

## A WALKABOUT AT OSSETT COMMON

Friday 16th July 2010. Myself, Steve Wilson and Richard Glover met at Alan's house on Hags Hill Road about 10.00am. We had a route pretty much planned, which would take us up the old Hags Lane, along the Lights Beck, up Baptist Lane and down Spa Lane. The weather was quite grey, with a bit of light drizzle now and again, with a moderate drizzle shower towards the end of our walk.

We first of all spent some time looking at a magazine article which Richard had brought along regarding a Roman road on the western side of Huddersfield. Richard thinks (and I agree) that it could be the road which leads through Ossett, down past Runtlings and across the ford in the Calder.

We set off on our walk, and went up the present Teall Court, where Alan showed us where the old houses on Hags Hill Road used to stand. Amazing to look and see no sign of them whatsoever - a reminder of how easily the past can disappear without a trace. He had a map from 1970 which had the new estate laid over the original map of the area, and this was helpful in clearly showing how the area had changed. The new estate bears no relation whatsoever to the original route of the road.



From there we moved further along the old Hags Lane, to the rear of Hags Hill Farm. I was quite surprised to see that the old lane was bounded on either side by a very old looking stone wall, now greatly reduced in height. This was clearly an old lane, and from the width I would say it was quite an important thoroughfare. Now it runs straight into the embankment of the M1 motorway. I made a mental note to return one day to measure the width of this road. It was obviously made wide enough to take wheeled traffic, and the stone wall made me think it must have been a major route. A date is difficult to put on the walls, but I have a feeling of at least 18th century. An important piece of Ossett's history, hidden away and forgotten about.

*From here we moved along across the old spoil heap from Roundwood colliery, towards Lights Beck, and the place marked on Richard's map as "Bucktrap". He says this is where deer from the New Park would be held if they strayed. We had walked roughly along the line of the old Roundwood Road, where it had met with a junction at Hags Lane.*

*We then made our way down towards the lower end of Baptist Lane. I could not help but notice how high the motorway embankment seemed, and this must be one of Ossett's largest earthworks. At the bottom of Baptist Lane there was a drain cover which had been lifted, complete with surrounding brickwork, by the torrential downpours we had a couple of nights ago. An indication of how much water had fallen. We went up the lane and had a look at the old Baptist burial ground, which was bulldozed and destroyed by a local developer a few years ago. It was disappointing to see the old gravestones scattered, half buried. For no gain. This is in my eyes purely an act of pointless vandalism. There is now no way of knowing where the bodies are buried, and this should never have happened. It did cross my mind whether it was worth starting a project to recover some dignity for the site by placing all the stones in some sort of display around the edges, but I realise there would be little support for this, and no doubt it would just attract local vandals to do further damage.*



*We had a look at the old single-storey cottage on the junction of Spa Street and Baptist Lane. I have never looked at this in much detail before, and Richard informed us that he has an old photograph from about 50 years ago. He said it had fireplaces in it. The cottage has been renovated and restored in recent years, but it looks to me like it is still used as an animal shelter. However at least it has been salvaged and preserved for the future.*

*We moved down Spa Street and looked at Whinfield Terrace. We have come to the conclusion that this must have been erected sometime in the 1860's probably, and in connection with the spa. According to Alan's research it was built by a Mr Dews, who lived in Whinfield House, which we believe is the single structure at the far end of the terrace, now two homes. The research also shows that he built a terrace of houses which was along the roadside at the bottom end of Whinfield Terrace.*

*Across the road was Ginns Mill (1850's OS). Now site of the present day Wilkes Vending. On 1850's OS it is described as corn mill, but by the 1890 OS it is called Hope Mill and is shown as*

*mungo. Clearly a change of hands has occurred. Also the later map appears to show more buildings. It had been enlarged during the intervening period.*

*We moved on to Spa Lane, where we went to visit a gentleman called John Myers, who was interested in knowing more about the Spa Inn. I had copied him some details of this and other relevant items (maps, spa etc) for his area. He showed us the remains of the Spa Mills which are on his property. These are not on the 1850's OS, but are there on the 1890 OS. We saw what was remaining of the old engine house, and I was amazed to see the size of the old stones which must have borne the weight of the old steam engine which was used to power the mill. He showed us the square iron-lined holes through which the traction passed to power the machinery in the mill. According to 1890 OS it was a woollen mill. It would have been owned by Dews at this time. The bricks looked to be hand-made. Mr Myers said he demolished the top section of the remaining wall, and pushed them into one side of the dam to enable him to turn vehicles round in the yard. We thanked him for his time and hospitality, and went on to look at the remains of the old spa.*

*The spa lies at the back of F. C. Burrows Roofing. It is now only a low circle of stone, with an entrance gap at one side. The centre has what looks like a funnel type entrance to the shaft, with a modern concrete slab covering it. The inside of this funnel was orange coloured from the iron in the water. The spa was chalybeate, which means iron-bearing. I found it very disappointing to think that this once VERY important piece of local history could be left neglected and forgotten like this. We had to clear away the weeds etc to be able to get to it and photograph it. Something like this really ought to be preserved.*

*We did intend to look at what may be the site "round house" on the 1795 manor map, but decided to save that for another day, the following week. This is in the fields, near to the spa. We walked further along Spring End to what was described by Mr Myers as the site of an old hotel, just past the Horbury boundary. There definitely was something there, but it was beyond our boundary for the day. On our way to this we looked at the point where two watercourses meet, Lights Beck and the beck which runs down dividing Horbury from Ossett. This is just past Spring Field mills (present day Spring End mills), at the side of the road.*

*We went back to the Fleece for lunch, but it was closed so we moved on to the Little Bull, also closed. Further back along Teall Street we looked at Kirkwell House, and noted the name which must mean a well connected with the church. Alan then took us to look at an old cottage at the rear of Hope Cottages (1890 OS), a single storey building which, to me, looked of great age. This concluded our walk, and we went back to Alan's to collect the cars and go to the Silver King for a well earned pint and bite to eat, and discussion on the morning's observations.*

*It was a good walk as it was in an area which I have never really explored on foot, in a historical sense. There are many features which could lead to various research projects. We are quite keen to find out what the "round house" is on the 1795 manor map. We believe it was probably an engine house for pumping colliery water or air. Mr Myers seems to think there is some stone still there in the edge of the field, and this will hopefully be included in the route of our next walkabout.*