

## TODMORDEN TOPS - FORGED BY THE FIELDEN DYNASTY AUDIO E-TRAIL SCRIPT

### Stop 1: Todmorden and the Fielden Dynasty

Welcome to the trail which takes you over Todmorden tops! We hope you enjoy the walk and discover a landscape shaped by natural forces, industry and the Fielden dynasty.

The Fielden family had for generations been engaged as entrepreneurs in the textile trade, and some members of the family had been very successful. Amongst them were five brothers who, around the beginning of the 18th century were all successful clothiers. One lived in style at Todmorden Hall and one, Nicholas established himself as a master worsted manufacturer at Edge End Farm on the tops over Todmorden. It was here that the son of one of his nephews, Joshua (1748-1811) trained up to the business and was to become the founder of the Fieldens' dynasty which shaped the whole future of Todmorden.

Apart from becoming Todmorden's largest employers, the family also contributed to the town's development in many ways. Todmorden had a gas supply many years before most major towns and cities due to the Fieldens who brought gas to the town to light streets and houses as well as their Waterside Mill (where Morrisons now stands).

Many of Todmorden's fine architectural buildings such as the Town Hall, Market Hall and Unitarian church can be attributed to the Fieldens' generosity.

The Fieldens' trade was nearly all with the New World. Their business made them very wealthy people. Prosperity and growth were not the only new developments of the factory system, less agreeable 'innovations' included bad housing and sanitation, grinding poverty, child labour, dangerous working conditions and most significantly of all, unbearable long hours. Unlike many of their class the Fieldens were painfully aware of these evils and took steps not only towards easing the lot of the working man, but also towards his political emancipation. They were typical of the kind of Victorian businessmen who blended hard work and ambition with a social conscience and tempered it with a practical religion.

### Stop 2: The Great Wall of Todmorden and the Canals

The Great Wall of Todmorden before you was built in 1881 as a retaining wall, possibly due to the subsidence of the hillside, but also to support the enlarged station goods yard, including sidings for the Fieldens' Waterside Mill. It proved to be a mammoth undertaking by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company costing £28,200. At the time there was criticism particularly by one shareholder due to the use of brickwork in part of the country where stone was readily available. Reputedly it consists of four million bricks.

However, the railway was predated by the arrival of the canals and the story of the Fieldens is closely tied up with the arrival of the canal as well as the railway. Initially they and a number of local mill owners had opposed the proposal of a group of Hebden Bridge businessmen for a canal from Sowerby Bridge to Manchester. The reason for this opposition was water. The promoters of the canal planned to divert streams feeding the river to supply the navigation, thus reducing the need to build numerous catchment reservoirs of their own. Water was all important to the Fieldens as mill masters, as it was often used again and again, falling from mills high up in the moors to newer mills in the valley bottoms. Because of this, when the Rochdale Canal Bill came before Parliament, it was initially thrown out because of petitioning by mill owners. Amendments were made and the suggestion which proposed that only excess water should be fed in to the canal proved to be successful. It was also agreed that catchment reservoirs be built on the moors to supply both mills and canals and mill owners soon capitalised on the benefits of a canal which came to outweigh the disadvantages. These catchment reservoirs now form a substantial part of the vast open moorland landscape as often large expanses of water reflect big, open Pennine skies.



### Stop 3: Gauxholme Skew Bridge and Travelling by Train

The railway crosses the canal here over the striking skew arch and cast iron bowstring bridge set between four semi-octagonal stone turreted towers and then onto the 17 span Gauxholme Viaduct. When built in 1840 it represented a considerable feat of engineering and was one of the first two bow string bridges in the country, the other was down the same line at Whiteley arches near Hebden Bridge but that has now been replaced. The girders here are inscribed with the foundry mark of 'R.J.Butler, Stanningley, Leeds 1840'. It had to be strengthened in the early 20th century with the under girders you can see below the track. It's also a good example of an early skew arch bridge which were a necessary product of the railway age as railways, unlike roads, couldn't turn at right angles when they came to a river or canal.

A young man from Dewsbury who journeyed to Manchester in the mid-1840s described "crossing the canal by a fine cast-iron skew bridge of 101 feet, believed to be the finest specimen of the skew bridge in the world".

