

# THE PARAGON

JOURNAL OF THE STOCKSBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY



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## Society News

At the AGM three of our Committee resigned their posts. Roy Mallinson graciously accepted the honorary position as President of the Society and Barbara Mallinson and Betty McKay also remain members. We expressed our appreciation of the contribution all three have made to the continued success of our Society.

Meanwhile Dennis Pindar has been voted into the position of Chairman and is already making his presence felt. We are also pleased to welcome Val Dodgson as our new Treasurer.

Please contact Basil or Dennis with any enquiries.

**President** Roy Mallinson

**Chairman** Dennis Pindar 01142882301

**Secretary** Basil Spooner 01142884456

**Treasurer** Val Dodgson

**Archive** Brenda Duffield

Janet Parkin

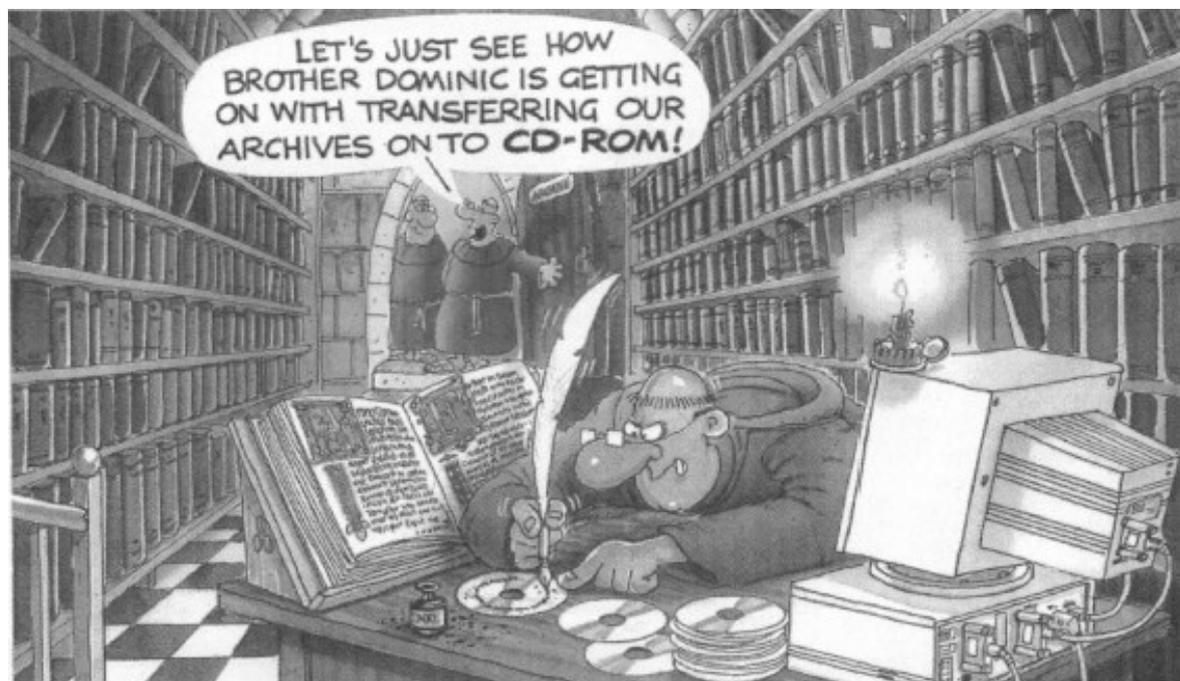
Mary Read

**PLEASE NOTE** that Graham Sedgwick is beavering away in the back room, digitizing our records and hoping no one will notice him, while the rest of us try to keep up. He does not wish to be "on the Committee".

BD

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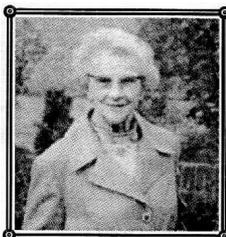


## The Memoirs Of Lilian Birkhead

1896 - 1987

### AMATEUR DRAMATICS

In 1937 when we had finished Gilbert and Sullivan operas, we ventured into Amateur Dramatics. For several years we did a play by Eleanor Reynolds, whose homely characters and dialect went down well with players and audience alike. The first one, *Gwynne versus Gwynne*, was a great success. This was followed by two other Eleanor Reynolds plays, then we gave a set of three one-act plays. We had often done sketches published by French, also Austin Hyde's dialect plays, in the days when we had a young people's concert party, but we had not launched out into a whole evening drama.



