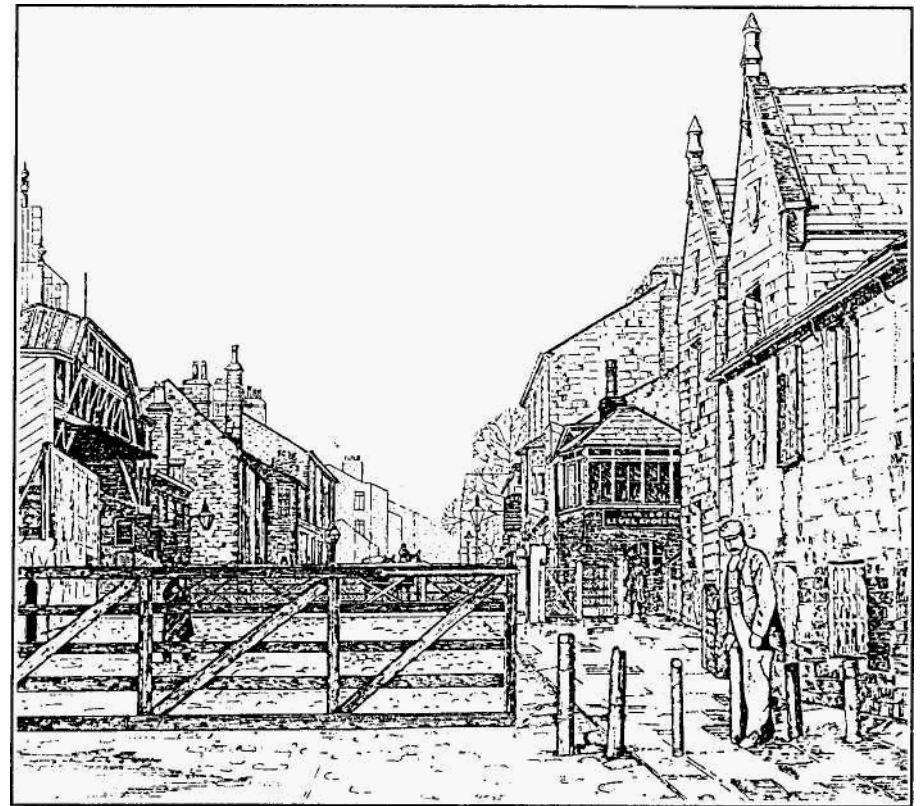


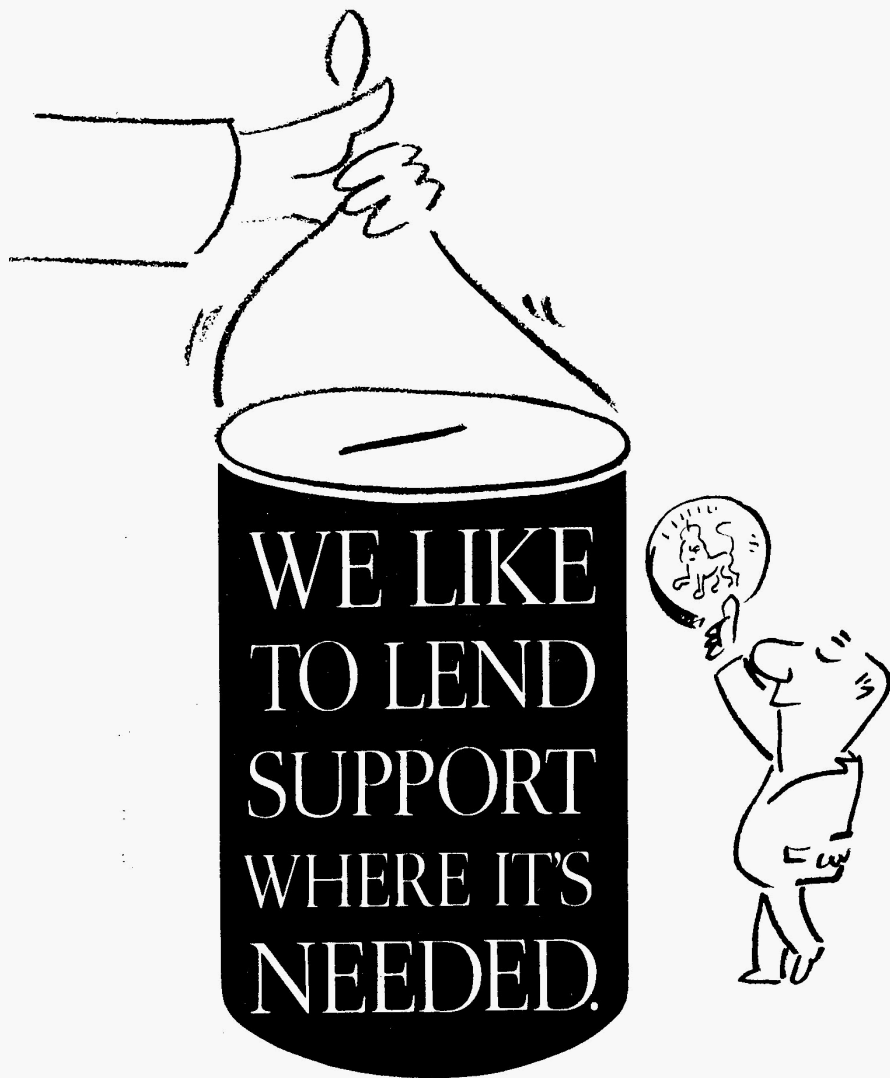


## NEWS MAGAZINE



Cover picture: Part of an original drawing of *Peel Bridge Toll Bar and Railway Crossing*, Bridge Street, Ramsbottom, c1900 by Zena MIDDLETON

(Complete print on sale at Ramsbottom Heritage Centre)



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**RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY**  
***THE HERITAGE CENTRE***

**CARR STREET, RAMSBOTTOM**

**Telephone: RAMSBOTTOM 821603**

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Editor: Barbara PARK

Illustrations: Zena MIDDLETON and John TAYLOR

**WELCOME TO OUR THIRD NEWS MAGAZINE**

It is now a year since we first decided to mark the opening of the Heritage Centre with what was intended to be a small newsletter for Society members, but which has in fact turned out to be a fully fledged News Magazine.

