

# Wycoller Bridges

Valley of the Seven Bridges



## Clam Bridge

The Clam bridge is a single gritstone slab laid across the beck with small holes on one side showing the former position of handrail supports. The bridge is believed to be more than a 1000 years old and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. On May 19th 1989 there was a cloud burst on Haworth Moor and Boulsworth Hill above Wycoller and in the resulting flash flood the stone slab was swept from its foundations and cracked in two. The bridge was repaired and put back into position, only to be swept away and broken in a further flood in August 1990. It was restored and replaced in June 1991.

Had Wycoller existed anywhere but in its remote moorland valley, surely by now a motor road would have caused the loss of the bridges and the loss of much of the beauty of the Dene and village. Luckily preserved by its remoteness, this valley, with its wandering stream, has left to posterity a fascinating collection of historic bridges.

*Seven bridges cross Wycoller Beck, these are the Clam, Clapper, Copy House, Laithe Hills, Lowlands, Packhorse and village bridges.*



## *Clapper Bridge*

The Clapper bridge is also known as the Hall Bridge, the Weavers' Bridge and the Druids' Bridge. Its varying names reflect both its great age and the traditions that surround it. It is the Hall Bridge because it leads to the Hall. It is the Weavers' Bridge because in times gone by it was used by generations of handloom weavers who lived in the village. And it is the Druids' Bridge because legend has it that it led to an amphitheatre where the druids held human sacrifices.

Clapper bridges of this quality are rare and there is considerable disagreement about their age. The Clapper Bridge at Wycoller ranks along with that at Postbridge in Devon as one of the most interesting early bridges in England. Centuries of use wore a deep trough in the centre of the slabs. Unfortunately, this record of the wear by generations of weavers clogs en route to the tenter field behind the Hall was destroyed around 1910. The groove was reputedly chiselled flat by a farmer after his daughter had a fatal accident on the bridge.

## *Lowlands Bridge*

There is a tradition that the bridge was constructed from the arch of the cellars of Wycoller Hall. The stones, it is said were marked one by one and then re-erected to form the bridge. A slightly varying version of the story says that the stones came from the old ice house at the Hall.

## *Packhorse Bridge*

The packhorse bridge is a two arched bridge of fascinating construction. It is frequently said to be a thirteenth century erection but some attribute it to be fifteenth century. It may well be much later than this and we will never know its true age. The bridge is not falling over as its precarious appearance suggests, but has withstood constant use and powerful floods over the centuries.

The packhorse bridge is frequently referred to as Sally's Bridge. Tradition has it that a lady of that name was responsible for it being built. It is interesting to speculate that the Sally in question was not the builder, but Squire Henry Cunliffe's niece, Sally Scargill, who delighted in her stays at Wycoller both as a child and later in life. Sarah Scargill, or Sally as she was generally known, later became Sally Owen and mother of the last Squire Henry Owen Cunliffe.

