

A Brief History of Middleton St George from 1800

Extracts from:

Middleton St George - Windows on the Evolution of a Tees Valley Parish

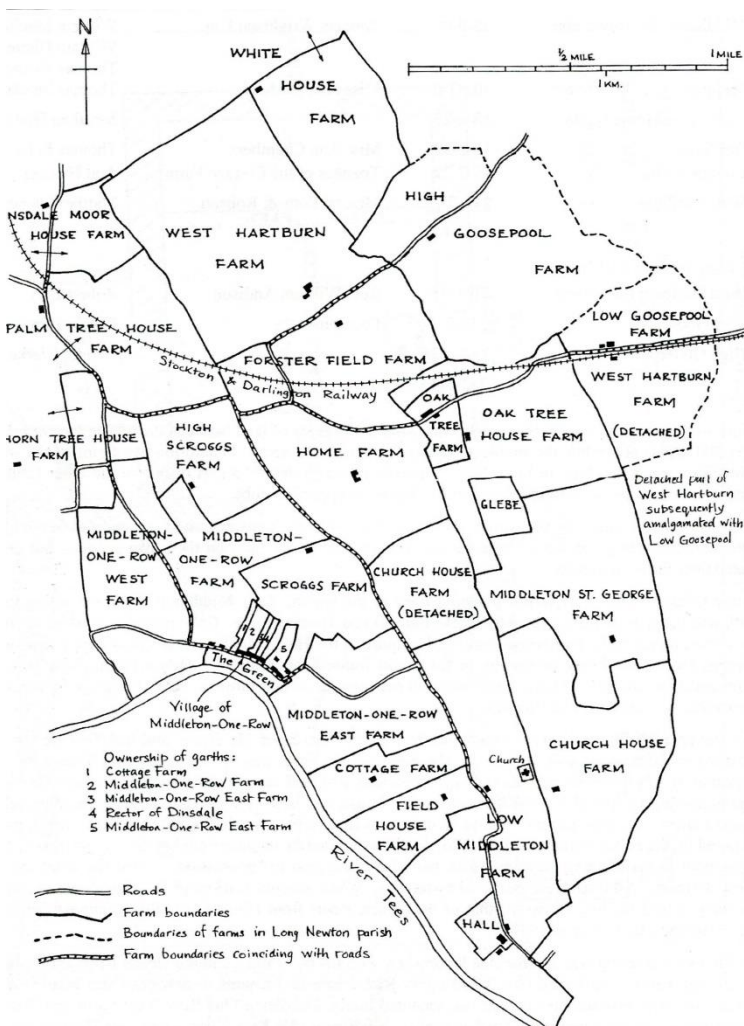
by Alan Pallister (ISBN 978-1-870268-28-8)

1800-1880 Spa and Railway Bring Changes

The nineteenth century was to see great changes for Middleton St George, including a re-shaping within the parish and the creation of a new village. By 1800 the first of the influences for change, the spa, was already beginning to have effects arising from its growing popularity, but otherwise the parish remained devoted to agriculture, as it always had been. The Napoleonic Wars gave farming a short-term boost as a sea blockage made home grain production of enhanced importance.

The Pemberton lordship of the manor just survived into the nineteenth century, having lasted only two generations. William Pemberton, who had inherited the title of lord of the manor from his Killinghall cousin, died in 1778. His son and heir, another William, died in 1801, leaving the estate to his mother's two sisters, Elizabeth and Sally Cocks of Plymouth Dock.

At this time there were 19 farms in the parish, with some 2,000 acres of land between them. In terms of land ownership, it was in the hands of nine individuals or groupings. These owners did not necessarily farm on their own account, but generally leased their farms to tenants. Squire Cocks, with his six farms, owned a third of the parish.



The farms of Middleton St George
in 1837.

Dinsdale Spa. In 1789, William Henry Lambton, looking at the possibility of extending the Durham coalfield, was test boring on the north bank of the Tees about half a mile west of Middleton One Row. No coal was found, however, a sulphurous spring was released which was the beginning of Dinsdale Spa. In the early decades of the nineteenth century the spa flourished. With the increasing patronage of the spa, the demand for accommodation also increased, providing a great stimulus to the hitherto sleepy village of Middleton One Row. In 1829 a large hotel was built adjacent to the spa by Lord Durham.


