

BILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Anne Richards.....

PROGRAMME FOR 2004

Enclosed with this newsletter is the programme for 2004. 'As usual it contains a variety of talks, lectures and walks for your enjoyment. Please write the dates in your diary now so as not to miss any. As only four newsletters a year are produced they cannot be relied upon as a reminder for meetings, and you don't want to miss Sir Thomas Ingilby in February do you? The next newsletter should be with you in March.

HOME GUARD

Did Bilton or Harrogate have an Auxiliary Unit of the Home Guard during the Second World War? Apparently the people who served in these units were not the usual Home Guard members but hand picked people who had to operate in the strictest secrecy. It is understood that a list of names of those who served in these units has recently been made available and is in the Public Records Office, London. The units operated at important strategic sites and could take action in the event of an enemy attack. With a railway viaduct and a fuel dump on the doorstep the existence of a local auxiliary unit of the Home Guard cannot be ruled out. If anyone has any information please contact the editor

ODDS AND ENDS

(Extracts from a letter by John Fletcher)

Bilton Parish Church drive. The felling of the 12 elm trees caused a lot of local controversy, prompting the then Churchwardens to write to *The Harrogate Advertiser* to defend the necessity of the felling - this was in 1959 or 1960 in the interregnum between Vicars - after the death of the Rev. Harold D. Pearson and before the institution of the late Rev. W. Vyvyan F. K. Watts-Jones. On that occasion the consent of the Diocese of Ripon was needed and obtained.

The Farm, Knox Lane. There used to be a dutch barn built of corrugated iron behind The Farm; it was badly damaged in a a gale in the 1950s. I also remember a "mistal" (cow house) in the field where Bachelor Way now leaves Bachelor Gardens. My mother told me that following some meeting about Bachelor Gardens Coronation Fund Mrs Dale's father emerged from the building with a rusty chain draped round his shoulders jokingly offering his services as mayor for the Great Day.

WHERE DID THE ROOFING SLATES COME FROM?

by Anne Richards

In the search for the missing pieces of the landscape survey puzzle it is sometimes necessary to look in places which, at first, seem rather unlikely sources. On finding a booklet in Harrogate Library entitled "Scotton and its Methodist Chapel" by Arnold Kellet published in 1985 for Scotton Methodist Chapel I wondered if it may hold some clues.

Scotton is an adjoining parish to Bilton linked by ford over the River Nidd. No place exists in isolation and a visit to a neighbouring parish can help put some things into perspective. So how could a book on Scotton Methodist Chapel help interpret the landscape of Bilton?

From the book we learn that the building of Scotton Methodist Chapel began in 1825 and on 14th June wood was purchased for £3-15-6d, in July the first load of stones was purchased for £3-0-0 and on 13th August a payment of 5s was made for "2 days leading (transporting) stones and lime." On 23rd October 1825 slates for the roof were purchased for £13-18-2d; these would likely be local stone slab slates rather than those from Wales or the Lake District.

The date 1825 predates the railway by more than 20 years so the wood, stone and slates probably came from local sources. Stone, of course, is very heavy therefore difficult and expensive to transport over long distances by pack horse, hence the assumption that it will have come from a local quarry; but which quarry? The Nidd Gorge is full of disused quarries on both sides of the river and little, if anything, is known about most of them.

The chances of finding information on the quarries, eg. where was the stone used and who were the people working there, is very slim but a search through the early accounts of Scotton Methodist Chapel may reveal the name of the person who transported the stone, the address of the quarry owner or even the location of the quarry itself. So, does anyone know where these records are likely to be and would anyone like to go and look at them for us? A large quantity of fragmentary information is being accumulated and fragments of information from elsewhere may be the missing links needed to complete the picture. If the quarry where the stone for Scotton Methodist Chapel was extracted could be identified it could also be dated. Once a date for a feature has been ascertained it is often possible to establish whether surrounding features are older or newer; and so the picture grows.

