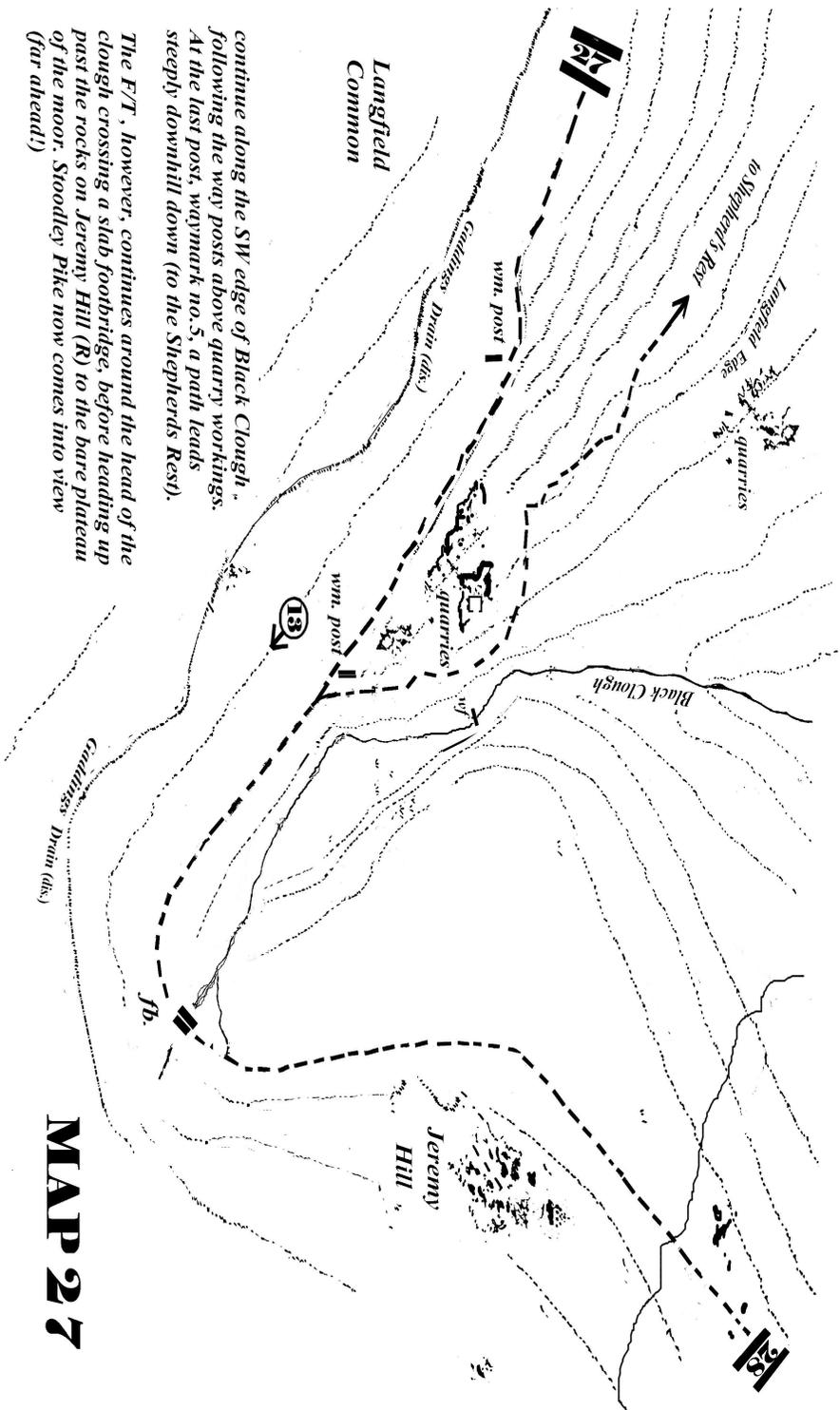
FIELDENTRAIL Section 4



The two reservoirs at Gaddings represent a compromise between two originally warring interests - the local manufacturers and the Rochdale Canal Company, who both needed large amounts of water for their businesses. Water from Gaddings passed through a succession of cotton mills (eg. Fieldens at Lumbuts) before finally feeding the Rochdale Canal. Today only West Gaddings remains. At the eastern edge of the dam, follow the discernible path along the contour towards a waymark post (first of 5)

The embankment of the Warland Drain (carrying the Pennine Way) can be seen ahead.

MAP 26



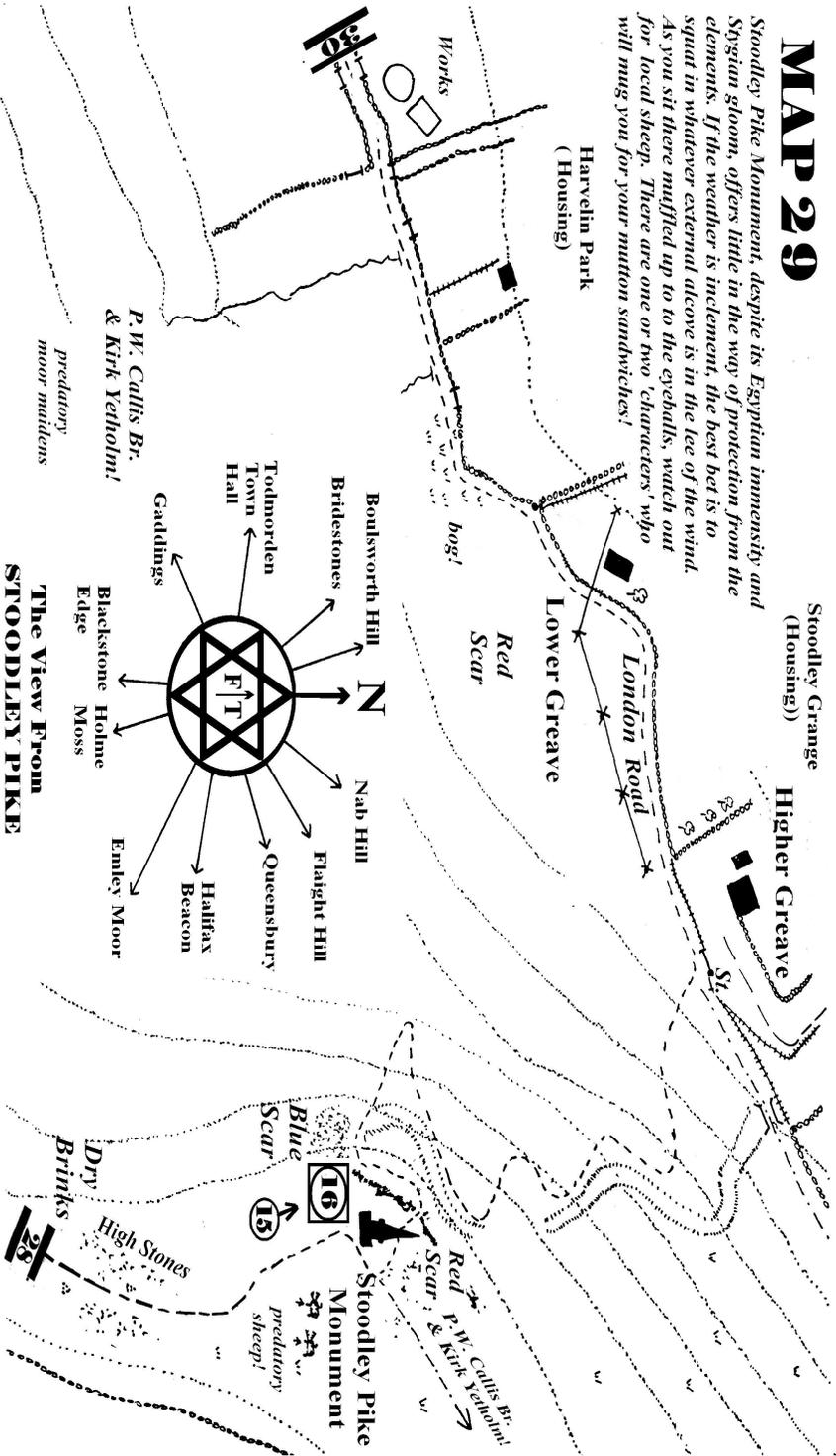
continue along the SW edge of Black Clough, following the way posts above quarry workings. At the last post, waymark no. 5, a path leads steeply downhill down (to the Shepherd's Rest).

The F/T, however, continues around the head of the clough crossing a slab footbridge, before heading up past the rocks on Jeremy Hill (K) to the bare plateau of the moor. Stoodley Pike now comes into view (far ahead!)

MAP 27

MAP 29

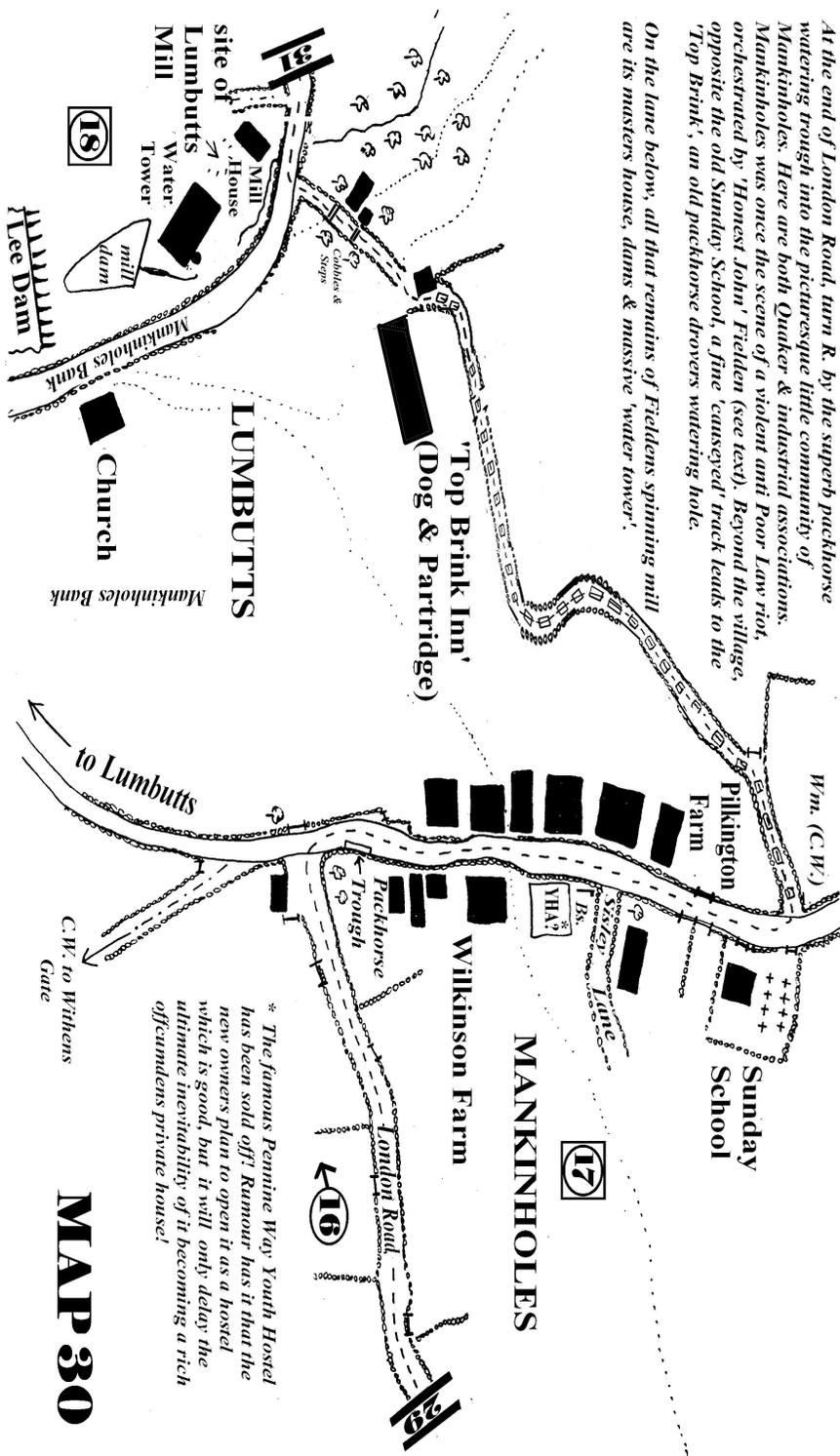
Stoodley Pike Monument, despite its Egyptian immensity and Stygian gloom, offers little in the way of protection from the elements. If the weather is inclement, the best bet is to squat in whatever external alcove is in the lee of the wind. As you sit there muffled up to the eyeballs, watch out for local sheep. There are one or two 'characters' who will mug you for your mutton sandwiches!



The View From STOODLEY PIKE

At the end of London Road, turn R. by the superb packhorse watering trough into the picturesque little community of Mankinholes. Here are both Quaker & industrial associations. Mankinholes was once the scene of a violent anti Poor Law riot, orchestrated by 'Honest John' Fielden (see text). Beyond the village, opposite the old Sunday School, a fine causewayed track leads to the 'Top Brink', an old packhorse drovers watering hole.

On the lane below, all that remains of Fieldens spinning mill are its masters house, dams & massive 'water tower'.



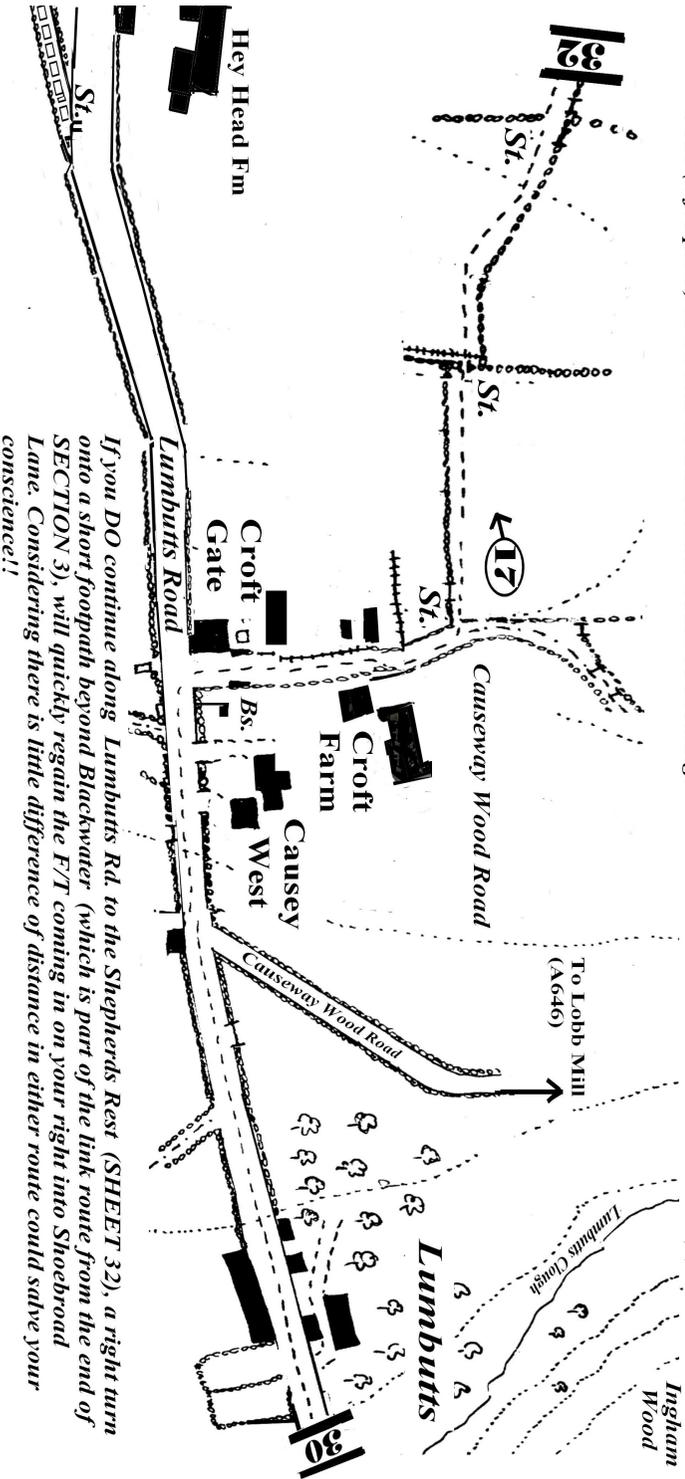
* The famous Pennine Way Youth Hostel has been sold off? Ramour has it that the new owners plan to open it as a hostel which is good, but it will only delay the ultimate inevitability of it becoming a rich offcumbens private house!

MAP 30

CW. to Withens Gate

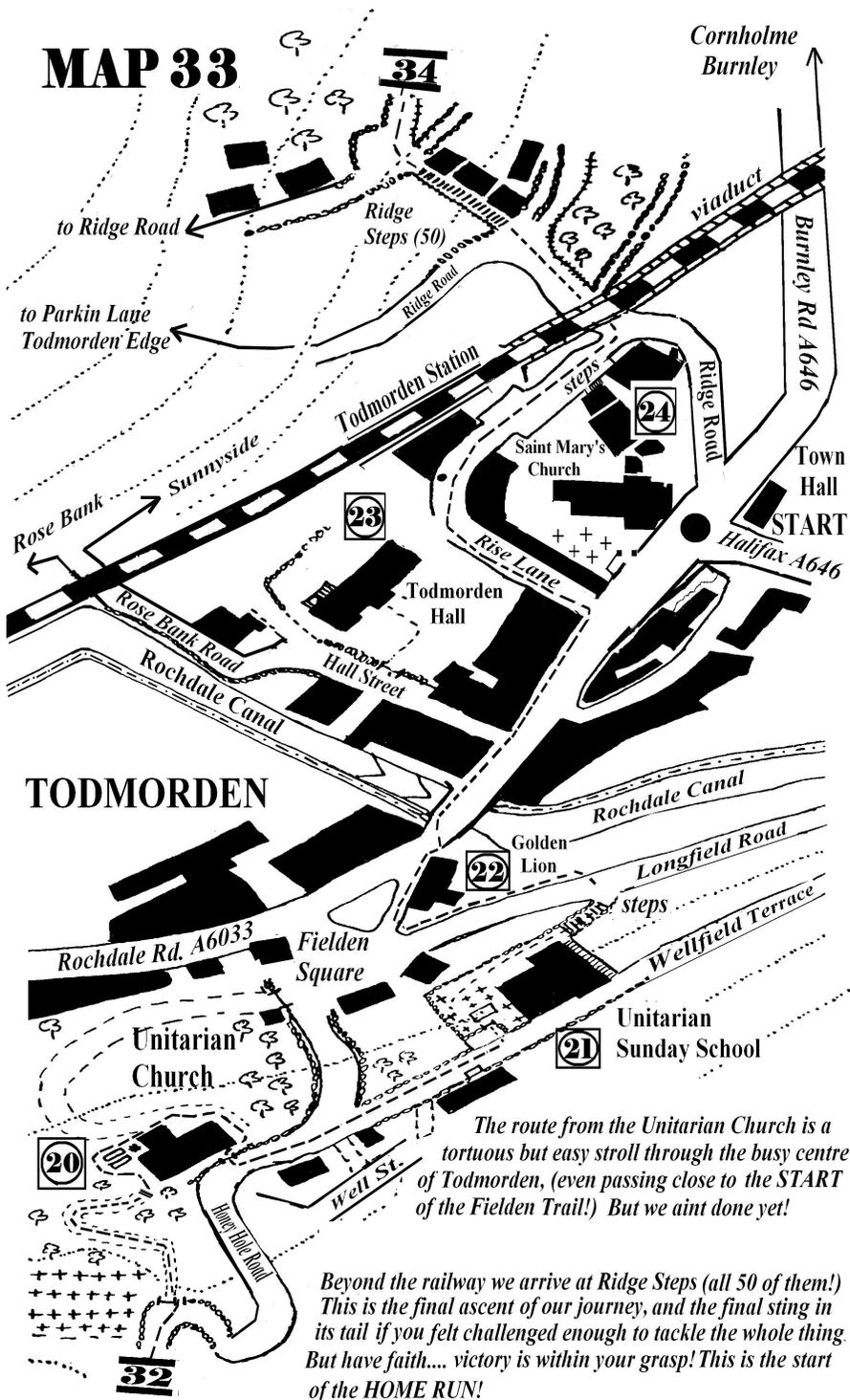
MAP 31

Fields, Stiles and fine views, just follow the Calderdale Way!
Alternatively, if you are tired out and don't mind walking on tarmac you can simply walk along Lumburts Road and take refreshment at the Shepherds Rest.... if you missed the 'Brink' that is! You could also catch a bus (infrequent) down into Tod..... but that would be cheating!



If you DO continue along Lumburts Rd. to the Shepherds Rest (SHEET 32), a right turn onto a short footpath beyond Blackwater (which is part of the link route from the end of SECTION 3), will quickly regain the F/T coming in on your right into Shoebrook Lane. Considering there is little difference of distance in either route could solve your conscience!!

