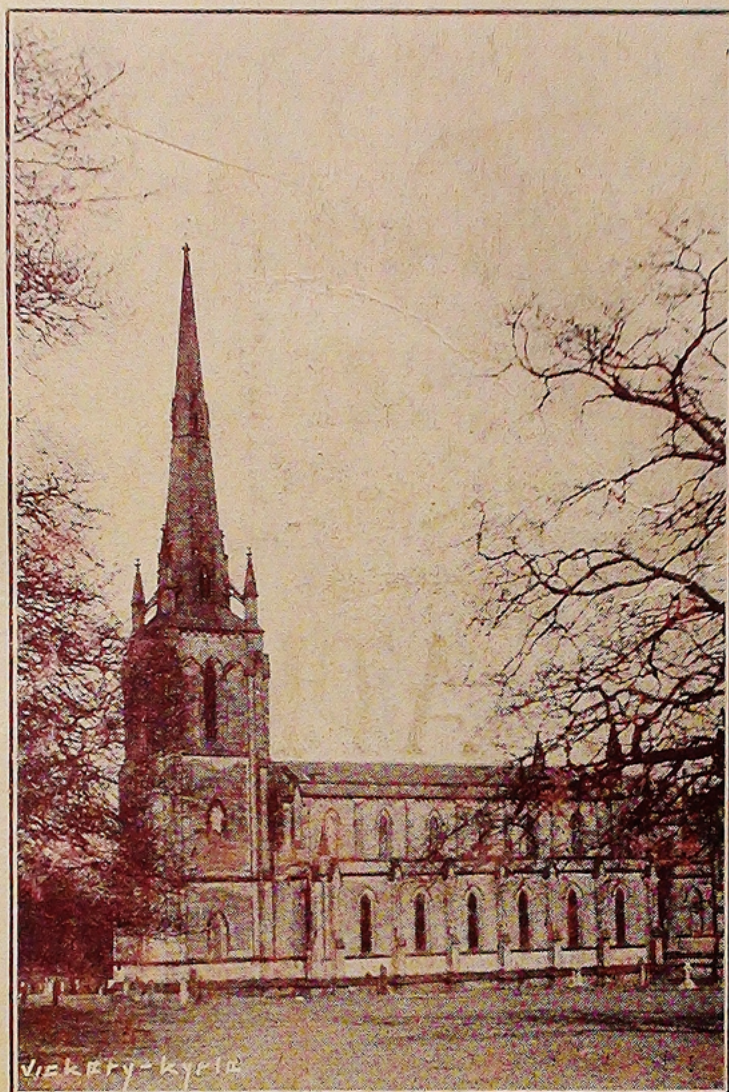




OULTON *with*
WOODLESFORD

OFFICIAL GUIDE.



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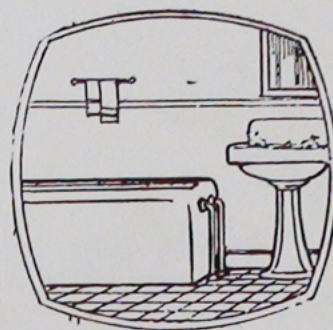
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Oulton with Woodlesford.

Situation.

The township of Oulton-cum-Woodlesford consists of the two pleasant villages, Oulton and Woodlesford, which, each a separate ecclesiastical parish, are situated in the civil parish of Rothwell. Both are placed amidst historical surroundings. Woodlesford is on an eminence overlooking Templenewsam, the birthplace of Lord Darnley, and until recently the home of Lord Irwin, now Viceroy of India, and close to Swillington Hall, noted in bygone days for its aristocratic gatherings; Oulton lies in a hollow near Methley Hall, where the Duke of Orleans was held prisoner after the battle of Agincourt, and now the seat of Lord Mexborough. Popular opinion is that Oulton is one of the prettiest villages to be found around the city of Leeds; and this is not to be wondered at when, between Easter and Whitsuntide, the myriad blossoms of its numerous pear, plum, and apple trees present a spectacle that must ever remain indelibly fixed in the minds of those who are fortunate to find themselves in the village at this time of the year.

Accessibility.

Oulton village is 5 miles from both Leeds and Wakefield, 8 from Pontefract, 4 from Castleford, and about half-a-mile from Woodlesford station, on the L.M.S. main line (Midland Division) from London to Leeds. Between Leeds and Woodlesford a good service of local trains is maintained, enabling business men to travel between the two places in about twelve minutes. Leeds is, of course, one of the most important railway centres in the country, and is the starting point for through trains running to Scotland, all parts of Wales, Norfolk, and as far south as Bournemouth and Torquay. Indeed, it has been said that there is no railway centre in the world from which so many places can be reached with so few changes of carriage. Supplementing the train services are 'buses running regularly throughout the day between Leeds, Woodlesford and Castleford; and for the transport of goods there is the Aire and Calder canal, giving direct access to the ports of Goole and Hull.

