

SECTION V.

MODERN TIMES

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CHAPTER 1. Clee Village.

CLEE to-day is much the same as it has been for years, though there are not wanting signs that the end of another century will find in it much more than a century's change judged by the standard of the last five hundred years. But now, despite an occasional lamp-post, its venerable Church and cottages of the Elizabethan style yet preserve for it an old-time aspect.

An important factor in the future history of Clee will be the road between itself and its prodigious offspring, New Clee. Carr Road, at one time the village lane to the Carrs, or meadows, is now a road into Grimsby through New Clee, and seems likely to become, when its roughness shall have been removed, the way by which Clee will be first invaded by those pioneers of population—suburban residences. Carr Road was at the beginning of the 19th century a mere “occupation road”—an extension of what was known as “Ox Pasture Lane.”

Another road, running from Clee to Grimsby, has changed its character during the past hundred years. The old “Fish” Road from Cleethorpes is now, after passing through Clee, continued only as a footpath, and this at its Grimsby end has been considerably diverted of late by the extension of the Welholme district. The Clee National School was opened in 1874.

{96} The Clee Cemetery, situated on the rising ground towards Cleethorpes, is just within the limits of the township: the old wooden boundary post standing on the Clee and Cleethorpes high road, not many yards East of the Cemetery gates. In a field opposite, the Admiralty have erected a Naval Brigade Station.

The Clee Foundation Grammar School, founded originally at Humberston in 1708 and endowed by Matthew Humberston, a wealthy London Merchant, was reorganised and removed to Clee in 1881. The School provides free and assisted scholarships for boys belonging Humberston, Clee, Cleethorpes, and Weelsby. The Arms of the School are:—Argent three bars and in chief as many rondels ermines. The motto is “Fax mentis honestae gloria.” The Rev. Arthur Abbott, M.A., was head master from 1882 to 1899.

CHAPTER 2. Cleethorpes-with-Thrunscoe.

CLEETHORPES as it is to-day took its rise rather less than half-a-century ago. In 1811 the population was not quite 400, and even forty years later the village would hardly have been recognised by those who are among its most frequent visitants to-day.

Then, the shore was wild and fringed with brown clay cliffs, rugged of outline and sheer of face, which sloped away from where "Ross Castle" now marks their greatest altitude to the sand-dunes of the Humberston Fitties on the one hand, and those of the Clee Ness on the other. Between the recreation grounds, which edged the cliffs in its higher reaches, and the Itterby Road (now the Alexandra Road) small gardens intervened, and on the beach under the lee of the cliff's highest point was Rowston's Booth. Similar edifices, known respectively as Appleyard's Booth, Grant's Booth, and Sleight's Booth—two of them graced with flag-staffs—were gathered about the point at which the way from Lower Thorpe merged itself with the sands. A rough clayey road this, rifted by wheel-ruts and the courses of torrents which, in wet weather, converted the road into a drain. "Folly Hole" was the suggestive name it bore.

{98} The recreation ground and beach were rarely thronged with noisy crowds then, for the reign of the day-tripper was not yet, and Cleethorpes was the chosen resort of visitors from among the well-to-do people of the country-side, who, attracted by its quaintness and seclusion, came to stay usually the summer through.

Walking along the cliff verge to Top Thorpe you had before you the "Cliff" Hotel, while to the right the only houses on the Itterby Road between the Cliff and Dolphin Hotels were the residences of Dr. Parkinson and Mr. Joseph Chapman. Turning to the right, just beyond the former, into the Town Street (now Sea View Street) you found yourself in a typical fishing village, composed of cottages—most of them of a single storey, whitewashed and straw-thatched, with green doors and door-steps as white as the chalk stones of the shore could make them. In the Town Street there were but ten houses, and these nearly all on the South side. Behind them, however, and opening upon a narrow road (now Wardle Street) were four squares set round with tiny cottages.

The Town Street came to an end upon joining another road running across (which is now called Cambridge Street). The way to the left was "Thrunscoe Lane," that to the right "Hoole Road." Following the latter, a few yards from the Town Street end, you swerved to the left where stood Joseph Parkinson's cottage, and opposite it the Primitive Chapel. Then came three more cottages, and on the other side "Nottingham Terrace," the Odd- {99}fellows' Hall, and an open space upon the far corner of which Cuttleby Lane entered. At the point where Mill Road joined it the Hoole Road turned sharply to the right, round the Almshouses—the National (Boys) School now occupies the site—and from there, save for the Wesleyan Chapel about half-way on the right, its course was through open ground as far as the turn into the Hoole Town Street (now Market Street) where it terminated.

