

**Vision4Whaley – The Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan
Proposed Local Green Space 15 Carr Field
The Carrs, Carr Field and The Manchester Man by Mrs G Linnaeus Banks**

Background

Mrs Linnaeus Banks (nee Isabella Varley) was born in 1821 into a household in Oldham Street, Manchester. Her father was a pharmacist and Manchester Town Councillor, Alderman and Magistrate. He was heavily involved in the politics of the period and had first-hand knowledge of the major events which took place in this the first industrial city in the World. She wrote *The Manchester Man* in 1874. Although a work of fiction, the book is peppered with a great deal of historical fact, and cites local place names in Manchester, Stockport, Furnace Vale & Whaley Bridge.

The book tells the story of the progress of an orphan Jebez Clegg against the back-drop of the three decades from the Napoleonic Wars to the 1832 Reform Act crucial years in Manchester's development. Jabez is employed by a Mr Ashton, a mill-owner.

In Chapter 25 of the book the location changes to Whaley Bridge:

"Whaley Bridge has been mentioned more than once, for in that village, near the high road from Manchester to Buxton, Mr Ashton possessed a water-mill on the picturesque banks of the river Goyt, which here divided the counties of Chester and Derbyshire. It had been established in the previous century, together with another in contiguous vale of Taxal, by a speculative ancestor of Mr Ashton whose old hall is in the locality. The two places had been chiefly colonised by his work-people, many of whom had been pauper apprentices from Manchester and Warrington.

"Besides the mill, Mr Ashton owned the White Hart Inn, close to the bridge, where Buxton coaches stopped; and **Carr Cottage**, a long low, rough-cast building, nestling under the shadow of a fine old farmhouse which.....

"From this farmhouse **Carr Cottage** was separated by a retired walk at the back, which itself a wilderness of nettles, gave access to the cellarage and a clear well led the adventurer away up the hill between the cottage grounds and the farmers's tall high-banked hedges, which almost over-topped the cottage roof.



Figure 1 Carr Cottage as illustrated in the Manchester Man (it is largely unchanged)

"The lower windows in the front at least, those of the large parlours, were brought close to the ground, and **overlooked a charming landscape; descending at first suddenly, from the widespread flower garden, with its one great sycamore to the right of the cottage for shade, then with a gradual slope to a bean-field below, to a meadow crossed by a narrow rill; then, after a wider stretch of grass, the alder and hazel fringe of a trout stream skirting the high road, on the far side**

of which tall poplars waved, and in autumn shed their leaves in the wider waters of the Goyt fresh from the bridge, where the road bends.

“Rivulets, road and river ran parallel. And from the road a broad wooden gate gave access over a bridge across the trout stream, to a wide, steep avenue between trim hedges, rising to the level of the cottage, in itself as delightful a retreat as any wearied denizen of town could desire.”



Figure 2 Carr Cottage - present entrance (left), Canal Feeder behind hedge to the right



Figure 3 Carr Field – looking south, the present gate besides the A5004, by the Randall Carr Brook bridge on the right, with the junction to the River Goyt across the road to the right (now in Memorial Park)

Notes

1. In 1797 a canal feeder was built from Combs Reservoir to the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge. This open-air feeder is believed to be the rivulet referred to in the Manchester Man as it runs to the eastern edge of Carr Field, 10 feet from the entrance to the cottage.
2. In 1910 two houses were built on the land which it is believed to be the site of the bean-field. These houses are just to the left of the gate in Figure 3.

Conclusion: Carr Field, like Carr Cottage, has lost none of its character as described in the Manchester Man: “as delightful a retreat as any wearied denizen of town could desire”.