History of Oulton and Woodlesford.

The pleasant twin villages of Oulton with Woodlesford are not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but were no doubt then included in the old parish of Rothwell.

Although said to be without ancient history, it is recorded that the retreating Mercians crowded over the Aire at Woodlesford after their rout by the East Anglians under Oswy in 655.

Woodlesford, formerly known as Windlesford, Woodford and Wigglesworth, appears to have derived its name from this

crossing over the river at Swillington Bridge, *i.e.*, Ford in a dell by the wood (old Roman ford).

Oltone or Oulton, meaning old town, or out town, a township out of the Parish of Rothwell.

It has been suggested that the name formerly signified the home of owls, which even at the present time may be heard hooting in the stillness of the night.

The ensuing details have been gleaned from Batty's "History of Rothwell" and conversations with old inhabitants.

At the census in 1801 there was a population of 1,223, comprising 608 females and 615 males. In 1841 there were 362 inhabited houses, 13 uninhabited and 9 in process of building, and the population had increased to 1,789, 919 females and 870 males.

The men appear to have been mainly engaged in agricultural pursuits and in stone quarrying, and many more farmsteads existed even 70 years ago than to-day.

There were extensive quarries along Aberford Road, behind the Midland Hotel and beyond the Stockings Lane End; and there were also deep quarries at the corner of Woodlesford Lane and Hobb Lane, re-named Midland Street, and the portion of New Woodlesford, known as The Gardens.

One of the most interesting buildings in Oulton is the old Post and Panel House, a half-timbered structure, locally known as the Nookin, at the commencement of Rothwell Lane. At the outside, on a cross-beam of a gable, is very legibly carved the name, "EDRVS TAILOR, T.I.T. 1611, APR. 10." On a glass pane in the lower room is: "Edrus Taylor et Isabella Uxor, eius hoc facerunt, r-b-u-s 1611." Painted on a lozenge pane of glass is a shield with part of a pointed cross. Near by in Rothwell Lane there is a Quaker burying ground, etc., called the Dam Close.

Richard Bentley, the great Greek scholar, was born at Oulton, on January 27th, 1661. He subsequently became one of the most classical scholars in England, was Chaplain to the Bishop of Worcester, and afterwards Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He died on July 14th, 1742, aged 81; the house in which he was born and lived—a quaint residence known as Vine Cottage—is situated in the yard adjoining the Wesleyan Chapel.

At Woodlesford, standing back from the road, nearly opposite Stockings Lane, is a plastered house with a small stone let in: "I.C. (John Collins) 1636."

Ancient windmills for grinding corn existed, one on Holmsleigh, and another at the commencement of Rothwell Lane; and coal mining was carried on in the 14th century.

The stone trade was, and still is an important branch of trade in the Oulton district. Large quantities of stone from Messrs. G. Armitage and Sons' quarries are sent by water, rail



NORTH LANE.

Photo: A. D. Collier

and road to all parts of the country. Formerly it was not possible for the stone-getters to penetrate very deep down into the strata, so they obtained only a top brown or grey stone, because they had not then the appliances to reach great depths, or to check the water. It is thought that William Owen was one of the first to erect a pump worked with steam power, thus enabling the getters to reach a much lower depth for the blue stone much prized for its fine grain.

There is an old abandoned quarry in Quarry Hill, Oulton, now occupied by Mr. James Dickenson, where the top soil is overgrown with grass and containing fruit trees.

Thirty years ago the site of the Council Yard and houses was an enclosed field called the Three Cornered Piece. Here the local feasts and fairs were held.

Less than 50 years ago the Woodlesford pottery, now dismantled, was in a flourishing state and found employment for many of the old inhabitants. Miss Owen, of Claremont Street, Oulton, has a mug made there 100 years ago, and stamped with the name of her father, Thomas Owen.

Old Roads and Public Houses.

Before railways were formed, and prior to the time of the macadam roads, traffic had to be conveyed upon bye and trunk roads. Inns were then of real importance, and were generally situated at prominent angles of the road, and at convenient distances. The buildings on Holmsleigh at the corner of Pick-pocket Lane were formerly the public house known as Needless Inn. In connection with one of these cottages is a remarkable dungeon cellar, that is one cellar under another; it was approached by a covered aperture in the floor of the

higher one and is excavated out of the rock. It is supposed to have been made for smuggling purposes by some of the watermen of olden days, and it is termed Welles End.

