

## **Poynton Walk 4 The north-eastern part**

*Starting at Elmbeds Farm caravan park, on the west side of the canal. Out onto Shrigley Road, past the south end of Shrigley Road North and down Coppice Road past Smithfield Cottages. Footpath across to Worth Clough (Petrebank). Northwards along Middlewood Road to Worth Hall, then footpath to Park Pits and joining the Ladybrook Valley Trail down into Norbury Hollow. Norbury Clock House, then Middlewood Road southwards to Middlewood railway station, Pool House Farm, New House Farm then German Lodge. Past Horsepastures Cottages to Green Lane Cottages; along Green Lane to the Boar's Head Inn and up Nelson Road to Mount Vernon and the canal wharf.*

### **Elmbeds**

The present caravan park was a farm, and for a short period after 1830, a canal wharf for loading coal from the nearby Smithfield Pit, served by a tramway. The course of this is apparent at its western end on the 1906 map extract (right), it then ran along Coppice Road, over the route of the later railway, and up Elmbeds Road, rather steeply graded here.

All evidence of the farm has gone, but several cottages remain; just below the canal are Elm Beds Cottage of 1820 (left below) and The Elms, a semi-detached pair built in 1880 (right).....



Further along the lane towards Shrigley Road is the terrace of 3 Daisy Bank Cottages of circa 1897, with date plaque now unfortunately removed, then a single cottage from before 1849 at the northern end.....



The main line railway arrived here in 1869 as described elsewhere, but the top end of Coppice Road and Shrigley Road North was not developed until after 1880. The 1906 map shows only West View, the terrace of 4 erected in the former year but which seem to be called Mount Pleasant in the 1891 census (below left), and the first three semi-detached pairs all in the same style built 1905-6, Edge View, Holly View and Coppice View (right).....



A further 3 pairs (odd nos 25-35) were put up about 1910, the first two being named High Lea and Ravenoak. Between the road junction and the railway bridge, a further two Edwardian style pairs were put up around 1910 (right), nos 41 & 43 being named as Ada Cottages. All these retain many of the standard external decorative features of the period in our area, including the very distinctive window lintels.....



Something of a mystery is "Railway View" thought to date from around 1885 and shown in the 1901 census as a confectionery shop. It is not shown on either the 1896 or 1907 OS plans, so was presumably a temporary, probably wooden construction on the site of no. 35 or thereabouts.

The slightly raised embankment, set back on the south side of Coppice Road, still marks the site of the former colliery tramway, leading into Smithfield Pit, on the extreme left of the above plan. Opposite, the three Smithfield Cottages were provided for the miners at this new site, around 1825.....



The tramway presumably dated from the opening of the canal in 1831, but lasted only for some 10-15 years..

Just beyond the site of Smithfield Pit is Coppiceside Farm, here before 1851. The present house appears to be from around 1920 (picture below left), but the barns are early Victorian, and probably incorporate the former farm worker's cottage.....



Going down Coppice Road, at the bend to the left before Alma Cottages (see walk 2) on the north side there is a footpath leading straight on; we take this to come out on the Middlewood Road near where it joins Anson Road at Worth Clough.....

## Petre Bank (Worth Clough) cottages

A fine row of 13 units, built 1815 by Lord Warren-Bulkeley to accommodate the miners working at the Lord and Lady coal pits at Hockley nearby (walk 2). The block was renovated and modernized in the 1970s. The large central house with the date plaque was once a shop. The name is thought to be a corruption of "Pear Tree Bank", but was always shown as Worth Clough Cottages in the census.

The old view below is about 1900 and our wide view was taken in 1980; since then vegetation growth prevents such a clear view of the whole nowadays.....



## Remains of colliery railway bridge over Anson and Middlewood Roads

Only one of the brick piers survives, in poor condition. As shown on the above plan, this was on the 1880 locomotive worked line from Towers Yard to Anson Pit.

