

Ribchester

'A walk back in time'

As you stroll round the ancient streets you will discover that there is more to Ribchester than meets the eye. The walk starts from the **Roman Museum** and is loosely based on the **Ribchester History Trail** published by the parish council although not slavishly following it. While acknowledging things Roman it seeks to concentrate on much later history.

Introduction

The roots of the village lie far back in the past – as it stands on the site of an ancient Roman fort. However, it is unlikely to have remained inhabited all the time as the present street layout does not correspond with that of the Romans.

Foreign troops were stationed in Ribchester for about 3 hundred years. Tom Smith in his *'History of the Parish of Ribchester'*, published in 1890 sets the scene:

"Soldiers wearing outlandish uniforms, speaking foreign languages, officered by men from over the sea trod its soil and kept watch over it.

Inside the ramparts of the fort were congregated people from all over Europe, Africa and Asia. A motley crowd passed through this secluded village such that is hard to comprehend"

A greater contrast can scarcely be imagined than that between those earlier inhabitants and the current population.

The civilian site (vicus) outside the fort was extensive and covered an area more or less corresponding to that of the modern village. Narrow plots were occupied perpendicular to the main Roman roads. Excavations have revealed rectangular wooden buildings used as workshops and dwellings. Craftsmen plied their trades in the vicus providing essential goods for both civilians and military personnel alike. Metalworkers and leather workers were particularly abundant, supplying all kinds of military and cavalry equipment. The vicus was also the site of the baths, the most substantial stone built construction outside the fort, and at least two temples, fulfilling important social and religious functions.

Ribchester also suffered from its share of man made calamities. In 1322 Robert the Bruce led a party of raiders on a fearsome looting trip through Lancashire and while not proved, it is possible that he burned Ribchester as well. Even more serious was the outbreak of plague, known as the Black Death, that swept through the country 16 years later (1348) carrying away between one third and one half of the population. Ribchester was not spared and well over a hundred inhabitants died.

1. [Before moving on into the village](#) pause for a quick look at Church Gates opposite. Originally 3 cottages known as Waterside cottages (and previously the homes of the Walton and Eccles families) the site was leased to Margaret Greenall in 1906 for reconstruction into 'one good and suitable dwelling house'. The earlier cottages were built in the 17th C on what was the site of the house of the Commander of the Roman camp. During reconstruction 2 wells were discovered one of which was full of roman masonry including 2 decorated capitals, now on display in the Museum.



Margaret Greenall (a member of the famous brewing family) is better known as the driving force behind the inception of the Roman Museum. Interestingly the Museum is **one of the features that distinguish Ribchester from other modern villages sited on or near roman forts.**

While we shall not touch on the church of St Wilfrid nor of the granary. These are best covered by their respective web sites, both of which are linked to the History Society site. However, before moving on we briefly recall the custom of

'kidnap' that flourished in the area for more than 100 years. There are those still living in the village who have personal memories of this:

In the early 1800s there grew the custom of placing a rope across the road to prevent the departure of recently married couples from the church gates until blackmail was paid. This custom remained in vogue for many years before finally dying out in the early years after the 2 world war. By then the basic ransom was said to be 2/6 or 12 pence.

The **parochial hall** (shortly to be known as the village hall) was built to replace the old Sunday school, last used in 1912, itself built on the site of an old malt kiln converted by **Rev'd Boulby Haselwood** for use as a Sunday school. Boulby Haselwood (who died in 1876) was Rector for 47 years and reportedly held in high esteem by his parishioners. But on the 13 August 1842 his life was touched by tragedy:

On that day his son (also known as Boulby) and a friend, John Eccles (son of the rector's servant) were playing on the riverbank opposite the rectory. Young Boulby had secretly taken a gun (thought to be a rook gun) from the rectory and the two boys entertained themselves letting off percussion caps. Unbeknown to them the gun was loaded with pellets and after the boys had played for some time the gun fired, the pellets hitting John Eccles behind the ear and in the face. The boy never regained consciousness but lingered for four days before dying.

