

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

Winter Evening Talk Programme

Wednesday 6th October, 7:30pm at Bilton Community Centre, Bilton Lane.
Admission £3.

The Society's programme of evening talks will be re-commencing after the Covid shutdowns. There will be a very full agenda for this first meeting.

Postponed AGMs

The meeting will start with the Covid postponed Annual General Meetings for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The Chairman's and Treasurer's reports for these years have already been distributed to members in Newsletter 85 (March 2020) and Newsletter 89 (May 2021).

You will have also read in the last Newsletter 89, that there are several positions on the Committee to be filled. Peter would like to stand down as photograph archivist and treasurer and a replacement is needed following the passing of George Thrower earlier this year.

If anyone is interested, or would like more information, please contact Alan Gould (01423 203097).

Talk

The postponed AGMs will be followed by Mr Stephen Cauldwell's talk entitled

"Windsor Castle, Fire and Restoration"

Stephen was a Senior Property Officer within the Royal Household after retiring from a career in the Royal Navy. The talk is about Stephen's time and experiences whilst working and living at Windsor Castle for nearly 12 years.

25th Anniversary Celebration

Finally, the meeting will close with the usual refreshments including a celebration of the Society's 25th Anniversary. Our Society held its inaugural meeting on 10th February 1996 and therefore 2021 marks its Silver Jubilee.

Covid mask wearing is not a requirement at the moment, but in consideration of vulnerable people, we respectfully invite those attending to wear a mask.

The history and origins of April Fools Day*Alan Gould*

The First of April some do say,
 Is set apart for All Fool's Day;
 But why the people call it so,
 Not I, nor they themselves do know.

Is this poem correct? Are we able to trace the history and origins of April Fool's Day? One of the earliest recorded pranks relates to several people being tricked into going to see the ceremony of the washing of the lions at the Tower of London on April 1st, 1698. Within living memory, who can forget the famous Panorama "Spaghetti Harvest" in 1957 presented by Richard Dimbleby featuring the farmers of Ticino, Switzerland? Bilton has also not escaped, because in 2011 the Harrogate Advertiser carried a hoax article on Bilton Lane resident Sharon Bromance, 43, who having found a red, woollen, bobble hat stuck in a tree, got it down with a stick and put it on a fence post.

As to the origins of April Fool's Day, some people link it with the vernal equinox, or first day of Spring, because Mother Nature fools us with changing and unpredictable weather.

Others suggest the Roman late March festival of Hilaria at which no-one was allowed to be unhappy. Hilaria was the culmination of a fortnight of festivals that had started with the Ides of March.

Another idea links it to Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th century "The Canterbury Tale" because in the Nun's Priest's Tale, a vain cock is tricked by a fox on a date given as "Syn March bigan thritty dayes and two". Is this "32nd March", ie April 1st? Perhaps so, but scholars, possibly lacking a sense of humour, consider it to mean 32 days after March, ie 2nd May.

A further possible connection is with Noah and the Ark. Was Noah a fool to send out the dove before the water had abated? It was thought that people who forgot this bible story should be punished by sending them on some meaningless errand.

Meaningless errands are a common theme on the day. We have all heard of someone being sent for a left-handed screwdriver or a tin of striped, or tartan, paint. In Scotland, April 1st is known as "Huntigowk Day", hunt the gowk or cuckoo, and involves a sealed message that supposedly requests help of some sort. In Ireland, the message reads "Send the fool further."

April Fool's Day is not just a British tradition. In France there are possible links back to 1582 when the calendar was changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Those who continued to celebrate the New Year around Easter rather than on January 1st became the butt of jokes and hoaxes. The fooled party is called a "poisson d'avril" (April fish) and a customary act is to pin a paper fish to a person's back. This paper fish prank is also common to Italy, Belgium and French-speaking parts of Switzerland and Canada.

Danes, Finns, Icelanders, Norwegians and Swedes also celebrate April Fools' Day. The Polish avoid doing any serious activities on April 1st and it is thought that this is why the Polish anti-Turkish alliance with Leopold I was backdated to March 31st, 1683. In the Netherlands, the Spanish Duke Álvarez de Toledo is considered to be the fool because he lost to the Dutch at Brielle during the Eighty Years War on April 1st, 1572. And, although we normally do not consider the Germans to have a sense of humour, even they celebrate "Aprilscherze" on April 1st.

