



STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Number 9
Spring 1994

HAVE A GO !!

If you were at the Annual General Meeting in February, you will be aware that the present committee was re-elected en bloc. This was really against the wishes of two of the committee members who have been in post for the last four years, in fact since the Society was founded. The committee is standing again because no one new was nominated to serve on it. Christine Herbert has become the assistant secretary and Del Carr has been approached to take the assistant treasurer's post.

Now is the time to think about what happens next year. The committee needs an infusion of new blood and ideas if it is not to become stale. New members bring those new ideas. The Society doesn't run itself - someone has to book the room, and collect the keys, somebody has to arrange for speakers - contrary to popular belief they don't just turn up out of thin air! Membership records have to be kept and the money doesn't take care of itself.

Think NOW how you might help the Society and your fellow members, we ideally need two people to become assistant secretary and treasurer, to 'understudy' Christine and Del - After all, what would happen if there wasn't a committee? - COME AND JOIN US - IT'S NOT THAT BAD AND IT WON'T TAKE UP A LOT OF YOUR TIME !!!

The Committee.

THE BLUE TOBACCO JAR

I wonder how many readers had the equivalent of my blue tobacco jar? During the early years of the war the blue tobacco jar stood on the sill of the little side window of our living room, next to the fireplace and just above the shelves which held the copies of the Encyclopaedia Britannica which, in a way, had replaced it.

When I was younger Dad had smoked a pipe, but always keen to improve his health and his mind, he had given up smoking and used the tobacco money to pay the instalments on the encyclopaedia. By the beginning of the war the fretwork pipe rack and the blue tobacco jar were redundant. I don't remember what happened to it in the end, but for a year or two I kept my collection of shrapnel in the jar.

Most of us at my junior school on the outskirts of Manchester had shrapnel collections. The morning after an air raid we would go out looking for shrapnel. They were cold, jagged lumps of metal which had come not from bombs, but from shells fired by the mobile anti-aircraft guns which were driven around during a raid in the hope of harassing or hitting enemy planes. It felt good to be the one to find the biggest piece or to have more than anyone else.

We were fortunate that the only bomb to drop close to our house landed on open ground. More damage was done when the local barrage balloon, known as 'Calamity Jane' broke

loose and floated off, trailing its ropes which whipped off chimney pots and ridge tiles.

Another war time occupation was to count the barrage balloons between our house and Trafford Park, Manchester's big industrial estate, which housed firms like Metro-Vicks and A.V. Roes. I seem to remember that we counted a hundred, but I suppose that it was more likely to be a couple of dozen.

No wars are good and certainly the wars we see now on TV screens in our living rooms seem more brutal than the one I remember. My friends and I were fortunate in that we were spared the traumas of war and that our recollections are of harmless incidents and items like my blue tobacco jar.

Joan Banks

BREWING

In the 17th. & 18th. Century

When studying local seventeenth and early eighteenth century wills and inventories, I frequently came upon an item for malt in the inventory. Seventy years ago I worked in a brewery, and consequently, I could only conceive one use for malt, the brewing of ale or beer.

There is a distinction between the two terms.

"Ale is made from malt and water, ale for an Englishman is a natural drink. It doth engender gross humours but yet maketh a man strong. Beer is from malt, hops and water. It is the natural drink for a Dutchman, and now of late days it is much used in England to the detriment of many English people: it killeth those who be troubled with the colic, the stone, and the strangulation, for it is a cold drink, yet it doth make a man fat and doth inflate his belly."

(Andrew Boorde, writing in 1524 - 'A Dietry of Health')

This prejudice against beer continued for many years, and though by the end of the seventeenth century the terms ale and beer had become synonymous and beer was a common drink, the inventories suggest that ale was still the preferred tippie, or alternatively, hops were very hard to come by in the Little Don Valley, for only one inventory listed hops.

The brewers of London were incorporated by Royal Charter in 1437 as the brewers company and recognised as a guild in 1493. The mystery of Coopers, in existence in 1420, was incorporated in 1501 as "Citizens and Coopers of the art and mystery of Coopers in the City of London."

By the seventeenth century the brewing trade was established in the Common Brewer and the Brewing Victualler. The Common Brewer could only sell wholesale, and no drinking was allowed on his premises except in the tap room. The Brewing Victualler could sell to anyone as

well as supplying his own premises. In 1637 there were 650 Common Brewers in England.

Refreshment was obtained at Inns, Taverns and Ale-houses, nearly all brewed their own liquor. Inns provided drink, food, accommodation and stabling, taverns provided ale, beer and wine, rarely food. Ale-houses were tipping houses - drinking houses.

