



# THE PARAGON

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## MEMOIRS OF JOHN PARKIN HOLLING – WRITTEN IN 1959/60 – PART 2

The activities in Church life were now gradually becoming a part of my young life, as it did in the lives of most other boys and girls, because, looking back, it was the only place to meet and enjoy the simple games and frolics and pass away the winter nights in those days. Band of Hope each week, and special nights to practice for the little operettas at the Annual Tea and Concert, and the same for the Missionary and Sunday School. All sections of the Church did likewise, so you can imagine that, at that time, each week-end was an eventful one for some section or other.

My home-life comes in great remembrance from now on. Each year further activities get a backward glimpse of mostly happy memories. It is to be understood by the reader, that at this time no building had been erected from Stocksbridge Church School, except "The Willows", right down to Mrs. Mellis house, across by the Wesley Chapel shop, nothing but fields. The Catholic Church was the first building which you could see on that side of the road, and the large Haywood Park Houses which belonged entirely to Sam Fox, and were occupied by his workpeople.

It seemed to me in those days that nearly every house in "New Haywoods" had living in them people from our Chapel. As each celebrated Week End occasion arrived, we youngsters, had the task of visiting most of the houses with a large clothes basket, into which spice cake - and all manner of good eating was put, by the ladies of the house, and on more than one occasion we had to return to finish collecting. A significant thing was that it was not begging, (as it might be termed today), they were expecting us, and it was ready for us, and trouble was in store for us had we missed anyone. At Whitsuntide, as now, all the Free Churches had their combined walk and sing in the large field adjoining New Haywoods on the east (now part of Stubbin Farm Estate and Haywood Avenue). It is interesting to note that the sectional religious antagonism was still in evidence, even in those days, among we children. More often than not when little fights developed Methodists fought lads from the Church of England, and the most severe ones were when both sides combined as one, if the Catholics started trouble. This kind of thing no doubt was a local inheritance, going far back in history, which has gradually declined, until today, respectful acknowledgement and consideration is given in all spheres of religious activities of all creeds and denominations which have the Welfare of the Soul to the fore.

My father told me that when he was a youth, pitched battles occurred at the top of Bocking Hill and near the Catholic Church to and from day school. From his account they usually drew blood on both sides, using stones, sticks, and fists.

Father says that one such stone was thrown with such force that it embedded itself in the brick-work of the first corner house nearest to the Catholic Church in New Haywoods. The march of time has brought enlightenment, until today Religion is one common bond for getting together in all walks of life.

Horses have always had a place in my every-day life since I can remember. I must have ridden - driven - and tended horses from starting walking to getting married. My father used them in his coal business at Stocksbridge, where he commenced or pioneered the bagging trade in this Valley. He lived at Bank House (The house opposite Stocksbridge Parish Church) which was the other end of the "New Inn" and father's stables and coal yard were at the back of the houses. My two sisters and two brothers were born at "Bank House" and myself soon after he, my father, built the premises at Old Haywoods; where I lived until getting married at the age of 25.

My father became to me, at all stages of my life, an idol of respectfulness, and the older I grew the more I desired to be in his presence. Whatever he embarked upon he invariably carried it out. He had great physical power. A great speaker, whether in the Pulpit (50 years), or on the Political platform (a Liberal), or in conversation, or lecture discussion groups, he commanded that silence by his fervour and knowledge of all great issues. He had a depth and quality of voice and command of the spoken word rarely heard in these days of Tin Pan Alley Syncopated Nasal Epileptic near Delinquents, who gyrate convulsively in pseudo English.

Horses were the only means of transport excepting journeys to towns on routes served by the Great Central Railway. The journey to Deepcar Station was by wagonette. These wagonette tradespeople covered most of the train service times of departures and arrivals. This service by horse wagonette was only through the main road. They picked you up and set you down at your own request. These wagonettes had two wheels at the front and two at the centre rear. You entered by a three step fixture set at the back, and the seating was down each side of the box-like wagon. Facing each other, the seating were forms similar to those now used on the road-side; the seating capacity was about 14. This type of wagonette could be drawn by two horses when required. Larger wagonettes, with seating capacity varying up to twenty or thirty, were used to take you on trips to Castleton or any other desired place. These generally had four horses, and were changed for four others about half way on your journey, and then on the return journey changed to the original four. They had received food and rest to return to our local area. I can remember that on occasions, the male members, on the steepest hills, got off the wagonette, and walked to the top of the incline to ease the horses of the strenuous pull.