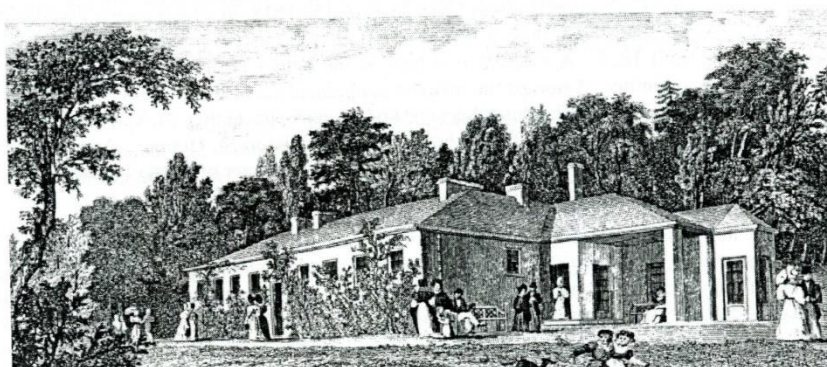
DINSDALE SPA HOTEL.		
		
Terms.		
Board, <i>per Week</i>	£	15 0
Wine, in a <i>Private Room</i>	2	5 6
Lodging Rooms from 10s. 6d. to 14s. <i>per Week</i>		
Double Bedded Rooms from 14s. to 20s. <i>per Week</i>		
Private Sitting Rooms from 14s. to 25s. <i>per Week</i>		
Stairs in Sitting and Bed Rooms, <i>per Week</i>	0	3 0
Waiter, 3s. Chamber Maid, 2s. 6d. Boots, 1s. <i>per Week</i>		
Servants Board and Ale, <i>per day</i>	0	3 0
SOUPS EVERY DAY.		
Charges for Bathing.		
Vapour Baths.....	0	2 6 each
Warm Baths.....	0	2 6 do
Cold Baths.....	0	1 0 do
Shower Baths.....	0	1 0 do
for Drinking the Water.		
Grown-up Persons, <i>per Week</i>	0	1 0 do
Children, under fifteen years of age.....	0	0 6 do
Day Visitors.....	0	0 6 do
N.B. Persons will not be charged for drinking the Water during the time they shall use the warm Baths twice a Week. Towels and Slippers will be provided by the person attending the Spa, and no charge will be made for the use of them or attendance.		

Fig.23 Tariff for the Dinsdale Spa Hotel 1835



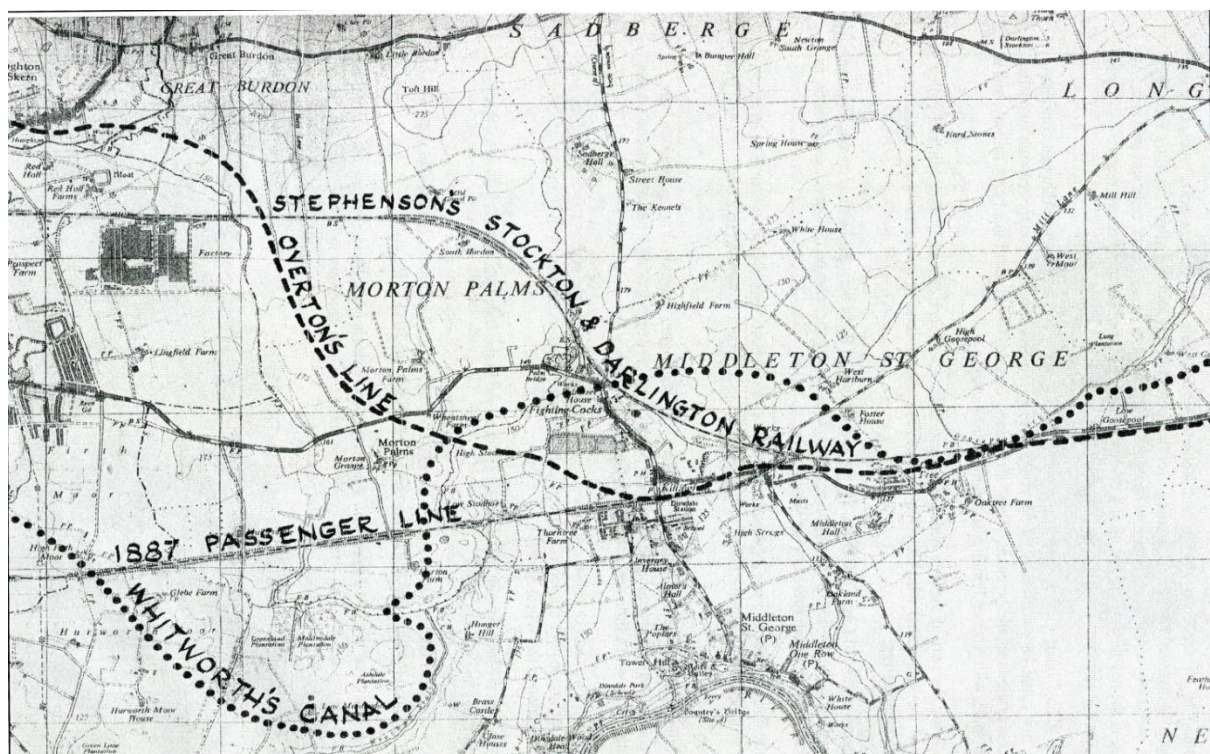
The Bath House of the Dinsdale Spa about 1835.

