

## Malton In Olden Times

### Introduction

This is a transcription of a three part article subtitled "The Memories of an Old Resident set down

by 'Spectator'" and published in the Yorkshire Gazette in August and September 1922.

### RIVER LIFE, SPA SPRINGS, AND GARDEN

#### *the first article*

My old friend, Mr. X, of Malton has often revealed to me his wide knowledge of "our town," in which he and his forbears have lived for many generations. The other night I induced him to talk to me consecutively about these times, and I now put down some of the he said, only remarking that if there are any errors, critics must attribute these to me.

We began our talk with the Derwent. Mr. X's father was a waterman. He had served his time with a York tradesman, but for some reason had not taken up the freedom of the city, perhaps preferring the somewhat unconventional life involved on the river. At any rate, Mr. X, sen., delivered coal up to Yedingham Bridge, being enabled to do this by means of the locks at Malton (situated between Metcalfe's mill and King's mill) and the Old Malton locks which seem to have disappeared concurrently with the cutting away of the stones of the flour mill which once stood to the north of the church.

#### Making the River Navigable

The Derwent was made navigable under authority of the Statute, 1 Anne C. 20 (1702), which conferred powers on certain persons, called the undertakers, to make the river navigable from Scarborough Mills to Hemingbrough, the point of its confluence with the River Ouse. The navigation was never commenced at Scarborough Mills, and from a case which was submitted in 1807 to the then Solicitor General upon the grievance of preferential tolls it would seem that for the space of some 20 years after the passing of the Act the powers conferred remained dormant. The original undertakers did not appear to have exercised their rights, but probably

disposed of them for valuable consideration, as about 20 years later the rights appear to have been acquired by Lord Rockingham, to whom the greater part of Malton then belonged.

Between 1720 and 1730 two persons, supposed to have been lessees of Lord Rockingham, made the river navigable from Hemingbrough (the lower end) to the beginning of the town of New Malton, by building 5 locks (which still remain) and doing some other trifling work – this part of the river being naturally in such a state that it required few alterations to make it navigable, and including 16 miles of tidal water. The outlay was understood to have been about £4,000 out of a total estimated outlay of £60,000 required to complete the navigation to Scarborough.

#### A Local Company

In the "Malton Messenger" of 1 January of this year the "Articles of Agreement" of the Malton and Hull navigation Company were printed, from which it transpires that in 1837 the following gentlemen formed a Company with the purpose of developing navigation between Malton and Hull:-

James Dunlop, draper; Edward Rose, wine merchant; Robert Pickering and Henry Pickering, drapers; Abraham Sewell, grocer; Joseph Priestman and Isaac {Priestman, tanners; Joshua Priestman and John Hopkins, carriers; Robert Woodroffe and Showler Woodroffe, ironmongers; Richard Tomlinson and George Kingston, brewers; George Barnby, stationer; William Horsley, druggist; Joseph Taylor, factor; Robert Clegg, draper and grocer; Thomas Ety, wine merchant; Joshua Metcalfe, grocer; Thomas Taylor, grocer; Robert Rutter, boot

and shoemaker; John Rutter, grocer; James Metcalfe, merchant; Charlotte Smithson, stationer (all of whom reside in New Malton, in the county of York); David Priestman, of Old Malton, in the said county, miller; John Slater, of the parish of Old Malton, aforesaid, nursery and seedsman; Robert Searle, of Norton, in the said county, grocer and spirit merchant; Edward Setchfield of the same place, raff merchant; and Benjamin Collins, of Scarborough, in the said county, gentleman.

The original capital of the Company was fixed at £2,500, divided into shares of £10 each.

Mr. X sen., used to tell his son that the Rye was navigable, at any rate as far as Newsham Bridge, which may well be so, as when the old Malton dam was demolished the Rye fell eight feet.

#### Picturesque Happenings

Bricks used to be taken in barges up the Rye, and the old waterman's father used to talk of one cargo being delivered at Garforth Hall. He added that the two brothers who owned this barge fell out, and scuttled it in the Rye – a reminder of the three co-heiresses who could not agree together, and in consequence pulled down Malton Castle and divided the stones between them! I myself remember the wooden bridge, the place of which was taken by the present iron erection, at Ryton. There is a story that still earlier wooden bridge collapsed as one of the Priestmans, tanners, of Malton, was carrying a load of bark over it, with the consequence that the wagon broke through the bridge and fell into the water below.