In its course the only roads which joined it were Cuttleby footpath, Mill Road, and Albert Road—then newly laid out. The continuation to the brow of the hill on the Grimsby Road has only been made during the last decade.

Upon entering the Hoole Town Street you found yourself well into Lower Thorpe. From the Market Place Cuttleby Lane extended to the right, crossing the Miller's Garth, by the Windmill, over the Hoole drain, across Albert Road by an open space where the stocks stood, and so skirting the Rectory garden past the National School and out, as we have seen, into the open space behind the Almshouses on the Hoole Road.

The Hoole Town Street from the Market Place followed an Easterly direction past the Dolphin Hotel to Folly Hole (Sea Road). Turning to the right, however, at the Dolphin, you entered High Street, which almost immediately took a Westerly direction, and running parallel to the Town Street passed Brown's and Lidgett's cottages, lying snugly back a little on the right; the Leeds Arms and Cross Keys Inns; down "Isaac's Hill" to the Town {100} Spring Well; where it branched to the West into the Clee and Weelsby Road; to the North into the newly made Grimsby Road.

Prior to the construction of this latter turnpike, the only way to the neighbouring town, unless one travelled by Clee to the "top end," was along a sandy track skirting "Thorpes-near-Marsh" and Smallfleets Common, and known as the Grimsby Marsh Footpath.

In order to trace the steps by which the Cleethorpes of these days rose to be what it is at the opening of the twentieth century, it may be well to marshal in chronological order those events which have made the greatest impression upon the face of the district.

The Almshouses.—These stood on the Hoole Road, opposite the Mill Road end. Concerning their genesis nothing seems to be known. They are mentioned in the Inclosure Award (1846) and had been in existence for a considerable period when they were finally handed over to the Rector at the time when the National School was transferred—upon their demolition—to the site, from its original place in Cuttleby Lane.

The National Schools.—In 1856, abandoning awhile the Cuttleby Lane site, the National Schools were rebuilt with a master's house attached, on the Hoole Road. This building, which has been considerably enlarged and which still serves as the boys' school, was designed by the Rev. W. P. Jones, the Rector, by whom also the coat of arms on the stone at the North end of the School-house was chiselled. The design is—Sable two lions, passant {101} gardant in pale, on a chief azure a Madonna and Child (See of Lincoln) impaling Sable a cross patoncee between four pheons (Jones). Crest, a Bishop's mitre. Inscription, "National School, 1856." In this building, prior to the erection of St. Peter's Chapel of Ease, divine service was conducted every Sunday evening.

A new school for girls was opened in 1888, on the East side of this building, and a few years later a separate infant school was erected on the old site in Cuttleby Lane.

One of the most deservedly familiar figures to the descendents of the aboriginal Cleethorpes, and also to the vast majority of the "Outeners," is Mr. John L. Rowles, since 1866 the painstaking head-master of this school. To him the present writer, in company with many another, owes a debt for more than a little of that knowledge upon which the best of experience is built—the foundation truths. The same man, he has the same benches before him to-day, but they are occupied by the sons of some who then sat there. It is not every dominie who can cane a late or refractory scholar with the reflection that he dealt thus with his father before him.

The Award.—The sole commission under "An Act for Inclosing Lands in the parish of Clee, in the County of Lincoln," dated the 5th and 6th years of the reign of Queen Victoria, was the late John Higgins, Esquire, of Alford. "The Award," which was completed in 1846, states that "There were within the several Townships, Hamlets or Places of Clee, Cleethorpes, Thrunscoc, Itterby and Oole, all {102} in the Parish of Clee, in the County of Lincoln, divers open and common Arable Fields, Moors, Carrs, Fens, Common Meadows, Common Pastures, and other Commonable and Waste Lands and Grounds, and divers inclosed Lands and Homesteads."

Manor lordship claims were allowed to the Earl of Yarborough for the Manor of "Scartho-cum-Cleethorpes"; to the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Grimsby, for the Manor of Clee; and to the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, for the Manor of Itterby. Broadly speaking, these Manor boundaries—which cannot be taken as historical—were fixed so that the Scartho-cum-Cleethorpes Manor comprehended the two townships—Itterby and Hoole, while the Itterby Manor was represented by Thrunscoc district, and the Clee Manor by Clee, and the district between the village, the shore, and the Grimsby boundary.