Despite the attractions of the spa, the viability of the huge hotel was always questionable, and it only lasted a few years before being closed as uneconomic, leaving the hostleries and boarding houses of Middleton One Row to cater for the visitors. The estate, including the spa, changed hands in 1844 with a sale to Mr H G Surtees, whose family had been the medieval owners, for £40,000.

Railway. The second great stimulus to the parish was the coming of the railway. Middleton St George had the distinction of being one of the places on the Stockton to Darlington Railway, the first railway constructed with parliamentary authority to carry passengers, and the first to use steam locomotives.

The opening of the railway in 1825 was the culmination of many years of planning and the investigation of alternative schemes. The primary objective was to link the Auckland coalfields with the main centres of demand and distribution between the collieries and the coast. As early as 1767 a canal was proposed, but failed to materialize due a lack of financial backing. It was 1810 before advocates of a railway link, led by George Overton, gained the initiative. The name “Stockton and Darlington Railway” was first used in 1818, in which year it was decided to apply for an act of parliament to authorize its construction. Legislative problems followed and it was not passed until 1821.

Having approached Edward Pease, who came to be known as “The Father of the Railways”, George Stephenson was appointed Engineer for the project. Stephenson conducted surveys, including that of a previous route proposed by George Overton, before coming up with the shorter route with reduced building and maintenance costs as shown below.



Coal to the Coast – Proposed Routes by Water and Rail between Darlington and Stockton

Stephenson’s recommendations were accepted and he was instructed to go ahead with the work. The first rails were ceremonially laid on 13 May 1822 at St John’s Crossing at Stockton. The opening of the completed railway took place on Tuesday 27 September 1825. Vast crowds gathered to witness the inaugural run. There was only one closed carriage, the others being open trucks.

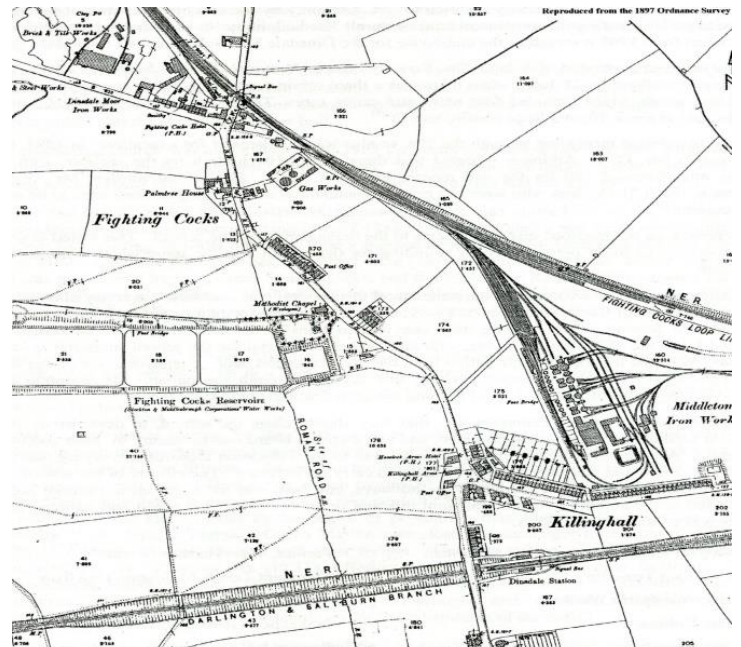
At the opening of the line the company possessed only one locomotive “Locomotion”. Two months later a further engine was added named “Hope”, and three more the following year. Initially, most of the traffic was horse-drawn. By 1839 between 20 and 50 coal trains per day were passing through Middleton. In little more than two decades further growth would be seen as the railway then provided the supply line for the setting up of the ironworks.

