

The toll collectors of Rowdale Bar

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Introduction

My interest in Rowdale Bar (or Toll Bar House, Hassop as it is known today) arose from researching routeways around the excavation site near Hassop Station in 2012. The Bakewell Crosses Project aimed to see if the Great Cross from Bakewell Church had originally stood at an old road junction in the field. Desk based assessment prior to the dig resulted in a wealth of information about roads in the area. The present day A6020 between Ashford and Hassop roundabout was part of the Ashford to Edensor Turnpike and the Rowdale Bar was one of two toll collection points on its length (the other being Birchill Bar, from 1863). I consulted the Edensor to Ashford Turnpike Trust minutes in Derbyshire Record office and found only a few references to the families who lived in the Toll Bar. The occupation of toll collector was an important part of the economy of a turnpike road. The tolls were used to finance the constant road repairs and to pay the interest on the loan which paid for the original road construction, in this case to the Duke of Devonshire. The families who carried out this role at Rowdale Bar began to fascinate me and I researched the Census records and the local registers of births marriages and deaths to find out who they were. I also consulted the Railway Employee Records available on www.ancestry.co.uk. This article is what I have been able to find out so far: if you come across any further information please let me know.

I am unsure when the Toll House was built. According to www.turnpikes.org.uk, it was built in 1824. I checked their sources by contacting Alan Rosevear who manages the website and found that they had evidence of toll collections from 1824. I also emailed Alan Roberts who records the “known date” of 1824 to 1868 in “Turnpike Roads around Buxton” using similar toll collection returns. Of course the collection of tolls does not necessarily mean that there was a toll house at the gate. However both Alan Roberts and I think that it is likely that a shelter of some type would have to be in place in order to unlock the gate and collect tolls throughout the day and night in such an isolated spot. Taking all evidence into consideration Rowdale Bar is likely to have been built around 1817 when the first toll collector was appointed but it could have been any time until 1827 when the Bar is recorded as an address for the first time. It was built and owned by the Duke of Devonshire rather than the Turnpike Trust and was not sold when the Trust was realising their assets when the Turnpike Trust was wound up in 1878. Unfortunately I have been unable to verify the building of the house in the Chatsworth Archive as no records of the Toll Bar have yet been found.

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George Heathcote 1817

The Edensor to Ashford turnpike road opened around 1812 but there is no mention of toll collection at Rowdale Bar in the early accounts of the Trust. In 1817 the Surveyor of Road was ordered “to appoint a fit person to collect the Tolls to be paid at the Turnpike Gate now erected at Rowdale Lane”. Two months later the Surveyor reported that George Heathcote who lived in Ashford and who was paid 2/- per week to mend the road was “in receipt of the Tolls at Rheudale (Rowdale) Bar”. How long he carried out this duty and if there were other toll collectors appointed after him in this early period is not recorded. He continued to mend the road until his death in 1865. The Surveyor's accounts of road mending from 1850 always itemise George Heathcote's payments first suggesting that he had a senior role.

Heathcote Close is the name given to the field by Hassop Roundabout in the Great Longstone Enclosure map of 1812. When the Turnpike Road was proposed, the schedule gives the occupier of

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the field as "Heathcote widow". It might be that George is part of the same family who owned the field and may have used the small quarry on the land as a source of road stone. This is supported by the census of 1851 when he is described both as a labourer and as a farmer of 11 acres living in Fennel Street, Ashford. Further evidence that the family was a little bit more prosperous than those of some labourers is suggested by the four rather ornate monuments in Ashford churchyard to George and several family members.

Samuel and Hannah Frith 1827

In 1827 their daughter young Hannah was born in Rowdale Toll Bar (Roadhill Bar, Longstone) and information is provided in both Eyam and Bakewell registers. Samuel is described as a tollkeeper (labourer). All the other records for the family births and from census returns from 1825 to 1883 indicate that the family stayed in Eyam.

Joseph and Elizabeth Raby 1835

It is not clear when the Raby family came to live in the Toll House. There is evidence for the family living in Ashford between 1822 and 1838 because all the births and deaths of their children give this information. The records also say that Joseph was a framework knitter. However Ashford burial records show that one of their children, Ann Raby, died at Rowdale Toll Bar in 1835.

It may be that the family were carrying on toll collecting as well as knitting at the Toll House but considering the size of the cottage and the amount of space the knitting frame would occupy it may have been quite a squash with up to 6 children as well. Their connections were with Ashford Parish but in fact the Toll House is in the Great Longstone and Holme Parish and not in Hassop Parish or Ashford Parish as might have been supposed.

John and Mary Jones 1841-1852

This is the next family to appear in the records with links to the Rowdale Bar. The 1841 census does not record addresses but the entry for the Jones family is the last record in the Great Longstone schedule. The occupiers of the Toll House is often recorded last in future censuses so this evidence suggests that they were in residence by this date. By the 1851 census the family address is Rowdale Toll Bar and John's occupation is given as agricultural labourer and toll bar keeper. They have had three more children since the last census called John, Samuel and Jane. They are recorded as being born at Rowdale (Barr) in the Ashford Christening records.

Minutes of the Turnpike Trust report that the Surveyor of the Road is asked to discharge John Jones and for a new toll collector to be appointed in 1852. The record is silent about the reason for the termination of John Jones's employment. It is clear from reading about other Trusts that there were problems with dishonest or unreliable toll collectors and that inspectors were appointed to check that they carried out their duties correctly. The reason for his discharge is only speculation and there may have been others reasons for the John Jones's new life, recorded in the 1861 census, when he was a gamekeeper, living in Greaves Lane, Great Longstone. His association with the Turnpike continued as the Surveyor's accounts from 1850 show that he was occasionally paid for road mending.

