

THE PARAGON

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HARRY OSMAN DUFFIELD

It is sheer coincidence that this issue is mostly on the theme of Death and Departure. I do not want to have to write an obituary for Harry, rather to express my gratitude for all the support I am receiving in my bereavement. We had more than 51 years together; he died happy and mercifully quickly. His pride and joy were his grandchildren, and we can remember his gentle humour, his quiet strength and devotion, which I think are evident in this recent photograph of him with our youngest - his namesake - Harry James Duffield. Life goes on.

Brenda

FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

CHAPTER IV DEVELOPMENTS 1851-1881

The population of Yorkshire quadrupled during the 19th century and that of the West Riding increased almost five-fold. In comparison with the rest of the country, this western part of Ecclesfield Parish had not changed as much by the half-century. Although the seeds of development had already been sown, the Chapelry of Bolsterstone still appeared to be largely a scattered and rather sparsely populated, rural community.

Boundary changes had been made to encompass Hunshef, when it was realised that Rates paid on the more

valuable property acquired by Samuel Fox across the Little Don River would go to Penistone District, while Waldershef Rate-payers would have to shoulder the burden of maintenance of the access roads to the Works. A petition to rectify this situation was made in 1872 by one-tenth of the residents of the proposed District of Stocksbridge,

This petition may have been the last occasion when this side of the river was identified as **Waldershef**.

In 1873 the election of a Local Board was held to conform with the Public Health Act of 1848 and the Local Government Act of 1858. Then the division of the country into Sanitary Areas, labelled Rural and Urban, was used as a basis for calculating the proportion of the population living in town or country areas. Stocksbridge thus became an Urban, not a Rural, Sanitary District, and in the 1881 Census was enumerated at 4,660, occupying 848 houses.

Even after making allowance for the boundary change, it is evident that just such a population explosion as the county one had occurred in this area between the Censuses of 1851 and 1881. Our defined area, in 1851 covered by 199 schedules, now needed 712 and the total population had grown from 985 to 3,737.

For the reasons for this spectacular growth we must look beyond the fall in death rates, caused by fewer epidemics and better health care, to the economic growth which encouraged earlier marriage and a higher birth-rate. Bradfield and Bolsterstone Parish Registers show that, in the marriages which took place in this area between these dates, the average age of the bride was 22 and that of the groom, 23 - 2 to 3 years younger than those for the North of England in the first half of the 19th century.

Brenda Duffield

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TELL MY PALS

DEEPCAR SOLDIER'S THRILLING STORY

SOME GRAPHIC PEN PICTURES

We cull the following extracts from a letter which Private A. Smith, of Deepcar, now with the 1st Battalion West Yorks. Regiment, British Expeditionary Force, has written to his parents: -

"I've had no chance to write since I came out here until now, so you will not guess what we've been doing. The Germans hoisted the white flag, and then two companies of our men went over to fetch them, and when within range they turned their guns on us. This is our sixth day in the trenches, but we are getting relieved tonight, all being well. The enemy's artillery fire is terrible. They fire a shell we call "coal boxes," owing to the dense cloud of black smoke. It makes a hole large enough to bury between 20 to 30 horses, and when they start dropping around it puts the fear of God into your hearts. But I never mind, I'm glad to be doing my bit for the old country. I've just seen a paper that's been sent into the trench saying that the German Army on the France - Belgium battlefield is suffering awfully.

Well, we are back in the trenches, but the weather out here has changed from wet to hard frost. We suffer most in our feet. You can hardly tell you have any on at times. When we were coming into the trenches we came along a road just behind the firing line at the same time as the Germans made an attack. They don't half kick up a row, shouting and singing. A football match isn't in it, I can tell you. They advance in thousands shouting "Hock the Kaiser," or something to that effect. You would think they couldn't help walking over you, and the stream of bullets sounds just like bees on a fine summer's day. But you soon get used to it. I go for rations now, a distance like from Deepcar to Stocksbridge, and do not bother to look round, for if I did I would be doing the cake-walk in record time, trying to dodge Black Maria. I left the firing line the other day to fetch water, at considerable risk from snipers. Looking for a pan in an old house, which was deserted, I fell across a Shropshire Light Infantry man, dead. Of course it gave me a shock for a minute, but I'm used to all that now. In our last trench we had 12 piles of "Germ-huns" in front of us. They swamped our "abode of love" the other day, killed one and wounded five on the right of me, so you needn't trouble much about me, as I think I am one of the lucky ones, or I would have been hit



before now. Coming out of their trenches the other night, a bullet whizzed past my elbow, making a hole in my coat, and five or six in my lappets, so if they keep there it will be all right. The next time I write I'll give you my first experiences on the battlefield. It was across an open ploughed field. I'll now conclude, as a rifle butt doesn't make a good desk.

