

# **From the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Year Book 1946/7 by G. H. B. Ward**

## **At and around the Cat and Fiddle and Axe Edge**

The Cat & Fiddle, origin of the name not satisfactorily explained --- Caton the Faithful (Caton Fidelis), the alleged faithful governor of Calais at some medieval date --- or dedicated to some "faithful Catherine" or to the "Great Empress of Russia" (1729 – 96) --- a children's game "Cats Cradle", a game supposed to emanate from the catching of the sun and keeping it for the growth and ripening of the crops, or the from the old making of fiddle strings from the entrails of the cat --- the game of 'cat' (trap ball) and a fiddle for dancing. Another unproven story is that a supposedly daft Duke of Devonshire once, or often drove there with a cat and fiddle.

--- Mr. Ashmore (and afterwards his daughter), Alice Burner who lived at the now ruined "Engine House" on the "Engine Place" moor, 350 yds. N.N.E. of the twin Boothman's Cottages. --- c.1909-1911.

Mr. F. Broadbery told of hearing Mr. Ashmore say that his great grandfather told his grandfather that he had found 4 or 5 sided gritstones, approximately 3 feet long and 6 inches square, set in the ground along of the line of the watershed boundary --- the perimeter of the divide between the sources of Wildboarclough and Dane Clough streams commencing at 300 yds. North of the (should this be south of ?) Cat & Fiddle (1705') at the wall bend ---- east of Cheat hollow source of Clough Brook, which flows into Wildboarclough. Then it goes past the C. & F. along the watershed of the Wildboar and Dane valley feeder streams to the 1795' level (½ mile S. of the Cat & Fiddle) and from this point, eastwards for a good ¾ mile to the old oak and stone post in the Tinkers Pit Gutter source of the Dane at about 500 yd. S.E. of the milestone (Buxton 4, Macc.7¾) on the new 1821 Act road. On the outward face of the stones was deeply cut weathering lettering, but by comparing one with another it was assumed that the top line was C A T, and the second line was F I D E L, and thus suggesting Caton the Faithful.

Mr. Broadbery's theory was supported by Mr. Ashmore's ancestral story of fully 100 years before --- that a Huguenot colony settled down at or near Congleton with a grant of land, founded the silk hand weaving industry and brought fame to Congleton and Macclesfield.

Our rambler friend Walter Smith in "Over the hills near Macclesfield" gives evidence by Mr. John Earles ---- Mr. John Hyle, Macclesfield's Mayor (1805) and John Brocklehurst, it's first M.P. (1832), bought Henbury Hall and Park, and also Errwood Hall and estate, -- " near which he erected the Cat and Fiddle on the site of an ancient hunting and shooting box", and the inn" was built about the year 1830".

An earlier quote from the rambler's book:-

"The Cat and Fiddle and the road, the date of the erection of the C. & F. Inn is also obscure but unless there are un-revealed records of an earlier erection I suggest that the present original inn, at the southern end (about 36' long and 32' wide, and excluding the addition of about 26' in 1926, is not older than 1790, if so old ?

Ryle's father was a friend of John Wesley, Mayor in 1773. John Ryle was a local silk manufacturer and banker (Daintry and Ryle) of Macclesfield and Manchester, father of John Chas. Ryle (Liverpool's first Bishop), and grandson of Dr. Herbert Ryle, Dean of Westminster ---- or church and cash for four generations !

Mr. Earle gives, but leaves us to guess about the ( ---- ) of the Faithful Cat, Faithful Caton and the old nursery rhyme and equally to wander this 'ancient hunting and shooting box' which might have been a 'box' built for a late Georgian or industrial monied sportsman, who bought real estate and like the well known Snake Inn, built a pub for revenue and for his shooting parties of business friends. This version (unlike the Snake Inn) rules out the Duke of Devonshire as the first owner of the C. & F. Indeed the 1758 act old road,

from its present junction with the new road (not 300 yds. S.E. of the present inn) went straight N.W. behind the Inn (a few yards) and the distance from the next milestone to that beside Marchington Farm heap of rubble ruin is exact. But where is that latter milestone to-day ? 15. 12. 1945, and who has it ?

