

Some Castleton History

Some Castleton History and Things Remembered

By Peter C. Harrison.

It is quite true to say that over the years many millions of people have visited Castleton. For instance, in 1975 the Peak District National Park Authority carried out a traffic and visitor survey, their findings were amazing! 25 million people visited the National Park and of that 25 million, 8 million came to Castleton.

Nearly all the visitors to Castleton will look around the many gift shops, visit a pub or café, look up at Peveril Castle perched high above the village; some of them even climb up to it and from there the views around the Hope Valley are spectacular. Only a minority of all these visitors will realise what an interesting and wonderful place Castleton is and what a wealth of history is all around them.

No one seems to know for sure how long ago it was when the first settlement appeared where Castleton is today, but it must be a very long time ago.

I hope what follows will give you an insight into Castleton history and into village life as well.

Early History

No evidence has been found of human cave dwellers locally, even inside Peak Cavern, although cave dwelling continued up to about 2000 years ago.

There is evidence of Neolithic people living locally at least 3500 BC (5500 years ago) in the form of a Neolithic family burial in a natural cave on Treak Cliff.

Celtic people were living on Mam Tor about 1000 BC (3000 years ago), they were Brigantes from Northumbria who settled on Mam Tor about 1000 BC. The stone head of their goddess Brigantia, found in the village near the Russet Well, can now be seen in the Castleton Centre.

This tribe of Brigantes would be brutally put down in the first century A.D. by the Romans. They had a military fort, Navio, at Brough almost in the centre of Hope Valley. All the encampments of indigenous tribes in occupied Britain were destroyed by the Romans after Queen Boudicca attacked the undefended town of Colchester, the Roman capital of Britain at that time.

Possibly some of the local tribe of Brigantes from Mam Tor came to live inside Peak Cavern where they would find shelter and plenty of water. There is no evidence whatsoever to support this theory although it would be very interesting to dig right through the terraces built for the Peak Cavern rope-walks. Nobody knows what these recent infillings are hiding.

When the Romans left Britain the Celts populated this area for about 150 years. Picts from Scotland and Saxons from Northumbria eventually displaced the Celts. The Saxons were the dominant tribe so they absorbed the Celts and founded the Kingdom of Mercia. The people who settled in this area were called Pecsætas or Peak Settlers, hence the current name, "Peak District"

The Normans

After William the Conqueror's (1066 to 1087) victory at Hastings in 1066 he started a program of castle building around the whole country to pacify and control the population. This he did in a most brutal manner and many thousands were put to death.

William Peveril, who was the "natural" son of King William I, was given The Castle of the Peake in 1086. The Castle was lived in until about 1480 then used as a courthouse. It became derelict around 1560.

The ruins of the Castle underwent a period of restoration in the 1930's and were made safe. Some archaeological excavations were carried out at this time and quite a lot of artefacts were found. Some of the finds were identified as being possibly of Roman origin.

When war was declared in 1939 the Ministry of Works said the artefacts were not safe in Castleton so several wooden crates of them were shipped off to London and they haven't been seen since. The Sheffield Museum Service have in their storehouse quite a lot of small artefacts from Castleton and the Castle.

It is more than likely that some sort of settlement existed at the western end of the Hope Valley in Saxon times, there is quite a lot of evidence of Saxons being in this area long before the Normans came.

When the Normans did come they found an ideal place to build a Castle and to establish a town, although Castleton is described as a wrongly sited town. Built on the south side of the valley the village loses much of the winter sun. Built on the north side of the valley, when the sun shines, it would be in full sun all the year round.

With an abundant water supply, the protection of the Castle and the meeting place of five packhorse trails Castleton became a thriving community with a market that in 1255 had at least 71 market stalls.

The Mam Tor Landslide

Dominating the north western end of the Hope Valley is Mam Tor, the "Shivering Mountain". It looks as if it is or has been a large quarry. What you are actually seeing is the result of a massive landslide that happened a long time ago.

Put simply, a great slice of Carboniferous shale and sandstone slipped down the front of Mam Tor. The bare rock face is where it all came from. The debris from the landslide forms the lumpy broken slopes below the face of Mam Tor and is over 1000 metres long. This debris, an estimated 3.2 million cubic metres, is still moving slowly downwards under its own weight, something like 8.5 million tonnes.

The evidence for all this movement can be seen by looking at the destruction of the higher and lower parts of the Mam Tor road where it crosses the landslide. Also look down to the toe of the landslide and see how it is encroaching on the fertile fields of the valley floor and destroying good grazing land. Within the last 60 or so years Blakett Ley Barn, a substantial stone built structure which lay directly in the path of the landslide has been pushed over and totally obliterated.

The Mam Tor road known locally as the "New Road" was opened in 1810 and starts from the end of the road to the Winnats Pass. The New road was built over the landslide debris, crossing it twice. This new road bypassed the very steep road through the Winnats Pass with its 1 in 5 gradient (20%).

Because of the continual downward movement of the landslide debris the road needed constant repair and rebuilding until a larger slip in 1975-1976 caused its destruction. After trials with single file traffic with passing places, then with traffic lights, both proving unsuccessful, the road was finally closed in 1979. Once again the Winnats Pass became the only road out of Castleton to the west.

Current geological research suggests the Mam Tor landslide happened 3500 to 4000 years ago and the mean average downward movement of the landslide is about 25 centimetres per year but this movement increases considerably during a very wet winter following a significantly wet summer.

The natural erosion of the face of Mam Tor by sun, frost, wind and rain is negligible when compared to the landslide.

The Neolithic family buried in Treak Cliff Sepulchre Cave would have seen Mam Tor as a complete mountain. The Celtic Brigantes who came from Northumbria much later (about 1000 years B.C.) would see it much as we do now and they used the steep face of Mam Tor as part of the defences of their encampment.

They raised double earthworks enclosing about 16.5 acres on the top of Mam Tor. Within this enclosure the tribe built their rude dwellings and started some form of community life. Finding enough water on Mam Tor would have been a problem for them.

Castleton Garland Day

There is very little written documentary evidence or definitive word of mouth information about the start of Castleton Garland Day. All we can do is use the fragments of evidence that still exist and speculate on what was the beginning of the celebrations and try to build on what little knowledge we have and relate it to what happens now.

It is well within the bounds of possibility the Mam Tor Brigantes started what we know as Castleton Garland Day although in more recent times it tends to commemorate the restoration of the Monarchy and Charles II (1660 to 1685) hiding in the oak tree. Currently the Garland King is dressed in Stewart period clothing.

Oak leaves play a significant part in today's Garland Day celebrations and may suggest a connection with the Green Man. The white dresses of the Dancing Girls a possible connection with the Druids. There is no evidence whatsoever to support any involvement of the Green Man or the Druids.

Let us pause for a while and contemplate Castleton's ancient Garland Day Ceremony, a unique, historic and wonderful event that takes place every year on 29th May. (Unless the 29th is a Sunday, then it moves back to Saturday 28th May) The Garland Procession starts from the Host Inn at about 6-30pm and reaches the church gates in Castle Street between 7-30 and 8-00pm.

There is some very fragmentary evidence to suggest the Garland ceremony commenced some time after the tribe of Brigantes came to live on Mam Tor, "The Mother Mountain" around 3000 years ago.

In the early 1970's a stone head being used as a rockery stone very near to the Russet Well in Castleton was seen by Miss Greatly from Manchester University causing her to become very excited. She was sure the head was very old. After some research Miss Greatly was able to positively identify it as the head of Brigantia, a benign Celtic goddess of fertility, even to the suggestive winking eye of an enchantress.

This stone head was a most important discovery dating back to the Celtic settlement on Mam Tor about 1000 years B.C. The head can be seen in the Castleton Centre together with a display of Garland costumes and equipment.

It is not hard to imagine the Brigantes performing their Spring-time fertility rites and garlanding their goddess Brigantia with wild flowers at the Russet Well. Probably she was attended by a male Consort and by the maidens of the settlement.

Bearing in mind there is very little water on Mam Tor what better place could these people find to perform their rituals and to worship their goddess than the place we know as the Russet Well? To them no doubt, a mystical, awesome, possibly fearful, natural resurgence of pure life giving water that seems to appear from unknown depths and which never ceased to flow.

During the passing years there have been considerable changes to the Garland ceremony almost always, as now, resisted strenuously by the people at the time the changes were suggested.

As far back as anyone can remember the Garland has always been made in two parts, one large and one small, both are bell-shaped. The large one is a bell shaped frame made of wood and metal, it is covered all over with flowers and leaves, wild flowers if possible. There are leather straps that pass over the shoulders of the Garland King and hook onto the rim of the frame, presently the rim is an old bicycle wheel minus the spokes. Currently the small bell-shaped part is a small hand posser covered with flowers only. This finial fits on top of the large part to complete the Garland. Significantly this finial is called "The Queen".

Accompanied by the Consort and mounted on horses the King carries the Garland around the village.

The participants in the procession are as follows; the Castleton Silver Band, the Garland King followed by his Consort, the young girls of the village wearing pretty white dresses with posies of flowers pinned on them. Only girls living in the Parish of Castleton or attending Castleton Primary School are allowed to dance in the Garland. When the 1st Castleton Scout Troop existed the Boy Scouts of the troop with their poles formed a protecting ring around the children giving them room to dance.

In front, behind and all around the procession are crowds of people who gather every year to follow and watch the enchanting Garland Ceremony.

Before the procession assembles at the Host Pub the King and Consort ride to the ancient boundaries of the village. Historically, most likely these boundaries were the north, south, east and west entrances to the village through the Town Ditch that enclosed the village. The Town Ditch was made in 1189. Now the King and Consort ride to the last house on the Pindale Road, (Town Head) to the top of Goosehill and to the last house on the Buxton Road. The east boundary is at Spital Bridge, it is the only one visited with the Garland Procession complete. The King and Consort's ride to the Tricket Bridge north boundary seems to have been discontinued due to lack of time.

The ancient village boundaries are not the same as the current Parish Boundaries. If the Garland was active in the reign of Richard I (1189 to 1199) it is very likely the original village boundaries were at the Town Ditch.

I remember when the Garland was made at the Host Inn and from where the procession started and ended. A different Inn was the Host each year. Currently the cycle of the Inns starts in Castle Street at the George and ends at the Cheshire Cheese in How Lane.

Towards the end of the twentieth century all the Pubs in the village have been brought up to a modern standard with the result the places where the Garland was made no longer exist so the making of the Garland moved to Lesley Sidebottom's barn on Mill Lane. When Lesley died the barn passed over to Gary Glennester so with his permission the Garland continued to be made there.

Shortly after the Castleton Centre opened in 2004 the Garland Committee decided to make the Garland in the covered area outside the Centre where more people could see how it was made, also more "contributions" could be collected from the watchers. The cost of the Garland Ceremony is funded by sponsors and collections from villagers and visitors alike.

During the Garland Procession several volunteers each with a collecting tin, nettles and oak leaves circulate amongst the crowds. Anyone without a sprig of oak leaves is likely to be nettled; safety and some oak leaves can be purchased for a generous donation into the collectors tin.

The procession starts from the Host Inn, a different one each year. Although the Garland is now made elsewhere it is carried to the Host Inn ready to be put onto the Garland King's shoulders. When the Garland is in place and the King mounted on his horse the procession can move off.

The Band, the King and Consort, the Children and the crowd make their way to Spital Bridge at the eastern end of the village. As the procession moves from Inn to Inn on the return journey the children dance along to the Ancient Garland Tune. At every Inn the procession halts, the band plays and the children perform the dance known as the Crossover. After the dance the landlord of the Inn provides refreshments, beer for the adults and lemonade for the children. This happens at all the Inns until the procession reaches the church gates.

When Dr. Bailey was ill and couldn't join in, the procession halted on "Doctors Corner" where the Dance was performed for him.

Castleton has only six inns now, imagine what it was like when there were several more Inns, imagine too the state of the participants at the end of the celebrations!

At the church gates in Castle Street the Queen should be removed from the Garland because it is still said by some people to be pagan. In the past the "Queen" was not allowed to enter the churchyard. That has now changed.

