

## Roughlee's Industrial Heritage

A summary from a talk by Brian Jeffery as part of the PHLP Community Archaeology Forum

Compared to the Blackburnshire area in general, the population of the Pendle Forest area, and Roughlee in particular, has only increased slowly over a thousand years. This is due to the control exercised by Clitheroe Castle, who suppressed economic development within the area for many centuries.

### **Phase 1: Medieval**

Population levels were very low in Late Medieval times, mainly due to the uses of the Pendle area. Pendle Forest was a Chase, stocked with game animals, who were looked after by the foresters. Besides the Chase, the remainder of the Pendle Hill area was occupied by Pendleton Common and used by the commoners from the eight townships from Mearley to Wiswell and Read to Padiham.

Game animals were driven over the Common and into the Chase, and modern-day Fence was used as a holding area for the Deer Park of Ightenhill.

This provision of hunting, solely for the privileged, didn't make the Kings (Edward 1<sup>st</sup> and Edward 2<sup>nd</sup>) any money, and they were struggling with severe poverty. When the *de Lacy* family came into power, they added vaccaries or oxen farms to the area, so as to breed draught animals. By 1305, there were 11 vaccaries in the Chase of Pendle. There were few breeds of livestock then, but the success of that story was based on the magnificent English long horn cattle.

At the time, chopping down and using timber was prohibited, therefore the buildings in the forest were predominantly made out of plentiful local stone with rushes for thatch.

Roughlee had 2 oxen farms from 1250 – c1450 and there were around 40 people in each vaccary. Each vaccary would have had a small cornmill, which would have been powered by horizontal waterwheels.

In Over Roughlee, there are records from 1295 of 1 bull, 42 cows, 37 calves up to 2 years old and evidence of rotation of stock within Blackburnshire to combat the problems of in-breeding. Thorneyholme was the centre of the Over Roughlee vaccary. During the summer the oxen would have grazed on the dry ridge, so leaving the valley areas for the summer growing of hay and crops.

There was a turbary area for fuel near Moss End, in which both Roughlee and Goldshaw Booths shared the cutting rights to the peat.

Throughout this time there were 3 main problems – the lack of winter feed, wolves and murrain (some sort of cattle disease). To reduce the effects of murrain, there were open cattle sheds around the valley, known as 'summer-houses'.

Rushes were used for thatch and nails were used for building – which requires iron! Pendle Archaeology Group have found a bloomery at Sabden Fold. Through carbon dating, research shows a possible date for charcoal in the late 1200s, which is before the arrival of Whalley

Abbey in 1296. Slag was also analysed by GeoLancs and it contained 47% iron-oxide (33% pure iron) – which shows that a lot of useful iron was being 'thrown away' from the low temperature kiln.

There is no evidence mining ever took place at Roughlee, but research by both the Pendle Forest History Group and GeoLancs has found 4 layers of ironstone nodules in the banks of Pendle Water at Roughlee. Take a look at the Wealdon Iron Research Group to find out more about this industry: <https://www.wealdeniron.org.uk/>

## **Phase 2 – the New Tenants**

With little money being paid into the king's coffers, it was time for the monarchy to have some new ideas. In 1507, new tenants were invited into Pendle Forest to increase the King's rents.

New tenants created new farms and many surnames are the same as those today. Unfortunately for the King, he agreed to very low fixed rents.

With an increase in the Forest population, there was a need for more local infrastructure. The church at Newchurch with its graveyard was built between 1527 and 1529 as a chapel for Whalley Parish. Services were led by the monks of Whalley Abbey until the 1537 Dissolution.

With an increase in population, there was the need for bigger cornmills at Thorneyholme House (now Hall) and Damhead. The word 'corn' relates to oats in this area and not wheat, because of our shorter summers and wetter weather. Both 16-17<sup>th</sup> century Damhead and Thorneyholme Corn Mills were expensive to maintain and water control was vital. Both Dimpenny Clough and Pendle Water were diverted to provide more controlled water supplies to each mill.

In 1662, King Charles 2<sup>nd</sup> sold all the 'Kings' Mills', because of low income and high maintenance costs. Thorneyholme mill became a farm mill and Damhead became a private cornmill. Damhead mill was demolished and is now the site of Roughlee School, which was built in 1852.

## **Phase 3 – Industrial Revolution**

Throughout the Industrial Revolution there were 2 cotton mills in Roughlee – one at Thorneyholme Farm and one at Judson's Roughlee Mill. Between 1795 and 1814 Thorneyholme Farm had a water-powered cotton twist mill, which closed when its waterwheel was taken to Roughlee Mill. The mill and its waterworks were all excavated by the Pendle Forest History Group in 2017. The mill became a 'dissenting house' until the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Roughlee was opened in 1823.

In the summer of 2021, Roughlee Parish Council are erecting 3 information boards on the topic of 'Roughlee's Industrial Heritage'. They will give access to further information via a QR code.