Coal and Electricity in Brundall 1930s -1950s

Coal was delivered from Thomas Moy's coal yard at Brundall Station.
In winter, the Model A Ford's coal trucks used to struggle up Station Road. There were no highway gritters in those days to treat the icy roads.

In our bungalow we had a coal-fired range in the kitchen, coal for heating and oil lamps.
We had no electricity although there was some electricity in the village which had been 110 volts. When more cabling came in, the voltage was increased to 240 volts and by 1933-1934 we had electricity supplied by Norwich power station. *[The power station, located at Thorpe was coal-fired. See p.2.]*

As children we entertained ourselves with Meccano, Hornby train sets, dominos, draughts, cards, music and so on. The piano needed a constant temperature and would go out of tune rapidly due to living in a wooden bungalow so mother didn't play too often.

The words of Colin Wood born in 1927 at 'Bankside', Links Avenue.
This is a transcript of his spoken memories, recorded on 19th January 2006

THE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY WAS NOT ALWAYS RELIABLE

"The Council views with considerable alarm the failure of the electricity supply, notably on Christmas Day when many Christmas Dinners were spoilt. Representation has been made to the appropriate authority who have promised to give their prompt attention."

Brundall Parish Council Annual General meeting 17th March 1958

MOY's COAL YARD was at the bottom of Station Road, where the station car park is today. It was located there as coal could easily be delivered by train trucks and plentiful supplies of coal could be stored to fire the steam locomotives.
As diesel engines replaced steam, between 1959 and 1961, the coal yard was no longer needed. It was replaced by the car park in 1964. By the early 1960s, coal was being replaced by cleaner and cheaper oil and electricity in the home.

THOMAS MOY's coal and goods yard at Brundall Station before it closed in 1964

Thorpe Power Station 1926-1964.

Opened in 1926, this power station was built to take over from the overworked Duke St. Station. The site was extended several times and supplied power to most of eastern Norfolk. Originally the station held two 5000kw steam turbines powered by coal fired boilers. A spur line was constructed from the railway line to supply coal and extract ash from the site. The station also had a large Telpher grabber suspended rail system to collect and distribute the coal fuel. This provided a continuous rail loop across the length of the site from the ship berths at each end to the coal store and through the plant. The site operated until 1964 and was later demolished.

Norfolk currently receives electricity powered from a diversity of sources, some from abroad, renewable energies such as wind farms and the recently revitalised Kings Lynn plant. It is one of the most hotly debated topics in the context of climate change today.

Cooking with Electricity in Brundall 1946

"Having no power station of any kind of its own, and being too great a distance from Norwich to be able to obtain gas from there, makes the village totally reliant on electricity produced by the Thorpe Station Electric Power Plant. Electricity is conveyed from Norwich to Brundall by means of overhead wires. If the journey is made from Norwich to Brundall by road these overhead wires supported by the huge pine masts will be found a regular feature of the landscape. Indeed this is the most practical connection that Norfolk villages have with their market town and County Borough - Norwich. In the private house electric stoves of modern design are generally found; and in the older cottages, previously heated by enormous fireplaces, which served as ovens as well. These new cookers and stoves have been introduced and they look strangely out of place. In many of the [older] cottages...heavily ornamented oil lamps are still to be found; not as a means of lighting but as an antiquity that has been carefully preserved as a reminder that life in the country has not always been as easy as it is today."

Quoted from: *Local Government Survey of the Parish of Brundall*
A school project written by Wanda Love aged 15 in 1946

During the 1930s and 1940s manufacturers introduced easy to clean enamel surfaces together with efficient heating elements and thermostatic controls.
At this time electric appliances became cheaper and hire purchase schemes made it possible for a large proportion of the population to benefit.
However, electric cookers were slow to replace the wall ovens, cast iron ranges, Agas, Rayburns and even the smelly paraffin stoves.
The reduction in time needed for cooking liberated women to take jobs and perform other roles outside the home, especially during WWII.

TODAY the **National Grid** is the high-voltage electric power transmission network which connects power stations and major substations in every part of the UK. It ensures that electricity generated anywhere on it can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere.

It was created following the passing of the Electricity (Supply) Act of 1926 which set up the Central Electricity Board. Completed in 1933, some 4,000 miles of transmission cables were carried by huge steel pylons across the countryside, changing the character of the British rural landscape forever.

During World War II the grid proved its worth when London power stations were knocked out of action by German bombing raids, known as the 'Blitz'.

It kept the lights working and the factories operating by sending supplies along the network from Scotland and South Wales.

These days, cleaner renewable electricity sources, such as wind and solar farms, have become prominent features of our coastline and fields. The solar panels on our Brundall rooftops are also a familiar sight.

The UK Power Network team responding to a fault 2020.

The *UK Power Networks* company currently owns and maintains electricity cables and lines across the east of England making sure our lights stay on. It maintains and upgrades power equipment and moves and connects new electricity cables.