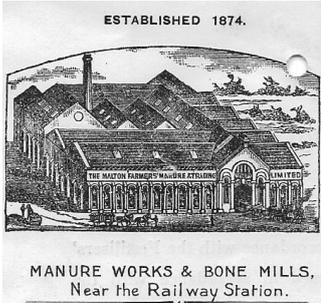


The Manure Company

Introduction



The mill and works of the Malton Farmers' Manure and Trading Company were situated near the Malton railway station. The original foundation of these was in 1832 when Mr. James Wise

erected a mill for bone crushing, and then in 1874

this was taken over and registered as the "Malton Farmers' Manure and Trading Company". This became a flourishing business under the guidance of Mr. William Hodgson, manager, and manufactured and supplied manures and feeding stuffs. The business provided good dividends to its shareholders. The premises were the first in Malton to have electric light [1]

A Nasty Smell

The smell caused in the town of the processes being operated by the company and the storage of bones and fish material came to the fore in 1878 when the Local Board of Health brought an action for

'nuisance.' [2] A number of people gave evidence at this. However, it was concluded that although there had been a nuisance, it was not injurious to public health.

Destruction of the Mill

On Saturday 9th December 1893, a fire completely gutted the mill. A detailed report was given in the York Herald [3].

"At an early hour on Saturday morning, the extensive works of the Malton Farmers' Manure and trading Company, Limited, were partially destroyed by fire, and considerable loss will result to the company. The mill and works are situated near the Malton railway station, and were comparatively new buildings. The original foundation was made in 1862, when the late Mr. James Wise erected a mill for bone-crushing; but in January, 1874, the concern was taken over and registered as 'The Malton Farmers' Manure and Trading Company,' and the business was extended by degrees to almost every branch of agricultural requirements in the way of manures and feeding stuffs. From time to time additions were made to the works, and under the supervision of the present energetic manager, Mr. William Hodgson, every modern scientific appliance that could aid in the production of high-class and pure feeding stuffs and

manures was adopted; the result being that the company's business flourished and they held a high character in the agricultural world. The business proved a satisfactory one to the shareholders, too, the dividends paid having ranged up to 10 per cent in the good times of agriculture. The sad calamity which has befallen them is the more to be deplored, but it is satisfactory to learn from the manager, that though the destruction wrought is great the business will not be stopped, as he has already arranged for its continuance till the results of the fire can be obliterated.

The origin of the fire is not exactly known, nor at what hour it broke out. The premises were left all safe at six o'clock on Friday night, but about 11.30 the engine cleaners at their work in the shed at the railway Station saw flames and smoke bursting out of the windows, at the mill, and then immediately ran to Malton and alarmed the manager, who on reaching the works in about ten minutes found the top floor of the mill in flames and the fire spreading rapidly in all directions.

The portion of the works in which the outbreak had occurred was a large three-storied coprolite-grinding-mill, which was fitted with expensive machinery and appliances. The mill was completely gutted, the roof falling in at an early period after the fire was discovered. On the top floor were 100 tons of coprolites, which were damaged by the water poured into the mill.

Only so recently as January last the company had the works completely fitted with the electric light, and as the dynamo was in the portion of the mill burnt down, it was destroyed with all the connecting wires. The large engine belonging the works is also under the ruins, and its condition, of course, may be imagined.

The Malton fire brigade, with their steam engine, responded to the alarm made at midnight, but, owing to the long distance between the works and water-main, their services were of little avail in staying the progress of the flames of the mill. With their help, however, that of the company's employees, and some willing outsiders, the manager succeeded in confining the fire to the coprolite-grinding mills; and with the free use of hatchets, &c., cut off the connection between it and the storage warehouse, thus salvaging some

A Potted History

The following article is taken from the Yorkshire Gazette series Malton Trades and Industries [5]:

The company with which this article deals was formed in 1874, but the business which was then taken over had been in existence for several years. The premises opposite the railway station "were finished and occupied as a bone mill" - to quote the diary of a deceased Maltonian - in 1862, and the business was carried on by Mr. J.H. Wise under the name of J.H. Wise and Co.

The present company was formed under the name of the Malton Farmers' Manure and Trading Co., with the object of supplying agriculturists, or rather enabling them to supply themselves with chemical manures and "every description of agricultural manure of proved value as a fertiliser, at a price which will simply pay a fair commercial interest on the capital employed in the undertaking." With this end in view the management was placed in the

valuable material, and besides saving the new gas apparatus recently put down by the company for making their own gas.

