

THE PARAGON

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SOCIETY NEWS

Soon our Society will be 20 years old, having been reincarnated from the remains of the once-thriving Kenworthy Fellowship in November 1989. There may not be many survivors other than Jessie Clark, Norma Pears, Binnie Whittaker, Basil Spooner and I, but we would love to hear from them any memories they may care to share. We would also welcome suggestions of how we may celebrate the occasion.

I offer as my personal contribution the closing chapters of the dissertation I submitted in that year for my Master's degree in Local History. The title was *From Waldershelf to Stocksbridge* – a Local Study of how this area developed from a crossing-place on the Little Don between Hunshelf and Waldershelf to the thriving town it became in the Industrial Revolution. The study was based almost entirely on information gleaned from the Census Returns 1851-1881.

Previous chapters, after an introduction giving the location and origin of the names Waldershelf and Stocks Bridge, assessed the contributions of earlier Historians, the geography of the area, and analysed the 1851 Census, demographic and economic developments and immigration (with particular reference to Samuel Fox – it was at this stage that I began to appreciate the contribution that “incomers” make to our society.)

Now we can examine how far things had changed during that period, and in what way some remained stable.

CHAPTER V CHANGE AND STABILITY

The Ecclesiastical boundary changes taking place on the formation of a new Parish of Oughtibridge in 1868 reduced the size of the ancient Chapelry of Bradfield, which from that date comprised only Bradfield Parish, Bolsterstone and Midhope Chapelries, and excluded the

Township of Bradfield. Therefore the people who were entered in the 1881 Census as natives of Ecclesfield and Bradfield are even more likely to be locally born.

The 54 born in Bolsterstone, 425 born in Bradfield, 37 in Deepcar, 8 from Ecclesfield and 49 born in Stocksbridge, plus 25 who gave the name of an individual homestead as their birthplace, form a nucleus of 598 locally born inhabitants. However, this number is only part of the 1851 population of 985, and not necessarily synonymous with it. In fact it is certain that some young people, for instance, who were working and so living outside the immediate area at the time of the earlier Census, would return later and are found to be in residence in 1881. Nevertheless, the comparison gives us an idea of the proportion of native population – less than a sixth of the total 3,737.

The number of people now under consideration includes those omitted from the analysis of the working population made earlier – that is, women who had no occupation entered, and retired or unemployed persons. There were 303 women without occupation, 6 females described as “annuitants” and 3 retired ladies. One Gentleman resided at Spink Hall, while 5 men were unemployed or had no occupation. There were also 5 invalids – 3 male and 2 female – but of these only one was old enough to be considered in the comparison.

People would have to be at least 30 years old to have enumerated in 1851. This criterion applies to only 640 of the 1,566 workers and to the 319 non-working and unemployed people already identified.

Amongst these 595 people, a search of the Census

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Returns and Church Registers of Marriage covering this period has identified only 200 of the original 985 inhabitants of Stocksbridge. Thirteen of these were now living in the Scattered Districts" of Stocksbridge (Hunshelf – not within our boundary in 1851), 24 living in the Hamlet of Green (which included Horner House), 97 in Deepcar and 66 in Stocksbridge itself.

Allowing for a Death Rate of 21.67%, as suggested by the statistics in the Parliamentary Preliminary Report on the 1881 Census, it could be assumed that 213 or 214 deaths had occurred in the interim, which leaves 413 or 414 people who must have left the area. Some of these would be women who had married men living outside our boundary, young couples and widowed or single people of any age who found work and set up house elsewhere. They would not have to move very far to be in a neighbouring Enumeration District and still be within easy visiting distance of relatives or within travelling distance of work here.

Having dealt with the statistics, we will look at the actual families involved in the growth of Stocksbridge in our next issue.

THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN

TRENCH WARFARE *CONTINUED*:

About 20 yards to the rear of our gun position was a small, shallow trench, 4 feet deep, and while waiting for Zero hour we dug in and made holes in the side of the trench to keep our ammunition safe from shrapnel. This was hard work and I took off my pack and other things round my neck that were hampering me.

Suddenly an enemy shell struck the ground two yards in front of one gun, sending it flying in a shower of earth into oblivion and covering our trench with soil and debris. Three more shells fell on our gun position in quick succession, leaving us with soil in our mouths and ears.

"Get further along the trench, away from the guns!" yelled the officer. We crawled 100 yards along the trench and lay flat. The morning was still dark and foggy.

