



THE PARAGON

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WW2 IN THE LITTLE DON VALLEY

The final part - A Compilation by Barry Needle

V1 Rockets



On Christmas Eve 1941 a formation of modified Heinkel bombers launched 45 V1's from the North Sea near Mablethorpe, towards Manchester. A fisherman (who witnessed the launching), said some failed to ignite and plunged into the sea, but the majority did ignite. Some reached the target area, 15 falling on Manchester without hitting any military or factory buildings. In total 42 people were killed and 100 seriously injured. The remaining few fell over a wide area. One of these fell locally on the moors above Stocksbridge as described below. Another was recorded as falling in the Beighton area of Sheffield.

Frank Carr and David Carrigan of Sheffield (WW2 Peoples War) remember 'One night there was the sound of a very large motorcycle (Doodle Bug). It went right over our houses (Hermies Road area) towards Stocksbridge somewhere and came down on the moors'. There has been conflicting opinion on where it landed as there are two craters to the north of the Cut Gate path going over from Langsett to Slippery Stones and the Derwent Valley. The second crater has been attributed to a parachute mine. The V1 fell on Christmas Eve 1944, and it was Christmas Day before anyone got to the still smoking site. Analysing the fragments found at the sites, researchers say the V1 site is to the east of Outer Edge trig point and the parachute mine is on Featherbed Moss. Alf Bonner was walking to work on Sunday 24th December, having missed his bus due to overlaying. As he walked past the water trough at the bottom of Haywood Lane, he heard and then saw a Doodlebug travelling low from the direction of Wortley (This could have been a different one to that seen by Frank Carr and David Carrigan.)

Stocksbridge School Records.

When war broke out, practically all of the staff took up ARP duties to help out. Gas masks were fitted to every child and tested on 11th September when school reopened, after having been closed for a week after war had been declared.

Two air raid shelters were constructed, one on the old car park and another on the site of the old sports hall. (These were recently discovered in 2011 during construction work, and were subsequently filled in to prevent the foundations for the new 'D Block' being too weak.) The children had to climb down a ladder to them, and each shelter had 5 or 6 tunnels of to the side. Food was stored in the tunnels along with shovels, buckets, sand, and 6 big iron kettles were taken down with boiling water for drinks. All had to wear gas masks. Lillian Birkhead 'remembered these shelters with a shudder, to which we periodically reported for air raid drill, or when the sirens went.'

There were frequent practices for Fire Wardens at the school and the Home Guard trained in the evenings. The school became the natural HQ for most war activities for the duration of the war.

One particular weekend a light German plane came down in the school field, and almost the whole neighbourhood turned out to watch this unusual event. The Police arrested the two German occupants. The Perspex was stripped from the plane after permission was granted, to be used in school to make brochures.

An article from the Wikipedia site records that between 1939 and 1945, Stocksbridge (High) School played an active part in the war effort. In March 1941 they raised a total of £91.17.8p as part of a 'War Weapons Week'.

Use of POW's.

The Stocksbridge Town Council History mentions 'The Spink Hall Estate was begun in 1945. Foundations were dug by German prisoners of war.'

Stocksbridge School History records that Kenworthy Road was built by 16-20 German prisoners. They stayed in a large hut at the side of the Co-op Dairy just above the high school and worked Monday to Friday.

Report from a website says 'The council house where I lived in Stocksbridge for a time was part built by Italian prisoners of war.' (Italian POW's were held at Lodge Moor.)

Local Wartime Air Crashes.

On the 31st March 1941 an Avro Anson Mk1 N9912 of No 25 Operational Training Unit (OTU) crashed on Whitwell Moor, while on a night navigational exercise from RAF Finningley. The four man crew all survived, but were later lost on the 29th August 1941 flying a Hampden Mk1 AE126, when shot down by a Luftwaffe night fighter.

A Stirling Mk3 LJ828 of 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit, Wigsley, practising 2 and 3 engine flying crashed on Upper Commons (east of Margery Hill) on the 21st July 1944. The 10 man crew survived. The useable items were quickly recovered by a team from York, the rest pushed into gullies and broken up with axes. This was in the main finally removed in 2005.

West Riding ARP Archives record that on the 5th November 1942, 'More information coming in of this afternoon's air crash near Deepcar / crews on route to see what has happened.' They later reported 'The aircraft is a right old mess but the crew are fine thankfully. Lockheed Hudson for all you plane spotters.'