So, perhaps the poem is correct. The possible origins appear to be many and varied. Therefore we may not know why people call it so.

But does it matter what the history or origin of April Fool's Day is?

It seems to be mainly celebrated in the northern hemisphere where we have all come through a long, dark, dismal winter. We have the joys of Spring to look forward to. We need some frivolity and light-heartedness. So what is wrong with having a bit of harmless fun?

But next year on April 1st, remember to look out for any potential "banana skins". An anagram of April Fool's Day is:-

"Fool – slip a yard".



Grandparents:

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

◆ My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was and I answered "62". My grandson was quiet for a moment and then he asked "Did you start at 1?"

◆ A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her own childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tyre – it hung from a tree in our front garden. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed taking in all of this. At last she said "I sure wish that I had got to know you sooner!"

◆ My grandson was visiting one day when he asked "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?" I mentally polished my halo and said "No. How are we alike?" "You're both old," he replied.

◆ A little girl was diligently pounding away on her grandfather's word processor. She told him that she was writing a story. "What's it about?" he asked. "I don't know" she replied. "I can't read."

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings - and those a bit older too.

Benchmarking Bilton

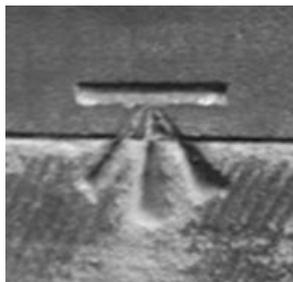


Figure 1 - on St John's Church

Ordnance Survey (OS) height benchmarks, Figure 1, are a common feature across Britain. Over 500 000 were created, but they are generally unseen by the casual observer. The earliest local height benchmarks date back to 1840 [not to be confused with Triangulation (Trig) points which were only introduced after 1936]. Since their first introduction, a total of 64 have been carved into a variety of stone structures in the Bilton area over the years. Sadly, following a recent survey, only 23 still survive today with a further possible 9 benchmarks currently identified as unknown, since it cannot

be confirmed if they still do, or do not, exist. The majority of the benchmarks are of the "traditional" design. Bilton does not have any of the "flush bracket" type benchmark but there are several "rivet" style benchmarks, a good example of which can be found on the Ripon Road near where it crosses the Oak Beck and also at Scotton weir.

These local benchmarks now represent a largely obsolete and abandoned technology, having been superseded in the last 30 years by digital, satellite and GPS mapping and surveying techniques. However, despite this, there is still nationally a series of approximately 190 highly accurate Fundamental Benchmarks (FBMs) linked to the Ordnance Height Datum at Newlyn and maintained by the OS. These FBMs are still used by the OS for the primary height network and as a check on the accuracy and reliability of the modern technologies. The FBMs are buried in bedrock with a simple marker above ground indicating their location. Our nearest FBM is at a minor road junction between the villages of Kearby with Netherby and Sicklinghall, Figure 2.

Heights were introduced to Ordnance Survey maps by Thomas Colby during the 1840-1860 First Geodetic Levelling survey of England and Wales. All heights were referenced to a benchmark on St. John's Church, Old Haymarket, Liverpool, which was determined as being exactly 57ft above mean sea level. This original Liverpool datum (ODL – Ordnance Datum Liverpool) was replaced in 1921 by the current, and different, Newlyn sea level datum plane (ODN – Ordnance Datum Newlyn) and since then all heights have continued to use the Newlyn datum plane, despite the fact that the sea level has risen about 20cm over the last 100 years. Reported heights in Bilton referenced to ODL are approximately 0.6ft higher than when referenced to ODN.

The first 1854 OS map of Bilton showed the location of 10 benchmarks, all positioned on the primary routes through the area, namely Skipton Road, Bilton Lane and Milners Lane. Perhaps surprisingly, 3 of these original 10 still survive today.

