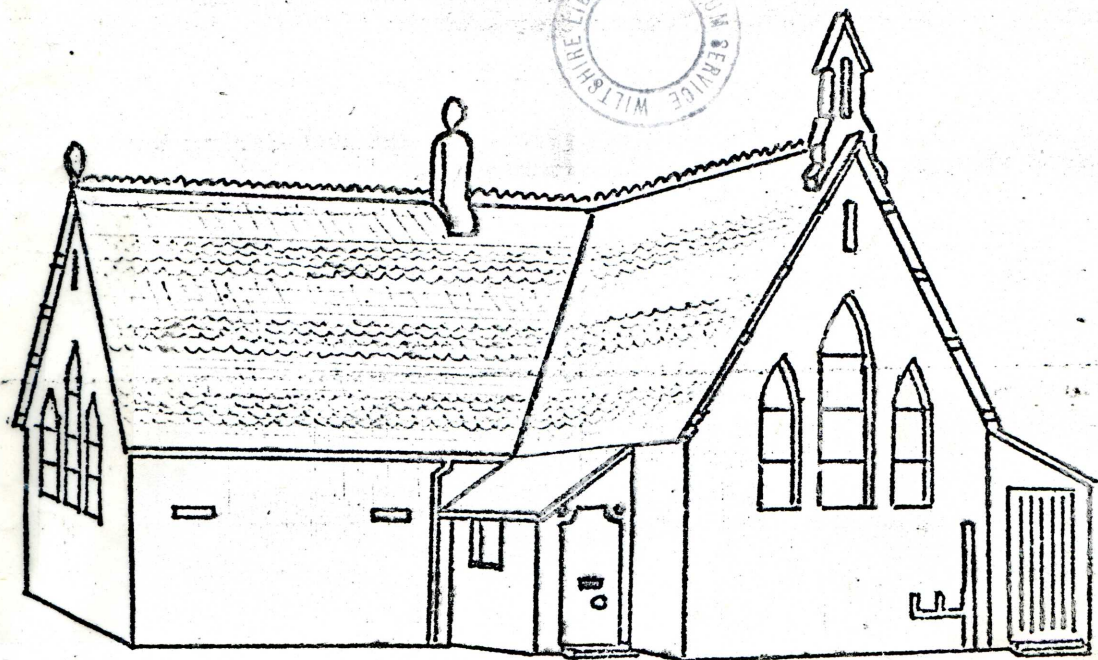


STAVERTON SCHOOL

CENTENARY 1880-1980



VILLAGE HISTORY  
TRAIL

STV913

## THE STAVERTON HISTORY TRAIL

The History Trail starts at the SCHOOL (1) which was built in 1880 on land conveyed to the Church by a Mr. S. Keddle. It was designed to hold 100 children. The earlier school was established in 1850 in a house belonging to The Kennet & Avon Canal Co. and was situated on the East bank of the canal near the present Wharf Cottage. Approximately 50 children attended in those days and the school was staffed by a temporary mistress and two pupil teachers. The 'new' school of 1880 taught pupils, of all ages, up to 1931 when the older children were sent to senior school in Trowbridge.

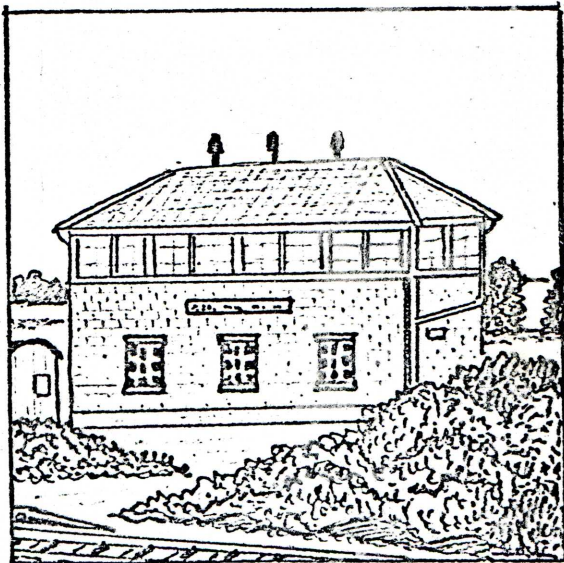
Numbers of children attending varied through the years from 60 in 1899 to only 30 in 1938. The school was nearly closed in the 1930's due to the low numbers but expanded during World War 2 when evacuees were sent to the district. During this time the Reading Rooms across the road (now modernised) were used for temporary classrooms.