At Woodlesford the old Pack Horse Road crossed the ford at Swillington Bridge, came along Pottery Lane up the village over Holmsleigh, behind the Needless Inn, down Pickpocket Lane, and across behind John-o'-Gaunts, crossing the Leeds Road to Rothwell Haigh, and forward to Morley and Manchester by way of Middleton Wood. Also at Woodlesford was a way called Meg Lane, down by Applegarth House (now called the Grange), by the Boot and Shoe Inn, to an old stone wharfe, portions of which can still be traced near the paper mill. Applegarth House itself is a very old building with the letters R.B. 1756 carved on the stone windowsill; it has quaint arched cellars and thick walls. Recently Mr. Whittaker discovered a large secret cellar situated under the quadrangle, of which previous occupiers appear to have been unaware. There are also indications of an old road, probably an old Roman thoroughfare, from Stanley, bounding the West side of the Grange property, and leading down to the river beyond the paper mill opposite Leventhorpe.

Dame Schools.

Before the present improved system of infant instruction was adopted, various schools were held in cottages by elderly ladies, both widows and spinsters, who taught boys and girls the simple rudiments of learning, and the arts of sewing, knitting and patching. There was one kept by Ann Walker, and another by Mattie Brooke, in Oulton, where some of the older inhabitants received their first lessons. Miss Batty also kept a school at Woodlesford, in a house at the bottom of Church Street, and a Miss Wade at Claremont Street, New Woodlesford.

Not so very long ago stray horses, sheep, pigs and cattle were impounded or locked up by a Pindar, to whom the owner had to pay a fee for the release of his animals. The pinfold at Oulton is situated behind Mr. Barker's shop, near the school yard. The late sexton of Oulton Church, Mr. John Poole, was for many years the pindar of Oulton. At Woodlesford the pinfold is in Station Lane, near the house occupied by Mr. Strafford.

Old Trades.

Cloth weaving at Oulton, Geo. Taylor, 1662; linen weaving at Oulton, 1730, Robert Hey, who was also Parish Clerk and Clerk at Rothwell Church for 42 years; Stuff weaving at Oulton; plaids and petticoating in colours, 1768, John Beever; Breeches maker at Oulton, 1752, John Dobson; Tanner and currier at Oulton, 1730, Thos. Taylor; Sieve maker for home-brewed ale and for flint riddling at Potteries at Oulton, 1713, Jonothan Flockton; Paper-making, 1756-1765, John Proctor and Isaac



THE AIRE AND CALDER CANAL,
WOODLESFORD.

Photo: A. D. Collier

Walton, at Woodlesford (up to a decade ago this trade was carried on by the late Mr. J. C. Oddie); Dyer at Oulton, 1767, William Bentley; Stone quarrying, 1779, John Armitage, of Oulton, Quarry mason; Oulton, 1717, William Owen, Miller, Oulton, 1772; George Scott, Blacksmith at Oulton, 1714; William Burwell, Tailor, Oulton; 1715, Anthony Moore, Tailor, Oulton; 1718, John Crowther. About these dates, and later, a good many "Taylers" (tailors) seem to have been located in Oulton, evidently in close connection with the clothing business.

The Parish Church and Other Places of Worship.

The Parish Church of Oulton—dedicated to St. John the Evangelist—was built in 1827 at a cost of £12,000, bequeathed for the purpose in that year by John Blaydes, Esq. It consists of a chancel, nave, aisles, and a tower, surmounted by a spire, containing one bell. The windows, although stained, exhibit no outstanding features, and are of purely local interest. The register dates from the year of consecration. The living is in the form of a perpetual curacy with a residence, in the gift of Major H. W. Calverly, J.P., and is now held by the Rev. W. E. Worsley, M.C. It may be mentioned that there is a fund, derived from investments, expended by the Ripon Diocesan Finance Board in repairing and improving the edifice.

The Parish Church of Woodlesford—dedicated to All Saints—was erected by subscription in 1870 at a cost of £4,500, exclusive of the site, which was given by Henry Bentley, Esq. A building of stone in the Gothic style of architecture, it consists of a chancel, nave, transept, and a tower, surmounted by a lofty spire, containing six bells. The stained glass windows include two memorial windows to Mr. and Mrs. Bentley, formerly of the parish.



THE WAR MEMORIAL.

Photo: A. D. Collier



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Parties Catered For.

Other religious denominations are represented in Oulton by Wesleyan and Methodist chapels; and in Woodlesford by a Wesleyan chapel.

Both Parish Churches contain beautiful War Memorials, commemorating the gallant men who laid down their lives in the Great War 1914-1918, in addition to the Memorial erected on land generously given by Major Calverly and unveiled in September, 1926.

Charities, Hospitals. etc.

