

Gillibrand Hall Viaduct



The Society is fortunate in having been given copies of photographs of the Gillibrand Hall Viaduct, immediately before and during its demolition. The photographs were taken by, and belong to Ian Calderbank. In 1977 he was tasked with demolishing the Gillibrand Hall Viaduct that had come into the ownership of Chorley Council but was in a poor state of repair. Before going ahead, he photographed the structure and its numerous defects and submitted a report to the regulatory body, no doubt English Heritage in an earlier form. They deemed it not to be of historical value and the demolition went ahead.

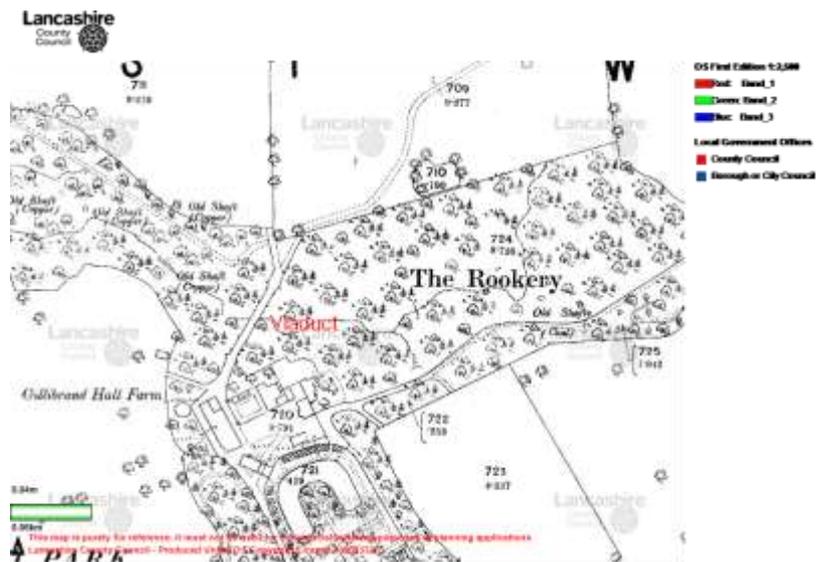
Gillibrand Hall was the home of the Catholic Gillibrand Family who in the late 18th and early 19th century owned half of the Manor of Chorley. It was, therefore one of the most important estates in Chorley. Thomas Gillibrand demolished the old hall in 1807-8, and replaced it with the present hall. (In trying to date the viaduct, this would probably be the earliest date, although as will be shown below, there is an argument for a later date.) In 1825, Thomas bought the remaining part of the Manor of Chorley and thus united it for the first time in centuries. The estate shrank in size from 1830 onwards as land was sold, and this enabled Chorley to expand as an industrial town. The Manorial Rights were sold to Chorley Improvement Commissioners in 1874 and the hall was put up for sale in 1880.



Ian takes up the story: “The keystone of the centre arch had the initials HHF carved into it and this was my starting point. Thomas Gillibrand (- 1828), the owner of the hall, had a son, Henry Hawarden Gillibrand (1809 -1865). Henry's uncle, Samuel Gillibrand, had established a connection (described as obscure in one source) to the Fazakerley family and the grant of *Royal Licence* followed. In his will, Samuel left his estate to distant cousin with a requirement that he take the name Fazakerley. Henry took the name of Fazakerley in 1814 (hence HHF) which also gave him the right to 'bear arms'.

Thomas' eldest son William was killed in a shooting accident in 1816 so that when Thomas himself died in 1828, Henry, was the eldest surviving son and inherited the estate although at only 19 years old, no doubt it was held in trust. There is reference to a challenge in the High Court to a will by other members of Henry's family in 1832 and to the Court of Appeal between 1843 -1846. Henry had a son in 1832, also Henry Hawarden Fazakerley but he was killed in a mine explosion in 1851.

From the above, I concluded that the viaduct was constructed after 1814 when the family took the name and before 1865 when HHF died. However, the viaduct appears on the First Edition OS 1:10000 map which was surveyed between 1844 and 1850.



One curious point is why the viaduct was ever constructed. This wasn't the main approach to the hall, that was from Gillibrand Walks and along what is now Grosvenor Road. The route over the viaduct passed through the farmyard. The original way from the farm to the North was down a slope into the valley and out the other side. It may have been constructed to improve access to the farm but seems somewhat excessive for farm traffic.

Perhaps I can now do my Dan Cruickshank. In 1840, the railway arrived in Chorley by way of the railway viaduct at Hoggs Lane. To my knowledge, this was the only multi-span bridge in the area at the time and is likely to have generated significant local interest. Maybe HHF was inspired by this to construct his own viaduct, possibly encouraged by the presence in town of expertise and skilled labour – his very own folly albeit with some practical use.”

A further point upon the purpose of the viaduct is that it might have been designed as a landscaping feature. Frank Hall Standish had considerable work done on the grounds around Duxbury Hall in the 1820s and 1830s and added pleasure gardens including a tunnel entrance to a bathing pool. The viaduct might have been an ostentatious statement!

Ian Calderbank and John Harrison
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