From the school, walk South down School Lane, past the poultry farm and follow the footpath across the fields to Ladydown.

On your right, as you approach the canal, is the RAILWAY (2) built in 1848 as part of the GWR scheme for the West. The original line, in broad gauge, connected Thingley Junction, Chippenham and Westbury. BRADFORD JUNCTION (3) did not connect to Bradford Station until 9 years later due to reasons unknown but probably lack of funds. The north curve of the junction was completed in 1895 and the present signalbox, built in 1933, replaced three boxes - one on each corner of the junction.

Walk to the canal and about 100 yards to your right is the AQUADUCT (4) which carries the canal over the River Biss. Further on is the River Avon Aquaduct. ? Both carry the classic Rennie style.

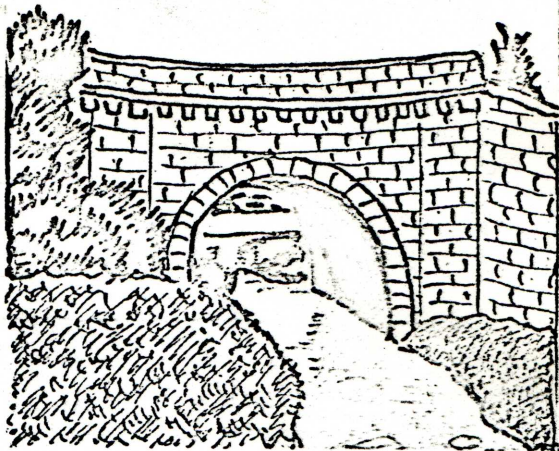
Turn N.E. and follow the canal towpath back towards



THE BRADFORD JUNCTION SIGNALBOX

the village. The CANAL (5) was built in 1801 under a scheme proposed by The Kennet & Avon Canal Co. and with John Rennie as the Chief Engineer.

Proceed along the towpath and you will come to PARSONS BRIDGE (6) which connected the lands of Smallbrook with the Wyke Estate. Wyke House (re-built in 1625 and again in 1865) was situated on the South Side of the new housing development at Tudor Drive. Copied from the previous house in the Jacobean style it was demolished in 1972.



