



Silkstone Waggonway

The following text has been copied directly from the original "The Silkstone Waggonway - A Guide to a Historical and Recreational Trail". This booklet may still be available from tourist information points such as Penistone (St. John's) Church and Silkstone All Saints Church but it would appear to be in short supply.

The map that is included at the end is the one that was originally drawn for the leaflet; the Google maps version which can be seen on the Visit Penistone website, though not strictly accurate, will help to clarify landmarks.

The Waggonway Trail



To the many people who use the Bridleway, which runs through the village of Silkstone and down the valley, they find it a pleasant walk away from the busy roads.

To the residents of Silkstone this public right of way is called the "Waggonway". It was formerly the route of a horse drawn railway, built in 1809 by the Barnsley Canal Navigation Company, which was granted in 1808 an Act of Parliament for the building of a waggonway. This early railway transported the coal from the collieries in the Silkstone Valley 2.5 miles from Silkstone Cross to Barnby Basin Cawthorne, the terminus of the canal.

In 1830 Robert.C.Clark of Noblethorpe Hall built an extension up to Silkstone Common and down to his new colliery developments at Moorend. (SEE MAP) The coal was loaded onto barges or keels, and transported throughout the canal and river network to the towns and villages in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire some being shipped from the Humber to London and other East coast ports. Cargoes of limestone were brought back to Barnby Basin, to be burnt in the limekilns. Much of the lime was then used on the land, being brought into cultivation, such as former moorland.

Horses pulled the waggons, on this early railway which conveyed thousands of tons of coal till the 1860's. In the late 1840's branch lines of the steam railway companies came into the area and the use of the canal and waggonway declined due to the competition.

Coal had been mined in the Silkstone area for hundreds of years but this land-locked coalfield had to wait until the coming of the canal and railways to be fully exploited.

Silkstone Common

Walkers should start their visit at the Railway Station if they come by train, bus or car.

Follow the road along to Station Inn P.H., cross Knabbs Lane and go down Moor End Lane. Pass Silkstone Common school on the right and South Yorkshire Buildings on the left.

The Yorkshire Buildings built by the South Yorkshire Coal and Iron Company to house workers and families, with Foremen and Managers houses nearest the road.

Proceed down and under the disused railway bridge.

This was formally the route built in 1880 by the L.N.E.R Company as a later development to join up with the railway from Barnsley at West Silkstone and to link up with the line through to Penistone, Woodhead Tunnel and Manchester. Having a gradient of one in twenty this gave particular problems, as the line was mostly used for coal traffic. Powerful steam locomotives were used such as the Beyer-Garret to push the heavy trains. Work started before the Second World War to electrify the line but was suspended till the end of hostilities, work finally being completed in the 1950's and the line was closed in 1982. The former route is now part of the Transpennine Trail.

Below the bridge on the right is the entrance to Knabbs Wood owned by the Woodland Trust and the site of the 1838 Husker mining disaster memorial.

During a violent summer storm, twenty six children were drowned making their escape from the underground coal workings by a sloping shaft or drift called the Husker Pit. The disaster was instrumental in having a Royal Commission set up to look at the working conditions in the country's coal mines. In an Act of Parliament in 1842 brought by Lord Shaftsbury women, girls and boys under the age of 14 were banned from working underground.

Moorend

Which lays at the top of the Dove Valley became in the 1830's the centre for the Clarkes of Noblethorpe coal mining operations and developments. This was based around Moorend and House Carr (Husker) collieries all the workings connected underground.

These were served by an extension of the waggonway from Silkstone and the canal termin al at Barnby Basin Cawthorne. By 1852 the collieries had an extension of the South Yorkshire Railway Company carried up to Moorend , which took Mrs.Clarkes highly prized Silkstone Coal directly to Kings Cross London.

In 1851 a three cwt piece of beautifully marked "Peacock Coal" mined at the Husker Pit was sent to the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park, London.

By the 1860's the Clarkes had opened the Old and New Sovereign Collieries . There were further railway developments in the later part of the 19th Century, building a large embankment which covered most of the site of Moorend Colliery and the Waggonway. In the 1940's opencast operations were carried out in the area, down the valley to House Carr, which removed the evidence of the Waggonway.



