

THE MARSDEN FAMILY OF OSSETT AND HORBURY¹

The Old Halfway House and Matty Marsden Lane Horbury - Who was Matty Marsden?

The Old Halfway House Horbury stands at the junction of Westfield Road and Matty Marsden Lane but for much of the 19th century, and before, this stretch of Westfield Road was known as Denton Lane. The building displays signs of several alterations over the years and includes some stonework along the road frontage which suggests 18th Century beginnings.



The Old Halfway House with Matty Marsden Lane to the right

At that time Denton Lane began at this building and ended in Ossett Parish at the junction of the roads now known as Horbury Road and Sowood Lane Ossett. Along Denton Lane, closer to Ossett than to Horbury, stood Sowood Farm which in the late 16th century was occupied by the Denton family who worked and lived at the farmstead. Sadly tragedy struck the farm and the Dentons and several more from Sowood and Ossett died in summer 1593 when they contracted the Plague, The Black Death.

The Dewsbury Parish Burial records of the time reveal that thirteen people, including eight Dentons, were buried of the plague at Denton's House. This tale is pertinent to the story of Matty Marsden Lane because it is a reminder that pathways, bridleways, roads and lanes were often named after the people who lived there or close by. It is also pertinent because it meant that Sowood Farm was no longer occupied and that new tenants were required to work the farm which some believe was the site of an earlier Medieval manor

¹ This history is one of several about the Marsden family published by Alan Howe in 2012 including the histories of Sowood Farm and Rock Cottages

At the end of the 16th and throughout most of the 17th century Sowood Farm would be in decline. The buildings, almost certainly timber structures, were old and neglected and it was almost 100 years before any serious efforts were made to renew the farmstead. In the early 1680's farmer **Francis Marsden (1651-1718)**² left Penistone parish with his wife and three children and journeyed the 20 miles to Ossett to rent land and a farm "under Storrs Hill" from Thomas Beatson who was considering a future elsewhere at New Hall Overton.

By 1689 Francis Marsden had built or rebuilt Sowood Farm and he had three more children all of whom were baptised at Dewsbury. Of his six children, John the eldest and William the youngest were the only boys. They, their father and their descendants were to leave a significant legacy on the Storrs Hill landscape in the next 100 years.

Francis Marsden died in 1718 leaving his son **John Marsden (1679-1735)** to work Sowood whilst young William (1689-1757) went to farm at Hallcliffe, with his brother in law William Pollard. William Marsden died a bachelor without issue but John Marsden was a father of ten children including the eldest child, also named John (1704-1742) and a second son named **Joseph Marsden (1714-1758)**. Six of John's ten children were boys.

