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Rastrick Local History Group Newsletter

Unearthing the Legacy, Celebrating the Spirit of Rastrick

WELCOME NOTE

Dear Members and History Lovers,

As the days the first real warmth of summer settles over Rastrick, there's a renewed sense of energy in the village. Gardens are coming into colour, evening walks linger a little longer, and the familiar landmarks we study so closely seem to take on a softer glow in the early light. It's a lovely time of year to be working with our local history. The season itself reminding us how each generation has watched these same hills, lanes and rooftops shift from spring into summer, just as we do now.

As we move into the summer months, work within the Group continues at a steady and rewarding pace. Our ongoing project with the Margaret Usher files and documents has begun to reveal some genuinely fascinating material, the sort of detailed, personal, and often unexpected insights that bring Rastrick's past to life.

Several newly unearthed items will make excellent additions to our archive library, strengthening our long-term aim of building a well-organised, accessible record of Rastrick's people, places, and stories. These discoveries also help fill gaps in our understanding of the estates, families, and everyday life that shaped the community we know today.

We'll be sharing selected highlights from this work in future meetings and newsletters, and we welcome any members who would like to get involved in cataloguing, transcription, or research. Every contribution, large or small, helps preserve Rastrick's heritage for future generations.

A reminder that our meetings take place at Rastrick Library on the second Tuesday of the month at 5pm, and as always, new members and visitors are warmly welcomed.

The Rastrick Local History Group

FEATURED 'STORIES FROM THE PAST' IN THIS NEWSLETTER

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An invitation to people to become involved in our group

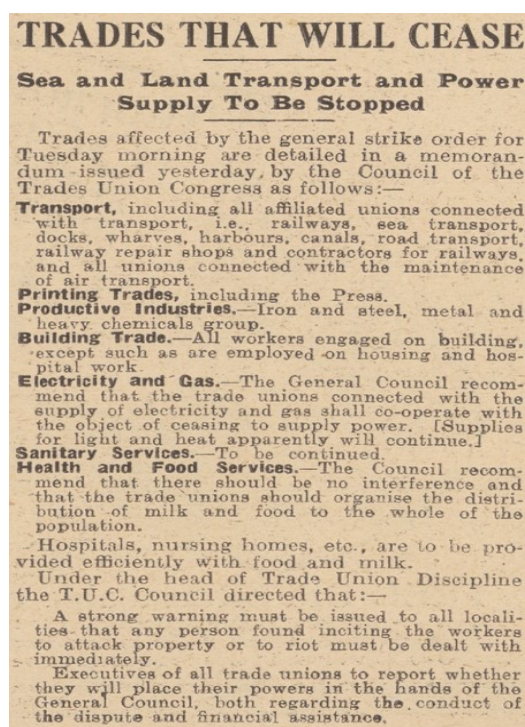
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Connecting past and present

The General Strike by John Sheppard

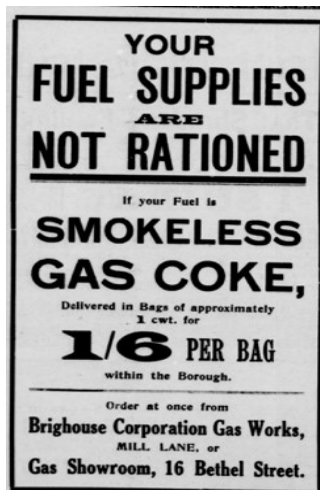


May 2026 marked the 100th anniversary of the so-called General Strike in Britain (though not quite so general as the popular name suggests). How did this affect Rastrick? The answer seems to be, not a lot, despite the number of different trades that were affected, however, John Chatburn and his new wife, Emma of Rastrick, were married at Bridge End Chapel on the 1st May 1926. They went on honeymoon to Bridlington but he recalled at the time of their diamond wedding anniversary that, “all trains stopped running and the country came to a standstill. We didn’t know how we were going to get back but we couldn’t have cared less.” They eventually managed to get home by private bus.

British coal mines had been returned from nationalisation to private ownership in 1921. The economy was still in post war turmoil, not helped by the decision of the Chancellor, Winston Churchill, to tie the pound to the gold standard. Exporting of coal became increasingly difficult, cutting the mine owners' profits.

Miners' pay in a seven-year period had been reduced from £6.00 to £3.90. Coal was once mined in Rastrick but by the twentieth century mining had moved further east. So in 1926 there would be very few local wage earners directly affected by the cutting of hours and wages imposed by the mine owners. However, the use of coal and particularly the burning of coke to make gas was of considerable importance to the Borough Council.

When the mine owners announced their intentions to reduce wages further, the government, led by Stanley Baldwin, provided a subsidy to maintain the wages at their current level. A Royal Commission led by Sir Herbert Samuel reported in March 1926, rejecting re-nationalisation but recommended that miner's wages be reduced by 13.5%, and at the same time the withdrawal of the government subsidy. The Prime Minister did not feel he could extend the subsidy. The Miners' Federation refused to accept this and the TUC announced a general strike to begin on Monday 3rd May.



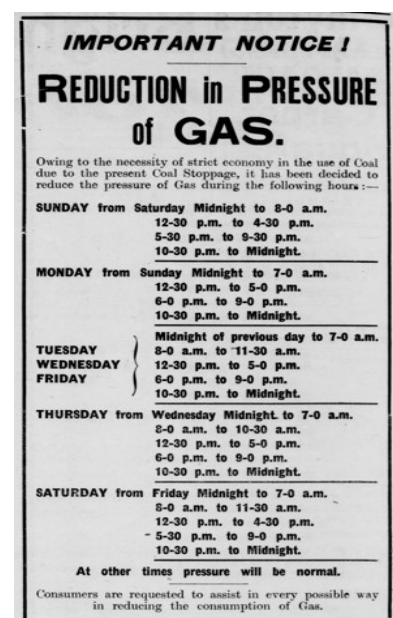
The general strike meant that trams, buses and trains were affected. This would have caused some inconvenience locally, though in 1926 most workers were employed very close to their homes. About half of the workforce at Blakeboroughs came out on strike. For many Rastrickians, probably the most serious effect would have been the prospective shortage of coal for domestic purposes, particularly as the weather happened to be cold for the time of year. It was reported that prices in Halifax, Bradford and Leeds were increased, but not in Brighouse or Rastrick. People who burned Smokeless Gas Coke were not affected by the coal shortages and it could be bought for 1/6d (7.5p) for a one hundredweight bag.

In May 1926, the Borough Council appointed an emergency committee, including representatives of the coal merchants, to consider any actions required. It was agreed that the summer street lighting programme should be put into force immediately and that volunteers be asked to enrol to prevent closure of the gas works.

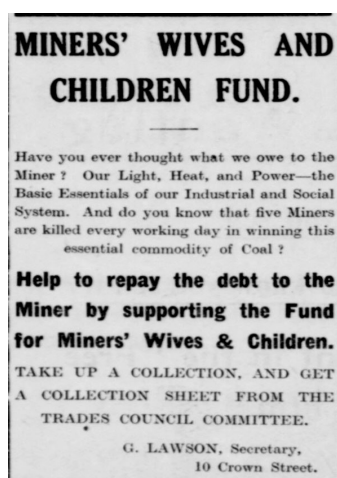
The pressure of gas would be reduced during certain periods, and permission was given to purchase "a quantity of foreign coal." The Council minutes and the press reports were coy as to where the coal was to be sourced.

The extension of the miner's strike to become a general strike also led to the proposal for a food rationing committee. However, it could well be that this proposal was not progressed. There were some food shortages during the strike, e.g. butter, due to transport disruption.

The general strike was identified as not being protected by the Trade Dispute Act of 1906, except for the coal industry, meaning that the unions became liable for the intention to breach contracts. Some believe that the TUC never meant the strike to be more than a threat to aid negotiations and were relieved when it had to end. On 12th May, the TUC General Council announced that the strike was being called off with immediate effect.



After the general strike, the price of coal did go up, despite stocks waiting at the pits though, again, less in Rastrick than in some adjacent areas. Miners in some areas, particularly Nottinghamshire, drifted back to work. Others continued to resist for as long as November but to no avail.



At this time, adverts began to appear in local newspapers such as the Brighouse Gazette and Brighouse Echo, asking members of the community to support a Miners' Wives and Children Fund.

The adverts played upon the heartstrings of the public, informing them that five miners are killed every working day in winning the essential product of coal.

But the price of coal and the shortages caused some people to go to extreme lengths in order to keep their cooking ranges burning. In June 1926, two Rastrick men, Fred Sayers and Fred Laycock, both labourers of Rastrick were summoned before the Magistrates on charges of trespassing on the railway and doing malicious damage. The men had gone onto railway property at the bottom of the woods below Boothroyd, Rastrick, and were seen to tear branches from several trees causing 'enormous damage.' It transpired that the enormous damage was to the value of 6d. When asked if he had anything to say, Laycock replied, "It is caused through the coal strike." The Chairman of the bench asked, "You wanted wood for the fire?" to which Laycock replied, "Yes." They were both fined ten shillings, five shillings on each of the charges. Such were effects in Rastrick of the General Strike of one hundred years ago.

STORIES FROM THE PAST

Typhoid Fever Outbreak in Rastrick and Brighouse – Fiona Gregory

Early mortality from infectious diseases was a fact of life in Victorian Britain. Typhoid fever was a not uncommon occurrence in the district and was reported on by the Huddersfield Chronicle in 1873. Typhoid is a disease caused by bacteria, mainly by Salmonella Enterica Typhi, or Salmonella Paratyphi which causes paratyphoid fever, a similar illness. It spreads through contaminated food and water, poor hand hygiene and close contact with an infected person or carrier. It is more common in areas with poor sanitation which would have been a feature of these times. The symptoms include intestinal bleeding, bowel perforation, severe dehydration, confusion or delirium and sepsis. These conditions can all be life-threatening.

Nowadays of course, there is an effective vaccination but the first vaccination was not developed until 1896 and used by the British military during the Second Boer War, where it significantly reduced deaths

from typhoid among soldiers. But there was little that could be done to protect the population from earlier outbreaks.

Looking at the ages of people who were documented in the St. Matthew's Burial Register in the year of 1871, the majority of deaths were in the infant years, with thirteen deaths in babies under 3 months, eight aged 4 to 6 months, and an enormous twenty-six in children aged from 7 to 18 months. This gives a total of forty-seven infant deaths in one calendar year. Things didn't improve much for children aged from 19 months to 6 years, with a further thirty-two recorded deaths, just in the Rastrick locality. Comparing this to older adults, who nowadays would be expected to make up the majority, there were twelve people aged between 60 and 69 years, eighteen between 70 and 79 and four aged over 80 years. This demonstrates the parlous state of public health at the time, and how it mostly affected infants. High infant mortality is of course well known in the Victorian era, but it is interesting to see laid out in raw data from our own village.

Although there is little data specifically relating to Rastrick, industrial towns like Rastrick and Brighouse at that time had typically high infant mortality due to gastrointestinal diseases which were linked to contaminated water, poor sanitation and unsafe milk. This was considered to be the largest cause of death. Of course, there were other infectious diseases in circulation such as whooping cough, measles and scarlet fever, as well as respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia. At this time, these were also considered to be major killers of young children, but diarrhoea related infections were the most prevalent.

We know of an outbreak of typhoid in 1873, which was reported in the Huddersfield Chronicle on Tuesday 19th August of that year. A telegram had been sent to Dr. Britton, the medical officer for the Halifax Union alerting him to the situation and he came to inspect the district. He made two reports, in which he complained very severely of the want of proper sanitary arrangements in the locality. The origin of this outbreak had been traced back to the milk supplied by a farmer in Southowram, but Dr. Britton stated that the spread of the disease was also fostered by the want of efficient and satisfactory drainage. He stated that, ably assisted by Mr Richard Richards, the nuisance inspector, he found more than thirty cases, and in all but one, the milk used was from the same dairy. There were also some defective drains, and badly planned ashpits in the infected district.

An ashpit was often adjacent to an outside toilet. Coal ashes, cinders, kitchen waste and general refuse would have been deposited in the ashpit, and the contents would be periodically removed by local authorities or contractors. They were common due to the use of coal-burning but could become unsanitary due to attracting flies and could contaminate nearby water supplies so were known to contribute to the spread of disease.

ALARMING SPREAD OF TYPHOID FEVER AT BRIGHOUSE. THREE DEATHS.

At the last meeting of the Brighouse Local Board, held at the gas house on Friday night, it was announced that a species of typhoid fever had broken out in the district some few days previous. A telegram had been at once sent to Dr. Britton, the medical officer for the Halifax Union, to come and inspect the district, and the officer had at once responded to the call, and had made a minute inspection of not only the affected locality but of the whole district. In the two reports of the medical officer he complains very severely of the want of proper sanitary arrangements in the locality of the disease, which although having been traced to the milk supplied by a farmer at Southowram, it is said has also been fostered by the want of efficient and satisfactory drainage. The drains are untrapped, refuse from numbers of cottages is thrown on the surface of the road, and numbers of ashpits are uncovered, all of which emit a most offensive smell. In some instances the drains in the neighbourhood of Church-street are so offensive that the children coming to their dinner are prevented from eating it on account of the poisonous smells emitted from drains at their own doors. To remedy this state of things the medical officer pointed out several means, and ordered disinfectants at the various houses where the fever raged, which, he stated, was not of a virulent kind, as was shown by the fact that out of thirty persons attacked, and reported to him, only three deaths had occurred, and these were before the disease was known to be so extensive. After pointing out to the Board the various methods that he had adopted to prevent the spread of the disease, and in which he stated he had been ably assisted by Mr. Richard Richards, the nuisance inspector, Dr. Britton remarked that the cause of the outbreak was from milk; and further stated that more than 30 cases were found by him, and in all the houses but one the milk used was from the same dairy. There were also some defective drains and badly-planned ashpits, &c., in the infected district, which is chiefly comprised in Church-street. On going

When Dr. Britton visited the farm that was considered to be the source of the outbreak, owned by a Robert Garside of Southowram, he found the family and the cattle apparently healthy, but one cow was drinking from a cesspool, formed by the drain running through the fold, in which there was a large manure heap. The water was extremely offensive. Dr. Britton had no doubt that this was the cause of the fever, and Mr Garside immediately removed the cattle to another field. Disinfectants were used to help clean the area, and also the improvement of the drains was requested. Mr Garside promised that no milk from the farm would be supplied for a week and that he would fill up the cesspit. The families who had received milk from the farm would be warned of the dangers of using it. Although several fresh instances of the disease occurred on the following Saturday, no fresh occurrence was recorded after this day.

There were in total five deaths recorded in this

outbreak, all in the Church Street area of Southowram. This demonstrates how vulnerable the population was to disease at this time, and how lucky we are nowadays to be able to count on modern vaccination programs, as well as vastly improved public health standards which protect us from diseases which still exist in the world.

The Healey Family Tragedy and the Call for a Fever Hospital (Rastrick, 1892)

While the typhoid outbreak of 1873 showed how vulnerable Victorian Rastrick was to infectious disease, an even more poignant example came nearly twenty years later with the tragedy that struck the Healey family of Huddersfield Road in early 1892. Their story, widely reported in the local press, reveals both the human cost of poor sanitation and the growing pressure on local authorities to improve public health provision.

The outbreak began quietly at Newlands, opposite the Friends' Meeting House, where John Healey, a labourer, lived with his children. Dr Carter was first called to attend "a member of the family who was ill," but it soon became clear that the illness was typhoid fever. The disease spread rapidly through the household until, as one newspaper put it, "*six members of the family were prostrated, the father and five children*".

The first death came on 1st February 1892, when Sarah Healey, aged eight, died at home. The following day, 2nd February, her father John Healey, aged 43, also succumbed to the disease. Their burials are recorded in the local newspaper notices:

FEVER OUTBREAK AT RASTRICK.

THE sad outbreak of typhoid fever which has been brought prominently before the public of this district during the present week is a strong and unsavoury reminder of the fact, if any were needed in the present season of influenza and small-pox epidemics, that the Brighouse and Rastrick district possesses little means of isolation for these terrible diseases when they make their unwelcome presence manifest in our midst. In this connection we wish to draw the very serious attention of all interested in the sanitary condition and welfare of the district to the important letter on the subject which appears in our issue to-day from the pen of Dr. CARTER, of Rastrick, who has been the medical attendant in the fatal fever cases which have come to light at Rastrick within the past few days. Dr. BOND, the medical officer of health for the Rastrick district, has frequently pointed out in his annual reports and in other ways, the necessity for the establishment of an infectious diseases hospital in this locality. At present such cases, if the attacks are considered sufficiently severe, are sent on sufferance to the fever hospital at Halifax; but the accommodation there is only of a limited character, and in the event of a large demand for admission Halifax cases would, as a matter of course, be given a preference over applications from the outer districts. In his letter, Dr. CARTER very concisely points out the advantages of such an institution, not only for the patients themselves, but also for the protection of the members of their families, and indirectly for the benefit of the whole community. The subject is one of vital importance to the district, and ought to receive the early attention of the members of our local authorities. The expenses attendant upon the inception of such an institution and its subsequent maintenance would not be heavy, and when divided *pro ratio* amongst the ratepayers, say of the Brighouse and Rastrick districts, would hardly be felt, and would not perhaps at the outside represent more than a penny rate each year. There is no higher duty for a local sanitary authority to perform than to attend to the public health, and it will only need a few more cases of so terribly realistic a character as the present severe outbreak in Huddersfield-road, Rastrick, to convince folks generally that something should be attempted in the way of isolation as soon as ever these dreaded diseases make their appearance. The subject is one peculiarly adaptable for discussion and ventilation at the meetings of the various friendly societies in the district, for it only requires a strong public opinion to be formed on the matter to induce the members of our local public bodies to move in the matter. Meanwhile we hope the appeal made this week by Dr. CARTER will not fall upon deaf or unwilling ears, but that his letter will be given that thoughtful, dispassionate and careful consideration which the importance of the subject demands.

SAD OUTBREAK OF FEVER.—A sad outbreak of fever has taken place at Rastrick, in the house at Newlands (opposite the Friends' Meeting House) occupied by Mr. John Healey. Some time ago Dr. Carter was called in to attend a member of the family who was ill. It was afterwards discovered that the outbreak was one of typhoid fever. The disease spread, until six members of the family were prostrated—the father and five children. Last Monday a young girl, eight years of age, died from the disease, and two other members of the family—a girl and a youth about sixteen or seventeen years of age—were removed the same day to the Fever Hospital at Halifax. On Tuesday the father died, and two other children are still in the house prostrate with the disease. The case is an extremely sad one, and has evoked a good deal of sympathy in the district. Dr. Bond, the medical officer for the district, has several times visited the patients. The origin of the outbreak is purely local in its character, and is said to be due to the defective sanitary condition of the house and its surroundings. For years all the excreta in connection with the property—which comprises two houses—has, it is said, been deposited in the garden about the houses, until the place has become a veritable hot-bed for fever germs. Prompt measures are being taken to stop the spread of the outbreak. Attention is being paid to the drainage, and measures are also being taken to thoroughly purify the soil.

"HEALEY – Feb. 2, aged 43 years, John Healey... HEALEY – Feb. 1, aged 8 years, Sarah, daughter of John Healey". Both were laid to rest at Carr Green Cemetery, where their names appear together on the family gravestone.

Two other children, Hannah aged nineteen and Harold aged fifteen, were removed to the Halifax Borough Fever Hospital on the same day their sister died. Another report described the father's case as *"the worst they have ever seen"*. Two more children remained at home, still dangerously ill.

Newspapers were clear about the cause: the outbreak was *"purely local in its character"* and attributed to the defective sanitary condition of the house and its surroundings. One article stated that for years *"all the excreta in connection with the property... had been deposited in the garden about the houses, until the place had become a veritable hot-bed for fever germs"*. The description is stark, but it reflects the reality of many working-class homes before proper sewerage systems were installed.

The Healey tragedy did more than shock the community, it reignited a long-running debate about the lack of local facilities for infectious diseases. In a strongly worded letter to the press, Dr

Carter of Rastrick, who had attended the Healey family, argued that Brighouse and Rastrick urgently needed their own fever hospital.

A leading article supported him, warning that the district possessed *“little means of isolation for these terrible diseases”* and that Halifax’s Fever Hospital could not be relied upon indefinitely, as Halifax cases would always take priority over those from outlying districts. Dr Carter stressed that a local hospital would protect families, reduce spread, and cost very little, *“not more than a penny rate each year”*.

The editorial went further, stating: *“There is no higher duty for a local sanitary authority to perform than to attend to the public health.”* It urged friendly societies, ratepayers, and councillors to take up the issue before another tragedy forced their hand.

The Healey family’s suffering illustrates how a single household could become the centre of a deadly outbreak in an era before clean water, proper drainage, or effective isolation. It also shows how local voices - doctors, newspapers, and residents, pushed for change, helping to shape the public health improvements that followed later in the 1890s and early 20th century.



The gravestone at Carr Green Cemetery stands as a quiet memorial to a father and daughter lost within twenty-four hours. But their story also marks a moment when Rastrick began to confront the need for better sanitation, better housing, and better protection for its people.

The Clifton Fever Hospital: Brighouse’s Answer to Repeated Epidemics

The tragic events surrounding the Healey family in February 1892, and the public outcry that followed, came at a moment when Brighouse and Rastrick were already confronting the limits of their public-health infrastructure. For years, doctors such as Dr Carter of Rastrick and Dr Bond, the district’s Medical Officer of Health, had warned that the area possessed *“little means of isolation for these terrible diseases”* and that reliance on Halifax’s Fever Hospital was unsustainable. Halifax could only accept out-of-district patients *“on sufferance,”* and in any major outbreak, Halifax cases would always take priority.

It was against this backdrop that the Clifton Fever Hospital, situated on Thornhills Lane, was opened on 20th June 1892. Its creation followed a serious outbreak of smallpox in the village of Clifton, which finally convinced local authorities that Brighouse needed its own dedicated isolation facility. The timing is striking: the Healey family deaths occurred in the first week of February 1892, and by June the new hospital was ready, a sign of how urgent the situation had become.

The Clifton Fever Hospital was designed as a small but effective isolation unit, intended to handle cases of smallpox, typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and other infectious diseases that had repeatedly swept through the district. Its rural position on Thornhills Lane was deliberate: isolation hospitals were placed well away from dense housing, with good ventilation, open fields, and controlled access.

Over the decades, the hospital became a familiar part of Brighouse's public-health landscape. It served throughout both world wars, continuing to receive infectious-disease patients at a time when troop movements, overcrowded housing, and wartime disruption increased the risk of outbreaks. By the mid-20th century, as vaccination programmes expanded and sanitation improved, the hospital's role gradually shifted. Like many former fever hospitals, it transitioned into a residential home for the elderly, reflecting changing health needs in the community.

After more than a century of service, from Victorian epidemics to modern social care, the Clifton Fever Hospital finally closed in 2008. Its long life stands as a testament to the public-health struggles that shaped Brighouse and Rastrick, and to the persistent efforts of local doctors and campaigners who recognised, long before the Healey tragedy, that the district needed better protection.

In many ways, the hospital's story completes the arc begun by the outbreaks of the 1870s and 1890s. The suffering of families like the Healeys, the warnings of Dr Carter, and the pressure from newspapers and ratepayers all contributed to a turning point in local health provision. The Clifton Fever Hospital was the physical embodiment of that change, a place built to prevent exactly the kind of heartbreak that had struck so many homes in Rastrick.

Dross: The Forgotten Material That Built Brighouse and Rastrick – Andy Eccles

In the 19th century, the word *dross* carried a very different meaning from the casual sense of "rubbish" we use today. In the industrial towns of Brighouse and Rastrick, dross was the lifeblood of road maintenance, a cheap, abundant and surprisingly useful by-product of the region's booming foundries, quarries and gasworks. Council minutes from the 1870s mention it constantly, because without it the steep, muddy roads of the district would have been almost impassable.

Dross came in several forms, each tied to a different local industry. The most common was metallurgical waste: the hard, glassy slag skimmed from molten iron or other metals during smelting. As the document notes, it was the “scum or oxidised impurities skimmed from the surface of molten metals, often crushed and used as a base or ‘coating’ for roads”. Gasworks produced another type, clinker and ash left after coal was burned to make town gas. This gritty residue was prized for improving traction on unsealed roads. Even the quarries contributed their own version of dross: unwanted chippings, small stones and spoil left behind when masons squared off blocks of Yorkshire stone. Councils used this finer material as a binding layer, spreading it over larger stones to lock the road surface together.

The reason dross became so central to local infrastructure was simple: it was cheap. In an era when the Brighouse Local Board (formed 1865) and the Rastrick Local Board (formed 1863) were under pressure to modernise their towns, using industrial waste was a practical solution. It saved the ratepayers money as it essentially cleared the industrial sites of their own trash while providing the local boards with a product that produced a decent road surface. And because the boards were dominated by the very men who owned the quarries, foundries and gasworks, it was considered common sense, not a conflict of interest, to buy waste material from “one of their own.”

By the 1870s, Brighouse and Rastrick had multiple sources of dross. Blakeborough’s iron foundry, which moved to Woodhouse Works in 1875, produced a constant stream of metallurgical slag. While Blakeborough’s was a major contributor, it was far from the only source. The Brighouse gasworks and the Rastrick gasworks on Birds Royd Lane supplied clinker and ash. Low Moor Ironworks, one of the largest in the country, sent slag by rail or cart into the district. Smaller engineering firms, textile machinery makers and any business with a furnace added to the supply. Even the small coal mines around Clifton and Hartshead contributed spoil that was sometimes described as dross.

But the most influential suppliers were the quarrying families whose names still echo through Rastrick’s history. The Marshalls of Hove Edge, long before they became Marshalls plc, produced huge quantities of stone spoil from their quarries at Southowram and Hove Edge. This “masons’ dross” was cleaner than furnace slag and ideal for binding road surfaces. The Normingtons and Gledhills operated Lower Edge Quarry, supplying both stone setts and waste chippings. Their involvement was so extensive that they were directly awarded council contracts to provide stone setts and road metal for major streets such as Commercial Street and Bridge End.

Among the most prominent figures was Ernest Walker, whose family firm E & A Walker dominated the supply of road metal in the late 19th century. Council minutes frequently record payments to the Walkers for “chippings” and “rubbish”, their own term for quarry dross. Ernest lived at Quarry House on Church Lane, literally overlooking his quarries. As a member of the Rastrick Local Board and later Brighouse Town Council, he often sat on the very committees responsible for awarding contracts. This was a classic Victorian circle of patronage, where civic duty and business interests overlapped without controversy.

The Gledhills, too, were central to the story. Samuel Gledhill, who began life as a factory boy, rose to become a quarry owner and partner in Normington & Gledhill. Their firm became one of the “big three” quarrying operations in the area, and the Lower Edge site is still known locally as Gledhill’s Quarry despite being owned by Rand & Asquith. They supplied both high-quality stone and the waste material needed for daily road repairs, and their partnership with the Normingtons ensured they remained close to the decision-making heart of the Local Board.

Together, these families and industries created the patchwork of materials that kept Brighouse and Rastrick moving. Dross, whether slag, clinker, spoil or chippings, was the unsung hero of Victorian road building. It was layered, compacted and rolled into the steep lanes that wound through Lower Edge, Bridge End, Birds Royd, Rastrick Common etc and the growing town centre of Brighouse. Only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did tar and eventually bitumen begin to replace these rough surfaces, ushering in the smoother roads we recognise today.

Yet for decades, dross was everywhere: a symbol of industrial ingenuity, civic pragmatism and the intertwined fortunes of the families who shaped the landscape. It was waste transformed into infrastructure, and in the process it became part of the very fabric of Brighouse and Rastrick’s development.

A classic example of these old road surfaces can be found on a track which is locally known as New Dick. It runs between Toothill Lane South adjacent to the Four Sons public house and Toothill Bank but was bisected by the M62 in the early 1970s. Two hundred years ago, the road was a major thoroughfare for horse drawn carriages coming over the Ainleys and heading down Toothill Bank into Brighouse via Rastrick Common or to Deighton via Shepherds Thorn Lane and Old Lane. Because the track hasn’t been used for vehicles for almost 60 years, the old, metallised road surface is still evident in places.



On the left is vitrified slag, probably from the foundry at J. Blakeborough & Sons. This was found on New Dick where many other pieces can also be unearthed.

In some areas, the slag was poured into moulds whilst still in its molten form which created coloured setts or bricks.

It was used, along with quarry waste, to make up the road

surface of New Dick. As shown below, there are still surviving sections of the old road surface.



William Bradley – Engineer, Millwright, Machine Maker & Iron Founder - Paul Thompson

William Bradley operated his business at Gooder Lane Iron Works, Brighouse and was the originator and proprietor of the company which operated at the Gooder Lane Iron Works and was involved in the construction and repair of all types of machinery, and he specialised in the manufacture of steam and hand cranes up to 30 tons lifting capacity.

He was reported as having wide experience as a practical engineer and millwright and manufactured engines, boilers, pumps and claypans and supplied many of the principal quarry owners and contractors in the West Riding.

His works were situated immediately off Gooder Lane and covered a large area with workshops, pattern stores and it was stated that "his working machinery consisted of a first-class modern plant , affording every facility for conducting the work on efficient lines"

William Bradley was born in 1833 at South Crosland, Huddersfield and was the son of John Bradley, a farmer. William's father died when he was quite young, but his mother continued to farm the ten acres of land that they leased, however, William decided that farming wasn't for him.

He trained to become a millwright, an old term for a mechanic who repaired the breakdowns in mill machinery. He married in 1855 and was still living at South Crosland in 1861. It appeared that William Bradley was in Rastrick as early as 1863 as his partnership with Edwin Hanson and William Boothroyd was dissolved. They were working as engineers, millwrights and finishing machine makers at Calder Bank Mill, Birds Royd Lane, Rastrick in September that year. At a Huddersfield Infirmary fund raising demonstration in 1880, he had a waggon in the parade containing a patent leather cutting machine and then in 1882 he had another waggon displaying a silk dressers filling engine, so he was obviously doing different things before concentrating his efforts on crane making.

He moved to Gooder Lane, Rastrick by 1871 and set up his own business and in 1875, plans were submitted by the architects, Edwin Heaton of Brighouse for William Bradley to build an iron foundry in Gooder Lane between William Street and Laura Street. In the 1881 census, William is shown residing at William Street and was employing three men, five boys and two labourers, including two of his sons, Fred and Arthur.

Accidents were frequent in the engineering trade and a newspaper story from 29th October 1932 reported on an accident at the Marsh Lane quarries, Southowram where Jonathan Willie Sykes, an employee of Wm. Bradley & Co, who had attended to carry out some maintenance on a Bradley crane, lost his life after falling over 30 feet. The newspaper had his name as William Sykes, but I was informed of his correct name by his grandson, John. William was the name of Jonathan Willie's son who was also present at the time of the accident as he also worked for Bradleys at that time. William went on to work for the British Engine & Electrical Insurance Co who carried out insurance inspections to prevent industrial accidents and ironically attended a crane accident at Marshall's quarry, Toothill Bank, Rastrick in 1937 when a 15-ton Bradley crane toppled over and the underground miners were trapped at the bottom of the shaft. William rescued them with a hand winch.

Many of the above trades that Bradleys were involved with were in slow decline and the company closed after trading for around 100 years.



When I was on holiday recently in the Lake District, I came across Stott Park Bobbin Mill near Lake Windermere which is the very last survivor of the 100-odd Lake District mills which produced wooden bobbins for the Lancashire Cotton industry.



'Bobbin boys' aged from 10 to 14 worked here in arduous conditions to produce 250,000 bobbins a week. Packed with clattering belt-driven machinery, Stott Park Bobbin Mill is operated by English Heritage and is presented just as it was in the 1870s.

Originally, the power for the mill came from a waterwheel until 1858 and then a 38hp steam engine manufactured by William Bradley in Rastrick was installed. Waste wood and wooden shavings would have provided the fuel for the boiler, and this system would have been continued until 1941 when the first electric motor was installed.



A William Bradley derrick crane remained in situ at Mount Tabor quarry near Halifax and is featured in the steam engine magazine “Old Glory” in the January 2012 edition.

William Bradley died in January 1897 aged 64 years, but the steam engine produced by his company still in operation and is used for demonstration at certain times to power the plant.

PHOTO ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Discover More at www.MyRastrick.com

Each season brings new additions to our understanding of Rastrick, and much of that ongoing work is reflected on www.MyRastrick.com. The website continues to expand as more photographs, documents, and research notes are added, offering a deeper and more detailed picture of the township’s past than ever before.

For anyone interested in tracing family lines, exploring the development of local streets, or simply enjoying a look at how Rastrick has changed over time, the site provides a wealth of material at your fingertips. Recent updates include newly scanned images, improved indexing of historical references, and clearer navigation to help visitors find exactly what they’re looking for.

The extensive burial records for St Matthew’s Church and the former Bridge End Chapel remain among the most frequently used resources, supporting family historians from near and far. Alongside these, the growing collection contributions continues to shed light on stories that might otherwise have been lost.

With visitors from across the UK, and well beyond, the website has become an important point of connection for anyone with ties to Rastrick. If you haven't explored it recently, it's well worth a visit. You may find a familiar face, a forgotten building, or a detail that adds a new layer to your own understanding of the place we call home.

GET INVOLVED

Contribute to Rastrick's Legacy

Your voice matters in preserving the legacy of Rastrick. Do you have old photographs, fascinating anecdotes, or hidden artefacts? Share them with us and become a custodian of our community's history. Email your contributions to history.rastrick@gmail.com. Together, we can ensure our heritage continues to inspire future generations.

Alternatively, come and join our friendly group at Rastrick Library. Meetings are held every second Tuesday in the month at 5.00pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly meetings held at Rastrick Library, 5-00pm – 6-30pm

Tuesday 14th July 2026

Tuesday 11th August 2026

Tuesday 8th September 2026

CLOSING THOUGHTS – Connecting Past & Present

As we bring this Summer edition to a close, it's worth recognising how much of Rastrick's story has been shaped, and continues to be shaped, by the people who care about it. Every photograph preserved, every memory shared, every question asked about a name or place adds another thread to the wider tapestry of our village's past.

Local history isn't only found in archives or old documents; it lives in the conversations we have, the buildings we pass without thinking, and the small details that connect one generation to the next. By taking an interest, whether through reading this newsletter, attending a meeting, or simply pausing to wonder about the origins of a familiar street, you help keep that story alive.

We hope this edition has offered something to spark curiosity, encourage reflection, or inspire a closer look at the places we call home. Thank you for joining us in celebrating Rastrick's heritage, and for supporting the ongoing work that ensures these stories remain part of our shared understanding.

We look forward to returning with more discoveries, research, and community contributions in the Autumn edition.

The Rastrick Local History Group