Mr. Eli Morton of Oughtibridge was the largest wagonette proprietor in the area, and for the larger parties they were always engaged. This necessitated the party finding their own way to Oughtibridge, either by rail, (Deepcar to Oughtibridge) or walking it, or any other means at your disposal, and entering his "Horse Buses" in front of his Fruiterers Shop on the main road across from the Zion Congregational Church. (Mr. E. Morton's shop was in the middle of Zion Terrace). This row of shops was the property of my mother's family, and in my later years I collected the rents weekly for my mother to whom they mostly belonged.

Mr. Harold and Colin Morton, sons of Eli Morton drove these wagonettes, and until quite recently (1960) still plied their fruiterers trade within a ten-mile radius of Oughtibridge with modern transport. (Harold was a Special Constable and in my command, a very conscientious member until his death). The "Gaunt" brothers of Stocksbridge were the main transport service by wagonette to Deepcar Station. Also plying for hire with horse drawn vehicles (wagonettes, traps, braughams, gigs), were Sam Herbert – Jon and Hugh Swallow – Newtons, and many farmers and tradespeople owned their own cabs. It was not unusual to see, at a large funeral, horses of all colours taking the mourners to Bolsterstone by cab.

I remember that there were only two proprietors who kept jet black horses for the use of funerals. (Messrs Swallow brothers and Mr. G. C. Knowles) - about four each - and one of G.C. Knowles's was called "Blackie". This "Blackie" was always waiting at the bottom of Hoyle House Lane (now called Hole House Lane). He was termed a "chain horse" and hooked on in front of the horses pulling the large mausoleum-type mourners carriage. This carriage was an awesome thing to look at, huge, massively built, like an ornamental black railway carriage, the entrance at the back with steps set in the middle. There were seats down the sides much like I described for a wagonette, the difference being the overhead covering was permanent, not canvass as Mr Gaunt's was for station service. There were several windows darkened by tassels and braid, black leather cushions, and black coloured ornamentations. In this contraption, all the family mourners rode to the interment. It was termed the "Hearse" or "Mourning Coach" and was usually the only carriage used. Notables and people of consequence had some following cabs to seat four or six along with the driver. The "Mourning Coach" also carried the "deceased person" in a long box-like compartment situated over the front axle and the driver and undertaker plus one or two other bearers sat, as it were, on the top of the coffin box. It was when I was in my early teens that the single hearse, solely for the "deceased," was introduced, but still horse-drawn.

I remember Harry Gaunt would meet a train with his wagonette about dinner-time, as we boys left school for dinner, and we always tried to take a ride on the step behind. People walking on the causeway would shout "Whip Behind" and Harry would lean sideways from his driving seat and lash round the back of his wagonette with his long driving whip extending 10 feet. They were exciting days. I can only remember twice seeing "Stage Coaches" come through the village, and on both occasions "Post Horns" were blown, and I remember the people inside throwing coppers to us lads running after them in the road.

#### WHEN HUNSHSELF DEFENDED BRITAIN

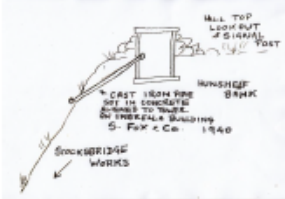
DB & WM Horsfall

An effective method of signalling by Morse Code was used by members of the Stocksbridge Works Home Guard and A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) in the early 1940s.

A trench was dug in the brow of the hill at the top of Hunshelf Bank between Windy Bank Hall and the trigonometrical point.

