



The Maldens and Coombe Heritage Society

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WHY DOES THE HIGH STREET KINK?

Julian McCarthy

I suppose the first point that needs to be made – just in case you hadn't noticed- is that there IS a distinct kink in the High Street between the Fountain and the station.

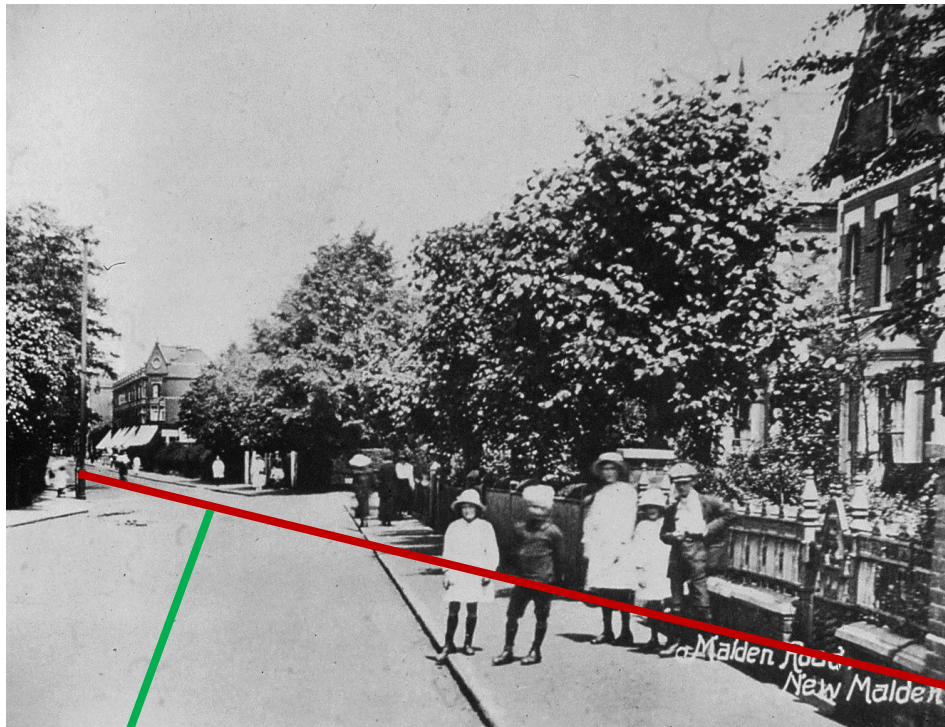
If there wasn't a kink you would be able to see the railway bridges from the Fountain but, considering the images below, this is clearly not the case.



Ok, big deal, so the road 'turns'! All roads do. Even Roman Roads had to turn at some point and there is, therefore, nothing special about this feature and we can all progress our daily lives without considering this little bend any further. If that works for you then fine and you can quite happily stop reading at this point, safe in the knowledge that at the end of this article there is nothing 'remarkable' that will be divulged that you are missing by not reading further.

This piece is simply a theory, rather than fact, and it stems from my (apparent) 'need' to solve puzzles. I am not sure at what stage in life one develops this 'need' and it varies from person to person with some of us, quite frankly, loathing riddles, crosswords, spot the difference puzzles, mysteries and curiosities and others (of which I am one) who are drawn, inexorably, to find 'the answer', the solution! Perhaps it is a genetic trait and as a species we survived by 'problem-solving'. Who knows? But, back to the kink in the road.

The more that I look at old photos of New Malden High Street (Malden Road, Traps Lane, whatever!) the more that this kink has come to bother me.



Why take this direction?

and not continue with this?

