

## **RASTRICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**

**WHO are we?** - A group of people interested in both Local & Family History who got together at the time of Rastrick Library's Centenary Celebrations in 2012; we'd all noticed that, though Rastrick as a settlement is older than Brighouse, there was little, if anything, published about Rastrick itself. Since then three members have had books about Rastrick published (and one about Clifton!).

**WHAT do we do?** - We pursue individual research and share much of it. Before Covid we had talks in the library and walks in Rastrick, open to anyone, and we're hoping that these could be reintroduced. Items of Rastrick interest are on the shelves and displayed in the new Local History Room. A collection of members' research and photographs of Rastrick (donated & loaned) is being digitised and preparations are ongoing to run them on a loop in the library and ultimately for them to be accessible to everyone, probably through Calderdale Libraries whose catalogue can be searched online. The digitisation is a huge job but recently we've been lucky enough to welcome two volunteers who are certainly making inroads into the task. People's donations and loans are always interesting but some have been very exciting and have led to further research uncovering information about Rastrick's history we knew nothing about.

We do our best to answer queries about Rastrick and the people who have lived here. Three RALHG members are in the library each Tuesday afternoon (2 – 5) and if we can't help then, we'll find another way. You can also contact us via [rastrick.history@gmail.com](mailto:rastrick.history@gmail.com), [RALHG@outlook.com](mailto:RALHG@outlook.com) and do look at <https://myrastrick.com/>

**WHEN & WHERE do we meet?** - Rastrick Library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in each month at 5pm.

**WHY do we do it?** - Because it's fascinating and compelling.

Because we want to add to the body of knowledge about Rastrick's history.

Because we want to share our enthusiasm and encourage others.

## **THE DYSON FAMILY OF RASTRICK - BUILDING CONTRACTORS, PUBLICANS & LOCAL COUNCILLORS**

The story begins with a local man named **James Dyson** who was born in 1773. He married Betty Ambler at Elland Church in 1796 and they went on to have ten children, seven boys and three girls. Some of those boys were to have an influence on Brighouse and Rastrick which lasts to this day.

The eldest son, **William** (1798) was the grandfather of two children who were murdered in Rastrick in 1864, but that is another story that can be found at <https://myrastrick.com/double-child-murder/>

The second son was **John** (b.1800) who had three sons, **James** (b.1826), **George** (b.1830) and **John Exley** (b.1836).

The third son was **Joshua** (b.1802) who had two sons, **James** (b.1833) and **George** (b.1845) whilst

The fourth son was **James** (b.1809) who was the father to **Thomas Bottomley Dyson** (b.1836).

There were other children too, but they don't form part of this story.

Starting with brothers **James** and **George**, the sons of **John**. They were working a clay quarry at Gooder Lane under Healey Wood during the 1850s when they unexpectedly came across some fine quality clay deposits. This allowed them to expand their business, and they started to make bricks. They formed the Brighouse and Rastrick Brick and Tile Company and were later joined in business by their younger brother, **John Exley Dyson** and their cousin, **James Dyson**, the son of **Joshua**. Other notable tradesmen in the district such as John Cheetham, Thomas Bottomley and Joel Avison also became directors and shareholders of the company which later became the Brighouse Brick, Tile and Stone Company Ltd.

In 1868, the company won a contract from the London & North West Railway Company (LNWR) to provide 115,000 bricks per week over a two and a half year period to line a second railway tunnel under the Pennines between Marsden and Diggle. We call this amazing feat of Victorian engineering the Standedge Tunnels. This created more jobs for the Rastrick company and the following year, it built an eight-chamber brick kiln, capable of firing 400,000 bricks at a time. When the kiln was

completed in November 1869, some of the workmen and company directors climbed to the top of the kiln chimney to celebrate. They sat aloft and unbelievably drank several bottles of wine before returning back to the ground.

**FESTIVITY ON A CHIMNEY TOP.**—The Brighouse Brick and Tile Company have recently been extending their works, and adding a large kiln, on Hoffman's principle, and erecting a tall chimney. The latter work was completed on Tuesday. In celebration of the event, some of the directors and several of the workmen ascended to the top, drank several bottles of wine, and decended in safety. On Wednesday the workmen proceeded to take down the hoisting apparatus. The cross bar to which the block was attached became fastened in the flue, and is now to be seen projecting from the top of the chimney in an oblique direction. One of the coping stones by the pressure has been moved from its bed some seven or eight inches. How to repair this mishap is a difficulty not easily to be solved.