The **rectory** itself was built in 1884/1885 to replace the earlier rectory built in 1682. Reputedly the famous Ribchester parade helmet was found here. The story goes:

"One village tradesman (clogger/shoemaker) Joseph Walton – lived in the last house on the western side of the main street leading down the village to the river. John, his son was digging on a piece of waste ground behind the house and made the discovery of the helmet and other objects'. [What is odd is that the helmet is reputed to have been located some 8ft below ground. If true one can only guess at what the boys intentions were in digging down that deep]"

It is probable that the waste ground of the story lies between the rear of Riverside House and the garden to the east of the rectory.

2 **Riverside house:** This apparently 19th C villa stands on the site of the old tithe barn from which it had been converted (circa 1860) . Next to it is a delightful 17th C cottage that stands on the north east corner of the Roman rampart.

A tithe barn was a type of barn used in much of northern Europe in the Middle Ages for storing the tithes - a tenth of the farm's produce which had to be given to the church. The tithe barn would have been associated with St Wilfrid's church or rectory, to which independent farmers took their tithes.

3 **Ribchester CE School:** Known formerly as the Ribchester National School. This was built in 1870 largely by the Fletchers who were Ribchester Stonemasons. It was officially opened by the Bishop of Manchester in 1872. **Note the two angel heads on either side of the main door.** These were carved by Mr Fletcher in memory of Alice, an angelic looking 9 year old, and the daughter of William and Margaret Barton who then lived in Riverside House. During the building of the school Alice contracted scarlet fever and died. Mr Fletcher was Alice's godfather and so grief stricken by the tragedy carved the heads as a lasting memorial.



4 **Church Street:** The houses to the right in the print on the following page were built by Mark Hardiker in 1888 and carry the carved initials MMAH. The first house, known as 'Wilkins Cottage' was named after a Miss Wilkins who taught at the school. It was she who gave the cottage to St Wilfrid's for use by the sexton. The property was finally sold in 1983.

Mark Hardiker was a prominent member of the village during the latter part of the 19th C. He farmed at Lower Alston farm and in the census for 1881 and 1901 is listed as Surveyor of Highways. In that capacity he is credited with building Boyce's Bridge separating Ribblesdale terrace with Stoneygate Lane opened in 1876.

One contemporary account of the opening awards him the title of 'Mayor' (the Parish Council was not formed until 1896 and there is no evidence that the title was ever in use), In this account he is quoted as saying " the construction of the Bridge brings the village closer together". A somewhat fanciful observation given that at that time few people lived on Stoneygate Lane. Also early Ordnance survey maps show a bridge in place as early as 1843.

The large house on the left was built in 1885 and carries the initial JMA (James & Mary Alston - the Alston name was prominent in the village during the 19th and early 20th C). The terrace with the gates (Alston Terrace) was built in 1891.

Further on from the terrace is the start of the hand loom weavers cottages of which we shall consider in detail. Before then a brief break to consider the background to hand loom weaving in the village.



Hand Loom Weaving



Hand loom

For many years agriculture remained the principal industry in the area. By 18th Century handloom weaving assumed a growing importance to the local economy.

Weaving was a longstanding occupation in Ribchester, although parish records of the early 18th Century indicate that there were more weavers in Dutton than Ribchester. Handloom weavers would traditionally combine agriculture with weaving. Linens and fustians were the fabrics produced in Lancashire though woollen fabrics were also common. Later in the 18th Century Ribchester began to take on something of its present appearance when many new cottages were built to house the growing number of handloom weavers.

The golden age of handloom weavers in Lancashire was a result of several factors. Government legislation to ban cotton imports in the early 18th Century coincided with a demand for lighter fabrics. The development of industrial techniques such as the flying shuttle; allowing one man to weave wider fabrics, the invention of the spinning Jenny and water frames providing substantial supplies of raw materials. Lancashire was also fortunate that the textile industry was not controlled by the strong guilds which existed in other parts of the country; it also had a damp climate. Ribchester lay on an established pack horse route from Blackburn to Longridge and Preston, then connecting with major access to Liverpool and London. Putters out could easily provide yarn and collect the finished product.

In 1773 Ribchester was described as a poor village but all this changed in the years leading to the mid 19th Century. Trade directories of the time (1821, 1830, 1841) indicate that handloom weaving was the primary activity in the "township". The village then supported numerous grocers, a tea merchant, a draper, butchers, 3 tailors, shoe, boot, clog and patten makers, hatters, substantial woodworks (wheelwrights, bobbin makers, joiners, cabinet makers, coopers), maltsters, cordwainers, even a hairdresser, a vet, and a dancing teacher. A corn miller existed over the whole period.