Under the beneficial influence of first the spa and then the railway the village grew and prospered.

The Iron Works. In 1851 the first blast furnaces were constructed in Middlesbrough using iron ore from the Eston Hills and in little more than a decade industry spread to Middleton St George. Land belonging to Palm Tree House Farm was purchased for the establishment of the Middleton Iron Works. The railway provided the means of bringing in the raw material for the process and the delivery of the pig-iron to processing works elsewhere or for export.

Unfortunately, not long after the creation of the works demand for pig-iron slumped and 2 of the 3 blast furnaces were idle. Recovery was slow until resurgence in the 1870s. Middlesbrough and Cleveland were at the forefront of the now booming iron business and no doubt Middleton Ironworks shared in this economic prosperity.

By 1881 the number of furnaces had been increased to four. While the location of the works was eminently suited to the availability of raw materials, there was no substantial source of labour in the immediate locality to meet the heavy demands of the enterprise. Consequently, labour had to be brought in, many from considerable distance which, in turn, required the provision of housing to meet this demand.



The Ironworks and other industrial enterprises at Killinghall and Fighting Cocks at the end of the 19th



Frank Richardson's Illustration of Middleton St George Ironworks

Habitation. Previously, the parish was little more than a small nucleus of houses, shops and hostelrys in Middleton One Row and a hamlet at Oak Tree. The industrial growth now required the provision of housing and accommodation to keep pace. The first houses were built in a long terrace on the southern end of the Ironworks site. Squire Cocks, the last lord of the manor, saw to it that the names of his ancient forbears were perpetuated in the industrial developments by calling these houses Killinghall Row. Pemberton Terrace, named after his more recent predecessors, and with the added luxury of front gardens, followed later. Other houses were built around The Square.

The railway had already been responsible for developments around the station at Fighting Cocks (named after the Inn of the same name). The additional impetus of the Ironworks and related activities resulted in more houses being constructed there and also along what is now Station Road. A little to the south, close to the junction of the

Middleton One Row and Neasham roads, Chapel Row (now Chapel Street), was begun later to be extended to its current length.

The emergence of this large new aggregation of housing changed within one decade the centre of gravity of the Parish. The previous nucleus of population, Middleton One Row, was still there but was now outweighed by that growing up around the Ironworks. The Ironworks centred housing was originally known collectively as Killinghall but with its continuing expansion the name was lost. The new village took the name of the parish, Middleton St George.

The census of 1861 registered a population of 294. In only 10 years this had risen to 918, a threefold increase. Of these 470 were now living in Killinghall and Fighting Cocks, where previously there had been very few.

Separated by a mile from the new Killinghall community, Middleton One Row remained a centre for visitors to the spa and the location of several services. Its population had grown from 130 in 1851 to 229 by 1871. The spa, together with the pleasant rural environment of One Row remained a considerable attraction with the ironworks out of sight not presenting too much of a distraction. The Devonport and Queen's Head accommodated most of the spa visitors which reached a peak of 150/month in Jun 1871.

Oak Tree, centred on the Inn of the same name, was another secondary nucleus of population. Its origins probably lie in the void in the agricultural living space after the disappearance of the village of West Hartburn. By the nineteenth century it had developed into a distinct hamlet and in 1871 had a population of 44 in its nine households.

Other Services. Even before the appearance of the ironworks, brickworks had been set up at Fighting Cocks. There was a strong demand for local bricks with the re-building of much of One Row and expansion of the spa. This was greatly enhanced with the introduction of the railway, ironworks and additional housing.

Smithy services were also in great demand supplemented by the industrial growth. John Dobbing was the Blacksmith at Fighting Cocks and employed two others. Closely allied to the blacksmith were joinery, wheelwright and cartwright services provided by Robert Pallister.

Squire Cocks had a corn grinding mill also at Fighting Cocks. The sails being destroyed in a storm it was then converted to engine power.