Although Castleton Garland is still thought by many to be pagan some things have been relaxed considerably. The large part of the Garland is allowed into the churchyard and taken to the bottom of the church tower where a rope lowered from the top of the tower is attached to the Garland. It is then hoisted from the Garland Kings aching shoulders, pulled up to the top and mounted on the centre pinnacle on the south side of the tower where it remains until it withers. Oak leaves decorate the other pinnacles around the tower.

Meanwhile the rest of the procession moves to the open area of the Market Place just outside Castleton Hall, the one-time residence of the Squires of Castleton. Here the children perform six Maypole dances to six different tunes played by the band. At the end of each dance the crowd used throw coins into the area of the Maypole dancing where the children eagerly gather them up. The throwing of coins is now discontinued; Health and Safety say it is dangerous!!!

When the Maypole dancing is over the children line up to form a corridor for the King to use to get through the crowd to the War Memorial. Here the King dismounts and places the Queen at the base of the Memorial Cross. The hymn, Abide With Me is sung, then one of the bandmen plays The Last Post and this short ceremony ends with the National Anthem.

The Garland Ceremony ends with "girls" of all ages who have danced in the Garland in previous years dancing the Criss-Cross. Following Castleton Silver Band these dancers make their way back to the Host Inn and bring Castleton Garland Day to a close

Historically, only people who had previously danced in the Garland were allowed to dance the Criss-Cross, this seems to have been relaxed somewhat because of pressure from other people wanting to join in.

The Fragmentary Evidence

To this day the "queen" is a quite separate part of the Garland; it is made separately and fitted onto the top of the larger frame to complete the Garland. No explanation has ever been offered as to why the topmost part of the Garland is called the queen and why it is made separately. The one and only possible reference to a queen is the stone head of Brigantia, goddess or possibly the Queen of the Brigantes.

We do not, nor ever have had, a female Garland Queen. The King's attendant is always called the Consort. Historically the Consort was a man dressed as a woman. More than likely in ancient times this man was Brigantia's personal attendant, possibly a priest or king and probably the "power behind the throne"

Nobody knows when the Consort began dressing as a "Lady". The last male Consort was Tommy Liversage, when he retired after about forty years service no man wanted to become the Consort so Jean Abbott, a young lady of the village became the first female Consort.

Historically this was quite a radical change but in this modern age an added attraction to the ceremony. The Consort should never be referred to as the Garland Queen.

Considering all the foregoing bits of evidence it is quite reasonable to think Castleton's Garland Day is very special and a very ancient ceremony indeed.

The Russet Well

The Russet Well referred to in the Garland Ceremony is another of Castleton's many wonders. It is in the garden of Rose Cottage, Waterside, on the east side of Peaks Hole Water (Castleton's river) and is described as a natural resurgence.

People who see this natural resurgence or "rising" find it a most awesome sight, especially if the Well is in flood. After heavy rain the brown muddy water boils from the Well and rushes away into the nearby river. The colour of this water probably gave the Well its name.

All this rainwater is gathered from about six square miles of land to the west and south of the Well. This is called the catchment area. About 80% of this area is limestone rock, 20% shale and gritstone.

Before piped water became available in Castleton, the Well provided pure drinking water for the whole village. Some people got their water from the Well, others took it from the river. When you are able to see the riverbank especially near houses it is still possible to see short flights of steps down to the water, this is where people downstream from the Well obtained their water.

The disadvantage of using water from the Well or the river is that it is very hard water. The lime in the water suppressed its natural iodine and this caused some people to develop enlarged thyroid glands commonly called "Derbyshire Neck". I can remember many years ago several people in the village with this condition of iodine deficiency. The introduction of iodised salt solved the problem.

During the droughts of 1947 and 1959 water from the Well was pumped into the mains water pipes. So again the Well provided pure drinking water for the village.

The following information is from the Derwent Valley Water Board's measurements done many years ago. The year-round average flow of water from the Well is 9100 litres (2000 gallons) per minute, or 13,104,000 litres (2,880,000) gallons per day.

The daily (24 hours) flow patterns of Peaks Hole Water are as follows; Average flow, 22,750,000 litres (5,000,000 gallons) Maximum recorded flow, 127,400,000 litres (28,000,000 gallons) Minimum recorded flow, 2,750,000 litres (500,000 gallons).

I hope to obtain more up-to-date information when the Huddersfield University's Limestone Research Group publishes their research findings on the flow patterns and drainage systems of the Russet Well and Peaks Hole Water.

The Ancient Hospital

What are thought to be the remains of Castleton's ancient Hospital are on the east side of the village, just beyond Spital Bridge. They are just mounds in the field called Spital Field. Almost opposite Losehill Hall Lodge and Drive and just over the fence running alongside the road and plainly visible are some grass-covered mounds that are thought to be all that is left of the Hospital of the Blessed Mary of Castleton?

The wife of Lord Peveril probably founded the Hospital in the 12th century. The ancient record reads "Hospital de Spytelhouse in Alt'Peke in Com Derb".

The first Warden of the Hospital to be mentioned was William de Yelvercroft in 1330. The living was worth £3 and 4 bushels of oatmeal a year. Around 1350 John O' Gaunt granted to the hospital a right of removal of rabbits from the cunnery and fish from the troutery, it was a hanging offence to remove them without permission.

In 1377 Richard II (1377 to 1399) granted custody of the hospital to Thomas Brownflete. Over the years several other wardens were granted custody of the Hospital. The last recorded Warden was George Savage. (1536 to 1542).

During the last year of Henry VIII's reign (1509 to 1547) George Savage was granted the income of the hospital which was now 40 shillings a year. Probably this was from the 1535 "Valor Ecclesiasticus", a valuation of all properties in England for Henry VIII.

There is a reference in 1382 of a building in the Castle grounds being used as a source of materials to maintain the Hospital. I have no information about when the hospital became derelict. Like Peveril Castle it would become a source of good building stone. It is suggested quite a lot of the Hospital was reused to build Spital Mill.

In its early days as well as being a Hospital for the sick and injured, this building was probably a House of Hospitality where visitors to Castleton and the Castle could stay rather than climb the steep hill up to the Castle. Possibly the Sisters who lived and worked in the Hospital would treat the sick and injured people as well as caring for any guests who stayed there.

In November 2007 a programme of electronic surveying of this ancient scheduled site was started by Angela Darlington and is still continuing. Current research (2009 and 2010) suggests the hospital may be in another location. I hope to have more information when the research is complete

Packhorse Trails and Roads

We must remember that in very early times because of the marshy wet area in the valley bottom between Castleton and Hope eventually called "The Marshes", the old A625 (changed recently to the A4187) that now passes alongside what are thought to be the ruins of the Hospital probably did not exist.

Before the present road was made the way to Hope, Bradwell and Sheffield was via the Pindale Road that leaves Castleton to the east from the Market Place. By 1654 the Parliamentary Survey indicates there was a "highway" close to the present A4187.

Some of the packhorse trails that came together in Castleton Market Place would eventually become rough roads and be used by wheeled vehicles as well as pack animals.

Clockwise from the south east corner of the Market Place these routes are as follows;

1. Bargate becomes Pindale Road which divides about 500 metres east of Castleton village, the left fork, still the Pindale Road, is the old road to Hope and Bradwell avoiding "The Marshes", this road would continue on to Sheffield.
2. The right fork or "Siggatt" (Side Gate) leads to Tideswell and the south.
3. Cavedale remains a bridle path to Peak Forest, where it now becomes a road. In earlier days the bridle path would continue westwards, possibly to the Cheshire salt mines.
4. The Buxton Road via the Winnats Pass also led out to the west.
5. Back Street ends at Tricket Bridge and becomes Hollowford Lane leading to Edale and the north, this route remains a bridle path from about half a mile north of Castleton.

The "New Road" around by Mam Tor was opened about 1810 as an alternative route to the steep one in five (20%) gradient of the Winnats Pass. The Romans are not known to have used the Winnats Pass. From their fort Navio near Brough they had their own road system. From Navio via Batham Gate to Buxton and from Navio via Doctors Gate to Milandra, near Glossop.

Another bridle path came down from Hollins Cross to where the Hairpin Bend is, it continued to below the Odin Mine then very gradually started to ascend across the slope of Treak Cliff Front until it levelled out. This bridle-way crossed the Winnats Road just below what was at that time the Speedwell Tavern. (If it was there at all when this packhorse trail started) the trail continued along the bottom of Long Cliff, Cow Low Bank to Cow Low where it divided. The left hand fork carried on to Castleton Market Place via Goose Hill and The Stones. This route avoided the Toll Gate situated somewhere near the end of the road to Winnats Pass

The right hand fork was the main supply route to the Castle of the Peake where there were several buildings outside the precincts of the Castle. A bridge across the deep gully between the Peak Cavern Gorge and Cave Dale linked these buildings with the Castle. The bridle path continued to the southwest away from the Castle along the side of Cow Low until it joined the trail that comes up Cave Dale from Castleton.

The Castle and Castleton

Only two English Castles were built in natural defensive positions, (ref. Sir Brian Horrocks' BBC lectures) one was the Castle of the Peake, the other was Corfe Castle in Dorset. The Castle of the Peake only became known as Peveril Castle after Walter Scott published his book "Peveril of the Peak" in the 19th century and by that time the Castle was a ruin.

The Castle of the Peake was built to protect the valuable Crown interests in the rich mineral wealth of the area and the excellent hunting in the Forest of the Peake.

When the building of the Castle started isn't clear but William 1 (1066 to 1087) gave it to his "natural" son William Peveril in 1086.

Henry II (1154 to 1189) added the Castle Keep at a cost of £175-00 and about the same time he built a single earthwork around the settlement that had sprung up below the Castle and planned a Town on a simple grid system within it. It seems Castleton has been at the mercy of the planning authorities for a very long time. Currently it is the Peak District National Park Authority.

The earthwork became known as the Town Ditch and the settlement became the village we know as Castleton.

The Church was the focal point of the village with the Market Place, Castle Street, Cross Street and part of Back Street forming a square around it.

Running down from the named streets to the Town Ditch were several smallholdings, a few of which still exist. The roads, the Market Place and the footprints of some of the buildings are almost as they were laid out in the reign of Henry II.

The Town Ditch was built as a defence for the village, what it actually did was to restrict its development.

For many years the "Town" would not be allowed to develop outside the Ditch. The result is, in these modern times many people have very little room to extend their houses and nowhere to park their cars off-road within what was the confines of the Town Ditch. The oldest surviving buildings in Castleton are within what remains of the Town Ditch.

The Joule Yard is mentioned during the reign of Henry III, (1216 to 1272.) The Castle of the Peake was lived in until 1480. Robert Fulove emptied the Castle in 1530. It was then used as a courthouse until 1560. After 1560 the Castle was left derelict and eventually became a ruin and a source of ready-quarried building stone.

The thick outer walls of the Castle Keep were built of limestone quarried from the top of Cow Low. The limestone was then faced over with Millstone Grit, very hardwearing sandstone often referred to as ashlar, it was probably quarried from the local Dark Peak area. (Ashlar is hewn stone with square corners and edges, more a building term than a type of stone)

Most of the Millstone Grit facing has been removed from the Keep and reused around the village as building stone where it is very easy to identify. The reused limestone from the Castle is not quite so easy to detect.

Ancient Buildings

A. F. Hancock Ltd. were general dealers and had shops in several local villages. Hancock's shop in Cross Street Castleton was just a shop with no living accommodation and it ceased to trade in 1969. The new owners converted it to a very up-market ladies clothes shop and called it The Cruck Barn. In 1977 or 1978 it was turned into a gift shop. In 1975 the adjoining property, Jasmine Cottage was purchased, part was added to the shop and part retained as living accommodation. The combined properties were sold in 1995. The Cruck Barn is now a book shop on the ground floor with a very nice dwelling on the upper floor. The bookshop has been sold recently. Planning Permission has been granted to turn it into a restaurant. (2010)

This building has a Deed dated 1620 describing the dividing up of an ancient cruck built barn, it may also have been a tithe barn. The Deed records, "On the 5th April 1620 John Mellor sold to Nicholas Staley for £9 all that one baye of and in one barne to the outside of the crocke".