Into this was placed a three and a half metre long cast iron pipe. It was aligned in position to point exactly at the tower on top of the umbrella buildings of Stocksbridge Works – Samuel Fox and Co. (This building, complete with tower and flagpole displaying Tata Steels standard, is still there (2014)). The tower was used as a meeting place and headquarters by the Home Guard and A.R.P. members.

I was told of the pipe used by the home guard by Mr Clement Smith who helped to install it on Hunshelf Bank. He did not mention anything about installing one on the tower to shine back towards the hill top. Knowing Mr Smith I am sure he would have told me if this was so.



He explained in great detail the difficulty of aligning the pipe to the tower. I don't think there was a pipe on the tower for returning messages. It was only necessary to keep this system of messages hidden from anyone in the valley and hillside to the south (Stocksbridge), thus the pipe. Looking the other way (north) towards the top of Hunshelf there would be little chance of anyone seeing it.

Once the pipe was in the correct position it was secured by concrete. Then the trench was filled in. I believe some sort of small hut or building was constructed to cover the top of the pipe. It was probably camouflaged and large enough for two or more people to send any signal required. Messages were sent using Morse Code by flashlight (hand-held torch). When in use it was only possible to see the light from the pipe at the tower, eliminating any evidence of use. It would also be possible to return messages from the Works tower to the top of Hunshelf Bank



Although this was set up by the Home Guard it was mainly used by the A.R.P. for spotting aircraft and to give warning of an air raid. From the top of Hunshelf Bank it was also possible to signal to a lookout post at Waldershelf Low. This was a small 7 metres square red brick building (still there now in 2014 but derelict) above Stocksbridge Golf Course very near to Bolsterstone. From this structure there was a direct telephone line to Deepcar Police Station.

This observation post would not have used a pipe, but it was possible to signal to Hunshelf without too many people seeing it. There is a window facing north towards Hunshelf. There was also an electricity supply. My father, who was an electrician, told me he was sent up there often to repair the electric kettle, or do some re-wiring jobs occasionally. This building was used by the A.R.P. most nights.

Robert Penistone

*This article appears because I meet Robert and Jenny on the bus to Barnsley on Saturday mornings, David Horsfall*

#### The Signal System

If you have difficulty in envisaging how such a primitive system and such a puny light as a hand held torch could be effective over such long distances, you have to realise that in 1942

Britain was a very dark place indeed. No street lights, no shop displays, headlights on the few cars or lorries around were so shaded as to be almost absent (pedestrian deaths were at an all-time high!). House windows were swathed in thick black curtains (blackout material) and industrial premises' doors and windows were shielded to stop light leaking out. All of this to avoid giving enemy aircraft any guidance.

A torch beam would have been clearly visible for miles.

### WW2 IN THE LITTLE DON VALLEY

#### **A compilation by Barry Needle**

I was born in the middle of the war in Rookery Nook cottage adjacent to Town End House. Two of my earliest recollections (apart from been bathed in a tin bath in front of the range), are of having to try on a suffocating gas mask, which was then kept hung on the kitchen wall; the other was feeling frightened when playing outside as a loud siren went off, and hammering on the closed kitchen door so I could be let inside.

I also have a vivid post war recollection of a very low flying single engine plane, passing low over the top of a large ash tree above the main road at Deepcar opposite Midge Hall Farm, I saw small leaves and twigs flutter down in the slipstream and ran down the fields to pick them up. I could easily see the pilot and the roundels, and was amazed that he had flown so dangerously low. That tree is still there today.

During the War all our road signs were removed and replaced with 'Left and Right' signs, never north or south. All windows had to be blacked out at night and wardens walked round at regular intervals checking they were in place and adequate. The merest think of light brought a knock on the door.

Black Out times were 45 mins. after sunset to 45 mins. before sunrise during double summer time, (2 hours) this was 1st Sunday in May to 2nd Sunday in August.

All we children had to carry a gas mask to school along with satchels and lunch boxes.

When the German bombers came to strike Liverpool or Manchester, they flew over Stocksbridge in the evening at about 6pm, before returning later that night. As the ominous drone receded, people's tension relaxed.

