

THE PARAGON

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WILLIS BURGIN'S DIARY

AFTER ANOTHER MOVE TO BENTLEY COLLIERY AND
MORE ADVENTURES UNDERGROUND ;

1914: A Year of Sadness and Happiness

It was Bank Holiday Monday and the members of the Chapel Institute were on the Tennis field, when on to the field came a newspaper lad with a special newspaper - in the middle of the day - August 5th 1914.

On the front page we read:

ENGLAND AT WAR WITH GERMANY

A black cloud descended over our country. But it did not stop us continuing our game of tennis.

Two weeks later I had an accident in the mine at 3 am. I was uncoupling two wagons of sand in the underlevel when the first finger of my right hand was split at the side from top to bottom. It was a deep cut 2 and a half inches long. An Ambulance box was near and a lad helped me to bandage the finger.

I was taken home in a pony and trap and a worried mother opened the door. She made me a cup of tea and helped me to get washed. I lay on the couch and tried to sleep until time to see the doctor at 8.30 am.

Doctor Walker took off the bandage and remarked "This is a nasty cut, Willis and it's your trigger finger! This will stop you joining the Army! "

The accident caused me to be off work for 8 weeks and when I started work, the finger had to be protected with a bandage and glove-finger.

Then I was amazed at the sight which met me on my way home from the colliery after the night shift, half asleep and rubbing my eyes. Coming up the road to work was a party of lads, who worked on the haulage road in the mine, all dressed as if they were going to a Fancy Dress Ball. The lad in the lead was wearing a black, swallow-tail coat with a red handkerchief hanging out of the back pocket. His pit trousers had been through the mangle and were well pressed, and he was carrying a top hat and white gloves. The other lads were dressed as tramps, wearing old suits with plenty of holes, top hats with holes in the top and boots with

holes in heels and toes. Each lad had a mouth-organ or a tin whistle, and some were singing at the top of their voices - at 5.45 am.-Alexander's Ragtime Band! This was their way of advertising the introduction of Ragtime to our country from the U.S.A.

I was now at the age when a lad starts looking out for a girlfriend. It was at the Wesleyan Chapel that I met Elsie - tall and slim and bonny, and she wore her hair in two long plaits. We had been going out together a month when her father found out that his daughter had a boyfriend. Elsie was told that had to stop! Of course, I could understand this, I was 18, but she was only 15 years old. But this only made me keener, and we carried on our meetings in secret, always keeping out a watchful eye for her father! Finally I was invited to meet the family and invited to tea.

Next issue: Willis enlists

THIS IS A NASTY CUT, WILLIS
AND IT'S YOUR TRIGGER
FINGER! THIS WILL STOP YOU
JOINING THE ARMY!



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FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

CHAPTER IV CONTINUED: SAMUEL FOX

The 1850s had been a struggle for Samuel Fox in his wire-mill in Hunshelf Bottom. He had had to borrow to buy the old cotton mill and convert it, and again to buy his house there, but both debts had been paid off by 1860. Whites 1849 Trade Directory described him as *wire-drawer, hackle- and gill-pin manufacturer.*

In 1856 the Parochial Valuation of the Township of Hunshelf described the extent of his property: *Stocksbridge, owner - Samuel Fox; occupier, himself; description of property = homestead and goit, dyke, house, carriage house, office, barn and outbuildings, mill and power, smith and other shops, new factory and stove, coal-pit; Rough Brow Field, Upper Holme, Middle and Far Holmes, Mill Holme. Estimated extent, 10 acres, 36 perches. Total rateable value, £119.15s.6d.*

(We can identify the holmes listed as the land occupied by John Stocks in the early 1700s.)

The demand for his first products, used for processing flax for linen, slumped drastically during the cotton famine of the 1860s, and Samuel Fox's fortunes could have followed his predecessors' into ruin. But the turning-point came as he began his production of umbrella frames, and the invention of hollow ribs by an employee made them much lighter. Sending them away to be covered proved too big an expense, and he tried covering them here and marketing the finished product as the Paragon Umbrella. In the 1860s he even established his own factory in Amiens, France, with an office in Boulogne, to reduce his import duty. Although this enterprise eventually foundered, it is the reason that a few people found in the 1871 and 1881 Censuses were born in France and descendants of those who settled there still live in Amiens. He also sent agents to America and was able to advertise the fact in the 1856 General Directory.