THE AQUADUCT OVER THE BISS

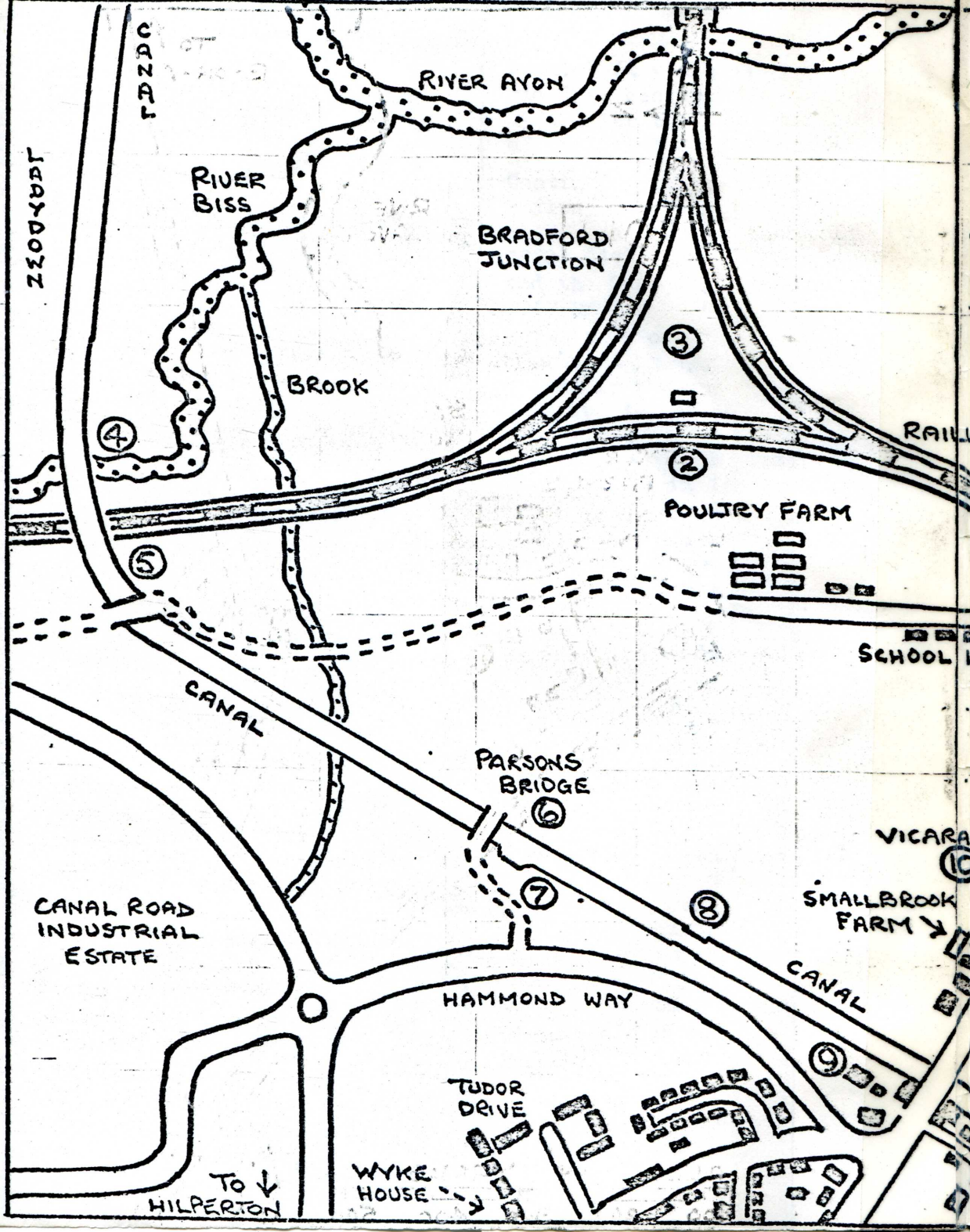
The corners of the bridge arch still bears the grooves worn by towropes from the old horse towing days.

Just past the bridge on the other side of the canal is a 'TURNING BAY' (7) where coal barges were turned round because they were too long to turn at the wharves.

Midway between Parsons Bridge and the Road Bridge you will see the remains of a wooden SWINGBRIDGE (8) the stone abutments only remaining.

Each side of the Road Bridge on the Hilperton side of the Canal are the remains of the CANAL WHARVES (9) which were a hive of activity in the early 1800's. Coal, from the Somerset Coalfields, was the main cargo in those days - it was offloaded at the Wharves and distributed to mills etc. around the district. The Wharves were still in use at the turn of the century although the canal trade had badly declined by this time. The coalhorses of A.H. & S. Bird were stabled here until after the Second World War and lorries, which replaced the horses, up into the early 1960's. The building on the Bridge was used for stabling and a feed store for horses and many of the original Wharf buildings can still be seen on the other side of the roadbridge.