'Lord Haw Haw' - William Joyce, often threatened the "Fox in the valley", but we only took a few stray bombs. His broadcasts always began with the words "Germany calling, Germany calling, Germany calling.....". His aim was to frighten the people and undermine their morale, but apparently he had the opposite effect. In December 1940 when Sheffield was hit, the Bolsterstone area provided a good local vantage point where many people could hear the crump of the bombs and see the ensuing fires.

#### Samuel Fox.

Fox employees had to show their I.D. cards (which recorded the holder's name, address, date of birth and identification number) to get into the works, even though the Gate Keepers had known most of them all their lives.

In September 1939 the outbreak of war the production of umbrella frames quickly stopped and factory space was turned over to war production. The umbrella production line was converted to produce munitions and 200 million cartridge clips were supplied for the Browning machine gun alone.

In 1940, the Spring Department set up to produce springs for tanks (2000/week), service vehicles, shell fuses, Bren, Bofors and Oerlikon guns. Steam Hammer production produced large quantities of shell forgings. The Wire Department drew fine precision wire for aero and motor engines as well as clocks.

Other work involved making bomb fins, fuse bases and radio antennae for both tanks and aircraft.

The following recorded production figures are from September 1939 to November 1944:-

Gun Belt Links	303n Mk 1	116,100,000
	Mk 2	71,200,000
	0.5 Mk 2	6,993,000
Stainless Steel Helmet Rings		6,445,000
Mortar Bomb Tail Units		151,425
Fuse Percussion Base Assembly		213,280
Shelter Bunk Mattresses		126,000
Polster Gun Magazine Springs		93,875
Antennae Tubes		331,000

In addition Fox's produced high quality alloy and stainless steel for the aircraft industry.

Coal and ganister were regarded as strategic minerals during the war. By 1945 nearly 300 miners and 100 pit top workers were employed by Fox's Stocksbridge Colliery and Grayson Lowood's Wharmcliffe Chase Mine at Deepcar. Production was kept at a very high level throughout the war.

In September 1939 Fox's issued an Air Raid Precautions booklet. Each employee of the Company was allotted a position in a trench, basement or shelter, and steps taken to ensure that everyone knew what to do and where to go, in the event of an air raid. There were large trenches situated near the Victory Club and in the field behind Siemens Department Chimneys near Miry Bottom Farm.

The ARP (Air Raid Protection) scheme included Shelter Wardens, Service and Shop Wardens, Gas Searches, Fire Watchers, First Aid Parties, Rescue and Salvage Squads, Decontamination Squads and Fire Fighters. The Main Control Centre was situated under the General Office and had two telephones for communication. In the event of a raid, employees were to be warned by a system of flashing coloured lights and audible bells and klaxon horns in every department.



My father 'Tommy' Needle shown here belonged to one of the First Aid Parties. He had a lifelong interest in first aid with the local St Johns Ambulance Brigade and the local Scout Group.

#### Home Guard

Samuel Fox's steelworks formed a Home Guard Unit from the older men and reserved employees, under the command of Gordon Harris. (He can be seen in the centre of the second row of a 1941 photograph of No 6 Platoon in the Societies 'Around Stocksbridge Second Selection'.)

They had few rifles initially and had to practice with brooms. Some of the girls were taught to shoot at the rifle range on the top floor of one of the office buildings. To make any invading Germans think that they were prepared to 'defend to the last man' steel strips were laid across the bottom of the office windows, with holes for the rifles to fire through. Edith Schofield remembered they looked good.

There were some accidents, a report in the Penistone Almanac 1944, stated that 'on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1943 two

Stocksbridge Home Guards Harry Battye and Irwin Ellison, received injuries in training from the bursting of a grenade\*.

John Bunting, who was involved in the Sheffield Ramblers mass trespass protest on Midhope Moors in 1995 and 1999, was a member of the Home Guard from 1939 based at Totley. He remembers light firing (rifle) at Totley and coming to Midhope/Langsett for heavier training, firing live spigot mortar ammunition. (He was also on the House Committee for the Langsett Youth Hostel when it was the old wooden hut.) The Home Guard used the Midhope range from 1943 firing Z Batteries\* (Anti-aircraft rockets). Town End Common was also another training area for the local Unit. I vaguely remember seeing some bullet marked steel plates on the Common.

