

## BLACKSHAWHEAD PACKHORSE AUDIO E-TRAIL SCRIPT

### Stop 1: Blackshawhead Village.

As you look out from the bus shelter to Long Causeway, take a few minutes to imagine the village as it was. Although all the buildings in the village are now occupied for domestic use, many had commercial functions in the past, so as you listen try to imagine a much busier village centre. The road through the village is called Long Causeway, a major packhorse route between Halifax and Burnley, which you'll hear more about later.

The building opposite was The Shoulder of Mutton Public House, once a popular stop – off place for cattle drovers using the Long Causeway. There was a pasture for the cattle - now a row of houses on Causeway Fold - and a barn for shelter when the weather was bad. This was not the only pub in the village, an indication of how busy it was, and how many people - and animals - passed through. To your right is Blue Ball Cottage and House, previously the Friendly Inn, which in its time has also been home to a butcher's shop, post office and café.

Further along Long Causeway at the top of Davy Lane, the disused piece of land was the site of a textile mill. Powered by coal, it provided gas as a bi-product to light Blackshawhead Chapel. To the left of the bus stop is the large white building of Hamer Cottage which has had various functions - as well as cottages, it served time as a sweet shop, a butcher's shop and a café.

When you reach the Calderdale Way, stop to look at the row of 4 cottages opposite which once housed a Coop and a Post Office. The village was famously cut off in 1947 by horrendous snow drifts, and there are amazing photos of "The Relief of Blackshawhead" showing horses pulling sledges, struggling through Wragley Woods to get vital provisions to the Coop and the stranded village residents.

The village is still a thriving community, but with many of its working age residents commuting to Leeds and Manchester, and no surviving shops or pubs in the centre, it is sometimes hard to imagine the busy, bustling place which existed in the past.

### Stop 2: The Long Causeway between Burnley and Halifax.

From Bronze Age track, this developed over time into a major trading route, paved with characteristic causeway stones. Settlements tended to form along the shelf of a valley and for generations the characteristic packhorse roads of this area were the only means of communication, but gradually developed into a much more complex series of trade routes. The packhorse roads tended to stay below the 1,000 feet level (Blackshawhead stands at around 1300') to avoid the persistent cloud on the higher moors, and only descended to the valley floor when absolutely necessary, often to gain a crossing point as we'll see later in Hebble Hole.

The Long Causeway was probably based on a Bronze Age track, but over time developed into a major trading route linking Halifax and Burnley. There are Long Causeways around the country, named after the long, continuous stretches of pavement. This was very much a textile area – mainly woollens - and the weaving hamlets along the route of the Long Causeway are commemorated in this old Rhyme:

Burnley for ready money,  
Mereclough nooa trust,  
Yo tekken a peep at Stirperden,  
But Ca'at Keps yo must.  
BlackshawYed for travellers,  
An Heptonstall for trust,  
Hepton Brig for landladies,  
And Midgely on the Moor.  
Luddenden's a warm shop,  
Roylehead's varry cold,



And if yo go to Halifax  
Yo mun bi varry bold.

The industry would have begun in a very simple way, with each individual, and often isolated, farmer-cum-weaver spinning the wool from his sheep, then weaving it at home on a hand loom. Once the farmer had enough for his own family, he would tramp across the hills to market, with his cloth slung over his back, or if he was lucky leading a horse or pony to take the weight.

As the industry expanded, weavers collected into settlements, and the area has numerous examples of collections of weavers cottages, still often isolated, but increasingly connected by new packhorse trails. By the 1840's, this cottage industry had been taken over by the mills – more about them later - and production escalated on a huge scale, with an increasingly complex network of routes needed to transport both the raw goods and the finished cloth. As well as wool, cotton was later imported from America, and further down Badger Lane the buildings of Cally Hall and Cally Cottages, reflect the presence of the calico industry there.

### **Stop 3: Blackhawhead Methodist Chapel.**

“A church at the heart of the community”, not just for weekly worship, but also community activities. In the early 1800's, there were 4 times as many inhabitants in Blackshawhead. To attend places of worship, they had to walk long distances, in all weathers, to Slack, Heptonstall, and Birchcliffe.

Mr John Gill, a resident at Apple Tree, further down the Calderdale Way, anxious about the spiritual welfare of the villagers, offered the use of his house for Sunday worship. Services were conducted by a Preacher or Leader, who read out 2 lines of a hymn which was then sung by the congregation, and so on to the end of the hymn, enabling the congregation, who for the most part couldn't read, to commit the hymns to memory. As the number of worshippers increased, the need for larger accommodation was felt. In 1813, the Reverend Mark Day went around the district to gauge the willingness of people to contribute towards building a chapel in the village.

