



THE PARAGON

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50P [FREE TO MEMBERS]

❁ A G M Report Inside ❁

LETTER FROM INDIA

Most of us have some regrets. One of mine is that I was not aware of the letter from India when my father was alive. Perhaps I'd been shown it when I was a child and had forgotten it. It's not the sort of thing that I would have forgotten if I'd seen it as an adult. However it wasn't until the sort-out of my father's papers, after his death, that I realised that this interesting letter existed.

It was written in Kussowlie, India on October 30th 1846 and it was franked in Manchester on January 5th 1847. The addressee is Thomas Banks of 40 Hall's buildings Manchester England. The writer, who bore the same name as my father, Samuel Banks, was literate at a time when literacy was not to be taken for granted among working class people. Samuel grew up long before education became compulsory, but not before the advent of the British School movement or of National Schools. Had he attended one of these new schools or had he gone to a dame school or Sunday school? Where had this Samuel Banks gained his literacy?

The letter is written on thin paper which folds to become its own 'envelope' there are three sides of writing and each one begins 'Dear Brother'. The first letter of every line is a capital, regardless of whether it begins a sentence or not. The writing is a good cursive hand and apart from

a little fading of the ink, is easily read. Did Samuel carry paper, pen and ink with him in his kitbag, or were they provided by the regiment?

The part of the letter most difficult to read is the name of the regiment written across the bottom of the 'envelope'. I think I can decipher it as Lancashire Fuseliers (sic) 29th regiment of Foot. How did Samuel and his brother Robert, who is mentioned in the letter, come to join up? Perhaps to poor lads from Hall's Buildings life with the regiment seemed more attractive than work in a cotton mill.

The letter suggests that Samuel and Bob came to regret their decision to take the Queen's shilling. A quick look into an old school history book tells me that 1845/46 was a very troubled time for the British in India. "Ranjit Sing, the ruler of Lahore had died and his Sikh generals were anxious to measure their strength against the British." says J.R. Green. There were several pitched battles. The tone of Samuel's letter implies that he doubted whether he and Robert would see England and their brother Thomas again.

The best way to give an indication of the letter is to quote from it. The second side begins "Dear Brother" as do the first and third sides. The spelling and punctuation are as Samuel wrote them.

"Since I have come to this country I have seen a bit of what you may call hard Soldiering and things are in a very unsettled state At present and likley, Quite likley there will be a little more work for us I Do not know weather it will take place this Season or not But Bless your Soles there is nothing but Bloody Rows in this Country this country it is that keeps up the Crown of England we Fought 4 General Engagements last winter season And we Received 12 months Batta or Prise mony We got 76 Rupees a Rupee is 2 shillings English Mony and we are expecting 6 months more from the English Government weather we will get it or not I do not know We are stationed now up in the mounts of Emlea about 23 thousand feet above the surface of the seas there is snow staring you in the face any hour you may look out at the door and You could heat a horse the angreyest Plase in the world And we are under orders for to march we do not know the Day we are likley to Go to the Cashmeer Country"

The letter goes on to hope that the three brothers may meet again. "But it will be a long time Before it comes to my lot to see England." Which begs the question, did Samuel see England and his brothers again? Perhaps one day I'll do some family history research and discover answers to some of the questions posed by the letter. I regret that I did nothing about it while my father, who was also Samuel Banks, was alive.

Joan Banks

WORKING OVERTIME

GOING TO WORK IN STOCKSBRIDGE

height.

In 1939 a consignment of gas masks intended for **Stocksbridge** was delivered by mistake to Stockbridge in Hampshire.

We umbrella ladies and some people off the dole were directed to Sheffield City Hall Ballroom to assemble a new batch of gas masks for our town. Free transport was provided on the number 57 council bus.

Ladies worked a morning shift in the umbrella Department before working

When I first left school I, went potato picking and earned 2/6d a day plus a bucket of potatoes and then on 5th November 1929 I began work at Stocksbridge Colliery where I earned 9/6d a week for six days work. So I was getting more money picking spuds than working in the pit. Out of my 9/6d a week I had union to pay to Bill Dimmock and stoppages.

"The way I went to work at the pit

Colliers home coal was brought by horse and cart, a load (approximately one ton) every seven weeks. One load for each household was allowed never mind how many men in the family were in the pit.

My first job at the pit was on the screens picking dirt out. Later I moved on to the tipplers where I pulled a handle, the tub tipped up and the coal went down a chute into the screens and the coal fell through different sizes of mesh.

Then I was moved on to the ropes and I lashed tubs onto the overhead ropes to go down the pit. Later I was taking chains off full tubs and throwing them down the chute towards the tipplers. Any bind (dirt) that came up was taken out to go into a different chute towards the waggons. Two men had to fill the coal tubs, they had to hammer on the girder with an iron bar when the waggons were full and a new waggon was needed.