The Heritage Centre now one year old continues to attract many visitors. It was announced at the May meeting that over 8000 people had visited the Centre since it opened. The

display *Transport in Ramsbottom* is proving to be very popular and part of the previous display, Granny's Kitchen, has been retained by popular demand. The whole exhibition is a credit to the small but dedicated Display team and also to all the people who have loaned or donated items for the displays.

Reaction to the Magazine has been most encouraging. Issue No 1 has completely sold out and at time of writing there are very few copies remaining of issue 2, even though more were printed.

There has been some interesting feedback to articles in previous issues, a particularly pleasing development as, in addition to providing news of the Society and articles of local interest, I like to think of the Magazine acting as a kind of "information exchange" for people who are searching for information and those who are able to help.

It is encouraging when people read an article and are inspired to go out and discover more information for themselves - even more so when they write it up as an article for the Magazine! This also applies to the exhibitions at the Centre. As you will see a number of items in this Magazine have a transport theme - surely not unconnected with the current exhibition *Transport in Ramsbottom*.

On Saturday 27th April the steam train went through to Rawtenstall for the first time since the line closed. Crowds of people thronged the station in the brilliant sunshine, bands played, civic dignitaries spoke and eventually the signals gave the all clear, the crossing gates opened and the train chugged through.

On the 21st April a historic event of a different kind took place - Census Day. Census Returns are a valuable source of information to local history researchers and family historians. I wonder what our descendants will make of the information about life in 1991 when it is opened to public inspection in 100 years time? We shall not be here to find out! We can however look forward to the publication of the 1891 Census quite soon which will surely be closely scrutinised for clues about life a century ago.

The Society continues with its programme of monthly meetings, visits and walks (see inside back cover for details), and in April we celebrated our FOURTH BIRTHDAY. Meetings continue to attract good attendances and on one or two occasions recently we have even had to bring in more chairs to accommodate capacity audiences!

The archive is still receiving numerous interesting donations and loans - so many in fact that we may even have to computerise them! For more on this subject read Brenda DECENT's article on page 9.

The National Westminster Bank have generously sponsored this issue of the Magazine and on behalf of the Society I wish to thank them for their support which is much appreciated.

Thanks also to everyone who has helped to produce the Magazine not least all those who have contributed articles and drawings. I hope that their efforts will inspire some of you to follow their example and send in material for the next issue.

Items for future issues of the Magazine may be left, preferably as early as possible, at the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom, handed in at the monthly meetings, or sent direct to the Editor, Barbara PARK, 434 Bolton Road West, Holcombe Brook, Ramsbottom (telephone 0204 883184).

I look forward to receiving your ideas, articles, news, reviews and reactions to items in the Magazine, I hope there are lots of them! I also hope that you enjoy reading this issue!

## **RAMSBOTTOM MODEL RAILWAY CLUB - HISTORY IN MINIATURE**

Ramsbottom Model Railway Club began in August 1978 with an idea from colleagues at work with a mutual interest in model railways. A notice was displayed in the Library and in early September nine enthusiasts met at the house of one of the proposers. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to form the Ramsbottom Model Railway Club with a view to building a model layout of Ramsbottom and a Committee was duly elected.

At this stage we had a Club with a Committee and a purpose but no premises. Over the next few weeks a number of options were discussed and investigated but proved fruitless. Then it was discovered that a room was available at Stubbins Church, but unfortunately it was in the roof of the Church. However, after taking some measurements it was decided to accept and planning began.

The original idea of a model of Ramsbottom from Nuttall Tunnel to Stubbins was discovered to be rather an ambitious project. In fact to model this distance in the scale of 1 inch to 1 foot would require a length of some 40 feet (our room was roughly 18 feet at the most). However, by using a little "modellers licence", we were able to condense the layout and by making the model triangular we were able to fit in the major details. This enabled us to form storage sidings at the rear, giving us continuous running. Fortunately, one of our members had a certain amount of experience in building model railways and was able to advise us as we proceeded to construct our layout.

Space in our loft was limited and access was difficult, so it was with relief that we discovered an alternative venue at Patmos Church Hall. A meeting was arranged with the Trustees and an agreement was reached on tenancy. Some work was necessary to make the building habitable and acceptable for our needs and finally, in December 1978, we moved premises and this has been the home of the model railway for the last 12 years.

The size of the building enabled us to enlarge our original plan and work began once again on the construction of the layout.

We appealed through the local press for photos and memories of the Railway and its adjoining buildings and area, but it was found that very little was available. Because little had changed in the area around Stubbins which we were to model, a start was made there from photos taken by members.

Ramsbottom station and surrounding area proved more difficult, but with the help of some old photographs in the Ramsbottom booklets published by Tower Press, the recollections of some of our members and a cine film of the demolition of the station, gradually things began to take shape.

It was not until 1980 that the first phase of the model was operational and since that date alterations and modifications have been continually taking place.

The layout was designed in sections with the long term view of exhibiting at other venues and in our earlier years we staged fund raising Open Days at St. Paul's school. We also went along to St. Andrew's Spring Fair in 1984 and on one memorable occasion we were invited to Bleakholt Spring Fair where we shared a stable with a braying donkey - what a hilarious experience that was!