A committee was formed, with “Economy” as their motto. They chose a piece of waste land, called Bull Green, with no apparent owner, avoiding the need to purchase the land; the design was based on the nearby chapel at Mankinholes, saving them architects' fees!; and volunteer labour was used, so that when the Chapel was finally built in 1815 – see the date carved above the front door - it cost the grand total of £801. 14s 9d.

Services were held every Sunday morning and evening, with a Sunday School for the children, catering for both their spiritual and educational needs, and a School building was added in 1838. The return for 1843 shows there were 66 teachers and 240 scholars.

The building has undergone several renovations and today is a vibrant place of worship which welcomes people of all faiths to its weekly services. The building also acts as a community centre for the village, and is used by a wide variety of groups. It truly is a Church at the Heart of the Community.

### **Stop 4: Causey Stones, causeways and pack horse trains.**

The stone paved causeways were the foundations of the packhorse trails which allowed goods to be transported over large areas by individual or trains of packhorses.

Now's time to clarify some terminology. A Causeway is the characteristic style of construction for packhorse trails over the Pennines. The original lines of many of the trails go back to the bronze age and artefacts dating back 3,000 years have been found along many of the routes. As the original tracks deteriorated over time with use, they were delineated and fortified with a stone pavement, which became known as a causey, and later a causeway, from the Old French “cauci” meaning a raised or paved way,.

Causey (or causeway) stones were strong rectangular flagstones from which the causeways were constructed. These were placed with the long edges at right angles to the track, so that the ponies could place their hooves in the centre of the stones, giving a much more stable track for the ponies and their heavy loads. Although placing



the stones short end on would have covered longer distances more cheaply, the ponies would have placed their hooves, and their weight, at one end, resulting in tilting or rocking stones, making progress slower and more precarious. The stones were laid in a single track, so the causeways were very narrow - typically between 24 – 27 inches wide. The wear and tear in the middle often resulted in a groove being worn away by the iron-shod hooves. Look out for that today as you walk.

The breed chosen tended to be the Galloway, often shortened to “Gals”, a breed from South West Scotland which, famed for its stamina, was particularly suited to hill country. Depending on the terrain, they could cover up to 30 miles a day, fully laden. This breed is sadly now extinct in the UK.

The load was usually carried in panniers, and the train of up to 30 to 40 horses would follow, in single file, the lead horse, or bell horse, with its collar of bells. As you walk this path today, especially in the parts where there are still causey stones visible, try to imagine the line of horses snaking its way along the single track of the Long Causeway with the bells ringing

With the advent of more advanced turnpike roads, you might think the packhorse trains would have transferred over to those routes. However, with the need for feeding and shelter along the way, plus expensive tolls, it often made more sense to stick to the established trails.

Raw materials and finished products still had to be transported to and from scattered areas, and the spiders web of trails that had sprung up over the years was more effective for this than the new roads which were designed for getting quickly from a to b.

## **Stop 5: Stoodley Pike Monument - one of the oldest towers dedicated to peace in the world.**

The monument can be seen from many parts of the Calder Valley, and will follow you today for most of the route, giving you different perspectives along the way. Rumours and myths abound as to the history of “The Pike”, as it is affectionately known locally, and indicate that there had originally been a cairn at the site.

Stoodley Pike itself rises 1,310 feet above sea level and would have provided an ideal lookout point. One theory is that in the 17th century there was a beacon on the site, one of a chain including Beacon Hill, Halifax and Pendle Hill in Lancashire, which could be lit to warn of invading Spaniards.

The first monument was erected to commemorate the surrender of Paris to the Allies in March 1814. The money was raised by public subscription. It was 37yards 2 feet and 4 inches high, with 156 steps leading to the top, where there was a small room with seating and a fireplace, where those who made it to the top could enjoy magnificent views. Vandalism, a lightning strike which cracked the walls, and its exposed position led to the collapse of a large portion of the tower on February the 8th 1854.

The Halifax Guardian described the fall as “An evil Omen” as, on the same date, the Russian Ambassador left London before war with Russia was declared. But within a week, discussions started with a view to building a new monument, along with a road up to it for carriage approach. By June 1st 1854, the design of local architect James Green was approved and accepted.

