

# THE PARAGON

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## SCHOOLDAYS IN THE 1900s

This year – 1968 – it is 100 years since our Church School was built at Stocksbridge. My father, Marsh Swallow, came to Stocksbridge as head teacher in 1893, and I was born at the School House in 1896 and lived there for nineteen years. Later, in 1926, I became a member of staff, and served for thirty-one years. So the school has had a very important place in my life.

My memory goes back to my early schooldays, in what present-day reporters often call “the first decade of the twentieth century” as though it were far away, in the mists of time. I suppose it is, but to me it is still a clear recollection.

In my very young days, the school was smaller, both in extent and numbers, than it is now – a village school. We were then part of the Parish of Bolsterstone. Our church was built in 1890, by order of Mr. Samuel Fox. He was then near the end of his life – he died before the church was finished – and it is often spoken of as “the Fox Memorial” Church.

When the Vicar of Bolsterstone, Canon Wilson, visited the school, we all rose to our feet as he entered, and remained standing until we were given permission to be seated. We maintained absolute silence while he was in the room. He was driven in a carriage and pair, and did not use a motor-car until about 1910, four years before his death in 1914.

The great occasion of our church year was undoubtedly Whitsuntide and the Procession of Witness, our great Whitsun walk. For some weeks beforehand we learned the words and tunes of the hymns, both at day school and Sunday school. On Whitsunday afternoon we had a sort of dress rehearsal – a short procession, singing all the hymns, accompanied by the Stocksbridge Brass Band; and then were ready for Whit Monday, when we “walked round”.

I remember still the awed excitement with which I used to look at the Sunday School banner, taken out of storage and set up at the west end of the church on Whit Sunday. It was carried in front of the Sunday school scholars by members of the choir and the Young Men’s Bible Class.

On Whit Monday morning we were all up with the lark, for the procession must be assembled and ready to start at 8 a.m. We all had new dresses and hats for Whitsuntide,

which were a great responsibility. I suppose it must have rained sometimes, but all the Whitsuntides that I can remember were beautiful, sunny days. We set off from the school at Stocksbridge at 8 a.m., led by the band to the rousing strains of “Hail, Smiling Morn!” and walked to Deepcar. Bolsterstone Sunday school set off at the same time, and we all met at Deepcar, and held our first united sing at the top of Vaughton Hill. We then all walked up to Stocksbridge, led by the band – Bolsterstone first, then Deepcar, then Stocksbridge, each preceded by its own banner. We assembled in our school yard and sang again. Then we all, in the same order, climbed the hill to Bolsterstone and held our final sing in the village square. In my very young days, we had a pause at Holly Bush, where milk and buns were served, but this was later discontinued.

The Bolsterstone scholars then adjourned to their school for a mid-day meal, while the Deepcar and Stocksbridge scholars went back to their own schools to be fed. We had quantities of milky tea, served from earthenware crocks, lent by the ladies of the parish, and used in the ordinary way for storing home-made bread. With this went potted-meat sandwiches and buns – spiced currant buns, shiny on the outside – nothing ever tasted better after a long walk than those home-made, school-feast buns!

After dinner we went home to take off our new clothes and put on something less important in which to play all afternoon in fields put at our disposal by kind friends. At Stocksbridge we used the field that belonged to the Church Cricket Club – now the property of the Works Social Services. There used to be a small number of stalls which sold simple toys – balls, squeakers, canes, etc. I do not

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know where we found the energy after all the walking we had done, but we used to rush about playing at rounders and similar vigorous games, and enjoying ourselves very much. The day ended with an evening dance for the grown-ups – square-dances like lancers and quadrilles, to the music of the band.

### *Madeleine Swallow*



Photo of Miss Swallow on her retirement 1969

## THE HISTORY OF THE U.R.C. CHURCH STOCKSBRIDGE

To stand in the church grounds and have the imagination to look back almost two hundred years would give us a picture of a quiet valley, almost unnoticed as one passed in a stagecoach. In the book "THE HISTORY OF THE DUN VALLEY" it was said that the coach leaves Midhope through the quiet valley to its next calling-place of Deepcar.

The Wadsley and Langsett Turnpike road was opened in 1806 to improve the coach-route to Manchester. At the time, between the toll-booth at Deepcar and the farm at Unsliven Bridge, there were only about eight places of residence along the valley bottom, but Christianity was being taught in the area.

It is probable that an Independent Sunday School existed near Bolsterstone before the year 1805. The Glass House, now called Pot House, is the site given most credence. Summer services were also held at Greave House Farm; indeed, old hymn-sheets, the oldest bearing the date 1819, bears this out.

The Sunday School became connected with the Sheffield Sunday School Union in 1816. Increasing attendance made the search for new premises essential, and the thought was that any increase in population would naturally gravitate towards the bottom of the valley.