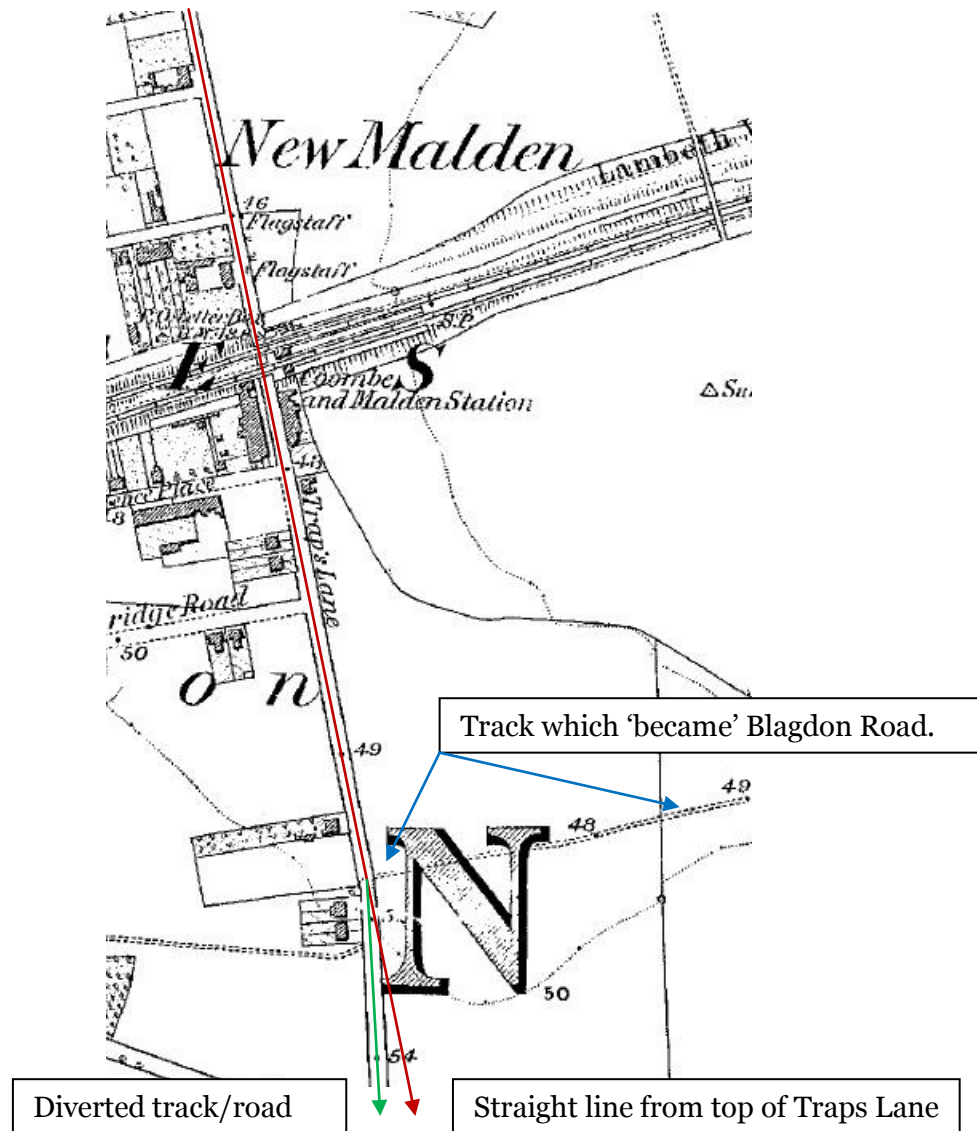
Looking at a map (circa 1819) which, out of interest, *does* show other kinks in roads, the main track down from Coombe House is quite straight, apart from the slight kink at the top just by the end of the gardens of Coombe House.

Kinks in tracks are clearly shown



No kink in this section

But looking at the map of 1865/7 there is now a kink introduced at the track that will, eventually, become Blagdon Road.



With due regard to Isaac Newton and his first law of motion which, I shall adapt and tailor for the point of this piece, my understanding is that something will continue in a straight line unless acted upon by an external 'force' which causes it to deviate from its original path.

So, we have a straight line in approximately 1819 and we have a kink in the line by 1865. Isaac, were he here, would I trust support my theory that something has acted upon the straight line and original path causing it to be subtly diverted.

(I feel I should remind you at this point that this is, of course, all conjecture!)

Isaac would, most likely, be heard to say, "Well, what is this force that you believe has caused the kink in the road that has wasted the time of the people reading this piece and has needed you to bring me out of my 'retirement'?" (a little imagination *is* required here!).

“Well, Mr Newton or should I call you Sir Isaac?” I would say, “the ‘force’ that has caused the kink in the road is undoubtedly not ‘natural’. There is no obstructive rocky outcrop around which the road has had to be diverted as that would have been there in 1819 when we know (or at least believe) that the road was straight.”

I would continue “No, Sir Isaac, I believe that what has caused the kink in the road is ‘man-made’ and wasn’t there before 1819 but has been made since then.”

“What do you mean?”, he might ask, “Surely not a house, or a building as quite understandably that would not be built on an existing road. Also, I believe it is unlikely that the road has been diverted simply because of land ownership or a change in a land boundary as such. So what man-made feature could have been caused that required the road to be diverted.”

Already having an established theory, I would then proceed to explain that, with the coming of the railway in 1838 and, subsequently, with the development of New Malden in the Groves area, north of the railway, there was a local need for brick clay and as such local field clay was used (as it had been for many years) to form bricks for, say, the local railway bridges and perhaps houses, etc.