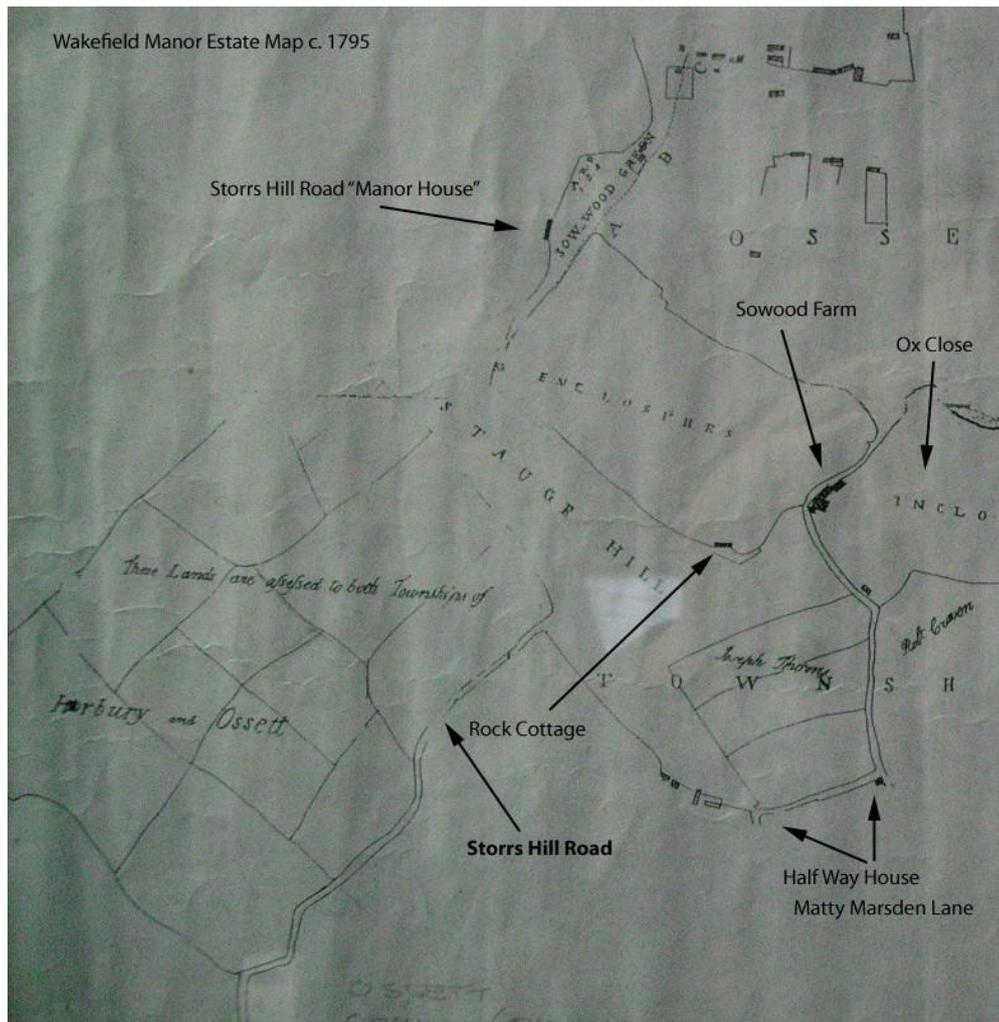
As was the custom in those days the eldest son inherited most of the father's estate and so it was in 1735 that John Marsden inherited Sowood Farm leaving the rest of the children to find their own way in the world and often this meant they must seek their fortunes elsewhere. For Joseph Marsden, the second son, this meant him leaving Sowood and making a new home in nearby Horbury. When he died in 1758 Joseph Marsden was referred to as being "of the Township of Horbury " and in his Will he left to his wife, Mary, his dwelling house and the land upon which it was built, which was "held under" (rented from) Anby Beatson of New Hall. This land was on Storrs Hill and was probably the same land which Joseph's grandfather Francis had worked earlier.

Joseph Marsden had nine children but only three were to survive him. The youngest and only surviving boy was Francis, or **Frank Marsden (1751-1797)** who was five years of age when his father died. It is likely that he continued to live with his mother, Mary (nee Peace) and two other surviving siblings at their home on Storrs Hill where they eked out a living from farming the land left to them by their father.

Joseph also left an inventory with his Will which records the contents of his home and whilst it is clear that his dwelling is in Horbury and on Storrs Hill the actual location is not certain. By 1775³ Frank Marsden is 24 years old and farming about 28 acres of Horbury land including the 4 acre Sallot Royd field situated on the east side of Denton Road and a 4 acre "close under the house". The same 1775 record shows that "Mrs Marsden" was also farming land in Horbury mainly in the area close to the River Calder. The Ossett Valuation 1775 records a Widow Marsden renting land with the same field names from Edward Oates and it is thought that Mrs Marsden and Widow Marsden were one and the same – the widow of Francis Marsden of Sowood Farm. The land shown in the 1775 records for Ossett and Horbury were in the area shown on the map (below) denoted by "These lands are assessed to both Townships of Horbury and Ossett".

² Francis probably lived close to the Silkstone boundary with Penistone – almost certainly within a mile radius of Oxspring.

