

Stainforth today

Stainforth has a population of about 200 electors residing in around 100 dwellings. Stainforth Beck runs through the centre of Stainforth, its focal point being stepping-stones which cross it and connect village greens at either side of the beck. Goat Scar Lane (known to locals as Gooseker Lane) to the north of the village leads $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the splendid Catrigg Force Waterfall, which is hidden in a secluded wood. The waterfall has a drop of 20 feet or so. The footpath from the village to the waterfall is part of the Pennine Bridleway National Trail which runs through the village and there are several other interesting footpaths leading to and from the village. Less than a mile to the south of Stainforth is the well preserved Hoffman kiln, a 19th century oval-shaped limekiln of quite epic proportions (being 120m long) which is a designated ancient monument that has a footpath running alongside it, leading from Stainforth Village at the side of the B6479.

In Stainforth village, the picturesque St Peter's Church dates from 1842 and the Craven Heifer Public House, alongside the beck, offers a warm welcome. The Village Hall hosts a number of community led activities and is available for hire. From the village and across the B6479 the narrow Dog Hill Brow descends to the packhorse Stainforth Bridge and downstream can be found Stainforth Force (known to locals as Stainforth Foss), another awe inspiring waterfall, with a footpath running alongside it. This is said to have been a favourite spot of Sir Edward Elgar, who liked to walk there when visiting Dr Buck in nearby Settle. The footpath is exactly that and the adjacent land is privately owned and not a picnic area. Care should be exercised near the waterfall, as the river is often fast flowing and deceptively deep and the rocks there are frequently slippery.

In Autumn, salmon can be found leaping there.

Dog Hill Brow itself crosses the Settle-Carlisle Railway Line which skirts the village. From Stainforth Bridge a narrow lane rises to Little Stainforth, which is a hamlet dominated by the three-storey Knight Stainforth Hall. A pay and display car park with an adjacent picnic area sits at the side of the B6479 on the fringes of the village.

Place name

The village was given its name by the Anglo-Saxons and it was written down in the Domesday Book as Stainforde. It means 'stony ford' which refers to the ford by the stepping stones across Stainforth Beck. Later on it became a prosperous farming community belonging to Sawley Abbey near Clitheroe. Signs of early fields can be seen on the terraces rising to the north of the village. In the 18th and 19th centuries the village was a hive of industry with two water-powered cotton mills, a linen works, leather and paper making, and brewing.

Waterfalls



The North Craven Fault, a major tear in the earth's crust, runs through Stainforth and this has led to the development of two spectacular waterfalls. At Catrigg Force, at the top of Goat Scar Lane, the stream plunges 6 metres over a single drop into a narrow rocky gorge. At Stainforth Force the Ribble tumbles over a series of cascades where salmon can be seen leaping on their final journey up river to their spawning grounds.

The packhorse bridge



Just above Stainforth Force a former monastic road crosses the Ribble on a bridge that was built in 1675 by Samuel Watson, owner of Knight Stainforth Hall. To preserve the bridge for the future, it was given to the National Trust in 1931. A short distance upstream of the bridge lie the remains of a small water mill. This was originally a corn mill where villagers in Little Stainforth took their grain to be turned into flour. In 1792 was a cotton mill but by the 19th century it had closed.

Knight Stainforth Hall

There has been a hall here since the Middle Ages but it was built in its present 'L' shaped form in 1649 by Samuel Watson, a prominent Quaker, who found himself on the wrong side of the law several times at a time when no one was allowed to disagree with the teachings of the established church. Several false windows can be seen on the frontage. These were blocked up when a new tax was introduced in 1696 based on the number of windows a house had.

St Peter's Church

Until the middle of the 19th century Stainforth was part of Giggleswick parish and villagers had to walk there every Sunday to attend church. After Stainforth became a separate parish, three sisters from a prominent local family called the Dawsons paid for a church to be built in the village. It was consecrated in 1842. Three cottages were demolished to make way for the church and one of the residents was buried on the site of his old home.



The village school

There has been a school in the village since at least 1710. This school stood at the north end of the village but in 1857 a new school was built on the main road just outside the village by 'public subscription' to teach children aged 5 to 14. In the 1950s it became just a primary school and, in 1984, it closed its doors for the last time. As with other schools in the dale, the authorities decided it was too small to provide a good education.

The village pub



In 1807 a massive shorthorn cow (or heifer) was bred at Bolton Abbey. It became famous across Yorkshire because of its size and was soon known as the Craven heifer. Several inns were renamed The Craven Heifer as a result. Until then, the inn here had been called The Packhorse. Stainforth sat at the junction of several long-distance packhorse roads, and the inn had served the needs of packhorse drivers for several centuries.

Taitlands



Taitlands is a fine early-Victorian house built for Thomas Redmayne and his family from 1831, though date stones inside the house suggest it may not have been completed until 1841 after extensions were added. Redmayne wanted the best for his family and was keen to be seen as of a higher class than most local people. Apart from the house itself, he built an impressive carriage house and stable block, installed a large walled kitchen garden, and had a ha-ha constructed around his boundary so that views down the dale were not spoiled by a wall. He also had his own gas supply, using carbide.

From 1942 to 2007 Taitlands was a Youth Hostel.

Robin Hood's Mill

Just below the road from Little Stainforth to Giggleswick, near the parish boundary, there is a hollow filled with stones. According to local legend, this is the site of Robin Hood's mill. Robin the miller had been a greedy sort who worked all the hours available, even on Sundays, never resting if there was money to be made. Over time, the weight of his clanking machinery sank further and further into the ground until it completely disappeared from sight. Before it was filled with stones, if you put your ear to the ground, you could still hear the millstones grinding deep below. Was it the sound of Robin's ghost at work? Sadly not. It was the gurgling sound of underground water.