Leave the Canal and cross the road heading West and into the village. You will pass the fine old houses of Elmfield and Smallbrook Farm on your left. The old VICARAGE (10) comes



JEAN DOZZ

JEAN DOZZ

RIVER AYON

RIVER BISS

BRADFORD JUNCTION

BROOK

④

③

RAIL

②

POUSTRY FARM

⑤

SCHOOL

CANAL

PARSONS BRIDGE

⑥

VICARAGE

CANAL ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

⑦

SMALLBROOK FARM

HAMMOND WAY

⑧

CANAL

TUDOR DRIVE

WYKE HOUSE

To ↓ HILPERTON

⑩

⑨



To ↑  
B-04-A

# STAVERTON

MOVA

RIVER AVON

HILLWAY

ST. PAUL'S

STAVERTON FARM

SCHOOL

OL LANE

CHAPEL

NESTLÉ FACTORY

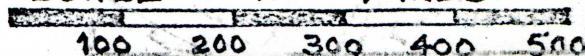
TO →  
HOLT

ARAGE

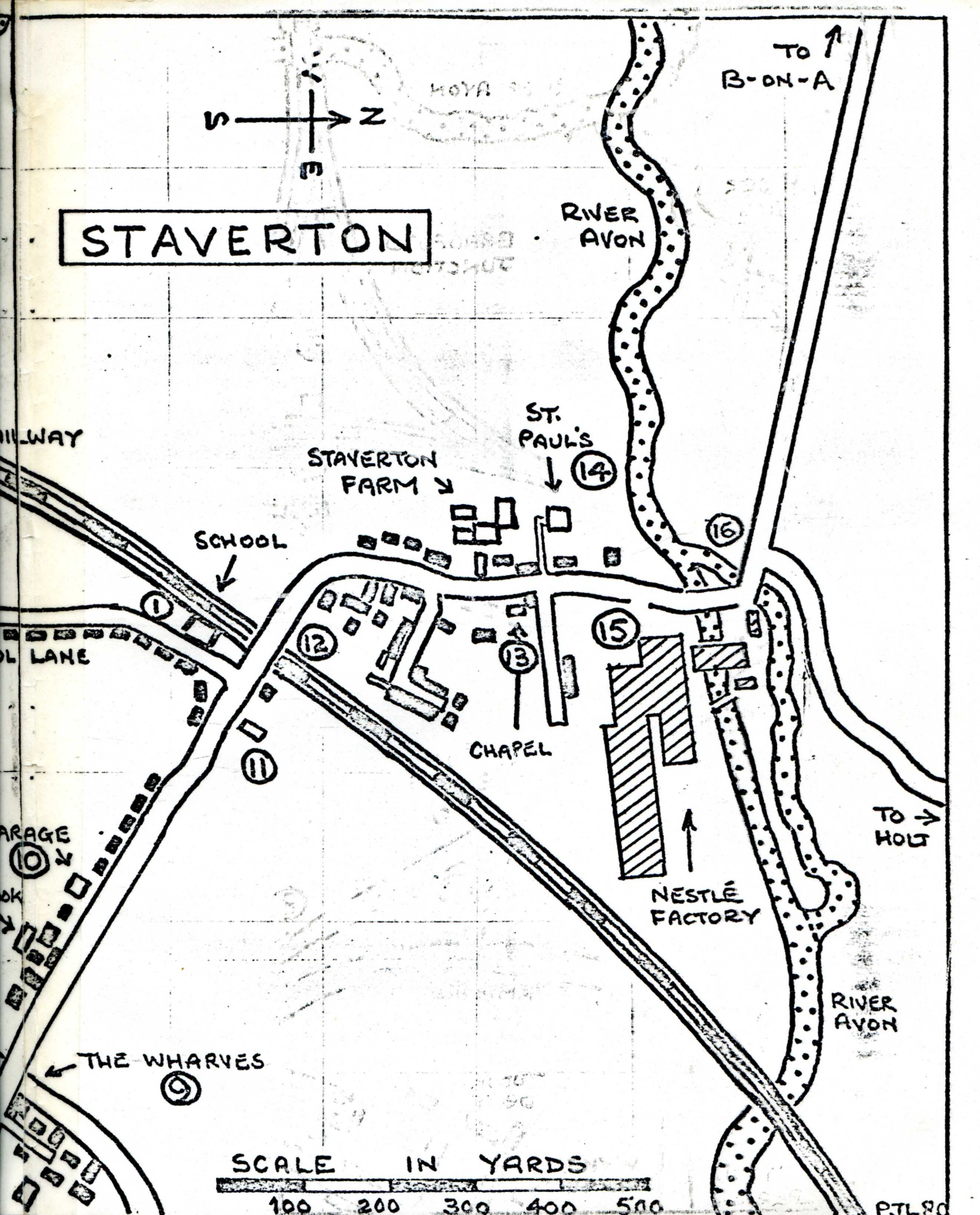
← THE WHARVES

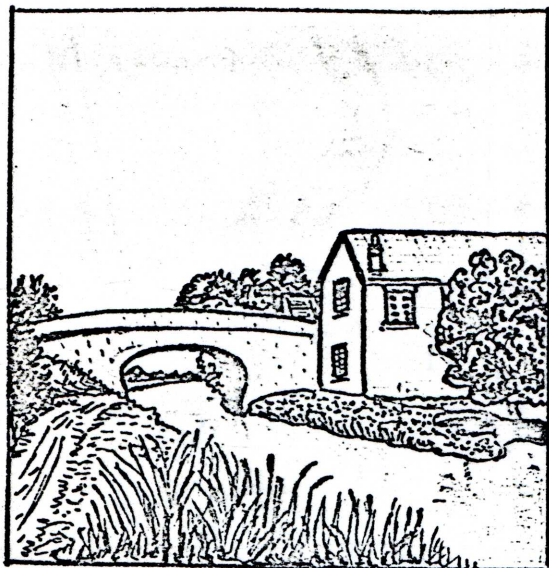
RIVER AVON

SCALE IN YARDS



PTL80





THE ROADBRIDGE AND WHARF

next. It was built in the mid 19th century and sold in 1971 after the amalgamation of the local Churches.

Continue walking to the railway bridge passing the STAVERTON CLUB (founded in 1920) (11) on your right and the School on your left. STAVERTON HALT (12) situated North side of the bridge, was built in 1905 and remained in use until 1966 when due to the decline of the railway it was closed and demolished. Nestle factory siding, laid in 1935, was taken out about the same time.

Walk on down through the village passing the Old Bear public house and Staverton Farm. Just past the farmhouse on the right is the METHODIST CHAPEL (13) built in 1824 and declared at that time to be able to seat 100.