In 1577 a census of ale-houses in England and Wales was taken. Listed were 1402 ale-houses, 1631 inns and 329 taverns. In Yorkshire there were 3679, 279 and 23 in that order respectively.

In 1643, in an effort towards the funding of the Civil War, both sides levied excise duty on ale and beer at 2/- (10p) a barrel on strong beer; by 1695, to help William III fight Louis XIV in Europe, it had risen to 4/9 (24p) a barrel on strong beer and to 1/3 (7p) a barrel on small beer. In 1830 duty was abolished only to be restored in 1880.

W.E. Spencer

[To be continued in the next newsletter]

THE LIFE OF A YORKSHIRE MINER

A CENTURY AGO

[This is an abridged version of a manuscript first given to me by Roy Mallinson. The original was a faded, duplicated typescript, probably dating from the 1930's. The work was anonymous, but after a bit of diligent research and with some extra information supplied by Mr. W.E. Spencer, I was able to discover the true identity of this unknown author - he was George Marsh, onetime miner and later carriage proprietor of Pilley Green. - Ed.]

Part Three.

I was getting on for twenty years of age when I got married and left Thurgoland to live at Pilley brickyard, and to work for the Wharnccliffe Silkstone Coal Co. on the seventh day of May 1856.

I began to get coal and I found the work so comfortable that I thoroughly settled down, and, being steady, I found that I had some spare time in the evenings, so I began to do a little joinery work such as making chairs for children and also clothes horses. The latter I used to sell at two shillings each and the chairs at three shillings.

My spare time afterwards was taken up going about killing pigs, killing as many as three or four a night and cutting them up the next day. For this I got an average of two shillings each.

I left Pilley brickyard and came to live at Pilley Green in the house I now occupy, and began to build a hothouse twenty yards long by four yards wide, which took up my time for twelve months.

Then I began to grow cucumbers and several kinds of flowering plants in it. The first year I had the hothouse I made sufficient money to take me to Paris for ten days and then I had not spent up.

I also went to Stocksbridge every other Saturday during the summer to sell celery, cucumbers and other plants. I used to stand with my horse and dray on Smithy Hill in the Coach and Horses yard, and people came there to buy from me. On the other Saturday I stood in the market at Hoyland Common

I had plenty of time to look after my work at home

without interfering with my work at the pit. I was the eighth member to pay into the miners union at the Cross Keys, Hoyland Common, and I am now the oldest paid-up member in South Yorkshire.

I have never been in arrears since I joined the union and I am proud to say that I have never needed a penny from its funds for the last thirty years.

I ran a little wagonette to Hoyland Common Market. I then bought a large wagonette from Mr. W.H. Haigh of Sheffield, and began to run from Pilley, Hoyland Common and Birdwell to Barnsley on Wednesdays.

This I continued to do for 20 years, and during that time, anybody who was going to the hospital I only charged half fare, and I found that by doing this my custom was greatly increased.

I began to take Sunday School children and other parties to places of interest such as Wharnccliffe Craggs, Stainboro', Conisborough castle, Askern, Roche Abbey and many other places when needed, and this I found a very good thing.

The first time turning out with a four-in-hand (my son driving), we went into Wortley Park and met the late Lord Wharnccliffe walking in the park.

I told the driver to pull over, and I passed the usual "Good Morning My Lord". His Lordship looked at the horses and conveyance and was surprised. He said that he was not aware that a tenant of his had such horses and such a turnout.

I asked him if he would get up and have a ride which he did. I took him round to the front of the hall and he got down and went to fetch her ladyship to have a look and she was amazed.

After this he engaged me to do all his work which his own coachman could not do, and moreover, he gave me all the conveyance work belonging to the shooting. I did this right up until his lordship's death.

[To be concluded in the next issue.]

STEAM IN THE BLOOD

November 7th. 1944 - a cold grey day, my introduction to steam locomotives and the equally steely characters of the men, and a couple of ladies, who handled these vibrant giants, as a clerk might handle a pen. I had just passed my fourteenth birthday and this was my introduction to a working life as an engine cleaner.

Before being allowed near the engines I was introduced to shovel and brush to keep the shed itself clean, where loco fires had been cleaned at change of shift there were numerous piles of hot ash and clinker. The morning shift always found the pit roads full of heavy wet ash where the loco ashpans had been raked and washed out, but worst of all, especially if there was a wind, was the fine, black ash which had accumulated in the smoke box beneath the chimney, on being cleaned out this always found its way into eyes and the most inaccessible places.

