

From Keighley to Skipton – a journey of 1900 years

Suppose you had to get from the Keighley Picture House to The Plaza in Skipton, what route would you take ?

Almost certainly, it would be: down North Street into Skipton Road; right at the first roundabout and then left at the next, onto the A629 dual-carriageway. From there it's a straightforward drive over the two roundabouts at Steeton and Kildwick, and then onto the single-carriageway that takes you through Snaygill and into Skipton from the south.

It's such an obvious route that, surely, there couldn't be any other ? For example, no-one in their right mind would think to turn left off North Street and go up Spring Gardens Lane and onto Hollins Lane; down through Steeton and Eastburn to the Kildwick roundabout; then straight on and over the Kildwick bridge; up through Farnhill, right onto Bradley Lane, down Bradley bank, through the village, up and over the hill to Snaygill and then on to Skipton ?

If you were to go that way, one thing is certain: you wouldn't have time to buy pop-corn.

But, as this article will describe, this convoluted route was, for a long time before the invention of cinema (or pop-corn), the only way to get from Keighley to Skipton.

Click below for the full 1900-year story of how to get from Keighley to Skipton:

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The Romans – all roads lead to (and from) Elslack

All good history starts with the Romans, and so shall we.

Not only were the Romans prodigious road-builders but they built to such a high construction quality that many of their roads, even today, form the basis of modern highways. So much so that even where a modern road isn't based on Roman foundations, it will often follow a route not far removed from that of the Roman original.

There are the remains of two Roman settlements in the area: the Roman fort at Elslack¹, and the smaller fort and settlement at Ilkley. Antique sources are unclear on the names of these settlements, but it is now accepted that both Olicana and Olenacum refer to Elslack with the name Verbeia being used for Ilkley^{2,3}.

Both appear to have been founded around 70AD, at the time the Romans were extending their control over the north of the new province of Britannia, and to have been in and end of use between then and the end of the Roman occupation at the start of the 5th century.

It is reasonable to assume that there would have been at least one road built between the two sites, with others to connect them to the wider Roman road network within Yorkshire and the North of England generally.

One of the best researched and reported of these was excavated by Dr. Francis Villy, who did a lot of work on Roman and pre-Roman roads and track-ways in the Keighley area in the first couple of decades of the 20th century. He identified an almost complete stretch of road between Keighley and Glusburn, and possibly continuing on to the fort at Elslack⁴.

A further route led from Elslack fort along the line of the now defunct Skipton to Colne railway, which cut through the fort when it was built, from Elslack towards Skipton Station, then following the line of Newmarket Street and Shortbank Road⁵.

Dr. Villy's route between Keighley and Elslack runs up Spring Gardens Lane, and out of Keighley via Hollins Lane. An archaeological excavation in 1921, in the field opposite The Hollins (OS ref: SE 0455-4332), revealed an undisturbed section of the road 16ft wide, with stone kerbstones, and having a camber of 18 inches, that was considered to be Roman^{6,7}.

The road then drops down into Steeton as Hollins Bank Lane which becomes the High Street. It has been suggested that the origins of Steeton as a village began with a ribbon-development along the line of this stretch of Roman road⁸.

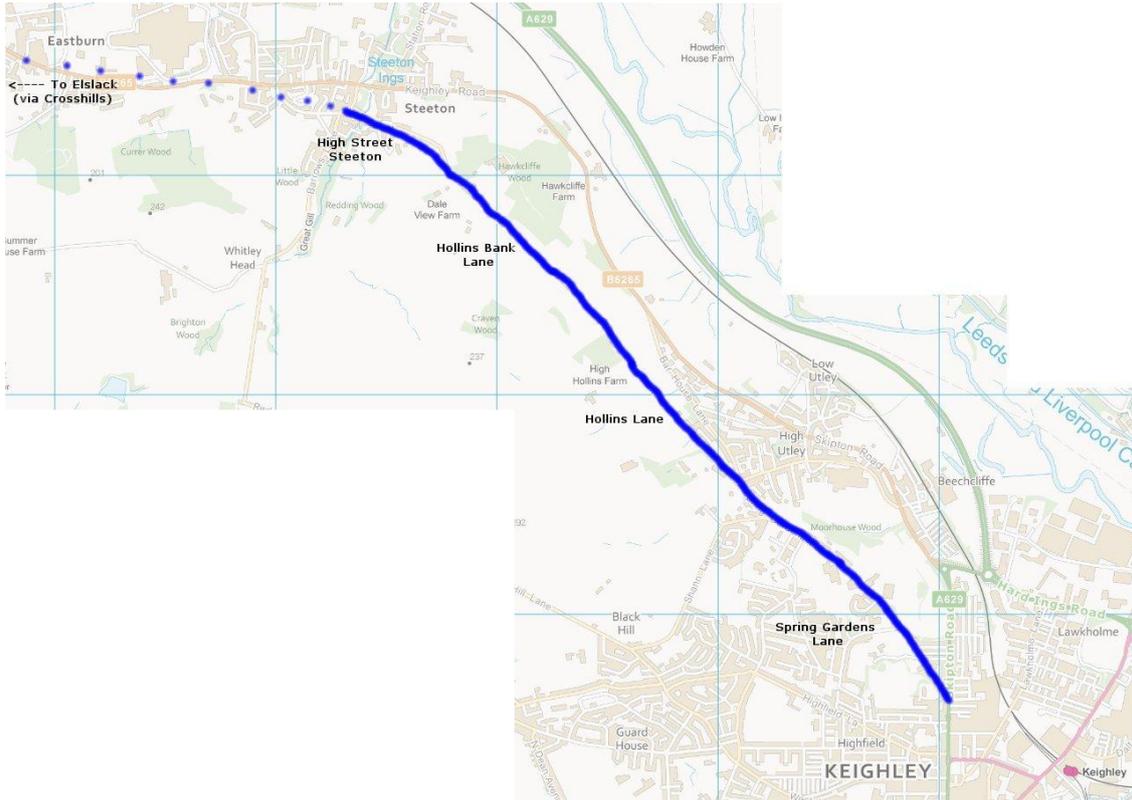


Figure - 1: The route of Dr. Villy's proposed Roman Road between Keighley and Steeton High Street. The route then continues through Eastburn, Crosshills and Glusburn to the Flavian fort at Elslack. This map drawn on a background of the 2010 Ordnance Survey Map (Crown copyright)

After a break, which must have taken the road through what is now Eastburn and Crosshills⁹, archaeological evidence for a road appears near Ling Haw on Glusburn Moor and again under Well Head Lathe, as a terrace¹⁰.

As we will see, the Spring Gardens Lane to Crosshills section of this road may have continued in use as part of the main Keighley to Skipton road until well into the 18th century.

Development of village communities (c.AD400 - 1086)

Roman administration over the province of Britannia ended around AD400, and organised society immediately collapsed¹. Into the turmoil walked the Saxons. As Bede tells us, Britain was in such a bad state that in at least some instances the Saxons were actually invited in, for fear of something worse².

By the 7th century, Anglo Saxon kingdoms had been established throughout England, followed in turn by the Danes in the North and East.

The Roman centralised command economy was replaced by a dispersed, largely agrarian economy. At the same time, building in stone was abandoned in favour of building in wood.

Because wood structures leave very few obvious remains, the evidence for the development of communities in this area in the period between the end of Roman rule and the arrival of the Normans is based solely on the Old English origin of most of the place-names and fragments of 9th century Saxon stone crosses excavated from St Andrew's church in Kildwick.

Modern Name³	Name in Domesday book	Meaning (all Old English with some Norse)
Keighley	Chichelai	Cyhha's wood/clearing
Steeton	Stivetune	Stephen's town OR Farmstead built among (from) tree stumps
Eastburn	Esebrune	(Land to the) East of stream
Kildwick	Childeuic	Dairy-farm of the young men / attendants
Farnhill	Fernehil	Fern-clad hill
Bradley	Bradelai	Broad clearing
Snaygill		The snake-infested nook of land
Skipton		Sheep town / estate

The Domesday survey of 1086 indicates that all the villages we know today between Keighley and Skipton were already well established in 1066 and were big enough to be recorded for taxation purposes.

Name⁴	Owned by (in 1066)	Owned by (in 1086)	Tax Paid (in 1086)
Keighley	Ravensward, Toli, Ulfkil, William of Utley	King William	6 geld
Steeton	Gamelbarn of Kirkby	Gilbert Tison	2.5 geld
Eastburn	Gamelbarn of Kirkby	Gilbert Tison	4.7 geld
Kildwick	Arnketil	King William	2 geld
Farnhill	Gamal son of Karli	King William	2 geld
Bradley	Gamal son of Karli, Arnketil, Thorkil	King William	7 geld
Snaygill	Earl Edwin	King William	3.9 geld
Skipton	Earl Edwin	King William	3.9 geld

Now although there is no documentary or physical evidence for any road building in this period, it is not unreasonable to suggest (particularly given the pattern of land ownership) that track-ways may have been built to connect these otherwise isolated communities.

We can then conjecture that, by the time of the Domesday survey, a continuous route existed between Keighley and Skipton; using the old Roman road between Keighley and the Crosshills area, crossing the Aire at Kildwick over a wooden predecessor of the current bridge⁵, and then continuing on through the villages on the other side of the river.

The true cost of Kildwick bridge (1305 – 1313)

The date of the first bridge across the Aire at Kildwick is not known. However, one thing that the internet is certain about is that the first stone bridge was built in 1305, by the Canons of Bolton Priory, at a cost of £21 12s 9d¹ (and many others). It's a good story, but it isn't true.

- First, the cost quoted is clearly far too low. The average wage for a craftsman in 1305 was 3d per day². Assuming 300 working days per year, this amount would fund the effort of barely five men.
- Second, we're being asked to assume either that the work was completed in just one year or that the Canons of Bolton Priory had very good accountants, able to estimate and accrue the cost of a major construction project to the penny.

So, a stone bridge built in one year by five men, with the equipment available in 1305; funded by monks employing advanced accounting techniques. It's not really credible.

