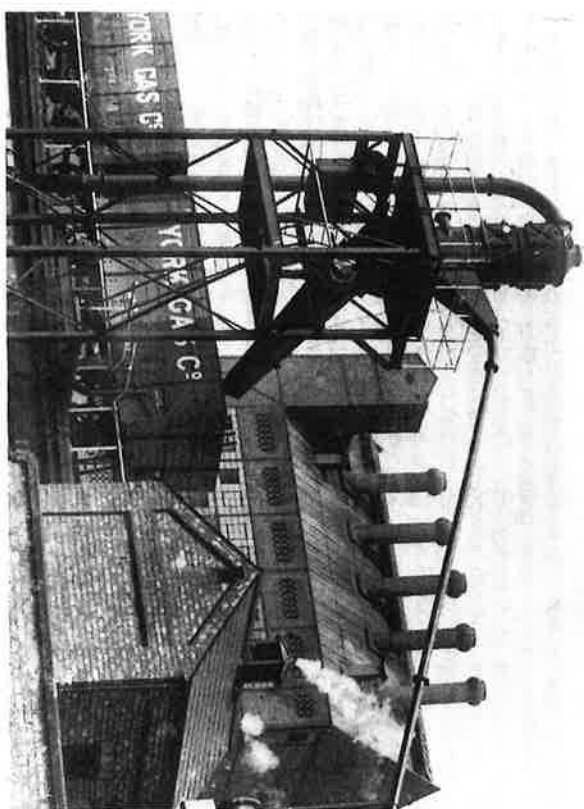
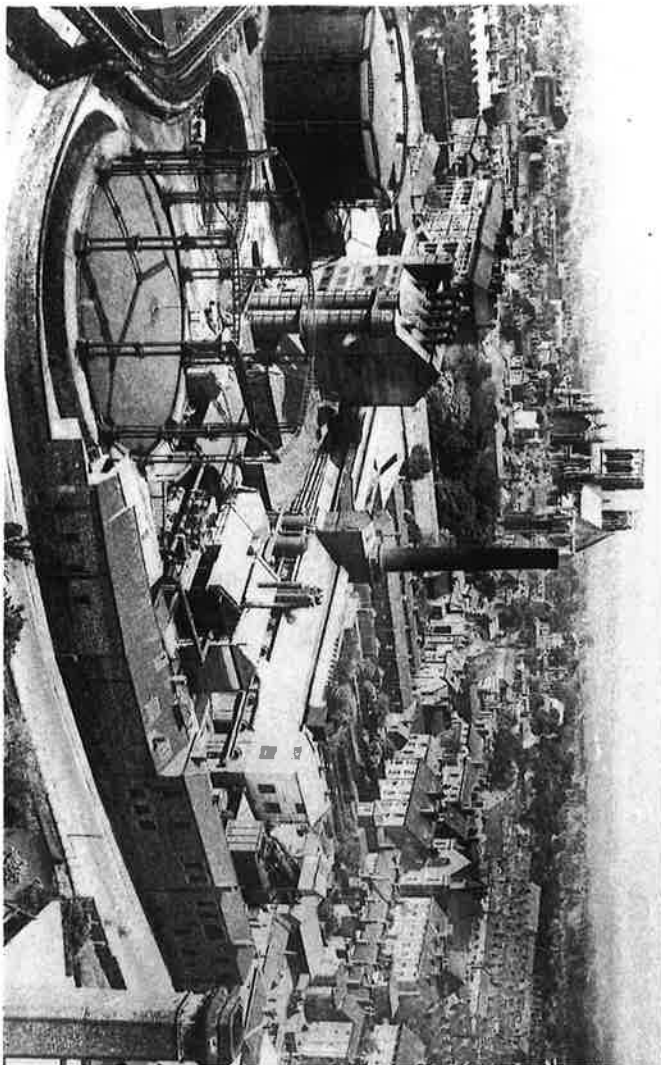


York Gasworks

The York Gas Light Company was formed on 13th September 1822 and received Royal Assent on 30th May 1823. On 18th July 1823 two acres of ground on the west bank of the River Foss, near Monk Bridge (grid reference SE 608524) were purchased and on 12th August Mr John Outthett was appointed to design and build the works which was in production by 22nd March 1824. The company had the backing of York Corporation and it provided all public lighting, together with supplies to around 250 private consumers. Competition appeared in the form of the York Union Gas Light Company from 17th May 1836. This was a joint stock or co-partnership company whose shareholders were to be consumers. A site adjoining the Foss in Hungate (SE 607517) was purchased in July 1836 and the company was in a position to supply gas from 1st October 1837. The two companies merged on 19th July 1844 to form the York United Gas Light Company, the name of which was shortened in 1912 to the York Gas Company.