By 1894, the extensive clay pit stretched from Gooder Lane up to the Rastrick Common School. New houses on Gooder Lane were erected for the workers at Brick Terrace, Tile Terrace and Brick & Tile Terrace.

As the clay deposits diminished, the kilns became redundant and the operation closed down in the late 1950's. I remember the area as a young child as being a great place to play hide and seek in the old kilns and a fine area to find frogs and newts in the old ponds. The kilns and chimneys were demolished in the mid 1960's.

Looking in more detail at the aforementioned **James Dyson** (1833), he was actually born in Liverpool at a time when his father was working on a contract in that area. By the age of 18 years, he was living with his cousin Henry at Dinting Vale nr. Glossop, working as a stone mason but following his marriage to Ann Garside at Halifax in 1858, he moved back to Rastrick. The 1861 census described him as a stone mason and contractor. **James** and his cousin, **John Exley Dyson** were in business together, not only with the Brighouse Brick, Tile and Stone Company but also as building contractors.

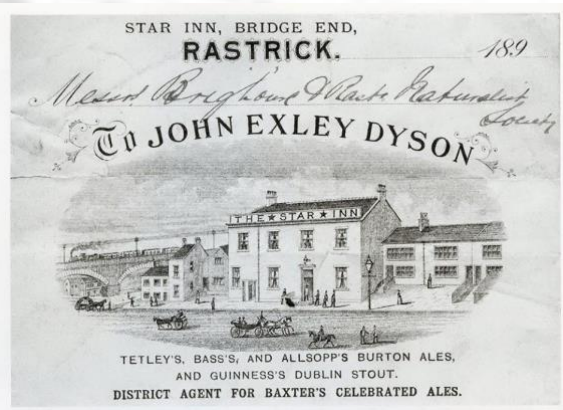
**BRIGHOUSE.**  
**THE TOWN HALL.**—The contractors Messrs. J. and J. E. Dyson, of Brighouse, are pushing forward the works of this undertaking. The first floor is raised and a great portion of the walling of the second storey is nearly half way up, and should fine weather continue a short time longer the joists and beams for the second floor will be laid. The building when completed will form a handsome ornament to this thriving town.

In 1867, they were awarded the contract to build a new Town Hall in



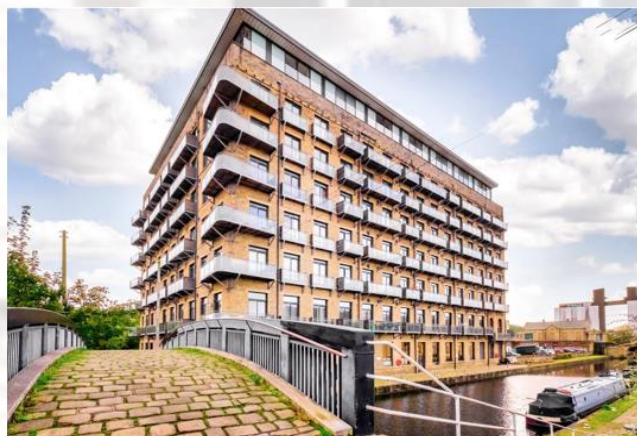
Brighouse. This was not the Town Hall in Thornton Square that we all knew, but the fine building that houses the former Civic Hall, Lords Photographic shop and the Yorkshire Building Society on Bradford Road and Bethel Street. They were responsible for constructing many other buildings in the area but in July 1869, the partnership between the two was dissolved. The following month, **John Exley Dyson** took his first steps into local politics when he was elected to the Rastrick Local Board.

At the time, he was living at Gooder Lane but in 1857 he married Hannah Lord, the daughter of William and Caroline Lord, licensees of the Star Inn, Bridge End, Rastrick. The couple moved into the pub upon the death of William Lord in November that same year and in 1874, John Exley Dyson took over the licence. He held it for 23 years and despite leaving the Star in 1897, his name was still etched into the glass fanlight above the front door until the pub closed in 2021.