The township is fortunate in the possession of two charities. Joshua Crabtree's charity provides the widows and orphans of Rothwell and Oulton with a sum of money on St. Thomas's Day and five pounds to Sunday Schools; and Webster's charity, amounting to £220, derived from £8,000 Consols, provides a yearly sum, according to trade, for apprentices, and for distribution to poor persons. This last-mentioned charity applies to both villages.

Several medical practitioners are resident in the locality, and cases necessitating hospital treatment are attended to at the Leeds General Infirmary, one of the foremost institutions in the country.

Municipal Matters.

For the purposes of local government and ecclesiastical administration, the township of Oulton-cum-Woodlesford is situated in the Rothwell division of the Riding, lower division of Skyrack Wapentake, Wakefield union, Lower Agbrigg petty sessional division and Wakefield county court district, the rural deanery of Whitkirk, archdeaconry of Leeds and the diocese of Ripon.

The interests of its 4,000 inhabitants are vested in a local Parish Council, and with Templenewsam in the Hunslet Rural District Council and the West Riding County Council. The Parish Council has always been noted for its foresight and enterprise, and is only prevented from increasing its activities by the rigid limitations imposed upon small governing bodies. Among other things, it has to its credit the promotion of many allotments.

An abundant supply of pure water is maintained by the Leeds Corporation; gas, for both domestic and commercial purposes by the Rothwell Gas Light Co.; and electricity is distributed to the whole township by the Yorkshire Electric Power Co. Not a little of the healthfulness of the district may be attributed to the excellent joint sewage scheme with the township of Rothwell, which has been in operation for some years. The outfall works for both areas are in Oulton, and are to be enlarged in the near future.

Full postal facilities are to be found in both villages; and in Oulton there are pillar boxes situated at Royds Green and Upper Royds Green.

No market is held in the township; and the local tradespeople observe Early Closing either on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The area of the parish is 11,086 acres; and the present rateable value £29,000.

In concluding this chapter it may be remarked that the township already contains 150 Council-built houses; and that a further 50 are in course of erection.

Educational Facilities.

The village of Oulton has a non-provided school under the jurisdiction of the Parish Church, and Woodlesford a modern Council School under a local authority, known as the Oulton District Education Committee. The whole education system is controlled by the West Riding County Council Education Authority. Those who wish to pursue higher studies find the secondary schools of Leeds and Normanton easily accessible by both bus and train. Leeds, it may be remarked, boasts a fine University, where prominence is given in the curriculum to technical subjects.

Recreative Facilities.

As a residential district, one of the most attractive features of the township is the facilities it offers for recreation and social intercourse. There are, for instance, a well-supported Sports and Recreation Club, which, through a Miners' Welfare Scheme, practically controls all the Football, Cricket, Tennis and Bowling of the district; a popular Working Men's Club; and a Village Institute, that, in comparison to the size of the township, can be accounted one of the finest of its kind in the West Riding of Yorkshire. This contains reading, smoking and billiard rooms, and a large concert hall that is in frequent use throughout the winter months. In Woodlesford there is a cinema with a reputation for the presentation of high-class programmes.

As mentioned previously, Leeds is within only a few minutes' run by train, and here are two theatres where the latest London successes are staged nightly, three variety theatres giving twice nightly entertainments, and among numerous cinemas, one that is acknowledged to be among the finest in Europe.

Round About.

The village of Oulton has not a few attractions for Leeds folk who come hither by train and 'bus in the summer months; and to the rambler offers many delightful rural walks around the sister villages of Methley, Swillington, Rothwell and Stanley, and the towns of Tadeaster, Wakefield, Castleford and Pontefract.

Electricity.

Electricity is widely available in Oulton-with-Woodlesford & District, thanks to the active labours of the Yorkshire Electric Power Company and Electrical Distribution of Yorkshire, Ltd. Together, these two companies cover the whole field of electricity supply for power and lighting. The close association in which they work enables them to produce and distribute electrical energy with the greatest economy for all purposes.

This year will be remembered in electrical history as marking the opening of the Power Company's large generating station at Ferrybridge. Large users of power would do well to consider the advantages to be gained from a degree of reliability which is independent of the breakdown of machinery and which is unaffected by adverse industrial conditions or disturbances.

The Distribution Company, catering for domestic and small power supplies, has an extensive network of mains in many parts of the West Riding, where it is rapidly furthering the use of electricity in the home. It is thus, only, that we can hope to mitigate the evils arising out of our smoke-polluted atmosphere. It is hardly realised to what extent soot and noxious fumes add to our discomfort and the cost of living. Large sums of money spent annually in cleaning of all kinds and in combating illness might be greatly reduced if the smoke problem were solved. Domestic chimneys are largely responsible for this pall of smoke and there is no doubt that a wider use of electricity in place of raw coal in our homes would help appreciably to keep the beauties of our county unspoiled.

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