

Electricity

Early Days

The very first use of the 'electric light' in Malton was in 1893 at the Farmers' Manure Company's Works. The dynamo was capable of supplying 70 pumps at 16 candlepower and savings of £60 - £70 per annum in gas were anticipated. It must have been a curious

sight for unsuspecting inhabitants as the electrician demonstrated its capabilities by throwing a searchlight across the town. [1] The installation was destroyed in a fire later that same year [2]

Electric Lighting In The Streets

After a somewhat lengthy and tedious decision-making process, electricity finally lit the Malton streets in 1905. Around the end of 1903 the Northern Counties Electricity Supply Company (NCESC) 'secured the yard and the warehouses recently occupied by Mr Black, seedsman, by the Derwent side, as the site for their generating station and manufactory.' [3]

In November 1899 it was put to a meeting of the Malton Urban District Council (MUDC) to consider whether an agreement should be given to the Northern Counties Electric Supply Committee (NCESC) to apply for permission to the Board of Trade to establish works for supplying electricity to the urban district of Malton. The company guaranteed to supply lighting for the town within two years at a cost of 30% less than was currently paid for gas. The scheme would initially cost £10,000 but it would cost £40,000 to complete it. [4]

In December that year an agreement was signed with the above company to permit them to establish electricity works at Malton. [5] However, the company covenanted to light a 'compulsory area', which didn't include all of the streets that were lit by gas at that time. It seems that a dispute was already underway. MUDC had appealed to the NCESC to extend the 'compulsory' lighting to cover the present area lit by gas and to reduce the maximum charge per unit for electricity. A letter received from the agents for NCESC, Messrs. Wyatt

& Co, Westminster, stated that they declined to accede to this. At the monthly meeting of the MUDC in January 1900 it was decided to ask the Board of Trade, by resolution to enforce their request. [6] It seems that the scheme did not progress but it was a discussion point in the September monthly meeting later that year 1900, where Mr Fairweather, engineer of NCESC attended. After full discussion it was agreed to go ahead with the scheme provided the following terms were agreed to in writing: The same area to be lit as was at present with any reasonable extensions requested by the council to be added as desired. The generator and any other related works to be erected in Norton. The cost of lighting the streets was to be 30% less than gas and must not be more than 7d a unit to private customers. They must also cover the cost of the Council's solicitor fees and they should have the option of purchasing the works after 12 years. [7]

In February 1901 NCESC were advertising shares in the company at a 'one chance' offer of £1 each. [8] Some of the smaller towns had already had electricity stations set up but presumably to progress they required further investment. The article listed the towns where agreements had been made to provide electricity, including Malton, on 27 Dec 1899 and Norton, on 15 Oct 1900. It is unclear why but little progress was made until 1905 regarding installation of electricity in the town as it seems negotiations were still underway regarding

the areas to be lit. The gas company submitted their usual tender for the contract in this year but were instructed that they were only required to light part of the town as NCESC were going to provide lighting for some of the streets. An argument ensued with MUDC that resulted in the Gas Company withdrawing their tender on 4th July. [9] MUDC held several meetings in this month in an attempt to finally resolve the lighting issue leading to both gas and electric companies submitting new tenders for the whole of the town. The original tender from the Gas Company was £404.10s - £42.8s.6d less than the previous year but the renewed tender was £353.15s while the tender from NCESC was £385. While one may think that the decision would be in favour of the Gas Company winning the contract, some members of MUDC felt that they had probably been over charged for their gas supply the previous seven years by £899.9s.1d in total. In addition, they saw electricity as the way forward for the future so it seems that an agreement was finally reached for NCESC to provide lighting for the whole town. [10]

By September 1905 the electric street lighting was well under way and it was expected that it would be completed by the end of the month. [11] At the same time, Norton Urban District Council (NUDC), not wanting to be left behind, was undergoing discussions with NCESC regarding laying cables for

Electricity in the Houses

The above refers to the electric lighting of the streets. Many people were very happy with gas and it was a long time until electricity began to be generally used in the home. Just when the first house had electric lighting is not known. A house

lighting their town. A meeting was held with Mr Fairweather on 29 July 1905 to discuss the issue, where he explained that the generating station and machinery at Malton had been provided at a great outlay.** If the committee could agree to it Norton could be supplied from there and the cable could commence being laid. It seem that Initially, Norton had expected to have their own generating station but as Mr Fairweather pointed out, the cost saved in this way would mean further improvements could be made at the Malton station that would benefit both towns. After the war NCESC was taken over by Newcastle Upon Tyne Electric Supply Company. Clement Wilson Fairweather became General Manager of NCESC in 1900. ** I thought the land purchased for the electric plant in 1903 was on the Norton side

When the street lighting contract came up for renewal in 1908 the Gas Company originally declined to tender. Agreement was reached in July 1908 with the NCESC whereby for £400 per annum 34 morning lamps would be lit from one hour after sunset till one hour before sunrise from 16th July till 31st May; and, 147 night lamps would be lit from one hour after sunset till 11pm from 1st August till 16th May. The proposal to not light the lamps each month for the nights when there was a "full moon" was not implemented [13]

'Fern Croft', no. 25 The Mount was being auctioned in May 1922, and was advertised as being 'lighted by gas.' [14] A Mr. Vasey was advertising in the Malton Messenger in 1923 services for the installation of electric light [15].

References

- [1] Yorkshire Gazette, 25 February 1893
- [2] Yorkshire Herald, 16 December 1893 [3] Hull Daily Mail, 5 January 1904
- [4] Yorkshire Herald, 8 November 1899
- [5] Yorkshire Evening Post, 28 December 1899
- [6] Yorkshire Herald, 2 February 1900
- [7] Yorkshire Herald, 26 September 1900
- [8] The Berwickshire News 12 February 1901

- [9] Malton Gazette 22 July 1905
- [10] Malton Gazette 29 July 1905
- [11] Malton Gazette 2 Sept 1905
- [12] Malton Gazette 29 July 1905
- [13] Yorkshire Gazette, 18 July 1908
- [14] Malton Messenger, 6 May 1922
- [15] Malton Messenger, 10 March 1923