

THE PARAGON

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FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

THE HISTORIANS
ALBERT COULTAS: 1962

Albert Coultas was part of Armitage's Works, Deepcar, throughout the existence of the Company. He first went into print in a letter to the Fox Magazine in winter, 1961, commenting on Jacqueline Stafford's article on Clay Mining. He followed this in the winter edition following with an article of his own on JOHN ARMITAGE OF DEEPCAR 1826 - 1890

He began with a description of Deep Carr as it was in 1850, according to the Ordnance Survey map, from the Chemical Works in Station Road to Hen Holmes.

A contemporary of Samuel Fox, John Armitage was an itinerant glazier, who bought the Henholmes Works from the Turner Brothers. He ignored the Engineering side of their enterprise and concentrated on clay products.

The three beds of minerals available to him, on lease from the Earl of Wharnccliffe, were White Carr fireclay, the ganister, or Halifax Hard Coal, and the Halifax Soft, or coking coal. The coke in turn produced gas for use in the Works.

Mr. Coultas described exactly where the entrances, ventilation shafts and workings were. One bed of coal, leased from the Rev. Bell of Bolsterstone, ran under the main road from Henholmes Lane.

When the Works was extended as far as Station Road, John Armitage found that he had taken 3 inches of land too much and had to pay the Railway Co. a ground rent of £1 per annum.

He was able to co-operate with Samuel Fox, whose land his joined at what is now East Bank. John Armitage built the bridge at Henholmes, which was useful to his neighbour, and they agreed on its upkeep. The ford alongside was kept a right-of-way.

John Armitage built Wharnccliffe Villa for his own occupation, on land leased from the Shrewsbury Hospital Trust, and there he kept up to twenty horses and pit-ponies. There were gardens which featured sculptures by an Italian,

Peter Nanetti. (I have him in the 1861 Census as Nunatti, a Moulder of Ornaments, from Tuscany) The Villa was being demolished at the time of writing.

John Armitage died at a second home which he had built in Sheffield, having brought his two sons, Charles and Alfred, into the firm. Albert's father, Fred Coultas, had been appointed Manager of John Armitage and Sons a few months previously.

The Company became a private limited company when Charles Armitage got into difficulties, under the name Armitage Works Co. Ltd., with F. Coultas one of the Directors, Secretary and Manager. Mr Coultas himself began work there on leaving school in 1901 as an office boy.

Brenda Duffield

John Armitage found that he had taken 3 inches of land too much and had to pay the Railway Co. a ground rent of £1 per annum.

FROM THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN

After having an accident and a badly cut finger, I was found a new job by the manager - fetching explosive from the Powder Magazine. I was given a wooden case with a leather carrying strap, and a list of the explosives wanted. I was amused at the large block of wood attached to the two keys, and as I went out of the office, the manager said, with a smile, "Don't lose those keys, Willis!" Six inches of snow lay on the footpath through Bitholmes Wood by the River Don, a two mile walk. Once before I had been here with a workman when I was half time. The Magazine was brick-built and the size of a "snap"-cabin. The large key opened the iron door, and the smaller key opened the inner, wooden door. Inside I knew on which shelf to find the explosives - 80

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE	PAGE 1
FROM THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN	PAGE 1
VERY HAZY MEMORIES OF STOCKSBRIDGE	PAGE 2
DISCOVERIES AT BOLSTERSTONE	PAGE 3
FLORENCE BUILDINGS	PAGE 4

sticks of dynamite, 40 "bobbers" of black powder and 24 detonators. I hadn't needed telling that these were highly dangerous and needed careful handling. The detonators were one and a half inches long and looked like a copper tube, and these I put in a small wooden box and covered them with sawdust. When I got back with the explosives I was glad to pass them over to the manager and handed back the keys, complete with the lump of wood. But my task was not yet over. The man checking the dynamite said that it was too hard, and needed softening. He got a blanket and told me to follow him with the dynamite through the two large wooden doors that were the entrance to the mine travelling road. He stopped near the fan chamber, where the rush of returning warm air was so strong it took me all my time to keep on my feet. Overhead was an electric light. The blanket was opened out on the earth floor and the 8-inch long sticks of dynamite were spread on it, a foot apart. I was instructed to sit on the ground and keep turning the sticks of dynamite until they became as soft as jelly. It took two hours, after which I had to get it back to the office. It was the first, and only, time that I played with dynamite!

VERY HAZY MEMORIES OF STOCKSBRIDGE

I know that I visited Stocksbridge on a couple of occasions in 1943-44 and memory cannot keep the two apart. I have no one left to confer with at my age, but they are my memories and so I will put them down as they drift back to mind, and let your readers decide what was exactly where and when!

Let me state my Stocksbridge connections to start off with. My mother was **Vera Underwood, nee Shaw**, born in Stocksbridge, the only daughter of **Willie Shaw** from Midhope and **Frances Herbert** from Deepcar. Willie worked at Fox's and had the reputation of being a fine cricketer. He was a left-arm, slow bowler, although unfortunately, his cricketing descendants do not have a "lefty" amongst them.