The other thing that could be done is to ask a geologist to examine the slates of the roof of Scotton Methodist Chapel and link them to a local quarry. Sadly, the slates must have been of poor quality because there are several reference to a William Kellet the Slater being paid to repair the roof and in 1909 the whole roof was replaced as part of a much larger renovation and modernisation scheme.

Today the roof of Scotton Methodist Chapel is of blue slate, probably from Wales. In 1909 transport of heavy goods was no longer a problem as they could be brought to Knaresborough or Ripley by train leaving only a short road journey to Scotton.

A search through the early accounts of Scotton Methodist Chapel may not help with the landscape survey as further clues may not be revealed or a quarry outside the study area could be identified. The questions prompting the search may not be answered but what is guaranteed is that the searcher will find all sorts of other interesting snippets he or she will wish to find out more about and instead of having one question to answer he or she could leave with several.

CHAPTER 3 OF ELEANOR DALE'S BOOK

KNOXLANE

Once across Spruisty Bridge we are in Bilton, the other side being Killinghall Parish. For many years the Bilton side was under the administration of Knaresborough Rural District Council before it was incorporated into Harrogate Borough Council. The children on the Bilton side usually attended Bilton Endowed School.

The first cottage on the left after leaving the Beck was a shop kept by a Mrs Duffield and later taken over by Mrs I. Smith. The shop closed sometime in the late 1950s. In the last cottage of the row is the remains of a pump which can still be seen. Next came a market garden run by Mr Pettinger. Between the terrace and the market garden is a gate leading to two fields, at the far side of which two houses were built at the side of the beck; they have long since been demolished. My dad rented the two fields from Mr Pettinger and in the summer when the cows slept in the fields my friends and I would be delegated to take the herd to them from Bachelor Gardens after they had been milked in the afternoon, accompanied by the dog. We were instructed to let them graze on the way down on the wide grass verges which are still there today but not so lush or tidy. We were not allocated this task when the gypsies were camped there, which they did about twice a year.

The next row of cottages had a pump in a garden, this faced on to the pavement. I can remember when our second form teacher Miss Dickinson took us for nature walks down to the Beck, the boys would run forward to work the pump handle and flood the pavement before she could stop them.

Half way up Knox Lane a red iron bridge crossed over the road and carried the light railway into a tunnel on its way to New Park Gas Works; this, of course, was the Barber Line which enabled coal to be hauled from Bilton Junction to New Park. The tunnel came out near to the playground of New Park School. Sometimes, on its way back from the gasworks it would pull tankers containing tar oil. The line became extinct after the Second World War. The Barber engine is currently in a sorry state at Armley Mills Museum, Leeds awaiting restoration. Once the railway closed coal was hauled by road from Bilton Junction.

Beyond the bridge the land bordering Knox Lane belonged to three farms. To the left, where the Kebbel Estate now is, the first two fields were cornfields and the next field, the biggest, was a pasture. On the right of the Lane the first field belonged to Lambs Farm and was quite rocky. On the brow of the hill stood an old barn which I believe was home to many barn owls. This was demolished when the Knox and Ripley Estate was built. Next was a field that had been used as a market garden by the same market gardener who worked the Bachelor Gardens plot. My dad bought this field from Mr Carter and farmed it until after the Second World War. Before the War dad had sold the frontage to Mr F. Wilkinson who built the first houses on Knox Lane, later he purchased the rest of the field for development. The next field, where Knox Avenue is, belonged to Hill Top Farm. Bilton Cricket Club played cricket on the flat area of this field for many years. As children we would go and watch the game but if anyone misbehaved the grown up spectators would send us home in disgrace. We were not permitted to be noisy either. When Mr Thackray gave up farming and the farm changed hands the cricket club moved to land near the church before purchasing land on Bilton Lane where the fine ground and clubhouse are today. At the top of Knox Lane, at its junction with Bachelor Gardens and Crab are two stone cottages which are very old, but more of this next time.