In 1828 **William Radcliffe** described the handloom weavers he knew at the end of the 18th Century::

Their dwellings and small gardens clean and neat - all the family well clad - the men each with a watch in his pocket and the women dressed in their own fancy - the church crowded to excess every Sunday - every house well furnished with a clock in elegant mahogany or a fancy case - handsome services in Staffordshire ware.

By then hand loom weavers in general could earn 30/- a week and some were known to earn as much as £5 - this could be the equivalent of as much as £250 per week today. Although this golden age was short lived, it created much of the architectural heritage of the village.

In 1838 **William Howitt** published his 'Rural Life of England' in which he described conditions in the weaving districts of East Lancashire.:

Everywhere extend wild, naked hills, in many places totally un-reclaimed, in others enclosed, but exhibiting all the signs of neglected spiritless husbandry ...Over these naked and desolate hills are scattered to their very tops, in all directions, the habitations of a swarming population of weavers... In Ribchester our chaise was pursued by swarms of [these] wooden-shod lads like swarms of flies and were only beaten off for a moment to close in upon you again, and their sisters showed equally the extravagance of rudeness in which they were suffered to grow up, by running out of the houses as we passed and poking mops and brushes at the horses heads. No one attempted to restrain or rebuke them; yet no one of the adult population offered you the least insult; and if you asked the way, gave you the most ready directions, and if you went into their houses, treated you with perfect civility and showed an affection for these little brats that was honourable to their hearts and wanted only directing by a better intelligence. The uncouthness of these poor people is not that of evil disposition, but of pressing poverty and continued neglect'.

Although by 1844 the chief employment continued to be weaving there were growing complaints of rack rents and miserably low wages while work was uncertain. The village had every appearance of poverty and offered a painful contrast with its historical inheritance and the beautiful scenery in which it was set. Six years later in 1850, times were becoming particularly hard with the prospect of famine. Life may have been hard but baptisms, weddings and funerals were seized upon as occasions for a feast. Later records from around 1875 recall that courtship constituted one of the chief charms of the district.. The story goes:

'Foreigners (particularly from Longridge) who came a 'courting' had to 'stand treat' or get 'secked'. No man may meet his lady on a Friday. This was 'jingling neet' .If he did all the frying pans and kettles would be set in motion as if a thousand bees were in swarm.

The houses at **8-15 Church Street**, dating from 1795, do not appear to have been originally built to accommodate hand looms. All have side passages with a door from the side passage into the back room. These side passages were put in for access as the houses backed on to what was then a private field belonging to Hothersall Hall (now the Ribchester Playing Fields).. The 1838 tithe map shows that some of these houses had multiple occupancy, with separate families living in the back rooms. As demand for hand-loom weaving increased, weaving sheds were built at the backs of some of the houses.

Number **11 Church Street** illustrates well the water shot stone coursing which is typical of most of the weaver's cottages in Ribchester. The weaving shed at the back of number 11 was later used as a school-house and as a non-conformist chapel (known to locals as "The Temple").

Dating from 1793, the houses at **16-22 Church Street** were built to accommodate hand looms. This was the original Ribchester Club Row.

Although it is often said that these houses have "weaving attics" this is probably not the case. The windows in these attics are very small and close to the floor so would not have let in enough light for weaving. The double windows on the first and ground floors are more typical of a Lancashire loomshop and the attics may have been used for storage or sleeping.



Church Street looking towards the White Bull.

Number **18 Church Street** is one of the best-preserved examples from this row. Note the double windows on the ground floor and first floor and the small attic window.

Numbers **20-22 Church Street** have had their fronts altered. The front wall has been rebuilt and the double windows replaced by single windows. Was this to avoid paying window tax, once these houses were no longer used for weaving,

and the double windows had become an expensive luxury? In 1825 the window tax applied to any house with 8 windows or more. It depends on when the rebuilding was done.

Number 22 has been substantially altered. Compare it to number 18, which it would once have resembled. Again, if the work was carried out in the early nineteenth century, it may have been to avoid paying the window tax, but not if it was more recent.



61-62 Church Street had weaving shops in the basement. The ground floor is raised so that windows can be accommodated to let light into the loom shops. There is an identical pattern of windows at the back of the houses. The stone steps would once have faced the other way, leading away from the houses. They have presumably been turned around to allow the road to be widened.