Then into our trench jumped an Infantry Corporal, revolver in one hand and a light pistol in the other, shouting "Here they are, lads!" thinking we were the enemy. But as his men appeared, rifles with bayonets fixed, he saw the khaki uniforms and moved off into the mist of No Man's Land. They were followed by a second wave of Infantry.

Suddenly one of our section yelled "Gas!" and we all reached for our gas masks. Mine was not there – in its place over my shoulder was only a pair of field glasses in its case. As my eyes started watering I knew it was gas, so I pulled a packet of *Ruby Queen* cigarettes, lit one and puffed away in an attempt to forget the gas.

I was not at all happy and crept back to the gun position to look for my gas mask, but everything was buried, covered with earth, and I had to crawl back to my Section.

By this time the gas had cleared and they had all removed their masks, much to my relief.

When the officer ordered us back to the gun position we found two guns of no use and the mail was mixed with jam and other rations. I eventually found my gas mask but with a hole in the canister it was useless. All the ammunition boxes had been riddled by shrapnel. Fortunately, the attack by our Infantry was successful and Jerry was retreating.



Example of World War One, British Small Box Respirator. Brought into service in 1916, just before the battle of the Somme. Probably the most effective gas mask of the conflict. It was also adopted by the United States on their entry to the war in 1917

THE MEMOIRS OF LILIAN BIRKHEAD 1896 – 1987

1929 THE "NEW" SCHOOL

When the New School was opened in Shay House Lane all our books and equipment had to be transferred. What a packing and a "flitting" that was! We settled into our new quarters on a cold, foggy morning in January. Householders in Victoria Street came out to watch the long trek of teachers and scholars up to "t' New School".

For a year we carried on as separate Girls, Boys and Infants. I was transferred to the Infants School (age 7-8) under Mrs. Firth. I felt very much out of place there, even though the children were my former pupils. I could not adjust to Infant School methods as they were carried on there. Again I felt that I was in the wrong profession, and at times could cheerfully have taken an office job in Fox's.

Then came a vacancy on the Junior School staff under Mr. Weaver, for which I applied. What a change that proved to be! My three experiences under headmistresses

had been unhappy. My new headmaster seemed pleased with my work and I began to feel I could teach after all. Also I had a happy relationship with the staff.

1945 GREEN MOOR SCHOOL

In 1945 circumstances caused me to have to make a big decision. The headship of Green Moor School became vacant and I was asked to apply. There were no other applications. But it did not appeal to me on the least. To leave our happy staff room to go to a one-teacher school, all ages 5-11, and take on the responsibilities of a Head – no appeal whatsoever! However I was told that I could have an assistant and I began to see possibilities.

I applied and was asked to take up duties at once. I left my many friends at Stocksbridge, where I had taught for 23 years, and took up the lonely life of a one-teacher school (for there was no assistant for quite a few weeks), and the organising was almost overwhelming. I was quite unused to 5-7 year-olds.

Then came an assistant, who was wanting to give up office work and take up the one-year intensive training course that was available at that time.

(Note: This was an emergency Teacher training to replace staff lost during World War II. Strange that Lillian does not tell us of her wartime experiences!)

She was Miss Margaret (Madge) Squires of Thurgoland, and she was with me for one year until she was accepted at college, and as she gained knowledge and experience she was a great help, for she was conscientious and understanding. It was good to have Juniors, about 14 of them, aged 7- 11, knowing the Infants were being well catered for.

The furniture was heavy and old-fashioned, but there was plenty of room. Dinners were brought from Penistone and a dinner attendant – Mrs. Hilda Shaw – came in each day. But conditions were somewhat primitive. There was electricity, but no piped water until 1951. We washed up in rainwater carried in each morning from a tank on the roof and heated in an electric boiler, while drinking water was brought in a jug from the village pump by the Rock Inn. The boys performed these duties on rota. And of course, the most unpleasant drawback of all, earth closets

VICTORY CLUB RECORDS

We are indebted to Mick Kerrigan for his study of the Minute Books covering the period December 1953 to March 1960, of which this is a summary.

On the day of the A.G.M. 1954 Club Members were to receive free beer.

Billiards does not warrant many comments, other than the resolution to charge 4d a game for Inter-

departmental matches, an intriguing one about loaning “trick balls” to Oughtibridge Club and the question of supervision.