BILTON WITH HARROGATE - OUR HISTORIC INDUSTRY

Quarterly Update

Weekly meetings are continuing at Bilton Community Centre on Tuesday mornings between 9.30am and 12.30pm. We have been pleased to welcome a steady stream of visitors calling in to see what is happening, the most distant being John Lee from Wynmondham in Norfolk. If you have not been to see us yet do drop in; 10.30am is a good time, we have coffee then.

Media attention has been high and several local and regional newspapers have featured the project. Harrogate Advertiser readers will not have failed to notice the photograph of the good looking quartet gracing its pages.

Map histories are progressing well and computer input is steady. An update of the computer programme caused a delay because it did not work properly. Sound familiar? Help and advice is available from the consultant archaeologist, Kevin, and Colin of the Knaresborough Community Archaeology Group who designed the database, but it would be really useful if we could persuade someone to become our computer co-ordinator. This person need not be particularly interested in gathering the information or inputting it as we have a good team working on both these aspects, but the person would need to be interested in the computer programmes, the database, the overall objective, be prepared to liaise with Kevin and Colin and possibly North Yorkshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record Office, update the programmes when necessary and, perhaps, help to train interested members of the team. If you know someone who may be interested please ask them to contact me.

In addition to visits to West Yorkshire Archives at Sheepscar, Leeds a visit to North Yorkshire Archives at Northallerton has now been made. The volume of information there of potential use to us is mind boggling. It is unlikely that we will be able to assimilate all this before the current project ends in Autumn 2004 but there is always another project after that. We would be particularly interested in hearing from anyone who would like to become involved in a systematic search of the records at Sheepscar and/or Northallerton.

Now that winter is here we have started field visits again. As much time as possible will be spent in the Nidd Gorge whilst vegetation is low. Because of the dry summer water levels in the River Nidd have been at their lowest since the landscape survey started and some anomalies have come to light. We call them anomalies because we do not know what they are. It has been suggested that youngsters may have been making childish attempts to divert the river, dam it or try to cross it. I used to do that sort of thing a long time ago but I did not use stones that big, I couldn't lift them, and lost interest long before my structures reached the size of those being discovered. Furthermore my structures were usually destroyed by the next flood. However, children's activity cannot be entirely ruled out so perhaps long term residents may be able to help. Can you remember playing in the Nidd with large stones? If you can please let us know where you played and what you did. If you are too embarrassed to admit to ever being a child (however old you were at the time) please don't be, all information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Anne Richards

This project is supported by Local Heritage Initiative, a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency.

MORE ABOUT KING EDWARD'S DRIVE

by Cedric Wilkinson

The terrace which is numbered 48 to 64 King Edward's Drive, which now forms King Edward's Drive shopping parade, was built around 1913. It would seem that it was always the intention for all these premises to become shops but it was not until after 1968 that this was achieved. There were still two private houses with fronting gardens in 1965 when I took a photograph of my son in his St. Aidans School uniform from no. 51 with the parade in the background. There were 4 shops initially occupying the 2 pairs at the ends of the terrace. No 48 opened as a fruiterer (greengrocer), no. 50 as a butcher, no. 62 as a newsagent and no. 64 as a grocery.

No 48 saw little change remaining a greengrocer's until about 1965. For nearly 30 years the proprietors were the Stubbs family. Mrs Stubbs, now in her 90s, still lives in Church Avenue at the house with the monkey puzzle tree. The shop then became a wine shop Taggers, then Threshers (The Drinks Cabin)

No 50 similarly saw little change continuing as a butcher's until nearly the end of the century. The shop was empty for several years before being acquired by Active Edge, a business retailing sports wear and equipment and providing internet access to extreme sports.

Numbers 52 and 54, throughout the years, have had a parallel existence. They were both private houses until about 1968 when no. 54 opened as a washeteria (Launderette) to be followed shortly with the addition of No. 52. The double shop closed around the turn of the century when it was acquired by Wright's Chemists, who moved from the single shop at no. 56.

This move ended more than 80 years for no. 56 as a chemist's shop. For many of these years the proprietors were the Pickles family. The present business is a hairdresser (Gilly's Hair Port) which moved from No. 15.

