



BILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Issue 106 NEWSLETTER December 2025

If you need to get in touch or have something to offer please e-mail us at mail@biltonhistoricalsociety.org.uk
We are always looking for pictures or memories of life in Bilton

The Committee wishes all members a



To help you enjoy your celebrations perhaps you would like to try our quiz.

Across the decades - a prize Christmas Quiz.

1930's

- 1 Who played Dorothy Gale in the 1939 film 'The Wizard of Oz'?
- 2 In which year was the first Royal Christmas Radio message broadcast 1932, 1934 or 1937?

1940's

- 3 In 1947 the people of which country gifted Britain the first Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree?
- 4 Which famous Christmas song was written for the 1942 movie 'Holiday Inn'?
- 5 What was the title of the 1946 Christmas Classic film that featured a building society manager and his guardian angel?

1950's

- 6 On Christmas Day 1956, a campaign launched that featured a chimpanzees' tea party. What product was it advertising?
- 7 Which radio show, billed as 'an everyday story of country folk' began broadcasting nationally on New Years Day, 1951?
- 8 Which American woman bravely refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in December 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama?

1960's

- 9 Which doll won the UK Toy of the Year in 1968?
- 10 Which British coin stopped being legal tender on New Years' Eve, 1960?

1970's

- 11 Who said to conductor Andre Previn, "I'm playing all the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order" on Christmas Day in 1971?
- 12 Which rock band had a Christmas No.1 with 'Merry Christmas Everybody' in 1973?

1980's

- 13 What was the title of the 1984 Christmas single by Band Aid?
- 14 The 1987 Christmas Day episode of Coronation Street saw the final scenes of which of its characters? (Clue, think of curlers and a pinny.)

1990's

- 15 Which girl band had three Christmas No.1 hits in a row, in 1996, 1997 and 1998?
- 16 The film 'The Muppet Christmas Carol' was released in 1992. Who wrote the original 1843 book it was based on?

2000's

- 17 Which famous pop star did film producer Guy Richie marry on 22nd Dec 2000?
- 18 Which 2001 Christmas TV Show was the most watched in the noughties? (Clue, it starred a Peckham Market Trader.)

2010's

- 19 What type of weather did the Met Office report on Christmas Day in 2010?

2020's

- 20 After the late Queen's message to the nation, what was the second most watched Christmas TV programme broadcast on Christmas Day 2020?

Answers to be sent to either

Email: mail@biltonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Or post: BHS Christmas Quiz, 57 Heather Way, Harrogate, HG3 2SH

All answers must be received by Friday 16th January 2026. Please include your name and contact details with your entry. The winning entry will be drawn out of the Chairman's top hat at the February talk on 4th February 2026.

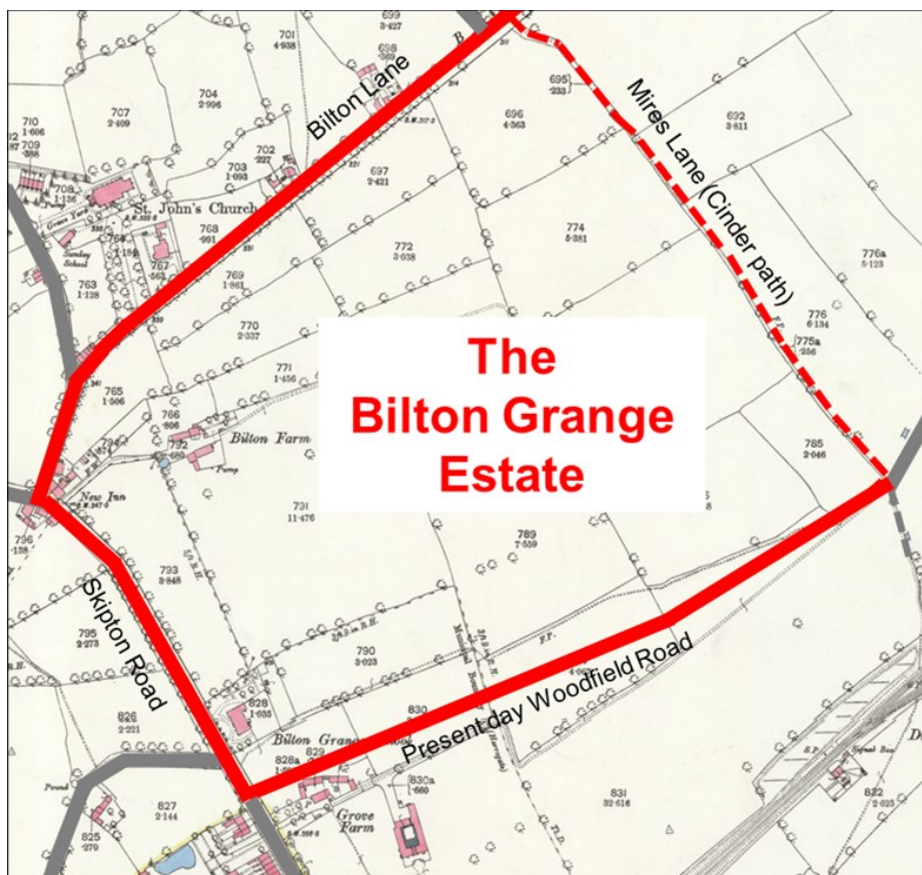
To encourage you to take part there will be a prize of a £10 gift token.

