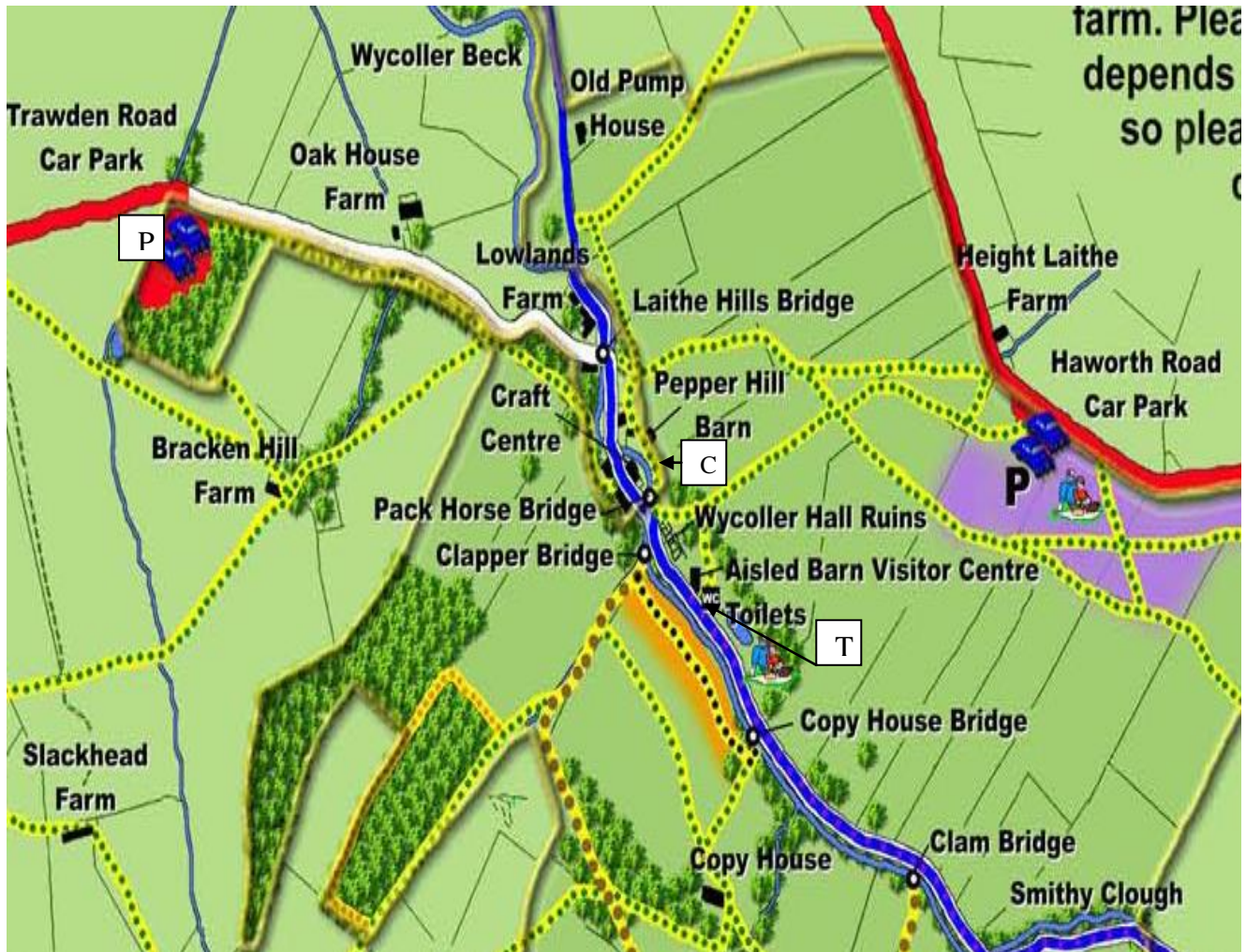


WYCOLLER.

