

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

Ivy Robinson 1920 - 2019

At the end of 2019 Ivy died peacefully in her 100th year at The Granby Care Home - her home for the last few years. Longer term members of the society might well remember that she contributed an article, *Full Circle*, to the Newsletter in 1997.

Ivy was one of the most elegant ladies that I have met - always well-turned out, proud of her family, very proud to have lived almost all of her life in or very near to Bilton. She was quite a talker, full of anecdotes and very willing to share them with anyone. She was especially pleased to do so over tea and cakes at her bungalow on Old Trough Way.

Her involvement in Bilton was extensive. She was an active member of St John's Church and retained contacts with it when she went to Granby. She was proud to have been deeply involved with Brownies and Guides and with the Trefoil Guild.

The Society was well-represented at her funeral at St John's Church in January. There were many there saying goodbye to a great friend.

Keith Burton

Visit to Bilton Grange School.

Bilton Grange School opened 100 years ago and as part of the celebrations we were invited to morning assembly in late September last year. Peter Barnes presented our talk on the development of the area around the school during this time illustrated with maps and photographs supported by John Branson, George Thrower and Alan Gould.

After the assembly several of the older pupils stayed behind to look at the exhibits we had brought: old and new Ordnance Survey maps and an aerial photograph. They were able to easily identify the roads and were particularly interested in finding the sites of their homes. George was there to tell them about some of his brothers and sisters who were amongst the first pupils on the day the school opened in 1919.

We thought the morning was very successful and the pupils showed a positive response during the talk when they recognised places in the old photographs and had to be brought into order by the headteacher!

George Thrower

New Insights into Bilton Park Colliery (Part 1 of 3) – Alan Gould

The presence of coal seams and mining activities on the southern bank of the River Nidd in the vicinity of Bilton Village Farm is generally well known locally. The mine workings extended from the plateau down the steep sides of the gorge on Bilton Banks, in the area known as Coalpits Wood, to the river. The most detailed reports to date are contained in the Society's own publications, ie "Bilton with Harrogate – our historic industry" published in 2005. However, until now, no effort has been made to pull together all of the available information, such as the documentary and map archives, field survey work, LiDAR (**L**ight **D**etection **A**nd **R**anging) mapping and aerial imagery, into a single report that attempts to tell the complete story of the colliery.

A 2019 research project has been undertaken to try and fill this void. As a result, it has been possible to postulate a story that best fits the limited amount of available data. The report describes the development of Bilton Park Colliery from the early part of the 18th century until its closure around 100 years later. The story of the mine can be told as a sequence of key stages: i) before 1777, ii) post 1777 Phase 1, iii) post 1777 Phase 2 and iv) its final closure. These will be the subject of a series of articles in forthcoming Newsletters.

Before 1777

Bilton Park Colliery exploited two thin seams of relatively poor coal which dipped at an angle of 6° to the north-northwest. The uppermost 1m thick and principal seam was separated from the lower and largely unworked 0 – 0.8m thick seam by a 3m thick band of shale. The principal seam, along with the seams exploited at Tan Hill and Fountains Fell Collieries, was amongst the thickest in the Great Dales Coalfield.

There is a strong local belief that the initial surface working of the exposed outcropping seams may have started as early as the mediaeval period. These outcrops were on the steep north-facing slopes of Bilton Banks and on the plateau to the immediate south-east of what is now the privately owned Valley Sun Club caravan site. No records have been found to support this early mining activity, but it would have been unusual for a readily available local source of coal, even of poor quality, not to have been exploited for lime production and perhaps some domestic use.

In the 1720s, Thomas Stockdale, the owner of Bilton Park, became a victim of the South Sea Bubble and had to mortgage the Park to, amongst others, several Tyneside financiers. It is possible that these financiers, familiar with the success of the North-East coalfield, saw the opportunity of exploiting the estate's coal deposits as a means of securing, or benefitting from, their investment. This is because one of the earliest references to the presence of a coal mine is a 1728 North of England Institute of Mining report that refers to "an experimental boring at Bilton Park, west of the Old Colliery". However, it is unclear as to what constituted the "Old Colliery" or precisely where this trial borehole was located.