During the late afternoon 4th November 1942, the pilot of a Hudson AM531 of 6 (C) OTU, was flying a ferry flight from St Eval airfield to Thornaby airfield, when he became lost due to failing light, rising fog and loss of radio contact. A wheels up forced landing was made through a gap in the fog, but the aircraft then slid into a ravine and was badly damaged. The three crew on board escaped serious injury. The crash site was on the old waste coal and slag tip at Soughley, and the crash was witnessed by railwayman Mr Bert Fisher who was on track-laying duty and 'bomb watch'. He was amazed that the aircraft came down avoiding the chimneys and pylons in the area. On landing a wing caught a bank swinging the plane round. It probably finished up down the nearby river bank.



On the 9th December 1942 a Wellington DV810 of No21 OTU with a crew of seven, crashed on Broomhead Moor whilst on a navigational exercise in atrocious weather. F/O 'Tubby' Baker lost in cloud was easing the plane down thinking they were much farther east than the moors above Stocksbridge, when it hit the ground and skidded to a halt. Though injured, all the crew got clear before the fuel ignited and the plane blew up. The crew were led off the moor to Stocksbridge, before being taken to hospital with minor injuries and mild shock, whilst 'Tubby' was given a bed at a local policeman's house. The sergeant's wife treated him very kindly, and for a long time after she sent cakes to his unit. F/O Baker survived the war as a highly decorated Wing Commander (DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar). Four of the survivors were later killed by a Luftwaffe night fighter, during a bombing raid in Tunisia.

I remember visiting a large section of wing in the 1960's at the side of the Ewden Beck source several times, and finding small pieces of wreckage in the stream bed, possibly from the Stirling.

This was removed many years ago, probably by crash enthusiasts.



VE Day

In 1945 the local Scout Group held a torchlight procession to a beacon. (F/L Eddie Challis was lost in a raid over Berlin in 1943. His was probably the only fatality from the local Scouting Community during WW2. He was the son of Vincent and Clara Challis of Stocksbridge.)

Edith Lily Schofield remembered celebrating VE Day in June 1945, and also VJ day in August outside Fox's Gates and afterwards at the New Inn.

My father had a couple of photographs of a Military March Past through Stocksbridge assumed to be part of the celebrations.

The Societies 'Around Stocksbridge Second Selection' includes a photograph on Bath Terrace of a 1945 Victory Party.

In 1947 Stocksbridge Urban District Council produced a booklet 'a Welcome Home to fellow citizens from Active Service with His Majesty's Armed Forces in World War 2 1939 to 1945.' It contained a personal message to the recipient and a Roll of Honour of all those who served (912) and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice (41).

The Cold War.

In 1949 the United Steel Companies Ltd started recruiting volunteers and Instructors, and in 1951, a Civil Defence Committee was set up. A 'Civil Defence Handbook' was produced to inform employees of the background information and made plans at each works for shelters in the event of a nuclear attack.

To enable the Royal Observer Corp to operate in a nuclear environment and be protected from blast and radiation effects, underground posts were built. On Salter Hill, near the triangulation point on Whitwell Moor, lies a brick plinth with a padlocked manhole cover. The external access steps can still be seen. It was built and used during the Cold War (1955 to 1996) for Nuclear Warfare and fallout analysis. Access was via a vertical shaft some 25ft deep, branching off horizontally into a room nominally 10ft wide by 16ft long. This contained a large desk and a map of the area with distance radii marked off in half mile sectors. It also had two steel bunks, air purification plant, Elsan toilet, water supply, sink and food supply cupboards. The post was probably used between about 1964 and 1991 and constructed throughout in solid concrete, which would presumably make it quite chilly for its occupants.



This photo shows the visible part of the underground bunker on Salter Hill 2014.

The Central Command Post was near the Macdonald roundabout on the Stocksbridge Bypass. All communications were passed on to the Master Post in Hampshire.