To continue the walk retrace your steps: come back under the railway bridge, turn right up the path on to the embankment turn and cross the bridge. You are now on the Transpennine Trail. Walk up the slope and take the footpath on the right into Black Horse Drive.

Cross the road and follow the sign left up the footpath that runs at the back of the house gardens into Orchard Meadow, till you arrive at a gate. From there look-back. This was the inclined plane coming up from Moorend.

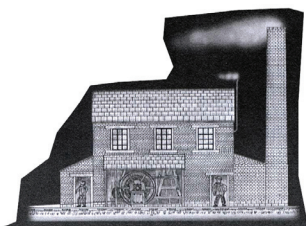
The white house on left called Meadow View was originally a row of cottages. You are now on Woodland View, Walk up to where the road joins Knabbs Lane. This area is called Black Horse.

The Inclined Plane from Moorend



The waggonway came across the fields from the colliery near House Carr Bridge on the road to Stainborough, being joined by a short branch from Moorend Colliery. From this point the waggons were pulled up the single track inclined plane by a steam engine situated near Black Horse Farm at Silkstone Common.

Blackhorse



Mining had been carried out in this area for hundreds of years notably by the owners of Knabbs Hall on their adjoining land and by others on the commons from small pits.

Coal was used locally, and small amounts were taken by pack horse and carts further afield as well as on the improved road which was turnpiked and ran through the area ; The Doncaster and Salterbrook Trust.

In the 1830's Robert C. Clarke, developing his mining interests on his land at Moorend, built Black Horse Engine to wind the coal waggons up from Moorend. This beam engine worked at a high pressure having a cylinder bore of 18 inches and a four feet stroke . It was built by H Graham and Company, Milton Iron Works, Elsecar.

The waggons were then taken by horse through the Black Horse Tunnel which ran under the Turnpike road and later the railway. In 1846 there were celebrations in Silkstone, at the granting of an Act of Parliament for a branch of the M.S. and L. Railway to be built from Oxspring to Black Horse, Silkstone Common. By 1848 coal was sent directly through the Wood Head Tunnel to Tintwistle and Manchester, later joined by the railway coming from Barnsley.

Cross the road and walk along the pavement to the right until you come to a little triangular shaped garden.

Under this site is the Black Horse Tunnel, when laying a new gas main a few years ago the excavations broke through the tunnel roof and photographs taken at the time show it remained in good condition . The Tunnel entrance has now been built over.

Walk on until you come to a path next to the Station House. Walk through the gate and cross the single track of railway by the level crossing and through the gate to the car park.

Black Horse Tunnel

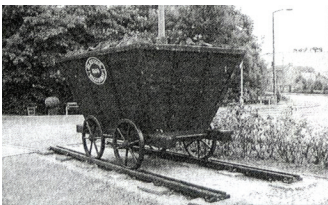


From the Station car park, cross Cone Lane. Directly ahead of you, you will see a metal wall plaque "Black Horse Tunnel 1830". From this position look over the wall and you will see the top of the tunnel entrance. Proceed down hill and enjoy the view of Silkstone Village and Parish Church in the distance.

Walkers coming down Cone Lane take the second footpath left at the waggonway trail sign, go over the stile and down to the bottom of the steep field. Over the next stile (pausel) and take a good look at the inclined plane. Turn right and walk over the embankment under which flows Silkstone Beck through a tunnel, crossing the boundary with the recreation ground through Kissing Gate down the footpath that takes you on to Silkstone Cross.

Self-Acting Inclined Plane

After the waggons of coal were brought by horse through the Black Horse Tunnel to the holding area at the top of the inclined plane, eight waggons were then connected to a 4inch diameter hemp rope wound round a brake checking drum to control their descent. To counter balance the weight eight empty waggons were pulled up at the same time. On reaching level ground the waiting horses took the waggons down to Silkstone Cross and on to the Canal Company's two and a half mile stretch of the waggon way to Barnby Basin.



