



THOMAS WILLIAM HUSTLER,
A.M.I MUN. E

THOMAS WILLIAM HUSTLER, F.I.C.E., M.I.MUN.E. 1911 TO 1993

By Diane Potter

Introduction by Diane Potter

The following reminiscences were presented to the editor by Diane Potter daughter of Thomas Hustler. Here she gives a short introduction to the life of her father.

Thomas William Hustler was born on 29th March 1911 in Victoria Promenade, Northampton. He was the middle child of three, with an older and younger sister. At the age of four, following the death of his father, the family moved to The Hind Hotel in

Market Harborough, where his mother became licensee. (Mrs. Gertrude Hustler ran the off licence in Nelson Street in later years.)

Tom was educated at Market Harborough Grammar School, and upon leaving school was apprenticed to Mr. H.G. Coales, Surveyor to the Market Harborough Urban District Council. He lived in Market Harborough for the whole of his life, firstly in Victoria Avenue and then in Ashfield Road, where he remained until he died. He was employed by the Urban District Council for the whole of his career, with the exception of war duty, becoming Engineer and Surveyor in 1958. He died on 2nd November, 1993, at the age of 82.



DIANE POTTER
(THOMAS HUSTLER'S
DAUGHTER)



TOM HUSTLER AT HIS DESK AT BROOKLANDS

The following is taken from the draft of a talk that he gave to the Civic Society shortly after he retired, in 1975. I have copied it as it was written with no amendments.

The talk given by TW Hustler to Market Harborough Civic Society in 1975

Whatever I say tonight concerning my job as Surveyor to the Urban District Council refers to the Council as it was prior to March 31st 1974, the day on which the old Local Authority "died" and on which my retirement from office commenced, after 48 years spent in Local Government service (apart from 4 and a half years war service.)

When one enters on a career in Local Government there is a philosophy that one has to accept. It is perhaps best expressed in the well-known words "one can please some of the people some of the time but one cannot please all of the people all of the time." A local authority can only try to do the greatest good for the greatest number at the cheapest possible cost.

It is always difficult to carry out some of the onerous and controversial duties imposed on a Local Authority and as the years go by more and more duties are being foisted onto the shoulders of the Local Councillors by Central Government. However I do not wish to dwell upon this subject except to add that most Local Government Officers consider that all rules, regulations or controls are evil but some are necessary evils.

I can say that this is the first occasion on which I shall have addressed an assembly on my experience as a Local Government Officer. Whether or not you will feel honoured I will leave up to you. This may well arise from the trait in my character that prefers the background rather than the foreground.

Early Career

To start at the beginning, I have to confess that I am not quite a Harborian, as I was born in Northampton, although I have lived in Market Harborough for 59 years.

On leaving the Grammar School at the age of 15 (the school leaving age was raised during the last year of my school life) I was articled to the late Mr. H.G Coales, who was at that time Surveyor to the Urban Council, and I started at the Council Offices on April 22nd 1926. My wages were nil for the three years of my Indenture and I owed a lot to my widowed mother for keeping me during those first three years. There were no grants for students in those days.

The Beginnings of Harborough Urban District Council

It is perhaps an interesting fact that during the 79 years of the Urban Council's existence it had only three Surveyors, Mr. H.G Coales, from 1896 to 1931, Mr. J.G.Barlow from 1931 to 1958, and myself from 1958 to 1974. To go further, perhaps I can claim a little uniqueness as I was articled to the first surveyor, served under the second and became the third. I should add here that Mr. Coales' service to Market Harborough began earlier than 1896 as he held the post of Surveyor to the Market Harborough Great and Little Bowden Local Board from 1888 to 1896. This Local Board succeeded the Parish Vestries in 1880 after many years of wrangling between the three Parishes, Harborough and Great and Little Bowden. Mr. W.B.Bragg published the annals of the 15 year life of the Local Board and many copies of these annals are still in existence. One may still be seen at the local Library I believe.

You may have seen some of the waterworks marker posts alongside the roads of this town with the letters MHGLBWW round the edge. This stood for Market Harborough Great and Little Bowden Water Works, which, along with the first Town sewers, were the principle engineering works accomplished by the Local Board. The Headmaster of the Grammar School until 1921 was Mr. Hammond, and he told his pupils that the letters stood for "Mr. Hammonds Good Little Boys Want Whipping."

The Office and Staff of the Council

The office of the Urban Council in 1926, and indeed up until 1950, was the Building next to the Swimming Baths in Northampton Road: (at one time the Little Bowden Police Station) which now serves as a Store and Mess room for the Council workmen.

The Staff in the offices in 1926 totalled 10, a little different from the numbers in the offices when I retired last March (1974)

The number of workmen was probably no more than 20 in those days and I do remember when I helped Mr. Barlow with the wages that the rate of pay was one shilling per hour for a 48 hour week, a gross wage of 48 shillings per week. Refuse collectors were paid an extra 1 penny per hour or two pounds 12 shillings per week. The transport was horses and carts and the horses were used in emergency to draw the fire engine.