The days soon passed to the stage where I was let loose to make the engine shine with oily waste, paraffin and tallow. The grease merely transferred itself from the engine to my boiler suit. It was but a short step from there to hiding oneself in the corner of the cab of a working engine and finding what the most important aspects of traffic working involved.

There were fourteen steam locomotives on the yard when I started, basically the same, yet each an individual with its own idiosyncrasies. Two of the engines had only

four wheels, intended for working where the bends were sharpest, they were grand little workers unless there was a damp, greasy atmosphere when they would slip and slide. These had been manufactured by Hudswell Clarke of Leeds, as were four other six wheel, saddle tank locos, plus side tanks no's 17, 14 and 20, this latter being used to the present day at Minehead on the West Somerset Railway, although I understand that it now bears the name 'Jennifer' - *How are the mighty fallen!*

Another six wheel side tank from the same manufacturers was the engine which belonged to the Stocksbridge Railway Company. This was a company in its own right and held the responsible task of transferring outward bound traffic from Stocksbridge to Deepcar and bringing inward traffic from Deepcar. Before there was a bus service to Stocksbridge from Sheffield, workmen and staff alike would travel to Deepcar by main-line train, from where they would transfer to Fox's train, known as the 'Paddy', which would be drawn by the Stocksbridge Railway engine into the low yard, at a proper siding complete with platform.

To work with any regularity on the Stocksbridge Railway, one was transferred from Fox's books and given a new clock number, it seemed as final as going to work abroad. The working practices were different, counting a train length of 36 wagons for the outward trip, one wagon length beyond the signal and then ease back onto the stop block. The inward length of 28 wagons was to allow you to pull onto Ellen Cliffe weighbridge and still be clear of the main line, or if you had to leave the train after weighing, you were clear of the bottom end.

There were two six wheel saddle tank engines, built by Peckett of Bristol, which I never knew to work anywhere but the Siemens Stage, handling the pan bogies which carried the 80 tons of scrap steel, pig iron or whatever made up the type of cast being made. Once these furnaces had been tapped and the ingots stripped from their moulds, work was provided for the largest of the engines, this was No. 15, known to one and all as 'Peter', so called after the son of the former general manager Mr. Gerald Steel. Peter Steel was an apprentice at the works, but unfortunately lost his life in World War 2. 'Peter' and engine No. 16, another six wheel saddle tank, came from the noted works of Hawthorn Lesley on Tyneside, and what magnificent machines they were, they really barked as they worked, complete masters of the job. The attention to detail was so noticeable, on the day it was burnt for scrap, the paintwork in the cab of No. 16 shone beautifully, and it was the original!

On returning to Stocksbridge after National Service I found that a number of the old engines had been scrapped, and as we were now part of the United Steel Company, politics played a big part in choice, and as the Yorkshire Engine Company were also part of the combine, we now had three of their six wheel saddle tank engines, not that they weren't good engines but they didn't appear to have any individuality.

Work carried on and then in 1953, on Coronation Day, I went home, having seen a diesel engine which had been borrowed for trials, the end of steam was approaching.

Roy Mallinson

MUSICAL TRADITIONS

The oldest musical organisation in our district is the Stocksbridge Works Prize Brass Band, founded in 1854. The band attended all the public functions held in the area, such

as Whitsuntide processions and other celebrations and even went as far afield as Manchester, where they always lead a Catholic Whit Friday Procession.

For many years their practice room was at the west end of the old Goit Side warehouse building. The tenants living on Goit Side always used to practice their dancing when the band rehearsed outside and had the advantage of listening to lots of classical music when the band was preparing for a contest.

The most successful year in the history of the band was 1883. They competed at seven brass band contests and won five first prizes, one second and a fourth, they also collected two solo cornet prizes and a euphonium prize. Mr. Aaron Sanderson went on to win the euphonium prize for Great Britain.

Over the years the old band gave inestimable pleasure to the citizens of Stocksbridge, and this early example of good music was instrumental in the setting up of different branches of music such as the Drum and Fife band formed at the National School in 1875. There was also a team of hand-bell ringers and the Temperance Band. This was an offshoot of the Old Band, supported and patronised by the leaders of the Congregational Chapel. They practised in the old infants school attached to the British Hall. They always led the Whitsuntide procession of the combined chapels. From this band, the New Band (also called the Brass and Reed band) was formed. They became very popular in the district, the members being a very versatile crowd with accomplished singers and piano players of fair talent.

The choral societies then followed; the Churches and Chapels, developing a keen interest in their choirs, the Congregational choir winning a first prize at Sheffield's Montgomery Hall in 1886.

