

MARRIOTT OGLE TARBOTTON (1834-87)

This brief biography by Ken Brand appeared in Newsletter No. 132 (January 2007). At the foot of the piece the author acknowledged the encouragement he had received during the research and writing of it from Geoffrey Oldfield (1920-2016), local historian and staunch Civic Society member:

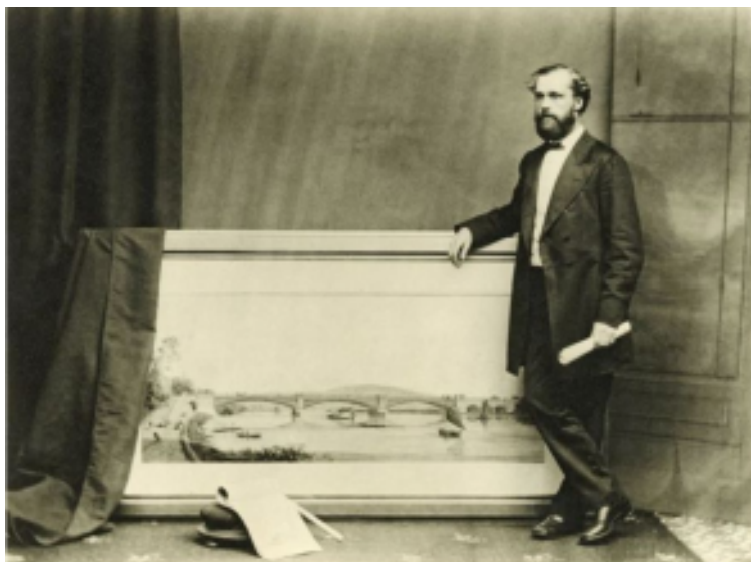


Illustration 1: Marriott Ogle Tarbotton

Marriott Ogle Tarbotton was appointed Nottingham's first full-time Borough Surveyor and Engineer in October 1859. He was selected from a short list of eight, chosen from the 52 original applicants. The post was established as part of the Council's response to the 1858 Local Government Act. Previous Borough Surveyors had been part-time, combining Council work with private practice. The current incumbent, Henry Moses Wood, had taken over the post in May 1837 after the death of Edward Staveley. The Council anticipated correctly that the former would not apply under the new conditions and considered the propriety of granting him compensation bearing in mind his long service.

Tarbotton was born on 6 December 1834 at Brunswick Terrace, Leeds. He was the second of the five children of Samuel and Grace Tarbotton, née Ogle. Samuel (1800-50) was a Chemist, Druggist and Oilman trading from premises at 116 Briggate, Leeds. He is listed in the 1849 local directory but in the next edition of 1851, the year after his death, the proprietor is given as Mrs Grace Tarbotton.

Marriott attended the Leeds Grammar School. Showing an interest in engineering after leaving school he was articled first to a Mr Herbert of Thirsk and then to Charles Clapham of Wakefield. It has been recorded that he took over Clapham's practice. Although he was not yet 25 years old when he came to Nottingham, he had been managing his own civil engineering practice in Wakefield for five years. For two of these he was engineer to the Wakefield gasworks and in 1855 he became, additionally, the Borough Surveyor of Wakefield. In the

Wakefield section of the Leeds Woollen District Directory of 1857 Tarbotton is listed as Borough Surveyor with business premises in Barstow Square and a home address of 31 St John's Place (now St John's Square). In his four years as Borough Surveyor his main work was the setting out of the cemetery, the erection of its chapel, and the design of the church for the newly created parish of St Mary's.

The post of Nottingham's first full-time Surveyor was advertised in local newspapers and nationally in *The Builder* and *Building News*. In the short list of applicants only one was from Nottingham and one from Derby. Tarbotton's age was erroneously given as 27, but as the interview was on 6 October 1859 he was remarkably not yet 25 and the youngest of those interviewed. He took up his new post on 9 November 1859 at a salary of £250 per annum, payable quarterly.

Tarbotton was soon made aware of the many problems facing the town still struggling with the implications of a complex Inclosure Act, some fifteen years after it had received the Royal Assent and still five years away from the completion of the Award. He was confronted with the chaotic nature of the sanitary and engineering conditions of the old town, and the lack of infrastructure in New Nottingham, the land gradually enclosed from 1845.