There was an obsession with Egyptology at the time, and the trustees had asked for an obelisk theme to the design. The one at Stoodley Pike was to be 120 feet high, with 39 steps up to a viewing gallery running round the monument at a height of 40 feet. This was to be topped with a square pillar in obelisk form rising a further 80 feet. The new monument was sited further back from the hill edge, to give it some protection from the elements, and was finally completed in 1856 when peace was declared at the end of the Crimean war, reinforcing the monument’s reputation as a “Peace Monument”

Repairs, including a lightning conductor, were done in 1889, and it was partially rebuilt in 1918. The monument still stands today, proudly dominating the hilltop from all directions. Now that you know the history, you’re most



likely to want to walk up to the monument and explore it for yourself. There are numerous walks of varying lengths available.

## Stop 6: Lumb Bank.

Once home to a Mill Manager, a Poet Laureate, and now a centre for aspiring writers. Lumb Bank is halfway down the wooded valley and dates from the 1820's when a mill manager lived there. By now, textile production had moved a long way from the cottage industry of the packhorse trails. The mill workers' cottages were further down in the valley, so the manager could keep an eye on his employees going to and from work. There were 3 mills – now in ruins – making black cloth for widows' garments. The last manager left in 1918.

In 1968, the former poet laureate, Ted Hughes, bought the house, partly because his parents lived in a house called The Beacon, a short climb away. Ted had spent his childhood nearby in Mytholmroyd and knew this area well. In his poem "Stubbing Wharf", he described Lumb Bank as "an eyrie over the crevasse of trees and water"

Lumb Bank is now an Arvon Centre, which runs residential courses for aspiring writers. The original Arvon Foundation concept of enabling young people to live and work with experienced writers started in Devon. Ted Hughes was invited to the last night of the first course there, and from then on was supportive of the venture.

This led to him leasing Lumb Bank to the Arvon Foundation as a northern centre in 1975. In 1989 the Foundation purchased the house, which stands in 20 acres of steep woodland. Set in its striking Pennine landscape of woods, rivers, fine stone houses and weavers' cottages, packhorse trails and the ruins of old mills, it is hardly surprising this has inspired so many writers, not just to write stories and novels but songs as well?

There is an option to do a short detour to Lumb Bank later on, for those of you who may have an interest in Ted Hughes or the centre itself.

## Stop 7: Bow Lane.

An ancient Holloway intersecting the Long Causeway. Watch out for the Boggarts! As you step out onto Bow lane, look upwards where this steep unmetalled footpath and bridleway continues uphill to meet Badger Lane.

The local name for the Lane is Boggart Lane. "Boggarts" were household sprites who lurked in remote places waiting to attach themselves malevolently to hapless travellers. You may not encounter any Boggarts today, but watch out for walkers, cyclists and horse riders on this popular bridleway, part of both the Pennine Bridleway and the Mary Townley Loop.

It is more likely the name comes from the Old English word "boga" meaning "bow" referring to the long natural curving profile of the lane. The Old English period spans the fifth century to the Norman Conquest in the mid 11th century, indicating that Bow Lane has been a well used thoroughfare for at least a thousand years, possibly longer. It was most likely used by travellers on foot, or with pack animals, who would have chosen this shorter, but harder, straight route

The Lane was certainly an important local route, intersecting here with the Long Causeway and linking many paths from the south to Hudson Mill Road, the Colden Valley below, and on to the other side of the valley.

You will notice that the lane surface is several feet lower than the level of the fields on either side, as it is in fact a Holloway, formed where the surface of a track was not protected by a laid causeway, causing erosion from the daily pounding of hooves. Holloways are therefore one of the best indicators of the use of a route as a packhorse track, and the depth is a further indication of both the importance and the age of that route.

Take a few seconds before you move on to visualise the pack struggling up Bow Lane – but don't hover too long or the Boggarts might get you!



## Stop 8: The Colden Valley.

The Colden Valley. The scattered communities on each side of the valley were brought together as more and more trails appeared and crossed the river below. Handloom weaving in this valley, was replaced by 13 water powered textile mills during the Industrial revolution.

This valley has been a long time in the making, and three hundred and twenty million years ago the region was a shallow tropical sea. It has undergone many changes since – instead of the sheep you see grazing in the fields nowadays, try to imagine arctic weather with mammoths and woolly rhinoceros shambling along the valley; or a later warm interglacial period with herds of straight-tusked elephants grazing and hippopotamus schools wallowing in the river!