The Cat and Fiddle has not faced both ways. My pre-1848 first Ordnance Map shows the oldest road behind the Cat and Fiddle in dotted lines.

Mr. Ernest Axon, F.S.A. in six valuable articles printed in the Buxton Advertiser between 18.11.1944 – 30.12.1944. refers to Acts of Parliament (in 1758 – 9) for improving roads from Mansfield to the Derbyshire/Chesterfield turnpike road from Nottingham to Newhaven and Ashbourne, from Wirksworth to Chapel-en-le-frith, and also from the Broken Cross in Macclesfield, through Macclesfield Forest to the turnpike road at the south end of Buxton. This was what is now the old road to Macclesfield.

The road from Buxton to Burbage goes S.W. past Gosling Toll Bar House (the last house on the right ?) “Gosling” is on Smith’s 1804 Derbys. Map. It was a catch-bar for coal and caulk (byrites) traffic, etc, between the Buxton/Leek and Macclesfield roads.

----- past the Old Goyt Colliery (1410) ft., then by old workings on each wide descending to, and beside Goyts Moss then up to Moss Hall Farm, Moss House and Marchington Farm, and straight uphill ahead to the junction with the new road some 300 yds. Short of the C. & F.

Mr. Axon says the Buxton end of this old road is the east end of the present West Road in Buxton.

Mr. Jessie Grindy (aged 64) of Chapel Row, Ladmanlow, says he left Moss Hall Farm House about 1932, and the old natives do not forget they were turned out, and the four houses afterwards erased, except the Goyts Moss Far now (Dec.1943) – window and doorless and partially roofless, because

Stockport Corporation had obtained the land and were making Fernilee Reservoir, about 2 ½ miles away.

Some day the making of desert land around a reservoir will be sternly prohibited.

Mr. Axon's last note is that the longer, better graded new road from Macclesfield to Buxton was authorised in 1821, and apparently completed in 1823. It entered Buxton by St. Johns Road – formerly called Macclesfield Road or Macclesfield New Road. The toll bars on the then old road were quickly sold, the Buxton School Trustees buying for £45 the Gosling Bar Toll House (1923), which adjoined their allotted piece of land on Hartington Common.

There were Buxton to Macclesfield and Buxton to Leek and Congleton, etc. bridleways ages before the turnpike, cart and carriage roads to 1758 and 1763 ---- often parallel with or merged into the present road.

There may have been a miserable medieval ale house at or by the Cat and Fiddle, but having regard to lack of clear evidence of any ancient house or pre-1800 land clearings between the Goyt's Moss and Marchington Farm lands, a mile west of the C. & F., and Stake Farm, I express my doubts. Otherwise it would have been little more than a shepherd's cottage like the Fox House Inn near Longshaw.

Another theory is that in pre-1535 Monastic times there was a bridlewayside spital or free house for travellers near the C. & F., similar to the Benedictine spital or stainmore (north of England). The watershed of Wye and Goyt linked the King's two medieval sporting grounds.

The absence of presumably Enclosure acts on the west side of Macclesfield Forest boundary adds to the problem of ex Crown or Abbey lands often fritted (sic) away (17 th century) and thus becoming entailed estate and not common

land subject to Enclosure Acts. Kinderscout, the Ashop and Upper Derwent Valley lands were ex crown lands once part of the Kings Forest of the Peak.

### **THE ROAD PUZZLE NEAR AXE EDGE**

Coming from Buxton on the Leek road, there was a Ladmanlow toll bar house fixed beside the present level crossing (1266') over the High Peak Railway line at the junction with the road to Longnor. About 800 yds. Further S.S.W. on the Leek road at the 1411' level is another old disused road fully 30-40 feet wide, going N.N.W. for 500 yds. To an acute bend at 1482'.

