

Bilton Historical Society Newsletter

If you need to get in touch or have something to offer, please come to the Community Centre on Tuesday morning or contact Keith Burton on (01423) 569907 or email yourbhsnews@gmail.com

What's That Smell? – part 2

David Stover

This section relates to the continued expansion of the company, the nationalisation and then the steady decline and final closure.

In 1928, the Company purchased Boroughbridge and Knaresborough Gas Companies. Boroughbridge remained open but Knaresborough, one of the oldest gas works in the country, was closed. Seven years later the Company was supplying gas to 38 parishes. In 1936 the Company merged with the United Kingdom Gas Corporation. The railway carried 51 000 tons of coal compared with 38 000 in 1924.

“Spencer” was withdrawn from service in 1944.

On 1st October 1946 the York, Harrogate & District Group of Gas Companies was formed and joined by Yeadon, Guiseley & Otley Gas.

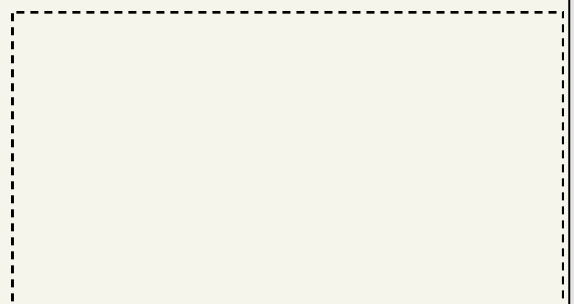
A third locomotive was purchased. It was never officially named but became known as “The Peckett” after the Peckett Company of Bristol where it was made. It was the mainstay of the line until 1949 when the diesel “Drewry” was purchased. This loco ran the line until closure in 1956.

In 1948 the Company was nationalised. Offices for York & Harrogate Group of the NEGB were set up on John Street in Harrogate. These included the Gas Showrooms. They have now become the Lakeland shop.

40 000 tons of coal were carried by rail and a further 28 000 by road from Bilton Junction in 1955 but demand could still not be met. In the following year with the introduction of more economical diesel lorries it was decided to close the railway. The last train ran in July and demolition of the railway began in November. Rolling stock and rails were broken up at New Park.

A note from John Fletcher on Part 1:

“I think that there is an error in the caption of the map on Page 7. It says “...in about 1947”, but it shows the Barber Line site as completely cleared. The line was not lifted until 1956 and I recently sent a photo of the terminal in the process of demolition in 1967” (See Page 2).





The previous article by David Strover brought two contributions. This picture of the demolition of the Coal drop Sheds was taken by John Fletcher on 16th April 1967 through the railings in Sykes Grove. It was taken on a dull day with his first

35mm camera, which he had had only 6 weeks as a 21st birthday present.

We also received the following by Keith Wilkinson. His differs in a few points but also adds a few interesting details so I hope that you will forgive me for the repetition and enjoy the extra.

Harrogate Gas Company was formed in 1845 and obtained an Act of Parliament in 1846. The works were situated at Rattle Crag on the main Ripon road (A61) at New Park. The original intention had been to build a gas works adjoining the railway at Starbeck, but this plan was dropped. The streets of Harrogate were lit by gas lamps for the first time in February 1848.

The gas works were supplied with coal transported from Starbeck railway yard, originally by horse and cart and from 1871 by a fleet of steam road locomotives travelling along the A59 through High Harrogate and Bilton to New Park. Numerous complaints were made to the gas company on account of the noise and smoke this generated, especially when coal was being transported through the night, and the severe damage the heavy vehicles caused to the roads. Well-to-do spa visitors arriving at Starbeck station to be driven by horse-drawn cab into Harrogate also experienced the general pandemonium which was compounded by the sight of the bare bottoms of the poor displayed at the upper windows of Henry Peacock's Workhouse on the High Street! Harrogate's image had to be improved!

To eliminate complaints and reduce the cost of transporting coal the company opened a coal yard at Bilton Junction where the railway to Ripon crossed Bilton Lane. Again the coal was transshipped from Bilton Junction by steam road locomotives. This was in 1880 and, though the shorter road route alleviated both the transport and environmental problems, it was not the ideal solution. The growing demand for 'town gas' outstripped the carrying capacity of these road locomotives and in 1908 - 1909, a narrow gauge railway was constructed from Bilton sidings to the New Park gasworks. The gas company purchased its first locomotive in 1908 which it named 'Barber' after the chairman of the gas company. The line, which included a tunnel carrying the tracks under the A59 at New Park and today's Knox Avenue estate, was officially opened in December 1908.

