

CHARLESTOWN HISTORY AUDIO TRAIL SCRIPT

Track 1: The Stubbing Wharf Hotel

For the last 200 years the Stubbing Wharf pub has catered for traffic on the two highways that pass by on either side – the turnpike road from Halifax to Todmorden, and the trans-Pennine Rochdale Canal.

As the Industrial Revolution developed in the Upper Calder Valley, the hotel was enlarged and the adjacent barn and car park were used for a fortnightly cattle market.

During this time, the clientele of the Stubbing Wharf must have been a mixed crowd, as in 1918 the tenancy agreement for the new landlord specified that he must not allow any thieves or rogues to gather, in or around the Hotel. He must have taken this seriously as a sign found later during redecoration of the hotel read: "Swearing, improper language or other misconduct will not be permitted in this House."

A relative of one of Mytholmroyd's famous sons may have suffered as a result of this ruling. Forty years before Ted Hughes was born his grandfather was pulled drunk from the canal and proceeded to spend the rest of the evening in the hotel, wrapped in a sheet, singing contently to anyone who cared to listen. And just months before his death in 1998, Ted Hughes released *Birthday Letters*, his final collection of poems that documents his uneasy marriage to Sylvia Plath. One of the poems is entitled 'Stubbing Wharfe'. Sitting inside this empty pub on a cold winter's night in 1959, Hughes realized, metaphorically speaking, that the pair were "between the canal and the river".

Although the poem paints a grim picture of the area, at a time when the mills stood derelict, the mood is lifted with the arrival of five local men with sharp, black Yorkshire humour. That local spirit survives today at the Stubbing Wharf Hotel, which provides a warm welcome and a great selection of wines and real ales and home cooked food, making it an ideal beginning or end to your walk. As you make your way to stop 2, following the directions in your guide booklet, look out for where the river disappears into a tunnel.

Track 2: Whitely Arches

If you found yourself here 400 years ago you would have been very alarmed, as the bottom of this valley would have been an impassable area of marsh and dense woodland, alive with wildlife. This was no place for people. At the time travel was only possible along the ancient stone slab packhorse routes that ran along the hilltops. These dropped into the valleys when absolutely necessary, as was the case with Hebden Bridge, which was then just a bridge and a pub (the White Horse Inn which still stands today). 'Trains' of packhorses, up to 40 in number, would transport cloth, food and salt across the area and beyond.

Once the marshland was drained, as many different transport links as possible were created through the valley. A rough track between Todmorden and Hebden Bridge was superseded by a 1760 act of Parliament, establishing the Todmorden Turnpike Trust, with the aim of "diverting, altering, widening, repairing and amending the roads from Todmorden to Halifax". Work on the stretch of road through Charlestown was started in November 1760, but must have taken a long time to complete, because records show that in May 1768 Thomas Kershaw, who could not read or write, was paid thirteen guineas for a bridge over Jumble Hole Clough (the location of Track 7).

Although the Turnpike was an improvement (and perhaps because they had to pay to use it), local mill owners wanted a more efficient way of transporting goods and decided to build a canal cutting through the Pennines, to join up existing canal systems in Yorkshire and Lancashire. In the early days canal boats were not allowed to operate on Sundays or in the hours of darkness and heavy chains were fixed across the canal to prevent access. When traffic increased on the canal, these restrictions were relaxed. The 32-mile Rochdale canal was the motorway of its day, with 2000 barges transporting hundreds of thousands of tons of freight along its length each year. All the bridges were painted white, to avoid collisions!



Still not satisfied, another set of mill owners decided they needed a railway, and on the 1st January 1841 the Manchester and Leeds Railway Company opened up in the stretch between Littleborough and Hebden Bridge. How the railway was squeezed between the river, the turnpike and the canal is a fantastic feat of 19th century engineering. They ran the river through a stone-lined tunnel, which you passed on your way to this point, and built the central arch of the railway bridge so that it went down through the road and the tunnel underneath, with its foundations built on the riverbed.

As you make your way to stop 3, look for where the river re-emerges from the tunnel. It is said that the owner of the building you will pass on your right used to drop his digger into the river there and drive through the tunnel every 5 years, to clear it out. Have a think about why the canal widens out just before reaching Rawdon Mill Lock.

Track 3: Rawdon Mill Lock

The section of the canal that you have just passed was widened to allow barges to turn around after they had delivered their loads.

The whole area away to your right was the site of Callis Mill, one of the largest mills in the area, with a four storey spinning mill and weaving sheds. Although most of it has been demolished, you can still get some idea of its size.

