

The History of North Rode



Anne Lever

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Acknowledgements:

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Front Cover:

Mr Thomas Biddulph of Bell Farm with Jess, Phylis and Flower outside the Grange, 1941

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Early History

North Rode with its small church of St Michael's is a tiny community of 150 souls where it has been said "nothing ever happens but there is always something going on." It first makes its appearance in recorded history in the Domesday Book (1086) where we are told "Bigot, a free man, holds Rode... it is a waste(land). There is a wood 1½ leagues (1mile long) and ½ league (¾ mile broad)." As late as 1840 it is dismissed as 'land which is indifferent' supporting an agricultural population of about 250, but later in the century it is being reported that 'the land in this township is cold and wet, but has been greatly improved by draining and superior cultivation'. However, the boundaries of North Rode have never really changed encompassing around 1,500 acres then as now.

The name North Rode means "clearing in the forest" probably from Old English 'Rod' and North to distinguish it from Odd Rode. The Forest in question was Macclesfield Forest. This was part of an ancient Royal preserve which stretched from Marple to the River Dane. The Norman Kings created these Forests in order to preserve royal game; deer, wild boar and wolves. Forest Law was applied, designed to protect noble game animals for the king. Forests were reserved for the monarch or, by invitation, the aristocracy. They usually included areas of heath, grassland and wetland. Any village which came within its

jurisdiction was subject to Forest Laws. The rights of the inhabitants were restricted. They were outside the normal jurisdiction of the country. These areas were usually relatively wild, unpopulated land and poor farmland.

North Rode came within such a Forest. It was administered by the Verderer or Chief Forester who had absolute and extensive jurisdiction. In this period the Davenport family were chief Foresters under the Norman Earls of Crew and they had the right to decapitate offenders without appeal (A right commemorated on the crest of their coat of arms where there is a picture of a head with a noose round its neck). Life was hard, poaching, stealing or letting beasts stray was punishable by death and wolves roamed until 1303. The southern boundary of this ancient forest was at Bosley, indeed in 1288 enclosures were made to prevent game escaping into Staffordshire and in 1361 we hear that the Black Prince ordered two lodges to be built to safeguard the game. It may be that what is now North Rode Manor was in fact one of these hunting lodges. That North Rode was once largely forested is indicated by the number and names of woods on an old ordnance survey map of 1871. Shellow Wood, Fernybank Wood, Scissorcroft Wood, Walley Wood and Hungry Hill Wood.

Macclesfield Forest

Not only was North Rode situated in the Macclesfield Forest it was also on the edge of the Macclesfield Hundred, another ancient administrative area, originally called Hamestan Hundred, of which in Cheshire there were twelve. It was the largest and most sparsely populated of the Hundreds of Cheshire at the time of the Domesday Survey and there was little “sown” land in it, being mostly wild uninhabited hills. There is mention of the “deplorable” condition of the land and people and in the 12th century and it was said this part of the county was scarce of corn but plentiful in cattle and fish, and the cheese was delicious!

So North Rode came not only under the jurisdiction of the Macclesfield Hundred and The Forest but also the Church. Population was sparse, the land infertile and justice harsh. Indeed, in looking at early maps even until the 18th century this little backwater of Cheshire looks as if it is a place where ‘there be Dragons,’ covered with symbols for hills and a lot of unmapped space.

The Manor of Rode

After the Davenports in the 14th century, Edward II granted Olivier de Burdegalia the right to enclose and cultivate the wastes in their Manor of Rode “within the bounds of the

Earl's Forest." Then the estate passed through the Trussells to their heirs the Veres, the Earls of Oxford, then to the Crewes of Crew who sold the estate to the Michael Daintry Esq in 1808. Then began North Rode's long association with the Daintry Family and after centuries of not very much changing something began to happen. The changes reflected the changes in the country as a whole through the Georgian and Victorian eras. They were due partly to the Daintrys and partly to improved communications; roads, canals and railways were built and all of these play their part in this story.

