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BAWTRY – A RAILWAY AND COAL TOWN RATHER THAN A MARKET AND INLAND PORT?

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BAWTRY – A RAILWAY AND COAL TOWN RATHER THAN A MARKET AND INLAND PORT?

On 17th October 1890, The Retford and Gainsborough Times ran a story about the opening of the just built “Bawtry Public Hall” – subsequently the Town Hall, recently a florist and an art gallery, now vacant.

The article mostly concerns the names of “the great and the good” of Bawtry who attended the opening ceremony, gave speeches and who attended a celebratory lunch followed by a musical concert in the evening. Details of the lunch menu and of the concert are of interest, but there are also two little known gems of local history buried in the report.

The first is that there was an exploratory boring for coal at Martin, just north of Bawtry. The way the article is written seems to imply this had happened quite recently. Coal was found in useful quantities, but – as we know today - a pit shaft was not sunk at Martin. Was this coal subsequently exploited by accessing it from underground roads driven from Harworth or Rossington collieries?

Secondly, it appears that Bawtry was “in the running” against Doncaster for becoming the location for the Great Northern Railways workshops. The Great Northern Railway had come to Bawtry in 1848. The company had its workshops in Boston and Peterborough; these were to be closed in favour of a relocation to Yorkshire. As we know today, Doncaster “won” this competition, and the works were commenced at Hexthorpe in 1853, opening in 1855. They became nationally – or even internationally – known as the “Plant”.

Had either of these developments occurred (let alone both!) Bawtry would be a very different place today. In the context of the railway works, the newspaper article quotes someone as saying people would have referred to “Doncaster, near Bawtry” rather than the other way around.



The original newspaper article can be seen below. Read left to right on each page before going to a new page.

BAWTRY PUBLIC HALL. OPENING CEREMONY.

Yesterday week the consummation of the movement for providing Bawtry with a Public Hall was witnessed by the populace of the town in the formal opening by Mr. Francis Raynes, the veteran and senior citizen of the place, who on his 90th birthday, April 26th, this year, laid the foundation-stone. Since then the building has been erected by Mr. R. H. Rawson, of Tickhill, and though one or two additions and slight alterations have been made, the block presented to the readers of the *Retford and Gainsborough Times* on the day previous to the stone laying gave a tolerably accurate representation of the proposed building. One of the most important items is the presentation of the town clock over the entrance by Mr. Raynes, as a kind expression of his goodwill. The total cost of the building has risen to between £800 and £900, which has been almost entirely taken up in shares, and the building was opened as an ornament to the town, and a contributor to its anticipated increased prosperity, without sixpennyworth of debt on it. The directors are—Mr. Francis Raynes (chairman), Lord Houghton, Mr. O. Bridgman Simpson, Mr. Wm. Gill, Mr. Richard Cullen, Mr. Thos. Glenn, Mr. W. L. Baines, Mr. F. T. Parkin (Serlby), and Mr. C. Bulmer. A most suitable and central site in the Market-place was secured through the kindness of Lord Houghton, and tenders being invited, that of Mr. R. H. Rawson, of Tickhill, at £640 was accepted. Some details of the new building may be of interest. There is a large assembly hall, 48ft. by 27ft., and 22ft. high, with a stage, and capable of accommodating 300 persons, according to a rough estimate, and two retiring-rooms behind the stage, with lavatories and other convenient appointments. On the first floor is a reading-room, 21ft. by 14ft., and a portion of the basement is occupied by the heating apparatus and stores. The large room is lighted by Strobe and Sons' patent ventilating sun burners, and all the doors are hung to swing either way, a great consideration in the case of the crowded audiences which the building may be called upon to contain. The large hall has a dressed pitch pine roof, with a waggon shaped ceiling over the stage end.