The wages of the watermen were good, namely, 6s per day. The list of coalyards was quite formidable, and included King's, Metcalfe's, Russell's, Walker's, Wilson's, Waterlane, Cleason's and Bell's (now Longster's), Geoffrey Brown's and Black's. Often the river would be so full of barges that it was difficult to take a boat up or down.

About the time the railway was opened there were 60 vessels in the river at Malton.

#### Old Cobbled Streets

Many of the streets of the town were paved with cobbles after the style of Thirsk Market Place today. These were brought by barge from Hull Roads, and return loads ere made up of grain, stone, beer,

and so forth, nearly all the barges being unloaded at Goole.

In conjunction with the industry, it will be remembered that a little goods railway line ran under the York Road from the quarries to the river where there was a loading stage. As a boy it was one of my chief delights to play with the remaining wagons and it is a wonder that some of us escaped a watery grave.

Most of the circuses which visited the town used to find a home on Gelding Hill – as the most respectable Mount was then called, and there was also a site for fairs, just below Rockingham House. Of course, the adjacent portions of the town on the moor side were quite unbuilt, the Newbiggin of that date being a shortened street of thatched cottages.

The present writer described in this newspaper some years ago Capt. Bayly's map, and pointed out certain interesting facts shown by it. For instance, a forgotten feature of this part of the town was a cross road called Middlecave Branch-rd., connecting up Broughton-rd., about where Mr. Ernest Russell now lives, with Middlecave-rd., just below Quarry Cottage. Along a large portion of the south side of this was a rope walk, and a house and grounds. "Sotheran's Garden" took the place of the current entrance to the "stiles" and the Mount gates.

#### Summer Houses

The "Back-lane," now Wentworth st., was connected with Pasture-lane by a belt of trees, in which was a summer-house (at this period Malton seems to have had many summer-houses, probably provided by private residents); and at the corner of this street and Ropery-rd. (now Cemetery-rd) the houses were known as Smithson's-buildings, with a pond of the same name behind, since dried up. The present Cemetery-rd. was not made, but the Ropery Walk was there.

Our Cemetery-road, then a series of delightful gardens, is marked as being part of the site of the moat of the ancient walled town. The continuation of the wall is shown above the Parish Hall (then the Primitive Methodist Chapel), a little way back from the present frontage of the low side of the cattle market, descending to the new Talbot Inn, as it was then called, and then to the Derwent.

## Malton Spa

One feature of the Malton map, unknown I expect to most Maltonians, is the presence of Malton Spa (chalybeate) and Spa gardens, practically on the site of Messrs. Longster's nursery gardens. So far as I can ascertain, the public had free access to the river bank there, and lower down, whilst large portions of York-rd., now enclosed behind high walls and gates, were common land.

On 4 March, 1865, the following paragraph appeared in a local newspaper:-

"We are glad to observe that there is some probability of restoring to use the valuable mineral spa at Mr. Longster's gardens. On the destruction of the mill dams a general subsidence of the clay on each side of the river took place, and this disarrangement of the stratum through which the water percolated has partly destroyed the spring, or diverted the course of the water.

In his history of mineral waters, Dr. Short speaks highly of the beneficial properties of the Malton Spa waters. The hopes expressed in the first paragraph

were destined to remain unfulfilled, and all traces of this spring appear now to have been lost.

On 4 February, 1865, the second spring was referred to as follows:-

"An excavation is now being prosecuted on the site of the old locks which used to admit vessels to the upper part of the Derwent over the Yedingham navigation until the navigation was destroyed at the period of the Rye and Derwent drainage. On the formation of the locks and the old canal, the medicinal spring was destroyed. Since the discontinuance of the navigation the canal has been filled up, and the object of the present search is to recover, if possible, the mineral waters of the spring. The work went on until Monday, when, owing to the thawing of the snow, the workmen were flooded out. We hope that this spring may be recovered, and in future properly preserved."

Malton's future will depend upon other things than springs!

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## THE INNER TOWN LIFE: WHY MR. TURTON WAS CARRIED SHOULDER HIGH *the second article*

Among the industries of Malton which have now vanished is that of tanner, the best known tanners being Joseph and Isaac Priestman, who did a very large business, in full swing between 1820 and 1830.

Among several walks that have vanished was a delightful ramble between the York road and the river Derwent, on land which apparently should still be in the possession of the public. And what of the river bank walks?

Malton was full of inns, largely because of the very great number of horses and carriages, with their owners, which required putting up on Saturdays, and occasionally over-nights as well. The leading industries were brewing, and milling, with some tanning. Buxton's foundry was a flourishing

concern on "the island," as the site now occupied by the Gas Works was then called, and another foundry stood practically where the Court House in Malton now stands.