The bridge spans themselves were timber trestles, dismantled soon after closure in 1935. The route here was also used by an early colliery tramway c. 1839-44



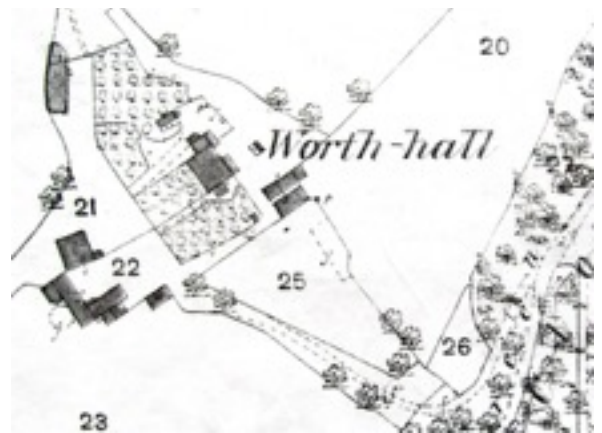
## Worth Cottage

The solitary building just to the east of the colliery railway line, a few yards along Anson Road, this was occupied from at least 1813-1912 by the Clayton family of colliery engineers and millwrights. A descendant, Ian Harris of London, sent me this print of circa 1898 from his family album, to compare with the modern view.....



## Worth Hall

This house was the seat of the Downes family until 1791 when the manor of Worth became part of Poynton. The brown sandstone rubble building is 17<sup>th</sup> century, listed, and later became a farm (extended in 19<sup>th</sup> century). It is now converted to flats, conveniently sited right opposite the clubhouse of the Davenport Golf Club, and surrounded by the extensive fairways and woodland. The site of the manorial corn mill is not known.



The 1871 map extract shows that the course of the driveway up from Middlewood Road was the same as that followed by the present approach road to the golf club, so it is likely that the elegant gateposts flanking the entrance are the originals.



### Park Pit cottages

A variety of footpath options leads back to the colliery railway line heading northwards, now a dirt track which can be followed as far as the former Park Pits. This area has all been landscaped in recent years, but the pair of former colliery engineer's houses built around 1845 survives, seen off to the right of the main footpath.....



### Entrance to Sir George Warren's Sough

Continuing north on the footpath, this eventually descends steeply into Norbury Hollow, crosses the river by footbridge and joins the Ladybrook Valley Trail. Turning to the right along this, in a few yards the entrance arch to an old mine drainage adit can be seen on the opposite stream bank, though it is often almost obscured by vegetation (picture right). Behind it, a long tunnel (not accessible) leads into the workings of the former Park Pit, and still flows after heavy rain. There was an early steam coal pit engine near here working from around 1780-90 (at map reference SJ931852 - "near the black hole ")



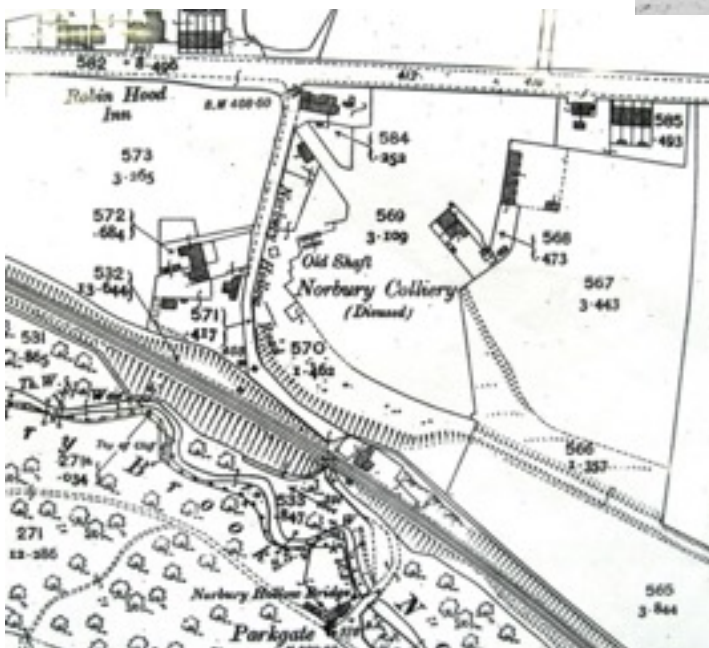
### Parkgate Farm

The original farmhouse and cottages here abutted the roadway, and were demolished about 1955. This postcard photo of around 1948 shows what they were like.....