After long consultations with the Patmos Trustees over the next few years we were finally given the opportunity to purchase the building. In 1983 work ceased on the layout for some months whilst more repair and maintenance was done on the premises.

During the period of our existence we have had numerous members, sometimes as many as 30 adults and juniors together on one evening. Present membership stands at nine adults and one junior member. Three of the adults are founder members.

Although we try to encourage juniors, many of them soon realise that joining the model railway club is not just a night out playing with trains. There are many skills attached to railway modelling which some youngsters find boring and sometimes complicated. The skills which can be taught include design and planning for baseboard construction which also includes joinery and basic carpentry; electrics and simple electronics; modelling skills for making buildings and rolling stock; and artistic ability for painting and finishing the models.

Trains can be kept running by two people but need a minimum of five people to operate at Exhibition times. Trains are run to a programme which is a series of moves (43 in all) involving all locomotives on the layout at some time. This ensures something moving at all times on the tracks and typifies some of the standard moves which would normally have taken place. The whole operation takes 90 minutes from start to finish by which time each train is back to where it started and the whole process begins again.

At the time of compiling this account we are negotiating with the Bury Metro Tourist Board with a view to becoming part of the Ramsbottom tourist industry. Should this become a reality then the Railway Club will probably be open on Sundays, Market days and other occasions when we have sufficient members available.

In addition to being a local society whose story is of interest in its own right, the Model Railway also preserves, in miniature form, an important part of Ramsbottom's heritage.

Harry DENNIS, Vice Chairman, RMRC

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## PHOTOGRAPHERS IN FOCUS



The first exhibition at the Heritage Centre this year included the work of three outstanding local photographers: J Eric BIRCHALL ARPS of Crawshawbooth, Roy FISHWICK of Ramsbottom and Dr G Neil GILMORE of Tottington.

Eric BIRCHALL was hooked on photography in his teens and since his retirement from the engineering trade works professionally as a photographer. He photographs in black and white and for this exhibition displayed studies of places and people taken in Lancashire. He obviously has a good sense of humour. His work has been on show in many parts of the UK and internationally.

Neil GILMORE has also had his work accepted by international exhibitions. He uses colour and concentrates on natural history. He has travelled widely with his camera. For the Centre's exhibition he showed, for example, many close-up photographs of butterflies and birds and some spectacular shots taken in the Arches National Park, in the USA.

Roy FISHWICK has lived in Ramsbottom for nearly 50 years. He is one of our members and is a professional photographer. Many of us will have seen his work in the local press photographs were of local winter scenes causing viewers to take a new look at the familiar.

Altogether the variety of style and subject of the photographs made a most enjoyable exhibition with which to start 1991. Many thanks to Eric, Neil and Roy.

Brenda DECENT

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## HERITAGE CENTRE

The Centre, despite its success, or perhaps because of it, is still in need of more helpers. We had a good response to our last appeal but due to illness, removals, and other commitments, we seem to have lost quite a few of our regular helpers at least temporarily.

As a result we are once again in need of extra help, especially with the busy summer season here.

An hour or so each week or fortnight would be a great help to the present willing band. No experience is necessary - most of us have never done anything like this before so we all live and learn together. If you were born and bred in Ramsbottom you will find yourself in great demand as a source of information and also, occasionally, as a (tactful!) referee between people whose memories of a place or event do not coincide! If you are a young person or are new to the area you are just as welcome. Working at the Centre is really most enjoyable - whether "playing shop" at the counter, serving refreshments to thirsty visitors (and even more thirsty helpers!) or receiving the visitors as they arrive and ensuring that they sign our visitors book.

As a Heritage Centre helper myself I always enjoy my time at the Centre but two occasions I will never forget were our very first school visit when the Centre was filled to bursting with children - the four helpers simply disappeared beneath the tide! The other occasion was an early morning visit by a delegation from China. They were involved in tourism and railways so were visiting the Heritage Centre and the ELR. They presented us with badges and engine drivers neckerchiefs which we immediately put on display - and which are now in the archives. They also left us an advertisement for a guest house in their home town in case anyone is able to return their visit!

We have had many visitors from overseas including France, Canada, USA., Australia, Fiji - not to mention far flung corners of the U.K.

The Display Team are also in dire need of help. Most people seem to think that it is just a matter of being "artistic" and arranging displays so if their talents do not lie in that direction they do not volunteer. But there are many ways in which almost everyone can help. Documents, photographs, artefacts, all have to be located, collected, listed, and researched before they can be displayed and dismantled and returned afterwards. This all takes a lot of time especially when there are only a few people to do it and a few extra hands for a few hours would make all the difference. People with display experience and/or other artistic talents would, of course, be particularly welcome.

If YOU would like to join in and help, please contact Dorothy MOSS or Barbara PALMER at the Heritage Centre during opening hours or leave a message on the answering machine (0706 821603).

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## RAMSBOTTOM S IRON RAILINGS

In the Winter issue of the magazine Fred ENTWISTLE wrote about the fate of Ramsbottom's iron railings. Mr G Ashworth, who now lives in Grange over Sands, has sent us the following item from the records of the Methodist Church, Market Place (now known as Christ Church) which explains what happened to some of them.

"We came across a note in the accounts in 1949 that we received the sum of £9 from the Ministry of Works as compensation for the compulsory removal of part of the iron railings let into the stone work in front of the Church.

"The job was never finished - old iron became unwanted. In later years we had to complete the removal of the rest of the rails and also take down the stone wall, so that we could complete the "flagging" of the forecourt of the Church."

## THE ROOKS OF RAMSBOTTOM



No, not another long-settled human family, but a much more ancient part of our heritage - a population of birds. Those much-maligned bald-faced, longer-billed relatives of the carrion crow, that have the fascinating habit of nesting in the same large traditional colonies year after year. This makes them relatively easy to study as well as, unfortunately, easy to destroy.

