



Old Wadsley – A Local History Walk

Text and route by **Ron Clayton**

Images courtesy of **Picture Sheffield**



From Rural Lane by Major C P Kaye

Copyright Ron Clayton August 11th 2020. All Rights Reserved.

Old Wadsley – a short history trail

The area known as Wadsley has largely been swallowed up by private housing and the development after WW1 of the Sutton and Wisewood estates. Before WW1 it was a largely rural area consisting of several notable buildings, some of which have survived to this day, and a much larger number of cottages, cutlers' workshops, chapels, farms etc. Sadly most of these were cleared in the late nineteen sixties. Despite not being a Wadsley Villager I still fell in love with the rather ramshackle village with its whitewashed cottages and shops and the day when its death knell was rang despite villagers protests still rankles in many a breast in S6. As a result I am following in the footsteps of a number of local historians and inhabitants who had a great love for a settlement which goes back to the Anglo Saxons and which has a few indications of possibly earlier inhabitants, and am producing this first version of a Heritage Trail which I intend to build on.

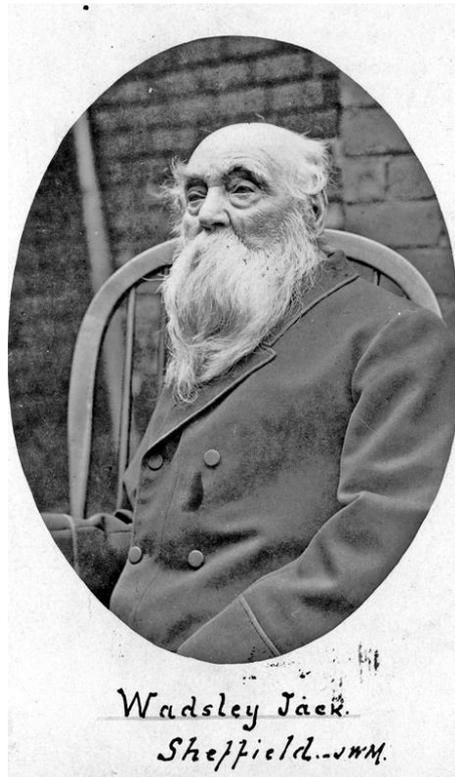
I am pleased to support again the Wadsley Arts Festival and Wadsley Church as they again come together as a community to highlight the history of Wadsley and keep alive its history and its identity. I hope you will enjoy this stroll back into the past and take an interest in what survives. Allow yourself about one hour for the walk and please observe social distancing and watch out for traffic, especially when walking down Rural Lane towards Worrall Road, and remember to respect people's privacy at all times.

Ron Clayton

August 2020.

Images by kind permission of Picture Sheffield who would welcome any images of Wadsley Village .

- 1.Wadsley Jack [formerly Star Inn]
2. Village Stocks.
3. Aldene Road and Holly Bush Farm
- 4.Rock House and The Rose and Crown
- 5.Rural Lane -Lamp and Cottages
6. Almhouses- School -Church
7. Site of Original Manor house



1. The Wadsley Jack, formerly The Star Inn

The walk starts outside the Wadsley Jack pub on the corner of Rural Lane [formerly Fox Lane] and Laird Road. Formerly the Star Inn, the pub probably dates back to the mid nineteenth century and was probably constructed of stone quarried on Wadsley Common. The interesting looking character on the pub sign is Reuben Hallam (1818-1908) who wrote local stories regarding a travelling cutler called Wadsley Jack towards the end of the nineteenth century. The origins of the name Wadsley are twofold: the 'ley' indicates a clearing or settlement in the area (similar such local place names are Walkley and Loxley), and Wada; who Wada or Wade was is unknown; he may have been a settler or an obscure local deity.

2. The Stocks



The village stocks, in situ outside Rydalhurst House

Adjacent to the pub are the village stocks which formerly stood outside Rydalhurst House which stands on the corner of Rural Lane and Rydalhurst Avenue. On one side of one of the stock stones you can make out the image of a man firing a gun which is said to relate to the tale of a villager who shot and killed a Police Officer. As with the tale of Mary Revill (or Reville), who was supposedly murdered on a snow covered Common on a dark winter night by her husband, who later committed suicide, there is no truth in the tale. The Common of course has its true dark tale with the gibbeting

on it of Frances Fearn in the eighteenth century for the brutal murder of a jeweller named Andrews near Kirk Edge.

