

THE PARAGON

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THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN

I had only been in the company a month when I was promoted to Lance Corporal. The Battalion required a Police Force of Provost Sergeant, a Corporal and three Privates. Sergeant Page and the three privates had already been chosen and it was the Provost Corporal who was now wanted. The Companies A, B, C and D were asked to send a trustworthy Lance Corporal to be interviewed for this post by the Battalion C.O.

An empty house on the Leeds Road was used as the C.O.'s office. At 2.30 pm. four of us sat in line, waiting for this interview. I looked down the line at the other three and especially noted the one from A Company who looked tough, with his nose flat to his face and a cauliflower ear, and the other two were much taller than me.

After the interviews, we were told that the promotion for this post would be posted in Battalion Orders that evening. What a shock, and a surprise for the whole Battalion – it was I who was busy with needle and thread, sewing on two stripes to my tunic sleeves!

Our first Police Station was in the Ranglen School for Boys, which was closed. The office was in a cellar, with all the windows barred, and it looked like a prison.

The first three nights we had to use candles, and this made it difficult for us to fill in the various lists and forms required at the end of duties. One night the Sergeant accidentally knocked over the ink bottle, putting out the candle and spilling ink over many of the forms already completed. This upset the Sergeant, especially when the cork of the ink bottle was missing, and he had the two soldiers and me on our hands and knees, with a candle each, looking for that damned cork! It took us half an hour to find it, in a corner where it had rolled.

The cellar was a grimy place, more like a mortuary. One of the remanded soldiers told me he had not had any sleep since he was brought into this place a week ago, and said it was a dead house.

All the Police staff, a month later, were pleased to be moved into one of the two old cottages on Belton Road. We used the front room as an office, and the Sergeant's sleeping quarters; in the two bedrooms we had the windows barred and used them for remanded prisoners and the

kitchen was used as a mess-room.

While the Battalion was billeted in Harrogate, every night at 10.00 pm., in front of the Prince of Wales Hotel, the Orderly Sergeants from all the Companies answered for Roll Call. The Provost Sergeant was in charge of this parade, with the Orderly Officer of the week in attendance. The Sergeant was 6ft. 6ins. tall, with a long row of coloured ribbons and medals on his tunic, the kind of N.C.O. suitable for the job. He took charge of the defaulters, who were marched in front of the Company Officer. When he opened his mouth and barked out the order: "Quick march into the C.O.'s office!" to the prisoner, the soldier moved as if blown in by a hurricane.

Two soldiers were once remanded for further evidence and were taken back to the cottage cells in the upper room. With the cells being above our mess-room, we could hear the prisoners moving about. Some time later, as the Police staff were having an evening meal. We suddenly heard a clatter outside the mess-room window in the back yard. Thinking it was the prisoners, trying to make a break, two of us ran out into the back yard. It was quite dark, but looking up at the cell

window, I saw a length of cloth being pulled up through the partly opened window. Underneath the window my colleague picked up a brown paper parcel. We took this back into the mess-room and found it contained about four pounds of freshly cooked sausages. It seemed that some prisoner had pals billeted nearby and notes were dropped from the cell window to their pals in a side lane, which was unlit on account of Zeppelin raids. The piece of cloth I saw disappearing through the cell window was a puttee – worn

WE SUDDENLY HEARD A
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BACK YARD.

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FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

by all soldiers around their legs below the knee. Later we learned that the prisoners had been living on better rations than the staff. The two old ladies occupying the cottage next door had been supplying the prisoners with milk, coffee and other dainties, all pulled up to the window by the "puttee" crane!

One day the Police staff sat down to a tea of bread and margarine, currant cake and tinned pineapple chunks. When we had finished, we realised that we had only left two pineapple chunks for the policeman still on duty, although there was still plenty of syrup. One of the Privates said we could soon put that right, got a turnip and cut four cubes, dropping them in the syrup. When the soldier came in and saw the pineapple he said "My favourite fruit!". After eating four of the cubes, he remarked "My mother used to say that pineapple tasted like turnip to her, and I think she was bloody well right, too!"