He also described what travelling Third Class was like at that time. "The carriage was simply a square wood box or wagon without seats or roof, exposed to all sorts of weather and the passengers all wedged in like cattle in a truck. To my surprise and sorrow on emerging out of Summit Tunnel I found my new hat entirely frizzled up by the small hot cinders emitted from the funnel of the engine."

Thomas Fielden, a director of the railway in the 1840s, was described as "a thorn in the chairman's flesh" for complaining about the conditions for Third Class passengers, much to the derision of his fellow directors. But the railways opened up the country and the seaside to ordinary working folk for the very first time.

### Stop 4: The Railway, the Fielden Dynasty and Dobroyd Crossing

To help with understanding the relationship of the Fieldens, their family tree can be seen on the back page of the booklet.

Thomas wasn't the first Fielden, or by any means the last, to be involved with the Manchester and Leeds Railway Company, which became the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway in 1847. His elder brother 'Honest' John was a founder Director of the Company in 1825 and successfully argued for a route through Todmorden where it would pass within a few yards of the family's main mill at Waterside, now the site of Morrisons.

The line eventually opened over its full length between the two cities in March 1841 and was the first trans-Pennine railway. In Todmorden there was a private siding into Fieldens' railway warehouse across the canal from their Waterside Mill connected by an overhead gantry the remains of which and its supporting pier across the canal you passed on your way to Lock 20.

Successive Fieldens were directors of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Company and all had considerable shareholdings in it. Just as 'Honest John' had been there at its very conception so his grandson Edward was its Chairman in its last years as an independent company after the First World War. Reputedly during slumps in the cotton trade income from their railway shares supported their lifestyle.

When John Fielden junior, Honest John's second son, built his mighty gothic Dobroyd Castle, which we'll see shortly, he had a carriage drive down to Waterside with a private crossing and gate keeper's cottage with a small ground box controlling the gates. The crossing was staffed until 1964 long after the Fieldens had left the castle and then in 2014 the crossing, by then pedestrian only, was replaced by the footbridge you are about to walk over.

### Stop 5: An Industrialised Valley created by a Mighty Ice Age Flood

Here you get a great view of the valley, transport and Gauxholme Viaduct. You can see how the river, turnpike road, canal and railway are squeezed into the narrow gorge.

Also below, alongside the main road, are the cottages at Laneside where Joshua Fielden set up his cotton business.



Landscape is a product of the interaction between physical and human forces.

The underlying geology, climate and weathering shape the land, produce its soils and clothe it in vegetation. Man determines its final form with his construction of towns, villages, fields, factories, quarries, mines and transport routes. This is all before you now. Here lie the very roots of industrial society and origins of the factory system of production.

Sour soils and harsh weather made crop growing precarious. People turned to other ways of securing a living. Cloth-making began as early as the 12th century and developed until here the great majority were employed in manufacturing. Manufacturing, initially was a home industry; later, water-powered and then steam-powered mills were built. Sources of power existed close at hand, raw materials were available and the long years of domestic cloth making produced a skilled population, adequate local capital and a well-developed marketing and sales network

Hillside villages contain many former weavers' cottages and evidence of the domestic textile period, whilst the ruins of water mills are to be found in the narrow tributary valleys. The early steam age town occupies the main valley and the whole package is tied together with a rich network of footpaths, packhorse routes, canals, railways, roads and river.

This valley was spectacularly cut by meltwaters after the last ice-age, overflowing northwards from 'Lake Rochdale'. This devastating river cut a deep valley creating the falls for the water power for early mills and a crowded valley below. Here canal, railway, road and river jostle and cross over as they compete for space with mills and cottages.

## Stop 6: Mystery of the Standing Stones

If you look over the wall into the adjoining field you will see a substantial menhir or standing stone. At the top of the hill, amongst the trees is another similar stone. These are potentially the most impressive standing stones in Yorkshire. But what are they?

The spindley structure among the trees on top of the mound called Centre Hill (locally known as Beacon Hill - clue there?) stands around twelve feet high. It sits on a large circular stone, like a mill-stone. According to the 1912 geological survey, there was no stone here. Possibly it appeared between 1912 and 1921. Did it replace a missing stone?

In the field, west of Centre Hill, stands the tallest and most impressive stone, at twelve feet high. Travel north-west up Stones Lane. In a field on the left is another stone which at four-and-a-half-feet tall is easy to miss as it lies near the dry-stone wall. This stone had a counterpart originally. There until the early fifties it has disappeared today. However, where the older maps show its position, now lies a spring. A nearby trough contains a stone, about five feet long, possibly the lost menhir.