The Bilton Grange Estate

A largely forgotten name; the Bilton Grange Estate was the area being developed at the start of the 20th century around King Edward's Drive. Bilton Historical Society has decided to make this area its main project for 2025/26 culminating in an event at Bilton Community Centre in September 2026 as our contribution to next years National Heritage Open Days, with possibly a new publication and some walks and talks. It will also be a memorial to Cedric Wilkinson who spent a considerable time looking at King Edwards Drive.

The boundary of the project area starts at the corner of Woodfield Road and Skipton Road, progresses along Skipton Road to the Co-op, turns into Bilton Lane which it follows as far as Old Mere Lane (aka Mire Lane, Cinder Path, bridleway, cycle path) which starts almost opposite Hall Lane. The boundary follows this path as far as Woodfield Road turns right along Woodfield Road back to the start point on Skipton Road.

The site of the estate just before development started shown on the OS map of 1889



How Can You Help?

Plans are still at a very early stage. The Society already holds information on the area but is always looking for more. Have you any photographs, memories, stories you would like to share? We are keen to increase our collection of more recent records from the last half of the 20th century and early 2000s, as well as anything older.

We would not keep your personal photographs or written material but, with your permission, would like to scan them into our digital archive then return the original documents to you.

Within the project area there is a church, various social/sports clubs, bowling greens, an allotment site, shops houses, families. What else is there? No longer here is the Dragon pub and prefab estate. What else has disappeared? It is not only buildings that can disappear or change use. What about occupations?

This project has the potential to cover many different themes and interests. If you would like to get involved or have anything you think may be of interest do visit us. Find out where and when in the "Where to Meet Us" section of this newsletter or contact the project co-ordinator Alan Gould at:

mail@biltonhistoricalsociety.org.uk or telephone 01423 203097

Grandparents

A six year old came home from school and said to her grandmother "Grandma, guess what? We learned how to make babies today." The grandmother, more than a little surprised, tried to keep her cool. "That's interesting" she said "How do you make babies?" "It's simple" replied the girl. "You just change 'y' to 'i' and add 'es'."

Children's Logic: "Give me a sentence about a public servant" said a teacher. The small boy wrote: "The fireman came down the ladder pregnant." The teacher took the lad aside to correct him. "Don't you know what pregnant means?" she asked. "Sure" said the young boy confidently. "It means carrying a child."

A grandfather was delivering his grandchildren to their home one day when a fire engine zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the engine was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties. "They use him to keep crowds back," said one child. "No," said another. "He's just for good luck." A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrants."

Grandpa is the smartest man on earth! He teaches me good things, but I don't get to see him enough to get as smart as him!

Taken from papers written by a class of 8-year olds and provided by the late David Coates

Winter Evening Talks

For those who missed the talks here is a summary of the first three

1st October 2025

Prof. Joyce Hill

"In and Under the Vatican"

The start of the new season of winter evening talks welcomed 36 members to listen to Professor Joyce Hill's presentation "In and Under the Vatican".

In her usual humorous and energetic style, Joyce recounted her visits to the Vatican City to study, by invitation, the roman and early Christian tombs, including that of St. Peter, which had been unearthed beneath the present day St. Peter's Basilica.

She described how the ancient roman Circus of Caligula, or Circus of Nero, had been a significant venue located in what is now the present-day Vatican City. This circus, first built under Caligula and later completed by Claudius had been used for chariot races and other public games. It also served as a site for executions, including the martyrdom of Saint Peter. The area was later subdivided for the construction of tombs in the necropolis, and the remains were destroyed during the construction of the new St. Peter's Basilica. At the same time, the obelisk at the centre of the circus, which had been originally brought to Rome by Caligula, was moved the short distance to its present location in St. Peter's Square in the late 16th century.

