

GILL BROOK LANE



*“I once was lost
but now am found.”*

Research into the discovery of a 17th century lane

Mike Barton - 2020

Introduction:

This collection of map extracts and photographs have been put together to assist readers to visualise the route of **Gill Brook Lane** as it appears today. The lane once connected Newport Road with Plardiwick Lane but it was severed and lost as a “through route” during the construction of the canal.

The very existence of the lane first came to the notice of Gnosall Heritage Group when copies of documents and other historic information relating to the Manor of Plardiwick were obtained from Mr Ronald Smith, the present owner of the title of “Lord of the Manor”.

The content of some of these documents raised more questions than answers, which has prompted many hours of further research by a “Plardiwick Study Group”. An account of the research findings to date is on the Gnosall History website :

http://www.gnosallhistory.co.uk/manor_of_plardiwick.htm

One of the documents: “**The Perambulation of the Manor of Plardiwick, 1773**”, describes a walk around the manor by 12 sworn jurors, essentially to confirm and define the boundary of the Manor in law.

Gill Brook Lane and Gill Brook are both recorded by name in the document, and consequently must have been important landscape features at the time.

The earliest maps of Plardiwick: dated 1795 (Thomas Unett) and 1813 (Anson’s Map) do not show either Gill Brook Lane or Gill Brook as named features. Also these names do not appear on the Tithe Maps (1838) or on the Parish Map (1880) either. Their locations were unknown to the Plardiwick Study Group and were puzzles to be solved.

A considerable amount of “desk research” was undertaken including a closer, more detailed study of all the above maps and comparing them with modern satellite images. This was supported by “field research” looking for evidence and traces of these features on the ground, on occasions using very rudimentary surveying techniques ie. a pocket compass and estimating distances by pacing out!

We are as confident as we can be that the locations of Gill Brook Lane and Gill Brook, as they are in 2020, have now been mapped and identified correctly .

NB. The mapping of Gill Brook is presented in a separate account.

Gill Brook Lane: the evidence.

Both Thomas Unett's map (1795) and Anson's Map (1813) produced before the coming of the canal show the junction of a short "stub" of a lane and Plardiwick Lane, some 100m or so from "Plardiwick Crossroads". On Unett's map it is annotated "to Newport " and "to Coton" on Anson's map.

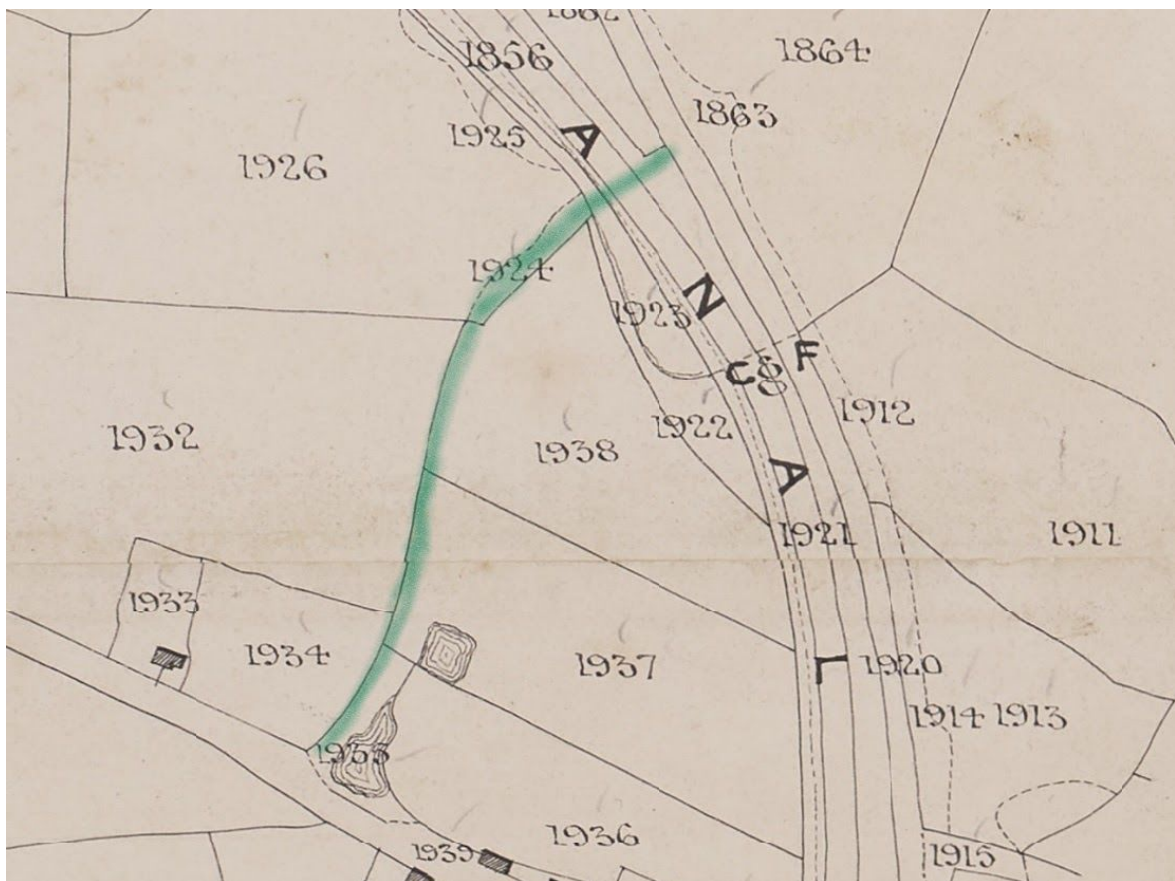
The Tithe Map and Awards show and record two parcels of land:

- No. 1924 situated on the other side of the canal, recorded as an "Old Lane".
- No. 1935 in Coton, recorded as a "Road and Pit adjoining Turnpike".

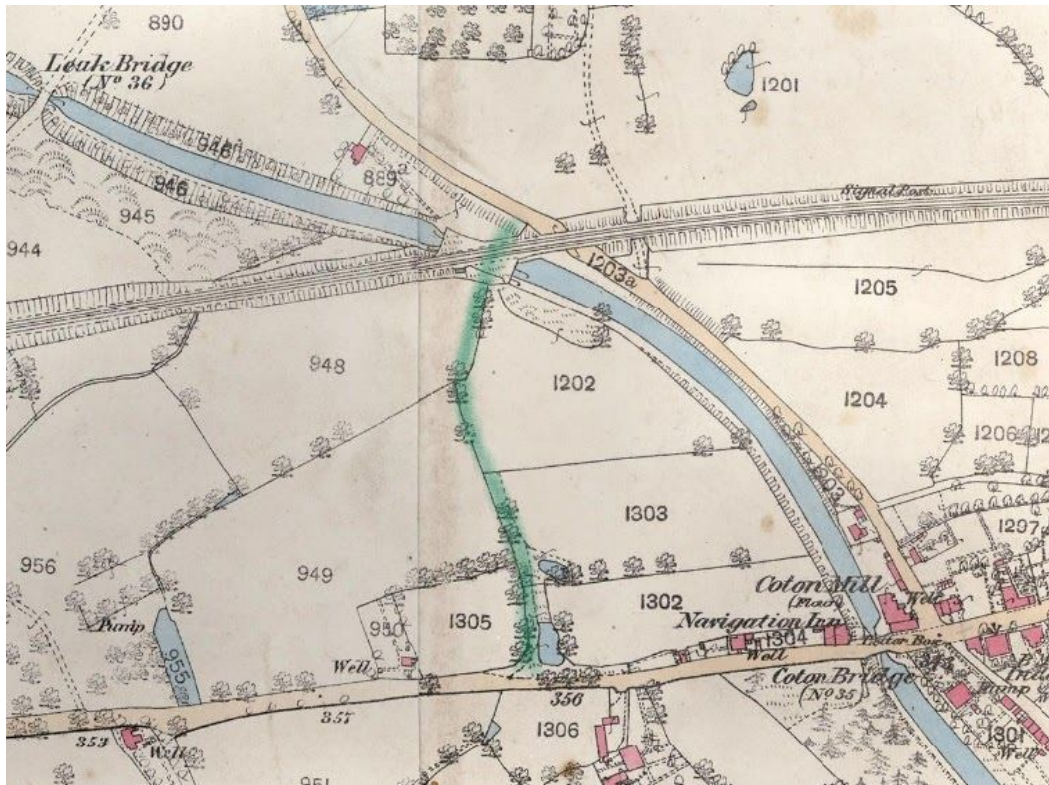
During the research it was noticed that these parcels of land were aligned with one another and could be joined up by following the enclosure boundaries which might have been Gill Brook Lane.

This is an extract from the 1838 Tithe Map with the potential route of the lane shown in green. (NB. The Tithe Map is not aligned North - South).

It also shows the length of lane beyond 1924 toward Plardiwick Lane (opposite no. 1863) has been removed during the building of the canal. It is considered that as the lane was lost as a thoroughfare because of the canal, it probably lost its name as well.



The detail shown on the Parish Map (1880) also supported the idea that this was the location of Gill Brook Lane. Extract shown below:



The Parish Map also shows that the section of the lane that was lost when the canal was built was disturbed again by the construction of the railway bridge over the canal.

A few days after, this map (Greenwood 1820) was “discovered” showing Gill Brook Lane in situ thus confirming that the potential location, as identified, was correct.