Over much of Britain, the rook has been declining in numbers for at least the last 30 years. A number of possible reasons for this have been suggested; ranging from poisoning by agricultural chemicals to loss of feeding grounds for building, felling of nesting trees and loss of nesting trees because of Dutch Elm Disease in some areas. Probably a different combination of factors is responsible in different areas.

As part of a long-term study of rooks in East Lancashire, most of our local rookeries have been censused each year since 1962; while, since 1977, members of the Rossendale Ornithologists' Club have counted the nests in all the rookeries within the former Ramsbottom Urban District. In view of the item in "Extracts from the Diary of a Dedicated Gardener" in issue No 2 of this magazine, I thought members might be interested in a summary of the results of this work. These are shown, briefly, in Table 1:

*Table 1: The Number of Nests in Ramsbottom Rookeries*

Location	1977	1990	Higher figures from earlier years
Holcombe Brook	8	0	39 (1967)
Holcombe Church	76	44	
Kay Brow	6	18	68 (1949), 63 (1964)
Stubbins	56	3	74 (1963)
Edenfield (Crow Woods)	22	0	47 (1962)
Shuttleworth Churchyard	53	50	104 (1973)
Edenfield (Bridge Mill)	1	0	

Table 1 shows that over the 14 years of the survey, our breeding population of rooks has declined from 309 nesting pairs to 162; a 47.5% decrease. The third column in the Table suggests that the decrease has been going on longer than this and is, in fact, much greater.

Consideration of individual rookeries can suggest reasons for the decline in some places. At Holcombe Brook, most of the remaining nests were in a single elm tree which succumbed to disease and was subsequently felled. At Summerseat, there was considerable shooting of rooks associated with changes in ownership of the property holding the rookery. The Stubbins rookery was decimated when several of the nesting trees were felled to make way for building work. This was particularly insensitive in that the trees were felled during the breeding season whilst young birds were still in the nests. There was a similar occurrence at Kay Brow in 1990 and we must wait and see the outcome of that particular action.

Another major influence must be the loss of feeding grounds sufficiently close to the rookeries. Rooks, in this area, feed largely on soil invertebrates (leatherjackets are a favourite food) which they find in the better pasture land. We have only to consider the number of fields lost recently in the Nuttall Lane - Broadhey area and, a few years earlier, around Holcombe Brook and Greenmount - all to house building, to understand why the rooks of Ramsbottom are finding it harder to make a living. Although rooks remain faithful to the same nesting sites for many generations, they do move about as well. Larger rookeries seem to break up periodically and a number of smaller ones appear for a few years. Some sites drift into disuse and others increase in size.

An idea of such changes can be gleaned from the data in Table 2.

*Table 2: Former Ramsbottom rookeries not used at*

Location	Number of nests (year)
Garnett Street	2 (1966)
Grant Arms	10 (1970), 3 (1971), 6 (1972), 1 (1974)
Heys Street	110 (1949), 2 (1962)
Edenfield (Hawthorn Ave.)	14 (1973)
Ewood Bridge	6 (1971)
"Near Peel Brow"	4 (1968), 2 (1970)
Stubbins roundabout	3 (1973)

Most of these sites are only known to have been used by a few pairs for a few years. The earlier (1949) figure for Heys Street (now Heatherside Road) is interesting, however; particularly when taken in conjunction with the 1949 figure for Kay Brow (Table 1). These two sites alone then held 178 pairs, which strongly suggests that there were many more rooks in Ramsbottom 40 years ago than there are now.

No doubt some people think we still have too many and that they are noisy, dirty things best got rid of. To me, however, and a good many other people, the sight and sound of an active rookery on a sunny day in Spring, before the leaves are on the trees, is one of the best and most-promising bits of the year. A real sign that Spring is in the air and summer is coming. Long may they remain!

John SYKES

## DATESTONE COMPETITION

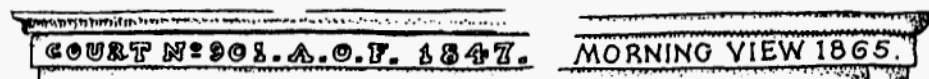
In the last Magazine readers were asked to take part in a competition to identify the locations of six datestones which will appear in John TAYLOR's forthcoming book *Stories in Stone - Datestones in Ramsbottom*.

The correct answers are:



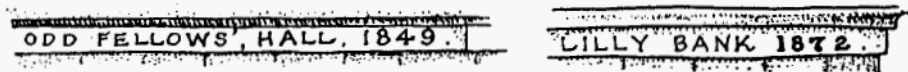
60 Bridge Street

252 Whalley Road, Shuttleworth



44 - 46 Bolton Street

66 Bolton Road West



22-24 Bridge Street

106 Bolton Road West

The winners were Kath and Harry DENNIS who correctly identified all six.

*Stories in Stone - Datestones in Ramsbottom* will be on sale this summer.

## THE 5TH ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Now is the time of year to be taking photographs for this year's competition which closes on the 30th November 1991. The purpose of the competition is to record a year of everyday life in Ramsbottom, and to retain the photographs in the archive. Photographs may be displayed in exhibitions at the Heritage Centre.

This year, there will be four categories, with a prize for the winner of each category.

The overall winner of the competition will be awarded the Dickensian Trophy. Two highly commended certificates can be awarded in each category.

The categories are:-

**EVENTS** - could include street markets, events in Nuttall park, VIP visits, Christmas, special railway weekends etc.

**TOWN and COUNTRY** - landscape, general street views, railway scenes, traffic, churches, shops etc.

**INTERIORS** - interiors of large or small buildings, especially ones which are changing their function.

**OPEN** - any picture which doesn't fit into any of the above three categories.

Entry forms are now available from the Heritage Centre and at the monthly meetings.