3. The chimney breast and Holly Bush Farm

Walk past the pub going in the direction of the shops and turn first right into Luke Lane. Follow this right round until it meets up with Aldene Road [formerly Coal Pit Lane] and walk up the road. Aldene was a local landowner, before the Norman conquest. On the right hand side set in a garden wall note the chimney breast dated 1719 originating from a demolished cottage. Keeping to the pavement walk down to Holly Bush Farm on the same side. Back in the nineteen sixties there used to be a herd of geese in the yard, sometimes venturing onto the road! Traffic is more frequent now so take care. On the left hand side of the farm yard, on the barn wall, are the initials and date of someone connected with the farm called up for National Service in the 1950's. At the front of Holly Bush Farm you will see a date stone - until well into the nineteenth century Holly was grown as winter feed for livestock, hence the place names Hollins Hagg etc (hollin referring to holly). Taking care as you round the corner on the left hand side look back at the cottages across the Road that were thankfully spared demolition.

4. Rock House and The Top House

Taking care cross the road to the pavement on the right hand side and continue until you come to a turning on the left hand side- Stour Lane - walk up the hill until you come to Rock House, a fine looking building set back from the Road. On the left hand side of the entrance is a stone bearing the inscription Rock House. This was a public house until the 1930's ; again please respect the current owners' privacy.



Further up is the Rose and Crown or Top House as it is known locally. Another mid nineteenth century building it was extended on the northern elevation into two of the few Wadsley cottages to survive the vandalism of the late nineteen sixties and once bore a plaque that bore the legend that King Richard the Third popped in for a pint of Tetleys after a hard day's hunting in the area!

Like the Wadsley Jack [Jack Whitham] the Rose and Crown had an ex Sheffield Wednesday player as landlord -Arthur Edward Catlin skipper of the 1935 FA Cup Winning side. On the other side of the road you can see more of the post demolition Wadsley redevelopment. One of the real Old Wadsley characters -Big Sam Fretwell- used to sit outside here in his wheelchair.

5. Rural Lane; a lamp and three cottages

Taking great care because of traffic walk down and turn left into Rural Lane till you come to a row of three three storey cottages, built, like all the buildings of old Wadsley, from stone quarried from the local quarries. In the garden of the first cottage is a fine example of a Webbs Patent Street Lamp, an ingenious method of street lighting which utilised sewer gas. Sheffield has about 20 of these left which have recently been renovated by the Conservation Section of Sheffield City Council. London has just one. Look at the ground floor window of the end cottage which has the inscription Thomas Haliday 1804 on the top lintel. Haliday was a Non Conformist Clergyman Educationalist, quarry owner and would be businessman who built the Robin Hood and Little John public house at Cliffe Rocher overlooking Little Matlock in the Loxley Valley (now apartments), as well as Loxley House and this end cottage. All Haliday's constructions are massive and incorporate little wood. The stone for these buildings was obtained from the quarry behind them. Alas Haliday failed in business had to re enter the Ministry and he vanished into obscurity in Ireland -his wife Maria/Martha whose dowry he had spent lavishly on his business ventures predeceased him and is buried in St Nicholas Churchyard High Bradfield. The end cottage was home to the Lincoln family for many years - who I understand were Wardens of the Common.

6. Towards the Almshouses and the church



Hannah Rawson

Walk further down Rural Lane past one of the paths up to Wadsley Common to a block of cottages on the corner. These are circa 1840 and this corner of Wadsley is called Townhead. Taking care cross Worrall Road onto the pavement, and walk back down towards the church, and the Wadsley Almshouses (passing on the right the Sportsman Pub, another probably mid-nineteenth century building. The former mine host back in my youth was the legendary Phil Mulvaney, who once turned the inside of the pub into a veritable military museum festooned with ammunition, hand grenades, gasmasks and an epaulette from a combat jacket which had a piece of cardboard on which bore the legend 'shoulder tab from an Argie [dead]' brought back from the Falklands in 1982.

