







A picture perfect gateway to the Peak with style, country charm and curiosities!

Words and photographs by Ashley Franklin

**D**riving to Baslow from south of the county is a pleasure before one even gets there: the drive takes you through Chatsworth.

About four miles NNE of Bakewell, Baslow is a popular base both for visitors to the Palace of the Peak and 'Edge' walkers, but it's also worth a visit in its own right as an agreeable place to stroll, sightsee, dine, drink and shop. As for living there, you may feel a twinge of envy at the words of Parish Councillor and resident Sarah Reid: 'We are one of the most picturesque villages in the Peak, we have a thriving community with a vibrant mix of long-standing residents and active incomers, there are excellent village facilities with choice shops, plus a highly regarded school and fantastic sports provision, we've lots of pretty cottages and

we're within walking distance of Curbar Edge and Chatsworth Park. What more could you want?' Well, if you take into account that you're only 10 minutes drive from Bakewell and about 15 from Sheffield, you've got that as well.

Baslow is also a place of many parts – or should I say ends? There are five parts to the village: Bridge End, Far End, Over End, West End and Nether End; six parts if you count Goose Green, the village green area in Nether End; seven if you include Bubnell, an adjoining hamlet by the Derwent which is part of the Baslow parish.

No place is perfect, of course: the heavy traffic flow through the village is permanently on the agenda at Parish Council meetings but it's still pleasing to see a visitor attraction that has resisted commercialisation and is still a relatively unspoilt and

quintessential English village. For instance, although Alistair Myers at Rowley's restaurant and bar wants as many customers as possible, he wholeheartedly approves of the fact that no advertising boards are allowed on Goose Green, the site of Baslow's main car park. 'This is Baslow, not Blackpool,' as one resident reminded me.

#### BASLOW HYDRO

Baslow could have become like Buxton had fate dealt a different hand. In 1880, the Hydro Hotel was built as a spa attraction. At its zenith, this massive mock-Gothic edifice housed 120 bedrooms, a ballroom, massage rooms and a welter of sports facilities in its 12 manicured acres of grounds. The Hydro dominated the village for over 50 years before custom declined, maintenance costs climbed and it was closed and later



Nelson on nearby Birchen Edge and paid for Wellington's Monument 'as a balance'.

Another notable resident was electrical engineering pioneer Sebastian Ziani De Ferranti who bought Baslow Hall in 1913. Ferranti was a tireless inventor who, between 1882 and 1927, took out 176 patents for a range of products including alternators, circuit breakers, transformers and turbines.

However, Ferranti's personal projects at Baslow Hall had mixed success. Although he supplied central heating to the house, it was via radiators in the ceilings and the frequent power failures left his considerable family huddling together in heavy overcoats on winter evenings. A hot air system was introduced but this, too, was abandoned, leaving Ferranti to fall back on what he knew: electricity. Even here, Ferranti had a major mishap. He installed an electric laundry, electric lawn-mower and electric floodlighting for the tennis court, but his experiments with battery hen production – arguably the world's first – failed spectacularly when he accidentally electrocuted the chickens.

Ferranti came to be dubbed the 'European Edison', largely through designing a power station in Deptford in 1887. This was the first high-voltage generation station in the world which not only brought electricity to most of central London but also spawned the national grid, responsible for lighting up the country today.

Coincidentally, Baslow Hall was subsequently home to two famous car dealers: Sir George Kenning of Kennings and T.C. Harrison. The Hall was originally built in 1907 for Rev. Jeremiah Stockdale, vicar of Baslow for nearly half a century, though one could easily mistake the Hall for a 17th century manor house.

## BASLOW DINING

Now a successful hotel and restaurant called Fischer's, Baslow Hall is, according to Events Marketing Co-ordinator Amy Wilkinson, 'a grand, stately house whilst retaining a cosy family home feel', a feature that must have



Mary McNulty and Katrina Woodworth of Izzis



Anna Carroll of the French Depot of Baslow



Above and below left: Pretty gardens and charming cottages  
Below right: Ivy House pottery



appealed to Max and Susan Fischer when they bought it in 1988 as a setting for their successful Michelin-starred restaurant business. Theirs is a story of great determination: in the first year, while refurbishing the Hall, one wing was completely gutted by fire and it took another year to rebuild the Hall with the family hovering on the brink of liquidation while living with their three young children in a mobile home.