York Gasworks. The left hand view shows the rail bridge from the New to the Old Works across the River Foss, whilst the extent of the Old Works can be seen in the lower view. Circa 1924. (British Gas)



The coal suction pump unloading coal from barges into private owner in about 1934. (British Gas)

After the amalgamation, both works were retained until a further 1½ acres o bought at the Monk Bridge site. This transaction was completed in 1847 and the l closed on 26th January 1850, the site being sold by auction to Henry Leatham and mill. The Retort House beam engine, twin Lancashire boilers and chimney were still early 1940s as part of Bellerby's sawmill. Considerable additions to the Monk Bri made in 1871 but the site was too small and so a further six acres on the Hewort the Foss, opposite the existing works, were purchased between 1879 and 1881. A works was begun in 1880 and completed by 1885, whereupon Monk Bridge was t 'Old Works' and Heworth Green the 'New Works'. The latter was built to the plans supervision of Mr Vitruvius Wyatt, Engineer to the London Gas Light and Coke Comf were connected by a bridge over the River Foss and could be worked separately required.

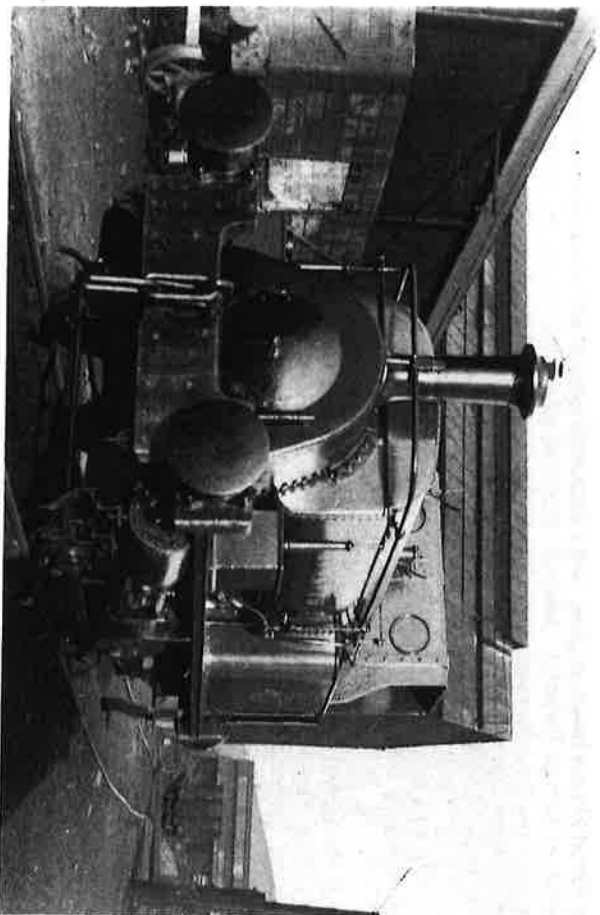
Prior to the arrival of the railways, coal was brought to York by boat. In 1839, th Midland Railway had built a coal landing stage on the west bank of the Ouse clos Lendal Bridge; the latter was erected in 1861. All coal for the gasworks either came the River Foss, or by cart from the railway goods station across the Ouse Brid considerable coal traffic through the town. When the land for the new gasworks wa connecting junction with the NER Foss Islands Branch was immediately installed an tons of coal movement annually was diverted from the streets. Traffic on the riv expand reaching its zenith in 1902-03, then declining as competition from motor th manifest itself. There was some respite with the installation of the Coal Suction Plant in 1934 when up to 25,000 tons a year returned to river transport. The railway took e and so, by agreement, water-borne coal was thereafter limited to not more than 2 annum. Railway and river traffic ceased when coal gas production was terminat supplies for the oil gas plant at the 'New Works' arriving by road.