Water was important to both the ironworks and the workforce and a public supply was made available. The Stockton, Middlesbrough and Yarm Water Company was established in 1851 to serve the rapidly growing demands of Teesside industry. They extracted water from the Tees by Tees Cottage just outside Darlington and pumped it to a reservoir constructed at Middleton St George near Fighting Cocks. From there it was fed by gravity through a 15 inch pipe to Yarm, Stockton and Middlesbrough. It wasn't until 1853 that an additional pipe was provided to the village.



The Blacksmith's and Wheelwright's shops at Fighting Cocks (1880).

Gas works at Fighting Cocks did not appear until 1871.

The Church. In the new make-up of the parish, the inadequacy and inconvenience of St George's Church, standing in the fields of Low Middleton, had become even more pronounced. As early as 1851, the Wesleyan Methodists had had a chapel at the east end of Middleton One Row, but adherents of the established church still faced a cross-country ride or walk to St George's. With the need to cater for the new and more distant industrial population the long term solution was to build a new church. The site chosen was at the western end of Middleton One Row at the corner of Middleton Lane. Apart from the pleasant location overlooking the river, it was no doubt motivated by

being contiguous with the old-established nucleus of population and at the same time within a reasonable distance of the new community to the north. The new church, dedicated to St Laurence, was ready for use by the spring of 1871.



**St Laurence's Church at Middleton
One Row.
Built in 1871.**

Education. Another shortcoming in the newly shaped parish was education. Around the time the ironworks was founded there were 28 children recorded in school. The small school at One Row was clearly inadequate for the increasing population. Around this time the Education Act (1870) aimed at education for all. The response at Middleton St George was to establish a National School for children over the age of 6. A new school, sited on Chapel Row, was built and opened by mid 1871. By January 1872, 115 children were attending the school.

Cricket Club. The Middleton Ironworks Cricket Club was formed around this time. There was some difficulty in finding a ground but eventually one was obtained temporarily for the 1871 season in the field opposite Almora Hall. It stayed as home for the club for 80 years! The inaugural match was against One Row on 27 May 1871. Forthcoming matches were played against Darlington North Road, Stockton Second Eleven, Ormesby Ironworks and Sadberge.

1880-1914 Continued Development Through Troubled Times

Boosted by the ironworks the population continued to grow. By 1881 the census listed for Middleton St George parish 1081 people, a further 81 at Fighting Cocks and 22 at Goosepool, giving a total of 1184. Pemberton Terrace had been extended and more houses built in Chapel Row and the Killinghall area. Middleton One Row did not expand significantly, although some 15 large detached houses were built along Middleton Lane towards Killinghall by 1881. One of these, Felix House, was occupied by Dr Porteous, the General Practitioner for the area. The house was named after the ship on which Dr Porteous had sailed in the course of arctic exploration.

The expansion of the village alongside the ironworks was not long sustained. By the 1880s better quality ore from Spain and elsewhere were ousting the local high sulphur ore from Cleveland. This made it more economical to have blast furnaces near the coast. Also, the rapid increase in steel production contributed to the difficulties of the ironworks resulting in 1881 of all 4 furnaces being out of blast and in 1883 the works shut down. The parish was hard hit by the withdrawal of the main employer. Up to 1891 the population of the parish reduced to 871 from its peak of 1103 only 10 years earlier.

Some alleviation was provided by new industrial enterprises at Fighting Cocks. The Dinsdale Steel and Wire Works was established in 1882, and Dinsdale Moor Ironworks in 1887 taking over the blacksmiths hearths.

Away from the industrial village, Middleton One Row continued much as before, as did the farming community of the parish. The new larger houses on Middleton Lane were mainly the homes of prosperous families in commerce and industry.

The Darlington termination of the railway line was moved from North Road to the main line station at Bank Top. Moving the termination of the Saltburn line to Bank Top meant a new route eastwards out of Darlington which by-passed Fighting Cocks before joining the old line by the Oak Tree signal box. A new station was necessary for

Middleton St George. Fighting Cocks station was closed to passenger traffic on 30 June 1887 but remained open for coal and other freight on a loop line. The new station, given the name Dinsdale, opened the following day.



Dinsdale Station 1887

The new railway station was better situated than Fighting Cocks for visitors to the spa. However, by this time the spa's fortunes were severely failing. Despite a re-organization of the premises to include accommodation and using its appealing position to attract salmon fishermen and artists, it did not result in sustained revival. The age of the spa was over. The Bath House later served as the Clubhouse for Dinsdale Golf Club from 1908.