The Fischers gradually established their business, achieving a Michelin star in 1994, which they have retained ever since. Head Chef of the last eight years, Rupert Rowley, cut his teeth with Gordon Ramsay and Raymond Blanc and further awards have followed – four AA Red Rosettes and Derbyshire Restaurant of the Year 2008 and 2009 – for 'traditional dishes served in a modern way'. Many restaurants boast of sourcing local produce but Fischer's has the worthier claim: it grows its own fruit and vegetables. The Hall has also

developed a reputation for its wedding packages.

The Fischers and Rupert Rowley also own Rowley's restaurant and bar which used to be the *Prince of Wales*, a popular pub in Baslow so the classy replacement has had to work hard to win round the locals. It's a bright, airy 64-seat diner where I sat and enjoyed a succulent home-made burger washed down with a refreshing lager – Freedom Four – brewed in Staffordshire. Manager Alistair Myers describes the cuisine as 'a quirky modern take on traditional fayre' including ox cheek braised in vanilla stout and a rib bone steak braised in whisky. Alistair is especially proud of the service – 'as important as the food,' he declares.

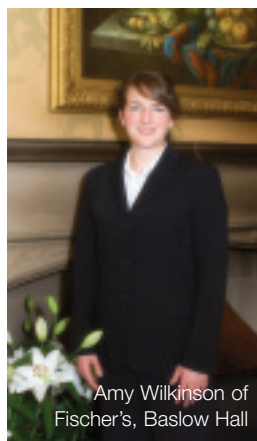
Further down the road is another old inn conversion. What was once the *Peacock* owned by the Duke of Rutland is now the *Cavendish Hotel*, acquired in 1830 by the Duke of Devonshire. Travel writer Arthur Eperon once said 'It is possible to



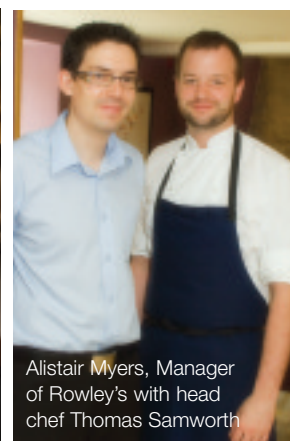
Doreen and Ray  
Gridley of  
Baslow Pottery



Kyle Lane  
at Il Lupo



Amy Wilkinson of  
Fischer's, Baslow Hall



Alistair Myers, Manager  
of Rowley's with head  
chef Thomas Samworth



Rowley's Restaurant and Bar



Fischer's at Baslow Hall

look out from the Cavendish and dream that you are a Duchess', a reference to the view of Chatsworth Estate.

General Manager Philip Joseph concedes that 'we would have to cut down a few trees to keep that dream alive', though you can still see the hunting tower, he adds. The Cavendish is suffused with elegance including a multi award-winning Gallery restaurant serving what Philip describes as 'imaginative food uniquely presented in relaxed and sumptuous surroundings' which include fine art on the Gallery walls, some of it loaned by Chatsworth. The bedroom suites are plush, and the whole place can only become more luxurious with Philip speaking of 'a rolling programme of refurbishment'.

Recently refurbished and reopened under new managements is the *Devonshire Arms* which, in spite of its name, isn't owned by the Chatsworth Estate. There are two other taverns in Baslow – the

*Wheatsheaf* and *Duke of Rutland* – and also an Italian restaurant *Il Lupo*, a family business run for the last 15 years by Luigi Divito. In their guest book is an accolade from a Sheffield-based diner who declared that it was 'the nicest Italian I have ever been to, with friendly staff and amazing food.'