Dealing with the same property 207 years later, here is a short extract from the very complicated Will of Jeremy Royse dated 5th May 1827, this Will took two years to prove; "—to my nephew Isaac Royse — also the north end of the aforementioned barn called the Tithe Barn with gardens —". Proved at Lichfield, 17th June 1829. The foregoing information gives an idea of the age of some of Castleton's buildings that are still in use.

Castleton Hall, the traditional home of The Squires of Castleton, seems to have been built over a very long period. Parts are pre 1600, others much older and some parts are said to be mentioned in the Domesday Survey. (Ref. Castleton Y.H.A.) The Hall was sold to the Y.H.A. in 1943. Until 1945 it was used to house refugees. In 1945 it opened as Castleton Youth Hostel.

Goosehill Hall, situated at the southwest corner of the village was probably built by William Torr, as referred to in his Will dated 1696. In 1817 the Vicar of Castleton the Reverend Charles Cecil Bates was living there.

There are some very old properties in the Goosehill, Waterside and Peak Cavern Walk areas. In the Waterside and Peak Cavern Walk areas adjoining "one up and one down" properties were joined to make a house. To mention just one, Rose Cottage, Waterside, its earliest deeds are dated 1736 although it is much older than that, it appears as a hovel on a painting of the Waterside area dated 1530, how old it actually is, is unknown. No doubt other dwellings in these two areas are equally old but like Rose Cottage are very much altered.

The Peak Cavern Walk and Waterside areas are where some of Castleton's poorest dwellings were built. If a lead miner could obtain a bit of land he could build a dwelling on it, usually just two rooms, "one up and one down". Land was cheap in the two areas mentioned because the surrounding hills kept the sun away for all or part of the year. The miner-builder had a bonus; he was allowed to use the limestone rock cuttings ("deads") from the lead mines that were normally thrown away.

The New Hall, now totally demolished, was more or less in the same place that Castleton Methodist Church occupies now. The New Hall was a fine building, parts of which were said to be pre 1400. New Hall Bridge spanning Peaks Hole Water at the west side of the village near the Castleton Centre is the only local reminder that this building ever existed.

There is documentary evidence and a painting proving the New Hall did exist and what a fine building it really was. Why it was abandoned remains a mystery. It was finally demolished in 1890 to make way for the Methodist Church. I often wonder if some of the dressed limestone of the Hall was reused to build the Church?

On Hollowford Lane a few metres past Tricket Bridge and just below Tricket Bridge Sough outflow was a cobbled area now totally disappeared, this is where stagecoaches and other vehicles were washed and cleaned. The Tricket Sough was excavated between 1816 and 1823 and drained the Odin Mine. The outflow into Hollowford Brook ensured there was never a shortage of water for cleaning vehicles.

Industries

About 200 metres beyond Tricket Bridge on the right hand side of Hollowford Lane is a three story building now converted to a dwelling named Candle House Farm. I can remember in the mid 1930's the ground floor was a garage, above it was the Scout Headquarters. The top floor was unsafe and was used for storage only.

Very much earlier this old building was a Chandlers Shop where tallow candles (or dips) were made for use in the mines and for commercial and domestic use. In 1820 the Tallow Chandler was John Slack, it is possible he lived in Tallow Cottage on How Lane.

The huge vats used for rendering down all kinds of fallen stock and dead animals into tallow still exist and are displayed in Castleton Methodist Church grounds.

Another Castleton industry was the making of ropes. Some of the rope was for use locally in the lead mines, by farmers and for domestic use and some taken away to be sold elsewhere. Three places in the village are known where ropes were made; these places are called "rope walks".

One was in the area of the Methodist Church and apparently not under cover. Another rope walk was in an ancient building near the northwest corner of the village car park, it is still called "The Walk". The lower part of this very long building was where the ropes were made with a dwelling above. The whole of this building is now carefully converted into a house and a car body repair workshop.

The third and most important rope-making area was inside the huge Peak Cavern entrance. Several terraces were constructed with a rope walk on each one. It was possible to make ropes up to 300 feet (about 90 metres) long on most of these walks. The cold damp atmosphere of the cavern was just right for keeping the fibres supple.

Bert Marrison was the last of the traditional rope makers; he died in 1983 aged 98. He retired from rope making in 1974 aged 89. I knew Bert personally and watched him working many times. Bert told me his great, great grandfather installed the machine he was still using. This hand-turned machine twisted the hemp or sisal fibres into a rope. Bert's ashes are interred in Peak Cavern behind a brass plaque.

Very many years ago up to around twenty families could be employed in Peak Cavern making ropes. There were hovels inside the entrance where some of the poorest people lived. The blackened roof of the cavern is mute evidence of their smoky chimneys

Obviously one of Castleton's oldest industries must be lead mining, and the richest mine in the Parish was the Odin Mine. More than likely its original name was Oden. What remains of the mine is about a mile west of the village along the Mam Tor Road to the northern end of Treak Cliff, this is where the Odin Fault is still clearly visible and where one of the entrances to the mine is located.

There is no evidence left to show whether the Romans or Saxons produced lead ore from Odin Mine but is far more likely they did than didn't. Odin Mine was one of the richest lead mines in the Castleton area. Mining records referring to the Odin Mine began in 1280 and with several unexplained gaps continued until the mine closed in 1869.

Odin Mine worked on three levels underground, extending about 2.4 Km. west from the entrance to somewhere below Rushup Edge. The total recorded amount of lead ore produced from this mine was around 40,000 tonnes. The maximum output in any one-year period was about 800 tonnes. This amount was achieved only 3 or 4 times during its 700 years working life. There is some evidence to suggest that all the lead ore mined from Odin was not declared to the Barmaster so no royalties were paid on the unrecorded production. This means the recorded 40,000 tonnes is not a true record of Odin's total output.

Like many rich lead mines, Odin Mine suffered from an excessive inflow of water. Extensive drainage work was carried out between 1711 and 1850. Knowlegates Sough was made between 1711 and 1712. This sough extended from the mine down to near Knowlegates Farm lowering the water table in the mine by about 30 metres.

Between 1816 and 1823 another sough was driven up to Odin Mine from near Tricket Bridge in Castleton, this lowered the water level another 40 metres. Because the outflow of the Odin Sough is into Hollowford Brook near Tricket Bridge this sough is often referred to as "Tricket Sough".

Altogether this drainage work gave a total of 70 metres (about 265 feet) of new ground that could be worked. What is now Knowlegates Farm was thought to be several cottages, the miners who lived there probably working at Odin Mine.

When Odin Mine was being worked, at times it became a very dangerous place to work. This was due to the presence of Slickensides, a mineral that explodes when struck with a pickaxe or iron crowbar. The story goes that when Slickensides was discovered convicts were brought in to work the mine until the danger was past. This was said locally and passed down by word of mouth. No written evidence has been found to support this story.

The Village

The Back Street or Back Lane of many English villages was the agricultural road to be used by farm animals, vehicles and machines that needed to gain access to the fields in use or under cultivation. By using this road all the mud and mess resulting from such use was kept to one road only. This meant the other village streets could be kept relatively clean.

Castleton's Back Street starts downwards from the Market Place and ends at Tricket Bridge. The road then becomes Hollowford Lane. After about half a mile the road becomes a bridle road. Some of the people living in the Mill Bridge area have had a bit of Back Street renamed Mill Bridge, this I don't agree with. Mill Bridge is an area within the village; Back Street is an ancient thoroughfare.

Along Back Street were several Folds that can best be described as small self-contained farms. What remains of the named folds along Back Street starting from Tricket Bridge are; Eades Fold, Frost Fold, Burrows Fold, Biddock Fold and Turnbull Fold. All the barns, shippens and other buildings enclosing these folds have either been converted into dwellings or demolished. Burrows Fold is the best preserved but it does have some new additions.

Tricket Gate House is on the east side of Back Street next to Tricket Bridge. It was a traditional Derbyshire Long House, part dwelling and part farm, people living at one end, animals at the other with hay and straw storage above, all under one roof. William Trecket is recorded as living there in 1455.

Some of the land belonging to Tricket Gate House was in use as a market garden until around 1972 when a small housing estate was built on it. In the early to mid 1900's Mrs Potter had her greengrocers shop and her renowned fish and chip shop in outbuildings to the west front of the house. Tricket Gate house is now very sympathetically restored as several dwellings.

Until recently two farms existed on Back Street, Bene Hill Farm at the top, it has been unused for several years. Mill Bridge Farm at the bottom was in full use until about 2000 when all the stock was moved to a new building off Hollowford Lane just above Tricket Bridge.

All the Mill Bridge Farm outbuildings and barns were then demolished and several houses built in their place. The farmhouse that fronts onto Back Street is still intact.

On the opposite side of Back Street from Tricket Gate House was a dilapidated barn, once a cotton mill. This mill was making spun cotton yarn from about 1760 to 1800. Among other things, it was probably producing wicks for the candles being made in the Chandlers Shop only about 220 metres away on Hollowford Lane. Although the cotton mill is right alongside Peaks Hole Water no evidence has been found to indicate waterpower was used to drive it. The Mill was tastefully converted to dwellings at the same time as the Mill Bridge Farm development.

Included in the Mill Bridge Farm outbuildings was a small single story building known locally as Pepper Hall, modified from Pauper Hall. This was a shelter of sorts for vagrants who were not allowed to enter the village. I have no date for this building. Starting about 2001 it was demolished together with all the outbuildings of Mill Bridge Farm. The whole area has been rebuilt to comply with current building regulations and a small modern housing complex created. A new Pauper Hall occupies the same site as the old one but it has a different use.

Squeezed in between Mill Bridge Farm House and Mill Bridge House is Mill Bridge Cottage said to be Castleton's smallest house. Little Rose Cottage on the right hand side at the bottom of Lunnons Back, Goosehill, at this time is probably the only unaltered old lead miners cottage left in the village.

Crossing Back Street near Mill Bridge House and what used to be Castleton Young Men's Institute, later on Castleton Social Centre and now offices, is an ancient lane. To the east it is called Mill Lane to the west it is known locally as The Green, both are of historic interest.

Mill Lane

Mill Lane runs from the west side of Swiss House on How Lane to Back Street and is where both the corn mill and sawmill were located, the corn mill on the south side of the lane, the sawmill on the north side, both were known to be working in the early 1400's. Both buildings still exist and are now part of Cambion, Wearnes, Hollinsworth's Ltd. electronics factory.

The water to power both mills was taken from Peaks Hole Water about 250 metres downstream from the Russett Well and quite near to Brookholme Cottage. From here the water runs along a leat to the mills. Because this water comes from underground it feels cold in summer but is comparatively warm in winter preventing it from freezing, it enabled the corn and saw mills to keep working for much longer than other mills using surface water only. The corn mill was still working in the 1930's but had closed by the end of the 1939-1945 war. At this time the mill was owned by a family named Cooper. The mill manager and miller at that time was Frank Eyre. Frank worked there until the mill closed.

I can just remember being taken by Frank's niece Gladys Eyre to see the mill working. I can also remember the sound and sight of the water rushing below a well-worn slatted platform. Together with the noise of the machinery it was rather frightening for a seven year-old child.

I moved to Castleton permanently in 1945 just after the Second World War ended. I knew Frank Eyre quite well and we were good friends. He became my grandmother's third husband. One of the things Frank told me about was how Sam Longson started his transport business.

Sam Longson's first vehicle of what was to become a very large fleet was a small flat-back lorry. Because Castleton's corn mill could keep working longer than other mills in the area (the reason is stated earlier) Sam brought corn from Chapel-en-le-Frith to be milled in Castleton.

Sam's small lorry could get to Castleton fully loaded with sacks of grain but on the way home it couldn't get back up the Mam Tor road with the same quantity. So Sam took the full load of sacks of milled grain to near the Hairpin Bend, here he unloaded about half the sacks then took the others to the top of "Ibbotson's Pinch", the last steep bit before the road levels out near Windy Knoll. (A "pinch" is a short, steep ascent)

Here Sam unloaded the sacks remaining on the lorry, he then went back for the sacks he had left at the Hairpin Bend, after loading them onto his lorry back up the Mam Tor road he went for the second time. At the top he reloaded the sacks he had left there and off he went back to Chapel-en-le-Frith with the full load of milled corn. According to Frank Eyre that is how Sam Longson's large and very respected transport business actually started.

