

Memories of Malton and Some of Its Inhabitants in the 'Sixties and Onwards.

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By Thomas Baker
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OLD MALTONGATE

The late Mr. John Estill, solicitor, considerably improved the appearance of the lower part of Old Maltongate by erecting his offices on the site of the public house known as the Scarborough Arms and also the small shop occupied by Mr. Cour. These offices were taken over a short time prior to Mr. Estill's death by Mr. J. D. Whitehead, solicitor, who succeeded to Mr. Estill's practice, and now it is known as "J. D. Whitehead, Estill, and Newey."

The shop now tenanted by Mr. Ellis, as fishmonger, was previously occupied by Mr. Henry Blanchard, butcher; and for neighbour he had Mr. George Longster, florist and seedsman, who commenced a business here which has been considerably developed by his sons, who now have business premises in Wheelgate and Yorkersgate, though there is only one son in the ? at present, Harold. Mrs. Brown had a marine store two doors away. Several cottages and yards constituted Old Maltongate. In one yard lived a well-known character names "Loddy" ?ster, who trained greyhounds, and judging by their appearance they were not kept too well, and no doubt that was the cause of their thriving propensity. They used to jump on to Mr. Blanchard's shop block and grab a piece of meat or even a leg of mutton and run "home" with it. The meat was not fit for man consumption after the dogs had mauled it about, and of course the "owner" could not afford to pay. Mr. Blanchard became so annoyed with these depredators that he was on the look out for them, and when he saw one of the dogs jumping off the shop block, he let fly with a combil, which not only hit the dog on the hind leg, but went smashing against the door of Mr. Mitton's shop on the other side of the road, and knocked out a panel. My father experienced the same annoyance as Mr. Blanchard from these unwanted visitors, and often laid a complaint, but no redress for the stolen meat was ever forthcoming.

A little higher up was a beerhouse occupied by Mr. Beecroft. It had no sign, but was commonly known as "The Hole in the Wall," presumably because the entrance was in the passage. Not far away was another public house – The White Swan, - and this was kept by Mr. Graham. This public house is still in existence and Mr. Chas. Coldbeck is the present landlord. A few doors higher up lived Mr. George Taylor, who was the verger of St. Leonard's Church for many years, and who rang the six o'clock bell every night and morning from Lady Day to Michaelmas for a number of years. Mr. Henry Bradley had a joiner's shop and workshop where Mr. W. Wilkinson now has a garage. Mr. Bradley unfortunately had a serious fire on the premises and much damage was the result. He then vacated the premises, and the shop was eventually taken by Mr. Mark Stubbs, who dealt in curios. The "Lodge" at the top of Old Maltongate was then tenanted by Captain Copperthwaite, who was then steward to Earl Fitzwilliam, and the grounds attached were kindly loaned to the Malton Gala Committee for their Annual Show, which at that period was a very popular function. Just above the Lodge lived Mr. Edwin Ash, an auctioneer, and I remember he sold a lot of the salvage of Messrs. Johnson and Taylor's biscuit works, after their disastrous fire. East Mount at that time was comprised of a lot of piggeries and dilapidated cowsheds, and there were no houses on that site. The Rev. R. W. Elliott, vicar of St. Leonard's Church, occupied the Vicarage; and the room near by was the office of Mr. Walker, solicitor. Mr. R. Snow lived next door, at St. Leonard's House, and just below where the Drill Hall is now was the British School, conducted by Mr. "Cadghey" Firth. Where Nurse Wood now lives, Mr. William Douglas, who was a traveller for Messrs. Walker and Co., brewers, resided. He was a big, brawny Scotchman, and was well known for his immense stature. I may here mention that contemporary with Mr. Douglas as a traveller for Messrs. Walker was another well-known individual in Jack Masterman. Jack was a real live wire, always up to some mischief or other,

and never seemed happy unless he was playing pranks on someone. One of his favourite tricks was to invite his friends, and others, to look at his tie pin, which represented a negoo's face with protruding open lips. Attached to the pin at the back was a rubber tube, which ran down the inside of his waistcoat and into his trouser pocket. At the end of this tube was a bulb filled with water, and when the innocent individual was admiring the pin, Jack pressed the bulb and squirted water into his face, and then laughed heartedly at his discomfiture. I remember him and some of his chums going to a temperance lecture in the Temperance Hall in Spital Street. The lecturer was a great temperance advocate named General Neal Dow. Jack and his friends had not been in the hall very long before a pigeon was released and fluttered about, shortly afterwards another was let loose, and then a third and fourth. This, of course, caused confusion and created further disturbance, greatly interfering with the course of the lecture, and led to unpleasant consequences. Jack invariably wore a silk hat slightly tilted on one side, and his trousers were very tight-fitting, and I used to wonder how he got them on and off. Whenever I see a picture of Mr. Micawber I am reminded of Jack Masterman. There were a few lively sparks at this period, amongst who I remember Tom Hickson, Billy Edwards, John Cox, John Read, Billy Cattaneo, and others whose names I cannot for the moment recall.

At the opposite side of Greengate to where Mr. Douglas lived, the corner house was occupied by Mr. John Sawdon, brewer for the Griffin Brewery Company. Lower down, William Stamper and John Rowsby, two noted bell ringers of St. Leonard's Church, had their abode. Malton at that time was fortunate in having some very ardent bell ringers, and peals were rung quite often. The remaining houses on that side of the street are in much the same condition; although the public pump which stood opposite the White Swan Inn has been removed. Mr. Morrill had a plumber's business two doors from the Christian Brethren Meeting House, and had for his neighbours Hugh Monaghan, noted for his mint drops, which he manufactured at the back of the premises; and Mr. "Johnny" Willows, a much-respected chimney sweep, who in later years was elected to a seat on the Malton Urban District Council. Mr. Willows was very original in his method of advertising, and on a sign-board denoting where he lived and also his "profession," he had emblazoned thereon a house showing a chimney on fire, with a sweep climbing up over the roof to extinguish the fire, and under the picture were some lines something like the following:-

John Willows he lives here
He sweeps chimneys not to dear
He sweeps chimneys up and down
Both in country and in town

I remember he had two men – George Wilson and Natty Williamson, and a boy we used to call Nick Sweep - engaged to assist him in his work. Williamson's widow once informed me the assistants used to sleep in the soot house, which was on Church Hill, and only washed once a week on Saturdays – and that when they ascended some of the chimneys of the larger houses, such as Birdsall House, Castle Howard, Scampston Hall, &c., they bandaged their eyes with a cloth. There were projecting bricks at intervals in the chimney, in order to assist them in climbing.

In later years Mr. Willows went into the boot and shoe business in Wheelgate, and afterwards became interested in the china establishment of Wilson & Co., in Yorkersgate, and traded as Wilson, Willows, & Co.

Prior to the erection of the Christian Brethren Meeting House, which was originally built for a Workmen's Hall, but did not have a very long existence, there was a road leading to the back of a public house (The Rockingham Arms) in Wheelgate, next to the Old Post Office.