You can order simple traditional English fayre over the road in the Café on the Green, recently taken over by Nick and Penny Morgan who previously spent 12 years in the Middle East. 'After all that endless sand we still can't get over the pleasure of seeing trees, grass and a change in the seasons,' smiles Penny, adding as she gazes out on the verdant village green 'and I don't think we could have chosen a lovelier, more scenic location.'

#### BASLOW SHOPS

Around the corner from the cafe are two retail establishments enhanced by the splendid stone buildings that house them. Inside a Victorian

mansion is Izzis of Baslow, a warm, friendly and colourful fashion outlet owned for 23 years by Isobel Bennett, who has been 'dressing the women of Derbyshire' for 23 years – 'everything from classy to casual and for all ages and sizes,' says store assistant Katrina Woodworth. German clothes are their speciality, with Izzis being one of the largest UK stockists of the Basler range.

As Katrina points out, although a store like Izzis is the kind that you would expect to see in a city high street, its attractive rural location means that customers so enjoy the trip through the countryside that when they arrive, they are more happily predisposed to browsing and buying. 'If you come here, you have already made the effort,' adds Katrina, 'so we offer them coffee, make a fuss of them, and many end up making a day of it by dining in the village.'

Next door, Anna and Michael Carroll's three year-old antiques ▷





Top first: Anne Tempest, author of the book *Baslow 2000*  
 Top second: Maddie Hardie of Five Little Ducks  
 Top third: Avril Crossley of Avant Garde  
 Top fourth: Helen Hill of Darling Buds  
 Bottom left: The Derwent flows through Baslow  
 Bottom right: Bridge over the Derwent

outlet also looks to Europe for its stock. Although entitled The French Depot of Baslow, they also sell a large range of beautiful Italian bedroom furniture, chandeliers, mirrors, chairs, tables and desks. Once owners of the Halifax Antiques Centre, Anna told me that as she and Michael were of retirement age, they ought to look for a smaller business. 'This is our golf,' smiles Anna, a 'retirement' all the more pleasurable when she and Michael source antiques at continental trade fairs.

Over the road in another attractive house – Ivy Cottage – is Baslow Pottery where potter Ray Grindley and his wife Doreen settled three years ago. Ray didn't take up pottery until he was 45. Rather than sit in his car while his son attended a pottery class, Ray decided to join him. As a bread maker, Ray took to the pliant nature of clay and found his metier. He's good with metal, too: taking over what had previously been a fashion outlet at Ivy House, Ray took the dress railings and made them part of the glass cabinets amidst a gallery space that shows both Ray's work and that of 18 local artists. His own work he describes as 'traditional English studio pottery with an Oriental

influence,' adding that 'whatever I do always combines functionality with artistry.'

There are further retail delights on the other side of Baslow in Bridge End. Avant Garde is made up of two shops, both selling multifarious furniture and accessories for home and garden including dressers, dining tables, birdhouses, clocks, cushions, mirrors, lamps and prints. Nearby is Church Farm Art Gallery run by

lit only by gas lights was a notorious tinderbox piled so high with papers that they covered not only a rolled-up carpet but also a piano.

It would also have been an experience, as further recounted in the book, to have encountered a tramp called Harry, though maybe at a distance. He lived in a cave and never washed. Although he owned a tin bath, it was never filled with water; instead, he raised it off the

*'Although Harry the tramp owned a tin bath, it was never filled with water; instead, he raised it off the ground with bricks and lit a fire beneath to heat it up, making the bath a warm bed'*

retired dental surgeon Norman Tomlinson; the charmingly named toy and gift shop Five Little Ducks; and the cutely-named florists, Darling Buds.

#### BASLOW 2000 AND BEYOND

One shop I would love to have experienced is Ethel Bufton's paper shop, as recalled in *Baslow 2000*. In the 1980s, this 'dark and dingy' shop

ground with bricks and lit a fire beneath to heat it up, making the bath a warm bed. However, sleeping amidst the wood smoke made him appear even blacker and dirtier than he need have been. While assembling *Baslow 2000*, author Anne Tempest told me, she built up a picture of Baslow as a steadfastly rural community which gradually changed after 1920 when the Duke of Rutland



Above left: Charlie's bistro and café  
Above: The Wellington Monument on Baslow Edge  
Bottom left: The lounge at the Cavendish Hotel  
Bottom right: Countryside around Baslow

'sold most of Baslow at a public auction'. Most tenants bought their own properties and made improvements, one of them replacing thatch with slate. 'Baslow lost more of its cosy charm with increasing transport bringing tourism to the village,' observes Anne, adding 'and all the useful shops are now trendy.'

