

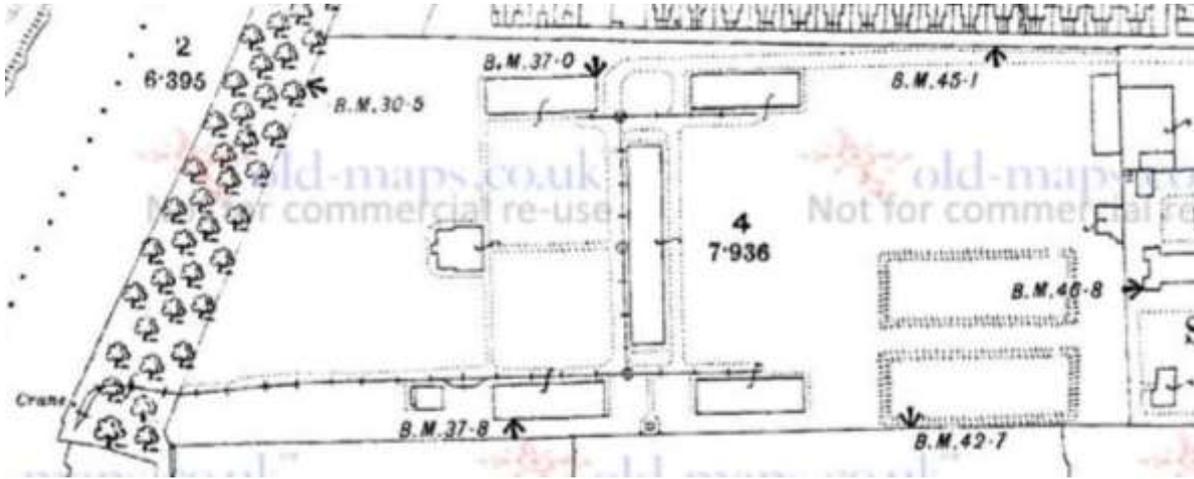
## **The New Walk Ordnance Railway**



The Cavalry Barracks on Fulford Road was built in the late 1790s. The site was enlarged in 1880 when the Infantry Barracks (now, Imphal Barracks) with its dramatic keep was built. In 1854 a large military hospital was constructed on the west side of the road on what became known as 'Hospital Fields'. Unfortunately, almost all of the Cavalry Barracks was demolished when the Police headquarters was built and all that remains of the hospital are the houses for medical staff in Ordnance lane.

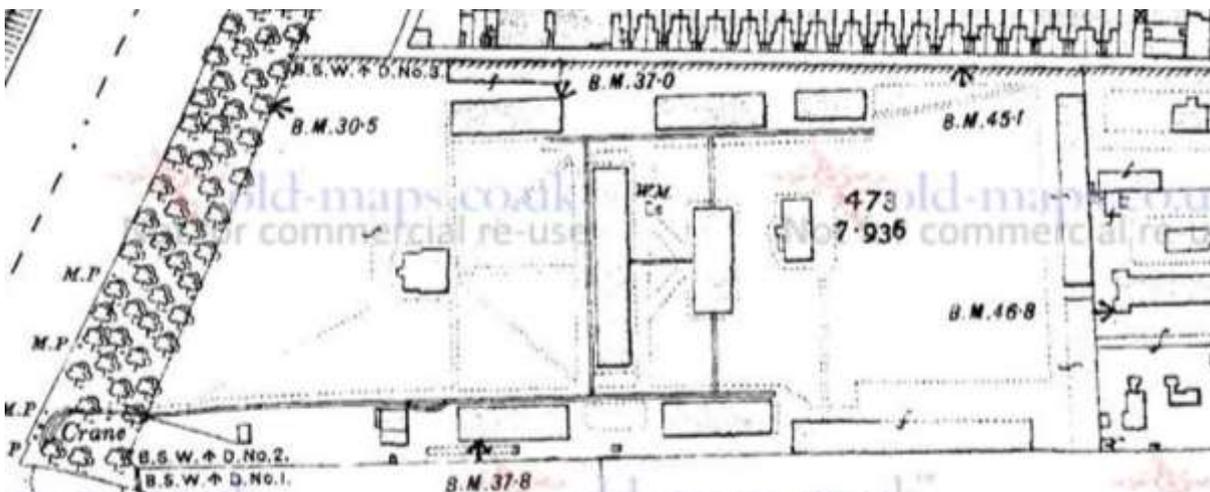
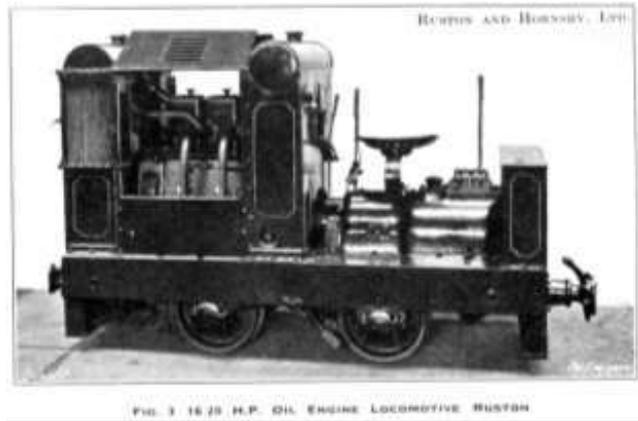
In 1890, a depot for the Royal Ordnance Corps was constructed between the military hospital and the river. Several former workshops and storage buildings still exist and now form part of the industrial estate.