There were fewer confectioners and no chocolate shops, but there were, at any rate, six bakers who did a large business in baking pies and other confections brought to them by people who found it difficult to bake at home. The charge was nominal – 1d. a pie only. One of the most famous of these bakers was Dickie Gage, who lived where Mr. Dennis now has his bakery. Mr. X tells me that he once saw this man making his bread with his feet! He had put the dough in a tub and was paddling up and down in it – a proceeding which did not lose him a single customer. The shops at Butcher Corner were entered up two or three steps. Shop-keepers

worked far longer hours than do their decendants, but the speed certainly was not great. Most of them had apprentices formally bound for a long period of years.

#### Manufacturing Linen

There was an extension of the Shambles on the north side of the church, where also was a stall-house used by the farmer from Castle Howard Castle. Probably there were more industries in proportion to the number of inhabitants in those days than there are now. One of the most interesting of these was the manufacture of linen on old-fashioned hand looms, which probably were worked in the homes of the people. An old local book contains the information that in the workhouse of other days there was "the necessary apparatus for employing the poor in different trades, particularly the manufacture of linen."

#### Intellectual Malton

Mr. X's clearest reminiscences of winter evenings in Malton are concerned with the establishment of a Working Men's Club, which originally met behind Mr. Maude's shop in Yorkersgate, where the old Conservative Club used to be. Presently, however, the men built a new room in Old Maltongate, now used as the Brethren's Chapel. A large number of people were interested in music, natural history, and popular literature, and there was an Amateur Dramatic Circle which once gave a rendering of "Tommy Mawman." Newspapers were very dear and scarce, and good readers were in great requisition in order to publish the news to the groups round about.

#### The Schools

The main schools were:-

Freddy Firth's Academy in the old Drill Hall, called the free school (although a penny or twopence per week was paid, and 6d if special attention was guaranteed to students.)

The Infant's School in Greengate, altered very much in later years. At that time you went up three or four steps to a dwelling-house, the school being behind with a gallery. The master was called Livesey.

Dunlop's private school, in Yorkersgate, for the aristocrats of the town, which became so successful that for a time it was carried on at Kirkham Hall; and

The National School, then much smaller than it is now.

#### The Post Office

The early days of the "penny post" in Malton are interesting. About the time Queen Victoria came to the Throne the local post office was removed from Chancery Lane to Wheelgate. There was only one delivery and one despatch, the delivery being some time about eleven in the morning. The Whitby mails came by post horse or cart driven by "Packet Matt." We have before us as we write an official return (of a little earlier date, by the way, than the opening of the reign) of "Thomas Robinson, postmaser, Malton," which in a striking manner brings before one's mind some disadvantages of "the good old times!"

Thus, whilst Thomas states that he receives letter bags from Bridlington, Driffield, Pickering, Scarborough, Whitby, and York at "three o'clock in the morning," the distance of each place from Malton and the postage is as follows:- Bridlington, 28 miles, 6d; Driffield, 20, 5d; Pickering, 9, 1d; Scarborough, 22, 6d; Whitby, 30, 6d; York,

18, 5d; How should we like a return to this in the present enlightened days?

Malton's Members of Parliament would "front" their letters in these days; perchance some naughty people forged our Members' signatures. In 1840, when the practice was abolished, it was stated that a regular trade in counterfeit franking had grown up. In five months one man had counterfeited 1,200 of franks of Members of Parliament.

### Chapels and Churches

Churches and chapels were much better attended than is the case at present. A long way back the Primitive Methodists used to meet in what is now the Parish Hall. The present large Primitive Methodist Chapel was built on the site of a farmhouse. Of course, St. Leonard's and St. Michael's were two separate parishes, each with its own vicar, whilst no one at Norton had ever dreamt of pulling down the church by the railway lines and building a new one. All the religious bodies now in Malton were represented except the Salvation Army, which was, of course, a later importation.

In some ways those were happier days than these. There was more incentive to work than now. And all this in spite of the fact very few people in the town were teetotal.

### Politics and Bribery

As regards politics, Mr. X tells me that we had "lots of politics" in Malton. At election times there was a great deal of bribery, although this was camouflaged carefully. The women would decorate the men with colours, and when the time of polling came near they would go out with boxes containing blue or yellow ochre, as the case might be, and smear folk over with one of

the colours as they came to poll. Such a district as Greengate-hill was very rowdy indeed at these times.