The story is based on an entry in the 1305 account book for the priory, which is said to read:

In the building of the bridge of Kildwyk £21.12s 9d³ (and many others)

This interpretation appears to have originated with the Rev. E. W. Brereton, a former vicar of Kildwick, who included it in his book *"The History of Kildwick Church"* (publ. 1909). However, in 1980 a copy of the original Latin document was found at Grange Farm, Kildwick, in which the line appears as:

Construction of the bridge at Kildwick in part ...

As reported by Roy Mason in the Bradford Telegraph and Argus⁴ the omission of the last two words in other records seems to have misled historians into believing the bridge was completed in 1305 and that the sum was the total cost of construction.

Mason's article then goes on to describe how the construction took place between 1305 and 1313, with a break during 1311. It lists some of work from 1306, as follows.

Year	Work and cost
1306	Thomas the mason was paid: £1 7s by William Desert, £11 6s 4d by Brother Symon de Otley, £1 19s 5½d by Robert the Chaplain, and £1 6s 4d by Brother Henty de Poyngton. Various other workers, stone-breakers and carters were paid 4s 5d.
1307	Thomas the mason and John de Farnhyll were paid £14; John the carter, 2s 6d.
1308	Total expenditure for the year: £11 18s.
1309	Total expenditure for the year: £13 6s 1d.
1310	Construction of a lime kiln: £2 7s 4d. Cost of food for masons: 13s Horse shodding: 8d Ralph le Quarreour was paid 8s for breaking stones. Master Hugh the mason: 13s 4d William the mason: 10s John le Tornur and his groom: 2s worth of food, payment for stone-breaking.

Year	Work and cost
1311	No work recorded.
1312	Paid to masons: £5 17s 4½d.
1313	Paid to masons: £1 6s 8d.

This is a far more believable account of the building of the first stone bridge recorded in Craven, the oldest bridge in the Aire valley, and one of the earliest documented medieval bridges in Yorkshire.

In 1780 the bridge was widened⁵, presumably to allow for two-way traffic. The bridge as it currently stands is, subsequent work notwithstanding, two separate bridges standing side-by-side: the Skipton side is the 14th century original, the Keighley side the result of the 1780 improvements.



Figure 2 - Kildwick bridge photographed from the Skipton side and the Keighley side. Note the four round arches on the Keighley side, and two pointed arches and two round arches on the Skipton side.



Figure 3 - Kildwick bridge photographed from the Skipton side. The two sections of the bridge can be clearly seen, with the ribbed vaulting (nearest) representing the 14th century bridge and the plain barrel vaulting (furthest) the 1780 widening work.

The long term consequence of the Kildwick bridge was to fix from 1305 onwards, quite literally “in stone”, the point at which the route from Keighley to Skipton crosses the river. Over time this makes Kildwick a busy place (a smithy and coaching inn will be built – facing each other – on the Northern end of the bridge, nearest the village) but as we will see, increasing traffic volumes in the 20th century will become a significant problem for the village.

Warburton’s Map (c.1720)

Of all the early maps of the area one of the most useful is that produced by John Warburton from about 1720. Warburton actually surveyed the area himself, making careful measurements of distances and noting various side roads and buildings of interest near-by.

The notes he made during these surveys have survived and were quoted extensively by J. J. Brigg in his book “*The King’s Highway in Craven*” (publ. 1927). Brigg augmented Warburton’s original text with comments and summaries of his own to create a full description of the route from Keighley to Skipton as it would have been when Warburton made his survey. We have adopted the same approach, using both Warburton’s original and extracts from Brigg’s text of 1927, adding further comments that may be useful to contemporary readers.

What is perhaps surprising is that the route, although convoluted by comparison with the modern road, is quite easy to follow.

Keighley to Steeton

Warburton’s MS (1720)	Brigg’s commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
<i>Began to survey from Keighley Cross to Skipton</i>	Keighley Cross - where High Street, Low Street, North Street and Church Street intersect.	Close to the modern Airedale Shopping Centre.
	His route took him down Changegate (for North Street was not yet made) along Cooke Lane, and in a direct line, across the site of the Institute, Lord Street, etc., past the site of Sandywood House to Low Spring Gardens Lane at a place known as “The Flosch”, and so by Low Spring Gardens, and the Hollins, to the top of Steeton Bank.	For “Institute” read Keighley College. The “site of Sandywood House” is now Keighley Picture House ¹ . “Flosch House” is a private house at the bottom of Spring Gardens Lane ² . Warburton’s route out of Keighley follows the Roman road identified by Dr. Villy.

Warburton's MS (1720)	Brigg's commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
The view from the top of the bank was described: <i>Common on ye Left, a great valley, meadow and arable ye Rt. Handson Hall, Holden Lodge, a house on ye Rt, called Hollens, and a stone wall ye Rt. Silsden Village lies N.E., 0.8 degrees at about 1 ½ m, Hollen Beck Ho., ye River winds in ye valley to ye Rt.</i>	For "Handson Hall" read Holden Park Golf Club; for "Holden Lodge" read Upper Holden; for "Holden Beck Ho(use)" read Lower Holden.	Apart from the reference to Hollens, Warburton appears to be looking across the valley towards Silsden to view these buildings ³ .
	Descending the steep "Bank" into Steeton the road crossed the beck and ran, as it does now, in front of Hob Hill and so direct to the beginning of Harewood Hill.	Hob Hill appears now to be part of Chapel Road, near to Steeton Health Centre ⁴ . A small map in the supplement to the first edition of Brigg's book has the label "Harewood Hill" on the modern road directly in front of the Airedale Hospital. The beginning of Harewood Hill might therefore be the Chapel Hill / Pot Lane / Skipton Road junction.

Steeton to Kildwick

Warburton's MS (1720)	Brigg's commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
	Here it made a right-angled turn down to a place afterwards called "Nanny Grave Hill" and so, turning left ...	The precise location of this is now unclear ⁵ . However, a small map in the supplement to the first edition of Brigg's book places it between Pot Lane and Lyon Road – close to or possibly under the Airedale Hospital.
<i>Ye Red Lion Inn Cross Eastburne beck a stone bridge.</i>	For "Red Lion Inn" read Lyon House.	Now Lyon House Farm, Lyon Road ⁶ .
	From Eastburn Bridge the road ran to Cross Hills at what is now Lothersdale Road corner.	The top of Station Road ?
<i>A Rd. ye Lt. to Elslack and back direct to Glusburn</i>	This is the line of the Roman road suggested by Dr. Villy.	But that's not the way we want to go, so ...
	At Cross Hills the road turned sharply to the right, and passing the present Kildwick Station crossed Kildwick Bridge into Kildwick Village.	For "present Kildwick Station" read former Kildwick and Crosshills station, in Station Road.

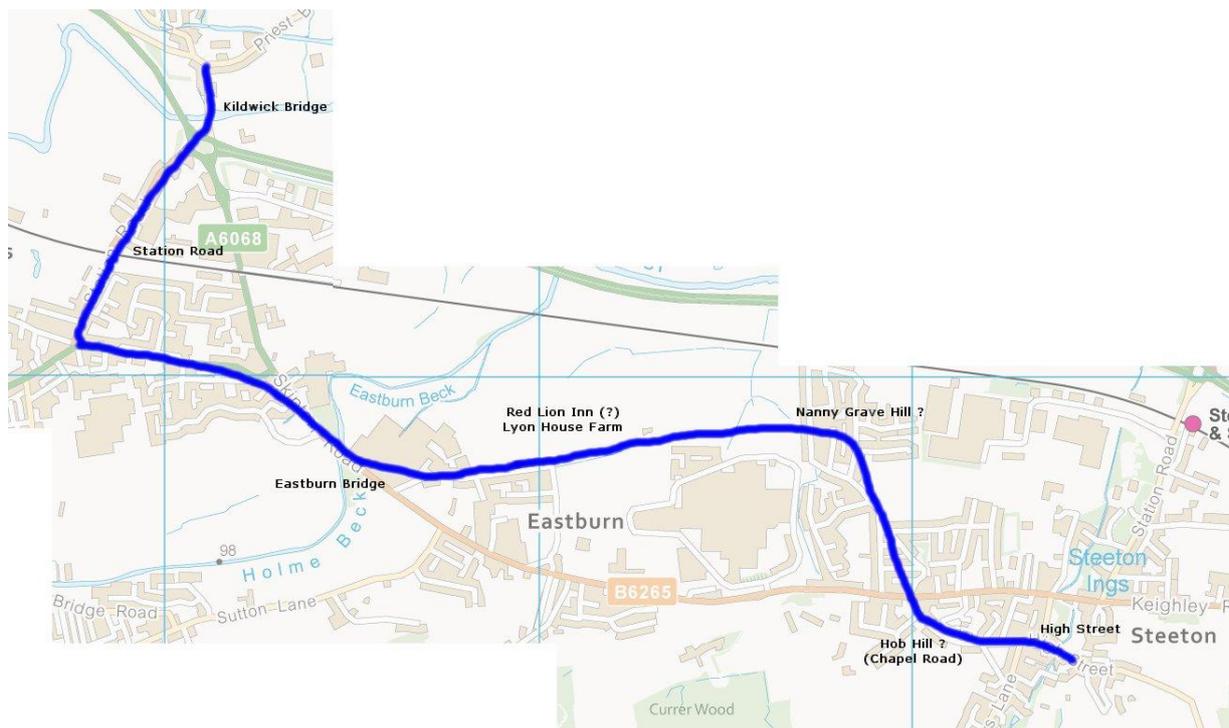


Figure 4 – Warburton’s c.1720 route from Steeton to Kildwick. This map drawn on a background of the 2010 Ordnance Survey Map (Crown copyright)

Kildwick to Bradley

Warburton’s MS (1720)	Brigg’s commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
<i>Kildwick Church ye Rt – a street back direct to Silsden – Kildwick Hall 2 furlongs ye Rt.</i>	The present highway from Kildwick to Skipton was not then made, nor the canal, and Warburton goes on to describe the old road ...	Warburton is describing the route up Priest Bank Lane to Kildwick Hall.
That’s not where we’re going ... <i>Leave ye village – Houses scattered both sides – Farnell village</i>	... as it climbs the shoulder of Farnhill Moor, through Farnhill Village. Warburton overlooks the junction with the road in High Farnhill of the road from Silsden.	
<i>Away ye Left to Farnell Hall ½ furlong ye Left</i>		On the modern road the priority has changed, it’s now straight-on to Farnhill Hall with a right turn required to get onto Bradley Lane.
Once we’re on Bradley Lane ... <i>Ye Left – Farnell Wood and a wall ye Left Ye Common</i>		Bradley Lane still has a wall on its left side, along the edge of the wood; the right side being open to Farnhill Moor.