George Liddell, a cousin of Stockdale bought the Estate in 1732 for £7500 (equivalent to £1.8million today). He commented in a 1730 letter that the Estate contained ordinary coal, fit for burning lime, which generated a handsome profit and should be considered as very valuable in the purchase. Liddell only owned Bilton

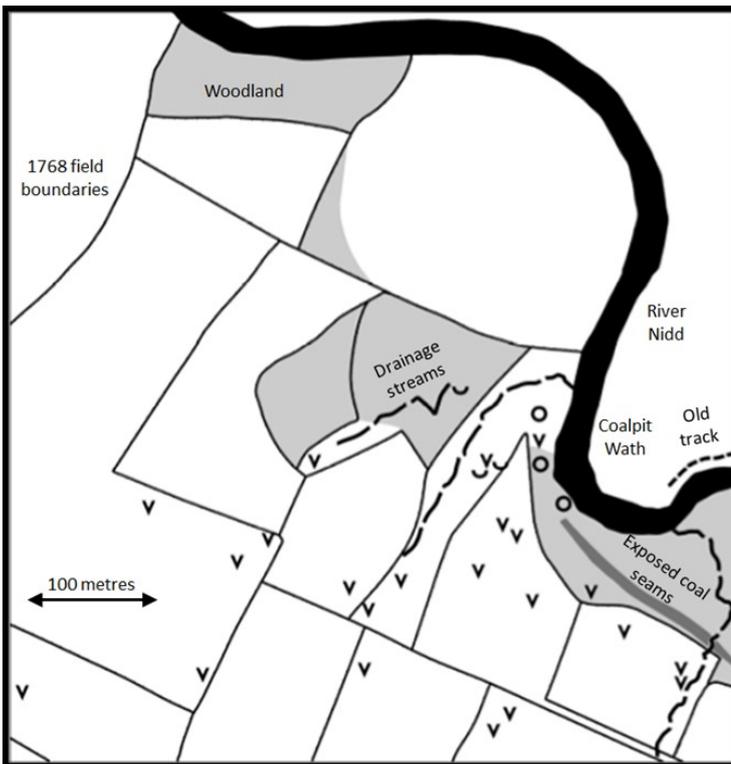
Park for a few years because in 1741, following a protracted legal battle, he sold it to John Watson, a solicitor, for £8500 (£2million). A further indicator that coal was being mined in, or before, 1744 is the Knaresborough burial record of John Firth, who was described as being a collier at Bilton Park. It is not known if he died as a result of a mining accident or from other causes.

In 1755, the Bilton Park Estate was inherited by John Farsyde, via his uncle George Watson, after the death of John Watson. Farsyde changed his surname to Watson and the archived records indicate that he was the owner during the peak of coal exploitation. The records suggest that the Estate only benefitted from the leasing of the mines, rather than from being directly involved in the mining activities. The mine was leased by several individuals, or consortiums, from 1756 to 1772 with a progressively increasing annual rent of £50 (£11 000) to £100 (a peak equivalent value of £15 000). In addition to leasing the mine, the miners also had to pay the estate £5/acre/year (£750) for ploughed or dug up land. During this period, one of the lessees, William Dickinson, had problems with the Harrogate Overseers because in 1760 they charged him with not having protection certificates for 3 colliers and 1 woman. These protection certificates safeguarded Harrogate from having to maintain newcomers to the area if they became destitute.

In 1777, John Watson commissioned William Brown of Throckley, an eminent northern consulting mining engineer, to produce a report on the colliery. Brown was also a major coal mine owner and coal viewer on Tyneside (a job title that encompassed an engineer, a surveyor, a financial adviser to the colliery owner, a recruiter, manager and retainer of the workforce and the man with the responsibility or oversight for the ancillary industries and services required to run the mine) and the leading authority at the time on the use of stationary Newcomen steam engines for pumping water from mines. His report, which included a rough sketch plan, provides the most detailed surviving description of the colliery. It documented that the construction of the drainage adit from the River Nidd many years previously, to facilitate water removal, had been very beneficial and had enabled the extraction of more coal to the west and southwest of the river. It also reported that the colliery workings had been extended to within 185 metres of the western boundary of Bilton Park estate.