MAP 33



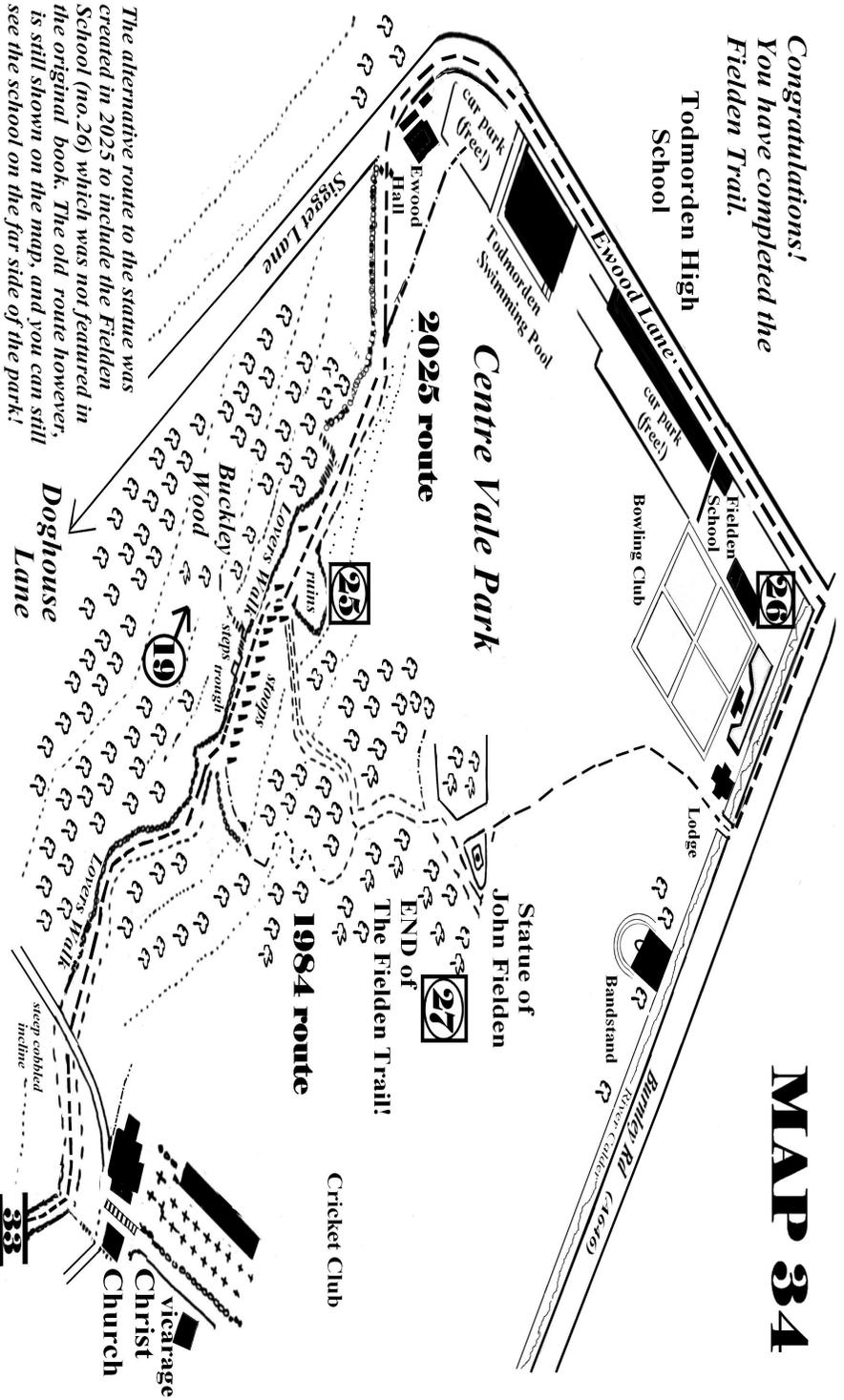
TODMORDEN

The route from the Unitarian Church is a tortuous but easy stroll through the busy centre of Todmorden, (even passing close to the START of the Fielden Trail!) But we aint done yet!

Beyond the railway we arrive at Ridge Steps (all 50 of them!) This is the final ascent of our journey, and the final sting in its tail if you felt challenged enough to tackle the whole thing But have faith.... victory is within your grasp! This is the start of the HOME RUN!

MAP 34

Congratulations!
You have completed the
Fielden Trail.



The alternative route to the statue was created in 2025 to include the Fielden School (no. 26) which was not featured in the original book. The old route however, is still shown on the map, and you can still see the school on the far side of the park!

SECTION 4

Centre Vale Park Todmorden via Basin Stone, Withens Gate, Stoodley Pike, Mankinholes and Lumbutts.

Rake End. **The Start of SECTION 4.** Now at last we come to the final (and wildest) section of the *Fielden Trail*. The going from here on gets tougher, the route becoming a high level traverse along the edge of the watershed from Gaddings to Stoodley Pike Monument, via Withens Gate. If the weather is awful and you are badly equipped and/or tired, then this is the time to think about that nice cosy car down in Todmorden! Remember it's not too late (yet!). If, however, you have walked all the way from Stansfield Hall and have set your heart on doing 'the whole thing' — well, let's get going then! If on the other hand you are starting Section 4 'fresh', simply follow the directions below.

*To regain the start of SECTION 4 from Fielden Square, simply follow the link route up past Shoebroad and Blackwater, crossing the Lumbutts Road and ascending the boggy path round the back of the farm to follow paved Moor Lane up to the intake gate, where you turn right to a junction of paths then left again straight up the moor path to **Rake End**. Alternatively, if you wish to take some of the sting out of the climb, you can catch the **T8 Walsden Bus** up to the **Shepherds Rest** and head up the **Salter Rake Gate**. The bus is currently a two hourly service trunning from 9.10 am to 4.13. Make sure you have an up to date timetable!*

*From the Rake End Cairn SECTION 4 starts out as a well trodden path which ascends the moor, swinging round gradually right to the solitary bulk of the quite unmistakable **Basin Stone**, (which, incidentally, you may have distantly noticed when walking the first part of SECTION 3!)*

14. The Basin Stone. A giant stone mushroom, the **Basin Stone** affords an excellent view over the Walsden Valley. Nicklety and Inchfield, encountered earlier, may be seen over the other side. This bizarre rock formation is the result of natural erosion:- centuries of scouring by wind and rain. The Basin Stone looks almost like a pulpit, and it is perhaps not surprising, therefore, to discover that it has, on occasion, served exactly that purpose. Wesley is reputed to have preached here, and although I have found no evidence to give truth to this story, I would not be in the least bit surprised to discover that he had. Wesley certainly had a penchant for moorland crags, as his initials carved on rocks at Widdop testify.

The Basin Stone



But Evangelism was not the only force to beckon crowds of people to these remote moorland fastnesses. There were other, more secular causes to be fought for. The year 1842 saw considerable industrial and political unrest. In the summer of that year there was a general mill stoppage throughout south-eastern Lancashire. Those on strike were determined to stop others from working, and on Friday morning the 12th of August, a mob of men and women marched from Rochdale to Bacup, armed with hedge stakes and crowbars, and continued onwards towards Todmorden. Every mill en route was visited, the fires raked out and the plugs drawn from the boilers. Shopkeepers and innkeepers were forced, under threat of violence, to 'donate' bread and ale. The agitators or 'plugdrawers' visited Waterside Mill, where Fielden's operatives were actually receiving higher wages than the plugdrawers themselves demanded. No opposition was offered, but special constables were sworn in and Hussars from Burnley were quartered in Buckley's Mill at Ridgefoot. The plugdrawers next marched on Halifax, where, 600 strong, they joined a contingent from Bradford the following Monday, and proceeded to attack the mills of the Bradford district.

To add to the social unrest, indeed to foment it, there was the politics of revolution — Chartism. "The People's Charter" sought to obtain many of the rights which today we take for granted, often forgetting that they were hard won. It demanded the following reforms:-

- **THE VOTE for every man over 21 years of age. (Votes for women weren't thought of in those days!)**
- **A SECRET BALLOT. (Elections in the early 19th century often involved intimidation and violence.)**
- **NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION. (Opening Parliament to the common man.)**
- **PAYMENT OF MEMBERS. (As above.)**
- **PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. (The 1832 Bill had improved things but fell far short of what needed to be done. Even today the need for improved PR is still a political issue!)**
- **ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS. (This has still not been achieved.)**

These demands might sound reasonable to us today, but they did not seem so to the ruling classes of the early 19th century. Such ideas were regarded as subversive, and were treated accordingly. If Chartism and the Plug Riots were inextricably intertwined, so were the political aims and interests of those intent on quelling such "lawless and seditious" activities. This is not to say, however, that Chartism was made up entirely of persons from the lower classes. Chartism indeed enjoyed the support of many prominent men, the Fieldens included.

It is quite possible that John Fielden himself might have attended the large Chartist meeting which was held here at the Basin Stone in the August of 1842 (the same month as the Plug Riots). 1842 saw a long hot summer of strikes, agitation, violence and unrest. The great Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor had been touring the North West, visiting such towns as Bacup, Colne and Burnley, where workers were on short time and strikes were breaking out. His fiery rhetoric stirred up the feelings of the poor operatives of Lancashire (indeed he described himself as the champion of the "unshorn chins, the blistered hands and fustian jackets"), and it is hardly surprising that he was eventually arrested and charged at Lancaster in 1843 with inciting the people of Lancashire to riot.

An extract from one of O'Connor's speeches culled from the Halifax Guardian (8th October 1836), will perhaps give you an idea of the kind

of oratory to which the ragged, motley crowd of locals, who assembled here at the Basin Stone to hear him speak, must have been subjected:

"You think you pay nothing? Why, it is you who pay all! It is you who pay six to eight million of taxes for keeping up the army, for what?? For keeping up the taxes!!"

It seems incredible when one tries to imagine the crowd of over a thousand people, which, in August 1842, gathered in this bleak spot to hear the speeches of Chartist leaders. One of the speakers, Robert Brooke, a lame schoolmaster, urged that men should cease working until the Charter was obtained, and that overseers should be asked for relief and some other means be adopted to obtain it. For this speech Brooke was arrested and tried at Lancaster with more than fifty other Chartists charged with uttering seditious speeches. All, however, were acquitted. Such repression as this did not, however, stop these political rallies. A meeting was held, for example, at Pike Holes near Stoodley Pike, attended by nearly two thousand persons to protest against the non-representation of working men in Parliament, and the sum of £1 13s 6d collected, to "help to freedom" Ernest Jones, who in 1847 was to stand as M.P. for Halifax under the Chartist banner. Meetings were frequently held by torchlight in these wild and remote places, and the sight of a line of torches proceeding over dark and lonely moors must have presented a strange, half pagan sight to those who witnessed it. One section of the Chartists proposed the use of "Physical Force" — one of the Chartists' slogans proclaimed "sell thy garment and buy a sword" — and it is said that men secretly collected pikes and engaged in drill exercises on these remote Pennine uplands.

Unfortunately the 'Revolution' never came; but if Chartism itself declined, Chartist ideas and principles certainly did not, and were to play a vital role in the evolution of democracy in Britain in later years. John Fielden and his offspring "sold garments" yet declined to "take up the sword", preferring to use the pen and the spoken word in pursuit of their radical aims. The Fieldens were not, however, totally averse to the use of political violence, as we will see further along the *Fielden Trail. From the Basin Stone, the path continues up the moor to Gaddings Reservoirs*, a popular local resort in summer and looking across the valley, up the gorge towards Cornholme, Pendle Hill can be seen on the far horizon.

15. Gaddings Reservoirs. There are two reservoirs here, Easterly and Westerly Gaddings. The latter is the only one still containing any water, Easterly Gaddings having dried up and grown over long ago. These were the final supply reservoirs to be built for the Rochdale Canal, being the last of an immense complex of reservoirs and feeder channels that stretched across the moors all the

way from Blackstone Edge. Water supply had always been a problem for the Rochdale Canal, as we have already seen; and after the opening of the Manchester section of the canal, the problem became even more acute. In the years leading up to 1827 a complex system of reservoirs and channels had been constructed. Altogether, there were eight reservoirs. The original reservoir for the canal had been the one at Blackstone Edge, which under certain conditions washes over the moor road leading down to Cragg Vale. Afterwards came White Holme, Warland and Lighthazzles Reservoirs, Upper and Lower Chelburn Reservoirs, Hollingworth Lake and finally the twin reservoirs here at Gaddings, begun in 1824.

Gaddings Dam 2025



In order to avoid the continuing "annoyance and torment" suffered by mill owners in the Calder Valley, the canal owners agreed to build Easterly Gaddings for the sole use of the mills, to be filled once a year from the feeders on Langfield Common. Subsequently, the mill owners themselves (led by the Fieldens), reciprocated by building Westerly Gaddings alongside. This was to provide additional capacity and be a means of ensuring supply to the canal in dry periods. The supply from Gaddings ran into Lumbutts Clough, and then to the Calder, passing through the dams, goits and wheels of an assortment of mills en route, many of them, Lumbutts for example, being part of the Fielden 'Empire' of outlying spinning mills. The Fieldens, who led the mill owners' group, had a major interest in the maintaining of

water supplies in the Calder Valley, and Gaddings represents a compromise drawn up between two previously warring interests.

In 1923, the dam was one of the Rochdale Canal feeders sold to Oldham and Rochdale Corporations, for drinking water supply. By this time, the Easterly reservoir had simply dried up into moor bog. It was also believed that the remaining dam was drained during World War 2, to prevent the Luftwaffe from using its moonlight reflection as a navigation beacon. It is true that both dams were empty during this period, but Todmordens Borough Engineer in 1943 reported that it was in the same condition as it was in 1933!

In 2001 the Gaddings Dam Preservation Company purchased it for £1,500 for the local community.

Gaddings Beach in 1984 (with son Richard)



Gaddings Dam has a beach. It was probably created by wind erosion of degrading sandstone and subsequent wind and wave deposition on one side of the reservoir. In the 1980s It was often visited by local families for summer picnics and paddles. However, post millenium, someone in the media billed it as 'Britains Highest Beach' and hordes of offcumdens descended on the place! Any nice summer weather would see narrow Lumbutts Lane (its nearest point of access), jammed up with parked cars, excluding people from their homes and preventing the passage of local buses and farm tractors! The Council had to get heavy, with blanket double yellow lines and threats of parking fines! Today, things have calmed down a bit, but it's still billed on Trip Advisor and numerous touristic websites. The recent vogue for wild swimming makes it even more popular, despite there being a

swimming fatality in the dam some years back. Further research reveal a 19th century catalogue of tragedy.

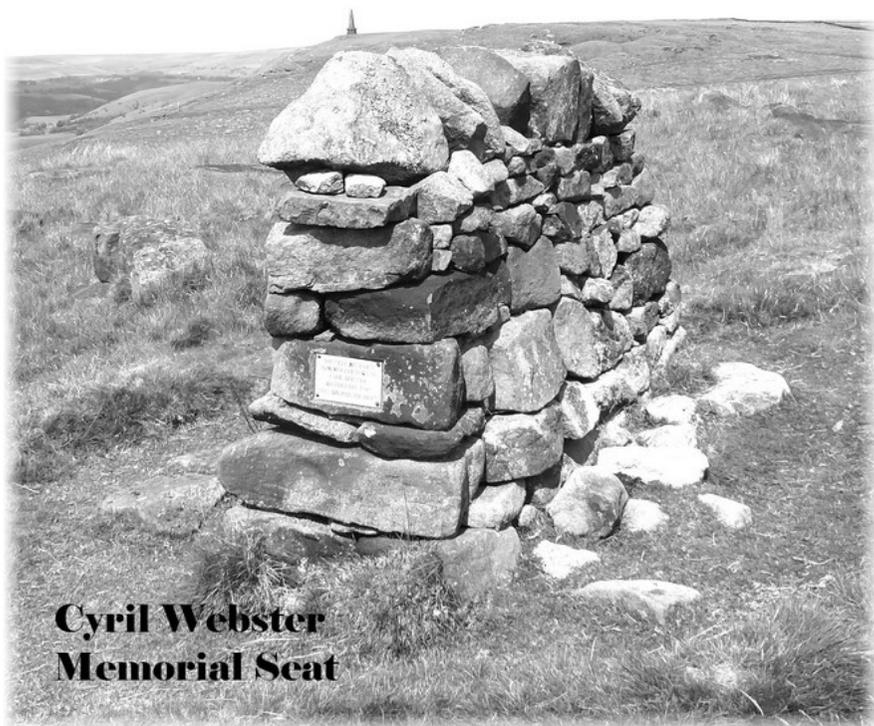
1872, William Proctor, of Brook Street, Todmorden, Drowned.

1889 James Stevenson (12) Abraham Crossley (10) Ernest Greenwood (9) .1894, Edward Ogden 57 years old. Body recovered.

Gaddings Reservoir stands in an elevated bleak location, with extremely cold water all year round. It should be approached with circumspection. The irony is that it's **not** the highest beach in Britain! There are a number of similar beaches in the area, Light Hazzles on the Pennine Way for example, from where you can see the footpath running **down** the moor to Gaddings! Then there are other parts of Great Britain to consider. It's all a bit spurious really- it's really a glorified millpond! (But a good spot for picnic on a summers day!).

Now it's time to move on. Back in 1984, my projected route for the *Fielden Trail* followed the defunct and overgrown Gaddings Drain from the end of Eastern Gaddings towards the head of Black Clough. Where the channel collapsed, the route disappeared, forcing me down to the stream, up to a rash of stones near Jeremy Hill. From there I made a compass line over open moor, finally reaching an obvious boot bog marking the route of the *Pennine Way*. Back then, this route seemed quite innocent of footpaths – forcing you to take to open country. Today, in 2025, it's all turned around. The drain has almost disappeared and more obvious and well frequented footpaths are now in evidence. Proceeding as follows.....*From the end of Eastern Gaddings, a well used and waymarked path heads along the edge of Black Clough, following a succession of CROWS waymark posts passing above quarry workings on the left. At the fifth post, a junction of paths appears. Ignore the path heading steeply down the Clough back towards the quarries, and continue onwards around the clough, crossing the stream at its head. The path follows the other side of the Clough for a short distance before winding up right by Jeremy Hill. Breasting the hill, our route becomes a long and well discernible straight path running along the ridge, over low Coldwell Hill, with Withens Gate and Stoodley Pike clearly in view ahead. Beyond Coldwell Hill, a slight descent joins the **Pennine Way**, approaching from the Warland Drain, no longer a boot bog here, but a paved causeway, one of many helicoptered in down the years, to stop moorland erosion and take all the fun out of the **Pennine Way** for the purists. (But at 75, I ain't complainin'!). Ahead, can be seen Withens Clough Reservoir and the wooded hillsides above Cragg Vale. Now Turn left onto the **Pennine Way**, which will take you unerringly down to its junction with the packhorse route of **Withens Gate** at Long Stoop. (Just follow the trail of bottles, coke*

cans and empty crisp packets!-I said in 1984!). But before we do this, it might be good to take breather and enjoy the far reaching views from the rugged windbreak/Stone Seat on the edge of the scarp, looking for all the world like an 'offcut' of a drystone wall!



**Cyril Webster
Memorial Seat**

**THIS SEAT WAS BUILT
IN MEMORY OF OUR DAD
CYRIL WEBSTER
WHO DIED IN DEC. 1992.
'STILL WALKING THE HILLS.'**

*Descending to **Withens Gate** we arrive at the **Long Stoop**.*

The Long Stoop (or Withens Gate Stoop) is a monolith nearly 9 feet tall, that marks the summit of the **Withens Gate** packhorse

route (or Long Causeway) coming up from Cragg Vale (today the '*Calderdale Way*'), that drops steeply down the scarp here to join with the Salter Rake Gate in Mankinholes. No-one knows the age of the Stoop (also spelt Stoup), probably mediaeval, possibly earlier. Judging by the crazy angle it now leans at, it's been battered by the winds for a very long time!

At **Withens Gate** the *Pennine Way* continues onwards to **Stoodley Pike Monument**. My route, however, recommends a short detour from the main route in order to see the '**Te Deum Stone**', a very rare thing which is well worth the short diversion involved in order to see it.

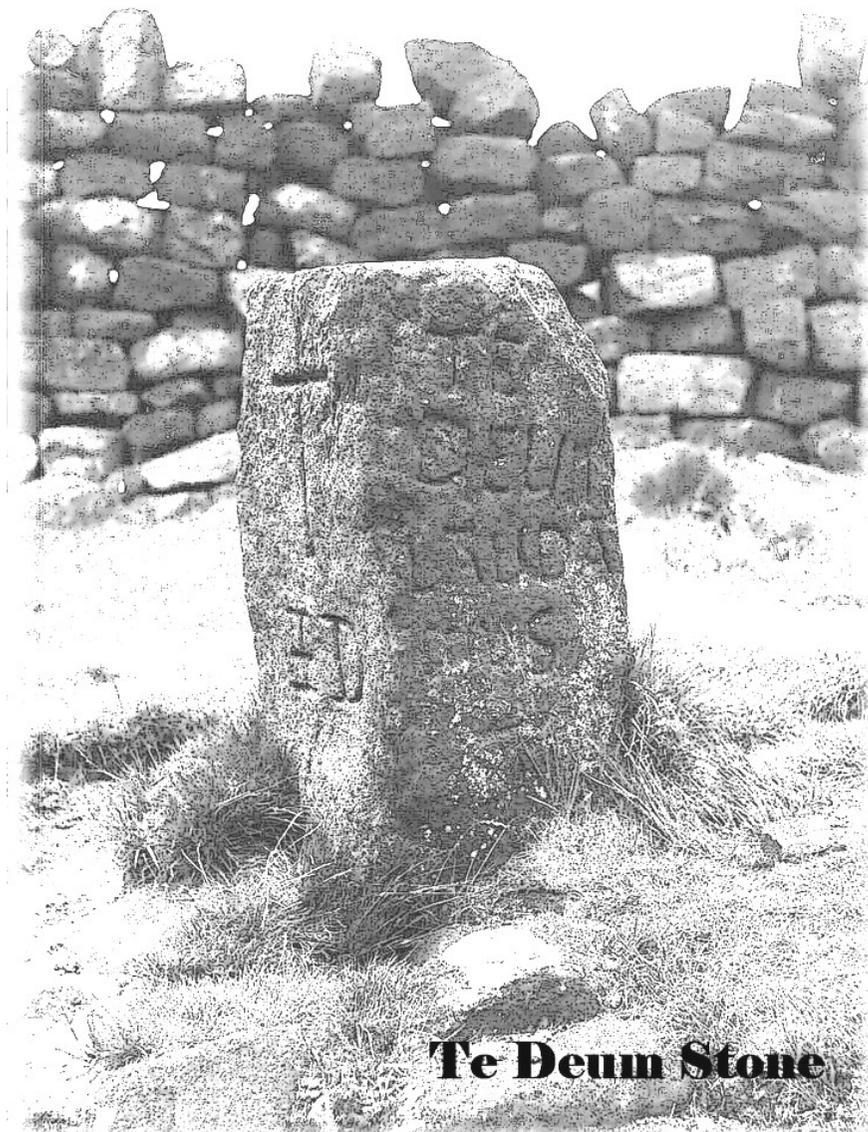
The Long Stoop



At Withens Gate, turn right along the causey, following the Calderdale Way towards Cragg Vale. Soon the route reaches a large gate in an intake wall. Climb over the stile here to find the 'Te Deum' Stone on the other side of the wall.

