

## The Great Wall of Todmorden by Ray Pearce

Dear readers it is so good to be back having missed last month's contribution due to illness. Much better now but not quite 100%. I am reminded of my English Literature O level in 1951 at Waterloo Grammar School near Liverpool where one of the set books was Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. In the book a man called Christian leaves the City of Destruction where he lives to journey to the Celestial City. He meets many hazards on the way including The Slough of Despond an area of bogs and swamps. I feel I have just dragged myself out of the swamp and am making my way forward again.

Todmorden lies on the historical boundary between Lancashire and Yorkshire and prior to the country boundaries changes of 1885 the boundary went through the centre of the town including the Town Hall.



Thus on a Saturday night dance you could start a waltz in Yorkshire and finish in the next county the other side of the ballroom. The river Calder in part of its length is now the border in Calderdale, administered from nearby Halifax. The population is now 15,480 but in 1932 when it was 22,000. It had several cotton spinning mills and at one time had the largest weaving shed in the world.

It was whilst watching a programme about canals I learnt about the Rochdale canal which was completed in 1804, to take cotton to nearby Manchester, then known as Cottonopolis. Then along came the railways and in the 1870s part of the development put pressure on the embankment. So, in 1881 Lancashire and Yorkshire, to stop it and the Pennines from falling into the canal a Great Wall was designed, 4 million bricks were used in its construction and it is there to this day.



Had I been my normal self I would have paid it a visit and took some photos. I could have caught the 10:03 from Birmingham New St, to Leeds then on to Todmorden at 13:01. A walk round the town and light lunch. The train back at 15:03 to Manchester and then Birmingham. Maybe later this summer I will take the trip, who knows? What I did find out that by 1938 there were five stations serving Todmorden, Stansfield Hall, Cornholme, Walsden and Portsmouth. (Yes that is a small village of that name in the area.) The only 2 remaining now are Todmorden and Walsden that reopened in September 1990.

Ray Pearce 20.3.23