The Local Government Act of 1894 introduced Parish Councils and brought the village level of government into the pattern we have today. Coincidentally, marking the change from the old to the new, Squire Cocks, the last lord of the manor, died in November 1884. The inaugural meeting of the Middleton St George Parish Council was held in the Chapel Street School on 4 December 1894.

Around the turn of the century, the ironworks re-opened after some reconstruction by the new owners, Linthorpe Dinsdale Smelting Company. The furnaces were progressively brought back on line over a number of years. There were many complaints about the danger to health and the environment arising from these operations. The District Council had taken legal opinion and whilst operations did not contravene the law the Company was willing to consider suggestions from the Council. The Council were anxious to safeguard the interests of the community whilst not crippling the company in the legitimate conduct of their business. In 1904 it was proposed that the company embellish the centre of the village by the installation of a fountain combined with a gas lamp. The fountain idea was changed to a drinking trough and constructed the following year.



The Square around 1914

After the early mushroom growth of Killinghall to meet the needs of the ironworks, expansion still continued, but in a more piecemeal fashion.

Houses in Station Road were built in the 1880s at a cost of about £100 each and building extension at the Water View end of the row continued up to 1900. Middleton One Row continued as a separate village centre with its shops and post office, although the Queen's Head was now defunct having not been licensed since 1880. Around 1900, the former Spa Hotel, which had subsequently served as a mental hospital, became a school for retarded children. A new school building opened in 1911 providing modern premises for the growing population on the same site as today.

1914 onwards

As in all conflicts, the logistic problem during the Great War was to take away the young men for the front line while at the same time keeping the home front going efficiently to support the war effort. The generally adopted solution was to employ women into what were traditionally men's jobs. However, blast furnace work was hardly suitable for women. The war effort would require full production although at the beginning of 1915 60 men had enlisted in the forces. The war inevitably halted the normal development in the parish but there were changes associated with the conflict. The original Pemberton House, which had become the Ropner Convalescent Home, was put into service as

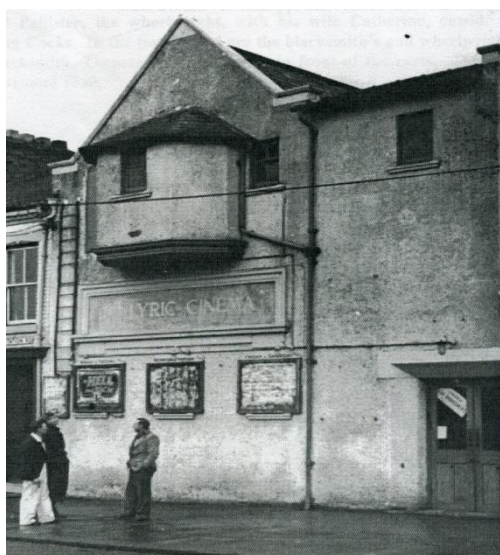
a Red Cross hospital for the war years and sometime afterwards. Forty men did not return from the war, having given their lives, as recorded on the war memorial at St Laurence's Church.

The coming of peace allowed the suspension of development of the parish to recommence, but problems of the ironworks' viability were a brake on progress. The position worsened when there was a 2 month shut-down due to a coal strike. Production continued in stuttering fashion until the works finally closed in 1931 as part of the wider depression afflicting the country. Agriculture continued to provide some employment, but only for a small portion of the population. Until the Second World War, horses remained the main source of motive power.

There was a post war demand for housing, and council houses were planned for Middleton St George in the early 1920s. The new houses were built and called Thorntree Gardens, as the estate was bought from Thorntree Farm.

Public works schemes were promoted to help provide employment. The road to Darlington was re-routed and filled to avoid the severe gradients near to Morton Palms. Another change in the road system was a new road to Long Newton, branching off the Yarm Road before it passed under the railway bridge.

In respect of public services, a gradual improvement in sanitary arrangements was made throughout the period. For those not on mains sewage the District Council operated a motorised clearing service.



The Lyric Cinema after closure.

An aftermath of the ironworks was a huge mountain of slag left over from the smelting process. There was a use for this in road making and 2 crushing plants were set up for this purpose.

A sign of the times was the opening of the Lyric Cinema, situated between Station Road and Water View. The owner, Mr Carter Crowe of Newcastle, converted what had been built in the 19th century as Raikes Hall.

