

THE PARAGON

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MY WORKING LIFE

My first week at work coincided with a nasty accident when a shunter, Mr. Albert Wheatley, got his head crushed between the pan bogies that were used to feed the scrap steel into the furnaces. He survived the accident, thank goodness, and he was found a job around the department office to keep him in employment until retirement.

I was still in my first week when I heard a man using the really foul language that I had heard existed, but never actually heard before. This was not used in temper, but in general conversation, and I thought that if he could not express himself without the use of such language, he was a poor sort of person. There and then I resolved that I would try to get by on good English, and I have never regretted that decision.

There were some quite unforgettable personalities there in the Traffic Department. Big Herbert was one everybody was wary of. Because of the War, all labour was needed and age did not necessarily mean that retirement was round the corner. Herbert Tyas was a big man, and had been even larger when, as a member of the West Riding Police, he had protected the people of Penistone around 1900. After retiring from the Constabulary and entering the steelworks he still carried that air of authority. He always wore a moleskin waistcoat with pictures of noted racehorses on its white buttons. But the thing to watch out for was his moustache – if that started to bristle, “Get out!” and everybody did. He would not be “in” today – he considered that his position as constable had meant that he had to keep all foreigners out of his district, even the Irishmen coming to seek work at the Penistone steelworks. One shunter, a Deepcar man in his forties, once lost his temper and called Herbert a very nasty name and was immediately floored. Herbert was summoned to the office and asked what he thought he was doing – this was a steelworks, not a boxing booth. Herbert replied, “Mr. Illingworth, I do not allow anyone to call me what he did,



and if you had used that name you would have received the same treatment!” The manager knew that this was so, and told him to go and get on with his work. Even at seventy years of age, Herbert Tyas was still a valuable worker.

The need for labour at that time meant that if a person was fit enough for work there was no age problem, and this shortage also meant that women were brought into the steelworks to do all sorts of jobs. There were two who were designated as Firemen during my time in the department, Mary McFadyen and

Gladys Cooper. I cannot remember Mary being a regular member of a particular crew, but Gladys always worked with Harry Ashton and “Pop” Sheriff. Harry was a veteran of the

First World War trenches and as tough as they come. When he felt the need to give vent to his feelings, he would first send Gladys to the cabin before really roasting his victim with his anger. There was no swearing when ladies were around!

His shunter, “Pop”, was known for the aroma of his twist pipe tobacco. He might have been absent for a couple of days, but the smell of his pipe would still be around. He was also noted for hiding shunt poles around the works for his own use. I wager there will still be fall-pipes or gaps in walls containing Pop’s shunt poles some sixty years after he retired.



L-R Alec Ward, Roy Mallinson, Lawrence Buxton, Derek Brearley *Roy Mallinson*

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VICTORY CLUB RECORDS

Ledger 46 covers the years 1946 to 1949 and was reviewed by Val Dodgson. All comments are hers.

Audit and Accountancy: In 1949 there was a monthly "investigation". The Minute Books may reveal why.

Artistes' fees: Through the four years the fees paid to artistes doubled. Was this due to better artistes or inflation?

Billiards: Obviously billiards was taken very seriously. There are entries for Delegates, Billiards Control Council, repairs to the Trophy Shield and sale of Billiards shades.

The Bar: A lot of money was spent at the Bar. For instance, the total for 1946 was £28,270. I find that beer cost 8d a pint. I don't suppose it was all spent on beer, but the above total would buy 848,100 pints! Purchases by the Club of "patent glass tubing" and "rubbers" for pumps were regular.

Benefit Dances: Collections were taken for the National Institute for the Blind and the Hospital for Sick Children. The children always got more than the blind.

The Club Ball: A band, doorkeepers and cloakroom attendants were paid and Lucky Spot Prizes were provided.

The Children's Treat: In 1946 and 1947 the children received threepenny pieces, but in 1948 and 1949 they were given sixpenny pieces. A good pay rise!

Donations and Grants: Each year the Club donated to the Members Outing, Old Age Pensioned Members, the Horse and Pony Society, the Horticultural Society, the Brass Band and Earl Haigh's Fund. In 1947 Bolsterstone Male Voice Choir was granted £25 (The year of the accident at Holmfirth.)

Free Beer to Members: Distribution of tickets cost 10s. each year. The cost of free beer rose from £38 in 1946 to £66 in 1949, which works out at about 1,140 free pints in 1946.