Cross the road at the top of the hill and walk to the Church gates in front of you. To the left of the gates stand some of the original weaver's cottages (now modernised) and across the road, on the bank above the factory, stood another terrace of weavers cottages. These were demolished in 1966. Enter the Churchyard and walk the path to ST PAULS CHURCH (14). The present Church, rebuilt and enlarged in 1826 stands on the site of an earlier Chapel first mentioned in 1535. The Church plate is Elizabethan (1577) and the Church records date back to 1685. The building in Ashlar with a Welsh slate roof has a stained glass East window erected in 1887 by the Hargreaves family (owners of the mill) in memory of their eldest daughter Mary. The Churchyard was enlarged in 1906 and the cross, presented by Mr. & Mrs. Donald Rogers in 1926, honours one of the village war dead. The Church bell is said to have come from the mill bell-tower. The registers contain references to the well known local poet/rector George Crabbe and the burial of John Bythesea of Wick House.

As you leave the Churchyard, the Nestle Factory buildings spread out before you at the bottom of the hill.

The first mention of the MILL (15) on the river is in the Domesday Survey commissioned by William The Conqueror in 1086. The Staverton mill and fishery is again mentioned in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. Fulling mills were purchased by a Christopher Aley in 1556 and the mills were leased to various people - Stevyns of Holt and the Houlton family - in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries.