The ancient tombs, discovered during the Second World War, were richly decorated with examples of early Christian paintings and mosaics, and many showed evidence of alterations from pagan images to Christian.

Joyce also amused the audience with her experiences of being treated like royalty as an invited guest of the Vatican, including a meeting and prayer with Pope Benedict.



5th November 2025

Alan Gould



"We Will Remember Them"

Our last event in remembrance of the 80th anniversary of the end of the 2nd World war was our Wednesday talk given by Alan, our secretary, on the 5th November during the week before Armistice Day. It was on his latest research into the lives of the men and women from Bilton and New Park who lost their lives in the War. His local sources of information included the memorial tablets in St. John's Church, Bar Methodist Chapel, The Grammar school and the War Memorial. 71 men and 4 women were identified as having lost their lives and most of the streets had at least one death. They fought in most theatres of war from Europe, through North Africa to the Far East, but most died in the UK or Europe. There were peaks of deaths around the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940, when three men were killed on the same day as a result of the sinking of the ship Lancastria, whilst being evacuated from St. Nazaire in France, and during the final 11 months of the war in Europe following the D-day landing on 6th June 1944. Most of the deaths were through active service, but others were due to accidents, health, training and as prisoners of war.

Their ages ranged mostly from 18 to 35 but the oldest, Corporal George Bertam Forster of St. John's Drive, the Chief Warder at Hong Kong Prison who served with the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, was 48 when he died as a prisoner of war in the Stanley Internment Camp. Our youngest casualty was Private Denis Quinlan of Skipton Road. He was serving with the Green Howards and was killed whilst on a training exercise when only 18½ years old.

Corporal Kenneth Amos Miles, whose wife was Elsie Barker of Eastville Terrace was very unfortunate because he had only been married for 105 days when he was killed in Normandy in July 1944.

Not all of those remembered died during the war. The death of any member of the Services which occurred before the end of 1947 was considered a war death and five of Bilton's fallen died during this period. The last of whom was Sister Florrie Pest of the Territorial Army Nursing Service, who was mentioned in despatches. She served throughout the war in Northern Europe, Iceland, North Africa and the Middle East and her final posting was in Hiroshima, Japan following the dropping of the atomic bomb.



All those who gave their lives for our future were remembered in the poppy display in front of Bilton Community Centre and on labels put up on lampposts in the streets where they lived.



Lamppost in Albert Road



3rd December 2025**Andy Wilson****“100 years of Saving Lives in Our Community”**

A small number of members braved the December weather to listen to an excellently delivered talk by Andy Wilson of Yorkshire Cancer Research on the history and numerous successes of this local research charity as it celebrates its centenary.

At a meeting in Leeds University's Old Medical School on 21st May 1925, eighteen of Yorkshire's most eminent industrialists and aristocrats founded a new organisation, “The Yorkshire Council of the British Empire Cancer Campaign”, intent on ‘the improvement of cancer research in this part of the kingdom’.

In January 1925, at a lunch in the Queens Hotel, Leeds hosted by the charity's president, Viscount Henry Lascelles (the future 6th Earl Harwood), the founders of the charity pledged a staggering £50,000 (equivalent to £2.5 million today) so that the charity's work could begin. Over the following 100 years, with the support from the generous people of Yorkshire, the fledgling charity has gone from strength to strength and today is known as Yorkshire Cancer Research.

Over its 100 years of existence, Yorkshire Cancer Research has been at the forefront of pioneering work investigating the causes of cancer, its treatment by radiation, chemotherapy and new drug development, etc. More recently the charity's use of MRI scanning and mobile CT scanners in shopping centre car parks has improved the early detection of cancers, screening programmes that have now been adopted more widely by the NHS.

Yorkshire Cancer Research's work continues. At its 30th anniversary in 1955, Chairman Sir Harold Mackintosh (of toffee fame) offered his deepest appreciation to the scientists and voluntary helpers whose unfailing energy had supported three decades of cancer research for the benefit of humanity. Seventy years on the message is still the same: Thank you!

The meeting raised £102 to support the work of Yorkshire Cancer Research.

Yorkshire Evening Post, Thursday 12th March 1896**Singular Fatality at Harrogate**

Yesterday, a child named Grace Schofield, aged 1 year 11 months, the daughter of Mrs. Schofield, widow, residing in Bachelor Gardens, Harrogate, was admitted to Harrogate Cottage Hospital suffering with injuries to the neck caused by falling upon some knives. The child had got to the knife drawer and gathered a handful of knives and forks. The mother, seeing her told her to put them down, but instead of doing so the little one ran away with them playfully, and doing so fell, when one of the knives penetrated the neck and severed two arteries.