Another boost to the growth of

business was provided by the new fashion for crinoline skirts. Against all advice, Samuel Fox chose to take advantage of the craze while it lasted, from 1858 to 1866, and made £80,000 out of the production of wire for crinoline frames.

There were other employers in the valley – a mill at Deepcar was converted to make crinoline wire, but was unable to adapt when the demand ceased. And John Armitage, an itinerant glazier, had seen the possibilities of a

pipe works at Henholmes and developed it into a thriving concern. The 1856 General Directory described him as *drainpipe, firebrick, chimney-top, etc. manufacturer, at Sheffield and Stocks Bridge.*

Thomas Brooke worked for Armitage until clay was discovered at Bracken Moor and he moved there to set up a pipe works of his own. Then his son, William Brooke, left to establish the works near Pot House in 1853.

But none of these businesses achieved anything like the success of Samuel Fox, who showed more foresight in his grasp of market requirements. The greatest break-through came for him when Henry Bessemer introduced his steel conversion process in 1856. Samuel Fox realised its enormous importance and acquired a licence to use it even before its viability was proven. Expanding his crucible capacity with Bessemer converters, he was able by 1862 to enter his most lucrative market – the manufacture of railway materials. He produced rails and billets from 1863 and rods the following year. His engineers built steam engines to drive the mills - men described in the Census as *engine-driver* and *engine-cleaner* would be those who worked on these stationary machines rather than railway engines.

Expansion continued after Fox's became a Limited Company in 1871. The last obstacle to his prosperity, the local transport problem, was overcome by the building of a rail link with the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway at Deepcar in 1877.

Brenda Duffield



Top—Samuel Fox.
Bottom—Maria, wife of Samuel Fox, wearing a crinoline skirt. Did it use Fox wire?

SELF REMEMBERED

CHARLES ROYSTON MALLINSON (Roy)

Born 2nd October 1930

Place of Birth: rented rooms above a shop in Langsett Road South, Oughtibridge.

I have no recollection of being a 'bawling' baby, but within a few weeks we were in other rented rooms, still on Langsett Road South. About eighteen months later we had moved into our own rented house in Church Street, Oughtibridge. The house consisted of a cellar, living-room, bedroom and attic. In winter water came into the cellar to the depth of 18 inches to 2 feet. This had to be bridged to get to the coal stock, which was tipped through a grate in the outer flagstones.

I started school in the Infants Department of Oughtibridge Council School in 1935. There were three classes in the Infants section; two of them were Mrs. Royal and Mrs. Skelton. They were more like mothers than teachers. We spent our time writing with chalk, drawing and making raffia mats.

One girl in our class died and we each took either a penny or halfpenny towards some flowers. Death happened - no seeking someone to blame, or who could be sued for money.

Once a year a supply of new shoes arrived for teachers to hand out to children from the larger, poorer families.

After going through the three Infant classes we would be about seven years old and moved into top school. What a change in the teachers! In Standard 2 we met Mrs. Maw. Five foot nothing, she had the throwing arm of a county cricketer and would pick up anything that came to hand chalk, keys, inkwell full or empty and it came flying at either boy or girl who had given a wrong answer. A more serious crime, like talking in class, and we were called out to her desk. A 12-inch wooden ruler could really make knuckles sore.

This was the class in which we learned our Tables, from 2 times to 12-times, standing to repeat each one in turn. Learning by rote was the great thing then.

The next move was to Standard 3, where a younger and more gentle lady taught us. Each morning after Prayers we moved to our own classroom and the first thing was always to solve twenty mental arithmetic problems.

Moving to Standard 4, we were met by an athletic male teacher, who proceeded to inform us what was allowed and what was definitely not allowed; at this point, to show what would happen if we should stray into forbidden territory, he slid a 2-foot, 6-inch cane from his sleeve. Funnily enough, he was quite liked I think it was because he never varied from his word. Do wrong, and you got the cane; stay on the right side of his rules and you were ok.