His appointment followed closely on the 1858 report of the Highways Committee, which contained the damning realization that 'the foul and offensive state of the water in parts of the Nottingham Canal was mainly caused by the water of the River Leen, which is contaminated by the sewage of the districts lying to the west of this town being carried into the canal.' Even the Sanitary Committee could not fulfil its responsibilities without becoming involved with the much larger issues of overhauling and replacing the town's woefully inadequate drainage and sewage systems. Welcome to Nottingham, Mr Tarbotton!

In February 1860 the Council's Highways Committee, in reporting they had taken over from the parish Highways Boards under the terms of the 1858 Local Government Act, indicated they had been in consultation with the new Surveyor. A month later, probably after some investigation by Tarbotton, the Committee informed the Council 'that they do not find that the Council possess any plan showing the sewers in the Town, the Streets laid out in the New Inclosure, the levels in the old and new parts of the Town and on the new Inclosed Lands the Gardens belonging to the Corporation according to their several divisions.' The Committee felt a large-scale plan was essential and recommended that the offer by Frederick Jackson to provide such a plan for 800 guineas be accepted. The Council agreed.

The problems of the Meadows locality, which lacked efficient main sewers and where most streets were 'without drainage or pavements, to the great injury and discomfort of the inhabitants', were of great concern to the Sanitary Committee. As noted, they were so convinced that the state of the river Leen and the Nottingham canal were influential in the unhealthy conditions in the Meadows that they requested the eminent water and civic engineer

Thomas Hawksley, a local man but since 1852 well established in London, to report on the Drainage and Sewerage on the line of the Leen. Surprisingly Hawksley was contacted in October 1859, the month Tarbotton was appointed. So in effect the two engineers were working on the same problem for at least part of the same time. No doubt their paths crossed and Hawksley must have been impressed with the expertise and enthusiasm of the younger man, as Tarbotton became a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers on 1 April 1862. He was accepted after being proposed by Thomas Hawksley and the equally distinguished engineer J W Bazalgette. Hawksley and Tarbotton presented their reports in September 1860, Hawksley on the 27th and Tarbotton on the 29th.

Both reports revealed mammoth tasks. Both engineers found the River Leen and the Tinker's Leen were in an incredibly polluted state, the accumulated filth coming not only from within the town but from the townships along the Leen valley to the north of Nottingham. Their long, detailed reports on these drainage problems, and particularly those of the Meadows district, highlighted the town's deficiencies. The reports emphatically spelt out the extent of inactivity and neglect. This must have been particularly galling for Hawksley, whose earlier provision of a constant supply of pure water had prevented an outbreak of cholera in 1849.

Tarbotton pointed out that 'there is no correct plan of the town or neighbourhood in the hands of the Corporation, no established system of levels, no complete record or plan of subterranean works and sewage and there are no public data whatever to aid the consideration of a subject like that of sewerage. The Local Government Board of the works in this Borough having been, until very recently in the hands of a number of bodies, most public improvements and operations have been conducted irrelatively.' His subsequent work eventually brought much improved conditions in the lower-lying districts of the town.

William Booker, the Referee to the Enclosure Commissioners, died in December 1861. His official function was to supervise and approve the erection of every new building on the land enclosed in 1845. It was a superhuman task, all but impossible to carry out scrupulously. On 6 January 1862, the Council, taking advantage of the situation, agreed to endeavour to bring buildings and roads in both the old and new town under the control of the Town Surveyor, whilst leaving the office of Referee vacant for the present. It was obviously desirable that Tarbotton should fill the post but it was noted that he would not reach the requisite age of 30 until December 1864. When he was finally recommended for the post on 15 June 1865, the completion of the Award of the Enclosure Commissioners was a little over a month away! Nevertheless he had probably refereed unofficially since early in 1862.

In 1865 Tarbotton introduced into Nottingham the first service subways under the main streets outside London. Drains, gas and water mains were laid in subways beneath Victoria and Old Queen Streets in order to minimise traffic disruption when repairs and improvements were carried out. There was also a subway in Lister Gate, although, surprisingly, for a time the Gas and Water Companies refused to use it. Later, under the direction of his successor, sewers and

telegraph wires were carried in these and other subways.