#### The Army arrives in 1940

Not long after their arrival, sometime in 1940 a big storm decimated the large tented camp in the disused quarry behind Reservoir House. They were then housed in farm buildings and ten huts in a field behind Manor and Townhead Farms, the foundations of which still remain. This was the accommodation for the tank drivers.

Lawton Farm at Upper Midhope (seven bedrooms), was billeted with thirteen permanent staff for people in charge of the range. Townhead Farm was also commandeered, but not Manor Farm, although two men did stay there. Other visiting troops were billeted in Holmfirth. Under bank Hall was also commandeered, with huts in a field below for the bulk of the men and some visiting officers billeted in the Hall.

There was an army camp of Green Howard's, beneath Underbank Reservoir embankment. The hut (recently demolished) was used as a cookhouse. Food and crockery were stored in a field by Midhope crossroads, where there were two tents.

Totally some 9,000 men were involved in looking after the reservoirs on the west and north-west side of Sheffield.

Smoke barrages, looked after by conscientious objectors, were set up on most of the reservoirs using smoke generators, but these, when in use, upset both the soldiers and local residents. The men in charge of the barrage, lived in tents nearby, one party being established in a field at the left hand side of the lane leading to Wind Hill Farm.

William Lowe (WW2 Peoples War) remembers being billeted at Bolsterstone, which was originally in tented accommodation

#### **Next time 'The Tanks'**

#### **LOCAL SURNAMES – LAWTON, LAYCOCK, LINDLEY & LOWOOD.**

None of these originated within the Parish of Bolsterstone, although some have thrived here more than others.

LAWTON is the nearest to being localised. There have been Lawtons at Midhope since records began. William Lawton was born at Bintlcliffe and was described in 1851 as a Landed proprietor farming 100 acres, with 22 acres of heathland. Joseph Lawton was perhaps the last to be farming the 70 acres at "North America" in 1881.

LAYCOCKS lived and worked on Hunshelf and Deepcar as shoemaker and stonemason before getting into steel and the railway. Within living memory, of course, they have been shopkeepers in Thurgoland.

LINDLEY is more recent, first appearing in the 1871 Census, a steel melter from Darnall, followed by a coalminer from Thurlstone and a brickyard labourer from Crowedge. The ancestor of the family now thriving in Stocksbridge and Deepcar was a Life Assurance agent from Darton.

LOWOOD deserves a mention because of its importance in local industry, but it was a Cheshire incomer, which we know only in connection with the Graysons.

## ***SOCIETY NEWS***

I look back over the last quarter and so much seems to have happened. We are on track with the Valley Heritage Centre, with display equipment ordered and things pretty much planned for an opening very early in the New Year.

The society is grateful for being the recipients of vast tracts of the Trevor Lodge archive. We have removed numerous loads of steelworks material from his house at Grenoside and have this in store at the moment in the Sports Centre at Moorland Drive, until we can sort it. Some of the material is original or copies of very early Samuel Fox documents and many photos & negs of the works that we thought had gone missing. We hope over the next few months / years? we will be able to put the pieces in the jigsaw of the works in the valley, that have been sorely missing. The quality of material in this archive also leads us to think of the setting up of a separate research archive, but it's early yet.

We have a fairly heavy programme of talks that we give to other groups over this next few months and these are always enjoyable and get the name of the society well known throughout North Sheffield.

Christmas Supper & singing next month, great stuff, hope to see you all there.

#### **PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR 2014**

November 13 <sup>th</sup>	KING GEORGE V (Local Developments 1910 - 1936)	Basil Spooner
December 11 <sup>th</sup>	CHRISTMAS RELATED EVENT (Pre booking - Members only)	
2015 January 8 <sup>th</sup>	WINTER RECESS (No Meeting)	
2015 February 12 <sup>th</sup>	THE HISTORY OF IZAL	Joan Jones

**Why not visit our Website at - [www.stocksbridgehs.co.uk](http://www.stocksbridgehs.co.uk)**

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