The principal front (to the Market-place) is constructed of Gainsborough red bricks, with moulded brickwork and Roche Abbey stone dressings, with a clock (supplied by Messrs. Potts and Sons, the eminent Leeds firm), in the gable. The new structure is a decided acquisition to architectural Bawtry. The contract has been carried out by Mr. Rawson, of Tickhill, while Mr. Green, of Gainsborough, superintended the work on behalf of the directors. Shortly before two o'clock the directors, accompanied by the Tickhill Jubilee Brass Band, under the direction of Mr. Percy, paraded to Mr. Raynes' house to call upon the venerable director, who there joined them and returned to the hall, arriving two or three minutes before noon. Here, in the presence of a large company of onlookers, he (Mr. Raynes) unlocked the door and, having entered the hall, set the clock going on the stroke of twelve. When the chime of the bells had subsided the public entered the hall and the directors took up their places on the platform for the opening ceremony. There was a large company present, the hall being well filled. The interior of the building had been nicely decorated for the occasion by Messrs. Kitson and Lindley, of Doncaster, assisted by some of the directors. The decorations consisted mainly of banners and flags, but made a very pretty show. Amongst those present were:—Mr. F. Raynes, Dr. Raynes, Mr. O. B. Bridgman Simpson, Mr. W. Gill, Mr. R. Cullen, Mr. T. Glenn, Mr. W. L. Baines, Mr. F. T. Parkin, Mr. C. Bulmer, Mr. J. Walker (sec.), Mr. R. H. Rawson (contractor), Dr. Lyon, Mr. J. Dickinson (Misson), Mr. P. H. C. Chrimes, Mr. J. Camm (Ranskill), Mr. C. E. Kitson, Mr. T. W. Nettleship, Mr. G. V. Gibson, Mr. C. Shackle, Mr. W. Collinson, Mr. F. Jackson, Mr. F. J. Jackson, Mr. W. C. Gill, Mr. J. Cameron, Mr. A. Morton, Mr. F. E. Wilkinson, Mr. T. Croft, Mr. F. J. Bailey, Mr. W. Genn, Mr. J. Rumble, Rev. E. Heald, Mr. C. H. Bickford, Mr. Crookes, Mr. T. Lister, Mr. J. W. Reeves, Mr. T. Bell, Mr. J. Howard, Mr. W. Wagstaff, Mr. J. Stephenson, Mr. W. White, Mr. J. Lindley, Mr. J. Draper, Mr. B. Morton, Mr. Richardson, Mr. S. Morgan, Mr. C. W. Hall (Doncaster), Mr. T. Masterman, (formerly Lord Galway's agent), Councillor Butler (Retford), C. H. Marshall (Retford), Miss M. Baines, Mrs. F. T. Parkin, Miss Clara Lindley, Miss Jenkinson, Misses Knox, Mrs. Knox, Miss Nettleship, Miss E. Taylor, Misses Popplewell, Misses Morton, Mrs. Adams, Miss Brown, Mrs. and Miss Chrimes, Misses Cartwright, Miss Willows, Mrs. W. Wagstaffe, Misses Kitchen, Mrs. and Miss Green, Mrs. Auckland, Mrs. F. Jackson (Bawtry), Mr. Naylor (Everton), Mr. Little (Everton), Mr. Auckland (Bawtry), Mr. Low (Misson), Mr. Swailes, and others.