In 1944, when the war appeared to be turning for a British victory, we older boys were put on duty, clearing the sand-and water-buckets from the classrooms and it fell to me to find his plimsoll shoes on top of a sand-bucket. I had to throw them away, knowing he would not be coming back, having been killed in the Fleet Air Arm.

There being no Standard 5, we had a year in Standard 6 before finishing our time in that class. All this and never a sign of Algebra, which came later. I left school in October 1944, aged 14 years, and began searching for a job.

This is a broad outline of schooldays. Every few months we had an inspection by the Nit-nurse when you had to rest your head on your hands while she ran a pencil through your hair. There was a regular handkerchief inspection to make sure you had a clean hankie. Each morning we had a half-pint bottle of milk, and the teacher came round with one spoon to issue a spoonful of cod liver oil and one of orange juice. So much for hygiene in those days!

At 11.55 am. the older boys were released to take dinners the men at the Silica Firebrick Co. or to the Paper Mill. They had to hurry, but not commit the cardinal sin of spilling the gravy. When air-raids occurred during school-time, we were ushered into the underground air raid shelters, and this was the time for everyone's party-piece, be it a song or poem, or general singing of popular songs.

By the very severe winter of 1939-40 we had moved to a larger house and that was during the snow, carrying the furniture between the yard-high piles of snow, which soldiers had been brought in to move.

The worst blow of all was on the 12th. and 14th. of December, 1940, when the Sheffield Blitz occurred, This started with the sirens going at about 7 pm. and lasting until the early hours of the morning.

The morning after the first raid, my aunt called on me to walk from Oughtibridge to Worrall to see if her old aunt had survived the raid. There was no local radio in those days - if you wanted to know anything, it was a question of walking to find out. It was a morning of very keen, white frost, and the trees were littered with bills and police notices, which had risen skyward in the heat and once out of the thermals, had fallen and frozen to the trees, just like gigantic, white leaves. We found no damage at Worrall, and the old lady was well enough, although feeling the effects of a night of dread.

STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT
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MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY HELD ON THE SECOND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, AT THE UNITED REFORM
CHURCH HALL, MANCHESTER ROAD, STOCKSBRIDGE AT
7.00 PM.

THE PARAGON

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MEETINGS

❖ PROGRAMME 2006 ❖

APRIL 13TH

SHEFFIELD AT WAR

DOUGLAS LAMB

MAY 11TH

WILLIAM I – THE HARRYING OF THE NORTH

LLOYD POWELL

JUNE 8TH

VISIT TO BOLSOVER CASTLE

JULY 13TH

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH INN

HOWARD SMITH

AUGUST

SUMMER RECESS – NO MEETING

SEPTEMBER 14TH

THE HISTORY OF CASTLETON

PETER HARRISON

OCTOBER 12TH

IT WAS ON THE FRONT PAGE – SHEFFIELD'S

NEWSPAPERS

MIKE SPICK

NOVEMBER 9TH

THE SEARCH FOR BOLSTERSTONE CASTLE

WENDY GOODHIND

SATURDAY DECEMBER 16TH

CAROL SUPPER – CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Designed & printed by Mike's DTP 0114 246 4200 mike@pictz.co.uk

SOCIETY NEWS

We are pleased to announce the grant from the Bridge Community Shop Fund of £500 to pay for a lap-top computer. We shall now be able to record entries in the Parish Registers and any relevant information from Archive libraries, which we have so far had to take down with pencil on paper, then transcribe back at base onto our computer. This will only have to be typed in once and transferred via a compact disc or memory stick.

(Yes, it is all new to us too, but we are willing to learn!)

There has also been progress in our efforts to make the Census data, collected over the past four or five years, more accessible to the general public as well as our own members, who increasingly are becoming used to using these electronic labour-savers.

Thanks to our Secretary, the disc containing the whole of the Censuses 1841-1901 covering this area has been indexed on a second disc, which will shortly be made available. We propose charging £15 for each, or £20 for the pair.

Meanwhile, we are also on the Internet, with access to so much more information. So, we step tentatively into the 21st. Century!

Brenda Duffield