One face of this squat, ancient stone, is inscribed with the letters **T.D.** and a cross, whilst on the adjacent face is the inscription '**TE DEUM LAUDAMUS**' — "We praise thee O Lord!". Here, at this consecrated stone, weary travellers gave thanks and prayed for a safe journey. But there is more to it than this. The Long Causeway was also

what was known as a Corpse Road. As with the traditional 'Lych Gate', coffins were rested here on their way to burial in Heptonstall Churchyard, and no doubt prayers would be offered for the soul of the deceased. In those days Heptonstall was the only church in the area, and here, as in other parts of the Pennine Dales, it was by no means unusual for people to carry their dead over the moors for burial. Many so-called 'Corpse Roads' owe their origins to this necessary and time-honoured practice.



Te Deum Stone

In terms of superstition and religious belief, a dead family member who had not received the last rites was unshriven. The soul was still earthbound, unable to rise up to heaven until it had received Absolution and Christian burial. It is worth remembering that unborn children, murderers, and witches were traditionally buried in unconsecrated ground, often at crossroads, their souls condemned to hell or the eternal wanderings of the damned – rather dodgy company! Better safe than sorry! To use a rather modern analogy – the stone was used as a 'spiritual charging point', for the deceased on the dreary journey to the local Churchyard! Such stones are not unique – **Catstones Cross**, carved on a rock outcrop in the ravine below Hudson Clough/Orchan Rocks (*near Section 1*), might also be one. It bears the inscription **JESU DEUS DOMINUS MONTIUM 'Jesus Lord King of the Mountain'**. One story relates it was used to celebrate Catholic Mass by Irish Navvies working on the railway, but that doesn't mean they carved it!!

*From the 'Te Deum Stone' climb back over the stile, and retrace your steps to the Long Stoop. (note: paths which lead off to the right into the quarried area all rejoin the **Pennine Way** further along. Whichever way you choose you will find yourself on the simple (but stony) stroll along the well defined path which leads to **Stoodley Pike Monument**, which is one of those places that never seems to get any nearer- but inevitably does – in all its looming, gloomy glory!*

16. Stoodley Pike Monument, standing at 1310 feet above sea level is the highest point reached by the *Fielden Trail*. It is also the coldest, bleakest and wildest point! The Pike appears to be welcoming, yet when you get there, you soon find that it offers little in the way of shelter from the elements. The wind howls up the staircase! After groping your way up through pitch darkness to reach the viewing platform, you find that it's actually colder *inside* the Pike than it was outside, where you at least had one of four alcoves to break the wind. On a wet, cold and windy day, with grey clouds billowing over the moors, Stoodley Pike can be a miserable place. The Pike has been in existence much longer than the rather lugubrious egyptian monument that crowns it today. In 1274, Stoodley was mentioned in the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, and it seems fairly certain that originally a large cairn stood on the Pike, probably covering an ancient burial, for tradition asserts that a skeleton was found on the spot when the first Monument was constructed in 1814. The *first* Stoodley Pike Monument was constructed by public subscription to commemorate the surrender of Paris to the Allies in March 1814. Among the names associated with its construction, we find

Greenwoods, Halsteads, Lacys, Inghams and, of course, Fieldens. The foundation stone was laid with *Masonic* honours and a feast and celebration held. The completed Monument was 37 yds. 2 ft. 4 in. high. For the first 5 yds. it was square, above which height the structure was circular,

Stoodley Pike 1984
with son Richard



tapering to the top. Inside, a staircase of around 150 precarious steps led to the top where there was a small room with a fireplace. While work was continuing on the monument, Napoleon escaped from Elba and finally met his 'Waterloo', and it was in that year, 1815, that the monument was finally completed.

Its career was ill-starred. Within a few years it had suffered vandalism, and the entrance had been walled up. Nemesis arrived on February 8th 1854 when, during the afternoon, after a rumbling which startled the entire neighbourhood, it was discovered that the Monument had collapsed. By an unhappy co-incidence this happened on the same afternoon that the Russian Ambassador left London before the declaration of war with Russia. As a result of this, Stoodley Pike Monument has since been saddled with the myth that its collapse heralds the approach of war.

On March 10th 1854, a meeting was held at the **Golden Lion** in Todmorden with John Fielden in the chair. Object — to rebuild the Monument. John's brother, Samuel Fielden, was also among the speakers at the meeting. It was estimated that the rebuilding would cost between £300 and £400.

On March 30th another meeting was held and it was decided, on the motion of Samuel Fielden, that the Monument should take its present obelisk form. The Fieldens, Sam, John and Joshua, contributed to the project along with other local worthies, and £300 was raised. On June 1st they held another meeting, at which designs were submitted for the new Monument, resulting in the acceptance of the design of local architect Mr. James Green of Portsmouth, Todmorden. A Committee of Works was appointed:

Chairman — John Fielden of Dobroyd.

Treasurer — Samuel Fielden of Centre Vale.

J. Ingham, Joshua Fielden of Stansfield Hall, John Eastwood, Edward Lord, John Veevers, Wm. Greenwood of Stones, J. Green (architect), John Lacy and Mr. Knowles of Lumb (secretary).

By now £600 had been raised, helped by subscriptions from Thomas Fielden of Crumpsall, Manchester, and Mrs. James Fielden of Dobroyd. In the end the total bill came to over £812 with £212 outstanding. This debt was generously liquidated by (guess who!) Mr. Samuel Fielden of Centre Vale. Thus it was that in 1856, the year of the Peace (Crimean War), the Monument was reconstructed in its present form. Within a few years the fabric was in need of repair, and when this work was carried out in 1889, again assisted by funding from John and Samuel Fielden, improvements were made — among them more adequate lighting for the staircase and a lightning conductor. Once again, costs exceeded estimates, and once again Fieldens cleared the debt. The emblems and inscriptions over the entrance to the monument were carved by Mr. Luke Fielden, and it is believed that John Fielden himself composed the inscription. The lettering is not too easy to read these days, so I will save you the trouble:-

"STOODLEY PIKE A PEACE MONUMENT

Erected by Public Subscription.

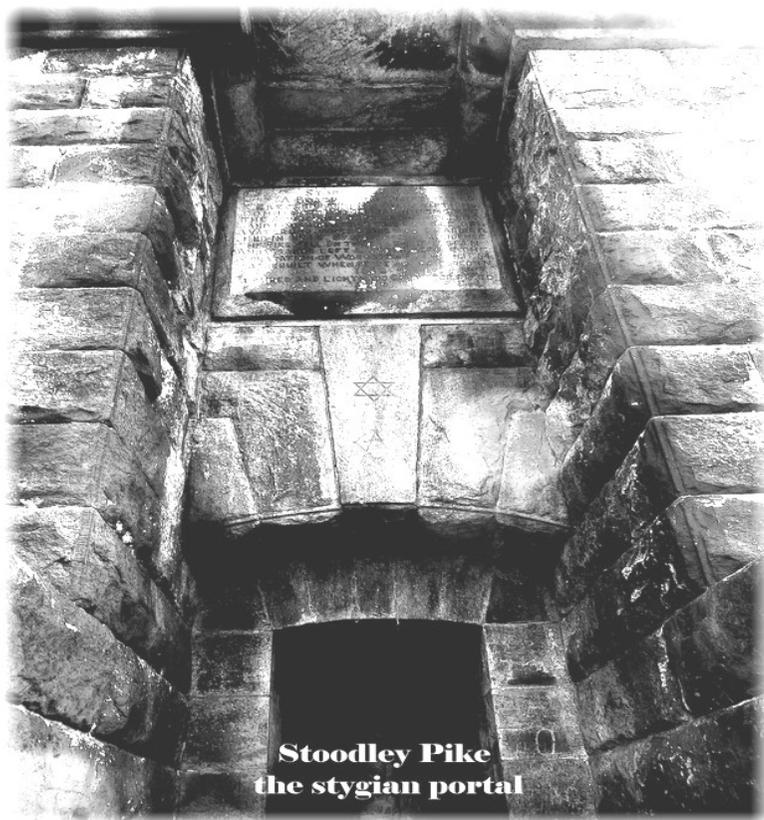
Commenced in 1814 to commemorate the Surrender of Paris to the Allies and finished after the Battle of Waterloo when peace was established in 1815. By a strange co-incidence the Pike fell on the day the Russian Ambassador left London before the declaration of war with Russia in 1854 and it was rebuilt when peace was proclaimed in 1856.

Repaired and lightning conductor fixed 1889."

Superficially that might be an end to the story, but the Pike also exhibits another more esoteric aspect. Above the entrance is carved a masonic compass and a hexagram (The former is a variant of the latter). This is very significant, for Samuel Fielden was an enthusiastic freemason. There are (even today), a number of masonic lodges in the upper Calder valley, with

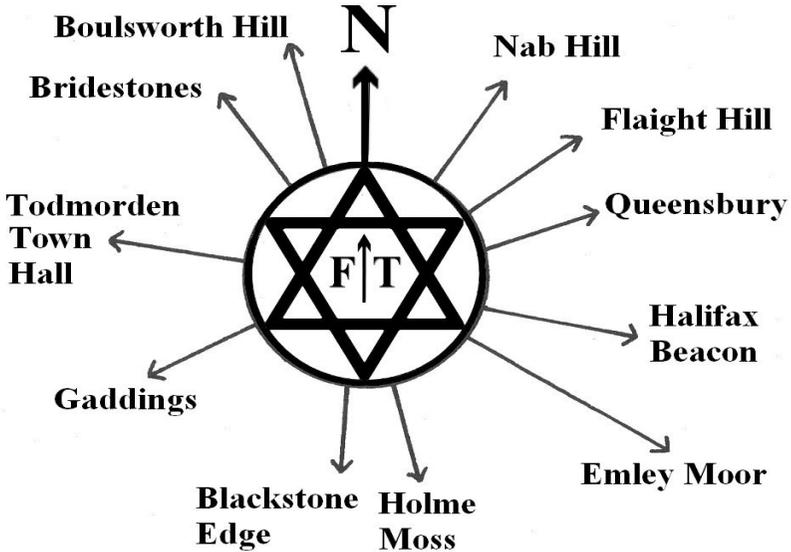
brethren who socialise (and ritualise) in masonic halls, dreaming about the ancient egyptian temples, columns, obscure symbolism and obelisks, that denote their Order. It seems that when the first Pike collapsed, 'Black Sam' Fielden had a grand idea..... He had the resources and the money why not *build* one of these temples..... a full on Masonic structure? Well that is exactly what he did! Stoodley Pike Monument belongs to Todmorden, despite being perhaps nearer to Hebden Bridge. The Pike is not visible from Hebden Bridge, whereas it dominates Todmorden from a distance and can be seen from every part of the town.. It crowns Todmorden's most elevated eminence, and crowns the towns heraldic crest. Yet its distinctive shape and form would not look out of place on the back of a U.S. Dollar bill!

As a one time author of books about follies and prospect towers, I can say with confidence that most prospect towers have slit windows to light their staircases, in the same way as castle towers and turrets &c. Stoodley Pike does not.... the ascent is made in total darkness all the way to the top. Now this is deliberate - the ascent of the Pike is an enforced Masonic Initiation Ritual. The darkness is unavoidable. (My kids and I once ascended the Pike from Withens Clough on a starry summers



night, armed with hurricane lamps.... but that was cheating!) Take one of your boots off, roll up a trouser leg, get one of your mates to hold a penknife to your chest as you nervously ascend with halting steps up through the stygian gloom and you are halfway to being a brother! But as you step into the daylight, ordeal becomes enlightenment and fresh air as you take in the fine views from every side of the obelisk! Sam Fielden's master plan!

The View from Stoodley Pike



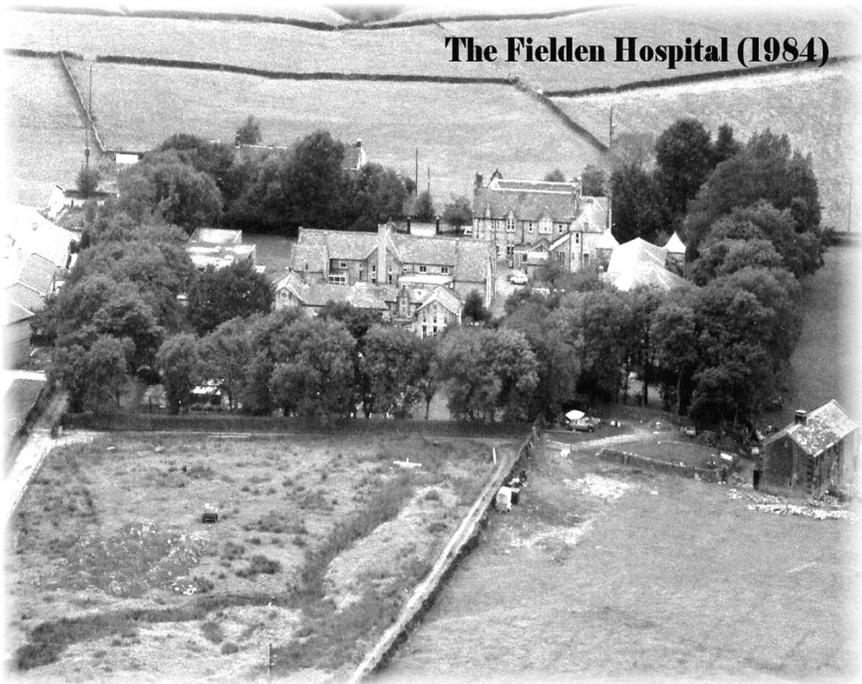
The view NNW from Stoodley Pike is defined by one of the finest expanses of wilderness in Northern England. Lad Law, (also known as Boulsworth Hill), is the rocky crest of the highest point in the South Pennines and the start of a long, bleak and quite unspoiled ridge which extends deep into Yorkshire across to Ponden, Wolf Stones and the Aire Valley. In 1974, when plans were afoot for a South Pennine Park, this unspoiled landscape was to have been the jewel in its crown. Sadly this never came to pass and consequently there are now plans emerging for its exploitation and exclusion in the form of a huge windfarm with sixty plus wind turbines each as large as Blackpool Tower! The effect of this in despoiling the upland landscapes may be already seen in the areas around Bacup and Burnley, where the present turbines are smaller! All this is 'green' they say, 'tackling' climate change &c. But the man in the street knows what it's all about – private profit and arab investment! 'We need to harness the wind', they say, to get 'cleaner, cheaper'? electricity! But what about the *water*? Those dirty Victorians, who blighted the valleys with their chimneys and smoke, *harnessed* our oft flooding rivers

to first turn their machines and later to light up their mills! No-one would call them 'green', but ironically today, the valleys which were harnessed by the Industrial Revolution and had the greatest concentration of dams, lades, goits, culverts and waterwheels in the country, now lie derelict and decayed, only adding to the perennial flooding problems of the urbanised valley floors. Some years ago now, David Fletcher of Pennine Heritage, who well understood this history, installed a low maintenance Archimedes Screw in Hebden Bridge to power a mill with free, green, energy! Some years later the National Trust in Hardcastle Crags electrified Gibson Mill by a similar method. Since then millions have been spent on flood defences but no-one has made any effort to harness the rivers themselves. If the developers have their way, the windfarms will blanket our countryside and remove our only recently and dearly won right of access to open country. – and Britain will...like... erm....unilaterally save the planet!?

Back in the real world, there is still Stoodley Pike - an *original* blight on the landscape! It is quite unique. But so are other odd structures in the Pennines. The strange compulsion that led 19th century Yorkshiremen and Lancashire folk to build bizarre 'follies' on their hilltops is something of a mystery:- Wainhouse Tower, The Pecket Memorial, Rivington Pike, the Earl Crag Monuments near Keighley- Wainman's Pinnacle and Lund's Tower, and the Jubilee Tower on Almondbury at Huddersfield - all bear mute testimony to this strange urge. (Perhaps it is similar to the one which prompts lesser mortals to add stones to cairns on the *Pennine Way*!) But a tradition was established, that in a more commercially intrusive way, persisted into the 20th century, with the electricity pylons and the communications masts and towers of Holme Moss and Emley Moor, and post millennium, we now have the relentless march of the giant wind turbines, a new altar to oligarch profitability, sadly degrading the unspoilt landscapes our ancestors sought to escape to on Sundays, when the mills stopped and the smoke cleared!

It is time to move on. If you are feeling really energetic you can follow the ***Pennine Way*** to Kirk Yetholm. If you are following the ***Fielden Trail***, however, you will ignore such temptations and head back towards Todmorden.

From the entrance to the Monument, walk straight forwards towards the edge of the scarp, bearing slightly left. Soon a much eroded footpath can be seen winding very steeply down the face of the hillside towards a cluster of odd looking buildings on the upland 'shelf' below.



This is **Stoodley Grange**, today a modern housing development incorporating the former **Fielden Hospital**, which was built at Leebottom in 1892 by John Ashton Fielden, who was carrying out the wishes of his father, the late Mr. Samuel Fielden of Centre Vale. It was built originally as an isolation hospital but eventually became a children's hospital, for Samuel had long displayed an interest in the welfare of children and the building of a children's hospital had always been his dearest wish. Finally it became connected with nearby Stansfield View Hospital as a facility for mentally handicapped patients.

*But back to the **Fielden Trail**. The path from Stoodley Pike passes **steeply** down to the left, through Red Scar, and after meandering down the moor eventually reaches London Road, a walled lane which runs along the foot of the scarp near Higher Greave. Bear left, following this track to Mankinholes (very wet in winter!).*

Further along the hillside below London Road, was yet another, larger hospital, **Stansfield View**. This was originally the Union Workhouse, although it wasn't constructed until the late 1870s (the original Poor Law Amendment Act having been passed in 1834). The reason for the delay was the fierce and often violent opposition to this despised institution, an opposition in which the Fieldens

were particularly vociferous and active. Events here in Mankinholes in 1838 were to have a particular impact on the area and delay the implementation of the new Poor Law for many years (as we will shortly see). In the post war period around 1948, it became a hospital for the mentally handicapped. It was finally demolished in 1996, when institutionalised care became unfashionable (and expensive on Thatcherite budgeting), the land being given over to much needed executive housing, which has mushroomed considerably in this area since the the 1980's.



*London Road emerges onto the metalled Lumbutts Road at the southern end of Mankinholes. A sharp right takes us into the village. On the right is an unusually long **stone trough**, constructed as a watering place for the packhorse trains of the Salter Rake Gate, which at one time were the almost universal traffic of the area. It is hard to imagine that in the centuries prior to the Industrial Revolution this sleepy little backwater lay astride what was then a busy trade route. (**note** – if you are perplexed as to why there are circular stone troughs on either end of the structure – as I was until very recently – the answer is that they were made to keep milk cans cool in hot weather in hot weather by immersing them in the icy water!)*

17. Mankinholes . . . IS DELIGHTFUL! Apart from the tarmac lane which brings the odd speeding motorist through its meandering, tree-shaded heart, Mankinholes is venerable and peaceful, a community that time seems to have passed by. It is tempting to call

the place "pre-industrial", but more accurate to call it "pre-Industrial Revolution", for although mills, canals, towns and railways have left Mankinholes alone on the hillside with its memories, it was nevertheless, in the days of its prosperity, almost entirely given over to the domestic textile industry. Even with the Industrial Revolution, textiles did not die out up here, as the



traditional domestic woollen industry was simply replaced by Fielden's cotton spinning mill at nearby Lumbutts, just a little further along the hillside. Up here on the 'shelf of land' just below Stoodley Pike, we are given the rare opportunity of seeing two small and very different industrial communities side by side - the one domestic and the other factory based - representing two different epochs in the history of the area.

In Mankinholes we see the earlier epoch. A woollen industry characterised by the spinning wheel and the handloom, the jingling packhorses and their colourful drivers, the "broggers". When Defoe passed through this area in the 18th century, he remarked upon the 'pieces' of cloth which could be seen on every hillside, stretched upon their tenter frames (the origin of the expression 'on tenter hooks'). Weavers would often carry pieces to market on their backs as we have seen. Besides the weavers, there were the croppers with their enormous

shears for cutting the nap on the cloth; there were dyers, fullers with their stocks and waterwheels- their tiny mills serving an industry centred on the hillfarmer's hearth and home, yet pointing towards the new industrial age that was to come, for in the end the 'hearth and home' would come to serve the mill and the flow of progress would create new communities and environments, leaving the time honoured industries of communities like Mankinholes high and dry.