Illustration 2: The New Trent Bridge

A new bridge across the River Trent was urgently needed. On 20 November 1867 the Council had instructed Tarbotton to investigate

'the erection of a Bridge over the River Trent in substitution of the present delapidated structure.' His full survey not only covered the long history of the bridge but also included his detailed proposals for its

replacement. On the 20 April 1868, after the Bridge Committee had submitted and recommended the Surveyor's report, the Council adopted the scheme. Tarbotton prepared designs for the new bridge and its approaches and it was formally opened on 25 July 1871. With just three high arches and four flood arches, compared with the 17 low, narrow arches of the old medieval structure, the new bridge greatly reduced the likelihood of flooding in the Meadows. The handsome new bridge was aligned more or less alongside the old, which was demolished soon after.

Tarbotton also designed a new bridge at Gunthorpe, which was constructed between 1873-5 using mainly stone taken from the old Trent Bridge. It was considered to be capable of sustaining the heaviest traffic that was ever likely to arise in the area.

In 1872 in another lengthy report Tarbotton examined the question of dealing with sewage, not just in Nottingham but in the whole of the Leen Valley. As a result the Leen District Sewage Act was passed and a Leen District Sewerage Board established. This Board, with Tarbotton as its engineer, lasted until the Borough Extension Act of 1877 brought much of the Leen Valley within the town. Tarbotton set out the initial Leen Valley sewage system, and in 1875 he reported on the desirability of having a sewage farm; as a result the sewage farm at Stoke Bardolph was constructed under his supervision.

In 1876-7, with the co-operation of the Ordnance Survey, Tarbotton prepared a map of the greater Nottingham area showing the alignment of the existing sewers. His accompanying report emphasised the importance of uniting the inter-parochial sewerage systems under one influential body. He also drew attention to the lack of roads connecting the districts soon to be incorporated into the Borough. Tarbotton had anticipated rapid expansion once the 1877 Act came into force, but the actual rate astonished him.

Although with the passing of the Act Tarbotton's geographical area of responsibility greatly increased, his salary remained fixed at £1080, a figure which included £80 a year for the services of a draughtsman. He did have a temporary bonus of 2.5% commission on the new sewage works, an average of £250 per annum which expired when the project was completed!

He started to plan the boulevards which would link the town's newly acquired parishes. Powers had been granted to make the first, Gregory Boulevard, in the Nottingham Improvement Act of 1878. The actual implementation of his ideas was carried out by his successor as Borough Engineer, his former assistant Arthur Brown. Gregory Boulevard was opened in 1883, followed by Lenton and Castle Boulevards in 1884.

A little earlier in 1875, possibly prompted by his friend, the architect T C Hine, who had long campaigned for a new, impressive Town Hall, Tarbotton prepared a report on the provision of a collection of new buildings for Municipal Offices, Town Hall, Museum, and Free Library. Three possible locations were suggested: the site of the existing Exchange, a site between North (now Forman) Street and Parliament Street, and finally the decaying area between Long Row Central and Parliament Street known as the Rookeries. The report was withdrawn, but it led to the scheme for the erection of University College in Horse Fair Close (South Sherwood Street). In almost his last act as Borough Engineer Tarbotton prepared a full design brief with specifications for an architectural competition for the new University College.

In 1874 the Council had taken over the gas concern and Tarbotton was called on to take control of the gas works. He expanded these to such an extent that the Nottingham gas works covered a larger area than any other in the country. In 1879 the Council agreed to purchase the successful Nottingham Waterworks Company and initially the role of water engineer was to be added to Tarbotton's duties.

Thomas Hawksley (1807-93) had been the chief engineer of the Nottingham Waterworks Company throughout its fifty-year life span (1830-80), and he had a similar post with the Gas undertaking from c.1840 until its acquisition by the town in 1874. Thus in several ways Tarbotton was following in Hawksley's footsteps. As noted earlier, their professional relationship probably started soon after Tarbotton's arrival in Nottingham in October 1859, when both men were examining and preparing reports for the Council on the 'Drainage and Sewerage on the line of the (River) Leen.'

Before long the Council realised that with the likelihood of a vastly increased workload generated by his involvement with the gas and water undertakings he could no longer be expected to carry on his work as Borough Engineer. He technically resigned on 6 September 1880, and on 4 October his assistant Arthur Brown was appointed Borough Engineer. Tarbotton's duties were redefined. He was retained as consulting engineer to the Corporation and engineer to the gas and water departments and to the Sewage Farm Committee. He became one of the highest paid Corporation employees. In February 1880 the Water Committee

suggested an increase to £1500, but after 'complaints from ratepayers' this was reduced to £1350 later in the year, a salary he was still receiving at the time of his death in the spring of 1887.