In medieval times most people survived by farming. In the Calder valley these farmsteads were mainly built on the shoulder land, where you're now standing, between the top of the steep tree-lined valley and the hilltop moors. This land was less steep, and more fertile than the moor. Once the trees and stones had been cleared, an enclosure would be formed and a dwelling built. Early dwellings were built of timber, but as time went on, and supplies of timber became scarce, these were often encased, or rebuilt, in stone.

Not all farms prospered, and many had to look for other sources of income. The cottage industry that became the second income to farmers in our valley was handloom weaving. Weaver's dwellings were scattered about the valley but became less isolated as the system of paths, and later proper trails, enabled the residents spread out on each side of the valley to make contact with each other and to exchange goods and services. If you look 45degrees diagonally to the right, you can see 2 sizable rows of weaver's cottages at Knowle Top and Long Hay Top. If you come back on the bus, look out for those.

Looking over this green and pleasant valley now, it is hard to imagine that it was once home to no fewer than 13 mills in the valley bottom – dark satanic mills where children worked long hours in dreadful conditions.

## Stop 9: Hudson Mill.

From 13th century corn mill, to 16th century Fulling mill, and finally Spinning and Weaving in the 19th century. The mill is said to have been named after Thomas Hudson who was the grieve or Tax collector of Heptonstall around 1570. However the earliest mention is of a medieval corn mill belonging to John de Sothill on the site in a document dated 1353.

A mill of one variety or another has stood on this site for over 700 years. In the early days it would have been a corn mill, forming part of the "Manor of Rawtenstall with Blackshaw" that stretched from "Coldeynmythm to Blackshawhead".

A reference to a fulling mill on or near the site appears in 1571, in the will of Thomas Hudson. A fulling mill was where wool was cleaned to remove oils, dirt and other impurities, making it thicker. Slightly rounded hammers, driven by a waterwheel, pounded the wool and gradually turned it, so all the cloth was the same thickness. In Roman times, fulling was carried out by slaves, standing ankle deep in tubs of cloth and human wee! Urine helped in cleansing and whitening the cloth, and was so important to the fulling business that it was taxed!

The final process was to carefully dry the wool so that it didn't shrink. To do this the fuller would place the wet cloth on a large wooden frame or 'tenter'. The perimeter of the cloth would then be attached to the frame using hooks so that it would retain its shape and size. From this process we derive the saying 'being on tenterhooks', meaning to be held in suspense.

Anyway, returning to Hudson Mill, it was rebuilt after a fire in 1802 and was then used both for cotton spinning and 'the shelling of oates'. In later years it became a mill for weaving, dyeing and finishing fustian cloth. According to an article published in 'The Outfitter' in 1893, there were 135 looms in operation at the mill and 50 workers – a large enterprise. The trade journal commented that the owner's trademark was very well known and that the firm had earned its reputation from what were known as 'partridge cords'.



There also used to be a toll house here, but for the last 100 years the road has been closed to traffic. Much of the mill has been demolished – what remains is now a private house and the site of the mill dam.

### Stop 10: Colden Water and Hebble Hole.

A fabulous example of an early packhorse bridge, over the river forming the boundary between Heptonstall and Stansfield townships. Colden Water runs along a five mile stretch from its beginnings on bleak and barren moorland at Black Hambleton to where it meets the river Calder at Mytholm (on the outskirts of Hebden Bridge ). Black Hambleton forms another boundary, that which divides the counties of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

We have already mentioned the number of mills along its length, and the Colden waters were crucial to many of their survivals, giving up its water to help to turn the machinery, and then carrying the used water downstream.

The river is crossed here in Hebble Hole by the stone slab bridge you can see in front of you. There is a deal of controversy locally about this bridge, many referring to it as a clapper bridge. But if we are to believe Titus Thornber, it is actually a fine example of a clam bridge, carrying the Long Causeway over the River before Jack Bridge was built further upstream.

As you will see, Hebble Hole Bridge consists of 4 massive slabs, 2 lots of 2 side by side and end to end, supported on a huge boulder in the middle and clamped in place on the banks, giving this type of bridge its name.

You cannot help but be impressed by the effort that must have gone into acquiring 4 slabs of such similar size in the first place, getting these heavy slabs, sometimes weighing up to several tons, to the site, and then manoeuvring them into position – all without the lifting aids we have at our disposal nowadays.

People often wonder why there is an upright post in the middle of the bridge on the Blackshawhead side of the stream, The general opinion is that it was placed there to block any transport, such as the packhorses, once the turnpike road between Halifax and Burnley was built, in order to force them to use that road and generate more revenue from the tolls.

