

HUYTON ABOUT 100 YEARS AGO.

Let us journey back 100 years or so to see Huyton village as it was in 1850.

In the first place, if we began our journey through Huyton at - shall we say- Roby Station, we would probably be annoyed by the fact that we would have to pay for the privilege of using the road.

For at the junction of Twig Lane (there was no Church Road Roby or Bridge Road as Roby Church was only built in the 1850's) and Roby Road, stood Roby Turnpike - a gate set right across the road to Huyton. The gate would only be opened when we had paid the correct toll to the toll-keeper who lived close by in Toll-Bar Cottage. This of course still exists- one of Roby's few antiquities. If we came on horseback we would pay 1d., but the cost of a cart or a carriage would be 1s.

On the right hand side of Roby Road, just past Carr Lane we can still see a pillar of stone. This would have been there 100 years ago. Opinions differ as to what it really signifies. Some say it is the remains of an old village cross, but the general opinion is that it is one of four Boundary Stones which marked the boundary of Roby Fair which had its centre in the region of the existing Roby Station. Another suggestion is that it was a mounting block to help riders mount their horses.

Behind all these buildings we would find wells, for in the Huyton of a century ago there was no piped water (and in many of even the largest houses no baths either) and all the water had laboriously to be hauled up.

Many of these wells still exist, covered by flagstones and soil and forgotten by the present owners of the houses.

Continuing on our journey to where Archway Road now joins Tarbock Road, we would find that Archway Road didn't exist, though Sandfield Cottages did. Instead, a narrow lane wound between fields and ran beneath the Railway line in a narrow tunnel.

Tarbock Road existed- but was then called New Road. On its corner stood Blacklow Smithy, a pleasant long low building of red brick which was not pulled down until 1937 when the shops that at present stand on that corner were built.

Just past the Smithy, Rowley Road branched off- I wonder how it acquired its present spelling of the Rooley?

Then from Rowley Road to the corner of the New Lane (as St. John's Road was then called) there was nothing except the row of cottages known as Huyton Terrace and the Royal Oak Inn, on the site of the wine stores in Tarbock Road.

Blacklow Brow was the main road to Huyton village. Up there we would go, past Blacklow Cottage, noting the huge mansion- Ewanville- at the corner of Blacklow Brow and Rowley Road. This house has now disappeared, but has still a niche in history as the place where Sir Thomas Beecham spent part of his youth in the 1880's.

As we rode up the Brow we would probably be annoyed by the sight of yet another toll-gate. It was placed where The Orchard now begins and the cottage known as Leafy Acre was the toll-keeper's residence. This cottage was rebuilt in 1853 but demolished in 1932. This gate was intended for those travelling along the New Road and entering the turnpike road at the bottom of Blacklow Brow. We would not have to pay twice!

Just beyond the toll gate we would come upon Pinnington Place, named after one of the most prosperous inhabitants of 19th century Huyton. John Pinnington was a joiner and builder and probably had his yard in the Place. He was also the licensee of the Queen's Arms which stood at the end of Pinnington Place. The original building of the inn, which was 150 years old was demolished and the present public house built on the site.

Like many other public houses in the 19th century the Queen's Arms brewed its own ale and beer in a brewery at the back of the inn. At the back of the coal office of Thomas Smith & Son is a rough sandstone wall dividing Pinnington Place from the railway station. In this wall are holes where a century ago the floor beams of the brewery rested. Mr. Smith says that when his office was about to be rebuilt a few years ago the old cellar of the brewery, filled with cinders, was discovered in the exact spot where the foundations were to be laid.

At this time the brewers used to collect their own coal from the pit head themselves and paid between £1 and £1 5s a ton for it. Accounts were settled in sovereigns. One old Huytonian recalls his grandfather telling that in the 1860's a colliery clerk would leave the colliery office in Windy Arbor Road at 6a.m.- walk to Widnes, Woolton and then Huyton by 1p.m. collecting money from all the local breweries on the way.

1856  
~~7-10-1856~~  
~~St. John's Rd.~~  
~~New Road.~~



Also in Pinnington Place opposite the brewery was the original Huyton Congregational Chapel and it survives today as a garage. Inside there are remains of the pews which once filled it.

The Liverpool to Manchester Railway was opened on September 15th 1830. Passengers for Prescot were taken from Huyton Station in a horse-drawn bus. When Royalty visited Knowsley they came to Huyton Station and continued their journey by a horse-drawn carriage.

Huyton Station was- because of the turnpike- known as Huyton Gate Station, and on our journey through the village a 100 years ago we should look in vain for the subway by which we should now cross the line. 100 years ago there was a level crossing spanning the line. Several people were killed on the crossing and in 1870 a coroner remarked after an accident that the level crossing seemed particularly dangerous! The present subway was therefore built in 1871 when the Liverpool-Wigan line was constructed by the side of the Liverpool-Manchester line.

