

## Gone but not Forgotten Shipton Gas Works

### Town gas

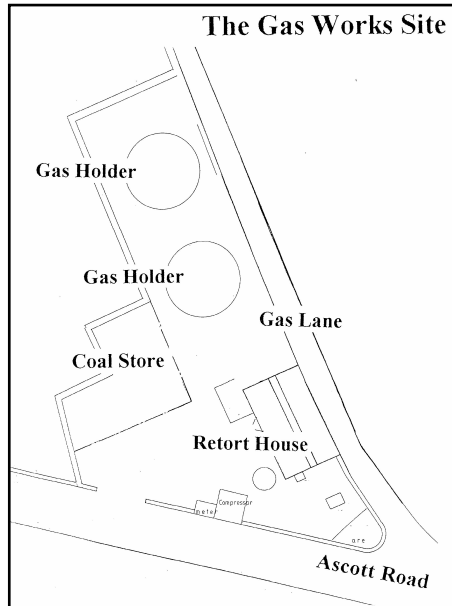
The site is now occupied by Bowerham Flats in the triangle of land between Ascott Road and Sinnels (now Gas) Lane. In 1868 it was acquired by Shipton Gas, Light, Coal & Coke Co. Ltd. "To produce town gas and its products." The gas was used to light the streets and to light and heat homes and public buildings (schools, churches, halls etc.) in Ascott, Milton and Shipton.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Shipton was amalgamated with seven other local gasworks to form the Mid Oxon. Gas Co., which subsequently became the United District Gas Co., until its closure.

### Lighten our darkness

By 1915 the Shipton was turning 213 tons of coal per annum into gas, which was supplied through cast iron pipes to about half the homes in the three parishes, for cookers, fires, lights, geysers etc. Large users like FWP Matthews and Alfred Groves had their own gas plants whilst large houses had their own generators. Those without relied on paraffin and candles!

In the next twenty years gas production increased slightly but any big increase



was probably curbed by the arrival of Wessex Electrical Co. in 1929/30.

### Workers

During the late 30's and 1940's Mr Eeles was gasman and stoker; he shovelled about a ton of coal daily into the retorts. Tom Barrett was relief-stoker and District gas fitter, responsible for sales, fitting and repairs to all gas equipment and for the reading and emptying of

meters. Mr. W.D.Keogh was District Manager.

### Nationalisation

All gas undertakings were nationalised in 1949 into the British Gas Authority and by 1950 pressurised town gas (Southern) was being pumped from Oxford. The redundant Shipton works closed in January, 1951 and the site was sold.

Unfortunately there are no photographs of the gas-works, either in operation or during demolition, nor of the subsequent building of Bowerham. Many of our readers must have memories of the gas works, particularly Tom Barrett, who currently lives in Langston House. Do write in and share your memories with us.

**John Rawlins**