Callis Mill was originally known as Rawdon Mill, hence the name of the lock. Christopher Rawdon was the millowner in the 1820s and he lived at nearby Underbank Hall, the venue for some serious upper class merry making, as you will discover in Track 6.

Businesses such as Callis Mill frequently changed hands, as fortunes were built up and lost. The last user was Cords Ltd, who patented and manufactured a cotton tyre fabric using the best Egyptian cotton.

The process was a revolution in tyre technology and allowed the first tubeless tyres to be made. The cotton process started at the top of the mill, moving downwards at an angle to eliminate knots. At this time the mill employed about 50 local people, working two 12-hour shifts, starting very early in the morning. The business was wound up in 1971, following the development of steel tyre innards.

Before you go on, spare a thought for two local men. Peter Crossley is said to have knocked down the 120 foot chimney with a sledgehammer, whilst the rest of the mill was knocked down by Brian Sutt, who had little experience of this level of demolition. Perhaps it seemed like a good idea at the time, and no doubt the pay was an incentive, but imagine the first morning when they looked up at that huge structure and wondered, "Where on earth do I start?"

On the way to stop 4 you will pass Callis Community Gardens, which is representative of many similar community sites set up in the area from the 1970s onwards, by those seeking an alternative lifestyle.

Track 4: Callis Bridge

Sniff the air and you'll soon know if you are in the right place. You are standing next to Eastwood Sewage Treatment Works, and also the Pennine Way, which comes down at this point from Stoodley Pike.

Because Hebden Bridge is in a valley, it has always had problems with flooding - the original marshland being testament to that. Because flooding is so frequent here, the level of the River Calder has been lowered and special perforated kerb stones fitted, so that water can drain back into the river.

The intake for the huge mill dam that powered Callis Mill has disappeared and the mill dam site has been made into a flood plain to limit water damage. The narrowboats moored on this stretch of the canal have used the flood plain to develop Callis Community Gardens.

So why was this area called Callis? There are a lot of suggestions but no one is absolutely sure. One theory is that comes from the latin term 'Callus', C-a-l-l-u-s, meaning a path hardened by the tread of wild beasts in forests

and mountains. A more likely suggestion is that it comes from a corruption of the word 'Calais', regularly seen on 19th century maps. This may explain why the buildings on the opposite side of the main road were named Dover Cottages!

Track 5: Underbank Hall

You are standing outside Underbank Hall, built in 1788 by Christopher Rawdon of Rawdon Mill fame, who we met at stop 3.

It doesn't look quite so grand now, having been split into 4 dwellings, but in its heyday many a party was thrown here, as Anne Lister recorded in her diary on 30 January 1823:

"... Yet this was outdone by the ball and supper at Mr James Rawdon's at Underbank last Monday. Twenty different sorts of wine, all sorts of fruit, French and Portuguese. None of the visitors ever saw anything so splendid. There were 85 persons there, 42 stayed the night, two ladies to each bed, the gents in one room, a warehouse, as E.B. called it, 'ye dormitory,' very comfortable, the floor covered with some mattresses, one for each gent, and plenty of covering or bed clothes; 45 sat down to breakfast there next morning - great betting and gambling - no long whist - nothing but shorts and Loo played all night and till ten next morning."

Anne Lister who lived at Shibden Hall in Halifax is probably most famous for her lengthy diaries, which she began writing at the age of 15. Besides recording things like the weather, social events and business interests, a sixth of the diaries were written in a secret code, containing the most intimate details about her personal life and relationships with other women.

Track 6: Jumble Hole Mill

Jumble Hole Clough is one of the most dramatic valleys and streams in the area. You'd be forgiven for walking through it unaware that it was an industrial powerhouse in the 19th century, including five mills and an elaborate water power system.

Jumble Hole Mill, the first of these, was used for dyeing silk. It was originally called Underbank Dyeworks and, not surprisingly, was owned by one Christopher Rawdon (of Rawdon Mill and Underbank Hall fame). On the 11th August 1899 the mill was destroyed by fire. As the Todmorden Almanac reported:

"Shortly after 5 o' clock this afternoon an outbreak of fire, most disastrous in its effects, occurred at Jumble Hole Dyeworks, occupied by Edward Steads & Sons, dyers and finishers. Only the bare walls of the works remained in about an hour from the time of the outbreak. Damage about £6000".

The mill was partly rebuilt, and used for bleaching, dyeing and finishing of blacks and colours; rayons; pongees; crepes; repps; cashmeres; brocades; honeycombes; mercerised stripes, muslins; lenos and doria shapes. A bonus point if you recognise all those fabric types!

The mill closed in the 1950s and today the building survives as private residences and workshops.