In the meantime, James Dyson was still working in the construction industry and in 1873 he won the contract to build Mill Royd Mills, a seven-storey textile mill for Jonathan Stott & Co. The mill became known for many years as Henry Cullingworth's and the remaining structure still adorns the canal side in Brighouse, opposite Sainsbury's supermarket. It is now houses private residential apartments.

**IMPROVEMENT AT BRIGHOUSE.**—A few days ago the works required in the erection of an extensive cotton mill for Messrs. Jonathan Stott and Co., Millroyd Mills, were let. The new building will be 38 yards long by 16 yards wide, and seven storeys high. It will be built partly on the site of the mill that was destroyed by fire about two years since, and will adjoin the present mill, which will then form two sides of a square, and when united will be one of the largest mills in this part of Yorkshire. The entire length of the building on one side will be 50 yards by 21 yards wide, while the wing will be 38 yards long and 16 yards wide, the whole being of the uniform height of seven storeys. The contractors are—Mason's work, Mr. James Dyson, Rastrick; joiners, Messrs. B. Sykes and Son; ironwork, the executors of the late Mr. John Field, Cleckheaton; painter, &c., Mr. Marshall Turner. Some idea may be formed of the progress made at Brighouse from the fact that when Mr. Jonathan Stott entered that place 23 years since, there was not a cotton spindle in Brighouse, while at present it contains nearly 400,000 cotton spindles, all fully employed.



In 1881 he was residing at Thorncliffe Villa on Thornhill Road, Rastrick,

a large house near to the bottom of Longroyd Road and was employing twenty-four men and two boys within his construction company and at his stone quarries, located at Longroyd and Toothill Bank. He was awarded another large contract when he undertook a huge pipe-laying operation for the Liverpool Corporation, that brought fresh water into the town (as it was then) from Wales. He liked to tell stories of his experiences whilst working with Welsh men and he often said that he had never understood what 'welching' meant until he lived amongst the Welsh people and had dealings with them; *"then I knew what it meant."*



In 1889, James Dyson returned to Brighouse and like his cousin, **John Exley Dyson**, he went into the licensed trade taking up the tenancy of the George Hotel, Brighouse. It was stated at the time that he made alterations which *'placed the old inn at the head of its class in Brighouse, a position it has retained since that time.'*



Again, like his cousin, **James** had an interest in local politics and held a position on the Rastrick Local Board. When Brighouse and Rastrick were incorporated in 1893, he was returned as the representative for the Bonegate ward, chairing the New Buildings Committee. His outspoken temperament and his vigorous denunciation of anything and everything with which he disagreed led at

times to some lively debates. **James** retired from the Council in 1897.

In 1903, **James Dyson** handed over the George Hotel to his eldest son, also called James, whilst he took over the New Inn, Marsden. He returned to Brighouse just prior to his death on Christmas Day 1906. He died at his daughter's home at Healey Wood Terrace and his remains were interred in the family vault at Rastrick Churchyard (shown below).



**Thomas Bottomley Dyson** was also a stonemason and contractor in Brighouse and Rastrick and not to be outdone by his two cousins, he took over the licence at the Thornhill Arms public house on

Church Street at the Top of Town, Rastrick. Some may remember the building in recent years as the Cottage Residential Home.

In his obituary in the Huddersfield Chronicle dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 1896, it states that he was an innkeeper and farmer residing at the Thornhill Arms, Rastrick and he was well known in Halifax, Huddersfield and Brighouse as a building contractor. One of his largest contracts was the erection of the Victoria School on Aire Street for the Rastrick School Board. He left a son, **Frank** and a daughter, **Ellen**. **Frank Dyson** never married and lived with his mother at the Thornhill Arms in 1901, working as her assistant but also working on the small farm belonging to the pub. He took over the



licence upon the death of his mother in 1911 and remained at the Thornhill Arms until his own death in 1915.

Daughter **Ellen** married **Frank Whatmough**, a professional cricketer of the Scarborough Cricket Club. He also played seven matches for Yorkshire between 1878 and 1882. Upon his retirement from cricket, **Frank** and **Ellen** became the licensees at the Stotts Arms, Brighouse in 1891 and at the Greyhound Inn, Rastrick in 1901 and he died at the pub in 1904 aged 46 years.