In 1943 we lived in Faringdon, then in Berkshire, now in Oxfordshire. Mother was having a baby, so it was arranged that I should take my younger brother from Oxford by train to Pontefract, where Grandfather would meet us. I was 12, my brother 6, and the guard looked after us - it would be unthinkable today. The plan was that I would stay with my grandmother for a few days, then move on for a short stay with my "Auntie" **Blanche Ollerenshaw** in Stocksbridge, while my brother divided his time between two aunts.

I have no memory of how I got to Stocksbridge - maybe by bus to the clock-tower, where Blanche would meet me. Behind the clock-tower somewhere was a field where Mother used to go tobogganing, and that was where she got the scar just above her nose! I do remember going down from the main road and over the railway lines to **Ford Lane**, where Blanche lived with her two brothers and sister. Blanche and her sister **Cissie** were great friends of my grandmother and grandfather Shaw, so were life-long

"aunties" to my mother.

Percy Ollerenshaw, the eldest, was a bachelor, a silent, gentle old man, who before the war kept and raced pigeons. He was loath to show his medals and cups, which were kept in a cupboard near his chair. **Tom**, his younger brother, also a bachelor, was a coal miner, who was hard and dour and kept to himself, although he had a quiet sense of humour. Sadly, Tom took his own life in the 1950s, drowning in the reservoir behind Ford Lane.

Blanche, the youngest in the family, worked at Fox's, making clips for ammunition - war-work - turning them out in their thousands. Her elder sister, **Cissie**, was a lovely lady. She was a spinster and kept house for the others. She had a quick sense of humour and a ready wit and was always pulling my leg.

I was introduced to so many people I cannot remember their names. I bought things from the shop at the corner of Ford Lane - not sweets, they were rationed - but a hard-to-get bottle of "pop". **Cissie** put sugar in it to take away the bubbles, then added gelatine to make a jelly for tea, and I helped her do it. What lengths people went to in those days to try to live normally!

Tom took me for long walks up on the moors behind the house with the dog **Monty**, named after General Montgomery. We sat talking as we looked down on the steelworks, where all was hustle and bustle, but up there was little noise. We picked bilberries, which I love, and **Cissie** soon turned them into a mouth-watering pie.

Cissie took me to meet her friends along the Lane, the **Crawshaw** family. The mother's name I have forgotten, but Dad was **Herbert**, I think, and their daughter was **Bessie**, aged about twenty. Her brother was a little older and was on leave from the Army, having taken a bullet in the leg after the D-Day Landings somewhere near Caen in Normandy.

On the wall in the living-room was a large sepia photograph showing **Herbert's** father playing **Knurr and Spell**. This was a game I had known little about, but I was soon instructed by **Herbert** in the finer arts of the sport. **Herbert** and his father were both champions, so I guess I could not have had a better tutor.

Now to walk by memory through the village, on to the main road from Ford Lane, then turn right - was there a club of some sort on the corner, where **Percy** and **Tom** used to play "crib"? A little further on, on the left is a cinema. This was where **Reginald Dixon** of Blackpool Tower Ballroom fame used to play the organ. Mother told me about this, as she used to serve him with sweets and cigarettes when he came into her mother's sweet shop opposite the cinema in the 1920s. I think the name **Peace** was on the signboard by the time I saw it. Further along the road we passed the **Co-op** on the left, then on the right the **Victory Club**, Here my mother spent many an hour dancing, learning all the latest, as well as the old dances, including **The Lancers**. I have a vivid memory of the **Victory Club** myself. I had already gone to bed one evening when there was a knock at the front door and **Cissie** opened it to find **Bessie**, asking if I could go to the **Victory Club** dance with her.! I was out of bed, washed and dressed in no time, and off we went. On arrival I was

introduced to **Herberts, Hoyles, Firths**, all related in some way. I shook hands with many relatives that night - it made my head spin, trying to work out how they all fitted into my family tree. But I did not take too much notice - like my mother, I loved to dance.

On down the road, on the right was a railing or wall to lean on as you watched the **coke ovens** spilling out their regular amount of coke onto the spillway. Here it was cooled with water and gave off flames, sparks and steam. Vapour filled the air, along with the acrid smell of gas. It was like a vision of Hell, portrayed in a film, as we watched the men toiling away.

I am not sure whether my Uncle **Albert Herbert's** house was before or after the coke-ovens, but there was a little row of houses on the right. I do not recall Auntie's name, but I know there were two cousins in the Navy aboard submarines. One of them was killed when his submarine went down in the Mediterranean, due to enemy action.

