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BILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Chairman: Bill Williams

Secretary: Keith Wilkinson

Treasurer: Anne Richards

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to this, our Society's first newsletter.

Starting any new organisation involves an immense amount of preparatory work. To begin with we needed to establish our aims and how we hoped to achieve them, to produce a constitution, decide how to finance and publicise the Society. It was a long list, but the committee have now completed those tasks and the Bilton Historical Society is, as they say, now up and running. We even have a logo!

Some would be members expressed dismay that we did not intend to embark on a series of talks, but there's little point in doing so when the Society exists mainly because so little is known of Bilton's past. As our researches progress, then perhaps regular talks will become an option.

One thing we do need is more involvement and if any of those reading this newsletter are not already involved in our projects then do please think about getting involved. Whether you want to work on your own or with others we will certainly be able to accommodate you and you can do as little or as much as you want. Whilst our work is serious, we want being a member of this Society to be fun as well! So why not think about it?

Information has been forthcoming from sources outside the Society. We are indebted to Mr Rogers of Starbeck who worked on railways for many years and has provided a wealth of information on the building of the Nidd Viaduct and on the railways too. We are also grateful to Mrs Olive Whitfield for donating a video, created from old cine film, of steam trains in the Bilton/Harrogate area.

Photographs and post cards are perhaps the best source of information and we'd be delighted if anyone could donate or loan old pictures of Bilton. We are still seeking one of a steam train on the viaduct!

If you'd like to help, or require any further information, please contact either myself or any of the committee members whose names appear at the top of this newsletter.

Bill Williams

A GLIMPSE OF LIFE AT BILTON ENDOWED SCHOOL ...

... 25.6.1885 Caned six boys on hand for being late and trespassing in fields. [Extract from school log book]

Her Majesty's Inspector's Report

The discipline is very good and the tone of the school is pleasing. Recitation is well said, and the children now speak out better, but should answer more connectedly. The knowledge of Geography should be more general. Needlework is creditable. The general results shew gratifying progress and the higher Principal Grant may be recommended. The good attendance speaks well of the teachers' influence. A book cupboard and a museum case should be supplied. The ash pits require to be roofed from rain and the offices need some slight modifications.

[The Principal Grant was for 14/- (£0.70) and the report (on Bilton C.E. Endowed School) is dated 16.1.1899. This report comes from research being carried out by Sandra and Brian Selvidge.

RESEARCHING NIDDERDALE

You may have noticed recent press releases advising about a project run by Harrogate Museum Service to produce a complete historical record of man's habitation of Nidderdale. Accordingly I attended the inaugural meeting with Keith Wilkinson, but the area being researched is within the Nidderdale A.O.N.B. (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and that begins upstream from Birstwith, so sadly, it wasn't for us.

However, we did obtain the names and addresses of useful contacts which we will need in the future.

Bill Williams

BILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXHIBITION: 1 - 12 July 1996

Bilton Library was the venue for our small exhibition of photographs and material illustrating aspects of Bilton's past. Newscuttings about Bilton Endowed School (1793 - 1960), the coming of the age of steam (1847 - 1967) and the development of the Gasworks (Barber) Railway (1907 - 1958) attracted much interest. We were most grateful to the staff of the Bilton Library for their assistance and the loan of exhibits from the Victorian era.

There is clearly more scope to explore Bilton's heritage by means of exhibitions of photographs, postcards, memorabilia, colour slides etc. and if members would like to contribute in any way I would like to hear from them.

KW

STARBECK MUSEUM

The committee was privileged to have a guided tour behind the scenes of Starbeck Museum at Starbeck C.P.School. Curator and founder Gordon Beer outlined the objectives of the project and gave a first hand account of how the many artefacts had been acquired. He also admitted to being a Bilton Endowed School old boy who was once caned for "chucking muck at t'lasses sir"! No doubt further research may reveal the incident in the school log? The museum is a shining example of what community involvement can achieve. It is open by arrangement with the school during term time and by contacting Mr Beer privately at other times.

GUIDED WALKS

The 1996/7 history project for senior students at Bilton's Richard Taylor School is the history of Bilton through the ages. I was delighted to lead groups of enthusiastic youngsters through Bilton and Bachelor Gardens, highlighting some of our local landmarks. Stopping briefly on Hall Lane to discuss the site of the Bilton Lane pinfold and sandstone quarry, we progressed to the location of Harrogate Hall Farm (circa 1400 - 1974). The students went down into the 17th Century ice-house excavated in 1995 before going on to Bachelor Gardens where we noted numbers 2-34 are Grade II listed building built before 1750, pre-dated perhaps by Red Cat Cottage (site of Red Cat Inn and maybe one time residence of Blind Jack, the famous blind roadmaker of Knaresborough).



Harrogate Hall Farm Ice-House

By prior arrangement with Mr George Tickle of Ripley Drive we walked the track bed of the Barber Railway (1907 - 1958) and examined at close quarters the portals of the railway tunnel beneath Red Cat Hill which emerges behind New Park School. The afternoon walk also took in Spruisty Packhorse Bridge, Knox (circa 1600), Bilton Endowed School (1793), the well head and pump from the original Bachelor Gardens village green.

We returned to school to note, with satisfaction, that cuttings from the ancient white mulberry from Bilton Endower School were still surviving – a living link with the past.

KW

BILTON 2000

Enquiries have been received from members concerned with the "Bilton 2000" project. Bilton 2000 aims to capture a picture of Bilton as it is today and how it has developed, with a view to publishing the material for the millennium. In some respects there is a "time capsule" feel to it and future generations will be able to look back on Bilton as we know it now.

The research has been broken down into manageable tasks, and we have members working on aspects such as; the establishment of the church in Bilton, past and present distribution of wildlife, domestic and industrial transport, coal mining, the Skipton turnpike road, a photography project, Bachelor Gardens and education. We have recorded our first interview with a Bachelor Gardens resident.

Further volunteers and suggested areas of study are always welcome. All members are invited to a special meeting at 7.30pm on Wednesday 30th October 1996 at the Granary, Knox Arms, Knox Lane to discuss how best we may achieve our goals.

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The society was pleased to be invited by the local authority to suggest suitable names for the small housing development planned between Woodfield House and Woodfield Square. The site is at the heart of the original Grove House gardens and has very strong associations with the Fox family. We have put forward a number of street names reflecting the Samson Fox theme for approval by the council and local residents.

STOP PRESS - NEW BOOK FOR 1997

The new year promises to throw more light on the history of High Harrogate and Bilton with a publication "The Way It Was - A Pictorial History of High Harrogate". Local author James Potts has a lifelong interest in High Harrogate and is particularly attracted to the life of Samson Fox of Grove House who founded the Royal School of Music. Industrialist, inventor and benefactor Samson Fox became Mayor of Harrogate and is famed for celebrating the monarchy with public ox roastings on the Stray in 1887 and 1902.



Samson Fox's Royal Stables

A NOTE FOR YOUR DIARY

At the request of the Bilton Conservation Group we are to give a talk on aspects of Bilton's history at the Bilton Community Centre, Bilton Lane at 2.00pm on Saturday 9th December. Admission is free to members, but please, bring your membership card!