As engineer to the Water Department he recommended, planned and erected the new waterworks at Papplewick between 1882-5 at a cost of £55000. This was below his (revised) estimate of £56500 (£51000 plus 10% contingency). In 1885 he enlarged and covered the reservoir at the top of Park Row. In fairness it must be mentioned that it is probable that Hawksley had the Papplewick area in mind for a future pumping station had the supply of water remained in private hands.

Tarbotton was highly respected and his specific skills and knowledge were widely requested. Even though the Council undervalued him financially, the Water Committee did acknowledge early in 1880 that 'Mr Tarbotton has been with the Corporation for 20 years and upwards and has proved himself a faithful and competent servant.' He gave evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee, he was an examiner for the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain and Ireland besides acting as consultant to several water undertakings.

Tarbotton was also a Fellow of the Geological and the Royal Meteorological Societies. He was very interested in meteorology and for a number of years took important detailed readings, which were published at intervals. In 1877 he was called to give evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the conservancy of rivers. He lectured and published a number of papers on sewerage and drainage.

He married Emma Maria Stanfield at Wakefield in 1857. When they moved to Nottingham they lived briefly on Forest Road, then at two addresses on Newstead Grove for most of the 1860s. In the early 1870s the family moved to the Park Estate, initially to a house at the junction of South Road and Newcastle Circus. It is quite possible it was chosen for them by Tarbotton's friend, the architect T C Hine, who by this time was well into developing the estate for the Duke of Newcastle. Their final house was just across the Park, close to where Tattershall Drive meets Cavendish Crescent South.

The census returns reveal a little of Tarbotton's family life. The 1861 census confirms the Tarbotton family on Newstead Grove. Marriott and his wife Emma are both aged 28. They have just one child, John S Brunel, who is aged three and was born in Wakefield. There are two servants. Ten years later the family are still on Newstead Grove, at No. 30. Son John is absent but the other three children, Minnie Grace (9 years old), Lilian Mary (7), and Harold (2), all born in Nottingham, are listed. There are two different servants. By the time of the 1881 census, with the family living on South Road in the Park Estate, only two children are at home, Minnie and Harold. The family now has a designated cook and a housemaid.

Colleagues said Tarbotton never gave himself adequate rest or recreation. On what short

holidays he was induced to take, his mind was occupied with engineering or architecture. As noted, he appears to have developed a strong friendship with Hine, which possibly grew out of their working relationship. Hine, who often sketched the local architecture whilst on holiday, recorded in a personal journal several trips they made together. An entry for 1869 notes 'Self and M.O.T. to Venice etc.' In November 1873 they took a 17-day trip to the Continent. Later (3-8 October 1873), the pair went with the Council's Castle Committee to Paris. Hine even recorded their joint visits to examine sewage disposal. The inference is that a holiday in Hine's company was far from relaxing!

From about 1883 the state of his health caused some anxiety, and some two years later he started to suffer loss of memory and showed signs of a nervous disorder. He attended a meeting of the Sewage Farm Committee on Friday 4 March 1887 but was scarcely able to speak. An hour later he was taken home partially paralysed. He rallied and tried to carry on his business on the following day. However he suffered a relapse and died on Sunday evening 6 March. He was in his 53rd year; in modern terms one could say he died in harness, a workaholic - in the best possible sense.

His wife and his four children, two sons and two daughters, survived him. His elder son had by this time obtained a position with the Government of Canada, while the younger was still at school.

At his funeral at the Church Cemetery on 9 March many Town Councillors, Corporation officials, and professional friends paid their respects. Several carriages, including those of Hine and his physician Dr Claude Taylor, followed the hearse. His obituary in the Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers listed his qualities. He was an accomplished scholar, full of classical lore. He was a refined gentleman, kindly, genial in the last degree. In his obituary in the Nottingham Journal of 8 March 1887 the writer made the observation 'The history of Mr Tarbotton's later labours is to some extent the history of Nottingham during the last thirty years.' It is a pity that one of the true founders of modern Nottingham is remembered by many only as the architect of the quaintly conceived Chinese Bell Tower of 1863 in the Arboretum.

His wealth at death was recorded as £25651.

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