Munitions for the various military units based in York were stored here and used for training. The 18" gauge tramway enabled easy transport of heavy loads from the wharf, where delivery boats were unloaded using a small crane.



**1892 OS map showing the tracks running from the wharf and then around the depot, including one track across the front of the headquarters building, now Cycle Heaven. Note the turntables at each junction and a passing point.**

In the early years, it is likely the small trucks were pulled by a horse and soldiers, rather than steam locomotives, as this would have avoided the risk of sparks igniting the explosives. However, it is possible that small petrol or diesel engine locos could have been used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as this Ruston and Hornsby engine of 1933, which was used at other Ordnance Depots. (Image: Graces Guide)



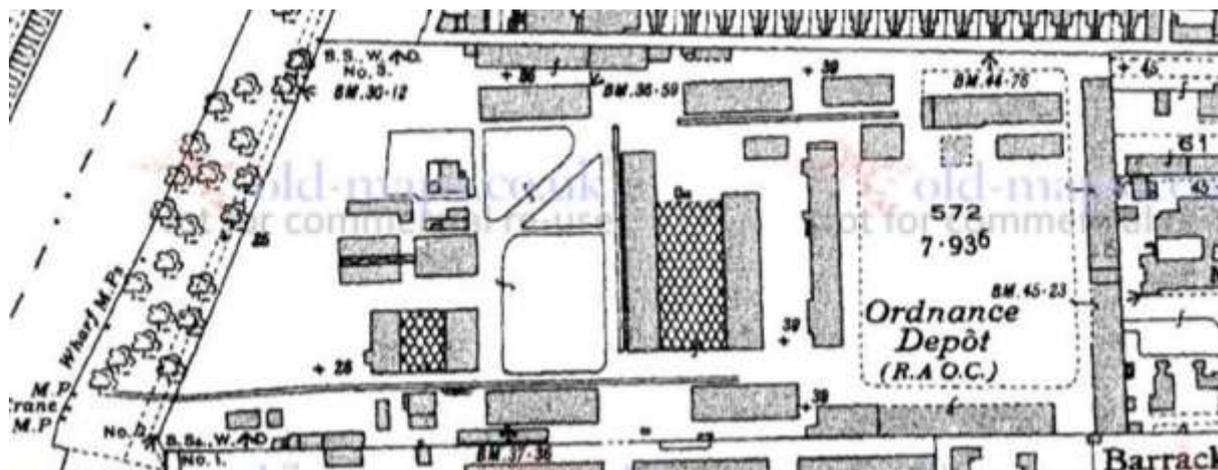
**1909 OS map showing more tracks within the depot, including one route which runs through a building**

Unfortunately, we have not found a photograph of the crane, or a ship at the wharf, but FFH member, Judy Nicholson discovered that a ketch named 'Princess' delivered ordnance from Woolwich Arsenal on a regular basis. (restored example pictured right)



It is likely that the sailing ships were replaced by motor powered ships, and within recent memory, these craft were known locally as the 'Powder Boat'.

Local historian, Van Wilson, reports that York Council charged £1-10s when a poplar tree was felled on New Walk in 1888 so that the War Department could construct a wharf.



**1937 OS map still showing the crane, but far fewer tracks than in 1909.**

It is thought the railway was removed from the Depot in the late 1950s and the access gateway through the boundary wall was bricked up. The tracks were uncovered during the New Walk Millennium Project, but require regular cleaning to remove silt after flooding.





**Aerial View showing the route of the tracks through the remaining original and modern buildings. Numbers 6 & 5 are the wharf and crane, other numbers relate to junctions and passing places.**

Soldiers on the Western Front pushing narrow gauge munitions trucks, probably similar to those used on the New Walk track.

<http://archives.ecpad.fr/wp-content/gallery/train/SPA-23-S-1534.jpg>



A 20HP Simplex loco at Beamish Industrial Museum but normally at the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway. Built in 1916, it was restored in 1997-2009 and probably served on the Western Front. Locomotives like this may have operated at the York Ordnance Depot.

<http://beamishtransportonline.co.uk/2016/05/tracks-to-the-trenches-2016/>

With thanks to Tim Robinson of the York Past and Present Facebook Page.

Christopher Rainger, Chair of Fishergate, Fulford and Heslington Local History Society. February 2020.

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