Another suggestion of their origin is based on the fact that the top stone is roughly squared to face the compass points and is in alignment with its neighbour, possibly for astronomical purpose as fore and back sighting stones. It could also be a grave marker and boundary stone, as sometimes it was customary to be buried on the boundary of one's land with a monolith to mark the spot. Indeed Todmorden means 'Totta's boundary valley'. A further theory is that it celebrated the Battle of Waterloo and had a weather-cock on top.

Whatever the truth, the farm is called Stones and the lane is Stones Lane. The Greenwoods lived at Stones Farm and were substantial landowners and Quakers. In 1771 their daughter Jenny married Joshua Fielden of Edge End. They had five sons and four daughters (one of which died as an infant). The middle son was 'Honest John', more of which we'll hear later.

## Stop 7: Dobroyd Castle

Dobroyd Castle is the second of the 'great houses' which were the residences of 'Honest John' Fielden's three sons. It was the home of the middle son, John Fielden, a landowner in the grand style who was appointed High



Sheriff and a J.P. in 1844. In 1857 John Fielden married Ruth Stansfield a local mill girl. The story goes John's brother Samuel also pursued Ruth but that she replied to John's proposal of marriage by saying that she would accept if he built her a castle on top of a hill. As a wedding gift to the workpeople in the mills £69 was distributed (perhaps sixpence or a shilling a person).

The castle was designed by John Gibson, who also designed Stansfield Hall and the Town Hall. The land was bought from the Stones estate and the building is made of local stone in the castellated Tudor style. Over a million and a half bricks were used for the inside walls. The castle had 66 rooms, stables and stalls for 17 horses with a coach house and tack room etc. In the grounds of the estate there was a model farm (visible later on the walk), a walled kitchen garden, greenhouses for exotic fruits and a vinery and well laid out gardens which contained two ponds which supplied the castle. The castle took two years to build and cost £100,000. On completion in 1868, 300 of the workmen were treated to a "celebration dinner" at the Lake Hotel, Hollingworth Lake, being taken there in a fleet of waggons. The men were largely John Fielden's own employees who had found work hard to come by during the cotton famine.

John and Ruth Fielden entertained a great deal and could be remembered for their generosity and patronage. Local people were sometimes invited to musical soirees and Sunday school treats were often held in the Castle grounds.

The castle was purchased by the Home Office in the 1940's and became an approved school. Since then it has been a community home, a Buddhist Centre and is currently an Outdoor Adventure Centre.

## Stop 8: Edge End Farm and Early Fielden Weavers

This low, stone farmhouse hugging the hillside was the scene of the Fielden's transition from farming and wool to industry and cotton. As such it was also where the Industrial Revolution in Todmorden was born.

Edge End was the home of Joshua Fielden Snr. (born in 1748) the founder of the Fielden business. Like most farmer weavers in the Upper Calder Valley, he had to work hard for his living. He followed his father making a living from the farm and from his activities as a clothier, carrying his 'pieces' to the Halifax market every weekend, a distance of 12 miles. At that time Todmorden was a mere village consisting of just Todmorden Hall, St. Mary's church, two or three inns and a scatter of cottages. The rest was farmland, woods and marshes.

In 1782 however, he bought some spinning jennies and moved with his wife and five small children to three cottages at Laneside where he established his cotton business. From these humble beginnings, the site at Laneside expanded to become one of the largest weaving enterprises in the world.

As the small business gradually progressed, land was acquired followed by premises and water rights. The preparation and spinning operation was enlarged with the addition of new machinery to the early spinning jennies. Joshua Fielden's sons worked in the business from an early age (John Fielden worked ten hours a day in the cotton factory from 10 years old) and took over the business when Joshua withdrew in 1803. When Joshua died in 1811 he left £200. The name of the firm changed from 'Joshua Fielden and Sons' to 'Fielden Brothers' in 1816 and by 1832 Fielden Brothers was one of the largest textile companies in Britain.

## Stop 9: Smallpox and Sourhall Isolation Hospital

A serious smallpox epidemic in 1874 highlighted the need for an isolation hospital. Pressed by Samuel Fielden who paid for the nursing staff, doctors and equipment at first, this was the town's modest response. The building was an old hillside mill that had stood vacant for many years. The purpose-built Fielden Hospital across the valley on the Langfield hillside, financed by John Ashton Fielden and funded out of Samuel Fielden's estate, replaced it twenty years later.