For some 25 years no. 58 was a private house, but just before World War II Mr Clifford Johnson, who had the newsagency at No. 62, also acquired the Post Office business and transferred to no. 58. For many years the post office had been at no. 110, the post master there having the apt name of Rowland Hill. In the 1960s Bill Hunt became post master, expanded the shop and brought new life to it. He was followed in about 1997 by Roy Langstaffe and then in 2003 by Mr Mann who still retains the newsagency at no. 144.

No 60 was similarly a private house until about 1940 when a Mr Geo. Smith opened a draper's. It has had several owners over the years. In 1955 it was recorded as Albany Cleaners (Mrs A. Winterburn); in 1963 a ladies outfitter (K. Craggs); in 1966 a draper again (A. E. Burl). Sometime round about the turn of the century in became Bilton Discounts, a general store.

After the newsagency at no. 62 closed the shop was empty for some time before becoming a ladies' hairdresser's in the 1950s. It remained so until nearly the end of the century when it was acquired by Jacksons and incorporated into their premises at no. 64. No 64 opened as a grocery becoming a bakery after World War I. The proprietor was Mr A. Broadley. In the mid 1960s it was Christines Cake shop. After a short period as a mini market it was acquired by Jacksons, who extended the premises to include no. 62.

Readers will have memories of individual occupants of the houses and shops but it has not been possible to list them all in the context of this article. If you would like to share your memories with me please telephone 569731 and we will arrange to have a chat

KNOX BLEACH WORKS

by Peter Barnes

The piece in the last newsletter "Knox Hamlet" by Eleanor Dale has prompted me to write this further piece about Knox.

I was particularly interested in Eleanor's reference to a bleach mill. I think that this would probably be better described as a bleach works and that it is likely to have post-dated the Knox Corn Mill rather than pre-dated it. That being so, it would also have been on a different site, but where?

As a member of the LHI Landscape Survey project team, I have recently been carrying out some further research in order to complete writing up our records for the sewage works. Amongst other things, I have read again the long section on sewerage in "History of Harrogate under the Improvement Commissioners: 1841-1884" by H. H. Walker, namely Chapter 24 "Sewerage - The Battle of the Bleachworks". The chapter recounts the long, sorry saga of the establishment of sewers and sewage treatment for Harrogate in the latter half of the 19th century, which eventually lead up to the creation of the Northern Outfall Sewage Works in Bilton in 1905.

As the chapter heading indicates, the story includes reference to a bleach works. In fact it includes an account of lengthy litigation between the Commissioners and a Mr Wood over the alleged pollution of his Knox Bleach Works as a result of sewage effluent being discharged into Knox Beck (Oak Beck). The account clearly establishes that there was a bleach works in Knox, and it was adjacent to Oak Beck but it gives no clue as to its precise location. However, it does tell us that the land on which it was situated was originally owned by Countess de Bois Ferriers, a relation of the local Sheepshanks family, until it was bought by the Commissioners in April 1875. This will perhaps enable us to identify its location eventually by reference to archive records.

It is curious that, although the old maps we are using for the project show a number of bleach works in Bilton, none of them show a bleach works in Knox or on Oak Beck. Yet clearly there was one. Has anyone any clues or further information?

There is another, probably related, mystery. The 1890 Ordnance Survey maps show two prominent lines starting about 100 metres apart in the area which subsequently became the sewage works, one line runs west to the A61 then SSE down the verge of the road to the Skipton Road roundabout, the other runs east towards Bilton crossing. So far we have not been able to identify precisely where they terminated or for certain what they were. They are not identified on the maps, nor are they shown on subsequent maps. It is possible that the western line may be the pipeline to carry treated sewage effluent, bypassing Knox Bleach Works, which is referred to in Walker's book as being a consequence of the long-running Wood litigation. Once again, can anyone throw any more light on this subject?

There is a De Ferriers Avenue off Kings Road. Is this street named after the family mentioned above? Any further information would be most welcome, (ed)?