However, she regards Baslow as 'a special and beautiful place' with a good social mix and enough nonagenarians to convince her that Baslow air is healthy. Ray and Doreen Grindley of Baslow Pottery will never forget the kindness and help shown to Doreen's mother by the villagers through the local Senior Citizens Club and Age Concern. She still gets out and about now, aged 97.

There is plenty of activity for all ages in Baslow provided by church groups, a thriving WI, Garden Society, Flower Club and a useful 'Handy Man' help scheme run by the Parish Council. My Saturday visit to the village revealed plenty of cricket activity for the young on a sports field which, as Baslow Sports Field Trust Chairman Simon Turton told me, is also home to bowls, tennis, rugby and football clubs. There's a

new pavilion, too.

Simon and his wife and children are one of many young families mentioned by Parish Councillor Sarah Reid as having, in recent years, moved in and reinvigorated the community. 'Baslow is also a diverse community,' adds Sarah, 'which is very positive as it means we, and particularly our children, mix with people of all ages, backgrounds and work experiences.'

There's also an improved community spirit, exemplified last year by the first of what is now an annual street party, and the fact that plans are being discussed for the return of a village fete or carnival.

There remains the traffic problem. The entry for Baslow in Pigot's *Commercial Directory* of 1835 now seems ironic: 'The coaches passing through here infuse a degree of liveliness into it; but it possesses nothing otherwise interesting.' Simon Turton believes Baslow has the highest volume of traffic of any village in the region and says the answer is simple: 'Ban all HGVs from the Peak.' A more workable suggestion, he says, is 'to get Sat Nav companies to re-route vehicles away from picturesque villages.'

On a light note, Anna Carroll of The French Depot tells me that if she puts a chandelier in her window, she always ends up selling it. This is because the traffic regularly comes to a standstill right outside her shop front, giving drivers plenty of time to window shop!

Baslow has the tricky conundrum of needing the traffic to bring commerce to the village while trying to retain its rurality. On the question of commerce, Simon believes the Peak Park authorities need to consider that: 'While Baslow shouldn't aspire to become a small town, it does need a wider range of commercial enterprises to cater for a younger profile of villager and for the inflow of tourists. There also needs to be places where residents can set up and run businesses, especially as we're all being told to drive less. We should encourage villages like Baslow to be thriving centres of commerce and not to remain as sleepy dormitory backwaters.' □

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# Baslow from the archives



Autumn 1952

Wrought iron smith, Baslow



A day out at Wellington's Monument in the 1940s



A corner of the village green in the 70s



## From the archives of The Sherwood Foresters Museum

Lance Corporal Joseph Eades  
9th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.  
Joseph was born at Baslow in 1896  
the son of John and Kate Eades of  
Yeld Cottage. He attended the local  
school and upon leaving was  
employed as a waggoner with Messrs  
Staley, Joiner and Wheelwright of  
Baslow. He enlisted in January 1915,  
joining the 2nd battalion then based  
in Sheffield. After training he went to

France landing there on 22nd June  
1915. Although the dates are not  
clear we know he was wounded in the  
knee and spent some time in hospital.  
Upon discharge from the hospital he  
was transferred to the 9th battalion  
which had been serving in Gallipoli  
but arrived in France and Flanders in  
early 1916. In August 1917, the 9th  
battalion were in action in Belgium  
near Poelcappelle in the Ypres

Salient. Joseph was  
killed in action by  
enemy shell fire  
and his pal Pte  
Dove reported that  
he had been hit in  
the head by  
shrapnel. He is  
buried in Artillery  
Wood Cemetery,  
Belgium.