The Green

Going west off Back Street is the lane known locally as "The Green". Only about 250 metres long the lane then turns left and narrows into a footpath. After about 20 metres the footpath reaches the Mill Leat and runs alongside it. When the path reaches the A4187 it continues on the other side of the road and follows Peaks Hole Water to Stones Bottom.

The Leat goes under the road and continues behind some of the cottages on the Island to the place where it leaves Peaks Hole Water. (The Island is an area surrounded by water, the river on one side, the leat on the other side.)

At the end of The Green and on the right of the footpath was a triangular field with several buildings located in the southern corner. The triangular field was Church of England property; the last tenant was Frank Eyre.

When it was put up for sale it could have been purchased by Castleton Parish Council for a very reasonable price. They didn't buy it but Derbyshire County Council did. They used the buildings as a garage and workshops. Part of the field was used as a salt storage area. The rest of the field was leased to Chapel-en-le-Frith Rural District Council who made it into a car park. The small single story building on the east side of the building complex was one of Castleton's ancient blacksmiths shops.

At the re-organization of local authorities the R.D.C. became High Peak Borough Council, The D.C.C. leased the buildings to an industrial thermometer manufacturer, the salt tip moved away and the whole field became a car park. Castleton car park is the second highest earner in the administrative area of the H.P.B.C.

All this income would have been Castleton's if the Parish Council had not been so negative in their outlook and missed the golden opportunity of buying the field and buildings.

In 2000 or 2001 the buildings referred to were taken over by the Peak District National Park Authority. A partnership was agreed between the P.D.N.P. and Castleton Historical Society. The Society had a Museum founded by Geof. Darnborough and housed in the Methodist Church schoolroom. The Methodists needed the Schoolroom for their own use and wanted the museum to leave. With the co-operation of the Society and with the grants available to Museums but not to the P.D.N.P. a first class Information Centre and Museum was created.

All the buildings were carefully refurbished and extended so the Information Centre and the Museum together are named The Castleton Centre. The whole complex was officially opened on the 5th July 2004 by Mr Brian Blessed. The Castleton Centre is a real asset to the village.

The Green Continued

Starting along The Green from Back Street, on the right is what remains of Eades Fold. After Eades Fold and Eades Cottage the Green is alongside Peaks Hole Water.

Starting on the left hand side of the Green is the side of the Ramblers Rest, a fair sized property fronting onto Back Street, obviously affluent enough in its early days to have a small stage coach, the now in-filled archway to the coach-house is clearly visible.

The next building, now demolished, on the left was attached to the Ramblers Rest, I remember it only as Bill Jackson's paint store, Bill and later on his son Teddy were the local painters and decorators. Bill was renowned for his ability to realistically "grain" wood with paint.

Also on the left and demolished long ago was one of Castleton's many Vicarages. This Vicarage and its gardens were bounded on the south by the Mill Leat, on the north by The Green and on the west by about 20 metres of the footpath that is then alongside the Leat. The whole area remained church property until it was sold as building land in the 1960's. Two detached houses have now been built on this land.

The last Vicar to live in this Vicarage was probably the Reverend Edward Bagshaw, Vicar of Castleton from 1723 to 1769. He had a large private income but lost it all in the "South Seas Bubble". He left this Vicarage because, he said, "it is very damp and affecting my health". Whether he left Castleton or moved to another Vicarage in Castleton is not clear.

In 1845 the Reverend Charles Cecil Bates reported to the Bishop "that a barn (now demolished) occupied the site of the former Parsonage". Mr. Bates was Vicar of Castleton from 1817 to 1853.

The Coffins Way

Something else of historic interest in this area is the Coffin's Way. At the western end of The Green is a small area called Foxhills. It includes what was the old Vicarage garden, a bit of The Green and a bit of the land and barn on the other side of the river. (Peaks Hole Water)

Crossing Foxhills, The Green and the river at this point was the "Coffins Way", an ancient bridle path from Edale to St. Edmund's Church in Castleton. It crossed The Green about 40 metres west of Eades Cottage. In later years the bridle way became a public footpath.

How long ago I don't know, but it must be very many years ago, anyone who died in Edale was brought over on the Coffins Way to be buried in Castleton. A clue to the date is that the Edale Chapel (C of E) was built in 1633 and Consecrated in 1634. We can only wonder whether the dead were brought to Castleton prior to 1634 because there was no Consecrated building or ground in Edale.

Anyway, the coffins (or we suspect just the bodies for ease of transporting) came via Hollins Cross and the Lydgate onto Hollowford Lane passing behind Mill Bridge Farm until reaching the river, Peaks Hole Water, where a ford was used to cross it.

I can remember the ford being used to gain access to the barn and the land on the north side of Peaks Hole Water. I also remember alongside the ford was a two-plank footbridge with a wire handrail, no doubt provided for people who wanted to cross the river without getting their feet wet.

After crossing the river and The Green the Coffins Way continued across what was the old Vicarage garden, over the Leat and over two walled gardens until it reached what is now Rose Cottage Café. A passageway through this building was used to get onto Cross Street. This passageway could not be closed day or night.

On the south side of Cross Street is another passageway between Castleton Gift Shop and the Toll Bar Gift Shop giving access to St. Edmund's Graveyard and the end of the Coffins Way, but not quite the end of the story. Set in the wall of the Toll Bar was a small oblong opening where a toll was paid to allow the coffin into the Graveyard, hence the name of the shop. The now blocked up opening is still easy to find.

In the 1970's An Act of Parliament closed the Right of Way from The Green over the gardens and through Rose Cottage to Cross Street. It is very interesting to speculate, which was there first, the Coffins Way, or the building that is now Rose Cottage Café? Originally it may have been the old cruck barn with a doorway on either side. One may also speculate the coffins (or more likely the bodies) left Hollowford Lane and used the bridle path to the west of Back Street to ensure the coffins (or bodies) were not exposed to public view.

More about the Village

Continuing upwards along Back Street and now on the short bit of the old A625 we come to Causeway House, no doubt one of the oldest houses in Castleton, it was originally cruck built and has two and a half pairs of crucks still standing. I have no date yet for this property but it must be very old.

Behind Causeway House were farm buildings including barns, a shippon and slaughter-house. All these buildings have been tastefully converted to other uses. A butcher's shop was housed in the building that is now Causeway House Crafts.

Education in Castleton

Next door to Causeway House is Castleton C. of E. Primary School opened in 1863. Previously schools of one sort or another were held in various places in the village, here is a list of some of them, possibly incomplete.

It seems the earliest school was pioneered by the Bagshawe family in 1687. The first known schoolmaster, Stephen Hall. 1721. Richard conveyed to trustees a newly erected building called the Schoolhouse.

1751. Reverend Edward Bagshawe's Parochial Returns mention an Endowed School of 46 children.
1819 First known site of Schoolhouse appears to be the premises in the Market Place where William Dakin the Schoolmaster lived.
1819. Robert Hall probably succeeded William Dakin who was over 70. Mr Dakin was Schoolmaster from 1819 to 1855, he moved to the premises known as the Poor Houses of Castleton.
1841. Frances Hall assisted her father as a teacher at the School.
1835 to 1851, the Armstrong's Academy (a Dame School) and a school up Goosehill run by Septimus Needham were also in the village.
In 1855 Robert Hall died and plans for a National School were formulated.
8th December 1863 Trust Deeds were signed and the present School was opened.
1871. The first known Schoolmaster was William Crouch.
1878. The date of the first known School Logbook.

Back Street Continued

Over the road and opposite the school is a wooden single-storey shed attached to a well-built, dressed limestone, two storied building. It was built as a Primitive Methodist Chapel. The Methodists moved elsewhere and the Chapel was sold to George Boam and Sons. They established a mineral water factory in the Chapel so it became known as "The Pop Shop". Eventually the Boam's sold out to the Ackroyd brothers (John and Henry) who continued the business until the mineral water business closed completely.

The Pop Shop, as it had by then become known, was used by the Kelsey's, (Drury and his son John) as a furniture store. Their furniture shop was in Swiss House on How Lane. When Kelsey's moved their storage facilities from the Pop Shop to the Peak Pavilion the Pop Shop was sold to The British Speleological Association. (B.S.A.) and it became their headquarters. In 1974 The B.S.A. merged with The Cave Research Group. (C.R.G.) All their records etc. are now stored in the Pop Shop. It is still the headquarters of Cavers, Cave Divers and Pot-holders and the Society is now The Technical Speleological Group. (T.S.G.)

Still on Back Street, just past the Nags Head Hotel car park (the east side) are two semi-detached houses; they are built on the site of an ancient barn that ended its days as the North Western Road Car Company's 'bus garage.

This reminds me to record that the North Western Road Car Company's Manchester to Sheffield 'bus that arrived in Castleton at about 4-45pm and left for Sheffield at 5-00pm parked in Back Street alongside the Nags Head Hotel. Letters could be posted on this 'bus.

By starting from the Nags Head Hotel the North Western Road Car Company's 'bus service continued Sam Hardy's horse drawn Mail Coach service between Sheffield and Manchester. In 1829 the Manchester to Sheffield via Castleton stagecoach was called "The Wellington". I suspect Sam had one coach in each direction every day. The 'bus company ran five buses in each direction every day, the number of busses running each day was increased during the high season.

In the early days of this service 'busses were not so powerful or reliable as they are now. A 'bus going from Castleton to Manchester with a full load of passengers would have to stop below the Hairpin Bend where all the able bodied passengers had to get off and walk up to the Blue John Cavern. Similarly if the 'bus on its way to Sheffield had to stop to set down or pick up passengers at the Millstone Inn, with a full load of people it couldn't start off again. This meant all the able bodied had to walk up to the Surprise View. I remember very well this happening to me in the mid 1930's

We are now getting near the top of Back Street where on the left is another very old building called Lodge Cottage. Almost opposite Lodge Cottage is Stone Trough Cottage, once a shippon with hay storage above. There were two more cottages behind Stone Trough Cottage, they were demolished in the 1950's or '60's.

This is where we enter the Market Place On the left is what remains of Biddock Fold and on the right is a cottage that was probably Castleton's first Post Office. Next door to the Post Office were the Nags Head Inn's stables with stalls for several horses. The stables are now converted into two cottages. Together with the old Post Office this row of dwelling are called "Nags Head Cottages" and are numbered 1, 2, and 3.

Attached to the Nags Head Cottages is Werneth House where Colin and Reina Johnson used to live. After Colin died Reina eventually moved into Peveril Close and Reina's daughter Fiona Money and her husband moved in. Werneth House is probably two cottages knocked together.

The north wall of Werneth House is all that is left of The Hole in the Wall another of Castleton's old inns. When it closed it became a house. As far as I can discover after the Inn closed probably the first person to occupy this property or at least part of it, was a man called "Daft Sammy", he was an unofficial guide to Castleton. Sammy was not as daft as he acted, he had the ability to extract money from visitors in such a way that it seemed to them just the right thing to do was to reward him for his efforts.

The last person to live in what was The Hole in the Wall was a lady called Miss Brown. When she died the house became derelict and eventually a ruin. Colin and Reina Johnson bought the ruin, had it demolished and built a garage and made a yard in its place.

If you enter St. Edmund's Graveyard through the main gateway on Castle Street, look immediately to the right and see a high wall built of limestone going east for several metres to a corner where the wall turns south for a few more metres. This is all that is left of The Hole in the Wall. Still visible are the walled up windows that would look out onto the graveyard.

Reina and Colin Johnson gave St. Edmund's Church a corner of their yard on which a small garage was built. This garage remains church property.

On Castle Street are the George Hotel and the Castle Hotel. A very long time ago the names of these two hostelries were reversed. The landlord of the then Castle Inn moved to the much larger George Inn and decided to take the name of his Inn with him so the Castle became the George and the George became the Castle and so it has remained ever since.