The forward-looking Rev. Henry Robertshaw instituted a class for the study of the then new tonic sol-fa notation in 1857. This was the forerunner of Mr. J. Fawcett's class which ran for many years and brought much pleasure and benefit to many people.

This foundation was ably supported by the schools, who all had their tonic sol-fa register hanging on the classroom wall and the teachers used it regularly to instruct their pupils in the rudimentary principles of music. Anyone who learned the tonic sol-fa method thoroughly could read a sheet of music at first sight, more accurately than than one accustomed to conventional notation.

The 'giant' of music in Stocksbridge was Dr. Robertshaw. He was medical officer for the local authority for 50 years, and served as works doctor for Samuel Fox & Co, and although he followed his chosen profession conscientiously throughout his life, his great love was music.

Dr. Robertshaw started training choirs in 1907 when he was choirmaster at Stocksbridge Congregational Chapel. He established the Stocksbridge Music Festival which ran for 30 years, but his chief interest was in the training and conducting of choirs, in which he achieved outstanding success.

The Choral Union was inaugurated in 1912, and comprised the Mixed Choir, Male Voice Choir and the Female Choir, later to be re-named the Saint Cecelia Choir.

The Saint Cecelia choir was his most famous undertaking. Among many successes they won first prize at the 1936 Edinburgh Festival and sang for the B.B.C. on two occasions. They also made an annual appearance at popular concerts at Huddersfield Town Hall. In combination with the Penistone Choir they gained third prize at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in 1929. They paid two visits to the London Musical Festival and were placed first each time.

The doctor erected a practice room at Belmont, where he trained his choirs, and many happy times were enjoyed

there. The results he achieved were amazing from what must be admitted was a preponderance of raw talent.

The disbandment of the choirs and the loss of much musical activity was caused by the second world war.

Anon.

BRITISH HALL

Do you remember the British Hall which stood in the Market Place in Stocksbridge? As I only have vague recollections of it, I was interested to learn of its history.

The original single storey Ebenezer Chapel was built in 1827. It was enlarged in 1846 by adding an extra ten feet to its height, allowing it to have galleries put inside on three sides. As its use changed over the next hundred years from Chapel to Sunday School to Day School, so the building was altered or added to accordingly and became known as the British School. It functioned as a day school until 1929 when pupils were transferred to the new council school in Shay House Lane. In 1931 the British School changed its name for the last time to the British Hall. Its role in the community also changed with the passing years, being used as a casualty station during World War II, a concert and meeting room, a library and a clinic before its doors closed for the last time in December 1961.

The history was interesting to read but it was purely factual and lacked the personal anecdotes that, to me, make history come alive. Do you have any memories of the Ebenezer Chapel and its Sunday School? Were you a pupil of the British School? Did you attend any concerts, meetings or clinics at the British Hall? Can you recall any incidents that you can share with us or would you be willing to let us record your memories on tape and let one of the Oral History Group transcribe it for you. The building only exists in photographs and its memories will be lost for ever if we don't do something about it...help dress the bones of history before it's too late!

Christine Herbert (on behalf of the Oral History Group)

YORKSHIRE HUMOUR

A motorist going from Manchester to Sheffield decided to go the scenic way over the moors, finding himself on the edge of Broomhead Moor and not being sure of his way, he stopped and asked a man walking along the road edge.

MOTORIST "Could you tell me the nearest way to Sheffield please?"

NATIVE "Ah let's see; if tha teks first left dahn to Wigtwizzle an straight on, or tek second left then t' first reight dahn to Low Bradfield, or tha can tek second left an keep straight on to 'Igh Bradfield, an then tha'll see t' signs fer Sheffield."

MOTORIST "You seem very unsure of which is the best way."

NATIVE "Na that could say that, but then Ah'm not lost!"
Alec Herbert

PROGRAMME 1994

April 14th.
Martin Olive
Hillsborough to Stocksbridge
A Journey in Time

May 12th.
Ian Enters
Local Author

June 9th.
Marjorie Dunn
Hathersage and the Brontes

July 21st.
Steel Valley Walk
with Andy Warren

AUGUST
NO MEETING

September 8th.
W.E. Spencer
Hunshel and the Poor Law

October 13th.
To be Arranged

November 10th.
To be Arranged

December 8th.
To be Arranged

Stocksbridge & District History Society
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Meetings are normally held on the Second
Thursday of each month, at the Library
Manchester Road, Stocksbridge at 7.00pm.

NEXT NEWSLETTER
JUNE 1994

Publication Deadline
Thursday 12th. May

All articles and letters for publication
should be clearly marked 'History
Newsletter' and sent to:- Mike Spick, % The
Library, Manchester Road, Stocksbridge.