Although it was a relatively small city, York was endowed with a very progressive The 1847 gasholder (No. 1) with a capacity of 240,000 cubic feet was the biggest

and one of the New Works holders (No.4, built in 1884) is still in existence. In 1929 a water-less (water not used to effect a gas tight seal) gasholder (No.6) of the Klönne patent was the first to be installed in a British gasworks. Built by Ashmore, Benson & Pease it was 201ft high with a capacity of 1,920,000 cubic feet of gas. Though bombarded rather dramatically in World War 2, it lasted until 1970 when it became obsolete with the advent of natural gas and was dismantled. The carburetted water gas plants were installed in 1899 and 1901, and in 1915-16 mechanical stoking and coke/coal handling plants were introduced. Continuous vertical retorts of the Glover-West system were introduced in 1923 (33in) and 1941 (40in) to supplement the Drakes horizontal retorts. A Special Gas plant was installed in 1940 to manufacture hydrogen for barrage balloons by the steam-iron process. Near the end of the War, this was modified and incorporated in the two big fully automatic carburetted water gas plants which were erected in October 1947.

The Corporation was responsible for the Ouse and Foss Navigation and in 1932 requested that more traffic should utilise the river. Barges transported all the tar produced by the works to Knottingley and occasionally coke and spent oxide were carried by barge to West Riding destinations. More regular traffic was forthcoming with the installation of the Coal Suction Plant, the first in a British gasworks. This could draw up the coal at a rate of 18 tons per hour out of the 95 ton barges and deposit it into the private owner rail wagons.

Although the plant was nationalised in 1949 when the assets of the York Gas Company were vested in the North Eastern Gas Board, the experimental work at the carburetted water gas plant continued. The use of Litter patent tray purifiers also enhanced the Gasworks' reputation as a progressive plant. Additionally, in the early 1950s, there was a plan to expand and develop the gasworks into a major producing site with some 20 sidings and the right of way for the gasworks locomotive over the whole of the Foss Islands line to Hambleton Street Sidings. This scheme had developed to the point where castings started to arrive on site before the City Corporation vetoed the plan, having decided it did not want York to become a major gas producing centre. Investment was then switched to Tingley, Bradford, to which York was connected by a 32 mile gas main.



KENNETH at York Gasworks.

(Courtesy B.D. Stoyel)

production and the site was cleared in 1960, to be later occupied by a Sainsbury development. Then in 1964 all the remaining manufacturing plant, including the 'Ne and petroleum distillate gas plant closed and by 1966 the site had become a storage centre.

The railway system and much of the plant was dismantled with the end production, though the bridge spanning the River Foss and the road was maintained. carried the gas main, the bridge structure being provided with an alarm to warn of height restriction. A most spectacular collision occurred during 1944 when a Uni detachment moving at night hit the bridge with the Sherman tank they were transpo gun barrel stuck between the sleepers! In 1970 York was converted to natural gas a girder bridge was replaced by a neat concrete structure spanning the Foss alone. the Foss Islands Branch was filled in and levelled.

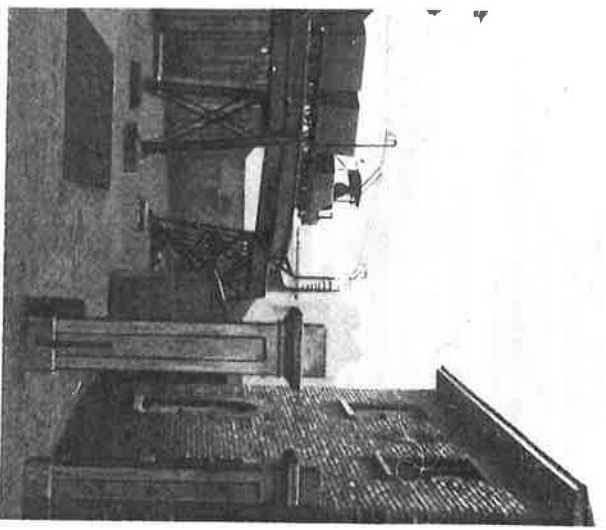
Information on the earliest locomotives at York Gasworks is limited but the first is OLD TOM, a 0-4-0 saddle tank locomotive with outside cylinders built by Rob maker's number 2396 of 1881. The Works also used a Peckett locomotive (make built in 1890) from the United Alkali Flint Castle Works. This was an example of Pe a 0-4-0 saddle tank with 10in x 14in cylinders. Dates of arrival and disposal are r