There were, however, few convictions as a result of these excesses. Dinner tickets were presented to voters, the guinea ever going to the aristocrats and the half-guinea over to the ordinary elector.

Over a long number of years the town faithfully did what the Fitz-Williams asked it to do! Strange to say, the present Coalition member for Thirsk and Malton was once carried round in a chair shoulder-high in acknowledgement of the clever exposition of his Liberal faith!

In the forties of last century the roads of our town were all paved with cobble stones. St. Michael-st. did not exist except as a passage, and Old Maltongate was a very steep hill for horses to descend – a fact which will encourage us to hope that some time the narrow streets in our town will become available for motor traffic without danger to the public.

### The Black Hole

The site of the present picture house was used as a cabinet-maker's shop, which was burnt down. The Malton prison was in Finkle-st. and was called "The black Hole," whilst the Norton prison was known as "The Round House," demolished about 1880.

In winter the town was sometimes almost snowed up, real old-fashioned winters being the rule; for 5 or 6 weeks snow would lay on the paths. I myself remember learning to skate up Castle Howard-rd., and then being promoted to Welham fish pond, and later to Castle Howard lake. I am sure that Malton

winters were much more severe and more prolonged in my boyhood than they are now. I learned to skate on the hard snow on the footpaths – policemen notwithstanding!

Sometime I hope to get Mr. X to point out all the main alterations in the town itself, but

that will take a good deal of space. Older people will remember the slaughter-house was separated from the cattle market by a blacksmith's shop with a house over the top, in which Mr. Stabler, the candler, lived.

(To be continued)

## The Prince of Wales and a Borrowed Umbrella

### *concluding article*

Mr. X some of whose recollections I have given in the previous articles, had very little schooling. He got as far as long division sums before his parents wished him to begin to contribute to the family income. Between the ages of six and seven he was sent out into the fields to scare crows, his wages being 6d per day. Fancy the little lad, with a shawl wrapped round his shoulders, trundling up Castle Howard Road with great enterprise and braving the hungry birds! Later he went into a mill where he had the misfortune to get one finger cut off. This cut was treated by the doctor without anaesthetic. In those days no compensation was asked or given for such accidents.

His next move was to the farm of a relation at Mowthorpe, a district which he remembers with vivid pleasure, especially for the trees, the birds, the flowers, and the animals. The farm was quite small and only needed his assistance and that of a maid-servant. At the age of 11 he could plough a straight furrow. His hours stretched

from early Sunday morning to late Saturday night, although in winter the family did not get up until nearly 8am in order to save artificial light.

### On Castle Howard Estate

Mr. X remembers going to the castle at Castle Howard for ale for an invalid at his cousin's farm, this being a regular gift by the Howards to all their tenants. The winter nights were long and the only recreation was reading the "Weekly Budget" to the rest of the family as they sat by the fire. Even more interesting than the Budget was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when by good fortune this famous book came into his hands.

Rabbits, hares and foxes and a stray deer or two were common sights in Mowthorpe. All these and similar game were well looked after by the large number of keepers on the Castle Howard Estate which also maintained far more labourers than at present. When a magpie was seen folk said: "Aye, there goes a mischief" then, as other magpies came into view: "Two

for a birth, three for a wedding and four for a death.”

The then Earl of Carlisle was fond of walking about his estate. One day, he called at this particular farm for the first time, and the mistress did not know him. They began talking together, and presently she said: “Pray you, sir, will you have a dish of tea with us.” A horrified onlooker who knew the Earl by sight whispered “It’s the Earl.” “I can’t ‘elp it” replied the mistress, who was quite set at ease when the Earl interposed with “Yes, I will have a dish of tea with you.”

#### Ryton and Habton

When he left Mowthorpe, Mr. X – went to the other side of Malton to Ryton – not a very pleasant change from the beautiful hilly country he had so much enjoyed. From Ryton he moved on to Habton and Kirbymisperton, when he led bricks from the Black Bull siding on the Malton to Pickering railway in order to provide material for the building of new houses.

The next move was to Binnington, where Mr. X had the happiness to become engaged to be married. The wage then given was about £18 per annum. The farm was a large one, and long hours were worked. The cultivation was carried out much more perfectly in those days, and certainly the crops were infinitely better than

they are today, both in quality and quantity. The winters were very severe, and usually the men had to “cut” through the drifts in order to make the roads passable. The usual method of doing this was to make a track for the horses and then yoke up four or five animals to a cart and drive these along the horse track.