After passing through the kissing gate at the boundary with the recreation ground the trail runs parallel with Silkstone Beck and the banking of the playing fields. When you reach the end, the path turns left to join the car park at the back of the service station and shop, take a detour round to the front on the main road A628. Cross the road and walk towards the grass island at the end of High Street, there you will see a replica coal wagon, with wheels running on cast Iron rails bolted down on original stone sleeper blocks. Nearby is a cross set up for the millennium with a plaque of Silkstone Parish

Council logo, a miners lamp and brass plates one of which has a brief history of the waggonway.

The Cross

The area which is now a recreation ground, belongs to Silkstone Parish Council, but in the past was the scene of much industrial activity. It was developed during the first half of the 19th century by the Clarke family of Noblethorpe Hall, with the collieries, Coke ovens, Tile works, Gas Works and the Waggonway.

The House No: 1 The Cross which stands at the bottom of Cone Lane, had a passage running down between the buildings to take the waggonway. Before the porch extension was built the adjacent building on the other side had a corner of the wall removed to allow enough width for the waggons. This building was called the "Tommy Shop," a shop and store owned by the Clarke Family. Against wages paid to miners and families every fortnight, deductions would be made for rent of their cottages in the village, and purchases at the shop such as candles. Record books for the shop and store are in the Clarke Collection Sheffield Archives.

The village By-pass completed in 1985 altered the road layout and changed the area lying at the end of the High Street called The Cross. In the past this was probably the site of a medieval cross.

Noblethorpe Hall

The estate was bought by Jonas Clarke in 1790. The original house was a modest farm house. As the family fortunes increased a new mansion was built and the park landscaped, after mining had finished.

Silkstone Village

Continue the walk after crossing the A628 at Silkstone Cross. Pass the replica coal wagon and stone cross. Follow the route along the path to the right of the High Street. As you walk along, you will start to see the stone sleeper blocks.

The trail runs at the back of the Ring O' Bells Public House, village stocks and along the back of the cottages close to Silkstone Beck, until you come to Pot House Bridge at the bottom of Church Hill. In the churchyard is a memorial to the 26 children drowned in the Husker Colliery in 1838.

Pot House was the site of a 17th century glass house and in the 18th and 19th centuries a pottery. The former corn mill has been renovated and with the addition of new buildings form the Potting Shed Cafe. The rest of the area is a garden centre and other retail businesses called Pot House Hamlet.

The stretch from Pot House Bridge to Norcroft Bridge was bought by Silkstone Parish Council in 1987 and is a pleasant walk with views of Fall Wood, Beck and fields.

You will come to the Waggonway pass-bye uncovered and reconstructed by the Roggins Local History Group as part of the Waggonway project with money from a grant from the Rural Target Fund, with a rebuilt field wall, metal plaque and a short length of track relayed with replica rails on original stone blocks.

This Waggon pass-bye is shown on a map of 1833 in detail and is one of many provided at regular intervals on the route , as the Waggonway was a single track. Norcroft bridge was built to take the Waggonway over the stream , which comes down from Banks Bottom and joins Silkstone Beck. When first built it had a flat top without parapets. Later concrete and brick parapets were added to take lorries over to the sewage works.

Just after the bridge marked on the 1833 map was a Waggonway extension which went up Banks Bottom to a colliery. This was in the 19th century.

Close to Norcroft Bridge near the boundary between the parishes of Silkstone and Cawthorne, you will find a small colliery spoil heap, the only one left in the area called Pop Pit's. The site of Joseph Popplewell and Stringers colliery, which mined coal from the opening of the Waggonway in 1809 till 1830 and later the Robinson family's small colliery operations carried on till the 1960's. The brick building in the yard close to the road was a W.W.2 canteen and office.

Cross Norcroft Bridge and after the sewageworks, you will come to a stile on the right. This track goes over Beck by a stone Waggonway bridge to the site of Pall Mall Colliery.

Further down you come to Low Mill, this again had an extension of the Waggonway which crossed the beck by a stone bridge. Across the Waggonway is a small area of trees and bushes. This is the site of Waterloo Colliery.