Up the bank somewhere was where I joined a lot of others on a misty, drizzly afternoon to watch that village character **John Thomas Hoyle** play Knurr and Spell. I had been forewarned about his eccentric behaviour and I was not disappointed. In the match he hit his "potty" from a cradle, while his opponent used a spring. I am certain that money was wagered on the proceedings, but I saw none of it. In those days, gambling was illegal,

Going out of the village, well back off the road, was a row of houses behind which was a row of toilets. Here lived Auntie and Uncle **Hoyle**, Was he an **Albert** too? I think he had been a gate-man at the Works, and I am pretty sure he should have been retired by then, but was "doing his bit". Was she **Mary** or **May**? Their daughter was another **Bessie**, who married **Bernard Fieldsend**. They came to my mother and father's Golden Wedding. **Bessie's** brother **Billie Hoyle** died in Malaya in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp from cholera.

Up the hill was the school which my father worked on as a bricklayer for **Bill Wade**, and narrowly escaped a serious fall one day, when scaffolding gave way and left him hanging

by one arm inside the freshly-built wall.

I visited **Langsett, Ladybower, Bolsterstone** and **Midhope**, but only have vague memories of these. However, I distinctly remember a Charity Cricket Match at **Chapelton**, where I saw **Leary Constantine** of the **West Indies** and **Yorkshire** players **Paul Gibb, Bill Bowes** and **Arthur Wood**. What would an autographed programme of that match be worth now?

I have no memories of rainy days in **Stocksbridge**, no unhappiness comes to mind even though the war was still on. Everyone seemed cheerful, as the war news at that time was good. Of course, people were all in work after years of short-time and the dole, taking home good money for the long hours and hard work they put in for their families and their country. I found the people of **Stocksbridge** helpful and friendly then, as I do now.

Keith Underwood of Gloucestershire

DISCOVERIES AT BOLSTERSTONE

-FROM PARISH MAGAZINE NOV. 1871

In the month of November, 1822, whilst a farmer was engaged in cultivating a piece of rough ground in the immediate vicinity of **Bolsterstone**, he accidentally pushed his spade into a cavity or what appeared to be such, and on exploring further he discovered several human bones. The skull was tolerably entire, half of the upper jaw with the teeth in a state of good preservation, part of the femur and some portions of the bones of the pelvis; the bones did not appear to have been calcined. The grave in which the body was laid was well defined, about 8 ft. long, 3 ft. broad and 2 ft. beneath the surface. The head of the skeleton was towards the west. The soil appeared to be clay, and the earth on the surface like peat earth. About six yards from the grave and a foot under the surface was found an iron axe-



The view from Walders Low, Bolsterstone village is in the distance

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MEETINGS

❖ PROGRAMME 2001 ❖

OCTOBER 11TH

MR P H PROCTOR

AUCTIONEERING

NOVEMBER 8TH

MR A YORK

NELSON & HIS WOMEN

DECEMBER 8TH

SATURDAY

CAROL SUPPER

A REMINDER

SHEFFIELD LOCAL HISTORY FAIR

SATURDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

10.00 AM— 4.00 PM

MILLENNIUM GALLERIES

ARUNDEL GATE

ADMISSION FREE

COME AND HELP ON THE SOCIETY'S STAND,
OR JUST COME ALONG FOR THE CHANCE TO
MEET PEOPLE FROM OTHER SOCIETIES AND
ORGANISATIONS, WHO LIKE US, HELP TO
RECORD AND PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF
SHEFFIELD.

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head (now in the possession of the Sheffield Lit. and Phil. Society). Its form and appearance are by no means indicative of great antiquity.

These relics were found on a conical eminence (Walderslow - hill), about 200 yards S.E. of Bolsterstone, being the highest point of the hill on which the village stands. The diameter of this eminence is about 15 yards, probably 10 feet in height. The human bones were found on the western side, midway between the base and the summit. There is no trace of a trench round the base of the hill, but it is clearly the production of art. It is highly probable that this cone of earth was a sepulchre of the Saxons after their conversion to Christianity.

W. Jackson 1823

Joseph Kenworthy recorded that it was Charles Macro Wilson, Esq. (died 1902) who had raised the cairn which still marks what he believed to be the burial-place of Walder, an Anglo-Saxon chieftain. The word "low" is an Old English name for a hill or mound, as in Stainborough Low.

C. M. Wilson also named the house he built at Hagg Farm "Waldershaigh". *Early History of Stocksbridge and District: Bolsterstone.*

FLORENCE BUILDINGS

FROM COMMENTS ON AROUND STOCKSBRIDGE
I & II BY ROY ASHBY

The houses in Florence Buildings were not "back to back", but through properties. They were odd in that each alternate house had a different layout from its neighbour. The first house in each block had a large kitchen and living-room downstairs, only one door at the back, and just two bedrooms upstairs. The next house had a large kitchen and living-room downstairs with both a front and back door, two bedrooms and a huge attic on the third floor, which extended over the bedrooms of the houses next-door. This pattern continued on down each block. So the largest families lived in the second, third, sixth and seventh houses in each block, because they had extra space in the attics with floor-space covering the four bedrooms beneath. Only the fact that the smaller properties had only one door led to them being condemned and eventually demolished.

Thanks to all the natives of Deepcar who pointed out the mistake. Our information was taken from Harry Eastwood's *History of Stocksbridge*, which I shall be reviewing in the next issue of the Paragon. BD.