Was it in the late 30s that we began to have Flower Services at the Church? The first of these was *The Adorning of the Cross* - the idea and the cross was borrowed from Potter Hill Methodist Church at High Green. These activities were discontinued during the War years.

### EVACUEES

1939-1940 was a sort of stalemate. Then the war hotted up, bombing over the south coast became fierce, and plans were made for the evacuation of children to the safer, rural areas in the north. My brother (Parish Clerk) took a kind of Census, with which I helped, of every house and family in the Parish - how many spare rooms were available and how many people would be willing to take in evacuees.

We received word to be prepared for eight children in our village from Shoreham, Sussex. These eight, along with many more, were first sent to Wakefield and housed there for the night, then taken to schools in the various villages in the West Riding to which they had been allocated. So on Friday afternoon I went home from Stocksbridge School to Green Moor School to collect my quota - two girls aged 8 and 10. All these eight children were assembled there with their clothes in haversacks, name tags pinned on them, some crying and all looking apprehensive. We were also feeling apprehensive.

The allocation was to be: 4 to *Hunshelf Hall*, one to Mr. and Mrs. Goodram at *Roisfield*, one to Mr. L. Walton at *Inglemount*, one to Mr. Dolby at *Rock Cottage* and one to me, Miss Lilian Walton at the *Bungalow*. But two brothers wished to be together and so did two of the girls, so finally the two boys went to Mr. and Mrs. Goodram, two girls to me and four to *Hunshelf Hall*. The other two prospective "hosts" withdrew, but Leslie Walton (my brother) and his wife were most helpful in taking over my "Vacs" when I wanted time off or went on holiday.

The two girls came to therefore, and I must say that after the first two days it felt like a week since they arrived - trying to console them, getting to know their likes and dislikes, planning their routine. My life certainly took on a different pattern - a family to plan for, meals and clothes to prepare. They went with me to Stocksbridge School. Early morning was a bit hectic. I felt they should have a cooked meal, but they were not keen. It certainly took some managing to be fed and ready to leave by 8.20am. Miss Annie Crossland from *Cherry Tree Cottage* came in part of each day, so there were no cleaning worries. She also baked bread and had tea ready when we came in, and she did some of the washing.

Sometimes there were rifts, more so towards the end, for the older girl (Pearl Williams) was rather aggressive, but it was a very interesting two years, and I thought it well worth while. Several times the parents came to visit and seemed well satisfied. It must have

been a great strain for them to have to send their children so many miles away to live with complete strangers. By about August 1942 the bombing had eased off and it was considered safe for the evacuees to return home. I took them to London where Joy Howitt's mother met us. Joy had been ill all the way on the train. As I came away I felt as if all the cares in the world had lifted from my shoulders, but I wouldn't have missed those two years in spite of all the worry and responsibility. I visited their homes at Shoreham twice afterwards and was warmly welcomed. The last time was in 1957. I am still in touch with Joy, who was a happy, friendly girl, and is now the happy mother of three boys. I enjoy visiting them in Coventry. One Sunday afternoon in 1965 Pearl came on a flying visit in a car with her eight children. They were living in Sprotborough, where her husband worked for a Gas Company. I have not seen her since.

## The Diary Of Willis Burgin

### Son of a Yorkshire Miner

The Germans had built small, concrete pill-box forts, which our artillery failed to penetrate. I looked inside a captured one and it looked cosy, furnished like a sitting-room with two arm chairs and carpet on the floor. These would have come from captured farmhouses.



Our job done, the Section returned to Company HQ, to find that the village had been shelled and Company HQ had to seek cover in a deep wine cellar,

but the bottle racks were empty. The next day the 16<sup>th</sup> Section marched into a lime-stone quarry dug-out. Our four guns were in rough, open country and after visiting their placements I was on my way back to the quarry when I was brought down sharply onto my belly by trip wires. Only 6 inches from my body was a sharp, pointed bayonet, two feet long. This was one of the many nasty tricks Jerry played that upset your nerves. I realised I had missed death by mere inches on this terrible instrument of torture. I cut the wires and threw them and the bayonet as far into the open country as I could, then made my way back to the Section to warn them to keep their eyes open for these trip wires.

Near the Quarry I found a good mackintosh, just my fit. On the way I met a Corporal from another Regiment. We talked about things happening in the area and at every line end he addressed me as "Sir". When we had finished our conversation he stood back and gave me a smashing salute. Then I tumbled to it - it was the mackintosh I was wearing - the corporal mistook me for an officer! It was fun while it lasted!

