

HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT MUSGHYLL GATE TO DUMPHILL GATE ROAD

The origins of this former sunken lane running between the ancient settlements of Barnoldswick-Cotes and Salterforth go back at least a thousand years as it was a vital local trade route between the two villages and was probably part of the system of routes taken by the salt dealer's packhorse trains which date back to the Romano British period. It also acted as the main highway to and from St Mary-le-Ghyll the parish church for Salterforth residents and before the building of Thornton Church circa- 1250A.D Kelbrook residents would have used this route via Mucky Lane as well.

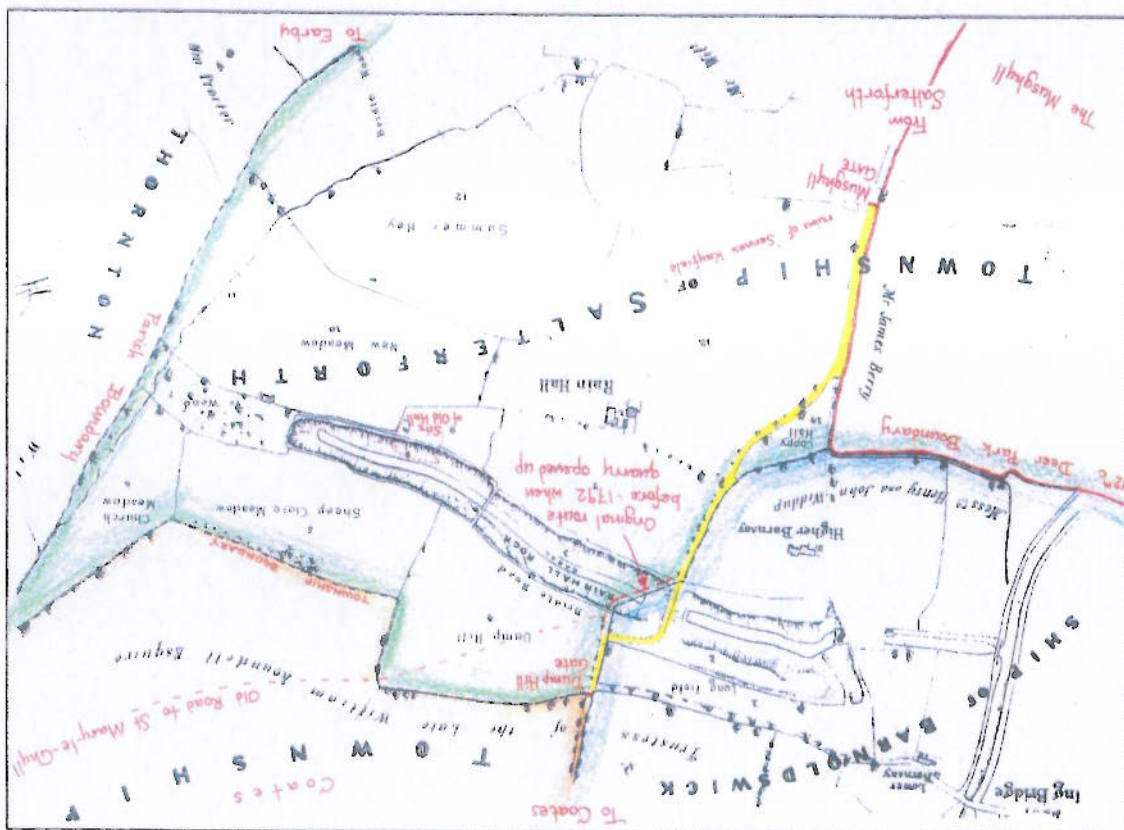


Looking along 'Musghyll Road' or 'Rocky Tops' 23rd Feb 1969

This road was also used as a monastic way by the Cistercian monks and lay brothers who farmed the two grange farms at Coates and Greenhill at Salterforth for Kirkstall Abbey, although the grange at Salterforth had by the mid 13th century transferred into the hands of Roche Abbey in South Yorkshire. This road has probably altered very little over time apart from being widened due to traversing boggy patches and slowly being enclosed landowner hedges in the late medieval period. Indeed the names of 'Dumphill Gate' and Musghyll Gate hint that it was once gated at the extremity of the old townfields of Coates and Salterforth where it tracked through the open common grazing lands that once lay between the settlements.