MAP OF THE WYCOLLER AREA



KEY:-

P – Car Park

C – Cafe

T – Toilets

Map Ref SD 932 392

OVERVIEW

From the 15th century the Wycoller area was a sheep farming and weaving community, but the invention of power looms eventually led to the village's decline. In the 1890s there were plans to create a reservoir by damming Wycoller Beck, but fortunately the plan never materialized. 'The Friends of Wycoller' were established in 1948 in an effort to preserve Wycoller Hall and the village. Lancashire County Council bought the land from the Water Board in 1973 and the village and surrounding countryside were designated a Country Park. Wycoller Country Park is one of the prettiest Country Parks in Lancashire. The area is famous for its association with the Brontë sisters who referred to many of the nearby landmarks in books such as "Wuthering Heights" and "Jane Eyre". The exclusion of cars from the village and the attractive appearance of the many preserved old buildings creates a unique feeling of tranquillity which is rarely experienced today. The Country Park has many footpaths leading to local beauty spots which include Bank House and Wycoller Beck.

AILED BARN VISITORS CENTRE



The Ailed barn was built in the 1630's and is one of the finest examples of its kind in Lancashire. The appearance of these buildings suggests a change from grazing to crops between the 1570's and 1640's, with the Ailed barns being built within the last 40 years of that period. Cereal prices rose rapidly in the 1570's so the ploughing of poorer land became feasible and larger grain barns replaced Cruck barns which were too restrictive in interior space. The Wycoller barn was built using materials from a former Cruck frame barn.

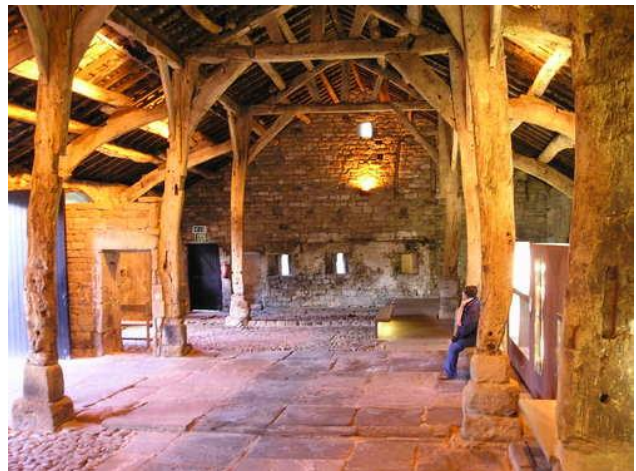
Climate changes in the mid-17th century onwards produced bad harvests leading to more mixed farming systems. Later use of the barn varied - sheltering cattle, storing crops and latterly, a coach house used in conjunction with the Hall. Note the arch stoned doorways used for access by coaches. The barn is listed as being of historic and architectural interest (Grade 2) and following development by Lancashire County Council the barn now serves as an information centre.

Brief description of the Ailed Barn

The Barn lies to the east of the ruins of Wycoller Hall, in the village of Wycoller, and is aligned approximately north-south. Large barns are often misidentified as tithe barns, but true tithe barns (such as the late-medieval single-aisled barn at Horbury, West Yorkshire) are few in number and most aisled barns were farm buildings on larger or smaller landed estates, as in this case.

The timber frame

The structure of the aisled barn, within the outer envelope of stone walls, consists of four cross-frames. Cross-frames I and II exactly correspond to Type III aisled barns in the published typology,² but trusses III and IV lack queen struts on either side of the tiebeam. Although the presence of queen struts is one of the features which distinguishes postmedieval king-post trusses in the Pennines from medieval trusses of the 15th and early 16th centuries, it is not uncommon for such struts to be omitted. The roof has two tiers of purlins over the aisles and two tiers of purlins over the nave. The original ridge does not survive and the present plank-like softwood ridge is modern. In the northern bay, all the purlins in the nave except the one next to the western arcade plate have been replaced with softwood and the upper purlin in the eastern aisle is also modern. The carpentry is not of a high quality, which would in fact have been difficult to achieve when so much of the timber used came from an earlier building..



