

# A Prophecy about Roade

In a "Handbook for Travellers along the London and Birmingham Railway" published in 1839 at a price of 2 shillings, when the line had been opened to traffic for a year, there is an interesting reference to the village of Roade. After describing the course of the line from London to Hanslope, the book proceeds:

“ About this spot we leave the county of Buckingham and enter that of Northampton and, passing rapidly over a lofty embankment of about a mile in length, which divides the village of Ashton in two parts, shortly arrive at the Roade Station.

The little village of Roade, which lies close to the railway, has suddenly been invested with all the bustle and activity of a town; and will, no doubt, enjoy increasing consequence and prosperity from its locality to this great line of communication. This is one of numerous instances which could be adduced, of the great benefit which a Railway confers upon the towns near which it is formed; and amidst the changes which are thus originated, many places which heretofore have been comparatively unknown will become towns of considerable extent. ”

Since these prophetic words were composed, the village has grown both socially and economically into a sustainable rural hub. In the 183 year interim, the expanding community has witnessed considerable changes, many of which were influenced by the railway or a consequence of its passage through the Parish.

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# Cutting Remarks

The Story of Roade's Railways  
and Cutting through the Ages



Christopher  
Hillyard RVM

# Cutting Remarks

Stories, personalities and events recorded within this publication include –

**THE ENGINEERING CHALLENGES**

**THE HUMAN COST OF CONSTRUCTION**

**THE IMPACT OF THE NAVVIES**

**THE DISRUPTION TO FOX HUNTING**

**MURDER, MYSTERY & INTRIGUE**

**ACCIDENTS, INCIDENTS & TRAGEDIES**

**ROADE'S 'OTHER' RAILWAY**

**INDUSTRIAL GROWTH & DECLINE**

**TWO WORLD FIRSTS**

**THE CONSEQUENCE OF TWO WORLD WARS**

**A SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**

**NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NOTORIETY**

**MEMORIES & EYE WITNESS TESTAMENTS**

**POETRY & HUMOUR**

**ROADE'S RAILWAYMEN**

‘Viewing the work altogether, it affords one of the finest specimens of engineering this country can boast of. It is a spot beset with difficulties of every kind, and the bold and effective manner in which it has been executed, is a bright example of the talents of the Engineer in Chief’. *(Thomas Roscoe 1838)*

‘Certainly no men in all the world so improve their country as Navvies do England. Their work will last for ages.’ *(Elizabeth Garrett 1879)*

‘The hounds chased after the fresh quarry who ran them ragged via Blisworth, Plain Woods and eventually the sides of Roade Cutting, whereupon three exhausted dogs went ‘over the edge’. The trains were stopped at great inconvenience to retrieve the unhurt hounds whilst the pursuit continued as far as Alderton, where the hunt gave up chase’. *(Frank Beers Master of The Grafton Hunt 1884)*

‘A railway lamp man Joseph Hillyard was lighting a lamp at the top of a tall signal post when he fell on to a passing express and received fatal injuries. It was surmised that the deceased, who was perfectly sober at the time, turned giddy as the train passed and lost his balance’. *(Chronicle & Echo 1912)*

‘We often got up to mischief of some sort or other. The first hobby was to put our pennies on the line and then try to find them after an express had run over them. At Roade Station you could see how long it would be before the Stationmaster chased you off the platforms’. *(Colin Skears)*

‘Like the cutting itself, this work is of considerable breadth and depth, and it charts the effect the cutting has had on the development of Roade and its people over a period approaching 200 years. Our nation’s transport history has shaped it, and nowhere is this more evident than at Roade; the Roade Local History Society and in particular Christopher Hillyard are to be congratulated on this work which appeals equally to the technically minded and the social enquirer’. *(Cutting Remarks Foreword, Stuart Wilkinson NTT 2021)*



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