Four public footpaths, beside those which follow the high-roads, are safeguarded to the Parish—Cuttleby, under the name of "School Footpath"; Humber Bank Footpath, from the "Fishermen's Road" to the Parish of Humberston "near the New Clough"; the Thrunscoc and Humberston Footpath; and the Scartho Footpath from the Humberston Road.

The Railway.—It was in 1863 that the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire, now the Great Central Railway Company, opened a single line to Cleethorpes. The first station consisted in little else than a low single platform with the necessary buildings and a turntable. To what extent the development of Cleethorpes in the {103} direction here indicated is due to the enterprise of this Company it is difficult to say. It has since these first days expended vast sums of money over the place, and doubtless expects to obtain a quid pro quo sooner or later.

The Lifeboat.—Cleethorpes became a lifeboat station in 1868, the boat-house standing upon the shore at a point about equally distant from White's and the Thrunscoc farms. Not once or twice from this spot the boat was sent forth into the darkness of the night and the fierceness of the gale to succour some vessel in distress; but the danger and the cost of launching from the open beach were so great that in 1882 the lifeboat was removed to the Royal Dock Basin, at Grimsby, which has ever since been its head-quarters.

The Pier.—The Cleethorpes Promenade Pier, built by a private Company at the cost of £10,000, was opened upon August 4th, 1873. In its early days a daily musical feast was provided by a brass band of three performers, and there was an open-air rink for roller skaters. In 1884 it was leased for 999 years to the Railway Company, who constructed a new pavilion and made other alterations.

During its existence the pier has more than once narrowly escaped destruction from vessels driven before the storm in the darkness. One memorable October morning more than a hundred vessels, ranging in size from the coasting sloop to the steamship, were to be counted from the coign of vantage it affords, driven ashore by the violence of the storm on the previous night, three of them embedded in the sand but a few yards away. Of these luckless craft {104} the great majority were floated off without much difficulty during the next few tides, but here and there one was left a wreck—the keel and stempost protruding from the sand for months after the other timbers had been broken up and sold, silent witnesses during the calm of many a summer day to the wildness of the storms of winter.

The Sea-wall and Cliff Gardens.—There may be difference of opinion as to whether, upon building the sea-wall and converting the rugged brown cliff into trim green banks and gardens, the Railway Company made Cleethorpes more attractive, but that in so doing it made the village secure from the very serious inroads of the sea, there can be no dispute. For years of late the tides had been undermining and demolishing the clay bank upon which the place is built, and the cottages which a hundred years ago were comfortably inland were at this time menaced with a fate similar to that which befell Ravenser-odd, across the river, five centuries before.

It was probably in view of this grave fact that the Railway Company were able to purchase the old "Recreation Ground" from the Churchwardens for an "old song" and begin their work of "developing" the place as a seaside resort. The scheme was complete in 1885, when the late Prince Albert Victor performed the opening ceremony.

To-day.—Of late years Cleethorpes has blossomed abundantly, and bids fair to forestall the prophesy of the somewhat cynical journalist, who in 1864 exclaimed, as if he would ask A Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?—"Why, even Cleethorpes a {105} thousand years hence may, perhaps, have emerged from dirt and obscurity, wearing fortune's chaplet." Before a tithe of the allotted time has sped, much of the dirt and more of the obscurity have

departed, and with them alas! many of the old landmarks. A public hall, a public fountain, long rows of shops and longer rows of red brick houses have come with the times. Donkeys and donkey-boys, waggonettes with importunate drivers, are still there, but mingling with them now are pretentious char-a-bancs and tram-cars. The oyster-man has abandoned his basket and sits behind a counter, the booths have swollen into refreshment-rooms, the penny stalls into shops, and the only representative of Clark's wooden bazaar is an imposing colonnade, which might have been transplanted from Holborn.

What wonder if, while the very oldest Megs still speak of the "village," the streets be traversed by electric cars, and the air be stirred with whispers of a Charter of Incorporation, and other great things in a land

"Where ducks become swans, and barnacles geese
And every lamb gets a golden fleece,
Where nobles grow kings, and all other things
Are changed in the self-same way as these."

CHAPTER 3. Weelsby and New Clee.