The works are 500 or 600 yards away from the water-main and it was not until 2.15 in the morning, or fully two and a half hours, the manager states, before the fire brigade got their hose to work, and it was then too late to save the mill and machinery. The fire raged with fearful rapidity, and being in a tall building the flames could be seen for a long distance, the sky being brilliantly lighted up with the reflection therefrom. Hundreds of persons went down to view the spectacle.

We understand the mill was insured with the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company. The exact amount of damage done cannot as yet be definitely ascertained, but it is estimated to be not less than £1,500 [3].

The works re-started on Wednesday, 7th March 1894. The ceremony of re-opening the works and formally installing the new electric lighting apparatus was performed by Mr. W.H. Rose, chairman of directors 'who addressed the workmen at length, thanking them and the manager for their energy in assisting in the re-erection.' [4]

hands of agriculturists, and the first directors were Messrs. Digby Cayley (chairman), Tranmer, Coulson, Robert Boulton, Robert Hall, William H. Rose, Richard Smeeton, and Seth Tinsley, with Mr. Edward Taylor as secretary and general manager. The office was at this time in St. Michael-st., but some years later the present commodious offices in Wheelgate were taken.

The capital of the company was £20,000, composed of £10 shares. In a prospectus of the company it is claimed that the company was meeting a want very generally felt among farmers, and the prospectus adds that "it is not necessary to remind agriculturists how much it is to their advantage to buy manures which they may feel perfectly certain they are genuine."

Since the formation of the company the business has largely developed, and the mills at Norton have been considerably enlarged. Used at first solely for

bone crushing, the works are now fitted with intricate machinery for dissolving and grinding bones and the manufacture of mineral superphosphates. All kinds of artificial manures for different crops and for all soils are also compounded. Bones are crushed to a large extent in the form of meal and quarter-inch dust which are extensively used by Wold farmers for turnip growing. Much attention is also given to the making of various kinds of manure material to suit different crops, and in this direction the company do a large trade with farmers over a wide area. Necessarily, the bulk of the company's business is done with agriculturists in the immediate district, but the company's products are in demand at Pickering, Kirbymoorside, Scarborough, Helmsley, Thirsk, Bedale, Northallerton, Ripon, Leyburn, York, Easingwold, Darlington, Stockton, Newcastle, etc.

As showing the trade which the company does it may be mentioned that about two thousand tons of raw bones are ground and dissolved in a season, and the mills turn out about eight thousand tons of manures in the same period. The season lasts from the middle of February till June, and between twenty and forty men are employed at the mills, according to the season. The manufacture of mineral superphosphates is an important branch of the company's business, the raw phosphate for this purpose being imported from Tunis.

The company was the first business concern to introduce the electric light in Malton. The work of installation was completed at the mills in January,

References

- [1] Yorkshire Gazette, 25 February 1893
- [2] York Herald, 23 December 1878
- [3] York Herald, 12 December 1893

1893, and the light was formally switched on by the late Mr. W.H. Rose, the then chairman of the board of directors. At the same time a gas-making apparatus was installed in order to produce power to drive the engines. In December of the same year a fire broke out at the works, with the result that the mill was completely gutted, and the electric light installation, including the dynamo, was destroyed. The damage was said to be over £1,300. Although the fire was so disastrous, work was not entirely suspended, and in a short time the mill was rebuilt. The whole of the directorate are agriculturists, and the shareholders are largely composed of farmers. The present directors are Messrs. J.A. Coulson, Scarborough; H. Prodham, Sherburn; F.W. Buttle, Kirkham Manor, Driffield; and W. Fisher, Amotherby. Mr. W. Southwick is the general manager and secretary, he having succeeded the late Mr. W. Hodgson in 1902 [5]

An earlier article suggests the company was formed by taking over and amalgamating the businesses of Mr. Edward Taylor who became the secretary and general manager, and, Messrs. J.H. Wise & Co. who were already bone-crushers in the town. The same article states that 'the bones, purely English, collected from neighbouring towns chiefly, are stacked to an enormous height, along with other raw materials, in the yard outside. Here they are carefully sorted by experienced men, who pick out all the horns, hoofs, bits of glass, iron and other unmentionables The mill reduces the bones to various sizes, half-inch, quarter-inch, and dust, as may be required' [6]

- [4] Yorkshire Gazette, 10 March 1894
- [5] Yorkshire Gazette, 2 December 1911
- [6] Yorkshire Gazette Dec 2nd 1911