Mr. F. RAYNES, who was received with cheers, said: Friends and neighbours, ladies and gentlemen, on the last occasion I had to apologise for keeping on my hat, but under the protection of this roof I can afford to take it off and pay you the respect I owe you. I regret very much Lord Houghton's engagements prevent him from honouring us with his presence to open this hall, and I regret it the more because I know he would have been more acceptable to all our Gladstonian and Radical friends than an inveterate Tory like myself. (Laughter.) Failing Lord Houghton, and willing to do all our aforesaid friends a pleasure, I should be delighted if we could have had the grand old man himself. (Laughter.) It would have been a glorious opening. We know the grand old man has favoured very little people, and we venture to think, some less worthy than ourselves. (Hear, hear.) Unfortunately we are not on his road to Scotland—(laughter)—or to dear little Wales—(laughter)—or we might have expected a speech from him at our station. It would have been a bright record for us. At all events, I am quite sure that all our political friends, inveterate Tories as well as the most rabid Radicals, would have given him a most hearty reception. (Hear, hear.) We could show him another old man middling cute in the wood carving, his favourite amusement, and I venture to feather myself he would hold out his hand to a brother "chip." (Laughter.) A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind. I cannot attempt to chip logic with him, but I will chip sticks with him. (Laughter.) And now, my friends, we must go to business. On laying the foundation stone I pointed out to you many of the advantages and uses to which this hall could be appropriated. I hope now to show you a bright future for Bawtry, though it will be a black one. I dare say you have read a great deal in the papers about the development of coal; that it is to be found within three miles of Doncaster. I hope and believe it will be found nearer Bawtry. (Hear, hear.) Some of you will recollect we once had an enterprising spirit amongst us—Bennet Jenkinson—poor fellow, he went to the majority in early life, otherwise we might have expected something great from him. In the sanguine hope of tapping the spring of wealth he introduced some friends to join him in tapping coal. They bored at Martin; unquestionably coal was found, but it was asserted that some wicked wag, in the spirit of mischief, one fine night popped a piece of coal into the bore hole. Bennet found it and was satisfied coal existed, but they never bored an inch deeper. (Laughter.) The

fact is Bennet did not find the money, and without finding money there is no raising of coal. But the project dropped; it "finished in smoke," as the saying goes, but not in the smoke of a colliery. I venture to think that the smoke of a colliery will appear at no long distant date. (Hear, hear.) There will be other enterprising spirits, who will find plenty of money. It is a significant coincidence to my mind that Martin belongs to the Duke of Newcastle. There are two collieries on the duke's estate, and if the duke is not inclined to develop the coal himself as one of his ancestors did, at Shireoaks, he may be induced to negotiate with other parties, and the magnificent estate of Martin will facilitate any negotiations, for it is always found more easy to deal with one individual than with a number. I cannot believe that the valuable property of coal underneath the Martin estate will remain long unfound. Future generations will rejoice in black faces—(laughter)—and in well-lined pockets. Bawtry will become a populous place, and a corporate body will be presided over by a corpulent mayor—(laughter)—a descendant, no doubt, of some well-to-do Wagstaffe—(laughter)—or a Dawson, or a Cullen, or some other citizen of great renown. (Laughter.) The complaint will then be that this hall is not half big enough, and they will say, "Why didn't the stupids make it larger." I will not commit my friends the directors to the foolish presumption that because Bawtry did nothing for us we need do nothing for Bawtry. I think we have done fairly well for Bawtry, and now we may leave Bawtry to do something for themselves. We, too, must do something for ourselves. We must look after our dividends, and we propose to commence operations by a concert this evening in this room. I have great pleasure in conveying to Mr. Rawson the approbation and satisfaction of the directors in the construction of this hall, and to the whole of his men. I do not know whether the men were Unionists or free labourers, but they worked with a free will. (Hear, hear.) They did not scamp the work, but worked so amicably that we have had no "strikes." (Applause and laughter.) We have had no police batons, and our army has not been called to suppress any riots. (Laughter.) I think the men worthy of all commendation, and they are a bright example to the labourers' community—and to the nations abroad, for I think the world is going mad with strikes. Of course, this hall is severely criticised, and all sorts of architectural faults are found in it. Some of my friends say it is like a Methodist Chapel. (Laughter.) I hope my friends the Methodists will appreciate it, and that they will make very good use of it and pay for it. (Laughter.) The poor fox on the top of it even comes