At this acute bend – N. side – is an open stile for apparent public path going down the slope and direct to the level crossing (and an iron gate there by the roadside) which at field wall higher up is now obstructed. But this path goes down a clearly seen, if steep old carriage road 40 – 50 ft. in width and apparently towards the junction with the road to Longnor.

From the acute bend the 30 – 40 ft. width road goes S.W. for 600 yds. And junction crosses the new road to Macclesfield, opposite and a few yards S. of the Buxton Waterworks pumping house, on the E. bank of the highest feeder of the River Wye.

Crossing the new road, this old road goes direct S. beside the wall, passes the disused coal road and path N. to the Engine House and then to the old turnpike to C. & F. and in ½ mile passes Boothmans Cottages (Halfway Houses) at 1615'. The road now about 25' wide and drained off on the high side for another 800 yds. passing another old coal road, is like an old turnpike but in the last 600 yds it is tarmaced – about 1930? Then it joins the old road at about 120 yds. E. of Moss Hall's farmhouse heap of rubble. Opposite Boothmans Cottages however is a significant straight 500 yds. of old coach road about 50' wide going S.W. across the moor where the Congleton joins the A537.

## Conclusions or guesses:-

1. was the steep apparent carriage road from the High Peak Railway crossing at Ladmanlow the first attempt (soon abandoned?) to make the Buxton / Congleton road after 1735?
2. was the wide and easier road leaving the (1765 act) Leek Road 800 yds. S.S.W. of the High Peak Railway crossing, a pre-1821 Act road from Buxton to Congleton, or from Chelmorton and Longnor, etc. to Macclesfield and Congleton avoiding Buxton?
3. I have a new maps of the County of Derby printed for C. Smith etc., dated Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1804 which just shows Moss House Farm on the old Buxton – Macclesfield road, and also the Buxton – Congleton road as leaving the old road at about 200 yds. S.W. of Moss House and going almost direct S.W. though the direction is only approximate, it indicates a Buxton – Congleton Road Act before 1804 and probably before 1780 – 90.
4. did this pre 1804 or pre 1780 road to Congleton from near Moss House go to Boothmans Cottages and when S.W. across the moor, 500 yds. to the present junction with the new Buxton – Macclesfield and Congleton roads and as now almost straight S.W. for another mile.
5. I guess that the earlier Longnor – Congleton and Macclesfield roads joined at Boothmans Cottages.
6. The grassy path and road going almost due N. from about 200 yds. E. of Boothmans Cottages, past Engine House and the old coal mine shown as 'Coal FI' on my pre 1843 Ordnance map, to the 1553' level, is I suggest an old coal road made to connect with the old Buxton – Macclesfield road, and with (2/)

7. at 3 miles S.S.W. of Buxton, the Leek road is joined by a road from Hartington and Earl Sterndale and the road forward (N.) beside Cisterns Clough if it was used for the Burbage Colliery, may be a late 18<sup>th</sup> century connector for Macclesfield and Congleton. The paths and tracks going N. half a mile, W. of Axe Edge, are Thatch March Colliery and quarry tracks between the 2 roads.

### **ENGINE HOUSE, BOOTHMANS COTTAGES AND PORTOBELLO BAR**

The Engine House about 1560' is best approached from the now green but metalled coal road going S. from the 1559' summit of the old Macclesfield Road, 1 ¼ miles S.W. of Burbage Parish Church, and according to Mr. Jesse Grindy who lived there 62 years ago, it was a coal winding engine. He told me (15.12.1945) that the filled-in pit shaft was 4 yards outside the thick walls (stone) of the engine house, afterwards made a dwelling house of 2 rooms, up and down plus a kitchen and pantry. I hear it was deserted about 1911.

