
Hellifield Highways and Byways

The Main Roads that we are familiar with in Hellifield, are busy arteries that provide routes to Skipton, plus Kendal and the Lakes (A65) and on the edge of Hellifield the Gisburn to Long Preston Road (A682). This road is notorious for its bends and hills. One particular location, which bypasses the village in the vicinity of the sewerage works - contains a long sweeping stretch noted for its speeding motorcyclists and vehicles, which unfortunately results in the occasional accident. This road is in fact described as one of the most dangerous in England!

The history of these roads is an interesting one. The road we know as the A682 is noted to be the oldest route. From Gisburn it reaches the outskirts of Hellifield near the hamlet of Swinden. On a tight curve by the river's edge it passes by a locality known as the 'Clint'. You may have seen the large house (currently for sale) on this site. Back in the 1960's a roadside café stood near this spot. It was not unusual as children, for us to walk down to this café from the village. It was pulled down around the year 1969.

Onward on an uphill climb, with the

river on the left, the road runs alongside the curiously named Tommy Clarke Wood. Supposedly named after a local farmer in the 17th Century who hung himself in the wood after being in debt and unable to pay his rents! The road winds past Pan Beck House which was the sight of a Tannery in the 18th and 19th Century. The tanning of hides was done in pits within a field below the house. The indentations of these tanning pits can still be seen in this field. Opposite and above Pan Beck House on the left is the farm at Goosemere Heights. Here can be traced the route of an old coaching



19th Century photograph showing the tight corner on the A682. This area is known as 'Clint'. The Ribble is on the left.

route which crossed the existing road near Pan Beck House and made its way through the fields. It gradually climbed to join the existing road near the edge of Arnford Farm Estate and the current Gallaber Park Caravan Site. Just past Pan Beck House and the turning off for Halton West stood Newins Bar. This was one of the Toll Bars within our area which can be seen on the old maps. At its location, a glance over the wall into the field still shows the disturbed ground upon which the Toll Bar stood.

All travellers on horseback or drawing carriages and wagons, paid a toll of anything between 2 old Pennies or a Shilling, dependant on their load. Continuing onwards past the junction of the road into Hellifield, the road goes up a hill, and on the right hand side is the end of the Back Lane. Its actual

name is 'Boggart Lane' (old name for a ghost!) Why it was given this name is lost in the mists of time. The road then continues on its way to Long Preston.

Turning to the village itself. In 1753 the Keighley and Kendal Turnpike Trust improved and altered the road we know as the A65 by constructing a new route from the vicinity of Coniston Cold to Hellifield. Bypassing the current Bannisters Hotel and Lake, and dropping down past Switchers Farm, the road rises, with Tenley (Peel Wood) on its left, until it drops steeply into the village itself. Before this alteration to the road was made, the original route ran more to the north. Its junction with Hellifield was on the Hellifield to Malham road at a point near the entrance to Walton's Haulage and the house known as Cravenholme, which stands between the two existing roads.



19th Century view of Thornview Road on the current A65 with the Toll Bar still in place (Centre). This is prior to the building of the Council Houses which would have been on the right of the picture.



Interesting photo of a sunny day along the Back Lane in the 1960's.

The remains of some of the existing old road can still be made out in the fields at the top of Skipton Hill. The road we use now was opened for use in 1827. A Toll Bar (originally at Coniston Cold) stood in a location approximately opposite St Aidan's to collect the toll's from travellers heading to and from Skipton and Malhamdale. The Tolls went towards the ongoing costs of maintenance and the constant improvements which were necessary to keep the road in reasonable order.

All toll collecting on this stretch of the road to Kendal was ended on November 1st 1877 and travel became free. Prior to these busy roads which we use to get to Settle, Skipton and

Gisburn, there were many other routes which traverse the countryside in our area.

Some of these date back to Roman times, and many are old Pack Horse and Drovers Roads. Traces of these tracks and trails are still evident within the district. On the subject of road traffic, it is interesting to comment on some of the regular horse drawn coach services that came through the village in the late 1700's and early to mid 1800's. A daily service (except Saturdays) was the London to Kendal Post Coach. This left London at approx 7.45 a.m. and reached Kendal the following day at around 5 p.m. Not bad going!. It passed through Hellifield with

a stop at the Black Horse Inn for refreshments etc, and if required, a change of horses, at mid-day. Passenger transport ran between Leeds and Kendal and Clitheroe via Hellifield on most days of the week. The average cost of travel was 4 pennies per mile. There were also local goods services from Settle and Skipton.

One particular service from Jackson & Co. of Settle ran on Wednesdays on a 5 day journey to London. Many of these larger Goods Wagons required 6 or more horses to haul their loads. This

was of course before the railway came to Hellifield. When the railways arrived, the transport of goods and people began to be monopolised by the Midland and Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Companies.

It wasn't the end for the importance of roads and road transport through Hellifield.

But it was certainly the start of a new period in the history of the village.

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