Schools

There were six schools in Harborough and the Bowdens: The Grammar School in Burnmill Road, The British School in Fairfield Road, now only partly used as an Infants School, The Church of England School in Coventry Road now used as a Catholic School, Little Bowden School in Scotland Road, Great Bowden School and the Catholic School in Fairfield Road.

In addition to these public schools there was a private school called the Collegiate School situated in upper High Street in the building now occupied by Fisher and Co. The school moved to the Elms and is now known as Brooke House School.

The Swimming Baths

The Swimming Bath was open during the summer only and there was no filtration plant. The bath was drained twice a week and refilled with clean Town water, 60,000 gallons of it. If I remember correctly it was 6 pence per session on Monday and Thursday (when the clean water was in) 4 pence on Tuesday and Friday and two pence on Wednesday and Saturday. The Baths being open during the summer months only created some difficulty as the staff, man and wife, had to be found other work during the winter and this wasn't easy,

The Market

There was no covered Stall Market and wooden trestles, table tops and tarpaulin sheets were erected in the Square at 6 o'clock on a Tuesday morning and taken away again at night and stored in a building in the Commons, which is now the car park.

The Cattle Market was roughly the same as it is today except that there were no sale rings or weighbridges and the cattle pens were different in layout.

The Football Club

The Market Harborough Town Football Club played in the field next to the Cattle Market which is now the site of the new Slaughter House. The team played in the Birmingham Combination and were I believe champions of that league on one occasion. Names like Alec McClure, Buck Vials, Bunsen Berry, Lobit Almey, Parry Panter, Freakley, Varnham brothers, Hannah, Nutty Sargent and many others come to mind.

Gas, Water and Council Houses

The waterworks was sourced from six wells in the North Kilworth area that produced 200,000 gallons of water every day of the year. There was one reservoir (now abandoned) at the top of Burnmill Road and that held half a million gallons of water in case of breakdown. The Gas Works was owned by the Council and the water used in the production of gas was pumped to the market and used for swilling down the cattle and sheep pens.

The Council had built 92 Council houses in the Broadway, The Headlands and Hillside Road in the early 1920's and some of these cost £1,040 each to build – quite expensive compared with the Welland Park Road houses built in 1934 to 1936 at £64 per pair. The Council now owns about 1000 houses out of the 5,500 houses in the town.

There was no Welland Park Road, no Welland Park, no Roman Way or anything beyond the Headlands in the 1920s. There was no Southern estate, no Arden Way, no Ridgeway. There were two public Recreation Grounds – Little Bowden and Great Bowden, and the field Clover Close was rented from the Town Estate Feoffees as a New Harborough Recreation Ground.

Delivery of goods and parcels between the Town and the surrounding villages was carried out by several Carriers who offered a daily service (horse drawn), from the three public houses with stable yards, Cherry Tree, Talbot and Hind. Names like Dunkley, Aldwinckle, French and Beale come to my mind.



This was roughly, the town when I started my life in Local Government in 1926. It was fairly leisurely in those days, very little fast traffic on the roads, no car parking problems, no rush and bustle that we see in the Town today. Market Day was an event and on Tuesday most of the children received their pocket money of threepence or sixpence to spend on sweets from the stalls in the market. There was a silent Cinema in the Square and a new one 'The Oriental' being built in St. Mary's Road.

Council Career

The first major work with which I was concerned was when the Council purchased the whole of the open fields between Northampton Road and Coventry Road/Lubenham Hill and between the Rugby Railway Line and the River Welland. In 1930 the first part of the development of the land was undertaken and that was the construction of Welland Park Road, which in those days was considered to be a Town Centre by-pass road. All the excavation work for drains and sewers which were put in to take the discharge from the houses we knew were to follow, was by hand. The road was made of a layer of boiler ashes mainly obtained locally and a nine inch thickness of lump stone pitching (granite or slag) all hand pitched. The only machine on the job was a steam roller, apart from the vehicles delivering the stone and ashes. One can imagine the labour force needed for a job like this compared with the relatively few men but many machines employed today on similar work. The road construction included the building of the bridge over the River Welland.



TOM HUSTLER IN HIS OFFICE JUST BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT

marchers from Jarrow being housed overnight at the Workhouse, now St. Luke's, on their way to Downing Street to petition the Prime Minister and the Government.

In 1934 Walcot Road was built and this is constructed of concrete slabs cast on the site and I think that anyone who drives a car along Walcot Road will have noticed how the slabs have curled to give you a seesaw ride over the surface. 40 houses and 12 bungalows were built along Walcot Road during the next year or so.

Also, in 1934, Welland Park was built under Mr. Barlow's guidance. This work was undertaken as an Unemployment Relief Scheme and built by employing local unemployed men to do the work. It was mainly the conversion of several open fields into the landscaped area as we know it today. The Buildings in the park were erected by a local firm of builders, Messrs. G. Jarman and Sons.

