

How Bridlington Grew

When one talks of Bridlington it is automatically taken for granted that it is one place, a single settlement, but 500 years ago there were two, possibly three, parts. There was the Old Town, the Priory buildings and about a mile away across open fields and moorland, the Quay.

To consider first the Old Town, or Burlington, or Bridlington - this was mainly to the west of the Priory and its backbone was Westgate most of which is now called High Street and from this branched out Market Place, St. John's Gate, Kirkgate, Nungate and Baylegate. Note that five out of six of these ancient street names end in -gate so that Baylegate is the street in which the Bayle stands and not the building itself. Off these streets was a tangle of narrow courts or alleys where people lived in hopelessly crowded conditions.

Following the Dissolution of the Priory Henry VIII began repairs to the houses and from a Bill in the Public Record Office discovered by Dr. Purvis it can be gathered that they were built of a timber framework filled in with mud or plaster, with thatched roofs. Many of these probably stood on dwarf walls of stone from the ruined Priory.

North Back Lane and South Back Lane ran behind the main street to mark the limits of the house-plots of the High Street dwellings. Nungate continued east to become Sewerby Street, Kirkgate ran on into Pinfold Lane, Westgate led to the road to York and St. John's Gate continued towards the Quay.

The antiquity of High Green and Low, the latter now called Church Green, is not known. It is known that High Green contained a large pond but this was filled in about 1900.

Applegarth Lane marks the site of the Priory orchards and not far away, near the present Headlands School (now the new college - Ed.), were the Priory Fishponds, called on some later maps the Long River.

The only connection between the Old Town and the Quay was a single road, not very straight and not very good - really a country lane best used in summer but muddy, rutted and bad in winter. It is doubtful whether there were any houses which could have formed a street further down the road to the Quay than somewhere about the present

Queensgate. Everywhere else was grass, moorland or worse - from the Priory grounds across to Fortyfoot, all the Queensgate area, St. John's Avenue across to Hilderthorpe - all fields with not a building on them anywhere except a few sheds for cattle.

Little is known about the Quay at that time but in 1539, although no street names are mentioned, the property there included what were called the "Beach houses" and the "Herring houses". Slowly the two distinct townships of Bridlington and Bridlington Quay began to grow and by 1672 there were 232 houses in the Old Town and 120 at the Quay. Note the importance of the former compared with the latter. By the early 19th century both areas had extended a little and a map of 1828 by Wood clearly shows the streets of the period. People often think that vandalism of public and private property is of recent origin but listen to an extract from John Thompson's "Historical sketches of Bridlington" first published in 1822.

"The streets of Bridlington, though, like those of all old towns, narrow, crooked and irregular, are safe and commodious being generally provided with convenient flagged causeways. The pavements receive incalculable damage during the winter months from the ponderous weights passing in the narrow-wheeled wagons used in this part of the country. In addition to the damage thus received the dirt is too often suffered to accumulate to a degree which, to the ladies, renders crossing the street in an open winter, extremely unpleasant. Another great inconvenience is the want of lamps. A few formerly displayed by private individuals, but that wanton and ignorant barbarism which too frequently accompanies uncultivated leisure, soon effected their destruction; so that after the shops are shut passengers are left to grope their way in a state of disagreeable uncertainty unless provided with lanterns, the glare of which is very annoying to those who may be walking in a contrary direction".

Regarding the paving of the streets it is said that a draper called Hustler was responsible for this about 1680 but the Lords Feoffees carried out many improvements in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Flagging of High Street and St. John Street began in 1798 and Market Place and Westgate in the 1840's.

Oil lamps were fixed in the Old Town in 1824 and gas lighting was introduced for the first time in 1833.

Over the years the weekly market has been held in various places but was moved from the Old Town about 1910 after the purchase of the market rights by the new Bridlington Corporation from the Lords Feoffees in 1899. The following extract from Thompson's "Historical sketches..." will give some idea of the conditions.

"The Market, which is held on Saturday, has considerable claim to antiquity, having existed upwards of 600 years. The market cross has long since been demolished, but a slight elevation at the lower end of Market Place, partly occupied by a dwelling house and shop, still retains the name of Cross Hill. The Market is plentifully supplied with butcher's meat, vegetables, fruit and other necessities, and is principally held in the west end of High Street, the piercing blasts of the north winds rendering the situation of the Market Place bleak and uncomfortable. The flesh shambles are moveable stalls, ranged on each side of High Street and the lower end of the Market Place."

The dwelling house and shop have been demolished but it is interesting to note that the flat roof of the shop was used as a platform by the Mayor of Bridlington to proclaim the coronation of Edward VII (photograph below).