Well, much has happened since last week. I'm going to tell you all about it, as it's been the worst since we came out here. In the first place, we've been soaking wet for six days and nights, with no possible chance of getting dry, and standing knee-deep in water all the time. So they thought they would give us four days rest in the billet, which was a flax mill, and on the last night the enemy started shelling the town just after we had got down to sleep. The shells (Jack Johnsons) were bursting four at a time over the mills. Of course they had got to know we were in there (210 of us, and waiting, expecting to be blown to pieces any minute). Well, a shell burst on the mill, and we had orders to fall in. Out came matches and candle. I was rolling my blanket up when someone yelled "The mill's on fire!", and before anybody could say Jack Robinson the flames were licking the

roof. We all made a dash for the door; some poor chaps lost everything they possessed. I lost my rifle and rucksack, containing my scarf and all the comforts you sent me; some lost everything. They marched us about 600 yards into a field. We were given a grand display by the German artillery. The sky was lit up for miles, it making a proper target for their gunners, and they kept it up all night. The French people had come back to their homes, and it was awful to hear the women and kiddies crying, but we shall pay the Germans back with interest shortly. I think we are going to do a big advance, and then there will be some fun. I often think if all the "royal standbacks" at home could only know half of what's

going on, they would enlist to a man, that's if they are Englishmen, because to see the old folk and kiddies without home or habitation, makes us eager to get at the foe. You mention reading about the German brutality - I'll tell you what happened close to where we are. They set a house on fire, a party of our men went to see what they could do in the matter, and they found three young women locked up in a cupboard, left to be burned to death, but thank God they were not much hurt. Nice chaps aren't they?

Well, I promised to tell you all about my first lesson, but I'll leave it until I come back as I'm not likely to forget the smallest detail of it. My listing friend was shot dead yesterday. We were standing talking about what we were going to do and what a tuck-in we were going to have when we got back home, and in a few minutes a bullet came clean thro' his head. Now, if you are sending me anything, let it be something to eat, as I've two pals who like tasty bits, and you cannot imagine what it's like having bully beef so long.

Never mind, we are getting to Berlin, if it's only step-by-step, it's sure. Tell my pals to get themselves out here, as there's extra game to bag!

The Express, Saturday, July 17th 1915.

War's Terrible Havoc.

Private Arthur Smith, 1st West Yorks. Regiment, who lived at the King and Miller Hotel, Deepcar, as announced in last week's issue, has been killed. In his last communication to his parents, which was received a few days before his death, he writes:

"Dear parents, I write just to let you know I am quite well, so far as health is concerned, but I shall never be able to stamp out of my mind the terrible sights of the last few days. You will read about this battle we've been in, but no pen can describe the slaughter. It was a victory for us – but at what a cost!

You see in the paper British assault at - - - - and the capture of two enemy trenches – but that doesn't make you see the - - (here it seems to have been censored)

I only hope I am not called upon to go through it again. We just landed in from the scene. We had been in the trenches for 14 days and under shell fire all the time. It was just like a piece of music playing mezzoforte before crescendoing into double forte. Talk about hell let loose! The bombardment at Neuve Chapelle lasted thirty-five minutes, but this lasted 18 hours. Fancy ** guns belching out fire for 18 hours as fast as possible, and with a splitting headache, expecting to be blown to atoms any minute. It started at 3 o'clock in the morning. The whizz and bursting of shells just over my head sounded like a huge wave, and the feeling was like being in an express train going through a tunnel, and then the Germans started. I don't know how many guns they had, but it was a lot, and they caused great havoc. The bravery of our lads is something wonderful. The third line of enemy trenches fell to us in under an hour, and we took 44 prisoners, but they were too eager. Instead of taking the trenches one by one, so as to allow the artillery to batter the other trenches – they flew on into the first, straight on to the second, and then the third – (more censorship)

A Scottish regiment took the fourth line, and was taking the fifth, but had to retire back to the second under machine-gun fire. Some of our chaps started in with the boot and fist, and you should have seen some of the German prisoners, who hadn't received a wound at all except with the boot and fist or rifle butt. I think our Fred was behind us, as we were working with their division, and their infantry were in charge, supported by us. We are now in a wood, still in sound and range of guns, and some shells came over us this morning, but it seems peaceful after that hell-hole. Don't wait to see if I'm alive or not when you want to send a parcel; because if I'm not, my mate would get it, and we really need things tasty to make life at all worth living."

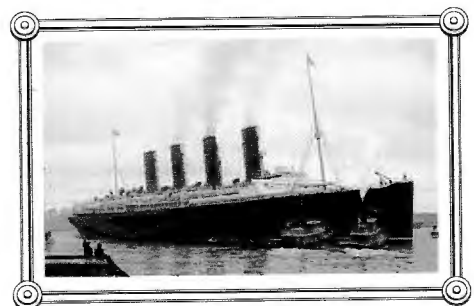
All during this last year Mr. Pickford had been writing, telling how fine everything was over in America. He said that trade was better than it had been for a long time. Here, by complete contrast, trade grew terrible. At last, through worry and discontent, they decided to write to Mr. Pickford and tell him they were coming. Then they wrote to the brewery to tell them they were leaving for America.