The Daintry Family

Firstly, the Daintrys and their long association with the village. North Rode Manor passed from the Crewe family to Michael Daintry in 1808. Michael's son John Smith Daintry inherited in 1811 and held the Manor until his death in 1848, then the Rev John Daintry, his brother, succeeded to the estate acting as vicar of North Rode until his death in 1863. His brother George Smith Daintry inherited, then left it to his son John Daintry in 1881. The family were not major county landowners which suggests this was their main holding. At the time of the purchase in 1808 the estate comprised the Manor House overlooking an ornamental lake, the Grange, Oaklands, seventeen stock, dairy and cheesemaking farms and numerous cottages. The estate was located 23 miles from

Manchester, 5 from Macclesfield and 9 from Leek. The North Rode railway station was on the estate.

The Daintrys had been bankers, originally in Leek and in 1810 their Macclesfield Bank appeared in a Manchester Directory with the following entry.

“Never was there a more respectable bank than Daintrys of Macclesfield; one better provided with solid capital, or superintended by gentlemen of greater probity ... Michael Daintry’s family belonged originally to Leek where it had been held in high repute for more than half a century”

They opened a branch in Manchester in 1841 but due to some unwise appointments to manage the bank it collapsed taking the Macclesfield Bank with it. It was said that if Mr Daintry and his partner Mr Ryle had stood on Salford Bridge and shovelled their money into the water they could not have wasted it more thoroughly. Both men made sure that they paid all their debts and thus maintained their reputation for honesty and integrity. The estate was entailed. So the family were ultimately respected more for their generosity than their business acumen and finally moved to Oaklands from the Manor because of the collapse of the bank. The Manor was let to various people over the years until 1923 when the estate was sold. Since then there have been a number of sales but

the Manor is now happily in the hands of its current owners. The sale was by Auction at the Crewe Arms Hotel on the 16th April 1923 at 2.30pm. Many tenants bought their properties and some of the same families still live in the village. The break-up of the estate changed the character of the village but there was continuity as so many of the tenants remained as freeholders and it is still a tight knit community.

The Manor House

The Manor House is set on high ground above a lake looking towards Bosley Cloud and the hills of Staffordshire with one of the best views in Cheshire. The site of the house has been inhabited for many centuries. There is a legend that a priory once stood on the site but no documentary evidence can be found for this. There have been a number of houses on the site, two destroyed by fire, and the present one has a Gothic Revival character and was built in 1838. Originally it was a Hunting Lodge, and old maps show it was called 'Toothill Lodge' then 'the Cottage,' until 1860 when John Smith Daintry renamed it the Manor House. It is worth noting at this point the ornamental lake at the end of which is a large 'plug hole' by which water pours down into the river on the other side of the embankment. It is said that the same stone was used as for the canal and it is beautifully engineered. There are also a number of bits of Victorian engineering designed to create an artificial rainbow to be viewed from the Manor House.

These sluice gates and water channels are now rusted over. The lake is a wonderful bird sanctuary.

In a Cheshire Gazeteer of the 19th century it mentions the view from the residence of Mr Daintry

“from whence is seen the line of the North Staffordshire railway, which intercepts the township (of North Rode) and passes the River Dane by a viaduct, remarkable for its beautiful masonry. It has an elevation of 113 feet, comprises 20 arches, and stretches a distance of 430 yards”

The Railway

The stone for the viaduct was taken from the summit of the Cloud. There is a photograph showing the wide groove carved in the hillside by the aerial ropeway cradles as they lowered the stone from the Giants Foot to the viaduct a mile away. This remarkable viaduct was opened in 1849 after two years of labour by 2000 men who lived, in very orderly fashion, in shacks by the river. There was a great celebration and an ox roast under the viaduct. The railway came to North Rode as a result of an alliance between potters, coal owners and iron founders. In 1835 they proposed a line to go from the potteries through Congleton towards Manchester. George Stevenson surveyed the line and it was built. Work commenced in North Rode in 1847. The station was opened by the North

Staffordshire in 1849 and formed the junction between the Churnet Valley Line and the main North Staffs Railway Line between Stoke and Macclesfield. The line up the side of Rudyard lake was much loved and the line into Macclesfield and Manchester opened the world up for the village. They could transport stock, send milk and go shopping.

In the memoirs of William Arthur Hudson, born 1884, who spent his first six years in North Rode between 1884 and 1890, he talked of the line which was run by the North Stafford guards.