The Plan

The barn is a double-aisled structure of five bays, with a narrow, single-storey, lean-to overlapping the two southern bays on the east side of the building. A number of building

phases can be discerned.

WYCOLLER HALL



History

Wycoller Hall dates back to the end of the 16th century, and was built upon the site of a house occupied in 1507 by Piers Hartley. By the 1590s a substantial house had been built, probably sometime in the mid 16th century, replacing Piers' original dwelling. The estate then came into the possession of the Cunliffe family, after the marriage of Pier's daughter Elizabeth to Nicholas Cunliffe. They had a number of children, one of whom, John, married Grace Hartley in 1628. The Cunliffes settled at Wycoller in the 1720s, after losing their ancestral home to debts. The estate then passed through several brothers, all of whom died without issue, before passing to the grandson of one of the sisters, Henry Owen, on the condition that Owen took the name Cunliffe. He took the name Henry Owen Cunliffe, and became the new squire. He embarked on a large building project for the hall, to create a home that he felt would be worthy of his position, and that would attract a new wife.

The building project took over a year to complete, during which time Henry moved out and lodged at the nearby public house. The work included the fitting of a new porch, a large range of mullioned windows, and the modernisation of the interiors. By the time it was complete Henry had married and the couple moved into the hall to enjoy their new lifestyle. Henry was however a keen sportsman and gambler, and ran up heavy debts. On his death in 1818 the property passed to his nephew, Charles Cunliffe Owen, but Charles could not afford to pay off the debts, and the estate was parcelled off to the creditors. The hall passed to a distant relative, John Oldham, and then to the Rev. John Roberts Oldham. The latter arranged for large parts of the stonework to be sold off to build a cotton mill at Trawden.

Despite this, much of the hall survived into the late 19th century, though it was unoccupied and steadily crumbling, with considerable amounts of the stonework being removed for local buildings. The entire village subsequently passed into the ownership of the local Water Board, but continued to decline. A local conservation group, 'The Friends of Wycoller' was founded in 1948, and began a campaign to conserve the historic village. Their work on the hall included the restoration of the fireplace in the 1950s. The entire area was sold in 1973 to Lancashire County Council, which declared the entire village a conservation area, and designated the surrounding 350 acres as a Country Park. The

ruins of the hall were designated as a scheduled monument and are Grade II listed. An exhibition about the history of the hall, the village, and the surrounding area was established in the aisled barn close to the ruins.

Design

The house had a grand two storey porch, which had been removed in the 1870s and re-erected in Trawden. The porch led into the great hall, dominated by a large stone fireplace. On the right is a key hole shaped opening, the function of which is still unknown. The part of the house rebuilt in the time of Henry Owen Cunliffe was three storeys high, and contained the drawing and sitting rooms, and the bedrooms. Behind the main hall were the kitchens. Beyond the main building of Wycoller Hall was a courtyard with coach-house and stables. Gardens were laid out in Henry Owen Cunliffe's period of occupancy, as was a cock pit. During the last years of occupancy the house was divided in two and lived in by two different families.

Wycoller and the Brontës

Wycoller Hall is thought to be the inspiration for Ferndean Manor in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The Brontës lived in the nearby village of Haworth, and both Charlotte and her sister Emily probably visited Wycoller on their walks. Parallels have also been drawn with the owner of Ferndean, Mr Rochester's father, and Henry Owen Cunliffe. One of the occupants of the hall, Elizabeth Cunliffe, also became Elizabeth Eyre through marriage. Wycoller Hall was even used to illustrate the cover of the 1898 edition of *Jane Eyre*.

BRIDGES

Seven bridges cross Wycoller beck including the somewhat primitive Clam bridge, together with the Copy House, Clapper, Pack-horse, Laithe Hills and Lowlands bridge and the village bridge near Pierson's House.

PACK HORSE BRIDGE

The twin-arched pack-horse bridge may have originated in the 13th century. Over the years it has been reconstructed and adapted by local people for carrying goods. The bridge is not falling over as its precarious appearance suggests but has withstood constant use and powerful floods over the centuries. The bridge is also known as Sally's bridge after Sally Owen, mother of the last squire, Henry Owen Cunliffe.