The one single element of the World War 2 having the greatest impact on the area was undoubtedly the construction of the RAF Aerodrome. Construction was started in 1938 and continued through 1939/40. The slag heaps leftover from the ironworks contributed towards the base material of the runways. A large labour force was required which was a boost to local employment.

Operations commenced in Autumn 1940 although the station officially opened on 15 Jan 1941. Officially RAF Middleton St George, the station was known as Goosepool after its immediate location. The original aircraft based at the aerodrome were Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys, a twin-engined bomber. The Whitleys of 78 Squadron were soon joined by Handley Page Halifaxes of 76 Squadron. In May 1942 both squadrons were involved in the first "thousand bomber" raids. Both squadrons moved to RAF Linton-on-Ouse in September 1942. From October 1942 the Royal Canadian Air Force assumed operations from Goosepool and remained there for the rest of the war.

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) operated 3 squadrons from Goosepool, 419, 420 and 428 Squadrons. Initially equipped with Halifaxes and Wellingtons the first Avro Lancasters arrived in May 1943.

The presence of the aerodrome had a considerable effect on the parish, providing civilian jobs, contributing to the local economy and a significant social impact. All of the public houses in the area were well patronised, as was the Lyric Cinema, which was showing 3 programmes every week and dances were held in the Parochial Hall.



419 (Moose) Squadron

The high casualty rate in bombing operations fostered an attitude of living for the day but this hid the human drama behind operations. Many aircraft were lost and their crews perished. The best remembered feats of heroism were that of Pilot Officer William McMullen, who remained with his doomed aircraft to steer it away from Darlington who then died in the crash near to Lingfield Farm, and Pilot Officer Andrew Mynarski, a mid-upper gunner who gave his life attempting to rescue his trapped rear gunner when his aircraft was attacked and in flames over France.



**RCAF Memorial outside the St George Hotel
Previously the Officers' Mess**



**Pilot Officer
Andrew Mynarski VC**

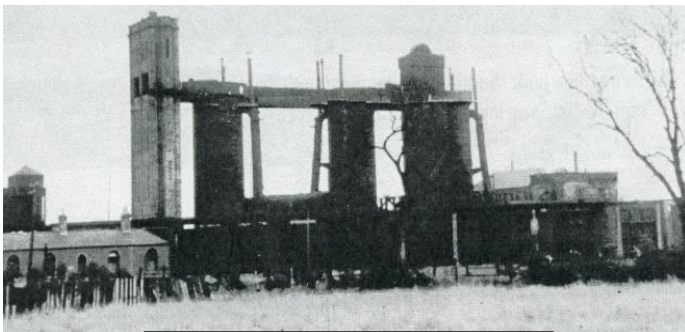
In the war years, local services met a large proportion of daily household needs. The village supported a CWS store and six other general dealers. There was also a butcher, a greengrocer, an outfitter and haberdasher, a newsagent and Post Office, and 2 shoemakers/cobblers. These were supplemented by mobile grocery, butchery, greengrocery and fish deliveries. Two fish and chip shops struggled to meet the nightly demand.

With the end of the war, life began to return to a more normal peace-time style. However, significant changes had occurred since the period of recession which had only ended in the run up to the conflict. Always of first importance was employment. The ironworks had gone for good. The blast furnaces, brick lift towers and ancillary buildings being demolished in 1947. However, the smaller Dinsdale Moor ironworks at Fighting Cocks continued as a major employer. When they closed in 1954, the adjacent scrap works of Arnott and Young continued to fill the void. Many found work in Darlington and Teesside helped by the good transport system of trains and buses. ICI at Billingham and a Royal Navy Supply Depot at Urray Nook, previously an aircraft scrap establishment during wartime, provided jobs for many Middleton men. Also, the aerodrome continued to provide civilian jobs after the departure of the

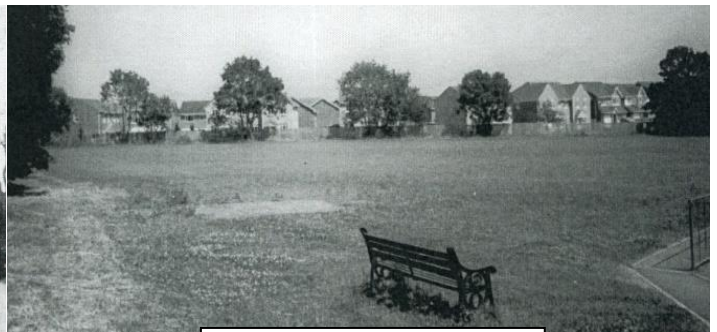
Canadian squadrons. During 1945-47 it served as a Fighter Command base operating Mosquitos and, for a further 10 years under Flying Training Command including jet-powered Meteors. From 1950 married quarters began to be built and a considerable number of service families joined the local population.

