

# Times Past

Spring 2009

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Local History Group

**PROPOSED**  
**TURNPIKE ROAD,**  
FROM  
**SKIPTON to GRASSINGTON;**  
WITH BRANCHES FROM  
**LINTON to THRESFIELD;**  
AND FROM  
**CRACO to ESHTON BRIDGE.**

SOME difference of opinion having been expressed as to whether all, or how much of the above Districts should be included in the proposed application to Parliament.

**Notice is hereby Given,**  
THAT a Meeting will be held at the **BLACK HORSE HOTEL**, in Skipton, on *Saturday the First Day of November, 1851*, at Two o'Clock in the Afternoon; for the purpose of taking the matter into consideration, when and where all Persons interested are requested by the Committee appointed for carrying out the project to attend.

BY ORDER,

**Henry Alcock, Solicitor,**  
**SKIPTON.**

J. GARNETT, PRINTER, SKIPTON,

The meeting advertised above led to the formation of the  
Skipton to Craco Turnpike Trust

Featured in this Issue.....

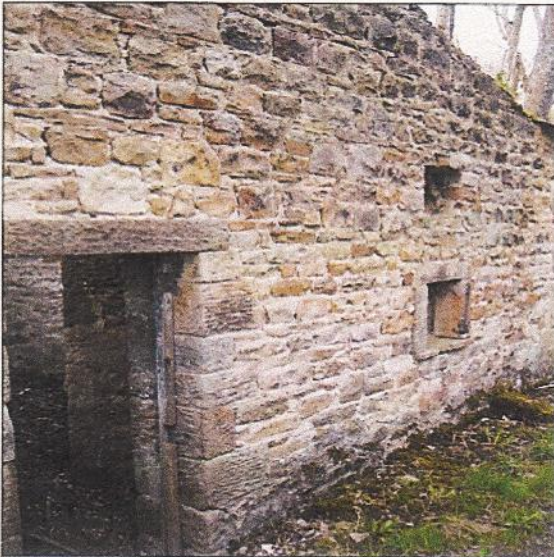
The Skipton to Craco Turnpike and  
the Turnpike House at Sandy Beck.

Where have all the Travelling Shops Gone ?

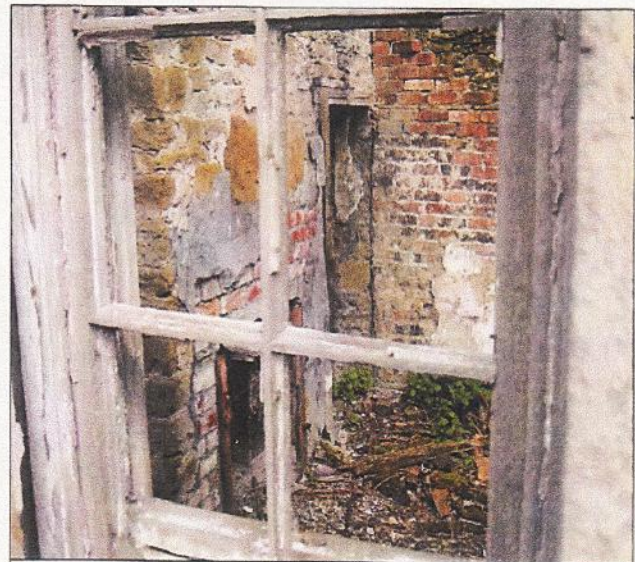
## The Skipton to Craco Turnpike & Turnpike House at Sandy Beck

Have you ever wondered as you travel along the B6265 to and from Skipton, about the history of the ruined building straddling the southern boundary of the township of Rylstone, that is on the left as you travel in the direction of Skipton. The building or what remains of it is the toll house that was built in 1853 for the new Skipton to Craco Turnpike road then also being developed. **Editor's Note.** From our research, we can confirm that the toll house is actually in the township of Stirton with Thorlby.

Sadly the building, unoccupied since around 1950 is now in an advanced state of decay which can clearly be seen in the photographs below.



The Toll House, entrance at the back of the building, note the two payment windows, the higher window allowed coachmen and those on horseback to pay the toll without the need to dismount !



The sad state of dereliction that can be seen through what remains of one of the front windows

A turnpike was literally a defensive framework of pikes that could be set up to defend soldiers on foot from attacks by soldiers on horseback, but in this context refers to a gate set across a road to stop traffic until a toll was paid.. Toll Roads or Turnpikes, were one of the great achievements of 18th & 19th century England. Such roads were not planned centrally, but were the result of local enterprise, regulated through Acts of Parliament. Local trustees were given powers to levy tolls on the users of a specified stretch of road. The income from the toll was used to improve and maintain the toll road.

