

## EWDEN VILLAGE

The recent sale of derelict property in Ewden valley has revived interest in the Model Village, built for workers on the Sheffield Waterworks Morehall and Broomhead reservoirs. Building was planned to commence in 1913, but World War I delayed the work. It was not completed until 1929.

Photographs taken by William Terrey, General Manager responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of the village and general administration of the works, show the valley as it was before, during and on completion of the transformation. These were donated by his great-granddaughter to Stocksbridge Archive in 1998.

[photos of the village from the opposite hillside, the Mission Hut, the interior of the navvies' canteen and the Scout group.]

Yorkshire Waterworks Library has very little information about the history of Ewden. Our only other sources are our late President and local historian, Jack Branston, the memories of surviving members of families who lived there, copies of The Ewden Gazette and Electoral Registers.

Brian Robinson and other writers have provided detailed accounts of the Derwent and Howden reservoir projects, which preceded that of Ewden. They evidently had access to official records. Brian Robinson does mention that workers and their families from Birchinlee Village came to Ewden on completion of their work in the Derwent Valley and the demolition of Birchinlee.

Ewden Village, although smaller than Birchinlee, was perhaps superior in that its buildings were constructed of timber, rather than the corrugated iron of "Tin Town". But both were remarkable in having proper sanitation. Itinerant "navvies", who had in the past been used to having to shift for themselves and

often lived in appalling conditions, were accommodated here in comparative comfort.

Jack Branston says in his *History of Stocksbridge* that the huts were erected by Walkers, Sheffield timber merchants, and that each had electric light and hot and cold running water in well-fitted bathrooms. There was a Mission Hall, canteen, recreation hall and a general store, run by the Stocksbridge Co-operative Society, where Jack himself worked. He says that he had to deliver 4lb. loaves of bread, sometimes sixteen of them, to each boarding-house.

Jack also remembered that, even after the official opening in 1929, landslips occurred at Broomhead which needed extensive remedial work.

A railway was constructed to carry building materials up the track from Morehall and people were able to travel on this to reach the main line, or walk down “the rout” to the Sheffield road. A photograph of the *Ewden* locomotive and its single passenger carriage appeared in our first Archive Photograph book on page 119.

The only other written records we have are a few copies of the *Ewden Gazette*, issued monthly throughout 1932 and 1933. These give details of activities in the village, which show how the community had developed socially, taking full advantage of the amenities available. Typical newsletters, they reported on sports fixtures, whist drives and concerts and gave gardening advice and notice of planned activities.

There was a Brighter Ewden movement, for which everyone was competing to make the best of their gardens and they held a flower show.

The magazine included horoscopes, jokes, a calendar of local fairs, For Sale items and even a column by the “store cat”.

The editor was W. Greaves, who may also have been the Billy Greaves who organised the concerts.

People who advertised their services were Crookes, scissor-sharpener at No.58; Hattersley, cobbler (No.23); E. Hazlehurst, cattle-food dealer (No.60); A. Schofield, barber (No. 54) Styring/Needham, hairdresser (No.62); Wiseman, Insurance (No. 7).

Other names mentioned in the Gazette were Barkworth, Bennet, Chandler, Clark, H.Clarke (Staff Bungalow), Coukham, Donkersley, Elliott, Greaves (No.72), Hadfield (No.35), Hague/Haigh, Hirst, Marsh, Micklethwaite, Murrell, Pinder, Sanderson, Simpson, Smith (No.9), Steward (No.34), Swales, Swift, Waller, Walters, Webber, Wood and Wyke.

There was a bowling green, children's play area, cricket pitch, recreation hut with billiard tables, dance and concert hall. Ladies had a sewing circle and bridge parties, while billiards matches were held with visiting teams (one from the Stocksbridge Miners' Welfare) and football matches against Bolsterstone, Deepcar B.C., Stocksbridge Evening School and Royd Moor at Scout Dyke.

Organised by the Committee of a Recreation Club, to which members subscribed, were sports for the children and day trips – to Skegness (cost 9/-) and to the Lyceum pantomime Dick Whittington (balcony 2/-).

Regular Saturday night dances were held, with Bolsterstone's "Ace Band". On reading the Gazette I discover that my uncle, Vickers Hague, was often M.C.

My mother's family had come to No.30, Ewden Village from Sheffield directly after the war. She had been a pupil at Sheffield City Grammar School, and should have transferred to P.G.S., but travel there would have been so difficult that it was made an excuse to keep her at home to help look after her father

and four brothers. My grandfather, Frank Hague senior, was a cement tester. He died of what would now be called silicosis, and my grandmother and two remaining uncles had to leave, moving into Stocksbridge. All I remember of the hut was the pine panelling and the bath.

In the 1950s and 60s Margaret Todner remembers that her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Marsh, lived on the “shop row”, which at that time was run by the Charlesworths, with Burkinshaws next-door. Also on that row lived the Peakers and Hackets. On the bottom row her aunt and uncle Jack Worthington had a lodging hut which accommodated 13 men. These were dam workers at first, but after completion, they took anybody. They moved to a single hut on the top row years later.

The Y.H.A. used one of the huts on the middle row. Alan and Jean Herbert were wardens for a few years in the 1950s.[photo loaned by one of our members, who stayed there in the 1950s]

In 1969, a Register of Electors shows that only 15 of the original huts were still occupied, by families named Adams, Bartlett, Bell, Burkinshaw, Crooks, Davidson, Elliott, Gregory, Humphrey, Launder, Perkins, Pratt, South, Worthington and Wyke.

The Humphrey children were all born there, one of whom still occupies one of the only huts which have been maintained. In the newspaper report of the sale of one of the derelict huts he says he is baffled by the interest in it. He obviously does not appreciate how some of us envy his idyllic lifestyle in what is still a beautiful valley.

Brenda Duffield

Stocksbridge and District History Society

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