Namely:- *Oak Beck Bridge, Skipton Road* (good condition)

Quarry Lane junction with Skipton Road (almost completely destroyed)

Cottage near Richard Taylor School, Bilton Lane (some erosion)

For the next 100 years, up to and including the production of the 1947 OS map of Bilton, all additional new and replacement benchmarks still continued to be located on these three principal routes. Today, Milners Lane is not much more than a muddy footpath, but it has surprisingly accounted for 9 of the 64 benchmarks sites in Bilton,



"Rivet" style benchmark on the top of a gatepost near where Ripon Road crosses Oak Beck



Figure 2 - the location of the nearest FBM



Ripley's Hotel de Ville is our nearest "flush bracket" benchmark

with 2 still surviving today, a rivet benchmark at Scotton Weir and a traditional benchmark on the wall of a ruined building midway along the track. Is this possibly a reflection of the historic importance of this route or the challenge in transferring a height reference from the Gardener's Arms to the weir? It is only since 1951 that benchmarks started to be sited away from these principal roads. This was due to the post-war expansion of Bilton and the construction of the many new housing estates. The familiar arrowhead mark has been carved onto structures on Crab Lane, Bachelor Gardens, Knox Lane, Knoxmill Lane, Hall Lane, St. John's Road, St John's Grove, King Edwards Drive, Cecil Street, Woodfield Road and Ripon Road. Many of these no longer survive and some are threatened or vulnerable.

Bilton's best preserved benchmark is on St John's Church (see Figure 1), most likely a reflection of the quality and hardness of the stone. It is not easily seen as it is obscured by vegetation. This aspect of many benchmarks being "hidden in plain sight" is not unusual and it is often a challenge to find them, e.g. the one at Spruisty Bridge is believed to still exist but is now hidden behind the more recent brown information plaque.

A study of the survivability of the early local benchmarks showed that the newly created mark had an initial high loss rate, Table 1. If the new benchmark was able to survive its first 20-40 years then there was a good chance of it surviving through to about 1950. Since 1950 a further 50% of these old surviving marks have been lost, as have 50% of the most recent Bilton benchmarks created after 1950.

	1854 map	1890 map	1909 map	1910 map	1932 map	1934 map	1947 map	OS database	2020 survey
1854	<u>10</u>	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
1890		<u>13</u>	10	8	8	8	8	4	3
1909			<u>6</u>	2	2	2	2	1	1
1910				<u>0</u>	0	0	0	0	0
1932					<u>9</u>	9	9	4	2+(1?)
1934						<u>5</u>	2	0	0
1947							<u>0</u>	0	0
OS DB								<u>29</u>	14+(8?)
Total	10	17	20	14	23	28	24	41	23+(9?)

Table 1 Benchmark survivability. Key:
X = number of new benchmarks created at that date
T = number of known surviving benchmarks at that date/database/survey
(N?) = possible surviving benchmarks in 2020 which cannot yet be confirmed as existing or destroyed.

Some of the lost benchmarks were originally carved onto substantial, but now demolished, landmark buildings, e.g. The Star Inn (Skipton Road), The New Inn (replaced by the Dragon), the signal box (Bilton level crossing) and Bilton Grove Farm (Bilton Lane). But it was not only significant buildings that were used. According to the OS archive database, several domestic houses on the St. John's estate featured benchmarks, but so far it has not been possible to confirm if any have survived when viewed from the road, as they are on private property. Walls and old field entrance stone gateposts were also favoured sites and several examples still survive, e.g. on Bilton Lane, Bachelor Gardens, Hall Lane and Ripon Road. Railway structures did not escape the surveyors' chisels. Besides the signal box, the Barber line northern bridge abutment on Knox Lane should have a benchmark carved into it, but it has not been possible to confirm this because of the density of vegetation covering the stonework. The railway wall near Bilton level crossing and the railway bridge under the cycle path adjacent to Woodfield Road still have their benchmarks.

The study also revealed that OS maps contain errors. The reported height on the 1854-1910 maps of the Skipton Road Oak Beck bridge benchmark was 225.6ft (ODL). The 1932-1947 maps reported its height as 244.98ft (ODN) and in the more recent OS benchmark database it is 225.09ft (ODN). With the difference between the Liverpool and Newlyn height datum planes only being about 0.6ft, it would appear that the 1932-1947 maps contained a printing error and should have read 224.98ft.