A HUNDRED years ago there was no New Clee. A sandy common, the old haven, the boundary blue-stone, Billy Croft's hut, and a sandy track joining the village of Cleethorpes on the hill a mile or so to the South-East, with the tiny town of Grimsby almost as far away in the opposite direction, was all that for the first forty years of the nineteenth century marked the district now known by that name. The prosperity of Grimsby in the advent of the Railway in 1844, the construction of the Docks, and the subsequent diversion of the fishing trade from Cleethorpes, resulted in an overflow of the population into the adjoining parish, and New Clee sprang to birth and grew with astonishing rapidity.

Actually a portion of the Parish of Clee, it was popularly reckoned a part of Grimsby, though for many years its civic affairs were controlled by the Clee-with-Weelsby Local Board. It is now a corporate part of the Borough of Grimsby, and a parochial unit.

The second of the Grimsby Board Schools was erected in Hilda Street in this district in 1877. The Hamilton Street School was built in 1882, and that in Weelsby Street seven years after.

In 1889 small-pox was epidemic in New Clee and {107} Weelsby, and in recognition of his brave and unremitting services in stamping it out, the freedom of the Borough—thus for the first time bestowed—was conferred upon the late Mr. John Wintringham, of the Abbey, by the Corporation of Grimsby.

Of old, Weelsby consisted of a few scattered farmsteads and dwellings, lying for the most part between the Manor House and the Grimsby border, and congregating somewhat more thickly at the Holme. In later years the Grimsby population has overflowed into it, and claimed a large tract for the Borough.

The boundary of the old Parish on this side must not be confounded with the course of the Old Haven, but may be roughly indicated after following Humber Street as embracing Holme Hill and extending in an irregular line to, and including, the South-East corner of the Grimsby Park.

The new district of Weelsby, whose development synchronised with that of New Clee, was included with it and the village of Clee in civic affairs, under the Clee-with-Weelsby Local Board, until it was merged with the Borough under the Grimsby Extension Act of 1889.

The land here belongs Lord Heneage, of Hainton, and the vicinity is mostly remarkable for its freedom from public-houses. The first Board School in the Grimsby District was erected at Holme Hill, in 1876, to accommodate 1,100 children. Since that date two other schools have been required in this part of the town, the Welholme Road School having been built in 1891, and the Eleanor Street Girls' School two years later.

{108} The construction of the Royal Dock at Grimsby led to the establishment of a Roman Catholic Mission. Holme Hill is now the site of a large brick Church, Schools, and a Presbytery.

CHAPTER 4. Beaconthorpe and New Cleethorpes.

BEACONTHORPE took its name from the White Beacon which for thirty years stood on the shore at the point at which the cliff sloping away to the North became merged in the sand of the beach, opposite the end of what is now called "Poplar Road." *

* The inhabitants had a right of way down to the Shore at this point, which has been lost, it is to be feared, through neglect.

The Beacon owed its erection, in 1834, to the Admiralty. It was constructed of massive timbers—a central upright with supports surmounted by a cage of hexagonal outline—and cost £300. As a navigation mark it was the more prominent from the fact that the land beyond it was at this period open common. In 1844 the township of Beaconthorpe comprised four houses, of which one, adjacent to the beacon, was occupied by a French gentleman of the name of Nestor. During the twenty years that followed the township grew apace, and in 1858 became the site of a coastguard station, houses being built for six men and a chief boatman not far from the beacon. The Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire

Railway Company (now the Great Central Railway) constructed a single line of Railway from Grimsby Docks, with a station, and opened the branch for traffic in April, 1863. The Cleethorpes Gas Company constructed their Gas-works in the township during the following twelve months.

It was in the year 1864 that the White Beacon was taken down. A local paper commenting upon the circumstance at the time remarked:—"Archeologists a thousand years hence, may, perhaps, ponder over the origin of the name (Beaconthorpe) which will have to be elucidated by notes or tradition. What a change will have come over the world during that period if we go on improving at our present fast pace! Why, even Cleethorpes, a thousand years hence, may have emerged from dirt and obscurity wearing fortune's chaplet."

For some time there existed a battery of cannon upon the foreshore, near Suggitt's Lane, served by the Grimsby detachment of the First Lincolnshire Artillery Volunteers, but it was abandoned a few years ago when advances in the method of wholesale murder had made the grim black-paled enclosure unnecessary.