We stopped around that quarry for three days, and then the Section marched to Le Catelet. In the streets English and German soldiers lay dead after the bloody battle for this little town. Many lay facing each other, still gripping rifles with bayonets fixed after a conflict of cold steel.

The road out of town was more of a sunken lane, with a bank 5ft 6ins high on the left and like the parapet of a trench. The officer brought the Section to a halt as we came across a soldier, upright against the parapet, with rifle on top, aimed at the enemy 200 yards away in the valley, all on his own. This looked strange, but as I moved closer I could see that he was stiff and dead, still in position. In the middle of his forehead was a bullet hole, showing he had been the victim of an enemy sniper. I called to one of

my Section to help lay him on the ground. The lad looked at his face and got a shock - he knew the dead man; they had been friends and he knew the man's family well. He asked if he could look in the dead man's pockets and found a handful of photographs - amongst them one of himself. He later wrote to the parents to tell them how their son had died.

### Salford Remembered - Part 3

By A.A. McKay (1927 - 2009)

(Omitting gruesome details about treatment of an absciss)

When there was a death in the street they called on one of the neighbours to help lay out the corpse, usually in the front room of the house on some kind of bed, because there were no ready-made coffins, they were all hand made to order. The next thing to do was go to the shop to buy a blind to put up at the front window. This would be a cream-coloured blind made of paper - a sign of mourning. Close members of the family would also put up blinds in sympathy. The body would lie in the front room until the day of the funeral; there were no funeral parlours then.



One of the most important persons in the community was the Undertaker.

The nearest one to Shepherd St. was Miss Birtles - she seemed to have cornered the market. Miss Birtles was - how can I describe her - well, to my young eyes she was very tall and well-built, almost mannish. She walked with a steady tread and had that certain looking her eyes, almost as if she were sizing everyone up for a coffin.

The neighbours would drop in for a chat and offer their sympathy, and before the funeral two of them would go round the locality collecting pennies for a wreath. They went in pairs to show that it was all above board.

The funeral would be very solemn. The hearse would arrive, pulled by two black horses with black plumes on their heads. The hearse was glass-sided with patterns etched in the glass and pierced ornamental metalwork around the top for hanging wreaths, the coachwork beautifully hand-lacquered. The driver sat up high on what looked like a glass case. This was a sign of the times when you consider the high infant mortality rate. It was just big enough to hold a child's coffin.

As for the mourners, there was no dashing off to buy a new suit for the funeral, they made do with a black armband and a black tie and dressed in whatever best clothes they had. The womenfolk would wear their one and only coat, or borrow one, and the obligatory black straw hat. Coats were only worn for special occasions; mostly they wore a woollen shawl wrapped around their head and shoulders. I still treasure the one my mother wore.

After the funeral they would all return to the house for the funeral tea - mostly cold ham sandwiches, a cup of tea, a bun, and maybe a tot of whisky.

My Dad was at that time working for a man named Jack Brierley, driving a horse and cart. The yard and stables were on Allendale - the street that was just a few minutes walk from Shepherd St. In the yard next to the stables was a large barrel of molasses that Dad used to mix with bran for the horses. I was just then tall enough to reach over the top of the barrel and dip my fingers in. It tasted lovely.

Dad never had a day off. It was part of his job to

take the horses for a walk round the district every Sunday morning. This was the normal way of exercising them as they could not be left in the stables all day. I can't think he would ever be late for work.

I can just about remember that we had a "knocker-up" - a man who used to come around every morning to wake people up. He had a long pole with some coiled wire at the end and for a few pence a week he would come round to your house at an arranged time and tap on your bedroom window to wake you up. If he did not get an answer he would call out until he got some kind of response. I remember the odd occasion when he would call out, "Come on, Ted, it's time you were up!"

Remember, good time-keeping was all important, as jobs were very scarce. The knocker-up faded away with the coming of cheap alarm clocks. These could be bought on the "Never - never", or as it is known today, Hire Purchase, for a very few pence a week.

Talking of jobs, the next people to be affected by modernisation were the lamp-lighters. They used to come round at dusk with their long poles with a light at the end and light the street gas lamps, returning at daybreak to turn them off. Then someone invented a timer that would switch on the gas supply to the street lamps, ignite them at dusk and douse them at dawn, and so came the demise of the lamp-lighters.

Thinking of gas lamps reminds me of gas mantles. These were a kind of little silk bags (for want of a better description) that hung below your gas fitting and when lit, gave off a lovely glow of light. At that time every house had gas light and nearly every shop sold gas mantles, they were in such demand. They were packed in individual little boxes and could be handled without too much care, but once lit they were so fragile that the slightest vibration anywhere near could cause them to shatter and render them absolutely useless. The odd occasion could arise when a faulty gas mantle would cause fire damage, and this meant that the Fire Brigade would turn out.