It was a Saturday night and the Sergeant's night off, and I had been left in charge of the office and the Police Station. I was busy doing clerical work at about 9.55pm. when I heard a noise coming from the passage leading into the cottage, then the door flew open and in fell a drunken soldier. "Hello, Corporal!" he said, "I've come to give myself up! I couldn't get back in the same way I got out!" As I helped him to his feet, I saw that he was the same soldier I had served tea that afternoon at 5.00pm. in his cell upstairs. He was full of apologies because he had taken out two of the bars from the cell window. I helped him back upstairs; in fact he was so drunk I nearly had to carry him, and dropped him on his bed. When I examined the window I found that two of the bars were loose. Prisoners must have been taking nights off, but what a good thing for the staff, that they always came back! I said nothing about my drunken soldier.



In the late 19th. century the building trade was booming with the enormous demand for housing, created by the increase of population. Samuel Fox built houses for his workforce on both sides of the river, close to the Works as he acquired land adjoining his original property, not perhaps foreseeing that they would be too close for comfort as the plant expanded and noise and dirt increased.

The housing at Horner House and later, New Haywoods, was where the majority of immigrants were housed, while a new community sprang up on the south side of Manchester Road between the Ebenezer Chapel and Hole House Lane.

The 1881 Census shows that the workforce involved in the building trade included bricklayers, brickmakers, carpenters and joiners, chimneypot-makers, clayminers, dry-stone wallers, masons, plasterers, a potter, a journeyman slater, stone-cutters and stone "getters", terra-cotta workers, quarrymen and quarry owners:- 65 in all.

To serve the growing population there was a "besom" maker, 7 carters to cope with increased transport, 10 "cordwainers" or shoe makers and a gentleman's hairdresser. A postman was evidence of further refinement in communication and a Waterworks "turncock" the sole employee required by the new Waterworks regulations of the Local Board. There were 15 people described as shopkeepers: a bookseller, several butchers, a confectioner, drapers, a "drysalter" or chemist, general dealers, grocers, greengrocers and a stationer. There was also a pedlar entered, who was not likely to be itinerant, as his wife was an umbrella wire-tester and would be working at Fox's.

The major development in the retail trade was the foundation of a branch of the Co-operative Society in Stocksbridge in the guise of the Band of Hope, whose founders met initially at the Friendship Inn. In the 1881 Census, the Co-op Stores is entered as having no occupant, with the manager living in adjoining premises. Two men and one woman were classed as shop assistants. Three of the shop-keepers were women and there was a female hawker from Ireland lodging at Horner House.

Opportunities for the employment of women had been transformed by the kind of work required in Samuel Fox's Umbrella Shop. 87 of the 121 umbrella workers were female, two of them part-time scholars of 10 years of age. 51 women were entered as Domestic workers - a category including charwomen, cook, housekeepers, housemaids and a nursemaid. There were 10 dressmakers and sempstresses, 4 bonnetmakers and milliners. A widow was landlord of the New Inn, a woman was employed as rent-collector, and 9 of the 12 teachers now employed in the town were female.

Several young people employed were apparently under the legal age limit: 15 full-time workers and 7 part-timers in the factories were between 10 and 12. The latter were described as "half-time scholars". David Brearley, born

at Townend in 1855, had attended Bolsterstone National School full-time up to the age of 10, then part-time for 3 years – in the winters only, working for his builder father in the summer. But 10 years after the Act of Parliament which set up Local Boards empowered them to enforce school attendance up to the age of 13, it is surprising to find children still exploited in this way.

The “Dame School” held in the Hive Yard at Deepcar in the 1840s was no longer a feature in this valley, although a Mrs. John Brearley of Lion Lodge, formerly Miss Figg, governess at More Hall, was entered as “teacher of ladies’ school”, so perhaps took private pupils. Joseph Sheldon’s *Reminiscences* of 1924 states that this lady also taught French in the Mutual Improvement classes started by Rev. Robertshaw.

SELF REMEMBERED

PART 3

Leaving school in 1944 and searching for work was a bit of a bore. I would have liked to have gone in for joinery, but there was little chance of getting into apprenticeship because of the shortage of materials. Long after the war finished, the bombed-out buildings had to wait until builders got permits in order to carry out repairs.