Other Indoor Games were mentioned when the Secretary was authorised to order taxis to convey a team to Bolsterstone Castle. In the Club games could be played in the Best Room on Saturday evenings and any other evening than Sunday.

Closing Time was to remain at 10.30 pm and no extension was to be applied for at Christmas and New Year.

Complaints about the manner of H.L. in supervising Billiards led to his duties being partly taken over by E. Broomhead.

There were also complaints about the behaviour of J. W.W. that led to the complainant, E.L. consulting his solicitor. A further complaint resulted in a letter giving him a final warning that his membership would be suspended.

A disturbance on Christmas Eve was reported without the culprits being identified, but a similar incident at a Saturday Free and Easy resulted in two men and a woman being refused further admission, although they were to be allowed to appear before the Committee if they wished to state their case.

Complaints about the “dirty habits” of the Club cat resulted in the poor thing being destroyed.

Discipline within the Club was evidently a primary concern and patrolmen G. Wilson and N. Pridmore were appointed to challenge anyone whose membership was in doubt.

A letter was received in April 1954 from the Education Officer of the West Riding C.C. requesting that the Large Hall should be made available for use in the event of a National Emergency. (One wonders why this situation should be considered nine years after the end of the War.) The matter was referred to the Company.

Entertainment was a main feature of Committee business. A Boxing Day Ball was deemed so successful that a bonus of £2 was voted for the Casino Orchestra. The opening dance, held after the extension of the Large Hall in October 1954, resulted in a profit of £49 and was hugely successful, except for a “stampede” to the gents’ cloakroom at the end. Cloakroom attendant H. Howard reported the loss of his raincoat and was granted an *ex gratia* £10. The coat was eventually returned.

The Stan Hardcastle Band was booked for Boxing Day 1955 at a fee of £20 and on another occasion the Secretary was authorised to purchase 12 gramophone records.

A group of 70 visitors from Penistone Y.M.C.A. were entertained in May 1955 and 100 sandwiches were provided.

A Film Show at the Palace Cinema was an annual Children’s Treat between Christmas Day and New Year. The one held in December 1954 was not as well attended as the previous two – only 643 as opposed to 870 and 830 – despite the provision of a free three-penny ice-cream. This was put down to poor weather.

A curious decision, in the face of this enthusiasm for celebrating Christmas, was that the suggestion of a Harvest Festival in 1955 was rejected on the grounds that the Club

STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT
HISTORY SOCIETY

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TREASURER

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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 ❖

NOVEMBER 12TH
A CORNISH MISCELLANY
CHRISTINE MCKAY

SAT. 12TH DECEMBER
CAROL SUPPER

was Non-sectarian.

Each year the question of the admission of Ladies to the Club was raised and although a partial ban on any other than Members' wives and lady friends was rescinded, three Committee Members registered their objections.

Members of the Forces in uniform had been admitted to the Club without a Member's introduction, but a motion to reverse this decision was referred to the S.W.S.S. The Parent Committee replied that Members conscripted to the Armed Forces should retain their membership of both organisations.

Tribute was paid on the death of Mr. G. Wilson and flowers were sent to his funeral.

The Committee were keeping a close eye on the performance of the staff, particularly the Steward. Complaints were made about warm beer – was the sprinkler system being used? - and that the pint pots were not clean. There was a decline in beer sales.

Eventually the Steward was asked to resign, the post was again advertised and a Mr. and Mrs. Chambers were appointed. He wished to retain his home at Deepcar while the Steward's house was being cleaned and offered his sister's services as cleaner, all of which was agreeable to the Committee. Soon there was favourable reaction to the excellent bar service and condition of the beer. But some time later it was noted that the Steward took an unnecessary risk in climbing on a chair and table to change a light bulb, so he was to be told to use the steps and ladders provided. However, the Concert Chairman commended him for his servicing of the Public Address system and he was given a bonus of 100 Players' cigarettes.

Bar staff complained that the cream paintwork in the bar area was tiring for their eyes, so it was agreed to change it to a more restful shade of pale green.

A cleaner who claimed compensation for an accident had her case referred to the Insurance Company. But a later claim by cloakroom attendants in respect of damage to their nylon stockings, allegedly caused by new fitments, was not acted upon. However cleaners applied for, and were granted, new terms of employment – 5 hours a day with one full day off a week – and a pay increase from 1s/7d to 1s/9d weekly.

To be continued