Between the Station and the Church there were very few buildings a century ago. Wallcroft House was there (the Jersey Dairy just recently demolished) and the old Village Infants' School. This was originally an old barn given by Lord Derby. There was no Police Station but the cottages at the Church end of the village were there. One of the cottages served as the Post Office for the 1300 inhabitants of Huyton.

log book  
dates from  
1880

A Directory for Lancs. for 1854 informs us that the mail was taken to and brought from Prescot at 6a.m. by a postman who walked between the 2 post offices, returning with the outgoing letters. This journey he did morning and evening.

When we reached the corner of Huyton Lane we would probably call in at Huyton's most important inn -the Rose and Crown- for refreshment. Legend says the cellars of the 200 year old building harboured 2 bodies and a secret passage to the Parish Church opposite. Before demolition for the road widening scheme, investigations by the Historic Society revealed a 6 foot tombstone dedicated to the memory of William Webster and son Thomas who died in 1686, and what seemed to be the start of a tunnel pointing towards the vicarage.

The new Rose and Crown stands where a century ago was one of the sights of Huyton- Barker's Brewery, whose tall chimneys could be seen from the railway and were not demolished till the beginning of this century.

1856  
Foundation  
Stone of new  
Church in  
H. Hey Rd.  
Park Day School  
opened 1861.

If we were to approach Huyton by Prescott Road, again we would be held up at Huyton Gate Toll Bar which is where the Eagle and Child public house now stands. The inn sign of the Eagle and Child was taken from the Stanley coat of arms- an eagle either looking at or preparing to snatch a sleeping child from a basket.

There are various legends as to how this came to be on the Stanley coat of arms- Knowsley Hall used to belong to a family called Lathom who owned most of this part of Lancs. In the Middle Ages it was most important for a family to have a son to inherit the family lands, because if there were only daughters the land went to their husbands when they married and so the family name died out.

Now Sir Thomas Lathom despaired of a son and conducted an affair with a serving woman. Their child was laid at the foot of an eagle's nest and later adopted by Lathom. He confessed to this deceit on his deathbed and left his lands, including Knowsley, to his only surviving daughter Isobel. She adopted the Eagle and Child on her crest. Now Isobel married Sir John Stanley, and so Knowsley and all her other property passed to the Stanleys.

There is an old story told about an incident at the Huyton Gate toll bar.

Jem Mace, a bare-fisted fighter was riding his horse towards Liverpool when he saw the gate opened to allow another traveller to pass through. Without a moment's hesitation Mace spurred his horse on and galloped through the toll without paying. On arriving back at the gate several hours later, Mace found that the gate was shut, and was forced to wait in the rain whilst the toll-bar keeper, from the door of his hut, demanded the toll that was owing. Irritated and wet, Jem threw the coins on to the muddy roadway, expecting the keeper to pick them up and open the gate. The keeper refused to do so, and Mace had to dismount, clean the coins, and place them in the keeper's hand before the gate was opened to allow him to proceed.

There were of course no houses between the Huyton Gate toll bar and the Blue bell inn except Woolfall Hall on our left. The Lord Derby of that time had bought Woolfall just a few years before.

Page Moss at this time really was a desolate place, with very few tracks across the dangerous mosses through which the Alt slowly wound its way towards the sea.



Perhaps we might prefer to turn right into Twig Lane. At the corner of Dinas Lane (then called Diana's Lane ) was yet another toll bar. This was a lovely country lane- hedges on either side of the narrow path leading to Dam House Lane. This we know better today as Rupert Road.

Dam House farm would be on our left- nothing else until we came to the cottages which belonged to Lord Derby and housed some of his workers.

The village school in Rupert Road wasn't there till 1868, and of course a 100years later it has just been replaced by a new building.

At the top of Stanley Road we today see a cross. This would not have been there in 1850, as it was only erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. But a village cross was there a century ago because this was the centre of the village green, and in 1819 the vicar of Huyton, Rev. Ellis Ashton had erected a cross to fill the space opposite the church which was used for cock-fighting. There used to be an annual Derby Road Fair, and Ellis Ashton used to go on the village green, roll up his sleeves and fight anyone indulging in cock fighting, one by one.

Perhaps the greatest difference we would notice between Huyton of a 100years ago and the Huyton of today would be the absence of any traffic problem.

In 1931 the population was 5198.

In 1939 " " " 38,420.

In 1968 " " " 70,000 approximately.

Today Derby Road is a busy road, but a 100 years ago a dog could lie in the sun- when the sun was shining- for hours on end and run no danger.