

BILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

March 2004 - No. 35

Editor: Anne Richards

MEMBER'S EVENING AND AGM
ON
WEDNESDAY 7th APRIL, 2004
AT
7.30pm

Bilton Community Centre,
48 Bilton Lane, Harrogate.

The AGM will start at 7.30pm prompt. The agenda and annual report are printed within this newsletter. It is hoped proceedings will have concluded by 8.00pm when refreshments will be served and followed by

**WITH HAVERSACK, GAS MASK AND LABEL by
Dr Roy and Mrs Rosemary Boud**

Please note there will be no raffle on this occasion.
Members free. Visitors welcome £1.00

MEMBER'S EVENING

on

Wednesday, 2nd June 2004

at 7.30pm at Bilton Community Centre

THE 1892 GREAT TRAIN CRASH AT THIRSK

by Cooper and Margaret Harding

All welcome. Members free, visitors £1.

Refreshments and raffle

BILTON GALA

Bilton Historical Society will have a stand at Bilton Gala which takes place on Monday, 3rd May 2004. We will **not** be having a tombola this year. Instead there will be a local history display, we will tell people about our work and try and recruit new members. Helpers are needed to erect and dismantle the display and to man the stand during the day on a rota, thus allowing everyone the chance to enjoy the other attractions. Offers of help please to Anne Richards.

ODDS AND ENDS

Bilton Endowed School (from John Fletcher) The air raid shelter was at the north west corner of the school, reached by a gate and flight of steps down from the girls' yard. The shelter was partly below ground level and covered by a grassy mound. It remained disused after the War for as long as I can remember. My parents told me that few residents used it - a few at first on the outbreak of hostilities.

King's Road and Hill Top (from John Fletcher) I remember when I was a child a dairy on the south side of King's Road opposite the then Post Office, called Hill Top Dairy. In those days the Ordnance Survey called the area "Harrogate End or Hill Top", but no-one I knew used those terms and this was the only instance I ever saw of the use of "Hill Top" - not Hill Top Avenue and Road (half a mile away) which later sprouted a whole estate of "Hill Top" street names.

Gordon Avenue VE Party (enquiry from Geoff Deighton)

We have a photograph of the Gordon Avenue VE Party but we do not know where this party was held. Can anyone help, please?

The next instalment from **Eleanor Dale** will appear in the June newsletter.

Wartime in the woods (enquiry from Anne Richards)

Was there any wartime activity in the woods in or near the Nidd Gorge during the Second World War? For example a look out post or Home Guard activities.

Famous customers of the Gardener's Arms. It has been reported that Andre Previn, the orchestral conductor visited the Gardener's Arms as a customer.

In response to the article in the last newsletter about the roofing slates at Scotton Methodist Church **Dorothy Fieldhouse** sent a letter saying that there was a little quarry on the Scotton side of the Nidd Gorge on a road which sounds very much like a continuation of Milner Lane at the other side of the ford across the Nidd. Dorothy used to go there with her uncle, Firth Kershaw, who was a builder. His business was on Skipton Road where the wine merchant now is opposite the Skipton pub (formerly Dragon). This would be in about 1917 and Dorothy still has a stone in her garden which was carried there by a young man who worked at the quarry. Dorothy suggests we consult some trade directories of the time to see if they throw any light on the origin of the roofing tiles of Scotton Methodist Church. What a good idea.

It was good to hear from **Valerie Witts** who now lives in Bedfordshire. She says the cottages at the top of Bilton Lane were once called "Spring Cottages", she would like to know more about them because her mother was born in one of them. (I'm guessing but could they have been called Spring Cottages because there was a well in the end garden? ed.)

An enquiry from **Anne Richards** about the electricity pylons striding across our study area from the sub station in Jennyfield to where they cross the Nidd Gorge. Can anyone remember when they were erected and how it was done?

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ON KING EDWARD'S DRIVE

by John Fletcher

I remember that whilst a small child in the late 1940s the West Yorkshire Road Car Co. Ltd's bus services from Harrogate Bus Station terminated at the corner of King Edward's Drive and Willow Grove. The No. 11 came via Victoria Avenue, Montpellier Hill, Crescent Road, King's Road, Skipton Road and Bilton Lane. The No. 12 came via Mayfield Grove, Franklin Road, King's Road and King Edward's Drive Post Office. My recollection is that a No. 11 coming from town would turn into No. 12 to go back, and vice versa. However, I also distinctly recollect the "car" (as the bus company called it) reversing into Willow Grove to await departure time. In those days every bus carried a conductor, who got off to ensure safety in reversing, using his whistle. If the 11 became a 12 and vice versa, I am not clear why it was necessary to back into Willow Grove.