We do have more information on KENNETH and CENTENARY because they recent times. KENNETH was a 0-4-0 saddle tank locomotive built by Hudswell number 448) in 1895. It was renovated by the Darlington dealer, J.F. Wake Ltd (in in 1912 and came to York Gasworks in 1919. The last steam locomotive was a CENTENARY, a 0-4-0 saddle tank with outside cylinders, was built by W.G. Bagnall (2229) in 1924. KENNETH had originally been No. 1 but was changed to No. 2 after arrival. Rather surprisingly, KENNETH was considered to be the better locomotive CENTENARY. Both locomotives were serviced in a shed in the Old Works situated the coalhouse, although the limehouse was also used as a locomotive shed in latter CENTENARY's firebox failed and the locomotive was towed to Foss Islands yard by William Young & Stewart of Otley. The fact that the locomotives were fired with hastened the failure.

A 4-wheel Ruston & Hornsby diesel shunter, maker's number 338417 of 1 obtained in 1956 from the Central Electricity Generating Board's Drakelow Pow Burton on Trent. It was an example of the manufacturer's 88DS design. In the rar. Gasworks locomotives were under repair, a locomotive was borrowed from Row Ruston diesel moved to New Wortley, Leeds about August 1959. KENNETH was fir. limehouse by Thos W. Ward Ltd in 1963.

Locomotive livery was olive green, lined with red and yellow and with gold lettering done by Bellerbys, a local company. CENTENARY was fitted with cast nameplate KENNETH was painted on the locomotive and referred to the son of Mr H.E. E Manager and Secretary at the time. Locomotives worked on a 7.30am - 5pm shift, lighting up at 6.00am. Coal for gas making generally came from the local Yorkshir contracts and often twice as much coal was required in the winter as in the summer. could vary from 0 to 20 wagons with the occasional special train to build up stocks sidings, known to NER men as the 'Heworth Sidings', could take up to 25 wagons worked by hand signals, with catch points to protect the NER. Incoming branch train wagons in the sidings, whereupon the Gasworks locomotive collected and delivered they were needed. The catch points were held over by the fireman while the locoo ran up the bank and he then jumped on to the step of the last wagon (most being, shunting steps and handrails). Maximum load up the gradient to the works was two or three 10½ ton wagons, and the Gasworks 'lad' then had the job of counting them down the collieries from whence the wagons had come. Fire bricks, lime for the pul for the water softeners also arrived by rail, as did all the new mechanical equipment