## A RASTRICK LAD'S MEMORIES OF THE BOER WAR

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, British troops were fighting in South Africa in what became known as the Boer War. Historians still debate the reasons behind the war but there is no doubt that one of the main underlying factors was the control of the enormous gold mines in the Witwatersrand area. It was the largest gold mining area in the world at that time. The world's monetary systems were based on the value of gold and the British government were dependent upon the precious metal to maintain the Empire and their status as a world power. Britain, led by its South African High Commissioner, Alfred Milner, sought to undermine the political independence of the South African Republic by demanding changes to its constitution to grant political rights to British Uitlanders (British people working in the goldfields), aiming to shift state policy in Britain's favour. Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal region where the goldfields were located, negotiated with Milner but Kruger had the interests of the Boers ahead of the British. During negotiations, Kruger made several concessions, but these were all rejected by Milner. Fearing a conflict, Britain sent more troop reinforcements to South Africa which upset the Boers and after further concessions by Kruger were also dismissed, war was inevitable. The Boers issued an ultimatum on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1899, demanding the withdrawal of British troops from the border. When Britain refused, the war began on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1899.

The Boers were mainly farmers of Dutch origin, who had settled in South Africa over many years and knowing that they had no chance of defeating the British Army by adopting conventional warfare methods, they resorted to besieging towns such as Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking. They used guerilla tactics of ambushes and hit and run against British camps and patrols. This resulted in the British high command adopting scorched earth policies and building a network of defensive barbed wire fences, nets, trenches and blockhouses to restrict the Boer movements. Over 100,000 Boer civilians were put into concentration camps, mainly women and children, where over 26,000 died from disease and starvation. Black Africans were also interned to stop them from supplying the Boers with arms and over 20,000 of them also died in awful circumstances. Lord Kitchener eventually offered generous terms to the Boers to surrender in 1902 and the ludicrous war came to an end.

Whilst the war was going on, the railway was an important communication link for the British Army but attacks by the Boers became more frequent, reaching its climax by the end of 1900. Better defences were needed, and blockhouses were erected at strategic points near to bridges over the railway. These were usually two storeys in height and had a machine gun emplacement upon the roof. Approximately twelve soldiers who manned the blockhouses had to enter by a ladder and from their elevated position, they could survey the land around them and spot any potential enemy attacks. The blockhouses took around three months to build at a cost of between £800 - £1,000, but this was deemed to be too costly. A cheaper method of building was employed which involved a double skin of corrugated iron, six inches apart, the gap being

filled with shingle. A single sheet of corrugated iron was used as the roof. These worked out at around £44 each and so the army set about building them, about one mile apart, along the length of the railway network. The blockhouses were surrounded by a trench with high wire entanglements, designed to keep the enemy at bay. Over 8,000 blockhouses were built covering 3,700 miles. As time went on, trenches and steel wire fences were placed between the blockhouses so stop the Boers from crossing the lines during darkness. Each blockhouse was connected by telephone and in addition to six soldiers, armed native scouts were used to patrol the outside area. This certainly made travelling around the open country, more difficult for the Boers.

The Northern Transvaal is often overlooked as a key area in the South African War. While there wasn't much action during the early battles, it became a crucial stronghold for the Boer resistance fighters during the guerrilla phase. As Boer commandos retreated further east and north, the recently built 290-kilometre railway line between Pretoria to Pietersburg played a significant role. This railway became vital for both Boer and British strategies in the later years of the war. In August 1900, the British army pushed into Northern Transvaal, following the railway as far as Nylstroom. They advanced towards Pietersburg in early 1901, using the railway to move equipment. After the British occupied Pietersburg, the Boers focused on sabotaging the railway. The line had ten girder bridges and seven stations at Pienaars River, Warmbaths, Nylstroom, Naboomspruit, Piet Potgietersrust, Marabastad, and Pietersburg. The full journey took 10½ hours. Following attacks, the British prioritised repairing war-damaged railway lines quickly, using construction trains to make temporary fixes and later permanent repairs. Keeping the railway operational was essential for the British war strategy.

The blockhouses along the route were given identifying numbers and it was at Blockhouse Kilo 122 that a man from Rastrick spent several months. But life was dull and very rarely did they contact or even see the enemy. Rudyard Kipling drafted a poem about life in a Blockhouse.