The buses were Bristol diesel single deckers, with a half-cab and an entrance at the front and an emergency exit at the back. The destination "Bilton", route and number were shown on a book of clapper boards held on to the front of the bus by clips. The crew changed the "page" at each end of the run by climbing up the front of the vehicle. The windows were wooden framed and I did not think that the buses gave a very smooth ride.

The fare for an adult from Bilton to town was 2d. Shortly after the Bachelor Gardens service was introduced for the first time ever in (I think) 1948 (Service 9A) at the exorbitant fare of one halfpenny more, I remember my mother asking for a "a tuppenny-ha'penny one" on a Bilton No. 11 and being told by the conductor, "There aren't any tuppenny-ha'penny ones on this route."

While I was at primary school, the routes were re-organised. The No. 12 was extended down Bilton Lane to the corner of Grosvenor Road and run by double deckers. These all had conductors and were Bristol diesels. Many were "low-bridge" (with a sunken gangway along the offside of the top deck), but some were the newfangled Bristol Lodekka, launched at the Festival of Britain.

Services from King Edward's Drive via Bilton Lane/Low Harrogate ceased; the No. 11 service being diverted to Bachelor Gardens.

Following complete reorganisation of Harrogate local services in late 1960s buses from Harrogate to King Edward's Drive originated from the Starbeck area. One service followed the traditional route the full length of King Edward's Drive onto Bilton Lane, extended to the corner of Fountains Avenue. The other came down part of Woodfield Road from Senior's Corner, then along Rawson Terrace, calling at one stop in King Edward's Drive before going down Poplar Grove to terminate at Roche Avenue. This remained the pattern with slight extensions until the routes were joined in a circular at the east end. For a few months there was bus to Bilton Crossing.

For many years there was also a single decker bus (no route number) once a week each way on Sunday afternoons New Park - Bilton - Stonefall Cemetery (from Sykes Grove along Skipton Road, down Bilton Lane and up King Edward's Drive) which avoided the town centre by going direct along Skipton Road and Wetherby Road. As there were no Sunday funerals at Stonefall, presumably this service was worth running just for people who visited graves there.

Regarding Knox Bleach Works, John recollects reading in an old book, the name of which he cannot remember, that there was a bleach works on the site of the later nurseries on the north side of Knox Lane a few yards up from Oak Beck. The works were described as the bete noire of the place.

BILTON WITH HARROGATE - OUR HISTORIC INDUSTRY

Quarterly Update

The winter months of January, February and March are usually the busiest of the year. This is because the undergrowth and vegetation in the woodlands and open countryside is at its lowest and therefore it is the best time to see what is actually there.

Most fieldwork has been carried out in the Nidd Gorge and detailed records of Coal Pit Wood have been compiled. Spring Wood and Bilton Beck Wood have been explored generally but detailed recording will now have to wait until next winter. Knox Hill has been seen in a new light and there is more to Oak Beck Park than is immediately obvious. Limekiln Plantation has been viewed from Bilton Lane and several landowners have kindly allowed us access to their land.

One of the field days was devoted to geology and we were accompanied by professional geologist, Ian Burgess, who was able to clarify and explain features that were puzzling us. Botanist and Historical Society member, Ian Wallace, accompanied the group on occasions. Ian is conducting a botanical survey of the Gorge (not part of the Historical Society project) and we have found that botanists and archaeologists sometimes record the same feature, albeit for different reasons. Hopefully, we can continue to help each other.

Indoors the recording of field histories from maps and photographs continues and data is regularly input to the computer. Visits to record offices have included West Yorkshire Archives and Yorkshire Archaeological Society at Leeds plus a record office in Northumberland where a document relating to Bilton Coalfield in the pre Industrial Revolution days was located. It is common knowledge that the coalfield was worked before the Industrial Revolution but now documentary evidence to support what can be seen in the field has started to emerge.

Consultant Archaeologist, Kevin Cale instigated two workshops for Community Archaeology groups. The first, at Masham, was attended by two members and concerned websites. Hopefully we may now be in a position to contribute directly to the LHI website page on Bilton with Harrogate - Our Historic Industry. Some of our members are already on the LHI website under Bilton with Harrogate - Our Historic Industry.

Three members attended the second workshop at Dacre concerning digital archiving. All present were convinced that the records being produced should be stored digitally. The sites and Monuments Record Office, where the information will eventually be housed, welcome this and, in any case digital archiving is the only practical way the volume of records being generated can be stored by organisations without their own permanent premises. However, digital archiving is a contentious issue because no-one knows whether the archives will survive more than 20 years and some record offices will not accept digital records. For practical reasons we have to hope that the pessimists are wrong. The software we have seen appears, not only to lend itself to the storage of the Landscape Survey records, but to the wider Historical Society records as well. We will certainly be following this up.