5 White Bull

61-62 Church St

At what is perhaps the heart of the village we briefly divert from the cottages to look at the White Bull. From here the Roman branch road heads off up Water Street and Stonegate Lane to join the main route from Chester to Hadrians Wall.

The White Bull dates from 1707, although it is believed that an alehouse stood here before then. At one time it was used as a court house and there is some evidence that the cellar was used as a temporary jail. Over the years many alterations have been made to the inn. Early in the last century a refreshment room was opened to cater for an increasing number of day visitors but by the 1940s the doorway to the right of the main entrance had been blocked up and the refreshment room door positioned centrally as today. Next to it stood the Red Lion another very ancient hostelry. The property to the right of the pub was once the village bakehouse.



The antiquary Dr Stokely visited Ribchester in 1725. He tells of:

“Several Roman stones including a pillar 7 feet long that lay in the alehouse yard. He also refers to the Unicorns Head and the fact that in living memory the chief inn of the town had been washed away by the river. He comments that the village also had the Old Bull Inn (the Black Bull) and two beer shops – the Bay Horse in Water Street and the Manor House in Greenside.”

In front of the White Bull is the rounded shape of the ‘Hillock’ (although the years have somewhat altered this shape) used as a centre for leisure and relaxation for over two thousand years. Here one could enjoy dancing bears, punch and judy, local band concerts and other fairs bands and street entertainments. All were enjoyed but more than one entertainer complained ‘at the ability of Ribchester Folk to disappear when it became time to pay for the entertainment.’

There is the impression that the hillock may have been a market place but Smith recorded in 1890 ‘that no markets ever took place there although 3 or 4 fairs were held each year.’

Postcards of the area printed around 1900 show a large stone block at the edge of the site where the paving stones are now. It was conjectured that this was the base of an ancient cross or stocks but no evidence exists to back this up. Smith is also silent on this although he comments ‘that while no memory of a cucking stool remains the village possessed a set of stocks that were removed early 1800s’.



White Bull, with ‘Hillock’ around 1900

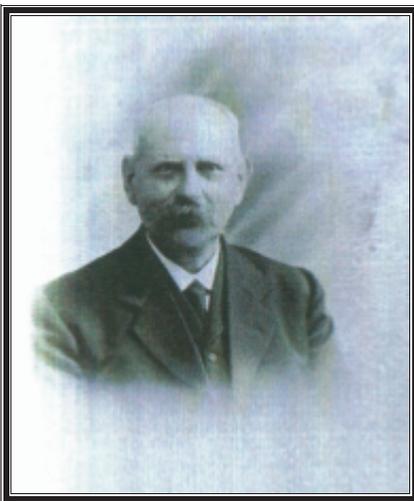
Ducking-stools and cucking-stools are chairs formerly used for punishment of women. The term cucking-stool derives from wyuen pine ("women's punishment") as referred to in Langland's [Piers Plowman\(1378\)](#). They were both instruments of social humiliation and censure, primarily for the offence of scolding or back biting and less often for sexual offences such as bearing an illegitimate child, or prostitution.

The stools were technical devices which formed part of the wider method of law enforcement through social humiliation. A common alternative was a court order to recite one's crimes or sins after Mass or in the market place on market day.[\[possibly on the stone?\]](#)

In a letter to the records office dated August 1968 Canon John Wallace (then the well loved Rector of St. Wilfrid's) recounts the origin of the carved bull:

"Thomas Dolphin was the Ribchester wheelwright occupying what is now the joiners shop near the New Hotel and the adjacent blacksmiths shop (now vacant).

He it was who carved the wooden bull outside the White Bull. After acquiring the local Buckley quarry he was dismayed by an accident to an employee who lost a hand and subsequently wore an iron hook. So he emigrated to Australia. There his home was called 'Stydd'. A descendant, likewise of the name Dolphin later became one of the world's leading violin makers. Another female relation was a teacher at SS Peter and Paul's school and, as was the custom then lived in the almshouse. She also later emigrated to Australia where she continued to teach."



John Edward Pinder

Pause briefly to remember one Ribchester resident who went off to fight during the 1st World War. But, unlike 20 of his compatriots, including his brother James, John returned to the village.