Fire Engines in the 1920s and 30s were quite modern, compared with the earlier horse-drawn vehicles; they had petrol-driven engines, but the men were not under cover as they are these days, they sat along each side at the rear of the engine, while one sat with the driver, ringing a warning hand bell. Every time a Fire call was made, the fire engine was accompanied by an ambulance - not one of the modern cream or white ones with fancy gadgets and emergency medication, but one painted dark brown and carrying a couple of stretchers. Modern radio communications have done away with this need.

Talking of vehicles, my brother Tom used to service a car that belonged to a Mrs. Walker, who had a sweet shop on Rosamond St. I remember it was a beautiful, hand built saloon, the kind you see being driven in the old 20s films. Tom used to drive Mrs. W. when she had to go anywhere. She was a widow and could not drive herself. Tom kept the car in immaculate condition, waxing and polishing it.

One Sunday, after working on the car, he was followed into our house by the smallest, scruffiest, black and white terrier you ever saw. We must have pestered Mom to let us keep the dog, and as no one ever came to claim it, it stayed with us for years. This was my first experience of having a family pet, and we named him Spot. I don't know how Mom found the food to feed it.

**STOCKSBRIDGE &  
DISTRICT HISTORY  
SOCIETY**

COMMITTEE

ROY MALLINSON  
HONORARY PRESIDENT

DENNIS PINDAR  
CHAIRMAN

BASIL SPOONER  
SECRETARY

VAL DOGSON  
TREASURER

BRENDA DUFFIELD  
ARCHIVE LIASON

MARY GREEN

JANET PARKIN

MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND  
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH AT THE  
CHRIST CHURCH HALL STOCKSBRIDGE AT  
7.00PM.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2011

**APRIL 14th**

PIE & PEA SUPPER AND PRESENTATION  
OF WEBSITE

**MAY 12th**

SUZANNE BINGHAM - THE HISTORY OF  
SOCIAL HOUSING IN SHEFFIELD

**JUNE 9th**

OUTING TO TEMPLE NEWSAM

**JULY 14th**

TO BE ARRANGED

**AUGUST**

SUMMER RECESS

**SEPTEMBER 8th**

NIGEL CLARK - THE KENWORTHY  
BROTHERS

**OCTOBER 13th**

STEPHEN GAY - MORE RAILWAY RAMBLES

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 3rd**

BRADFIELD HISTORY FAIR

**NOVEMBER 10th**

MALCOLM NUNN - THE HISTORY OF LOXLEY  
VALLEY

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 10th**

CAROL SUPPER

**VICTORY CLUB RECORDS**

**Cash Book No. 15**

**Dec. 1986 - Aug. 1991**

Recorded by Margaret Todner

Fees for the hire of the Hall ranged from £5 to £180, presumably dependant on the length of time and the extent of the facilities required.

Least demanding were the Observer Corps and Don Valley Wine Club, followed by St Matthias, the Salvation Army and the Townswomen's Guild.

Next came Pat Scott's School of Dancing, the Fellowship and S.R.Gent, then the Bowls Section, Stocksbridge Town Council and Stocksbridge Majorettes.

A White Russian paid £25 (perhaps an artiste?) and Stocksbridge Juniors (School?)

£30 was charged to the "Olde Tyme" Dancing Society, Bolsterstone Choir, the Christian Council, Friends of the Earth, the Gardening Section, Deepcar School and something called SWAK.

The Dance Section itself paid £40, Fitness Connection and the Canine Society £50.

Trent Health was charged £70 to hold a Blood Donor session in 1990, while *Stocksbridge Trader* (forerunner of *Look Local*), the Darts League and Stocksbridge Strip (Works Dept.) paid £80 for hire of the Hall.

One of the most expensive artistes to use the Hall was The Cadillacs at £150, only exceeded by the Stocksbridge Works Social Services Council itself and the Dramatic Section, but the best customer of all must have been the Stocksbridge Works Amateur Dramatic Society, who paid £180. Perhaps they gave performances on two or more evenings.

Among private individuals was our own Mr. R. Mallinson, who hired the Hall for his daughter's wedding reception, and Sean Glenn, a local artist who lived in Rundle Road for some time and is now a Theatre Director.



We are grateful to Margaret and all the others who had the patience and dedication to work through these records. They have helped to remind us of the activities taking place in this town in the not too distant past.

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