If there was anything wrong a bell had to be rung to stop the haulage ropes. I did this one day because of some runaway waggons which ran off the rails. The waggons had to be knocked back into shape by a man called Wragg and then we lads had to help to get them back on the rails. Jack Whittaker told me off for stopping the rope because if the rope stopped, the pit stopped. Wragg was also the timber man who had to sort and send any timber down the pit.

I actually went down the pit at 16 trammings about, taking empties to the coal face and full ones back to the shunt, then a rope took them back to the haulage. The tubs had to be bounced over the empty road, then you had to sprag yourself to take them on to the full road. Some of these tunnels I was going through were only the height of the tub and my fingers or back were often scraped if I forgot and didn't keep my head well down. For light I had my oil lamp hung round my neck with a strap. Trammers had two gates to look after with four men turning coal. One man I used to tram for was Bernard Marsh



Trying on Gasmasks in World War Two

until 10pm at the City Hall.

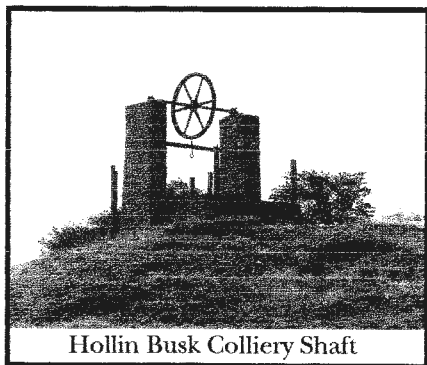
The mask assembly project took a week to complete and of course we had to be shown exactly what to do, but perhaps it's as well that people didn't know that at the time!

Grace Cardwell (Resident of Balfour House)

from Hawthorne Brooke was along Manchester Road to Bosworth's shop, opposite there were the work's offices and at the side of them was a footbridge over the river Porter or Little Don. Next I went round by the Benzine works and the office of the under-manager and the first-aid room to the lamp cabin. My lamp number later when I went down the pit was 126. I wore ordinary old clothes and clogs on my feet which were the most sensible form of footwear for comfort and safety. I climbed over the haulage rope to go into the entrance to the pit which went under Hunshelf Bank towards Penistone. The seam worked was the Halifax Soft Bed and was approximately 2ft 6in to 2ft 10in in

who was a brother to Vin Marsh who married my mother's sister Eliza. Bernard lived on Sitwell Avenue.

Then I went on to the haulage ropes. The rope I used to drive needed a special licence from the mines inspectors which I had to carry in my pocket at all times. Even when I went to work on other jobs I was often fetched back to this work if the driver was off ill, because of this special



Hollin Busk Colliery Shaft

licence.

My next job was on the face on a cutting machine which was worked by a team of five men, two on the cutter, two at the back of the machine and one at the front. Bert Allen along with two brothers called Wilkinson and a chap called Pearson were on my team.

After this I went back to work with uncle Albert Cooke who particularly asked if I would work with him because his mate had left the pit. The work was regular nights, repairing roads, back ripping, and rectifying any other problems ready for the next shift to start. I continued working with him until I left Stocksbridge.

Maureen Newton

RAMBLERS AND SHEEP IN THE SNOW OF 1947

Fifty Years On; A Personal Recollection

The week before Christmas and the week following were wild, wet and windy and it was not until the 7th of January that the first snow fell. It

was but a prelude to what was to come, nevertheless it caused traffic chaos and temporary isolations in north Derbyshire and traffic difficulties in Sheffield. A fortnight of miserable weather followed and on the weekend of the 25th/26th of January it began to snow in earnest and continued to do so intermittently, with varying intensity, from blizzard conditions to heavy falls accompanied with spells of keen frost, until the middle of March.

During the first week in February, Mr Ashton Priestley, a noted sheep farmer put out a call to rambles, "Instead of going for a walk in the snow, why not walk and help me to fodder my sheep?" In response, the Sunday morning saw some thirty rambles gathered at the Plough, Lcadmill Bridge, Hathersage where Mr Priestly was the landlord as well as farmer. He had already filled bags with hay, which we shouldered, and he led our snake like procession through the village and Brookfield park towards Stanage where the sheep were gathered under the Edge.

They were a pitiful sight, some were still standing others were lying down. The backs of all were a matted mass of snow, ice and frozen wool, and it hung down their flanks like long, dusty barley-sugar sticks which rattled when they moved. The ones lying down had urinated and this had frozen them to the snow beneath, and we had great difficulty getting them to their feet. I usually have a pocket knife with me and was able to cut through the frozen wool and get one or two of them upstanding and watch them waddle and rattle off to join the rest of the flock.

