



Transcribed by John Turner

\* = buildings pulled down

## Earby Shorter Town Trail

For about 1000 years Earby (together with Thornton & Kelbrook) was only a very small village. In 1379 according to the Poll Tax returns of that year the population would be about 250 while in 1556 the three villages had a total of 60 houses giving a probable population of perhaps only 300. By 1801 this had risen to 1202, but with the building of the cotton mills in the latter part of the 19th century this was to dramatically change, for by 1911 the population rose to just over 6000.

### **1. Dockyard \***

A row of houses so named because many of the families lived here came from the dockyard area of Liverpool in the early 1900's, to get work in the newly built weaving mills.

### **2. Seal Beck**

The bridge here is called Seal Bridge, but when Victoria Mill (known as '*The big Mill*') was built it became known as the 'Mill Brig'.

### **3. Victoria Mill \***

Built in 1852 by Christopher Bracewell of Green End House originally for spinning as well as weaving. It was pulled down in 1970. There was a bell on the roof which came from the first Methodist church in Stoneybank road. This bell was rung at the relief of Mafeking in 1900.

### **4. Victoria Shed**

Was built on the old cricket field about 1916, with space for 850 looms, power being provided by a shaft over the beck from the Big Mill engine. See the bricked up hole where the shaft entered.

### **5. Grammar School**

Founded by an Earby man, Robert Windle, in 1599. It cost "...at least £800 including purchasing the parcel of land on which it was erected". It had two storeys with the headmaster living in 'The Schoole House' as it was first called.

### **6. Empire Picture House**

In 1922 cloth was moved here for safety when the Big Mill opposite was on fire in that year.

Bus Station

This site was used for a weekly market, and for visiting fairs and circuses.

### **7. First Fire station \***

Was a wooden building situated at the end of the Big Mill in the early 1900's The steam engine was drawn by two horses which in winter were stabled in the council yard across the road. During the summer however they were let out to graze on Bailey Banks fields, which meant in case of a fire there was a 400 yard dash to catch and bring the horses to the fire station. The drivers soon developed the ruse of rattling a bucket on the gate leading into the field, and this resulted in the horses trotting up in anticipation of a feed, thus saving valuable minutes. The station moved to a new site near the bus station in 1920.

### **8. Old gasworks \***

Was built in 1895, the streets first being lit on the 31st December

### **9. Dame House**

In the latter half of the 19th century there was a Dame School here, the infant school *of* the village. The infants were taught to read a little for the sum of one penny a week before passing on to the Grammar or Wesleyan schools.

### **10. Profitt's lodging house\*, Island Square \***

This was the first house over the bridge and was used by 'tramp weavers'- who got a spell of weaving when the regular weaver failed to turn up for some reason or another. The proper name for the two rows of houses here was Ireland, as the land use to belong to the Bank of Ireland, but the area was always known as Island Square.

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### **11. James Brown's post office**

James Brown was a Methodist lay preacher who opened this shop shortly after his marriage in 1849, as a general stores and post office. The stone landing outside the shop was often used as a platform for open-air public meetings.

### **12. Wesleyan school**

This was erected in 1872 as a day school for infants and older scholars. It was handed over to the West Riding County Council in 1904.

### **13. White Lion**

When most people were unable to read, a pictorial sign such as a lion could be recognised. It was built by Joshua and Jane Windle in 1681.

### **14. Tipsey Field**

This was the field next to the White Lion used for the game of Knurr and Spell (tipping). A game played by hitting a ball with a slick to see who could send it the furthest.

### **15. Riley Street**

Known locally as 'Catgate'. Here would have been a gate through which the villagers drove their cattle on to the village green and common land for free pasture.

### **16. Village green**

The open space opposite the White Lion now looks much as it did before six rows of houses were built on it between 1875 and 1880. Here was the old village green with the blacksmith's forge and also, one of the village wells. Opposite the White Lion a space had been left after the houses were built, and here a few stallholders from Colne market used to set up their stalls, the best known one being called 'Swaggering Dick' who sold oatcakes and brandy-snaps.