(Laughter.) The poor fox on the top of it. I confess I am not much enamoured of it myself. I would suggest that each of my sporting friends send me a sketch of a fox breaking cover, and I will give it "my careful consideration," as the Home Secretary says. (Laughter).—After a few further remarks on fox hunting, and the criticism which some people passed upon the sport, Mr. Raynes concluded as follows: "I must soon go to the majority, and when I am forgotten—for I shall be—" ("No, no")—my last hope and wish is that you may all enjoy health, that first of mortal blessings—(hear, hear)—and such health as I have enjoyed, thankfully I hope. Now I declare this hall to be opened. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. JNO. WALKER said that all would join with him in thanking Mr. Raynes for the way in which he had opened the hall; and also in the hope that he might long live in health and strength, to visit the hall and enjoy the entertainments provided. (Applause.)

A very handsome bouquet of flowers lying on the platform, was alluded to by Mr. Walker, who said it had evidently been put there for Mr. Raynes. Having taken it up and examined it, he said it was from Mr. and Mrs. Lister, of Finningley Park, for Mr. Raynes, to whom he presented it amid applause.

The band then played "For he's a jolly good fellow," and sang the same strains, and the proceedings concluded with "God save the Queen," by the band.

THE LUNCHEON.

At two o'clock an excellent luncheon was served by Mr. White, of the Crown Hotel, in a large marquee erected in the Market-place, which had been decorated for the occasion. There was a large company present, over which Mr. Raynes presided, being supported by the directors, Councillor Walker, of Retford, and about a hundred others. The following was the

MENU:—

FISH.

Cod and Oyster Sauce. Fillet of Soles, Drawn Butter.

MEATS.

Haunch of Venison. Roast Beef. Hind Quarter of Lamb. Boiled Leg of Mutton and Tongue, Caper Sauce. Roast Duck, Apple Sauce. Boiled Fowls, a la Béchamel. Roast Fowls, Bread Sauce. Ham.

SECOND COURSE.

Roast Pheasants. Partridges. Grouse. Bread Sauce.

SWEETS.

Noyeau and Wine Jellies. Almond Blancmange. Cake a la Bacchus. Apple Tarts and Custards. Stewed Fruits. Cheesecakes. Pastries.

VEGETABLES.

French Beans. Cauliflowers. Potatoes. Cheese and Celery.

The table having been cleared,

The CHAIRMAN proposed the toast of the Queen which was received with musical honours.

The Prince of Wales, "the finest man in England," was also proposed from the chair and similarly received.

Mr. J. WALKER proposed the chairman of the directors (Mr. Raynes) saying he was as fine an old English chairman of directors, and as fine an old English gentleman as ever sat in a chair or crossed his leg over a saddle (cheers), and he was sure all would join with him in congratulating Mr. Raynes on the excellent condition in which he seemed to be in view of the approaching hunting season. (Laughter and applause.) They must all, he thought be possessed of a feeling of envy when they saw him looking as hale hearty and strong as many a man 30 or 40 years his junior, and when they thought of the pain it caused to their teeth when they cracked a nut, who were fifty years younger than he, and then saw Mr. Raynes at Doncaster station munching a captain's biscuit they could not help hoping that some fifty or sixty years hence they would be able to preside at such a "do" as that. They all knew the import of their gathering that day was the opening of the public hall but had it not been for their chairman no hall would have been built and no luncheon been provided. When the matter was first spoken of it was their chairman who planked down his £100—(cheers)—and since then the scheme had never looked back. It had gone on till they hoped to open the hall at the expense of class upon a

to open the hall at an expense of close upon a thousand pounds without 6d. debt upon it. That was something for Bawtry to boast of, and for their chairman to boast about, and to hand down worthy of remembrance to those who would come after him. He would not mention in detail the good deeds Mr. Raynes had performed in the parish because he was one of those men who never made a row about what he did, but did it quietly and unostentatiously; "who did good by stealth, and blushed to find it famed." He would conclude with the lines which they would all remember:—

If he to whom this toast we drink,
Has brought the needy to his door,
Or raised the wretch from ruin's brink,
From the abundance of his store;
If he has eased the mourner's woe,
Or raised young merit into fame,
Fill high: Our cup shall overflow,
In honour of his name.