Using Brown's report and sketch, together with a 1768 estate map (which made no reference to the presence of the colliery), Ordnance Survey maps, LiDAR maps and field surveys, it has been possible to estimate the probable extent of the colliery in 1777, see figure.

Mining is believed to have originally started in the south-eastern corner of the area and on the steep slopes of the gorge, ie where the coal seams outcropped or were closest to the surface. Only a limited number of pits, or perhaps even only a single pit, would have been active at any one time. These early pits were of the characteristic "bell pit" form with limited underground working away from the pit shaft. This is evidenced by the large number of the pit shafts being in close proximity to each other and today these can be identified as shallow, circular surface depressions a few metres in diameter, sometimes with an adjacent mound of spoil. The colliery workings would have most likely gradually migrated in a westerly and north-westerly direction following the dip of the seam with the most



V, v (Bell)-pit shaft (large, small) O Drainage adit

Probable pre-1777 extent of Bilton Park Colliery
superimposed onto the 1768 estate map

western pit shafts having a depth of up to about 40 metres. As the coal seams dipped closer to and below the water table, or river level, problems with water extraction increased and adits were driven into the slope of the gorge to aid drainage. The pitheads would most likely have employed horse driven gins, or winding gear, to raise and lower the men and coal. Perhaps these horse-gins were also used for water removal, operating simple buckets or rag and chain pumps, because some water channels in the area start immediately below abandoned pits and are more characteristic of mine, than surface water, drainage. The extracted coal was mainly used for local lime production although no evidence of paths, tracks or even the reported tramways have been found linking the colliery with nearby limekilns in Spring

Wood or Limekiln Plantation. There is a pack horse track on the north side of the river, separated from the colliery by Coalpit Wath, a ford that is still crossable today at low river levels. This track gradually ascends the steep northern side of the gorge in the direction of Scotton and was a possible northern transport route for the wider distribution of the coal away from colliery.

The main focus of Brown's 1777 report was to investigate the possible future prospects of Bilton Park Colliery and this part of the story will be continued in the next instalment.

I hope that you have noticed that there has been a long gap between Newsletters. I am surprised that there haven't been complaints about the lack of any issue since May 2019. I haven't given up but I have a major problem in that the supply of interesting articles has dried up. I am pleased that two or three people have continued to work on suitable material but there is a limit to how much I feel that I can put in on one subject or by one contributor. That applies as much to me as anyone else so the solution of my writing large or small articles to fill the newsletter is not an option. One solution would be to reduce the number of pages all the time or sometimes. Another would be, of course, if more people were prepared to send in items. Over to you - tell me what you would like.

Another question for you - would you be happy to receive your copy of the newsletter by email rather than by post or hand? This would save money, paper and the time of the small number of volunteers who go round to deliver locally. Obviously printed copies would still be produced for those not wishing to use email.

William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke.

The first Earl of Pembroke also called William the Marshal was the true Lancelot of his era, a peerless warrior and paragon of chivalry. Born in 1146 or 1147, he died on 14th May 1219 at Caversham, Reading, Berkshire. His father was John Marshal. His mother was Sybilla of Salisbury. He served five Kings of England: Henry II, his son the “Young King” Henry, Richard I, King John and John’s son Henry III. He befriended the great figures of his day, from Richard the Lionheart to the infamous King John, and helped to negotiate the terms of Magna Carta - the first ‘bill of rights’. Yet at the age of seventy he was forced to fight in the frontline of one final battle, to save the kingdom from French invasion in 1217.