A plot of land was bought in 1827, where the shopping arcade now stands, and a one-storey chapel was built. By 1846 it was found that more room was needed and the height of the outer walls was raised and galleries were built on three sides, for by now the Ebenezer, as it was called, was also being used as a Day School.

The Reverend Henry Robertshaw was called to be minister of the Ebenezer in 1857 and served for fifty years. 1862 saw the building of a second Congregational Church, known as Salem. The two churches were amalgamated in 1881. Just prior to this date, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jones began their service to the school and Sunday School – a service which spanned some fifty years.

On November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921, a fire tragically destroyed Salem. It is believed that the tarmac on the recently surfaced road had hidden the hydrants, and the pumps had to be taken to the river. The delay was disastrous. However, the church was rebuilt as we see it today, and the first service was held in 1923.

The former situation resumed, with the Ebenezer (now the British Hall) being used as a Sunday School, and the adult services being held in the Church. This continued until 1939, when the Hall was taken over as a Casualty Station for wartime needs, and the Sunday School was transferred to the Church.

1949 saw the British Hall resume its role as Sunday School, until 24<sup>th</sup>. September 1961 – the last time it was used for this purpose. After this the Church premises were used for all purposes.

Still more space was needed and the land behind the Church was purchased and a new Hall was built. In 1969 this was named after the two former teachers and became known as the Jones Memorial Hall. This provided a room thirty feet long by twenty-five feet wide, plus a corridor, kitchen and storage-room.

In 1972 the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church united to form the United Reformed Church. The demise of Stocksbridge Urban District Council left funds, which were allocated as grants. With a substantial grant to the Church, the new hall was extended another fifteen feet in length, allowing for another storage-room and increasing the length of the main hall by a third. The ground adjacent was levelled and topped off with basic slag to produce a car park, which later was fully tarmacked to bring it to its present state.

*Roy Mallinson*



Congregational Church after the fire of November 16th  
1921

## THE SANDERSON FAMILY

### CHAPTER 4 THE BEER-OFF

The new beer-off at Sanderson's store was paying well. It certainly had increased the trade and it was then that the store really paid. Many pounds went into the bank and Mr. Sanderson was delighted. Even his wife was not so sorry that she had come to live there.

The girls were getting quite big. Now Miriam was nine and Fanny was fourteen. Miriam had a fine voice and took singing lessons. She got on very well and was thought to be a very good singer in Stocksbridge. At school she was very bright and popular with other children. Fanny went to the city of Sheffield every day to learn millinery and she got along fine.

Mrs. Sanderson had a brick house built with a good piece of ground. Trees were planted and she said that would be her future home. Everything seemed to be going well and everyone was happy. But it was not to last.

The landlord also had built himself a beautiful house, but was discontented and wanted more money. So he sold the store to the brewery. That made him still wealthier, but the Sandersons had to go short. The profit they had made was now to be shared with the brewery and little was left for them.

Mrs. Sanderson was very unhappy about it. She had bought the most beautiful furniture and was preparing to move into the house she had built. But her husband persuaded her to stay a little longer, saying "The trade may grow still greater!" So she stayed, and every chance she got, bought more things for the new house, ready to move at any time.

Unfortunately, trade did not improve – if anything, it got worse. For many people began not to pay for their goods, and that went hard on the mother, for she could not ask them for the money – they had such pitiful tales of hardship to tell. So she would just let it go till the next time.

But some of them, having got into debt, did not show up again.

One woman came in, asking for credit, telling Mrs. Sanderson that her husband was sick and unable to work for several months, and that she would pay as soon as she could. Mrs. Sanderson gave her the groceries, and more besides, but eventually had to refuse her credit, as she came in each time with a more pitiful story to tell.

## FROM WILLIS BURGIN'S DIARY – A PRANK MISFIRES

I had an idea who had sabotaged my wagon – it was the trammer who had told me to hide my drink. He was much bigger than me, so I hunted for his bottle, took a good drink, and the rest went on the floor. I heard him swearing and shouting when he found his drink had gone!

All the lads saved a drink to quench their thirst before taking the long walk up the mine. In the summer months, after finishing the afternoon shift in the mine at 10 pm. I would run across Foxes' yard to the cold water tap near the check office to fill my bottle. There I noticed a small wooden hut, the door partly open. Peeping inside I saw six half-gallon jars of what looked to me like pop. I unscrewed one of the tops and foam came out. I tasted it and found it was dandelion and burdock. I had a good drink. I took a free drink there every night up to the Thursday, when another trammer followed me with some of his pals, who all filled their bottles to take home. On the Friday night I hurried across to the shed for my free drink; I was very thirsty! I couldn't wait to get the top off the jar sharp enough and pour it down my throat. I swallowed the lot, but immediately coughed, spit and spluttered, and finally was terribly sick. For in the "pop" bottle was sweet, but greasy and dirty, engine oil!