John LEYLAND

## THE RAMSBOTTOM OIL RIG and other items from the Archive

One of the problems with the archive is how to let members see some of the more interesting contributions. I like to bring some of them along to the monthly meetings but it is obviously not possible to do this with every item - some are too large, others too fragile and in any case there are just too many.

Exhibitions at the Heritage Centre provide an opportunity to display some of the items and the present *Transport in Ramsbottom* exhibition includes a number of these. I will attempt to describe them, with their backgrounds where we know them, so that you can look out for them.

There is a large photograph of the *Hare and Hounds* pub at Holcombe Brook in 1890 with what we think is a funeral cortege outside. The macadam road is in the process of being resurfaced with stone setts. A tiny drawing of a horse drawn ambulance is displayed because the ambulance was built by WILSON and STOCKALL of Bury in 1912. Inside, though not visible in the picture, it was equipped with two stretcher beds and a seat for the attendant. The original ambulance is at Shibden Hall, Halifax.

Some photographs have to be hunted down. For example, someone brought in a crumpled article from the Bury Times of 1987 with a picture of a horse drawn coach driven by Albert DUNLEVY who was a well known coachman. The passengers were local gentry being taken to the races at Harwood in the late 1920's. The location was outside Higher House, Holcombe village, the home of the Ainsworth family. The article was written by Lynda DUNLEVY and with her help I found the owner of the original photograph in Turton. It was taken by her husband as a lad. I was allowed to copy it and it looks very well. The original photograph is now safely back with the owner but the copy will be kept in the archive. The Society does welcome opportunities such as this. We can now make very good copies of documents and photographs so please don't forget this when people show you interesting items which they are willing to share in this way. Many of the archives on display are loans which we couldn't manage without, and we are very grateful for them. The largest item in the *Transport in Ramsbottom* exhibition is the Edwardian bicycle which is on loan from Bury Transport Museum.

The smallest item on display is one of our most amusing recent acquisitions, a tiny photograph of the Ramsbottom oil drilling rig! This was somewhere overlooking Fletcher Bank Quarry, past Shipperbottom Farm, and the photograph was taken by the donor in 1953. Obviously, Ramsbottom was no Dallas as no other rigs have appeared!

A different type of archive which is also displayed in the exhibition is the written (or taped) recollections of Ramsbottom in bygone days - for example the item on pigeons and horses and the one on Cliff RICHARD's visit to the town in the sixties (fuller versions of both of these are printed elsewhere in this magazine).

There are many other pieces from the archive in the Exhibition including a transfer of the RUDC crest used on the side of their buses and a time and fare table for the Holcombe Brook to Bury and Manchester train service - valid in 1934.

In the last issue of the News Magazine I described in detail the process of recording all the Archive acquisitions and some of the problems involved in this task. The process continues unabated and with help from Geoffrey JOHNSON-BRETT the cataloguing is nearly up to date. The Filing Team will soon be at full stretch once again.

The offer of an Amstrad computer, which our Secretary had negotiated, was unfortunately withdrawn due to present economic circumstances. However, we are still hopeful of being able to buy one as soon as funds are available.

In the meantime a group of four members who are 'into' computers have already had a rewarding meeting and concluded that the answer must be a database! If you are not sure what this is, as I wasn't a year or two ago, it is The Answer and will save hours of work! Thank you to all who help with the Archive.

Brenda DECENT, Archive co-ordinator

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## THE SWINGING 60s - CLIFF RICHARD VISITS RAMSBOTTOM - every picture tells a story!

Visitors to the Transport exhibition at the Heritage Centre may have been surprised to see pictures of the famous pop star Cliff Richard alongside his exotic JENSEN sports car in Butler Street, Ramsbottom. Alan COOKSON has explained the story behind the pictures. During the 1960's and 70's there existed in Ramsbottom a Christian organisation for boys and girls called the Crusaders. The organisation is no longer active in Ramsbottom but still exists elsewhere. In addition to Bible study the group had football teams, club nights, camps, gym clubs etc. The leaders of the group belonged to several local churches and included Mr H WITJIS, Mr I HUTCHINS ON and Mr A COOKSON. Much of the group's activity centred on Ramsbottom Methodist Church (now Christ Church).

During 1967 Mr. COOKSON, through his work with the Crusaders, came into contact with Mr W LATHAM who at that time (and to this day) assisted Cliff RICHARD in his work with the organisation. As a result the star was invited to visit the Ramsbottom group. The invitation was accepted but two years were to elapse before the visit actually took place on the 26 September 1969.

In order to avoid large crowds of people from outside the area coming along, plans for the visit were made amid great secrecy. When the great day arrived the star, accompanied by Mr Latham, drove to a lay-by on Walmersley Road where he was met by Mr Cookson and taken to the home of Mr and Mrs P Cook, his hosts for the weekend. The bright yellow Jensen car created quite a stir in the town and it was considered safer to hide the car for the duration of the visit in Mr Cookson's garage in Butler Street. Hence the photographs on show at the Heritage Centre.

## JOURNEYS DOWN MEMORY LANE

Prior to 1878 there were, I believe, no motor cars but there were a few steam coaches and lorries on the roads. The law specified that three persons must be employed to drive a road locomotive. One man, carrying a red flag, must precede the vehicle and the maximum speed must not exceed four miles an hour. In the early 1890's a few motor vehicles crawled through London preceded by red flag bearers, causing considerable amusement, as you can imagine!

In 1896 an Act was passed which liberated motorists from most of their restrictions. By 1903 there were a few more cars on the roads and a speed limit of 20 miles per hour came into force and remained in force until 1930 when it was raised to 30 mph. Before the Act of 1930 motor lorries, which all had solid tyres, were limited to 12 mph, and 5 mph if a trailer lorry was attached.