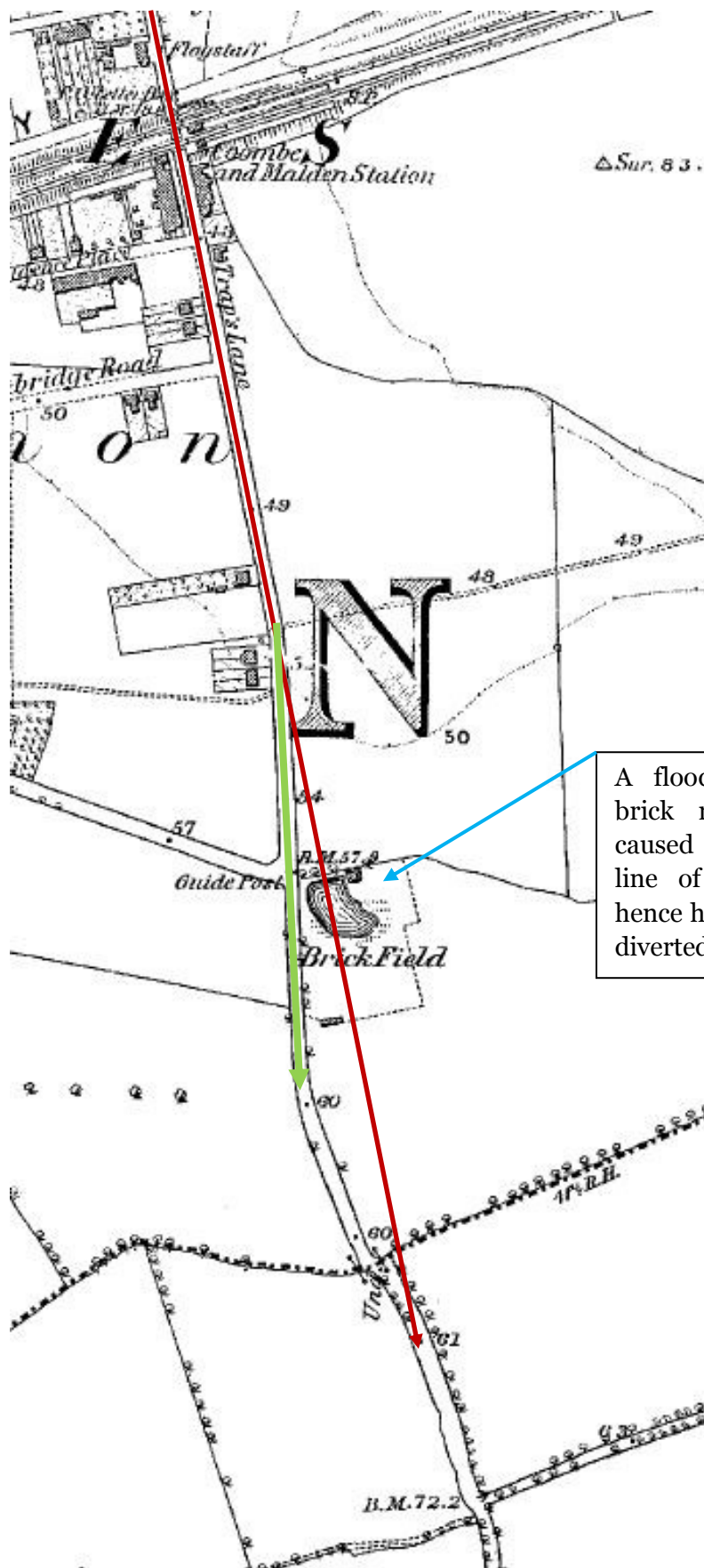
I would then produce an extension of the previous 1865 map and the red and green arrows. As above I would project the red arrow from Traps Lane, under the bridges past the kink at the path to Blagdon Farm but would continue the arrow onward through, what would later be the location of the post office and police station and past the point at which the road meets the Kingston Road.

I would then say to Sir Isaac “Sir, I believe that what caused the kink to be made in the original straight track from Coombe House toward Malden was the finding of clay, suitable for brick-making, at the junction of Traps Lane and Kingston Road. The excavation of the clay appears to have extended across the line of the straight road and there is, by 1865/7 a sizeable pond /lake directly in the path of the straight road, this pond clearly identified as being in a Brick field.

It is clear that after the diversion of the road, around the pond and the brick field, the red arrow shows that the path of the road connects back to that of a straight line.”

I would then show him the map, the arrows, the pond, the brick field and he would (if he were here!!) look at the evidence and shortly before disappearing back to the early 18th Century might say “Well, it may be! But there could, perhaps, be another reason! “ and then (at the speed of light) he would be gone!

I would be alone, standing there, with simply a map indicating a pond and some arrows to hand, not unlike this that follows:



A flooded clay excavation for brick making seems to have caused a local pond across the line of the straight road and hence has required the road to be diverted around the field

So what of today, is the kink still there? Well yes it is! I have taken a series of photos looking at the line of the lamp posts in the centre of the road and you can see that they are aligned as far as Blagdon Road but thereafter turn away and the straight line would (if extended) run straight through Greggs.



Looking south from the centre of the road by the war memorial, note the alignment of the lamps.



Looking north from the centre of the road just before the Pound Shop, note the alignment of the lamps.



But looking north just before Blagdon Road the lamps and road can be seen to divert



Looking south after Blagdon Road the straight line of the lamp posts and the kink in the road is clear



Looking north from the point at which the 'straight' road would have continued.



So the next time you walk along the High Street or are crossing the road remember this photo and look for the kink in the road. If, like me you want to solve puzzles and if it isn't due to the brick excavation and pond then ask yourself 'why *does* it kink?'

However, please cross the road safely as Newton's second and third laws of motion will apply to you if you happen to unwittingly step out in front of a cyclist or worse!

Be safe!

Julian