The coal road, as above, is shown on my pre 1848 map and the Engine House is given as Coal Pit, but not (1.) the track from it N.W. to the old Goyt Colliery (about 1400') situate about 400 yds. E. of the 1559' summit, (2.) the patch or cart-track from the engine House to the old road about 200 yds. E. of Boothmans Cottages, or (3.) the latter. Engine House was a wild placed dwelling.

### **BOOTHMANS COTTAGES**

Once two, now with only one tenant, and already doomed by the authorities when post war housing is less of a problem, are 1615' altitude and about 800 yds. W. of the square build pumping station.

Whether built by Boothman a builder (Mr. Jesse Grindy version), or whether as Mr. John Mort (the Peak Barmaster) suggests, one of the Boothmans who figured in old time lead mining and whose efficient work can be seen as far as

Whaley Bridge and Furness Vale. He was also interested in coal mining near Moss House and may have built them for miners fully 100 years ago, but neither is proved.

They are also called “Half Way Houses” to the C. & F. and sometimes old posting houses – a statement open to doubt. An old pit, pond and quarry are 100 – 300 yds. N.W. of the 2 houses but drinking water is obtained 800 yds. away from the infant Wye.

### **PORTOBELLO BAR** (1506')

Was a toll house and catch bar not 100 yds. W. of the pumping station on the right (S.) side of the A537. Now recognised by a heap of stone and exposed ground floor flags, it was a one storey dwelling of 2 rooms and a kitchen or pantry – late inhabited until 1905 by a Mr. John Brindley a Buxton Waterworks employee.

Portobello – “the beautiful gate or door” must be another Buxton joke for the scenery hereabouts. The little Portobello Buxton Reservoir – named after it ? – is below, about 200 yds. N. of Portobello Bar site.

### **COAL MINING NEAR AXE EDGE**

The history of coal mining and the collier in this wild moorland, S.W., W. N.W. AND N. of Axe Edge  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 mile, would be highly interesting and probably show that ‘the wages of sin is death’, the collier’s life around Burbage, Ladmanlow, the Goyt’ Moss, 4 or 5 houses and moorland farmlets, Flash and the few moorland cottages, was almost Hell, 100 – 200 years ago.

Glovers valuable Derbyshire Gazeteer (1829) gives 3 collieries hereabouts. (1) Black Clough (or (Beat)  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile N. W. of Flash, in Hartington Parish, first and second coals (sold coal seams), a great fault across the works, worked lately by stunnel for boats. Though previously abandoned I spoke to odd man



working in it during the 1914-1918 war coal scarcity period when old workings were re-opened. Beat may refer to the old practice of pairing the turf, burning it and scattering the ashes before ploughing – Wrights Dialect Dictionary. (2) Thatch Marsh in Hartington, 2 miles S.W. of Buxton (works 2 ½ miles long) first coal, brasses (hard yellow or ochrey kind of sulphide of iron) worked by a railway tunnel. This railway tunnel was financed by the Duke of Devonshire to better the supply of coal for Buxton (from Glover's Gazeteer).

Josiah Fairbank's note book of a survey in 1815 of a promised tram-railway from Park Forest to Hope Woodlands, near Ashopton, but never carried out, says Philip Hescok Esq. of Buxton, one of the Duke of Devonshire's stewards says that he has expended 10,000 in a sough and railroad to the collieries at or near Buxton, and that the runnel cost between 5 or 6 guineas for yarqd running. It was about 103 wide and from 5 to 6 ft. high, this included the pits or shafts for air. (a record now in Sheffield Public Ref. Library) "E THERE ARE A FEW WORDS I JUST CAN'T MAKE OUT HERE or a moor or marsh as wet as the straw partly rotted with water (should this be wetted with water?) before it is used to thatch a roof.