There have been several Vicarages in Castleton; four of them were in Castle Street. The oldest of them is Castleton Hall once occupied by the Vicar of Castleton. Cryer House the next oldest was occupied by the Reverend Samuel Cryer, Vicar from 1644 to 1697. Farran House was the residence of the Reverend Frederick Farran, Vicar from 1780 to 1817.

In 1903 the Reverend W. H. Shawcross produced a booklet called "Castleton and its Old Inhabitants" covering the period from AD 1645 to AD 1837. It contains some very interesting information. Its price when published, 10d. (4.5p)

The Reverend Edmund Wasteneys Hobson, Vicar from 1910 to 1935, was the first Vicar to live in what became the fourth Castle Street Vicarage. His first Vicarage was Castleton Hall, from there he moved to a house in How Lane. (Probably Holme Dene) From How Lane he moved back into Castle Street and into the house called Nether House right opposite the main entrance to the Churchyard, This was after

the death of Colonel Moore in 1932. The Parsonage Board purchased this private house and made it a Vicarage. Mr Hobson was the first Vicar to use it and the purchase price was £750-00. The Reverend Michael Francis Collier was the last Vicar of Castleton and the last Vicar to reside in Nether House. It is now owned by and is part of Castleton Youth Hostel.

In Nether house's 48 years as a Vicarage the most notorious Vicar to live in it was the Reverend Joseph William Haydock, Vicar from 1950 to 1957. One Garland Day, shortly after the Garland had been mounted on top of the church tower, Mr Haydock climbed up inside the tower, out onto the roof, removed the Garland from its pinnacle and threw it down to the ground where it smashed to bits. The following morning when it was discovered what had happened to the Garland the village was in an uproar and Mr Haydock was not very popular for quite some time. He said "the Garland is pagan and ought not to be put on the church".

The Reverend Michael Collier was Vicar of Castleton from 1975 to 1980. In 1980 the Parishes of Castleton and Hope were combined and Michael was forced to move from Castleton to the Hope Vicarage. Michael was Vicar of Castleton and Hope until he retired in 1997. We are now the Combined Benefice of Castleton, Hope and Bradwell. The Priest-in-Charge at this time (2007) is The Reverend Ian Davis, he lives in the new Vicarage in Bradwell. The first incumbent of the Combined Benefice was the Reverend Peter Bowles. (1998 to 2003). Edale is due to join the Combined Benefice in 2011.

How Lane

How lane is an enigma that gives me cause for much thought. Time-wise it is in two parts; From Back Street to Mill Lane it is old, old enough to be within the Town Ditch and to have a cruck built dwelling in it. From Mill Lane to Spittal Bridge the buildings are mostly Victorian.

Why has the old part of How Lane been given a persons name while all the other roads in the village have descriptive names? I.E. Back Street, Castle Street, Bargate, Buxton Road, etc.

If its name has been changed, when was it changed and what was its previous name? The Reverend Shawcross's booklet "Castleton and its Old Inhabitants" 1645 to 1837 mentions How Lane.

On How Lane, behind and just east of Fern Cottage and where the service bus station is now was another set of farm buildings. The shippon had standings for eight or ten milk cows with hay storage above them. It had cattle food preparation facilities in front of the animals, enabling them to be fed and watered from the front. This is a much easier and safer method than feeding from behind. I know because I did both. As well as space for food preparation to the front of the animals there was a large space right up to the roof for hay or straw storage

Attached to the south side of the shippon was a stable for one horse. This meant the stable was on the roadside with no footpath between road and stable. I can remember Frank Eyre's huge and powerful Shire horse Prince being stabled there. Prince carried the Garland King for many years.

The last dwelling on the north side of How Lane before Spittal Bridge and now named Spittal Bridge Bungalow, is what was the second of Castleton's two blacksmiths shops. In 1910 it was a corrugated iron building that started life as a "Tin Town" dwelling in Birchinlea. "Tin Town" was a conglomeration of corrugated iron buildings where workmen and their families lived when they were making the Howden and Derwent reservoirs.

The old corrugated iron blacksmith's shop has been extended to make a bungalow and the whole building tastefully clad over on the outside with stonework.

. Slippery Stones and the River Route

Starting from the Market Place just to the left of Castleton Hall is a short steep road called The Stones, abbreviated from Slippery Stones. The road is referred to in the 1761 church records of that time as follows; Baptism of George, son of John Hall, Slippery Stones. This road was too dangerous for horses and carts to use so a safer, but most unusual route was used to get to Stones Bottom, Waterside and Goosehill.

To make deliveries to the Stones Bottom, Waterside and Goosehill areas horse drawn vehicles entered the river, Peaks Hole Water, down a ramp from the Buxton Road on the west side of Newhall Bridge, they then travelled along the river bed to another ramp near Carlton House. This is where they would leave the river. The same route was probably used for the return journey, but not necessarily, empty carts being pulled uphill is not so dangerous.

When the river was being used as a road the weir that is about 50 metres downstream from Carlton House did not exist. It was made in the late 1960's or early 1970's to raise the level of the river so that a pond could be made in the garden of Millstream Close. This very nice house was built in 1960 in what was originally Castleton Hall's walled vegetable garden. The walled up doorway from the Hall to the vegetable garden is still very much in evidence. Millstream Close has changed hands several times since it was built.

Chapel-en-le-Frith Rural District Council constructed the weir at public expense when Councillor Eric Marples was Chairman of the Council. Mrs Sylvia Dervin (nee Clarke) who lived nearby at Brookholme Cottage remembers just as I do that the weir did not previously exist and the riverbed was a continuous pitched gradient to prevent the horses using it from slipping. The pitching is still in situ below the weir. Several years ago the river was deepened above the weir and the pitching removed. I have no knowledge of when the river route was abandoned.

Continuing the history of the river route we will look at the riverside wall opposite Brookholme Cottage's boundary wall where two gritstone gateposts with a limestone infill between them can be seen.

If one looks at Brookholme Cottage's boundary wall opposite the gate posts in the riverside wall you will see the lower of two doorways, to the left of which can be seen quite clearly an older wall head.

Together with the doorway this would have provided an opening the same size as the one in the riverside wall enabling goods to be delivered or collected from the barn and shippon by vehicles using the river route.

The barn and shippon were attached end-on to the farmhouse which at that time was probably an Inn as well as a farm; its probable name was The Wagon and Horses. If this was the case there would be two inns in the village with the same name. In 1820 John Hall was the Innkeeper.

When this property was divided the farmhouse/inn became a dwelling known as Waterside Cottage, the barn and shippon became Brookholme Cottage.

Old documents kept in the Public Records Office in Lichfield suggest Inns and alehouses were quite common in Castleton: this is not unusual in mining areas.

The second opening and ramp where vehicles left the river is in just the right place to deliver and collect from the Inn/farmhouse.

Recently discovered in this area is what is left of Bradgate Fold. It can reasonably be assumed that this was an ancient farm complex including what are now Waterside Cottage, Brookholme Cottage, Greystones and Douglas House.

Brookholme Cottage's boundary wall is in fact quite interesting and tells a story of many alterations. A few metres below the delivery opening referred to is another walled up doorway with an ashlar lintel still in situ. There is a small walled up window and signs of various alterations to the wall itself.

In the same wall and just to the right of a doorway leading into Millstream Close is a small brick in-filled area; this is where a post-box used to be. I personally posted letters in it. The doorway gives access to Millstream Close and to the Mill Leat shuttle or sluice gate, this was used to control the flow of water to the corn and saw mills. Just outside the doorway is where water leaves the river (Peaks Hole Water) and enters the leat.

Cambion, Wearnes, Hollingworth, Ltd. who now own the mill buildings, still have a right of way to the shuttle through this doorway and to control the amount of water entering the Mill Leat from the river.

After the ramp down to the river by New Hall Bridge was removed a flat area remained just behind the parapet of the bridge. Eventually a very decorative Victorian cast iron urinal was erected on it. The urinal had no piped water for flushing or cleaning and it drained straight into the river. It was demolished in the late 1960's or 1970's as being unhygienic!! It should have been preserved if not used.

Stones Bottom

From the early 1900's what is now Douglas House was the Douglas Museum owned by Mr Randolph Douglas and his wife Hetty. Randolph was a very skilled model maker and locksmith, he was an escapologist and for several years an assistant of the Great Houdini, an escapologist of world renown. Randolph's stage name was Randini.

The Douglas Museum was described by Randolph as "A House of Wonders". This was quite true; the whole house was full of interesting things collected by Hetty and Randolph on their travels. There were locks and keys, African native spears and shields together with rocks, minerals and all kinds of cave formations collected on their many potholing excursions. There was a considerable number of tiny models Randolph had made. After the Sheffield Blitz Randolph was employed by many people and firms to open their safes damaged by bombs etc.

After Randolph's death Hetty continued to run the museum until she passed on. Eventually the Derbyshire County Council purchased most of the Douglas Collections and dispersed them to various museums. Some of the locks, keys and other interesting things can be seen in the Castleton Historical Society's museum housed in the Castleton Centre.

Another interesting building in this area is Carlton House, now an antique shop called Carlton Emporium. Long ago it was just a two-story building. In Victorian times a Bolton solicitor named Rooke Pennington used the building as a museum.

Rooke Pennington collected the remains from many ancient burial sites with very little thought of recording his finds or doing any archaeological research whatsoever.

His finds were exhibited in his museum where he had several human skulls and bones together with various artefacts gathered from all over Derbyshire.

When Rooke Pennington left Castleton and returned to Bolton he took all the contents of his museum away with him and they haven't been seen since.

After Rooke Pennington departed John Tym occupied Carlton House. He added a third story and had a museum, shop and workshop all under the one roof. John Tym's speciality was cutting and polishing Blue John Stone into ornaments and jewellery, these he sold in his shop. He was also a mineral dealer who bought and sold rocks, minerals and fossils including fine specimens and collections of minerals and fossils.

John Tym's masterpiece was a most beautiful Blue John Stone window. It proved to be the largest Blue John Stone window ever made. When John Tym was appointed curator of the Vernon Park Museum in Stockport he left Castleton taking his window with him.

He enlarged the window and erected it in the Vernon Park Museum where it can still be seen. When Bert Marrison was alive he told me he could remember seeing the Blue John Stone window in the single window opening of the top story on the north side of Carlton House. From this top floor is where visitors to Tymes Museum would be able to view the window.

When they actually took over Carlton House I don't know; but I do remember Mrs Minnie Brett and her daughter Violet living there and running the shop. This was around 1934 to 1939. Sometime in the late 1940's they sold off the shop stock and the fixtures and fittings.

The mahogany shop counter, the postcards and various other stock items found their way up to Treak Cliff Cavern where the counter is still in use. I have the very early model Avery sweet scales they used in the shop. These scales are now included in my collection of Salter Spring Balances and other weighing scales.

On the opposite side of the road from Carlton House is what is left of a narrow passage called Treacle Street, said to be altered from Tickle Street. On the left side of this passageway there were two or three very small cottages. They were reputed to be the "Red Light" area of Castleton. There may have been another two small cottages on the other side of the passage, now part of "The Cottage" (Bert Marrison's house)

A Bit About Herbert (Bert) Marrison

On the right hand side of the same passage is a detached house again probably two or three miners cottages knocked together and more than likely part of the "Red Light" area. This house is where Bert Marrison lived with his wife and daughter. The right hand side of the house was Bert's workshop with an arched doorway entry. Bert called his workshop "The Natty".

Almost opposite "The Natty" is a small odd shaped building. What it was for originally I don't know. I do remember Bert selling bicycles and motorcycles, spare parts and all manner of things associated with this trade from this shop. Some of the ropes he made in Peak Cavern were sold here. Eventually Bert's daughter Ruby fitted it out and turned it into a hair dressing shop.

Another of Bert's enterprisers was running a taxi. If I tell you Bert's taxi was held together with string you may think I'm joking but I'm not. The rear doors did close after a fashion but had to be secured by a thin rope across the car from one door handle to the other. The near side front door didn't shut at all; it had a rope and spring from the door handle to the handle that opened the windscreen. This kept the door only semi shut, as the car moved along it flapped about like a loose tin sheet in a wind. The only door to shut properly was the boot lid!