JOHN HOLLING MEMOIRES

Part 4 - Local Industries

The products made in our area were sent mostly to other areas throughout England. Grayson Lowwood's Silica and Firebricks, were dispatched straight into railway trucks direct from their kilns. They had a private line adjoining the G.C. railway at Deepcar, and had four horses for internal yard work, beside their pit ponies in the mine (Clay & Ganister). I remember that almost every house in Florence Buildings (which belonged to Lowwood's) had someone with that dread disease Silicosis, and they seemed, at one time, to have a death almost every week. I remember as a youth the outcry for better safeguards and compensation. Dr W. M. Robertshaw I believe was one who was instrumental for the legislation affecting this dread disease. It was the dust of the blown or dynamited ganister in the pits which did not settle before the miners started to fill the carves. This dust got in their lungs and tore them literally in holes. Those who had worked a few years down the mine became pale-gaunt and thin and had a peculiar cough. I visited most of these houses in my early teens, every week, attending my Father's Coal Business, and remember the hard dry cough and bucket always near to the male member of the family. The secretion was generally flecked by blood.

The people of Deepcar were poor regarding these worlds' goods, but a great many were most clean, kind, and of a good heart one to another. The menfolk had their own Institute and Rifle Range, their pigeon lofts, their whippets and double barreled guns - Knur and Spell and tossing the coins. I remember once seeing the police converging on the brow of the Hill near Greenmoor Quarries one Sunday afternoon, prior to them raiding one of these rings. Not necessarily the people from Deepcar for they congregated from anywhere in the Stocksbridge District.

Armitage Works on Station road were manufacturers of Bricks (Silica & Firebricks). All their output had to be carted up to the station and loaded into trucks. Two carts with two horses each were used backwards and forwards each day. Apart from clay and ganister mining, they had a ganister coal deposit in the mine, which they used to fire the Kilns with, and offer for sale to householders in the vicinity. The sulphur

content, emitted as smoke, used to lie very low over Deepcar area because of its low lying position. This also produced coughing and tears from the eyes of people walking about the roads. Mr. Coultas was the Chief man here, and his son Albert was, what would be termed today, the Electrical Engineer. Mr. Coultas was, apart from his work, a noted educationalist, a local Councillor for many years, and lectured and was acknowledged by mining engineers as in the first rank.

Proceeding up the Valley, as a boy I remember the next Industry. This was the Timber Felling and Cartage of same, carried on at the old "Corn Mill" at the junction of Vaughton Hill with Wortley road. This corn mill was used, by J. Schofield and his sons Harry and Jack, as stabling and coverage for his timber wagons. He had eight horses and three men. These teams departed and returned each day, if the work on hand allowed them, to such as Wharnccliffe Chase - Dene Head - Ewden Valley - Wortley Park etc, but sometimes they would be away all week in Derbyshire or a distance too far to return profitably. Harry is now retired in Derbyshire, and Jack is still at Deepcar and retired, although he goes down to Bitholmes Wood each day for a walk. (He still owns all that area from his father's days). The "Corn Mill" was totally demolished three years ago, cleared away, and Council Flats are now built on the site. (1959).

Continuing in remembrance was another Silica and Firebrick Works of "Gregory Reddish" up Carr Rd on the right of Park View Row. This row belonged to this firm, and the Manager's House was the first in the row as you approach. The Manager was the most eccentric in my whole life. (Mr. Johnny Morgan) He cursed and swore uphill and down dale in the works. He could be heard all over that area. He was tall, with a good complexion, straight as an arrow in stature and straight in his dealings with men of all ranks. He was a tartar and disciplinarian. He would sack a man for batting an eyelash, and on the quiet, provide the breadwinners home wants out of his own pocket. He would, and could, have been a Minister of Religion, such was his different natures. He was his own friend; never did I see him all the years which I knew him, be in company with anyone. He was looked after a great many years by the wife of his Head Horseman (Mrs. Beacham) who resided immediately behind his house on the ground floor. His hobbies were pianoforte playing, at which he was a master (never to known company). I had heard him when passing his house in the evening. He enjoyed week-end cycling (a square frame). No bent back would he show to people, he rode as straight as a ramrod. I remember when I sang the Bass part of "Harapha" out of "Samson", when our choir gave it at the Chapel; Mr. Morgan, the day previous, called me in his office and bawled at me, shouting something not nice about the Chapel. I was flabbergasted when he asked me to send him eight tickets and paid me £1 for them. He was really as gentle as a lamb. Sometime or another he must have had a great disaster in his own life, and his bursts of temperamental lapses relieved him somewhat. He drank spirits but never to anyone's discomfort. His chief Clerk, Mr. Hugh Matthewman, was a tenor in our Chapel Choir and no doubt he had told Mr. Morgan I was the Soloist. He would have no truck with Hugh and his tickets, but would have them from me to spite his clerk. Mr. Morgan knew me because of gardening acquaintance during the First World War, which had only recently then ended