ST. PAULS CHURCH

There are records of a Fulling mill in 1778 and a Grist Mill five years later. A new mill was built by John Jones in 1800 and the installation of modern machinery led to the shearmen's riots of 1802. An account of the riots describes a mob of shearmen massing on the high bank above the mill and firing shots at the buildings. They were dispersed on the arrival of local Dragoons called out by the mill owner. Coopers took over the mill in 1813 and by 1824, when it was mysteriously burnt down, it was stated as employing 1500 people. Re-built the following year it continued to prosper until 1847. The new mill was quite an imposing building, the main block being six storey's high crowned by a pheonix rising from the flames. This building was reduced to two storey's in the 1930's. The first power looms were installed in 1839.

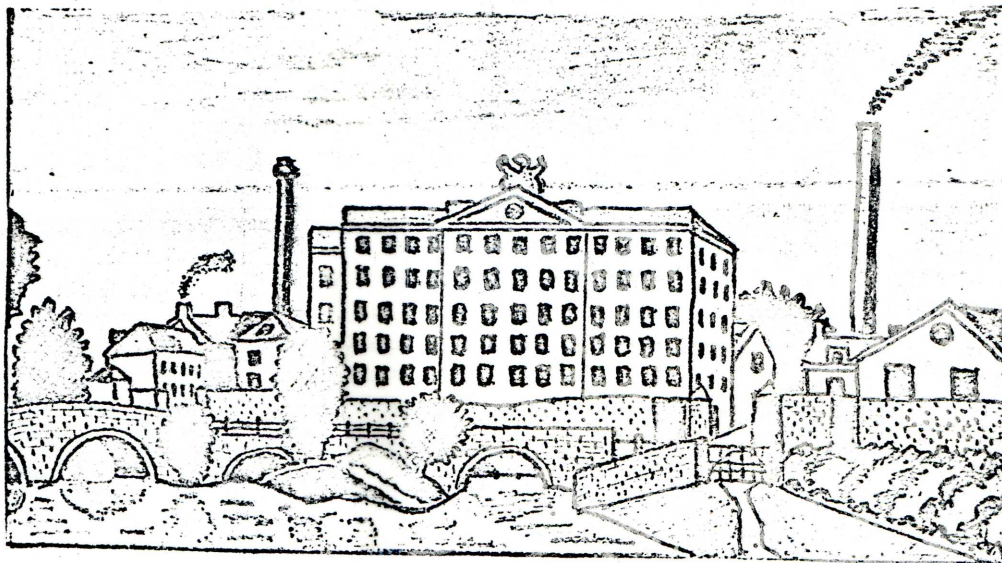
The mill stood empty from 1847 until 1864 when it was again started up as a cloth factory. James Hargreaves took it over in 1872 and ran it successfully until the decline of the cloth industry in 1891. A number of un-successful ventures were carried out in the mill until it was purchased by The Anglo-Swiss Milk Company (now Nestles) in 1897 and converted into a milk condensery.

The first tins of sweetened condensed milk rolled off the production line in 1898 and in 1902 the first unsweetened condensed was produced. Expansion continued and in 1914 the present chimney was erected by the German firm of

Alphonse Custodes. A new process block was added in 1935 with stainless steel vacuum pans and automatic filling and packing machines. Major expansion took place in 1967 when a new million pound culinary products plant was built behind the existing factory. This plant produces baked beans, spaghetti products and soup under the Grosse & Blackwell name. Production in the milk factory has now swung to yoghurt and desserts.

The RIVER BRIDGE (16) first mentioned in 1540, ends the history trail. Before the first bridge was built the river was crossed by a paved ford. The present structure dates from the late 18th century.

N.B: The space available in this publication allows only a very brief outline of the village History. Hopefully a more comprehensive study will be produced at a later date.



THE MILL AS IT LOOKED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 1800's

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