

## Bugbrooke Gas Works.

Mr Goode, was a very elderly retired man and ex soldier, who served in the army in India and South Africa before the First World War. He used to come and work part time painting ladders, along with chopping and bundling fire lighters for Mr Harold Ward during the mid to late 1950s. He was a very amusing man with his tales from soldiering in so many different parts of the world.

He used to love walking along the country lanes leading to and from Bugbrooke. One could always tell where he had been, for he had a habit of pulling small boughs down and over from the hedges on the roadside, and fixing one of his empty cigarette packets to the thin end of one of its branches, thus for all to see. At times when fellow workmen used to play me up about being called up to do my national service, as to how and what they would do to sort me out, and this from over half of them who had never served, of those that had he would say take no notice bwoy, if any of them had been at the battle of Omdurman, they would know what real fighting was all about, as they were outnumbered twenty to one, he said that if it was not for Maxim Guns he would not be here to tell the tale. While I was serving out in the Far East he used to write regularly to us, asking to my wellbeing.

We had gone to Elliot's wharf to deliver a ladder from the workshop, when he mentioned all about Heyford Road gas works as it was known, that supplied gas to Bugbrooke and Heyford, for at the time to our right going up the trackway from the Heyford Road to the Old Wharf, stood the tall gasometer surrounded with large Poplar trees. He said at one time a dozen men were employed on shift work producing coal gas, and barges came alongside its wharf to unload coal that was fed into its ovens to produce the gas.

One by product, coke, would be loaded up onto barges and taken to Heyford Furnaces for use in smelting iron. These Furnaces were between the canal and railway in Heyford, the offices and building for the furnaces were adjacent to the canal bridge and were later turned into dwellings and a farm. The other by product was tar water, this tar and water was pumped from a sump within the gas works by a horse driven pump, whereby the horse walked in circles pulling on a long pole that was attached to the gearing that drove the said pump, of what pumped the fluid and tar into a small tank or container that ran on wheels that ran on angle iron rails.

The horse that normally pulled the barge back and forth would pull this small container on wheels up the small gradient to the barge, draining its contents into containers within the barge, before being taken down to Northampton Gas Works to be treated. It was said that some of this tar and water, was taken to some treatment works within London.

During the 1960s when the country turned to use North Sea Gas. The gas works and gasometer were made redundant, as Northampton Gas Works with its large storage gasometers were used to store natural gas instead of Coal Gas.



Ice breaking barge going past the gasometer between Bugbrooke and Heyford.(with permission of the Bugbrooke History Group)

Stanley Joseph Clark.