³ The Horbury Tithe 1775



The map (c 1795) is interesting too because it shows a building at the junction of Denton Lane (Westfield Road) and Matty Marsden Lane and other buildings further south on what is now known as Matty Marsden Lane but then may have been part of an old, perhaps ancient, route from Storrs Hill (Stauge Hill) to Horbury town. Note too that the map shows that the lane adjoining Denton Lane is depicted as a more substantial route than the stretch adjoining Storrs Hill Road. This suggests that the main access to the buildings shown there was from Denton Lane.

The evidence is that Francis or Frank Marsden was living on Storrs Hill and working land there and on the east side of Denton Lane. The 1795 Estate Map shows buildings in which he may have been living. One of those buildings is the one which sometime later would become the Halfway Beerhouse.

By 1778 Frank had married **Martha** (nee Kirshaw) and by the time of his death in 1797 he was the father of nine children aged between one and nineteen. The eldest was also called **Martha** Marsden (1778-1852) after her mother. Consequently in 1797 Martha Marsden was a widow with nine children. No evidence has emerged that she re-married after 1797 and it is likely therefore that she remained living at her home on Storrs Hill. Four of Martha's children were boys. One died in the 1797, the same year as his father, two others went off to Cumberland and Bradford, but the youngest boy, **Benjamin Marsden (1790-1867)** remained living in Horbury until about 1820 when he moved to Healey in Ossett.

Benjamin Marsden had eight children and only his eldest child, Francis or **Frank Marsden (1817-1886)** was baptised in Horbury before his father moved to Ossett. The 1841 Census records this Frank living in the only Horbury parish dwelling on Denton Lane. *This property can only be the*

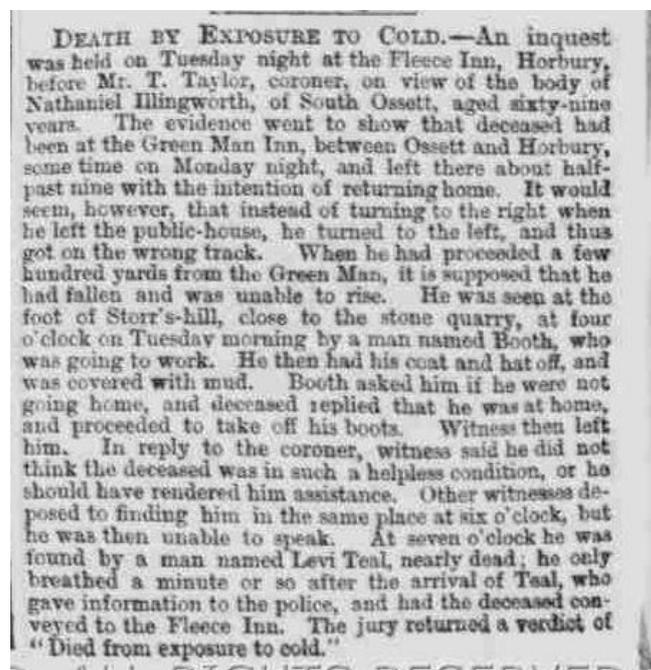
building which was to become the Halfway Beerhouse. Frank must have left Horbury to live in Ossett with his parents in about 1820 but he returned to Denton Lane perhaps in 1837 when he married Eliza Wilby.

The 1848 Horbury Tithe Book records plot numbers 240, 241 and 242 in the ownership of Thomas Marsden (Frank's younger brother) and in the occupation of Frank Marsden. The reason for this is perhaps apparent in the events of 1851 recorded below. The plots are described as "House & Yard, Garden, Croft and Shop". The 1857 Tithe Book shows that ownership has passed to George Thompson but the occupier is Frank Marsden suggesting that he and his family were still living there. The description of the three plots numbered 240, 241 and 242 is *Halfway Beer House, Cottage, Cow House etc, Garden and croft*.