## Stop 10: Valley View of a Part of the Fieldens' Empire

The Fielden family virtually created Todmorden and the story of the two are inseparable. As the Fielden spinning and weaving business grew to become one of the largest cotton enterprises in this area, so the town of



Todmorden grew and expanded, growing from a small hamlet to an industrial mill town. By 1850 the firm employed 1700 factory hands at their 11 mills in Todmorden and another 200 hands in Mytholmroyd.

Robinwood Mill was built before the cotton slump in the 1840's and was later acquired by John Fielden in 1843 as a newly built building 6 storeys high. It cost £3,900. Over the next 10 years £34,000 was spent on installing steam engines and equipping it for cotton preparation and spinning of warps yarn. In 1856 over 300 workpeople, mainly children under 13 or young women were employed there. Robinwood became the main spinning site when Waterside mill closed and as another Fielden mill 'Lumbutts' faltered. Electric power was introduced progressively to all machinery by the 1920's. At its height the mill could spin 3 to 3.5 million pounds of cotton a year.

The mill closed in 1960 since which time much of it has been demolished.

## Stop 11: Hartley Royd, the Puzzle of Its Datestone and Quakerism

Successive Fieldens from another branch of the family lived at this fine mullioned farmhouse. The ornate datestone in the north wall is visible and reads: "John Fielden and wife Elizabeth from Harm at Home 1724". There is some confusion as to whether the date is correct as the style of the present building with its mullioned windows and externally protruding chimneybreast is more evocative of the 17th than the 18th century. This raises two possibilities. Either the house was built in 1724 in a style which by that time was going out of fashion (by no means unlikely as Pennine hill farms were severely functional in design and styles were a lot slower to change than in more 'civilised' areas), or the house was built in the 17th century and underwent alteration in 1724.

Quaker gatherings were held here by the Fielden family who were Quakers. Todmorden itself must have been noted for the number of 'Friends'. When they declined to pay for repairs to the church and school at Rochdale, it was stated that the majority of the offenders came from Todmorden, where Quakers were "both numerous and troublesome".

Life as a Quaker before the Toleration Act of 1689 was dangerous. Early Quakers were persecuted and fines were imposed on each person present at meetings or their goods would be taken. Fortunately for the Fieldens the passing of the Toleration Act enabled Quakers to register their meeting houses officially for the first time. Methodism then followed though unlike many of their Quaker brethren, the Fieldens were not converted to Methodism. That said, the Methodists were to play an important part in the establishment of Unitarianism in Todmorden, with which the Fieldens were actively involved.

Quakers were not allowed any monuments or gravestones, so their burial grounds are not immediately apparent. There is a Quaker burial ground at Todmorden Edge and one at Shoebroad where Joshua and Martha Fielden are buried, whilst John Fielden is buried in a simple grave at the Unitarian Church in Todmorden.

## Stop 12: Packhorse Routes Across the Pennines

Whirlaw Stones are now above and to the left. You are on a part of an ancient packhorse track from the Long Causeway near Stiperden to Cross Stone above Todmorden. Further along the track are the two farms East and West Whirlaw (now a ruin). In the days of packhorses, one of these houses was the Packhorse Inn but after the valley roads were made in 1765 the licence was removed to the Bay Horse Inn, Cross Stone.

The high rainfall, water-retentive soil and thick peaty layers made journeys difficult for loaded horses, particularly on gradients where surface water created secondary drainage. In these instances the laying of causey stones and other surface materials became necessary on well-used routes to give the horses a firm footing. Before you is a line of well-preserved causey stones over softer ground.

Galloways, a small sturdy Scottish breed of pony were used in the Pennines, locally known as a 'Gal'. Usually packhorses travelled in teams of up to thirty or more, each carrying around 2cwt, often goods such as coal one way and lime or cloth on their return.

The lead horse was the Bell Horse named due to the set of bells it carried. A set of Cumbrian bells made around 1753 hangs in Townley Hall Museum, Burnley. A notice there states... 'the flanking bells have different tones indicating in darkness the direction of turning'. The bells also warned of other teams approaching, essential on narrow or precipitous sections of track. Accounts tell of packhorses bedecked with gaily-coloured fustian ribbons. These reliable beasts of burden brought not only vital commodities but also news of national and local affairs.