The remains of the mill dam, which fed water to the mill along a goit, or purpose built channel are above the mill, but the most obvious feature is the chimney. This was nearly pulled down in 2006 but was saved by an anonymous benefactor from Rochdale, who bought the chimney and repaired it. It is said that this person even employs his own steeplejack, to care for the many chimneys he owns around the country.

As you walk up the track, look for the hole in the wall to your right. This is the stone-lined goit that feeds water from the clough to the dam above Jumble Hole Mill.

Track 7: Spa Hole Mill

You are standing just below Spa Hole Mill, the second of the five mills of Jumble Hole Clough.



As you will see, there is very little left of the five-story Spa Mill built about 1788, just a few pieces of large dressed stone by the track side and the retailing wall of the dam above it. It used to be called Spa Hole Mill (and also Spoil Mill locally) where over the years cotton was spun and cord manufactured. During its operational years there would have been significantly fewer trees here, but 80 years later the mill has been reclaimed by nature.

Opposite Spa Mill you can see a patch of ivy between the track and the river. Amazingly this was the site of a terrace called Spa Hall, consisting of 8 back to back houses and one through dwelling. It's hard to believe now, but up to 50 people once lived here.

One local resident left some notes about the former residents.

There was Margaret Baxter who smoked a pipe with leaves in it, Dan Crabtree, who also kept a donkey (it's unclear whether this was in his house or not!), a District nurse and Frank Sutcliffe who "was something to do with ships and then drove the Cragg Vale bus". Frank apparently had a wonderful rose garden and kept a pet monkey!

Spa Mill closed in the 1920s and was demolished before the Second World War.

Track 8: Cow Bridge Mill

Beneath the top side of the bridge you can see the weir that fed the mill dam above Spa Mill. Looking beyond Cow Bridge you should be able to make out the footings of the five-storey Cow Bridge Mill. Over the years it was also known as Cowside Mill and Cow Brigg. In later years John Horsfall of Higher Underbank House owned it. Remember the name, as we will meet him again in track 11.

Next to the mill, where the road turns sharply right, were Cow Bridge Cottages. Here there were 5 dwellings for millworkers of a design unique to the Hebden Bridge area.

Due to the steep valleys and lack of flat land in the area, there was limited space for housing, which led to the development of over- and underdwellings. The upper storeys or overdwellings faced uphill while the lower story or under dwelling faced downhill with its back wall against the hillside (people often call these back to earth). If you look at the site of Cow bridge cottages you should be able to see where the larders once were and, if you look to the right of the terrace, you will see a set of steps up to the gallery that provided access to the overdwellings.

Track 9: A stone stairway

This magnificent set of steps which has three flights is one of the finest examples in the area. Whilst the steep, wet valleys of the Calder Valley provided ideal conditions for water powered weaving mills, many of the skilled workforce that were needed still lived up on the hillsides.

Dave Shepherd, a local archaeologist, explains why steps such as these were carved into the hillsides all around this area: "Well with industrialisation really, that's when the valleys came into their own. So you have got the canals, the railways, water power that gave way to steam and so you have got the gradual shift. It's the secret details of the valleys, so all those steeped sided gorges, like Hardcastle Craggs or the main Calder valley, when you look there are flights of steps going up all over the place. And it's when you had handloom weavers working in cottages above the deep valley. It was really when they couldn't compete with the other mills, so they had got to go and work in the mills everyday. They were all going up and down because you couldn't move house – there were no houses to move to. You walked to where the work was, so there are lines of steps and pathways that converge on it from all different directions from the upland hamlets. It's that kind of detail which is good. You can discover these things."

If you want to know what it felt like going up and down these steps to work every day, try climbing to the top and down again.

As you make your way up the track beyond Cow Bridge Cottages to stop 10, look down to your right and depending on how much foliage there is, you might be able to see the huge size of the mill dam for Spa Mill.



Track 10: Mount Olivet Chapel

The chapel opened in 1842 after occasional services which were held in the area since 1836. By 1876 there were 58 members. There is a picture of the Chapel on the front cover of your route guide.

Towards the end of the 19th century industry moved down to the valley floor and the mills of Jumble Hole closed. People also moved down to the valley so the Chapel was now in the wrong place and in 1909 a replacement Chapel was built in the valley bottom. The last service is recorded:

“...And so in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and nine, it is with great sadness that we say our final farewell to this fine home of God, which has served us so well for 57 years. During that time we have said goodbye to many friends, but welcomed many more into the new world, and we will honour those with an annual service on this site each year.

But just as Jesus travelled through Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, so too must we move down into the valley amongst our flock and take shelter in our new chapel on Halifax Road.