Even the keenest computer enthusiasts agree that staring at a computer screen in no way compares with the pleasure of leafing through a really good book. A really good book of our findings is something we aim for in the long term but right now we are about to start compiling the report "Bilton with Harrogate - Our Historic Industry" which should be available in the Autumn.

Does anybody still think history is boring and lacks variety?

Anne Richards

The Annual General Meeting of Bilton Historical Society will take place on Wednesday, 7th April, 2004 at Bilton Community Centre, 48 Bilton Lane, Harrogate at 7.30pm prompt

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Apologies Absence
- 2) Minutes of the Previous AGM
- 3) Matters Arising
- 4) To adopt the Annual Report (printed below)
- 5) To adopt the Treasure's Report and Account 2003/4 (to be circulated at meeting)
- 6) To elect Officers and Committee
- 7) Any Other Business

ANNUAL REPORT 2003/4

Membership of the Society is currently 96 which is very similar to the previous year. During the year Alistair Fletcher accepted the position of Chairman, Peter Barnes was welcomed as Treasurer and Ken Timms as membership secretary.

The Society remains financially stable. Membership subscriptions are primarily used to finance expenses associated with lectures and social evenings at Bilton Community Centre, production of the newsletter and administration expenses. Thanks are expressed to Brian Selvidge for auditing the accounts.

Shortly after publication of the previous report, news was received from the Local Heritage Initiative that the Society's application for funding to extend the project had been successful. This has enabled Phase 2 "Bilton with Harrogate - Our Historic Industry" to progress during the year. A dedicated group of core workers has spent the time on desk research, fieldwork and visits to Leeds City Archives such that the project is now approaching a stage where a formal report can be written with a view to subsequent publication. Much progress has been made in understanding historic industrial activity in the Bilton and Nidd Gorge area and a considerable amount of hitherto unpublished material has been identified. The project is very dependent on the guidance of Kevin Cale, Community Archaeologist; professional assistance has also been sought in the field of geology and archaeological sciences. The group very much looks forward to sharing the results of their work with you.

The successful Awards for All grant application referred to in last year's report has allowed the purchase for Society use of a computer and ancillary equipment, a digital camera and a printer/scanner. These have all found fruitful use in the project.

A successful Open Day was held at the Community Centre on July 12th and about 40 people came on the associated walk in the afternoon. The Society's annual walk took place on the evening of August 6th and on August 17th a very informative and enjoyable visit to Toft Gate Lime Kiln, Greenhow was led by Kevin Cale.

Cedric Wilkinson has extended his research on King Edward's Drive to include Bachelor Gardens.

Five lectures/social evenings were held at Bilton Community Centre, highlights being a very enjoyable presentation by Sir Thomas Ingilby in February and "The Sutton Hoo Ship Burials" by Eric Holder in October. The committee is indebted to Alan Oliver for compiling the programme and thanks are expressed to everyone who worked in the kitchen, provided refreshments, raffle prizes and who sold raffle tickets.

Alan Oliver is also thanked for his initiation and updating of the Society website and comments and contact with the site are encouraged. The newsletter is now quarterly and Anne Richards tries to reflect all aspects of Bilton history, drawing on your reminiscences, queries and comments. It is remarkable how an innocent aside by one member can trigger a host of memories in another.

The "Then and Now" project, a proposed publication of old and new photographs is ongoing and members are reminded that microfiche copies of certain St. John's Church records remain available as does the publication "Bilton 2000."

The Society exhibited at the Bilton Gala and it is planned to do so in the future albeit with a different format.

The activities of the Society are varied. Above all, the committee is anxious to ensure that these activities reflect the interests of members. Constructive comments from members are always welcome. The committee is now planning the next two to three years and your input is invited. We would particularly recommend to all members the Tuesday morning meetings at Bilton Community Centre. Whilst the focus remains the Landscape Survey Project, it is interesting that the gatherings have evolved to include a group of friends having very informal chats on Bilton past and present.

We have tried to thank everyone who has helped the Society in any way but there is nearly always someone that is forgotten. If this is you please accept our apologies and thanks.

Officers and Committee Members

Bill Williams (President)

Alistair Fletcher (Chairman)

Geoff Deighton (Secretary)

Peter Barnes (Treasurer)

Anne Richards (Newsletter Editor and Project Co-ordinator)

Ken Timms (Membership Secretary)

Committee Members: Dorothy Fieldhouse, Irene Kaye, Alan Oliver, Ivy Robinson.