

## FIAT LUX!

(Let there be Light!)

*The following poem, transcribed by Brian Blowers, tells the story of the arrival of electric power in Kettlewell.*

“Uncle” Percy Inman was tall and dark and thin,  
He wore an ancient, shiny suit he had been married in,  
His general store, the Post Office, had prospered through the years  
And the bell on his capacious till brought music to his ears.  
An astute and clever businessman, he had a nimble brain  
Which started working overtime one evening in the rain,  
He saw the flooded beck race past and then felt ten feet tall  
As he realised its potential for the benefit of all.  
He spoke to Mr. Carradice and Mr. Joseph Raw,  
(A much respected citizen and Percy’s Pa-in-law).  
Then Mr. Holberry Coates chipped in and all took paid up shares  
And they saw a rosy future for the project which was theirs.  
They built a concrete dam across the beck below Town Head  
And lower down assembled their machinery in a shed.  
Lots of inexpensive water they fed in through a spout  
And by dark mysterious processes electric power came out.  
It proved a nine days wonder and all was truth and light  
Until it had stopped raining, when the light was far from bright.  
Then the critics had a field day, and the cynics with a grin

Said one had to strike a match at night to see if t'light was in.  
At six old pence a unit, you may think it awfully dear,  
Considering cash values in that distant happy year,  
Till you realise, of course, that each unit meant each light.  
When you'd paid up that each quarter you could burn it day and night.  
It had its teething troubles, as when fish swam down the spout  
And gummed up the machinery till all the lights went out,  
Or sometimes it would happen, in periods of drought,  
You could leave it switched on all the time and all you'd get was nowt.  
They called a Village Meeting to consider street lights too,  
Sounding various opinions as to what they ought to do,  
The young folk didn't want them, said Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne,  
And in any case the old folk were all in bed by nine.  
Another of the speakers was Mr. Bob MacLure,  
Who reminded all those present of the hazards of manure  
But the meeting soon decided to retain the status quo,  
And those who wanted street lights could go to -- Jericho.  
Sic transit gloria! Kettlewell Power is dead, we're on the Grid.  
What used to cost a bob or two now costs several quid,  
So give three cheers for Percy and those ardent pioneers  
Who lit the Lamps of Progress, which have burned for sixty years.

*R.H.Tomalin, 1974*

*Notes on the people mentioned in the poem.*

The electric power was switched on at an opening ceremony in 1914 and finally closed down in about 1949, when the enterprise was bought out by, and connected to, the National Grid.

**Percy Inman, 1876-1944** lived above the village shop and post office, which he ran, as did his brother before him. A keen photographer, his prints of village life at the beginning of this century, which one sees all around the village, were taken from glass plates found in the shop cellar.

**William Carradice, 1861-1933** was the village schoolmaster. He married Elizabeth **Wiseman**, one of his early pupils, and lived at Whernside House, now the Youth Hostel, which they ran as a guest house.

**Joseph Raw, 1849-1929** was a joiner, cabinet maker and father-in-law of Percy Inman.

**C.J.W.Cutcliffe Hyne, 1865-1944** was a Bradford citizen whose family spent long summer vacations in Kettlewell in the early part of the twentieth century, arriving by horse-drawn wagonette from Grassington railway station. He was the author of the *Captain Kettle* series of works and a great traveller.

**Robbie H. Tomalin** was an optician with a practice in Skipton. He married **Mary Horner**, daughter of Jane and Thomas Horner of Bordley and Conistone, and lived at Troutbeck, Kettlewell.

No information about **Holberry Coates** and **Bob McLure**.

Notes supplied by Brian Blowers and published on the Airedale and Wharfedale family history site, <https://awfhs.org/a-wharfedale-miscellany/> along with the poem.