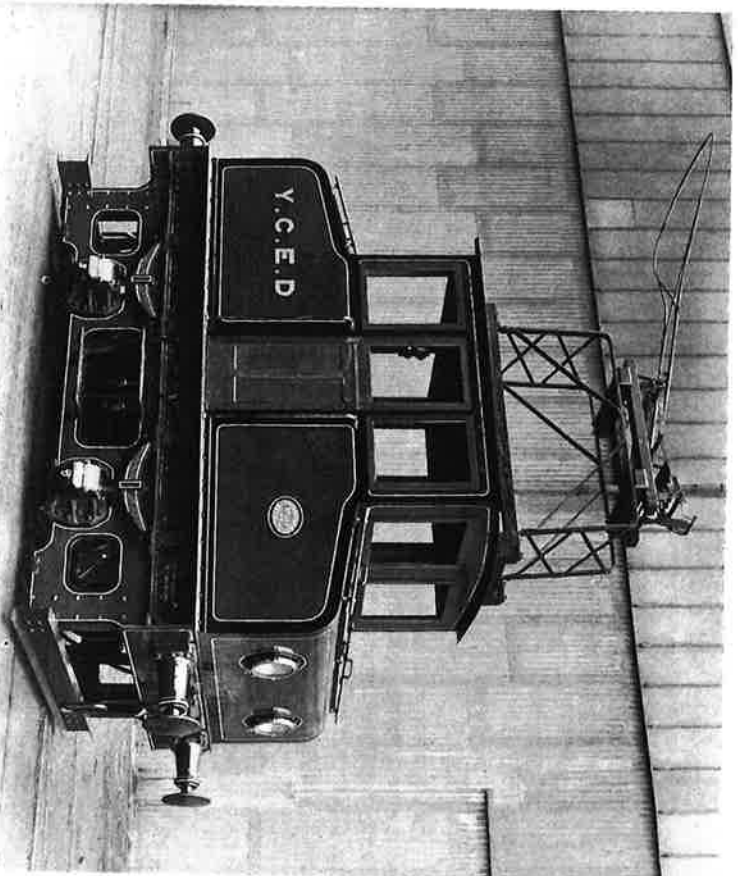
York Corporation Power Station and Depot



The entrance to the Old Works with the overhead electric tram locomotive and train. (British Gas)

is consisting of mainly empties and coke were taken into the Layerthorpe Sidings. The locomotive was positioned at the front of the wagons going down the bank. Chains attached to the front of the wagons could be pulled along from the adjacent sidings by barge was unloaded into private owner wagons, which were weighed on the platform then shunted as required. These were ex NER wooden coal wagons painted black, with 'York Gas Company' in white on the side, and comprised at least four 20 ton wagons in examples. There was also a travelling steam rail crane built by Smiths of Rodley and loading from stockpiles. The coal and coke handling plant in the Old Works consisted of a slip bucket conveyor, enabling a rail wagon to be emptied of coal and, without subsequently filled with coke.

Works, there was a remarkable elevated electric narrow gauge system, believed to have been built in 1915. It consisted of a 3in gauge with a tram locomotive built by Dick Kerr. This was installed about 1915 and the horizontal coke retort hoppers with the coke stockpiling yard. 'Heavy' coke from the retorts was discharged on to a drag bar conveyor, elevated to the screening plant, and on was diverted to the coke tram and taken up the yard where it was discharged. The coke wagons (capacity two cubic yards) were of unusual construction with bottom discharge from the tram by a rope and counterweight system. Power for the tram was supplied from the tram by a private electric railway system, although in later days alternating current was used. A rectifier had to be installed in the Gasworks. There were no loops or turnouts and the locomotive led with the full wagons and pushed the empties back. If there was a problem, the brakes had a tendency to lock, causing the locomotive to slide. Sand was applied to the retorts for the primitive sanding mechanism, which comprised a hole in the cab floor through which the sand was pushed by the driver's foot. Nevertheless the driver had to have to 'ball out', preferably where there were generous coke drops a 30ft drop to the ground!



The Foss Islands Power Station was planned as a municipal undertaking from its inception in 1897. Electricity was produced by a coal fired power station driving steam generators. Integral to the project was a Manlove-Alliott refuse destructor, the exhaust of which supplemented the raising of steam for the generators. The completed power station (SE 610520) was built by Parker & Sharp Ltd on part of the Corporation Highways Depot (SE 611528) and opened in April 1900. Siemens supplied the electrical equipment. It was not initially a financial success and did not make a profit until 1910. Increased consumer demand resulted in the construction of a hydro-electric scheme on the Ouse at Linton Lock in 1923 and York was connected to the National Grid in 1932. The electricity undertaking was nationalised in 1949 as part of the new British Electricity Authority (BEA), which later became the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). Control of the Foss Islands Yard was retained by the Corporation which in 1975 completed a major modernisation of the original depot area.

The above manufacturer's photograph shows the newly completed Kerr Stuart 1269 of 1912, with an inscription on the steel section chassis recording its power as 70hp and weight as 18 tons. A maker's plate confirms Siemens Brothers Dynamo Works Ltd as the supplier of the locomotive's electrical equipment.