In Ramsbottom at the turn of the century, and for some years later, transport of goods had to be by horse drawn lorries to and from the railways goods yards and between local factories and warehouses in Manchester. The journey from Ramsbottom to Manchester was a long, hard day's work for drivers and horses.

Several firms in the RUDC provided these services. One of them, J & J WHITTAKER of Edenfield I believe it was, used to load their lorries with finished cotton from the local mills, and very early next morning the drivers would set off for Manchester. After delivering the cloth the drivers reloaded their lorries with raw cotton to be delivered to local factories the following day but first they had to face the long journey home. By the time they had passed through Bury and reached Pigs Lee Brow, which is on Walmersley Road, near Bury General Hospital, and was much steeper in those days than it is now, the horses had had enough and were too tired to climb the hill.

There were then no telephones, so to surmount this difficulty the drivers, before leaving Manchester, released homing pigeons which they had taken with them. When the birds arrived back home at Edenfield the owners were able to calculate the time the lorries would reach Pigs Lee Brow and another driver set out with a fresh team of horses to meet them and replace the tired horses which had done such a hard day's work.

As a child, around 1914, I remember steam wagons chugging through Edenfield on their way to and from Manchester. RIDING & GILLOW of Stacksteads and Fred STRINGFELLOW of S huttleworth are two of the names I recall, but there were probably others. As all loading and unloading had to be done manually a driver and loader usually worked on each lorry. The lorries had no windscreen wipers, no heat, no windows on the cab sides and no headlights - only oil lamps. There were no white lines or cat's eyes on the roads which were mainly paved and no lights, except the gas lamps in the towns, so driving in the dark wasn't exactly a pleasure, especially in the black fogs we used to have.

Early in this century a few of the wealthier people had horses, or a pony and trap. There were occasional outings in wagonettes (horse drawn four wheeled vehicles). Unfortunately if it rained there was no cover, and often, if they were going up hill, it was too much for the horse and the passengers had to get out and walk. Occasionally the men had to help by pushing the wagonette up the hill.

There was no public transport, apart from the trains, so if we wanted to go anywhere away from the railways we had to walk. We were fortunate in Ramsbottom because in addition to the Ramsbottom Station we also had stations at Stubbins and Holcombe Brook.

With the advent of the trackless trolley trams life became easier, although they only ran every half hour between Edenfield Church and Holcombe Brook. They were not very

comfortable as the entrance was at the back and the back platform was open to the elements. There was no heat at all, and the solid tyres on the paved roadways didn't make for comfortable riding. Some one even composed a ditty:

*From Holcombe Brook to Edenfield you often take a ride  
Upon the beautiful tram-car with your best boy by your side  
The car with its gentle motion soon sends you off your seat  
Your teeth drop out, your hair comes down and your stockings are over your feet.*

I must say that was a slight exaggeration and we were very glad to have them. The tram conductors were most helpful and also accepted and delivered parcels anywhere along the route for a small fee - I think it was threepence (3d). They were not allowed to deliver letters but if you tied a piece of string round it they accepted it as a parcel!

After the 1914 - 18 war came the charabancs! As there were no customers except at weekends and holidays, they were used as motor lorries during the week. On Friday night the flat part of the lorry which was purpose made to carry the goods, was lifted off the on an old fashioned pram, which they unfolded over us. We thought they were marvellous and it was a rare treat to travel on one. Now we have the so-called executive coaches with reclining seats, heating and air conditioning, TV, toilets and wash basins - what luxury!

Today with inter-city trains, jet aircraft, buses available every few minutes and the majority of people owning their own cars, things are very different. Perhaps the danger for future [generations](#) is that they will forget how to use the oldest of all forms of transport - their feet.

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## BOUNDARIES BACKWATERS

A close look at the boundary map of the old Ramsbottom UDC will show you that Ramsbottom extended westwards across the rifle ranges at Holcombe Brook to meet the Edgworth boundary along Hawkshaw Brook. The boundary cuts back at Higher House Farm (about half way along Hawkshaw Lane) leaving those farms at the top of the lane in no-man's land.

But please don't overlook us, for long before the industrial revolution and the growth of Ramsbottom which was, in 1780 'little more than a place of farms and fields and orchards, rooks and trees and an ancient tannery and an old corn mill,' farming and weaving went hand in hand on the Pennine hillsides, providing cloth for export all over the world and a living for hundreds of families.

These outlying settlements provided the first skilled workers for the mills and the accommodation for the quarrymen who worked the quarries along the edge of the moor providing stone for the building of the mills, the workers cottages and the hardcore for the new roads.

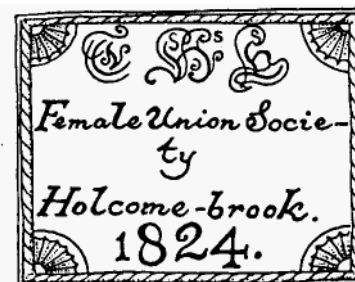
Later these same farms continued to supply food, meat and milk to the ever growing population along the Irwell Valley.

This rich rural legacy can still be seen today in the ancient packhorse routes dotted around the hillsides, the weavers cottages and the hill farms still to be found in the quiet backwaters and far flung outbacks of Ramsbottom.

Jan BARNES

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## THE FEMALE FRIENDLY SOCIETY



This plaque, on a row of cottages on Bolton Road West, has stimulated much interest and not a few theories about its origins and significance.

From the little information which I have been able to glean so far I believe that the cottages (also known as Club Row) were built in 1824 under the auspices of the Female Friendly Society which was based on the Bull's Head, Greenmount.

The date on the plaque is confirmed by the appearance of the cottages in the Rate Assessment records at this date, and there area number of references to a Female Friendly Society at the sign of the Bull's Head at Tittleshaw. (Greenmount.)