The works were enlarged again in 1908 - 1909, 1911 and 1914. In 1925 the Harrogate Gas Company took over the Pateley Bridge Gas Company whose works were at Glasshouses and by 1927 Harrogate Gas Company extended its

area of supply again by absorbing the gas undertakings of Knaresborough UDC, Tadcaster, Boston Spa and the Boroughbridge. On nationalization in 1949 the undertaking became part of the Harrogate / York Group of NEGB.

The almost insatiable demand for gas to meet Harrogate's expanding township meant that even the narrow gauge railway could not carry enough coal and during the 1950s a large proportion of the coal had to be transported by road (20 tonne diesel wagons) which led to the decision in September 1955 to close the line and revert to road transport. The last train passed through the New Park tunnel in July 1956. By the end of 1965 the Harrogate Gas works was converted to the storage of North Sea natural gas and both the narrow gauge railway and the gas production plant it supplied had gone. Apart from vestiges of the stone abutments of the transshipment depot at Bilton Junction and the single gasometer at New Park there is little obvious archaeological evidence of this important part of Harrogate's industrial past.

Post Script: 2015

During the life time of the 'Harrogate Gas Works Railway' (known locally as 'The Barber Line') the railway had a succession of steam locomotives: 'Barber', 'Spencer', 'Peckett; (unnamed in fact but identified generally by its maker's name) and a diesel (again unnamed but referred to by its maker's name 'Drewry'). 'Barber' has been refurbished and works on the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society's line at Alston in Cumbria, 'Peckett' has been named 'Harrogate' and runs on the Statfold Barn Railway (a private narrow gauge line), 'Spencer' was scrapped and the last news of 'Drewry' was many years ago at a Chrome Works in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

Members of the Tuesday Morning Study Group have started on a new topic. When looking through Ackrill's Annual of 1918 we came across the pages with the listings of officers and men of Harrogate who had been killed, wounded, gassed or missing during the War. We have picked out those who came from Bilton. Although only a small photograph and a line in a book, every one of the men named was a member of his family and would be sorely missed.

Sometimes, it seems as though they were just numbers and therefore nameless, but they mattered a great deal to their own people. We can only imagine what it must have been like when the telegram boy stopped at your gate!

In the television drama "Home Fires" you might have seen the way that one family dealt with it in WWII – pinning their hopes on a single word.

How many of the 'missing' were 'found' and was there a record kept? Again, we seem to have more questions than answers.

Were the 'Harrogate Pals' amalgamated into another regiment or did they survive as a group?

Barbara Scaife

Do you have anything in your family papers that will help us in our research?

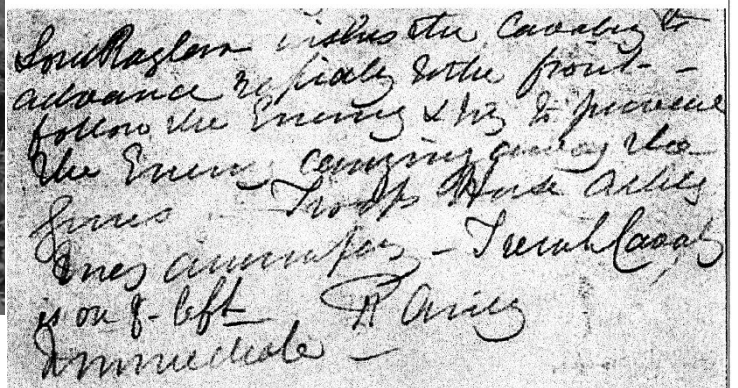


Memorial stone for Robert Johnston in Grove Road Cemetery. This was paid for and then later restored by donations.

Marion Brooks has been gathering information on the man behind this gravestone in the Grove Road Cemetery. This has followed on from an article that she found in *The Harrogate Advertiser*, written by Malcolm Neesam. As usual it produces a number of questions as well as a few answers – a single gravestone in Harrogate connected with great events in the world and famous names. The story is incomplete – like most.