Warburton's MS (1720)	Brigg's commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
<i>Ye end of Farnell Wood – a house ye Left (Hamblethorp) – ye wall continues</i>	Once a possession of the Knights Hospitallers.	Hamblethorpe Farm.
<i>Enter a lane</i>	... descends by a steep and dangerous hill into Low Bradley.	Warburton neither knows nor cares that many drivers and their vehicles will come to grief on Bradley Bank.
<i>Enter Low Broadley – Houses scattered both sides – a street ye Rt. Into ye towne</i>		The right is the road to Bradley Manor (College Lane).

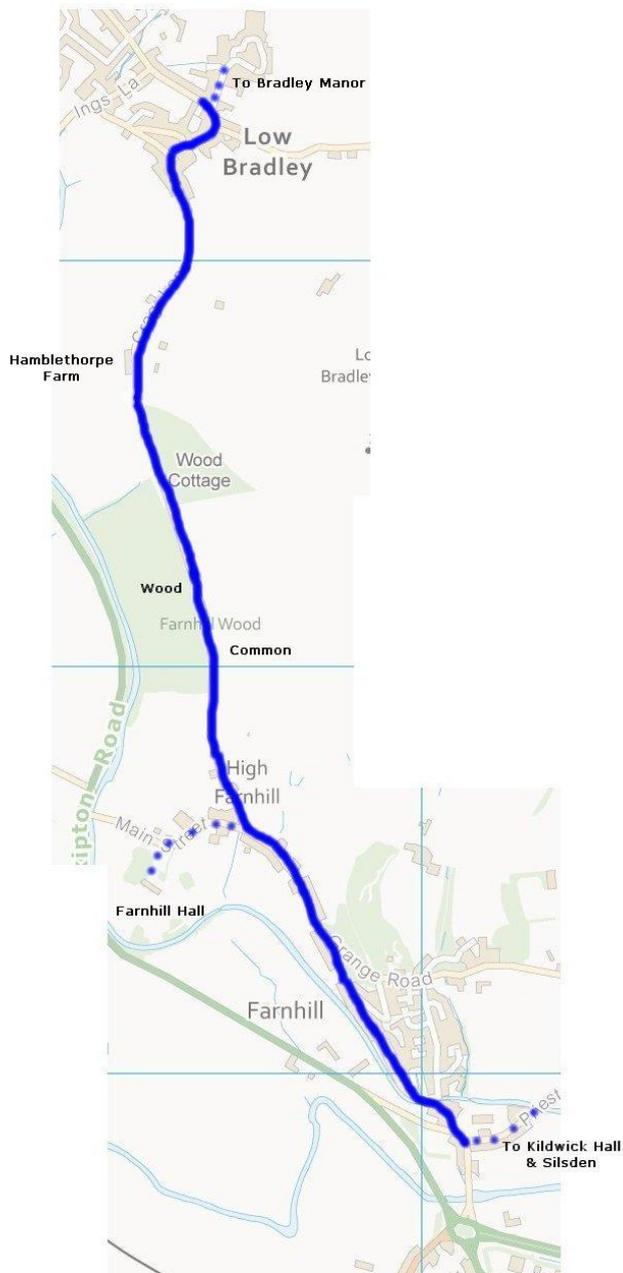


Figure 5 - Warburton's c.1720 route from Kildwick to Bradley. This map drawn on a background of the 2010 Ordnance Survey Map (Crown copyright)

Bradley to Skipton

Warburton's MS (1720)	Brigg's commentary (1927)	Updated notes (2011)
Leave ye Towne a lane – cross Bradley Beck	The road went from Low Bradley over the shoulder of the hill to Snaygill and along the line of the present road into Skipton at “Ship Corner”.	For “Ship Corner” read Caroline Square / Swadford Street ⁷ .
Cross Walton Brooke, a stone by the arch – Houses both sides		
A street, ye Left	Swadford Street.	
Come to ye cross at Market-day, Saturday.	Fixes the site of Skipton Market Cross... 165 yards from the end of Swadford Street.	Between Craven Court and Otley Street.

The Kildwick Parish map of 1768

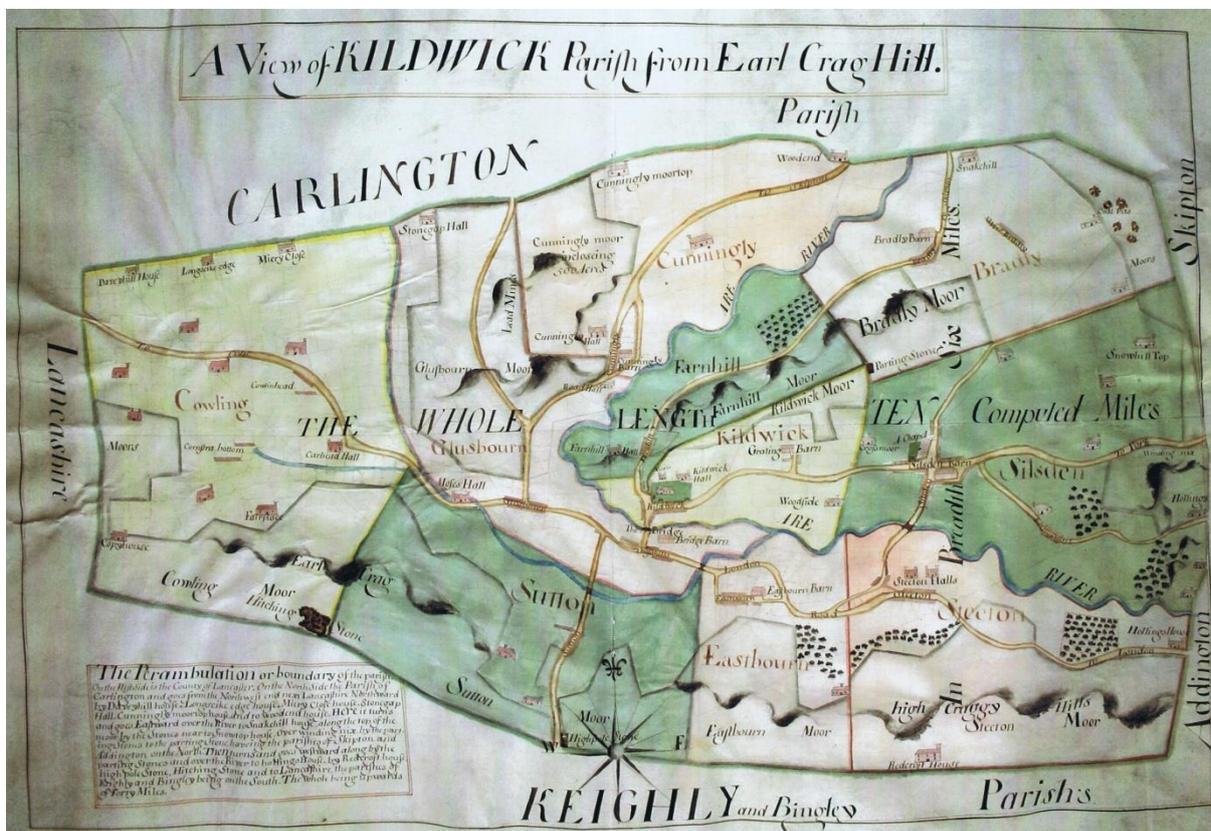


Figure 6 – A map of Kildwick parish, dated 1768 (reproduced by permission of Christ Church, Oxford)

This map shows a high degree of correspondence with the Warburton map of not quite 50 years earlier. The only road running East-West along the valley is that between Kildwick and Silsden (the modern Priest Bank Road--Grange Road route). The route from Keighley to Skipton runs through Sutton, over Kildwick bridge, up through Farnhill and Bradley, and then on over “Snakehill” (Snaygill).

The impact of the Leeds-Liverpool canal (1773)

The Skipton to Bingley section was the first part of the Leeds-Liverpool canal to be completed, in 1773¹.

Between Snaygill and Kildwick, the waterway crosses the roads described by Warburton and shown on the 1768 map at three points:

- At Snaygill, where bridge #182² was built to take the road from Bradley to Skipton over the canal.
- At Cononley Lane End, where the Grade II listed bridge #183a³ was built to take the lane that Warburton describes as leading to Farnhill Hall (and from there, presumably on to Cononley) over the canal. (Although no direct route is shown on the 1768 map.)
- In Low Farnhill, where a Grade II listed aqueduct was built to take the canal over the Newby Road at the bottom of Main Street⁴.

The building of the canal left its mark on Farnhill village, where the building of the aqueduct must have been a considerable undertaking. The area now called "The Arbour" was originally known as "The Harbour", and is marked as such on maps of the village dating from as late as the early 20th century. The building closest to the aqueduct, Kirkgate House, was until 1935 a public house known as "The Ship"⁵. So Farnhill could claim to have a "Ship" and a "Harbour" - in a village that is nowhere near the sea.

Keighley and Kendal Turnpike Road Trust (KKTR) (1752 – 1878)

Note: The definitive work on the Keighley and Kendal Turnpike Road is "*The King's Highway in Craven*", by J. J. Brigg (publ. 1927). Unless stated otherwise, this book has been used as the source for all information in this section.

From earliest medieval times, the maintenance of highways was the responsibility of the county and the local parish. The Highways Act of 1555 regularised this arrangement and required that all the inhabitants above the position of a hired labourer do four days work each year (later increased, in 1562, to six days) in order to maintain the roads locally¹.

Despite this, and other Acts of Parliament, the condition of roads deteriorated and, in 1706, the first "Turnpike Trust" was formed: a private company authorised by parliament to levy tolls to maintain and develop a specific highway².

As the industrial revolution took hold, a number of Turnpike Trusts were established and, from 1750 onwards, there was a campaign to have a Turnpike Trust take control of the roads in Craven. The case for the new arrangement was made most forcibly in a broadsheet circulated locally:

The Woollen Manufacture has of late years been carried on and is daily increasing in Craven, for which it is better situated in every respect (save the scarcity of Coal) than any other part of the Country. Good Roads wou'd lower the Price of Coal at least one-Third, this wou'd be a prodigious advantage to all the inhabitants, and such an encouragement to that Branch of Trade as wou'd render it General, by this means the Country wou'd become Populous and consequently the Value of Land greatly increased ...