During my ongoing fieldwork into the extent and history of the early medieval deer park based at Barnoldswick Old Park (Lower Park) The Musghyll Gate Road formed part the eastern most boundary of this old deer park during the 12th and 13th centuries, which is likely to have been part of the monastic estate, this deer park or hunting lodge was acquired by the Boltons of Bolton-by-Bowland during the 13th century and ended up with the Pudsey's of Bolton Hall who claimed the title of master forester of the Barnoldswick Forest.

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SALTERFORTH



Map of part of the estate of Ellen Smith of Fence End, dating from the 1880's with added notes and colouring by author

The Musghyll Gate Road would have been difficult to traverse in the winter months due to poor maintenance and was used by mainly hoofted traffic with the odd small cart. It wasn't until the 16th and 17th centuries that wheeled traffic increased which was mainly local in nature, but by the late 17th and early 18th centuries there was an increase in population, wealth and commerce this put greater pressure on the route which was by now hemmed in by hedge banks and heavier carts caused deeper ruts and winter mud. Up to the late 18th century the road was known as a bridle road and responsibility of its maintenance lay with the landowners and villagers who each had to provide a number of days labour on the roads each year.

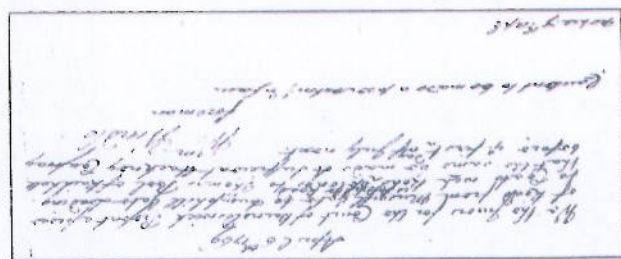
The earliest documentation relating to the road is contained within the 'Bagshaw Papers' which contain the Barnoldswick Manorial Court Records. A copy of which is at Barnoldswick Library.

17th April 1733, We also amerce every person who useth the way from Salterforth Town Stoops (Mucky Lane Stoops) to Barnoldswick-Coates within the jurisdiction of this court with cart and carriage and any other loads, not having a right there in mercy of the Lords, 4 shillings for each offence.

6th April 1769, We the jurors for the court of Barnoldswick present a piece of road from Musgill Gate to Dumphill Gate leading to Coates such a road is a bridle road belonging to Thomas Peel of Rainhill that the same be made a sufficient Hackney Causeway before ye first of July next. Content to be made a presentation in force. Notice 7th April 1769.