We pray that this new home will protect our congregation from the diseases and accidents that the new mills in the valley have brought, and that each Sunday we will take solace in our new home and all pray and sing together.

Let us now sing hymn number 123, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’

Inside the metal railings on the wall just beyond the chapel is the graveyard. You are welcome to go inside, if you may have to fight your way through the brambles. The entrance is by the ‘Pennine Way Wainwright route’ sign at the far end.

The chapel was demolished after the First World War, but every year there was an anniversary celebration with a brass band.

As you set off on the track to stop 11, take a look back at the fine view. Try and spot Underbank Hall, brought to life by Anne Lister’s diary, and the chimney at Jumble Hole Mill.

Track 11: Higher Underbank

This cluster of houses is called Higher Underbank with the main dwelling, Higher Underbank House, in front of you. This is thought to have been built about 1612 and around 1770 a new frontage was added. It is a fine example of a yeoman clothier’s house where spun wool would have been delivered, sent out for weaving, and then the finished product sold on. On the rear wall (just before the track turns sharply right) you can see the blocked up intake door, where goods would have been hoisted up into the building.

You will no doubt have spotted the unusual inscription on the lintel? It is said that it might be weaver’s script, but this code is still to be cracked. One theory is that it is an interpretation of the Greek words for Jesus Christ.

The other, and perhaps the front runner, is that inscription is John Horsfall who owned Cow Bridge mill passed earlier and who lived in Higher Underbank House.

Whatever the inscription means it was an expensive piece of work. The symbols stand proud of the stone, which was carved away to reveal these characters; a skilful job.

As you leave Higher Underbank, take time to look across the valley and, again, you will be able to spot some of the places you passed earlier on the trail.

Track 12: Dale Clough Bridge





On arrival at the bridge, look on either side. Dale Clough runs freely down the hillside to your left, but below the bridge it has disappeared. The owners of nearby Underbank House channelled the stream in an underground goit leading down to the River Calder, and the reason why?

At the top of the hillside is 'Winters', a hamlet based round another mill. It is fair to say that domestic facilities in years gone by were not quite up to today's standards. The fast flowing waters of Dale Clough was perfect for removing unwanted effluent from the 'cludgie' the local name for a long-drop toilet

Continue along the path now, passing Underbank House, completed for the Horsfall family in 1835. A Great Tudor style house once stood here, dating back to 1525.

Track 13: Old Charlestown

If you look back up towards Underbank House and turn your attention to the other building looking out across the valley, you will notice that it isn't quite as grand as you first imagined. The back of the house has been 'chopped off', and isn't as deep as you might expect.

This was the house belonging to the overseer for Callis Mill and buildings like these were all about show. Across the valley Knott Hall, as it was called, would have looked very impressive.

Looking to the route ahead you can see the Air Training Corps building. This was the original site of old Charlestown. On this incredibly small site there were 14 back to back dwellings. Although it is unclear when the terraces were built, the 1851 census recorded that even though there were 7 vacant houses, with 68 people living in the other seven.

Records from the 1920's tell us that there was a sweet shop run from someone's front room, a Mrs Johnston ran a bakers shop from her house making onion and potato cakes, supplying dinners for Callis Mill, and one of the dwellings was a cobblers shop run by Teddy Speak, who was also known as 'peg leg'.

Two stories from the Todmorden Almanac report that, in July 1830, a child was born with four legs! And in 1880, "scarlatina of a malignant type broke out causing two fatal cases, the origin was undiscovered."

Old Charlestown was condemned and demolished in the mid 1950s and became lock-up garages, before its latest incarnation.

Track 14: Calderside Mill

Calderside Mill, which once stood to your right, was built by John Whitely as a five storey cotton mill in 1824. The 300 foot (or 100 metre) high chimney was said to be the tallest in the district. Just try and imagine how tall that was! As a guide it rose about halfway up to the highest point of the valley, where the gritstone rock is exposed, over the other side of the river.

In 1899 the company name was changed to Calderside Dyeing Company and was described as "dressers, bleachers and dyers". Clearly the 5-storey building was not big enough and a further 2 storeys were added to accommodate 30 – 40 local men who worked here. The mill was demolished in the 1960s.

So here you are at the end of the walk. If you haven't done so already it must be time to visit the Stubbing Wharf Hotel.

While you're there wander round and look at the fascinating old photos and engravings showing the pub and canal. If you want to see more photos or to find out more about what you've seen on the trail, look up the Charlestown History website – the web address is on your guide booklet. If you have time to spare, drop into the Canal Interpretation and Visitor Centre in Hebden Bridge for further information.