When the Roads are effectually repaired Goods may be conveyed from one Place to another in Carriages with less than half the Number of Horses now employed in carrying Packs and consequently at half the Expence ...

Are not Roads so narrow that frequent disputes happen between Carriers and other Passengers ? ...

These are all Facts too well known to be denied.

Of course there were some obstacles to be overcome. Apparently some local farmers were none too happy:

The Graziers are I believe the only People at whose Instance the Opposition is set on Foot ... It is evident then that the Advance they expect good Roads would make in their Farms is their real objection and this can I the better assert as some of them have declared they neither want Trade or Inhabitants at Skipton.

There was some question about whether people would be expected to continue contributing to the repair of the road:

On the question of "Statute Labour" less than two common days' work is not done by the Inhabitants on any TURNPIKE Road whatever.

The motive of MPs in voting for the new arrangement was also considered and dismissed:

But that every or any Member will be induced to vote for a TURNPIKE from the chance that he might have of Travelling over the Road sometime or other, is a very unjust Imputation, as no Parliament were ever known to have enacted more useful Laws for the Publick than the Present.

All-in-all, then:

It might be said ... that a TURNPIKE would make a better Trade and a greater Number of Passengers.

This campaign was successful and, in 1753, the route between Keighley and Kendal came under the control of the Keighley and Kendal Turnpike Road Trust (KKTR)³.

The good intentions of the KKTR were made clear when it was decided that the standard width of the turnpike road would be 7 yards, of which 5 yards were to be metalled. Although this standard was not always kept to, it represented a significant increase in quality when compared to earlier roads. For example, in 1720 the churchwardens of Kildwick made a contract with local road builders to repair 62 yards of the causeway on the Crosshills side of Kildwick bridge to a width of just 3 yards. This seems to have been the standard width of the road surveyed by Warburton and is not far removed from the current width of parts of Farnhill Main Street, Bradley Lane and the road between Bradley and Snaygill.

The various works undertaken by the KKTR between Keighley and Snaygill are summarised below. However, despite all this endeavour the Trust was a commercial failure, incurring debts of nearly £34000 before “... by some sort of financial euthanasia, the debt and the Keighley and Kendal Turnpike Road Trust expired together” in 1878.

Keighley to Steeton

Year	Work
1782	The Spring Gardens Lane – Hollins Lane – Hollins Bank Lane – High Street route out of Keighley towards Steeton was superseded by a new road: Bar House Lane – Keighley Road.
1786	North Street, Keighley, laid out.
1824-1826	Development of Skipton Road, Keighley, continuing through Utley to Steeton. The “fine approach to the town of Keighley from the north”. This joined up with the 1782 road at the junction with Bar House Lane.

The sum of these works creates the route which formed part of the Keighley Skipton route up to 1988: along North Street then on to Skipton Road (the B6265), which becomes Keighley Road.



Figure 7 - The KKTR woz ‘ere – and still is. A stone horse-trough on the outskirts of Utley. This is thought to be the only “signed” and dated piece of road furniture on the whole of the Keighley to Kendal turnpike.

Steeton to Kildwick

Year	Work
1753	New bridge over Steeton beck.
1789	Skipton Road, Steeton. Continuing on from Keighley Road, Skipton Road forms the main road through Steeton and Eastburn (the B6265).
1824	Eastburn Bridge to Kildwick Bridge. The road, running almost due north diverges from the old road at the Crosshills junction – cutting-off the circuitous route through Crosshills recorded by Warburton.

Kildwick to Snaygill

Year	Work
1786 – 7	Skipton Road – from Kildwick Church to Snaygill, superseding the old route through Farnhill and Bradley.

Apparently the KKTR Minute books for the period 1763 – 1786 had already been lost by the time Brigg wrote his book in 1927 and so there is no definitive information on the construction of this section of road, which is still in use as part of the Keighley to Skipton route today.

However, the opening of the new road was heralded in the newspaper The Leeds Mercury, which published the following report⁴:

We hear from Skipton that the new diversion of the turnpike road between that place and Keighley was opened on the tenth instant [10th May 1787] whereby those disagreeable hills of Snagill, Bradley and Farnhill together with the navigation culvert at Kildwick are entirely avoided and the whole road between Skipton and Bradford by means of this and other diversions at Steeton Bank and Cottingley Cliff is now rendered the most easy and level of any in the whole county. And we are further authorised to inform the public that notwithstanding it is supposed to be near three miles further from Skipton to Leeds by way of Keighley and Bradford than by Otley, yet in consideration of the former road being so level and good in comparison of the latter and that it will be done in less time and with more ease it is agreed by the different people who keep chaises, to run both ways at the same pace so that travellers from Leeds into the West need be under no terrors of the future about those tremendous hills of Otley, Schwen [Chevin ?] and Short Bank.

So, the new road is not only flatter and smoother than it was previously, but it's now a better option than the alternative, shorter, route.

The turnpike road coming out of Kildwick (Skipton Road) does indeed avoid the “disagreeable hills” of Snaygill, Bradley and Farnhill, its course running along the bottom of the valley between the river Aire and the Leeds to Liverpool canal, keeping very close to the line of the canal for almost all its length. Why this should be the case is not clear but it is tempting to suggest that using land already disturbed by the canal-building just 13 years previously may perhaps have been more cost effective than buying productive farm land closer to the river.



Figure 8 – A KKTR milestone erected in 1786 close to Cononley Lane End. The mile "stone" was cast at the William Tower Globe Foundry, in Leeds.

In any event, in Kildwick the canal and river lie very close together and the new Skipton Road, entering the village alongside the old smithy and opposite the church, must do a right-angle turn in order to go over Kildwick Bridge (Figure 9). As the volume of traffic increases in the 20th century this will become a bottle-neck.

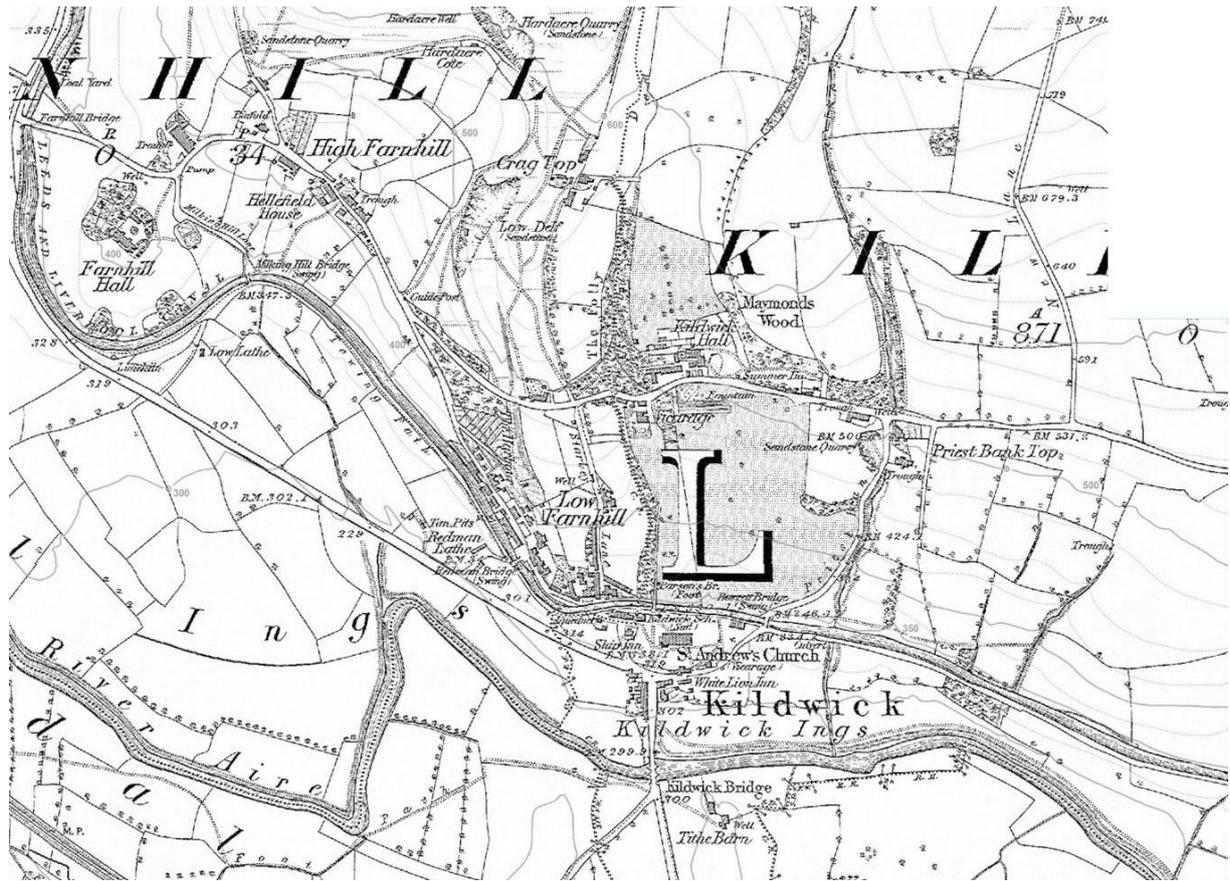


Figure 9 – The 1849 6" OS map showing Kildwick and Farnhill. The route of the turnpike road over Kildwick bridge and the left turn taken in front of the Church can be clearly seen.

A further traffic hazard built-into the Kildwick to Skipton road, and which continues to be an accident black-spot right up to the present day, is the junction at Cononley Lane End. Here, the road (following the line of the canal) makes a tight turn just where the lane from Farnhill crosses it on the way to Cononley.

Increasing traffic at Kildwick corner (c.1910 - 1986)

In the very early years of the 20th century, there was very little traffic between Keighley and Skipton: it was even possible for a dog to stand in the middle of the main road, without coming to any harm (Figure 10).