So Mankinholes remains aloof and detached from the bustle below, nursing its memories, a community put out to pasture. Mankinholes, like other places we have encountered along the route, was a stronghold of early Quakerism, the first recorded meetings in the area being held here at the house of Joshua Laycock, to which a burial ground was attached on December 3rd 1667. Half a little croft called 'Tenter Croft' was rented as a burial ground at a yearly rent of 'one twopence of silver' for a term of 900 years. This plot of ground still forms part of one of the farms at the northern end of the village, and on one of the outbuildings is a gravestone with the inscription "J.S. 1685". Within a short time of the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689, Quaker Meeting Houses were registered in Haworth, Mankinholes, Bottomley and Todmorden. Eventually, as the development of the area began to centre on the valley below, the Quakers moved nearer to Todmorden — to Shoebroad and ultimately to Cockpit Hill behind Fielden Square in Todmorden.

With the end of the Quaker persecutions, Mankinholes returned to its tranquil life. In the wake of the Quakers came the Methodists, who built a chapel here in 1815, and in the same year, a school was opened with Mr. William Bayes of Lumbutts as headmaster. As the cotton spinning industry developed at nearby Lumbutts, the traditional domestic industries of Mankinholes declined, and this little community might simply have passed into oblivion and obscurity had it not been for the sudden and extremely violent scenes which took place here on the afternoon of Friday November 16th 1838, events which were to have a profound effect on the neighbourhood for some years to come.

These troubles were caused by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which abolished the old system of parish relief for the poor which dated back to the time of Elizabeth I, and brought in a new regime, administered by three commissioners who rapidly became known as the 'Three Bashaws (Pashas) of Somerset House'. These commissioners were empowered to group parishes into Unions where workhouses (which came to be called Unions), would be established.

As a result of this, the able-bodied might receive no relief except within the workhouse, where conditions were deliberately made harsh. In the

workhouse, men and women were kept apart to prevent childbearing, and to enter it meant leaving one's home and loved ones to suffer perpetual imprisonment simply for having the misfortune to be poor or unemployed.

In the south the new act was quickly implemented, but in the north it was resolutely and often violently opposed. "The New Bastilles" as the workhouses were called, were set on fire or pulled down; and in many northern towns it was many years before the act could be enforced. To understand the reason for this violent opposition, we must look more closely at the objects and aims of the Act, and at the social, economic and cultural divisions between England's Northern and Southern regions.

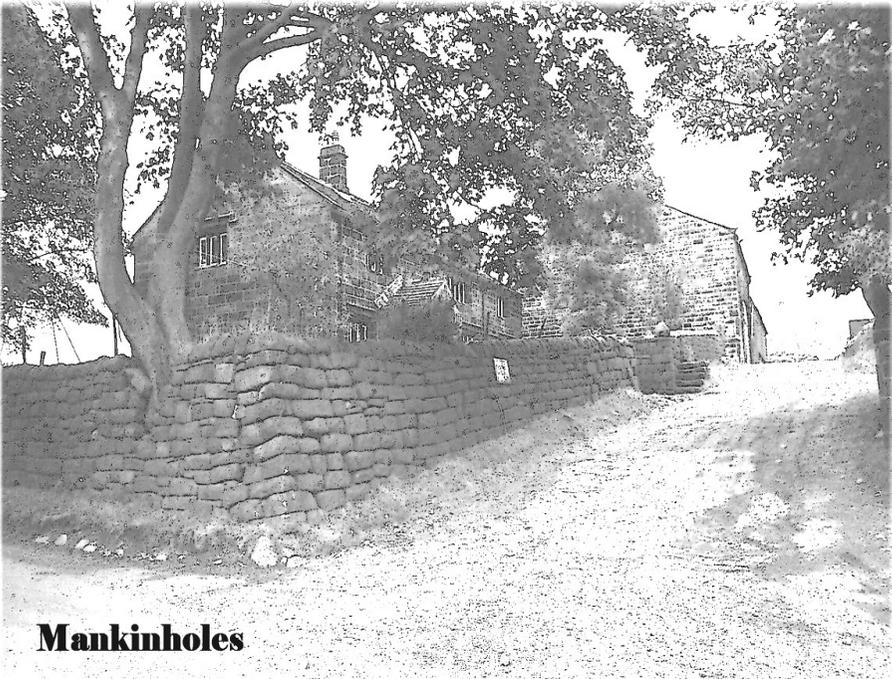
The aim of the Poor Law Amendment Act was primarily to reduce vagrancy by making it impossible for the poor to get an easy living by "scrounging" off the parish (the attitude exists right down to this day!). In certain areas, this situation was indeed the case - with many people preferring to live on relief rather than seek honest employment. It was reasoned that the introduction of this new system would make living "on the Parish" so harsh, restrictive and unpleasant, that a man would take on any kind of work rather than submit himself to the horrors of the workhouse.

The implementation of the law proved that there had indeed been *some* point to the argument. The numbers of people seeking relief dropped drastically in the South, but unfortunately the government of the day completely misjudged the effects of the new Poor Law upon the industrial North, where a completely different situation was to be found.

In the North things were different. Work was centred on the new factories and workers in these factories were having difficult times. Traditional industries like handloom weaving were in decline, and in factories with the new machines fewer hands were needed to do the work of many. Wages were poor and unemployment was widespread. Naturally enough, the arrival of the workhouse upon the scene proved to be the last straw. In the South it may have persuaded the 'idle poor' to seek work, but in the North there was often no work of any kind to be had, especially in areas where the whole community was often entirely dependent on a single industry, or even a single employer. People were forced to enter the workhouse through no fault of their own and be separated from their loved ones, with no prospects save harsh labour and perpetual imprisonment. Furthermore, the workhouse initiated a downward spiral, for if work was available, the poor, rather than submit to the rigours of the workhouse and the workhouse test and lose their homes, would accept lower wages and longer hours, and thus aggravate still further the great struggle with poverty in which so many of the weavers and workers were at that time engaged.

Lower wages and longer hours would, of course, benefit the mill masters, giving them an endless supply of cheap labour, but thankfully there were more enlightened souls who were aware of the injustice of the new Poor Law, and who were ready to organise local opposition to the hated workhouse.

In Yorkshire there were two hotbeds of Poor Law opposition. Huddersfield, led by Richard Oastler, and the workers of Todmorden, led by 'Honest John' Fielden. On May 13th 1837, 'Honest John' was speaker at a huge West Riding Anti-Poor Law rally held on Hartshead Moor near Liversedge, and on 19th February 1838, he became vice chairman of Earl Stanhope's Anti-Poor Law Association. The struggle against the workhouse in Todmorden was bitter. Elections of 18 Guardians for the seven townships in the Union were ordered in January 1837, but Todmorden, Walsden and Langfield refused to proceed, and when the Guardians did meet on 6th July 1838, their opponents forced them to adjourn. As regards John Fielden's



Mankinholes

involvement in these events, his opposition was vigorous:- "A most extraordinary course of conduct was pursued by Messrs. Fielden & Co.,"

who dismissed all their workers to overload the system and force the Guardians to resign. Unfortunately, they "wholly failed in this remarkable endeavour to intimidate the Guardians" and re-opened their works within days, on the 16th. John then warned the Guardians with an ominous placard:

"To oppose force we are not yet prepared, but if the people of this and surrounding districts are to be driven to the alternative of either doing so, or surrendering their local government into the hands of an unconstitutional board of lawmakers, the time may not be far distant when the experiment may be tried, and I would warn those who provoke the people to such a combat of the danger they are incurring."

In July, 1838, faced with a united and flat refusal to construct a workhouse in the area, the Parishes of Todmorden & Walsden and Langfield, were fined £50 and £20 respectively.

Consequently, when no payment was forthcoming, William Ingham of Mankinholes, the elected local 'Overseer of the Poor,' was summoned to the magistrates court in Halifax to pay the fine for the local refusal to contribute towards a Union Workhouse. He refused to pay it. The court then fined him a further £5 for refusing to pay. He refused to pay that also!

The warning was duly noted and the Guardians were at first cautious, not attempting to implement the Act fully for some time. But attempts to levy rates through the Todmorden and Langfield Overseers, led to tangled legal actions. Finally, when two Constables, Feather and King, were sent from Halifax to Inghams house in Mankinholes, on November 16, 1838, to seize household goods to the value of the fines of Mr. William Ingham, the Overseer, for his refusal on behalf of the township of Langfield to pay the new Poor Law levy, they could not have been aware of the seething cauldron of violent resentment that they were about to overturn!

What happened next is best expressed in the words of the time, from a pamphlet account published in 1838:-

"The Overseer of Todmorden, Mr. Ingham, has recently had a fine imposed upon him for neglecting to pay the demands made upon him under the new [Poor] Law. In consequence a distress warrant was taken out against him on 8th December Thursday. Feather, the Under Deputy and King, Sergeant of the Watch, proceeded to Langfield to mark the goods and give the usual notice that if the fine was not paid the goods would be taken and sold ... On Friday 16th May they went, taking with them a horse and a cart ... Immediately upon the Officers being seen, a woman, who was standing with several others upon a piece of rising ground at a short distance called out. "Ring the `larum bell", she repeated, and forthwith a bell commenced ringing ... with tremendous violence. In almost an instant, the bell of Mr. Fielden's factory situated at Lumbutts about two fields length from Ingham's house was set a ringing and was followed by several others. These bells were rung from 10 to 15 minutes incessantly. The game was now commenced, factories emptied of men armed with clubs, etc., hastening to the scene of action. Soon there was a mob of two thousand people gathered!"

The mob threatened to raze his house if Ingham would not deliver up the Constables, who, after having been mauled by the mob, were now *hiding* in Ingham's house. Eventually, however, an agreement was reached whereby the Officers agreed to take an oath that they would not return here again on such an errand. The mob was now slightly pacified — but not content with this, they demanded that the Constables should apologise on their knees. Neither Officer was willing to submit to this kind of degradation, so when Ingham finally opened the door both Officers were seized in an instant and the mob commenced stripping them of their clothes. Feather, now seeing the position they were in, begged for mercy. The mob shouted: “we will spare your lives! Mr. Fielden told us to spare your lives!”

Left now to the mercies of the mob, the Officers were “most severely kicked, thrown upon the ground, dragged by their heels upon the ground and suffered the most murderous treatment. Their hats were taken off, filled with mud, and then with great violence forced over their faces. Thus blinded and choked they continued to make their way towards Stoodley Bridge.” Half a dozen of the mob protected them for a time, but, being attacked by the remainder, they left them to their fate.

Upon arriving at the last turn in Stoodley Plantation, the mob threatened to throw them into the canal: “One man who was holding King's left arm said — “Now if you will make a split [run] I will give you a chance!” [They were about forty yards away from the canal]. He [King] did so, but was immediately pursued by the man who had hold of his right arm. This fellow, who King says was one of Mr. Fielden's mechanics, proved to be a treacherous rogue who tried to pitch him into the cut . . .” The Officers eventually found refuge at a Mr. Oliver's, and managed to get some clothes and catch the ‘*Perseverance*’ Mail Coach back to Halifax (their cart having been smashed and burned and the horse turned loose by the mob).

That might have been an end to it, but on the following Wednesday, (21st November), a rumour spread to the effect that the Constables were returning once more, this time with a body of soldiers. The balloon went up and the mob gathered; but the rumour turned out to be a damp squib. Not to be thwarted however:-

“The infuriated mob determined to manifest their indignation at the new Poor Law and its advocates in the following summary manner — From Mankinholes they proceeded to Mutterhole, the residence of Mr. Royston Oliver, one of the Poor Law Guardians, and broke the whole of his windows and doors; after which they proceeded to Wood Mill, breaking the windows of Mr. Samuel Oliver's house, and the windows of the inn where the Guardians hold their meetings.”

From here the mob went “then to Stones Wood, the residence of Messrs. Ormerod Bros., destroying windows, doors and furniture, and

on their return called on Mr. Helliwell of Friths Mill." The mob then went to Wattey Place (Wm. Greenwood), Jeremiah Oliver (the surgeon) and the house of Miss Holt, the draper, all of whose windows were smashed. Also suffering damage were the houses of Mr. Henry Atkinson (shoemaker) and Mr. Stansfield, Solicitor and Clerk to the Board of Guardians.

On reaching **Todmorden Hall**, which was at this time the residence of James Taylor Esq, the Magistrate, they destroyed windows, doors, furniture, family paintings and carriages, and carried off spirits, wines and the contents of the cellar. Next they went to the house of Mr. James Suthers, who lived up Blind Lane and who was the Collecting Overseer under the new Poor Law for the Todmorden District. Here again, windows were smashed and the house plundered, and the mob would have made a bonfire of the furniture but for the appeal of a lady nearby who feared for the houses catching fire; so instead they threw it into the nearby watercourse. The mob ended its rampage at the residence of Mr. Greenwood at Hare Hill, where, after breaking windows and doors they set the house on fire, which was quickly extinguished by a fire engine sent from Fielden's Mill at Waterside before much damage was done. All the people whose houses were attacked were either Union officials or "other persons supposed to be friendly to the Law"; Miss Holt for example, whose windows disappeared under the vengeance of the mob, was sister-in-law to Joshua Fielden, but had shown herself by chatter over her shop counter to be in favour of the new Poor Law.

Retribution was swift. Soldiers were brought in and large numbers of Fielden's workers were arrested by police and troops. Of 40 men tried however, only one was actually imprisoned. The Fieldens and their workers had won — it was not until 1877 that Todmorden finally agreed to build a workhouse.

After these events, Mankinholes reverted back to its former tranquility (although it must have seen a little activity four years later with the Chartist and Anti-Corn Law disturbances). Mr. Ingham's house still remains, standing in a cluster of trees in Mankinholes, with its gable to the road. It seems hard to imagine the scenes that took place here on that fateful Friday afternoon in 1838. Such violence seems somehow incongruous in this gentle place.

*But back to the present. More or less in the centre of Mankinholes is the T8 Circular Bus stop, offering a potentially welcoming escape to Todmorden if necessary. Immediately adjacent is the former YHA Pennine Way Youth Hostel, with its lovely round headed mullions facing onto the road, currently facing an uncertain future. This was Ingham's house. From Mankinholes, the **Fielden Trail** essentially*

*follows the route of the **Calderdale Way** into Todmorden, via Lumbutts. Just beyond the northern end of the village, the **Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School** appears on the right. This was built by public subscription in 1833. The adjoining ground was the site of Mankinholes Methodist Church, and a sign by the gate in 1984 informed us that it was “built in 1814, enlarged in 1870, rebuilt in 1911 and closed in 1979.” Opposite the chapel gate, a paved track leads down between walls to emerge by the **Top Brink Inn** (on your left) at Lumbutts. Originally known the **Sportsmans**, then later as the **Dog and Partridge**, the inn was finally renamed after its location. This is one of the oldest hostelries in the district. Sheep fairs were once held here, and business deals clinched over a pint of ale. The Langfield Moor Gateholders met here and the pub was a traditional haunt of the 'Broggers' and packhorse men). In 1822, one John Mitton was the landlord and the inn was also a farm. A long succession of landlords have run it right down to the present day. The dark low panelled rooms of the older part of the pub, are highly suggestive of its past, and its not too hard to imagine less*

Top Brink Inn Lumbutts



genteel convivial times long ago, with pewter tankards hanging from beams, sputtering candle lanterns in near darkness, clouds of tobacco smoke rising from clay pipes and rough looking farmers, weavers delvers and travellers.

*The paved route continues onwards - a short, steep, cobbled ginnel, which drops into the Lumbutts Road directly opposite the huge **Lumbutts Water Tower**. Turn right. Soon a stream passes beneath the road and an imposing mill-house appears on the left in front of the water tower. This house, and the tower, is all that*

remains of Fielden's Spinning Mill. Around this mill in the 19th century mushroomed the cotton manufacturing community of **18. Lumbutts**. Sited on the fast flowing stream flowing down Black Clough from Langfield Common, Lumbutts was the ideal site for the development of a small manufacturing community of the Industrial Revolution. Whereas Mankinholes owed its livelihood to farming and to the domestic-based textiles of an earlier age, Lumbutts, in contrast, was almost entirely created by, and centred around, its cotton mill; which was one of the many remote

Lumbutts Mill



outposts of the Fielden's cotton manufacturing 'empire'. Nearly all of its 200 or so inhabitants were employed by Fieldens in the 19th century.

The mill that stood in front of the huge tower was (on the authority of a local retired postman I conversed with) Fielden's Scutching and Carding Department. On the other side of the road stood the Spinning Shed. Today, only the water tower, the dams that fed it, the manager's house, and some workers' cottages remain to testify to the substantial manufacturing establishment that developed here. The water tower especially was a fine work of water engineering. In its day it housed three overshot waterwheels which were fed from the dams up Black Clough and Gaddings, which sent the water down through a complicated network of drains and culverts, which included the 250 meters long Horsewood Tunnel - a considerable feat of engineering. The three wheels were arranged in a vertical sequence so that each wheel had its own feed, but was also driven by the water falling from the wheel above it. The top water fell a total distance of 90 feet and the whole system was capable of generating 54 horse power. Today, though ruined, the tower is still a fascinating structure and is a landmark visible from all the surrounding moorland edges.

*From Lumbutts the **Fielden Trail** continues onwards along the local bus route, ascending gradually (with fine upland views behind us!) towards the **Shepherds Rest**. On this tarmac road we are, in fact, walking along part of the same Salter Rake Gate we left behind at the end of SECTION 3! A little further along, near the Inn, the old stone causey coming down from Rake End joins up with the modern road, where it disappears beneath the tarmac! The **Fielden Trail** however, leaves the road before reaching this point, following the route of the **Calderdale Way**.*

This next part of the walk seems superficially very complicated, with great potential for straying over private property, but when you are on the ground it is actually quite easy. Being mostly on the *Calderdale Way*, it is well waymarked and well used. In fact it's really hard to go wrong! Only the *Fielden Trail's* 'Short Cut' from Longfield Farm is unwaymarked and less frequented, but the field stiles (ageing as they are) are plain enough. Even if you miss it and follow the *Calderdale Way*, you will still end up on Shoebroad Lane by the Blackwater Dam. You really can't go wrong. The detail is as follows.....

*After passing 'Causey West' on the right, turn right by pole no. 215 (also Bus Stop 450 18965 and **CW** Waymark) at Croft Gate, a farm road leading towards Croft Farm, (beautifully restored!). Pass through a gate to the left of the farm buildings, following a walled*

*grassy track, which very quickly reveals a hugely waymarked stile on your left. This is the first of a long succession of stiles (12 in all) leading to Shoebroad Lane via Far Longfield Farm, Little Jack's Cottage, Middle Longfield Equestrian Centre and Longfield Farm. The route passes right through the middle of riding stables, via a succession of gates, with horses to pet all round! After the last gate, turn left up the farm road (where continueth the **Calderdale Way**) which we quickly leave by turning sharp R. down an unpromising looking private road, which is seemingly heading towards a dead end, but just as you think its going to drop you into someones front garden, a stile appears on your left, blocked by a large piece of chipboard with an arrow and 'footpath' painted on it! It is not obstructed - you simply slide the board to one side and slide it back behind you! (It's probably there to keep stock in.) This is the shorter **Fielden Trail** Route which leads directly into Shoebroad Lane via four more (unwaymarked) stiles. Here you rejoin the **Calderdale Way** which is coming down the lane on your left. A brisk Right turn leads directly down to the*

19. Shoebroad Quaker Burial Ground. A small walled enclosure, now heavily shaded by trees. There is nothing much to see here, apart from two or three tombstones of the Oddy family, lying flat in the shaded turf. (They stood upright in 1984). But there is much to tell. Back in 1984, its entrance was walled up, and I had to shin over the wall to visit it. Today there is an iron gate with a plaque marked **Shewbread Cemetery**. The site has obviously been improved - but with dubious results. A wooden seat in the middle offers a peaceful shaded haven from a hot day, but the site has been 'improved' in a less pleasant way. There is a rope swing on a tree, a makeshift firepit, and the turf had been worn down to a large patch of eroded bare earth. Some people these days have no respect.

This tiny cemetery dates from around 1690, and contains at least **200** burials. Being a Quaker Burial Ground, its residents were not allowed headstones or grave monuments until relatively recent times, (which explains the Oddy burials), the tradition being one of anonymous burial in an unmarked plot of ground. This said, It should come as no surprise then, when I tell you that there are at least 24 Quaker Fieldens buried in this tiny plot of ground, and goodness knows how many other people from other Quaker families in the district. Here lie the mortal remains of Joshua Fielden (I) of Bottomley, who along with his brother John Fielden of Hartley Royd, were amongst the first people in the district to become Quakers. He was buried here on 21st April 1693, and was followed by successive Joshuas, the last Joshua being 'Honest John's' father, the

enterprising Joshua Fielden (IV) of Edge End and later Waterside, who was buried here in April 1811. The last Fielden to be buried here was old Joshua's youngest surviving daughter, Salley Fielden, who died at Waterside on 18th September 1859 aged 79. (She was Mary Fielden's aunt.) Also buried here are John and Tamar Fielden of Todmorden Hall, whom we will shortly encounter on the last lap of the *Fielden Trail*.

A final note on spelling. 'Shoebroad' is a local corruption of 'Shewbread' or 'Bread of the Presence' - 12 loaves of unleavened bread representing the 12 tribes of Israel, which were placed on a gold topped table in the Temple of Jerusalem to represent their presence before God – actually a very apt name for a cemetery!