Just prior to leaving school we were asked to vote on whether school meals should be introduced. We voted, but pupils still had to walk home for dinner after I left. The shops only had rationed food, so there was nothing to make a meal of that could be bought.

This was the age of the British Restaurant. This was a national type of eating-place, serving basic meals such as *Snuek Pie* – some sort of fish – and *Woolton Pie*, named after the then Food Minister. It was a mystery what went into these strange dishes, but you ate them thankfully or went hungry.

I had tried to get employment at several places before coming to Stocksbridge to the steelworks of Samuel Fox & Company. The Youth Employment officer sent me round with another young lad from his office to find out if any department needed a youth. I was taken on in the Traffic Department, cleaning the steam locomotives and around the shed. I was still only 14 years old, and moving those huge engines around within the shed.

My hours were 8.00am. – 5.00pm. Monday to Friday and 8.00am. – 12.00 pm. Saturday. We had to attend Day Continuation School one day a week, and this is where I first encountered Algebra. What a shock ! The other lads might not have been brilliant at Algebra at school, but at least they had been given the ground rules. With my Council School knowledge I didn’t get too far; in fact I was 40 years old before I got my “O levels” in Maths and English Language.

There were still shortages. If you bought a loaf from a

shop, you had to carry it home with no wrapping. Getting your sweet ration was also affected; when you bought your small bar of chocolate, there would be a small band of paper with the producer’s name on it and the rest was unwrapped. Shopping at food stores was equally difficult. People took newspapers with them to protect foodstuffs from the dust and germs one might meet.

When the men came in for breakfast at work it was usual for the lads to be sent to the canteen for food. One young man used to send me for seven slices of bread and dripping and would throw away the bottom slice because it had my greasy handprint on it.

I recall going on holiday towards the end of the war, when we went to Cleethorpes for a week. This was sheer luxury for us. We visited the market on Freeman St. and met a lady who had bought a new chamber-pot – she was walking along with this held in front like a star prize from some lottery.

Men could not always get beer or cigarettes; some would get to know delivery days and walk a far as the Ladybower Inn to get some, having just finished the 6.00 – 2.00 morning shift.

Trying to remember the people around is somewhat difficult after almost 60 years. There were no class photographs at that time, and what snaps there were no bigger than 35m. negatives. After a long test of memory, I have listed those I recall of my age group.

Boys: Les Howson, Tom Collingwood, Derek McCaslin, Joseph Swift. Arnold Pursall, Derek Hobson, Roy Glenn, Howard Jackson, Dennis Collingwood, Alan Bradshaw, Stanley Bird, Jimmy Sanderson, Ben Nettleton, Leonard Hanson, Tommy Crofts, Willy Hirst, Dick Piddington, Douglas Hague, Stan Greaves, Bill Brearley, Albert Waistnedge, Ken Ellison, Noel Edis, Eric Paton, Austin Morgan, Peter Foster, Eric Briggs, Frank Fletcher, Frank Dawon, Frank Woodhead, Malcolm Mallison, Peter Lee, Raymond Ashton, Eric Guy, Tommy Walton, Jimmy Crofts, Arnold Howe, Doug Bullock, Roy Brears, Dick Harper, George Brearley, Jack Butcher, Desmond Brearley.

Girls: Norah Lath, Betty Tear, Betty Reid, Alice Leet, Norah Crofts, Margaret Brown, Betty Wood, Betty Grace, Ada Crofts, Dorothy Tittcombe, Moira Minnis, Marjorie Clarkson, Pauline Bills, Mary Lilley? (Tonks), Mary Curbishley, Dorothy Grace, Audrey Martin, Joyce Morton, Doris Hughes, Beryl Briggs, Shiela Glossop, Pam Paget, Jean Ibbotson, Barbara Brooks, Kathleen Hammerton, Nelly Turner.