Figure 10 – View of the approach to Kildwick church and the White Lion (right) along the Keighley to Skipton road. The route to Skipton takes a sharp turn to the left at the bottom of the church steps, leading past the old smithy. Photograph taken from Kildwick bridge, probably around 1905.

Even as the century progressed, the volume and speed of traffic increased only slowly (Figure 11).



Figure 11 – View of the smithy in Kildwick. Kildwick bridge is off to the left and the Keighley to Skipton road continues directly ahead (along the line of the telegraph poles. Photograph taken from the bottom of Priest Bank Road, probably around 1912.

Eventually came the car, truck and motorbike (Figures 12-14).



Figure 12 – The approach to Kildwick in the late 1920s (?); although this photograph cannot be dated precisely, extreme magnification of the original photograph shows the car registration number to be UB 861 - two-letter area codes became obsolete in the early 1930s⁴. Compare this with Figure 9 and notice the addition of a road-sign (“School”, far left) and a signpost (by the church steps).



Figure 13 – The White Lion in the 1930s. A white line in the centre of the road indicates the sharp bend coming up. Horse-traffic outnumbers the cars but, with the remodelling to the pub entrance, the horse-trough just visible in Figure 10 has been removed.



Figure 14 – A car and a small truck approach each other on Kildwick bridge. Taken in the mid-late 1950s or early 1960s; a gas holder can be seen in the middle-distance (the gasworks closed in 1955). Notice the white lines and cats’ eyes.

In the decades after WWII, the volume of traffic increased throughout the UK. More-and-more goods were moved by road rather than rail. In addition, the 1950s, 60s and 70s saw many families getting their first cars.

In 1961 the bridge at Kildwick was strengthened, to cater for the increased weight and volume of traffic².

But the bridge wasn’t the real problem.



Figure 15 – Kildwick corner – mid 1960s

By the 1970s, the road between Keighley and Skipton was approaching saturation levels; with the right-angle turn at Kildwick corner, necessitating reducing speeds to a crawl, causing a particular bottle-neck. As someone who was a young girl living in Eastburn in the early 1980s has said: "Particularly at holiday times, it was not unusual for the traffic coming from Keighley to be backed up as far as Steeton."³

The government were aware of this. In a parliamentary answer in May 1974, the then Under Secretary of State for the Environment said:⁴

There is no doubt about the need for some improvement over the existing highway facilities in Airedale... Within Airedale the greater part of it is subject to speed restrictions. There is serious traffic congestion and delay, with traffic flows at saturation level on certain sections. This has a most serious effect on the environment of the communities along the route. The accident rate is three or four times greater than for similar roads in West Yorkshire.

Unfortunately, government plans to resolve this problem were overblown and were met with an extraordinary response from the public.

As early as 1969, the Green Paper "Roads for the Future", suggested a new route from Bradford up Airedale and extending north-west to join the M6 near Kendal⁵. By late 1973 this had become a plan for a motorway, the M650, intended to run between Baildon and Kildwick, with a dual-carriageway extension to Snaygill⁴.

It has been suggested that the long term plan was to link this motorway to the M606 and the M65, and thereby create a new trans-Pennine route⁶ but in December 1974, this plan was dropped due to public objection and was replaced with one for an all-purpose dual-carriageway for the full length⁷.

The public enquiry into the revised Aire Valley Trunk road, starting on 4th November 1975, was brought to a halt after less than a minute when the chairman was shouted down by objectors.

All subsequent attempts to restart the enquiry were also disrupted, with violence erupting. Finally, on 11th February 1976, the enquiry was adjourned indefinitely⁸. It was the first time a road scheme had been so vociferously opposed. The enquiry did not restart and the plan was abandoned.

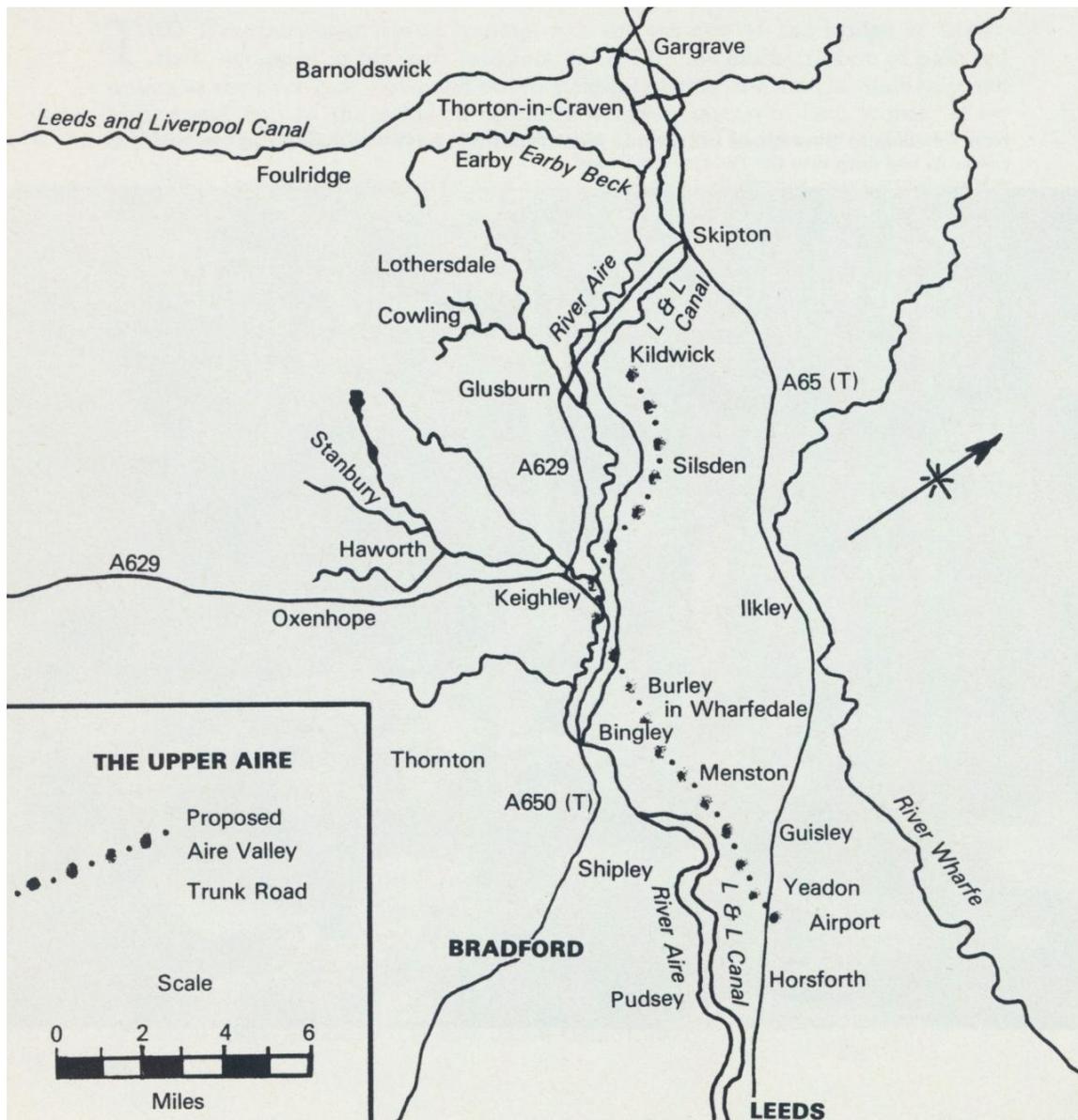


Figure 16 – A proposed route for the Aire Valley Trunk Road, dated 1976

What came out of this chaos was a decision to create a series of dual-carriageway stretches between Skipton and Bradford, which was given the go-ahead in May 1982⁹. Stage 1 of this plan was for a new dual-carriageway between Keighley (Beechcliffe) and Kildwick, bypassing Utley, Steeton, Eastburn and Kildwick itself – although, in 1978, Kildwick Parish Meeting had suggested that the dual-carriageway should continue as far as Snaygill¹⁸. The parish also expressed concern that the new road would effectively cut Kildwick off from Crosshills, and a significant amount of effort was put into ensuring that a suitable underpass would be developed to enable people to move easily between the two townships – particularly children going to and from school¹⁹.

When the full plans were revealed, for a dual carriageway running along the bottom of the Aire valley and ending at a large roundabout adjacent to Kildwick bridge, Glusburn parish council objected on the grounds – correctly as it turned out – that this would lead to a massive increase in traffic running through Glusburn and Crosshills^{15,16}.

The start of work on the new road was delayed. In May 1983, in a debate in Parliament, the then MP for Keighley, Bob Cryer, berated the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Lynda Chalker, over the lack of progress⁹:

... in a parliamentary reply last month to me the Government announced that the road should be "open to traffic in April 1987." That is far too long a delay... I urge the Minister to proceed with the construction of the road as rapidly as possible to ensure, as was promised in an Adjournment debate in the previous Parliament, that the Keighley to Kildwick section will be constructed and opened first to relieve local traffic.

Those living alongside the existing trunk road have to put up with enormous difficulties. There is noise and vibration and dangers in crossing the road, because of the considerable volume of traffic, particularly at Utley, Steeton and Eastburn in my constituency, but also at other places alongside the existing trunk road.

In July, Kildwick Parish Meeting added their voice to the calls for progress²⁰:

The meeting wished that an early start be made and rapid progress achieved so that the benefits and relief be obtained as soon as possible.

In the meantime conditions for residents along the existing route continued to deteriorate, as contributions to the BBC's 1986 Domesday Project illustrate.



Figure 17 – This photograph, taken from near the top of Starkey Lane, Farnhill, in 1985 (?), shows a stream of traffic between Kildwick bridge and Eastburn. A contribution to the BBC Domesday Project¹⁰.

From an article headed "Bypass: Kildwick Roundabout"¹¹:

In 1975 it was decided that an 11 mile long bypass was needed in the Aire Valley to relieve the existing roads of heavy traffic. The new road would reduce accidents on the narrow Kildwick Bridge and also noise levels in the local villages.

It was stated that construction would start in 1983 but in 1985 this has yet to happen.

The children of Kildwick Primary School carried out a traffic survey which indicated that, in a 30 minute period on a typical Tuesday morning, no less than 648 vehicles negotiated Kildwick corner¹².

