

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

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By Thomas Baker
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WHEELGATE

My first impression of Wheelgate was when it was paved with blue cobble stones, commonly called "Kidneys," and you can imagine what a jolting you got when riding in a conveyance at a moderate pace over these stones, and what a clatter it made when you desired to carry on a conversation with someone seated beside you.

I don't wish to infer that I was more precocious than the average boy of that time, but very early in life, when about 10 years of age, I was entrusted with the responsibility of driving a horse and trap for the purpose of delivering meat to my father's various customers, and when approaching the shop occupied by Messrs. Joseph Moon and Sons I always put the horse into a smart trot, and the reason for this was that this shop was the only one in Wheelgate possessing a large plate-glass window, which faithfully reflected passing traffic, so it can be imagined with what pride I sat upright, holding the reins and whip in the orthodox style of the show-ring, and looked for my reflection in the window. Vanity! Yes, vanity, and in one so young, too. To have allowed the horse to pass this window at a walking pace would have the effect of subduing the pleasure and pride of driving. It has often been said that first impressions last longest, and this I have found to be true in my case, and thus it is that I have such a lively recollection of the cobble stones in Wheelgate.

I don't know when the stones were replaced by Macadam, but think it would be somewhere in the middle "sixties" when the town's water supply was laid on, and what a boon that was to the inhabitants, because previous to the installation of a water supply it was the custom of householders to fetch water required for domestic and other purposes from the various pumps in the town. Many of the houses had private pumps in their yards and gardens, but since the introduction of the town's water supply, many of these have become obsolete, and the wells adjacent filled up. As far as I remember, the water was very good and wholesome, but the fact of having a supply laid on within the house, and able to obtain it by the turn of a tap instead of having to pump it up, was indeed much appreciated.

It was the custom for carriers' carts to stand on each side of the street, and the owners put up their horses at the Sun Inn, the Crown, and the Cross Keys. Malton at that time, especially on Saturdays, really looked like it was – an old-fashioned market town.

I have frequently been told that Malton is not progressive in the matter of its buildings and other improvements, but I can assure my readers it has made much advancement in its structural alterations in my time. Wheelgate in particular presents a changed aspect from what it did sixty-five years ago. Take the right hand (or east) side from Butcher Corner. The post office was there (postmaster Mr. James Sellars, followed by Mr. Smith, who died there. The Rev. W. Sutherland was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Smith but resigned the appointment a short time afterwards. Mr. Wilcox was his successor, and then Mr. Ashwell, who was there when the post office was removed to Yorkersgate.) Next door to the post office was a public house called The Rockingham Arms, kept by Mr. Reynard, and in front of the house was a mounting stone intended for the wayfarer to mount his horse or the stage coach after partaking of refreshment at the 'pub.' My father was the succeeding tenant, though not as a publican, but as a butcher. Mr. Hudson, an ironmonger, lived next door, and in recent years the old house and shop have been re-built and brought up to date. Messrs. Galtry's shop was then occupied by Mr. George Barnby, the proprietor of the then "Malton Gazette," who also had a licence to sell stamps. Whoever wanted a stamp had to knock at a small door fixed in the shop window, and when it was opened ask for what he required; when

served, the door was again closed until the next customer appeared on the scene, going through the same process. Mr. George Barnby was succeeded in the business of bookseller, stationer, and proprietor of the "Gazette" by his son Edmund, who sold the business to Mr. Reuben Bradley, and later it was transferred to Mr. J. G. Jones, and eventually the business ceased to exist. The "Gazette" was afterwards incorporated with the "Yorkshire Gazette," and is now printed at Darlington.

Adjoining the "Gazette" Office was the Sun Inn, kept by Mr. "Dick" Wilson, and at his death, the house was pulled down, and the present one erected, when it rose to the dignity of Sun "Hotel." The first landlord of the new house was Mr. Tom Harrison, he being succeeded by Messrs. E. B. Rawlinson (the noted Yorkshire County Cricketer), Metcalfe, Spencer, Standidge, Gilliard, Cooper, Geldard, Malkin, and the present landlord Mr. John Spanton, so it will be seen that the house has had many tenants during the period under review. The Crown Hotel next door had a well-known lady for its tenant in Mrs. Leaper, and at that time was a very exclusive hotel, for it was here that most of the principal business men of Malton foregathered almost nightly, when the affairs of the town (and nation) were discussed and arranged.