Despite toll roads, the majority of roads and lanes remained the responsibility of the parish and were toll free. These were repaired by statute labour the result of an act of Parliament in 1669 which required all tenants and cotters to provide 6 days work annually on the roads until the passing of the General Highways Act of 1835. Enclosure of the old open fields during the 18th century created new, often straight, local roads and resulted in changes to the ancient road or track patterns.

It is interesting to note that the majority of milestones/ direction markers can be attributed to the development of turnpike roads, although there are exceptions to this, for example, Roman mile markers together with stone wayside markers that indicated parish boundaries which pre-dated milestones / direction stones



Any way but up !

From 1767 mileposts / direction markers were compulsory on all turnpikes, to inform travellers of direction and distances, to help coaches keep to schedule and for charging for the changes of horses at coaching inns.

The distances were also used to calculate postal charges before uniform postal rates were introduced in 1840.

Sadly many milestones have gone, due to neglect and damage by flail machines used to cut hedges. We also wonder how many are buried in undergrowth awaiting re- discovery and hopefully renovation, assuming souvenir hunters have not discovered them first, although they should be aware that milestones/ direction markers are protected by law and therefore the removal of them is an offence.

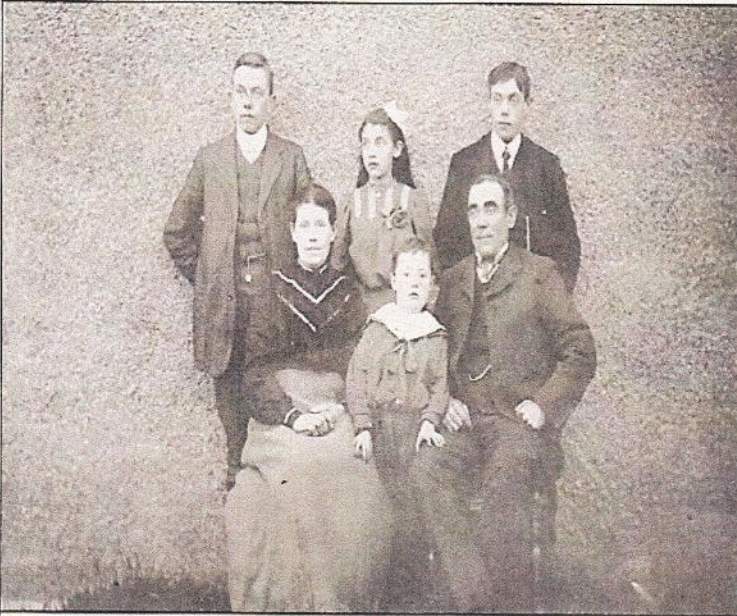
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## The Skipton to Craco Turnpike and Turnpike House at Sandy Beck (continued)

It has been surprising to discover how little is known locally about what today is an extremely important road. Imagine what it meant to local people 156 years ago when it opened !

We contacted various organisations such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Skipton Reference Library ( who were very helpful,) Skipton Museum and the North Yorkshire Records Office at Northallerton but we were unable to establish any information that would answer the majority of our basic questions. When was the house built? Who has lived there? What were the tolls? etc

We are however most grateful to local historian Mrs Bronte Bedford- Payne of Grassington who kindly provided us with valuable information concerning her father's family who lived in the toll house up until 1946



The Griffiths Family,  
Back row standing L to R .Albert ,Emily ,Alfred.  
Sitting L to R. Louisa, Arthur, Owen

With the kind permission of Mrs. Bronte Bedford- Payne we reproduce extracts from her account of her father's background.

“ My father Arthur was born at Sandy Beck Bar in 1901. He was the youngest child of Louisa and Owen Griffiths, who had moved from Heath Bank, Halifax as employees of the Standeven family of Scale House, Rylstone. Owen my Grandfather, was the coachman and then the chauffeur until his retirement, after which time he went daily to tend the boilers and keep an eye on any minor technical jobs around the estate. He had been born in Swansea, and spoke with a distinct Welsh accent, whereas my Grandmother Louisa came from Blackheath in South London.

I guess they had met in service at Heath Bank , Halifax prior to the move to Scale House. . My father had two brothers, Albert and Alfred and a sister Emily who was named after Emily Norton of Wordsworth's famous poem, The White Doe of Rylstone.