### **16. Village blacksmith**

The smith had his forge near the well. One of these Earby blacksmiths in the 18th century was known as a 'mighty man' at wrestling, holding the championship for Yorkshire against all comers. Contestants from all over the north of England would arrive here, some of them champions in their own right, some accompanied by their wealthy sponsors in their carriages. Off would come the leather apron and battle would commence, the Earby man invariably being the winner, to the great delight of the locals. Victory would be celebrated in the usual manner at the sign of the White Lion, conveniently a hundred yards away.

### **16. Wesley Place \***

There were three rows of houses here were called this by being built next to the Wesleyan Chapel. However, later on they were also known as -

### **16. Whitechapel \***

Getting this name in 1892, as the house of the Earby Murderer, Moses Cudworth, was in this area. The nickname arose due to the fact that Jack the Ripper had recently done his murders in the Whitechapel area of London, and been given the name of 'The Whitechapel Murderer'.

### **16. Donkey Tale**

The man who lived in the first house in Melrose Street here about 1950 was a chimney sweep. He had a donkey and cart for the removal of soot. There was neither garden or yard back or front, the doors leading straight on to the pavements he kept the donkey in the house, tied to the mantelpiece. Anyone passing, as I did on many an occasion could see the donkey through the open door. The bags of soot were kept in a bedroom and in the cellar.

### **17. Aspen Lane**

On the first Ordnance Survey map of 1848 the name is given as Muck Street. Later on it was given the name of Aspen Lane, later changed to its present name. It was however commonly still called Muck Street in living memory.

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### **18. Gaumless**

Here was a lamppost which had been placed in the centre of the road junction of Green End and Riley Street. The houses here were called Harrison's Buildings, and the one nearest the Gaumless was occupied by the principal village tailor Mathew Briden as his workshop. Old Mathew had three sons the youngest Billy, was nicknamed 'Needles' because it was his job to see that the needles were always threaded.

### **19. Cobble row**

Hand loom weavers cottages, with one house at the end turned into a warehouse for the woven cloth (now pulled down for road widening). A carhouse was built opposite by 'Old Billycock' (Chris. Bracewell) for a horse and cart to carry the cloth to Colne Piece Hall and bring back yarn. This row got its name from the pavement being made from small round stones or cobbles. Opposite No. 30 you will see in the wall a stone with a small round hole in it. This is known as a '*Wuzz Holeing*' which the handloom weavers used.

### **20. Green End House**

Christopher Bracewell came to Green End House in 1813. Shortly afterwards he enlarged it to its present size. It was later purchased by John Rycroft of Colne in 1885.

### **21. Rushton Avenue**

Built on land known as Tarn mires (corrupted to tranmires). Here there was very boggy ground and a small lake. The word tarnmires comes from the Danish 'myre' - wet, deep mud, or boggy land. Because this row of houses started to settle due to the unstable foundations it came to be called Earthquake Row.'

### **22. Longroyd (Longer Royd Road)**

This name comes from the Anglo Saxon meaning a clearing through a wood. A 'royd' was a place which had been 'ridded' of trees. Further on is Barnwood, and further on still we come to Rostle Top, from the Celtic 'ros' meaning a wood, just three examples to show that Earby was well wooded in past times.

### **23. Gasworks**

A new gasworks was built here, but used for only a short period before the second world war. It was demolished about 1955.

### **24 Green End Shed, the 'Old Mill'.**

Built by the Bracewell family of Green End House in 1839. It was a long narrow building, housing originally 160 looms. It was burnt down about 1900, and the stones were used to build Brook Shed opposite.

### **Air Raid Shelter**

The buildings in the yard of Brook Shed were air raid shelters in the last war.

### **24. New Road**

This was originally the private drive to Green End House, and was tree lined. There were gates at top and bottom.

### **24. New Road School**

Erected in 1896. The date is there quite prominently - but can you find it? Yes, it is there! The school opened the following year with 252 scholars. In 1911 the log book relates that "*The school is very-full, averaging 52 scholars per class*".

### **25. Billiard Hall**

Now used as the offices of Johnson & Johnson.

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