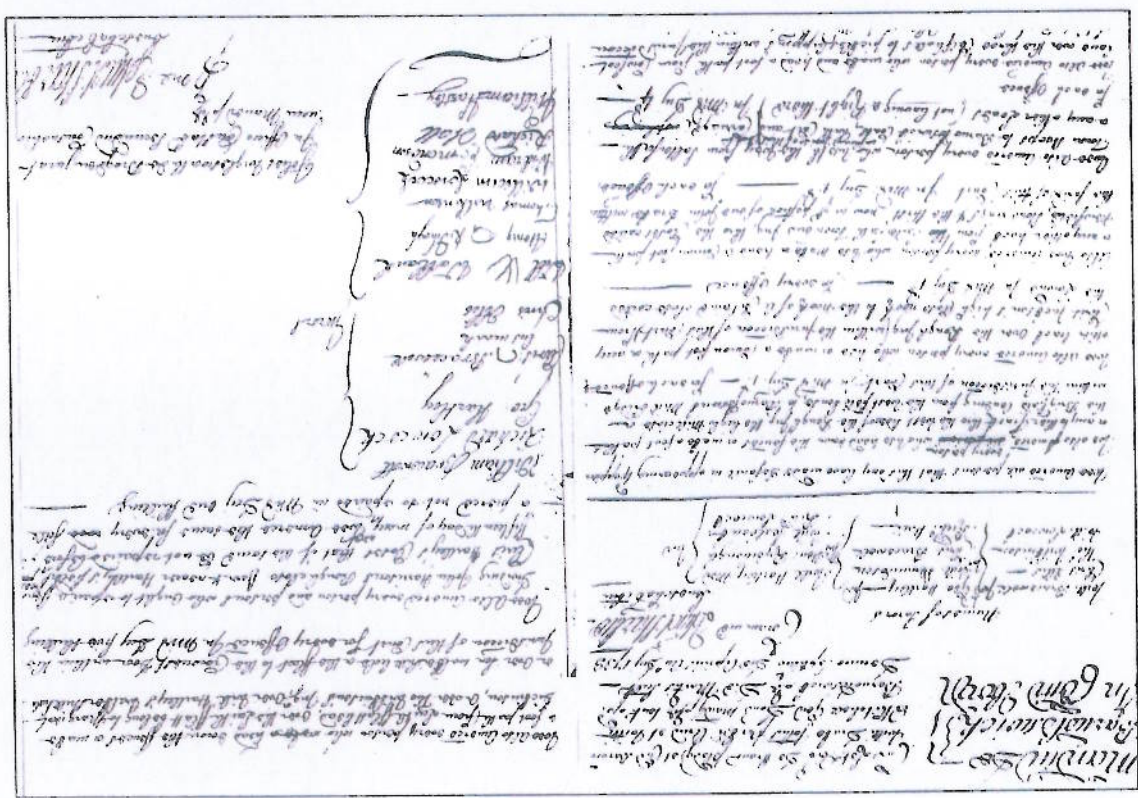
It may have been at this time that the Musgill Guide stoop was commissioned and placed at the Cross Coates, but the guide stoop may date from much earlier, but it does show the way and uses the same names. An article on the known history of this old guide stoop, its rescue and restoration to its former site was written some years ago.

A page from the Barnoldswick Manorial Court Rolls contained within the 'Bagshaw Papers'



In other words if you were from outside of this parish/ manor you had to pay for passage, if caught on this road with cart, carriage or load. The money gained in this way would have been used for the maintenance of the local road network, administered by the manorial court and constable for Salterforth. The next reference to the road from the manorial records is perhaps the most important as it shows that it was upgraded to a full carriage road (a Hackney Causeway).

A page from the Barnoldswick Manorial Court Rolls contained within the 'Bagshaw Papers'



The road network in and around Salterforth was first tarred in late spring of 1924 by Skipton Rural District Council. We believe that the road over to Coates was left as a dust/ stone road, the reason being that the construction of the New Road between Barnoldswick and Salterforth offered a better route. This section of the New Road was unofficially opened for use in 1929. The Musghyll to Dumphill Road would have seen a huge decrease in its use other than by local farms, therefore the District Councils of Barnoldswick and Skipton did not press for its maintenance as a main highway, which over the last 70 odd years has led to its slow deterioration and it becoming a place to dump rubble and in recent decades a place to fly-tip. This road is more commonly known by its local nick-name of 'Rocky Tops'.

Local residents firmly believe this road to be an unclassified county road or white road, who's ownership and maintenance has been deliberately neglected. It is in and always has been in full legal use as a vehicular right of way for wheeled traffic since 1769 and also long before that date as a main highway between these two ancient of Salterforth and Barnoldswick-Coates.

The 'Musghyll Guide Sloop' restored to its former site at the junction with Mucky lane/ Cross lane & Musghyll Road