### Norbury Hollow Bridge

This marks the parish boundary between Poynton (to the south) and Norbury, north of the brook; it is at the bottom of this 1906 plan.....



Just beyond, the road crosses the Stockport – Buxton branch railway at Middlewood Level Crossing, with hand-operated gates and still manned from a small modern signal box, due to its awkward and potentially dangerous situation. Around the bend in this narrow lane lies another former mining complex, Norbury Colliery.....

### Norbury colliery engine house ("Clock Cottage")

This was built around 1840 and is now restored as a large private house - until recently there was a large clock on one end, hence the name. There is a 600' deep shaft under the stone outside the front door! Our first two pictures show it in 1980, the left-hand view including the very old cottages adjacent to the road, which were regrettably demolished soon afterwards.....



This 1990s picture (right) shows new houses which replaced them to the left, and that the engine house has by now been stripped of all its previous external domestic adornments and returned to something like its original appearance, though with the eponymous clock not yet re-instated.....

This view was taken with a long lens from the end of another colliery railway siding, the route of which is seen on the above plan coming in from the SE side, above and parallel to the main railway line



### Norbury old engine house

From the same vantage point, to the north between this siding and the main A6 road is a much older former pumping engine house (picture right), in the distance, with evidence of another railway siding sweeping down towards it, in the trees to the left.....

The first mines here were started around 1795, working the 4-foot, 5-foot and Silver (Gees) coal seams. This engine house is at what was known as Sargeant's Old Pit and is now a private residence.



### Route of old railway line - Norbury colliery to Middlewood station

The above mentioned colliery railway line was a standard-gauge private siding used to bring coal out from the Norbury pits, down to an exchange point with the main line of the Macclesfield, Bollington & Marple Railway north of Middlewood (Higher) station, on what is now the Middlewood Way footpath. This was on the east of the line, so the siding first passed over it on a (surviving) bridge and then curved and descended sharply down to meet it.

Operating from around 1870 to 1890, it was nicknamed the "Faery line" after the name of the steam locomotive that worked on it. Some of its route is still clearly evident (right).....

Back over the level crossing and heading southwards on Middlewood Road, the large house down on the left hand side has been much rebuilt in recent years from three Norbury Hollow Cottages in existence here before 1841.



For many years the popular Cooper's tearoom operated in the extensive gardens in the summer months, catering for weary hikers.....



Shortly on the west side is the farmhouse at Correction Brow, so named as there was once a "House of Correction" here, a form of detention centre for unruly or drunken locals!



The building appears on the 1774 Poynton estate map and later ones, including the 1906 extract (above right)

Oak Bank is a large Victorian House (surprisingly called Oak Cottage in the 1901 census; it is now The White House), seen here (right) from the footpath leading from Middlewood Road to the railway station.



### Middlewood stations

The lower station was built by the London & North Western Railway company on the Stockport-Buxton line and is still in use. The upper station was added in 1871 soon after the construction of the Macclesfield, Bollington & Marple Railway which passes over at an angle here; it was made entirely of timber upon the embankment, and collapsed around 1960; the line itself was closed in 1970 and now forms the Middlewood Way long-distance path.

Beside the path leading to the station is this neat little railway staff cottage, formerly without road access, but now privately owned and renovated.....

The pictures below compare the Lower station



looking westwards towards Stockport, in around 1905 and in 1978, with the former MB&MR route passing overhead on the plate girder bridge.....



and here is a closer view, circa 1950, of both the lower and higher level station offices and waiting rooms.....



### Middlewood curve

This complex junction, including a flyover and goods sidings for exchanging traffic between the two companies lines, was added to the layout at Middlewood in the 1870s and allowed excursion trains to run directly from Macclesfield to Buxton, until its removal in 1955.....



Returning to the Middlewood Road, we can now take the footpath leading up through the woodland behind Correction Farmhouse, to reach New House Farm, show at middle of the left hand side on the above plan.