Abraham, Ann and Selina Goodwin 1852-1892?

The Trust minutes record that in 1852 Abraham Goodwin was appointed the toll collector at Rowdale Bar.

Prior to this, Abraham and Ann lived in (Great) Longstone and even though they appear to be members of the Wesleyan Church they were married in Bakewell Parish Church in 1847. This was

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because these chapels were often only registered for baptisms. In fact all the future children's baptisms are recorded in the Bakewell Wesleyan registers.

In the 1851 census the family were living in Little Longstone where Selina had been born in 1848.

There are several records which tell us a little about their life at the Toll Bar.

In the 1861 census Abraham is recorded as living at the Toll Bar with Ann and his two children Selina and Agnes. His occupation is given as both an agricultural labourer and toll collector.

The Bakewell Wesleyan Baptism records show that Agnes had been born at Rowdale Bar in 1852.

In 1865 Ann Goodwin, who was 14 years older than her husband, died and was buried in Great Longstone Churchyard.

Agnes appears in the 1871 census as an “imbecile”. It might be speculated that Agnes was suffering from Derbyshire Neck, a condition caused by lack of iodine in the diet (personal communication Anne Taylor). This leads to a swollen thyroid gland which makes the neck swell greatly. It has been shown that many inmates of asylums in the White Peak area were suffering from this condition so this idea is not without foundation. Within a few days of this census being taken, Agnes had died of scarlet fever. She was buried in Great Longstone Churchyard on 20th April 1871 and shares a headstone with her mother Ann.

Selina is named as the Toll Collector with her father in the Trust minutes from 1866 until 1878 when the turnpike road stopped taking tolls. (I suspect that the wife of a Toll Collector and other family members always contributed to manning the Bar as it was a 24 hour, 7 day a week commitment. It is only in 1864 when the Trust minutes start to record the toll collectors by name that the responsibility of other family members is recognised.) Selina and her father were paid 4/- per week for carrying out their tasks.

The years after Agnes died were eventful ones for the residents of the Rowdale Bar. In 1872 Selina gave birth to a child at the house. Baptism records state that he was the “natural” son of Thomas Fidler and Selina Ann Goodwin. This, and the fact that Selina never used the Fidler surname, is evidence that he was illegitimate. Research into the father, Thomas Fidler shows that he was living with his family in Hassop in 1871. He was 16 years older than Selina and in a position of authority being the Clerk to the Board of Guardians (associated with managing the relief for the poor of the district). Selina lived with her child, Charles, and her father Abraham at Rowdale Bar.

Two years later in 1874 Selina married Thomas Bagshaw from Baslow and they had a daughter, Agnes Hannah, in 1875. For a few years Selina and Thomas and the children Charles and Agnes are likely to have lived with Abraham at Rowdale Bar while Selina helped Abraham with the toll collecting duties. There is evidence in the Trust records that Thomas helped with road mending during this time. But this came to an end in 1878 when the tolls were lifted and the Turnpike Trust was wound up. As the property was owned by the Duke of Devonshire it is likely that the family were allowed to stay as it would be more difficult to find a tenant for a house in that isolated position.

In February 1881 Selina died of pleurisy at Rowdale. It is interesting to note that the “Bar” usually included in their address had been dropped from the death certificate reflecting that the house was no longer a toll bar. She was buried in Great Longstone Churchyard but there is no memorial stone. The next record of the family is three months later in the 1881 census. This shows that after Selina's death Joseph and his young daughter Agnes Hannah moved into Bubnell Hall, Baslow

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where Joseph is employed as an “indoor” servant and agricultural labourer. This left Abraham, now out of business, and Charles, the illegitimate grandson, living at the Rowdale Bar.

In 1886, when Charles reached age of 14, he started work as a machine youth at Hassop Station helping with the goods trucks on the weighing “machine”. He rose to become a goods clerk and the grandfather and grandson were living in the house when the 1891 census was taken. By then Abraham had found a job as a grocer. There are two photographs believed to be taken in 1888 which show Abraham then aged 65 with a long white beard outside the now redundant Toll Bar. Copies of these came to light in the Derbyshire Record Office (D307/I/9/7) as well as in the Terry and Sheila Bettney collection.

It is difficult to find out when the Goodwins finally left the Toll Bar but it might be the case that they moved to Sheffield when Charles took the job of counter clerk at the Midland Railway Station in the city in 1892. They were recorded as living together in Sheffield by 1901. In this census Charles had married and had a son and daughter, whose name it is touchingly recorded as Selina, the name of his unmarried mother. Abraham Goodwin died in 1903 aged 79 and is buried in Meersbrook Church.

Around the turn of century Rowdale Bar became unoccupied and there is a photograph of the forlorn semi derelict building from this period in the Derbyshire Record Office (D307/I/9/8) albeit printed back to front. In the 1911 census the house is unoccupied.

The house deeds, made available for research from the current owners Bruce and Kim Edmonds, show that the Duke of Devonshire sold the Hassop Old Toll Bar to Francis and Wheatley Cox Wilson in 1919 for £40 and a next phase in the occupation of the Rowdale Toll Bar had begun.

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If you have any more information about the toll collectors of Rowdale Bar I would be glad to include your information in this record and acknowledge your contribution. Please get in touch with Ann Hall annhall4@hotmail.com

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COPY 94
How to be successful in
the art of photography