

ADDRESS GIVEN AT HIS FUNERAL AT ST. MATTHIAS CHURCH STOCKSBRIDGE 7 JAN. 2000

BY GRAHAM HARRISON

On behalf of our family I would like to thank you all for coming to pay your respects to my father. Although it is inevitably a sorrowful occasion I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the life of a remarkable man.

Dad was born at Christmas time in 1914 in Ford Lane, a stone's throw from this church. He celebrated his 85th. Birthday less than a mile away from here in Manchester Road, Stocksbridge, where he spent all 59 years of his married life with his loving wife Muriel. He was truly a Stocksbridge man through and through.

"Freddy", as he was known as a boy, spent his youth living at Sitwell Avenue in the new Garden City and passed the County Minor Exam to go to Penistone Grammar School. Although he was much loved by his mother and father, unfortunately it was a very bad time for them and they were unable to find the extra money needed for the uniforms, etc., for him to go.

His sister Joan tells me that Freddy was her hero as he was always so kind and protective towards her. When he took her sledging he would always pull her back up the hill and would always buy her presents on her birthday and at Christmas and at holiday times.

His father and brother had come up from Sheffield in 1910 to work in the Samuel Fox Cold Rolled Strip Department, which is where Fred started work while still a young

lad. He did odd jobs at first, but wanted to be a Roller like his Dad, so, with encouragement from his boss, he set about making his own pair of rolls. Despite many difficulties, including the disappearance of some of the parts he had put together, he finally succeeded and, true to his spirit, became a Cold Roller whilst still a teenager.

I vividly remember his father writing the following motto in a little book he once gave me: IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY, TRY AGAIN. It would appear that he had also instilled this spirit in my father. He once took me to see his Rolling Mill.

I knew he was immensely proud of the skill needed to produce the high quality of work which sometimes involved rolling steel down to little more than the thickness of paper.

My father was a modest man, but I could tell that his skills were highly respected by his workmates, who incidentally, called him "Fidder" for some reason.

He also used his clever hands and brain to earn extra money from the many suggestions he submitted to the Works Suggestion Scheme.

During his late teens and early twenties he enjoyed running, cycling, and eventually – the love of his life – motorcycling. He once bought an Ariel Red Hunter after seeing it all in pieces spread out on the floor. I am sure that gained just as much enjoyment from assembling it as he did from riding it.

I am told that he was quite a fast rider but, to my knowledge, never had any mishaps. Joan tells me that he once spotted her in Deepcar, pulled up and asked her the time. "Ten past two", she

said. "Not bad, eh?", he replied, "Ten minutes from Middlewood!"

During World War II he was classed as a Retained Worker in the Steel Industry, but he was an enthusiastic and active member of the Home Guard. Mum told me that this would sometimes involve finishing work at 10 pm. and then spending all night guarding the Dams. He could also of course, use his motorcycling skills as a dispatch rider.

He was instrumental in the formation of the Stocksbridge Motor Club, where he helped organise, and participated in, many competitive and social events. This club was to play a central role in our family life and in the upbringing of me and my sister, Janet. We regularly went on family outings or Sunday "Runs", as they were called, in the motor-bike and side-car.

Some of my fondest memories relate to the preparation for Scramble events at the Trunce circuit over Greenmoor, as this was the chance for the growing young lads of the Club to ride the bikes. However, I had a condition to meet. I was told that when I was old enough to kick-start the bike on my own, then I could ride it on my own. I managed to kick-start his 500cc. BSA

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when I was about 10 years old, and he was true to his word. Luckily for me, and him, the bike had the side-car attached and I rode it up and down the start and finish straight. Incidentally, I am told that one of the first words I uttered was "carburettor", which I believe thrilled him to bits.