The toast was heartily drunk with musical honours.

The CHAIRMAN, in reply, said he should want the vocabulary of their friend Mr. Gladstone—(laughter)—and the eloquence of Messrs. Dillon and O'Brien to respond appropriately, so they must imagine he possessed all the powers of those three remarkable men, and he would thank them to their heart's content. A man that spoke of himself generally spoke a deal of nonsense, so the less he said on that subject the better. ("No, no.") Anything he had done or could do he could assure them in his simple language was only a small instalment of the debt of gratitude he owed for thousands of kindnesses, and he begged they would take it in full discharge, and he would then still remain their debtor. (Cheers.)

Mr. HALL (Doncaster) proposed the toast of the day, "Success to Bawtry Hall." After expressing the pleasure he had in being present, he said he was very glad to see Bawtry was going with the times, because a town that lagged behind failed to be in at the end of the race. Bawtry, at one time in his younger days, he could recollect, was near to coming into great importance, when it would have been "Doncaster, near Bawtry," instead of vice versa. He referred to the time of his laying down of the Great Northern Plant Works. There was a great fight between the two places, but in the end Doncaster succeeded. He was, however, glad to see the inauguration of what he considered a very good thing in a town hall, which was the beginning of prosperity he hoped. After referring to the kind of entertainments and meetings which would probably be held in the village, he congratulated all concerned on the excellent start which had been made in the matter, concluding by proposing the toast and coupling with it the directors, and Mr. Jno. Walker, the secretary.

Mr. WALKER responded. He felt sure that at last Bawtry had waked out of that sleep in which it had been ever since the extinction of the old coaching days, and had once more begun to march on in that progressive course which every town must start or go on to extinction. They believed this hall would be a very great benefit to Bawtry and to everybody in the neighbourhood, as everybody was at liberty to go there on paying for it—the directors had not built it with the view of dividends—they never expected them. (Laughter.) It was a credit to the architect who designed it, to the builder who had built it and was of standing reproach to every body in Bawtry who had not subscribed towards it. (Laughter.) But there was yet time for the repentant sinners, for he was glad to say that almost all was paid. Mr. Rawson had succeeded in heaping on some "extras," so that they would be able to issue a few more shares, and he hoped none on the other side of the street would allow the day to go by without becoming subscribers. The very first subscriber was a clergyman who was in the parish some 30 years ago, and who had sent £50 for 20 shares, saying he did not care 2d. if there was no dividend but he sent the money for the sake of old associations. That was the spirit in which Bawtry ought to be supported, and he hoped the repentant sinners would yet come forward and subscribe. (Applause.)

Mr. W. GILL proposed the health of Lord Houghton, expressing great sorrow that his lordship was not able to be present, though but for important business engagements he would have been. He was sure the directors and shareholders felt deeply indebted to Lord Houghton for his great consideration and kindness. As most of them were aware, he had let them have the land for the building at a merely nominal price, which had been a very great boon indeed. If he had been present he would have been accorded a most hearty reception. They all felt most deeply for him in the bereavement his family had sustained during the last year or two, and no doubt that had something to do with his absence that day.—The toast was very warmly received.

Mr. F. T. PARKIN, in responding, expressed sorrow at the absence of Lord Houghton, but assured the company that his lordship was in excellent health, as he had heard from Lord Galway only a few days ago.

Mr. C. E. KITSON proposed "The Builders," Mr. RAWSON responding.

"Our County Councillors" was submitted by Mr. CHRYMES, and Mr. NICHOLSON acknowledged the toast.

"The Outside Workers" coupled with name of Mr. C. H. Bickford, and "The Caterer, Mr. White," concluded the toast list.

The evening's first public concert was given in