'Ere am I in a Block'ouse,  
Like a 'ornet under a glass;  
Nothin' to do but sentry-go,  
H'Up an' down, an' to-an'-fro,  
Watchin' the trains as pass.

'Ere am I in a Block'ouse,  
Full fed up with the game;  
Stuck 'ere now five months an' more,  
Never a 'undred yards from the door,  
And h'every day the same!

'Ere am I in a Block'ouse,  
One of a thousand more;  
Same old dooties, rain or shine,  
Watchin' the same old bit o' the line  
For the same old Brother Boer.

'Ere I sweats in the daytime,  
'Ere I freezes at night;  
Same old game, week in week out,  
Same old Kopjes round about,  
An' the same wire fence in sight.

Rudyard Kipling

It is at this point that I will introduce a Rastrick lad by the name of John Henry Dyson Bintcliffe. He was born at Rastrick on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1874 to his unmarried mother, Hannah Bintcliffe but there is no doubt that his father was called George Dyson, a local stone merchant. George's father (also George Dyson) was a farmer and the innkeeper at the Upper George public house, which was situated in what is now the St. Matthews Church cap park. He became known as Harry but because his parents were unmarried at the time of his birth, neither his subsequent baptism or marriage records show his father's name. He was baptised at St. Matthews Church, Rastrick in 1881 on the same day as two other siblings and he was recorded in the name of Harry Bintcliffe. He went on to marry Jane Eliza Knapton on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1898, also at St. Matthew's, but his name was recorded as John Henry Dyson Bintcliffe. In the 1881 and 1891 census records, he was shown as John Henry Dyson. It is apparent that he only ever used his Bintcliffe name on official records and was known around Rastrick and in his workplace as Harry Dyson and I will use that name for the purposes of this story.



## THE LIFE OF PRIVATE HARRY DYSON DURING THE 2<sup>nd</sup> BOER WAR

On the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1900, Harry Dyson answered the call of duty and signed up as a private soldier with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volunteer Service Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion West Riding Regiment, service number 7024. He was immediately transferred to the Army Reserve but on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1901, he was transferred to the colours. On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1901, he was called up to serve as the Boer War in South Africa showed no signs of ending.

Evidence from the Boer War Medal Rolls of the West Riding Regiment show on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1901, Harry was serving at Pienaars River in the Transvaal region which earned him a 'Transvaal' clasp to his Kings South Africa medal by 'being present at the operation for which the medal and clasps are claimed.' Harry kept a personal diary whilst serving in South Africa but unfortunately, only a scrappy single page remains from the first year of his time in South Africa, however, there are several other pages that have survived. These cover the remainder of his time in South Africa and offer a vivid insight into his life during this period, providing a firsthand account of the experiences of a soldier stationed far from home. He entitles his diary **LIFE IN A BLOCKHOUSE**.



By 1902, Harry Dyson found himself stationed in the Waterberg District of Limpopo Province, living in a blockhouse near Nylstroom (now named Modimolle). Blockhouses were small, fortified outposts used by the British during the war to control key routes and areas. In this case, it was the railway line that ran between Pietersberg (now named Polokwane) and Pretoria in the northern Transvaal.

Conditions were harsh, with limited resources and frequent illness among the troops. On March 18, 1902, Harry and his companion, Private Dennison, went into Nylstroom for supplies. The area was marked by the grim legacy of a concentration camp where 525 Boer civilians had died between May 1901 and March 1902.

Throughout his diary, Harry expressed a deep yearning for home and frequent mentions of letters from his wife, Jennie. Her correspondence was morale-boosting and a source of comfort during his time in South Africa. The diary also records significant events such as Easter Sunday (March 30, 1902), when he hoped for an end to the war, and April 12, 1902, the anniversary of his wedding.

Harry received regular copies of the *Brighouse Echo* newspaper, sent to him by the Reverend Robert Gill Irving, the minister of St. Matthew's Church in Rastrick. These newspapers served as a vital connection to home, keeping him informed about local events and reinforcing his bond with his community. Friday became known to him as "Brighouse Echo day," a small but significant marker of routine in the otherwise uncertain conditions of war.