One of his main qualities was his resourcefulness and ingenuity. On one occasion the spring on the side-car suspension broke and he fixed it at the road-side and got us home, using large rubber bands made from cut-up inner tubes. These rubber bands were always in Dad's emergency kit, and I confess I have one or two in my car boot today. On many occasions, if someone had a problem to solve on their bike or car, the word would go out, "Send for Fred."

As the family expanded and grew up, it was inevitable that we had to graduate to a car if we were to keep our mobility. I believe that we had one of the first car radios in a Ford Prefect. We were on holiday at Colwyn Bay – Dad always made sure that we had an annual holiday. This was a particularly rainy July in the 1950s, so he bought a large portable radio – you know, one with valves in! In order to get it to play in the car it had to be held up against the roof. However four cup-hooks and two rubber bands later, we had a built-in car radio!

We were one of the last families to get a TV, and Janet asked when we were getting one. His answer was that we would have one when they made them for cars. She realises now how subtle that answer was. His first priority was for the family to be able to get out into the surrounding country-side and meet real people.

Janet and I left Stocksbridge in the early Sixties to pursue our own lives, leaving Mum and Dad to develop new interests and rekindle old ones. He was very proud of the four grandsons who appeared on the scene over the next two years. In Janet's case there was a complication, as she was living in Italy, but

without more ado, Mum and Dad went to night-school at the age of 60+ to learn and practise a new skill – the Italian language.

The 23 years of retirement which Dad enjoyed enabled him to brush up his old skills of drawing and painting, together with the further application of his manual skills into model-making. He also encouraged Mum into the world of Art. Many of you will have seen the excellent results of their work at local exhibitions and at home.

Dad's continuing thirst for knowledge was also typified by his active membership of the Art Society, Local History Society and the Probus Club.

Do you remember the advertising slogans "Fortifies the Over-Forties" and "Prolongs Active Life"? Well, Dad certainly had his own secret formula for fortifying the Over-Fifties, Sixties, Seventies and Eighties! Apart from occasional trips to the Hospital garage for a de-coke and overhaul, he led a full and active life. Only two days before he last went into hospital Mum was having trouble with the door-bell, so she "Sent for Fred and he fixed it!

As a friend summed him up this week, he was "A lovely chap".

Thanks, Dad, for everything, from us all. Goodbye for now and Arrivederci!

FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

THE HISTORIANS: -

JOSEPH SHELDON

1922 FOUNDERS & BUILDERS OF STOCKSBRIDGE
WORKS

1927 REMINISCENCES 1845 TO 1927

Joseph Sheldon was a different kind of historian in that he was a working man from very humble beginnings who made a name for himself, which is commemorated in a local street name.

In his Reminiscences he tells of his early years in Hathersage. His first contact with our area was at the Hiring Fair at Hope in 1861, when he was hired by Tommy Crawshaw of Deepcar. Joseph remembered his dismay at having to work on Whit Monday when he could hear the band playing in Fox Bottom, and his disgust when he was cheated out of all the money he had by local men in a game called "Odd Lad".

He found more satisfactory employment with Joseph Crossland, tenant of Broomhead, Morehall and Wood Farms. He lived at Morehall with the cowman and horseman, and says that he exchanged his new clothes for a pistol from Johnny Grant, the horseman. While working at Wood Farm, he wrote his first letter home to his mother.

When he sought to better himself by applying for a position at Fox's of Townend, Mr. Crossland gave him a "character" reference, saying simply that "Joe was a good lad".

Joseph believed he had made a good impression on Mr. Fox by walking to Deepcar from Hathersage. He was at first a footman, his wages £11 for the year, with one new suit, one long silk hat and a pair of white gloves. One of his duties was to accompany the coachman when Mr. and Mrs. Fox were driven to the Ebenezer Chapel. Mr. Fox was a hard master, who dismissed the coachman George Ellis for allowing the dog-cart to run away.

Joseph had to collect the letter-bag from Thomas Turton at Deepcar Post Office, and sometimes, when delayed, he would have to run down the Bitholmes Lane after One-armed Tom, who carried the mail to Sheffield. He also took his employers' dinner to them at the Works.