“They were very dignified officials; they had frock coats; a broad belt round their shoulders holding a pocket and a distinctive hat rather like that of French army officers with a very high top (many years later we saw De Gaulle wearing such a hat)”

It has also been referred to as “a very neat station” run at the time by Mr. Hawkins the station master who also made violins which he sold from the station The Milk Train ran to Manchester at 8.30 am and the farmers took their milk in churns on a horse and float Because there was such a steep sided cutting for the station slides had to be provided for the farmers. You can still just see one by the bridge. They would slide their churns down for the

milk train in the morning. Locals remember that the postman would stand at the top and distribute mail then repair to the Manor House for breakfast from the cook. Sir Tootal Broadhurst lived at the manor after the Daintrys and used to go to Scotland to stalk near Dalwhinnie every year. He had a special coach sent to the station which was put in the station siding about 4 days before he was to leave. It had a double brass bed in it. He was a director of the London and North West railway which had running rights over the North Staffordshire Railway line that ran through the village. The village lost their station in 1962 when Dr Beeching closed many rural lines. They did not lose it without a fight.

The Canal

The Macclesfield Canal was completed in 1831 and the Duke of Bridgewater employed Thomas Telford the great engineer to oversee the project which was his last. Chatsworth Gritstone from Bosley Cloud was used for the stone chambers of Telford's famous twelve lock ladder where a solution was needed for the change of level. It is one of the most superbly engineered flights in the country. The canal was never a great commercial success but locals remember it as always busy. Miss Elsie Heath remembers in 1951

“The section which was cut through North Rode on its way to Congleton was of great charm and beauty in its setting of quiet pastures and lush meadows, with the long ridge of Cloud End looming in the background. The canal was once very busy, and it was a common sight to see as many as twenty barges with their characteristic decoration of castles and roses, waiting to pass through the locks. Cargoes were varied with flour, wheat, coal, beer, chemicals, pottery, and during the war, munitions. Heavy horse, light horses, donkeys, mules, all were familiar sights on the towing path but the last horse drawn barge disappeared about twelve years ago.”

By the mid 19th century though North Rode was now more connected to the wider world it remained a self-contained and self-supporting little community. It had its own shoemaker, wheelwright, blacksmith, undertaker, joiner, tailor, miller and clogger. John Bereford was the village cobbler and clogger in Victorian times. Old accounts mention the stacks of clogs piled on the grassy plot in front of his house. He lived in Yew Tree Cottage, perhaps the oldest house in the village. It is a half-timbered house where the waters of the River Dane and the ‘Cowbrook’ meet and is said to date from the thirteenth century.

Lea Street was a master wheelwright born in 1863. He came to the village in 1890 and died aged 88 years. He was

a well- known character making carts, stools and wheelbarrows for farmers from miles around. A day when a wheel was to be hooped was a big day with a huge fire lit and water from the Dane at the ready. When the hoop was red hot it was lifted onto the wheel and then many buckets of water were needed to cool it quickly. He lived at Colley Mill in the old black and white house by the River Dane part of which is dated 1440. This was the old Mill where the farmers used to bring their corn to be ground and is next to the narrow humped back bridge which has the appearance of an old packhorse bridge. It is a very old river crossing and there are large stones on the river bed which suggest there may once have been a ford here.

There are two examples of rather larger scale enterprises in North Rode's history. In 1846 the North Rode and District Friendly Society was formed. Hundreds attended its jubilee in 1896 (by which time it had 545 members) alighting from the station into the park. They boated on the lake, enjoyed Aunt Sallies, Edison's photographs and donkey rides There was a service in the church, a big luncheon was held followed by sports of pony racing and swimming. The Congleton Volunteer Band played for dancing which was kept up with great zest until the time arrived for the fireworks display. Also, for a short period in the 1920s a brick works was opened by a number of local men supplying bricks for building in Manchester and

Macclesfield. The site is now called the Tileries and is next to the railway where the delivery company UPS operate.

The School

There had been a school in the village since the 18th century established by a John Plant who set up a trust for poor children, the first 'Poor School 'in the area, then in 1835 the school was built by John Smith Daintry and endowed. Later it joined the Diocesan system and the pupils paid 2 pence a week and coal money. There were 80 pupils. The boys carried water from the roadside well and the girls swept and dusted. The schoolmaster complained about children haymaking, planting potatoes 'minding babies' and on Friday preparing for Saturday market. They had to walk miles in all weathers to attend. In 1933 the inspectors said "Everything in this small village school is admirable in tone. The children make splendid response to the efforts of their teachers" Water and electricity were not laid on until 1938.