By 1851 Frank Marsden is in York Castle Debtors' Prison and the London Gazette of 6th June 1851 records that *Frank Marsden (sued with John Wilson) late of Horbury...out of business, a prisoner for debt...cloth manufacturer in co-partnership with John Wilson.. under the style of Messrs Wilson and Marsden and also in co-partnership with David Clafton, Joseph Wilby and John Wilson in Power and Machinery in the Victoria Spinning and Slubbing Mill...*

Frank's wife, Eliza, and their children continued to live at the dwelling in 1851 (which by now has an address of Westfield Road) but by 1857 the property is named the Halfway Beer House and it has the same description in the 1861 Census. By this time Francis has been released and is working as a rag grinder and living on Horbury Road Westgate Wakefield where he was to spend of his life. He died in 1886.

In 1866 the following press report from the Leeds Mercury on 1st February 1866 suggests that the Halfway Beer house has changed its name to *The Green Man*



DEATH BY EXPOSURE TO COLD.—An inquest was held on Tuesday night at the Fleece Inn, Horbury, before Mr. T. Taylor, coroner, on view of the body of Nathaniel Illingworth, of South Ossett, aged sixty-nine years. The evidence went to show that deceased had been at the Green Man Inn, between Ossett and Horbury, some time on Monday night, and left there about half-past nine with the intention of returning home. It would seem, however, that instead of turning to the right when he left the public-house, he turned to the left, and thus got on the wrong track. When he had proceeded a few hundred yards from the Green Man, it is supposed that he had fallen and was unable to rise. He was seen at the foot of Sterr's-hill, close to the stone quarry, at four o'clock on Tuesday morning by a man named Booth, who was going to work. He then had his coat and hat off, and was covered with mud. Booth asked him if he were not going home, and deceased replied that he was at home, and proceeded to take off his boots. Witness then left him. In reply to the coroner, witness said he did not think the deceased was in such a helpless condition, or he should have rendered him assistance. Other witnesses deposed to finding him in the same place at six o'clock, but he was then unable to speak. At seven o'clock he was found by a man named Levi Teal, nearly dead; he only breathed a minute or so after the arrival of Teal, who gave information to the police, and had the deceased conveyed to the Fleece Inn. The jury returned a verdict of "Died from exposure to cold."

Even the tragic case of Nathaniel Illingworth has a Marsden connection for he was the great great grandson of Francis Marsden who built Sowood Farmhouse in 1689. He was also married to Fanny Clafton who may have been a relative of the David Clafton who was a business partner of Francis Marsden pre 1851.

The 1871 Census records the Public House once again as the Halfway House suggesting that *The Green Man* name had not long survived. The origin of the name will be lost in time but the change of name may have coincided with the arrival of the landlord, John Nichols, from Sleaford Lincolnshire who, in 1861, describes himself as a fish dealer and beer house keeper. Was *The Green Man* a reminder to him of an earlier time in his life when he may have had an uncomfortable time learning the fish trade whilst working the boats?

By 1874 the lane, much to the annoyance of the Horbury Local Board, was being used by their Ossett equivalent to tip household refuse suggesting that the adjacent quarry had, by then, come to the end of its useful life⁴. This must surely have resulted in the strengthening of the lane's surface to allow vehicular (horses and carts) access and egress to the tip. There may also have been some widening to the lane although the 1795 map suggests some width to the lane even in those early days.

Conclusion

What can be made from the above information as it relates to the dwelling which became the Halfway beerhouse between 1851 and 1857 and does this have any bearing on the name of the adjacent Matty Marsden Lane?

It is certain that Frank Marsden (1817-1886) was living there by 1841 and he would have been there in 1851 were it not for a prior engagement at York Prison. It is also likely that Frank was born there like his father Benjamin Marsden (1790-1866) who probably lived there until his move to Ossett in about 1820. Benjamin's father, Frank Marsden (1751-1797) was working 28 acres of land on Storrs Hill and Denton Lane in 1775 and living in the house with his wife Martha Marsden and nine children including his eldest daughter who was also called Martha. This would be the house that Frank's father, Joseph Marsden (1714-1758) mentioned in his Will as being on Storrs Hill and rented from Anby Beatson of New Hall.