John was born in 1876 at the White Bull. In 1899 at the age of 23 John became landlord of the Bay Horse at the top of Water Street near the red Lion, before moving to Hillock House (opposite). He enlisted in 1917 at the age of 41. During his time in Belgium and France he was engaged in most of the battles on the western front including Ypres, Messines Ridge and Cambrai. After the war John became the first steward of the Working Men's club. He died in 1942 aged 60.

To the left of the White Bull once stood ['The Red Lion' and stables](#) now converted into two cottages. A Mr Townley was licensee at the time of the celebration of the coronation of King George V. The Hotel ceased trading a few years later. The Hotel was used as an occasional venue for inquests and for meetings of the society of catholic ladies. There are a number of stories relating to the Inn One such was related by the Preston Guardian in September 1884:

Members of Ribchester Football Club met in their room at the Red Lion Inn to present their late secretary, Mr Albert Alston (who had left for Burnley! with a handsome silver guard and medal in recognition of his services.' Of course the village has a long association with football with a succession of teams (successful or otherwise) over the centuries. Football was also the cause of some (friendly) friction among families, with some members supporting Blackburn Rovers while others turned their faces towards Preston North End.

Many current residents of the village are aware of the fable of the 'pig on t' wall'. There are a number of versions to the story. One is of a marching band that visited the village where one local was so impressed that he lifted the pig on to the wall, either Black Bull or Dam End, to see the band go by. Another is of a promise made to a soldier that the family would celebrate his survival by placing a pig on a wall. But the one that perhaps fits the story best (and one in which there is photographic evidence) is the one which relates that if Ribchester beat Longridge in a cup match it was traditional to put a live pig on the wall by Dam End.

Retracing our steps along [Church Street](#), and moving on to the cottages where the roofs begin to rise are the cottages known as Club Row, built in 1793 on a similar basis to that of High Street Longridge. Land for [25/26 Church Street](#) was leased in 1793 by

the Hothersall Estate In 1828 the cottages were sold to Lawrence Dewhurst by Edmund Welch who was then serving time in Lancaster Jail for being a debtor.

This early postcard from around 1900 clearly shows the lobby between 25/26 blocked and replaced by a window. This suggests that the houses were occupied by the same family, a not uncommon arrangement in those days. Both are good examples of three storey weaver's cottages, built to house hand-loom. The cottages comprised one principle room, known as 'the house'. On the same floor was a loom shop capable of holding four looms with a kitchen to the rear. The bedchambers were situated on the floor above. The whole cottage was lit by windows of small, square panes framed by lead. To the front of the cottages the windows were protected by shutters, and some of the iron brackets can still be seen today. The



row of cottages to the right are two storey hand loom weaver's cottages. To the rear of is the remains of a loom shed.

Moving on up the street, which was known then as 'King Street' a wall existed where the current entrance to the playing field now is. The next house on the left is Pope Croft, built by William and Nancy Fox in 1777. Both hailed from Oxendale Hall, Osbaldeston, and it was William who purchased the land to the rear of 45 Church Street (more later). In 1778 William became churchwarden at St. Wilfrid's and both he and Nancy are buried in the Dutton Chapel.

On the other side of Church Street, numbers 51-58 date from 1795, the same year as numbers 8-15. The date stone indicates that they were built by the same person (possibly a Mr. Leeming, who owned a lot of property in Ribchester at that time). All the houses in this picture have triple windows on the ground floor, showing this is where weaving took place, but those at each end of the row do not. They may have been altered. The window to the left of number 55 looks like it doesn't belong; none of the other houses has a window here. Look carefully at the stonework and you will see that this was once a door. It was once the entrance to a side passage like the one between 51 and 52.

The white gable house in the distance, with a date stone of 1680, was owned by the Holt family, who occupy it to this day. By 1910 it was being used as a grocer's shop run by Mrs Sarah Holt., who a contemporary record says 'was a licensed dealer in tobacco and snuff'. The family moved into the haulage business, started by John James Holt (presumably because of the competition from the Coop opposite) and later to be called Clarendon Haulage.



Opposite is a pair of Georgian Town Houses, built in 1745. They are unusual in that very few town houses, such as these were built in this part of the Country. Little is known other than they probably operated for a while as 'Ale Houses' for the refreshment of travellers.