We spread the hay, moved the sheep amongst it, and then left before it became dark, making our way back to the inn to feed ourselves and await the train for home. Whilst we were relaxing, a shout came in at the door, for help to push a vehicle which was stuck on the rise to the bridge. Five or six of us went out to oblige and the driver offered a lift to Sheffield for anyone who cared to come. Three of us accepted the invitation. The vehicle was a forces' ambulance,

conveying a German prisoner with suspected appendicitis, from Buxton to Norton Aerodrome Hospital, for treatment. The inside of the vehicle was dimly lit, and we had no idea of what sort of journey the driver faced but it was certainly a roundabout one. Grindleford, Calver, Baslow, the Robin Hood, over Eastmoor to Chesterfield, Dronfield and to four lane ends, Meadowhead, where we three passengers alighted and walked to the terminus for a tram to town and home.

The next farmer to seek aid was Mr Ollerenshaw of Derwent. He was a member and strong supporter of CPRE and naturally he made his appeal through them, so that the twenty-odd of us that climbed out of the train at Bamford, found ourselves marshalled by Gerald Haythornthwaite (I think he was a Major then) and lined us up in single file on the platform. He probably wanted to count how many we were, but I remember some wag next to me muttering loudly "All you guys with shovels - two paces forward". We clambered onto a dray bodied lorry and were taken to Derwent. There the snow lay much deeper than we had experienced the previous week on the open moor at Stanage, and our task was to find sheep, not to feed them. We broke up into groups of four or five and struggled through the deep snow and up the steep valley side. In place and particularly under walls it was more than shoulder deep. I think we found a couple of sheep, but somehow I came away at the end of the day feeling that we had not been very effective. None of us had any experience in looking for overblown sheep and we probably looked in all the wrong places.

Come the Saturday, I was knocked up by the police (I was secretary of the Sheffield Ramblers' Association at that time) with a request to take a party of rambles to High Bradfield and help with the search for an old man who had set out on the Friday to collect his pension and had not returned. Helping farmers had now caught on with rambles and next morning I had no difficulty in making up a party of eight, for scores of

ramblers were milling around the station approach and Pond Street. We caught the tram to Malin Bridge and set off towards High Bradfield.

It was a lovely, sunny morning and I remember as we toiled up the hill overlooking Dam Flask, seeing footprints in the snow crossing the reservoir - somebody had tested the ice! We reached Bradfield about noon only to find that ramblers who had overnighted at Ewden hostel had walked up from that side and had found the old man dead in the snow. We were at a loss as to what to do, so we decided to feed and went into the Old Horns Inn, where ramblers were always welcome. We asked the landlord if he knew of any farmer who might welcome our help and he suggested that we might try Mr Sampson of Hoyles Farm. We made our way there, explained our mission, and made arrangements that we would come the following Sunday.

We met at the farm, Mr Sampson, who

was both farmer and a vet in practice, and his man Harold led the way. We carried bags of hay on to the moor behind the Strines Inn, rounded up the sheep and foddered them while Mr Sampson dealt with the 'recklings'.

This was now the last week in February and from then until the last week in March, our eight, which grew to twelve in number, went onto Strines moor each Sunday, taking hay to the sheep. This isolated us from what was happening elsewhere, for no one person, no one club, nor body was in charge of organising the 'sheep rescues' as they became known. I imagine that other ramblers did what we had done, in their clubs and groups and had gone each week to help the farmers of their choice.

On the week of the 23rd March, it was the annual meeting of the Ramblers' Association at York, and along with three other members, I attended as a Sheffield delegate. That weekend the thaw came, and I remember we

sloshed through the streets of York which were full of wet snow, as we went to and from St. Williams College, the venue of the meeting.

The 'sheep rescues' were a spontaneous reaction, of ramblers to the appeal for help and ended as quickly as they began.

W.E. Spencer.

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☆ **PROGRAMME 1997** ☆

APRIL 10TH

GRAHAM FRITH

**ATKINSONS - THE HISTORY OF A
FAMILY FIRM**

MAY 8TH

IAN ENTERS

**HISTORY OF CHILDRENS'
RHYMES AND STORIES**

JUNE 12TH

JULES DUGGLEBY

**HISTORY OF SHEFFIELD GENERAL
CEMETERY**

**SUNDAY JULY 6TH
VISIT TO EYAM HALL**

**AUGUST
NO MEETING**

**SEPTEMBER 11TH
JIM NICHOLSON
FILE MAKING**

**OCTOBER 9TH
DEREK BAYLISS
SOUTH YORKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL
HISTORY**

**NOVEMBER 13TH
DAVID HEY
16TH & 17TH CENTURY
SHEFFIELD CUTLERS**

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 13TH
CHRISTMAS SOCIAL MEETING**

- NEXT ISSUE -

**OUR BACKYARD
GROWING UP IN 20'S
STOCKSBRIDGE**

**MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY HELD
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