Robert Johnston

Robert was born in the St Peter's area of Dublin in 1833. (In early records he appears as Johnson or Johnston). He enlisted in June or July 1852 aged 18, service number 1126 and sailed for Varna



Handwritten order for the Charge

in the Crimea on April 25th 1854 from Plymouth. Three ships sailed at that time; the "Shooting Star", the "Echunga" and the "Mary Anne". All three carried passengers and horses. Robert was on the "Shooting Star", which was a fully rigged American Clipper built in California. It weighed over 900 tons and was 154 ft long. Private Johnston, as he was then, took part in the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade" which was part of the Battle of Balaclava. It started at 11.10 am on October 25th 1854 and was led by James Brudenell 7th Earl of Cardigan. The bugle charge was sounded by Private William Brittain, Lord Cardigan's duty trumpeter. (The bugle appeared on the Antiques Road Show). Private Brittain was unhorsed and badly injured by the last volley from the Cossack battery. He was taken to Scutari hospital where he was nursed by Florence Nightingale but died later. The bugle was given to the Queens Royal Lancers and Nottingham Yeomanry Museum in 1964 by the actor Laurence Harvey.

In the front line were the 13th and 17th Lancers, followed by the 11th Hussars, and then the 8th Royal Irish Hussars and the 41st Light Dragoons. It is believed that the 8th held their line all through the charge. 673 men took part of whom 118 were killed and 127 injured. 362 horses were noted as lost but their losses were almost certainly higher as many were destroyed later. According to one source 113 were all that were left; the majority of these were to die from exposure and starvation during the dreadful winter of 1854-55. Robert came through the Charge unscathed.

The regimental mascot, a terrier dog named Jenny or Jemmy, (the names vary in different reports) accompanied them on the charge, and was wounded by a splinter in her neck. On returning to England she was presented with a collar with 5 clasps attached to it for Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman, Sevastopol and Central India. The medal is still in the officer's mess today. She embarked for India with the regiment and marched with them until the crossing of the river Chambal, where the current was too strong and she drowned.

In later years twenty veteran survivors of the charge went to see Alfred Lord Tennyson to beg for help as they were destitute. Funds were raised to help them.

We do not know why Robert came to Harrogate, but it is fairly safe to assume it was to do with his health, as the town was famous even then for its health-giving waters. Robert was admitted to the Cottage Hospital in Harrogate, North Yorkshire (now the site of the Alms Houses), and died there of an abscess of the liver on the 28th November 1882 age 48. His wife was with him at the time. He is buried in Grove Road Cemetery. As can be seen from his death certificate, he is listed as a book-keeper, so he must have been an educated man.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
Application Number 5490665-1


REGISTRATION DISTRICT: **KNARESBOROUGH**
1882 DEATH in the Sub-district of **Harrogate** in the County of **York**

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
	Spontaneously November 1882 449 Cottage Hospital Harrogate 11 & 15	Robert Johnstone	Male	48	Book-keeper Wheat	Abscess of Liver Certified by W. Williams M.D.	W. Johnstone Widow of deceased Presented the death Certificate Leavespool	Nov 28 1882 Harrogate	Thomas Seale Provl Regist

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the **28th** day of **February** 2014

DYD 656024 See note overleaf

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



The Wednesday Monthly Talks—The New Season

Please make a note of and support the talks that will be given on the first day of each month from October to December

October 7th Terry Williams - More New Park Stories

November 4th Dr Andrew Woods - What Happened to The Vale of York Hoard

December 2nd George Thrower - Bygone Harrogate Shops

Hall Lane

A time traveller from the 1930s walking from Bilton Lane down Hall Lane today would recognise the dozen or so elegant detached houses on the right but that would be about all. The name "Hall Lane" first appears in street directories in 1930 after the houses were built, despite appearing on maps as far back as 1845, The few properties in "Hall Lane" up to 1930 were given a Bachelor Gardens address.

On the left our traveller would find a school (Richard Taylor) which stands on the open field which he knew, and which had some evidence of ridge and furrow working. Lower down he would find the ugly quarry has been filled in and replaced by parkland. The only evidence left of the quarry is an outcrop of rock on the side of the road towards the bottom of the parkland area.

On the right below what is now the junction with Meadowcroft our traveller would be astonished to find that Harrogate Hall, the farmhouse, outbuildings and garden have disappeared and been replaced by a row of bungalows, This fine building was demolished in 1974; however its existence can be identified as far back as 1450; its history is closely associated with that of the Bilton area. Further down the lane on the same side past what is now the Tennyson Avenue turnoff the traveller would be familiar with a large nursery the ownership of which by the Johnson family can be traced back to 1841. Today he would find a row of redbrick houses built where the nurseries were, a small section of the high wall surrounding them (at the junction with Bachelor Gardens) being the only trace left.