6. Spar

Along with the 'White Bull' this building boasts a most fascinating history. The Cooperative movement, started by two weavers in Rochdale in 1844 had 20 years later expanded to more than 200 individual societies. By 1875 the movement arrived in Ribchester operating from a cottage on Church Street . This was eventually considered too small and inconvenient and work on the building of a new store began in October 1885. Originally intended to be completed by the following May the foundations gave way and the building was finished six months behind schedule. The new premises were opened on a Saturday in December 1886 by the Rector of Ribchester, Rev. F J Dickson who received the keys to the store from Sir Roger Anderton, President of the Society. The new store, standing opposite the old store, was considered an ornament to the village. It was palatial compared with other shops in the village having a second storey divided by partitions into Reading room, Committee room and a passage. These partitions were removable providing space for a comfortable hall capable of holding 600 people.

During the opening ceremony a banner was held in front of the new building and the Ribchester brass band played a number of musical selections before parading around the village. The founding of the store occurred just before the building of Bee Mill, the second large mill in the village. These two events were connected in as much as the mill was

built with financial support from the local Co-operative Society.

The store served the village well for a considerable period before merging with Longridge Co-operative Society in the 1960s by which time the upstairs rooms were no longer being used for their original purpose but had become at one time or another an antique shop and dress agency.

The Co-op closed its doors for the last time in 1985, some 99 years after opening for business. The whole building however became a focus of activity with a Spar supermarket taking over from the Co-op and with a Museum of Childhood occupying the remainder of the premises.



Early (undated) photograph of the Cooperative building and staff

7. The Black Bull.

This pub, formerly known as the Old Bull, is over 250 years old. It was largely remodelled in the 19th century - the roof, chimney stack and the pedestal supporting the stone bull all date from this rebuilding. To the rear of the pub in what was known as 'The transport yard' evidence of cremation burials was found. However, later excavations on the pub car park in 1976 revealed no further burials showing that the burial site did not extend far.



From the Black Bull corner and looking towards Preston Road, the house in the centre of the terrace to the right is 45 Church Street. This is one of the oldest houses in Ribchester. Formerly with railings and porch. The railings were removed during the 2nd World War but the porch, along with the rest of the house, has recently been restored. While the exact date of the property is unknown, it is recorded as having been sold in 1680, by John Seed to Richard Pemberton, a local blacksmith, for £10. The two houses to the left of number 45 were originally the barn.



At time of sale the property was described as 'house and barn at the Gibstones'. A croft on a parcel of land adjoining and lying unto the north east side of a dwelling aforesaid containing half an acre of ground or thereabout'.

In 1780 a William Hayhurst, described then as a yeoman of the City of London, bought the house. Many changes followed this sale. The barn was converted into three cottages and a part of the croft was sold to W M Fox, who built on the croft at the back the cottages around the corner of Blackburn Road and the little street known as Fold End, forming a square of cottages.. In 1808 the property was purchased by the Rev'd W M Fisher, who was responsible for building StPeter & St Paul's church in

45 Church St (with fence) 1789. Other notable sales occurred in 1835 when the property passed to Richard Leeming, a handloom cotton manufacturer employing 13 weavers and to Mary Murray in 1923. Mrs

Murray's husband James made oatcakes and bread on the premises. These he sold throughout the outlying district from a horse and cart. Turning the corner of the Black Bull along Blackburn Road look for the small ring bolted into the stonework adjacent to the 'Stop sign'. Older residents recall that this was used in the early 1920's to tether cattle, presumably while on the way to market. One resident also recalls that she and friends used the ring as one end from which to tie a skipping rope.



Along Blackburn Road the terrace on the right was built in 1904 and named 'Hope Terrace' for reasons unknown. To the left is [Beehive House](#) used for many years as the village post office. It was first used as such in the early 1900s by Postmaster Edward Dewhurst with his two sons Henry and Richard acting as post office clerks. In the mid 1900s the telephone exchange operated from the room in the building (behind the first ground floor window). Prior to moving to Beehive House the post office had operated from the draper's shop at 42 Water Street run by Mrs Ann Alston and her daughter. There Edward had run the post office while his daughter was a milliner/dressmaker. No 58 opposite was the home of the 'clogger'. He it was who threw offcuts of leather into the orchard that now forms part of the Black Bull car park.