### Stop 11: Enclosures

Packhorse trails originally crossed open country, which was later divided up by field boundaries created by the practice of enclosures. Although some of the track you have walked today has gone across open fields, there are also long stretches bounded by walls and fences. All the original tracks would have gone over open countryside and moorland, and the ponies would have had adequate space to accommodate the bulky paniers balanced on either side of them.

However, the growing practice of the enclosure of lands affected the packhorse routes in several ways, as freeholders were allotted more and more areas of wasteland to turn over to cultivation. The division of previously open fields, common land and even moorland into enclosures interfered with the public's right to cross over them in all directions. The packhorse routes had resembled intricate spiders webs, branching off unhindered in whichever directions were needed to get goods to and from the required locations.

With the advent of enclosures, new, and fewer, public rights of way were set up to run between enclosures, and many of the old packhorse routes were lost in the newly created fields. The new routes had to be walled or fenced in, and also varied in width and construction, often causing problems for the progress of the ponies and their loads.

And so instead of branching out in all directions as before, the tracks were now confined to much fewer walled-in routes as far as the latest moor gate opening onto what remained of the wastes; but as the new routes did not always follow the old tracks, once they arrived at these open wastes, they would then have to do a diversion to find the old routes taking them further on their journey.



These changes, plus developments in the road system, would lead to the eventual demise of the packhorse train as a viable means of transporting goods around the country.

### **Stop 12: The Three- Cornered Field.**

The Three Cornered Field, originally called “The 3 Nook’d Field”. Many people walking past spot the stone carved with the words “Cathy’s tree” – don’t move on till you’ve found it - and think the plot is some kind of memorial garden in memory of Cathy.

Many people have tried to work this field to grow crops, or as pasture land, without much success. Current owner Eric -hence “Eric’s Folly” as it is fondly known locally- discovered this was due to numerous gigantic boulders hidden beneath the surface.

Deciding to develop the field into something more pleasing, Eric set about planting trees. He had to unearth these boulders and has amazing photographs showing him standing in holes taller than himself where he has miraculously managed to get them out with a system of pulleys and levers - Eric was an engineer by trade . Many of these boulders are scattered over the site as part of the new landscape he created.

To get a better view of the land, walk to the end and take the path going downhill along another edge of the triangle. There you can truly marvel at the enormous endeavour Eric undertook. He estimates he has spent more than 3,000 man hours, but in reality it was probably more. Please respect the fact this is private land and view it from the path rather than trample all over it. Then retrace your steps and carry on upwards, following the directions.

### **Stop 13: Windy Harbours.**

Resting places for weary packhorses and the teamsters to shelter from the inclement weather. If you’ve never come across one before, you might be perplexed to find a “harbour” in the middle of the countryside. But there are several examples of Windy Harbours along the Long Causeway and other packhorse trails.

These were simply resting places along the route, for times when the ponies had gone inclement weather which prevented the packhorse train from making any further progress. They were often found in a sheltered place, sometimes slightly off the main track which was more exposed to the weather. Remember that the surrounding area would have been much more open and exposed than it is today.

This Windy Harbour is interesting as it is situated very close to one of the important trading locations in Heptonstall. But not all the trains would have been starting from or stopping there, so it would have been used by those making longer journeys. There would be shelter for the teamster and his ponies, and somewhere to store the goods they were carrying. Although there were many Inns along the routes, these would more likely have been used by the dealers and traders, as they were too expensive for the men leading the packhorses.

### **Stop 14: Weaver’s Square and the Cloth Hall.**

Where much of the locally produced cloth would have set off on its journey, loaded on the backs of the packhorses.)

Although the square itself is relatively modern, completed in 1967, there are still a few surviving weavers’ cottages along one edge, and in other parts of Heptonstall. It is a fitting place to end today’s walk. Heptonstall was a major centre for the woollen trade, and much of the cloth produced in the weaver’s cottages scattered all over the area we have just walked, would have ended up being sold in the Cloth Hall further down the cobbles. Before you leave the walk, take a few minutes to imagine how busy it would have been where you’re standing now, with trains of packhorses coming and going, either following the route you’ve walked today, bringing in both raw and finished goods, or setting off with their laden panniers towards Blackshawhead and continuing along the Long Causeway to Burnley and beyond.

We hope you’ve enjoyed your walk today retracing the steps of some of the packhorse trains.