Miriam was very excited, running to tell her friends and neighbours that they were going to America. Mr. Sanderson was going to have their things auctioned off. They got an auctioneer and everything was got ready for the great sale. This took place on the 19th. September. Miriam spent the day in the attic with her cousin, having a fine time, making signs to her friends to attract their attention. Her mother sat in the empty parlour with her lively sister, who was trying to cheer her up. Mr. Sanderson was helping the auctioneer and Fanny was out, visiting a friend. At last the dreary day passed, the house was empty, and the family spent their last two weeks with Mrs. Smith, Mr. Sanderson's youngest sister.

All their brothers and sisters said they would go with them to Liverpool to see them off, but when the day came, they just couldn't watch them go. So no one went with them but an American friend. It was a very sad parting. Mrs. Sanderson cried with her sister. Fanny was crying and kissing her friends goodbye, but Miriam was having a delightful time. Mr. Sanderson was talking to a young man, who was pleading to be allowed to come to America later, to be with Fanny, for her liked her a great deal.

At last, after a three-hour ride, the Sandersons arrived in Liverpool, where they were to embark for America. They had lunch with their American friend at a beautiful hotel. Eventually they went down to the harbour to watch for their ship. When it came into view, they realised how enormous it was – they had to strain their eyes to see the top – and it was as long as a city block. This was the ship they were to sail on. Its name was the Lusitania.

The landing board was stretched from ship to pier and they were taken on board. The American found them their cabin, and then took his leave. On deck, they waved to him as the great ship got under way and gradually, the white handkerchief he was waving dwindled to a speck in the distance, and they were left alone on the vessel.



STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT

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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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MEETINGS

❁ PROGRAMME 2005 ❁

APRIL 14TH

MEMBERS EVENING — OPEN FORUM

SATURDAY MAY 7TH.

SHEFFIELD HISTORY FAIR IN SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL
10 AM.

MAY 12TH

TO BE ARRANGED

WEDNESDAY JUNE 8TH

VISIT TO BRODSWORTH HALL & GARDENS

JULY 14TH

LLOYD POWELL SHEFFIELD CASTLE

AUGUST

NO MEETING - SUMMER RECESS

SEPTEMBER 8TH

JOHN SALT CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE

OCTOBER 13TH

MEMBERS EVENING — OPEN FORUM

NOVEMBER 10TH

BETTY MCKAY THE POPPY PEOPLE

SATURDAY DECEMBER 10TH

CAROL SUPPER AT THE UNITED REFORM HALL

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WILLIS BURGIN'S DIARY

TRAGEDY

When I came home from work after the night shift and opened the front door, I noticed how quiet things were in the house. Then I heard hushed conversation from upstairs. I was told that Father was ill and confined to bed.

Two weeks went by and he was no better, in fact he was worse. My birthday was on the 16th. February in this year of 1911. I was 17 and my present was a pedal cycle, but it passed very quietly.

I was not allowed to see Father, so each day I enquired of Mother how he was, until the 24th., when she said I might see him. When I got into the sick-room and saw his ashen face, it shook me. He did not know me. The doctor came in the afternoon and told Mother that it was just a matter of time.

That night when I went to bed I prayed for Mother and Father and asked that he should not be allowed to suffer any more. Next day Father's condition was the same.

After tea that day, Mother asked me to do some shopping at the Co-op Stores across the road in Haywoods. Something strange happened, which I have never been able to explain. I stood outside for a moment, looking in to see how many people were inside, and I could see the row of sweet jars on the back shelf. Looking along the row of jars to see which I fancied, I saw the glass lid of one, halfway along, rise out of top of the jar, remain in the air for three seconds and then back it went.

I went in and did my shopping, but did not buy any sweets. They all looked normal now. Later I told Mother what I thought I had seen, but she laughed, saying I had been "seeing things".

Next day, at midday on February 26th 1911, Father died, aged 40.

The funeral was held three days later. On that day at 2 pm. a hearse and four carriages arrived at our front door, each drawn by two black horses. Nurse Sunter, who had been a good help to Mother and all the family, ushered the mourners into the carriages. The service was held at the Deepcar Wesleyan Chapel. The seats were filled with friends and relations.

Mother was too upset to help with the singing, but her seven sisters, most of them in the singing profession, made up for the lack of her voice.

Father was buried in Bolsterstone Church cemetery. I have no idea what was on his Death Certificate, but I am sure that his illness and death, at only 40, was due to his work in the ganister mine. It took Mother and the family many months to get over this loss.