The building, now known as the Old Halfway House is shown on the Manor of Wakefield Estate map 1795 and today displays several building styles suggesting several extensions and some re-modelling over the years. Parts of the building do however suggest 18th Century construction and it is possible that this section of the building was constructed in about 1739 in readiness for Joseph Marsden to move into with his new bride, Mary Peace, who he married in Horbury on 5th January 1740.

The late Ken Bartlett, the renowned Horbury historian had this to say about Matty Marsden Lane.

via Hallcliff. The road from High Street to Ossett via Westfield Road had two names, Westfield road or lane from highfield road to The Half Way House, from Half Way House to the Ossett boundary it was called Denton Lane. The road then turned left through Sowood and the Green into Ossett. There was no Station Road that was built later. Matty Marsden lane is obviously called after someone of that name but in all my research I have not come across anyone of that name, either Matthew or Matilda. The Marsdens were an Ossett family mainly and Matty was probably an Ossett person. A branch of the Marsden family lived at Sowood Farm just over the Ossett boundary, their initials are on the lintel over the front door with the date 1689.

⁴ Neville Ashby from articles published in the Ossett Observer

Ken Bartlett had it almost correct but just 30 years or so ago he didn't have the resources available to him that can be accessed in the 21st century. Ken was searching for a Matthew or Matilda Marsden but, not surprisingly, he couldn't find one. That's because they don't exist. However a search of the several Family history websites now available will reveal many a Martha who is also known as Matty.

Closer to home in Horbury the name Matty was also in use in the late 18th/early 19th Century For example in November 1804 William, the son of William Rayner and *Matty* was baptised at Horbury. In January 1803 the same William Rayner and *Martha* had their son Joshua baptised at Horbury. They had only the two children it seems.....unusual except that on 4th December 1805 Martha Rayner wife of William Rayner was buried at Horbury. This demonstrates that Matty was an alternative name for Martha and also that the name was in use in Horbury.

Even Wikipedia has it that Matty is an alternative name for Martha.

This study has revealed two women called Martha Marsden. The first was *Martha Marsden*, the wife of Frank Marsden (1751-1797) living on Storrs Hill from about 1780 and probably at the dwelling which became the Halfway beerhouse. Martha was widowed in 1797 when she was mother of nine children, one a babe in arms and the eldest, also called *Martha Marsden* (1778-1852). This fact alone, a 39 year old widow with nine young children, may have been sufficient for her to be remembered in the name of the lane adjacent to her home.

That she also had a daughter named Martha Marsden may have led to one of them becoming known as Matty to differentiate one from the other. Martha junior married in 1802 so it is likely that the two Martha Marsdens lived there for (at least) 20/25 years The lane itself is likely to be an 18th century creation, linking Denton Lane to an old, perhaps ancient, route across Storrs Hill to Horbury town. This lane would also have allowed access to the dwellings on this old route which are shown on the 1795 Estate map. Although no evidence of this has emerged, it is also possible that some or all of the 18th century dwellings shown on the 1795 map along the lower stretch of Matty Marsden Lane were built by and occupied by the Marsden family. The lane, already established by 1795, would thus be well used by the Marsdens and this too may have been further reason for the naming of the Lane.

Lanes need names and what better description than one which links a person's abode to the location of the lane. Matty Marsden lived at the junction of Denton Lane and a lane with no name. Are these the reasons why it became Matty Marsden Lane?

A final comment and acknowledgement. Horbury history owes a huge debt to the tireless and quite remarkable work of the late Ken Bartlett, a man very much ahead of his time. Had he lived longer he would have found the answer he sought much sooner than 2012. As it was the transcription of the documents he termed "Horbury Fields" was part of his legacy to us and one which has been the light along the way.

This research and these findings are a nod to him, and to my grandson, Jack Wild, who whilst walking with me along Matty Marsden Lane one day in August 2012 *insisted* I discover Matty's identity. For Ken and Jack.....this is my best effort.

Alan Howe

November 2012

