



History of Pleasington and The Clog & Billycock

Pleasington

Pleasington is a village and civil parish in the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire, which lies within a wide bend of the River Darwen. The village was listed in the Domesday Book as Plesigtune, a name which means "a settlement owned by Plessa's People".

A small area of land is used for growing crops, but the greater part consists of meadow and pasture. The area is 1,701 acres, and the population in 1901 numbered 461 persons, but dropping in the 2011 Census to 446. A considerable area of land lies within the park enclosures of Pleasington Hall, Woodfold Park and Feniscowles Hall. The latter part, occupying undulating and well-wooded ground by the River Darwen, is now used as a pleasure ground. Immediately to the north runs the Liverpool, Blackburn and Accrington line of the East Lancashire line managed by Southern, with a station near the north-eastern corner of the park. There are no main roads, but numerous country lanes intersect the township. There is a large residential population and an entire absence of manufacturing.

The alum mines, which were formerly worked at Alum Crag, near the confluence of the Arley or Alum House Brook with the River Darwen, were once of some celebrity. In 1617 when James I was at Houghton Tower he visited these mines. They were worked with varying success until the latter part of the 18th century.

The Roman Catholic Church of St Mary and St John Baptist in the village is known as Pleasington Priory. Mr. John Francis Butler, built the present church as an act of thanksgiving for his recovery from an accident, whereby he



Pleasington Priory, ca. 1923

was nearly killed on the spot where the church now stands. The building was begun in 1816 and completed in 1819, at a cost of £20,000. It is a large and lofty fabric in the early decorated style of Gothic architecture, and comprises nave with clerestory, side isles, and octagonal chancel apse. It is built of hand-dressed stone, and ornamental with countless statues and designs.

Father Edward Kenyon was the first resident priest, and was justly proud of his new church. At that date there was nothing to compare it with in Lancashire, or indeed in any part of England; even today, after a hundred years, it is spectacular. This is largely due to the improvements carried out in 1913, when stained glass was put in the chancel windows, the gift of the late Monsignor Canon Burke, as a memorial to his parents.

Pleasington Old Hall is another notable historic building in the village, built in 1587 and is Grade II Listed. The building is still perfect, despite a few more recent improvements.

There are many quaint recesses in the walls, one being for holy water, according to tradition; whilst recently a hidden chamber was unexpectedly discovered, pointing to the priests of old having been hidden there. The old doorway is very remarkable; it is divided into five panels, the first and last reading: R. H. 1587, Richard Ainsworth; the second, T. H., for Thomas Houghton and his crest – a bull's head couped; the third, three battle axes for Robert Ainsworth; the fourth, J. S., for John Southworth and his crest – a bull's head erased. The Ainsworths, Houghtons, and Southworths were the chief landowners in Pleasington at that date.



Pleasington Old Hall

National Cycle Network

Pleasington is on the National Cycle Network Route 6, one of the main national bicycle routes in the UK, which is planned to connect Windsor to the Lake District. The route is currently 390 miles long, if you fancy giving it a go.

Our Pub

The Clog and Billycock has been part of Pleasington's history for over 150 years. Records can be found for permission to alter the premises in 1951 by Architects Department Daniel Thwaites and Co. Ltd. Blackburn, but sadly nothing springs up from earlier in its life.

We doubt that it started life as a coaching inn. It's our supposition that it is not central enough to Blackburn, which already had 4 or 5 significant coaching inns in Church Street and Darwen Street. They were large, had considerable stabling and were of course bang in the town centre. It also seems unlikely that the Clog would have been a coaching stage either as it is so close to Blackburn, so a stop there would have been unnecessary.

The Clog and Billycock was originally called the Bay Horse Inn, sometimes referred to locally as "The Steady Hoss". It was one of two Bay Horses in Blackburn the other being where the bus station is now located. During the period of around 1920 to 1940 the landlord was one Alfred Pomfret. He always wore a billycock and special "boot clogs" that had been made for him by his brother who was a renowned leather craftsman. One of the regulars during this time was Mr. Bill Adams. It was Bill who coined the name of the Clog and Billycock for the pub, obviously in honour of Alfred. However, it was not until 1973 that the then landlord Mr. Alan Seed asked Thwaites if he could change the name permanently from the Bay Horse to the Clog and Billycock. In April of that year Thwaites rebranded the pub officially.

The Billycock (or Bowler hat to you and me)

The Billycock is a low-crowned felt hat. The word is thought to have been derived from the words bully and cock; that is, cocked like the hats of the bullies. The style however is far more commonly known as the Bowler Hat.

The first Bowler hat was originally created for Edward Coke, the younger brother of the 2nd Earl of Leicester in 1849. It was designed by London hatmakers Thomas and William Bowlers for hatters Lock & Co of St James's. They still sell around 5000 each year.

The brief was to create a piece of headgear that could be worn by gamekeepers when they were out riding to protect their heads from low-hanging branches. It is thought that before accepting the hat, Coke arrived at the shop in London and stamped on the crown twice to check its robustness. It survived, and he paid 12 shillings for it.

The Bowler went on to be associated with businessmen in the City of London. During the 1950s and 60s men wore the Bowler as part of the City uniform but the practice died out during the seventies.

Cavalry officers still traditionally wear Bowler hats and suits for their annual parade and both Princes William and Harry have worn them for official duties.

It was the Bowler rather than a cowboy hat or a Stetson that was also the most popular hat worn by men in America in the 19th century - such as Billy the Kid and Butch Cassidy.

Famous Bowler hat icons include Agent Jon Steed, played by Patrick Macnee in the Avengers; the evil henchman Oddjob in the Bond film, Goldfinger; Thomson and Thompson, identical twin detectives from Herge's The Adventures of Tintin; Alex DeLarge lead character in Stanley Kubrick's film A Clockwork Orange; Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy; Costello; Charlie Chaplin's character "The Tramp" almost always wore a bowler and probably most famously, Sir Winston Churchill.



Agent Jon Steed, played by Patrick Macnee

Clogs

The Clog perhaps isn't so much of a mystery to us in modern times.

Wooden clogs originated in Holland, eventually spreading to France, England and Scandinavia. The clog shoe became the most common work shoe in Europe throughout the Industrial Revolution era. Clog shoes were derived from 'calceus' shoes, wooden-soled shoes that existed during the Roman empire. Very practical, so perhaps not an odd choice to wear behind a bar.

The name certainly stands out, but we hope it's the hospitality and the great quality of food and drink that win us a good reputation and place in peoples hearts.

The Clog & Billycock

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www.theclogandbillycock.com