Along the next row of cottages, in the centre, is Dam Cottage (*fig1*). The cottages facing Dam Cottage ran almost into the centre of what is now Blackburn road. The end cottage was a small shop operated by Annie Woods. These cottages were eventually demolished in the 1960s. At that time the Parish Council wanted to build flower beds and seats but this was rejected in favour of redevelopment. During the demolition evidence was found of a roman building possibly an inn.



Fig 1



Fig 2

In its relatively short life the replacement building had many disguises. Originally called 'The Copper Knight' because of its stand out copper roofing, it was infamously renamed 'Conquest Corner' for obvious reasons. Other businesses, such as 'Country Vogue', 'Greengage Restaurant' grew for a time before dying back. Finally the site became an Indian restaurant and takeaway, before being demolished again, returning to residential use.

The view at *Fig 2* looking further up Blackburn Road is from the early 1900s. In the centre can just be seen the last remaining building of the old mill used to grind corn in the 1830s when about a quarter of the land was still under the plough. The mill eventually diversified to bobbin turning until 1890 when it finally closed down. At this time this area was the centre of industry, with the wheel right's shop and the blacksmith's forge across the road from the mill. The dam (with the railings around) can be seen on the left. Water from Boyce's Brook was diverted into this lodge and used to run the mill. The land to the right on which the houses stand was owned by the Rogerson family who were the village blacksmiths.



9. [Water Street](#)



The above pictures are of Water Street, located in the centre of Ribchester. Although Water Street today is entirely residential, in times past it was a thriving commercial centre. There were two pubs (the Red Lion as well as the White Bull). There was also an ale house (to the left of the second picture). This was not a place to linger but somewhere where travellers and tradesmen could buy ale for refreshment in a time when fresh water was hard to come by and ale was the drink of preference. Parking wasn't such a problem in those days as it is today. Now a rather unremarkable street, in the late 1800s and early 1900s it supported numerous

businesses, notably a post office, grocery, tailor and barbers shop. Later the street boasted a Fish and Chip shop and (where Wren cottage now stands) a VG grocers. This latter business replaced a small cottage built below road level and surrounded by a stone wall (of which part remains today).

As so often was the case in those earlier days, tragedy struck this quiet street in April 1881 as this story from the Preston Guardian at the time recalled.

On a Saturday in April 1881, Water Street was the location of a tragedy that affected the whole village. On that day James, the 4 years old son of tailor William Dewhurst met with a fatal accident. The story goes that on that Saturday afternoon the little fellow went missing. The parents thought that he was playing with some other children close at hand and were not concerned. Towards night they enquired as to his whereabouts but the search was useless. On Sunday morning bands of young men went in search, brooks were dragged but no trace could be found. The Rector at both services mentioned the circumstance which acted as a stimulant for by mid afternoon the village was deserted with all joining the search. About 5pm a young man, uncle of the boy, examined the closet to the rear of the house and found the boy there lifeless. An inquest at the Red Lion reached a verdict that the boy had suffocated by falling through the seat of the closet.

10. Roman Baths

These are now the sad remains of what was once a magnificent structure, and rightly valued by the various Roman dignitaries and garrison. In 1837 a section of the Bath House was discovered by labourers digging to make a hotbed in the garden of Dr Patchett (of which more presently). Unfortunately most of the stones, pillars, tiles etc were 'taken up' (pinched) and used in nearby buildings.

The first official excavation of the northern end of the site took place in 1927. Again some stone disappeared and the area was neglected until 1960.

Odd as it may seem at one time planning permission had been granted to build on the site. But, thankfully the then owners (Mr & Mrs Duxbury) sold it to the Council for it to be preserved for the public. The Borough Council has recently granted a 25 year lease of the site to the County Council who have in mind a plan to cover and protect the area. Presumably this idea will now be caught up in today's financially straightened times.

11. Greenside

Before moving further into Greenside we must stop and pause to consider the remarkable 'Patchett' family.

The Patchett family occupied Riverside House (the one with the outsized bay window). They were a family of physicians which served Ribchester for well over 100 years. The 1809 parish register records the burial of Elizabeth, wife of William, surgeon. Their son, born in 1808 was their a connection here?) became a well loved member of the community. He died in 1873 and the Preston Guardian recorded at the time that, like many of the old school '*he had no formal training, other than assisting his father in the surgery*'. Consequently he was not possessed of any high classical attainment, but his practical knowledge of bodily infirmities and other medicines best adapted to alleviate the suffering humanity surpassed many medical men of the present day and ensured for him a very extensive practice in Ribchester and surrounding local villages'.