Up to the early 19th century there was a corn mill and a water holding pond at Low Mill, which was replaced by an iron furnace . Silkstone Beck was diverted from its course so that the furnace could be built close to the bottom of the hill. The furnace was charged from the top with coke and iron stone, mined from bell pits in the area. A water mill wheel drove the bellows for the air blast. Water was stored in a holding pond diverted from Silkstone Beck.

Proceed on your walk until you come to Barnby Furnace Bridge. To the right is the road to Higham.

In the 17th century Barnby Furnace smelted Ironstone using charcoal. In 1802 the Low Moor Iron Company of Bradford sunk a colliery in the area building a waggonway to the newly built canal basin. Just after Furnace Bridge on the right is an old colliery building which may have been a lamp room.

The White House beside the main road had an office at the side next to the Waggonway. In the census returns of 1851 for Barnby Basin Cawthorne, it is recorded a Thomas Hawksworth 66, collector of tolls for the canal company and his wife Martha Hawksworth 68 lived there. Tolls would have been paid by the various colliery owners to transport their coal to the Basin . It is thought that the corner room was the Toll office.

Barnby Basin and the Lime Kilns

Limestone was brought back to the Basin and burnt along with coke to make lime, for the use of local farmers.

In 1850 a branch line of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway was built to take the coal from the collieries in the Silkstone valley. This effected the use of the canal and waggonway which closed in the 1860's.

I hope you have enjoyed your walk.

J . R. 2006

Acknowledgments and References

Further reading on the history of the Silkstone Waggonway, can be found in the following publications, which are available in Barnsley Archives and Local Studies Department, Central Library, Barnsley.

"The Silkstone Waggonway" by John Goodchild. Article included in " Aspects of Barnsley No 2", edited by Brian Elliott.

"The Clarke's of Silkstone and their Collieries" by Robert A. Roberts.

"Silkstone Coal and Collieries" by George N. Teasdale.

"The Husker Pit Disaster "by Jack Wood.

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Silkstone Primary School for the use of a framed map of Highfield House Farm , Silkstone.

Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum SOciety, for access to the collection of photographic glass plates by N.Moxon of Cawthorne.

Map

Below is the map that was printed in the original booklet, the details (dark green boxes) can be found on the following page.





MAP OF BARNBY BASIN 1850's
From Information Collated From Ordnance Survey Map

- A.** ROW OF COTTAGES
- B.** WHITE HOUSE. FORMALLY OCCUPIED BY THE COLLECTOR OF WAGGONWAY TOLLS FOR THE CANAL COMPANY
- C.** WAGGONWAY
- D.** STABLES AND WORKSHOP (DEMOLISHED)
- E.** CANAL COMPANY WAREHOUSE (DEMOLISHED)
- F.** ADJOURNING PUBLIC HOUSE "JOLLY SAILORS"
- G.** BASIN AGENTS HOUSE (DEMOLISHED)
- H.** DRY DOCK OR BARGE BUILDING DOCK
- I.** RESERVOIR FOR FEEDING BASIN WITH WATER (FILLED IN)
- J.** LIME KILNS
- K.** YORKSHIRE AND LANCASTER RAILWAY; SILKSTONE BRANCH
- L.** AQUEDUCT CARRYING CANAL OVER BECK 1-2-3-4 COAL LOADING STAITHES (DEMOLISHED)



— ORIGINAL ROUTE OF THE WAGGONWAY
 — WAGGONWAY TRAIL WALK

Silkstone Common

TO BARNSELEY
 TO SILKSTONE
 TO OXSPRING
 TO PENISTONE

HILL TOP COTTAGES
 CONE LANE
 BEN BANK ROAD
 SILKSTONE COMMON SCHOOL
 SOUTH YORKSHIRE BUILDINGS
 MOOREND LANE
 ORCHARD MEADOW
 STATION INN
 STATION
 WOODLAND VIEW
 MEADOWVIEW COTTAGES
 BLACK HORSE DRIVE
 KNARBS LANE
 BLACK HORSE TUNNEL
 INCLINED PLANE
 TRANS PENNINE TRAIL
 HUSKER 1838