

## "Clacking Shuttles" by Florence Bone

*from an article originally posted by Harry Cooke April 2004*

The book, written by a member of the Wilford family is based on the mill life of Brompton.

Bartholomew Wilford (1810-1856), linen manufacturer in Brompton had 3 daughters, Mary Kate (born 1847), Clara Elizabeth (born 1849) and Lydia (born 1852). Lydia Wilford married the Rev Henry Bone of Birstall in the West Riding of Yorkshire. They had 2 daughters, Florence Bone (1875-1971) and Lucy Bone (1878-?). Florence became a prolific writer and had many books published, the most well known around Brompton being "Clacking Shuttles". She also wrote extensively for The Quiver which I believe was a Methodist publication. The Wilfords were enthusiastic Methodists whereas their rivals in the village with the "other" large mill, the Pattison family were members of the congregation at St Thomas, where they have a window "dedicated" to them. Florence often wrote about life with "the Aunts" who were Mary Kate and Clara Elizabeth and the Methodist church features in a number of articles/books. The most well known Aunt, Mary Kate is buried in the Stokesley Road cemetery in a simple grave marked with just something like "Kate E Wilford - Manor House died 1928"

Not all Florence's books were about Brompton, indeed "Flash of Scarlet" is more of a historical novel and there were many children's books I believe. There have been a number of references to the style of "Clacking Shuttles" but to me the best was "it is a bit Mills and Boon-ish" although I enjoy reading it, because of the references to the view I have out of my window and to things around Brompton. Perhaps if I repeat the first paragraph, you will see what I mean:-

### *Chapter 1 A CHILD IN THE FOG*

*"Fog had hung about the village all day. It came down from the moors, far, brown and desolate in the winter afternoon. It crept in and out of the weavers' cottages and seemed to hover over the beck down at Boggy End, the lower part of the village of Rumbton. The square tower of the old church was barely visible when Harriet Willow went up to her bedroom, the Crimson Room, for the window of which she could look out on the green, and the copper beech tree under the churchyard wall. A travelling carriage rumbled along the rough road beyond the green. A few candles glowed dimly from the little square-paned windows of the cottages that stood round it. Two pack-horses laden with linen pieces walked out from under the gateway beside the house, and which gave Gateway House its name. It would be a long cold trudge for the men, shadowy in the fog, who walked beside the horses up to Ossleby bleaching mill, a few miles nearer to the moors".*

For those who know Brompton, they will recognise the various references such as Boggy End for Water End, Rumbton for Brompton, the church still has the square tower and the Crimson Room is part of the Manor House overlooking the green. The copper beech is just coming into bud and there is a photo of it and the Church which I put on the [BBC North Yorkshire website](#). Mount Grace priory (National Trust - just off the A19) gets a mention in the book as Gracious Priory and of course, Ossleby is Osmotherley, where the linen produced in Brompton was taken for bleaching. Harriet Willow was of course, Harriet Wilford and we only have to go back to New Years Eve last to have seen the candles glowing dimly through the little square-paned panels of the cottages - we lost our electric power from shortly before midnight until the middle of the afternoon of New Year's Day 2004!

There is a copy of Clacking Shuttles in Northallerton Public Library.