Hudson comments that these village schools were not for country bumpkins which was a popular misconception. His brother went on to a greengrocer in Macclesfield where he could 'hold his own with the town boys' and Hudson himself passed civil service exams and went into the post office. Other accounts refer to many clever children being schooled there in the two room school. The school closed

in 1969 but reopened as an independent school and is now a private nursery. North Rode also had many farms which were working communities. Dobford Farm for example had three men and dairymaids living in besides casual labourers all fed by the farmer's wife. Bell Farm, once the home farm attached to the Grange, was the meeting house for Primitive Methodist worship, and so called because of the great bell which was used to summon people to the services held there in the room leading from the farm kitchen and also to summon the farm workers to and from the fields. The Hadfield family were the tenant farmers at the time and another local farmer remembers about twenty people gathering for the services which were taken by local preachers walking out from Macclesfield and going back by train. Meeting ceased around the beginning of the 20th century. The Primitive Methodist movement began with a meeting at nearby Mow Cop in the early 19th century.

The Daintry family remained generous benefactors and gave the village school building to the village for use as a village hall. It was named The Daintry Hall in their memory and continues to play an important part in village life. They still occasionally visit and continue to take an interest in the village. Indeed, one of the very strong features of this small community has been the strength of its Women's Institute over the years. Mrs Daintry was its first president in 1927 and it has continued to be a strong presence at village

events. No harvest supper over the years would have been the same without the WI ladies wielding heavy teapots and masterminding the hot pots and refreshments in the Daintry Hall.

Stories

Many stories have been told and recorded over the years by people who have lived through many of these changes. W.L.Cumberlidge was parish clerk in 1923 and lived in North Rode from 1914 to 1973, "The parish made its own amusement. Whist drives, dances, concerts. The porter's room at the station was always filled to capacity during the winter by youths of the village. All the parish was lit by oil lamps in 1914 and only a small proportion had running water." Eva Axson who lived in North Rode from 1899 to 1918, "North Rode was a very lively place in the years I lived there. All the young people with big families. Now in 1987 it is very quiet." Mrs Dorothy Bowyer who lived in the village all her life, "Local farmers used to bring their sheep down to the river at Colley to wash them. It was quite a to do. The tenants had to go to the Cheney Gate (The Chain and Gate Pub) each March and September to pay their rent to the squire." W.A.Hudson born 1884 in North Rode, "One winter the weather was so cold that North Rode pool (the lake) was frozen and a lot of skaters came from Macclesfield and other places. Mother made a big milk can of tea and carried it across the field $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away to sell. We had tallow candles (mutton fat) and cooking was done on

the range. We got cleaning water from a water butt but drinking water from the well in the meadow in front of the Grange. We had a yoke with chains and two buckets. We had a pig and chickens.”

The Church

Finally, we have the church of St Michael’s which has always played such a large part in the life of the village. The church was built in 1845-6 by Thomas Ryle Daintry and his brother the Reverend John Daintry. It was designed by Charles and James Trubshaw (Charles Trubshaw also designed the Midland Hotel in Manchester) and dedicated in 1846. In Nicholas Pevsner’s series ‘The Buildings of England’ it is described as “A charming Estate Church” It is stone with a tiled roof in Romanesque and Gothic Revival Style. It has a four bay nave, a south porch, a two bay chancel, a vestry and a west tower. There is a little stair turret which rises above the height of the tower and contains casement windows. The west door is loosely Romanesque in style and decorated with spaced chevron motifs. Above there is a circular clock and three lancet bell openings. The windows are in Early English style and over the south porch is a niche containing a statue of St Michael.