In 1942 Cyril Adamson and I hired Bert and his taxi to take us to Hatfield to see Cyril's parents and me to see my grandparents, a round trip of about 100 miles.

The first intimation we had of what the trip was going to be like was joining the main road on the Nags Head Corner this is where we had to stop. The way Bert managed to stop his taxi is interesting; on the dashboard was an ordinary electric light switch, this was the ignition switch. As the place where we needed to stop approached Bert switched of the ignition causing the engine to act as a brake. At the last minute Bert switched on the ignition and as soon as the engine fired Bert put out the clutch and applied the brakes which were almost none existent.

Using this method we navigated through Sheffield, Rotherham, Conisborough and Doncaster, twice! It was a most hair-raising journey but we never failed to stop nor did the engine fail to start. The nearest we got to coming to grief was on the way home at the junction of Attercliffe Road and Staniforth Road. We were following a tram car that slowed down as we approached the junction so Bert pulled out to pass it on the outside. Unfortunately another tram was coming in the other direction; Bert couldn't stop so the oncoming tram had to. How we managed to squeeze between the two trams only God knows. After a five minute swearing session all Bert said was "I thought that tram was turning left down Staniforth Road.

Bert's taxi service ended some years later when he was found using red coloured petrol in the car, he was fined £40-00 and had his licence withdrawn. Red petrol was for agricultural tractors and stationary engines only.

After Bert's death and his daughter Ruby had given up hairdressing and moved south the building was sold and it became a store. To perpetuate Bert Marrison's memory it is called "The Old Ropemakers Shop.

Dolly and Teddy

Next door to "The Natty" was Teddy and Dolly Medwell's greengrocery shop and house. Teddy was the village Postman, his delivery round was on foot and could be over 30 miles every day depending on how many outlying farms he had to visit with the second post. Teddy was St. Edmund's Sexton, Verger, Bell Ringer and Clock Winder. He delivered in his wheel-barrow the fruit and vegetable orders Dolly had taken earlier in the day. Teddy was a very busy man but always found time for a few pints every day and not always after work!

As well as looking after the shop Dolly went around the village taking orders from some of the cafes and most of the hotels where she would usually partake of a tot of whisky!

Most of the mothers with babies in the village used take them to Dolly's Shop to be weighed on the potato scales. The babies were put into its large container and given an orange to suck while they were being weighed. Teddy died in May 1969 aged 68. Dolly died in July 2003, aged 101.

Blue John Stone

I think this is a good place to say a bit about the history of Blue John Stone, the mineral that created an industry covering quite a wide area that started in the 18th century and is still continuing today.

Blue John Stone is a very rare variety of banded fluorspar; (Modern name, Fluorite) it's basic or background colours vary from almost colourless to a dull yellow. The bands of beautiful colours vary from blue to purple and show clearly the angular pattern of fluorspar's cubic crystal system. This illustrates clearly the colours are due to an inclusion within the crystal lattice and not a compound with the fluorspar.

First we must dispel the myth of any Roman involvement with Blue John Stone as an ornamental stone, they would not know how to treat it with resin as a binding agent. The Romans did use perfumed resins on some of their very expensive drinking vessels called Vasa Murrhine. These Loving Cups were carved by hand out of coloured fluorspar that came from Persia and was known as Murrhine.

The Romans didn't have lathes for turning stone, wood or metal and all the Blue John Stone ornaments I have seen in many places have all been turned work and not carved entirely by hand as are the rare and valuable Roman drinking vessels. They are referred to in the writings of the Roman historian Pliny. Some of these cups look a bit like Blue John Stone but they were hand carved in Persia from a very hard fluorite mined there and Pliny documents them very clearly.

We must remember the name Blue John wasn't used until around 1766. In the ornamental trade the early references to this rare and beautiful stone were Derbyshire Spar and Derby Drop. It was the miners of the stone who called it Derby Drop.

Another very important thing we must remember is that it is not possible to cut and polish Blue John Stone into ornaments or jewellery unless it is treated with resin. Whoever discovered this vital process was the person who enabled the Blue John Stone industry to start. There isn't any clue as to who discovered the resin bonding process.

Considerable recent research into Blue John Stone, its history and its uses has revealed that it was known about and was being used for ornaments and jewellery much earlier than was previously realised.

Celia Fiennes in her book "A Tour Round Britain" dated 1697 mentioned seeing Azure Spar in Derbyshire, in 1700 Charles Leigh mentioned seeing Azurine and Sapphirine spar in Castleton, both obviously referring to what became Derbyshire Spar and what we know now as Blue John Stone. Neither mentioned seeing ornaments so we assume they saw only rough pieces.

In the mid 1700's reference was made of Spar coming from Old Millers Mine and later on from one lower down on Traye Cliffe front. This describes what we know now as the exit and entrance to Treak Cliff Cavern. The higher tunnel, possibly Old Millers Mine, is the cavern exit; the lower 1750 tunnel is the cavern entrance.

In 1709 or 1710 lead miners were working Waterhull Mine now thought to be part of the Blue John Cavern. This is assuming Waterhull Mine and Waterhull Pipe are one and the same. This is very debatable as there is no proof. Obviously the miners were after lead ore because Blue John Stone was not in use at that early time and the natural waterworn chambers of Blue John Cavern were undiscovered.

Around the 1740's the Blue John Stone industry must have gone ahead fairly quickly. Old Millers Mine (Treak Cliff Cavern) was known to be producing Blue John Stone in 1750. By 1765 Henry Watson alone had 16 mines working on Treak Cliff, the Barmaster's records show he had 16 pairs of stowes erected on Traye Cliffe. (stowes are the simple winding gear erected over the mine shaft and show the mine is owned and being worked) By 1770 there were thought to be at least 25 mines working on the one hill. Realising its potential in the late 1760's Mathew Boulton tried to buy the whole of Treak Cliff and to corner the Blue John Stone market but nobody was prepared to sell.

The first vague reference to Blue John Stone being used in the ornamental trade was in 1743 when Henry Watson claims to have made the very first Derbyshire Spar vases for Lord Duncannon. We have no proof that it was Blue John Stone.

By 1770 there were about 30 firms in Castleton, Buxton, Bakewell, Ashford in the Water, Matlock, Matlock Bath and Derby cutting and polishing Blue John Stone. The hey-day of the industry was from about 1760 to about 1870.

Within this period the most important workers of Blue John Stone were Henry Watson and his nephew White Watson, Matthew Boulton, Woodruff's of Buxton, James Shore, William Adam, John Vallance, John Platt, Joseph and Thomas Hall of Derby who eventually became Brown, Son and Mawe. This is the John Mawe who died on October 26th 1829 and has a marble memorial Tablet on the south wall of St. Edmund's Church in Castleton. The Browns were related by marriage to the Halls of Castleton.

One might suggest Blue John Stone attained the height of fashion in 1771 when King George III ordered from Matthew Boulton and Thomas Wright an Ormolu and Blue John Stone clock. Matthew Boulton made the Blue John Stone panels and the Ormolu decorations Thomas Wright made the clockworks. Later on Matthew Boulton added two candelabra and two cassolets to make a full garniture with the Clock. The very ornate clock is still in Buckingham Palace and was exhibited in the Queen's Gallery in 2003. The rest of the garniture was not exhibited with the clock.

From the mid 1700's Blue John Stone was increasingly used for interior decorative work. It was used in all kinds of situations and buildings. All sizes of ornaments were made; some hollowed out, some left solid then decorated with ormolu. Blue John Stone was also used for fireplace surrounds, clocks, windows and inlay work of all kinds. In Victorian times it started to be used for jewellery. From the 1930's Blue John Stone became more and more popular in jewellery. From pre the 1939-1945 war and to about 1970 it was mostly silver mounted. From the 1970's onwards gold mounted Blue John Stone became more fashionable, as it still is now. (November 2010)

In the early 1920's Harry Grant and Sons of St. Marychurch in Devon purchased 20 tons of Blue John Stone and used it for vases, inlay work and jewellery. Mr Charles Lewis who worked at Hope Station remembered the two ten-ton wagons being dispatched from the goods yard.

He also remembers someone saying "why put a bit in the bottom of two wagons, why not put it all into one" not knowing how heavy Blue John Stone really is. In fact one cubic foot of Blue John Stone weighs 183 pounds or about 83 kilograms.

Later on one of Harry Grant's employees, Fred Crute, set up on his own and started another firm in St. Marychurch called Devon Art Stoneworks, they also used Blue John Stone for ornamental purposes. Fred and his son Berkeley were both very skilled turners.

John Royse, the first Lessee of Treak Cliff Cavern when it was opened to the public in 1935 was a skilled turner of Blue John Stone bowls and small ornaments: Large pieces of rough stone were already almost non existent. John Royse's workshop was at the top of the Stones. (where the fish and chip shop is now)

After completing his Military Service in 1949 my friend and colleague Cyril Adamson came back to work with me at Treak Cliff Cavern. We were both miners and workers of Blue John Stone. Cyril became one of the most skilful turners, cutters and polishers of Blue John Stone in recent times. He was also very skilled at repair work. Cyril died in 2005.

Cyril excelled in the repair and restoration of all sorts of Blue John Stone ornaments, fireplaces, inlay work and jewellery. Fortunately he passed on some of his skills to Peter Sharp who works at Treak Cliff Cavern.

Castleton's first and richest Blue John Stone mine was Old Millers Mine (now Treak Cliff Cavern) and was known to be producing Blue John Stone in 1750. This mine still produces about half a ton every year. In the 1760's the price of rough Blue John Stone at the mine was £5-15-6 per ton. (£5-78)

The total output of all the mines around 1750 was about 14 tons a year. Production increased as Blue John Stone became more fashionable. For instance, in 1769, 80 tons were advertised for sale by auction.

Historically the most productive mines were Old Millers Mine, now Treak Cliff Cavern, Waterhull Pipe?, now Blue John Cavern and the Old Tor Mine on the north side of Winnats Pass. Eventually all these mines were producing considerable amounts of Blue John Stone. Treak Cliff Cavern and Blue John Cavern are the only mines still producing Blue John Stone 2010.

Each vein of Blue John Stone has distinctive colours and patterns, 14 of the veins were given names. Giving names to some of the veins is said to be an original marketing ploy by the early users of Blue John Stone to popularise it. There are at least three times as many actual veins as named veins; the un-named veins were passed off as the nearest match to a named vein. The richest vein of Blue John Stone ever found was Millers Vein in Treak Cliff Cavern then called Old Millers Mine and this was where Castleton's unique industry actually started.

As already mentioned the earliest names given to this rare and beautiful mineral were Derbyshire Spar and Derby Drop. In the 1760's Matthew Boulton became interested in using Blue John Stone. His early work was solid ornaments embellished with elaborate ormolu fittings and later on with clockworks as well. He used the cheap dark yellow resin to treat the Blue John Stone, this made the body colour of the ornaments yellowish but still with the beautiful coloured banding.

Some of the ormolu embellishments Matthew Boulton used on his ornaments he made in his workshops in Birmingham and Sheffield. Other fittings and most of the clockworks were imported from France. The French obviously saw the yellowish stone with the coloured banding; in our language they would call it a blue and yellow stone, in their own language, bleu et jaune. So the name we have today for our beautiful Blue John Stone is said to be a corruption of the French for blue and yellow.

St. Edmund's Church.

St. Edmund's Church with quite a large Graveyard around it occupies a central position in the village. The oldest gravestone we can find is dated 1520 or possibly 1570, it is very weathered and difficult to read.

It is thought a building has occupied this site since Saxon times. The present building, now very much altered, was probably the Garrison Church of the early Castle of the Peake.

A redeeming feature of this rather plain Church is the Chancel Arch. Said to have been built between 1042 and 1066 it is thought to be one of Edward the Confessor's experimental buildings and built in the Norman style in use at that time.

Expert opinion suggests the base or plinth of the Font is Saxon, the top Norman. There is a Saxon Piscina located near the front of the church on the south side behind the present choir stalls.