Gregorys mined their own clay and also mined coal. This coal was used to fire the kilns and it was one of the finest coking beds in Yorkshire. It really was a waste to burn at the Brick Kilns. It left a very high grade coke deposit after burning, and the tip of Gregory's was a happy hunting ground for poor people, who were able to keep home fires burning all the year

round. I remember, as a youth, periodically, taking tons of this coal, to Mr. Ebenezer Grist's Blacksmiths Shop at the top of Vaughton Hill. This blacksmiths shop is now occupied by a Vinegar Bottling Firm, and a Garage and Filling Station has latterly been built next to it.

Mr. Grist used to shoe all my Father's horses, and the coal which I delivered he burnt first, until it was coke. Then he put it in his furnace hearth and large cylindrical bellows blew to required heat and glow for his malleable iron and steel requirements. The ganister and stone were mostly bought by Gregory Reddich, and some was supplied from Townend Common Mine. This mine was owned by the "Crossland and Bower Family". It was said that the best was from the Townend deposits. Clay and coal was also mined, along with the ganister. The mine drift was in the next field to what is now the "Golf Course", and all that range of high crude rough land has been worked. The "Dragons Well" is just above the pit mouth.

To get back to Gregory Reddich - the means of their transport was by a tramway track, from the middle of the works, down to the back of Ivy Yard, under the main road, and over a bridge to a Stock and Dispatch Yard Area with, a short private line connected to Samuel Fox's private line which ran alongside en route to Deepcar Station. Samuel Fox, by agreement, brought railway wagons inwards and outwards as required. Lump ganister also came via rail to this stock yard, and so this tramway served the inward and outward transport of goods, an ingenious method of the downward thrust of full carves, helping the inward and upward raw materials.

Across from Park View was a Quarry (stone) now out of use and gradually being leveled up. I cannot remember any more industries in that area as a youth, except watching the quarry men shaping and carting the stone for houses at Quarry Hill Quarries. This was on the left almost at the top. It had two approaches, one forking up to it with its Junction thirty yards from the bottom of Quarry Hill, and the other at the left hand side of the sharp curve at the top of Quarry Hill. This top entrance and roadway was made in a half circle travelling down to meet the other private road coming up. This top road was built over an arched entrance which led into the Quarry level. Again an ingenious construction (necessity must indeed have been the Mother of inventions). My father's house was built from the stone out of this quarry and many more in the district.

John Parkin Holling born 1901; Memoires written 1959. (Ed)

Society News

Our last Paragon of the year, another one gone, they just seem to wiz past.

The final part of Barry's contribution on WW2 in Stocksbridge this time and we thank him for this fine compilation of history sleuthing and anecdotes. If any member has a project, topic or story they would like to have published in the Paragon, we would be pleased to help.

Early next year we are considering a project to gather information and publish a booklet of Stocksbridge & Deepcar Street and Placenames, with some explanation of their origin. We welcome member's advice, input and questions on this subject in order that we can start compiling a register.

We have had some very successful visits from local groups to our Valley Heritage Museum and these together with the visits (and return visits) by members of the public, have encouraged us to keep up the opening times we have at the moment with Tuesdays and Thursdays. We are going to review the volunteer staffing next year and if anyone would like to help for a couple of hours and perhaps learn a little more about our local history, we would be pleased to hear from them. This could also be a good time to thank all members and members of the public for their gifts and loans of artefacts to the museum, we are most grateful.

Again it is our 'Christmas Do' next month, I am looking forward to a very good night again, hope to see you all there.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR 2015

November 12th	How The Victorians Invented Christmas	Susan Deal
December 10th (Note! this is a Thursday)	Christmas Celebrations (Pre-booking essential - Members only)	
January 14th 2016	No Event - Winter Recess	
February 11th 2016	A History Society Presentation	

Meetings take place in the Christ Church Meeting Room (Under Croft) starting at 7.00pm Prompt

Why not visit our Website at - www.stocksbridgehs.co.uk

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