From the Quaker cemetery, the track continues to descend towards Todmorden, passing Shoebroad Farm (the original Quaker meeting place), on the left. On reaching the bend at Honey Hole, do not follow it, but instead continue onwards through an iron gate, which leads into the church cemetery. The gravel path turns left, descends through trees and shrubbery, and finally emerges at the chancel end of Todmorden Unitarian Church.

20. Todmorden Unitarian Church

On the left, at the corner of the church, are the graves of Samuel and Joshua Fielden, two of the three brothers who left such a lasting mark on the architectural character of Todmorden. (The third brother, John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle, is buried at Grimston Park near Leeds.) Also buried here is Samuel Fielden's wife, Sarah Jane, whose educational works were recently discussed. The inscription tells us that she was born at West Dingle, Liverpool, on 5th November 1819 and died at Centre Vale in 1910. There is less inscription on Joshua's grave, although we note with some surprise that Joshua, by a strange twist of fate, died on his 70th birthday, being born on March 8th 1827 and dying on the same date in 1897. My first visit here seemed a rather haunting experience. There I stood, with one of Samuel Fielden's actual letters in my inside pocket, along with correspondence written by his sister Mary. It was strange to reflect that had not fate brought this material into my possession, I would not even have been aware of his existence, still less visited his grave. It was equally strange to think that his birthday was the same as my own, 21st January. For me, my own personal *Fielden Trail* began right here.

From the two graves, bear right, around the front of the church, passing through the magnificent porch beneath the tall spired tower. In the mosaic pavement is a small, circular device containing the names of Samuel, Joshua and John Fielden. On reaching the far end of

the building, bear right, to where the main entrance to the church stands near a magnificent 'rose' window.

Todmorden Unitarian Church was built by the three Fielden Brothers, John, Samuel and Joshua, in memory of their famous father, 'Honest John' Fielden M.P. The first sod was cut in April 1865, and the corner stone was laid by Samuel Fielden on December 23rd 1865. Prior to its opening, the structure was complete in almost every detail, and the gathering of 800 people who met for the official opening on April 7th 1869, saw the church as a finished work of art. Like most of the Fielden buildings in Todmorden, the Unitarian Church was designed by the Westminster architect John Gibson, who created a Gothic style church of remarkably fine taste. (Victorian 'Gothick' was very often quite the opposite.)

"Internally this massive church, constructed in stone, marble and oak, is 128 feet long and 46 feet wide. The magnificent spire is 196 feet in height. To ensure its safety the steeple has its foundations 30 feet down into the ground, and the pinnacles increase the stability of the tower by their downward thrust. The lofty nave with its two aisles has seven pointed and moulded arches on each side, springing from pillars of Devon marble six feet in circumference. Each window in the nave has its arch finished with the carving of a human, alternately male and female. A unique feature of its oak roof is the insertion of a number of small windows admitting light. These cannot be seen from the outside. On the south side of the chancel is the vestry, originally planned as a mortuary chapel, and on the north side is the organ chamber and original vestry. The rose window at the western end of the nave is one of the finest features of the church. In some lights the 35,000 pieces of glass used in its design gleam like a precious jewel. The only other windows of stained glass are those in the chancel, which contain representations of biblical incidents. These windows, with colours rich and glowing, were the work of M. Capronnier of Brussels. The beauty of this church has not been spoiled by the addition of unsuitable memorials. It contains only four, one to the memory of those members who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-18, and the other three to the Fielden brothers by whose munificence the church was built . . ."

So much for the "guide book" details. Now to the more recent history. On my second visit here back in 1984, I was lucky enough to arrive when the custodian of the church, Mr. Rushworth, was showing round an architect and a surveyor from London, who had been requested to come and inspect the fabric, judge what repairs were necessary, and estimate the cost. Mr. Rushworth explained to me that the church was normally locked because of repeated acts of vandalism

carried out by the youth of the neighbourhood. Only recently, the church had been broken into and a lot of damage done. My guide informed me that he had once worked as a secretary at Fielden's Mill. He showed me pews at the front of the church which were slightly larger and more comfortable than the others (I wouldn't have noticed the difference had it not been pointed out to me). These were obviously the Fieldens' own private pews.

At that time, the future prospects for the church were none to good, despite it having been awarded an English Heritage Grade I listed status in 1966. Not only had the church been vandalised, but the lead on the roof had become so decayed that it was raining in, with resultant damage to the church's fabric. Mr. Rushworth informed me at the time, that they had put in for a grant to restore the church, but did not feel that it would be of much use, as the cost that was estimated for the repair work was in excess of £50,000 (it only cost £36,000 to build – in 1869 that is!).

Indeed, this magnificently beautiful building was at that time something of a white elephant. Built in an age of Victorian wealth and opulence, the Fielden brothers would never have imagined that perhaps one day future Unitarians might be quite unable to keep up to this grandiose memorial to their father's memory. Its very scale and magnificence seemed to deny it any use other than that for which it was intended. If it were smaller, and older, there would have been lots of potential uses and sources of revenue to ensure its continued survival. Alas, this was not the case. It remained, a massive, decaying church with only a small congregation.

The irony of the situation is that before then, when faced with the choice of selling either the old Sunday School or the Church, they sold the former, on the grounds that it would be unthinkable to part with the magnificent latter building. The Sunday School (which was the *original* Unitarian Chapel) became a workshop, and the Unitarians came to regret that they had sold it. It was smaller, more adaptable and historically of greater significance than its more magnificent yet less venerable successor. There would have been far less difficulty in attracting funds to restore and modernise it. So they were left with a huge financial headache. There was light at the end of the tunnel however; and at the time of writing, a grant had been obtained, and there were plans to turn the church into a Fielden museum and exhibition centre.

All this was in 1984. Even then, the congregation was in near total decline, and thereafter things went even further downhill, forcing total closure of the

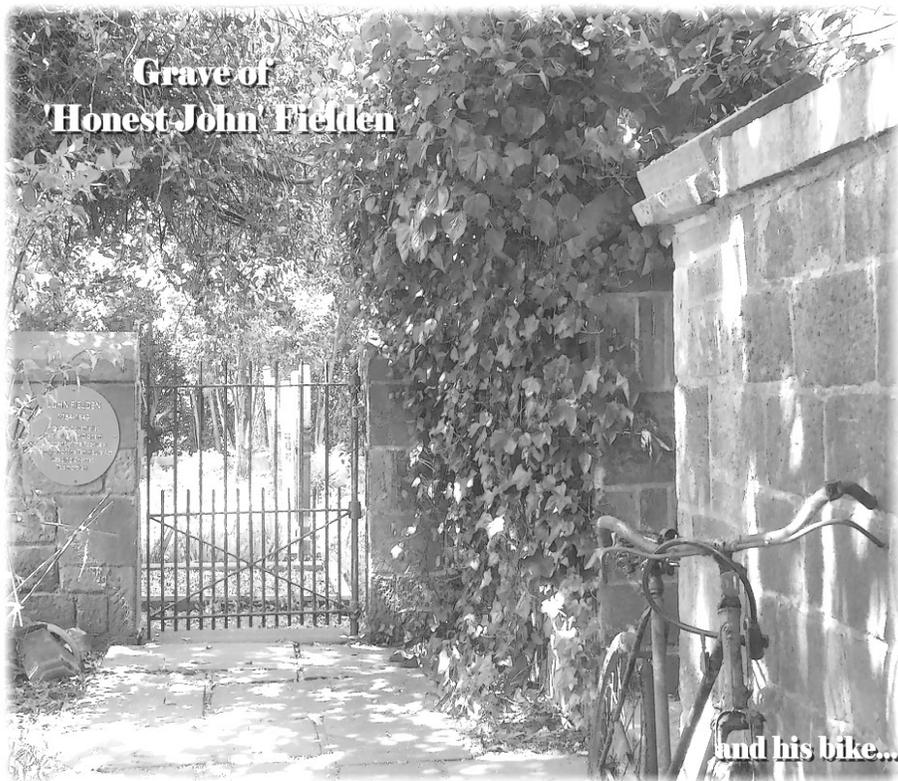
church in 1987, after which the building fell even deeper into disrepair. But happily there were still people who cared for it. The building was acquired by the Historic Chapels Trust, who in 1994, initiated a million pound repair and renovation project, restoring the church to its full magnificence. Today, it still holds occasional services, but kitted out with kitchens, toilets and hi tech lighting, it has become a venue for weddings, funerals and secular music performances.



**Todmorden Unitarian Church
Graves of Sam and Joshua Fielden**

*From the entrance porch of the church return to Honey Hole Road and pass Meeting House Cottage on the right. Here was the **Banktop Quaker Meeting House**, which was built in 1808, after the meeting house at Shoebread had been taken down. A little further on, near a high wall and a trough on the right, bear left past modern railings to an iron gate in a stone wall. This leads into the graveyard of Todmorden Unitarian Sunday School:-*

21. Todmorden Unitarian Sunday School The first thing we encounter at the old Sunday School is 'Honest John' Fielden's simple and austere grave, which lies almost at your feet as you enter the graveyard. It is substantial but plain, being little more than a large expanse of gravel surrounded by four kerbstones.



Why, you might ask, was this relatively humble spot chosen as the last resting place of such a distinguished man as 'Honest John' Fielden? Surely it would have been more fitting to inter his remains in a more suitably grandiose tomb, sited in the magnificent church that was erected nearby to his memory? The reason is simple. The Old Sunday School, being the original chapel of Unitarian worship in the area was the building that 'Honest John' knew and loved during his

lifetime. Indeed, 'Honest John' Fielden's role in the development of the Unitarian Faith in Todmorden cannot be ignored, for without his enthusiasm and support that faith might well have foundered and passed into oblivion.

The story of local Unitarianism begins in 1806, with a schism among Methodists in the Rochdale area. This was caused by the expulsion from his ministry of the Reverend Joseph Cooke, who was removed from the Rochdale Methodist Circuit on account of his heretical opinions. Joseph Cooke was both young and popular, and his expulsion caused a secession from the ranks of Methodists in Rochdale, Padiham, Burnley and Todmorden, which were the areas where Cooke preached. These people gathered into Bible Reading Societies known as "Cookite" Congregations. Cooke's friends built for him the Providence Chapel in Clover Street, Rochdale, from which centre he established a 'circuit' and ministered to the various Cookite groups in neighbouring towns and villages. He died in 1811 aged 35. After his death, Cookite numbers dwindled and those that remained became known as Methodist-Unitarians, and it was to one such group, in Todmorden, to which John Fielden, the Quaker, was attracted.

In 1818, the renowned Unitarian Missionary, the Revd. Richard Wright, preached at Clover Street when some Todmorden hearers were present. They invited him to come and preach in Todmorden, and when he did so, the local Cookite group were deeply impressed, realising that Unitarianism and their own beliefs were pretty much in agreement. Equally impressed by his meeting with Richard Wright was John Fielden, the Quaker millowner, who was converted to Unitarianism as a result. Already renowned for his sincerity, ability and work as an educationalist, John Fielden was the natural choice to lead this small band of Todmorden Unitarians, and the first result of Wright's visit was the formation of the group into a "Unitarian Society", with 'Honest John' as its most influential member. Fielden invited local Unitarian Ministers to visit Todmorden on a fortnightly basis and was successful in his endeavour. The Society at first met in a meeting room at Hanging Ditch, but, as they prospered and grew in number they resolved to build a Meeting House "Where the worship of God in one Person shall be carried on and a school taught."

Thus it was that in 1824, the Todmorden Unitarian Chapel (which later became the Sunday School), was opened on Cockpit Hill, with an outstanding debt of about £500. Times were hard for the cotton operatives who were the main support of the chapel. The trustees, finding the situation a burden, begged to be relieved of the office.

'Honest John', in typical Fielden fashion solved the problem by buying the Chapel, School and all accoutrements for £480. He appointed a regular Minister and paid his salary. This Minister was to also act as Schoolmaster in 'Honest John's' own Factory School at Waterside, which we encountered earlier in our travels. 'Honest John' superintended the Sunday School in person, beginning at 9.30 am with prayers, service, and scripture reading; followed by the 'three Rs', spelling and history. From 1828 onwards, Fielden provided a day school with accomodation for 100 children between the age of four and the time of going to work. A fee of 2d per week was charged. This covered the cost of materials, the teacher's salaries being paid by 'Honest John'.

On 29th May 1849, after a distinguished but alas rather brief Parliamentary career, 'Honest John' Fielden died at Skeynes in Kent and was brought to Todmorden to be buried in the yard of the chapel he had loved so well. The funeral took place on 4th June, and according to the account published in the Ashton Chronicle, it was quite a substantial affair:

"The remains of Mr. John Fielden of Centre Vale, late M.P. for Oldham, were interred on Monday in his own chapel yard at Honey Hole. The funeral procession began to move from Centre Vale about 12 o'clock, headed by the minister, Mr. James Taylor and the Revd. J. Wilkinson of Rochdale, followed by the principal gentlemen of the neighbourhood ... The hearse was followed by two mourning coaches containing his sons and brothers ... these were followed by four other coaches, with relatives and intimate acquaintances, among whom were Mr. Charles Hindley, M.P. for Ashton, and Mr. John and Mr. James Cobbett. These were followed by a large procession of gentlemen and operatives from Oldham, Bolton and Manchester, who had come unsolicited to pay a mark of respect to their friend and benefactor. The road was lined with spectators from Centre Vale to the chapel, and thousands were on the hillsides and the tops of houses to witness the sad procession."

After 'Honest John's' death, his three sons and their wives took over leadership of the Unitarian Congregation, and in 1869, when the new church was endowed, a new school was opened in the old chapel, which became the Todmorden Unitarian Sunday School. The old chapel was further extended and modernised in later years. A stone over the entrance reads:

**"To the memory of Samuel, John and Joshua Fielden;
constant benefactors of the Unitarian Church and
School this stone was laid by**

Salfred Steintha June 17th 1899."

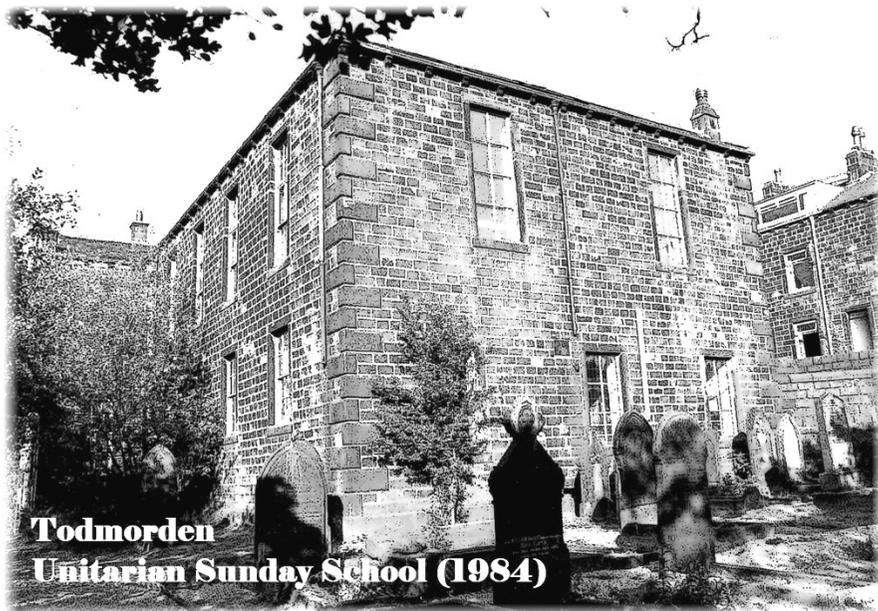
Today, the Sunday School is yet another chapel building fallen to the ravages of today's unbelieving consumer society. But it is no longer a workshop – it has been converted into housing – so at least its structural future is secured for the time being.

In the 19th century, both family and community life was centred on the chapel — today's urban man dedicates his spare time to TV and the internet. The material has replaced the spiritual, and in thousands of demolished or secularised chapels all over the region, we witnessed the "Fall of Zion". Today's society, living in the shadow of nuclear annihilation, sees no tomorrow, and it is hardly surprising to find that the solid faith and confidence in the future enjoyed by our Victorian forebears is singularly lacking today. Chapels have now become workshops, recording studios, offices. There was even been an attempt to turn one into a witches' temple, and a century ago this would not only have been impossible but inconceivable! Today, we are no longer subject to the tyrannical restrictions that were imposed on us by the blinkered guardians of Christian morality, but equally, we are no longer able to enjoy the strength, fellowship and confidence that they took so much for granted. In rejecting the bad, alas, we have also rejected that which was good.

Before leaving the Sunday School yard take a look at the grave of James Graham, blacksmith of Dobroyd, whose headstone bears the following inscription:

**JAMES GRAHAM of DOBROYD, Todmorden.
Born March 18th 1837
Died February 12th 1876**

**My Sledge and hammer lay reclined,
My bellows too have lost their wind,
My fires extinguished and my forge decayed ,
My vice now in the dust is laid.
My iron and my coals are gone,
My nails are drove, my work is done.
My fire dried corpse lies here at rest ,
My soul is waiting to be blest!**



*Exiting the graveyard turn left, alongside the outer wall of the Sunday School. At the end of the chapel building, a steep cobbled snicket runs down the side of it, to its junction with steps descending from the lower gate of the chapel graveyard (overgrown and padlocked). This leads down into Langfield Road. Follow downhill into **Fielden Square**.*

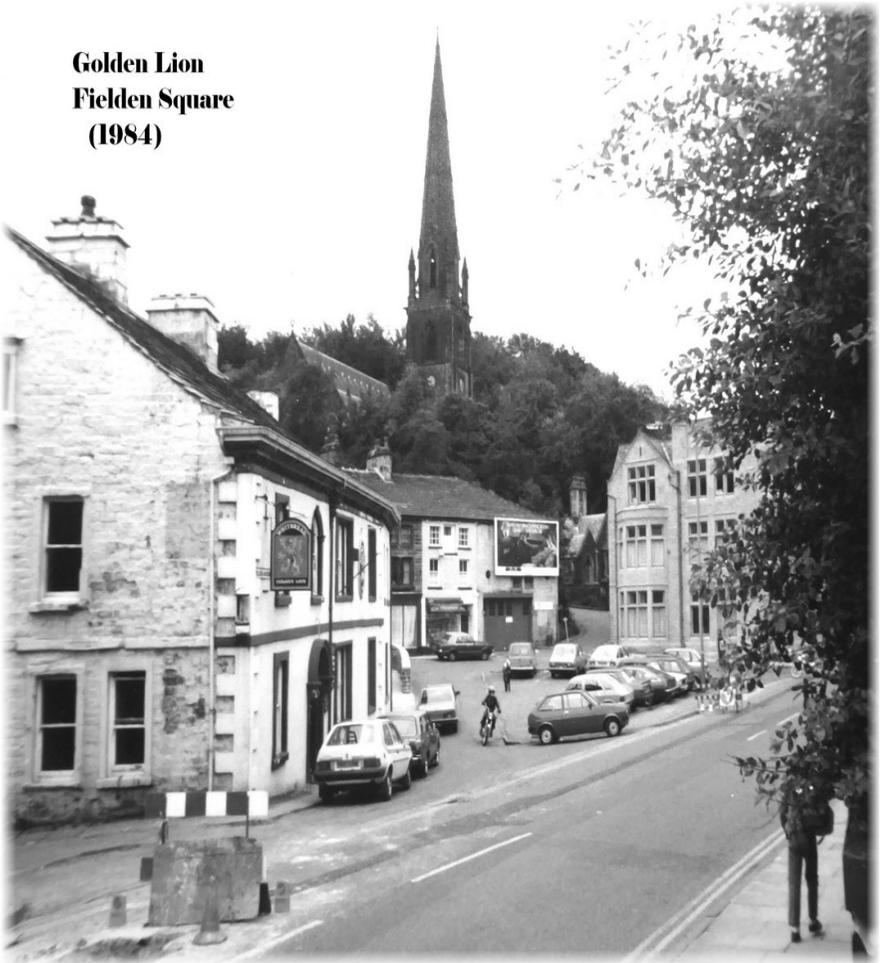
The area around **Fielden Square** is the oldest part of the village that gave rise to Todmorden . It was once known as 'The Cockpit', built on the sloping ground up to Bank Top, where was situated the Quakers 'new' Meeting House, built in 1808, to replace the older meeting house up at Shoebread. Then, what is now the square, was originally occupied by a sawmill and wood yard standing opposite the **Golden Lion**, which is on your right.

22. The Golden Lion Inn. One of the older local hostelries, the *Golden Lion* has witnessed much of Todmorden's history. Situated in the old township of Langfield, it has an old drainpipe bearing the date '1789' on its rainwater head. An old coaching inn, it was very important in the days of turnpikes, and is very like The *Dusty Miller* in Mytholmroyd, which displays more or less the same architectural styling. (Venetian window for example). The turnpike came to Todmorden in 1750, with the canal, and by 1810, David Cawthorn, the Landlord of the *Golden Lion*, had established himself at the head of a local committee intent upon promoting a passenger stagecoach service between Manchester and Halifax, and also desirous of persuading the General Post Office in London to operate a Mail Coach through Todmorden,

with the **Golden Lion** as local Post Office and primary staging post along the route! In the first instance he was successful, his committee of local worthies setting up a single coach passenger service twice weekly, twixt Halifax and Manchester. Sadly, Mr. Cawthorn didn't live long enough to see his Mail Coach, as it didn't arrive in Todmorden until 1821. This singular honour went to his successor Edward Blomley – 'Old Neddy', who was both postmaster and coach proprietor. Mail coaches ran from 1825-29. Both the '*Shuttle*' and '*Perseverance*' stagecoaches called here on their way to and from Halifax. With time and progress the routes available expanded. There was a Manchester Market Coach (thrice weekly) and also a coach route to Burnley and Preston, and on to Lytham and Blackpool (during the summer bathing season!).