In addition to his military duties, Harry spent time interacting with the local environment. He wrote of setting traps for jackals and monkeys, skinning snakes, and collecting animal fangs and skins. On May 15, 1902, he described catching and skinning an exceptionally large monkey, a unique specimen measuring seven feet from nose to tail. The pursuit of these monkeys became a recurring theme, as he often mentioned the challenges of tracking them across rock terrain. On 14<sup>th</sup> May, after firing at a group of monkeys during dusk, he tracked a blood trail but was unable to locate the wounded animal until the following morning. He noted the creature's immense size and the struggle it took to bring it back to camp. Despite the hardships, he found fascination in the natural world, reflecting the monotony of blockhouse life.

Harry's interactions with his fellow soldiers and officers provide further insight into his daily life. He occasionally mentioned being involved in a 'rough house' on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1902, which lasted for hours. The monotony of life in the blockhouse was evident as he describes one evening as a 'rum night' however they were punctuated by the occasional festive meal at Easter and Whitsuntide, where Harry was commended for his cooking skills, including currant loaves and pastries. His relationship with Antonio, a local worker, also stands out. Together, they set traps for jackals and discussed local wildlife, forming an unlikely bond amid the war.

Harry also recorded encounters with higher-ranking personnel. On 14<sup>th</sup> May 1902, he mentioned General Barton passing through on a train, a moment that gave him hope for an eventual return home. The arrival of reinforcements, including Indian soldiers and the Wiltshire Regiment, brought a mix of anticipation and uncertainty. The departure of his officer on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1902, signalled the imminent relief of his post, further strengthening his hope for a return to England.

The prospect of peace was a recurring theme in Harry's diary. By mid-April 1902, he noted that negotiations were underway, with key Boer leaders such as General Louis Botha and Koos De la Rey meeting with British officials. On April 18, he received official notification that his battalion would soon be heading home. Despite delays and rumours, he finally left his post on May 15, 1902.

Harry's journey back to England was both an arduous and emotional experience. After reaching Pretoria and spending time in Green Point Camp, Cape Town, he embarked on the *Roslin Castle* troopship on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1902. The voyage was fraught with challenges, including rough seas and cramped conditions, but also moments of awe, such as sightings of flying fish, porpoises, and a whale near St. Vincent in Cape Verde. His excitement to reunite with Jennie and return to civilian life grew with each passing day.

The final entries in Harry's diary capture his anticipation as he neared Southampton. On 13<sup>th</sup> June 1902, he reflected on the joy of returning home, wondering if Jennie would be waiting for him in Brighouse. His final words convey a sense of relief and gratitude for the journey's end. He was discharged from the army on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1902.

Private Harry Dyson's diary is a remarkable historical artifact, offering insights into the firsthand experiences of soldiers during the Boer War. It highlights the resilience and humanity of those who endured the hardships of war, holding onto hope and the promise of home. A full transcription of his diary will be made available on the [www.MyRastrick.com](http://www.MyRastrick.com) website, which Harry Dyson entitled 'Life In A Blockhouse'.



## NEWSPAPER STORIES FROM BYGONE YEARS

Here are a few newspaper reports from Victorian times, concerning the good people of the Rastrick area. Some are amusing and some very sad but they give a window into the everyday life of our long departed ancestors. Strong drink was considered dangerous by many Victorian people and the local Temperance Societies encouraged newspapers to report upon people who had fallen upon hard times because of the 'demon drink'. The more tragic the story, the more that it enhanced their cause and with many newspaper proprietors belonging to the fast growing Methodist movement, they were very willing to dramatise the stories as much as possible. The below report is from the Huddersfield Chronicle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1853 regarding the death of a loving husband and father who died in tragic circumstances at Bridge End, Rastrick due to his insobriety. It acted as a warning to those who may consider straying from the straight and narrow path of life.

**FATAL ACCIDENT.**—As a man named Simeon Horsfall, of this town, was returning home on Monday evening last about midnight, he met with an accident which, it is to be hoped, will act as a caution to others accustomed to an over free indulgence in strong drinks. Instead of going underneath the railway arch at Bridge-end, he took the turn to the left towards the dam-stakes, opposite the corn mill of Messrs. Sutcliffe, and coming to the wall close to the river, he by some means fell over on to a large stone, where he lay in a senseless state until about five o'clock the next morning, when he was found by a man going to his work, and conveyed home. Subsequently he was removed to the Huddersfield Infirmary, where, we understand, he expired on Wednesday last, leaving a wife and two children unprovided for to lament their loss.

Photographs and reports concerning the ox-roast and bonfire festivities in Rastrick to celebrate the coronations of King Edward VII in 1901 and King George V in 1911 are commonplace but a report in the Leeds Mercury dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1838 gives a rare insight into what went on in the village as the whole nation celebrated the coronation of Queen Victoria. Jonathan Schofield was a textile manufacturer in Rastrick and was a friend of the famous campaigner of that time, Richard Oastler. Schofield was loved by the people of Rastrick and was well known for 'looking after' his workforce who considered it an honour to work for him. More will be written about him in a future newsletter as his story is very interesting but he contributed to the Rastrick revelries, where a sheep was roasted along with some joints of beef.

A dinner was given by Jonathan Schofield, Esq. to upwards of 100 of his workpeople, consisting of a fine sheep, roasted whole, three large pieces of beef, &c. &c. A band of music and glee singers were provided for the occasion. After dinner, appropriate toasts were given, interspersed with glees, songs, &c. and the evening was spent in accordance with the fitting occasion. Several tea parties took place in the open air there was a ball, and also various other amusements to crown the festivities of the day.

In recent times, we have all been subjected to our local roads and pavements being excavated whilst fibre-optic cables are laid for high-speed internet or cable television. Whilst we consider it an imposition upon our lives, most of us enjoy the benefits that are brought to us as a result, albeit, at a cost. In 1871, the people of Rastrick were complaining about new technology being a blight upon their lives. The Huddersfield Chronicle dated 8<sup>th</sup> July tells us that they were objecting to the latest modern inconvenience ..... the telegraph pole!

**TELEGRAPH COMMUNICATION.**—During the past week, workmen have been erecting along the side of the road from Brighouse to Rastrick, poles for fixing telegraph wires thereto, from the Post Office in this town to Rastrick. It is intended to carry the wires forward to Elland, thence to Greetland, Stainland, and to Halifax. Some of the poles are considered unsightly, and the authorities at Rastrick are objecting to their erection in that district.

We can probably all recount stories of reckless things that we did in our formative years. We can now look back and with hindsight, we wonder why on earth we did such a stupid thing. Many of us will have taken up a dare to tackle a dangerous track or hill on our bikes and then regretted it. So finally, let us complete these accounts of local folklore with a giggle at the expense of a visitor to Rastrick in May 1869, who arrived along with his pedal cycle or velocipede as they were then known. Bear in mind that cycles with cranks and pedals had only been invented around six years previous and the thought of adding brakes to such a device was still around 25 years away so why the man chose to ride down Toothill Bank on such a machine is anyone's guess. I am sure the story brought about much laughter from the local residents but it was a decision that the visitor would regret and I have no doubts that the name of Rastrick would remain with him for the rest of his life. Again, the Huddersfield Chronicle takes up the story in their 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1869 edition.

**VELOCIPEDE ACCIDENT.**—A velocipedist from Halifax came to grief in Rastrick last night week, and in addition to the machine being considerably damaged, the rider was much injured. It seems that two parties from Halifax were enjoying a short excursion, the one mounted on a two-wheeled velocipede, and the other on one with three wheels. They passed through Elland and Huddersfield with safety, and, on reaching the top of Toothill Bank the manipulator of the three-wheeled machine was advised by his companion to walk down the dangerous steep (which in many places has an incline of one in five), more especially as the vehicle had no break attached to it. The caution passed unheeded, and away sped the young man down the bank, the vehicle increasing in velocity at every yard. On reaching the middle of the hill, either through fear or inability to manage the machine, the rider attempted to check the speed by turning it across the road. The attempt failed, and being diverted from the straight course, the vehicle dashed with considerable violence against the fence wall, smashing the crank of the velocipede, and severely crushing the rider, who had the mortification of going to Brighouse and home to Halifax by train, while his more cautious companion went on his way rejoicing.

## NEXT MEETINGS

TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025 - TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2025 - TUESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2025  
5-00pm at RASTRICK LIBRARY, CROWTREES LANE, RASTRICK

If you have anything of interest that you would like to include in the Summer Newsletter, please let me know via email at [rastrick.history@gmail.com](mailto:rastrick.history@gmail.com)