**History of Bingley**

**Bingley is a market town in the metropolitan borough of the City of Bradford, in West Yorkshire, England. It is situated on the River Aire and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The town has a population of 19,884 according to the 2001 Census. Local travel links include Bingley railway station in the town centre and Leeds Bradford International Airport, which is located 7 miles from the city centre. The B6265 (Main Street), connecting Bingley to Keighley, runs through the town centre. Historically a part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Bingley appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as “Bingheleia”.**

Bingley was probably founded about the time of the Saxons; certainly its name is Saxon in origin, meaning “Bing’s clearing”, though this would not be the original spelling or pronunciation of Bing. Bingley is thought to have been founded around a ford on the River Aire. This crossing gave access to the villages of Harden, Cullingworth and Wilsden on the south side of the river. As well as the ford on the river, the other feature likely to have influenced Bing’s decision and to foster Bingley’s growth is the constriction of the Aire valley at the upstream side of the Bingley settlement.

Like most towns of the West Riding, Bingley prospered from the Industrial Revolution. The Bingley section of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was completed in 1774, linking Bingley with Skipton, and with Bradford via the Bradford Canal. It travels through the centre of Bingley & then climbs dramatically up the side of the valley in the famous Bingley Five Rise Locks and not quite so famous Bingley Three Rise Locks. Several Woollen mills were founded and people migrated in from the surrounding countryside to work in the mills. Many came from further afield such as Ireland, especially in the wake of the Irish Potato Famine. A railway line was constructed through Bingley including a goods yard in the centre of Bingley bringing further trade. During this period the villages of Gilstead and Eldwick became conurbated with Bingley. The Bingley Building Society was founded in this period.

Bingley College was opened in 1911 with Helen Wodehouse as the first principal. The first intake of students was 102 women from in and around the then West Riding of Yorkshire. Over the years until its closure in 1979 the college produced approximately sixteen thousand teachers and provided Bingley inhabitants with a workplace and lots of customers for local shops and services.

The Beeching Axe demolished the goods yard, though the station which recently celebrated its centenary, still serves trains to Leeds, Bradford, Skipton, Morecambe and Carlisle. The textile mills have over the years largely been replaced by cheaper labour overseas. The Damart mill still stands and trades in textiles. Since 1995 the tannery, Bingley Mill & Andertons have all been converted into flats. In 1974 the West Riding of Yorkshire was replaced by the new metropolitan county of West Yorkshire and the Bingley Urban District Council was dissolved. Bingley now became a ward in the Bradford metropolitan district. The most cramped and outdated terraced housing (in the opinion of the council) was partly replaced with council housing, Bingley Arts Centre and the headquarters of the Bradford & Bingley Building Society. Further council housing was built up the hill towards Gilstead including three substantial blocks of flats. In the wake of the Thatcherite reforms of council housing the majority of the council estate has now changed into private hands and a substantial portion has been knocked down and rebuilt as private housing. In recent years Bingley has become relatively prosperous once more as a desirable suburb of Bradford. The Bingley Permanent Building Society merged with the Bradford Equitable Building Society to form the Bradford & Bingley Building Society (now a bank) in 1964. It was decided to site the corporate headquarters in Bingley. This brought several thousand jobs to the town but the building itself did not meet with universal acclaim.