My father told me that he owed his success in life to the Vicar of Rylstone, the Reverend Lowe, who not only encouraged him to sing regularly in the church choir, but also coached him through the entrance examination for Ermysteds Grammar School. He then became an apprenticed draughtsman with George



Louisa Griffiths feeding the chickens at Sandy Beck Toll of Sandy Beck Toll House.

King's engineering firm in Keighley.

In 1931 he joined the Ford Motor Company, followed by a period as Director and General Manager of the Perkins Engine Company. He later joined the board of the Daimler Company Ltd in Coventry.

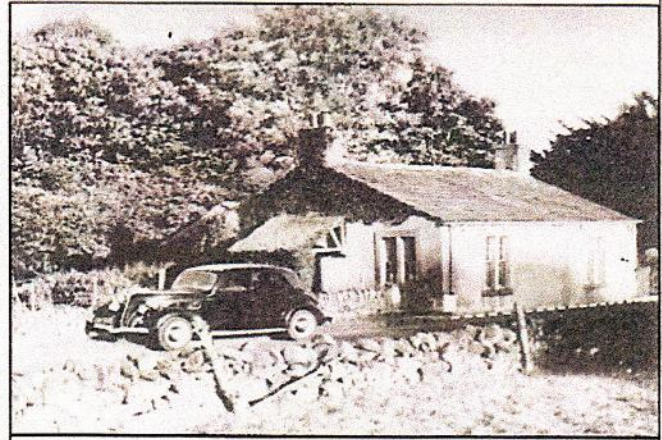
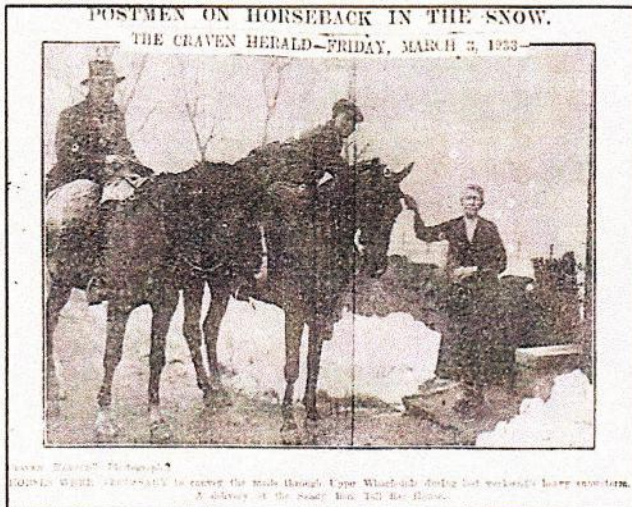
He was awarded the O.B.E. in the 1953 New Year Honours List. He died in 1961”

Reproduced on the next page is a newspaper clipping from the Craven Herald of Friday March 3rd 1933. The words underneath the photograph state that following a heavy snow-storm during the previous week, postmen on horseback were used to deliver mail to outlying districts. In the picture is we believe, Mrs Louisa Griffiths receiving a delivery of mail at the door

continued overleaf

## The Skipton to Craco Turnpike and Turnpike House at Sandy Beck ( continued )

We believe that Sandy Beck Toll House has been unoccupied since around 1946, although Jack Wade of Threaplands Farm remembers when he was a boy that an old lady occupied the house for several years until around 1950



A V8 Ford Pilot car belonging to Arthur Griffiths parked outside Sandy Beck Toll House in the early 1940s

**Editor's Note.** We also note having examined the admission and withdrawal register for Cracoe School that on the 4th of June 1945, Geoffrey Willoughby Collier started attending Cracoe School. His previous school had been Cross Gates School in Leeds. His address was given as Sandy Beck Bar. He left the school on the 1st April 1946. Our thanks again to Mrs. Bronte Bedford-Payne, who confirmed in her account that her father's sister Emily married Jack Peacock of Cracoe and they lived in Blackheath. One of their Daughters- Phyllis (Pat) married a Bill Collier and had one son Geoffrey. Pat and her son spent some of the war years with her widowed grandfather ( Owen Griffiths ) at Sandy Beck Toll House ,while Geoffrey went to Cracoe School .

We now know that the Toll House was built around 1853 ,the same time as the road was re-aligned to become the toll road. This date is confirmed in a number of books such as " Old Yorkshire Dales" by Arthur Raistrick first published in 1967. Talking about Rylstone, he refers to "the Cracoe to Skipton turnpike which runs in a nearly straight line between Rylstone and its southern boundary, leaving the old road one field distant to the east. Where the old and new road meet at the boundary, there is Sandy Beck Bar, the only tollhouse on the road, so placed as to keep an eye on the traveller who might be disposed to slip by on the old road". In her book Wharfedale first published in 1938 Ella Pontefract refers to the fact that tolls doubled after sunset and every effort would be made by carriers and farmers to avoid paying them, including the wily Jamie Ibbotson of Threshfield who had a habit of presenting a high denomination note which the toll keeper could not change! Ella Pontefract also mentions how boys used the old road from Grassington to Skipton to collect coal. They drove small Galloway carts which could carry half a ton and the journey took them two hours each way. Often as many as 20 to 30 carts would go on one day. A boy got 6d for the journey, and 4d for his dinner at Skipton, and was given his tea when he got back. The usual fare was a meat and potato – mostly potato –pic for twopence, a plate of milk pudding for a penny, and a cup of tea for a penny.

1853 Toll House Building Costs	
April 4th. To stonemason on account	£15. 0s 0d
April 18th	£15 0s 0d
April 30th	£15 0s 0d
May 14th	£20 0s 0d
May 28th	£10 0s 0d
June 11th	£10 0s 0d
July 4th	£ 6 0s 0d
Shuttleworth- Plasterer	£6 7s 1d
Thornton -Slate	£5 11s 1½d
William Domaine- Joiner	£21 0s 0d
Sundries	4s 6d
John Wood- mason	£ 4 6s 6½d
Grand Total	£128 10s 1d

Our research has shown that the plans for the intended turnpike road from Skipton to Cracoe were prepared by Surveyor, James Elwood Terry in 1851. We were fortunate to locate the plans, and following a visit to the West Yorkshire Archive Service at Wakefield we can confirm the following:-

The plans show no indication of the positioning of Sandy Beck Toll House, although we did discover documentary evidence of the actual cost of the building detailed in the accounts record book as shown left

The total cost of the building we found to be surprisingly high for the time, considering that Hetton Chapel was built 6 years later for around £159. The records confirmed that tolls commenced on 26th of August 1853, and by December of

1853 toll income had reached £100. 8s 4d .

continued across

*Tender to 102.*

### **Skipton to Craco Turnpike and Turnpike House at Sandy Beck(continued)**

We have also been able to identify from National Census Records some of the earlier occupants of Sandy Beck Toll House who were employed as Toll Collectors.

#### **1841 National Record**

We started our search with the 1841 return, and as we expected no trace was found of Sandy Beck Toll House, unsurprising because the toll road was not opened until 1853. It did however seem to establish that there was not an earlier toll road in existence which if there had been, would have explained why the toll windows are so placed on the opposite side of the building to the toll road making it quite difficult to pay the toll and then have to reverse back to the toll road or perhaps the original toll road had been re-aligned in more recent times— more of this later .

#### **1851 National Record**

No trace of Sandy Beck Toll was found in this return, which again makes sense as the toll road did not open until August 1853.

**Editor's Note.** From our research at Wakefield, we now know that the Toll Bar did not commence until August 1853 by which time the Toll House was built and a Toll Collector named John Wilson had been employed. The accounts show that he was paid the sum of £12 for the period August 1853 –June 12th 1854

#### **1861 National Record**

It was this return that provided some of the information we were seeking. There in the beautiful copperplate writing of the time was the name William Petty aged 72 Toll Gate keeper born in Rylstone, also his wife Ann aged 75 who was born in Gargrave and their granddaughter Ann aged 9 acknowledged on the return as a Servant ,who was born in Craco, all of whom lived in Sandy Beck Bar. Our research later confirmed that he was paid the sum of £13 for the period June 12th 1854 —December 31st 1854 . William Petty was employed until sometime in 1870

#### **1871 National Record**

In this return Robert Ringrise aged 46 is shown as Toll Keeper and Labourer. He lived there with his wife Mary aged 52, their daughter Sarah Ann aged 20 a dressmaker and their granddaughter Elizabeth aged 1 year

#### **1881 National Record**

This return shows the name of Thomas Waterhouse, Head of the Household, a male of 53 years of age, born in Edenfield ,Lancashire. He lived at Sandy Beck Bar with his wife Elizabeth aged 24 years, and their three sons ,William aged 5, Henry aged 3,and John aged 1. The only problem is that the records show he was employed as a general labourer and not as a toll collector due to the turnpike being removed.

It should be remembered that by an Act of Parliament, all roads throughout the country including those maintained by Turnpike Trusts became the responsibility of local authorities around about 1875 thus the need to collect tolls to maintain roads ceased and therefore Toll Collectors lost their employment.

When next you travel along the B6265 passing on your way the old toll house, spare a thought for those industrious Victorians who 156 years ago, were responsible for improving the road you are using today.

### **Skipton to Craco Turnpike Trust**

#### **Trustees**

Henry Blake. Robert Henderson. Sarah Chamberlain. William Maud. Thomas Tennant. Henry Alcock.

Rev. William Boyd . William Nicholson Alcock . John Birkbeck . Sir Richard Tufton.

Rev. Thomas Francis Wills

**As a final thought, would it not be a fitting tribute to the above Trustees, to see the restoration of Sandy Beck Toll House to its former glory for the benefit of future generations before it is too late and the building falls down.**

## Skipton to Craco Turnpike and Turnpike House at Sandy Beck ( continued )

We would take this opportunity to thank the West Yorkshire Archive Service for the ready assistance provided by them in our quest for information.

When we made our visit ( appointment only ) what we found was a wealth of information about virtually all aspects of the Skipton to Cracoe Turnpike from its inception in 1850 to it ceasing to be a turnpike on the 1st day of November 1875.

From the meticulous records of expenditure we were able to identify such costs as:-

John Brown. contracted to supply and erect the following:-

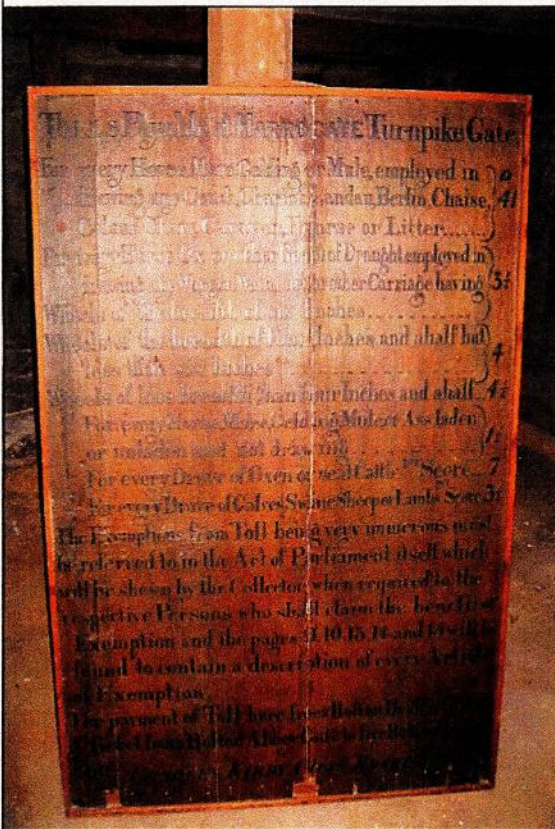
	£	s	d
I Main Toll Gate.	13	10	0
I Toll Board	1	1	0
19 Field Gates	15	4	0
Fixing & Cartage	3	18	6
Grand Total	30	11	6

W.H. Stoney for painting the Toll House, Toll Board and milestones.    £4    16s    0d

John Wilson, mason. for the supply of 5 milestones @ 4s/6d each    £1    2s    6d

At this time, we have been unable to confirm the precise charges at Sandy Beck Toll, but as an example show below the scale of charges levied at the Harrogate Turnpike toll on Bolton Abbey Bridge. The picture below left is of the actual board that used to be displayed at the bridge

### Tolls Payable at Harrogate Turnpike Gate



	For every Horse,
Mare, Gelding or Mule, employed in drawing any Coach, Chariot, Landau, Berlin, Chaise	) 4½
Calash Chair, Caravan, Hearse or Litter	)
For every Horse, Ox or other Beast of draught employed in drawing any Wagon, Wain, Cart or other Carriage having wheels of the breadth of 6 inches	) 3¼
Wheels of the breadth of four inches and a half but less than 6 inches	) 4
Wheels of less breadth than four inches and a half	4½
For every Horse, Mare, Gelding, Mule or Ass laden or unladen and not drawing	) 1½
every drove of Oxen or neat Cattle per score	7
every drove of Calves, Swine, Sheep or Lambs per score	3
The exemptions from toll being very numerous must be referred to in the Act of Parliament itself which will be shewn by the Collector when required to the respective persons who shall claim the benefit of exemption and the page 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15 will be found to contain a description of every article of exemption. The payment of toll here frees Bolton Bridge Gate a ticket from Bolton Abbey Gate to free Bolton Bridge Gate.	

**Charles Kirby. Clerk Knaresboro**

continued overleaf