Mrs. Fox, as well as supervising the payment of wages in those days at the Works, taught at the Ebenezer and gave the servants Scripture lessons in the kitchen on Sunday evenings. She also took an interest in Joseph's education, giving him writing lessons and books to read.

Joseph Sheldon attended the Rev. Henry Robertshaw's Bible Classes and became a Sunday School teacher himself in March 1864, the Sunday before the Sheffield Flood.

He claims that he joined the Mutual Improvement Society branch of the Yorkshire Mechanics Institute "a dull boy" and rose to become its secretary.

After two years at Townend Joseph requested a transfer to the Works and became a "catcher" in the Hot Sheet mill. Later he was apprenticed to Engineering.

He married before his time was up, and dared to ask Mr. Fox for a rise. The hard task-master proved to be a fair one, and granted every apprentice in his last year the same rise.

Joseph Sheldon became Head of Light Engineering and eventually Head of the entire Engineering Department of a rapidly expanding manufacturer. His *Reminiscences* provide a rare, first-hand account of the way of life in the late 19th Century in this part of Yorkshire.

The earlier publication *Founders and Builders of Stocksbridge Works* gives a detailed account of the fortunes of the manufacturing base of the growing town from the time of the firm's foundation, and includes lists of many of the people and family names which we see in the Census Returns.

Next issue: JOSEPH KENWORTHY

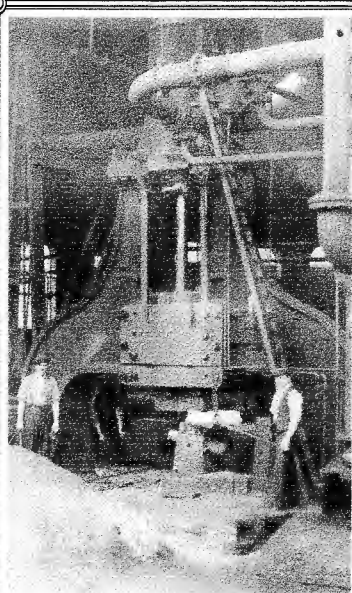
STOCKSBRIDGE IN 1917

When one is requested to reminisce about life in the early days of this century, it is not easy, at 81, to remember names, dates, etc., so I hope I don't get it wrong too often.

GOOD CHOIR

My connection with St. Matthias' Church and the School began when we moved from Bolsterstone to Stocksbridge in about 1910. Attending the C of E School as a matter of course, I soon found that as a boy, unless you were tone-deaf, you were in the Church Choir, and a very different choir it was in those days.

Mr. Marsh Swallow, Head of the School, was the Organist. He was one of Nature's gentlemen, in the full sense of the word. The Choirmaster was, at first, Mr. W. H. Robinson, Manager at S. Fox & Co., which became part of the United Steel Co. during the 1914 / 18



TYRE MILL - MAKING RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK TYRES 1913 -
Left William Helliwell, Right Gus Withers

War.

The Choir was very large and very good. I should think we had 18 or so men and 18 to 20 robed boys, plus about 6 probationers sitting at the back, waiting for any vacancies, who had their own practices under one of the men of the Choir.

It was the first time I had heard of Decani and Cantores - the two sides of the Choir stalls, often utilised when we did an Anthem, which was frequently.

FOX'S CHURCH

Services seemed to be always well-attended, and most of the Church sidesmen, and the Wardens, were fairly prominent men in Fox's, which might account for good attendances!

The Rev. C. Edgington was Curate -in-charge, as we were part of Bolsterstone Parish. Stocksbridge became a separate parish in 1917, long after my voice (never that good!) had broken.

On the social side, the Church had quite a lot of activities, Football and Cricket teams, C.E.M.S. and an Amateur Dramatic Society.

So far I have devoted my remarks to School and Church. Now a word about the community in general, vastly different from the present day, I am afraid.