On the opposite side of the road at this point our traveller would look in vain for a substantial building called "The Cottage". All he would find would be a row of chalet type bungalows perched above the road. He may have been acquainted with a Mrs Beaumont who lived at "The Cottage". This lady was famous for having a pack of beagles which she bred, used primarily for hare coursing. The kennels were to the rear of the property. It was built in the mid-nineteenth century and up to 1909 was known as "St John's Cottage". The Beaumonts are recorded as living there back to 1902. Another name change to "Lime Trees" occurred in the 1950s when the property was occupied by the Johnsons from the nursery over the road. It was finally demolished in 1965.

Hopefully being a pragmatist, our traveller would recognise that changes had to take place in the name of progress but would be pleasantly surprised to find that at least some of the time Hall Lane has retained some of its character as a quiet leafy walk.

The photograph taken at the time of the 1953 Coronation is a view towards Hall Lane from the bottom of Bachelor Gardens. It shows the "Lime Trees" to the right, with Harrogate Hall and some outbuildings in the



Hall Lane from Bachelor Gardens in June 1953

background. The nursery wall can be glimpsed through the procession. The wall to the right can be seen today.

David Coates and Geoff Deighton

News of a new production from the Study Group

Bilton Historical Society (sponsored by Bilton Gala) has recently produced a colourful leaflet "**The Bilton Heritage Trail – Old Bilton and the Nidd Gorge**". Although this path is well known to many, the industrial activities within the Gorge and ancient Bilton Park of the 18th and early 19th centuries remain less so. Notes and pictures point to evidence which still remains of the considerable activities which once characterised the area, predominantly coal mining but also flax bleaching and quarrying for lime. Included is a short history of Bilton's historical background.

Features along the route include:

Old Bilton, Woodside Farm, Milners Lane, quarries, river fords/weirs, retting pond, 'engine race', mining quarries and the 18th century Gardeners Arms.

There is also the wonderful panoramic view from Milner's Lane (at a point formerly named Beacon Hill), and prominent landmarks which can be seen from this path are indicated.

In addition, according to season, there is always something for everyone - flora, fauna and abundant wildlife.

Although the walk can be accessed at any point there are car parks at Bilton Crossing on Bilton Lane, or Scotton Moor on the B6165 Ripley / Knaresborough road. Disabled access is limited but the section from Bilton Crossing car park and eastwards along Bilton Lane can be enjoyed.

Copies of the leaflet are available for £1 each from the society c/o Bilton Community Centre, 48 Bilton Lane, Harrogate HG1 3DU (call in any Tuesday morning, excluding August, between 9 am and noon) or from Bilton & Woodfield Community Library. For a posted copy the price is £2.50 from the society (address above).

Not the Latest News – 1863 – Leeds Mercury, 26th March.

Report from Knaresboro' Petty Sessions

"John Finner, a tramp, was charged with stealing a top-coat and railway signal flag, belonging to Thomas Bradley, a plate-layer, at the Bilton Junction, on the North Eastern Railway.

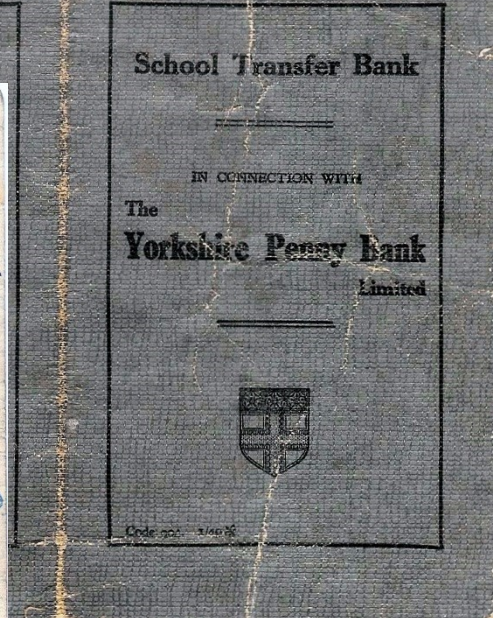
The prisoner offered the articles for sale at a rag shop in Knaresborough. Sergeant Archy took him into custody on the Plompton Road. He then had the stolen property in his possession.

