

THONGSBRIDGE CC

# DOWN YOUR WAY

## TURNPIKES, FLOODS & HENMANIA

### The Village

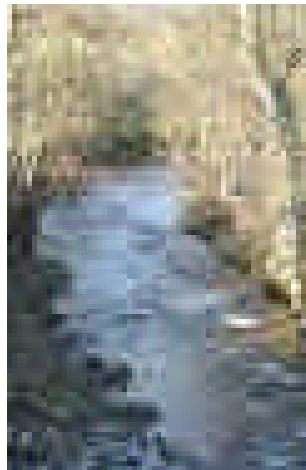
Today Thongsbridge ('thong' meaning a narrow strip of land and, of course, today describes a diminutive item of underwear, and 'bridge' added later referring to the bridge over the River Holme) is described as 'a typical south Pennine Village... in the heart of Last of the Summer Wine Country'.



**The village is located, as the description implies, just a mile or so from Holmfirth and like its neighbour, Thongsbridge grew up alongside the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Prior to this the village, along with many of the areas in the valley bottoms, would have been sparsely populated.**

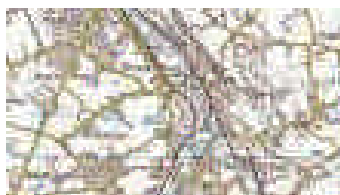
Indeed before the mechanisation of the textile industry, farming was the main occupation in the area and the majority of farms would have been located higher up the valley on the hilltops – sensibly away from areas which had the potential to flood. (Thongsbridge has suffered floods on numerous occasions – the worst occurred in February 1852 when a reservoir constructed above Holmfirth burst its banks killing eighty one people and causing £250,000 worth of damage to property.)

**It was during the mid-eighteenth century that the Thongsbridge we know today began taking shape. In 1768 the Woodhead turnpike road was built, the new road crossing the River Holme at Thongsbridge. Turnpike roads were toll roads and the turnpike was the gated entrance to a town or village where tolls were collected.**



These roads were constructed to improve transport and communication and the tolls collected used to finance the roads. However, not everyone was happy to pay the tolls and many continued using the old packhorse routes and any other path or road that they could find to avoid paying; a lesson that should not be lost on present day transport planners.

**The Woodhead Road brought many travellers through Thongsbridge and in the 1780s the Royal Oak Inn (which is still standing today, although currently boarded up) was built at the junction of the trading routes at Thongsbridge. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were three types of public houses: alehouses for the general public/commoners to drink in, taverns which were pubs for ‘respectable drinkers’ and inns which provided meals and accommodation.**



The Royal Oak fitted into the latter category providing food, drink and a bed for travellers. Many of these travellers would have been clothiers on their way to and from Huddersfield Cloth Hall (built in 1766) to sell their wares. Indeed, the first landlord of the Royal Oak, William Bray, was a clothier by trade (he only began brewing and selling beer to supplement his income) and would therefore have encouraged the buying and selling of cloth in his establishment.

**Whilst transport and communication improvements (the railway came to Thongsbridge in 1850 although it is difficult to find evidence that the railway existed today) brought trade and travellers through the village, it was not until the late 1700s when inventions like the spinning jenny were introduced in the Holme Valley and the first mills began to appear.**

The Industrial Revolution had arrived. Hundreds of men, women and children were employed in the mills, many abandoning hilltop living to move into the terraced workers cottages (like those still standing today opposite what was formerly Albion Mills) in the valley bottom close to their workplace.

**Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the textile industry thrived in Thongsbridge and much of the Holme Valley but by the middle of the twentieth century as a result**

**of foreign competition (countries like India could produce cloth more cheaply) the textile industry began to decline. So what has happened to the mills of Thongsbridge?**



According to the Textile Directory of 1911 Thongsbridge had six mills; today only one – Pickwick Mills which is still occupied by the same firm Sam Weller & Sons Ltd - remains in operation (as well as producing fabrics for coats, Sam Weller & Sons Ltd is one of the leading decatizing wrapper manufacturers in the world).

**Others like Royd Mill have been turned into apartments, business centres or demolished, and one has apparently been turned into Holme Valley Camping and Caravan Park – no doubt to provide accommodation for the increasing numbers of tourists hunting for Sid’s Cafe.**

Despite the disappearance of the village’s mills Thongsbridge today is still thriving and has become, as one writer puts it, ‘a hot-spot’ for local sport. As well as the cricket and bowling club Thongsbridge is also home to what the LTA describes as one of Yorkshire’s premier tennis clubs.