There was a gallery at the back of the church still in use in 1817. It is recorded in that year six seats in the gallery were offered for sale. Robert Needham for the Rowter Estate purchased seat number one, the purchase price was £6-11-0. (£6-55) The value of all six seats was £31-15-0. (£31-75)

Apparently the gallery was removed at the same time as the organ was installed, both things done without Faculties being obtained. This caused a lot of trouble for the Vicar and the two Church Wardens, both of whom lived outside the Parish. The Vicar at this time was the Reverend Henry Smith Warleigh, Vicar of Castleton from 1879 to 1892. The installation date on the brass plate fixed to the organ is 1882.

The old oak box pews are another redeeming feature within this ancient church and are still in reasonable condition. Many still have the names of the people who "owned" them carved into the woodwork.

There are 13 pews on the north side of the church and 7 long pews and 7 short ones on the south side. The short pews on the south side are from the Oliver Cromwell period. (1649 to 1660) The long pews on the same side are from the Charles I period. (1625 to 1649) The north side pews and the carved Altar Chairs are from the Charles II period. (1660 to 1685. It is interesting to note the Charles II period pew doors are ornately carved whereas the Cromwellian ones are very plain. Since the extensive restorations in 1968 several of the pew doors are not in their original place

On the fronts of some of the choir stalls are some strap work panels. These are all that remains of some Elizabethan period pews (1558 to 1603.) St. Edmund's church has one Kemp stained glass window. Kemp died in 1907.

The lower part of the church tower is of the Early English period, dated around 1220, the top storey of the tower is of the Perpendicular period, dated around 1500. The tower houses a peal of 8 bells. They are the only full peal of bells left that were made by Harrison's (no known relationship) of Barton upon Humber. The tower clock was made by Smiths of Derby and dated 1887, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Year.

The clock is now automatically wound, but still manually regulated. The striking and chiming mechanism is computerised and the clock still keeps good time.

The Army Camp

In the summertime around 1900 but only for a few years Castleton had an influx of several hundred Territorial Army soldiers. A very large number of tents were erected in several fields some on the south side of the Winnats Road and some on the north side of the Mam Tor road. Two or three sectional wooden huts acted as headquarters, cookhouse, showers etc. All the water for this large undertaking was pumped by hand directly from the Russet Well. Possibly, but not certainly, the last camp was held in 1905.

Winnats Pass

I am sure several people will remember the telephone posts strung with their many wires going through the Winnats Pass just as we remember the underground oil pipeline following the same route through the Pass in the mid to late 1960's. The pipeline takes oil to and from Immingham to Liverpool.

The telephone poles and wires were eventually removed as being unsightly in this bit of the new Peak District National Park. The telephone lines were recently reinstated, but they can't be seen. I was told by one of the BT engineers the cable carrying the lines is inside the pipeline!

The Winnats Pass has now a most unsightly appearance, in fact worse than it ever was with the telephone posts and when cars were allowed to park off-road on the smooth grassy areas.

Because of current Health and Safety laws, all the loose rocks on the sides of the Pass had to be removed. They were dislodged and allowed to fall onto what used to be a smooth area of lovely green grass. It is now in 2007 a most unsightly rock and boulder strewn mess endangering walkers' feet and legs and forcing some of them to walk on the narrow road. I really do wonder why the National Trust has allowed this desecration by letting all these rocks remain on this once most beautiful area. It is still the same in 2008. 2009, nettles are now established, how long it will remain so unsightly is anybody's guess.

The Murder in the Winnats Pass

In 1758 a most gruesome murder took place in the Winnats Pass. A young couple named Allan and Clara eloping from Scotland to be married in the Extra Parochial Church of Peak Forest were waylaid in the Winnats Pass by five miners who took them to a nearby barn where the young couple were robbed and murdered.

The terrible crime came to light when the last of the five miners, who all died violent deaths, confessed to what they had done. The lady's side saddle from Clara's horse can be seen in the Speedwell Cavern shop. The large gritstone cornerstones of the barn in which the young couple were murdered can still be seen as part of the wall in the field just below the Speedwell Cavern car park.

Odd Tragedy's

Another tragedy in the Winnats Pass was the death of two young lovers. They committed suicide in the small cave on the right hand side of the Winnats about 100 metres beyond the Speedwell Cavern car park. From the 1930's it has been known as "The Suicide Cave."

As far as I can remember it was in the 1980's when another village tragedy happened. After a drinking session in the George Hotel four young men decided to visit Peveril Castle. When they discovered they had to pay they decided to try and get in free.

They climbed up the side of Cow Low and tried to cross over the top of the Peak Cavern Gorge and into the Castle. They didn't realise the steep moss covered slope was a death trap. One after another all four of them plunged the two hundred feet to their deaths and all for the sake of a few pence.

In 1959 a young potholer called Neil Moss was trapped deep inside Peak Cavern. With friends he had crawled along a narrow passage that ended at a deep fissure in the floor. Neil tried climbing down the fissure without a safety rope, slipped and became wedged beyond reach or recovery. Here he died and his body remains in the fissure.

Castleton's Showcaves

Castleton has four caves that are open to the public: Peak, Speedwell, Blue John and Treak Cliff. I have been a guide in all of them except Peak Cavern.

The Show Caves In order of them opening to visitors are;

Peak Cavern, it didn't ever need discovering as its awesome Gorge and entrance were always there to be seen.

The huge entrance chamber is very historic and at least two dwellings were built inside it. For several hundred years ropes have been made here and some of the ancient machines used by the rope-makers are still to be seen. Demonstrations of rope making are now part of the guided tour. Among other things that can be seen on the tour are "Lumbago Walk, The Inner Styx, The Great Cave, Roger Rains House and the Devils Staircase.

Blue John Cavern was discovered in the 1770's and took its name from Blue John Stone the rare and beautiful mineral found in Treak Cliff and used for ornaments, jewellery and interior decorative work since the mid 1700's.

In 1799 the guide to Blue John Cavern was a man named Royse. (no first name available) In 1840 the footpaths were improved and in 1843 Lord Mulgrave entertained several friends to dinner in one of the large chambers.

The guided tour includes seeing several tunnels made in search of Blue John Stone, The Pothole, Ladies Walk, The Crystallized Cavern, Lord Mulgraves Dining Room, Mirror Lake and The Variegated Cavern.

Speedwell Cavern is a large rift with an invisible roof and a lake below, eventually called "The Bottomless Pit". This rift is at the end of the first tunnel of the Speedwell Mine. It was made between 1771 and 1781 in search of lead ore. The rift was bridged 20 metres above the lake and another tunnel made beyond the rift to join up with an underground stream. All the cuttings of rock from the second tunnel were tipped into the lake where they totally disappeared from view, hence the name "The Bottomless Pit"

With hindsight it is quite obvious the makers of the mine tunnels knew of the existence of the underground stream. Whether they knew about the rift is open to conjecture. The mine tunnels are just over 2 metres high and wide. When the stream was tapped it flooded the tunnels to a depth of about a metre.

It seems the Speedwell Mine was planned very carefully. The unusually large tunnels were cut due south to intersect the lead veins that normally run east-west. The vein can then be worked on two faces at the same time.

With the mine being flooded boats were used to transport all the lead ore to the shaft bottom where it could be hauled up the 23 metre shaft to the surface.

But there was a problem! The mine tunnels took about 11 years to make at a cost of over £14000-00. The lead ore recovered was valued at only £3000-00. It strikes me quite forcibly that the financiers of the Speedwell Mine paid out a lot of money for very little return. I am sure we can assume that some other people did very well out of the deal.

Visitors travel by boat along the Speedwell Mine tunnel to see the Speedwell Cavern with its Invisible Roof and Bottomless Pit.

Treak Cliff Cavern was Castleton's fourth show-cave to be opened. Its discovery and the possibility of its opening to visitors is far more complex than any of the other three Show Caves. The reason, Treak Cliff Cavern is two quite separate cave systems. The "Old Series" was probably discovered in the early 1700's and known as Old Millers Mine was found to be full of Blue John Stone. The "New Series" discovered in 1926 is full of stalactites, stalagmites and beautiful cave formations.

Mining for Blue John Stone led to the discovery of the "New Series" of caves. These caves are full of stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and all kinds of beautiful cave formations but no Blue John Stone. Although the two cave systems were not very far apart there was no apparent connection between them. To get into the "New Series" involved descending 14 metres down a pothole whereas the "Old Series" was entered through a level mine tunnel.

The subsequent discovery of the natural connection between the two cave systems is quite amazing and is as follows. Four men were involved in this important discovery; Herbert (Long Bert) Eyre, Hugh Bradwell, Walter Marrison and William (Billy) Bradbury.

The four men were working inside the "Old Series" (Old Millers Mine) mining fluorspar and some Blue John Stone for use as a flux in the steel-making process in Sheffield. They found four or five very large and beautiful pieces of Blue John Stone. All four of them agreed these pieces were far too good to be used for fluxing steel so they buried them in a bank of clay just to the left of a large pillar of Blue John Stone left as a roof support.

For one reason or another it was 1932 before the four men were able to return to look for the lumps of Blue John Stone they had hidden six years earlier.

They dug and dug into the bank of clay where they had hidden the Blue John Stone but without any success. They agreed no one could have known about their "crime" and "nicked" the stone they had saved so they kept on digging. After removing a considerable amount of the gooey clay they found the weight of the lumps of Blue John Stone had caused them to sink right down through the clay. When they found their lumps of Blue John Stone they also found the ancient natural water inlet into Treak Cliff Cavern's "New Series".

One of these large pieces of Blue John Stone has been preserved and in 2007 (and 2010) is displayed in the window of The Blue John Craft Shop in Castleton. It is clearly identifiable as coming from the Treak Cliff Blue vein with its all-over dark colour and fine cubic crystals.

Many years ago Bert Eyre (nicknamed Long Bert because he was very tall and so that he wasn't confused with other locals with the same name) showed me the exact place in the Witch's Cave in Treak Cliff Cavern where he and his three mates found this large piece of stone

before hiding it in the clay. At the time Bert told me about it, this piece of Blue John Stone was displayed in the shop at the entrance to the Blue John Cavern. (1947/48)

The quite accidental discovery of a natural and easy link between the "Old" and the "New Series" created an opportunity to make a wonderful Show Cave that could be opened to the public.

By combining Treak Cliff Cavern's "Old and New Series" visitors would be able to see one cave system with many rich and visible veins of beautiful Blue John Stone and a second cave system full of Stalactites and Stalagmites and wonderful cave formations. The "Wonder Caves" of Castleton, opened its doors to the public at 10-00 am on the 1st of April 1935.

The guided tour of the cavern includes; The Lower Cliff Blue Vein, The Fossil Cave, The Witch's Cave, the Blue John Stone Pillar, Aladdin's Cave, Fairyland, The Dream Cave and The Dome of St. Pauls

In 1935 to advertise Treak Cliff Cavern a huge sign made of whitewashed limestone rocks was constructed on the sloping hillside below and to the south of the cavern entrance. It was 5 metres high and read "WONDER CAVES". It could be seen and read from all the hills surrounding the Hope Valley; it could even be seen by passing aircraft.

In 1940, the second year of the Second World War the Ministry of Defence decided enemy pilots could use this large sign as a marker for aircraft wanting to bomb Sheffield or Manchester. In their wisdom the Ministry ordered "Wonder" to be deleted and to leave "Caves" clearly visible!

In the late 1940's or early 1950's the National Trust and the Derbyshire County Council decided the sign, which by now had become a well-known landmark, contravened the new signs and hoardings legislation and therefore must be removed. Again bureaucracy caused to be destroyed a landmark enjoyed by the vast majority of the public, I wonder if our ancient hillside carvings that can be seen in various places are next on the list for removal?

Some Interesting Aspects of Tourism and How Visitors Were Catered For.

Because of its location and many attractions, Castleton, from very early times has been a Tourist Destination and has attracted visitors from far and near. These visitors were most welcome, they brought much needed trade to the village and money to anyone willing and able to entertain and cater for them.

Over the years quite a lot of famous people have visited Castleton. Here are just a few; Celia Fiennes, Daniel Defoe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Ruskin, several reigning monarchs including Henry II, King John and Queen Victoria.

One of Castleton's busiest Tourist periods is of historical interest. This was after the Dore and Chinley railway opened about 1895. When the route for the line was being planned it was proposed that it came to Castleton but because of the very unstable Mam Tor at the end of the Hope Valley the line went up the Edale Valley instead.