All of these local height benchmarks are now no longer maintained and it is to be expected that more of them will be lost, or further damaged, in the future.

The recent survey records their current status and this information will be kept by the Bilton Historical Society for future reference.

If anyone is interested in trying to find any of the local benchmarks recorded in the OS database, then a useful website to visit for information is <https://parallel.co.uk/os-benchmark-archive/#7/53.551/-2.062> . Happy hunting!

Alan Gould

Membership renewal reminder

For all instances of membership renewal and joining, the subscription is £6.00 per annum and £4.00 for any additional person living at the same address, please return your completed membership form (see page 4 of the last Newsletter 89) with either your cheque payable to "Bilton Historical Society" or an indication of method of payment by standing order or BACS (Account name Bilton Historical Society, sort code 05-04-54, account number 16646470, providing your name as the reference) to either:

The membership secretary - Wendy Warren, 108 Forest Lane, Harrogate HG2 7EG,
or

The treasurer - Peter Barnes, 13 Old Barber, Harrogate HG1 3DF.

1895 – York Herald, Friday 13th December.

Five Bullocks Killed on the Railway

Yesterday, the train due at Harrogate from Newcastle to Leeds at 12.28 (noon), prior to crossing the viaduct over the Nidd, near Bilton Junction, came into contact with five beasts, which had evidently been grazing in the adjoining land and had broken through the fence or passed through an open gateway on to the line. The engine struck two in the six-foot and cut them almost to pieces and the other three were almost instantly killed by the impact of the train.

Can anyone help?

In 2020 the society received a set of 4 photographs taken around the start of the 20th century. The package contained no information regarding who had sent them or who the subjects were. The letter was postmarked Dorset and two of the photographs had some limited information written on the back.

Can anyone help? Do you know any of the people featured in the photographs? Two of the photographs appeared to be of the same couple, presumably husband and wife.



The photo of the pony and trap is dated September 1910 and was taken by the photographer J. Yates at the end of the cul-de-sac between the backs of the terraced houses in Crab Lane and Elm Tree Avenue. St. John's Church and the Sunday School can be seen in the background. The greenhouses appear to have been built around the same time as the houses since they do not appear on the 1892 OS map and are only shown with the houses from 1907.

The 1911 Census details a Mr James Scott (aged 50) and Mrs Ann Scott (aged 55) with a son John Barker Scott (aged 20) who ran a gardening business and lived at St Ann's House on Crab Lane, which would have been immediately in front of these greenhouses. Are these photographs of Mr & Mrs Scott? Their ages are about right. The photographer, James Yates, was a local man who, according to the 1911 Census, lived at Holly Cottages on Skipton Road, somewhere close to where St Joseph's Church is now sited.

A third photograph shows the same lady as a passenger in a late Victorian or early Edwardian car, probably 1900-1905 vintage, but with a different man driving. I do not think that the photograph was taken locally as the vehicle appears to be on sand. Owning a vehicle at this time would suggest that the family might have had some wealth and standing in the Bilton community.





This same man also appears to be standing on the extreme left of the 4th photograph, the 1909 St. John's Bible Class.

The reverse of the image, besides stating that it is the Bible Class, also appears to contain some names. They are difficult to read and are thought to be Gyles, J Chard, Howarth and Cartmill. Does anybody know any of the other men featured in the photograph? The elderly gentleman on the far right is the vicar, the Reverend David Alexander.

It is speculated that the featured couple are a husband and wife and that the driver, and man on the left of the Bible Class could possibly be their son, John Barker Scott who according to the Census information was 20 in 1911.

If anyone has more information, or knows who any of the featured people are, then we would be delighted to know. Please contact Alan Gould 01423 203097 or use the Contact Us link on the society's website,

www.biltonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/

Alan Gould

Bits and Pieces

Why do ...

Banks leave both doors open and then chain the pens to the counters?

We leave cars worth thousands of pounds in the driveway and put useless junk in the garage?

They have drive-up ATM machines with Braille lettering?