General Meeting and Election Expenses: In 1946 there is an entry "selling chairs for General Meeting". A fee of £4.10s was paid to polling clerks and £1.2s 6d to the scrutineer. This sounds a serious business – did people have to pay to attend?

General Repairs: 1947 repairs to outside lavatories. It must have been cold outside in the bad winter of that year! In 1948 a new floor was laid in the Best Room and in 1949 new lino in the Snug.

Honorariums: Each year "Christmas money" was given to draymen, pianists, glass collectors, cellar stewards and

secretaries.

Heating: Payments were made to the Coke, Coal and Slag Co. and to Stocksbridge Gas Company. Mr. Stafford and Mr. Broomhead were paid for "wheeling coke".

The Indoor Games League: In 1947 the dominoes were "burnished".

Lighting: In 1946 gas fittings and mantles were bought for emergency lighting.

Newspapers and Periodicals: The Club spent £68 in 1946 and £80 in 1949.

Sundries: In 1946 expenses of 5s were paid for Police Proceedings and £3.3s 0d Legal charges to J. Mitchell & Co. (The Minutes may show what had happened.)

On March 17th 1947 9s 2d was paid for carrying cases of beer in bad weather. (Nothing stops the beer!) And on July 29th that year £1 1s 6d was spent on buckets. (Too much beer?)

Telephone: The cost increased over the 4 years from £6 10s 11d to £27 7s 10d.

Refreshments to Lorrymen: There are lots of entries under this heading – what would "refreshments" consist of – more beer? Drinking and driving had not been invented then!

Steward/stewardess: In 1948/9 a new steward was advertised for and costs of advertising, interview expenses and names of those interviewed are listed. This would be useful for Family History purposes.

Balance sheets are included at the back of the ledger.

THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN

When I returned from Aldershot to Belton Park I found that my Company had moved further into the park, and by the look of the ground, the camp had had plenty of rain. The huts were waterlogged and wooden duckboard paths were being used to get from hut to hut. If a soldier was unlucky enough to slip off the duck he found himself in two feet of sludge and water. The mud made our huts and living quarters dirty and it was a constant worry how to keep our equipment clean.

A new form of transport was now employed to carry the machine guns and ammunition – mules and horses. I was one of the party of 30 from my Company assigned to a Saddlery course. Our first job was to learn to ride a horse, and down I went to the Quartermaster stores to be fitted with a pair of riding trousers.

On the Monday morning I reported at the stables with the others and found the horses ready saddled and lined up. We each stood at a horse's head and awaited

orders from the Sergeant Instructor. The first things to learn were how to hold the reins, and then to mount, and there were many sarcastic remarks from the Sergeant before we accomplished this.

At last the class was successfully mounted and at ease in the saddle, our feet correctly in the stirrups. For two days we were getting used to the horses walking, trotting and galloping. Then we were faced with the jumping ring of six fences, 4 ft. 6 ins high. The Instructor stood in the middle of the ring, correcting each rider as he passed by, with witty and sometimes amusing remarks. My mount took the first two fences, but at the third I became unseated and finished with my arms around the horse's neck, holding on like grim death. Then I heard the Instructor's voice, "Please don't get too damned loving, Sergeant!"

The next day at the stables the class mounted in line and were awaiting the order "Walk, March!" when the horse on my left – its rider an officer wearing a kilt – suddenly reared up and, as soon as its forelegs hit the ground, went off at full gallop into open country with its rider still in the saddle. In fact the horse was taking the officer for a ride. The Sergeant Instructor put his hands to his mouth like a megaphone and shouted, "You'll send back the horse when you have finished with him, won't you, Sir?"

In the next issue: To the Front

THE MEMOIRS OF LILIAN BIRKHEAD

BACK TO COLLEGE

The first summer in Manchester in 1921 was very hot indeed. Some of us were doing School Practice in the slum district of Old Trafford. The crowded classrooms were unbearably hot, but we liked the children there. My class did not know what heather was! We had to take Physical Training on the playground in our gymslips and mothers lined up at the railings to watch us. Teachers in gymslips in the playground! This was long before the days of mini skirts and bikinis.

ROYAL VISITS

It was during this period that the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, came to Manchester and the children and teachers were given places of vantage on the pavement. We were all charmed with the Prince. Later that same year King George V, Queen Mary and Princess Mary came and we were given the same preferential treatment. But never once did Princess Mary smile or show any interest or pleasure. Soon afterwards her engagement was announced, and however much it was applauded in the Press, we couldn't forget how unhappy she had looked and we wondered how much she herself had had to do with this "arranged" marriage.