This Friendly Society may have been what is known as a terminating Building Society. There are several versions of this type of society. One version was formed by a group of people who each contributed an amount of money on a regular basis, usually weekly, until enough was amassed to build a house. Lots would be drawn and the first house was occupied by the winner. Payments would continue until there was enough money for a second house which would again be balloted for and soon until all the members had a house when the society would be terminated, hence the name terminating building society. Another variation involved the whole row being completed as a single project. Sometimes members contributed labour or materials as well as cash. Terminating building societies were the forerunners of today's 'Permanent' Building Societies. Terminating building societies were sometimes set up as Friendly Societies in order to safeguard their assets under the protection of the laws governing the running of Friendly Societies.

Some of the questions I would like to find answers to are - why if the houses were built by a FEMALE Friendly Society are all the original occupiers listed in the Rate Assessment records MALE? Could it be that females were not allowed to buy property in this way? Was the Female Friendly Society set up specifically to build the houses? Or was this just a 'sideline' of the more usual sick benefit type of benevolent society? Did the Society close down after the houses were completed as it would if it were a terminating building society? And why is the name Female Union Society on the plaque instead of Female Friendly Society? Apparently some of the Friendly Societies were actually covers for political societies - but could this really be the case in this instance given that they built a row of houses? And who were the members of this Society? Were they perhaps a group of local artisans? If so what was their trade?

It is my intention to try and find out more about this subject if at all possible. If anyone has any information or ideas as to how I might go about this I would be most interested to hear from you.

Barbara PARK,

## JOHN SPENCER s HAZELHURST ENGRAVING WORKS

Any regular traveller along Bolton Road West will be familiar with the distinctive stone-built, listed engraving works at Hazelhurst. Its lower two storeys, with prominent bay windows and front doorways, could easily be taken for a terrace of late 19th Century housing (were it not for the now filled in carriage entrance). The third storey, however, with its line of continuous windows, separated by twenty-odd square sectioned mullions, indicates an obvious industrial origin, an interpretation confirmed by the great square chimney standing to its rear.

The early history of this impressive mixture of the domestic and the industrial has been something of a mystery. One local authority historical survey, taking especial note of its line of continuous windows, inferred that it was a missing link between domestic handloom weaving and its eventual inhalation into powerloom sheds. The weavers lived in the cottages, and wove on handlooms in the factory space above. The building, however, does not figure on the 1st edition of the sixinch Ordnance Survey map of the district (surveyed in 1844-7), pointing to a date of construction absurdly late for handloom weaving, a trade in chronic decline as early as the 1820s. The recent appearance, on the north eastern gable end of the building, of a sign proclaiming 'John Spencer (Hazelhurst) Ltd - Engraving Technology for over 150 years', has now pointed to rather a different origin.

My interest in the building has developed through research that a group of RHS members recently initiated in the Local History evening class at Woodhey. We started out by seeking to date the sequence of terraces which straggle along the north western side of Bolton Road West between Hazelhurst and Holcombe Brook. (Many of these were built on land leased from the Little Holcombe Estate. This was owned by the GRIME family and its descendants from the early 1800s to the 1960s).

One of the earliest of these richly different terraces (274-280 Bolton Road West) is now part occupied by the Halo Hair Studio and Village Barbers Shop. According to the Tottington Lower End rate books (on microfilm at Bury Library) this terrace owned by one Thomas SPENCER, was built in three stages between 1823 and 1829. This is confirmed by the building breaks (ie unbonded masonry) between the three modern units of the terrace.

The Ordnance Survey of 1844 - 7 captions this terrace 'Wetlands', almost certainly an error, since the Wetlands (or Wheatlands) field of the Little Holcombe estate lay some way towards the north east. The township tithe award of 1842 shows the three houses of the terrace occupied by three members of the SPENCER family - Joseph, Betty and Jonathan. The latter man was a druggist, aged 65, born in Bury according to the 1851 census returns, and identifiable with the Jonathan SPENCER, surgeon of 'Houlkham Brook', who figures in ROGERSON's 1818 *Lancashire General Directory*.

Adjacent to this terrace is, of course, the engraving works referred to at the beginning of this article. The John SPENCER whose name now features on the sign was enumerated in the 1851 census immediately before Jonathan SPENCER (one uninhabited house separated them), so it seems likely that he was in, or very close to, the building which now carries

Sydney and Amelia. 10 years on, in the 1861 census returns, he was recorded as 'Master Engraver employing 16 men and 5 boys'. In addition, he had two further children - Fanny

It seemed to us too much of a coincidence that the SPENCERs of the short terrace (274-280) and those of the engraving works should be next door neighbours, but unrelated.

The census returns also threw up another mystery - why the concentration of engravers in the Hazelhurst area? In 1841, for example, the following heads of households were engravers - William CUNLIFFE, Richard HAWORTH, Hargreaves HAWORTH and Giles ASHWORTH.

The current proprietor of John Spencer (Hazelhurst) Ltd. is John Spencer FORSHAW. He had visited the Heritage Centre at Carr Street in the earliest days of its existence, and had expressed an interest in his firm's history. So, when the Woodhey class became interested in the terraces along Bolton Road West, and the engraving works, it was possible to organise a visit.

John is a direct descendant of the John SPENCER who founded the firm in the 1840s. The latter's son, Charles, was actually Charles Cunliffe SPENCER - and this discovery led us to suspect a family relationship with the William CUNLIFFE, engraver, whom we had discovered in the 1841 census for Hazelhurst. John SPENCER's daughter, Amelia, married John FORSHAW, son of John FORSHAW, landlord of the *Hare and Hounds*, Holcombe Brook.