Undoubtedly the coming of the railway to the district in 1846 did more to merge the Old Town and the Quay than anything previously. According to Furby's book "Excursions from Bridlington Quay" there were soon "many neat and convenient houses on either side of the connecting road which bids fair for a union of the two towns". The extension of the Quay itself was confined to building along the Promenade, running northwards from the town centre. A few houses, among them Fort Hall and Sea Breezes, had been built by 1828 and by 1850 such groups as Victoria Terrace, Providence Place, Ocean View and Belle Vue reached almost to the town's boundary which at that time was Trinity Cut. Just beyond, Sewerby Terrace (now called Alexandra Terrace) was built between 1855 and 1859 comprising houses to accommodate 12 to 15 visitors. Almost next door was the Alexandra Hotel erected between 1863 and 1866.

Farther south the development of the land between the Promenade and the sea front proceeded slowly after 1860. The Local Board laid out a new street (later called Marlborough Terrace) in 1866-67 and the building sites were bought by G.W.Travis of Sheffield who was also largely responsible for Cliff Street and The Crescent as well as some of the Esplanade. Fort Terrace was built in the early 1860's and by 1870 50 sites were available on the Beaconsfield Estate. It is interesting to note that the name Beaconsfield comes not from the Earl of Beaconsfield but more likely because there was one of Bridlington's 3 warning beacons on the coast at this point. This land stretched from York Road (Somerfield's supermarket) to Trinity Cut although the seafront sites were not used owing to inadequate defences.

The town boundary was extended in 1877 and St. Anne's Road and Flamborough Road were built up by 1890 also the Convalescent Home between Carr Lane (now called Sands lane) and St. Anne's Road. The development inland from the sea began in the 1870's, the Wellington Road Estate in 1875. The Wellington or Temperance Hall, now the Salvation Army Citadel, was built in 1877 and Field House Estate about 1880 although Field House itself is much earlier. In fact, it was built between 1780 and 1820 and the entrance drive then came in from Quay Road next to Christ Church but the church was not built until 1841. The name Field House gives a good idea of its location as it was completely surrounded by grass fields. There have been a number of alterations over the years but one unusual feature still remaining is a sunken bath which in the early 19th century was served by a chalybeate spring. In

view of its present use as a doctor's surgery it is interesting to note that in the 1890's Field House was used as a massage and hydropathic establishment.

From the Wellington Road estate and the Field House estate Trinity Road was made joining up with Promenade near Holy Trinity Church. Victoria Road was laid out in 1886 and the Roman Catholic Church was opened in 1894 replacing an earlier iron church in Wellington Road. There was also a Dominican Convent in this road until it moved to High Street about 1930. Building had begun in Princess Street and North Street by 1890. Off Quay Road approval for new villas in St. John's Avenue was given in 1873 and terraced cottages in Medina Avenue. The Masonic Hall was erected in 1875 and several houses beyond the Gypsy Race appeared by 1890. On the Hilderthorpe side of the Gypsy Race there were almost no buildings of any kind in 1850 apart from an isolated windmill and Apple Pie Cottage not far from the harbour. In the 1870's, however, work began on Railway (now called Windsor) Crescent. The old name was because of an extension line from the goods yard in 1851 to South Cliff Gardens but the line proved unsuccessful. It was derelict by 1866 but the track was not removed until well into last century. By 1890 there were more terraces around West Street but the sea front and the roads behind it had not been developed by 1894 although a Geoffrey Rhodes of Leeds issued a prospectus for a layout to be called South Burlington. One improvement carried out by the Local Board which benefitted Hilderthorpe residents was the erection in 1882 of a permanent bridge to replace a wooden footbridge over the Gypsy Race at the bottom of Beck Hill.

Early this century Oxford, Cambridge and Carlton Streets and Havelock Crescent were built up and across Quay Road, Brett Street, Borough Road and St. John's Walk, also the area around Midway Avenue. On the North Side several houses appeared on Marton Road whilst nearby the first Council houses in Watson's Balk (now Avenue), the latter to re-house families from property demolished in St. John Street and near the Priory. Trinity Road and Tennyson Avenue were completed in the 1890's - the latter was earlier known as Jimmy Tenny Lane after an old resident who lived in a cottage there.

In Hilderthorpe the South Burlington Estate of about 41 acres was taken over by Whitaker Bros of Leeds and in 1896 Tansy built a sea wall and the First Spa. During 1897 and in the next few years, this firm were