Clearly, the new road was required urgently, but even at the start of 1986, the government could not give a firm date for the start of construction¹³. By March, it looked as if work would start in the summer¹⁴. Too late to prevent yet another accident at the now notorious Kildwick Corner¹⁷:

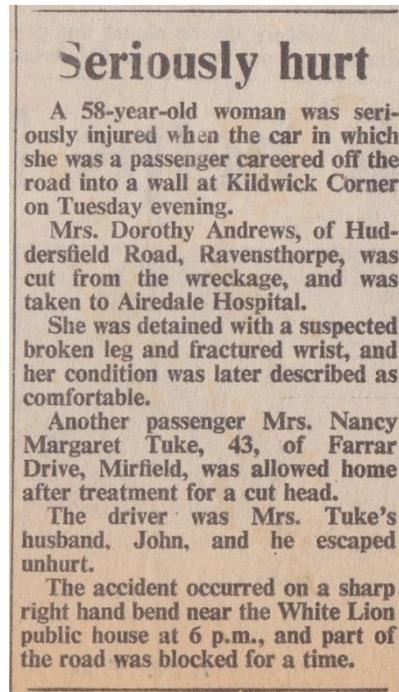


Figure 18 – A report of just one of an increasing number of accidents at Kildwick Corner

Work finally started on the Beechcliffe to Kildwick dual-carriageway in August 1986.

Beechcliffe to Kildwick A629 Trunk Road (1986 – 1988)

The first spadeful of earth on the much-debated and long-awaited Airedale Route – Stage 1, the Beechcliffe to Kildwick A629 dual-carriageway – was dug by Gary Waller, the MP for Keighley, in August 1986. The new road was completed on-budget and ahead of schedule, and was formally declared open in a ceremony attended by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Peter Bottomley, on August 2nd 1988¹.

(Full details of the construction techniques used on Stages 1 and 2 of the Aire Valley Route were reported in The Journal of the Institution of Highways and Transportation, May 1989.)

The new road, built along the Aire valley floor, between the railway line and the river, completely bypassed Utley, Steeton and Eastburn.

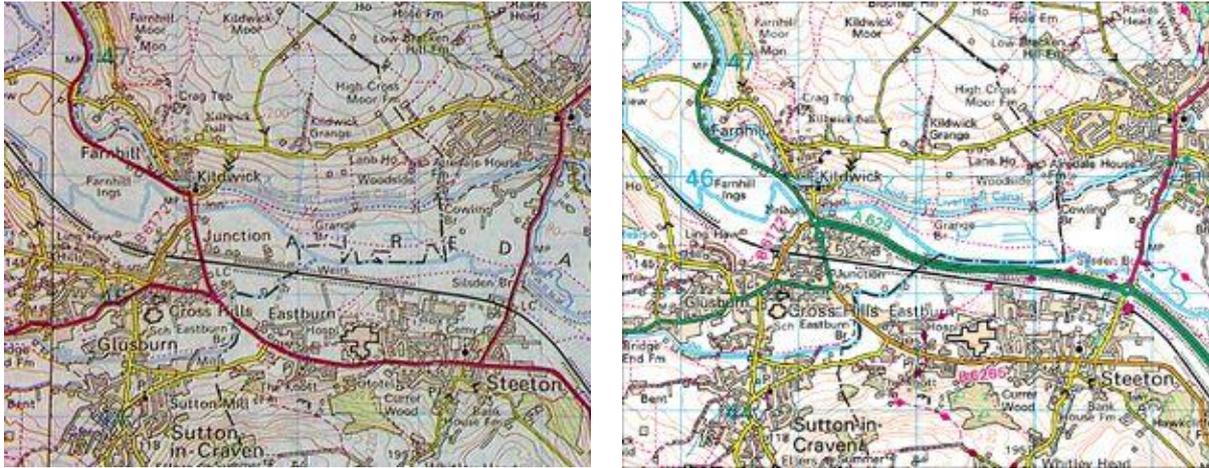


Figure 19 – A roadmap from 1986 (left) and 2011 (right), showing the route of the new Beechcliffe to Kildwick road. Both maps taken from the BBC Domesday Project² (Crown copyright).

At the Kildwick, the new road could not come quickly enough; as evidenced by the minutes of Kildwick Parish Meeting – from as early as three years before work started:

July 7th 1983

The meeting viewed the plans for the new Trunk Road ... The meeting wished that an early start be made and rapid progress be achieved, so that the benefits and relief be obtained as soon as possible.

The reason for such eagerness was clear: Kildwick corner was an increasing problem; but relief was at hand:

July 10th 1986

The Chairman reported that the road works at Kildwick corner had now been completed after six months work ! Some work on preparation [for] the trunk road was now visible locally.

The new road was joined to the Kildwick to Skipton section of the old KKTR turnpike by means of a short single-carriageway section and a new bridge over the Aire, routing traffic away from the centre of the village and leaving the old 14th century bridge to handle local traffic only.



Figure 20 – The new road bridge over the Aire. Photograph taken from the now quiet(ish) old bridge.

The way in which the opening of the new road was reported in local newspapers was interesting. At the Skipton end, the Craven Herald and Pioneer virtually ignored the event, relegating their coverage to a short “Advertising Feature” which invited readers in Skipton to consider using the new road to go to Keighley for their shopping³. (Bizarrely this also reported that the new single-carriageway section of the road linked Kildwick directly with Haworth !)

In Keighley, the Keighley News was much more enthusiastic⁴, with articles from Gary Waller and the leader of the government’s Enterprise Allowance Scheme reporting the opening of the new road under headings that sound very like phrases used in the pamphlet lobbying for the old KKTR turnpike road in the early 19th century: “Enterprise a real winner”, “Area revitalised”, and “Road to Prosperity”.

All-in-all, perhaps it was – in the words of the Keighley News – “A day to celebrate”:

So begins a new era – and a welcome end to the congestion, delays and dangers of the present inadequate A629 road which have been endured for too long.

And the new road also presents exciting opportunities for local trade, commerce and industry, already booming, but even more success to look forward to in the future.

“The only option that we must reject ...” – Kildwick to Skipton (1988 – 2014)

With the opening of the Beechcliffe to Kildwick dual-carriageway, the only section of the KKTR turnpike that still formed part of the main Keighley to Skipton route was that between Kildwick and Snaygill. But even before the Beechcliffe to Kildwick road was opened, concerns were being raised about government plans for a dual-carriageway along this remaining section.

The original Department of Transport plan had the new dual-carriageway following the line of the old KKTR turnpike for most of its length.

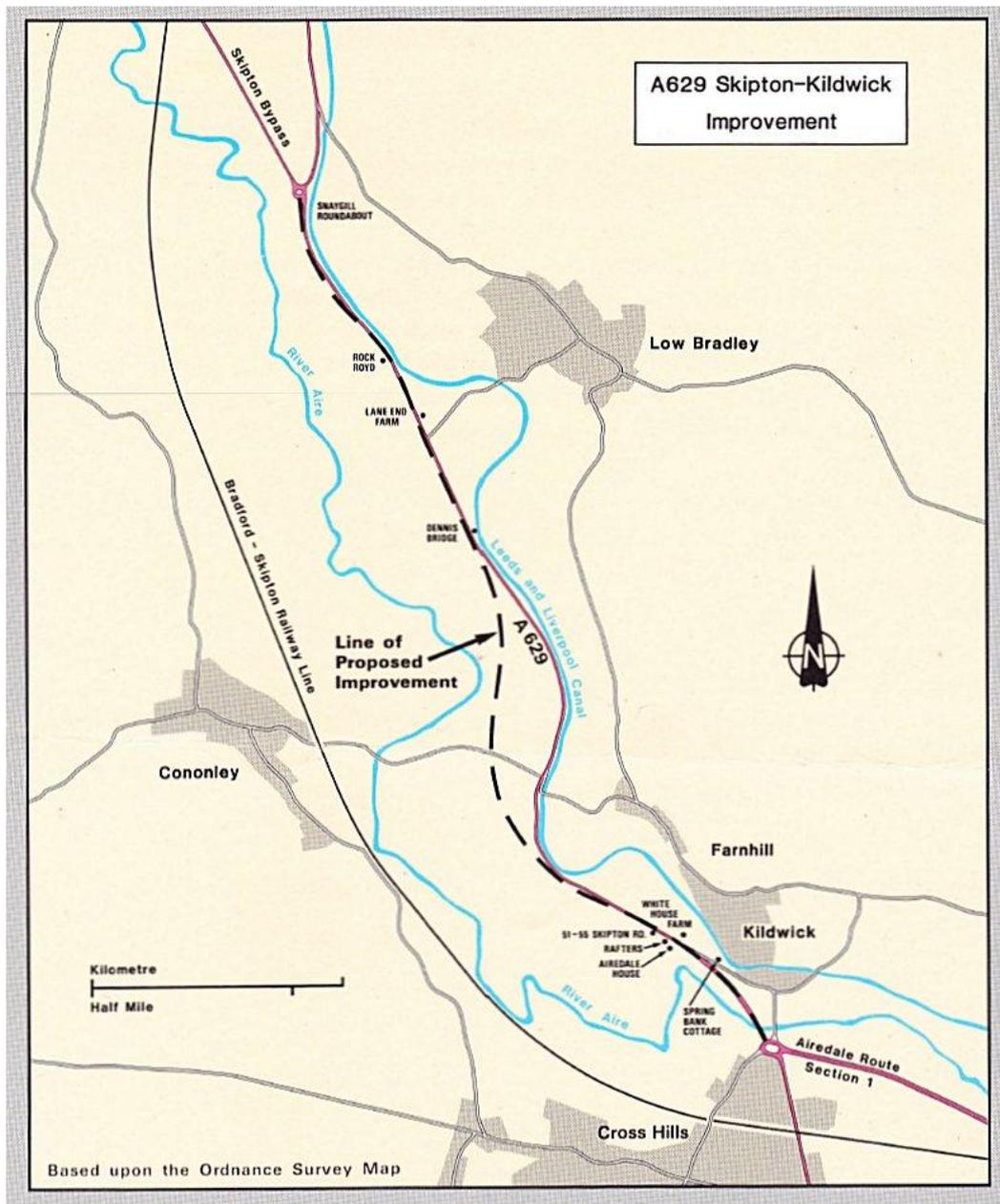


Figure 21 – The Department of Transport 1987 plan for the Kildwick-Skipton dual-carriageway

In January 1988 representatives of the Department of Transport presented these proposals at public meetings in Farnhill, Cononley and Bradley. As reported in the Craven Herald¹, the overall views were hostile but:

... the meeting was told that with the increased volume of traffic using the road the current road line, with all the bends at Cononley Lane Ends, could not be used.

It was then asked whether the current line could be used if the [new] road was a single carriageway rather than the proposed dual one, but the reply to that was that a single carriageway would be even more unacceptable ...

So, in short, there simply had to be a new dual-carriageway, replacing the old KKTR road, between Kildwick and Snaygill: whether or not anyone wanted one.

This was confirmed by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Peter Bottomley, on July 1st 1988²:

There are three further schemes in the trunk road programme: Airedale section 3 [the Crossflatts to Cottingley Bar dual-carriageway], Skipton to Kildwick and the Shipley eastern bypass... Our aim is to provide a new continuous high standard route to link Bradford and Skipton... The preferred route for one scheme has just been announced, that is, the Skipton to Kildwick section, linking Skipton bypass and Airedale section 1. That was announced in May after public consultation.

The speech ended with the Minister stating quite categorically:

The only option that we must reject is doing nothing. The area deserves better than that.

But it was precisely “nothing” that happened for quite some time, while the planners presented plans for how they would cope with the problems caused by the Cononley Lane End junction. In 1989 their solution was a half-clover-leaf arrangement developed on the Ings.

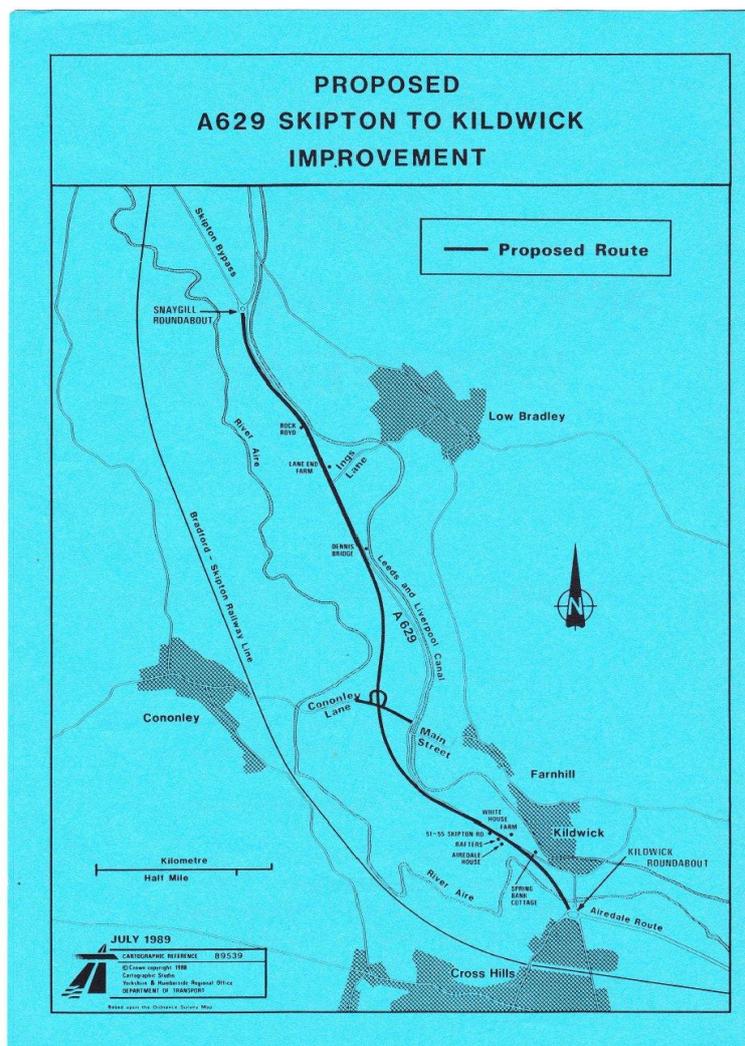


Figure 22 – The Department of Transport 1989 plan for the Kildwick-Skipton dual-carriageway; showing the proposed arrangement at the Cononley Lane End junction

However this plan also failed to get off the drawing-board.

In 1993 an 8-page colour booklet was produced, outlining the latest variant of the plan¹⁴. Like the others, this also sought to solve the problem of Cononley Lane End by taking the new road to the west of the line of the old KKTR, out onto the Ings and very close to the river at one point.

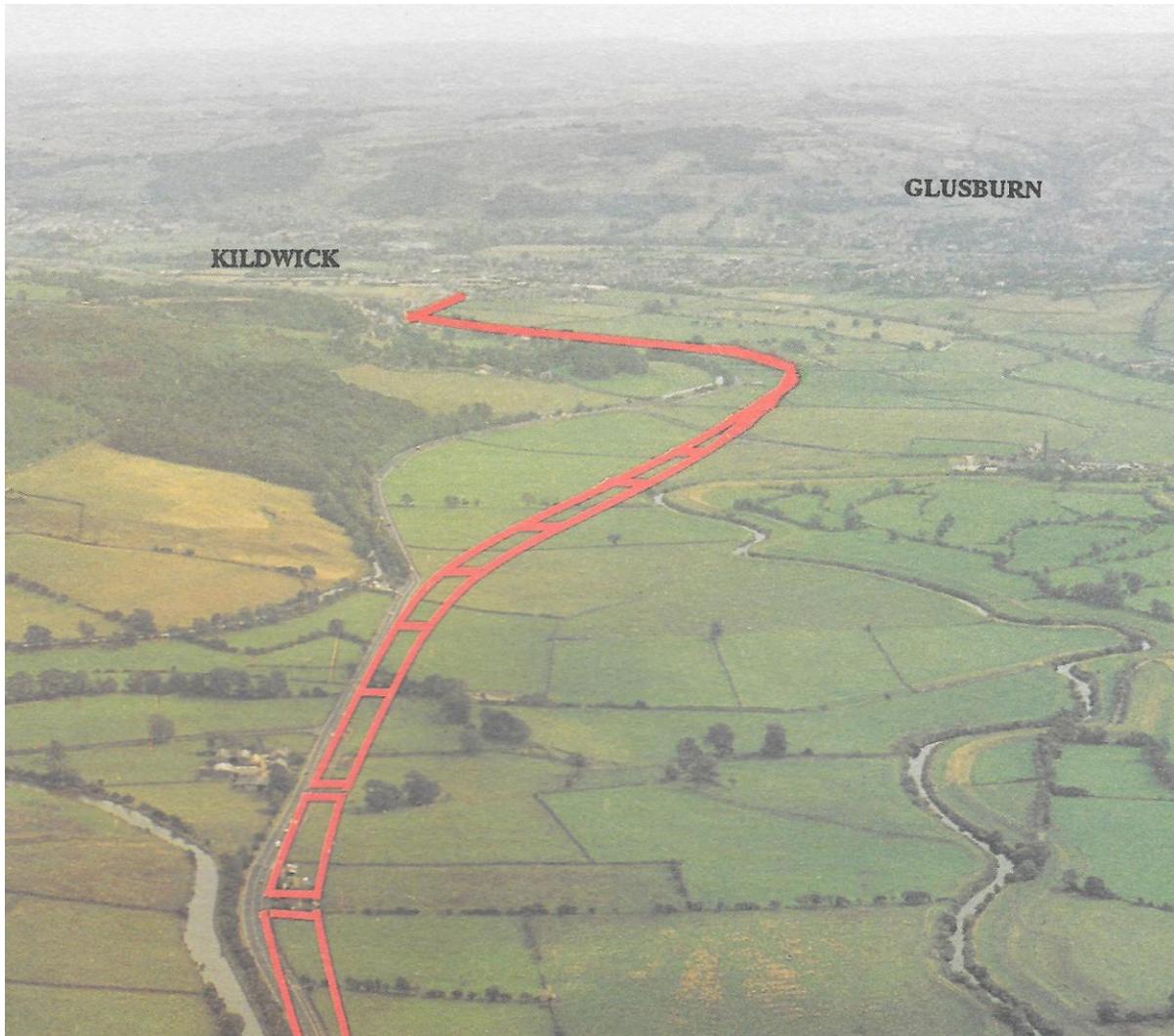


Figure 23 – The Department of Transport 1993 plan for the Kildwick-Skipton dual-carriageway; showing the line of the proposed new road running to the west of the turnpike into the Ings and close to the river

The detailed plan of the route showed a number of other flaws, including the over-ambitious plan for a new Cononley junction – expanded from the 1989 half-clover-leaf to something that would rival Spaghetti-junction. It also provided no direct means of access to the new road from Bradley; travellers seeking to go from Bradley to Skipton would have to begin their journey by travelling in the wrong direction as far as Cononley.

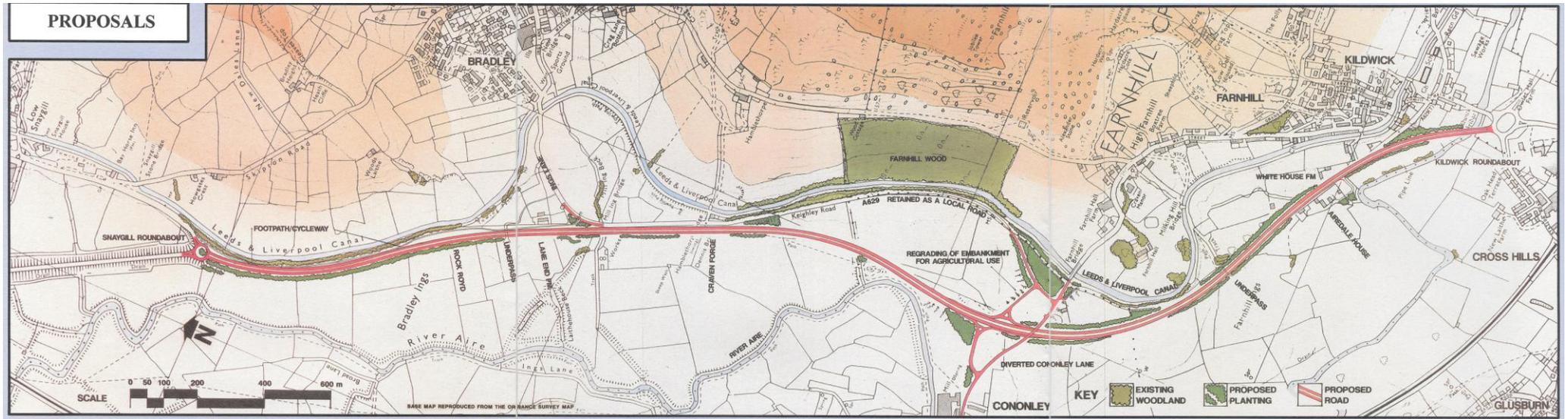


Figure 24 – The Department of Transport 1993 route-plan for the Kildwick-Skipton dual-carriageway. Notice the highly complex Cononley junction and the lack of access at Bradley

Despite the delays and repeated revisions, the Kildwick to Skipton improvements remained part of government plans³ and eventually went to public inquiry in October 1993. On the 19th January 1995⁴, the government were able to announce:

The inspector's report has been received, and is currently being considered.

In April 1996, the statutory orders necessary for the building of the new road came into force^{5,6} and, at the end of 1996, the new road was included as part of the Department of Transport's response to the government's private finance initiative: it was to be a Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) project⁷.

This is an innovative way to introduce private sector finance and expertise into scheme development and management of the network.

No doubt the residents of Cononley and Farnhill, still having to negotiate the notorious accident black-spot at the Cononley Lane End junction, were reassured by this.

But in January 1998 the new Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Glenda Jackson, clearly also had the Kildwick to Skipton development in mind when she raised some doubt over the plans for the Bingley relief road⁸.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend ... I am sure he will appreciate that, until the review of the roads network has been completed, I cannot tell him what the future of the scheme will be.

In July 1998, the report "A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England" was published⁹ and the plans for the Kildwick to Skipton improvements were withdrawn.

In 2003 plans were put forward for a much a smaller scheme, designed specifically to improve the existing road at Cononley Lane End¹⁰. The dual-carriageway, which was essential in 1988, apparently now not quite so essential; the existing road-line, with the bends at Cononley Lane End, unacceptable in 1988, now perfectly adequate.

The plan included a staggered junction, with Farnhill Main Street joining the Skipton to Keighley road approximately 500m north of the current location¹¹. This was precisely the arrangement which had been criticised at public meetings in 1988 and, once again, there were public objections.

But this plan went the way of the others and, in 2007 the government finally threw-in the towel and revoked the statutory orders issued in 1996^{12, 13}. There would be no new road between Kildwick and Snaygill: what had been, in the 1988, "The only option we must reject" had become the only solution the government could achieve.

The latest proposals for Cononley Lane End (2015)

The abandonment, in 2007, of any central government plan for a dual-carriageway between Kildwick and Snaygill left the problem of Cononley Lane End unresolved.

In April 2014 a public meeting was held in Cononley to discuss the options for improving safety at this “notorious accident black spot”¹. Following this meeting, North Yorkshire County Council Highways have drawn up plans for a pedestrian crossing island².

Appendix A – Could Kildwick have been a major transport hub ?

The main subject of this article has been the road between Keighley and Skipton and the position of Farnhill and Kildwick on that route. We have looked in detail at the Keighley-Kendal turnpike but that wasn't the only major road that might have come through Kildwick.

In 1754 a number of petitions were put before Parliament calling for improvements to be made to the roads connecting Leeds to parts of East Lancashire, including Colne, Burnley, Preston and Manchester. A inquiry was held in 1755 in which one of the options considered was for the development of a turnpike road between Otley and Colne via Ilkley, Addingham (Cocking Lane), Kildwick and Glusburn. However, this was not the only route under consideration; an alternative was for the improvement of the existing road between Otley and Skipton, with the development of a new route from Skipton to Colne via Pinhaw¹.

There must have been support for both options, as a two-page flyer was circulated arguing against the Kildwick route and in favour of the Skipton route. The full title of the flyer was [deep breath]²:

REASONS and PROOFS In Support of the Turnpike Road going from Otley through Skipton, over Pinna to Colne; and from thence to Burscough Bridge, in Walton, in the County Palatine of Lancaster; And against the same being carried from Cockin End through Kildwick and Glusburn, to Colne, or from Broughton through Thornton and Kellbrooke, to Colne, or from Cross Hills through Marton and Swinden, to Long Preston.

In the end, neither of the two proposed routes were adopted. Instead, Acts were passed for the improvement of a number of existing roads³.

It is interesting to consider, however, had an Otley – Colne (via Kildwick) turnpike road been created, how well connected the village would have been by, say, 1850. Transport links would have included:

- A major East-West route linking the village with Leeds and the industrial towns of East Lancashire and Manchester.
- A road connecting the village to the local towns of Keighley and Skipton, and on to Kendal.
- Rail links to both Bradford and the Lancashire coast.
- The Leeds-Liverpool canal.

What would the impact of all these have been on Kildwick ?

Appendix B – An alternate trans-Pennine route, from the 1960s ?

We have already discussed how, in the 1970s, the Government planned a motorway to connect Bradford to the M6 using the proposed M650. But even before this, in the early 1960s, there appear to have been plans to relieve the pressure of traffic travelling into Lancashire from the Aire valley – a plan that did not have involve a dual-carriageway between Keighley and Kildwick.

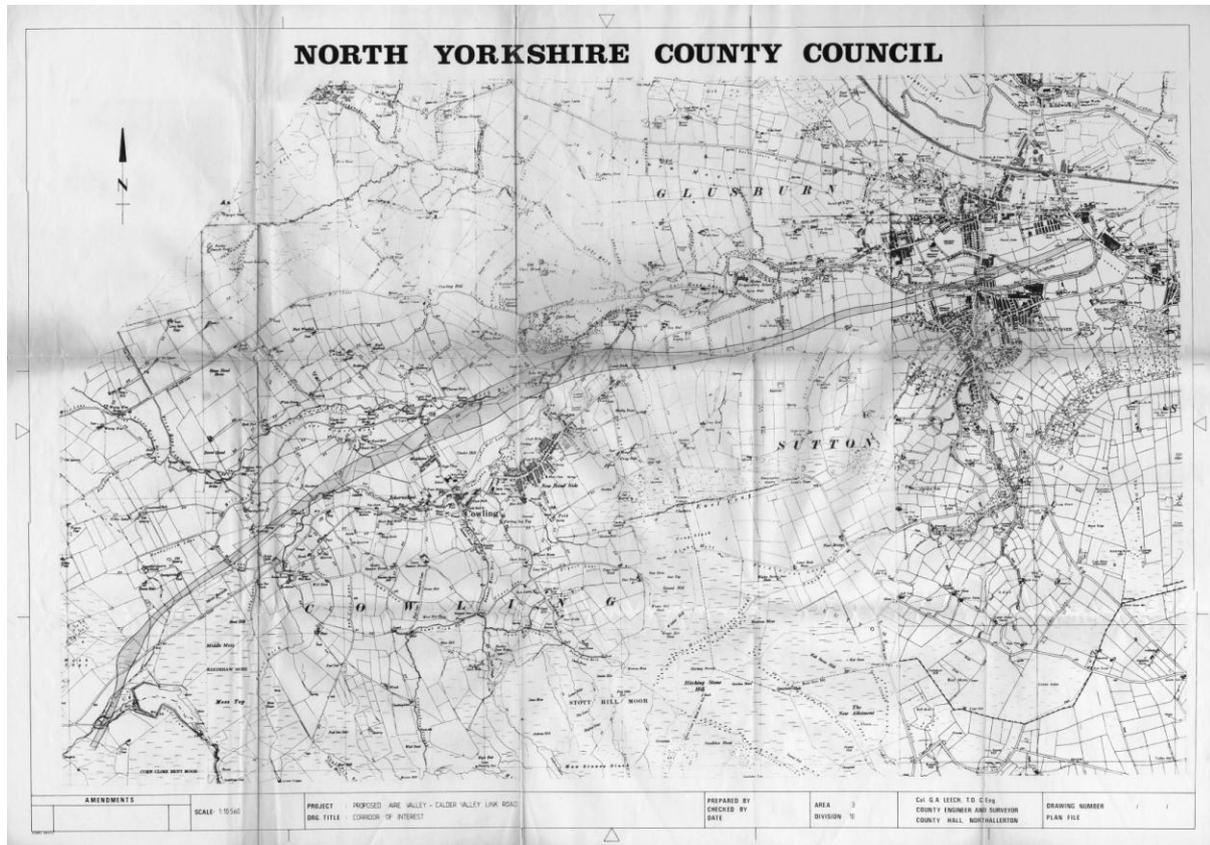


Figure 25 – A North Yorkshire CC plan for a route running west from Eastburn (presumably) to Colne.

The plan shown above, believed to date from the early 1960s, shows the “corridor of interest” for a route running west from Eastburn to Cowling and beyond (shown shaded). It shows that the route would have come off the existing Keighley to Skipton road opposite the Landis-Lund works and travelled south-west cutting across the bottom of Holme Lane, before continuing south of Glusburn Cricket Club and the Dog and Gun. It would then have passed to the north of Cowling and Ickornshaw before continuing on into Lancashire.

If this corridor had been adopted, the road landscape of this part of the Aire Valley would have been very different. For example, any dual-carriageway heading west out of Keighley may have ended at Eastburn, leaving traffic going to Skipton to continue on over Kildwick bridge and negotiate Kildwick corner.

Crosshills, Glusburn and Cowling would have been much quieter than they are today, and Kildwick much busier.

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- 1 <http://www.farnhillpc.org.uk/docstore/CononleyLaneEnds2.pdf>
- 2 <http://www.farnhillpc.org.uk/docstore/CononleyLaneEndsPe.pdf>

Appendix A – Could Kildwick have been a major transport hub ?

1. Journals of the House of Commons, Volume 27 (p124); available online at https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Journals_of_the_House_of_Commons.html?id=cAIDAAAACAAJ&redir_esc=y
2. The “flyer” is held in the Lancashire Record Office: ref TT1 12 (1755)
3. House of Lords Journal Volume 28: April 1755; available online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol28/pp405-414> (search for “Otley”)