

This work is the Copyright of the author and/or Wakefield Historical Society and is not to be copied in any medium without explicit written permission

Timeline of Wakefield 1950-1960

The 1950s

The decade was largely one of redevelopment and expansion, especially in terms of the redevelopment of the Bull Ring, Upper Kirkgate, and the bottom part of Northgate. But inevitably it also saw the further loss of old buildings, like the York Hotel and the George Hotel.

The Bus Station, now about to be replaced, was among the first new developments, formally opened on 30 September, 1952.

In terms of expansion, this was the decade when Kettlethorpe council housing estate was built. Many more council houses were added to the Eastmoor estate. Some redevelopment happened because of accident rather than design! Thornes House burnt down in July 1951 and a new school had to be built.

It was also the decade that saw a number of new schools, and the relocation in new premises of others, to meet the growing population on the council estates and the shift away from urban living. So we had Flanshaw St Michael's Junior School opening in Flanshaw Lane in 1951, Broadway Infants School/Waterton First School 1951, Heath View Primary School 1952, Kettlethorpe Junior and Infants School 1954, Kettlethorpe Junior School 1957.

1950 The early 1950s saw the redevelopment of the Bull Ring with the widening of the bottom of Northgate by some fifteen feet on its eastern side, and new ranges of shops on the corners of Savile Street.

1951 Building work commenced on Kettlethorpe council housing estate.

1951 July, Thornes House destroyed by fire.

1952 Wakefield Express celebrated its centenary.

1952 July, work started on the new Electricity Generating Station (ie Power Station) Heath.

1952 September, Heath View Primary School opened.

1952 30 September, the bus station in Savile Street opened.

1953 30 August, Coronation Gardens, on the corner of Wood Street and Rishworth Street, opened to mark the coronation of Elizabeth II

1953 30 September, the York Hotel, York Hotel Yard, Westgate, closed.

1954 Wakefield's sole remaining live theatre, the Theatre Royal and Opera House, was closed for conversion to a cinema.

1954 28 August, 178 acres of woodland and lake at Newmillerdam, bought by Wakefield Corporation in January, were formally opened as a public amenity.

1954 September, Crofton Old Hall became Crofton's new secondary modern school.

1955 24 January, the Essoldo Cinema opened, a conversion of what had been the Theatre Royal and Opera House.

1955 The Springs widened.

1955 8 August, the George Hotel on the corner of Southgate and Upper Kirkgate closed, prior to demolition as part of the Upper Kirkgate widening and redevelopment. Its licence was transferred to the George, Eastmoor estate.

1955 25 September, Ebenezer Methodist Chapel, Market Street, closed.

1956 29 September, the Carlton Cinema in Grove Road closed. The first of a steady stream of cinema closures in the Wakefield area.

1957 October, official opening of the £13m electricity generating station at Heath, adding the twin cooling towers to the Wakefield skyline.

1957 15 December, the Grand Electric Cinema, housed in the Corn Exchange, closed after a fire.

1958 September, the West Riding Clean Air Campaign initiated in Wakefield.

1959 February, the Prison Officers' Training College was opened on Stanley Road in premises put up during the war for the 'Bevin Boys'; this meant that premises in Love Lane could be used solely as a prison Staff College.

1959 February, both the Rex Cinema in Stanley Road, and the Savoy Cinema at Middlestown closed.

1959 March, Express Dairies' milk pasteurising and bottling centre opened in Back Lane, (one of the most advanced, technologically, in the world.)

1960 Wakefield-born writer David Storey's first novel, *This Sporting Life*, published. Wins the Macmillan Fiction Award. Later made into a film.

© **Kate Taylor, 1999**

Published on the Wakefield Historical Website May 2015