He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment."

Continuing his searching and sorting John Fletcher came across the 1/- per wk. card from Bilton Endowed School – scans below. The teachers' initials are of Miss Ellis (later Mrs Shannon – Infants), Miss Dickinson & Mr Brown. *It is difficult to imagine schools being involved in this way now or that parents or*

BILTON ENDOWED School
 PRIMARY SCHOOL Dept.
 No. 320
 Depositors Large Pass Book No. 23994
 at HARROGATE Branch
 Name John Alex Fletcher

Date	s.	d.	Initials	Date	s.	d.	Initials	Date	s.	d.	Initials	Date	s.	d.	Initials
17.9.51	1	-	PHB	Forward				17.9.51	1	0		17.9.51	1	0	J.M.D.
24.9.51	2	-	PHB	18.2.52	2	6	PHB	18.9.51	2	5	J.M.D.	12.1.52	1	-	J.M.D.
1.10.51	2	-	PHB	25.2.52	2	6	PHB	8.9.51	2	5	J.M.D.	19.1.52	1	-	J.M.D.
8.10.51	1	6	PHB	3.3.52	2	6	PHB	15.9.51	2	5	J.M.D.	26.1.52	1	-	J.M.D.
15.10.51	4	6	PHB	10.3.52	2	-	PHB	22.9.51	1	-	J.M.D.	2.2.52	1	-	J.M.D.
22.10.51	4	-	PHB	17.3.52	2	-	PHB	15.9.51	1	-	J.M.D.	23	-	PHB	
12.11.51	5	-	PHB	7.4.52	4	-	PHB	22.9.51	1	-	J.M.D.	20 T	-	PHB	
19.11.51	2	-	PHB	28.4.52	4	-	PHB	29.9.51	1	-	J.M.D.	3	-	PHB	
	20	-	PHB					6.10.51	2	-	J.M.D.	9.2.52	1	-	PHB
	20	1	PHB					13.10.51	1	-	J.M.D.	16.2.52	1	-	PHB
26.11.51	2	-	PHB	5.5.52	2	6	PHB	21.10.51	2	-	J.M.D.	2.3.52	2	-	J.M.D.
3.12.51	2	-	PHB	12.5.52	1	6	PHB	27.10.51	2	-	J.M.D.	9.3.52	1	-	J.M.D.
10.12.51	2	-	PHB	19.5.52	1	-	PHB	3.11.51	1	-	J.M.D.	23.3.52	1	-	J.M.D.
17.12.51	2	-	PHB	26.5.52	3	-	PHB	10.11.51	1	-	J.M.D.	30.3.52	1	-	J.M.D.
14.1.52	5	6	PHB	7.6.52	5	-	PHB	17.11.51	1	-	J.M.D.				
28.1.52	2	6	PHB	14.6.52	2	-	PHB	24.11.51	1	-	J.M.D.	20.4.52	3	-	J.M.D.
4.2.52	2	6	PHB	23.6.52	1	-	PHB	1.12.51	1	-	J.M.D.	27.4.52	1	-	J.M.D.
11.2.52	2	-	PHB	30.6.52	1	-	PHB	18.12.51	1	-	J.M.D.	4.5.52	1	-	J.M.D.
Forward	20	6	PHB	Forward				Forward				Forward	16	-	PHB



children would be interested in finding the sum in cash to take to the school. I wonder how many shillings didn't

make it to the school but were deposited at the sweet shop en route to or from school.

Comfort Food

Ginger biscuits and cocoa, sitting under the table with the chenille cloth pulled down when there was an air-raid warning. I could never understand why it was OK for Mam to stay outside the 'tent', obviously making the cocoa. She got us out of bed and under the table. Dad was in the Home Guard so he would be out 'Home-Guarding'. It still remains the same – if I'm fed-up or not too well, out come the ginger biscuits.

The table in the living room wasn't only used as a 'tent' during air-raids. We obviously ate our meals at it and it was used for scrubbing the washing – pillowcases, collars, towels etc. Then I folded a clean sheet once the washing was dry and used it as an ironing pad. By the time that I had finished the ironing, the sheet was done as well.

In those days you plugged the iron into the light socket. Thinking about it now, that must have been quite dangerous – the wire would be swinging wildly with the movement of the iron. Still – it had to be better than the old flat irons.

Barbara Scaife