#### When the Prince Came

During his stay on the farm, the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII.) came to Scarborough, an event which attracted the whole countryside. The Prince was lighted into Scarborough station by bonfires on each side of the line, and into Scarborough itself by torches.

Mr. X – saw the Prince shooting on the Londesborough estate, and remembers several interesting things about him. One day the Prince, finding a donkey and cart at the side of the road unattended, sprang on to the cart and started to whip up the donkey. The owner, who was in the adjoining field saw what was happening and called out, “What’s that fool what gotten up there?” One of the attendants of the royal visitor replied: “Take care, don’t you see it is the Prince.” But the outraged owner was not to be mollified and rejoined “I don’t care who it is – he’s a fool anyway.”

## The Borrowed Umbrella

At Ayton the Prince sought the shelter of a public-house during heavy rain, the quaint old landlady at once began to interrogate the visitor "I suppose," she said "you're having a great man at Scarborough, and making much a-do about him."

"Yes," replied the visitor, "but he's only a man after all is said and done."

Then as the rain did not cease, the visitor said.

"Bye the bye, Miss'is, will you lend me an umbrella?"

"Why," she replied, "I 'ave been done a time or two with lending umbrellas but I have an old one which I will lend to you."

So the unknown Prince went away happy and sent a courier back with the umbrella and a sovereign and the Prince's thanks, whereat the old lady said: "If I 'ad but known it was him I would have lent him my best umbrella."

## On the Wolds

A farm at Wharram was Mr. X's next destination. A great deal of wheat was grown, and a large number of men were kept on the farm. The then owner, an enterprising man, did not succeed in making the farm pay, and after his death it was put with an adjoining one and actually worked with the labour of the second farm, the result being serious under-cultivation. The nights on the wolds were so dark that lanterns were in universal use. He recollects helping in the renovating of the Wesleyan Chapel at Duggleby, and told me how very full of worshippers it used to be in comparison with today.

For a short period Mr. X changed his vocation, working iron in Cleveland at a wage of £5 a week, and later on coal in the West Auckland pits. It interested me to find that a man who all his life has been so very appreciative of nature could enjoy districts such as these – but this is another illustration of mastery of mind over matter.

## Women's Work

Mr. X – thinks that in the days he is speaking of the women on the farms shared in the general work better than they do now. Also that farmers and their wives on the larger farms mixed with their servants more than is the custom now.

"The farmers with their servants together used to dine

But now they are in the parlour with the beef pudding and wine"

As regards education, he is doubtful whether our expenditure on education, especially since 1870, has given adequate return, although he would disagree entirely with the old lady at Swaledale, who once informed the writer that education had spoilt all the young people of the dale! He deplores the decline of crafts in the villages. He says even hedging and ditching are going out of date, and it is comparatively very few villages which supply a first-rate tailor or shoemaker; even the village blacksmith is not the man he used to be. In other ways young lads delighted going into the smithy and working the bellows, especially when the smith was making the real good old horseshoe.

## Concerning Pie-Crusts

I asked Mr. X about the fare given at the farms, and he told me that boiled milk, bacon and meat, and pies with crusts two inches thick was the rule. Occasionally, the

pie crusts were even thicker, so that a humorous lad would say that he could block a wagon wheel with one, or that if you tied a crust behind a wagon you could travel from one town to another without breaking it.

At Christmas time “frummity” was the popular thing, but the greatest times for feeding were at harvest when the Mell-supper came along. This custom is referred to in a popular poem which springs from Wensleydale, in which the following lines occur:-

“John Metcalfe has gitten all shorn and  
mawn,  
All but a few standards an’ a bit o’ lower  
corn.  
We have her, we have her.  
Fast I’ a tether,  
Coom help us to hod her,  
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

Blest be t’ day that Christ was bor,  
For we’ve gotten t’smell o’ t’ farmer’s corn  
It’s weel bun’.  
But better shorn,  
Mell! Shout, lads, Mell!”

I hope that these reminisces of an old friend of mine for whom I have a very real respect will encourage others to tell some stories of our dear old town.

Spectator’s interesting account of the recollections of Mr. X must have brought to the minds of many of our readers incidents of the life in their younger days, and the remembrance of many old practices that have now passed away. We hope, with ‘Spectator,’ that the relation of these reminisces will encourage others to detail their recollections, and we should be glad to make a feature of any letters on old times which readers may care to send us. – Ed., “Yorkshire Gazette”