The need for new housing was met by extending Thorntree Gardens, the site of the new development previously being the Middleton St George Football Club. The Club, who were district championship winners in successive seasons, moved to a new site at Fighting Cocks. Only a few years later the village Cricket Team was also to lose its pitch off Middleton Lane, used temporarily for 80 years, as it had to make way for the building of St Anne's Gardens. The opportunity was taken to build a new pitch on waste ground behind Cocks Memorial Homes, and at the same time form the Cricket and Social Club. Still on the sporting front, Dinsdale Spa Golf Club gave up the clubhouse by the river that they inherited from the spa and moved to new modern premises on the road to Neasham.

Other developments took place in the area of The Square. A small field adjacent to the Cocks Memorial Homes was taken for the building of old peoples' bungalows. Next to these was the "Works Field", which had belonged to the ironworks. This was made into the community playing field. Across the road, further housing was built where Lamb's Garage had previously stood.



**The Ironworks at the time of
demolition 1947**



The same view in 2007

Changes in water supply arrangements resulted firstly in the construction of a pumping station adjacent to the reservoirs. When this and the reservoirs were no longer necessary, the area was converted into the Water Park for leisure activities and the pump house became a new village hall, filling a void which had existed since the demolition of the Parochial Hall for the building of houses on Chapel Street.

In the immediate post war years, economies impacted on Dinsdale Station. The number of porters was reduced and the once splendid gardens left to deteriorate. In the Beeching era the ticket office and associated premises were demolished, as were the waiting rooms and the station became unmanned with a minimum of facilities. The old station at Fighting Cocks, which had continued as a goods depot was finally closed on 9 March 1964.

There was, however, no halt in the expansion of the village. After a public inquiry in 1962, the building of St Anne's Gardens had bridged the remaining gap between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row. Further development off Church Lane contributed towards meeting the increasing house demand. The population increase was not accompanied by any expansion in village services which suffered a slow decline as mobility increased and the attractions of urban supermarkets prevailed.

Goosepool aerodrome, operated by Flying Training Command since 1956, saw Meteors and Vampires progress to Hunters and finally Javelins and Lightnings before assuming a separate function as a V-bomber base, principally Vulcans, strategically important during the Cold War period. By 1964 however, defence requirements had changed and the aerodrome closed that year. The departure of the RAF allowed a consortium of local authorities to commence work to turn it into a civil airport. Flights to Heathrow commenced from Teesside at the end of 1964.

Within the new airport many of the buildings were now surplus to requirements. The old HQ and administrative blocks became, from 1968-1977, a College of Further Education and an airfield fire training school. The previous Officers' Mess has become the St George Hotel. A number of accommodation blocks were developed into Trees Park, a residential home for the elderly. This has more recently become St George's Hospital for psychiatric care.

The end of the millennium saw the closing down of Durham Tube, the successor to Arnott and Young and the earlier iron and steel firms at Fighting Cocks, ending the long tradition of metal manufacturing in the area. It did allow further redevelopment for housing, now St George's Gate.

For a long time the idea of a by-pass for the village was considered. This eventually became a reality when the road between Darlington and Yarm was taken on a completely new line around the north of the village, removing the disturbance of the ever-increasing through traffic. The re-shaping of the road system came at the end of an eventful twentieth century, with the local scene constantly changing to adapt to national and global pressures and technical advances of the century. There is no sign of any lessening in the rate of change or any diminution of developments affecting the face of the village and the parish.

Despite the fact that employment in the village is the lowest it has ever been the village continues to grow. Globalisation, unrestrained use of private cars, public transport including rail links to London, an airport on the doorstep and the IT revolution have all combined to a situation where it is no longer necessary to live close to one's workplace.

It is often said that the established population finds it hard to integrate with newcomers and that incomers have little sense of identity. It is hoped that from this history it can be seen that it has not been the case at Middleton. The wide diversity of origins has not prevented the existence of a strong sense of community in the past and there is no reason why it should not continue in the challenging conditions of today.