This site (Glover often being very exact) would be about ½ mile W. of Axe Edge summit though by earliest Ordinance (1") map pre-1848 which does not show the Ambergate – Rowsley railway line (1929), places this colliery S.S.W. of Axe Edge, near the site of the Burbage Colliery, or "Top Collier" – the latter sinking (?) near Cistern's Clough Head (meaning shaft head ? ). 3. "Goyte Moss" or (Goit) E. and N. of Moss House in Derbyshire and Cheshire, 2½ miles W. of Buxton, second coal.

There are at least 7 old coal pits and trial holes up to ½ mile Northerly and Southerly of Goyt's Moss Farm and chiefly E. of the source of the Goyt. This scattered working is also a "coal pit" on my pre-1848 map. My copy of a "New Map of the Country around Manchester" about 1795 ? shows Moss House and 3 coal pits, one about 1/3 miles N.E. and two a little further from Moss House to the N.E. These Goyt's Moss, Moss Hall, Moss House and

Marchington House clearings and sheep farms, would I believe be built and used after the 1758 Act and Buxton – Macc. Old road was laid, and some of the farmers and sons would work in the pits.

Mr. Jesse Grindy says that Marchington Farm was once the “Coach and Horses” Inn and the name on the mantelpiece front – when the Goyt paint mill, 1 ¼ miles N. (afterwards a wool scouring mill, pre 1848 map) was in full swing, and caulk (barites) was carted from to it. The Goyt Hill site and mill race from the river Goyt is at the foot of Deep Clough, then called Mill Clough, and ex Deep Clough cottage.

These coal pits and drifts from ¾ mile S.S.W. and S.W. ¼ mile N., 1 ½ miles N.W. and 1 mile N. of the Axe Edge summit, though some bell pits were possibly earlier, were extended and deepened after the invention of the colliery chain pumping engine – 1700 – 50. The altitudes are 1200 – 1650’.

Pilkington’s inferior Derbyshire Gazateer (1789) only records coal found at Hartington Upper Quarter near Buxton. Coal from these pits was led to Taddington and Chelmorton etc. 8 – 10 miles away and Old Coal Pit Lane about ½ mile N. of the latter, could tell of long day travel for a ton of coal with 2 horses. I must add that Glover copied and revised much information from John Farey’s (1766-1826) General View of the Agriculture and minerals of Derbyshire, 3 vols. 1811-17. Farey gives the above 3 named collieries and details in 1811 and says that Thatch Marsh colliery “will soon be worked by a railway tunnel”. Farey records Birchen Brook, Notbury etc. N.N.W. and S. of Flash and a fourth colliery and a fifth: Dane Head, Cheshire 2 miles N.W. of Flash in Staffordshire, second coal.

This working was westward of Burbage Colliery. Penny Hole 1 ¼ miles N.N.W. of Flash, first coal, 1811. These shafts are about ½ mile N.N.E. of Orchard Farm and about ½ mile S.W. of Burbage Colliery. “Penny” may refer to the old clay embedded modules of ironstone, or to a pit watercourse.

The last colliery worked is said to have been Burbage Colliery (Top Pit) by Buxton Lime Firm Ltd. Until about 1910, re-opened during the 1914-18 War and closed c. 1919.

Mr. Jesse Grindy tells me that in very bad weather colliers would walk down the drift, about 1 ½ miles long and emerge at the “Level” old workings by Level Lane (just N. of the Wye), about ½ mile S.W. of Burbage Church. In some of the shafts colliers (as the lead miners) descended by ladders and risk their necks every working day. He called one drift the “sluther” probably from to “slip or slide” on the clayey bottom of the drift.

### **MOSS CHAIN**

This place name 1150 yds. almost N.W. of Axe Edge summit may mark the site of an 18<sup>th</sup> century chain pumping engine, the chain of buckets pulled up from the sump, and emptied into a pipe and drain, etc. on the surface.

Many of these old shafts, air shafts and trial holes are filled-in, effectively covered with plans or fenced off and otherwise neglected. Thus no rambler should cross these coal mined moor tops in darkness or mist.

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