TO WORK AT 13

Children left school at 13 in those days, unless you were lucky enough to pass the County Minor examination and go to the Grammar School, which was way out of most of our reach, mainly for financial reasons. Families seemed to want their children to start work as soon as possible to augment the average poor wages and incomes.

I left school the day after my 13th birthday and started work in the Tyre & Axle Mill next day. Most children went either into the Steelworks or the Colliery - girls to the Umbrella Department.

I hope these somewhat rambling remarks will stimulate someone of my generation to produce perhaps more exciting reminiscences.

Arnold Pears 1980

**Extract from WILLIS
BURGIN'S MEMORIES:
MY CHILDHOOD**

I lived in a long row of terraced houses in Marsh Street, Haywood Park, with two bedrooms, a living-room, and a kitchen so small, my Mother used to say "not room enough to swing a cat round".

Mother and Father occupied the front bedroom, which had an iron bedstead with two straw mattresses, a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, and a wash-stand on which were a wash-bowl and water-jug – used only if there was illness in the family. Hanging on the bedroom wall was a framed motto:

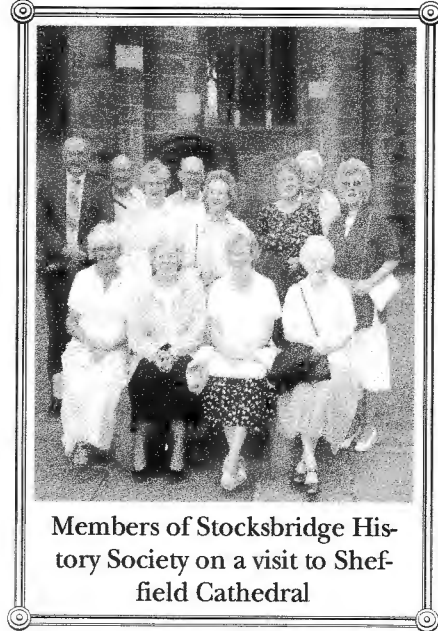
THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME

My bedroom was so small there was only room for a single bed. The stairs were so steep, it was like going up a ladder. Our light came from a tall, glass oil-lamp standing on the living-room table, which was filled and trimmed each day. In the winter months we carried candles to light us to bed.

A coal-fire grate heated our home and water was heated in a boiler near the fire, which had to be ladled in and out. A polished copper kettle gave us our hot water to make tea and for cooking purposes.

The furniture in our living-room was an organ, a side-board, four chairs, and a sofa padded with horse-hair. I spent many unhappy hours on this sofa with tooth-ache, and how those horse-hairs pricked my face and my legs. Mother had only one cure for tooth-ache, a pinch of salt in the hollow tooth.

In the corner of our kitchen was built a set-pot boiler to boil clothes on wash-day and to heat our bath water each week. We used a large zinc bath, which we kept hanging on the wall outside our kitchen-door. Standing near the set-pot was a large, five-foot high mangle with two four-inch wooden rollers on the side and a large wheel with a handle attached. Underneath the mangle was a wooden tub and in it a rubbing-board and pegged legs. All the lot was covered over by an old plush table-cover till next wash-day.



Members of Stocksbridge History Society on a visit to Sheffield Cathedral

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MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, AT THE LIBRARY, MANCHESTER ROAD, STOCKSBRIDGE AT 7.00 PM.



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**JULY 9TH
SUNDAY AFTERNOON VISIT TO
THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**

**AUGUST
NO MEETING**

**SEPTEMBER 14TH
FOR VALOUR: THE STORY OF THE
VICTORIA CROSS - KEN LOXLEY**

**OCTOBER 12TH
ROYAL MAIL PART II - BASIL
SPOONER**

**NOVEMBER 9TH
AFTERNOON VISIT TO THE
TURNER GLASS MUSEUM**

**DECEMBER 9TH
SATURDAY
CAROL SUPPER**