The *Golden Lion* was the scene of many gatherings of local importance (The sale of Robinwood Mill was held here as we have seen). The inn was

**Golden Lion
Fielden Square
(1984)**



for many years the meeting place of the Freeholders of Langfield Common, and as such was greatly involved with both the building and later re-building of Stoodley Pike Monument.

All this is history. But history is **made**. Today, neither the **Golden Lion** nor its licencees are any less colorful.

Matthanee Nilavongse (known as 'Gig') and Richard Walker took over the Inn in 2015. They transformed a run down pub into a classy music performance venue – but achieved much more than that. During the flooding, and the coronavirus epidemic, the inn became a community hub, providing free food and drink to local people. As a 'community space', it has hosted art classes and all kinds of cultural activities, but it was brought to national notice in 2020, when, with pandemic spreading abroad and the Tour De France imminent at home, it was decided to give the somewhat faded 'off white' *Golden Lion* a 'Yellow Jersey' to brighten up the town. The Inn was duly painted a bright Canary Yellow, but the project backfired when they received a letter from Calderdale Council ordering them to paint it *white*, threatening them with a £20,000 fine and a a six months jail sentence! Arguments that the Inn had, in fact, been painted pink, (and orange) in the past without issue, fell on stony ground. None of this went down well in Todmorden. Over a thousand people signed a petition demanding that the Golden Lion remain yellow. Councillor Jane Scullion (it was reported) wrote to the owners after receiving a complaint (isn't that always the case), and that the council had a duty to investigate alleged breaches of planning controls on listed buildings. (The Inn is Grade II Listed). So the owners had to paint it white again.

Todmorden, which once had its own Borough Council, sits uneasy with Halifax and one wonders what might have happened if they had sent Police Officers to back up their threat. Events in Lumbutts in 1838 spring to mind!

Fielden House (the former Conservative Club)

Across the square from the *Golden Lion* stands the **Fielden House**. This was originally opened in 1880, as the *Fielden Hotel and Coffee Tavern*, and was, in its day, a stand for temperance in an area rich in taverns and hard drinking. It was built through the generosity of John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle. Closing its doors in April 1913, it reopened afterwards as a Conservative Club, the function it retained until fairly recently when part of it became a dance studio. Outside it, stood the statue of 'Honest John' Fielden, which is now situated in Centre Vale Park, at the very end of our journey.

Fielden Square (1984)

(main road blocked as usual!)



Almost where the statue stood, is now the site of a more curious contraption, being the **sluce gate** which controlled the flow of water between the Walsden Water and Fieldens Dam at nearby Waterside. An informative information board next to it explains (in great detail) how it worked. It is the only surviving monument to Waterside, the long gone epicentre of the Fieldens' great industrial enterprise.

From Fielden Square we pass through the heart of Todmorden to Centre Vale Park and the end of the *Fielden Trail*. By now, your feet will be telling you that you have nothing left to prove after having walked most of the route. "What is the point of walking this extra distance into Centre Vale Park?", you will be saying. You will have to walk back into the town centre when you've been there anyway! Well, if that's how you feel you can go home now, but if you'll bear with me, I'm sure that you will find the extra bit of walking required to complete the *Fielden Trail* quite worthwhile — there are still some stories left to be told and some ends to tie up.

From the Conservative Club follow the main road towards the centre of Todmorden. After crossing the canal with its unusual guillotine lock gate, turn left up Hall Street to-

23. Todmorden Hall Back in the 1980s, when Todmorden Hall was a restaurant (See Pic), the *Fielden Trail* passed through the grounds across the front of the house to emerge into Rise Lane on the other side. Sadly, this is no longer possible as the grounds are now private and the hall residential. You could also go around the back of the house, past the 'Takkin' in Shop, but this is fenced off and you can't see it, so your only option is to retrace your steps back to the main road.



This magnificent house, formerly a Post Office (before it was a restaurant) stands at the very hub of Todmorden's history. The present Hall was rebuilt in 1603 by Saville Radcliffe, whose family had lived there for several generations. It was a gentleman's house, built (by local standards), in the grandest possible style and up to the 1700s it was the very heart of Todmorden, which at that time was little more than the Hall, the Church, and a few cottages. Todmorden was unusual in those days; a small valley community, rare in a district where almost all the local population lived at a higher level on the surrounding hillsides. The main arteries of

communication also tended to avoid the valleys in those times; so Todmorden was in many ways a quite untypical Pennine settlement. By the 18th century, Todmorden was growing, and the Hall passed into the hands of John Fielden, brother of Joshua (I) of Bottomley. John lived here from 1703 to 1734. Besides Joshua, John also had three other brothers, Nicholas and Samuel of Edge End, and Thomas of Hollingworth, all of them Quakers. In November 1707, John married Tamar Halstead of Erringden and they lived together at Todmorden Hall. John Fielden was a wealthy man: a prosperous woollen clothier who extended the Hall and built a "takkin' in shop" at the back, reached by a flight of external steps, **which is no longer accessible from Hall Street.** In the days of the handloom, weft and warp were given out to the weavers, and later, the finished pieces were "taken in" here, hence the name. The weavers must have been a far cry from the gentry who would have visited the Hall in the days of the Radcliffes. John and Tamar Fielden must have been an industrious couple, for besides being deeply involved in the woollen trade they were also responsible for building the White Harte Inn which, like the Golden Lion, was witness to much of Todmorden's local history.

Tamar Fielden died on 8th January 1734, and was buried at Shoebroad. Her husband followed her on 20th May in the same year, having already made out his will in February. Their marriage had been childless, and John's estates, which also included Edge End, passed to his nephew Abraham, who in turn died at Todmorden Hall on 14th May 1779 aged 74. Like his uncle, he was buried at Shoebroad. After this time the Hall passed from the Fieldens, later to become the residence of Mr. James Taylor Esq. the Magistrate, during which time the Hall suffered damage at the hands of the Anti Poor Law rioters.



Having retraced your steps back to the main road, (note the fabulous vintage shop front across the way!) turn Left, then next Right up Rise Lane, which passes up the other side of Todmorden Hall. At the back of it, the former route back to Hall Street via the Post Office premises and the 'Takkin in' Shop are now occupied by a Funeral Directors.

*Continuing up Rise Lane towards the Railway Station, the elegant regency style windows of the **Queen Hotel** appear on our right. Built in 1840 to cater for railway passengers, it was (and is), the classic 'Railway Hotel' par excellence! It was originally physically connected to the station by a closed overhead railway bridge. The hotel caught fire in 1997, but was soon renovated. *Directly opposite, across the way, is **Todmorden Railway Station**. Unlike many stations on the line, it is still dignified with a ticket office, sheltered waiting rooms and real human beings! There was a temporary railway station here until 1844, but the present building dates from 1865. The Great Wall of Todmorden, the massive goods yard retaining wall above the canal, was built in 1881, and Fieldens were involved with much of this development. Both Thomas Fielden, 'Honest John's' brother, and his nephew Joshua were directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.**

On 1st March 1841, Thomas Fielden complained about the practice of compelling 'waggon passengers' to arrive at the station ten minutes early. He was, it is said, a constant thorn in the flesh of the Railway Board's Chairman. Suggestions he made for improving the comfort of second and third class passengers were greeted with derision, and at some stations the following notice appeared:

The Companies Servants are strongly ordered NOT to porter for waggon passengers ! (Not even the railway companies, it seems, were spared the endless efforts of the Fieldens to improve the lot of the lower classes!).

Continuing onwards, down Station Approach, a short flight of steps on our right leads down onto cobbles, taking us into-

24. White Harte Fold. The building on our left is the **White Harte Inn**. (The entrance you see is its side door, as the main entrance fronts onto the Burnley Road). The pub looks modern — and indeed it is, being built on the site of John and Tamar Fielden's original *White Harte* which was demolished in 1935. The original pub was built in the 1720s and was also known as the *New Inn*. It was in front of this inn that the first Todmorden market was established in 1801; and later, between 1821 and 1851, when George Eccles and family occupied the inn, a court of Petty Sessions was established, and held

upstairs in a large chamber used by the local Freemasons. As a result, when anyone had to appear in court, it was referred to as 'goin' up Eccles' steps!' The first market was held here on Thursday 4th February 1802, and each Thursday thereafter. It spread out on Church Street under the church walls and also up into the White Harte Fold. It must have been a huge success, as before long it was held on Saturdays also. A monthly Cattle Market was also held, along with an Easter and Michaelmas Cattle Fair.

In December 1830, 'Honest John' addressed a meeting at Lumbutts which petitioned Lord Radnor and Henry Hunt in support of Parliamentary Reform, to which Earl Grey's new ministry was pledged. A month later, Fielden presided over another assembly, here at the White Harte, to found a "Political Union". Thereafter the Todmorden men joined their fellows in a network of Political Unions dedicated to Parliamentary Reform. Their good faith was rewarded, and in 1832, 350 reformers held a banquet to celebrate the passing of the Reform Bill, with John Fielden in the chair. A free meal was also provided for 3,000 of Fielden's workers at his own expense. As a result of this reform 'Honest John' was elected first ever M.P. for Oldham, and embarked upon his campaign to secure for the oppressed operatives of the northern mills a Ten Hours Bill. Here, at the White Harte an important chapter in the annals of English social history was begun.

The present White Harte was converted into a JD Wetherspoons House in 2011. On 14th March 2024 it briefly closed after being sold to the Mountain Pub Company, of Derbyshire who currently run it.

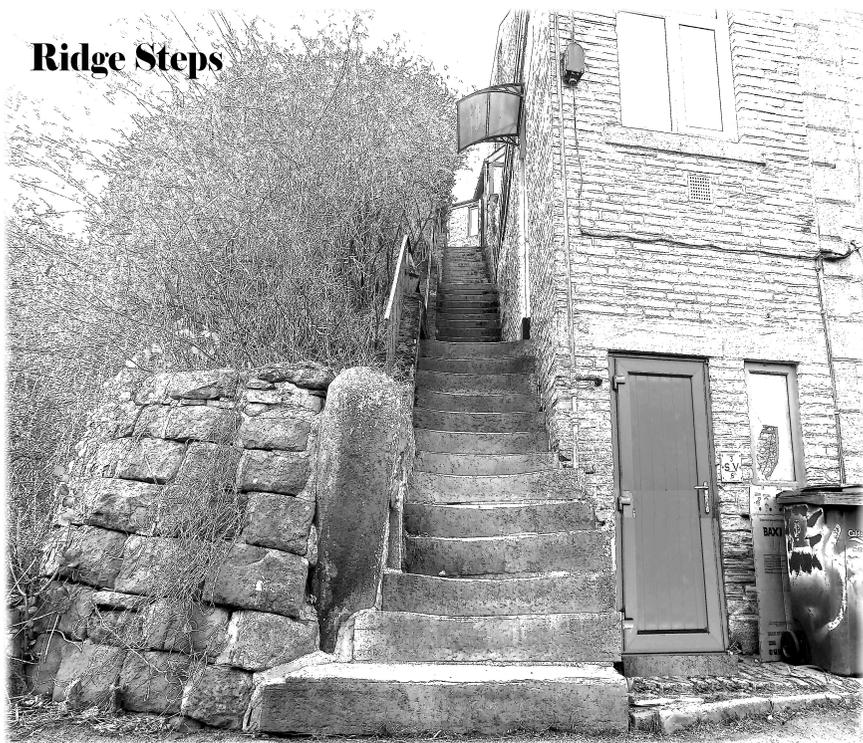
Todmorden Masonic Hall



On the opposite side of White Harte Fold is the **Todmorden Masonic Hall**. This marvellously italianate building opened in 1864, and was the first purpose built Masonic Hall to be built in East Lancashire. Today, it is home to two active lodges – the Lodge of Prudence 219 founded in 1774 which meets on the second Tuesday of each month, and the Royds Lodge 816 dating from 1860, which meets on the second Thursday of each month. The Loyal Todmorden Chapter meets here occasionally, and it is also used by a Mark and Knights Templar Lodge .Upstairs, it has a magnificent Lodge Room, while downstairs there is a function room, bar, toilets and full catering kitchen, all of which may be hired for special occasions.

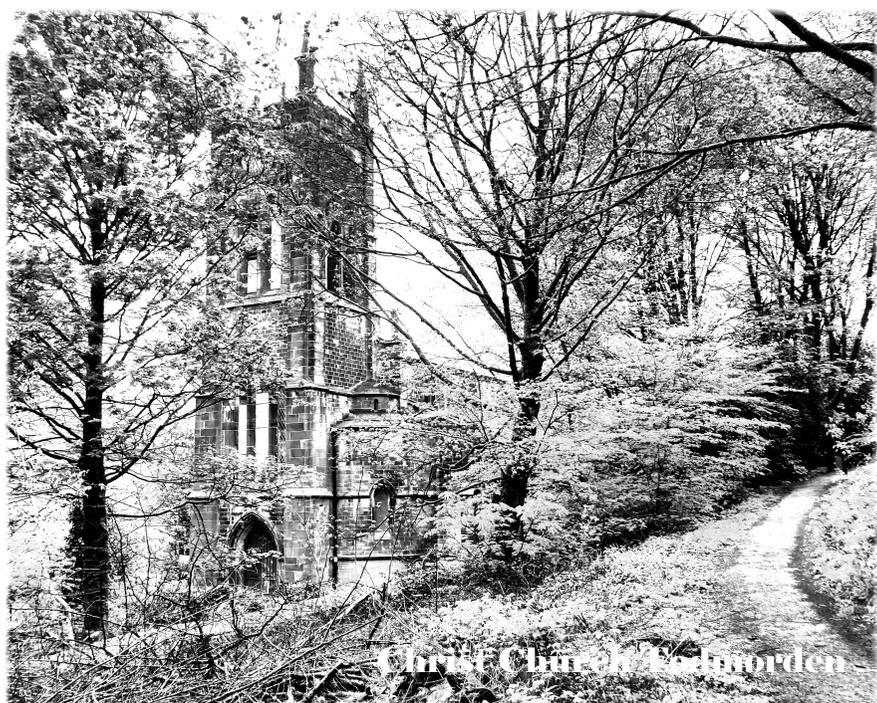
*Now make your way back up the steps onto Station Approach, bearing Right., then crossing the road to join Ridge Road as it passes under the viaduct. Just before it winds to the left, a tall group of buildings appears ahead. This is 'The Ridge', access to much of which is by the **Ridge Steps**, a steep flight of 50 steps leading up onto Well Lane. Ridge Steps is the last sting in the tail of our journey – beyond, it is level or downhill all the way to the end of the *Fielden Trail*. (If you are overly exhausted at this point, you could cheat by continuing on up Ridge Road to bear sharp Right past Mount Pleasant and Pleasant View, which will bring you back to the top of the steps. - but of course you wouldn't do that – would you?)*

Ridge Steps



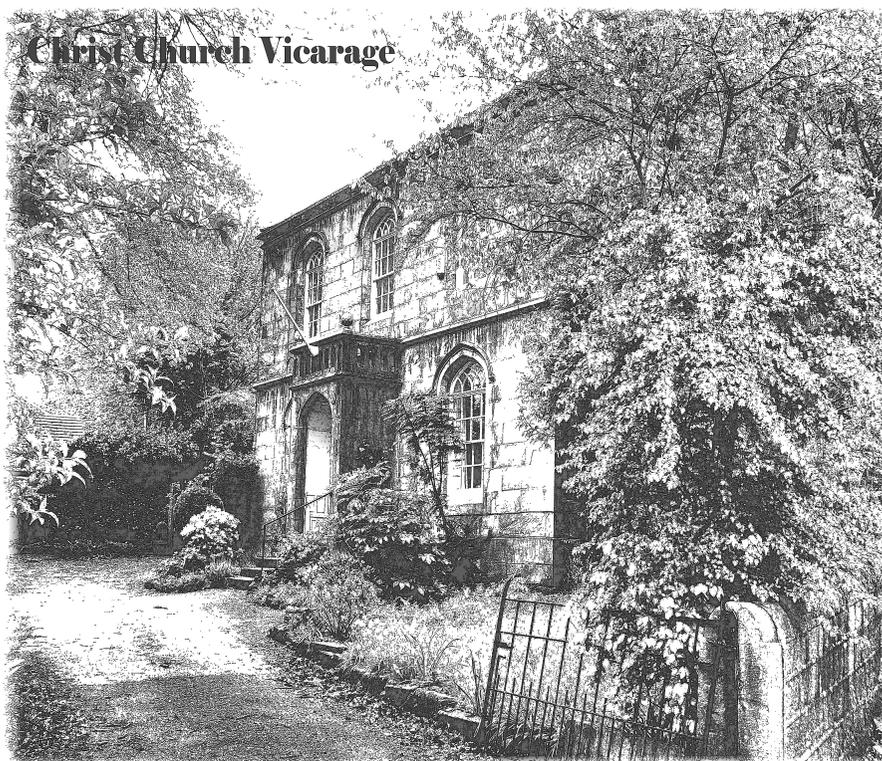
*From the top of the steps, bear R. into Well Lane, which quickly encounters **Lovers Walk** coming into it on the left from woodland. Bear left onto it, and follow it into the woods. A short distance on, a steep cobbled path descends diagonally through the woods across your path, heading down towards a church (in summer almost hidden by Trees). This is **Christ Church**, and although the **Fielden Trail** does not visit it, it being off-route, it is nonetheless worthy of comment (though you will have to steeply retrace your steps should you wish to explore it more closely).*

Christ Church was intended to replace St. Mary's when it was opened in 1832, but there was some acrimony among local people, who saw the new church as being intended for the rich folk in the posher part of town, the rift being further exacerbated by the stripping out of pews and the organ from the old church for it. The Revd. Joseph Cowell, who had instigated all this back in 1829, realised his mistake, and set in motion a new train of events that eventually designated Todmorden as a Parish in its own right, resulting in Christ Church becoming the Parish Church, with Old St Mary's as a Chapel of Ease for the new church. Thus Todmorden's Anglicans ended up with two places of worship! Thereafter, Christ Church had quite an illustrious history until dwindling congregations forced its closure in 1992, the remaining congregation moving back



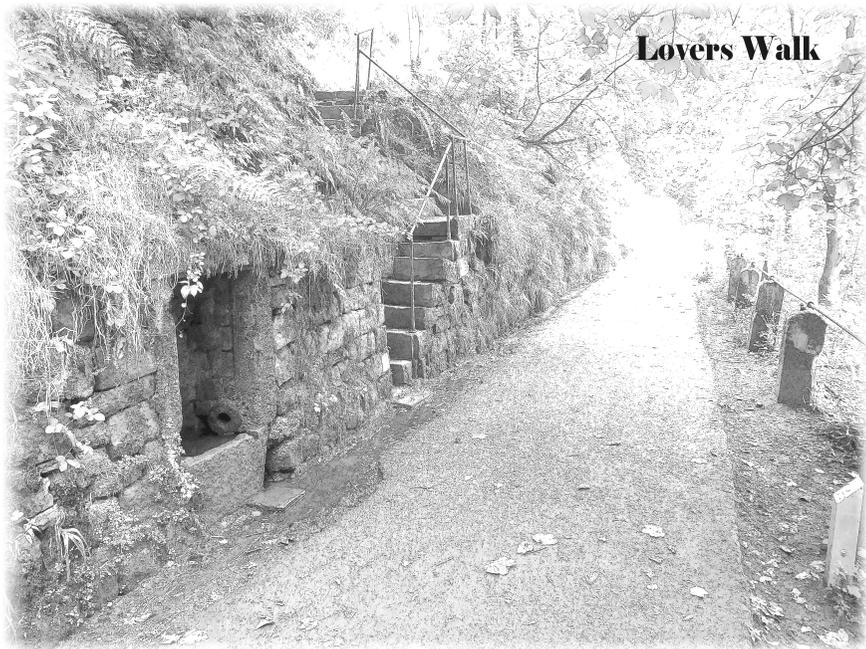
to St. Marys, where worship continues. Thereafter, deterioration and vandalism set in, until it was privately purchased in 2004, with plans for home conversion, which will leave it essentially intact. Restoration is ongoing.

Of course, the racier history of Christ Church remembers the original 'Murder at the Vicarage' which took place at its vicarage in 1868! The perpetrator was a young weaver and Sunday School Teacher named Miles Weatherill, who courted Sarah Bell, a maidservant at Christ Church Vicarage. He had asked the Vicar, the Revd, Plow, her guardian, for permission to marry her and he had flatly refused. Thereafter they met clandestinely, but a jealous housemaid by the name of Jane Smith told on him, with the result that the Vicar confined Sarah to the house before sending her back to her parents in York. Young Weatherill, it seems, had some sort of mental breakdown and vowed revenge. He armed himself, returned to the vicarage, killed Jane Smith and grievously assaulted Plow and his wife with a pistol and a poker! Plow died of his injuries and Weatherill died on the gallows!



Continue onwards, into Buckley Wood, to arrive at the site of:-

25. Carr Laithe. Here at Carr Laithe in Buckley Wood, once stood a farmhouse which was the setting for a romantic but rather sad episode in our 'Fielden Saga'. It was the home of John Stansfield, a poor farmer, whose daughter Ruth was courted and married by John Fielden J.P. of Dobroyd Castle, 'Honest John's' second son. It was a classic 'rags-to-riches-cum-Cinderella' story. When he and Ruth met she was a mere weaver at Waterside. He sent her away to be educated, but alas, she could never adapt to Fielden's by now aristocratic lifestyle. She died, an alcoholic, on 6th February 1877 at the age of 50, and is buried at the Unitarian Chapel. In the same year John Fielden remarried, taking as his second wife Ellen, the daughter of the Revd. Richard Mallinson of Arkholme in Lancashire. John Fielden J.P. is buried, as we have already mentioned, at Grimston Park near Leeds. Perhaps it is from Ruth's story that the Lover's Walk derives its name? It would certainly be nice to think so.