C.R. Mallinson

THE MEMOIRS OF LILIAN BIRKHEAD 1896-1987

SCHOOL

I began school at the age of five at Green Moor (Hunshelf) Board School No. 1, founded in 1879, as it says on the stone

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MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY HELD ON THE SECOND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, AT THE UNITED REFORM
CHURCH HALL, MANCHESTER ROAD, STOCKSBRIDGE AT
7.00 PM.

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MEETINGS

❖ PROGRAMME 2006 ❖

OCTOBER 12TH

IT WAS ON THE FRONT PAGE – SHEFFIELD'S
NEWSPAPERS
MIKE SPICK

NOVEMBER 9TH

THE SEARCH FOR BOLSTERSTONE CASTLE
WENDY GOODHIND

SATURDAY DECEMBER 16TH

CAROL SUPPER – CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATIONS

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

plaque on the outside wall .Was there some thought of a No. 2 School? It had accommodation for 120 in two rooms, with two fireplaces in the "big" room and one in the Infants' room. Rows of seats went up in tiers in the Infants' room, with new beginners on the bottom row and the older ones at the top. Nowadays children have room to move about freely. In those days we had no activities, we stayed put until playtime, and then again until home time. A partition came down the side of this gallery, and behind this the Head Teacher used to bring the big boys for a thrashing. Yes, there were thrashings in those days! "Touch your toes!", then Swish! We could hear the swish of the cane and sometimes the boy would cry out, and we younger ones were scared, wondering perhaps if the victim was perhaps one of our brothers. Good old days? I still wonder what was the object of bringing those boys into the room where the younger children sat, instead of punishing them in front of their colleagues.

Mr. Taylor took the upper classes – age range 7 to 14 – called Standards I to VII, and he must have had over 50 scholars, so certainly strict discipline was needed, but sometimes it verged on cruelty. His wife took the Infants. Her form of punishment was "Close your hand!", then she rapped our knuckles with a ruler. Later an assistant was granted.

In 1903 Mr. and Mrs. Taylor left to go to Wortley School, and Mr. and Mrs. Prew, from Barnsley, took over. Under Mr. Prew's regime, he took Standards IV, V, VI and VII, while Mrs. Prew took Standards I, II and III, and Miss Theresa Clixby took the Infants.

Mrs. Prew was of Scottish descent and we thought she looked like Queen Victoria, always in black with voluminous skirt and wearing a little white collar, crocheted or tatted by herself, and fastened with a little silver brooch with a cairngorm stone. Her greying hair had a lovely, soft wave. We thought Mr. Prew resembled King Edward VII. Their daughter Jean kept house – the School House.

We were very well grounded in the 3 Rs by Mrs. Prew, with the History and Geography of Yorkshire, England and Wales included. In Mr. Prew's class we took World Geography – how exciting that seemed! We took Europe first, country by country, its capitals, rivers, mountains, capes, bays and towns and what they were famous for. Nowadays Geography is taught in regions of similar physical features, perhaps more logically, but those rivers, bays and capes do live on in my memory.

I do not remember having any "visual aids" or illustrations, which in later years as a teacher I would collect and display, but then we used only maps and our imaginations. Mr. Prew made History, Geography and Scripture most interesting, in fact quite exciting, putting those Old Testament stories in modern language. The story of Samson and those thirty suits stands out in my memory. History was from 1485 to modern times. Mrs. Prew took earlier History. I did not like the Ancient Britons.

Mrs. Prew taught the girls Needlework, while Mr. Prew took the boys for Drawing. They had models of geometric shapes to draw. Why? There was no imaginative work, no painting, no large pieces of paper to use like we have today. We girls never had Drawing lessons. In Needlework we learned to tack and hem on square pieces of spotless, white calico – how soon they changed colour! After tacking, we hemmed them with red, blue or pink cotton, then seamed two pieces together, hemming the piece all round to make a "specimen". There was also a "run & fell" seam, then the setting of gathers into a band, halving and quartering and "stroking" the gathers. There were squares of flannel on which we learned to herring-bone. A knitting "specimen" was a stocking heel or a stocking toe. We are still using this Dutch heel method in stocking knitting today – 70 years later, one thing yet unchanged, for some men still prefer hand-knitted socks.