The Almshouses were endowed in 1839 by Hannah Rawson of Wardsend, which provided accommodation for six needy widows



Wadsley National School -now the church hall - was opened in 1838 and was usually referred to as the Church School. I believe Radio Sheffield's Tony Robinson's great grandfather was head master here at one time. It serves as a community resource these days. Back in the nineteen sixties it was home to the youth club. It holds a collection of watercolours of old Wadsley by Mayor Conrad Kaye, a school teacher, talented artist and lover of Wadsley and local history - still fondly remembered by many. (See below for examples of his paintings.)

Wadsley Church built in 1834 and endowed by Elizabeth and Anne Harrison is one of Sheffield's overlooked churches. The pews which I remember from the nineteen sixties have long gone but its churchyard has a timeless charm which makes the imagination go back to the days when fields stretched out in every direction from it. Unusually it is not dedicated to an individual Saint but it is fitting that it acts as a focus for many community activities and keeps the memory of Wadsley alive, and provides the area with a focus as it has done over its long history.

7.Site of the original Manor House



Keeping on the same side of the road we walk down past Linley's Monuments and with care cross over the road to the modern houses opposite the Horse and Jockey pub now enjoying a new lease of life.



These dwellings are built on the same line as the former cottages and mark the site of what may have been the original village green the other suggested site being opposite the Wadsley Jack. We then proceed up Laird Road to the nineteen sixties block of apartments built on the site of Wadsley's most historic building -the original Manor House.

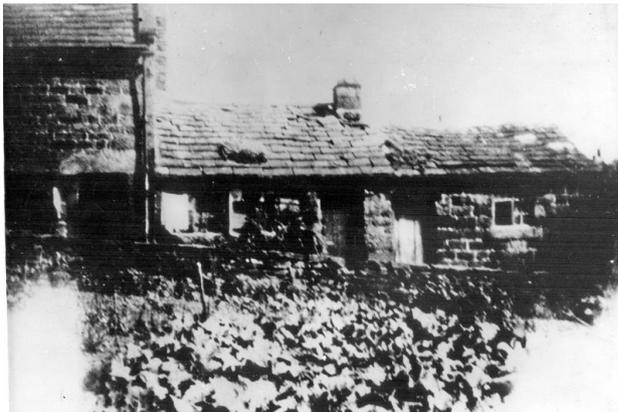
It was of uncertain date, but probably 16th century, being refronted in the early 18th century. A drawing of it shows it to have a side elevation with evidence of a timbered structure, massive stone walls and door key which I haven't seen for years. The Manor House was demolished in the nineteen fifties despite Sheffield City Corporation considering giving it listed building protection. Of all the actions that I for one regard as nothing other than municipal vandalism that took place in respect of the destruction of Wadsley this was the worst. There was a tunnel from the building which reached out as far as a telephone kiosk on the left hand corner.



The Manor of Wadsley passed out of the De Wadsley family before the close of the fifteenth century and the Manor House was eventually superseded by the present Wadsley Hall in Far Lane which was heavily remodelled in 1722 by George Bamforth. His initials and the date bears witness on a side elevation as you enter the yard. We then return to our start point outside the Wadsley Jack via Laird Road..



Finally I hope you enjoy this perambulation round Wadsley and find much of interest. I have barely touched the surface and there is much more to write about this former rural community of pen knife makers who produced the Wadsley Flatback, miners of ganister and coal, grinders, farmers and publicans with a sprinkling of gentry - a village of character with more history and character than anywhere else in S6.



(Wadsley Cutlery Works)



I want to build on this concise initial version and include a bibliography and also continue building up a gallery of images of Wadsley before it fades from human memory. I have tried to put this document together with as little reference to sources other than my own.

The Reverend H Kirk Smith whose History of the Manor and Parish of Wadsley published in the nineteen fifties first opened my eyes to the history of Wadsley, visited his parish after the demolitions in the late nineteen sixties and lamented in a letter to me how 'The Glory of Wadsley has largely gone'; let's bring some of that glory back and above all keep the identity of Wadsley alive and not let it be totally subsumed in the Wisewood Estate. Wadsley folk were always independent folk after all.

Ron Clayton

bigronclayton@hotmail.co.uk



Paintings of C P Kaye : Luke Lane (above)

Cottages opposite Top House (below)