During the period of the Enclosure Acts many lengths of causeway disappeared, being used as base stones for dry stone walls. However thin Pennine soils meant ploughing is often not viable and that, together with restoration in response to increasing recreational demands, are ensuring there is a rich inheritance of stone flagged causeways across the South Pennines.

### **Stop 13: Hole Bottom Mill**

Ahead lies an old mill chimney, the remains of Hole Bottom Mill originally an early water powered spinning mill. It was destroyed by fire in 1918 but then it had been a steam laundry for over 20 years.

Conditions in the mills were poor and like other workers those at Hole Bottom were forced to work excessively long hours, the standard working week being 69 hours. The practice of nightshifts, which allowed the continuous running of machinery were condemned by some Todmorden manufacturers as 'demoralising and injurious to the worker's health'. The owner of Holebottom Mill was not one of them and tried to run his mill at night, until he was publicly shamed into giving up the practice.

John Fielden (1784-1849) the middle son of Joshua Fielden was an important figure in improving and reforming factory conditions. He is mainly remembered as the Parliamentary promoter of the Ten Hours Act of 1847. He never forgot his experiences as a child labourer in a cotton mill and developed a keen concern for improving the welfare of workers, especially children. John Fielden demonstrated his concern first in the family business and later, as Member of Parliament for Oldham, in his ceaseless struggle to secure legislation for better working conditions. He was strongly opposed to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act – which attempted to force the poor into workhouses and campaigned for the limitation of working hours, achieved in the 1844 Factory Act and the Ten Hours Act of 1847.

John Fielden was also concerned with the spiritual outlook of his workers and with his brother Joshua opened a Sunday School where they taught their apprentices the three R's as well as the scriptures, later opening a day school. Over the years, locally he was known by the nickname 'Honest John'. His statue stands in Centre Vale park.

### **Stop 14: Fielden Terrace, Stansfield Hall and Sir Charles Barry**

This attractive row of cottages, Fielden Terrace, was built in about 1863 by John Gibson to conceal the somewhat squalid view and to provide a more dignified approach to Stansfield Hall, the home of Joshua Fielden.

Stansfield Hall is a Grade 2 listed building. It was built in 1640 for James Stansfield and extensively enlarged in 1862 in gothic Revival style for Joshua Fielden M.P. to cope with the needs of his large household (thirteen children). John Gibson, a pupil of Sir Charles Barry who designed the Houses of Parliament and Halifax Town Hall, was engaged to design the enlargement of the Hall. The friendship of the two men which followed was to leave a distinctive mark on Todmorden and to yield some of Gibson's most renowned buildings in the town and elsewhere over a period of fifteen years.

### **Stop 15: Stansfield Hall Railway Footbridge**

From the bridge look over to your left and on the right of the track you'll see the recently re-opened Stansfield Hall Junction and Todmorden Curve which had been closed to passenger trains in 1965 and to goods trains in 1973.

## Pennine Horizons e-Trails

[www.pennineheritage.org.uk](http://www.pennineheritage.org.uk)



When the Burnley Branch opened from Todmorden in 1849 this curve was the only connection between the Branch and Main Line. But trains to and from Yorkshire had to reverse at Todmorden station to get onto and off the branch and with large numbers of long daily coal trains and then Blackpool Specials in summer this caused heavy congestion at the station.

To overcome this a spur was built in 1862 off the main line just to the east of Todmorden up to the Branch and this is the line you see going straight ahead. But Tod folk weren't at all happy about this as it meant that Yorkshire specials to Blackpool now by-passed Tod station. Reputedly Joshua Fielden MP, of Stansfield Hall, a major shareholder in the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company thought that as a line now passed in front of his residence there should be a station for his convenience when travelling up and down to London. Joshua's sons Thomas and Edward also both became Conservative MPs and were successively Directors of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway with Edward, as we said earlier, becoming its last Chairman.

A station was opened here in 1869 with very long platforms extending to the other side of the footbridge to accommodate the vast numbers going on the Blackpool specials particularly at Whitsun and Wakes week (the platforms can be seen on the photograph as a long white line to the mid left of the picture). The station was closed in 1944 and all that's left to tell it once stood here is the stone recess you can see where there had possibly been a small single storey ticket office as well as the signal box which controlled the junction until it closed.