

## WATCHMAN'S HUT



Most villagers will know of the Watchman's Hut, situated up against the wall of the old bridge, close to the old Wheatsheaf Inn (now the Co Op store). It is a small nearly square structure with a low open entrance facing the road. The walls are stone slabs, the roof is pitched and tiled with heavy stone slates.

The hut is part of the Old Bridge, which is a scheduled monument. The bridge was built in 1609, but the hut appears to be a later addition. I am not aware of any factual information about when it was built or its original purpose. It is generally assumed that it was a shelter for a watchman checking on traffic over the bridge during the night though there is an alternate suggestion that it was part of the Toll Booth when the road through the village was a turnpike. In the past it has had the alternative name of Mary Brady's House: she was a tramp who visited Baslow occasionally and used the hut to sleep in.

Whatever its history it is a unique feature of the village which has recently become an icon in features promoting Baslow. It is an interesting, memorable and important part of our heritage.

In 2019 it was in a poor state. Pointing was falling out, the stone was eroding, and there was a suggestion that the whole edifice is gradually tipping forward. As is a Scheduled Monument action had to be taken. Historic England and the Derbyshire Highways Department planned together and money was allocated.

In 2021 the road was closed. The monument was dismantled to its foundations and rebuilt by specialist stonemasons in a stable fashion. Special mortar needed protection until it had set properly. Some stonework had to be replaced with new, carefully chosen to match the original. This stands out, but the experts assure us that this is consistent with English Heritage guideline, and it will all merge in in due course. Let us hope that it will be there for centuries to come

David Dalrymple-Smith June 2019