Santa Claus has the right idea: visit people only once a year *Victor Borge*

Our season of talks continue in the new year at Bilton Community Centre.
The talks start at 7:30pm and admission, which includes refreshments and a raffle, is £4 for members and £5 for non-members.

4th February 2026

Mr. David Winpenny

“A Very Dangerous Work”

Sir Gilbert Scott and the Restoration of Ripon Cathedral.

Sir George Gilbert Scott 1811-1878 was a prolific English Gothic Revival Architect. He was associated with the design, building and renovation of churches and cathedrals and began his career as a designer of workhouses. He was the architect of many notable buildings in London, including the Midland Group Hotel at St. Pancras Station, The Albert Memorial and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

This talk will be about how Sir Gilbert Scott restored Ripon Cathedral.

David is a writer and lecturer, mostly on architectural and related subjects. He is Co-Chair of Ripon Civic Society and regularly lectures on the above subjects. He also lectures on cruises and has published several books.

4th March 2026

Mr. Ken Shaw

“The Lost Plains of Doggerland”

During the last Ice Age sea levels fell to such an extent that the whole of the North Sea, an area of a quarter of a million square miles, turned to dry land which has become known as Doggerland. Objects recovered in modern times from the sea bed reveal that Doggerland was inhabited by mammoths, woolly rhinoceros, cave lions, bears, hyenas, bison, sabre-toothed cats and ...humans too. The talk considers how our ancestors would have existed in what were rapidly changing and challenging times.

Ken worked as a Quantity Surveyor in the construction industry. He now focuses on archaeology and history, compiling many talks on these and other subjects.

1st April 2026

Annual General Meeting

followed by a talk by

Suzanne Coulson

“Dark Threads”

Child Exploitation in the 19th century Textile Industry

Children made up a significant part of the textile industry workforce – but

Why were they employed and what did they do?

How did conditions in which they worked impact upon their health?

Who were the apprentices and how were they treated?

What were the varying views and practices in mills in the local and wider area towards child labour?

How was this exploitation of young lives slowly addressed?

And most importantly - hear the children's voices, telling of their experiences.

Susanne is a volunteer, secretary and trustee of Knaresborough Museum Association with a background in children's nursing and clinical education.

Where to Meet Us

Bilton Historical Society Tuesday Group. An informal meeting at Bilton Community Centre on the following Tuesdays between 9:30 and 11:30:

6th and 20th January, 3rd and 17th February, 3rd, 17th and 31st March, 14th and 28th April.

Casual visitors preferred on the 1st meeting of the month.

Come along to help plan for the Society's 30th anniversary next year.

Monthly History Drop-In Sessions at Bilton and Woodfield Community Library to meet a member of the committee and look at archives.

Third Thursday of each month 15th January, 19th February, 19th March, 16th April.

Community Centre Quiz

Six members of the Historical Society took part in the Community Centre Quiz on Friday 28th November and our team the "Histericals" was a credible second.

Congratulations to the winning team the "Hill Top Hoppers".

"Oddballs and Knitwits", the winners of the last two quizzes, were third.

Well done!

Anne, Jean, Pamela, Ronnie, Mike and Alan.

We hope you enjoyed searching for the answers in our Christmas quiz and that it will make you think about joining us in next years Community Centre quiz. If you would like to be on our potential winning team next year, let us know. If we have more than the numbers for one team we can put in two to double our chance of winning. Perhaps some new brains would help us to get first place!

Treasurer

We are pleased to have had a response to our request for a treasurer to take over from Alan, who has been acting treasurer since the retirement of Peter. We will be welcoming Sandra who will be joining us to take over at the next AGM.

Vacancy for Newsletter Editor

We are still asking if someone would like to take over the editing of this Newsletter. We were not surprised to receive any replies so until we find a replacement for Keith, the newsletter is being put together by an editorial team made up of committee members. It involves assembling 4 newsletters a year with supplied material. The majority of members receive the Newsletter by e-mail in pdf format whilst only a few members receive a hard copy. Having access to a computer with knowledge of working with Publisher or Word is required.

You do not have to be a member of the committee for this post.

If interested please e-mail us at email@biltonhistoricalsociety.org.uk, phone Alan on 01423 203097 or come to see us at one of the "Where to Meet us" venues.