On the famous packhorse bridge close to the old hall, four of the stones have cup-markings etched onto them [1]. It seems that



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at least three of the carvings are archaic; cups on one of them seems somewhat deep and may be medieval. A short article describing them was in the Cartwright Hall Archaeology Bulletin in October 1962, where they were just as puzzled about them. In 1979, J.A. Heginbottom described them in his survey on the prehistoric rock-art of upper Calderdale.

The bridge is believed to have been built by monks of the Cisterian Order who controlled several abbeys on this side of the Pennines. Care must be taken when crossing the bridges as visitors have polished the rock on which the brides are made!



[1] Cup Markings.

CLAPPER BRIDGE

Clapper bridge, also known as Hall, Weavers or Druids bridge, is a simple construction of stone slabs supported by stone piers, probably dating from the late 18th or early 19th century. At one time the bridge was heavily grooved by the weavers clogs en route with their cloth to the tenter field behind the Hall where the cloth was spread on tenterhooks to dry. The groove was reputedly chiselled flat by a farmer after his daughter had a fatal accident on the bridge in about 1912.

Clapper Bridge lies within close proximity of the Packhorse Bridge. There has been a great deal of debate on the reasons for having two ancient bridges so close together.

One source of reasoning suggests that Clapper Bridge was built to solve some demarcation dispute over rights-of-way.



Historically, the Clapper Bridge suffered much wear & tear from the abrasion of iron-shod hooves. As such, one of the Clapper stones broke and had to be supported by the central pile of rocks in the bed of the beck.

CLAM BRIDGE

The Clam bridge is a single gritstone slab laid across the beck with small holes on one side showing the former position of handrail supports. The bridge is believed to be more than 1000 years old and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. On may 19th 1989 there was a cloud burst on Haworth Moor and Boulsworth Hill above Wycolter and in the resulting flash flood the stone slab was swept from its

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foundations and cracked in two. The bridge was repaired and put back into position, only to be swept away and broken again in a further flood in August 1990. It was restored and replaced in June 1991.

Clam Bridge lies part way along the Bronte way - a interesting walk from Wycoller Village towards



Haworth. It is a unique single-span bridge crossing the banks of the beck. You can see from the photograph the the bridge rests precariously on the edge of a natural rock outcrop. Yvonne is standing on a system of huge balance stones that support the main Clam bridge. Clam Bridge is believed to be the oldest bridge in the Wycoller area- perhaps dating back to Bronze-Age times. Perhaps as old as Stonehenge!

VACCARY WALLS

A medieval farm or vacaria specialising in cattle. These were frequently established in deer parks and often took over as the main activity in a former deer park. The term is sometimes used for simple cattle enclosures.

The Vaccary Walls provide an interesting archaeological site dating from the 13th Century. From the French word "Vacher" meaning a herd of cows, vaccaries are stone slab walls, and were established with the advent of cattle farms and were used to keep cows enclosed. The Forest of Trawden was the site of several vaccaries, remains of which can still be seen today in Trawden and Wycoller. A small settlement housing the vaccary keeper and his family together with a small workforce would have been sited close to the winter pasture. The general principle of a vaccary farm was that a winter pasture was situated on good land at the head or side of a valley, which in turn led onto summer pasture lying on the higher ground above. The winter pasture was surrounded by a substantial bank and ditch with the bank either topped by a wall or palisade. The cattle remained in the winter pasture during the winter months, where some shelters were available, and moved up onto the summer pasture in early summer.



Wycoller Panopticon



Books on Wycoller

- 1) "Portrait of Wycoller", John Bentley, Paperback (1 May, 1993)
- 2) "Wycoller Country Park", Stanley Cookson & Herbert Hindle, Paperback (June 1982)
- 3) "In Brontë Footsteps", Herbert Hindle, Paperback (June 1982).