*From Carr Laithe, a path leads off R.down the woods to the **Fielden Statue** in Centre Vale Park, and the end of the original **Fielden Trail**, but this new 2025 version has some more story to tell and continues onwards, passing the temporary Castle Hill*

School below on the right, built to house the kids while the old Castle Hill School on the Halifax Road is modernised. Soon the Lovers Walk forks L., to join Sigget Lane descending from the left, or alternatively, the R/H path leads directly to the car park by Todmorden Swimming Pool. (In either case you will find yourself descending Ewood Lane which runs directly to the A646 Burnley Road. At bottom of the lane.) Just before it meets the main road is the -

26. Centre Vale School.



Centre Vale School

Near the end of the *Fielden Trail* at Centre Vale Park is the *Centre Vale School*. This also is something of a love story, as it was built by Black Sam Fielden as a present for his wife, who was seriously intent upon being an educationalist. Its plans were first submitted in 1870, and it was built and maintained as an elementary school at Samuel's own private expense. His wife, Sarah Jane, was particularly notable in this respect. She was the daughter of Joseph Brookes Yates of Liverpool, (Samuel married her at Childwall Church near to that town in 1859), and no doubt she would have been quite familiar with the conditions endured by the slum children of that sleazy, bustling port. All this may be speculation, but even if she was not influenced by such realities, her interest in the welfare of Todmorden's children is in no doubt. In August 1874, the first

School Board in the Todmorden district was elected and Mrs. Fielden was its most distinguished and active member. She devoted many years to the study of the education of younger children, at first in unpretentious buildings in Cobden St., then later in this, her own custom built school at Centre Vale, where she engaged in education work along lines which she herself had searched out and practically tested. Centre Vale School continued under her sway until she retired in 1896, after which her son, John Ashton Fielden, donated it to the newly established Todmorden Borough Council. In her day the school population was around 180 children, mostly (but not all) girls, their parents paying fourpence a week. Mrs. Fielden was a strict school ma'am and, like her husband, not afraid to give her peers a piece of her mind. This did not enhance her popularity in the town.

Yet she never really retired – thereafter she became involved in teacher training, created a Fielden Chair of Education, and a Demonstration School at Owens College – which became Manchester University. She remained actively involved in all these things until her death at Centre Vale in 1910 at the age of 90. But what a lovely school! Sam Fielden did her proud! He employed John Gibson (who had worked on the Houses of Parliament) as architect. The Fieldens employed him (as we have seen), to design Dobroyd Castle, the Unitarian Church, and the unique little Town Hall.

Built in the Neo - Gothic style so beloved of Victorians, the School is a riot of miniaturised medieval architectural statements, like dormers, a steeply pitched slate roof, pointed arches and ornate bargeboards. Its tour-de-force however, is its massive rose window, quite out of proportion to the rest of the building – it competes with the one in the Unitarian Church, and is the more interesting of the two!

Its central motif is the Masonic Star of David, or Solomon's Seal, which in this context, means 'Wisdom' and which was almost certainly influenced by her master mason husband! Sarah Jane's school was built with children in mind, and its interior is full of light – far ahead of its time when compared to traditional 19th century schoolrooms.

The siting of the school is of interest. It was built on the site of a mill with its attendant mill dam, harnessing the course of the River Calder, which hereabouts marks the County Boundary. When in the 18th century the river was channelled into its present (straightened) course, in line with the turnpike, the boundary remained along the old (dried up) line of the river. The school was built over this, so consequently, the Centre Vale School (like the Town Hall) is half in Yorkshire and half in Lancashire!

Before we leave **Centre Vale School**, I must dwell on its more recent history – simply to clear up any confusion – as each change of use has brought about a change of its name! At the end of 1897 Sam and Jane's son, John Ashton Fielden, conveyed it to the newly created Borough Council, who re-opened it

in 1898 as the **Fielden School of Art**, a capacity it served until 1939, when the war turned it into a First Aid Station. The Art School was then merged with the Borough Technical School (see SECTION 2). After the war, the school fell on hard times. For a while it became an annex to overcrowding in local schools, but became marginalised as the educational provision exponentially improved and expanded in Todmorden. In 1970, it served as the **Todmorden Remedial School** this finally closing in 1984. Thereafter, although still in use as an annex, the building began to deteriorate rapidly. By 1996, the school was derelict, boarded up, vandalised and full of dry rot. But when it became an expensive liability, and a fine site for 're-development', Calderdale Council (like other cash strapped councils wishing to sell off community assets originally given to them to be 'held in trust' for ordinary people), found itself up against a wall of local opposition! The long struggle by all kinds of people and local groups to save this lovely building, is beyond the scope of this book, but suffice to say in October 2006, the fully restored building was re-opened as the **Fielden Centre** by John Fielden of Grimston Park, direct descendent of the Fielden brothers. Today (2025), the buildings

'Wisdom' Window Centre Vale School



present incarnation is **Fielden Hall** - a venue for hire – primarily hosting weddings.

So now for the Finale! Beyond Fielden Hall, cross over the river, and turn right onto the A646. A short distance on, you will reach the Lodge Gate into Centre Vale Park, where you turn R. again, recrossing the river into the park. On your right, is the Bowling Club (currently under reconstruction) and beyond it, the rear wall of the Centre Vale School displaying that lovely rose window, which is the chosen logo for the revised **Fielden Trail**. On the left is Centre Vale Park's unique bandstand – another vandalised local treasure now happily under restoration.

Centre Vale Park was the grounds of the final Fielden Mansion to be visited on our route. '**Centre Vale**' was the first 'great' house of the Fielden family; a Georgian styled mansion which was the residence of 'Honest John' Fielden in later life, after he had sold Dawson Weir (By the 1840's, Dawson Weir was in the hands of the Holt family). When he died, Centre Vale became the residence of his eldest son, Samuel Fielden, until his death in 1889, after which his wife, Sarah Jane lived there until her death in 1910. In the Great War, the house became a military hospital, and was eventually purchased, along with its estate of 75 acres, by Todmorden Corporation; who bought it from Samuel's son, John Ashton Fielden, for the sum of £10,547.

Centre Vale



Between the wars the house was utilised as a museum, which housed fossils, butterflies, birds and relics of local prehistory. The Todmorden Historical Rooms were closed in 1947 because of dry rot, and the house was finally demolished in 1953. All that remains today is the park and a few of the old mansion's outbuildings. Part of the site now contains a War Memorial and a Garden of Remembrance.

Centre Vale Park is Todmorden's lovely playground and is still the scene of an annual summer gala, which back in 1984, saw the staging of the '*Battle of Gettysburg*' by one of those societies of enthusiasts, who delight in re-creating great military conflicts of the past. It was a spectacular event. The smoke of carbines and the roar of cannons could be seen, heard, (and felt) all over the valley. As I stood there, feeling the ground shaking beneath my feet as the guns roared, I wondered if anyone had realised the curious relevance of this event to the real life history of Todmorden; for the cannons of Gettysburg closed the mills and brought a hardship every bit as lamentable as that endured by the Confederacy when General Sherman began his famous "march to the sea".

For as we have seen, from the very outset, the whole of Lancashire's textile industry had been dependent upon an uninterrupted supply of imported raw cotton, and with the onset of the American Civil War in 1861, the supply of cotton from the South, as we have seen, began to steadily dry up, causing widespread distress in the cotton manufacturing areas of Lancashire. A wave of speculation on the Liverpool Cotton Exchange made prices soar, and cotton was even taken from mills to be re-sold. At the same time the employers took advantage of the Cotton Famine to force down wages to as little as 4s and 5s a week. Soon, however, mills had closed down all over Lancashire and jobless operatives flooded the Unions demanding relief. In 1861 the census population of the Todmorden Union was 29,727 and the rateable assessment for the poor rate £89,696.

In order to help the various Boards of Guardians to cope with the distress, the Union Relief Act was passed in 1862. This gave special powers, by which the public authorities could at once undertake a programme of public works, making roads, enlarging reservoirs, and cleaning out river beds. The Fielden brothers helped by employing men on road mending and making schemes. In connection with this work there were 3,000 suits of clothing and 300 pairs of watertight boots distributed. In 1863, when Fieldens were shut down for 9 months, the employees were paid half their usual wages, and were given work cleaning the machines and reclaiming wastelands. The Todmorden Relief Fund Committee met in rooms at Dale Street while the Cotton Famine lasted, with John Fielden J.P. as its chairman.

Work was found in other trades, and a sewing school established where girls could earn 6d a day for a five day week. Cheques to shopkeepers, payable in provisions or goods, were issued to those in the most urgent need.

All the mills in Todmorden were at a standstill; the only cotton available was Indian cotton, known as 'Shurat'. This inferior cotton was notorious among cotton spinners for being 'bad' work. As one Todmorden operative put it — "we were fit for naught but to goa t't'bed when we'd done wi' it!". Even a generation later, the word 'Shurat' was used in Lancashire as a synonym for 'rubbish'. A verse from a contemporary ballad, dating from the time of the 'Famine', and written by Samuel Laycock, who was a power loom weaver of Stalybridge, echoes the sentiment which must have been felt by the depressed and destitute operatives of Todmorden:

*"Oh dear if yon Yankees could only just see
heave they're clemmin' an' starvin' poor weavers loike me,
Aw think they'd sooin settle their bother and strive,
to send us some cotton to keep us alive.
Come give us a lift, yo' 'at han owt to give
an' help yo'r poor brothers an' sisters to live,
be kind an' be tender to th' needy and poor, an'
we'll promise when t'toimes mend we'll ax yo' no
moor..."*

(Shurat Weaver's Song)

27. John Fielden's Statue (Terminus Absolute!)

So finally we limp up the gentle slope to the statue of 'Honest John' Fielden at the very epicentre of the park, cutting a loose, slightly stooping figure, 'lean and lanky' - wearing a long frock coat. '

Honest John's' statue has moved around a bit since it was first unveiled at Todmorden on a blustery April day in 1875. Made by J. H. Foley in 1863, it stood originally by the western side of the Town Hall until 1890, when it was removed to Fielden Square and erected outside the former Conservative Club. It was moved to its present position in Centre Vale Park in 1938, and in the 1980's there was talk of moving him back to Fielden Square again. In July 2017, the *Halifax Courier* reported that Todmorden Councillors had approved a plan to return it to its original position by the now very busy arterial roads outside the Town Hall. Calderdale Council

estimated the cost as being £20,000 to make the move. Today, in 2025, 'Honest John' Fielden still inhabits the park, by the peaceful site of the home he loved so well. Kids let loose in the park sometimes chase around him, and sometimes ask their parents who he was. Not all of them know.

The statue was unveiled by Lord John Manners, who "tried to persuade Joshua Fielden (who was M.P. for Eastern Division W.R. Yorkshire) to let me say something handsome of Shaftesbury, but found, if I did, that he would break out in abuse!" The Fieldens had never forgiven Lord Shaftesbury (Ashley) for his "treason" in accepting Grey's compromise Factory Act in 1850. Even the commemoration of the old radical was not peaceful!

John Fielden must have cut a strange figure when he first took his seat in the re-organised Parliament of 1832. Tall and awkward, he spoke in a thick northern accent, in a voice which was barely audible; yet his sincerity and dedication more than made up for his shortcomings as an orator.

Fielden soon established himself as the leader of northern opposition to the hated 1834 Poor Law, and as chief promulgator of the Ten Hours Act, to limit hours of labour in factories and mines, towards which end he campaigned, collected evidence and spent thousands of pounds. To his friends he became known as 'Honest John' while his enemies dubbed him "The Self-Regulating Mule" on account of his refusal to compromise on matters of conscience. No doubt this quality led to the rift with Shaftesbury, who, although he shared Fielden's aims, was quite unlike him in background or temperament. Ashley Cooper could not stomach Fielden's Chartism, and together, the sensitive, aristocratic Shaftesbury and the radical, gritty millmaster must have made a strange pair!

In 1847, after an uphill struggle, the Ten Hours Movement's agitation succeeded, and Fielden was able to steer the Bill through Parliament. Yet at the end of 1847, he must have had mixed feelings, for his political triumph was quickly followed by the collapse of his parliamentary career. In his opposition to the highly popular Anti Corn Law League, led by John Bright, he lost many of his friends in Parliament, and in the hustings of that same year, 1847, he lost his seat to the Tories, who had rigged the election by threatening the livelihoods of voters. Losing his seat probably deprived him of his *raison d'être*, for within two years he was dead.

Back in 1847, Fielden had addressed a mass rally in Oldham where thousands of supporters had turned out to congratulate the **loser!** He

made what was to be his farewell speech. Towards the end of it, he uttered the following words:

"I have served you faithfully for 14 years. I never bought you ... I never sold you. I have tried all I could to endeavour to do something calculated to make you more comfortable and more happy — and having succeeded in that object which I had so much at heart, I can now well afford to go out to grass . . ."

So here we are, tired and footsore, at the end of our **Fielden Trail**. Before you stands the frail figure of 'Honest John' cast in bronze; staring benevolently across the park to where the children play. Foley made his likeness well. 'Honest John' looks like he could step off his pedestal and shake your hand, so lifelike is his expression! In his right hand he grasps that Ten Hours Bill which he struggled so single-mindedly to obtain. This was 'Honest John's' supreme achievement, the effect of which is well summed up in the words of Moses Heap, a Rossendale spinner:

"For a while we did not know how to pass our time away. Before, it had been all bed and work, now, in place of 70 hours a week we had 55 and a half. It became a practice, mostly on Saturdays, to play football and cricket, which we had never done before . . ."

Today 'Honest John's' statue watches over his grounds, where local people still play football and cricket, enjoying the free time which John Fielden pioneered for them. Football and cricket, in his park! 'Honest John' would have liked that! Before we trudge back to Todmorden Bus Station, car park, chip shop, cafe or whatever, let me leave you with a few words that were written about this man, who has always been at the very heart of our Fielden quest, for without him, such a journey as this we have made would have neither point nor meaning. I will leave you with the following extract from R. G. Gammage's book *'The History of the Chartist Movement'* in which he says of 'Honest John' Fielden:

"That gentleman was known as the successor to the principles and honour of the immortal Cobbett, and was deservedly popular for the warm and unceasing interest he had taken in the fate of the industrial millions. No man, according to his powers, had been a more strenuous opponent of the new Poor Law, and against the police system he had taken an equally decided stand. But what most gained for him the heartfelt affection of the working class, was the position which he, a rich

manufacturer, had taken as the unqualified denouncer of factory oppression. There was scarcely a measure he was not prepared to adopt in order to protect the people from the grasping 'cottonocracy'. A Ten Hours Bill was the object of his constant advocacy, and it was he who succeeded at last in carrying that measure through the legislature . . . The man, standing apart from the generality of his class, ventured in whatever way to plead the claims of suffering humanity against wealth and power.

Fielden had shown himself to be something more than a mere factory reformer, he had everywhere declared himself to be the advocate of Universal Suffrage. He did not merely profess himself willing to protect the people against aggression, but, by striving to arm them with the Vote, he manifested a desire to give them the opportunity of protecting themselves. In this he proved himself to be something better than a mere 'humanity monger' aping philanthropy for the purpose of catching a little popularity. As a speaker, he was far from being effective, his sincerity rather than his oratory, gave him force. He was ever earnest, disdaining to strive after mere effect, but courageously plodding on in his own humble and unpretending way towards the attainment of his object. He has now gone to the tomb of his fathers, peace rest his ashes! The sun has seldom shone over a better man than John Fielden."

Postscript

We have now reached the end of the **Fielden Trail** (me for the second time in 40 years!). We have not, however, reached the end of the Fielden family. Our 'History' effectively ends with the deaths of 'Honest John's' last remaining sons; but the Fieldens did not die out — children were plentiful and the line continued, along with all the other, less eminent branches of the Fielden family to be found in the Upper Calder Valley, and elsewhere. Fieldens are as plentiful today as they were a century ago, and the only reason our trail ends where it does, is because it concentrates on 'Honest John's' line, which, after the deaths of Sam, John and Joshua came to be less and less associated with Todmorden and the Upper Calder Valley. Their mansions and parks remain, but Fieldens no longer live in them. In 1959, the Cotton Industry Act compensated employers for getting rid of old machinery. More than 12 million spindles and nearly 105,000 looms were scrapped and the workforce fell by 30 per cent in 2 years. Trade had been declining since the 1930s, and by 1958 Britain had become a net importer of cotton goods for the first time since the 18th century! Cheap, foreign cloth was

forcing mill closures (in the 1960s and '70s almost one a week). The Fieldens' cotton empire, being one of the biggest, was one of the first to collapse, and by the 1960s Fieldens' cotton mills had shut down for good.

The family remains: John Fielden of Grimston Park, Tadcaster, great, great, grandson of 'Honest John' was recorded as being head of the family in 1968. His great aunt Ellen died in 1956 aged 100, his great aunt Edith married Sir John Mackintosh McLeod, 1st Bt. His great uncle Edward, who lived at Dobroyd Castle was M.P. for S.E. Lancashire 1886-92 and 1895-7. All these were Joshua Fielden of Stansfield Hall's children. Lionel Fielden,(1896-1974)another relative, was Director of Talks BBC 1927-35 and Controller of Broadcasting in India 1935-40. A playwright, he was the author of *Beggar My Neighbour* (1943) and *The Natural Bent* (1960). His recreation was given in *'Who's Who'* as "trying to avoid being organised."

Of course there were, and are, many more.. Other branches of the family abound, and any glance at the local 'phone book will affirm that Fielden is a fairly common name in the Todmorden area.

But Fieldens have a huge diaspora. The UK apart, Fieldens live worldwide, in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. After the publication of the first book in 1988, I was contacted by Mr. Marvel L. Fielden of Glen Allen Virginia. he wished to come to Todmorden that I might sign his copy of my book. He did so, and a gathering of the Fielden Society was convened in Todmorden to celebrate the event. I signed his book for him. His copy of my humble paperback was hard bound in hand tooled leather!

Forty years later, long after these events, old and grey, I find myself (with an uncanny synchronicity!) suddenly in touch with a Mr. Lucas Fielden of Garrett, Indiana, who knew Marvel and wishes to discover his UK forebears!

So as this story ends the saga of the Fieldens continues. I wonder what Nicholas and Christobel Fielden's four sons, the origin of all the Fieldens in the Upper Calder Valley, would have made of the last words in this story, which I saw chalked on a wall opposite the Council Offices in Hebden Bridge, in July 1984:

**"COLIN FIELDEN IS FIT
O. K. ? "**

I wonder if he is still fit? He's probably a granddad by now!

Jim Jarratt. September 2025



**Fielden Trail
Revisited!
Journeys End
Aug. 2025**

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Digital Resources

<http://www.calderdalecompanion.co.uk/index.html>

Malcolm Bull's amazing site is a treasure trove of historical/cultural/genealogical information relating to the Calderdale district. It is like 'a box of chocolates - you never know what you're gonna get!'

<https://sites.rootsweb.com/~todmordenandwalsden/home.htm>

Excellent and enthralling website covering all aspects of the history of the Todmorden Area'

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/haymarket/Fielden.html

Autobiography of Socialist Samuel Fielden of Walsden in his own words. An excellent and highly readable story of one man's journey from a Todmorden Cotton Mill to a Ranch in Colorado, and his part in an event that helped to shape American History.

<https://calderdalelocalstudies.wordpress.com/2022/05/04/a-todmorden-man-on-death-row-sam-fielden-and-thge-haymarket-riot-of-18866/>

Another excellent account of Socialist Samuel Fielden with a UK perspective.

<https://footpathmap.co.uk/map/?zoom=16.2&lng=-2.10067&lat=53.71462>

FOOTPATH MAP Internet footpaths map. Todmorden.

<https://crows-coop.co.uk/>

Countryside-Rights-Of-Way is a volunteer charitable organisation dedicated to restoring footpaths and bridleways – steps, stiles, waymarks, footbridges, paths, causeways etc. etc. It was their efforts to turn the largely forgotten Fielden Trail into a workable reality that inspired this 75 year old to revisit (and rewrite) a challenging project which was first undertaken as a young man! I must have been mad!

<https://fieldenhall.com/>

Excellent resource telling the full and detailed history of the Centre Vale School.

<https://spartacus-educational.com/TEXfieldenS.htm>

Short but highly effective potted biography of Samuel ('Black Sam') Fielden, 'Honest John's' eldest son. One item of particular interest is his friendship with the Revd. William Gaskell, (husband of novelist Elizabeth Gaskell), who influenced and befriended him as a young man. Gaskell was invited to give the first sermon at opening of the Todmorden Unitarian Church on 7th April 1869. The Gaskells, like the later Fieldens, were Unitarians, and almost certainly socially connected.... which suggests a very intriguing mystery – Elizabeth published *North and South* in 1855. Was she thinking about the Fieldens?