As a younger son, William had no lands or fortune to inherit, and had to make his own way in life. Due to his father’s support of Empress Matilda during the period known as The Anarchy, (during the civil war which raged for fourteen years), the young Marshal, at about the age of 5 or 6, was taken hostage by Matilda’s rival, King Stephen. Stephen’s forces threatened to kill the boy if his father, John Marshal, did not surrender Newbury Castle, which was under siege. John did not accept, but rather than being murdered Marshal remained a hostage for several months. He was finally released due to the cessation of hostilities with the Treaty of Wallingford in 1153. Around the age of 12 he was sent to Chateau de Tancarville in Normandy to be brought up in the household of William de Tancarville, a cousin of William’s mother, Sybilla. It was here that he began his training as a knight. It appears that it was not all training and practice however, as William’s biography recalls he earned the nickname “Greedy Guts” during his early years with the Tancarville retinue. It was however in the final year of his apprenticeship that renowned six foot tall William learnt that his father had died and, as expected, had left him no money at all. He was knighted in 1166 on campaign in upper Normandy. William realised that he had better start earning his living, and as a knight, fighting in tournaments appeared to be the order of the day. In Medieval Europe, tournaments were mock battles in which knights could showcase their talents, typically hundreds, sometimes thousands, of mounted knights carrying war lances would charge headlong into each other and in the melee that followed, swords and maces were used to knock seven bells out of each other. As a “training method” for war, death was not common but did happen on occasion; broken teeth and bones were far more typical. It is known that William received a wound to his thigh and that someone in his household took pity on the young knight. He received a loaf of bread in which was concealed several lengths of clean linen bandages with which to dress his wounds. This act of kindness by an unknown person perhaps saved Marshal’s life as infection setting into the wound could have killed him.

By the 1170s William had become somewhat of a superstar of the tournament circuit, and had grown very rich as a consequence. With the combination of his physical strength, horsemanship, prowess with lance, sword and mace, leadership skills and sheer cunning, William had literally fought his way to the very top of his profession.

In 1189 William married Isabel of Clare in late July in a simple ceremony on the church steps – perhaps even those of St Paul’s itself. He then became Lord of Striguil (modern Chepstow), after the wedding. Isabel was an heiress in her own

right. They had ten children, five sons, the eldest of whom was born within a year, and five daughters. It is also thought that, even in an age when male infidelity was commonplace and broadly reported, there is no evidence that Marshall ever took a mistress. On balance, there is good chance that their union was happy and intimate. Even so, William's career in royal service led to long periods of separation, and by mid-August that summer he was drawn back into the maelstrom of power politics.

Marshal's health finally failed him in early 1219. In March of that year he realised that he was dying, so he summoned his eldest son William and his household knights and left the Tower of London for his estate at Caversham in Berkshire. On his deathbed he fulfilled the vow that he would be invested into the order of the Knights Templar. He had made the vow in late 1183 to King Henry II whilst on crusade to Jerusalem. He was then buried in the Temple Church in London, where his tomb can still be seen today.

Isabella Ladigus



The Wednesday Lectures.

December Not surprisingly the topics for the lectures have extended far beyond the confines of Bilton or Harrogate. The one in December was a fine example of broadening our knowledge in a most entertaining way. John Buglass was heavily involved in the excavation of an area of land which was affected by the disastrous collapse of an embankment on the Aire-Calder Navigational Canal. The outflowing water flooded an opencast coal mine, to such an extent that the river flowed backwards for a substantial distance downstream from the breach. Quick thinking by lockkeepers limited the drainage but a section of the Navigation was drained, revealing, for the first time in 200 years, the remains of the 18th century construction of a system of locks and several of the unique early 18th century river craft built to transport the coal from the pits via the canal. Over three years a team of volunteers excavated some boats and locks. They uncovered not only the remains of the boats and Navigation infrastructure but also the artefacts which shed light on the day-to-day lives of those working along the river in the 18th century. John's talk was fascinating and very well illustrated by slides and word-pictures telling the story in more detail. He has published a book on this subject and had brought some copies to the talk. As he has been involved in a number of other excavations in other parts of the country we can hope that Isabella Ladigus will be able to persuade him to return to continue our education.

February As expected from previous experience, John Oxley's talk on Richard III was fascinating. Formerly the Archaeologist for the City of York, John took us back

to the visit to York by Richard in 1483. Though Richard was not born in the North, his various holdings and appointments gave him a strong link to the county and city of York. John told us all of this as well as explaining how the decision was made to bury Richard in Leicester Cathedral rather than York Minster. It was an excellent talk and very well received - with lots of questions to follow, some relating to why Richard was buried in Leicester rather than York.

The Bilton Scientist – Dr. S Jefferson

In the Harrogate Herald, dated 27th June 1917 there appeared a column headed “Notes on Nature & Science”, which was a regular feature. The article includes a mention of Bilton:

“Viewed from Bilton Lane, the glorious scene was over those spurs of the Pennines that stretch from Skipton to past Ripon. Now, this Monday, the 25th the clearness was far greater than I ever saw, year after year in this region. Ridge after ridge stood out with marvellous sharpness”.

