

Roots and Routes Walk 5 – Cousin Lane to Illingworth via Holmfield

When you leave OSCA, turn left and after you have past Club Lane, on the right side there is a fenced area between 68 Cousin Lane and 66 Cousin Lane. Look through the metal fencing and you will see a red brick tower which was a ventilation shaft from the age of the steam train. Hidden around Ovenden are reminders of the railway. Walk on Cousin Lane until you reach the end and then turn left at Morrison's and carry on up the hill. On the left is the site of the Commercial Inn that was at 70 Keighley Road and originally owned by Fielding's White Castle Brewery, Bradshaw and later bought out by Websters. Ownership transferred from Fielding's to Webster's on the 14th of June 1961 and the pub was demolished in 2000. On the same site are remnants of a Blacksmith's.

At the curve stood the Talbot Pub. It had previously been a vicarage, parts of which were ancient, possibly 14th century. This pub was partially rebuilt in 1840 and remained open until 2008. It was demolished in February 2009. The church of St Mary the Virgin, situated behind The Talbot, closed in 2010. The church dated back to 1525, when Henry Savile, Lord of the Manor of Ovenden, gave 1 acre of waste land for a free chapel to be built in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary; in return, he and his heirs were to receive annually one red rose. By the mid-18th century, the church had fallen into a state of disrepair and was supported by props. In 1774, a petition was sent to the Archbishop of York seeking to demolish and rebuild the church. This was granted with the understanding that the new building would be shorter and broader than its predecessor. In 1777 the church was rebuilt at a cost of £1,400. On 22nd March 1873, 2 stained glass windows were installed in the Church, presented by the Holdsworth family. Colonel Edward Akroyd gave a font and baptistry window to the church. There is a small plaque to the outside wall in memory of Private Ernest Atkinson and Private John Willie Drake who lost their lives in World War I.

Continuing the climb, there is a row of shops which, in the 1970's was home to a local deejaying set up, Spin-A-Disc. Past this is are the stocks and Gaol The gaol, or jail, and stocks are dated 'G.K. 1697'. The initials are those of George Kitchenman, constable of Ovenden in that year. Over the main door is the inscription "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph IV, 28. The stocks are also dated 'G.K. 1679', which is inscribed on one of the stones. On the other are written 'A. H.' and 'G. R.' above a crown with the motto "Know thy Self" below.

Carefully cross the road because you will be turning right at the bend. On the bend was a Fish and Chip Shop. This road leads on to the school base but at Whitehill Road take a right. This eventually leads you to the Ivy House Pub. This was originally a house called Little Moor, built by John Brearcliffe in 1704 before becoming a Public House. It was originally a Stocks pub, Stocks being part of the Shibden Head Brewery which was bought out by Samuel Webster's in 1932.

To the left and over the bridge are Holmfield Mills. Originally built by a number of entrepreneurs primarily for worsted spinning this site was chosen because of Strines Beck which supplied the water for steam generation, although when the Queensbury Tunnel was being built Strines Beck, which passed right down the centre of the cutting, was the greatest obstacle encountered because of constant flooding and overflow which required frequent diversion. The mills became under one ownership from 1929 and were known as Smith Bulmers and employed up to 600 people at its

peak. The mills were split up and sold off in the 1980's. As you face the Mills, try to imagine to the right of it was Holmfield Railway Station.

The station was opened by the Great Northern Railway on 14th October 1878 and closed to passengers 23rd May 1955 with goods facilities remaining via Queensbury until 28th May 1956 and via Halifax until 27th June 1960. Because it cut through the hillside to Queensbury, it was nicknamed the Alpine Route. Very little remains to show that this was once a busy country junction. The overbridge carrying Holdsworth Road at the northern end of the station still exists, with a flooded cutting stretching north from the bridge. The bridge walls show where the station access steps were.

Continue up Holdsworth Road where, on the left the school base was. The first school was St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Secondary School, opened in August 1957. It was formally opened by the Bishop of Leeds on 14 December 1957. The first headmaster being Jim O'Reilly. The school later became known as Halifax Catholic High School in 1971. Its last name change was in 2000, when it was renamed Saint Catherine's Roman Catholic High School. The school then closed in August 2013. With the last assembly held at St Catherine's in July 2013. The students were merged with Trinity Academy Halifax in September 2013.

The second school as you walk up Holdsworth Road was Holy Trinity Church of England secondary school. Work on the School began in April 1961 and the school opened on 1st of May 1962. It became Holy Trinity Secondary Modern School in 1965 and then a comprehensive school in 1975.

Before continuing to look at the school base, on the right is the Grade II listed building, Holdsworth House. The site, on which the house now stands, was first mentioned in documents as far back as 1272 when the De Aldworth family paid 2½ pence for 2½ acres of land in the hamlet. Families of wealth and distinction occupied the land. One such owner was the rich but unfortunate Vicar of Halifax, Dr Robert Haldesworth, who was murdered by thieves at Halifax vicarage in 1556. Haldesworth was buried in the south chapel of the Halifax Parish Church, now the Halifax Minster. Over the years Holdsworth House has also been used for filming television programmes and has had many famous visitors, including The Beatles who visited on 9th October 1964.

Although it was the first school to be built, being opened in August, 1952, the third school was J.H. Whitley Secondary Modern, named in honour of another Ovenden born person who made an impact far beyond North Halifax, John Henry Whitley. Whitley was born on the 8th of February 1866 the son of Nathan Whitley from Ovenden. Nathan went on to serve as Mayor of Halifax from 1876 to 1877. John Henry Whitley became Liberal Member of Parliament for Halifax in 1900. In 1917, during the First World War I, Whitley was appointed to chair a committee to report on 'the Relations of Employers and Employees' in the wake of the establishment of the Shop Stewards Movement. The smooth running of industry was vital to the war effort so maintaining good industrial relations was a priority. He proposed a system of regular formal consultative meetings between workers and employers, known to this day as "Whitley Councils". These would be empowered to cover any issue related to pay and conditions of service, and to take matters through to arbitration if necessary. This was a strong model which was to influence industrial relations beyond the UK.

The Halifax Technical High School was the top school, formed in 1957. This was before its Moorbottom Road premises were completed and opened in May 1959 by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds. It had around 725 boys and girls. It became the Highlands School in 1969, changing to the Highlands Grammar School and then the North Halifax High School which was formed with the 1985 amalgamation of the Highlands Grammar School and the Princess Mary

School. Around 1993/4 the school changed its name from North Halifax High School to North Halifax Grammar School. You will see Highlands Lane which is a reminder of the school's history after you pass North Halifax Grammar.

Here you have 2 choices.

1. Turn left down Whitehill Road eventually leading you to the Ivy House where you will take a right and follow Shay Lane. (see Trail 4.)
2. Go forward to the end of Whitehill Road and turn left down Keighley Road back towards Cousin Lane back to OSCA