The earliest method of printing a design on cotton cloth (calico) was by means of a wooden block, on which was carved the pattern. During the 19th Century, block printing was replaced by roller printing. The engraver would prepare metal rollers, by order, with the required patterns 'mill engraved' onto the circumference. The design was originated on a hand cut dye, a steel rod of about 3/4" circumference. The pattern on the dye was, in turn, transferred (or clammed) onto a 'mill', and this engraved the design onto the final roller. This process was ideal for fine patterns, but was inevitably restricted to small, repeating designs.

The works at Hazelhurst was certainly mill engraving by 1880, judging by the cloth samples in the earliest surviving order book. Remarkably, machinery manufactured by George MOULTON of Salford in this period survives in the old part of the works.

Mill engraving continued at Hazelhurst until 1988. Then, the technology of the late 20th Century was introduced. Computers and lasers can, in 30 minutes, put on to a rotary (a polymer coated screen) what the old process took three to four weeks to engrave onto a copper roller.

Those of us fortunate enough to be shown around the two portions of the building - one effectively an industrial archaeological museum of the last century, the other a modern workshop containing probably the most advanced engraving facilities in the world - were enthused to research deeper into this family and firm.

John FORSHAW, the current proprietor, has already generously allowed access to much useful documentary material, and has offered to provide further information on the technology of engraving. We are keen to establish the circumstances in which the three engraving families represented here (CUNLIFFE, FORSHAW and SPENCER) launched and developed the enterprise. We would like, in general, to find why Ramsbottom has

building and how it was used. We would like to find out about the workforce and their skills.

Already, a start has been made. Fred ENTWISTLE has looked at census returns: Barbara PALMER and Ethel CARROLL have begun to comb parish registers; and Barbara PARK has extracted references to engravers and engraving from 19th Century trade directories. We suspect that it could be a big project, perhaps one which, ultimately, could be written up as a Ramsbottom Heritage Society publication.

We would welcome help! Anybody who can offer information, or who would like to do some research with us, can contact me direct.

Andrew TODD, 78 Albert Street, Ramsbottom, Bury BLO 9EL (0706 824511)

## THE COURTHOUSE, HOLCOMBE

In the attractive and informative leaflet, *Historic Trails - Holcombe* published by Bury MBC in 1981 the statement is made that the Holcombe Primary (C of E) School "stands on the site of the former courthouse which was built by the Duke of Albemarle in 1664". This statement has been repeated in several subsequent publications in recent years. It seems unlikely to be true.

The 1845 Six Inch Ordnance Survey map shows no building on the site of the school. Nor does the Tithe Map of 1841. However the Tithe Map identifies the courthouse in another place. This is on Chapel Lane, in the region of where the Lych-gate now stands, between the old parsonage (referred to elsewhere in the leaflet) a little to the SW, and the old church (pictured on the Winter 1990 Magazine cover), a little to the NE. This was of course before the present church was built.

The statement may arise from a misunderstanding of paragraphs in DOWSETT's *Notes on Holcombe*.

## SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

The Society is always happy to welcome new members. Subscriptions run from April and cost £4.50 (£2.50 concessionary) per annum.

Our varied Programme of meetings is listed above and all Members receive a FREE copy of each News Magazine.

Application forms may be obtained and subscriptions left at the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom. Telephone Ramsbottom (0706) 821603.

Why not JOIN NOW?

## FRIENDS OF THE HERITAGE CENTRE

For people who are unable to attend meetings and take part in other Society activities but who would like to support the Heritage Centre there is an alternative.

In exchange for a donation of £5 per year you can become a "friend" or "patron" of the Heritage Centre. You will receive a copy of each News Magazine (usually twice yearly) and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping in a very practical way to keep the Centre going.

If you would like to help the Centre in this way please contact the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom. Your support will be very much appreciated.

J PALMER, Membership Secretary

## PROGRAMME

19th June	Mr R K BAINES <i>A Decade of Archaeology in Prestwich</i> - illustrated
17th July	Mr Noel BOOTH <i>A Guided Walk around Holcombe</i>
21st August	Visit to Croal Irwell Moses Gate Country Park
19th September	Mr N TURNER <i>The Chatterton Riot</i> - illustrated
16th October	Mr Kevin MULLEY <i>Ramsbottom from the Borough Archives</i>
20th November	Mr Brian E HOLDEN <i>Restoration of the Rochdale Canal</i>
48th December	<i>A Christmas Celebration</i>

Meetings of the Society are held in the Civic Hall, Ramsbottom on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.45 pm. New members and visitors are welcome at all meetings.

## SPECIAL NOTICE TO MEMBERS

November 1991 Meeting

The Committee wish to give notice that the first few minutes of the November 1991 meeting will be convened as an Extra-ordinary General Meeting in order to discuss the motion that the word "audited" be deleted from clause 7a of the Society's constitution. The Committee has been advised that Certified accounts should be adequate for our requirements.

**THE HERITAGE CENTRE**

**WILL BE OPEN**

**SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND BANK HOLIDAYS  
from 12 noon - 4.00 pm**

**Up to and including Sunday 22 December 1991  
The Centre will also be open on some WEEKDAYS**

For DETAILS of days/times please see NOTICES or enquire at **the Centre**

**Telephone: 0706 821603**

Contributions, comments and correspondence to contributor may be sent to the Editor at the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom.

## **RAMSBOTTOM S IRON RAILINGS**

In the Winter issue of the magazine *Fred ENTWISTLE* wrote about the fate of Ramsbottom's iron railings. Mr G Ashworth, who now lives in Grange over Sands, has sent us the following item from the records of the Methodist Church, Market Place (now known as Christ Church) which explains what happened to some of them.

"We came across a note in the accounts in 1949 that we received the sum of £9 from the Ministry of Works as compensation for the compulsory removal of part of the iron railings let into the stone work in front of the Church.

"The job was never finished - old iron became unwanted. In later years we had to complete the removal of the rest of the rails and also take down the stone wall, so that we could complete the "flagging" of the forecourt of the Church."