When the line was well-established people in Sheffield and Manchester discovered how cheap and easy it was to get to Castleton.

There were caves to visit, a castle and a pretty village with many attractions to explore and all surrounded by hills with footpaths for short or long walks and all at the western end of the lovely Hope Valley.

At peak-periods train after train arrived at Hope and Edale station from Sheffield and Manchester bringing thousands of people to the area. Most of these people would walk to Castleton from Hope Station. Others walked over the ridge from Edale Station. Many people left the train at one of these stations and walked via Castleton to the other. Castleton being just about half way between Hope and Edale these walkers arrived in Castleton just in time for lunch!

Several enterprising people in the village invested in horse drawn carriages and had thriving businesses transporting people who could afford the fare from Hope Station to Castleton and the caves. In several properties in the village it is still possible to see the walled up archways where these vehicles were housed.

We must remember this activity was very seasonal. The busiest times were Bank Holidays, School Holiday periods, Sundays in June, July and August.

The "season" lasted from Easter to the end of September when Castleton would literally close down for the winter.

To cater for all these visitors a number of large capacity cafés opened. There were a lot of well-established hotels, Inns and public houses; many more than there are now.

For instance, on a Sunday afternoon in the season if the Peak Hotel with its large Pavilion on the opposite side of the road didn't serve at least 500 salad teas at 2s-6d to 4s-6d (12.5p to 22.5p) each they would think they were having a very bad day.

I can think of one or two more establishments in the village that could cater for fairly large numbers of people during these busy times. Some of them no longer exist or have been put to other use. Three of the larger establishments with changed use are The Castleton Restaurant, now Castleton Garage and Swiss House. The Peak Hotel, Cheshire Cheese and the Nags Head Hotel all had a large function room upstairs. In 1820 the Cheshire Cheese was called The Butchers Arms.

One of the Inns now long gone was The Ship Inn, it was just on the right as you approached the entrance to Castle Hill and Peveril Castle. It was named The Ship because its roof and structural timbers were reused ships timbers thought to have come from a breakers yard in Manchester. Several years ago I was allowed to climb up into the roof space to see for myself what a wonderful structure it is,

When the Inn closed part of the building became Peveril Café. Later on it was a Chinese Restaurant and then it closed down altogether. The building is now divided into two houses. I remember Mrs Breeze and the Peveril Café very well.

I also remember two "penny-in-the-slot" machines standing in front of what is now Adventurequip's front window. One was "What the Butler Saw" the other, our favourite, an Electrical Shock machine. By holding a pair of handles and twisting one of them the voltage was increased until one couldn't bear the pain any longer! What Health and Safety would say about this machine now is anybody's guess.

I can remember Philip and Gerald Wells owning Castleton Garage, they eventually sold it to Roger Thorpe. Roger opened the garage on the first of April 1967. Christine and Roger were married on November 4th 1969 and came to live in the fine house attached to the garage. Roger still runs the garage but only does repairs. He ceased selling fuel in 2007 after the diesel tank was damaged.

Swiss House became Kelsey's Antiques and Furniture Shop until it was converted into Holiday Flats and a small restaurant. The Restaurant became an Italian one for a time then closed down altogether. (2007)

For many years The Peak Pavilion was a very popular Dance Hall. As dancing declined it was used as a Furniture Showroom, but not for long. The last tenants to occupy The Peak Pavilion were T.J.J. Weaving and Son. (Tommy, father and son, Jack) They were Auctioneers and Valuers and used it as a Sale-room. When the Pavilion burnt down in the 1970's it had many items waiting for the next sale. It was also as full as it possibly could be with second hand furniture that hadn't sold previously. As you can imagine it was a most spectacular fire.

All the places mentioned were able to cater for large numbers of diners. Another cafe able to cater for up to about fifty people was Speedwell Café; it was in the area where Orchard House and garden are now. It belonged to Mrs Ginny Eyre. She also owned the adjacent Speedwell House and Shop and made the best ice cream in Castleton.

The hotels that had either a large dining room or a large room upstairs were the Castle, the Bulls Head, the Nags Head, the Peak and the Cheshire Cheese. The Peak Hotel, together with the Peak Pavilion was able to cater for more people than any of the others.

At the turn of the 19th century the first house on the corner of Back Street and the north side of How Lane was a café, it is now called The Gables. Rose Cottage Tearooms on Cross Street had a large wooden building in the garden with seating for up to about 60 people. From the 1930's to the 1970's the hut was the meeting place for cyclists. It was C.T.C. Recommended. (Cyclists Touring Club)

Another ancient café was up the Winnats Road about 100 metres below the Speedwell Cavern. If you look at the wall on the left hand side of the road as you ascend it is easy to see where the rough, dry limestone walling ends and a dressed limestone and cemented wall begins and continues for several metres. In its day it was a very popular café, it closed shortly after Arthur Ollerenshaw senior bought the field with the café in it. Before it became totally derelict it was used by Oswald (Oz) Warrington as a henhouse.

As well as all the commercial premises a lot of private houses provided some form of refreshment; many of them had a little sign saying "jugs of hot water and tea provided", the tea was "provided" if people had forgotten to bring their own. Some of these private houses provided everything, the pot of tea, the sugar, the milk and the cups and saucers.

A couple of shops I visited before the '39-'45 war and remember quite well were Foden's shop on How Lane and Mr. Wray's shop where Bargate Cottage is now. There was another shop on the east side of the Market Place, after the war it was Teddy Brockbank's cobblers shop. This shop is now a house.

I remember the old police station on How Lane, it had six cells, how often they were used in the old days I don't know but they were never used in my days although I did go "inside" but only to look around!

The old police station was always the residence of the local police sergeant. When the last one retired it was demolished to make room for a modern house with a small building at the side as an unmanned police station.

Eventually the new property was sold and is now a private house, so we have no police station, no resident police officer in Castleton or for that matter, anywhere in the Hope Valley, only a telephone number!

Characters of Castleton

Here are a few Characters of Castleton I remember that are not already mentioned.

Frankie Critchlow, a farmer who had very little land but had a lot of sheep! He had a heart attack and was taken to hospital. When his Wellington boots were removed each one was found to contain £500-00 in £5 notes.

Alfie Whittingham, dairy farmer. Alfie had milk cows and a milking shed in the large triangular field below the Speedwell Cavern car-park. As he tried to make his dog gather the cattle to be milked his antics and his flowery, even obscene language was most entertaining to the visitors at the Speedwell who all had a grandstand view.

Dr John Willie Wardle Bailey was for many years our well loved but dour Scottish family doctor. He continually locked himself out of his car when he was on his rounds.

The "new young Doctor" was Dr. David Mander, he was often seen reading the newspaper in his car as he drove along on his rounds.

Dr. Jack Lee was the last of our family doctors who lived in Castleton and the last doctor to be at the beck and call of his patients at almost any time of day or night.

Currently an appointment system is in operation and patients attend at the Evelyn Medical Centre in Hope, it is open from 8-30am to 6-30pm Monday to Friday. When necessary the five Practice Doctors do home visits. None of the Practice Doctors work at weekends.

Nellie Preston delivered milk around the village in cans or buckets. Every time the Ministry Milk Inspector appeared on the scene poor Nellie had an accident of some sort and all her milk was spilt on the road!!! It was then impossible to test it for purity and content.

Tall Sam Needham and the much shorter Frank Eyre were farmers. They once had a fried egg eating competition at Mam Farm. I can't remember who won but one ate 36 eggs and the other ate 34 eggs.

Wallace Fletcher's three sons are worth a mention. Among many things they were scrap metal dealers. They had a small lorry the petrol tank of which was a five gallon drum on the seat in the cab with a rubber pipe connected to the carburettor. All three of them smoked!!! To say the least, none of them were very academic, but they were marvels with engines, they could get practically any engine to run. The family lived at Knowle Gates Farm.

Joseph (Joe sheep) Eyre, brother of Bert Eyre was a shepherd of some standing. He was an Honorary Member of the prestigious Shepherds Association, their local headquarters are in Edale. Joe had the ability to see a sheep once then was able to recognise it again wherever he saw it.

One spring day many years ago Joe was having trouble with a fox taking lambs up on Cow Low. He went to Knowlegates Farm and asked the Oakes brothers, Tim and Marsh, if he could borrow their single barrel twelve bore shot gun, "yes" they said, "here it is and some cartridges, it's not loaded". Joe took the gun by the barrel and pushed it butt first down inside his sack of hay.

Off went Joe, hay sack on his back with the gun barrel nudging his left ear as he climbed. When he was on the top of Cow Low he dropped the sack on the ground, bang went the gun and blew a large hole in the turf at Joe's feet!!! A gunsmith once said "it's always the "unloaded" gun that goes off".

A lady worth remembering is Eva Eyre, she eventually married Marsh Oakes. I don't know the exact date but it was after the '39-'45 War. Little Tony Robinson who lived with his family along Peak Cavern Walk was seen by Eva to fall into the river which was in full flood. It was of no use getting into the river behind Tony so Eva ran the considerable distance to the long field behind How Lane with the river running along the south side of it.

Here there were no walls or fences so it was possible to get into the river easily. Eva waited until she could see little Tony bobbing along in the current and just at the right moment she jumped into the fast running water, grabbed the boy and struggled to the bank with him where by now there were others waiting to pull them both to safety. Both were lucky to live to tell the tale.

Some more things remembered.

When Peveril Castle was being restored in the 1930's one of the major problems faced by the workforce was the difficulty of getting supplies from the village up to the Castle, this included many tons of aggregate and cement.

I don't know if there is anyone left in the village who remembers how the problem was solved; it was quite simple when the resources of the Ministry of Works are at your disposal.

A very strong wire rope was anchored to one of the solid limestone buttresses in the appropriate place on the south side of Cavedale, the other end was secured to a tower inside the Castle walls, it was tall enough to allow a container to clear the wall. The container was a strongly made wooden box large enough to hold about a quarter of a ton of aggregate.

The box was hooked onto a pulley wheel that ran on the strong wire rope. Another much lighter wire rope was attached to the pulley wheel support and the other end of this wire was attached to a hand wound winch up on the Castle. As you can imagine it was hard work winding the winch to pull up the loaded box but not as hard as carrying it up the steep footpath from the village.

You may be wondering how all the supplies got to the bottom of the aerial rope. Frank Eyre was given a contract to deliver supplies to this place. He had or had made a narrow cart that would go through the narrow entrance to Cavedale. This cart plus about a half ton load was pulled up Cavedale by Franks powerful Shire horse Prince.

The holes where the wire rope was anchored are still visible in Cavedale if you know where to look.

The person in charge of the restoration work on Peveril Castle was Mr. Roughead, pronounced "Roehed", When the restoration work was finished Mr Roughead was appointed custodian of the Castle.

Because John Walker would not open Peak Cavern on Sundays the Duchy of Lancaster terminated his lease and appointed Mr. Roughead as custodian of Peak Cavern and Frank Eyre became custodian of the Castle.

While Custodian of Peveril Castle Frank Eyre married my grandmother Mrs. Catherine Grace Spencely. Her first husband, my grandfather, was Jack Milbourne. Mamie's maiden name was Boughen.

After the death of Jack Milbourne and when grandchildren began to appear on the scene Mamie thought grandma too ageing so we were to call her Mamie. In fact when Mamie and her daughter Edith, (my mother), went to dances in Hatfield, Yorkshire, they went as sisters!

Mamie's second husband was Joshua Spenceley a Yorkshire farmer, a very kindly man, we children called him "Pence"

Frank Eyre was Mamie's third husband and she outlived him as well as the other two. Mamie was born at Hatfield, West Riding of Yorkshire in 1875 and died in Buxton in 1973 aged 98 and is buried in Castleton's Cemetery on Hollowford Lane.

After a few years as the Custodian of Peak Cavern Mr Roughead moved to the Roman site at Wroxeter, near Shrewsbury, and started the restoration work there. My father, Frank Eyre, Cyril Adamson and me went to see Mr Roughead at Wroxeter when it was a total ruin, not the well restored Roman Site it is now