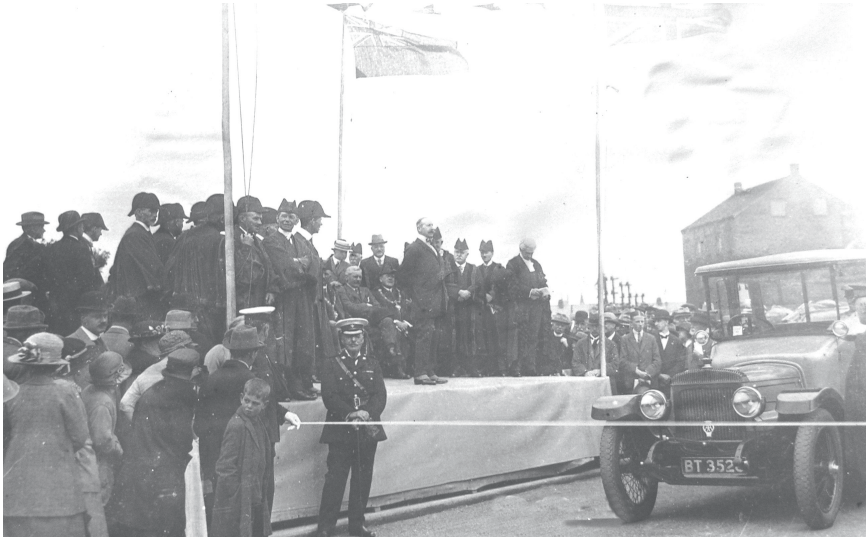
selling plots and homes in Horsforth Avenue, Roundhay Road, Belgrave Road, Cardigan Road and the South Marine Drive. Further south on the seafront J.W. Pitt bought land in 1898, and in 1902 he was planning to build villas behind his new sea wall.

Trees were planted alongside several roads in the 1890's and after the incorporation of the Borough in 1899 the event was marked by the laying-out of Midway Green as Victoria Gardens and the renaming of Prospect Gardens as Wellington Gardens, where the War memorial is now situated. Quay Road was improved by widening which involved demolishing about 60 houses between 1903 and 1912. In the Old Town, Waterworks Street was made between High Street and North Back Lane also Gordon Road from High Street to South Back Lane linking up with Ings Lane, now called Brookland Road. Down at the Quay a new road was made along the north harbour side and a slip-way from Prince Street to Crane Wharf was closed and levelled in 1894. Clough Bridge was widened and renamed Bridge Street, and Cross Street was increased to the same width as Promenade in 1904 by the demolition of part of the New Inn.

The First World War brought an end to further development but in the 1920's new estates were laid out, both Council and private, between Quay Road and Fortyfoot Lane, renamed Fortyfoot Road and made into a dual carriageway in 1922 at a cost of £14,000.

Kingsgate was opened in 1923 by Lord Deramore and much of the area between this road and Cardigan Road was built up by 1926. More private building took place in the 1920's along Sewerby and Marton Roads and Bempton Lane. The 1930's were a busy period and the Council began the South Back Lane Estate, 400 houses being built here by 1934. Other council houses were built near Sewerby Road, Marton Road and St. John Street in the late 1930's and private housing was extended behind Forty Foot as far as the privately owned Limekiln Lane caravan camp. This included St. Columba Road, Lambert Road, Nightingale Road and Harland Road. By the Second World War many houses had been erected around the Bempton Lane area and new roads laid out to the west of Kingsgate including Rosebery Avenue and Westridge Road.

It is interesting to note that practically no purpose-built accommodation for holiday-makers had been built for many years except for a prominent



The opening of Kingsgate with the anti-mill in the background where

addition to the N sea-front in 1937, the Expanse Hotel. It is quite a coincidence that the builder of this hotel, E.G. Briggs, originated from Horsforth near Leeds, the same place as the builder of the first Spa and sea-wall. The chief street improvements of the inter-war years were the widening of the top end of St. John Street in 1939 and the demolition of Waterworks Street plus part of North Back Lane in 1934 to provide an easy route from St. John Street to Scarborough Road. Other improvements included the building of bridges over the Gypsy Race at the end of Springfield Avenue in 1931 and part-way along Midway Avenue in 1938. The surroundings of the Priory and Church Green were also opened up by the extensive demolition of old property mainly in the year 1921.

The post-war development is too well-known to describe in detail but the Council decision to build on what is now called West Hill will be remembered by many. The battle to obtain the land by compulsory purchase began soon after the war ended and the first house was opened in 1949 and by 1970 there were 840 dwellings. More recently there has been the large municipal housing estate off Scarborough Road. Most of the private house building has taken place to the north of



Springfield Avenue was a cul-de-sac until this bridge was built to connect to Hilderthorpe Road in 1931. Lowson's Mill on the far left stood where the Toyota garage is now.

the town off Marton Road, both sides of Bempton Lane, between Sewerby Road and Marton Road, north of Martongate and west of the Hull Road.

What the future has in store and what the ultimate population figure for Bridlington will be, possibly only the planners know. But it is to be hoped the railway line to Scarborough will continue to be regarded as the northern and eastern limit for new houses and leave the green fields beyond as Bridlington's green belt.

By our late Bro Sydney Thompson, written about 1980.



Early aerial view of St Johns Street and Old Town, c. 1915. Queensgate is yet to be constructed and there are no houses south of Priory Church and little development in the fields north of Marton Road.



Jimmy Tenny Lane in 1887, now Tennyson Avenue which by 1900 looked much as it does today.



1934 and Waterworks Street about to be converted into Scarborough Road.



The Alexandra Hotel completed in 1866.