**Perhaps then the village that was once renowned for its textile industry can in years to come become famous for producing the next Tim Henman or for all the men out there, Maria Sharapova.**

# FLOODS & FIRES

## THONGSBRIDGE: 3 KEY FACTS

### 1. DISASTERS AND NEAR DISASTERS:

In August 1852 (just six months after the Great Flood) a train from Hull to Holmfirth pulled into Thongsbridge Station. It was the height of summer and this particular train was full of day-trippers returning from a day out on the East Coast. It was normal practice for trains that were full to stop at

Thongsbridge where half the carriages were detached whilst the other half continued the journey to Holmfirth (there was a slight incline between the two stations which meant that if a train was full it was too heavy for the engine to pull all the carriages up the slight slope).



After depositing the first load of passengers at Holmfirth the engine would return to collect the remaining passengers. On this occasion another train was seen advancing at speed towards Thongsbridge Station where the abandoned

passengers were patiently waiting. Fortunately, this train was seen by the station guard who grabbed a red light and ran towards the train. The driver saw the guard and stopped the train just 12 inches away from the carriages!

As a result of the 1944 flood (known as the Forgotten Flood because it occurred a few days before the Allied invasion of Normandy) the cricket and bowling green at Thongsbridge was completely covered with 150 tons of sludge and debris.

## **2. PUBLIC HOUSES**

**In bygone days public houses were the focal point of society (some would argue that they remain so today particularly on Friday and Saturday nights). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were not only public houses but doubled up as auction houses, courtrooms, meeting rooms for various clubs and societies and even makeshift morgues (apparently the cold cellars were an ideal place to store bodies).**





**Five bodies from the Great Flood of 1852 were brought to the Royal Oak for identification whilst three were taken to the Rose & Crown. It was also common practice for Inquests into the circumstances of the death to be held in the local pub, often in full view of the body or bodies. Apparently this macabre attraction often increased trade!**

### 3. FIRES AND ACCIDENTS

Mills could be dangerous places to work and accidents were commonplace even after the introduction of factory and health and safety legislation. On 12th June 1948 a sixteen year old girl suffered injuries to her right foot whilst working at Thongsbridge Mill. Apparently a fan case weighing approximately 200 kg fell on it.



The mills were also dangerous for people living nearby. In January 1907 a mill on Huddersfield Road caught fire, whilst a fire at another of Thongsbridge's mills led to the evacuation of some residents to Holmfirth Police Station to avoid exploding drums of dye.

# RIVERS & ROYD

## KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THONGSBRIDGE BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THE CRICKET CLUB

**1000-1200** First recorded settlers in Holme Valley, although it is possible that the area had been inhabited prior to this.

**1200s** 'Thong' as it was then known first mentioned in a document.

**1768** Woodhead turnpike road built.

**1776** First spinning jenny introduced in the Holme Valley.



**1777** Wednesday 23rd July – a thunderstorm causes the River Holme to burst its banks.

**c.1780** The Royal Oak is built.

**1794** Royd Mill is built.

**1821** 21st September - heavy rainstorms cause yet another flood. There is no loss of life.

**1850** Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Company open branch line to Holmfirth passing through Thongsbridge.

**1852** The Great Flood. Bilberry Reservoir bursts its banks causing death and destruction in the Holme Valley.

# 180 NOT OUT!

## KEY DATES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF CRICKET IN KIRKLEES

1825: Lascelles Hall Cricket Club founded.

**1842: Dalton play Sheffield for £30.**

1867: *Huddersfield Examiner* publishes scores or reports on 209 matches featuring 107 different teams.



**1868: Fartown ground leased by Huddersfield St. Johns C.C.. Savile Ground, Dewsbury, hosts game between All England XI and United All England XI.**

1873: Batley legend Louis Hall makes Yorkshire bow.

**1883: Lumb Cup and Heavy Woollen Cup born.**

1886: Huddersfield Cricket Association is formed.

**1887-9: Dewsbury Savile C.C. win hat-trick of Heavy Woollen Cup titles.**

1892: 10 Clubs take part in inaugural Huddersfield & District Cricket League competition.