Index

Anti Corn Law League, 204
Aragon, Katharine of, 130
Arkholme, Lancaster, 197
Arkwright's Water Frame, 73
Ashley, Lord Shaftesbury, 204
Ashton Chronicle, The, 184
Ashton Under Lyne, 184, 185
Atkinson Henry (shoemaker), 173

Basin Stone, The, 149, 150, 151, 152
Baxendale David, 43
Bayes, William, of Lumbutts, 168
Bentleys Washing Machine, 74
Berthollet, 74
Bill Knipe (see Eagles Crag), 69
Blackburn Loom, The, 73, 74
Black Clough, 174, 176
Blackstone Edge, 153
Blind Lane, Todmorden, 173
Blue Pig, 119
Bobbins, makers, 17, 43, 56, 127
Bonfield, John, Chicago Police Captain, 126
Bottomley, 46, 49-50, 51, 79, 121, 122, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 168, 177, 191
Boulsworth Hill, 163
Bowking, (Cotton Process), 74
Bridestones, Todmorden, 44
Bright, John, 204
Brocklehurst, Ellen, 40
Broggers, 168, 175
Brontë Family, 39, 88
Brooke, Robert, Chartist Leader, 152
Brooks Sunnyside Works, (bleaching process), 74
Buckley's Mill, Ridgefoot, 150
Buckley Wood, 197
Butler, R. J., 114
Calderdale, 9, 14, 15, 21, 115, 133, 214
Calder, River, Yorkshire, 21, 36, 38, 52, 55, 67, 154, 199
Calderdale Council, 11, 188, 200, 203
Calderdale Way, 43, 46, 78, 85, 134, 157, 173, 176, 209

Callis Bridge, 38
 Capronnier, M., 179
 Carr Laithe, Todmorden, 197
 Cartwright's Power Loom, 73
 Castle Hill School development, 197,198
 Causey West, 176
 Centre Vale Park, 35,75,201,203
 Centre Vale School, (aka Fielden School of Art, Fielden Hall),
 198,199, 200
 Chartist, Chartism, 114,123,125,151,152,174,207,213
 Chelburn Reservoirs, 153
 'Chicago Eight', the, 126
 Chicago, Illinois, (U.S.), 125,126
 Childwall, Liverpool, 198
 Christ Church, Todmorden, 195, 196
 Christ Church, Vicarage, 196
 Civil War, The English, 54, 55
 Civil War, American, 202,203
 Cliviger Gorge, 67
 Cobbett, James, 90
 Cobbett, John Fielden, 90
 Cobbett, John .Morgan, 90,210
 Cobbett, Richard, 90
 Cobbett, William, 90
 Cobbetts Political Register, 19
 Cockpit Hill, Todmorden, 183
 Cockroft Sir John Douglas (physicist)12,127
 Coldwell Hill, 155
 Colorado, Indian Creek, last home of Samuel & Sarah Fielden,126
 Confederacy, The,123,202
 Cooke, Joseph, 183
 Cornholme, 21,52,54,55,56,67,92,105,114,152
 Cotton Famine, The, 42,123,202,203
 Cotton Industry, Decline of, 206,207
 Cotton Industry, working conditions in, 112,113,114
 Cotton Industry, reasons for growth, 73,74
 Cotton Industry, processes, 73,74
 Cotton Industry Act 1959, 206
 Crabtree, Henry, 77
 Crabtree, Mrs., of 'The Mount', 40

Crawshawbooth, 74
Croft Gate, 176
Crompton, Samuel, 'Spinning Mule' 73
Cross Stone Church,39
Crossley, Abraham, 155
Crossley, Betty, 120
CROWS, 7,13,47,52,56,70,76,155,212
Crowther, Jane, 130,
Crowther, Janice (and Jeremy Burgoyne), 209
Crowther, J.W.,209

Dawson's Hardware, Borough Market, 36
Dawson, Thomas, 91
Dawson Weir, 87,88,89,90,91
Dean Royd, 130,131
Dearden, Elizabeth, (2nd wife of 'Honest. John Fielden), 89
Defoe, Daniel, 167
Dewhirst, Ian, 91
Dewsbury, William, 51
Dickinson's Blackburn Loom, 73,74
Dingle, Liverpool, 178
Dobroyd Castle, Todmorden, 83,84,85,86
Dobroyd, Model Farm, 81,82
Dog and Partridge, Lumbutts, 174
Domestic System, The, 79, 167 ,168
Donkey Stones, 37
Dundee Road, 67

Eagles Crag, (see Bill Knipe), 69
Earl Crag, Keighley, 164
Eastwood, John, 161
Eccles, George, 192,193
Edge End Farm, 77,78,79,80,83,87,105,107,108,118,177,192,191
Emerson, Keith (rock star),12
Emley Moor, 164
Erringden, 191

Farnham, Surrey, 90
Faucher, Leon, 75
Feather, Constable, 171,172

Fielden Abram (of Walsden) 122
 Fielden, Abraham, 49,50,51,79,121,130,131,191
 Fielden, Alice 122
 Fielden, Ann (Grindrod), 87,89
 Fielden Ann (infant), 108
 Fielden, Annie Maude, 127
 Fielden, Anthonie, 49,54
 Fielden, Bett,(aunt Lacy), 89,107
 Fielden, Christobel, 46,54,207
 Fielden, Edith, 207
 Fielden, Ellen, (b. Dawson Weir 1829), 87, 89
 Fielden, Ellen (Mallinson), 2nd wife of 'Honest John', 197
 Fielden, Elizabeth of Bottomley, 49,50,79,121,130,131
 Fielden, Elizabeth, of Flail Croft,76
 Fielden 'Honest John', M.P., 17,18,21,36,40,43,49,77,78,79,83,84,87,
 91,106,107,108,109,113,114,121,123,131,170,177,182,183,184,
 188,192, 193,194,197,198,203,204,205,206,207,208,209,210, 212
 Fielden, James, of Bottomley,129
 Fielden, James, picker maker of New Towneley, 68
 Fielden, James of Inchfield Fold,121
 Fielden, James of Waterside, 108
 Fielden, James, of Dobroyd, 161
 Fielden, Jane of Bottomley, 130
 Fielden, Jane, b. Dawson Weir, daughter of 'Honest John', 87
 Fielden, John Ashton, 165,199, 201
 Fielden, John J.P., of Dobroyd Castle & Grimston Park,
 36,83,84,87,88, 89, 161,178, 188,197, 202
 Fielden, John of Grimston Park, (Descendant), 200
 Fielden Hall, (Centre Vale School,) 198, 199, 200
 Fielden Hospital, The, 18,165
 Fielden, John, of Todmorden Hall, 191,
 Fielden, Joshua (I), of Bottomley', 51, 79
 Fielden, Joshua(I), of Edge End, 79
 Fielden, Joshua (II), of Edge End, 79
 Fielden, Joshua (III), of Edge End, 79
 Fielden, Joshua (IV), of Edge End & Laneside,
 77,78,79,80,83,84,86,87,105,107,108,109
 Fielden, Joshua of Flail Croft, 76
 Fielden, Joshua, of Laneside & Waterside, 108
 Fielden, Joshua, of Stansfield Hall,& Nutfield Priory, 83

Fielden, Joshua of Swineshead, 50
 Fielden, Josiah, of Inchfield Foundry, 121
 Fielden, Lionel, 207
 Fielden, Lucas, Garrett, Indiana, 207
 Fielden, Luke, 161
 Fielden, Lydia, 106
 Fielden, Marvel L., Glen Allen, Virginia, 207
 Fielden, Mary,(Cobbett), 19,20,87,88,89,90, 91,107,108,178,210
 Fielden, Nicholas, 45,46,49,50,54,118,121,130,191,207
 Fielden, Nicholas, of Shore, 50
 Fielden, Robert, of Hole Bottom Mill, 42
 Fielden, Robert & Sons, of Inchfield, (picker makers), 121
 Fielden, Salley, 107, 108,177
 Fielden, Samuel, of Bottomley,130
 Fielden, Samuel, of Centre Vale, 19,35,87, 88,105,107,108,161,
 162,165,178, 179,184, 198,199,201,
 Fielden,Samuel, of Edge End, 191
 Fielden, Samuel, of Inchfield Fold, 121
 Fielden, Samuel S., child drowning victim, 38
 Fielden, Samuel, of Walsden & Chicago,122,123,124,125,126
 Fielden, Samuel, Flail Croft (1707), 76
 Fielden, Samuel, (Black Sams uncle), 109
 Fielden, Sarah Jane, (Wife of Sam of Centre Vale), 178,198,199,201
 Fielden, Sarah, (wife of James Ratcliffe of Knowl Wood), 68
 Fielden Hall (Centre Vale School, Art School), 198,199,200
 Fielden, Tamar,178,191,192
 Fielden, Thomas, (1790-1869), 39,40,108,192,210
 Fielden, Thomas, of Hollingworth, 131,191
 Fielden, Thomas, of Nicklety, 121
 Fielden, Thomas, of Inchfield Fold, 121
 Fielden Thomas, of Crumpsall,161
 Fielden House, Former Conservative Club, Fielden Hotel, 188
 Flail Croft, 76,92
 Flints, near Sowerby, 44
 Flying Shuttle, The, 73
 Foley, J . H., 203, 205
 Fox, George, 51
 Frieldhurst Road, Cornholme, 56,67
 Friths Mill, 172

Gaddings Reservoirs, 18, 21, 133,149,152,153,154,155,176
 Gammage, R. G., 207,211
 Gaskell, Elizabeth, 212
 Gauxholme Mill, 118
 Gauxholme Viaduct, 85,114,115
 General Wood, 118
 Gibson, John, 35,40,84,179,199
 Gibson Mill, 164
 Golden Lion, Todmorden, 72, 186,187 188,191
 Grace, Pilgrimage of, 54
 Graham, James, Blacksmith of Todmorden, 185
 Greave, Higher, 165
 Green, James of Portsmouth, local architect of Stoodley Pike., 161
 Greenwood, Elizabeth, 46
 Greenwood, Jenny, 82
 Greenwood, John, 82
 Greenwood, John, 124
 Greenwood, John and Anne, 130
 Greenwood, Mary, 130
 Greenwood, Martha, 131
 Greenwood, Ernest, 155
 Greenwood, Sarah & James, 82,83
 Greenwood, William,91
 Greenwood, William of Stones, 161
 Greenwood, William of Wattey Place, 172
 Greenwood, Mr., of Hare Hill, 173
 Grey, Earl, 193
 Grimshaw, William, 77
 Grimston Park, 83,178,199,197,200,207
 Grindrod, Ann, 87

Halifax, 10,11,12,43,54,55,79,80,89,124,
 150,152,171,172, 186,187, 172,186,198,203
 Halifax Piece Hall, 54
 Halstead, Tamar, 178,191,192
 Hanging Ditch, 183
 Hare Hill, 173
 Hargreaves, 'Spinning Jenny' 1760, 73
 Hartley Royd, 46, 48,49,50,51,52, 55, 68,79,121,177
 Hartshead Moor, 170

Haworth, 14,77,87, 88,168
Haymarket Demonstration, Chicago, 125, 211
Heap, Moses, 205
Hebden Bridge, Salem Chapel, 125
Helliwell, Mr. of Frith's Mill, 172
Helliwell Family at Hole Bottom, 41
Henny, Doctor, 90
Heptonstall,54,55,79,158, 159, 209
Heyhouses nr. Sabden, (possible Fielden origin), 45
Hinchcliffe, family of Cragg Vale, 41
Hindley, Charles, M.P for Ashton, 184
Hippodrome Theatre, 11
Hole Bottom Mill, 17, 40, 41
Hollingworth, 18,131,132,191
Hollingworth Lake, Littleborough, 84, 153
Hollins, The, 39, 40
Holme, The, 75
Holme Moss, Marsden, 164
Holt, Miss, 172, 173
Holt, William, 12, 209
Honey Hole, 178,181,184
Hough Stones, 42, 55
Hoyle, Kevin, 19
Hudson Bridge, 47,48
Hudson Moor, 47
Hunt, Henry, 193

Inchfield, 18,21,45,46,49,51,52,79,85,119,120,121,122,129,149
Inchfield Fold. 121,122
Incredible Edible,11
Ingham, Mr. William, of Mankinholes, 171,172, 173

Jeremy Hill, 155
Jones, Ernest, 152
Jubilee Tower, Almondbury, 164

Kadampa Buddhist Tradition, 85
Kailey, Henry, 77
Kay, John, 'Flying Shuttle' 1733, 73
Kilnhurst, 12

King, Constable, 171,172
 King, Mrs., of Hartley Royd, 50,52
 Knowles, Mr., of Lumb, 161
 Knowsley Cottage, (aka' Blue Pig'), 120

Lacy, Betty, 89, 107
 Lacy Henry, 89
 Lacy, John, 161
 Laneside Cottages,17,80,86,87,105,107,108, 109,111,112,114,115
 Langfield, 83,170, 171,174,186,
 Langfield Common. 153, 174, 188
 Langfield Moor, 174
 Langfield, Overseer, 171
 Langfield Road, 186
 Law Hey Farm, 118
 Laycock, Joshua, 168
 Laycock Sam, 203
 Leventhorpe near Bradford, (possible Fielden origin), 45
 Ley, New, 53,56
 Lighthazzles Reservoirs, 153
 Lineholme, 67
 Liversedge, 170
 London Road, 165, 166
 Long Stoop 156,157
 Loom Tacklers, 111
 Lord, Edward, 161
 Lover's Walk, Todmorden, 195,197
 Lumbutts, 18,111,116,129,133,149,153,154,166,167,168,171,173,174,
 175,176,188
 Lumbutts Stream, 116, 153
 Lund's Tower, Sutton, 164
 Lydgate, 56, 67, 70, 71,72

Mackintosh Meleod, Sir John, 207
 Mackworth, Sir Francis, Royalist commander, 55
 Mallinson, Revd. Richard of Arkholme, 197
 Mankinholes,
 10,12,18,43,129,157,165,166,167,168,171,172,173,174,175
 Mankinholes, Methodist Chapel, 174
 Manners, Lord John, 36, 204

Masonic Hall, Todmorden, 18, 194
Mercer, of Clayton-Le-Moors 'Mercerisation', 74
Mercerfield Farm, 13,46,49,50,52,53,54,55,56,68,121
Methodism, 37,55,77,124,125,130,168,173,174,183
Mitsgelden Clough, 116
Mons Mill,17, 75, 70
Moss Bros., Springside, 38
Mutterhole, 172
Mytholmroyd, 14,19,20,41,81,105,111,186

Naze, 118
New Towneley, 17, 68,69,70,76, 121
Nicklety House, 17,119,121,149
Northrop Loom, 74
New Ley, 17, 53, 56
Nutfield Priory, Surrey, 40,83

Oakhill, 42
Oastler, Richard, 123,170
O'Connor, Fergus, 151,152
Oddy, Family, 177
Oldham, Lancs.,72,87,113,154,184,193,204,210
Oliver, Jeremiah, (surgeon), 172
Oliver, Royston, 172
Oliver, Samuel, 172
Orchan Rocks, 17,47,48,159
Ormerod Abraham, (Medical Centre),10
Ormerod Brothers, 172
Ormerod, Peter, 85
Ormerod William, 85

Padiham, Lancs., 183
Parsons, Albert, American Radical Speaker, 125,126
Pasture Side, 17,118,119
Pecket Memorial, 164
Pennine Way, The, 10,18,155,156,157,159,164,173
Perkins, Aniline Dye, 74,
Perseverance, Stagecoach, 172,187
Pexwood Road, 85
Pex House, 85,115,117

Pickers, makers, 18,68,69,121,122
 Pighill, 85
 Ping Hold, 17, 80,81
 Plug Drawers Riots, The, 150,151
 Pole Gates, 47
 Political Unions, 193
 Poor Law Amendment Act. 84, 112,165,166,168,169, 170,
 171,172,173,174,191,205
 Poor Law Riots,170, 171,172,173
 Portsmouth, 67,72,161
 Poverty Knock, 111
 Prestbury Church, Macclesfield, 40
 Providence Chapel, Rochdale, 183
 Pudsey, nr. Cornholme, 55,67

Quakers, 51,52,55,76,77,79,82,130,168,177,178,181,183,186,191

Radcliffe's Dressing Machine (1803), 73
 Radcliffe, Saville, 190
 Ratcliffe James, 68
 Radnor, Lord, 193
 Railway, 9, 39,40,55,56,67,72,73,74,85,86,109,114,
 115,117,122,127,128,159,192,209
 Rake End, 18,21,132,133,134, 149,176
 Rake Hey Farm, 46
 Ratcher East, 17, 42
 Reddyshore Scout Gate, 129
 Reform Bill, The,113,193
 Rise Lane, Todmorden, 190,192
 Rivington Pike, 164
 Robinwood Mill,17, 69, 70,71,72,187
 Rochdale,10,11,20,45,72,77,87,105,114,116,128,150,154,183,184
 Rochdale Canal,
 38,73,85,86,87,89,114,115,116,117,126,127,128,153,154,172,186,190
 ,192,209
 Rochdale, Methodist Circuit, The, 183
 Rochdale, Parish Church, 87
 Rodhill End, 77
 Roomfield School, 37,38
 Roundfield Farm, 68

Royd House (ruin), 70
 Rushworth Mr., 179, 180
 Ryburn Valley, (proposed canal route), 116
 Saint Mary's Church, Todmorden , 35,36,89,195,196
 Salter Rake Gate, 18,128, 129,130,131,133,149,157,166,176
 Scrapper's Lane, 43,44
 Scutching Room, The, 113
 'Self Regulating Mule' The, nickname, 204
 Shepherd, Henrietta 38
 Shepherd, James, 38
 Shepherd, Levi, 38
 Shepherd's Rest Inn, 133,149,176
 Sherman, W. T. General, 202
 Shoebroad Quaker
 'Pasture',51,79,133,149,168,176,177,178,181,186,191
 Shore, 'Quaker Pasture', 77
 Shore, Wesley Preached, 77
 Shore, Further,46, 49, 50, 52,77,121, 210
 Shurcrack Fm., 133
 Shurat Cotton, 203
 Shuttle, stagecoach, The, 187
 Shuttleworths Laundry, (Hole Bottom Mill),42
 Skeynes, Kent, 184
 Smith, Simeon, 77
 Somerset House, 'Three Bashaws of', 168
 Sowerby, Crow Hill, 44
 Spies, August, American Radical Speaker,125
 Springs, ruined (farm), 46
 Springside, Near Callis Bridge, 38
 Stalybridge, 203
 Stanhope, Earl, Anti Poor Law Association, 170
 Stansfield Hall, Tod.,17, 36, 39, 40,83,84, 87, 149, 161, 207, 210
 Stansfield, Christobel, 46, 121
 Stansfield, Ruth, 197
 Stansfield View Hospital, 18, 165, 166
 Statue of 'Honest John' Fielden, 4,5,205,206, 210
 Stenhouse, Jane (Crossley), 130
 Stephenson George, (railway engineer), 117
 Suthers, James, 173
 Steintha, Salfred, 184

Stones, Farm, 17,82,83,85,117,118
Stones Wood, 172
Stoney Lane, 46
Stoodley Bridge. 172
Stoodley Clough, 116
Stoodley Grange, 165
Stoodley Hall, 89
Stoodley Pike, Monument, 43,149,155,158,159,160,161,162,163,164
Strines Barn, Walsden,130
Summit, 127,114,128
Summit, Tunnel, 128
Sutcliffe, Daniel, 77
Suthers, James, 173
Swimming Pool & Sports Centre,10, 198
Swineshead Farm, 50

'Takkin' in shop', John & Tamar Fieldens, 18, 192,79,190,191,
Taylor, James, Esquire, 173,184,191
Te Deum Stone, 18,157,158,159
Ten Hours Act, Movement, The, 6,19,114,123,193,204,205,206,210
Toddywood!, 12
Todmorden Edge, 17,43,51,69,76,77,78
Todmorden Hall,18,36,76,79,173,178,190,191,192
Todmorden Library,11
Todmorden Market Hall & Markets, 9,10,14,36,37,38,54,55,73,
79,80, 105,187,193
Todmorden Pool & Sports Centre, 10,11,14,198
Todmorden Relief Fund Committee, 202
Todmorden Sunday Schools, 18,111,
114,130,131,173,180,182,183,184,185,
186,196
Todmorden Town Hall. 17,35,199
Todmorden Unitarian Church
18,178,179,180,181,182,183,184,185,199,212
Toleration Act, 1689, The, 77,168
Top Brink Inn, Lumbutts, 174
Travis, George, 121
Travis, John, 130, 210

Unitarianism, 77,111,183

Vale, 52,67
 Veevers, Mr John, 161
 Wainman's Pinnacle, Sutton, 164
 Walker, Richard, 188
 Walker, Stephen, 70
 Walker James, (Manchester to Leeds Railway),117
 Wainhouse Tower, 164
 Walsden,
 10,18,21,36,46,77,81,85,105,119,120,121,122,125,126,127,130,133,
 149,170,171,189,210,211
 Walshaw, 122
 Walsden Church, (St. Peters),126
 Warland Clough, 116
 Warland Drain, The, 155
 Warland Reservoir, 153
 Waterhouse, Family, (of Shibden), 79
 Waterside House, 17,108,110
 Waterside Mill, Waterside, 10,17,72,79,105,106,107,108,109,
 112,125, 173,177,178,184,189,197
 Waterside Sluice Gate, 189
 Wattey Place, 172
 Wesley, John, 77,78,117,118,124,149, 150,173,209
 West Whirlaw, 43
 Wet Shaw, 68
 Whirlaw Stones, Todmorden, 43
 White Harte Inn, Todmorden, 191,192,193
 Whitney, Eli, 73
 Wickenberry Clough, 43
 Widdop, 149
 Willow Bank, 40
 Wilkinson, Revd. James, 184
 Wilson Lawrence, 43,55
 Wilson Bros, 56
 Winding Holes, 127
 Winterbutlee Lock, 127
 Withens Gate, 149,155,156,157
 Wizard of Whirlaw, 12
 Workhouses, 91,112,165,168,169,170,171,173
 Wright, Revd. Richard, 183
 Yates, Joseph Brookes, 198



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