The interior of the church has a hammer beam roof and the nave and chancel are floored with beautiful encaustic tiles with the Daintry family crest and the initials of Jane and

Thomas Ryle Daintry all the way down the aisle. The Family crest also appears in the windows There are mural tablets on the walls in memory of the Daintry family also eight family sarcophagus graves on the east side of the church in the churchyard. There are four brass corona chandeliers and the stained glass windows are described by Pevsner as “delightfully bad”! The woodwork is of particular interest having been carved by local people. The rood screen is of great beauty and was carved by Mrs John Ridgeway in 1899. She also carved the altar table which was presented in 1858 by Mrs Seymour in memory of her granddaughter. The font cover in memory of James Hogg (who married one of George Smith Daintry’s daughters, Clara and who lived at Oaklands) was carved by eight members of the choir who had been taught their craft by Mrs Ridgeway. In 1904 the new oak choir stalls were added, the work of the Macclesfield School of Carvers, and presented in 1904 by Mrs Hammond Walker in memory of her husband. The kneelers were all stitched in the 1970s by ladies in the village and were organised by Mrs Tudor Evans of the Grange.

St Michael’s has been at the centre of village life since it was built. Harvest Festival and Plough Sunday have always been important in the life of this agricultural parish and when most of the farms were dairy farms the services were timed to take into account the dairy farmers milking schedules. Our current rector is Bishop William A Pwaisiho

OBE, Hon Assistant Bishop of Chester. We are now part of a new benefice with Gawsworth having for many years previously been joined with Bosley, Wildboardclough and Wincle.

The first vicar of North Rode was the Rev John Daintry. The Rev Julien Harvey MA Cantab was vicar for 35 years from 1902 to 1937. A scholarly man with a kindly sense of humour he was remembered with affection and his old fashioned four wheeler drawn by the old white pony called Admiral was a familiar spectacle in the lanes. Another vicar The Rev. Slater wrote a poem which was set to music. It was called "Our Dear North Rode" and is a much loved song. It is printed at the end of this history. The children in the school had to learn it by heart and there are still those around who, when pressed, will do a rendition.

Farms

North Rode has always been a farming village. Many of the tenanted farms were bought by their tenants on the break-up of the estate when there were seventeen stock, dairy and cheesemaking farms on the sale particulars. Rode Hall Farm is described as a well-known dairy farm, The Ladderstile Farm as an important cheesemaking farm, The Bell Farm as a desirable dairy property, Yew Tree Farm as a valuable dairy and stockholding farm and Dobford Farm as

a very important dairy holding. From twelve dairy herds in the 1980s there are now no dairy herds in North Rode as the industry has declined nationally over the last few years. A number of the farm buildings have been converted into new houses, but the village is still community minded and the newer residents have thrown themselves into the life of the village which is still made up of many of the older families who have farmed in this village for generations. A map recording all the old field names in the village was made by the WI. Some of these names reflect the antiquity of the parish, Weaver's Hey, Shad's Clough Meadow, Ox Hey, Coney Green, Upper Gorsey Hey and Old Moor.

War

The First and Second World Wars did not impact on North Rode as much as on some villages as farming was a reserved occupation. There were serving soldiers from the village but they survived the war and as a result there is no war memorial. There were in fact six deaths connected to the village in the First World War but of those three were born in North Rode but had moved away before the war and the dependents of the other three arrived to live in the village after the war. One of these was the son of the Rev. Slater who wrote 'Our Dear North Rode' who had moved away aged eleven. Technically then North Rode could be called a 'Thankful Village.' It might also be entitled to call itself a 'Doubly Thankful Village' as the same applied in the 2nd World War.

So a place where nothing ever happens but where there is always something going on and rarely in the limelight. Except, on the occasion of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. When the Queen lit her bonfire in the Mall at midnight, the television cameras on the national news, having recorded the moment, cut to a small village in Cheshire called North Rode where they televised the moment that North Rode lit its beacon. The reason North Rode was chosen to represent all the villages in England was because it had been very quick off the mark with its jubilee plans and the BBC had spotted this. Thus it was that this tiny community in the centre of England, briefly and for the first time in its long history, took centre stage at a great national event.

The End

“Our Dear North Rode”

**written by the Rev Slater former Vicar of North
Rode**

“Our dear North Rode
Is the pleasant abode
Where most of us children dwell;
And go where we may
For a year and a day
No place can we love so well

The park and the lake
A sweet picture they make
And the rippling brook beneath;
Field wood and lane
And the bright River Dane
And the Cloud with its crown of heath

We love them all
And the church so tall

With the school across the Way
When each day we return
Our lessons to learn
And the playground where we play

Oh, if e'er we roam
To some distant home
May we never love this the less;
May we never forget
To pray God yet
Our Dear North Rode to bless."

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