MY SECOND YEAR AT COLLEGE

Another bedroom now and two new roommates – Miss Burrows, who worked in a clothing warehouse, and Miss Franklin, who lived in Pangbourne in Dorset and had come to see what life was like in the north, and worked in an office. I was at first very disgruntled to be moved away from my former roommates, whose company I had so very much enjoyed. For when three people share a room, with no privacy, so much depends on harmonious relationships.

Miss Mildred Burrows had had a very different upbringing from mine. Her mother (or was it her step-mother?) must have been a very cultured person, for she had been responsible for the education of the children of the family, even teaching them French and German. One of Mildred's sisters was Assistant Matron at the Hostel.

Miss Olive Franklin had arrived during my long summer vacation. She was very reserved and had made no friends at Y.W.C.A., spending most of her weekends with an aunt at Leigh. But as we became friendlier she went to Leigh less frequently. Most evenings we went up to our bedroom after dinner, she with needlework or a book, I with my swotting, taking off our shoes and getting into bed between the blankets. It was a good job they were grey! Mildred Burrows mostly spent her evenings downstairs.

On Saturday mornings, while the others were at work, I tidied the bedroom as before, then I would go out to buy our lunch. This would mostly consist of a 2d. carton of cream, bananas and one cake, unless I had any sent from home. We loved to eat this picnic in our bedroom – sometimes three of us, sometimes two. What Spartans we were! For there was no central heating – just large fires in the drawing room and study downstairs and a kind of oil stove in the dining room. But I never had a cold all the time I was in Manchester.

Mildred hated the warehouse and eventually left, and she helped her sister with the cooking and housekeeping at the hostel. It was no mean task, cooking a meal for approximately 40 people, with no previous experience.

College life took on a more serious aspect now, for this was our final year (only a two-year course in those days). After Christmas we had to do our School Practice, when Her Majesty's Government Inspectors came round to assess our ability and give us a final mark, which was carried forward to our final exam. One incident stands out in my memory, when I had to give a singing lesson before the H. M.I., the College Music teacher and the Class teacher. I had to try and teach a new song by singing it through, without the piano. The words were written on the blackboard and fifty-odd eleven year-olds sat expectantly, waiting to hear me strike up. It was an agreeable surprise to all when I managed it. There were no discipline problems – the class teacher was strict and so was the Head teacher. The Inspector gave me B+ teaching mark.

Another exam that came along soon after this was on Poetry. We made our own choice and the visiting Inspector chose one of these. I had chosen Browning's *Prospice* (strong

STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT
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MEETINGS ARE NORMALLY HELD ON THE SECOND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, AT THE LIBRARY, MAN-
CHESTER ROAD, STOCKSBRIDGE AT 7.00 PM.

THE PARAGON

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MEETINGS

❁ PROGRAMME 2009 ❁

DETAILS

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ISSUE

stuff), Shelley's *Skylark* (very beautiful) and prose from Stevenson's *Eldorado* (inspiring). With these two practical subjects out of the way we concentrated on the final written exam, which was held in June-July 1922.

Early that year we had been getting and filling in application forms. I applied to Sheffield and the West Riding and about Easter I heard that I had been appointed to

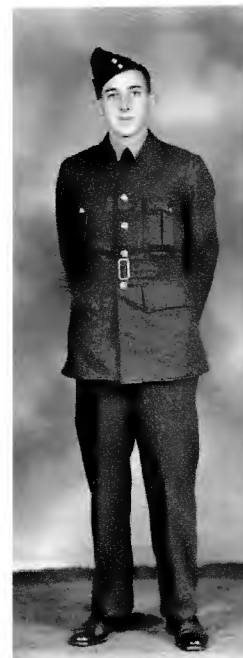
Stocksbridge Works School. Not many girls got a post so soon, some not even by the time they left college, so I was fortunate. So, at the beginning of July the exams were over, my trunk was packed, Goodbyes were said at College and Y. W.C.A. and back I went to Green Moor. I have always felt that those two years were the most interesting, progressive and worthwhile period of my life.

I was able to get in three weeks of teaching before the summer holidays. I was not thrilled with my new post, but more of that later.

SOCIETY NEWS

GOOD NEWS FROM STOCKSBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL.

After a period when Local History was not included in the school's History syllabus, Head of History Mr. Staunton informs me that they plan a course of study of the Stocksbridge area from the Middle Ages to the present day, with emphasis on Industry. Also a gallery will be created for display of historical artefacts and memorabilia.



No Prizes for guessing the identity
of this snappy dresser