Refuse Disposal

In 1934 a Refuse Destructor was built on a site in Rockingham Road, the site now being used as a temporary dump for householders in the town to take their garden refuse and other rubbish for disposal. Before the Destructor was built house refuse was tipped at the back of what is now Plowman's Nursery. The refuse destructor burnt the whole of the town's refuse until 1956 when it was no longer able to cope with the growth of town and waste matter and a return to open tipping at the Sewage Disposal Works in Sutton Road was resorted to. By 1970 this 12 acres of land had been almost completely covered with refuse and an agreement was entered into with the Desborough Urban Council for a joint use of their tip in an old ironstone working.

In 1936 Sun Yard was pulled down and Roman Way was constructed leading from Church Square to the Broadway. The Sun Inn stood between Burgess Furniture shop and Bells the ironmongers and had an archway which led to a yard which contained many small dwelling houses in the Yard itself and in Buzzards Place and Gibbons Place. Nicholls blacksmiths shop and works was also there and I remember Perkins cobblers shop on the corner. This shop was later occupied by York, also as a cobbler.

The construction of Roman Way was quite difficult as I remember finding a seam of running sand whilst digging for the foul sewers. It also allowed Doddridge Road to be linked through so as to relieve Kings Road of some through traffic, and in 1938 Sharman Goward's old house Ashfield was split into two and Ashfield Road was built with the 10 new houses alongside it.

Also in 1938 the stall market was removed from the Square and the back of the Old Grammar School and housed in a new building in Northampton Road which we all know as the Covered Market. This building was erected for £5,000 which would barely lay the floor today.

1939 to 1946 saw little in the way of development of the Town itself although a great deal happened. Market Harborough received its share of women and children evacuated from London on the declaration of war and all the local factories were turned in one way or another to war work or housing bombed-out factories on war work from other towns. I was not personally concerned with the town's life during this period as I was engaged on the building and extension of airfields for Fighter Command and spent four and a half years in suburban London at Command Headquarters on Stanmore. Fortunately no V1 or V2 had my name on it, although I was very close to many incidents, but that is another tale.

During these first 13 years of my time with the Urban Council and in addition to the developments that I have referred to, the other day-to-day services operated by the Council were going along smoothly, for instance the sewage disposal works in Sutton Road. Here the whole of the discharge from the town's sewers was received into two large sedimentation tanks and the sludge separated from the liquor. The sludge was dried on drying beds and then burnt. This left a very fine red ash which was extremely good as a fertiliser. The liquor was irrigated over 120 acres of land and collected 4' 6" below the surface of the land and discharged into the River Welland. This system served satisfactorily until after the war, when the population explosion began to take place. I can recall one manager of the sewage disposal works who collected all the false teeth which were caught on the screens and lined them round the windowsills of the buildings. Before the war it was easy to forecast fluctuations in the sewage flow as Monday was an almost universal washday and rainwater was used as detergents were not developed to any great extent. Normally a sewage discharge from a town



NEW DUSTCART, TOM HUSTLER IS IN THE CAB WITH GAS MASK



runs roughly parallel to its water consumption and an influx of rainwater on washdays meant adjustment of the works to cope. Nowadays of course with washing machines and detergents there is no washday as such but there is the increasing problem of detergents at sewage works.

I think that of all the Council's duties and undertakings that gave me, and I feel sure all local government Engineers, the greatest satisfaction is the work of Water Supply. I feel that I could talk for hours on my experiences in this direction, days and weeks tramping over fields, months of exploring by boreholes and levels ganging of springs until a decision is reached to sink a well in a certain spot hoping that it will give a continuous supply, until the final day when the well is put into commission and the water flows. It is about the only time when a feeling of accomplishment glows within the Engineer's heart. Today it is much easier as the water engineer simply floods a large area of land and makes a reservoir. Perhaps if I try to describe the sinking of a well at the Harborough Works it may interest you. Most of the wells are circular in shape and 8' in diameter. Whether the sides are brickwork or precast concrete tubes does not alter the system. The first part is the cutting ring which is a special casting circular in shape with a sharp edge at the bottom and a flat top on which the bricks can be built or the concrete tubes placed. This is set in position and digging commences inside the ring. As digging proceeds the ring falls and bricks are built on it or the first concrete tube placed. So it proceeds with digging taking place inside the well whilst more bricks or tubes are being placed at ground level as the well sinks into the ground. When water level is reached a pump is lowered into the well to keep the water level down whilst work proceeds until finally the water bearing strata is dug through and impervious strata reached in our case blue clay. Weep holes are left in the sides below water level to allow the well to replenish itself. Two floors are then built in the well, one just above, two or three feet above, top water level and one at ground level with an iron ladder between the two floors for access purposes. There are many types of pump in use but the most popular one today is the submersible pump which works below water level and is driven by an electric motor at ground level, but I have happy memories of the old three stage reciprocating pumps driven by belt drive from an old gas oil engine.

Here the talk ends and below the text were additional notes which were never fully written out. Let us hope that Diane Potter can find them and one day we can publish the full story. (Editor)