Mrs. Suddaby succeeded Mrs. Leaper, and was much esteemed as landlady. At her demise, her son William became licensee. He died quite recently, and now the management of the hotel is under the supervision of his sons. Adjoining the Crown was a private house occupied by Mr. Barnett, who was a ham and bacon factor. He had his shop and warehouse where Mr. Mark Nicholson's butcher's shop is at present, the private house later being converted into business premises, and is now in the occupation of Messrs. Dent and Sons. Next to Mr. Barnett's shop was a private dwelling house, occupied by Mr. Charles Monkman, who was a freelance journalist and married a daughter of Mr. George Barnby, the proprietor of the "Malton Gazette." The house was eventually transformed into a shop, and occupied by Mr. John Willows as a boot and shoe shop. It is now in the occupation of Messrs. Tate and Durrans. Messrs. Joseph Moon and Son, clothiers, were the tenants of the adjoining property, and they were followed by Mr. Bell in the same line of business. Next door was a private dwelling house, which was later transformed into a shop and tenanted by Mr. Alfred Brown as an athletic outfitter; in course of time Mr. Alfred Taylor effected improvement in the appearance of the premises, and opened out a grocery and provision business. The adjoining house was occupied by Miss Mande as a millinery and dressmaking business, though it was a private dwelling to all outward appearance. On the other side of the archway was Mr. Wright's ironmongery shop, and he was succeeded by Mrs. Smiddy, and later by Mr. Gypson, and then Mr. Fentress. Up Wright's Yard were a few small cottages, but not there a quite a number of dwelling houses, which have been built on the site of some workshops and vacant ground which led out into Greengate.

The Malton and Norton Co-operative Society, Ltd., have recently greatly improved the property extending from Messrs. Tate and Durrans' to where Mr. Wright's shop stood, and do not occupy the whole of this site. Mr. John Teale had a stone-yard next to the shop of Mr. Wright, and on this space has been built some commanding premises now occupied by Mr. Gibson as a millinery and dressmaking establishment. Mr. Teale carried on the business of builder and contractor, and he was succeeded by Mr. Wood in a similar line of business. Where the property occupied by Messrs. North, Wheeler, Brown, and the Post Office now stand, were a row of thatched houses occupied by Mr. Barker a well-known muffin maker; Mr. Edward Medd, commonly known as "Weaky," a rope and twine maker, who had his rope-walk in a long garden behind the house; Mr. Exley a shoe factor; Mr. William Blanchard, a butcher; and Mr. Bullock, a shoe-maker. There was a passage leading into Victoria Square here, and when anything of an uncommon character was taking place in the town such as a circus procession, parade of school children, a wedding at the Primitive Methodist Chapel at the opposite side of the street, or the funeral of some notable person, there was always a good sprinkling of females with arms akimbo standing at the end of the passage to witness it. The shop now occupied as a fish shop was then a grocer's shop tenanted by Mr. Ness and at the other side of the passage was a pork shop kept by Mr. Bilton, succeeded by Mr. Stiegman, and later by Mr. C. Heyne, and immediately adjoining was a dwelling house occupied by Mr. North who had a shoe shop at the opposite side of the road. Mr. Joseph Skelton had a barber's shop next door to Mr. North. Mr. Charles Lapish and Mr. Megginson were the

occupants of the next premises, and I think these two shops are the only two on this side of Wheelgate that have not received the attention of the modern architect and builder. The late Mr. R. C. Horsley was the means of improving property in this locality, having rebuilt four or five shops, which have greatly enhanced this part of Wheelgate. The Castle Howard Ox Inn (landlord Mr. Barker) is now extinct. The adjoining property and the premises now tenanted by Messrs. Bowers, butchers, was a clothiers' shop occupied by Mr. Soothern, who was locally known as the Bull of Bashan by reason of his sonorous voice and huge feet.

Taking the opposite side of the street, I commence with the grocery business of Mr. R. Hatfield, which, at his decease, was transferred to his son R. W. Hatfield, who died in 1926. The latter sold it to Messrs. Fuller and Co., who still carry on the business of grocery and provisions. Adjoining Mr. Hatfield's was another grocery and provisions shop occupied by Messrs. Henry Taylor and Sons, but is now an ironmongery establishment owned by Mr. Hudson. The Cross Keys Hotel next door is notable for its antiquity, as the following inscription which is placed upon an outer wall near to the entrance will show:-

Cross Keys Hotel, Malton

This hotel is built upon a beautiful Gothic crypt with an intricate stone vaulted roof; and is one of the most interesting relics of mediaeval times remaining in Malton. The crypt is all that is left of one of the three hostels founded in the district about 1150 by Eustace Fitz John and maintained by the Canons of the Malton Priory as a hostel for Pilgrim travellers and a shelter for homeless poor.

It is interesting to note that the other two hostels, one St. Mary Magdalene, was situated at Broughton, and the other, St. Nicholas, on an island in the River Derwent on the Norton side of the river.