Dr Patchett also owned the surgery to the right of Ribblesdale House. One son (Dr Leo Patchett) although living in 'Stone House' continued to use the surgery. The family then let what were known locally as 'Doctor's flats until these were sold in 1962.

12. Richard Rawcliffe

Richard Rawcliffe, Ribchester's own dialect poet, was born on Greenside in 1839. He worked as a hand loom weaver before hard times forced him to move to Blackburn in 1858 to seek work as a mill hand. He returned briefly to Ribchester in the 1860's to work as an overlooker at Ribblesdale Mill before going back to Blackburn in 1865. There he prospered eventually becoming President of the Overlookers Association. But fate again took a hand and ill health caused by Tuberculosis forced him to give up work and with his savings almost gone he left England to live with relatives in Australia where he died some 10 months later. In 1891, his brother John published a small volume of poems entitled '*Pebbles for Ribblesdale*' in memory of Richard. The best known of these is called '*A sweet little spot*' which describes living and working around Greenside. (see last page)

12. Stone House

This listed building stands at the eastern entrance to the village. It has been described (in the Conservation report of 2002) as one of two iconic buildings in the village (the other being the White Bull). Once the home of William Welsby who owned the Dam and mill on Blackburn Road, it became the home of Mr Fletcher (of St Wilfrid's school fame) a member of the well known family of stonemasons. We have mentioned that at some time Dr Leo Patchett resided there and the medical connection continued in the mid 20th century when it became the home of Dr William (Bill) Kelly who added a surgery to the left hand side of the property.

Opposite was the Mill and wheelrights .

The building to the right , and now refurbished was originally a stable for the New Hotel before becoming a dairy.

13. Ribchester Arms

Originally known as 'The New Hotel' the pub was built after the turn of the century. Its architectural style was a revolutionary change from the designs of the Victorian era. The building was influenced by the 'Arts and Crafts movement' with red tiles on long roofs that changed pitch, splayed wings with a hint of mock Tudor on the gables. Since then the structure of the building has changed little, although the interior was remodelled in the 1980s. However, now, instead of horse-drawn vehicles in front visitors sit out on the benches and tables enjoying a meal and admiring the lovely floral displays around the inn. There was once a bowling green to the right of the building (now the car park).



Ribchester Arms and cottages with Stone house House at the back.

Across was a row of cottages. These regularly flooded and were demolished in the late 50s early 60s to make way for the Stonebridge Restaurant that is now a private house. As the Guardian reported in 1880:

In consequence of the heavy rains that fell during Saturday the river rose considerably above its usual height. Several of the houses at Stone Bridge were flooded and the occupants had to move their furniture. In one or two the water reached 3 to 4 feet - but no considerable damage was done.

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*The Roy Skilbeck collection
The Margery Wordsworth Collection
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*Ribchester Parish Council
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and with apologies to any we have inadvertently omitted*





RICHARD RAWCLIFFE.

A sweet little spot

Such a sweet little spot, It can ne'er be forgot;
Round my heart are its mem'ries entwined.
Where the brook wanders by,
With the Ribble so nigh,
And the people so homely and kind.
It was there, when a boy,
That my heart lept with joy,
When aw'd finished my cut or my beam.
Then away from my home, by their waters to roam.
For the sand martin's nest by the stream.
Then I've come back again,
Up that shady old lane,
To that sunny Greenside,
I have tramped it with pride.
With my nettles slung over my back
They were all the world's wealth,
But I'd freedom and health;
I could soar above sorrow supreme;
In that long narrow room I could sing at my loom
In that old fashioned cot by the stream.
By that old bobbin mill where the waters so still,
I have gone with my pinhook and rod;
I was filled with delight when the fishes would bite
At the worm I'd found under the sod.
But there's mills large and new
Where once wild roses grew
And the looms are all driven by steam;
Now, the Ribble will roar,
But twill sparkle no more
As did when I waded the stream.
Ah! but where is that well,
Where the apples once fell -
Those red ones so juicy and sweet/
Then I loved a strong wind, for to me it was kind,
When I watched its o'erflow
To the brook it would go
For they bot
h loved the Ribble's bright stream.