“That most beautiful of all trees both as to form in itself and the graceful feathery-like and the abundant leafage – I mean the true Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) – now is in full glory. Notably so in Bilton Lane where it forms a fine avenue.”

“The visitor should not miss a visit to Bilton Woods on the banks of the River Nidd, where that has passed under the railway viaduct at Nidd Bridge”.

The article goes on to provide directions, and describes the magnificent beauty spot with tall dark conifers, fully grown larches, Scotch fir and as having a “solemn gloom” but making a “georgeous picture”.

The author of these notes is given as Dr. S. Jefferson. Samuel Jefferson, the son of a gentleman, was born and educated Leeds. In 1901, he was living at 81 Valley Drive with his wife Annie, those of his 8 children who remained unmarried, and a domestic servant helping in the home. Sadly, his wife died in 1905. Two years later, however, Samuel re-married. He was 66 years old and his new wife, Florence Edith Lowrey, at 36, was younger than his daughter Florence Jefferson, who was a witness at their marriage at Christ Church, Harrogate on the 6th February 1907.

By 1911, Samuel & his wife Florence were living at 11 Bilton Grove Avenue. He was a Science Lecturer and Author. Sadly, his second wife died in 1914. Samuel Jefferson died in 1919 and was buried at Harlow Hill with his first wife.

According to his obituary in the Yorkshire Post, he was the founder, in 1868, of classes in chemistry for schoolmasters in Leeds, from which sprang the Yorkshire College. He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Chemical Society and made a Fellow, so entitled to add FCS after his name. He became a professor of natural sciences at the chief schools in Yorkshire, a well-known lecturer and author on scientific subjects. From 1860 to 1870 he was Secretary on the Yorkshire Board of Education. He was Assistant Lecturer to the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institutes and in 1877 was appointed President of the Leeds Naturalists Club.

It is certainly something when such a remarkable gentleman should choose to live in Bilton!

Kath Martin

Harrogate in 1936

Harrogate's growing prestige as a centre for conferences was well-illustrated during the year and will be further advanced in 1937 for which already there is a record number of bookings.

There were three outstanding assemblies in the past year. The first was in connection with the Oxford Group Movement. This was a Christian organisation founded by the American missionary Frank Buchman. (*In 1938, Buchman proclaimed a need for "moral re-armament". The phrase became the movement's new name.*) The co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous met through the Oxford Group. At the Wesley Methodist Chapel, built in 1862, the Rev J H Bodgener used this innovation in 1932, and it attracted a large number of young folk to the congregation. Shortly after the introduction of the Oxford Group came the completion of the Methodist Union, bringing together the Wesleyans, Primitive Methodist and United Methodists. Wesley Chapel was at this time the Mother Church and a friendship remained constant between the three Churches in Harrogate and eventual reunion was accomplished without strain.

Second came the International Air Rally at Lympne. Mr Noel Coward was among the crowd watching the aeroplane stunts. This was so important that it was filmed by Gaumont British Newsreel. The film was shown to the people of Harrogate.

Third was the Conference of South African War Veterans Associations, at which the noted soldier, General Sir John Hamilton, spoke and took the salute.

In politics, a striking announcement was made towards the end of the year that the British Union of Fascists intend to fight the Ripon Division at the next election. This will entail a three-cornered fight, for the first time for a number of years.

The district suffered a severe loss by the death, on November 1st of the noted Yorkshire manufacturer and philanthropist Sir Algernon Firth, Bart, of Scriven Park, Knaresborough. In Harrogate itself, the town is the poorer for the deaths, among others, of Mr J Turner-Taylor OBE Town Clerk of Harrogate for 37 years, Dr Rutherford, Head of the well-known Harrogate family, Councillor C H Plackett, who was killed while on a motor trip in Sussex, Mr Fred Proctor, Mr J Balmforth, a Harrogate magistrate and Mr Amos Chippindale, and by the retirement to Northumberland of the Rev J Mitchell, former Presbyterian Pastor and an ex-President of the Harrogate Literary Society.

Found by Isabella Ladigus

Did you know the origin of this phrase? *It's raining cats and dogs*

In medieval and Tudor times, houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof.

Hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs."