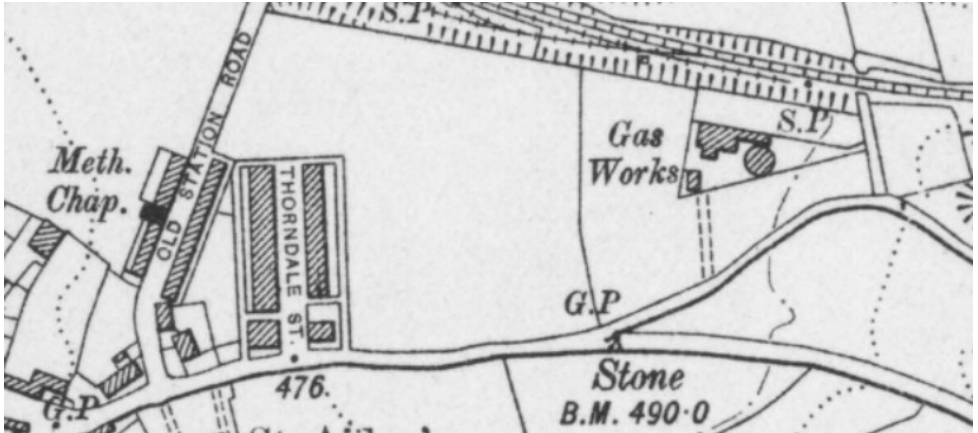


Let there be light !

With the replacement of the village street lights with the new LED versions being underway, I thought a look back at how the village was lit in days gone by may be of interest. Prior to the 1880s it would seem there was no public lighting of the village streets although some form of Petroleum lamps was said to have been used along the main road.



The Gas Works, marked on the 1910 OS map on Malham Road

When the Midland Railway constructed its new station at Hellfield in 1880 it produced its own gas supply for the station and also for Midland Terrace, making this the first street in the village to have lighting. Originally the gas was produced at the Midland locomotive sheds but later moved to a purpose-built gasworks on the opposite side of the tracks to the carriage sheds. Two further private gas supplies were also in use in the village, the first being at the home of William King Hardacre of Hellfield House (the present-day Social Club). This used coal gas which was produced in a small gasworks, located on Gisburn Road, with a small gasometer for storage in the field behind the building. I can remember the gasometer still being there when I was a youngster: it was being used as

a garden store place by one of the adjoining cottages! The gasworks building still remains today and has now been converted into two dwelling houses as can be seen below.

The other supply was at the Black Horse Hotel, this used Acetylene gas



Present day view of the Gisburn Road gasworks

which was produced by water being added to pellets of Calcium Carbide, the resulting gas being piped into a storage tank and then on to the rooms around the building.

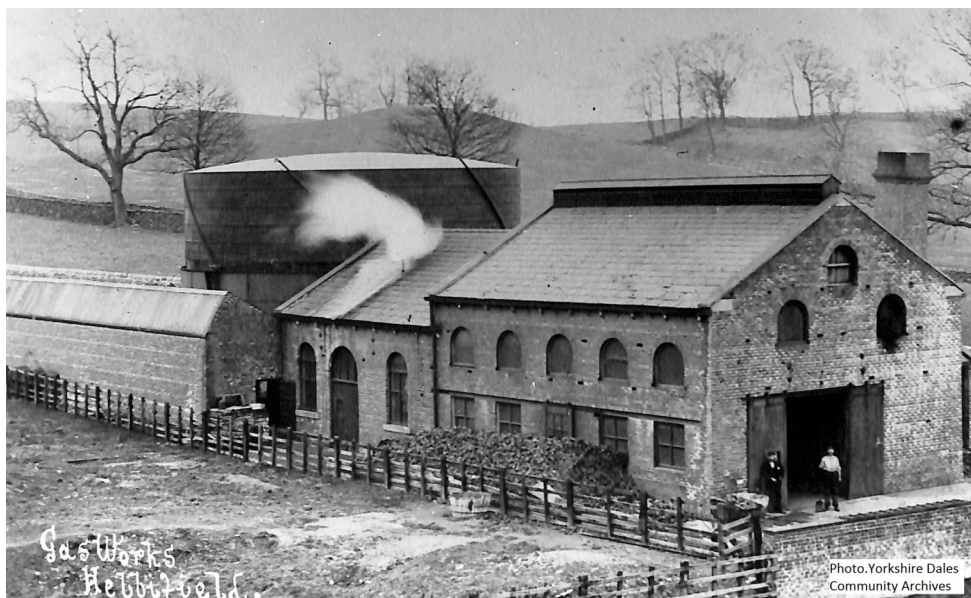
In 1903 the Hellifield and District Gas Company came into being, its gasworks were located on Malham Road, now the site now of the J. C. & I. Walton Haulage Company and is shown on the section of Ordnance Survey map from 1910 (shown on previous page). The gas company was launched with a capital of £7000 in £1 shares to manufacture, sell and supply gas for light, heat, and motive power. The gas made here was also coal-gas, so a new siding was laid down at the old station goods yard on Haw Lane by the Midland Railway Company, for the use of the Gas Company's coal deliveries. It would seem that apart from the Midland Railway, the private networks moved over to the village gas sometime after the gasworks' opening.



Early view of the manager's accommodation, Malham Road site

The manager of the gasworks lived in a property located on the Malham road site, an early view of the property is shown in the photo above. In 1911 the manager was a Mr. Wilfrid Bowman, who was living there with his wife Alice and their two young daughters, Gladys and Frances Louie.

In 1925 the company purchased the Long Preston Gas Company and linked the two distribution systems. The gas



The Gas Works on Malham Road

industry was nationalised in 1949 by the government of the time and Hellifield became part of the British Gas North-Eastern, Bradford area group. I am not sure exactly when the gasworks at Hellifield were closed, I seem to remember the site being abandoned and out of use by the late 1960s so perhaps the closure was during the advent of North Sea and

natural gas around that time? The original manager's property still stands on the site having been added to and improved over the years.

John Percy - April 2022