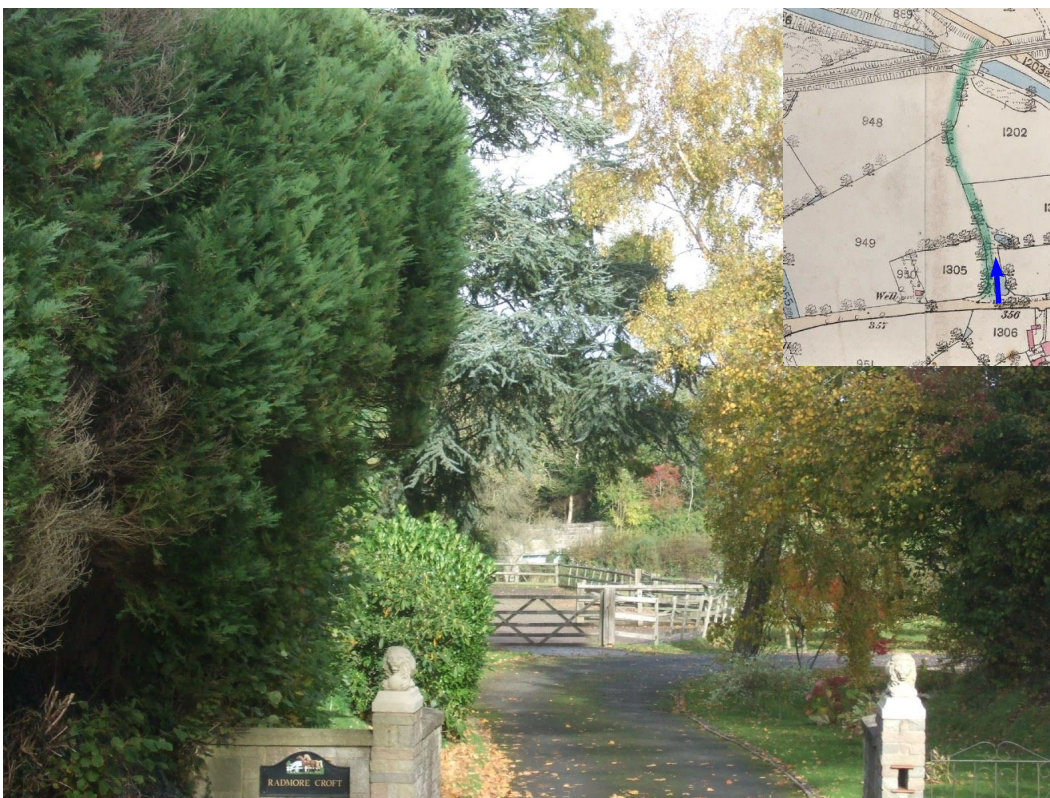


Photographs:

The following sequence of photographs chart the route of Gill Brook Lane from Newport Road to where it once met Plardiwick Lane, but as it looks today in November 2020. All photos were taken from publicly accessible vantage points.



1. Newport Road junction - Gill Brook Lane is now a private residential drive.



2. The parapet of the Railway Bridge over the canal is visible beyond the arena.



3. Taken from the railway looking over the canal. The route of Gill Brook Lane follows the tree / hedge / fence line behind the arena and down to the canal.



4. A view taken from the railway, on the Newport side of the bridge over the canal. The gap in the hedge line is the location shown on the Parish Map where the fields no: 948, 949 and 1202 meet and the lane changes direction slightly.



5. Gill Brook Lane follows the post and rail fence in the middle distance and meets with the railway fence and bridge in the corner of the field.



6. A view looking across the canal taken at the railway bridge. The Newport Rd end of Gill Brook Lane - now a private drive - can be seen beyond the arena.



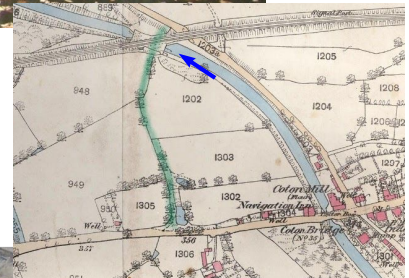
7. Taken on the railway bridge over the canal facing Plardiwick Farm. Standing vertically above where the route of Gill Brook Lane would have been were it not for the canal and railway.



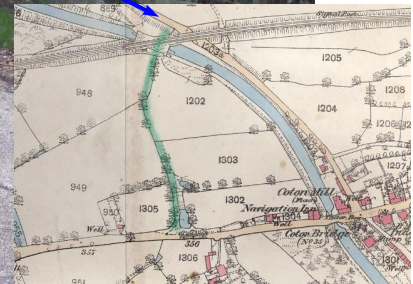
8. Location of Gill Brook Lane shown in yellow. The red dashed line shows a best estimate of the original ground level before the canal and railway were built.



9. Closer view: The best estimate of the location is shown by the dashed yellow line. The red line is the estimate of the original ground level before the canal.



10. Location of Gill Brook Lane: severed by the canal and then built over by the railway.



11. Location of Plardiwick Lane and Gill Brook Lane junction. Plardiwick Lane has been deepened by about 2m to create sufficient headroom for the railway bridge.



12. Closer view of the junction as it looks in 2020. The 2m long rule (above the yellow line) is set at the ground level in the field opposite. The surface level of Gill Brook Lane would have been somewhat lower due to erosion through usage.