Beaconthorpe is now a moderately populated district, and since it lies between Cleethorpes and its youngest child, New Cleethorpes, it must inevitably advance. It forms a part of the Middle Ward of the Cleethorpes Urban District. The Primitive Methodists have a small Chapel here upon the Grimsby Road, erected some twelve years ago.

New Cleethorpes is the somewhat unmeaning name by which the rapidly developing district connecting Cleethorpes with New Clee has been baptised. Not that it is more than one thorpe. The enquirer of future years must remember that {111} Cleethorpes itself has now lost its plural connotation, and is regarded in the light of a town unit rather than a villagery.

It may be well to notice that at the present time New Cleethorpes, constituting the North Ward of the Cleethorpes-with-Thrunscoe Urban District, lies with the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Road for its spinal column, with ribs of new streets towards the Humber and towards Clee. The Anglicans have erected a parochial institute, and dedicated it to St. Aidan, and the Wesleyans have built a substantial School-Chapel. Educationally the district is served by a School Board of seven members. The School is in Lovett Street.

The Lords of the Manor—the Sidney Sussex College—in 1890 vested twelve acres of ground in the District Council for a public recreation ground.

A HISTORY OF
CLEE AND THE THORPES
OF CLEE;

Being a Brief Account of the Townships of

CLEE, HOOLE, ITTERBY, THRUNSCOE,
WEELSBY, HOLM, CLEETHORPES,
NEW CLEE, BEACONTHORPE,
AND NEW CLEETHORPES;

Comprising the Parish of Clee in the County of Lincoln.

BY

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CLEETHORPES, now much frequented as a watering place, formerly only a fishing hamlet, has, since the opening of the branch of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railway from Great Grimsby, made rapid progress, having upwards of sixty machines for the use of bathers: a pier, 1,200 feet long, was erected in 1872, at a cost of £10,000: there are a number of lodging houses: oyster beds are numerous here, Cleethorpe oysters being much sought for in many parts of the kingdom. A substantial sea-wall, three-quarters of a mile in length and 20 feet in height (which is six feet above the level of high tide), has been erected by the directors of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln Railway Co.; the total width of the wall is 65 feet, of which 40 feet are devoted in the inner side to a carriage drive, divided from an asphalted promenade by a dwarf wall of Portland cement concrete. Cleethorpes township, with Thrunscoc, was constituted a Local Board of Health district in 1874, but under the provisions of the "Local Government Act, 1894" (56 and 57 Vic. c. 73), an Urban District Council has been established. The church of St. Peter, a chapel of ease to the parish church of Clee, was erected in 1866—7, at a cost of £3,300, and is a building of stone in the Decorated style, consisting of chancel, nave; aisle, south porch and an embattled western tower containing a clock and one bell, and has sittings for about 500 persons. The Wesleyan chapel, erected in 1885 at a cost of £6,000, is an edifice of red brick, and will seat 900; the Primitive Methodist chapel, Mill road, also of red brick, was erected in 1876, at a cost of £4,425, and will seat about 800; there is also a small Primitive Methodist mission chapel at Beaconthorpe. A cemetery of 8 acres, between Clee and Cleethorpes, was formed for Clee parish in 1877, at a cost of £3,700, and is under the control of a joint committee; a portion of the cemetery is reserved for Catholics. The Alexandra Hall, erected in 1895 by a company, at a cost of £4,500, is used for theatrical performances, and will hold 620 people. The Odd Fellows' Hall, built in 1853, and restored in 1891, will hold 160 persons. The Dolphin, Cliff and Victoria hotels front the sea, with commanding views of the Humber, German Ocean and the opposite Yorkshire coast. Cleethorpes is a coast-guard station, and the Government have purchased a number of houses in Neptune street for the men. The Earl of Yarborough P.C. is lord of the manor of Cleethorpes, and the principal landowners are Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge; Alexander William Thorold Grant-Thorold esq. and Lord Heneage P.C. The soil is a rich loam; subsoil, clay. The area of Clee township is 2,401 acres of land and 154 of foreshore; rateable value, £49,538; and the population in 1891 was 18,775. The area of Cleethorpes township is 1,195 acres of land and 1,043 of foreshore; rateable value of Cleethorpes and Thrunscoc, £26,814; the population in 1891 was 4,306, and is now (1896) about 8,500. A portion of Weelsby was included in the borough of Grimsby, April 6th, 1891, and the remainder was in 1896 formed into a civil parish.