The first coal pits here were recorded in the fields beyond and down into the valley, from as early as 1589, and clear evidence can still be seen on the ground. Waterwheel pumps were in operation by 1707, and the first steam pumping engine before 1764, at the House of Correction site - it had a 28" diameter cylinder. These small-scale pits were worked out by around 1820.

### New House farm

The farmhouse (left below) is recorded here before 1841, and two farm workers cottages were added by 1851. There are some interesting old outbuildings here (right), which might once have been used as stabling for the gang-road horses working the coal tubs down to the sale yard on London Road North (for more on this, see our companion article on the colliery tramways & railways).





The access road running past the front of the farmhouse curves round past the mobile telephone masts and comes to an end in a clearing by a gate, which was once the site of a pair of lodge cottages guarding this rear approach into the Vernon Estate properties. They were called variously Park Lodges in 1841 and 51, Carr Wood Lodge in 1871 and Cawley Wood Lodge in the 1901 census, but were demolished many years ago.



Following the lane back southwards past the farmhouse, this leads down to the Middlewood Road at German (or Garman's) Lodge. Probably originally built in the 1830s, this is pictured right.....

This was possibly associated with a large farm at German Square, nowadays called Pool House Farm, at the further end of Pool House Road, a turning off the east side of Middlewood Road just to the north of the lodge. The farmhouse here looks relatively modern, but the barns are older.....



Continuing south along Middlewood Road from German Lodge, the next cottages on the west side are at Horsepastures (right), marked as "Poynton Stables" on the 1871 OS map (below). Here lived the ostlers who looked after the colliery company's horses, use for haulage on the tramways and railways, and below ground.



The map is of unusual interest in that it shows the courses of no less than four "gangroads", colliery tramways or railways: at top left, running eastwards along the line of trees is the circa 1793 gangroad up from the London Road coal yard, to the pits past New House Farm mentioned above.

Running north-south down the middle is the supposed course of Gee's tramroad of the same era, starting near the point marked B.M. 485.5 and curving along the top of a shallow causeway holding back the water of German Pool.

From west to east across lower middle comes the route of the 1845 standard-gauge, horse-worked Princes Incline on its way from Prince Albert Wood up to Canal Pit, already out of use and dismantled by 1871.



Finally, the MB&MR company's line, just completed in 1869, runs down the eastern edge...

### Green Lane cottages

An attractive terrace of 4 opposite the junction of Green Lane with Middlewood Road, at the bus turning point. Dated 1760, they were restored in 1980.....



**Woodhouse Farm**

The old farmhouse was derelict until a few years ago, but now completely rebuilt and enlarged. This was formerly also the site of the old "Boars Head" inn, erected around 1850. The 1871 (left) and 1906 (right) maps compare the layout here, at the junction of Green Lane with Anson Road, Shrigley Road and Nelson Road.....



Here is the old pub building, now a private house.....



**The "new" Boar's Head public house**

A solid high-Victorian establishment of circa 1885 on the other side of Anson Road, prominently sited to serve the weary travellers arriving at the new railway station.

With stabling provision to the rear, unusually still in use as such, though nowadays for residents' horses rather than those of travellers (photo below).....





The coffee tavern next door along Shrigley Road is dated 1876, and still offers the non-alcoholic alternative to its clientele arriving by foot or car, or from canal boats moored nearby, though not now from the railway station, which closed along with the line in 1970 (right)



### Platforms of the Higher Poynton railway station

The pictures below contrast the appearance of the station around 1910 with now, a picnic site on the Middlewood Way path, in both cases with the Boar's Head pub in left background .....



The bridge carrying Nelson Road and a former colliery tub-way over the railway has had to be strengthened by means of an additional brick pier underneath, as have many others along the route in recent years. Here are two further views of the station area, one from a train around 1950, and the other recent.....



### Mount Vernon cottages and the former canal coal wharf

Lord Vemon's coal wharf on the Macclesfield Canal started up in 1831 when the canal was opened, and the 4 cottages were built 1835. The nearby Nelson pit was working by 1847 and again from 1860-80.



This concludes our present walk, close to the starting point at Elmbeds Farm. The wharf and canal itself are described more fully in walk 5 following on.....

**K. A. Jagers    September 2010    (Revised April 2011, October 2012, August 2022 and April 2024)**