All I wanted was to get my check from the office and get home. I could hear the other trammers coughing and swearing, but was too ill to enjoy the joke. I had two miles to walk, and by the time I got home I felt really poorly. Mother had a plate of fish and chips on the table for my supper, but that I could not face.

Mother took one look at my face and said "What's a matter wi' thee, lad?" for under the pit muck my face was white. I felt too ill to answer. Mother helped wash my back and I went straight to bed.

Next morning I felt much better and told the family about it at the breakfast table. I thought they would never stop laughing, and I joined in too. After the weekend rest, I started work on the Monday morning well and truly oiled! I later learned that the pop was left there for men doing a hotter job than ours – in the steel furnaces at Samuel Fox and Co.

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 7.00 PM.

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MEETINGS

❖ PROGRAMME 2004 ❖

APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup>. OPEN FORUM — MEMBERS' EVENING

MAY 13<sup>TH</sup>. STEPHEN GAY: A JOURNEY THROUGH  
DEVON

JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup>. HISTORY AFLOAT: MARJORIE DUNN

JULY 8<sup>TH</sup>. DAYTIME VISIT TO KELHAM ISLAND  
MUSEUM

AUGUST — SUMMER RECESS — NO MEETING

SEPTEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>. MARTIN OLIVE: A HISTORY OF  
SHEFFIELD THEATRES

OCTOBER 14<sup>TH</sup>. OPEN FORUM — MEMBERS' EVENING

NOVEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>. DAVID HEY: THE HISTORY OF THE  
MOORS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>. CHRISTMAS CAROL  
SUPPER

SOCIETY NEWS

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT OUR  
COLLECTION OF BOLSTERSTONE GLASS IS AT LAST ON  
DISPLAY IN THE STOCKSBRIDGE ARCHIVE IN THE  
LIBRARY, AND WE HOPE THAT IT WILL ATTRACT MORE  
USERS OF THIS FACILITY.

Designed & printed by Mike's DTP 0114 246 4200 mike@spick.co.uk

FROM WALDERSHELF TO  
STOCKSBRIDGE

**A**nalysis of the occupations indicated by the 1851 Census show that the working population of this area were still largely engaged in agriculture. Of the 372 workers 128 were farmers and agricultural labourers – by far the largest group and more than a third of the whole. The next largest were 51 coal dealers, coalminers, coalpit banksmen and cokeburners, so getting coal was the nearest to an industrial concern on any scale, in keeping with the general development in the West Riding. But 43 masons, quarrymen and stonecutters were a considerable element and were to profit just as much from the valley's mineral wealth and growing population. Together with a blacking maker, a drywaller and a potter, and possibly the two landowners, and of course, the gamekeeper and molecatcher, they constituted a force which was still bound to the land.

This does not include the 26 classed as general labourers, many of whom can be presumed to be employed in the same kind of work.

The largest category of employment for women, apart from the wives and daughters who worked on their own farms, was domestic service.

The only other trades, whose number was in double figures, were cordwainers and shoemakers (18) and carpenters and joiners (13). Together with 8 wheelwrights, 5 blacksmiths, 5 tailors, 2 milliners, a basketmaker, a nurse and a sempstress, they would serve the needs of the community; 5 millers, 4 innkeepers, 4 shopkeepers and 2 butchers would help provision them, while 4 ministers of religion, 3 teachers and a solicitor provided spiritual, intellectual and legal guidance. There was one banker's clerk and a tollkeeper.

The only people at all connected with new industry were 6 railway workers, 3 wireworkers and 2 umbrella smiths. Two of these were aged 10 and 13, as were 9 of the coalworkers. Apparently a farmer would not put his children to work, at what seems to us a very tender age, where a miner would, but undoubtedly, chores on the farm would be taken for granted and not declared as occupations. Only since 1842 had the use of children under 10, and of women, been banned by law, so socially the 1851 census returns reflect an improvement, whatever the financial hardship suffered until legitimate employment could be found.

Family incomes were sometimes supplemented by dual occupations of the breadwinner, and a variety of job combinations are shown. Of the 19 who had two jobs, 13 combined farming with building, cokeburning, innkeeping and joinering; a solicitor, 3 masons, a father and son who were tailors, and a wheelwright were also farmers. One was a carpenter and joiner, one a carpenter and grocer, one a joiner and wheelwright. Two menservants combined the duties of coachman with gardener and those of house-servant with groom.

Obviously, in some of these cases, the dual occupation shows the diversification of interests which comes with increasing prosperity, in others perhaps a family tradition rather than a desperate attempt to make ends meet. Certainly, those who were able to adapt to changing social conditions and market demands were those who would survive the coming Industrial Revolution.

*Brenda Duffield*