

Mr D Styan...2010 Memories of Kirby Hill & Boroughbridge 1920's onwards.

.....mjrjones

My father being a bricklayer/stonemason it was natural for me to follow in his footsteps, although I didn't necessarily agree that's what I wanted to do. Throughout my working life I saw many changes in the character of buildings in and around Boroughbridge. I recall the many old cobbled stone one-bedroom houses inhabited in those days by poor farm labourers often with families of nine or more children. Can you imagine raising a family in such circumstances? These old houses were gradually replaced by modern type dwellings, many of which I helped construct or convert.

As a workman I recall the old Brick Works up towards Roecliffe. The operation was a hive of activity employing a number of local men. Clay was dug out nearby, transported to the works to be fired into Bricks, Tiles, Drainage Pipes, and Chimney Pots. The clay was of a fine quality a testimony to those buildings we see today in and around Boroughbridge. I understand many products went further a field, and even exported. Now a distant memory the legacy left is in the name of "Clay Pit Lane" and "Brickyard Lane". Will future citizens of Boroughbridge make the connection?

The old railway is another institution long gone, but brings back happy memories. Running through Boroughbridge via Starbeck, Knaresborough, and on to Harrogate mighty steam trains pulling carriages steaming along rattling iron tracks. Many's the time I journeyed to Harrogate for a day out to enjoy it's splendour and sample its wares. In those days you had the option to pay 1s 9d by bus or 1s 8d by train. By using the train it left me with an extra 1d (a penny in old money) in my pocket that gave me extra purchasing power on a day out. In those days 1 penny went a long way.

Another fond memory of the railways many years ago was of the iron rail bridge (long demolished) that spanned the river Ure just above the weir. As young boys in summertime we would jump off this bridge into the river and swim to one side or the other. This was very daring as the bridge was some way above the river the drop was considerable. What thought of Health & Safety, and Risk Assessment in those days?

In past times I recall watching very long logs (tree trunks) being transported through the town on a set of wheels front and rear joined down the middle by a long plank. The carriage was drawn by a number of large horses. The logs were destined for John Body's wood yard. When the carriage driver came to negotiate the sharp left bend at the bottom of high street, and with sometimes-skittish horses many a time things went wrong putting out the windows at what is now the Tourist Information Point. Similarly when turning from Horsefair into Valuation Lane the manoeuvring occasionally went awry and did the same to buildings nearby.

Long ago as far as my mind can stretch I recall a service being run by a lady from Kirby Hill who had a horse drawn charabanc, it operated to and from Ripon at a cost of 1 old shilling. I remember the Bluebell Inn at the top of Kirby Hill housed a prisoners cell. This was used as an overnight stop to keep a prisoner being taken from northern climes (even Edinburgh it is said) to courts further south such as York, and even London for trial. No doubt the officers accompanying the prisoner enjoyed their stay at the Bluebell whereby no doubt they downed a glass or two of local ale brewed by the old Boroughbridge Brewery. I too have supped many a glass of this excellent brew. A story I was told in my younger days was that of a man found dead in the well opposite the Bluebell. Search as they may the police could not trace the perpetrator(s). It was decided that something had caused the poor mans death so a decision was made to arrest the bucket. The said bucket was subsequently charged and taken for incarcerated at Knaresborough Castle to be hung on a wall for perpetuity. It is said records at Knaresborough substantiate this although I have not sort out these records.

Again in my youth I was told of how travelling folk who we called gipsies used to park their horse drawn caravans and carriages on land adjacent to the Bluebell Inn. One morning it is said a man was found dead between the Church and the Inn. The cause of death was said to be a result of being kicked to death. Prior to that time it was not usual to hold a coroners court to legally establish the cause of death. It is said that the first coroner's court in the land was held on this occasion to legally determine the cause of his demise.