The two houses and shops adjoining are of a rather primitive construction, and I expect will in due time be modernised. The one next to the hotel was then tenanted by Mr. Fawcett, who was a stays maker, and used to have a stall in the Market Place on Saturdays. The other was in the hands of Mr. North as a shoe shop.

Where the Primitive Methodist chapel now stands were two or three old cottages, one of which was occupied by Mr. Sturdy, and a small farmyard was attached. The house next the chapel was tenanted by Mr. Wood, a builder, who had his stone-yard at the opposite side of the street; and the premises now occupied by the Malton Farmers' Manure Company, Ltd., were in the possession of Messrs. Metcalfe and Sons, millers, as a retail flour shop; and then came some thatched houses, which were demolished and nobler looking buildings erected on the site. The first tenants of the new property were Mr. Charles Thompson, draper; and Messrs Leatham, and Co., the shoe shop. The latter are still there, whereas the former was succeeded by Mr. Felton, as a draper, and later by Messrs. Wilsons, grocers and provision merchants.

On the opposite side of St. Michael Street was a private house, together with offices occupied by Mr. Charles Jagger, solicitor; and for his neighbour he had Mr. W. Rieveley, a boot and shoe maker, who died there. After a time the house and shop became vacant, and structural alterations were effected. Mr. R. S. Wallgate became tenant, and opened a grocery and provision stores. On Mr. Wallgate's decease, business was carried on for some time by his widow, who eventually disposed of it to Messrs. Cooper and Stephenson in the same line of business; and on the death of Mr. Stephenson, the business was continued by Mr. William Cooper, the present tenant. Mr. William Freer commenced business as a basket maker in the adjoining shop, now occupied by Messrs. J. Read and Sons, plumbers, and added to his basket making business that of tobacconist. After a time he removed to the shop in Yorkersgate and developed into a full-fledged tobacconist and confectioner, and gave up basket making. Next door lived Mr. Joseph Todd, coach builder, and adjoining his private house was a commodious showroom and workshop behind. This property has been considerably altered and improved. Mr. W. Wilkinson commenced an aerated water business here, and his son Ernest still carries it on.

Through the adjacent passage was Mr. Matthew Edward's leather works, and at the bottom end of the passage Mrs. Allenby had a semi-private house and carried on the business of altering shapes of straw hats and bonnets. At her death the house was partly demolished

and converted into a shop, the first tenant being Mr. R. S. Wallgate, who later removed to the premises a few doors higher up the street; he was followed by Mr. Harold Wrangham, also a grocer; and then Mr. Humphrey, who removed a little later to the new premises lower down the street. The shop is now occupied by Messrs. Curry's Cycle Co.

The houses and shops now occupied by Mr. George Brown and Mrs. Stubbs are the same as they were 65 years ago, and how long before that I cannot say. Mr. John Hide was the first tenant of this property that I can remember. The premises now occupied by Messrs. George Longster and Sons was a private house in the occupation of Mr. Pallister, who was a dealer in milk, and kept his cows at the back, ingress to which was up Chapel Lane, in Yorkersgate. The late Mr. Charles Barker, veterinary surgeon, had rooms at Mr. Pallister's for many years. Mr. Robert Harrison, basket maker; Mr. William Coates, fishmonger, who was always anxious to know where they put the "muck" which was taken out of the Suez Canal when being constructed; and Mr. Lightowler, barber, were tenants of the property which had just been pulled down to make way for the new premises of the Yorkshire Penny Bank, etc. When you entered Mr. Lightowler's there was a room to the right where shaving and haircutting was carried on, and one to the left where his son William used to clip and singe horses. The old gentleman was a humorous character. I remember a youth once going in to get his first shave. After the youngster had been well and truly lathered, Mr. Lightowler went and leaned over the bottom half of the door (the door was in two halves) and began to look out quite unconcernedly, and apparently forgot he had a customer awaiting his attention – at least the young man thought so. After patiently waiting he reminded Mr. Lightowler that he wanted to be going as his limited time had nearly expired. The old gent turned round and said, "Oh, I was only waiting until your whiskers grew." Mr. Joseph Wrangham then had the chemist and druggist business. Eventually Mr. George Hardy went into partnership and the firm was known as "Wrangham and Hardy." Sometime afterwards it became "Wray and Thompson," as it is today.

Where the National and Provincial Bank now stands was a butcher's shop occupied by my father, and where the writer first saw daylight, for it was here where I was born. There was then an area adjoining Mr. Wrangham's shop, which had some iron railings round and down some steps was access to the cellar kitchen. My father afterwards removed to the opposite side of the street, where the public house was. Mr. Charles Hartley, chemist, became the occupant of the shop my father vacated, entrance to which was at the corner. Mr. Hartley was succeeded by Mr Jas. Hopperton as a coopery warehouse; and later by Mrs Lumley as a gents' outfitter.